

THE SHOE SHINE

an original screenplay by

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A popular singer with a worldwide following is confronted with an incriminating photograph at the press conference announcing the release of his first Christian album.

FADE IN:

INT. LOBBY OF LUXURY HOTEL IN DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - MORNING

The large lobby of the luxury hotel is bustling.

INT. CORNER OF LOBBY OF LUXURY HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

WILLY, 65, African American, is dressed sharply and wearing a top hat. He is overflowing with personality and soliciting customers, standing next to his shoe shine stand with a sign that says "Willy's Shoe Shines". TWO BUSINESS WOMEN walk in front of Willy. Willy tips his hat and gives a small bow.

WILLY

Top of the morning to you ladies.

The ladies smile and continue walking. A gray haired BUSINESSMAN, 70, follows.

WILLY (CONT'D)

Good morning young man. How bout a shine? The best shoe shine in the City of Angels.

Businessman smiles and raises a hand signaling "no". A young ATTORNEY, 32, approaches the shoe shine stand.

WILLY (CONT'D)

Now we're talkin. Step on up here son.

Attorney takes a seat on the shoe shine stand.

ATTORNEY

How's it goin?

WILLY

Better than I deserve, thank the Lord...better than I deserve.

INT. LOBBY OF HOTEL - MORNING

JASON, 25, and SAMANTHA, 30, professional, are walking through the lobby toward the elevators, each carrying two cups of coffee. Willy can be seen in the distance shining shoes.

JASON

What's wrong with the coffee here?

SAMANTHA

Nothing. This is what Jennifer wants. There are two basic rules to being Jennifer's assistant. Rule number one. Don't ask questions.

JASON

And rule number two is remember rule number one?

SAMANTHA

See! You've already figured it out.

Jason and Samantha arrive at the elevators.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

She's in a good mood today.

JASON

Because of Ryan?

The elevator door open.

INT. ELEVATOR OF HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

SAMANTHA

Oh yeah. She gets to let the whole world know she's the one who signed him to Salis Records.

JASON

Will people really care?

SAMANTHA

His cross over to Christian music is one of the biggest events in the music industry and she's gonna be the one who gets the credit. It all starts this morning.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Elevator doors open and Samantha and Jason exit. They are walking down the hallway toward Room 1680.

JASON

I heard he wrote the title song for the album...wrote the whole song in two hours...right after he became a Christian.

SAMANTHA

He did. Have you heard it?

JASON

Not yet.

They arrive at Room 1680 and Samantha knocks on the door.

SAMANTHA

You gotta hear it...it's amazing.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - CONTINUOUS

The large suite on the 16th floor has full length windows with a view of downtown Los Angeles. The room is filled with tension. RYAN, 34, covered in tattoos and with short hair, some of which is bleached, is standing in front of a full length mirror. ISABEL, 40, is in charge of Ryan's appearance. She is having Ryan try on various edgy jackets.

MARK, 45, Ryan's controlling agent, is on the telephone pacing in front of the full length windows.

JENNIFER, 40, hard-charging A personality, is the record label's vice president. She is holding an oversized I-pad, searching the internet.

Jason and Samantha enter the room, coffees in hand.

JENNIFER

Finally!

She grabs a coffee from Samantha. Jason distributes the other coffees.

SAMANTHA

What's wrong?

JENNIFER

This picture was posted just a few moments ago.

Jennifer turns the I-Pad so Samantha can see the photo. [We don't see it]. They are shocked with disgust and disbelief.

SAMANTHA

Is that Ryan?

Jennifer shrugs. They both look at Ryan who is oblivious.

JENNIFER

His agent's on the phone right now to find out who posted it.

SAMANTHA

If it's him...oh, my gosh. He just signed with us!

JENNIFER

I know. I know. It's bad.

Isabel pulls out some black stylish boots for Ryan to put on, as he continues to stand in front of the mirror.

ISABEL

Let's use these...hold on.

Isabel picks up the phone in the room and makes a call.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

(into the phone)

Yes, can you send someone up to shine a pair of shoes for us. We need it done right away. Yes, Room 1680. Thank you.

Mark ends his call.

MARK

Ryan.

Mark harshly motions for Ryan. Jennifer also approaches.

