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Waiting to Exhale

By Terry McMillan

D.J. OVER RADIO:

K107, broadcasting on New Year's Eve.
Why don't y'all scribble down those
New Year's resolutions and dial me up.
Tell us those lies you're telling yourself,
promises you know you won't keep.

WOMAN 1:

resolutions. They're stupid.
- I Promise I will not spend....

WOMAN 2:

...this year,
I'm starting my catering business.

WOMAN 3:

I'll whip something on him so tough....

WOMAN 4:

and eat right. Fifteen pounds.
Okay, 35. I mean it. Thirty-five pounds.

MAN:

where you wanna be tonight?
And where do you wanna be next year?
Think about it. Because we're getting
close to that final hour.
So if you haven't finished
those resolutions...
...you'd better jump it
before it's too late. I've made mine.
How about you?
This is brand-new from
the beautiful chante Moore, "wey U."
K107. check it out.

SAVANNAH:

the men in Denver are dead.
No wonder I'm changing towns again.
It's gotta be better in Phoenix.

BERNADINE:

I gotta pick up the babysitter...

...pick up my gown,
stop and get John's tux.
I'd clone myself,
but I wouldn't have time for the surgery.

ROBIN:

the wrong men to fall in love with.
My weakness is pretty boys
with big sticks.

GLORIA:

spend New Year's Eve with his homeys.
He sees them every day.
Plus, there are gonna be
all these drunk fools in the streets.
He'd have more fun at home with me,
watching videos.

D.J.:

that if you're searching...
...somewhere, there's a love for you.

SAVANNAH:

Here it is New Year's...
...and I'm geeked up for a blind date
that's not even all that.
Just some party this guy's voice
invited my answering machine to...
...when got worn out
playing phone tag.
A long time ago, I asked God
to send me a decent man.
I got Robert, Cedric,
Darrell and kenneth.
God's got some serious explaining to do.
So my prayers got more detailed.
Like, how about some compassion?
could he have a sense of purpose?
A sense of integrity?
could he listen?
The truth is, most men are deaf.
They prefer to guess what you need,
but they don't guess worth shit.
They lie without a conscience.

what they're best at is convincing us
we should feel desperate.
Thank God I don't fall for that shit.
If I had the nerve,
I'd get me some real breasts.
[PHONE RINGING]
Oh, I know that's gotta be Mama.
She's the only one
that knows I'm staying in a hotel.
I Iove you, Ma, but tonight....
I'll call you in the morning, Ma.

BERNADINE:

to another one of these boring affairs.

- Bernie?

- Yes?

Would you be terribly disappointed
if we didn't go to the party tonight?
crushed.

What?

I guess there's no appropriate time
to tell you this, but...

...I'm going to the party,
just not with you.

- She--

- She?

Yes.

She doesn't wanna be alone tonight,
and I was thinking, "Why should she be?"

It's that bitch

who keeps your books, isn't it?

And you picked tonight
to flaunt your whore...

...in front of all your business partners
and your friends.

- What are they supposed to think, John?

- The truth.

Finally, the truth.

I'm leaving you for her.

MAN OVER RADIO:

of the Emergency Broadcast System.

This is only a test.

Don't worry...

...you can have the house,
and you know I'll take care of my kids--
You wait a minute.
I give you 11 fucking years of my life...
...and you're leaving me
for a white woman?
Would it be better if she were black?
No, it'd be better if you were black!
Thank you, Bernadine...
...for making this easier for me.
I'll be back next week for my things.

MAN:

of the Emergency Broadcast System.

D.J.:

your groove on. All night long.
I don't believe
I'm spending New year's Eve by myself.
This is definitely a first.
Finally gave up on Russell.
A lying, sneaky, whorish Pisces!
[WHIMPERS]
Russell was so fine.
Probably...
...every woman in America
wanted to be with him...
...but you know what, Achey?
Oh, I knew he was mine...
...till....
Till I found that half-slip
in his gym bag.

D.J.:

Phone's ringing off the hook tonight...
...from women wondering
where all the real men are.
So for you fellas out there
running the streets...
...looking for love
in all the wrong places...
...there's something you should know.
Love might be waiting
right there at home.

Ma, I wish you were going out tonight.
I'm just fine, thank you.
you coming in at a decent hour tonight.
It's New year's Eve.
Things don't jump off till midnight.
you should praise God I'm letting
you out at all, the grades you get.
you best get busy. You're gonna be using
Morse code to contact your girlfriends.
I'm doing the best I can,
so just ground me.
Your father's coming on Tuesday.
And?
He's not my father, he's my daddy.
There's a big damn difference.
Watch your mouth.
I see the bastard every two years.
I'm supposed to get excited?
You get excited.
I can't believe this, man.
Why she doing this?
What is that supposed to mean?
Where'd he sleep
the last time he was here?
Ma, I'm sorry. I'm sorry.
Ma, I'm sorry. Ma, I'm sorry.
I'm sorry. I'm really sorry.
That's none of your business.
I'm sorry.
[BRANDT'S "SITTIN' UP
IN My ROOM" PLAYs]

D.J.:

broadcasting live from The Hermosa...
...and this is where the party's
going down.
Why are you sitting there
when you could be in my room?
Let Brandy tell you.
check it out. k107.
Excuse me, is anyone sitting here?
No. Please join us.

WOMAN:

She has her nerve sitting down here.

SAVANNAH:

Hell, yeah.

I'm single and desperate
and have no morals...

...and when you turn...

...I'm gonna flirt my butt off
and then take your man.

I can't stand a woman like her. Please.

Savannah?

- Lionel? Hi.

- Hi.

God, if this man isn't the one,
at least let me dance till I sweat.

- Would you like to dance?

- I'd love to.

All right.

God, you look so beautiful tonight.

- Thanks.

- I'm certainly glad we finally met.

You made it here safely, in one piece.

Our answering machines

almost moved in with each other.

I'm glad we met too.

[THE WHISPER'S "I'M GONNA
MAKE YOU MY WIFE" PLAYS]

You feel so good.

Thank you, Jesus.

And then I did it.

