

THE FAITHFUL ONE
by
(Michele Chynoweth)

(Based on the novel, The Faithful One)

7 Ironoak Ct. North East, MD 21901
410-937-9801
Michelechynoweth@comcast.net

THE FAITHFUL ONE - SCREENPLAY BY MICHELE CHYNOWETH

INT. LUXURIOUS MANSION FOYER - AFTERNOON

Whistling, SETH JACOBS (49), a tall, well-built, handsome man with slightly graying brown hair, looks in the mirror, straightens the tie of his tux. He grabs an expensive overcoat from a nearby rack. Outside: SOUND of limo approaching.

EXT. MANSION DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

A limousine pulls up a circular drive outside the Jacobs' family's huge, stone mansion. The LIMO DRIVER steps out and whistles in appreciation. He tilts his head back to see the entire building. Seth approaches him from the side, surprising him.

SETH
(clears his throat)
You must be my driver?

LIMO DRIVER
(looks at Seth with
surprise, stuttering)
Good evening, uh, Mr. Jacobs, sir.

Seth extends his hand to the driver, who shakes it.

SETH
Relax, what's your name?

LIMO DRIVER
James, sir.

SETH
(pats driver on back,
laughs)
Well, I might have guessed. OK,
James, let's go.

The limo driver opens the back of the limo, Seth climbs in and is seated. The driver gets in and drives off.

EXT. LIMO ON HIGHWAY RIDING PAST MASSACHUSETTS COUNTRYSIDE,
APPROACHING THE CITY SKYLINE OF BOSTON - HOUR LATER, DUSK

As limo hits downtown Boston city streets, traffic becomes
clogged due to construction.

INT. LIMO - CONTINUOUS

Seth checks his watch, which reads 5:30 p.m. Seth converses
with driver through the interior window opening in limo.

LIMO DRIVER

(facing front with eyes on
road but speaking to Seth
behind him)

What time does the Senator's dinner
start sir?

SETH

Dinner starts at six-thirty, but
since I'm the owner, I should get
to the Perfect Place no later than
six. At this rate, it doesn't look
like we're going to make it
anywhere near Rows Wharf by then,
does it?

LIMO DRIVER

I'm afraid not sir. I'm sorry,
I'll do my best to get you there as
quickly as possible, but...

SETH

James, no offense, but that won't
do. I think I'll take the T.

LIMO DRIVER

But sir, the way you're dressed,
the subway, well, you know, it
might be dangerous.

SETH

Don't worry, I won't hold you
responsible. Why don't you just
pull over there. It looks like the
T stop is up ahead.

We see a metro station in the near distance. The limo driver
maneuvers the limo into the right lane and then pulls to the
curb. As Seth gets out he hands him a fifty-dollar bill.

SETH (CONT'D)

Thanks, James.

INT. T METRO TRAIN - MINUTES LATER

Seth sits on a bench seat near an elderly, hunched over woman with wispy gray hair in a ragged housedress and worn coat named RUTHIE O'HANLON (70s). The car is packed with a variety of passengers, all dressed in informal clothing so Seth sticks out in his formal attire. He pulls out the Boston Globe newspaper he has brought with him and opens it up to read it as the train takes off. We see article on front page with a head shot photo of distinguished male politician in his sixties with the headline: U.S. Senator Caine to Announce Bid for President at Boston's Perfect Place.

Seth opens paper to inside and CAMERA zooms in on a sidebar article with his own photo and the headline: Perfect Place Restaurant Chain Owner to Host Senator Dinner - Secret Menu Sure to Wow. Seth smiles, closes paper, folds and sits on his lap. He rests back against his seat.

Suddenly train jerks violently to a stop; interior of train shakes and lights flicker then go out, leaving emergency lights on. We simultaneously hear a deafening grinding, screeching of brakes. Passengers are flung about inside train car. Next we hear passengers all at once babbling, young children crying and Ruthie O'Hanlon moaning. She has been thrown to the train floor.

Overall shot of train interior, dimly lit by emergency lighting, with passengers flung across aisles and seats, all talking at once. We see Seth still seated and Ruthie sitting on floor moaning, holding her leg.

SETH

(frantically looks around,
shouting)

Is there a doctor or nurse on
board?

(finds none, squats down
next to Ruthie)

What's your name ma'am?

