MEAGAN McPHEE, A.D.*

*After Divorce

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COLD OPEN

EXT. CROSSROADS CHURCH - DAY

A SMALL BUT CHARMING BRICK CHURCH IN EVANSTON, ILLINOIS.

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

IT’S DESERTED EXCEPT FOR AN ATTRACTIVE WOMAN IN HER THIRTIES WHO TENTATIVELY WALKS DOWN THE CENTER AISLE. THIS IS MEAGAN MCPHEE. IT’S CLEAR FROM HER DEMEANOR THAT SHE’S A STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND.

MEAGAN (UNCERTAIN) Um... hello?

A GRIM OLD MAN IN DARK CLOTHES APPEARS FROM A SIDE DOOR BEHIND THE ALTAR AND STARES AT HER OMINously.

MEAGAN (CONT’D) Oh. Hi. Reverend Paul? I’m Meagan. Meagan McPhee. Here to interview for the assistant job? Listen, I should tell you up front that organized religion makes me a little nervous, in case that’s a deal-breaker. Even walking in here makes me feel like I’m going to get zapped for doing something wrong. Which I haven’t. Unless you count getting divorced. Which I don’t. I mean, my ex is a sweet guy, but he wasn’t meeting my needs. And I’m not talking about sex. Oh god, I said “sex” in a church. Oh god, I said “God.” Look, not to sound desperate, but I really need this job.

(MORE)
MEAGAN (CONT'D)
There isn’t a whole lot out there and
I’ve got a kid. Not that I’m looking
for charity. Although this would be
the place. Anyway, your ad said you
were looking for a “people” person.
That’s me. I’m very in tune to the
feelings of others. For instance,
right now I’m getting a sense that you
think I’m a wacko.

MAN (O.S.)
That’s Ivan, the custodian.

MEAGAN TURNS TO SEE A HANDSOME MAN IN HIS MID-THIRTIES.

MAN (CONT’D)
And he’s deaf.

MEAGAN
Oh, I’m so glad. (REALIZING) I mean,
because that wasn’t going well, and I
need to charm the Reverend before he
learns that the last time I was
employed Andre Agassi had hair.

THE MAN EXTENDS HIS HAND.

MAN
I’m Reverend Paul Mathews.

MEAGAN
Holy [BLEEP].

AND WE... DISSOLVE TO:
SCENE A

INT. MEAGAN’S LIVING ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

IT’S A SMALL, SPARSELY DECORATED APARTMENT. MEAGAN IS MODELING A CONSERVATIVE-LOOKING OUTFIT FOR HER SON RINGO (TEN, SMART, EMPATHETIC). DISCARDED OUTFITS ARE STREWN AROUND THE PLACE.

MEAGAN
OK, how do I look?

RINGO
Like a news lady in a low-budget movie.

MEAGAN
Well, that was... specific.

RINGO
I’m sorry, Mom. I just want you to make a good first impression.

MEAGAN
I already made a first impression. And he hired me anyway.

RINGO
But what if he changes his mind? I saw this movie where a psycho-killer runs into a crumbled down church. And the police yell (MIMES A BULLHORN) “Throw down your axe, we’re coming in!” Only the psycho-killer says they can’t because the church is a sanctuary. But then this priest hands him over anyway and later the killer comes back and chops off his head.
MEAGAN
(HORRIFIED) Where did you see this
movie?

RINGO
Max’s house.

MEAGAN
No more play dates with Max.

GINA WELLS (30’S, A LIKEABLE MESS) BURSTS IN.

GINA
Let’s roll. (RE: MEAGAN’S OUTFIT) Are
you hiding a pregnancy, or a bomb?

MEAGAN
(IGNORING THIS) Ringo, grab your
backpack. Gina is taking you to
school.

RINGO EXITS INTO HIS BEDROOM. GINA UNBUTTONS A BUTTON ON
MEAGAN’S BLOUSE AND ATTEMPTS TO “PLUMP” HER BREASTS.

GINA
You need to air these out once a year
or they get sad.

MEAGAN SLAPS GINA’S HANDS AWAY.

GINA (CONT’D)
Just tell me if he’s handsome.

MEAGAN
Gina, I’ve been divorced six months.
Give me some time.

GINA
Hey, you said he was single.
MEAGAN
A single minister.

GINA
They’re allowed to lie with women. I looked it up.

MEAGAN
Fine. You’re single -- you lie with him.

GINA
Nah. I’m too filled with hate.

RINGO RACES IN WITH HIS BACKPACK, THEN OUT THE FRONT DOOR.

MEAGAN
Gina, this isn’t about dating. I just spent ten years being Suzie-homemaker so Wes could devote himself to his art. I’m done with that. Now I’m finally doing something for myself. Using my ingenuity and brains.

GINA
One button.

MEAGAN
(SIGHS) Fine.

GINA UNDOES A BUTTON ON MEAGAN’S BLOUSE. AND WE...

