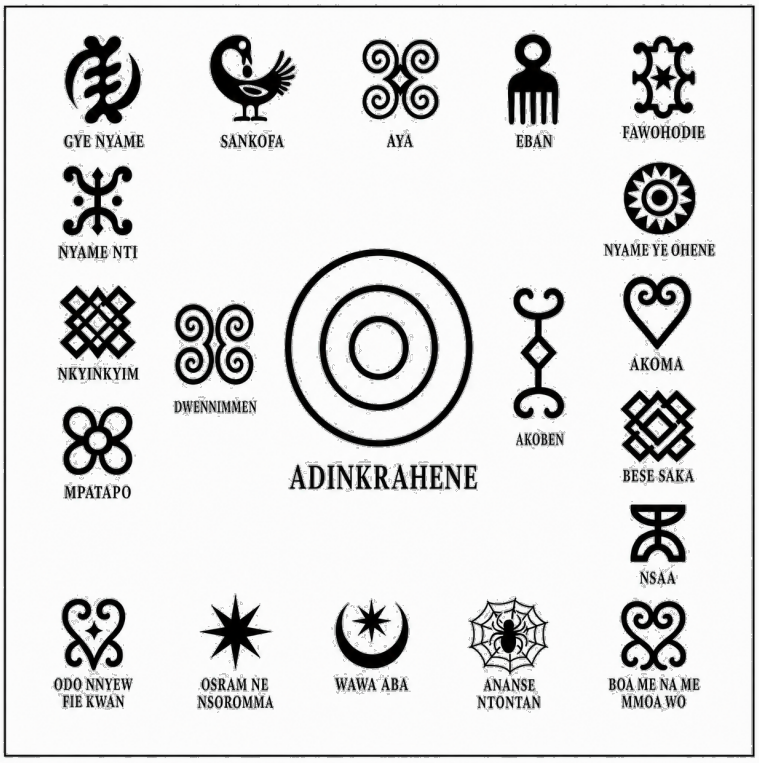
ADINKRA JUSTICE

Episode 1: "Ready or Not"

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EXT. HAMILTON HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT - FLASHBACK - DAY (2008)

ABENA PREMPEH (14) — a dark-skinned Ghanaian American girl wearing a large afro and a GOLD ADINKRA SYMBOL PENDANT — crosses the parking lot with her three besties.

Sweat-drenched African fabrics wrap their waists. Bright smiles light their faces.

Abena stops and turns to ZARA MARIA CISNEROS (14), a dark-skinned Mexican American with short locs and multiple piercings.

ABENA
Are we really going to Ghana this summer or am I dreaming?

YASMINA ALI (14), an Egyptian American wearing a hijab and glasses, pinches Abena.

ABENA (CONT'D)
Ouch!

YASMINA
You're awake. And don't come back to L.A. acting brand new.

MIN-JI KIM (14), a Korean American sporting a chin-length bob with side-swept bangs, puts on her announcer voice. She bounces and points finger guns at Abena and Zara.

MIN-JI
Meet the newest initiates of the famous... Kumasi Dance Academy!

The girls scream and jump in celebration. Zara's eyes mist.

ZARA
The universe heard our prayers.

MIN-JI
C'mon, ladies. Let's do what we do how we do when we do.

The girls perform their signature handshake: three finger snaps, three claps with both neighbors, three crossed-hand chest claps, three hip sways. They giggle uncontrollably.

As they reach the empty side of the parking lot, one car after another whips into tight circles, tires smoking. STUDENTS watch and cheer.

ZARA
Someone needs to sage these fools.

ABENA
(Ghanaian accent)
Don’t mind them.

The girls chuckle.

SCREECH!

The girls look up. A red Mustang hurtles toward them, spinning out of control. STUDENTS scream and scatter. Smoke swallows the parking lot.

MIN-JI
Move, ladies! Move!

Min-Ji grabs Yasmina’s hand. Yasmina grabs Zara’s. As Zara reaches for Abena, a blinding light explodes from Abena’s pendant. Abena’s eyes twitch.

Abena steps toward the spinning car — surprisingly composed. She spreads her arms, shielding her friends.

The Mustang suddenly changes direction, veers onto an open stretch of grass, and sputters to a stop.

The pendant dims. The smoke clears. Min-Ji, Yasmina, and Zara stare at Abena, bewildered and afraid.

ABENA
Did I just do that?

Min-Ji, Yasmina, and Zara nod — eyes wide in disbelief.

STUDENTS rush toward the motionless Mustang.

YASMINA
If anyone finds out what just happened, they’re gonna put your butt in a cage. And start running experiments on you. This stays between the four of us. Nobody says a word.

Everyone nods in agreement.

The girls turn to the Mustang. As one student struggles to pull the driver out, others SCREAM —

INT. ABENA & ZARA'S APARTMENT - ABENA'S BEDROOM - PRESENT DAY - NIGHT (2025)

— the SCREAMS carry over as Abena (30s) bolts awake, hollering, sweat-drenched, one fist locked around her gold adinkra pendant.

ZARA (30s) bursts in wearing a flowing African-print robe, copper bracelets crowding both wrists, her long locs wound atop her head. She pulls Abena into a tight embrace.

ZARA
Hey, sweetie, it was just a dream. You're okay.

Abena's breathing steadies. She relaxes and opens her fist. Blinding light floods the room.

ZARA (CONT'D)
What?! A nightmare can activate your pendant now? What's going on?

ABENA
I have no idea. I'm scared, Zara.

ZARA
Yasmina, Min-Ji, and I have been guarding your secret since we were teenagers. The Fearless Four will figure something out. Like always.

Zara rubs her back and sings a verse over and over until the pendant gradually dims.

ZARA (CONT'D)
Me do me babea. Me do no paa.

INT. CITY BUS - DAY

Abena — wearing afro-chic clothing, super funky glasses, and her adinkra symbol pendant — strides onto the bus.

Abena taps her phone on the fare reader. She briskly weaves through the crowded bus — briefcase in hand.

She slides into the only empty seat beside a MOTHER with a BABY. Beneath her briefcase, Abena's knee bounces on autopilot, shaking the seat.

MOTHER
You good?

The mother flashes a bright smile. Abena smiles back.

ABENA
Yeah. Sorry.

She presses a palm to her bouncing knee, stilling it.

Abena glances out the window. The sun glows orange through wildfire haze. An oil pumpjack bobs behind a row of homes.

She looks across the aisle and spots a CONSTRUCTION WORKER sprawled across three seats beneath a sign marked “PRIORITY SEATING.” She perks up.

He occupies one seat, gobbling pizza and guzzling soda. His pizza box claims another. A six-pack of soda fills the third.

The bus stops. A visibly PREGNANT WOMAN holding a bag of groceries boards and approaches the priority seats. The construction worker looks at her, but doesn’t move.

She stands beside him and grips a rail as the bus pulls away. Abena recoils, face twisted in disgust.

The bus hits a pothole. Passengers sway. Abena grips her pendant and slowly blinks three times. It flashes.

A force yanks the construction worker forward. He face-plants at the pregnant woman’s feet. His pizza box and soda tumble onto him, clearing all three seats.

Passengers scramble to avoid the splatter. Amid the chaos, Abena catches the pregnant woman’s eye. Abena smiles wide and gestures toward the empty seats. The pregnant woman shakes her head.

PREGNANT WOMAN
Been sitting all day.

She sets her grocery bag down and helps the construction worker gather his scattered food and cans. She guides him back into his seat and offers wet wipes. He settles back in.

The construction worker wipes soda and sauce off his clothes. Abena glares at him. Their eyes meet. He squirms under her intense gaze.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER
Can you believe our supervisor didn’t give us a lunch break?! Or even a water break. In this heat!

The construction worker shakes his head in disbelief. Abena exhales sharply and folds her arms.

The next-stop display flashes “LEIMERT PARK STATION.” Abena springs up. Her knees buckle. She grabs the rail and regains her balance.

MOTHER
We don’t need anyone else falling out on this bus. You sure you good?

Abena nods. She staggers off the bus in defeat.

INT. ADINKRA COMMUNITY CENTER - RECEPTION - MOMENTS LATER

Abena staggers through the front door as if drunk.

CHRIS WALLACE (30s) — Abena’s white legal associate who has a crisp lineup and pairs his tailored suit with several iced-out platinum chains — lingers at reception.

He steadies Abena and lowers her into a chair.

CHRIS
Boss, you good? Did someone try to rob you? Are you dehydrated? Is your blood sugar low?

Abena shakes her head after each query.

CHRIS (CONT’D)
Oh! Okay! A little day drinking to take the edge off. I ain’t mad.

ABENA
Boy, bye. Why are you loitering at reception? Get to work. What’s on today’s docket?

CHRIS
No court appearances today. We only have one client meeting. Ms. Gonzalez. Juanito’s mom. The eviction case. She should be here any minute.

ABENA
It’s a little early for a client meeting.

CHRIS
The meeting is later. But since Juanito is in the dance battle, I promised her that we would go together.

Abena shoots him a quizzical look.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Zara's hip-hop dance students are facing off against Sungjoon's? The whole center will be there.

ABENA
Oh shoot! I promised Zara I'd be there. I gotta get pumped up.

CHRIS
Or you could sit this one out. Maybe take a power nap in your office.

ABENA
I'm going. But if I start snoring, tell Zara I'm beatboxing.

MS. GONZALEZ (30s), a Mexican woman with pink hair, enters.

CHRIS
Hey, Ms. Gonzalez. You ready to see Juanito bust some moves?

