

TOMORROW'S CHILD

Written by

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INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

SUPER: 1985

A woman lies in a hospital bed asleep. The television in her room plays an episode of "Dougie Houser, MD". She has on a white hospital gown with a wrist band on her arm with the numbers 125487.

Beside her bed is a newborn baby girl in a bassinet asleep. She also has a wrist band on with the numbers 125487.

V.O.

They asked me... "What do you want to name her?" I was so exhausted from labor that I just told the midwife, "I will name her tomorrow." Then, I passed out. When I came to, her birth certificate was laying beside me and her name was Tomorrow Anderson. I took another look at my sleeping angel and said to myself, "Tomorrow, you are the best blessing I could ever have."

The woman wakes and looks at the baby. She sighs and SINGS.

WOMAN

You are my sunshine... my only
sunshine... You make me happy...
when skies are gray... you'll never
know dear... how much I love you...
please don't take... my sunshine
away.

END OF FLASHBACK

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY- PRESENT

Students play on the playground at the "William C. March Middle School".

A school bell RINGS and all but one of the children run into the school past a group of teachers at the door. The students make apologies as they bump into the teachers.

After a few minutes ASHLEY ANDERSON, 12, sits alone at a picnic table. She stares off into the distance. Her teacher, DISCHON JOHNSON, 29, notices her and looks down at her watch to notes the time "8:30 am". She nods her head and approaches Ashley with caution.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Ashley... Ashley... it's time to
come in. Do you hear me calling
you?? ASHLEY!!!! ASHLEY!!!!

Ashley stirs after the fourth call of her name. She hops down
off the table and runs toward Dischon. She stops just short
of Dischons legs.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

My bad, Mrs. Johnson... I didn't
hear you calling me.

DISCHON JOHNSON

I could tell and it's alright. Are
you alright? You were deep in
contemplation. What were you
thinking about? Boys?

Dischon gives Ashley a playful smile which Ashley returns.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

No Mrs. Johnson. I am way to young
for boys.

Ashley looks down at her shoes as she rubs her feet together.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Then what was the thousand yard
stare worth?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Nothing Mrs. Johnson. Nothing at
all.

Dischon stares for a moment.

DISCHON JOHNSON

You know, I haven't seen your
mother in awhile. How is she doing
lately?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

She is fine. We doing good as
usual.

DISCHON JOHNSON

I know she usually brings you to
school, and I can't believe that I
have been missing her. It's been
like a week since I have seen her.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Oh, well, we were running late this morning which is why you didn't see her. She dropped me off on the corner.

(beat)

You know, I got some of her perfume on me this morning when she hugged me goodbye. Wanna smell?

Ashley extends her arm towards Dischon. She smells and then pushes the arm out of her face with ease.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Yea Ashley. It smells nice. Well, I guess we better get on in that room before Sam Oliver and Amanda Williams get into my secret stash of candy.

They chuckle together.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

I understand. It's time for class to start, right?

DISCHON JOHNSON

You got it. Why did you repeat the question?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Just making sure I am following the rules I have been given.

DISCHON JOHNSON

OK Ashley.

Dischon looks puzzled at Ashley. They enter the building together.

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY

It's later that same day based on Dischon's attire. The clock in the wall reads "12:30" p.m. Several people are in the lounge.

Dischon sits on the couch in the lounge with a blank stare on her face, completely disconnected to the conversation between KIMBERLY PATTERSON, early 30's, TAYLOR DUBOSE, late 30's to early 40's , and WILLIE MASON, 33.

Everyone eats as Dischon sits and stares.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

(agitated)

Amanda Williams is driving me crazy
with the 50 thousand questions
everyday!!!

WILLIE MASON

I know what you mean. These kids
today. No respect. When I say Quiet
Reading time, I mean "quiet"!

Taylor shakes her head in agreement.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

And when I put her in the same
group as Sam Oliver, they are
almost unstoppable with the
giggling and talking. You would
think they were Italian love birds
or something.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

I know, right. I want to put them
in time out, but you know how that
looks.

WILLIE MASON

I put kids in time out everyday.

Kimberly gasps and places her hand on her chest.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

Really?? Why?

WILLIE MASON

Because, if I don't... then I just
might kill one of them!

Willie and Taylor laugh and giggle at the comment. Kimberly
rolls her eyes and sucks her teeth.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

Well, if you have effective
classroom management skills you
don't need to use time out that
much.

WILLIE MASON

Bite me, Kim. Hard and on the bum!

Kimberly flares her nose at the thought.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

You would like that wouldn't you
Willie???

Taylor stands and raises her arms between the two of them.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

Alright you two... cut it out!!!

Kimberly looks Willie up and down and then turns and leaves.
Willie shakes his head and

WILLIE MASON

When you have great classroom
management skills? Please, she
teacher Art, how hard could it
be???

TAYLOR DUBOSE

Harder than you think. All those
shapes and colors. Getting kids out
of play mode and back into serious
mode is almost impossible. Just
relax, ok.

They laugh. Dischon takes a long and loud sigh. The other
teachers wrinkle their faces as they look at her. Kimberly
comes back with a cup in her hand.

WILLIE MASON

Johnson, what is your problem?

Dischon takes another sigh. Kimberly stirs the liquid in the
cup for a moment and then drops it in the trash. She walks
over and sits next to Dischon on the couch.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Oh nothing...

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

Yea, right. Just tell us already.
You know you want to.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Have any of you seen Ashley
Anderson lately? Does she seem
strange to any of you?

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

Nothing out of the ordinary in Art,
what about you guys?

Willie frowns his face in thought while he stirs his coffee.

WILLIE MASON

Well, she has been sleeping a lot
in math class lately.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

Yea. And today, she didn't want to
play at recess at all.

DISCHON JOHNSON

I know, right. Something strange is
going on. I can't quite put my
finger on it, but there is
definitely something wrong.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

It's like, she gives you this
thousand yard stare throughout the
whole class.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Yea, she was doing that this
morning. I don't know what her
problem is, but I think someone
needs to talk to her. She
completely missed the bell this
morning.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

Why don't you talk to her then?

DISCHON JOHNSON

I don't know what to say.

Kimberly gets up off the couch and walks over to the table.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

Ask her about those clothes she's
been wearing.

Dischon's eyebrows raise.

DISCHON JOHNSON

What about her clothes?

WILLIE MASON

They have holes in them. Yea, a few
of her pieces have holes in them.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Really? I hadn't noticed that. I
don't know what that is about?

TAYLOR DUBOSE

I'll tell you what it is... It's babies having babies is what it is. That is the real problem.

Willie shakes his head at the comment.

WILLIE MASON

Maybe there is just not enough to go around right now. Not enough for new clothes? Did you ever think of that?

TAYLOR DUBOSE

Chile please. I have been teaching for far to long to follow that bull. Some of these children come from some of the worst kinds of homes.

Dischon shakes her head in disagreement.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Well that is not Ashley and that is not her situation. I know her mother. She is the best mother in the world. Nothing comes before Ashley and Tremayne.

The teachers pause for a moment. They exchange looks and then turn to Dischon who sits with her lips glued together.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

You know her mother? Did I hear you correctly?

Dischon shakes her head slow but in agreement.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Yea. We grew up together in Flag House Projects. I also knew Tomorrow's mother and no hole, big or small would be acceptable to Miss Bertha. She didn't play and that's how she raised Tomorrow.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

People can change, you know that, don't you?

Kimberly looks at her watch and gets up from the table. She walks towards the door.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Not Tomorrow... she wouldn't change like this without an external incentive.

Kimberly stops and turns to face Dischon.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

A lot of things have changed since you were children Dischon. Besides, I heard a teacher in this district got fired last week for sticking her nose where it didn't belong.

Willie starts to nod his head in agreement.

WILLIE MASON

Yep. That's how they do us now. They want you to report abuse, but now a days, you better have NO doubt if you want to keep your license. But let something happen and you had the slightest hint there was something wrong, and you still lose your job. Your screwed if you do and if you don't. Just leave it alone Johnson.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

If you know what's good for you, you will leave that child and her mother alone.

Kimberly and Willie exit. Taylor pauses and then walks over and sits next to Dischon on the couch.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

Don't listen to them Dischon. Helping students is our business. Do you think there is something wrong?

DISCHON JOHNSON

I know Tomorrow. She is not that kind of mother. Maybe I should call.

Taylor gives Dischon a soft smile.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

You do what you think is best, just be careful, alright.

(MORE)

TAYLOR DUBOSE (CONT'D)
You're a good teacher and I would
hate to see you go because you
forgot your place in this setup.

Taylor exits.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Thanks.

Dischon looks around the room and then exits.

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY - FLASHBACK

Children play in the courtyard of another school.

One little girl wears a pretty dress and sits alone. She
brushes a dolls hair as she rocks her head back and forth .
Other children rough-house all around her. A little girl with
tattered clothes on runs over to her. She carries a ball
under her arm.

DISCHON JOHNSON (YOUNG)
Hey!!! Aren't you new here?

TOMORROW ANDERSON (YOUNG)
Yes. I just moved around here.

DISCHON JOHNSON (YOUNG)
Is that why your sitting alone
playing with that doll, cause you
don't know anybody?

TOMORROW ANDERSON (YOUNG)
A little.

Dischon smiles and drops her ball onto the floor.

DISCHON JOHNSON (YOUNG)
Well, my name is Dischon Johnson.

TOMORROW ANDERSON (YOUNG)
My name is Tomorrow Anderson.

DISCHON JOHNSON (YOUNG)
Tomorrow? Why your Mama name you
Tomorrow?

TOMORROW ANDERSON (YOUNG)
I dunno. Why your Mama name you
Dischon?

DISCHON JOHNSON (YOUNG)
I dunno. She probable like the
mustard.

TOMORROW ANDERSON (YOUNG)
Oh. So did my Mama.

Dischon wrinkles her eyes at Tomorrow and shakes her head.

DISCHON JOHNSON (YOUNG)
You know, I been going here
forever, so knowing me is just like
knowing everybody.

TOMORROW ANDERSON (YOUNG)
OK.

DISCHON JOHNSON (YOUNG)
So, do you wanna play kickball with
me?

TOMORROW ANDERSON (YOUNG)
No. My dress may get dirty.

Dischon hunches her shoulders.

DISCHON JOHNSON (YOUNG)
So...

TOMORROW ANDERSON (YOUNG)
So, if my dress gets dirty, then I
can't be a princess.

DISCHON JOHNSON (YOUNG)
What does being a princess have to
do with playing kickball?

TOMORROW ANDERSON (YOUNG)
My Mama said that I should always
dress like a princess if I want to
be treated like a princess. And I
want to be treated like a princess.

Dischon wrinkles her face at Tomorrow and shakes her head.

DISCHON JOHNSON (YOUNG)
On second thought, don't tell
anyone you know me.

Dischon kicks the ball down the hall while Tomorrow plays
with her doll. She swings her head back and forth as she
hums.

END OF FLASHBACK

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

Ashley sits by herself with a small burn on the palm of her hand. She has a dirty bandage with several stains on it. Her hair is has knots at the end. There are small holes in her blouse and in her socks. She stares off into space again.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Ashley... come here please.

Ashley stirs and runs over to Dischon.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Yes Mrs. Johnson.

DISCHON JOHNSON

What's going on with your hand?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Oh nothing. I picked up a candle and some wax spilled on it.

DISCHON JOHNSON

It looks bad. Did your mother take you to the hospital for it?

Ashley's eyebrows raise slightly. She cocks her head to the side.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Uh yea, she took me overnight. The doctor said I will be alright. It just needs to heal on its own.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Last night? She took you to the doctors last night.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Yes ma'am.

DISCHON JOHNSON

That bandage looks a little rough for you to have gone to the ER last night.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

She took me. How else would I have the bandage?

The bell RINGS. Ashley and Dischon both jump.

DISCHON JOHNSON

It's time for the day to get started. Go on inside and wait for me.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Yes. Ma'am.

Ashley heads inside the school. Dischon ponders the exchange and then heads in the building.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

It's the same day just later and we are in Dischon's classroom.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Alright you guys... before we go out for recess, can any of you tell me what you know about dolphins?

(Vocal chaos)

Calm down... now, can anyone tell me anything about dolphins? They will be our next lesson and I am curious as to what you know about them.

Hands shoot up in the air as fingers wiggle around and the students jump up and down in their seats. Ashley remains quiet and distant.

DISCHON JOHNSON (CONT'D)

How about you Ashley? Can you tell me what you know about dolphins?

Ashley is stares at Dischon. Her eyes are wide open but she lets out a loud SNORE.