I closed my eyes...

...and I exhaled.

And pretended this man was mine...

...that he was everything

I ever dreamed of...

...that he was the one

I'd been waiting for all my life.

WOMAN:

Lionel.

Lionel.

You haven't danced with me all night.

Savannah, this is my friend Denise.

If I hurry, I can still catch Dick Clark.

What's up, Joseph?

I like them pants.

- Thank you, girl.

- Joseph, he show up?

You think he didn't?

come on, honey, you next.

Gloria, look at this.

Go on, there.

Yes, that's nice, very nice.

- Looks just like in the book.

- Gloria, you like this color?

- I charge you 25 cents for each finger.

- You're gonna charge me what?

Robin, why don't you just

come out of my shop...

...go back to that insurance company

you work for.

Because, baby doll,

I don't punch in or out.

- I got it like that. Remember?

- Lunch hour is over.

So I guess you guys have heard, huh?

- What?

- Jhon Left Bernie.

- What?

- Uh-huh.

And for a white girl.

- You Lying.

- For a white girl?

Honey, if I'm lying, I'm flying.

I saw her just the other night

at the circle K, and she was a mess!

Honey, her hair was in rollers.

She had a funky old bathrobe on.

- I had to take my girlfriend home.

- Joseph, are you serious?

- As a heart attack.

- Be still...

- ...I don't wanna burn your scalp.

- Gloria, I toId you he was an asshole.

-Excuse her, baby.

ROBIN:

Watch your mouth in here.

537....

- Are you calling? Let me talk--

- Wait.

- Let me talk.

- It's the machine.

Bernie, this is Gloria.

Honey, you call me at the shop, okay?

We wanna know

what's going on--

How dare that son of a bitch

leave you with two kids!

- You don't go there up in here.

ROBIN:

- Go on back to work.

- ...I will see you Tuesday.

JOSEPH:

- Oh, my goodness, Miss Monroe.

GLORIA:

Honey, you call me at the shop, okay?

we wanna know what's going on--

ROBIN:

leave you with two kids!

SAVANNAH:

I'm here. call me. I'm at the Biltmore.

Hey, hey, hey. Hug?

Thank you.

ONIKA:

John, Iet's go!

Thank you.

GIRLS:

Mama's boy.

Bye.

BERNADINE:

This motherfucker is psychotic.

I bet you there's serial killers less anal.

A white woman is probably the only one

who'll tolerate your smug ass!
yeah, I was your white woman
for 11 years!
couldn't have started
that damn company without me!
Hell, I worked my ass off.
I mean, I got a master's degree
in business...
...and there I was his secretary,
his office manager and his computer!
"No, Bernadine, you can't start
your catering business this year.
Why don't you wait a few years, huh?
Don't start it right now.
Wait one, two, three years...
...I need you to be the fucking
background to my foreground!"
[SOBBING]
Seven thirty-two! Seven thirty-two!
The number of times we made love!
I remember when that bastard told me
he was counting!
Right after 51!
I'll show you!
Fuck me for not leaving your ass then!
But the worst,
oh, the fucking worst...
...was sending my kids to school
with only two other black kids...
...become you don't want them
to be improperly influenced!
Well, guess what...
...you're the motherfucking
improper influence!
Get your shit-- Get your shit and get out!
[DOORBELL CHIMING]
Ma'am...
...were you aware
that your car was on fire?
Yes.
Did you start this fire, ma'am?
It's against the law to burn anything
except trash in your own yard.
It is trash.

This is a nice area.
Luckily, a neighbor cared enough.
The next time
you wanna burn something....
It won't happen again.
Michael and I work
for the same company.
He's just been promoted
onto my marketing team.
Michael was no Russell.
I mean, he's not pretty,
but he is available.
Oh....
[MICHAEL CHUCKING]
A Kodak moment.

ROBIN:

Michael had to be about a 38D.
My brain was saying, "Put your hands
anywhere else but on my body.
Then go home. And don't come back,
you human submarine sandwich."
But you can't say that without
hurting his feelings.
Go, Robin. Go, Robin.
come here, baby.
You feel even better
than I thought you would.
come here.
- I got you.
- You got me?
- I got you.
- Whoa!
- You all right?
- Yeah.
- I'm sorry, baby.
- It's okay.

Hey.
[MICHAEL CHUCKLING]
Yeah. All right. All right.
Here I come. Here I come.
Here I come.
Alrighty, then.
Somebody's gotta undress me.

Ooh....

At dinner he told me he drag races,
scuba-dives, deep-sea fishes...

...and a boat speak
in the white Mountains.

I told him I grew up an Army brat.

That I went to ASU,
and I majored in anthropology.

I knew you were gonna be beautiful
all over.

- Ah-ah-ah

- What?

Here you go.

All right.

- You need some help?

- No.

No.

There.

There.

Damn, I didn't even get a chance
to see what he had to offer.

Oh.... Oh, yeah.

Oh.... yes. yes.

Oh, shit. Oh, shit. God.

The shit is good, huh?

Shit is good.

What's my name? Say my name.

- What's my name? What's my name?

- Michael?

- What's my name?

- Michael?

Yeah! Oh, shit. Oh, this is good.

Yeah, it's good. It's good.

Yeah!

- I love it when you call me Big Papa

- Big Papa. Yeah.

Papa coming!

[SCREAMING]

Ooh.... Pow!

Does he think

he just did something here?

Shit. I could've had a v8.

Oh, I knew you were gonna be
somebody special.

[MICHAEL CHUCKLING]

How do you feel?

About what?

Me.

This.

You know, everything.

Tell me what you want,
what you need...

...because whatever it is,
I'm gonna see that you have it.

What's your fantasy?

I mean, what do you want from a man?

Everything.

could you be more specific?

I wanna have a house in Scottsdale.

I own a house in Scottsdale.

What else?

I wanna get married.

And I wanna have kids. Two...

...maybe three.

And?

I wanna eat out two,
maybe three times a week.

I wanna have babies.

I wanna go away for long weekends.

I wanna have a family.

I wanna be happy.

You don't want much.

