

A VERY BLACK CHRISTMAS

by

André Gordon

Story by André Gordon and Kevin Porter

3108906267

FADE IN:

1

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - AUSTIN - DAY

1

Within a modern apartment, with European style accents on the walls, sits DARYL MOORE, 30s, black, numbers genius, making breakfast while running equations on his computer.

Christmas decorations line the walls.

EMILY SINCLAIR, 30s, pale skin with a face that you'd see on a magazine, fixates her crystal eyes, as blue as the ocean, on a book.

She enters wearing Christmas pajamas and a Santa hat.

DARYL  
Morning, sunshine.

Her face almost disappears in the paperback.

DARYL (CONT'D)  
Babe?

She holds up a hand, captivated by the words on the page in front of her.

EMILY  
Almost done.

Daryl flips a pancake.

DARYL  
And I'm just getting started.

He manages to kiss her cheek, flips another pancake, and solve an equation without a hitch.

Emily hovers over her seat and, with finality, closes the book and exhales.

EMILY  
What am I doing with my life?!

DARYL  
What do you mean?

EMILY  
Oprah has already been fired,  
Michael Jordan got cut, and The  
Rock made The Tooth Fairy movie. I  
haven't struggled through anything.

DARYL  
You married me.

He stops the cooking and mathing. They kiss. Emily looks at her ring.

EMILY  
That wasn't a struggle.

He raises his eyebrows.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Well, not really, but telling your  
Mama-

DARYL  
Thoughts and prayers.

EMILY  
I'm gonna need a reverend to break  
the news to your family.

He hands her coffee and a plate full of breakfast goodies.

DARYL  
Babe, it's the Christmas season.  
Mama is gonna support us no matter  
what.

EMILY  
If I was Jennifer Hudson.

DARYL  
You're more Jennifer Aniston than  
Hudson, and that is why I love you.

They face each other in a warm embrace.

EMILY  
You're my favorite.

DARYL  
You're my only.

Daryl and Emily smile, forehead to forehead.

EMILY  
You sure about this? Everything  
could go sideways.

DARYL  
Speaking of sideways...

Daryl picks her up and holds her horizontally.

DARYL (CONT'D)  
I have an early Christmas present  
for you.

He carries her to the bedroom. Laughter fills the air as  
we...

SUPER:

**A VERY BLACK CHRISTMAS**

End opening.

2

INT. FAMILY HOUSE - MACON GEORGIA - DAY

2

POPS, mid 60s, flipping pancakes and scrambles eggs while  
dancing along to Christmas MUSIC. MAMA, 60s, arranges a black  
Christmas nativity scene. She HUMS along with Pops as she  
decorates for the holidays.

MAMA  
Lester, how's it look?

Lester takes a peak over his shoulder to assess the level of  
Christmas spirit. His eyes are magnified in his this lenses.

POPS  
Looks fine, Honey.

MAMA  
You didn't even look!

POPS  
I'm wearing 7 X bifocals. I sure  
enough did.

MAMA  
Look again, and tell me the truth.

He continues to scramble eggs and flip pancakes with surgical  
precision.

POPS  
You killin my Christmas groove. I'm  
in a zone.

MAMA  
You gonna be in a Christmas coffin  
if you don't turn your head over  
this way.

Pops stops and looks.

POPS

It looks like Jesus fell in a  
bucket of chocolate.

MAMA

Lester Raymond Jenkins...

POPS

Milk Chocolate though, not that  
dark bitter stuff.

GRANDMAMA, 80s, is SINGING Amazing Grace while staring out  
the window chimes in.

GRANDMA

Jesus was a brown bundle of  
miracle.

MAMA

Thank you, Mama.

GRANDMA

Don't thank me. Thank the Lord  
almighty for loving his mocha  
people.

Grandma waves a hand in the air as if in church.

BRIAN, Daryl's brother, 40s, sits in front of the television  
wearing headphones and a microphone as if an airline pilot.  
The video game CHIMES and PINGS.

BRIAN

Hey, Dad, is Daryl comin home for  
Christmas.

POPS

Yes, siree. My son, who has a job,  
is comin home.

BRIAN

That hurts, Pops.

POPS

You hurt my bank account by still  
livin here, so we're even.

Brian pushes buttons harder than before.

BRIAN

Is he bringing that girl home?

POPS

That girl has a ring on it.

GRANDMA

You finally forgive them for eloping?

MAMA

I wasn't upset.

BRIAN

You cut her face out their wedding photos.

Mama looks at the wedding photo on the wall with Emily's face cut out.

She walks over, takes the cut out face out of the drawer, and sticks it back in its place.

MAMA

Oh, my baby is coming home, and they apparently have an announcement. I am just fine.

Mama is now holding Baby Jesus as if it were her own.

MAMA

It's Christmas, and it's the perfect gift. Gonna be a grandma, ya'll. Ohhhh, and they're probably gonna move back home!

POPS

How you know all that?

MAMA

Betta yet, call me, GG, okay! I'm still young.

GRANDMA

You so old, your birth certificate says expired.

MAMA

You're too much.

GRANDMA

She owes Moses a wooden quarter.

BRIAN

They didn't have money back then.

GRANDMA

Fine, she owes him a bushel and a donkey.

BRIAN  
Not quite, Grandma.

GRANDMA  
I'm gonna pray for you, Brian. You need prayer.

BRIAN  
How's that?

GRANDMA  
Ain't got no sense of humor. Dear brown baby Jesus, give this boy some sense, and some humor.

BRIAN  
Just sayin. Ya'll jumpin to conclusions.

GRANDMA  
Make yourself useful and pass me some my knitting kit.

Brian picks up the kit and hands it to Grandma.

BRIAN  
What are you making?

GRANDMA  
A job application for you.

Brian rolls his eyes and walks away.

GRANDMA  
You think I can't sense them eyes rollin? Roll em again, I dare you.

MAMA  
Listen, I know my son. He's gonna break the good news at Christmas dinner. When he does, you all gonna owe me a dollar.

Mama sets Baby Jesus down and continues to decorate.

3

INT. APARTMENT - OFFICE - AUSTIN - DAY

3

Diplomas line the walls of Daryl and Emily's home office. Pictures of the pair together sit on every shelf.

Emily enters, eating a sandwich, to find Daryl at the computer, crunching numbers.

DARYL

Hey, babe. I'm working through some numbers. If we pack lunches for the drive there, and use the half tank of gas to get to the rest stop a quarter way there, we'll save fifteen percent costs, easy.

EMILY

I'm worried.

DARYL

Why?

EMILY

Telling your mother.

DARYL

She'll be fine.

EMILY

I'm white.

DARYL (LAUGHING)

Okay. You just now noticed this?

EMILY

I'm serious, Daryl. I'm Caucasian, like lily white.

DARYL

I know, Whiteout. I can see the mayo dripping from your sandwich.

EMILY

Sheila can see, too.

DARYL

First, never call her Sheila to her face. Remember, at the wedding, you tried calling her ma'am.

Emily breaks into her best Mama impersonation.

EMILY

Yeah, she said, is this the Army? Always call me Mama.

DARYL

And you saluted.

EMILY

I got nervous!

DARYL

Em, no one cares that you look like you're allergic to the sun.

Daryl jokes with her. Emily cracks a smile.

DARYL

I love you. I don't care what color you are, even if it's translucent. It doesn't matter.

She playfully slaps his arm.

EMILY

Babe, it's gonna matter to your parents.

DARYL

We've been together for a while now, I think they've noticed.

Emily looks at her ring.

EMILY

True, but what about our announcement? That could change everything.

Daryl stands up to comfort her.

DARYL

Hey, listen, snowflake.

She chuckles to herself as Daryle flashes his million-dollar smile.

DARYL

The only thing that will matter to my family is that I love you, and we are doing what's best for us. My parents are gonna support us no matter what.

EMILY

Okay. Don't just leave me at the table alone when we are at dinner. I hate when you do that.

DARYL

I promise not to use the bathroom, get water, or go anywhere at any time during dinner.

EMILY  
Cross your heart?

He raises his hand and gives scouts honor.

DARYL  
And what about your parents?

EMILY  
What about them?

DARYL  
Babe, they're so racist they don't even like turning off the lights because everything goes black.

EMILY  
They were raised differently, in a different time.

DARYL  
Yeah, like they want me to have my own water fountain, different.

EMILY  
I know, I know. Sometimes I feel like if I pretend they're normal that their bigotitus will just go away.

DARYL  
Did you just make up a word?

EMILY  
Bigotitus, why yes, I did.

DARYL  
See? Another reason why I love you.

EMILY  
You're my favorite.

DARYL  
You're my only.

She holds her stomach and walks to the window.

EMILY  
I'm gonna pack for us. I feel kinda sick, though.

DARYL  
You okay?

EMILY

Yeah. I think my snack didn't agree with me.

DARYL

You mean a mayonnaise sandwich doesn't go down easy?

EMILY

Love you.

DARYL

Always.

She sits down to continue to pack as Daryl heads back to the computer.

4

INT. FAMILY HOUSE - MACON - DAY

4

Christmas music RINGS in the air as the family decorates. Questions about white people fly.

POPS

Mama, do we have everything we need for Emily?

MAMA

You act like I've never hosted guests before.

BRIAN

White guests, though?

POPS

Think we have enough mayo? They like mayo.

MAMA

Bought fourteen jars.

BRIAN

It's one person, Ma.

GRANDMA

Never can be too careful.

POPS

Whatchya makin for dinner?

MAMA

Okay, I was gonna ask everybody.  
Should I make one plate with no  
seasoning, just salt and pepper, or  
just make a salad?

GRANDMA

If you aint sneezin, it ain't  
seasoned, my Mama Lulu always told  
me.

She reaches into her bag.

GRANDMA

I bought the young lady Barbara  
Streisand and Clay Aiken's greatest  
hits.

Brian sings to himself.

BRIAN

If I was invisible.

POPS

Lord Jesus Lord.

BRIAN

What? Aiken slaps.

Mama grabs a bag of bed linens.

MAMA

I'm gonna fix up Daryl's room.

She walks down the hall.

5 INT. DARYL'S ROOM - DAY 5

Football posters, cars, and action figures still decorate the  
room. Mama straightens and dusts the surfaces.

A picture of Daryl and Mama stares back at her. She touches  
it lovingly.

6 INT. CAR - DAY 6

Daryl's hand holds a shammy and furiously rubs the windshield  
of their navy blue Volkswagen Jetta GL. Emily brings a  
mountain of suitcases out the front door. She's wearing a du-  
rag.

EMILY  
What are you doing?

DARYL  
Cleaning Aunt Jemima.

EMILY  
Seriously?

DARYL  
You know I'm serious about Aunt J.  
Gotta keep her clean.

He continues buffing without looking up.

EMILY  
We're literally driving through a  
sea of bugs at seventy miles an  
hour for hours.

DARYL  
Seventy-two. We can gain windspeed  
without a ticket.

Daryl stops buffing and looks up.

DARYL (CONT'D)  
Are you wearing a du-rag?

EMILY  
You're buffing a car before a road  
trip!

DARYL  
Well, excuse me, Rhianna.

She steps toward him.

EMILY  
Awww, do you mean that? Like, could  
I pass for her?

DARYL  
You can pass me the hose.

She does. He sprays her playfully. They water fight as she  
grabs the soapy bucket and heaves water at him.