MS. GONZALEZ
Sí, señor.

Ms. Gonzalez busts her own move, then hugs Chris. She bends down to hug Abena.

MS. GONZALEZ (CONT'D)
You good?

ABENA
That seems to be the million-dollar question this afternoon. I'm fine. I'll walk with y'all.

Abena struggles to her feet. She buckles. Chris and Ms. Gonzalez each support Abena by an elbow. They set off.

ABENA (CONT'D)
Is this your first time here?

MS. GONZALEZ
Sí, señora.

They stop in front of a LARGE MAP of the community center, showing the medical clinic, law office, computer lab, commercial kitchen, restaurant, and gymnasium.

ABENA
Chris will give you a full tour later, but the community center has everything my girls and I wished for when we were coming up. It's our dream come true.

Ms. Gonzalez hugs Abena. The trio continues to the dance studio.

INT. ADINKRA COMMUNITY CENTER - DANCE STUDIO - DAY

Hip-hop music rattles the walls. Zara's students face Sungjoon's across an open stretch of floor. The students freestyle.

SPECTATORS pack in against one wall, seated and standing. Chris and Ms. Gonzalez guide Abena into an empty chair. They stand next to her.

YASMINA MOHAMED (30s), formerly Yasmina Ali — flawless makeup, glasses, a hijab, and a wedding ring — walks toward Abena, chattering on her cell phone.

She spots Chris, pauses her phone call, and covers the phone mic.

YASMINA
Why do you need so many chains? Are you going to court or shooting a rap video?

Chris twists his lips. Yasmina sits next to Abena, then resumes her phone call.

YASMINA (CONT'D)
Tell the CEO that the owner says if we find his password taped to his monitor again, I'm adding a fee for helping the hackers. I'll double it if he accents the password with a yellow highlighter again. Homar!

Yasmina hangs up and huffs.

She turns to Abena and delivers her signature look. She rests a knuckle against her lips, tucks her thumb under her chin, and peers over her glasses.

YASMINA (CONT'D)
Habibti, you look like crap.

Abena rolls her eyes.

ABENA
This jerk decided to occupy three seats on a crowded bus. Priority seats! I had to sort him out.

YASMINA
Was he worth it?

ABENA
No. But I couldn't help myself.

Yasmina grimaces.

ABENA (CONT'D)
Shouldn't you be drilling your students for the upcoming hackathon?

YASMINA
Fernando talked me into giving the team a break. He's the one over there with the head that's too big for his body. Sweet boy.

She points to FERNANDO (12), a spectacularly offbeat dancer.

YASMINA (CONT'D)
Although he wants to be Bad Bunny, he's actually a super talented hacker.

ABENA
You finally found your protégé?

YASMINA
Maybe.

Abena turns her attention to the dancers.

ABENA
Min-Ji's got back-to-back patients. She and Sungjoon are missing their big chance to bring Seoul II Seoul out of retirement.

YASMINA
Retirement? Her and her brother act as if Tuesday karaoke night is their Vegas residency.

Yasmina and Abena giggle.

SUNGJOON KIM (30s) – a tall Korean American man in a hoodie and vintage sneakers – body-rolls. He points to Zara.

ZARA
Bring it, baby!

JUANITO GONZALEZ (10), a Mexican American boy with a blue mohawk, steps forward from Sungjoon's line.

He tears through a dazzling breakdancing set. Sungjoon's students explode with oohs and aahs after every move. Ms. Gonzalez and Chris hoot and holler.

Juanito finishes in a handstand and backs into his line, soaking up the praise.

JOHNNY WASHINGTON (12) — a small African American boy with a larger-than-life afro — struts forward from Zara's line.

Johnny coughs violently. Concern ripples through the room. He recovers. He coughs again, this time in exaggerated slow motion, syncing it to the beat. Both teams roar with delight.

Johnny powers through a windmill, a head spin, and a series of rapid footwork moves. Zara's students answer every move with approving grunts.

Another cough tears through Johnny. Students grin, expecting another fake-out. Johnny coughs again. Harder. He doubles over. The grins vanish.

CHRIS
Oh crap!

Chris calls 911 and dashes out the door. Zara throws out her arms, guiding the students toward the wall with the spectators.

ZARA
Back up! Give him some space!

JERMAINE WASHINGTON (12) — Johnny's overprotective twin brother — bolts to Johnny's backpack and digs out an inhaler. He runs to Johnny and thrusts it into his hand.

JERMAINE
I got you.

Johnny takes a puff. Nothing. Another. Then another. The coughing worsens, racking Johnny's body. His knees fold.

Zara lunges and catches him before he hits the floor. The inhaler slips from his hand. Johnny goes limp.

Jermaine drops beside him, terrified. Some students burst into tears. Others scream.

Zara locks eyes with Abena and gestures to Abena's pendant. Abena nods, grabs her pendant, and slowly blinks three times. The pendant stays dark against her chest.

She tries again. Nothing. Abena and Zara stare at the pendant, devastated.

Chris returns with MIN-JI (30s), a doctor in a white coat, baggy jeans, and high-end sneakers, a tattoo sleeve running down one arm.

CHRIS
I grabbed Min-Ji from the clinic. And the ambulance is on the way.

Medical response bag in hand, Min-Ji races to Johnny and examines him.

MIN-JI
I can't feel his pulse. Chris, grab the AED!

Chris bolts out. Min-Ji begins CPR — hard, rapid compressions. She tilts his head back and gives two breaths. Nothing. More compressions. Two breaths.

Johnny coughs, then breathes steadily. Min-Ji checks his pulse and feels it return.

MIN-JI (CONT'D)
He's breathing.

PARAMEDICS rush in and take over Johnny's care. Abena, Zara, Yasmina, and Min-Ji lock eyes. Stunned silence.

INT. ADINKRA COMMUNITY CENTER - CLINIC HALLWAY - DAY

DOCTORS, NURSES, AND PATIENTS zigzag through the corridor. Amid the activity, Min-Ji stands beside an oversized map. Abena, Zara, and Yasmina look on.

On a map of Leimert Park, red circles mark three oil wells labeled 14, 17, and 22. Yellow pins cluster around each well.

MIN-JI
Wildfire smoke makes respiratory cases, like Johnny's, spike seasonally.
(pointing to the yellow pins)
But these patients are getting sick year-round. And get this.
(MORE)

MIN-JI (CONT'D)
Their blood tests all turned up the same toxins.

ZARA
So, while wildfire smoke poisons us from across the county, these wells poison us from across the street? Jah, have mercy.

YASMINA
Abena, let's sue these bastards.

ABENA
Slow down. This map is devastating. But it only shows a connection between the oil wells and the illnesses. To shut the wells down in court, we need proof that keeping them open will likely cause lasting harm.

YASMINA
You need more proof?! How many children have to stop breathing before the law calls it proof?!

Everyone nods in agreement.

ABENA
I'll invite the regulatory agency here next week. We have enough evidence to demand a full investigation.

Yasmina, Min-Ji, and Zara nod. Abena's smile fades. Her eyes drop. She motions for the ladies to enter an empty exam room.

INT. ADINKRA COMMUNITY CENTER - CLINIC EXAM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Abena shuts the door and speaks in hushed tones.

ABENA
I tried to use my telekinesis to compress Johnny's chest and revive him. But my pendant failed me. I —

Yasmina delivers her signature look.

YASMINA
That's because you spent every last flicker of your pendant's light on a food fight aboard the 210 bus.
(MORE)

YASMINA (CONT'D)
Then, when Johnny needed a withdrawal, the account was empty. Zero. Zilch. Nada. Nothing.

Min-Ji shoots Yasmina a death stare. Zara rubs Abena's back. Abena throws her hands in the air.

ABENA
Oh, great! We've managed to keep this between just the four of us all these years. But now, you wanna announce our secret to the whole clinic.

Abena glances at the door.

ABENA (CONT'D)
Habibti! Hush.

Yasmina raises her hand in apology.

ABENA (CONT'D)
We all know how my power weakens after I use it. How I weaken. But my pendant's never gone completely dark. Until now.

ZARA
Your mom would know why this is happening. I pray that she is still alive and that the universe leads us to her soon.

ABENA
She abandoned me, Zara. Maybe my mom doesn't want to be found. That's why I always say, we're all we got.

The room stills.

Min-Ji looks around. She bounces, popping her booty to an invisible beat.

MIN-JI
(singing)
You're all I need to get by, by.

Abena, Zara, and Yasmina light up and point at one another.

MIN-JI/ABENA/YASMINA/ZARA
(singing)
You're all I need to get by, by.

The four friends fold over, laughing.

INT. ADINKRA COMMUNITY CENTER - GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

An aisle separates 200 folding chairs into two sections. COMMUNITY MEMBERS fill every chair and line the walls. CHILDREN fidget. ADULTS watch the stage.

Two podiums flank a large screen. Abena stands behind one.

ON SCREEN: A SERIES OF SLIDES — Photos of oil wells next to houses.

ABENA
Good evening, everyone.

EVERYONE
Good evening!

ABENA
I'm Abena Prempeh. My girls and I founded the Adinkra Community Center.

Front row: Min-Ji, Zara, and Yasmina stand and wave. The audience applauds.

ON SCREEN: Min-Ji's map.

ABENA (CONT'D)
We've invited y'all here tonight because we have evidence that the oil wells E&B Energy Resources operates are poisoning our community.

ON SCREEN: A SERIES OF SLIDES — Photographs of community members, toxin levels circled beside each face.

