

FAITH AND REASON

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INT. JACKSON HOME CLOSET- DAY

A soothing spiritual HUM emanates from a closet full of colorful church hats, scarves and pins.

An **OPEN BIBLE** rests on a suitcase near **DARLENE JACKSON**, 80, a graying African-American woman kneels at a vanity chair turned makeshift altar. Her hum turns into a hymn followed by a short prayer.

DARLENE

"Give me a clean heart, and I'll follow thee." And lord please continue to be a hedge of protection all around us as we acknowledge you in all our ways.

The phone lights up with a FaceTime call from **CASSIE**.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

In your name we pray, amen.

Darlene looks at the out-of-focused phone, everything is blurry. She holds it to her ear.

On the phone we glimpse her daughter, **CASSIE**, 50's, in a power suit that screams high-priced attorney. Cassie tries to be patient.

CASSIE

Mother?

Darlene gingerly stands and puts her slippers on.

DARLENE

Good morning, you headed to work?

CASSIE

Calvin says you didn't check in last night or this morning. And, you didn't call me. What happened to you?

DARLENE

Hello? You there?

CASSIE

Mom, I see your ear, this is a FaceTime call.

DARLENE

What happened when?

CASSIE

We agreed you would check in twice a day. If this is going to work your have to keep your end of the bargain.

Darlene turns the phone around but her focus is unstable.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

I see you now.

DARLENE

Well, I don't see you. Let me find my glasses.

CASSIE

Mom, your glasses are on your face.

DARLENE

What do you know, They sure are.

CASSIE

Mom, how's your eyesight?

DARLENE

About the same. I got a late start, plus I got carried away talking to the lord this morning. Did you read the bible and talk to the lord this morning?

CASSIE

I did, mom. I'm glad you're okay, don't forget to take your blood pressure and make sure you eat before you take your medicine.

DARLENE

Since you became an attorney you want to interrogate everybody. Let me ask you some questions. Did YOU eat breakfast this morning? Mhm, I know you didn't. You just grabbed a cup of joe and headed...

Darlene collapses to the floor. Cassie's worried face shows on the phone. Cassie sees an array of church hats and the ceiling.

CASSIE

Mother? Mom? OH goodness! Mom...

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - EVE

A black car pulls up to the entrance of Memorial Hospital. Cassie exits the car with a suitcase and heads to the door.

INT. HOSPITAL- WAITING ROOM- NIGHT

Cassie sits nervously surrounded by other guest. She responds to texts from her brother Calvin. **"I'm still here, waiting for an update. I'll let you know as soon as I know."**

She twiddles her thumbs, takes her jacket off, sit back down and finally a doctor arrives.

DOCTOR

Ms. Jackson, we meet again.

CASSIE

Yes, it's almost been a year. You can call me Cassie. How is she?

DOCTOR

Let's talk somewhere privately.

Cassie nervously walks with the doctor to a quiet corner and braces herself.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

It took sometime, but we were finally able to bring her pressure down and it was dangerously elevated. Make no mistake this would have turned out differently had you not been on the phone with her. She needs to replace a few stints but her pacemaker is fine.

Cassie slips into the hospital room with her bag in tow. She watches her mom sleep. She looks at the monitors, IV tubes and holds back tears.

DOCTOR V.O.

Her vision problem may continue to get worse. It's a side effect of her sickle cell. When we met last year we discussed her need for monitoring but she still lives alone?

Cassie studies her moms face and kisses her forehead and settles in for the night.

CASSIE (V.O.)
She's strong willed and really
treasures her independence.

DOCTOR
It's never easy but it's not a wise
living arrangement. It's not safe.
Unfortunately this is going to be
her new norm.

DARLENE'S KITCHEN TABLE - AFTERNOON

Family photos adorn the kitchen walls and an array of
medications cover the kitchen table including a broken blood
pressure monitor.

Darlene has her arms folded in defiance. Her hospital name
tag is still on her wrist. Cassie completes a laundry list of
her medications.

CASSIE
So we have the blood thinners, the
diuretics, the kidney medications,
acid reflux, the eye drops, what's
this one?

DARLENE
I take that one as needed, that's
for gout. Does the doctor have to
know about that too? How about the
vitamins?

CASSIE
Yes he wants to know everything.
What vitamins are you taking?

DARLENE
Just kidding, I'n not taking any
vitamins. I brought some but by the
time I take all these I'm too full.

CASSIE
I'll send this to your doctor.
He'll refer us to a good doctor in
Houston.

DARLENE
You don't hear to well do you?

CASSIE
My hearing is just fine.

DARLENE

To be so smart, something is very wrong with your understanding. This is my home. I've been holding it down since before you and Calvin went to college. I cook and clean for myself. I can't think of one good reason I should leave.

CASSIE

Mom! There's a plethora of reasons right here on this table. How can you keep up with all this stuff?

DARLENE

Plat a whoo? You and your big lawyer words. Where's your medicine? Your doctor put you on cholesterol medicine did you bring that with you?

CASSIE

Mom.

DARLENE

Did you have your mammogram this year? What about your wellness exam? Mmh That's what I thought.

