

Lemonade Blessing

By Chris Merola

This story is a story. A fiction! If it reminds you of anyone, alive or dead, that's just a funny coincidence :)

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We hear the muffled roars of a MOTHER and FATHER in a blow-out screaming match.

We see the FUZZY HISS of a CRT television screen turning on, followed by the GAMECUBE STARTUP SCREEN jingle.

The game boots up - we stare down the morning sun, the sound of ocean waves lapping in the background.

An inviting musical theme begins to play, as the game's title appears - THE LEGEND OF ZELDA - THE WIND WAKER.

1 INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

1

JOHN (5, brown hair, bowl cut, in Mario pajamas), smiles in wonder at the title screen and its bright, sky-blue visuals.

Suddenly, the SCREAMS boom louder upstairs. John frowns. He gets up from the couch, walks to the CRT, raises the volume.

He sits back down, a tentative smile forms. He presses start, and the title theme fades into the gentle harp melody of the FILE SELECTION SCREEN.

Upstairs, something SHATTERS. More YELLING.

John sighs. He gets up, walks over, raises the volume to MAX, sits down again. He begins typing his name in - J, O, H, N.

The SHOUTS reach a fever pitch. John furrows his brow, slams down his Gamecube controller. He steps up the stairs-

2 INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

2

-as MARY (40) and PETE (42) continue their wailing. We can now hear their Brooklyn accents more clearly.

John peers through a slit in the door. He sees Mary throw a calendar down in front of Pete. She jabs her pointer finger at various dates.

MARY

June 12th, you're 'with your parents'!
June 19th, 'dinner with Joni and Don'!
Tonight, you 'saw Meg and Larry and
the kids'! Why wasn't I invited,
Pete?! Why can't any of them remember
the occasion?!

PETE

You hate seeing my family, so I see

them alone! That's the story!

MARY

How-fucking-**stupid** do you think I am?!

Mary socks Pete in the arm repeatedly - he grabs her wrist in the air. She hits him with her other hand. John's lips tremble against the door. He nudges it open-

MARY

Tell me you're not fucking around! She's slotted in every Thursday like a trip to the fucking dry cleaners-

PETE

I run a business, I come home, that's it! You don't fuck me, nobody fucks me! I'm not fucking!

Mary and Pete stop short as they hear the creak of the door. They turn and spot John, realizing what he's witnessed.

MARY

Look what you did, Pete!

Mary picks up John, cradling him as she walks towards the basement.

PETE

What I did?! What I fucking did?!

Mary slams the door to the basement.

MARY

I'm glad he's old enough to see you for who you are! Piece of shit!

PETE

Just, fuck off, Mary! God!

Pete's footsteps stomp away. We hear the sound of the front door bursting open and slamming shut. John's cries are muffled as he leans into his mother's embrace.

She holds John's head up with the palm of her hand.

John looks up at his mother. She smiles warmly at him. The sound of rushing water rises as we-

CUT TO:

3 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT [TEN YEARS LATER]

3

A blue face, writhing in pleasure.

On a cracked, wet XPERIA PLAY phone screen, a Youtube video plays - "*MASS EFFECT: Liara Romance Scenes (All)*"

SUPER: LONG ISLAND, 2012.

John, now 15, touches himself to the video, his back against the tub of his shower. RUSHING WATER from the showerhead drowns out most of his groans.

Suddenly, a BANG on the door.

MARY

John!? Everything okay in there?

John's face flashes with worry. He takes his hand off of himself.

JOHN

Yeah!

MARY

...well! It's been a while!

JOHN

Sorry, just, scrubbing! Have to be clean for orientation!

John tentatively begins touching himself again.

MARY

I don't see your phone in your bedroom!

John freezes.

MARY

You aren't looking at anything in there, right?!

JOHN

N-no! I was just looking up a game walkthrough!

MARY

Okay! I believe you!

John looks at the door. He frowns with guilt, puts the phone down outside the tub, covers it with a towel.

MARY

But! I'm going to stay here til'

you're finished, just to be sure!

JOHN
I'm being good! Seriously!

MARY
You want to sin, do it at your
father's house! From now on, phones
stay outside the bathroom!

John sighs, sliding his head down into the tub until he's
fully submerged.

4 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

4

Mary guides John across the countertop, compulsively touching
each item as she goes-

MARY
Just so you know what's here for
breakfast, we have almond butter,
multigrain toast, bananas, oranges,
apples, pears-

JOHN
Is it true we have to pray before
every class?

Mary opens the fridge-

MARY
(nods)
And the Angelus at midday. There's
hard boiled eggs, sliced prosciutto,
turkey chili, lemonade, chocolate oat
milk-

JOHN
I heard if a guy's hair touches his
collar, they make you get a buzz cut
in the men's bathroom?

MARY
You hair's pretty short, so-

5 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

5

Mary points out the uniform laid out on John's desk chair.

MARY
Blue dress shirt, nice and ironed,

gray slacks, tie is done, all you need to do is loosen it, here's your belt, penny loafers are at the door-

JOHN

Is it true they hit us with rulers when we mess up?

MARY

(waving her hand)

They stopped doing that a few years ago-

6 INT. PRIUS - NEXT MORNING

6

Mary pulls John up to SAINT DYMPHNA'S, a ritzy Catholic private school surrounded by lush foliage.

Mary rifles through John's backpack, touching each object-

MARY

You have your planner, notebooks, multicolored folders, pencil case, six sharpened #2 pencils, a pen with blue ink, a pen with black ink, a sharpie-

JOHN

(accepting defeat)

Thanks, Mom.

Mary spots John's flagging energy, his hunched posture.

MARY

You're excited, right?

John puts on the best smile he can find-

JOHN

Yeah! Of course!

Mary shakes her head in disbelief - *where did the time go?*

MARY

Your first day of high school! Ugh! I still remember the doctor putting you in my arms.

She lovingly touches John's left and right temple.

MARY

You had these little bumps, right

here, and right here.

John looks at his mother. Her smile melts him, like it always does. He hugs her tightly.

JOHN

I love you.

MARY

I love you extra.

Mary kisses John on the cheek. He opens the door, steps out-

7 EXT. ST. DYMPHNA'S ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS 7

-and walks up the smooth quartz steps of SAINT DYMPHNA'S. At the top of the stairs, he turns, and sees Mary looking up at him.

She waves farewell silently. He waves back.

8 INT. MUSIC ROOM - DAY 8

John and the other FRESHMEN are shuffled into a large room with panoramic glass windows all around. The walls are lined with hand-carved mahogany.

In the center of the room sits a small number of chairs - enough for about half of the students.

John rushes to grab a seat, as do many of the boys in the class. The rest of the girls stand awkwardly on the periphery of the chairs.

John glances up at one of them, a redhead student, with scrawled eyeliner that looks like it was applied on the bus ride to school. We will soon know her as LILITH (15).

She side-eyes John briefly before turning away.

JOHN

Hi, uh-

John waves his hand. The girl doesn't notice.

JOHN

(clears throat)

Excuse me, do you want to sit?

The girl turns to John, gives a slight smile.

LILITH

No, it's cool. I kinda like standing.

She stares at John cryptically.

JOHN

Are you sure? I like standing too, I like sitting, I like all, ah, ways of being still.

The girl giggles - at John, not with him, but he doesn't notice.

LILITH

You're fine. Stay.

John blushes at the command, turns away.

MRS. GROFF (O.S.)

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen!

The student's chatter dies down. John glances around to locate the source of the voice.

John sits up, and finds all four feet and eight inches of MRS. GROFF (47) smiling confidently in front of the crowd.

MRS. GROFF

Before we begin, let's pray together.

She reverently makes the sign of the cross. John and the other students slowly get the idea and join in.

MRS. GROFF

In the name of the father-

MRS. GROFF

-and of the son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, Amen.

STUDENTS

-and of the son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, Amen.

Mrs. Groff makes the sign of the cross. All students follow. She grins at them.

MRS. GROFF

My name is Mrs. Groff. It's my sincere hope that none of you get to know me during your four years at Dymphna's.

Mrs. Groff steps up close to a student in the front row, sleepy-eyed GARRY BRUSS (14).

MRS. GROFF

If you ever do have the pleasure, please know, you've made a mistake.

Mrs. Groff hands Garry a GRAY SLIP.

MRS. GROFF

Save nap time for the bus ride home. Fill out your name and see Mr. De Luca after school, room 232.

Garry sniffles, rubbing his eyes, holding back a tear.

GARRY

I'm sorry. I have to take a lot of buses to get here...

Mrs. Groff puts her hand on his shoulder.

MRS. GROFF

(warm)

Go to bed earlier. It'll be worth it.

She paces around the gaggle of students, hands behind her back.

MRS. GROFF

I know what it's like to be young, hopeful, a diamond in the rough.

Mrs. Groff tugs on a FEMALE STUDENT's (14) shirt, with a faint blue color visible beneath it.

MRS. GROFF

If you choose to wear a colored bra, don't whine to me when your chest gets pinched in the hallway.

The female student looks down, devastated. One damp male student, CONNOR O'CONNOR (14) lets out a GIGGLE. Mrs. Groff dagger-eyes him.

MRS. GROFF
 Your fly is undone and your shirt is
 sopping wet. Deodorant. Can you spell
 that for me?

Connor gulps.

CONNOR
 Uh, D, E, O, uh, W-

MRS. GROFF
 No.

Mrs. Groff makes her way to the front of the room.

MRS. GROFF
 You all lack polish. You're unformed,
 smelly, loose, and lost.

She points to a crucifix hanging at the top of the room.

MRS. GROFF
 But don't lose hope. Dymphna's where
 you come to meet God. It's where you
 go to *become yourself*.

John looks on expectantly.

MRS. GROFF
 Dymphna is my alma mater. In fact,
 this is the room where I first met my
 husband.