Within minutes, the couple kisses one another as they stand  
sopping wet under the mistletoe.

DARYL (CONT'D)  
I love you; you know that, right?

EMILY

Of course, I know that.

DARYL

I also don't want you to go Rachel Dolezal and freak out this weekend.

EMILY

There's no freak out happenninn.  
I'm chill.

DARYL

Okay, see, you're doin too much.

EMILY

I'm just-

DARYL

The Du-rag, the MLK book, I mean, pretty soon you're gonna come out with your self-tanner on max.

EMILY

Babe, I just want them to be okay with our news.

DARYL

They will be. Just be you. They already like you, so stop acting crazy.

She smiles.

EMILY

Am I still invited to *the cookout*?

DARYL

Not with that headpiece. And no mayo sandwich.

They LAUGH and walk to get more luggage as we-

CUT TO:

7

INT. FAMILY HOUSE - MACON - DAY

7

Pops holds one end of a sign while Brian struggles to hold up the other. Frustration mounts as Brian lets his end slump downward. Grandma knits on the porch.

MAMA

It's not straight.

POPS

I know.

He shoots a look at Brian.

MAMA

Well, can you get it up?

GRANDMA

Well-

POPS

Not a word, Mama.

GRANDMA

How do you know what I'm gonna say, child?

POPS

You always making jokes.

GRANDMA

Yessir, I made you.

BRIAN

Grandma cooked you!

MAMA

Brian, stand up with the sign, please!

Brian and Pops finally get the sign level.

MAMA

It's perfect!

The words, "Bump Bump Bump it up," in blue and pink letters, sit above a giant picture of Emily sporting a baby bump with Daryl holding her belly from behind.

MAMA

Pops, Brian, come on down now, you two. Come see!

They make their way over to Mama.

MAMA

So... What do you think?

BRIAN

I'm surprised Daryl isn't bigger.

MAMA

Good point. Let me call the printer.

Brian shakes his head.

8

INT. CAR - DAY

8

Daryl drives as Emily looks through real estate websites. He reaches for the radio and scans for new music. He SINGS "I'll Be Home for Christmas," by Bing Crosby at the top of his lungs.

EMILY

Article two, section one. Shotgun controls music choice.

DARYL

What's wrong with Bing?

EMILY

Let me educate you.

Emily skillfully changes the channel in one seemingly flawless move. The BASS kicks in. It's Tupac.

DARYL

No, you didn't.

Emily shakes her head with thuggery.

EMILY

Bounce wit me.

DARYL

You're so crazy.

They laugh.

DARYL

Babe, you're officially losing it. I told you, you don't need to try to be something you're not to fit in with my family.

EMILY

What am I trying to be?

DARYL

A bad stereotype of a black person.

EMILY  
I'm not trying to be black, I'm  
just trying not to be so-

DARYL  
White?

EMILY  
YES!

DARYL  
Well, stop. I love you as you are.  
Your parents are the ones to worry  
about. Have you talked to them yet?

Emily stops the dancing and looks away out the window.

EMILY  
Don't kill the vibe.

DARYL  
This isn't just killing a vibe.  
Your dad didn't give me his  
blessing, remember? Your mom won't  
still won't look at me. I think  
it's a pretty big deal.

EMILY  
At least my family knows what's  
going on in our lives.

DARYL  
That's fair. But aren't we going  
home to tell mine? And yours aren't  
as involved in our lives as mine.

EMILY  
Tell me about it.

DARYL  
What's that supposed to mean?

EMILY  
Nothing, I'm just scared out of my  
mind.

Daryl takes a hard turn. The corner hits fast. Emily looks  
unwell.

DARYL  
Sorry, there was something in the  
road. You okay? You look-

EMILY

Shh, one sec. I think I'm going to throw up.

DARYL

WOAH, WOAH, wait! Hold on here, babe. Jemima ain't built for this. Let's take a breath.

EMILY

Pull over.

DARYL

What, now?

EMILY

Pull over!

She slaps her hands over her mouth.

DARYL

Okay, okay! Just don't spew all over Auntie J.

He stops the car on the shoulder. Emily opens the door, takes a few steps and gets SICK.

Daryl turns up Bing Crosby to drown out the DRY HEAVES.

The phone RINGS. It's Mama.

INTERCUT:

9

INT. CAR - DAY AND INT. FAMILY HOUSE - DAY

9

DARYL

Hey, Mama.

MAMA

Hey, baby! How's the drive comin'?

DARYL

Well, we had to stop.

MAMA

Why? What happened? Are you okay, and why is the music so loud?

DARYL

I'm fine, Mama. Sorry. It's just Emily is feeling kinda sick.

Mama covers the phone and turns to the family.

MAMA

She's gettin' sick, ya'll! Like  
mornin sickness or somethin.

She shoots her hands up in the air in celebration.

Daryl turns down the music.

DARYL

Hello?

MAMA

Sorry, baby, your dad was  
distractin me. You take care of  
that precious little angel over  
there-

DARYL

Emily, a little angel? I didn't  
know you guys loved her like that...

MAMA

We do! We love. Take your time  
getting here. See you soon!

DARYL

Okay, Mama. Love you, too.

Emily comes back to the car.

DARYL (CONT'D)

You okay?

EMILY

I'll live, but I need to drive so I  
don't get car sick again.

DARYL

Cool, but given stoppage time,  
wind, and miles per hour, we are  
still 13 hours out.

EMILY

Well, crank up that 2Pac because I  
got ambition az a ridah!

Daryl clicks on Kelly Clarkson instead of 2 Pac.

DARYL

I am what I am.

"Underneath the Christmas Tree" blares as they drive on.

As the song ends, Emily looks glances over at Daryl.

EMILY  
You're my favorite.

DARYL  
You're my only.

He lovingly places his hand on her leg as they drive.

EMILY  
You said that you're fine with moving, but I want to make sure we are on the same page.

DARYL  
We talked about this, babe. I support you.

EMILY  
You do, and I love that. Just making sure you won't resent me later.

DARYL  
A move for you is a move for us. Later, we will be celebrating.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

The pair drive through different states  
Rest stop selfies and driving food fights  
Christmas music sing-alongs

VFX:

The image of a VW moves along a map that fills the screen.  
A *Welcome To Atlanta* sign welcomes them.

END MONTAGE.

10 INT. CAR - DAY

10

The couple pulls up to the end entrance of a neighborhood.  
Daryl turns to Emily with serious concern.

DARYL  
You ready?

EMILY  
They're gonna hate me.

DARYL  
It's Christmas. What could go  
wrong?

They squeeze hands and drive forward.

11 INT. EXT - CAR - FAMILY HOUSE - DAY

11

Daryl and Emily arrive in front of his old family home. The family runs out. They greet them at the car.

MAMA  
My baby!

Daryl gets out of the car met by the vice grip bear hug of Mama.

DARYL  
Hi, Mama.

POPS  
Son!

DARYL  
Hey, Pops.

Group hugs.

MAMA  
You look skinny, boy! We need to  
feed you. She feedin' you?

DARYL  
Yes, Mama.

MAMA  
Where is she?

Emily gets out of the car.

EMILY  
Hi, Mama Moore.

MAMA  
Ohhh, come and let me get a look  
atchyu.

Mama holds Emily's stomach.

Emily looks at Daryl, confused.

MAMA  
Brian, get our Emily some water.

Brian stands on the porch, arms crossed. He and Daryl make eye contact.

A simple head nod.

Grandma strides over, SINGING "Amazing Grace." Grandma blesses Emily's tummy and breaks into the chorus.

EMILY

Oh, I-

Pops pulls a cigar out of his breast pocket. He lights it.

POPS

Son, you did it.

DARYL

Did what?

Pops holds up the cigar while singing the opening of "Circle of Life." Daryl looks to his brother for advice; Brother shrugs his shoulders and hands Emily the cup of water.

POPS

Well, let's not go into details in front of your little brother.

BRIAN

I'ma whole adult, and I'm older than him.

POPS

Yeah, yeah, whatever.

Mama takes the cigar out of Pops's mouth.

MAMA

Have you lost your mind? Take that smoke outta here.

Daryl and Emily look up at the sign. They exchange looks. Mama hands all the bags to Brian.

MAMA

Don't strain yourself, Emily, ya hear.

EMILY

Really, I'm okay.

MAMA

Yes, you are.

Mama beams and walks them inside.

12 INT. FAMILY HOUSE - DAY

12

The family shuffles inside. Grandma is still standing on top of a rock outside, SINGING. Brian drops their bags at the entryway.

MAMA

Let me take you guys to where  
you'll be sleeping.

POPS

Mama, you take Emily. I want to  
talk to my boy, my son, the fruit  
of my loins.

Mama leads her to the room while Pops leads Daryl out.

13 EXT. FAMILY HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

13

Pops stares out into the backyard as Daryl shifts uncomfortably.

POPS

Sure is nice havin you home for  
Christmas.

DARYL

Absolutely, Pops.

POPS

You know this is my favorite time  
of year?

DARYL

Why's that?

POPS

Do you remember when you were about  
twelve, you'd ask to go to Pawpaws  
house for Christmas?

Daryl smiles to himself.

DARYL

Yeah, the snow angels.

POPS

You'd love to go over to PawPaws  
house, and you'd get his shoes and  
put them on his feet. He loved  
being a grandfather.

DARYL  
Pops, listen-

POPS  
No, son, you listen. I know I've  
been really hard on you in the  
past. Gave you grief about movin  
away and whatnot-

DARYL  
Dad-

POPS  
Just let me finish now; your old  
man is opening up... It's not in my  
nature to talk about my feelings,  
but I am proud of you for what  
you're doin. We all are.

Pops pulls him in for a hug. Guilt washes over Daryl.

POPS  
Okay, enough from me. Sorry, what  
did you wanna say to your old man?

Daryl regards him for a moment, taking him in. Daryl drops  
his gaze a bit and looks back up.

DARYL  
Just that, this Christmas is going  
to be great.

If sunlight could shine from someone's face, it would look  
like Pops at this moment. He stands up a little bit  
straighter as his chest puffs out with pride.

POPS  
Love you, Son.

DARYL  
You too, Dad.

Beat

DARYL  
Guess it's time to celebrate?

POPS  
Dang right it is. Let's do this  
thing proper! I'll get the Apple  
Cider goin.

Pops shuffles inside, leaving Daryl alone with his  
conscience.

14 INT - GUEST BEDROOM - MACON - NIGHT

14

Darryl and Emily sit frozen on the bed, staring straight ahead.

EMILY

So...

DARYL

Yah...

EMILY

We're in trouble.

DARYL

We're in trouble.

EMILY

I knew it!

DARYL

You were right.

EMILY

They think I'm pregnant.

DARYL

Wait, are you pregnant?

EMILY

Daryl, no! You'd know. I'd know!

DARYL

I know.

Beat.

EMILY

Your mom is finally being nice to me. She's actually, like, caring for me.

DARYL

She cares about you no matter what.

EMILY

I know, but this has been different. She's been considering me.

DARYL

As she should.

EMILY

I feel like she hasn't been looking at my skin.

DARYL  
She's been looking at your belly.

EMILY  
Ugh. I know.

Emily falls backward on the bed.

