

NORMAN THE MORMON

"Pilot"

Written by

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COLD OPEN

INT. MORMON CHURCH - STAKE PRESIDENT OFFICE - NIGHT

OPEN ON a group of MORMON BISHOPS in a small, crowded office. They sit in a reverent semi-circle with cans of root beer.

STAKE PRESIDENT JONES <SIPS> long and hard from his root beer can before speaking.

PRESIDENT JONES

Bishops, I've gathered you here this evening to discuss a very delicate matter. At the request of our Prophet, our stake will receive a new family.

The Bishops perk up with interest. The President stirs his root beer uncertainly.

PRESIDENT JONES (CONT'D)

Unfortunately, they're... *less actives.*

The Bishops <GRUMBLE> and shake their heads in dissatisfaction. One of them physically clutches his chest at the news.

BISHOP #1

What?! Why are we getting a group of less actives, President? We've doubled our stake's membership numbers this year!

PRESIDENT JONES

You've answered your own question, Bishop Warner. Because of our Stake's reputation, we've been selected to host and restore this family's faith.

BISHOP #2

But a less active family could jeopardize what we've worked so hard to achieve. What's their record like?

The President fumbles with papers on his desk, peering slowly over his small frames to review the documents.

PRESIDENT JONES

Their record is... less than ideal.
They've been cited multiple times
for skipping church, immodest
dress, and immoral behavior.

BISHOP #3

Could you give us more detail
regarding the immoral behavior?
(beat, uncomfortable)
Just... so we have a better idea of
what we're dealing with.

PRESIDENT JONES

Kissing in public.
(beat)
With tongues.

The Bishops visibly cringe and <GASP>.

PRESIDENT JONES (CONT'D)

But even with a record like this,
they're not a lost cause. Not until
we give up on them.
(lighter)
And come on! We're Mormons! We
don't give up. We don't know how.

BISHOP #1

(nudging another Bishop)
It's true, I have absolutely no
conception of the phrase "cease and
desist."

President Jones addresses a quiet BISHOP in the corner of the
room, who's been unnoticeable thus far. This is NORMAN,
mindlessly staring off into space.

PRESIDENT JONES

Bishop Smith, are you still with
us?

Norman snaps to attention, dropping his root beer can on the
ground. It spills onto some of the mens' shoes.

BISHOPS

Norman! / Augh, really?! / These
were new shoes!

Norman quickly retrieves the rogue can.

NORMAN

Y-yes, President. You were
discussing, um...

(MORE)

NORMAN (CONT'D)

(beat)

It was something about... God,
maybe?

The President <SIGHS>.

PRESIDENT JONES

I've decided the new family is
moving into your ward, Bishop. It's
going to be your responsibility to
bring them back into the fold.

(beat)

Of course, if it's too much for
you, I can always reassign...

BISHOP #3

(whispering to another
Bishop)

I give the family 2 weeks in
Norman's ward before they go full
no-Mo.

Norman overhears and grows a little red in the face.

NORMAN

I - I can handle the new family,
President!

PRESIDENT JONES

Now that's the spirit! I expect the
rest of you to take a page out of
Bishop Smith's book when it comes
to optimism and faith.

The Bishops continue to <GRUMBLE>, but Norman ignores them.

NORMAN

When does the new family move in?

PRESIDENT JONES

Why, first thing tomorrow morning.

END COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

INT. SMITH HOUSEHOLD - KITCHEN / LIVING ROOM - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: TOMORROW MORNING... NOT QUITE FIRST THING

Norman fusses with his tie in front of a mirror. His wife, JANE, prepares school lunches in the kitchen.

NORMAN

Jane, honey? Could you help me with my tie?

Jane exits the kitchen and grabs Norman's tie firmly in her hands.

JANE

Big day today, huh? The Less Actives are moving in.

NORMAN

(frowns)
Please. Don't call them that.

JANE

Sorry. I've just heard so many things about them... mostly bad.

NORMAN

Where did you hear bad things? Matter of fact, how did you hear anything at all? I found out about the new family last night!

Jane finishes adjusting Norman's tie.

JANE

You know how it goes. One Bishop tells his wife, his wife tells another wife, and soon, every wife within a five mile radius knows the story.

NORMAN

(chuckles)
A wife mile radius.

Jane looks at her husband, confused.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Never mind. So what do you know?

JANE

Well, I know the husband, Terry Snellie, lost his Church calling after a doctrinal disagreement with his Bishop.

NORMAN

Oh... dare I ask for more?

JANE

Mary Snellie, his wife, is vocal about the priesthood and wants to be ordained.

