

INT. SEMINARY CLASSROOM BUDILING HALLWAY - MORNING

NOELLE (30's, fat, black, stylish...think Lizzo with more clothes) stands in the hallway of seminary. She looks down at her class schedule seeing that her Media and Modern Ministry class is meeting in room 203. She takes in the scene around her: all the door numbers, the people scrambling and rushing through the hallways. We hear the faint whisper of voices in the background. We can't quite hear what they're saying but, as we watch and listen, the whispers coalesce into a quiet melody. The melody builds as Noelle walks to a classroom door. As she reaches for the handle, we pull out to a wide shot of Noelle revealing the CHOIR (2 men, 3 women, diverse, wearing choir robes) standing behind her. They've been music we've been hearing.

CHOIR

(singing a loud soulful melody
a la the theme song to Good
Times)

Open the damn door.
Go in and sit down.
You're here now.
Stop fucking around.

NOELLE

Shhhhhh. Shit. Ok. Here we go.

Noelle enters the classroom with the choir trailing behind her humming and oooooing to the melody. It's a large lecture hall and Noelle chooses a seat at the end of a row. The choir continues to sing as they stand just behind her. She unpacks her laptop and notebooks, studying the others in the room. The individuals in the choir each mumble-sing one of the following little comments about what she's seeing.

CHOIR

1. Shit. Shit. Shit. Shit. Shit.
2. That girl's hair is green.
3. Did we turn off the stove?
4. Coffee. Need coffee.
5. God? What am I doing here?

PROFESSOR

Good morning everyone. Let's get started!

(CONTINUED)

NOELLE

(waves a hand at the choir)
Guys! Shut up. Geez.

Choir doesn't quiet but lowers in volume.

PROFESSOR

Welcome to the Media and Modern
Ministry seminar. I'm sure you've
already logged in to Blackboard and
had a look at the syllabus. As you
know, your grade this semester will
rely solely on the group project
that you must complete by the end
of term. You'll meet in your groups
at the end of the lecture. Please
turn your attention to the screen
and we'll get started.

The room goes dark and a video begins to play.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. SEMINARY CLASSROOM BUDILING HALLWAY - SAME

Professor raps up her lecture and the students start to
rearrange themselves into their small groups. Choir resumes
their observations and incessant chanting as Noelle and
Choir are waved over to a table by TEMPEST (African-American
or Afro-Latina woman, late 20's, appears to be a good church
girl and is a very proficient busy body).

CHOIR

1. Shit. Fuck. Shit. Fuck. Fuck.
2. Hey! That girl from the dorm!
3. Turned the stove off? Yes? No?
4. Why be awake without coffee?
5. God. Help me see. What am I
doing here?

NOELLE

(taking a deep breath)
Geez. Please. Guys, keep it down.
Hey Tempest.

(CONTINUED)

TEMPEST

Hey Neighbor! I didn't know you were in this class. How did you get in? It's usually for 2nd or 3rd year students.

NOELLE

I told you I'm a TV producer, right? The registrar arranged for me to take it because I already have a lot of experience in media. Wait. You're a first year too. How did you get in?

TEMPEST

I have my ways, girl. Hey Steven!

STEVEN (African-American man, handsome, charming, playa type, mid 30's) joins the two women. He hugs Tempest in greeting. She hugs him a little too tightly and for a little too long.

STEVEN

Tempest! Good to see you again, sis.

TEMPEST

Hey! Yeah. I haven't seen you since Sister Jenkins' home going service.

STEVEN

She was a good woman, God rest her soul. Um... who's your friend here?

TEMPEST

Oh! I'm sorry. This is Noelle. She's my dorm neighbor. She's a first year too.

Steven takes her hand, kisses it and hold on as he steps closer to her.

STEVEN

Welcome to Unity. Always nice to meet a fellow shepherd of God's people. And such a beautiful one, at that.

(CONTINUED)

CHOIR

Playa please!

NOELLE

Nice to meet you. Steven, was it?

STEVEN

(flirty in a gross ogling way)

At your service.

He's super corny. Noelle pulls her hand away like it's touched slime.

CHOIR

(sings in a round, ending in 3 part harmony)

Ew!

NOELLE

(rolling her eyes but trying to be polite)

Thanks. Hi.

The three of them are joined by (NINA, 20's, white, argumentative, passionate to the point of fanatical and waaaaaaaaay too extra) and ANUKTA (aka. ANU, Indian, gender non-conforming, early 30's, always mildly amused by everyone and everything). They are wrapping up an argument.

NINA

I don't understand why you're not pissed. She totally mis-gendered you! You have to standup for yourself!

ANUKTA

Nina. Chill. It was an accident. She didn't mean it.

NINA

But she didn't even apologize!

TEMPEST

What happened?

NINA

(suspicious of this person
interrupting their argument)

Who are you?

TEMPEST

(offended)

Hello to you too. I'm Tempest. This
is Noelle.

NINA

Aren't you a first year? I thought
this class was just for 2nd years!

ANUKTA

(amused and apologetic)

Who are you? The seminary course
police?

