

CHURCH GIRL
"PILOT"

Written by

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COLD OPEN

INT. JACOBSON HOME- DINING ROOM- DAY (SUNDAY)

The Jacobson's are eating breakfast at their dining room table. RAVEN JACOBSON, TEVIN JACOBSON, and their son, TOBIAS/TOBEY JACOBSON (8). Their middle daughter, KALEY JACOBSON (12), tests out a video camera between bites.

Their oldest daughter, AMANI JACOBSON (14), runs around out of breath and half-ready. She rushes to the table grasping at the back of her dress, which she somehow has on inside out.

AMANI

Mom, can you help me zip up my
dress?

Raven gives her a side eye. *

RAVEN

Nope, not until you fix it.

Meanwhile Tevin and Tobey look at each other, failing to stifle a laugh.

Kaley's eyes dilate. She points her camera at the content unraveling before her. *

KALEY

(whispering)
This is so good.

LATER

Amani stuffs spoonful after spoonful of Honey Nut Cheerios into her mouth.

TEVIN

Woah Amani, slow down there.

AMANI

Sorry, guess I'm a little nervous.

She takes a much... slower... bite.

TEVIN

(looking at his phone)
Well, you do only have fifteen more
minutes before we have to go.

She pushes the cereal away, frustrated.

AMANI

I don't get why I even have to do
this stupid youth leader job.
Lincoln DuBois has always been good
at it. He's the church favorite
anyway.

RAVEN

Well, his mother said he got in
some trouble at school. But it's an
honor you were asked-

AMANI

You volunteered me-

RAVEN

Same difference. And you're
carrying on your grandfather's
legacy by being a church leader.

(beat)

You also need to start applying
yourself and stop with the
daydreaming. That college resume
won't build itself-

*

TEVIN

Honey, she's in the ninth grade,
she has time.

TOBEY

Yeah. And it's not like you let us
go anywhere.

Tobey takes a sip of coffee.

RAVEN

(staring him up and down)

Was that my cup?

Tobey's face goes blank.

AMANI

So I'm carrying on Pop-Pop's legacy
by repeating word-for-word what's
in the bulletin?

RAVEN

(head in hands)

It's a start, and still a holy
calling.

(beat)

Now go get your shit together for
church.

As Amani gets up, her stomach bubbles.

RAVEN (CONT'D)

And make sure you go to the
bathroom. You're not about to
embarrass me up there passing wind.

TOBEY

But you said you wanted her to be
like Grandpa.

Tevin high-fives Tobey. Off Raven's glare-

TEVIN

(to Tobey)

Finish your food.

EXT. SAINT ALEXANDER'S CHURCH- FRONT YARD- DAY

Kaley films as various St. Alexander's CHURCHGOERS have their
routine gossip sessions before service starts.

She focuses in on MRS. DUBOIS (60s) and the other elderly
women of Daughters of the Father, or DTF. MS. ABIGAIL (mid-
60s), MS. LOUISE (late 60s/70s), and MS. TERRY (mid-60s).

MRS. DUBOIS

(to DTF women)

- In my opinion, Lincoln was a much
better fit for the youth leader
position. My heathen of a daughter-
in-law is only pulling him out
temporarily because of some
misunderstanding at school.

*

MS. ABIGAIL

Of course, of course.

MS. LOUISE

Lincoln was the absolute best
choice. So mature, too.

(beat)

Ooh, I like your new perfume, Ida.

MRS. DUBOIS

Thank you, darling.

As they chatter, Amani walks by and into the church. Mrs.
DuBois looks in as Amani puts her notes at the altar. Then,
Mrs. DuBois returns to the group.

MRS. DUBOIS (CONT'D)

What would you ladies say to
helping my Lincoln out a bit?

MS. TERRY

Will you all stop messing with that
poor Jacobson girl? She's going to
do just fine.

(to Mrs. DuBois)

And why are you so tight-lipped
about Lincoln's 'trouble'? Was it
bad grades, or more of the reefer I
caught him smoking behind the
church last summer?

Mrs. DuBois is taken aback and storms off into the church
with her minions.

INT. SAINT ALEXANDER'S- SANCTUARY- LATER

Amani shuffles to the altar and looks for her notes. They are *
not there. The congregation looks on expectantly.

Panic sets in and after a few beats of scattered searching,
Amani gives up. She has to wing it.

FANTASY FLASH

Amani stares out at the congregation, who are now all *
vultures circling for their next meal. With the last CROW-

BACK TO REALITY

The vultures are replaced with some smiling faces, some
worried ones. Amani gulps.

AMANI

(croaks)

G- g- good morning, church.

CONGREGATION

Good morning.

The Assistant Pastor, MOTHER CONNORS (late 20s), sits right
behind her.

MOTHER CONNORS

(whispering)

Is everything okay?

(distant)

(MORE)

MOTHER CONNORS (CONT'D)

Do you need someone to help you
down?

Her question begins overlapping as Amani hyperventilates and looks out at the congregation like a deer in headlights.

In a daze, she starts making her way back to her family's pew. But she doesn't make it. She throws up Honey Nut Cheerios all over the percussion player, MR. BROWN (late 50s) and his equipment. Then, she collapses to the floor.

The entire church GASPS.

*

The flashy PASTOR REED (50s), draped in Gucci and Rolex, comes from behind Amani and starts dramatically praying over her on the floor. He motions for the gospel choir to start singing. They begin Marvin Sapp's "Never Would Have Made It."

*

Amani, miserable, sits up.

PASTOR REED

Praise the Lord, she's alright!

More "Praise the Lord"'s and "Hallelujah"s come from the crowd.

PASTOR REED (CONT'D)

Poor Amani's incident just now...
It could've been so much worse. We
thank God that she is still on her
feet.

Some "Yes"'es and "Absolutely"'s can be heard.

PASTOR REED (CONT'D)

We also pray for the imminent
carpet cleaning bill. If you have
it in your hearts- and your
pocketbooks- please consider
contributing to it in your tithing
this week.

As Pastor Reed says this, ushers begin rushing the aisles with collection plates.

Amani (mortified) looks over towards her family and realizes Kaley has been filming the entire disaster. Kaley gives her sister a thumbs up. Then, realizing-

KALEY

(mouths)
Ooh, my bad.

SUPER: "CHURCH GIRL"

An excerpt of Beyonce's "Church Girl" echoes with the title sequence.

ACT ONE

1 INT. SAINT ALEXANDER'S- BASEMENT- TWENTY MINUTES LATER 1

The Assistant Pastor, Mother Connors, is Shakespearean-ly preaching to the whole church school as she attempts to make chocolate chip cookies from scratch to support her sermon.

MOTHER CONNORS

- And like Daniel in the Lion's Den, God saved Daniel in the most unexpected of ways.

(beat)

Just like He'll hopefully save these chocolate chip cookies once we get them in the oven.

The LITTLE KIDS are distracted playing with toys and the OLDER KIDS are dozing off. *

LITTLE GIRL *

Mother Connors, can we play with the cookie dough? It looks fun! *

MOTHER CONNORS

(sighs)

Sure, sweetheart.

Mother Connors gives the little kids in the front some dough.

MOTHER CONNORS (CONT'D)

Just don't put your fingers in your mouths. I can't risk anyone getting Salmonella... again.

DISSOLVE TO:

A little later. Many of the kids are now gone as Mother Connors cleans up the mess on the cheaply made portable altar. Ms. Abigail comes up from behind.

MS. ABIGAIL

I don't recall cookies being anywhere in the Bible. And I don't blame the babies for being bored. The random activity shows just a total lack of preparation. *

MOTHER CONNORS *

(oblivious) *

I know!

(MORE)

MOTHER CONNORS (CONT'D)

I've been trying to think of
different ways to get the kids
engaged in Bible stories.

