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THE VASE

A modern farce adapted from Kleist’s “The Broken Jug”

by

Laura Lewis-Barr

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THE VASE
by Laura Lewis-Bar

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

REVEREND ADAM APPLE; 40-50, leader of the Church of Generous Giving. Charismatic, sensual, ethically challenged.

DEACON WILEY; older than Reverend Adam. Long suffering, expert at the “slow burn.”

JOY; 20’s. Sexy secretary, not too bright.


MARTHA; Eve’s mother, 50-60.

TOM; Roger’s Father, 60’s. (Optional double cast as MAN FROM CONGREGATION)

EVE; 20’s, in love with Roger.

ROGER; 20’s, in love with Eve. (Optional double cast as PR MAN SWARMY)

BRIDGET; old woman in love with Reverend Sammy.

MR. SWARMY; PR MAN for the “Odysseys in Faith” tour

MAN FROM CONGREGATION

CAMERA CREW/CAMERA MAN

SETTING:

A simple church sanctuary space; A few pews and stained glass windows

ETC:

Ages in character descriptions are suggestions only.
THE VASE
by Laura Lewis-Barr

THE PLAY

(AT RISE: inside the church, the charismatic REVEREND ADAM sits under an open stained glass window examining his torn clothing, cleaning a wound on his leg, and feeling some bumps on his head. The area is strewn with debris; blankets, sheets, empty cans, old food, etc. In one area is a table constructed on hymnals. DEACON WILEY enters looking through some papers. HE does not look up.)

WILEY
Morning Reverend. I don’t suppose you got around to looking at these expense reports as I asked you to. *(REVEREND ADAM moans)* No. Most certainly not. From the amount of....cleaning....that goes on here you could take a tax cut on an unseen Laundromat. *(REVEREND ADAM moans again)* Ok. So the metaphor was a bit— *(Looks up)* What happened?

REVEREND ADAM

What?

WILEY
You look...

REVEREND ADAM
Oh. I cut myself shaving…

WILEY
You look like you fell…

REVEREND ADAM
That too.

WILEY
…down a canyon?

REVEREND ADAM
I fell over myself. We each have a stumbling block within ourselves, Yes? I know you do.

*(REVEREND ADAM applies bandages.)*

WILEY
This was not a stumbling block—it was a boulder. *(Goes to touch a wound; REVEREND ADAM reacts)* Was it this morning?
REVEREND ADAM
Yes. Very early.

WILEY
It looks like someone punched you—Did you get punched? (Aside) You probably deserved it...

REVEREND ADAM
I had a bad dream. I was fighting the devil. I must have come out of my bed swinging because I found myself on the floor, next to the bed post. I must have banged into that.

WILEY
I’d go back to bed if I were you. You look terrible. (Starts to leave)

REVEREND ADAM
Did you come for any other purpose? Or just your usual spite?

WILEY
What?

REVEREND ADAM
Did you come in for something?

WILEY
Oh, yes! Yes! You scared me so—I forgot what I came in to say. The 6900 club is coming today.

REVEREND ADAM
Deacon Wiley…

WILEY
I’m not sure what time they are coming but it was on television today. You know Reverend Sammy never allows parishes to know when he is to visit… I heard them announce on the air that he is coming here today...

REVEREND ADAM
Wiley—

WILEY
I’m not kidding! The film crew. Reverend Sammy Hammy. Part of the “Odyssey” tour...

REVEREND ADAM
(Distracted; with bandages) Oh yes?...

WILEY
They are on their way. You better clean up.
REVEREND ADAM
Why would the 6900 club want to film at our little church?

WILEY
Word has gotten around, I guess.

REVEREND ADAM
What word?

WILEY
(Dry) Word of your goodness?

REVEREND ADAM
Oh. That.

WILEY
Your wisdom.

REVEREND ADAM
Please. You embarrass me.

WILEY
Anyhow, I thought it only best that you should know.

REVEREND ADAM
Yes, thank you. I appreciate it.

WILEY
I’ll try to clean up the church. The gun club always leaves such a mess… (Going to leave)
Prime time coverage… (To himself) …we’ll have to provide lunch.

REVEREND ADAM
Are you joining us for poker later? Don’t say no. You can’t win and then refuse to play
again.

WILEY
Hello?? Reverend…? Maybe you have a concussion?

REVEREND ADAM
I didn’t get much sleep...

WILEY
What is supposed to be happening here today?

REVEREND ADAM
(Shrugs) Same old—Amway meeting, poker club, City Councilman’s…discussion…
WILEY
Yesterday the tour stopped by the East Side Motor Lodge Church unexpectedly and there was quite a scandal.

REVEREND ADAM
Well…they obviously…they…must have deserved it.

WILEY
Undoubtedly… Well…I won't give you any more bad news. I’m sure you have plenty to do.

REVEREND ADAM
What. What news?

WILEY
Just about Reverend Bob...

REVEREND ADAM
Of the East Motor Lodge Church…?

WILEY
He tried to string himself up from the hydraulic lift.

REVEREND ADAM
While on the air?

WILEY
No. Afterwards. Fortunately a parishioner came in just in time to bring him down—Only minor lacerations…

REVEREND ADAM
What a scandal…tsk, tsk…

WILEY
HE didn’t prepare for Hammy’s visit.

REVEREND ADAM
Of course, I’m sure Bob played everything to his advantage. Hovering over the masses in the church? (Preacher voice) A miracle!

WILEY
He's in the hospital...

REVEREND ADAM
Good for him...

WILEY
His wife has been arrested for financial misdealings...
REVEREND ADAM

I never trusted that woman…

WILEY

Reverend Adam, do you understand the implications of what I am telling you…?

REVEREND ADAM

Have faith Wiley. Have faith… For those who trust in God, etc. etc... Who knows, while his church is in disarray, his parishioners may need another helping hand... We'll have to take out some print advertisements.

WILEY

His house is sealed up! His wife is in jail! They are auditing his books! And going through his mail!

REVEREND ADAM

You made a rhyme. Did you do that on purpose?

WILEY

He'll never preach again.

REVEREND ADAM

Well, to tell the truth, he never had the gift. His flock may be lost for the time being, but they are better off. Maybe some circulars in the area too. We could have a "Carnival Crusade" to get the ball rolling.

WILEY

If you want to be in denial about this, that’s fine with me. It’s your head. (Again moving to leave) But just for the record, Hammy is due here in an hour.

REVEREND ADAM

That's fine... (Finished bandaging; limping toward the exit; beat) An hour...What? An hour? An hour?

WILEY

Finally. You've woken up.

REVEREND ADAM

Well there is nothing to fear. It’s just that... (Grabbing WILEY)... In an hour!!!? Network television??? Maybe we could postpone it. Just till next week. Or next year...

WILEY

I’m sure they're on their way.

REVEREND ADAM

They?
The crew... The fervent followers...

REVEREND ADAM
Yes. Crew. Followers. Well Wiley. We have to help each other now. To make a good impression...

WILEY
(Dry) Of course.

REVEREND ADAM
I mean. I know you’ve wanted to be named a minister here for some years now.

WILEY
Seven years.

REVEREND ADAM
And as I’ve told you, your time is coming. But. Today. For today, I hope that we can put aside any minor frustrations we have had with each other. Any lingering anger you may have regarding that unfortunate incident with the cow...

WILEY
(Dry) You certainly don’t believe I would be one to carry a grudge, do you Reverend?

REVEREND ADAM
Well, of course not but...well shucks...everybody is ambitious! That is one of God's great temptations to man. But you have been so patient. So very patient. And God will surely reward you. As I will. We just have to work together today, to make a good impression and to give the glory, all the glory to God. Yes! And then, afterward, we can happily plan for greater things. Yes?

WILEY
Of course Reverend Adam.

REVEREND ADAM
You can believe me, Wiley. I know that the world is a corrupt place and it is hard to allow ourselves to trust each other... But in our profession! In our profession! Surely, I don't need to explain to you.

WILEY
No, you don’t.

REVEREND ADAM
And when the time comes, I won't forget your friendship. You'll have a parish of your own someday.
A parish…?

REVEREND ADAM
Yes. Just as you always wanted. Your own little kingdom to run as you wish. Bingo extravaganzas. Tent meetings and even your own TV show if you want! But now. We must be silent. And in your modest silence, I learn silence too. *(WILEY looks bored, points to his watch and is about to walk away)* I could make great speeches about public monies and interest yields... Speeches regarding you that the authorities would surely be interested in... *(WILEY stops)* But why should I struggle with the stringing of such words?