(to Noelle and Tempest)

What she meant was "Hi. Nice to
meet you."

TEMPEST

(still offended)

We got special permission, not that
it's anyone's business.

Noelle waves a hand at Anukta and Nina.

NOELLE

Hi. I'm Noelle. You are?

NINA

I'm Nina. She/her.

CHOIR

(in round)

SHE! HER! HE! Him! They! Them!

NOELLE

Uh... I'm She/her, too, yeah.

(to Anukta)

And you are...?

ANUKTA

Anukta. Anu.

(CONTINUED)

NOELLE

So what happened? Are you ok?

ANUKTA

Yeah. Nina's made because people who knew me last year are still adjusting. I used to be a she/her and now I'm they/them. It's just less confusing for me than gendered pronouns.

STEVEN

But it's more confusing for everyone else.

CHOIR

(singing)

He's a Dickhead.
And an Asshat.
Punch him in the balls.
Saying shit like that.

NINA

You're such a dickhead!

Noelle nods in agreement but jumps in to take control before the group ends up throwing hands.

NOELLE

OK. Let's focus. What topic should we cover in our project? I mean, we're already on it so, why not talk about gender identity? It's important. It's timely. People are curious and it's an area that could always use more coverage. We could do a little documentary or research gender politics in the bible.

Everyone is quiet, clearly uncomfortable.

CHOIR

(a reggae melody)

Shit. You said the wrong thing.
Again. Again. You always be saying the wrong thing. OOOOOOO. The wrong thing.

NOELLE

What's up? What did I say?

TEMPEST

Maybe we should chose another
topic? Something
less...inflammatory?

NINA

Inflammatory? Other's people's
right to declare their own gender
identity is only inflammatory to
republicans, misogynist and white
gay guys who vote republican
because they're misogynist.

ANUKTA

Nina. Don't start.

NINA

No. They need to learn. It's not
ok. I know the "black church" is
still homophobic and sexist af and
that's the way Stevo and little
miss Proverbs 31 here like it.

Noelle rolls her eyes watching this Nina chick is doing THE
most. She ain't wrong but she must be the poster child for
overreacting.

CHOIR

(excitedly)

Drama! High drama!
They all up on this drama!
Mama! Drama!

STEVEN

Look, Nina. Cast all the stones you
want. I can admit that the black
church has some work to do but so
does the white church. I'm open to
learning something new.

(grinning like a fool)

And you know I like to keep the
ladies happy.

(CONTINUED)

NINA

Ladies!?!? You're such an...

Noelle interrupts before Nina can get revved up.

NOELLE

(to Anu)

Ann. Annie? I'm sorry. What was your name again?

ANUKTA

Anu is fine.

NOELLE

Sorry. thanks. Anu, what do you think? Would this topic be ok with you or should we do something less personal? Less... I don't know...

ANUKTA

(all fake drama and tears)

Dreadfully painful? Oh my god, I can't take it! Change the subject! I'm too delicate.

Anukta fake faints on Noelle's shoulder, breaking the tension and making everyone smile.

ANUKTA

Hell, yeah, kiddies! Let's talk gender. Why the fuck not? You gender normies could use a little shake up!

CHOIR

(a chant like Ciara's "Level up")

Shake it up! Shake it up! Shake it up!

NOELLE

OK! Everyone cool with that?

Noelle does a visual check-in with each person in the group. As she does so, the Choir sings Noelle's harsh judgement about each person.

CHOIR

(about Nina)

White feminists make me itch.

(about Steven)

Pee pee head of the patriarchy.

(about Tempest)

Is she silly or thirsty or just
plain dumb?

When Noelle looks at Anukta, the Choir quiets and sings a sweeter, more compassionate and loving melody. Noelle feels...something when she looks at Anu. She sees something special that she likes but isn't sure what it is.

CHOIR

(about Anukta)

And you. What is it about you? You.

Anu. You.

Noelle pulls her attention back to the rest of the group.

NOELLE

So, we're agreed. We'll focus on
gender for our project?

The group looks around at each other and all nod in agreement. In the background, the professor announces that class is over. The group starts to pack up their belongings. Noelle is proud of herself. Not a bad first day of seminary.

CHOIR

(Hamilton-style rap)

Yeah, I'm good.

Already running this.

Damn, I'm a bad boss bitch.

They say their goodbyes. Tempest again hugs Steven too hard and too long. He struggles to extricate himself from her embrace.

STEVEN

When do you ladies want to meet
again?

NINA

Who are you calling "lady?"

(CONTINUED)

ANUKTA
(exasperated)
Nina.

Steven starts to back away with hands up. Nina follows him, starting on a rant about calling women "ladies." Anu follows behind them but looks back at Noelle and gives her a smile and a wave. Noelle watches them go.

CHOIR
(same melody as last Anu
thought)
Shit. Is this a love story?
Why does that worry me?
What is it about you?
You. Anu. Anu.

Tempest elbows Noelle to get her attention.

TEMPEST
Wanna get lunch?

