

ADOPTING FAITH

20-DE06-W31

Logline: When a recent widow's adoption of foster kids proves more than she can handle, her trust in God is shaken.

INT. PERRINE'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

PERRINE (late 30s) walks through her house, which is as well-kept but unassuming as she is. She's on a video call on her phone with MADDIE (mid-40s). Maddie has a big smile on her face on the screen; Perrine, a more anxious smile.

MADDIE

It's the big day! Are you excited?
Nervous? Pumped?

PERRINE

Distracted.

Perrine puts protective plugs in the wall sockets. Maddie chuckles.

MADDIE

Looks like it. The kids are 12 and
14; they aren't going to be putting
forks in the sockets.

Perrine sits on the couch next to a tall bookshelf. Sets the rest of the plugs down on the coffee table.

PERRINE

These kids might. I wish John was
here.

MADDIE

I know, sweetie. My brother was a
man of his word. You made this
decision together, so he'll be
there with you.

PERRINE

Can he discipline them from heaven?

MADDIE

You'll be great. God's got you.

Perrine looks over to the bookshelf. Jenga sits atop a large book on one shelf. She grabs a book from another shelf.

PERRINE

God does seem to want this to
happen. The first time I mustered
the strength to get out of the
house after the funeral, I was
mindlessly wandering the bookstore.
I look down and -

She looks at the book, it's about a foster family.

PERRINE (CONT'D)
He's throwing foster adoption in
front of me yet again.

A KNOCK at the front door. A panicked/excited look on
Perrine's face.

PERRINE (CONT'D)
They're here! Gotta go! Love you,
Maddie!

MADDIE
Have a great day! Love you!

Perrine hangs up the call and walks to the front door.

RUTH (30s), an overworked social worker, stands with Latina
siblings JEREMIAH (12) and GABRIELLA (14).

PERRINE
Hi Gabriella! Hi Jeremiah! Come in!

They walk in, each carrying a tattered bag of their
belongings. The kids are quiet and polite, giving her a
smile.

PERRINE (CONT'D)
I have lunch ready for us.

INT. PERRINE'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

The kids sit at the kitchen table. Perrine sets a tray of
taco shells and fixings in the center.

PERRINE
You said tacos are your favorite!

They are still reserved.

PERRINE (CONT'D)
Go ahead. Dig in!

The kids attack the food like it's their last meal.

PERRINE (CONT'D)
Jeremiah, I bought Jenga for you.

JEREMIAH
Thank you.

GABRIELLA
You just like to knock it down.

Jeremiah shoots her a look to be quiet. Perrine tries to connect.

PERRINE

That is kinda the most fun part.
Gabriella, I got my old Nancy Drew
books I was telling you about from
my mom and dad's house.

GABRIELLA

Thank you.

PERRINE

You're welcome. They're all over
there.

She points to the bookshelf of games and books. Ruth grabs her purse.

RUTH

Ok, kids, I'm leaving now. Call me
if you need to.

JEREMIAH AND GABRIELLA

Bye, Ms. Ruth.

The kids keep eating. Perrine walks Ruth to the door.

RUTH

You call me if you need anything,
too. See you at the support group.
And lean on your family. You're not
alone.

Perrine nods confidently.

PERRINE

Will do. I'm feeling good. I've
prayed about this and I'm ready.

INT. PERRINE'S HOME - PERRINE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Super: End of Week One

Perrine is on her laptop with headphones on, having a virtual parent-teacher conference. She sits up tall with the blind confidence of a new parent.

TEACHER

(on computer)

I'm concerned about Jeremiah. He
refuses to read out loud in class.

(MORE)

TEACHER (CONT'D)

I've tried a few different tactics
with him.

Perrine is quick to defend.

PERRINE

You know that we just -

TEACHER

I'm aware of the home situation.
But his defiance is getting
aggressive. He threw a book.

Perrine is determined.

PERRINE

I will handle it. Thank you.

She closes the laptop and walks out of the room.

INT. PERRINE'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jeremiah plays a video game on the couch. Perrine goes over
to him. She towers over him.

PERRINE

Hey, buddy, any problems in school
today you want to talk about?

He flinches in fear. She quickly understands his reaction and
sits down next to him. She's loving and soothing.

PERRINE (CONT'D)

I'm here to help.

He doesn't respond.

PERRINE (CONT'D)

Your teacher says you aren't
participating in class.

Jeremiah breathes deeply, more like grunts. Perrine is
surprised, but holds firm.

PERRINE (CONT'D)

What if we write a list of reasons
you don't like reading out loud and
we can see how to make it better?

An anger spreads on his face. He growls.

JEREMIAH

I don't want to!

