

Religious Freedom?

Written by

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INT. CITY STREET - DAY

REBECCA (African American) and AMY (both 20s) stroll along a street. A RAINBOW flag pin twinkles on Amy's label. Shopping bags dangle from their hands.

As they walk, faint CHANTING grows.

Across the street: PROTESTORS wave LGBTQ signs outside a pastry shop. One of which reads: "No service? Shut it down!"

A STORE OWNER blocks the entrance, arms crossed. Angry words (MOS) fly like bullets from both sides.

Rebecca chews her lip, keeps walking. Amy follows, but keeps her eyes glued to the scene. As they pass, Rebecca groans.

REBECCA

Lemme guess. Another gay cake drama?

AMY

Either that, or someone got really bad baklava.

REBECCA

It's 2022 and we're *still* arguing this no brainer? Why?

AMY

Tell me about it. All they have to do is bake cakes for *everyone*. This is dessert, not brain surgery. The concept isn't all that hard.

REBECCA

Or... the customers could go somewhere else. There are other places to get a sugar fix, you know?

Rebecca pulls a box of DONUTS out of Amy's shopping bag.

REBECCA

Here, see? Exhibit One! The defense rests, Your Honor.

AMY

Sure, they could. But that's not the point. They're discriminating. YOU know that's wrong!

REBECCA

The point is religious freedom, Ames! That's what this country's about.

(MORE)

REBECCA (cont'd)
No-one has the right to force someone
to do something they feel's a sin.

Amy snatches the donut box back, fishes two out: one chocolate covered, the other white powder. She presses them together, like a couple cuddling.

AMY
There's a difference. Religious
freedom has its limits. It's not like
customers are asking bakers to be gay
WITH them! And don't even *start* me on
the interracial marriage overtones...

She separates the donuts, as if one's walking away.

REBECCA
Gimme that!

Rebecca grabs for the pastry. Amy reflexively clenches a fist. The donut crumbles. Crumbs for sidewalk pigeons.

REBECCA
Look what you just did.

She stuffs the other donut in the box, resumes her stroll.
Amy follows - the conversation turned tense.

AMY
I... I didn't know you felt that way.

Rebecca fingers a GOLD CROSS at her neck.

REBECCA
Hey, you of all people know I'm pro
LGBTQ. But everyone still deserves
the right to live by *their* rules.

AMY
But in public -

Rebecca perks up, points to a PHARMACY.

REBECCA
Hold that thought for a hot minute.
I've got a prescription to pick up!

INT. PHARMACY - LATER

SUPER: 15 minutes later. And counting...

Amy and Rebecca fidget in a loooooonng line. They're next up.

AMY

I can't stand much longer. If they're gonna be so slow, can't they at least provide chairs?

REBECCA

You gotta come with me to the gym, push out some squats! And who knew this many people needed drugs?

AMY

(snorts)

Have you looked around recently?

REBECCA

The legal kind! Sitting or not, I'm hungry. I haven't eaten for hours, and you know how my blood sugar gets.

(nods towards the bag)

Something nutritious. Not this high carb crap Entemann's stuff.

AMY

We'll hit a place on the way back. Promise.

Rebecca's stomach grumbles. Ominous.

The PHARMACIST waves them forward. Becky hands the woman her prescription. The pharmacist reads it: her face sours. She slides it back across the counter, lips pursed.

PHARMACIST

This is mifepristone. I can't fill it.

REBECCA

You're out of stock? I've only got a few pills left.

(to Amy)

Geez, this sucks!

AMY

Don't panic. I got this.

She steps up to the counter.

AMY

When's the next shipment in?

PHARMACIST

I'm sorry, but I misspoke. We've plenty in the back. I WON'T fill it.

REBECCA

Excuse me?

AMY

What?

The woman taps the prescription hard with her finger.

PHARMACIST

This is an abortion drug. It's
against my religion to give it out.

Rebecca drops her bags, annoyed.

REBECCA

I'm not taking it 'cause I'm
pregnant!

A MIDDLE AGED WOMAN standing behind her perks up.

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN

You're pregnant, Dear? Congrats! You
don't show at all, you're so slim!

REBECCA

Hey, thanks! I've been trying to get
in shape.

She swings around to the pharmacist and pushes the script
back. Taps it harder, for emphasis.

REBECCA

But I'm NOT pregnant! I take this for
my blood sugar. My friend and I have
been standing here fifteen minutes.

AMY

More like twenty, I think.

REBECCA

Fill it. Then we can get outta here.

PHARMACIST

Prove it.

REBECCA

Prove what?!?

PHARMACIST

Prove you're not pregnant.

AMY

Lady, did you ever take philosophy?
Proving a negative isn't how stuff
works.

REBECCA

What do you want me to do, pee on a
stick? We are in a pharmacy. You
wanna gimme a freebie, I'm game!

Rebecca waves her arms at shelves. She unbuckles her belt,
unsnaps her jeans. Behind them a MAN clears his throat.

MAN

Lady, people are waitin' here! Most
of us are on lunch break. Ya wanna
put on a free show, do it somewhere
OFF the line! Dunno what all this
drama's for...

The middle aged woman whispers in his ear.

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN

I think she's pregnant, and in
denial!

The pharmacist waves a dismissive hand at Rebecca.

PHARMACIST

This town has plenty other
pharmacies. Find somewhere else to
get your baby killing poison. Shoo!

REBECCA

I'm signed up here. I WILL be served!

She punches the counter. People in line react.

EVERYONE

Oooooooooooooo!

AMY

Becky, this is so not worth it. And
yelling's making it worse. Maybe we
should go somewhere else?

REBECCA

You can't make me!

The man in line rolls his eyes.

MAN

Why not? Your legs don't look broke.

REBECCA

On principle. This is wrong!

PHARMACIST

What's wrong is asking me to do what
I think's evil. This is America. I've
a right to my beliefs.

She nods towards Rebecca's gold cross necklace.

PHARMACIST

A concept you should be familiar
with.

Rebecca's stomach grumbles. She sways; Amy catches her.

AMY

You OK?

REBECCA

Uh, not now. My blood sugar.

Amy digs in the bag, pulls out the surviving donut. Rebecca
grabs it, chows down. Glares at the Pharmacist, mouth full.

REBECCA

I was on a diet. Now look what you
made me do!

AMY

Wait. I... I think I've got a
compromise.

The crowd responds in unison behind her.

EVERYONE

Good!

AMY

Why don't you get someone else to
fill the script? No harm no foul! My
friend gets her meds. And you keep
your beliefs intact.

PHARMACIST

It's lunch time. I'm the only
pharmacist on shift.

AMY

Crap.

PHARMACIST

And if I wasn't, I still wouldn't
allow this to be filled.

REBECCA

Do you want me to pass out? You know how that'll slow down your precious line?

Donut crumbs spray with Becky's wrath.

PHARMACIST

Passing the prescription along makes me complicit. You can pretend it doesn't, but God and I know. That's what counts.

REBECCA

What *counts* is you're providing a public service.

PHARMACIST

In a private store, where we make the rules.

REBECCA

You don't get to do just anything. Look at segregation!

PHARMACIST

I'm no racist, but -

AMY

(groans)

Here we go...

PHARMACIST

Private property matters. And who says SCOTUS got that one right?

Rebecca grabs a vitamin bottle, lunges across the counter.

REBECCA

Fill my prescription, Karen! Or I'll shove this bottle down your throat!

PHARMACIST

My name's "Suzanne". It's on my nametag. Or can't you read?

REBECCA

You racist motherfuc-

AMY

(to Rebecca)

Don't!

(MORE)

AMY (cont'd)
(to the pharmacist)
Please understand, my friend's angry.
Low blood sugar messes with tempers.
As a pharmacist, you know that much!

The pharmacist crosses her arms, like the bakery owner did.

PHARMACIST
Ma'am, cursing's also against my
religion. Since you're starting a
scene, I'll ask you just once before
I call Security: PLEASE exit the
line. Be considerate of customers in
this store!

Rebecca crosses her arms, too. In mirror mode.

REBECCA
No. Not happening.

The pharmacist picks up the phone. Stops.

PHARMACIST
I'd dearly like to hear: why not?

REBECCA
Because... because my religion
requires me to keep my blood sugar
regulated? The way God commanded it
to be?

Rebecca's riffing. That last part comes out like a squeak.

PHARMACIST
(chuckles)
Nonsense, honey. If God wanted your
blood sugar regular, he would've made
you that way.

REBECCA
Nuh-uh. Satan messed with my insulin!

PHARMACIST
Where's *that* written in the bible?

REBECCA
Don't try to deny my truth!

AMY
Uh, Becky, this is getting -

REBECCA
Upsetting? Yeah. No shit, Sherlock!

The pharmacist finishes dialing, clears her throat.

PHARMACIST

Hello, Security? We've got a
difficult customer here who needs
removing. She's talking about Satan.
I think we've got a crazy one here.

SECURITY arrives. They stand before the counter like Roman
statues, two beefy GUYS.

AMY

This is kinda overkill...

PHARMACIST

Your friend's creating a disturbance.
You're her accomplice. Leave
peacefully, and no-one gets hurt.

REBECCA

(yells)

If you mess with my blood sugar,
you're the complicit one, bitch!

The middle-aged woman chimes in.

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN

I have a religious right to be served
on time!

A scrawny TEEN in line raises his hand.

TEEN

Hey, I'm an atheist. Don't my beliefs
count, too?

The whole line turns and screams at him.

EVERYONE

No!

The man steps forward, growls.

MAN

Here's a radical thought, people.
I've got a religious right to get
back to work on time!

He shoves a guard from the counter. An all-out brawl ensues.

EXT. PHARMACY ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Security frog marches everyone to the curb: the man, the teen, the middleaged woman. Rebecca and Amy, too.

Rebecca stumbles. Amy kneels by her side. One of the security guards points at Becky, snarls.

SECURITY GUARD

Let that be a lesson. Next time,
respect other folk's faith!

Rebecca stuffs another donut in her mouth, stifles a scream.

The group gathers around the friends. Amy gently removes the donut from Rebecca's mouth, tosses it aside.

AMY

We can Google new pharmacies over
lunch. There's a brew pub down the
street I like. Let's go there. After
that, I NEED a drink.

REBECCA

Anywhere but here? Works for me.

They start to leave. The others trail behind.

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN

You know, you shouldn't be drinking
when you're pregnant, young lady.

REBECCA

I told you I'm not. What were you in
the store for, ear wax drops?

The woman shrugs. Leaves. The teen pipes up.

TEEN

Hey, can I come along?

AMY

How old are you?

TEEN

Seventeen.

REBECCA

Shoo. Come back in four years.

The man's the only one remaining now.

AMY

Great. You wanna join us, too?

REBECCA

The guy who starts fights? No thanks.

The man yells after them.

MAN

Hey, my religion forbids women from
drinking. So even if I wasn't on
lunch break, I wouldn't go!

Amy and Rebecca groan, walk away.

REBECCA

Unless we're in your *private* home,
Mister - your beliefs don't apply to
me!

FINAL FADE OUT: