

Something Medium

A Play in 19 Scenes

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SCENE 1

Setting: Grace and Rachel's childhood church (flashback)

At Rise: RACHEL and MATTHEW are inside the church. Outside the church, there is a telephone pole covered in flyers.

Projected: "Fall 1986"

(Church bells ring as lights go up. GRACE enters. Crosses to the telephone pole. Studies the flyers. Rips one off the pole. Pockets it. Takes a deep breath.)

GRACE

(sarcastic)

The Lord give me strength to make it through this.

(Grace enters the church. The lights in the church stay down. Beat. Grace leaves the church. She crosses to stage right. Pulls out the flyer. Checks it. The flyer is projected. It is a recruitment flyer for "The Family and Refuge of Amos. Come faithless, become family" with directions to a farm out of town. Rachel leaves the church. Matthew exits after her. He grabs her hand. They cross to stage left. Grace glances back at Rachel. Rachel glances back at Grace. Rachel looks away. Grace exits.)

RACHEL

(sincerely)

The Lord give me strength to make it through this.

(Matthew pulls Rachel forward. They exit. Lights down.)

SCENE 2

Setting: Rachel and Matthew's church

At Rise: BETHANY sits at a pew. She holds a bible.

Projected: "Summer 1990"

(Lights up on stage left. MATTHEW enters. Beat. RACHEL enters behind him. She carries a notebook and pen. They cross to the church. She stays a few steps behind him.)

MATTHEW

You made us late.

RACHEL

I'm sorry, I had to clean up our breakfast so the bugs wouldn't// get to it.

MATTHEW

We've probably missed the service.

RACHEL

I'm sure we haven't! I don't think the Pastor would have started// without us.

MATTHEW

You're right. You don't think. You don't know this church as well as I do.

RACHEL

We've both gone here for the same// number of years

MATTHEW

You think you know better than I do?

RACHEL

No, I'm just saying they've started late for people// before.

MATTHEW

(impatient and assertive)

Who's church is it?

(Matthew stops. Rachel stumbles into him. She takes a few steps back. Looks at the floor)

RACHEL

The Lord's.

MATTHEW

And who does the Lord give power to?

RACHEL

The worshipers.

(beat)

The husbands.

(Matthew nods. Continues walking)

MATTHEW

The husbands. You'd do well to remember that.

RACHEL

Of course, dear//

MATTHEW

Your duty is simple.

RACHEL

I know, dear//

MATTHEW

All you have to do is obey me and provide me with a family.

RACHEL

You're right, dear//

MATTHEW

And you couldn't even succeed at that.

*(Rachel looks upwards. Beat. Looks back down.
Rushes to follow Matthew)*

RACHEL

We'll have a family someday.

MATTHEW

You aren't getting any younger, darling.

(Matthew stops at the church. He pulls open the door. Holds it for Rachel. She enters the church. Lights go up inside. Soft light from the stained glass windows paints the

church. Matthew enters after her. The door slams shut. Rachel jumps.)

MATTHEW

We missed the service.

RACHEL

I'm sorry.

MATTHEW

I'm going to confess. Might as well get something out of this morning.

(Matthew exits. Rachel sits at a pew. Writes on her notepad.)

RACHEL

Dear Grace,

(Rachel stops writing. Stands. Faces the audience.)

RACHEL

My sister, how I've missed you. Your presence. Your guidance. I feel misguided. Alone. Weak. Everything you would have scoffed at. Looked down upon. You always were bolder than me. Stronger than me. I wish I had your strength. I've always found strength in God, strength in my faith. I felt that strength on my wedding day, under the stained-glass windows and eyes of the Lord. I wish it had lasted. As soon as I left the church, as soon as I stepped into my marital home, I felt weak. Alone. Abandoned by my devotion. Suddenly, my husband, the man our mother and my father had chosen for me, the Godly, respected man, needed my devotion. My obedience. My strength. I'm not sure I ever really got it back after I left the church that day. In a way, I lost myself. But it was okay. I was supposed to, right? Supposed to be my husband's? Supposed to live and die for him? Supposed to provide him with sons to succeed him and daughters to bring him respect? Daughters to auction off to the highest bidder the day they turn 18? Daughters to serve their husbands and give them sons and daughters? To give them their strength? Is that the fate of my daughters? Was that our fate? How did you escape it? Anyway, you remember Matthew, right? Strong, old, loved by my parents Matthew? He wasn't my choice, but he is my husband. My partner. My other half, better half in the eyes of God. Forever. Until death do us part. Some days, I wonder if death is waiting for me or if I am waiting for death. Is that blasphemous of me?

RACHEL (cont.)