WILEY
A waste of time.

REVEREND ADAM
Just so that we understand each other. Neither of us can be accused of the tiniest infidelity!

WILEY
Certainly not—

*(REVEREND ADAM and WILEY begin cleaning the church; folding sheets and blankets as well as throwing away food stuff, pop cans, and other debris from under or on pews.)*

REVEREND ADAM
Certainly not. Certainly not! This visit is a joke. A practical joke. Intended to unnerve me but it will do nothing of the kind. We have nothing to worry about. What can they accuse us of? If at times I’ve chosen to be a bit demonstrative of my love of others. What of that?

WILEY
I’m sure the ladies would never tell. At any rate no one can prove—

REVEREND ADAM
Anything—Yes! That is exactly right. And our books... I never was good at accounting. They will have to accept my shortcomings there. If I’ve been successful. What of that?

WILEY
There is nothing evil about wealth.

REVEREND ADAM
On the contrary, it shows—

TOGETHER
Blessings from God.

REVEREND ADAM
Blessings from God.
(MR. SWARMY, The PR Man from the “Odysseys in Faith” tour enters.)

SWARMY
God bless you, Reverend. (REVEREND ADAM, startled, drops a bunch of aluminum cans) Reverend Hammy is on his way.

WILEY
(Helping REVEREND ADAM pick up cans) Recycling drive... Is he finished in Rockford already?

SWARMY
Yes, his limo has just gotten off the freeway.

REVEREND ADAM
(Yelling) Joy! Faith!

WILEY
Easy, Reverend, Easy...

REVEREND ADAM

WILEY
Yes, praise, God.

(REVEREND ADAM repeats yelling and begins moving much faster with the clean-up; piling his arms full with papers, cans, a beach ball, etc.)

REVEREND ADAM
Joy! Faith!

(Two sexy secretaries, JOY and FAITH enter; JOY carries a bowl of water to give a manicure and FAITH massage oil and a bottle of champagne. FAITH begins to put a sheet on a table made up of hymnals.)

WILEY
(To SWARMY) Reverend's private nurse. And his aide.

JOY
Couldn’t we wait until my soaps are over! Jake is about to propose.

FAITH
He attacked her!

JOY
He didn’t attack her. He has always loved her.
FAITH
You are so naive!

WILEY
Joy, we need your help.

JOY
Forget it. I’m not doing another fashion show!

WILEY
Ladies—

(WILEY stops REVEREND ADAM from moving frantically around. HE does his best to restrain REVEREND ADAM although this is difficult.)

JOY
I told you! This is my last day of work. I’m leaving today.

FAITH
She always says that!

JOY
I’m going to botany school and you can’t talk me out of it!

WILEY
Ladies. We need your help to get Reverend Adam ready for the “Odysseys in Faith” tour. We are all going to be on television!

JOY
I don’t want to be on television. I’m too fat (SHE is not) as it is.

WILEY
You are not fat, Joy.

FAITH
She just says that to get attention.

JOY
That is not true! If you knew the anguish of those of us who have slow metabolisms!

WILEY
(Quietly, to FAITH) We are going to need some makeup for the Reverend. Those television lights are fierce. Could you do that?

FAITH
I haven’t been trained for that. I don’t know what to do! Please. Ask Joy to do it. I’ll do the filing. I like that. I’m good at filing.
WILEY
Just get some of your makeup and bring it here.

FAITH
I’m not sure what color.

WILEY
Just bring out everything you have.

FAITH
But what if he is allergic. He isn’t used to—

WILEY
Just bring it out, Faith. It will be ok… (FAITH exits; to JOY) Joy dearest darling love, could you please—

JOY
You aren’t my boss...

WILEY
Joy. Darling.

JOY
I can’t hear you…

WILEY
Sweetheart, I don’t have time to beg. If you have any feeling of kindness or compassion for Reverend Adam you will help us. (No response; beat) Alright, look at it this way, if you don’t help us you could be out of a job by the end of the day. (No response) How bout twenty bucks for twenty minutes of your time? (Offers bill; SHE takes it) Alright, could you get Reverend Adam’s good blue suit? Then you two can change into your choir robes.

JOY
(Without enthusiasm) Sure. Sure.

(JOY grabs a nearby robe and starts to remove her dress)

WILEY
Over your clothing, Joy.

JOY
Sure. Ok. It will be hot though.

WILEY
Please. For Reverend Adam...
(JOY exits. REVEREND ADAM, recovering his voice, finally breaks away from WILEY and begins to limp around wildly.)

REVEREND ADAM
Praise god. Praise god. Praise god. But really, Dear Mr...

SWARMY
Mr. Swamy. I’m truly not myself today. I think I have a fever, and God forbid that I should infect anyone, especially Reverend Hammy, today...

WILEY
Nonsense, you're fine.

REVEREND ADAM
I’m flush all over! I feel weak. Dizzy. Shaky.

WILEY
You're just excited… And who wouldn't be to have the 6900 club visit your humble congregation.

SWARMY
He should be here in 1/2 an hour.

(FAITH and JOY have entered. While FAITH applies heavy, heavy makeup, including eyeliner and eye shadow, JOY dresses REVEREND ADAM in clean pants and shirt, a vest, jacket and nice shoes.)

WILEY
Have you had breakfast, Swamy?

SWARMY
No. Hammy keeps me on the run all day.

REVEREND ADAM
But, praise God, Mr. Swamy. How long does Reverend Hammy intend to stay? Damnation and thorns! Joy—that hurts… easy with the shoe over my skinned foot! And I can get the zipper myself. Myself!

WILEY
There is a wonderful little diner...
REVEREND ADAM
You should take Reverend Sammy there first… *(Under breath)* Perhaps we could get the cook to—

(A MAN FROM THE CONGREGATION enters and addresses REVEREND ADAM who tries to stop him from speaking but JOY and FAITH have REVEREND ADAM within their grasp; one attempting to button his vest; the other applying makeup which HE keeps ruining with his flailing.)

MAN
Hey Reverend Adam, we’re waiting for you! Are you joining us Wiley? And a new sucker, I mean, guest too? Great. I can feel that I’m hot hot hot. But what about the wine and chips? The tabernacle looks barren.

WILEY
Clean up. We have no time for…the dramatization today.

MAN
Clean up? I just set up...

REVEREND ADAM
*(Hysterical)* Do you watch the 6900 club, man? They are coming here today! An impromptu filming...

A documentary?

SWARMY
“Travels in faith—An Odyssey across America.”

FAITH
Travels in Faith...that's me. I should be the spokesmodel—

SWARMY
We could talk about that...

JOY
Oh, give me a break...

FAITH
Why are you so jealous of me? Live your own life! Leave me alone!

REVEREND ADAM
Really, there is no odyssey here. Nothing is happening here. It is a very boring day. Mondays are very boring.
SWARMY
It’s Sunday, Reverend.

REVEREND ADAM
Sundays are very boring here. And so are Mondays. I could have sworn it was Sunday.

SWARMY
It is Sunday, Reverend.

REVEREND ADAM
Very boring. Sundays, Mondays. Boring, boring...

(SWARMY, with a sigh of exasperation, hurries out.)

WILEY
Reverend Adam, get a hold of yourself.

REVEREND ADAM
I told you, I’m sick. Maybe you could stand in for me.

WILEY
That’s enough ladies. Look what you’ve done; you’ve made him look like some stripper on 10th Avenue. (Hands REVEREND ADAM a mirror; REVEREND ADAM screams) Off, take it all off! (JOY walks away laughing; FAITH looks helpless) Cold cream, do you have cold cream? (FAITH runs off to get it; WILEY turns away so HE doesn’t laugh) So. Everything must go as normal.

REVEREND ADAM
As normal?

WILEY
All right. As it is supposed to go. As they expect it to go. Before the service is the Rite of Healing and Reconciliation, yes?

REVEREND ADAM
I don’t know.

JOY
It's listed on the marquee. As if that meant anything.

WILEY
(To JOY) Go change... (SHE starts to take clothes off again) OVER. Over, Joy.

JOY
(Taking robe and leaving) Too hot.
WILEY

Does anyone come?

(Just offstage, JOY takes off her clothes, throwing parts back onto stage as REVEREND ADAM watches.)

REVEREND ADAM

I imagine they must.

WILEY

To the Rite of Healing and Reconciliation!