(beat)

Do you have any advice, Ms.
Abigail?

*
*
*
*

Ms. Abigail's eyes widen, shocked that she asked.

MS. ABIGAIL

Well I- I don't know. But what I do
know is that this is not Cooking
with Paula Deen.

*
*

MOTHER CONNORS

She's still around? And I was going
more for Great British Baking Show.

*
*

Mother Connors suddenly gets an idea.

MOTHER CONNORS (CONT'D)

What if we took them to see the
Sight and Sound production of
"Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor
Dreamcoat"? I know some people from
drama school that might be able to
get us in.

(beat)

Thanks, Ms. A!

*

Before Ms. Abigail can respond, Mother Connors rushes over to
tell Pastor Reed her idea.

*

MOTHER CONNORS (CONT'D)

Hey, Pastor Reed! We have a great
idea for a field trip for the kids-

PASTOR REED

Field trip? What do you think this
is, the Magic School Bus?

He laughs at her over-enthusiasm and walks over to Ms.
Abigail.

MS. ABIGAIL

(to Pastor Reed)

Pastor, where did you find this
girl. Task Rabbit?

*
*

PASTOR REED

Don't be ridiculous, we can't
afford Task Rabbit. Her mother and
I went to seminary together, so I'm
just doing a favor.

(MORE)

PASTOR REED (CONT'D)

I have a feeling she'll be out of
here before we know it.

(beat)

Girl's got a heckuva resume for Off-
Broadway. Maybe even Broadway!

Ms. Abigail looks over at Mother Connors, who is trying and
failing to clean up the cookies-turned-Playdoh.

MS. ABIGAIL

(low)

God save us. And Off-Broadway.

2 INT. SAINT ALEXANDER'S- BASEMENT- SIMULTANEOUS

2

Meanwhile, Amani is in the back of the church school, slumped
against the wall in a steel chair. Raven comes over and hands
her a ginger ale.

RAVEN

Feeling any better, hon?

AMANI

(shaking her head)

I don't think I've ever been so
embarrassed.

She winces as she sips the soda.

RAVEN

Might've been bad milk.

(distant)

You know, this is why we prepare.
You can't go up there and just talk
cold, that's not your talent.
Shoot, I can barely do that.

AMANI

But I had my notes! They just
disappeared.

RAVEN

Whatever the case, I just want
everyone to see how great you are.

Mother Connors re-enters with paper towels as Raven starts
her lecture and locks eyes with Amani. She takes in the
mother-daughter scene, which transports her to-

EXT. UNIVERSITY- DAY- FLASHBACK

*

A couple years younger, Mother Connors is dressed in a cap and gown. She smiles broadly as she takes a picture next to a WOMAN, who we can just barely see.

As the camera FLASHES-

*

WOMAN

A theater degree, seriously Marie?
I wish you would stop dreaming and
apply yourself to something more
realistic.

*

*

*

*

BACK TO THE CHURCH BASEMENT

Suddenly, the altar collapses in on itself.

MOTHER CONNORS

Damn it!
(then)
Oh, sorry...

Mother Connors rushes to put the altar back together as
Amani and Raven look on amused.

*

*

3

INT. JACOBSON HOME- DINING ROOM- NIGHT

3

The Jacobson's are sitting at the dinner table, finishing their Sunday spread of collard greens, fried flounder, baked macaroni and cheese, and corn bread.

RAVEN

(between bites)

Hey Mani, I want you to write an
apology to Mr. Brown for ruining
his drum equipment.

(beat)

And write one to Mother Connors,
too. I think she's kind of weird,
but she is the one who offered you
the role.

KALEY

Yeah, she is a little off.

TEVIN

(to Raven)

Baby, don't add fuel to the fire.
Don't you think she feels bad
enough?

*

Raven rolls her eyes.

*

RAVEN

(to Amani)

Let me read what you write before
you go to bed.

(to rest of family)

And y'all put this food away when
you're done.

AMANI

Why not you?

Raven is already halfway up the stairs.

