

THE MINISTER OF DIVINE

by
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AND BELOVED BRITISH SERIES
THE VICAR OF DIBLEY**

by
Richard Curtis and Paul Mayhew-Archer

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THE MINISTER OF DIBLEY

PILOT

ACT ONE

A

FADE IN:

INT. FIRST CHURCH OF DIVINE - DAY

IT'S THE KIND OF QUAIN'T, HOMEY CHURCH YOU FIND IN EVERY SMALL TOWN IN THE SOUTH. THIS PARTICULAR CHURCH SEEMS TO HAVE A BIT OF AN ATTENDANCE PROBLEM, WITH THE ONLY PEOPLE PRESENT BEING OUR REGULAR CHARACTERS: ALICE TINKER, HUGO HORTON, OWEN NEWITT, FRANK POOLE, JIM TROTT AND MRS. CROPLEY. DAVID HORTON IS AT THE PULPIT. NO ONE IS RIVETED.

DAVID

...and so they did leave that country
and did with heavy heart return unto
Japeth and unto Gadd. Here ends the
lesson.

HE TAKES HIS SEAT AS REVEREND POTTLE CREAKILY MAKES HIS WAY TO THE PULPIT. HE IS, PERHAPS, THE OLDEST MAN ALIVE.

REVEREND POTTLE

We shall begin with concerns of the
church. Let us pray.

(MORE)

REVEREND POTTLE (CONT'D)

(BOWING HEAD) Dear Lord, our thoughts, prayers and congratulations go out to Libby Thomas, who won first prize at the county fair for best-tasting baby girl, and to Kellie Porter, who gave birth to a beautiful eight-pound rhubarb pie.

AS HE BOWS HIS HEAD, ALICE TINKER, SITTING NEARBY, APPROACHES HIM AND WHISPERS IN HIS EAR.

REV. POTTLE

Yes, yes, of course. (TO OTHERS) Flip that. (THEN) We ask thee to bless all the members of this congregation. May you grant them happiness in this world and in the next, peace everlasting.

Ah...

THE "-MEN" HANGS IN THE AIR AS THE REVEREND, STILL BOWED, DOES NOT MOVE. WE CUT TO THE PARISHIONERS, EACH ANXIOUSLY AWAITING THE FINISH TO THE WORD. ALICE RISES, CHECKS HIS PULSE, THEN ADDRESSES THE CONGREGATION.

ALICE

Men. Amen. We will now sing hymn number 16, "The Day Thou Gave Us Has Ended."

The small group begins to sing as we hear the much louder thud of a body falling to the floor.

CUT TO:

B**INT. MEETING HALL - THAT NIGHT**

THE SAME GROUP THAT WAS IN THE CHURCH - MINUS OWEN AND THE DEAD REVEREND - ARE IN THE MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM. EVERY CHURCH HAS ONE: THE PLACE WHERE BEARDED PRE-SCHOOLERS PUT ON NATIVITY PLAYS, TEEN YOUTH GROUPS LOOK FOR LOVE, AND AA MEMBERS SPILL THEIR GUTS. TONIGHT THE FOLDING TABLES AND CHAIRS ARE SET UP FOR THE DIVINE COUNCIL, A GROUP THAT DISCUSSES MATTERS OF THE CHURCH AND TOWN. **DAVID HORTON** (40S, WELL-BRED AND EDUCATED, DOESN'T SUFFER FOOLS GLADLY) IS AT THE HEAD OF THE TABLE. TO HIS RIGHT, PREPARING TO TAKE MINUTES, IS **FRANK POOLE** (A FASTIDIOUS MAN IN HIS 30S WHO COULD VERY WELL BE THE LEAST COOL BLACK MAN IN AMERICA). **ALICE TINKER** (EARLY 20S, DAIRY QUEEN WAITRESS PRETTY, NO ROCKET SCIENTIST) IS SCURRYING AROUND SETTING UP REFRESHMENTS.

DAVID

Well, then, are we all here?

FRANK

Yes, all except Mr. Newitt.

ALICE

And me, Alice Tinker.

DAVID

(PAINED) But you are here.

ALICE

But I'm not *usually* here. I'm just here to set up the welcome reception for the new Reverend.

DAVID'S SON **HUGO HORTON** (EARLY 20S, CUTE, SHY, QUITE DIM) LOOKS AT ALICE LIKE SHE'S A RARE JEWEL.

HUGO

(EAGERLY) And what a real awesome job
you've done!

ALICE

Wow, thanks, Hugo.

THEY EXCHANGE SHY GLANCES. AS ALICE EXITS TO GET MORE
GLASSES, DAVID AND HUGO WATCH HER LEAVE WITH VERY DIFFERENT
EXPRESSIONS ON THEIR FACES.