NORMAN

Ordained? But only men can hold the priesthood!

JANE

(scoffs)

I know! I mean, really, how selfish can she be?

NORMAN

Unbelievable.

JANE

Their two sons, Jerry and Larry, are nothing but troublemakers. They're constantly getting into fights with their leaders, and adults in general. No respect for authority.

Norman takes a deep breath.

NORMAN

Sounds like I have my work cut out for me. Good thing I took the day off from work.

CUT TO:

EXT. SNELLIE HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Norman pulls up in front of a dark, overgrown house. It stands out among the other brightly painted homes. A moving truck is parked in the driveway, and the MORMON MOVERS unload the vehicle.

Norman exits the car and pushes open the small gate fencing in the front yard.

Norman's gentle push is enough to crack the hinge, and the gate topples onto the floor. Some of the movers stop to watch.

NORMAN
I can fix that!

He tries to correct the gate, but he only makes it worse. A few of the gate posts now bend at 45 degree angles. He nervously wrestles with the posts until--

NORMAN (CONT'D)
Aha! Fixed!

The posts he straightened out immediately fall to the floor.

NORMAN (CONT'D)
(beat)
I found it like this.

He leaves the fence alone and approaches the front door, avoiding eye contact with the movers. After a deep <BREATH>, he knocks.

The door slowly opens, and TERRY SNELLIE, a hippy-like guy wearing a politically charged shirt and tons of ear piercings, answers the door. He is the visual epitome of non-Mormon.

Norman <CHOKES> on his own saliva.

TERRY
(judgmental)
You always this charming with introductions?

Norman holds up a finger, gesturing for Terry to give him a second before--

NORMAN
(violently coughing)
Bishop Smith, at your service.

The fence behind him collapses. A beat.

NORMAN (CONT'D)
(shakes his head,
accusatory)
The movers.

TERRY
So you're the Bishop, huh?

Terry folds his arms condescendingly as he looks him up and down.

TERRY (CONT'D)
Where were you 2 hours ago? The Movers are just about done.

NORMAN
I know. That's why I waited to come over.

Terry shoots daggers at Norman.

NORMAN (CONT'D)
Uh, can I come in for a moment?

Terry wordlessly heads inside. Norman follows in after him.

INT. SNELLIE HOUSEHOLD - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Apart from two couches and a coffee table, the room is empty and barren. Terry plops himself on the couch and cracks open a Red Bull.

TERRY
Red Bull?

NORMAN
N-no. I don't drink caffeine. We don't drink caffeine, remember?

Terry takes a long, deep swig of Red Bull.

TERRY
You're missing out, Bishop. This stuff here is the elixir of life.

NORMAN
But the caffeine...

Terry takes another long swig of Red Bull, this time polishing off the rest of the can. He squishes the can on his head and tosses it to the ground.

TERRY
So, you here to quiz me or something? See how Mormon I am?

NORMAN
I'm here to meet you and your family, Brother Snellie.

TERRY
 (reluctant)
 Oh right, the family, they moved
 too.
 (shouting out)
 Mary, kids! Get in here!

MARY SNELLIE and their two kids, JERRY (14) and LARRY (12),
 enter. The two boys are in the middle of a fight.

LARRY
 I'm bigger and stronger than you,
 Jerry.

JERRY
 But I'm stronger and bigger than
 you, Larry!

Both boys are exactly the same size.

LARRY
 Oh yeah?

JERRY
 Yeah!

LARRY
 OH YEAH?!

JERRY
 YEAH!

They lunge at each other, executing a series of frail kicks
 and punches. Mary easily separates them.

MARY
 Stop it, boys. Stop it! We have
 company!

The two boys look at Norman and size him up.

LARRY
 Do you want to fight us?

NORMAN
 No! Why would I want to do that?

JERRY
 You're our guest. Guests get first
 dibs.

LARRY
 Fight *me*!

Larry lunges at Norman, who recoils in time to avoid the punch.

WHACK! Larry's fist goes right through the wall!

LARRY (CONT'D)
 (resigned)
 I'll fix it...

Larry exits the room. A beat.

NORMAN
 (nervous)
 Look, I'm just here to get a sense of you people and leave. I have a couple of things I'd like to clear up and understand.
 (addressing Jerry)
 Have you ever back talked your leaders and/or shown blatant disregard for authority?

JERRY
 Like, every single day!

Larry comes back with materials to patch the hole in the wall.

LARRY
 Sometimes multiple times!

PULL BACK TO REVEAL he's patched the wall several times already.

NORMAN
 (to Mary)
 And have you asked to be ordained to the priesthood?

