

TRAFFIC SCHOOL FOR SINNERS

"Threads of Forgiveness"

Pilot

Written By:

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COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

INT. LO'TOWN COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

DEVON GOTTLICH, black, late-twenties, who never did master an "inside voice," and moves with the kinetic energy of pop rocks in a coke bottle, is on stage with a stool and a mic.

DEVON

-- and my church is so diverse,
even the exit sign is confused.

A couple looks at each other. A few glance around the room. Should I laugh? Devon rubs his neck, shifts his stance.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Look, I get it. Y'all's faith ain't
nothing to laugh at, right?

DRUNK HECKLER

No, you ain't!

DEVON

Sweet baby Jesus, friend, turn your
phone on -- Saint Peter called and
said you lost your place in line.

Some laughs. Devon chugs water and continues.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Anyway. I was born Jewish, raised
Baptist and married Muslim... My
man Jesus, Allah and Yahweh are
homies.

Devon's pastor and best friend early-thirties CISCO MALAK nods. A well-groomed, meticulously dressed middle-eastern man, he passes out comfort and affirmations with the skill of a baby-kissing politician up sixteen points in the polls.

CISCO

Amen, brother Devon.

At the end of the bar, the club's DISGRUNTLED MANAGER looks over the sparse crowd, shakes his head and glares at Devon.

INT. LO'TOWN COMEDY CLUB - LATER

Devon and Cisco talk at a table while a pregnant Asian comic riles the crowd up about feminism and politics.

CISCO

God is good, Devon. You're a testament to the faith.

DEVON

Yeah, yeah. Thanks. So you say, but not sure the manager --

Nods his head to the approaching manager.

DEVON (CONT'D)

-- shares your opinion.

The manager is a metal-head, long-hair type more comfortable in a concert shirt, but wears an oversized tie knot and untucked shirt because he knows how to dress professionally.

DISGRUNTLED MANAGER

Devon, can I see you a minute?

INT. LO'TOWN COMEDY CLUB (ALCOVE) - MOMENTS LATER

DISGRUNTLED MANAGER

Look, Devon, this ain't going to work.

DEVON

What's not going to work, friend?

DISGRUNTLED MANAGER

Your set. The crowd's not connecting. It's the religious vibe, bro.

DEVON

Bro, even Mother Mary wouldn't connect with that tie, but I'm not pulling you aside.

DISGRUNTLED MANAGER

Yeah, real funny. Listen, eleven customers and your friend ain't enough for a Saturday night. I gotta cut you loose.

DEVON

One bad night, friend, come on. What about Thursday nights?

DISGRUNTLED MANAGER

If you change your set... maybe. It's not you -- you're a natural. It's the material.

DEVON

Look -- how 'bout half? Half God's work, half urban hood jokes... I got enough to fill a full set.

DISGRUNTLED MANAGER

No religious crap. Period.

Devon's eyes flare, then he --

-- spins away from the manager, faces the opposite wall and --

SWOOSH! His fist sails toward the wall, but --

-- right when it would hit --

-- stops just short. After one long exhale, slowly, calmly, he turns back to face the manager.

DEVON

It's not crap, friend. It's God's Word.

DISGRUNTLED MANAGER

Understood. I feel you, but religion's no joke. Not here.

INT. LO'TOWN COMEDY CLUB - MOMENTS LATER

Back at the table, Cisco reacts to what happened.

CISCO

The old you would have decked him.

DEVON

You're right. I'm grateful for God in my life. If it wasn't for him, I'd be living in a bathroom with steel bars and shiny toilet.

CISCO

(laughs)

So, what you gonna do?

DEVON

Whew. I don't rightly know... the Lord will provide.

CISCO

And he works in mysterious ways. Remember that sister who dumped you for a white boy?

DEVON

Yeah -- if it wasn't for her I
would've never met -- wait. What am
I gonna tell Holly?

CISCO

Tell her you got a new job.

DEVON

A new job?

CISCO

It's why I came, brother Devon.
The church needs you. Join us as
Associate Pastor.

DEVON

What? Associate Pastor? Wait, are
you joking?

CISCO

No, brother. I don't know a better
man of God for the job.

Devon shifts in his seat and rubs his neck. Watches the crowd
laugh at the Asian woman's jokes.

DEVON

I don't know. I don't think I'm cut
out for the sermon thing... I
almost put a hole in the wall.

CISCO

It'll do you some good, brother...
And the church needs your laughter.

DEVON

Telling jokes isn't my problem...
Not punching someone, is.

END COLD OPEN

ACT I

FADE IN:

INT. GOTTLICH APT (BEDROOM) - DAY

Devon's wife HOLLY GOTTLICH, white, late twenties, is getting dressed and talking to Devon. She's an ice cream cone with sprinkles; sweet, a little crunchy but a blast of joy and laughter.

HOLLY

Cisco was in a bar? Scandalous!
Wait 'til I tell Fatima.

DEVON

Now wait a minute, Snuggles.
That's not the point. And not a
bar, a comedy club!

HOLLY

A bar! Dirty, dingy, booze
flowing. How many floozies were
flopped all over you and Cisco,
huh, Devo?

DEVON

A few... enough to start my own
brothel.

HOLLY

Ah, ha! I knew it!

Holly continues getting ready, Devon trails her as she does.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

So, what was he there for?

Devon looks away. Rubs his neck.

DEVON

You know, just to check it out.

HOLLY

That's not like him.

Holly buttons her JILBAB and reaches for her HIJAB.

DEVON

Snuggles. I was thinking of maybe
taking a break from doing stand-up.

Holly stops wrapping her Hijab around her head and stares at Devon.

HOLLY

Was that Cisco's idea? Was that why he was there? You love doing stand-up. We need the money, Devo.

DEVON

I know, I know. It's just... I don't feel like I'm making a difference.

Holly hugs Devon tight, her eyes shut even tighter.

HOLLY

You do make a difference, Devo. You shine a light on Allah while making people laugh.

DEVON

I try...

Devon rubs his neck.

DEVON (CONT'D)

I mean, my light ain't much, but it is my light... you're right. I probably should keep doing stand-up... Holy grail, I married up.

HOLLY

Of course you did. Who else could love a southern Baptist who can't sing a lick?

DEVON

What? Oh yeah? How 'bout I make you dance!

Devon grabs a towel and snaps it --

-- causing Holly to squeal and --

-- jump to avoid the snap of it's tail.

EXT. GRACE REFORMATORY FOR BOYS - DAY

A sprawling campus of brick buildings, green lawns and crisscross of sidewalks has a college campus feel, except for the tall fence and GRACE REFORMATORY FOR BOYS sign.

Holly and her Hispanic GOSSIPY FRIEND walk the grounds. Both wear VOLUNTEER BADGES.

GOSSIPY FRIEND

-- and she didn't say a word. Can you believe that?

HOLLY

No, that's crazy... Hey, weren't there three residents by the basketball courts earlier?

GOSSIPY FRIEND

I didn't notice, why?

HOLLY

Look -- the court's empty and I don't see them on the yard anywhere.

GOSSIPY FRIEND

They could have went to the gym?

HOLLY

Or the Grove. You know that's where they smoke.

GOSSIPY FRIEND

I'll check the gym. Will you cover the yard?

HOLLY

OK, hurry back, I don't like being single coverage out here.

GOSSIPY FRIEND

I got you girl, be right back.

Holly scans the yard. Several groups of teenage boys loiter under trees, on picnic benches. In a dense foliage area known as the Grove, she spots rustling bushes and branches.

HOLLY

I knew it.