DISCHON JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Ashley... Ashley... ASHLEY!!!!

Ashley snaps to attention and looks around the room. The students all laugh at her. Ashley holds her head down rubs her eyes.

DISCHON JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Alright everyone. That's enough for now and it's time for recess. I will come and get you when it's time to start class again.

All the kids head out. As Ashley walks to the door, she stops short

DISCHON JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Not you Ashley. I would like to talk to you. Ashley, what is going on with you? I am concerned about you. You can talk to me if you need to, you know that right?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

I'm fine Mrs. Johnson. I promise. Everything is fine. Can I go to recess?

DISCHON JOHNSON

You know. I think I am gonna have to call your mother in for a conference because everything does not seem fine to me.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Oh just mind your own business Mrs. Johnson. There is nothing to be concerned about. Just leave me alone.

Ashley storms out of the room. Dischon stands in the middle of the room with her hands perched on her hips and wrinkles in her forehead.

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY

The teachers are once again gathered to eat lunch and grip about their students.

WILLIE MASON

Good Lord, these children are driving me mad!!! I should have been a stock broker like my mother wanted.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

Didn't you invest your mother's pension fund in junk bonds last year?

WILLIE MASON

Yeah, so...

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

So, maybe you should have become a used car salesman instead of a teacher or a stock broker...

WILLIE MASON

And why is that?

DISCHON JOHNSON

Because you don't know anything
except how to lie...

(They all laugh at Willie)

DISCHON JOHNSON (CONT'D)

You guys, I am really concerned
about Ashley Anderson.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

Good grief Dischon, not this
again!!!

WILLIE MASON

Didn't we just talk about this a
couple weeks ago? Leave that little
girl alone Dischon. She is not your
child.

DISCHON JOHNSON

She snapped at me. That's not like
her at all. I have known Ashley
Anderson since she was a baby, and
she is the sweetest little girl in
the world. I think something may
really be wrong.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

Yeah. Something is wrong alright.
That little girl has a burn on her
hand that has not been looked at.

DISCHON JOHNSON

I saw that. I asked her about it
and she told me that her mother
took her to the hospital.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

Well, maybe she did, but she hasn't
done anything else for it. The
bandage is disgusting. It looks
like it hasn't been changed in
weeks.

DISCHON JOHNSON

That's not like her. That's not
like Tomorrow at all.

Kimberly shakes her head in frustration as she walks across
the room and sits on the couch.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

Really? You keep saying that but look how she let's her walk around. She doesn't do her hair, she doesn't wash her clothes and the untreated burn on her hand. It sounds like her mother has developed a habit.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Tomorrow?? Tomorrow Anderson?? She would never do drugs.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

Well, it sounds like something is more important to her than her daughter. Maybe she has a man.

DISCHON JOHNSON

No... nothing is more important than her kids.

WILLIE MASON

Look Dischon, you say you know this woman. Maybe you do. Maybe she is Mother of the Year. All I know is if you start making wild accusations about this woman and your wrong, you will be looking for another job and ducking and dodging a lawsuit. You better watch yourself.

The teachers all exit. Dischon stands near the door. She stares at it for a moment then she exits.

INT. DISCHON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dischon sits on her couch. She watches the "Late Night News".

NEWS ANNOUNCER

Police are still baffled by the random crime spree that has taken place over the last couple of weeks. Insiders to the station have reported that there are several credible leads as to who is responsible for the break-ins including the local street gangs "The Forty Fifth Street Crew" and "DTH Mafia".

DISCHON JOHNSON

That's a damn shame. People in the news are just crazy!!!!

NEWS ANNOUNCER

Several places vandalized include a drug store on Greenmount and a laundromat on Patapsco Ave. Employees state that while nothing is missing from the stores the locks on the back doors are busted. This is Misty Collins reporting live from Channel 14 Late Night News.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

It's the very next day and we are back in the classroom. The students buzz while they complete their group assignments. Ashley is gives us the 1000 yard stare out the window. She doesn't work at all.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Alright... pass your papers forward.... Now for the big news you all have been waiting for, because you all have done such a good job learning about dolphins... WE ARE GOING... TO ... THE AQUARIUM!

Vocal chaos ensues as Dischon passes out the permission slips. The students lean over to each other and talk with intensity at the news.

DISCHON JOHNSON (CONT'D)

I know, I know...so I want you all to have your parents sign your permission slips... the trip is in a few weeks and I want everyone to go, otherwise you will have to stay with Mrs. Taylor down the hall while everyone else has fun. Also, you will not be able to go if you are not on your best behavior all the way up until the trip. If any of you are caught breaking the rules, you could be forced to stay here and miss out on the aquarium. OK, it's time for lunch so line up in the hallway.

The students line up... everyone except for Ashley who has missed the entire conversation.

DISCHON JOHNSON (CONT'D)
ASHLEY!!!!!!

She jumps in her seat and snaps to attention.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
Yes Mrs. Johnson.

DISCHON JOHNSON
Did you hear anything I just said?

ASHLEY ANDERSON
Uh-huh... yes Mrs. Johnson.

DISCHON JOHNSON
Girl, what is wrong with you?

ASHLEY ANDERSON
Nothing Mrs. Johnson... Can I go to recess now?

DISCHON JOHNSON
No.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
(whines)
Why not? I didn't do anything wrong!!!!

DISCHON JOHNSON
Calm down little girl. It's lunch time, that's why, but more importantly, you better watch your tone and your attitude.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
Sorry Mrs. Johnson.

DISCHON JOHNSON
Ashley, for the past 3 weeks, there has been a dramatic change in your behavior. Now, is there anything you need to talk to me about?

ASHLEY ANDERSON
I told you before Mrs. Johnson... everything is fine.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Well, I think I should speak to your mother when she comes to pick you up this afternoon.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

No... my mother is not coming to get me today.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Doesn't she always come to pick you up for school?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Ummm, not today. Today she has to go and get Tremayne early so she told me to walk home.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Well, give this note to your mother and tell her that I need her to call me when she gets this tonight, ok?

Ashley takes the paper and stuffs it into her pocket.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Yes Mrs. Johnson.

Ashley leaves while Dischon stands at her desk. She watches her leave and then turns to look out the window.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Ashley walks down the hall and when she gets about 10 yards away from the classroom door, she slows down and retrieves the notes from her pocket.

The camera reads her expression first, then cuts to a close up of the note:

ASHLEY ANDERSON V.O.

It is imperative that I speak with you regarding your daughter and her change in behavior. If I don't hear from you, I will be forced to notify the principal of my concerns. If there is something wrong, please talk to me. Dischon Johnson.

Ashley looks around the empty hall and throws the note in the nearest trash can. She walks into the lunchroom.

INT. DISCHON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dischon sits alone in her apartment and watches the news. She eats her TV dinner right in front of the television

NEWS ANNOUNCER

And a random wave of crime continues to plague our city. Witnesses to last night's attempted break in at the city dump say the alarm scared the bandits off although no one can seem to understand why someone would want to break into a branch office of the DPW... Sources close to the station have reported that break-ins only occur in the dead of night in secluded areas. So far, an abandoned warehouse in Fells Point and several homes usually used for prostitution and drug trafficking. Police continue to remain baffled at what the vandals want...

DISCHON JOHNSON

Dumb ass cops!!! They break in but don't take anything... sounds like they are looking for something to me and I ain't never been to the police academy.

DISCHON shakes her head and finishes her dinner.

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY

The teachers all eat lunch as they exchange war stories.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

All I know is, I'm really happy that I got placed at this school. It's much safer than any other school.

WILLIE MASON

That's one thing we have going for us here. The last school the board sent me to had metal detectors everywhere.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

The real tragedy is that having metal detectors in the school has become the norm.

WILLIE MASON

But this school went overboard with the detectors. We even had metal detectors at the doors.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

That's where they are supposed to be.

WILLIE MASON

The classroom doors... They went off every time a student brought a pen into class. It was crazy.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

But you were safe... and ultimately, that was the point.

WILLIE MASON

But at what cost?

TAYLOR DUBOSE

Three teachers at my last school got stabbed during the school year. Nowadays, you can't even raise your voice to students without fearing that the walk to your car may be your last walk.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

I hear that... what do you think Dischon?

Dischon sits and stirs her coffee. She stares at the stirrer with her eyebrows narrow.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

Dischon... DISCHON!!!

Kimberly walks over and snaps in front of DISCHON's face. This grabs her attention.

TAYLOR DUBOSE (CONT'D)

Dischon... girl, where are you?

DISCHON JOHNSON

Ummmm... I was thinking. Sorry about that. What did you say?

WILLIE MASON

Please don't tell me you are still caught up in Ashley Anderson.

DISCHON JOHNSON

I am... you guys, something is not right. And I know what you all think, but...

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

But nothing. Girl, you won't be satisfied until you are in the unemployment line.

DISCHON JOHNSON

At least I care... which is a lot more than I can say about you.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

Excuse me... you don't know anything about me.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Everyday you come in here with the same complaints... you hate the children, you hate the parents, you hate the administration. How anyone like you became a teacher is a mystery to me.

Kimberly looks at Dischon with a smirk on her face. She takes a deep breath and blows out in anger. She turns and walks away, but then stops. She walks up and stands right in Dischon's face.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

Dischon, do yourself a favor and don't come for me unless I send for you. You have been teaching what... maybe 4 years. I have been a teacher in City Schools for more than 15 years. I have seen this system go to hell in a hand basket and seen it eat bright, young teachers like you for breakfast and then shit you back out. I have had students and parents break my heart time and time again. I have seen the budget for supplies cut 20 times but the budget for security increase 30 times over.

(MORE)

KIMBERLY PATTERSON (CONT'D)

You don't know a thing about what made me become a teacher or what it even means to be a teacher because if you did, you wouldn't be in here sitting around asking us about what you should do about a child you feel is being neglected and until you get a little more experience under your belt... until you have seen half of what I have seen in this district, don't judge me. Now, before I burst your little bubble and further and hurt your incredibly delicate feelings, let me leave.

Kimberly leaves the other teachers quiets with open mouths.

WILLIE MASON

(laughs hard)

DAAAAAAMMMMMNNNNN!!!! Shots fired. No survivors.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

That's enough of that.

WILLIE MASON

All I'm saying is she bassed on her. I don't know how Johnson will ever recover all the pieces of her face on the ground.

Taylor looks Willie up and down.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

Why don't you worry about whether your wife will recover that money your hiding in the ceiling panels of your classroom? Or maybe she will find out about that little love nest you have tucked away in Cross Keys with Ms. Daniels?

Willie gathers his things and exits. He shoots Taylor a nasty look and she gives him the slant eye.

TAYLOR DUBOSE (CONT'D)

Now, you know you deserved to be "read", right?

DISCHON JOHNSON

Yea. Probably not that badly though.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

Dischon... I like you. I like you a lot, which is why I am gonna break my rule and tell you what to do.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Really?!? Because I have been wracking my brain trying to decide if I'm gonna disrupt this child's home on my hunch.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

Pretend you don't know her mother. If this were some other child, like Amanda Byers, and she was coming to school everyday, but in just a little worse shape than she was the day before, what would you do?

DISCHON JOHNSON

Send a note home asking for the parent to come to school to address my concern.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

Did you do that?

DISCHON JOHNSON

Yea. I sent one home with Ashley a week ago and I got no response.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

So, what else can you do?

DISCHON JOHNSON

If this were Amanda Byers, I would make a visit to her home to try and talk to her mother.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

OK, but what if that doesn't work?

DISCHON JOHNSON

If that doesn't work, I would talk to Mrs. Jeffries.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

See. I was able to tell you exactly what to do without opening my mouth. I'm something like a puppet master that way. Now that you have a plan, implement it.

DISCHON JOHNSON
Your right. Thanks girl.

They get up and leave out the room.

ESTABLISHING SHOT: OLD HOUSING PROJECT - DAY

INT. PROJECTS HALLWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Dischon walks down an endless hall. She has her satchel thrown over her shoulder and a piece of paper with Ashley Anderson's address written down on it.

As she walks down the hall, she tips past the broken bottles and trash in the hallway along both sides. She kicks several pieces of trash out of her way as she walks.

She places her hand on one of the graffiti covered walls.

DISCHON JOHNSON (V.O.)
This sure does look familiar.

INT. OLD PROJECTS HALLWAY - LATE AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

A YOUNG DISCHON , early teens, runs through a similar hallway to the one just seen minus the graffiti and the trash. Dischon kicks a soccer ball from side to side as she approaches the door. YOUNG TOMORROW, early teens, skips down the hall towards the same door.

