

ERIC

"They Say That Townsend is a Bad Mother"

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EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

ERIC, 14, strolls down the playground with a bunch of dandelions. He approaches BERNIECE, 14.

ERIC

Hey, Berniece! I picked these flowers for you.

BERNIECE

These are dandelions!

ERIC

Right, flowers!

BERNIECE

No, weeds!

ERIC

Well, they look pretty. And it's the thought that counts, right?

BERNIECE

Eric, you don't have a thought in your head!

ERIC

Fine.

He walks away and runs into SHANA, 16.

SHANA

I'll take those weeds from you, babycakes!

ERIC

Fine, here.

He gives them to Shana and continues to walk away.

SHANA

Oooh, I'm wearing him down!

CONNIE, 14, walks over to Berniece.

CONNIE

Why do you keep giving him a hard time?

BERNIECE

Girl, I'm not thinkin' about him. I want a man who's tall, cool, handsome. You know, like your man.

CONNIE
 (scoffs)
 Want him? Let me tell you, everyone isn't
 always what they seem.

DIMMEY, 14, approaches Berniece and Connie.

DIMMEY
 (to Connie)
 Hey, dear, what's going on?

CONNIE
 Nothing, baby, just talking about how
 sexy my man is!

Connie plays with Dimmey's collar and kisses him.

DIMMEY
 Okay. Let's go to lunch.

CONNIE
 (to Berniece)
 Later, girl.

Dimmey and Connie walk together.

DIMMEY (V.O.)
 Liar. I can't wait 'til I get rid of her.

INT. MATT'S CAR - THE NEXT DAY

MATT, Eric's stepfather, drives. Eric rides in the
 passenger seat.

ERIC
 I don't get it. I've tried everything,
 and Berniece still won't give me the time
 of day.

MATT
 Don't worry, son. If it's meant to be, it
 will be. There's one man out there for
 every girl.

ERIC
 But didn't Mom leave one man and marry
 you?

MATT
 Yeah, but Junior is that one man, and he
 gets with every girl.

ERIC

Is this supposed to make me feel good?

MATT

Well, sorry! You want fatherly advice,
turn to Cosby!

ERIC

That's not much better!

MATT

Well, alright then!

SFX: Police siren BLARING.

MATT (CONT'D)

What's going on?

Matt pulls over. The police car stops behind him. OFFICER TOWNSEND exits it and marches over to Matt's window.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Please let your window down, sir.

MATT

(lowering window)

"Sir"? Yvette, you know us.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

"Officer Townsend" to you. Did you know
you were going 32 miles?

Officer Townsend points to a speed limit sign. Matt looks
in her direction.

INSERT - "SPEED LIMIT: 30"

BACK TO MATT'S CAR

MATT

Are you serious?

OFFICER TOWNSEND

As a heart attack, sir. We need to
protect the streets from reckless drivers
like you. Here are your tickets.

MATT

What's the other ticket for?

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Your kid needs to be in a booster seat.

ERIC

Hey!

OFFICER TOWNSEND

And needs to be in the back seat. Have a nice day.

Officer Townsend leaves. Matt continues driving.

MATT

They always pick and choose when to uphold the law! Like, look at these guys right here!

Matt and Eric drive past a fire station. A group of FIREMEN play basketball in front of a hoop.

MATT (CONT'D)

(calling out to them)

Wasting our tax money again, huh?

FIREMAN

We're on our lunch!

MATT

I said what I said!

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

JACOB JACKSON, 16, holds up ARNOLD, 14, by his shirt.

JACOB

Pay up, squirt.

ARNOLD

I don't have any money, I swear!

Officer Townsend marches up to them.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Alright, Mr. Jackson, let him go, or you're coming downtown with me!

JACOB

(letting go)

What's wrong? I'm just doing my daily bullying.

ARNOLD

Yeah, what gives?

OFFICER TOWNSEND

There'll be none of that on my watch! I'm issuing you a citation, Jackson!

She writes Jacob a ticket, gives it to him, and marches off. Jacob reads it.

JACOB

I can't pay this! Arnold, you owe me more money now!

Jacob lifts Arnold by his shirt again.

ARNOLD

(gloomily)
Thanks, Officer.

EXT. OUTDOORS - LATER

EDDIE the cat chases WHISKERS and FRISKERS, two mice, down the sidewalk. They run past Officer Townsend.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Hold it!