Holly walks briskly to the outskirts of the Grove. As she approaches, she hears voices coming from the brush.

TOUGH GUY VOICE

-- if you've never done it, you don't know nothing 'bout it.

SOUTHERN COUNTRY VOICE
I know. And I have done it. Plenty
of times.

TOUGH GUY VOICE
Oh yeah. Can you prove it?

SOUTHERN COUNTRY VOICE
Prove it? How can I --

-- Holly bursts into the small clearing inside the bushes,
prompting one boy to --

-- frantically toss a cigarette, while the other two --

-- act overly nonchalant.

HOLLY
Boys. How ya' all doing?

The tough guy voice is MARCEL, black, seventeen. Oversized
for his age, booming voice and furrowed brow, he's the
natural leader of the bunch.

MARCEL
Look, Jalen, your girl. Is she the
one you've done it to?

Marcel pumps his fist up and down mimicking masturbation.

JALEN, black, sixteen, is the southern country voice. Tall
and lanky, he's a baby-faced awkward boy, in way over his
head.

JALEN
Come on, man. Ms. G is cool.

A third boy, TERRELL, Samoan, seventeen, snickers. He's built
like a navy ship and scowls when he means to smile.

TERRELL
Why you all covered up, lady?

Holly touches her Hajib.

HOLLY
You boys need to come up out of
here.

MARCEL
She's all covered up because she's
got something special underneath.
Ain't that right, Jalen?

JALEN
Come on, man.

Holly peers through branches and bushes toward the gym.

HOLLY
Let's go, right now, all y'all.

Marcel blocks the way out.

MARCEL
Hey Jalen, why don't you show us
how to do it... you know, since
you've done it plenty of --

SHOVE! Holly pushes at Marcel, who --
-- stumbles, rights himself up and lunges at Holly, then
-- Terrell snatches Holly's arm and --
-- jerks her back roughly while --
-- Marcel bolts onto her other arm with brute force.

TRAPPED. Holly squirms and struggles between the grip of the two boys and musters all the authority she has.

HOLLY
(breathing hard)
Let me go, now.

MARCEL
(to Jalen)
Take the scarf off her head!

JALEN
What are you doing, man! Let her
go!

Marcel keeps his grip on Holly. His other fist flies toward Jalen's shirt, grabs it, and yanks Jalen close.

MARCEL
Either you're going to show me...
on her, or I'll show you on you...
Got it?

Jalen swallows. Looks at Terrell, then back at Marcel. Nods.

MARCEL (CONT'D)
Good. Now, let's see what she has
underneath.

Holly doubles her effort at getting loose as Jalen reaches for her Jilbab.

EXT. GRACE REFORMATORY FOR BOYS - MOMENTS LATER

Holly's gossipy friend walks outside of the gym and scans the yard. Not seeing Holly, she frowns. She squints to the Grove, then --

YELPS! And bolts as fast as she can toward the brushy area --

-- screaming --

GOSSIPY FRIEND

-- HOLLY! HOLLLEEYY!

No response except for the violent and jerky motion of branches snapping up and down as she runs as fast as she can to her friend.

INT. CITY GENERAL HOSPITAL - DAY

Devon sprints down the hospital corridor. Deep pain is seared on his face. And fear.

DEVON

I'm here to see my wife, Holly
Gottlich.

A gum chewing, barely twenty-something GOTH NURSE with black hair, large earspools and heavy make-up looks at the patient CARD SLOT for Holly. Squinting, she reads Holly's race: "WHITE."

GOTH NURSE

Are you a relative?

DEVON

Yes! I'm her husband, what room is she please?

Eyebrows raised, she pulls clipboard and thick pile of documents.

GOTH NURSE

She's going to be all right, Mr. Gottlich. The police are talking with her now, it will be a little while.

She pushes the clipboard to him.

GOTH NURSE (CONT'D)
 In the meantime, please fill out
 these forms for insurance purposes.
 I'll come get you when you can see
 her.

Devon frantically squints into each ICU room.

GOTH NURSE (CONT'D)
 Please, Mr. Gottlich. She's going
 to be OK. Really. I'll come --

WHACK! Devon smacks the clipboard onto the counter, causing
 the nurse to --

-- gasp and jerk in surprise but then --

-- just watch as he storms off to the sitting area.

INT. CITY GENERAL HOSPITAL (SITTING AREA) - LATER

The goth nurse follows behind an Indian HARDENED WOMAN DOCTOR
 who interrupts Devon's staring off in space.

HARDENED WOMAN DOCTOR
 Mr. Gottlich?

DEVON
 I'd like to see my wife now.

HARDENED WOMAN DOCTOR
 I've given her a sedative, but you
 can see her.

DEVON
 Is she going to be alright?

HARDENED WOMAN DOCTOR
 Physically she will be just fine.
 Some bruising, minor cuts. I
 stitched up a nasty cut on her hand
 from a tree branch.

DEVON
 OK, you said physically. What else?

HARDENED WOMAN DOCTOR
 Mr. Gottlich, your wife refused to
 say whether she was sexually
 assaulted or not.

DEVON
Rape?! My wife was raped?!

HARDENED WOMAN DOCTOR
 I'm sorry, Mr. Gottlich, I realize
 this is very upsetting. However,
 it's important we are able to
 examine her as soon as possible if
 she was assaulted in that way.

Devon's hands clench, his muscles swell, his eyes tighten.

DEVON
 I will sue you... this hospital...
 and every nurse with a nose ring --

The goth nurses tosses Devon a dirty look.

DEVON (CONT'D)
 -- if you don't get the evidence
 necessary to bury who did this!

HARDENED WOMAN DOCTOR
 Your anger is understandable, Mr.
 Gottlich. In order to do that, I
 need your help. Will you please
 explain to your wife how important
 it is that she share with us what
 happened?

Devon nods his head.

HARDENED WOMAN DOCTOR (CONT'D)
 Thank you. Now, if you hand me your
 insurance documents, I will take
 you to her.

Devon's shoulders are drooped, his head down as he hands the
 clipboard to the doctor, who hands it to the goth nurse.

INT. CITY GENERAL HOSPITAL (ICU ROOM) - MOMENTS LATER

Holly is curled into a fetal position, blanket wrapped
 tightly around her in a dimly lit ICU room.

DEVON
 Snuggles?

No answer, no movement.

Devon walks around the bed to the side where her head is
 lying on a pillow. He lightly touches her shoulder when
 Holly --

-- jerks her body from his touch and mummies --

HOLLY
-- don't touch me.

Pain etched across his face, Devon pulls back. He puts both hands on his head and sits down.

DEVON
I am so sorry, my morning star. I swear to you, I will make who did this, pay.

Nothing.

DEVON (CONT'D)
Snuggles, light of mine... I need you to tell these fine folks what happened. They need to --

WHOOSH! Holly slings the blankets off the bed --

-- leaps from the mattress and screams --

HOLLY
-- leave me alone!

-- storms to the bathroom and --

-- slams the door with a flurry.

Devon places his head back in his hands as the SOUNDS OF A SHOWER are heard in the hospital bathroom.

INT. CITY GENERAL HOSPITAL (SITTING AREA) - LATER

Cisco sits down next Devon.

CISCO
I came as soon as I could, brother Devon.

DEVON
Thank you, brother.

CISCO
How is she?

DEVON
Broken.

CISCO
How are you?

DEVON

Angry.

CISCO

I'm so sorry, brother Devon.

DEVON

How can this happen? Do you know
she was prob --

Devon chokes on the word. He averts his head away from Cisco.

DEVON (CONT'D)

-- prob -- ably raped. Raped.

