

Risen

written by

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EXT. ARCATA PLAZA - ARCATA, CALIFORNIA - DAY - DREAM SEQUENCE

A mid-summer day in Arcata Plaza. The area is bustling with families, couples, friends just hanging out, listening to birds chirping and taking in the serene landscape.

A SNOWFLAKE drops. A young curly hair, African- American boy, JOSEPH, searches for something. Joseph looks behind the trees, behind the trash can, and continues searching.

Joseph walks up to an interracial couple standing by the fountain in the center of the plaza. Tears well up in his eyes. He tugs on the woman's dress.

JOSEPH

Have you seen my mom?

The woman turns to look down at Joseph, but both her and her mate fade away. A tear escapes Joseph's eye. Snow falls softly as Joseph approaches a mother sitting on the bench with her baby.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Have you seen my mom?

Just as before, the woman and her baby fade away. Joseph runs up to more and more people but one by one they fade away. The snowfall grows intense.

Everything is blanketed with powdery white snow and Joseph surmises he is alone. He holds back his tears until he sees a figure in the distance.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Mommy?

He clumsily runs through the snow towards the figure of his mother letting the tears steam down his face.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Mom. Mom. I'm here. I've been looking everywhere for you.

Joseph reaches the figure and he hugs it tightly. He lets go but suddenly falls to his knees, clutching his stomach, blood flowing onto his hands. He looks up to see a KNIFE covered in his blood and the dark-skinned man wearing a black robe holding it.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Reuben...

Joseph collapses. A single tear escapes the man's eye.

REUBEN

Joseph, I'm sorry. I didn't have a choice.

Flames engulf the man and Joseph lay dying, forgotten in the snow.

INT. JOSEPH'S PENTHOUSE - ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA - BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

In the bedroom of a well furnished penthouse apartment, three individuals, two men and one woman, lay next to each other fast asleep.

The African-American man in the middle , JOSEPH WALLACE, 23, ambitious, good-looking, stirs awake. He quickly sits upright and clutches his stomach, panting and sweating.

BONNIE, 26, African-American woman next to him turns to him. She sits up, covering herself with the sheet.

BONNIE

Joseph you okay?

Joseph turns and smiles at her.

JOSEPH

Sorry Bonnie, I'm fine. Go back to sleep.

BONNIE

You sure?

JOSEPH

Yea the sun's not even out yet.

Joseph gives Bonnie a peck on the lips before Bonnie turns around and drifts back to sleep. Unbeknownst to Joseph, the ghost of his mother, Martha, watches him. Joseph sighs and lays back down. Before Joseph closes his eyes, the ghost fades away.

INT. PETERMAN HOUSEHOLD - ARCATA, CALIFORNIA - KITCHEN - MORNING

It's a beautiful day outside. The sun peers through the windows of the intimate kitchen. A beautiful light-skinned Dominican woman, MICHELLE PETERMAN, 27, kind yet assertive, is preparing pancakes and CHRISTINA PETERMAN, 5, adorable, bubbly, dark-skinned mixed girl, anxiously awaits breakfast with a smile on her face.

CHRISTINA
Is daddy awake yet?

Michelle flips the pancakes.

MICHELLE
No, not yet. Between you and me, I
think he enjoys being late to work.

CHRISTINA
Can I wake him up, Mommy?

The kettle WHISTLES.

MICHELLE
No, honey.

Michelle turns the fire off. She makes Christina a plate and places it on the table in front of her. Christina drowns her pancakes in syrup and digs in.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
Eat up. Daddy'll be up soon.

A loud CRASH.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
There he goes.

DONALD (O.S.)
Is that the time? I'm gonna be
late.

Michelle and Christina LAUGH among themselves.

MICHELLE
You ready for your first day of
kindergarten Christina?

CHRISTINA
Yes mommy. I wanna make lots and
lots of friends.

MICHELLE
You will. Eat up. I'll be right
back.

Michelle steps out of the kitchen. Christina finishes her plate and puts it in the sink. Michelle enters holding a yellow dress. Christina's eyes light up.

CHRISTINA
Oooo mommy it's so pretty.

DONALD (O.S.)
Chel, have you seen my shoes?

MICHELLE
They're by the door.
(to Christina)
Hurry. Go get dressed.

Christina grabs the dress and runs out. Michelle makes another plate of pancakes and sets it down. She washes the dishes in the sink.

Michelle's husband, DONALD PETERMAN, 27, enthusiastic, slender, Caucasian male, comes in and hugs her from behind. He kisses the side of her face, grabs the plate and starts eating as he walks to the table.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
Aren't you going to be late for work?

Donald stuffs a whole pancake in his mouth.

DONALD
I can't help it.

He sits down and swallows.

DONALD (CONT'D)
They're just so good.

MICHELLE
I'm glad you still like my cooking.

DONALD
That'll never change.

Christina waltzes back in showing off her new dress.

CHRISTINA
Daddy. Daddy. Look. Don't I look pretty?

DONALD
Aw. Of course you do. You're prettier than the sun.

Donald gets up from the table, and picks Christina up. He swings her around in the air.

DONALD (CONT'D)
What's the special occasion?

MICHELLE
Christina starts Kindergarten
today. Don't tell me you forgot.

Donald sets Christina down.

DONALD
Me? No.

MICHELLE
Then we should really get going.
(to Christina)
Go get your bag honey. We don't
want to make daddy anymore late.

CHRISTINA
Okay mommy.

Christina runs out. Donald puts his plate in the sink, grabs his briefcase and kisses Michelle on the lips. He heads to the door.

MICHELLE
Donald?

Donald stops, turns around and sees Michelle giving him a familiar look.

DONALD
I'll go start the car.

Michelle smiles and Donald exits.

INT. AMBER'S CONDO - ARCATA, CALIFORNIA - MORNING

A small red car pulls up to the two-story condo. A beautiful African-American woman, AMBER, 27, kind, good-looking, steps out, grabs her luggage and keys then heads for the door. She opens the door to her house and steps in. She closes the door behind her.

AMBER
Danny! I'm home.

INT. AMBER'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

A tall, muscular, African-American man, DANIEL WALLACE, 24, charismatic, athletic and a petite Caucasian woman, CINDY, 25, race to put their clothes on. Daniel grabs a can of air freshener and sprays the room.

DANIEL
Cindy, get in the closet.

Cindy gives Daniel a look that could kill.

CINDY
I can't believe you.

DANIEL
Just do it.

A half-dressed Cindy gets in the closet and Daniel jumps in the bed and pretends to be asleep. The bedroom door opens and Amber walks in.

AMBER
Daniel?

Amber smiles. She watches Daniel sleep for a moment. She notices something red by the corner of the bed. She walks over, picks it up, revealing it to be a bra.

AMBER (CONT'D)
Daniel, get the fuck up!

Amber starts hitting Daniel who is still pretending to sleep. He gets up after a while.

DANIEL
Damn bae, you're back early. Whats good with you hitting me like that, though? I was knocked out.

Amber reveals the bra she is holding.

AMBER
You had some girl in my bed?

DANIEL
Bae, its not what you think.

AMBER
So you wasn't fucking another bitch, in my bed, while I was gone?

Daniel averts his gaze. Amber LAUGHS to herself.

AMBER (CONT'D)
Right. Probably one of them girls from Instagram. Shit, I hope it was worth it.

Daniel looks at Amber confused. Amber stops laughing.

AMBER (CONT'D)
Get out of my house.

 DANIEL
What?

 AMBER
I didn't stutter. Pack your shit
and get out.

Daniel gets up out of the bed.

 DANIEL
Come on Amber, I'm sorry. I won't
do it again.

 AMBER
I've heard it before. Time and time
again. Get your shit and get out.

 DANIEL
Amber, I'm sorry but I'm not
leaving you. I love you girl.

 AMBER
Oh. You love me?

Amber starts throwing Daniel's stuff out the window, clothes
and shoes.

 DANIEL
Amber chill we can work this out.

Amber grabs the PlayStation off the dresser.

 AMBER
Maybe you can work this out.

 DANIEL
Girl chill. That's my PlayStation
yo.

Amber attempts to throw the PlayStation out the window but
Daniel grabs her first. Amber shakes free of his grip and
drops the PlayStation on the floor.

 AMBER
Don't fucking touch me.

The doorbell RINGS.

 DANIEL
Who is that?

AMBER

Don't worry about it you don't live here anymore.

The doorbell RINGS.

AMBER (CONT'D)

Get to packing.

Amber walks out of the bedroom. Daniel rushes to open the closet. Cindy is fully dressed and annoyed.

DANIEL

You gotta get outta here.

CINDY

I should've never came.

Cindy walks to the bedroom door. Daniel quickly grabs her.

DANIEL

Not that way.

Daniel points to the window.

CINDY

You can't be serious.

DANIEL

Hurry before she gets back up here.

Daniel helps Cindy through the window. Cindy rolls her eyes and climbs down. The door opens, Daniel moves from the window, and Amber enters.

AMBER

You still not done packing?

DANIEL

I never said I was leaving.

AMBER

Michael's downstairs--

Daniel's eyes widen.

DANIEL

Alright you got it.

Daniel walks to the closet grabs a bag and starts packing. Amber smirks.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Aye! Who's that chick in the yard?!

Amber runs to the window and looks outside. She sees Cindy reaching the front of the yard.

AMBER

That bitch!

Amber runs out of the house to chase Cindy. Daniel drops his head into his bag in defeat.

INT. ARCATA CITY HALL - MAYOR'S OFFICE - MORNING

The mayor, REUBEN WALLACE, 30, charismatic, well-built African-American man, stands staring out the window of his office, enjoying the beautiful sunshine. He takes a sip of his coffee. His iPhone rings, "LINDA". He pauses for a moment before answering the call.

REUBEN

Linda, my love. Good morning. I apologize for leaving so early this morning. You looked so peaceful and I wanted to let you sleep. I had a lot to prepare for today.

LINDA (V.O.)

Reubee, what's going on?

Reuben takes a seat in his chair.

REUBEN

Just some politician stuff, you know it goes.

