

Executive Producer: Liz Heldens
Executive Producer: David Janollari

PILOT

SALVATION

Pilot

Written by

Liz Heldens

NBC CASTING

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Universal Television
100 Universal City Plaza
Bldg. 1320
Universal City, CA 91608
(818) 777-1000

David Janollari Entertainment
100 Universal City Plaza
Bldg. 6111 / Suite 125
Universal City, CA 91608
(818) 733-5983

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TEASER

EXT. TEXAS - EARLY MORNING

It's a sunrise that makes a person believe in God, all orangy-purple against the clouds. Over this we hear the BOOMING voice of PASTOR DANIEL STRICKLAND.

DANIEL (V.O.)
I am. I am that I am. I am everything...

INT. THE STRICKLAND HOME - EARLY MORNING

JENNIFER STRICKLAND, mid to late 40s, beautiful, opens her eyes. Jennifer is one of those awesome, smart, no bullshit, socially savvy Texas chicks - great friend, great wife, great mother. She kneels next to the bed and prays.

DANIEL (V.O)
Open your bibles to Isaiah 43:25. If you don't have a bible, you must be new. You can find one under the pew in front of you.

CUT QUICKLY through her morning routine:

DANIEL (V.O) (CONT'D)
Isaiah 43:25: *I am he who blots out transgressions.* Exodus 15:26: *I am the Lord who heals you.* Isaiah 45:3 *I am He who will sustain you...*

-- She swims laps in her pool.

-- She does her hair, puts on her makeup.

-- She picks out an excellent outfit.

INT. THE STRICKLAND HOME - KITCHEN

Jennifer makes breakfast and jokes with her two youngest children, NOAH and NATALIE, twins, 16. These two are tight. Noah is gorgeous, athletic, good-natured. Natalie is awkward, an emo tomboy with a sweet, smart-alecky disposition. She reads David Foster Wallace's, "The Pale King."

DANIEL (V.O.)
John 11:25 *I am the resurrection and the life*.

CUT TO:

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INT. TODD AND LILLY BISHOP'S HOME - MORNING

LILLY BISHOP, 26, is Jennifer and Daniel's eldest daughter. Beautiful, sharp tongued and seven months pregnant. She's having rushed, morning sex with her husband, CONGRESSMAN TODD BISHOP, 32. The bedroom is littered with campaign paraphernalia. In fact, Lilly is staring at a life-size cardboard cutout of Todd... which is weird. She glances at the clock.

LILLY
Baby? We're gonna be late. Can you bring this in for a landing?

The door opens. BRAYDEN, 4, walks in...

BRAYDEN
Momma you said we could have pancakes.

LILLY
In a minute!

TODD
Get out!

DANIEL (V.O)
Are you guys seeing a pattern here?

We hear some "Amens." Daniel is picking up steam now.

DANIEL (V.O) (CONT'D)
Revelations 21:6 *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To him who is thirsty, I will drink to him.* See what I'm saying? He is EVERYTHING.

As the Congressman bangs to climax, we hear a few "Amens."

INT. PAUL STRICKLAND'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

The word PAUL STRICKLAND'S, 28, siblings use to describe him is "pinched." The word "aspergers" also comes up. But there is also something boyish and hopeful about Jennifer's oldest son. He ties his tie in the mirror and struggles to speak.

PAUL
P-p-p...

Paul is plagued by a stutter which flares up under stress. He takes a deep breath, tries again.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.
(looks in the mirror)
(MORE)

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PAUL (CONT'D)
Okay. Good tie. Good shirt. Good day. Praise the Lord.

He smiles at himself, then hurries out the door, a spring in his step. Daniel's VO continues.

DANIEL (V.O)
I am the body. The body is mine. I am the creator of all things, and all things are mine..."

EXT. VARIOUS HOME/APARTMENT DRIVEWAYS IN TEXAS - SAME TIME

As Daniel's voice grows louder, we POP THROUGH people getting into their cars dressed in their Sunday best - families, older couples, single people...

DANIEL (V.O)
He is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He is the soul. He is our Mother and our Father. He is everything.

EXT. SPRING HILL CHURCH - PARKING LOT - DAY

Parking lot attendants direct traffic. It's like a football game. We follow people as they walk from their cars to...

EXT. SPRING HILL CHURCH - CAMPUS - DAY

...Sunday Service at Spring Hill Church. Crowds of people walk through. Everyone has their own bible. People smile at each other, extended families are meeting up, happy to see each other after a busy week. A kiss hello here, a mother chasing after a laughing toddler there. Everywhere you look it's the same story: Ordinary people taking a moment from their hectic lives for church.

INT. SPRING HILL CHURCH - SUNDAY SCHOOL - SAME TIME

Parents say goodbye to their precious toddlers, handing them off to Sunday school teachers, armed with smiles and art projects.

Lilly swipes her church ID through a kiosk that spits out bar-coded name tags, which she then slaps on her kids Brayden, and her daughter CHARLOTTE, 14 months. A kiss, a diaper check, and they're off...

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EXT. SPRING HILL CHURCH - CAMPUS - MOMENTS LATER

Lilly and Todd hurry to join up with Jennifer, Noah, Natalie, and Paul. Jennifer is greeted by people as they come in. She is royalty here. Everyone kisses hello, then goes into...

INT. SPRING HILL CHURCH - DAY

... Where DANIEL STRICKLAND, 50s, preaches to TEN THOUSAND people. He is a large man, easy in his body. His image is magnified on gigantic screens so the people in back can see. The congregation follows the sermon in their bibles. Some people use a bible app on their phone.

DANIEL
Do you believe that? Do you believe that He is everything?

People answer, raising their hands. Daniel pauses, then:

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Well, if you believe that. If you believe that He is everything and everyone to you, then why would you have one second of worry?
(the crowd erupts)
Give it all to God. You let God into your heart and let him take the lead.
(a pause)
Okay, get in groups and pray. Lift all those cares up to God. Tell each other what's on your mind.

Daniel looks down, catches Jennifer's eye. He winks at her. She smiles back. There is still love and a spark here.

PICK UP: Jennifer, Lilly, and Todd join hands with another WOMAN and MAN.

JENNIFER
Hey. I'm Jennifer Strickland.

WOMAN
I know who you are. First lady. It's wonderful to meet you. I'm Leslie, and this is my husband Brett. We just moved here. It's our first time.

Jennifer is warm and friendly and sincere as she takes Leslie's hands.

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JENNIFER
Oh, so nice to meet you. Welcome! Well, I'll start. Lord, please watch over and bless the sick and the hungry in our community. Please help us all to find ways to make the world a better place and please bless Leslie and Brett who are new here.

Jennifer finishes. Lilly's turn. Lilly can come off as fake sometimes. Also, she is laboring under the delusion that no one can tell she's pregnant.

LILLY
I pray that this baby is healthy.
(to Leslie)
I don't know if you can tell, I'm pregnant.
(everyone can tell)
Also, Lord, please bless my husband Todd's reelection campaign...

But while Lilly talks, we see what's really on her mind...

FLASH ON: A fleeting image. Lilly's hand intertwined with a man's dark-skinned hand. It's not her husband's hand.

LILLY (CONT'D)
We need him in Washington doing your work, God.

Lilly squeezes Todd's hand, her face giving nothing away...

PICK UP: Paul holds hands with a couple and a PRETTY WOMAN.

PRETTY WOMAN
I just had my heart broken. So I pray that I meet somebody else, Lord. I have so much love to give and I really want to start a family.

Paul watches her. Wow, is she ever pretty. It's his turn.

PRETTY WOMAN (CONT'D)
What do you want to pray for today?

While Paul is struck by a stuttering fit, we see his fantasy...

FLASH ON: Paul, wearing black jeans and a T-shirt, preaches to a young crowd at a pulpit that is industrial and rock and roll-y looking. He's sexy, aggressive and LOUD.

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Words flow like water and have a rap-like rhythm. The crowd in his mind loves him.

PAUL
Jesus, loves you. Jesus died for you, Jesus rose for you. Jesus will forgive your sin. Jesus will change your heart and your mind and your life. Jesus is AMAZING.

We find PRETTY WOMAN watching from the front row, smitten.

PAUL (CONT'D)
JESUS IS GOOD, JESUS IS GOD! THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE! TO SPREAD THE WORD!

He drops the mic like a rock star, charges down the steps, grabs PRETTY WOMAN, and starts making out with her...

BACK TO PRESENT:

Paul struggles. Everybody's embarrassed for him.

PRETTY WOMAN
(trying to be kind)
Sweetie, maybe we should come back to you.

PICK UP: Noah and Natalie holding hands with two beautiful girls. The one who matters is HAYLEY STERN, 16. Hayley is a gorgeous, high-pony-tailed twat. Noah lusts after her. Natalie hates her. Hayley takes Noah's hand, intertwining their fingers.

HAYLEY
Jesus, bless us at the Cheerleading Regionals. Also, please help Natalie pick out an appropriate outfit for church next Sunday.
(off Natalie's look)
Jk, JC.

NOAH
I'll go next. Lord, please watch over the Tigers Friday and lead the team to a righteous victory.

FLASH ON: Noah scoring the WINNING TOUCHDOWN. He is hoisted on the shoulders of his team!

Later, he gets a hand job from Hayley. For some reason, this is taking place in a monster truck.

BACK TO PRESENT:

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NOAH (CONT'D)
...And bless our troops.

