



THE
BLOOD
STILL
SPEAKS

*They silenced the story.
But not the blood.*

CHRISTIAN PLAYWRIGHT

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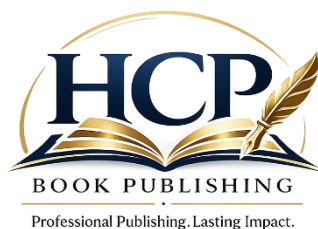
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Sample Script

ACT 1 – SCENE 1

STAGE RIGHT: CHURCH OFFICE / REHEARSAL SPACE

A church office that bleeds into rehearsal storage: a desk, chairs, a rolling rack with choir robes, a few props (a wooden cross piece leaned safely, a plastic crown of thorns for a skit, a tub labeled “EASTER DRAMA PROPS”), and a clipboard. A banner design mock-up reads: **EASTER SUNDAY: “HE IS RISEN”**

LIGHTS UP

PASTOR RENEE CARTER stands near the desk, reviewing a rehearsal schedule.

DEACON VERNON PRICE is seated too comfortably, as if he owns the room.

SISTER LO stands near the props tub, rummaging with suspicion.

Deacon Vernon taps the rehearsal schedule with a manicured finger.

DEACON VERNON: Pastor, I’m not trying to control the vision. I’m simply... protecting the moment.

PASTOR RENEE: The moment is Christ.

DEACON VERNON: Exactly. And Christ deserves excellence. We have visitors coming. The city councilwoman confirmed. Two new families. Possibly three. We cannot afford... confusion.

SISTER LO: (confused on purpose) Oh no. Not confusion in the house of God. Lord forbid we ever discover ourselves.

PASTOR RENEE: Sister Lo—

SISTER LO: I’m just saying, Renee, if the Holy Ghost could handle Corinth, He can handle Vernon’s blood pressure.

DEACON VERNON: My blood pressure is fine.

SISTER LO: That’s what men say right before they start whispering threats with a smile.

Pastor Renee suppresses a small smile despite herself.

Pastor Renee flips a page.

PASTOR RENEE: We're not turning Easter into a performance.

DEACON VERNON: It is always a performance. The question is whether it's powerful.

SISTER LO: Powerful is not the same as loud. Some folks confuse that.

DEACON VERNON: No one asked for commentary.

SISTER LO: Then stop saying things that invite the Devil's laughter.

Pastor Renee stands more squarely, trying to keep peace.

PASTOR RENEE: Vernon, what is this really about?

DEACON VERNON: It's about testimony.

PASTOR RENEE: Whose?

Deacon Vernon pauses—just long enough to reveal calculation.

DEACON VERNON: Kairo James.

Pastor Renee's face tightens—not because she dislikes KJ, but because she recognizes risk.

Sister Lo pulls a prop from the tub: a plastic crown of thorns. She holds it up like evidence.

SISTER LO: Now who bought this?

DEACON VERNON: It's for the youth skit.

SISTER LO: This is for Halloween.

PASTOR RENEE: Sister Lo—

SISTER LO: No. I'm serious. If we're going to talk about crucifixion, let's not use party-store suffering.

Deacon Vernon stands, smoothing his jacket.

DEACON VERNON: Pastor, the community responds to visuals. They need something they can feel.

SISTER LO: They can feel the truth. But the truth don't come with a lighting package.

Pastor Renee's phone buzzes. She looks at it, then sets it face down like it weighs too much.

PASTOR RENEE: Kairo's only been out a short time. This is delicate.

DEACON VERNON: That's why it's perfect. People love a turnaround. A resurrection story. They'll pack the room.

SISTER LO: People also love a scapegoat. They'll pack a room for that too.

A beat. Pastor Renee and Deacon Vernon both clock what she said, but neither wants to touch it.

Pastor Renee moves to the door, uncertain. Deacon Vernon opens it with certainty.

DEACON VERNON: We'll go ourselves. It will mean more face-to-face.

PASTOR RENEE: Vernon—

SISTER LO: Renee, if you go, go with your eyes open. People don't only use hammers to build. Sometimes they use them to hide what they broke.

Pastor Renee holds Sister Lo's gaze—recognizing warning, not superstition.

PASTOR RENEE: I'll be careful.

SISTER LO: Be truthful. Careful is how lies stay alive.

Deacon Vernon exits RIGHT. Pastor Renee hesitates, then follows.

LIGHTS OUT

ACT I – SCENE 2

(Good Friday. Late afternoon.)