LINDA (V.O.)

Okay. Well you better be on time for dinner tonight.

Reuben swivels around in his chair.

REUBEN

I will. I promise.

LINDA (V.O.)

Love you.

REUBEN

Love you too. See you tonight.

Reuben hangs up. He opens one of the drawers in front of him and pulls out a folder, places it down in front of him and stares blankly ahead.

The ghost of his mother, Alice, watches him, but Reuben does not see her. Reuben's phone rings again, a text, "1 ATTACHMENT". He opens it. Alice fades away.

He sees a picture of his wife and three year old daughter smiling. Linda texts, "WE MISS YOU". Reuben replies, "I MISS YOU GUYS TOO. LOVE YOU".

Reuben sets his phone down and pages his secretary.

CHARLIE

How can I help you Mayor Wallace?

REUBEN

Any sign of Donald?

CHARLIE

No sir. Not yet.

REUBEN

Let me know as soon as he arrives.

CHARLIE

Will do sir.

REUBEN

Thanks, Charlie.

Reuben grabs the folder and opens it. The top of the first page reads, "CAMPAIGN SPEECH". Reuben picks up his phone and dials a number. It starts to RING.

INT. JOSEPH'S PENTHOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Joseph's iPhone rings slowly waking him up. From under the sheets, he grabs around, searching for his phone. He pulls himself from under the sheet and locates it. "THE FIRST" is calling. Joseph lets it go to voicemail. His screen now displays, "12 MISSED CALLS & 5 NEW VOICE MESSAGES".

JOSEPH

Oh shit.

He sits up and listens to the messages.

GREG (V.O.)

Joe my man great news. Giselle wants to meet with you today at Chateau's at 9. I know you got this.

JOSEPH
Chateau's! This is great. I love
that place.

He looks at the time. "7:46".

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Ugh. Maybe not so great. I'm going
to be late if I don't hurry and get
dressed.

Joseph gets out of bed, walks into the walk-in closet and
prepares his outfit. In walks a well built, half naked
African-American man, RUSSELL, 28, even-tempered, carrying a
plate of food. He looks around.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Dammit. Why didn't Bonnie or
Russell wake me up?

Russell walks over to the bed and places the tray of food on
the nightstand.

RUSSELL
Because you never sleep through the
night.

Russell sits on the bed with a plate of food and starts to
eat.

JOSEPH
I know. I'm going to talk to Dr.
Pollard about these dreams I've
been having.

Joseph steps out of the closet in a button-up and slacks. As
he adjusts his cuff-links he notices the tray of food on the
night stand.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Breakfast in bed?

RUSSELL
Breakfast in bed.

JOSEPH
Sorry Russ. Rain check?

RUSSELL
Yea. Yea.

JOSEPH
Where's Bonnie?

Joseph grabs a blazer from the closet.

RUSSELL

She said she had to be on set early today.

Joseph steps out of the closet and adjusts himself in the mirror.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Am I really having breakfast in bed without my boyfriend or my girlfriend? What's wrong with me?.

JOSEPH

We can't all be set like you. The rest of us common folk have to work.

Russell comes up behind Joseph and caresses him.

RUSSELL

Well, I mean I got something you can work on.

JOSEPH

Gonna have to take a rain check on that too.

RUSSELL

Ah you're no fun.

They laugh, then kiss and Russell jumps back into bed.

JOSEPH

We can have fun later though but I have a career to go attend to right now.

Russell LAUGHS.

RUSSELL

Well you better brush them teeth before you lose whatever career you think you got.

JOSEPH

Ah. You got jokes. Watch when I get back from this interview.

RUSSELL

Yea. Yea.

Russell turns on the TV. Joseph steps into the closet and comes back out holding a tie in each hand.

DANIEL

Russell.

He holds them up for Russell to see.

RUSSELL

That one.

Russell points to the left hand. Joseph looks in the mirror with the selected tie.

JOSEPH

Interesting choice.

INT. BRIGHT START ACADEMY - ARCATA, CALIFORNIA - MORNING

An intimate private school for young minds. Donald, Michelle, and Christina walk through the white and black painted hallways.

DONALD

Interesting color palate choice for one of the top private schools in California.

Michelle LAUGHS. They continue walking and reach a door "RM. 161". Michelle pulls a pamphlet from her bag and checks it.

MICHELLE

This is it.

Christina lets go of Donald's and Michelle's hand and walks into the classroom. She looks around, captivated by the other kids playing. She looks back to her parents, they give an approving look and Christina is off to make a new friend.

The classroom teacher, MRS. HOBBS, 48, stuck-up, portly, African-American, walks over to Donald and Michelle.

MRS. HOBBS

You must be Mister and Misses Peterman. We're glad to have Christina here.

MICHELLE

Thank you.

DONALD

Where are the other parents?

MRS. HOBBS

Most children have nannies who drop them off in the mornings. It's rare to see a parent on the first day. I'm about to begin.

Mrs. Hobbs walks to her desk. She notices Donald and Michelle and still standing there.

MRS. HOBBS (CONT'D)

You can say goodbye now if you'd like.

Michelle turns to Donald with an offended look on her face.

MICHELLE

You can go ahead. I know you're really late but...

Michelle glares in Mrs. Hobbs direction.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

I think I might need to stay.

DONALD

Calm down honey.

Donald kisses Michelle on the cheek. Donald takes Michelle's hand and they walk over to Christina who was running around. Donald pats her on the head.

DONALD (CONT'D)

Daddy's gonna drop your mommy off and head to work. You gonna be a good girl for daddy?

CHRISTINA

Yes daddy and for mommy too.

Christina, Donald and Michelle hug. Michelle and Donald walk out the door waving to Christina. Two of Christina's new classmates run up to her.

GIRL 1

Was that your dad?

Christina nods her head. The two girls start laughing.

CHRISTINA

What's so funny?

MRS. HOBBS

Alright children, take a seat.

The girls run away laughing. Christina's smile fades.

INT. WALLACE HOUSEHOLD - ARCATA, CALIFORNIA - LIVING ROOM

A group of older church-goers stand together holding hands in a prayer circle with their eyes closed. An African-American man, BENJAMIN WALLACE, 47, strict, intimidating, leads the group in prayer.

BENJAMIN

And let our bible study be blessed
in Jesus name we pray. Amen

EVERYONE

Amen.

They release each others' hands, open their eyes and take their seats. Benjamin remains standing.

BENJAMIN

Good morning guys.

EVERYONE

Good morning Pastor Wallace.

BENJAMIN

For today's bible study, the scripture that we will be discussing is taken from First Thessalonians chapter four verse fourteen through eighteen. While everyone locates the verse, can anyone tell us what this scripture references?

As they all search for the scripture, JUDIE, 53, prim, raises her hand.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Yes, Judie.

JUDIE

The rapture.

BENJAMIN

Thank you. And can anyone tell us what the rapture is?

Judie swiftly raises her hand but Benjamin calls on the man sitting next to her, who is half way raising his hand.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Matt?

MATT

The second coming of Christ?

BENJAMIN

Yes Matt. That's part of it. Any--

Judie raises her hand with no hesitation.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Judie.

JUDIE

The dead in Christ will be resurrected and all believers in Christ will be called up to heaven and the earth will become Satan's playground.

BENJAMIN

Uh. Yes, Judie exactly. Now has everyone found the scripture?

Everyone nods.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Who'd like to read?

Judie raises her hand.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Okay.

JUDIE

We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God...

The doorbell RINGS.

BENJAMIN

Let me go get that. Judie you can continue without me for a moment.

JUDIE

With the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

Benjamin leaves the group and heads to the front door.

INT./EXT. WALLACE HOUSEHOLD - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

He opens the front door and Daniel is standing there.

DANIEL

Hey, pops.

Benjamin looks surprised.

BENJAMIN

Daniel? What're you doing here?

DANIEL

I was just in the neighborhood and thought I'd say hello to my dear old dad.

Benjamin rolls his eyes while Daniel continues to smile.

BENJAMIN

What do you want? You need money or something?

Daniel pretends to feel attacked.

DANIEL

Dad. That's crazy. I don't only just come here when I need something.

BENJAMIN

Daniel you're interrupting my bible study. Spit it out boy.

Daniel tries to formulate the words. Benjamin starts to close the door.

DANIEL

Wait. Amber kicked me out.

BENJAMIN

Again?

Daniel averts his gaze from his father.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

You cheated on her didn't you? I ain't raise you like...

Something dawns on Benjamin.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Oh so you need a place to stay?

Still not looking at his father.

DANIEL

Yea dad.

BENJAMIN

You know that means you're coming to church with me right?

Benjamin opens the door further, steps out the way, and gestures for his son to come inside.

DANIEL

Yes! I mean, that's fine. Lemme go get my stuff.

Daniel turns to walk away. Benjamin reaches out to his son and stops him.

BENJAMIN

You can get that later. Come get some of this prayer son.

DANIEL

Really dad, right now? Aren't you in the middle of bible study?

BENJAMIN

Don't worry we'll pray for you when that's over. Come study the good lord's word.

DANIEL

Great.

Daniel walks inside and Benjamin closes the door.

INT. CITY HALL - ASSEMBLY HALL - DAY

The assembly hall is bustling with people. People of the city sit around in discussion groups preparing to ask their questions to the mayor and the rest of the city council.

Reporters and cameraman from different news stations are preparing their questions and getting ready to film.

INT. ASSEMBLY HALL - BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Reuben is pacing back and forth. He goes over his speech in his head. Donald walks in, looks around, spots Reuben and walks over to him. Reuben notices him.

REUBEN

Donald. Finally. I thought you were never going to get here.

DONALD

Sorry I'm late. It was my daughter's first day of Kindergarten and I totally forgot till this morning.

REUBEN

It's alright. We have been pretty busy with things.

DONALD

Still that's no excuse. I apologize again Mayor Wallace.

Reuben gives Donald a LOOK.

REUBEN

Donald, you've known me since before I was mayor. Just call me Reuben.