I could give you that
and a whole lot more.

What about you, Michael?

What do you want?

Robin, I think I found it.

you don't even know me.

It's about knowing me.

I could give you everything you want,
everything you need, if you let me.

You can start by kissing me.

No.

Slowly and gently.

And he did it right...

...and I felt like silk,
and when I looked at him...

...I didn't care anymore

that he wasn't Mr. Universe.
I just felt young...
...and sexy...
...and beautiful.
And when I closed my eyes...
...and squeezed my pelvis real tight...
...and my body exploded
from the inside out...
...Michael felt just like the real thing...
...and everything was perfect. For once.

SAVANNAH:

Hey, girl.
How you doing? Oh, Bernie.
So good to see you, girl.
I been waiting all day for you.
You okay?
come on, let's go get a drink.
Hey, I bought some toys for the kids.
come on.
JOHN, SR. Over Tv.. Don't drink
too much, this stuffis expensive.
[WOMAN CHUCKLING OVER TV]

JOHN, SR.:

to my beautiful wife.

BERNADINE:

- Thanks, baby.

JOHN, SR.:

Happy anniversary.
Nice house, Bernie.
At \$5.00, you can have it.
You know what's funny?
I always thought if I gave him
what he needed...
...he'd give me what I needed.

JOHN, SR.:

BERNADINE:

It's amazing what can happen when
you give a man control over your life.

I can't even pretend
it's all John's fault.
So tell me about this new job.
Well, I took a pay cut...
...to see if I have
what it takes to produce.
You know, some of us are still
on that dream trip, girl.
Are you scared?
Yes.
Me too.
[KNOCKING]

GLORIA:

Okay.
Hi.
Gloria.
[GIGGLES]
come on in.

GLORIA:

he did me a favor by spending the night.
Lord, let him be merciful again tonight.
Well, have a seat.
Well...
...you're looking healthy.
Thank you.
Oh....
So where's Tarik?
He's not here right now.
I don't know why
I continue to do this.
He's almost grown.
Yes, he is.
- Would you like some wine?
- Oh, no.
- No thanks.
- Sure?
Hmm.
When exactly are you expecting him?
Tomorrow.
Wait!
David...
..you know

you can always stay here.

- Here?

- Yeah.

I thought that maybe we--

You know, we could--

Well, like last time.

I should be honest with you.

- About what?

- About me.

What about you?

Remember how I didn't respond
to you last time?

Of course. I remember. I....

I thought it was

because of my weight--

I have been bisexual for years.

What? What?

you heard me right.

But I'm not anymore. I'm gay.

David...

...you don't have to go to this extreme--

Look, Gloria,

I don't have to lie about this.

I've lied too long as it is.

I am.

I'm staying at the Biltmore,
and if...

...he ever wants to see me,

he has to make the first move.

If I don't hear from him by noon,

I'm checking out, and I mean just that.

Oh....

come on.

It's an offer you can't refuse.

Oh, Onika, honey,

put that one over there too.

- Ma, are we just selling Daddy's stuff?

- Yes, honey.

WOMAN:

- Thank you.

Why come?

"Why come?"

Oh, Onika. "Why?"

Why?

- Because he asked me.

JOHN, JR.:

Yes. It's just collecting dust.

- Oh bring the wine. Hurry. come on.

ONIKA:

- She toId me to get it!

- No, she toId me to!

- She toId me! Give it to me!

- No! Me! Give it--

[BOTTLE SHATTERS]

JOHN, JR.:

Oh, man.

Look what you did.

[CHUCKLING]

SHOPPER:

- That's right, sir. Thank you.

Enjoy your skis.

[CHUCKLING]

I didn't think I'd ever see him again...

...but he did call to apologize.

That's my toothbrush!

Is he crazy?

Turns out this guy has no real income...

...chain-smokes reefer...

...brags about being a vegetarian,

then inhales three hot dogs...

...like it's the last time

somebody's gonna buy him a meal.

I gave him \$20 for gas,

which came to \$7.18...

...and he didn't give me my change.

My fantasy was to get myself

a little piece.

You know, get my feet wet

in a new town.

well, not exactly my feet.

Hell, it's been five months...

...and he has gotten on my last nerve...

...but...

...I don't have to be in love with him
to do it.

Hell, my body needs this.

Oh....

Lionel, baby, we've got all night.

You can take your time.

I'm just so excited.

I been thinking about what I'd do to you
since New year's.

[MOANS]

- Hold on, baby. I'm on my way.

- What?!

[GROWLS]

Now I'm a keeper at the damn zoo.

JOHN, SR.:

Kathleen.

John, the reports on the Geary account
are right here.

Everyone have a copy?

Thank you.

JOHN, SR.:

on the Geary report, you'll find--

Bernadine, I'm in a meeting here.

If you need something, I suggest--

Would you mind terribly

if I had a few words with my husband?

- What the hell are you doing?

- I've been to the bank.

Thank you! Thank you for thinking
of your children!

- Everybody, out.

- Yes, out. Out!

You don't come into my office...

...and throw a tantrum because
you can't finish what you started!

What am I supposed to do for money?

- I gave you the house. Now sell it!

- I hate you!

I'm really sorry to hear that, Bernadine.

But I'm not playing games
with you anymore.

Who do you think started

this damn company, huh?
Let's not start that again.
And now you think
you can just take the money and run?
Business hasn't been good for years.
But don't worry.
you'll get what's coming to you.
Hell, I'm not worried.
You, on the other hand, should be.
Okay. Look.
Let's not let this thing
get any uglier than it already has.

JOE:

Everything all right, Mr. Harris?
Fine. Now, I'm willing--
I'm more than willing...
- You here to put me out?
- ...to give you \$300,000 cash today!
Your children aren't for sale.
One more thing before you go.
I'm coming for my kids on Saturday.
Yeah?
And if I hear you had them
anywhere near that tramp bitch...
...you're gonna regret it
for the rest of your life.