EMILY  
I found myself pushing it out.  
Oddly enough, her loving on me...  
It's kinda something I want. She's  
never been this kind, I-

DARYL  
She hasn't been unkind.

EMILY  
I know... it's just, you could tell  
that she was disappointed that I  
wasn't... You know, something else.

Emily tears up.

DARYL  
Right now, she's loving a lie.

EMILY  
You're right.

DARYL  
Okay.

EMILY  
So.

DARYL  
So, what do we do?

Emily looks at Daryl.

EMILY  
For now, let's just go to sleep.

Daryl walks over to the bathroom and stops before going in.

DARYL  
You're enough, Em.

Emily turns over. Sleep's weight sets in as she closes her eyes.

FADE TO:

15

INT. DARYL'S BEDROOM - DAY

15

Grandma and Emily sit out on the porch. Daryl wraps presents. He looks lovingly out the window as Grandma has Emily standing on a rock, singing a hymn while she knits.

A KNOCK raps the door. Daryl breaks his gaze and answers. It's Brian.

BRIAN

Hey, bro.

DARYL

Brian, what's up?

BRIAN

Lunch is about to be ready. Mama summoned me to summon you, your highness.

DARYL

Dang, okay, salty!

BRIAN

It's just crazy, man. They're fallin all over themselves.

DARYL

Everybody's just happy to see us.

BRIAN

Yeah. Everybody.

Brian eyes him.

Daryl feels the stare and acts busy.

BRIAN

Anything you want to tell me?

DARYL

About?

Daryl pretends to get busy wrapping presents.

BRIAN

Askin you, bro.

DARYL

All's good, but I'm gonna go let Emily know so she has time to get ready. Let's pick this up later.

Daryl squeezes past Brian and out the door.

Brian stands in front of the door, ajar. He looks around. With the coast clear, he tip-toes into the room.

Brian looks through a bag on the bed.

Nothing.

He opens a drawer to find Santa Claus boxers with Daryl's name across the behind. Brian fumbles the boxers and juggles them as if they are toxic waste.

In his snooper, Brian bumps into the nightstand table. The lamp rocks. As if an Olympic diver, the lamp plunges off the nightstand and toward the floor.

Brian dives.

Everything slows down.

He catches it before it falls.

Relieved, he exhales and sets it back in its resting place. A brochure pokes out of Emily's nightstand drawer.

*Europe, where you can make a difference.* He raises his confused gaze only to be met by the glaring eyes of Mama.

16

INT - FAMILY HOUSE - DINNER TABLE - NIGHT

16

Okra swims in red sauce and spices. Crispy fried chicken jumps from hand to hand. Sweet tea, and with blocks of ice, team up with bright yellow lemon wedges as they swim in southern-style glasses. The Christmas Ham sits in the center of the table. Food flies.

EMILY

This looks incredible, Mama.

Mama takes off her apron.

MAMA

Thank you, Emily. Gotta keep up your strength!

Brian slowly reaches for food. Grandma, with catlike reflexes, SLAPS his hand without even looking.

GRANDMA

Who you think taught Chuck Norris?

BRIAN

Ow!

PAPA

Shall we?

GRANDMA

Dear God in heaven, I pray the soul  
of my heathen grandson.

POPS

Okay, okay. It's time to bless the  
food for real. Emily, want to say a  
blessing?

EMILY

Me? Oh, um, sure, yes. Thank you.

They close their eyes. Emily, frozen, is not sure what to  
say.

EMILY

Oh... Um. Oh, oh, my Lord.

Grandma shakes her head in agreement.

EMILY

Oh my Lord, Lord, Lord Lord.

GRANDMA

MMMhhhh.

BRIAN

Is that from Glory?

DARYL

Pops. Why don't you pray for us? We  
love your prayers.

POPS

Heavenly Father, we come to you  
today during this Christmas season  
in a spirit of thanksgiving.

Emily opens her eyes. She stares with bug eyes at Daryl. She  
waves frantically trying to get his attention.

He doesn't see her yet. Grandma shifts in her seat. Emily  
quickly stops waving and closes her eyes.

POPS

In this blessed time we have so  
much to be thankful for-

Daryl's eyes snap open. Now does his best to try to get  
Emily's attention. He cocks his head to the side as his eyes  
bulge out of his face.

Emily feels his stare. She mouths to him.

POPS  
And you are such a good good God  
who has given us so much-

Emily mouths to Daryl.

EMILY  
Tell them tonight.

He mouths back.

DARYL  
Shrimp fried rice?

Grandma's eyes open. Daryl shoots a hand into the air as if feeling the prayer in his heart.

POPS  
We glorify, sanctify, and unify  
under the name of Jesus-

Emily waves him to sit down.

EMILY  
Tell them tonight!

She mouths again and again.

Now Brian's eyes open. Emily stands with both hands in the air.

GRANDMA  
Yes Jesus. Thankya Lord.

POPS  
In Jesus name, Amen.

Amen.	GRANDMA	Amen.	BRIAN
-------	---------	-------	-------

Amen.	MAMA	Amen.	BRIAN
-------	------	-------	-------

Amen!	DARYL	Amen.	EMILY
-------	-------	-------	-------

Daryl and Emily are still on their feet.

GRANDMA

See, I like that. Lettin prayer  
move your spirit like that.

POPS

See, Mama. You said my prayers drag  
on. I got these young folk up on  
their feet.

Mama looks confused but goes on with the dinner. The table erupts into chatter. The excitement for the food takes over. The buzz halts with Emily's question.

EMILY

Oh, can someone pass me the hot  
sauce?

Everyone stops.

POPS

Well, hot damn, you one of us.

GRANDMA

You betta watch yo mouth, son.

Emily smiles.

BRIAN

You like hot sauce?

EMILY

Love it.

BRIAN

I thought you were more into mild  
flavors last time we had a family  
dinner.

EMILY

People change!

Emily adds a splash of hot sauce to her food.

BRIAN

That's it? That doesn't look like  
someone who loves spicy food, now  
does it?

Daryl eyes Brian.

MAMA

Brian, leave her alone.

BRIAN  
What? I'm just sayin-

EMILY  
No no, it's fine. This is... My  
jam.

She slathers the sauce on. Brian watches with doubt dripping from his eyes.

EMILY  
See? There.

DARYL  
Happy, Brian. Anyway, so-

BRIAN  
Taste it and let me know if it  
needs anything.

Emily stares.

EMILY  
Like, right now?

MAMA  
Don't be afraid, honey, it's a  
family recipe. You'll love it with  
the sauce.

She takes a bite. Instantly, her eyes water.

Daryl's hands engulf his face.

EMILY  
Mmmm. Delicious.

She chokes through the lava. With tears in her eyes, she gives a half-hearted thumbs up.

The table cheers, Emily chokes down the lava.

POPS  
So, how's work, Daryl?

DARYL  
Everything is going well.

MAMA  
Oh yeah? Good!

POPS  
You've always been so stable,  
Daryl.

DARYL

Actually, some really great opportunities have come up for me and, well, Emily.

Emily is still drinking water and wiping her eyes from the hot sauce. She squeezes him under the table.

Daryl stands.

DARYL

We actually have an announcement. We love each other very much, and you already know we recently got married. I am married to the greatest person ever. We are -

Mama jumps up, points to Brian.

MAMA

Yes! I'm going to be a grandma! Yes, yes, yes! See that, Brian? You're always trying to get on Daryl. You got no prospects and still livin here. If I would have waited for you, I'd neva be a GG.

Darryl tries to stop her.

DARYL

No, Mama, wait.

Mama dances.

Grandma sings the hymn from Glory praising Jesus.

GRANDMA

Oh my Lord, Lord Lord Lord...  
Mhhmmm.

Pops lights up another cigar and then puts it out quickly and blows it away from Emily. Darryl finally blows a gasket.

DARYL

NO! We are actually planning on moving. We were going to move back home here to Macon, but Emily has an opportunity. This opportunity is in England. We're going to be moving to the UK!

Emily chimes in with a bad English accent.

EMILY  
Halo, Govna!

She tries to muster a smile.

MAMA  
Say what?

DARYL  
We're moving, Ma.

Mama looks at Emily.

MAMA  
No baby?

EMILY  
We-

MAMA  
And you're taking my baby away from  
me?

Emily looks crestfallen.

EMILY  
I was trying-

MAMA  
You let me fuss over you and carry  
on, and you knew this whole time?

EMILY  
Mama, I'm-

MAMA  
Don't you *Mama*, me.

Mama turns away.

MAMA  
I need to be excused.

Daryl slumps into his chair. Pops goes after Mama. Brian bites the head off of a gingerbread man cookie, and Emily runs to the bathroom in tears.

GRANDMA  
So, no baby?

Daryl goes after Emily.

17 INT - FAMILY HOUSE - DARYL AND EMILY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 17

Emily and Daryl get ready for bed, recounting the night.

EMILY

I didn't mean for this to happen.

DARYL

Of course not, babe.

EMILY

No, I pushed you into telling them, and I'm pretty sure I just ruined Christmas.

DARYL

You didn't ruin anything. We are moving for us. You're fighting for us. That's what makes you the wifey ever.

EMILY

Or the worst. What was I thinking? Hot sauce, reading MLK. I'm a walking stereotype.

DARYL

You're not racist, Em. You're married to me. I'm black, remember?

EMILY

That's the thing. It's not the first thing I see when I look at you. First thing I see is your eyes.

DARYL

The first thing I see is your smile.

EMILY

I don't know why, but I care so much about what your mom thinks. Like more than anything else.

DARYL

Normal.

EMILY

I'm taking you, her baby, away, and-

DARYL

Hey, we're doing this life together. Don't think this is all on you.

EMILY

I know black moms are territorial and hovering and all that. I just don't want her to hate our relationship.

Daryl, taken aback by the comment, stands up.

DARYL

What did you just say?

EMILY

That I'm taking you away, and I know how difficult that can be.

DARYL

No, no, that other thing about black moms.

EMILY

Nothing, just that I know it can be harder for black mamas to let go. They hover.

DARYL

Hold up, I'm confused. You think hovering or helicopter parenting is a black thing?

EMILY

Babe, that's not what I meant. They just don't trust as easily-

DARYL

They?

The tension in the air thickens.

EMILY

I'm sorry.

She stutters. Kisses him instead.

EMILY

Right now, I'm a mess. You know I love and honor your mother. That's why I'm so upset. Babe, please.

She takes his hands.

EMILY

Let's just focus on Christmas and  
our life together.

Emily hugs him. Over her shoulder, Daryl furrows his brow.

INT. PARENT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Pops sits listening while Mama recounts what happened. Like a caged lioness, she paces the room.

MAMA

Can you believe her?

Pops opens his mouth to answer.

MAMA

Leading us on like a high school  
relationship. Is that fair?

Pops raises his head to speak, only to be cut off again.

MAMA

Do you know how long I've been  
waiting to be a GG?

Pops lays down instead of trying to respond.

MAMA

And she's taking my grown baby away  
from me.

Mama stops pacing.

MAMA

Are you listening to me?

POPS

Can I answer, or?

MAMA

I am just so upset with that white  
girl.

POPS

See, why'd you have to go and do  
that?

MAMA

Do what?

POPS

Call her by her color.

MAMA

Are you siding with her?

POPS

And how many times did you say I,  
or me in that little tirade?

MAMA

I'm just-

POPS

Sweetheart, there's only a few days  
to Christmas. Is this how you want  
to have your son remember it this  
year?