Devon puts his head in his hands. His shoulders jerk.

Cisco places his hand on Devon's back. He watches Devon sob.

He lifts his head to the heavens and closes his eyes.

CISCO

Our heavenly Father, we come to you
in sorrow and --

Devon jerks away, stands up.

DEVON

No! No praying!

CISCO

Brother Devon, I --

DEVON

-- I don't want to hear it! God
let this happen.

CISCO

There's doesn't seem to be any
reason why he should let this
happen.

DEVON

Exactly!

CISCO

I imagine Jesus felt betrayed when
God allowed his only son to be
nailed to a cross.

DEVON

This is not the time for bible
lesson, friend.

CISCO

You're right. There's no consoling possible in a time like this.

DEVON

No, there isn't.

CISCO

I just know the devil is close when tragedy strikes, brother Devon. You can either take comfort in him or in God.

DEVON

I will take comfort in making who did this pay.

CISCO

The police have arrested three boys.

DEVON

Good! God has thrown them in the Lion's den where they belong. Let Nebuchadnezzar close the gate.

CISCO

One of the boys is Ms. King's son.

DEVON

Ms. King? The one who owns all the buildings on Lo'Town Avenue?

CISCO

Yes, that's her.

DEVON

Isn't she also --

Devon and Cisco did not notice the goth nurse's approach.

GOTH NURSE

-- Ex .. Excuse me, Mr. Gottlich?

She stands at a distance, her arm extended at full length, holding a clipboard with stack of papers attached.

DEVON

Yes?

GOTH NURSE

Your insurance was denied. Do you have another insurance carrier, or can you pay by other means?

DEVON

Denied? Wha -- what... how can
that be?

GOTH NURSE

I'm not sure... Do you have any...
um, government benefits? A lot of --
well, I mean... you could use that.

FLASHBACK -- DEVON'S CHILDHOOD SALTINES MEMORY

INT. DINGY PROJECTS APT - NIGHT

A six year old Devon wanders about a trash strewn barely lit
living room. A BLACK MAN lays splayed on the floor,
overturned OLD ENGLISH 800 forty ounce at his side. He
snores.

A WHITE WOMAN is curled on the couch. Devon shakes the white
woman.

DEVON

Mom? I'm hungry.

The woman groans and sharply pushes Devon away.

Devon shuffles to the kitchen and opens the cupboard.
Overturned SALTINES, a single INSTANT NOODLES and a SALT
SHAKER litter the shelves. He grabs saltines.

To the refrigerator. Some half filled BEER BOTTLES, a
container of SOUR CREAM. Score! A single HOT DOG in the
package.

END FLASHBACK -- BACK TO PRESENT

Devon glares at the goth nurse.

DEVON (CONT'D)

What? You think because I'm black,
I'm --

GOTH NURSE

-- no! I didn't mean --

DEVON

-- no, I get it! Tell you what,
you... emo-goblin, give me --

SNATCH -- Devon rips the clipboard from her hands, she --

-- cringes and jerks back --

DEVON (CONT'D)

-- this, and I'll be sure to call you after my case worker fronts me my SSI check.

GOTH NURSE

Mr. Gottlich, I --

SLING! Devon hurdles the clipboard toward his chair, which causes --

-- the papers to dislodge and shoot about wildly --

DEVON

-- leave me alone --

-- the goth nurse twirls and power walks back to the nurse's station, her dark rimmed eyes wide with fear.

CISCO

Brother Devon... she's just doing her job.

DEVON

Doing her job? Just like you, Cisco?

CISCO

Wha -- what do you mean?

DEVON

Ms. King? Isn't she in your church?

CISCO

Yes, you know she's a --

DEVON

And doesn't she contribute to --

A steely eyed, flat look plasters Cisco's face.

CISCO

-- wait, brother. If you're implying --

DEVON

-- no, I'm not implying, I'm asking. Did you talk to her before you came here?

CISCO

That doesn't mean a damn thing.

DEVON

Well, look at you, preacher man.
Not so pious after all, ha!

CISCO

I am a man of God, brother Devon. I
must shine the love of God to all
who are distraught, just like you,
understandably, are right now.

Devon stalks up to Cisco with clenched fists and heavy
breathing. Cisco stands.

DEVON

Distraught?! She was distraught?!
What about my wife! My wife who
was raped by her son!

Cisco lifts his hand to put it on Devon's shoulder when --

FLASHBACK -- DEVON'S CHILDHOOD PARENT'S FIGHT MEMORY

INT. DINGY PROJECTS APT - NIGHT

A seven year old Devon stands behind a closed bedroom door,
listening to SOUNDS OF FIGHTING in another room. Man and
woman's voices YELLING. Sounds of SMASHING ITEMS. Clunks of
ITEMS FALLING to the floor. Then --

SMACK! A woman yelps in pain as the unmistakable sound of
being struck.

DEVON

Mom!

Devon screams and bolts out the door to a WHITE WOMAN laying
on the floor, her hands covering her sobbing face, blood
trickling through her fingers.

A BLACK MAN storms toward the door to leave, Devon chases
after him.

DEVON (CONT'D)

She's hurt!

The man reaches down, grabs Devon's shoulder and --

END FLASHBACK -- BACK TO PRESENT

SWAT! -- Devon knocks Cisco's hand off his shoulder --

CISCO

-- hey! I'm your best friend!

DEVON

Are you?! One of your richest
church member's son rapes my wife
and you --

The goth nurse from her nurse's station watches the heated
exchange. She picks up the phone.

DEVON (CONT'D)

-- visit with her first?! You here
for her interests?!

CISCO

No! She called me, needed comfort,
it's my job --

SHOVE! -- Devon shoves Cisco --

DEVON

-- comfort?! You gave her --

-- Cisco stumbles, reaches for Devon to hold onto when --

-- Devon, angrily blocks Cisco's arms and --

THUNK! -- punches Cisco in his face while --

-- police officer's begin running down the hall toward them --

-- Cisco blocks the blows that rain down from an angry,
raging Devon.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

FADE IN:

INT. MEN'S CENTRAL JAIL - NIGHT

An OFFICER WITH A MAN BUN slams the cell door shut and walks away from Devon's jail cell.

DEVON
(yelling)
Tell the maid not to disturb me in
the morning. I need my sleep!

Devon angrily throws the jail blanket roll to the back of the cell, landing on the SHINY TOILET.

DEVON (CONT'D)
Hello good friend. I knew one day
we'd meet.

The shiny toilet is stoic.

DEVON (CONT'D)
I'd tell you to keep your mouth
shut, but you're --

Devon plops down hard on the bottom bunk.

DEVON (CONT'D)
-- full of crap anyway.

Devon stares at the graffiti filled bottom portion of the top bunk. Among the graffiti, there's a LARGE CROSS drawn in pencil.

DEVON (CONT'D)
Really?...

Devon punches the cross, and turns on his side, away from the offending symbol of his faith, and closes his eyes.

INT. MEN'S CENTRAL JAIL - LATER

Devon is startled awake by the officer banging keys against the bars of his cell.

OFFICER WITH MAN BUN
Gottlich!

DEVON

Yeah?

OFFICER WITH MAN BUN

You got a visit. Let's go! Get up.

INT. MEN'S CENTRAL JAIL (VISITING ROOM) - NIGHT

Holly's eyes are darkened, her face flat. She manages the slightest of a smile to acknowledge Devon's arrival. They pick up the phone to talk between the glass.

HOLLY

You look horrible, husband.

DEVON

Snuggles. I have failed you. I am so sorry.

