

See You

By Lee Osorio and Gabrielle Fulton Ponder

SEE YOU was commissioned by the Georgia Council for the Arts, the Georgia Attorney General's Office, the Georgia Department of Education, Wellspring Living, and Street Grace. It will be taken into middle schools across the state of Georgia to raise awareness about sex trafficking. Because the average age at which children are sexually exploited is 14, the target age group is eleven to twelve years old. This play was co-written by Lee Osorio and Gabrielle Fulton Ponder.

Synopsis:

Trapped inside a mysterious maze of mirrors, three kids find the following spell written in golden letters on the walls: *"To escape this maze of mirrors, You must learn to see you clearer. Tell your story to unearth, The true value of your worth."* As they begin to tell their stories, the WISE WARRIOR, the PRINCESS, and THE STRONGEST BOY recognize what connects them and start to realize what it will take to get out of the maze. Using the framework of fairy tales and metaphor, each kid begins the long process of healing after the trauma of exploitation.

Characters:

THE WISE WARRIOR: Black, female identifying, can pass for early to mid-teens.

THE PRINCESS: White, female identifying, can pass for early to mid-teens.

THE STRONGEST BOY: Latinx, male identifying, can pass for early to mid-teens.

The stage is bare, reflecting an emptiness that need not be spoken. It is a liminal space and time. THE WISE WARRIOR, THE STRONGEST BOY, and THE PRINCESS face off with the audience.

Once.	THE WISE WARRIOR
Upon.	THE STRONGEST BOY
A time ...	THE PRINCESS
There were three kids.	THE STRONGEST BOY
The Princess.	THE PRINCESS
The Wise Warrior.	THE WISE WARRIOR
And the Strongest Boy in the Land.	THE STRONGEST BOY
Really?	THE WISE WARRIOR
Yeah--. What?	THE STRONGEST BOY
Nothing.	THE WISE WARRIOR
What?	THE STRONGEST BOY
Strongest in the entire land?	THE WISE WARRIOR
Yeah, why not just Strong Boy?	THE PRINCESS

THE STRONGEST BOY

It's my story, I can tell it how I want.

*With a side-eye from THE PRINCESS and
an eye-roll from THE WISE WARRIOR, they
concede.*

THE WISE WARRIOR/THE PRINCESS

Okay.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Anyway. They were three basically normal kids--

THE WISE WARRIOR

Whatever that is.

THE PRINCESS

Normal except for the fact that each of these kids ended up trapped.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Trapped inside a Maze of Mirrors.

THE PRINCESS

Kinda like in one of those Carnival Fun Houses.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Yeah, only this wasn't just any maze of mirrors.

THE PRINCESS

This was a mysterious, mystical, maze of mirrors.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Because when the three kids looked for their reflections in this maze of magic mirrors ...

THE STRONGEST BOY

They didn't see themselves staring back.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Instead they saw ...

THE PRINCESS

Bar codes.

THE WISE WARRIOR

A baby doll.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Nothing.

THE PRINCESS

The Princess saw ... every inch of her body covered in barcodes, so many she couldn't breathe.

THE WISE WARRIOR

The Wise Warrior saw ... a limp baby doll with lots of makeup and this giant smile painted on in red lipstick.

THE STRONGEST BOY

And the world's strongest boy saw...

A beat of sorrow comes over THE STRONGEST BOY.

THE PRINCESS

What is it?

THE STRONGEST BOY

He saw nothing at all.

They all share knowing looks.

THE WISE WARRIOR

On the mirror, written in golden letters were these words--

THE STRONGEST BOY

Words that were like, a spell.

THE PRINCESS

Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?

THE WISE WARRIOR

No, not that spell!

THE STRONGEST BOY

It said ... To escape this maze of mirrors, you must learn to see *you* clearer.

THE PRINCESS

Tell your story to unearth ...

THE WISE WARRIOR

The true value of your worth.

*Beat as the three try to figure out exactly
what this riddle/spell means.*

THE STRONGEST BOY

What does that mean?

THE WISE WARRIOR

I don't know either.

THE PRINCESS

Maybe ... I mean, I guess it's ... STORYTIME!

THE STRONGEST BOY

Who's first?

THE PRINCESS

THE STORY OF THE PRINCESS!

THE WISE WARRIOR

Why am I not surprised?

THE PRINCESS

Once upon a time ... In a land far, far - well, not too far from here - there lived a King.

THE STRONGEST BOY

'Sup?

THE PRINCESS

And a Queen.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Bow down to me, for I am the Queen!

THE PRINCESS

And their daughter, The Princess.

THE STRONGEST BOY

The King and Queen loved their daughter very much--

THE PRINCESS

So they said--

THE WISE WARRIOR

They loved her so much that they gave The Princess everything she wanted. And I do mean *everything*--

THE PRINCESS

But they locked her in a tower.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Well, yeah, so that she would be safe from the dangers of the world!

THE PRINCESS

And barely visited her.

THE WISE WARRIOR

They were busy doing the things Kings and Queens have to do!

