

RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME

by JOHN COSPER

GENRE: Comedy

SYNOPSIS: A woman recounts incidents from her past when she should have stood up to the people she loved.

TIME: Under 5 minutes

CAST BREAKDOWN: 1

TOPIC: Christian Living

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Matthew 16:23

CHURCH YEAR SEASON: Any

SUGGESTED USE: Sermon Starter

CHARACTERS: DENISE

PROPS: None

COSTUMES: Modern dress

SOUND: One wireless microphone

LIGHTING: General stage

SETTING: Unspecified

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DIRECTOR'S NOTES:

There are some nuances in this script that you would do well to discuss with the actress playing Denise. First, the title: "Right In Front of Me." Throughout her monologue, Denise tells us these trusted people in her life stood "right in front of her" and let her down, even led her astray. Her best friend encouraged her to steal. Her mother didn't have faith in Denise's integrity as a young woman. Her boyfriend asked her to ignore the sanctity of marriage and live with him instead. If these statements are all we focus on, then we make Denise little more than a whiny child saying, "I didn't do it! They made me!" And that's not who she is. The author is careful to say that these people stood in front of Denise and instead of encouraging her to do the right thing, encouraged her to do something that in her heart of hearts she knew was wrong. But she did it anyway. And that's a key piece of information about Denise. These actions she's regretting—stealing, losing her virginity before marriage, living with her boyfriend before she married him—were all her own choices. No one forced her to make them. But at these crucial times in her life, she lacked the strength to say, "Get behind me, Satan." That's her big regret now. That she wasn't strong enough to stand up for what she knew was right. She knows that if she had, perhaps her life would have turned out differently.

So how does this affect your directing and the actress who is acting the part of Denise? It can make the performance much richer. Instead of seeing Denise as a whiner, the audience can empathize with her, see that she needed the correct encouragement, that she needed the assurance that her Christian friends and family were there to help her make the right decisions. To get that empathy out of the performance, work with your actress to get a real visual image of the places and events Denise describes. Memorizing the lines is not enough. The actress needs to be reliving each of these events.

One of the troubles inherent in a monologue like this is the audience not knowing what to do with the information at the end. Even if the actress is able to evoke empathy from the audience, we need to take them one step further. The first step is getting them to understand where Denise has been and to feel the turmoil she is in. The next step is to get them to apply a lesson to their own lives.

One choice would be for Denise to be angry with the three people who steered her the wrong way. But that's a choice that will shut out your audience and not evoke the empathy you're looking for. A stronger choice would be for Denise to truly wish she'd had the courage—at age six even just the understanding—to say, "Get behind me, Satan." The lesson for the audience is twofold: we all need to get better at saying "Get behind me, Satan" when we face such decisions, and we can all be better at encouraging those around us to stand up for what they know is right.

Work with your actress to help her share those emotions and lessons with the audience, and you will make a strong impact on your audience.

This script is rich with imagery. The author has all but painted pictures of the places Denise is remember-