RAVEN

I made it!

Once the bedroom door slams closed, Tevin and Tobey sneak off
into the living room and turn on the football game.

*

KALEY

I guess we should go ahead and
start cleaning up.

(touching her nose)

Shotnot washing the dishes.

*

*

*

*

AMANI

But I always do the dishes.

*

*

KALEY

And that's why you're so good at
it.

*

*

*

Kaley and Amani start to clear the table.

*

A few silent beats pass, then-

KALEY (CONT'D)

Can I ask you something? What
happened up there earlier?

*

*

*

AMANI

When I was up at the front of
church, I looked out at all those
people and everybody was just...
staring. I couldn't breathe. It was
almost like when we watched "Get
Out."

*

*

*

*

*

*

(beat)

When Mom and Dad weren't home that
one time.

*

*

KALEY
You're so dramatic.

*
*

INT. JACOBSON HOME- GIRLS BEDROOM- A FEW MINUTES LATER

*

Amani trudges into her bedroom and sits down at her desk,
preparing to write the apology notes.

BEEP!

A notification pops up on her computer. It reads: "ENGLISH-
AKEELAH AND THE BEE ORAL PRESENTATION- DUE WEDNESDAY."

FANTASY FLASH

*

Amani smashes her computer to pieces.

*

BACK TO REALITY

She slams her computer shut.

AMANI
(petting the computer)
Ah, sorry!

*

4 INT. JACOBSON HOME- HALLWAY/EXT. RAVEN AND TEVIN'S BEDROOM- 4A
FEW MINUTES LATER

*
*

Amani is on her way to the hallway bathroom as Raven ends a
call and steps out of her and Tevin's bedroom doorway.

RAVEN
Mother Connors wanted to know if
you would like to come by St.
Alexander's tomorrow night to help
with a special project for the
church school. I said you would be
happy to.

AMANI
But I have an oral report due
Wednesday and-

RAVEN
Girl, we live five minutes down the
road. You have more than enough
time to go up to church and do your
homework.
(beat)
And fix your face-

*
*
*

AMANI
(low, but clear)
Before you fix it for me?

Amani slams the bathroom door closed.

A rage comes over Raven, but she stops herself short.

RAVEN
(to herself)
You're a Christian woman. You are a
reborn Christian woman.

TEVIN
(getting into bed)
Such a pleasant age.
(beat)
She's a dreamer, let her dream. At
14-

RAVEN
At 14, it's time to get serious. At
her age, I was class president,
head of the debate team, head of
the cheer team-

TEVIN
And look at you now, a husband and
3 kids later.

He gestures to her ill-fitting pajamas and bed-prepped hair.

TEVIN (CONT'D)
Such a gem.

RAVEN
That is until I finally meet
Michael B. Jordan. Ooh, or Rege-
Jean Page. I'll be like-
(curtsies quite low)
Your majesty.

TEVIN
Alright alright, calm down.

INT. BATHROOM- SIMULTANEOUS

In the bathroom with the door open, vigorously brushing her
teeth-

AMANI

I hate church. I hate school.
 (observing her face in the
 mirror)
And I really hate my eyebrows.

*
*
*

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

1 INT. SAINT ALEXANDER'S- SANCTUARY- NIGHT (MONDAY) 1

Amani opens the front door as "Jacob & Sons" from "Joseph & the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" booms over the speakers.

Mother Connors is standing at the altar, lip-syncing to the words.

Noticing Amani, she pauses the song.

MOTHER CONNORS

Oh, hey Amani!

(stage whispers)

Step into my office.

Her office door in the back of the sanctuary squeaks open, possibly the loudest squeak in existence. *

AMANI

(low)

Such a weirdo...

Amani follows Mother Connors towards her office. *

2 INT. JACOBSON HOME- GIRLS BEDROOM- SIMULTANEOUS 2 *

Kaley is editing the video from Sunday on her desktop. *

Tobey comes in and slumps into a beanbag chair.