THE PRINCESS

Whatever. So, The Princess spent a lot of time alone, all by herself, locked in the tower.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Playing with all the incredible things that her parents had bought for her.

THE PRINCESS

Mostly her iPhone. The Princess really liked making silly videos and posting them on TikTok and she was basically like Insta-famous – well, on her way to being Insta-famous. And one day, as she was playing in her tower, a Pigeon landed on her window with a message tied to its leg.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Wait. Was it a pigeon or was it a message on the Gram?

THE PRINCESS

Well, this *is* a fairytale. Remember how we started with Once Upon A Time? So, in the fairytale it's a pigeon.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Can it at least be a cool bird? Like a hawk?

THE PRINCESS

Fine. Sure. A hawk landed on her window with a message tied to its leg. And the message said: *Your* really pretty. But the “your” was misspelled. It was Y-O-U-R instead of Y-O-U apostrophe R-E. Which THE PRINCESS thought was really cute, for some reason.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Ummm...

THE PRINCESS (*off a look from the other two*)

I don't know why! I just did. Anyway, so THE PRINCESS looked out the window-

THE WISE WARRIOR

She looked at the message guy's Instagram Profile--

THE PRINCESS

SHE LOOKED OUT THE WINDOW ... And standing below was a young man. He was hot. A little older. He had a car. So, she sent the hawk back down to him with a message.

THE STRONGEST BOY

What did it say?

THE PRINCESS

LOL Thanks. What's up?

THE WISE WARRIOR

How eloquent.

THE PRINCESS

And thus began the Courtship of The Princess and R.J.

THE WISE WARRIOR

And pause!

THE PRINCESS

Wait. Pause?

THE WISE WARRIOR

Seems like a good time to introduce The Wise Warrior.

THE PRINCESS

But I haven't finished The Princess's story.

THE WISE WARRIOR

We'll get back to you, Princess, don't worry. But let's introduce ... Me.

THE PRINCESS

Fine...

THE WISE WARRIOR

The Wise Warrior. Once upon a time there was a Wise Warrior who lived in a big city with her Mother.

(points to THE STRONGEST BOY)

That's you.

THE STRONGEST BOY

I'm playing the Mother?

THE WISE WARRIOR

It's my story, I can tell it how I want.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Okay...Oh, daughter of mine, how I love thee!

THE WISE WARRIOR

Yeah, that's not how my Mom talks.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Sorry.

THE WISE WARRIOR

So, The Wise Warrior and her Mother lived in the city. And when I say she lived in the city, it's more like they lived all over the city. The girl's Mother was never able to find the perfect home for her and her daughter.

THE STRONGEST BOY

The neighbors are too loud...

THE WISE WARRIOR

The Mother would say as they packed their clothes into bags and took a bus to the next house.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Nope. Too small...

THE WISE WARRIOR

She would say about the next one.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Uh-unh. Too big...

THE WISE WARRIOR

Or.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Ugh. Too hot...

THE WISE WARRIOR

Or.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Brrr. Too cold...

THE WISE WARRIOR

The Wise Warrior's mother always had some reason or another for their constant moving.

THE STRONGEST BOY

That's kinda fishy.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Yeah, the Warrior suspected there was something her mother wasn't telling her. But she was just a kid, what's a girl to do? And moving so often meant that she was always changing schools.

THE PRINCESS

Ew. It's the new girl.

THE WISE WARRIOR

That's how she earned the name Warrior. Every new school was another battleground where she had to prove herself.

THE PRINCESS

This lunch table is a no loser zone. Sorry.

THE WISE WARRIOR

And it's hard to make friends when you're constantly having to prove your worth. Which is why The Wise Warrior was so excited when one day, her mother came home and said:

THE STRONGEST BOY

You'll never believe what happened! I was just standing in the street and who should stop his carriage to say hello but THE DUKE! He said he couldn't take his eyes off me. We're in love! And we're going to move in with him!

THE PRINCESS

Love at first sight! Swoon.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Something like that. The Wise Warrior walked into the Duke's house and it was--

THE STRONGEST BOY

Perfect!

THE WISE WARRIOR

Okay, it was a regular house. But her Mother was happy!

THE STRONGEST BOY

Not too loud, not too big, not too small, not too hot, not too cold. This place is just right.

THE WISE WARRIOR

And for a time, they were all happy,

THE PRINCESS

The Duke.

THE STRONGEST BOY

The Mother.

THE WISE WARRIOR

And The Wise Warrior. But before long ...The Duke started to wake the Warrior in the middle of the night.

THE PRINCESS (*loud, aggressive*)

WAKE UP!

THE WISE WARRIOR

She was terrified. And...she didn't know what to do. At first The Wise Warrior tried to ignore it. She didn't want to upset her Mother. But it kept happening. Every night, after the Warrior would fall asleep...

THE PRINCESS (*even louder and more aggressively*)

WAKE UP!

THE WISE WARRIOR

She would wake up to the Duke at her bed. It happened so often that finally The Wise Warrior worked up the courage to tell her Mother.

In a shroud of sadness, The Wise Warrior approaches THE STRONGEST BOY hesitantly.

THE STRONGEST BOY

What's wrong?