Mrs. Groff steps up close to Garry once more.

MRS. GROFF
 Do you know how I met him?

GARRY
 (mumbling)
 No, ma'am.

Mrs. Groff leans in, inches away from Garry's face.

MRS. GROFF
 He offered me *his seat*.

She gestures to the right, towards a standing FEMALE STUDENT.
 Garry SHOOTs UP, extends his hands towards the seat.

GARRY

I-I'm sorry, Miss, here you go!

The girl sits down. She's visibly uncomfortable. Mrs. Groff smiles.

Beat, as she looks up at the rest of the room.

MRS. GROFF

Young men, can you take a hint?

SKKKRRT! All the seated boys LEAP out of their seats, offering them to their female classmates. John, sweating bullets, looks up at Lilith.

JOHN

(whisper-shout)

Hey, can you please sit?!

LILITH

No. I told you, I like standing!

Soon, every seated student is a girl, save for John. Mrs. Groff steps between John and Lilith.

MRS. GROFF

(to John)

Have you wet yourself, or do you have some excitement you're trying to hide?

The students in the class giggle. John turns beet-red.

JOHN

No, no, I tried to give her my seat, but, she likes standing.

Mrs. Groff frowns, looks up at Lilith, who shakes her head.

LILITH

(faux-sad)

I, I kept asking him nicely, but all he did was yank my pigtails.

JOHN

What?! No!

THWIP! Mrs. Groff hands John a GRAY SLIP.

John sits next to a dozing Garry Bruss, his snores revving

like a clinically depressed buzzsaw.

ANGELO
Whatta you in for?

John swivels his head, smiling awkwardly at the STUDENT, ANGELO (14) sitting behind him.

JOHN
I was the only guy who didn't stand in the music room.

ANGELO
Did you have a boner or something?

JOHN
No, I don't- no. A girl tricked me.

ANGELO
(nods knowingly)
Mmm. That's pretty hot.

Angelo gives John a 'come here' gesture. John leans in as the two whisper-

ANGELO
They found me lookin' up cake farts by my locker.

JOHN
What?

ANGELO
Yeah, like, this naked girl sits her ass on a cake, and farts on it. Not shitting or anything, she just farts on it.

JOHN
(confused frown)
Oh... mmm, yeah. That's, pretty hot.

Angelo smiles widely at his new friend.

10 INT. BUS - DAY

10

John leans against his patchwork seat as the rickety school bus JOSTLES him around slightly.

He takes in a deep breath, pushing out all the embarrassment of his first day at school.

We hear the HISS of the engine and the GROAN of the metal interiors FADE AWAY as John OPENS the window and leans against it.

He sees sunlight STREAM in through the leaves of passing trees.

A lone goose HONKS to itself as it waddles through a grassy park.

John smiles at the goose. He makes the sign of the cross as he continues to gaze out the window, at God's world.

MARY (PRE-LAP)

Dear Lord, thank you for the company of my son on his evening. Thank you for his being here, in his mother's house-

11 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

11

John and Mary sit at the dinner table, praying together.

MARY

Please, watch over his father's soul... and please watch over John's soul, whenever he must come in contact with his father's soul, as per the worldly obligations set forth by the divorce settlement.

Beat.

MARY

Anything you want to add?

JOHN

Uh, thank you God, for dinner.

Mary frowns playfully, tilts her head. Gestures her prayer hands back at herself.

JOHN

Ah, and the chef.

Mary smiles, nods. Gestures her prayer hands at the surrounding room.

JOHN

And the house.

Mary grins, pinches at John's shirt using her prayer hands.

JOHN
And my clothes.

Mary makes a cryptic swirling gesture, gives an expectant look. John furrows his brow.

JOHN
And, uh, everything in the universe?

Mary smiles, nods.

JOHN	MARY
Amen.	Amen! Beautiful prayer, sweetie.

JOHN
(sarcastic)
Yeah, it just, came to me.

The two begin eating, as John struggles to take the toothpicks out from his Chicken Cordon Bleu.

Mary reaches over, yanks out all three for John.

MARY
Did you find the signups for
Eucharistic Ministry?

JOHN
Oh. Uh, no, must have slipped my mind.

MARY
(cheery)
Okay.

Mary picks up her fork, stabs a piece of chicken with it.

MARY
How about this? We'll take away your
games tonight, and every night until
you sign up.

JOHN
What?! No, Mom, I'll remember to do it
tomorrow!

MARY
(smiling)
I insist. Too many games are bad for

the developing mind.

John sighs, fiddles the extracted toothpicks with his fork.

PRE-LAP: A bell RINGS.

12 INT. HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

12

John grabs an NIV Teen Study Bible from his top locker. We hear muffled conversations and students bustling around him.

John slips the textbook into his backpack, closes the locker.

LILITH (O.S.)

My Dad's such a piece of shit.

John's ears perk up. He looks up, sees Lilith talking to Bridget, the blonde girl from orientation.

LILITH

He's down in Miami partying while my Mom gets stuck at home raising four kids.

BRIDGET

Wow. I can't even imagine that.

John's eyes widen.

JOHN

Are your parents divorced?

Lilith looks up, a bit taken aback. She pauses, then nods.

LILITH

Yeah.

JOHN

Mine too.

Lilith smiles. She looks up at her friend, who grins, walks away.

JOHN

When did your Dad leave?

LILITH

When did *your* Dad leave?

JOHN

Uhh, like, four years ago, I think?

Beat.

LILITH

Yeah. Mine left around that time as well.

JOHN

I'm sorry. Are you doing okay?

LILITH

I never wanna see him again, so, yeah.

John nods thoughtfully. Lilith stares at him with an odd intensity.

LILITH

Can I borrow a pencil?

JOHN

Oh, sure.

He reaches into his bag, hands her a pencil. As he does, *her fingertips brush against his*. Both of them notice this.

LILITH

Thanks.

John smiles.

JOHN

I'm John.

LILITH

Lilith.

Lilith slinks away to class. John turns, watching her go. Longing in his eyes.

ANGELO (PRE-LAP)

How many times you guys jerk off a day?

13 INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

13

John sits with Garry, Angelo, and Connor, amid the mayhem of lunch period.

John gulps at the question. Connor sits back, pondering.

CONNOR

Guess it depends on the day.

Connor elbows Garry, who raises his head from his hamburger. Sesame seeds dot his forehead.

CONNOR
How about you, Garry?

GARRY
(sniffles)
I have to do it before bed. It helps me fall asleep.

ANGELO
I'm a three times guy. Morning, noon, night. In fact,
(glances at watch)
I'm due to cum during sixth period.

Everyone turns to John.

ANGELO
How long does it take you, from flaccid to jizz?
(makes speedy jerk-off motion)
I'm down to thirty seconds.

Beat, as John shifts uncomfortably.

JOHN
Ahh, I wish I could jerk off, but, my Mom's always trying to stop me.

Angelo and Connor BURST into peals of laughter.

ANGELO
Hah! What, your Mam grabs your dick and does it herself?

Connor laughs, elbowing Angelo-

CONNOR
Yeah, does your Mom grab your dick?!

ANGELO
(to Connor)
I just said that.

Connor's smile vanishes.

John leans his head against his hands, looks past the table as everyone continues chattering.

GARRY

(muffled/fading out)

I don't understand all the love for
Moms. Like, a baby came out of there.
That's gross.

John's gaze wanders to a crucifix, hanging over the rest of the cafeteria. As he sees it, the chaotic noise of shifting chairs and screechy-pubescent laughter begins to dim.

14 INT. CHAPEL - LATER

14

John steps into the chapel. Its white stucco walls are inviting, its ceiling is made of STAINED GLASS, which lets in red, blue, and yellow-tinted daylight.

At the front of the chapel, atop the altar, sits a massive wafer inside a golden MONSTRANCE. It looks like a metallic sun with long winding rays spreading out in all directions.

To Catholics, this wafer is the **physical body** of Christ.

John looks at the sacrament, and makes the sign of the cross.

MAN

You here for EM sign-ups?

John startles at the MAN (40s), dressed in a modest black suit.

JOHN

Ah! Yes. I'm John-

John presses his palms together, bows awkwardly.

JOHN

Uh, bless you, father.

BROTHER PHIL

Hah, I'm a brother, actually. But,
nice to meet you, John. I'm Phil.

Brother Phil does a mock bow, grinning. He directs John to a pew. They both sit down.

BROTHER PHIL

So, you want to be a Eucharistic
Minister?

JOHN

Yeah, my Mom wanted, uhm-

John's eye is caught by the blessed sacrament. He watches it.

JOHN

I guess... I think I want to have my own thing, with God. Not super casual, my own thing like, oh, God's my homie, but... I don't know, it might be nice if God were my homie.

Brother Phil smiles warmly.

BROTHER PHIL

There's nothing wrong with wanting to be close on your own terms.

John smiles back. Brother Phil leans in.

BROTHER PHIL

But, how can you act as the bridge between Christ and his church, if you haven't started your relationship with Him?

John plays with the bottom of his tie.

JOHN

Well, I don't know...

John peers up, at the sunlight streaming in from the windows.

JOHN

I've sorta... had this feeling, ever since I was a kid, that someone was with me... like, every second of the day. And, it felt good, to know I had someone there, seeing all the beautiful stuff, and all the ugly stuff, too.

Beat. John looks up at Brother Phil.

JOHN

Do you think that's God?

Brother Phil smiles at John.

BROTHER PHIL

Meet me after school on Friday, if you want to start your training.

Brother Phil puts his hand on John's shoulder as he steps up

from the pew. John smiles so hard, he lets out a chuckle.

15 INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

15

John stalks Lilith's ASK.fm profile (a briefly popular early 2010's social media site where someone could be asked anonymous questions, which would be posted to their profile).

He scrolls past a few questions - "*Fave artist?*" "*How big are your boobs?*", and smiles at her answers - "*claude monet,*" and "*idk, how small is your penis?*".

His thumb stops on the next question - "*Do you believe in god?*"

He frowns at her response - "*Not a chance. Imma diehard atheist. Were alone in the universe...*"

John's ears perk up as he hears-

MARY (O.S.)

...full of grace, the Lord is with
you, blessed art thou among...

John's face scrunches up. He stands, walks to his bedroom door, and spies Mary praying in her room. He closes his door on the sight, drowning out the noise of her prayer.

16 INT. HALLWAY - DAY

16

John grabs books by his locker - slowly. As he does so, he casts furtive glances to his left, to see if Lilith is around.

LILITH

You look nervous.

John's back stiffens up in surprise. He can't hide his smile.

JOHN

Hah, a little bit, yeah.

Lilith starts packing her books. John clears his throat.

JOHN

Hey, listen, would you ever want to be
boyfriend? Be, uh, have a boyfriend?

Lilith laughs. John laughs along with her.

JOHN

God, I'm sorry. Do you want to go out on a date?

Lilith smiles, then covers it, pursing her lips.

LILITH

Well, I've been asked out by like, eleven guys today, so, I'll consider your offer.

JOHN

Wow, yeah, eleven. Okay. But I think, you know, I like that your parents are divorced.

Lilith raises her eyebrows. John shakes his head.

JOHN

Sorry! I mean, like, I can relate, and, I don't know, I wanted to get to know you better. All my friends talk about is like, jerking off-

Lilith snorts at this. John giggles with her.

LILITH

(taunting)

So you're a mature guy.

JOHN

Uh,

(deepens voice)

Yeah.

Lilith closes her locker.

LILITH

Okay, well, I don't wanna date anyone who believes in god, or the tooth fairy, or santa.

JOHN

I only believe in one of those, though! And that's just cuz I keep finding money under my pillow.

Lilith smiles.

LILITH

You're no Abercrombie and Fitch model,

but...

JOHN

Buuut?

LILITH

But. I need you to say something.

JOHN

Sure, anything, I'll say anything.

LILITH

Say "fuck Jesus" for me.

John freezes. He attempts a casual peer around the hallway to see if anyone heard.

JOHN

Wow. Okay. Uh... yeah. Sure.

LILITH

Yeah.

(aggressive)

Fuck Jesus.

JOHN

Ahah, fuuuuuuu-

Mr. De Luca walks by. John shuts his mouth. Lilith frowns, gives an expectant look - *well?*

JOHN

(clears throat)

Sorry. Ffff-

John spots Mrs. Groff stomping by-

JOHN

(to Mrs. Groff)

-uuul of love, love, for all.

Mrs. Groff keeps walking, unfazed.

LILITH

It has to be like, fuck you, Jesus.

JOHN

Right, yeah.

(as if surprised)

Fuck, Jesus?

LILITH

No. That's like you ran into Jesus at the park.

JOHN

Fuck,
(coughs)
Jesus!

Lilith punches John in the shoulder.

LILITH

No. One statement. Go.

JOHN

Jesus fuck.

LILITH

No, in order!

JOHN

(mumbling)
Fuckjesus.

LILITH

No, I need to hear it-

JOHN

(slightly less mumbled)
Fuckajesus-

LILITH

Dude, just say it!

JOHN

Gah! Fuck Jesus, okay!? Fuck Jesus!

Lilith nods approvingly, shuts her locker.

LILITH

Good. You can come over my house Friday, after school.

She slinks away with a smile, throwing two middle fingers in the air.

John grins in triumph, turns back to his locker. On a whiteboard calendar, he sees Friday marked - **E.M. TRAINING**. He stares at it for a moment, then slams his locker shut.

17 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

17

John puts the finishing touches on a REDHEAD Mii (a digital avatar from the Wii era). He grins as he inputs her name - L, I, L, I, T-

MARY

And who is this?

John turns around, barely hiding the pride on his face.

JOHN

Ohhhh, noothing-

MARY

Do you have a little crush? Are you going to put her next to your algebra teacher?

John gasps.

JOHN

What, no! Miss Quail was years ago. I don't even have her Mii anymore.

John quickly exits to the Mii Channel plaza, where he plucks a busty-looking FEMALE MII from the screen and deletes her.

JOHN

I don't have a crush. I have
(affected pose)
a *girlfriend*.

The smile vanishes from Mary's face.

MARY

Oh. A good girl, yeah? She's Catholic?

John frowns.

JOHN

She goes to Dymphna's.

Mary smiles once more.

MARY

Beautiful! So you have a date?

JOHN

Maaaaybe.

MARY
 (fangirling)
 Agh! What are you gonna wear?

JOHN
 Uhm, I have a pretty cool Walking Dead
 t-shirt-

Mary stifles a laugh, puts her hand on John's arm.

MARY
 Baby, I would wear a nice button up.
 Roll up the sleeves. And maybe a
 little *bow tie*! Agh, so cute! I'll go
 to Marshalls tomorrow.

Mary tussles John's hair while pinching his cheek.

MARY
 But make sure you wait a month before
 hugging. And don't hug too tightly, it
 could encourage your baser instincts.

JOHN
 (giggling)
 I don't think we're that close yet.

MARY
 Good. I look forward to meeting her. I
 hope she passes the Mom test.

JOHN
 The Mom test?

Mary sits down next to her son. She smiles at him lovingly.

MARY
 If you look happy next to her, she
 passes.

Mary kisses John on the cheek, and leaves the room.

John smiles, wiping his cheek. He looks up at Lilith's Mii on
 the TV screen, and clicks SAVE.

18 INT. HALLWAY - DAY

18

John elbows his way through THROGS of STUDENTS as the final
 bell rings. He reaches Angelo, grabs him by the shoulders.

JOHN
Angelo! My dude!

Angelo's shoulders CRINGE as he shrugs John off-

ANGELO
Jesus, what are you, tryna fuck me?

Angelo keeps walking. John follows.

JOHN
You wish. What's up?

ANGELO
I just shit the bed on my first
English quiz, so-

JOHN
Oh man, I'm sorry about that-

As the two round the corner, John STOPS Angelo with his hand.

JOHN
You wanna do me a quick favor? Could
you run into the chapel and tell
Brother Phil I can't make EM training?
Tell him my, uh, Grandpa has cancer.
You can pick the organ.

Angelo looks stunned, for a second.

ANGELO
(shakes head)
Ehh. I don't like talking to priests.
I always feel like they're gonna try
and suck my dick or something.

JOHN
Well, he's a brother, so.

ANGELO
Oh, sorry, he's gonna fuck me in the
ass instead?

Angelo starts to walk away. John steps in front of him.

JOHN
Help me out. I have a date.

ANGELO
(raises his eyebrows)

Hmm.

He looks John up and down.

ANGELO
You said you have a Mom, right?

JOHN
Yeah, we all have Moms-

ANGELO
Yeah, but she's... send me a picture
of her.

John winces.

JOHN
Ugh, no way dude. I don't want you
jerking off to my Mom-

ANGELO
You're a sick little fuck, you know
that? I just wanna see what she looks
like.

John shakes his head. Angelo grabs him by the shoulders-

ANGELO
My bus leaves in three minutes. Send
me a little pic of Mrs. Santucci.

JOHN
Listen, I'll invite you guys over my
house this weekend, okay? You can meet
her. She's a kind, respectable woman.

Angelo grunts, then stares intensely at John.

ANGELO
We're gonna get pizza. White pie. I
get my own white pie.

JOHN
Deal.

ANGELO
You got a Wii?

JOHN
I got a Wii.

Angelo looks at his watch, nods.

19 INT. LEXUS - LATER

19

John hops into the passenger seat, as Pete is mid-sentence, phone to his ear-

PETE
If you double your rate of failure,
you triple your rate of success, you
understand? That's just math, Paul-

Pete tussles John's hair, pulls him in for an awkward side hug with one hand, while his other hand rests on the wheel. John smiles sheepishly.

PETE
If you, if you, can we just talk logic
for a second? If ten people buy our
tile, and they all tell ten of their
friends, and they tell ten-

John peers out the window, and sees Angelo RACING after his bus as it drives away.

John gulps, sinks into his seat.

20 INT. DAD'S OFFICE - DAY

20

We see a BLITZ game on chess.com. Bishop captures knight with a satisfying CLACK.

JOHN
Hey, Dad, guess what?

Pete's face is lit up by the blue of his computer screen. John stands behind him, dressed in a button-up shirt and bow tie for his date.

PETE
(distracted)
Johnny-ooch, what's up son?

JOHN
(beaming)
I have a girlfriend.

Opponent advances a pawn with a dull THUD.

PETE

Ah, nice! Same here! High five.

He raises his free hand in the air, faces it behind him. John gives him a spirited slap.

JOHN

Oh, awesome. Yeah, good for you, uh...
what about pawn to H5?

Pete's eyes narrow.

JOHN

You could pin the-

PETE

Rook and the bishop. Not bad!

He makes the move - THUD.

JOHN

Listen, I have a date tonight, and I
need a ride.

PETE

Mmm, you need money for a taxi? The
change jar could use emptying.

He gestures to a JAR OF COINS beneath his desk. Opponent moves his bishop behind a supporting pawn, attacking Pete's queen and avoiding the trap - THUD.

PETE

Ahh, shit. Should have seen that one.

JOHN

Dad, I was thinking, maybe you could
drive me?

He walks around Pete's desk chair, faces his screen-lit face.

JOHN

Her Mom wants to meet me. I thought it
would be cool if you met her, too.

Pete takes in a long sigh.

PETE

Ahh, I don't know. I had to talk a
supplier off the ledge today, it was
like, agh, and then, had to schlep to

Uniondale to pick you up... kinda just
need to decompress, you know?