TOBEY

What are you doing?

She whips her head towards him.

KALEY

(dramatic)

Beginning my influencer era. I'll become a pioneer in internet history by giving an inside look at what it's like growing up at St. Alexander's. And then I'll move onto television and film projects that will become the pillars of my ultimate passion project-

TOBEY

Which is?

KALEY

I don't know yet.

Tobey slips on his headphones.

KALEY (CONT'D)

But what I do know is that
I'm on my way to
revolutionize media.

TOBEY

(singing "Sunflower" by
Post Malone and Swae
Lee)

Ay ay ay ay

(beat)

Ooh ooh ooh oooooh

*

KALEY (CONT'D)

Essentially, I'll be the next Ava
DuVernay.

Raven comes in with the girls' laundry.

RAVEN

How's your homework coming along?

KALEY

I didn't have much to do. I
finished mine at school.

Raven nods in approval, then looks to Tobey.

*

TOBEY

(still singing)

Then you're left in the dust,
unless I stuck by ya. You're the
sunflower, I think your love-

*
*
*
*
*

RAVEN

(lifting his headphones
from his ears)

You didn't even start, did you?

*
*

He pulls his headphones down to his neck and swiftly slips
out of the chair. As he reaches the doorway-

*

RAVEN (CONT'D)

Tobias George, don't you go and
mess around with--

TOBEY

Daaaad!

RAVEN

(rolling her eyes)

--Your father.

Raven moves closer to see the video Kaley's editing. She's impressed with her daughter.

RAVEN (CONT'D)
(pointing to the screen)
What's this?

KALEY
The cut tool.

RAVEN
And this.

KALEY
(curt)
Toggle.

Raven takes over the mouse and starts surfing the toolbar.

KALEY (CONT'D)
Mom, be careful you're going to
delete something!

*

A distracted Kaley accidentally clicks the "Post to YouTube" button while her mom is interfering with the toolbar.

RAVEN
You know what would be great? Maybe
if Amani used the camera to
practice her public speaking, that
could keep her from getting
nervous. You think you could help
her out with that?

*
*
*
*
*

KALEY
Sure, whatever.

Raven pinches her on the back.

KALEY (CONT'D)
I mean, yes ma'am!

RAVEN
Even Ava DuVernay had to help her
sister.

Raven kisses Kaley on the forehead and exits. Kaley rolls her
eyes and wipes the kiss off, getting back to work.

*
*

3 INT. SAINT ALEXANDER'S- MOTHER CONNORS' OFFICE- SIMULTANEOUS *

Amani closes the door and is shocked to see how messy Mother Connors' desk is. Mother Connors slides a stack of papers off the guest seat. *

MOTHER CONNORS
Make yourself comfortable!
(beat)
So how have things been since...
yesterday? Feeling any better?

AMANI
(embarrassed)
Yeah, I guess. *

MOTHER CONNORS
Did talking to your mom help?

AMANI
I mean, not really. She's a mom.

Mother Connors looks at a picture of her MOM, dressed in religious garb, standing next to Mother Connors as a LITTLE GIRL (5).

MOTHER CONNORS
I get it.
(beat)
You know, when I came here a little
while ago, I was feeling pretty
scared, too.

AMANI
Really? About what?

MOTHER CONNORS
(scattered)
Well, I was coming into a new
environment. Plus, this wasn't my
original plan- crap. Okay. *
(bringing back the focus)
All I'm trying to say is that you
feeling nervous is completely
normal. But it doesn't mean you
can't grow from it.

Amani locks eyes with Mother Connors. She's listening.

MOTHER CONNORS (CONT'D)
Wanna learn a new trick that might
help? Let's try a breathing
exercise. *

AMANI

Why?

MOTHER CONNORS

It can keep you from getting super nervous and help you focus on the task at hand.

*

(beat)

Put your thumb up like this.

She makes the thumbs up gesture. Amani follows.

MOTHER CONNORS (CONT'D)

Put it up to your lips, and blow on it.