REVEREND ADAM

What? Oh. No. It’s turned into a city council meeting, they needed the space. And I appreciated them allowing me to...make suggestions. (Resumes staring offstage at JOY)

WILEY

Listen to me. Reverend Adam... No council meeting. Healing and Reconciliation.

(FAITH enters with cold cream and starts lathering up REVEREND ADAM’S face. JOY comes in using a hymnal to hold grapes. SHE offers some to WILEY.

WILEY

Thank you Joy, but keep the hymnals dry please. We are going to use them later. Where are the Reverend’s vestments?

JOY

He lost them. Somewhere.

REVEREND ADAM

I left them at home. Faith, go ask Reverend Larry down the road if he will lend me his gold brocade robe.

JOY

(Laughing) Reverend Larry, lend you...?

REVEREND ADAM

Go ask him. And give him this... (Reaches in his pocket for bills)

JOY

(Reaching for the bills) He’ll ask about yours. What should I tell him?

REVEREND ADAM

It’s at the cleaners.

JOY

Is it at home or at the cleaners?
REVEREND ADAM
What are you? An attorney?

FAITH
I myself am not a good liar. I need details to be convincing.

REVEREND ADAM
At the cleaners on Fourth.

(WILEY begins dismantling the hymnal-table and placing hymnals in the pews.)

FAITH
Wouldn't the one on Maple be closer? And you are friends with the woman there. It’s what Reverend Larry would expect.

REVEREND ADAM
Whatever you think!

FAITH
And Joy can say that she is bringing it there after you returned with it last night, all black with earth. Which is the truth.

WILEY
What is the truth?

FAITH
I saw the vestments black with dirt.

JOY
Why not just say “dirty?” “Black with dirt.” She thinks she is some kind of poet? “Black with dirt...”

FAITH
I am a poet.

WILEY
Ladies. Ladies. (Pointing at REVEREND ADAM’S face) Shouldn't you take off this cream? Now look, it’s hardened on his face. (To FAITH) Get some water, please... And you, to Reverend Larry!

(FAITH and JOY exit.)

REVEREND ADAM
I have a bad feeling about this Wiley. Reverend Hammy never liked me. Not since we were in the seminary together. I played a few tricks on him. He's set to get me back.
WILEY
You worry too much. Have faith. (REVEREND ADAM reacts) This is quite an honor for you. Think of the exposure.

REVEREND ADAM
That's exactly what I’m thinking of. I had a dream last night. I was at a healing service but I couldn’t get anyone to help me. I was the minister too but I withheld mercy from myself. And then, both minister and petitioner, both of them myself, joined together and ran out down the alley and hid among the trash cans.

WILEY
Sounds symbolic.

REVEREND ADAM
The devil take it.

WILEY
Treat this as just another day. You'll get through it. Without the dramas your subconscious dredges up.

(The REVEREND SAMMY HAMMY enters with the CAMERA CREW.)

REVEREND SAMMY
Reverend Adam. How gracious to see you again after so many years! (Attempts to keep his back to him as HE tries to peel off the cold cream; REVEREND SAMMY moves to embrace him) It has been too long!

REVEREND ADAM
Let me see if I can imagine your congenial face. Those piercing...yet gentle eyes. The thick blond hair.

REVEREND SAMMY
It was brown. Now it’s red from the bottle. Turn around my friend, let me embrace you...

(REVEREND SAMMY gestures to the CAMERA CREW to start filming.)

REVEREND ADAM
No. I’m overcome with the sentiment of this meeting; I mean the emotion of seeing you again.

REVEREND SAMMY
But you haven't seen me yet. Only heard me.

REVEREND ADAM
Like the voice of god.
REVEREND SAMMY
Come come. That is too much. Only his lowly messenger. *(To CAMERA CREW)* How's the lighting in here?

*(REVEREND ADAM is about to run out when FAITH enters with the water.)*

FAITH
Sorry. I couldn't find a clean sponge anywhere. Oh my god. I mean. Sorry. I mean. I can't believe it. Is that really you Reverend Hammy?

REVEREND SAMMY
Oh my dear. What a dear child you are. Yes. It is me. Would you like to say something to the folks at home?

WILEY
*(Interrupting)* On behalf of the Church of Generous Giving, I want to welcome you Reverend Hammy and your Odyssey tour.

REVEREND SAMMY
Thank you. And you are?

WILEY
Frank Wiley. Reverend Adam's deacon. Faith just needed to freshen up his makeup a bit. How's he look Faith?

*(FAITH looks doubtful.)*

REVEREND SAMMY
Now Reverend Adam, dear minister of the people...I don’t have all day... Let me see if you need any stage makeup. *(Goes a look at REVEREND ADAM)* What are you doing? This isn’t the Rocky Horror Picture Show I’m producing here!

FAITH
Have you seen it? I heard that it was very naughty. But fun.

REVEREND SAMMY
Although I must say that this doesn’t surprise me. I’ve heard rumors from your parishioners...

WILEY
Reverend Adam was just, getting a facial, and now a...conditioner. You know, honoring the temple of the spirit...

REVEREND SAMMY
But it is time for the service...

*(WILEY takes over removing REVEREND ADAM’S make-up, pushing FAITH offstage.)*
WILEY
Right you are. Right you are! We’ll take this off, then add a little powder and we’ll be ready to go.

REVEREND SAMMY
You know, it is the purpose of “Travels in Faith—An Odyssey across America” to show the best of this land’s churches but if we have to expose scandalous practices we will! I’m as open minded as the next Reverend but from what I’ve already seen of the Church of Generous Giving—

REVEREND ADAM
Who are you to—

WILEY
(Interjecting) Nobody’s perfect, God knows. And your goodness is so...good...I’m sure that many of our human frailties will disturb your enlightened soul...

REVEREND SAMMY
Well—

REVEREND ADAM
Listen. I’ve known this guy since—

WILEY
And we are sure that if you lend your wisdom to our practices we can continue to grow in holiness, in response to your good example...

REVEREND SAMMY
Thank you. Good to know at least one person on the staff watches my program. (To WILEY, moving him to one side) But tell me, I read your church bulletin and didn’t understand a word. Perhaps you can explain to me what programs you are offering?

REVEREND ADAM
(Stepping in, To REVEREND SAMMY) By all means. By all means. (Offering chair) Sit?

REVEREND SAMMY
(Sits reluctantly) We need to set up for filming.

REVEREND ADAM
You’ve just come from the East Motor lodge church?

REVEREND SAMMY
Yes. How did you hear so fast?

WILEY
A vagrant told us.
REVEREND SAMMY

A vagrant?

REVEREND ADAM

(Distracted) At your service...

REVEREND SAMMY

(Double take) Yes. An unhappy scandal. It doesn’t matter that the networks eat it up. I really have no stomach for such dramatics...

Bob tried to string himself up...?

REVEREND ADAM

If we had any wonder about the truth of the embezzlement charges...his actions spoke his guilt. You won’t mind showing us your books before we’re through...? That kind of openness pleases the networks and sponsors very much.

REVEREND ADAM

We really don’t—

WILEY

A privilege, an honor for us.

REVEREND SAMMY

We need to get started. Tell me, is this the day... (Pulls out bulletin)... is this the day of the... (Reading it)... it looks like “Gamblers Anonymous” meets— but they are taking a riverboat gambling trip?

REVEREND ADAM

To test their resolve...

WILEY

A joke, it is just a river cruise. Tomorrow. But today we have the Healing Rite of Reconciliation...

REVEREND SAMMY

Is that what the crowd outside is gathering for?

(JOY enters.)

JOY

I can’t repeat what Larry told me to tell you— Oh! Reverend Sammy. (Faints)
REVEREND SAMMY
Did you get that on camera, boys? No?! I’ve told you, keep the camera rolling no matter what! We can always edit later! Is she bleeding? We can always have her faint again. You ready? At least get me consoling her. Wait! Give me a minute. (Cops a feel; kisses her) Alright. Now. (Gently taking her hand) My dear...my dear...you sweet angel, it is Reverend Sammy Hammy and you are now part of the “Travels in Faith—An Odyssey across America” tour! (Gently pulls her up, patting her head) Say hello to the folks at home.

JOY
(Affecting a fake pleasant demeanor) Hello. (Mechanically) Rev. Kirby sends his greetings but he cannot spare an extra vestment. He says you never returned the other one.

(JOY faints once again, but this time more dramatically.)

REVEREND SAMMY
What—?

