

Right Where I Belong

by John Coper

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GENRE: Drama

SYNOPSIS: A woman who wants to serve others nearly misses a chance to serve a friend in need because she's distracted by a "bigger" cause.

TIME: 5 minutes

CAST BREAKDOWN: 2M, 1F

THEME: Serving

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Esther 4:14

CHURCH YEAR SEASON: Any

SUGGESTED USE: Sermon Illustration, Women's Ministry

CHARACTERS:

ERICA and CASIE—co-workers in an office

PROPS: Office furnishings and equipment

COSTUMES: Work clothes

SOUND: Two wireless microphone (optional)

LIGHTING: General stage

SETTING: An office

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DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Living in oblivion

Our heroine is oblivious to her co-worker's need, and only half listening for most of the scene. This inattention is important for the final 'hook' of the scene, as Erica realizes where her attention should have been all along, so take care to set it up right. It isn't of course that Erica lacks compassion—quite the contrary—she's just got her mind on other things, and everything from her delivery of lines to her body language should demonstrate this loud and clear. It is only as the scene reaches its conclusion that she 'wakes up' and realizes what (if you've done your job right) the audience has already gotten.

Lost in the shuffle

Some props are more important than others. A lot of handheld items—phones, purses, ink pens, etc.—don't really tell us anything vital about the character or move the story forward, they're just a necessary piece of set dressing or costuming. Certain other props, however, have huge significance to either the character or the scene; these are sometimes referred to as "flags", as they're kind of waving a banner, directing the audience's attention to something critical.

As innocuous as it may seem, the pledge sheet in Erica's hand at the start of the scene is just such a flag. It pretty much epitomizes her hopes and dreams, and as such, should be given special attention from a directing standpoint. It might help to make the pledge sheet a specific color—goldenrod, for example—to visually set it apart from all of the other papers on her desk. Then take note of where it starts and where it goes—from Erica's hand to the desk to Casie's hand and then...? Does Erica pick it back up for her call to Gail, then set it down with meaning, giving us a visual symbol of what's happening internally?

Possibly. There are lots of options. But it's always

wise to look for physical cues that help 'sell' the emotional ones. These little signs may not even be consciously recognized by the audience, but they go a long way toward providing a deep rich scene that the audience 'gets', even if they don't fully know why.

Milking it

Casie's having a rough time, but one of the endearing things about her is how remarkably composed she is about it. She's so clearly not looking for pity that we naturally want to extend her some. Take care to maintain this in your actress' portrayal of the character—if she suddenly turns weepy or morose, it runs the danger of seeming campy and contrived. The opposite extreme is of course also to be avoided—she shouldn't seem so casual about her crumbling marriage that we imagine she doesn't care—but a little goes a long way when it comes to portraying deep emotion. The fact that she's still wearing the wedding ring, for example, speaks volumes without the need for a massive breakdown.