

ORPHEUS STAR

written by
Donn Swaby

Copyrighted
10750 Palms Blvd. Unit 201
Los Angeles, CA 90034
818-915-9944
donnswaby@yahoo.com

EXT. WORKING CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD IN ST. LOUIS -- NIGHT

A poorer neighborhood of the bustling city that nevertheless buzzes with the energy of people trying to live life the best way they know how.

INT. DOUGLAS' ROOM -- NIGHT

DOUGLAS PRIVETT (mid 20's), African-American, lies face-up in bed listening to rock music blasting through ear buds connected to his cell phone while finishing the last bit of a JOINT. He exhales and watches a plume of smoke float to the ceiling.

His room is a random mess of misplaced clothes, kitchenware and other various items strewn about while posters of various rock bands plaster the walls.

An alarm on his cell phone rings.

INT. BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Dressed in a Bohemian blend of scruffy denim and cheap punk rock accessories, Douglas stands in front of a mirror spraying and priming his tall, flaring mohawk. He stops and stares at himself in the mirror, wearing a facial expression that's enigmatic at best.

EXT. THE MUSIC DEPOT -- NIGHT

People hang out on the sidewalk talking and smoking while rock music blasts from inside.

A sign above the door reads: 20th ANNUAL ST. LOUIS BATTLE OF THE BANDS.

EXT. BACK ALLEY -- NIGHT

MIKEY (20's), Caucasian, a roadie, and Douglas smoke from a weed pipe.

MIKEY
So you guys ready to win number
three?

Douglas shrugs, takes another hit and passes it back.

DOUGLAS
I feel like having a shot. You want
one? I'm buying.

INT. MAIN BAR -- NIGHT

Douglas pays for a round of shots, passes one to Mikey.

JOE VICARRO, (30's), Caucasian, the drummer, and THEO KOEBAL, (20's), Caucasian, the guitarist, approach.

JOE
(to Douglas)
Thought we'd find you here.

DOUGLAS
You guys're just in time. Was about
to get you from backstage.

Douglas hands Joe and Theo a shot each.

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
Where's Rico?

MIKEY
At the front, interviewing people
who came to see you guys.

Mikey motions to the front of the club where RICO, (20's), Latino, records an interview of a fan.

DOUGLAS
What for?

THEO
He swears we'll be thankful one day
when we're famous and he has all
the footage for a documentary.

Douglas picks up Rico's shot.

DOUGLAS
Guess I'll have to drink his.

MIKEY
Damn, D. That's your third shot in
five minutes.

DOUGLAS
I'm good.

JOE
Bro, you look like you were just in
a sauna.

DOUGLAS
I sweat a lot.

He holds up his shot.

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
Cheers.

He downs both shots and they all down theirs.

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
One more round?

JOE
Maybe after the show.

Joe, Theo and Mikey head toward backstage. On the way, Joe and Theo stop at the front of the stage where their respective GIRLFRIENDS are standing. Douglas watches them hug and kiss before the guys continue backstage, more than a hint of envy on his face.

Douglas looks around the bar, takes in the scene. People talking, laughing, enjoying each other's company.

A mixture of sadness and envy fall across his face. He'd give anything to feel what these people feel.

INT. MAIN STAGE -- NIGHT

Douglas, Theo, and Joe hit the stage to loud applause.

MC (O.S.)
And now give it up for two time St.
Louis Battle of the Bands
champions, Third Degree!

The band launches into their first song with Douglas singing lead.

Douglas jumps and spins, playing FAST AND LOOSE. He misses a change, out of sync with his band mates. Theo and Joe share a look of concern.

Douglas fills the rhythm pocket with Joe as Theo rips a guitar solo. He looks out into the audience and spots someone up front wearing a Led Zepplin Swan Song t-shirt (the one with the winged angel, Apollo.)

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. CAL'S BEDROOM -- DAY

CAL (16), Caucasian, stands facing Douglas (15), wearing the exact same Led Zepplin shirt.

CAL

If you really like it, bro, I have no problem giving you the shirt off my back.

Cal pulls the t-shirt off and hands it to Douglas, smiling.

CAL (CONT'D)

All yours.

END FLASHBACK

INT. MAIN STAGE -- NIGHT

Douglas blinks, looks around. Joe and Theo stare at him, wide eyed. Douglas jumps in front of his mic and begins singing, realizing he must have spaced out.

INT. MAIN STAGE -- NIGHT

Six bands stand on stage with the MC (40's), Caucasian.

M.C

And the winner of the 20th Annual Battle of the Bands is... Distorted Notion!

The audience claps as Distorted Notion take their bow. Douglas glances over at Joe, who looks pissed.

EXT. BACK ALLEY -- NIGHT

Douglas carries his amp and guitar to the band's van where Joe stands loading his drum set.

JOE

Where was your mind tonight, bro?

DOUGLAS

I don't know. I'm sorry.

Joe begins to walk back inside.

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

It's just a Battle of the Bands.

Joe turns back, staring at Douglas, like he can't believe what he's hearing.

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
What does it matter if we win again
or not?

JOE
You see that tall, bearded dude
talkin' to the band that won?

DOUGLAS
What about him?

JOE
He's a scout for Kamikaze Records.

Douglas nods, realizing the lost opportunity.

DOUGLAS
It's not like there's a guarantee
anything's going to happen.

JOE
Do you even want to be in this band
anymore?

Not waiting for an answer, Joe turns and goes back in,
leaving Douglas to feel the weight of his guilt.

INT. DOUGLAS'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Douglas enters his room, puts down his guitar.

He goes to his closet, searches through his hung-up clothes
until he stops, pulling out a Led Zepplin Swan Song shirt
(the same shirt Cal gave to him in the flashback.)

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. CAL'S BEDROOM -- DAY

CAL
Go ahead and put it on.

Douglas takes off his own button down shirt and pulls on the
Led Zepplin t-shirt.

Cal smiles.

CAL (CONT'D)
Perfect fit.

Cal goes over to his dresser, pulls out another t-shirt. Douglas can't help noticing the way Cal's muscles ripple as he puts on the shirt.

END FLASHBACK

INT. DOUGLAS' ROOM -- NIGHT

Douglas stares at the shirt with longing.

INT. DOUGLAS' LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Douglas sits on his sofa, his lap top open before him on the coffee table. He goes to a Fulton, Missouri business directory site, aka, the white pages, and types in CAL JOHNSON. Nothing comes up.

He pulls up the yellow pages and types in Cal's name. An ad appears on the screen for CAL'S MUSIC STORE with the caption: NO INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE ABOUT THIS BUSINESS.

Douglas smiles. It's still a lead.

After a moment, he clicks open a new tab, pulls up greyhound.com, then finds a round trip ticket from St. Louis to Fulton leaving tomorrow.

Douglas goes to click purchase, then hesitates. Second thoughts? He sighs, moves his hand away and sits back, staring at the screen.

EXT. DOUGLAS' APARTMENT BUILDING -- NIGHT

Douglas exits the building.

EXT. ALLEYWAY -- NIGHT

Douglas lights up a joint and takes a long toke.

He exhales the smoke as he looks up at the few stars shining through the partially cloudy sky.

DORA CLEMONS (O.S.)
The stars are lovely tonight.

Douglas turns to see DORA CLEMONS, (60's), African-American, approaching. Homeless, but content, she pushes a shopping cart filled with her meager belongings.

She looks up, pointing.

DORA CLEMONS (CONT'D)
Andromeda... Perseus... Taurus...
Orion...

She turns to him, smiling.

DORA CLEMONS (CONT'D)
'Course, if we were to get in a
spaceship and travel millions of
light years to try to reach 'em,
the further we went, the more their
compositions'd change. They'd cease
to look like the constellations we
know. Proof that things ain't
always what they seem.

She leans in, a glint in her eye.

DORA CLEMONS (CONT'D)
Trust me, I know 'bout them stars.
(pointing upwards)
Been up there. Astral projection.
We can all do it, you know. Just
forgotten how, weighed down by
fear, doubt, pain, all our baggage
from the past. Gotta let go, just
let it go. Then we'd be light as a
feather. Free.

She extends one hand towards Douglas, her smile sincere.

DORA CLEMONS (CONT'D)
Name's Dora Clemons.

Douglas looks at her hand hesitantly.

DORA CLEMONS (CONT'D)
Don't worry. I don't have cooties.

Douglas shakes her hand.

DORA CLEMONS (CONT'D)
Least not too many!

She laughs heartily and Douglas joins in. She's certainly a
live one.

DORA CLEMONS (CONT'D)
What's your name, child?

DOUGLAS
Doug.

DORA CLEMONS

Very nice to meet you, Doug.

DOUG

Same.

He holds up the still-lit joint, offering it to her.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Want a hit?

DORA CLEMONS

Don't mind if I do.

She accepts the joint and takes a drag.

Douglas nods, studying her. Something about this woman...

DOUGLAS

You look familiar. Have we met before?

Dora exhales, offers a playful little smile.

DORA CLEMONS

I get around, here and there.

She gives the joint back to him.

DORA CLEMONS (CONT'D)

So what do you love to do, Doug?

DOUGLAS

Play bass guitar and sing.

DORA CLEMONS

Ah, a musician. Ever heard of the constellation Lyra?

DOUGLAS

No.

DORA CLEMONS

Named after the lyre that Orpheus played. Heard of him?

Douglas shakes his head, intrigued.

DORA CLEMONS (CONT'D)

In Greek mythology, Orpheus was a musician. So good at playing the lyre, he could charm everything and everyone. But his story ends in tragedy.

(MORE)

DORA CLEMONS (CONT'D)
Lost his love 'cause he couldn't
follow directions. Couldn't trust
the process. Lost his life 'cause
he vowed to never love another.

She looks upward, shakes her head.

DORA CLEMONS (CONT'D)
Shame. All that love gone to waste.

She grows still, letting her words hang in the air. With a sigh, she turns to Douglas, all smiles .

DORA CLEMONS (CONT'D)
Well, Doug, it was a pleasure.

She's about to go when she stops, looks back at him.

DORA CLEMONS (CONT'D)
You remember what I told you now.

He watches her push her cart down the alley, humming a carefree tune.

INT. DOUGLAS' LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Douglas sits in front of his laptop. He purchases the bus ticket and let's out a big exhalation. He clicks on the tab showing the ad for Cal's Music Store and smiles, excited about his upcoming surprise reunion.

EXT. I-70 HIGHWAY -- DAY

A greyhound bus flies along a highway.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS -- DAY

Douglas, now wearing the Led Zepplin shirt Cal had given to him ten years ago, sits and looks out the window at the rural landscape while listening to rock music via headphones.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. CAL'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Cal and Douglas sit on the floor smoking a joint.

CAL

Go ahead and take an extra big puff, my man, 'cause today I'm playing you my top ten most epic songs of all time.

END FLASHBACK

INT. GREYHOUND BUS -- DAY

Douglas continues to stare out the window.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. CAL'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Cal stands playing air guitar along to a speed-metal song thrashing his head back and forth. Douglas jumps up, stands next to Cal and begins to play air bass. Both in sync, they grin ear-to-ear.

FLASHBACK ENDS

INT. GREYHOUND BUS -- DAY

Douglas sees the station up ahead.

EXT. FULTON BUS DEPOT -- DAY

The bus pulls in to the station. Douglas exits with several other people and crosses to the taxi pick up area.

INT. TAXI -- DAY

Douglas sits in the back, takes in some deep breaths, trying not to be nervous.

The taxi pulls over to the curb.

TAXI DRIVER

This is it.

Douglas pays the driver.

DOUGLAS

Thanks.

He exits the taxi and looks around and spots the sign for Cal's Music Shop... except half of it has been smashed out and the store windows have been boarded up.

INT. FULTON MOTEL -- DAY

Douglas stands in the lobby looking through a white pages phone book. He whips out his cell phone, dials a number.

JAYLENE (O.S.)

Hi, you've reached Jaylene. Leave your info at the sound of the you know what and I'll do my best to get back to you soon. Love and light.

FX: BEEP

DOUGLAS

Jaylene, this is Douglas Privett. Cal's friend from junior high? I used to hang out with him at your house. Anyway, I found your number in a phone book. I'm actually back in town and wanted to know if you and Cal wanted to get together. Maybe go for a drink or something. My number's 314-555-6428. Give me a call.

EXT. CAL'S OLD HOUSE -- DAY

Douglas walks by a house where three CHILDREN, all African-American, play in the front yard while their MOTHER, (30's) African-American, sits on a chair by the front door watching them. He looks up at a window on the second floor.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. CAL'S BEDROOM -- DAY

It's a MESS. Comic books and clothes litter the floor. Douglas and Cal sit in the center of it. Rock music plays from a stereo.

CAL

I got a huge online library.
What do you wanna hear next? Rock?
Pop? Hip-Hop? Funk?

DOUGLAS

Anything.

Cal jumps up, goes to the stereo and selects another song. The sound of funky groove-rock fills the air.

There's a knock on the door. The door knob jiggles.

JAYLENE (O.S.)

Cal, dad told you not to lock your door.

Cal unlocks the door and JAYLENE, (12), Caucasian, Cal's feisty younger sister, enters, pushing past him.

CAL

(to Doug, wearily)

This is my kid sister, Jaylene.

DOUGLAS

Hi.

She waves hello to Douglas, then playfully hits Cal on the arm.

JAYLENE

Who you callin' kid, kid?

He jostles her hair.

CAL

You, youngin.

JAYLENE

Watch the hair, please.

She steps back, folding her arms.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)

We still playin' Grand Prix before dinner?

CAL

So I can kick your butt for, like, the millionth time?

JAYLENE

I beat you the last time we played.

CAL

Yeah, dumb luck.

JAYLENE

In your dreams.

She turns to Douglas.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)
Nice meeting you.

She starts to leave.

CAL
Didn't dad tell you to stay in your room until you finished your homework?

Jaylene turns back.

JAYLENE
You gonna tell on me or something?

CAL
Just do it and maybe he won't get-

JAYLENE
Just save it, alright?

She hits him in the arm a little too hard to just be playful.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)
Jerk.

Cal turns up the stereo's volume, then crosses to his closet where he picks up a sneaker and pulls out a DIME BAG of weed, a small pipe and a book of matches. He turns to Douglas, grinning.

CAL
Ever smoke weed?

Douglas shakes his head, eyeing the pipe. Definitely something he's never seen before.

Cal places a nugget in the pipe and hands it to Douglas.

CAL (CONT'D)
When I light it, just inhale and hold it as long as you can before blowing it out. Okay?

Douglas nods and holds up the pipe, inhaling when Cal lights it. He tries to hold it and his eyes start to bulge.

CAL (CONT'D)
And try not to cough.

Too late. Douglas nearly coughs up a lung. Cal pats him on the back.

CAL (CONT'D)
You'll be alright.

Cal goes to the floor, then lies on his back, closing his eyes.

CAL (CONT'D)
I like to let the music kind of
wash over me.

Douglas lies on his back next to Cal and closes his eyes.

After a while, Douglas opens his eyes, now glassy from being HIGH, and looks over at Cal, whose eyes are still closed.

Then he looks down at his own left hand. His fingertips are almost touching Cal's.

He closes his eyes again, a smile on his lips. This moment could last forever.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. CAL'S OLD HOUSE -- DAY

Douglas takes a last look before walking away.

INT. FULTON DINER -- DAY

Douglas sits in a booth eating breakfast. His phone rings and he picks up.

JAYLENE (O.S.)
Is this Doug?

DOUGLAS
Jaylene?

JAYLENE (O.S.)
Cal's friend, right? Yeah, I
remember you.

DOUGLAS
Great. Yeah, I just got into town
today.

JAYLENE (O.S.)
To see your grandma?

DOUGLAS
My grandma?

JAYLENE (O.S.)
Your grandmother's Pastor Privett,
right? From Holiness Baptist
Church?

Douglas shifts uneasily. He was not expecting to hear that name.