DAVID

I hope to God the new minister gives
that pea brain the heave ho.

HUGO

But, Dad, she's so--

DAVID

(CUTTING HIM OFF) Moving on. I call
this meeting of the Council to order,
David Horton President, Frank Poole
taking minutes. First, I think we
should acknowledge the passing of
Reverend Pottle, who was a great
servant to Divine, ever since his
arrival as a young...ish man in 1927.

JIM TROTT (30+, CRUSTY, WARY, A TRULY WEIRD DUDE) CLEARS HIS
THROAT. BECAUSE HE IS SO CIRCUMSPECT HE HAS AN ODD WAY OF
ANSWERING ALL QUESTIONS INITIALLY IN THE NEGATIVE.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Something to add, Jim?

JIM

Nope. Nope. Nope. (THEN) Yeah. How do we know he wasn't poisoned?

DAVID

The man was a hundred and two. He was hardly cut down in his prime. Now then. On to the first order of business, which is the completely and utterly disastrous appointment of Geraldine Granger as our new minister.

AS ALICE RE-ENTERS:

MRS. CROPLEY

Why, because she's a female?

DAVID

No, because one of the least moral people to ever disgrace our town is going to be our moral leader. *And* because she's a female. Call me old-fashioned, but I just don't like this growing trend of women ministers. Jesus had Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, not Sharon, Tracy, Tara and Debbie.

HE CHUCKLES AT HIS OWN CLEVERNESS, THEN NOTICES HE IS LAUGHING ALONE, CLEARS HIS THROAT AND MOVES ON.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I'll give her a few days for appearances then send a letter to the Georgia Church Council asking for her removal.

MRS. CROPLEY (60+, OVERLY-POUFFED SOUTHERN BELLE) LOOKS UP FROM HER KNITTING.

MRS. CROPLEY

I heard she certainly was popular with the boys in this town.

DAVID

(RUEFULLY) And the married men.

FRANK

I heard she was arrested for public drunkenness at 14.

ALICE

She was our own real life Drew Barrymore.

DAVID

Drew Barrymore is real.

ALICE

Who said she wasn't?

DAVID

No, it's just that that expression is normally used for fictional characters...(NOTING BLANK STARES) Oh, never mind.

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

(SIGHS) You know, I just thought with the right kind of minister we could get people back into church and get this town on a firm moral course.

HUGO

Reverend Pottle knew right from wrong.

DAVID

It also would've been nice if he knew Tuesday from a doorknob.

AGAIN, DAVID LAUGHS AT HIS OWN JOKE. AGAIN, ALONE.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Why do I even try?

OWEN NEWITT (30S, TOTAL GOOD OL' BOY) ENTERS, DRIPPING WET. HE SHAKES OFF HIS NASCAR CAP AND PUTS IT BACK ON.

OWEN

Sorry, I'm late. It's raining like a cow peeing on a flat rock out there.

DAVID

We're discussing the new minister.

OWEN

I'll tell you what, I do not like the idea of a female minister.

DAVID

Finally, someone else with traditional values.

OWEN

I'll be spending the whole sermon undressing her with my eyes.

MRS. CROPLEY

I used to do that with Reverend Pottle. (OFF THEIR LOOKS) Not *recently*. (DEFENSIVELY) Well, there weren't many men around during World War II. (FARAWAY LOOK) He had this one vestment... The fabric worn so thin that when the sunlight shone at a certain angle-

SFX: SOUND OF A CAR ON THE GRAVEL DRIVE.

ALICE

I hear the taxi! She's here!

THEY ALL RACE TO THE WINDOW TO WATCH HER GET OUT OF THE CAB.

FRANK

She looks respectable.

MRS. CROPLEY

Very well-dressed.

DAVID

That means nothing. You can dress up a goat in a prom dress, it doesn't mean you can take it to the dance.

OWEN

Tell me about it.

GERALDINE GRANGER (30+, INCREDIBLY APPEALING LOOKING AND FULL OF LIFE) ENTERS, PUTS DOWN HER SUITCASE AND SOAKED UMBRELLA AND NOTICES THE CHAMPAGNE ON THE TABLE.

GERRY

Oh, thank God, you've got alcohol.
 (REALIZING) Oh. Sorry. Probably not
 the best opening line for the new
 minister, is it? (UNBUTTONING HER
 COAT) It's just that with the storm
 the flight was so horrible I thought
 you were going to have two preachers
 bite it in one week!

SHE TURNS TO HANG UP HER COAT AND TURNS BACK TO REVEAL THAT SHE IS TRULY A LOVELY WOMAN, AND SUCH A FAR CRY FROM REVEREND POTTLE THAT THEY ARE ALL MOMENTARILY STUNNED INTO SILENCE.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Hi, I'm Geraldine. Boo!