SFX: CAR BRAKES sound as the cat and mice stop running.

OFFICER TOWNSEND (CONT'D)

Is this feline bothering you?

The mice looks at her emotionless.

OFFICER TOWNSEND (CONT'D)

(to Eddie)

It looks like you're disturbing the peace. I got my eye on you. Have a good day.

Officer Townsend marches off. BONY the dog, who is the director, calls out.

BONY (O.S.)

Cut! She messed it up!

WHISKERS

Should we take it from the top, Bony?

BONY

Nah, let's just break.

EDDIE

Fine, I'm hungry, anyway. Let's go to Timmy's.

He and the mice start to walk. Bony hurries to them.

BONY

Hey, can I come?

Whiskers, Friskers, and Eddie look at each other.

FRISKERS

You can't fraternize with the actors,
Bony.

The three of them walk away.

BONY

Oh, now you're following rules?

Bony runs after them.

INT. NELSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY - LATER

RHONDA sits on the couch and watches a soap opera where the characters CLARK, STEVE, DOROTHY, and KEISHA have a heated discussion.

ON THE TV

CLARK

So Maggie is your long-lost daughter?

DOROTHY

I think so. It might be Diana.

KEISHA

How do we know for sure?

DOROTHY

I don't know. We don't have much time.

STEVE

Well, Maggie is waiting in the car. We can just ask her. I'll get her.

DOROTHY

No, there's not enough time, damn it! We need to make the flight to Egypt and catch Rocky before he kills someone else!

KEISHA

And he might know who shot me!

BACK TO LIVING ROOM

RHONDA

Ooh, I wonder what's gonna happen next!

Eric and Matt enter the house.

MATT

Rhonda, you gotta do something about your friend there.

RHONDA

What do you mean?

ERIC

Officer Townsend pulled us over and gave Matt a ticket!

RHONDA

None of that sounds like her at all.

MATT

I know! She's your soror. Can you see what's up?

RHONDA

(getting up)

Yeah, I gotta go anyway.

ERIC

(looking at the TV)

Is this "Searching for My Children of Tomorrow Today?"

RHONDA

They're trying to figure out who Dorothy's long-lost daughter is.

MATT

Still? Haven't they been on this for three months?

RHONDA

The story has to build, Matt. Turn the TV off for me, but don't erase that episode.

Rhonda leaves the house.

ERIC

And I thought my life had a lot of drama.

Eric exits the living room.

MATT

Rhonda and her stupid soaps.

He picks up the remote, then looks at the TV.

MATT (CONT'D)

Hey, is that Charles Van Norman?

He sits down to watch.

MATT (CONT'D)

What's he doing on here? He must be guest-starring.

He picks up a bowl of popcorn from the end table and starts eating it.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY - LATER

Officer Townsend sits at her desk and watches a small TV on her desk. GRETCHEN "GRETCH" JACKSON, a detainee, sits in a holding cell near Officer Townsend's desk.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

(yelling at the TV)

Watch out! Rocky's right there!

GRETCH

Officer, do you mind turning the volume up?

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Shut up in there, Gretch!

Rhonda enters the station and approaches Officer Townsend's desk.

RHONDA

Hey, sands. Ooh, don't tell me what happened on the show. I'm not caught up yet.

GRETCH

Spoiler alert: they...

OFFICER TOWNSEND

(to Gretch)

Hey, I'm warning you!

(to Rhonda)

What's up?

RHONDA

Everything been alright with you? You've been acting a little uptight.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

No, everything's fine. I might be up for a promotion, and I'm staying on my toes.

RHONDA

But it seems like you're giving everyone on the north side a ticket!

OFFICER TOWNSEND

That's not true, now I'll have to ask you to leave, because you're this close to loitering.

RHONDA

'Vette, talk to me.

Officer Townsend turns off the TV.

GRETCH

Hey!

Officer Townsend signals at Gretch to be quiet. She then pulls out her phone.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Here's a video that's been floating around.

ON THE PHONE

A WOMAN is being interviewed on the street.

WOMAN

Officer Yvette Townsend trying to get promoted? She can't even take care of her own daughter!

BACK TO POLICE STATION

OFFICER TOWNSEND

If this gets out, the other cops will think I'm not fit for my job!

