The Holy Dishwasher

The Holy Dishwasher — Pastor Appreciation Skit for Church

WHAT

A first-time church volunteer signs up for kitchen duty after a Wednesday-night dinner. Through the night she keeps spotting the same man in jeans and a faded t-shirt. He fixes the broken latch on the back door. He hauls out three bags of trash. He sweeps under the high chairs after the toddlers leave. He scrubs a pan that someone had given up on. She finally pulls a deacon aside and asks who the maintenance guy is — he is everywhere. The deacon's answer is — that's our pastor. The final monologue is the volunteer reading Mark ten, verse forty-five aloud.

THEME

The shepherd you would not recognize from the back is often the one who has been carrying you the longest.

WHO

MAYA — Late twenties; first-time volunteer; came to church once because a coworker invited her

DEACON GRACE — Sixties; longtime kitchen leader; tells the truth without apology

BRENDA — A volunteer cook in her fifties; cheerful, fast, knows every dish in the kitchen

PASTOR JIM — Mid-fifties; never identified by title until the last scene; in jeans and a faded t-shirt

YOUNG MOM — Late twenties; carries a fussy toddler past the kitchen; her hands are full

OLD MR. POLK — Eighties; widower; comes back to ask for a leftover plate to take home

CONGREGATION VOICE — Read by an offstage reader during the closing monologue

HOW (STYLE / TONE)

The set is a working church kitchen. A long stainless-steel counter, a sink with running water, a pass-through window to a fellowship hall offstage right. Pastor Jim moves through the kitchen the entire skit, doing small tasks. The audience is meant to track him before Maya does. He never speaks until Scene 11. Comedy lives in Maya's slow recognition, never in mocking the work. Keep movement quiet — let the small acts of service do the talking.

PROPS

- A long stainless-steel counter and a working sink

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- Three full trash bags, a broom, a mop, a rag
- A broken door latch and a screwdriver in Pastor Jim's back pocket
- An apron Maya keeps tying and re-tying
- A baked-on casserole pan everyone has given up on
- A child's high chair that needs sweeping under
- A leftover plate covered in foil for Mr. Polk
- A worn pocket Bible Pastor Jim opens once at the end

TIME

15 minutes

Scene 1 — Maya Signs Up

(Lights up. Maya stands at the kitchen entrance, holding an apron she does not know how to tie. Deacon Grace approaches)

DEACON GRACE

First time?

MAYA (nervous)

First time signing up. First time eating the food. First time inside this kitchen. First time inside this church, actually.

DEACON GRACE (warm)

Sweetheart. Welcome to the kitchen. We do not bite. We do, however, scrub. Are you ready to scrub?

MAYA

I think so.

DEACON GRACE

Good. We have lasagna pans from the dawn of time over there. Have at it.

(Pastor Jim quietly enters from the back hallway carrying a broken door latch and a screwdriver. He sets to work on the back door without a word)

Scene 2 — The First Sighting

(Maya runs water in the sink. She glances over her shoulder at Pastor Jim)

MAYA (to Brenda, quietly)

Hey. Quick question. Who's the maintenance guy?

BRENDA (over her shoulder, busy)

Which maintenance guy?

MAYA

The one fixing the door.

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BRENDA (without looking)
Oh, him. He's around. He fixes things. Don't worry about him.

(Pastor Jim finishes the latch. Tests it. Smiles to himself. Moves to the trash)

Scene 3 — The Trash Bags

(Pastor Jim ties off three trash bags. Lifts all three at once. They are heavy. He carries them out the back door without comment)

MAYA (to Deacon Grace)
He just took out three bags. Three. By himself.

DEACON GRACE (matter-of-fact)
He always takes the trash. Says he doesn't want the older deacons hurting their backs.

MAYA
Is he on staff?

DEACON GRACE (small smile)
You could say that, sweetheart.

(Pastor Jim returns. Wipes his hands on his jeans. Heads for the broom)

Scene 4 — The Young Mom

(A Young Mom enters from the fellowship hall carrying a fussy toddler in one arm and a diaper bag falling off the other)

YOUNG MOM (frazzled)
I am so sorry. He had a meltdown. The high chair area is a disaster. I'll come back and clean it after I get him to the car.

