

THE RELIGION THING

by Renee Calarco

(excerpt – Act II, Scene 2)

Contact:  
Renee Calarco  
3704 Alton Pl., NW  
Washington, DC 20016  
(202) 277-6590  
[rlcalarco@gmail.com](mailto:rlcalarco@gmail.com)

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

MO, F. 30s

Funny, intelligent, fierce. Consumed by others' expectations of her.

BRIAN, M. 30s, MO's husband

Passionately in love with Mo, not sure what to do about it. Jokey, friendly. Lost.

PATTI, F. 30s

Brilliant. Self-destructive. Hard and soft. Desperate for peace in her life.

JEFF, M. 30s, PATTI's husband

Charming, insatiable for Patti, shattered.

GLICK, M. 30s, PATTI's ex-boyfriend.

Fun-loving, kind of sexy, kind of an asshole.

The actor who plays GLICK also plays the following characters:

GRAMPA

SISTER MARY KEVIN

BILL

**Place:** Washington, D.C.

**Time:** Fall and winter, 2010.

## PROLOGUE

A comedy club, 1994.

## Act I

Scene 1: BRIAN and MO's living room

Scene 2: BRIAN and MO's living room, after the party

Scene 3: PATTI and JEFF's bedroom, later that night

## Act II

Scene 1: BRIAN and MO's living room, about a week later

Scene 2: A downtown lunch place, a few days later

Scene 3: BRIAN and MO's bedroom, that night

Scene 4: PATTI's office, the next day

Scene 5: BRIAN and MO's living room, that night

Scene 6: PATTI and JEFF's bedroom, that night

Scene 7: A wedding reception, a week later

**A production note:** The set and furniture should be minimalist and spare:

For BRIAN and MO's living room: a sofa and coffee table.

For the bedrooms: a bed. Other pieces: a table, a desk, four chairs. The televisions can be represented in the lighting design; actual televisions aren't necessary.

**Act II**  
**Scene 2**

*A few days later, a downtown lunch place. MO sits at the counter with a salad, her iPhone, and her Blackberry. She's thrown her purse and coat on the stool next to her in order to save it for PATTI. Maybe she checks her email. PATTI eventually enters. She wears a coat, carries a purse, and holds a salad on a tray.*

PATTI

Heeyyyy....

MO

Heeyyyy....

*PATTI puts her tray on the counter. A weird little dance as the women maneuver and awkwardly hug. They rearrange coats and purses and trays and salads and phones.*

Ohmygod, this is like the craziest time to be here. Sorry, is that in your way? Crap, crap, crap. Sorry.

PATTI

*(overlapping)*

No, it's fine. You're totally fine. Oops. Hold on a sec.

*They rearrange themselves again with rather elaborate coat and purse and phone choreography.*

MO

Do you have room?

PATTI

I'm good. Are you okay?

MO

Uh huh.

*PATTI sits down. A moment.*

So.

MO

I'm not gonna lecture you. I promise.

PATTI

Good.

*PATTI bows her head.**An awkward moment as MO watches PATTI silently say grace. PATTI finishes her prayer. MO reflexively crosses herself.**PATTI begins eating her salad. MO kind of takes a moment, then starts to eat her own salad. She struggles to contain herself.*

MO

I'm just worried about you, honey.

PATTI

You don't need to worry about me.

MO

I know, but I can't help it. I love you.

PATTI

I love you, too.

And I'm fine. You don't need to worry about me.

*They kind of play with their lunches.*

MO

Listen, honey: all I know is that six months ago you were single and now you're married to pretty much a total stranger.—

PATTI

—It was longer than six months ago—

MO

—Okay, eight months, whatever. This is not like you. Some random guy comes into your life, you know nothing about him, and boom, you suddenly marry him?

PATTI

Who was it who said “sometimes you just know when it's right?” I think that was you the other night, yes?

Let's just say that Jeff is keeping up his end of the bargain. Pun intended, by the way.

MO

Okay, for the first time in eighteen years, I'm happy to say that I don't want to know about your sex life. Keep it to yourself.

*A beat.*

PATTI

He's hung like a horse.  
He's stupendously good.  
He can go for 45 minutes while he's going down on me .