STAGE LEFT: THE HALFWAY HOUSE COMMON ROOM

A modest common room: scuffed sofa, two chairs, a small table with pamphlets (“RE-ENTRY PROGRAM,” “JOB FAIR,” “HOUSE RULES”), a coffee station. A whiteboard reads: **FRIDAY: HOUSE MEETING — 4:00 PM. REMINDERS: CURFEW 9 PM / JOB SEARCH LOGS / NO DRAMA**

LIGHST UP

MS. DARLENE WADE stands with a clipboard. Two residents, **RAY** (30s, talkative) and **TONY** (20s, quiet), sit. **KAIRO “KJ” JAMES** stands slightly apart, jacket on, job-search folder in hand.

MS. DARLENE: All right. House meeting. Four o’clock means four o’clock. Not four-oh-seven. Not four-ish. If your life is “ish,” that’s how you end up back inside.

RAY: Ms. Wade, I was here at three fifty-nine.

MS. DARLENE: Ray, you live here.

RAY: Yes ma’am. I’m just saying I’m consistent.

TONY: (under his breath) He consistent with talking.

MS. DARLENE: Good. We’re healing. Honesty is breaking out like a rash.

(beat; she checks clipboard)

MS. DARLENE: Rule review. Curfew is nine. If your ankle monitor has to call me, I’m charging it rent. Job logs due Sunday night. And whoever keeps making “protein shakes” in my blender—stop.

RAY: It’s nutritional, Ms. Wade.

MS. DARLENE: That blender sounded like it was confessing sin.

(mild laughter. KJ does not laugh. He is present but guarded.)

Darlene turns to KJ.

MS. DARLENE: KJ. Job search status.

KJ: I had an interview.

RAY: Look at you, man. Suit and everything.

KJ: It wasn't a suit.

MS. DARLENE: It was effort. That counts. How'd it go?

KJ: He said, "We'll call you."

RAY: That's good.

TONY: That's a funeral.

MS. DARLENE: That's reality. And we keep showing up anyway.

(beat; she watches KJ carefully)

MS. DARLENE: Any triggers today? Any... impulses?

RAY: I had the impulse to slap Tony for breathing loud.

TONY: I don't breathe loud.

MS. DARLENE: Gentlemen. We are not returning to prison over respiratory issues.

KJ: I'm good.

MS. DARLENE: Good is not a feeling, KJ. It's a practice. You practice "good" long enough, it becomes muscle.

KJ nods. He is used to her truth.

Darlene marks something on her clipboard.

MS. DARLENE: All right. Next: weekend passes. Nobody leaves without clearance. And nobody brings drama back in here like it's a souvenir.

RAY: Ms. Wade, define drama.

MS. DARLENE: Drama is anything that turns your peace into a phone call.

(beat; she glances to the audience as if daring anyone to argue)

MS. DARLENE: KJ, you've got church tonight?

KJ: Maybe.

MS. DARLENE: Maybe is how men drift. You either go or you don't.

KJ: I said maybe because—(he stops) Because it's complicated.

MS. DARLENE: Everything worth healing is complicated.

Darlene closes her clipboard.

MS. DARLENE: Meeting's done. Ray, take out trash. Tony, wipe down that coffee area—no, it is not "optional." KJ, you and me—two minutes.

Ray and Tony move reluctantly. KJ stays.

RAY: (to KJ, friendly) Don't let Ms. Wade scare you. She just... loud-love you.

MS. DARLENE: Ray.

RAY: Yes ma'am. Trash. Leaving. Exiting. Walking away from the loud love.

He exits. Tony follows, shaking his head.

Now KJ and Darlene alone.

MS. DARLENE: You've been quiet all week.

KJ: I've been... normal.

MS. DARLENE: Normal for you is silence with a storm inside.

KJ doesn't answer.

MS. DARLENE: Easter season does something to people. Church folks get... ambitious. They start looking for "stories."

KJ: I'm not a story.

MS. DARLENE: No. You're a man. But you're in a town that confuses men with headlines.

KJ: I stay out the way. I do what I'm supposed to do. That's it.

MS. DARLENE: That's not "it." That's survival.

(beat)

MS. DARLENE: I heard Deacon Vernon been asking around.

KJ's jaw tightens slightly.

KJ: He doesn't ask. He... collects.

MS. DARLENE: You know him?

KJ: Everybody knows him.

MS. DARLENE: Not like that.