Mary reveals a stack of letters, grinning.

MARY
 They've all been returned to me.

NORMAN
 (to Terry)
 And have you lost your church calling over a doctrinal disagreement?

Terry <CHUCKLES>, but it isn't friendly.

TERRY

I wanted a calling he wouldn't give me.

NORMAN

Well, I think you'll find I'm completely rational when it comes to member assignments.

(analyzes Terry)

Let's see... fairly strong upper body, impressive core strength... I think you'll do well as the designated Church Janitor.

TERRY

Nah. That's not how I work, Norm.

NORMAN

It's Bishop Smith, Brother.

TERRY

But what if it was Bishop Snellie?

Norman can't help it. He <LAUGHS> right in Terry's face.

NORMAN

I'm sorry, I said Church Janitor, not Church Jester!

But Terry isn't laughing. In fact, he's moving forward, closing the gap between himself and Norman, fast. Norman instantly clamps shut.

TERRY

If you want my family to be full on Mormon-ized, I get your job. It's an all or nothing deal, Norm. What do you say?

Norman <GULPS>.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO**INT. SNELLIE HOUSEHOLD - LIVING ROOM - RESUME**

Norman stands up, flustered.

NORMAN

I have to go! Uh, just got a spiritual prompting about some baptisms in a well or something.

He rushes toward the door and runs. He leaves the Snellies behind, the Movers behind, his own car behind.

MORMON MOVER #1

Sir, your car!

It doesn't matter.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - LATER

Norman bursts through the doors of a hospital and takes off down a hallway. He passes room after room, glancing in until he enters a--

INT. HOSPITAL - SURGERY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Norman erupts through the double doors to find President Jones mid-operation.

PRESIDENT JONES

Norman? How many times have I told you not to bother me at work?

NORMAN

(out of breath)

I'm sorry, President... but I can't... I can't do it. The new family... they're not Mormon!

The President returns to performing open-heart surgery on the patient, accepting Norman's presence.

PRESIDENT JONES

You want to know why I gave you that family, Norman? Your membership numbers are the lowest in the entire stake, and your bishop-ship is on the line.

The President pulls out various chest cavity items from the patient and tosses them aside like chew toys.

PRESIDENT JONES (CONT'D)
 I'm giving you an opportunity to prove yourself. No other bishop has been able to reclaim these wandering souls. But if you could do it, Norman, you'd be a hero!

Norman absorbs the President's words.

NORMAN
 Huh. Hero.

PRESIDENT JONES
 This is your last shot, or else...

President Jones plunges his fist deep into the open chest. The body writhes.

INT. SMITH HOUSEHOLD - LATER

Norman returns home with renewed confidence.

JANE
 Dear, I got a call about the car. Apparently it's been tow--

NORMAN
 Not important. We're inviting the Snellies over for Family Home Evening.

Jane nods seriously.

JANE
 On it!

QUICK CUTS as JANE PREPS FOR FAMILY HOME EVENING

Jane removes a picture of a Book of Mormon from the wall to uncover a safe. She cracks it open to find multiple stacks of stashed away Book of Mormons.

Jane harvests rings hanging from a small tree in the kitchen window. These are CTR (Choose the Right) rings. Camera cuts to her back, where she turns around and flashes rings on all fingers. They sparkle.

Jane, in oven mitts, pulls out a voluptuous dish of green Jell-O from the oven and proceeds to sprinkle oregano and parsley flakes on top. The Jell-O is somehow perfectly intact.

JANE (CONT'D)
We're ready.

INT. SMITH HOUSEHOLD - THE FOLLOWING WEEK

SUPERIMPOSE: FAMILY HOME EVENING

The Snellies knock on the Smith's front door. Norman answers and addresses each family member.

NORMAN
Terry. Mary. Jerry and Larry.
(beat)
Wow. Was that on purpose?

MARY
(dryly)
Complete accident.

NORMAN
Inspired! Welcome to the Smith Temple!
(beat)
That's what I like to call it, since God is ever present in our home.

The Snellies cautiously enter and find two giant tables set out in the dining room: an adult table and a kid table, where all the SMITH KIDS sit.

Jane pokes her head out from the kitchen.

JANE
(forced, awkward)
Oh hi, so nice to meet you! Take a seat. The food's almost ready.

Terry and Mary sit down at the adult table, while Jerry and Larry scramble for seats at the kid table.

JERRY
Move it, Larry. This seat's mine!

He shoves his brother out of the way to sit next to CINDY (14), who ignores him.

JERRY (CONT'D)
(flirty)
Hey.