MO

Okay, TMI.  
TM fucking I. Shut up shut up shut up la la la la la la

That's a lie! Right there, that's a lie.

*They realize they're speaking in public. A beat.*

PATTI

Wherever he learned it, he learned it well. The sex is incredible.

MO

As it was with Jon. And Miguel. And...and... Glick, for God's sake.

*PATTI shoots her a look.*

Sorry.  
I'm just saying. This is like another one of your things. It's one of those things that you do.

PATTI

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

MO

When you were with Jon, you hung out with bands. When you were with Miguel, you took up mountain biking...should I go down the list? Every time you're with someone, you glom onto whatever they do. And then you break up and you go on to the next guy and the next thing. Now you're with some reformed gay boy so you're all about Jesus.

PATTI

My religion is not a "thing that I do." This is not some random hookup, and we're not 22 anymore. Okay?  
What.

MO

Just look at this objectively, okay? Look at it. You can't just stay with someone who's so wrong for you.

PATTI

You're staying with Brian.

MO

What?

PATTI

You heard me.

MO

Shit. I knew you hated him.

PATTI

No, I just think you could have done better. I don't like the way he treats you.

MO

He treats me just fine.

PATTI

He doesn't respect you. You've wanted kids since, like, forever, and he doesn't give a shit about that.

MO

Hey. Watch your language.

PATTI

He's just stringing you along. And you know it, too.

MO

I don't wanna talk about it.

*They eat.*

PATTI

Please don't take this the wrong way, but I really think it bothers you that you don't go to church anymore...and I guess I'm just asking: What do you have to rely on when something awful happens and your life is falling apart? What are you gonna have if you-lose your job, or your parents die, or Brian-- for whatever reason--decides to bail on you? If that happens, what are you gonna have?

MO

Vicodin.

PATTI

This is what I have: Faith is what I have.  
Nothing else has worked--not alcohol, not running five miles a day, not therapy, not even A.A., not consistently. Faith is the one constant thing I have.

MO

Honey, if it works for you, that's great. Just don't force it down my throat. Don't tell me what to believe. —

PATTI

—I'm not telling you what to believe—

MO

—I mean, I understand if A.A. wasn't enough. I totally, totally get that. But this is just so wrong on so many levels—

PATTI

—Mo, just shut up for a minute and listen to me!

I'm tired of thinking about myself. I'm tired of worrying all the time. I'm tired of my world being small and cramped and tight and only about me, me, me. I walk into church and all that tightness disappears. I disappear. It's beautiful. And you know it- you know that feeling, too, because you used to get it from going to Mass and don't say you didn't because I used to see it in you, even in the few times we went to Mass together. I never had it and it made me so jealous, seeing you like that. You used to have it. I never did. And now—finally—I do.

*MO has nothing to say. Finally...*

MO

I'm going to hell: yes or no?

PATTI

What?

MO

I'm going to hell. Brian's going to hell. Right? That's what you believe, right?

PATTI

I really don't want to get into that.

MO

That's what you believe, though, isn't it? That's what you're taught. Anyone who doesn't accept Christ as their savior is going to hell.

PATTI

That's what people believe, yes.

MO

And so by extension, that's what you believe.

*A beat.*

PATTI

Yeah.

MO

Yeah.

PATTI

It's nothing personal.

*MO gathers up her things.*

MO

Gosh, look at the time. Guess I'd better go back to the job that I didn't quit for my non-gay husband.

PATTI

You're seeing it all wrong.

MO

No. Here's what I see. I see my best friend—who clerked for Ruth Bader Ginsburg and got hired by Hanson Wolff and made partner in practically five minutes—I see my best friend suddenly quit her job so she can stay home to make babies with her gay—excuse me—ex-gay husband. I see a woman who thinks she's gonna go back to work as soon as her kids are in school. But then one kid leads to another, and pretty soon she's spending her afternoons driving the kids to soccer practice in a minivan that smells like apple juice and vomit. And then one day she comes home from Costco and finds her husband blowing the soccer coach under the piano. All because she went to a church dance when she was high on Sudafed. That's what I see.

*A beat.*

PATTI

I'm praying for you.

*PATTI leaves. MO sits there for awhile.  
Lights fade.*

END OF EXCERPT