Pete moves his Queen to evade capture and reinforce his pawn
- THUD.

John musters up a polite nod for his father. He grabs a
handful of change-

21 INT. CAB - DAY

21

-and dumps a pile of COINS into cabbie MITCH's (40s) hands.

JOHN

Sorry. My Dad's trying to get rid of
his change.

Mitch gives a long sigh, and begins parsing his way through
the coins. John gets out of the cab-

22 EXT. LILITH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

22

-and walks up to the door. He turns around, noticing that
Mitch is still sitting in his yellow taxi out front.

John shoos him away, but Mitch is busy staring at his
mountain of coins.

JOHN

Hey! You can go now!

We hear the door open behind John.

BRUCE (O.S.)

Hello!

John turns around. He's staring up at BRUCE ARQUETTE (40s),
Lilith's FATHER.

BRUCE

You must be Rachel's special friend.

He reaches out his arm, gives John a firm handshake.

JOHN

(confused)

Uh, yeah. I'm John, great to meet you-

BRUCE

Is that your Dad back there? Can I say
hello to him?

Bruce steps out towards Mitch.

JOHN

No, no! I don't know who that guy is. My Dad just dropped me off. He wanted to make sure I got here safe. He's very invested in me, as all parents are. I mean, uh, not all parents are invested in me, just, all parents are invested in their kids.

John chuckles nervously. The man nods.

MITCH

Hey! Kid! You shorted me three bucks!

John shudders. Mitch gets out of his taxi and stomps up the steps.

MITCH

Bad enough I gotta count a pile'a fuckin' dimes. Pay up.

BRUCE

Excuse me?

John reaches into his pockets, grabs more change, hands it to MITCH-

JOHN

Please consider this a donation. Have a nice evening, get yourself some food and a place to rest.

MITCH

What the fuck are you tawkin'-

BRUCE

Hey! Enough with the language. You're paid up.

Mitch throws his hands in the air, clomps back to his car.

MITCH

Congrats, you made it onto on my don't cawl list, kid.

Bruce frowns, looking back at John with new eyes. He walks back into the house, shouting-

BRUCE

Rachel! He's here!

He turns to John, noticeably cooler-

BRUCE
You can come in.

23 INT. LILITH'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

23

John steps inside, trying his best to hide his confusion and embarrassment.

Lilith comes down the stairs, dressed in a low-cut white sweater. Her face is free of makeup for the first time since we've met her. She's wearing a GOLD NECKLACE with a CROSS on it.

She steps up to John, gives a coy smile - and a confused glance at his bow-tie.

LILITH
Hey.

Bruce eyes her sweater.

BRUCE
Where'd you get that?

Lilith shrugs, looks at the ground.

LILITH
I don't know, Hollister?

BRUCE
That's a lot of chest.

LILITH
...okay?

BRUCE
Why don't you go put on something that tells me you respect yourself?

LILITH
(mortified)
Dad...

Bruce turns to John.

BRUCE
I mean, don't you agree?

John stares back, a deer in headlights.

JOHN

Well... uh, I think I have, a lot of, respect, for your daughter.

BRUCE

I'm talking about the sweater.

JOHN

I... I like the fabric.

Lilith groans, slinks away. John looks after her, confusion still on his face. Her father places his hand on John's shoulder.

24 INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

24

Bruce sits down at his desk. He motions for John to sit down. John does so, the change in his pocket JANGLING as he shifts his weight.

Bruce presents a formal smile to John.

BRUCE

We have something in common, John. You know what that is?

JOHN

Oh, are you a Mets fan? Let's go Mets!

Bruce clears his throat.

BRUCE

I'm actually a Yankees fan.

JOHN

(shifting nervously)
Mmm, yeah. I love the Yankees.

BRUCE

Right. But, there's something specific we both share-

JOHN

Yeah, we're both Catholic.

BRUCE

(sighing)
Yes, yes, but there's a particular person in our lives that we both care about-

JOHN
Right, that's Jesus-

BRUCE
No, John, gosh. Rachel!

JOHN
(faux casual)
Ahah, yeah! Rachel! That makes sense.
I was just, thinking of Him.

Beat. Bruce straightens his back. He leans forward.

BRUCE
I'd like to know what your intentions
are with my daughter.

John sobers up, looks down for a moment - *should I say it?*

JOHN
I guess I'm drawn to Lil- uh, Rachel,
because she said her parents were
divorced. That made me feel like we
might have something in common.
Something really personal.

Bruce frowns.

BRUCE
She... what did she tell you?

25 INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

25

John stares across the table at CLARA ARQUETTE (45). She
sends him a kind smile.

CLARA
So good to meet you.

JOHN
Yes, so good.

John looks at Lilith, then to the table.

JOHN
(tight smile)
What a lovely uh, *intact*, family unit.

Beat. Bruce clears his throat.

BRUCE

Rachel, would you like to lead us in prayer?

LILITH

I'd love it if John could lead us, actually.

Bruce shrugs. John glowers at Lilith. He straightens his back, clears his throat, clasps his hands.

JOHN

Well, thank you, Rachel. And thank you God, for *honesty*. Thank you for all of your holy children who represent themselves accurately.

John smiles at Lilith. She dagger eyes John.

JOHN

Ame-

LILITH

Actually, I'd like to add something.

John clears his throat.

JOHN

Of course, of course.

LILITH

Lord, thank you for those who are *adaptable*. Thank you for all of our brothers and sisters who know how to go with the flow and not take every little thing so seriously.

Bruce and Clara share a quizzical glance.

LILITH

Ame-

JOHN

That was beautiful, Rachel.

JOHN

And I might add, thank you God for the *responsible* souls among us. Thank you for those who take ownership over their sins, say, *lying*, for example-

Lilith KICKS John's leg under the table.

LILITH

Great God of all things, thank you so much for your children who know how to

appreciate an active imagination-

JOHN

Holy Spirit, thank you for the blessed few who would never dress up a *vice* and call it a *virtue*-

LILITH

God, thank you for those who know when to shut up and eat-

JOHN

Thank you Lord Jesus, for those who don't have an appetite because they feel *hurt* when they've been *lied* to-

BRUCE

(grave)

I'd like to add something.

Beat, as John and Lilith look over at Bruce. They settle back into their chairs.

BRUCE

Thank you Lord, for all your children who go to *eucharistic adoration* as penance for making a scene at dinner.

He smiles. Lilith GROANS, falls back into her seat.

LILITH

Are you serious?! My first date, at the youth group? I wanted to hang out, or go for a walk-

BRUCE

You're fifteen years old, Rachel. I'll decide where you can and can't go with your special friend-

LILITH

He's my boyfriend.

John shifts nervously in his seat. Lilith turns to her mother-

LILITH

Mom, can't we just hang out here-

BRUCE
 (roars)
 HEY!

Pin drop silence, as Lilith hangs her head low. Bruce takes in a breath. He leans in towards her.

BRUCE
 Don't wedge yourself between your
 mother and father.

In the corner of his eye, John spies Lilith, the pain on her face.

26 INT. SEDAN - LATER

26

John and Lilith sit in tense silence as Lilith's father drives them to adoration.

Every few seconds, one of them has the courage to glance in the other's direction - but they keep missing each other.

27 INT. GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

27

John and Lilith stand up against the wall of the gym, watching a group of GANGLY TEENS play dodgeball.

John holds a plate of snacks in his hand. He nibbles on a chocolate chip cookie while he watches the teens play.

JOHN
 I didn't know adoration was this,
 uh... playful.

Lilith scoffs.

LILITH
 They do little activities beforehand,
 so the home schoolers can learn how to
 socialize.

John nods, as the awkward body language of the players takes on a new meaning.

Lilith takes off her modest grey sweater, revealing the original low-cut white sweater she was wearing before. She applies purple eyeliner while looking into a pocket mirror.

JOHN
 (re: sweater)
 Ah, nice one.

LILITH

Yeah, you weren't much help back there.

JOHN

Sorry. I didn't know you were gonna have a Dad.

LILITH

Well I wish I didn't, so.

JOHN

So you just, lied about it?

LILITH

Lie is, mmm, I wouldn't use that word.

JOHN

What word would you use?

Lilith puts her eyeliner away in a huff.

LILITH

I don't know! I just, I hate my name, I hate the shit he force feeds me. I didn't want to go to a fucking borderline Amish school.

JOHN

Could you talk to your Mom about it?

LILITH

My Mom's like, that picture of a face with no mouth.

JOHN

Wow,
(chuckles)
our Moms are really different.

LILITH

Is yours super controlling?

JOHN

No, no! She's like... she just likes to look out for me.

LILITH

Oh yeah? Was this her?

She tugs at John's bow tie. John lies-

JOHN
Hah, no. I, I dress myself.

LILITH
(sweet)
Well, it looks a little dumb, just
fyi.

JOHN
Oh! Uh, sorry-

John lifts up his collar to remove it-

LILITH
I got it-

Lilith steps up to John, reaches around his neck, loosens the bow-tie. It's the closest their faces have ever been.

28 INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

28

The pews are so full that TEEN WORSHIPPERS spill out onto the side aisles - John and Lilith included.

John kneels next to Lilith, who sits with her back against the wall.

The MONSTRANCE is brought out. A bright spotlight SHINES on the eucharist wafer inside.

John breathes heavily, his knees buckling against the hard marble floor. Lilith smirks at him, tugs his shirt.

LILITH
You don't have to play tough.

John sighs, falls back against the wall, sitting next to her. There are dozens of worshippers nearby, but the look on John's face makes it clear - to him, Lilith is the only person in the world.

The two lock eyes, then break immediately. John looks down.

Lilith has her hands in her lap. She takes one of them and gently pushes it over, closer to John. He looks at her hand, moving past her leg, her fingers hovering in the air.

John gulps - *should I do it?*

He moves his hand towards hers.