HOLLY

No, Devo, don't -- You're my husband. My hero.

DEVON

I promise you I will get who did this to you.

HOLLY

I have forgiven them, Devo.

DEVON

What?! No! How can you?

HOLLY

Even Jesus said 'Forgive them for they know not what they do.'

DEVON

The doctor said you wouldn't let her examine you for... ra -- um for you know... sex --

HOLLY

-- in Islam tradition, four men must witness a rape for it to be a crime.

Devon tilts his head, frowns his disbelief.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

And if a wife claims rape without those witnesses, she's guilty of adultery, which is punishable by stoning.

DEVON

No, you didn't commit adult --

HOLLY

-- in the eyes of Allah, if I claim I was raped without male witnesses -
- I did.

DEVON

No, no, no. In the eyes of God, Snuggles, you were attacked and deserve justice. And if our justice system doesn't hand it down, I most certainly will.

HOLLY

Devo, honey, I love you with all of my heart. You are the light of my life. Please, for me, let this go, forgive them. I have to. You need to too.

DEVON

I can't do anything while in here. Can you get me out?

HOLLY

They want five thousand. We don't have that kind of money.

DEVON

For the love of Angels, I can't stay in here.

HOLLY

I don't know what to do, Devo. You know the hospital told me we owe them fifteen thousand? And our insurance was denied. Why would they do that?

Devon rubs his neck, casts his eyes away. Shakes his head.

DEVON

I don't know. I'll take care of it. But I need to get out of here.

HOLLY

You know what we have in the bank.
What do you want me to do?

DEVON

Is there someone we can ask?

HOLLY

Normally we'd ask Cisco and Fatima.

DEVON

Yeah, well our friend-ship is done
sailed.

HOLLY

I could talk to Fatima.

DEVON

No, don't. Please. I've ruined it
with them. You can't ask her for
anything after what I did.

HOLLY

Your court date is in a couple
days. Lucky you're not scheduled
for the club until Saturday, right?

DEVON

I'm not scheduled, that's right.
Lucky.

Devon glances at the guard, rubs his neck.

HOLLY

OK, well hopefully, they'll let you
out on your court date.

DEVON

Yeah, hopefully.

HOLLY

What is it, Devo?

DEVON

It's just... I consider myself a
man of faith.

HOLLY

You are, Devo.

DEVON

Then what happened? Why would God
do this?

HOLLY

Allah says nothing will afflict us save what Allah has ordained. And that toil and struggle is part of man's place.

DEVON

Our Christian Bible has a story of Job. How the Devil bet God his servant would betray him if God stopped protecting him.

HOLLY

I remember. Didn't he disavow God?

DEVON

He didn't. He stayed faithful. And he was rewarded.

HOLLY

Then that's what we need to do, Devo. Stay faithful.

DEVON

Sure. Easy to say.

Holly nods.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Not easy to do when a toothbrush and a shank are kissing cousins.

INT. MEN'S CENTRAL JAIL (CENTRAL HALLWAY) - NIGHT

The officer with a man bun escorts Devon down a central hallway that spawns housing pods on either side.

Walking past a pod marked JUVENILE INMATES, Devon squints inside at a dayroom full of juvenile inmates eating.

INT. MEN'S CENTRAL JAIL (JUVENILE POD) - CONTINUOUS

Marcel, Terrell and Jalen are at the same table eating.

MARCEL

You don't like white bread.

Marcel takes bread off of Jalen's tray.

JALEN

Hey! Yeah I do.

MARCEL
Not any more.

TERRELL
You got punked.

MARCEL
Correction. He is a punk.

JALEN
You're a punk.

MARCEL
What'd you say fool?

JALEN
You're the reason we're in here. I
didn't want to --

WHAP! Terrell sucker-punches Jalen, who --

-- falls onto the cement floor with arms covering his face,
while --

-- Marcel jumps up kicking him, causing a --

-- loud buzzer sound and parade officers to run in to --

-- surround the boys and pull them off a curled up Jalen.

INT. MEN'S CENTRAL JAIL (DEVON CELL) - MOMENTS LATER

The officer opens Devon's cell. Inside stands PAYTON
JACOBSEN, late-thirties, white, shaved head, face tattoos.
Swastikas, devil horns and "SKIN HEAD" adorn his face.

PAYTON
What's up cellie?

Devon stares. The cell door slams and locks.

Payton raises his eyebrows, expecting a response.

DEVON
My blood pressure, now that you
mention it.

PAYTON
Yeah, I feel ya big man. Not my
idea of a party either.

DEVON
No? What is?

PAYTON

Not this. They won't keep us together. Shouldn't be long. They don't mix races here.

DEVON

Is that your policy?

PAYTON

No way, homie. I'm not a race hater. Live and let live. I'm just down for my own race.

DEVON

What about all that ink? Swastika, skin head?

PAYTON

I'm just playing the part, big man. We all have roles to play, right?

DEVON

Says the man with horns on his head.

INT. MEN'S CENTRAL JAIL (DEVON CELL) - LATER

Devon and Payton lounge on their bunks. Payton is meticulously unraveling threads from his blanket.

PAYTON

-- so you think the kid who raped your wife is here?

DEVON

Yep.

PAYTON

And your plan is to get to him?

DEVON

Eye for an eye.

PAYTON

Wait. You wanna rape --

DEVON

-- uh, no, no. I meant, in so many words. But, he needs to pay.

PAYTON

No, big man, I get it. I do. I've been here for justice plenty of times.

DEVON

For justice?

PAYTON

Yeah, my kid sister. Hooked up with this jerk who beats her.

DEVON

Ah. Street justice.

PAYTON

Yeah. Unfortunately. I might have taken it too far this time, though.

DEVON

He don't learn?

PAYTON

No, their "in love."

DEVON

But, you pay the price. You're in here.

Payton expertly begins crafting his blanket thread into a woven necklace in the form of a cross.

PAYTON

Exactly. That's what playing God gets you. Thirty-three times this year. This one ought to be the last, though.

DEVON

You've been here thirty-three times? This year? What is it, June?

PAYTON

Yep. And let me tell you, with your situation, it's gonna be hard to get to your sinner, big man.

DEVON

Why?

PAYTON

First, you need the OK from y'all's shot caller.

DEVON
Shot caller?

PAYTON
Yeah. Every race has someone in
charge. You know, to regulate.

DEVON
I think he'll understand.

PAYTON
Absolutely. Rape is a sex crime,
and every race regulates for that.

DEVON
I just need to get to him.

PAYTON
That's the easy part.

DEVON
Yeah?

PAYTON
Sure, just go to church.

DEVON
Church?

PAYTON
It's the one place everyone's
allowed to go. Religious freedom,
right?

DEVON
More like blessing in disguise.

INT. SUPERIOR COURTROOM - DAY

Devon sits chained with other inmates in the courtroom. He scans the crowd for Holly. Nothing. Across the courtroom, in a secure room with a large window, sits Payton.

Devon raises his eyebrows, raises his shoulders and turns his palms up in the universal "WHY?" expression for Payton's sitting in his own room. Payton shrugs.

The court is in session, an aging long-haired HIPPY MALE JUDGE is speaking.

HIPPY MALE JUDGE
Will the defendant please stand.

Payton stands.

HIPPY MALE JUDGE (CONT'D)
Do you understand you are charged
with capital murder of Karlsen
Diangelo?

Devon's head snaps up.

PAYTON
I do.

Devon's face registers shock.

HIPPY MALE JUDGE
Bail is revoked. You are remanded
into the custody of the state
special case detention facility
until your Preliminary Hearing set
for September twentieth.