DISSOLVE TO:
SCENE B

INT. CHURCH RECEPTION - A LITTLE LATER

A FRIENDLY, IF SLIGHTLY DILAPIDATED, WORK SPACE WITH A WAITING AREA, SEVERAL DESKS, AND CLEARLY OUTDATED PHONES, COMPUTERS, ETC. PAUL, NOW WEARING MINISTER GARB, IS STANDING WITH MEAGAN, SORTING THROUGH PAPERS AT HER VERY CLUTTERED DESK.

PAUL

Sorry about the mess. Work has been piling up since Miss Ledbetter passed away.

MEAGAN

Oh, I’m so sorry.

PAUL

Well, it was her time.

MEAGAN

Ah. Because, according to your faith, we each have a preordained fate?

PAUL

No, because she was ninety-three.

PAUL EXITS INTO HIS OFFICE. MEAGAN Follows.

RESET TO:

INT. PAUL’S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

IT LOOKS RATHER LIKE A COLLEGE PROFESSOR’S OFFICE, EXCEPT FOR RELIGIOUS TEXTS ON SHELVES. PAUL AND MEAGAN ENTER.

PAUL

Also, preordained fate kind of went out with the ancient Greeks.

MEAGAN

Good to know.
PAUL
Around here, we’re more into
forgiveness of sins. (SMILES) In
fact, it’s probably our top seller.

MEAGAN SMILES BACK, CLEARLY CHARMED.

PAUL (CONT’D)
Please, sit.

MEAGAN DOES.

PAUL (CONT’D)
Meagan, Crossroads isn’t just about
Sunday morning services. (MODESTLY)
Although attendance is up ten percent
this year.

MEAGAN
Very impressive.

PAUL
I’m not counting when it rains.

MEAGAN
Of course not.

PAUL
But that’s only a fraction of what
this church does. We also host
lunchtime A.A. meetings, various
support groups... we even reach out
to local gang members. Your job is to
help me keep tabs on all these people.

MEAGAN
Okay. (A BEAT) How?
PAUL
By being the warm and caring person I know you are.

MEAGAN BLUSHES.

MEAGAN
Oh, I’m sure you’re just as warm.

MEAGAN WINCES AT HER OWN REMARK AND TRIES TO RECOVER.

MEAGAN (CONT’D)
When you need to be. And cooler other times.

SHE WINCES AGAIN. RICHARD CLAPPER (30S, A LITTLE HYPER, SEEMINGLY GAY) ENTERS.

RICHARD
Paul, I’m trying to make copies for our budget meeting, but the machine is being a little bitch. (NOTICING MEAGAN) Oh, hello.

PAUL
Richard, could you knock? We’ve been through this.

RICHARD
Are you in one of your moods?

PAUL
(SIGHS) Meagan McPhee, meet Richard Clapper, our financial officer.

THEY SHAKE HANDS.
RICHARD
So you’re the new Miss Ledbetter.
Well, minus sixty years and the smell of communion wine.

PAUL
Richard, let’s not spread rumors about the recently departed. (TO MEAGAN)
Although she did slur her words after lunch.

LOUD WOMAN (O.S.)
Reverend Paul! A moment with you.

PAUL
Oh no. (TO MEAGAN) Hide me.

ANNA LUNDOQUIST (50-ISH, EXPENSIVELY DRESSED, SEVERE-LOOKING) BURSTS IN, CARRYING A LARGE SHOPPING BAG.

ANNA
Paul, I want to call special attention to these clothes I’m donating.
They’re designer, so could we make sure they go to poor people with taste?

MEAGAN LAUGHS, THEN STOPS SHORT AS SHE SEES RICHARD MAKE A "SHE’S NOT JOKING" FACE.

PAUL
Anna Lundquist, meet Meagan McPhee, my new assistant.

ANNA TURNS TO PAUL AS IF MEAGAN ISN’T THERE.
ANNA
I thought we agreed to run the secretarial candidates by me.

PAUL
(LYING) I forgot.

ANNA
I have a niece who would be perfect for this job. She has a learning disorder.

PAUL
Well, now Meagan’s here. She’s a fresh face and an outside-the-box thinker. She’ll be great.

PAUL SMILES AT MEAGAN, WHO BLUSHES AGAIN.

ANNA
(TO MEAGAN) Could you excuse us?
(WITHOUT WAITING, TO PAUL) Who wants outside the box? We just need someone who can answer the phone and smells better than Ledbetter.

MEAGAN
Would you care to sniff me?

ANNA
I’m sorry, I thought you were gone.

MEAGAN
And I thought you were rude. But I’m still here, and you still are.
ANNA
What?

PAUL QUICKLY STEPS IN AND USHERS ANNA TOWARD THE DOOR.

PAUL
Thanks for the clothes. I’ll make sure they go to the fashion-conscious.

ANNA
Are you trying to get rid of me?

PAUL
Not at all.

PAUL SHUTS THE DOOR AND LEANS AGAINST IT, RELIEVED. A
BEAT.

PAUL (CONT’D)
As you can see, we don’t get to pick our benefactors.

MEAGAN
Is she for real?