ABENA (CONT'D)
Each person on this screen has been poisoned.

Community members raise their hands as their photographs appear.

USHA SINGH (40s) — a bespectacled, brown-skinned woman in a rumpled pantsuit — stands behind the second podium. Her eyes widen with each raised hand.

ABENA (CONT'D)
Ms. Singh is the Southern District Deputy for the California Geologic Energy Management Division, otherwise known as CalGEM. Her office inspects oil wells and enforces the state's safety standards.

Abena turns toward Ms. Singh.

ABENA (CONT'D)
Our demands are twofold. First, your office must conduct a full investigation based on our evidence. Second, your office must shut down the oil wells until we have conclusive proof that they're not poisoning our community.

The audience erupts in cheers and applause. Ms. Singh fidgets with her pen as she surveys the packed room.

MS. SINGH
Thank you, Ms. Prempeh. I must admit, I, um... I didn't expect such a huge turnout.

Ms. Singh laughs nervously and clears her throat repeatedly.

ON SCREEN: A SERIES OF SLIDES — An incident date and description on one side. A green check mark on the other.

MS. SINGH (CONT'D)
We have indeed received several complaints related to E&B's oil wells. And we have thoroughly investigated every single one. As you can see, each time we found that E&B was compliant with our safety standards.

ABENA
(rapid-fire blur of jargon)
That's because your "safety standards" don't account for the cumulative effect of low-level exposure to multiple pollutants over months and years on vulnerable children and elders already living in a heavily polluted neighborhood.

Abena pauses. She takes a deep breath.

ABENA (CONT'D)
You test each poison separately. Our community breathes them all together.

The audience cheers, rising to their feet.

MS. SINGH
I don't have the authority to shut down legally compliant wells. There's nothing more I can do.

A CHILD breaks into a coughing fit. Heads turn. HER PARENTS pull her into the aisle, making space around her. Min-Ji rushes over with water. The child's coughing subsides.

Min-Ji locks eyes with Ms. Singh.

MIN-JI
There's nothing more you can do?

Min-Ji charges the stage. Abena catches her before she reaches Ms. Singh.

ABENA
She's not the enemy. We're going after the broken rules that allowed this to happen in the first place.

Ms. Singh gathers her papers and scurries away.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS exit the gym. Abena, Min-Ji, and Yasmina stand near the stage.

YASMINA
Min-Ji! You're like a wild donkey, charging at people when you get upset.

Min-Ji looks away and exhales through her nose. Zara approaches, a smoldering sage bundle in hand.

Johnny, Jermaine, and HARRISON GEORGE (40s) — a bespectacled African American man built like a defensive lineman, dressed in an immaculate yet dated suit — follow.

Harrison carries a thick stack of files.

ZARA
We need to reset the energy in here. That meeting put our chakras out of alignment.

Zara sweeps the smoldering sage up and down the aisle. She circles it over Min-Ji's head, then Yasmina's. Yasmina chokes.

YASMINA
Get that crap away from me!

Zara rolls her eyes.

ZARA
Beloveds, you know my students Johnny and Jermaine. I want you to meet their neighbor, Harrison.

Harrison shakes everyone's hand.

HARRISON
What's the connection here?

He points at Abena and Zara.

HARRISON (CONT'D)
You sisters?

ZARA
Foster sisters. We met when Reba and Roosevelt took us in.

As the crowd files out, Zara points to an African American couple: REBA JACKSON (50s), a regal yet approachable African dance teacher, and ROOSEVELT JACKSON (50s), her towering, easygoing husband.

HARRISON
What about y'all?

He points to Yasmina and Min-Ji.

ZARA
Our soul sisters. We met in Reba's African dance class at Hamilton High School.

YASMINA
Been keeping these three out of trouble ever since.

MIN-JI
Girl, please. You are the trouble.

Harrison chuckles.

HARRISON
Well! That meeting was a... a hot buttery mess.

ABENA
Excuse me!

HARRISON
I didn't mean to offend. We're all on the same team. I'm just saying, I had high hopes for this meeting.

ABENA
So, what's your story?

HARRISON
E&B murdered my grandfather.

Abena, Yasmina, Zara, and Min-Ji freeze.

ABENA
We're listening.

HARRISON
I've long suspected pollutants from the oil wells caused my grandfather's leukemia. He's all I had.

Zara rubs his back.

Harrison hands Abena a stack of files. She hands half the stack to Yasmina. They both start rummaging.

Abena opens a file and pulls out a letter from CalGEM stamped in red: "NO VIOLATION."

Harrison pulls out his E&B badge and places it on Yasmina's stack.

YASMINA
You work for them?!

HARRISON
I got a chemical engineering degree from Berkeley so they couldn't lie to me. Then I took a job inside so I could find what they were hiding.

YASMINA
Are y'all buying this crap? C'mon!

ZARA
Get into vibration, Yasmina. I've already read his palms. He's legit.

Zara circles the smoldering sage bundle over Yasmina. Yasmina shakes her head and throws up her arms.

HARRISON
Look, I'm telling the truth.

JOHNNY
Our families have lived next door to each other since before we were even born. I can vouch for him, Ms. Yasmina.

JERMAINE
Quiet as it's kept, Daddy doesn't like Mr. Harrison because he and Mama used to date back in the day.

JOHNNY
Hush up. You always telling folks' business. Mr. Harrison is a great dude. End of story.

Harrison pulls a photograph from the files: Harrison and his grandad seated together in a church pew.

HARRISON
See the suit my grandad got on? I got it on right now.

Harrison's eyes mist. Yasmina snatches the photo and examines it.

HARRISON (CONT'D)
I've fought them alone long enough. We can go farther together.

Yasmina whips out her phone. The screen shows a photo of MOHAMED MOHAMED (MO MO) (30s) — an Egyptian American man, muscular and imposing in his LAPD uniform.

YASMINA
My husband's a cop, and if you play us, he'll lock your butt up.

MIN-JI
Cool it, Habibti!

ABENA
My associate, Chris, will look into everything.
(MORE)

ABENA (CONT'D)
If your story checks out, he'll work with you to gather all the evidence we need to take E&B down.

MIN-JI
While y'all run a background check on o' boy, I'll set up a meeting at the end of the month with E&B's environmental safety division so I can present my evidence.

ABENA
Great idea. We'll invite their lawyers and top executives too. It's time for the suits to meet the people they've been poisoning.

INT. ADINKRA COMMUNITY CENTER - HALLWAY - DAY

Min-Ji stands on her tiptoes, struggling to peer through the kitchen door's high window. Abena approaches with a file on E&B in hand.

ABENA
Girl, what are you doing?

MIN-JI
My moms is teaching her first cooking class. Just making sure there're no casualties.

Abena sympathizes. She touches her pendant and blinks three times. Her pendant glows softly.

A chair at the end of the empty hallway glides toward them. Min-Ji steps onto it, bringing the window to eye level.

MIN-JI (CONT'D)
Thanks, boo.

Abena waves it off.

ABENA
Your mom can handle a cooking class. Your parents ran a restaurant for 30 years. Nobody died.

MIN-JI
As far as we know.

CLANK! CLANK! CLANK!

INT. ADINKRA COMMUNITY CENTER - COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Abena and Min-Ji burst into the kitchen.

MS. HYE-JIN KIM (70s) — a small, boisterous Korean woman who always uses her outside voice — clanks a metal pot beside a STUDENT'S ear. Abena rushes to comfort the student while the others cower.

MIN-JI
Yo, Mom! What are you doing?

MS. KIM
This is Korean omelet. I said roll it. He's folding it. He's not listening. Do his ears work?

Ms. Kim continues clanking the pot. Min-Ji restrains her mom. A few students cheer Min-Ji on.

MIN-JI
Eomma, geumanhae!

MS. KIM
Too much praise. Not enough discipline. Not on my watch.

MIN-JI
Class dismissed. See y'all tomorrow. I swear on everything I love, this won't happen again.

Min-Ji stares at Ms. Kim menacingly. The students exit, giving Ms. Kim a wide berth. She registers their fear with a satisfied smirk.

ON THE WALL: A SCHEDULE — "10 A.M. BREAKFAST FOOD. 12 P.M. VEGAN COOKING."

Ms. Kim preps kimchi for her next class.

MS. KIM
I arranged a date. Nice boy from church. Ms. Joon's son. Timmy. He's a doctor. Don't mess this up!

MIN-JI
Oh hell naw! Last time you set me up, dude went to the restroom and never came back.

MS. KIM
You scared him. You think you Tupac. You not Tupac. I'm Tupac.
(singing)
'Cause through the drama, I can always depend on my mama; And when it seems that I'm hopeless; You say the words that can get me back in focus.

Min-Ji bounces her head and grunts after each line.

MS. KIM (CONT'D)
Focus. You're going. That's final.

Min-Ji freezes.

MR. YOUNG-SO KIM (70s) — a tall, understated Korean man — enters with JERRY SMITH (18) — a shy white boy who stutters.

MR. KIM
Meet the first graduate of the Youth Academy for Hospitality. YAH!

Min-Ji high-fives Jerry and Mr. Kim. Abena and Ms. Kim cheer.

MR. KIM (CONT'D)
Yesterday, a trainee. Today, a server.

JERRY
D-d-d-do you really think I'm ready?

MS. KIM
You work hard. You'll succeed. Min-Ji's failing. No husband in sight. Young-so, should she date Timmy?

MR. KIM
Yes.

Abena crosses to Min-Ji and hooks her arm through hers.