To hope for a time when I am not married to my husband? To doubt the will of God? I can't doubt the will of God. Without my faith, I'm truly alone. Alone with my husband and my fate. I need something bigger than that. Something bigger than Matthew's power. Something bigger.

(Rachel sits back down at the pew. She goes back to writing)

RACHEL

Always your sister,

BETHANY

Rachel?

(Rachel picks her head up. Bethany closes her Bible. Beat)

BETHANY

Your name is Rachel, right? Pardon my boldness, I just thought I remembered you from last week's Bible study.

RACHEL

Yes, I'm Rachel. I'm sorry, I don't recognize you.

BETHANY

Don't worry about it, dear. My name is Bethany.

RACHEL

Bethany.

BETHANY

I'm new to the church.

RACHEL

New?

BETHANY

Well, not new. I came to this church years ago with my husband and our daughter.

RACHEL

Oh! I come with my husband now. We've been coming for about four years.

BETHANY

That's lovely.

(Beat)

RACHEL

I can't help but notice that you're alone.

BETHANY

My husband passed.

RACHEL

Oh, I'm sorry.

BETHANY

He was old. Old and expired. Like a can of soup left out in the heat.

RACHEL

That's awful, I'm sorry.

BETHANY

I'm not. I never much cared for soup anyway.

RACHEL

Oh. What about your daughter?

(Bethany looks upwards)

BETHANY

She passed too. About the time I stopped coming to church.

RACHEL

Oh, I'm sorry.

BETHANY

She was young, but she didn't suffer. Quick, sudden, and painless.

RACHEL

I'm so sorry.

(Bethany pulls a tissue out of her pocket. Dabs at her eyes)

BETHANY

You sound like a broken record.

I'm// sorry

RACHEL

Sorry? Why? Did you kill my daughter?

BETHANY

No!

RACHEL

Then don't apologize, dear. You're not a child who got caught with her hand in the cookie jar. You're an adult.

BETHANY

(Rachel looks away. Beat)

Is your husband here?

BETHANY

Yes, he's confessing.

RACHEL

Are your children with him?

BETHANY

No. No children.

RACHEL

Oh. I'm sorry.

BETHANY

I thought we weren't supposed to apologize.

RACHEL

Yes, but this time, I have my hand in the cookie jar. I didn't mean to pry.

BETHANY

I almost had one. Once upon a time.

RACHEL

Almost?

BETHANY

(Matthew enters. Crosses to Rachel. Places a hand on her shoulder. Rachel turns to look at him)

MATTHEW

We're going home.

RACHEL

But I was going to// confess.

MATTHEW

Well, you should have considered that before you made us late.

RACHEL

But//

MATTHEW

You have to get started on dinner, right?

RACHEL

Yes, dear, you're right.

(Rachel stands. Bethany stands after her)

BETHANY

It was nice to meet you, Rachel.

RACHEL

Oh, it was nice to meet you too. Will I see you at Bible study?

BETHANY

Yes, but why don't we meet for brunch tomorrow? At the café down the street?

(beat)

I've just been so lonely since my husband died.

(Rachel glances at Matthew. Beat. He nods. Rachel turns back to Bethany)

RACHEL

I'd love to.

(Matthew exits. Rachel watches him go. Beat. Rachel exits. Lights down)

SCENE 3

Setting: Grace's bedroom, Amos's farm

At Rise: GRACE sits on her bed with a pillow, a notebook, and a pencil. There is another bed in the room. EVE sits on the opposing bed dressed in all white. Grace does not notice her.

(Lights up on stage right. Grace taps her head with her pencil. Beat. Writes)

GRACE

Dear Rachel,

(Grace stops writing. Stands. Faces the audience)

GRACE

Can you believe it's been almost 4 years? I've missed you. Your unwavering devotion. Your unconditional love. Your unbelievable faith. I wish I had your faith.

I've never considered myself a religious person. Never believed any of it, but it wasn't my job to believe. It was my job to follow. To apologize for lying. For liking women. For being born. But it's not just being born. My birth was especially sinful, because my parents were, as you know, unmarried! Scandalous. My life is scandalous. It's also sinful, and guess who took the brunt of the sin? Their poor, closeted lesbian, bastard daughter. And they can repent for the actions that led to my birth, but I can't. Not really. How am I supposed to apologize for being born? Really apologize? Really look God Himself in the eye and say "sorry, I regret my actions of being born and I hope you'll forgive me"? And then he'll say, "my child, say five Hail Mary's for forgiveness, and don't forget to drop your allowance in the Offertory Box on your way out." Like forgiveness is pay to win. A rigged game that says that as long as my father apologizes for abandoning me, as long as our mother apologizes for letting him go, they get salvation. But somehow, I have to go to hell for being born the way I am? My gay ass can't buy that, sorry.