REVEREND ADAM
Oh hell...hello. My only vestment is at the cleaners. I don’t think we can have the service. Without a ritual garment...

REVEREND SAMMY
We have to think of something. The “Travels in Faith” tour is moving ever forward. We cannot wait until you restock your liturgical wardrobe! Go find something!

(REVEREND SAMMY pushes REVEREND ADAM out. HE goes to touch JOY again when MARTHA, TOM, EVE, and ROGER enter noisily.)

MARTHA
You vandals! You will pay!

TOM
Calm down! Not here!

REVEREND SAMMY
What is this? Penitents seeking absolution?

MARTHA
Oh yes, calm down he says...He is so clever—

TOM
Everything will be settled here.

MARTHA
Settled, he says. Settled! Like this vase here? (Holds up smashed ceramic vase) You certainly settled this! My vase remains settled for good!
TOM

If you demonstrate—

REVEREND SAMMY

(Looking for REVEREND ADAM) Reverend REVEREND ADAM, what is this? Are you—

TOM

—that you’ve been damaged by me, I’ll replace it.

MARTHA

You’ll replace it? How will you replace the memories of when I made this vase? How can you replace all of the happy memories I’ve had using it! If I can prove you’re right...such arrogance!

REVEREND SAMMY

Wiley, is this—

TOM

You heard me, you old fart!

MARTHA

Is that the best you can do, old man?—(Moves to fight with him)

TOM

(Holding her back) Why all of your venom? What else can I do? If one of us has broken your damn vase—

REVEREND SAMMY

(To CAMERA CREW) Are you getting this? This is better than Ricki Lake.

TOM

What do you want from me?

ROGER

Come, father, let her be. It’s not the vase, but the smashed wedding plans that have her so broken up. She hopes that with her violence she’ll convince me to change my mind. But I will never marry that slut!

REVEREND SAMMY

(While directing the camera to get him in the shot) My dear son. What is the problem? Surely in this house of prayer we can be reconciled with each other…

MARTHA

(Speaking directly to the camera and REVEREND SAMMY) He is a conceited little punk. I want to patch the wedding up?! Please! I am so relieved to not have him entering our family! (To ROGER) I’d like to break your head.
REVEREND SAMMY

My dear—

EVE

Roger!

ROGER

Get away from me!

EVE

Dearest Roger...

ROGER

Get away, I can’t stand the sight of you.

EVE

Please! This is killing me!

ROGER

You...you whore.

(The OTHERS react to the reference.)

EVE

If you would just give me a moment, I could explain—

ROGER

Go away!

EVE

I heard you are leaving for boot camp tonight! Is that true? What if I never see you alive again? They could ship you out at any time! We can’t leave each other angry.

ROGER

(Softened) I’ll pray for you. That’s all I can do. But the only way you will get peace is if you admit your sins.

MARTHA

(To EVE) Why do you open yourself up to such abuse! There is a more worthy man for you, Mr. Starchy. He is a true military hero. (To the camera) She will be married next week. And then we will have a funeral, theirs or mine. Whoever survives the judgment of my vase!

EVE

Mother! Forget about the vase. If it can’t be mended take all of my savings and buy yourself a better one.
MARTHA
You are so young! Don’t you see that your own virtue was destroyed when this vase was smashed? Do you want to gain a certain reputation? *(To the camera)* And that is why we came here today. To seek the wisdom of the church.

*(REV. ADAM enters wearing a beautician’s plastic smock.)*

REV. ADAM
This is the best…Eve!

EVE
*(Seeing REV. ADAM)* Let’s go!

REV. SAMMY
Finally. You’re back... *(Fingers the plastic smock in disgust)* So there is a case here, a circumstance in need of wisdom and absolution. It seems to concern a broken vase of some kind...

REV. ADAM
*(Too loud)* A vase. A vase? Who broke it?

*(REV. ADAM crosses towards EVE)*

REV. SAMMY
Sit down and listen and you can find out...

REV. ADAM
*(Confidentially)* Dearest Eve.

EVE
*(Also in confidence)* Go away!

But—

EVE
I will hear nothing.

REV. ADAM
Why are you here?

EVE
Get away from me.

REV. ADAM
What does all this mean?
EVE
I’m warning you!

REVEREND ADAM
(To WILEY) This seems like the perfect case for you to try your hand, deacon Wiley...

REVEREND SAMMY
What?

REVEREND ADAM
My wound here… (Pointing to bandaged foot) I’m growing a bit queasy.

WILEY
(Confidentially) This is your chance, the 6900 club! It is your chance to shine. Don’t back away...

REVEREND ADAM
(The same) The hell with it. I’m going to throw up.

WILEY
Do you have a fear of success?

REVEREND ADAM
(To EVE) Are we talking about your mother’s broken vase?

EVE
Yes.

REVEREND ADAM
And nothing else?

EVE
Nothing else.

REVEREND SAMMY
Shouldn’t we start the service, or read a bible passage...

REVEREND ADAM
(Soft to EVE) Be wise! I know Roger’s boot camp captain...

EVE
You slime.

REVEREND SAMMY
We need to see and HEAR your counsel, Reverend Adam. We need it to be loud enough for the cameras please!
REVEREND ADAM

What?

REVEREND SAMMY

(Positioning REVEREND ADAM) Please Reverend Adam, stand here, this is your more photogenic side...

REVEREND ADAM

(To himself) Something crashed just before I left...

WILEY

Reverend... Reverend...

REVEREND ADAM

No. It couldn’t have! It must have been—

WILEY

What?

REVEREND ADAM

What?

WILEY

Reverend Sammy is waiting for you!

REVEREND ADAM

Did you ask something?

WILEY

Only if you were a piece of sludge— Hello, Reverend Adam, hello...Reverend Sammy...network television...

REVEREND SAMMY

(To REVEREND ADAM) You seem bewildered. Are you—

WILEY

Just shy in front of the cameras...

REVEREND ADAM

You know, Reverend Sammy...this young girl here...

REVEREND SAMMY

Yes, you really shouldn’t give her your exclusive attention. It doesn’t look right...

REVEREND ADAM

She is studying to be a surgeon, and I have this pulled muscle...
REVEREND SAMMY
We must get started. *(Movement)* You. Here. You......here. Reverend Adam is here under the heavenly lights... Very nice. These seem to be the parties which need reconciliation. Now. Let us roll the cameras.

CAMERAMAN
They ARE rolling...

REVEREND SAMMY
*(Rises hand to strike man)* I told you!— *(Recovering)* Surely. Yes, of course. We can always edit later... *(Gives man the “death stare”)* Alright. Here we go. Reconciliation at the Church of Generous Giving. Show us your stuff, Reverend Adam...

REVEREND ADAM
Deacon Wiley!

WILEY
Here Reverend.

REVEREND ADAM
Come here and hold my hand! *(WILEY takes his hand with some discomfort; beat)* And let us pray. Oh dear God! Help us! Amen. *(Beat)* Alright! *(Rubs his hands together; to MARTHA)* Would you state your name and tell us your problem?

MARTHA
You know my name.

REVEREND ADAM
*(Beat)* Yes. Alright... But for the cameras, here...

MARTHA
My name is Martha, and this vase—

REVEREND ADAM
Yes, that seems to be the entire problem. The entire situation... This vase…

MARTHA
*(Pointing at ROGER)* That... “Man”—

REVEREND ADAM
Yes. He needs forgiveness! *(Overly loud)* Oh GOD! Please forgive Roger for his thoughtless act!

ROGER
But Reverend, it isn’t true.
REVEREND ADAM
Don’t talk back to me and God, young man! Or hell fire awaits!

REVEREND SAMMY
Stop the cameras! (To REVEREND ADAM) What are you doing? (REVEREND ADAM looks to WILEY as if REVEREND SAMMY is talking to him.)

WILEY
Healing Rite of Reconciliation?...

REVEREND ADAM
I’m...creating drama for the camera...

REVEREND SAMMY
I don’t want you to create drama!

REVEREND ADAM
But I thought you said...?

REVEREND SAMMY
Random acts of violence and irrationality—These are good for the ratings. But well thought-out acts of abuse? I can hear the television sets turning off as we speak...

REVEREND ADAM
(Rubbing hands together) Alright then! I misunderstood! Can we start over?

REVEREND SAMMY
Yes. Yes. Roll the cameras...

CAMERAMAN
They are rolling.

(Once again, REVEREND REVEREND SAMMY goes to strike the CAMERAMAN but stops himself.)

REVEREND SAMMY
Right. We can always edit later!