DONALD

I can't just call you by your first name. I mean as your chief of staff aren't I supposed to be setting an example?

Reuben CHUCKLES to himself.

REUBEN

An example? Like being late?

DONALD

Fair point Mayor Wallace.

Reuben gives Donald a LOOK again.

DONALD (CONT'D)

My bad May... Reuben. Did you get to finish your speech though? I know you wanted me to hear it.

REUBEN

I did and it would have been nice to get your take on it but it's brilliant if I do say so myself.

DONALD

I'm glad to hear that. Did you let Linda hear it?

(MORE)

DONALD (CONT'D)

She always used to write you the most amazing speeches.

REUBEN

No, I didn't let her hear it.

DONALD

So wait--

REUBEN

--In fact...

Reuben turns away from Donald and looks into the crowd from backstage. He turns back to Donald.

REUBEN (CONT'D)

Everyone is going to hear it for the first time here, at this Town Hall.

DONALD

Does Linda know you're about to do this?

Reuben gives Donald a LOOK.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

And now, please welcome Mayor Reuben Wallace to the stage.

THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE.

REUBEN

Here goes nothing.

Reuben walks out onto the stage. The applause continue. Donald stands backstage.

DONALD

This might not bode so well.

INT. REUBEN'S HOUSE - ARCATA, CALIFORNIA - KITCHEN - DAY

In a two story house, a petite light skinned, half African-American, half-white woman, LINDA, 27, likable, seasons a whole chicken while she watches her three year old daughter, BECCA, 3, bubbly, adorable, playing with DOLLS and TOY CARS in the living room.

The door bell RINGS. Linda places the chicken down and washes her hands. She quickly dries them in her apron as she runs through the living room to the front door.

INT./EXT. REUBEN'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Linda looks through the peephole and her face lights up. She unlocks the door, revealing her sister, Alex.

LINDA

Alex! What are you doing here?

ALEX, 20, inquisitive, looks like the younger version of Linda, jumps to hug her sister. Linda hugs her back. They separate.

ALEX

My class got canceled today so I thought I'd come see my big sister.

LINDA

Well come on in.

Linda walks into the house and Alex follows behind her.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Don't forget to lock the door.

Linda continues to walk into the kitchen. Alex doubles back and locks the door.

INT. REUBEN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Becca plays with her toys as Alex walks in...

ALEX

Where's my lil niece at?

Alex sees Becca playing with her toys.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Oh. There she is.

Becca sees Alex and smiles wide.

BECCA

Teetee Alex!

Alex walks over to Becca and picks her up.

ALEX

Hey there Becca.

LINDA (O.S.)

Be careful with her.

ALEX
Don't worry.

Alex sets Becca down.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Play with your toys, teetee's gonna
go talk to mommy.

INT. REUBEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Linda puts the seasoned chicken in the fridge. Alex walks in and sits at the counter. There's a muted TV next to her, on a local news station.

ALEX
So how have you been, all things
considered?

Linda closes the fridge door. She grabs a bag of peas from the cupboard. Alex watches her.

LINDA
Better.

ALEX
How are you and Reuben?

Linda ignores Alex as she washes the peas in the sink.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Linda.

LINDA
Did you come here to play therapist
on me?

ALEX
Come on Linda. Talk to me. I'm your
sister for crying out loud.

Linda stops washing the peas and turns around to face Alex. She SIGHS.

LINDA
He's always hard at work. I get it,
he's the mayor. But... I just wish
he would stop.

Linda eyes well up with tears but she doesn't let a single tear fall. Alex pauses for a moment.

ALEX

Have you talked to him about it?

LINDA

He's the mayor. He can't just up and quit.

ALEX

Well this is his second term and it's almost over, maybe when he's out of office things will change for the better.

Linda thinks to herself for moment. Alex looks at the TV.

LINDA

You know what you're right.

ALEX

Isn't that Reuben on the TV?

LINDA

Yea probably. I think there's a town hall today or something.

ALEX

Sis turn it up.

Linda uses the remote and raises the volume on the TV.

REUBEN (V.O.)

And it is with great humility that I place my bid for Governor of California.

LINDA

What!?

INT. CHATEAU'S - ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA - MORNING

Inside the fancy restaurant, among the people eating, sits GISELLE, 34, quirky, thin, with a almost empty plate in front of her. She's dressed like a fashion model.

Joseph walks in and looks around. He spots Giselle and walks over to the table.

JOSEPH

Am I late?

Giselle dabs the corners of her mouth with her linen napkin.

GISELLE
No darling, I just like to be
early.

Joseph notices her plate.

JOSEPH
Hope I didn't keep you waiting too
long.

GISELLE
No, not at all. Take a seat.

As Joseph sits down, Giselle notices his tie.

GISELLE (CONT'D)
That's a cute tie.

JOSEPH
Thanks my --

Joseph pauses. He sees Martha's ghost for a split second.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Mom?

Giselle looks behind her.

GISELLE
Is your mom here?

Joseph snaps back to reality and realizes what just happened.

JOSEPH
My mom got it for me. Sorry about
that I just spaced out for a
minute.

GISELLE
Aw. That's sweet. Your a momma's
boy.

Joseph diverts his gaze.

JOSEPH
My mom passed away five years ago.

GISELLE
Oh. I'm so sorry.

JOSEPH
It's alright. No need to apologize.

There's silence between them for a moment.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Let's talk business, shall we.

GISELLE
We shall. Oh but first.

Giselle extends her hand and flags the waiter.

GISELLE (CONT'D)
Oh... waiter. Over here.

The waiter acknowledges Giselle and she turns back around.

GISELLE (CONT'D)
I don't know about you, but I'm
starving. Now where were we.

INT. CHATEAU'S - MOMENTS LATER

A plate or two later...

GISELLE
You do seem to embody my main
character.

JOSEPH
Thank y--

GISELLE
I'm not quite sure the look is
right though. I wanted him to look
a little older.

GISELLE (CONT'D)
But having a rising actor such as
yourself might be the touch that we
need. I'll reach out to your agent
with my decision.

Waiter comes with the check.

GISELLE (CONT'D)
Would you like me to handle the
check?

Joseph takes the check.

JOSEPH
It would be my pleasure.

Giselle gets up, kisses Joseph on both cheeks and walks out.

GISELLE

Bye love.

Joseph looks at the bill.

JOSEPH

No wonder she likes to be early.

There's a few empty plates on the table. Joseph hangs his head.

EXT. BRIGHT START ACADEMY - PLAYGROUND - AFTERNOON

Mrs. Hobbs stands outside while her class runs around the small playground. Christina sits by herself. Mrs. Hobbs sees Michelle in the distance coming towards the playground.

MRS. HOBBS

Christina your mom is here.

Christina runs to her mom and hugs her tight. They let go and Michelle waves to Mrs. Hobbs and Mrs. Hobbs turns her face away. Michelle quietly soothes her rage. She turns to Christina.

MICHELLE

How was your first day of school baby?

CHRISTINA

It was okay.

Christina looks away half-smiling.

MICHELLE

Everything okay honey?

CHRISTINA

Can we just go home mommy?

MICHELLE

I have a better idea. Why don't we get some ice cream on our way.

Christina's face lights up and she jumps up and down with glee.

CHRISTINA

Yay!

INT. BLINK FITNESS GYM - ARCATA, CALIFORNIA - AFTERNOON

The gym isn't very lively. There are only a few people inside. Donald is working out with Ronaldo and Troy, his childhood best friends. They're taking turns doing reps and spotting each other. Ronaldo is lifting and Troy is spotting him.

TROY, 23, comedic, muscular built, African-American LAUGHS as he speaks to Daniel.

TROY
Bro she kicked you out again?

DANIEL
She stay wildin. I know she gon
take me back though.

RONALDO, 25, wise, fit, Dominican, finishes his reps and sits up.

RONALDO
You stay playing with these girls'
heads?

DANIEL
Nah I love amber.

RONALDO
So why you was fucking Brittany?

Ronaldo and Daniel switch places.

DANIEL
It wasn't Brittany. It was Cindy
this time.

TROY
Damn bro. You'se a dog. Props.

Troy and Daniel dap each other up. Daniel puts his hand out to dap Ronaldo but Ronaldo doesn't give him dap.

DANIEL
Aye don't be gay.

RONALDO
Naw I see you dog.

Ronaldo daps him and Daniel does a set of reps.

TROY
So how'd Pastor Wallace take it?

DANIEL
Bro he walked me right into bible
study and sat me next to Judie.

Ronaldo and Troy LAUGH.

RONALDO
Granny Judie annoying as fuck.

Daniel sits up on the bench.

DANIEL
Yo, facts!

They all LAUGH.

TROY
Guess we'll be seeing you at church
from now on then?

Troy and Ronaldo look at each other, try to hold in their
laughter but can't hold it in for too long.

DANIEL
Go ahead laugh it up. I'ma get some
water.

As they're laughing, Daniel walks to the water fountain and
Ronaldo notices something.

Daniel reaches the water fountain and makes eye contact with
a tall Indian girl and she waves to him. Ronaldo comes
running over before he can walk over to her.

RONALDO
Aye Danny isn't that Cindy over
there?

Ronaldo points her out by the the treadmills.

DANIEL
Oh shit. Oh shit. Oh shit.

Daniel ducks behind one of the columns. Troy jogs over.

TROY
Bro you good?

Daniel waves Troy away.

DANIEL
I'm not tryna let Cindy see me.

RONALDO

I think its too late for that.

Daniel catches Cindy's glare. She smiles and walks over.

CINDY

Hey Daniel.

DANIEL

He--

Cindy smacks him.

CINDY

You ain't shit. Lose my fucking number.

She goes to hit him again but Daniel catches her hands.

DANIEL

Cindy chill.

CINDY

Why you ain't tell your girl to chill when she was chasing me down the street?

DANIEL

My bad.

CINDY

Get off of me.

Cindy breaks free of Daniel's grip.

CINDY (CONT'D)

You better watch yourself.

Cindy grabs her things and leaves the gym. Daniel plops down on one of the benches. He can feel all eyes on him.