DOUGLAS
Yeah, what about her?

JAYLENE (O.S.)
She had a stroke. It was in the local paper. They said it happened while she was giving a sermon at Sunday service. They got her over at Methodist Hospital.

DOUGLAS
Thanks for letting me know.

JAYLENE (O.S.)
Of course. Hey, listen, I'm at work, so I can't talk right now. But I'll be done by seven this evening. I'll text you the address and you can meet me here if you want.

DOUGLAS
Uh, sure. Sounds good.

JAYLENE (O.S.)
Okay, super. See you then.

DOUGLAS
Oh, and what about-

But she's already hung up.

Douglas conducts a Google search on his phone, finds a number to Holiness Baptist Church. He goes to dial, then hesitates.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S PARLOR -- NIGHT

PASTOR EURYDIA C.M. PRIVETT (50's), African-American, stands over Douglas, (15), who kneels on the floor, tears falling from his face.

Pastor Privett has one hand on his shoulder, the other reaching upward high above her head.

DOUGLAS (O.S.)
Grandma, we weren't doin' anything,
I swear!

PASTOR PRIVETT
Please forgive him the wicked sin
of abomination, oh Lord! Shine your
infinite grace down on him,
heavenly Father.

END FLASHBACK

Douglas blinks away the horrible memory and stares at his phone for the longest beat. He finally sighs and dials. After all, family is family.

OLIVIA (O.S.)
Holiness Baptist Church.

DOUGLAS
Ms. Olivia? It's Doug- Douglas.

OLIVIA (O.S.)
Pastor's grandson, Douglas? Oh my Lord, I can't believe I'm hearing your voice right now.

DOUGLAS
It's been a while.

OLIVIA (O.S.)
Over ten years. How've you been?

DOUGLAS
I've been alright.

OLIVIA
Well, you couldn't be calling at a better time. Your grandma's not well.

DOUGLAS
I heard she's at Methodist.

OLIVIA (O.S.)
They admitted her last night.

DOUGLAS
I can meet you there. I'm in town.

OLIVIA (O.S.)
Why that would be wonderful! Beaula and I were actually planning to stop by there later this morning.
(MORE)

OLIVIA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
We can pick you up on the way. Tell
me where you're located.

EXT. FULTON DINER -- DAY

Douglas stands at the front entrance as a car pulls in to the parking lot.

He sees OLIVIA BROOKS (50's) African-American, step out of the car along with BEAULA DAVIS, (50's), African-American. As to personality, if Olivia is sweet, Beaula is salty.

OLIVIA
As Lazarus rose from the dead!

She gives him a big warm hug. Beaula stares at his mohawk.

BEAULA
What happened to your hair?

OLIVIA
Now Beaula...

BEAULA
What? I just want to know if that
was an accident or intentional.

Olivia shakes her head. Beaula will be Beaula, good manners be damned.

OLIVIA
Pay her no mind, Douglas. We're
both glad to see you.

They approach Olivia's car.

EXT. METHODIST MEDICAL CENTER - MAIN ENTRANCE -- DAY

Olivia's drives her car onto the parking lot.

INT. METHODIST MEDICAL CENTER - HALLWAY -- DAY

DR. THELMA PARKER, (40's), African-American, with the warmth and friendliness of a small town doctor, walks down a hall with Douglas, Olivia, and Beaula.

DR. PARKER
Now remember, she's still a little
disoriented.

BEAULA
Will she recognize us?

OLIVIA
Beaula, she said disoriented, not
senile.

BEAULA
(ignoring Olivia)
What's her diagnosis?

DR. PARKER
We're still not sure what caused
her to lose consciousness or what's
caused the paralysis of her leg.
We're going to keep her at least a
few more days, run some more tests.

They stop in front of Pastor Privett's room.

DR. PARKER (CONT'D)
I have to check on another patient.
I'll be back in a minute.

Dr. Parker continues down the hall as Olivia turns back to
the room and opens the door.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S ROOM IN MEDICAL CENTER -- DAY

Olivia and Beaula enter to see Pastor Privett, sitting up in
bed.

OLIVIA
Good to see you awake, Pastor.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Good to be awake, Sister 'Livia.

Olivia holds up a bag she's been carrying.

OLIVIA
I stopped by the house earlier,
brought you the things you wanted.

She reaches into the bag and takes out items one by one and
places them on the table next to the bed.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
Your latest issue of Essence
magazine... two pairs of your extra
thick socks... and I stopped by the
drug store to get you something for
your upset stomach.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Thanks, 'Livia. The way the food
here makes my stomach act up, maybe
I should've asked you to get two.

OLIVIA

Pastor, someone's waiting out in
the hall to see you.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Who?

She motions towards the door. A moment later, Douglas timidly enters. Pastor Privett's eyes widen when she sees him. Douglas swallows, nerves jangling.

OLIVIA

Pastor, it's your grandson,
Douglas.

PASTOR PRIVETT

I know who it is. Boy, what'd you
do to your hair?

BEAULA

Asked him the same question.

Douglas sighs. Ten years gone and that's what they notice?

DOUGLAS

Good to see you too, grandma.

PASTOR PRIVETT

When did you come back?

DOUGLAS

Just got in today.

OLIVIA

He called by the church earlier
this morning.

BEULA

God does work in mysterious ways.

OLIVIA

(to Pastor Privett)

Before I forget, your niece Celia
called at the house, said to call
her soon as you can, let her know
you're alright.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Lord, all I need is for that one to worry. She's liable to jump in her car and drive all the way from California, her and her two kids.

BEAULA

Well, Celia ain't here, but Douglas is.

Douglas glances at Pastor Privett. She's not even looking at him.

DOUGLAS

Look, I just came to make sure you're okay, but...

Dr. Parker enters, approaches Pastor Privett's bed.

DR. PARKER

How are you doing today, Pastor?

PASTOR PRIVETT

Good as can be expected.

DR. PARKER

(to Pastor Privett)

Got some good news. I spoke with the physical therapist. You can start as early as tomorrow morning.

PASTOR PRIVETT

The sooner the better.

DR. PARKER

But she's only in once a week, so she recommends having someone come to the session with you to learn the process, and then work with you on the days she's not here.

OLIVIA

I would, but with Pastor here, I'll be too busy in the day takin' care of church business.

BEAULA

I can't either. My daughter, Jessica's gotta travel to New York for her job and needs me to watch my grandkids while she's away.

OLIVIA

I can ask around at church, I'm
sure we can find someone.

Douglas looks at Pastor. Something about the way she looks
back tugs at something inside of him.

DOUGLAS

I'll do it.

PASTOR PRIVETT

You sure?

DOUGLAS

Yeah, I'm sure. Just got to let my
job know I'll be out of town for a
while.

DR. PARKER

(to Douglas)

Great. Second floor, room 201,
eleven AM.

DOUGLAS

Alright.

DR. PARKER

I've got to continue my rounds.
Pastor, I'll check on you a little
later.

(looks from Pastor to
Douglas)

Now you guys be good to each other,
okay?

Dr. Parker exits.

OLIVIA

(to Pastor Privett)

We should let you rest up.

Douglas starts for the door.

BEAULA

(to Douglas)

Aint' you gon' hug your grandma
'fore you go?

Douglas hesitates, glances at Pastor, looking frail and
vulnerable. Certainly not the domineering, imposing figure he
remembers from his childhood.

Douglas approaches her and leans in, opening his arms. Pastor
Privett awkwardly opens her arms to receive him.

OLIVIA

Now that's a beautiful sight to
see.

Pastor Privett pulls away.

PASTOR PRIVETT

You should go now.

Douglas steps back. He should know better than to expect too much.

PASTOR PRIVETT (CONT'D)

Where are you staying?

DOUGLAS

I was going to stay at the motel.

PASTOR PRIVETT

You can stay at the house. Bed
sheets in your room are clean.

DOUGLAS

Thanks. See you tomorrow.

Just as Douglas exits behind Olivia and Beaula, Pastor Privett turns and watches him go, like she wants to say something else, some deep, unexpressed emotion.

Ext. HOLINESS BAPTIST CHURCH -- day

Olivia pulls up in front of Holiness Baptist Church, plain and humble in appearance, it's worn, chipped-paint exterior a testament to the decades it has served as a place of worship. We hear the choir singing inside.

INT. HOLINESS BAPTIST CHURCH -- DAY

DEACON GABRIEL TIMMONS, (50's), directs the choir as they finish rehearsing a gospel song.

DEACON TIMMONS

That was wonderful. Alright, see
you on Sunday.

He turns and sees Beula, Olivia and Douglas approaching. He meets them in the middle of the center aisle.

OLIVIA

Douglas, you remember Deacon
Timmons?

Deacon Timmons shakes Douglas's hand.

DEACON TIMMONS

Douglas Privett! Look at you, all
grown up! I remember when you came
up to here on me.

He places a hand near his waist.

DEACON TIMMONS (CONT'D)

And the way you could sing... man.
You easily sounded twice your size.

DOUGLAS

Thanks, Deacon.

DEACON TIMMONS

No, I mean it. Strongest high tenor
this church choir's ever had. Can
you still sing like that?

DOUGLAS

I don't know.

DEACON TIMMONS

You used to sing a version of Safe
in his Arms that moved me tears.
You're grandma loved it too.

DOUGLAS

She did?

PASTOR PRIVETT

Sure she did! She never told you?

Douglas shakes his head, incredulous. When has his
grandmother ever said anything nice to him?

BEAULA

Well, I'll see ya'll later.
Everybody's probably waiting on me
in the back room to start the
council meeting. Sooner we finish,
sooner I can get home and watch my
stories.

She exits through a doorway at the back of the church.

DOUGLAS

It was nice to see you again,
Deacon.

DEACON TIMMONS

Pleasure's mine, son. Just wish it
was under better circumstances.

(MORE)

DEACON TIMMONS (CONT'D)
We all love your grandmother very
much.

DOUGLAS
I know.

DEACON TIMMONS
I hope to see you again soon.

He leaves.

OLIVIA
(to Douglas)
I'm steppin' into your grandma's
office for a minute. Be right back.

She exits. Douglas walks down the center aisle, eyeing the
rows of worn wooden pews.

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)
What is love? Well, I will tell you
this: I love my Father with all my
heart. But I know there is no
greater love than the love my
Father has for me, praise his name.

He stops at a particular row, studying the seat.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. HOLINESS BAPTIST CHURCH -- DAY

Douglas, (15), sits with the congregation listening to Pastor
Privett (40's)delivering a sermon.

PASTOR PRIVETT
His love is a perfect love. A
supreme love. There is none higher.
His love fills me up and makes me
whole. He holds me in His bosom and
there, I am forever safe from all
harm and worry because I know he's
got me and I have nothing to fear,
in Jesus name.

Douglas sees movement in his peripheral vision and looks to
his left where he sees Cal bopping his head to music only he
can hear through ear buds connected to his cell phone.

Sensing someone watching him, Cal turns and looks at Douglas,
who quickly turns away, embarrassed at being caught.

Douglas can't help but sneak another look in Cal's direction, fascinated by a boy doing something he'd never have the guts to do.

Their eyes meet again and Cal smiles, throws up a "rock on" hand sign. Douglas smiles back.

The music fades in the background.

OLIVIA (O.S.)
Brings back memories, huh.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. HOLINESS BAPTIST CHURCH -- DAY --

Douglas sees Olivia approaching.

OLIVIA
I don't know what church you go to
in St. Louis, but I'm sure God's
happy to see you've come home.

EXT. FULTON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL -- DAY

Olivia drives past the school as Douglas looks out the passenger window.

INT. OLIVIA'S CAR -- DAY

OLIVIA
(to Douglas)
You went to school here, didn't
you?

DOUGLAS
Yes, ma'am.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. CAFETERIA -- DAY

Douglas, (15), sits by himself eating lunch.

CAL (O.S.)
Hey.

Douglas looks up to see, Cal, (THE BOY HE NOTICED AT CHURCH.)

DOUGLAS

Hey.

CAL

I'm Cal. Short for Caleb.

DOUGLAS

Douglas.

CAL

Cool if I eat with you?

Douglas shrugs, trying to play it cool. Cal sits.

DOUGLAS

You always listen to music at church?

CAL.

If I get bored.

DOUGLAS

Your mom and dad let you?

CAL

It's just my dad. But he doesn't notice. Too busy listening to the game through his headphones.

Cal grins, then takes a bite out of his sandwich.

CAL (CONT'D)

What kind of music do you like?

Douglas hesitates. No one's ever asked him that question before.

DOUGLAS

Gospel.

CAL

Cool. What else?

DOUGLAS

I... I don't know.

CAL

You don't know?

Cal nods to himself, like he's just made a decision.

CAL (CONT'D)

We'll have to fix that.

END FLASHBACK.

Douglas looks back at the school disappearing down the block.

BEAULA (O.S.)
You should call up your old
friends. Sure they'd love to hear
from you.

EXT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S HOUSE -- DAY

Olivia's car pulls up in the driveway.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S PARLOR -- DAY

Douglas looks around. It's just as he remembered, with the same plain simple furniture covered with the same worn upholstery, doilies on every surface.

INT. DOUGLAS'S ROOM FROM CHILDHOOD -- day

Douglas enters and puts his backpack down, looking around. Nothing's changed here either, right down to the familiar floral print bed sheet and solid wood desk and chair.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S PARLOR -- NIGHT

Douglas rocks in Pastor Privett's ROCKING CHAIR, smiles. He remembers this!

He turns on the radio on a nearby side table. Gospel music fills the air...

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S PARLOR -- NIGHT

Douglas, (15), sits in the rocking chair doing homework as gospel music emanates from the radio.

He stops writing, makes sure his grandma isn't watching, then flips his notebook over to reveal a music catalog displaying bass guitars.

He's got his eye on a gorgeous model with a gold sunburst body and maple wood neck...

BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE:

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

Douglas walks down the center aisle lined with tall stained glass windows depicting famous African-American rock n' roll musicians like Chuck Berry, Phil Lynott, Jimi Hendrix, Vernon Reid, Prince, etc.

Before him is an elevated stage covered with lush, green grass, young, sprouting trees, and patches of wild flowers.

Steps lead to an ornately decorated ALTER, center stage.

A funked-up, rocked-out gospel groove blasts from unseen speakers.

From the heavens, a beam of light shines on the alter and a GOLD SUNBURST BASS GUITAR with a heart-shaped body descends.

DEEP SOULFUL VOICE (V.O.)
 With this, you shall move mountains
 and shake valleys! You shall tame
 the tempest and enchant the beasts
 of the forest. You shall heal the
 sad, the lonely and the hopeless,
 raising the heart vibration of all
 who hear you wail upon it!

Douglas reaches out to touch the guitar.

PASTOR PRIVETT (O.S.)
 Douglas!

END DREAM SEQUENCE.

Douglas stands in front of the radio, now blasting rock music. He turns to see Pastor Privett, wearing her coat and holding her keys.

PASTOR PRIVETT
 Have you lost your mind playin'
 that devil music in my house?

DOUGLAS
 I'm sorry, ma'am.

Douglas changes the station back to gospel, then turns to Pastor Privett, as if awaiting her approval.

PASTOR PRIVETT
 Boy, you better stop lookin' at me
 like that. Ain't nobody studyin'
 you. Nobody even thinkin' a' you.

Douglas stares at the floor, his spirit CRUSHED.

Seeing this, Pastor Privett falters, but then straightens herself just as quickly. Whatever the reason, she won't allow herself to feel compassion.

PASTOR PRIVETT (O.C.) (CONT'D)

I'm going to the store. Try not to
get into any trouble while I'm
gone.

She turns to go. When Douglas hears the front door close behind her, he jumps up and rushes to the window, peaking out.

Satisfied she's gone, he turns the radio dial back to the same rock music station.

He dashes into the kitchen and reappears a moment later holding a broom, pretending to play bass guitar along with the music.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S PARLOR -- NIGHT

Douglas takes out his cell phone to check the time, then rises out of the chair.