It's Natalie's turn.

NATALIE
Lord, when you're done watching over the Cheerleading Regionals, I hope that you can find some time for the children that are starving in Syria...

This gets the annoyed reaction from Hayley that Natalie was hoping for. But as she talks we...

FLASH ON her darkest, deepest secret:

Natalie's dressed as a BOY, hair stuffed into a hat, chest taped down. She's working a little swagger in the mirror.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
Hey. S'up? I'm Nate.

She breaks. Looking in the mirror, she sees a freak. She DROPS to her knees and prays.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
Please God. Make me strong enough to resist this temptation.

BACK TO PRESENT:

Natalie looks around, trying to shake off her shame.

INT. SPRING HILL CHURCH - DANIEL AT THE PULPIT - CONTINUOUS

DANIEL
That's my favorite part of the service.
(moving on)
Okay! Let's have a song.

A SINGER steps forward and begins to sing Carrie Underwood's "Jesus take the Wheel." It carries us to...

INT. THE STRICKLAND HOME - AFTERNOON

Everybody has gathered for Sunday football. Noah, Daniel and Paul watch on the sectional. Jennifer makes meatballs, following along with TRISHA YEARWOOD on a cooking show. The Stricklands are a big raucous family, just like any other. Lilly paces with a fussy Charlotte. Natalie stands nearby...

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LILLY
Todd left a day early. He keeps leaving me with the kids...

NATALIE
Mom. Can I go see Cayucas in Austin on Saturday? Don't think. Say yes.

JENNIFER
Ask your father.
(to Lilly)
Well, he's your husband. That's marriage, honey. Stay here. I'll help you. Gimme that baby.
(takes Charlotte)
She'll settle down for me, won't you sweet girl?

Charlotte actually does settle down for Jennifer, much to Lilly's irritation.

NATALIE
Why do I have to ask dad? It's Austin, not Somalia. It's just music.

LILLY
Is this some kind of lesbian deal?

NATALIE
Your stomach's so big this time. Maybe you're having twins!

The doorbell RINGS. Lilly narrows her eyes at Natalie.

LILLY
You present as a lesbian. That's what you tell the world with the way you dress.

JENNIFER
Guys. Enough!

ON THE COUCH: Daniel and Noah flip through channels, waiting for the game to start. Paul leans forward to his father.

PAUL
So, I was thinking I could maybe take one of the Wednesday night services.

DANIEL
Yeah. It's a good idea.

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PAUL
Good idea, let's do it? Or good idea, never bring it up again?

NOAH
(re: the TV)
Agh! Boo!

ON THE TV: We see a preacher at the pulpit of a church that rivals Spring Hill. This is CALEB BRYANT, late 40s, slick, great suit, not without sex appeal.

CALEB (O.S.)
God wants you to be successful. God wants you to take care of yourself. It's like when they say, put on your own oxygen mask first before you try to assist others...

NOAH
This guy's so full of crap.

JENNIFER
Don't use the C-word.
(to Daniel)
Hon, get the door?

NOAH
You know that's not the actual C-word, right Mom? Hey, whose book comes out first, Dad?

DANIEL
(getting up)
Caleb is our friend. Plenty of room for all who spread the Lord's word.
(little smile)
But our book comes out two weeks before his, so we win.

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Father and son high five as Daniel goes to answer the door.

INT./EXT. THE STRICKLAND HOME - FRONT DOOR - SAME TIME

Daniel opens the door to find a MANILA ENVELOPE. He looks around - no one's there. He opens it to find PICTURES. He stares at them, blood draining from his face. He backs into the entryway, grabs his keys, and heads to the garage...

INT. THE STRICKLAND HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

NATALIE
Mom, you know what bothers me? The fact that you have no authority in this house. That saddens me.

JENNIFER
Now you're just ticking me off, little girl. Go ask your father.

Natalie stomps through the living room, walking past a window looking out onto the street.

NATALIE
Fine. I will. Dad! Dad?
(sees her dad drive away)
Where's he going?

EXT. TEXAS HIGHWAY - A CORN FIELD IN THE DISTANCE - LATER

Johnny Cash plays. Daniel sits in his car taking pulls from a bottle of Jack. There is a bible next to him. He is crying. He takes a GUN out of the glove box.

DANIEL
Please forgive me.

We PAN UP before we hear the gun go off.

EXT. THE STRICKLAND HOME - LATER THAT NIGHT

SHERIFF DAVID DOBBS, 30, knocks on the door. Jennifer answers, concerned, Paul and Lilly behind her.

DOBBS
Mrs. Strickland...

JENNIFER
Davey Dobbs. What's going on?

DOBBS
It's Daniel. He's... there's been an accident. It's bad. He's... he's dead, Mrs. Strickland. But you need to come out and see this...

Jennifer is stunned.

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EXT. TEXAS HIGHWAY - DANIEL'S CAR - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

Dobbs leads Paul, Lilly, and Jennifer to the car. Jennifer peers in. Daniel's head is completely bloody. She pulls back and covers her mouth with her hand. Dobbs hands Jennifer the folder with the pictures.

DOBBS
It's self-inflicted. He's been dead for hours. I found these in the car. I wanted you to see what happened before anybody else.

Jennifer looks through the photos. They are pictures of her husband, Daniel, America's Pastor, with a series of girls who look like prostitutes.

JENNIFER
I can't... I don't understand... Some of these girls look like teenagers. There must be some mistake. There's an explanation.

Paul grabs the pictures. Jennifer, blind-sided, comes unhinged. She opens the car door and DRAGS her husband's bloody body out while her children look on, horrified.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
Daniel! Get up! I don't understand. Explain this to me! WAKE UP, DANIEL. There must be some mistake. Tell me what's going on...

Daniel's heavy. He drops to the ground. Jennifer shakes and kicks him. Her shirt's all bloody now. Paul grabs her.

LILLY
Momma! Stop. Just stop...

JENNIFER
I need to understand what's happening here... Okay, okay. Don't touch me. Okay...

Paul manages to half lift, half drag his mother away. She PUSHES him off and staggers into the night. She stops after about a hundred feet, panting and sobbing. After a second she bends over and THROWS UP, her body shuddering.

BACK WITH PAUL AND DOBBS:

DOBBS
We have to call an ambulance.

Jennifer stands, wiping her mouth with the back of her hand.

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JENNIFER
Who knows about this?
(off Dobbs' look)
Does anybody else know anything about these pictures?

DOBBS
No. Just me. Like I say, I wanted --

Jennifer walks up to the body, looks at it, thinking.

JENNIFER
This was a hunting accident. That's what happened. He came out here to shoot wild turkey. His body was found a hundred feet from the car.

PAUL
Momma...

JENNIFER
And these pictures never happened. You hear me?
(takes a step toward him)
We go back, Davey. You know we do. Your daddy had some trouble in the past and we were always there. I need to call in that favor. I got two babies still in school. We have a congregation to think about. People believe in him. The truth is nobody's business but ours.

PAUL
Momma, let's just think...

JENNIFER
People will rip us to shreds. You know that.
(looking at Davey)
Make this go away. It wasn't a suicide. It was a hunting accident. Are we clear?

Jennifer looks formidable despite her disheveled appearance. Dobbs, Paul, and Lilly have no choice but to agree.

END OF TEASER

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ACT ONE

INT. THE STRICKLAND HOME - DAY

Jennifer is on the phone. She hasn't slept and looks a little frayed, but she's in full get-it-done mode. She makes her way through the house, giving us a look at all the flowers and homemade suppers that have been sent by members of the congregation. Lilly and EMILY, 50s, Daniel's secretary, are trying to organize all the food.

JENNIFER
(into the phone)
JJ Banks is speaking first. And listen, we need everyone to limit their remarks to ten minutes. We got a lot of people who want to talk. Okay. Yeah. Talk in a minute.

She hangs up.

LILLY
There's enough food here to feed the whole congregation.

EMILY
People want to help. The phone at the church is ringing off the hook from people wanting to do something for you all. Maybe we should set up a donation to the food bank...

Emily starts to cry. Jennifer goes to her.

JENNIFER
Okay... okay...

Over Emily's shoulder, on the shelf, there's an electronic photo frame, the kind that give a slide show. She watches images of her life with Daniel - holding their babies and grand babies. It looks like perfection. Knowing what Jennifer knows, it's almost too much to bear.

EMILY
Do you know he paid for Ethan's first year of college?

JENNIFER
He was a wonderful man.

The slide show is about killing her. Lilly clocks this and unplugs the frame, then walks past her mother, giving her shoulder a squeeze. This all goes unnoticed by Emily.

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EMILY
What are we going to do? What are we gonna do without him?

JENNIFER
We're all gonna do our very best.

Emily nods. Jennifer's phone rings: Paul.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
(answering it)
Hey. You get your brother yet?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PAUL'S CAR - DAY - MOVING

Paul is at the airport, driving in circles.

PAUL
I'm at the airport. He should be out any second. Then we'll do the car.

JENNIFER
Okay, call me when you're done. Thank you honey. I love you.

PAUL
You too.

Paul hangs up and slows down. The back door opens. A bag flies in. Then the passenger door opens and Paul's brother, MILES STRICKLAND, 27, African American, gets in. Miles is hip and smart and cute. Miles gives Paul an awkward hug.

MILES
Hey man. How you doing? How's mom?