Larry ends up sitting next to JESSICA (12), noticing her hairy legs in shorts.

LARRY
Woah, that's a lot of hair!

Jessica shrugs.

JESSICA
It keeps me warm in the winter.

LARRY
(beat, impressed)
Cool. How do you get your hair so long?

JESSICA
Genes.

LARRY
I gotta start wearing those.
(beat)
What game are you guys playing?

PATRICK (10) interjects, overly excited to share the card game with newcomers.

PATRICK
It's called Book of Mormon Stories!
We go 'round in a circle and everyone draws a card. Then you do whatever your card says to do.

ALICIA (8) hands Larry a card.

ALICIA
Here you go.

Larry takes the card and reads from it:

LARRY
(reading)
"Share a spiritual quote from your favorite male hero in the Book of Mormon."

CINDY
That's so easy! They're all guys!

PATRICK

If I were you, I'd pick Abinadi
because he was burned at the stake!

(quoting)

"What ye shall do unto me shall be
a type of things to come!"

ALICIA

I like when the whale eats Jonah.

CINDY

That's not Book of Mormon, Aly. It
can only be from the Book of
Mormon.

JERRY

Yeah, what...

He waits for her to give her name.

CINDY

(shortly)

Cindy.

JERRY

(happily)

...Cindy said.

JESSICA

(to Larry)

Who are you gonna pick?

LARRY

I don't know. How about Laman? He
was kinda cool.

The Smith kids collectively <GASP>, looking horrified.

CINDY

(seriously)

Laman is the complete opposite of a
Book of Mormon hero. He's the bad
guy.

JERRY

Yeah, Larry, you idiot. You chose
the bad guy. *Stupid!*

Back at the adult table, Norman makes nervous small talk with
the Snellies as Jane grabs the food from the kitchen.

NORMAN

So, uh, how was the drive over? You
find the place okay?

Terry and Mary look at each other.

MARY

We live less than a block away.

NORMAN

Oh, right, right. How's the weather? Warm? Cool? I haven't been outside all day! Well, I mean, I've been outside, but I haven't *been* outside, you know what I mean? It's just been--

JANE

Food's ready!

NORMAN

(relieved)

Oh, thank the Lord above.

Jane carries out two giant round saucers filled with heaping piles of food. On one plate, a mountain of scrambled eggs. The other, diced baked potatoes. She sets the plates down on the adult table.

JANE

And I'm so embarrassed to admit it, but we're all out of orange juice.

MARY

Why does that matter?

JANE

(incredulous)

Don't you drink orange juice?

Jane goes back into the kitchen to fetch two more giant saucers for the kids.

NORMAN

I feel like we may have started off on the wrong foot the other day, so I'm glad we're here now, about to feast on a magnificent dinner and put that joke behind us, huh Terry?

TERRY

What? Me wanting your job?

Norman's bends his plastic fork.

NORMAN

It's not a *job*, Terry. It's a lifestyle. I don't get paid to be the bishop of this ward.

TERRY

(under his breath)
I would if I was bishop.

NORMAN

That's not how it works... You and your family are putting my position in jeopardy.

Terry sits back, his hands behind his head.

TERRY

Well, I knew you weren't genuine, but I had no idea how selfish you were.

This whole time, Mary has barely touched the food. Each bite she takes, she cringes and sets the fork down, disgusted.

JANE

Mary, are you all right?

MARY

I can't eat any of this.

JANE

Well, there's still dessert! You won't be able to stop yourself from scarfing down my homemade green Jell-O.

Jane brings out her famous "homemade" (not really) green Jell-O in an effort to save the evening. Mary stares at it, distrustful.

JANE (CONT'D)

Go ahead. Have a bite!

After one microscopically small bite, Mary <GAGS> as she dramatically clings onto the wooden table for dear life.

TERRY

WHAT DID YOU DO TO MY WIFE?!

(beat)

Mary?!? Mary, can you hear me?

Mary <CHOKES> some more.

TERRY (CONT'D)
She can't breathe!

Mary's face turns purple, and the kids run around, <SCREAMING>. It's mass chaos as things are punched, thrown, broken, etc.

NORMAN
Let me handle this!

He kneels down to pray.

NORMAN (CONT'D)
Lord above, we bow our heads before thee and ask that--

TERRY
She's choking, Norman! Your prayers mean nothing!

Norman tears up.

NORMAN
You take that back!

It's then that Jane steps in and performs a Heimlich maneuver on Mary, forcing her to <COUGH> out the insignificant piece of Jell-O.

MARY
(gasping)
You almost killed me!