The judge slams his gavel. Payton shrugs again at Devon and
glances at a young woman who bursts into tears and runs out
of the courtroom. PAYTON'S SISTER.

She brushes against Holly who enters the visitor seating.

The bailiff calls Devon's case. A DISHEVELED LOOKING lawyer
shifts through papers, looks in briefcase, can't seem to find
what he's looking for and stands up.

DISHEVELED PROSECUTOR
Leyland Peters for the state, your
honor.

A MOVIESTAR ATTRACTIVE woman with PUBLIC DEFENDER badge
stands.

MOVIESTAR LAWYER
Candace Abney for the defendant.

HIPPY MALE JUDGE
Mr. Peters, go ahead.

DISHEVELED PROSECUTOR
Your honor, the victim has dropped
the charges, but the state is
picking them up and moving forward
on this case.

He continues to search for papers.

MOVIESTAR LAWYER

Your honor, this is not warranted. My client has no criminal history, is an active member of his church and upstanding citizen of this community.

Waving the paper he was looking for in the air triumphantly, he turns to his opponent.

DISHEVELED PROSECUTOR

Your client attacked the pastor of his church, in a hospital.

MOVIESTAR LAWYER

He was distraught by his wife's brutal attack that day, your honor.

DISHEVELED PROSECUTOR

Violence in a hospital is an egregious offense and is the reason we're adding a mayhem charge, your honor.

MOVIESTAR LAWYER

Your honor, I don't think --

HIPPY MALE JUDGE

-- I've heard enough Ms. Abney. Bail is set at one hundred thousand and the defendant is to remain in custody until which time bail can be posted.

The gravel slams down. Devon catches a glimpse of Holly's tearful face as he is removed from the court.

INT. MEN'S CENTRAL JAIL (DEVON CELL) - DAY

Devon slings his court papers into his cell and slams his fist on the wall. The cell door shuts with a clank.

DEVON

Why, why!?

Devon turns to the bunk beds and sees Payton's bunk is empty. He notices the cross Payton wove from the blanket sitting on top of a piece of paper. It reads:

"IF YOU PLAY GOD, HOW CAN HE PLAY HIMSELF?"

Devon clenches his fist around the necklace then places his fist on his forehead, closing his eyes.

SWOOSH! The necklace flies toward the steel mirror --

-- bounces off the mirror and --

-- lands in the toilet.

With a deep scowl, Devon flushes the toilet. The cross swirls around and around, then disappears.

He grabs the toothbrush from the sink and begins scrapping it's handle on the rough cement wall.

EXT. MEN'S CENTRAL JAIL - DAY

Cisco is walking toward an entrance into the jail when he hears his name called. He turns to see MS. KING, black, mid-forties, distraught look on her face.

MS. KING
Pastor Malak?

CISCO
Ms. King. How are you?

MS. KING
Good as can be expected, I suppose,
Pastor. May I talk with you?

CISCO
Yes, of course, what is it?

MS. KING
I wanted to know if you have seen
Jalen lately?

CISCO
No... no I haven't. But chapel
services are held weekly.

MS. KING
Would it be possible to check on
him, Pastor Malak?

Cisco reaches out and holds her hand.

CISCO
Yes, of course. Have you talked
with him?

Tears well up in her eyes. She struggles to keep her composure.

MS. KING

I -- well... I have, yes. Pastor, he's not doing good. I'm worried about-- about my boy.

Ms. King begins to openly sob. Cisco holds her as the tears wrack her body.

CISCO

Our loving Father is watching over your boy, Ms. King.

MS. KING

I know, Pastor. It's just... he's not so strong. He doesn't stand up for himself, you know?

CISCO

He'll be fine, I'm sure.

MS. KING

No, no, you don't understand. It's why he was in the reformatory in the first place. A lot of good that place did him.

CISCO

What do you mean?

MS. KING

He's never had a strong male presence in his life. His... his father was abusive and left when he was four.

CISCO

I'm sorry, Ms. King.

MS. KING

Understand, it was good that he left, but it left a void in Jalen's life without that male presence. And ever since, he's had problems with being bullied and getting in trouble. Doing things bully's force him do.

CISCO

Bullied.

MS. KING

Yes. And those two boys that he got in trouble with? They've been bullying him since grade school.

CISCO

I can look into separating them.

MS. KING

Thank you, Pastor. I think that would really help.

CISCO

It's nothing. Anything I can do.

MS. KING

And Pastor, I am so sorry what happened between you and Devon.

CISCO

Thank you Ms. King. He was not himself.

MS. KING

No, but he had every right to be upset because of what my Jalen has done to his wife.

CISCO

We're all children of God, Ms. King.

MS. KING

Yes, yes, I know. But I made sure to talk to her to let her know how sorry I was.

CISCO

You're a good woman, Ms. King.

MS. KING

Is there something I can do? Can I help their family in some way?

CISCO

If there was, I know God will reveal it to you.

MS. KING

I sure hope so. I can't tell you how devastated I am about this.

CISCO

Our faith in God can be shaken by tragedies like these, Ms. King. But I've witnessed blessings from tragedies before. God is good, have faith.

MS. KING

Thank you, Pastor... You go with God, you hear?

CISCO

And may God go with you, Ms. King.

INT. MEN'S CENTRAL JAIL (PHONE) - DAY

Devon is in his jail's pod phone bank area, calling Holly.

INT. GOTTLICH APT (KITCHEN) - DAY

Holly answers the call.

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION

HOLLY

Hello?

DEVON

Snuggles?

HOLLY

Devon! Honey, my Baptist bunny, I'm so sorry, baby.

DEVON

Holy angels of God, snuggles, it's so good to hear your voice.

HOLLY

It's good to hear yours, Devo. I'm so sorry about court yesterday.

DEVON

I know, me too. I'm hotter than a burning bush about that... Snuggles, I've been thinking. Has Grace Reformatory talked to you?

HOLLY

No, why?

DEVON

Shouldn't they be liable for what happened to you? Maybe they can help?

HOLLY

Cisco says they won't help because I violated policy. They said I should have never been out there in single coverage. That, I knew that.

DEVON

Cisco? Why'd you talk to him?

HOLLY

I had to. What'd you want me to do, we have no money!

DEVON

We can get money some other way!

HOLLY

He forgives you, Devo. He knows you were upset.

DEVON

Great. Good for him. But, what about him talking to Ms. King, huh? He comforted her, snuggles. Comforted! After what her son did to you!

HOLLY

I talked to her too, Devo. She offered to help however she can.

DEVON

Never! No way!

HOLLY

Devo, why'd you lie to me? I called the comedy club to let them know you couldn't make it. They told me you were fired.

DEVON

Snuggles. I just... I didn't want you to worry. I wanted to make everything right.

HOLLY

But you lied. What's happened to you? Where is the man I married? A true man. Honest. A man of God.

DEVON

God has abandoned me, Holly.

Devo looks down. There on the ground, next to his shoe is the woven blanket cross Payton made. Devon frowns. How'd that get there? He looks about. Inmates mill about. Frowns again, then -- kicks it angrily away from him.

HOLLY

I need my husband back. God hasn't abandoned you. You've abandoned him... And me!

Dial tone! No, she didn't. Devon looks at the phone and slams it down. Storms out, stepping on the woven cross as he leaves.

INT. MEN'S CENTRAL JAIL (CHAPEL) - DAY

Devon watches as fellow inmates file into the chapel. He spots the shot caller, GAVIN, black, late-thirties, sitting down. Devon slides in next to him.

DEVON

I hear you're the shot caller.

GAVIN

Word. What's up?

