

Wander Lost

written by

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WANDER LOST

*Keep your mind in hell and do not despair. - St.
Silouan*

ACT 1

SCENE 1.1

People's Church of the Prophecy, Humboldt County, near Eureka. A Christian mosaic hangs overhead.

Enter Reverend Gregory Green, exhausted. He kneels beside the holy water, washes his face with it. He stares into the water.

REVEREND

I am looking younger every day now.

He sits on a chair, opens a bible and takes out recorder, speaks into it.

Every day he is talked about, prayed to. Has been for two thousand years. Who is this man? If he walked this earth today, in modern clothes, speaking modern slang, who would he be? What crowd would he keep? In terms the people can understand. Basics. A child prodigy. They're always selected for special treatment. Born from nothing, like any American lift me up by the bootstrap story. Fucked trained under John the Baptist. Renowned thinker at the time, like getting into Harvard. Top of his class, his boots John is unworthy to untie. A privileged fucking education. Never a scene of him begging. Always working, able bodied. Worked in construction at first, but moved onto medicine. Healing, a big industry then. He had disciples, but for today, what. A discipline, a craft. His employees, working under him. Expanded his private practice around the desert, like an entrepreneur, little firms, to fame and fortune. A traveling doctor and part time tutor. Never homeless and wandering. Occupied, the boss. Privileged and talented. Healed the sick, but only to supply the demand. Sick need a physician, not the the healthy. The teaching did him in. What did he teach, as one who speaks with authority? Those parables that imply, Blessed is the slave who goes in the market and makes his master profit. Profit. He with much will be given more, and he with little will have it all taken away. That is his idea of charity. That's investing. There is no regret or reproach to this idea. No, that's the kingdom of heaven. More to the haves and nothing to the have nots. Not a place, not a system of welfare and aid. Heaven. That sermon. The poor and meek are blessed, not helped, blessed not because they are poor but because they might become the enterprising ubermensch he is. The last will be first, so on. Corporate self help talk. Has no illusions of money. Render unto Caesar Caesar's. Let the rich and powerful keep their riches and power. No insurrection, no revolution. Leave the power be. And his death. He is trialed. Even Pilate takes a liking to him. I find no fault in this man. Pilate, the inquisitor, the authority, the man, finds him good company.

(MORE)

REVEREND (CONT'D)

Trialed for saying the church will fall. Oh, it's just a metaphor. Probably it was. He doesn't fly with the people, for good reason. Never unites them, deliberately divides. With a sword. But no, in this story the people are the problem. The king is slain by a protesting mob. Not just a king, but the king of kings, the smartest and most competent man in the Middle East. Okay. This is supposed to be a tragedy, that the people have the power, that privilege and tyranny is taken down?

Enter Vivian.

And of course, they fail. He rises from the dead. I see no Marxism in this at all.

VIVIAN

Arguing with spirits again? Which ones?

Reverend turns off recorder.

REVEREND

The right ones this time.

VIVIAN

That was a great sermon you gave. The church loves you. You tell them exactly what they want to hear.

REVEREND

Why are you here?

VIVIAN

James called.

REVEREND

What did you tell him?

VIVIAN

I asked if he called to apologize. He said he just wanted to speak to you. I hung up.

REVEREND

Good. If he'd like to speak to me, he can come to me.

VIVIAN

There's a young woman who wants to see you. I met her in a rehab during Monday's recruiting. Police found her face down in an alley, unconscious, with a used condom inside her.

REVEREND

God damn.

VIVIAN

Folks like these may make very devoted members of our church.

REVEREND

Bring her in.

Exit Vivian. Reverend picks up bible, reads. Enter Elizabeth.

Ah, hello.

ELIZABETH

Hello, Reverend.

REVEREND

Elizabeth, right?

ELIZABETH

Yes. I wanted to tell you that you are a really great public speaker. I've been going to rehab for about a month now, and it hasn't been half as inspiring as your words.

REVEREND

Very kind.

ELIZABETH

You make it feel like you're talking only to me.

REVEREND

One church, one soul. You are thinking of becoming a member.

ELIZABETH

Yes. Even if I can't be part of your work, I still want to come each week.

REVEREND

That's great. I'd like to know more about you. I take it your life has not been going so smoothly lately. Is this new?

ELIZABETH

I can't say.

REVEREND

This is a place for open exchange.

ELIZABETH

I can't say how bad it has been. I'd have to know everyone's story.

REVEREND

I've heard many stories, Elizabeth. I will be the judge.

ELIZABETH

My life has never been smooth, but I guess it's been a lot rougher recently. I haven't really cared about anything for two years.

REVEREND

What happened two years ago?

ELIZABETH

Who cares?

REVEREND

My child.

ELIZABETH

I don't know. I was angry about the things that were happening around that time. And all the time. So I left something that I had been a part of my entire life.

REVEREND

You know how we found you. We're very strict in our abstinence here.

ELIZABETH

That's good. That started a long time ago, though. Sometimes, it's like there's never enough. It always feels like it's the last time, until it's not.

REVEREND

Well, okay. Let's go back further. What was your childhood like?

ELIZABETH

I was kind of adopted.

REVEREND

There's nothing wrong with that.

ELIZABETH

My adoptive father would hit me.

REVEREND

There's definitely something wrong with that. In our community the only physical contact we allow is gentle, healing contact, if at all. Mostly, we do not lay hands on each other, even for healing. Healing hurts enough as it is. Go on.

ELIZABETH

I've been raped, by, uh, you know, family members or, uh, the adoptive family. I. Is that normal?

REVEREND

This is not normal, Elizabeth. But many families have similar issues. Our church does not believe in consanguinity. Do you know what that is?

ELIZABETH
(laughs)

No.

REVEREND
Simply put, you do not need to be loyal to an abusive family.

ELIZABETH
I was hoping, this is silly, but that it might be normal or something. Maybe that's silly. God forbid it should be normal.

REVEREND
Sorrows aren't unusual. There are sorrows in this world, aren't there, Elizabeth? Most people hide their sorrows. I'm privileged as a Reverend to hear about them. I know it's difficult to have your weaknesses exposed like this, but God is listening.

ELIZABETH
Okay.

REVEREND
And you are here, and you are no saint. Listen. We consider our church something of a family.

ELIZABETH
Okay.

REVEREND
And in a family, you have to give as much as you are given. I can't do everything myself. Do you understand that?

ELIZABETH
Yes.

REVEREND
God helps those who help themselves, but moreso those who help others. In order to help us, you must be honest. I'm a harsh Reverend.

Julianne laughs.
Uh huh. But we don't punish. We forgive. We transcend. But confession is the only way.

ELIZABETH
Okay.

REVEREND
We do something a little different in this church. Because we're so small, we feel that we should be totally transparent. So, for every Sunday we write a list of our week's transgressions, every sinful act, every impure thought, then we share it with each other.

(MORE)

REVEREND (CONT'D)

I'd like you to do this too. To help you, to serve you, Elizabeth, we must know you. Understand?

ELIZABETH

Okay.

REVEREND

I'd like you to start with your whole life for the first one. Can you do that for me?

ELIZABETH

Okay. What if I can't remember everything?

REVEREND

Write the worst that comes to mind. You look tired.

ELIZABETH

Yeah.

REVEREND

You're getting sleepy. Sleeping beauty. You're very brave. Do you need a place to stay?

ELIZABETH

I'd like that.

REVEREND

Go speak to Vivian. She'll give you a room in one of our compounds. Drink some water, pray, get some rest. In dreams, we find the answers that will guide us through our new life.

ELIZABETH

Yes. Okay. Reverend, thank you.

Exit Elizabeth. Reverend opens Bible again, skims.

SCENE 1.2

Enter Alex. He is dirty, in ripped clothing. He sits on the floor. Enter Vivian, who approaches him.

VIVIAN

Hello, young man. Are you okay? Maybe, maybe not. Where do you hail from?

ALEX

Someplace else.

VIVIAN

Do you have a home?

ALEX

No. Not here. Maybe sometime later.

VIVIAN
Are you hungry? We have food. Yes, you're hungry. Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH
(voice)
Yes?

VIVIAN
Can you bring some food for this young man?

ELIZABETH
(voice)
Yes, Vivian.

VIVIAN
You look like you've come far.

ALEX
I'm not very religious.

VIVIAN
And yet here you are. Sweetheart, this is the last Christian church. You didn't know it, but you traveled a long way to get here and only here.

Enter Elizabeth with plate of food, hands it to Alex.

ELIZABETH
Hello.

ALEX
Hi.

ELIZABETH
What's your name, brother?

ALEX
Alex.

ELIZABETH
Welcome, Brother Alex.

Exit Elizabeth. Alex eats.

VIVIAN
So, tell me where you were before this.

ALEX
I was in a jail cell.

VIVIAN
A rebellious young man.

ALEX

No. Not really. I always manage to do what people ask me to do in exactly the way they don't want me to do it.

VIVIAN

That's an interesting thing to say. We've got compounds if you have no place to stay. You don't have to say yes now. Do you know anything about the Reverend here?

Enter congregation slowly.

ALEX

No.

VIVIAN

His name is Reverend Gregory Green. He's loved by all people, high and low. Do you know why?

ALEX

No.

VIVIAN

He is in tune with the spirits. He's a prophet and a revolutionary.

ALEX

There are many of those.

Vivian grabs Alex's shoulder.

VIVIAN

They can't raise pouring water. They can't draw the right connections in politics and religion as he can. That's heaven and earth. You don't believe me, but you'll know. You'll see.

Choir begins singing hymn.

It's starting. I'll be on my way. Please stay, and talk to me after about the compounds.

Exit Vivian. Congregation shakes hands with Alex, bows and greets him. Thomas, mid-twenties, is filled with energy.

Enter Reverend. Hymn ends.

REVEREND

How are we all doing this morning?

Crowd cheers.

What's in your hearts, my children?

Crowd cheers.

Are you asleep? What is in your heart?

Crowd cheers louder.

That sounds like what I want to hear. What has been in your heart? Hmm? Have you been suffering lately? I know suffering. No one knows suffering better than me. I don't care. I worship suffering. I worship poverty. I'm Mother Theresa. I'm more Christ than Christ. Think back not on today, not yesterday, not the last week, nor even the last year. What is in your heart, my children, not just now, but always?

THOMAS

Hmm.

REVEREND

Hmm. That's a bigger question than even I know. The smartest men in history have come close to knowing what's inside themselves, but spat themselves out when at last they learned.

THOMAS

Boo, smartest men.

REVEREND

Boo, indeed.

THOMAS

Ha.

REVEREND

Our hearts hold a chamber from which the bravest among us have cowered. The entrance is a black pit with danger signs hanging overhead.

THOMAS

Hoo, yes.

REVEREND

And the honest and loyal, the best of us, even they have found that there are shadows in their hearts that they would rather lie about and betray. Shit, man. Why would God make us like this? Why, because that is not the whole heart.

THOMAS

No, it's not.

REVEREND

So. Tell me. What is in your heart?

Loud cheers and answers.

That's what I'm talking about, that's heart. There's that power that lies underneath. I can bring out that power. I can show you the horror and the glory in us all, and I will show you the healing of an open heart. Is there. O Lord, is there an Alex here? The holy spirit's telling me there's an Alex.

ALEX

Uh. I'm an Alex.

REVEREND

Come on over here, Alex. Don't be shy. The spirit is telling me, you've been having some legal troubles. Is that right?

ALEX

Yeah. How do you know that?

REVEREND

The holy spirit, my son. He's giving me a vision. I see you. You were sitting in a jail cell, weren't you, Alex?

ALEX

Yeah.

REVEREND

But you had no business being there, did you? No. I can see what's in you. A pure and kind heart that had been trampled and beaten by a cruel world. Yes?

ALEX

Yes.

REVEREND

And I can see the other part of you that wants to fight out against that world. Am I right?

ALEX

Yes.

REVEREND

You came here from off the streets of suffering, of indifference, of oppression, born into a world of abundance that had been sealed off from you by a cold and heartless tyranny, and tired, lost and wandering you found yourself in the one place that can show you who you really are. Show me, Brother Alex, what is in your heart. Show me.

Alex yells.

God has found you, Brother. Show Him what He made you with.

Alex yells louder.

Arise, Brother Alex, and let fill the light of God into that darkened chamber of your heart. Arise.

Reverend pushes Alex's head back. He falls backwards into the arms of the ministers, who sprinkle holy water on his forehead. They bring him back up.

Tell me you love God.

ALEX

I love God.

REVEREND

Tell me you love the people.

ALEX

I love the people.

REVEREND

Tell the people you love the church.

ALEX

I love the church.

REVEREND

Brother Alex, do you love me?

ALEX

Uh.

REVEREND

It's okay to be shy, Brother. I love all my children and all the children of God. Take your seat. Ladies and gentleman, my children, I don't care for the blood of man. I care for the hearts of man. I care for the soul of man. I want to save man. I believe that's all of our job. The time will come when we will fix or relinquish ourselves from this miserable world of sin. Our time will come. Consider Elizabeth, our most recent member. She has been beaten by every man she has ever loved. Give a hand for her.

Applause.

What would you say to these men? God has a special purpose for us all, but not all those stories are good. Let's make our story a good one, eh?

Crowd yells in agreement.

I want mine good, so I want yours good. I am born from the people, like all of you. A man of the people, like all of you. What is in my heart is in yours, too.

Crowd erupts into joy and applause. Reverend dances with some members. Vivian approaches Alex.

VIVIAN

So. You want a tour of our compounds?

SCENE 1.3

Compound room, two beds. Thomas lays in bed reading. Enter Alex, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

Here we are. Here's your key.

ALEX

Thank you.

ELIZABETH

This will be your roommate, Thomas.

ALEX

Hello.

THOMAS

Yo. You get fucked up?

ALEX

What?

Thomas pulls out some beers.

THOMAS

You get fucked up. Have a beer, my friend. Heal yourself from all that healing.

ALEX

You want one, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH

I shouldn't. This place is kind of a sober living home for me.

THOMAS

Suit yourself.

Elizabeth grabs one.

Word of warning, Brother Alex. Be careful here. People can lose their minds in this place.

ALEX

Nah. I'll be fine.

THOMAS

I'm telling you, you think you're a free spirit now, but that will only make your slavery more obscured.

ALEX

Trust me, I've never been able to listen to anyone. Doubt that will change.

THOMAS

The Reverend can be persuasive, he can.

ALEX

I'm telling you, it doesn't work on me. There's no idea, or dogma, or persuasive skill or whatever that can strap me down. It's just people behind this stuff. No one cares. The ugly truth, Thomas, is that no one gives a shit about you.

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

If you died tonight, I might be a bit upset, but I wouldn't care. And no one else would.

THOMAS

Gee, you really know how to get on someone's good side. Cheers to this charming stranger.

He drinks.

ALEX

What brought you here?

THOMAS

Free rent. Bahahaha. No, but seriously. Free rent.

ALEX

That's it?

THOMAS

That's all there is to it. You sing a few songs, pass a few flyers, repent a few sins. Golden. Free rent.

ALEX

That's a bit amoral.

THOMAS

I get mine, Brother. It's freely given, so it belongs to me. It's tough times for the journalism major. I didn't choose the times, but I'll take what I can from it.

ALEX

You chose the major.

THOMAS

Blow me, Brother Alex.

Alex throws a beer at Thomas.

Hey. I'm just messing with you, man. We're not all solemn here in the house of God.

ALEX

I don't like smart asses.