THE WISE WARRIOR

Make him stop.

THE STRONGEST BOY

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

THE WISE WARRIOR

The Wise Warrior told her Mother everything, the late-night visits, the terror. But her Mother only said...

THE STRONGEST BOY

I think you're having bad dreams. That's what's waking you up. It's just a very realistic nightmare.

THE WISE WARRIOR

And when The Wise Warrior tried to tell her it wasn't a dream, her Mother said...

THE STRONGEST BOY

We've finally found the perfect house. Don't make trouble for us.

THE WISE WARRIOR

The Wise Warrior screamed: He's the one doing this! How am I making trouble?! To which her Mother screamed back...

THE STRONGEST BOY

If he's waking you up, it must be because you asked him to wake you up! That's why he's doing it!

THE WISE WARRIOR

And the two were screaming so loud that the Duke heard them and rushed in asking...

THE PRINCESS

What's going on?

THE WISE WARRIOR

Of course, the Duke denied everything.

THE PRINCESS

I deny everything.

There is a long beat as The Wise Warrior works up the courage to tell this part.

THE WISE WARRIOR

And my mom believed him.

THE STRONGEST BOY

I believe him.

THE WISE WARRIOR

So even though The Wise Warrior was a fighter, she knew how to choose her battles – that's what made her a *wise* warrior. She knew this was a battle she couldn't win.

(beat)

The Wise Warrior put her stuff in a black garbage bag, and she ran away as fast and as far as she could.

*Silence as The Wise Warrior's story lands.
THE STRONGEST BOY, breaks the tense
silence.*

THE STRONGEST BOY

Wow, that's...Do you want to keep going or would you rather—

The Wise Warrior just shrugs.

THE PRINCESS

Wanna hear the rest of The Princess Story?

THE WISE WARRIOR
(to THE STRONGEST BOY)

It's your turn.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Me?

THE WISE WARRIOR

Yeah...what's your story?

THE STRONGEST BOY

The Princess can go, I don't care.

THE PRINCESS

Okay, so--

THE WISE WARRIOR

No! ... You. I wanna hear the story of The Strongest Boy in the Land.

THE PRINCESS

Le sigh. Fine.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Once upon a time, there was a boy. And not just any boy! The Strongest Boy in the Land. He could carry his whole house on his back!

THE WISE WARRIOR

For real?

THE STRONGEST BOY

Yeah...in a way. Buuuut...this boy had a secret. His mother...

THE PRINCESS

Me? Ooo ooo, let me be the mother this time.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Uh. I think I'd rather just tell this part.

(beat)

His mother was sick. Really sick.

THE PRINCESS

Oh.

THE STRONGEST BOY

She had gone to doctor after doctor. But no one knew what was wrong with her. She got so sick she could barely leave the house, which meant she couldn't work. Which meant that the cupboards of THE STRONGEST BOY's house got emptier and emptier. Soon there was hardly anything for the Boy, his Mother, or his little brother to eat. THE STRONGEST BOY decided that, as Man of the House, it was his job to help his family in their time of need.

THE WISE WARRIOR

But how can a boy feed his whole family? You were just a kid.

THE STRONGEST BOY

That was the problem that THE STRONGEST BOY needed to solve. And fast. There was a house in THE STRONGEST BOY's neighborhood. A man lived there, but hardly anyone ever saw him. No one ever talked about what exactly went on inside the house, even though people were always coming and going from it at strange times of day and night. But it was known that any boy who wanted to make some money could knock on the man's door. So, one afternoon, THE STRONGEST BOY worked up the courage to walk up to the door.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Knock.

THE PRINCESS

Knock.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Knock. A voice came from inside...

THE WISE WARRIOR

Who is it?

THE PRINCESS

It's me! The Princess.

THE WISE WARRIOR

What?!

THE PRINCESS

Come on, let's get back to my story.

THE STRONGEST BOY

But we were just getting to the suspenseful part of mine.

THE PRINCESS

But mine is a love story.

Both THE STRONGEST BOY and The Wise Warrior give The Princess a look.

THE STRONGEST BOY
Is it?

THE WISE WARRIOR
Love?

THE PRINCESS
Well ... yeah, kinda.

THE WISE WARRIOR
Girl, how do you love a guy based on a couple of hawk messages?

THE PRINCESS
A. It was a lot of hawk messages, and B. Just because *you've* never been in love doesn't mean love's not real.

THE WISE WARRIOR
But if it was a happily ever after kind of love then how'd you end up trapped in this maze of mirrors?

Unable to answer, The Princess stomps away haughtily, frowning at The Wise Warrior.

THE STRONGEST BOY
What is this place anyway?

THE PRINCESS
I don't know. All I know is that it's kinda creepy and that spell thingy says we have to tell our stories to get out- so can I tell my story already?

THE WISE WARRIOR
Go ahead then...

THE PRINCESS
The Princess Part Deux- That means Part Two- I took French for a year, so...

THE STRONGEST BOY
Get on with it!

THE PRINCESS

So, the girl in the tower who was given everything she wanted, well, except what she really wanted, was falling for this guy...fast. They communicated by hawk a lot. Like every day.