KJ looks away. His silence is an answer.

Darlene leans in, voice lower.

MS. DARLENE: Listen to me. If they offer you a microphone, it's not always for your freedom. Sometimes it's for their comfort.

KJ: I'm not doing no testimony.

MS. DARLENE: Good. Because testimonies can turn into auctions. Folks bidding on your pain to feel holy.

(beat)

MS. DARLENE: And if anyone tries to drag you back into that old mess—

KJ: Don't.

MS. DARLENE: I'm saying it.

KJ: I said don't.

Darlene stops. She studies him—she sees fear under the edge.

MS. DARLENE: All right. Then I'll say this: You can't resurrect a life by burying the truth. The dirt still talks.

KJ flinches at that, as if she touched a nerve he hides.

A knock at the door (audible). Darlene and KJ freeze. Another knock.

MS. DARLENE: We closed. Visiting hours are posted for people who read.

KJ: (under breath) It's them.

MS. DARLENE: You sure?

Before he can answer, **Pastor Renee** and **Deacon Vernon** enter. Their presence changes the oxygen.

DEACON VERNON: Ms. Wade. Blessings.

MS. DARLENE: Mm-hm.

PASTOR RENEE: Ms. Wade. Thank you for allowing us—

MS. DARLENE: You didn't ask. You arrived.

(beat; polite tension)

DEACON VERNON: We don't want to intrude. We came for Kairo.

KJ stands straighter, guarded.

KJ: Why.

Pastor Renee steps forward gently, trying to humanize the moment.

PASTOR RENEE: KJ... Easter is coming. We're doing a service for the community. And... we would like you to be a part of it.

KJ doesn't respond.

DEACON VERNON: A brief word. A testimony. Something real. Something hopeful.

MS. DARLENE: Hopeful to who.

Deacon Vernon smiles like he didn't hear the challenge.

DEACON VERNON: To everyone.

KJ: Everyone don't want me hopeful.

A quiet beat. Pastor Renee feels the truth of that. Deacon Vernon refuses to.

DEACON VERNON: That is exactly why you should speak. People need to see what God can do.

MS. DARLENE: People also need to stop using God to cover what they did.

Pastor Renee turns sharply to Darlene—caught off guard by the directness.

PASTOR RENEE: Ms. Wade—

MS. DARLENE: Pastor, with respect, I run a house full of men who been fed speeches their whole lives. If you came with truth, you're welcome. If you came with a script, try Broadway.

Deacon Vernon's smile tightens.

DEACON VERNON: We came with an invitation.

KJ: And if I say no?

DEACON VERNON: Then you say no.

(beat; then, softer—loaded)

DEACON VERNON: But you should consider what “no” costs... in a town that's still deciding what to do with you.

Pastor Renee's eyes flick to Vernon—she hears the threat.

KJ's jaw clenches. Darlene steps slightly in front of him, protective without making it obvious.

MS. DARLENE: He'll consider it. And you'll consider leaving.

Pastor Renee takes a breath, trying to keep this from becoming a war on the first encounter.

PASTOR RENEE: KJ... I'm not here to pressure you. I'm here because I believe God is not finished with your life.

KJ meets her eyes—he wants to believe her, and that makes him angry.

KJ: God might not be finished. People are.

A beat that lands.

MS. DARLENE has the door cracked as PASTOR RENEE and DEACON VERNON exit. Pastor Renee offers a polite nod back, clearly uncomfortable. Deacon Vernon gives one last smile that doesn't reach his eyes.

DEACON VERNON: Thank you again, Ms. Wade. We'll be in touch.

MS. DARLENE: Don't strain yourself.

PASTOR RENEE: KJ... thank you for listening.

KJ doesn't respond. Pastor Renee holds the silence, then leaves.

Deacon Vernon lingers a fraction longer—just enough to let KJ feel it—then exits.

Darlene closes the door with a firm click and locks it.

A beat.

LIGHTS OUT

ACT I – SCENE 3

STAGE LEFT: HALFWAY HOUSE COMMON ROOM

The same common room. The front door area is visible. A lingering tension hangs in the room like smoke after a small fire.

LIGHTS UP

MS. DARLENE: (quietly) Now... you want to tell me why my building suddenly qualifies for pastoral visitation?

KJ: They want me to talk.

MS. DARLENE: They want you to perform.

KJ says nothing. He is trying to keep his breathing even.

MS. DARLENE: Pastor seemed... sincere.

KJ: She did.