TOMORROW ANDERSON (YOUNG)
Hi Dischon!

DISCHON JOHNSON (YOUNG)
Hey. How's it going?

Dischon picks the ball up and tries to balance it on her knee.

TOMORROW ANDERSON (YOUNG)
Everything is going great!! I am so excited about going to school on Monday, I don't even think I will be able to sleep tonight.

DISCHON JOHNSON (YOUNG)
But it's Friday, we just got out of school.

TOMORROW ANDERSON (YOUNG)
I know... don't you wish we could
go to school everyday?

Young Dischon drops the ball and her mouth falls into the
shape of an O.

DISCHON JOHNSON (YOUNG)
Are you crazy?!?? I hate school!!!

TOMORROW ANDERSON (YOUNG)
You hate school?? Why on Earth
would you say something like that?

DISCHON JOHNSON (YOUNG)
Because the teachers are always
asking questions... tryna get all
in your business.

Young Tomorrow shakes her head and smiles.

TOMORROW ANDERSON (YOUNG)
They are supposed to ask us
questions... they are our teachers,
how will they know what we don't
know if they don't ask us.

DISCHON JOHNSON (YOUNG)
All I know is when I grow up, I'm
never gonna step foot in another
school. I can't stand going there
now. I only go because Mama makes
me. When I get grown school is
gonna be the last thing I think
about.

TOMORROW ANDERSON (YOUNG)
Girl, you are crazy. I love school.
I love everything about it. Reading
books, answering questions... just
everything. When I grow up, I think
I may become a teacher just so I
can always be in school.

DISCHON JOHNSON (YOUNG)
Are you insane? All that time in a
classroom is not the life for me. I
think I may become a race car
driver.

TOMORROW ANDERSON (YOUNG)
And you call me crazy???

Tomorrow rolls her eyes and skips down the hall while Dischon kicks the ball down to her door.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. PROJECTS HALLWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Dischon shakes her head back to reality and walks through the hallway until she stands in front of the Anderson home. She shifts her weight and KNOCKS on the door.

A MINIMAL RATTLE is heard behind the door but no one comes. She KNOCKS again and FOOTSTEPS slide across the floor.

ASHLEY ANDERSON (THROUGH THE DOOR)
Who is it?

DISCHON JOHNSON
Ashley, it's me Ms. Johnson.

Ashley's eyes scan back and forth.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
Oh... what do you want?

DISCHON JOHNSON
I want you to open the door. I want to speak to your mother.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
You can't talk to her right now. She's sleeping.

Dischon shakes her head and rolls her eyes.

DISCHON JOHNSON
Well, wake her up. I need to talk to her.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
She doesn't like to be woken up. I will tell her to call you.

Dischon stomps her feet and hangs her hands on her hips.

DISCHON JOHNSON
Ashley... tell your mother to come to this door right now!!!

ASHLEY ANDERSON
She is sleeping Mrs. Johnson. I promise, I will tell her to call you tomorrow.

DISCHON JOHNSON

OK Ashley. But if she doesn't call...

ASHLEY ANDERSON

She will call. I promise.

DISCHON, noticeably upset, leaves as ASHLEY watches her walk away through the peephole in the door.

EXT. PROJECTS - NIGHT

Dischon sits in her car outside of the project where the Anderson family lives. She stares out the window at the doors to the project. She talks to herself as she sits.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Girl, what are you doing? Why are you here? This is crazy? Girl why are you--

She sees Ashley leave and walk down the street.

DISCHON JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Where... is... she... going?

Ashley looks over her shoulder several times as she walks down the street past all the elements of the neighborhood.

She walks into several stores and then leaves the store with her head lower than before. She then walks into a bar.

EXT. LOCAL POOL HALL - LATE NIGHT - ESTABLISHING SHOT

INT. LOCAL POOL HALL - LATE NIGHT

Dischon slides into the back of the pool hall and watches as Ashley walks up to the counter and takes a seat at the bar. The bartender pours her a drink.

They talk for a few minutes and Ashley has a furrowed brow and wrinkles around her eyes and mouth by the end of the conversation.

Ashley takes several sips of her drink and then leaves the bar. Afterwards, Dischon walks up to the bartender and slants her eyes at him.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Hey, can I speak to you for a moment?

BARTENDER

(looks her up and down)

No.

DISCHON JOHNSON (beat)

Please I really just need a moment
of your time.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Does it look like I have a moment
for anyone like you?

DISCHON JOHNSON

I noticed you had time to serve a
minor. If you want, I can call the
cops and you can talk to them. I
can have everyone from the health
department, to the state liquor
board crawling up your ass day and
night or, you can talk to me.

The Bartender looks up slightly and then picks up a glass jar
and begins to polish it with a dry cloth.

BARTENDER

(beat)

First of all, you have no idea what
was in the glass, and secondly, you
would have an easier time getting
that girl's mother to come in here
than the cops, and finally,
threatening me won't get you
anything but an ass whooping. Now,
get the hell out of my bar before
you make me raise my voice.

Dischon's face turns red with embarrassment. She looks down
for a moment to gather her thoughts.

DISCHON JOHNSON

(beat)

Look, maybe we got off on the wrong
foot. I don't mean any disrespect.
I am really just looking for some
help. That little girl you served
is one of my students. I'm worried
about her. Please help me.

The Bartender stops, takes a deep breath and sighs.

BARTENDER

Fine, what do you want?

DISCHON JOHNSON

I just want to know what she asked you. That's it.

BARTENDER

She asked me if I have seen her mother.

DISCHON JOHNSON

What do you mean?

BARTENDER

Look, all I know is that she said she can't find her mother. She said she's been looking for her for weeks now and that she was hoping I saw her.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Thank you. That's really all I wanted to know.

BARTENDER

Yea. Now get the hell outta here before you make me raise my voice.

Fear flashes across Dischon's face for a moment and she backs away. The Bartender motions towards the tip cup and Dischon leaves a tip for the Bartender.

Dischon walks to the door of the bar and pictures of Ashley's deterioration flash through her mind one at a time. She gasps and pushes the door open.

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY

Dischon sits in the teacher's lounge and stares off into her cup of coffee. Taylor walks into the lounge and notices Dischon's stares.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

Hey Dischon. How was your night?

DISCHON JOHNSON

I need to talk to you.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

OK, what's going on?

DISCHON JOHNSON

I think there is a real problem at home with Ashley Anderson.

TAYLOR DUBOSE
Problem like what?

DISCHON JOHNSON
I think Tomorrow is missing.

TAYLOR DUBOSE
What do you mean?

DISCHON JOHNSON
Look, I know you told me to keep my
distance, but last night, I went
over there.

TAYLOR DUBOSE
Christ Johnson... you're gonna get
yourself fired and arrested if you
keep this up.

DISCHON JOHNSON
Just listen, ok. I asked to speak
to Tomorrow and Ashley told me she
was sleep. Then she came downstairs
and left the building. I saw her go
into like 15 stores and then
finally a bar.

TAYLOR DUBOSE
She went into a bar. Really??

DISCHON JOHNSON
And she had a drink. Possibly
Alcoholic.

TAYLOR DUBOSE
Then what happened?

DISCHON JOHNSON
I talked to the bartender and he
said that she came in looking for
her mother.

TAYLOR DUBOSE
But, didn't you say she told you
her mother was in the house sleep?

DISCHON JOHNSON
Yea... she lied to me. Girl,
something is really, really wrong
here.

Taylor begins to frown her mouth with concern.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

Well, if you really think things are that bad at home, if you think her mother has gone missing, you need to go talk to Mrs. Jeffries and the principal... and maybe even the police.

DISCHON JOHNSON

But what if I'm wrong?

TAYLOR DUBOSE

Do you really think something is wrong?

DISCHON JOHNSON

I think I need more information.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

At this point, you have to investigate. Talking with Mrs. Jeffries covers your ass, which if what you think is true, you most definitely need to do.

DISCHON JOHNSON

I think I will just confront Ashley myself. If I bring Mrs. Jeffries in, she may involve the police and cause more damage than necessary.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

Do what you have to do, but I'm telling you, if that girl comes in here with one more injury, I'm calling the cops myself.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Now you want to get involved?

TAYLOR DUBOSE

Now you think her mother is missing.

DISCHON JOHNSON

OK. I will handle it.

TAYLOR DUBOSE

You better because I am not losing my license behind you or anyone else. My job is far too important. Plus I can pay my car notes and my resent out of one paycheck. You think I got time to play with you.

(MORE)

TAYLOR DUBOSE (CONT'D)
I do not. After all, Sallie Mae
just found out I graduated and my
real phone number.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

We are back in the classroom and the day is over. As DISCHON
dismisses the class.

DISCHON JOHNSON
OK class, I will see you all
tomorrow bright and early. Ashley,
please remain behind. I need to
talk to you.

The class exits. ASHLEY remains behind and takes a seat.

DISCHON JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Ashley, I need to talk to you and I
need you to be honest with me.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
Yes Mrs. Johnson, but is this going
to take long, because I have to go
and pick up Tremayne from the baby
sitter.

DISCHON JOHNSON
Why can't you mother pick him up?

ASHLEY ANDERSON
(beat)
She can... but she asked me to do
it because she has something else
to do today.

DISCHON JOHNSON
She never called me Ashley. I am
very concerned about what is going
on in your home.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
Mrs. Johnson, I already told you
there is nothing going on in my
home. Everything is fine.

DISCHON JOHNSON
Ashley, don't lie to me. I know
that there is something wrong. I
can help you. I have known your
family for a long time so you can
talk to me.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

There is nothing to say. There is
nothing wrong. I promise.

Ashley exits the room and walks down the hallway out of the school.

EXT. CRACKHOUSE - NIGHT

Ashley walks into a crackhouse. She looks around the house for an entrance and finds one off to the side. She enters the house.

INT. CRACKHOUSE - NIGHT

Ashley walks through the crackhouse with purpose. She sees various people in multiple states of euphoria. Ashley stares each female in the face before she moves on to the next one.

She turns over the women to get a good look at her face before she leaves. She rolls over a prostitute transvestite with a her penis out on the floor. She vomits and seizes on the floor in front of Ashley.

Ashley SCREAMS at the sight of the woman.

SAM OLIVER, 12, usually has on a logo of some kind, comes from a back room in the house and is pauses for a moment to see Ashley as she shakes over the woman. Urine drains from the woman's semi-erect penis and onto the floor.

He walks over to Ashley and as he gets closer, Ashley can see that his face has turned beet red by the time he reaches her. His eyes narrow in on Ashley's face.

SAM OLIVER

Was that you screaming just now?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Sam... is that you? What are you
doing here?

His voice lowers and intensifies.

SAM OLIVER

Was that you SCREAMING just now?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Yea. It was me. She is sick. I
think she is dying.

Ashley points to the woman. Sam maintains eye contact with Ashley. He voice deepens.

SAM OLIVER

Don't scream like that in here
again, do you hear me?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

I hear you. But she is gonna die if
you don't do something.

Sam stares for another moment and then his eyes relax.

SAM OLIVER

Oh, I'm gonna do something.

Sam motions to Man 1 and Man 2, 30's and long term drug users, who stumble down off their high to answer him.

SAM OLIVER (CONT'D)

Hey, you two... you know what to
do.

They get up and drag the transvestite out of the house and come back quickly without her. Sam gives them each a small sample of drugs and they quickly retreat to corners of the room to get high.

SAM OLIVER (CONT'D)

What are you doing here Ashley?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

I could ask you the same question?
Are you selling drugs?

SAM OLIVER

What I am doing here is none of
your business? What are you doing
here?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

(snooty)

Well, what I'm doing here is none
of your business.

Sam tenses up as he looks at Ashley for confirmation. He scans the perimeter and then steps in closer to sam.

ASHLEY ANDERSON (CONT'D)

I am here looking for someone.

SAM OLIVER

Someone... someone like who?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

None of your business, that's who.
When did you start selling drugs?

SAM OLIVER

What I do is my business, what
happens in here is my business, now
who are you looking for?

Ashley steps into his face and yells.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

I said none of your business!!!

Sam grabs Ashley by the arm in anger and pulls her to the side.

SAM OLIVER

You don't seem to understand. This,
right here, is my trap. The only
people in here are buying or using.
And you betta not be doing either,
which means you don't belong here.

Ashley snatches away from him in defiance.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Sam, you don't own me and this
building is abandoned so you don't
own it either. I suggest that you
remember that I will beat you down
like I did last year, if you touch
me again.

Sam pulls out a 9 mm pistol from his belt holds it against Ashley's head.