He gets up and stomps to his room.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Super: End of Week Two

At a baseball diamond, Gabriella pitches softball. As Perrine cheers her on, Gabriella isn't sure what to make of it.

A LOUD MOM cheers on the PLAYER at bat. Gabriella watches the Player shake her head at the Mom. Gabriella tries to play cool like her. But a tiny smile turns on her face, secretly happy to finally have someone supporting her. She covers it with the ball.

From the stands, Perrine sees this small milestone. Smiles to herself. The Loud Mom charges over to her, Jeremiah and an OVERWEIGHT BOY in tow, dirty from a fall and crying.

LOUD MOM

Excuse me. Is this your kid?

Perrine is thrown by the Loud Mom's aggressiveness.

PERRINE

Um.. uh.. Yeah. What's going on?

LOUD MOM

He called my son fat and then pushed him. That's called bullying, you know!

PERRINE

Jeremiah, what happened?

LOUD MOM

I just told you. And I recorded it. Want me to share it?

Perrine gets red in the face. Turns to Jeremiah.

PERRINE

Let's go have a talk.

Loud Mom and son walk back to the stands. Perrine walks Jeremiah toward the parking lot. He starts his angry grunts.

PERRINE (CONT'D)

Did yu push that boy?

Only grunts in response. She opens her car, rolls down all the windows.

PERRINE (CONT'D)

Get in.

Jeremiah gets in the front passenger seat. She puts the child lock on and closes the door.

PERRINE (CONT'D)

You're going to spend the rest of the game watching from the car, alone.

She walks closer to the game, but still close enough to the car. She cheers for Gabriella. Jeremiah loses it and starts SCREAMING! Reaches over and HONKS the horn. Hits the seats.

Gabriella looks from the field. Everyone watching the game looks over. The Loud Mom shakes her head. Perrine rushes over to the car. Unlocks it.

PERRINE (CONT'D)

Jeremiah, I'm right here. I was only fifteen feet away.

He runs out of the car, screaming.

JEREMIAH

Don't lock me up! Don't lock me up!

PERRINE

I'm sorry. I'm right here!

He runs toward the field. The crowd reacts, some ready to run, others ready to take action. Perrine chases after him.

PERRINE (CONT'D)

Jeremiah! Come back!

He charges at Loud Mom's son. She grabs her son, holding him close, away from Jeremiah.

LOUD MOM

Get control of your son!

Gabriella runs off the field to Jeremiah. He stops screaming, but sobs and grunts loudly. Gabriella rubs his back.

Everyone continues to stare at Perrine. She pulls out her phone and dials. Ruth answers the video call.

PERRINE

Ruth!

Jeremiah lets out another scream, escapes Gabriella's hold, runs onto the field. Players run from him.

RUTH (O.S.)
Is that Jeremiah?

Perrine runs to the field as she talks.

PERRINE
Yes. I put him in a time out.

RUTH (O.S.)
No! We told you his attachment
issues. Time outs aren't good. They
may send him over the edge.

PERRINE
So I see! You didn't tell me this
would happen!

Gabriella walks Jeremiah off the field. He's finally calming.

INT. PERRINE'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Super: End of Week Three

Jeremiah is engrossed in his video game on the couch. Perrine
walks in the front door.

PERRINE
Where's your sister?

Without a word, he points to their room.

PERRINE (CONT'D)
I'll get Gabriella and we're going
to have a family meeting.

JEREMIAH
With Abigail, too?

PERRINE
Who's Abigail?

JEREMIAH
From the group home.

INT. PERRINE'S HOME - OUTSIDE KIDS' BEDROOM - DAY

Laughter from the other side of the door. Perrine knocks on
the door. Gabriella and Abigail shush each other.

GABRIELLA
Um.... wait a minute.

PERRINE

Do you have a friend over? You need to get permission before having anyone over.

Gabriella opens the door; she's a little off. ABIGAIL (18) sits on the edge of the bed, eyes glazed, breathing slowly.

PERRINE (CONT'D)

Your friend needs to go.

Perrine looks at Abigail.

PERRINE (CONT'D)

Wait, how old are you?

Abigail gets obstinate. Her speech is slow.

ABIGAIL

How old are you?

PERRINE

You need to leave. I want to have a family meeting.

GABRIELLA

Well, we're not a family, so... we'll talk later.

Abigail laughs. Then slips off the bed. An empty bottle of vodka is on the bed. Gabriella tries to shut the door. Perrine pushes into the room.

PERRINE

Alcohol?! You're only 14!
(to Abigail)
Get up and get out of my house!

Abigail doesn't move. Doesn't stir at all.

GABRIELLA

Don't yell at her! Abigail, let's go to your house.