AMANI

Like this?

MOTHER CONNORS

Just like that.

They continue the exercise for a few beats.

MOTHER CONNORS (CONT'D)

I do it before shows all the time. Oh, well I guess now it's before sermons...

*

*

(beat)

Anyways, I asked you to come in tonight to get a student's perspective on going on a field trip to this performance of "Joseph & the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat."

*

*

*

*

She pulls out a notebook and flips to a clean page.

MOTHER CONNORS (CONT'D)

Since you're the youth leader, do you think going will make church school more exciting? The vestry should definitely be able to give us the money--

*

*

*

*

*

AMANI

(overwhelmed)

Mother Connors, none of the adults actually care about what we're learning! They just send us all to the basement after service because they don't feel like dealing with us.

*

(beat)

(MORE)

AMANI (CONT'D)

The little kids' coloring books
haven't even been changed since
2005.

*

Amani points to a picture of a Cinderella scribbled brown on
the "Kids Corner" bulletin board.

MOTHER CONNORS

Good point.
(writing it down)
New coloring books.
(beat)
How would you suggest we deal with
them?

*

*

*

*

*

*

*

AMANI

Well, start slow, do what you're
told, then you'll win them over.
You'll get what you want, but it's
gonna take some time.

*

*

*

*

Mother Connors looks a little defeated. She's right. Then-

*

AMANI (CONT'D)

Also, I don't know if being the
youth leader is still for me.

MOTHER CONNORS

What do you mean?

AMANI

I'm nothing like Lincoln. He could
always speak so well in front of
the congregation.

MOTHER CONNORS

No one's great at anything on the
first try. Not even him, believe
me. What matters is that you start
small and do what you need to do to
find your footing. Over time,
you'll win everyone over, too.

*

*

*

*

*

Amani thinks about this a little.

MOTHER CONNORS (CONT'D)

See you Sunday?

Amani gives a small smile.

AMANI

Bye, Mother Connors.

She leaves, then sheepishly comes back, giving Mother Connors the apology notes her mom told her to write.

MOTHER CONNORS

What's this?

AMANI

Me doing what my mom told me to do.

(beat)

She also put in a check for the carpet cleaning.

4

INT. JACOBSON HOME- GIRLS BEDROOM- DAY (TUESDAY)

4

The next day as Amani gets home from school, Kaley has the video camera and a pack of index cards set up at Amani's desk.

AMANI

What's all this?

KALEY

Mom thinks practicing with the camera will help you get better with your public speaking in school and church.

*

AMANI

I'm not sure I want to be youth leader anymore, so--

*

*

KALEY

Well, just try it so Mom can get off our backs. Even if you stop the church thing, don't you have that report on 'Akeelah and the Bee' tomorrow?

INT. CLASSROOM- DAY- FANTASY FLASH

*

Amani begins to speak in front of her class, then throws up like on Sunday.

*

The entire class is laughing. Even a YOUNG KEKE PALMER is laughing.

BACK TO REALITY

*

Amani looks at her sister. Why does she have to be right?

LATER

Amani watches her self on camera.

AMANI (V.O.)

In "Akeelah and the Bee," Akeelah's journey represents what it means to come to a better understanding of yourself...

AMANI

Hm, not too bad.

While Amani's looking at the video, Kaley's jaw drops at the computer.

KALEY

Oh. Shit.

We see the video she was editing earlier. It's **blowing up all over YouTube**. Kaley clicks on another video, and the video and sound of Amani throwing up is already being made into a meme.

Amani's phone PINGS with texts. "Is this you?" "WHAT HAPPENED!?"

KALEY (CONT'D)

I have no idea how this happened, Mani. Seriously!

Amani grabs her sister's camera and raises it over her head.

KALEY (CONT'D)

No! Not my Canon XF-100!

Kaley wrestles her sister to the ground.

KALEY (CONT'D)

Don't you dare!

Amani gets on top.

AMANI

Fu-

Raven briskly walks by.

