

Hollywood Dreams

by

The Midtown North Emerging Artists:

Jervon Caery	Yvette Jennings
Michael Caery	Diamond Kimbrough
Brianna Cansler	Kayla Kimbrough
Dinisha Evans	Octayvia Kimbrough
Jazmine Fleming	Gloria McCoy
Brianna Hailey	Marquavius Reed
Catarra Hailey	Jalen Royal
Stephaine Ingram	Deneaka Williams

with

The Riea and Steve Lainoff Fellows

Marissa Clark, Roy Rainey, Lucy Kay Sumrall

in the Rhodes Institute for Regional Studies

and

Plough Community Development Fellow

Danielle Jones

under the mentorship of

David Jilg, Associate Professor of Theatre, Rhodes College

CAST

The Kerry Family

VANESSA KERRY

CELESTE KERRY, *Vanessa's oldest child*

SHANE KERRY, *Vanessa's older son*

DEANGELO KERRY, *Vanessa's younger son*

TASHA KERRY, *the youngest of Vanessa's children*

COACH MARQUA FRANKLIN, *Shane and DeAngelo's football coach*

The Jones Family

MEEMAW, *mother of Vanessa Kerry and Monica Jones*

MONICA JONES, *a lawyer with high hopes for her daughters*

SAPPHIRE JONES, *Monica's older daughter*

RUBY JONES, *Monica's younger daughter*

MS. HONEY, *a music teacher*

EMILY GREENE, *a greedy music producer*

Also:

STUDENTS, FOOTBALL PLAYERS, CHEERLEADERS, DOCTORS
and a FAIRY GODDOCTOR

Scene One – Homeroom Dreams and Dance

(All the emerging artists are seated in rows in homeroom; their homeroom teacher is COACH QUA FRANKLIN.)

NARRATOR: Not long ago in a place far away next door called Hollywood, there were two best friends who went to school together at Midtown North. They both had big dreams: Shane wanted so much to be on the school football team...

SHANE: My dad taught me how to throw – it was how we bonded. I remember him saying, “Don’t let the ball drop, son. It’s like money – don’t let it slip from your hands!” That was kinda cool. I know I’m not the best on the team, but I love playing football. It makes me feel free and strong. I’m working hard to get better and better – I’d like to be famous for the game.

NARRATOR: ...and Sapphire wanted nothing more than to write and sing her own songs.

SAPPHIRE: I love to sing – day and night! I sing in the shower, at church, in the car, at school – everywhere! I am most alive when I sing. My dream is to become a famous singer; I would love to record my own songs and have people hear my music all over the world. My mom wants me to be a doctor – but I want to sing! I want to follow my heart....

NARRATOR: They talked to each other about their dreams all the time. Of course, Shane and Sapphire weren't the only students at Midtown North with big dreams!

TAY: I wanna be a writer!

JAZZY: I wanna travel the world!

DENEAKA: I want to be an entrepreneur.

CATARRA: I wanna be an actress.

AMERICES: A lawyer...

QUA: A rapper...

JALEN: I wanna have a nice car...

AMIA: A big house...

STEPHAINE: I wanna play the trumpet...

MICHAEL: Play football...

DIAMOND: Design clothes...

GLORIA: Be a model...

KAYLA: I wanna be a princess!

YVETTE: I wanna move my family away from here!

(Homeroom/dreams/dance sequence with grade reports from COACH. As they state their dreams and receive their grade reports, they exit variously.)

NARRATOR: One day – in homeroom – their teacher Mr. Franklin handed out their grade reports. Sapphire had done very well (*so had DEANGELO*), but she could tell from the look on his face that Shane was not happy. She knew his grades needed to be good for him to be on the football team.

As they were leaving homeroom, Mr. Franklin – who also happened to be the football coach – asked Shane to stay (*SHANE doesn't/refuses to hear*):

COACH: Shane...

SAPPHIRE (*at the same time, but closer to SHANE*): Shane!

SHANE: I have to go suit up for practice – talk to you later. (*He exits.*)

NARRATOR: Giving him an encouraging smile, Sapphire went on to music class....

Scene Two – Music Class/1:

(MS. HONEY's music class. Students include SAPPHIRE, RUBY and TASHA.)

MS. HONEY: Now everyone, let's do our scales. (*She sings the number song and class repeats; school bell rings signaling the end of class. SAPPHIRE lingers behind.*)

SAPPHIRE: Today's grade report day, Ms. Honey.

MS. HONEY: Let' see! (*She looks at SAPPHIRE's grade report and beams.*) All A's! Great job, Sapphire! I knew you could do it. You're one of the brightest

students in the class. Your mama is going to be so proud. With grades like this, you should have no problem getting into medical school.