Mama is dejected and furious.

POPS

I'm not sure about you, but I want  
to support our son.

MAMA

I'm doing what's best for him.

POPS

He's not twelve.

MAMA

He's actin like it! Running off to  
England, forgetting about his  
family and where he came from.

POPS

Maybe he's doin this for his  
family. Do you know how much  
pressure a man feels to provide and  
do more, be more?

MAMA

I'll tell you what I do know. She's  
a gold digger.

POPS

What are you sayin, woman? She  
makes great money from her job.

MAMA

Mark my words, by Christmas, they  
will be broken up. I'm gonna see to  
it.

POPS

This isn't a couple goin to the  
prom. This is a marriage.

Mama crosses over to the bathroom and turns to him before  
going in.

MAMA

Mama knows best.

She SLAMS the door.

18

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY

18

Mama is doing laundry. Loads of clothes, dirty and clean,  
litter the laundry room. Emily walks in with a hamper full of  
her and Daryl's clothes.

Emily sees Mama before Mama can see her. She slowly backs  
away to leave, but Mama catches her out of the corner of her  
eye.

MAMA

What's wrong? Can't you share a  
room with people like me?

EMILY

I'm not sure what you mean by that,  
but I just didn't want to disturb  
you.

MAMA

Oh, you have disturbed a whole lot.

Mama SNAPS Christmas boxers out with Daryl's name on them.

EMILY

Are you doing his laundry?

MAMA

Who, my son? Imagine that, doin  
your son's laundry. Wait, you can't  
because you refuse to have a baby.

Emily looks away, uncomfortable, but tries to make peace.

EMILY

Um, could you teach me how you get  
your clothes so soft? I could never  
wash and clean like you.

MAMA

What's that supposed to mean?

EMILY

What? Nothing, just you guys are better at cleaning than me.

MAMA

You guys? Who is you guys?

Emily stumbles.

EMILY

You're like a Mama, like an experienced Mama.

MAMA

You trying to say I'm a Mami? Like a house slave?

EMILY

No, I-

MAMA

Want me to dance for ya, too?

EMILY

You're joking, right? You're unbelievable.

MAMA

We'll see who is unbelievable.

Emily looks at her with disbelief.

EMILY

I'll come back later.

Emily leaves her clothes and walks out.

19

EXT. FAMILY HOUSE - DAY

19

Daryl rakes the leaves outside. Emily charges toward him.

EMILY

You have got to do something.

DARYL

What's the matter?

EMILY

I think your mom just accused me of being racist.

DARYL

Don't be silly. You're with me.

EMILY

You weren't there. She's like  
twisting my words. It was like an  
evil Jedi.

Mama appears at the top of the porch.

MAMA

Daryl, can I talk to you for a  
second?

Emily squeezes his hand. He gives her a reassuring look.

DARYL

Sure, Mama. Em was just filling me  
in on her day.

MAMA

I'll be in the laundry room.

Mama disappears into the house.

DARYL

Emily, don't worry.

EMILY

Promise me you won't let her  
convince you that I'm racist.

DARYL

Do you even hear yourself? Of  
course, I'm not going to think  
you're racist.

EMILY

You're my favorite.

DARYL

You're my only. Trust me.

Daryl briskly ventures into the house.

20

INT. FAMILY HOUSE - DAY

20

Mama stands with her arms folded as Daryl enters the room.

MAMA

What do I look like?

Daryl stares.

DARYL

Is this a rhetorical question?

MAMA

You tell me, is it?

DARYL

Am I in trouble, here?

MAMA

Your wife just told me that I clean better than her because I'm black.

DARYL

She didn't say those words.

MAMA

She might as well have.

DARYL

Mama, what did she say exactly?

MAMA

Are you callin your mama a liar?

DARYL

I didn't call anyone anything! I'm just asking what happened, which is ridiculous that we are even having this conversation.

MAMA

Here's what I know, and here's what you about to find out; She doesn't know what it's like to live in this skin. She clearly isn't thinking of me.

DARYL

And who are you thinking about?

MAMA

US.

DARYL

What's this really about?

MAMA

I don't trust her. Never have. You need to be careful.

Mama grabs the laundry and storms out of the room. His Christmas boxers lay on the ground. David exhales his frustration.

21 EXT. FAMILY HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER 21

Emily sits on a stump outside. A text comes in from her dad.

"Please be careful around those people. Don't embarrass yourself, you've already embarrassed the family enough.

CUT TO:

22 INT. FAMILY HOUSE - BRIAN'S ROOM - DAY 22

Brian wears a headset and eats Cheetos as he stares at the screen. His giant glasses reflect the battle on the oversized monitor.

BRIAN  
Flank left... LEFT.

Mama stands in the doorway.

MAMA  
Hey Rambro, got a second?

BRIAN  
Saving the free world, Mama.

Mama steps in front of the screen.

MAMA  
Brian!

The monitor SCREAMS and flashes red as Brian's avatar dies.

BRIAN  
Mom! You just caused the deaths of  
an entire platoon of men.

MAMA  
It's just a game.

Brian takes off his headset dramatically.

BRIAN  
You try telling that to their  
families.

MAMA  
They're not real, Brian! I have a  
job for you.

BRIAN  
Let me grieve.

Mama straightens up.

MAMA

This is a covert mission... And  
I'll pay you \$200.

She flashes two Benjamins.

BRIAN

And I will honor their lives with  
this bounty.

He takes the money.

MAMA

Your mission.

She hands him a manilla envelope with a Christmas bow on it.  
Brian takes the envelope.

MAMA

Complete this successfully, and  
you'll save Christmas for our  
family.

He opens and reads the contents. Brian looks up at his  
mother.

BRIAN

Mama, you sure you want me to do  
this?

Mama bats her eye lashes a bit at Brian.

MAMA

You're the oldest, so I thought it  
was best for you to handle it, son.

Brian's chest puffs.

MAMA

Sometimes, people are so blinded by  
their point of view that they miss  
the truth.

BRIAN

Okay, Mama. I'll do it.

MAMA

I knew I could count on you.

She hugs him. Brian enjoys feeling the love and special  
attention from Mama.

23

INT. FAMILY HOUSE - DAY

23

Grandma knits by the corner window. The sun gleams in. Emily approaches her with her head down. Grandma doesn't look up.

GRANDMA  
Lose something?

EMILY  
Feels like it.

GRANDMA  
Keep your head up, young lady.

EMILY  
How'd you-

GRANDMA  
Know your head was down? Your soul  
feels downcast. Your sadness done  
slapped me in the face when you  
walked in.

Grandma continues to knit.

EMILY  
Can I sit?

GRANDMA  
First Kings 5:4.

EMILY  
"But now the Lord my God has given  
me rest on every side; there is  
neither adversary nor misfortune."

Grandma looks up and smiles.

GRANDMA  
Okay, she knows The Word!

Emily sits and smiles bleakly.

EMILY  
I don't know what to do. I feel  
like I did something wrong.

GRANDMA  
Taking care of your family?

EMILY

Well, yeah, I thought that by taking this job, I'd be putting us in a great position to take care of our future family.

GRANDMA

My daughter was thinking about your future family.

EMILY

Your daughter was thinking about herself.

GRANDMA

Amen.

EMILY

I didn't know she was going to react like that.

Grandma looks at her with disbelief.

EMILY

Okay, maybe I knew she wouldn't like it, but that was excessive.

GRANDMA

Sometimes we cast our hopes and dreams on others.

EMILY

1 Peter 5:7.

GRANDMA

"Cast all your cares upon Him, for He careth for you."

EMILY

Grandma knows her Bible.

They laugh.

GRANDMA

Listen, you need to do right by you and your family. That is the focus. You can't please everyone. You can't be guacamole.

EMILY

Hah! Because everyone loves guac?

GRANDMA

Amen.

Emily stands.

EMILY

Thanks, Grandma. I feel better. I may need another chat soon.

GRANDMA

I'll be here.

EMILY

Gonna go grab a snack.

GRANDMA

Amen to food.

Emily leaves the room as Grandma continues to knit.

24 INT. FAMILY HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

24

Brian stands down the hall from his brother and Emily's room. He has suddenly taken on the body language of one of the soldiers in his video games. Blackout paint lines below his eyes. Camouflage pants and a poorly fitting black t-shirt clings to him. A hard hat with a branch and leaves stems from his head.

The mission is on.

Brian stands flush to the wall as he slides toward Emily and Daryl's room. His fist motions to no one to move as he points ahead. Brian's feet tip-toe down the hall with delicate precision.

HUMMING emanates from the furthest end of the hall. Grandma walks by, quietly SINGING a hymn. Brian holds up a fist and stops dead in his tracks. He plasters himself against the wall.

After what seems like an eternity, Grandma finally shuffles across the frame, moving at a snail's pace. Brian exhales with relief.

25 INT. FAMILY HOUSE - DARYL AND EMILY'S ROOM - DAY

25

Brian reaches Daryl and Emily's door. He peers into his brother's room.

No one in sight.

A computer sits on the desk. The cursor on the monitor blinks. Brian looks around and miserably attempts to shoulder roll into the room. His roll falls flat.

He comes face to face with the computer. It's locked. He attempts several different passwords.

PASSWORD: incorrect

Password1234: incorrect

BRIAN  
Sophisticated.

He tries again.

DarylandEmily: incorrect. One attempt remaining.

Brian thinks. He looks up and sees a family photo of their entire clan. Reluctantly, he enters a final password attempt.

FamilyForLife. The screen comes to life, as does Brian's guilt. He hesitates.

MAMA (V.O.)  
You're the oldest, so I thought it  
was best for you to do this, son.

Resolves washes over him. He CLICKS on Daryl's email.

Subject line: Job Offer

Brian opens the email. The job offer to Daryl to stay in Georgia stares at him. Brian begins to write.

*Thank you for this incredible offer. This opportunity feels right and what's best for my family. With gratitude, I accept. I will be in touch after the holidays to discuss the particulars.*

The cursor hovers over the send icon.

WOOSH

He sends the email, closes the window, and puts the computer to sleep. A photo of Jesus comes into focus in front of him. It seems to stare at him from across the room.

Brian stands, guilt flooding in. He pulls out his phone and sends a text.

Mission accomplished.

A Santa icon and gift box with a bow from Mama answers him back as he exits the room.

26

INT. FAMILY HOUSE - DAY

26

Scrambled eggs, orange juice, and toast with perfect squares of butter dress the dining room table. The smell of bacon wafts through the house, waking up the sleeping members of the family.

Mama SINGS and HUMS a tune as she puts the finishing touches on breakfast.

Pops enters, skeptical.

POPS

Well, good morning, sweetheart.

He looks around with surprise.

POPS

What's the occasion?

MAMA

What do you mean?

She smiles as she flips some pancakes.

Pops motions to the spread.

POPS

All this.

MAMA

Can't I just be appreciative that my family is here?

POPS

Mama, you were Godzilla the last couple of days, and now you're Barney.

MAMA

It's the season for joy.

She bites a piece of bacon. Pops sits down, unconvinced.

Brian enters the room and is welcomed by a big hug from Mama.

MAMA

There's my oldest child. Come here.

BRIAN

Morning, Mama, Pops.

MAMA

I'm so proud of you.

