

ESSENCE

SCENE 1

EXT. 97 ESTORIA BAR - DAY

Taj and Essence watch Larry Reid on Taj's phone. They sit at Video Village on the set of Essence's new music video. A DIRECTOR and Choreographer rehearse with Dancers in the b.g. in front of the "Shine Different" mural.

Start

TAJ

She's everything Kingdom needs.
She's young... she's got swag...
and that voice. It's like an angel,
but with broken wings.

Essence, seeing the fire in Taj's eyes, feels a twinge of jealousy, but masks it with a put-on attitude. Taking his phone and with a twinkle in her eye and tone, she teases --

ESSENCE

We're only dating a minute and
already you trying to make me
jealous?

TAJ

What?
(then, realizing)
No.
(re: the phone)
This is... work.

ESSENCE

(playful)
Relax. I'm teasing.

But, is she? Then --

ESSENCE (CONT'D)

How you gonna find this Cinderella?

TAJ

I'll figure that out after I talk
to my mom.

ESSENCE

Your mom? What's your mom got to do
with it?

KINGDOM BUSINESS / BET

Sides by Breakdown Services - Actors Access

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ESSENCE

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scene 1

TAJ

It's her label. She needs to approve anyone we sign.

ESSENCE

Then maybe you need to work someplace else. Someplace you don't need your mama's permission to do your damn job. You can produce me.

The "mama's boy" comment stings, but Taj tries not to let on.

TAJ

That's not how it is. Kingdom Records is my birthright. It's also my... purpose. It's where I'm meant to be.

Essence, not sure what to say to that, changes the subject --

ESSENCE

So, what would you think about me singing at your mom's tribute?

Taj didn't expect this. He looks uncomfortable.

TAJ

For real? I didn't think-- I mean, I never would've ask--

ESSENCE

If your mom approved, of course.
(sly smile)
Sorry. Couldn't resist.
(off his awkward look)
Wait. Am I right...? Your mom wouldn't want me to sing?

TAJ

Well, she's strictly Gospel and--

ESSENCE

I can sing Gospel. What doesn't she approve of? My music... or me?

Taj tries to choose his words carefully.

TAJ

Uhh...

ESSENCE

She doesn't even know me!

TAJ

I know, I know...

ESSENCE

scene 1

DIRECTOR

(shouts)

Essence! We're ready for you. Let's
go again!

Essence, shooting Taj a final look, heads for the set. Taj,
feeling the need to smooth this over somehow, calls out --

TAJ

Hey! You have plans tonight?

ESSENCE Reacts.....

end