

Silent Truth

Excerpt of a dramatic play

by

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CHARACTERS: (in order of appearance)

Lowanda Jamison - 11 years-old. African-American. Adina's eldest daughter. Very serious, focused, thoughtful, and a worrier. She is often the caretaker for her siblings when her mother is overwhelmed. She has been her mother's primary support system for years.

Adina Jamison - African-American. 30 years-old. She has been suffering from bouts of depression since she was a teenager but has never sought treatment. She extremely secretive about her personal struggles, and she pretends to have her life under control. Her rich imagination sometimes helps her escape her life, but mostly it pulls her into more destructive self-loathing and a fear. A former high school valedictorian who graduated from Phillips Exeter and got a full scholarship to Columbia Engineering, she is now a college drop out and a full-time mother of four, married to a very successful electrical engineer whose high paying consultant job requires him to live away from their home for months at a time. Her husband's absence placing the brunt of the parenting responsibilities on Adina. She is turning 30 and is about to make some major changes in her life.

Tanya Phillips - African-American. 25 years-old. Adina's loyal sister. Outspoken. Open-minded. Free-spirit. She is a strong believer in the healing powers of cannabis remedies. She likes to test people and challenge the status quo. Her success as a hedge fund analyst is matched by her edible cannabis baking skills, and her martial arts talents.

Helen Matson - Caribbean-American. mid-to-late 60's. Free spirit. Adina's aunt. She loves yoga and she is an advocate of medical marijuana, and spiritual growth. Generous, joyful, empathetic and loving. She trusts her intuition and tends to be impulsive. She is privy to the secrets that her family refuses to share with each other, and everyone trusts her to be discreet.

Lillian Matson- Bi-racial. early 20's. Single. Actress. Adina's cousin. Helen's only child. Ambitious, outspoken, self-reliant and self-confident. Freedom and stardom are her goals. She is the star of "Mission: Robota" a streaming show about a robotic engineering student/international spy. She relishes witnessing and analyzing other people's weakness in service of her art, yet she keeps her personal life secret.

Phebe Phillips - African-American. Late 60's-70's. Widow. Retired. Adina's mother. Edgy. Judgemental. Watchful. Perfectionist. She enjoys being self-controlled and controlling. She wants and needs to be right. She dispatches outliers with her deadly glance and poisonous tongue. There is a purposefulness in her actions, sometimes an urgency - but not anger. She is constantly watching to see what she can correct.

Jamie Jamison - Any ethnicity. Early 30's. Adina's husband. He and

Adina have been a couple since his sophomore year in college. Go-getter. Achiever. A bit of a manipulator. His work takes him out of town for long stretches of time, but he believes the opportunity his high six-figure income provides his wife and children makes him a good provider. Being a good provider is key - and what happens when he is away from home, stays away from home.

SETTING:

A brownstone in Park Slope, Brooklyn, New York

SILENT TRUTH

Synopsis

"I woke up one day and felt like I was in a bad 1950's movie - stuck in a housewife role that I had never imagined for myself." It's Adina Jamison 30th birthday and she is on the verge of making some life-altering choices. How does a former valedictorian/college dropout/mother-of-four-young-children claim her right to choose her destiny? It takes uncovering three generations of secrets, marijuana-infused brownies, and the support of loved ones for her to claim her right to live.

Excerpt from Magaly Colimon-Christopher's **Silent Truth**

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE

Setting: Park Slope, NY. Day. The Jamison family's Brownstone.

Lights up on an open concept living area with a large living room and a chef-style kitchen.

Upstage center there is an archway leading to the foyer. A closed wooden pocket door separates the living area from the foyer.

There are four large cardboard boxes piled up next the archway, each bearing a HANDLE WITH CARE label. Three of them are taped shut, one is open.

The living room is furnished with two high-end oversized leather couches and an arm chair, a large floor-to-ceiling shelving unit with a in-built desk, a large storage chest, a coffee table and end tables. Hard covered books and a number of family pictures adorn the shelf. A lap top sits on the desk.

Piles of clean but unfolded laundry cover one couch, and a basket of laundry sits on the other couch along with several Transformers and dinosaurs. Cereal bowls sit on the floor in front of a 56-inch flat screen television propped up on a stand above the fireplace.

Between the living room and the chef-style kitchen there is a round 8-seat dining table. A "Happy Birthday" balloon is tethered to a jar of M&M's in the middle of the table. Two oversized, handmade birthday cards - one entitled "Happy Birthday to The Best Mom Ever" and the other "Happy Birthday to Our Little Brother" - stand next to the jar of M&M's.

Sound of children laughing and running upstairs.

Sound of someone running down a set of wooden stairs.

The sliding doors open.

Enter LOWANDA JAMISON, 11 years old. She is wearing a school uniform - white button up shirt, and maroon slacks. She rushes through the living room into the kitchen area leaving the sliding doors open.

The stair case leading upstairs is stage right of the archway.

Facing the archway is a door to the downstairs garden apartment.

Stage left of the archway is the brownstone's main entrance.

Lowanda clears away three plates of partially eaten Belgian waffles from the dining table and places them in the sink.

Lowanda grabs a sponge and wipes the dining table.

Sound of someone quickly walking down the stairs.

Enter ADINA JAMISON, 30.

She is dressed in a floor length tie-dyed house dress.

As she enters, Adina closes the sliding doors.

ADINA

Lowanda, leave that and go help Anton and Malika catch Jameel. The bus is coming soon.

LOWANDA

I'm finished. I just want you to rest today, Mama. It's your birthday.

Lowanda rushes to the living room and picks up the cereal bowls.

Adina takes them from her and puts them back on the floor.

ADINA

Thanks. Now I need you to help with Jameel for the last time. Starting tomorrow, Mina will be here to handle everything.

LOWANDA

I thought she was supposed to be here today.

ADINA

I wanted to have you all to myself for today. Nanny time starts tomorrow. Are you sure you like her Lowanda?

LOWANDA

Of all the nannies we tested, she was the only one who knew how to handle Jameel.

ADINA

True. What do Malika and Anton really think of her?

LOWANDA

We all like her - especially Jameel. When will the housekeeper start?

ADINA

Her name is Janice. She starts tomorrow, too.

Lowanda takes Adina's hands in her hands.

LOWANDA

Are you happy today, Mama?

ADINA

I am very happy.

LOWANDA

And when Janice and Mina start helping around here, you won't be stressed out anymore?

ADINA

You don't have to worry about your mama anymore, Lowanda.

LOWANDA

Good.

Adina hugs Lowanda.

ADINA

I love you so much. You are my rock. Don't you ever doubt how much I love you.

Lowanda is taken aback by Adina's declaration.

LOWANDA

Mama...are you okay?

ADINA

I'm great. It's my birthday - right?

Adina releases Lowanda.

Sound of Jameel screeching.

Sound of feet running downstairs.

SOUND of the exterior door swinging open and slamming against the interior wall.

ADINA

Jameel is on the run.

Lowanda and Adina hurry to the sliding doors.

Adina opens it for Lowanda.

LOWANDA

See you later, Mama.

Lowanda hurries out.

Adina hurries to the living room window and opens it.

Adina leans out the window to watch her children.

ADINA

(Calling out window.)

Malika, don't let Jameel run around like that. Grab his hand. Jameel, you better stop your running. Don't make me come out there and whip your butt, on your birthday. Lowanda! Hurry up and do something, the bus is going to leave you all. Anton! Lowanda - where is Anton?

LOWANDA (OFF STAGE)

He's on the bus..

JAMEEL (OFF STAGE)

I don't wanna go to school!

ADINA

Jameel, stop misbehaving. Malika get on the bus - Lowanda will handle him.

JAMEEL (OFF STAGE)

I wanna wait for Daddy to come home and wish me Happy Birthday!

LOWANDA (OFF STAGE)

Boy - get on the bus before I stomp you.

JAMEEL (OFF STAGE)

No!

LOWANDA (OFF STAGE)

5, 4, 3, 2...

JAMEEL (OFF STAGE)

Okay!

SOUND of Jameel squealing with excitement.

ADINA

'Bye babies. I love you.

Adina waves and blows a kiss down to her children.

Adina leans as far as she can to watch the bus until it turns the corner and disappears from view.

Adina slowly closes the window and shuts the curtain.

Adina walks over to the shelf and selects a number of framed pictures of the children. She wraps them with bubble paper and packs them into the open box.

Sound of cellphone ringing.

Adina answers and activates the speaker phone.

Lights change.

Reveal Jamie in a spot downstage. He is using a hands free headset as he types on his laptop.

Adina continues wrapping and packing during the conversation.

JAMIE

Good morning, Birthday Mama.

ADINA

Good morning to you.

JAMIE

Is Jameel still there?

ADINA

He's on his way to school.

JAMIE

How was he?

ADINA

Angry you weren't here to wish him happy birthday. You know Jameel - he wants what he wants when he wants it.