GRETCH

Hmmph. Can't have that.

RHONDA

I don't get it. This is just one person on one video. Who cares what she thinks?

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Well, there may be a little truth to it. Remember how I told you about my upbringing in Tennessee?

RHONDA

Farm town, yeah. Your husband left you.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Actually, I was the one that left. I felt like I was in a dead-end situation. I had a husband and a kid, but I wanted more out of life. So one day, I told them that I was going to the store for some milk. Fast forward to now, and I'm here.

RHONDA

Oh, man.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

What could I do? College wasn't that fulfilling for me. The police force was where I could forget all of my troubles and make something of myself. But I can't run away from my responsibilities anymore.

RHONDA

So what are you saying? You're gonna move back?

OFFICER TOWNSEND

No, I like my job here. But at least I can go back home and talk to my family. Maybe I can make things right.

RHONDA

If you feel that's best.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

But I need you to drive me. My car's in the shop...and they really don't want me driving in Tennessee. I'll explain later.

RHONDA

Oh my god.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Sounds like a yes to me! Let me go and get packed.

RHONDA

Wait, you can just leave your job like this?

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Yeah, why not?

Officer Townsend exits the station. Rhonda follows her.

GRETCH

And I'm locked up.

(calling out)

You could've at least turned the TV back on!

INT. NELSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY - LATER

Rhonda talks with Matt.

RHONDA

So Yvette wants me to drive her to her farm so she can clear things up with her family.

MATT

I can't believe someone as lazy as her had energy to start a family.

RHONDA

Maybe that's why she left, I guess. You wanna come?

MATT

I don't know, honey.

Eric runs downstairs.

ERIC

Did somebody say, "road trip"?

RHONDA

Uh, no.

ERIC

I can go for the ride. We have a three-day weekend at school, anyway.

RHONDA

Well, this isn't for fun, Eric. We're trying to reunite Officer Townsend with her daughter.

ERIC

All I heard was, "road trip".

RHONDA

Again, nobody said that. But pack a bag quick. What about you, Matt?

MATT

No, I better stay here. The pets need feeding, the chores need to be done, the darn fitted sheets need to be folded.

ERIC

What's up with fitted sheets, anyway?

MATT

I'd tell you if I knew, son.

RHONDA

(to Eric)

Well, let's go get ready.

Rhonda and Eric exit.

SFX: Bedroom doors CLOSE off screen.

Matt looks behind his shoulder, then sneaks to the remote. He turns on the TV.

ON THE TV

CLARK

So is Diana or Maggie your long-lost daughter?

DOROTHY

We have to ask Maggie. We got to!

SFX: GUNSHOT off screen.

STEVE looks out the window.

STEVE

It might be too late. She just got shot!

Disturbing MUSIC plays.

BACK TO LIVING ROOM

MATT

(whispering)

Oh no! Not Maggie!

INT. RHONDA'S CAR - DAY

Rhonda drives her car down the road. Officer Townsend sits in the passenger seat. Eric sits in the back.

RHONDA
Where is this place?

OFFICER TOWNSEND
A few more hours.

RHONDA
Well, I need to pull over to get more gas.

ERIC
Man, women are so silly!

RHONDA
Read the room, son.

ERIC
I'm talking about Berniece.

RHONDA
Eric, if the girl don't want you, let it go. Sometimes, you just gotta move on.

OFFICER TOWNSEND
Yeah, that's what I did.

ERIC
Uh, isn't that why you're in the situation you're in, and why we're on the road right now?

OFFICER TOWNSEND
(to Rhonda)
Smart boy.

RHONDA
He gets it from me.

OFFICER TOWNSEND
I meant, "smart aleck."

RHONDA
He gets it from his father.

INT. GAS STATION - DAY - LATER

Rhonda walks away from a cashier. Officer Townsend and Eric approach her from different directions.

RHONDA

Where were ya'll at? We gotta get going.

ERIC

The flea market next door. I got three outfits, real flowers for Berniece, 5 CD's, and a lunch all for five bucks! Oh, and check out my Faux-lex!

He holds out his wrist.

RHONDA

Make sure your wrist doesn't turn green.

ERIC

Officer Townsend, I saw some baby dresses that you could get.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Uh, I don't think he would like those.

RHONDA

"He"? You have a son, too?

