

# Babylon and the Bride

The Original Stageplay



Cleveland O. McLeish

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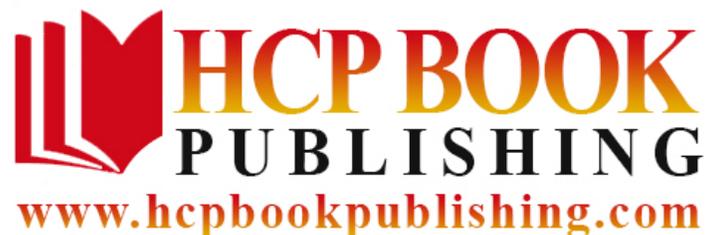
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## Characters

Pastor Johnson

Male

Male Voice

Walter

Male

Sherrie

Female

Malcolm

Teenage Boy

Rasheda

Teenage Girl

Stephanie

Female

Nicole

Teenage Girl

Shawn

Male

Monica

Female

## Setting

One general setting is used: Living/Dining room with exits leading out to the kitchen, upstairs and bedrooms.

## The Story

Babylon and the Bride is a contemporary real-life story that refers to:

- Everyday choices as well as steps during critical moments;
- Challenges that make a person stronger;
- Family values;
- The relationship between husband and wife, parents and children;
- True Christian principals.

Shawn and Monica have been happy in their marriage for over 15 years. They have a teenage daughter, friends, nice house and good jobs. Everything is seemingly fine, just routine family issues. Christmas is coming, and they are planning to celebrate it in the right way, fully appreciating its true meaning, because they are Christians.

Suddenly the unexpected happens – Shawn’s ex-girlfriend Stephanie comes to see him. She tells him that she is losing her house and has no place to stay. Of course, it is right to help her. Moreover, it is the Christians’ duty to his neighbor. Shawn decides to let Stephanie stay with his family until she finds somewhere to live.

From this point on the family stability is going to be brought to the test as Stephanie is Babylon. This young woman invades the couple’s private life. She is going to explore if Shawn has a happy marriage life and try to steal him from Monica. In turn, Monica must find out if there is true Christian love, and if she can help Stephanie and trust Shawn inside her heart.

Fortunately, there are friends who can help – Monica’s friend Sherrie and Shawn’s friend Walter give support and advice all through the tight situations. Also, the family is strongly supported by Pastor Johnson.

The great storyline will not leave anyone untouched – kindness, lust, forgiveness, grace, patience, friendship will engage the audience from start to finish as they become engrossed in the story. **“Babylon And the Bride”** encourages, blesses and helps one appreciate the good things in life, things one may not even pay attention to, however, they build up a happy and meaningful life.

## Play Details

**Length:** 70-90 Minutes

**Cast:** 4 Males, 5 Females

**Audience:** Teens & Adults

**Genre:** Contemporary Play Script | Comedy Drama

# THE SCRIPT



## Scene 1

### LIGHTS UP

*Monica (late 30's), Shawn (early 40's) and Nicole (Mid teens) gather at CS, sitting on the couch and holding hands. Their eyes are closed as Shawn prays.*

*Monica is overly conservative. She wears tall, loose clothing, no make-up and her hair is unkept.*

**SHAWN:** Father, thank you for another vacation. We have lived to see yet another year, another opportunity to celebrate the birth of your Son. We thank for our jobs that affords us so many days off from those vile and evil ---

**MONICA:** Honey ---

**SHAWN:** --- lovely, angelic children we are privileged to teach. We ask only that throughout this season and in the midst of society's over-commercializing this holiday, that you teach us what it means to celebrate Christmas, in Jesus name.

**MONICA & NICOLE:** Amen.

*They release hands. Nicole jumps to her feet.*

**NICOLE:** Good prayer Dad. Awesome family moment. I will see you guys later.

**SHAWN:** Where do you think you're going?

**NICOLE:** Out.

**SHAWN:** We're having a family meeting.

**NICOLE:** Can't you do it without me? Rasheda & Malcolm are waiting for me at the mall.

**SHAWN:** They can wait a little more.

**NICOLE:** I'm sixteen. What can I contribute to this meeting?

**SHAWN:** Sit.

*Nicole reluctantly sits and begin texting on her iPhone.*

**SHAWN:** We have six days to Christmas, and we haven't done anything in a while as a family. So I thought maybe we could paint the house together.

**NICOLE:** Or pay somebody to do it.

**SHAWN:** Or we could do it together and save some money.

**NICOLE:** Or not.

**MONICA:** I think it's a good idea ---

**SHAWN:** Exactly.

**MONICA:** --- to get somebody to do it.

**SHAWN:** What?

**MONICA:** I've had a rough year. I need to sleep. Painting would not be very compatible with my plans for this holiday.

**SHAWN:** Okay, so maybe that's too much. How about we do a little spring cleaning?

**NICOLE:** In the Winter? Dad, seriously.

**SHAWN:** It's just a term used for excessive cleaning.

**MONICA:** We could pay somebody to do that too.

**NICOLE:** I love my Mom. She thinks just like me. (*gets up*) I think you guys need some time alone, so I'm just gonna go.

**SHAWN:** Stay where you are Nicole.

**NICOLE:** But Dad ---

**SHAWN:** Can't you guys see what I'm trying to do? We need to work on a project together as a family. This is the best time to do it. Once school starts again, we won't be able to do what we can do now.

**MONICA:** I need to get some sleep.

**NICOLE:** I need to go.

**SHAWN:** I think we need to work on a project together. So what's it gonna be?

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*Nicole's phone begins to ring. She answers it.*

**NICOLE:** Hi Malcolm.

**SHAWN:** Did she answer the phone in the middle of our meeting?

**MONICA:** Give her some space Shawn. She's a teenager.

*Nicole is listening to the voice on the other end and giggling like a school girl.*

**NICOLE:** We were having a family meeting, but it's over now. So I'll be right there.

*Nicole hangs up and heads for the door.*

**SHAWN:** The meeting is not over.

**NICOLE:** Dad, you always told me not to keep people waiting. Just fill me in on what I missed later.

*Nicole leaves.*

*Shawn sighs.*

**MONICA:** Can you take me to the store? I need to get a few things.

**SHAWN:** You guys are killing me.

**MONICA:** Is that a yes or no?

*Pause.*

**SHAWN:** We need to talk, Mum.

**MONICA:** I could always drive myself.

**SHAWN:** I would prefer that, but I need to talk to you about something.

**MONICA:** I hope it's about getting another car.

**SHAWN:** We can barely afford one car.

**MONICA:** Yes, but sometimes one of us has to take the bus. Most times it's me. We need another car.

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**SHAWN:** I'm trying to tell you something.

**MONICA:** Can it wait?

**SHAWN:** Maybe not.

**MONICA:** Okay. What is it?

*Pause.*

**SHAWN:** Please promise me you won't over-react.

**MONICA:** What is it, Shawn?

**SHAWN:** I saw Stephanie the other day. She came by the school, and we had a talk.

**MONICA:** Wait. Slow down. You're going too fast. When you say the other day, do you mean like you should have told me this days ago but waited till now?

**SHAWN:** Something like that.

**MONICA:** When you say she came by the school, do you mean she came by to see you?

**SHAWN:** Something like that.

**MONICA:** And you talked. Like, hello, how you doing kind of thing?

**SHAWN:** More like, can I take you to lunch kind of talk.

**MONICA:** You allowed your ex-girlfriend to take you to lunch?

**SHAWN:** Not exactly. It was lunch period, and she was there, while I had my lunch.

**MONICA:** Why are you telling me this now?

**SHAWN:** I was waiting for the right time.

*Pause.*

**MONICA:** Okay.

**SHAWN:** So you're good with that?

**MONICA:** *(lying)* Yeah.

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**SHAWN:** Great. Because she needs our help.