SAPPHIRE: But I don't want to go to medical school, Ms. Honey. My dream is to be a singer/songwriter.

MS. HONEY: I thought you wanted to be a pediatrician.

SAPPHIRE: That's my mama's dream, not mine. Didn't you ever have a dream when you were young, Ms. Honey?

MS. HONEY (*reminiscing, with a dreamy look on her face*): I wanted to be a ballerina. (*She strikes a ballet pose.*)

SAPPHIRE: What happened?

MS. HONEY (*as she and SAPPHIRE sit*): When I was young I was always told I wasn't good enough. I tried and tried. I practiced and practiced. I sat in my room and thought, "I AM good. I have a great talent. What don't they see?" Then one day, I was rehearsing for my audition for Juilliard...

SAPPHIRE: That's where you want me to go!

MS. HONEY: Right. Well... I was doing a double pirouette and I twisted my ankle – at least I thought that's what happened. Anyway, I missed my audition. I found out the injury was serious and even after a year it hadn't healed properly. And so I never danced again. (*She looks very wistful.*)

SAPPHIRE: That's so sad, Ms. Honey.

MS. HONEY: Dreams can end – or begin – in an instant. Or they can take a long time. (*Recovering.*) And that's why you have to follow your dreams, Sapphire. Don't let anything stand in your way!

Scene Three – Football Practice/1:

(COACH FRANKLIN leads the football team – SHANE, DEANGELO and JALEN – in “Football Practice I” – a short movement piece. COACH signals the end of practice by blowing his whistle.)

COACH *(congratulates DEANGELO and JALEN)*: Ya’ll did a good job today in practice, boys. Keep up the hard work! Now hit the showers. *(As the team exits:)*
Shane Kerry!

SHANE: Sir?

COACH: Don’t you wanna be on my team, Kerry?

SHANE *(confused)*: Sir?

COACH: Lacking in practice, lacking in grades. You don’t wanna be on my team, son.

SHANE: I’m trying my best, Coach.

COACH: Well, your best may not be good enough. What’s keeping you back? Your brother DeAngelo’s doing well on the field and in the grade department.

SHANE: I’m not my brother, sir.

COACH: I guess not, but I sure wish you were.

SHANE: What are you gonna do, sir?

COACH: What am I gonna do? It seems to me you ain’t studying and practicing ain’t helping. I don’t know what you’re doing. But I’m gonna make a decision for you, son: no football practice for the next few weeks...

SHANE: But, Coach...

COACH: ...while you work on getting those grades up. If you've shown improvement by midterm, I'll consider letting you back on the field. (*Noticing the look on SHANE's face.*) You think I'm being unfair?

SHANE: No, sir; it's just...

COACH: What? Speak up, son.

SHANE: It's just it's always been my dream to play football.

COACH: Dreaming's easy, son. It's getting there's the hard part.

SHANE: Yes, sir.

COACH: Now, do I need to call your mother and explain the situation to her, or can I trust you to do that?

SHANE: I'll tell her.

COACH: Good man. (*As SHANE moves away.*) Study hard, son. I'd like to see you back on the field in a few weeks.

(SHANE slowly exits.)

Scene Four – The Kerry Home/1:

NARRATOR: That afternoon, Shane and DeAngelo's mother Vanessa was waiting for her oldest, Celeste, to arrive from Atlanta....

(VANESSA is waiting in the kitchen, preparing dinner. CELESTE enters with a suitcase and purse.)

CELESTE: Mama?

VANESSA: Is that my baby?! Celeste! *(CELESTE drops her suitcase and purse and hugs VANESSA.)* Let me look at you! Child, you look thin – don't they have food in Atlanta? Well, I've got your favorite – beef stew – on the stove.

CELESTE: Oh, mama, it's good to be here at home with you. *(They hug again.)*

VANESSA: So, sit down and tell me all about your work in Atlanta. *(They sit.)*

CELESTE: Well, I've got a new boss – her name's Emily Greene. She's one tough cookie: bossy and nerve-wracking, but she gets things done. I've even mentioned Sapphire and her singing to Ms. Greene. But I'm really learning a lot about how the music business works, and I'm making lots of good connections.

VANESSA: And they pay you okay? Do you need help with money?

CELESTE: I get paid very well, mama. I've saved up a good bit, so I wanted to talk to you about...

(TASHA bursts in with her grade report.)

TASHA: Ce-Ce! You're home! *(She runs to CELESTE and hugs her.)*

VANESSA: Hey, baby, don't I get one too? *(TASHA hugs VANESSA.)* What's that you got in your hand?

TASHA: My grade report.

VANESSA: Well, let me see. (*TASHA hands over her grade report.*) Umm-hmm. Umm-hmm. Umm-hmm! (*VANESSA is generally pleased.*) What's this low grade in music class?

TASHA: I don't LIKE music class.

CELESTE: Girl, are you part of this family?

TASHA: Sapphire's the one for music in this family – she's Ms. Honey's pet and she just sings better and better. (*Back to the subject of her grade report, to VANESSA.*) But my other grades are real good, right, mama? (*Holds out her hand.*) So gimme my dollar.

VANESSA: I don't got a dollar for you right now, baby.

TASHA (*To CELESTE, still holding out her hand*): You got a dollar for me?

CELESTE: I would, Tasha, except, well I've only got 50 cents.

TASHA: 50 cents?

CELESTE: I'm just not making a lot right now.

VANESSA (*joining in the standing family joke*): What do you mean 50 cents? How do you expect to pay for things with so little money?

TASHA (*disbelievingly*): You only have 50 cents.

CELESTE: I'll make more eventually and then I'll be able to move you all out of here. You can come to Atlanta and live near me. Then I'll pay for things.

VANESSA and TASHA: WITH ONLY 50 CENTS?

(All three join in laughter.)

Scene Five – The Boys Are Back:

(While the Kerry Family women are laughing, SHANE and DEANGELO enter a different part of the stage.)

SHANE: Remember, Dee, don't tell mama I'm off the team for now.

DEANGELO: But what you gonna say when she don't see you playing the next game?

SHANE: I'll think of something – I just need some time.

DEANGELO: Okay, bruh, but you know we don't lie to mama.

(They join the Kerry Family women in the house.)

VANESSA: Here my boys home!

SHANE: Hi, mama! How was your day?

VANESSA *(indicating CELESTE)*: Look who's here!

SHANE and DEANGELO: Ce-Ce!

(Hugs and “welcome home”, “whassup, sis?”, etc.)

CELESTE: So, how was football practice?

SHANE: Okay.

DEANGELO: Kinda rough.

SHANE: Stressful.

DEANGELO: I'm gonna play wide receiver next game. (*SHANE punches his arm.*) Owww! Painful!

SHANE (*giving DEANGELO a look*): Nerve-wracking!

DEANGELO: Great!

VANESSA: And wasn't today grade report day?

DEANGELO (*looking at SHANE*): Well...

SHANE: They didn't come out yet.

VANESSA: Didn't come out yet?

SHANE: Yeah, they didn't get all the grades entered or something, or they ran out of paper and ink. They should come out next week.

VANESSA: Next week?

SHANE: Yes, ma'am.

VANESSA: How come I got your sister Tasha's grade report here? (*She produces it.*) Hand 'em over! (*DEANGELO surrenders his grade report.*) Umm-hmm. Umm-hmm. Umm-hmm! (*She is pleased.*) You make me proud, DeAngelo. Shane?

SHANE: I got the wrong one – mine must've been in another stack? (*VANESSA's having none of it and SHANE knows it.*) I dropped it on the way home?....And a dog ate it?

(*VANESSA holds out her hand again. SHANE gives her his grade report.*)

VANESSA (*looking it over and making no sound. Then, to the others*): Why don't ya'll go wash up and set the table for supper while I talk to your brother?

(*Casting SHANE some somewhat sympathetic glances, CELESTE, DEANGELO and TASHA exit.*)

Scene Five – Shane's Big Lie:

(*There is an uncomfortable silence while VANESSA gives SHANE her "look".*)

SHANE: What?

(*VANESSA's "look".*)

SHANE: It's just a progress report, mama!

VANESSA: This don't much look like what I'd call "progress", Shane Kerry.

SHANE: No, ma'am.

VANESSA: And what do you mean lying to me?

SHANE: I'm sorry, mama.

VANESSA: Why would you do that?

SHANE: I guess...I just didn't want you to be disappointed...

VANESSA: Can't help being disappointed, Shane. But what disappoints me most isn't the grades, it's the lying about them.

SHANE: It's just a little lie....

VANESSA (*the “look” one last time*): I know I taught you better than that, Shane Kerry.

SHANE: Yes, ma’am.

VANESSA: Here’s what’s gonna happen: every evening after football practice, you’re gonna study until bed time until you bring those grades up.

SHANE: Yes, ma’am.

VANESSA: No TV, no telephone....

SHANE: Yes, ma’am.

VANESSA: No hanging out with friends....

SHANE: Yes, ma’am.