GLORIA:

Tarik?
Get out of my goddamn house!
I'm-- I'm sorry.
I'm sorry. Ma, I'm so sorry. Ma--
- You was grounded!
- That's why I invited her over--
I'm sick of this!
If your daddy wasn't gay, I swear to God,
I'd send your black ass straight to him!
Shit.
You saying my father's a faggot?
- I don't like to use that word.
- Ma....
"Faggot," "gat," "homo,"
it's all the same.

So my daddy's a queer.
My daddy-- My daddy's a queer.
My daddy's a queer!
Yo, my father's a queer!
He's a fucking queer!
- My father's a fucking queer!
- Stop it! I said, stop it!
One thing's for sure,
it ain't running in the family.
Because, you know....
You best watch your mouth.
- I'm sorry.
- Sorry? You're sorry?
You're sorry about everything.
You're sorry about lying to me,
sorry about your grades...
...sorry about letting some girl in here
to suck on your little 17-year-old dick!
How can I trust you in Spain
if I can't trust you here? Huh?
- Get out of my face.
- Just let me--
You'd better get out of my face.
This is something we should focus
our attention on this quarter.
This account comes up for renewal
June 1.
The worker's comp premium
is about 1.5 million.
The loss experience has been excellent.
What does the engineering report show?
It shows an active safety environment.
Actually, I found a discrepancy
in the report.
Now, if everyone could turn to page 20,
we can look at the graph.
If you'll excuse me.
So you wanna do your job?
well, you will never get
another whiff of this.
Yes?
It appears that everything he's purchased
in the last 10 years...
...is in his name only,

including the business.
Look, I'm not trying to get rich here.
But I wanna be able
to pay my mortgage...
...and take care of my children.
Their education.
I just wanna be okay.
All right?
Look, I'm not gonna lie to you.
We're in for a fight.
But I promise you I will do my best.

GLORIA:

Just because you're upset--
I love you, Gloria, but I won't
debate this. I'm not here for a lecture.
I've done your hair for 11 years.
One ignorant move by your husband,
you chop it all off?
- Yes. come on. Do it.
- I'm not doing this.
What is the fucking big deal?
Just cut it, Gloria!
You'll feel stupid tomorrow
and be mad at me!
You don't wanna cut this fucking shit
off my head, I'll do it my goddamn self!
Fine. Fine.
You want me to cut it, I'll cut it.
How short do you want it?
You want it shorter than mine?
And I can always use a razor too.
I can't believe you.
Eleven years of growing your hair out
and look.
Fine.

GLORIA:

from across the street.
I was wondering, what do you know
about these people moving in here?
Well, the guy, in my opinion...
...seems to be nasty and ignorant...
- ...and bossy.

- Oh....

What about his wife?

Well, she....

She died a couple years ago.

This is one of the many precious items she bought for him...

- ...that I'm making sure don't get broken.

- That's nice.

Why's he trusting you with it?

Well, I'm Marvin King.

Yeah. Your new neighbor.

- I was just fooling around.

- Oh.

- Nice to meet you, Gloria.

- Nice to meet you.

Well, I'd just like to welcome you and your family to the neighborhood.

Thank you.

[CLEARS THROAT]

Unpacking. It could be hard work.

MARVIN:

I got a lot more to do tomorrow too.

Would you like to have dinner with us tonight?

It's just leftovers.

collard greens, corn bread, some candied yams, potato salad...

...fried chicken, peach cobbler, few slices of ham.

Mmm. Yum-yum.

Yeah, I would love to, Gloria...

...but I just got too much work to do here.

Maybe another time.

Well, to be honest, I don't have no business eating it myself, big as I am.

Hmm. Yeah, well, my wife was a big woman.

I like that. I like a woman with a little meat on her bones, you know?

Oh....

Well, I could send a plate over by my son, Tarik, for you.

Great. yeah. I'd appreciate that.

How old's your boy?

- Seventeen.

- Teenager.

He's gonna be leaving in June...

...I think.

college?

[EXHALES]

Oh, excuse me.

What did you ask me?

I said, Tarik....

Tarik, he's going to college, huh?

Oh. Um....

He wants to travel around the world
with Up With People.

- I'm just not sure I--

- Yeah, let him go. He's young.

Up With the People.

Yeah. Where's his daddy?

In california somewhere.

Look, Marvin,

I'll let you get back to your work...

...and I'll send that plate right on over.

Thank you. Thanks, Gloria.

- Yeah.

- Yeah, nice meeting you.

Hope to see you again soon.

Oh, God, I hope he's not
watching me walk away.

- All right.

- He's watching.

Grant the petitioner \$3000 per month...

...until we're able to review
all newly submitted documentation.

Next.

LAWYER:

Stay strong, Bernadine. Stay strong.

JOHN, SR.:

to be over and done with.

MAN:

JOHN, SR.:

You sorry son of a bitch, John.
The mortgage is \$5000 a month!
How are your children
supposed to live?
I told you to settle for the 300,000,
but you wanna play hardball.
All dogs don't go to heaven, John.
You think you can
get away with this...
...you lowlife, ass-kissing Uncle Tom.
You know, this....
This Uncle Tom stuff...
...it's really becoming a bit redundant,
don't you think, Bernadine?
Excuse me.

BERNADINE:

BARTENDER:

- Here you go.
- Thank you.

JAMES:

Is anybody sitting here?
No. No one's sitting there.
cognac, please.

BARTENDER:

Yes, sir.
My name is James Wheeler.
How do you do?
Your cognac, sir.
Thank you.
So do you have a name?
Bernadine.
Bernadine.
My, this is a pretty place.
But I have to admit...
...I haven't seen anything as splendid
as you since I've been here.
Okay, hold on, now.
Hold on.
You don't have to give me that look.