**MONICA:** Is she dying?

*There's a knock at the door. Shawn looks at his watch.*

**SHAWN:** I should have talked to you before now.

**MONICA:** Who's at the door, Shawn?

*Stephanie (Early 30's) lets herself in. She is wearing a tight-fitting dress with a split running a few inches from her knees up that appears higher than it actually is as she pulls in two large suitcases.*

*She closes the door and straightens herself.*

**STEPHANIE:** Hi Shawn. Monique.

**MONICA:** It's Monica.

**STEPHANIE:** Right. This is a very nice house. Where's my room?

**MONICA:** What?

**STEPHANIE:** Oh, I guess I'm a little early. Sorry Shawn.

*Monica folds her arms and stares at Shawn. He smiles embarrassingly and scratches his head.*

**LIGHTS FADE**

## Scene 2

### LIGHTS UP

*Nicole and Malcolm sit on the couch. Nicole has a little ghetto in her. Malcolm is a bit reserved.*

**NICOLE:** Are you just going to sit there staring at me?

**MALCOLM:** I've never met a girl like you.

**NICOLE:** You're just saying what I want to hear.

**MALCOLM:** Is it working?

**NICOLE:** Yes.

*Malcolm comes a little closer. Nicole blushes. They are coming in for a kiss.*

*Rasheda comes up from behind the couch holding up an earring.*

**RASHEDA:** Found it!

*Nicole pulls away from Malcolm. She looks a little embarrassed.*

**RASHEDA:** You guys were about to kiss?

**NICOLE:** We came really close.

*Rasheda drops her earrings.*

**RASHEDA:** Oops. I think I lost my earring again.

*She disappears behind the couch. Malcolm smiles. He comes close to Nicole again. They are about to kiss.*

*Shawn enters in his pajamas. He is holding a pillow and a blanket.*

**SHAWN:** You guys know what time it is right?

*Nicole pulls away again embarrassed.*

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**SHAWN:** (*eyes narrow*) If I didn't know better, I would think you guys were about to kiss?

**NICOLE:** Eww, Dad, don't be silly. You know we're just friends.

**SHAWN:** I did say if I didn't know better.

**NICOLE:** Anyway, Dad.

**SHAWN:** Malcolm, you should go home. You too Rasheda.

*Rasheda reappears from behind the couch.*

**RASHEDA:** How'd you know I was here saar?

**SHAWN:** You three are like peas in a pod.

*Shawn pulls Nicole and Malcolm out of the couch and puts down his pillow and sheet.*

**SHAWN:** Now I'm going to need this couch tonight, so you two. Go home.

**RASHEDA:** Why are you sleeping on the couch saar?

**SHAWN:** Only people who live here are privy to ask me such questions.

*Shawn forcibly grabs Rasheda and Malcolm and shoves them through the exit closing the door.*

**NICOLE:** Dad, I don't mean to pry, but considering that I still live here...I thought maybe I should ask. Who is that lady in the guest room?

**SHAWN:** A friend.

**NICOLE:** Is she the reason why you're sleeping on the couch tonight?

**SHAWN:** No, I'm sleeping on the couch tonight because your mother locked me out of the bedroom.

**NICOLE:** Is the lady in the guest room the reason why mom locked you out of the bedroom?

*Shawn sighs.*

**SHAWN:** Yeah.

**NICOLE:** Smart dad.

**SHAWN:** She lost her home and had nowhere else to go. I am just doing my Christian duty and helping a friend. Is that really so bad?

**NICOLE:** Depends on how close of a friend she is to you.

**SHAWN:** We used to date before I met your mother.

**NICOLE:** Dumb dad. Why would you do that?

**SHAWN:** My intentions are pure. I don't see this as a problem unless your mother doesn't trust me.

**NICOLE:** So this is a test.

**SHAWN:** No.

**NICOLE:** Is everything okay between you and Mom?

**SHAWN:** Yes, we are happy.

**NICOLE:** I have several friends at school whose happy parents are now divorced.

**SHAWN:** We're supposed to be our brother's keeper. How was I supposed to just leave her out on the streets?

*Nicole gets up to leave.*

**NICOLE:** Dad, this is way above my weekly allowance grade and intellectual maturity so if you don't mind, I would rather not get involved.

*Nicole exits.*

*She quickly returns.*

**NICOLE:** Unless you want to increase my weekly allowance.

**SHAWN:** Go to bed.

**NICOLE:** I will take that as a no. Goodnight, dad.

*Nicole exits.*

*Shawn positions himself on the couch, placing the pillow, lying down and pulling the blanket over himself.*

**LIGHTS FADE**

### Scene 3

#### LIGHTS UP

*Walter (Mid 40's) is seated opposite a sleeping Shawn eating some ice cream and a piece of chicken.*

*Shawn wakes up and is startled by Walter sitting close by.*

**WALTER:** Amma gonna go out on a limb here and suggest that you either stop messing with your wife, or you buy a proper couch that is conducive for sleeping.

**SHAWN:** This is my first time sleeping on the couch.

**WALTER:** Ai, you're right. That was an epiphany of my own life. Okay. Why are you sleeping on the couch?

**SHAWN:** Have you been in my fridge?

**WALTER:** Duh. Nothing much there though. Just this piece of chicken and a spoon of ice cream.

**SHAWN:** That chicken has been in the fridge for over two weeks now.

*Walter spits out the chicken. Puts it aside with the ice cream.*

**WALTER:** Man, you should put a label on these things.

**SHAWN:** You don't live here, Walter. Before I see you, I should hear a series of knocks at the door first.

**WALTER:** I thought we have an open door friendship.

**SHAWN:** Not literally.

**WALTER:** Why are you sleeping on the couch, bro?

**SHAWN:** My wife accidentally locked me out of the bedroom.

**WALTER:** Where is she?

**SHAWN:** I think she is still in bed.

**WALTER:** Which bed?

**SHAWN:** The bed in the bedroom.

**WALTER:** So she accidentally locked you out of the bedroom, while she is still in the bedroom?

**SHAWN:** Something like that.

*Pause.*

**WALTER:** Did you forget to take out the garbage?

**SHAWN:** No.

**WALTER:** Forgot a birthday or anniversary?

**SHAWN:** Nope.

**WALTER:** Forgot to call her during your lunch break?

**SHAWN:** Stop wasting your time...

**WALTER:** Went on a date with one of your exes?

*Pause.*

**WALTER:** Really. That's really it?

**SHAWN:** How on earth would you guess that?

**WALTER:** My life again. Thinking of all the things that landed me on the couch. Who was it? Paula. Kay? Jasmine?

**SHAWN:** Stephanie.

**WALTER:** Hot mama.

**SHAWN:** That's just half the story.

**WALTER:** What's the other half?

*Stephanie enters wearing yet another tight fitting dress. She is searching through her handbag.*

**WALTER:** I'm fully mesmerized and utterly confused right now. Unless I'm dreaming, your ex-girlfriend is in your house man.

**STEPHANIE:** Shawn, can you take me to the store. I need to get a few things.

**SHAWN:** Sure. Just give me a minute to get ready.

**WALTER:** How you gonna do that? You remember your bedroom situation. Your clothes are also in the bedroom.

*Shawn is visibly upset.*

**WALTER:** No worries. I will take this beautiful damsel to the store. Maybe even get to know her a little better.

**STEPHANIE:** I'm not going anywhere with you, perv.

**WALTER:** I think she remembers me.

**SHAWN:** He has to take you Stef. I can't go to the store like this.

**STEPHANIE:** Did you sleep on the couch?

**SHAWN:** What kind of question is that? Why would I sleep on the couch when I have a queen sized ---

**WALTER:** He slept on the couch.

**SHAWN:** Yes, I did.

**STEPHANIE:** And you're the man of this house?

**SHAWN:** Are you questioning my authority?

**STEPHANIE:** Should I?

**SHAWN:** You're here aren't you. That was my decision.

**WALTER:** As much as I'm enjoying this back and forth between you guys...I would rather be on our way to the store. I need to get me some breakfast.

*Stephanie whispers in Shawn's ear.*

**STEPHANIE:** Is he safe to be around?

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**SHAWN:** *(obviously affected by her whisper)* Yes --- he is.

**STEPHANIE:** Okay. I will go with him, just because I trust you.

*Stephanie leaves with Walter. Shawn beats himself up.*

*Monica enters. She goes to the fridge and gets some juice. She is about to leave. Shawn blocks her path.*

**SHAWN:** Let's talk about this, Mum.

*Monica tries to get around him. He blocks her every attempt. Eventually, the juice is spilled on him. They are both frustrated.*

*Shawn sits Monica down.*

**SHAWN:** Talk about it.

**MONICA:** Fine. You have no respect for me.

**SHAWN:** You know that's not true.

**MONICA:** Can you imagine what the neighbors are thinking?

**SHAWN:** They should mind their own business.

**MONICA:** Imagine what our Church family will think.

**SHAWN:** You're too concerned with what people think.

**MONICA:** Shawn, you don't move an ex-girlfriend into your matrimonial home.

*Pause.*

**MONICA:** We've been married for fifteen years. It hasn't always been great, but we were happy, and you come and give me this to deal with.