VANESSA: Now, go wash up for supper.

(They exit.)

Scene Six – Music Class/2 – Emily Greene:

(MS. HONEY’s music class. The same group of students as before.)

NARRATOR: A few days later, in Ms. Honey’s music class.... As they were singing their usual warm up songs, Emily Greene, ... (*EMILY GREENE enters with a demanding attitude.*) ...a money-hungry producer, barged into the class.

EMILY GREENE (*to audience*): I only care about money and I’ll do anything to make sure this child (*indicating SAPPHIRE*) becomes a star and turns me a big

profit. *(In the scene.)* Sapphire, you need to come with me. I've got a studio booked downtown so we can make a demo. We've got to go now.

(SAPPHIRE hesitates a moment, then moves to leave with EMILY GREENE.)

MS. HONEY: Excuse me, but who are you, and where are you taking my student?

EMILY GREENE: Sapphire, you're wasting time in music class, and time is money. You belong in the studio making demos and writing new songs. Music class is for those who have no talent! Not someone like you, Sapphire. Come on, we're going to make REAL music.

MS. HONEY: Sapphire, do you know this woman?

SAPPHIRE: Yes, Ms. Honey. This is Ms. Emily Greene – she's in the music business and is going to produce my first record.

MS. HONEY: Well, not right now she's not. You can't just leave school in the middle of the day without permission.

EMILY GREENE: Listen, lady, she's coming with me and that's final. We have work to do; come on, Sapphire. *(She grabs SAPPHIRE's hand and they exit.)*

RUBY: Sapphire! Ms. Honey, where's she taking my sister?

(TASHA and the other students comfort RUBY while MS. HONEY pulls out her cell phone.)

NARRATOR: Now, Ms. Honey was not pleased to see her most promising student whisked away by some hot shot producer. She really cared a lot for Sapphire and didn't trust her so-called producer one bit. She had no choice but to call Sapphire's mother Ms. Jones and explain what had happened.

Scene Seven – The Recording Studio:

NARRATOR: When Mrs. Jones found out that her daughter had left school with a stranger, she was – understandably – very upset!

(Mama Jones – MONICA – enters the studio– to take SAPPHIRE back home.)

MONICA: What is the meaning of this! Sapphire Jones, you did not have permission to leave school today! *(To EMILY GREENE.)* And just WHO do you think you are? YOU are not her mother. *(To SAPPHIRE.)* You just march your little self to the car. You have a lot of explaining to do.

EMILY GREENE *(very highhandedly)*: Wait just a second! This is my client and I will make sure that she's treated with respect. We're in the middle of rehearsing for her demo right now, so if you'll excuse us...

MONICA: Rehearsing my butt! She'll rehearse her math homework and get back to school tomorrow!

SAPPHIRE: Mama, please let me stay and at least finish my demo. I promise I'll get all my homework done when we're finished.

MONICA: This is not a discussion! *(To EMILY GREENE.)* And as for her being your client, she's only fourteen years old! Sapphire, you're going to be a doctor and doctors don't sing. If you want to perform, perform surgery.

SAPPHIRE: But Mama! I've never wanted to be a doctor. That's your dream, not mine. I LOVE singing! It's my passion, and you can't keep me from doing it.

MONICA: Don't you sass me, young lady! Get in the car, NOW! *(To EMILY GREENE.)* And you! I don't want to hear another word about this silly music

business, filling her head with nonsense. *(Threateningly.)* I better never find out that you're corrupting my daughter again, or I'll have you charged with contributing to the delinquency of a minor. I'm a lawyer, lady, and I can do it! Goodbye! *(She slams the door as she and SAPPHIRE exit).*

EMILY GREENE: Well, there went the money!

Scene Eight – The Jones Home/1:

NARRATOR: Mrs. Jones lectured Sapphire the whole way home on the importance of an education. She explained to her daughter that in the real world, money was very important and the chances of her becoming a rich musician were far less likely than those of her becoming a successful doctor. Sapphire was disappointed that her mother did not understand her point of view.

(MONICA and SAPPHIRE come into the Jones' household still bickering.

MEEMAW and RUBY are at the kitchen table, and watch what follows with great interest.)

SAPPHIRE: Mama! You just aren't listening to me! I DO NOT WANT TO BE A DOCTOR! And you can't make me!

MONICA: Child, I don't wanna talk to you no more.

SAPPHIRE: But, mama, why are you pressuring me so much, when you know it's something that I really don't want? Didn't you say once that you only wanted to see me be happy? Well this is not the way to get that! Let me follow my heart!

MEEMAW: Monica, what on earth's going on? Why you so worked up?