SAM OLIVER

And you betta remember that I am a
drug dealer. And a damn good one at
that. Ain't nobody gonna beat me
down EVER again. Especially you,
you hear me. You actin like an ASS
and you about to piss me the fell
off.

Ashley takes a deep breath and a flash of fear crosses her face. She nods in agreement.

SAM OLIVER (CONT'D)

Now that I have your attention, I'm
gonna ask you again, what the hell
are you doing here?

Ashley's words stammer as they creep out of her mouth.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

I... I told you, I am looking for someone. Someone important.

SAM OLIVER

Well, whoever you looking for ain't here. And they ain't gonna be here, so do yourself a favor and don't bring your ass back in my trap again... or you will regret it. You hear me?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

(docile)

Yea, Sam. I hear you. I won't come back.

SAM OLIVER

(sternly)

Good. Now, get the FUCK outta here.

Ashley backs away slowly and Sam keeps the gun pointed at her. She bumps into the door of the crackhouse and walks out into the streets.

EXT. CRACKHOUSE - NIGHT

Ashley comes out of the door to the crackhouse and stops on the top step. She takes several quick, deep breaths and cries. She wipes the tears from her face as her hands shake. She talks to herself.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Sam is a bastard. But he is also a drug dealer who just pulled a gun on me. Maybe I should rethink this whole quest. But what about Tremayne... what about his pictures? What about him? He needs his mother? I have to find her.

Ashley walks down the street and back to her apartment. She stops for a moment on the steps of her building and steadies her nerves.

INT. PROJECTS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ashley walks down the hallway to her apartment door and CRIES can be heard from inside the apartment.

She hears FAINT FOOTSTEPS behind her and she picks up the pace to get to her apartment.

Ashley enters the apartment as the CRIES GROW with intensity.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ashley walks into the apartment and Tremayne sits in his crib. His cries deafen Ashley as she grabs him and rocks him.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

What's the matter baby??? Something
is wrong... you can tell me!!!

As soon as she touches him, she pulls her hand back quick. She carries him to the bathroom and gets the thermometer from the cabinet.

She takes his temperature and sees that his temperature is 99.9. She looks for a baby Tylenol. Her breath quickens in its absence.

Tremayne's cries grow LOUDER. Ashley's face turns red and she walks over to the telephone.

She dials a number and waits.

ASHLEY ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Hey... good evening Mrs. Taylor, is
Rebecca home... Oh, my mother said
I can have company if you say it's
ok... hold on let me ask her... she
said that she will send Rebecca
home in like a hour... OK thanks.

Ashley hangs up the phone. She waits and rocks Tremayne as he cries. She walks over to the cabinet and retrieves a coffee can with money in it. She slides the money into her pockets.

There is a KNOCK on the door. Ashley opens the door and REBECCA TAYLOR, 13, enters. She covers her ears because of Tremayne's cries.

REBECCA TAYLOR

Girl... what in the world is going
on here???

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Thank God you came over. Shut the
door for me.

REBECCA TAYLOR

OK.

Rebecca shuts the door and walks into the house. Her eyes scan the room and then relax.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
I need a favor from you.

REBECCA TAYLOR
What kinda favor?

ASHLEY ANDERSON
I need you to watch Tremayne for me while I run out and get him some medicine.

Rebecca openly looks around this time.

REBECCA TAYLOR
Where is your mother?

ASHLEY ANDERSON
Oh, my mother. My aunt just called and she is having a super emergency. She asked me to watch Tremayne, but he has a fever and needs medicine. Can you watch him for me?

REBECCA TAYLOR
Sure. Is he gonna cry like this the entire time?

Ashley shakes her head and hunches her shoulders.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
He might, but if you just rock him, it will soothe him and he may stop crying.

REBECCA TAYLOR
Okay.

Ashley pauses for a moment. She hands Tremayne over to Rebecca and grabs her coat off the floor.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
How long can you stay, really?

REBECCA TAYLOR
Girl, I live down the hall and my mother is gone to bed. Really, I can stay all night.

Rebecca rocks Tremayne to the beat of his wails.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Well, I don't know if I will need you to stay all night, however, I wouldn't mind if you could stay longer than an hour.

REBECCA TAYLOR

Christine just took an Ambien so she will be dead in like two minutes. And I would rather be here than there if Jethro comes in tonight.

Ashley pulls the collar of her coat down around her neck. SHE slows and lowers her voice.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Is he still doing that?

REBECCA TAYLOR

I don't wanna talk about it...

ASHLEY ANDERSON

I understand. Thanks again for staying and I will be right back with the medicine.

Ashley leaves the apartment while Rebecca rocks Tremayne. His cries soften; however, it is still audible from behind the closed door.

Rebecca rocks Tremayne and his cries get LOUDER.

REBECCA TAYLOR

Tremayne... what is going on??? You are this upset, why?

She feels his forehead and notes his increased temperature. She rocks him harder.

REBECCA TAYLOR (CONT'D)

OK... So, the crying is killing me, how about a song. Mama sings songs to me when I am sick, maybe it will help you.

Rebecca sings "YOU ARE MY SUNSHINE" and Tremayne's cries quiet down. She sings to him as she rocks him.

INT. DRUGSTORE - NIGHT

Ashley looks for the children's brand of medicine as she walks down the aisle of the drugstore.

She gets to the section of the store and the cheapest bottle of medicine is priced \$7.89. She pulls out her money and counts out \$6.94. She grabs the medicine and walks over to the counter where she sees no one around.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Excuse me... is anybody here?

A FAINT VOICE comes from behind the partition.

VOICE

I'm on break. Come back in 5 minutes.

Ashley looks in over her shoulder.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

But... but--

VOICE

I said come back in 5 minutes.

Ashley sighs and shakes her head. She looks at the medicine and the money in her hand. She walks back over to the medicine section.

She holds the medicine and the money in her hands at the same time. She walks over to the door and looks over her shoulder. She walks back to the section to put the medicine back, but instead puts the medicine in her coat pocket.

Ashley speeds out of the drugstore with the money still in her hand and the medicine in her coat pocket.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ashley walks back in the apartment and hears Rebecca's voice through the door. He no longer cries, but he is still in noticeable distress.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

He stopped crying.

REBECCA TAYLOR

I been singing to him for the last 20 minutes.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

You been singing that song for 20 minutes.

Rebecca nods her head.

REBECCA TAYLOR

Yea... I tried switching to another, but he seems to only like "You Are My Sunshine"... his cry is unbearable... I don't know how you can stand it.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

He loves that song. Mama sings it all the time.

REBECCA TAYLOR

Mine too. That's why I know all the words.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

I got the medicine. Thanks for watching him. I will take him and put him to bed.

Ashley takes Tremayne and gives him the medicine. She rocks him for a few minutes and then puts him to sleep. She comes back from their room and sits down on the couch next to Rebecca, who has her feet up on the coffee table.

REBECCA TAYLOR

Can I stay a little while longer? I heard Jethro coming down the hall.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Of course. I don't know how you deal with him and all that...

REBECCA TAYLOR

I don't know how you deal with your mother making you watch Tremayne all the time.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Yea, I guess the only way to get through it is...

REBECCA TAYLOR

To get through it.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Now, look at us. Sounding like Mrs. Johnson. That is really sad.

REBECCA TAYLOR

Isn't she like a hundred years old.

Ashley takes a deep breath and relaxes into the couch.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

I know exactly what you mean. I get so upset sometimes that I just don't know how I will ever make it through the day.

REBECCA TAYLOR

Do you hear how old we sound? I bet no one will ever believe that we are only teenagers.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

(laughs)

I ain't even a teenager yet. I still have three months before my birthday!!!

REBECCA TAYLOR

Girl, I just turned 13 like two weeks ago.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Thirteen. Wow, girl, that feels like it is super old compared to all that we have gone through in our little lives.

REBECCA TAYLOR

You ain't lying chile.

They laugh again.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

I know... I am sorry I missed your party... I got busy at the last minute.

REBECCA TAYLOR

It's alright. I know something is going on here. I know you don't wanna tell me, but you will, eventually.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

(shrugs her shoulders)

Yea... well, do you want something to eat?

REBECCA TAYLOR

No, I'm good.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

OK, well, I am gonna take a shower and then I gotta run back out.

REBECCA TAYLOR
(sarcastically)
What, you got more medicine to buy
or something???

ASHLEY ANDERSON
And what does that mean?

REBECCA TAYLOR
Nothing. Go... I will be here with
Tremayne all night, so you don't
have to worry about him.

Ashley goes into the bathroom and starts the shower. She
grabs her towel and enters the bathroom and shuts the door.

Minutes later, she exits the bathroom and enters her bedroom
where she dresses.

She checks on Tremayne, who has fallen sound asleep by this
time. She rubs his face with her hand and he feels cooler
than he did when she gave him the medicine.

She walks over to Rebecca to speak but Rebecca has fallen
asleep on the couch.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
(reflectively)
Why didn't I think about this
sooner?

REBECCA TAYLOR
Hey, don't forget to pick up some
milk while you are out. You guys
don't have any?.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
I know. We haven't had milk for a
while now.

Ashley shakes her head and blinks hard to hold back her
tears.

Ashley plugs in the baby monitor set and places the receiver
next to Rebecca and then leaves the house again.

EXT. PROJECTS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Dischon sits in a car outside of Ashley's building. Just as
she is about to get out of the car, Ashley leaves the
building.

Dischon follows her and this time, after she goes into the first store, Dischon approaches her.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Ashley, what are you doing in here?

Ashley jumps back and gasps for air.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Ms. Johnson... what are you doing here?

DISCHON JOHNSON

I was following you. What are you doing here?

Ashley stops for a moment as her eyes search Dischon's frame.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Have you been following me this entire time?

DISCHON JOHNSON

Why? Do you have something to hide?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

No. I had to run to the store and get something is all. For my mother. Wait, why have you been following me? What is your deal?

DISCHON JOHNSON

Oh, so she is home right now. You never answered my question, why have you been following me?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Yea. She is upstairs with Tremayne.

DISCHON JOHNSON

So, when we go upstairs, your mother will be somewhere in the house with your little brother, is that what you are saying to me right now?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Mrs. Johnson, I do not have time to talk with you about my mother and why she hasn't called you back. Maybe she just doesn't like you. Did you ever think of that? We are not going up stairs. I am going up stairs. U are going home.

Ashley steps around Dischon as she talks. Dischon circles back and stops Ashley in her tracks.

DISCHON JOHNSON

You can double talk me all you want, but I am not letting you go anywhere without speaking with your mother. I have tried to reach out to her and she has not responded. Play time is over, do you hear me?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Get your own life, Mrs. Johnson. My mother doesn't want to be bothered by you... don't you get it. She is not your friend and you are not a kid anymore. Now, leave me alone!!!

Ashley runs away from Dischon. Dischon takes off after her, but she is no match for the spryness of Ashley's youth.

Ashley runs down a set of back alley steps and up a safety grate. She darts across two rooftops until she reaches building and enters from a maintenance corridor.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ashley walks through the apartment door and notices Rebecca gone from the couch. She looks around and finds Rebecca and Tremayne in Ashley's bed, asleep together.

Ashley picks Tremayne up and carries him into their mother's bedroom and they climb into bed together.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - DAY

It's the next day Ashley awakens to the smell of bacon and eggs. She leaps out of the bed and runs into the kitchen with excitement in her face and a wide tooth smile.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Mom... is that you... where...

The light in her face dims when Ashley sees Rebecca put the milk back in the fridge. Ashley looks down for a moment and then stops and readjusts her face.

REBECCA TAYLOR

Hey there... I just thought I would cook breakfast this morning as a way of saying thanks for letting me stay here last night.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Oh, that's good. It's alright. You can stay here anytime you need to.

REBECCA TAYLOR

Thanks.

Rebecca places the food on plates just as Tremayne stirs.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

I have to get him. Thanks for cooking. He loves eggs and bacon.

REBECCA TAYLOR

No problem.

Ashley leaves the kitchen and comes back with Tremayne. They sit down at the table with Rebecca and eat their breakfast.

Once breakfast is done, Rebecca leaves and Ashley dresses Tremayne and then herself for the day. They leave the apartment.

EXT. STREET ATM - DAY

Ashley walks to the ATM and uses her mother's bank card to withdraw the fee for Tremayne's day care provider.

EXT. DAY CARE CENTER - DAY

She drops him off and pays the day care provider at the door. Then she walks to school.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Ashley enters the schoolyard and sees no one outside. The yard is still. She walks into the school.

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ashley walks into the school and still sees no one. The halls are empty. She walks down the hall and to her classroom. When she walks in to her classroom, the room is deserted.