DAVID RECOVERS FIRST.

DAVID

Yes, of course. Everyone, this is
 Reverend Geraldine Granger.
 (RELUCTANTLY) Our new minister. (THEN,
 EXTENDING HAND) Hello, Geraldine, it's
 been a long time.

GERRY

(TAKING HIS HAND) Yes it has. (THEN TO
 THE OTHERS) The rest of you I'm sorry
 I don't know. I didn't spend a lot of
 time in church, back in the day.
 (APPROACHING HUGO) Hi, I'm Geraldine.
 Call me Gerry.

HUGO

Hi, I'm Hugo, call me Hugo.

GERRY

Do you mind if I say that that is a
devastatingly handsome sweater, Hugo.

THE SHY, SLOUCHING HUGO INSTANTLY STANDS UP A BIT STRAIGHTER.

HUGO

Is it? (THEN) I'm David's son.

GERRY

I was wondering where you got those
beautiful eyes.

DAVID

I didn't know flirting was part of the
seminary syllabus.

GERRY

Oh, it's the whole second year.

ALICE

Hi, I'm Alice, the minister's
assistant.

DAVID

(QUICKLY) Though that doesn't mean she
has to be your--

GERRY

(TO ALICE) Oh, would you like to keep
the job?

ALICE

I'd love to!

DAVID REGISTERS REGRET, HIS CHANCE TO GET RID OF THIS IDIOT GONE.

OWEN

(EXTENDING HAND) Owen Newitt.

GERRY

(NOTING CAP AND JACKE) Let me guess...
you're a Nascar fan.

OWEN

Nascar's my life. Nascar and goats.

GERRY

Well, well. A Renaissance man.

MRS. CROPLEY

(EXTENDING HAND) And I'm Letitia
Cropley. I'm the church organist and
I was also Miss Divine of 19--

GERRY

(UTTERLY TRANSPARENT FLATTERY) Let me
guess. 1998.

MRS. CROPLEY

Yes!

GERRY LOOKS SHOCKED.

OWEN

(SHAKING HEAD) Weak field that year.

MRS. CROPLEY

My family once owned the plantation
that is now most of Divine.

ALICE

And get this, Frank here, his great--
great-grandfather used to work for her
great-great-grandfather.

GERRY

(STRAINED "HOW TO PUT A GOOD FACE ON
SLAVERY" SMILE) *Really.*

FRANK

Yes. He was the first black attorney
in the state. And his son was an
attorney and his son and his son.

GERRY

(RELIEVED) Oh, well, that's great!
And are you also an attorney?

FRANK

No, no, I'm the family rebel. I'm an
accountant. And like 72.839% of
Divine I work for (INDICATING DAVID)
Horton Peanuts. But I'm also the
director of Divine's Department of
Cultural Affairs. Just last year I
played the lead in Hamlet. (FARAWAY
LOOK) "To be or not to be"--

DAVID

Most of the audience was rooting for
the latter.

GERRY STIFLES A GRIN AS SHE APPROACHES A WARY LOOKING JIM.

GERRY

And you are?

JIM

Nope. Nope. Nope. Jim.

GERRY

You *are* Jim or you're not Jim?

JIM

I'm Jim.

GERRY WAITS FOR MORE. NOTHING COMES.

GERRY

O-kay, then. (THEN) How about I pour some champagne and we get this party started. (AS SHE POURS) And if you don't mind, I'd like to say a few words. Listen, I know what people here think of me. I'm like the down home Hester Prynne.

THEY ALL LOOK LOST, EXCEPT DAVID.

DAVID

I got it.

GERRY

I'm the prodigal daughter.

NOW THEY ALL NOD.

GERRY (CONT'D)

But when this position became available I figured God was trying to tell me something.

(MORE)

GERRY (CONT'D)

So I volunteered to come here. And sure, part of it is to make amends for the past.

SHE LOOKS AT DAVID. HE LOOKS AWAY.

GERRY (CONT'D)

But mostly I want to do great things for this town and this church and I'm open to any and all suggestions.

AFTER A BEAT, HUGO RAISES HIS HAND TENTATIVELY.

HUGO

Well, I've always kinda wanted to clap after hymns.

BEFORE DAVID CAN OBJECT:

GERRY

Great idea! And you can clap after my sermon, too, if you like.

DAVID

But-

MRS. CROPLEY

How about a senior's single night?

GERRY

Sounds hot.

OWEN

And I think we should switch to real wine for communion.

JIM

Nope. Nope. Nope. Yeah. That grape juice is bullcrap.

GERRY

Done. And I was thinking about inviting guest speakers from other religions to come and share their views.

DAVID

Now hold on a min-

FRANK

I rather like the idea of hearing about the tenets of other faiths.

OWEN

Yeah, we can hear all the kooky stuff other people believe before they all go to hell.

GERRY

Well, I can't wait to get to work.
(RAISING GLASS) And I also can't help but think that God has a hand in all this and unless I'm reading the signs wrong, he wants me right here!

AS SHE RAISES HER GLASS HEAVENWARD, WE HEAR A BOLT OF ANGRY, WRATHFUL THUNDER AND LIGHTNING. THE LIGHTS GO OUT AND WE HEAR A SICKENING CRASH.

CUT TO:

C**INT. CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER**

An enormous tree has fallen through the stained glass window. Everyone stares for a shocked beat, then David turns to Geraldine.

DAVID

What were you saying about signs from
God?

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO**D****FADE IN:****EXT. CHURCH - THE NEXT DAY**

THE HURRICANE IS OVER, BUT THERE IS DEBRIS EVERYWHERE. TWO TEN-YEAR-OLD BOYS (PICTURE RICKY BOBBY'S FOUL-MOUTHED KIDS FROM *TALEDEGA NIGHTS*) STAND BY THEIR BIKES APPRAISING GERRY AS SHE BENDS OVER PICKING UP PIECES OF BROKEN STAINED GLASS.

BOY #1

Not bad.

BOY #2

I like (SOMEWHAT OFF COLOR COMPLIMENT SPECIFIC TO ACTRESS WE CAST).

BOY #1

My mom said in high school she always wore the shortest skirts.

GERRY STAND UP AND TURNS TO THEM.

GERRY

Okay, boys, move along.

THEN, AS THEY WALK BY HER:

BOY #2

("SOTTO" TO FRIEND) My dad said he'd still like to give her one.

GERRY

All right, now, that's enough. (THEN,
CONSPIRATORIALLY) Who *is* your dad?

AS THE BOYS CROSS AWAY, ALICE JOINS GERRY.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Oh, hello, Alice.

ALICE

Hey, Reverend. Gosh, what a mess.

AS SHE HELPS PICK UP DEBRIS:

ALICE (CONT'D)

So, how's it going?

GERRY

Well, I spent most of the morning
visiting parishioners and the good
news is that the hurricane didn't do
too much damage. Nothing like the
devastation down south.

ALICE

I know. Those poor people.

GERRY STRAIGHTENS UP AND RUBS HER BACK.

GERRY

I need a break. And I have some
questions about the goings on here.
(AS THEY WALK) First of all, what kind
of crowd are we pulling to the Sunday
gigs?

ALICE

Oh, like... (COUNTING CAREFULLY) Six.

GERRY

That's it?

ALICE

Of course, Christmas and Easter are different.

GERRY

Great, how many?

ALICE

Five. Mrs. Cropley goes to visit her sister in Atlanta. Y'know, I always thought we could get more people if we had church just once a month, so going to church would be like the town's period. Unless you're like me and it's every 22 days.

GERRY

I *really* don't know what to say to that.

THEY REACH THE DOOR. GERRY OPENS IT.

RESET TO:

INT. GERRY'S RECTORY COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

THIS IS A TYPICAL SOUTHERN-COMFORT COTTAGE, WITH MANY OF THE DOODADS AND WHATNOTS HAVING A SPIRITUAL FLAVOR. THERE ARE MANY MOVING BOXES STILL UNPACKED. AS THEY ENTER, GERRY SEES ALICE'S EYES GO TO AN ALMOST EMPTY BOX OF CHOCOLATES AND BOTTLE OF WINE.

GERRY

Last night's dinner. I just quit smoking, so I'm replacing cigarettes with chocolate and wine.

ALICE

Gosh, I wish I had your discipline.

GERRY OFFERS ALICE A CHOCOLATE AND SHE TAKES ONE AS THEY SIT:

ALICE (CONT'D)

So what other questions you got?

GERRY

What's the deal with that "nope nope nope" guy?

ALICE

Oh, Jim? He's all into government conspiracies and such. His whole trailer's full of surveillance equipment and weapons and books on aliens.

GERRY

How does he make a living?

ALICE

He's our Mayor. (OFF GERRY'S LOOK) The other candidate was a real nut job.

(THEN) So what else you wanna know?

GERRY TAKES A BREATH.

GERRY

Okay... There was this guy I... Do you know a ... Blake Jones?

ALICE

No, don't know him, but I've seen him. Some guys just look good in a pair of jeans, y'know?

GERRY

Yeah, I do. He also had a tongue that could've been on the Olympic gymnastics team.

ALICE

(SHOCKED) Reverend.

GERRY

I'm serious. He could've scrambled eggs with it at twenty paces.