Paul is annoyed with the car in front of him. He leans on the horn and shouts.

PAUL
YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO STOP THERE!
YOU'RE BREAKING THE LAW!
(to Miles)
She's... she's okay. I need your help with something.

MILES
Whatever you need, man. What's up?

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PAUL
We have to go dump dad's car into a landfill.
(honks again)
MOVE YOUR TRUCK!

MILES
Why?

PAUL
Because he shot himself in it and we don't want anybody to know.

MILES
WHAT? Was this... part of the hunting accident?

Paul rolls his eyes at his brother's slow-ness.

PAUL
That's a made up story. He committed suicide. I'll explain on the way.
(honks his horn)
MOVE! I hate airports...

Miles stares wide-eyed at his brother.

CUT TO:

INT. MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON - HOLDING AREA - LATER

JACOB THORNE, 30, sits in a holding area looking at a bible and writing in a NOTEBOOK. Jacob is small but wire-y, all prison weight room muscle. He is also intense and watchful. A PAROLE OFFICER, male, 40s, overworked, walks in. Jacob politely closes his bible and notebook.

PAROLE OFFICER
Okay, Jacob. Big day. Here's your parting gifts. Bus ticket. Ten dollars. Courtesy of the State of Texas.

He slides a ten dollar bill and a bus ticket across the table. Jacob stares at the bill.

PAROLE OFFICER (CONT'D)
So. Food, clothing, shelter. What's the plan?

JACOB
Well, I got this ten dollars burning a hole through my pocket.

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PAROLE OFFICER
Don't get smart. You've been in here since you were a teenager. How do we keep you from coming right back?

JACOB
I'm a man of God. The Lord will provide.

PAROLE OFFICER
I'm a Christian too, Jacob. But I sure would like to hear a plan that doesn't involve God doing all the work. Food, clothing, and shelter. How we gonna do that?

JACOB
I've been writing to Daniel Strickland over at Spring Hill Church. He asked me to come and see him when I got out. Said he might have something for me.

PAROLE OFFICER
Daniel Strickland's dead. Didn't you hear? Hunting accident. What's plan B?

Off Jacob's face...

EXT. MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON - LATER

Jacob walks out of the prison. He sees a beat-up car waiting for him. He's annoyed to see a couple making out in the front seat. He TAPS on the window. BILLY, 23, dumb as a kitten, looks up and laughs, rolls down the window.

BILLY
Hey, free man! Look at you! How's it feel?

JACOB
Who's she?

That's PAIGE, 26, and Jacob doesn't like a thing about her. Not her cheap, pushy sexuality, not her methy twitchiness, and most of all, not the way she confidently sizes him up.

PAIGE
I'm sitting right here and my name's Paige, rude man.

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BILLY
We're staying at her place, it's great. Babe, this guy's an awesome preacher. I'm serious. He saved my life. Brought me to Jesus.

Jacob just stares at her. Billy clears his throat.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Babe?

PAIGE
(eye roll)
Alright. The Pastor can ride shotgun.

She gets out, managing to brush her body up against Jacob teasingly. Jacob slides in the passenger side.

BILLY
It's good to see you man! Good to see you! I got a present for you.

Billy reaches into the backseat and hands Jacob a BLACK WOODEN BOX. Jacob stares at it. Billy keeps talking.

BILLY (CONT'D)
I'm real sorry about the pastor. I heard he got shot in the face.

PAIGE
Where was Dick Cheney? Ha ha. OH MY GOD! Put that thing away!

Jacob has the lid off the box. A RATTLESNAKE uncoils itself.

BILLY
He knows how to handle serpents, babe. Don't worry.
(to Jacob)
So what are we gonna do?

Jacob stares at his snake, giving it's head a little tap.

JACOB
I guess I'm going to a funeral.

EXT. THE STRICKLAND HOME - ROOF

Noah sits on the roof, grieving. A window opens. Natalie (skate shorts and her father's UT sweatshirt) shimmies through the window and sits next to Noah.

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NOAH
Is that dad's sweatshirt?

NATALIE
Yeah. You okay?

NOAH
No.

NATALIE
He didn't look like he was going hunting.

NOAH
That's a made up story, obviously.

NATALIE
You wanna pray?

Noah nods. As they bow their heads...

INT./EXT. DANIEL STRICKLAND'S CAR/LANDFILL - DAY

Miles drives the car his father died in. He is following Paul, who drives his own car, into this GIGANTIC DESERTED LANDFILL. The backseat is stained with Daniel's blood which is creeping Miles out. He stops and gets out quickly. Paul is standing there, all practical and grim. Both men look at the car their father died in.

MILES
I really think this is a bad idea. It's unethical. It's wrong.

Paul sees a bottle of whiskey on the floor. This is what Daniel was drinking the night he died. Paul reaches for it.

PAUL
Well, luckily you are not in charge here, you godless hobo.

MILES
It's good to see you too, Paul. I can't believe he did this. It goes against everything... How many were there?

PAUL
What?

MILES
How many prostitutes?

Paul unscrews the cap while he talks, takes a pull.

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PAUL
In the secular world, is there an acceptable number of underage prostitutes a married man can fornicate with? Because around here one is too many. Look, this is a good solution to a terrible problem. I've prayed over it.

MILES
Really? You talked to God?

PAUL
I talk to God all day every day.

MILES
No wonder he doesn't have time for the Sudan. What's he say about dad?

Paul takes another pull from the bottle.

PAUL
He says that dad is in hell.

MILES
Since when do you drink?

PAUL
Since our father made a disgusting mess and left us holding the bag.

Paul releases the emergency break. The brothers push the car toward the landfill, which is deep and huge. All of a sudden: THE HORN BLASTS. Paul dives into the car and tries to shut it off. The car is still rolling toward the landfill.

MILES
Just leave it!

PAUL
Somebody's gonna hear.

Paul hits the break, but the car is on a steep slope and it slides. Half in, half out of the car, Paul gets the horn off and rolls out just in time to watch it crash into the sinkhole and get swallowed. He's on his knees in the dirt, panting. All of a sudden he HOLLERS.

PAUL (CONT'D)
God damn you, Daddy. God damn you. Burn in hell you son of a bitch!

Paul is crying now. Miles gives him room. Paul HURLS the bottle and turns to walk back to his car. Miles pats his brother's shoulder as they walk...

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INT. THE STRICKLAND HOME - DAY

Miles and Paul enter, dirty from the landfill. Jennifer is there, on the phone.

JENNIFER
We're going to pass capacity. Some have to watch in the annex...
(seeing Miles)
Can I call you back?

She runs over to Miles and throws her arms around him. She holds his face in her hands. Her affection for him is fierce.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
Miles! You're here. Oh, hi, honey!

MILES
Hi Momma. How you doing?

Miles is the child Jennifer confides in most. She almost breaks but it passes and she manages a smile.

JENNIFER
I'd be fine if only everybody would stop asking. There's clean sheets on your bed. Are you hungry?

MILES
No. I'm okay.

Jennifer's phone rings. She rolls her eyes and answers.

JENNIFER
Yes?

INT. THE STRICKLAND HOME - MILES ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Miles puts his duffle bag down in his room, which still has some remnants of him - football trophies, high school graduation picture, yearbooks. It's weird to be home.

LILLY (O.S.)
Hey stranger.

He looks up to see Lilly, pretty and pregnant. She's awkward and a little fake.

MILES
Hi... you're pregnant. Again.

LILLY
Yeah. Just beginning to show.

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MILES
Right. So this is...

LILLY
Third. Third child. We have a boy and a girl. We're very blessed.

MILES
Do you... like being a mom?

Lilly drops the act. She flops down on the bed.

LILLY
I don't know. Do you like being a black person? It's just what I am now.

MILES
That is so... beautiful.

LILLY
When was the last time you talked to him?

MILES
You know when. Six years ago.

LILLY
It wasn't fair that you took the heat for that. I'm sorry.

There's a story here but neither wants to linger on it.

MILES
Was probably for the best. I was always kind of mom's project.

LILLY
That's not true. He wanted to make things right. He just didn't know how.

MILES
We'll never know now. So... hunting accident.

LILLY
Do I hear righteous indignation in your voice?

MILES
Secrets make you ashamed.

NBC CASTING

LILLY
Well, daddy had plenty to be ashamed about, apparently.

MILES
Somebody sent those pictures. Just because we all hold hands and say hunting accident, doesn't mean it's going away.

LILLY
Whoever sent those pictures got what they wanted.

Over this we PRELAP:

CALEB (O.S.)
Lord, please bless the Judge and help him to recover from the chemotherapy that is sapping so much of his strength...

INT. A JUDGES HOME - NIGHT

CALEB BRYANT, who we met earlier on the TV, stands at the bed side of JUDGE RICK BOYD, 60s. The JUDGE'S WIFE, NAN, 50s, and two adult children hold hands with Caleb.

CALEB
We ask that you aide the good judge to a swift and full recovery. We need his wisdom, Lord. And may he lean not only into his own understanding, but may he hear your voice clearly in every decision he makes. Thank you Lord.

NAN
Thank you for coming, Pastor.

She walks him out.

CALEB
I'll come back and check on him in a few days.

NAN
It's such a shame about Pastor Daniel. You're close with them, right? Will you send them our love?

CALEB
Of course. Call me if you need anything. I'll pray for you.