She looks around and sees her classmates stuff in their desks but still sees no one. She drops her bookbag at her desk and walks to the office.

She opens the office door and walks in.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ashley walks into the office and still finds no one. The radio is on behind the secretary's desk and it plays gospel music. The counter top is covered with school announcements and various sheets of paper.

There are chairs lined against a wall with magazines on each side of the side tables next to the chairs.

There is also a bell on the counter top. Ashley RINGS the bell and a voice calls from another room behind the desk.

SECRETARY (V.O.)

I'll be right there.

Ashley stands at the desk and sighs. She taps her foot and places her hands on her hips. She stands there for another moment before she taps the bell.

SECRETARY (V.O.)

Didn't I say I will be right there?
Just wait a minute.

Ashley walks around to the chairs in the room and takes a seat.

The Secretary comes from the back room with a huge stack of papers in her hands. The stack is so large that it covers her face for a moment.

SECRETARY

Can I help you?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Yeah. Where is everyone?

The Secretary places the stack of papers on the counter top and bends around the stack of papers to get a good look at the face of the student. She gasps to see that Ashley.

SECRETARY

Ashley? What are you doing here?
Why aren't you on the trip?

Ashley cocks her head to the side and squints.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

What trip?

SECRETARY

To the National Aquarium. Ms. Johnson and two of the other teachers took all the students in your grade to the Aquarium today.

Ashley tilts her head back and rolls her eyes into her skull.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

That's right. The trip was today.

SECRETARY

Your mother didn't remind you this morning when she dropped you off.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Oh... she forgot this morning. Is there another classroom that I can sit in until the class gets back?

SECRETARY

Well, you know what, give me your mother's number and I will call her and ask if I can just drop you off at the Aquarium.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Oh no, I don't wanna trouble you.

SECRETARY

Child please, it's no trouble at all. Take a sheet of paper and write her number down.

Secretary picks up the phone to dial. Ashley's eyes search the room quickly for a distraction.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Oh no. That's alright. I can stay here and catch up on some of my school work. I am a little behind and I need to get back on track. I can go sit in Ms. Jenkins room.

SECRETARY

You don't wanna go on the trip? But you love dolphins. Is something wrong Ashley?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

No, there is nothing wrong. Nothing wrong at all. Thanks but I am alright. I am gonna head on down to Ms. Jenkins room.

Ashley walks out of the office and heads to Ms. Jenkins room for the rest of the day.

EXT. STREET ATM - DAY

It's after school another day and Ashley walks down the street and to the ATM. She pulls out her mother's ATM card and inserts the card into the machine. She punches in the code and reads the screen. Her mother's bank account is low. There is only \$45.19 in the account.

She reaches in her pocket and pulls out an invoice from her brother's day care provider and reads the bottom of the invoice \$20 DUE NOW- FINAL NOTICE.

Ashley goes back to the screen and punches in the code again and withdraws \$40 from the machine.

EXT. TREMAYNE'S DAY CARE CENTER - DAY

Ashley walks into the day care center. She hands the provider a crisp \$20 bill and takes a receipt from the provider.

Ashley walks over to Tremayne's cubbie and gets his coat only to find a note attached to his jacket. The note reads:

*Your child needs a box of pampers
and a box of wipes. If you do not
provide these things, your child
will not be permitted to return to
the Center until these items are
provided. Management.*

Ashley looks over her shoulder at the day care provider, who is busy with another child, and frowns. She shakes her head and walks over to Tremayne who sits on the floor and plays with a few toys.

She bends down to pick him up but stops for a moment and just stares at him. He turns to look at her with a wide-eyed grin. He shows his four crooked teeth.

Ashley looks at him and smiles. She then bends down and puts his coat on his little chubby arms and scoops him up into her arms. She grabs his baby bag backpack and they walk out of the day care center.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Ashley struggles up the stairs with Tremayne and his stuff and her stuff. She breathes heavy as she carries a Tremayne up the stairs and into the hallway.

Ashley stops for a moment to wipe several beads of sweat from her forehead. Her knees shake from all the weight she has. She readjusts Tremayne into one arm and opens the door to the hallway with another.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ashley walks down the hallway atop broken bottle fragments and trash out of her way as she walks towards her door. She shakes her head at all the trash in the hallway.

She struggles to retrieve her keys from her pocket.

Just then a group of kids not much older than her run up the stairs and tear down the hallway. They disappear before she could ask any questions.

Ashley's face flushes with fear as she struggles to get her keys into the door. She hears a COMMOTION from down stairs and then footsteps on the stairs. She takes deep, intense and heavier as the footsteps get closer and closer to her.

She is in a full blown heave when she gets the door open and slides in the house with Tremayne and her bags in her arms. She slams the door shut.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ashley peeps out the hole in the door to see if she can see anyone at her door and she sees no one. She sighs with relief and turns away from the door.

Ashley walks through the apartment into Tomorrow's room and lays Tremayne on a pile of dirty clothes. She picks up a shirt and smells it to see how bad it smells. She nods her head slightly and places the shirt right beside Tremayne's head.

Ashley walks back to the kitchen and opens the refrigerator. All that's there is one half a pack of bacon, a summer sausage, a carton of milk and a quarter pack of crackers.

She reaches back into her pocket and pulls out the \$20 bill and the note from the day care provider. She sighs and just shuts the refrigerator door.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Ashley lies in bed while Tremayne sleeps beside her. She hears the ALARM but does nothing. The ALARM stops and she gets up and walks over to the house phone. She dials.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Hello... May I speak to Rebecca please... hey, I am not going to school today, do you want to come over and chill with me... ok, see you in a minute... oh, can you bring some cereal... yea, I got milk... ok, see you in a few.

Moments later there is a KNOCK on the door. Ashley walks over to the door and peers through the hole to see Rebecca in a hoodie and pajama pants. Ashley opens the door and Rebecca comes in with a huge box of Frosted Corn Flakes in her hands.

REBECCA TAYLOR

Girl... what's up?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Nothing. Just didn't feel like being bothered today.

REBECCA TAYLOR

So, you just gonna chill in the house and not bother with school?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Girl, I got a lot on my mind right now and I just can't think about school at this very moment.

REBECCA TAYLOR

I understand. I really didn't feel like going anyway.

Ashley looks at Rebecca as she walks over to the table and sits the box down. Her head tilts to the side as she watches her friend walk over from the table with a slight limp.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Did it happen again last night?

REBECCA TAYLOR

Girl, now why would you ask a question like that? You already know the answer.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Why don't you tell your mother what happens when she is gone to work?

REBECCA TAYLOR

Because, he pays all the bills and he buys all the food.

(MORE)

REBECCA TAYLOR (CONT'D)
Before she met him, we were all
living in a family shelter in
Canton.

Rebecca lowers her head into her hands and sighs a deep sigh
of relief.

REBECCA TAYLOR (CONT'D)
He makes sure she stays off drugs
and he makes sure she goes to work
every night.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
But look at what it costs you. He's
messing with you because he thinks
he owns you.

REBECCA TAYLOR
He does own me. She knows it, I
know it and he knows it.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
But that is not ok.

Rebecca sits down next to Ashley on the couch.

REBECCA TAYLOR
The only one of the four of us that
seems to have a problem with it is
you. And your life ain't exactly no
crystal stair.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
Well, you know you can stay here.
You can stay with us anytime. And
you don't even remember that poem
from last year, so don't even try
and play with me.

They chuckle.

REBECCA TAYLOR
Until when? That nosey teacher of
yours finally makes it through the
door. It is just a matter of time
before you ain't living here no
more and I got to be stuck here...
all alone... with him and her.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
Well, until then, you can stay
here.

REBECCA TAYLOR
Maybe just for a little while.

Rebecca starts to yawn wildly.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
You still sleepy?

REBECCA TAYLOR
Girl, I never went to sleep. He
came in as soon as she left and
stayed all night with me.

Ashley gets quiet and shock comes across her face. She looks
puzzled.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
All night.

REBECCA TAYLOR
I told you, he owns me. So he does
what he wants with me and then when
he's done, he throws a towel at me
and tells me to "make sure I don't
get pregnant".

Ashley's face now shows full blown shock and disgust.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
Y'all don't use... protection?

REBECCA TAYLOR
(dismissive)
Girl, bye! Protection means he
can't feel anything while inside of
me. It is so gross. He is so gross.

Rebecca stands up from the couch and walks around to the
kitchen for a minute.

REBECCA TAYLOR (CONT'D)
Sometimes, I want to throw up at
the thought of him being anywhere
near me. He disgusts me.

Rebecca stops however she keeps her back to Ashley.

REBECCA TAYLOR (CONT'D)
Sometimes I have to talk to him...
you know, during... or he will beat
me... or he will beat her. And the
sickest part is that sometimes, I
think I like it when he comes into
my room.

Rebecca shakes her head as she speaks.

REBECCA TAYLOR (CONT'D)
It's like, I know he is coming and
I know that it's going to hurt and
I know that he is gonna breathe on
my face and my arms and lick my
boobs... and I know that I should
be disgusted, but every now and
then... when he touches me, I like
it...

A single tear slides down Rebecca's cheek.

REBECCA TAYLOR (CONT'D)
How sick is that, you know? That I
like it when Jethro touches me.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
Wow... you never told me all that!

REBECCA TAYLOR
I don't know why I am telling you
all this now... but I am.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
Well, there is nothing you can do
about liking it because you can't
help what you like.

Ashley gets up and walks over to Rebecca. She puts her hand
on her shoulder.

ASHLEY ANDERSON (CONT'D)
You know, maybe we should talk to
somebody about it? What do you
think?

Rebecca pauses for a moment. She turns to look Ashley dead in
the eye.

REBECCA TAYLOR
Have you told anybody about your
mom?

Ashley stops for a minute and takes a deep breath.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
What do you mean?

REBECCA TAYLOR
You know what I mean. Your momma is
missing, right? She left y'all here
and didn't say a word, right?

Rebecca maintains eye contact with Ashley. Ashley's takes deep, shallow breaths.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

My mother is not missing. She is just out right now.

Rebecca smiles. She walks back over to the couch and flops down.

REBECCA TAYLOR

Well, since your momma has been out, have you thought it would be a good idea to tell someone?

Rebecca looks at Ashley right in the face then she looks away.

REBECCA TAYLOR (CONT'D)

I didn't think so. Because you know the same thing I know. Adults only make things worse. Even when they are trying to make things better, they make then worse.

Ashley looks at the ceiling for a moment and then rejoins her friend on the couch.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Well you got me there.

REBECCA TAYLOR

Look, I will make a deal with you, ok. When you tell that nosey teacher of yours what's going on with you... then I will tell her what is going on with me. Deal??

Ashley's face gets tight for a moment then she nods her head.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

OK. Deal.

The girls shake hands and then lean back their heads.

ASHLEY ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Until then, you're staying right here. He may think he owns you, but he doesn't. You are free.

Rebecca gives a soft smile.

REBECCA TAYLOR

I wish it were that simple. It's bad enough I'm gonna have to sneak out of here so he doesn't know where I was. If he catches me coming out of here, he may start to suspect that your Momma ain't here. Then he WILL come after you. Eventually, I have to go home, or he will beat her because she didn't make me come home. I am sure he is already angry because I slept here last night.

Ashley places her hand atop Rebecca's and pats it lightly.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Well, stay here for as long as you can. Then you can go home.

Ashley smiles as she rests her head on Rebecca's shoulder.

ASHLEY ANDERSON (CONT'D)

And as for me, there's a butcher knife in the kitchen with his name on it if he comes down here with that mess. I will send him to Hell where he belongs.

They both smile and put their legs up and fall asleep on the couch.

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY

It's another day in the teacher's lounge and Dischon is more frantic than ever over the situation with Ashley. She paces back and forth around the room when Kimberly and Willie enter.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

Dischon, what is wrong with you girl?

DISCHON JOHNSON

Girl... I took your advice and attempted to confront Ashley at her apartment last night and she blew me off!

Kimberly and Willie stand there with their mouths wide open. Dischon paces.

WILLIE MASON

Wait... you did what?

DISCHON JOHNSON

I took Kim's advice.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

That was not my advice at all and you know it. I told you to go and talk to Mrs. Jeffries and you did not do it.

WILLIE MASON

Girl, do you know how much trouble you could get into for going to a students home without parental permission?

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

You could lose you job, your pension, and possible your freedom if her mother decides to press stalking charges against you.

Dischon furrows her brow for a moment and then shrugs her shoulders. She paces back and forth.

DISCHON JOHNSON

She won't. I don't even think her mother is around anymore.

WILLIE MASON

What do you mean? And stop pacing, you are making me dizzy.