ALICE

Reverend!

GERRY

Well, that was a long time ago. Let's just say he's one of my many regrets.

ALICE

Well, I don't have a lot of info in that department.

GERRY

Watch and learn, kid, watch and learn.

ALICE

My dad said he'd kill me if he caught
me with a guy.

GERRY

(SMILING) *All* dads say that.

ALICE

Well, he said it when I was visiting
him in prison so it kinda had the ring
of truth to it.

CUT TO:

E**INT. MEETING HALL - DAY**

DAVID, HUGO, OWEN, FRANK, JIM AND MRS. CROPLEY ARE THERE.

DAVID

So, as promised, I've drafted a letter which asks that she should immediately be removed from her new position.

MRS. CROPLEY

But, David --

DAVID

No buts, we agreed on this. And I don't need to remind you that there's nobody here who doesn't work for me or have a friend or relative who does.

THIS SHUTS THEM UP FAST. GERALDINE ENTERS WEARING A "MINISTERS DO IT ON SUNDAY" T-SHIRT. DAVID SEES IT AND IS NONE TOO PLEASED.

GERRY

Hello, everyone.

GERRY TAKES A SEAT NEXT TO HUGO.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Hugo, yet another dazzling sweater.
The girls just aren't safe around
here, are they?

HUGO BEAMS.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Oh, and Jim, I looked through your
surveillance photos (TO FRANK) while I
listened to *The Mikado*. (SINGING) "*On
a bridge by a river a little tom tit.*"

FRANK

(THRILLED, SINGING BACK) "*Sang willow
tit willow tit willow.*"

OWEN

What the--?

GERRY

(TO JIM) And I do believe I saw some
definite paranormal activity.

JIM

Nope. Nope. Nope. (EXTREMELY
VALIDATED) Thank you.

GERRY

Well, my apologies for being late. I
was out making the rounds when Gracie
Tuttle went into labor. I helped
deliver a baby boy!

EVERYONE AD-LIBS PLEASED COMMENTS.

DAVID

You never forget that moment.

GERRY

Why, you old softie.

OWEN

Was it as ratfaced ugly as her other brats?

GERRY

Owen!

THEN, UNABLE TO RESIST, GERRY MAKES A RAT-LIKE FACE AND NODS "YES."

DAVID

Geraldine, we have drafted a letter-

GERRY

Oh, just a sec, the weirdest thing, everybody insists we should replace the stained-glass window with the same scene, but no one could agree on what the scene was.

MRS. CROPLEY

I always thought it was Jesus feeding the five thousand.

JIM

Nope. Nope. Nope. Yeah. (THEN) I don't know.

OWEN

He was too fat for Jesus. It was
Moses.

HUGO

I didn't know Moses was fat.

GERRY

Oh, please. That long beard? Total
jowl hider.

DAVID

Frankly it doesn't matter what the
window was.

GERRY

You can't remember either?

DAVID

(EMBARRASSED) No. But the point is
I've made some calls and it'll cost a
minimum of \$40,000 to replace it.

JIM

You could get someone killed for that.

GERRY

Do you know that from personal
experience?

JIM

Nope, nope, nope--

GERRY

(INTERRUPTING) Stop there.

DAVID

We can't afford it.

GERRY

I won't listen to that. "Can't" isn't in the Christian vocabulary.

HUGO

Yes it is. You can't commit adultery, you can't steal.

OWEN

You can't even covet your neighbor's ass, even if it is big and round and shifts from side to side when she's hanging the laundry.

GERRY

I just meant we can achieve anything if we believe in it. We'll find out what the window was and we'll get the money. Anyway, David, I'm sorry, something about a letter?

DAVID

We have drafted a letter to the head of the Georgia Church Council.

GERRY

Oh, Fred, he's such a doll.

DAVID

Frank, as Secretary to the council, I think you should read it.

FRANK

I'd rather not. (OFF DAVID'S LOOK) Oh,
all right. (READING) "Dear Reverend
Lare--

GERRY

Oh, you might want to mention his trip
to Africa, something like, "welcome
back from your triumphant conference."
He'll be eating out of your hand.

FRANK

Thank you. "Dear Reverend Lare,
Welcome back from your triumphant
conference."

GERRY SMILES AND NODS.

FRANK (CONT'D)

"As you are aware, your appointment
for our new minister has arrived and
we must say that we are all deeply
unhappy with her. We believe she will
not fit in with our very conservative
community and trust that you will
respect our wishes and withdraw this
unacceptable appointment." Signed,
"The Council of the First Church of
Divine."

GERRY

Wow. Didn't see that one coming.

(TRYING TO LIGHTEN THE MOOD) Now I know how the stained glass window felt. (RISING) Speaking of which, I'm off to call every rich person I know to hit them up for donations.