MS. DARLENE: Sincere people can still be used. A good heart is not the same thing as a protected heart.

KJ moves to the table, picks up his job-search folder, puts it down again like it's suddenly heavy.

KJ: He said the town still deciding what to do with me.

MS. DARLENE: That wasn't ministry. That was leverage.

KJ: He always talks like that.

MS. DARLENE: So you do know him "like that."

KJ doesn't answer. Darlene watches him with the patience of someone who has learned not to rush pain.

MS. DARLENE: How long you been connected to that church?

KJ: Since I was a kid.

MS. DARLENE: Mm-hm.

KJ: My mom cleaned there. Tuesdays and Thursdays. She'd bring me. I used to sleep under the pews.

MS. DARLENE: (chuckles once, then sobers) Church will raise you and then pretend they don't know you when you bleed.

KJ's eyes flick up at that.

KJ: I stopped going when... when everything happened.

MS. DARLENE: When "everything happened" is a sentence that usually means the truth is still alive.

KJ's jaw tightens. He looks away.

Darlene moves to the coffee station, busying her hands as she speaks.

MS. DARLENE: Let me guess. "A few words." "Short testimony." "Inspiring."

KJ: Something like that.

MS. DARLENE: They don't want your words, KJ. They want your image. There's a difference.

KJ: Pastor Renee... she's not like him.

MS. DARLENE: Maybe not. But she's in his system. And systems make decent people do dishonest things while calling it "peace."

KJ exhales through his nose, controlled.

KJ: I'm trying to stay out the way.

MS. DARLENE: Staying out the way is fine—until someone builds a highway through your silence.

KJ looks at her, almost asking permission to say what he's holding back.

KJ: You ever feel like... a whole city decided who you are, and you don't get a vote?

MS. DARLENE: Every man in this house knows that feeling. Difference is... some of them still trying to vote with violence.

KJ: I'm not.

MS. DARLENE: Good. Then vote with truth.

KJ flinches again—truth is the thing that costs.

MS. DARLENE: That case... the one everybody whispers about. You were convicted of what you actually did, or what they needed you to be?

KJ's face hardens. He doesn't answer at first.

KJ: I did time.

MS. DARLENE: That wasn't my question.

KJ grips the edge of the table.

KJ: In court, they don't ask what happened. They ask what story can survive.

Darlene nods slowly, like that confirms something she's suspected.

MS. DARLENE: And the church?

KJ: The church...(he swallows) The church needed the story too.

Darlene's voice softens, but doesn't lose steel.

MS. DARLENE: Did Deacon Vernon ever apologize to you?

KJ: For what?

MS. DARLENE: For how fast he turned you into a cautionary tale.

KJ's mouth twitches—almost a bitter laugh.

KJ: He didn't turn me into it. He just... used what happened.

MS. DARLENE: Used it for what?

KJ hesitates. A door inside him creaks open, then shuts.

KJ: To keep certain people clean.

Darlene freezes—just for a moment.

MS. DARLENE: Certain people like who?

KJ: I'm not doing this.

MS. DARLENE: KJ—

KJ: I'm not doing this. Not here. Not now.

Darlene nods, backing off without retreating.

MS. DARLENE: Okay. But hear me: if you go back in that building this weekend, you don't go back as their trophy.

KJ: I'm not trying to be nobody's trophy.

MS. DARLENE: Good. Because trophies sit on shelves. Men walk free.

KJ looks at the locked door—like he can already feel the town pressing on it from the outside.

KJ's phone buzzes in his pocket. He checks it. His face tightens.

MS. DARLENE: Who is it?

KJ: (quiet) Somebody who remembers.

He pockets the phone without replying. Darlene watches him—alert now, like a storm has shifted direction.

MS. DARLENE: KJ... blood speaks. Even when people try to gag it.

KJ stares ahead, the weight of Good Friday pressing down without anyone naming it.

LIGHTS OUT

ACT 1 – SCENE 4

STAGE RIGHT: CHURCH OFFICE / REHEARSAL SPACE

The same office. Props remain. The rehearsal schedule is still on the desk.

LIGHTS UP

DEACON VERNON: All right. That's done.

PASTOR RENEE: What's done?

DEACON VERNON: Contact. Seed planted. You saw his face—he's hungry for a second chance.

PASTOR RENEE: He's hungry for peace. Those aren't the same.

DEACON VERNON: Pastor, please. Easter is in forty-eight hours. We need a testimony that lands.

