

MEAGAN MCPHEE, A.D.*

***After Divorce**

by
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and
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Third Studio Draft
1/8/10

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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 (GUILILESS, 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) Gaahhhh!

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.

DAPHNA
Meagan, are you insinuating something?

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

A BEAT. MEAGAN LOOKS DOWN AND SHAKES HER HEAD.

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

DAPHNA TAKES THE STICK AND HANDS IT TO KYLE.

 DAPHNA
Go on, sweetie.

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

MEAGAN LEAPS UP.

 MEAGAN
(BURSTING) Kyle is still boffing the
dog walker!

SHOCKED GASPS.

 DAPHNA
What?

 PAUL
What?

 MEAGAN
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 1

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
You are wrong. About people never
changing. Look at you. You're
changing your whole life. How
terrifying.

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 m̄y 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