REVEREND ADAM
(To MARTHA) Sweet sister. Would you tell us your burden?

MARTHA
Yes. Yes. You see this vase!

REVEREND ADAM
Yes. I see it.
(Throughout the following speech, more and more attention is given to speaking to the camera.)

MARTHA
But no! You cannot see it! It is a fragment of its former self! Here in this spot only two of the Beatles remain—Ringo and George! And near them, Jimi Hendrix—Without his Fender guitar! Which lies decimated in the bottom of my garbage can. Here, my favorite! “The Monkeys” pretending to sing in the studio, while Jim Morrison looks down from heaven! All of them cracked! This section, depicting the protests at the ‘68 convention… If you notice the coloring here, the pastels are supposed to represent the psychedelic movement. And if you notice here, behind Mick Jagger’s cracked face—

TOM
We are going to be here all day...

MARTHA
But the artwork is not the only value of this vase! It has a history! Celebrities loved this vase! After I created it, Jerry Garcia borrowed it. He used it to store his medicinal herbs.

TOM
(Gestures for her to get MARTHA moving) Would someone please...

MARTHA
And then Jerry gave it to Janis Joplin. Although she only had it for a short time. Because there was a fire in her home and one of her fans got into the wreckage and stole the vase, thinking it was hers—

TOM
Reverend Adam…??????

REVEREND ADAM
Brother Thomas. This is very interesting to me. The counter-cultural movement and its implications—

REVEREND SAMMY
(Signaling boredom) Reverend Adam...

REVEREND ADAM
Sister Martha, we really need to get back to your concerns...

MARTHA
Just understand this vase is…was…a work of art. I cannot be falsely modest here. The Guggenheim expressed interest in it! But it was also sentimental to me, after Eric Clapton returned it that blessed weekend we spent—
REVEREND SAMMY

Please!

MARTHA

(Pointing to ROGER) That “Man” that...Devil! He destroyed my most prized possession.

ROGER

That is a lie!

REVEREND ADAM

Wait your turn! You may get a chance to speak eventually. (To MARTHA) Tell us what happened.

MARTHA

It was yesterday at 11.

WILEY

In the morning?

MARTHA

No. At night. I was in bed when suddenly I heard a male voice coming from Eve’s room! I ran there to find the door broken in by force. I turn on the light and what do I find? What do I find Reverend? I find my beloved vase lying in pieces in her room. Glass shattered everywhere. Eve is wringing her hands, wringing her hands, while that one (Indicating ROGER) is standing in the middle of the room half-naked and in a choleric fit.

ROGER

But I didn’t—

MARTHA

And then, God forgive me, I was furious; I felt a rage come over me as I approached—that “Man.” I ask him to tell me why he has broken down the door! Ready to be in bed with my daughter!

ROGER

I never—

MARTHA

And do you know what he says? Such a lack of creativity! He says that it was another man. Another man? First he cannot be honest about his own crimes. Then he is going to spew libel upon my daughter!

REVEREND ADAM

A poor attempt at a diversion...
MARTHA
Yes. And so I look at Eve, standing there, still wringing her hands, wringing her hands, white as a ghost, and ask her, “Was there some other man?” And she begins to yell out, “I swear to you, I swear to you...” and “What are you thinking, Mother?” But she knew what I was thinking! And just to make sure, I ask her again. “Was there someone else here?” And she says, “Who else? Who else?” And then she swears to me that he had done it.

EVE
I never swore that!

MARTHA
Eve!

EVE
You are lying!

ROGER
You see—

REVEREND ADAM
Shut up!

WILEY
Reverend—?

MARTHA
You don’t remember...?

EVE
I never said that Roger did it.

REVEREND ADAM
Let us be cautious in our words...

MARTHA
You were saying “I swear to you...”

EVE
An expression. But I swear now to you, Roger didn’t do it.

REVEREND ADAM
No, now... I can see that the cameras have you quite shaken, dear. You must be calm, and then you will recall clearly all that happened— I say all that happened and all that still can happen. I am sure you will not contradict your mother so severely...
REVEREND SAMMY
She seems to know her own mind, Reverend. You duty is to provide solace, wisdom, and healing. Invoke the scriptures, not your own doubtful psychology...

MARTHA
If my daughter is going to now say it was another person. Another man?

TOM
Shame on you!

REVEREND ADAM
Well, let us all be reconciled. Mistakes happen. Let us pray. The good Lord—

WILEY
Let us hear the other side, Reverend. There can be no healing without allowing the other party—

REVEREND ADAM
My muscle spasms. Weird sensations. I should be going to a doctor immediately.

WILEY
Brother Roger, we should hear from you...

ROGER
Thank you, Deacon. This woman’s words are false.

REVEREND ADAM
Can you prove that?

ROGER
Yes.

REVEREND ADAM
Really? This good, honest woman, here? Let you try to prove her wrong...

ROGER
You see—

REVEREND ADAM
Because I’ve known this woman all my life. She is the epitome of honesty. If she says—

ROGER
She may be a good woman but—

REVEREND ADAM
She is the epitome of honesty. Epitome of honesty. Epitome of honesty—
REVEREND SAMMY
Could you conduct the service, or should I step in?

WILEY
You are kind, Reverend. I would be proud—

REVEREND ADAM
(To ROGER) Speak, would you? Tell your story!

ROGER
What story?

REVEREND ADAM
What happened?

ROGER
I’m trying to tell you... Last night around 10, it was a very balmy. The wind was so...it felt like the wrath of God. The cicadas were screeching. Almost screaming. My father said—

TOM
I told him he was a damn, sorry, silly fool to go out in weather like that.

ROGER
The weather—

TOM
I told him it was going to storm but would he listen, no, his mind is—

ROGER
—was filled with Eve. Mysterious. Unfathomable. Filled with a secret promise. The wind grew stronger. The trees were monsters shaking over me as I got on my bike to go see her. Storm or no storm...she was...so...it was like our hearts were...she was so— She was exactly...it was like...whatever I would say, she would finish my sentences for me. Before I got the chance.

TOM
If you talk like that I can see why...

ROGER
And beautiful... Beauty you could see. And beauty, you cannot see with your eyes alone. I thought— My heart! How could I have been so mistaken? Such ecstasy I had. Just to look into her eyes. To stare at her for hours. Nothing else. I didn’t need anything else. Just to gaze at her beauty. But so much more than her outer beauty. Her kindness, her constant care of me. Her intelligence. She made me laugh. She made me proud. Going to medical school. First in her class. But all that—Her beauty, warmth, intelligence. All that was nothing. Because under all those things was a soul so good. So pure. And she loved me! Or so I thought. So I thought... I would have given her everything. We were getting married...
REVEREND ADAM
Yes. Yes. Yes...Less drama please.

ROGER
She was—

REVEREND ADAM
Yes. Yes...you liked her. Go on!

ROGER
I was only going to visit for a short time. It was late. We would stand near my bicycle, arm in arm, look up at the stars and kiss—

REVEREND ADAM
A pleasant dream. We don’t have all day!

ROGER
So I started out but there were detours on the roads because of construction and the storm and I was running late. Eve keeps the gate open for me until 10:30 but it was 10:45 when I finally arrived. It was very dark. A moonless night. I parked the car and started to walk to the garden gate. I heard it open and I started to run. I thought it was Eve, waiting for me! But I saw no one. Until, almost at her door I saw her figure and someone else was with her.

REVEREND ADAM
Really? You saw someone else? Who, you smart-aleck, who?

ROGER
You’re asking me who?

REVEREND ADAM
I—He doesn’t know, so this is no help for us...

ROGER
It was quite dark and in the darkness everything looks the same. Gray. But it must have been Leo. He’s been chasing Eve since last summer. And I told her to tell him to stay away, but she wants to be nice and she is always laughing at his stupid jokes so he thinks she is interested. I already chased him from her house more than once!

REVEREND ADAM
Ah. Finally, some hard evidence. Leo is his name? We must pray for this Leo. Now Roger, my son. You saw Leo...

ROGER
Yes, it was after 11, I used to leave before that time, so now I know what happens after hours! But I wasn’t going to give up that easily! I heard them whispering, and then they were scuffling around—
EVE
How can you say these things?

MARTHA
You will pay for this slander.

ROGER
I hid near some bushes for about 15 minutes and they went inside to her bedroom—

MOTHER...

EVE

MARTHA
(To ROGER) God silence you!