DAVID

But the letter...

GERRY

If that's how you feel I can't stop you from sending it, but my focus is on writing my first sermon and raising the money to fix the window. It happened on my watch. (EXITING) By the way, Stuart's a democrat, so I'd avoid the word "conservative." "Traditional community" would work better.

CUT TO:

H**INT. DAVID HORTON'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING**

DAVID IS IN AN ELEGANTLY DECORATED ROOM, GOING OVER SOME DOCUMENTS. ON THE RADIO, THE FARM REPORT IS FINISHING UP AND GARTH BROOK'S "AIN'T GOING DOWN" STARTS PLAYING. DAVID, ABSENTMINDEDLY STARTS TAPPING HIS PEN TO THE BEAT, THEN HIS TOES, AND BEFORE LONG HE IS ON HIS FEET AIR GUITARING AND DANCING ACROSS THE ROOM UNAWARE THAT GERRY AND HUGO ARE THERE. HE INSTANTLY TURNS IT OFF.

GERRY

Well, you're no Mario Lopez, but
you're better than Tucker Carlson.

HUGO

Hey, Dad, guess who's here?

DAVID

Hugo, I can see who's here.

HUGO

And doesn't she look great?

DAVID

(AWKWARD) Well, yes, that's a very
flattering color on you.

GERRY

So is the blush in your cheeks.

DAVID CLEARS HIS THROAT AND HUGO EXITS, LEAVING DAVID AND GERRY AND A WHOLE LOT OF TENSION. GERRY NOTICES A FRAMED PHOTO OF DAVID AND A WOMAN.

GERRY (CONT'D)

David, I was so sorry to hear about your wife. I didn't know.

DAVID

Thank you. Not something I can quite talk about yet. The church helps.

(THEN, QUICKLY CHANGING THE SUBJECT)

So... how's the fund-raising going?

GERRY

I've called every rich person I know and gotten completely shot down. It's kind of funny, actually. You tell you friends you're addicted to cocaine and they don't blink an eye, you tell them you've found God and they look at you like you're on drugs. (BEAT, THEN)

But then I realized there was one rich person I hadn't spoken to. You.

DAVID

Gerry, under different circumstances I might contribute, but I can't in good conscience invest in the church when I don't like the direction it's going.

GERRY TAKES THIS IN.

GERRY

Oh, David, let's stop this. We need to talk.

DAVID

I'd really rather not.

GERRY PICKS UP ANOTHER FRAMED PHOTO OF A WOMAN WITH CHILDREN.

GERRY

So...how is your sister?

DAVID

The divorce was hard on her and the kids. And also hard on me now that they've moved so far away.

GERRY

I was real young and real stupid.

DAVID

You were old enough to know better and you've *never* been stupid. You certainly knew he was married. Luckily, I was able to keep it from becoming public knowledge, not an easy thing to do in this gossipy place.

GERRY

But David, don't you understand that's part of the reason I'm back here? To make up for things I've done?

DAVID

I know the church teaches forgiveness and believes in redemption... but some things are unforgivable. And I'm not going to change.

GERRY TAKES THIS IN AND LOOKS AT THE PICTURE AGAIN, THEN:

GERRY

I'll tell you what. Don't send that
letter. If you pay for the window,
I'll leave and you can find the kind
of minister you want. Deal?

DAVID

Deal.

CUT TO:

J

INT. GERRY'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

ALICE IS IN THE KITCHEN MAKING COFFEE. GERRY IS WORKING ON HER SERMON AND WATCHING COVERAGE OF THE STORM ON TELEVISION.

TV ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

It's hard to believe that the damage could rival last year's devastation, but as you can see from this footage of the hardest hit areas...

GERRY IS CLEARLY SADDENED BY WHAT SHE SEES.

SFX: KNOCK AT DOOR.

GERRY MUTES THE TV.

GERRY

Come in.

HUGO ENTERS.

HUGO

Hey, it's me, Hugo.

GERRY

Y'know you can really stop introducing yourself every time I see you.

HUGO

I'm just kinda the sort of person people forget.

ALICE ENTERS WITH A TRAY OF HOT CHOCOLATE.

ALICE

(BIG GRIN) Oh, hey, Hugo!

GERRY

(TO HUGO, MEANINGFULLY) Not everyone.

HUGO

Hey, Alice.

ALICE

Hey.

HUGO

Hey.

ALICE CARRIES IN THE TRAY AS GERRY DABS HER EYES. DURING THE FOLLOWING ALICE AND HUGO SIT ON THE COUCH.

HUGO (CONT'D)

Wait, have you been crying?

GERRY

God, how embarrassing. I'm such a crybaby. I cry at everything.