**SHAWN:** You don't trust me?

**MONICA:** This is not about trust. This is about principle.

**SHAWN:** She needed help. I want to believe that our priority as Christians is to show concern for those who are not saved. How else will they know God's love?

**MONICA:** So you think you can make a convert out of your ex-girlfriend? Show her some love, and she will come to Church?

**SHAWN:** I see this as an opportunity to try. Have I ever given you a reason not to trust me?

**MONICA:** Not before yesterday.

**SHAWN:** So, because we had a thing in the past, I should have just left her on the streets?

**MONICA:** I'm sure she had options.

**SHAWN:** Can you look beyond your own fears and jealousy to see that my only motivation for doing this, is the fact that it is what I think Christ would do?

**MONICA:** How would you feel if I started moving in my exes?

**SHAWN:** You're missing the point.

**MONICA:** I was looking forward to this holiday Shawn. I can always depend on you to make a mess of a good thing.

*Monica leaves.*

**LIGHTS FADE**

## Scene 4

### LIGHTS UP

*Shawn is sitting up on the couch, unable to sleep and deep in thought.*

**VOICE:** See I know these two women; Babylon and the Bride. And the Bride is in my heart; Babylon's in my eyes. One wants me to lay with her; the other keeps me in line. One hates she can't have me; the others already mine.

*Stephanie comes on. She is wearing a nightgown that light can slightly pass through. She sits beside Shawn.*

**STEPHANIE:** Did you sleep?

**SHAWN:** No.

**STEPHANIE:** You must be so tired.

**SHAWN:** From lack of sleep?

**STEPHANIE:** From running through my mind all night.

*Pause.*

**SHAWN:** If I didn't know better, I would think you're coming on to me.

**STEPHANIE:** I missed you, Shawn. A whole lot more than I thought I did. When I saw you the other day, I realized that nothing has changed.

**SHAWN:** I have changed. I'm married.

**STEPHANIE:** I was talking about me. I still love you.

*Pause.*

*Shawn gets up from the couch and puts some distance between him and Stephanie.*

**SHAWN:** I think you should go back to your room...and bolt the door.

**STEPHANIE:** Why?

**SHAWN:** Let's just say, my wife hasn't yet warmed up to the idea of you staying here. If she sees us like this, it's going to get worst.

**STEPHANIE:** She's not here. I checked. Your daughter too. She's out with her boyfriend.

**SHAWN:** Nicky doesn't have a boyfriend.

**STEPHANIE:** You're still as naive as ever. Still highly attracted to me too.

**SHAWN:** Why would you think I'm attracted to you?

**STEPHANIE:** You offered to help me.

*Stephanie tries to get close to him, but he keeps slipping away from her.*

**STEPHANIE:** I know you feel the same way Shawn and whatever happens between us can be our little secret.

**SHAWN:** Nothing is going to happen between us.

*Pause.*

**STEPHANIE:** So you've totally gotten over me?

**SHAWN:** *(lying)* Yeah. Pretty much.

**STEPHANIE:** So why did you agree to help me then?

**SHAWN:** It was the Christian thing to do. How could I be able to tell you about God's unconditional love, if I left you out there on the street?

*Pause.*

**STEPHANIE:** No man has ever loved me like you, Shawn. I don't need God's love when I can have yours.

**SHAWN:** There is no separating them, and my heart belongs to somebody else.

**STEPHANIE:** For now.

**SHAWN:** What!

**STEPHANIE:** Well, for what's it worth, I appreciate what you did. And I can see now that you think you love your wife. She's a lucky girl to have such a man.

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*Pause.*

**SHAWN:** So this was a test?

**STEPHANIE:** I think I'm just bored. What is there to do around here?

**SHAWN:** I was thinking of doing some painting.

**STEPHANIE:** Now that sounds like fun. I haven't done anything like that in a while. When do we start?

**SHAWN:** I haven't bought the paint yet.

**STEPHANIE:** Can I drive?

*Shawn considers, then tosses Stephanie the keys.*

**SHAWN:** Get dressed, then go warm up the car. I'll get my coat.

**VOICE:** See I know these two women; Babylon and the Bride. And the Bride is in my heart; Babylon's in my eyes. One wants me to lay with her; the other keeps me in line. One hates she can't have me; the others already mine.

*Shawn exits visibly disturbed.*

**LIGHTS FADE**

## Scene 5

### LIGHTS UP

*Monica is pacing back and forth. Sherrie comes from the kitchen with two glasses of juice.*

**SHERRIE:** Here.

**MONICA:** Not hungry.

**SHERRIE:** This is juice. Not food. Drink it.

**MONICA:** I don't want anything to drink.

*Sherries put her glass down and force Monica to drink the juice. It spills all over her clothes.*

**MONICA:** Are you crazy?

**SHERRIE:** I'm not the one walking down the carpet.

**MONICA:** Shawn is not here.

**SHERRIE:** Okay. That sounds normal.

**MONICA:** She's not here either.

**SHERRIE:** You want me to get your sneakers?

*Monica drops on the couch.*

**MONICA:** I thought If I locked him out of the room and cut off his supply of...you know ---

**SHERRIE:** No, I don't know. Don't talk to me in codes, girl.

**MONICA:** Sex Sherrie. God, you will never change. I thought if I locked shop he would somehow see the light.

**SHERRIE:** I don't think that works girl. Usually, it just makes them see other lights.

**MONICA:** You're not helping.

**SHERRIE:** And you're over-reacting.

*Stephanie and Shawn enter carrying four cans of paint. They are laughing as they enter, but stop when they see Monica and Sherrie.*

**SHAWN:** Hey.

**MONICA:** Where were you, Shawn?

**SHAWN:** Stephanie offered to help me paint, so we went to the store to get some materials.

*Sherrie eyes Stephanie from head to toe.*

**STEPHANIE:** What is she looking at?

**SHERRIE:** Just thinking that somebody needs to take out the trash.

*Stephanie is about to retaliate. Shawn steps between them.*

**SHAWN:** Enough. I don't need any drama in my house. Stef, let's take this stuff around back. We can begin from there.

*Stephanie and Shawn exits.*

**MONICA:** He called her 'Stef.'

**SHERRIE:** This is more serious than I thought. Nicknames are a bad sign. It's the first step on the cheating ladder.

**MONICA:** How would you handle this?

**SHERRIE:** I would probably go to jail for a double homicide.

**MONICA:** I don't know what to do, Sherrie.

**SHERRIE:** I know what you're not going to do. Shawn is a good man. Maybe the last of his kind. You're not just going to sit here and let a chica take him from right under your nose.

**MONICA:** Seriously Sherrie, after fifteen years I'm supposed to be fighting for a man like a teenager.

**SHERRIE:** This is not a man. This is your husband. I expect you to fight for him if you think he's worth fighting for.

**MONICA:** How?

**SHERRIE:** For one, a lot about you has to change.

**MONICA:** What do you mean?

**SHERRIE:** The competition is stiff. You saw the curves on that woman, and she ain't hiding it. She swinging it all up in his face. You can't compete against that dressing like a granny.

**MONICA:** What's wrong with how I dress?

**SHERRIE:** (*touches Monica's hair*) When is the last time you went to a hairdresser?

**MONICA:** Uhm --- about eight months.

**SHERRIE:** What! This is worse than I thought.

**MONICA:** I think my hair looks fine.

**SHERRIE:** If you were a shitzu.

**MONICA:** Hairdressers are too expensive.

**SHERRIE:** Girl, you let yourself go over these past few years. No wonder your man calls you Mum. I remember the days when you were pursuing that man. You bumped all competitions off the chart. You never put a price on it then. What happened?

**MONICA:** Motherhood.

**SHERRIE:** You were a wife before you were a mother.

**MONICA:** What are you suggesting?

**SHERRIE:** Grab your bag and let's go.

*Monica grabs her bag.*

**SHERRIE:** Make sure your credit cards are in there.

*Monica pushes Sherrie playfully.*

**MONICA:** You think it's a good idea to leave them alone here?

**SHERRIE:** You have to let that man know that two can play this game. Make him think you're okay with all this, but several layers beneath all that, you will be sending a clear message to all man-stealing chicas that this territory belongs to you.

*They high five.*

**SHERRIE:** Let's walk through the back so they can see us go.

**MONICA:** Yeah, we would need to borrow the car anyway.

*They exit.*

*A beat.*

*There's a knock at the door.*

*Shawn comes out covered in paint and holding a paintbrush. He answers the door.  
Pastor Johnson steps in.*

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** Well, praise the Lord brother.