POPS  
Him? For what, beating level six on  
that dumb game?

BRIAN  
Thanks, Pops, for your vote of  
confidence.

Daryl and Emily, groggy, find a seat at the table.

DARYL  
Vote of confidence for what?

MAMA  
Your brother just makin us proud.

POPS  
Yeah, don't get me wrong, son. I'm  
tryin to know what I am cheerin  
about.

MAMA  
Cheering for family.

Brian and Mama exchange a look. Emily has been sitting  
quietly.

MAMA  
Emily, would you like breakfast?

EMILY (SOTTO)  
Is it poisoned?

DARYL  
What did you say?

EMILY  
Anything in particular you've  
chosen?

MAMA  
Here's an apple...

Daryl looks sharply at his mother.

MAMA  
And some other fruit.

Emily takes a bite of the apple.

MAMA  
Aren't you going to offer some of  
the apple to your husband? It's  
biblical.

Emily looks away.

EMILY

Yes, Matthew 19:5 is one of my favorite verses.

Grandma comes in, knitting.

GRANDMA

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

EMILY

What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

Daryl looks at Emily and speaks to her under his voice.

DARYL (SOTTO)

Don't take the bait.

They sit, and Pops PRAYS.

ALL

Amen.

MAMA

So, Daryl, what are you going to do for work again?

DARYL

Gonna figure it out when we get to London.

EMILY

We've committed to making it work for us.

MAMA

We?

EMILY

Yes, we.

MAMA

Okay. Well, sometimes, Daryl, The Lord works in mysterious ways. Just be open to what he has for us.

DARYL

Okay, Mama.

EMILY  
Yes, we're open.

Brian, COUGHS.

BRIAN  
May I be excused?

DARYL  
You okay, bro?

BRIAN  
Yeah, just need to step aside. You  
guys keep on eating.

The family continues with their awkward breakfast.

DARYL  
Mama, are you open to what God has  
for us?

MAMA  
Of course.

DARYL  
You sure?

MAMA  
I'll make you a deal; whatever God  
reveals plainly to us regarding  
your "situation" this wonderful  
Christmas season, we will both  
accept.

DARYL  
Deal.

MAMA  
Emily?

EMILY  
Okay.

They shake.

MAMA  
Now, let's eat.

Grandma and Pops look on with suspicion.

Brian stares at Mama from down the hall with guilt written  
all over his face.

27

EXT. TRAILS - DAY

27

Daryl and Emily walk hand in hand down a trail outside the property. They have fun taking in all the Christmas decorations.

EMILY

Oh, I like that one!

DARYL

That a reindeer or a moose?

EMILY

Aren't they the same?

Their LAUGHS are interrupted by Daryl's phone. It RINGS.

DARYL

Hello... Yes this is he?

Daryl covers his phone's speaker as he speaks, confused, to Emily.

DARYL

It's that job I turned down in Atlanta.

He returns to the call.

DARYL

How can I help?

Daryl's listening transitions to confusion.

DARYL

I'm sorry, which email? I didn't send an email. I actually spoke to the Hiring manager and declined the job... Sir, I am sorry for the confusion, and I appreciate the opportunity, but I didn't send an email... Okay, thank you. Again, my apologies.

He pushed end.

EMILY

What was that?

DARYL

I have no idea.

EMILY

Well, what did he say?

DARYL

So, he got an email from me within the last day or so saying that I was excited to get started and that making this move was what was best for my family.

EMILY

You said that?

DARYL

What? No! Of course, I didn't. But the question is, if I didn't, who did?

Emily stops.

EMILY

Your mom made us promise that if God revealed a sign, I would accept it.

DARYL

You think my mom did this?

EMILY

If the shoe fits...

DARYL

Em, this is my mom we are talking about here.

EMILY

I know.

DARYL

What is that supposed to mean?

EMILY

Just, I think that she has something to do with it.

DARYL

Wow, so maybe she's right; you do think she's bad.

EMILY

No, D, she's just been open about this being a mistake, me taking you, and all that.

DARYL

She wouldn't do this, Em. I know her.

(MORE)

DARYL (CONT'D)

She is extreme, but she wouldn't violate my privacy. I probably got hacked.

EMILY

Okay.

She puts her hands in the air.

DARYL

Let's get back. It's getting late.

28

INT. FAMILY HOUSE - DAY

28

Emily and Daryl enter the house. Mama is in the kitchen. Pops is listening to CHRISTMAS MUSIC. Grandma knits.

EMILY

Good news everyone. Daryl apparently accepted a job here in Atlanta.

Daryl looks on with frustration.

DARYL

I told her it's probably a mistake.

EMILY

Damn right, it is.

MAMA

Language.

EMILY

You're really trying to lecture me right now?

MAMA

You have something to say, Missy?

EMILY

I think actions are speaking louder than words right now.

POPS

I'm sure there is a reasonable explanation for this.

Grandma knits.

EMILY

I know of one.

DARYL  
Stop accusing my mother.

EMILY  
I didn't say it was her, but you obviously have a guilty conscience.

DARYL  
You know, I don't appreciate your tone.

Mama smiles to herself.

EMILY  
I don't appreciate your MAMA,  
MAMAING you to death.

DARYL  
Did you just say Mama like a black Mami?

Emily flails her arms.

EMILY  
Oh sure, SURE, I'm racist. Me, married to the black guy, am racist.

DARYL  
That's like saying your best friend is black.

EMILY  
My best friend is black, and my husband!

Grandma HUMS, "Why Me Lord."

DARYL  
Do you hear yourself?

MAMA  
Sorry to interrupt, but if someone emailed that you accepted, then maybe it's a sign.

Daryl turns to Mama.

DARYL  
What did you just say?

Beat.

MAMA

I said, if they think you have  
accepted the position, then maybe  
it's a sign.

DARYL

No, you said email.

MAMA

Did I?

DARYL

I never mentioned email.

Brian enters with groceries and a Santa hat.

BRIAN

I come bearing gifts.

Silence.

BRIAN

What? What'd I miss?

DARYL

My wife's prejudiced, and my mom  
lies.

MAMA

Daryl, hold on.

DARYL

Don't...

He looks at his mother and his wife.

DARYL

You two deserve each other.

EMILY

Babe, wait-

DARYL

You know, it's crazy that the two  
women I love more than anything  
manage to hurt me the most. Merry  
Christmas to me, I guess.

Daryl storms out.

29

INT. FAMILY HOUSE - MAMA AND POPS BEDROOM - NIGHT

29

Pops sits up in bed, reading his Bible. Mama sits, taking off her earrings and makeup while talking to Pops in the mirror. She looks at him for a beat.

MAMA

You're not gonna say a word?

POPS

Reading The Word.

MAMA

I feel you judging me.

POPS

We know what this book says about judgment.

MAMA

If you're trying to insinuate-

POPS

I'm not insinuating anything. You're an adult. What you decide to do is between you and God.

MAMA

Okay, so you're saying you don't approve of what I did?

POPS

So you admit it, finally? That's the first step.

MAMA

I am doing what I think is best for this family.

POPS

Our son is a grown man trying to start his own family.

MAMA

She's ruining his life.

POPS

She is his life.

MAMA

I'm his mother.

POPS

This isn't about you!

Mama is taken aback as Pops never raises his voice.

POPS

Not everything is about you,  
Sheila. We raised him to be his own  
man, and somehow, you've managed to  
step all over his manhood. Now, I  
don't know how you did it, but if  
you want to keep this family  
together, you need to reconcile  
with him and with her.

MAMA

There ain't no way-

Pops walks over to Mama, who is fighting tears in the mirror.

POPS

There's always a way. Humility.  
This is the perfect season for it.  
Find your son and your daughter-in-  
law tomorrow, and make it right.

Mama reaches to touch his hand.

CUT TO:

30

EXT. FAMILY HOUSE - DAY

30

Emily sits outside, typing away at a table. The phone RINGS,  
her email CHIMES, and her stress levels build. As the tidal  
wave of issues washes over her, Brian sees her and tries to  
get her attention.

BRIAN

Hey, Emily, can I talk to you?

Emily mouths that she's on the phone.

BRIAN

It's important.

She holds her hand up, motioning for him to hold on a minute.

EMILY

Sorry, Mom, my brother-in-law,  
Brian, was asking me for-

BRIAN

It was me. I accepted the job on  
Daryl's behalf.

Emily freezes.

EMILY  
I'll call you back, Mom.

Brian lowers his gaze.

EMILY  
Wait, sorry, what did you just say?

BRIAN  
His computer was out. No one was around, so I went in and accepted the job for him.

EMILY  
Why in the world would you do that? Do you have any idea the position you put him in?

BRIAN  
I do, and I'm sorry. I didn't think-

EMILY  
You definitely didn't think.

BRIAN  
Don't be mad at Mama.

EMILY  
Why would I be mad at her if...

Brian steps back.

EMILY  
Are you telling me that she put you up to this?

Guilt covers Brian's expression.

BRIAN  
She just wanted to keep the family together. I've been feeling terrible about all this. I had to tell you.

Emily's eyes flare with anger. Brian winces. He cowers back as she turns toward him.

EMILY  
Where is she?

She marches toward the house.

BRIAN  
Emily, wait. Mama doesn't know I  
told you-

EMILY  
Where is she?!

Emily opens with enough force to rattle the Christmas  
decorations.

31 INT. FAMILY HOUSE - DAY

31

The aftershocks of the door's SLAM reverberate throughout the  
room as Emily bounds from room to room.

EMILY  
I cannot believe what I am hearing.

Grandma sits in the corner, knitting. Pops peaks out of the  
master bedroom.

POPS  
What's going on out here?

EMILY  
Where is Mama? We need to talk.

POPS  
You okay, Emily? You seem stressed.

EMILY  
Stressed? No, I'm not stressed; I'm  
livid. Your wife has gone behind  
your son, my husband's back, and  
concocted an elaborate plan to keep  
us, quote-unquote, home.

Mama comes in from the front door with groceries.

MAMA  
What's all the commotion about? I  
can hear the noise outside.

EMILY  
Excellent question, Mama.

Emily exaggerates when she says Mama.

MAMA  
I don't understand.

EMILY  
You never did.

Brian soon enters from the back hallway.

MAMA

Do you have something to say,  
Emily?

EMILY

Me, no, but Brian sure as heck had  
a lot to say. Didn't you, Brian?

All eyes turn to Brian as he stands in a shadowed corner.

MAMA

You didn't.

Silence cuts through the tension.

EMILY

Mama, I have broken my back to  
impress you and try to feel like a  
part of this family...

Daryl enters cautiously.

DARYL

What's going on?

EMILY

Smoke and mirrors.

MAMA

Now you look here, young lady. I've  
had enough of you throwin' around  
attitude, trying to control this  
family.

EMILY

Listen, Sheila-

The room holds its collective breath.

MAMA

I will not be disrespected in my  
own house.

EMILY

Do you even live in reality? You  
know, I know they say black mothers  
are controlling and have a hard  
time letting go-

DARYL

Woah, Emily!

MAMA

You can leave anytime you'd like.

EMILY

You'd love that, wouldn't you?

DARYL

Em-

EMILY

It was her, Daryl. Well, actually, it was your brother, but It was your mom who planned the whole thing.

DARYL

What whole thing?

EMILY

The email accepting the job here. You thought you were hacked. Turns out your mom was the virus.