MONICA: Would you please tell your granddaughter to stop acting stupid, start thinking, and listen to her mother?!

MEEMAW: Sapphire, stop acting stupid, start thinking, and listen to your mother!

SAPPHIRE (*surprised that her grandmother seems to be siding with her mother*):
Meemaw! (*She bursts into tears.*)

MEEMAW: Oh, child, go git in the tub! Scoot!

(Still in tears, SAPPHIRE runs out. MEEMAW turns to RUBY, who has been watching the family fireworks with open-mouthed amazement.)

MEEMAW: Oh, Ruby, you git too! Your mama and I got things to talk about.
(*RUBY is only too happy to leave. She exits. MEEMAW turns to her daughter.*)

Now, Monica, what was all that about? Why is Sapphire so upset, and what could you two possibly be arguing about that can't be solved without getting so worked up?

MONICA (*trying to compose herself*): Sapphire was taken out of school today by some hot shot music producer without my permission.

MEEMAW: Okay, so she left school without permission.

MONICA: Yes.

MEEMAW: Kids leave school without permission all the time and it ain't the end of the world. Now, I wouldn't expect it of Sapphire...

MONICA (*frustrated*): That's not the point, mama!

MEEMAW (*matching her*): Then I would really like to know what the point is, girl!

MONICA: The point is this whole stupid music singing thing!

MEEMAW: Well, you know the child has always dreamed of being a singer....

MONICA: That's just it – it's only a dream! She'll never make a living as a singer!

MEEMAW: You don't know that.

MONICA: What are the odds, mama? You know how hard it is to break into the music business?

MEEMAW: If that child wants to sing, Monica, let her sing. Have you listened to her?

MONICA: I hear her all the time, singing this, singing that.

MEEMAW: That's not what I asked you, girl. I asked have you *listened* to her.

MONICA (*ignoring the implication*): She's smart, she makes good grades, she's gonna be a doctor and have a secure future. I'm the mother here, and I know what's best for her.

MEEMAW: What's best for her or what's best for you? I swear listening to the two of you arguing is like living you and me all over again.

MONICA (*exasperated and ready to end this*): Mama, it's been a long day, I've fought with Sapphire and I don't have the energy left to fight with you. (*She turns to leave.*)

MEEMAW: Girl, we can't leave it like this! (*MONICA continues walking out.*)

MONICA! Stop acting stupid, start thinking, and listen to your mother!

(MONICA is gone.)

Scene Nine – Football Practice/2:

(SHANE is seated CENTER, watching football practice – sounds of practice and whistles. SAPPHIRE joins him in the bleachers.)

SAPPHIRE: Are you ready to study now? *(SHANE doesn't respond, just looks out at the field.)* Why're you here anyway?

SHANE: I just want to be out there on the field, and this is as close as I can get.

(The CHEERLEADERS [Kayla, Amia, Americas, and SAPPHIRE's sister RUBY] are practicing the "R-E-S-P-E-C-T" cheer.)

CHEERLEADERS:

Gimme an "R"!
I got your "R"; I got your "R"!
Gimme an "E"!
I got your "E"; I got your "E"!
Gimme an "S"!
I got your "S"; I got your "S"!
Gimme a "P"!
I got your "P"; I got your "P"!
Gimme an "E"!
I got your "E"; I got your "E"!
Gimme a "C"!
I got your "C"; I got your "C"!
Gimme a "T"!
I got your "T"; I got your "T"!
What's it spell?
"R-E-S-P-E-C-T" – RESPECT!

(We hear COACH's whistle, signaling the end of practice. DEANGELO and JALEN cross the stage, headed for the locker room. The CHEERLEADERS, in a gaggle, giggle and say, "Hi, DeAngelo!" and "Hi, Jalen!" and run off talking animatedly, except for RUBY, who notices her cousin SHANE sitting in the bleachers with her sister SAPPHIRE; she exits. COACH crosses the stage, completely ignoring SHANE.)

COACH *(calling after DEANGELO)*: Hey, Kerry!

(SHANE perks up, thinking COACH is addressing him. But it is DEANGELO COACH wants to praise.)

DEANGELO *(re-entering)*: Yes, Coach?

COACH: Good practice, son!

(He walks off with arm around DEANGELO. SHANE follows their exit with his eyes, then hangs his head.)

SAPPHIRE *(putting her hand on his shoulder)*: I'm having trouble with my dream, too. Just the other day someone said to me, "Dreams can end – or begin – in an instant. Or they can take a long time." I'm writing a song about that. You wanna hear a little bit? *(He nods. She sings.)*

Wake up,
Cause reality is still here.
Keep working hard,
And you will get there.