JANE
What are you talking about? I just saved your life!

MARY
After you tried to take it!

TERRY
(deadly)
Kids, we leave now.

The Snellies march out of the Smith house.

EXT. SMITH HOUSEHOLD - CONTINUOUS

Norman chases them out, begging for them to stay.

NORMAN
You can't leave! Don't kill the night before it's even begun!

Mary angrily <SCOFFS> at Norman as she shoves Jerry and Larry into the backseat.

NORMAN (CONT'D)
C'mon, we still have so many
wholesome board games to play!

At this point, Norman is on his hands and knees, clutching at Terry's leg in an effort to keep him out of the car.

TERRY
It's over, Norm. You're done for.

NORMAN
(small)
No.

Terry shakes Norman off and revs the engine. They drive off, and Jane rushes out to her husband.

JANE
Oh honey, are you okay? How could
this have happened? My Jell-O has
ended wars, not started them!

NORMAN
I... I have to go.

Without another word, Norman rushes to the car (now with a sizeable dent in the rear) and drives away.

EXT. MORMON CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

Norman screeches up to the Church building. It's dark and empty, but this doesn't stop Norman from entering.

INT. MORMON CHURCH - BISHOP OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

He enters his small bishop's office and takes a seat in the plush chair behind the desk. His head falls into his hands.

NORMAN
(sotto)
What am I gonna do?

His office phone begins to <RING>. He answers.

NORMAN (INTO PHONE) (CONT'D)
Hello?

PRESIDENT JONES (THROUGH PHONE)
Bishop Smith, it's President Jones.

NORMAN (INTO PHONE)
Oh, President!

Norman salutes, hitting himself in the head with the phone.

NORMAN (CONT'D)
(forced)
To what do I owe this pleasure?

PRESIDENT JONES (THROUGH PHONE)
Look outside.

Norman looks outside his window and sees the President standing there, peering in.

PRESIDENT JONES (THROUGH PHONE) (CONT'D)
I left my keys at home. Could you
open the window?

Norman hangs the phone up and rushes toward the window, flinging it open wide enough for the President to crawl through.

PRESIDENT JONES (CONT'D)
You know why I'm here, don't you?

The President sits down in Norman's chair and clasps his hands seriously.

NORMAN
(nervously)
Uh... no, not really. I mean, why
would I?

PRESIDENT JONES
I can't have you and the Snellies
together in the same ward. After
your wife's attempted murder, it
took a lot of convincing to stop
the Snellies from reporting you
directly to the Prophet.

NORMAN
Well... that's good news, right?

PRESIDENT JONES
I'm sorry, Norman. You're being
demoted.

NORMAN
What?!

PRESIDENT JONES

It was the only way to placate the family. Trust me, it gives me no pleasure to strip you of your title.

Norman leans on the desk for support, heartbroken.

PRESIDENT JONES (CONT'D)

Next Sunday, we'll announce your replacement.

The President stands and <SIGHS>, making his way towards the door.

PRESIDENT JONES (CONT'D)

The Big Guy upstairs is not happy about this. Not. Happy.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE**INT. MORMON CHURCH - BISHOP OFFICE - RESUME**

We see Norman at his absolute lowest point. He's so riddled with grief, he starts to hallucinate. His eyes meet with a slightly off-putting picture of Jesus Christ hanging on the wall.

NORMAN

What do I do, Jesus? Christ, I've
lost it all...

(realizing)

Sorry.

The picture doesn't respond -- it can't, it's a picture -- but Norman nods as if the painting with bulging eyes and a lopsided mouth were speaking to him.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Yes... I understand. I have to
sully their reputation completely
in order to redeem my own. I have
to expose the Snellies as Mormon
imposters.

CLOSE UP on the painting. No response, but the picture looks like it's frowning?

CUT TO:

INT. MORMON CHURCH - BISHOP OFFICE - LATER IN THE WEEK

SUPERIMPOSE: WEDNESDAY CONFSSIONAL

Norman is still in his office, but he's dressed in Sunday clothes and meeting with an elderly woman, SISTER JENKINS.

NORMAN

What would you like to confess
today, Sister Jenkins?

SISTER JENKINS

(timid)

Ever since I lost my husband, I
haven't been the same, Bishop. When
the day ends, I can't remember what
I did. Maybe I stole a necklace
from the store, or maybe I filed a
restraining order against my
veterinarian?

(beat)

(MORE)

SISTER JENKINS (CONT'D)

Do I need to repent for actions I
can't remember doing?

NORMAN

Hmm... this is quite the conundrum,
Sister.