Dischon stops and walks over to the table and takes a seat. Kimberly and Willie join her around the table.

DISCHON JOHNSON

I think her mother is missing.

(beat)

Like, when I followed her, she went into the bar and told the bartender that she had no idea where her mother was and that she was looking for her.

WILLIE MASON

(confused)

So, you think her mother is missing?

DISCHON JOHNSON

Yea. Think about it. She was fine at the beginning of the year, but now, she is falling apart. Her clothes are dirty and her hair is a mess.

Dischon waves her hands for emphasis

DISCHON JOHNSON (CONT'D)

And, it's like, always a mess. I think it may be matted down to her skull. No one ever combs it.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

She is falling asleep in all her classes.

Dischon nods in agreement.

DISCHON JOHNSON

And now she is starting to fail. She missed the trip to the aquarium, which is crazy because she loves dolphins.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

Look Johnson, I am tired of this conversation. We are gonna solve this once and for all.

WILLIE MASON

She looks like she's losing weight too.

Dischon and Kimberly both look at Willie.

WILLIE MASON (CONT'D)

What? I can't have noticed that the child is a wreck up from the neck up?!?!?

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

So, why haven't you done anything about it?

DISCHON JOHNSON

(beat)

Because... it's really none of my business and I wish you would stop asking me that question.

Kimberly gets up and walks over to the intercom. She presses the button.

SECRETARY

Main office?

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

Hi there, can you page Ashley Anderson to the teacher's lounge, please?

Dischon and Willie sit and observe.

SECRETARY

No problem. Who am I speaking with?

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

My apologies, this is Mrs. Patterson from 302.

SECRETARY

Thank you and standby.

Moments later. A voice comes over the intercom.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)

Ashley Anderson, report to the Teacher's Lounge on the 3rd Floor.

Dischon feigns a creepy smile.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Why did you do that?

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

Because, you obviously aren't going to let this go and it is time that we get some answers from this young lady.

DISCHON JOHNSON

OK.

There is a slight knock on the door. Kimberly walks over and answers the door.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

Who is it?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

It's me, Ashley. Is someone looking for me?

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

(snatches open the door)
Come in here right now.

Ashley enters and looks puzzled and scared. Her eyes search the room where she sees Willie and Dischon at the table.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Is there something wrong?

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

Ms. Johnson and I have some questions for you, young lady. About your home life. Do you want Mr. Mason to be in the room when you answer?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

I'm not answering any questions about my home life.

Kimberly takes a deep sigh and walks to Ashley. She is now stands in front of her.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

You are misinformed young lady. I am not your peer. I am a teacher. Which means that when I say that I want answers, I want answers.

Kimberly pokes Ashley in the arm.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON (CONT'D)

Now, you can either answer my questions now, or I can call Dr. Hamilton, the principal, in here and you can answer her questions, do you understand?

Ashley looks concerned for a moment and takes a deep breath. Her eyes water.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

OK... ok. I will answer, but only to her.

Ashley points at Dischon. Dischon looks around and then sighs in relief.

KIMBERLY PATTERSON

OK. Mr. Mason and I will leave. But the moment you decide you don't wanna answer, I am coming back. And I am bringing Dr. Hamilton with me and the school police, you hear me?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Yea ma'am.

Kimberly and Willie exit. Dischon stands right beside Ashley and then takes a seat next to her.

DISCHON JOHNSON
Are you sure you're ready to answer?

ASHLEY ANDERSON
No.

DISCHON JOHNSON
If you want, I can bring Mrs. Patterson back?

ASHLEY ANDERSON
(enthusiastically)
NO... No... please don't bring her back. You know, for an Art teacher, she is not very serene.

DISCHON JOHNSON
(chuckles)
Serene... that's a big word. I am gonna have to make sure you get credit for using it correctly
(beat)
Well, tell me what is going on with you.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
Nothing is really going on right now Mrs. Johnson.

DISCHON JOHNSON
That's not true and you know it.

Ashley looks around the room. The wells in her eyes get bigger.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
Well, I have been having a little trouble lately. The days are starting to blend together.

DISCHON JOHNSON
Well, I have noticed that your clothes have been getting dirtier and dirtier over the past couple of months.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
Yea. That's because I haven't really had time to go to the laundromat lately.

DISCHON JOHNSON
That's because you're twelve. Why
are you going to the laundromat?

ASHLEY ANDERSON
I always go to the laundromat.

Dischon taps her foot while Ashley looks all over the room.

DISCHON JOHNSON
Ashley, where is your mother? You
can tell me. I can help you if you
just tell me. Where is she?

ASHLEY ANDERSON
I dunno.

DISCHON JOHNSON
What do you mean?

Ashley looks down at the floor.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
You know what I mean. I dunno where
she is.

DISCHON JOHNSON
Did you see her this morning?

ASHLEY ANDERSON
No.

DISCHON JOHNSON
Well, when was the last time you
saw her?

Ashley looks up into the ceiling. She shakes her head back
and forth.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
Remember when you asked me how she
was doing?

DISCHON JOHNSON
Yea. That was 2 months ago.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
It was two weeks before that.

Dischon's mouth falls open wide into the shape of an O.
Ashley looks down at her shoes and the tears fall.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Ashley, that was 10 weeks ago. You have not seen your mother in 10 weeks?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

No. And I have looked everywhere I can think of but I can't find her anywhere. I don't understand. She left to get us some milk for our cereal and never came back.

Ashley's cries get intense.

DISCHON JOHNSON

You and your brother have been all alone for 10 weeks. Ashley, why didn't you say anything?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Because, if I told you what was going on, you have to call Social Services and then they are gonna take Tremayne away. I can take care of us. I been doing just fine taking care of us.

Dischon leans over and wipes the tears from Ashley's face.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Ashley... that is not the point. The point is you are 12. It is not your job to take care of you guys. It's your mother's job. And if she never came back, something could have happened to her. Ashley, we need to call the police.

Fear flashes across Ashley's face. She stops.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

No... no... no, you can't. If you call the police, they are gonna take us away and split us up. And, they are gonna put her in jail.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Ashley, something could have happened to her. She could be hurt and wondering why no one has come to look for her. Now I am calling the police. And they are not gonna split you up from your brother. The system doesn't work like that.

Ashley shakes her head briefly and then stops. Her eyes race back and forth.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

But I have already looked all over the city. Every night I go looking for her. I just can't find her. I check all the abandoned houses and buildings. I even went to the local clubs and bars, but I can't find her.

DISCHON JOHNSON

That was you that the news said was breaking into places all over the city.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Yea. I was just trying to find my mother. I don't know where she could be.

DISCHON JOHNSON

(reflexively)

I do...

Dischon pulls out her cell phone and dials.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Dischon alerts the police and there are two OFFICERS (late 30's) in the office to interview Ashley. A third officer carries Tremayne in with him. She hands Tremayne to MRS. SHIRLEY JEFFRIES, late fifties, who holds him in her arms and rocks him. DR. CHARMAINE HAMILTON, late forties, stands around with several forms in her hands.

OFFICER 1

So, you mean to tell me that your mother has been gone for 10 weeks and no one knew anything.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

No. I never told anyone.

OFFICER 1

Why not? I don't understand. Why wouldn't you ask for help?

Ashley shakes her head softly.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Never trust cops. EVER.

OFFICER 1

Well, we are here to help. And we are gonna do everything we can to try and find your mother.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Cops always say that right before they put you in jail. You wanna put my mother in jail. I know you do. But you shouldn't because she is a great mother.

OFFICER 1

A great mother wouldn't have left you alone to care for a baby for 10 weeks.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

See, you're judging her right now and you don't even know her.

OFFICER 1

I know enough to know that you need help. I don't judge, but I am a police officer and you need to learn to trust the police officers. We are here to help. That's it.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Tell that to Michael Brown.

OFFICER 1

Child, please.

Ashley looks over at Tremayne who grins and tries to break free from Mrs. Jeffries grip to get to Ashley. She smiles and reaches for him.

Just as they are about to touch, Mrs. Jeffries stands up and walks to the desk with Tremayne.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Where are they going?

OFFICER 1

Just to the desk to fill out some forms and make a few calls.

Mrs. Jeffries comes over and sits back on the couch. Ashley looks at Tremayne as he smiles at her. She sits beside Mrs. Jeffries and extends her arms towards Tremayne who wriggles free of Mrs. Jeffries and leaps into them. Ashley holds him close and rocks him.

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

Now Ashley, I'm glad you finally decided to come forth and tell someone what was happening.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

I didn't, really. But Mrs. Patterson is really scary when she is angry.

Mrs. Jeffries chuckles at the statement.

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

Yea, I bet. The officer has done his best to make sure that you and your brother are released into my care while they mobilize a task force to look for your mother. While we wait to hear back from them, why don't we go and get something to eat?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Well, Tremayne is probably hungry by now. I only packed crackers and soda in his lunch box today.

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

What about you? I know you are hungry too if you gave him the last of the food?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

I will be fine. Just feed him. He likes cheeseburgers and french fries for dinner and cereal and milk for breakfast.

Mrs. Jeffries smiles.

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

Well, that's good to know.

Mrs. Jeffries turns to the crowd of people in the room as they talk.

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen, we are gonna take off for the night if there is nothing else needed of us.

CHARMAINE HAMILTON

Mrs. Jeffries, do you think it is wise to leave at this juncture in the investigation?

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

As a matter of fact, I do. These children are hungry and I have some additional paperwork that I need to complete in my office. I am sure that things will be just fine here and the officer has my number in case of an emergency. Or if we have any news to share with the babies.

Dr. Hamilton looks around the room and receives various nods of confirmation.

CHARMAINE HAMILTON

Well, alright then. I will see you both bright and early tomorrow then.

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

(nods)

Right on schedule. Come now babies.

Mrs. Jeffries gathers her coat and papers and Ashley picks Tremayne up. She readjusts him in her arms and walks out behind Mrs. Jeffries. As she gets to the office door, she turns and shoots a strong, fierce look at Dischon who is stands behind the desk to talk to Dr. Hamilton.

Dischon sees Ashley and shrinks into herself for a brief moment as Ashley disappears from the doorway.

INT. SHIRLEY'S OFFICE - MID AFTERNOON

Ashley sits in a chair. She holds Tremayne in her arms as she struggles for comfort. Mrs. Jeffries sits at her desk while she fills out some paperwork. There are fast food wrappers in the trash can at the end of her desk and Tremayne is dead weight in Ashley's arms with crumbs on his chin and his shirt.

Ashley sits upright and looks at Mrs. Jeffries at her desk, which is covered in paperwork. Mrs. Jeffries finishes with one section of paper work and turns to look at Ashley.

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

OK Ashley. Now, I know what you must be thinking.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

I am thinking that you are gonna split us up and put my mother in jail.

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

Believe it or not, that is not what we do here at Child Protective Services. Here, we protect children.

Mrs. Jeffries turns her chair towards Ashley and folds her hands on her lap.

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES (CONT'D)

It is my job to look at everything that has happened over the last 10 weeks and made a decision about the care that you guys have received and determine what would be reasonable in your best interest. Now, that may mean removing you and your brother, but it may not.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Do you think you are gonna split us up?

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

That depends.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

On what?

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

Whether or not one of the suitable homes we have at our disposal can care for two children at one time.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

And if you can't find one?

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

You already know the alternative.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

That's not fair! We didn't do anything wrong!

Mrs. Jeffries looks disappointed. She sighs deeply.

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

Honey, that's not the way things work.

(MORE)

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES (CONT'D)

I am sorry, but right now, the best solution is still one where we find your mother.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

But, you will just try and put her in prison so you can take us away. That's all social workers do. Rip families apart. I was doing fine on my own. I didn't need your help or anyone else.

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

You know, a lot of people think that. If you call the social worker, your kids are taken away and your put in prison for neglect. That is just not true. I have been a social worker for more than 35 years. I love it. Because of situations like yours. Working with you gives me the chance to really help out someone who needs it. But, I don't put people in prison. I don't even recommend that people are sent to prison. I recommend that children are provided for. Now, if your mother goes to prison, that will not be up to me. That will be up to a judge. Right now, I am more concerned that you and your brother are safe and cared for. That is it.

(beat)

Now, tell me. Do you have any additional family? Like an aunt or uncle?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Well, we have Uncle BeBe and Aunt Ungela, but they live in Jersey City and aren't really married... and they live in a tent on a reservation.

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

Anyone else? Like a grand parent or a godmother?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Well, there is Aunt Geena, but Mama said she is homeless now.