DARYL

What???

The family is in upheaval. Pops SHOUTS for everyone to calm down, Mama and Emily bicker back and forth, Daryl and Brian are almost nose to nose.

Grandma ROARS.

GRANDMA

HUSH YOUR MOUTHS.

The room falls silent.

GRANDMA

I can't even hear myself think. About to give an old lady a heart attack.

DARYL

Sorry, Grandma, I'm just in shock.

MAMA

Daryl, baby, it's not what it looks like. I was thinking of our family, our immediate family.

DARYL

No, you were thinking of you. How could you go behind my back?

(MORE)

DARYL (CONT'D)

And you got Brian in on this. You guys lied to me.

MAMA

Daryl, I did this for your own good. Trust me.

DARYL

I did trust you.

Daryl grabs his keys.

MAMA

Where are you going?

DARYL

For a drive. A lot to think about. My mother and brother lied to me, and my wife...

He turns to Emily.

DARYL

My wife thinks all black mothers are controlling. Looks like we all have parts about us that we didn't want to come out.

EMILY

Are you taking her side?

DARYL

When will you two learn that it's not about sides? Everyone is so worried about getting what they want.

Daryl grabs his coat.

DARYL

It's funny, though; no one seems to care what I want.

He looks back and forth between Mama and Emily and leaves the house.

32

INT. FAMILY HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

32

Mama CHOPS chicken in the kitchen with a butcher knife. With each STRIKE, her frustration seems to mount.

Emily comes into the kitchen and calmly begins to speak.

EMILY

Did that chicken threaten to move  
to London as well?

Mama CHOPS again but cracks a smile.

MAMA

It's not personal, Emily.

EMILY

Funny because it feels pretty  
pointed.

MAMA

One day when you have a family  
you'll understand.

EMILY

How-

MAMA

How what?

EMILY

How will I ever understand? How  
will I ever have a family? You  
won't let me, us, live.

MAMA

If I am cramping your life you can  
always just go.

EMILY

I'm not trying to fight you right  
before Christmas, but what you did  
is inexcusable. I came to see if  
you would at least be willing to  
apologize.

MAMA

The only thing I am sorry about is  
that I didn't do something sooner.

Emily is taken aback by her defiance.

EMILY

Wow. You know, I guess I was right  
about you.

Emily walks out as Mama, emotional, stops cutting the  
chicken.

Daryl sits down on the sofa by Grandma, who is still knitting.

DARYL  
How did you do it?

GRANDMA  
What, baby?

DARYL  
How did you get through life unscathed?

GRANDMA  
Child, you think you get to be my age without any problems?

DARYL  
Maybe not, but you're always so happy.

GRANDMA  
Well, young man, it's not because life is perfect, but it's darn near perfect for us.

DARYL  
What do you mean?

GRANDMA  
We all go through trials. Your trials may even get worse, but we have an example we can follow.

DARYL  
I'm not as smart as you, Grandma. You're speaking in code.

GRANDMA  
For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return;

(MORE)

GRANDMA (CONT'D)

when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

DARYL

Dang Grandma, preachin.

GRANDMA

What I'm tryin to say, son, is that these little trials, to me, ain't nothin compared to what Jesus went through for us. And if he could bounce back from death itself, I can bounce back from anything.

DARYL

So what should I do?

GRANDMA

Don't take your faults patiently. Go to your wife, let her know you're on her side. You didn't back her up. You were called to leave your mother and father and cleave to your wife. Go and cleave, boy!

DARYL

Thanks, Grandma. I got some cleavin to do.

GRANDMA

Find some mistletoe. Your Grandad didn't stand a chance against these lips.

DARYL

Grandma! No. Gross.

GRANDMA

How you think you got here? These lips are code named pillows of love—

DARYL

Bye, Grandma..

Daryl chuckles as he exits.

Emily writes in her journal. As she writes, emotion wells within her. Tears fight for position in her eyes as Daryl enters the room. Her bags are packed on the bed.

DARYL

Hey, babe. What's all this?

Emily looks up.

EMILY

Hi.

She wipes her eyes.

DARYL

I feel like we should talk.

EMILY

Sure, yah. I was just writing down some thoughts.

DARYL

I wanted to say something about what happened.

EMILY

Yeah, me too. That's actually what I was writing in my journal about.

DARYL

Okay-

EMILY

I'll start.

Daryl's smile slowly fades as Emily's concern etches across her face.

DARYL

I'm listening.

EMILY

Growing up, all I ever wanted was a family of my own. I would dream about my prince charming and our kids. I thought about how they would be dressed, matching, of course, and even how their hair would look. My mom would be so great and just listen to me dream. I bet she would dream as well.

DARYL

She probably didn't think your prince would be the Black Knight.

EMILY

Bet your mom didn't think your maiden would be so fair.

Beat.

EMILY

We are supposed to be a team. We are supposed to be unstoppable, you and me, against the world. For a while, I knew that no matter what, you would be.

DARYL

You're r-

EMILY

Until last night. Your mom hatched a plan, broke your trust, and essentially tried to frame me. That isn't the worst part because I can expect that from a mother desperate to keep her child close to home.

DARYL

Emily-

EMILY

You hung me out to dry. You chose your mother over me. You promised to choose me every day of your life. You had a chance to prove your promise to me, and it only took a mother's false accusation to make you waver.

DARYL

Wait, what are you saying?

EMILY

I'm gonna need some time.

DARYL

What? You're leaving?

EMILY

I'm not leaving you. I just need to think. Just some space. A little separation.

DARYL  
Tomorrow is Christmas Eve.

EMILY  
My parents are coming to get me.

He rises.

DARYL  
You called your parents? You just gave me a whole speech about choosing each other over our mothers, and you called two of the most racist people I know to come here? Are you hearing yourself?

EMILY  
I know, I'm sorry. I just didn't want to be here and spend Christmas with a family who doesn't want me, and a husband who doesn't believe me.

DARYL  
Emily, I came here to tell you that I was wrong to accuse you. I acted emotionally, but you did generalize all black mothers, and it's not okay.

EMILY  
I'm not the enemy!

DARYL  
You don't see that you have unconscious bias. Approximately thirty-seven percent of America has this problem.

EMILY  
My husband misses 100 percent of the point.

DARYL  
What am I missing?

EMILY  
Your mother has made it her Christmas mission to destroy our marriage, and you are talking to me about unconscious bias.

DARYL  
Em-

EMILY

I may not understand what it's like to be you, but I do know I've spent the last three days trying to prove myself. Nothing I do is good enough. I'm getting accused of things that I didn't do, and no one is listening to me.

DARYL

Welcome to being black.

EMILY

That's not fair.

DARYL

I'm sorry, too. I think you do need some time.

Daryl walks out of the room and gently closes the door. The wreath on the outside of the door falls to the ground.

35 INT. FAMILY HOUSE - MAMA AND POPS BEDROOM - NIGHT 35

Pops reads his Bible. Mama lay in bed looking the other way.

MAMA

So that's it?

Pops doesn't look up.

MAMA

You're not going to say anything?

POPS

Reading the word.

MAMA

Which I appreciate, but what about me?

POPS

It's not always about you.

Pops looks up.

POPS

I don't approve of what you did. In fact, for the first time, I am truly disappointed in you.

Mama winces.

MAMA  
I was just doing my job.

POPS  
Well, looks like you got fired.

DING DONG.

The doorbell RINGS.

MAMA  
Who in the world is here this close  
to Christmas?

The pair get up from the bed and walk to the front door.

36

INT. FAMILY HOUSE - MOMENT LATER - NIGHT

36

Pops and Mama walk to the front door. Pops peeps through the peephole.

POPS  
Mama, it's white people?

MAMA  
Jehovah's Witnesses?

POPS  
Don't think so; they don't have on  
the tie or holding any papers.

Mama squeezes in.

MAMA  
Let me look.

DING DONG.

MAMA  
They're dressed all stuffy.

DING DONG.

Mama looks. The pair on the outside of the door look annoyed.

DING DONG.

Grandma strolls out in her nightgown and sleep mask.

GRANDMA  
Is it that rapture?

Brian comes out of his room.

BRIAN  
What's going on?

Emily and Daryl come to the door. Emily's red eyes and streaky mascara tell the story.

EMILY  
Sorry, that's probably my parents.

MAMA  
Your parents?

DARYL  
You told them to come get you, like now?

Emily looks at Daryl at a loss, unsure what to say. Emily turns to Mama.

EMILY  
I asked them to come and get me. I know I'm not wanted here.

Brian and Mama look away, embarrassed.

Emily opens the door.

37 EXT. FAMILY HOUSE - MOMENT LATER

37

WILLIAM, mid to late 50s, a white man with silver hair and spectacles, stands next to a woman, IRENE, 50's. Irene's perfectly cut shoulder-length bob hangs like a silver curtain. Their faces sour by the minute.

IRENE  
Well, it's about time. We almost caught our death of cold out here.

WILLIAM  
Emily, hello. Figured you would be calling us sooner or later.

IRENE  
You didn't tell us they lived in a log cabin.

IRENE'S face lines with disapproval.

Mama approaches.

IRENE  
Ah, the help.

Irene hands Mama her coat.

IRENE  
Be a dear and go hang this up.

Mama radiates anger so hot she could heat the room. She takes off an earring, and kicks off a shoe as if ready to go into battle.

Pops grabs her by the shoulders and steps forward.

POPS  
We all love a great sense of humor.  
Daryl has told us about you all.  
We're his parents.

IRENE  
I see.

WILLIAM  
Your home is... Cute.

POPS  
We aim to please. Come in.

The pair enter a room more tense and cold than outside's winter.

MAMA  
Emily says you're here to pick her up.

Daryl stares at Emily, still in disbelief.

IRENE  
I think she just needs to be with her own this Christmas.

Grandma shuffles through and sits by the window.

GRANDMA  
I may as well knit if I'm up.

WILLIAM  
With tomorrow being Christmas Eve,  
we won't be staying.

GRANDMA  
Ya'll ain't goin no where. Snow's  
just around the way.

IRENE

Ridiculous. It hasn't snowed since 2018.

DARYL

And not enough to keep them here. The highest snowfall ever recorded in Macon was in 1940, with 8.3 inches of snow accumulated on a single day. If she wants to leave, she'll leave.

GRANDMA

If she's supposed to stay, she won't have a choice.

IRENE

What is that supposed to mean?

GRANDMA

Mysterious ways.

The lights flicker. They all look around. Snow outside intensifies. Grandma knits on.

WILLIAM

Given the time and weather, we will stay the night but leave first thing tomorrow morning.

IRENE

William, we can't just invite ourselves to their little flat. They may not have room in the inn for us here.

Sarcasm drips from her lips with every word.

POPS

There is plenty of room for you, fine folks.

MAMA

I'll put you in Emily and Daryl's room and put them in Daryl's old room. I'm planning on converting it to an office.

IRENE

Cute.

POPS

Okay, well, Merry Christmas Eve. See ya'll in the morning.

(MORE)

POPS (CONT'D)

Mama will make sure you're all comfortable.

DARYL

I'll go get our stuff.

EMILY

Don't worry, I'll get my stuff.  
Just um, grab what you need.

Emily, head down, walks away.

Her parents look at each other with a smile.