NOELLE
Naw. I gotta find a job. Is there,
like, a campus job board or
something?

TEMPEST
Oh! The Pub is hiring. I saw a
flier!

NOELLE
Cool. I used to tend bar. Is it
close by?

TEMPEST
It's upstairs.

NOELLE
Wait. The Pub is on campus? The
seminary has a bar?

TEMPEST
I know. It's crazy right? Maybe
it's the Lord's way of testing us.

NOELLE

Maybe. But, hey, Jesus drank wine.

TEMPEST

Noelle! That's blasphemy.

NOELLE

(laughing)

Sorry. Take me to this den of iniquity please.

TEMPEST

(scolding but giggling by the end)

You laugh but it won't be funny when you're burning in hell.

Noelle laughs as they head toward the Pub, the choir singing an upbeat little ditty as they go.

CHOIR

Jesus turned water into wine.
Love a guy who loves his drink.
Jesus on that turn up.
Drink up.
Jesus get us turnt up.

Nina enters the empty pub. She looks around and reads the signs taking in the vibe. The Pub looks a little like a chapel with stained glass windows and religious décor. But alongside there are the usual Pub touches as well - jukebox, darts board, pool table, old fashioned pictures of people drinking and partying. She gets engrossed studying a painting. She hears a noise and turns around to see DOUG (Latino or Brazilian man, early 40's, oozes good-naturedness, flirty & wise) watching her.

DOUG

Good day to you. Welcome to The Pub but we're closed, so...

NOELLE

Oh, yeah. Hi. Sorry. I'm here for... I wanted to... Are you hiring?

DOUG

Ah. Yes. I am hiring. Just need some help serving drinks, cleaning up, that kind of thing. You ever work in a bar before?

NOELLE

Yes. I bartended my way through journalism school.

DOUG

Journalist, huh? Doing an in-depth investigative report on the secret lives of seminarians?

NOELLE

Ha. Not.

(looking around)

This place is cool but, I have to say, I didn't expect a seminary to have a bar in it.

DOUG

No? Even Jesus drank wine!

NOELLE

I just said the same thing!

Doug gestures for Noelle to join him at the bar. He pulls out 2 bottles of wine. He holds them both up as if to ask Noelle which she'd prefer. She points to the red. He fills two glasses and hands one to Noelle.

DOUG

So, boozy clergy is a shock. What else? How are you finding seminary so far?

NOELLE

Honestly, it's not what I expected. These people. The school. I thought it would be more...mystical, more spiritual.

DOUG

You were expecting what? Gregorian chant?

NOELLE

No. But, kinda, yeah.

DOUG

Oh, I do so love a seminary virgin!

NOELLE

Excuse me!

DOUG

I love how cute you are in the beginning. You come in all holy ghost filled and fire baptized ready to get your Jesus juices shaking.

CHOIR

Jesus Juice! Oooooooooo!

NOELLE

Hardly. This whole seminary things wasn't my idea.

DOUG

No? What happened? Get a visit from an angel? Burning bush speak to you? How did the our Lord get you in this much trouble?

NOELLE

Trouble? I'm in trouble? Wow. That's comforting.

DOUG

My ability to comfort is what made me a fucking awesome priest.

NOELLE

You're a priest?

DOUG

Was.

NOELLE

And now you serve drinks to clergy in training? How did that career change happen?

DOUG

No. Nope. I asked you first. You tell me your story. I decide if it qualifies you to serve drinks in my bar and then, some day, when you've earned it, I'll tell you my story - how I feel from grace, left the priesthood and became the sad Sam Malone of a seminary pub.

NOELLE

Oh my God, that's freaking poetry. You should write. Do you write? Please tell me you write!

DOUG

Don't try to distract me with flattery. Spill!

Noelle takes a moment to center herself. She looks over her shoulder at the choir. They're quiet but paying close attention, following the conversation. Noelle nods at them

(CONTINUED)

before turning back to Doug who hasn't noticed any of this. He refills her wine glass. They're drinking a lot and fast. From a close up on Noelle, we see her story unfold visually as she recounts it to Doug.

NOELLE

Last year I got in an accident at work. I was a TV producer on a morning talk show. It was a crazy day. Delilah Check was the guest. You know her?

DOUG

Televangelist, right? I always think of her as the Nancy Grace of Sunday mornings.

INT. TV STUDIO HALLWAY - MORNING

2

We see a bustling studio hallway. There are tons of people moving about moving set pieces, rushing to and fro. There's a large choir in the crowd. They're wearing gold lame and white choir robes that are flamboyant and very different from Noelle's choir robes which are burgundy. They're rehearsing in the background as the action unfolds. We see DELILA CHECK (white woman, mid-50's with a big blond bouffant of hair...not so much Tammy Faye as Nancy Grace with with lots of fold jewelry and a Jesusy vibe) ordering people around, talking on a phone and channeling all the diva of divinity she can muster.

NOELLE

Yes. Her. So, she shows up that morning with tons of people, sets, wardrobe and an entire film crew. It was bedlam! Anyhow, there was so much going on and I somehow ended up walking in to one her ridiculous set pieces. Giant crucifix knocked me unconscious.