(MORE)

ASHLEY ANDERSON (CONT'D)

And Uncle David who is not really our uncle but our cousin, but Mama said that I can't be around him alone. She wouldn't say why.

Mrs. Jeffries shakes her head and writes down the names. Ashley calls off names to Mrs. Jeffries and each person seems to be in a worse position than the last person.

Mrs. Jeffries then calls to all the family members Ashley mentioned. Ashley lies Tremayne down on a small cot near the desk and then lies down across the chairs herself.

Mrs. Jeffries gets to the end of the list and notices that the sun has gone down and her office is dark except for the light from her desk lamp.

She looks over at the children and takes a deep sigh. Just as she is about to wake Ashley, the phone RINGS. She turns her back to the children to answer.

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

Hello... oh, hello Officer... yes, they children are still with me... oh, I see... are you sure... how long ago... I understand... no, that's alright... I will tell her... thank you officer and good night to you.

Mrs. Jeffries hangs up the phone and turns around to see Ashley right in her face. Her eyes are well with water and her bottom lip quivers.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Was that about my mother?

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

Ashley, sit down please.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

No... just tell me the truth... was that about my mother?

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

Ashley-

ASHLEY ANDERSON

I promise I won't cry... but you have to tell me the truth... please... I need to know.

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

Alright Ashley. That was the officer from earlier today. It was about your mother. They found her.

Ashley perks up a little.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Where is she? Is she ok?

Mrs. Jeffries shakes her head in negation.

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

Ashley, your mother is gone. She died the day she left you to go to the store. She has been gone this entire time. I'm so sorry baby.

Ashley pauses for a moment and then holds her head down in sorrow. She turns away from Mrs. Jeffries and puts her hands over her face.

Mrs. Jeffries stands up and walks over to her. Ashley tries to breakdown but keeps her composure long enough to turn and ask,

ASHLEY ANDERSON

What happened to her?

INT. PROJECTS - DAY

SUPER: 2005

A YOUNG TOMORROW, late teens, plays with LITTLE ASHLEY, 3.

Little Ashley runs and plays and has fun with Young Tomorrow. They are both dressed in white.

LITTLE ASHLEY

Sing it again Mommy... Sing it again...

YOUNG TOMORROW

Alright princess... anything for you.

Young Tomorrow sings "You Are My Sunshine..."

YOUNG TOMORROW (CONT'D)

YOU ARE MY SUNSHINE... MY ONLY
SUNSHINE... YOU MAKE ME HAPPY...
WHEN SKIES ARE GREY...

Little Ashley stops and sits down and plays with toys while Young Tomorrow sings. Tomorrow smiles as she finishes her song.

YOUNG TOMORROW (CONT'D)
YOU'LL NEVER KNOW DEAR.. HOW MUCH I
LOVE YOU... PLEASE DON'T TAKE... MY
SUNSHINE AWAY...

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

Ashley is back in school and sits in the principal's office and waits for the police to come and speak with her. Dr. Hamilton sits right beside her. She pats Ashley on the shoulder for comfort. Mrs. Jeffries fills out paperwork.

CHARMAINE HAMILTON
Ashley, I know this seems rough
right now. But it will get better.
Your mother's funeral was really
nice. I was surprised that they
could put something together so
quickly.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
Is your mother dead?

CHARMAINE HAMILTON
No.

Ashley's eyes narrow. She turns her head and looks Dr. Hamilton dead in the eyes.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
Then you have no idea what I am
going through right now. Please,
don't try and help. Adults only
make things worse. Even when they
try and make things better, they
only make them worse.

Dr. Hamilton looks despondent.

CHARMAINE HAMILTON
I will leave you alone then Ashley.
Let me know if you need anything.
And just remember that I am only
here to help you guys.

She gets up and walks away. Ashley sits in the chair and stares at the wall. Dischon walks in. She stops and looks at Ashley for a moment and then walks away.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Mrs. Johnson, do you know what happened to my mother? No one will tell me and I really would like to know.

Dischon stops in her tracks and comes back to Ashley with beads of sweat on her forehead.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Well Ashley, if they haven't told you what happened, then I don't think I should.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Please. I have to know.

Dischon takes a seat next to Ashley and recounts the details.

EXT. STREET CORNER - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Tomorrow walks down the street with grocery bags in her hands. She looks both ways before she crosses the street to get to her car.

She crosses and takes out her keys, two YOUNG KIDS, early teens, in hats run up to her and stick a gun in her face. She drops the bags and puts her hands up in the air.

YOUNG KID 1

Give it up bitch!!!

YOUNG KID 2

Yeah Bitch, give it up!!!

TOMORROW ANDERSON

OK... calm down... just take it...
just take it... take it all...

The Young Kids grab for her purse when the hat slips off Young Kid 1's head. He struggles it and that's when Tomorrow can see his face.

TOMORROW ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Sam... Sam Oliver. Is that you?

SAM OLIVER

Damn... Damn it all. Now why did you have to go and do that?

Tomorrow raises her eyebrows.

TOMORROW ANDERSON

Do what? I don't understand. What did I just do?

SAM OLIVER

You just proved to him that I couldn't rob someone without messing things up?

Tomorrow shakes her head.

TOMORROW ANDERSON

How did I do that???

SAM OLIVER

You recognized me... now I have to do what I have to do.

TOMORROW ANDERSON

Have to do what, Sam?

SAM OLIVER

I have to do this--

Sam pulls his gun out and points it right at Tomorrow's face. She takes a deep breath and freezes. She then looks at him. Sam's hand shakes for a few seconds.

TOMORROW ANDERSON

Sam, you don't have to do this? You don't have to kill me. Here, just take it. Take the car!

SAM OLIVER

No. I have to do it. If I don't, then they will kill me.

TOMORROW ANDERSON

Sam, you know I have children. You know my children. Think about what you are doing.

Sam's hand steadies.

SAM OLIVER

I can't think about them right now... I gotta think about me.

TOMORROW ANDERSON

No don't... pleas--

Sam shoots Tomorrow right in the stomach. She lets out a loud GRUNT and doubles over as the fine mist of gunpowder rises in the air. She grabs her stomach and applies pressure to the gunshot wound. Then, she falls to the ground.

YOUNG KID 2

Look, steal her wallet and keys and we won't even get charged.

SAM OLIVER

But, they won't know who she is when they find her.

YOUNG KID 2

Duh! That was the point stupid. C'mon. We will take her car.

Tomorrow, laid on the curb, looks up at Sam with tears in her eyes. Sam looks back at her with sorrow in his eyes. He shakes his head and mouths the words "sorry" to her as he picks up her purse and grabs her keys.

SAM OLIVER

Got it dude!

They hop into her car and start it up. A few moments later, her car speeds off and turns around the corner. Tomorrow lies on the ground with her hands across her stomach. She sings to herself while tears run down her face.

TOMORROW ANDERSON

YOU'LL NEVER KNOW DEAR... HOW MUCH
I LOVE YOU... PLEASE... DON'T
TAKE... MY... SUNSHINE... AWAY...

Tomorrow's face and muscles relax as she takes her last breath and dies on the curb.

MONTAGE:

- Passers by notice Tomorrow on the ground and call the police.
- The police and the medical examiner come out and examine the scene and question witnesses.
- The Medical Examiner takes Tomorrow's body away and run her fingerprints.
- They tag her as Janet Doe, autopsy her, place her in the freezer and complete a report.

END OF FLASHBACK

BACK TO SCENE

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

Dischon and Ashley sit in the office.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Ashley, your mother was identified from the information you gave us and through DNA sampling. They matched her to a woman they found in Fells Point.

Dischon places her hand on Ashley's knee.

DISCHON JOHNSON (CONT'D)

It appears that she was coming from the store with bread and milk when she was robbed and shot at gunpoint.

Ashley looks at Dischon as tears well in her eyes.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Somebody tried to rob her.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Yes. And then they shot her for some reason and stole her purse and her car.

Ashley sits for a moment looks up at the ceiling. She takes a deep breath and looks at Dischon with a relaxed forehead.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

So... what happens now?

DISCHON JOHNSON

Well, now, Mrs. Jeffries finds you and your brother a good home where you can stay with people who will take care of you.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Right... she looked all night, you know. I saw her. She called everyone she could think of to take care of me and my brother and she couldn't find anyone.

DISCHON JOHNSON

There is someone for the both of you.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

But what if there isn't. I don't know what I will do if I lose Tremayne too. He was Momma's everything.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Ashley--

ASHLEY ANDERSON

You did this. You did this to us. I had everything under control. I was taking care of us. I was gonna find her.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Ashley, I am more sorry for you and your brother than you could ever imagine. I knew your mother. I loved your mother. I know that nothing in this world was more important to her than you and your brother. You guys were her whole world...

ASHLEY ANDERSON

And now... now she is gone and we have nothing.

DISCHON JOHNSON

That's not true. Mrs. Jeffries will make sure you guys are ok.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Yeah, right. We are going to strangers because our entire family is unsuitable.

Dischon gets up and walks over to Mrs. Jeffries. They lean in closely to each other.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Shirley, what is gonna happen to them? Tomorrow is gone and Ashley says that you couldn't get in touch with anyone in their family.

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

Well, it's true. Tomorrow is gone, but that is not the worst part.

(MORE)

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES (CONT'D)

Ashley and Tremayne don't have any family. Everyone she told me about said that they grew up with Tomorrow but that none of them knew her in the recent years and that they were not willing to care for her children.

DISCHON JOHNSON

So, what is gonna happen to them?

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

Well, at this point, if someone doesn't appear, they will be going into foster care.

Mrs. Jeffries shakes her head as she fills out the paperwork.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Well, there has to be someone?

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

At this point, I would take a stable godparent, but the police have been to the house and they can't find any paper work that would substitute for my judgement.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Well, I know who Ashley and Tremayne's godmother is. I didn't say anything before because I didn't think it was an option.

Mrs. Jeffries stops and puts down her pen. She turns her head to Dischon and stares at her for a moment.

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

You know who their godmother is and you didn't tell me?

DISCHON JOHNSON

How was I supposed to know that you were having trouble locating blood relatives? Tomorrow didn't want Ashley to know because she didn't want her to freak out.

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

Who? Who is it? I need to find her before she gets away from me.

DISCHON JOHNSON
Well... it's me. I am Ashley and
Tremayne's godmother.

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES
(puzzled)
You???

Ashley overhears this revelation and stands up and approaches
the women.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
You're our godmother?

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES
Since when?

ASHLEY ANDERSON
Yea, since when???

DISCHON JOHNSON
Since we were ten years old. Not
you and I , but me and your mother.

Both people stand back and just stare at Dischon. Mrs.
Jeffries motions with her hand to continue the story.

DISCHON JOHNSON (CONT'D)
As I keep saying, Tomorrow and I
grew up together in Flagg House
projects. Back then it was nice and
one day, we went from hating each
other to loving each other.

They turn and look at each other.

DISCHON JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Well, when I was 15, I had a
pregnancy scare. It was a stupid
college boy who told me he loved me
and got me all twisted up. Anyway,
I asked Tomorrow if she would be
the godmother to my children,
present and future and she said yes
and then she asked me.

Dischon smiles and looks at Ashley and Mrs. Jeffries. They
stand there and look at her.

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

Okay then... Since you just stopped the story without anymore information, I guess I will just ask you. How does that make you their godmother?

DISCHON JOHNSON

Oh, well, because I asked her and she then stated that when she had children, I would be their godparent since she was mine.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Okay, but why didn't you say anything?

DISCHON JOHNSON

Well, when you started going here, you were smart funny and popular. I didn't want you to think that I was a creep and a weirdo because I have been a terrible godmother. All I ever did was send you Build A Bear teddies on your birthday.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

You're the Build-A-Bear Workshop lady?

DISCHON JOHNSON

Yea. That's me.

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

What?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Every year, my mother would send me into my room and there would be a new Build-A-Bear lying on one of my pillows. My mother always said that it was from my Fairy Godmother.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Yea. Like in Cinderella. Which is the story that I used to read to you when you were a baby.

Dischon crosses the room and takes a seat. She looks up at the ladies and takes a deep breath.

DISCHON JOHNSON (CONT'D)

After I would read Cinderella to you, you would always start crying.

(MORE)

DISCHON JOHNSON (CONT'D)
So your mother would start singing
to you, because it was the only
thing that could calm you down.

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES
Well, I'm convinced.

Mrs. Jeffries picks up a huge stack of papers and throws them
in the "Shred It" bin and picks up a new much LARGER stack.
Ashley wrinkles her face.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
Hang on a minute. My mother was no
singer. In fact she hated singing.
There was only one song that I like
to hear my mother sing. What was
it?