Look, I haven't seen the sun
for four days now.
I mean, it's been one meeting
after the other after the other...
...and now, I'm finished...
...so I decided to come downstairs,
have myself a drink...
...and in the morning...
...I look forward to returning home
to my lovely wife.
Salute.
So why are you sitting here all alone?
Okay. Wait now.
You don't have to answer that.
You don't know me. I mean, you don't
know me from a can of paint.
I'm all in your Kool-Aid
and don't know the flavor--
- I'm getting a divorce, James.
- Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.
Yeah, well, it happens, huh?
And, you know,
it just occurred to me that...
...I've lost something
that once meant everything...
...and it hurts...
...and right now, I'm just--
I'm really pissed about it.
But you know what really gets me?
I didn't have plan B.
My marriage was supposed to last.
So I guess that's why I'm here.
I can tell you one thing.
Yeah, what's that?
Well, you are one brave woman.
You're bad.
- No.
- Oh, yes. Oh, yes.
- I hope you recognize that.
- No, I don't really feel like that, James.
Well, I mean,
you're sitting here all alone...
...ain't a black person in sight, and you
sitting here like everything is all right.

You know, your makeup is flawless--
Oh, co-- That-- come on now.
I mean, you've taken his best shot,
and you're still here.
- Splendid.
- You just know me so well, huh?
No, no, no, no. I don't know you.
But I do know a fighter
when I see one.
And I could tell that...
...with one look in your eyes.
What are you?
A psychiatrist or something?
No. No. I am a civil-rights attorney.
My practice is in Washington, D.c.
I'm going through something similar.
My wife is dying...
...of breast cancer.
Oh, I'm sorry. Sorry to hear that.
It's....
Bernadine,
have you ever watched someone dying?
I tell you, I mean,
watching her suffer just kills...
...a bit of me every day.
And the worst part is that I can't help
but remember all the plans we made.
You know, like we were supposed
to retire in St. Thomas.
You know,
out there by the beach.
She loves the water.
Get the coconut oil
and rub it all over her.
She is definiteIy....
I tell you, I just....
I just wish I couId have a piece of her
that I couId keep safe, you know?
Just something.
Something more
than a bunch of memories.
Anyway....
you look like you're out.
How about a...?

A refill?

- Yeah, okay.

- Okay.

She'll take another
of whatever it is she got.

- Scotch and soda.

- Ooh....

I'm scared of you.

[KNOCKING]

Well, hello.

Hello.

You look better than I remembered.

It's funny, you don't.

[SAVANNAH CHUCKLING]

But I guess you couldn't.

- Oh, it's good to see you.

- You too.

Well, I am producing my first segment.

It's only three minutes long,

but it is a start.

KENNETH:

That's real good. I'm proud of you.

All right, let's cut the bull.

Are you gonna talk to me for real?

I have to apologize for thinking

I can just pop back into your life...

...after all these years.

Pop back? In my life?

Yeah.

I needed to see you.

All right, you've seen me.

Now I can leave. I can go.

Oh, man. There's so many things

I wanna say to you.

Is that right?

Things I've wanted to say ever since....

Well...

...ever since you dumped me.

Dumped you?

Can we revisit the real world

for a minute, Kenneth?

- Yeah.

- You stopped calling me.

Oh, yeah, well,
it took me a while to get the hint.

- The hint?

- Yeah.

Well, what hint is that?

you never called me...

- I never called you....

- ...go anywhere.

Not even once.

Kenneth, you're the man.

And that wasn't the nature
of our relationship, and you know that.

I know.

The nature of our relationship was
that I was in love with a woman...

...was too nice to hurt my feelings.

You were in love with who?

And what?

Look...

...I know I'm married...

...and I love my daughter
with all my heart.

You see...

...her mother was five months pregnant
when we married.

Now, that was my choice.

I went in with my eyes open...

...and I've lived with it
for seven years now.

I don't want this to come off
like some kind of come-on...

...but you are the only woman
that I have ever loved...

...and I still love you, Savannah.

[FAITH EVAN'S "KISSING YOU" PLAYS]

JAMES:

- Yeah, I'm just.... Yeah, I'm okay.

Nervous.

I'm a little nervous.

If you're having second thoughts
about me being up here....

No, no.

I'm having all kinds of thoughts.

Well, I mean,
if it's any consolation, Bernie...
...I've never done this before.
You sure?
I haven't made love to a woman
in over a year.
Lauren stopped wanting to, so....
[GIGGLING]

JAMES:

Look....
- I got two things I wanna say.
- No, you don't have to say anything--
I do, because you may
kick me out afterwards.
[CHUCKLES]
Remember how you were saying that
the woman your husband was marrying...
...I mean, ex-husband...
...that she was white?
Yes.
Well....
Well, so is my wife.
Look, Bernie, I mean,
I could sit here and say...
...that the reason I'm staying with her
is because she's dying...
...or that it's my obligation
or a whole bunch of stuff...
...but the truth of the matter is...
...I love her.
She's the only woman
I have ever loved...
...and I would never leave her
under any circumstances.
It hurts like hell.
Yeah.
Someone felt that way about me once...
...but he stopped.
What do you wanna do tonight?
Make tonight beautiful.
Beautiful.
- Marvin, please eat this sandwich.
- Mmm.

- Yes. Yes, indeed.

- Come on now!

- Just kidding.

- No, you weren't.

I wouldn't do that to you.

can you hold that for me?

Don't throw that away, now.

Ain't got no cheese on this sandwich.

- You don't like cheese.

- Bought the paint.

Good.

Sit it right down there, Tarik.

Want a bite of this sandwich?

It got cheese in it?

[LAUGHING]

Here. Take a bite.

[PLAYS "HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU"]

[WOMEN SINGING

"HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU"]

GLORIA:

Oh....

- Thank you.

- Happy birthday, baby.

To the best blow-drying,
scissor-scalping...

...bumber-curling, braiding, weaving...

..."get this gray out of my head,"
dyeing beautician...

...west of the Mississippi.

Happy birthday.

Oh, thanks.

Weak.

Gloria, I hope you find true love...

...and get you some that's so electric,
you ain't gonna need no blow dryer.

- Oh, please.

- And so juicy...

...it's gonna put an end
to your 10-year drought.

- Oh!

SAVANNAH:

Nasty.

Oh, come on, raise them once more.

Let's get serious now.

Girlfriend...

...here's to peace of mind...

...and all the happiness

that your heart and hand can hold...

...because Lord knows you deserve it.

Oh....

- Happy birthday, girl.