PAUL
Ask her first two husbands. Except you can’t. (SOTTO) Because they both died in “yachting” accidents.

OFF OF MEAGAN’S INCREDULOUS REACTION, WE...

DISSOLVE TO:
SCENE C

INT. RECEPTION AREA - LATER

MEAGAN IS TRYING TO WORK THE COPY MACHINE WHILE TALKING ON HER CELL PHONE.

MEAGAN
(INTO PHONE) Wes, I can’t pick Ringo up from school. It’s my first day.

INTERCUT DURING THE FOLLOWING:

INT. CAR REPAIR OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

WES MCPHEE (THINK A 40-ISH BILL MACEY) IS HOLDING A REPAIR ESTIMATE.

WES
(INTO PHONE) Well, I’m stuck. My transmission died.

A GARAGE MANAGER CALLS OVER FROM A DESK.

MANAGER
Mr. McPhee, your card was declined.

WES
(INNOCENTLY) That’s weird -- try it again. (INTO PHONE) Can’t you slip out? I mean, it’s a church, not air traffic control.

MEAGAN
(INTO PHONE) Wes, please take my job seriously.

WES
(INTO PHONE) Look who’s talking.
MEAGAN (INTO PHONE) Let's not point fingers. Remember what "The Blame-Free Divorce" book said?

WES (INTO PHONE) I didn’t read it.

MEAGAN (INTO PHONE) And whose fault is that?! (CALMING DOWN) Let’s remember that I’m the one who suggested you quit teaching and be a sculptor. I said “follow your bliss.”

WES (INTO PHONE) I remember. I followed it, and you left.

MEAGAN (INTO PHONE) Because it didn’t fix what was fundamentally wrong!

MANAGER (CALLING OVER) Declined again.

WES HANDS THE GUY A DIFFERENT CARD.

MANAGER (CONT’D) (RE: CARD) This is a video store membership.

WES INDICATES “JUST A SECOND” TO THE MANAGER.

WES (INTO PHONE) You know, I might have to sell the house.
MEAGAN
(INTO PHONE, EXASPERATED) Wes, you wanted the house, you got it. Now it’s your problem.

WES
(INTO PHONE) Meagan?

MEAGAN
(INTO PHONE) What, Wes? What?

WES
(INTO PHONE, GENUINE) Let’s give us one more try. I’ll be more responsible. More romantic. Whatever you want.

A BEAT. IT’S HARD FOR MEAGAN TO STAY UPSET WITH SOMEONE SO VULNERABLE.

MEAGAN
(INTO PHONE, SOFTENING) We’ve had this conversation a hundred times. There’ll be promises, resolutions... and we’ll be right back where we were. We don’t work, Wes. There’s no “there” there.

WES
(INTO PHONE) My “there” was there.

MEAGAN
(INTO PHONE) It’s not a question of whose there was where.
WES
(INTO PHONE)  Then where was your there?

MEAGAN
(INTO PHONE)  What?

WES
(INTO PHONE)  What?

MEAGAN
(INTO PHONE)  I have to go.

MEAGAN HANGS UP THE PHONE IN FRUSTRATION, THEN TURNS AND JUMPS SLIGHTLY AS SHE SEES A PLEASANT 40-ISH WOMAN STANDING NEAR HER. THIS IS DAPHNA DAY (GUILELESS, ECCENTRIC).

DAPHNA
Hello. I’m Daphna Day, Chairperson of Casino Night, the Religious Education Committee, and our biannual Church Comedy Jam.

MEAGAN
Hi. I’m --

DAPHNA
Meagan. The woman who sassed Anna Lundquist.

MEAGAN SHOOTS A LOOK OVER AT RICHARD.

RICHARD
(CHEERFULLY)  I texted my mother and it went viral!

DAPHNA
Anyway, I was hoping to see Reverend Paul.
MEAGAN
He’s in with someone right now.
Anything I can do?

DAPHNA
I probably should wait for the Reverend.

MEAGAN
That’s fine.

DAPHNA
It’s a deeply private matter regarding my husband Kyle.

MEAGAN
I understand.

DAPHNA
I caught him sleeping with our dog walker. So I left him. But this morning he called and asked if he could drop by to “work things out.” And I don’t know what to do.

MEAGAN
I’m sure Paul will be able to help.

DAPHNA
But what do you think?

MEAGAN
Well, Daphna, I just met you.
DAPHNA
(SIGHS) This wasn’t Kyle’s first “adventure.” He makes promises, resolutions... and then we’re right back where we started.

THIS RESONATES WITH MEAGAN.

MEAGAN
You feel like you’re at a crossroads.

DAPHNA
That’s right.

MEAGAN
But you’re scared to choose a path.

DAPHNA
Yes!

MEAGAN
You know, when I have a hard time making life-decisions, I use the “ten ten ten” rule: how will you feel about your choice in ten minutes, ten months, and ten years?

DAPHNA
Well, if I take him back, I’ll feel pretty good in ten minutes, because we make up really well, if you know what I mean.

