

THE GOOD BAPTIST

BY

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EXT. HOBOKEN BAPTIST CHURCH--AFTERNOON

MRS. CRABTREE, a fragile old woman, looks up at the building.

INT. HOBOKEN BAPTIST CHURCH OFFICE-- MOMENTS LATER

A door opens...BROTHER JOHN, all smiles, stands.

JOHN
We have a big surprise for you.

MRS. CRABTREE
You do?

John swings the door open and she enters the office.

JOHN
Yes ma'am.

BROTHER WILLIAM, less nice than John, pulls a chair for her.

WILLIAM
Big surprise

She sits.

MRS. CRABTREE
What is it?

JOHN
First off, we must offer our
condolences on the loss of your
husband. He was a good man. One of
the best men I have ever known.

MRS. CRABTREE
Thank you very much.

JOHN
A tragedy it was to lose him like
that.

MRS. CRABTREE
Well, what is it they say? The Lord
works in mysterious ways.

WILLIAM
Funny you should say that.

JOHN
That is exactly why we needed to see
you today.

He sits in front of her.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Now, Mrs. Crabtree...

MRS. CRABTREE
June.

JOHN
Beg your pardon?

(CONTINUED)

MRS. CRABTREE

June. Call me June. My name is June.

JOHN

As you well know, June, Mr. Crabtree...Sam...was a very distinguished member of our church. As a matter of fact, as far as church devotion went...There was none more dedicated to the word as he.

WILLIAM

He was an inspiration.

JOHN

So much was he that he was about to receive a very special promotion when he was taken from us.

WILLIAM

A tragedy.

John stands.

JOHN

June, come with me please.

He leads her out the door, down a hallway. William follows.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I am about to disclose to you a wonderful, wonderful secret about our church...June, because of your distinguished service and devotion to this church and to the word...We would like to offer your husband's promotion to you.

MRS. CRABTREE

To me?

JOHN

We couldn't think of anyone who deserved it more...

WILLIAM

...and our time constraints were rather pressing.

JOHN

None-the-less, we would like you to accept his position ASAP.

They arrive at a set of double doors.

MRS. CRABTREE

(joking)

What, do you want me to become a Deacon?

JOHN

No June. We want you to become God.

He throws open the doors to the chapel. The room is bathed in light filtered through stained glass.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. CRABTREE

What?

JOHN

We would like to offer you the position of God.

MRS. CRABTREE

What?

JOHN

That's the secret, June. Our little church...Can you believe it? We are the center of the Christian faith.

WILLIAM

Hoboken, Georgia.

MRS. CRABTREE

I don't think...I don't know...WHAT?

JOHN

Brother William can explain better than I He's the historian. I'm just the administrator.

WILLIAM

Sure...Sure.

INT. CHURCH SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSROOM. -- MOMENTS LATER

Mrs. Crabtree is sitting in a chair that is way too small for her.

WILLIAM

June, it is no big secret that our particular faith is the only way.

William pulls down a chart that illustrates the following speech. Words like "THE ONLY WAY" and "DEEP CORRECTNESS" adorn the chart. Periodically, he smacks it with a pointer.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

This fact has been taught throughout history. And, of course we Baptists have a special place in the scheme of things because of the deep correctness of our branch. Baptists are the center of the Christian faith. But what is not widely known, June; in fact it is only known to us. We, the First Hoboken Baptist Church, are the pinnacle of the Baptist ideology! Because of that distinction, June, we have been given certain responsibilities for the rest of the faithful. Among those responsibilities is deciding the fate of each and every human being. We are not just the chosen ones, June. We are the ones who choose.

JOHN

We are God. Well, you are anyway...or at least you could be.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. CRABTREE
 You're saying that this church is
 Heaven?

JOHN
 No. Heaven is Heaven. And it is
 something that we still can't imagine.
 But June, someone has to be in charge
 of who gets to go...And more
 importantly...

WILLIAM
 ...Who does not get to go.

With that, William closes the chart.

JOHN
 And that someone is you, June.