EXT. THE RED ROSE GENTLEMEN'S CLUB -- NIGHT

Douglas shows the bouncer his ID and enters.

INT. THE RED ROSE GENTLEMEN'S CLUB -- NIGHT

A hole in the wall, just this side of tacky: posters of scantily clad women hang on the walls, and silver tinsel frame the edge of a single, small stage.

Three MEN sit at the bar as STRIPPERS try to hustle them for a lap dance. One approaches Douglas.

STRIPPER

You want a lap dance, hon?

DOUGLAS

No thanks.

DJ (O.S.)
Alright guys, get ready 'cause next
up on stage, we have Lady Antigone!

Jaylene, (now in her 20's), struts onto the stage like she owns it. She jumps high up onto the pole, turns upside down, wrapping her legs around it, then slowly twirls while descending. She is FIERCE and knows it.

She finishes her routine and hops off stage. She spots Douglas, then approaches him.

JAYLENE
Douglas?

DOUGLAS
Jaylene?

JAYLENE
Meet me out back in ten minutes.
I'm the red mustang. We can go to
this little dive bar down the road.

INT. DIVE BAR -- NIGHT

Douglas and Jaylene sit at a table sharing a pitcher of beer.

JAYLENE
So sorry to hear about Pastor. Is
she going to be okay?

DOUGLAS
She'll be fine.

JAYLENE
She must've been happy to see you,
right?

DOUGLAS
Uh, sure.

Douglas looks down at his beer. Not his favorite topic.

JAYLENE
Man, talk about synchronicity. I
mean, what're the chances of you
coming back to Fulton the same time
this happens to her, you know?

DOUGLAS
Yeah. So how's Cal?

Jaylene hesitates, swallows. Whatever she's about to say is not easy.

JAYLENE

Uh... Cal's gone. He got really sick and passed away five years ago.

Douglas stares at his drink, dazed. This news hits him hard.

DOUGLAS

His music store is still online like it's open.

JAYLENE

Oh yeah, he ran that for a couple of years before it tanked. Then he took off for California. That's where he...

Jaylene slumps in her seat. Just as quickly, she sits up and looks at Douglas.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)

If he was here, he would've loved to have seen you.

DOUGLAS

You think?

JAYLENE

Are you kidding? He always talked about you. He loved how you dug music as much as he did. The dreamy look you'd get when he played something you immediately fell in love with.

Douglas can't help but smile. Feels good to think Cal thought of him like that.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)

Hey, can I ask you something? And feel free to tell me it's none of my business.

DOUGLAS

What is it?

JAYLENE

Did you and my brother ever...

DOUGLAS

What?

JAYLENE

I just figured... I mean, I always suspected my brother was gay ever since he'd told me he had the biggest crush on Freddie Mercury. And the way you guys were always hanging out together, I just assumed you were too. Sorry if I'm wrong.

Douglas studies her a beat, sees her sincerity. He can trust her.

DOUGLAS

No, you're not. And no, Cal and I never did anything together. Not really.

JAYLENE

Oh.

DOUGLAS

But nobody ever made me feel the way he did.

JAYLENE

How's that?

DOUGLAS

Seen.

JAYLENE

Yeah. Cal had a way a' doin' that.

They share a smile, bonding over their memories of Cal.

INT. DOUGLAS'S ROOM FROM CHILDHOOD -- NIGHT

Douglas lies in bed staring at the ceiling. Can't sleep.

EXT. SIDEWALK IN PASTOR PRIVETT'S NEIGHBORHOOD -- NIGHT

Douglas listens to rock music on his phone as he walks. He stops at a curb, waits for a car to pass.

Suddenly, one of the car's front wheels pops off and the car careens to one side, headed straight for Douglas.

He leaps out of the way and falls to the ground as the car, jumps the curb and CRASHES into a nearby mailbox.

Douglas gets back on his feet as the DRIVER (30's,) a Caucasian male, steps out of the car and looks at him.

DRIVER
You okay?

Douglas nods, though he's still pretty shaken up.

DRIVER (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry. I have no idea how
that happened.

Douglas glances at the crushed mailbox. That could've been
him.

EXT. METHODIST MEDICAL CENTER -- DAY

Douglas approaches the entrance.

INT. HALLWAY -- DAY

Douglas walks with Doctor Parker up to room 201.

DR. PARKER
Your grandmother's already in there
with the therapist. I'll introduce
you.

INT. METHODIST MEDICAL CENTER THERAPY ROOM -- DAY

Douglas sits on the mat next to the physical therapist, MS. TATE, (40's), Caribbean-American, as she takes hold of Pastor Privett's left leg.

MS. TATE
(to Douglas)
Our main goal is full recovery.
Through repetitive stretching and
manipulated movement, we aim to
improve circulation and condition
the nerves in the affected limb to
start responding to stimuli again.
See how I'm moving her leg?
It should always be this slowly.

She demonstrates.

MS. TATE (CONT'D)
About thirty repetitions in a set.
Three sets total. Want to try?

They switch positions. Douglas holds Pastor Privett's leg and begins to move it.

MS. TATE (CONT'D)
Good! You doin' alright, Pastor?

PASTOR PRIVETT
Just fine, Ms. Tate.

MS. TATE
Good. I need to make a phone call,
so I'm going to leave you two to
continue, okay?

Ms. Tate gets up and heads for her desk across the room.

PASTOR PRIVETT
I didn't get a chance to tell you
before, but when you're at the
house, make sure you push the
fridge all the way closed or it'll
stay cracked open and anything in
there'll spoil. Also make sure to
shut all the windows-

DOUGLAS
When it rains, always wipe my feet
on the front door mat, turn off any
light I'm not using, make sure the
front door's locked and turn off
the kitchen and bathroom taps all
the way so they don't leak and run
up your water bill. Don't worry, I
remember.

Pastor Privett nods. No need to say more.

PASTOR PRIVETT
I guess you do.

Douglas moves Pastor Privett's leg in silence.

Finally --

PASTOR PRIVETT (CONT'D)
So what do you do in St. Louis?

DOUGLAS
Play music.

PASTOR PRIVETT
I'm not surprised. Which instrument
do you play?

DOUGLAS
I play bass.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Sing too?

DOUGLAS
Lead.

PASTOR PRIVETT
You always did have a beautiful
voice in church.

DOUGLAS
You remember me singing?

PASTOR PRIVETT
Sure, I do. Why wouldn't I?

Douglas opens his mouth to respond, but stops himself. He
needs to accept she remembers differently.

PASTOR PRIVETT (CONT'D)
What kind a' music you play?

DOUGLAS
We try not to define it. But it's
probably not anything you'd like.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Does it have all that loud heavy
guitar in it?

DOUGLAS
'Fraid so.

PASTOR PRIVETT
You're probably right.

Douglas can't help but smile. Finally, something they agree
on.

PASTOR PRIVETT (CONT'D)
So what's your band's name?

DOUGLAS
Strangely enough, Third Degree.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Why is it strange? Name sounds like
you got a good band.

DOUGLAS

No, it's not the name that's
strange. It's because you're asking
all these questions, like...

Pastor Privett nods, getting it.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Oh. So, you'd prefer me not to?

DOUGLAS

No. It's not that. Forget I said
it.

PASTOR PRIVETT

I was curious about your life is
all, but you don't have to share
what you don't want to.

DOUGLAS

I'm sorry I said it. I appreciate
that you want to know.

He makes eye contact to let her know he means it. After a
beat--

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

But why would you think we're good
just because of our name?

PASTOR PRIVETT

I'm just saying you chose a good
name and you seem so committed, how
could you not be good.

DOUGLAS

Trust me, there are a lot of
committed bands that suck.

Pastor Privett gives him a disapproving look.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Can't you find a more decent word
to describe them?

Douglas lays down her leg, tried to stay calm. He needs to
remember who he's talking to.

DOUGLAS

Sorry. A lot of committed bands
stink.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Thank you, that's better.

Douglas nods. Anything to keep the peace.

DOUGLAS

I saw the church yesterday. Glad to
see it's still standing.

PASTOR PRIVETT

It could use a new roof and a good
coat of paint. But yes, by the
grace of God we still got it.

A BEAT, then --

PASTOR PRIVETT (CONT'D)

You go to a church in St. Louis?

Douglas hesitates. Does he want to go there?

DOUGLAS

No.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Oh. That's too bad.

Douglas sighs. He knows he shouldn't take the bait, but...

DOUGLAS

Why is it 'too bad'?

PASTOR PRIVETT

You used to like going to church
when you were little.

DOUGLAS

Things change.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Well, don't matter. God's always
with you. Whether you're in his
house or not.

Douglas picks up her leg and resumes the motion. The last
thing he wants to hear is a sermon.

PASTOR PRIVETT (CONT'D)

You can talk to him too. Anytime.

DOUGLAS

I know.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Day or night.

DOUGLAS

Yes, I know. God's available
twenty-four seven. I got it.

Pastor Privett looks at Douglas, sensing his frustration.

PASTOR PRIVETT

You don't have speak so flippantly
about it.

Douglas stops moving her leg.

DOUGLAS

Then why go to church? If people
can talk to God anytime.

PASTOR PRIVETT

That's a silly question. Church is
for people to worship in
fellowship.

PASTOR PRIVETT (CONT'D)

But you just said-

PASTOR PRIVETT (CONT'D)

Did you come here to help me or
debate me?

DOUGLAS

If you don't want me here...

PASTOR PRIVETT

Who said anything about not wanting
you here?

DOUGLAS

You didn't have to.

Douglas looks up, sees Ms. Tate returning. He rises.

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

Sorry, grandma, but maybe it's
better if Ms. Tate helps you with
the rest of your session.

He rises and heads for the exit. Pastor Privett watches him
go, then tries to cover the hurt look on her face when Ms.
Tate reaches her.

EXT. FULTON BRIDGE -- DAY

Douglas pauses halfway over, looks into the water.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

The moonlight streaming in from the window illuminates a simple kitchen: old school spice rack next to an oven range on the polished counter, perfectly folded kitchen cloth on a towel rack and a spotless sink.

Douglas stands in a corner holding the receiver of an old fashioned phone, its pig tail cord extending to the wall.

Pastor Privett can be heard through the ceiling from the floor above praying loudly, with the passion of a true believer.

DOUGLAS
(whispering)
You think we should go tonight?

CAL (O.S.)
Carpe diem, bro. Seize the day. No time like the present.

Douglas hesitates, then nods to himself, making an internal decision.

DOUGLAS
Okay, let's do it.

CAL (O.S.)
Awesome. See you at the bus station.

INT. FULTON BUS DEPOT -- NIGHT

Douglas buys a ticket.

EXT. FULTON BUS DEPOT -- NIGHT

Douglas sits on a bench while other people enter and exit the depot.

Time passes... and Douglas is in the same spot and the only person in sight. He looks hopefully towards the entrance, as a bus pulls into the depot.

ATTENDANT (O.S.)
You still here?

Douglas looks up to see the BUS DEPOT ATTENDANT, (40's), Caucasian, lighting a cigarette.

ATTENDANT (CONT'D)
You're lucky. Last bus to St. Louis
heads out at midnight.

He glances at his watch.

BUS DEPOT ATTENDANT
That's in ten minutes.

Douglas looks toward the entrance one more time, more than a hint of anxiety on his face. Cal is a no-show.

INT. BUS -- NIGHT

Douglas sits in the back staring out the window.

EXT. FULTON BRIDGE -- NIGHT

The bus crosses the bridge.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. FULTON BRIDGE -- DAY

Haunted by his memory, Douglas resumes crossing over.

EXT. JAYLENE'S HOUSE -- DAY

Douglas knocks on the door of a little cottage house, located behind a larger, separate house. Jaylene opens the door.

JAYLENE
So glad you could hang out!

INT. JAYLENE'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Jaylene and Douglas enter. It's small but tidy, with framed artwork courtesy of Bed, Bath and Beyond decorating the wall space, multiple colors of sheer fabric draped over the windows and scented candles on almost every surface.

Douglas notices an acoustic guitar collecting dust on a stand in one corner.

JAYLENE
Make yourself at home.

A furry SMALL DOG bounds up to Jaylene, wagging its tail. She bends down and pets it lovingly.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)
Hey buddy, how ya' doin'?
(to Douglas)
This is Lucky, my little boy.

Douglas steps toward Lucky, who starts growling.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)
It's not you. I got Lucky from a
shelter. He was abused as a puppy.
He's got trust issues with men.

Douglas nods. Stay away from the dog. Got it.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)
Did you see your grandma?

DOUGLAS
Yeah, stopped at the hospital
yesterday.

JAYLENE
How is she?

DOUGLAS
Good. Started physical therapy
today. I volunteered to help.

JAYLENE
How'd that go?

DOUGLAS
Well...

JAYLENE
Not good?

DOUGLAS
Oh no, she's doing fine. It's
just... we haven't seen each other
in a long time and I think it's
going to take a while for us to get
used to each other again.

JAYLENE
Hey I hear you. What family doesn't
have issues, right?

Jaylene's phone chirps and she reads the message. She seems annoyed as she starts typing a response.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)

Sorry. Just responding to a message. You on social media?

DOUGLAS

Yeah, but I don't really keep up with it. My band's got a web site though.

JAYLENE

Oh cool, you play in a band?

DOUGLAS

I'm the singer and bass player.

JAYLENE

You got any songs online?

DOUGLAS

We got a few.

JAYLENE

Can you play one for me?

Douglas takes out his cell phone, finds his band's songs online and plays a song.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)

Nice! You guys are good!

DOUGLAS

Thanks.

They listen to the song for a beat.

JAYLENE

Hey, I was actually about to make lunch. You hungry?

INT. JAYLENE'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Jaylene puts down two full plates on her dinette table, then sits next to Douglas.

JAYLENE

Bon appetit.

DOUGLAS

Looks good.

JAYLENE

It's seasoned tofu with carrots,
broccoli, figs, and buttered
gnocchi with nutmeg.

Douglas takes a bite. His eyes light up. He's loving it.

DOUGLAS

Where'd you learn to cook like
this?

JAYLENE

My mom, before she died. She loved
to cook and I loved helping her.
Something about feeding people
always made me feel good.

DOUGLAS

You're really good.

JAYLENE

Thanks. I'm actually saving up
tuition for the Le Cordon Bleu
Culinary Academy in Los Angeles. If
I get this partial scholarship I
applied for, I'll be able to go
this Fall.

Jaylene reaches for the salt and Douglas sees a crisscross
pattern of SCARS on her right forearm.

Jaylene moves her arms away, self-conscious.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)

I, uh, used to be a cutter.

DOUGLAS

Heard of that.

JAYLENE

I don't anymore though. Got help.

DOUGLAS

That's a good.

JAYLENE

Yeah. They keep all the lights low
at the club, so most people don't
notice.

DOUGLAS

You like working there?

JAYLENE

Sometimes. When I first started, it
felt like an act of rebellion. I
liked how it made me feel
empowered. Nowadays, I like it if
I'm makin' decent money. Better if
it's above average.

(beat)

Even if I get the scholarship,
school's pretty expensive.

DOUGLAS

Hey, it's all good. Do what you
gotta do, right?

Jaylene offers a smile, grateful Douglas doesn't judge her.

INT. JAYLENE'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Douglas strums Jaylene's guitar while she tokes on a joint.

JAYLENE

You sound great.

She passes the joint to Douglas.

DOUGLAS

Just playing chords.

JAYLENE

Better than what I can do. That
guitar has never had a professional
play on it.

DOUGLAS

I'm not professional.

JAYLENE

Compared to the way I play, trust
me, that guitar's in heaven right
now.

Douglas passes back the joint and strums some more. He
suddenly stops.

DOUGLAS

You mind if I ask you about Cal?

JAYLENE

'Course not.

DOUGLAS

How did you find out about his
illness?