GLORIA:

Happy birthday.

I can do this.

All right, come on,

make your wish first. Make your wish.

Okay.

- Come on, girl, go on.

- Okey

Oh, this is pitiful.

come on, let's help this old lady.

- You need some help.

- Let's help her out.

[WOMAN SINGS OVER STEREO]

Why do they write these damn songs?

To make you think and believe

and dream you could feel like this?

Somebody had to go through this shit
in order to write it.

Don't you think?

You know what?

You know what we all have in common?

What?

None of us, not none of us...

...have a man.

That's some sad shit.

That lying asshole.

He messed up my life.

I should call him right now.

I wanna talk to that bitch.

GLORIA:

Girl, you crazy. What are you thinking?

ROBIN:

Hand me the phone. I'll talk to her.

GLORIA:

No, wait a minute.

- Dial her number, Bernie.

GLORIA:

SAVANNAH:

- No.

SAVANNAH:

KATHLEEN:

No, it's not John, bitch.

Robin! Savannah, talk to her.

BERNADINE:

- Bernie don't do this.

Bernie? Bern, don't do this.

I gave him two babies, and she thinks she can just take my fucking husband.

GLORIA:

Bernie!

Bernie, cut.

It's stupid!

It's stupid, and it's childish!

SAVANNAH:

Thank you!

Gloria, I have some shit

I wanna get off my chest.

I'm hurt.

You unplugged the phone.

What happened to the music?

I thought this was supposed to be a party.

[TLC's "CREEP" PLAYS]

BERNADINE:

ROBIN:

[GIGLING]

I'm sick of this shit, now.
Wait a minute.
The one man I Iove
is married with a kid...
...and there's my life
in one little sad nutshell.
Men do leave their wives.
At least he told you he was married.
yeah, but see,
I'm not your average 24-year-old girl...
...who's willing to wait around
and count the days, see?
- I'm 33 years old
- Ooh....
...and I still look good.
I still look good!
- You do.
- You look good, girl.

GLORIA:

Fly diva.
Uh-huh. Freak mama.

GLORIA:

- No.
All y'all go to hell.
- You know you look good.
- You look good, girl.
Whatever happened
to the good old days?
- The good old days?
- What good old days?
Jinx.
You know, the days when men
actually flirted with you...
...and asked you out
for a real date, you know?
Where they hiding?
They're not hiding.
They're too damn scared
to make a commitment.
They're with white women.
- They're gay.
- Or married.

- They ugly.
- They behind bars.
Got bad credit.
Got little dicks and can't fuck.
That's what it is.
Or they got big ones
and still can't fuck!
[CHUCKLING]
Wait, wait. They wanna spank you.
- What? They wanna what?
- They wanna spank us?
- That's not a bad thing.
- Oh, Robin.
Oh, come on.
- They're too possessive.
- They want you to be their mama.
And their daddy.
- And they ugly.
- We already said they was ugly.
Yes, good and ugly.
Inside-out ugly?
If you're ugly inside,
you're ugly outside.
- Inside out.
- Jeez, who asked her?

TARIK:

Happy birthday, Mom.

[PHONE RINGING]

SAVANNAH:

Hi, Ma. Did I wake you?
What difference does it make?
I'm up now.
What's wrong?
why you talking so low?
Savannah? Are you there?
Yeah. yeah, Ma. I'm still here.
Nothing's wrong.
How are things with you?
Well, they cut my food stamps
to \$57 a month.
How've you been getting by?
What've you been eating?

Oh, baby, see,
I knew you would get upset...
...and I been trying to deal with it
on my own.
The check, it goes so fast,
and things are so high nowadays.
Ma, how much money do you have?
Sixty-seven dollars.
Ma, be down at Western Union
first thing in the morning. Okay?
Baby...
...you know, Kenneth called,
and he said he's going to be trying...
...to come out there,
with him filing for his divorce and all.
well, did he call you?
No, no, he hasn't.
Well, then pick up the phone
and call him.
Because, Ma, I just don't know.
I don't know if I can trust him.
Oh, girl, you're so crazy.
Mama, do me a favor, okay?
Yes?
I don't care if it's a knitting class
or a new girdle, anything.
I don't care what it is...
...you just pick up the phone
and you call me, okay?
All right, baby.
And only me, Ma.
Only you, precious.
Bye.

KENNETH:

Hi.
Yeah, sorry I didn't call after I got in.
Oh, continuous introductions
after a very long and tedious meeting.
I was whipped.
Yeah. One thing is certain...
...I'm gonna have to come here a few
more times before this deal's in place.
Yeah. How's my baby girl?

Well, you tell her
that her daddy loves her.
Yeah.
Me too.
Bye.
- Well, good morning.
- Well, good morning.
And how are you today?
I'm here with you. It's all good.
Have your breakfast. I'll be back.
I'll be here.
This is gonna broaden his horizons.
Make him more worldly.
He'll be fluent in Spanish.
I know that.
I don't see why he has to go
all the way to Spain...
...when he's accepted
at Arizona State--
I'm gonna miss him too.
- Who's talking about missing him?
- Look, he's a man, Gloria.
He knows what he wants.
- Be proud you raised him that way.
- I am proud.
It's just....
- He's my baby. you don't understand.
- I understand. I--
Why you telling me all this?
I thought that since you been coming
over, showing him how to fix things....
He's never known what it's like
to have a father.
You took him fishing.
He looks up to you.
I thought maybe you
could talk some sense into him.
It seems to me Tarik isn't the one
needs to come to his senses.
If you don't mind my saying so.
Well, everybody's entitled
to their own opinion. Good night.
Gloria.
Good night.

It's getting late. I better....

Good night.

Russell called and said

he's leaving his wife for sure this time.

Okay, so, what's taking him so long?

Russell?

Russell, what took you so long?

RUSSELL:

I wasn't gone that long.

ROBIN:

Well, what happened?

RUSSELL:

We talked.

Well, I assumed that much.

So...

...is she gonna sign the divorce papers...

...or what?

You just don't decide to divorce

somebody and sign on the dotted line.

It doesn't work that way.