NBC CASTING

EXT. THE JUDGE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

She closes the door. Caleb walks over to where his driver, bodyguard, and assistant, CLEAVON, 60s, stands. Caleb's demeanor changes to all business.

CALEB
Phone.

Cleavon hands him the phone. Caleb checks his messages.

CLEAVON
Jennifer Strickland would like you to speak at the service. She's waiting on your answer.

CALEB
Tell her I'd be honored. Cleavon, what do we think about this hunting accident nonsense?

CLEAVON
I don't know. What do we think?

CALEB
(musing)
Men are complicated, Cleavon. And dark. I think Daniel Strickland was a lost man. Shame can be a powerful force. It's tragic...
(now tough as nails)
... But didn't it say they found him near a farm? What was he hunting, corn on the cob? It must be chaos over there at Spring Hill. And where there is chaos, there is opportunity, Cleavon.

Caleb pauses at the door of the car.

CALEB (CONT'D)
What was the name of that chatty prostitute? The young one in the pictures?

CLEAVON
Cherise.

CALEB
Cherise. Right. Let's find her. See if she's up for a conversation.

END OF ACT ONE

NBC CASTING

ACT TWO

INT. THE STRICKLAND HOME - KITCHEN - MORNING

Natalie, Noah, and Miles sit on the sofa in their funeral attire. Natlie wears a dress and looks uncomfortable. They're channel flipping. Paul studies his speech nearby. Lilly is trying to remove a stain from Todd's tie in the kitchen. Charlotte and Brayden are underfoot.

MILES
You're wearing a dress. It's nice.

TODD
(calling over)
He's right. You look real pretty.

LILLY
(to Todd)
Hold still.

NATALIE
I look ridiculous, but thanks.

Jennifer comes in, beautiful in her black dress.

JENNIFER
Everybody ready? Car's outside.

NATALIE
Mom...

Natlie is gesturing to the TV. Everybody looks.

ON THE TV:

MSNBC REPORTER
A young woman, Cherise Ford, has come forward saying that Pastor Daniel Strickland paid for sex with her when she was sixteen years old.

Everybody's horrified.

JENNIFER
Where's the remote?

TODD
Oh no.

MILES
I knew this was gonna happen.

NBC CASTING

NATALIE
Knew what was gonna happen?

TODD
How'd you know this was gonna happen?
(to Lilly)
Do you know anything about this?

Miles watches as Lilly shakes her head. Jennifer is tearing up the couch, angrily looking for the remote. ON THE TV: Cherise is being interviewed.

JENNIFER
Noah! Where is it?

CHERISE
I saw him maybe ten times in 2011.

REPORTER
Did he know how old you were?

CHERISE
Yes. He asked me.

JENNIFER
(at the TV)
Shut up!

LILLY
Momma...

Click. Jennifer found the remote. She looks at her family.

JENNIFER
It's not true. All kinds of people are gonna come out of the woodwork saying things about your father. We have to be prepared for that.

NATALIE
How do you know it's not true?

TODD
Yeah how do we --

JENNIFER
(raising her voice)
Because I said it's not! You all are going to have to be strong, okay? I need you to let all this noise roll off you. There will be cameras today and I want a unified front. I'm serious. Now let's pray.

NBC CASTING

MILES
Mom...

PAUL
This isn't going to go away --

JENNIFER
I said let's pray!

The Strickland children exchange looks: *She's crazy*. But they do as they are told. Everyone grabs hands. Jennifer pulls herself together.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
Lord, please carry us through this day. Please give us strength to honor the memory of Daniel as a husband and father...
(after a beat)
Please help us to do that.

Lilly squeezes her mother's hand tightly.

EXT. SPRING HILL CHURCH - DAY

WE POP THROUGH THE ARRIVALS. It is a full house at Spring Hill. This feels like a who's who of evangelical celebrities.

-- LUKE HAYWARD and his wife MELISSA (think Joel and Victoria Osteen) arrive. A little on the flashy side, the Haywards have a HUGE church in Houston. They arrive in a limo.

-- A laid back, affable preacher reminiscent of Rick Warren gets out of his car. This is JEFF SORENS, nice guy. He has driven himself. People flock to him.

-- An older guy in the mold of Jimmy Swaggart arrives. This is ROBERT OLSON.

-- JJ BANKS, African American, larger than life, gets out of a black SUV, a huge presence shaking hands with people.

-- Hipster Pastor DREW ROARTY gets out of a black SUV, sexy in a tight shirt and jacket - no tie.

-- WE FIND the Stricklands getting out of their car. Jennifer holds her granddaughter. Miles, Paul, Lilly, Todd holding Brayden's hand, Noah, and Natalie, all close ranks. Despite the ugly story on the news this morning, people stop the Stricklands to express sincere condolences. Maybe this will be okay.

Caleb approaches, smiling somberly and shaking hands as he moves. He walks up to Jennifer.

NBC CASTING

CALEB
Jennifer.
(embracing her)
The Lord called him home too soon.

JENNIFER
Thank you for coming.

JACOB (O.S)
Mrs. Strickland! Mrs. Strickland.

Jacob, in mismatched jacket and pants, hair all combed down, walks up and GRABS her hand, hard. He's holding a NOTEBOOK.

JACOB (CONT'D)
We met once, but you don't know me. I'm Jacob Thorne.

He looks straight into Jennifer's eyes, straight to her soul. She's stares back - something about him is mesmerizing.

JACOB (CONT'D)
I was corresponding with your husband from prison. He promised me a position...

CALEB
From prison.

PAUL
What kind of position?

JACOB
I'm a pastor. He promised me a place in the church. He made assurances. I have his letters...

Jacob pulls out his letters but Caleb waves them away.

JENNIFER
I'm sorry. You're hurting my hand.

CALEB
Let go of the woman's hand, son.

JACOB
You're going to hell if you don't repent. You know that, don't you? I know what you did.

Caleb has heard enough. He motions for security.

CALEB
Security! Will you please lovingly remove this man?

NBC CASTING

Security swarms in and Jacob is dragged away, hollering.

JACOB
You think what happened to your husband was an accident? God sees Mrs. Strickland. God exacts justice.

Jennifer is horrified. Caleb takes her arm.

CALEB
There's a lunatic in every crowd.

As he leads her into the church, we PRELAP:

JJ BANKS (O.S)
Let's pray. Merciful Father, thank you for your time on this sad day.

INT. SPRING HILL CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

JJ Banks stands on the stage. He's a big-hearted presence.

JJ BANKS
We want to express appreciation, Lord. Appreciation and thanks for the life of Daniel Strickland. A great man. A good man. An inspiration to all of us...

INT. SPRING HILL CHURCH - LATER

Drew Roarty is up. He's the young hipster preacher - he's pretty animated.

DREW ROARTY
God. Has. A. Plan. This is part of God's foreknowing, definite, plan. What does this mean? It means, DON'T FREAK OUT!

INT. SPRING HILL CHURCH - LATER

Carrie Underwood is lovely as she sings this tribute...

CARRIE UNDERWOOD
(singing)
It's gone away. Yesterday. Now I found myself on a mountain side. Where the rivers change direction...

NBC CASTING

INT. SPRING HILL CHURCH - LATER

Jeff Sorens is up. He's folksy and easy in his skin.

JEFF SORENS
Many Christians have it in their mind that the Lord is with us only in the good times. But Jesus never leaves us. No matter what the circumstances...

INT. SPRING HILL CHURCH - PULPIT - LATER

Caleb's turn. It's just him in the spotlight. This is his element. He is a gifted and inspired preacher. We're about to see why people love him.

CALEB
The shortest verse in the bible is John 11:35: "Jesus wept." You all know this. Jesus had let Lazarus die. He had glorious and merciful reasons for doing that. And he knew that in a few short minutes, all this weeping would turn to joy. But this did not mean that he didn't feel grief or compassion. Death consumes every human God has ever created. And so he wept. And so we weep.

(more intimate now, like he's talking to a small group)

I... I can't even get my arms around how sad today is. We come together to try and find meaning and solace, but on a day like today, all I want to do is weep for my friend Daniel, for how much we all will miss him. Natalie and Noah - who we have all watched grow up - the world must look so mean and unloving to you right now. I know it's hard to imagine a time when you will feel better.

Caleb's voice breaks. Natalie and Noah fight a losing battle with their tears. People are sobbing now. They love him. Now his voice gets fuller and stronger.

ABC CASTING

CALEB (CONT'D)
But I am here to tell you that love is stronger than death, because love lives forever.
(applause and "Amens")
Jennifer Strickland. I want you to hear me because I know what you are afraid of. That when this day is over and your phone stops ringing and friends stop coming by with food, that you will feel a void where Daniel was. But don't you think for one second that you were abandoned. Because God will fill that void and you will come back from this. You will astonish yourself with your resilience. You will astonish us with your grace. Because he will live inside you forever. God bless you Jennifer, Lilly, Paul, Miles, Natalie, and Noah. God bless you.

HUGE APPLAUSE. Caleb doesn't seem to notice. He walks away, leaving an empty spotlight ready for Paul to fill.

INT. SPRING HILL CHURCH - BACKSTAGE

Caleb knows he killed it. He walks over to where Paul is waiting to go on, sweating already.

CALEB
I guess your conversation with your father about his indiscretions didn't go as planned. Too bad. Lovely service though. Good luck.

Caleb walks away. Paul closes his eyes for a moment, then walks out. He has none of the swagger of the other preachers.