**SHAWN:** Hey Bishop. This might not be a good ---

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** Where's your lovely wife?

*Stephanie comes out covered in paint.*

**STEPHANIE:** Shawn, I thought we were gonna do this... *(sees the Bishop)*  
Oh hello.

*Uncomfortable pause.*

**SHAWN:** This is not what it looks like.

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** Your wife is here, right?

**SHAWN:** No, she just left.

*Uncomfortable pause.*

**SHAWN:** Stephanie is a friend of mine. She needed some help, so we decided to let her stay here for a while.

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** Okay. I assume by the use of the term we that Monica agrees?

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**SHAWN:** She's...yeah, you know.

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** No, I don't know.

**STEPHANIE:** Shawn, I'll be around back. Don't take too long.

*Stephanie exits.*

**SHAWN:** With all due respect sir Pastor, why is this any of your business?

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** I've seen this many times before Brother Shawn. I know where it goes.

**SHAWN:** I'm happy you stop by sir Pastor, but as you can see, we're doing a little painting, so maybe you could come by again later.

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** You may think you're painting, but what you're doing is cheating on your wife.

**SHAWN:** How is this cheating?

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** Painting sounds like fun. Maybe I'll join you. *(begins to take off his jacket)*

**SHAWN:** You don't need to do that. I know how busy you are. So many other members to go and see.

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** Oh, I insist.

**SHAWN:** Fine. Just do me a favor, and leave all your charisma and sermons for Church.

*Shawn and Pastor exits.*

*A beat.*

*Nicole and Malcolm enter, followed by Rasheda.*

*Malcolm and Rasheda sit. Nicole goes to the kitchen and looks around.*

**NICOLE:** Looks like nobody's home.

**RASHEDA:** Time to party. *(pulls out a bottle of Bacardi)*

*Shawn comes back. Rasheda quickly hides the bottle.*

**SHAWN:** Oh, you guys are here.

**RASHEDA:** Party's over.

**SHAWN:** What is that you have there Rasheda?

**RASHEDA:** Nothing saar.

*Shawn tries to take the bottle from her. She passes it to Malcolm, who passes it to Nicole, who passes it back to Rasheda. Shawn eventually gets a hold of it.*

**SHAWN:** Is this liquor?

**RASHEDA:** No saar. It's water.

**SHAWN:** This is a Bacardi bottle.

**RASHEDA:** That is filled with water.

*Shawn opens the bottle and smells. The scent knocks his head backward.*

**SHAWN:** This is not water. Have you guys been drinking?

**RASHEDA:** No saar. If we were drinking, the bottle would be empty.

**SHAWN:** You were about to drink it.

**NICOLE:** Dad, don't be silly. Mom asked me to get it for the cake.

**SHAWN:** I thought you said it was water.

**NICOLE:** No, it's for the cake.

**SHAWN:** What cake?

**NICOLE:** Mom is baking Christmas cake for our family dinner.

*Pause.*

**SHAWN:** Your mother has not baked a cake in five years.

**NICOLE:** I guess things are changing around here.

**SHAWN:** Malcolm. Is there something you want to tell me about this?

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**MALCOLM:** No sir. I thought it was water.

*Pause.*

**SHAWN:** We'll deal with this later. Can you guys go get the Christmas tree from the attic and put it here. Also, the boxes of decorations.

**NICOLE:** We were about to leave.

**SHAWN:** You just got here.

**NICOLE:** We just wanted to drop off the rum for Mom.

**SHAWN:** (*firmly*) Go get the tree.

**NICOLE:** What's the big deal anyway? We haven't used that tree in years.

**SHAWN:** That's because nobody wanted to help me decorate it.

**NICOLE:** I don't think that has changed.

**SHAWN:** Stephanie is going to help me, so please just do that for me before you leave.

*Shawn exits.*

**RASHEDA:** Who is Stephanie?

**NICOLE:** She's the mystery lady staying in the guest room. One of Dad's exes.

**MALCOLM:** Awesome.

**RASHEDA:** Guys can be so stupid. My dad went on a date with one of his exes once. Made the mistake of telling mom.

**NICOLE:** How did that work out?

**RASHEDA:** He had to wear shades for three weeks. Half his face was black and blue. I think Mom hit him with a pressure cooker. He told people he walked into a door.

**NICOLE:** Oh my God.

**MALCOLM:** I think it's cool the ex can stay here with the pops and his wife.

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**NICOLE:** Yeah, if you plan to pull a stunt like that on me. Don't just buy yourself shades. Buy a hijab to cover your whole face. Anyway, this house is too tense. Let's just bring up the tree and go.

**RASHEDA:** What do we do with the rum?

**NICOLE:** Stick to the original plan.

**RASHEDA:** That's what I'm talking about.

*They exit with the bottle.*

**LIGHTS FADE**

## Scene 6

### LIGHTS UP

*Shawn and Stephanie are busy decorating the Christmas Tree while Christmas songs play in the background - Drifters' "White Christmas."*

**STEPHANIE:** I totally love that song.

**SHAWN:** Me too.

*They sing a line together. Shawn catches himself and refocuses on the tree.*

**STEPHANIE:** I haven't had so much fun in years.

**SHAWN:** Me too.

*They look at each other. Shawn catches himself again.*

**STEPHANIE:** Your wife has been gone a long time. Maybe she's not coming back.

**SHAWN:** You would love that, wouldn't you?

**STEPHANIE:** Should I answer you honestly or lie.

**SHAWN:** Lie.

**STEPHANIE:** I am anxious to see her walk through that door.

**SHAWN:** She will. Any minute now. We should probably change the music.

**STEPHANIE:** It's Christmas. What's wrong with the music? Anyway, I was thinking we could go see a movie later. There is this great movie play ---

**SHAWN:** Aww, slow down girl. You're my guest, not my girlfriend.

**STEPHANIE:** I used to be your girlfriend. We had fun back in the day. When is the last time you had any fun?

**SHAWN:** Everyday ---

*Pause.*

**SHAWN:** --- back in the day.

**STEPHANIE:** Exactly. You need me, Shawn, as much as I need you.

**SHAWN:** Why are you here, Stef?

**STEPHANIE:** What do you mean?

**SHAWN:** I agreed for you to come here because I thought you needed help. But you have been coming on to me since you walked through that door.

**STEPHANIE:** I miss you, that's all. You have always valued honesty. Would you rather I pretend as if I don't feel anything?

**SHAWN:** I'm not interested in hurting my wife.

**STEPHANIE:** Okay. You keep telling yourself that.

*Stephanie turns her back to Shawn and bends over to pick up a few things out of the box. His mind goes crazy --- he stares as he puts up a piece of decoration missing the tree by inches.*

*Stephanie turns to see him staring. She smiles and points to the tree.*

**STEPHANIE:** You should probably focus on the tree.

*Shawn bites his lips.*

**SHAWN:** Maybe we could go see a movie. I don't see any harm in that.

*Stephanie touches his chest.*

**STEPHANIE:** What changed your mind?

*Monica enters. She is significantly different. Her hair is done and pinned up with just a few strands hanging down. She is wearing enough makeup to look like a movie star, and she is wearing a dress that is short, low cut and tightly fitted to her body. This is a Monica we see for the first time.*

*Shawn sees her and everything he was holding in his hand falls.*

*Stephanie sees her and frowns.*

**MONICA:** How about you step away from my husband, Chica!

**SHAWN:** *(Disbelief)* Monica?

*Monica strides towards him in her high heels and almost trips over her feet. Stephanie giggles.*

*Shawn catches up to Monica.*

**SHAWN:** You okay?

**MONICA:** Yeah.

**SHAWN:** I love this dress.

**MONICA:** You sure?

**SHAWN:** Yeah. How did you get into this dress?

**MONICA:** That was the easy part. I'm going to need your help getting out of it.

*Monica leads Shawn offstage waving triumphantly at Stephanie. They exit.*

*Stephanie folds her arms and frowns. She looks at the unfinished Christmas tree.*

**LIGHTS FADE**

## Scene 7

### LIGHTS UP

*Walter and Shawn are seated around a table playing cards.*

**WALTER:** I'm gonna go out on a limb here and suggest that we extend our boys night out to include more men.

**SHAWN:** Not tonight. I need to talk to you about something.

**WALTER:** Okay, the last time you said that I went home with a brain tumor.

**SHAWN:** You had a headache.

**WALTER:** It felt like a brain tumor.

**SHAWN:** Well maybe if you stop thinking that when I talk to you I expect you to give me a solution, maybe then you won't leave with a headache.