JAYLENE

One of his roommates called me,
told me Cal had been sick for six
months and died in some hospital. I
had his body brought back and
cremated.

Jaylene glances at a tall black vase on top of a book shelf
and Douglas follows her eyeline.

She takes out her cell phone and pulls up a screen, then
shows Douglas, who puts down the guitar.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)

This was the page I made, dedicated
to him.

Her screen shows a photo of Cal at the center with a big red
heart around it. A paragraph below begins like an obit: CALEB
JOHNSON, 20 OF FULTON, MISSOURI, PASSED AWAY ON FEBRUARY
TENTH IN SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA...

DOUGLAS

He would've appreciated this.

JAYLENE

I'd like to think so.

She stares at her phone, lost in the sadness welling up
inside her. She blinks it back and puts away her phone before
picking up her guitar and holding out to Douglas.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)

And if he were here he'd totally
want you to play something else.

DOUGLAS

Sure.

Douglas picks up the guitar begins playing.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S PARLOR -- NIGHT

Douglas sits in the rocker reading on his phone the obit on
the page Jaylene dedicated to Cal. He looks like he's
fighting back tears.

EXT. LOCAL STREET -- NIGHT

Douglas walks down the block listening to rock music blasting through his headphones. He feels a few drops of rain and looks up. His phone vibrates and he answers a call.

DOUGLAS

Hello?

OLIVIA (O.S.)

Douglas, it's Ms. Olivia. A group of us at the church want to come over to the house tomorrow and give it a good scrub down so when Pastor gets out of the hospital, she'll have a clean place to come home to. Would be great to have you help us out.

DOUGLAS

Sure, I'll help.

OLIVIA (O.S.)

Great! See you tomorrow.

She hangs up. Douglas notices the rain drops have become a steady down pour. He turns around and begins to run back as thunder rumbles in the sky. He looks up. Where did this storm come from?

EXT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S BLOCK -- NIGHT

Douglas rounds the corner when lightning suddenly flashes in the sky, striking a tree close by. He hears the unmistakable sound of wood splintering as the tree falls in his direction.

He jumps out of the way as the tree comes CRASHING down, nearly crushing him. He stares at the fallen tree. Did he just come close to dying again?

INT. METHODIST MEDICAL CENTER THERAPY ROOM -- DAY

Douglas sits with Pastor Privett, assisting her as she moves her leg.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Thought I wasn't going to see you here again.

DOUGLAS

I said I'd help you.

PASTOR PRIVETT
I know you did.

Douglas lowers her leg to the mat.

DOUGLAS
How's your leg?

PASTOR PRIVETT
Feels good.

DOUGLAS
Good. Let's do round two.

He picks up her leg and begins moving it again. She watches him, enjoying their rare moment of harmony.

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
Do you remember how it happened?
When you had the stroke?

PASTOR PRIVETT
Do I remember...?

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. HOLINESS BAPTIST CHURCH -- DAY

Pastor Privett delivers a fiery sermon to a full house.

PASTOR PRIVETT
...And we must always be vigilant
in our devotion to God, lest we
find ourselves slacking. We must
stand fast against all temptations
and wickedness-

She stops suddenly as she focuses on a WOMAN (50's) Haitian, at the back of the church, wearing a white dress and red head scarf.

Pastor Privett blinks several times and looks again. The woman is GONE. Pastor Privett seems to sway to one side, trying to breathe deep, then turns toward a nearby bench. She takes one step before fainting to the floor, to the horror of her flock.

END FLASHBACK

INT. METHODIST MEDICAL CENTER THERAPY ROOM -- DAY

Pastor Privett swallows nervously, looks away.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Couldn't tell you. I was in the pulpit preaching to my congregation when I got real light-headed and turned to go sit down. Next thing I know, I'm opening me eyes and lying on the floor.

DOUGLAS

Good thing you weren't alone when it happened. You could've hit your head... or worse.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Guess it wasn't my time, by the grace of God. He must have something else for me to do.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S HOUSE -- DAY

The members of Holiness Church bustle about, wiping down walls and furniture, sweeping and mopping floors, washing windows, etc.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Douglas picks up a pair of shoes and puts them away in a closet.

He sees a cardboard box jutting precariously over the edge of the top shelf and tries to reposition it. The box falls, spilling a collection of loose photos.

He picks up the photos and sees several of Pastor Privett, forty years younger, embracing a handsome, smiling man. Douglas' grandfather?

He sees photos of the younger Pastor holding a little boy whom he recognizes as himself. Other photos are of him with a man and woman. The parents he can't remember.

He places the photos back in the box when he sees a small unopened package addressed to Pastor Privett. He reads the sender's name: BONAPARTE GUTREAUX. Her address is in HAITI.

In addition to the package, there's also a notebook lying at the bottom of the box.

Curious, he picks up the notebook and opens it to find the pages filled with writing. He begins to read the first page.

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)
 I write this, here and now, not to
 justify any pain and suffering I
 may have caused, but to make sense
 of how everything got to be the way
 it is-

BEAULA (V.O.)
 Douglas?

Douglas looks up to find Beaula standing in the doorway.

DOUGLAS
 Hey, Ms. Beaula.

BEAULA
 We're gettin' ready to have lunch
 in the backyard. So take a break
 and come on.

She leaves. Douglas stands and tucks the notebook down the back of his pants before exiting the room.

EXT. BACKYARD -- DAY

All the church members sit at a long table enjoying a pot-luck meal of home-cooked food: macaroni, chicken, greens, corn bread and potato salad.

Douglas sits between Beaula and Olivia.

BEAULA
 Whoever did the kitchen wasn't
 thorough. Still some grease on that
 counter top, especially behind the
 appliances.

DELILAH HAMMOND (African-American, 60's) turns to Beaula

DELILAH
 Pastor always seems like she lives
 clean.

BEAULA
 Well, if cleanliness is next to
 Godliness, Pastor done strayed too
 far from the Lord when she in there
 cookin'.

DELILAH
 (laughing)
 Beaula Davis, the things that come
 out your mouth!

BEAULA

I ain't saying nothin' but the truth! The way Pastor been keeping that kitchen-

OLIVIA

Quite a little thunder storm we had last night.

She glances at Beaula, daring her to change the subject back.

DELILAH

On my way over here, I saw that big fallen tree a few blocks away. Looked like lightning hit it.

DOUGLAS

Yeah, and it almost hit me.

BEAULA

Boy, you were out in that storm?

DOUGLAS

I was taking a walk before it started. On the way back, the tree fell. Nearly killed me.

BEAULA

Lord, that's all Pastor needs is to hear something happened to you. That bad luck she been carryin' -

OLIVIA

Beaula...

BEAULA

She's his grandma. Why shouldn't he know?

OLIVIA

Nothin' but church gossip.

BEAULA

What you mean 'nothin''? He just said a tree almost fell on him.

DOUGLAS

What're you guys talkin' about?

BEAULA

Well, your grandma lost your granddaddy when she was carrying your daddy. Then your momma and daddy died in a car accident.

(MORE)

BEAULA (CONT'D)

After you ran off, it just made
everybody at church think maybe
Pastor had some kind a' bad luck
when it came to family.

Douglas is taken aback at this revelation.

DOUGLAS

Grandma never told me.

OLIVIA

(cutting her eyes at
Beaula)

Maybe she had a reason. Might be
best to talk to her, let her tell
you what she wants you to know.

BEAULA

From what she told me, all her
troubles started when she went to
that island.

DELILAH

You mean when Pastor was in Haiti?

BEAULA

Don't know why she tried dealin'
with them people when they ain't
even trying to be Christian.

OLIVIA

Honestly, Beaula, the way you talk
sometimes...

BEAULA

Am I lyin'? Doing all that hoodoo
voodoo craziness.

OLIVIA

It's a fact most Haitians are
Christians.

BEAULA

Yeah, with all that blood sacrifice
mixed up with it. Smell's like the
devil's work to me.

DELILAH

No, Beaula, 'Livia's right. They
got Pentecostals, Baptists,
Catholics-

BEAULA

Catholics! There you go right there! People blessin' some wine and bread, thinkin' they're literally eatin' and drinkin' the body and blood of Christ. Sound like a cannibal vampire cult.

Olivia cuts her eyes again at Beaula.

OLIVIA

Sound like judgement.

BEAULA

I'm just tellin' it like I see it. I once saw a program about one a' them so-called 'Christian' churches where everybody smoked that evil reefer. They called it a sacred sacrament.

(turns to Douglas)
Gettin' high to praise the Lord!
Can you believe that?

INT. JAYLENE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Jaylene sits on the floor with Douglas as she lights a joint.

JAYLENE

And and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

She tokes then passes to him. Her cell phone tweets, letting her know she's got a message. She reads it and sighs.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)
This guy, I swear...

She texts a response.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)
Sorry, it's my boyfriend, Daryl.
He's apologizing for my something he said a few days ago and not doing a very good job of it. I mean he is trying, albeit, in his own clumsy way.

She sends her text, then takes back the joint and tokes.

JAYLENE (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
You ever had a relationship where you knew the person was wrong for
(MORE)

JAYLENE (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
you compatibility-wise, but in the
sexual chemistry department,
everything was so right?

DOUGLAS
Not really.

JAYLENE
Was it the opposite? Totally
compatible but lousy in bed? Or
have you been lucky enough to have
both?

DOUGLAS
Uh... neither.

JAYLENE
What do you mean?

DOUGLAS
I mean I've never had...

JAYLENE
A relationship? Sex?

DOUGLAS
Both.

JAYLENE
Really? A rock star like you?

DOUGLAS
It's not like I haven't tried. One
drunk guy I met at a club passed
out on me. Another guy had a major
hygiene issue. Then another guy
said he thought he was bi, but at
that moment, realized he was
straight.

JAYLENE
Damn, that sounds like some real
bad luck.

She passes the joint.

DOUGLAS
Eventually, I just kind of gave up
trying.

JAYLENE
That's too bad. Your first time
might be super enjoyable and
romantic, or it might be pretty
(MORE)

JAYLENE (CONT'D)
blah or even completely horrible.
But you need to get it out of the
way so you can get to the good
stuff.

DOUGLAS
The good stuff?

JAYLENE
Discovering what turns you on, what
turns you off. How to please your
partner. All that.

DOUGLAS
One day, I guess.

He passes the joint.

JAYLENE
You've got to be more
confident than that. That's how
positive manifestation works. You
gotta claim that shit.
You got to be like-
She raises her right hand.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)
I, Douglas Privett... Come on.

She motions for him to copy her. Douglas smiles, raises his
right hand. He'll go along, just to indulge her.

DOUGLAS
I, Douglas Privett...

JAYLENE
...am most definitely going to get
laid.

DOUGLAS
...am most definitely going to get
laid.

She passes the joint to Douglas who tokes, then passes it
back as he stands up.

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
Carpe diem.

JAYLENE
What?

DOUGLAS
Seize the day. Cal used to say
that.

JAYLENE
So what do you want to do?

INT. JAYLENE'S CAR-- NIGHT

Jaylene drives with Douglas sitting next to her.

DOUGLAS
This place was the first listing on
Yelp. List was pretty short though.

JAYLENE
What, gay bars in Missouri? That's
not surprising.

DOUGLAS
It's a weeknight. What if no one's
there?

JAYLENE
We'll check it out. If it's dead,
we'll leave.

INT. DANDY RANDY'S -- NIGHT

Jaylene and Douglas sit a table with drinks in the small,
darkly lit bar filled with a medium-sized crowd.

JAYLENE
So? Anybody catch your eye?

DOUGLAS
We just got here.

JAYLENE
From my experience, attraction is
pretty immediate.

DOUGLAS
Yeah well, I don't know.

He looks around.

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
No one's exactly jumped out at me.
Maybe one...

ROGER the waiter (20's), Caucasian, approaches the table.

ROGER
You guys doing alright?

JAYLENE
I'm good. Doug?

Douglas smiles shyly.

DOUGLAS
Uh, yeah, thanks.

ROGERS
(to Douglas)
I haven't seen you in here before,
have I?

DOUGLAS
First time.

ROGER
Figured. I'd have remembered
you. I'm Roger.

DOUGLAS
Douglas. This is Jaylene.

JAYLENE
We're friends.

ROGER
Nice meeting you both. Let me know
if you need anything, okay?

Jaylene sees Douglas watching Roger walk away.

JAYLENE
He the one you were talking about?
He's pretty cute.

DOUGLAS
He's alright.

Jaylene smiles.

JAYLENE
Just alright? The way you just
clocked him walking back to the
bar?

Douglas smiles. She's right.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)
And you know what?

She spots Roger delivering drinks to another table, eyeing Douglas as he passes by.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)
I think your feelings are mutual.

She downs the rest of her beer and stands up.

DOUGLAS
Where you going?

JAYLENE
I'm going back to Fulton, put in
a few hours at the club.

DOUGLAS
You're going to leave me here?

JAYLENE
You'll be fine. Just be yourself
and see what happens. I'll call you
when I'm done and come get you.
Unless, of course, you make other
plans.

She smiles at him, then exits the bar. Douglas takes a sip of his beer and takes a big breath, failing miserably at trying not to appear nervous.

Roger stops at Douglas' table, a drink in hand.

ROGER
Where's your friend?

DOUGLAS
She had to go.

ROGER
Oh. Well, I'm about to take my
break and enjoy this drink. You
want some company?

DOUGLAS
Uh, sure.

Roger sits at the table with his drink.

ROGER
So where you from?

DOUGLAS
Fulton.

ROGER

Not too far at all. So what do you like to do?

DOUGLAS

Play music.

ROGER

Oh yeah, what kind of music?

DOUGLAS

Rock.

ROGER

Oh, okay. I'm a disco guy myself. But I can appreciate other genres. Do you play an instrument?

DOUGLAS

Bass.

ROGER

That's the one with the thicker strings, right? You must have really strong fingers.

Douglas smiles, looks away. Not easy for him dealing with this kind of attention.

ROGER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to embarrass you.

DOUGLAS

You didn't.

ROGER

Maybe it's the way I said it. A friend told me I don't realize I say things in a flirty way when I'm around someone I like.

Again, Douglas smiles, looking at his drink.

ROGER (CONT'D)

And I did it again. But I can't help myself cause the more shy you act the cuter you get and the more flirty I talk. Just a vicious cycle I tell ya'.

Douglas laughs. He likes this guy's sense of humor.

ROGER'S EX (O.S.)
Who the hell is this?

Douglas turns to see STAN (30's) Caucasian, march up to the table, in full jilted lover mode.

ROGER
What're you doing here?

STAN
It hasn't even been two weeks.

ROGER
It's been over a month, Stan.

STAN
(looking at Douglas)
You been seeing this guy?

ROGER
I just met him tonight.

STAN
Bullshit! He's the new one you've
seeing isn't he?

ROGER
No, Stan, that's not the-

STAN
Bullshit!

ROGER
Stop yelling, unless you want me to
tell everyone how many times you
drunk called me this week.

STAN
Screw you!

ROGER
You wish!

Douglas stares at them, wide eyed.

INT. RED ROSE -- NIGHT

Jaylene gathers money from the stage after her last performance. She goes up to the bar, stuffs the money in her purse and downs the rest of her drink.

EXT. RED ROSE STRIP CLUB -- NIGHT

Jaylene exits, heads to her car. She stops when she sees Douglas.

JAYLENE
How'd you get here?

DOUGLAS
I called a ride share.

JAYLENE
What happened?

INT. JAYLENE'S CAR -- NIGHT

Jaylene, in the driver's seat, looks over at Douglas.

JAYLENE
Are you serious?

DOUGLAS
I'm just not cut out for all that drama.

JAYLENE
Sorry I left you to deal with that.

DOUGLAS
It's not your fault. I told you, I have no luck in that department.

JAYLENE
Dude, seriously, you gotta be more positive. When one door closes, another opens.

DOUGLAS
I hear you.

JAYLENE
You gotta do more than hear you me. You gotta believe it yourself. I can't do it for you.