JAMIE

I just have to take care of a few things at the site. But I am still trying to see if I can head home today.

ADINA

Yup.

JAMIE

I really am sorry I couldn't make it home yesterday.

ADINA

Okay.

JAMIE

Kiss, kiss. Have a great birthday, Babe.

Lights out on Jamie.

ADINA

Thanks. Hey - call me if you do catch a flight. Okay.

No reply.

Beat.

She looks at her cellphone and sees Jamie's hung up.

Adina finishes taping the box shut.

The door intercom buzzes.

Adina answers the door using an app on her phone.

ADINA

Who is it?

TANYA (VOICE ON APP)

Me.

ADINA

Tanya?

TANYA (VOICE ON APP)

Who else?

As Adina buzzes Tanya in, she tapes the box close and pushes it next to the other boxes.

Enter Adina's 25-year-old sister, TANYA PHILLIPS.

She's carrying two filled-to-overflowing grocery bags, a gift bag and a bunch of helium-filled "Happy Birthday" balloons.

Tanya hugs and kisses Adina while still holding the bags and balloons.

TANYA

Happy birthday, beautiful.

ADINA

Thank you. You look good. Keeping those Wall Street sharks in check?

Tanya releases Adina and puts the bags down.

TANYA

You know me. My brains and my black belt keep them in line. How is the birthday boy?

Tanya looks around the messy living room as she ties the balloons to the back of a dining room chair.

As they talk, Tanya cleans up the living area.

She empties out a laundry basket, sweeps the children's toys into it, walks over to the storage chest near the front door, pours the toys into it, and closes the chest.

Adina sits on the couch and folds the laundry.

ADINA

Jamie couldn't fly home last night as planned - last minute complication with his assignment. So, this morning when he didn't get his father's "happy birthday" tickle, Jameel had one of his fits. Jamie might fly in later, but I doubt it.

TANYA

Poor Jameel. How are you doing?

Tanya gathers the dirty cereal bowls, and carries them to the kitchen sink, and places them on top of a pile of dirty dishes.

ADINA

I finished baking half of the cupcakes and cookies at 2 this morning.

TANYA

I would have picked some up from a bakery if your kids weren't all gluten, nut, egg, and lactose intolerant. The nearest allergen free bakery isn't near enough.

ADINA

My recipe tastes better than anything out there. And I make them way bigger.

TANYA

I don't know why you won't just open a bakery.

ADINA

I'm an app designer, not a baker.

TANYA

Delicious cupcakes sell -

ADINA

I still have to clean up in here for the party. I have some more cupcake batter in the fridge along with icing. Would you mind baking the rest for me?

TANYA

I don't mind. I am here to turn this place into party central for my nephew, and to send you off for your birthday beauty day. I am so happy you decided to treat yourself to a spa day for your big 3-0.

ADINA

You can say it - “thirty.”

TANYA

You are “superwoman-thirty” - married with four gorgeous children, and the owner of a start-up.

Adina stands and collects an armful of folded laundry.

ADINA

Yup. That’s me.

Tanya grabs the laundry out of Adina’s arms, drops it on the couch, takes Adina’s hands, and hops up and down.

TANYA

Are you ready for a new you?!!

Adina tries to pull her hands out of Tanya’s, but Tanya hops higher and harder, hoots and hollers - forcing Adina to join her in the revelry.

ADINA

You are stupid.

TANYA

I said, “Are you ready for a new you?”

Adina gets swept up in Tanya’s excitement, jumping with authentic enthusiasm.

ADINA

Yes.

TANYA

I can’t hear you.

Adina laughs.

ADINA

Yes.

TANYA

I can’t hear you!

ADINA

Yes. Yes! Yes!!!

Tanya releases Adina's hands.

Tanya grabs a basket of laundry.

TANYA

Good. Let that good feeling sink in while I take these up stairs.

As Tanya exits, she stops at the pile of boxes near the entrance.

TANYA

(o.s.)

What in the boxes?

ADINA

Just some stuff I'm putting into storage. The storage company is supposed to send someone to pick them up around noon.

TANYA

Okay. I've got that too.

ADINA

I am liking this. It's good to have someone to handle things around here for me.

TANYA

I keep telling you to hire a nanny.

ADINA

Actually - a woman named Mina starts tomorrow.

TANYA

Seriously?

ADINA

I've even installed the nanny cams. You were right - there's nothing wrong with getting help around here and having more time for myself.

TANYA

Perfect. When do I meet Mina? What is she like?