ROGER
I started to pull off my shirts because I felt that I suddenly couldn’t breathe, and I went to her door and tried to open it but it was locked! And so I braced myself and used all the anger that was building up in me and smashed against the door, to break it down.

MARTHA
The Devil.

ROGER
And just as it crashed in the vase tumbled from the mantle and then a man went jumping through the window! I saw his coat flying as he jumped away.

REVEREND ADAM
This was Leo...

ROGER
Who else could it be? And Eve is standing there, I push her to the side and rush to the window and he is stuck in the vines that climb along the trellis, so I took the metal door knob which was in my hand and I slammed it across the top of his head which I could still reach.

REVEREND ADAM
God forgive you. It was a door knob?

ROGER
Yes, the door knob.

REVEREND ADAM
I see...

WILEY
You thought it was something else?
REVEREND ADAM

I thought—what?

ROGER

A metal knob—

WILEY

Maybe you thought it was a dagger? You see, the other end of the doorknob would be like a
dagger...

ROGER

It was the lump of lead of the door knob. It would cause a very nasty gash, I would think...

Yes...

WILEY

Yes. (Looking at REVEREND ADAM)

REVEREND ADAM

(To WILEY) It is time to pray.

ROGER

And so that villain falls down and I’m about to talk to Eve when I see him getting up and I
think, “He’s still alive, I must kill him.” God forgive me. I was still possessed with jealousy.
So I got up on the ledge and I’m about to leap on top of him when suddenly I’m hit by a gust
of rocks and sand. Millions of sharp stones in my eyes—and I blindly fell.

REVEREND ADAM

That Leo. A crafty fellow.

ROGER

At first I did not know where I was, the fall seemed to last forever. And then I hit the floor
hard. It was a miracle that I didn’t break my neck or back, or hips. But I felt no relief
because the coward was gone. And then Eve came to me crying “Oh my dear Roger...” But
my eyes were still filled with sand—and water—and I couldn’t see where I was kicking.

REVEREND ADAM

That Leo got you good.

ROGER

And as I was crying and screaming at Eve her mother walks in and turns on the light. And
there is Eve, looking pathetic. So lost and alone. (To her) I pity you.

EVE

How can you even—?
MARTHA
Quiet!

ROGER
The rest you already know...

WILEY
Give us your version.

ROGER
Her mother comes in railing and roaring. And the neighbor Fritz comes in, and another named Ralph, and cousins Tom, Dick, and Harry. And everyone is shouting. And Mother Martha asks Eve who broke the vase, and she says I did it, which is true, although I never—

REVEREND SAMMY
Sister Martha, what do you say to this?

MARTHA
I’d like to beat him right now...

(MARTHA tries to attach ROGER while WILEY and REVEREND SAMMY hold her back.)

REVEREND SAMMY
We are praying for you sister...

(REVEREND REVEREND SAMMY motions at CAMERA CREW to get a better shot.)

WILEY
Eve. Now is the time for you to speak. The truth.

REVEREND ADAM
No. Certainly not.

REVEREND SAMMY
Reverend Adam...?

REVEREND ADAM
Well, Reverend...young girls...in cases like this...we have to shield them against...the emergence of false memories...

REVEREND SAMMY
Reverend, I have never seen such a mixture of piety and superstition, false beliefs and common sense... (To EVE) Come here, dear child and tell us your story...

REVEREND ADAM
(Begins to cough violently) Water...
(REVEREND ADAM looks for someone to get him water but no one wants to move. REVEREND SAMMY motions a CAMERA MAN to get water as REVEREND ADAM continues coughing.)

REVEREND SAMMY

And so, my dear...

(REVEREND ADAM COUGHS even louder for an extended period while everyone watches. The CAMERA MAN brings two glasses of water. REVEREND ADAM motions to ask REVEREND SAMMY if he wants one. REVEREND SAMMY shakes his head. REVEREND ADAM drinks both glasses while everyone watches.)

REVEREND SAMMY, Continued

(Beat) Now, my dear...

REVEREND ADAM

I feel ready to pray now. (Loud) DEAR GOD—

REVEREND SAMMY

In a moment, Reverend. I want to hear what this dear child needs to say.

WILEY

So do I.

REVEREND ADAM

(Ignoring them) —THANK YOU FOR YOUR MANY BLESSINGS, ESPECIALLY THE VISIT OF YOUR HOLY AMBASSADOR REVEREND SAMMY—

REVEREND SAMMY

Thank you very much. Eve—

REVEREND ADAM

—A MAN SO DEVOTED TO YOUR LAWS...

REVEREND SAMMY

Tell us—

REVEREND ADAM

And GOD, I PRAY FOR ROGER AND LEO. WHOEVER IT WAS THAT BROKE THAT BEAUTIFUL—

REVEREND SAMMY

Speak up. He can’t pray forever...

REVEREND ADAM

(Very fast) Amen. Amen. Amen. Now Eve, you are at the judgment seat of God and you know that you must not babble silly words. You have good sense. And a Reverend such as I
REVEREND ADAM, Continued

will always be here to help you when you need it. So tell us Eve if it was Leo, very good. Or if it was Roger, very good. In either case, God and I will help you get through this period. But do not waste our time with other idle thoughts, mentioning other names with no regard to proof or what the repercussions may be...

REVEREND SAMMY

Are you through?

REVEREND ADAM

Shall I go on?

REVEREND SAMMY

NO!

REVEREND ADAM

I am helping this dear child. She knows that. She understands me.

MARTHA

Eve, say something!

EVE

Mother…I—

MARTHA

Do not trifle with us!

ROGER

It is hard to speak the truth when one has been ensnared in a web of lies.

MARTHA

That is enough! Who was it?

EVE

Oh my God...

MARTHA

It was Leo, wasn’t it? You—I am so ashamed of you...

REVEREND SAMMY

Give her some room...

ROGER

She has all the room she needs, now.

EVE

Roger!
ROGER
That clerk, Leo...won’t take up much space. He is pretty insubstantial...

MARTHA
I thought we would find some healing here, Eve. But if you won’t confess...

ROGER
(To EVE) You...You—I am ashamed of you. And I wish I had broken the engagement instead of the vase on his—

EVE
You wish? You show your true colors Roger, and I am ashamed of you. How little faith you have in me. You don’t know what you saw but you assume the worst! And even if you saw me in a compromising position. Leo and I having a drink, admiring the vase, any number of situations you cannot even imagine—Could you not give me the benefit of the doubt?

ROGER
This is clever!

EVE
Let us suppose, hypothetically that it was Leo. Just listen! Then why, if for some unknown reason I had to conceal this...why could you not trust me when I said it was you?

ROGER
Do not play such games with my heart! I don’t care anymore.

EVE
This isn’t easy for me. If you knew my reasons!

MARTHA
What are you talking about?

REVEREND SAMMY
If you want forgiveness my child, you must reveal what you know!

EVE
It was only for his sake that I kept my silence. My secret.

ROGER
My sake?

EVE
The vase was not destroyed by him. You can believe that.

MARTHA
And so—
EVE
I’m sorry I lied to you.

MARTHA
Was it Leo?

REVEREND ADAM
Why make her confess it? We know it was Leo, let us be reconciled now—

TOM
(To REVEREND ADAM) Didn’t you yourself send Leo to New York, with a list of names for your friend in the military? I now remember that he has been out of town for a week.

REVEREND ADAM
Well. Well. Of course I forgot. Then this mystery gets more and more...mysterious...

ROGER
That’s right! I saw Leo at the airport last week and he said he would be in New York for a time...

REVEREND SAMMY
Eve. Eve. Be healed. You seem to be falling into a deeper and deeper pit. Deceits fly all around you and God is losing patience.

EVE
Reverend Sammy. This situation I am in. It is strange. Unusual. Roger didn’t break the vase. I swear to this. The rest of the details, I will tell my mother later. But this isn’t the place for me—

REVEREND ADAM
Yes. She is quite right. This has become a kind of courthouse instead of a church. We shall all pray for forgiveness and then lunch for everyone!

TOM
Lunch?

MARTHA
(To EVE) You humiliate me!

REVEREND SAMMY
Calm. Calm, Sister Martha.

MARTHA
Such a simple question, deserves a simple answer. But you wish to hurt me in front of my neighbors. Is that it? You are punishing me for asking you to hold the wedding off. I want you out of my house! You can lie in the gutter where you belong. You can lie and lie and lie there in the gutter. But I will not have you lying in my house!
REVEREND SAMMY

Sister Martha...

