

SIDE: F 50s M 60+

At lights up, FATHER ALTMAN comes out of the center compartment of a Confessional. He is about to make his way to the Rectory, when he is approached by a modestly dressed, middle-aged woman.

WOMAN

Excuse me, Father?

FATHER

Yes, can I help you?

WOMAN

I hope so. I was wondering if you're still hearing confession today.

FATHER

I'm afraid I've just finished for the day. I'm sorry.

WOMAN

(Under her breath) Shit. *(Speaking to FATHER again)* Are you sure? I wouldn't be long. And I've travelled quite a ways to get here today.

FATHER

I'm very sorry. I wish I could help but I have Mass at 4pm and I need to prepare. Perhaps tomorrow...?

WOMAN

I'm from out of town. I was passing through and hoped I could see someone. I'll be moving on soon.

FATHER

To or from...?

WOMAN

I don't understand.

FATHER

Are you going TO somewhere, or going home FROM somewhere?

WOMAN

I'm not really sure. I'm kind of winging it right now.

FATHER

Do you have a home, Miss?

WOMAN

Oh I do, Padre. I just don't feel like I belong in it very much these days.

FATHER

Everybody belongs somewhere.

WOMAN

I've been feeling very unwelcome in a lot of places lately.

FATHER

You have a home here, with God. You're always welcome in His house.

WOMAN

(Looking around) IS this His house? Hmmph. I thought it'd be bigger. And maybe down by the lake.

FATHER

(He smiles at the joke) It's not the trappings. It's what it represents.

WOMAN

What DOES it represent?

FATHER

A connection with the Creator. A place where anyone may have a discussion with God and not be—

WOMAN

Judged?

FATHER

Afraid.

WOMAN

Why is that? Why do so many people have the “fear of God” in them?

FATHER

I suppose many people think they ARE being judged, as you said before. And many are found wanting, in their own minds. That makes them afraid.

WOMAN

Well that sucks balls, Padre. Sorry about that. I get a little salty when my Irish is up.

FATHER

(An uncomfortable moment passes between them. FATHER looks at his watch) You know, I think I have a little time before I have to go. I get the feeling you could use someone to talk to. Please... *(He indicates the pew. The WOMAN and FATHER sit)* So, you're a colleen, are you?

WOMAN

Not by birth, no. I'm kind of a mix. A mutt.

FATHER

(He smiles) Far from a mutt, young lady.

WOMAN

No, it's true. I have a little bit of everybody in me, but you're kind.

FATHER

So, you came here with a need to unburden yourself...?

WOMAN

Yeah... well, yes and no. I do have a lot to get off my chest but I don't think I can shirk this. It's my burden to bear.

FATHER

Well, if we can't relieve you of your problems, perhaps we can lighten your load a bit. God has a way of helping those who need it.

WOMAN

And who helps God when God's taken on the world's problems?

FATHER

The Lord has the strength to bear any weight. He doesn't need our help. He endures. And is still able to help His creations.

WOMAN

You believe that, Padre?

FATHER

I do.

WOMAN

That's nice to hear. It's reassuring.

FATHER

So, do you wish to talk face-to-face, or would you prefer I open up the Confessional again?

WOMAN

I'd prefer the face-to-face. Going in there puts a barrier between us. I'd rather there weren't any.

FATHER

Certainly. My name, by the way, is Father Altman. Daniel. I figure, since we're being informal and in the spirit of not raising any barriers, let's be friends first and priest and penitent second.

WOMAN

(She shakes his hand) Thanks Daniel... Father Dan. I like it. A good name.

FATHER

And you are...?

The WOMAN hesitates.

FATHER

It's all right. There's no pressure for yo--

WOMAN

God.

FATHER

I'm sorry?

WOMAN

I'm... I'm God.

FATHER

Is this a joke?

WOMAN

No Father, it's not.

FATHER

I agreed to talk to you in good faith. You seemed like you needed help.

WOMAN

I do need help.

FATHER

Miss, I--

WOMAN

I know how this sounds.

FATHER

I know how this sounds too. Like you're having a laugh at my expense. *(He gets up)*

WOMAN

You don't believe me.