(Pastor Jim quietly intercepts the broom and heads through the pass-through to the high chair area. Doesn't look up)

PASTOR JIM (off, faintly to the mom)
Don't worry about it. I've got it. Get him buckled in. Drive safe.

YOUNG MOM (calling back)
Bless you, sir. Whoever you are.

(Maya watches her go. Watches Pastor Jim sweep with quiet patience)

Scene 5 — Mr. Polk Returns

(Old Mr. Polk shuffles back into the kitchen, holding his hat in his hands)

MR. POLK (apologetic)

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Brenda. I am so sorry to ask. Could I — could I have a plate of leftovers? It's just me at the house this week. The microwave food is killing me.

BRENDA (without missing a beat)
Mr. Polk, you don't have to apologize. Sit one second.

(Before Brenda can move, Pastor Jim has already covered a fresh plate in foil and is bringing it over)

PASTOR JIM (gently)
Mr. Polk. I added an extra biscuit. Margaret used to say you liked the biscuits.

MR. POLK (softly)
Margaret. She did. She did indeed. Bless you. Bless you, son.

(Pastor Jim shakes his hand. Mr. Polk shuffles out. Maya watches)

Scene 6 — The Pan Nobody Wants

(Brenda lifts a charred lasagna pan onto the counter. Sighs)

BRENDA
Maya, sweetheart. This pan is a lost cause. We have been soaking it for an hour. Throw it out.

MAYA (uncertain)
Are you sure?

BRENDA
Yeah, sweetheart. Some things you just can't save.

(Pastor Jim quietly takes the pan off the counter. Carries it to the deep sink. Picks up steel wool. Begins to scrub. He hums softly while he scrubs)

MAYA (whispering to Brenda)
He's scrubbing the lost cause.

BRENDA (without looking)
He always does.

Scene 7 — Maya Asks Again

MAYA
Brenda. Seriously. Who is that man?

BRENDA (now looking)
Sweetheart. You really don't know?

MAYA

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I told you. I'm new. I've been here once. I came to a service one time. I sat in the back.

BRENDA (slow smile)

Then I'm going to let Deacon Grace tell you. Grace? Got a minute?

(Deacon Grace walks over. Wipes her hands on her apron. Looks at Pastor Jim across the room. Looks at Maya)

Scene 8 — Deacon Grace Tells the Truth

DEACON GRACE (gently)

Maya. The man scrubbing that pan? That's Pastor Jim.

MAYA (long pause)

I'm sorry. The pastor of this church. The one who preached on Sunday.

DEACON GRACE

Yes.

MAYA

The one whose name is on the church sign.

DEACON GRACE

Yes.

MAYA (quiet)

He's been fixing the door. He carried out the trash. He swept under the high chair. He brought a plate to Mr. Polk. He's scrubbing a pan.

DEACON GRACE

And tomorrow morning at six he'll be in his office writing his sermon. He doesn't see those things as different jobs, sweetheart. He sees them as the same job.

Scene 9 — Maya Watches Differently

(Lights soften slightly. Maya watches Pastor Jim with new eyes. Brenda touches her shoulder gently and steps away. Deacon Grace returns to wiping counters)

MAYA (to herself)

I've been here three hours. I asked who he was twice. He never introduced himself. He never said — hey, I'm the pastor, welcome. He just kept doing the next thing.

MAYA (quieter)

Most pastors I've met would have shaken my hand twice. Posted a picture. Asked me to fill out a card. He didn't even tell me his name.

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MAYA

He just took out the trash. He just fixed the door. He just brought a plate to a widower. He just sat on the floor with a meltdown toddler's high chair.

MAYA (turning to Deacon Grace)

Grace. Has anybody told him thank you for any of this?

DEACON GRACE (small smile)

Once or twice. Mostly we forget. Mostly he prefers it that way. Mostly he says — Grace, the work is the thank-you. The pan is clean. That's the receipt.