TROY

She sure told you.

RONALDO

Damn Amber chased her down the street though?

DANIEL

Fifteen blocks bro.

RONALDO

I'm surprised Amber didn't catch dat ass.

The Indian girl, FATIMAH, 26, daring, sexy, walks over to the guys and slips Daniel a piece of paper with her name and number on it.

FATIMAH
I like bad boys.

She turns around and walks to the exit. Daniel, Ronaldo and Troy watch her leave. She turns around one last time.

FATIMAH (CONT'D)
Call me.

Fatimah exits. Troy and Ronaldo look at the expression on Daniel's face.

TROY & RONALDO
Here we go again.

INT. REUBEN'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Linda sets the table. She hears the door open, and looks at the clock surprised. Reuben walks in with flowers.

REUBEN
Honey I'm home.

Reuben hands Linda the flowers. She doesn't show any appreciation to Reuben but puts them in a vase while Reuben takes his coat off and sits down.

REUBEN (CONT'D)
Smells great in here. What's on the menu?

Linda takes the chicken out of the oven and starts to carve it.

REUBEN (CONT'D)
Linda, what's wrong?

She ignores him.

REUBEN (CONT'D)
Are you okay?

Linda slams the knife down and turns to face Reuben.

LINDA
Why Reuben?

REUBEN
You saw?

LINDA
Did I see? That's it?

Reuben gets up and tries to console her.

REUBEN
Linda, my love--

Linda doesn't let him touch her.

LINDA
Don't "my love" me. Governor? What were you thinking?

REUBEN
I have a legitimate shot at pulling this off.

LINDA
Reuben. That's not the problem.

REUBEN
Then what is?

LINDA
You act as if it didn't happen.

REUBEN
Linda.

LINDA
Reuben it could happen again.

REUBEN
Linda that was a tragic accident.

LINDA
Don't be naive Reuben. That was no accident.

REUBEN
There were no leads, no suspects, no signs of foul play. No nothing.

LINDA
Something like that doesn't just happen. Something or someone didn't want you running Reubee.

REUBEN
Linda.

LINDA

For god sake. Your car blew up with
our son inside it. Explain it.
Explain that to me.

Reuben is at a loss for words.

LINDA (CONT'D)

You can't. And instead of grieving
with your wife you somehow decided
to keep running. Now look at you.
Two term mayor running for
Governor.

Silence.

LINDA (CONT'D)

We have a daughter now not much
younger than Nathan.

Silence.

LINDA (CONT'D)

I don't want you to run.

REUBEN

Linda--

LINDA

Do me a favor and sleep on the
couch tonight.

Linda storms out.

INT. PETERMAN HOUSEHOLD - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Michelle, Donald and Christina finish eating dinner. Donald
BURPS.

DONALD

Excuse me. Them pork chops were so
good, Chel.

MICHELLE

Thanks honey.

They Eskimo kiss.

CHRISTINA

Can I go to bed?

Donald and Michelle look at Christina then look at each
other.

MICHELLE

Sure honey.

CHRISTINA

Thank you.

Christina gets up from the table, puts her dishes in the sink and walks out.

DONALD

What's wrong with her?

MICHELLE

I'm not sure. I think something happened at school. She won't talk to me about it. It was probably that rude ass teacher.

DONALD

Lemme go talk to her.

Donald gets up and walks out. Michelle grabs the plates from the table.

MICHELLE

I hope everything is okay.

INT. PETERMAN HOUSEHOLD - CHRISTINA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Christina changes into her pajamas and turns off the overhead light, a nightlight is plugged in by her bed. Donald walks in and sits down on the bed next to her.

DONALD

Did something happen at school today?

Christina sits up but can't look into Donald's eyes.

CHRISTINA

No.

DONALD

Now you know you can tell me anything Chrissy.

CHRISTINA

I know daddy.

DONALD

So what happened at school?

Christina curls up and she starts to tear,

CHRISTINA
There were mean girls in my class.

DONALD
Did they hurt you?

CHRISTINA
No. They were laughing at me.

Christina starts to cry. Donald hugs Christina then let's her go.

DONALD
Words are just that. Words. Try not to let it bother you too much.

Donald hugs Christina again.

CHRISTINA
Daddy?

DONALD
Yes, beautiful?

CHRISTINA
Are you my real daddy?

Donald looks shocked. Michelle, hiding by the doorway, is also in shock. Donald gathers himself and releases the hug.

DONALD
Of course I am baby.

Christina hugs Donald tightly. Donald looks guilty. Michelle covers her mouth with tears in her eyes.

INT. REUBEN'S HOUSE - BECCA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Reuben watches Becca sleep with a proud smile on his face. He rubs her head.

REUBEN
Your dad's gonna be the Governor of California.

There's a BREEZE. Reuben shivers. He closes the window. He feels another breeze, he turns around and sees Alice's ghost.

REUBEN (CONT'D)
Mom?

Alice doesn't respond and phases through the door. Reuben exits behind her.

INT. REUBEN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Reuben follows Alice's ghost down the stairs and to the front door. She turns around. Her lips are moving but Reuben can't hear what she's saying. Her voice gets louder and louder.

ALICE

R...

ALICE (CONT'D)

Run...

ALICE (CONT'D)

Run away!

There's a strong gust of wind.

Reuben's phone RINGS. He rushes to answer.

REUBEN

Mom?

Reuben catches his breath as he looks around for any sign of Alice.

BENJAMIN (V.O.)

Don't you have caller ID boy?

Reuben SIGHS in relief and plops down on the made up couch.

REUBEN

My bad pops. I think I need some sleep.

INT. WALLACE HOUSEHOLD - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Benjamin sits up on the couch with the lights on. He talks on the phone with Reuben.

BENJAMIN

I would have called you earlier but I figured you were so busy either running the city or campaigning. I just wanted to say I was proud of you.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

REUBEN

Thanks, pops.

BENJAMIN

You coming to church Sunday?

REUBEN

Sure thing, I'll bring Linda and the baby.

BENJAMIN

Great. Can't wait to see my granddaughter. Get some rest son.

REUBEN

Will do.

(pause)

Hey pop?

BENJAMIN

Yea Rue?

REUBEN

Have you spoken to Joseph lately? I've been trying to reach him.

BENJAMIN

No and I'd like it to stay that way.

REUBEN

Pops...

BENJAMIN

Goodnight Rue.

The call ends. Benjamin sits back. The front door opens and Daniel walks in.

DANIEL

Hey pops.

Benjamin gets up and stands face to face with Daniel.

BENJAMIN

You think you can just waltz up in here whenever you please? This ain't Amber's house.

DANIEL

Dad chill I met this girl at the gym earlier today and we just--

BENJAMIN

Didn't you just get out of something earlier today?

DANIEL

Dad all we did was have dinner.

Benjamin walks to the recliner, sits down and gestures Daniel to sit on the sofa. Daniel complies.

BENJAMIN

Why cant you be more like your brother?

Daniel rolls his eyes.

DANIEL

Which one?

BENJAMIN

Did you know Reuben's running for governor?

Daniel stands up visibly upset.

DANIEL

So what dad?

BENJAMIN

Daniel what are you doing with your life? You can't just expect to mooch off people the rest of your life.

DANIEL

Damn dad tell me how you really feel.

BENJAMIN

I just did son.

DANIEL

Whatever.

Daniel walks off.

BENJAMIN

Figure your shit out!

EXT. - ARCATA PLAZA - DAY - DREAM SEQUENCE

Everything is blanketed with powdery white snow, an adult Joseph surmises he is alone. He sees a figure in the distance.

JOSEPH

Ma?

He clumsily runs through the snow towards the figure of his mother letting the tears stream down his face.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Mom. Mom. I'm here. I've been
looking everywhere for you.

Joseph reaches the figure and he hugs it tightly. Joseph
looks up and it's Martha.

MARTHA
You gotta go back pumpkin.

INT. DR. POLLARD'S OFFICE - ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA - MORNING

Dr. Pollard and Joseph are sitting in the small office. The
noise canceler is the only thing on.

JOSEPH
And every time I'm looking for her.

DR. POLLARD, 68, scholarly, elderly, Caucasian, writes in his
notepad.

DR. POLLARD
How do these dreams usually end?

JOSEPH
My brother kills me.

Dr. Pollard is taken aback for a moment.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
But last night was different. When
I ran into its arms it was her this
time. It was my mom. But then she
told me to go back. It was weird.

DR. POLLARD
That's very interesting. When's the
last time you've gone back home?

JOSEPH
I haven't been back since I left.
There's nothing left for me there.

DR. POLLARD
I think it's time that you go back
and at least visit. You're dreaming
of home and you're family. I think
the answers you're looking for are
back in Arcata.

JOSEPH
I'll think about it Doc.

DR. POLLARD
Anything else on your mind today?

JOSEPH
Yea. A few things.

INT. ARCATA CITY HALL - MAYOR'S OFFICE - MORNING

Reuben's sitting at his desk going over fiscal reports.
Donald walks in. Reuben takes notice.

REUBEN
Donald? You're on time today?

DONALD
Very funny.

While still sifting through paperwork...

REUBEN
I need you to do something for me.

DONALD
What's up?

Donald stands in front of the desk. Reuben looks up.

REUBEN
I need you to plan a dinner party
for me.

DONALD
A dinner party? For the campaign?

REUBEN
No. For Linda.

DONALD
I guess she wasn't too happy to
find out after the fact.

REUBEN
She sure wasn't. She didn't
outright say it but I know she
blames me for Nathan's passing.

Reuben slams his fist down hard on his desk. He has a
flustered look on his face and Donald seems worried.

DONALD
Well who should I invite?

Reuben slows his breathing.

REUBEN
Family and friends.

Reuben pauses.

REUBEN (CONT'D)
Try and reach Joseph too.

DONALD
Got it.

REUBEN
And make it informal too so you can
bring Christina and Becca can have
someone to play with.

DONALD
No problem.

Donald walks to the door.

REUBEN
Thanks Donald.

DONALD
You're welcome Reuben.