JOHN
 (whispers)
 Is this bad? Should we be kneeling?

LILITH
 (whispers)
 Shhh...

The tip of John's finger touches Lilith's outstretched hand. She closes her hand around his.

John caresses her knuckles with his thumb.

John smiles, then breathes in, taking a mental picture of the moment. He glances up at the altar, at the SHINING eucharist, at the thoughtful faces of the kneeling teens who worship it.

29 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

29

John, Connor, and Angelo play New Super Mario Bros. Wii, while Garry lays passed out on the couch.

Mary pokes her head in-

MARY
 (performative)
 Did somebody order a pizza?

She plops the pizza box on the table in front of the boys.

ANGELO
 (high-pitched, perfect diction)
 Thank you so very much, Mrs. Santucci!

Mary waves her hand - *oh, stop, it's nothing!*

MARY
 Please, call me Ms. Romano!

Beat. We hear the front door slam behind her as she leaves.

JOHN
 Don't say it-

CONNOR
 Dude, she's so hot-

ANGELO
 So hot. I'm takin' a photo with her before I leave-

JOHN
 (half serious)
 Dude, I'll fucking kill you.

Angelo snorts. John moves to open the pizza and take a slice-

ANGELO

Don't touch that. That's my pie.

John grumbles, falls back into the couch. He tosses the wiimote to Garry-

JOHN

Garry, your turn!

Garry snorts awake.

GARRY

Buh?

ANGELO

How did the date go? Did she touch your penis? Mouth, hands, over the jeans?

John smiles at the memory, nuzzling into the couch.

JOHN

Yeah, it was great. We went to a youth group and talked, and,
(warm smile)
held hands...

Connor, Garry, and Angelo look at one another. They BURST out laughing.

ANGELO

What, did you skip through the fuckin meadow together?

GARRY

(chuckling)

That's it? You just held hands?

JOHN

Uh, yeah-

CONNOR

Dude, she thinks you're gay-

ANGELO

Definitely. Can't know if she likes you even a little bit until you make out. Prolly gotta feel downstairs to see if she's wet, too.

Connor nudges John.

CONNOR

And if she's shaved-

ANGELO

Yeah, if she isn't shaved, that means she wasn't lookin' forward to anything.

JOHN

How do you know all of this?

Angelo WHAPS John on the back of the head.

ANGELO

Because we're fuckin' experts! We did our research!

JOHN

How many girls have you guys dated?

ANGELO

Zero, zip. But I watch a lotta porn-

CONNOR

And reddit. Girls go on there and tell all their secrets. And sometimes guys upload their penises.

John rubs his forehead, exasperated.

30 INT. HOMEROOM - DAY

30

John sits behind Lilith as a PRE-PUBESCENT STUDENT (15) struggles not to voice crack while he says the morning announcements over the video projector.

John looks at Lilith admiringly, sees the peach fuzz of her neck glow blue against the light of the projector.

John eyes his homeroom teacher, MR. MYERS (30) - *will he see?*

Mr. Myers sits at his desk, absent-mindedly fingering his wedding ring.

John exhales - *coast is clear*. He leans forward-

JOHN

(whispers)

You wanna hang out this weekend?

PRE-PUBESCENT

STUDENT (O.S.)

Class of 2012, this is your last chance to submit for-

Lilith turns her head to the side.

LILITH
(smiling)
Let's watch bowlers.

PRE-PUBESCENT
STUDENT (O.S.)
-Project Appreciation, to
receIve the-

JOHN
Go bowling?

PRE-PUBESCENT
STUDENT (O.S.)
-early bird discount.

LILITH
No. I like watching the
bowlers. You save money, and
the bowling alley can't
legally kick you out if you
don't bowl. It's a law.

PRE-PUBESCENT
STUDENT (O.S.)
Please hurry home and tell
your parents. This is so
much more than a trip to
Israel.

John smiles thoughtfully.

JOHN
Cool... as long as I'm with
you.

PRE-PUBESCENT
STUDENT (O.S.)
It's an interfaith memory
thAt will last a lifetime.

Beneath her desk, Lilith lets her hand fall out behind her
back.

Beneath his desk, John leans forward and holds her hand. She
smiles.

PRE-PUBESCENT STUDENT (O.S.)
Will John Santu- uh, San-touch-ee,
please see Brother Phil in his office
before first period?

John SHOOTs back, letting go of Lilith's hand. A few nearby
students turn and look at him with curiosity.

Recognition flashes on his face - *shit, the EM training.*

31 INT. BROTHER PHIL'S OFFICE

31

John steps inside. Brother Phil is absorbed, reading a copy
of *Man's Search for Meaning*.

His office is filled with abstract devotional paintings -
multicolored portraits of Christ that look like Jackson
Pollock paintings at first glance.

BROTHER PHIL
 (friendly)
 John! Sit down.

John sits.

JOHN
 I'm so sorry about Friday, my Grandpa-

BROTHER PHIL
 I heard. How are things at home? Are you alright?

JOHN
 Oh no, yeah, I'm good, Mom's good, it's just, a total tragedy, you know? Cancer of the, uh, the-

BROTHER PHIL
 Liver?

JOHN
 Right! The liver... yeah, no, it's tough. It's really tough. But uh, is there any way I can make up my training?

Beat, as Brother Phil inhales, and leans forward.

BROTHER PHIL
 John.

JOHN
 Yeah?

BROTHER PHIL
 Do you want this?

JOHN
 Yeah!

Brother Phil shakes his head.

BROTHER PHIL
 Don't say the first thing that pops into your head. Think about if you actually want to be a minister.

John shrinks back into his seat.

JOHN

Well, uhm-

BROTHER PHIL

Don't talk while you think. Sit for a second.

JOHN

Sure, cool-

BROTHER PHIL

Don't talk!

JOHN

You got it-

Shhh! Brother Phil puts his finger to his lips. John nods.

We sit with John. His eyes peer around, catching a portrait of the Virgin Mary cradling baby Jesus. He also spots a print of Gustave Dore's *Temptation of Christ* hanging on the wall.

JOHN

...do you think, when Satan fell from heaven, his friends saw him falling? Or his Mom? Did he have a Mom?

Brother Phil stares at John with something between pity and pride in his eyes.

BROTHER PHIL

If I put a gun to your head, and told you to say you love me, and you complied... would that constitute love, in your mind?

JOHN

Probably not.

BROTHER PHIL

Right? Love can't come from a place of fear. Serving the eucharist isn't about being who someone wants us to be. It's about being like Christ.

John nods, takes this in.

JOHN

Can I serve at the next monthly mass?

BROTHER PHIL
 If you keep working on your
 relationship with God. No
 distractions.

John smiles, standing up.

JOHN
 Thank you, Bro Phil-

John shakes hands with Brother Phil.

ANGELO (O.S.)
 Uh, sorry, am I early?

John turns, and sees Angelo in the doorway.

He frowns at him thoughtfully - *what are you doing here?*
 Angelo looks down, his cheeks growing red.

BROTHER PHIL
 No! Come in, we're just wrapping up.

John steps out. As he leaves, Brother Phil shouts after him.

BROTHER PHIL
 Remember, no distrac-

32 INT. BOWLING ALLEY - DAY

32

John rests his head on Lilith's shoulder, their hands
 interlocked as they watch BOWLERS playing at the lanes.

John leans into her ear.

JOHN
 Hey.

LILITH
 (smiling)
 What?

JOHN
 Can I kiss you?

Lilith sits back, takes John's arm off of her.

LILITH
 Weeeell, okay.

John giggles, leans in. Lilith pushes his face away with her

hand.

LILITH

But.

JOHN

But?

She produces a SMALL GLASS VIAL filled with a clear liquid.

LILITH

This is holy water, from Lourdes.

John straightens up at the sight of the holy object.

JOHN

Oh, wow. Doesn't that cure cancer?

Lilith snorts. She leans forward, whispering-

LILITH

You see that dog over there?

John turns around, and eyes a golden retriever SEEING EYE DOG, sitting next to MAGGIE (20s, blind) and her FRIENDS.

He looks back at Lilith fearfully.

33 INT. BOWLING ALLEY - SHORTLY AFTER

33

John slinks over to Maggie and her friends. He smiles at her.

JOHN

Can I pet?

MAGGIE

Huh?!

The girl JOLTS in surprise. Her friends scowl at John.

JOHN

(remembering she's blind)
Oh! I'm sorry, sorry, I thought,
(clears throat)
your dog is really cute, could I pet
her? Or him?

MAGGIE

Guys. Does he look weird?

FRIEND #1
He's like an anorexic Tobey Maguire.

MAGGIE
Oh, that's fine. You can pet him.

She waves John on. John kneels down, pets the retriever near his water bowl.

JOHN
Hey, little buddy...

In his back pocket, John takes out the holy water vial. He loosens the cap, lowers it to the bowl, pours it in-

FRIEND #2
Excuse me?

Friend #2 SNATCHES the bowl away from John.

MAGGIE
What's going on?

FRIEND #2	JOHN
He's putting something into Chloe's bowl.	No, no!

GASPS from Maggie and her friends.

JOHN
It's holy water from Lourdes!

John holds up the vial.

FRIEND #1	FRIEND #2
I'm sorry?	Can you leave?

OWNER (O.S.)
What's going on here?!

JOHN
It's holy! It's holy! You can drink
it! Look-

John pours the vial into his mouth-

JOHN
EWGH!

FRIEND #1	FRIEND #2
What the fuck-	Oh my god-

34 EXT. OUTSIDE BOWLING ALLEY - LATER

34

John and Lilith are SHOOED out the door by the OWNER. They both sit on the curb.

Lilith breaks first, laughing gleefully. John looks at her in wonder.

JOHN

Can I kiss you?

Lilith smiles.

LILITH

Take off your sweatshirt.

John does so. Lilith throws it over her head.