RUTHIE

(groaning in pain)

Ruthie O'Hanlon.

SETH

I don't see any doctors or nurses
Ruthie, but I'll do whatever I can
to help. What's wrong?

RUTHIE

My leg.

Seth stands, removes his overcoat, unzips the cashmere lining, then kneels on the floor next to Ruthie and gently places the coat under her injured leg, which is bleeding around the ankle. He removes her shoe and bloody sock and wraps her ankle in the lining.

SETH

(giving her a kind smile)
I hope that helps until a doctor
can take a look at it.

RUTHIE

(squinting her eyes at
Seth)
Haven't I seen you before? Aren't
you one of those models I've seen
in my magazines?

SETH

(grins)
No ma'am. I'm not a model. Just a
restaurant owner.

RUTHIE

(Reaches out with a
gnarled finger and
tentatively touches
Seth's wedding band)
Too bad you're married. Good
looking and charming to boot. You
would make a great catch for my
daughter Lucille, who if she waits
much longer is going to end up an
old maid. Pity too, she's a
beauty.

SETH

I'm sure she is if she looks
anything like her mom.

RUTHIE

Pshaw! Hey, thanks Mister uh...

SETH

Jacobs. But you can call me Seth.

RUTHIE

Thanks Mister Seth. So you're
married...you got any kids?

Seth takes out his wallet and proudly shows Ruthie a family photo.

It shows his wife MARIA (43), a beautiful Italian woman with dark hair and eyes, his sons ADAM (22) and AARON (20) and his daughter ANGELICA (17). All three children are good-looking like their parents.

SETH

This is my wife Maria. These are my boys, Adam and Aaron, and this is my daughter, Angelica.

RUTHIE

(looking at photo)

What a nice family. I bet you're really proud.

SETH

Yeah, I am. I'm a lucky man. I wish Maria could be here with me right now, but she was sick, I guess she came down with something, so I had her stay home tonight. Luckily, Angelica is home looking after her. The boys are off at a soccer game and frat party. They go to Harvard. My alma mater.

RUTHIE

Hmmm...sounds like you have the perfect life. So how did you get to be this lucky, Mister Seth?

SETH

(reflectively)

Believe me, I wasn't born that way. I was an only child of Polish immigrants who struggled just to keep me fed and in school. I worked my way through college busing and waiting tables, at whatever restaurant jobs I could get until I learned the ropes and saved enough money to finally buy my own little restaurant. And I kept working hard until I built more than fifty restaurants. I was lucky to fall in love with Maria and have three healthy, beautiful children. I guess God has been good to me. I've always believed that if you have a little faith and put in a lot of work and try to do God's will and just be a good person, things will work out for you.

We hear a churning sound as train's engines start working again. People inside train, who have been relatively quiet except for Seth and Ruthie conversing, start chattering, coming to life.

CONDUCTOR'S VOICE OVER LOUDSPEAKER
 Good news ladies and gentlemen.
 The Blue Line has been repaired and
 is back on track and should be
 arriving at its destination
 shortly.

There is a flurry of activity as the train starts to move from underground up into light of day; passengers gather their things, all talking at once. Seth helps Ruthie up from floor to the seat.

SETH
 (to Ruthie, worried)
 Ruthie, I'm not sure who...

RUTHIE
 Don't worry about me, Seth, you've
 already done much more than I could
 have asked for. I'll get the
 conductor to call Lucille and
 she'll come get me. I'll be fine -
 you just get to that dinner of
 yours!
 (Looks down at her foot
 wrapped in coat, stained
 with blood)
 Now, what about your nice coat?

SETH
 (smiles)
 It's yours.

INT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Seth exits train, is walking quickly through train station. Gets cell phone out, talks while walking.

SETH
 Henri, it's Seth. I'm sorry I
 missed the dinner. The train broke
 down and...
 (pauses, listening)
 Henri, calm down, it sounds noisier
 there than here. What's wrong?
 (pauses)
 People are throwing up? I'll be
 there as soon as I can.