**WALTER:** What's the point of talking if it doesn't solve anything?

**SHAWN:** How's Jennifer?

**WALTER:** Why are you asking about Jennifer? You already have two ladies.

**SHAWN:** I don't have two ladies, Walter, and I wish you would stop saying that before someone hears you.

**WALTER:** Jennifer is fine.

**SHAWN:** Have you ever cheated on her?

**WALTER:** Before I answer that question, let's be clear about something. You're a Christian. I am not.

**SHAWN:** Okay.

**WALTER:** Unfortunately, Jen is the kind of woman who thinks that in order to get back at me for something I said wrong or did or didn't do she should lock shop. She thinks it will make me see the light.

**SHAWN:** Does it?

**WALTER:** Yeah. I see the lights. All the other lights. She doesn't know that when shop lock at home, the grocery store is open down the road.

**SHAWN:** Well, I don't have that problem with Monica.

**WALTER:** You slept on the couch the other night.

**SHAWN:** I slept on her last night.

**WALTER:** That's a quick turn around. Maybe even a new record.

**SHAWN:** She went out and came back a different woman.

**WALTER:** What do you mean?

**SHAWN:** Make-up, hair, curves.

**WALTER:** Wow.

**SHAWN:** What do you think it means?

**WALTER:** She's fighting for you.

**SHAWN:** Really.

**WALTER:** Yeah.

**SHAWN:** I like it. Maybe this wasn't such a bad idea after all. It is bringing out the best in my wife. Haven't seen that in a while.

**WALTER:** You don't want to see what happens if this brought out the worst, bro.

**SHAWN:** What do you mean?

**WALTER:** Are you planning to cheat on your wife?

**SHAWN:** No.

**WALTER:** Have you thought about it?

**SHAWN:** No.

*Pause.*

**SHAWN:** Yes.

**WALTER:** Have you ever cheated?

**SHAWN:** No.

**WALTER:** In your mind?

**SHAWN:** Yes. Is something wrong with me? I mean, I have a good woman. She's beautiful, sexy, smart ---

**WALTER:** --- miserable, picky, moody.

**SHAWN:** Sometimes.

**WALTER:** Are you one of those guys who will not admit that there is always someone more beautiful than the woman you're with?

**SHAWN:** I think love makes my wife the most beautiful of them all. I should not be having these feelings for someone else.

**WALTER:** Yeah, you're definitely one of those guys.

**SHAWN:** The good outweighs the bad.

**WALTER:** Let me ask you this, do you like chicken?

**SHAWN:** Yeah.

**WALTER:** Has anybody ever really cooked chicken for you, I mean, well marinated in season and cooked within a fraction of perfection?

**SHAWN:** Yeah.

**WALTER:** Would you eat that every day?

*Pause.*

**SHAWN:** You're comparing a woman to chicken?

**WALTER:** They compare us to dogs.

**SHAWN:** Why are we friends? We're two different people.

**WALTER:** That's why. We balance each other out.

**SHAWN:** You're encouraging me to cheat on my wife.

**WALTER:** What you have, my friend is a once in a lifetime opportunity. The woman you love in one room, the woman you lust in another and under the same roof. What you feel is natural. If you fight it, it will just get stronger and eventually you will end up doing something stupid anyway.

**SHAWN:** Or I could ask Stephanie to leave.

**WALTER:** Do you want her to?

*Pause.*

**SHAWN:** I should want her to.

**WALTER:** It's a simple question. Do you want her to leave?

**SHAWN:** Maybe we should talk about something else.

**WALTER:** Like what?

**SHAWN:** I don't know. Improvise.

**WALTER:** How's Nicole?

**SHAWN:** Acting weird.

**WALTER:** Sounds normal. She is a teenager.

**SHAWN:** I think she's drinking.

**WALTER:** Technically, if we don't, we get dehydrated.

**SHAWN:** I'm talking about liquor.

**WALTER:** We drank when we were teenagers. Remember all those wild parties ---

**SHAWN:** I'm trying not to remember.

**WALTER:** Those were good times. The booze, the girl s--- ah man. We just have to assume that teenagers these days are doing the same thing we did back then.

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**SHAWN:** Dear God. We slept with a lot of girls back in our day.

**WALTER:** Yes, we did. Good times.

**SHAWN:** I'm going to lock Nicole in her room and throw away the key.

**WALTER:** Cut the girl some slack. After all that, we didn't turn out so bad.

**SHAWN:** I didn't.

**WALTER:** Don't insult me, man. I might take it personally.

**LIGHTS OUT**

## Scene 8

### LIGHTS UP

*Monica, Shawn & Nicole come in from Church.*

*Nicole sits on the couch on her iPhone and violently chewing on gum.*

**SHAWN:** That was a good service.

**MONICA:** If you minus the pretenders, and that annoying sporadic throaty sound Pastor does between sentences when he is preaching.

**SHAWN:** He does that when he really gets into the message.

**MONICA:** It's annoying.

**SHAWN:** So, are we good?

**MONICA:** I did get a word today....so, I guess things are looking up.

**NICOLE:** Can I not go to church for a while?

**SHAWN:** What? Why would you even ask us that?

**NICOLE:** Church is not fun. It's boring.

**MONICA:** I knew this day would come. Shawn, I have been telling you to make a suggestion in the Business conference for a teen ministry. We can't keep putting the same expectations on them as we do adults.

**SHAWN:** Fine, but until then, we all go to Church and you young lady, will stop walking out with your friends when the message starts.

**NICOLE:** I can't relate to what the Pastor is saying. Today he was talking about young people spending most of their time on Myspace. What is that?

**SHAWN:** So, he's a little behind. He will catch up eventually.

**MONICA:** By then, Nicole will be an adult, and there will be a new generation, new technologies, new social networks ---

**SHAWN:** Alright --- I get it. Still, everybody in this house goes to Church.

**MONICA:** Not everybody.

**SHAWN:** What?

**MONICA:** Nothing.

**NICOLE:** Statistics will show that 99% of teenagers who grow up in a Christian home will stop attending Church at some point or the other.

**SHAWN:** I guess that puts you in the one percent.

*Stephanie comes out wearing an apron and carrying a spoon with some sauce in it.*

**STEPHANIE:** I thought I heard you guys. How was church? You have to taste this.

*Stephanie stuffs the spoon in Shawn's mouth before he can respond.*

**MONICA:** Excuse me!

**STEPHANIE:** You're excused. So what do you think, Shawn?

**SHAWN:** It's good. What is it?

**STEPHANIE:** It's dinner. I cooked, just to show my appreciation for you guys letting me stay here and being a part of this lovely family. Dinner is almost ready.

*Stephanie exits back to the kitchen. Shawn and Monica watch her go.*

**MONICA:** Does she have to walk and swing her hips like that?

*Shawn didn't hear a word.*

**MONICA:** Nicole, please go to your room.

**NICOLE:** And miss this. No way.

**MONICA:** Now!

**NICOLE:** Okay.

*Nicole leaves but remains close by.*

**MONICA:** Shawn, I am not eating from that woman.

**SHAWN:** How bad can it be, Mum?

**MONICA:** Stop calling me mum. I have been sucking in my gut for three whole days. I think I deserve to be called babe.

**SHAWN:** Okay --- babe.

**MONICA:** She is either going to poison me so she can have you, or poison us all and take the house.

**SHAWN:** I think you're taking this too far.

**MONICA:** How much longer must I endure this?

**SHAWN:** Just till after Christmas. She has a sister who will take her in for a while. It's just that, due to the season and all --- there are a lot of people visiting with the sister now.

**MONICA:** Did she tell you that?

**SHAWN:** Stop being so paranoid, Mum --- babe. She's not here trying to take your man away from you.

**MONICA:** I think she's up to something.

**SHAWN:** You think I would throw away fifteen years of marriage. Monica, we're past this. You're a grown adult acting like a jealous teenager.