HUGO

Oh, me too. Every year at Christmas when I watch Rudolph (GETTING CHOKED UP) and his nose cover pops off...

ALICE

(GETTING EQUALLY CHOKED UP) And the other bucks make fun of his real nose...

THEY BOTH TRY TO HOLD BACK TEARS.

HUGO

Anyway... Dad said you're leaving and I just want to say that because my father is the most powerful man in Divine, a lot of people are intimidated by him and do everything he wants.

GERRY

Like you?

HUGO

Well, yes.

GERRY

Y'know, Hugo, you're a capable guy. You could leave your father's house and stand up on your own two feet, make your own way in the world. Date who you want to date...

GERRY, STANDING BEHIND THE COUCH, PUTS HER HANDS ON THEIR SHOULDERS AND PUSHES THEM CLOSER TOGETHER.

GERRY (CONT'D)

...even if you know your father would hate it.

SHE PUSHES THEM EVEN CLOSER TO TOGETHER. WITH THEIR BODIES PRESSED CLOSE THEY ARE THRILLED AND TERRIFIED.

HUGO

Wow... Wow. But I was more talking about you. You don't have to leave just cuz he says so.

ALICE

He's right.

GERRY

I know that, guys. My leaving is my own choice.

HUGO

Oh. Then why are you crying?

GERRY

Oh, not about me. The hurricane. Kinda hard to feel sorry for myself when you see people going through this.

ALICE

Makes you feel so helpless.

SHE UN-MUTES THE TV.

ANNOUCER (V.O.)

Tens of thousands are homeless, many of them very young or very old. For donations, please call the 800 number on the screen now.

GERRY PICKS UP A PAD AND BEGINS TO WRITE.

GERRY

I can always take the bus back to New York, right?

CUT TO:

K**INT. MEETING HALL - NEXT DAY**

ALL THE COUNCIL MEMBERS, EXCEPT OWEN AND GERRY, ARE PRESENT.
OWEN ENTERS.

OWEN

Sorry I'm late, but my farm's a muddy
mess and for some reason my goats
won't mate. And I've tried
everything.

DAVID

Please don't elaborate.

OWEN

I've given them music, candles, wine,
edible panties.

DAVID

When did everyone stop listening to
me?

GERRY ENTERS. ALL EYES TURN TO HER.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Oh, yes, that's when.

GERRY

Hello, all. I've got a couple of
announcements to make.

(MORE)

GERRY (CONT'D)

First of all, thanks to a very generous anonymous donor, we have enough money to replace the window!

THEY ALL CLAP.

GERRY (CONT'D)

My second announcement is that, in principle, I agree with the letter to the national council, and I will be leaving Divine.

THEY STOP CLAPPING.

MRS. CROPLEY

But we never voted on that letter.

DAVID

We most certainly--

OWEN

Let's have a vote now. I propose we give the Reverend a chance, at least see if she craps out on Sunday.

ALL EXCEPT DAVID RAISE THEIR HANDS IN SUPPORT OF GERALDINE.

DAVID

Okay, fine, but you could save a lot of time and give the sermon now, no one but the people in this room are going to show up anyway.

CUT TO:

L

INT. CHURCH - SUNDAY MORNING

THE CHURCH IS PACKED TO THE RAFTERS. THE NEW WINDOW IS DRAPED WITH A CURTAIN. GERRY STANDS AT THE PULPIT.

GERRY

In the name of the father, the son and
the holy spirit, amen.

CROWD

Amen.

GERRY

I'd like to start by singing "Zippidee
Doo Dah" because it is such an
incredible thrill to see you all here.
And as much as I'd like to think you
came today to seek spiritual guidance
in these troubled times, (GEORGIA
DRAWL) how many of y'all came to see
the slut in the pulpit? Show of
hands.

THE VAST MAJORITY OF PARISHIONERS RAISE THEIR HANDS.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Well, at least you're honest. Listen, I know you're all dying to hear about how I hit rock bottom, in bed with four guys lying in my own vomit, and then found the Lord. But it didn't happen that way. First of all, four guys is just silly. There was no epiphany - it was gradual and uncomfortable. The truth is, when I was growing up, religion was so at odds with my hormones and the music I liked and the material things I wanted that I tamped it down. And yes, I took it to an extreme. Like a lot of us, I became a closeted believer. Sure we let it seep out a bit at Christmas, but some time around the January white sales we shut the door again. For me, it just got to the point where I had to come out of the closet. And once again (INDICATING COLLAR) I took it to an extreme.

GERRY (CONT'D)

We all know the expression "to err is human, to forgive divine." Well, I've definitely erred, and I've asked for (LOOKING HEAVENWARD) Divine forgiveness and now I'm asking for forgiveness from (INDICATING THEM) Divine.