THOMAS

No one does. Why I'm unemployed. So there. But you'll have to get used to it if you're going to be my roommate. I can't help myself. Or, I don't want to. Anyway, you'll have to get used to it. What's your story, Bethlehem?

ELIZABETH

What?

THOMAS

You've just been sitting there drinking.

ELIZABETH

Oh, I don't know.

ALEX

Where are you from?

ELIZABETH

I don't know.

ALEX

You have a home somewhere?

ELIZABETH

No. I've been traveling all my life. I've been to every continent. Ever since I can remember, I've been escorted around the world.

ALEX

Your parents travel a lot for work or something?

ELIZABETH

I wasn't with my parents. I don't know them. I don't know where I was born. I might not even be American.

THOMAS

I can't tell if you're really lucky or really unlucky.

ALEX

Lucky. I think travel has made me more confident, you know. Nothing scares me, nothing surprises me. I find that no matter how far I go, I can't escape myself. And that, in the end, is a good thing.

ELIZABETH

You haven't traveled enough.

ALEX

I've been to many places, alright?

ELIZABETH

I'm sure you have, but travelling is more than just the area you cover. I bet you've seen many ordinary buildings you never thought to walk in, and you were smart not to think so.

ALEX

I walked in here.

ELIZABETH

Well, stay and see how it pans out. Thanks for the drinks, Thomas.

Exit Elizabeth.

THOMAS

Here. Take these pamphlets. Learn about this place. One thing you should know, if you expect to stay here you'll probably be handing out these pamphlets, begging on streets, so on. Then, there's the guilt list. Don't take that seriously. There are some people here that are only here because of that guilt list. Tomorrow morning's your first healing session. Don't say anything that you wouldn't put on your guilt list, and vice versa.

ALEX

Healing session like I had today?

THOMAS

No, he does a bunch of different stuff. Maybe it will work on you. Doesn't work on everyone.

ALEX

I'm being open minded. But what he showed me today, the faith healing thing, it was powerful, man. There maybe something to this.

SCENE 1.4

Congregation seated, talking. Enter Reverend.

REVEREND

Who here is sick and in need of healing? Moore, Richmond. Alright. Many of us. Lay down, please.

Members of all ages lay down. Reverend slowly moves his palm over and above members, sees Alex is standing.

You, what's your name?

ALEX

Alex.

REVEREND

Right. Are you healthy?

ALEX

Yes, I'm healthy.

REVEREND

Pass your health to some of these members.

ALEX

Okay, uh, what should I, uh.

REVEREND

Just do as I do.

Alex moves his palm over Jeremy.

ALEX

What's ailing you?

JEREMY

Life is.

ALEX

Not now, I hope.

JEREMY

No, you're doing fine.

ALEX

If life isn't going too well, maybe you should change the things you do. What kind of future plans do you have?

JEREMY

My future plans as of right now are to live and die.

ALEX

Okay. That's a start.

JEREMY

I'm supposed to be telling you my confessions. My confession is that I fucking suck. I've had severe depression since I was a teenager. I've tried talking to my parents, they don't understand. Therapists, they don't help. They try to be nice, to compliment me, but that just insults me and makes me more depressed.

ALEX

Right. It's patronizing.

JEREMY

But then I've never been able to accept that I don't deserve abuse. I'm unlovable. Bad breath, fat, no job, my penis is small, which would be a problem if I weren't impotent.

ALEX

We don't need to think about those things right now. You have self doubts then.

JEREMY

Yes, I doubt myself.

ALEX

If you doubt so much, then maybe you can doubt all the doubts you have, couldn't you?

JEREMY

What do you mean?

ALEX

Doubt your doubts. I do that. I think it but I just don't fucking believe it.

JEREMY

I wish that could work, but depression is a biological fact.

ALEX

I get it. Just keep your eyes closed. Breathe and, uh, feel my health.

Reverend is above Megan.

MEGAN

It's a sharp pain in my thighs.

REVEREND

Right. You're wondering what caused it.

MEGAN

Yes.

REVEREND

According to your guilt list, you have been dating four different people. Nonmembers.

MEGAN

I know. It's awful. I feel awful.

REVEREND

Have you been taking them into the compound? Well? So, you have been.

MEGAN

Not all of them.

REVEREND

If the other members knew about what you were doing, what do you think they'd say?

MEGAN

They would say I was being, I don't know.

REVEREND

Sexual activities of any kind are a sinful business, and you've gone and multiplied it.

MEGAN

I'm sorry.

REVEREND

It's alright, but behavior has physical ramifications. Stay celibate for a month and see how that heals you. This is for you, not for me.

MEGAN

Okay.

Alex is above Elizabeth.

ALEX

Hello again. You're having troubles?

ELIZABETH

Yes.

ALEX

Physical?

ELIZABETH

No.

ALEX

What kind of places were you talking about?

ELIZABETH

What do you mean?

ALEX

Last night. You told me you've been to many places that it's smart not to walk in.

ELIZABETH

Did I say that? I don't remember saying that.

ALEX

You were telling me about how you traveled a lot. Remember?

ELIZABETH

Oh. I don't know. I was drinking. I say all sorts of things.

ALEX

You were saying that you.

ELIZABETH

Okay. Please, just shut up and heal me.

ALEX

Okay then.

Reverend addresses congregation.

REVEREND

Are we all feeling better?

CONGREGATION

Yes. Yes, Reverend.

REVEREND

Great, now repeat after me, my children. I can heal myself.

CONGREGATION

I can heal myself.

REVEREND

But not without guides.

CONGREGATION

But not without guides.

REVEREND

I can love myself.

CONGREGATION

I can love myself.

REVEREND

But not without partners.

CONGREGATION

But not without partners.

REVEREND

And I can be myself.

CONGREGATION

And I can be myself.

REVEREND

But not without community.

CONGREGATION

But not without community.

REVEREND

Group hug, group hug.

Group hug.

ELIZABETH

What's your confession, Reverend?

REVEREND

Excuse me?

ELIZABETH

We've all been confessing our sins. What's yours?

REVEREND

Are you implying I have anything to confess?

ELIZABETH

I guess not.

REVEREND

That's all, my children. Have a good day. Harold, remember, you'll be pamphleting this afternoon and, provided the fascists don't kidnap you, tomorrow. Elizabeth, stick around for a moment.

Exit all, except Reverend and Elizabeth.

Are you happy here?

ELIZABETH

Kind of. I can't get along with anybody in a deep way. Like, intimate way. I think I'm doing everything right, but.

REVEREND

I know the feeling. Make all the right formations, and yet, no harmony. Elizabeth, I am the headstock. I am the tuning board. Please me, and the church will be in harmony with you.

ELIZABETH

Really?

REVEREND

That's all there is to it. Do you understand me?

ELIZABETH

Yes.

REVEREND

I don't mean only what I'm saying. Do you understand me?

ELIZABETH

Like you, as a person?

REVEREND

We find ourselves when we peer into another's soul, not into our own. We find what lies beneath all of our defenses.

ELIZABETH

You know, I bet a lot of people think they can't handle you. I can handle you.

REVEREND

Let's test the limits of your understanding. You want to be more connected. Yes? Look me in the eyes. What am I thinking?

ELIZABETH

You're thinking. You are getting tired.

REVEREND

No. Slap yourself.

ELIZABETH
Slap myself?

REVEREND
Slap yourself.

Elizabeth slaps herself on the cheek.

ELIZABETH
It doesn't hurt.

REVEREND
It doesn't matter. What am I thinking?

ELIZABETH
You're thinking this is fucking stupid, Gregory.

REVEREND
Slap.

Elizabeth does so.
I'll make you take this more seriously. Lift up your other hand. Open it.

Reverend presses fingers against her fingers.
Everyone is an expert body language reader subconsciously. Body language communicates the unconscious mind. So. Look me in the eyes. Envelop yourself with my being. What am I thinking? I can sit here all day.

ELIZABETH
You're thinking. I look good in the light from the stained glass.

REVEREND
Slap.

ELIZABETH
No?

REVEREND
Not close enough.

Elizabeth slaps.

ELIZABETH
Oof. What is in your heart?

REVEREND
Yes. That's right. Yes.

ELIZABETH
Oh. I'm sensing some embarrassment.

REVEREND
No. No embarrassment.

ELIZABETH
I'm sensing some defensiveness.

REVEREND
No. Slap.

ELIZABETH
Ugh.

Elizabeth does so.

REVEREND
You are picking up on all the wrong things.

ELIZABETH
Hmm. You're thinking of healing.

REVEREND
Slap.

Elizabeth slaps herself.

ELIZABETH
Um. I don't know. I don't know. Okay. I see in you. Oh.

REVEREND
What?

ELIZABETH
So sad.

REVEREND
What do you see?

ELIZABETH
You'd like to know, wouldn't you? Tell me what I am thinking.

REVEREND
Slap.

Elizabeth slaps herself, stares intently in his eyes.

ELIZABETH
Huh. Okay. That's something.

REVEREND
Yes?

ELIZABETH
It's just something that flashed in my mind. A church.

REVEREND

Yes.

ELIZABETH

Really? An old church. An old Victorian church.

REVEREND

Yes. That's right.

ELIZABETH

And someone else, another Reverend. He's not around anymore.

REVEREND

Slap.

Elizabeth slaps.

ELIZABETH

He's still around. But he's somewhere else. Like, in some kind of. Jail?

REVEREND

Slap.

Elizabeth slaps.

ELIZABETH

Is he in a mental institution? Hmm. Okay.

REVEREND

Now tell me, what will I be thinking?

ELIZABETH

Like, in the future?

REVEREND

When I take a shower tonight, what am I going to think about?

ELIZABETH

I'm not so sure I want to know that.

REVEREND

Uh huh. Slap.

Elizabeth slaps herself.

You'd better want to soon. Every other day we're going to practice this. Don't worry. I'm proud of you. Let me tell you something. I want to empower you. Whatever you need is yours. Whatever you need to quiet that demon in you. You will have your charity. But remember. Please me, and the whole church will be in harmony with you.

ELIZABETH

Thank you.

She stands up, kisses him.

SCENE 1.5

Reverend and Megan sit across table, signing documents.

REVEREND

You never told me what inspired this.

MEGAN

A heart as big as the whole wide world.

REVEREND

Really?

MEGAN

Just thoughts over the last year. Regrets. It's like, it hit me how selfish I've been. I've been given everything. I had a great education, I was raised in a great family that provided me anything I ever could have wanted. But, it's funny. It's like, everything is not enough. I knew that there was a higher calling in my life, that having a lot is so empty if it isn't being used for good.

REVEREND

Exactly right.

MEGAN

There are so many people who have not been as lucky as I have been. So, then I came to your church because I heard about all the good that you do, and I thought, here is a guy who is devoting his life to helping the world, and he doesn't have half the things that I have been given.

REVEREND

Thank you.

MEGAN

So, I'm giving you what I can because you can use it for good in a way that I can't. Okay. This is the last form.

Megan signs.

REVEREND

There it is.

MEGAN

There it is. The deed for the field in central California, and the keys to the houses in LA. How are you going to use them?

REVEREND

I'll probably sell them. Pay for the new compounds in San Francisco. Or other places.

MEGAN

Oh. Okay. Just like that. Gone.

They stand up. Megan, slightly pouting. Facing her, Reverend puts hands on her shoulders. Enter Howard.
It's so hard, you know. So hard.

REVEREND

It's sweet to suffer. Be joyous. You've done more good in the last ten minutes than you have your entire life.

MEGAN

Thank you, Reverend.

REVEREND

You're welcome.

Exit Megan.

HOWARD

Hiya. I didn't want to interrupt.

REVEREND

Hello, sir.

HOWARD

Are you the man who's purchasing the block of buildings on Geary?

REVEREND

That's me.

HOWARD

Hi there, James Howard. How did you manage to afford all of those?

REVEREND

Excuse me, sir, who is James Howard?

HOWARD

I like you. A bold Reverend. A, I don't know.

REVEREND

A harsh Reverend.

HOWARD

A, yes, a harsh Reverend. I'm running for mayor in San Francisco. I need bold people, harsh Reverends.

REVEREND

I'm glad you can understand my, uh, defensiveness. I don't often see men in business suits walk into my church.

HOWARD

Not the preacher's crowd, I understand.

REVEREND

I serve all crowds. But you should know, Howard, I save my respect for people, not positions. Why should I respect you?

HOWARD

I may look reactionary, but I'm not. I work within, like you. Greg, if I could call you Greg, I've heard of the remarkable things you've done for this community and the impoverished. You have the kind of politically progressive creed that Christianity needs. I want to bring to politics what you've already brought to religion. Bring power to the powerless, dispose of tired, ancient institutions. If this country operated the way your church operates, we would have had peace by now.

REVEREND

I know, I wish.

HOWARD

And it's working out for you. How'd you get those buildings, anyway?

REVEREND

I got those buildings from the generous donations of my followers. The Richmond family in particular is very well-off. They been donating lots of land for us.

HOWARD

How many followers do you have?

REVEREND

A few thousand, in all our locations.

HOWARD

Unbelievable. See, most people in my sphere of influence don't have the fortitude to move mountains like you. They couldn't get a quarter from their grandparents. Their shadows wouldn't follow them. Your shadow follows you, right?

REVEREND

It does, it does.

HOWARD

Ultimately, it's a problem of weakness in leadership.

REVEREND

Weak men can't give. Don't offer help, don't get people.

HOWARD

You may not respect positions, but the Housing Commission will have an open seat if I get elected. You know a thing or two about housing.

REVEREND

One of my many services.

HOWARD

I'd like to see your practices in more houses. What other services do you have?

REVEREND

I'm a man with many religious specialties. I can make an oracle out of someone.

HOWARD

An oracle?

REVEREND

That's the end game, at least.

HOWARD

Like, a person who can.

REVEREND

See things. Read minds, all that. Highly intuitive, visual and with extraordinary inductive reasoning. These things can be learned.

HOWARD

You're kidding me.

REVEREND

The prophecy part in our name, Howard.

HOWARD

Huh.

REVEREND

Some people it doesn't work with. You can apply centuries of psychological programming, manipulation, so forth, and it's like performing magic tricks to dogs.

HOWARD

Sure.

REVEREND

Others, though.

HOWARD

So, you've done it before?

REVEREND

Yeah. Last girl couldn't handle it. Jumped off a cliff.

HOWARD

Yikes.

REVEREND

But others can. Some here in this compound, right now.

HOWARD

Show me someone.

REVEREND

I can bring up one of the new girls, Elizabeth. She isn't the only one. Young women of all ages can be made to do this.

HOWARD

What, uh, could they give someone like me?

REVEREND

You tell me. What do you want?

SCENE 1.6

Vivian is cleaning.

REVEREND

(voice)

Attention to the compound. All residents please gather in the church immediately. I repeat, all residents please gather in the church immediately. That is all.

Enter Alex.

ALEX

Morning, Vivian.

VIVIAN

Good morning, Brother Alex.

ALEX

What's this all about?

VIVIAN

We had a defection.

ALEX

A defection?

VIVIAN

Yes. It's happened before, in Indiana. People leave. It's fine. We have more coming in than going out.

ALEX

Yeah. I woke up and all my roommate's things were gone. I mean, the little he had.

Congregation slowly gathers in.