THE PRINCESS (cont'd)

Asking how each other's days were, he would LOL to all of my TikToks, and had good ideas about how to make them funnier, sent me like all these new indie bands, and he would listen to me complain about my parents, he was like my best friend.

THE STRONGEST BOY

And?

THE PRINCESS

After months of really getting to know each other, he says--

THE STRONGEST BOY (*pointing to himself*)

RJ says?

THE PRINCESS

Yes, RJ says-

THE WISE WARRIOR (*pointing to herself*)

By hawk, right?

THE PRINCESS (*reluctantly*)

Yes, by hawk.

THE WISE WARRIOR

YES! Caw caw, CAW CAW!

*THE WISE WARRIOR stands in between
THE PRINCESS and "RJ" passing notes
back and forth.*

THE STRONGEST BOY

You know what we should do?

THE PRINCESS

What?

THE STRONGEST BOY

We should run away together.

THE PRINCESS

Really?

THE STRONGEST BOY

Totally. You shouldn't have to live in a tower where no one loves you.

THE PRINCESS

Okay!

Before taking the note, The Wise Warrior gives her a look like: Are you sure?

THE WISE WARRIOR

Caw caw caw?

THE PRINCESS

Yes, Hawk, I'm sure. And I don't need your advice thank you very much.

The Wise Warrior reluctantly hands the note to THE STRONGEST BOY.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Awesome.

(then)

Aww...Dang it.

THE PRINCESS

What?

THE STRONGEST BOY

I don't have any money to run away with.

THE PRINCESS

Oh.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Wait a second ... I've got an idea. Do you trust me?

THE PRINCESS

Duh.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Good.

THE PRINCESS

So RJ brings a ladder one night and she sneaks out of her tower and I...uh, The Princess goes with him into town.

THE STRONGEST BOY

I have some friends I want you to meet.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Hello...

THE WISE WARRIOR now as A Body Collector, extends her hand to THE PRINCESS who reaches out to shake it.

THE PRINCESS

Hey.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Very nice to meet you.

(beat)

What lovely fingers you have. How much?

THE PRINCESS

Excuse me?

THE WISE WARRIOR

How much for your fingers?

THE PRINCESS *(yanking her hand away)*

They're not for sale!

THE STRONGEST BOY

Two hundred a piece.

THE PRINCESS

What?

THE STRONGEST BOY

Babe, if you really want to run away, we're gonna need money.

THE PRINCESS

What about your fingers?!

THE WISE WARRIOR

I'm not interested in his fingers. I want your pretty little dainty ones.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Excuse us for a sec. We'll be right back.

(to The Princess)

Listen, you're not in your tower anymore. In the real world, things cost money. If you want to have everything handed to you on a silver platter, go back to the life you had before. But if you want to be with me, you're going to have to earn it.

THE PRINCESS

... Um . . . how?

Do you trust me? THE STRONGEST BOY

Yes. THE PRINCESS

Do you love me? THE STRONGEST BOY

Yes... THE PRINCESS

Then you'll do this. THE STRONGEST BOY

Hold up...selling your fingers doesn't sound like love to me. THE WISE WARRIOR

It was just a couple. THE PRINCESS

A couple of fingers! THE WISE WARRIOR

And then a couple more...and then a couple more...and then her wrists, her elbows, her shoulders. And every time he sold a piece of her he'd say... THE PRINCESS

We almost have enough. Just a few more sales and we can go to Miami or Chicago or wherever you want. THE STRONGEST BOY

Pretty soon he'd sold her entire body, every inch of it. And that's when he said... THE PRINCESS

I need you to find other girls. THE STRONGEST BOY

No, I'm done. THE PRINCESS

Want me to tell your parents that you've been leaving the tower? Want me to tell them what you've been doing? Want me to tell them there's nothing left of The Princess they knew? THE STRONGEST BOY

THE STRONGEST BOY (cont'd)

They'll throw you out on the street, and you'll be right back where you are right now. Only this time, you won't have me.

THE PRINCESS

You would leave me? After everything that I've done for us?

THE STRONGEST BOY

I can't stay with someone who doesn't understand how hard I'm working to make a life for us. I'm not gonna stay with someone who doesn't see how much I love her.

THE PRINCESS

You do?

THE STRONGEST BOY

You know I do.

THE PRINCESS

So, I--. The Princess. She found other girls. At school mostly. Told them they could make easy money. And then she watched RJ sell them off, bit by bit. Some got out with only a few toes missing. Others. . .

(longish beat)

Others weren't so lucky.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Just a little while longer. We almost have enough money, Babe.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Babe?! Oh, puh-leese.

THE STRONGEST BOY

One more month. Do this for me. For us.

THE PRINCESS

One more month. And the month would come and go. And I stayed. Because I loved him.

THE STRONGEST BOY

. . .I don't think that's love.

THE PRINCESS

Then what is?

THE STRONGEST BOY

If someone tells you that you have to give them something to earn their love, that's not real love. Real love doesn't make demands like that, it doesn't hurt you like that.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Your parents loved you.