DEVON

I was told I need to talk to you. The punk that raped my wife is here. I need to remind him what he did wasn't very... Christian.

GAVIN

OK. I feel you. What's his name?

DEVON

Jalen. Jalen King.

GAVIN

Jalen. Word, yeah I know him. Rape, huh? That's a heavy beef. Comes with a price in here.

DEVON

I know. I just want --

Devon lifts his pant leg and lowers his sock to reveal a sharpened toothbrush handle.

DEVON (CONT'D)

-- a chance to have a conversation... if you catch my drift.

Gavin glances at the weapon.

GAVIN

What are you here for?

DEVON

I got in a fight with my best friend.

GAVIN

First time locked up?

DEVON

Yeah.

GAVIN

Word. Let me lay down how this'll go down.

DEVON

OK.

GAVIN

First, get rid of that thing in your sock. If what you say is true, I'll take care of it. Clear?

DEVON

I was thinking --

GAVIN

-- don't think. This is how it works.

DEVON

OK.

GAVIN

Next, don't touch anyone. Anywhere, for any reason. Black, white, Mexican, nothing. Clear on that?

DEVON

Yeah, sure.

GAVIN

Good, 'cause if you do, then you're the one we'll be having conversations about in the chapel. Kapeesh?

DEVON

Yes.

GAVIN

Word then. We're good. Sit back, enjoy the sermon. This guy's good. Ever hear him preach?

Devon glances up to the podium. Cisco is adjusting the microphone and opening his bible.

Devon clutches the pew in surprise and looks around in disbelief.

DEVON

Yeah. I have. That's my best friend. The one I'm here for.

GAVIN

Really? HA! They say God works in mysterious ways, my man. There are no coincidences, are there?

INT. MEN'S CENTRAL JAIL (CHAPEL) - LATER

The chapel is deserted. Cisco and Devon sit on a pew.

CISCO

So, how you holding up in here, brother Devon?

DEVON

Holly told me you're helping her. I don't like it, but it is the least you can do.

CISCO

I'm glad to help, my brother. I know ya'll have limited resources right now.

DEVON

I'm still angry how you comforted Ms. King, after what her son did to Holly.

CISCO

I understand, brother Devon.
Sometimes God's work is a burden.
Especially to the ones we love.

DEVON

How could you? How could you do
that to us?

CISCO

This calling is dirty work, brother
Devon. It means I sometimes have
to look past my own interest, my
own ego, and be an ambassador of
the Lord to everyone. Not just to
the ones I think deserve it.

DEVON

She doesn't deserve it. And
definitely not her son.

CISCO

Their both hurting too, Devo. Ms.
King is devastated, humiliated and
ashamed. She wants to do anything
she can to make this right.

DEVON

What about him? He doesn't deserve
any kindness, Cisco. None!

CISCO

There are evil men in this world,
brother Devon. The devil is alive
and well, and walks among us. But,
this boy, Jalen, he's not one of
them. He's done something that is
inexcusable. And he must answer to
God and the courts for what he has
done. And to Holly and you.

DEVON

Yes, and he will, Cisco.

CISCO

Do you know why God's forgiveness
is called Grace?

DEVON

I am not going to forgive him,
Cisco, he doesn't deserve it.

CISCO

I understand, brother. He doesn't deserve it. Don't forgive him if you don't want to. But, God's forgiveness is called Grace because it's undeserved. If you do forgive, do it to relinquish the dark malady in your soul. The one you've been carrying around. That caused you to punch me. Caused you to seek revenge. These things are hurting you, brother Devon. And the ones you love.

Devon looks through the colored pane glass windows. Light shines brightly through a blood-red cross, reflecting the image on the floor behind Cisco.

DEVON

I don't know if I can, Cisco.

CISCO

You've struggled with your faith. Blessings can come from struggles.

DEVON

But why did he do it, Cisco?

CISCO

It helps to have humility and empathy to forgive. This boy's character is still being built, he's faced many challenges and doesn't know how to face them. He is a victim of abuse from his father and bullying at school. In fact, I'm going to separate his accomplices from him here in jail, because they've bullied him since grade school.

DEVON

I didn't have the best childhood, but I didn't rape anyone.

CISCO

He could benefit from hearing that from you, brother Devon.

The officer unlocks the chapel door.

OFFICER WITH MAN BUN

Gottlich. Let's go. Back to your pod.

CISCO

Come back tomorrow, Devo, think about it. It might do you some good to say your peace. Without violence. Let God's love back in your heart.

DEVON

I'll think about it. No promises.

Devo gets up, walks to the door, turns back around when --

-- Cisco waves, revealing --

-- the woven cross on his wrist --

-- Devo opens his mouth to ask how he got it when --

-- the officer slams the door and escorts him out.

INT. MEN'S CENTRAL JAIL (DEVON CELL) - NIGHT

MONTAGE OF DEVON'S REPENTANCE

-- Devon stares at the cross above his bed.

-- Unravels the threads of his blanket.

-- On his knees praying

-- Weaving a cross from blanket thread

-- On his knees praying as the morning sun shines in his cell

END OF MONTAGE

INT. MEN'S CENTRAL JAIL (CHAPEL) - DAY

Devon has a smile on his face, a woven cross necklace around his neck, and a bible in his hand as he watches the inmates file in.

As a group of young inmates enter, Devon squints at a tall, lanky figure. Leaning forward to see better he sees --

-- the woven cross around JALEN'S neck!

Devon smiles broadly, clutches his bible and walks toward him, when --

WHACK! Gavin swoops in, begins punching Jalen in his stomach repeatedly again and again --

WHACK! WHACK! WHACK! As Devon watches in horror he sees blood soak Jalen's shirt.

He's being STABBED!

DEVON

Noooo!

Devon jerks alive, runs toward the melee when --

-- Cisco yanks him back and --

-- guards rush in past them as --

-- Cisco pulls him away from the scene.

INT. MEN'S CENTRAL JAIL (DEVON CELL) - DAY

Devon prays in his cell.

DEVON

To the loving God of Grace and
Forgiveness. I come to you humbled
and broken from the harm I have
caused. I ask that you look upon
me with the same grace you've
bestowed on all sinners and allow
me to --

His cell door is unlocked and swung open.

OFFICER WITH MAN BUN

Gottlich. Pack your stuff. You're
being released.

INT. MEN'S CENTRAL JAIL (RELEASE) - DAY

Cisco watches as Devon finishes dressing into street clothes and placing his belongings in his pockets.

CISCO

-- so apparently the prosecutor is
so unorganized, he didn't file the
charges in time.

DEVON

Any word on Jalen's condition?

CISCO

No, none yet.

DEVON

OK, let me know, will you? And
Cisco? Sorry for going fire and
brimstone on you.

CISCO

It's OK, brother Devon. But it's
not me that you have some
explaining to do.

DEVON

Holly. What am I going to do?

CISCO

Pray, brother Devon. Pray.

END ACT II

ACT III

FADE IN:

INT. GREAT AWAKENING BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

Devon is kneeling in one of the pews, facing the alter of Great Awakening Baptist church. In his hand is the woven cross. He stares at it, rubs the threads, the cross, between his fingers.

He looks up to the figure of Christ. Tears stream down his face.

DEVON

Please forgive me Lord. I abandoned you. I let the dark sickness of rage and anger blacken my soul.

Behind him, Holly enters the sanctuary and begins walking toward Devon while he continues to pray, unaware of her approaching.

DEVON (CONT'D)

I abandoned my wife. Next to you Lord, she is my whole life. I pray my actions have not hurt her, I pray you place your loving hand of goodness and light onto her heart and heal the harm I have caused.