EXT. DR. POLLARD'S OFFICE - LATER

Joseph walks outside of the doctor's office. He checks his phone, "2 NEW VOICE MESSAGES". He clicks on the first one.

GREG (V.O.)
I don't know how but you pulled it
off but you did. She loves you. She
wants to know when you'll be
available to start signing
contracts.

Joseph can barely contain his excitement and almost puts his phone away until he gets a quick glimpse of Martha's ghost. He checks the other message.

DONALD (V.O.)
Reuben's hosting a dinner party
this Sunday. Can you make it?

Joseph SIGHS.

THE END - EPISODE ONE - GHOSTS

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT - DREAM SEQUENCE

A fire RAGES. Smoke fills the air. A young Reuben runs through the fire attempting to escape. He stumbles but continues on.

There's a clearing ahead. Reuben runs faster and faster, then finally reaches a lake. He drops to his knees and begins to sip the water. He sees his reflection in the surface of the water but a shrouded figure also appears behind him in the reflection. He looks on stunned.

The figure opens its eyes revealing them to be RED. As Reuben turns around, he stands up, and the figure disappears.

The flames surround Reuben. He closes his eyes and cries out for help. The flames engulf him but he stands there unfazed. Reuben opens his eyes and they're RED.

INT. REUBEN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Reuben wakes up sweating and panting. He sits up in the couch and holds his head in his hand. He ponders to himself. He hears footsteps. He looks up and sees Linda coming down the stairs.

REUBEN

Linda?

Linda passes by Reuben and enters the kitchen without a word. Reuben looks towards the kitchen. He follows behind her.

INT. REUBEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Linda opens the fridge and looks through it. Reuben tries to hug her from behind. She pushes him off.

REUBEN

Linda I'm sorry.

Linda looks through the cupboards ignoring Reuben.

REUBEN (CONT'D)

You can't keep this up forever.

Becca CRIES. Linda heads to Becca's room.

REUBEN (CONT'D)

Linda...

Reuben follows behind her but the doorbell RINGS. Reuben changes direction.

INT./EXT. REUBEN'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Reuben looks through the peephole then sighs to himself before he opens the door.

DANIEL
Hey First.

REUBEN
Second...

Daniel opens his arms, then Reuben does too, they share a big hug. Daniel pushes past Reuben and walks inside. Reuben closes the door as he shakes his head.

INT. REUBEN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Daniel looks around the room, notices the couch Reuben slept on, pushes the bedding over and sits down. He grabs the remote and turns on the TV. Reuben walks into the living room.

DANIEL
Long time no see First... Hows my
big brother mayor doing?

Reuben grabs the bedding off the couch and folds them up.

REUBEN
It's Saturday morning. What are you
doing here?

DANIEL
You told me I could visit anytime.
So I dropped by.

REUBEN
What do you want?

DANIEL
You and Dad are just alike.

REUBEN
You're just too easy to read.

Reuben puts away the pillows and blanket.

DANIEL
Yea. Whatever.

Linda comes down the stairs and walks into the living room. She's about to pass through without a word until she notices Daniel. Daniel gets up and smiles.

LINDA

Daniel!

She hugs Daniel tightly. He hugs her back after a brief pause, then looks to Reuben. Reuben looks away. Linda breaks the hug. She looks him up and down.

LINDA (CONT'D)

You hungry?

DANIEL

Of course.

LINDA

I was thinking pancakes.

DANIEL

Sis, you're the best.

LINDA

Don't forget to remind your stupid ass brother.

Linda walks off into the kitchen. Reuben sits next to Daniel.

DANIEL

Trouble in parad--?

REUBEN

--Don't even.

DANIEL

Alright, alright.

(pause)

Reuben. Can I come work for you?

REUBEN

You don't even like to work. Never did ya chores back in the day either.

DANIEL

Come on Reu, I really need this.

REUBEN

Why? You tired of living off Amber?

Daniel averts his gaze.

REUBEN (CONT'D)

I'm the mayor. You think I wouldn't know that you got fired.

DANIEL
Don't tell dad please.

Reuben thinks to himself for moment.

REUBEN
She kicked you out again?

DANIEL
(to himself)
Just alike.

LINDA (O.S.)
Pancakes ready.

Linda walks in with a plate of pancakes and a small cup of syrup and hands them to Daniel.

DANIEL
Thanks Linda.

LINDA
Anytime.

Daniel pours the syrup on the pancakes and starts eating.

REUBEN
Where's my plate?

Linda SCOFFS and walks back into the kitchen. Reuben grabs Daniel's plate from him and starts eating.

DANIEL
Really bro?

REUBEN
She's MY wife.

Daniel LAUGHS to himself.

DANIEL
So about that job...

Reuben rolls his eyes.

REUBEN
Fine. I'll give Donald a call.
Don't make me regret it though.

Daniel smiles hard.

DANIEL
I won't let you down.

INT. PETERMAN HOUSEHOLD - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Michele and Christina are pretending marrying dolls.
Christina stops abruptly and looks to Michelle.

CHRISTINA
Mommy, where's daddy?

MICHELLE
Daddy's upstairs in bed. What's
wrong baby?

CHRISTINA
I wanna play with daddy.

MICHELLE
Daddy'll be up soon.

Michelle hears footsteps coming down the stairs.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
There he is.

Christina drops the doll and runs to Donald. Donald meets her
at the foot of the steps, picks her up and twirls her around.

CHRISTINA
Daddy!

DONALD
Good morning sunshine!

Donald puts her down.

CHRISTINA
Daddy will you play with me?

DONALD
Sure honey when I get home from
work.

Christina looks sad.

CHRISTINA
Okay.

Christina sulks back into the living room, and plays with her
dolls. Donald heads to grab his coat but Michelle stops him.
He turns to her.

MICHELLE
Donald. Your going to work?

DONALD

Yes. I have to go finish setting up this party for tomorrow.

MICHELLE

But it's Saturday. What about family time?

DONALD

Michelle, you know he could replace me at anytime. He's running for governor. I need to keep him happy and be on my "A" game to support him. Who knows what kind of doors this can open for me.

MICHELLE

I get it.

Donald kisses Michelle.

DONALD

And you know what's great?

MICHELLE

What?

DONALD

You and Christina can come to the party.

Christina pops in.

CHRISTINA

Really daddy? I can go to the party too?

DONALD

Mhmm.

Christina jumps up and down in glee.

DONALD (CONT'D)

You and mommy can go out and buy a new dress for tomorrow.

Christina runs up to Donald and hugs him.

CHRISTINA

Thanks daddy.

Christina runs to her room. Donald is about to walk out the door but Michelle holds his hand. He turns to her.

DONALD

What's wrong?

MICHELLE

Donald, I wanted to talk to you about the other day?

DONALD

The other day?

MICHELLE

I heard what you told Christina... Was it alright to lie to her?

DONALD

She's five. You think I should've told her you cheated on me?

MICHELLE

Donald...

DONALD

Let's just talk about this when I get back home.

Donald walks out without acknowledging Michelle. Michelle holds her head own. Christina walks back in a sundress.

CHRISTINA

Mommy! Go get dressed! We have to go shopping.

Michelle turns around, notices Christina, and smiles.

MICHELLE

Okay baby.

INT. JOSEPH'S PENTHOUSE - ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA - BEDROOM -

Russell sits at the foot of the bed in his pj's, watching the news. Joseph walks out of the closet carrying a few pieces of clothing, and puts them in his small suitcase on the bed.

RUSSELL

So how long you gonna be gone for?

JOSEPH

Just the weekend.

Joseph walks over to the dresser and looks around.

RUSSELL

You sure you even wanna go home?
Wouldn't you rather just lay up
with me and Bonnie?

Joseph finds some of his jewelry and puts it in the suitcase.

JOSEPH

You wanna come?

Bonnie comes into the bedroom drinking a cup of coffee.

BONNIE

Count me out.

Bonnie sits on the bed next to Russell.

RUSSELL

Don't nobody wanna meet the
homophobic pastor.

Joseph brushes his hair in the mirror.

JOSEPH

I don't wanna see my dad either but
even the doc thinks I need to visit
home. Plus my brother's throwing a
party.

BONNIE

Which brother?

JOSEPH

The mayor one.

BONNIE

Oh fancy. Now I might wanna come
and dress up.

RUSSELL

Don't you get enough of that with
all those galas you attend? Y'all
both stay leaving me.

JOSEPH

Well maybe you need a hobby.

RUSSELL

Y'all are my hobby.

Russell holds on to Bonnie tight and she playfully pushes him
off.

BONNIE
Well isn't that romantic.

They all LAUGH.

RUSSELL
Bonnie I thought you were making
breakfast.

BONNIE
I did, its in the kitchen.

RUSSELL
No breakfast in bed?

Bonnie laughs to herself and walks out of the bedroom.

JOSEPH
You really do need a hobby.

Russell throws a pillow at Joseph and hits him in the back of the head. Joseph grabs the pillow and his phone rings. He throws the pillow back at Russell, then looks at his phone.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
My car's here.

Joseph goes to grab his suitcase but Russell grabs his hand.

RUSSELL
A few days right?

Joseph smiles.

JOSEPH
Only a few days.

Bonnie walks in with a waffle in her mouth.

BONNIE
Well ain't y'all cute.

Bonnie runs and tackles them both to the bed. They kiss.

INT. REUBEN'S HOUSE - FOYER - AFTERNOON

Linda walks down the stairs with Becca. They're both dressed. Linda grabs the walker and straps Becca in. Reuben walks in from the living room.

REUBEN
Where you two heading?

Linda straps Becca in.

LINDA
The park.

REUBEN
I'll go get dressed and tag along.

Linda opens the door.

LINDA
Don't.

Linda walks out with Becca leaving Reuben without closing the door behind her. Reuben sucks his teeth and closes the door. He turns around and sees his mother's ghost. He jumps back.

REUBEN
Mom? How?

Alice floats towards Reuben and caresses his face. Reuben places his hand on his mother's and is surprised when he feels her hand.

ALICE
Baby run away before its too late.