THE PRINCESS

Did they? Who was there for me every night? Not my parents. Who told me I was beautiful even after. . .? It wasn't them. It was RJ.

THE STRONGEST BOY

But he was just using you! He sold your fingers!

THE PRINCESS

I know, but-. You don't understand. I'm not explaining it right.

THE WISE WARRIOR

I know what you mean ... how you can feel like that. Like someone is using you and loves you at the same time.

THE PRINCESS

Yeah?

THE WISE WARRIOR

Yeah.

THE PRINCESS

Tell us.

THE WISE WARRIOR

The Wise Warrior Part Two.

THE PRINCESS

The Duke denied everything.

THE STRONGEST BOY

And the Mother believed him.

THE PRINCESS

And The Wise Warrior ran away.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Right. So, The Wise Warrior can't stand it anymore and so one night she throws everything she can in a black garbage bag and she sneaks out of the house. She just starts running, afraid the Duke and her Mother will come after her.

THE WISE WARRIOR (cont'd)

She runs so far and so long she doesn't even know where she is anymore. The Wise Warrior, she doesn't get scared often, but she's scared now. She keeps hearing footsteps behind her.

The other actors make footsteps.

THE WISE WARRIOR

And people calling out to her.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Where you goin', baby girl?

THE PRINCESS

You lost?

THE WISE WARRIOR

The Wise Warrior is completely lost, but too afraid to say it.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Why didn't she just go to a friend's house?

THE PRINCESS

What friend? As many times as they'd moved, she didn't have anyone to go to. Keep up, bruh!

THE STRONGEST BOY

Right, sorry.

THE WISE WARRIOR

So, the girl that doesn't get scared is scared and hungry and doesn't know where she'll sleep and she is just about ready to turn around and go back to the Duke's house when out of the shadows comes a woman.

THE PRINCESS

You're lost.

THE WISE WARRIOR

No, I just...

THE PRINCESS

You are. You're lost. You're scared. You're hungry, and you don't know where you'll sleep tonight.

THE WISE WARRIOR

How do you know?

THE PRINCESS

I'm a Seer.

THE WISE WARRIOR

What's a Seer?

THE PRINCESS

Just someone who sees what other people don't.

THE WISE WARRIOR

What else do you see?

THE PRINCESS

You've run away. From someone who hurt you.

THE WISE WARRIOR

I'm alone in the middle of the city in the middle of the night holding a garbage bag of clothes. Anybody can see those things.

THE PRINCESS

What you want more than anything in the world is a place to call home. You've never had that. You've lived places. A lot of places. But you've never had a place that feels like home.

THE WISE WARRIOR

How did you--?

THE PRINCESS

I can give you that. In fact, that's what I do. I make a home for girls without a home. I make families for girls that have lost theirs. Would you like that?

THE WISE WARRIOR

The Wise Warrior isn't sure if she should trust this Seer lady. It *was* what she wanted more than anything, but something about that lady gives her the heebeegeebies.

THE PRINCESS

Listen, I'm not going to force you to come with me. You can stay out here and let the wolves get you.

THE WISE WARRIOR

There are no wolves in the city.

THE STRONGEST BOY howls loudly.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Okay! I'll come with you.

THE PRINCESS

Being a part of a family is work. You up to work?

THE WISE WARRIOR

I can work.

THE PRINCESS

Good.

THE WISE WARRIOR

The Seer led The Wise Warrior to a small shack deep in the woods. Inside are three other girls. They each greeted her unenthusiastically as they head out the door to work.

THE PRINCESS

Alright, Dolls, meet the newest member of our family.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Oh, Fresh meat. Welcome home.

THE PRINCESS

We'll give you a night to get settled in.

THE WISE WARRIOR

...The Seer said.

THE PRINCESS

You'll start work tomorrow.

THE WISE WARRIOR

When the girls got back the next morning, they looked tired. Makeup was smeared across their faces. She asked, What kind of work do you all do at night?

THE STRONGEST BOY

We have to make people smile.

THE WISE WARRIOR

That doesn't seem too bad.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Okay. Let me know what you think after tomorrow night.

THE WISE WARRIOR

The next night. The Wise Warrior went out with her new family to work. The Seer gave her a dress, did her makeup, and took her into a small bedroom in a run-down apartment, one that her mother would have surely said was too small, too dirty, and too cold. There was a twin mattress on the floor of the room.

THE PRINCESS

The clients will come in one at a time...

THE WISE WARRIOR

The Seer told her.

THE PRINCESS

All you have to do is make the clients smile, okay?

(beat)

It helps if you're smiling, honey. Let me see that smile. There's a good Doll.

The Wise Warrior eeks out a pained smile.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Did you? Make people smile?

The Wise Warrior shrugs.

THE WISE WARRIOR

One day in the first week The Wise Warrior tried to run away. But the Seer caught her.

*The actor playing the Seer slaps her hand.
And then again.*

THE PRINCESS

I hate when you girls make me hurt you- Look at me! You're family, now. And a *real family fights to stay together-* even when it hurts. But I get why you wouldn't understand that.