38 EXT. FAMILY HOUSE - SUNRISE 38

Snow falls. Sheets of white blanket as far as the eyes can see. Christmas decorations peek through the snow at various houses.

Many of the Christmas lights on different homes flicker before the power shuts off.

39 INT. FAMILY HOUSE - DAY 39

Daryl wakes up and looks over to Emily's side of the bed. He reaches out and touches the empty space.

DARYL

Merry Christmas Eve.

He sits up and puts on a sweater.

40 INT. FAMILY HOUSE - DAY 40

Emily wakes up wrapped in a Christmas blanket. She looks over and sees her mother in a sleep mask covering her eyes and her father asleep wearing a clay mask.

Emily gets up and stands by the window. She shivers and pulls the blanket around her for more warmth.

41 INT. FAMILY HOUSE - DAY 41

Grandma sits by the fire. She is bundled up and struggling to stay warm.

Emily comes in.

EMILY  
Hey, Grandma. It's Christmas Eve.

GRANDMA  
Is it?

She HUMS.

EMILY  
What are you knitting?

GRANDMA  
You'll see. Come sit by me, dear.  
I'm cold as a lake in a snowstorm.

Emily sits by her.

EMILY  
Oh my- Grandma, you're ice cold.

Grandma tries to bring feeling to her hands while knitting by flexing them.

GRANDMA  
Power went out, and I ain't as thick as I used to be. Should have seen Grandpa look at me when I would strut away.

Grandma shakes her behind as best she can.

EMILY  
Grandma, let's get you wrapped up and in bed, where it's warm.

Emily helps her up and takes her to her room.

42

INT. FAMILY HOUSE - DAY

42

Emily's parents walk out into the common area. Mama is awake and making breakfast.

MAMA  
Almost Merry Christmas.

IRENE  
Hardly. The snow is too high to go anywhere.

WILLIAM  
This is an unmitigated disaster.

Pops enters with a Christmas hat and an ugly sweater.

Irene looks disapprovingly.

POPS  
Ho Ho Ho. Merry-

IRENE  
Save it. We're stuck here. No need  
to pretend.

POPS  
Well, I don't know about you, but  
every morning I wake up is a good  
one, especially today.

Daryl comes in and walks to the window.

DARYL  
We're snowed in.

IRENE  
Observant.

Emily enters.

EMILY  
Daryl-

WILLIAM  
Emily, dear, pack up. As soon as  
the snow melts, we're off.

MAMA  
I'm making Christmas Eve breakfast-

IRENE  
I don't eat pig's feet and collard  
greens, thank you.

EMILY  
This is imp-

MAMA  
I was making French toast and  
scrambled eggs, but you would  
notice if you weren't so busy  
judging-

DARYL  
Can everyone please-

EMILY  
Daryl, I need to tell you-

WILLIAM  
Your home can't even withstand snow-

EMILY  
Grandma is sick!

All eyes turn toward Emily.

EMILY  
She's really cold.

MAMA  
I'll take care of my family, thank  
you very much. You're family can  
stay on one side of the house, and  
my family will stay on this side.

DARYL  
You're segregating us?

MAMA  
I'm protecting us. Now, where's  
Mama?

Mama and Pops head toward Grandma's room.

43 INT. FAMILY HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY

43

Brian is in the basement, tinkering with the circuit breaker. A flashlight holds its place in his mouth while he pries open the board.

Daryl enters.

DARYL  
Hey, bro.

Brian stops for a moment but doesn't look at him.

BRIAN  
If you've come to yell at me, I  
deserve it.

DARYL  
I didn't come to yell. I'm already  
struggling with Emily. But I gotta  
say, what you did-

BRIAN  
I know.

DARYL  
Do you?

BRIAN

I know! I know I let you down,  
violated your trust, acted a fool.  
I know I always am the one messing  
up. I know. I'm the worst.

DARYL

Okay, good. It sounds like you  
know.

Brian exhales and keeps working.

DARYL

I don't understand what made you  
think I wouldn't find out.

BRIAN

Knew you'd find out. Didn't think  
it would be this fast. But  
honestly, didn't really care.

DARYL

Are you serious?

BRIAN

Not what I meant.

Brian stops working and looks at Daryl. As he summons his  
next words, he fights back tears.

BRIAN

For a few moments, Mama was focused  
on me. Needed me. She told me that  
I was helping the family. D, I live  
at home, I'm single, and I play  
video games. I'm the biggest  
disappointment this family has ever  
seen. Mama made me feel important.  
Usually, you're the important one.  
I'm sorry. I messed up.

DARYL

Growing up, I always looked up to  
you. You were like Superman.

Daryl smiles as he remembers.

DARYL

No matter what happened, no matter  
if the world was falling down  
around me, I knew I could count on  
you. I knew you had my back.  
Nothing could get between us.

BRIAN

You kidding? Since you started dating Taylor Swift over there, you'd been distant.

DARYL

Brian, I text you every week. I even tried playing your stupid video game with you.

BRIAN

You suck at it.

DARYL

I know! But I do it to find time to hang out with you, even if it's online.

Daryl puts his hands on his brother's shoulders.

DARYL

Life is going to change. Our careers are going to change. But do you remember what else Mama would tell us growing up?

BRIAN

Stop hitting each other?

DARYL

No, fool. Well, yes, but-

BRIAN

The thing to take care of each other, because one day we'll be gone and you'll need each other.

DARYL

Yeah. I need my big bro right now. I'm losing my wife because of all this.

BRIAN

Can I be honest with you?

DARYL

That would be a nice change.

BRIAN

You're losing your wife because you were afraid to choose her over Mama.

DARYL  
 Woah, woah, woah. You takin her  
 side?

Daryl almost laughs.

BRIAN  
 No, bro, I'm takin yours.  
 Tomorrow's Christmas. You need to  
 find a way to make it right.

They embrace.

DARYL  
 Okay. Man, that was kinda deep. But  
 we have another problem. You have  
 about a twenty-five percent chance  
 of fixing this.

BRIAN  
 That's generous.

They laugh.

DARYL  
 We need Dad.

BRIAN  
 We need Dad.

44 INT. FAMILY HOUSE - DAY

44

Grandma lay in bed, shivering. Mama lays close to her.  
 Somehow, Grandma is still humming.

MAMA  
 Save your strength, Mom.

Grandma's teeth CHATTER as she speaks with little energy.

GRANDMA  
 You done messed up, young lady.  
 Done messed up real good.

MAMA  
 Mom, please.

GRANDMA  
 Don't please me. You need to get  
 right before you lose everything.

Grandma turns over.

GRANDMA  
 Need some food.

MAMA  
I'll be back.

Mama heads to the kitchen.

45 INT. FAMILY HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

45

Irene rummages through the kitchen cupboards and fridge. Food is separated on the counters.

Mama's mouth hangs agape as she watches Irene categorize her kitchen.

MAMA  
What in God's name do you think we are doing?

Irene barely acknowledges her.

IRENE  
Move the bread to the far side of the counter.

MAMA  
Have you lost your mind?

IRENE  
Fine, bread near side, soups far side.

MAMA  
I'm going to give you three seconds to back away from the vehicle.

IRENE  
Isn't that what your kind is used to hearing?

Mama takes off her earrings.

MAMA  
I'm gonna show you what my kind is used to doing.

Pops and William rush into the kitchen. William, who is closest to Mama, holds her back, while Pops, who is closest to Irene, holds her back.

IRENE  
Let go of me, you brute.

MAMA  
Got your clammy hands off me!

Pops and William look at each other knowingly. Roll their eyes at their wives and switch positions.

POPS

Now look, you two need to stop this.

WILLIAM

Irene, you're behaving like a child.

MAMA

She started it.

IRENE

She started it.

POPS

Enough! Now, I've kept my voice down for long enough. This is my house. And I will not have your terrible attitudes ruin Christmas.

William smoothes his shirt out.

POPS

We're all parents, right? Well, we're also all on the verge of losing our kids.

IRENE

My child called me for help.

POPS

Your child also said you're the most racist person she knows.

WILLIAM

She said that?

POPS

Sure did.

WILLIAM

We're not racist, we just, well, I would say we're more particular.

IRENE

Please. Tiger Woods has exquisite taste.

POPS

I don't care if you like Tiger King, but we need to work together. The heater is busted, we need food, and Grandma is sick.

(MORE)

POPS (CONT'D)

If we don't work together, I think it's going to be anything but a Merry Christmas.

WILLIAM

I have experience with electrical.

POPS

Good. You and I will handle the circuit breaker. I'll work downstairs. Can you leverage your experience and go through the manual? Maybe there's an override or line splice we can work on.

WILLIAM

I will make it so.

Pops hands William the manual. William heads off to read it.

POPS

Mama, you and Irene, figure out our food situation. We could be out of power for a few days. The oven is gas, so we should have some options.

Mama and Irene eye one another.

POPS

Ya'll... Together.

They agree and head to their jobs.

46 INT. FAMILY HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY 46

Emily stops, looks in the mirror, and exhales.

47 INT. FAMILY HOUSE - DAY 47

Emily closes the bathroom door and heads to the family room.

48 INT. FAMILY HOUSE - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON 48

Mama and Irene work in the kitchen. Mama stirs a pot and Irene kneads dough.

The silence presses the joy right out of the air.

Finally after what seems like ages, Irene speaks.

IRENE  
This dough is sticky.

Mama stirs the soup.

MAMA  
Mmhmm.

IRENE  
I'll have you know... Whatever  
you're boiling in that pot  
smells... Live.

Mama stirs on.

IRENE  
I think actually I should have said  
it's gas, or straight fire.

Mama's stirring is interrupted by her own laughter.

MAMA  
Do you hear yourself?

Mama's laugh grows.

IRENE  
What? I'm trying to relate.

MAMA  
That's your problem. You think  
we're some template out of a music  
video.

IRENE  
I never said that. I hear the kids  
down at the gymnasium using those  
words.

MAMA  
Do I look like a kid to you?

Irene stares.

IRENE  
Good point.

MAMA  
Irene, I am not perfect.

IRENE  
Yes, I heard.

Mama gives her a look.

MAMA

As I was saying, I am not perfect. I may have done some things out love for my family, that in retrospect, I could have done differently. But we have more in common than you think. You're here on Christmas Eve, at the drop of a hat for your little girl.

IRENE

I will do anything for my daughter.

MAMA

And I'll do anything for my son.

She stops stirring. She pulls her jacket on to get even warmer.

MAMA

I think I went too far.

IRENE

At least your son calls you. This is the first time in ages Emily has called us. It's only when she needs something.

MAMA

And when mine need something, they try to fix it on their own.

IRENE

I guess, one could say, they balance one another.

The two look at each other as if struck with an epiphany.

49

INT. FAMILY HOUSE - GRANDMA'S ROOM - EVENING

49

Daryl sits bedside with Brian next to Grandma. She shivers.

BRIAN

How you doin', Grandma?

Grandma's teeth CHATTER as she tries to speak.

GRANDMA

Pass me my knitting kit.

DARYL

Grandma, you are literally freezing. I don't think now's the time.

GRANDMA

Christmas is tomorrow. Gotta get this done.

BRIAN

Hey, Grandma, Daryl and I are worried about you.

GRANDMA

That's funny because I'm worried about you and Daryl.

The boys look at each other.

GRANDMA

Jospeh and his brothers, Jacob and Esau, Ishmael and Isaac...