LILITH

Come under.

John shimmies closer to Lilith, lifts the sweatshirt up, goes under.

LILITH

(smiling)

Let's pretend we're in a cave, at the bottom of the ocean.

In the dark of the sweatshirt, Lilith leans in towards John. He leans in a little. She leans in some more. Their lips fumble into a kiss - it's awkward, but neither of them realize it. John sways back, gives an elated sigh.

JOHN

Wow.

Beat, as they sit under the sweatshirt.

JOHN

(tender disbelief)

I think I love you.

Lilith smiles warmly, shakes her head with a chuckle.

LILITH

(flirty)

You're silly.

John rubs his neck, looks down.

JOHN
 Sorry, was the kiss not good?

LILITH
 No, it was acceptable.

JOHN
 Acceptable? Like, compared to all the other guys you've kissed?

Lilith raises her eyebrows. She puffs out her chest.

LILITH
 Well, I haven't- I don't know. I've made out with like, twenty, or, forty guys, so.

JOHN
 (deflated)
 Uh huh... well, you're the first girl I've kissed, so.

Lilith laughs guiltily.

LILITH
 Maybe you just need more practice.

She leans in, and french-kisses John.

CUT TO WIDE:

The bowling alley owner stands behind the two sweatshirt-covered kissers, his arms crossed.

OWNER
 Can you two get off my property?

John and Lilith throw off the sweatshirt, their cheeks red.

35 EXT. BEHIND BOWLING ALLEY - DAY

35

John and Lilith make out behind a dumpster in an alleyway near the bowling alley. Their hair is noticeably tousled.

John pulls back from the kisses.

JOHN
 Do you think I'm gay?

LILITH
 Uh, no.

JOHN
Okay, cool.

The two keep kissing. Then, John pulls back-

JOHN
Do you kiss other guys like this?

Lilith frowns.

LILITH
Uhm, what does that mean?

JOHN
Sorry, like, am I doing better?

Lilith nods. She leans in for another kiss, to invite John into the moment. John accepts it... for a second.

JOHN
Has a guy ever touched you? Down there?

Lilith's eyes widen as she pulls back.

LILITH
Do you not like kissing me or something?

JOHN
No, I do! I'm sorry, I'm being dumb. Stupid, sorry. I just thought, if we did something you've never done before, then I'd know you like me.

LILITH
Well, how can I know you like me? I just wanna kiss, and you're talking about other guys.

JOHN
I'm sorry. I do like you- I told you I loved you.

LILITH
Those are just words.

JOHN
How can I show you I love you?

Beat.

LILITH

What if you like, got a Bible, and,
like, lit it on fire?

JOHN

Jesus. What?

LILITH

Love is sacrifice.

John's eyes widen as he notices Mom's Prius parked at the end of the alleyway, in front of the bowling alley.

His back stiffens. He shuffles away from Lilith - leaving room for the Holy Spirit.

36 EXT. OUTSIDE BOWLING ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

36

Mary gets out of her car, gives John a big hug.

MARY

Hey, baby!
(kisses on both cheeks)
Mwah! Mwah!

JOHN

Agh! Hey, Mom.

She turns to Lilith, gives a polite smile.

MARY

You must be John's little friend.

Lilith grins widely, extends her hand.

LILITH

Yes! I'm Lilith, John's *girlfriend*.
Nice to meet you, Mrs. Santucci.

MARY

I prefer Ms. Romano, if you don't
mind. What were you two doing by the
dumpster?

JOHN

Ahh, we were throwing out some
garbage!

Mary narrows her eyes, pointing to a GARBAGE CAN right next to John - *why didn't you use that?*

Lilith steps in front of the car.

LILITH

(smile)

I've heard so many nice things about you!

MARY

And I've heard so little about you! Tell me, Lily, how are you doing in school?

LILITH

Very well, so far! All A's in English, Algebra, Earth Science, Scripture, Church History-

MARY

We-ll, look at you! There must be some class you're doing poorly in!

JOHN

(embarrassment)

Mom!

LILITH

Nope, I'm pretty much good at everything.

MARY

And what about your faith? Do you attend Mass?

LILITH

Every Sunday! And what about *your* faith, Mrs. Santucci? Have you gotten an annulment to absolve the sin of your divorce yet?

John's face turns red.

Mary bites her tongue as she eyes the owner CLOMPING towards her.

OWNER (O.S.)

You responsible for these kids?

John and Lilith's faces sink. Mary steps forward, her face white as a sheep.

37 INT. PRIUS - CONTINUOUS

37

Mary drives, her face tight with polite fury.

MARY

Save the rest for your wife, dear.

Ugly silence, as she continues driving. John looks down.

JOHN

...does she not pass the Mom test?

MARY

Do you look happy?

JOHN

I really like her.

MARY

Is that your heart talking, or something else?

JOHN

...what?

MARY

(sighs)

When you're 'sucking face' behind a dumpster, is that your heart or something in your pants?

JOHN

Mom! Seriously?!

MARY

You wanna be an adult? Let's talk like adults! Why do you like her so much?

JOHN

I don't know! I just, she's really clever, and she always knows when she doesn't like something, and I don't feel, like, lonely when I'm with her.

MARY

Great metric! Toss away all your hopes for a partner and marry so you can feel less lonely. Works every time.

JOHN

(defeated)

Okay, Mom.

John slumps back in his seat, shifting his whole body towards the window. His face contorts, then settles into decision.

JOHN
Hey, could you settle a debate?

MARY
What do you mean?

JOHN
My friends and I were arguing about whether the New Living Translation or the English Standard was the least holy Bible.

MARY
(snorts)
You're arguing least holy, and nobody brought up the King James Version?

A grin flashes on John's face.

PRE LAP: A Microwave DINGS.

38 INT. ANGELO'S BASEMENT - DAY

38

John stares down a KING JAMES VERSION Bible sitting in the bookshelf of Angelo's basement living room.

Behind him, Angelo and Connor play Black Ops Zombies. Behind them, Garry is asleep on an inversion table.

CONNOR
Pizza boys are ready!

Angelo swats behind him.

ANGELO
Garry! Get the pizza boys!

Angelo's hand pushes the inversion table forward, flipping Garry UPSIDE DOWN. He stays asleep.

John reaches for the Bible.

JOHN
Angelo, this your Bible?

Angelo glances from the game. His face sinks, but he quickly recovers.

ANGELO
Uh, yeah, it's my Dads.

JOHN
Mmm.

ANGELO
Can you get the boys?

John takes the Bible from the shelf, flips through the pages faux-casually.

JOHN
You know, this is the least holy Bible there is. It's like, negative holy.

CONNOR
(to the TV)
Ahh! Ray Gun!

ANGELO
(to John)
Have yah seen Garry?! Look at him!

Angelo flips Garry right-side up on the inversion table. He start snoring louder.

ANGELO
He's losing weight! I'm worried about him! Can you get the boys?!

JOHN
Could I bring this to a priest? I want to exorcise any demons that could be lurking inside of it.

ANGELO
Get the pizza boys, *and*, you know what, I want an invite to your girlfriend's friend's sweet fifteen.

JOHN
Bridget?

ANGELO
Yeah.

JOHN
You got a little crush?

ANGELO
No! Fuck off!

John giggles.

PRE LAP: We hear a MATCH BEING STRUCK.

39 EXT. DAD'S BACKYARD

39

John stares at the flame. In front of him, on Pete's

cobblestone patio, sits the KING JAMES BIBLE.

He looks guiltily at the Bible. Back to the match. He BLOWS it out.

He sits down, closes his eyes, flips the Bible to a random page. He places his finger to a random verse.

It's Lamentation's 3:40 - *Let us examine and probe our ways, And let us return to the LORD.*

John frowns. He flips through the Bible again, finds another random page. He opens his eyes.

Romans 6:23 - *For the wages of sin is death.*

John clears his throat. Flips through again. Opens his eyes.

Leviticus 6:13 - **Fire shall be kept burning on the altar continually; it shall not go out.**

John raises his eyebrows.

CUT TO:

The King James Bible, ENGULFED by flames.

John takes out his Xperia Play and SNAPS a photo, sends it to Lilith. He stands, watching the flames dance before his eyes.

40 INT. BUS - DAY

40

John kisses Lilith in the back of the bus. Lilith pulls back, smiling.

LILITH
Let's do it now.

JOHN
What? Now now?

John peeks his head above the seat, at the STUDENTS populating the rest of the bus.

LILITH
Yeah. It would be so bad. Let's do it.

Lilith pulls down her tights, grabs John's hand, pushes it under her skirt. John's eyes widen as he makes contact.

JOHN

Wow. You're uh, wet.

Lilith stares blankly at him.

LILITH

Yeah, we've been making out for a half hour.

JOHN

I just, you're also hairy down there... does that mean you only half like me?

LILITH

Am I supposed to be shaved?

JOHN

No, no, I just have it on good information that, you know, if you're shaved, it means you're really excited.

LILITH

Are you shaved?

JOHN

Uh, no, but I can be. My Mom has a razor at home-

LILITH

Can you just finger me and we both keep our pubes?

JOHN

Sure, sorry... uh, am I doing okay?

LILITH

I think you have to like, make little circles with your fingers.

John obliges clumsily. Lilith moves his hand.

LILITH

That's my thigh.

JOHN

Oh, sorry, sorry. How's this?

Lilith sighs with pleasure at John's correction.

LILITH

Yeah, that's good. Keep going.

The bus hits a BUMP - John's hand slips.

LILITH

Woop, no, that's not the
right hole-

JOHN

Oh, fuck, sorry-

41 INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM (DAD'S HOUSE) - NIGHT

41

We see John's left hand. He rubs his thumb over his pointer
finger.

He tenses his hand, as if to squeeze the sin out of it. He
does it again, harder, digging his fingernails into his palm.