VIVIAN

Mmm. Some people leave because life takes them elsewhere. Our church is just a hostel to them, and we're fine with providing it. But this was a defection. Some people don't have mercy on the poor and downtrodden like we do. So, when we let them in, these people have fits, and claim we're ruining the community we're creating. Way I see it is if I let you in, why should I not allow any other in, even if it's your enemy? The People's Church is not exclusive.

ALEX

It's a shame people can think that way.

VIVIAN

You'll get another roommate. Like I told you, it's fine. Those who stay are the true believers, and we want them to stick around.

Enter Reverend.

REVEREND

Morning, everyone.

CONGREGATION

Morning, Reverend.

REVEREND

So. We had a defection last night. You all know about this? Yes, many members of our family will not be back again. It's too bad. I would rather not dwell on the details of the issue. I would just like to say that it truly pains me when this happens. Conflicts like these arise from the sheer mystery of the other people in our lives.

CONGREGATION

Yes.

REVEREND

I want to strip away that mystery. We need to, we must be one divine, inclusive, socialist family. There should be no uncertainty about the interior lives of the other people in our church. Yes?

CONGREGATION

Yes.

REVEREND

No more monogamy, no more constant roommates. We are married to the church, all to all. So, starting at our move to San Francisco, all roommates will rotate on a weekly basis. That's our form. This includes all married and partnered members. A new roommate, every week.

JEREMY

You mean, each week we have to move our stuff to a new room?

REVEREND

If that's going to be a hassle for you then get rid of your stuff. You should anyway, because we have no personal stuff. We all belong to everyone else. I want an equality of identity. I want us all to see ourselves in every face we meet. If you are straight you will do gay things. If you are kind, you will scream at your loved ones. It sounds harsh, but it must be done, because when we are all the same, there will be no more defections. There couldn't be. Would you run away from yourself?

VIVIAN

I've got the schedule for the next year right here. Everyone can look it over.

JEREMY

I don't think it's going to work.

ALEX

It can work, if you open up your mind to it. That's the point of this. To open up to each other.

JEREMY

I think forcing me to spend time with a stranger will just make me hate the stranger more.

ALEX

No, man. It's to, uh, establish trust. Understand? With more trust, the more, like, stable we are. Ha, I can't put this as well as Greg, but it's not only to avoid losing members. It's to become closer to the members that we haven't lost yet.

REVEREND

No, that's exactly right, Alex. Very well put. So, that is all I have for this morning. We'll be taking offerings tonight at six PM. Alex, will you stay here for a moment?

ALEX

Sure.

JEREMY

What do you care about this? You won't be here for much longer.

ALEX

Whatever, man.

Exit all, but Reverend and Alex.

REVEREND

Alex, you're slowly becoming a church within the church.

ALEX

Is that a problem, Greg?

REVEREND

Not at all. You know, it may be good for me after the defection. It was just a tragic misunderstanding, all of that. Would they have minded so much had it been the child of another church?

ALEX

Uh. What? No. I suppose not.

REVEREND

And yet we are all the children of God. I can't explain this so simply, or else they would not have defected. But you can speak my words in a way that I can't.

ALEX

I suppose so.

REVEREND

We have things here called guidance sessions. I would like you to lead them. I'd like you to be my new guide.

ALEX

That would be an enormous honor.

REVEREND

To translate the translation of the word of God? No doubt it would.

ALEX

What would I do?

REVEREND

After my sermons, you will organize a circle and speak to the congregation. You will learn the interpretations of my word and the word of God, and correct them if necessary. I'm relying on you to fill in the gaps for me.

ALEX

Okay.

REVEREND

But giving this to you in the hope that I won't waste my time teaching someone who'll soon desert me. You won't be defecting from us, will you, Alex?

ALEX

I've got no reason to leave. Especially not now.

REVEREND

See, I give. I have faith in the youth. If you want to change a man, you give him an opportunity. One other thing, and tell me if this is too much.

ALEX

Of course.

REVEREND

We have a thing here called partnerships. I want it for you and Elizabeth. On the whole we are all brothers and sisters of one divine, socialist family.

ALEX

Right.

REVEREND

But some people need a constant eye on them. That will be your responsibility.

ALEX

So, like a boyfriend or something?

REVEREND

No. This is more for the church than for you. See, I've read Elizabeth's guilt list. I read everyone's guilt list, but her's. She's, how shall I say, wayward. I love that she's here, and I am always opening my doors to lost souls, but given certain developments lately, I can't have her behavior staining the reputation of the People's Church.

ALEX

I understand.

REVEREND

Great. Well. I'm looking forward to seeing what you can do for these sessions. You should know, I ordain the best members and if one day I possibly purchase a new church, I'd need a minister to lead it. Have a good morning.

Exit Reverend. Alex opens bible, reads with rapt attention.

SCENE 1.7

Alex sets up tables. Enter Vivian.

VIVIAN

I've noticed you've been reading the bible more often lately.

ALEX

Yep.

VIVIAN

What do you think?

ALEX

It's pretty dark, to be honest. What am I supposed to do for these guidance sessions?

VIVIAN

Well, do you have a topic in mind?

ALEX

I was thinking about talking about the move over to San Francisco. Their thoughts on travel and moving to a new place. Is that stupid?

VIVIAN

No, that's a very good idea.

ALEX

What if it veers in some other direction?

VIVIAN

Then, it does.

ALEX

I'm not sure I can do this.

VIVIAN

This is more than just a load of responsibilities. He's asking you to join us.

ALEX

Aren't I already a member?

VIVIAN

Let me tell you something. I rarely ask people to live in our compounds. We're full enough as it is. But I saw something in you that Greg can see too.

ALEX

You guys talk about me, I guess.

VIVIAN

No. We saw that special something in you quite independently of each other.

ALEX

I don't know the first thing about religion, or politics, or revolution.

VIVIAN

You don't have to. You want to know what's sacred? What's in that book, it's not only miracles, though they're there, or lights in the sky, or life changing speeches, or perfect people doing perfect things. Though, that's there, what's more in there is dumb human beings wandering around some dirty country, making mistakes and trying to do the best they can, and failing, and trying again.

ALEX

Yeah.

VIVIAN

That's sacred. You're one of those dumb people, too, Alex.

They laugh.

ALEX

I notice that. Greg has lately been, I don't know, putting down the bible, making fun of it, pointing out its inconsistencies.

VIVIAN

He knows that this book is how we speak, but life is how God does.

ALEX

I don't have to sign anything, do I?

VIVIAN

No.

ALEX

Okay. I'll try my best.

VIVIAN

Don't be afraid. Take responsibility. It might feel fake at first, but you'll find it'll come easier to you with time. And one day, you might be sermonizing, too.

*Enter Small Group, taking seats, pouring coffee.
Enter Elizabeth, with a beer. Alex pulls it out of her mouth.*

ELIZABETH

Excuse me.

ALEX

You're my responsibility now. I can't have you doing this.

ELIZABETH

You're not my parent.

ALEX

See this label? Excessive alcohol consumption. This is a warning, not a guide.

ELIZABETH

A prophecy.

ALEX

No. You need to take this seriously. Anyone else, I'd shrug.

ELIZABETH

Okay, partner. Is this how you're going to treat your partner?

ALEX

Do you think this is a game? Some fun, little power struggle game. This is not a game. I've got no reason to lie to you.

ELIZABETH

Mmm hmm.

ALEX

This has almost killed you many times, and it has killed many, many people before you.

ELIZABETH

Uh huh.

ALEX

This is not entertainment, and it is definitely not a game.

Elizabeth giggles to herself.

ELIZABETH

I like you, Alex.

ALEX

Uh huh.

ELIZABETH

No, I'm not joking. I'm glad you're my partner. You're being so cold about wholesome things. It's funny. Like, I know I can be a handful.

ALEX

Alright, I get it.

ELIZABETH

No, listen. And I will be a handful, but just don't, like, take advantage of that, you know.

ALEX

You don't have to worry about me.

Elizabeth giggles, sits down.

Megan approaches Alex.

MEGAN

You need to give her lots of attention, don't you?

ALEX

It's my responsibility now.

MEGAN

That's too bad.

ALEX

(aloud)

Okay, everyone. Let's take our seats. Raise your hand if you'll be moving with us to San Francisco next week. Wow, that's a lot of you. I wanted to ask, is anyone having doubts about leaving? Okay. That's fine. Now is the time to share.

ACT 2

SCENE 2.1

People's Church of the Prophecy, San Francisco. The same Christian mosaic hangs overhead.

Vivian and Reverend stand offstage together, Alex overhearing.

VIVIAN

See the woman who's passing pastries. Her name is Sandra. A foreigner. Works as a maid for a living. No family, work friends. She has been coming for a few weeks now. Loves Jesus.

REVEREND

Okay.

ALEX

Vivian give you this information all the time?

Reverend laughs.

REVEREND

No. No.

ALEX

Planning a faith healing this morning?

REVEREND

What dreams may come, my son.

Enter Howard, onstage.

HOWARD

Where's Greg? Greg, get out here.

REVEREND

Showtime.

Reverend steps on stage. Crowd cheers.

HOWARD

Reverend, can I embarrass you for a minute?

REVEREND

If you must.

HOWARD

Let me tell you all something. This man. This man. Greg Green. Gregory Green. Reverend Gregory Green. This man does not just have visions. He has vision.

(MORE)

HOWARD (CONT'D)

He's a man with the foresight and the knowledge and the passion to see what's best for the future of this country and the world, to see what God has in store for humanity, and bring it down to Earth. He would have made a great candidate for mayor himself, but God had greater, nobler plans for him. I fear to envy him. I want to congratulate Greg on his massive move over to this great American city, and cheers him to a long, and fruitful career.

REVEREND

Can I embarrass you, Howard? Or, should I say, Mayor?

Crowd cheers.

HOWARD

Please, embarrass me.

REVEREND

I'll tell you the truth. I hated this guy before I ever met him. I thought I knew what a politician was. I thought they were all in it for themselves. But we got to talking and because of him, my entire conception of what a politician can be changed. I was astonished to learn that Howard knows a secret that I have always believed. He knows that to make God's commune on Earth, you cannot wait for Him. You cannot wait on God. God is not going to fall down from the sky.

CROWD MEMBER

No, he's not.

REVEREND

He only comes when you don't need him. God is a fair weather friend and he is always late to the party. He's waiting on us, isn't he?

Crowd cheers.

Well. I for one am tired of waiting for heaven. I want to bring it down here. Why can't we? God is limitless, he does not need our prayers. We've got the politician of the people, the Reverend of the people, and the people of the People's Church. We cannot fail. We don't need God. My children, if you are to pray, don't pray to God, pray to yourself. If you are going to worship, worship yourself. And, if you are to sin, sin against yourself, because it is the highest immorality to harm another person.

HOWARD

Where does he get his wisdom?

Crowd cheers.

REVEREND

Play some music.

*Organ, drums. Reverend points into the crowd.
The lovely and generous Sandra. Come up here.*

Sandra does so.

I've long held that the People's Church belongs first and foremost to its newest members. How would you like a central role in this operation?

SANDRA

I would love it, Reverend.

REVEREND

Howard needs votes from people of all walks of life. Would you be able to bring the word and knowledge of Howard to your community and your people?

SANDRA

Yes, Reverend.

REVEREND

It would unite them all with you. You would have friends both here and in your community.

SANDRA

Yes, yes, Reverend.

REVEREND

You are chosen, Sandra, to organize us all. Who passes flyers, who drives the campaign bus, you decide. What's your first decision?

SANDRA

I'm going to, um. I'm going to rent a helicopter and drop a thousand fliers for Howard's campaign over San Francisco.

REVEREND

That's what I'm talking about. I love that. You can do it if you want, Sandra. You have the power. I give you the keys to this campaign.

SANDRA

And I give you, um, my undying loyalty.

REVEREND

Big words for a nonenglish speaker. Take that, bigots.

Crowd cheers. Reverend bows to Sandra, and crowd disperses, talks amongst themselves.

Vivian approaches Sandra. Alex watching.

VIVIAN

How would you like to join our church? Live in our compounds?

SANDRA

I've got a place.

VIVIAN

This is your home, Sandra. I can see, everyone can see, that special something in you.

SANDRA

Maybe. Yes, I'll think about it.

VIVIAN

Please do.

SCENE 2.2

Reverend and Elizabeth sit across, deep eye contact.

ELIZABETH

A high mountain faraway. Some foresty area, and a kind of desert next to it. Okay. Change. Um. Vivian?

REVEREND

Slap.

Elizabeth slaps herself.

ELIZABETH

Oh, no, no, no. It's that one girl. Um, Megan. You're grateful to her for something. Something she's given you. I don't know. Paper? Oh, and a house, but you never saw the house yourself. So, she gave you some land, or something? Like, the rights to some land?

REVEREND

Yep. Exactly right. That's enough for today. A high mountain, a forest, and a desert.

ELIZABETH

Yeah.

REVEREND

What I might be thinking about in the future, I guess. What's up with you?

ELIZABETH

Have you read my guilt list this week?

Reverend picks up paper off desk.

REVEREND

No.

He reads.

ELIZABETH

Don't be angry.

Reverend stands up, paces.

REVEREND

Is it mine?

ELIZABETH

I don't know.

REVEREND

Not surprising.

ELIZABETH

I'm going to keep it.

REVEREND

This moment for me is too vital for a scandal.

ELIZABETH

I don't care. It's mine.

REVEREND

Ours.

ELIZABETH

I don't know that.

REVEREND

It's not even a thing yet, right? So, you don't have it. You can't get rid of something you don't have.

ELIZABETH

I will have it, though.

REVEREND

It may seem like simply a question of life to you, but what will it mean to the church? A church known for looseness, bad decision making. Would you want this item in your guilt list to be known to the everyone?

ELIZABETH

I think by the time I'm giving birth they would have figured it out.

REVEREND

This is a conflict. I don't want conflicts like this. God does not choose sides. It pleases Him only that conflicts should end. Think like God. Beating or being beaten should be equal to you so long peace is restored. Believe that.

ELIZABETH

I don't know, Reverend.

REVEREND

I am no military chaplain. I am at war with war itself. Do you understand me?

ELIZABETH

Yes.

REVEREND

You can handle this. I'm begging you right now to do what I'm asking you.

ELIZABETH

Or what?

REVEREND

I don't want you to find out.

Enter congregation.

ELIZABETH

Let me find out. I'm keeping it.

Reverend stands.

REVEREND

Good morning everyone. Get comfortable. I have some dispiriting news. More than anything, I would love for today to be a normal healing session. Unfortunately, we can't have only wonders here. It is action more than spirit that defines and defiles us. So. How have we behaved? Most of us commit only minor transgressions. Most of us. One of us, however, has committed a seriously grievous sin. One of us is more tainted than the others, and this taint has chance to be contagious. The herd must halt for the wandering sheep. Here I have Elizabeth's guilt list. Elizabeth, step onstage. Read this out for everyone.

Elizabeth steps onstage. Reverend hands her guilt list.

Come on. I can't confess your sins for you.

ELIZABETH

(reading)

Tuesday I took a pregnancy test after missing my period, and it came out positive. I don't know what to do. This has happened to me before and I wish I had.

REVEREND

Okay, stop. We don't need to hear all that. Impregnated, without the blessing of the church. An impure body breeds an unclean spirit. An unclean spirit breeds a impure church. You can see the catastrophe we're facing. Where's her partner, too, Alex. Come up here. Front and center.

Alex steps onstage.

Alex, you too have been wandering. Jesus. Partners in sin.

ALEX

Yes, Reverend.