RAVEN

No cussing.

(beat)

And can you girls go at least one day without trying to kill each other?

The girls separate. Amani discreetly kicks her sister.

*

KALEY

*

Ow!

*

(louder)

*

Mooom!

*

AMANI

*

(low)

*

Shut up.

*

Amani runs out.

*

END OF ACT TWO

*

ACT THREE

1 INT. JACOBSON HOME- GIRLS' BEDROOM- DAY- A FEW MINUTES LATER *

At her desk, Kaley rewinds and presses play several times on the Amani church video, now on YouTube. *

KALEY

Whoa, what are the DTF ladies doing? *

Her eyes widen, finally putting the pieces together.

INSERT SHOT OF MRS. DUBOIS' WITH HER MINIONS STEALING THE NOTES AT THE ALTAR BEFORE SERVICE.

BACK TO THE GIRLS' BEDROOM

Kaley sits back in her chair.

KALEY

Dang. Mrs. DuBois is the LaCienega Boulevardez of grandmas. *

She pulls up her messaging app and begins typing feverishly. *

2 INT. SAINT ALEXANDER'S- MEETING ROOM- NIGHT 2

Mother Connors rushes into the weekly vestry meeting as the doors are closing, papers literally flying out of her tote bag.

MOTHER CONNORS

Hi everyone, sorry I'm late!

Her toothy grin glistens as she meets the side eyes of Ms. Abigail and Mrs. DuBois. A couple MEN, including the percussionist, Mr. Brown, grunt in response. Pastor Reed and a few other PARISHIONERS are also present, sizing her up. *

Mother Connors sets her bag down and fishes out a crumpled piece of paper. *

MOTHER CONNORS (CONT'D)

Oh, here you go Mr. Brown. *

(beat)

It's from Amani.

MR. BROWN
(confused)
Thank you?

He skims it with a furrowed brow as Mother Connors starts talking.

*

PASTOR REED
You have a presentation for us,
Mother Connors?

MOTHER CONNORS
(to Pastor)
Yes, thank you.
(dramatic pause, then to group)
I love our children, I truly do. I believe St. Alexander's has some of the brightest and most talented youths. And I want to enrich those young minds by introducing them to the magic of theater and taking them to a production of "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" at the Sight and Sound theater in Lancaster. It will get them more engaged in the Word, but I need some support to make it happen. That said, we'll need about \$500 for the tickets and to take the kids out to a nice dinner afterwards.

*
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*

MRS. DUBOIS
Endearing-
(beat)
But no. Why do they need to see some frilly over-exaggeration of a parable that they can read about in the Bible?

MS. LOUISE
Right. What a waste of our Lord's money!

*
*
*

MS. ABIGAIL
Agreed. And they can get a nice dinner at home.

*
*

MOTHER CONNORS
But-

MRS. DUBOIS
Next item on the agenda!

Defeated, Mother Connors looks towards the door where Kaley appears holding her phone. Kaley motions for Mother Connors to come over.

*
*
*

MOTHER CONNORS
Excuse me, everyone.

*
*

DISSOLVE TO:

*

Mother Connors walks up to Mrs. DuBois, Kaley by her side and video in hand.

*
*

MOTHER CONNORS (CONT'D)
Mrs. DuBois, can we have a word?

DISSOLVE TO:

*

Mrs. DuBois walks in front of the group.

*

MRS. DUBOIS
(forced)
After some deep thought and reflection, I think Mother Connors'... idea is wonderful and we should approve the money for her trip.
(beat)
But maybe pizza for dinner.

*
*
*
*
*
*

MOTHER CONNORS
Deal. Oh, and money for the curriculum. It's a little outdated-

*

MRS. DUBOIS
(irritated)
Fine.

MS. ABIGAIL
But Ida-

*
*

MRS. DUBOIS
All those in favor?

ALL
Aye!

*
*

Mother Connors collects her belongings.

MOTHER CONNORS
Thank you for your consideration.