CASSIE

Mom, you're deflecting.

DARLENE

There you go with the big lawyer words again. Since that little miss step last year. You and Calvin won't give me a break.

CASSIE

Last year was a misstep, this year was worse.

DARLENE

I don't know why you sent them people marching into my home. Causing a scene, worrying all the neighbors. Now I gotta remember a new code to the door.

CASSIE

You would have done the same thing for me. I'm calling Calvin.

DARLENE

Good. I can tell you both at the same time. You will be on that flight by yourself. I'm not leaving my home. That's it.

CASSIE

Mom, it doesn't have to...

DARLENE

I don't want to talk about it any more.

A defeated Cassie watches Darlene put her medicine in a zip lock bag.

Darlene sips her tea and hands Cassie a cosmetic bag with hair supplies.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

Can we get started, I don't want to fall asleep on you.

Cassie takes the bag and unpacks a comb, a brush and hair grease. She parts her moms hair down the middle and greases her scalp. Cassie braids Darlene's hair and chuckles.

CASSIE

Remember when I put a whole jar of hair grease in my hair?

DARLENE

How could I forget. You had grease everywhere, the floor, the walls...

CASSIE

What was I, four years old?

DARLENE

You were old enough to know better.

CASSIE

This is the same brand.

DARLENE

I washed your hair everyday for weeks and still didn't get it all out. Talking bout, "look mommy I fixed my hair". Always trying to be helpful and most of the time making a mess.

CASSIE

I guess your right. I told Calvin and the doctor there was no way you would agree to move in with me. Do you want a mirror?

DARLENE

I don't need a mirror. Just make em flat, and not too tight either.

CASSIE

I'll make you a big breakfast in the morning. I'll try to get everything in order by the end of the week. It shouldn't take long to sell my house.

DARLENE

Sell your house? Why would you do that. Your father would die all over again.

CASSIE

The last thing he told me and Calvin was "take care of you mother". Whose going to take you to your doctor's appointments and all your church functions. If you won't come live with me then I'm going to quit my job, and come here.

DARLENE

All that education going to waste?

CASSIE

Maybe, Maybe not. The truth is, if anything happens to you I couldn't live with myself.

DARLENE

Do you have any sense?

CASSIE

I barely sleep as it is. I can't have daddy haunting me.

DARLENE

They don't make em like your dad anymore. He was a great friend, father and even better husband. Still trying to make sure I'm taken care of even in death. God rest his sweet soul. I miss him so.

CASSIE

Me too momma, me too. And you know what?

DARLENE

What?

CASSIE

I miss you too? You're all done. You want a mirror.

Darlene rubs her hands over her braids.

DARLENE

I don't need a mirror, they feel nice and flat, not too tight either. I'm gonna have my talk with the man up stairs before I hit the sack.

CASSIE

I'll have brief conversation from my pillow. I'm exhausted.

Cassie sees her mom struggling to get up and she rushes to help her up.

DARLENE

It's late, I lose my strength in my left leg this time of the day.

Cassie face is full of concern as she watches her mom limp toward the bedroom.

CASSIE

Let me know if you need anything.

DARLENE

I'll let you know.

INT. JACKSON HOME - MORNING

Cassie's bag is packed. She heads to the bedroom with breakfast but Darlene's bed is empty and doesn't look slept in. She returns the food to the kitchen.

Cassie looks in the garage and the backyard.

She hears her mom humming and follows the sound to the closet. Cassie spies Darlene on her knees finishing her prayers.

DARLENE

Be a hedge of protection around us all and thank you for your wisdom, your guidance and direction. ***I will trust in the Lord. I will trust in the lord I will trust in the lord til I die.*** Thank you lord. Amen. *You should have joined me.*

CASSIE

I wanted to make you some breakfast.

Cassie looks around the closet and notices hat boxes on the floor.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Mom, are you giving your hats away?

DARLENE

Just packing them up. Hate to leave things messy. Where this breakfast you promised?

INT. JACKSON HOME KITCHEN - DAY

Darlene cleans her plate and Cassie stares knowing it could be the last time she sees her like this.

There's enough food in the fridge for a few days and I'll have groceries delivered on Friday.

DARLENE

I don't plan on being here then that wont be necessary.

CASSIE

Mom, don't talk like that.

Cassie clears the dishes. Darlene gets up from the table and look around her home taking a mental picture. Then heads to the door. The DOOR BELL RINGS. Cassie looks confused.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Who you expecting this early?

DARLENE

I told the driver to come early seeing as you have a lot more bags to check.

CASSIE

I do?

The driver carries Darlenes two suitcases and hat boxes to the car.

DARLENE

Well, I figured somebody needs to make sure you're eating right and taking your medication. Come on now.

Casie and Darlene walk toward the door.

CASSIE

I could use the help, Mom, I really can.

DARLENE

I mean who's gonna remind you to get your annual exams? I need to make sure you're getting your sleep. What kind of mother would I be if I didn't make sure you were taking care of yourself.

Cassie helps her mom into the car. They hold hands as they look at the trees headed to the airport.

FADE OUT.