I wish it did, but it doesn't.

Why don't you get my pajamas.

Pajamas?

Now, that's the first time

you ever asked for those.

Russell, did you sleep with her?

I can't take coming here...

...and being pressured

about what I'm doing with my own wife.

Well, you know we won't have

very much time to spend together.

[PHONE RINGING]

Hello.

TROY:

what's happening, baby? It's Troy.

- I can't talk right now.

- What? Can't talk now?

Look, why don't you just say something

sexy to me, so I can go to sleep--

Who was that?

Savannah.

I suggest you tell your boyfriends
not to call here after 11:00.

He's jealous. what a joke.

What the hell am I doing, anyway?

[CHOIR SINGING GOSPEL SONG]

This Up With People's choir
that's going to Spain...

...is it this good?

You mean the one

You won't let me join?

No.

But they're close.

After that selection, after that song....

After that song,

somebody should say, "Thank you."

ALL:

- Say, "praise the Lord."

ALL:

- Say "praise the Lord!"

- Praise the Lord!

- Turn to your neighbor and say:

- "The Lord is blessing me..."

- The Lord is blessing me...

- ...right now."

- ...right now.

- Amen.

- Amen.

At this time, our prayers go out
to Sister Lulu Mae Preston...

...who's had hip surgery.

Church, I want you to know

this morning that God is able!

And because we know that he's able...

...we will continue to pray

her strength in the Lord.

- Amen.

- Amen.

Sister Gloria Matthews

would like the congregation...

...to send their prayers out

for the safe journey of her son, Tarik...

...who'll soon be on his way
to Spain for a year...
...to play saxophone in the
Up With People International Orchestra.
Hallelujah! Amen.
Ah!
Brother Tarik...
...hold on to the Lord's unchanging hand.
As you go on your journey, continue
to trust in the Lord with all your heart.
- Amen

ALL:

[CHILDREN SCRAMING]
So, what do you think, Robin?
I've loved this man forever, and now
that we've got another chance...
...I don't wanna blow it by making him
think I don't have faith in him.
Do you know what I mean?
I mean, don't we hear this
on Sally and Oprah every day?
- That's what you sound like.
- I know.
Is that where you get advice?
The TV?
Well, you know, there was
this one woman in your same situation.
This man kept saying
he was gonna leave too.
She got her hopes all up
and everything...
...quit her job,
even moved to the city he lived in.
Right after she got there...
...she found out
she was three months pregnant.
He ended up dumping the woman.
He said his kids would be too hurt
if he left now.
So, what about the baby?
So she had an abortion.
She never, ever told a soul...
...not even her mama.

Hmm.
She never looked at men
quite the same again.
So he left his wife in the end, right?
Take a wild guess, Savannah.
What show was this on?
Sorry...
...I've never been on Oprah.
[COUGHING]
Guess what I got.
- Some tea.
- Guess.
Picture you drew for me?
I don't know, honey. What is it?

ONIKA:

I got the mail, Ma.
- Oh. Thank you.
- You're welcome. I'll be right back, okay?
Okay.

ONIKA:

Mama?

JAMES:

as I could to contact you.

ONIKA:

Mama, is "freak" a bad word?

JAMES:

about you a lot, Bernie.
Every day. All the time.
I'm embarrassed
to even write that down...
...but it's true.
Bernie, I fell in love in one night.
Mama, I asked you a question.
No, honey. No, it's not.

JAMES:

for me to understand...
...is that what I feel for you...
...has never undercut

the love I have for my wife.
Now, how is that possible?

ONIKA:

Tabitha said it was a bad word.

JAMES:

I still watch her every day.
So beautiful. So brave.
I just wanna give her
everything I've got in me.
Every moment.
It's not a nice word.

JAMES:

fighting to be here for me...
...and when she sleeps, I cry...
...over how amazing she is...
...and how lucky I've been
to have her in my life.
can I say it?
No. No.

JAMES:

world I ever knew I could tell this to...
...and even if this never finds you...
...and we never speak again...
...you've changed my life.
You know what inspiration is?
It's someone who lets you know
life will go on...
...and something beautiful
can be waiting somewhere.
Somewhere when you least expect it.
Mama, what does it mean?

BERNADINE:

- "Freak."
It means "weird."
You let me say "weird."
Why can't I say "freak"?
- Because.

ONIKA:

Huh?

Look at you.

What?

ONIKA:

God stopped crying.

I don't think those

are God's tears at all...

...just his way of making sure
everything keeps growing.

KENNETH:

Hi, darling.

I'm sorry I'm late.

My daughter's had a 104 temperature
for the past two days.

- Really?

- She's got the chickenpox.

Oh, gosh.

I mean, PauIa's been beeping me
on the hour, every hour, all damn day.

I toId her, all she had to do
was give the girl an ice bath...

- Right.

- ..or rub her down with alcohol.

- Hmm.

- Jesus you'd think she had malaria.

- So why'd you even come?

- Why?

Because you are the most
important thing in my life.

WAITER:

Can I get you something to drink?

- No, thanks, for me.

KENNETH:

One of these days, she won't
have me around to bug about this shit.

Hmm....

You know, every trip

I make out here...

...I dread going home.

The longer I think about it...

...the more I'm convinced
that this is what I want to do...
...when the time is right.

WAITER:

- Thank you.
I mean, it's more financial
than anything right now...
...and there's still a lot of things
to be worked out.
I know if I left right now, it would be
the wrong time for my daughter.
She thinks she's having a baby sister.
A baby?
So we're going to have to wait
a little bit longer than I expected.
Yeah.
But I know the kind of person
that you are.
You wanna do the right thing
as much as I do.
I do, Kenneth. I really do.
You see, the more I think about it...
...the more I look at you...
...you look like...
...the scum of the fucking earth.
You see, the good news is, Kenneth...
...is that I was never, ever in danger
of you getting a divorce.
Oh, no. I'm the lucky one.
"The most important thing" in your life.
Meaning you'll abandon
your wife and your child...
...to get laid every chance I give you...
...and you think--.
You think the brass ring...
...is some bogus promise
to put me in Paula's shoes...
...so you can do the same fucking thing
to me next year?
It's pretty close
to irresistible, lover man.
What the hell's wrong with you?
I mean, you and my wife working

for the same fucking firm or something?
You weren't this self-righteous
when you were fucking my brains out.
You weren't worrying
about my poor wife then, were you?
You're right.
You're absolutely right, Kenneth.
I couldn't see past what I wanted,
so that made me an asshole...
...but the difference
between you and me...
...is, I'm not anymore.
- Wait a minute. Whoa, whoa, whoa.
- What is it?
Now, look, I'm sorry, but we need
to talk about this some more.
I mean, without all the anger.
Look, I'm not mad. Really.
Neither am I, baby. I'm not mad.
And to prove it, the drinks are on you.
Hey! Damn it!