THE WISE WARRIOR

What's that supposed to mean?

THE PRINCESS

You ran away before. And your Mom let you. Didn't she? And do you know why she let you?
(beat) Do you?

THE WISE WARRIOR

Why?

THE PRINCESS

Because she doesn't care if you're alive or dead. She doesn't love you.

THE WISE WARRIOR

That's not true.

THE PRINCESS

Oh, she's come looking for you? She's put up fliers? It's been three months since you left home, has she tried to get in touch with you even once?

THE WISE WARRIOR

...

THE PRINCESS

Has she?

THE WISE WARRIOR

No.

THE PRINCESS

I can't hear you. Speak up.

THE WISE WARRIOR

No.

THE PRINCESS

No. She hasn't. Who gives you food to eat? Huh?

THE WISE WARRIOR

...

THE PRINCESS

Answer me, Dolly. Who feeds you?

THE WISE WARRIOR

You do.

THE PRINCESS

And who gives you a roof over your head?

THE WISE WARRIOR

You do.

THE PRINCESS

And who loves you too much to let you leave?

THE WISE WARRIOR

... You do.

THE PRINCESS

That's right. I'm more of a mother to you than your Mom ever was. I love you. That's why if you ever try to run away from me, I won't rest until I find you. We're family. And what do family's do?

THE WISE WARRIOR

...

THE PRINCESS

Families fight to stay together. Say it.

THE WISE WARRIOR

They fight to stay together.

THE PRINCESS

That's my Dolly-gal. Take the night off. No one is going to smile at a girl with a busted lip.

THE WISE WARRIOR

And so, I stayed, and stayed, and stayed.

THE PRINCESS

Like I did.

THE WISE WARRIOR

I think the same thing happened to both of us.

THE PRINCESS

They tricked us. They made us think they loved us.

THE WISE WARRIOR

But they didn't. Not really.

THE PRINCESS

But, like, when you tell your story - what the Seer did to you - I can see that's not love.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Yeah, I was thinking the same thing when you were telling your story. I can see that what RJ did to you was messed up.

THE PRINCESS

But when I think about RJ...it felt like love. It felt like he cared.

THE WISE WARRIOR

He didn't.

THE PRINCESS

And the Seer didn't love you.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Nope.

THE PRINCESS

Why couldn't we see that?

THE WISE WARRIOR

I think it's sometimes easier to believe the worst things people tell us about ourselves than to trust the voice inside that tells us it's not true.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Than to see your true worth! That's it. Look in the mirror.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Why?

THE STRONGEST BOY

Just do it.

THE PRINCESS

My fingers! I can see them again.

THE WISE WARRIOR

The painted-on smile is gone, I can see my lips!

THE STRONGEST BOY

I think it's working. The spell. To escape this maze of mirrors, you must learn to see *you* clearer.

THE PRINCESS

Tell your story to unearth...

THE WISE WARRIOR

The true value of your worth.

THE STRONGEST BOY

So...I guess that means I should--

THE PRINCESS

The Strongest Boy Part Deux

THE STRONGEST BOY

Yup, shall we pick it up from the...

THE WISE WARRIOR

Knock.

THE PRINCESS

Knock.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Knock. THE STRONGEST BOY had mustered up all his courage to stand at the man's door. A voice came from inside the house.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Who's there?

THE STRONGEST BOY

Um. It's me. The Strongest Boy in the Land. The Door opened and there stood -

THE PRINCESS

A dried up wrinkled old man with a wart on his nose?

THE STRONGEST BOY

No.

THE WISE WARRIOR

A super evil looking man with a long twisty mustache that he kept twirling with one finger?

THE STRONGEST BOY

No.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Who was it then?

THE STRONGEST BOY

Just a normal looking man.

THE PRINCESS

Normal?

THE STRONGEST BOY

Yeah. He just looked...average. Nice and kind, even.

THE PRINCESS

And what did he say?

THE STRONGEST BOY

He said...

THE WISE WARRIOR

Come in.

THE PRINCESS

That's it?

Yeah. THE STRONGEST BOY

And what did you do? THE PRINCESS

I went in. THE STRONGEST BOY

And then what? THE PRINCESS

He said... THE STRONGEST BOY

Why did you come here? THE WISE WARRIOR

THE STRONGEST BOY
THE STRONGEST BOY--. I told the man about my sick mom and my brother and how I'd heard that the man might be able to help us out.

Sure, I can help you... THE WISE WARRIOR

Said the man, looking at me, sizing me up. THE STRONGEST BOY

You're young. And you're strong. I'm old and weak. I want to borrow your strong, young body. THE WISE WARRIOR

Borrow my body? THE STRONGEST BOY

Like it's for rent? THE PRINCESS

Yes... THE WISE WARRIOR

He said... THE STRONGEST BOY

THE WISE WARRIOR

If you let me use your body for, let's say, an hour a day, I'll make sure that you and your family have all the food you need.

THE STRONGEST BOY

An hour a day didn't sound like such a long time, so I agreed. The man handed me a ... like a potion.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Drink this.