MARK (CONT'D)

Ok. The post was made by Joey Denison. He lives in Tyler, Texas. His brother was Bruce Denison. Any of this ring a bell?

Ryan is deep in thought about the past haunting his future.

RYAN

No.

MARK

They called him Sticker in high school.

RYAN

Oh yeah. I remember Sticker. Sticker posted this picture?

MARK

No. His brother did.

JENNIFER

Why?

MARK

Because Ryan has 100 million followers. Oh, and he also told me that Sticker knew about all the bad things Ryan did in high school, that Ryan's going to hell and shouldn't be making a Christian record. Something like that...you get the idea.

RYAN

I need to talk to Sticker.

MARK
He's dead. His brother said he died
five years ago.

JENNIFER
So this...this is all hearsay?

MARK
Exactly.

JENNIFER
(looking at Ryan)
Is that you in the picture?

Ryan is taken off guard with her frankness.

RYAN
Ma'am? I...

Mark interrupts.

MARK
Hold on...hold on...don't answer
that.
(looking at Jennifer)
Let's talk.

Jennifer and Mark move away from Ryan to talk privately.
There is a knock on the door. Jason opens the door and Willy
enters, smiling ear to ear, holding a rusty toolbox.

WILLY
Somebody here needs a shine.

Isabel hurries up to Willy.

ISABEL
Thank you. Thank you. You're a
life saver! Over here.

Isabel directs Willy to Ryan who is standing, staring out
the window. As Willy approaches, Ryan turns around.

WILLY
I'm here to help you young man and
make those shoes shine like a silver
dollar. Have a seat right here.

Willy gets a chair for Ryan to sit in, while Willy pulls up
another chair facing Ryan. They both sit and Willy opens
his rusty toolbox to set up shop.

RYAN

(looking at his shoes)
They look ok to me, but she wants
everything to be perfect.

WILLY

Perfect. Perfect. Perfect. That's
what the world expects. Perfection.
Everything has to be perfect.

Willy rolls up the cuffs of Ryan's edgy pants.

RYAN

Ain't that the truth.

WILLY

Are all these people here for you?

Ryan nods.

WILLY (CONT'D)

You got a lot of people trying to
make you perfect for this world.

Willy starts applying some black paste to one of the shoes
with his worn fingers.

RYAN

Yes I do.

WILLY

You know none of us are perfect.

RYAN

You're not?

Willy laughs and mumbles to himself as he applies black paste
to the other shoe.

WILLY

I don't care how many people they
bring up to this room to give you
what they think you need, you'll
never be perfect. Not in the eyes
of this world.

Samantha approaches Ryan.

SAMANTHA

I'm supposed to find out if you've
picked out your verse?

RYAN

For what?

SAMANTHA

Your autographs. The company likes you to include a reference to a bible verse when you give your autograph.

Ryan hesitates.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

I'll find you one... or I'll find you a couple and you can choose the one you like. Something about strength, to go along with the name of your album. Would that work?

RYAN

Sure.

Samantha leaves.

WILLY

Now you've got to have the perfect verse! Good thing God loves us just as we are, warts and all. He knows we're not perfect. But He gives us a way to become perfect in His eyes.

RYAN

I figured that out a few weeks ago.

WILLY

Praise God.

Jennifer and Mark are in an intense conversation in the corner of the suite.

MARK

I know you don't like it, but what's the alternative? The album tanks, your company loses millions, and you and me get the blame.

Jennifer hesitates and against her judgment reluctantly nods.

JENNIFER

Ok.

Jennifer motions for Samantha and Jason standing nearby.

MARK

We need you guys to start making calls and find someone to come forward and say the picture was of them, not Ryan.

JENNIFER

It needs to be someone Ryan's age who looks like him. The picture is not real clear so it doesn't have to be his twin.

MARK

Offer them whatever it takes.

JENNIFER

And they'll need to sign a nondisclosure agreement.

Mark and Jennifer approach Ryan and ignore Willy, who is still shining Ryan's shoes.

WILLY

Yes siree, we can't do it alone. He's with us morning, noon, and night.

MARK

(to Ryan)

We've got it taken care of. We'll have a guy, I don't know who yet, but somebody's gonna say it was them in the photo. So don't worry.