Dischon tilts her head back and smiles just a little. Then,
she sings--

DISCHON JOHNSON
YOU ARE MY SUNSHINE... MY ONLY
SUNSHINE... YOU MAKE ME HAPPY--

ASHLEY ANDERSON
WHEN SKIES ARE GREY... YOU'LL NEVER
KNOW DEAR... HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU...

They sing the final line together.

TOGETHER
PLEASE DON'T TAKE... MY SUNSHINE
AWAY.

Ashley's mouth falls open into the shape of an O.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
Oh my god... you really did know
her. She was your friend.

DISCHON JOHNSON
Yes. I keep telling you that. We
were friends. Your mother was a
little more than a friend to me,
she was my sister from a different
mister.

Ashley stands and taps her foot for a moment.

DISCHON JOHNSON (CONT'D)
I know you may not like me. I was
only trying to help you but I
probably ruined your life.
(MORE)

DISCHON JOHNSON (CONT'D)

I got you into trouble with the principal and now you and your brother may end up in Foster Care, but perhaps you guys can come and live with me for awhile. Just to try it out. If you don't like it, perhaps Mrs. Jeffries could search for an alternative placement.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

All this time... You have been here looking out for me. You have been protecting me all this time.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Yes, I am your godmother and I love you very much.

Ashley shakes her head for a moment and then walks over to Dischon and sits down.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

I think we can give it a try, if it's alright with Mrs. Jeffries.

SHIRLEY JEFFRIES

Oh honey, it's fine with me.

Dischon and Ashley hug. Then Ashley's eyes widen.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

There is just one other thing that I need to do before we go home.

Ashley gets up and walks over to Officer 1.

ASHLEY ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Excuse me, you said that you could help, right?

OFFICER 1

That is what I am here for.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Are you just school police or are you a regular cop too?

OFFICER 1

Regular cop.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Well, my friend has a problem.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT

It's that same night and Ashley, Officer 1 and Officer 2 walk down her hallway. She doesn't stop at her apartment and instead walks down the hall towards Rebecca's apartment.

Officer 2 knocks on the door. A SCURRYING noise can be heard the door and then the door creaks open.

REBECCA TAYLOR
Can I help you, officer?

OFFICER 1
Well, actually I was thinking I may be able to help you.

REBECCA TAYLOR
How's that?

OFFICER 2
Well, do you know Ashley Anderson?

REBECCA TAYLOR
Yea, I know Ashley and her brother Tremayne. Her mom just died and they're gonna be moving soon, so if you need to catch her, she is right down the hall.

A voice calls from the distance.

JETHRO (V.O.)
Who the hell is that at the door?
Get yo ass back in here in this bed!!! Now!!!!

Rebecca cringes at the sound of his voice.

REBECCA TAYLOR
It's the police.

Jethro scurries and gathers himself. Several heavy objects FALL in the background.

OFFICER 1
Excuse me for a moment, young lady.

Officers 1 and 2 enter the apartment. Rebecca's eyes follow them. Then she turns her head and sees Ashley stands in the hallways with Dischon. Rebecca gives a nervous smile.

REBECCA TAYLOR
Why did you do this? Why did you bring them here?

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Because, you need someone to protect you now that I'm leaving.

REBECCA TAYLOR

He's gonna beat her, you know that. I told you that! Because of you, he may kill her! Is that what you wanted, me to have a dead mother too?

Ashley's pauses for a moment. There is a LOUD SCUFFLE in the background from inside the apartment.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

No. What I want is for your mother to take care of you like she is supposed to do. It's not your job to be the grown up in your family. You don't have to screw him to keep your family together.

Dischon remains very quiet.

REBECCA TAYLOR

You're right. But what are we gonna do when you leave. Not only will I have to screw him, but I may have to screw his friends too.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Not if you tell. Tell everything. Leave nothing out.. If you tell the police what he and his friends did you to, they will all go to jail for a very long time and you can get the help you need.

REBECCA TAYLOR

Ms. Johnson, with all due respect, you don't know what I have been going through... what I have had to endure.

DISCHON JOHNSON

What I'm saying is... you won't have to ensure it alone... not anymore... not ever again.

Officer 1 and 2 come out with Jethro in handcuffs. He has several bruises on his forehead and on his neck.

OFFICER 1

Did he hurt you, little lady?

REBECCA TAYLOR

Yea... every night for the past six months.

OFFICER 2

Oh, they gonna have fun with you Sweet Meat over at BCCC.

JETHRO

You called the cops on me. You ungrateful little bitch!

Dischon steps in front of the girls.

DISCHON JOHNSON

No, I called the cops on you. Now you get to be somebody's bitch, Sweet Meat!

The officers smirk and carry Jethro off down the hallway as he screams expletives.

DISCHON JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Why don't you lock up the house and I will take you home with us.

REBECCA TAYLOR

Really? That sounds nice.

Rebecca locks the doors and leaves with them.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

SUPER: 2020

It's the year 2020 and we are at a high school graduation. There are parents and family members all over the schoolyard. There are students in caps and gowns off in the distance as Dischon and a much older version of Tremayne walk up the lot. They see two seats together next to an older woman who identifies herself as Rebecca's mother. Rebecca and Ashley are amongst the graduates and they flaunt their success. They smile and laugh and take selfies and lavish in their happiness. The News Announcer comes in and stands behind the podium.

NEWS ANNOUNCER

Take your seats please.

Everyone sits downs and gets quiet.

NEWS ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your patience. It gives me great pleasure to serve as your master of ceremonies on today as we honor the achievements of your children as they move on from high school into college. And now, with the commencement address, we have our valedictorian, Ms. Ashley Anderson.

Ashley hugs Rebecca again for and walks to the podium.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

Thank you to everyone gathered here today. We are your Class of 2020 graduates and we could not be happier to share this moment with our families and friends. You know, there was a time in my life where I didn't know if I was gonna make it to this point. I had decided that no matter what happened or what came my way, I wouldn't ask for help. The disappearance and murder of my mother taught me how to be respectful and responsible. Sometimes, the responsible thing to do is to ask for help, even when you don't want to... even when it's hard and it might hurt. I am so glad I finally broke down and asked for help. That help lead me to the sister I never knew I had and a love that I couldn't ever imagine. So, when you are off in college next year, don't be afraid of getting overwhelmed. It happens to the best of us, but always remember that no matter what, help is on the way for those who simply ask for it. Sometimes, Adults can make things much better than they were to begin with.

Dischon sits there and closes her eyes tightly. She blinks hard and is transported back to the past.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

SUPER: 2003

It is Dischon and Tomorrow's graduation day. The yard looks similar to Ashley and Rebecca's graduation.

TOMORROW ANDERSON

Girl, I am so excited. I can't wait until they call my name.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Me either girl. I am looking forward to college and getting away from here.

TOMORROW ANDERSON

The only thing I wanna do after high school, is raise that baby right over there.

Tomorrow points to BABY ASHLEY (1) who rests in the arms of a parent.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Girl, she is adorable! I could just eat her up.

TOMORROW ANDERSON

Well, you should love her, you're her fairy godmother.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Girl... You know I am coming over to read her that story. It's my favorite.

TOMORROW ANDERSON

That's because you have a pulse... every little girl loves Cinderella. All I wanna do for the rest of my life is love her.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Girl, you so sappy.

TOMORROW ANDERSON

I'm serious... she is the greatest blessing I could ever get. Everything I do from now on has to be because it is what's best for her, not for me. My little princess deserves a royal farm and

DISCHON JOHNSON

You ain't lying. OK... shh. They are starting to call the names.

The girls smile as their names are called for graduation. They each start up the pathway as the names are called.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Dischon snaps back just in time to hear them call Ashley's name. She smiles as Ashley traipse across the stage and collects her diploma. All the people cheer as Ashley walks back to her seat.

NEWS ANNOUNCER

You know what to do class.

The students all stand up and throw their hats in the sky and the parents all stop and cheer and shout for the graduates.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Listen, I knew things haven't always been perfect. And sometimes I may have stumbled raising you and your brother. But I did the best I could. Not as good a job as your mom, but I kept you alive and healthy and helped you get into college.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

You did a good job raising us.

DISCHON JOHNSON

I tried to do a good job raising you guys... all alone.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

OK. I will buy you a drink.

DISCHON JOHNSON

No. What I am trying to say is, in spite of everything, your mother would be so proud of you. Of all that will have and do with your life. You were to have your mother with you for all of it. I'm sorry she couldn't be here to see it.

Dischon pauses for a moment and then stops.

DISCHON JOHNSON (CONT'D)

You are not old enough to buy anyone a drink! So, don't even think about it!!!

EXT. DISCHON'S HOUSE - DAY

It's college day and Ashley and Rebecca are off to college together. Dischon has loaded up the car and they are off to Frostburg State University.

DISCHON JOHNSON
Have fun at college ladies.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
We will. Lots of fun!!!

DISCHON JOHNSON
Please don't get X-Rated. I would hate to have to drive all the way up there to kick your butt because you wanna be running lose.

REBECCA TAYLOR
Do worry, I will make sure she stays on the straight and narrow.

DISCHON JOHNSON
Yea... because your skinny butt can get kicked as well Miss Missy!!!

They all chuckle.

DISCHON JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Ashley.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
Yes.

DISCHON JOHNSON
Your mother would be so proud of you. All that you have accomplished and all that you have become. You were her heartbeat outside her body. She loved you more than anything except the boy child.

ASHLEY ANDERSON
You know, you tell me that every time I do anything worthwhile.

DISCHON JOHNSON
That is because I know if your mother was here she would want the best for you. You deserve the best. Now, have fun in school and stay out of trouble.

Dischon and Tremayne wave goodbye as the girls leave.

EXT. ST. PAUL'S CHURCH - DAY

SUPER: 10 years later

It's Ashley's wedding day and she is a gorgeous bride in white. She has the entire set up: white dress, huge train, long white veil.

Dischon goes behind the veil to talk with Ashley just before she walks down the aisle.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Ashley, you are the most gorgeous bride I have ever seen. Your mother would be so proud of you. You're a wife, a daughter, a friend, a teacher, and a companion. Derrick is a lucky man.

ASHLEY ANDERSON

My mother Tomorrow would be proud of me, but my mother Dischon is right here standing by my side and making sure that everything I have needed since Tomorrow died, Tremayne and I have. You are the best mother Tremayne and I could have ever asked for after our mother died.

DISCHON JOHNSON

I am glad you think of me as your mother. I have thought of you as my daughter since the day you and your brother came to live with me. And your mother Dischon is very proud of you. Proud of all that you have accomplished and all that you have become.

Tremayne walks her down the aisle as Dischon beams with pride at the young woman Ashley has become.

She then looks at Tremayne as he gives her away to her future husband Derrick Minoah. She smiles with excitement and glee as they exchange in their first kiss as husband and wife.

INT. WEDDING RECEPTION - NIGHT

Ashley and Derrick dance the night away.

After the wedding, Dischon packs all Ashley' things up and puts them in her car and takes them home for Ashley and Derrick after their honeymoon.

INT. DISCHON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tremayne looks at all the gifts Ashley and Derrick get and he smiles.

TREMAYNE ANDERSON

When do you think it will be my
turn Mama?

DISCHON JOHNSON

Oh boy, I'm not sure. When you meet
the right woman and she loves you
enough that you see it everyday in
the way she walks and how she acts.
Then it will be your time baby.

TREMAYNE ANDERSON

I can't wait for it Mama.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Me either baby. I got your sister
out with her craziness. Now I just
need to work on you.

They chuckle.

Tremayne comes over and gives Dischon a kiss on the cheek.

TREMAYNE ANDERSON

Good night Mama.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Good night Baby.

Dischon takes a seat on her plush couch and closes her eyes as tight as she can. When she opens them, she can see Tomorrow on the couch.

DISCHON JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Girl, I knew you would come and
talk to me today of all days.

TOMORROW ANDERSON

I know. Our baby is all grown up
now.

DISCHON JOHNSON

Yep. She's not bothering me or her
brother no more. Small favors.

TOMORROW ANDERSON

(chuckles)

I knew I picked the right person to
take care of them while I was gone.

DISCHON JOHNSON

It wasn't easy, but we made it
through.

TOMORROW ANDERSON

I knew you would.

They sit beside each other and start sing.

TOGETHER

YOU ARE MY SUNSHINE... MY ONLY
SUNSHINE... YOU MAKE ME HAPPY...
WHEN SKIES ARE GRAY... YOU'LL NEVER
KNOW DEAR... HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU...
PLEASE DON'T TAKE... MY SUNSHINE...
AWAY.

THE END.