THE STRONGEST BOY

I did, and it made me sleepy but not asleep. Like I felt myself- my spirit- detach and slip out of my body. I floated up to the ceiling of the room. And from there I watched the man crawl into my skin and use my body...An hour later I guess the potion wore off because I sank back down and re-entered my body, but now there was like a cloudiness...like part of me was still floating and detached. The man drove me to the grocery store, let me buy what I wanted, and then took me home.

THE WISE WARRIOR

You know where to find me. Come back anytime.

THE STRONGEST BOY

That night I watched my mom smile for the first time in what felt like a year as my little brother ate an entire frozen pizza by himself.

THE PRINCESS (*as little brother*)

Mmm, mmm, mmmm.

THE STRONGEST BOY

And I tried to ignore the feeling that I wasn't quite as strong as I was when I woke up that morning.

THE PRINCESS

Did you go back?

THE STRONGEST BOY

Whenever the groceries ran out. It was always the same. Knock, Knock, Knock, Potion, Leave my body, and then...After the first time there were always other men. Sometimes there were other Strong Boys like me. Floating. Watching. But every time I came back into my body, I felt...even- I don't know how to say it- even less there, more detached. Weaker. Like everytime the man used my body, it got a little cloudy or foggy, a little more invisible. Until I felt like I was invisible, until I felt like. . .

THE PRINCESS

Nothing?

THE STRONGEST BOY

Yeah.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Like what you see when you look in the mirror?

THE STRONGEST BOY

Yeah.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Just like I see myself as a toy doll.

THE PRINCESS

And I see a bunch of price tags and barcodes.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Why didn't you tell anyone?

THE STRONGEST BOY

Tell anyone about what?

THE WISE WARRIOR

What was going on? About your family? About the man?

THE STRONGEST BOY

Why didn't you?

THE WISE WARRIOR

...I did. I told my Mom about what the Duke was doing. But she didn't believe me. I guess I didn't tell anyone about the Seer because...I don't know. If the person who was supposed to love me the most didn't believe me, I figured no one else would either.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Just because one person didn't believe you, doesn't mean someone else won't! I believe you.

THE PRINCESS

I believe you too.

The Wise Warrior breaks down a little. Then a lot.

THE WISE WARRIOR

But it was my Mom! Why didn't she believe me?

THE STRONGEST BOY

I don't know. I'm sorry. She should have believed you.

He comforts The Wise Warrior.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Why didn't you tell anyone Princess?

THE PRINCESS

I didn't want anyone to know, I guess. I guess I was ashamed. And. . .I thought people would hate me.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Why would they hate you?

THE PRINCESS

For...everything I did.

THE WISE WARRIOR

I hate RJ, not you.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Yeah, same.

THE WISE WARRIOR

So, Strongest Boy- why didn't you tell?

THE STRONGEST BOY

I thought...I think I thought I could handle it on my own. I thought that was what I supposed to do. Be the man of the house. Provide for my family.

THE PRINCESS

But you're a kid! That's too much for a kid.

THE STRONGEST BOY

I know, but I...I wanted to be strong enough.

THE WISE WARRIOR

I think you're incredibly strong.

THE PRINCESS

Me too. But...Some things you need adults to help with.

THE WISE WARRIOR

I think sometimes the strongest person in the land is the one who has the strength to ask for help.

THE PRINCESS

Whoa. That's deep.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Why do you think they call her The Wise Warrior? Keep up, bruh!

THE WISE WARRIOR

So, if you didn't tell anybody, how did you end up here? In the maze?

THE STRONGEST BOY

I kept getting weaker and weaker. I got so weak I couldn't lift my arm to answer a question in class. So weak I couldn't speak when friends asked me how I was. I guess everyone just assumed I was tired or moody or being a quote unquote typical teenager. And then one day I was so weak I didn't even have the strength to keep my eyes open at lunch. I fell asleep. And when I woke up the lunch lady was standing over me.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Lunch is over. You gotta go to class, hun.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Okay.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Are you alright?

THE STRONGEST BOY

I'm... okay.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Come with me.

THE PRINCESS

And that's how you ended up in the mirror maze?

THE STRONGEST BOY

She took me to the counselor and the counselor asked me a bunch of questions, and then she brought me here. What about y'all?

THE PRINCESS

One of the girls from school that I tried to introduce to RJ told her mom about it, and her mom called the cops.

THE WISE WARRIOR

You go to jail?

THE PRINCESS

No, I came here. Wherever here is.

THE STRONGEST BOY

What about you, Wise Warrior?

THE WISE WARRIOR

A teacher.

THE PRINCESS

You were in school when you were living with the Seer?

THE WISE WARRIOR

Absolutely. I had perfect attendance. She wouldn't let us miss school for anything. Said she wasn't going to have any social workers showing up at our house and breaking up her family.

THE STRONGEST BOY

So how did the teacher know?

THE WISE WARRIOR

My hair.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Your hair?

THE WISE WARRIOR

And my nails. And my makeup. And my clothes and my purse. She said,

THE PRINCESS

I like your style. Especially your new purse.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Thank you.