MARTHA

God forgive you, Eve. For what other crimes you may have committed last night. With Roger about to go into the service and this morning I cannot find my pearl necklace...

ROGER

What are you saying?

MARTHA

Perhaps you were going to steal away. With my daughter, and other things. And now she seeks to protect you...

ROGER

What an imagination!

MARTHA

I heard about your plans from Bridget!

ROGER

What?

MARTHA

She saw you with Eve outside...the loving talk and coaxing. Trying to talk her into something...

WILEY

We should bring in this woman. To help settle this hurtful episode. I’ll go get her.

(WILEY moves to leave.)

REVEREND ADAM

I’ll go too!

(REVEREND ADAM moves to leave but REVEREND SAMMY and WILEY stop him.)

ROGER

This is a complete fabrication!

MARTHA

Bridget will confirm this.

(WILEY exits.)
TOM
Son. I’ve never known you to lie—

ROGER
I’m not!

TOM
Don’t make it worse upon yourself. I’m warning you! I’ll beat you bloody.

ROGER
I’m leaving.

TOM
(Stopping him) Why did you pack your things last night? Where you planning to run away? Steal and then elope?

ROGER
I was packing because I’m off for Kentsborough and boot camp. You know that!

TOM
You were so eager to get to boot camp? I didn’t even know you had been assigned a date!

REVEREND ADAM
(Checking watch) That’s about all the time we have for the Rite of Reconciliation. We need to leave this space for the next event. Perhaps Reverend, you would like a tour of the church buildings?

REVEREND SAMMY
No, we need to finish this.

REVEREND ADAM
These families are obviously tired. I should send them home to get some rest. We can finish the service another time.

REVEREND SAMMY
After lunch we move on to Springfield. I’m sure—

REVEREND ADAM
Lunch. Lunch. Yes! Reverend...I am hungry. I am losing my strength. Oh, this makes me very happy. Joy! Faith! The rest of you, why don’t you go home. Come back in several hours. Or tomorrow....

REVEREND SAMMY
Generosity...Reverend. Lunch for all of us?

REVEREND ADAM
(With difficulty) Of course... Faith, Joy!
JOY
Faith is hiding in the closet.

REVEREND ADAM
(To REVEREND SAMMY) What would you like? We have French wine, California Merlot, Pomeranian goose, some fresh Limburg cheese, fresh baguettes...

TOM
It sounds delightful.

REVEREND ADAM
(Quiet to JOY) Set up a table just for the two of us, and set the rest off to the side. No goose for them!

(JOY doesn’t move until REVEREND ADAM slips her some bills. SHE exits.)

TOM
This is a wonderful idea. Reconciliation should always include food.

REVEREND SAMMY
Will it take Sister Bridget long?

REVEREND ADAM
For all we know, she may be out of town...

MARTHA
I saw her at home today.

REVEREND SAMMY
Is it nearby?

TOM
Very close.

REVEREND SAMMY
Wonderful.

TOM
Let us drink.

(JOY enters carrying food and glasses then exits for wine.)

REVEREND ADAM
(Aside; moves away) Oh hell!
REVEREND SAMMY

(Following him to the side) How did you ever get that wound, Reverend? There is a nasty hole in your head there.

REVEREND ADAM

...I fell.

REVEREND SAMMY

Incredible. Thank God you didn’t bleed to death... Was this last night?

REVEREND ADAM

Yes. No. It was early this morning. As I was getting out of bed.

REVEREND SAMMY

You fell over something...?

REVEREND ADAM

I really don’t know. I am such a klutz. I fell over myself I think. Into the stove.

REVEREND SAMMY

Fell backwards?

REVEREND ADAM

Backwards. Forwards. I really don’t remember...

REVEREND SAMMY

Some brain damage perhaps... You have two wounds, one in front and one in back.

REVEREND ADAM

Yes. Yes. JOY! I hit the stove here, and then fell backwards on the ground. (Calling) Where is the wine?

(JOY enters with bottles)

REVEREND SAMMY

Now, if you had a wife, then I might understand some of your wounds...

REVEREND ADAM

(Forced laugh) What?

REVEREND SAMMY

You seem to be scraped and scratched everywhere.

REVEREND ADAM

No...these aren’t from a woman’s nails...no women for me... (Forced laugh) No. I have some branches, willow branches in my home, a decoration. Near the stove. I fell into them too. Here’s to your health! (Drinks)
REVEREND SAMMY
And just today you lost your vestment so strangely. It would have at least covered up your wounds.

REVEREND ADAM
Misfortunes. What do they say? They come in threes? Have some of this cheese. It is exquisite.

REVEREND SAMMY
A bit. From Limburg, you say?

REVEREND ADAM
Straight...glad to share such delicacies with you, Reverend.

REVEREND SAMMY
How did it happen?

REVEREND ADAM
What?

REVEREND SAMMY
That you lost your vestment.

REVEREND ADAM
The laundry lost it.

REVEREND SAMMY
And your others?

REVEREND ADAM
At the tailors. So where is the tour off to next? I promise not to tell...

REVEREND SAMMY
I’ve always loved a good mystery. But I think we may soon solve this riddle of the vase. Marks on the criminal will give him away... *(Drinks)* Napa?

REVEREND ADAM
What?

REVEREND SAMMY
Or is it the Central Valley?

REVEREND ADAM
Napa. You know your wines...

*(REVEREND ADAM pours more wine into REVEREND SAMMY’S glass then fills those of the OTHERS.)*
REVEREND SAMMY
I’m observant. (Calling) Sister Martha! How high is your window?

MARTHA
Which window?

REVEREND SAMMY
Your daughter’s...

MARTHA
It isn’t the height which makes the window dangerous but all the branches that crawl along the trellis next to the window.

REVEREND SAMMY
Yes. Branches. And Roger, where did you say you hit the sinner?

REVEREND ADAM
(Trying to pour more wine) Here.

REVEREND SAMMY
Stop.

REVEREND ADAM
Give it here.

REVEREND SAMMY
It is still half full.

REVEREND ADAM
I want to keep your cup brimming. With all God’s blessings.

REVEREND SAMMY
I cannot drink much more.

REVEREND ADAM
Humor me… (Fills the glass to overflowing)

REVEREND SAMMY
How often did you hit the sinner’s head?

REVEREND ADAM
(Filling ROGER’S glass) One is for the first day, and chaos and God’s voice over the water. Two is for the second day when God brought light (Toasts) and three is for the separating of earth and sky. Three glasses, that’s my limit. By the third glass you better understand…everything! (Toasts again)
REVEREND SAMMY
How many times did you hit the sinner’s head? Roger, I’m talking to you.

ROGER
(Distracted by the food and drink) With the knob?

(REVEREND SAMMY looks to REVEREND ADAM.)

REVEREND SAMMY
Yes with the knob.

ROGER
Two times.

(BRIDGET, a very old woman, enters.)

REVEREND ADAM
Sister Bridget. You are looking well.

BRIDGET
Screw you, Reverend. I know that you are all just waiting for me to die. Get all my money.

REVEREND ADAM
Now. Now... Bridget...

BRIDGET
(Spying REVEREND SAMMY) Reverend Sammy Hammy!

(BRIDGET falls on her knees before REVEREND SAMMY and grasps his legs.)

REVEREND SAMMY
Dear woman... dear... please get up... (Smiling for the camera) We do have wonderful viewers don’t we? Ma’am. Dear sister. Please get up.

BRIDGET
Reverend Sammy. Heal me!

REVEREND SAMMY
What is ailing you my dear?

BRIDGET
My husband died 12 years ago. I haven’t been with a man since.

REVEREND SAMMY
I will pray for you dear sister.
BRIDGET
(Pulling on him) I pray for you every night.

REVEREND SAMMY
Thank you for your kindness. (Trying to get free of her grip; BRIDGET is slowly crawling up his body) My dear...

BRIDGET
Reverend Sammy, my dear departed husband was a decent man but he never understood me the way you do. Was it a sin to love you more than him? I prayed and prayed every night that I would be freed from these feelings but it wasn’t to be. Because you have always satisfied me in a way that Sidney never could. And now that I am freed of him, and you have come to visit us— Oh Reverend Sammy. How good it feels to finally surrender to your righteousness and the warmth...of your body.

REVEREND SAMMY
I—

BRIDGET
Let me come with you and serve you on your holy pilgrimage. I can cook. Chicken. Lamb. Beefsteak. I can sew. Clean. All of your needs I will provide while you do the sacred work of the Lord!

