

BITTER HORIZONS

Written by

Matthew Phillips

mattp3385@gmail.com  
+1 (913)289-3298  
+52 81 2361 0242

FADE IN:

INT. MARRIAGE COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - DAY

A sterile, well-lit room. JOE (a 35-year-old man, wearing a blue button-down shirt, slacks, and sneakers) sits on a plush sofa. Dr. Anna Reid (about 50, a warm, professional marriage counselor, wearing a blue dress, high heels, and glasses) sits in an armchair across from them, holding a notepad.

DR. REID

Why do you think we're here today,  
Joe?

Joe shifts uncomfortably.

JOE

I just... I don't know anymore.  
We've been coming here for months,  
and I honestly think we're just  
going around in circles.

DR. REID

Could you explain what you feel is  
missing?

Joe sighs, running a hand through his hair.

JOE

It's like... we used to be on the  
same wavelength. We complete each  
other's sentences. We knew what  
each other was thinking. But now...  
now it's all just a polite, empty  
conversation.

DR. REID

But what do you mean by "EMPTY"?

JOE

She's at ease with the situation.  
But comfort isn't enough for me  
anymore. It's not enough.

DR. REID

Sometimes comfort becomes a cage,  
Joe, and you need to adapt to  
something that works better for  
both of us.

JOE  
Okay, I'll take that into  
consideration. Thank you very much  
for your time. I'm sorry.

Joe gets up and leaves the office.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INSIDE CHURCH - NOON

Joe enters the church and sits in a pew. PASTOR MARK (about 40, kind and empathetic, wearing a white shirt, black pants, black shoes, and a black tie) sits next to him.

PASTOR MARK  
Marriage is a sacred bond, Joe. It  
takes work, commitment, and, most  
of all, forgiveness.

JOE  
We know, Pastor. We've been trying  
to forgive each other for years.

PASTOR MARK  
Okay. And what makes it so  
difficult?

Joe hesitates, then speaks, his voice thick with emotion.

JOE  
We've built up so much resentment.  
Little things. Things we should let  
go so easily. But they've just  
piled up. And now... Those things  
have become a wall between us. And  
that wall is huge.

Pastor Mark leans forward, his expression serious.

PASTOR MARK  
Okay. Have you considered intensive  
marriage counseling? Maybe a  
retreat? Sometimes a dedicated  
space, something outside of the  
everyday, can make all the  
difference.

JOE  
We can't afford it, Pastor. We can  
barely afford these visits.

PASTOR MARK  
And find another resource?

JOE  
We've considered it. But I don't  
think it's feasible. Not anymore.

The room falls silent.

JOE (CONT'D)  
Anyway. I appreciate your time and  
listening.

PASTOR MARK  
I'm here for whatever you need,  
Joe. Count on me.

Joe gets up and leaves the church.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. PARK - AFTERNOON

Joe arrives at a park and sits on a bench. Joe sits and  
thinks about the advice Dr. Reid and Pastor Mark gave him.

JOE  
I don't know what to do anymore.  
Although. I think it's someone who  
can give me some advice.

Joe reaches into his pocket and takes out his phone. He dials  
a number and starts talking to someone. Music plays during  
the call.

(Inaudible dialogue)  
(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

(Hi. How are you? Oh, that's great. Honestly, things aren't going so well for us. Um, I think things with Candy have reached their limit, and now, I think it's over. I'm probably going to break up, actually. Yeah, I'm trying. Uh. Mmm. We've tried everything, yeah. We're in therapy. I mean, but I can't do anything anymore. I mean, I'm fed up, I'm fed up, you know. So it's probably over. Oh, okay. No. Yeah, yeah, I understand. Excuse me. See you later. Okay? Yeah, well. Thank you very much. Okay, see you later.)

Joe gets up and goes home.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Joe walks through the door and calls Candy.

JOE

Candy. Candy. Candy

Candy doesn't answer, and Joe fears the worst. Joe assumes Candy has dumped him. Joe stands in the living room looking sad and depressed while somber music plays in the background. Joe turns around and leaves the house.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Joe sits across from a stern-looking LAWYER (mid-fifties, efficient, professional-looking, wearing a blue suit jacket, white shirt, blue slacks, black tie, and dress shoes). Papers are scattered on the desk.

LAWYER

Well, I'm sharing a copy of the terms with you.

JOE

Thank you very much.

LAWYER

He's just reviewing what I was telling you about separate property. But... Before we continue, I'd like to ask you, are you sure about this, Mr. Henderson? Divorce is a big decision.

JOE

Well. Yes. Yes, I'm sure.

LAWYER

And does your wife agree?

JOE

Well. Who knows. There probably isn't one like it.

LAWYER

Good. Well, if you don't mind, let's review the terms of the separation.

Joe listens intently, his face marked by a mixture of relief and pain. Somber music plays in the background.

(Inaudible dialogue)

(MORE)

## LAWYER (CONT'D)

(Lawyer: As I mentioned, the matter of separate property is pending. As for the children, you have to support them until they're 18 years old. Joe: Okay. Lawyer: Any questions at this point? Joe: Uh, no. No, no, honestly, all I want is for it all to be over and for me to live in peace, to be calm, the end, I'm not interested, that's all. Lawyer: Sure. I imagine. Well, thank you very much for your trust, Mr. Henderson. Joe: Okay, thank you. Lawyer: Have a nice day.)

FADE TO BLACK.