DOUGLAS
No, it's true, you can't lose my virginity for me.

Jaylene laughs.

JAYLENE

That's not what I meant, silly.
Seriously though, if you see it,
you can achieve it. Do that, and
the possible becomes the
inevitable.

Douglas glances at Jaylene, looking confident, sure of herself. If only he could feel that way about himself.

EXT. JAYLENE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

From the living room window, we see the lights are out.

INT. JAYLENE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Douglas lies on the sofa's pull-out bed, asleep. Pounding on the front door wakes him up.

Jaylene enters from her room, goes to the front door, and unlocks it. DARYL, (late 30's), Caucasian, enters. He's a man whose former high school athlete days have proved to be the hi-light of his life.

DARYL

Thanks for accepting my apology,
baby. I've missed-

JAYLENE

(nodding, a smile on her
lips)

Shhh.

She points to Douglas and puts her other hand over Daryl's mouth. He kisses it and then pulls her into a lip lock that quickly heats up. She guides him back to her bedroom.

From behind her door, loud rock music begins to play.

Douglas lies there, listening to the music. But pretty soon, he can also hear moans.

INT. HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Douglas is on his way to the bathroom at the end of the hall when he sees Lucky sitting in front of Jaylene's door. Lucky sees him and growls.

DOUGLAS

Hey, boy. It's okay.

Douglas slowly inches around Lucky to get to the bathroom.

INT. JAYLENE'S BATHROOM -- NIGHT

With the fan whirring overhead, Douglas sits on the toilet seat dialing a number on his cell phone.

RICO (O.S.)
Yo, Doug! Where you at, bro?

DOUGLAS
Fulton. Where I grew up.

RICO (O.S.)
Getting in a little family time,
huh? That's what's up.

DOUGLAS
Yeah. So how's everybody doing?

RICO (V.O.)
Oh, you know. I've been doing the delivery thing while working on the documentary. Joe's been doin' session work and Theo's been writing some new songs the last few days.

DOUGLAS
They started looking for a new bass player yet?

RICO (V.O.)
Bro, they're over what happened. Why wouldn't they still want to play with you? You're a badass player, your voice is fire and you write great songs. Plus, you got a hard core group of fans that love you guys.

DOUGLAS
I don't know about all that.

RICO (V.O.)
Doug, I'm tellin' you, bro. In fact, I'll post this clip I edited just yesterday and send you a private link. I want you to watch it.

DOUGLAS
What is it?

RICO (O.S.)
You'll understand when you see it.

INT. JAYLENE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Douglas comes back to find Lucky on the bed lying on his sheets. Lucky spots him and growls. Douglas sighs. Guess he's not going back to bed anytime soon.

He sees Jaylene's guitar, goes over to picks it up, then sits on the floor. He begins to play a song, singing along. Singing softly, his voice is angelic.

He stops playing and singing to glance at Lucky, who has stopped growling and is now watching him intently.

INT. JAYLENE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Douglas lies awake in bed, Lucky close beside him. Despite the music coming from Jaylene's room, he can hear her and Daryl STILL going at it.

INT. JAYLENE'S BATHROOM -- NIGHT

With the fan whirring overhead to block out any sounds outside, Douglas sits on the toilet reading Pastor Privett's notebook.

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)
I need to begin my story in
nineteen-fifty, when, as a young
woman, I had received a calling
from God to go to Haiti as a
missionary...

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH -- DAY

MS. EURYDIA CARLA MAE ANDERSON, (Pastor Privett in her early 20's), an idealistic Christian missionary, delivers an impassioned sermon.

MS. LIZETTE JEAN-MARIE, (30's), a seductively beautiful, Creole Haitian, a local MAMBO, sits in a back pew smiling, entranced with the young preacher's passion (THE SAME WOMAN PASTOR PRIVETT IMGINED AT THE BACK OF HER CHURCH THE DAY SHE FAINTED).

EXT. FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH -- DAY

Lizette passes by Eurydia at the doorway.

LIZETTE
That was quite a moving sermon.
Divinely inspired.

She walks away as Eurydia stares after her.

MS. GUTREAUX (O.S.)
That's Ms. Lizette Jean Marie, the
local mambo.

Eurydia turns to see MS. BONAPARTE GUTREAUX, (20's), a Creole
Haitian, approach.

EURYDIA
Mambo?

MS. GUTREAUX
(whispering)
Witch doctor. She must've heard
something good about you to come
all the way down the mountain from
her humfo.

EURYDIA
Her what?

MS. GUTREAUX
Humfo. Her temple. Where she does
her..

Ms. Gutreaux waves her hands around like a magician.

MS. GUTREAUX (CONT'D)
It's true, what people say, though.
You are quite amazing, sister
Anderson.

EURYDIA
Just doin' what the Lord tells me,
sister Gutreaux.

INT. FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH -- DAY

Another service has just ended. Lizette talks with Eurydia.

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)
The first conversation Lizette and
I had lasted for hours...

EXT. PORT-AU-PRINCE MARKET SQUARE -- DAY

They stroll through the bustling square filled with SHOPPERS and VENDORS.

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)
...while I took in the
extraordinary beauty of the island
and its people...

They stop at a CART displaying hand crafted jewelry. Eurydia admires a NECKLACE of blue beads and lapis.

INT. CHURCH BACKYARD-- DAY

Smiling warmly, Eurydia stands behind a table with other missionaries serving people free meals. Lizette helps out nearby.

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)
I invited her to partake in the
divine work I had come to do on
behalf of my church...

EXT. LIZETTE'S SANCTUARY -- NIGHT

Lizette stands barefoot in the middle of a CIRCLE in front of a brightly decorated center pole supporting the shed-like roof of the HUMFO.

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)
In turn, she allowed me to witness
a ceremony in her sanctuary...

Eurydia watches, transfixed, as drummers, singers, and audience members surround Lizette during a RITUAL.

INT. LIZETTE'S SALON -- DAY

Eurydia and Lizette sit drinking tea. Though the room is simple in furnishings, velvet curtains and matching drapes suggests a touch of luxury.

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)
She invited me into her home and we
shared with each other our life's
stories... and our philosophies...

EURYDIA
Ms. Jean-Marie-

LIZETTE

Please call me Lizette.

EURYDIA

Okay. Lizette, do you mean to tell me you don't see the similarity between bein' visited by the Holy Ghost and what you call bein' possessed by your loas?

LIZETTE

Yes, I do, but when those of your faith are visited by your Holy Ghost it is always welcomed. Loas sometimes take possession by force, and must then be forcefully expelled, either by a Hungan, a mambo, or by the person themselves... if they are strong enough.

EURYDIA

But those are demonic loas, no?

LIZETTE

If that's what you want to call them. One religion's diab...

EURYDIA

Well it's nice for the people to keep their folk customs but-

LIZETTE

No, Sister Anderson-

EURYDIA

It's Eurydia.

LIZETTE

(smiles at the gesture)

Okay. Eurydia, our religion has been called folk custom, ideology, superstition... everything but what it is!

EURYDIA

Yes, but-

LIZETTE

Must everything be seen from the point of view of one religion? Of one perspective?

EURYDIA
Lizette, as a Christian...

Euryida pauses. She doesn't want to offend Lizette and jeopardize their friendship.

As if sensing Eurydia's thoughts, Lizette suddenly smiles.

LIZETTE
Don't answer that! Here, have some
more tea.

Eurydia returns the smile, relieved.

EURYDIA
Yes. This is some really good tea,
I will say that.

They share a laugh as Lizette pours tea into Eurydia's cup.

INT. ORPHANAGE -- DAY

Eurydia and Lizette play with the children.

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)
I was impressed with Lizette's
compassion and generosity. It was
truly a joy to be around her...

INT. LIZETTE'S SALON -- DAY

Lizette and Eurydia sit drinking tea.

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)
But then, something happened...
something unexpected...

END FLASHBACK.

INT. JAYLENE'S BATHROOM -- NIGHT

A knock on the door startles Douglas.

JAYLENE (O.S.)
Doug, you in there? I have to use
the bathroom.

Douglas folds down the corner of the page where he'd stopped reading.

INT. JAYLENE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Douglas lies on the sofa next to Lucky, listening to music on his cell phone.

INT. JAYLENE'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Douglas is asleep, his new friend, Lucky still nestled by his side. The sounds of two people laughing in the kitchen wake him up. Jaylene enters, all smiles, sees Douglas is awake.

JAYLENE

Hey, sleepy head.

Daryl appears behind her, grinning like king of the roost. Lucky sees Daryl and growls.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)

Lucky, be nice.

(to Douglas)

Doug, this is Daryl. Daryl, that's Doug. He was a friend of my brother's when we were kids.

DOUGLAS

(to Daryl)

Hey.

Daryl nods to Douglas, as he puts his hands around Jaylene's waist.

JAYLENE

(to Douglas)

I'm making french toast. Hope you're hungry.

She exits to the kitchen. Daryl sits on the arm of a chair and eyes Douglas, sizing him up.

DARYL

So you knew Cal?

DOUGLAS

In junior high.

DARYL

That's cool. She doesn't get to reminisce about him much with anybody.

DOUGLAS

Me neither.

DARYL

Hope you don't get too bored being back in Fulton. Imagine they got everything a guy like you needs in St. Louis. Am I right?

Douglas shrugs, looks away. Something about Daryl makes him uneasy.

Jaylene re-enters.

JAYLENE (O.S.)

You guys okay with cinnamon?

DARYL

Cinnamon's fine, baby.

Daryl grabs her and pulls her onto his lap.

DARYL (CONT'D)

Just like you.

JAYLENE

Daryl, come on now, I gotta finish makin' breakfast.

DARYL

You're my breakfast, baby.

He nuzzles his face in the crevice of her neck while making loud munching noises. She laughs as she playfully pushes his head away and stands up. Daryl's cell phone rings.

JAYLENE

You better get that!

He takes out his phone and checks the caller ID.

DARYL

Just my buddy, Ricky. I'll call 'em later.

He tries to grab her again but she quickly evades him.

JAYLENE

Nice try, mister!

He exits to the hallway. Jaylene turns towards the kitchen.

DOUGLAS

Hey, I know last night was a bust, but there were a few more places we can check out if you're up for it.

JAYLENE
Of course. Who else is going to be
your wingman?

She smiles then exits to the kitchen. Douglas scratches Lucky behind the ears, then picks up Jaylene's guitar and begins to play.

BEGIN MONTAGE

Douglas and Jaylene hang out at another gay bar. Douglas makes eye contact with a BAR PATRON and smiles.

Douglas helps Pastor Privett with therapy. They seem to be enjoying a conversation.

Douglas dances with a GUY (20's) African-American, on a small dance floor in another bar. The house lights come up. Douglas leans in and whispers in the guy's ear. The guy smiles shakes his head and walks away. Douglas makes eye contact with Jaylene seated at the bar and shrugs.

Douglas helps Pastor Privett slowly stand out of her wheelchair.

Douglas and Jaylene enter the first gay bar (WHERE DOUGLAS MET ROGER) and see a handful of men. Douglas scans the entire bar, then turns to Jaylene and shakes his head. They turn to leave.

INT. METHODIST MEDICAL CENTER THERAPY ROOM -- DAY

Douglas helps Pastor Privett with the last set of leg exercises.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Amazing how quickly I can already
feel my leg coming back.

DOUGLAS
Yeah, you did pretty well.
Practically moving it by yourself.

He helps her into her wheelchair.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Think I want to try using that cane
the nurse brought me. Lord knows I
ain't trying to get used to this
wheelchair.

Douglas assists her in slowly rising to her feet, then grabs the cane hooked on the handle of the wheelchair and hands it to her. Pastor Privett takes a few slow and awkward steps.

DOUGLAS
How does it feel?

PASTOR PRIVETT
Like a miracle. Think I want to try walking back to my room.

INT. METHODIST MEDICAL CENTER HALLWAY -- DAY

Pastor Privett walks out into the hallway with Douglas' assistance.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Thank God for my friends taking care of the church or I don't know what I'd do.

They move in a silence for a beat.

DOUGLAS
You ever hear from any other friends? Like the ones from your missionary days?

PASTOR PRIVETT
What you know about my missionary days?

DOUGLAS
I think somebody at church must've mentioned it. I was just curious if you stayed in touch with anyone.

PASTOR PRIVETT
That was a long time ago. Another life.

Pastor Privett has a 'far away' look, then snaps back to the present as they get to her room. She sees a NURSE (30's), Latino, setting a lunch tray on her bed's side table.

PASTOR PRIVETT (CONT'D)
Food's so bad in this place, I've lost my appetite.

DOUGLAS
You want me to go get you something and bring it back?

PASTOR PRIVETT

Oh, no, you go on and enjoy your day. I'll manage.

DOUGLAS

Okay. See you tomorrow.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Not if I see you first.

Douglas smiles, grateful she can joke with him like this.

INT. JAYLENE'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Douglas and Jaylene are finishing up eating lunch.

JAYLENE

I'm guessing you're probably not too crazy about trying the bar scene again, so I have a better idea.

She turns her nearby laptop toward him. The screen displays local ads for MALE ESCORTS SERVICES.

DOUGLAS

A male escort?

JAYLENE

You'll know exactly what you're getting. No drama. No fuss.

Douglas looks at the ads on the screen.

DOUGLAS

I don't have money for something like that.

JAYLENE

Don't worry about it. I got you.

DOUGLAS

No, I couldn't have you pay.

JAYLENE

I want to. Just think of it as my contribution to the de-virginize Doug fund.

Douglas looks at her, smiles. Hard to say no with that kind of support.

DOUGLAS

Alright, sure.

JAYLENE

Awesome! Now, you just got to find someone you like so we can set it up.

He looks at the ads.

DOUGLAS

But how do I know this is what they really look like?

JAYLENE

Which is why you only want to consider the ones that say 'actual photo.'

Douglas continues reading the ads. He sees one that reads: BOY NEXT DOOR LOOKS WITH A HOT BAD BOY VIBE. CALL JULIAN. The photo next to the ad shows a shirtless, well toned MALE (20's), African-American smiling sweetly.

DOUGLAS

How 'bout him?

He shows Jaylene the ad.

JAYLENE

Julian it is.

INT. JAYLENE'S BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Douglas gargles and spits into the sink. He looks at himself in the mirror, styles his mohawk a bit.

JAYLENE (O.S.)

Come on, Doug. He'll be here any minute.

INT. JAYLENE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Jaylene faces Douglas.

JAYLENE

Here's the money. And some protection.

She hands him an envelope and a pack of condoms.

DARYL (O.S.)
Jay, you comin' back or what?

She looks towards her bedroom down the hall, to see Daryl's head sticking out of the doorway.

JAYLENE
Be right there, babe.
(to Douglas)
Have fun tonight.

She smiles as she exits to her bedroom. Douglas sits in a chair and takes a deep breath; he's nervous.

There's a knock at the front door. He gets up and opens it. JULIAN (20's), African-American, stands there wearing a tight t-shirt and jeans that accentuate his well-toned body.

DOUGLAS
Julian?

JULIAN
You must be Doug.

Douglas moves aside to let Julian in. He grab the envelope near the chair and hands it to Julian. Julian quickly counts the money, then smiles at Douglas.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
Appreciate it.

Julian gets close to Douglas, running a hand over his chest.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
So what do you like to do?

Douglas back away, still nervous.

DOUGLAS
Uh, could we, like, take our time?

JULIAN
Absolutely. Whatever you want.

Julian sits on the bed, notices Jaylene's guitar in the corner.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
You play?

Douglas nods.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
Can you play me something?

DOUGLAS

Uh, sure.

Douglas picks up the guitar and sits in a chair. He begins playing and singing a soulful song. Julian becomes enrapt. Soon, he begins to cry. Douglas stops playing.

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

Julian...?

JULIAN

I'm sorry. You're playing is so beautiful. It reminds me of my mother. She just passed away. She loved music so much. She would've loved to hear you play and sing. But now she's...

