

ZARA & LUTHER SIDE

4.

LUTHER

It's not that.

ZARA

What is it?

LUTHER

(pause; after thinking) Nothing.

ZARA

Start ==> How long have we been married?

LUTHER

Is this a test?

ZARA

It's a question.

LUTHER

Five years.

ZARA

And three months. And before that we dated for...?

LUTHER

Three years.

ZARA

Congratulations, you passed.

LUTHER

I thought it wasn't a test.

ZARA

Whenever your wife asks a question out of nowhere, it's a test.

LUTHER

And your reason?

ZARA

To make a point. For five years and three months, and three years before that, you have been the personification of a secret. You're a secret with skin. Sometimes I have no idea what you're thinking, what's going on in your head.

LUTHER

Sometimes it's nothing.

ZARA

Sometimes I don't believe you.

LUTHER

You think I'm lying?

ZARA

I think you're hiding. You are the most honest man I've ever known -- more honest than my own father, and he was a saint as far as I'm concerned. I don't want to lose you to your own mind.

LUTHER

You're not.

ZARA

I don't need reassurance. I need us to be able to breathe away from the past -- things we had no control over and things that will never happen again, God-willing. Things that should have never happened in the first place. We used to have fun. We used to go out to places, make appearances. Things were normal.

LUTHER

We still go out.

ZARA

I'm not talking about the drive-thru, Luther.

LUTHER

This is it, right, our last day? That's what you said -- that's what you want.

ZARA

I'd like it to be that way, yes.

LUTHER

And you get what you want.

ZARA

You say it like it's a bad thing. You are my husband -- I serve you and you serve me.

LUTHER

For that reason, tomorrow should be fun. We'll be done with this and everything can continue on peacefully. We can go back to being us.

ZARA

Good, because you know it's not a lot of time before --

LUTHER

I know.

ZARA

I'm happy to hear you say that. Maybe - or not - but, maybe we can go to that garden we used to go to when we first met. It was where --

LUTHER

I remember.

ZARA

It's where we had our first date.

LUTHER

Second.

ZARA

What?

LUTHER

The garden. The garden you're talking about -- that was our second date, not our first.

ZARA

(laughs) No...it was the first.

LUTHER

The first was the movies. I took you to the movies. Do you not --

ZARA

That wasn't our first date.

LUTHER

It was. Do you not -- we went to see --

ZARA

For it to be the first date, both of us would have needed to know it was a date.

END ==> This makes him smile. An honest smile.

LUTHER

The garden.

Doctor. LUTHER

How are we feeling today? JOELLE

Great. ZARA

Luther? JOELLE

But he's not really paying attention.

Earth to Luther. JOELLE

He returns to reality.

Great. Like she said. LUTHER

JOELLE
I like to hear that. Let's start how we always do. Eyes closed, intentional silence, allowing ourselves to breathe --

ZARA
START ==> Is there any way we could skip the exercises today?

JOELLE
I -- is there a specific reason?

ZARA
Luther and I have something we'd like to discuss with you.

JOELLE
Of course. What is it?

Zara gestures for Luther to occupy the seat next to her. He obliges.

ZARA
We'd like this to be our final session.

Joelle looks at Luther. He looks down.

JOELLE

Oh. Is that what we want?

ZARA

It's nothing personal --

JOELLE

I understand that.

ZARA

We just think it's time to move on. From everything.

Zara takes Luther's hand.

JOELLE

And by move on --

ZARA

Yes?

JOELLE

Do you mean forget?

Luther looks up.

ZARA

No. Of course not. Forgetting is impossible.

JOELLE

It's good that you know that, that you can openly acknowledge it.

ZARA

We aren't -- we are not in denial of anything. The facts. We know. We know better than anyone. It's not about pretending something didn't happen. This is about reclaiming our sanity.

JOELLE

A sense of normality is a perfectly understandable thing to want, especially after going through what the two of you went through, but there is a difference between desiring a return to the life you used to have and truly processing your trauma.

ZARA

There it is.

JOELLE

There what is...?

ZARA

That word. Trauma.

JOELLE

END ==> Which word would you prefer I use?

ZARA

It has been months --

JOELLE

Three.

ZARA

That's more than enough time --

JOELLE

One could say that's not nearly enough time to even scratch the surface of what you all experienced.

ZARA

I mean no offense --

LUTHER

If you have to start with that --

JOELLE

It's fine.

LUTHER

--maybe you shouldn't say it --

ZARA

I thought this was a space where we were supposed to be honest.

LUTHER

That doesn't mean you should say anything that comes to your mind, Zara.

JOELLE

She's right. This is a room built on truth. Anything else is unhelpful.

ZARA

With all due respect to you and your profession, you're wrong.

LUTHER

START ==> What is wrong with me?

JOELLE

What's wrong with you? Nothing. I don't subscribe to that terminology. You are being affected by the same things you were affected by three months ago when you first walked through that door. PTSD. Paranoia. Depression. You were given medication --

LUTHER

I stopped taking it.

JOELLE

You will never improve --

LUTHER

I have a reputation to uphold.

JOELLE

You will never improve if you swallow the issues instead of taking action against them.

LUTHER

My wife was right. What does it look like if the counselors are in counseling, if the healers are being told they need to heal? People come to us for comfort and security and wisdom and guidance.

JOELLE

Does that mean you have to be without flaw?

LUTHER

Yes. In a sense, yes -- that is exactly what it means.

JOELLE

So you've never done anything wrong.

LUTHER

Yes. But --

JOELLE

Like what? Tell me. What have you done wrong in your life that could equate to the way you beat yourself down?

LUTHER

My parents...were good people...who I never gave enough credit to. They required nothing of me but to treat people well and pray before meals.

When their eyes weren't on me, I did neither. I got in trouble. I did wrong. I was disrespectful, disobedient. I did drugs. I drank. I lied --

JOELLE

You were a child doing childish things.

LUTHER

They named me after Dr. King. Luther. That's where that comes from. They thought they were naming me after a noble, powerful, honest man. But what they were really naming me after was someone who was hunted, paranoid, targeted -- someone who got shot. Of all the things he was, the last thing was a Black man who met the opposing end of a white man's bullet. I see now that's the real legacy they placed on me. That's the curse.

JOELLE

There's no such thing.

LUTHER

END ==>

It's your job to use logic. Same as it's my job to use faith. Karma. Punishment. Fate. I did wrong, wrong was done to those around me -- innocent people. They paid for my crimes.

JOELLE

What happened had nothing to do with you as a man or what you did as a boy. Three months ago, on what I can only assume felt like an ordinary Sunday, a man came through the doors of the church in which you pastor, holding a semi-automatic rifle. Not thirty seconds went by before he started to murder nearly half of the congregation. The only reason everyone wasn't killed is because midway through the massacre, the gun jammed. You could call it divine intervention -- that is, if there wasn't already blood painting the walls a new shade of red. But God forbid a congregant finds out you were mentally and emotionally affected by it too. I question whether you're worried about the approval of church members or if it's a little closer to home than that.

LUTHER

My wife is a good woman.

JOELLE

I don't disagree, but she is a good woman that you seem to aim to please, even if it aids in your own detriment.

LUTHER

That's an assumption.

JOELLE

It's an observation.