She pauses.

GRANDMA

Cain and Abel. If you boys aren't careful, you're liable to tear each other apart. You're supposed to look out for each other.

Daryl pulls the blanket further up on her.

GRANDMA

Hebrews 13:1.

DARYL

Keep loving one another as brothers and sisters.

GRANDMA

Yes, indeed.

Her eyes close.

BRIAN

Grandma?

DARYL

Grandma!

They shake her.

GRANDMA

Sweet Christmas, I was trying to  
take a nap. You tryin to kill me?

The brothers exhale.

DARYL

Thought you, you know.

GRANDMA

Kicked the Christmas tree?

BRIAN

You scared me! You closed your  
eyes.

GRANDMA

How else am I supposed to sleep?

DARYL

Sorry, Grandma. With the cold,  
there is a seventy-eight percent  
chance of you getting hypothermia.

GRANDMA

At my age, every nap is a  
cliffhanger.

The brothers CHUCKLE.

GRANDMA

Yes sir. That's it. Laughter is the  
greatest cure. I may be cold. But  
I'm strong. Family keeps me strong.  
Now, let me sleep.

Mama walks in.

MAMA

She okay?

Daryl looks at her.

BRIAN

She's going to rest. I'll stay with  
her. Looks like you two could use  
some time to talk.

DARYL

Um, yeah. Brian-

BRIAN

I'm sorry, D. For real. I shouldn't  
have-

DARYL

I know you were feeling pressure.  
All good.

He turns and looks at Mama.

DARYL

Okay, Mama. Let's talk.

He leaves the room. Brian huddles around Grandma and Mama follows Daryl.

50

INT. FAMILY HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY

50

Pops holds the breaker open. He wears a hat decorated with several Christmas lights.

William holds the breaker's instruction manual with one hand and a flashlight in the other.

Emily twines some wires as she waits for instructions from Pops.

POPS

Can you pass me the flashlight?

EMILY

You mean that beauty isn't enough?

She points to his hat.

POPS

I know it's lit.

EMILY

You didn't.

She smiles. William noticing, furrows his brow. Pops returns Emily's grin.

POPS

Thought I'd never see that again.

EMILY

Tough week.

POPS

Tellin me. Wife wen't rouge, one son turned Anakin Skywalker, and my daughter in law-

EMILY

Wait, you have all this to deal with, and you're worried about me?

POPS

You're family, of course, I got you.

William's face softens.

EMILY

I wish Daryl had my back.

POPS

Of course, he's got your back. Why do you think he's so messed up right now? He loves his mom, but he was headed to talk to you.

EMILY

I was just really hurt.

WILLIAM

Emily, if I may, my dear, even when your mother is difficult, we try to show a united front. You may not believe this, but it is possible for parents to make... well, mistakes.

William glances toward Pops and quickly clears his throat.

POPS

Welcome to being married, Emily. But look, if you work together...

Pops connects the wires to the panel behind the breaker. William points to something on the page.

WILLIAM

Ahah! May I?

William swaps two wires.

POPS

The energy is unstoppable.

EMILY

We did it!

POPS

Just two families workin together.

WILLIAM

Says here the system needs to thaw.  
Once it does we should be back up  
and running in no time.

William stands proud. Emily smiles back.

POPS

Is that two smiles in twenty  
minutes?

EMILY

Guess I should go talk to him.

POPS

Please!

Pop beams as he flicks on the Christmas lights on his hat.

51 INT. FAMILY HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

51

William shuffles into the kitchen. He has on a few sweaters.  
Irene is sitting in front of the oven, watching the bread she  
kneaded bake.

He regards her from the doorway.

WILLIAM

Watching paint dry?

IRENE

Thinking.

WILLIAM

I thought I smelled smoke.

IRENE

William, it's Christmas Eve, our  
family is in disarray, and we are  
in a house with our daughter's  
family, who we have completely  
dismissed.

WILLIAM

I must admit, they have been  
hospitable even though we have been  
a bit... Moody.

IRENE

We have been unreasonable.

WILLIAM

What's brought this sudden change on?

IRENE

Daryl's mother mentioned that I don't really know her. I have assumed her to be a certain way.

WILLIAM

So?

IRENE

I assumed her to be like me in a way, but I would have tossed them out in the snow if they spoke to me in such a way.

WILLIAM

I thought they would have tossed us if we weren't snowed in. Her father-in-law has been quite amenable.

IRENE

That's just it, William. They are sharing their food with us when their mother and grandmother lay sick.

Irene stares at the oven.

IRENE

This bread, without certain ingredients, would fail to rise. If we don't give Emily what she needs, she'll-

WILLIAM

Become stale bread?

IRENE

No, she'll never become everything she could be.

WILLIAM

Darling, she's an adult.

IRENE

Which is why we shouldn't wait any longer.

She turns back to the oven, watching.

52

INT. FAMILY HOUSE - DARYL AND EMILY'S ROOM - NIGHT

52

Mama sits with Daryl in their room.

MAMA

Son, I-

DARYL

I know.

Mama's eyes well.

MAMA

It's hard to let go.

DARYL

I'll always be your son.

MAMA

I just planned out life for you and  
it hasn't happened the way I  
thought it would.

DARYL

Maybe someone greater has bigger  
plans for me.

Daryl points heavenward.

MAMA

I'm afraid I messed that up.

DARYL

You're not that powerful.

MAMA

Come again?

DARYL

You're not that powerful. If God  
has a plan for me, you, Dad, Brian,  
Emily, nobody can stop it. I  
believe that.

MAMA

How'd you get so smart?

DARYL

I have an overbearing Mama.

They laugh.

MAMA  
The email and how I've treated  
Emily... Can you forgive me?

DARYL  
I forgive you, but I think you  
should talk to Emily, too.

MAMA  
I will.

She reaches out to hug her son. Daryl and Mama embrace.

Mama fixes his shirt and smooths out his hair.

DARYL  
Mama!

MAMA  
I'm sorry.

DARYL  
Where's Pops?

MAMA  
He's with Brian and Grandma.

DARYL  
You think she'll be okay?

MAMA  
Pops said she's real cold. She  
won't eat. She won't come to the  
kitchen where it's warmer. She's  
being stubborn.

DARYL  
Runs in the family.

MAMA  
Still have no phone signal, but I'm  
hoping that tomorrow-

DARYL  
Have faith, Mama.

He puts his hand on hers.

DARYL  
I think I should go find Emily.

MAMA  
Take this.

She hands him mistletoe.

DARYL  
Mama, don't be cheesy.

MAMA  
Can I use your bathroom?

DARYL  
Your house!

He smiles as he bundles up and exits the room. Mama walks into the bathroom.

53 INT. FAMILY HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT 53

Mama stands in the doorway of the bathroom. She looks down at the trashcan. She leans in. Her eyes widen as she reaches.

54 INT. FAMILY HOUSE - GRANDMA'S ROOM 54

Grandma, freezing, despite the blankets, lay in bed with Brian and Pops. Pops, sleeping, hold Grandma. Brian tosses and turns, eyes full of uncertainty.

BRIAN  
Dear God. I know I've been focused on beating level thirty-two rather than on you, but I need a solid. I know Grandma's old, but please give her a little more time... Amen.

55 INT. FAMILY HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT 55

Daryl walks throughout the house.

56 INT. FAMILY HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT 56

Irene and William are bundled up, sleeping by the oven in the kitchen. The bread is out, filling the kitchen with the comfortable smell of comfort.

57 INT. FAMILY HOUSE - GRANDMA'S ROOM - NIGHT 57

Daryl turns the corner and peeks in on Grandma, Pops, and Brian. He pulls the blanket up on all three. He exhales, hoping for a miracle.

58 INT. FAMILY HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM 58

Emily lays on the couch, sleeping. Daryl sits down by her. She has a jacket over her, puts his arm around her, and goes to sleep.

Emily, eyes closed, smiles.

59 59

60 INT. FAMILY HOUSE - MORNING 60

Daryl's eyes open. Emily, now facing him, grins. She whispers.

EMILY  
 Couldn't stay away, huh?

DARYL EMILY  
 I apologize. I'm sorry.

EMILY  
 I was upset. I felt like your mom was like larger than life.

DARYL  
 She is.

EMILY  
 Well, bigger than our relationship.

DARYL  
 That's my bad.

EMILY  
 I need to tell you something.

DARYL  
 Me too.

EMILY  
 Let me go first.

DARYL  
 Please, I'll be quick. I choose you. Every day, every Christmas, every opportunity, forever, I choose you. I will always choose you, and I have your back.

EMILY  
I'm pregnant.

Daryl jumps up.

DARYL  
What did you just say?

EMILY  
Merry Christmas!

DARYL  
But I thought-

EMILY  
Me too.

DARYL  
So you actually are-

EMILY  
Yup.

DARYL  
I'm gonna be a-

EMILY  
Yes.

Daryl punches the air, dances on his toes, and dips Emily with a kiss.

Pops, Irene, William, Brian, and Mama all emerge.

POPS  
What's all the noise about?

BRIAN  
Where's Grandma?

Grandma sits in the corner by the window, knitting.

POPS  
You're up!

MAMA  
Mama, you're okay!

GRANDMA  
Darn right, I'm okay.

Brian looks to the sky and smiles.

IRENE

William and I want to offer our  
apologies. We weren't very gracious  
guests. Please forgive us.

Daryl jumps up on the sofa.

DARYL

I love all of you.

BRIAN

Why are you so happy?

Grandma stands.

GRANDMA

Done.

She walks over to Emily and hands her a baby onesie.

MAMA

You knew this whole time?

EMILY

Wait, you knew?

MAMA

I just found out last night.

DARYL

After our talk.

BRIAN

Knew what?

POPS

Are you slow?! Son, you're gonna be  
a-

DARYL

DAD.

BRIAN

I'm gonna be an Unc?!

EMILY

We're pregnant!

Irene, mouth agape, hugs William. Brian and Pops exchange  
high fives with Daryl.

Mama, walks over to Emily and holds her face.

MAMA

I want to apologize. You are a miracle in my son's life, and I am so grateful for you.

She motions Pops to come over.

MAMA

We are grateful for you.

EMILY

Thanks, Mama.

They hug.

GRANDMA

Excuse me, excuse me. Can we just talk about the fact that I'm alive? I was at the bus stop, destination heaven, and Jesus was drivin'. He told me, not yet, young lady. So I just came on back.

BRIAN

So you were dead?

GRANDMA

Dreamin. But at my age, it's the same thing.

Everyone LAUGHS.

The power CLICKS back on.

CHEERS.

EMILY

You're my favorite.

DARYL

You're my only.

They kiss.

WILLIAM

I hear there is exquisite bread.

POPS

And soup!

EMILY

You know your dad is quite the electrician.

DARYL  
Did he wear the Christmas light  
hat?

EMILY  
Oh ya.

Daryl holds the onesie to Emily's belly.

DARYL  
A European baby!

EMILY  
Well, maybe we should keep this  
baby close to family.

DARYL  
What do you mean?

EMILY  
I love my job, but family is more  
important. Besides, I hear you  
accepted a job In Atlanta.

She smiles. He smiles back.

Mama serves bread. Irene serves soup. Pops turns on  
Christmas music. Daryl and Emily start to dance to the tune  
of "I'll Be Home for Christmas" as we-

FADE OUT.