Douglas watches Julian start to cry again. Certainly wasn't expecting this.

INT. JAYLENE'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Daryl lies next to Jaylene, having just finished making love.

DARYL

Lord have mercy, girl. You wore me out.

JAYLENE

You needed a good workout.

She kisses him then gets up out of bed and goes toward the door.

INT. HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Jaylene is on her way to the bathroom but the sounds of someone crying in the living room makes her curious.

INT. JAYLENE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Jaylene peeks into the room and raises her eyebrows when she sees Julian sitting on the bed crying on Douglas' shoulder. Not what she expected. She turns back into the hallway.

INT. JAYLENE'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Jaylene makes eggs and toast while Douglas sits at the table.

DOUGLAS

...so I gave him a shoulder to cry on. Safe to say, nothing much was going to happen after that.

JAYLENE

How crazy is that?

DARYL (O.S.)

Hey baby, you seen the toothbrush I was keeping in your bathroom.

Jaylene moves toward the entrance between the kitchen and hallway.

JAYLENE

Oh God, babe, that toothbrush was so old. I chucked it. New one's in the cabinet.

She turns to Douglas.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)

Bummer you paid Mr. Julian last night for nothing. Had to be the easiest three hundred dollars he's ever made.

DOUGLAS

He actually gave me the money back. Insisted.

JAYLENE

Awesome! You can pick another one and this time-

DOUGLAS

Forget it. When I try, it just never works out. Least when I don't try, I don't have to reminded how messed up I am. Like last night.

JAYLENE

What do you mean?

DOUGLAS

When he was crying on my shoulder, it felt so good to hold someone close like that. And I felt so bad because here he is, feeling completely heartbroken about his mom and I'm sitting there kind of wanting the moment to never end. How effed up is that?

Jaylene sits next to him, puts a hand on his shoulder. She really feels for him.

INT. DOUGLAS' ROOM FROM CHILDHOOD -- NIGHT

Douglas sits on his bed reading Pastor Privett's notebook from where he left off.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. LIZETTE'S SALON -- DAY

Lizette and Eurydia sit drinking tea.

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)
But then, something happened...
something unexpected...

Lizette gives Eurydia a small box. Eurydia opens it and takes out a beautiful necklace of blue beads and lapis lazuli (THE SAME ONE FROM THE MARKET)

EURYDIA
Lizette, you shouldn't have. It's beautiful.

Eurydia holds it against her neck.

LIZETTE
(rising)
Let me.

She goes behind Eurydia and fastens the necklace.

LIZETTE (CONT'D)
Come to the mirror so you can see.

She guides Eurydia over to the mirror. As they admire the necklace, Lizette's hands gently rest on Eurydia's shoulders, then gently move along her skin.

Eurydia closes her eyes, begins to breath deeper. Lizette kisses Eurydia on the nape of her neck. Eurydia suddenly opens her eyes and pulls away.

LIZETTE (CONT'D)
Eurydia, it's okay.

EURYDIA
No!

Eurydia yanks off the necklace and it falls to the floor, shattering into many pieces.

EXT. LIZETTE'S PORCH -- DAY

Eurydia runs off as Lizette stands in the doorway.

LIZETTE
Eurydia, wait! I'm sorry!

INT. FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH -- DAY

Eurydia stands before a congregation. She is FIRED UP.

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)
I could not face my fear of what
happened, of what it implied...

EURYDIA
...and that is why we must stand
vigilant against all manner of
abomination...

She sees Lizette rise from the back pew and walk out. She swallows hard then continues with even more conviction.

EURYDIA (CONT'D)
God commands us to condemn what is
unnatural...

EXT. LIZETTE'S FRONT PORCH -- DAY

Eurydia stands at the doorway and rings the bell. Her fiance, ROBERT PRIVETT, (30's), African-American, stands beside her.

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)
It may've helped play a role in
what happened next...

Lizette opens the door to see Eurydia.

LIZETTE
I was wondering when you'd arrive.
So what is this surprise you
mentioned on the-

She sees Robert and looks questioningly at Eurydia.

EURYDIA

Lizette, this is Robert Privett, a missionary from the states by way of Indiana.

Lizette is speechless.

EXT. PARK -- DAY

Eurydia and Robert sit on a bench. He presents her with a RING.

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)

Six weeks later, Robert asked me to marry him...

INT. HOLINESS BAPTIST CHURCH -- DAY

Robert and Eurydia exchange wedding vows.

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)

We left Haiti and moved to my hometown of Fulton. The preacher who married us told me he was movin' to Detroit and said God told him to give the church over to me...

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S PARLOR (UNFURNISHED) -- DAY

Robert carries Eurydia over the threshold.

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)

... We planned to build up our church, and raise a family..

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S PARLOR -- DAY

Eurydia sits in her rocking chair reading her bible in a furnished room.

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)

But I could not have foreseen what was about to come...

The doorbell rings. She gets up and opens the door to see CARL (40's), Caucasian.

CARL

Mrs. Privett? I work with your husband at the Colmby Manufacturing Plant downtown. There was an accident. Robert got hurt bad. By the time the ambulance came, he...
(shakes his head)
I'm sorry.

Eurydia backs away, shaking her head, in TOTAL SHOCK.

EXT. PORT-AU-PRINCE AIRPORT LANDING PAD -- NIGHT

Eurydia gets off the plane with the other passengers.

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)
My grief spilled into my dreams,
showed me a vision...one that led
me back to Haiti...

INT. LIZETTE'S PORCH -- NIGHT

Eurydia rings the doorbell as thunder cracks overhead. The door opens and she sees Lizette wearing a cold smile.

LIZETTE
Eurydia, to what do I owe this unexpected visit?

EURYDIA
What did you do, Lizette?

LIZETTE
What are you talking about?

EURYDIA
My Robert is gone! I had a dream that you...

LIZETTE
Just because you dreamed something doesn't mean-

EURYDIA
What did you do to him, you witch!

LIZETTE
Your ugliness doesn't suit you.

EURYDIA
God will judge you.

LIZETTE

Who are you to know what is between
me and God?

EURYDIA

I loved him!

LIZETTE

You know nothing of love! You, with
your arrogance and your
proselytizing and your assumptions
of religious and cultural
superiority.

EURYDIA

I came here to help people-

LIZETTE

No, you thought you were coming to
an island of poor, pagan savages to
mold them into little versions of
yourself, not even considering how
you might be destroying a long
existing culture that you do not
even begin to understand.

EURYDIA

(stammering)

I didn't... I just wanted to...

Eurydia is at a loss. She knows Lizette could be right.

LIZETTE

I love you, Eurydia. Doesn't that
count for something?

Gone is Lizette's rage. She's hurt and feels betrayed.

EURYDIA

I'm your friend, Lizette. That's
all.

LIZETTE

So you're going to pretend you
didn't feel anything more than-

EURYDIA

It was wrong.

LIZETTE

Maybe it's you who are wrong. What
I feel for you is real.

She raises her hand to touch Eurydia's cheek.

LIZETTE (CONT'D)
And I know you feel it too.

Eurydia pushes her hand away, locks eyes with Lizette.

EURYDIA
I don't love you, Lizette.

Lizette reacts as if she'd been slapped. Her face slowly turns into a thin-lipped smile.

LIZETTE
One day, you will regret this. As will all those whom you dare to love. And you will find yourself accursed. And alone.

She glances down at Eurydia's swollen belly. Eurydia backs away, then turns and quickly leaves. Lizette watches silently at the doorway, trying vainly to maintain her composure while tears stream down her face.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. DOUGLAS'S ROOM FROM CHILDHOOD -- DAY

Douglas' phone rings and he picks up.

JAYLENE (O.S.)
Me and Daryl were thinking of having a picnic this afternoon. Want to come with?

DOUGLAS
Sure.

Douglas glances at his grandma's notebook.

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
Is it okay if I invite someone to join us?

EXT. METHODIST MEDICAL CENTER -- DAY

Jaylene pulls into the parking lot.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S ROOM IN MEDICAL CENTER -- DAY

Jaylene, Douglas, Daryl, and Dr. Parker enter Pastor Privett's room to find her playing solitaire on her bed table.

DR. PARKER

Pastor, you got company. They want
to treat you to a picnic.

Pastor Privett looks up, sees her guests.

DOUGLAS

Hey, grandma.

JAYLENE

Hi, Pastor. I'm Jaylene, a friend
of Doug's.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Why would you young folk want to
spend Sunday afternoon with an old
fogey like me?

JAYLENE

Oh, Pastor, stop. With that
beautiful skin?

PASTOR PRIVETT

Miss Jaylene, I like you already.

DR. PARKER

This is actually perfect timing,
Pastor. I was going to tell you,
the additional CAT scans confirmed
there don't seem to be any other
issues. So if you'd like, you can
sign yourself out this afternoon
and they can take you home. How
does that sound?

PASTOR PRIVETT

Like the best news I've heard all
day.

DR. PARKER

Of course, you'll come back for
rehab. Douglas is still helping
you, right?

PASTOR PRIVETT

'Long as he wants to.

DOUGLAS

Of course.

He shares a warm look with Pastor Privett.

PASTOR PRIVETT

(to Jaylene)

So tell me what you got in that bag? Smells an awful lot better than the stuff they're tryin' to pass off as food 'round here.

JAYLENE

Vegetarian lasagna and a warm spinach salad with red peppers and walnuts.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Lord have mercy, vegetarian lasagna! Hah! If it eats as good as it smells you just might convert me.

(beat)

I just need to get ready, then I can meet everyone outside.

DR. PARKER

Why don't I bring you all to the recreation area so we can allow Pastor to get ready.

She turns to Pastor Privett.

DR. PARKER (CONT'D)

I'll find a nurse to help you, Pastor.

PASTOR PRIVETT

I'll be fine. Douglas can stay and help me.

Jaylene and Daryl follow Dr. Parker out.

PASTOR PRIVETT (CONT'D)

Help me put on my slippers.

Douglas gets her slippers and puts them on for her.

DOUGLAS

Did Ms. Olivia tell you about the house cleaning?

PASTOR PRIVETT

What house cleaning?

DOUGLAS

Some members of the church came by the house yesterday and gave everything a good wipe down. Guess they planned to surprise you.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Well, that's very thoughtful of them.

DOUGLAS

Yeah.

A BEAT, then ---

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

We were having lunch and Ms. Beaula told me something. She said some people at church think you might be cursed.

Pastor Privett shifts uneasily in her bed, looking away.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Now why would she tell you something like that?

DOUGLAS

She told me about grandpa's accident at work. And about what happened to my mom and dad. Then I told her what almost happened to me.

Pastor Privett looks alarmed but tried to cover it. Douglas helps her out of bed.

PASTOR PRIVETT

What almost happened?

DOUGLAS

One night, a car nearly ran me over me. Another night, during that storm, a tree almost fell on me.

Pastor Privett suddenly looks troubled.

PASTOR PRIVETT

(mumbling, almost to herself)

You should've never come back.

DOUGLAS

Why're you saying that?

She uses her cane to walk towards the door.

PASTOR PRIVETT
It's rude to keep people waitin'.

DOUGLAS
Grandma, anything you want to tell
me?

Pastor Privett stops, her back to him.

PASTOR PRIVETT
I knew you were coming. Had a dream
about it. I've dreamed other things
weren't half so nice as that.

She stands still a moment, lost in her thought, then
continues out the room on her cane.

EXT. METHODIST MEDICAL CENTER BACKYARD -- DAY

Pastor Privett, Douglas, Jaylene and Daryl sit on a blanket,
just having finished eating.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Miss Johnson, I do believe God has
gifted you with the potential for
culinary greatness.

JAYLENE
Thank you, Pastor.

PASTOR PRIVETT
No, thank you. This made my day.
Now, if you'll escort me back to my
room, I'm sure you've probably got
other things to do on this
beautiful Sunday afternoon.

DOUGLAS
Grandma, isn't there an evening
service at Holiness Church?

PASTOR PRIVETT
Six o'clock. Why?

DOUGLAS
Since Dr. Parker said you were free
to go, I was thinkin' we could take
you home, help you get ready for
service and then we could all go
together.

(MORE)

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
(looks at Jaylene and
Daryl)
If you guys are up for it, of
course.

JAYLENE
Sure.
(to Daryl)
That alright with you babe?

DARYL
Well, I don't really-

Jaylene gives him a look.

DARYL (CONT'D)
Sure, whatever.

DOUGLAS
Grandma?

PASTOR PRIVETT
I think it's a wonderful idea.

DOUGLAS
Great.

EXT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S HOUSE -- DAY

Jaylene's car pulls up to the house.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S PARLOR -- DAY

Douglas places Pastor's bags on the floor as Jaylene assists her entering the house.

DOUGLAS
I'm sure it must feel good to be
back.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Oh, you don't know the half of it.
My back was about done with that
awful hospital mattress. Lord knows
I'll sleep a whole lot better in my
own bed tonight.

JAYLENE
Oh, I'll bet. Can't nothin' compare
to your own bed.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Isn't your boyfriend coming in?

JAYLENE
He said he'll wait in the car. Come on, Pastor, I'll help you to your room.

INT. DOUGLAS'S ROOM FROM CHILDHOOD -- DAY

Douglas closes the door and sits on his bed. He pulls his grandma's notebook from under his pillow and opens it.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

EXT. HOLINESS BAPTIST CHURCH -- DAY

The congregation exits as we see a vegetable garden has flourished next to the church.

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)
My boy was the spitting image of his father.

ROBERT JR., (10), runs to Pastor Privett, standing by the church entrance.

ROBERT JR.
Momma! My tomato plant is growing!

He gives her a hug. She goes to hug him back.

LIZETTE (O.S.)
...as will all those whom you dare to love.

She lowers her arms, squashing the impulse. The look on her face says it pains her to do so.

PASTOR PRIVETT
That's enough now. Go on home. I'll see you soon.

He runs off.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S PARLOR -- DAY

Pastor Privett sits in her rocker crocheting when Robert Jr. runs in holding up a piece of paper.

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)
I was always afraid my love for him
would bubble up to the surface and
give me away...

ROBERT JR.
Momma! I got an A on my math test!

Pastor Privett smiles and begins to say something, but stops.
She forces her focus back to her crocheting.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Ain't that what you supposed to
get?

His face falls, disappointed by her lack of praise.

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)
So I learned to hide it... perhaps
too well...

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Pastor Privett prepares supper. Robert Jr., now 15, walks
towards the back door, a backpack over his shoulder.

PASTOR PRIVETT
(noticing the bag)
Where are you goin'?

ROBERT JR.
A friend's house.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Don't you have chores to do?

ROBERT JR.
Do 'em when I get back.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Get back early before supper, you
hear?

But he's already gone before she can finish speaking.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

Pastor Privett sits slumped over, staring at her untouched
plate of food. The wall clock reads: 4:13 AM.

LIZETTE (O.S.)
...and you will find yourself
accursed. And alone.

EXT. HOLINESS BAPTIST CHURCH -- DAY -- 1980

Pastor Privett stands by the door as people leave. They say goodbye to her as they pass, but she barely acknowledges them, numbed by the pain of her loss.

Deacon Timmons (40's) notices this and approaches her.

DEACON TIMMONS
Didn't see your son today? How's he
he doing?

Pastor Privett's deep sorrow flashes across her face.

PASTOR PRIVETT
He's...

She turns away, afraid her pain will spill over. Deacon sees this, can sense she's dealing with some serious hurt.

DEACON TIMMONS
You know, sometimes when my
feelings are too heavy to carry, I
write 'em down. Amazin' how puttin'
'em on paper can help lighten the
load. You take care now, Pastor.

He leaves as she contemplates his words.

END FLASHBACK

INT. DOUGLAS'S ROOM FROM CHILDHOOD -- DAY

A knock on the door makes Douglas jump.

JAYLENE (O.S.)
You ready?

Douglas closes the notebook, hides it under his mattress.