Holly kneels besides Devon. He smiles and snuffles and bear hugs his wife. She holds both of his hands.

HOLLY

In the name of Allah, the infinitely Good, the all merciful God, may peace be bestowed to my husband. Please Nourisher and Provider of all things, bestow upon my husband the grace of forgiveness, the warm light of kindness and empathy and humility. For he is a good man, a good husband, one of which I love with all of my heart.

Devon turns and holds Holly tight.

DEVON

I am sorry, snuggles. Will you forgive me?

HOLLY
Yes! A thousand times over, Devo.

DEVON
I will not abandon you again,
snuggles, I promise.

HOLLY
I know you won't, husband of mine.

DEVON
And I will keep the Lord close from
now on. No more anger danger.

HOLLY
My husband has returned.

DEVON
I haven't been here for you.

HOLLY
I am much better now that you are.

DEVON
The first thing --

Cisco enters the sanctuary and interrupts.

CISCO
-- ahh, my favorite couple.

DEVON
Thank you again, Cisco. We are
indebted to you, for all you have
done.

CISCO
We always need help in the food
pantry, brother Devon.

DEVON
You got it.

HOLLY
We're there!

CISCO
Although, that's not why I'm here.

DEVON
What is it, brother?

CISCO

I've got a call from Ms. King. She doesn't think Jalen will make it through the day.

Devon looks at Holly. Brings her in, holds her tight.

DEVON

I haven't talked to Holly yet about what happened.

HOLLY

What?

DEVON

I was so angry at what he did to you I wanted him to die.

HOLLY

Devo.

DEVON

So I was arranging to... stab him.

HOLLY

Devo!

DEVON

But, the shot caller in jail did it instead.

HOLLY

And now he's in the hospital?

CISCO

Yes, Ms. King says he's been asking for you. Says he wants to get right with you.

HOLLY

I should do this. Tell him what he did was wrong, how he had no right to do it.

Devon hugs Holly tight.

DEVON

You don't have to.

HOLLY

No, I need to do this.

CISCO

Would you like me to --

MS. KING

(to Holly)

-- Jalen has been asking if he could somehow say he's sorry. But he's scared you wouldn't see him.

HOLLY

I know this is difficult for you, Ms. King. Before this happened, I... I didn't think Jalen was a bad young man.

MS. KING

He's not, I swear to you. He's just so susceptible to bad influences.

HOLLY

It doesn't excuse --

MS. KING

-- no, no. It doesn't. I'm not saying that, dear. It's just, if there was some place he could have went instead of that cesspool of a facility.

CISCO

They don't address the spiritual malady.

MS. KING

No, they don't.

CISCO

It's the only program available in our area for wayward boys.

MS. KING

The church should step in, pastor.

CISCO

I wish we --

Jalen stirs and sees the group.

JALEN

Ms. G?

Devon squeezes Holly's hand. She turns to him, locks eyes. Leans in, closes her eyes and rests her forehead on his for a moment. Squeezes her hand back.

Opens her eyes and turns to Jalen.

HOLLY

Jalen.

JALEN

Ms. G, I swear to you, I didn't mean it.

HOLLY

What you meant doesn't matter, Jalen. What you did was wrong.

JALEN

I know, Ms. G. I am sorry.

HOLLY

I believe you, Jalen. It just doesn't heal the harm you caused. To me or my family.

JALEN

Ms. G?

HOLLY

Yes.

JALEN

I know there's nothing I can do to make it right. I just want you to know... if I die, I promise I will do everything I can to fix this... from the other side.

Ms. King wails and begins crying. Cisco holds her as she sobs.

Devon wraps his arm around Holly and squeezes. She allows herself to be held, then moves to Jalen's bed.

HOLLY

May Allah accept and forgive you in his infinite love, Jalen. Allah has put in my heart the capacity to forgive you the best I can, and I have.

Jalen smiles, but it turns to a wince. Devon steps in.

DEVON

Son. I'm Ms. G's husband. My name is Devon.

JALEN

I know who you are, Mr. G. You do stand-up at the club.

DEVON

Yes, that's right, though I'd give a widow's mite and Jacob's ladder to anyone that actually laughs at my jokes.

It's Holly's turn to squeeze Devon.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Anyway, I have a confession that I must make to you son.

Jalen shifts in his bed and winces.

JALEN

OK, Mr. G.

DEVON

After you... did what you did to my wife, I was very angry at you. I wanted to harm you.

Jalen swallows, then nods.

DEVON (CONT'D)

I took some steps to make that happen. And those actions likely led to --

Devon waves his arm over Jalen.

DEVON (CONT'D)

-- this happening to you.

JALEN

You mean, Gavin?

DEVON

Yes. I talked to him about you.

JALEN

It's OK, Mr. G. I deserved it.

DEVON

That wasn't up to me to decide, Jalen. Justice isn't my business, it's God's business.

CISCO

Amen, brother Devon.

DEVON

What I want to say to you Jalen is...

(MORE)

DEVON (CONT'D)

I'm angry for what you did, but am still sorry for my part in this happening to you.

JALEN

It would have happened anyway, Mr. G. If not Gavin, probably Marcel or Terrell. They blamed me for getting them in trouble.

MS. KING

It's them that bullied you!

DEVON

(to Ms. King)

I am sorry Ms. King for my part in your son being harmed.

MS. KING

I don't blame you. I blame them.

DEVON

Jalen. I wanted to also forgive you. I had a lot of hate in my heart for you. But that hate has no place in my heart now.

JALEN

Thank you, Mr. G.

DEVON

And I don't want to step on anyone's toes --
(looking at Cisco)
-- but have you accepted our Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior? He loves and forgives you too, more than you'll ever know.

Tears well up in Jalen's eyes.

JALEN

No, but can I?

DEVON

Do elephant farts sound like trumpets?

Jalen laughs weakly, but it turns into a grimace.

JALEN

Yes.

DEVON

Then give me your hand, let's pray.

Cisco looks on proudly as Devon kneels and holds Jalen's clenched fist.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Our heavenly Father, your love and grace is a bright white light guiding us to you. I am here with your child Jalen who has decided to accept your Son Jesus Christ into his life as his personal Savior. Lord, I ask you hold him tight and let your love heal his transgressions and warm the hearts of his family. I pray --

BEEEEEEEEEP! The occasional bleep abruptly turns into a loud, long single tone, causing --

-- a flurry of nurses and doctors to stream in, barking commands and terse responses and --

-- Devon to jump away from the chaos, while --

-- Ms. King buries her head into the comforting arms of Cisco.

INT. CITY GENERAL HOSPITAL(JALEN ROOM) - MOMENTS LATER

A nurse one by one turns off the medical equipment. A doctor quietly speaks to Ms. King. Devon's attention is drawn to Jalen's slightly open palm.

He drifts over to Jalen to see better, then he --

-- looks inside Jalen's fist, where he sees --

THE WOVEN CROSS. It sits embedded in the palm of Jalen's lifeless body.

INT. LO'TOWN COMEDY CLUB - DAY

Devon enters the empty comedy club where he once worked. Tables and chairs are stacked and pushed to one side of the room.

DEVON

Hello?

From the office emerges the disgruntled comedy club manager that fired him.

DISGRUNTLED MANAGER

Devon. We're closed, bro. What can I do for you?

DEVON

Listen, I wanted to say sorry for the way I acted... you know, when you fired me.

DISGRUNTLED MANAGER

Hey bro, it's not personal, it's just business.

DEVON

No, I know. But I almost punched the wall and didn't treat you the way I should have.