REVEREND

What have you done? Tell the people.

ALEX

Um.

REVEREND

What have you done, you've been doubting.

ALEX

I've been doubting your methods, Reverend.

REVEREND

He's been doubting my methods. She's been violating my teachings. Here shine our falling stars. So soon after our move, they descend. If only we could catch them before they crash and launch them back into heaven. Could we do that, my children?

Crowd yells, Yes.

Can we make her clean, make him believe?

Crowd yells, Yes.

I believe she's going to need a treatment more powerful than faith healing. Eh, Alex?

ALEX

Yes, Reverend.

REVEREND

I believe the woman wants to be baptized. Don't you, sister?

ELIZABETH

Yes, Reverend.

Reverend fills large vat with holy water, hands it to Alex. He holds an empty one, and will fill it up, switching vats with Alex once Alex's is empty.

REVEREND

And I believe Alex is the man to do it. So, let's baptize her. Kneel, Elizabeth. Pour the water on your partner. Go on. More. Baptize her. Drown her in the living waters. Do it, now, more. We fill it up and we let it pour. Swallow the water, woman. There should soon be only holy water circulating your veins. More Alex. More. If you thirst then swallow. Don't taint it with your tears.

ELIZABETH

Yes, Reverend.

Alex keeps pouring. Congregation howls.

REVEREND

Water, more water, more holy water. Unclean woman. Drippy, wet rebellious women. Who is your handler? Apparently your handler isn't here. You disrespect me, your leader and friend. You disrespect your partner. You care not for the people, you laugh at the word God. You even disobey yourself. I'm beginning to believe blasphemy is whatever the hell you do. What church are you in? What philosophy guides you? Who's your handler, woman?

ELIZABETH

(Spits)

You, Reverend.

REVEREND

Spitting it out, now? The unclean woman rejects the water of God. I guess she needs more. Dunk her head in it, brother. Dunk it. Now.

Alex pushes Elizabeth's head in water.

Good. Good.

Long pause.

ALEX

Say, that's enough, Reverend. Reverend. Say, that's long enough.

REVEREND

That's long enough.

Elizabeth raises out.

Feeling thirsty, woman? People of the people's church, tell the unclean woman what you think of her.

Various shouts of insults.

Have you had enough?

ELIZABETH

Yes.

REVEREND

I don't think you have. One more. Alex.

ALEX

You're going to hell.

REVEREND

Well. That about covers everything, doesn't it? On your knees, sister.

Elizabeth kneels. Reverend places hand on top of her head, softly pushes and pulls it in circles.

You are pure. You are pure. You are pure. Brother Alex, do you believe in my methods now that you have done them?

ALEX

Yes, Reverend.

REVEREND

And are we not all one flesh, one family, one identity?

ALEX

Yes, Reverend.

REVEREND

Good. Then, you have baptized yourself. Thank you, my children. Take your seats. People. It was them today, but it could very well be you tomorrow. Correct yourself, or we will know. Yes, we have all been excited after moving to San Francisco, but do not get carried away. You do not want to be them. May never happen again. Sandra, please play, hymn number 96. I love that one.

Jeremy approaches Alex and Elizabeth.

JEREMY

Shit. You guys are finished. You won't be in this church for much longer. Ahahaha.

Exit Jeremy. Congregation sings hymn. Elizabeth sings right notes, but in tongues. Alex puts arm around her shoulders, worried.

CHOIR

Hail, holy light of God. Hail, holy light. Hail, holy light of God and all in God's great fight. He came with courage when he came. Honor, order when he came. His way was right and now we will forever praise His name. Hail, holy light of God. Hail, holy light. Hail, holy light of God and all in God's great fight.

SCENE 2.3

Posters of Howard over walls. Line of people, waiting to vote. Sandra seated.

SANDRA

This is the life savings form. Do you have any? Yes, great, fill this out. Tax refunds, I'm sure you do. Paperwork here.

(MORE)

SANDRA (CONT'D)

Thank you, sir. You can fill it out in the mess hall. Just down and to the left. In the mess hall, we're serving small spirits. You'll have fun. Yes, miss, we can set up a direct deposit for the church, 10 percent of each paycheck. Form for that. Yes, I know. Give up your possessions. They only weigh you down. Miss, you forgot this form. Thank you. Oh right, and here's the ballot.

Enter Howard, Reverend.

HOWARD

If the numbers are real, you may have given me the edge, Greg. Let's see how well your followers follow directions.

Elizabeth approaches Reverend.

ELIZABETH

Where's Alex?

REVEREND

He's not invited.

HOWARD

We're trying to have fun here.

REVEREND

Lately, his presence has been having a domesticating effect on people. Probably something to do with that healing session.

HOWARD

Hey, has the training been working on her?

REVEREND

Does the training work?

Reverend scribbles on paper.

Elizabeth, what am I thinking?

ELIZABETH

You're thinking of Russia.

Reverend reveals, Russia, was written.

REVEREND

Exactly right. Outstanding.

HOWARD

You're a miracle worker.

REVEREND

Three seconds. No contact but eye contact.

HOWARD

Incredible.

REVEREND

Now, witness this. Elizabeth, who is going to win the election?

Elizabeth points to Howard.

ELIZABETH

He is.

HOWARD

Holy mother of God.

REVEREND

Yep.

HOWARD

How do you do it?

REVEREND

Okay, we'll see, we'll see.

HOWARD

No, but seriously, this is a miracle.

ELIZABETH

Thank you, Howard.

HOWARD

Uh. That was for him, not you.

REVEREND

Yeah, don't get overconfident. You're still just a problem that needs solving.

SANDRA

Everyone, the results are in. Howard has won.

Cheers.

REVEREND

Close those doors. Tonight the church celebrates together, and no one else. Sandra, take a photo for us.

HOWARD

You, Elizabeth, get over here. The training works.

REVEREND

The training works.

Reverend, Howard and Elizabeth pose for photo.

HOWARD

You people are the future not merely of Christianity, but every religion, and every government on the globe. We're in this together.

REVEREND

Together. Our successes are each others'. Our secrets are each others'. There is nothing that we can't do to each other. There is nothing that we can't do.

Sandra and Reverend hug. They kiss, for too long. This is love. This is what this night is about. Love is always lacking, in churches, in communities, in people. There is never enough. The best relationships I ever had were organic. I did not force it. It was not forced upon me. It was organic. Repeat that with me. I did not force it. It was not forced upon me. It was organic.

Congregation repeats with him as Reverend takes off Sandra's clothes.

Join us.

Congregation takes off clothes, kiss, while repeating.

CONGREGATION

I did not force it. It was not forced upon me. It was organic. I did not force it. It was not forced upon me. It was organic.

SCENE 2.4

Congregation seated, listening. Vivian stands.

VIVIAN

Davis family, you will be heading to Los Angeles. You're script is here. Emphasize our newness and growing popularity. Carter, Clark and Hayes to Denver. Spiritual aspects, oneness. Your stack of flyers is here. Moving onwards, we have purchased four new locations. Two in the midwest, one up north, the last in the East Coast. The following ministers will be appointed as leaders. Clark, McKinley, Buckley and James. The packets on the desk will give you your instructions. Finally, we're honored to have a visitor today, a previous member, Thomas Bradley. He's here to write an article on the People's Church of the Prophecy. Everyone, give him a hand and a warm welcome.

Applause.

THOMAS

Thank you, everyone. I look forward to speaking with you.

ELIZABETH

(aside)

Thomas is going to shit all over this church.

ALEX

You think so?

ELIZABETH

Look. You see the irony in his eyes?

ALEX

Yeah, I do. I'm going to go talk to Greg.

*Alex approaches Reverend, waits for Reverend and
Jeremy to finish conversation.*

REVEREND

You've got a big mouth, Jeremy. It will not serve you right now. Say nothing.

JEREMY

Say nothing, but talk to him.

REVEREND

Say nothing that might warrant a release of your guilt list.

JEREMY

You're in my guilt list, too, Reverend.

REVEREND

So, save the both of us.

ALEX

Hey, uh, Greg. I've got a question.

REVEREND

What is it? Jeremy leave us alone.

JEREMY

No one ever mentions how ridiculous this stuff is. Descending into hell is a very funny thing.

Exit Jeremy.

REVEREND

What is it?

ALEX

Am I going to be appointed my own church sometime?

REVEREND

No. Not you. You're not ready to sermonize yet.

ALEX

Why not?

REVEREND

To be honest, I've had doubts about you, since the whole, you know.

ALEX

Right.

REVEREND

I hope you understand.

ALEX

Yeah, I get it.

REVEREND

Just keep at it.

ALEX

Another thing. Elizabeth thinks Thomas might be writing a hit piece. I think so, too. He didn't even take this church seriously even when he was here.

REVEREND

Elizabeth doesn't know anything about promotion.

ALEX

No, but she can be very intuitive.

REVEREND

Thank me for that. Thomas is going to sit in on your guidance session today, okay?

ALEX

I don't know if I'm comfortable with that.

REVEREND

Listen, I'm going to be completely honest with you, Alex. You're not very brave, you're not very bright, you're not very beautiful, and you haven't demonstrated any desire to develop these qualities.

ALEX

I've been reading a lot.

REVEREND

You are liked, but more for your weaknesses than your strengths. And now it seems you expect me to honor your requests and opinions after you've doubted my practices. Just do what I'm telling you. If he writes a hit piece, it won't be because of me, but because of the doubts and bad character of members like you.

ALEX

Fine. You're not going to be there, are you?

REVEREND

Ha ha. No, I have some important business to attend to tonight.

Exit Reverend. Alex, sets up tables, chairs.

THOMAS

So, what was it like when you first came here?

MEGAN

It was surprising. Joyful.

THOMAS

Did he have the same kind of hypnotic spell he has on other people?

MEGAN

Yeah. Some people just have that magic. They have an impact on you the first moment that you see them. You know there is something special about them.

THOMAS

And what about all the rumors of misconduct?

MEGAN

People can change. Who's a perfect person?

THOMAS

That's it? He's not perfect?

MEGAN

Oh, it's not his personality that brings me here. He can be a bit crude sometimes. It's his beliefs that I agree with. Besides, he attracts people, and I like people.

THOMAS

Okay.

MEGAN

Why don't you interview Alex? I bet he has an interesting story.

THOMAS

I bet he does.

ALEX

I'm alright.

MEGAN

We don't ever hear about you. We don't know anything about you.

ALEX

This sit in on the guidance session is enough.

MEGAN

(quietly, to Alex only)

I can tell where you've been, and who you are.

ALEX

Who's that?

MEGAN

You're a bum. A hippie. That's it. You're only here because you have nothing else. I bet no one has ever given you anything. But you can walk into a church and within a few months start lecturing people.

ALEX

Only here, at least.

MEGAN

You need someone in your life to give you the kinds of things you never thought you deserved.

ALEX

I can tell Greg's still making you stay celibate.

MEGAN

That shouldn't matter to you.

Alex turns to group.

ALEX

Let's start the session. We're going to make it quick today. Today's session is on paranormal experiences. Anyone got anything? Vivian, okay.

VIVIAN

I've seen spirits, or angels, or something like that. It was on a camping trip at Big Sur with Greg. Three golden orbs in the night sky, but they didn't come down to us.

ALEX

Maybe someday, they will. Maybe one day, you'll ascend to them.

VIVIAN

I hope so. The angels are in us, if we let them out.

ALEX

We have our faults, though. It's not all angels in us.

VIVIAN

Yeah, that's true.

ALEX

Sometimes the demons can look like angels.

VIVIAN

I've seen those.

ALEX

It's like deceiving someone, you know what I mean? Making them feel special and then taking that away from them.

VIVIAN

Yeah. I know. Some things that seem good can be bad, but some things that seem bad can be good, too. Like how people can love humanity and hate humanity for the same reasons. I don't know, Brother. We're living in a world of nuance.

ALEX

Yeah. Okay. I understand.

VIVIAN

But there should always be love there for the people you are with, in your church, or in your country, or whatever it is. Especially when some other people or something within you or something else entirely can come in and ruin it with hate and exploitation.

ALEX

That's true.

VIVIAN

Love, I think, should always come with a warning. Love is easily exploited when the other doesn't have it. But then, it's better to be exploited than not to have it.

ALEX

Love can exploit love, though.

VIVIAN

But that's the best thing.

ALEX

And some people can be exploited when they have no love.

VIVIAN

Yes, and that's the worst.

ALEX

(laughs)

Okay. I understand. Anything else from anyone? No?

JEREMY

No. That kind of spiritual stuff doesn't really happen here.

ALEX

Yeah, right. I guess that's it, then.

THOMAS

Really?

ALEX

Yeah, really. Have a good day everyone.

Exit all, but Samuel and Thomas.

THOMAS

I'd like to have an interview with just you, if that's alright.

ALEX

I'm not interested.

THOMAS

Come on, man. I can tell you've got a gift that you're trying to hide from me. Besides, I can't be unbiased if I only comment.

ALEX

Not interested. Thank you.

Alex begins to leave, but stops at Thomas's comment.

THOMAS

He's using you. He's using you as his conscience, so that he doesn't have to have one.

ALEX

I knew this would be a hit piece.

THOMAS

You know what does to the members? Do they tell you in the guidance sessions, or do they just defect before you hear about it?

ALEX

I don't know what you're talking about.

THOMAS

Come on, man. You may be stupid, but don't be naive. Why did he leave Humboldt?

ALEX

He left Humboldt because he took the poor and downtrodden and he gave them hope, and a place to stay, and the elitists over there complained.

THOMAS

That's true, and what else? What did he do to the average member, the ones he's robbing?

ALEX

I'm sure nothing they wouldn't have been doing anyway. And don't call donations robbing. All religions do that. They put themselves in the place of the beggar and skeptics like you call them greedy.

THOMAS

If Green needed to beg, he wouldn't have so much publicity. Have you seen him do anything? Oh, I know. Has he done something to you?

Samuel throws a punch at Thomas, misses.
Still have the fighting spirit.

ALEX

You're not just attacking him, you're attacking my new home, my new family. You're attacking the People's Church.

THOMAS

It's not the people I have a problem with. I think the people are beautiful. I only wish that could gather outside this church.

ALEX

Well, guess what? Since you left, he's multiplied his followers.

THOMAS

Congrats to him. It couldn't have happened to a bigger douchebag.

ALEX

You don't know what you're getting yourself into.

THOMAS

I don't? Oh, I've heard of all the disappearing members. Their stories coming soon to the public. Oh yes. I am the unspookable Thomas. I'd like to see that cocksucker come and kill me. Really, I would. I wouldn't even care if he covered it up. I don't want to be a martyr. Just to see his arrogant, scared shitless face before he hammers a sickle in my third eye.

ALEX

And you will have deserved it.

THOMAS

Look, if he's done anything, and you need to someone to vent to, I can be your exit strategy.

Exit Alex, Thomas, opposite sides of stage. Lights dim. Enter Reverend, and Howard, stumbling. Howard bellows like an ape.

HOWARD

You are a wild, wicked man.

REVEREND

(into recorder)

One in the morning. Returned from the club.

HOWARD

We're going to take this place over. Every house is yours.

REVEREND

Ours.

(into recorder)

Everything smells like pussy to me.

HOWARD

Think of all those homeless people, cold and broken. You are their savior.

REVEREND

We'll give them a place to stay and rest.

HOWARD

And rally.

REVEREND

And rally.

(into recorder)

Long discarded lovers still wandering this lonesome blue orb return to my inward eye. Why did you leave me, Gregory Green? I'll never forgive you, Gregory Green.

Howard looks at map of San Francisco.

HOWARD

Hold on. I want to figure this shit out. What are we going to do about the mission?

REVEREND

Bring them in.

(into recorder)

Remember how she laid there, paralyzed in a bliss of love, too far gone even to wipe the come off her navel.

HOWARD

We'll have to occupy them somehow.

REVEREND

(into recorder)

Still she lays there, faraway, in some static dimension, her reverie of ecstasy forever pressed into one paused plane of time.

HOWARD

Greg, shut the fuck up and get the fuck over here. Help me look over this map.

REVEREND

Why stay in California? Why stay in America?

HOWARD

Ooh. Why stay on Earth?

REVEREND

Let me tell you something, buddy. Promise to keep it to yourself.

HOWARD

Yeah, yeah.

REVEREND

No, seriously. It's personal.

HOWARD

Alright. What is it?

REVEREND

Ten years ago I took a spiritual journey to South America. I took some ayahuasca. I had one of the most profound experiences of my entire life. That land is cheap, and I've been there before. And is there a place in this whole country that will give me the freedom to make the world I want, from scratch?

HOWARD

We're making it here.

REVEREND

No. No. From scratch. A tabula rasa. No oppressive institutions. Free land. Whatever we want.

HOWARD

I made you my Housing Commissioner and the first thing you want to do is run away to South America.

REVEREND

It's more than that. Think about the kind of things we can get away with there. Here we've still got the trappings and corruptions of civilization. Tonight, what we did tonight in this city, is nothing in comparison to this.

(MORE)

REVEREND (CONT'D)

How would you like to have the freedom that only exists in your imagination?

HOWARD

We got to get it, Greg. We got to get it.

REVEREND

We wouldn't have to live there, but whenever we would feel the need to escape, it would be there waiting on us.

HOWARD

Yes. It would.

REVEREND

Put that map away. Let's write up some contracts.

SCENE 2.5

Barracks. Jeremy rolls around bed, trying to sleep. Elizabeth sits staring at candles, sings melodic glossolalia.

JEREMY

God damn it, will you shut up? I'm talking to you. Fucking roommate rotation was a mistake, and all because of you. Do you hear me? I'm paired up with a crazy woman. Hear that? You're a crazy woman. Jesus Christ, where is that schedule? I'm getting your partner. You know your partner? He's coming. For the love of God.

Exit Jeremy. Elizabeth continues singing. Enter Jeremy and Alex.

She won't stop.

ALEX

Yeah. I heard about this.

JEREMY

Handle her. Baptize her, sedate her, I don't care what you do. Just make her right. I'm going to sleep in your room.

Exit Jeremy. Alex presses his hands on her shoulders and she stops singing.

ALEX

Elizabeth. Are you okay? I keep hearing that you walk around the church at night singing, lighting candles. You're waking up your roommate now. The building echoes. You're waking up everyone.

ELIZABETH

Rise and shine.

ALEX

You're not sleepwalking, are you?

ELIZABETH

I am always sleepwalking.

ALEX

I should be more concerned when you say things like that, but I guess it's better that you're saying words.

ELIZABETH

What does that mean?

ALEX

I mean, I hear you when the church sings. You sing in tongues. The right melody and random sounds. Like you're doing now.

ELIZABETH

I just forget the lyrics.

ALEX

They are written in the playbook.

ELIZABETH

Maybe I do. So what? If it's not gospel, it's the language of God.

ALEX

I'd like to think God is more coherent than that.

ELIZABETH

I'd like to think so too.

ALEX

I think I know how you're feeling, at least.

ELIZABETH

Mmm?

ALEX

Truth is, I don't think I can stay here for much longer.

ELIZABETH

Now, you can't.

ALEX

There were things Thomas was telling me that I can't get out of my head. Things that maybe he knows that I don't.

ELIZABETH

Like what?

ALEX

Like why did everyone defect so suddenly? Maybe they knew something the Reverend isn't telling us.

ELIZABETH

It's not unheard of.

ALEX

Well, what hasn't he told us?

ELIZABETH

That's not what I mean. It's not unheard of to runaway. People do it for all sorts of reasons.

ALEX

Are you talking about them, or about you?

ELIZABETH

Maybe about you. Maybe all those times I ran away from things was a mistake.

ALEX

He shouldn't have done that to us.

ELIZABETH

He didn't.

ALEX

We didn't ask for that.

ELIZABETH

He didn't ask for us.

ALEX

What did we do to deserve that?

ELIZABETH

What do we do to deserve anything? We don't even deserve to live.

ALEX

The hell does that mean?

ELIZABETH

I didn't pay to be here. I don't know. If we don't deserve the bad, we don't deserve the good either. We've got a great community, free rent.

ALEX

Free rent that we paid for with our fucking dignity. I should stand up to him. That's what he always says, stand up to the power.

ELIZABETH

Then, you'd be obeying him. And for what? So that he could do that to us again. He tries to treat us like equals here.

ALEX

I did not feel equal up there.

ELIZABETH

Equal with trust that we could handle that treatment.

ALEX

He could have handled that a lot better.

ELIZABETH

There isn't a place in this whole wide world which won't one day treat you like that. There are places where every waking hour is that treatment, and here we got it once.

ALEX

Those ordinary buildings.

ELIZABETH

Maybe, in this specific case, it really was our fault and we've got to humble ourselves to learn from it.

ALEX

Humble ourselves or humiliate ourselves?

ELIZABETH

So long as we learned from it, either works.

ALEX

We seem to have learned two very different lessons.

ELIZABETH

I have nowhere else to go.

ALEX

Neither do I. But if you didn't want to leave, you wouldn't be up all night singing yourself into a mental breakdown. And you wouldn't be trying to convince yourself to stay.

ELIZABETH

If I did something like that to you, would you leave me?

ALEX

No. I wouldn't.

ELIZABETH

Then, don't leave me.

ALEX

Go to sleep, Elizabeth.

They sleep. Moments pass. Enter Reverend, clutching a bottle of whisky. He pushes Alex for a few moments then kneels beside Elizabeth. He places hand over her head, then drinks.

REVEREND
Elizabeth. Awaken.

ELIZABETH
Hmm?

REVEREND
What should I do now?

ELIZABETH
You've got to go.

REVEREND
I've got to go?

ELIZABETH
Leave.

REVEREND
This room?

ELIZABETH
No. Go back and correct things. It's the only way.

REVEREND
Go back where?

ELIZABETH
You need to return. They're not going to stay with you.

REVEREND
Who won't stay with me? The people? The press?

ELIZABETH
No. No one else. Your place is not here.

REVEREND
Return. I think I know where. That place I want to be.

ELIZABETH
There's the right place, and this place, and the other place.

REVEREND
What will I find there?

ELIZABETH
It will show you who you really are.

Reverend drinks.

REVEREND

Fuck me. Go back to sleep.

Exit Reverend.

ELIZABETH

I'll go with you, Alex.

SCENE 2.6

Elizabeth is cleaning. Enter Alex.

ALEX

Hey.

ELIZABETH

Hey.

ALEX

You know, I've been thinking about what you've been saying lately.

ELIZABETH

Yeah?

ALEX

About being humble and committed to the People's Church. You're right. I have to accept when I'm wrong.

ELIZABETH

Right.

ALEX

I apologize for the things I said, about all my doubts and everything.

ELIZABETH

Okay. If that's what you think.

ALEX

That's what I think.

Enter Reverend, Jeremy, Howard.

REVEREND

You fucking cunt. Why didn't you tell me this was going to happen?

ELIZABETH

What are you talking about?

REVEREND

You bitch. The training's working this well, and you'll keep it all to yourself? Get your fat ass out of here. Alex, you can stay. We've got a situation here.

Exit Elizabeth.

ALEX

What happened?

REVEREND

That fucking journalist.

ALEX

Oh shit.

REVEREND

It was a hit piece. It wasn't the members who spilled. They said nothing. It was the defectors. Jeremy shut down the compound.

JEREMY

Shut it down?

REVEREND

Lock this place from the outside. Whoever is out is out. No one is allowed to leave until we figure out what to do. I will not let this mistake happen again.

JEREMY

Okay.

REVEREND

If the congregation gets restless, play one of the old sermons for them.

JEREMY

Got it.

REVEREND

Go on.

Exit Jeremy. Alex reads from magazine.

ALEX

Reports of Reverend Gregory Green smoking crack cocaine in the bathroom of a gay bar. Seen in a graveyard one Monday evening with three naked women, defiling a pot of lotus flowers. Screamed, I'm the zeitgeist now, faggot, to a third grader on his field trip to the aquarium. Reports of harassment, mysterious disappearances of ex-members. One member is reported to have committed suicide after years of psychological abuse in his church.

HOWARD

Unverified.

REVEREND

It's been published. It's in the collective unconscious now. You think anyone is going to take the time to verify it?

ALEX

They're not. It's basically fact, as far as anyone's concerned.

REVEREND

Do they not know the damage of their notions? Everything is normal if you know no different. The commentary is more traumatic than the act.

ALEX

Yes. They are sending doubts to the populace.

REVEREND

And doubts of what? Nature, grace. Every time they complain about me, they complain about life.

HOWARD

It's a small embarrassment. You'll get over it. We'll get over it. They're just a dozen little nerf guns shooting in your direction.

REVEREND

This is more than an embarrassment. What makes you think they won't pin something much worse on me?

HOWARD

What have you done that's illegal?

REVEREND

I haven't done anything illegal.

HOWARD

That's right, you haven't. This is the sort of thing you are going to have to get used to.

REVEREND

Right.

HOWARD

Man's capacity to bitch and mock and complain is as limitless as your genius. Relax.

Enter Jeremy.

JEREMY

The compound is locked.

REVEREND

Okay. We'll get him back. What's on Thomas's guilt list? Jeremy, you got that?

JEREMY

Yeah. There's nothing there.

REVEREND

What's there?

JEREMY

(reading)

Feeling so guilty now because I ate the whole bag of chips. Oh, why the whole bag? Lord, save me from hell's eternal flame. The whole list is like this.

ALEX

He never took the church seriously, Greg.

HOWARD

There must be some other way we can get him.

REVEREND

Okay, I want you to go find him. Grow out your beard a bit so you're unrecognizable. Tell him how you had a cousin, or brother or friend or something, he used to be a journalist and he published something that he regretted because it hurt people. And this cousin was so guilty he committed suicide.

JEREMY

Okay.

REVEREND

He had a mental breakdown and shot himself. Make it seem like you're just telling Tom a story.

JEREMY

Right, a friendly stranger sharing a passage of his life.

REVEREND

It has nothing to do with him. He wont see though the charade, he's an idiot.

JEREMY

Right.

REVEREND

It'll seep into his head. Be like, you feel bad for this friend, you know. You were so close and now your brother is dead. Or, your cousin or whatever.

JEREMY

Yeah, it could happen to anyone.

REVEREND

Yes, yes, exactly.

JEREMY

You want me to beat him up or anything?

REVEREND

No, no. It's important that we deal with this as passive aggressively as possible. Beat his body and the fascist regime will bury us. Beat his mind and he'll do the work himself.

JEREMY

Yeah.

REVEREND

I know a lot about human psychology. In the mean time, I don't think we should stay in this city. I think we should get out. There's been a spike in murders since you've been in office, Howard. It will come to us now.

HOWARD

Right.

REVEREND

People cannot stand the progress that we're making.

JEREMY

Which city?

REVEREND

South America.

JEREMY

That's not a city.

REVEREND

We've got it, though. We've got the land. There are a few members there right now, building cottages and stuff. We could go. We could take everyone. A modern day exodus.

HOWARD

I think that might be a good idea. Hide over there until the heat dies down.

REVEREND

There I could really get my work done. None of the churches I have made have been the real one, the one that I dream about. Ruined by fascists every step of the way.

ALEX

It could be a new nation.

REVEREND

A new nation. Greentown. Our panacea. It's a beautiful spot. Plains to the East, a wilderness to the West. A commune for the people, where I could serve them, and not they me. Where we could try our fates, force paradise. We'll have to be careful, though. Heard of one commune in Nevada, some one hundred people, slowly went mad from an outbreak of syphilis.

ALEX

An outbreak of. Of syphilis? That's not, uh, contagious through the air. They would have had to. Okay.

REVEREND

I guess, ultimately, our oracle was right.

ALEX

Our. Wait, what?

REVEREND

The oracle, Elizabeth. She told me I needed to leave. Said, the press is going to slander you. You have to go to South America. Her exact words.

ALEX

Greg, what are you.

HOWARD

You be quiet. This doesn't concern you.

REVEREND

We have many operations.

HOWARD

Be cautious with your questions, young man.

ALEX

Okay, then.

HOWARD

I'm the mayor of San Francisco. You think you'll be able to convince your whole congregation to move to South America?

REVEREND

I don't care. I'm going to Greentown. I hope to God the people go with me.

ALEX

I'll go with you, Reverend. I'll help you convince them.

REVEREND

Alex.

ALEX

My doubts are gone, Reverend. Especially in hard times like these, I will be loyal.

REVEREND

That means more to me than you can possibly know.

SCENE 2.7

Congregation in pews. Reverend speaking onstage.

REVEREND

False accusations are still accusations, and there will be consequences against us. There will be. What do you think this is? This is the kind of oppression against a sacred people the bible is always rambling about. That is us. Are we going to let them jeopardize the holy progress we have made? Consider what hasn't been reported yet about all of us. Consider every confession on our guilt lists. They will use that to humiliate us and blackmail us. We must go. We must.

JEREMY

Are you sure we can manage an entire commune like this?

REVEREND

Sure. I believe in my congregation. We don't need the trappings of this oppressive civilization to survive. We don't need the corruptions of markets. We can teach and heal ourselves. We can plant ourselves.

SANDRA

I think is wrong, Reverend.

REVEREND

We can harvest ourselves. Excuse me. What was that?

SANDRA

We should stay.

REVEREND

I'm telling you, you all, as your Reverend, that this is the one way.

SANDRA

And I'm telling you as campaign manager it's wrong.

REVEREND

Make your point.

SANDRA

We shouldn't run away. We shouldn't fight, either. If we can stay here, with each other and endure it, then we can win.

REVEREND

Understand what these people will do to us. They will put us in camps, they will starve us, they will beat and humiliate us. Do not underestimate how much they want you dead.

SANDRA

So, we turn the other cheek.

REVEREND

Isaac didn't complain on Moriah Mountain. He didn't argue. He followed his Father's direction, and he lived. Abraham maybe didn't want to slay his son, but he was committed to what was commanded of him. And they lived, and were fine.

ALEX

I'd like to follow that, if I may.

REVEREND

You may.

ALEX

I know many of you might be thinking that Reverend is asking you to cut all ties with your current life, give up everything. He wouldn't do this for no reason. I learned that from him, on the day of that healing session. We don't know what it is now, but there is always a plan. Always has been a plan. I spent my whole life thinking I was stupid. Green changed that. He saw something in me. I've learned more and read more in the year I've been with this church than in my entire life. So, I'm not going to leave him now, wherever he goes.

REVEREND

One is all. All is one. When one of us goes, we all go. Yes. Yes. Repeat that, after me. One is all.

CONGREGATION

One is all.

REVEREND

All is one.

CONGREGATION

All is one.

REVEREND

When one of us goes, we all go.

CONGREGATION

When one of us goes, we all go.

REVEREND

One is all.

One is all. CONGREGATION

All is one. REVEREND

All is one. CONGREGATION

When one of us goes. REVEREND

When one of us goes. CONGREGATION

We all go. REVEREND

We all go. CONGREGATION

Applause.

REVEREND
Yes. Are you ready for South America?

CONGREGATION
Yes.

REVEREND
Will we make paradise there?

CONGREGATION
Yes.

REVEREND
And will we show those tyrants the God they have forsaken?

CONGREGATION
Yes.

REVEREND
Let me hear your heart.

Audience howls.

Yes. That's the power. That's the power that lies underneath.
Sandra, start getting their tickets.

SANDRA
Yes, Reverend. Come on, everyone.

Exit congregation.

REVEREND
Alex. Stick around for bit.

ALEX
Okay.

REVEREND
Wait til everyone's gone.
(pause)
Alex. Holy warrior.

ALEX
Yes.

REVEREND
Has Elizabeth ever informed you how fine a lover I am, a lover that is spiritual, natural, a futuroprimitive lover, ferocious and uncompromising, with the effortless creative virility of a God?

ALEX
No. She hasn't mentioned that.

REVEREND
Would you like some pointers?

THOMAS
Um.

REVEREND
There's no lesson like practice.

Alex laughs.

ALEX
The people are excited to move.

REVEREND
It's not over.

ALEX
I understand this a lifelong process.

REVEREND
I mean the ceremony. The people are gone, as they should be. However, you've impressed me a great deal with your commitment to this church.

ALEX
It's my honor, Greg.

REVEREND
I was worried about you. I thought you'd defect, that you'd be one of those who'd betray me.

ALEX

Not me, Reverend.

REVEREND

You won't now, though, right?

ALEX

No.

REVEREND

You have been holding out for a long time. You still want your own church, right?

ALEX

I'm moving to South America.

REVEREND

That's the one I mean. You're man enough now. You can be the leading minister of Greentown. Below me. Below me. You understand?

ALEX

Yes.

REVEREND

You'll be the the moral center. You've demonstrated that you could be holy and gentle and compassionate with your guidance sessions. You've demonstrated that you could be loyal during this ordeal. You may not be brave or bright or beautiful, but you damn well have all that.

ALEX

It would be an enormous honor.

REVEREND

It's my belief a true ordination is best done in secrecy, between the Reverend and the initiate. Nothing is going to happen, but tell no one what does happen.

ALEX

Okay.

REVEREND

Do not resent your fate. What happens now might make you uncomfortable, but if it does, it is to teach you how to find peace and happiness within. Come, bend over this table for me. I'm you, you're your partner.

Alex stands up, does so. Reverend takes out recorder, lowers pants.

I recorded this especially for you.

Reverend presses play on recorder and thrusts himself on Alex.

(voice)

A place like Greentown has been a secret passion of mine ever since I first stepped foot on those wild, restless lands a decade ago. But today marks the day where it has finally become real to me. On this day I choose my first mate and second in command who can turn it from a wish in my heart into a reality. Alex has been holding out a long time for his own church, and I honor his patience and faith by giving him the key to my kingdom. Alex, this day is your ordination and first orders. You are hereby lead minister of The People's Church of the Prophecy, Greentown.

Reverend is done, zips.
It's over.

Reverend sits, motionless, staring blankly.

ALEX

I am honored, Sir. I'm ready for South America. We are all ready for South America. We. We, uh. Are you. Are you feeling alright, Reverend?

REVEREND

Hmm?

ALEX

That was a very powerful thing you just did for me.

REVEREND

Oh. Mmhmm.

ALEX

Very powerful. But you're. Um. Is there anything I can do? No? Reverend?

REVEREND

Hush, hush. Quiet time now.

Exit Alex, reluctantly. The Reverend stays seated, motionless, eyes open.

ACT 3

SCENE 3.1

People's Church of the Prophecy, Greentown, French Guiana. The Christian mosaic is gone.

The Reverend's voice over the whole grounds. The commune members dig and plant. Jeremy walks around redirecting them, Sandra kicking.

REVEREND

(voice)

Do not fear death. When an enemy comes, scientists say we fight, fly, or play dead. But why only play? Annihilation is an option like any other. When you do what your enemy would have done, you win.

SANDRA

Stop singing slave songs. It's inappropriate.

REVEREND

(voice)

Do not fear death. People die, but the church lives forever. If it is a choice between the commune and the congregation, always choose the commune. No church or race or individual has ever survived while suppressed by fears of death.

Megan collapses. Jeremy shakes her body.

JEREMY

Turn off the sermon.

REVEREND

(voice)

Do not fear death, for death is the true equalizer. It reciprocates life, and makes us all one. Do not fear death.

JEREMY

Turn it off. Cease work. Reverend, come over here.

Enter Reverend.

REVEREND

Move, move, move out of the way. What happened?

JEREMY

She just collapsed. She's the weakest person here.

Reverend waves his hands over Megan.

REVEREND

Stand back, everyone.

JEREMY

Get away from his energy.

REVEREND

Megan, can you hear me? I am going to need to summon the power of the people, the spirit of the globe. Jeremy, pass the people jugs of wine, now, all of it. I'll buy some more. But now everyone drink. I need your uninhibited energy. Drink up, my children, and Megan will rise again. Repeat after me, return to us, Megan.

CONGREGATION

Return to us, Megan.

REVEREND

Come back home.

CONGREGATION

Come back home.

REVEREND

Feel the healing energy.

CONGREGATION

Feel the healing energy.

REVEREND

If you leave us.

CONGREGATION

If you leave us.

REVEREND

We will leave with you.

CONGREGATION

We will leave with you.

Alex grabs Megan, holding a goblet of water, pours it into her mouth, over her forehead.

REVEREND

So, don't, uh, do that to us.

CONGREGATION

So, don't do that to us.

REVEREND

Come back to your last home.

CONGREGATION

Come back to your last home.

Megan wakes up. Congregation cheers.

Oh. Alex. MEGAN

You're dehydrated. ALEX

Oh my god. MEGAN

She sits up.

Stay seated. Keep drinking. ALEX

Thank the people, Megan. REVEREND

Thank you. Thank you, Reverend. MEGAN

Back to work, everyone. REVEREND

Congregation continues working. Elizabeth kneels beside Megan.

A long day in the field. ELIZABETH

Yes. MEGAN

Elizabeth drops leaves of papaya into goblet, stirs.

Here, papaya. These heal everything. Greg's discovery. ELIZABETH

Thank you. MEGAN

Elizabeth plants some seeds.

You're in good spirits. ALEX

Mmm? What? ELIZABETH

How are you? Are you happy here? ALEX

Mmm. Greg teaches us to find happiness from within, so that's what I'm doing. ELIZABETH

(MORE)

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Even if we get hurt, even if we're starving, even if some of us can never see our family again, our minds can make a heaven of this place, of any place and any situation. Plant these seeds with me. A rose garden in the most unlikely area.

ALEX

You're talking in that dreamy way again.

Elizabeth pats the ground.

ELIZABETH

Stay hydrated, little flower.

JEREMY

Elizabeth, what did you just say about Greg?

ELIZABETH

What do you mean?

JEREMY

Even if some of us can never see our family again. This a reference to Brother Jacob?

ALEX

Jeremy, it's nothing.

ELIZABETH

It's okay. It's true. I think he should go back.

JEREMY

Greg. Reverend. Do you hear this?

REVEREND

What?

JEREMY

Elizabeth sides with the US on Jacob's custody case.

REVEREND

Elizabeth, you think Brother Jacob should go back to the United States, to that corrupt, evil country from where we were exiled, a place where we were harassed, where they'll harass him, and interrogate him for information on our practices.

ELIZABETH

I think he should be able to go back to his family.

REVEREND

This is his family.

ELIZABETH

I have a point, Greg.

REVEREND

I don't care. I condemn that it was made at all. Do you not understand how a commune like this works? Or any community? It runs on the faith of its members. It exists if and only if people believe in it, like God or money. Belief is the necessary condition of its existence. So when you cast doubts, it dispirits the members, and when the members are dispirited, then there is no commune. There's just depressed people in a dirty country, too weak to even fail. That is no commune of mine.

ELIZABETH

Why does this kid scare you so much? You don't have a guilt list for him to be on.

REVEREND

Throw this whore in solitary. Two days.

Jeremy grabs her.

ALEX

Reverend, it's not that big of a deal.

REVEREND

You can go to solitary, too. Do you want that? Take Megan to the clinic, or you will be going with her.

Exit Alex, Megan.

JEREMY

Leave us alone for a minute. I'm speaking with the Reverend.

Elizabeth stands aside.

REVEREND

Yes?

JEREMY

Reverend, you know that no one understands the danger we are in like I do. Lots of people here think you're paranoid. I don't. I've seen the hatred of the fascists for you and me and for what we're doing.

REVEREND

I understand. What do you want?

JEREMY

I think we should have Elizabeth killed. She's done all she needed to do for this church. She's now dead weight, at best. At worst, she can destroy the commune.

REVEREND

Is that what you believe?

JEREMY

Imagine if she got out, what she would say. That we were holding her against her will in solitary, that we were kidnapping a kid, that we weren't sufficiently feeding the members. She would make this look a lot worse than it actually is.

REVEREND

That's true.

JEREMY

I don't object to decreasing our members a bit in order to maintain the sanctity of our community. And Alex.

REVEREND

What about him?

JEREMY

Dead weight. I'm not joking. You and I and everyone in Greentown can survive for a thousand years as long as he's gone.

REVEREND

I hear your thoughts. Now please, get her into solitary.

Jeremy grabs Elizabeth, exit Both.

SCENE 3.2

Members sprawled out around the stage, talking, resting, reading and so on.

Reverend talks with Vivian.

REVEREND

Now is not the time.

VIVIAN

I can't do it any longer. I can't be here. I support this. I support what you're doing. But.

REVEREND

One week is all I ask.

VIVIAN

You have been saying one more week for the last two months.

REVEREND

Vivian, my love, mother of my church, not now. I have that custody case with Jacob. Yes?

VIVIAN

So what?

REVEREND

I need your wisdom in this. Your comfort to take me through this.

VIVIAN

Greg. I should have divorced you, but I'm not. All I'm asking for is this.

REVEREND

You can leave any time you want, but I am protecting you. You don't understand what can happen to you out there.

Enter Alex, with packages.

ALEX

Greg, the packages are here.

VIVIAN

You know I won't say anything. Only positive things.

REVEREND

One more week.

VIVIAN

We'll talk.

Exit Vivian.

ALEX

Bye, Vivian. Reverend, I'm having trouble understanding the purpose of some these purchases.

REVEREND

What do you mean?

ALEX

I mean, it says here that you've purchased one hundred cases of mephobarbital tablets and forty gallons of cyanide.

REVEREND

The rats, my son.

ALEX

Is the rat problem so bad that we need 40 gallons? And what about the barbiturates?

REVEREND

You're not my accountant, Alex. Have faith in my plans, in my precautions.

ALEX

Okay. Another thing. We, uh, received a letter from Mayor Howard today. He wants to visit Greentown, give us a congratulations, evaluate the commune.

REVEREND

Evaluate, or investigate?

ALEX

It shouldn't be a problem. You launched his career.

REVEREND

Be more vigilant, my son. Old friends can make new enemies. Think of Thomas. Danger lurks in every gift, and kind word and under every blade of grass.

ALEX

That's true. What you are saying is very true.

REVEREND

Now excuse me, my son, I need some rest right now.

ALEX

What about the sermon?

Reverend takes barbiturate case.

REVEREND

You're living in the sermon.

Exit Reverend.

ALEX

I guess there's not going to be a sermon today.

JEREMY

Oh. Is it Sunday? Whatever. You give one, Minister.

ALEX

No, I shouldn't. I'm not trying to take Greg's place.

JEREMY

Then, I don't know, play one of the old ones.

ALEX

We're running out. He needs to make new ones.

JEREMY

No, he doesn't.

ALEX

We can't just start playing his notes.

JEREMY

You don't lead him. You follow him. Learn to wait on Greg.

ALEX

So, what should we do?

JEREMY

What we're doing now.

ALEX

What's that?

Enter Elizabeth, with basket of plants.

JEREMY

What we're doing. What everyone's doing.

ALEX

What, communing?

JEREMY

If you don't know what we're doing, then I can't tell you what to do.

ALEX

I mean, I have the guidance sessions after the sermon, but if there's no sermon, then.

JEREMY

You're still doing those?

ALEX

Yeah.

JEREMY

Yeah, you should stop doing that.

Exit Jeremy. Megan approaches Alex.

MEGAN

I'm bored right now.

ALEX

Yeah, I think I'll do a guidance session. Yeah? Everyone, let's do a guidance session. Come on.

A few people form a circle.

MEGAN

You want to baptize me instead?

ALEX

No, we're. Wait, are you serious?

MEGAN

Honestly, I thought it was kind of hot.

ALEX

No, we're going to do a guidance session. First.
(aloud)
Come on, everyone. Is this going to be it?

MEGAN

I guess so, Brother.

ALEX

I guess this is it today. Alright. Our topic is on gratitude. Someone, uh, no need to say who, they inspired me, how in life things can be rough, but to be grateful anyway and make it the best that it can be. What are you grateful for?

MEGAN

There's so much to be grateful for. We asked for freedom and Greg gave us it. We asked for safety from tyranny and Greg gave us it. We asked to return to nature and be one with our roots and.

ALEX

And Greg gave us it. Yeah.

SANDRA

History will vindicate us. They're afraid of him because he made the society that they couldn't. See our sacrifice. See our suffering. We are the saints. We are the holy people.

MEGAN

I just hope he doesn't lose faith in us. We came here on our own accord.

Enter Reverend half naked and intoxicated.

ALEX

This is great. This is a great session. Yep, yep. We're making lots of.

REVEREND

My childies, my itty bitty childies. Aye, the dead is king. Long live the dead.

Reverend falls.

ALEX

Everyone, lets take ten minutes.

REVEREND

Fuck.

ALEX

Or, go back to cottages. We're done for the day. Go, go.

Exit all, but Alex and Reverend.

Reverend. Are you alright?

REVEREND

Alex. Holy warrior. You're more of a son to me than all my adopted children. More than Chinua, more than Takayuki.

ALEX

Thank you.

REVEREND

Don't repeat this. En vino veritas. En a hell lot of other things veritas.

ALEX

It pains me to see you like this. It pains all of us.

REVEREND

All of us. People say things, huh?

ALEX

I can see it in their faces. Gregory.

REVEREND

Yes, my son?

ALEX

Can I tell you why I stayed here, what a shock it was to come in your church that first time? You need to remember, you need to know. Your church was a place where people were kind for nothing, where they hugged and smiled and played music for nothing, and how unusual that is, that it was just there, freely given. There it was, for nothing.

REVEREND

And you think it isn't like that anymore. Everyone, still, is doing it. Even my own members.

ALEX

Reverend, that's not what I mean.

REVEREND

I'll put the whole goddamn commune in solitary.

ALEX

Reverend.

REVEREND

To heal them. To heal the fascist attitudes.

ALEX

There's no.

REVEREND

Growing within.

ALEX

There's no fascist here to oppress us. We're at the top here.

REVEREND

There is no top here. The oppression in the commune itself. We can't have that, Alex. I telling you, weeping, I am telling you. I can see how miserable they are. But what they're breeding. Think of Julianne. I try to heal and they strike at me. When they would be lost without me. When I am the one who grants them peace.