JENNIFER

The media is going to ask you about it this morning and you just tell them it wasn't you.

MARK

Don't linger on the topic. Address it once and then move to the album.

RYAN

Are you sure that's how you guys want me to play this?

MARK

There's too much to lose. You could be canceled. This'll blow over.

Mark and Jennifer move away from Ryan and start whispering among themselves. Willy is buffing each shoe.

WILLY

You're being tested, son.

RYAN

I don't want to let people down. It's a big big business.

WILLY

God is bigger. Nothing He can't handle. Nothing.

Willy whips the cloth he was using to shine the shoes.

RYAN

Look at that shine.

WILLY

Best shine in the City of Angels.

Willy gathers his tool kit. He wipes his hands with his cloth and shakes hands with Ryan.

WILLY (CONT'D)

Remember, nobody's perfect. The truth shall set you free.

Willy winks and once Ryan turns away, Willy is gone.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - MORNING

Ryan is walking down the hallway with his entourage - Mark, Jennifer, Samantha, and Isabel. Jason follows, on the phone.

MARK

(to Ryan)

Remember. Deny it and move on.

Samantha hands Ryan a piece of paper.

SAMANTHA

Your verse...for your autographs.

Jason runs up to Mark and Ryan.

JASON

We found somebody. Costs us ten thousand, but he's glad to do it.

Mark is ecstatic the problem is solved.

MARK

Perfect. Ten k, that's a drop in the bucket. Ok, Ryan. It's all taken care of. Let's do this!

INT. SMALL BALLROOM OF HOTEL - MORNING

The small ballroom is packed with media, cameras, and fans. Ryan enters to much applause and sits behind a table with a microphone. A banner with the name of the new album "Invisible Strength" produced by Salis Records is the backdrop. Jennifer is on the stage sitting next to Ryan.

JENNIFER

We are so excited this day is finally here. Ryan has had a remarkable transition in his life in the past few weeks and Sails Records is so pleased to welcome him into our family. I can't remember when an artist as popular as Ryan has crossed over to Christian music. You're going to love his new album. Let me stop talking and let you hear from the man himself.

RYAN

Thank you Jennifer. She's right. My life has changed dramatically in the last month. When I made the decision to follow Jesus I was filled with so much emotion I went home and immediately started writing this song Invisible Strength that's the title song for the album. The lyrics, the melody, it all just came to me so clearly. I've never experienced anything like it before. I hope my fans who probably aren't used to this type of music, will enjoy it and know that it comes straight from my heart.

A REPORTER in the crowd stands. Here it comes! Jennifer points to him, giving him permission to talk.

REPORTER

Ryan, was that you in the picture posted on social media this morning?

Jennifer looks at Ryan. Ryan sees Mark staring at him on the first row. Ryan prepares to answer. He looks down and sees a distorted reflection of himself in his shiny shoes. He looks up and sees Willy in the back giving him a nod.

RYAN

(soft, then louder)

Yes. That was me.

Gasp in the audience.

RYAN (CONT'D)

It was taken my senior year of high school, many years ago when I was a fool. I apologize to anyone who is offended by the picture. I'm not a perfect person.

Furious, Mark gets up from the front row and exits.

RYAN (CONT'D)

None of us are. I'm just thankful
for the grace God gives us in Jesus
and for God rescuing me from my past.
I hope each of you will forgive me.

Ryan sees Willy in the back of the room smiling, a golden glow surrounding his profile. A moment later Ryan looks again and Willy is gone.

CHYRON: TWO MONTHS LATER

INT. CORNER OF HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Willy is at his shoe shine stand soliciting customers. AL, professional, 32, wearing ear buds, walks nearby.

WILLY

Ready for a shine young man?

Al removes his ear buds.

AL

What?

WILLY

You ready for a shine? Best shine
in the City of Angels.

AL

Ah, why not?

Al takes a seat on the shoe stand.

WILLY

What you listenin to?

AL

"Invisible Strength". You ever heard
it? It's been number one for like
three weeks now.

WILLY

Yes sir! I've heard it and seen it.

Al sees Ryan's picture on the shoe stand with Ryan's autograph and "Willy, you shine in the darkness! Jer. 1:7-8".

FADE TO BLACK