PAUL
Please turn your bibles to I-- I--

IN THE PEW: Jennifer, Miles, and Lilly all cringe.

MILES
Oh God.

JENNIFER
Shhh. He's gonna be okay.

Paul continues. He is sweating now. This is rough.

NBC CASTING

PAUL
I-- I-- Isaiah! So do not fear, for I I am w-w-w-...

BACKSTAGE: Caleb grabs a nearby gospel singer.

CALEB
Put the boy out of his misery. Sing something. I don't care what.

The CHOIR starts to SING before they even reach the stage, walking past Paul, almost running him over.

EXT. SPRING HILL CHURCH - LATER

The reception following the funeral. There's catered food set up. A modest selection of wine for those who drink. Everybody mills around. Miles finds Paul by the bar. Paul is pounding chardonnay.

MILES
It wasn't that bad.

PAUL
It was a social and biblical Chernobyl.

MILES
(re: the wine)
Slow down.

PAUL
After a lifetime of abstinence, I am finally beginning to see the appeal of alcohol.

MILES
You should try sex. I hear that's pretty good, too.

Jennifer joins. She's looking over to where Caleb talks with some of the celebrity preachers. They glance over at her.

JENNIFER
What do you suppose they're talking about?

PAUL
Us.

JENNIFER
Let's go nip this in the bud...

Jennifer walks off. Paul follows.

NBC CASTING

INT. SPRING HILL CHURCH - CONFERENCE ROOM - MINUTES LATER

All the celebrity preachers sit around a conference table. They include, Jeff Sorens, Robert Olson, JJ Banks, Luke Hayward, and a few other characters. They are all men, except for Jennifer, who sits at one end of the conference table, facing Caleb. Paul sits beside his mother.

LUKE HAYWARD
Jennifer, let's do this another time.

JEFF SORENS
I strongly agree.

JENNIFER
It's fine. Let's just talk.

A silence. Then Caleb jumps in.

CALEB
It's about that woman on MSNBC this morning.

JJ BANKS
Who could be lying.

LUKE HAYWARD
We all know that. She probably is making up the story. The problem is we are all bound together under the Trinity Broadcast group. When one of us is touched by scandal, it reflects poorly on all of us.

ROBERT OLSON
...And then Rachel Maddow goes off on another one of her rants. And then we're all over the news.

CALEB
We're all just concerned.

JEFF SORENS
<u>You're</u> concerned Caleb. I was just eating a cheese straw minding my own business.

LUKE HAYWARD
Jennifer do you know if there's a hint of truth to her story?

NBCASTING

JENNIFER
No. Of course not. Are you threatening to pull our show from the network?

CALEB
No one's threatening anything. Jennifer, we can take this up with Paul. You don't need to hear this.

JENNNIFER
Oh, I think I do.

CALEB
Alright...
(reluctantly... or maybe "reluctantly")
I am hearing rumors of some financial improprieties.

JJ BANKS
Oh, please Caleb. Did you drive here in the Maserati or the Bentley?
(rises, squeezes Jennifer's shoulder)
I'm leaving. I do not approve of this conversation on this day. Jennifer, you have my love, my blessings, and my phone number if you need anything.

JENNIFER
Thank you.

CALEB
Full disclosure, that woman on MSNBC is a new member of my flock.

PAUL
Of course she is!

CALEB
I can work what influence I have with her, of course...

JENNIFER
Can you? That's big of you.

CALEB
But she tells me that she thinks there might be pictures floating around somewhere.

NBC CASTING

At that moment, Jennifer KNOWS Caleb is behind this. He wants her to know. They might as well be the only people in the room.

JENNIFER
(you son of a bitch)
She said that? She said that to you?

CALEB
(yeah, I know)
She did.

PAUL
Caleb, you're a bastard.

CALEB
(Raises a hand to Paul but does not look at him)
Tell us Jennifer, I forgot to ask earlier. Do the police have any leads on the individual responsible for this hunting accident? That person must be brought to justice.

Silence as Jennifer and Caleb lock eyes. The other pastors are now totally lost.

DREW ROARTY
Guys, what are we talking about --

JENNIFER
(not breaking eye contact)
No. Not yet. Spring Hill Church is going to be fine. Paul is going to take over as pastor.

Silence as everyone takes that in.

CALEB
Oh dear. That's gonna be a long Sunday service. I guess you'll find out who the truly devout are.

JENNIFER
(rising)
If you don't mind, I'm going to mourn my husband.

CALEB
(you're going down)
I'll pray for you.

NBC CASTING

JENNIFER
(fuck you)
Oh no. I'll pray for you.

EXT. SPRING HILL CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

Jennifer walks out, the anger she was riding in the meeting turns into a wave of panic and devastation that nearly breaks her in half. She collapses onto a bench. Jeff Sorens appears, sits next to her. She tries not to cry. He pretends not to notice. This guy is all kindness, wisdom and comfort. He lets a beat of silence play.

JEFF
You know you're gonna be okay.

JENNIFER
How would I know that? I'm in trouble.

JEFF
Want to talk about it?

JENNIFER
Nope.

JEFF
Give it to God, then. Even better.

JENNIFER
Jeff... I can't find God.

JEFF
You keep looking. He'll turn up. Caleb... well, he makes a lot of noise. The bad apples are often loud, aren't they? Makes it seem like there's more of them than there are. Jennifer, you have many friends in the community. Lot's of folks love you and are rooting for you, okay my dear?

Jennifer nods, grateful. Off the two of them, just sitting there in the afternoon light...

INT. PAIGE'S CRAPPY APARTMENT - NIGHT

Duck Dynasty is on TV. Paige and Billy are snorting meth as they watch it. Jacob dangles a live mouse into a snake terrarium. Paige gives Jacob a teasing glance.

NBC CASTING

PAIGE
I cannot believe you got thrown out of that funeral. They let in anybody. But not you. Thrown out like trash...

BILLY
Babe. Come on. Lay off.

PAIGE
Lovingly removed! That's classic. I want those snakes out of my house by the weekend.

Jacob watches a snake go after the mouse.

JACOB
I feel like going to church.

INT. A DIRTY BASEMENT SOMEWHERE - LATER

A Pentecostal snake-handling service. People drink strychnine and play with FIRE, swaying with the spirit of the holy ghost, turning in circles, dancing to music only they can hear. The women wear long skirts and no makeup. This is some fringy shit. Jacob walks in with his snakes. Billy and Paige follow. Paige stands out in her sexy Forever 21 outfit.

PAIGE
I want to go home.

BILLY
Shh. Babe. Just be quiet.

There's snake boxes stacked up along the front of the room. Jacob walks up and talks to a GUY.

JACOB
Anybody handling tonight?

GUY
Not yet.

Jacob kneels down next to the snakes, his eyes lighting up. With his back to the congregation, he begins his prophecy.

JACOB
There's gonna come a day...
(then, louder)
<u>There's</u> <u>gonna</u> <u>come</u> <u>a</u> <u>day</u>. The bellies of the earth will open up. Some'll freeze and some'll be devoured.
(MORE)

NBC CASTING

JACOB (CONT'D)
And on that day, there's some'll be taken out of prison and put back in the heart of God where they belong...

BILLY
Amen brother!

Jacob drinks something from a jar. Paige leans over to Billy.

PAIGE
What's he drinking?

BILLY
Strychnine.

Jacob commands the room now. An old lady in the corner dances harder and harder. It's scary and bizarre and totally captivating. Jacob picks up a fat rattlesnake, then another.

JACOB
The earth is gonna shake and the sky will turn red as blood. And God's dark messenger will roll over rooftops and the righteous will take back the churches!

PAIGE
Holy sh---

JACOB
He said, "And these signs that shall follow from them that believe, in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them. AND THEY WENT FORTH AND PREACHED EVERYWHERE. AND THOSE THAT ARE NOT SAVED ARE DOOMED FOR ETERNITY..."

Jacob has two more snakes now. He is speaking in tongues, lost in some kind of euphoria. He spins around and around with his snakes. Everyone is mesmerized, including Paige...

END OF ACT TWO

NBC CASTING

ACT THREE

INT. THE STRICKLAND HOME - NATALIE'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Natalie is curled up in bed wearing her dad's sweatshirt. She's looking at articles on the internet. Story after story about her father and the prostitute: "Was Daniel Strickland a Fraud?" She is crying, wiping away tears. This girl is at sea. She gets up and looks in the mirror. Her long straight hair hangs down past her shoulders...

JUMP CUT THROUGH the images: SCISSORS on the counter. The first lock of hair hits the floor. Then another, then another...

INT. NOAH'S CAR - LATER THAT MORNING

Noah leans on the horn. Natalie slides into the passenger side. Short, shaggy hair, short sleeved button down, skinny jeans, Vans - very right-now hipster guy. She could pass as a boy. Noah gives her a long, slow, once over...

NOAH
I'm sorry. Are you looking for the One Direction tour bus? Nat, what are you doing?

NATALIE
I'm being who I am.

Noah drops his head to the steering wheel.

NOAH
This couldn't wait until you got to NYU?
(Natalie just stares straight ahead)
You're going to get crucified. You know that, right?

NATALIE
It's none of your business. It has nothing to do with you.

NOAH
(starting the car)
Oh, I think you're wrong, big guy.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - LOCKERS - DAY

WHAM! Noah is beating the shit out of a DUDE who presumably just made fun of Natalie.