MEAGAN
I do.
DAPHNA
Wink wink.

MEAGAN
Yes. I really get it.

DAPHNA
But in ten months, he’ll probably cheat again. (A BEAT) And in ten years, I’ll be right back where I am now. Except older, with those wobbly jowls that run in my family.

MEAGAN
Sounds like you’ve made your decision.

DAPHNA
Meagan, you’re a genius.

MEAGAN
Not really.

DAPHNA
You should have your own talk show.

MEAGAN
(FLATTERED) Right?

KYLE (40-ISH, SUSPICIOUSLY GOOD-LOOKING) ENTERS CARRYING FLOWERS. HE SPOTS DAPHNA AND SMILES INGRATIATINGLY.

DAPHNA
Oh no. That’s Kyle.

MEAGAN
(SURPRISED) Wow, he’s handsome. (OFF DAPHNA’S LOOK) Be strong.

KYLE APPROACHES.
KYLE
Hello, my potato pancake.

HE OFFERS HER THE FLOWERS.

DAPHNA
Kyle, you cannot just potato pancake
your way back into my life.

DAPHNA TAKES THE FLOWERS AND DRAMATICALLY THROWS THEM INTO
THE TRASH CAN.

KYLE
What are you trying to say?

MEAGAN
Really?  I thought that was pretty
clear.

PAUL ENTERS FROM HIS OFFICE.

PAUL
Hello, Daphna.  Kyle, this is a
surprise.

KYLE
Reverend, I’m here to ask Daphna for a
another chance.  Because I am
committed to rebuilding our marriage.
(FOR DAPHNA’S BENEFIT)  I’ll do
counseling.  Therapy.  Meryl Streep
movies.  Whatever it takes.

PAUL
Well, I haven’t heard you say that
before.  I’m impressed.

(MORE)
PAUL (CONT'D)
Daphna will have to make up her own
mind, of course. But this church is
all about redemption. The belief that
people can change.

KYLE LOOKS TOWARD DAPHNA, NOW ON THE SPOT.

DAPHNA
That’s not what Meagan says.

MEAGAN
Well, that Meagan has a big mouth.

SHE LAUGHS. PAUL DOESN’T. AND WE...

SMASH CUT TO:
SCENE D

INT. PAUL’s OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

PAUL STANDS GLARING AT MEAGAN, WHO IS TRYING TO LOOK CONTRITE.

PAUL
The “ten ten ten” rule? Where did you find that? Inside a fortune cookie?

MEAGAN
(DEFENSIVE) It’s a reputable self-help technique.

PAUL
Ah. Self-help.

MEAGAN
Hey, I can’t afford a shrink. Where else can I turn for guidance?

PAUL
You’re asking a minister?

MEAGAN
Look, I’m not trying to cause trouble on my first day --

PAUL
Meagan, what if Kyle is truly repentant?

MEAGAN
The man slept with a dog walker! That’s not only sleazy, it’s... cruel to animals.
PAUL
So you’re convinced people don’t change?

MEAGAN
That’s right.

PAUL
Then let me enlighten you. I had a pretty rocky childhood. After my mother married her fourth husband I ran away and lived on the street.

MEAGAN
Wow. That’s really rough.

PAUL
(MATTER OF FACT) It’s rough for a lot of kids. But I’m standing here now because one social worker at a teen drop-in center didn’t give up on me.

MEAGAN
Well, that’s... remarkable. But all it tells me is that a boy with potential needed some mentoring. Kyle, on the other hand, is a grown man who needs to boff other women to avoid dwelling on his entire failed existence!

PAUL
You barely met him!
MEAGAN
I’ve known a boatload of Kyles.

PAUL
I thought you were a people person.

MEAGAN
I’m also a realist.

PAUL
(EXASPERATED) Do you have faith in anything?

MEAGAN
Myself. My son. And that life will always kick you in the ass.

RICHARD POKES HIS HEAD IN THE DOOR.

RICHARD
Quick question.

PAUL
(TO MEAGAN) Well, maybe you’ve been bending over and asking for it.

RICHARD’S EYES WIDEN.

RICHARD
It can wait.

HE QUICKLY EXITS.

PAUL
I’m sorry. Just... from now on, I give the advice, all right?

MEAGAN
All right. I’m sorry too.

MEAGAN TURNS TO GO.
PAUL
You know, Meagan, being a cynic may
ease your disappointment. But it also
erodes your joy.

MEAGAN
You should weave that into next week’s
sermon.

PAUL
I can write my own sermons, thank you.

MEAGAN EXITS. PAUL GLARES AFTER HER, THEN THINKS FOR A
BEAT AND PICKS UP A PEN.

PAUL (CONT’D)
(WRITING) "... also erodes your
joy..."

AND WE...

FADE OUT

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

SCENE E

INT. MEAGAN’S MINIVAN/EXT. MOTEL -- NIGHT

MEAGAN DRIVES HER MINIVAN WHILE GINA SITS IN THE PASSENGER SEAT.

MEAGAN
Do you think I’m cynical?