ALEX

Reverend. You're fucked up.

REVEREND

Losing your loyalty again, huh? You too?

ALEX

No, I'm still.

REVEREND

What do you know about this that I don't?

ALEX

I don't know. Nothing.

REVEREND

Exactly.

ALEX

Okay.

REVEREND

None of you made the promises with this land that I did. I know more about this than everyone here combined, because it is my field, my house you're in, that you have been freely given, because I am protecting you from forces you cannot conceive.

ALEX

Alright.

REVEREND

When you come to the center, Alex, there is no rest, no rest. There is not enough spirit in this world to heal this world. But I am goddamn trying. And I am one man, though the world is in me. My miracles, my mind, they have taken you this far.

ALEX

I know.

REVEREND

So, have faith in me.

ALEX

Reverend, I.

REVEREND

Leave me alone.

ALEX

Reverend, I'm sorry.

REVEREND

Leave me alone, I said.

ALEX

Alright. Just get better, okay?

Exit Alex. Reverend takes out recorder, speaks into it.

REVEREND

Jesus, that visit in the garden. Could it have been real? What He said may have just been a metaphor. Don't bet on that. Don't forget it, don't forget. In the garden, the great fascist came down to me, showing me visions of the future, saying to me, Firing squads, firing squads, you and your children, firing squads. I'm going to skin you people alive.

SCENE 3.3

Alarm. Reverend speaks into microphone.

REVEREND

Everyone into the main hall. An attack is imminent. Everyone into the main hall. An attack is imminent.

Alarms. Enter congregation.

I need a couple dozen of our strongest men to form a line around the perimeter of the commune. You guys, get out there, protect the commune. Lock it from the inside. A few stand watch near the door if one of them needs to enter. Jeremy, make sure the guards are on duty.

Exit Jeremy.

The rest of you, relax, get comfortable, we might be here for a while.

ALEX

What's the issue, Greg?

REVEREND

We're all aware of the conflict surrounding Brother Jacob. Tonight they are taking their vengeance on us. Fascists have gathered at our gates.

(MORE)

REVEREND (CONT'D)

They are trying to take him back, take back one of our youngest members. What they call a custody case, I call a kidnapping. I refuse to let that happen.

CONGREGATION

Yes.

REVEREND

Make no mistake about this, my children. They seek retribution. If they get possession of Brother Jacob, it will be a totalizing victory for them. They will demolish our commune, slaughter our young, rape our corpses, all in the furious glory of their single success. Believe this. One is all. All is one. One life lost is a whole community lost. Believe me on this. When one of us goes, we all go. Do you believe?

CONGREGATION

Yes.

REVEREND

If something like this ever happens again, if they receive their totalizing victory, I am willing to take the ultimate precautions in order to protect this commune. Are you?

CONGREGATION

Yes.

REVEREND

I am passing out Statements of Loyalty and Faith. I want everyone to take one and sign it. It states that you will be committed to whatever orders you are given in the case of dire circumstances such as this. I need us all to think and believe and act together in this, one divine, socialist family. Hear that?

CONGREGATION

Yes.

REVEREND

Can I have a group of you pass these out to everyone?

Members pass out Statement of Faith. Elizabeth crumples up the Statement of Faith. Alex approaches her.

ALEX

You're out of solitary.

ELIZABETH

Mmm. Mmm hmm.

ALEX

You're not going to sign the statement?

ELIZABETH

It doesn't matter. We're all going to die.

ALEX

I'm sure this is nothing. Probably a false alarm.

ELIZABETH

I'm not talking about this. He'll kill us all and be blameless because he did it without touching us.

ALEX

What are you talking about?

ELIZABETH

If I could, I would bet my soul he's as bad as I think he is. I would, and I'd be saved.

ALEX

Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

Alex. I love you, in a way. Listen. I have visions in solitary. Listen. Play dumb. Play dead.

Exit Elizabeth. Alex sits down, hands on forehead.

Enter Jeremy, approaching Reverend.

JEREMY

So. The guards are on watch, and will be 24 hours now. We've added several more, and their arrangement has changed a bit. So, four out of six guards on the wilderness side are now pointing their guns outside the camp and four out of six guards on the plains side are now pointing inside.

REVEREND

I think I follow you.

JEREMY

It's just a harder shot towards the wilderness, so there are more pointed that way. You know how it is.

REVEREND

Has anyone tried breaking in yet?

JEREMY

No. I mean, the natives have.

REVEREND

That's not what I mean. Greentown belongs to the natives. The guards will be in that arrangement for the time being, even after this is through, understand?

JEREMY

Understood.

REVEREND

Let them know, if anyone tries to break out to shoot on sight.

JEREMY

Of course. Astonishes me that we're still being harassed liked this.

Enter Megan.

REVEREND

Yep, even now.

Exit Reverend and Jeremy. Megan approaches Alex.

MEGAN

Hey.

ALEX

(startled)

Oh, hey.

MEGAN

I've missed you.

ALEX

Yeah.

MEGAN

What's wrong?

ALEX

Nothing.

MEGAN

I know your face.

ALEX

It's just. Let's talk quietly, okay?

MEGAN

Okay.

ALEX

Lately the things Greg's been doing and saying has been freaking me out. Talking about the honor of dying for one's cause. Mentioned how there was a mass suicide 100 years ago a few miles away. He's getting angry at the smallest things. He's got gallons of cyanide in one of the cottages.

MEGAN

Okay.

ALEX

And this emergency that he's having, that I don't buy for a second. This isn't adding up in a positive way.

MEGAN

Right.

ALEX

I think he's going to try to kill some of us. Or all of us. Try to get us to kill ourselves.

MEGAN

I think you might be reading too much into this.

ALEX

I don't know. I don't know what to do. If any one of us speaks up against him, we disappear.

MEGAN

He can't make us all disappear.

ALEX

But we can't all get out of this without one person speaking up.

MEGAN

Are you dehydrated? No, seriously. You could always leave.

ALEX

I can't leave. Neither of us can. Supposing we got out without being shot, we'd have twenty one miles of wilderness to wander through.

MEGAN

I'm not going to leave. I basically paid for this place.

ALEX

There is something else I can do.

MEGAN

What?

ALEX

So strange to think I started with such honest intentions.

MEGAN

What are you thinking about?

ALEX

I can stop him right now. I just don't know if it's in me.

MEGAN

I know what you're thinking about. Stop.

ALEX

It's a thousand potential lives lost, or one certain one.

MEGAN

This commune couldn't exist without him. You'd be destroying everything we've done. You'd be destroying the People's Church.

ALEX

He's not greater than all the members.

MEGAN

No one can be swapped with him. Not even you.

ALEX

Maybe, but he's nothing without all of us.

MEGAN

If you do this and you're wrong, then you just killed an innocent person.

ALEX

And if I'm right, then I just saved a thousand people.

MEGAN

You couldn't prove you saved them. You can't know until it happens.

ALEX

It is not worth the risk to find out.

MEGAN

You would never forgive yourself.

ALEX

I wouldn't be able to prove I was wrong either.

MEGAN

Okay. If you don't do it, and it turns out you're wrong, this whole conversation will seem crazy to you. You'll probably be embarrassed for even thinking about it.

ALEX

If I do nothing, and it turns out I'm right, I would feel much more than just embarrassment.

MEGAN

What would you even say afterwards? How would you explain it?

ALEX

I'll say I had to.

MEGAN

And if you don't, you'll say you couldn't. You'll rationalize anything. So, do the moral thing, and rationalize that.

ALEX

Our future forms our past as much as the opposite, huh. Everything seems determined in retrospect, huh. That does not help me decide now.

MEGAN

Stop being weird. Think about what brought you to the People's Church to begin with. Is he the kind of person who would kill his entire church?

ALEX

No.

MEGAN

Have you ever been the type of person to even think of something this?

ALEX

No.

Enter Reverend.

MEGAN

So, don't do it. Minister. You're the moral center of this place.

REVEREND

Attention. Attention. My children. The attack is over, the fascists have receded, but we have to be on guard from now on. Especially now, for in a few days Mayor Howard will be coming to investigate our commune. We are taking extreme precautions, as everyone should. I will be preparing for more than just a pleasant meet and greet from Mayor. Be vigilant until his visit is over. Back to your cottages, everyone.

MEGAN

See?

ALEX

You're right. I'm malnourished right now. I suppose we all are. Ha. I'm going to go to the garden.

SCENE 3.4

Congregation talks, eats. Enter Howard, Reverend.

HOWARD

I've got to say, Greg, I'm impressed. When I came over here, I was expecting, I don't know, a shithole.

(MORE)

HOWARD (CONT'D)

But there's cottages, fields, clinics, schools. It's actually looking like a commune.

REVEREND

Thank you.

HOWARD

I mean, maybe with such low expectations. Hey, everyone's happy, getting exercise. I'm proud of you all.

REVEREND

Vivian, what do you think of the commune?

VIVIAN

We are making it the best it can be.

REVEREND

See, they love it here. Clean air, a vibrant native people depending on us, equality. Look, some carrots. Just when you thought things couldn't get any better.

ALEX

You're in great spirits, Greg.

REVEREND

When I'm here, great spirits are in me.

HOWARD

Some old friends. I'm going to go say, Hi.

Howard steps aside, speaks with people.

ALEX

How is he liking the tour?

REVEREND

Can't tell. He's a good actor. A politician.

VIVIAN

Try to be tactful. Remember what happened with you and James.

ALEX

Who's James?

REVEREND

James is my father.

VIVIAN

Greg.

REVEREND

Not now. One week. No. When Howard leaves, you can too.
(to congregation)

Everyone, gather round. A sermon for Howard.

Congregation gathers.

Two thousand years ago, we were informed directly and in no uncertain terms that whatever we bind and loose on earth will be bound and loosed in heaven. As above, so below. As below, so above. You've all heard that. There is the upper and the middle and the lower. Split densities of moral virtue, whatever that is. That is the class system. That is our cosmography. But why, why do we even need that division? Huh? If what we're doing here is heaven, right, then what's the, uh, the. Uhm. Like, what we're aiming to do, okay, is remove that class system, the hierarchy. Disintegration is the name, that's our cause. Heaven, earth, hell, all one, equal. No rich, no poor, no angels and demons. Doesn't exist, don't exist, all fictions. Yes. It had to happen here. No one in civilization, corrupt tyrants, they would not have flowed with that, no, no, no. No, sir. So, we're unbinding works in heaven here. Know the implications of this. We've got the fate of stars in our grasp. But we are also in heaven, too. Christ, you know, he was right, but he was also wrong because he was making that distinction in the first place. We're more correct because we're not making a difference. Or, the difference. Anyway. Howard's here. But you all know that. Give a hand for Howard. Yeah. We'll be taking photos with him. He's looking healthy. Bigger gut than I remember, ha ha. You like the air over here, Howard?

HOWARD

Yes, Reverend.

REVEREND

He likes the air. What a guy. Come, Sandra. Let's take some photos.

Reverend, Howard pose as Sandra shoots.

You'll take these photos back to San Francisco, right?

HOWARD

Yes.

REVEREND

Show them the world of my mind, yeah? Show them the God they've forsaken.

HOWARD

Sure, Greg. Sure.

REVEREND

Alright, thank you Sandra. Everyone, it's getting late. Back to the cottages. Let's give Howard some peace. Thank you.

Exit congregation.

Elizabeth, come over here. Howard's going to spend the night in your cottage.

ELIZABETH

No, he's not.

REVEREND

Excuse me?

HOWARD

It's fine, Greg. The girl's clearly sick.

ELIZABETH

I'm not sick. I've never been healthier. The air is so clean here.

HOWARD

She's mocking me, she's sick.

ELIZABETH

I'll spend the night with you if you take Jacob back home to his family.

HOWARD

Are you trying to negotiate with us?

ELIZABETH

Yeah. Are you going to throw me into solitary for this?

HOWARD

What's she talking about?

REVEREND

She's not talking about anything. She's sick.

HOWARD

Greg, just what the fuck is going on? Look, I'm aware of the custody case. That's your issue, I don't really care, but I'm willing to settle it right now if it's breeding conflicts in Greentown. She's proposed a pretty elegant solution.

REVEREND

No, there are no conflicts here. This woman not the representative of Greentown. I'm going to speak with Elizabeth alone, okay?

HOWARD

Alright.

REVEREND

Find whatever cottage you like and spend the night there. You have my blessing. But this girl is diseased.

HOWARD

Alright then. Sweet dreams.

Exit Howard.

REVEREND

What happened to the Statement of Faith?

ELIZABETH

I didn't sign the Statement of Faith. I just can't stop fucking things up, can I? Guess I'm off to meditate in solitary confinement.

REVEREND

No. You're staying here. Relax. We've spent so much time together analyzing me. Have a drink. I want to understand you.

Elizabeth drinks glass of wine. As Reverend speaks, he starts yelling, and Elizabeth starts singing in tongues.

This is an embarrassment to me. It makes me goddamn ashamed. Why aren't you? No one here likes you. They think you whine too much. Their exact words. Do you know how difficult it is to parent you? Elizabeth, you deserve all the harsh treatment you can get. Don't cry. Don't fucking cry. I told you, I'm a harsh Reverend, you remember that? First day we met. Did you think I was joking? You laughed, you thought it was a joke, but did you think I was joking? You have ruined every moment of mercy I have ever had for you and still I give to you. I have given you much more than you deserve. You need me more than I need you. All your good days are my doing. All your bad days are my fault. Without me here, guiding you, where would you be? Back home in your precious fucking alleyway, getting raped by dogs, selling your ass for an EBT card.

ELIZABETH

Oh, and this is better.

REVEREND

You told me to come here. Did you lie? Are you lying now?

ELIZABETH

Greg, you want to know the truth? You're just like a drunk idiot at a bar. You think that when I play along with your bullshit, you're controlling me, and when I don't I'm rebelling. Maybe it has nothing to do with what you say. Maybe some girls do whatever they want, and occasionally it'll fall in line with the orders of men.

REVEREND

Slap.

Elizabeth begins to slap herself, but stops before reaching cheek.

ELIZABETH

No.

Slap. REVEREND

No. ELIZABETH

I'll put you in solitary. REVEREND

I won't go. ELIZABETH

You are my child. You know what we do with those, right? REVEREND

I don't care. ELIZABETH

Fucking slap yourself. REVEREND

Let Jacob go home to his family. ELIZABETH

You are not nearly in control of things as you think. REVEREND

Apparently, you aren't either. ELIZABETH

Reverend takes out revolver.

At any moment, I can call up a helicopter and drop you into the Atlantic. REVEREND

Do it. ELIZABETH

Reverend presses revolver against Elizabeth's temple.

Let's test the limits of your honesty. Tell me, do you love me? REVEREND

No. ELIZABETH

Reverend twists her breast.

Do you love me? REVEREND

ELIZABETH

No. I do not love you.

Twists it more.

REVEREND

Be thankful the tools are limited here. Do. You.

ELIZABETH

No.

Reverend paces.

REVEREND

You are ruining this commune. This is supposed to be a church, goddamn it.

ELIZABETH

So, drop me into the Atlantic. It's my fault, it's all my fault. I've been left no room to do anything right. My lack of faith ruins the commune. My lack of doubt keeps me from disappearing. So, kill me, make a show of it. Neither the faithful nor the doubtful like me. I'd be a sacrifice the whole church could rally behind.