NBC CASTING

NOAH
What'd you say to my sister?

DUDE
I said she was a dyke. I guess I meant fag.

BAM! Noah hits him again, then BOUNCES HIS FRIEND OFF a locker. Noah turns and gets hit in the face by another guy. Natalie, off to the side, looks on, mortified...

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Jennifer stands in line at the grocery store with Miles. She picks up a tabloid with a picture of Daniel on it next to a picture of the MSNBC prostitute: "The Secret Life of Texas Pastor." Jennifer looks up to see people whispering. Miles takes the paper out of her hand.

MILES
Stop.

JENNIFER
Okay.
(starts putting her groceries on the belt)
No. Hey. We miss you. You could stay a while. Plenty of need for high school biology teachers here. You could go back to school. You wanted to be a doctor. You never told me why you dropped out. We could use you at the church, too.

His reason for dropping out of school is a long sordid story and Miles doesn't want to get into it right now.

MILES
You know I don't believe what you believe. I wish I could, but I think it's just a nice story. And not all of it's that nice.

JENNIFER
When you turned up in Sunday School, you told everybody there was no such thing as God, just like there was no such thing as Santa Claus. You took out God and Santa in one breath. Started a prison riot. Of all my children, you are truly the most skeptical.

NBC CASTING

MILES
Foster care will do that to you.

Jennifer looks at him, forgetting for a second the shitstorm that she's in.

JENNIFER
How much of that do you remember?

MILES
Enough.
(off her long look)
I'm okay, Momma. Mostly I remember your house.

JENNIFER
Our house.

MILES
Our house.

CHECKER
That's 284.57.
(Jennifer swipes her card)
Credit or debit?

JENNIFER
Credit.

MILES
Hey. This thing with dad... did you know about any of it?

JENNIFER
That's what everybody wants to know, isn't it? No. I didn't know. Maybe I was stupid, but... I thought we were happy.

CHECKER
Um, Mrs. Strickland. Your card was declined.

Off Jennifer's look...

INT. LAWYERS OFFICE - LATER

Jennifer, Paul, and Miles sit in front of their lawyer, DALE BARRINGTON, 50s. Jennifer looks like she's about to jump out of her skin.

JENNIFER
What is going on, Dale?

NBC CASTING

DALE
Jennifer, if I may be frank...

JENNIFER
Little late in the game to start, but go ahead.

DALE
That prostitute on MSNBC. She's probably telling the truth. And it looks like Daniel paid these girls to stay quiet using church funds. I think he was hoping the book sales would fill up his coffers.

JENNIFER
Dale! Damnit! You're supposed to be our lawyer. Not just his.

DALE
Daniel always led me to believe that he had final say. Both of you led me to believe that.

MILES
Is the Attorney General going to look into this? Because that's a very big deal.

DALE
We should be prepared for that. Jennifer, they could come after you.

JENNIFER
Me?

DALE
They'll say you knew about it.

JENNIFER
My God. I'm gonna lose the house.

DALE
Paul, don't pretend you didn't know about at least some of this.

Paul looks stricken. Jennifer stares at her son.

PAUL
He made me swear not to tell, Momma. I- I - I didn't know what to do. You have to see--

NBC CASTING

JENNIFER
All I see is a grown man with his head in the sand.
(to Dale)
You're fired.
(to Paul)
You I have to live with.

Jennifer walks out...

INT. THE STRICKLAND HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jennifer pulls a bottle of white wine out of the refrigerator. There's an inch left. How did that happen? Noah walks in, his face bruised. Jennifer whirls on him.

JENNIFER
Noah! What happened to your face?

NOAH
Nothing.

JENNIFER
How is this nothing?

Then Natalie comes in. She's modified her outfit a bit so she can fit back into the "tomboy" category. Jennifer's eyes widen. She reaches for Natalie's hair.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
Sweetheart, what did you do? What did you do to your hair?

NATALIE
I just cut it. Stop.

JENNIFER
Why would you do that?

NATALIE
It's who I am, Mom.

JENNIFER
Oh, honey, stop. It's not true. You're beautiful. You just need to get a little confidence...

NATALIE
Look at me, Mom! I'm not like other girls. I know I'm breaking some kind of house rule by trying to tell the truth...

Noah hangs back, wanting to hear this.

NBC CASTING

JENNIFER
Hey!

NATALIE
What happened to dad, Mom? What's going on? I hear you on the phone talking about money and... and... and that... girl on the news. It's true, isn't it? It's all true! Dad was some kid of dirty old man and you were his enabler...

SMACK! Jennifer has hit Natalie across the face.

JENNIFER
You watch your mouth!

Natalie blinks back tears and storms out the front door, leaving it wide open. After a second, Noah walks after her. Jennifer looks after them, miserable. Almost in a daze, she walks out of the kitchen, as a haunting, faintly menacing piece of score starts...

EXT. PAIGE'S CRAPPY APARTMENT - NIGHT

...And continues over Jacob who gets into Paige's car and starts the engine. There's a knock on the glass. It's Paige. Jacob rolls down the window, looks at her. She's flirtatious.

PAIGE
Billy's sleeping off a bender. Where you going, sexy?

JACOB
Store.

PAIGE
You're a badass, you know that?

JACOB
Think so?

He smiles. She smiles back, all sexy and up for whatever. The score begins to BUILD as we...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STRICKLAND HOME - BACKYARD - SAME TIME

...Where Jennifer looks up at the sky, crying angry tears. She paces around, about to jump out of her skin. After a second she prays, her prayers now reduced to simply this:

NBC CASTING

JENNIFER
Help me. Please, please help me.

Nothing happens. After a moment she DIVES into the pool in her clothes and swims laps. Back and forth. Back and forth, as the SCORE CONTINUES TO BUILD...

INT. PAIGE'S CAR - NIGHT

...Paige and Jacob are having some pretty hard sex. Paige throws in some porn-y sex moans as she bounces around. She slows. He's having trouble.

PAIGE
What's wrong, baby?

JACOB
Let's just stop. Get off.

PAIGE
(kissing him)
Come on. Let me help you out.

JACOB
(shoving her away)
I said stop.

PAIGE
I thought you were a snake handler.

She laughs at her joke, then without much grace, hikes down her skirt and rearranges her panties. She feels something under her chair: The NOTEBOOK Jacob had when he left prison.

JACOB
Gimme that.

PAIGE
(grinning)
Lemme see.

JACONB
I'm serious. Give it back.

But Paige is already looking. It's pages of pictures and articles about Jennifer Strickland: with Daniel, with the kids, with six year old Miles when they adopted him.

PAIGE
This is super creepy. Are you obsessed with Jennifer Strickland? Don't you think she's kind of old for you?

NBC CASTING

JACOB
You better shut up.

PAIGE
(laughing)
Is that why you couldn't get it up?
'Cause I'm not a milf-y Christian?

JACOB
Shut up!

He hits her across the face. She recoils, then HITS him back.

PAIGE
Hit me all you want dirt bag, you
still can't get it up.

He grabs her and SLAMS her head down on the dashboard.

JACOB
(slamming her head)
Shut up. Shut up! Will you shut up!

Paige screams until she doesn't. Just before her head hits the dash for the last time, we CUT TO:

EXT. THE STRICKLAND HOME - SAME TIME

SLAM! Jennifer hits her head on the side of the pool, hard. Blood streams from a cut on her scalp. With effort, she grabs the side of the pool and gasps for air, crying. From nowhere a hand appears, pulling her out of the water. It's Caleb. He helps her out, getting himself wet in the process. He puts his jacket over her, rubs her shoulders.

CALEB
Your front door was open. What are
you doing, girl? It's freezing. And
your head. Let's get inside...

INT. PAIGE'S CAR - NIGHT

Jacob holds Paige's body, rocks it back and forth, sobbing...

JACOB
I'm sorry. I'm so sorry...

INT. THE STRICKLAND HOME - KITCHEN - A MINUTE LATER

Jennifer dabs at her scalp with a towel. Caleb is concerned, tender even.

NBC CASTING

CALEB
Can I help you with that?

JENNIFER
Caleb, the thought of your hands on me makes my skin crawl.
(a beat)
I mean... No thank you.

CALEB
That was not always the case.

A little history here, apparently. Jennifer shoots him a dirty look. He slides an envelope across the counter.

JENNIFER
(looking at it coolly)
What's in the envelope, Caleb?

CALEB
Jennifer, I think you know.

Jennifer opens it. It's a set of photos identical to the ones Daniel shot himself over. Jennifer slides them back to him.

CALEB (CONT'D)
They were sent to me by an anonymous source.

JENNIFER
Well, can you look in the mirror and ask the anonymous source what he wants?

CALEB
(gently)
You have a problem here. Let me help you.
(off her frosty look)
Okay. Since we're being candid, let's talk about that hunting accident that never happened.

JENNIFER
I don't know what you're talking about.

CALEB
You want to know what I think happened? I think he took one look at these pictures, got in his car, and shot himself like the coward he was.
(MORE)

NBC CASTING

CALEB (CONT'D)
I think he left you to clean up this awful mess with no explanation, help, or guidance. Which part do I have wrong?

JENNIFER
His blood is on your hands, I hope you know that.

CALEB
I didn't send the pictures. And let's put the blame where it belongs: On the guy who was diddling teenage prostitutes. Jennifer, you were a wonderful wife to him. A wonderful mother. And now look at you. Grieving for a husband you didn't even know. Trying to keep it together for your family. And the church. The people who believed in him. It's awful what has happened and you do not have to face it alone.