You need to get focused, game face on.
It's true for real,
I'd never lie to you.
So take this from a friend,
You can shine bright,

Something something true.

SHANE: I know your mama wants you to be a doctor...

SAPPHIRE: Yeah, a pediatrician. I *am* good at science...

SHANE: You're good at everything.

SAPPHIRE: ...but I really don't like kids that much. *(They both laugh wryly.)*

C'mon, let's go.

(They exit.)

Scene Ten – Ruby:

RUBY *(to audience)*: Now, when I saw my cousin Shane wasn't on the football field and his brother my cousin DeAngelo *was*, I asked myself, "Why isn't my cousin Shane playing football?" – 'cause I know that's his dream – and I couldn't answer myself. Soooo, I asked my best friend my cousin Tasha – who's my cousin Shane's sister – "Why isn't your brother my cousin Shane playing football?"

TASHA: I don't know! *(We see it dawn on TASHA that SHANE's situation is worse than she knew.)*

RUBY: And of course my best friend my cousin Tasha....

TASHA: Mama! *(She runs off.)*

RUBY *(to audience)*: Got that?

(She skips off.)

Scene Eleven – The Jones Home/2:

(MEEMAW enters with a rectangular object and sits. MONICA comes in from work.)

MEEMAW: Monica, it's time we finished that talk....

MONICA *(wearily)*: Not now, mama.

MEEMAW: Come sit.

(MONICA reluctantly sits next to her mother.)

MEEMAW: I been doing some serious thinking about what's been going on in this family, and I want you to tell me something.

MONICA: What?

MEEMAW: I want you to tell me about your dreams.

MONICA: This is silly, mama.

MEEMAW: Tell me, child.

MONICA *(thinking for a moment)*: Well, of course, I want the best for Sapphire and Ruby....

MEEMAW: And you're working real hard for that. That's your dream for *them*, but what about your dream for you?

MONICA *(after a moment; somewhat surprised)*: I can't think of anything....

MEEMAW: What about your old dreams – from when you were a girl?

MONICA (*thinking back*): Well... my dream *was* to become an artist, and paint pictures of cats... (*She laughs ruefully.*)... but that was a silly dream, and you knew it. You knew that being a lawyer was a much more successful career, and forced me to go to law school, even though I really didn't want to. And I never understood why you let Vanessa do what she wanted.

MEEMAW: Your sister Vanessa has her own life and her own dreams. We're talking about you.

MONICA: I guess you just thought I needed someone older and wiser to talk me out of being an artist and explain that it wasn't reality! (*She laughs again, but sadly.*) And now look at me! I'm successful and make good money. Happy as ever! Isn't that right, mama?

MEEMAW: Monica, it seems to me you're taking your anger with me out on your girls. Answer me true, child: *are* you happy?

(MONICA considers the question. Her face crumples and tears flow down her cheeks. MEEMAW puts her arm around her shoulder.)

MEEMAW: I've made plenty of mistakes in the past, and I've learned from them – seems like everybody has to make their own mistakes before they can learn anything. But the past is the past, and we're trying to focus on the present—and the *future* – for you and your girls. If your father was alive today – God rest his soul – he would be so proud of your girls and what you have become. He would be so proud to see his grandchildren follow their own dreams.

MONICA: Oh, mama....

MEEMAW: I always believed in you! I just had my own plan for you, and I didn't listen to your dream. And for that, I am truly sorry.

(She gives MONICA the rectangular object: it is a small painting of a cat.)

Look, I have something for you. I been saving it.

MONICA: You kept this all these years?

MEEMAW: Sweetheart, it's never too late to start back painting. I want to see you happy again.

MONICA: Thank you, mama. *(She hugs MEEMAW.)* I love you, mama.

MEEMAW: I love you too, sweetheart.

Scene Twelve – The Kerry Home/2:

(CELESTE and VANESSA are discussing things in the Kerry home.)

VANESSA: Business at the dress shop is okay, but in tough times money seems to just melt away. The rent on the shop keeps going up, and then there are the break-ins, graffiti on the walls and windows, and the insurance....

CELESTE: Oh, mama, I really wish you would consider moving the family to Atlanta with me. I've got some money saved up – I can help you make a new start there. Maybe Shane would do a lot better in a different school.

VANESSA: I appreciate the offer, Ce-Ce, and I *will* think about it. It's just that I try so hard to support the community here, and bad things keep happening....

(TASHA bursts into the room, followed closely by DEANGELO.)

TASHA: Guess what! Shane's not on the football team anymore!

VANESSA: What?