42 INT. DAD'S OFFICE - NIGHT

42

John puts his ear up to the door of Pete's office. Inside, we
hear meditation music and some mantras.

John knocks on the door.

JOHN

Dad?

PETE

Come in!

John steps inside. The ceiling is lit with stars from a
GALAXY projector. Gentle meditation music laps into our ears.

MEDITATION VOICE

I am inviting infinite
wealth, into my life.

PETE

...I am inviting infinite
wealth, into my life.

Pete is laying backwards on his recliner, looking up at the
stars on his ceiling. He waves at John.

PETE

You wanna meditate?

JOHN

Uh, I'm okay.

MEDITATION VOICE

I use money, to improve, the
lives of others.

PETE

...I use money, to improve,
the lives of others.

JOHN

Actually, could we talk for a second?

John steps to Pete's computer, and turns off the music.

Pete straightens up in his chair.

PETE

You okay?

John pulls up another chair, sits across from Pete.

JOHN

Yeah, of course. Dad, I'm just- are you feeling okay?

PETE

Uhm, yeah.

JOHN

Okay, uhm, do you know when the last time you went to confession was?

Understanding washes over Pete's face.

PETE

Ahh, John, it's been a while.

John pulls out a notepad and begins writing on it-

JOHN

You see this?

Pete leans in. We see a little humanoid figure, filled with empty white space in its torso, limbs, and head.

JOHN

This is your soul. And every time you, you know, get a divorce, or whatever-

John scribbles in black ink onto the soul, making spots.

JOHN

You do *that*. And, you know, that's not gonna fly, when you get judged after you die. And I wanna hang out with you in heaven, so, could you go to confession?

Pete takes in a breath, smiles kindly at his son.

PETE

You know, everyone's got to find their peace thing in this life. This, (points to galaxy ceiling) is kinda my peace thing.

JOHN

Yeah but, that's just-

PETE

Why don't you try it with me?

JOHN

No.

PETE

Why can't you try it?

JOHN

It's pagan.

PETE

Oh god. Just like Harry Potter and The Golden Compass, right?

JOHN

You're not going to get anything out of this. It's just people saying words.

PETE

Yeah, that's exactly how I feel about your Mother's religion.

JOHN

It's not Mom's religion. It's *the* religion. It's God, and I'm trying to help you so you don't get butt fucked by pedophiles in hell for eternity.

Pete throws his hands up.

PETE

Well, I hope they have lube down there. Can you turn on my pagan radio?

John huffs, and storms out of the room-

PETE

Hello? Really?

43 INT. ST. DYMPHNA'S HALLWAY - DAY 43

John eyes Lilith coming down the hall. She smiles, and BUMPS into him, exchanging a note as she does. John peers down at the note-

LILITH (V.O.)
Say hi to your finger for me, winky
face.

John peers over at a nearby HOLY WATER basin on the wall. He dips his left hand in it.

44 INT. ALGEBRA CLASSROOM - LATER 44

John scrawls down a note-

JOHN (V.O.)
Did you like it? Was it the best ever?

John smiles, looks down at what he's written. He frowns, erasing the insecure note. He writes-

JOHN (V.O.)
What are we doing next weekend? Winky
face.

John erases the winky face.

JOHN (V.O.)
Smiley face. P.S., can Bridget give a
sweet fifteen invite to Angelo?

45 INT. ST. DYMPHNA'S HALLWAY - LATER 45

John BUMPS into Lilith, handing her his note.

46 INT. CHURCH HISTORY CLASSROOM - LATER 46

John sits, cheek resting on his palm. We hear the TICK TOCK of the clock.

47 INT. ST. DYMPHNA'S HALLWAY - LATER 47

Lilith BUMPS into John-

48 INT. STUDY HALL - LATER 48

John reads the note-

LILITH (V.O.)

How about this? You steal a eucharist
from the sacristy, take a shit on it,
and we can maybe go to third base.
Winky face with eyelashes. P.S.
Bridget says sure.

John exhales with pursed lips - *hoooo, boy.*

He rips paper out of his notebook, scrawls down a note,
passes it to Connor, who wakes up Garry, who passes it to
Angelo. His face reads shock and joy.

John looks back down, writes a response to the original note-

JOHN (V.O.)

That seems a little too evil, right?
Like, poop is really disgusting-

He frowns, erases it, writes a new message-

JOHN (V.O.)

I mean, sure, if you like poop that
much. Didn't know you were that kinky,
winky face, poop emoji.

49 INT. ST. DYMPHNA'S HALLWAY - LATER 49

John BUMPS into Lilith.

50 INT. EARTH SCIENCE CLASSROOM - LATER 50

John nervously TAPS his feet as we hear a muffled lecture and
the TICKING CLOCK on the wall.

51 INT. ST. DYMPHNA'S HALLWAY - LATER 51

Lilith BUMPS into John. He looks down at the note.

LILITH (V.O.)

Okay, fine, how about you just pee on
it instead?

John frowns, considering the offer, as he BUMPS into MRS.
GROFF.

MRS. GROFF

Excuse me! Young man, can you watch
where you're going!?

John stuffs the note in his pocket.

JOHN

Oh! I'm so sorry, Mrs. Groff. I mean, sorry, I'm not supposed to know who you are-

MRS. GROFF

What did you just jam in your trousers?

JOHN

Nothing.

MRS. GROFF

Passing notes is a half demerit. Cough it up.

John sticks his shaking hand in his pocket, fakes a YAWN, brings the note to his mouth behind his clenched fist. He swiftly SWALLOWS the note whole.

Mrs. Groff catches this, and grabs John's mouth.

MRS. GROFF

Did you just eat it?!

JOHN

(choking)

Is that against the rules?

BROTHER PHIL

What's going on here?!

Mrs. Groff takes her hands off of John.

MRS. GROFF

(noticeably polite)

Pay no mind, Brother. Just,
(brushes off John's shoulders)
a snack gone down the wrong pipe.

Brother Phil grabs John by the shoulder.

BROTHER PHIL

John, are you forgetting something?

John stares blankly at Brother Phil.

BROTHER PHIL

(exasperated)

Monthly mass?

JOHN
Oh! Oh, god-

52 INT. ST. DYMPHNA'S AUDITORIUM - LATER

52

Hundreds of students shuffle towards the stage at the front of the auditorium. A colorful CRUCIFIX TAPESTRY hangs from the rafters.

John, at the front with the other ministers, ciborium bowl in hand, offers the communion wafer to a STUDENT.

JOHN
The body of Christ.

STUDENT
Amen.

A look of contentment, on John's face. The sounds of shuffling feet FADE AWAY as he reaches for another wafer. All we hear is-

JOHN
The body of Christ.

STUDENT #2
Amen.

All we see is eucharist wafers, moving from hand to mouth - a smooth rhythm. John is transported, at peace.

HOLY JUDE (14) arrives. He makes an elaborate sign of the cross.

JOHN
The body of-

Something catches John's eye.

Lilith stands on line for communion at the other end of the auditorium. They lock eyes. John nods to his left - *get over here!* She smiles, makes her way to the other line.

HOLY JUDE
Christ?

Jude stares quizzically at John.

JOHN
(rushed)
Sorry, bodyofchrist.

John snatches the wafer and holds it in front of Jude. Jude closes his eyes, makes the sign of the cross, slowly.

John tries to 'here comes the airplane' the wafer into Jude's mouth. The wafer brushes against Jude's lips. He opens his eyes, a bit alarmed.

John impatiently motions to the line growing behind Jude.

Jude frowns, opens his mouth. John pushes the wafer in like he's shoving a quarter into a payphone.

John speedruns through the rest of the students.

JOHN

Bodyofchrist, bodyofchrist,
christofbody, body, body, christ,
christ, yup, keep em coming.

John quickly glances around, to see if he's causing a stir. He locks eyes with Brother Phil, and MARY, leaning against the wall on the left end of the auditorium.

Mary looks betrayed. Phil stares at John, frowning slightly. John glances back, despondent.

LILITH

Psst. Hey.

Lilith stands in front of John, an expectant look on her face.

JOHN

Oh, hey!
(whispers)
I'll do the pee thing.

Lilith raises her eyebrows. She flicks her eyes to the side, glaring at Mary.

LILITH

Feed it to her.

JOHN

What?

She gets on her knees, looks up, gives a sneaky smile.

LILITH

(whispering)
Piss on it, and feed it to her.

She sticks out her tongue. John gulps, and nods.

JOHN
(guilty)
The body of Christ.

LILITH
(slight moan)
Ameeen.

John's trembling hand grabs a wafer, moves it towards Lilith, places it on her tongue. She swallows it.

53 INT. HOMEROOM - LATER

53

As the bell rings, the girls shuffle out of homeroom, guided by a FEMALE TEACHER (30s).

Bridget exits, dropping invitations to her SWEET FIFTEEN on the desks of several students - including John's and Angelo's.

Angelo plays it cool as the invitation lands on his desk. As Bridget turns around, he PUNCHES THE AIR furiously beneath his seat in excitement.

Bridget catches up to Lilith, who smiles and waves at John with her invitation - *let's go together!* John smiles back faintly as Lilith leaves.

Mr. Myers steps into the room, stern expression on his face.

ANGELO
They're gonna talk to us about fuckin.

John turns around.

JOHN
For real?

ANGELO
Boys and girls separated, guy teacher
with the boys, come on, we're about to
get some
(pounds hands together)
penis-in-vagina talk.

JOHN
Wow, that's cool. Not that, you know,
I'll need any tips or anything.

ANGELO

Oh, shut the fuck up-

The two of them giggle.

JOHN

By the way, why were you in Brother Phil's office the other day?

Angelo's smile fades. He looks down.

ANGELO

Ahh, it's stupid. My grades suck and I'm tryna convince the school it's cuz my Dad died.

John's face sinks.

