

MEND

Screenplay by David Chester & Blake Pinter, © 2016

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A young widow with two children pursues her dream of opening a custom upholstery shop in defiance of her critical mother and finds unexpected support from the man she blames for her husband's death—his brother.

Talented seamstress Joanne Harrison is all set to open a custom upholstery shop that she's sure will impress her judgmental mother Lillian. Then tragedy strikes: Joanne's firefighter husband Jim dies in the line of duty when his brother Frank, also a firefighter, is unable to save him. Joanne visits Frank in the hospital, where his partner Brad watches over him. She brings a precious photo of Frank and Jim when they were boys, and Frank loses it. She comforts him, but is resentful that he, not her husband, survived.

Lillian, convinced the shop was doomed from the start, persuades Joanne to let it go and return home so she and George (Joanne's father) can help raise Joanne and Jim's boys, Tommy and Evan. She further encourages Joanne to return to her former position as a religious bookstore cashier and do her "sewing jobs" on the side. Numb with grief, Joanne agrees. But at a family dinner where Lillian blatantly praises the corporate career of Joanne's older sister Trish over Joanne's "foolish venture," Joanne defies her for the first time—and opens the shop as planned.

Business proves dismal until Joanne meets Phil, a country club manager in quick need of someone to redo the club's social room for a major event. Joanne seizes the moment, offers a fresh take on the room and gets the job. But as her career moves forward, her personal life unravels: Frank, always supportive of her talents, has become a daily reminder of all she's lost, and she cruelly dismisses him and Brad at a memorial service for Jim. Tommy, her emotional rock, accuses her of being like Lillian and hating Frank because he's gay. When she can offer no response, he withdraws. Lillian, who's hosting a church appreciation dinner, asks Joanne to make a time-consuming custom tablecloth, which she agrees to do, still hungry for Lillian's approval. At the shop, Cassandra, the woman who was originally tasked with redoing the social room, drunkenly stumbles in to view a unique wall hanging Joanne has created for the club—and accidentally destroys it.

With the deadline upon her, Joanne recreates her masterful wall hanging inspired by the design of an embroidered magnet she once made for Jim. At the club, Joanne arranges newly re-covered furniture and the wall hanging. Phil, seeing her handiwork, acknowledges her talents and invites her to meet the well-heeled guests that night. Having promised to attend Lillian's appreciation dinner the same evening, Joanne politely declines. Phil's attempts to convince her otherwise are interrupted by a call: Tommy has been injured in a school fight.

At home, Tommy rests uncomfortably. Unable to find a sitter for him and Evan and unwilling to call Frank for help, Joanne decides to stay home and take care of him. Tommy insists he's fine, and that Joanne should go—not to the dinner, where he knows Lillian will continue to bully her, but to the country club, instead. Still hoping to please Lillian, Joanne finally calls Frank and leaves a message, apologizing for her harsh dismissal of him and asking if he could watch Tommy for a few hours. When he doesn't respond, she settles in for the evening. But soon he shows up, eager to rejoin the family. Grateful, Joanne gets ready for the event. When he asks if Lillian will now show her any "appreciation," Joanne, in a simple dress, glances in a mirror and at last sees what she has become: unassuming and indistinguishable—exactly what Lillian wants her to be.

At the appreciation dinner, Joanne, now dressed elegantly, rushes in with the tablecloth Lillian requested, only to find out that Lillian purchased a cheap paper one, as a "back-up," assuming Joanne would never have the time for her. Lillian invites Joanne to take her place, but Joanne leaves instead and heads to the country club, where Phil wastes no time introducing her to the well-heeled guests who are admiring her work.

Joanne returns late and invites Frank to stay, which he does. He tells her Lillian called and was disturbed to learn that Joanne had gone to the club event, leaving the boys with him. He also admits that while Joanne may have thought his life was perfect with Brad, in fact, it was falling apart and Brad has now left him. He cries, his main relationship gone, his brother dead, and really, because there's no one left in his corner. Joanne, who once shunned him, now comforts him.

Lillian arrives the next morning, hell-bent on bringing Joanne to church. After a heated exchange with Frank (who she finds sleeping on the sofa), Lillian barges into Joanne's bedroom, demanding that Joanne accompany her to church. Joanne stands up to her in a way she never has and says she's not going. Lillian accuses Joanne, like Trish, of abandoning her, and slaps her.

Lillian decides to at take Evan to church—but he won't go. He's in the kitchen, where Frank is now making pancakes. Joanne joins them and invites Lillian to stay. For a moment Lillian is torn, then leaves. The commotion awakens Tommy, who comes downstairs to find a family scene of Frank making breakfast for Joanne and Evan.

At a Thanksgiving dinner, Joanne is now fully in control of her business and her family. Frank, who is now an important part of her and her children's world, brings the precious photo of himself and Jim that Joanne gave him at the hospital. He has framed it as an early Christmas gift, and Joanne places it in a prominent place amongst the family photos on the wall. Her mother is not in attendance, still not able to reconcile herself with what she considers Joanne's betrayal. But Joanne has mended everything she can, and now finally accepts that some things just can't be fixed.