DOUGLAS
Yeah, be right out.

INT. JAYLENE'S CAR -- DAY

Jaylene drives with Daryl next to her. Pastor Privett sits in the back next to Douglas wearing a pretty floral dress.

Jaylene turns on the radio, scans the stations and stops when she hears the song "Love Me Do" by the Beatles.

Jaylene looks up into the rear view, sees Pastor Privett singing the chorus, smiling, eyes closed. Jaylene joins her, then Douglas.

Pastor Privett looks from Douglas to the cars in the road driving in the opposite direction and her brow suddenly furrows.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Stop.

DOUGLAS

Grandma, what's wrong?

PASTOR PRIVETT

You got to get out this car. It's not safe.

JAYLENE

Pastor, I'm drivin' real careful-

PASTOR PRIVETT

Stop this car now! Please!

JAYLENE

Alright. Just hang on.

Jaylene pulls over and shuts off the engine. Daryl rolls his eyes, then looks at Jaylene, and mouthing SHE'S CRAZY. She hits him in the arm.

DARYL

You hit me again...

Pastor Privett opens her door and uses her cane to get out of the car. Douglas gets out and goes over to her side to help her.

DOUGLAS

You okay?

Pastor Privett nods, but it's clear by her heavy breathing she's still anxious.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Mind if you and I walk the rest of the way? Not too far from here.

DOUGLAS

Grandma, you can barely walk.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Getting stronger everyday. And I
need the practice.

Douglas sighs, knows better than to argue with her when she's being stubborn. He turns back to Jaylene.

JAYLENE
You take your time, Pastor. We'll
see you both at the church.

Darryl starts the car and drives off. Pastor Privett begins to walk slowly with her cane, Douglas by her side.

PASTOR PRIVETT
You got a good friend there.

DOUGLAS
Jaylene? Yeah, she is.

They walk in silence a moment. And then:

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
She's Cal's sister.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Who's Cal?

Douglas glances at her. He takes a big breath, preparing to 'go there'.

DOUGLAS
He was my friend. When I was a kid.

More silence. Douglas knows this conversation was never going to be easy.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Have you seen him since you've been back?

DOUGLAS
No. He died a few years ago.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Oh. Sorry to hear that.

DOUGLAS
Are you?

PASTOR PRIVETT
What do you mean?

DOUGLAS

Are you really sorry? Or are you
just saying that?

PASTOR PRIVETT

What kind of question is that?

Douglas looks at her, incredulous.

DOUGLAS

Don't you remember what happened?
What you did?

Pastor Privett stops, swallows nervously. She knows what he's referring to.

PASTOR PRIVETT

I've always tried to do right by
you. Never meant to make you
feel...

DOUGLAS

Like something was wrong with me?

Pastor Privett steps back, wincing from the sting of his words. She struggles to look at him.

PASTOR PRIVETT

I...

She wants to say so much. But the words won't come. Finally, she breaks her gaze and looks down the block.

PASTOR PRIVETT (CONT'D)

I need to use the restroom in that
convenience store. Excuse me.

With difficulty, she slowly makes her way to the store. Douglas watches her a moment, then moves up ahead and opens the door for her.

While he waits, Douglas looks around and sees a music shop a few doors down. He walks up to the music shop's window display and his jaw drops.

Propped up on a guitar stand, is the same heart-shaped, gold sunburst bass guitar he'd dreamed of!

EXT. MUSIC STORE -- DAY

PASTOR PRIVETT (O.S.)

You like that guitar?

Douglas turns to see Pastor Privett exiting the convenience store.

DOUG
It's nice.

PASTOR PRIVETT
The way you were just lookin' at it
a moment ago said more than nice.

He smiles, letting her know she's right.

PASTOR PRIVETT (CONT'D)
I appreciate you takin' me to
service.

DOUGLAS
It was Jaylene's idea.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Maybe so, but you chose to come
along when you didn't have to. Just
like you chose to help me with me
therapy.

DOUGLAS
Somebody had to.

PASTOR PRIVETT
You're not just somebody.

Douglas looks at her, his heart softening. It's not exactly
an apology, but he'll take it.

EXT. HOLINESS BAPTIST CHURCH -- DAY

Jaylene parks her car in the parking lot.

INT. HOLINESS BAPTIST CHURCH -- DAY

Olivia, Beaula and the rest of the Holiness congregation sing
a song of praise. Deacon Timmons stands at the pulpit, sees
Pastor Privett and his eyes brighten. He goes to her and they
hug.

DEACON TIMMONS
Brothers and sisters, we have with
us one of God's most selfless
servants, my dear friend, Pastor
Eurydia Carla Mae Privett!

Everyone greets her with nothing but love. She slowly makes it up to the pulpit up front while Douglas, Jaylene and Daryl sit in the back.

OLIVIA
(whispering to Beaula)
They released Pastor from the hospital?

BEAULA
Well, obviously if she's here.

A cell phone rings. Jaylene reaches into Daryl's pocket and pulls out his phone to silence it.

Jaylene sees the caller ID and looks up, FURIOUS. Daryl tries to grab his phone back but she holds it away. They start arguing in loud whispers.

Beaula watches them, then turns back to Olivia.

BEAULA (CONT'D)
They're messin' up service with all that fussin'. I'm gonna give 'em a piece a' my mind.

OLIVIA
Beaula...

But Beaula is already making her way towards the back. Just as she gets near, Daryl grabs his phone from Jaylene and heads for the exit. She follows. Beaula follows Jaylene, fast on her heels.

EXT. HOLINESS BAPTIST CHURCH -- DAY

Beaula exits just in time to see Jaylene punch Daryl in the face. Daryl shoves Jaylene on the ground, jumps in her car, and drives off.

Beaula watches as Jaylene's shoulders shake from crying. Her look of annoyance has been replaced with one of sympathy. Douglas comes from behind Beaula and goes over to Jaylene.

DOUGLAS
Jaylene?

JAYLENE
Doug, I'm so stupid.

DOUGLAS
What happened?

JAYLENE

He's been cheatin' on me with
another girl at the club. My so-
called friend, Debbie. Her name
came up on his caller ID.

DOUGLAS

I'm sorry.

JAYLENE

I trust them and they crap on me.
Story of every man in my life.

Douglas sits down next to her.

DOUGLAS

That's not true. I'm sure Cal loved
you. Your dad.

She laughs, stares off into the distance.

JAYLENE

Yeah, my dad loved me, alright.
Least, that's what he called it.
Made me promise to never tell
anyone. But I broke that promise
the night Cal told me he was
running away. I told him why he
couldn't leave me there with dad.
He flipped out, went straight to
dad and they got into a fight. Cal
called the cops the next day, had
dad arrested. Cal and I went to
live with Aunt Caroline. And after
years of therapy and anti-
depressants, what do I do? Find
myself with a loser of a guy in a
dysfunctional relationship. How's
that for lack of self worth?

Douglas puts his arm around her shoulders, trying to comfort
her. Ironically, now that she's opened up, she seems more at
peace, as if the weight of her terrible secret has been
lifted.

OLIVIA (O.S.)

Douglas?

Douglas turns to see Olivia and Pastor Privett standing at
the church door. He gets up and walks over to her.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

Beaula told me what happened. Is
she alright?

DOUGLAS

Ms. Olivia, is it possible for us
to get a ride back?

EXT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Douglas and Pastor approach the front door as Olivia's car drives off.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S PARLOUR -- NIGHT

Pastor Privett and Douglas enter.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Didn't know how much I missed that
church 'til I was there. Was a real
nice service.

DOUGLAS

It was.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Real thoughtful of you and your
friend bringing me there.

DOUGLAS

Glad we could do it.

For a brief moment, they share a warm smile. Pastor breaks it, starts towards her room.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Think I need to lie down for a
while. My body feels wore out.

DOUGLAS

Here, let me help you.

PASTOR PRIVETT

No, no, this cane helps me just
fine.

DOUGLAS

Okay. If you need anything, just
let me know.

He watches her disappear down the hall to her room.

INT. DOUGLAS' ROOM FROM CHILDHOOD -- NIGHT

Douglas pulls the notebook from under his pillow, lies back against the wall and picks up where he left off.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Pastor Privett sits at her desk, writing in her notebook.

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)
It was like a dam had burst. All
the heartache and pain tumbled out
of me.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Pastor Privett makes lunch. The phone rings. She picks up.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Hello?

MS. GUTREAUX (O.S.)
Bonsoir, Sister Anderson is that
you?

PASTOR PRIVETT
Sister Gutreaux! Yes, it's me, but
I'm Pastor Privett now. So good to
hear your voice.

MS. GUTREAUX (O.S.)
I feel the same. But I'm calling
with sad news. Lizette Jean-Marie
was murdered three days ago.

Pastor Privett falters, catching her breath.

PASTOR PRIVETT
What happened?

MS. GUTREAUX (O.S.)
So awful. Some men in town accused
her of putting a spell on the local
women. After getting liquored up,
they armed themselves with knives.
They went to her humfo and...

Pastor Privett closes her eyes, trying to block out the image in her mind.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Oh, God!

MS. GUTREAUX (O.S.)

I knew you two used to be close. I
thought you'd want to know.

Pastor Privett blinks back tears.

MS. GUTREAUX (CONT'D)

Please give me your address.
There's something I need to send to
you. It's from Lizette.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S BEDROOM --NIGHT

Pastor Privett sits on her bed writing in her notebook. She
hears the doorbell ring.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S PARLOR -- DAY

Pastor Privett opens the door and her eyes grow wide with
shock. Robert Jr., (26), stands there with his wife JOANNA,
early (20's), African-American. She holds Douglas, (5), their
child.

ROBERT JR.

Mom...?

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)

When the moment came, I thought it
was a dream...

She slowly reaches out and touches his face. Tears spring to
her eyes as she pulls him into a tight hug. She hugs Joanna,
then turns to Douglas.

PASTOR PRIVETT

And who's this handsome young man?

ROBERT JR.

That's Douglas.

Pastor Privett bends down to him.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Well hello, Douglas. I'm your
grandma. I'm so happy to meet you.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S PARLOR -- DAY

Pastor Privett sits in her rocker, her arms around Douglas seated on her lap. As Joanna takes a picture of them with her camera, Robert Jr. enters the room and stops to watch them, smiling.

PASTOR PRIVETT (V.O.)
I dared to believe I was finally
free from whatever curse had
befallen me. Free to love the
family that had come back into my
life.

Joanna puts down her camera and joins Robert Jr.

ROBERT JR.
Hey, Mom, Joanne and I are going to
run some errands. We'll be back in
a few. You mind watchin' Douglas?

PASTOR PRIVETT
Now what kind a' silly question is
that?

ROBERT JR.
Okay, didn't want to assume.

Robert Jr. and Joanna make their way to the front door. Douglas jumps off Pastor Privett's lap as she rises to meet Robert Jr. and Joanna.

ROBERT JR. (CONT'D)
Be back soon.

He kisses her on the cheek.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Okay, baby. Love you.

ROBERT JR.
Love you too.

Robert Jr. And Joanna exit.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Pastor Privett prepares dinner when the doorbell rings.

DOUGLAS (O.S.)
Gramma, somebody's at the door!

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S PARLOR -- DAY

Pastor Privett walks to the front door, with Douglas trailing her. She opens the door, revealing two POLICEMEN. Pastor Privett falters, leaning on the door frame.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Yes?

COP #1

Ma'am, are you related to Robert
Privett Jr.?

PASTOR PRIVETT

He's my son. Why?

COP #1

Your son and daughter-in-law were
in a collision with a vehicle that
ran a red light. I'm very sorry,
ma'am. They were both fatalities.

Pastor Privett falters to the floor, shocked and devastated.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Pastor Privett lies in bed. She gradually opens her eyes and sees Olivia, Douglas, (5), and other church members around her.

OLIVIA

Pastor, we're here for you.

BEAULA

Is there anything we can do?

Pastor Privett stares upward toward the ceiling.

PASTOR PRIVETT

(whispers)

Why can't you leave me in peace?

Olivia looks at everyone in the room.

OLIVIA

You heard Pastor. Come on.

They all start to file out.

DOUGLAS (O.S.)

What's wrong with Gramma?

OLIVIA (O.S.)
She'll be okay, dear. She just
needs some rest.

They all leave. Pastor Privett turns her gaze towards her notebook on the night stand.

LIZETTE (V.O.)
One day... you will regret this.

PASTOR PRIVETT (O.S.)
Douglas?

END FLASHBACK

INT. DOUGLAS' ROOM FROM CHILDHOOD -- NIGHT

Pastor Privett peaks her head into the room.

PASTOR PRIVETT
I was about to head the kitchen to-

Douglas scrambles to shove the notebook under his pillow.

PASTOR PRIVETT (CONT'D)
What was that?

DOUGLAS
Nothing.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Don't lie to me, Douglas. Now what
was it you just hid under there?

DOUGLAS
Grandma...

With her cane, Pastor Privett limps into the room. She goes to the bed and bends down, reaching under the pillow. She pulls out her notebook.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Douglas, why is this here?

DOUGLAS
I'm sorry. I didn't mean-

PASTOR PRIVETT
You had no right. No right to read
this.

DOUGLAS
I'm sorry. I just wanted to know-

PASTOR PRIVETT

Know what?

DOUGLAS

Something. Anything that could give
me answers.

PASTOR PRIVETT

What do you mean, 'answers'?

DOUGLAS

For why you treated me like you
did.

Pastor Privett looks at her notebook.

PASTOR PRIVETT

You shouldn't a' done it. Wasn't
yours.

DOUGLAS

And I found it. It was Lizette.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Douglas...

DOUGLAS

What you did to me had nothing to
do with me. It was about her. About
what happened between you two.

She turns away from him, putting a hand in the air.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Don't.

But Douglas steps towards her. Cat's already out the bag.

DOUGLAS

Why were you so afraid of your
feelings for her?

PASTOR PRIVETT

I said don't! I'm not talking about
this with you.

DOUGLAS

Why not?

PASTOR PRIVETT

Douglas Privett, you stop this
instant, or-

DOUGLAS

Why can't you talk about it?

PASTOR PRIVETT

Get out!

DOUGLAS

What?

PASTOR PRIVETT

Get out! If that's how you're going to be, I don't want you here in this house!

Pastor Privett stares at him, her face distorted with rage, her body trembling. Douglas looks at her a beat. He knows it's no use. He grabs his backpack.

DOUGLAS

Fine.

He walks past her, then turns back at the doorway.

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I read your journal. But I'm not sorry for wanting you to let go of whatever baggage you've been carrying all these years. 'Cause I'm trying to do the same thing. And if we can't help each other do that, then it's probably best if I go.

He leaves. Pastor Privett physically falters, tears falling down her cheeks.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Pastor Privett sits on her bed, the box from the closet opened before her.

She reaches inside and takes out the small unopened package addressed to her from Ms. Gutreaux in Haiti.

She slowly tears it open, reaches inside... and pulls out a necklace of blue beads and lapis lazuli (THE SAME NECKLACE LIZETTE HAD GIVEN TO HER DECADES AGO).

She hugs the necklace to her chest and starts to sob.

PASTOR PRIVETT

Lizette, I'm sorry. I didn't mean it. I didn't mean it.

INT. JAYLENE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Douglas sits on the sofa, strumming on Jaylene's guitar. He stops when Jaylene appears from the kitchen holding two mugs of tea.

DOUGLAS

Thanks again for letting me come over.

JAYLENE

Of course.

She hands him a mug and sits next to him.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)

So you're definitely leaving tomorrow?

DOUGLAS

No point in staying.

JAYLENE

I hear you. Hey, I was thinking of finding Daryl tonight, getting my car back. Want to come along?

DOUGLAS

Know where he is?

JAYLENE

(nods)

Probably his usual hangout spot.

DOUGLAS

Sure, let's do it.

JAYLENE

He's bound to be drunk though. He can be a little volatile when he's had a few.

