

BHX PRESENTS

Where Grace Finds Us

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ACT 1

Scene 1

INT. Jada's room in Virginia Cleveland

Jada's in her bed (stage left) with pajamas on, door locked. Nia bangs on her door (stage right) , urging Jada to borrow a shirt for the party.

Nia:

Jada!! Open the door, it's an emergency! Jada

Jada:

(Groans) I know it's not an emergency Nia, what do you want

Nia:

No it is! Jada open the door

Nia does "the most" outside.

Jada gets up off the bed and unlocks the door. Nia comes in and Jada walks back to the bed. Nia examines Jada

Nia:

Jada, please tell me you're only in pajamas because you thought Tyler's party was a pj party...

Jada:

Nia please, you know I'm not going to that.

Nia:

Girl, why not? You literally never go anywhere!

Jada:

Right and I never need to. This twin XL and I go together real bad

Nia:

Yeah, I know. I just wish you would get out more, this is our freshman year! We are literally at our dream school! Let's turn up omg

Jada:

Nia, I'm tired, I have homework, and most importantly-

Nia:

I have nothing to wear. Exactly

Nia walks over to Jada's closet (stage left) and starts to shuffle through all of Jada's clothes

Nia:

Jada, please don't lie like that. It really isn't cute, you have a ton of nice clothes in here. I mean they're definitely not my style, but still...very cute mama

Jada:

Right so... how are they not your style, but you came in here looking for a top?

Jada comes downstage to look at the audience and motions the "clock it" hand signal. She goes back upstage.

Nia:

Not too much on me, but you know what will be on me, this top. Thanks pooks. I'm going to change and I'll be back. You better be ready!

Door shuts.

Jada sits at her vanity and says a short and cute prayer.

Jada:

Hey God, it's me, Jada. So, as I'm sure you heard because well, you are God, I'm going to a party with Nia. Hope that's okay... k bye, love you!

Jada sighs and plays the "teach me how to dougie" song. She awkwardly dances in the mirror

Blackout.

Scene 2

INT. Tyler's Party - Harbs

*We start the scene with music playing, and extras fill the stage.
A common song comes on and everyone dances together*

Tyler:

Bro, how did all these freshmen get the addy bruh

Friend #1:

Maybe don't post your address on fizz, idiot

Tyler:

Oh I did post that, oh well

Zion walks in from stage right and catches the crowd's attention

Tyler:

Ayee, look who stepped in the function

Crowd excitedly welcomes Zion to the function

Zion

What up bruh I'm not staying all night. I just came to smoke.

Tyler:

Bro, stop being like that; just vibe out and take this shot

Crowd shouts "baddie baddie, shot o'clock"

Zion takes the shot and immediately starts dancing with the crowd

Tyler:

On the real tho, I'm glad to see you bro. We miss you on the team, the game's not the same without you.

Zion:

I've missed you too bro. But you know I can't come back to the game right now, football isn't even on my mind for real.

Tyler:

Alright man, this is a party. Let's dead all this sad and sentimental stuff and have a good time. I'll see you later I just spotted my lil vibe for the night (laughing with excitement)

Nia, Jada and Damien walk in from stage left

Damien:

Ouuuu girl this is my song! On my souuulll!

Nia grabs Jada by the arm and drags her into the center (center stage...downstage) on the dance floor. Jada nervously and awkwardly starts mirroring the dougie dance that she practiced in the mirror.

Zion stumbles in and bumps into Jada while she is dancing, spilling his drink on her. (downstage)

Jada:

Oh no! My shirt! Do people at this school not have manners or?

Zion picks up the cup.

Zion:

My bad, I didn't see you there

Jada:

It's okay, don't worry about it.

Damien:

Oh uhn uhn, I know you did NOT just bump into my girl Jada! Definitely not a Hampton man. Here she is, finally tryna have a good time, and in comes some ni-

Jada:

Damien! Stop, it's okay, really it's not that big of a deal.

Damien rolls his eyes and walks away while side-eyeing Zion.

Zion catches a better glimpse at Jada and is immediately intrigued.

Zion:

I really am sorry.

Jada:

I promise I'm okay.

Zion:

Is there any way I can make it up to you?

Jada looks at the audience and immediately begins to blush.

Jada looks back at Zion and starts to laugh awkwardly.

Jada:

Uh, you can get me a napkin

Zion goes to get a napkin and brings it to her to clean off the drink.

Jada:

Thanks... this doesn't do much but I appreciate it.

Zion:

No problem, what's your name?

Jada:

I'm Jada, what's your name?

Zion:

I'm Zion... Jada as in Jada Wayda?

Jada:

No, as in Jada Monroe.

Zion:

My apologies, Miss Monroe. I feel like we had a bad start. Can we start over?

Jada:

Sure.

The two continue chatting as the music plays over them. At the same time, Nia attempts to dance on a guy but he moves away, ultimately rejecting her. Offended and embarrassed, Nia comes rushing in urging Jada to leave

Nia:

Jada!! Jaaaddaaa!! Girl we have to go like NOW. These "Hampton men" clearly don't know how to appreciate a good woman.

Zion:

Well, looks like you have to go

Jada:

Seems like it.

*Nia is pulling Jada away and walking her towards the door.
Zion yells over the loud music*

Zion:

Don't be a stranger.

They pause for a moment and lock eyes. Zion looks her up and down admiring her.

Bye Miss Monroe.

Zion walks away and Jada stops Nia for a short second.

Jada:

Guys wait, *(she pauses)* he gave me his number.

Nia:

I KNOW THAT'S RIGHT! See!! I knew God told me to make you come to the party.

Jada:

Oh please *(sarcastically)*

The girls exit and the lights go out.

Scene 3

INT. Inside Jada and Zion's rooms

The stage is split, Jada on stage left and Zion on stage right, setting up to show both Jada and Zion in their room. They are texting each other. Nia is also in Jada's room, feeding her what to say to Zion.

Zion:

Hey.

Jada:

Hi.

Zion:

Did you get home safely?

Jada:

I did

Nia goes over to Jada. She sees the text messages and grabs the phone. The light dims on Zion's side and a spotlight hits Nia and Jada.

Nia:

Jada. Please don't tell me this is that fine man from the party and you're texting him like this...

Jada:

What do you mean? I really feel like I'm reeling him in.

Nia side-eyes Jada and lets out a loud laugh.

Nia:

Girl, the only thing you're "reeling in" is a long season of singleness. You have to act like you're on a hunt- Like "I need that. I want that. I have that. I gotta have that!"

Jada:

I don't need that though. The Lord and I are locked in.

Nia:

Listen, "the Lord" (*waves hands around dramatically*) wants you to get out and meet new people, and make new bonds. Like with Zion.

Jada:

And how would you know that Nia? You got a direct hotline?

Nia:

Look, I don't need "Holy Girl Swagger" to be sure that God wants you to enjoy His gifts... including the guys. Trust, he made men fine for a reason.

Jada playfully hits Nia and goes back to the conversation. Nia exits.

Zion:

So, you definitely don't give party girl; what were you doing at Tyler's tonight?

Jada:

My best friend dragged me, she's definitely a party girl

Zion:

Oh yeah, I could definitely tell- Nia right?

The lights go out on Jada. Tyler comes over, Zion puts the phone down and Tyler begins teasing Zion.

Tyler:

Zion what's up you left the party early, you good man? (Tyler pauses & hovers over Zion) Bruh I know you're not texting that freshman from my party cmon twin

Zion:

Bro it's not even like that I just spilled my drink on her

Tyler:

Oh so you could text freshman but you can't show up to practice? You know better than that

Zion:

C'mon man she really just a cool person. We was talking for the rest of the party

Tyler:

Yea, alright.

Tyler leaves and the lights come back on as Jada and Zion continue their conversation.

Zion:

Tell me about yourself. Who is Jada? What sparks her interest? What makes her tick?

Jada looks up from her phone and hesitates to type back.

Jada:

There isn't much to tell if I'm honest. I'm really not that interesting

Zion:

Well I'm interested

Jada:

Well, I'm my parents' youngest daughter, so that's a whole thing. And I feel like I should just tell you this now... my dad's the Pastor at Mount Cathedral, so I'm pretty committed to that.