DOUG

Damn!

NOELLE

Yeah. Apparently, I was only out for a few seconds but the network insisted that I go to the ER. I felt fine, though. I didn't even have a concussion. So, they sent me home and after that, like, that night, in fact, the choir came.

INT. THE PUB - AFTERNOON

3

Doug refills Noelle's wine glass. She takes a very large swallow.

DOUG

The choir?

NOELLE

Yeah.

INT. NOELLE'S OLD APARTMENT BEDROOM - 3 AM.

4

We see Noelle asleep in bed. There's some shuffling in her room. You can hear people whispering. Someone stubs their toe and says ouch. Noelle sits up suddenly in bed.

NOELLE

Who's there?

No one answers. Noelle waits for a moment, listening. She decides she must have been dreaming and then rolls over to go back to bed. Then we hear the quiet beginnings of a chorus singing.

CHOIR

Oooh oooh oooh

Noelle hears it, springs up and turns on the light. There's a small choir of 5 standing in her bedroom. She screams and starts throwing stuff at them but the stuff flies right through them. They're not corporeal. She thinks maybe she's asleep but...

CHOIR (cont'd)

(to the tune of "yes
lord...from the bottom of my
heart to the depths of my

soul...)
 Yes, girl.
 Yes, girl.
 We've been sent to sing you
 through.
 Throughout all the things you
 doooooo.
 Yes, girl.
 Completely yes!
 We're you're new friends.

NOELLE

What in the actual fuck!?

Choir does a short number about how they were sent from God to see to it that she follows her calling, doesn't get off the path and give her good, heavenly advice. She's got a special calling. God's got a special plan for Noelle and they're going to help her achieve it. (song lyrics need to be written)

INT. THE PUB - AFTERNOON

5

Noelle continues her story back in the present with Doug as she takes heavy sips of her wine.

DOUG

So, you see and hear a choir...

NOELLE

A gospel choir.

DOUG

Singing to you about? What? What's happening around you?

NOELLE

Or whatever I'm thinking or feeling. Sometimes they sing their opinions...tell me things about people. Things that have happened to them. Sometimes, things that haven't happened yet.

DOUG

Yet? The gospel choir in your head tells you the future?

(CONTINUED)

NOELLE

Sometimes.

Doug fills Noelle's glass again.

DOUG

Wow. That's...

NOELLE

Crazy, right? You think I'm crazy.

DOUG

No. Yeah. I don't know. You're talking to a former Catholic priest. I have a high tolerance for spiritually fueled insanity so... Maybe it's not that weird. Church history is full of Christian mystics who saw and heard angels, found messages in plants and weather and nature. Some heard music. Why can't you be hearing a choir singings God's will for you?

NOELLE

Well, for one thing, I don't actually believe in God's will. I mean, I don't even know if I believe in God. I mean, I used to. When I was a younger. But churches are...

DOUG

Theological Death Traps of Fuckery and Fear?

NOELLE

Wow. Yeah. I guess a former Catholic priest would know. I'm a preacher's kid and, well, PK's... We see it all. Church kinda ruined God for me a long time ago.

The both pause for a moment on that, shaking their heads, both remembering their own struggles with church people and God. They share a look, raise their glasses, clink them together and then both drain their glasses empty. Doug opens

(CONTINUED)

another bottle.

DOUG

So, you're not sure you believe in God so... Why are you in seminary?

NOELLE

Fuck if I know. I... The choir started singing about my purpose in life and having a calling and a vocation and following my path. It was all Eckhardt Tolle meets Moses smothered in Oprahisms. Like, Super Soul Sunday on speed.

Doug finds this hilarious and refills both of their glasses, encouraging her to continue through his mirth.

NOELLE

Then I started meeting strange people and seeing...signs, I guess you could call them.

DOUG

Signs? Such as?

Again, we see a montage of flashbacks with their dialogue in VO.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

6

From her car, Noelle sees what she describes below.

NOELLE (V.O.)

Like, I started seeing clergy everywhere. In their little white collars and wearing ceremonial sashes and robes and shit...

DOUG (V.O.)

Vestments.

NOELLE (V.O.)

Yeah. Just everywhere. It was like, everywhere I went, everyone was wearing vestments.

We see people walking down a busy street. Dozens of people.

(CONTINUED)

All dressed in an assortment of clergy vestments - everything from monk to preacher to pope gear.

INT. BACKSEAT OF NOELLE'S CAR

7

NOELLE (V.O.)

And then, there were the brochures.

We see a pile of brochures land on the back seat.

NOELLE (V.O.) (cont'd)

And books...

A stack of books land in the back seat.

NOELLE (V.O.)

And even a few billboards.

WHIP PAN TO A BILLBOARD SEEN FROM NOELLE'S VANTAGE POINT IN THE CAR.

The billboard reads: Are you preparing for Jesus to return?

NOELLE (V.O.)

And they were directed at me.

Directly. Like, my name was on that shit. You know those billboards that say, "Are you preparing for Jesus' return?" Well, I'd see those but my name would be on them.

Noelle's name appears on the in fancy font as though someone were writing it. Her name is animated with glitter falling from it.

INT. THE PUB - LATE AFTERNOON

8

Back in the pub, the light is starting to change. Evening is coming but Doug is totally entrhalled by this story.

DOUG

Wow. Talking about having your name writ large!

NOELLE

Yeah. And then I got an acceptance letter to seminary.

DOUG

Congratulations?

NOELLE

Thanks? I don't know. I mean, I never even applied to seminary! I just got accepted. With a full scholarship! And I thought it was a gag or, like, some new Nigerian prince scheme trying to get my social security and credit card information. And then the choir...

DOUG

What did the choir say?

NOELLE

The choir got louder and louder. The more I tried to ignore them, the louder they got. And they were confusing. It was like they didn't even agree amongst themselves about what I should do. So there was a like a whole debate in my head - in the choir, musically - about whether or not I should come here.

INT. NOELLE'S OLD APARTMENT - EVENING

9

Noelle is in her apartment doing various chores - cooking, folding laundry, unpacking groceries. All the while, the choir is having a debate amongst themselves - to music, a little like The Confrontation from Lez Miz. Noelle is trying to ignore them but even when she turns on the vacuum, the choir just gets louder so they can be heard. (Need to write this dialogue out.)

DOUG

But you're here. So, what made you come? How did the choir decide?

NOELLE

They didn't, really. I did. I guess. There's this one choir member. I don't know if they have names. Sometimes, I can only hear them and not see them, their faces.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NOELLE (cont'd)

But there is this one soprano voice. It's so beautiful. So clear. And she, that voice feels... special.

DOUG

Yes. Every choir has to have a diva. What did she say?

NOELLE

Weel, she insisted. It wasn't like she used force or even The Force like in Star Wars. She just... was so clear. And so sure. And so... Right. I don't know. She always feels right about whatever is happening, whatever they're saying or I'm feeling. She is always so confident. She decided that seminary was my calling and I just... found myself agreeing.

DOUG

(astounded and a little in awe)

Daaaaaaaaaaaaamn.

NOELLE

Yeah. And then...

INT. TV STUDIO HALLWAY - MORNING

10

We see Noelle being escorted from the studio by security.

NOELLE

I lost my job.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE OF NOELLE'S OLD APARTMENT

11

We see Noelle walk up to her apartment door, arms full of groceries, to see that there is an eviction notice on her door. All the doors, actually. The building is being condemned.

NOELLE

And I got evicted from my apartment.

INT. THE PUB - EVENING

12

Back in the present, Noelle and Doug at the bar.

NOELLE

I really didn't have anywhere else to go. That all happened just in time to move in and start classes here, so I just...came. And, now I'm here.

DOUG

Damn! You are a full on, bona fide mystic. So, do you still hear the choir.

(looking around)

Are they here now?

NOELLE

Yeah. They're here. Quiet, though. For once.

DOUG

Daaaaaaaaaaaaaaamn. Hey y'all.

(he waves at the choir but in the wrong direction cuz he can't see them)

NOELLE

So of course you're in seminary. And you're going to stay, right? Otherwise the voices will get you.
(Like a ghost.)

Oooooooooo.

NOELLE

You're a dork. And they're not voices. Don't call them that. I'm not crazy. I don't think. They're a choir. God. I can't believe I told you all of this. I haven't told anyone else.

DOUG

Well, that seals it then. I was gonna offer the job anyway - cuz you can handle your wine - but now

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DOUG (cont'd)

that you've made me your BFF --

NOELLE

You think you're my BFF now?

DOUG

Obvi. Girl. You gotta choir in your head and a fascinating story. You're just my kind of crazy. Plus, we're about to open and I really need help. First week of classes is always a party...until the syllabi are all distributed and the kids find out how much work they have to do.

NOELLE

Seminary is going to be really hard, isn't' it?

DOUG

Probably not for you. It can't hurt to have a chorus on angels singing the answers to test questions in your ear.

NOELLE

Wanna bet?

Doug gets up to open the door to the pub. Folks have apparently been waiting for it to open because students start pouring in. They're rowdy and cheery and super diverse. There's every ethnicity and religion. It quickly becomes a fun scene.

DOUG

It's now or never, Mahalia Jackson.

Doug throws a towel at her.

NOELLE

(laughing and catching the towel)

Sure. I'll take the job, bestie.

INT. THE PUB - EVENING

The Pub is in full swing and Noelle (now drunk) is waiting tables. She spies three of her Media and Modern Ministry group members (Steven, Lina and Tempest) at one table. They spot her and wave her over. She walks into the middle of a very heated discussion - one that Lina and Steven have obviously been having for a long time. They fight like Felix and Oscar - bickering & insults with friendship beneath.

LINA

...Don't be ridiculous! The science makes it abundantly clear! You cannot just clown on the scientific method for the sake of convenience!

STEVEN

It's not convenience. It's art. And the science isn't the most significant --

LINA

-- Yes it is! That's why you evangelicals are going to kill the planet! SCIENCE MATTERS! We can't live on fairy tales and light tricks!

STEVEN

No one is suggesting that we try to live on fairy tales. Don't be so hyperbolic. It's not about science. It's philosophy AND it's not that serious, Looney Lina!

NOELLE

What are you guys arguing about?

STEVEN

Your girl here--

LINA

I AM NOT A GIRL! I AM A WOMAN!

STEVEN

Oh, right. Sure. My bad, baby girl.

LINA

You're such an asshole. Why am I even friends with you!?

STEVEN

You can't help who you love. Isn't that what you LGBTLMNOPQ-ers say all the time?

(he gives Lina a half hug.)

Plus, I'm irresistible.

LINA

You're a skunk. You're the Pepe Le'Pew of seminary. YOU STINK OF PATRIARCHY!

The entire table erupts in laughter. The tension wasn't real. The fight wasn't real. They're just messing with each other. Idiots.

NOELLE

Y'all are all stupid as fuck. What can I get you to drink?

TEMPEST

OH! You got the job! God is good!

NOELLE

Yeah. Doug is cool. He gave me wine and I need the money so...

STEVEN

So, now that you work here, we getting a group discount on dem dranks, beautiful Noelle?

LINA

(making a jerk off hand motion)

Give it a rest, Hand Solo. No one wants to take a ride in the busted hoopti you call the Millennium Falcon.

STEVEN

See. You can't even have a civilized Wars vs. Trek debate without resorting to insults.

NOELLE

Oh wow. This whole argument is about Star Wars?

LINA

This whole argument is about why Star Trek is the better universe. Prime Directive. No poverty. Equality. Justice for all. No evil men in black

trying to control the universe. It's totally revolutionary. It's art that fights the status quo by offering us a future where peace is possible instead of perpetuating the continued oppression of the Other.

STEVEN

Are you kidding me? Star Wars is a treatise on humanity's moral conflict. It's not as simple as Trek future is positive and Wars is negative. It's a deep dive on what drives us to be what we are. It's reason and passion and the exploration of the ontological on a galactic scale. Plus, Lina-my-lezzi-love, just so you know, Wars takes place "a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away." It's a stage of history where humanity is still trying fight our own demons - socially and personally.

Noelle has been listening to this whole back and forth like they've all lost their minds. She looks over to the choir and sees that they too are divided on the issue. Two of the 5 choir members are holding light sabers, two are giving the Vulcan salute and the last choir member is wearing the Harry Potter Sorting Hat, a Gryffindor scarf and waving a wand. They sing simultaneously:

CHOIR 1	CHOIR 2 & 3
Imperio! Imperio! Imperio!	The Force will be with you, always.

CHOIR 3 & 4
Live Long and Prosper.

Noelle smiles at them and shakes her head. She turns back to her friends.

NOELLE
Yeah. Um... Y'all want drinks or not?

LINA
Of course we do. Steven's buying.

STEVEN
Only if Noelle's joining us and hooking us up with the employee discount.

NOELLE

I'm already pretty lit so...let me get through my first shift before I start stealing drinks for friends. Where's Anukta tonight?

TEMPEST

She --

LINA

THEY! Geez!

TEMPEST

THEY had a hot date tonight.

Noelle has...feelings about Anu being on a date but she's drunk so...

NOELLE

(whining)

Oh, really. With who?

TEMPEST

With a girl!

LINA

(to Tempest)

Come on, Churchina. Can you at least make an attempt at woke-ed-ness?

TEMPEST

I'm woke. The pronoun thing is just hard to remember. And weird.

LINA

It's not weird...

While Lina blabs on in Tempest's general direction, Noelle rolls her eyes and walks back to the bar. She pulls her phone out of her back pocket and we see her start a text to Anukta. Steven walks up to Noelle and taps her shoulder.

STEVEN

So, what have YOU been drinking tonight?

NOELLE

(putting her phone back in her pocket)

Wine. But I'm done for the night. Went through two bottles with Doug. I'm not

even sure how I'm still standing.

STEVEN

Well, you hold your wine as well as you hold your beautiful self.

CHOIR

(starts a low hum a la an old Negro spiritual)

Oooooooooooooo.

NOELLE

Come on, dude. That shit can't possibly work on any woman with sense.

STEVEN

(laughing)

Lina thinks I'm a player and I like to mess with her. She's so easily riled up.

NOELLE

If you say so.

STEVEN

(getting serious)

I'm just... Hey. Real talk: I'd like to get to know you. When I'm not playing Evil Patriarchy Man for Lina, I'm actually a nice guy.

NOELLE

Mmmmmmm hmmmmmm. Let you tell it.

STEVEN

Yeah. Let me tell you. You're cute. You're smart. You're funny.

NOELLE

(not moved)

Thank you.

STEVEN

(laughing)

OK. Fine. Obviously, you're not checking for me. So, what, are you gay?

NOELLE

(in awe of his arrogance)

Wow. So, if I don't fall at your feet

aching with the desire to suck your dick cuz you complimented me, I must be gay? Is that how that works?

Steven shrugs like, "If the shoe fits...."

CHOIR

Ain't this about a bitch? This fool coming at you like this. He's kinda cute but damn so what? His big mouth might just get him cut.

Noelle sees that Doug has set a tray of beers on the counter. Noelle picks it up and shoves it into Steven's hands.

NOELLE

Make yourself useful and take this to the group, please.

STEVEN

This isn't over, Sister Noelle. I'll win you over yet.

Noelle shakes her head. He's amusing. A pig, but an amusing one. And cute. It's only the first day of seminary. Noelle's dealt with worse from guys on TV and film sets. She playfully brushes him off.

NOELLE

You'll win these hands if you don't get out my face.

STEVEN

Ooooooo! And she's feisty too. Nice.

Steven walks back to the table and Noelle watches him go before getting back to work.

INT. THE PUB - LATE NIGHT

We see a short montage of Noelle working the room, serving drinks. She's having a blast! She waits on other tables but visits with her friends a lot - doing shots, laughing and toasting to Vulcans, Hogwarts and The Force.

The night is wrapping up and people in the bar dwindles down to this small group. Doug walks over the the table where Noelle is now sitting with her friends, totally drunk. He gives Steven a bro-hug/slap on the back and starts clearing glasses.

DOUG

Alright you heathens. The Pub is closed. Get the fuck out.

STEVEN

Doug, my man. You Catholics sure do know how to run a bar, bro.

DOUG

We're a spiritually boozy tradition. Transubstantiation requires wine at minimum.

LINA

Cannibalism too much to handle unless you're drunk on Jesus' blood or trying to survive a plane crash?

DOUG

Exactly.

NOELLE

Cannibalism? What?! Oh God. I'm too drunk to understand.

STEVEN

Let's get you home, little lady.

TEMPEST

I'll help you. We're dorm buddies.

STEVEN

I can always count on your support, Tempest. Such a good girl.

LINA

She's not a girl you fucker!

They all stumble out of the Pub together.

INT. NOELLE'S DORM ROOM

Back at Noelle and Tempest's dorm, Steven and Tempest help a very drunk Noelle get in to her dorm room. The choir wanders in behind them. Choir 1 is totally sober, silently watching the proceedings with distain. Choir 2 & 3 are both drunk off their asses and singing random bits of sexually explicit R & B songs. Choir 4 & 5 are helping Choir 2 & 3 stay upright. Noelle is singing along with Choir 2 & 3.

NOELLE

Yeah! That's my jam! I don't see
nothing wrong with a little bump and
grind.

Noelle tries to plant a kiss on Steven's mouth. It's
aggressive and sloppy.

STEVEN

Whoa. Slow your roll, honey. Tempest,
get her shoes off.

TEMPEST

Maybe you should go. I think I got
this.

NOELLE

You don't got nothing.

NOELLE & CHOIR 2 & 3

I don't think you ready for this
jelly.

NOELLE

YOU CAN'T HANDLE THE TRUFE!

TEMPEST

Noelle! You need to settle down.
You're acting crazy.

Tempest tries to lead Noelle to her bed. Noelle is still
aggressively trying to get at Steven.

NOELLE & CHOIR 2 & 3

(dancing a drunk, sexy dance)

Looking so crazy

Your love got me looking

Got me looking so crazy

Your loooooooooooooove

STEVEN

Yeah. I'm gonna go.

NOELLE

Nooooooo! Wait. Steven. STEVEN!

STEVEN

What Noelle?

NOELLE

My body too bootylicious for you,
Stevie? HA!

Noelle tries to pull him to her bed. The choir is still singing drunkenly - except Choir 1 who is quiet and not happy. Steven is trying extricate himself from Noelle and Tempest is trying to get Noelle to settle. Noelle slaps at Tempest's hands and pushes her away.

NOELLE

Tempest. Tempest is a storm.
Teeeeeeeeempeeeeeest. Tempest Bledsoe.
VANESSA! VANESSA HUXTABLE! Go home
Vanessa. You're cock blocking me.

Tempest looks devastated. She looks from Noelle to Steven with tears welling in her eyes. She runs from the room.

NOELLE

Good! Now, come over here, Preacher
Playa Boy.

STEVEN

Noelle, why don't you just chill,
alright? Much as I want to, ya
know...know you better, you're too
drunk.

NOELLE

You too gentlemanly. Too Christiany
for me. I knew you was all talk.

Steven leads her to her bed to get her to sit.

STEVEN

Yep. That's right. I'm all talk. You
just lay down and talk yourself to
sleep.

Noelle starts to kiss Steven again and pulls him on top of her on the bed, reaching for his junk. He resists and tries to pull away at first but then he sinks in to it.

Suddenly, Choir 1 sings a very high pitched note and keeps singing it (think Phantom of the Opera song). Choir 1's note continues and gets higher and higher until it becomes so loud and so high that it hurts Noelle's ear. Noelle pushes Steven away, jumps up and barfs in a trash can. Steven tries to help her a little but she pushes him away and tells him to get out.

NOELLE

Get the fuck out. Please. Shit. I'm
sorry. Please. Go. Oh, shit.

Steven pauses for a second to make sure Noelle is ok and then leaves the room. Noelle watches him go and then turns to the Choir. She locks eyes with Choir 1 (Soprano). Noelle's eyes well up with tears. She breaks eye contact and then climbs in to bed.

BLACK OUT.

EXT. SEMINARY QUAD - THE NEXT MORNING

Tempest is standing outside of the building, impatiently waiting for Noelle. Noelle walks out into the sunshine wearing dark glasses, clearly hung over. She stops short when she's Tempest.

NOELLE

Shit. Tempest. God. I was a full on
shit show last night. I'm so sorry.
Are you ok?

Tempest shrugs her shoulders and pulls Noelle along to start their walk.

TEMPEST

Well, your behavior last night is why
seminary's shouldn't have bars.

NOELLE

Yeah. Maybe. But, for real. I *am*
sorry. I was an ass.

TEMPEST

I'm surprised you even remember what
you did. You were a mess.

CHOIR

(singing)

God bless this mess.

NOELLE

Yeah. I am blessed with the ability to
remember *all* of my drunken escapades.
It's terrible. I can't even believe I
went so hard last night.

TEMPEST

Well, hopefully you'll learn from this

and not let your new job at the Pub
turn you in to a drunken slut.

NOELLE

Ha. Ok. Tell me how you really feel.

There's an awkward silence. Tempest stops their walk and
faces Noelle.

TEMPEST

I will... tell you how I feel, I mean.

NOELLE

Ok. I'm listening.

TEMPEST

I know everyone thinks I'm just a
goody goody church girl looking for a
husband. And that's fine cuz,
honestly, it's true. I *do* want to get
married. To a man of God. A minister.
It's what I've always wanted. It's my
calling. But not just any minister,
Noelle.

NOELLE

(suddenly getting it)

Oh. OH! Oh, God. I'm sorry. Steven.
You're into Steven? Really?

TEMPEST

Yes. I know he seems like an arrogant,
womanizing jerk sometimes but he's a
really good man. A good man of God. He
just needs a helpmeet.

NOELLE

A Proverbs 31 woman?

TEMPEST

Yes.

NOELLE

So, is that why you came to seminary?
To find a preacher husband? Like
Steven?

TEMPEST

It's my calling.

CHOIR
(from Bagdad Cafe)

IIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII am calling you. Can
you hear me?

NOELLE
Ok. I can get with that. And, I
don't... I'm not, like, in to him or
anything. I'll steer clear of Steven.

TEMPEST
Thank you.

EXT. SEMINARY QUAD - CONTINUOUS

Noelle and Tempest get to a shady part of the quad and join
their friends Steven, Lina and Anukta who are sitting on a
blanket. Steven stands up and greets them with a a big grin.

STEVEN
The dead has arisen!

NOELLE
Don't start. Please. I'm too hungover.
And, also, I'm sorry. So, just... ya
know. Let it lie. Please.

STEVEN
Let is lie?! Are you kidding? No way!
This is too good.

ANUKTA
What happened?

NOELLE, STEVEN AND TEMPEST
NOTHING.

LINA
(suspicious)
Yeah. Sure. Spill. What?

NOELLE
ANU! How was your date?

TEMPEST
Yeah. How was your date with THE GIRL?

LINA
She's not a girl. She's a woman and do
not even start on your gender

normative nonsense.

STEVEN

Here we go!

LINA

NO! I mean it. You all have to get better at...

As Lina starts on another one of her rants, Noelle takes a seat on the blanket next to Anu. Steven walks over to Tempest. He looks her in the eye, winks at her and gently chucks her under the chin. Tempest smiles back shyly. He takes her hand and leads her to the other side of the blanket, inviting her to sit next to him.

STEVEN

Dang, Lina. Alright! We got it!

LINA

No, you all claim to be an ally but --

ANUKTA

LINA! Shut the fuck up.

(softening)

You're my favorite ally but, for reals. Chill.

LINA

REALLY!?!?! OH MY GOD! I can't believe you're taking their side...

As Lina continues her rant and the rest of the group chimes in to argue, Noelle settles in and watches her new friends. She is amused and also excited. She's taking in her new life with good humor and a little anxiety. This is kinda cool.

Noelle spends a moment watching each person in turn - the camera pans around in a complete circle and we get a shot each of them being oh-so-very "themselves." We hear the choir humming and oooooing in the background.

When the camera gets back around to Noelle, it pulls out to show the 5 choir members just over her shoulder. Noelle turns to look in their direction. She smiles a little, frowns a little, shakes her head, and takes a breath. As she looks at them, Noelle catches the eye of Doug who is walking toward the group. He waves to her and she waves him over to the group. He sits down. We end on a wide shot of Noelle laughing with her friends, Choir singing behind her to an upbeat melody.

FADE TO BLACK