GINA
What I think is this could lead to thunderous, God-fearing make-up sex.

MEAGAN
Gina, my job is hanging by a thread. I don’t even think he likes me.

MEAGAN TAKES A TURN.

GINA
(NOTICING) Hey, I thought we were going to Bargain Basement.

MEAGAN
We will. After we see what Kyle’s up to.

GINA
Who’s Kyle?

MEAGAN
Daphna’s husband. The guy Paul thinks can “change.”

GINA
I don’t understand.
MEAGAN
He owns a hardware store on Third. I just saw him pull out of the parking lot and thought we’d follow along.

GINA
Seriously? How do you know it’s him?

MEAGAN
(POINTING) Read the bumper sticker.

GINA
(PEERING OUT) “Don’t Be Sexist -- Bitches Hate That.”

MEAGAN
Ooh, look where he’s heading.

MEAGAN PULLS OVER AS WE:

ANGLE ON: KYLE PARKING IN A MOTEL PARKING LOT. HE GETS OUT OF HIS CAR, LOOKS AROUND FURTIVELY, THEN UNLOCKS A MOTEL DOOR AND DISAPPEARS INSIDE. A MOMENT LATER A WOMAN WALKING FIVE DOGS APPROACHES AND KNOCKS ON THE DOOR. KYLE OPENS THE DOOR AND SHE HURRIES INSIDE WITH THE DOGS. HE PATS HER ASS AS SHE GOES IN.

MEAGAN (CONT’D)
Oh my god.

GINA
I know. I could never do it with anyone watching.

AND WE...

DISSOLVE TO:
SCENE H

INT. MEAGAN’S APARTMENT -- LATER THAT EVENING

MEAGAN PACES AS GINA DRINKS A GLASS OF WINE.

    MEAGAN
    You can’t be serious. Pretend I didn’t see that so my boss doesn’t look bad?!

    GINA
    Welcome to the land of the paycheck.

    MEAGAN
    But I was right and he was wrong. He thinks I base my life views on fortune cookies!

    GINA
    When in fact you base them on predictions from an online psychic.

    MEAGAN
    I did that once. Drunk. Whose side are you on?

SHE PACES FOR A BEAT.

    MEAGAN (CONT’D)
    And what about Daphna? I have to call her. She trusts me.

    GINA
    She doesn’t even know you.

    MEAGAN
    She knows I should have my own talk show.
RINGO ENTERS FROM THE FRONT DOOR, CARRYING HIS BACKPACK. BEHIND HIM WE SEE A LARGE SPERM-SHAPED SCULPTURE IN THE DOORWAY.

RINGO
Surprise! Daddy made us art!

WES ENTERS, PUSHING THE SCULPTURE ON A SKATEBOARD.

MEAGAN
(FORCED SMILE) Hey, that’s... large.

WES
And it’s for you.

WES LIFTS THE SCULPTURE OFF THE SKATEBOARD WITH SOME DIFFICULTY AND PLACES IT IN MIDDLE OF THE ROOM.

GINA
It looks like a sperm.

WES
(PROUD) It IS a sperm.

MEAGAN
Ringo, go do your homework.

RINGO
I know what a sperm is.

MEAGAN
Go.

RINGO SIGHS, THEN GIVES WES A HUG.

WES
Night, Sport.

RINGO HOPS ON THE SKATEBOARD AND SKATES OUT OF THE ROOM.

MEAGAN
Wes... (RE: SCULPTURE) I’m not sure this goes with the apartment.
GINA
Or any apartment.

WES
Ah, Gina... I have not missed you.

GINA
Give it time.

WES
Although I am glad you’re here. So I can tell you that I have been commissioned to create one of these babies for the lobby of the city works building!

MEAGAN
They want this? In their lobby?

WES
Only twelve times bigger! Thousands of people will see it. I’m finally catching a break!

HE GRABS MEAGAN IN A HUG.

MEAGAN
Wow. I don’t know what to say.

GINA
I’d call this a seminal event. (OFF THEIR LOOKS) Come on, that was funny.

WES
(TO MEAGAN) Are you proud of me?
MEAGAN
(FIRMLY)  You should be proud of yourself.

RINGO (O.S.)
Dad, can you quiz me on state capitals?

WES
Coming!  (TO MEAGAN)  You know, this only happened because you believed in me. At one point. That’s all it takes. (TO GINA, POINTEDLY) A little belief.

WES EXITS DOWN THE HALL.

GINA
I liked him better with longer hair.
(OFF MEAGAN’S LOOK)  What?

MEAGAN
Maybe I jumped to conclusions.

GINA
About Wes?

MEAGAN
About Kyle.

GINA
Kyle?  The cheater?

MEAGAN
All we saw was two people walk through a door. It could’ve been something very innocent.
GINA
You’re right. Maybe the dogs fooled around and they just napped.

MEAGAN
I’m just saying, who are we to judge?

GINA
Is this because Wes sold a sperm?

MEAGAN
You must admit, it makes you wonder about a higher power.