ASSISTANT:

You have a phone call.
Thanks, Edy.
Excuse me for a sec. Hello.

MOTHER:

Have you lost your mind?!

SAVANNAH:

Ma?
kenneth just called me
and told me how simple you acted!
He was actually crying!
And men don't be crying over no woman
unless they love them.
How can you be so insensitive?

SAVANNAH:

CREWMAN:

First of all, Ma, I'm sick of you
telling me how I should live my life...

...who you think I should love, marry.
Ma, I'm sick of it!
- DON't you raise your voice at me!
- Mama, I'm 33, and I live alone.
Yeah. Tell me about it.
And I have to accept the fact that
I may live alone for the rest of my life.
It ain't too late, Savannah.
He's begging on his knees,
and you letting him get away!
Mama, do you hear me?
I have a job. I have friends.
Ma, I have interests
that you don't even ask about...
...because only one thing counts
with you.
With any damn woman,
unless they lying to themselves.
Well, I'm being honest with myself, Ma.
I'm smart, I work hard
and I'm a good person.
Ma, if I allowed myself to think like you,
I guess I'd be a dead woman.
Ma, you should be proud
I'd rather live alone...
...than crawl up behind
a two-timing loser like Kenneth!
He's a good man, Savannah.
A good man.
He's just in a bad situation right now,
and he's trying to get out of it.
I tell you what,
why don't you fucking marry him?!
[PHONE RINGING]
Ma, I was wrong to yell.
I'm sorry.
But I meant what I said about my life...
...but I didn't mean to disrespect you.
I'll never do that again.
It's all right, baby.
It's all right.
I just don't wanna see you
end up like me.
Alone.

I know, Ma. And I love you.
I love you too, sugar.
I'll talk to you later. Bye.
After fully reviewing
all the newly submitted documentation...
...the settlement will go as follows:
One and a half million dollars...
...in the Phoenix Municipal Savings
and Loan Association...
...ownership of the residence
at 1985 Ohio Drive...
...in Pinnacle Peak, Arizona...
...a second house in Acapulco, Mexico...
...500,000 in stocks and bonds...
...and an E320 S Mercedes
station wagon.

Thank you, thank you, thank you!

[SCREAMING AND CHEERING]

[KNOCKING]

Hey, baby. Surprised to see me?
Finally got the bitch off my back
like I told you.

If that's what you want,
I'm happy for you.

Why are we standing here
talking about it?

Because I haven't invited you in.

Come on, baby. It's me.

It's Russell.

Why you wanna do this to us?

After all we been through?

- Come on, now.

- I said, stop.

What you reading?
childbirth choices?

What's that about?

Yeah. It's yours, and I'm keeping it.

- So, what you expect me to do?

- What you do best.

Disappear.

Go home to your wife.

Or better yet, go get some help.

I don't want anything from you.

I want you to read my lips.

We don't need you in our lives.

Yes!

[KNOCKING]

It's open.

GLORIA:

How you been doing?

[THUNDERING]

GLORIA:

I haven't seen much of you lately.

I, uh.... I acted silly when all you did was tell me the truth.

I guess I didn't wanna hear it.

I been real busy.

Um....

I came over for two reasons.

I know I shut you out...

...and I miss you in our life...

...my life.

Marvin, I have no doubt

what you said was true...

...and I apologize.

I just came over to say that.

Wait a minute. Wait.

come on in.

Sit down.

He just left.

He wouldn't even let me

take him to the airport.

He's been the man in my life,

you know.

My companion.

More than just my baby.

Now he's gone.

I gave up...

...a long time ago on any hope I had of finding someone for myself.

It's a terrible thing to do to Tarik.

- Tarik's gonna be fine. Yeah.

- Yeah.

I'm grateful to you, though,

for opening my eyes.

I miss you too.

You wouldn't allow
my fear of being alone...
...to get in the way of him growing up
and doing what he has to do.
I was so unfair to him.
- No, no.
- Yes, I was.
No. You haven't been unfair to Tarik.
You've been unfair to you.
To us.
It's like you don't feel you're worthy
to have someone to love you.
No, I....
I love you.
- I love you.
- Don't say it.
- Yes.
- You don't love me.
Yes, I love you...
...Gloria.

D.J.:
into our New Year's Eve countdown.

ROBIN:
I don't feel like going to a club.

SAVANNAH:

BERNADINE:

GLORIA:

SAVANNAH:

D.J.:
"It Might Be You"?
Who is this?
- Roberta Flack.
- Roberta Flack.
[ROBERTA FLACK'S
"IT MIGHT BE YOU" PLAYS]
It's an old cut.
It's an old cut.

Oh, you know this is....

Tookie.

Y'all know the movie.

- Tootsie?

- Tootsie.

Yeah, this is from Tootsie.

Dustin Hoffman.

This is steaming up, you know.

[SINGING]

Yeah.

D.J.:

got nowhere to go...

...don't fret, don't panic

and don't be afraid.

Do that for yourself....

SAVANNAH:

have more than one mama.

If you're mad, get even...

...but if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

whatever you do, do it this year.

Let's do this.

[CHEERING]

Nine. Eight. Seven. Six.

ROBIN:

- Five. Four.

- Three. Two. One.

ALL:

- Happy New Year.

- Happy New year!

SAVANNAH:

We made it!