THE PRINCESS

I have been looking at that bag for a while, but I can't bring myself to spend that much money on a purse.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Yeah, it was a gift.

THE PRINCESS

Nice! Was it your birthday recently?

THE WISE WARRIOR

Yup. Last week.

THE PRINCESS

I thought I saw on the roster that your birthday was in March.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Early birthday present.

THE PRINCESS

Six months early?

THE WISE WARRIOR

Half birthday present.

THE PRINCESS

I'd like for you to talk to someone, if you wouldn't mind.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Am I in trouble? I can't get in trouble.

THE PRINCESS

No, you're not, but why do you say you can't get in trouble?

THE WISE WARRIOR

Nothing. Just...my mom won't like it.

THE PRINCESS

I see.

THE WISE WARRIOR

The teacher called a social worker, I talked to the social worker, social worker brought me here.

THE STRONGEST BOY

So, this is a place for kids like us.

THE PRINCESS

Seems like it.

THE STRONGEST BOY

But...how do we get out?

THE WISE WARRIOR

The mirrors say we have to see our true worth.

THE PRINCESS

It seemed to help when we realized that what we thought of as love wasn't really love. We started to see more of who we really are.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Okay, but what does that do for me? I did what I did for love, but it was real love, for my Mom and my brother.

A beat while they think.

THE WISE WARRIOR

What thought keeps you up at night?

THE STRONGEST BOY

What do you mean?

THE WISE WARRIOR

So. The thought that keeps me up at night is...

She starts to tear up. This is hard to admit.

THE WISE WARRIOR

The thought that keeps me up at night is that no one will ever fight to hold onto me as much as the Seer...Brenda- that was her name- no one will ever fight for me as much as Brenda did.

THE STRONGEST BOY

That's not true! I'll fight for you!

THE PRINCESS

If Brenda was here I'd fight *her* for you!

THE WISE WARRIOR

Ha, thanks.

THE PRINCESS

My worst fear is the same- that after what happened. . .no one will love me. That RJ is the only person who will ever have loved me...even though I know that wasn't love.

THE STRONGEST BOY

There are so many people who are going to love you! Really love you.

THE WISE WARRIOR

So, what keeps you up at night?

THE STRONGEST BOY

. . .That. . .that it was my fault. That I did it to myself.

THE WISE WARRIOR

You didn't.

THE STRONGEST BOY

I'm not like you two. I didn't get tricked into doing what I did. I chose it.

THE WISE WARRIOR

You didn't choose it. You didn't. Did you choose for your Mom to get sick?

THE STRONGEST BOY

No.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Did you choose for your little brother to go hungry?

THE STRONGEST BOY

No.

THE WISE WARRIOR

And, what about you Princess, did you choose to have parents who were never there?

THE PRINCESS

No.

THE WISE WARRIOR

No! When the choice is to survive by any means necessary or not survive that's not a choice. Trust me, I didn't choose to have a mom who refused to believe her new husband was abusing me. We didn't choose to do what we did. We were trying to get what we needed to survive and some really bad people took advantage of us.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Okay.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Do you believe that?

THE PRINCESS

A little.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Kinda.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Repeat after me. I didn't choose this.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Seriously?

THE WISE WARRIOR

Yes, seriously.

THE PRINCESS

And I thought I'd be the cheerleader in the group.

THE WISE WARRIOR

I think if we have any hope of getting out of here, we're all going to have to take turns being the cheerleader. Your day will come. And yours too, Strongest Boy.

THE STRONGEST BOY

What are we repeating again?

THE WISE WARRIOR

I didn't choose this.

THE PRINCESS/THE STRONGEST BOY

I didn't choose this.

THE WISE WARRIOR

This wasn't my fault.

THE PRINCESS/THE STRONGEST BOY

This wasn't my fault.

THE WISE WARRIOR

I am worthy of love just as I am.

Silence.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Say it!

THE PRINCESS/THE STRONGEST BOY

I am worthy of love just as I am.

THE WISE WARRIOR

How was that?

THE PRINCESS

I mean. . .

THE STRONGEST BOY

Ummm...

THE WISE WARRIOR

Just say it.

THE PRINCESS

It sucked.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Good. We'll keep saying it until it doesn't.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Do we have to?

THE WISE WARRIOR

If you want to get out of here we do.

THE PRINCESS

Gahhhhh.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Hey, do you realize how lucky we are to be here? Yeah, it's a creepy maze of mirrors. Yeah, we have to say cheesy things until we actually mean them. But if it weren't for a lunch lady, a counselor, a friend, her mom, a teacher, and a social worker, we'd still be out there.

*The Princess and THE STRONGEST BOY
release resistance.*

THE WISE WARRIOR

Think about how many people like us are still out there trapped. Think what they would give to be here instead.

THE PRINCESS

Fine, fine. You're right.

THE STRONGEST BOY

Shall we try that last line again?

THE WISE WARRIOR

This time with feeling.

ALL

I am worthy of love just as I am!

THE PRINCESS

Still sucks.

THE WISE WARRIOR

Yup. But just keep saying it. Just keep on.

END OF PLAY.