He closes his eyes, tapping into what God would want.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

I advise placing yourself under
strict house arrest until God can
heal your memory.

SISTER JENKINS

I can never leave? Not even to go
to the grocery store?

NORMAN

Not if you want to be forgiven.

She nods seriously. Norman decides to switch the subject.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Speaking of forgiveness, would you
ever forgive the Snellies?

SISTER JENKINS

The who?

NORMAN

Our newest family.

SISTER JENKINS

What new family?

NORMAN

The family that moved into the old
Beaton's house.

SISTER JENKINS

Who are the Beatons?

Her face suddenly goes blank, and she quickly reaches for
Norman's pen on his desk, pocketing it like a thief.

NORMAN

Get out of here, Barbara!

Sister Jenkins scuttles out with the stolen pen.

CUT TO:

INT. MORMON CHURCH - BISHOP OFFICE

SUPERIMPOSE: THURSDAY CONFSSIONAL

Norman is once again in his office, but it's the next confessor, BROTHER LANE.

NORMAN

(friendly)

Brother Lane! What would you like to confess today?

BROTHER LANE

Well, you see Bishop... I've been unfaithful to my wife.

NORMAN

(shocked)

Really? Oh Brother, I thought things were going well!

BROTHER LANE

They were, until golf came between us.

REVEAL Lane holding a shiny golf club.

NORMAN

(uncomfortable)

Um... have you had any, um, how do I put this delicately?

(loud)

Unholy experiences with the golf club you're holding?

BROTHER LANE

Not at all! In fact, it's the complete opposite! I've never hit more holes in one than before I got this club!

He presses it to his lips and leaves a sweaty kiss on the reflective metal.

NORMAN

Um, to what degree have you been unfaithful to your wife?

BROTHER LANE

(darkly)

The worst degree, Bishop.

NORMAN
 (muttering)
 God give me strength...
 (beat)
 Could you tell me about it?

BROTHER LANE
 Well...

The audience hears nothing as Lane describes his relationship with his golf club. All we see is Norman's horrified reactions, one after another, as Lane makes exaggerated expressions, using the golf club as a prop.

When Lane's through, Norman is so exhausted, he can barely stomach his last meal. As he <BURPS>...

BROTHER LANE (CONT'D)
 You mentioned something about the Snellies earlier?

NORMAN
 Just... go. I can't...

Brother Lane holds his club close, caressing it, and exits.

CUT TO:

INT. MORMON CHURCH - BISHOP OFFICE

SUPERIMPOSE: FRIDAY CONFSSIONAL

Norman is now meeting with a newlywed couple, BROTHER AND SISTER FLAKER. They're clasping their hands together tearfully as they confess.

NORMAN
 Brother and Sister Flaker, please have some good news for me.
 (beat)
 You're back from the honeymoon early... I hope you were doing you-know-what in the you-know-what-way.

BROTHER FLAKER
 (quietly)
 I swear, Bishop Smith, it started off in the God-ordained missionary position, but then I was tempted by the Devil to deviate... Next thing I knew, my mouth was in places it shouldn't have been!

Sister Flaker is quiet, her face drained of color.

NORMAN

Did you feel any *pleasure*, Sister Flaker?

She looks down at her lap, ashamed.

SISTER FLAKER

Yes.

Norman sighs and rubs his temples.

NORMAN

This is a grave error indeed, but luckily, God can forgive you. Going forward, you must inform me every time you plan to procreate, and I will advise if the Lord approves.

BROTHER FLAKER

Thank you, Bishop!

SISTER FLAKER

We won't make the same mistake again!

NORMAN

Speaking of mistakes, what do you think of the new family, the Snellies?

The couple instantly launches into conspiracy theories.

SISTER FLAKER

I heard the children escaped from prison recently, and that Brother Snellie runs an illegal drug business out of his basement.

NORMAN

Wait, what?

BROTHER FLAKER

The worst part of it all is that Sister Snellie makes and sells pies from human flesh!

Norman is speechless for a moment, then makes eye contact with the painting.

SISTER FLAKER

Have you heard of anything else we should be concerned about, Bishop?

NORMAN

Uh...

BROTHER FLAKER

Are these rumors true? Should we be afraid?

The Jesus painting looks defeated. Norman, choosing his words carefully:

NORMAN

Believe... what your heart... and God, don't forget God... tells you to believe in. And never, ever, never repeat what we've discussed here today.

SISTER FLAKER

We promise.

CUT TO:

INT. SMITH HOUSEHOLD - LIVING ROOM - NEXT DAY

Jane <GASPS> out loud as she reads the ward newsletter, the source for all local ward news.