Still no movement from Abigail. Gabriella grabs her arm. Dead weight. Perrine kneels down, turns Abigail over. Passed out.

PERRINE

Get my phone! Call 9-1-1!

INT. FOSTER AGENCY OFFICE - DAY

Perrine is at the agency, talks to Ruth. She's frazzled.

PERRINE

I need to disrupt the adoption.

Ruth is a little stern. She can't lose another placement.

RUTH

You know this acting out is from the trauma. These kids have been in the system for three years. Seen their mom abused. This is why we had you attend the sessions before the placement. To prepare you.

PERRINE

Yeah, well, knowing something in your head and experiencing it real life are very different things.

Ruth changes tactic and is more calm.

RUTH

The first time I met you, I could feel the love you have to give. Love that can help heal. These kids think they're unlovable. So they don't know what to do when someone shows them love. They push back. They test limits. Have a little faith.

PERRINE

A little faith. That's what got me into this mess in the first place.

Perrine walks out.

INT. PERRINE'S CAR - DAY

Perrine sits in her car in the parking lot of the foster agency. On her phone on a video call with Maddie, upset.

PERRINE

It's not working. Not for the kids. Not without John. This would be so much easier if he was here.

MADDIE

Even if he was, those kids would still be who they are, needing you.

PERRINE

But with his - with your guys' -
childhood, he'd could have related
to them better.

MADDIE

Maybe so. But you empathized with
John. Loved him when he had a hard
time trusting and accepting love.
You have experience loving someone
with a traumatic past.

PERRINE

I guess.

MADDIE

You're scared. I get it. You had so
much faith about this before. Faith
and fear don't mix. You have to
choose one.

PERRINE

I had faith He wanted us to be
parents; not sure about me doing
this alone. I just got it wrong.

Perrine hangs up and starts her car.

INT. PERRINE'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Perrine walks in the door. Jeremiah sits on the floor by the
coffee table. He places the last pieces on the Jenga tower.
He looks over to Perrine and smiles. Then SMASHES the Jenga.
Pieces go flying everywhere.

Gabriella lays on the couch next to the bookshelf. She
quickly tucks a Nancy Drew book under the cushion. Starts
texting on her cell phone.

PERRINE

How did you get your phone back?

GABRIELLA

You think I can't pick a lock?

PERRINE

We're having a fam -. A meeting.

Perrine stops. She sees a glass, dripping in condensation, on
the large book on the table. She rushes over and picks up the
glass. Snaps at the kids.

PERRINE (CONT'D)
Come on! Can't you respect
anything?

She wipes off the ring of water from the book.

GABRIELLA
Why are you freaking out? It's just
some old book.

PERRINE
It's a family bible that's been
passed down from my great-
grandparents.

She walks to the kitchen, taking breaths to calm down. Sets
the glass down. Comes back into the living room.

Gabriella opens the bible. A family tree is on the first
page. Jeremiah looks. Calm for the first time in a while.

GABRIELLA
What is this?

PERRINE
It's a family tree. All the names
from my great-grandparents down to
me.

Jeremiah's hand traces the names. Reads out loud.

JEREMIAH
Perrine Elizabeth. Jonathan
Matthew.

Perrine tears up on hearing John's name.

JEREMIAH (CONT'D)
Jeremiah Luis. Gabriella Rosalie.

Perrine is taken aback. Goes over to them. Sits and looks at
the bible. The kids names are written under hers.

GABRIELLA
Why are our names in here?

PERRINE
John and I were reading and praying
the day we decided to adopt you. He
must've written them in then.

Perrine looks at the kids, her demeanor shifted.

PERRINE (CONT'D)
You were already family.

She looks them both in the eye as she addresses them.

PERRINE (CONT'D)
Gabriella, you are loved. Jeremiah,
you are loved.

The kids look at each other, not sure what to do. Perrine stands up with a big smile. She's suddenly cheerful.

PERRINE (CONT'D)
You are worthy of being loved. And
I love you. You don't have to feel
it. You don't have to say it if you
don't want to. But there's nothing
you can do about the fact that I
love you.

Gabriella hands Perrine her phone.

GABRIELLA
Ok.

Jeremiah cleans up his Jenga pieces. His eyes are glassy from emotion.

Perrine walks to the kitchen. After she's gone, Jeremiah scrambles to sit next to Gabriella. They hug each other, smiling.

INT. PERRINE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

Perrine walks in.

PERRINE
Ok, I get it. Sorry I doubted.

Looks at a picture of her and JOHN with a funeral card tucked into it. She looks up.

PERRINE (CONT'D)
You were with me through that, I
know you'll be with me and my kids.

FADE OUT.