DOUGLAS

I'm not afraid of him. Are you?

JAYLENE

Heck no.

DOUGLAS

Didn't think so.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Pastor Privett lies on her bed asleep, still in her dress. She turns and moans, in the throes of what appears to be one of her nightmares.

PASTOR PRIVETT
No...no...no!

She suddenly sits up, eyes wide with fear. She reaches for her bible on her nightstand and clasps it to her chest.

PASTOR PRIVETT (CONT'D)
Heavenly Father, please spare my grandson. Please protect him, Oh Lord. Send your angels to surround him and watch over him, Grant him your favor so that he not be harmed, oh Father.

The more she prays, the more passionate she becomes.

PASTOR PRIVETT (CONT'D)
Oh God, please watch over Douglas. Let not any wickedness fall upon him, Lord, I beseech you Father, please-

Suddenly the lights go out.

EXT. CHESTER PARK -- NIGHT

A crowd of PEOPLE hang out drinking, nothing better to do.

Daryl sits on the hood of Jaylene's car holding DEBBIE, (late 20's), Caucasian, in his arms.

They turn to see Jaylene and Douglas, who've just stepped out of a ride share car. Debbie steps forward, her hands balled into fists.

JAYLENE
You can relax, back-stabber. I just came here to get my car back.

DARYL
I'll drop it off later.

JAYLENE
I'm takin' my car now!

DARYL
Or what?

Jaylene steps up, shoves him in his chest, then punches him several times. Some of the blows land on Debbie.

DEBBIE

Ow!

DARYL

(backing off Jaylene's car)

Okay, take your damn car. We're done anyway.

(to Douglas)

Men don't last too long around her. Her daddy. Her brother.

DOUGLAS

Have some respect. Her brother's dead.

DARYL

Oh yeah? How do you know?

Daryl glances at Jaylene, then back to Douglas.

DARYL (CONT'D)

She show you the vase with his ashes?

DOUGLAS

What about it?

DARYL

(looks back at Jaylene)

Why don't you ask her.

JAYLENE

Daryl, what're you getting at?.

DARYL

Don't think I ever told you this. Few years back, there was a night I came over to surprise you. I happened to look through your window and you were sitting at the table burning up pieces of paper.

JAYLENE

So basically you were like a freaking peeping tom.

DARYL

Then I saw you scrape this big pile of ashes into a vase. I went back to my car and called you.

(MORE)

DARYL (CONT'D)

When you let me in, the vase was up
on the shelf. That's when you told
me you'd found out your brother had
died and those were his ashes.

JAYLENE

Daryl...

DARYL

Since I knew you were lying about
the ashes I suspected maybe you
were lying about the whole thing,
though I had no idea why you'd want
to make something like that up.

(glances at Douglas)

Or tell someone else that lie.

JAYLENE

You son of a bitch.

Douglas turns to Jaylene, aghast. He doesn't want to believe it.

DOUGLAS

Is it true?

Jaylene stares at Douglas. She wants to explain but has no idea what to say. Feeling betrayed, Douglas turns and storms off.

JAYLENE

No, Doug, wait!

EXT. LOCAL STREET -- NIGHT

Jaylene catches up to Douglas.

JAYLENE

Doug, I'm sorry!

He turns to her. He wants to believe her, but can't.

DOUGLAS

Why would you make up something
like that?

JAYLENE

I hadn't heard from Cal in so
long...

DOUGLAS

So you pretend he's dead?

JAYLENE

He might as well be. Maybe it sounds crazy to think that, but then at least I could stop wondering why he never called or sent a text or a letter or anything. I could stop thinking that he forgot all about me, stop feeling so angry and hurt.

DOUGLAS

And you felt the need to include me in all this?

JAYLENE

I thought it would help you too. I didn't mean for you to-

DOUGLAS

To what? To find out how screwed up you are? Is that why you got me to open up about my own issues? So you can feel better about yourself?

JAYLENE

Doug, that's wasn't the reason at all! I'm your friend.

DOUGLAS

If you were my friend, you wouldn't have been dishonest with me and manipulated my feelings.
I don't need it, okay?

He looks away. Too painful to even look at her.

JAYLENE

I'm sorry, Doug. I would never in a million years want to hurt you. But it's no good trying to hold onto Cal like that. He's gone and I'll never know why. And there is absolutely nothing I can do about it. I had to let him go. So do you.

Douglas looks away. He's still angry, but knows she's right. She approaches but he steps back.

DOUGLAS

Don't. I just need to be by myself for a while.

She watches him walk away.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Pastor Privett leans on her cane as she opens a drawer near the toaster range and pulls out a flashlight.

PASTOR PRIVETT

The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside still waters...

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S BASEMENT -- NIGHT

Pastor Privett's walks down the stairs with great difficulty, cane in one hand and the flashlight in the other.

PASTOR PRIVETT

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

She makes it to the bottom and shines the light on a FUSE BOX on a nearby wall. She goes over to it, opens it, sees the tripped fuse and flips it back.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

The frayed cord of the toaster range sparks and ignites grease on the counter. Like a domino effect, the flame catches a dry dish towel hanging on the wall directly above it, which in turn ignites the window curtains over the sink. Within minutes, half the kitchen is ON FIRE.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S BASEMENT -- NIGHT

With great difficulty, Pastor slowly climbs the stairs.

PASTOR PRIVETT

...Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

She reaches the top stair, opens the door... and is greeted with flames. She steps back and trips over her cane, losing her footing. She falls and tumbles down the stairs. She lies still at the bottom, knocked unconscious.

EXT. LOCAL STREET-- NIGHT

Douglas wanders aimlessly, not even looking where he's going, his mind reeling.

EXT. FULTON BRIDGE -- NIGHT

Douglas walks to the middle of the bridge, looking over the side. He leans forward continuing to stare into the water. He keeps leaning a little further until he's dangerously close to going over.

Suddenly a notification sounds on his cell phone. After a BEAT, he reaches into his pocket and pulls it out.

It's a message from Rico: DOUG-THOUGHT YOU MIGHT WANT TO SEE THIS. MISS YOU, BRO.

Douglas clicks a link that takes him to a video showing footage of Third Degree playing at various musical venues followed by several fans talking to the camera.

FAN #1

Third Degree is the best! What bands do you know come and hang out with their fans after every show?

FAN #2

They deserve to be famous 'cause they're not just phenomenal musicians, they're the most down to earth people you could ever meet.

Douglas sees a MALE FAN, (20's) Hispanic, shyly looking into the camera.

FAN #3

They saved my life. I know that sounds kind a' crazy but, the things was, like, three years back, I was made fun of a lot in my school. Like every day, non-stop. It got so bad, I just didn't want to be here anymore, you know? Since I was a foster kid anyways, I figured nobody'd care if I was gone. So I was gonna sit in my brother's car, use the exhaust. The night I was gonna do it, I turned on the stereo and my brother had left a CD in there. It was Third Degree's demo.

(MORE)

FAN #3 (CONT'D)

And I'm listening and hearing so much emotion in Doug's voice, his lyrics about the pain he felt and his struggle to find meaning in all of it, to make life worth living. It was like...

The fan chokes up, fighting back tears.

FAN #3 (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

RICO (O.S.)

It's okay. Take your time.

FAN #3

It was like he was singing about my pain, you know? Like, it wasn't just me. And I thought if he could find away through it maybe I can too. That's when I knew I didn't want to go through with it. That's why I say Third Degree's music saved my life. I don't even know how to thank them for that.

Douglas stops the video, smiling through his own tears. A moment later --

JAYLENE (O.S.)

Doug!

Douglas looks up to see Jaylene pull up to him in her car.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)

Let me at least drive you to the house.

Douglas hesitates. She's the last person he wants to be around after what just happened.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)

Come on, Doug, it's a long walk from here. You don't have to talk to me, just let me take you.

Douglas looks at her. She's really cares and he knows it. He gets in.

INT. JAYLENE'S CAR -- NIGHT

Jaylene's car suddenly slows to a halt.

JAYLENE

Crap.

DOUGLAS

What's wrong?

JAYLENE

Tank's empty. Numskull must've
burned up my gas.

DOUGLAS

It's okay. The house is right over
the next hill.

Jaylene looks up ahead and squints.

JAYLENE

Wait... That's not smoke, is it?

Douglas turns to see there is indeed smoke wafting upward
over the hill... where Pastor Privett's house is! He opens
the door, BOLTS from the car, and runs up the hill...

EXT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Douglas reaches the house and sees thick black smoke
billowing from the windows.

DOUGLAS

Grandma?

He leaps onto the porch and kicks open the front door.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

DOUGLAS (O.S.)

Grandma...?

Douglas bursts into the room, looking around for Pastor
Privett as he coughs almost uncontrollably.

INT. HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Douglas throws open a cabinet and grabs a towel, covering his
nose and mouth.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S PARLOR -- NIGHT

He runs through the room to the kitchen.

DOUGLAS
Grandma...?

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Douglas runs in, searching frantically. He sees this is where the smoke is the thickest, with half the room engulfed in flames. It could be minutes before they reach the rest of the house.

He spots the basement door ajar and runs over to it. He looks down the stairs, sees Pastor Privett at the bottom.

DOUGLAS
Grandma!

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S BASEMENT -- NIGHT

Douglas runs down the stairs. He bends down and lifts Pastor Privett up. She slowly opens her eyes, sees Douglas, and reaches up to gingerly touch his cheek.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Precious child.

She passes out. He throws the towel over her head, then lifts her up and carries her up the stairs.

INT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S KITCHEN --

Douglas exits the stairwell and goes to the back door, kicking it open. He carries Pastor Privett out, just before a section of the house COLLAPSES.

INT. EXT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Douglas lays Pastor Privett down on the grass, then collapses by her side, coughing. He sees Jaylene approaching.

DOUGLAS
She needs an ambulance...

JAYLENE
I called 911. They're on the way.

Douglas nods, then looks at Pastor Privett. She's still out. He looks back to the house, now completely engulfed in flames.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM -- NIGHT

Douglas sits with Jaylene, Olivia, Beaula and members of Holiness Church, waiting for news about Pastor Privett's condition. Dr. Parker enters.

OLIVIA
Can we see her?

DR. PARKER
Of course.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- NIGHT

Everyone has formed a circle around Pastor Privett's bed.

Olivia looks at Douglas whose eyes are on Pastor Privett.

OLIVIA
Everyone, why don't we let Douglas
have a moment alone with his
grandmother.

Everyone nods in agreement and files out. Douglas sits in a chair by the bed and holds Pastor Privett's left hand with his right hand. He lays his head on her body, eyes closed.

He begins to softly sing the gospel song Safe in his Arms, (THE SONG DEACON TIMMONS SAID HIS GRANDMA LOVED.)

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. PASTOR PRIVETT'S BACK PORCH -- NIGHT

Pastor Privett stands on the top step holding Douglas (5).

She points to the sky.

PASTOR PRIVETT
You see that bright star?

DOUGLAS
Yeah.

PASTOR PRIVETT
That's what you are to me. You're
my bright star.

END FLASHBACK.

Douglas feels Pastor Privett's left hand squeeze his right and stops singing. He looks up and sees her eyes open.

PASTOR PRIVETT (CONT'D)
So sorry... for all the hurt I
caused you.

Her voice is small and weak but her eyes focus steadily on
his. He continues to hold her hand, tears in his eyes.

DOUGLAS
It's okay, grandma.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Just wanted you safe. Afraid of
what could happen. Afraid of... so
many things. I stopped livin'...
stopped lovin'.

She shakes her head, sighs.

PASTOR PRIVETT (CONT'D)
I was wrong. I see that now. Was my
job to love you. Help you see how
special you are. How beautiful.

DOUGLAS
Love you, grandma.

PASTOR PRIVETT
Love you too, baby.

She squeezes his hand as they continue to look at each other.

TITLE CARD: THREE MONTHS LATER

EXT. THE DEPOT -- NIGHT

The usual rock crowd milling about on the sidewalk.

INT. MUSIC DEPOT BATHROOM -- DAY

Douglas stands in front of the mirror fixing up his mohawk.
He stops and looks at himself and smiles.

INT. DRESSING ROOM -- NIGHT

Douglas crosses the room, sees Theo and Joe.

THEO
(to Douglas)
How you feelin'?

DOUGLAS

Great. How're you guys doing?

THEO

Feeling good, bro.

JOE

Ready to do this thing.

Douglas sits on a chair and opens his case. He takes out a gold, heart-shaped guitar with a sunburst finish (THE SAME ONE HE'D SEEN IN THE WINDOW OF THE MUSIC STORE IN FULTON.) He picks up a small card in the case and reads it: MY DEAREST DOUGLAS, ENJOY. LOVE ALWAYS, YOUR GRANDMA.

MIKEY (O.S.)

Yo, Doug, someone's at the door for you.

Douglas puts down his guitar and walks over to the entrance. He sees Mikey walking away toward the stage as Jaylene stands in the doorway.

JAYLENE

You must be excited.

DOUGLAS

I'm glad you could make it.

JAYLENE

Oh my gosh, wouldn't miss it. The perfect excuse for a road trip to St. Louis.

DOUGLAS

Hope it's worth it.

JAYLENE

I'm sure it will be. Hey, I know you're probably still getting ready, but there's someone else who wants to say hello.

DOUGLAS

Who?

JAYLENE

You know how they say truth is stranger than fiction? Well, you'll never guess who's here with me. Called me out of the blue two weeks ago.

She turns and steps back... revealing Cal, now in his mid 20's, sporting a mustache and goatee.

Douglas' jaw drops. Total loss for words.

JAYLENE (CONT'D)
I'll let you guys talk.

She walks away.

CAL
Hey, rock star.

DOUGLAS
Hey.

CAL
It's been a while.

DOUGLAS
Yeah.

Douglas stares at him. Still hard to speak.

CAL
I know I owe you one hell of an explanation. From all those years ago.

DOUGLAS
It's okay. Things happen. Jaylene told me about your dad.

CAL
Yeah. That wasn't fun.

DOUGLAS
Family issues never are. So...
how've you been?

CAL
Better. After I left Fulton for California, I fell into some trouble and life got... complicated. Wound up addicted and homeless. Lost contact with Jay. Took years before I could climb out of that hole and get my life back.

DOUGLAS
Glad you did.

CAL
You and me both.

Cal looks at Douglas, smiles.

CAL (CONT'D)
Looking forward to seeing you rock
out tonight.

DOUGLAS
Thanks.

CAL
And it's really great to see you.

DOUGLAS
You too,

They look at each other, wanting to say more. Then--
Rico appears behind Cal.

RICO
Doug, manager said you guys go on
in two minutes.

CAL
See you out there.

DOUGLAS
For sure.

Doug smiles as he watches Cal turn and heads back to the audience area.

INT. MAIN STAGE -- NIGHT

A HUGE crowd erupts in wild applause as Theo, Joe, and Douglas hit the stage. Douglas looks out to the audience.

DOUGLAS
First, we want to thank our special
guests for bein' here tonight.

At the front of the stage we see Jaylene, Cal, the formerly suicidal fan from Rico's video, and the Kamikaze Records talent scout.

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
I also wanna thank Joe and Theo for
being the best band mates a guy
could ask for. I want to thank Rico
and Mikey for being an awesome
crew. They're all part of my
family.

(MORE)

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
I wasn't always appreciative of
what that word meant.

Douglas eyes Theo and Joe.

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
I love 'em. Just like I love all of
you. As part of the Third Degree
family you've shown us so much love
and support over the years... in
ways we couldn't have even
imagined. Thank you.

The audience, truly touched, claps.

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
We want to start off with one of
the new songs we've written
recently. Hope you like it.

They begin to play the song's intro.

EXT. THE DEPOT -- NIGHT

Dora Clemons walks down the block pushing her cart.

She stops in front of the club, listening to the music
through the wall. She stops and looks up at the sky, smiling.
She nods knowingly before continuing down the block.

FADE TO BLACK.