TASHA: He just sits in the bleachers and watches practice and doesn't play!
That's what Ruby says, and he (*indicating DEANGELO*) didn't want me to tell.

VANESSA: DeAngelo, what's going on?

DEANGELO: I don't know everything, mama, I – I just know Coach won't let
Shane play anymore.

VANESSA: Well, where does he go? What does he do? Why didn't he tell me?

DEANGELO: I don't know, mama.

VANESSA: And you – you keeping it from me too. (*The VANESSA look.*) I'll
deal with you later. I got to get to the bottom of this! I'm going to see Coach
Franklin right now.

(*VANESSA exits.*)

CELESTE: Anything else interesting happen at school recently?

TASHA: A scary lady came and took Sapphire out of music class....

(*CELESTE and DEANGELO look at TASHA in disbelief. SHANE shambles in,
book bag slung over his shoulder.*)

TASHA: Oh, boy, are you in trouble....

SHANE (*to DEANGELO, threateningly*): What did you do? Did you tell?

DEANGELO (*indicating TASHA*): It was Miss Blabbermouth!

SHANE: Where's mama?

DEANGELO: She went to see Coach.

(Upset, SHANE runs out.)

CELESTE: Shane, you should probably just stay here! Shane?

(He is gone.)

Scene Thirteen – Coach Franklin’s Office:

(VANESSA arrives at COACH FRANKLIN’s office.)

VANESSA: Coach Franklin? I’m Vanessa Kerry. I’d like to speak to you about my son Shane.

COACH: Pleased to meet you, Ms. Kerry. Come on in.

(They exit to his office.)

Scene Fourteen – The Accident:

(SHANE runs in. When he reaches center stage, we hear the sound of a car horn, screeching brakes, impact, and shattering glass. SHANE freezes in the headlights. As we hear an ambulance siren in the distance, the cast begins THE COMA JAM, starting with creating ambulance light effect with flashlights.)

Scene Fifteen – The Hospital/1 – Coma Jam and Rap:

(The DOCTORS dress SHANE in white and put him in the hospital bed, center, all the while discussing – in JAM form – his prognosis.)

DR. SMITH: Car accident.

DR. SPARKEL: Traumatic injury to the head.

DR. SMITH: Not responding normally.

DR. SPARKEL: Comminuted fracture of the femur.

DR. SMITH: Vital signs erratic.

DR. SPARKEL: It doesn't look good.

DR. SMITH: It doesn't look good.

(The DOCTORS repeat this as members of the KERRY FAMILY, the JONES FAMILY and COACH FRANKLIN enter, murmuring their own mantras.)

SHANE: COMA RAP

FAIRY GODDOCTOR (DR. SPARKEL):

CHORUS:

Oohoo please wake up.
We need you now.
My beautiful voice will wake you up.

SHANE:

Pass it, pass it, pass it.
Block it, block it, block it.

SAPPHIRE:

You have a big dream to follow
Don't let tonight disrupt tomorrow
When obstacles get in your way
Remember now the game you play

CHORUS:

Oohoo please wake up.
We need you now.
My beautiful voice will wake you up.

SHANE:

Football, football, football.
Get it, get it, get it.

SAPPHIRE:

Take this chance and ask me how
Your future is in your own hands now

CHORUS (*very slowly*):

Oohoo please wake up.
We need you now.
My beautiful voice will wake you up.

SHANE:

Gotta go back... Gotta go back...

Scene Sixteen – The Hospital/2 – Money Isn’t Everything:

(The COMA JAMMERS quietly begin their mantras again at the end of the COMA RAP. They disappear, leaving VANESSA and MEEMAW in the hospital room. VANESSA is humming a tune and holding SHANE’s hand.)

MEEMAW: Child, you need some rest.

VANESSA: I can’t. Oh, mama, I can’t help feeling this nightmare’s all my fault. I expect too much of him, and I been so hard on him...

MEEMAW: You’re his mama – that’s what mamas do: dream big for their babies.

VANESSA: Like you did for me and Monica?

MEEMAW: Like I tried. *(There is a pause. MEEMAW puts her arm around VANESSA.)* Sweetheart, if you need money....

VANESSA: I won’t take Monica’s money. I don’t need her to have that kind of power over me – expecting my eternal gratitude, thinking she can say anything she wants – that she’s better than me. I won’t be her next charity case just so she can feel good about herself. Money isn’t everything.

MEEMAW: Well, she offered.

VANESSA: Tell her I said thank you. What I need right now are prayers for my baby....

(MEEMAW fades away. VANESSA begins humming – then singing – “Amazing Grace” to SHANE. CELESTE enters and joins her mother singing.)