REVEREND

No one likes you, but which one are you? Do you have faith or do you have doubt?

Elizabeth laughs.

Well?

ELIZABETH

(laughing)

Press your gun against my temple again. It felt nice.

REVEREND

You fucking whore.

ELIZABETH

The faithful are naive morons.

REVEREND

You goddamn fucking whore.

ELIZABETH

The doubtful are disloyal wimps. Our deaths can't come soon enough.

REVEREND

Shut the fuck up.

Reverend points gun at her, stalks her in circles around room. Her voice gets fainter as she speaks.

ELIZABETH

Call me a helicopter. You'd better, or I will poison you while you sleep. You still won't forget me, though, will you? I've been here since the very beginning, haven't I? You'll still be dreaming of me. I'll still be killing you in your sleep.

Elizabeth collapses.

What the fuck. What was in that drink?

REVEREND

More than just the blood of Christ.

Reverend puts revolver away.

Something more is required to heal you.

ELIZABETH

What the fuck.

Reverend grabs cups of wine, drinks, keels beside Elizabeth.

REVEREND

Go to sleep, sleeping beauty. With me. With me. This one cup we share together, to dream deep dreams together. I have been exhausted all my life. It's finally catching up to me. Because of you. We're not nearly as in control as we think.

SCENE 3.5

Howard, Reverend shaking hands.

HOWARD

Greg, it's been an honor to be here.

REVEREND

Howard, I've failed you.

HOWARD

No, no.

REVEREND

I'm finished, Howard. This was supposed to be the escape and it's just. It's a fucking hellhole. I've lost everything.

HOWARD

No. No. You haven't failed me. I'd love to come back again. Just keep working on it, okay?

REVEREND

Jeremy, please escort Howard to the helicopters. Have a nice flight, Mayor.

HOWARD

Keep making us proud, Greg.

Exit Howard, Jeremy.

Reverend walks around, picks up bible, skims. He sips a glass of wine, sits back down. He pulls out recorder, speaks into it.

REVEREND

Felt like black death all day. Strange magic of intention, on my mind now. By some wordless passage of communication the will of one man may manifest, orders carried out through gestures and expressions, understood by all, executed by all, the decider unidentified.

Shouts heard faraway.

The decider himself perhaps unaware of his own intention and rule. Whose will do I follow then, if not my own? And who follows mine? Who, whom, as a great man once said.

Gunshots heard. Screams.

Always, everyone, master of one, slave to another, not one ever the king of himself. Give up entirely any notions of self ownership. Guiltless. Blameless. Yes.

Enter Jeremy.

JEREMY

Howard has been shot.

REVEREND

(into recorder)

At least, then, you may help all those you own.

JEREMY

Reverend, do you hear me?

REVEREND

What?

JEREMY

The mayor has just been shot.

REVEREND

Huh. A reason. How did it happen?

JEREMY

The guards. I guess they thought he was trying to break out, so they did what you ordered them.

REVEREND

Is he dead?

JEREMY

It appears that way.

REVEREND

At last. At last. The time has come.

JEREMY

Reverend?

REVEREND

There's no leaving this. This is where we came to leave. You know what this means, right?

JEREMY

Evacuation plans.

REVEREND

Everyone here will not be here soon, save maybe a few. Take it out.

Jeremy exits, enters, a few times with goblets, juice, gallons of cyanide. Reverend continues speaking into recorder.

Thirty minutes to twilight. We're overpopulated, anyway. I don't feel anything anymore but contempt. I don't know how that's possible. Maybe it's because I'm too strong to be strong. Maybe it's because I love too much.

JEREMY

Yeah.

REVEREND

People don't want perfection, they want peace. I can give them that. They deserve it. We're all too weak to do good, and too proud to repent. We confess for attention and sympathy then carry on with our sins, as though evil were the price one pays for community. At war with our own, and others. I'll give what's needed. I'll grant us peace.

JEREMY

Yes.

REVEREND

Done is better than perfect.

JEREMY

Good sermon, Reverend.

REVEREND

Thank you. I'll keep the recorder on. People should know my reasoning. It's the right thing to do.

JEREMY

Of course.

REVEREND

Turns on the alarms.

Alarms. Reverend speaks into microphone.
Everyone into the main hall. This is an emergency. Guards, leave your watches and come into the main hall. You're services will not be required there. Everyone into the main hall. This is an emergency.

The congregation gathers in, panicking.
Dim the lights, Jeremy. Time's up.

Jeremy dims lights.

JEREMY

It's been an honor, Sir. I hope it won't be too painful.

REVEREND

We'll see. The juice it comes in is very tasty, though. Okay.

Reverend walks onstage.
How is everyone? You feeling tired? It's been a long, long week. And it's hard out there. So hard it gets to be too much sometimes. I feel that. I feel that. We're exhausted. I feel it. I unfortunately have some bad news to tell you all. It is about Mayor Howard. He has been shot and killed.

Loud moan from crowd.
His body is lying on the helicopter pad as we speak. His fate is a tragic one. He was once one of our most important members. But it seems now our time has come. We all know what this means. We all know how we were used by the Mayor, and how he turned on us, how he associates now only with fascists, or maybe always had, fascists who will seek to avenge him. It would be, in my way of thinking, a dishonor to be slain by our enemies.

Yells of affirmation from crowd.
But they will come. Make no mistake. If we are to return to the heavenly palaces, the decision must be our own. Find the strength within yourself to do what I'm telling you. We all know what I mean. In these bowls are the tickets to heaven. Jeremy will be providing you all with these, these means to ascend us back to our home. Line up please.

Congregation forms a line of people, waiting to receive their cups.

Jeremy pours cyanide into vat of juice, fills cups with it, passes it to congregation. Once empty, repeats process.

Alex approaches Elizabeth.

ALEX

Elizabeth. Is this what you were talking about?

Elizabeth responds with glossolalia.

Elizabeth, this is not the fucking time to be doing this.
Elizabeth.

*Alex shakes her shoulder, but she continues speaking
glossolalia.*

Holy fuck.

REVEREND

There it is, there it is, that's easy. Pass the cups, Jeremy.
Pass the cups, I say. My children, with eyes damp, hands
clenched, blood shaking my heart, I give you the keys to the
Kingdom of Heaven. Paradise is coming soon. Peace is
forthcoming. We are beset on all sides, and there is one way
out.

Elizabeth takes cup, drinks.

ALEX

Megan, break out with me.

MEGAN

No.

ALEX

Are you crazy? Let's get out of here.

MEGAN

I paid for the People's Church with more than just my money.
I'm leaving with it.

Megan takes cup, drinks.

REVEREND

Pass the cups. Drink it down. I've brought you paradise in
cup. Our hour is here. We will reach the furthest dimensions,
the planetary Eden. Our souls have started the sojourn to the
stars. But we must drink this nectar first, the fountain of
eternity. This is not death, it is life everlasting. Women
and children first, please.

Vivian tries running out, but gets stopped by guards.

She reluctantly turns around, takes cup and drinks.

I know this hurts, but it is only fleeting. No need to wail,
no need to moan. We will be hounded no more. There will be
war no more. Pass the cups, now, please. Look there, the
Richmond family is already in heaven. I can see them now.
They are holding hands with the angels. They have joined
ranks with the Watchers. Envy them. Envy their peace and
follow their suit. Ascend, Megan.

Megan falls.
Elizabeth, ascend.

Elizabeth falls.
My lovely wife, mother of my church. Feel it. Ascend.

Vivian falls.

SANDRA
This is wrong, Father.

REVEREND
Join the Richmond family. They are calling for you. Can you hear them? Do you want to hear them?

SANDRA
Father, this is wrong.

REVEREND
Join. Sandra, I swear to God.

SANDRA
If our enemies are coming, we should fight. We should not give up out of fear.

REVEREND
Sandra, I hear you but this is the only way.

SANDRA
It's not the only way. This is defeat.

REVEREND
This is not defeat.

SANDRA
I am not ready to die. None of us are ready to die. We deserve to live, Greg. We have done too much now, for you, for the church, for the world, to have it all tossed away. We deserve life.

REVEREND
Sandra, you came to us as foreigner. You told us we were the most welcoming family and church in America. You told me you were ready to leave the country before you met us, and that you would give us your undying loyalty. And now you are threatening to defect.

SANDRA
I still give you my undying loyalty, Reverend. That is why I choose not to die.

REVEREND
We won't die. Our sacrifice will live on after us, but there has to be a sacrifice.

SANDRA

Then let some of us stay, Reverend, to give witness to it, to spread its word.

REVEREND

It must be all of us. It must be. What good is it to ascend to heaven and leave your loved ones in the dirt?

SANDRA

To live in the dirt will be their sacrifice.

REVEREND

I've had visions of what horrors await us if we do not choose this peaceful end. Have you?

SANDRA

No, Reverend.

REVEREND

Do not refuse the key I am giving you, that I am giving to all of you. There is no one in this whole wide world who would forgive you for this and who could guide you out of its damnation, except for me.

SANDRA

You're right.

REVEREND

Drink from the cup, Sandra. All will be fine and all will be revealed. Will you drink from the cup?

Sandra takes cup, drinks.

Good. Good. Lay down for me.

Sandra lays. Reverend moves his palm over her body.

Everyone, repeat after me. I am not exiting Earth.

CONGREGATION

I am not exiting Earth.

REVEREND

I am entering Heaven.

CONGREGATION

I am entering Heaven.

REVEREND

I'll see my family again.

CONGREGATION

I'll see my family again.

REVEREND

Again.

Reverend continues to move his palm as congregation repeats, bodies collapsing around him. Alex falls.

CONGREGATION

I am not exiting Earth. I am entering Heaven. I'll see my family again. I am not exiting Earth. I am entering Heaven. I'll see my family again.

SCENE 3.6

Wilderness. Three defectors huddle in a circle.

MEMBER 1

They couldn't all have done it.

MEMBER 2

Yes, they could have.

MEMBER 3

We'll see, we'll see.

MEMBER 1

Just to watch them do such a thing. Our weaknesses were exploited. Our guilts, our vulnerabilities. He took advantage of them.

MEMBER 2

Our strengths too, though. They were loyal, that's for sure. Brave enough to come here, brave enough to do that.

MEMBER 3

I don't see any police or helicopters. I think he might have been, I don't know.

MEMBER 2

Full of shit? Yes, he was full of shit. They weren't going to kill all of us just because of one murder, no matter how high up he is. Greg was just trying to protect his ass. Thought if he could take out his sheep, he wouldn't have to live with the shame.

MEMBER 1

Sheep. It's not any less a sin that this should have happened to ordinary people.

MEMBER 3

I wonder what will happen to the church.

MEMBER 2

It's dead. The People's Church is dying with the people.

MEMBER 3

Maybe.

MEMBER 1

What brought us together in the first place isn't dead, though. Remember that.

Distant call of Hello.

MEMBER 3

Do you hear something?

Another call. Defectors yell. Enter Alex.
Alex. You escaped. How are they?

ALEX

They're dead. All of them.

MEMBER 2

I fucking knew it.

ALEX

I laid on the ground, pretending to be dead. I snuck out when most of them were already gone. Brother, it looked like an orgy. There was no blood. There were a thousand bodies, our brothers and sisters, wrapped around each other, lying across each other. Like an orgy on pause. A field of corpses. The ministers kicked their bodies, checking to see if they were faking death. Then, they drank the poison themselves. All dead, and no blood. Except for him. He shot himself in the side of the head. He allowed only himself the dignity to bleed. Good God almighty. Good God, forgive me. I laid there and I did nothing.

MEMBER 1

Don't blame yourself. You did what you had to do.

ALEX

I can see helicopters coming. They'll take us home. Let's walk through Greentown, and say our goodbyes.

Defectors turn on flashlights. Exit All.

SCENE 3.7

People's Church of the Prophecy, San Francisco. The Christian mosaic hangs overhead. Survivors huddle in pews. There are few.

Alex sleeps aside. He screams. Enter Thomas, who wakes him up.

ALEX

Thomas. How long have you been here?

THOMAS

A couple hours.

ALEX

You came to write another article?

THOMAS

No, I came to see everyone. Everyone who is left anyway.
(sadly)

Heh. Hehe. Fuck. You want to talk about it?

ALEX

He ruined everything. Everything, his church, his legacy, he murdered his people, and there's no one left to pick up the pieces.

THOMAS

Except idiots like you.

ALEX

Except. Fuck you, Thomas. You do not know what I fucking went through, what I'm going through right now. I have to live with the guilt, not you.

THOMAS

What guilt? You didn't do anything.

ALEX

The guilt of being alive. Because I didn't do anything. I could have prevented it. I could have poisoned him. I knew where the bottles were. I knew he was going to do it. Elizabeth pretty much told me it would happen.

THOMAS

How'd she know?

ALEX

She had visions. Of the future. Don't give me that look. She may have saved my life. What would you have done?

THOMAS

I wouldn't have been there. I wasn't.

ALEX

I think I should tell them something.

THOMAS

Sure, yeah.

ALEX

They're here, right? For something. Familiarity, maybe. They want something, right?

THOMAS

Yeah, maybe.

ALEX

I'm asking you if I should say something to them. You know, not like a speech or a sermon or anything. Just some kind words with nothing behind it.

THOMAS

Right.

ALEX

No, I can't. You say something.

THOMAS

I wasn't there.

ALEX

Convenient.

THOMAS

I'd piss them off, anyway. They'd leave with a bad taste in their mouth, and never want to see each other again.

ALEX

We probably won't ever see each other again. So, maybe I should leave them with something to remember. I mean, I might need more time. I'm not sure I'm ready. But then, you're never ready for anything until it's done.

THOMAS

Yeah, that sounds right, go ahead, I don't really.

ALEX

There aren't that many people left here to embarrass myself in front of. But, I'm thinking, does what I've done so far qualify me to speak to them?

THOMAS

I don't know, man. You can.

ALEX

Like look, I was a minister, but a minister that let it happen. They might not want to hear from me. Or, maybe they'll be thankful the minister is speaking at all. I just, I'm still fucking disoriented about everything, but so are they.

THOMAS

Dude.

ALEX

We may need more time to process this and collect our thoughts, and.

Thomas slaps Alex.

THOMAS

Dude. Shut the fuck up.

ALEX

Did you just slap me?

THOMAS

Yes, like a bitch. Give a speech, or don't. It's your decision.

ALEX

I'll do the honorable thing.

Alex stands up.

You don't resent how I treated you, do you?

THOMAS

Bahahaha. No, no. I don't give a fuck what you think of me. Hey, by the way, why did that fucktard Jeremy follow me around for five blocks trying to tell me his brother was dead? Or friend.

ALEX

Right.

THOMAS

Or cousin.

ALEX

Right, it was an attempt at, uh, psychological warfare.

THOMAS

Well, it didn't work on me, at least.

Thomas sits down. Alex steps onstage.

ALEX

I'd like everyone's attention, if I may. Attention, everyone.

THOMAS

Hoo yeah. Speech, speech, speech.

ALEX

Thanks, Thomas. I'd like to. I'd like to have a minute of silence to remember our loved ones. Not for me, or you, or anyone else. Just for those who passed. Starting now.

Minute of silence.

Okay. That's it. Thank you.

CONGREGATION

Thank you, Brother.

Alex watches everyone. They dry tears, rest their heads on shoulders, play instruments, talk, read the bible, and carry on living.

Alex turns his back and looks up to the Christian mosaic, in contemplation or prayer.

Curtain.