OFFICER TOWNSEND

You're half-right. I have a daughter. She has a son.

ERIC

A grandma?! You're that old?

RHONDA

Eric!

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Well, we married young, started a family young, you know.

RHONDA

But who was that lady in the video that said that you don't take care of your daughter?

OFFICER TOWNSEND

(sighs)

My daughter.

RHONDA

Oh.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

We don't have the best relationship. My ex came to terms with me leaving, but she hadn't.

RHONDA

Will she let you see your grandson?

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Oh, she better. I'm going back to my hometown, and this time, it's parental.

Rhonda and Eric stare at her.

OFFICER TOWNSEND (CONT'D)

You know, because I'm a parent, that's my family...

RHONDA

Let's just go.

The three begin to walk.

ERIC

Wait, Mom, do you have ten bucks? There are some Air Jorgens for sale.

RHONDA

Let's go!

The three exit.

INT. NELSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Matt watches the soap opera on TV.

ON THE TV

The characters are in a hospital talking to a DOCTOR.

DOCTOR

I'm sorry, but Maggie is dead.

Sinister MUSIC plays.

DOROTHY

Noooooooo!!

BACK TO LIVING ROOM

MATT

(crying)

Noooooooo!!

SFX: The doorbell RINGS.

Matt quickly turns off the TV.

EXT. NELSON HOUSE - DAY - SAME

Berniece stands outside the front door.

BERNIECE

"Eric, I'm sorry. Those dandelions were a nice gesture."

(sotto voce)

"Even though it was stupid."

(normal voice)

No.

Matt opens the door.

BERNIECE (CONT'D)

Hi, sir. I haven't seen Eric in a while. Is he here?

MATT

(holding back tears)

No. He's gone. So is his mother! They went to Tennessee!

BERNIECE

Are you alright?

MATT

(breaking down)

I'll be fine. I have to go!

He closes the door and cries some more. Berniece walks away from the house.

BERNIECE

Gone? No way.

She runs into Shana.

BERNIECE (CONT'D)

Shana, have you seen Eric lately?

SHANA

No, why?

BERNIECE

His father just said that he and his mom left. He didn't say anything about moving, did he?

SHANA

No, but what do you care? You always treated him like crap!

Shana walks away.

BERNIECE

No I haven't. Have I?

INT. MOTEL - EVENING

Rhonda, Eric, and Officer Townsend approach the counter with their luggage. DARLENE, the receptionist, greets them.

DARLENE

Hey, ya'll, welcome to the Check Inn. Get it? "Check in"?

RHONDA

Nice. The name should be under Nelson?

DARLENE

Oh, we don't have a check-in process. You just say you're here, and you go in your room. First come, first serve!

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Then why is it called "The Check Inn"?

DARLENE

Take it up with my ma, Marlene. She owns the place. This is just my after-school job.

ERIC

What time's breakfast?

DARLENE

Whenever Mickey D's down the street opens. We don't have that here.

RHONDA

Let's just go to our room. Where's the elevator?

DARLENE

(shakes her head)

Uh...

RHONDA

Never mind! Come on, guys.

Rhonda, Eric, and Officer Townsend walk away.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - EVENING - MOMENTS LATER

Rhonda opens the door, which almost falls off of the hinges.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Man, that was a workout.

RHONDA

Alright, Eric, you get settled. I'm gonna take Yvette to her family.

Darlene enters the room.

DARLENE

Oh, I forgot to tell ya'll about the TV. It doesn't work.

RHONDA

You could have called us.

DARLENE

I can't. There's no phone in the room.

ERIC

Hmmph, what a great place. So what do you guys do for fun around here?

DARLENE

We have a couple of nice spots. I get off in 15 minutes. If you don't mind, I can show you around.

ERIC

Well, I'm a little bit tired...

Rhonda nudges him.

ERIC (CONT'D)

...of being bored. Let me wash up.

DARLENE

Great! Meet me downstairs.

Darlene exits.

ERIC

Mom!

RHONDA

All part of moving on!

ERIC

But she lives all the way here!

RHONDA

At least it'll get you out of your funk.
And you can take that energy with you
back home.

ERIC

My mom fixing me up: every young man's
dream.

RHONDA

And afterwards, bring her back up here so
you two can bond.

ERIC

The dream continues.

INT. NELSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Matt watches the soap opera and sniffles, holding tissues
in his hand.

SFX: The doorbell RINGS.

Matt turns off the TV.

MATT

Come in.

TIMMY enters the house.

TIMMY

Matt, I've been calling you all day,
what's up with your phone?

MATT

Nothing. I've been napping.

Timmy looks at the dining room table, which is full of
cakes, bread, and trays of food.

TIMMY

And what's with all of this food?

MATT

I don't know. Women have been giving them
to me all afternoon!

TIMMY

Can I have some of this pie?

MATT

Yeah, I'll get you a plate.

Matt walks to the kitchen. Timmy sits down and turns on the TV. The soap opera plays.

TIMMY

(calling out)

Matt, what is this?

MATT

Alright, it's a soap! Yeah, I've been watching it. I ain't ashamed. Shoot.

Matt walks out with some plates. Timmy sits and cries.

TIMMY

They killed Maggie??

MATT

I know! It ain't fair!

Matt sits next to Timmy and holds him. Both of them sob. A SEXY LADY enters the house.

SEXY LADY

Oh, that is so terrible.

MATT

(to the lady)

You saw it, too?

SEXY LADY

No, but I feel your pain. If you ever want me to come make you dinner, or even just to talk, gimme a call.

She hands Matt a business card and leaves.

MATT

This soap really brings people together, huh?

TIMMY

(sniffles)

Yeah. Uh, you can let go of me now.

Matt lets go.

EXT. OUTDOORS - EVENING

Berniece approaches a desk with a typewriter on it. OLIVER the duck wears glasses and sits behind the desk.

BERNIECE

Excuse me, is Dr. Syd in?

Oliver points to a hammock. DR. SYD the mole sits next to it with a notepad. Berniece gets into the hammock.

BERNIECE (CONT'D)

Thanks for seeing me after hours, Doc. I have an issue.

SFX: Dr. Syd SCRIBBLES on his notepad.

BERNIECE (CONT'D)

This boy keeps chasing after me. He's alright, I guess, but he's not what I'm looking for.

SFX: Dr. Syd SCRIBBLES some more.

BERNIECE (CONT'D)

Now his parents got divorced, and he moved away with his mother! He's gone now.

SFX: More SCRIBBLING.

BERNIECE (CONT'D)

I never got to tell him how I felt. I mean, he's okay. He's really short...but he has a big heart, I guess. But what if he's gone forever?

SFX: More SCRIBBLING.

BERNIECE (CONT'D)

I guess I can find him on social media. I can still tell him how I feel. Is that what you're saying?

SFX: More SCRIBBLING.

BERNIECE (CONT'D)

Yeah, I better find him and tell him before it's too late. Thanks, Dr. Syd!

Berniece gets up and runs past Oliver's desk.

BERNIECE (CONT'D)

Best doctor ever!

OLIVER

(calling out, telepathically)
Yep, and his bill will reflect that!

INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

Eric and Darlene sit and eat at a table in a country-themed restaurant. They both wear cowboy hats; Eric's is a little taller than Darlene's.

ERIC

So everybody wears these cowboy hats?

DARLENE

Yeah, it's to keep with the country theme.

ERIC

Hey, I'm not complaining. It makes me look taller.

They both laugh.

ERIC (CONT'D)

And these frog legs you ordered me are pretty good, too.

DARLENE

Honey, those ain't frog legs, they're...

ERIC

Don't gross me out, they're frog legs, and I'm sticking to it!

DARLENE

So how long are you in town for?

ERIC

Just overnight, I guess. I'm helping my mom reunite her friend and her family.

DARLENE

Well, that's important. Family is everything down here in the south. I love my Darling family.

ERIC

"Darling"? Wait, your name is Darlene Darling?

DARLENE

Yep, and my ma is Marlene Darling. My pa's name is Starling Darling, and my sister is Charlene Darling.

ERIC

Wow.

DARLENE

We had a dog named Arlene, but we sold her to this lady who visited from Milwaukee. She's this housekeeper, I guess. Takes care of some crazy family with a goofy, short boy.

ERIC

Anybody else in your family?

DARLENE

I have a big brother, too.

ERIC

And what's his name?

DARLENE

Matt Darling!

ERIC

Of course.

They both laugh.

EXT. HOUSE DOORSTEP - NIGHT

Rhonda and Officer Townsend knock on the door.

RHONDA

This is the place, right?

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Assuming I didn't mix it up with the other black farmers.

Officer Townsend's daughter, the woman from the video, opens the door.

WOMAN #3

I told you before, I...well, lookee here!

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Gloria, you're looking pitiful as ever!

GLORIA

Same to you, Mom!

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Aren't you gonna welcome us in?

Gloria shrugs, opens the door wide, and extends her hand to welcome them in.

RHONDA
(to Officer Townsend)
You want me to stay with you?

OFFICER TOWNSEND
No, Rhonda, I think I...

Rhonda races off.

OFFICER TOWNSEND (CONT'D)
(calling out)
...got it!

Officer Townsend walks in.

OFFICER TOWNSEND (CONT'D)
Look, I got Michael some gifts. Nothing
big. From the gas station.

GLORIA
Nice. Anything for me?

OFFICER TOWNSEND
Well, you can split this Kit Kat with me.

GLORIA
#1 Mom, ladies and gentlemen.

OFFICER TOWNSEND
Oh, don't start! Where is my grandson,
anyway?

GLORIA
He's with his daddy.

OFFICER TOWNSEND
Who's his daddy? Marcus? Teddy? Dante?

GLORIA
Uh...yes?

OFFICER TOWNSEND
(sighs)
Gloria...

GLORIA
He's with Johnny, who's as good as a
parent as anyone. See, he stays in town
to take care of family.

OFFICER TOWNSEND
You don't understand.

GLORIA

"Going to the store to get milk." We had plenty of milk in the house!

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Look, I apologized to you and your father many times. He came to terms with it. Why can't you?

GLORIA

Because I needed a mother growing up. Maybe that's why I can't stick with one man!

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Hey, you whorin' around has nothing to do with me! Nice try, though.

GLORIA

Damn.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Honey, look at it this way. If it weren't for me leaving, you wouldn't have learned how to be a better mother to your child. And I wouldn't have become a respectable cop in my community. Well, a cop in my community.

GLORIA

Well, I guess.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

I know it'll take a while, but I'd like for us to work on our relationship. I probably don't deserve it, but what do you say?

GLORIA

I suppose. But you have to start coming down here a little more. Michael's birthday is coming up in a few months.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Aw, Gloria, the Bucks's season is about to start!

Gloria looks at Officer Townsend angrily.

OFFICER TOWNSEND (CONT'D)

...but we can watch some games together...if you have Pay-Per-View.

GLORIA

I guess that's close enough. Since you're here, I need a few dollars.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Have you asked your daddy?

GLORIA

We don't have the best relationship either.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Maybe you should stop telling people you don't need nobody. Here.

She hands Gloria some money.

GLORIA

Thanks. Now gimme that Kit Kat. I'm hungry.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

(handing it to her)

You are your mother's daughter.

SFX: A cell phone RINGS off screen.

GLORIA

Hold on.

She walks away. Rhonda enters the house.

RHONDA

'Vette, are you ready? These cows out here are giving me the creeps. They got a weird look in their eyes.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Not yet, me and my daughter are making up.

RHONDA

Hey, why didn't you tell me about all of this? Aren't we girls?

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Yeah, but I didn't want you to look at me crazy.

RHONDA

Aw, honey, I already look at you crazy.

They both smirk at each other. Gloria reenters.

GLORIA
Mom, do you two mind leavin'? Pastor
Howard is coming over. I gotta get cute.

OFFICER TOWNSEND
I remember him. I thought he was married.

GLORIA
Well, you see...

OFFICER TOWNSEND
(sighs)
Oh, never mind! Rhonda, let's get outta
here.

RHONDA
Be careful for those cows.

GLORIA
She ain't lyin'!

Officer Townsend and Rhonda exit.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Eric and Darlene approach the motel.

ERIC
So have you ever thought of going into
the hotel business after school?

DARLENE
Oh, no! I wanna be a pop singer!

ERIC
Really?

DARLENE
It may be tough, but it's what I really
want to do. If you see something, and you
just know it's for you, don't give up.

ERIC
(pauses for a moment)
Yeah, that's right! Thanks for the night
out, Darlene.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rhonda and Officer Townsend sit in their room. Eric
enters.

RHONDA
Hey, how was your date?

ERIC
It was great. Darlene is probably the sweetest and most fun girl I know!

RHONDA
Really?

ERIC
And I'm gonna get Berniece to be mine, no matter how hard I try!

RHONDA
(sighs)
Great.

ERIC
(to Officer Townsend)
Did you see your family?

OFFICER TOWNSEND
My daughter, yes, but not my grandson. She'll let me see him next time. We're working things out.

ERIC
And what about the video?

OFFICER TOWNSEND
She said she would take it down, and that'll solve everything.

ERIC
Yeah, because that's how social media works.

Eric goes to the back. Officer Townsend turns to Rhonda.

OFFICER TOWNSEND
His father?

RHONDA
Yep.

INT. TIMMY'S PLACE - THE NEXT DAY

Matt, Timmy, and other patrons are crowded around a TV in the bar area. Rhonda enters. Timmy flips a channel with the remote.

RHONDA

Matt, there you are! What are ya'll doing?

MATT

(in a gruff voice)
Oh, just watching the game!

Timmy and the patrons gruffly respond in agreement.

RHONDA

Well, I dropped Eric off, and now I'm about to take Yvette home.

MATT

(in normal voice)
Is everything okay?

RHONDA

Yeah, it will be. See you at home.

Rhonda exits.

MATT

(calls out to Timmy, but in a
whisper)
Okay, now!

Timmy turns to the soap opera.

ON THE TV

ROCKY, the gunman, holds Dorothy in one arm while he sticks up Clark.

CLARK

Put the gun down, Rocky!

ROCKY

Then give me what I want!

CLARK

What's that?

ROCKY

The truth! Is Maggie or Diana this woman's daughter?

CLARK

Why do you need to know this?

ROCKY

Because...I am the daughter's brother!

Sinister MUSIC plays.

CLARK

What?!

Maggie comes behind Rocky and wrestles with him. The woman breaks free from Rocky.

CLARK (CONT'D)

Maggie, I thought you were dead!

BACK TO TIMMY'S PLACE

SFX: A gunshot FIRES on the TV, off-screen.

DOROTHY (O.S.)

Well, she is now.

The patrons panic and cry. Rhonda reenters the diner. Timmy quickly turns off the TV. He and the other patrons try to hold back tears.

RHONDA

(smirks)

They shot Maggie again?

MATT

(breaking down)

Why they gotta do her like that?

RHONDA

I know, baby.

Rhonda hugs Matt, who sobs. Timmy and the patrons sob along with him.

EXT. NELSON HOUSE - LATER

Berniece paces back and forth outside the Nelsons' door.

BERNIECE

I'll ask Eric's dad for his contact info, then I'll just be real with Eric. Okay, here goes: "Eric, you're..."

Eric opens the door.

BERNIECE (CONT'D)

...here! What are you doing here?

ERIC

I live here. What are you doing here?

BERNIECE

Oh, just making sure your father's okay.
He told me you left with your mama.

ERIC

Yeah, but we just went to help out a
friend.

BERNIECE

(chuckles nervously)
Well, of course you did. Why else would
you leave? Well, everything's fine. I'm
gonna go.

ERIC

Wait a minute. Did you think I moved
away?

BERNIECE

No.

ERIC

Were you...missing me?

BERNIECE

Miss you? Miss me with that.

ERIC

You did. Hey, I went all the way to
Tennessee to put a family together.
Doesn't that make me look good?

BERNIECE

Please, nothing makes you look good.

ERIC

Admit it, you thought I was gone, and you
missed me.

BERNIECE

Well, go away forever, and we'll find
out!

Berniece stomps away. Eric enters his house, where Matt
and Rhonda stand.

RHONDA

What was that all about?

ERIC

Berniece thought you and me moved away.

MATT

This neighborhood has been acting funny lately.

RHONDA

Yeah. We may have our issues like Yvette and her family, but I'll never leave you guys.

MATT

I know, honey.

The three of them hug each other. Their backs are faced toward the open door. A PRETTY LADY walks in with a basket of fruit and sees Matt.

PRETTY LADY

(sotto voce)

D'oh!

She turns away and walks off.

RHONDA

Hey, did they ever figure out if Maggie or Diana was the daughter?

They pause.

MATT

Who cares?

Rhonda and Eric nod in agreement. They all continue to hug.

THE END