GINA
But Wes has sold stuff before. What about the giant eyeball he sold to that rich guy in Detroit?

MEAGAN
That was seven years ago. The point is, maybe Paul is right. Maybe people can change. Maybe they just need... support.

GINA
Here’s what I support: (RE: SCULPTURE)
Hauling that thing onto the sidewalk.

MEAGAN
(AGREEING) The minute he’s gone.

AND WE...

DISSOLVE TO:
SCENE J

INT. CHURCH MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM -- THE NEXT MORNING

IT’S A PLACE FOR GATHERINGS OF ALL KINDS -- THERE’S A CIRCLE OF EMPTY CHAIRS, A TABLE FOR COFFEE AND SNACKS, ETC. MEAGAN IS SETTING OUT COOKIES AND NAPKINS WITH RICHARD.

RICHARD
So guess what I whipped out this morning?

MEAGAN
(ALARMED) Pardon?

RICHARD
Your rule! I was at a breakfast meeting, and I said, “If I order the eggs benedict, I’ll feel great in ten minutes because I’ll be eating bacon. In ten months, I’ll have forgotten all about it. And in ten years, I’ll be fat anyway, so what the heck?

RICHARD LAUGHS. MEAGAN DOESN’T.

RICHARD (CONT’D)
You know, my wife finds me hilarious.

MEAGAN
(CHUCKLES) Your wife.

RICHARD
What’s so funny?

A BEAT.

MEAGAN
Nothing.

PAUL ENTERS. MEAGAN APPROACHES HIM.
MEAGAN (CONT’D)
Paul... listen, about yesterday... I was out of line. From now on, I’m a team player.

PAUL
I appreciate that.

MEAGAN
Your dogma is my dogma.

PAUL
Good to hear.

MEAGAN
Praise the Lord.

PAUL
Alright, don’t overdo it.

MEAGAN
So what happens at these council meetings? Is it kind of like the president sitting with his cabinet?

PAUL
Just like it. Except instead of debating the war or Medicare, we deal with... well...

SMASH CUT TO:
SCENE K

INT. MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM -- A SHORT TIME LATER

THE CHAIRS ARE NOW FILLED WITH MEN AND WOMEN OF DIFFERENT AGES AND ETHNICITIES. RICHARD JUGGLES A STACK OF FINANCIAL REPORTS. ANNA SITS, POISED TO LEAD. MEAGAN, NOTE PAD IN HAND, SITS NEXT TO PAUL. A WOMAN, MARY LEE, IS SPEAKING TO THE GROUP.

MARY LEE
And can we please, please stop using the coffee filters to hold jellybeans?

ANNA
Mary Lee, you can’t address the group unless you’re holding the talking stick.

MARY LEE
What’s a talking stick?

ANNA
(IMPATIENTLY) It was in my e-mail.

ANNA PICKS UP A LONG STICK.

ANNA (CONT’D)
It’s a Native American custom. I heard about it from a practicing shaman who also does my nails. (TO MEAGAN) Have Mary Lee’s remarks stricken from the record.

MEAGAN
Me? What?

PAUL SHOOTS MEAGAN A “DON’T WORRY ABOUT IT” LOOK.

ANNA
Let’s move on. Reverend?
PAUL
Thanks, Anna. Well --

ANNA
Reverend?

PAUL
(SIGHS) All right.

PAUL TAKES THE STICK.

PAUL (CONT’D)
Richard, any financial updates?

RICHARD TAKES THE STICK.

RICHARD
We need heap more wampum to keep great building proud like eagle.

ANNA
That’s racist.

RICHARD
(TO THE ROOM, RE: ANNA) Squaw make noise like large bear.

PAUL TAKES THE STICK FROM RICHARD.

PAUL
Richard, please.

RICHARD
I’m sorry.

PAUL
(CAN’T RESIST) Chief want get home before moon is high over outlet mall.

ANNA
Paul!
PAUL
All right, all right.

DAPHNA HURRIES IN.

DAPHNA
Sorry I’m late! (TO ANNA) I got your email about the stick. Very pan-cultural. (TO THE GROUP) And I have a surprise.

KYLE ENTERS.

KYLE
Hello, all.

MEAGAN REACTS IN SURPRISE. DAPHNA TAKES THE STICK.

DAPHNA
I want to introduce my husband Kyle. He has something he’d like to say to the council.

MEAGAN RISES FORMALLY.

MEAGAN
(FOR PAUL’S BENEFIT) I for one would like to welcome Kyle to this sharing space where we learn to grow and change.

THE GROUP STARES AT HER, CONFUSED.

ANNA
And I for one would like you to use the stick.

DAPHNA AND KYLE SIT. KYLE TAKES THE STICK.
KYLE
Well, something happened last night, and it’s filled me with regret.

ANGLE ON: MEAGAN, CLEARLY WONDERING IF KYLE IS ABOUT TO CLEANSE HIS SOUL.

KYLE (CONT’D)
I was working late at the store, and it dawned on me: I haven’t been involved enough with this church.

THE GROUP AD LIBS APPROVAL. MEAGAN CAN’T HELP HERSELF:

MEAGAN
That’s your confession?

ANNA
(WARNING) Meagan, stick.

KYLE
So I would like to contribute to this congregation by starting a community garden.

MARY LEE
(IMPULSIVELY) Great idea!

ANNA
Mary Lee!

ANNA ROLLS HER EYES IN THE DIRECTION OF THE STICK, WHICH MARY LEE DOES NOT HAVE.

MARY LEE
I’m sorry. It’s just so exciting.

MEAGAN
(TO PAUL) May I speak to you privately?
KYLE
We could spread love by inviting others to help us work the soil.

MEAGAN
(BURSTING) Gaahhhhh!

RICHARD
That was an odd noise.

MEAGAN SNATCHES THE STICK FROM KYLE.

MEAGAN
It is a great idea, Kyle. Since you certainly know about spreading seeds.

PAUL FIRMLY TAKES THE STICK FROM MEAGAN.

PAUL
(POINTEDLY) I think the garden would be more about renewal. The belief that new seasons can bring change.

MEAGAN GRABS THE STICK BACK.

MEAGAN
But I know some things about Kyle’s garden that you don’t. Like how he’s always going to plant carrots on the side.

PAUL GRABS THE STICK.

PAUL
Maybe your garden feels that if it can’t have fresh vegetables, no other garden should.

RICHARD
OK. I am so confused.
Meagan, are you insinuating something?

Of course she isn’t. (WARNING) Are you, Meagan?

A BEAT. MEAGAN LOOKS DOWN AND SHAKES HER HEAD.

The stick, people. Really, is it that hard?

DAPHNA TAKES THE STICK AND HANDS IT TO KYLE.

Go on, sweetie.

So... I also had some thoughts about reaching out to single mothers.

MEAGAN LEAPS UP.

(BURSTING) Kyle is still boffing the dog walker!

SHOCKED GASPS.

What?

What?

They’re meeting in a motel downtown.

I saw them.

EVERYONE LOOKS OVER AT KYLE.
KYLE
(ACCUSINGLY) She doesn’t have the stick!

MEAGAN
(BUILDING STEAM) I’m sorry, Daphna. But when you see something wrong, you have to stand up and say something, before we start convincing ourselves that we don’t deserve better. I mean, so what if he finally sold a sculpture? That doesn’t mean I should settle! I have a right to be happy! (REALIZING) Daphna, I mean. Daphna does.

PAUL
Meagan, why don’t we speak in my office?

MEAGAN
There’s no need. Anna’s right. You don’t need someone who thinks outside the box. You just need... a box.

MEAGAN HURRIES OUT OF THE ROOM.

RICHARD
(IN AWE) Best. Meeting. Ever.

AND WE...

FADE OUT

END OF ACT TWO
ACT THREE

SCENE I

INT. CHURCH RECEPTION -- MORNING

THE ROOM IS EMPTY. MEAGAN AND GINA ENTER STEALTHILY.

GINA
(LOOKING AROUND) This doesn’t look that religious.

MEAGAN
What did you expect? Shepherds?
Let’s just grab my jacket before anyone sees me.

GINA
This is your own fault. I told you to keep your mouth shut.

MEAGAN
You also told me to flirt with our building manager to get vertical blinds.

GINA
And it worked.

MEAGAN
Except now he wants to know how I’m going to (AIR QUOTES) “pay him back.”

MEAGAN TAKES HER COAT FROM HER DESK AREA. SUDDENLY WE HEAR VOICES COMING FROM THE MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM. MEAGAN TRIES TO RUN FOR THE DOOR AS PAUL AND RICHARD ENTER.

PAUL
Meagan? What are you doing here?

MEAGAN STOPS, CAUGHT. SHE TURNS TO FACE THEM.
MEAGAN
(CONFRONTATIONAL) I might ask you the same question.

PAUL
Saturdays are my busiest days.

MEAGAN
Ah. Then... that explains that... bit of... church business.

GINA
(TO PAUL, CLEARLY SMITTEN) Hi. You must be Sir Paul.

PAUL
Reverend, actually.

GINA
I’m Gina. But you can call me any time.

SHE LAUGHS AT HER OWN JOKE.

MEAGAN
Gina, we’re in a church.

GINA
Right. (CONTRITELY) Forgive me, Father.

SHE CURTSIES SLIGHTLY. PAUL IS CLEARLY AMUSED.

MEAGAN
Gina, could you give us a moment?

GINA
Of course. I’ll just... wait in the car.
PAUL
Nice to meet you, Gina.

GINA
I’m not married.

PAUL
Okay.

MEAGAN SHOOTS GINA A LOOK. GINA EXITS.

PAUL (CONT’D)
Richard?

RICHARD
You’re kidding. Oh, all right.

RICHARD EXITS.

MEAGAN
So. What’s going on today?

PAUL
"Knitting for Social Justice."

MEAGAN
What are you knitting? Protest signs?