JENNIFER
Is this where you come in?

CALEB
If you want to think I'm the bad guy, go ahead, but let me help. We merge. I can take care of your financial problems. I can make this whole thing go away and you can focus on your family the way God planned.

Jennifer looks at him - she despises him, but his offer is tempting. He sees it in her face.

CALEB (CONT'D)
You know this is best. This isn't going away just because you made up a story about a hunting accident. You don't think there's more girls that'll come forward?

JENNIFER
I'm sure you'll find them.

Caleb is losing patience. He lets a beat of silence play, then goes for the jugular.

NBC CASTING

CALEB
Refresh my memory. How did you and Daniel meet? Weren't you a runaway living at the teen shelter? If I asked around, would I find out you turned a few tricks to make ends meet?

JENNIFER
What happened to you? You used to inspire people. You inspired me. When did you turn into such a son of a bitch?

CALEB
Rumors are already flying about how much Daniel liked his underage hookers. Imagine when everyone finds out that you were the original teenage prostitute! Promise me you wont take less than 6 million dollars for your book.

JENNIFER
Get out.

CALEB
I'm just the messenger. You'll be dragged through the mud. If you have skeletons, they will be found out. After people are through with Daniel, they are going to start to ask, "Who is Jennifer Strickland?" I'm throwing you a lifeline. You should take it.
(a beat)
I'll just show myself out.

And he's gone. Jennifer feels the gash on her head. It still hurts.

END OF ACT THREE

NBC CASTING

ACT FOUR

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GIRLS LOCKER ROOM - DAY

There's a mob of teenage girls laughing and taunting. The crowd spills out into the hallway. Noah PUSHES his way through the throng until he gets to the front.

HAYLEY
See, you are a girl, Natalie.

Natalie is stranded in the locker room, mortified, in boxer shorts with her chest taped up.

NOAH
Give her back her clothes, Hayley.

HAYLEY
I didn't take her clothes. Did you guys take her clothes?

All the girls make 'wasn't me' noises. Hayley runs a hand along Noah's side, flirting with him - what a bitch this girl is. She's getting off on the whole scenario.

HAYLEY (CONT'D)
You should cut your freak sister loose, Noah. Let her fend for herself.

NOAH
Why you gotta be such a bitch? Give her back her clothes or --

HAYLEY
Or what? You gonna beat me up, too? You gonna hit a girl? Is that what you're gonna do?

Off Noah's look...

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - LATER THAT DAY

SCREECH OF TIRES as Lilly's minivan screeches to a halt in front of the school. She turns to Charlotte and Brayden in the back seat. She picks Charlotte's pacifier off the floor, licks it, then pops it in Charlotte's mouth and smiles.

LILLY
Momma'll be right back, okay?

NBC CASTING

She gets out, tosses the keys to Noah. She's Texas-fierce and sexy -- high heel boots, skinny jeans, don't-fuck-with-me aviators... and a giant pregnant belly.

LILLY (CONT'D)
Where is she?

NOAH
In the gym.

As Lilly walks off, we hear Rihanna's "Only Girl In The World" start to play...

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - CONTINUOUS

...Because Hayley and the rest of the cheerleaders are working on a dance to it. The music abruptly CUTS OFF.

LILLY (O.S.)
Hayley Stern?

Hayley looks up. And this is AWESOME because Lilly does not stop, does not slow down as she advances on Hayley like a fucking truck. Without hesitation, Lilly HITS Hayley HARD across the face with an open hand.

LILLY (CONT'D)
I don't think that was a very Christian thing you did to my sister. I think you owe her an apology. Would you like to do that now?

The other cheerleaders GASP. One of them runs out of the room. Hayley's pride will not let her back down.

HAYLEY
Her? Who are we talking about? Don't you mean him?

Without the slightest hesitation, Lilly hits her again.

LILLY
I didn't come here to argue over pronouns. I don't want to hear another word about my sister having a hard time at school. Or I'll come back here. Do you understand me, you little shoplifter?

Hayley nods. Lilly looks her up and down, realizing that she is looking at a version of her own sixteen year-old self.

NBC CASTING

LILLY (CONT'D)
Enjoy the rest of high school. This is your peak.

The PRINCIPAL, female, 50s, clicks in on sensible heels.

PRINCIPAL
What is going on here?

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - THIRTY MINUTES LATER

Miles, Lilly, Natalie, Noah, Brayden, and Charlotte all sit in silence outside the principal's office. Natalie looks at Lilly.

NATALIE
You didn't have to do that...

LILLY
(whirling on her)
Oh. Don't think for a minute that you and I are okay --

The door opens. Jennifer emerges to witness the fight.

NATLIE
What am I suppose to do? Hide who I am?

LILLY
If this is what you are, then yes.

NATLIE
You're so mean that you're ugly, you know that?

Jennifer keeps her voice low. It's angry and sad and disappointed at the same time and it scares her kids.

JENNIFER
Stop it. Just please stop it.

They turn toward her, as Jennifer looks over her family.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
I expect more from all you.

And with that, she leaves. Her kids look after her, worried.

NBC CASTING

INT. LILLY'S CAR - HER DRIVEWAY - LATER

Lilly and Miles sit in the front seat of the parked car. Her kids nap in their car seats. Silence.

MILES
How long are they gonna be out?

LILLY
Could be ten minutes, could be two hours. Todd doesn't like them napping in the car, but he went back to Washington today so...

MILES
That was pretty mean back there with Natalie.

LILLY
I'm a little mean.

MILES
I don't think Natalie's pretending or trying to get attention.

LILLY
You think she's just gay?

MILES
If she's transgender, she identifies as a boy. It doesn't even necessarily mean she likes girls.

LILLY
Seriously?

MILES
Sure. She could want to be a boy who identifies as homosexual.

LILLY
Well, that seems like a long walk for nothing.

Miles smiles. He likes her edge.

MILES
I don't think you're mean. I think you're unhappy.

They hold eye contact for a long beat.

LILLY
Stop looking at me like that.

NBC CASTING

MILES
Why?

LILLY
Because of obvious reasons.

He reaches over and holds her hand. She allows it.

LILLY (CONT'D)
(after a beat)
Todd wants me to move the kids to Washington with him. He's afraid of the scandal thing with dad. He wants to create some distance... from my family.

MILES
Do you love him?

LILLY
(dumbest question ever)
What difference does it make? He's my husband.

Something catches Lilly's attention in the rear view. Her eyes widen and she pulls her hand away from Miles and turns to her left just as TODD APPEARS.

LILLY (CONT'D)
(natural as can be)
Hey you! What?!

TODD
I got to the airport and turned right around. I can wait another day. Hey, Miles. You want to come out for some barbecue?

MILES
Oh. No. I'm gonna go check on mom.

TODD
Need a ride? Come on. I'll take you.

MILES
Uh, thanks.

Miles gets up. He and Lilly avoid eye contact.

INT. THE STRICKLAND HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Paul and Jennifer.

NBC CASTING

JENNIFER
I think we have to consider his offer.

PAUL
It's Caleb! And besides, what about me taking over? Can we at least give that a shot?

JENNIFER
The DA is going to come after us. They're gonna come after you, too. I don't know what to do. This whole ugly mess is gonna come out. Are you prepared for that? I'm not.

PICK UP: Noah stopped at the bottom of the stairs.

PAUL
But what about the church?

JENNIFER
I have to choose my family over the church. And God. Look, you can do the service tomorrow. But then I'm calling Caleb and accepting his offer.

Paul stares at her, angry.

PAUL
Okay. It's your decision I guess.

Paul leaves. Jennifer heads upstairs, running into Noah. She instantly understands that he heard. She moves past him. He lets her get halfway up the stairs, then:

NOAH
When I was six I asked you why I had to go to church every Sunday.

Jennifer stops and listens.

NOAH (CONT'D)
You said because you wanted me to have a light to see by. And that my life should have purpose. You said it wasn't enough to be good, that I had to be kind and loving too.
(a beat)
It... it stuck with me, I guess.

Jennifer looks miserable. After a second, she continues up the steps to her room...

NBC CASTING

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Paul leaves a liquor store with a fifth of whiskey. It's raining.

JACOB (O.S.)
Hey brother.

Paul looks over to see Jacob standing next to his car. It takes Paul a minute to place him.

PAUL
Hello. Can I help you?

JACOB
It's coming down pretty hard. Come on...

Jacob hustles Paul into the car before Paul can protest.

PAUL
Um, what - what is this?

JACOB
I'm real sorry about your daddy. I thought he was a great man. Of course, it seems like maybe he wasn't so great. He was weak. All those little sluts he was fooling around with brought him down.

PAUL
This is a private matter. We're dealing with it as a family.

JACOB
But that's just it. That's why I wanted to talk to you. We are family. I'm your brother, brother. God told me.

Obviously, this man is a lunatic. Paul's heard enough.

PAUL
Okay. Sir, I am sorry for the series of misfortunes that landed you in prison and brought us to this depressing intersection, but I have a Sunday service to pre --
HOLY GOD!

We HEAR the RATTLE before we see the snake. It's slithering up the door, making it impossible for Paul to leave. Then ANOTHER ONE comes up over the seat. Paul's eyes are like dinner plates. Jacob is fully in control.