*Pause.*

**MONICA:** So you trust her enough to eat from her?

**SHAWN:** Yeah. I think so.

**MONICA:** Okay.

**SHAWN:** So we're good?

**MONICA:** *(lying)* Yeah, sure.

**SHAWN:** Let's get out of these church clothes.

*They exit.*

*Nicole returns. She is texting away on her phone.*

*Stephanie comes out with a bowl. She places it on the table. She sees Nicole.*

**STEPHANIE:** Nicky, help me set the table.

**NICOLE:** Do I have to?

**STEPHANIE:** Yes, I want you a little closer to me, so I don't have to shout when I ask you about Malcolm.

*Nicole quickly goes over to the table. They are setting the plates, knives, and forks.*

**STEPHANIE:** How are things with you and your boyfriend?

**NICOLE:** He's not my boyfriend.

**STEPHANIE:** I'm not your father, Nicky.

**NICOLE:** I do like him.

**STEPHANIE:** Have you had sex yet?

**NICOLE:** That's personal.

**STEPHANIE:** How was it?

**NICOLE:** I didn't answer your question.

**STEPHANIE:** Yes you did. I was your age once, kiddo. I know all the gestures, shrugs and lies. I have had my time. Even your mother who pretends to be so perfect has had her time. It's your time now.

**NICOLE:** So you think it's okay to just...do whatever I want to do?

**STEPHANIE:** Suppose there was a tornado heading to your house. What could you do to stop it?

**NICOLE:** Nothing.

**STEPHANIE:** Exactly. Fighting nature is pointless.

**NICOLE:** I like your advice.

**STEPHANIE:** It's coming from my heart, kiddo. You have one life to live. Don't limit yourself. Spread your wings. Be bold. Be wild, but be smart.

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**NICOLE:** You know, you're not so bad. And here I thought you were just a home wrecker.

**STEPHANIE:** Where would you get that idea from?

**NICOLE:** Mom.

**STEPHANIE:** Monique is just insecure and paranoid.

**MONICA'S VOICE:** It's Monica. And I don't appreciate people talking about me behind my back.

*Monica and Shawn are standing behind Stephanie and Nicole.*

**STEPHANIE:** I will bring the rest of the food.

**SHAWN:** I will help.

**STEPHANIE:** Great.

*Stephanie exits. Shawn attempts to leave behind Stephanie, but Monica holds him in place.*

**MONICA:** Not on my watch.

*They sit around the table as Stephanie brings the rest of the food.*

**MONICA:** *(to Nicole)* Why are you always on your phone?

**NICOLE:** I'm a teenager mom. It's part of my DNA.

**MONICA:** I don't want you talking to Stephanie without parental supervision.

**NICOLE:** Are you serious?

**STEPHANIE:** You're talking about me as if I'm not standing right here.

*Pause.*

**MONICA:** I wanted you to hear that.

*Stephanie finishes putting the food on the table. She removes her apron and sits at the available seat.*

**STEPHANIE:** Okay, let's eat. Who wants to say grace?

**MONICA:** Let's pray.

*They bow their heads in prayer.*

**MONICA:** God bless this food, I mean, really bless it, God. You said as Christians we would step on snakes and scorpions and they will not harm us. We would drink and eat poison ---

**SHAWN:** Baby...

**MONICA:** ...Amen.

*They help themselves to the food. After sharing out a portion in their plates, no one is willing to take the first bite.*

**STEPHANIE:** I guess this is where we feed our faces, as opposed to just look at the food in our plates.

**MONICA:** By all means, you go first.

**STEPHANIE:** You really do think I'm trying to poison you?

**MONICA:** Are you?

**STEPHANIE:** Don't insult my intelligence, Monique.

**MONICA:** It's Monica. Is something wrong with your brain? Why can't you register a name as simple as Monica, when I've corrected you so many times?

**STEPHANIE:** It would take some effort I'm not really inclined to give.

**SHAWN:** Ladies. Please.

**STEPHANIE:** You trust me, don't you Shawn?

**SHAWN:** I have no reason to think you would try to kill us.

**STEPHANIE:** Well, prove it.

*Pause. Uncomfortable stand off, still no one attempts to be the first to eat.*

*Walter enters.*

**WALTER:** Hey, you'll. Man, something smells good in here.

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*Walter pulls up a chair, grabs a plate and helps himself to some of the food.*

**MONICA:** Walter ---

*Walter has already begun to stuff his face.*

**WALTER:** Yeah.

**MONICA:** Never mind.

**WALTER:** Everybody okay? Hope you don't mind me helping myself to some of this fine food. Who cooked? I know this ain't Monica's cooking.

**SHAWN:** It was Stephanie.

**WALTER:** Wow. This is some fine cooking. So why you'll not eating?

**MONICA:** We don't know if she's trying to poison us.

*Walter spits food all over the table.*

**NICOLE:** I think I just lost my appetite.

*Nicole gets up from the table.*

**MONICA:** I'm going to order pizza.

*Monica gets up from the table.*

*Walter is wiping out his mouth with a hand towel.*

*Stephanie is hurt beyond words. Shawn notices. He touches her hand. She pulls her hand away.*

**SHAWN:** I'm sorry.

*Stephanie pushes herself away from the table and exits without a response.*

**WALTER:** Man, you could have warned me.

**SHAWN:** It's not poisoned. You would be dead by now.

**WALTER:** I could be dying right now...slowly.

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**SHAWN:** Naturally, we're all slowly dying.

**WALTER:** You're right. So why waste all this fine food. (*points at Shawn's plate*) You gonna have that?

*Shawn gives him his plate and Walter starts eating again.*

**SHAWN:** This is a mess, Walter. I felt something. I felt something for Stef. How could I feel something for someone other than my wife?

**WALTER:** That settles it, then. You are human my friend.

**LIGHTS OUT**

## Scene 9

### LIGHTS UP

*Monica is pacing, going out of her mind.*

*Sherrie tries unsuccessfully to calm her.*

**SHERRIE:** Monica, come and sit beside me. Please.

**MONICA:** What time is it?

**SHERRIE:** After twelve.

**MONICA:** I can't believe he's doing this to me.

**SHERRIE:** You should try not to make any assumptions, until you know for sure.

**MONICA:** Nicole is not here. Shawn is not here. The little tramp is not here. What is going on in this house?

**SHERRIE:** I wish you would calm down.

*There is a sound at the door.*

**MONICA:** That's them.

*Monica attempts to go towards the door. Sherrie grabs her. Speaks to her softly.*

**SHERRIE:** If you want to know the truth, we have to take a different approach.

*Sherrie takes Monica behind the couch and stoops down out of sight. Monica remains standing.*

**MONICA:** I'm not hiding like some jealous school-girl...

*Sherrie pulls her down behind the couch.*

*Shawn and Stephanie enter. Shawn looks around.*

**SHAWN:** Weird. I thought for sure Monica would meet us at the door.

**STEPHANIE:** Maybe she doesn't love you as much as you think she does. Monica is just pretending.

*Monica gets up from behind the couch. Sherrie pulls her back down before she is seen.*

**SHAWN:** You don't know her like I do.

**STEPHANIE:** I know you. I see you having a good time with me. When is the last time you laughed like you did tonight?

**SHAWN:** It was a funny movie, but I only agreed to the movie to make up for hurting you the other day.

*Monica gets up again. Sherrie pulls her back down again.*

**STEPHANIE:** I know these past few weeks have been as much fun for you as it was for me. You and I are naturally attracted to each other, Shawn. Why are you fighting it?

**SHAWN:** What do you really want, Stef?

**STEPHANIE:** Do I really have to say it?

*Stephanie comes close to Shawn and is about to kiss him.*

*Monica flies over the couch and grabs her.*

**MONICA:** Sherrie, call 911 and tell them you're reporting a murder.

*Shawn pulls Monica off Stephanie and stands between them.*

**SHAWN:** Have you been hiding behind the couch the whole time?

**MONICA:** *(gets up in Shawn's face)* You have some nerve. You're a married man. You're a Christian. How could you do this?

**SHAWN:** Nothing happened.

**MONICA:** It was about to happen. What would you have done if I wasn't here, Shawn?

**STEPHANIE:** Shawn, think about what I said. I'm going to my room where it's safe.

**MONICA:** There is nowhere in this house you'll be safe from me.

*Stephanie quickly exits.*

*Sherrie takes a seat on the couch to watch the show.*

**MONICA:** Are you having an affair, Shawn?

**SHAWN:** No.

**MONICA:** Have you thought about having an affair?

**SHAWN:** No.

**MONICA:** Are you attracted to that woman?

**SHAWN:** No.

**MONICA:** Have you had sex with her?

**SHAWN:** No.

**MONICA:** Have you had sex with her in your mind?

**SHAWN:** No.

**MONICA:** You're still a bad liar. Fifteen years, Shawn, and it comes to this. You bring an ex into our house. You paint with her, decorated the Christmas tree with her and go to the movies with her. And you expect me to smile and respect you for that?