JANE

Honey, it's awful! Who knew the Snellies were secret sex trafficking racists?

Norman, looking up from his Book of Mormon:

NORMAN

Is that what it ended up being?
(forced)
I mean, oh no, that's awful!

JANE

It's all right here, confirmed in the ward newsletter! Does the Stake President know? Our children aren't safe!

NORMAN

I'm sure he's been made aware. No need for me to lift a finger.

At that moment, the Stake President opens the front door.

PRESIDENT JONES

(surprised)

Oh wow, that worked? Norman, you really have to lock your front door.

NORMAN

President!

He collapses onto the couch, next to Jane and Norman.

PRESIDENT JONES

This morning has been a complete disaster! I've received countless emails and phone calls demanding the Snellies be permanently removed from Mormonism. It looks like you were right, Norman. The Snellies aren't Mormon. They've fallen away, and the only thing we can do is toss them out into the cold, cruel world and hope they never return.

JANE

So the reports are true?

PRESIDENT JONES

They're in the ward newsletter, so they have to be!

(beat)

Until we can get this sorted out, the High Council has decided you can retain your Bishop-ship. For now. We didn't realize the extent of the Snellie's transgressions.

(beat)

Welcome back, Bishop Smith.

He claps a warm hand on Norman's shoulder, but Norman frowns instead. The President pulls out a manilla envelope and hands it to Norman.

PRESIDENT JONES (CONT'D)

The excommunication papers are in there. I need you to hand deliver them to the Snellies.

The President begins to leave.

NORMAN

Aren't you coming with me?

PRESIDENT JONES

(laughing)

Oh no. I hate this part of the job.

(looks at watch)

Besides, I have three back-to-back eye transplants I can't keep rescheduling. A shame people are too reliant on sight and not God, huh Bishop?

Norman <GULPS> as the President leaves. Before he can decide what to do next, his daughter Jessica pokes her head out from around the corner.

JESSICA

What's gonna happen to Larry's family?

NORMAN

(business-like)

Him and his family are leaving our ward.

JESSICA

But he was okay, even if he was kinda weird. Why can't they stay?

NORMAN

They were just *too* different, sweetie. You'll understand when you're older.

JESSICA

That's not fair, daddy. Anyone should be able to live here, even the Snellies.

Norman condescendingly pats her on the head, but his eyes reflect conflict.

EXT. SNELLIE HOUSEHOLD - LATER

Outside the Snellie's home, Norman once again approaches the front door. But this time the house looks less scary, and Norman notes the small, green garden taking shape in the yard.

Terry answers the door again, but this time, he looks hurt and somber.

TERRY

Bishop. Was wondering when you'd stop by. My family got the news this morning.

NORMAN

Understand this brings me no joy, Brother, but it's what God commands.

TERRY

Sure, whatever you say. Doesn't matter what I think.

NORMAN

I'm glad you see the light.

He hands Terry the manilla envelope.

TERRY

How long do we have left?

NORMAN

The Movers are on their way.

The rest of the family comes to the door, looking crushed.

LARRY

Mom, why do we have to move again? I think I finally made a friend. Did I do something wrong?

MARY

(lovingly)

Oh Larry...

(accusatory)

Of course you did. You're the reason we have to uproot for the fifth time this year and try to start a new life.

Larry looks like he's going to cry.

NORMAN

(uncomfortable)

Well... leave the papers with the Movers, and uh, good luck.

As he begins to walk away, we see the Mormon Movers pull up in their moving truck.

MORMON MOVER #1

Didn't we just load this house 2 weeks ago?

MORMON MOVER #2

They're a troubled family. You know
how it goes. Gotta get 'em out.

The Movers greet the Snellies at the door as Norman leaves.
He turns for one last look and watches as the Movers
disappear inside the home and come out with furniture to load
the truck with.

Mary and the children are devastated, as Terry silently
watches. It's not until the Movers attempt to pick up the
Snellies and move them like furniture that Norman intervenes.

TERRY

Hey!

MARY

I have feet, you know!

NORMAN

Okay, no! No! Stop this! This ends
now!

MORMON MOVER #1

But we were commanded to--

NORMAN

I don't care what you were
commanded to do. Don't you ever
think for yourself once in a while?
Like, did you really think picking
up a full grown adult and moving
them like furniture was a good
idea?

The Movers just shrug.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

No. It's wrong. This is all wrong.
Put their stuff back.

MORMON MOVER #1

Are you serious? We just emptied
half the house before you decided--

NORMAN

I don't care, just do it! As Bishop
of this ward, I command you to
think for yourselves and do the
right thing!