ABENA
Slow down, fam. Let's focus on the noon cooking class. Not Min-Ji's love life. Wouldn't teaching the youth to make vegan chili be more practical than teaching them to make kimchi?

MR. KIM/MS. KIM/MIN-JI
No!

Abena unhooks from Min-Ji and steps away, wounded.

MS. KIM
Abena needs a husband. Timmy can bring a friend.

Min-Ji and Mr. Kim light up. Abena recoils.

MIN-JI
I guess it wouldn't be so bad if my girl was with me.

MR. KIM
Jalhaenne. Always so smart.

MS. KIM
It's settled. A double date.

The Kim family exits, escorting Jerry toward the restaurant. Abena stands alone in the empty kitchen — bewildered.

INT. E&B - MEERA'S OFFICE - DAY

MEERA FARAHANI (60s) — a small, brown-skinned, curly-haired woman of Persian descent — sits behind a desk in a tufted leather chair. Her stillness commands the room.

Sunlight pours through floor-to-ceiling windows onto wood-paneled walls. AWARDS line her bookshelves. A nameplate reads "Meera Farahani, CEO."

Across from her sits RICHARD (DICK) MCGREGOR (70s) — a litigator with a Texas drawl who is known for barbecuing his opponents in court.

A folder lies on the desk. Stamped across the cover: "LONGITUDINAL EXPOSURE RISK — INTERNAL ONLY." Meera reads a document.

MEERA
What if our wells are poisoning them? We need to complete a longitudinal study to rule this possibility out.

DICK
Even acknowledging the possibility would trigger a flood of lawsuits.

Dick softens.

DICK (CONT'D)
Only white men have had the privilege of sitting in that there chair. Now it's you. And profits are up twenty percent. Why pick this fight?

MEERA
I'm not a monster, Dick.

DICK
The regulator has confirmed E&B's wells are, in fact, legally compliant.

MEERA
According to this document, our own scientists think these wells are hurting people.

Dick snatches the printout and tears it up.

DICK
What document?

Meera stares at the torn page.

DICK (CONT'D)
I promise that tomorrow I'll shut this down before it hits the front pages. I know you don't like the way I push people's buttons with my Southern charm. But I throw a "sweetheart" here, a "darling" there, and people stop thinking straight. Angry people get sloppy. I don't.

MEERA
So, you enjoy humiliating people?

DICK
I enjoy winning. And so long as this battle plays out in court where they've gotta prove it's our wells, I will win. You're paying me the big bucks to protect your interests, so let me do my job.

Meera nods — slow and reluctant.

INT. E&B - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A wall plaque reads “E&B Energy Resources, Inc.” A long conference table fills the room. Min-Ji stands at its head, pointing to the red circles and yellow pins on her map.

Abena and Chris sit across from Dick and several SCIENTISTS in white coats and LAWYERS in dark suits.

MIN-JI
Thanks for allowing us to present our evidence. As the great philosopher Jay-Z once said, Men lie. Women lie. Numbers don’t.

Abena and Chris clap enthusiastically. A few others follow, hesitant. Min-Ji slips into a seat next to Abena.

ABENA
You see data points. We see our family members. Our neighbors. E&B must shut down wells fourteen, seventeen, and twenty-two until a longitudinal study confirms that they’re not poisoning our community.

DICK
Whoa! Slow ya horses, sweetheart. We will do no such thing. Shucks, that would cost us millions.

ABENA
When we show our evidence to the media and your stock price plunges, that’ll cost millions too. Sweetheart!

Dick’s face turns bright red.

SCIENTIST
The blood tests show petroleum-related toxins, but those same compounds are present in secondhand smoke. The tests prove exposure. Not that E&B’s wells were the source.

DICK
There ya have it. Maybe instead of threatening us, you should host classes at that there center of yours on the dangers of secondhand smoke.

ABENA
Stop right there! You don't get to blame sick families for a system that keeps poisoning them.

DICK
Don't go get ya panties in a bunch.

Min-Ji balls her fist. Chris leans forward. Abena shoots them both a look.

DICK (CONT'D)
Since the state regulator confirmed that we're legally compliant, if you go to the press, we'll sue for defamation. Plain and simple.

ABENA
You and I both know that what we allege in court is privileged and not subject to a defamation suit. So, we won't try this case in the court of public opinion. We'll file a lawsuit.

A devious grin occupies Dick's face.

DICK
Darling, I can't wait to tussle with you in court.

Min-Ji and Chris shoot up. Dick scoots his chair back. He cowers behind a scientist. SECURITY rushes in and guides Min-Ji, Abena, and Chris toward the exit.

Chris shouts as they exit.

CHRIS
We'll see you in court, bootleg John Wayne! Be sure to bring your emotional-support scientist!

INT. ADINKRA COMMUNITY CENTER - LAW OFFICE - DAY

Abena, Chris, Min-Ji, Yasmina, Zara, and Harrison sit around a conference table.

ABENA
So what we got?

ZARA
I've thoroughly saged this room to clear out any blocked chi.

Yasmina lifts her eyebrows.

ZARA (CONT'D)
I also sent several more of my dance students who live near the wells to Min-Ji for testing.

MIN-JI
Same toxins in the new tests. Zara's the bomb.

ABENA
Excellent!

Abena slides a document across the table. It reads: "MOTION FOR TEMPORARY RESTRAINING ORDER AND PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION."

ABENA (CONT'D)
Johnny's parents and five other families have signed on as plaintiffs. We're suing under public nuisance laws. The court granted an expedited hearing next week on our motion to shut the wells down while the case proceeds. We still need evidence that people could suffer lasting harm while this case plays out. Harrison, Chris, what've y'all dug up?

Harrison and Chris lock eyes and grin. Harrison starts the PowerPoint.

CHRIS
We got a plan. But it ain't gonna be easy.

ON SCREEN: A screenshot of a file directory — a lock icon beside "LONGITUDINAL EXPOSURE RISK — INTERNAL ONLY."

HARRISON
After months of snooping around, I found where they buried it. It's a report where my department warned the CEO that our wells likely cause long-term harm.

ABENA
How do you know what the report says?

HARRISON
My supervisor brought the completed report to my office so I could double-check the numbers. Then she asked for it back. When I brought it up later, she acted like it never existed. I got some lawyer friends to put in a formal request for a copy. Same answer. No such report.

ABENA
What?!

HARRISON
If we get a copy, I'll sign a declaration saying it's the same report she brought me. But there's a hitch.

Harrison points at the screen.

HARRISON (CONT'D)
This directory points to the electronic copy of the report. But it's in a folder stored on an air-gapped server, completely cut off from the outside world.

Harrison looks at Yasmina.

HARRISON (CONT'D)
Even South L.A.'s most badass hacker would have to get inside E&B's data vault to decrypt the folder and download its documents.

The entire room turns toward Yasmina. Her eyes widen.

ABENA
Habibti, this is the only way to shut these wells down at our upcoming hearing. Our community is counting on us. Remember, we're all we got.

YASMINA
You can't be serious! My husband's LAPD. If I got locked up, he'd die from shame. I'd lose my cybersecurity company. Everything I've built.

ABENA
Getting locked up is a risk we'd all be taking. Together.

YASMINA
Together? I'd be hacking in. I'd be going to jail. Who are you people? My girls would never ask me to blow up my life. That ain't sisterhood. That's a setup.

Yasmina storms out and SLAMS the door. Zara flinches. Abena and Min-Ji look downward. The locked folder glows on screen.

INT. ADINKRA COMMUNITY CENTER - RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Abena, Zara, and Min-Ji sit at a table, glancing nervously at the entrance.

ZARA
She's not coming. Do you think she'll come? She's never been that mad before.

ABENA
She's coming. Don't worry. Just breathe and rebalance.

Yasmina enters the restaurant and walks toward the table. Abena and Zara exhale. Min-Ji jumps up and grooves.

MIN-JI
(singing)
Friends. How many of us have them?

ALL FOUR
(singing)
Friends. Ones we can depend on. Friends.

The ladies embrace, giggling hard. Each takes her seat.

ABENA
Yasmina, I'm sorry. I was so determined to shut down those wells that I treated you like collateral damage.

YASMINA
Mo Mo had to talk me into coming. You three hard-headed donkeys are buying me dinner. I love —

Jerry interrupts.

JERRY
Here are your m-m-menus, ladies.

MIN-JI
Look at you! My folks told me you're killing it.

Jerry looks down and blushes.

JERRY
I'll be back in just a minute to t-t-t-take your order.

The ladies nod. Jerry walks to the next table and greets a MALE DINER and his DATE. The ladies look on, beaming.

Abena opens her mouth to speak. Yasmina throws up her palm.

YASMINA
Why was Zara the one who told me about this blind double date?

Abena growls. Min-Ji shudders.

YASMINA (CONT'D)
Give me the 411!

MIN-JI
My moms and her matchmaking mafia at church got us out here auditioning spouses.

ABENA
Ms. Kim is Cupid with a switchblade. I couldn't say no.

MIN-JI
I googled Tim and his friend. They're not ugly.

YASMINA
From you, that's high praise.

Yasmina and Zara clap excitedly. Abena looks at the ceiling and takes a long breath.

ZARA
Ask Ms. Kim to find out their birth dates. And birth times, if their mothers remember.

ABENA/YASMINA/MIN-JI
No!

Zara bristles.

Jerry brings drinks to the neighboring table. The male diner takes a sip. He yells at Jerry then sends both drinks back.

Jerry's hands tremble. The ladies clock it, then return to their chatting.