ADINA

You should drop by before you go to work tomorrow. She'll be here at 7. She's in her fifties, mellow but firm. The kids like her. She'll be staying in the guest room in the garden apartment. And our new housekeeper, Janice, starts tomorrow, too.

Tanya is stunned.

TANYA

I'm loving this new 30-year-old you.

ADINA

Can you help me clean up the garden apartment after the birthday party?

TANYA

No problem. I am so proud of you. Now you can focus on your business.

Tanya exits.

LIGHTS CHANGE

Spot light on Adina

Adina's FLASHBACK.

She delivers her pitch like a Shark Tank contestant - with enthusiasm.

ADINA

Hello. My name is Adina Jamison. Not only am I the CEO and Founder of Happy Body Apps, I am also the proud parent of four children who suffer with food allergies. When I first became a parent - I was totally clueless about all things parenting, and completely in the dark about food allergies. So when I learned that my first child, Lowanda, was having an allergic reaction to my breast milk, I had to struggle to revamp my diet. Imagine how difficult it was to shop for foods that didn't have any eggs, wheat, corn or lactose. Reading the labels on every container was a chore. That's when I got the idea for my No More Oops app.

Adina pulls her cellphone out of her pocket.

ADINA

It allows the user to scan the UPC bar code on products sold in grocery stores and quickly find out whether or not the items have specific allergens. Up to 15 millions American have food allergies. Potentially deadly food allergies affect 1 out of every 13 children in our country. My No More Oops app can make shopping easier for all Americans.

Adina reaches into a bag and pulls out the bag of cookies.
She scans the UPC code with her cellphone.

VOICE FROM APP

Adina, this product has gluten, lactose and egg food allergens.

ADINA

No More Oops will help you insure that your shoppers are saved from the “oops” factor when they shop in your grocery stores -

Adina’s cellphone chirps.

ADINA

I’m sorry. That’s the ring tone for my children’s school...

Adina answers.

ADINA (CONT’D)

Hello? Yes this is Mrs. Jamison. (listens) Is he all right? Did you call my husband? Oh. Okay. I’ll be right there.

Adina walks to the edge of the spot light.

ADINA

I’m sorry. My son Jameel got hurt playing soccer during gym class. I have to go...I’m sorry...Thank you.

LIGHT CHANGE

Continuation of flashback.

Spot light expands.

Reveal Jamie standing next to Adina.

JAMIE

Why didn’t you wear the suit I bought for you?

ADINA

Jamie, don’t get off of the subject.

JAMIE

I pulled in a few favors to get you that appointment, ‘Dina. I thought I was pretty clear when I asked you not to embarrass me wearing one of your hippie outfits.

ADINA

What difference does it make what I wore to the meeting? I wasn't able to finish my presentation, Jamie.

JAMIE

I am so sorry I didn't answer the school's call, 'Dina. My boss pulled me into an emergency meeting -

ADINA

I spent months preparing for that appointment.

JAMIE

I know.

ADINA

When "No More Oops" takes off, you can quit your job and work with me. This could be a win-win for both of us.

Beat.

JAMIE

That would be something.

Beat.

ADINA

I did tell you what time I was scheduled to present - didn't I?

JAMIE

I had no idea that Jameel would hurt himself during my meeting.

ADINA

Uh huh....

JAMIE

What? Say what you were going to say.

ADINA

I just don't want them to think I'm unreliable and a bad fit.

JAMIE

You weren't apply for a job. You were just expanding your client base.

ADINA

I put a lot of work // into this.

JAMIE

//You might want to stay small. Stay focused on selling to the schools / in the neighborhood.

ADINA

/ My five-year plan was to improve the app and expand// to grocery stores.

JAMIE

//It's not like you make much money from the app. This is more of a hobby.

ADINA

This is not a hobby. It's my business.

JAMIE

I pay all the bills. I let you keep the money you make.

ADINA

I know but -

JAMIE

Adina, I don't mind that you are doing this, but you made maybe \$10,000 in sales last year. That's less than 10% of the tuition we pay for the kids every year.

ADINA

Your are so egotistical.

JAMIE

Come on. We are doing really well, 'Dina. I am taking care of things. The kids are happy. You don't have to work a 9-5 job. You stay home making your little apps. It's a win-win.

Jamie's cell phone rings.

Jamie checks the caller id, stands and starts to exit.

ADINA

We need to finish this conversation, Jamie.

JAMIE

Baby, I have to get this.

Jamie exits.

LIGHTS CHANGE.

Lights on full.

Present day.