MRS. CRABTREE
 Me?

JOHN
 You.

William flips off the light to the room.

EXT. CHURCH HALLWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

John leads June by the arm.

MRS. CRABTREE
 And, who is God now?

JOHN
 Joe Phillips.

EXT. RANDOM FIELD -- AFTERNOON

JOE PHILLIPS is driving a tractor. He is a happy happy man.

WILLIAM (V.O.)
 Wonderful man. Superb Christian.

Joe Phillips waves.

MRS. CRABTREE
 I thought Joe Phillips was...

INT. CHAPEL -- CONTINUOUS

John stands behind the altar. He holds a Bible.

JOHN
 Dead? You see, June, to become God,
 which is understandably an extremely
 taxing position...what with
 controlling the destinies of every
 human being in the world. And with
 answering prayers and all, it is
 best for God to give up his or her
 daily life in order to dedicate fully
 to the task at hand.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOHN (CONT'D)

So, Joe had to shelve his Earthly ties to do a greater good. But, unfortunately, Joe let time catch up on him and well...

FLASH Joe Phillips' happy skeleton in a gold robe.

MRS. CRABTREE

So...If Joe is/was God, and now he's dead, will he go to Heaven?

JOHN

Well that is entirely up to you, June. Although, if I may make a small endorsement in Joe's behalf; he was an excellent God.

WILLIAM

Probably the best in years.

MRS. CRABTREE

OK, then I have just a quick question.

JOHN

Shoot.

MRS. CRABTREE

Well, what makes you...Why do you get to choose? God.

JOHN

Brother William...

He slickly passes the Bible to William...Baptist cool style.

WILLIAM

Ezekiel 33:7 "So thou, son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth and warn them from me".

MRS. CRABTREE

I still don't see...

JOHN

June, We have been appointed the watchmen of this world. Watchmen to the house of Israel. Heaven, June. Israel was the promised land. And now? What is the promised land? June?

MRS. CRABTREE

Heaven?

JOHN

Exactly, June. Heaven. See, she's already thinking like The Almighty.

WILLIAM

Good job, June.

MRS. CRABTREE

I'm still a little confused...

(CONTINUED)

JOHN

If you can't see how that verse defines what we are and what we are supposed to do, June...

WILLIAM

Perhaps we were wrong in choosing you.

MRS. CRABTREE

No, I don't think you were wrong... Just give me a minute to take this all in. OK?

JOHN

Time is unfortunately of the essence here, June. Joe's death on top of Sam's accident, has put us in quite the pickle. If I may be so blunt: we're desperate.

MRS. CRABTREE

What exactly do I have to do?

JOHN

We set you up in a chamber.

MRS. CRABTREE

A chamber?

JOHN

In the basement. You'll be very comfortable there. Joe was. We bring your meals and mostly you have complete solitude to pass your judgments on humanity.

MRS. CRABTREE

My judgments.

JOHN

You also get to answer prayers...

MRS. CRABTREE

Do I come in once a day or something?

WILLIAM

Oh...no...

JOHN

June, it's a full-time position. You move in immediately.

MRS. CRABTREE

But when could I see my sister? My children?

JOHN

Well that's the beauty of it, June. You're God. You can see them every second of every day. Not just that, but you'll be able to protect them like you never could on your own. And fortune? You pretty much write their tickets if you want. A nice job for your son...

(CONTINUED)

MRS. CRABTREE

Chris.

JOHN

Chris. And your sister could live a long and painless life...This is all in your hands, June. Consider it a perk. What do you say? Should Brother William take you downstairs and get you started?

MRS. CRABTREE

NOW?

JOHN

Well, there is no better time.

WILLIAM

And plenty of work to be done.

MRS. CRABTREE

No. I'm sorry. I am deeply flattered by this offer but...no. I have to say no.

JOHN

June, I just can't accept that. I think I know you far better than that. Your faith is stronger than anyone I've seen. No, I think when it's all said and done...

WILLIAM

You'll do the right thing.

MRS. CRABTREE

I don't think that I would be able to...