INT. PERFECT PLACE RESTAURANT ENTRANCE - NIGHT, MINUTES LATER

Seth bursts through entrance and nearly rams into HENRI, (55) a heavysset, balding maitre 'd who speaks in heavy French accent. Henri is panic-stricken. He grabs Seth by the arm and leads him to nearby French doors which lead into a huge dining room with chandeliers, where about 150 people, all in formal attire, are in various states of sickness. Some are throwing up, some are passed out on chairs, some are bent over others trying to help them, some are wailing and moaning in pain. Seth lets Henri lead him into the room and almost slips on a puddle of vomit on the marble floor. He covers his face with his hand to try to avoid the stench in the room and gags, trying not to vomit himself.

SETH

Henri, how did this happen?

HENRI

(blubbering)

Monsieur, I'm sorry, I do not know.
So many sick. What do we do?

SETH

(taking Henri firmly by
the shoulders)

Henri, where is Senator Caine?

Henri points to the far end of the massive room. Seth makes his way through the crowd until he reaches the room's end, where paramedics are working on a man laying on top of a table. Seth sees it's SENATOR CAINE, a tall, handsome man with gray hair laying in his tux, eyes closed, with his shirt open revealing his bare chest, which one of the paramedics is pumping, performing CPR.

SETH (CONT'D)

(to one of paramedics)

I'm the owner of this place and I
just got here. What's going on?

PARAMEDIC

(ignoring Seth, checking
Senator's pulse)

We've got a pulse...let's get him
to Mass General.

Paramedics shift the Senator onto a gurney and start exiting with him out a back door. Seth walks with them, trying to get their attention.

SETH

Can someone tell me what the hell
happened here?

PARAMEDIC

(turning to Seth as he's
walking)

These people all got a severe case
of food poisoning. More ambulances
are on the way. The Senator here
went into cardiac arrest, but we've
got him stabilized now.

Seth stops in his tracks, watches paramedics and gurney go
out back door.

SETH

(to himself)
Food poisoning?

Henri approaches Seth. We hear ambulance sirens approaching
in background.

HENRI

I am so sorry, monsieur. The only
thing I can think of was the
caviar. Everything else was
cooked.

SETH

(grabbing Henri by the
arm)
Come on, Henri, we're going to get
to the bottom of this.

INT. SETH'S RESTAURANT OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Seth is seated in a leather chair at a large desk in his
office. A television in the upper corner of the room has the
news on. Henri, still in his disheveled state, but quiet,
stands in the doorway of the office. Seth picks up the phone
and starts to dial, looks up at the television set and stops
dialing, receiver in hand. We see a photo of Senator Caine on
TV screen, then NEWS ANCHOR (30).

SETH

(motioning toward
television)
Henri, turn up the sound.

Henri goes to television, turns up volume.

NEWS ANCHOR

...I repeat, Presidential hopeful Senator Robert Caine died just minutes ago in Massachusetts General Hospital from complications resulting from food poisoning he contracted at a dinner in his honor tonight at the Perfect Place Restaurant. Sources at the hospital say it is too soon to tell what the complications were pending a coroner's report. For Channel Four News, I'm Rebecca Williams."

SETH

(still holding telephone receiver in hand, staring at TV, in a whisper)
Oh my God...

Seth hangs up the receiver and puts his head in his hands in despair. Henri quietly still stands in doorway, watching the television. The phone rings and Seth stares at it for a few rings, then tentatively picks up the receiver and answers.

SETH (CONT'D)

(impatiently)
Hello, Seth Jacobs.
(listens for a few seconds, into phone.)
I have no comment.
(listens a few seconds more, into phone)
Now is a bad time. Please call back tomorrow.
(hangs up phone; to Henri)
That was someone from Channel Four, asking for an interview for the Eleven o'clock news.

Phone immediately starts ringing again.

SETH (CONT'D)

(standing up, to Henri)
Let's get out of here before these news reporters track us down so we can find some answers in private.

Seth turns off TV and starts heading out of door with Henri behind him. They are at doorway of office exiting when in walks a SHERIFF'S DEPUTY.

SHERIFF'S DEPUTY
(barring the doorway)
Not so fast, gentlemen.

Seth is sitting back at his desk with officer and Henri seated across from him. Seth is on the phone. Hangs up.

SETH
The good news is I managed to warn most of the restaurants on the west coast, which were just about to serve dinner. The bad news is that every other restaurant I called that served caviar reported cases of food poisoning. We're probably looking at hundreds of cases across the U.S.

SHERIFF'S DEPUTY
Mister Jacobs, you've obviously been through a lot here tonight and I'm sure tomorrow will bring its own problems. It's late, so why don't I get you and Henri home? I'll call for a backup to handle things here. Hopefully the media have given up by now. We'll lock up for you and make sure the restaurant is barricaded with police tape. I'll call you both in the morning. We'll need both of you to come down to the station to give a statement.

EXT. JACOBS MANSION - LATER THAT NIGHT

Seth is riding in a taxi escorted by a police car. Both approach the circular drive, which is filled with other police cars and media crews. Seth exits the taxi and a female REPORTER approaches him.

REPORTER
(loudly, microphone in hand, running toward Seth)
There he is, Seth Jacobs!

A camera crew approaches Seth, but a big STATE POLICE OFFICER (40) steps in front of them, shielding Seth from the oncoming media. He takes Seth by the arm and leads him away from the crowd. Other officers keep the media from pursuing him.

STATE POLICE OFFICER
Mister Jacobs, I'm afraid there's
been an accident.

SETH
(wearily)
I know, Senator Caine has died. I
thought this media circus would
have died down by now.

STATE POLICE OFFICER
No, Mister Jacobs, there's been
another accident. I'm sorry, but
your sons have been involved in a
car crash. They were flown to Mass
General. Your wife and daughter
are en route with a police escort
now. We can take you there.

Seth stares at the state police officer as he relays the news, his eyes glazing over. He is stupefied, and as the officer finishes, he faints, the officer catching him before he hits the ground.

INT. FRONT LOBBY OF MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL - LATER

Entering the hospital with the officer behind him, Seth sees Maria and Angelica at the receptionist desk, asking for directions.

SETH
(calling)
Maria! Angelica!

Maria and Angelica turn to see him, their faces pale and streaked with tears. They run to him and hug him, crying. He holds them for a moment, then leads them off to a corner of an adjacent waiting room to talk.

SETH (CONT'D)
(rapidly)
What happened? Where are they? How
did - are they...?

ANGELICA
(takes deep breath)
Daddy, calm down, mom needs us to
be strong. The boys were in a car
accident coming home from the frat
party. Aaron was driving. The car
ran off the road and hit a tree.
They said Aaron is going to be
alright, but - oh, daddy, Adam...
(MORE)

ANGELICA (CONT'D)
 (voice starts wavering)
 They're not sure, we don't know...

Angelica starts crying. Maria has been crying all along. Angelica consoles her mother, putting her arm around her. Just then ER NURSE (30) bursts through a set of swinging doors and approaches them.

ER NURSE
 Seth and Maria Jacobs? Your son Aaron is in serious condition and is recovering in the Intensive Care Unit. He has some bad cuts and bruises and a fractured arm but no internal injuries. Adam, I'm afraid, didn't fair so well. He's still in surgery right now, so all we can do is wait. He was admitted in critical condition with internal bleeding and a head injury. We'll know more in an hour or so.

SETH
 Can we see them?

ER NURSE
 You can see Aaron. Follow me.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Nurse enters Aaron's room, followed by Seth, Maria and Angelica. Aaron is lying in hospital bed, eyes closed. Seth calls his name. Aaron's eyes open and he recognizes his family. Tears start to fall from his eyes. The rest of his face is covered in bandages. He reaches out with bandaged hands to his family, and they take turns hugging him, comforting him.

(CONT'D)

AARON
 (in raspy voice)
 Stop. Please don't...this was all my fault.
 (wild look in his eyes)
 Adam...how's Adam?

MARIA
 We're not sure yet, sweetheart. He's still in surgery. We came to see you first.

AARON

I'm sorry Mom, Dad. It's all my
fault. Oh Adam, I'm so sorry...
(his voice breaks off)

MARIA

Aaron, what do you mean?

Two police officers enter Aaron's room. OFFICER ADKINS (40),
a nice woman who is senior partner and OFFICER SMITH (55) a
gruff man.

SETH

(Under his breath)
God, more police officers!
(To the officers)
What do you want now, officers?

OFFICER ADKINS

We'd like to ask Aaron a few
questions about the accident.

SETH

(angry at the
interruption)
I think it can wait. We just got
here, and as you can see, he's in
no condition...

OFFICER SMITH

That's not what the nurse said.

SETH

Well, my son has a right to an
attorney before he talks to you,
and we'd like to speak to him first
if you don't mind. We'll call you
once our attorney arrives.

Officers exchange glances, then leave the room.

SETH (CONT'D)

(to Angelica)
Angelica, your mother and I need to
talk to Aaron, so if you can go get
us some coffee or soda...

Angelica nods and leaves the room. Seth and Maria pull up
chairs to Aaron's bedside, and sit in them, facing him.

SETH (CONT'D)

(to Aaron)
Do you want to tell me what
happened tonight?

MARIA

I don't know if he's ready, Seth.
(Motherly, to Aaron)
Are you sure you're up to talking
about this honey?

AARON

Yes, I'm sure. If I don't, I'll
keep replaying it in my head like
some horror movie that won't end.

(Swallows)

I was on such a high after scoring
the final goal today at the
Homecoming soccer game. We beat
Yale four to three.

(Small smile)

We were all whooping it up. The
guys carried me off the field on
their shoulders.

(Smile leaves his face)

We popped open some champagne. Then
Larry, one of the guys, invited us
to a victory party at his frat
house, so I found Adam and we went.
The place was pretty wild. Larry
put a beer in my hand the minute I
walked in and it was like every
time I finished one, another guy
would hand me a new one. I know I
shouldn't have had anything to
drink, but I thought a few wouldn't
hurt, and then I guess I lost
count. Later the lights were
dimmed, the music got slower and
this girl I'd had my eye on asked
me to dance. Her name was Riley.
She was pretty, a cheerleader, and
a junior. Any other time she
wouldn't have given me the time of
day, but I guess I was suddenly a
star. She started coming onto
me...

(glances at his mother)

And next thing I know, she's asking
me if I want to go upstairs to be
alone. By then I wasn't thinking
too clearly and I let her take my
hand and start leading me up the
steps. She handed me this pill,
saying it would get me in the mood.

MARIA

What kind of pill?

AARON

Ecstasy. At first I told her no, but then I thought it wouldn't hurt any. Then she takes a joint from her purse and told me we could really have some fun, and starts kissing me and stuff. I told her no, to put it away, we didn't need it. Just then Adam walks up to us and starts giving me a hard time, asking how much I'd had to drink. I was really mad he was interrupting my good time so I let him have it. I told him to go get his own girl and leave us alone. I think I was pretty nasty.

(Takes deep breath)

Adam insisted I go home with him. That really set me off, but he grabbed me by the arm and wouldn't let go. I tried to get away but Adam's pretty strong and I was feeling pretty out of it by then, so I let him drag me away from the girl and out the door. But once the cold night air hit me, it was different story.

SETH

(impatient)

What do you mean?

AARON

Adam insisted on driving, but I had the keys and once the cold air woke me up, I told him I wasn't going to let him boss me, that I was driving and that was final. He tried to get the keys out of my hand, but I pushed down, which gave me enough time to jump into the driver's seat and start the car. I told him get in or I was leaving without him, so he didn't have a choice but to get in the passenger side. Then I took off.

(Fresh tears falling)

The rest is kind of blurry. I was totally out of control, driving too fast, arguing with Adam. I didn't see the tree until it was too late.

(MORE)

AARON (CONT'D)

The next thing I know, I'm covered in all these little pieces of glass. I looked over at Adam...the dashboard was crushed against him and he was crumpled against the door, so I leaned over to look at his face...

(Sobbing)

Oh God, what have I done? I'm so sorry...

Maria softly cries in her chair by the bedside. Seth stands up and reaches out and takes Aaron's hand in his own, tears falling from his eyes. We hear a knock on the door and Officers Adkins and Smith reappear. Officer Smith holds papers in his hand.

OFFICER SMITH

We got the results of the blood tests taken on Aaron. They confirm that there was alcohol and the drug Ecstasy present. By the way, we received a warrant to search Adam's clothes taken here at the hospital and we also found marijuana in his coat pocket, which means he was found to be in possession of drugs as well. That means we're going to have to file additional charges.

SETH

(indignant)

Now wait a minute! I demand you wait until we have our attorney present!

AARON

(confused)

Marijuana? I know I didn't have any - I don't know how it got in my...

(enlightened)

Riley!

SETH

(glaring at Aaron)

Be quiet Aaron.

OFFICER ADKINS

We wanted to let you know what we've turned up so far, but we realize you have the right to an attorney, so we'll just leave these papers here for you and your attorney to review. We'll be back tomorrow...

(looks up at clock on wall, which reads 2 a.m.)

...I mean later today.

Officers leave room. Angelica bursts through partially open door, excited.

ANGELICA

Mom, Dad, they said come quick!
Adam is coming out of surgery!

Seth and Maria jump out of chairs, start to follow Angelica. Seth looks back at Aaron with concern.

AARON

(in scratchy voice)

Go!

INT. NURSES STATION IN ER - MOMENTS LATER

DOCTOR BENJAMIN GRASON (52) comes out of operating room, approaches nurses station, removes face mask. He is tired looking, wears surgical attire, has been sweating from efforts. He greets Seth and Maria as if he knows them.

DOCTOR BEN GRASON

(extends his hand to Seth)

Seth, Maria.

SETH

(surprised, shakes his hand)

Oh my God, Ben, it's you. Thank God you're here. But how...?

MARIA

(to Seth)

I called him while we were waiting for you, once I knew how serious the accident was.

Angelica stands unsure of what's transpiring, looking from her mother to her father.

SETH

(to Angelica)

Honey, this is Doctor Benjamin Grason. He's an old friend of ours. And a top-notch surgeon.

DOCTOR BEN GRASON

(shakes Angelica's hand;
to all three)

We worked on Adam for the past few hours. He's in stable but critical condition, still unconscious. But it looks like he'll make it.

MARIA

(crumples against Seth's
shoulder)

Oh thank God!

DOCTOR BEN GRASON

(looks serious, concerned)

But I do have some bad news. It appears Adam may be a coma.

The doctor leads Seth, Maria and Angelica over to chairs in the waiting room. They follow him obediently, in shock at his last words, sit, listen.

DOCTOR BEN GRASON (CONT'D)

(standing, to all three)

Adam suffered head injuries in addition to a broken right collar bone, leg, jaw and ribs and some internal trauma to his liver and spleen. His lung collapsed from the broken ribs but we've inserted a chest tube so he can breathe. He suffered a great deal of blood loss both through the accident and surgery. That, together with the concussion may have caused him to remain unconscious. We can't tell yet at his point if he suffered any brain damage...

MARIA

(wailing, doubling over)

Nooooo!

Seth puts his arms around Maria, holds her. Then he reaches an arm around Angelica, who is weeping quietly. Doctor Grason kneels before Maria and takes her hands into his.

DOCTOR BEN GRASON

Adam will be transferred in a few hours to a patient room, but you can come see him in a few minutes in the ICU. I'm sorry, we did the best we could. Now all we can do is hope and pray for the best.

INT. ADAM'S HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Doctor Grason, Seth, Maria and Angelica all enter Adam's ICU room. He is covered in bandages and his face is almost unrecognizable, his eyes closed, his eyelids and surrounding area are black and blue. He is unconscious, hooked up to various tubes keeping him breathing, etc. which Doctor Grason checks while Seth, Maria and Angelica silently stand by his bedside. Maria and Angelica cry quietly. Seth keeps his arm around Maria for support.

INT. MASSACHUSETTS HOSPITAL NURSES STATION - ONE WEEK LATER

Doctor Grason is sitting in a visiting room around a small conference table with a chart before him. Seth, with Maria and Angelica on either side, are seated across from him.

DOCTOR BEN GRASON

Well, it's been a week and I'm afraid you're not going to want to hear what I have to say, but I always tell my patients and their families the truth, and,

(to Seth)

Since I know you and Maria, I feel like I can tell you like it is. While Adam's injuries are healing, he is still dependent on the ventilator to breathe.

(takes deep breath)

We still need to run a few more tests, but unfortunately, it seems to be the case that Adam is definitely in a coma.

Seth reacts to the news by putting his head in his hands, then hugs Maria, who weeps out loud. Angelica cries softly, leaning on her dad's shoulder.

DOCTOR BEN GRASON (CONT'D)

(clears throat, continues)

Families of comatose patients often find the situation harder to bear than if a child actually dies.

(MORE)