She struts over to Kaley.

MOTHER CONNORS (CONT'D)

(to Kaley, low)

And thank you.

(beat)

Last I checked, blackmailing wasn't
one of the 7 deadly sins.

*
*
*
*
*

3 INT. HIGH SCHOOL- CLASSROOM- DAY (WEDNESDAY)

3

A BOY walks back to his seat from the front of the room.

ENGLISH TEACHER

Interesting take, Gregory. I never
heard such an... impassioned
argument connecting "Of Mice and
Men" to Ratatouille.

(beat)

Next up is Amani.

*
*
*
*
*

Amani's eyes dart around as she hears her classmates gossip.

*

KID 1

Did you see the video?

*

KID 2

Everyone's seen it.

*
*

KID 3

I hope she doesn't puke anywhere
near me. I just got these Jordans.

*

VICTOR

Hey Amani!

Amani looks in the direction of a cute boy, VICTOR (15).

VICTOR (CONT'D)

(fake vomiting)

Bla-a-a-h!

*

The rest of the class laughs.

ENGLISH TEACHER

Victor, class, not nice!

(to Amani, whispering)

I saw the video, sweetie.

(beat)

You take your time.

*

As she walks towards the front of the class, she does the
thumb breathing exercise Mother Connors taught her.

*
*

As she pulls out some index cards, her English teacher slides a trash can closer to her. Amani takes a final breath, then begins. *

AMANI

In "Akeelah and the Bee," Akeelah Anderson is one of the smartest students at her school but has little faith in herself. What she learns throughout the film is that you can't always run away from the things that scare you. That's the thing about fear. Sometimes it paralyzes you. But often, it's there to push you out of your comfort zone or to make you grow up. In "Akeelah and the Bee," Akeelah's journey represents coming to a better understanding of yourself rather than avoiding what is true because it scares you. *

DISSOLVE TO: *

4 INT. SAINT ALEXANDER'S- SANCTUARY- DAY (SUNDAY) 4

Amani is preparing to go up to the altar, her "Akeelah and the Bee" index cards in hand. *

As she brings her thumb up to do the breathing exercise, she locks eyes with Mother Connors who does the same.

AMANI (V.O.)

By giving in and giving power to what scares you, you won't grow and discover your full potential. *

Mother Connors crosses her fingers as if to say, "You got this."

It's time for Amani to go up. As she starts walking towards the altar, Lincoln suddenly appears and walks up to the microphone. Some "Oooh's" arise from the congregation.

LINCOLN

Thanks for being my placeholder, Amani!

Raven gets up, enraged. She's about to make a break for the altar. Then-

MOTHER CONNORS

(to Lincoln)

Not today!

*

Mother Connors nicely but firmly guides Lincoln from the altar, and motions Amani to come forward.

*

Amani steps up to the altar and looks over to Mrs. DuBois, who makes a slicing motion across her neck. Amani points to Kaley, who gets the threat on camera. Mrs. DuBois readjusts herself to appear more "grandmotherly."

*

Amani looks to Kaley, and moves her focus over to the congregation.

*

AMANI

Good morning, church. Happy Sunday!

*

(beat)

*

Here are this morning's announcements.

*

*

Raven and Tevin look on proudly.

*

END OF ACT THREE

*

TAG

INT. SAINT ALEXANDER'S CHURCH- REC HALL- DAY

Amani and Mother Connors sit at a table eating refreshments. They watch Pastor Reed talking with Mrs. DuBois and Lincoln.

AMANI

What am I supposed to do if they
keep trying this every week?

(beat)

I mean, look at him! He's just so
annoying. And perfect.

Mother Connors is quiet, then gets an idea.

MOTHER CONNORS

Let's do them like they did you.

(beat)

You're a church girl. Never said
you had to be a good girl.

AMANI

What do you mean?

(beat)

Mother Connors?

Mother Connors puts her focus back on the evil duo, proud of the plan she's devising to get back at the DuBois'.

*

END OF SHOW.