REVEREND SAMMY
(To CAMERA CREW) Would you please! (THEY move in to film closer) No! (Motions them to pull her off of him)

BRIDGET
(While THEY struggle to pull her off) Reverend Sammy, let me serve you!

REVEREND SAMMY
(Finally freed) The 6900 club moves ever forward. It’s time to go. Good luck to all of you...

(REVEREND SAMMY moves to leave.)

MARTHA
But what about my vase?

WILEY
Sister Bridget, Reverend Sammy is in need of your counsel.

BRIDGET
My counsel?

REVEREND SAMMY
(Motioning to CAMERA CREW to follow him) God bless you all...
WILEY

(To BRIDGET) And didn’t you want to make a small donation to help the Reverend finance his tour?

(REVEREND SAMMY stops at the mention of “donation.”)

BRIDGET

(Crossing toward REVEREND SAMMY) Everything I have I give to the Reverend...

(OTHERS gasp. WILEY steps in to shield REVEREND SAMMY from BRIDGET.)

WILEY

That is quite a gift... I’m sure the Reverend is speechless with joy. But even more than your generous donation, the Reverend needs your help to aid your grieving neighbors who came here seeking reconciliation.

BRIDGET

What can I do?

MARTHA

Tell them what you saw last night, Bridget. Tell them what you told me.

BRIDGET

About your hussy slut of a daughter and that (To ROGER) good for nothing slackard there?

REVEREND SAMMY

(Motioning for the cameras to begin rolling again) What did you see?

REVEREND ADAM

Really...aren’t we losing sight of healing and reconciliation here?

BRIDGET

(Gesturing with a torn piece of vestment) That boy (ROGER) comes too often for a visit and yesterday—

REVEREND SAMMY

What do you have in your hands, Sister?

BRIDGET

I found this—

(REVEREND SAMMY gestures once again to the CAMERA CREW to stop filming and pulls REVEREND ADAM aside.)

REVEREND SAMMY

Reverend Adam. You are an old, if not dear friend of mine. It is not my intention to—
REVEREND ADAM
What are you talking about?

REVEREND SAMMY
If you have been...involved...in some kind of...

Certainly not!

REVEREND ADAM
If you would just tell me, I will find a way to end this filming with the least—

I am offended by your implication!

(Motions CREW to resume) Well, good. I’m glad that’s cleared up. (Soft, to WILEY) I wouldn’t want his ruin on my conscience. (To BRIDGET) What is in your hand?

BRIDGET
I found this on the ground, underneath that hussy’s window...

REVEREND SAMMY
Reminds me of a vestment. Isn’t this much like your vestment Reverend Adam?

MARTHA
Yes. I saw you wear that one last Sunday...

REVEREND ADAM
Yes. It does look like my vestment. The one I gave to Roger to take to the cleaners...

(REVEREND SAMMY smiles.)

WILEY
(Smug) Roger...do you remember the Reverend giving...

He did give me—

WILEY
What?

ROGER
—the vestment after the service.

He did?

REVEREND SAMMY
REVEREND ADAM
Why didn’t you deliver it as I asked! I thought I could trust you in such a small thing Roger… What other misdeeds are you ready to confess...?

ROGER
I did deliver it!

REVEREND ADAM
Then how did it get over to Sister Martha’s home? Walk? My dear boy, please no more stories...

REVEREND SAMMY
Roger...he gave you the vestment...?

REVEREND ADAM
Reverend. During last week’s service, I had felt the power of God so strongly, and had been worked by His spirit to give a sermon of such—

WILEY
Grandiloquence.

REVEREND ADAM
Thank you. All God’s doing. All God’s.... So...after the service— Roger had stayed after to ask a few questions, and then he offered to take my vestment to the cleaners. I never expected him to use it as a disguise to make a midnight visit to this innocent girl!

REVEREND SAMMY
Well... Roger. Do you have anything to say?

BRIDGET
I have something to say.

REVEREND SAMMY
By all means, Sister. What can you add to the story?

BRIDGET
It is true that yesterday evening I heard Eve and some man quarreling. It sounded like a lover’s quarrel and so I thought nothing of it. And then, at around midnight—

ROGER
Just like I said!

REVEREND ADAM
You said 11 o’clock!
BRIDGET
It was around midnight that I felt a shape move past me. All the hairs on my body stood on end. This spirit hobbled by, his legs ended in horses hooves, and he gave off a smell of...oh...I nearly fainted. The devil’s smell of sulfur and of tar. My mother told me of his smell... I said a quick prayer of protection and turned around to see the rotting character disappear in a thick stench.

ROGER
That wasn’t me!

REVEREND SAMMY
What are you saying, Sister?

BRIDGET
I know quite well what I have seen...and smelled. Lucifer himself. Don’t be afraid Reverend Sammy. I said my prayer. I am quite safe.

REVEREND SAMMY
You are a soldier of the Lord. And so, you saw the Devil...

(It is clear that REVEREND SAMMY doesn’t believe this story but HE motions the CAMERA MAN to zoom in on BRIDGET.)

BRIDGET
(Getting close; touching REVEREND SAMMY) Yes. Oh. Yes. Beelzebub. The sly conniver...visiting that one there!

EVE
What???

REVEREND ADAM
And so it was Lucifer himself who broke the sacred vase!

WILEY
So it would seem...

MARTHA
Bridget, you never said—

REVEREND ADAM
Let us pray: “Thank you God for protecting Sister Bridget—

WILEY
(Over) Sister Bridget, was the Devil wearing Reverend’s vestment when you saw him?
BRIDGET
I don’t know. He hid himself in darkness and fog. I found the vestment later under Eve’s window. And then, I found some tracks. Satan’s tracks.

REVEREND SAMMY
What did they look like?

BRIDGET
Nothing human. That is for sure. A mis-shapened gait, with one foot hobbled, like a horse’s hoof!

REVEREND SAMMY
And where—

BRIDGET
Where did the tracks go? My sweet Reverend Sammy! They have come to this very house of God! To the window there.

REVEREND ADAM
We had best pray! The devil has been in this area!

REVEREND SAMMY
You followed the tracks here?

BRIDGET
Yes. First I followed a swerving, curving path. Like that of a dog avoiding cats that seek to spit into his face. And then I found a monument of the devil, close by a tree. I nearly fainted.

REVEREND SAMMY
A monument?

BRIDGET
Yes. And the stench that came from—

REVEREND ADAM
(Aside) Damn my bowels...

WILEY
Best to skip this part, Bridget...

BRIDGET
Well, shortly after that the tracks stopped here.

REVEREND ADAM
Let us go to the other side of the building and find out where the Prince of Darkness fled...
(REVEREND ADAM is about to exit but REVEREND SAMMY and WILEY stop him.)

WILEY

Is there a track in the front?

BRIDGET

I couldn’t tell, the earth was trampled down...

REVEREND ADAM

How unfortunate. And now we will never know what mischief that Archfiend has created. I’m sure he has meddled with my record books. I wouldn’t be surprised if they are completely in disarray... 

(Walking with his limp)

WILEY

Still...we may search for someone who produces a staggered track...

REVEREND ADAM

A needle in a haystack. Mephistopheles is back in hell by now...

REVEREND SAMMY

Reverend Adam...do you know anyone in your congregation whose gait would produce an unusual track...?

REVEREND ADAM

(Moving) No one Reverend. Everyone in this parish is sound.

MARTHA

But the vestment. Would the Monarch of hell put on the clothes of one of God’s ambassadors?

REVEREND ADAM

Who knows the fashions in hell? It would seem logical to me that that Fallen Angel would try to conceal his true identity by mingling with the most holy.

WILEY

Perhaps it only looks like your vestment, Reverend. Why don’t you try it on?

REVEREND ADAM

Touch the article that touched the Fiend? No thank you.

REVEREND SAMMY

Please Reverend. Say a prayer. You have nothing to worry about. You will weaken his power with your own courage...

REVEREND ADAM

I— (WILEY slips the vestment on him) How monstrous Old Scratch must be... I am swimming in it.
WILEY

A remarkably perfect fit...

REVEREND SAMMY
Reverend Adam, if we did not believe the Devil visited Sister Martha’s home yesterday, we may conclude that you yourself did.

REVEREND ADAM
(Taking off vestment) But we know it was the Devil. Let’s finish lunch!

REVEREND SAMMY
Eve? Was it him? (Refers to REVEREND ADAM)

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes