What the Pastor's Spouse Sees

What the Pastor's Spouse Sees — Pastor Appreciation Skit for Church

WHAT

An empty rocking chair sits center stage with a women's Bible on the seat. The skit is told entirely from the pastor's spouse's vantage point — through vignettes happening around the chair. The 11 p.m. crisis call. The funeral she attended alone because he was officiating. The Sunday morning he was in the parking lot ten minutes before service consoling a couple about a miscarriage. The empty seat in the third pew when he forgot to look up. The spouse never speaks. The cast plays out scenes around her. The closing scene: the chair stands empty, then a single church member — a woman she has quietly mentored for years — kneels next to the chair and says only — thank you. We see you too.

THEME

> *Behind every faithful shepherd is a faithful spouse the church has been fed by for years without knowing her name.*

WHO

DENISE — The pastor's spouse; never speaks; sits in the rocking chair through all vignettes; her presence is the spine of the whole skit

PASTOR DAVID — Heard offstage in three vignettes; never seen on stage

MEGAN — The young woman Denise has quietly mentored for seven years; speaks only at the end

HOSPITAL VOICE (V.O.) — Calls the parsonage at 11 p.m. on a Tuesday

SADIE — Denise's friend who attends the funeral with her in vignette two

THE GRIEVING COUPLE — Heard offstage in vignette three, weeping

CHURCH WOMAN ONE — Brings a casserole; speaks only to Denise; Denise does not respond

CHURCH WOMAN TWO — Asks Denise to lead the women's ministry while Denise is sitting in the chair recovering

DENISE'S DAUGHTER — Late teens; brings her mother coffee in one vignette; understands more than she lets on

NARRATOR — Warm, patient; speaks between vignettes; never describes Denise's feelings, only what she sees

HOW (STYLE / TONE)

Stage as a pastor's living room: a rocking chair center, a side table with a lamp and a women's Bible, a window upstage, a phone offstage. Denise sits the entire skit. She rocks. She listens. She does not speak. Each vignette plays in a small lit area around her — stage left for the parsonage phone, stage right for the funeral,

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downstage for the parking lot. The skit's emotional weight comes from Denise's stillness. Cast members come close to her, speak around her, and step away. Lighting on the chair stays gentle and warm throughout.

PROPS

- A wooden rocking chair, well-loved
- A side table with a small lamp and a women's Bible
- A landline phone with a long cord that rings offstage
- A casserole dish in foil for Church Woman One
- A funeral program for Sadie and Denise
- A coffee mug Denise's daughter brings her
- A small handwritten card Megan carries in her hand the whole final scene
- A worn blanket draped over the back of the rocking chair

TIME

20 minutes

Scene 1 — The Chair

(Lights up slowly. Denise sits in the rocking chair. The Bible is open on the side table. She is reading. She rocks gently. She does not look up)

NARRATOR: There is a chair in every parsonage in America that nobody on the church staff has noticed. It is the chair where the pastor's spouse waits. It is the chair where the pastor's spouse listens. It is the chair where the pastor's spouse — most of the time — is alone.

NARRATOR: Tonight, we are going to sit in that chair with her. We are going to see what she sees. We are not going to ask her to speak. She has been listening for thirty years. The least we can do is listen with her.

Scene 2 — The Eleven P.M. Call

(Lights warm stage left. A phone rings offstage. Denise looks up briefly. She does not move)

PASTOR DAVID (offstage, picking up)

Hello?

HOSPITAL VOICE (V.O.)

Pastor — it's the ER. The Aldridge family. Their son. He didn't make it. They asked for you. Specifically you.

PASTOR DAVID (offstage, after a long pause)

I'll be there in fifteen minutes. Tell them I'm coming. Tell them Denise is praying. Tell them they are not alone.

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(We hear footsteps. A door opens and closes offstage. The lamp light flickers as if the porch light has come on. Denise rocks. She picks up the Bible. She opens it. She does not turn the page)

NARRATOR: It is eleven oh-six p.m. on a Tuesday. Denise has eaten dinner alone for the second time this week. Her husband will be back at three a.m. He will sleep two hours. He will preach Wednesday night to two hundred people. Nobody at the Wednesday-night service will know about the Aldridge family. That is the point. That is the job.

Scene 3 — The Casserole

(A doorbell rings. Church Woman One enters cheerfully holding a casserole)

CHURCH WOMAN ONE (bright)

Denise. I brought lasagna. I know you all are so busy with the building campaign. I just wanted you to have one less thing to think about tonight.

(Denise looks up. Smiles softly. Nods. Does not speak. Church Woman One does not seem to notice)

CHURCH WOMAN ONE

Oh — and. While I'm here. Could you ask Pastor David if he could swing by my mother-in-law's house this week? She's been a little down. I think a visit from him would help.

CHURCH WOMAN ONE

And I have your name down for the bake sale. You don't mind, do you? You always make the brownies.

(Denise smiles. Nods. Church Woman One sets the casserole on the side table. Pats Denise on the shoulder. Exits)

NARRATOR: She brought a casserole. She left with two requests. She did not ask Denise how she was. Denise has been a pastor's wife for thirty-one years. She no longer expects to be asked. She just rocks.

Scene 4 — Sadie at the Funeral

(Lights warm stage right. Sadie enters in black. Carries two funeral programs. Hands one to Denise without ceremony. Sits next to her in a folding chair)

SADIE (gently)

He had to officiate the Henderson service downtown. He sends his love. He said — Sadie, sit with her. She loved Margaret. She needs a friend today.

(Denise nods. Lifts the program. Reads. A single tear slides down her cheek. Sadie sees it. Doesn't say anything. Reaches over. Takes Denise's hand)

SADIE (very quiet)

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I sat next to you at three funerals last year. He was at three other funerals on the same days. People keep asking where he is. I want to ask where you are. Nobody seems to.

SADIE

I see you, Denise. He sees you. The Lord sees you. I know that's not enough most days. But it's true.

(Denise squeezes Sadie's hand. Holds the program in her lap. Lights dim back to the chair)

Scene 5 — The Parking Lot Couple

(Lights warm downstage. We hear weeping offstage. Pastor David's voice, soft, just before the start of a Sunday service)

GRIEVING COUPLE (offstage, breaking)

We just found out this morning, Pastor. We were going to surprise everyone next week. We weren't going to tell anyone yet. And now there's nothing to tell.

PASTOR DAVID (offstage, gentle)

Sit with me. The service can wait. The service can always wait.

(Distant church bells ring. The service is starting. He does not move)

GRIEVING COUPLE (offstage)

But you're supposed to preach in ten minutes.

PASTOR DAVID (offstage)

I'll preach when you can stand up. The pulpit will be there. You won't be okay in ten minutes. I am not going to leave you in ten minutes.

(Lights dim. Denise rocks. The Bible is closed in her lap now)

NARRATOR: He preached late that Sunday. The congregation grumbled. A man on the second row checked his watch three times. Denise sat in her usual seat in the third pew. She knew exactly where he was. She knew exactly why. She also knew she could not say a single word about it. She just sat. She just rocked. She just kept the secret of his faithfulness. Because the family in the parking lot needed it kept.

Scene 6 — The Empty Pew

(Lights shift. We see Denise in church on a different Sunday — same chair, but tilted slightly, as if a pew. She holds her Bible. She listens)

NARRATOR: Denise sits in the third pew. House right. Aisle seat. She has sat in that seat for sixteen years. Before that she sat in the fourth pew. Before that she sat in the fifth. Each time the church grew, she moved forward one pew, so a visitor

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could have her old seat. Sixteen years ago she ran out of pews to move forward to.

NARRATOR: Some Sundays he looks up at her. He winks. He smiles. The congregation does not see it. It is their secret. It is the smallest gift a pastor can give his spouse — a glance from the pulpit that says, I see you. I have not forgotten you. You are the reason I can stand up here today.

NARRATOR: Some Sundays he forgets. He is too tired. He is preparing the next sentence. The crisis from yesterday is still in his head. He looks down at his notes the entire service. The third pew aisle seat goes unnoticed.

NARRATOR: Denise does not blame him. She knows he is carrying a hundred things she cannot see. She just rocks. She just listens. She just keeps her seat. The seat that has held the prayers of one woman for sixteen straight years. The seat the visitor who took her old fourth-row pew has never thought twice about. The seat that may be the most quietly faithful piece of furniture in the building.

Scene 7 — Church Woman Two

(Church Woman Two enters carrying a clipboard. Energetic. Sits across from Denise without asking)

CHURCH WOMAN TWO

Denise. We had a meeting last night. The women's ministry voted. We want you to lead it. We know you've been recovering from the surgery, but we really feel like you are the only one who could pull it off. The other women just don't have your touch.

CHURCH WOMAN TWO

It's only Tuesday nights. And Wednesday breakfasts. And the Thursday phone tree. And the monthly retreat. And the Saturday outreach. And whatever the elders want next.

CHURCH WOMAN TWO (cheerful)

It would mean so much. We need you. Will you do it? We are starting in two weeks.

(Denise smiles. Nods slowly. Picks up her Bible. Opens to a marked page. Hands the Bible — open — to Church Woman Two)

CHURCH WOMAN TWO (reading aloud, slower)

Mark six, verse thirty-one. 'And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while.'

CHURCH WOMAN TWO (long pause)

Oh.

CHURCH WOMAN TWO (quieter)

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Oh, Denise. I'm so sorry. We didn't think. We will figure it out. We will let someone else do it. We will leave you the Tuesday nights off.

(Denise nods. Smiles softly. Takes the Bible back. Closes it. Sets it on the side table. Church Woman Two exits, looking at the floor)

Scene 8 — The Daughter Brings Coffee

(Denise's daughter enters with a coffee mug. Sets it gently on the side table. Sits on the floor at her mother's feet. Leans her head against Denise's knee)

DAUGHTER (quiet)

Mom. I made it the way you like. Two sugars. Cream. The good cream from the back of the fridge.

(Denise puts a hand on her daughter's hair. Rocks. The two of them stay like that for a long beat)

DAUGHTER (softly)

I know I never say it. But I see you. I see Dad. I see what this house costs. I see what you carry. I see you waiting up at night. I see you sitting in the third pew alone.

DAUGHTER

I'm going to be a pastor's wife someday too, I think. James and I have been talking about it. He's thinking about seminary.

(Denise looks down at her daughter. Tears in her eyes. She squeezes her daughter's shoulder. Does not speak)

DAUGHTER (almost whispering)

Will you teach me how, Mom? Will you teach me how to sit in this chair?

(Denise nods. Pulls her daughter closer. The lamp flickers. The daughter stays at her feet)

Scene 9 — Pastor David Comes Home

(We hear footsteps offstage. A door opens and closes. The daughter slips out quietly. Denise straightens. Picks up her Bible. Pretends she hasn't been crying)

PASTOR DAVID (offstage, soft)

Denise? You still up?

(Denise smiles. Closes the Bible. Sets it down)

PASTOR DAVID (offstage, closer)

I lost the Aldridges' boy tonight. He was twelve. Twelve, Denise. They asked for me. I sat with them six hours.

(We hear his footsteps move past her. We hear him kiss her on the top of the head)

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PASTOR DAVID (offstage, breaking)

I don't know how to preach Wednesday night. I don't know what to say. The Wednesday-night crowd doesn't know about the Aldridges. I have to find words for the Aldridges and words for the Wednesday-night crowd in the same sermon. Without telling either one about the other.

(Denise reaches up. We do not see his hand. We see hers reach into space. They hold for a long moment)

PASTOR DAVID (offstage, quiet)

I don't know how I would do this without you. I don't say that enough. I don't say that at all, most weeks.

(Denise squeezes the empty space. Lets her hand fall. He does not appear. The lights dim slightly)

Scene 10 — Megan Approaches

(Lights warm. Megan enters slowly. Holds a small handwritten card in her hand. She is in her early thirties. She has been waiting a long time to do this. She kneels next to the rocking chair)

MEGAN (very quiet)

Denise. I asked Pastor David if I could come over tonight. He said you were in the chair. I told him I knew. I told him I have known for seven years. I told him this conversation has been mine to have, not his.

MEGAN

When I was twenty-five, I almost left the church. I almost left the faith. You met me at the coffee shop on the corner. I thought it was an accident. I know now it wasn't.

MEGAN

You met me there every Tuesday for fourteen months. You never once preached at me. You never once told Pastor David what we talked about. You just listened. You bought me coffee. You handed me a Kleenex. You told me your husband loved me even when I was angry at the church. You told me the Lord loved me even when I was angry at the Lord.

MEGAN

I wanted to thank him for years. I realized last week I had been thanking the wrong person. He shepherded me from a pulpit. You shepherded me from a coffee shop. The shepherding from the coffee shop is the one that kept me here.

Scene 11 — The Card

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(Megan opens the card she has been holding. Reads it aloud, looking up at Denise instead of down at the page)

MEGAN (reading)

Denise. I see you. We see you. The third pew sees you. The empty seat sees you. The Tuesday coffee shop sees you. The eleven p.m. phone calls see you. The funerals you attended alone see you.

MEGAN

I am the first of probably a hundred women in this church who needed to say it. Some of them don't even know yet what you have done for them. I knew. So I am saying it first.

MEGAN

Thank you. We see you too.

MEGAN (one breath later)

We have always seen you. We just never said it out loud. Tonight is the night we say it out loud. There will be more nights. There should be.

(Megan places the card on the side table beside the Bible. Touches Denise's hand. Stands up slowly. Steps back)

Scene 12 — Final Moment

(Denise picks up the card. Holds it against her chest. Closes her eyes. For the first time in the entire skit, she lets a real, long, quiet cry happen. Not a movement-cry. Just stillness with a face that finally allows the years)

NARRATOR: Proverbs thirty-one, verse twenty-nine. 'Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.' We don't usually say it about the pastor's wife. We usually say it about somebody on stage. Tonight we are saying it about somebody who has been faithful from a chair.

NARRATOR: If your church has a pastor who has carried you for years, your church has a pastor's spouse who has carried him while he carried you. There is no Pastor Appreciation Sunday that should end without thanking both of them.

MEGAN (final, soft, to the audience)

Tonight, the love offering at the back of the room is for the family. Not just the pastor. The family. Because the family is the church's family too.

(Lights down slowly on the rocking chair. The lamp glows for one long beat. Out)

END

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