Adina sits slouched, eyes staring off in the distance, as she nervously bites a finger nail.

Enter Tanya

She watches Adina.

Beat.

TANYA

Are you okay?

Adina sits up.

ADINA

Yes. I'm fine.

TANYA

Don't do the "I'm fine" thing.

ADINA

You don't have to worry about me, Tanya. When I called you a few weeks ago -

TANYA

You were a hot mess.

ADINA

But I'm better now.

TANYA

I brought some stuff to help you feel super better.

Tanya pulls out a zip lock bag out of her purse. It's filled with thin, rolled up joints.

ADINA

Tell me that's not what I think it // is?

TANYA

//It's what you need to take all your stress and blues away.

ADINA

I can't believe you brought that stuff into my house, / Tanya.

TANYA

/I can't believe you waited so long to tell me you were dealing with depression.

ADINA

I never said I was dealing with depression - you// did.

TANYA

//You are -

ADINA

No I am not. I can't have my home smelling like that stuff when the kids come home.

Tanya reaches into her purse again, and pulls out a plastic canister filled with brownies

TANYA

I thought you might use that excuse. That's why I made you these brownies.

ADINA

Does Mama know you are high-powered drug dealer?

TANYA

I am a pain-free-life enthusiast. "The can-can" is a non-gmo all-natural healer of -

ADINA

Oh you have a nickname for your contraband -

TANYA

No longer contraband - medical cannabis is legal in New York State.

ADINA

Where did you get all of this stuff from?

TANYA

The benefits of being a senior analyst for a hedge fund that invests in high-quality "can can" includes growing your financial portfolio, and having easy access to the good stuff.

ADINA

Tanya -

TANYA

Studies show cannabis helps with depression.

ADINA

They use to think a lobotomy was effective. It's the same thing -

TANYA

Forget the egg sizzling on a fry pan //idiocy.

ADINA

//Take that stuff out of my house -

Tanya opens the canister of brownies and waves it under Adina's nose.

TANYA

You know you want to try some.

Beat.

ADINA

They smell good. Like real brownies.

TANYA

I made it just the way you like it - dark and white chocolate chunks, almonds, and chopped walnuts.

Adina is torn.

ADINA

How the hell did you learn how to do this?

TANYA

Auntie Helen. Who else?

ADINA

What?!?

TANYA

You know her special teas that are only for grown people?

ADINA

I thought it was special because she put liquor in it.

TANYA

Yeah. No.

ADINA

Does Mama know?

TANYA

Girl, you are the only one in the family who doesn't know.

ADINA

Every day I am learning how clueless I can be.

TANYA

Not clueless. You are just on your own wavelength.

Beat.

ADINA

I saw a documentary about edibles.

TANYA

I got a botanical tincture extractor a few years ago to reduce production time. My brownies have gotten amazing reviews on Leafly.com.

ADINA

Damn - there's a website? Oh my God! You are a drug dealer!

TANYA

I am a baker. I have it down to a science. I made this batch really mild for you.

Adina sniffs the brownies.

ADINA

Does it taste like a regular brownie?

TANYA

Yes. Eating one square is like drinking a 4-ounce glass of wine.

ADINA

I only drink one glass of wine on Friday nights after the kids are asleep.

TANYA

Eat these instead. Start small and wait. It won't hit you right away, but you will feel mellow.

Tanya waves the brownies under Adina's nose.

TANYA

You can eat two or three small squares today to celebrate the big 3-0, then one on Friday nights. Don't drink wine with it until you get used to the difference, and make sure to never eat one on an empty stomach.

ADINA

This is crazy.

TANYA

Go get ready for your “me” day.

ADINA

Are you high?

TANYA

Only after midnight.

ADINA

Seriously?

TANYA

I'll put them in the refrigerator for now. You can have some when you get back, then put them in the freezer. This batch should last you about six months.

Tanya opens the refrigerator door and puts the container of brownies on the top shelf.

Adina pauses.

ADINA

The storage guys are coming to pick up these boxes. Make sure you listen for the doorbell, okay.

TANYA

Will do.

ADINA

If anyone from the school calls -

TANYA

They won't - and if they do - I've got it.

Tanya guides Adina out of the living room.

ADINA

I won't be able to keep my phone on. In the spa.

TANYA

Go take a shower. Oh and...if you give me your cupcake recipe, I'll give you fifty percent of the sales of my infused gluten free cupcake -

ADINA

(off stage)

I'm not giving you my recipe!

Sound of door slamming.

TANYA

Uh huh.

LIGHTS CHANGE