Sorry. It's not your fault I was born. It's not your fault my father left and yours stayed. I wish he'd stayed. I wish I'd stayed. I wish you'd made me stay. I'm so tired of being alone. Alone with my sins. Maybe that's why I gravitated towards Amos. Put my faith in him. In his family. He never left. He doesn't let me leave, he looks at me in ways that make me uncomfortable, he requires my devotion. My obedience. My dependence. But he's never left. How could I leave him? He's all I have. He's not

GRACE (cont.)

perfect, but he's something. Something smaller than the church. Something smaller than God. Something smaller.

(Grace sits back down on her bed. She goes back to writing)

GRACE

Always your sister,

AMOS (O.S.)

Grace?

(Grace jumps. Stashes her notebook under her pillow. Eve kisses Grace on the head. AMOS enters. Eve passes him as she exits. He is oblivious to her. He carries a shepherd's hook. DIANA enters after him. She carries a backpack)

AMOS

Grace, my wonderful and devoted disciple. How are you today?

(Amos crosses to Grace)

GRACE

I'm alright, Amos. What's going on?

AMOS

We have a new family member.

(Amos beckons to Diana. She crosses to him. He slips his shepherd's hook around her waist. She flinches. Steps out of his grasp. He laughs)

AMOS

This is Grace. She's new, she doesn't understand how this works yet. I trust you can show her the way?

GRACE

Of course, Amos.

AMOS

Good. She's going to be your new roommate.

GRACE

Roommate?

AMOS

As long as we don't have a repeat of last time, it should be just fine.

(Grace recoils. Looks at the floor. Amos picks her head back up with his shepherd's crook. Places a hand on her cheek. Beat)

AMOS

Help her get situated. Spend the day together. You're my most devoted, Grace. Don't let me down.

(Amos exits. Diana drops her backpack on the opposing bed. Turns to Grace. Holds out her hand. Beat. Grace shakes Diana's hand. Diana leans against her bed)

DIANA

Diana.

GRACE

Grace.

DIANA

Pleasure to meet you, Grace. Is he always like that?

GRACE

What?

DIANA

Amos. Is he always so... touchy?

GRACE

Oh. Depends on his mood.

DIANA

He has different moods?

GRACE

Yeah. Sometimes he's high.

(Diana laughs)

GRACE

So, Diana. What brings you to our lovely farm?

DIANA

Homophobic parents. Isn't that why most young girls join cults?

GRACE
Well, that and getting high.

DIANA
Is that why you joined?

GRACE
Me? No. I don't smoke.

DIANA
Oh, you prefer pills?

GRACE
(sarcastic)
Yeah, for sure. I love popping pills.

(Diana sits on her bed. Beat)

DIANA
So, why did you join the cult?

GRACE
Not cult. Family.

DIANA
You know, that sounds like what someone in a cult would say.

GRACE
I joined to get out of the church.

DIANA
Ooh, a woman of the church?

GRACE
I wasn't a nun.

DIANA
Are you sure? I think you'd look pretty cute in the nun hood.

GRACE
You mean a habit?

(Diana waves Grace off)

DIANA
Yeah, sure, whatever. Nun hood sounds better.

GRACE

I'm guessing you didn't grow up religious.

DIANA

No, but I grew up conservative. Being gay wasn't really an option.

GRACE

Yeah, the church wasn't any different.

DIANA

Are you// gay?

GRACE

No, I left the church and joined a cult full of women for straight reasons.

DIANA

So you admit it's a cult!

GRACE

Family. I meant family.

DIANA

It's kinda messed up to be attracted to your own family.

(Grace throws her pillow at Diana. Diana catches it. Giggles. Grace glances at her notebook. Stuffs it under her mattress.)

DIANA

What was that, pills?

GRACE

Yep, definitely pills. Don't tell Amos. He doesn't like when his girls are high without him.

DIANA

His girls?

(Grace shrugs. Beat.)

DIANA

So, are you going to show me around or what?

GRACE

What?

DIANA

This farm, Grace. Are you going to show me around or are we going to sit here and discuss our sins all day?

(Grace flinches at the word 'sins'. Beat. She stands. Extends her hand to Diana. Beat. Diana takes her hand. Hops off her bed. Grace gestures to the door)

GRACE

After you.

DIANA

What a gentleman.

GRACE

Wait until you see me in the morning.

DIANA

Are you expecting me to wake up beside you?

GRACE

We are roommates.

DIANA

Oh. I thought you were propositioning me.

GRACE

Not on the first date. What do you take me for?

DIANA

Is this a date?

(Grace shakes her head. Laughs. Diana grins. Diana exits. Grace exits after her. Lights down)