ZARA
The day Kareem and I met, I compared our birth charts. The universe confirmed that our spirits were aligned. Fifteen years later, we're still flowing.

Yasmina delivers her signature look.

YASMINA
Flowing everywhere except down the aisle.

Zara sucks her teeth.

MIN-JI
She's not wrong. If he likes it, then he needs to put a ring on it.

Min-Ji, Yasmina, and Abena botch Beyoncé's "Single Ladies" choreography. The ladies double over, laughing.

CRASH!

The ladies whip around. Shattered glass litters the floor. Red wine splatters the male diner and his date.

Jerry drops to his knees and scrambles to gather the broken glass. His hands shake so badly he keeps dropping the pieces.

JERRY
I'm s-s-s-sorry, sir. Sorry, ma'am.

MALE DINER
You are s-s-sorry. Look what you've done to our clothes.

Min-Ji, Yasmina, and Zara charge forward.

MIN-JI
Yo! Yo! Yo! Hold up. He made a mistake. Chill.

Zara guides Jerry up and wraps him in a protective embrace.

YASMINA
A grown man mocking a young man's stutter? Wine washes out. That ugliness in your spirit is permanent.

Min-Ji pump-fakes the male diner. He cowers. When he starts to retake his seat, Abena clasps her pendant and blinks three times. It glows.

As the male diner lowers himself, the chair slides back. He lands in the puddle of wine. A glass shard draws blood. His date shrieks.

Zara, Min-Ji, and Yasmina look back and lock eyes with Abena. She sits with a satisfied smile.

Abena's eyes twitch. A trickle of blood slips from her nose. She keeps smiling, oblivious. Then, more blood. Abena's mother's voice echoes in her head.

GRACE (V.O.)
Abena, stop it! The Adinkra King will find you. He will punish you.

ABENA
What?

MIN-JI
I said, let's get to the clinic! Now!

INT. ADINKRA COMMUNITY CENTER - CLINIC EXAM ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Abena sits on an exam chair. Min-Ji stuffs cotton into her nose and applies pressure. Zara and Yasmina watch, fidgeting with their hands and pacing.

YASMINA
You've got to stop using your powers! They're too unpredictable right now. Bloody nose today. Body bag tomorrow.

Yasmina slices her hand across her throat. Zara and Min-Ji shoot her a scornful glare.

ABENA
(muffled)
You saw that boy's hands. I couldn't just sit there.

YASMINA
Habibti, we had that man handled. There was no need for you to blink and bleed.

Yasmina stills. She locks in on the bloodied cotton in Abena's nose.

YASMINA (CONT'D)
You're a mess. You can't get the evidence without me.

Abena's eyes widen.

YASMINA (CONT'D)
Allah didn't give me these skills to watch children suffer. I'm in. But we do it my way.

Abena yanks the cotton out of her nose.

ABENA
Wait! Are you serious? You're in?

Yasmina nods vigorously and stretches out her hands. Abena, Zara, and Min-Ji approach. They perform their childhood handshake. It ends with laughter.

INT. YASMINA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Yasmina enters the house. She closes the door, turns the deadbolt, locks the knob, slides the top bolt into place, then hooks the chain.

YASMINA
Mo Mo, I'm home!

Mohamed stands in the kitchen still wearing his LAPD uniform, packing food into two containers.

MOHAMED
How'd it go?

Yasmina's eyes widen. She hesitates, then approaches.

MOHAMED (CONT'D)
Oh boy! It didn't go well, huh?

YASMINA
Who cooked this koshari?

Yasmina peers at Mohamed over her glasses.

MOHAMED
My mom dropped it off. Your koshari is way better though. It's not as spicy.

YASMINA
You called your mom and begged her to drop it off.

Yasmina playfully punches Mohamed's bulky biceps.

MOHAMED
Ouch. I plead the Fifth. Just be thankful that I'm packing lunches for the both of us.

Yasmina pecks Mohamed's cheek. He kisses her forehead. Yasmina takes his hand in hers. Her smile vanishes.

YASMINA
There's a file on E&B's air-gapped server that could help us shut down the wells. The girls are planning a break-in. I told them I'm in.

MOHAMED
Ya Allah! You swore your underground hacking days were over. We're trying to have a baby, Yasmina.

YASMINA
I told you what happened to Johnny. Am I supposed to sit by and ignore the fact that E&B is poisoning my community?
(beat)
I'm scared, Mo Mo. I need your support.

MOHAMED
No! I forbid you!

YASMINA
Forbid me?

Yasmina shakes her head. She releases his hand.

YASMINA (CONT'D)
I'm your wife. Not your child.

She walks to the bedroom and returns with a pillow and blanket. She drops them on the couch, walks back, and slams the bedroom door.

Mohamed stands alone, staring at the bedding. Stunned.

INT. ADINKRA COMMUNITY CENTER - LAW OFFICE - DAY

Abena, Min-Ji, Yasmina, Zara, Harrison, and Chris sit around a conference table. The ladies all wear lapas.

Surveillance photos, floor plans with marked routes, guard rotation schedules, and IT manuals cover the table.

ON A BOARD: "STEP 1: ENTER E&B. STEP 2: ENTER SERVER ROOM. STEP 3: EXIT SERVER ROOM. STEP 4: EXIT E&B."

YASMINA
All of us are putting a lot on the line, so Chris, Harrison, and I have gone over every detail to minimize the risks. But we could still go to jail for this.

Everyone nods.

CHRIS
Based on our stakeouts and research, Veronica will be on duty.

He points to a PHOTOGRAPH of VERONICA HADLEY (50s) — a voluptuous security guard with an extravagant weave and long airbrushed nails.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
She monitors the security footage. And controls the server room door lock. The switch is behind her desk.

A devious grin occupies Chris' face.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Word on the street is she has a huge crush on Harrison.

Min-Ji makes kissing sounds. Everyone giggles. Harrison blushes and lowers his head.

YASMINA
Min-Ji! Focus on surviving Tiger Mom Tinder tomorrow and leave Harrison alone.

Min-Ji blows Yasmina a kiss. Abena rolls her eyes.

ZARA
I'll keep Veronica busy while Abena flips the server room door switch.

YASMINA
Twice, habibti. Once to let me in, once to get me out. I'll text when I'm done. If I'm still in there at nine, security gets an alert.

CHRIS
Flipping the switch is, by far, the hardest part of the plan. Boss, are you sure you got this?

ABENA/YASMINA/MIN-JI/ZARA
Yes!

Harrison and Chris bristle. Min-Ji starts grooving.

MIN-JI
We need a name for this operation.
(singing)
Operation ready or not. Here we come. You can't hide. Gonna find you and. Take. You. Down.

Everyone sways and hypes Min-Ji up. Abena adds to the board: "OPERATION READY OR NOT."

Abena takes a seat. Her face hardens.

ABENA
Remember, the hearing is Wednesday. We've only got three days to get the evidence.

WALL CALENDAR: A red circle around WEDNESDAY.

ZARA
Now that that's all settled, we've gotta hurry. Mama Yaa and Mama Akosua's residency starts today. Class will be fire!

Min-Ji and Yasmina jump up and bolt out, leaving Abena slumped in her chair.

ZARA (CONT'D)
You coming?

ABENA
There's too much to get done before the big night.

ZARA
Your light is scattered, beloved. Come let the drums gather you.

Abena throws her head back in surrender.

ABENA
You're right. I'll be there in a bit.

INT. ADINKRA COMMUNITY CENTER - DANCE STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

DRUMMERS in West African garb fill the studio with soul-stirring rhythms. STUDENTS of all ages dance in a wide circle. Colorful fabrics, sweat, and joy fill the room.

AKOSUA OPOKU (50s) — a tall, exuberant Ghanaian dance master with a prominent birthmark on her chest — steps into the circle and beckons Zara.

Zara inhabits the rhythm — power and grace in every move. Whistles and cheers erupt. She finishes with a flourish and slips back into the circle.

YAA OPOKU (50s) — Akosua's equally tall sister, bearing the same prominent birthmark — paces the perimeter, evaluating every dancer. Stern. Unblinking.

Abena arrives late and slips into the circle. She waves at Akosua and Yaa. Akosua waves back enthusiastically. Yaa's face stiffens. She acknowledges Abena with a modest nod.

Akosua points to Abena. Abena steps into the circle. Her movements mesmerize. Even Yaa's face softens.

The dancers break the circle and move toward Abena, jumping and whooping in amazement. She throws her arms wide and bows. The drums stop. Cheers erupt.

REBA
Come round, everyone!

Reba summons the dancers. Yaa and Akosua flank her.

REBA (CONT'D)
We were teenagers when the Ghanaian dance legend, Prof. Francis Nii-Yartey, chose us to be his protégés... how long ago was that?

AKOSUA
Eish! Long, long time.

REBA
My dear sisters now run the Kumasi Dance Academy, and they're here for a six-month residency. Please make them feel at home. Class dismissed.

Applause erupts. The dancers gather their belongings and file out of the room. Akosua, Reba, Abena, Zara, Min-Ji, and Yasmina chat.

ZARA
Akwaaba, Mama Akosua.

AKOSUA
You've come a long way, Zara. You—

Yaa walks up, locks arms with Abena, and guides her across the room. Akosua eyes her sister.

YAA
It's been too long.

ABENA
Yes, it has. Akwaaba, Mama Yaa.

Yaa embraces Abena. During the embrace, Yaa grabs Abena's pendant and presses it against her adinkra-shaped birthmark. Both flare.

A light surges through Abena's body. Her knees buckle. Yaa squeezes tighter, holding her up. Yaa sings softly.

YAA
Me do me babea. Me do no paa.

FLASH CUTS: The Akan royal court. The ADINKRA KING (60s), charcoal skin draped in gold. GRACE PREMPEH (50s) — a stately Ghanaian woman dressed in kente — wedged between Abena and the King.

SNAP BACK TO:

Abena's body slumps. Yaa and Abena tumble down. Akosua, Reba, Zara, Min-Ji, and Yasmina bolt over. Akosua helps Yaa up, glowering at her. Zara lifts Abena.

ZARA
What happened?

ABENA
(whispering)
I don’t know. But I saw my mom.

Abena’s eyes lock onto Yaa’s glowing birthmark. Yaa stares at Abena’s glowing pendant. Disbelief twists both their faces.

Zara clocks it. She shoots Yaa a fierce look, then tucks the pendant beneath Abena’s shirt before anyone else sees it glow.

ZARA
Abena’s exhausted. I’ll take her home so she can re-center. But y’all keep catching up.

Zara gives Min-Ji and Yasmina a reassuring nod. They nod back. Zara props Abena up and they exit the studio.

INT. ABENA & ZARA’S APARTMENT - ABENA’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Abena and Zara wear nightclothes and sit atop Abena’s comforter. Zara holds a journal with one hand and lifts Abena’s glowing pendant with the other.

ZARA
Why in the world is your pendant still glowing? Why was Mama Yaa’s birthmark glowing?

Abena shrugs. Zara releases the pendant. She writes notes in her journal.

ABENA
I felt light surge through my body. Then, I saw my mom. She was trapped somewhere. She’s alive, Zara. She’s alive.

Zara nods. She rubs Abena’s back.

ZARA
We will find her. But not tonight. We need some sleep. You good?

ABENA
Just a little thirsty, that’s all. But I’m good. Stop worrying.

Journal in hand, Zara hops off the bed and walks toward the door. Zara and Abena blow each other kisses.

Zara starts to close the door. Abena raises a finger, almost calls her back — then stops herself. The door closes.

A glass of water sits on the dresser underneath a window. Abena clasps her pendant with one hand and stretches the other toward the glass. Three slow blinks. Her pendant glows.

The water glass trembles. Then, a blinding flash of light.

CRASH!

The window shatters. Abena screams and jumps out of bed. She backs away from the shattered window.

INT. ADINKRA COMMUNITY CENTER - RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Min-Ji walks in dressed in a silk spaghetti-strap camisole, baggy slacks, and statement sneakers. She tugs the camisole.

The HOSTESS spots Min-Ji and lights up.

HOSTESS
Hi, Ms. Min-Ji!

She embraces Min-Ji, then scans the reservation list.

HOSTESS (CONT'D)
Let's see. Yep. Your party got here early. Shall I take you to your — Ms. Abena. Ms. Zara.

Min-Ji whips her head around. Abena and Zara enter. The hostess hugs them tight.

Min-Ji confronts Abena.

MIN-JI
Zara told us what happened. Why are you here?

ZARA
Because she doesn't listen.

Abena twists her lips. She hugs Min-Ji. Min-Ji pulls away.

MIN-JI
(whispering)
Tomorrow's the big day. You should be chillin'. Powerin' back up.

ABENA
I know how much you're dreading this. I couldn't let you do it alone.

ZARA
I got her here safely. My job is done. I'm going back home.

Zara walks away, then turns back.

ZARA (CONT'D)
Did you ever get their birth dates and birth times so I can —

ABENA/MIN-JI
No!

Zara's smile vanishes. She sulks and stomps out of the restaurant.

ABENA
Shall we?

Min-Ji scans Abena from head to toe. She takes a deep inhale, lets it out, then trudges after the hostess. Abena follows.

TIM CHO (30s) — a Korean American man who looks like he never carries his own golf clubs — and SANJEEV RATHOD (30s) — an attractive South Asian man with a disarming smile — wait at the table.

Tim drinks whiskey while Sanjeev sips a mocktail.

The men spot Min-Ji and Abena. They pop up. Sanjeev pulls out Abena's chair. Tim freezes, then clumsily pulls out Min-Ji's.

Everyone sits. The hostess puts the menus down, gives the ladies a wink, and starts walking away.

TIM
Before you leave, I'll have another double whiskey. Neat.

The hostess nods.

MIN-JI
So, how do you two know each other?

TIM
Sanjeev and I survived USC medical school together. How 'bout you two?

Min-Ji starts the UCLA Eight Clap. She claps eight times. Abena joins in.

They shout each letter with a fist pump, alternating right and left. After each letter, they clap three times.

MIN-JI/ABENA
U! C! L! A!

Then, they repeat the letters in quick succession, alternating fists.

MIN-JI/ABENA (CONT'D)
U-C-L-A.

They pump their right fists on each "Fight!"

MIN-JI/ABENA (CONT'D)
Fight! Fight! Fight!

Min-Ji and Abena collapse in laughter.

MIN-JI
Us two plus two more. The Fearless Four. We all went to Hamilton High then UCLA together.

ABENA
Now we run this place.

Tim's smile fades. He raises his eyebrows, perplexed.

TIM
Your mom said you were a doctor.

MIN-JI
I stayed at UCLA for medical school. Now, I run our clinic. We take everybody — Medi-Cal, uninsured, undocumented. Keeps me broke and busy, but I'd have it no other way.

TIM
With those credentials, you could've been really successful. But instead you choose to work long hours for low pay. Interesting.

Min-Ji and Abena recoil. Sanjeev gently places his hand over Abena's. They lock eyes. She softens.

Sanjeev shoots Tim a quizzical look.

SANJEEV
Really, Tim? Abena and Min-Ji are doing God's work. Meanwhile you're a plastic surgeon whose sacred calling is to enlarge booties and shrink noses.

TIM
Hey! My parents sacrificed so that their kids wouldn't have to struggle. If I took a job that barely paid me, that'd be a slap in the face.

MIN-JI
My parents sacrificed so that I could follow God's calling on my life. They sit next to yours in church.

SANJEEV
You know what? Let's just change the subject.

The hostess arrives with Tim's drink.

TIM
Tough crowd. I'm gonna need another one of these.

The hostess nods.

TIM (CONT'D)
Okay. What kind of music do you like? Is that on your list of approved subjects, Sanjeev?

Sanjeev snarls. Min-Ji lights up.

MIN-JI
Yo! I'm an old-school hip-hop head. Tupac. Snoop. Wu-Tang.

TIM
Hip-hop clothes, hip-hop slang, hip-hop attitude. Isn't that cultural appropriation? Aren't we not supposed to be doing that?

MIN-JI
This is who I am. Hip-hop raised me. I grew up right here. In South L.A.'s public schools.

TIM
Most people would leave that part out.

Min-Ji lunges at Tim. He jerks back and narrowly escapes.

SANJEEV
Everyone calm down!

TIM
I'm outta here.

Abena sits frozen, boiling with anger. Her eyes twitch uncontrollably. Her pendant blazes — untouched.

Tim sprints to the exit. To the other diners, he seems to have tripped, rocketing into the air and slamming his head against a table edge. He goes limp.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Abena lies in a hospital bed. Her pendant glows. Min-Ji, Yasmina, and Zara surround her.

MIN-JI
She sent Tim flying without touching her pendant, like that day in the parking lot. Then they both blacked out.

ZARA
Is Tim now with the ancestors?

MIN-JI
He had a concussion. But now that fool is fine. He's down the hall. His doctor tried to discharge him. But no. He's demanding more tests. Backseat doctoring.

Min-Ji sobers.

MIN-JI (CONT'D)
He was already leaving, y'all. Why didn't she just let him leave?

Yasmina grabs Min-Ji's and Zara's hands, forming a semicircle around Abena.

YASMINA
Things are getting way, way out of control. But so long as we stick together, there's nothing the Fearless Four can't handle. Right?

Zara and Min-Ji nod. Zara sings a verse over and over.

ZARA
Me do me babea. Me do no paa.

EXT. ADINKRA KING'S ROYAL COURTYARD - DAY

Abena stands before the Akan royal court, wearing all white.

DIGNITARIES wear kente cloth and heavy gold adornments. Massive ceremonial umbrellas shade them. Gold-covered stools glint in the daylight.

The Adinkra King stands beside the QUEEN MOTHER (80s) — wrinkled and unmistakably regal.

The King beckons Abena forward. She approaches.

Grace steps out from among the dignitaries and thrusts herself between Abena and the King. She grabs Abena's hand and quietly caresses it with her thumb.

ADINKRA KING
What is her crime?

QUEEN MOTHER
The mother cast a cloaking spell to hide her from you, but it has been lifted. We can now see how recklessly this silly girl uses her powers.

ADINKRA KING
The Adinkra Guardians are the Akan people's most fiercely protected secret. Abena's carelessness has put us all in grave danger.

Grace falls to her knees and prostrates herself before the King.

GRACE
Please. I beg. Punish me. Not her. She doesn't know what she is. She doesn't know what she's doing.

The King rubs his jaw.

ADINKRA KING
I will spare her, so long as you accept our most severe punishment.

GRACE
I accept.

The Queen Mother heats a RITUAL BRANDING IRON over an open fire. As she walks toward Grace, many of the dignitaries cringe, lowering their eyes.

The Queen Mother presses the iron to Grace's cheek. An adinkra symbol sears into her flesh: SEPOW, the executioner's knife.