WE SEE THE PARISHIONERS TAKE THIS IN, ONE OF THEM DAVID.

GERRY (CONT'D)

And whether you give it to me or not, you've got to admit that's clever.

AT THIS MOMENT, A VERY NICE-LOOKING MAN GERRY'S AGE ENTERS AND TAKES A SEAT. GERRY'S EYES WIDEN, BUT ALICE'S GO EVEN WIDER AS SHE FRANTICALLY MOUTHS: "IT'S BLAKE! IT'S BLAKE!"

GERRY (CONT'D)

(POINTEDLY TO ALICE) *I know* (THEN CONTINUING) I am on the right path now.

VERY MUCH AWARE OF BLAKE'S PRESENCE, GERRY CASUALLY TRIES TO CHECK HER APPEARANCE BY USING THE LARGE, SHINY CROSS AROUND HER NECK AS A MIRROR. SHE CAN'T HELP BUT LET HER VOICE TAKE ON A MORE GIRLISH TONE AS SHE FLIPS HER HAIR SAUCILY AND SMILES BIG AS SHE LOOKS AT BLAKE.

GERRY (CONT'D)

So here I am, back home, totally yours. Any time, any place.

YES, SHE IS SIMULTANEOUSLY PREACHING AND FLIRTING. A WOMAN ENTERS AND SITS DOWN NEXT TO BLAKE AND TAKES HIS HAND. ALICE CAN'T HIDE HER DISAPPOINTMENT, BUT GERRY TRIES TO HIDE HERS.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Because... I know God and faith are
invaluable in helping us through
life's many challenges and
disappointments.

A CHILD IN THE FRONT PEW TUGS ON HIS MOTHER'S DRESS.

CHILD

(LOUD WHISPER) Mama, when's she gonna
stop talking and show the new window?

GERRY

(WHISPERING EQUALLY LOUDLY) How about
right now? (THEN) Would the members of
Council come up and do the honors?

DAVID, HUGO, OWEN, FRANK, ALICE AND MRS. CROPLEY HEAD TO THE
FRONT OF THE CHURCH.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Now, before we unveil the window, I
want to say that our very generous,
anonymous donor said that whatever
money we didn't spend could be sent to
the families displaced by the
hurricane. So, I am delighted to
unveil the new window of the First
Church of Divine.

THE VEILING DROPS TO REVEAL A PLAIN, CLEAR GLASS WINDOW
THROUGH WHICH WE SEE THE LOVELY FIELDS OF DIVINE ON A
PERFECT, SUNNY MORNING. THE CROWD GASPS.

MRS. CROPLEY

Oh!

JIM

You can see right through it.

ALICE

Lovely morning.

HUGO

Nice job.

DAVID

How much did it cost?

GERRY

About five hundred. I just felt that if I spent the whole thirty thousand on the window, ever time I looked at it all I'd see is the storm families.

DAVID LOOKS THROUGH THE WINDOW.

DAVID

(CLEARLY MOVED) I've always thought it to be the finest view in town. (TO GERRY) Good decision.

OWEN

Well, I mean when it comes down to it, you can't beat God's own creation, can you?

HUGO STARTS THE CLAPPING AND THE WHOLE CONGREGATION, INCLUDING DAVID, RISES AND JOINS IN.

GERRY

Well, since we're all on our feet, how about we sing hymn number 300, and I think it sounds best if you shout your lungs out and use a little jazz hands on the "Bread of Heaven" part.

As she leads them into song, Alice turns to her.

ALICE

(SOTTO) I think you're in.

GERRY

(SOTTO) We'll see.

Geraldine smiles at him and they both join in the song.

CUT TO:

MINT. GERRY'S COTTAGE - DAY

Gerry is telling Alice a joke. (This will be a weekly feature.)

GERRY

So, there's this nun, right and she's taking a bath and there's this knock at the door.

ALICE

Oh, dear.

GERRY

Yeah. And she says, "Who is it?" And a man's voice says, "It's the blind man, may I come in?" She thinks for a sec and she says, alright then, come in. So this guy comes in and says, "Nice knockers, where do you want me to hang the blind?"

ALICE

(SHOCKED) Oh!

GERRY

No, see, she thought he couldn't see her, but, he's not blind, he's there to put up the blinds.

ALICE

(THEN GETTING IT, LAUGHING) Oh!

GERRY

Yes.

ALICE

Oh!

AND AS ALICE CONTINUES TO LAUGH MORE AND MORE HYSTERICALLY
AND GERRY LOOKS ON, WONDERING WHAT THE HECK SHE'S GOTTEN
HERSELF INTO, WE...

END OF ACT THREE

CHYRON: BLESS YOU FOR WATCHING...

END OF SHOW