DISGRUNTLED MANAGER

Bygones, bro.

DEVON

Same here... Hey, you mentioned something about Thursdays, remember?

DISGRUNTLED MANAGER

Thursdays?

DEVON

Yeah, a time slot. I've got new material. Prison jokes -- I mean what's funnier than caged men in orange jumpsuits drunk on booze made in a bag?

DISGRUNTLED MANAGER

I always thought you were good, Devon. I really did. I guess you haven't heard.

DEVON

Heard what?

DISGRUNTLED MANAGER

The comedy club is shutting down.

DEVON

What?

DISGRUNTLED MANAGER
Yeah. We weren't making it.

DEVON
No.

DISGRUNTLED MANAGER
Yeah, bro.

DEVON
Holy tragedy. What about you? What are you going to do?

DISGRUNTLED MANAGER
Ms. King is a kind lady. She's going to place me in another one of her businesses.

DEVON
That's great, good for you. I'm glad to hear that... OK, friend, good luck to you.

DISGRUNTLED MANAGER
Good luck to you, bro.

As Devon walks away, Ms. King emerges from the office and watches as the door closes behind Devon.

INT. GREAT AWAKENING BAPTIST CHURCH (OFFICE) - DAY

Cisco sits behind his desk at the church. Devon sits opposite him.

CISCO
As your friend I wanted to say how awesome it was to see you bring that child Jalen to salvation.

DEVON
It was the least I could do, brother.

CISCO
There is more you can do, brother Devon.

DEVON
I told you, I'm not going to perform a rap sermon for the youth group. That's just weird man.

CISCO

(laughs)

I think that's one of my better ideas, frankly, but no, that's not what I mean.

DEVON

Holy boils and boomerangs, out with it.

CISCO

As I watched you pray for the soul of Jalen, I realized how much of a natural you are at it.

DEVON

I was caught up in the moment.

CISCO

Exactly. In the moment. Not what had happened. But what the moment required from a man of faith. And, regardless of whether that person deserved it.

DEVON

I still have feelings about it.

CISCO

I imagine you do, brother Devon. But you set them aside and did God's work.

DEVON

When in Rome.

CISCO

Well, Rome is calling. I asked you once and I'm asking again. We need an Associate Pastor. The pay isn't great, but it comes with insurance. What do ya say?

Devon instinctively reaches for the woven cross necklace hanging from his neck.

DEVON

Can I tell jokes?

CISCO

I'm counting on it.

DEVON

Then, move over Caesar. Brutus' got a bible and is coming for your sinners.

INT. GREAT AWAKENING BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

Jalen rests in an open coffin at the foot of the church's pulpit. A line of people take their turn paying respects.

Holly steps up to the coffin. She takes a moment to look upon the boy who attacked her. After a brief moment, she steps down and takes her place on the pew.

Devon steps up to the coffin. There in Jalen's hands is the woven cross. He touches it.

DEVON

I should have left your work to you, Lord. He's in your hands now, as he always has been.

Devon takes his place next to Holly, on the pew.

INT. GREAT AWAKENING BAPTIST CHURCH - LATER

Cisco is delivering Jalen's eulogy.

CISCO

-- I can tell you Jalen was a child of God... Does that mean he was pious? No. Not all of us are deeply religious or devote our lives to the Lord. Does it mean he was a member of the church? No. Jalen would accompany his mother to church when he was young, but once he reached a certain age, his mother wasn't able to corral him by force or persuasion like she could when he was a child.

Ms. King smiles and a few laugh knowingly.

CISCO (CONT'D)

Then, why do I say he was a child of God? Because good brother and sisters of this congregation, he was human. And we humans are what? We're flawed. We make mistakes. We all do. Not one of us in this sacred room can say we haven't.

(MORE)

CISCO (CONT'D)

And Jalen made his, yes. But, let me tell you this. What did Jalen do about it? He admitted them. He repented. He faced our loving, gracious Lord and asked for forgiveness. And you want to know what happened next? This young man, this child of God, the son of one of our own congregation, he asked the Lord Jesus Christ to come into his heart as his personal savior. And ladies and gentlemen, this child of ours now walks freely in the light of our Lord in the beautiful kingdom of heaven.

Cisco closes his bible, arranges his notes. He looks to Ms. King.

CISCO (CONT'D)

I'd like to ask Jalen's mother Ms. King to say any words if she likes. Ms. King?

Ms. King hugs Cisco and speaks at the podium.

MS. KING

Thank you Pastor Malak for your inspirational words about my son Jalen. You are right, he was --

Ms. King has to momentarily stop. Let the urge to break down pass, then continues.

MS. KING (CONT'D)

-- he was a child of God. If by child of God you mean his mother would need to pray for his safety each school day and weekends power prayers until dawn...? Then he gets the Child of God award.

The crowd laughs heartily.

MS. KING (CONT'D)

I did my best with Jalen. The good Lord knows. When his father left, it was just him and I. That boy needed something I wasn't capable of giving him. Something a father only provides. So, I sent him to this program and that program. None of them seemingly helping.

(MORE)

MS. KING (CONT'D)

I have often wished there's a place he could have gone that would have helped. Nothing can replace a father, of course. But a place where he could spend his days in the summer. Or after school. Where God's servants like Pastor Malak or Pastor Gottlich and his wife Holly, could show him life possible our faith can provide.

Ms. King looks at Cisco.

MS. KING (CONT'D)

That's why I have decided to donate the Lo'Town Comedy Club building to this church.

Cisco registers his surprise.

MS. KING (CONT'D)

But it's on one condition.

She now turns to Holly and Devon.

MS. KING (CONT'D)

And that condition is the church open a day care center for those who desperately need the services of this church. And that this day care center be run by Holly Gottlich and her husband Devon.

Holly and Devon look at each in surprise.

MS. KING (CONT'D)

And to help with this endeavor, I am donating a million dollars to get this vitally needed program off the ground.

The congregation breaks into applause while Cisco, Holly and Devon look at each in shock and surprise.

MS. KING (CONT'D)

Finally, I want to say this. My son caused members of this congregation pain.

Devon squeezes Holly's hand.

MS. KING (CONT'D)

He hurt individuals here in ways that cannot be undone.

(MORE)

MS. KING (CONT'D)

For that, I ask for forgiveness on behalf of my son. I pray my son can be forgiven not to absolve him of his actions or to say what he did was okay. It's not. No, I pray forgiveness so those individuals can open their hearts again to the power of God and his forgiveness. That truth, love and faith can once more fill their soul. And for that, I pray.

END OF ACT III

TAG

FADE IN:

INT. GOTTLICH APT - LATER

Holly and Devon enter the apartment after the funeral.

HOLLY

Well. What do you have to say for yourself, Pastor Gottlich?

Devon pulls Holly to him in an embrace.

DEVON

I say I better get in good with my new boss.

Holly smiles and they kiss. Devon begins to pull at Holly's hijab while his other hand slides down her hips, when --

BRUSH! Holly brushes his hand away and Devon --

-- pulls away confused.

DEVON (CONT'D)

What? What is it, snuggles?

Holly looks away. Wraps her hijab around her head tightly.

HOLLY

Nothing. I'm just not in the mood, OK?

Devon backs off.

DEVON

OK, snuggles.

Awkward silence.

HOLLY

I have to go to the bathroom.

INT. GOTTLICH APT (BATHROOM) - MOMENTS LATER

A pregnancy test box is crumpled in the trash. The toilet flushes and Holly picks up the test device. Two bars stare back at Holly. PREGNANT!

END OF PILOT