Zion:

Ohhhh, so you're a preacher's daughter. Should I be worried? I've definitely heard some wild things about them

Jada:

Trust, I'm not that kind of PK. I actually love my role in church, it's kind of the biggest part of my life. Let's not make fun

Zion:

No, no I'm down with that. I like that you're committed to something bigger than yourself

Jada:

I'm sharing a lot tonight. How'd you get me to do that?

Zion:

I just have a way with words

Jada:

Enough about me, tell me about you. I need the lore.

Zion:

I used to play football, but there's no lore, just ups and downs. But that's life for anyone you know.

Jada:

My friends say you're a big time football player.

Zion:

"Big time" is crazy. I played a little my freshman and sophomore year, but my heart's not there anymore. Now, I just need to find myself and ion see football doing that for me.

Jada:

I get that.

Nia enters the room and catches Jada's attention.

Nia:

OMG Jada! You've got to see this! Our RA just caught Eva trying to sneak her man up the fire escape, she's tweaking out!

Jada puts the phone down. She and Nia rush out the room.

Blackout.

Scene 4

INT. In class

Lights come on. Professor begins to lecture.

Professor:

Good Afternoon class.

(class says Good Afternoon)

I hope you all had an eventful weekend, but it's time to get to work.

The professor's phone rings.

One second, I'm getting a phone call.

The professor continues to lecture as Zion walks into class late and sits at his desk. He takes out his computer and begins to type. Shortly after, walks in and passes by Zion. Zion is hit with the aroma of whatever was just smoking and is subtly intrigued. He taps the person next to him.

Zion:

Hey Greg, do you have a minute?

Greg:

Yeah, what's up?

Zion:

So, I missed the deadline for that last assessment. Do you think you could send me yours so I can see what you did?

Greg:

Wait, hold on. You didn't submit it at all? Lock in bro

Zion:

Uh, no. I kind of lost track of time, and now I'm stuck.

Greg:

You better get your priorities straight

Zion:

Bro can I just see yours, it not that serious

Greg:

Oh, sure! Let me just grab my "Get Zion Out of Trouble" folder—oh,
wait, it's empty

Zion:

Yo, watch your mouth before I embarrass you

Greg:

Bro I was just joking dang

Zion:

Yeah whatever bro

Jdot:

Aye moe, you jhi look stressed

Zion:

What's up bro, this school dead blowing mine

Jdot:

I'm already knowing this class is mad dayroom

Zion:

Nah real, I'm tryna get high though- what's the word?

Jdot:

Heard you, meet me in the back of the stu after this period

Zion:

Pause. Sayless though.

Extras walk throughout the stage to indicate change of location

Scene 5

The stage is set up for three different locations: BRB, Hospital, and the car. Stage right is set up for BRB, downstage center for the car, and stage left is set for the hospital.

INT. In front of BRB

Lights up. Zion walks in from stage right, his hoodie pulled up, scanning the room. J Dot is on stage right, scrolling on his phone, cool and unbothered.

Zion:

Yo, what's good, J?

J Dot:

Ayo, what up, Slim? You finally decided to slide through. Took your sweet time, huh?

Zion:

Chill with all that. I had to make sure it wasn't hot out there.

J Dot:

Hot? Bruh, you geekin- this the student center, not the block. You moving paranoid for no reason.

Zion:

Aight, you got it or not?

J Dot:

You already know I got it. Ain't nobody out-hustling me. What you need?

Zion:

Just like we talked about. Something light to take the edge off.

J Dot:

Say less. But you're moving mad, shaky, B. You gotta relax. You look like you are about to fold.

Zion:

Yo, I'm good. Just don't need any extra eyes on me, feel me?

J Dot:

Aight, bet. But let me tell you something— you keep running from your problems like I'm gonna fix it, you gonna end up stuck.

Zion:

Yo, I don't need a lecture. I'm just tryna get through the day.

J Dot:

Aight, tough guy. But don't say I ain't tell you when this catches up to you.

Zion:

Yeah, yeah. Are you done?

J Dot:

Yeah, I'm done. Now slide before someone comes in here thinking I'm out here running a Ted Talk.

Zion:

You wildin'. I'm out.

J Dot:

Aight, stay up, Z.

Zion finds a seat. Jada enters from stage right, bumping into Zion unexpectedly, she sees Zion and starts walking over to him.

Jada:

[playfully] Oh ! Hey Zion!

Zion:

Yo, my bad, Jada. Wasn't paying attention.

Jada:

Clearly. You alright? You look... I don't know, stressed or something.

Zion:

I'm good. Just got a lot on my plate, that's all.

Jada:

Right... so, that's what people always say when they're not good.

Zion:

I said I'm fine, alright?

Jada:

You sure? 'Cause you're definitely giving "I need a quick therapy session" vibes right now.

Zion:

Nah, I'm good. You don't gotta worry about me.

Jada:

Well unfortunately for you, I'm wired to worry

Zion:

I said I'm straight, Jada. Why do you gotta push it?

Jada:

Alright, I'll back off. But for real, if you ever wanna talk... I'm here. No judgment.

Zion:

Appreciate it. But I'm not really the talking type.

Jada:

Yeah, I noticed. Still, it doesn't hurt to let someone in once in a while.

Zion:

[shakes his head] You sound like my mom.

Jada:

I'll take that as a compliment. She sounds like a smart lady.

Zion:

She was.

Jada:

Oh... Zion, I didn't mean to-

Zion:

Nah, it's cool. It's just been a rough couple of months, you know?

Jada:

I get it. Life's been throwing hands with me too lately.

Zion:

You? Miss Perfect GPA, pastor's kid? What kind of hands could life possibly be throwing at you?

Jada:

You'd be surprised. Just 'cause I look like I have it together doesn't mean I actually do.

Zion:

Fair enough.

Jada:

Seriously though, Zion. Whatever you're dealing with, you don't have to carry it alone.

Zion:

[nods but doesn't respond]

Jada:

Alright, I'll leave you alone for now. But don't be a stranger, okay?

Zion:

Yeah. Later, Jada.

Jada:

Later, Zion.

Jada walks away from Zion but doesn't exit the stage yet. Glancing back once to see Zion standing there, lost in thought. Jada walks off stage.

Zion:

I wish I had my mom back.

Blackout.

Lynette and Zion take their place down center stage.

Spotlight shines on Zion as he gets a flashback.

Zion and his mother are in the car driving. They are singing, "sweet love" by Anita Baker. As they are singing to one another, Zion's mood shifts and he begins to cry, haunted by the fight he just got into with his father. Lynette immediately notices and turns the music down. She begins to console Zion.

Lynette:

Baby, I know what happened earlier with your father was hard. He just-
he just gets so overwhelmed sometimes and-

Zion cuts her off.

Zion:

When you're overwhelmed you take a deep breath. You don't punch your
son in the face.

*Lynette looks over at Zion and notices his tears. She takes a deep
breath, softening her tone.*

Lynette:

Zion. I love you more than anything in the world.

Zion:

I know mom. I've never doubted that.

Lynette calms Zion by placing her hand on his leg. He stops shaking

Lynette:

I know how your father has hurt you. How much he's hurt us, and I hate it Z. I hate what he does to you, and I hate that I can't stop it. I'm your mom. I'm supposed to protect you.

You were always my sweet boy. My loving, soft-hearted baby who could never stand to see someone hurting. You have this light in you, Zion. A light so bright, so warm... I see it every time you smile, every time you love somebody with that big, beautiful heart of yours. But lately... lately, I see that light dimming, and it scares me.

Lynette takes a deep breath and her voice thickens with emotion. She swallows hard, blinking away tears.

Lynette:

I see it in the way you move through the world now. Heavy. Broken. Like life has beaten the softness out of you. And it kills me, baby. It kills me to know that your father—his hands, his words—made you believe that being gentle, being kind, being open was a weakness. That loving means losing. But that's not true, Zion. That's not who you are.

You don't have to carry his anger. You don't have to be him. I wish you could see yourself the way I do. The way God does. I wish I could reach inside you and pull out all that hurt, make you that bright-eyed little boy again, singing in the backseat, telling me you wanna grow up to be a good man. You can be, baby. You will be.

Her voice breaks, and she begins to cry.

Lynette:

I just—I just need you to promise me something, okay? Promise me you won't let this world make you cold. That you won't let pain turn you into someone you're not. Fight for your light, Zion. Please.

Zion VISIBLY takes his eyes off of the road and places them on his mom.

Zion:

I promise mom. I'm gonna do whatever I need to do, to show you-

Lynette cuts Zion off (car speeding towards them)

Lynette:

ZION!!! LOOK OUT!

The sound of metal crushing, glass shattering, and then... silence. Sirens approach.

Blackout. Zion takes his place on stage left, in the hospital.

Lights up.

Nurse comes in from stage left

INT. Hospital

Zion is sitting in the corner of the waiting room, anxiously. He's replaying the crash in his mind. His father is also in the waiting room, pacing back and forth. The doctor is explaining his mothers condition to Zion.

Doctor:

Hi... Zion?

Zion stands.

Zion:

Yeah that's me, how's my moms? Is she gonna make it? Doc, whatever you gotta do-

Ray:

Shut up, boy.

Faces doctor.

Ray:

How's my wife?

Doctor:

(Anxiously) Well, first, I want to say I'm glad your son is okay. The gravity of the crash usually would have resulted in fatalities all-around. You're lucky... blessed, really.

Ray:

I ain't ask you all that, how's my wife

Doctor:

Sir please lower your voice. I know this is incredibly difficult... and I want to thank you both for your patience.

Zion begins to noticeably break down.

Zion:

Just tell me, is she okay?

Doctor:

Despite our best efforts, your mother did not survive the injuries of the crash. I'm so sorry.

The doctor exits stage left, giving the family some space. Zion freezes, and slowly backs into his father's arms.

Zion:

She's gone, bro she's gone- she's gone dad!

The father hesitates to hold Zion, but instead gets quickly & increasingly angry.

Ray:

(Pushes Zion) Get off me boy! *(Snatches Zion up)* This is your fault.

Zion:

[panicking, shaking his head]

Dad, please! It was an accident! I didn't mean for this to happen—I didn't!

Ray:

[yelling]

Didn't mean to? You were behind the wheel, weren't you?! You're the reason she's dead! You killed your mother!

Zion:

[breaking down, voice trembling]

I didn't want to drive! She wanted me to! She said she was too tired, and I... I thought I could handle it!

Ray:

[points a finger in his face]

And you couldn't, could you? You couldn't even do that right! You are always messing up, Zion, always! Now look—she's gone because of you!

Zion:

[sobbing, dropping to his knees]

I'm sorry, Dad! I'm so sorry!

Ray:

[steps back, shaking his head in disgust]

Sorry ain't gonna bring her back. You took her from me, boy. From us.

The nurse rushes in alarmed from stage left.

Nurse:

Sir, please! This is a hospital—you need to calm down!

Ray:

[glaring at Zion]

You're lucky she's here. But this is far from over.

Ray storms out of the room, leaving Zion on the floor, broken and trembling. The nurse kneels beside Zion, placing a gentle hand on his shoulder.

Nurse:

Baby are you okay? Please calm down

Zion:

(shaking his head, voice barely audible)

No... I'll never be okay.

The nurse stays with him, offering quiet comfort as Zion sits there, consumed by guilt and grief.

Blackout.

Scene 6

INT. Sanctuary - Sunday Morning

The church is alive with the sounds of worship as Pastor Monroe passionately delivers his sermon. The congregation is engaged, nodding and murmuring affirmations. Jada sits in a pew near the front, her Bible open, taking notes in her journal. Sitting beside her are her best friends Damien and Nia.

Pastor Monroe:

As you leave here today, remember: God walks with you. You are never alone. Go in peace, and may His blessings follow you throughout the week.

Pastor Monroe:

And let us turn to James, Chapter One, verses two through four:
"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance."

He pauses, surveying the room

Can I get an Amen?

Congregation:

Amen!

Pastor Monroe:

(smiling warmly)

I know some of y'all feel like you're in the middle of a storm right now. Maybe it feels like God's gone silent on you. But let me tell you something— He's still there. Even when you can't see Him, even when you can't feel Him. He's working. He's strengthening you for something greater.

Jada:

(half-whispering to herself, as she takes notes)

"Strengthening me for something greater..."

Nia glances at Jada, noticing her pensive expression.

Nia:

(low voice, teasing)

Girl, you look like you're writing a whole book over there. What's going on?

Jada:

(softly, a small smile)

Just... thinking about stuff. Zion, mostly.

Nia:

Mmm, I figured. You're gonna talk to him, right?

Pastor Monroe:

(raising his voice slightly)

Now, before we close, I want you to think about this: What are you holding onto that's keeping you from trusting God fully? Is it fear? Doubt? Hurt? Whatever it is, leave it at the altar today.

The choir begins singing softly in the background, "We're Blessed." The congregation bows their heads, a quiet hum of prayer fills the room. Jada hesitates, her hands clenching her Bible. Damien nudges her gently.

Damien:

(whispering)

Go on. You've got something to say to God.

Jada nods, her movements deliberate, almost hesitant. She rises and walks to the altar, kneeling and folding her hands tightly, her head bowed in prayer.

Jada:

(quietly, almost inaudible at first)

God, I know You're there but... sometimes it's hard to feel You. There's so much on my mind—, school, everything. I'm trying to trust You. Show me how to let go of my own fears.

Sister Grace, an older woman from the congregation, walks over and places a gentle hand on Jada's shoulder.

Sister Grace:

(softly, with warmth)

The Lord put it on my heart to tell you something, sweetheart. You're stronger than you think. He's got a plan for you. Trust Him.

Jada:

(looking up at Sister Grace, surprised but comforted)

Thank you, Sister Grace.

Jada returns to her seat, her expression calmer. Damien looks at her expectantly.

Damien:

(quietly)

Feel better?

Jada:

(nods)

Yeah.

Her phone vibrates softly in her lap. She glances down at the screen—a]message from Zion

Text from Zion:

"Thanks for checking in. I'm alright, just a lot on my mind. Appreciate you."

Another text from Zion:

"When can I see you? #needthat"

Jada hesitates, her fingers hovering over the keyboard. Nia notices and grabs the phone out of Jada's hands.

Jada:

(gasping, reaching for the phone)

Nia! Give it back!

Nia:

(grinning mischievously)

Nope. You're too slow, and he needs a little push.

Nia quickly types and hits send before Jada can stop her. Damien watches Nia over her shoulder as she texts.

(Nia Texting):

"She'll meet you tonight. Where should she be?"

Jada snatches the phone back and stares at the screen in horror.

Jada:

(half-whispering, panicked)

Nia! I can't believe you just did that!

Damien:

(sarcastically)

Someone had to and we know it wasn't gonna be you !

Damien tries to hold in his laugh. Jada rolls her eyes.

Nia:

(casually, shrugging)

You're welcome.

The phone buzzes again with a reply from Zion.

"8 PM. I'll be waiting. I need to see you tonight."

Jada sinks into the pew, covering her face with her hands as Nia pats her shoulder reassuringly.

Nia:

See? He's into it. Now you've got plans, and you can thank me later.

Jada:

(muttering, embarrassed but smiling)

You're actually the worst.

The choir crescendos into the closing hymn as Pastor Julius Monroe dismisses the congregation.

Jada , Damien and Nia linger before filing out with the others. Nia is grinning, while Jada is still trying to process the sudden change of plans.

Damien:

(grinning as they walk out)

Oh please. Girl! Nia just saved you a week of overthinking.

Damien mocks Zion's text.

Damien

"My apartment, 8 PM!? Need that!? Jada, he is down BAD!

Jada shakes her head but can't help smiling. Damien, Nia and Jada walk off stage.

Blackout.

Scene 7

INT. Zion's Apartment

The lights are out on stage. A spotlight follows Jada as she is standing outside of Zion's apartment (on Ogden steps, stage right.) Pacing back and forth, on the phone with Damien and Nia. She is nervous about going inside. She moves up the steps to the door (the spotlight follows)

Jada:

Omg it is freezing! What did y'all get me into, I barely know this boy!

Nia and Damien:

Anxiety stopp!

Damien:

If you want to dip after a while, just say the word and we'll call you with an excuse to leave.

Nia:

But if not, have some funnnn. Open up...if you know what I mean.

Jada:

Nia. You are crazy! I'm not opening up anything but my bible..

Zion walks over to the door (the lights come on to reveal his apartment). Jada stops pacing as the door suddenly swings open. Zion stands there, looking slightly amused and confused.

Zion:

What's up Jada, I thought I heard your voice. You good?

Jada hesitates to speak but Damien answers on speaker phone

Damien:

She is GREAT! Yall have fun! Jada, don't do anything I wouldn't do.

Nia and Damien hang up. Zion opens the door and gestures to her to come in. The room is dimly lit, the soft glow of a lamp casting warm light on the deck of "We're Not Really Strangers" cards resting on the coffee table. Jada sits on the edge of the couch, nervously

Zion:

Get comfortable. You want a drink?

Jada:

I'm fine, I don't drink

Zion:

You seem like a woman of good discipline, Miss Monroe

(Jada chuckles)

Zion:

I respect it. Not too many people stick to their choices like that these days.

Jada:

Well, it's tough but, I try.

Zion:

Well alright Miss Discipline, Let me know if you change your mind about that drink- water, juice, whatever. I'm a good host.

Jada glances to the side table and notices the box of "We're Not Really Strangers". Zion continues to make himself a drink.

Jada:

Is that We're Not Really Strangers?

Zion:

Yeah, Tyler left it at my house. You heard of it?

Jada:

Heard of it? I love that game. Well... I've only played it once, but it was intense.

Zion:

And people play this for fun? Sounds like a set up to me

Jada:

Too scared to play, Zion?

Zion:

(Glances at Jada) I'm not scared of nothing. *(Walks to the couch next to Jada)* Open the box.

Jada:

Jada grabs and opens the box

Alright, your turn first. Ask me a question.

Zion:

What's something you need to hear right now ?

Jada pauses, her smile faltering for a brief moment as she thinks

Jada:

I think... I need to hear that who I am right now is... enough. That I don't have to constantly prove myself to be worth... well, anything.

She catches herself, realizing she may have gone too deep, and quickly forces a small laugh.

Jada:

But, you know, a simple "your hair looks good today" would probably do the trick too.

She gives a playful smirk , but there's a flicker of vulnerability in her eyes as she looks at Zion, hoping he doesn't press further.

Zion pauses, taking in her words, his playful demeanor softening.

Zion:

Well... for what it's worth, you don't have to prove anything to me. You're already enough, Jada. Like, right now.

There's a brief silence, weighted but gentle. He smiles softly, trying not to make her feel exposed.

Zion:

And... your hair does look really good today.

Jada laughs, the tension breaking slightly, but there's warmth in her eyes, touched by his sincerity.

She grabs a card from the deck.

Jada:

Alright, my turn. Describe a moment in your life that changed you forever

Zion leans back, his expression instantly guarded. He exhales sharply, rubbing his hands together as if trying to warm himself from a chill only he can feel.

Zion:

(quietly)

That's a real loaded question, huh?q

Jada:

(softly)

You don't have to answer if it's too much.

Zion:

Nah, I'll answer. You wanna know the real deal?

Zion sets his cup back on the side table.

It's gotta be when my mom passed. It was this summer.

Zion leans forward, elbows on his knees, staring at the floor for a beat before looking up at her.

Zion:

She was everything. She wasn't just my mom— she was my protector, my best friend. She always knew what to say, how to make me feel like I could take on the world, y'know? Then there's me, always tryna prove I'm grown, I'm tough, I got this.

Zion shakes his head, his voice getting a little more distant, his mind drifting back to that day.

Zion:

But... yeah. Life's different now. You lose someone like that, and it's like the ground's not steady anymore.

Jada:

Zion, you don't have to go through that alone—

Zion:

Respectfully, I didn't ask for a therapy session.

Jada blinks, caught off guard by the shift in his tone. Zion rubs his hands together, trying to steady himself. He exhales sharply and looks at her.

Zion:

(Exhales sharply) Look, I'm not trying to be rude, 'ight. But I didn't invite you over here to dig into my life like that.

Jada:

I understand. I wasn't trying to—

Zion:

I know. But I can't- It's just not something I do.

Besides, you look way too good to be sitting here listening to me complain.

Moves closer to Jada

Jada:

Um... thanks? But um... this is just not something I do

Zion:

Just trust me, Jada. I got you

Slowly, he leans in, his lips brushing hers softly in a kiss that speaks volumes—tender, unsure, but full of all the things they haven't said yet. When they pull apart, they stay close, their foreheads touching, sharing another wordless moment.

End of Act 1

ACT 2

Scene 1

INT - Restaurant

Two months have passed, Jada and Zion are now in a relationship

Jada and Zion are eating dinner and they're getting a better understanding of each other on a personal level

Zion looks in Jada's eyes in amazement

Waiter:

Here's your check

(Jada reaches for the bill)

Zion:

(Chuckles lightly) Stop playing, Jada *(He snatches the bill)*

(Jada laughs)

Zion:

Jada you're beautiful like really

Jada:

Thank you. You're kind of cute too

Zion:

Of course baby, you know things like this don't really happen often, I spend a lot of time alone and I have to adjust to this.

Jada:

It's okay, it's new to me too. Take your time adjusting; besides I'm full and I have a test tomorrow I don't wanna stay out too late

Zion:

'Tight I'm going to call the uber. But before you leave, *(He holds Jada's hands)* Spending these past 2 months with you... it's been different. In the best way. I really adore your presence every second I'm around you and I think we can make this thing work for the both of

us. What I'm really tryna say is that Jada, I think I'm falling in love with you.

Jada:

That's so sweet, Zion. I've enjoyed spending time with you too, getting to know you, and I think I'm falling in love with you too. You know I will never let you go through anything alone if I don't have to. Which is why I would love it if you could, you know, open up a little more.

(Zion sighs and lets go of Jada's hands)

Jada:

I don't want to stress you out. I'm just saying Zion, it's been two months. We've gone on dates and you know a lot about me, but sometimes I don't know- I feel like I don't know all the little things that make you... you. And that's important to me.

Zion:

I understand. You know I'm working on it, and I'm willing to... for you.

Jada:

Thank you. It means a lot.

Zion:

Of course. The uber's here; let's get you in.

BLACKOUT.

Scene 2

INT. Jada's bedroom

Jada is getting ready for bed, at her vanity. She opens her journal and begins to write.

Jada:

For my heart speaks aloud and my thoughts speak within
My mind speaks a thousand words but he can't get in
Please allow me to seek my fate
But don't rush my conscious for I will realize too late

Jada puts the journal down and looks up into the mirror of her vanity. She is analyzing herself. Noticing everything she sees as an imperfection. Her smile slowly fades and she lets out a deep sigh. She begins to talk to herself in the mirror.

Jada:

I can't believe I looked this bad today. I knew I should've put on a little more makeup.

She stands up, she lifts up her shirt and examines herself further in the mirror.

Jada:

I shouldn't have eaten that much. I mean seriously Jada, eating that much in front of Zion was absolutely insane. He probably thinks I'm a loser anyway. So it doesn't even matter.

Jada walks over to her bed and gets in it.

Jada:

What is a guy like Zion doing with me? It just doesn't make sense.

As Jada is talking, she begins to tear up. She gets a knock on the door. She walks over to open it and her RA walks in.

Ashley:

Hey Jada! Do you have a-

Ashley notices Jada is emotional and moves closer to her.

Ashley:

What's going on? Is everything okay?

Jada wipes her tears away and tries to put on a smile.

Jada:

Yea (*her voice cracks*)

Yes. Everythings okay. I'm okay. Everything's-

Ashley cuts Jada off and puts her hand on her shoulder.

Ashley:

Jada. You're not okay. And that's fine. I'm your RA, you know you can talk to me about anything. Plus, I'm not leaving here until I know you're really okay.

Jada and Ashley walk over to Jada's bed. They both sit and Jada takes a deep breath.

Jada:

I know it's going to sound stupid, but I've just really been in my head lately. I mean, I have this great guy who says he's into me and everything. But I just can't shake the feeling that one day he's going to wake up and realize that I'm-

(she pauses)

That I'm not good enough for him. I know he's going to realize that I can't give him the same things other girls can. I mean, I sit here every day and worry that a better girl will come along. She'll be more beautiful, funnier, smarter and more experienced than I am. Zion is amazing and he says all the right things, but he's still a guy and when the day ends, they always go for the better girl

Ashley:

Jada. You are the better girl. You are the girl that Zion wants. I mean... he already chose you. He chose you, Jada. To him, you're more beautiful, funnier, and smarter than every girl out there. And your experience's don't matter. If he's a real man...he'll be okay with taking it slow. Don't get too in your head. You're the prize Jada. Remember that.

The girls hug. A resident runs in, panicked.

Resident #1:

Ashley! Ashley! There's a fight in the lobby!! You've gotta come break it up!!

Ashley jumps up.

Ashley:

I have to go Jada, but remember what I told you. I'm always here.

Ashley leaves and Jada lays down in her bed.

Jada:

"You're the prize Jada" *(she mocks Ashley)*.

Maybe I'll believe it in the morning. *(she sighs, disappointed)*

Jada goes to sleep.

Blackout.

Scene 3

INT. Inside of the Student Center.

Nia, Damien, Tyler, JDot, and Zion are all at the "White Lie Party" in the Stu. Jada walks in and Nia and Damien are shocked to see her. The duo rush over and greet their friend.

Nia:

(Laughing)

Okay, Jada, I see you! Miss "I don't party" out here at the White Lie... Party.

Jada:

Don't act like you didn't beg me to come!

Nia:

Girl whatever, let me see your shirt. Ok, "I HATE UPPERCLASSMEN". You spilling all your tea tonight, huh?

Jada:

I mean... maybe a little. Cause that is...

Jada:

My man, my man, my man

The trio chuckles. The Student Center is packed, the energy electric. A common song comes on and the trio dance with the crowd and interact with their friends.

Jada's eyes land on Zion, standing casually in a corner with a drink in hand. Zion notices Jada and motions her to come over.

Jada:

I'll catch up with you guys in a second

Damien notices Jada and Zion's interaction

Damien:

Ohhhh I see, go handle that girl!

Jada pauses and looks back at Nia while adjusting her shirt.

Jada:

Wait, do I look okay?

Nia:

Girl, duh! Now go talk to your man... before I do.

Jada takes a deep breath. Puts on a smile and approaches Zion.

Jada:

(Reads Zion's shirt) Hmmmm, "I HATE PREACHER'S DAUGHTERS". What's the beef Zion?

Zion:

No beef at all, what are you doing here? Shouldn't you be at bible study?

Jada:

You know Nia threatened me to come here. And besides, bible studies are on Wednesday.

approaches Zion & Jada

Jdot:

Yo, what's up Z? I haven't seen you in a brick moe

Zion

Yo what up J, I been laying low; I'm here with my girl.

JDOT Motions to Jada. Jada waves.

Jdot:

Oh, you a changed man now? Nice to meet you beautiful-

Zion:

Aye watch ya mouth boy

Jdot:

My bad gangy, you tryna cop some za? I'll knock 5 off for u

Zion:

Damn J, you always got the block hot. But for the discount, I'm with it

Jdot:

That's what I thought slim, you jhi finna be smacked

Jada:

What does he mean smacked? Are you buying drugs Zion? This is what you've been hiding from me

Zion grabs Jada by the arm (gently) pulling her to the side.

Zion:

Yo, lower your tone. I wasn't hiding anything from you, this is just what I do. Or what did you say, what "makes me, me"

Jada:

Why are you saying this so casually? Seriously, you need help!

Zion sighs in embarrassment

Jada:

I feel like we should talk about this. Clearly there's more to you than meets the eye.

Zion begins to walk away (he's clearly annoyed) he stops to look back at Jada.

Zion:

Whatever you want Jada, you coming to the crib or what?

Jada:

I guess

Jada follows behind him.

Jada and Zion exit stage right. Blackout. The music continues as the setting changes. Music fades out.

Scene 4

EXT. Outside of Zion's Apartment

The lights are out on stage. A spotlight follows Jada and Zion as they are walking outside of Zion's apartment (on Ogden steps, stage right.) The atmosphere is tense. The couple is walking and talking.

Zion:

So like I was saying, Miss Monroe-

Jada:

Don't call me that right now.

They stop as they reach the door (the lights come on to reveal his apartment). Zion aggressively opens the door. They walk inside. They are walking towards the couch (center stage) as Zion says:

Zion:

Ok (*He hesitates*) Jada, (*sarcastically*) you don't know me from a hole in the wall. So what do you want to know?

Jada, visibly upset, stops walking.

Jada:

What do I want to know? I've been trying to "know" you for months now and Zion- all I get are half-answers, closed doors, and walls so high I'm starting to think you don't want me to climb them!

You say all the right things when it's convenient, but the second I try to get deeper, try to really understand you, you shut down.

What do I want to know? I wanna know why your eyes are always red, why you're always slurring your words, and what really happened to your mother.

Zion:

Damn Jada if you don't mind your business! You ever lost your mother? Your father beat you, Huh?

Zion sits on the couch. He begins to noticeably cry. Jada's demeanor becomes a little softer as she notices his tears. She sits down next to him, soaking in every word he speaks.

One night, we're driving around. She tells me to slow down, but I'm like, "I got this, Ma. We're gonna make it there on time."

He rubs his hands over his face, his eyes starting to gloss over as the memory starts to sink in.

Zion:

Then I hit that turn, and-boom! Outta nowhere, the car's swervin', I'm barely holdin' onto the wheel, and the next thing I know, we're crashin'. I wake up in the hospital, I'm beat up, but I'm good. But my mom... she's gone. Just like that. I remember my pops, man. his face was cold. Like I wasn't even his kid. He didn't even need to say it, but he said it anyway. "This is your fault."

Zion's jaw clenches, his fists tightening. He looks at Jada, eyes filled with the kind of anger and sorrow that comes from years of holding something inside.

Zion:

Like I had ruined everything. I felt like I was nothing! Like my life ended before it started. So I started doin' what he did, ight?! Drinking, smoking, actin' like I didn't give a damn about anything! 'Cause that's the only way I knew how to deal with it! You think I wanted to be like this? You think I wanted to feel like I was drowning every.damn.day? I got lost in that, Jada! Lost in all that anger and hurt, and nobody – nobody– was there to pull me out!

Jada's heart aches as she watches him struggle. She reaches for his hand now, a small, gentle touch.

Jada:

(sincerely)

Zion, that's not on you. That's not your fault- Accidents happen, but you didn't want any of that to happen. You didn't want your mom gone.

Zion:

(Zion snatches his hand back) You don't get it. You can't get it and you never will!

Jada:

Zion! You don't have to carry all this by yourself. You didn't deserve any of it. It wasn't your fault. I just wish you would've told me sooner. You've been walking around with all this pain, and I had no idea. I hate that you felt like you had to go through it alone. But you don't. I'm here, okay? I'm not going anywhere.

The two cuddle up on the couch and Jada lays on Zion's chest.

Jada:

I'm not going anywhere.

Blackout.

Scene 5

INT - Zion's Apartment at the Harbs

Jada wakes up to Zion pondering on the couch.

Jada:

Did you sleep at all?

Zion turns his head slightly, giving her a small, tired smile.

Zion:

Nah. Couldn't shut my brain off.

Jada:

(sitting up)

You should've woke me up

Zion:

(shaking his head)

You looked peaceful. Figured you deserved a night of good sleep

Jada rubs her eyes, then glances at him. She notices the tension in his posture, the way his shoulders slump as if carrying an invisible weight

Jada:

You don't have to keep doing this, you know. Carrying it all by yourself.

Zion:

Easier said than done.

Jada:

Maybe. But that doesn't mean it's impossible.

Beat.

Jada gets up and walks over to the " cabinets " and begins searching through them.

Do you have anything edible in this place, or are we about to survive on chips and vibes?

Zion:

There's some cereal in the cabinet. Might be expired, though.

Jada:

Mm, better idea! Let's go get brunch

Zion:

We could go to brunch, my treat.

Beat. Zion stands up.

Zion walks over to Jada. Zion sighs, scratching his head. He's quiet for a moment, as if debating whether to speak.

Zion:

I kept thinking about what you said. Last night.

Jada:

And?

Zion:

And... you're right. About all of it. I've been running from this for months, I don't even know where to start. That's why it's so hard for me to let you in... I barely know myself anymore

Jada:

You start by forgiving yourself.

Zion:

How do you do that? How do you forgive yourself for something you can't take back?

Jada:

You remind yourself it's okay to be human. My dad always preaches about Psalm 147:3. It talks about how God heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds. So, you start letting people in—the ones who actually want to help you heal.

Zion exhales, the weight of her words settling over him.

Zion:

You really don't give up, do you?

Jada:

Not when it comes to people I care about.

Jada grabs her bag and tosses him his jacket. As they head for the door, Zion glances at her, a faint smile playing on his lips.

Zion:

Thanks, Jada.

Jada:

(Smiling back)

Anytime.

Blackout.

Scene 6

EXT. Outside of Armstrong Stadium. Nia's on live, walking past the football players with flirtatious intent

Nia:

Hey y'all, what's up to my live! Just got out of class and you know where I had to be.

Nia pans the phone over to reveal the football players at practice. They are running drills as their coach blows his whistle.

Nia:

Mhmm! Boom Shakalaka! Yes God!! That's a fine black man right there. Hold on y'all. I got a connect on the team. I'm bout to hook yall up!

Nia puts her phone in her pocket thinking she's ending the live but doesn't. She begins to wave Tyler down.

Nia:

Number 13!! Tyler!!

Tyler looks over shocked and confused. He turns around and acts "like he doesn't hear her.

Nia:

Boy don't play. You know you see me over here! Tyler!! Tyllerrrr!!

Teammate #1:

Aye man, go handle that.

Teammate #2:

We got Tyler going for freshman before GTA 6

The football team begins to laugh and mock tyler.

Tyler:

Bro chill on me. I swear I do not know that girl.

Nia:

Tyler James! Tyler James from Atlanta, Georgia! I know you hear me.

Tyler runs over to Nia. Embarrassed, he covers her mouth to stop her screaming.

Tyler:

Ma'am please calm down. We don't allow fans to watch practices, so you have got to-

Nia moves Tyler's hand off of her mouth and pushes it to the side.

Nia:

First of all... I'm not a "fan", I'm your friend. And second, what the HECK is on your hands? They taste like sweat and dirt and grass.

Tyler:

Friend!? I don't even know who you are. For all I know you're the annoying loud girl who just interrupted my practice.

Nia:

Tyler. Be for real. It's me, Nia. As in best friend to your best friend's girlfriend... therefore ...your friend.

Tyler:

Okay, so why are you here, at the teams practice, yelling like you're insane

Nia:

Well I may just be insane but that's not what we're talking about right now. I seen you out there, running back and forth, butt all in the air, I could do that too you know- my favorite party trick

Tyler, still taken aback by her approach but humored at Nia's rant, chuckles slightly. He responds dismissively

Tyler:

Oh yeah, I bet you could. But instead, could you get your butt off the field. You're acting crazy.

Nia:

I'm crazy!? Negro, please. Your best friend is a druggie and I'M crazy... That's my problem with all of you Hampton men y'all always want to-

Tyler cuts Nia off

Tyler:

Bro what are you talking about? "My best friend is a druggie." Zion ain't on no drugs. The man is squeaky clean.

Nia:

Clearly, someone doesn't know their best friend, because my girl Jada practically came to me crying about how your "mans" can't stop popping percs.

Nia's phone vibrates constantly

Nia:

Hold on, my phone is going off

She pulls out her phone and realizes instantly that she is still on live

Nia:

Ohhh my gosh. I never ended the live

Tyler steps to the side of Nia to see the live and comments. Nia bolts off. Exiting stage right

Scene 7

INT - Harbs

Zion is on the couch in his room, headphones on, controller in hand, focused on his game. The glow from the TV flickers as he mutters to himself. The door suddenly swings open, and Tyler barges in, his face a mix of anger and concern. Zion barely glances over, visibly annoyed.

Zion:

You ever heard of knockin'?

Tyler:

We need to talk. Now.

Zion:

(pauses game, pulling off headphones)

Talk about what? You over here interruptin' my peace

Tyler:

(stepping forward)

For the fact that Nia was on live today, runnin' her mouth about you.
Now the whole school knows.

Zion:

Knows what? What are you talkin' about?

Zion's mood shifts

Tyler:

Nia said you're poppin' percs, Z. She said it loud and proud like it was some kinda PSA. And guess what? She never ended the live.

Zion freezes, staring at Tyler like he's trying to process the words. Then his expression hardens.

Zion:

You're lyin'.

Tyler:

(cutting in)

I wish I was. But I saw the comments. People were clownin', man. Star football player to junkie?

Zion slams the controller down on the table, his jaw tightening as anger takes over.

Zion:

(voice rising)

So you come in here to what? Rub it in my face? Act like you give a damn?

Tyler:

(trying to stay calm)

Nah, I'm here to make sure you're good. But I need you to be straight with me. Are you really doin' this, Z?

Zion:

(shouting)

Man, who cares?! The whole school thinks I'm a druggie now, right? Doesn't matter what I say!

Tyler:

It matters to me. We're supposed to be boys. If you're strugglin', I'm not just gonna stand here and watch you fall apart.

Zion:

(laughing bitterly)

"Boys," huh? You didn't even come to me first. You just believed whatever mess Nia said and ran with it. You wanna know if I'm good now? When my mother died, you didn't give a damn about nothing other than why I left the football team. Some friend you are.

Tyler:

Zion, this isn't about me. You're actin' like this is no big deal, but it is. People are talkin', and if you don't get ahead of it—

Zion:

(cutting him off)

Get ahead of it? What, you want me to do? Make some apology tour? "Oh, hey, everybody, yeah, I'm just out here tryna cope, my bad!" Nah, forget that. Forget all of it.

Zion's voice cracks slightly as his anger boils over. He starts pacing, his fists clenching and unclenching.

Tyler:

Bro, you're spiralin'. Let me help you before it's too late

Zion:

(raises his tone/shouts)

You wanna help? Get the hell outta my face! You, Nia, the whole damn school—y'all don't care about me! You just wanna watch me crash and burn so you can feel better about your own damn lives!

Tyler:

That's not true, man. I'm here because I care

Zion steps closer to Tyler, pointing to the door

Zion:

If you really cared, you'd leave me alone. Go. Now

Tyler:

(softly)

Zion, don't do this to yourself.

Zion:

(yelling)

Get out!

Tyler hesitates, his expression pained, but ultimately shakes his head and walks out. He slams the door behind him. Zion stands there for a moment, breathing heavily.

FADE OUT.

Scene 8

INT. Jada's Dorm Room - NIGHT

Jada is sitting at her vanity, doing her skincare, listening to "Truth Hurts" by Lizzo. Nia knocks on the door.

Nia:

(knocks on door) Jada! It's Nia open up, we need to talk!

Jada:

(walks to open the door)

Jada opens the door and grabs Nia's hands, playfully dragging her into the room and gesturing her to join in on the singing.

Jada:

Are you ready for our girl's night

Nia:

Yes... Jada, but-

Jada:

Aht! No excuses you promisedddd

Nia:

Jada, hold on we-

Jada:

I ordered our pizza, have our face masks, and-

Nia:

(screams) Jada!

Jada:

Okay, drama queen. What's so urgent?

Nia:

Jada, don't freak out okay. I was on live earlier today at the football field, but I forgot to turn the live off.

Jada:

Girl, okay, that's embarrassing, but no big deal. What, did people hear you singing off-key or something?

Nia:

No, They heard me talking to Tyler.

Jada:

Ooooh, what were you saying about Tyler? Let me find out you got caught thirsting over-

Nia:

It wasn't about Tyler! It was about Zion.

Jada:

What about Zion?

Nia:

I might've... mentioned something about what you told me about the percs thing.

Jada:

You mentioned it... to tyler?!

Nia:

Not just Tyler. I was still on live.

Jada:

Nia! Are you insane? You told the entire internet my boyfriend is on drugs?

Nia:

I know, I know! I wasn't thinking. I was arguing with Tyler, trying to make a point, and it just slipped out.

Jada:

How does something like that just slip out? Do you hear yourself? Nia, this could ruin him. It could ruin me! What if someone recorded it? What if Zion finds out?

Nia:

(Defensive)

Jada, I'm sorry, okay? It wasn't on purpose. And maybe this is a sign that Zion needs help. Tyler, his own best friend, didn't even know.

Jada:

That's not your decision to make, Nia. You had no right to air his personal business like that.

Nia:

Jada, I'm sorry, okay? I was just trying to—

Jada:

You were just trying to run your mouth, like always.

Nia looks stunned, her mouth opening as if to argue, but she stops herself.

You've done enough. Get out

Jada walks back to her vanity. Nia hesitates, then quietly leaves the room, shutting the door behind her.

Scene 9

INT - Zion's Apartment - Night

Jada:

(knocking on the door) Zion? Can I talk to you? I've called you more times than I can count

Jada listens for an answer but there is none.

I heard about the whole Nia thing, when she was on live. I'm sorry Zi-
(she knocks again, this time the door pushes open)

Jada:

Zion?

(voice trembling)

Oh my God... Zion!

She rushes to his side, dropping to her knees. She grabs his face gently, trying to wake him.

Jada:

Zion, wake up! Please, wake up!

Zion's eyelids flutter but don't fully open. He groans incoherently, his head rolling to the side. Jada's panic grows as she shakes him harder.

Jada:

Zion! What did you do?

She spots the pill bottle and picks it up, her hands shaking as she reads the label. Her eyes widen in horror. She grabs her phone and dials 911 frantically.

Jada:

(into phone)

I need help! My boyfriend— he's unconscious. There's alcohol and

pills everywhere. I don't know what to do. Please send someone,
quickly!

She sets the phone down, staying by Zion's side. Tears stream down her face as she places his head in her lap and strokes his hair, rocking him back and forth, her voice breaking.

Jada:

Why, Zion? Why do you keep doing this to yourself? You can't leave me. I need you.

Zion groans again, his voice faint and slurred.

Zion:

(weakly)

Jada...?

She leans closer, clutching his jaw

Jada:

I'm here, Zion. I'm right here. You're gonna be okay.

Zion:

(eyes half-open)

I didn't mean to... I just wanted it to stop.

Jada:

(sobbing)

Shh, Shhh. The paramedics are coming. Save your breath

Zion's eyes close again, and Jada shakes him gently, keeping him awake.

Jada:

Stay with me, okay? Stay with me. You're stronger than this.

The faint sound of sirens approaches in the distance. Jada looks toward the door, then back at Zion, her voice soft but firm.

Jada:

I got you, Zion. I got you... Lord please

The sirens grow louder as flashing lights illuminate the walls of the apartment. Jada holds Zion's hand tightly, refusing to let go.

BLACKOUT.

Scene 10

INT. Hospital Room

The lights come on and reveal Zion in his hospital bed, Jada is by his side. She is holding his hand and has her head on the bed. The doctor walks in and Jada looks up.

Doctor #2:

Your friend is lucky. He should have died tonight. The rest of his visitors are here.

Jada begins to sob, uncontrollably. Nia, Tyler, and Damien walk in.

Tyler:

I can't believe he let it get this bad... and more importantly, I can't believe I didn't know.

Nia:

It's not your fault, Tyler. This is not the time for any of us to be blaming ourselves... including Zion.

Damien:

Everyone has their own struggles and handles them differently—it's not our fault how we cope, we're just doing the best we can.

Nia:

Alright guys, let's give them some privacy.

The friends walk out of the room to give Jada some privacy. Jada kneels beside Zion's bed, holding his hand. Her voice is soft but filled with emotion as she kneels down to pray. Before she can begin to pray, an unexpected visitor comes in...Ray. Jada wipes her tears quickly, but there's a visible tension between them.

Jada:
(guarded)
Oh I -

I didn't know any more visitors were coming in today...

Ray hesitates before stepping further into the room.

Ray:
I'm Ray Morgan. *(he takes a deep breath)* Zion's father. *(he says softly)*

Ray looks taken aback, his face filled with shame as he steps closer to the bed, glancing at his son. He rushes over to Zion. He looks up at Jada.

Ray:
I wasn't a good father. Not the kind of father he deserved. I made mistakes, and I... I thought I was protecting him by pushing him away.
But I see now that was a mist-

Jada stops him and grabs his hand.

Jada:
It's okay... you're here now. He won't say it, but I will... he needs you.
He's needed you this whole time...

(Jada walks out of the room. Ray kneels next to his son.)

Ray:
You gotta wake up son... *(getting increasingly upset)* You gotta wake up!!! *(Begins to aggressively sob)* I don't know how to fix this. I don't even know where to start. But I'm here now. I'm trying. I just...
I don't want to lose you, son. I can't lose you.

I regret everything. I regret every time I put my hands on you, on my wife ... and especially for introducing you to this lifestyle. I'm sorry about blaming you for ya moms'. That night should've never unfolded like that. I should've got my life together and be the father you needed. I failed you... And I'm sorry

Ray sobs himself to sleep beside his son.

Scene 11

INT - Church

The next morning. Nia, Jada and Damien on the pew.

Pastor Monroe:

Some of us have been walking a path that looks good on the outside, but deep down, we know it's not aligned with God's purpose. And yet, we cling to it, thinking we can fix it on our own. Thinking we can save someone else by sheer willpower. But let me tell you something—only Christ saves. Only Christ transforms. You can't bring someone to the light by staying in the darkness with them.

Loving someone doesn't mean losing yourself in their chaos. It means standing firm in Christ and letting Him be the anchor for both of you. Sometimes, the best way to help someone find God is to show them what it looks like to walk with Him. To pray for them, to trust God for their transformation, and to let Him carry the burdens you were never meant to hold.

Jada's breath hitches, her gaze locked on the pastor. Her lips part slightly as if the words hit a hidden wound she'd tried to ignore.

Sister Grace:

You alright baby?

Jada:

I'm alright, it's just... what he said. About not being able to save someone on your own. About letting God do the work.

Sister Grace:

Yeah, it hit, didn't it?

Jada:

It's like he's talking right to me. I've been so focused on trying to

pull Zion out of his mess, thinking I could fix it, that I didn't even realize how far I've been sinking into it myself.

Nia:

You've been carrying a lot, Jada. Almost too much.

Jada:

But what am I supposed to do? Just walk away? Pretend I don't care? I love him. Seeing him in that hospital bed nearly broke me.

Sister Grace:

I know you love him, and you want to be there for him. But it's not about pretending you don't care— it's about trusting that God cares more. But you can't carry both of you, Jada. That's not your job.

Jada:

Then what is? What am I supposed to do if I don't fight for him?

Damien:

You can't fight for him if you aren't fighting for yourself first Jada. Don't break yourself to save him, but trust that God will handle what you can't.

Sister Grace:

He's right. You pray for him, you love him, but you let God do the heavy lifting.

Jada:

And what if that's not enough?

Sister Grace:

(Taking Jada's hand)

It will be. But you've gotta believe that, Jada. You've gotta have faith. And you can't just have it for him— you need it for yourself, too.

Jada:

You're right. I've been trying to play savior when all I really need to do is show him the way.

Nia:

Exactly. And the best way to do that? You gotta show him what faith looks like. You let him see how God moves through you.

Sister Grace, Nia and Damien hug Jada and the scene changes.

BLACKOUT

Scene 12

INT. Hospital. After church.

Jada arrives at the hospital and checks in to see Zion. She opens the door to Zion's room, and sees Ray lying next to him in the chair.

Jada:

I'm glad you stayed

Ray nods slowly, finally meeting Jada's eyes.

Ray:

I just need him to wake up..

Jada:

Sir... Do you believe in God?

Ray:

(Looking up, caught off guard, laughs it off)

Do I look like I believe in God?

Jada looks at Ray intently

Ray:

I... I don't know. I've never been the kind of man to pray or go to church. Life always felt too messy, too broken, for that.

Jada:

(Softly but firmly)

That's exactly who God wants— the ones who feel like it's too messy. I just came from church, and my dad said something I can't get out of my head. He said we can't fix people, but we can lead them to the One who can. And Zion... he needs you to believe in something bigger than yourself right now.

Ray:

I've failed him so many times. What makes you think God would listen to someone like me?

Jada:

Because God doesn't care about how many times you've failed—He cares that you're here now, willing to try. You don't have to have all the answers. You just have to surrender.

Ray:

I don't even know where to start.

Jada:

We start right here. Right now. Would it be okay if we pray together?

Ray nods slowly, tears streaming down his face. He kneels beside Zion's bed, and Jada kneels with him. She takes Zion's hand in hers and gestures for his father to do the same.

Jada:

God, we come to You together—broken, imperfect, and in need of Your grace. We know You're a healer, a restorer, and the One who carries us when we can't carry ourselves. Lord, we're asking You to move in this room. Touch Zion. Wake him up, and give him the strength to fight.

Ray:

God, I don't know what I'm doing, but I know I can't do this alone. Please, help my son. Help me be the father he needs. Give me the chance to make it right. I'll do better—I promise.

Jada:

We ask for healing not just for Zion's body, but for his spirit. For his father's spirit. Help them find You in this moment and beyond. Show them Your power, Lord. Your love.

A moment of silence fills the room, the hum of machines the only sound. Suddenly, there's a faint cough.

Jada:

(Gasping, opening her eyes)

Zion?

Ray:

Doctor... doctor come please he's awake.

Scene 13

INT. Zion's Living Room

The room is quiet, bathed in soft morning light. Jada carefully adjusts a pillow behind Zion, who is sitting on the couch, his face still pale but alert. A blanket is draped over his lap, and a glass of water sits on the coffee table. She sits down beside him, a small, warm smile on her face.

Jada:

Are you comfortable?

Zion:

Yeah, thanks. You really didn't have to do all this, though. I'm good, Jada.

Jada:

Let me take care of you. You've been through enough.

Zion notices that Jada seems distant and the mood thickens.

Zion:

(noticing) Hey, what's on your mind? You can talk to me. About anything. You know that, right?

Jada hesitates, then looks up at him, her eyes shimmering with unshed tears.

Jada:

I was so scared, Zion. Seeing you like that... I didn't know if you were going to make it. And the truth is, I don't know if I can handle all of this. Sometimes, I feel like I'm barely holding myself together.

Zion:

Jada I—

Jada:

(interrupting)

No, let me finish. I've been here for you, Zion. Through everything. But it hasn't been easy. I've been battling my own insecurities, my fears, questioning if I'm good enough—if I'm strong enough. And I've stayed because I care about you. But I need to know you'll stand with me too. That you'll be there for me the way I've been here for you.

Zion reaches out, taking her hands in his. His gaze is steady, filled with both guilt and determination.

Zion:

Jada, I had no idea... I'm so sorry. I've been so caught up in my own mess that I didn't see how much you've been carrying. You're incredible. You've done more for me than I deserve. But I promise you, I'll stand with you. I'll be better—for you, for us.

Jada:

You mean that?

Zion:

I do. I'm not doing this alone anymore. I'll lean on my family, my friends, and my therapist. And I'll be here for you, Jada. Through everything. I promise.

Jada exhales, her shoulders relaxing as a tear slips down her cheek. She squeezes his hands tightly, her voice trembling but firm.

Jada:

Okay. But I'm holding you to that promise, Zion. No more running. No more shutting me out.

Zion:

No more. I swear.

He leans forward, pressing a gentle kiss to her forehead. They sit in silence for a moment, the weight of the conversation giving way to a quiet understanding. Zion pulls her into a hug, holding her as if anchoring himself to her presence.

Zion:

Thank you, Jada. For everything. For not giving up on me.

The two hold each other, the quiet of the room now filled with a sense of love and renewed commitment. The lights dim.

Blackout.

Scene 14 - INT. Church - Sunday Morning

The church is filled with warm sunlight streaming through the stained-glass windows. The congregation hums with quiet anticipation. Pastor Monroe stands at the pulpit, his Bible open before him.

Pastor Monroe:

We just want to thank God for allowing Brother Zion to have a swift and safe recovery. We know all things work together for the good of those who love Him.

Pastor Monroe:

Today, we will be closing out service a little differently. As you all know, my daughter Jada is a student at Hampton University, and today she has decided to bless us with a reading of a poem the Lord put on her heart.

The congregation claps warmly as Jada rises from her seat. She walks gracefully to the podium, carrying her journal. She places it down and takes a deep breath. She closes her eyes briefly before beginning.

Jada:

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for thy rod and thy staff..
they... comfort me?

She pauses, takes a deep breath, then steadies herself.

Jada:

He called the broken, the unclean to pray,
And I joined them, though I'd lost my way.
And then, His word struck like a flame,

A holy fire, calling my name:
"She is clothed with strength, her dignity bright,
She laughs at the future, unshaken by fright.
Her words are wise, her kindness clear,
She surpasses all, her virtue sincere."

Proverbs spoke, and the chains fell apart,
Rejection and fear fled from my heart.
Now, I am clothed in resilience and grace,
No scars remain, just a radiant face.

My voice, once stolen, is now my might,
A beacon of hope, a guiding light.

I vow to inspire, to lead and to show,
The path to freedom, where love will grow.
For I am virtuous, a testimony divine,
A warrior reborn, in God's own time.

Zion stands and walks over to Jada, taking her hand gently. They walk back to their seats together. The choir begins singing a soulful rendition of "He Wants It All" as the congregation sways in worship.

Jada sits down, Zion leans closer to Jada, speaking softly

Zion:

That was beautiful, Jada. Every word.

Jada:

I wasn't sure I could get through it.

Zion:

You did more than that. You spoke your truth... and mine too.

The congregation stands to leave, they begin walking out.

Pastor Monroe:

You did well, baby.

Jada:

Thank you dad. That means everything. And thank you for always believing in me, and for encouraging me in every situation.

Pastor Monroe:

Always, sweetheart.

Jada wraps her arms around her father, the two embracing tightly.

As they are hugging, Ray and Zion share a moment. Zion walks over to his father and embraces him. Ray stays in it and as they pull apart, Ray looks at his son and smiles.

Ray:

What's this for ?

Zion:

I just wanted to thank you...for showing up. I know we've had our ups and downs but, I'm willing to put all that aside and start over.
You're my dad. I need you -
We need each other.

Jada overhears Zion and Ray's conversation and tunes in

Ray:

You're right son. And I'll be there for you every step of the way.

Jada walks over and joins their conversation. Placing a hand on Zion's shoulder she says..

Jada:

Me too.

Tyler walks over to Zion.

Tyler:

I second that man. We're boys. For life. I got your back from here on out.

Zion and Tyler "dap up", sharing a moment of joy, and exchanging smiles and laughs.

Nia, Damien, Sister Grace join ny Jada's side. Nia rests her head on Jada's shoulder.

Damien:

That goes for us too Jada!

Nia:

I promise, I'm gonna be a better friend to you. No more carrying your weight alone, we've got you.

Sister Grace:

We all do.

She looks over at Zion.

Sister Grace:

Both of you have been carrying so much by yourselves, but that ends today. From now on, we'll all lean on each other, like the family we are.

The cast all exchange hugs and begin a quiet banter as the choir continues to sing. The lights slowly dim as the choir's song reaches its end. Curtain closes .

THE END