PASTOR RENEE: We need integrity.

DEACON VERNON: Integrity doesn't fill seats.

PASTOR RENEE: (instant) Christ does.

A beat. Vernon smiles like she's being cute.

DEACON VERNON: Christ fills seats through strategy.

PASTOR RENEE: Through truth.

DEACON VERNON: Truth... is a responsibility.

PASTOR RENEE: Truth is not a liability, Vernon.

DEACON VERNON: In this city, it can be.

Pastor Renee studies him.

PASTOR RENEE: Say what you mean.

Deacon Vernon adjusts his cuff, buying time.

DEACON VERNON: People still have... feelings about Kairo James.

PASTOR RENEE: He knows.

DEACON VERNON: And they will come, Renee. Not because they love resurrection—because they love controversy. We must steward the narrative.

PASTOR RENEE: There it is.

DEACON VERNON: There what is?

PASTOR RENEE: You just preached public relations and called it stewardship.

DEACON VERNON: Don't be dramatic.

PASTOR RENEE: Easter is dramatic. A cross is not subtle.

Deacon Vernon steps closer, voice lowering.

DEACON VERNON: We cannot have him in front of a microphone saying anything... unsupervised.

PASTOR RENEE: Unsupervised?

DEACON VERNON: Unfiltered.

PASTOR RENEE: He's not a child.

DEACON VERNON: No. He is a man who has been hurt, and hurt men say hurt things.

PASTOR RENEE: And healed men tell the truth.

Vernon's smile fades a fraction.

DEACON VERNON: Not every truth needs a stage.

PASTOR RENEE: That depends on what the truth is.

A beat that opens a door neither wants to walk through—yet.

Deacon Vernon paces once—controlled, contained.

DEACON VERNON: We are offering him an opportunity.

PASTOR RENEE: You are offering him a costume.

DEACON VERNON: If he wears it well, doors open.

PASTOR RENEE: And if he doesn't?

DEACON VERNON: Then doors close.

PASTOR RENEE: That's coercion.

DEACON VERNON: That's reality. This church has kept the lights on through storms because we were wise.

PASTOR RENEE: Wise—or afraid?

DEACON VERNON: Careful.

PASTOR RENEE: Careful is not a fruit of the Spirit, Vernon.

He stops. He smiles again—thin.

DEACON VERNON: You have a gift for sermons. Use it on Sunday. Not on me.

Pastor Renee takes a breath, her composure straining.

PASTOR RENEE: What are you protecting?

DEACON VERNON: I am protecting this house.

PASTOR RENEE: From what?

A long beat.

DEACON VERNON: From reopening wounds that finally started to close.

PASTOR RENEE: Wounds don't close when they're covered. They close when they're cleaned.

Deacon Vernon's eyes narrow slightly.

DEACON VERNON: Be careful, Renee.

PASTOR RENEE: There it is again.

DEACON VERNON: I'm warning you as a friend.

PASTOR RENEE: No. You're warning me as a man who is used to being obeyed.

Another charged silence.

Pastor Renee sits at her desk, suddenly tired. Vernon remains standing.

PASTOR RENEE: I will not manipulate him.

DEACON VERNON: No one said manipulate.

PASTOR RENEE: You implied it with every word.

DEACON VERNON: Pastor, you're new enough to think purity is practical. I've been here long enough to know storms come. And when they come, people look for someone to throw overboard.

PASTOR RENEE: And you've decided it won't be you.

DEACON VERNON: I've decided it won't be this church.

PASTOR RENEE: Those are not the same thing.

A beat.

DEACON VERNON: Let him testify. Keep it controlled. Keep it hopeful. No mention of... that night.

PASTOR RENEE: Why.

DEACON VERNON: Because Easter is not the time to dredge up old mess.

PASTOR RENEE: Easter is literally about an old mess being exposed.

Deacon Vernon leans in, voice low, precise.

DEACON VERNON: If he speaks out of turn, Renee... it will not only hurt him.

PASTOR RENEE: Who else will it hurt?

Vernon holds her gaze, but does not answer.

Pastor Renee stands, steadying herself.

PASTOR RENEE: If there is truth we've avoided... we will face it.

DEACON VERNON: Then you'll split this church.

PASTOR RENEE: If unity requires a lie, it deserves to split.

Vernon's smile returns—cold this time.

DEACON VERNON: You'll learn, Pastor. Everyone loves resurrection—until it requires a death.

LIGHTS OUT