PAUL
Blankets for the homeless.

MEAGAN
That’s sweet.

PAUL
Most of us are.

MEAGAN
Well, I’m sorry it didn’t work out.

PAUL
You’re the one who quit.
MEAGAN
You would’ve fired me.

PAUL
That’s not how this church operates. I held on to Mrs. Ledbetter for eight years. And she used her dentures as a paperweight.

MEAGAN
Is... Daphna okay?

PAUL
She’s a little shocked, as you can imagine. But she’ll be grateful eventually.

MEAGAN
Well, I wish I’d been wrong.

PAUL

MEAGAN
(TOUCHED) It’s not so bad.

PAUL
I meant to everyone at that meeting.

MEAGAN
Ha ha.
PAUL
Meagan, I think there’s a place for you here. I really do. Yes, you probably could have handled things better with Daphna. But you were fighting for her happiness and that’s a damn good thing.

A BEAT.

MEAGAN
Are you allowed to say “damn?”

PAUL
On very special occasions.

MEAGAN SITS.

MEAGAN
I don’t know... me in a church? You must admit, it’s crazy.

PAUL
You want crazy? The knitters just voted to cover the entire roof with a “love quilt.” I need you to talk them down.

MEAGAN CONSIDERS THIS FOR A BEAT, THEN RISES.

MEAGAN
Well, that’s easy. How will they feel in ten years when the quilt is all ratty and full of spiders?
PAUL
Ah yes, the "ten ten ten" rule. That could have saved me years of divinity school.

MEAGAN
Are you mocking my faith?

PAUL
It doesn’t count as “faith” if you can fit it on a bubble gum wrapper.

MEAGAN
That’s good. You should put it in a sermon.

PAUL
I can write my own sermons, thank you.

THEY EXIT. A BEAT. PAUL RE-ENTERS AND QUICKLY GRABS A PEN AND NOTE PAD FROM MEAGAN’S DESK.

PAUL (CONT’D)
(WRITING) “... on a bubble gum wrapper.”

HE STUFFS THE PAPER IN HIS POCKET AND HURRIES OUT. AND WE...

DISSOLVE TO:
SCENE M

INT. CHURCH RECEPTION - LATER THAT DAY

MEAGAN IS AGAIN ATTEMPTING TO USE THE COPY MACHINE WHEN HER CELL PHONE RINGS. SHE ANSWERS IT.

MEAGAN
(INTO PHONE) Hello? Wes? What? I can hardly hear you... What about Ringo’s skateboard?

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

TIGHT ON WES’S FACE.

WES
I said, I was showing off, and there was a little accident.

WIDEN TO REVEAL: WES IS IN BED, WITH TWO FULL-ARM CASTS CONNECTED TOGETHER WITH A METAL ROD. RINGO IS HOLDING A CELL PHONE TO WES’S EAR.

WES (CONT’D)
(INTO PHONE) The bad news is, I won’t be able to feed myself for the next eights weeks. The good news is, Ringo has volunteered to drop out of school and take care of me. (TO RINGO) You’ll make up the work later, right?

RINGO
(NONCHALANT) Sure.

CUT TO:

INT. RECEPTION AREA - CONTINUOUS

MEAGAN IS IN SHOCK.
MEAGAN
(INTO PHONE) But... but...

WES (V.O.)
Needless to say, the sperm project is on hold.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

WES
(INTO PHONE) But I’m oddly at peace with it. Maybe this will give us a chance to reconnect. Be like a family again, you know?

A HOSPITAL STAFFER ENTERS, HOLDING A CREDIT CARD.

STAFFER
This was declined.

CUT TO:

INT. RECEPTION AREA - CONTINUOUS

RICHARD APPROACHES MEAGAN AND WAVES CHEERFULLY.

MEAGAN
(INTO PHONE, WEAKLY) Okay... I’m leaving now.

SHE HANGS UP.

RICHARD
You okay?

MEAGAN
No.
RICHARD  
(OBLIVIOUS) Listen, what you said at the meeting was very inspiring.

MEAGAN  
Thanks, Richard.

RICHARD  
I wish I had the courage to say what I feel without caring what people think.

MEAGAN GRABS HER COAT AND PREPARES TO LEAVE.

MEAGAN  
Tell Paul I’m taking my lunch.

RICHARD  
It’s just, sometimes I feel like I’m living a lie. You know what I mean?

THIS STOPS MEAGAN. SHE TURNS BACK TO HIM.

MEAGAN  
(GENTLY) I’m sorry, Richard. Is there something you’d like to share with me?

RICHARD NODS, OVERCOME WITH EMOTION.

MEAGAN (CONT’D)  
Come on, let it out. You’re safe here.

RICHARD SUDDENLY GRABS MEAGAN AND KISSES HER HARD. HER EYES WIDEN AS SHE TRIES TO PULL AWAY. FINALLY HE LETS GO.

RICHARD  
I want you, Meagan McPhee.

AND OFF MEAGAN’S SHOCK, WE...

FADE OUT

END OF SHOW