Scene Seventeen – The Hospital/3 – Amazing Grace:

VANESSA and CELESTE:

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

T'was Grace that taught my heart to fear.
And Grace, my fears relieved.
How precious did that Grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
'Tis Grace that brought me safe thus far
and Grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me.
His word my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.

Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease
I shall possess within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.

When we've been here ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun.
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we've first begun.

CELESTE: I used to love it when you sang to us, mama.

VANESSA: I used to love singing to you.

CELESTE: Go get some coffee, mama – something to eat. I'll sit with Shane
awhile.

Scene Eighteen – The Hospital/4 – Emily Greene:

(VANESSA nods and wearily stands up. As she exits, she looks back at SHANE in the hospital bed. Celeste begins humming “Amazing Grace”. As her voice begins to break, EMILY GREENE storms in.)

EMILY: Where's Sapphire? What happened to her?

CELESTE *(thinking EMILY is actually concerned)*: It's not Sapphire, it's my brother Shane. There was an accident, and we don't know if he is going to be—

EMILY: I don't care about your brother! Where is Sapphire?

CELESTE: She's outside with my family, worried about my brother! He's in a coma, Emily!

EMILY: What is she doing wasting time here? We could be rehearsing right now!

CELESTE: How dare you come in here at a time like this talking about rehearsal?
My brother might not wake up! You have some serious nerve!

EMILY: I will not be talked to like this by an employee!

CELESTE: And I won't listen to this kind of disrespect from someone who I
thought was my friend!

EMILY: Your friend? Ha! I am your BOSS, not your friend. You work for me!

CELESTE: Not any more I don't. I quit!

EMILY: You can't leave me! I made you! I took you out of this dump and gave
you everything important in your life!

CELESTE: What is important in my life is in that room: my family. Get out of
here, Emily. I'm done with you.

EMILY: You can't talk to me like that!

CELESTE: GET OUT!!

(EMILY GREENE leaves.)

Scene Nineteen – The Hospital/5 – Awakening:

NARRATOR: The hours went by slowly, the days and nights. Shane still
dreamed as his family watched over him.

*(As the NARRATOR speaks, CELESTE exits and SAPPHIRE enters, taking the
place at SHANE's bedside.)*

SAPPHIRE:

Wake up,
Cause reality is still here.
Keep working hard,
And you will get there.

You need to get focused, game face on.
It's true for real....

(As SAPPHIRE sings, SHANE slowly opens his eyes and turns his head to look at her. She doesn't notice until he manages to squeeze her hand.)

Ohmigod.... Shane! You're awake? Ohmigod.... Mama! Auntie Vanessa!
Meemaw!

(VANESSA, MONICA and MEEMAW enter. Hugs all around as SHANE looks from face to face – recognizing them from his coma dream. The DOCTORS enter and wheel SHANE off in the hospital bed, with VANESSA in attendance.)

Scene Twenty – Midtown North Talent Showcase:

NARRATOR: Several months went by and it was almost the end of the school year. Midtown North held its Annual Talent Showcase.

(Set up for showcase with SAPPHIRE center, preparing to sing. VANESSA wheels in SHANE in a wheelchair. Other family members and friends are in the audience.)

SAPPHIRE (Sapphire's Song: "Life is Hard for Real"):

I want to put something on your mind,
It's true for real,
I'd never lie to you.
So take this as your friend.
This is a true song,
That I'm about to give to you.

I gotta let you know,
That life is hard for real.
But if you stand still,
Then you won't survive.

Wake up,
Cause reality is still here.
Keep working hard,
And you will get there.

You need to get focused, game face on.
It's true for real,
I'd never lie to you.
So take this from a friend,
You can shine bright,
Something something true.

I gotta let you know,
That life is hard for real.
But if you stand still,
Then you won't survive.

Wake up,
Cause reality it still here.
Keep working hard,
And you will get there.

Wake up,
Cause reality it still here.
Keep working hard,
And you will get there.

I gotta let you know,
That life is hard for real.
But if you stand still,
Then you won't survive.

*(Thunderous applause. As other friends and family gather around SAPPHIRE,
MONICA slowly approaches. She has LISTENED. SAPPHIRE sees her.
MONICA opens her arms and SAPPHIRE runs to her mother; they embrace.
EMILY GREENE lurks in the background.)*

*(Unnoticed by his family and friends, SHANE – who has been applauding his best
friend's performance – slowly and painfully rises from his wheelchair. When
SAPPHIRE sees this, her focus on SHANE turns all eyes towards him. The center
of attention, he takes one step as the lights fade to BLACKOUT.)*

THE END

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