Scene 10 — She Joins Him

(Maya walks slowly to the deep sink. Picks up a sponge. Stands beside Pastor Jim. They scrub together for a beat. Neither speaks)

MAYA (finally)

I'm Maya.

PASTOR JIM (warm, casual)

I know, Maya. Brenda told me your name an hour ago. I was waiting for you to be ready to say hi.

MAYA (small laugh)

You knew the whole time.

PASTOR JIM

Knowing your name is the first part of my job. Telling you mine is somewhere down the list.

MAYA

Why?

PASTOR JIM (still scrubbing)

Because if I introduce myself first, you watch what I say. If I introduce myself last, you watch what I do. Watching what I do is the only honest sermon I've got.

Scene 11 — The Pan Comes Clean

(Pastor Jim lifts the pan out of the sink. The char is gone. He sets it on the drying rack. Brenda sees it and gasps)

BRENDA

How did you do that?

PASTOR JIM (smiling)

Patience and steel wool, Brenda. Same as the rest of the job.

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DEACON GRACE (laughing)

He's been saying that for thirty years. Drives me crazy.

PASTOR JIM (drying his hands)

I'm going to go check on Mr. Polk's car. He's slow getting out of the lot lately. I want to make sure he made it.

(He grabs his coat. Heads for the back door. Stops. Turns. Looks at Maya)

PASTOR JIM

Maya. Glad you came. Come back next Wednesday. The pans are always here.

(He exits)

Scene 12 — Maya Reads

(Maya stands at the deep sink. Picks up a worn pocket Bible Pastor Jim left on the counter. Opens to a page already marked)

MAYA (reading slowly)

Mark ten, verse forty-five. 'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

MAYA (quieter)

He underlined it. He underlined it twice. The words 'to serve' have a circle around them.

DEACON GRACE (gently, behind her)

He underlines that one in every Bible he owns. He says it's the whole job. He says if he forgets it for one week, his sermons get worse.

MAYA

How many Bibles has he underlined that verse in?

DEACON GRACE

I bought him three of them last year for Christmas. He underlined all three the same week. Same color pen. Same circle. He laughed when I asked him about it. He said — Grace, I'm just trying to make sure I see it before I see anything else.

MAYA (softly)

That's the only verse on the page that has a circle around it.

DEACON GRACE

That's the only verse on the page he needs.

Scene 13 — Voices From the Hall

(Lights warm. Offstage voices begin)

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CONGREGATION VOICE (offstage)
He fixed the toilet in the women's restroom for two years before we hired a plumber.

CONGREGATION VOICE (offstage)
He shoveled my driveway after my husband died. Three winters in a row. I never asked.

CONGREGATION VOICE (offstage)
He stayed late after Easter to vacuum because the carpet team was short.

CONGREGATION VOICE (offstage)
He drove the church bus when our regular driver got sick.

CONGREGATION VOICE (offstage)
He took the trash out every Wednesday for fifteen years and never told a soul.

CONGREGATION VOICE (offstage)
He patched the back fence after a storm. We didn't know it was him until somebody saw his truck pulling away.

CONGREGATION VOICE (offstage)
He stayed for the last car in the parking lot every Sunday for a decade. Just in case somebody needed a jump.

Scene 14 — Final Moment

(Maya closes the Bible. Sets it gently on the counter. Looks toward the back door)

MAYA (to the audience)
I came in here looking for the pastor. I found him taking out the trash. I have been a member of three churches in my adult life. I have never once seen a pastor take out the trash.

MAYA
I think I am going to come back next Wednesday. And I think I am going to start watching the men nobody is watching.

DEACON GRACE (softly)
That's what he wants you to do, sweetheart. Not for him. For the next person.

NARRATOR: The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve. The pastor in jeans, scrubbing the pan no one wanted, was preaching that sermon while you ate your lasagna. We hope tonight reminded you to thank the man who has been preaching it for years.

(Lights down slowly on the kitchen. Hold three full beats)

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END

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