NBC CASTING

JACOB
That's it. Stay for awhile, brother.

PAUL
Wh- Wh-- Wh--

JACOB
(aping him)
Wh Wha Wha do I want? I want to be welcomed. See, the state of Texas confirmed the message that God gave me. You know your momma had a baby when she was a teenager? She abandoned that baby and he was adopted by a couple. The adopted daddy used to like to punch that baby when no one was looking. It took social services a long time to notice, but they finally did. After that, it was foster care and group homes. I'll spare you the gory details, but you should know that Texas social services will fail to notice signs of physical and sexual abuse nine times out of ten. Can you guess who that little boy was?

PAUL
I don't believe you.

JACOB
Ask your mom. She and I have some business. What kind of a woman abandons her baby?

The snake is rearing it's head, about to strike. Paul is terrified. Let's out a little moan...

JACOB (CONT'D)
You worried about the snakes? They don't bite if your soul is pure. If your faith is strong, they can tell and they leave you alone. So you got nothing to worry about, right?

OFF PAUL'S SCREAM AS THE SNAKE BITES HIM...

END OF ACT FOUR

NBC CASTING

ACT FIVE

INT. MILE'S CAR - EARLY MORNING

Miles drives, looking at the sunrise in his home state. He yawns and rubs his face. Gospel music on the radio...

INT. HOSPITAL - LATER THAT MORNING

Miles walks into the ER and looks around for Paul, who is lying in a bed, getting an IV taken out of his arm. Paul sees Miles as he approaches.

PAUL
Thank you for coming.

Miles takes his brother in. He looks awful.

MILES
What happened to you?

Paul gets out of bed, begins to dress, tries to maintain his dignity by being matter-of-fact.

PAUL
Some just-out-of-prison, religious zealot set a bunch of rattlesnakes on me.

MILES
(nods)
Of course.

After a beat, Miles starts laughing.

PAUL
I don't see what's funny.

MILES
(still laughing)
You don't?

Paul starts laughing despite himself. He's all slaphappy from the lack of sleep and drugs.

PAUL
He said they wouldn't bite me if my faith was pure... I got bit three times.

They're doing that silent, shaking, laughing thing.

NBC CASTING

PAUL (CONT'D)
I almost died!

Hilarious. People are staring. Both men are doubled over. Finally their laughter subsides...

PAUL (CONT'D)
I was the one who sent dad those pictures. Caleb took them. But I sent them to daddy. I thought it would make him stop...

Miles stares at his brother.

PAUL (CONT'D)
I'm lost.

Off Paul, miserable...

INT. THE STRICKLAND HOME - JENNIFER'S ROOM - MORNING

QUICK CUTS OF Jennifer getting ready. She studies herself carefully in the mirror as she applies her makeup.

INT. THE STRICKLAND HOME - NATALIE'S ROOM - LATER

Natalie sits looking at a dress she's supposed to wear. A KNOCK: Jennifer. She sits down next to Natalie.

JENNIFER
Is this because your daddy died, or is this who you are?

NATALIE
It's who I am. I'm supposed to be a boy.

JENNIFER
How long have you felt this way?

NATALIE
All my life.

JENNIFER
(takes that in)
You been holding that all by yourself?

Natalie flings an arm over her face, embarrassed by her tears.

NBC CASTING

NATALIE
I pray and pray and God never answers. Does that mean he doesn't love me anymore? Do you not love me anymore? Or maybe... maybe it means he's just not there at all... I'm so alone...

Even though Jennifer has been grappling with this same feeling, hearing it from her youngest child simultaneously breaks her heart and renews her faith. She gathers up Natalie in her arms, kisses her...

JENNIFER
Oh, no. No, no... honey. God's here. All I have to do to believe in God, is to look at you.

NATALIE
Why doesn't he answer?

JENNIFER
He did. He gave you me, and he gave me you. Look at me. Your worthiness is not on the table. Everybody's just trying to catch up, is all. God made you. God loves you. And I love you. And I'm here.
(re: Natalie's tears)
Shh. Stop now. Momma's here. I know what to do.

We HOLD on Jennifer's face as she finds her resolve.

INT./EXT. SPRING HILL CHURCH - DAY

People stream in, holding their bibles. Jennifer, Lilly, Miles, and the twins close ranks, keeping their eyes frontward as they walk.

JENNIFER
You guys go sit. I'll be along later.

Her children give her questioning looks, but obey.

INT. SPRING HILL CHURCH - BEHIND THE PULPIT - MINUTES LATER

There's a singer on stage. Jennifer hurries to find Paul, whose grimly looking over his sermon. She puts a hand on his shoulder. He turns. She touches his face.

NBC CASTING

JENNIFER
None of this is your fault.

PAUL
(oh, but it is)
Momma...

JENNIFER
And none of it is my fault, either. But I... I need to do something...

INT. SPRING HILL CHURCH - STAGE - MOMENTS LATER

The music has stopped. Nothing happens. The congregation waits, restless. People start to murmur. The spotlight is on the pulpit and the pulpit is empty...

INT. CALEB'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Caleb watches the live stream from his office. He watches the empty pulpit. It's a bad sign. Perfect.

INT. SPRING HILL CHURCH - SAME TIME

Still nothing. Then: The CLICK of high heels and Jennifer walks out. She gets to the pulpit and adjusts the mic. She clears her throat, squints, not used to the light.

JENNIFER
I wanted to come out to talk to you...

She stops, looks at the congregation, then makes a decision.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
Let's pray. God, thank you for bringing us together. We rejoice in your name on this beautiful day.

She looks up, still feeling her way here.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
I wanted to talk to you today about truth and about faith and what we owe each other. I think it's important that y'all know what happened to my husband. He was your pastor after all, and what I think is that we owe each other the truth, even if it's hard to say and hard to hear. Pastor Daniel took his own life last Sunday...

NBC CASTING

Gasps and murmurs from the congregation.

INT. CALEB'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Caleb sits up, surprised, but controlled. He takes in Jennifer's poise, her easy, sincere way at the pulpit. It occurs to him that he might be watching a star being born...

INT. SPRING HILL CHURCH - SAME TIME

Jennnifer continues.

JENNIFER
These rumors on TV are true. It was the worst night of my life and I made a knee-jerk reaction to cover it up, because then I wouldn't have to look at it. But I do have to look at it, and unpack it, and try to make sense of it, and help my kids make sense of it. We all do.

PICK UP: The Strickland children in the pew. Natalie tears up. Miles and Lilly look at their mother with admiration.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
When the truth is hard enough and ugly enough it can make us question our faith. And we have to talk about that. And when we see doubt in the eyes of our children, we have to talk about that too. Because sometimes we can't find God. When we need him most, we can't find him. That's when we need each other. We need to talk about the truth and ask each other for help finding our way back to God.

A few "Amens." People are starting to respond to her.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
God tests us. And I believe God wants us to question and struggle. He gave us intellect and curiosity and circumstances that can veer into terrible at a moments notice. And He reminds us all the time that this life is short and we don't get enough time with...
(emotional)
We're... we're a breath.
(MORE)

NBC CASTING

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
We're a moment. A blink. We lose our way, we struggle, we lose God and then we help each other come back and our faith is stronger than ever. I believe this is how God keeps us accountable to him, and to each other. We need God. And God needs us. And we need each other.

Even Miles tears up a little. People raise their hands now. And what we see is a woman discovering what she was put on earth to do. She is a preacher.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
I know there's a lot of talk going on. I know y'all loved my husband and feel betrayed. So do I. But I want us to stay together. I want us to help each other get through this.
(a beat)
I'm gonna take over as Pastor at Spring Hill.

PICK UP: Paul, watching from the wings, a mixture of admiration and anger in his eyes...

Miles, Lilly, Noah, and Natalie all looked shocked. People start to applaud. Jennifer tears up a little. She looks down to cover, clears her throat, then:

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
Go ahead and get out your bibles. If you don't have one, you must be new. Look under the seat in front of you. That's yours to keep. Turn to Ephesians 2:8.

NBC CASTING

INT. SPRING HILL CHURCH - LATER

Jenifer mills around. Paul catches up to her.

PAUL
That was wonderful. It's what everybody needed to hear, I think. The truth.

JENNIFER
I should never have lied. I'm sorry I put you through that.

PAUL
(eyes narrow)
Momma, can I ask you a question? This might sound weird, but... I'm your first born, right? Did you have a baby before me?

Jennifer looks stunned at the question.

FADE TO:

EXT. PAIGE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - BACK ALLEY - SAME TIME

We land on Jacob and a weeping Billy, ROLLING PAIGE'S BODY in a rug. We hear Paul speaking to Jennifer over this image.

PAUL (O.S.)
Like when you were a teenager? I just heard a rumor. I'm sure it's insane...

We watch as Jacob and Billy THROW Paige's body into the back of Billy's truck...

INT. SPRING HILL CHURCH - BACK WITH JENNIFER AND PAUL

Jennifer looks at Paul for a long beat, beating back shock and pain, trying to keep her face neutral. Finally, she smiles and shakes her head, laughs even.

JENNIFER
My first baby was born on February 5th, 1984 at 3:37 in the morning, and we named him Paul and he cried non stop for the next three months. Can we go get some brunch now?

Paul smiles back at her, but his eyes remain suspicious.

PAUL
Sure.

SMASH TO BLACK:

END OF SHOW

NBC CASTING