The doorbell RINGS. Reuben turns his head for a moment and when he looks back Alice disappears. The door bell RINGS again. Reuben opens the door. Alex stands there with an impatient look on her face.

REUBEN
Alex?

ALEX
Hey Reuben.

REUBEN
How you doing?

ALEX
I'm fine. Where's my sister?

REUBEN
She just took Becca to the park.
You're welcome to come in and wait
til she gets back.

ALEX
Uhh, no thanks. She's mad at you so
you already know...

Alex looks Reuben up and down.

ALEX (CONT'D)
I'll try to catch her at the park.

Alex turns around and walks down the stairs. Reuben starts closing the door and realizes something.

REUBEN
Alex! Wait!

Alex turns around and just looks at Reuben.

REUBEN (CONT'D)
Lemme ask you something.

Alex turns around and continues to walk.

REUBEN (CONT'D)
Please Alex! I wanna make it up to
Linda!

Alex rolls here eyes and walks back up to the front door.

REUBEN (CONT'D)
Thank you.

ALEX
So ask.

REUBEN
Let's go inside.

Alex rolls her eyes and walks inside. Reuben closes the door.

INT. BANQUET HALL - AFTERNOON

A small team of people, including Donald, prep the venue space. Donald walks around and checks on everyone's progress. He turns to them all.

DONALD
The party's tomorrow guys. Pick up
the pace.

Donald's phone rings. As Daniel pulls his phone out of his pocket...

DONALD (CONT'D)
What else could Reuben want?

Donald looks at the caller ID "Charlie". He sighs, picks up the phone and walks over to the side.

Daniel comes in through the front door. He looks on in awe as he sees all the work everyone is doing. He spots a cute girl and walks over to her.

DANIEL
How you doing beautiful?

She turns to him, he flashes her a seductive smile and she smiles back.

WORKER
How can I help you?

DANIEL
How bout you help me with that number?

She laughs.

DONALD (O.S.)
What do you mean the caterer cancelled!?

Everyone turns their heads' and gawk at Donald.

DONALD (CONT'D)
I'll call you back.

Donald hangs up the phone, and notices everyone's eyes on him.

DONALD (CONT'D)
What are y'all just standing around for?

Everyone gets back to work. Donald notices Daniel talking to the girl. He walks over.

DANIEL
Let's go grab a bite when we get outta here.

DONALD
That might be sooner than later.

Daniel is spooked. He turns and looks at Donald.

DANIEL
Whats good Donald? Me and ...
(to Worker)
What's your name again?

The worker walks off without a word.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Dang that was type cold right bro?
I'll just shoot her a text later or
sumn.

DONALD

You really just getting here,
Daniel? No wonderd you got fired
from your last job.

Daniel gets visibly upset.

DANIEL

Don't go there with me Donald.

DONALD

You need to get ya act together.

DANIEL

You know what, I'm outta here.

Daniel turns to leave, Donald watches as Daniel walks to the door.

DONALD

And what should I tell Reuben?

Daniel stops and takes a deep breathe. He turns around and walks up to Donald.

DANIEL

What would like for me to do,
Donald?

DONALD

Alot. Oh and call me boss, in case
you end up forgetting my name too.

Daniel rolls his eyes.

DANIEL

Okay boss.

EXT. ARCATA PLAZA - EVENING

Michelle and Christina walk with a couple bags in hand.
Christina notices the ice cream shop across the way.
Christina stops.

CHRISTINA

Mommy!

Michelle turns around to Christina.

MICHELLE

Yes baby?

Christina points to the ice cream shop.

CHRISTINA

Mommy can we get some ice cream
before we go home?

MICHELLE

But you haven't had your dinner yet
sweetie.

CHRISTINA

But mommy.

MICHELLE

Later honey, let's get home first.

Christina's eyes well up and she's about to cry. Michelle
crouches down to her daughter's level.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

No staying up past bedtime.
Promise?

Michelle sticks out her pinkie. Christina's face lights up.

CHRISTINA

Promise.

Christina sticks out her pinkie and interlocks it with
Michelle's.

MICHELLE

Alright, let's go that ice cream.

Michelle stands up, but stops in place looking at something
in the distance. Christina stares at Michelle.

CHRISTINA

Mommy.

Michelle is lost in her gaze.

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)

Mommy.

Michelle takes a step forward but Christina tugs her hand.
Michelle looks back at Christina.

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)

Where you going mommy? The ice
cream shop is over there.

Christina points to the ice cream shop.

MICHELLE
Sorry, thought I saw someone.

CHRISTINA
Who mommy?

MICHELLE
Doesn't matter. Wasn't him. Now
let's go get you that cone.

Michelle and Christina walk towards the ice cream shop.

EXT. ARCATA PLAZA - CONTINUOUS

Joseph walks through a crowd of people. Taking in his surroundings and recalling old memories. His phone rings "BONNIE". He picks up.

JOSEPH
Hello.

INT. JOSEPH'S PENTHOUSE - SAME TIME

Bonnie turns over on the bed and puts the phone on speaker. Russell continues doing push ups next to the bed.

BONNIE
At least your alive.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

JOSEPH
Sorry I didn't call when I got in.

BONNIE
Are you at the hotel now?

Joseph walks over to the pond and leans on the railing.

JOSEPH
Nah. I'm out and about. Just taking
in the sights.

AMBER (O.S.)
Joseph?

Joseph looks over to his left and sees who's calling his name.

JOSEPH

Amber?

Russell gets up from the floor and wipes his brow.

RUSSELL

(to Bonnie)

Who's Amber?

Bonnie shrugs her head.

JOSEPH

Lemme call you guys back.

Amber runs over to Joseph. Joseph hangs up the phone and hugs Amber, gently lifting her into the air. He let's go of her. She punches him in the shoulder. He quickly clutches it.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Damn! What's that for?

AMBER

Where you been hiding?

Still clutching his shoulder...

JOSEPH

In my skin. Jeez when you got so strong?

AMBER

Life goes on Joe.

JOSEPH

Don't I know it. How you been though?

AMBER

Ever since me and your gigolo brother broke up, I've been great.

JOSEPH

Brother?

Joseph thinks to himself...

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

You. And Daniel? Dating?

AMBER

Dated.

Joseph bursts out in laughter.

JOSEPH
That's hilarious.

Amber stares at him, getting increasingly frustrated. Joseph notices and his laughter dies down.

AMBER
I definitely would have preferred
dating you.

Amber blushes. Joseph rubs the back of his head and half smiles.

JOSEPH
That wouldn't have worked out.

Amber scrunches up her face.

AMBER
Why not?

JOSEPH
Michael.

AMBER
Oh yea. I forgot he used to bully
you too.

JOSEPH
More like terrorize. Did Daniel
have to see him often? Daniel used
to get it the worst.

AMBER
Of course. Anytime that lil boy act
up, I'll call Michael over and when
he gets here, Daniel straightens
right up.

Joseph rubs the back of his head.

JOSEPH
Must've been rough.

AMBER
Not even. Michael's been real chill
ever since he got out of Juvie.

Joseph looks shocked.

JOSEPH
I'll take your word for it.

Amber playfully hits Joseph's shoulder and they both laugh.

AMBER

So what you doing back here?

JOSEPH

Here to visit the family actually.

AMBER

Have you seen them yet?

JOSEPH

No. Not yet.

AMBER

Well, tomorrow's Sunday. Go to church. I'm sure your dad will appreciate it.

JOSEPH

I doubt he'll appreciate it that much.

AMBER

Pastor Wallace used to always invite me and Daniel but Daniel never wanted to go. That's why I don't even go anymore. So I know for a fact that he'll appreciate it.

JOSEPH

Fine. I'll think about it.

Amber grabs Joseph's arm and starts walking and drags him along.

AMBER

Let's go for drinks while I try to convince you some more.

JOSEPH

Now drinks sound great!

Joseph smiles.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Your treat though.

INT. PETERMAN HOUSEHOLD - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

In the dark, Christina lays on the floor, and watches the TV intently. Michelle comes down the stairs and walks into the living room and turns on the light.

MICHELLE
Christina?

Christina turns around and sees her mom. Christina stands up quickly.

CHRISTINA
Yes mommy?

MICHELLE
What are you still doing up?

Michelle walks over and grabs the remote.

CHRISTINA
Mommy, my show's almost over.
Please!

Michelle gives Christina a look then holds up her pinkie to Christina. Christina's about to cry but she takes a deep breath and calms down.

MICHELLE
Goodnight Christina.

CHRISTINA
Goodnight mommy.

Christina goes upstairs to bed. Michelle goes to turn off the TV but then plops down in the couch and channel surfs.

INT. PETERMAN HOUSEHOLD - FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

While on the phone, Donald walks up to the door and pulls out his keys and unlocks the door.

DONALD
Yea, I got them. I'll finish the
rest of the preparations tomorrow.

INT. PETERMAN HOUSEHOLD - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Donald walks through the door then closes it. Michelle hears the door and walks over to Donald. She leans on the wall. Donald notices her.

DONALD
Call me if you need anything else.
Night Reuben.

Donald hangs up the phone and walks up to Michelle.

DONALD (CONT'D)
Night honey.

Donald kisses Michelle on the cheek and holds her by her hips.

MICHELLE
You ready to talk?

Donald lets go of her and takes off his coat. He turns his back to her and puts his coat on the coat rack.

DONALD
I just got home. Do we have to do this now?

MICHELLE
Yes.

Donald turns around to face Michelle.

DONALD
What about Christina?

MICHELLE
Christina went to bed already.

Silence.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
If not now then when Donald?

DONALD
When she's old enough to understand.

MICHELLE
She may be five but she's not stupid Donald. She can handle the truth.

DONALD
Alright. So go wake her up and tell her that your a hoe.

MICHELLE
Excuse me?

Michelle cocks her hand to hit Donald but he catches her hand.

DONALD
Or would you rather me tell her
that you cheated on me while we
were engaged?

Michelle snatches her hand back and massages her wrist.

MICHELLE
I thought we moved past this
already.