**SHAWN:** Maybe if you started doing those things with me, I wouldn't have to do it with someone else.

**SHERRIE:** Ouch, boy you're trying to get yourself killed.

**MONICA:** So this is my fault?

**SHAWN:** Can we discuss this in private?

**MONICA:** We're done discussing this. I have had it, Shawn. You need to make a choice. It's either me or that woman you brought into our house.

**SHAWN:** I made my choice fifteen years ago. I thought we were over that, but you have made it pretty plain that after all these years, you still don't trust me.

*Shawn turns to exit. Monica grabs him.*

**MONICA:** I'm the one who should get the final word and storm out of this room.

**SHAWN:** Let's talk again when you grow up.

*Shawn shakes himself free from her grip, and exits.*

*Monica breaks down. Sherrie hugs her.*

**MONICA:** I don't know what to do, Sherrie. Am I wrong to hate this? Am I wrong to confront him? Am I wrong to give him an ultimatum?

**SHERRIE:** This is where you talk to that God you're always boasting about.

**MONICA:** Yeah. You're absolutely right. My God can fix this. *(dries her tears)* You should probably get going. It's late.

**SHERRIE:** You sure?

**MONICA:** Yeah. Swing by Rasheda and see if Nicole is there. Tell her to come home now.

**SHERRIE:** Okay. I have seen you ride tougher waves than this, my friend. I have no doubt you will rise above this.

**MONICA:** Thank you.

*Sherrie takes her stuff, touches her friend and leaves.*

*Monica walks about considering. She is fighting back her tears.*

*She picks up a picture of her and Shawn. She looks at it intently. More tears.*

*She places the picture before her as she kneels.*

**MONICA:** God, it's just me and You. Forgive me if I don't approach You in the usual conventional manner, but I need You. I thought I was strong, but now I see that You're my only strength. I need a divine intervention this very hour, Lord. I am requesting Your Kingdom to come in my situation right now. Shawn is my husband. I am his wife. What You have joined together, no man, or woman, can pull asunder. I believe Your word and stand on Your word today as a woman of God. You were not born into this world in vain. You did not die in vain. I declare that this family will experience Your manifested will and glory in the name of Jesus.

*Monica sings "I Look to You" - (Whitney Houston)*

*Monica's cell phone begins to ring. She answers.*

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**MONICA:** Did you find her? (*Listens*) What? No. Where? Oh God! (*hangs up*) Shawn! (*Calls louder*) **SHAWN::!**

*Shawn comes out.*

**SHAWN:** What is it?

**MONICA:** We need to get to the hospital. Nicole's been in an accident.

*Shawn grabs his car keys and they exit.*

**LIGHTS FADE**

## Scene 10

### LIGHTS UP

*Shawn paces back and forth, he finally sits out of frustration.*

*There is a knock at the door.*

**SHAWN:** *(anxiously jumps to his feet)* It's open.

*Pastor Johnson enters.*

**SHAWN:** Aww, anybody but you.

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** I wondered why you weren't at service this morning, but then somebody told me Nicole was in an accident last night. A DUI.

**SHAWN:** Yes, please don't start a sermon.

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** How is she?

**SHAWN:** A whiplash, broken shoulder and some bruises. The hospital should have released her already.

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** She's at the hospital?

**SHAWN:** Yes.

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** And you are here?

*Pause.*

**SHAWN:** Stephanie felt ill. She is not the hospital type, so she asked me to bring her home.

*Pause.*

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** We need to talk, brother, again.

**SHAWN:** No, we don't.

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** I'm not getting through to you, Shawn, and I need to. You're cheating on your wife.

**SHAWN:** I am not cheating.

*Pause.*

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** You are committing emotional adultery. It's just a matter of time before it evolves into something more --- physical. In fact, Jesus said in Matthew 5:28 - Anyone that looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

**SHAWN:** I don't need this right now.

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** I believe you do. Your decisions are pulling this family apart. As the head of this house, you need to get it together.

**SHAWN:** Are you accusing me of something?

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** I'm accusing you of adultery.

**SHAWN:** What makes you such an expert at this?

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** The fact that I haven't always been a Pastor. And I've done similar things to my wife. Almost destroyed my home. We made a vow to our wives that we would forsake all others. I was the one who did your wedding Shawn.

**SHAWN:** I was just trying to help out a friend.

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** Sometimes we do the right things for the wrong reasons. Sometimes the right thing to do is wrong. The Bible has a name for people like your friend. Babylon. They go about wrecking homes and destroying families.

**SHAWN:** Aren't you being a bit paranoid?

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** You have to trust me.

**SHAWN:** So, you want me to just put her out on the street?

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** You know, your marriage situation is the life of a Christian played out. See, we struggle with the commitment we made to God and His Church when we first confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord, but now that we've been at it for a while, we start to feel the pull of the world. In your case, you know that your wife is the one for you, but you still find yourself fighting against your flesh allowing Stephanie back in your life.

*Shawn considers. His expression changes.*

**SHAWN:** You're right. I've been so stupid. This is all my fault. I just don't know how to fix it.

*Babylon and the Bride by Cleveland O. McLeish*

*Shawn sings "Pray For Me" - (Anthony Hamilton)*

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** Start by telling your wife the truth.

**SHAWN:** If I tell her the truth, she will know that I lied. She will never trust me again.

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** Only the truth can set us free.

*Stephanie enters. She appears sick.*

**STEPHANIE:** Shawn, it's a little lonely upstairs. Can you come up?

*Shawn looks at Pastor.*

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** Babylon gotta go, brother.

**SHAWN:** *(to Stephanie)* I'm going back to the hospital. See what's taking so long.

**STEPHANIE:** You're gonna leave me here alone?

**SHAWN:** You'll be fine.

**STEPHANIE:** Aren't you being a little selfish?

**SHAWN:** What?

*Monica and Sherrie enter supporting Nicole who has bandages on her head. One of her arms is in a sling.*

*Shawn goes towards them, genuinely concerned. Monica stops him with her hand, extremely upset.*

**MONICA:** Don't!

**SHAWN:** I have been worried sick.

**MONICA:** You left us at the hospital, Shawn. Your words mean nothing to me right now so get out of the way. Hi Pastor.

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** Praise God, Sister. God has delivered again.

**MONICA:** There is one more person here who needs deliverance. *(points at Shawn)* There is a demon following him around. *(points at Stephanie)*

*They carry Nicole past Shawn and put her to sit on the couch.*

**MONICA:** Are you okay Baby?

**NICOLE:** I'm sorry Mom. I just wanted to have some fun. I didn't mean for any of this to happen.

**STEPHANIE:** Nothing wrong with a little fun.

**MONICA:** Shut up! Pastor, could you please cast this demon out of my house.

**STEPHANIE:** Call me a demon one more time!

**SHERRIE:** Girl, I'm about to call 911.

**SHAWN:** Everybody calm down.

**MONICA:** Shawn, know that I blame you for this.

**NICOLE:** I don't feel so good. Can I go to my room, please?

**MONICA:** Yes, baby. Too much contamination in this room.

*Sherrie and Monica help Nicole, and they exit.*

*Pastor takes his Bible and head for the exit.*

**SHAWN:** You're leaving?

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** You're the man of this house, Shawn. Fix this. Today, more than any other day, when you should be celebrating the birth of Christ, your house is in shambles. You're a better man than this.

*Pastor exits.*

**STEPHANIE:** We should leave, Shawn. Get away from all this fuss.

**SHAWN:** We?

**STEPHANIE:** You know you and I belong together. You must realize that by now.

*Pause.*

**SHAWN:** What was I thinking ---

**STEPHANIE:** --- getting married to someone other than me ---

**SHAWN:** ...Bringing you into my house.

**STEPHANIE:** It's fate.

**SHAWN:** It's fake, Stef. This is not real. This is a fantasy I'm living out in my head and it's destroying my family.

**STEPHANIE:** This is real.

**SHAWN:** No, it's not. Are you even sick?

*Stephanie begins to cough, not realizing she was no longer pretending.*

**SHAWN:** You have to go.

**STEPHANIE:** You're throwing me out?

**SHAWN:** Babylon, I will, if you don't leave voluntarily.

*Stephanie has no reason to pretend sick anymore.*

**STEPHANIE:** You're choosing her over me?

**SHAWN:** I did that fifteen years ago. Nothing has changed.

**STEPHANIE:** Yes, nothing has changed. You still can't see that I'm a better woman than the one you married.

**SHAWN:** If that were true, I would be married to you.

*Stephanie pulls out her cell phone and makes a call.*

**STEPHANIE:** Walter, can you come take me away from this place, Now!

**SHAWN:** Walter???

*Walter steps in with phone to his ears.*

**WALTER:** I'm already here, baby.

**STEPHANIE:** I will get my stuff.

*Stephanie exits.*

*Shawn is in shock.*

**SHAWN:** You've been pursuing my ex behind my back?

**WALTER:** Before I answer that question, let's get something clear. You're a Christian. I am not.

**SHAWN:** You know what, I don't even want to know.

**WALTER:** So how's my god-daughter doing? Heard she got banged up from a DUI.

**SHAWN:** She just came in from the hospital. Boy, I really messed things up.

**WALTER:** We all make mistakes, bro. Some more than others. I just need to know if you ever got around to...you know...touching Stephanie.