Grace's high-pitched scream reverberates. Abena SHRIEKS —

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

— Abena SHRIEKS, bolting up in her hospital bed. Her friends startle, grabbing each other for dear life.

ZARA
You're okay, sweetie. We're here. We got you.

Abena calms. Zara, Min-Ji, and Yasmina dive in for a hug.

ABENA
My mom is in danger. The Adinkra King punished her because of me.

YASMINA
The who?

ABENA
All this time I thought my mom abandoned me. But she was hiding me from him. I don't know how to help her.

Abena glances at the WALL CLOCK: 10:00 P.M.

ABENA (CONT'D)
But I do know how to help Johnny. Let's get outta here. Operation Ready or Not starts in less than twenty-four hours.

She starts climbing out of bed. Min-Ji guides her back down.

YASMINA
Some “Adinkra King” is coming after you and you still want to break into E&B tomorrow? Have you lost your mind?

ABENA
We’re so close. I need y’all to trust me. I’m stronger than ever. I’m a Guardian.

The ladies exchange alarmed looks. Min-Ji takes a long breath, then slowly exhales.

MIN-JI
The window shattered. Tim blacked out. You blacked out. Your powers are buggin’ out. We can’t trust them.

ABENA
Don’t trust my powers. Trust me. I won’t use them. Not once. I promise.

Yasmina, Zara, and Min-Ji trade uneasy looks. Zara lights up.

ZARA
Then we stick to the plan. I’ll summon my inner diva and distract the security guard with the performance of the century. We won’t need the pendant.

YASMINA
Zara’s definitely full of drama.
(to Abena)
Even one little flicker from that pendant and Operation Ready or Not becomes Operation Get the Hell Out.

ABENA
Agreed! Now can we finish what we started?

Everyone nods. Abena pops out of bed. She nearly knocks over a bouquet on the bedside table.

MIN-JI
Yoooo! Those flowers are for you. Sanjeev brought them when he came to check on you earlier.

Abena suppresses her grin.

INT. E&B - FOYER - DAY

Veronica firmly commands the security desk. Security monitors flicker on her right. Entrance turnstiles stand on her left.

A control panel of labeled buttons and switches fills the wall behind her. One switch reads “SERVER ROOM.”

Above the panel, a CLOCK reads 2:00 P.M.

Yasmina — wearing a hijab and a cleaning uniform, bag in hand — follows Harrison to the turnstile. Harrison swipes his key card. The gate clicks open. Yasmina steps forward.

VERONICA
Hey, baby! You gonna walk by without saying hi to your favorite girl?
(angry)
Who’s she?

HARRISON
She went to lunch and left her badge in her locker. You know me, Mr. Nice Guy, just letting her in.

VERONICA
(to Harrison)
You so sweet, but baby, you know you can’t do that. No badge. No entry.
(to Yasmina)
Why have I never seen you before? You have a look I’d remember.

HARRISON
She’s brand new.

YASMINA
A look? Are you referring to my hijab? Islamophobia on my first day? This is exactly why I had to sue my last employer. I —

VERONICA
Calm down! Since it’s your first day, you can go through as a courtesy. But next time, you’ll need your badge.

Veronica turns to Harrison.

VERONICA (CONT'D)
And you still owe me that coffee, Mr. Nice Guy.

Harrison grins. He and Yasmina walk through the turnstile and enter the elevator.

INT. E&B - THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Harrison and Yasmina exit the elevator. They walk to the utility closet, scanning the hallway. Yasmina slips inside. Harrison continues to his desk.

INT. E&B - THIRD FLOOR UTILITY CLOSET - DAY

Cleaning supplies crowd the small room. Yasmina rearranges them to create a small workspace. She sets up her computer, snacks, prayer rug, and clock.

THE CLOCK: 2:30 P.M.

Yasmina calls Mohamed, speaking in a whisper.

YASMINA
Hey, Mo Mo. Assalamu alaykum.

MOHAMED (V.O.)
Don't "hey, Mo Mo" me. Where are you?

A loud police radio crackles behind Mohamed's voice.

YASMINA
I'm at E&B, hiding in a utility closet. I should be out by nine.

MOHAMED (V.O.)
Ya Allah! My wife is a criminal. What've I done to deserve this?

Yasmina fumbles the phone, trying to lower the volume.

YASMINA
Shhh. Stop yelling. You're going to get me caught. I love you more than the air I breathe. We — Wait, someone's here?

FOOTSTEPS APPROACH.

INT. E&B - THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

An E&B EMPLOYEE walks by the closet. He places his ear to the door. He shrugs, then walks away.

INT. E&B - THIRD FLOOR UTILITY CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

FOOTSTEPS RECEDE.

YASMINA
Okay, he's gone. Mo Mo, you there?

MOHAMED (V.O.)
(whispering)
Yeah. I'm furious with you, but I'll stay nearby. Call me when you're out. Allah ma'aki.

The call disconnects. Yasmina kisses her phone. A tear rolls down her cheek.

TIME PASSES:

— Yasmina types on her computer and eats snacks.

— She prays.

— She removes an adult diaper from her bag, grimaces, and puts it back.

THE CLOCK: 7:55 P.M.

ON YASMINA'S LAPTOP: LIVE SECURITY FEEDS.

She types. The feeds begin looping. She closes her computer, gathers her things, and exits the closet.

INT. E&B - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

THE CLOCK: 7:55 P.M.

Abena and Zara enter the building and join a short line at the security desk.

THE CLOCK: 7:58 P.M.

Veronica — wearing a name tag and a radio clipped to her belt — calls Zara and Abena forward.

ZARA
Hey, sis. I'm looking for my husband.
(MORE)

ZARA (CONT'D)
He says he's working late, but I know he's with some hussy and I'm gonna catch him in the act.

Abena folds her arms, lending Zara's story some muscle.

VERONICA
Um... Um... Um... Let me call upstairs to see if he's here. What's his name?

ZARA
Harrison.

VERONICA
Harrison? Harrison's married?! That man told me he was single.

Zara pulls out her phone and starts recording.

ZARA
I'm live at E&B, where my husband's side piece, Veronica, just found out he's married.

Veronica cringes.

VERONICA
I am not his side piece. Turn that off. Right now.

Zara walks backward across the foyer, keeping the camera trained on Veronica.

ZARA
Come make me!

Veronica starts after Zara, then catches herself at the edge of the desk. She snatches up her radio.

VERONICA
Turn it off, or I'm calling for backup.

THE CLOCK: 8:00 P.M.

Zara stops recording. She looks at Abena, defeated. Abena grabs her pendant. Zara motions for her to stop. Abena waves her off.

Abena blinks three times. Her pendant glows. The server room switch flips. Zara's face twists in horror.

ZARA
(under her breath)
You promised.

Abena covers her flickering pendant, avoiding Zara's eyes.

INT. E&B - SERVER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

BLEEP!

Yasmina enters. The door slams behind her.

Inside the server room, a reinforced DATA VAULT dominates one wall. Yasmina accesses its terminal, inserts a jump drive, and types rapidly.

ON SCREEN: "DOWNLOAD 2%." The number advances.

YASMINA
Yes!

She quickly covers her mouth, muffling her celebration.

ON SCREEN: "DOWNLOAD 90%." The number stalls.

YASMINA (CONT'D)
Shoot! What the hell!

Yasmina pounds the keys.

INT. E&B - FOYER - NIGHT

THE CLOCK: 8:30 P.M.

Zara asks for Harrison again. She and Veronica start talking over one another, arms flailing. Abena hangs back, her fist closed around her glowing pendant.

VERONICA
Leave right now or I'm calling the police.

Light bursts through Abena's fingers. Grace's SCREAM tears through Abena's head. Abena reels, clutching her head. Her eyelids flutter. She collapses.

Zara dashes to her side. Veronica calls 911.

VERONICA (CONT'D)
This is E&B security officer Veronica Hadley.
(MORE)

VERONICA (CONT'D)
I have one unconscious woman and another threatening me. Send police and paramedics.

INT. E&B - SERVER ROOM - NIGHT

ON SCREEN: "TRANSFER INTERRUPTED. ENCRYPTION KEY REJECTED."

Yasmina plugs in a second jump drive, types rapidly, then hits ENTER.

ON SCREEN: "DOWNLOAD 91%." The number advances.

YASMINA
Alhamdulillah!

ON SCREEN: "DOWNLOAD 100%."

Yasmina pockets both jump drives, sends a text, gathers her belongings, and heads to the door. She waits, hand on the handle.

THE CLOCK: 8:45 P.M.

YASMINA (CONT'D)
Open the door, ladies. Open the door.

INT. E&B - FOYER - NIGHT

PARAMEDICS attend to Abena, now conscious but dazed. Zara kneels by her side. LAPD OFFICERS burst in.

VERONICA
Fellas, she's the one causing the ruckus.

Zara looks up.

ZARA
Mo Mo?

VERONICA
You know her?
(beat)
Figures. This loony toon probably got warrants in all fifty states.

MOHAMED
Fellas, I'll take care of this.

Mohamed pulls Zara to the side. She whispers in his ear. Mohamed's eyes dart to the panel behind the security desk.

Zara returns to Abena's side. Mohamed approaches the desk.

MOHAMED (CONT'D)
Ma'am, I'm gonna need you to step out from behind the desk.

VERONICA
What? Whatever she said, she's lying.

MOHAMED
Ma'am, move now!

Veronica trudges away from the security desk. Mohamed steps behind it and rummages around, subtly angling his duty belt to bump the SERVER ROOM switch.

CLICK.

He keeps rummaging.