WILLIAM

...If for nothing more than to assure Sam's rapid ascension.

He mimes drinking with his thumb.

MRS. CRABTREE

Sam?

WILLIAM

Glug glug.

A beat.

MRS. CRABTREE

I guess I could see him then?

JOHN

Of course you could. And your mother.

MRS. CRABTREE

Mommy?

WILLIAM

And Daddy...And Sparky the dog and anyone else and everyone else dead,
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
 living, or unborn...That's how it
 works, June.

MRS. CRABTREE
 I don't know what to say.

JOHN
 Say yes, June. Say yes. It's such
 a simple word. All that glory for
 just a simple word. All that glory.

Something changes in her.

MRS. CRABTREE
 Yes.

JOHN
 Hallelujah!! June, I am so very
 happy for you.

Her eyes gather confidence.

MRS. CRABTREE
 Yes.

WILLIAM
 Praise it be thy name. Praise it be
 thine name. June. Our Holy Father,
 June Crabtree.

And...vengeance.

MRS. CRABTREE
 Yes.

JOHN
 Brother William, please take Our new
 Father to his chamber.

William takes her by the arm and begins to lead her out.

She's a lot harder to lead than before.

MRS. CRABTREE
 Just a second boys. I have to
 question your loyalty.

JOHN
 Our loyalty?

MRS. CRABTREE
 You see, I know that you have a list
 in your desk drawer.

JOHN
 A list?

MRS. CRABTREE
 A list of names...other possible
 candidates for this job.

WILLIAM
 Yes. But that list is now, of
 course, void. Null and void.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. CRABTREE

Which makes me think of another list.
Of 10?

JOHN

Oh dear.

MRS. CRABTREE

Thou shalt have no other gods before
me. But you did boys, didn't you?
You had another god before me.

WILLIAM

Sam!

MRS. CRABTREE

Sam. See I was willing to overlook
Joe Phillips and anyone who took the
position before him. But that list,
boys; I just can't over look that.

JOHN

We are so sorry.

WILLIAM

More sorry than you can ever guess,
June.

MRS. CRABTREE

YOU SHALL NOT MISUSE THE NAME OF THE
LORD YOUR GOD. For I will not hold
anyone guiltless who misuses my name.
How many times today did you misuse
my name. You dare to call your Lord,
"June"?

WILLIAM

You asked us to call you...

JOHN

Don't blaspheme!!!!

MRS. CRABTREE

John, take William, whom you love
and go to the altar. Sacrifice him
there as a burnt offering with your
cross pen.

JOHN

Yes.

John takes William to the altar, pushes aside the offertory
plate, lays him on top of it and prepares to stab him.

WILLIAM

Wait...Isn't this a little silly?
We don't have sacrifices anymore...Not
since the New Testament.

MRS. CRABTREE

There is no New Testament, for my
son, Chris has not yet died for your
sins.

WILLIAM

Oh.

(CONTINUED)

John holds the pen high...

JOHN
Thy will is done.

He brings down the pen.

MRS. CRABTREE
Wait, do not lay a hand on the boy.

John stops. William exhales.

MRS. CRABTREE (CONT'D)
Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear me because you have not withheld me from Brother William...Your only Brother William. Look in the broom closet and you will find a ram. Sacrifice it instead of Brother William. And because you have not withheld your Brother William, your only Brother William, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.

JOHN
Thank you, Lord.

WILLIAM
What about me?

She helps him off the altar.

MRS. CRABTREE
You shall be Brother John's servant until the end of time; where you shall sit with him at my side in Heaven.

WILLIAM
Great. Praise Jesus.

JOHN
Who?

WILLIAM
Jesus.

JOHN
Who is that?

WILLIAM
Oh, no...He's nobody.

MRS. CRABTREE
Good. I'll be in my chamber.

WILLIAM
I'll show you where it is.

MRS. CRABTREE
I know where it is.

(CONTINUED)

With that, she turns and walks away...

The other two look at a statue of Jesus... They don't seem to recognize him.

FADE OUT