**SHAWN:** Before I answer that question, let's get something clear. I'm a Christian. You're not.

**WALTER:** I don't know how you do it, man. I wish I had your strength sticking to just one woman for so long.

**SHAWN:** God is my strength.

**WALTER:** Well, God is asking for too much.

*Stephanie comes out with her bags. Walter takes them. They move to the exit.*

**STEPHANIE:** Are you sure you want me to go, Shawn?

**WALTER:** He's absolutely sure.

**STEPHANIE:** If I go out that door, you will never see me again.

*Pause.*

**STEPHANIE:** Goodbye Shawn.

**SHAWN:** Bye.

*Stephanie leaves.*

**WALTER:** For what it's worth man, Monica found herself a good man. Even if she kicks you out and divorces you, I just thought I would let you know that.

**SHAWN:** Thank you, Walter. As usual you have found the right words to make me feel worse.

**WALTER:** I'm just saying you have a good heart, bro.

**SHAWN:** If only I can convince Monica of that.

**WALTER:** Nothing good comes easy.

**SHAWN:** Look how easy you got Stephanie.

**WALTER:** As I said, nothing good comes easy.

*Walter exits pulling the large bags behind him.*

*Monica comes out, probably been listening the whole time.*

*Shawn turns to see her. He's not sure where to begin.*

**MONICA:** How could you do this to me?

**SHAWN:** I'm sorry.

**MONICA:** What exactly are you apologizing for?

**SHAWN:** Lying to you. Cheating.

**MONICA:** You slept with her?

**SHAWN:** No.

**MONICA:** You're still lying.

**SHAWN:** I cheated on you in my thoughts.

**MONICA:** What were you thinking bringing her here?

**SHAWN:** I thought my motives were good, and I'm not going to take the full blame for this. Look at that Christmas Tree. It's put up; it's decorated. The house is painted. We used to do those things together. Now we don't even go to the movies anymore. I missed that.

**MONICA:** You never once complained.

**SHAWN:** Not out loud. I tried to be good and supportive. I never wanted to give you a reason not to trust me. Your trust meant everything to me, especially with you knowing the kind of lifestyle I lived before I met you and came to Christ.

**MONICA:** I was beginning to think this was the ending of our marriage.

**SHAWN:** Do you want it to end?

*Pause.*

**MONICA:** No. But I'm not sure how to get over this. You hurt me, Shawn. We almost lost our daughter because of this. She thought we were getting a divorce.

**SHAWN:** I never meant to do all that. I need you to forgive me, Monica. I allowed myself to be caught up in a fantasy. None of it was real. You and I are real. Please forgive me.

**MONICA:** How?

**SHAWN:** I guess the same way God forgives us when we totally mess up.

**MONICA:** You're baiting me up with your psychology?

**SHAWN:** Is it working?

**MONICA:** Talk is cheap, Shawn. If you want my forgiveness, you will have to earn it.

*Nicole enters.*

**NICOLE:** Are you guys getting a divorce?

*Shawn goes to her. Touches her gently.*

**SHAWN:** You should be in bed.

**NICOLE:** It's Christmas Day. We always have dinner on Christmas day. I don't smell anything cooking.

*Pause.*

**SHAWN:** You're right.

*Sherrie comes on.*

**SHERRIE:** Why is this man still alive?

*Babylon and the Bride by Cleveland O. McLeish*

**SHAWN:** What is she talking about? Why is she even here?

**MONICA:** She's the one who has kept me sane throughout this entire time, so leave her alone.

**SHAWN:** Okay. Well, I'm gonna make some calls.

**MONICA:** Why?

**SHAWN:** It's Christmas Day.

*Shawn exits leaving everyone else confused.*

**LIGHTS OUT**

## SCENE 11

### LIGHTS UP

*Sherrie sets the table.*

*Shawn comes out wearing an apron and carrying two containers of food. He places these on the table.*

*Monica comes out also wearing an apron and carrying a cake. She carefully puts that on the table.*

*Pastor Johnson enters. He is carrying two bottles of wine.*

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** What was Jesus' first miracle?

**SHAWN:** Is that wine, Pastor?

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** Yes, but without the alcohol.

*Shawn takes the bottles of wine and put them on the table.*

*Malcolm and Rasheda enter. Malcolm is wearing a neck brace.*

*Shawn goes to greets them.*

**RASHEDA:** (*embarrassed*) Never thought you would want us at your house again, saar, after what we did.

**SHAWN:** It's a season of forgiveness. I can't condemn you as I was young once and also did some stupid things. But things will be different around here from now on. New rules.

**MALCOLM:** Sorry about everything.

**SHAWN:** I know your friendship with my daughter means something to you, Malcolm, so I won't hold it against you. I remember as a teenager, I was also close to...(*considers*) Wait a minute. Have you been fooling around my daughter?

**MALCOLM:** Food smells good. Is it take out?

**SHAWN:** You and I are going to have a long talk after this, young man.

*Walter enters.*

**WALTER:** I'm loving what I'm smelling.

**SHAWN:** I didn't expect to see you.

**WALTER:** You really think I would miss Christmas dinner.

**SHAWN:** I hope you came alone.

**WALTER:** Trick never made it to my house, bro. She was using me to get to you. She made me drop her off at her sister. Never even invited me in for a slice of turkey, man. So disappointed.

**SHAWN:** What were you expecting?

**WALTER:** Before I answer that, let's be clear on something ---

**SHAWN:** --- I'm a Christian. You're not. I get it. Come on. Dinner is just about ready.

*Everybody gathers around the table. Nicole enters. Rasheda greets her with a gentle hug.*

**SHAWN:** Before we eat, I hope you guys don't mind if I share a few words. Everyone close to me is here, and I'm happy. Just wanted to say, sometimes we forget. It's easy to forget. We forget the people who really matter. We forget the significance of a day like this. We forget what true friendship really is. We forget what it means to be a family. 2000 years ago, a young baby was born into this world. He seemed normal, but He wasn't. The angels declared that God was here. The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us. Because of that day, we can celebrate today. Because of that day, families get to gather right around the world, just like we are gathered here. The birth of Jesus Christ gave us this day, this moment, this opportunity to be together one more time.

**PASTOR JOHNSON:** Praise God, bless the Lord. I didn't know you could preach.

**WALTER:** Are we having dinner or church?

**SHAWN:** How about we have a little of both?

**WALTER:** How about we just eat?

**SHAWN:** Not yet. We have a fully decorated Christmas Tree that needs to be lighted. We also have an opportunity as a family to pray together one more time. Today could have been a tragic day. We have plenty to be grateful for.

**WALTER:** Maybe I should come back in half an hour.

**SHERRIE:** Maybe you should just shut up.

*Babylon and the Bride by Cleveland O. McLeish*

**WALTER:** Ohhh, I like a woman who stands up to me.

**SHERRIE:** What!

**SHAWN:** HEY! Comply or leave.

**WALTER:** Who are you, bro? I don't recognize this person.

**MONICA:** *(Smiles)* That's the man of this house.

*Shawn winks at Monica.*

*Shawn goes over to the Christmas Tree. He finds the plug and goes over to the socket. He gestures for Monica to come closer to him. They both light the tree.*

**SHAWN:** Merry Christmas everybody.

**SHERRIE:** Awesome.

*Everybody agrees.*

*Monica puts her arm around Shawn.*

**MONICA:** Now, this is the man I love.

**SHAWN:** So, you forgive me?

**MONICA:** Yes.

*Pastor Johnson raises a Christmas Song. Everybody eventually joins in.*

**FADE TO BLACK**