THE CLOCK: 8:58 P.M.

INT. E&B - SERVER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

BLEEP!

Yasmina exits. The door slams shut behind her.

INT. E&B - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

MOHAMED
Ma'am, you're right. She's lying. Her husband's not tied up behind this desk.

VERONICA
Why's it always got to be the pretty boys who are so damn dumb?

Veronica returns to the security desk. She plops in her seat, shaking her head.

Yasmina enters the foyer. She sees the paramedics attending to Abena and flinches.

VERONICA (CONT'D)
Hey! You were with Harrison. Your shift should've ended hours ago.
(MORE)

VERONICA (CONT'D)
I'd recognize you anywhere.
(pointing to the hijab)
I knew —

MOHAMED
Ma'am, stop with the Islamophobia!

Veronica throws her hands in the air. Mohamed and Yasmina exchange looks. Yasmina exits.

INT. ADINKRA COMMUNITY CENTER - LAW OFFICE - DAY

Chris, Harrison, Yasmina, Min-Ji, and Zara sit around the conference table, glued to their computers. Empty coffee cups and food wrappers cover the table. Everyone looks exhausted.

Abena walks in.

ABENA
Hey, y'all. Before you say a word — yes, I passed out. And yes, I'm fine. Turns out, I was just dehydrated.

The ladies exchange a furtive look.

YASMINA
You're fine? I almost went to jail. My husband put his badge on the line. But you're fine.

ABENA
God knows you're too pretty for jail. He wouldn't allow it.

Abena walks behind Yasmina and wraps her in a long hug. Yasmina stiffens as they exchange whispers.

YASMINA
You promised you wouldn't.

ABENA
I know. But the plan was falling apart.

YASMINA
Then we abort. That was the deal. You don't get to make choices for me.

ABENA
You're right. I broke my promise. I'm sorry.

YASMINA
I love you. But I don't trust you right now.

Abena releases Yasmina. The whispering stops. Abena breathes deeply, then addresses Chris.

ABENA
How many documents were in the folder?

CHRIS
Over a thousand files — handwritten lab notes, degraded scans, and meaningless file names. We split them up.

ABENA
The hearing starts in thirty minutes. We need the document, or we're going to lose today.

CHRIS
Why don't you go to the hearing and stall them? I'll bring the document once we find it.

Abena nods and dashes out the door.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Johnny, Jermaine, and their parents sit in the gallery alongside other community members.

A JUDGE in a black robe presides. Abena sits alone at one counsel table. Dick and three LAWYERS occupy the other.

JUDGE
Ms. Prempeh, you've stalled long enough. Show me evidence that your clients face irreparable harm if those wells keep operating, or I'm denying your motion.

Chris and Harrison burst into the courtroom. Harrison sits next to the twins.

Chris hands Abena a folder. Abena reviews its contents, then shouts for joy. The entire courtroom startles. Chris sits. He whispers in her ear.

CHRIS
Ready or not. Here we come. You can’t hide.

ABENA
Your Honor, we move for leave to submit this memo supported by a sworn declaration from Harrison George, an employee whistleblower protected under California Labor Code section 1102.5.

Abena points to Harrison in the gallery. She hands the folder to the judge. The judge removes the memo.

The header reads: “TO: MEERA FARAHANI, CEO. FROM: DR. LENA ORTIZ, DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY DIVISION. SUBJECT: CUMULATIVE EXPOSURE RISK ANALYSIS — WELLS 14, 17, AND 22.”

The judge reads the highlighted passage aloud.

JUDGE
While emissions from wells fourteen, seventeen, and twenty-two are legally compliant, it is highly likely that they produce significant cumulative health burdens in sensitive populations.

Dick’s eyes widen. He shoots up.

DICK
Objection! Untimely. Lack of foundation, lack of authentication, and hearsay. We’ve had no opportunity to examine the document.

JUDGE
To give E&B time to review this document, I’m continuing this hearing to Friday morning. Mr. McGregor, I suggest you discuss a settlement before we reconvene. I’m troubled by what this document suggests. This court is adjourned.

The judge pounds her gavel. Dick slams both hands on the table. Abena and Chris walk to the exit, glaring at him.

INT. E&B - MEERA’S OFFICE - DAY

Meera sits at her desk across from Dick.

MEERA
You failed. So now I'm handling this.

Meera holds Dick's gaze, unblinking.

MEERA (CONT'D)
I just got off a conference call with Ms. Prempeh and her lead plaintiffs. She gave us a choice: settle, or she releases the memo to the media.

DICK
Her threats don't scare me. I can't wait to crucify her in court.

MEERA
Our own scientists warned us. We kept pumping. That's the headline.

Dick grunts dismissively.

MEERA (CONT'D)
After Eaton and Palisades, every climate group in California is blaming fossil-fuel companies for worsening fire conditions. This memo makes us public enemy number one.

DICK
Calm down! You —

Meera stands up and pounds her desk.

MEERA
Dick, we're not going back to court. We're settling.

DICK
You do this, the board will come for your job.

Meera absorbs the threat.

MEERA
Then let them come.

Dick stands, plants his hands on her desk, and leans forward.

DICK
You scare too easily. Let me do my job. Let me protect you.

MEERA
Sit. Down.

Dick obeys. Meera picks up the phone and dials.

MEERA (CONT'D)
Ms. Prempeh, can you gather your lead plaintiffs so we can discuss a settlement?

INT. ADINKRA COMMUNITY CENTER - GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

SUPER: TWO WEEKS LATER

The room mirrors the setup from the last community meeting. Onstage, Abena sits between Meera and Ms. Singh.

ABENA
Welcome, everyone. Thanks for coming. As promised, E&B has a very important announcement to share.

MEERA
My lawyers have advised me to make clear that our actions are not an admission of liability.

The audience groans. Meera raises her palm.

MEERA (CONT'D)
But! We have launched an independent longitudinal study to investigate whether our oil wells have had long-term adverse effects on vulnerable populations in the community.

Applause erupts. Johnny and Jermaine high-five each other. Harrison hugs their mom. Their dad sneers.

MEERA (CONT'D)
I know you wanted us to close down the wells while the study is ongoing. We cannot do that.

A concerned hum spreads through the audience. A few jeer.

MEERA (CONT'D)
But! We'll have a third party install environmental monitors around the wells and publicly report the results.
(MORE)

MEERA (CONT'D)
We'll also fund medical treatment for affected community members through the Adinkra Medical Clinic.

Heads nod hesitantly. Some groan.

MS. SINGH
E&B has complied with every enforceable standard. These measures go beyond anything our regulations require.

The audience heckles Ms. Singh.

ABENA
This is not about one company, Ms. Singh. It's about a regulatory system designed to sacrifice the community while pretending to protect it.

The audience cheers, giving Abena a standing ovation. Abena gestures for Min-Ji, Zara, and Yasmina to come on stage.

Min-Ji glares at Ms. Singh. Ms. Singh looks away. Silent. Ashamed.

ABENA (CONT'D)
Y'all, we didn't get everything we wanted. But this is a win nonetheless. When we fight together...

Abena stretches her hand to the crowd.

EVERYONE
We win together!

Abena reaches for her girls. Yasmina raises her fist with the community but does not take Abena's outstretched hand. Min-Ji and Zara exchange looks, then take Abena's hands.

INT. ADINKRA COMMUNITY CENTER - RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Abena, Min-Ji, Zara, Yasmina, Mohamed, Sungjoon, Mr. Kim, Ms. Kim, Chris, Reba, Roosevelt, Harrison, Johnny, Jermaine, and their parents crowd around a long table, eating, drinking, chatting, and laughing.

Abena catches Yasmina's eye across the table. Yasmina looks away.

Grace's scream echoes in Abena's head, tormenting her. Abena masks her anguish with a smile. She sits alone, surrounded by the people she loves.

Harrison's phone lights up with a call from "E&B HUMAN RESOURCES." He draws a deep breath, then silences it. He continues chatting with the Kim family.

Ms. Kim looks at Harrison.

MS. KIM
You single?

Min-Ji shoots her mom a menacing look. Ms. Kim ignores her. Min-Ji stands and clinks her glass. The table falls silent.

MIN-JI
I wanna give a toast. This is an important first step. And we got here, together. Because...

Min-Ji starts grooving.

MIN-JI (CONT'D)
(singing Montell Jordan)
This is how we do it.

Everyone except Abena jumps up and grooves, singing along.

EVERYONE
South Central does it like nobody does. This is how we do it. To all my neighbors, you got much flavor. This is how we do it.

Grace's screams escalate. Abena's smile dies. As the celebration swells, Abena remains seated. Silent. Alone.

INT. ABENA & ZARA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Abena clutches her head as Zara ushers her through the door.

ABENA
Her screams are getting louder and louder. They won't stop.

Zara eases Abena onto the couch. She wheels a makeshift investigation board out of her bedroom and stops it in front of Abena. Shock lights Abena's face.

Red thread connects photographs of Grace, notes from Abena's visions, and a rough sketch of the Adinkra King.

ZARA
I put this together from everything you told me.

Zara removes Yaa and Akosua's residency flyer from her purse. In the flyer's photo, the sisters stand side by side, their matching AKOBEN birthmarks exposed.

Zara pins it beside an old photograph of Grace. In the photo, Grace's open collar reveals the same mark. Abena stares at the three birthmarks.

ABENA
How do we get Mama Yaa and Mama Akosua to tell us everything they know about my mom?

CLOSE ON: the matching AKOBEN birthmarks.

END OF PILOT