

THE CONFESSION

By Michael Zielinski

The curtain rises on a Roman Catholic confessional box with SHARON WALKER, an attractive woman in her mid-50s, kneeling facing a screen shielding her identity from the priest, FATHER MORRISON, a good-looking man in his mid-50s sitting on the other side. Both are visible to the audience.

SHARON WALKER

Please bless me father for I have sinned. It has been 30 years since my last confession. I have so much to confess. This may take a while so I hope your prostate isn't enlarged.

FATHER MORRISON

Please don't worry about the time. The confession business in our parish has been dead. It's like the restaurant business. Summer comes and people go away. Even during Lent our confessions don't have the numbers they used to. Practicing Catholics blow off confession. They'd rather be staked out in the sun. We have an hour before Mass starts, so no hurry. God is pleased you came and I could use the company. It gets lonely sitting in a box by yourself. Thank God for my iPhone. I used to play solitaire in the old days.

SHARON WALKER

Thank you for putting me somewhat at ease. I can't tell you how nervous I am. I walked around the church about a dozen times, trying to muster up the courage to do this. In spiked heels, no less.

FATHER MORRISON

There is no need to be nervous. God already knows your sins. But in order to get absolved from your sins, you first must confess them and feel sincere contrition. I realize it would be less traumatic for you to confess directly to God and cut out the middle man. But the sacrament of reconciliation doesn't work that way.

SHARON WALKER

That's a shame. It would be so much easier for sinners, especially sinners like me with a laundry list of mortal sins. And if we didn't have to confess to a priest, you would have your Saturday afternoons free to play golf or whatever else priests do for fun.

FATHER MORRISON

I would love to have Saturday afternoons off, especially in the fall to watch college football. But the answer to why we Catholics go to a priest to confess our sins is a simple one. Because Jesus wants us to. Not because he needs us to do it for him, but because he knows we need it for us. The priest is an instrument through which Christ Himself tells you that you are truly forgiven. There is nothing more reassuring than going to confession, baring your soul before God and hearing the priest say, "You are forgiven and absolved of your sins."

SHARON WALKER

I feel as if my soul is being crushed under the weight of my sins, like there is a grand piano sitting on my chest. Thank God, I have a big chest. So, can we just fast-forward to the absolution part if I merely confess that I have been an absolute total slut for three decades, that I have done enough wicked things that would have made even the people of Sodom and Gomorrah blush?

FATHER MORRISON

Well, it isn't quite that simple. But you do not have to be too granular or graphic in the details. So, synopsise the 30 years as best you can without glossing over them.

SHARON WALKER

I get your point. Otherwise we may have to send out for takeout. Do you like Chinese? Forgive my weak jokes, but they are my defense mechanism. Right now, I could faint because I'm so frightfully nervous and appalled at my sins. And hoping that my penance isn't to walk barefoot and backwards to the Holy Land and back.

FATHER MORRISON

If I gave you that penance, I would be assuming that you could walk on water, all the way across the Atlantic. And only Jesus could do that. If you feel like you are going to pass out, let me know and I will get you a glass of water. We have some holy water at the back of the church. I wouldn't want you to faint before you receive absolution. And relax about your penance. I won't sentence you to be stoned to death.

SHARON WALKER

Well, that's a relief. Even though I deserve it. I just hope that you are not shocked or offended by the nature of some of my sins. I know you are a priest.

FATHER MORRISON

After 20 years as a priest, I've heard some sins that would curl your cuticles. Besides, I didn't go into the seminary right after high school or college. So, I am hardly sexually naïve.

SHARON WALKER

Good. So, you'll have a clue about the depravity of my sins. So here we go. (She blesses herself with the sign of the cross) I was a highly-paid escort, a fancy way of saying I was a hooker or a prostitute or a whore, for 30 years. You name it and I did it. Conventional sex, anal sex, oral sex, kinky sex, rough sex, bondage, hand jobs, masturbating myself so my johns could get off watching, threesomes, foursomes, making love to another woman while a guy dressed in a bunny outfit watched, letting guys snort coke off my breasts, urinating on and defecating on men, doing sex fantasies while dressed up like Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Hillary Clinton believe it or not, and a Nazi concentration camp guard. I've done it in countless beds, not to mention bathtubs, showers, limos, taxi cabs, airplanes, swimming pools, whirlpools, dentist chairs, board rooms, whatever. I even screwed a guy in a museum. He was a curator and liked to get laid near his favorite Degas paintings. I've wallowed in perversion for so long that a normal life is abnormal for me. I rarely enjoyed the sex, but always loved the money. And I missed Mass every Sunday, ate meat on Fridays during Lent, took the name of the Lord in vain when I did climax, used to tie one john's wrists to the metal bed headboard with his rosary beads, and never reported all my earnings on my income tax returns but please don't tell the IRS. Of course, I practiced birth control but at least I never had an abortion. So, it could have been worse. Should I go on?

FATHER MORRISON

I think I've got the gist. You've been a rather industrious bad girl. What in God's name triggered your life as a call girl?

SHARON WALKER

Believe or not, I once led a moral life. I got into the business because my heart was broken and I literally said screw it. My fiancé broke up with me 30 years ago and it totally devastated me. I felt as if he had taken a meat cleaver and cut out my soul. Suddenly my heart was frozen out from any sense of love. I knew I would never want another man to love me and risk having him hurt me. The pain of my shattered heart was as tangible as a shattered leg that never heals. My frozen heart still hasn't thawed. It's more rock solid than any dick I ever went down on. Consequently, I am callous to all men. They're all as prickly as porcupines but with bigger dicks. Oops. Sorry.

FATHER MORRISON

Speech patterns are difficult to break after all those years. But I still don't understand why a broken heart led you to the life of a call girl.

SHARON WALKER

I was angry with God. I could no longer love God because my heart was frozen. But I could hate God. I once had a good Catholic faith but I was angry with God because of the breakup.

FATHER MORRISON

It is wrong to be angry at God. Anger at God is a result of an inability or unwillingness to trust God even when we do not understand what he is doing. Anger at God is essentially telling God that he has done something wrong, which he never does. Does God understand when we are angry, frustrated or disappointed with him? Yes. Does that make it right to be angry with God? Absolutely not. Instead of being angry with God, we should pour out our hearts to God and trust that his plan is perfect.

SHARON WALKER

That's easy for you to say. But it's total bullshit. Forgive my language but I am so upset.

FATHER MORRISON

God has heard much worse, but he's not a big fan of hearing it in the confessional box. Penance is a sacrament, which is kind of a big deal as you know.

SHARON WALKER

God's plan wasn't perfect when it comes to me. He did something horribly wrong. Not to utter blasphemy, but I feel that God should go to confession. He stole my man away from me. A good, gentle man who loved me very much. I was an agnostic when we met and I converted to Catholicism for him. And I thought for me. During some pillow talk over several months his faith in God and his church was contagious and I caught it. I must be the first person on earth who found God during breaks between premarital sex. I still can't believe that a guy with his sex drive became a priest. I hope the hell he didn't channel that exquisite sex drive and become a pedophile.

FATHER MORRISON

People find faith in all sorts of places. And if your former fiancé is a good priest, he did not become a pedophile. The overwhelming number of priests are not but unfortunately we all get painted with a broad brush. Why do you think God stole your man?

SHARON WALKER

My fiancé broke off the engagement because he was entering the seminary. If God hadn't hijacked my fiancé's soul, I would have led a good life, a blessed life in a wonderful marriage.

FATHER MORRISON

Apparently, he had a calling from God and he followed a priestly vocation, no matter how emotionally painful it was for you and likely for him. But you were wrong to turn against God and try to punish him by pursuing a sinful vocation. You didn't punish God by becoming a call girl, you punished yourself. But because God loves you, he was hurt by what you did and perhaps his calling to you, even if it took 30 years, was for you to finally return to his flock and save your soul. If you are with Christ, you are in the best relationship you can have.

SHARON WALKER

I understand the theological perspective, but I wanted a relationship with my beloved fiancé.

FATHER MORRISON

Breaking off the engagement had to be a nightmare for him, torn between God and you. Such decisions are heart-wrenching, even if you believe that you are following God's will. (*He coughs nervously*) I would like to take a quick sidebar from confessional protocol and ask your name.

SHARON WALKER

I thought confession was an anonymous situation, that my identity to the priest didn't have to be revealed.

FATHER MORRISON

That is true. And you don't have to reveal who you are. But perhaps you will change your mind when I tell you my name. If it doesn't change your mind, fine. Don't share your name with me. But my name is Kevin. Kevin Morrison.

SHARON WALKER

Oh, my God!

FATHER MORRISON

Are you Sharon Walker? The poor acoustics in this confessional box affect the sound of our voices, which makes it difficult to recognize a voice we are familiar with.

SHARON WALKER

You know damn well that this is Sharon you bastard. Of all the damn priests in the world, I have to pick you to go to confession to. Well, I'm walking out. I don't want forgiveness and absolution from you. I am sorely tempted to kill you here in church and then I'll have just another mortal sin to confess when I do go to confession. But the satisfaction of revenge would be well worth it. It would be even better if you died a slow, painful death. I have suffered so much. It should be your turn.

FATHER MORRISON

I don't blame you for hating me. But I hate it that because of me you hated God for all these years and turned to the life you did. Here's my confession to you before you storm out. I still love you. I still think of you daily and pray for you. I was hoping you found someone else and had a happy life and that you would come to realize that what I did was traumatic for me as well but I was answering God's call. For years, I wished I was the pope so I could allow Roman Catholic priests to marry.

SHARON WALKER

Do you regret that you chose God over me?

FATHER MORRISON

I would be lying if I said that I haven't had moments of regret. I love you. But I believed that God called me to the vocation of the priesthood, not marriage. I have found the priesthood to be very fulfilling. Who knows, I might have made a lousy husband and you would have wound up hating me anyway. I know I made the right choice, as traumatic as it was for the both of us. But it tears my guts out to hear how your life turned out. Whether it's today with me or another time with another priest, please confess your sins and return to Christ.

SHARON WALKER

Whatever life I lead here on earth; it will be as a single woman. What decent man would want me after my sordid past? Besides, after all the johns I serviced, I don't want another man. And if I do make it to heaven, I hope you will understand if I jam a harp up your ass. You dumped my ass and wound up having a happy life as a priest. I wound up being a whore and living a hell here on earth. Hell, I don't know why I even went to confession today. Hell is where I belong.

FATHER MORRISON

You chose the life you led. There have been countless relationships broken off over the decades and most women don't turn to a life of prostitution as a result. Your reaction was way over the top. For your own sake, get right with God and get right with your life, here and in the next life.

SHARON WALKER

A modern-day Mary Magdalene, huh? So, if you grant me absolution, what's my penance? Anointing your feet?

FATHER MORRISON

You've already served your penance. No additional penance would be required. Just make sure that the next time you get on your knees, it's for prayer and not oral sex.

SHARON WALKER

A priest taking a cheap shot in confession, how about that? But I'm sure you've done worst. How many young boys have you molested? How many nuns have you screwed? I've dressed up like a nun for several johns over the years. They must have been fallen Catholics.

FATHER MORRISON

No boys. No nuns. OK, we exchanged our cheap shots. Can we proceed or do you want to see another priest?

SHARON WALKER

Grant me absolution and then I want to see you face to face? Deal?

FATHER MORRISON

Deal. But first say an act of contrition.

SHARON WALKER

Forgive me, but I forget the words. Guess because I've screwed my brains out all those years.

FATHER MORRISON

Are you truly sorry for your sins?

SHARON WALKER

Would I subject myself to this otherwise? Of course. Yes.

FATHER MORRISON

I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Go in peace and serve the Lord.

SHARON WALKER

Please step outside. (*She exits the confessional box and stands in front of it*)

FATHER MORRISON

OK. (*He too exits the confessional box and stands face to face with her*)

SHARON WALKER

As you can see, it's easy to trace the tracks of my tears.

FATHER MORRISON

Actually, you look fabulous. Especially considering what all you've been through.

SHARON WALKER

You're too damn good looking to be a priest. I've bet all the women in your parish have a crush on you. Now that you see me face to face in the flesh, do you still believe you made the right choice to go to a lonely bed every night with only a faceless God to cuddle instead of going to bed every night with me to cuddle?

FATHER MORRISON

I answered Christ's call to be a priest, an agonizing decision as I said because it meant the end of us as a couple.

SHARON WALKER

Sort of like predestination, huh? I thought you were a Catholic, not a Calvinist. Those folks believe when they floss their teeth next is predestined.

FATHER MORRISON

You are confusing answering a vocation with predestination. If I had chosen not to be a priest and chose marriage, that would not have damned me to hell. But I would have felt somewhat unfilled spiritually because I didn't answer his call.

SHARON WALKER

Still sounds like predestination to me. And why the hell did God give a handsome stud like you a call? He usually calls the nerdy or fat kids who couldn't get laid with a fistful of twenty-dollar bills in their hand.

FATHER MORRISON

You just went to confession, Sharon. That's no way to talk and it's a sweeping generalization. But I must admit there were not a lot of Brad Pitts or George Clooneys in my seminary.

SHARON WALKER

So, what now? You absolved me from my horrible sins and now are you are just going to walk away to play with your incense?

FATHER MORRISON

What do you expect me to do?

SHARON WALKER

I don't have to be Nostradamus to predict that you are going to tell me to fuck off and you will continue your life as a priest.

FATHER MORRISON

You are partly Nostradamus.

SHARON WALKER

What does that mean?

FATHER MORRISON

I am going to remain a priest but not tell you to fuck off. And trust me this is the first time I've ever uttered the word fuck in church.

SHARON WALKER

So, you plan to remain a priest and screw me on the side, your dark, dirty little secret? No thanks. I'm finished being a whore and being a Roman Catholic priest's mistress is hardly a step above that.

FATHER MORRISON

I'm not remaining a Roman Catholic priest. I am going to convert to the Episcopal Church and marry you. Their priests can marry. I told God many years ago that if you ever came back into my life, I would do that. I still will be serving the same Christ. And philosophically, my personality is a better fit for the Episcopal Church. The Episcopal ministry tends to be one of persuasion, not of authority. I've never considered myself to be an authoritarian. I'd starve to death if I were a dictator.

SHARON WALKER

You are freaking serious? If you are, how the hell do you know that I still want you? I told you that I am not interested in having a relationship with a man, including you.

FATHER MORRISON

I will pray that you change your mind. Who knows? Perhaps someday you can become an Episcopalian. After all, I once persuaded you to become a Catholic with me.

SHARON WALKER

What's after that? Convince me to join you in becoming an agnostic again? Oh, what the hell. What else do I have to do? *(She hugs him tightly and they kiss passionately)* But I must tell you that I'm going to spank you with my hairbrush every night. It's your turn to get on your knees for 30 years.

FATHER MORRISON

You can do so while I am saying my prayers.

SHARON WALKER

We'll make the perfect *(she pauses to giggle)* platonic couple.

FATHER MORRISON

Sorry, my dear. I'm putting celibacy in my rearview mirror and putting a mirror on our bedroom ceiling. By the way, do you still have that Cinderella costume?

(BLACKOUT)