MORMON MOVER #2

Whatever, you're paying for it.

The Movers start to unload the truck and move things back in. The Snellies are silent, but their eyes reflect gratitude.

NORMAN
(awkwardly)
See you at Church on Sunday.

INT. SMITH HOUSEHOLD - MASTER BATHROOM - SUNDAY MORNING

SUPERIMPOSE: SUNDAY

Norman ties his own tie for Church.

JANE
Are you sure you don't need my
help, dear?

NORMAN
(confidently)
No. I've got this.

He looks at a creepy Jesus painting hanging in his bathroom (similar to the one hanging in his office) and winks at it. It winks back?

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

In a gloriously oversized white van, the Smiths ride.

EXT. MORMON CHURCH - PARKING LOT

In the parking lot, the kids pile on out and run for the church building. Jessica is the last to leave and smiles at her dad, a real, true genuine smile.

JESSICA
Thanks, daddy.

Norman takes Jessica's hand and they walk into Church.

INT. MORMON CHURCH - CHAPEL - MOMENTS LATER

Sacrament meeting is about to begin, and the Smiths find an empty pew close to the front. Welcoming music resonates from the organ, and everyone is happily chatting with their neighbors.

After a moment, the organ ceases to play, and the Stake President makes his way to the podium.

PRESIDENT JONES

Good morning, Brothers and Sisters.
I know I don't visit your ward as often as I'd like, but I have a very important message to share.

Norman visibly cringes in the pew, but Jane grabs his hand.

PRESIDENT JONES (CONT'D)

It was brought to my attention that a new family in your ward was the source of acute scandal and sin. Upon further investigation, I realized I believed false rumors and my own prejudices, leading me to make a rash decision to remove them from your ward.

(beat)

I was wrong. We all were wrong. The family never posed a threat to our happiness. Sure, they acted and behaved differently than we expected, but we looked for the negative before valuing the positive.

The President locks eyes with Norman.

PRESIDENT JONES (CONT'D)

Bishop Smith, could you join me up here a moment?

Norman hesitates, but Jane urges him to go.

PRESIDENT JONES (CONT'D)

Your Bishop here... he's a yes man. A follower. A coward.

NORMAN

What?

PRESIDENT JONES

But then he made a decision that almost got *him* excommunicated from the Church: he disobeyed my orders.

Norman is visibly nervous on the stand.

PRESIDENT JONES (CONT'D)

He proved that he had conviction, compassion, and a moral compass.

(MORE)

PRESIDENT JONES (CONT'D)

For those reasons, not only will he remain Bishop of this ward, but the Snellies are here to stay.

The ward is quiet and thoughtful.

NORMAN

I'd just like to echo everything the President said.

(beat)

But I can't. I'm my own person, with my own thoughts and feelings, and sometimes they're wrong. I don't have personal revelations all the time, guiding me to do and say the right thing. Sometimes I just... get uncomfortable and feel the need to do something about it.

He notices the Snellies walk in at that moment.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Ah, the family of the hour is here! I'm so glad you guys could make it!

The family awkwardly takes their seats.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Sorry, I know I shouldn't shout from up here, it isn't proper church etiquette, but I have some things to get off my chest before I lose this momentary burst of confidence.

(beat)

I'm sorry if I made you uncomfortable by being pushy and forcing myself into your lives. I guess I'm doing it again right now, I'm sorry, but I promise I'll do everything I can to make you and your family feel welcome. Even if that means leaving you completely alone. I just want you to feel like you belong here. That's it.

(beat)

I'll, uh, go sit down now.

Terry stands up suddenly and shouts back at Norman.

TERRY

Who just shouts during these meetings?

(MORE)

TERRY (CONT'D)

No Bishop I've ever known has had the guts to say what he's actually thinking without sugar coating it. You might be the worst Bishop I've ever had.

He gives a genuine grin at Norman, who grins back. Suddenly, Terry begins to clap, even though you're not supposed to. Pretty soon, the entire congregation is clapping.

INT. MORMON CHURCH - HALLWAY - LATER

After Church, Norman catches Terry before he and his family leave.

NORMAN

Brother.

TERRY

Bishop.

NORMAN

Let me ask you honestly, since being straightforward is my new thing. You and your family are going to be a headache for me, right?

TERRY

Of course.

NORMAN

And I'll have to remain vigilant to make sure you, your wife, and your sons don't go too off the rails?

TERRY

(lightly chuckling)

We don't even know what rails are.

Norman gives a small, satisfied smile and claps Terry on the back.

NORMAN

See you next week.

END EPISODE