DONALD
I did but--

MICHELLE
But nothing. I don't wanna lie to
my daughter!

Donald chuckles.

DONALD
Don't you mean our? I should've
left your ass as soon as I found
out I wasn't the father.

MICHELLE
So why didn't you?

Donald grabs his coat.

DONALD
Because I loved you.

MICHELLE
Loved?

Donald puts on his coat and walks out the front door.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
Donald!

Donald gets in his car and speeds off.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
Donald!

INT. POSTER'S BAR - NIGHT

Both Joseph and Amber have been drinking for a while. Joseph is a little more drunk than Amber, but not wasted. Joseph throws back a shot, while Amber watches him.

AMBER

You have grown up a little. You used to be such a lightweight back in the day.

JOSEPH

You mean back when we weren't supposed to?

Joseph waves the bartender over.

AMBER

Yeah you used to be such a goody-goody.

JOSEPH

Yeah. A little bit.

They LAUGH.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

(to bartender)

Lemme get another shot.

Amber downs her shot.

AMBER

Make it two.

The bartender picks up their used glasses and pours them two more shots.

AMBER (CONT'D)

Are you still a virgin?

JOSEPH

Would you believe I'm dating a guy and a girl right now?

AMBER

Really? I didn't know you swung that way. They know about each other?

JOSEPH

We're a throuple.

AMBER

Oh wow. That must be fun.

Joseph sips on his shot.

JOSEPH

Yeah. I guess.

AMBER

Is that why you don't wanna go to church.

JOSEPH

It's not church. It's my dad. He caught me with Yohan in the pews and it hasn't been the same since.

AMBER

Yohan!? From church!? That sexy ass man!?

Joseph laughs.

JOSEPH

He wasn't a man at the time but yeah.

AMBER

So he was your first?

JOSEPH

I actually lost my virginity to a girl I met here when I was 18.

Joseph finishes his shot.

AMBER

You're scandalous. You definitely need to go church and cleanse your heathen soul.

JOSEPH

Get me a couple more drinks and I'll consider it.

AMBER

Aren't you the one who's about to star in a movie?

JOSEPH

Yeah, but you own your own store right now.

They LAUGH together and wave over the bartender.

INT. TRINITY CHURCH - MORNING

Dressed in their Sunday's best, Troy and Ronaldo, place church pamphlets in the empty rows of pews. Daniel sluggishly walks in. Ronaldo notices Daniel.

RONALDO
Aye, Troy look.

Troy looks up and sees Daniel walking towards them.

TROY
You look a lil' rough bro.

Daniel plops down in one of the pews and closes his eyes.
Troy and Ronaldo walk over to him. Troy pokes Daniel and he wakes up.

TROY (CONT'D)
You good bro?

DANIEL
I got in late last night after
doing all that work for Reuben's
little minion.

RONALDO
What are you talking about?

DANIEL
He's having a party later and I had
to help set up. I'ma be working for
Reuben now.

RONALDO
Ah. Nepotism at its finest.

DANIEL
Nepo- what?

TROY
Don't bust your brain over it bro.

DANIEL
Whatever.

Troy and Ronaldo continue placing pamphlets and Daniel notices.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I didn't know you two were ushers
now.

Benjamin walks in.

BENJAMIN
Shows how long you haven't been to
church son.

TROY & RONALDO
Morning Pastor.

BENJAMIN
Morning boys.

DANIEL
I'm not the only son who doesn't
come to church.

BENJAMIN
Whaddya mean? Reuben's already
here.

DANIEL
Whatever old man.

Daniel lays back down in the pew. Benjamin hastily walks over to Daniel and smacks him the head. Daniel swiftly gets up. Troy and Ronaldo burst out in laughter.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
What was that for?

BENJAMIN
Boy go wash ya face and drink some
coffee. You sitting in the chancel
with your brother and the rest of
the clergy today.

DANIEL
Do I have to?

BENJAMIN
Yes.

INT. REUBEN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Linda wakes up and notices shes alone. She remembers.

Linda wriggles around in bed. She reaches towards the other side of the bed, searching for Reuben. She pops her head out from under the sheets. She looks around and sighs.

INT. REUBEN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Wearing a robe, Linda comes down the stairs and walks into the living room. She notices there's no bedding on the couch and walks into the kitchen.

INT. REUBEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Linda is surprised she doesn't see Reuben. She sits at the counter for a moment then goes to the fridge. She notices a note on the fridge before she can open it. She picks the note up.

As Linda's about to open the note, the doorbell RINGS. Linda heads to the front door with the note in hand.

INT. REUBEN'S HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Linda opens the door. Alex stands there and smiles.

ALEX
Morning sis.

Alex hugs her sister. Linda looks shocked but hugs her sister back. They release each other.

LINDA
Alex? What are you doing here so early?

Alex notices the note in Linda's hand.

ALEX
Maybe you should read the note.

Linda looks at Alex perplexed but begins to read the note.

INT. TRINITY CHURCH - LOBBY - MORNING

The clergy, including Daniel and Reuben ready themselves for procession into the chancel.

DANIEL
Ugh. I hate this.

REUBEN
Get over it already.

Joseph slowly walks into the church to avoid attention. He notices his family before they can notice him and he ducks off to the side. He relaxes a bit. He enters the "CHOIR ROOM".

INT. TRINITY CHURCH - CHOIR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Joseph walks in. He notices someone at the keyboard with headphones on practicing a song. Joseph walks up closer to see his face.

JOSEPH

Yohan?

YOHAN, 25, sensual and sexy, mixed , looks up, and realizes he's looking at his old flame Joseph.

YOHAN

Joseph? Oh wow.

Yohan takes off his headphones, stands up and hugs Joseph tightly.

YOHAN (CONT'D)

It's been forever man.

JOSEPH

Yea. It sure has.

Yohan's phone RINGS.

YOHAN

It's time already?

Yohan turns off the alarm and runs over to the closet and pulls out a robe.

JOSEPH

The processional right?

Yohan puts on the robe.

YOHAN

Yea.

Yohan thinks to himself for a moment. He goes back into the closet and grabs another robe and throws it towards Joseph who catches it. Joseph looks confused.

YOHAN (CONT'D)

Come lead us in the final praise
and worship song. The congregation
would love to hear your voice
again!

JOSEPH

I really shouldn't. Plus that's not
fair to whoever's solo it is.

Yohan walks up to Joseph and puts his hand on Joseph's shoulder.

YOHAN
Don't worry. I'm giving you my
solo. Plus don't you hear that.

Yohan points up. "OH HAPPY DAY" intro starts faintly.

YOHAN (CONT'D)
It's your favorite song.

Joseph smiles hard. Yohan starts walking up the stairs.

YOHAN (CONT'D)
Come on.

Yohan gestures to Joseph and Joseph throws the robe on and rushes up the stairs.

INT. TRINITY CHURCH - SANCTUARY - MOMENTS LATER

"OH HAPPY DAY" intro plays in a round. Joseph stays back while Yohan walks up to the microphone in the center.

YOHAN
Halleljuah!

CONGREGATION
Halleljuah!

YOHAN
The lord has blessed with a special
treat.

Yohan gestures for Joseph to come to the microphone. Joseph walks up and the congregation bursts out into standing ovation and Joseph begins to sing.

INT. TRINITY CHURCH - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The clergy line up. Daniel turns to Reuben.

DANIEL
Doesn't that sound like Joseph?

Reuben listens for a moment.

REUBEN
Yea it does.

The doors open and they proceed in.

INT. TRINITY CHURCH - SANCTUARY - CONTINUOUS

Joseph and the choir are halfway done with the song. Reuben and Daniel's eyes widen.

REUBEN & DANIEL

It is him.

Benjamin notices Joseph and anger washes over his face. Joseph notices but continues to sing. The procession reaches the altar and go to their seats in the chancel. Reuben notices the look on his dad's face as they all stand before their seats. Reuben nudges his dad. Benjamin looks at him.

REUBEN (CONT'D)

Dad, chill.

Joseph and the choir finish singing. The congregation give them a standing ovation. The choir take their seats. Joseph starts walking to the pews but Yohan grabs him and sits him with the choir.

Benjamin looks over at Joseph, visibly upset, but suddenly sees Martha's ghost. Benjamin quickly turns to Reuben and almost taps him but sees Alice's ghost next to Reuben and retracts his hand to his mouth. A tear escapes his eye. Reuben turns around.

REUBEN (CONT'D)

You okay?

Benjamin wipes his eye and walks to the pulpit.

BENJAMIN

Halleluah!

CONGREGATION

Halleluah!

BENJAMIN

Let us bow our heads and close our eyes as we prepare to let the lord in our hearts...

Everyone bows their head and closes their eyes. Calming music swells.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Dear heavenly father...

INT. PETERMAN HOUSEHOLD - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Michelle lays on the couch watching TV. Donald comes in through the front door.

MICHELLE
So you're finally back?

Donald walks into the living room and stands in front of the TV.

DONALD
I'm sorry about last night.

MICHELLE
Okay.

DONALD
Okay?

MICHELLE
Okay.

Michelle gestures for Donald to move out of the way. He hesitantly moves.

DONALD
Well alright then. I'm going to get ready for the party. Wanna join me?

MICHELLE
I'm not going.

DONALD
Why not?

MICHELLE
Because your apology was piss poor.

DONALD
Michelle...

MICHELLE
Donald, I really don't wanna hear it.

DONALD
Fine. Whatever!

Donald walks off but walks back.

DONALD (CONT'D)
I'm still taking our daughter.

MICHELLE

Of course you are. She's been
looking forward to it.

Donald storms off and walks up the stairs.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Get her ready while your at it!

INT. TRINITY CHURCH - LOBBY - AFTERNOON

The congregation mingle among each other. Joseph and Yohan
talk amongst the crowd. Yohan gives Joseph a piece of paper.

YOHAN

Call me later if you're still in
town.

Yohan walks off. Joseph watches as he walks away. Joseph
feels a hand on his shoulder. He turns around and it's
Reuben.

REUBEN

So the prodigal son returns?

Joseph looks Reuben up and down.

JOSEPH

You're getting old. Starting to
look like dad.

Reuben punches Joseph in the arm. Daniel walks over.

DANIEL

Acting more like him everyday too.

Reuben punches Daniel in the arm too.

REUBEN

So y'all ganging up on me now?

JOSEPH & DANIEL

Yup.

Joseph and Daniel look at each other and all three of them
burst out in laughter.

REUBEN

Just like old times.

Joseph's smile fades.

JOSEPH

Almost.

Reuben and Daniel's laughter dies out. Reuben sees their father.

REUBEN

Dad!

Reuben waves his father over. Benjamin sees Reuben calling him over, starts to walk over to him but then notices Daniel and Joseph next to him and turns back around. Reuben runs over to him and grabs his hand.

REUBEN (CONT'D)

Dad come talk to Joe.

Benjamin jerks his hand from Reuben's grip.

BENJAMIN

I refuse. I don't even wanna be near him.

JOSEPH

Don't worry, you won't be for too much longer. I'm outta here.

Reuben grabs Joseph's shoulder but Joseph harshly shrugs him off. Reuben and Daniel watch as Joseph storms off.

DANIEL

Good going pops.

Benjamin shrugs and walks off into his office.

REUBEN

I'ma go talk to him.

DANIEL

What about the party? It starts in like twenty mins.

REUBEN

Joseph and I will be there.

Reuben runs off to catch Joseph. Daniel stands there watching, shaking his head.

DANIEL

You better run or your wife is gonna kill you.

EXT. ARCATA PLAZA - AFTERNOON

Joseph stands by the railing and skips rocks into the pond. Reuben comes up behind him, bends down, picks up a rock and skips it into the pond. Joseph is taken by surprise. He looks to his side and sees Reuben. Joseph looks back to the pond.

REUBEN

Remember when we were younger and we used to skip rocks together?

JOSEPH

Yea. You would always win.

REUBEN

That's just cause I'm older. You never gave up though. That's what I admire most about you.

Silence.

REUBEN (CONT'D)

I know it must've been hard for you after she passed.

JOSEPH

It's still hard.

REUBEN

It's hard for all of us. Nathan would have been eight today.

JOSEPH

So the party...

REUBEN

Yea... Does it still haunt you?

Joseph stares at Reuben and looks away.

JOSEPH

More than you know.

REUBEN

It's the same for me too. Linda thinks I've somehow forgotten but... I know Martha didn't give birth to me but she was my mother too. I miss them both everyday.

Reuben skips a rock into the pond.

REUBEN (CONT'D)

But that's why we gotta keep on living, right? To remember them the right way. We have to fulfill our dreams for those who can't.

Joseph looks to Reuben. Reuben's eyes meets Joseph's gaze. Reuben smiles.

REUBEN (CONT'D)

Don't let dad discourage you.

A tear streams down Joseph's cheek but he LAUGHS.

JOSEPH

You're such a cheese ball. No wonder you're a politician.

Reuben and Joseph LAUGH together.

REUBEN

Let's go. You still haven't met your niece yet. It's been three years.

Reuben puts his arm over Joseph's shoulder and they leave.

INT. BANQUET HALL - MAIN ROOM - EVENING

The banquet hall is decorated beautifully. Linda and Alex sit together at a table by the corner. Christina and Becca play together in the corner.

LINDA

I can't believe he's not here yet. An apology party and he's late?

ALEX

I'm sure something urgent came up.

LINDA

Something always comes up with that man. It's quite aggravating.

ALEX

Calm down sis, enjoy the party. It's beautiful in here.

Linda takes a bite from her plate.

LINDA

And the food's not half bad.

Linda sees Donald and waves him over. He halfheartedly walks to her. He puts a fake smile on.

DONALD
How's the party going ladies?

LINDA
Donald. Where is Reuben?

DONALD
I'm not sure he should've been here
by now.

Donald looks around and spots Daniel. He excuses himself, runs over to Daniel and pushes him back over to Linda's table. Daniel sees Linda's face and gulps.

DANIEL
Linda...

LINDA
Daniel. Where is he?

DANIEL
Well something happened at the
church and Joseph ran off--

LINDA
Joseph? He's here?

DANIEL
Yea. Well... Reuben went to talk to
him. Dad was being his usual self
again.

DONALD
I think I see him.

Donald waves Reuben over. Reuben notices and he and Joseph walk over to the table. Linda stands up.

REUBEN
Linda I'm...

Linda walks past Reuben and hugs Joseph tightly and he hugs her back.

REUBEN (CONT'D)
Late.

LINDA
I'm so glad. You're alright. You
never call. You never write. And
look at you.

Linda let's him go and looks him up and down.

LINDA (CONT'D)

You've grown into a handsome young man.

JOSEPH

It's really nice seeing you too Linda.

REUBEN

You two can catch up later.

Reuben takes Linda by the hand and leads her away.

EXT. BANQUET HALL - PATIO - CONTINUOUS

Reuben walks Linda out the door, turns around and takes both of her hands into his.

REUBEN

Linda, I'm sorry.

LINDA

You're always sorry.

REUBEN

Yes and I always will be, I will never be able to replace what was taken from us, and I'm sorry for not being there for you in the way you needed and still need me to be.

Linda looks Reuben directly in his eyes.

LINDA

What are you saying, Reu?

REUBEN

I'm not going to run for governor.

Linda pulls away, walks over to the railing and looks out into the distance. She chuckles slightly. Reuben walks up next to her.

LINDA

It can't be that simple can it?

REUBEN

Sure. Why not? I think Nathan would enjoy seeing both his parents together and happy. Especially on his birthday.

LINDA
I didn't forget.

Linda holds on to Reuben's arm and leans on him. Tears fall from her eyes. Reuben hugs her as she cries.

LINDA (CONT'D)
The note was to show you that I
didn't forget either.

Donald watches from Reuben and Linda from inside. He steps away, pulls out his phone and starts dialing.

INT. PETERMAN HOUSEHOLD - LIVING ROOM

Michelle lays on the couch watching tv. Her phone RINGS. She looks at it "DONALD" but puts it back down and let's it continue to ring.

A few moments later, Michelle's phone rings again. She looks at it "1 NEW VOICEMAIL". She listens to the voicemail.

DONALD (V.O.)
Hey, just checking in on you. The party's going great. I wish you were here... Michelle, I'm so sorry. I should have never said what I said to you. I was just upset. It's really no excuse but after watching Reuben and Linda work things out, it just reminded me of what we have. I wanna go back to that. I love you. If you want to tell Christina the truth then I fully support your decision.

Michelle smiles to herself to herself, turns off the TV and runs upstairs.

INT. BANQUET HALL - MAIN ROOM - LATER

Linda and Reuben enter arm in arm. They see Joseph playing with Christina and Becca and chuckle to themselves. Reuben and Linda look at each other and smile. Linda looks closely at Reuben's eyes.

LINDA
Reubee, are you okay?

REUBEN
What are you talking about?

LINDA
Your eyes. They're really red.

Linda goes in her purse and gives Reuben a bottle of Visine.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Go to the bathroom.

Reuben kisses Linda and leaves. Joseph notices them, stops playing with the girls and walks over to Linda.

JOSEPH
Glad to see you two made up.

LINDA
Thanks. Where's my sister?

JOSEPH
Her and Daniel left to go enjoy the party.

LINDA
Not together I hope.

Joseph laughs.

JOSEPH
I need to go enjoy some of it myself, but first I promised two little ladies a trip to the dessert bar.

Christina and Becca hear Joseph and run over excitedly.

LINDA
Not so fast.

Linda picks Becca up.

LINDA (CONT'D)
It's too late for all those sweets.

JOSEPH
I thought you were the fun one.

CHRISTINA
Can I still go Ms. Linda?

LINDA
Sure sweetie.

Christina grabs Joseph's hand and drags him away. Linda looks on and smiles.

INT. BANQUET HALL - BATHROOM

Reuben walks into the empty bathroom walks over to the sink, looks in the mirror then washes his eyes. He uses the Visine and looks how red his eyes are in the mirror. Suddenly a dark shadow appears behind Reuben and collapses.

INT. BANQUET HALL - MAIN ROOM

Michelle enters wearing a beautiful dress. She looks around searching for Donald but can't see him. Donald comes up to the side of her.

DONALD

You came.

Michelle turns around and Donald grabs her and kisses her.

DONALD (CONT'D)

I love you.

MICHELLE

I love you too.

They look at each other and smile. Michelle looks around.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Where's Christina?

DONALD

She's playing with Becca.

Donald takes Michelle by the hand and they walk over to Reuben's table. Linda and Becca are sitting down eating.

MICHELLE

Hey there Mrs. Mayor.

LINDA

You won't be calling me that for much longer. Aww look at you. You look amazing Michelle.

MICHELLE

Thank you.

Michelle looks around.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Where's Christina?

LINDA
Joseph took her to get ice cream.
They'll be right back.

MICHELLE
Who?

LINDA
My brother-in-law, Reuben youngest
brother.

MICHELLE
I didn't know he had another
brother.

DONALD
Where is Reuben by the way?

LINDA
He went to the bathroom. He
should've been back by now though.

DONALD
I'll go see if I can find him.

MICHELLE
Alright, honey.

Donald gives Michelle a peck on the lips and leaves. Michelle
takes a seat at the table.

LINDA
You two are still adorable.

Joseph and Christina walk back to the table. Joseph is
holding both bowls of ice cream. Christina sees her mom and
takes off running. Joseph follows quickly behind her.

CHRISTINA
Mommy!

Michelle turns around, sees Christina and gets up. She holds
her arms out as Christina runs into them. Joseph catches up
and stares at them for a moment.

JOSEPH
Michelle?

Michelle looks up, and stares back at Joseph.

MICHELLE
Joseph?

CHRISTINA
Mommy, you know Mr. Joseph?

Joseph and Michelle continue to stare at each other while Linda looks on with a concerned look on her face.

THE END - EPISODE TWO - THE PRODIGAL SON RETURNS