JOHN

Your Dad actually died?

Angelo scrunches his lip, putting on a tough face.

ANGELO

Uh, yeah. Cancer of the liver.

JOHN

Dude... fuck, I'm so sorry-

ANGELO

It's alright-

JOHN

No, no, I'm sorry I asked you to lie about cancer to Brother Phil-

ANGELO

Well, it was a good lie, you know. Cancer's out here, fuckin' shit up.

JOHN

Wait, so... that Bible was your Dad's?

ANGELO

Yeah. He was an Anglican, yah know. He really loved the thing-

MR. MYERS

Clap once if you can hear me!

Chatter dies down as half of the room CLAPS. John looks up-

MR. MYERS
Clap twice if you can hear me.

The whole room CLAPS. Pin-drop silence.

MR. MYERS
Alright, men. Men! Can we be real for
a second? Raise your hand if we can be
real for a second.

A few boys sheepishly raise their hands, the rest soon
follow.

MR. MYERS
Okay, good. Raise your hand if you
like girls.

The boys raise their hands. Connor O'Connor briefly flinches,
then raises his hand even higher to compensate.

MR. MYERS
Raise your hand if you care about
girls!

Hands go up.

MR. MYERS
Raise your hand if you want to fall in
love!

Hands go up.

MR. MYERS
Raise your hand if you want to have a
family!

Hands go up.

MR. MYERS
Raise your hand if you want to marry a
slut!

Hands go up... then the boys side eye one another in
confusion. A few sharp tacks quickly put their hands away.
Others tentatively lower and raise their hands once or twice.

John slowly lowers his hand, looking down at his desk.

MR. MYERS
Hmm? Nobody? Nobody wants to marry a
slut?

Myers stomps up to Garry Bruss's desk, waking him from a nap.

MR. MYERS

Garry, you wanna marry a slut?

Garry startles, gulps.

GARRY

N-no, no sluts. Sluts are uh,
(looks around for support)
smelly. Very smelly.

Myers leans in.

MR. MYERS

But anybody can be smelly, Garry.
(addresses the room)
Connor O'Connor smells, is he a slut?

The class erupts into peals of laughter. Connor, wearing pit stains down past his nipples, crosses his arms and frowns.

Myers ambles back to his desk. He sits on it, dangling his legs as he speaks.

MR. MYERS

There was once a beautiful seventeen year old woman at a party... she made a mistake, and had a beer that night. That beer took her to a dark place. It made her lustful. This lady was hit on by a young man, who asked her to join him upstairs. She was going to go up there, she was gonna f-

Mr. Myers takes a deep breath, clenching his fist against the wooden ledge of the desk.

MR. MYERS

She was going to have sex with him. But as she was going, a good Samaritan appeared. It was a young man, who asked the woman to think about what her soul would look like if she went through with the act.

Myers teases the wedding ring on his finger.

MR. MYERS

That young woman went home a virgin that night. That young woman was a

virgin when I met her, and, yes, that *beautiful* young woman was a virgin when I married her.

John's lips tremble slightly.

MR. MYERS

Men, I have one favor to ask of you, on behalf of the man upstairs.

Myers points at the crucifix hanging above the chalkboard.

MR. MYERS

If Mrs. Myers wasn't a virgin, I wouldn't have married her, you understand? I'm asking you today, I'm asking you every day - be Good Samaritans. Don't go around turning girls into sluts.

Pin-drop silence as Myers smiles at the room full of boys. John raises a hand.

MR. MYERS

Yes, Mr. Santucci.

JOHN

Hey, I had a-uh, friend, from Thomas Aquinas, hah, you know how they are over there...

Myers stares blankly at John.

JOHN

Well, he's been slutting girls up, you know, left and right, since he was like, *nine*. Uh, so, can a girl ever, unslut themselves? Through Jesus?

Myers takes in a deep breath, sighs heavily. He points up at the crucifix once more.

MR. MYERS

I'll tell you, John, that man up there is the most loving, forgiving, understanding guy you'll ever meet. If a young woman intends to repent at tomorrow's assembly, I'm sure the Lord will forgive her. As for the rest of us? Sometimes it's hard to get certain images out of our heads.

John nods, his brow furrowed.

54 EXT. UNDER BLEACHERS - SUNSET

54

John and Lilith kiss sloppily against the metallic underside of the bleachers. Lilith grabs John's arm and sticks it under her blouse.

LILITH
Pinch my nipples.

JOHN
Like, hard? Like I'm plucking out a tick?

LILITH
No, just, twist a little bit.

John obliges clumsily. The two continue kissing. John clears his throat. Lilith opens her eyes.

LILITH
What was that?

JOHN
Nothing, I'm good.

Lilith frowns, but continues kissing John.

Beat. John clears his throat again, pulls his arm out from under Lilith's blouse.

JOHN
Do you think this is okay?

Lilith shrugs.

LILITH
I think you're doing the best you can.

JOHN
No, not the nipples, like, is it okay to be doing all this?

LILITH
...I like it. Do you?

JOHN
Yeah. I just, don't you want to get married one day?

Lilith freezes.

LILITH

Uhh, what?

JOHN

Like, you know, if you're a
(whispers)
slut, then, I don't think a guy will
want to marry you? Right?

Lilith pulls away from John.

LILITH

You think I'm a *slut*?

JOHN

No, I just, Mr. Myers was saying, and
I don't want you to be alone-

LILITH

Why would I be alone?!

JOHN

Because I touched your vagina, and
your nipples!

LILITH

Are you breaking up with me because
you touched my nipples?!

JOHN

No! I love your nipples! I just, I
don't know, *I'd* marry you, but what
if, by doing all this, I prevented a
great guy from wanting to marry you?

LILITH

I don't want to talk about other guys
or marriage!

JOHN

No, I don't really want to marry you!
But I would if nobody else did,
because I'd feel bad I turned you into
more of a slut!

Lilith slaps John across the face - hard.

LILITH

More of a slut?

JOHN
Ow, can you not?

LILITH
What do you mean *more* of a slut?

JOHN
Well, you said you made out with like, forty guys or whatever.

LILITH
I said that to look cool, idiot. I've never even held hands before you.

John goes slack-jawed. Lilith gets up, grabs her backpack.

JOHN
How was I supposed to know that?!

Lilith turns around.

LILITH
Everything's so fucking boring.

JOHN
What?

LILITH
Pray before every class, skirt below the knee, no cleavage, no makeup, you know what? I live in a different country in my head. I do magic tricks, and I ride motorcycles, and I run a fucking library, and I kiss everyone and do whatever the fuck I want.

John stares at Lilith in stunned silence.

JOHN
I'm sorry. I want to go into the world in your head... it sounds amazing.

Lilith's face softens for a second... but the hurt quickly returns to it.

LILITH
No.

She walks away. John gets up to follow-

WHAP! Lilith tosses a notebook at John.

LILITH

Don't fucking come near me!

She walks away. John looks down at her notebook. It reads *World History*.

He opens it up. It's stuffed to the brim with dark fantasy sketches - a hazy wood peppered with glowing werewolf eyes, fairies relaxing in a moonlit grotto, their feet in a small pond.

He turns a page, and sees an image of a boy and girl elf. The boy elf offers the girl elf an arrow. She takes it, blushing as their hands touch. It looks a lot like John giving Lilith the pencil.

John sighs.

55 INT. MOM'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

55

John stares glumly at his lasagna. Mary sits down. She's visibly shaken.

MARY

That was some performance at mass.

She glares at John. He stays quiet. John stabs the lasagna with his fork, brings it towards his mouth-

MARY

Ready for prayer?

John quickly chews the bite, swallows. Mary closes her eyes, makes the sign of the cross. John doesn't move.

MARY

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit-

Mary squints her eyes open.

MARY

Dear Lord, thank you for bringing us together on this night...

(clears throat)

John?

John stares ahead blankly. His cheeks are red, his hands unclasped. Mary reaches out, grabs his hand.

MARY
John? Do you have anything you'd like
to thank God for?

JOHN
(mumbling)
God's not real.

Mary's back tenses up.

MARY
What was that?

JOHN
I don't want to pray. God isn't real.

Beat. Mary straightens her posture, takes on an affected,
'*I'm the parent*' pose.

MARY
John, in my house, we thank God for
what we receive. You will pray.

She pulls John's plate away from him.

MARY
I'm not feeding a heathen.

JOHN
I'm not hungry.

MARY
I don't know who I'm looking at. What
has your father been-

JOHN
(flips plate over)
Shut the fuck up about Dad!

John's plate tumbles across the table. Lasagna splatters on
him and Mary.

John freezes. Mary sits, silent, seething.

MARY
(softly)
Go to your room.

John gets up, his lips trembling.

56 INT. JOHN'S ROOM - LATER

56

John plays Rayman Origins on the Playstation Vita. His face looks calmer.

A knock at the door. John's brow furrows. Mary opens the door.

MARY

Give me that.

John clicks the power button on the Vita. He hands it to Mary.

MARY

Your father called this afternoon.

Beat.

MARY

A few days ago, you were asking him to go to confession. Now you're saying God's not real.

Mary touches John's shoulder.

MARY

Baby, what's going on?

JOHN

I'm just worried about, Dad's soul, is all. He's been doing a lot of, he's been sinning, a lot.

Mary's expression softens. Her eyes hold a far away stare.

MARY

It's not your job to get your father into heaven... that was supposed to be my job.

John smiles.

JOHN

Hard job.

Mary giggles.

JOHN

He's always gambling until five am, or like, making out with his money.

The two laugh together.

MARY

He only has eyes for his god. God with a small 'g'. He doesn't see much else.

John looks at his mother.

JOHN

I'm sorry Dad hurt you...

Mary's eyes water. She looks like her heart has been fed for the first time in a long time.

MARY

I'm sorry he doesn't make you feel seen.

She hugs John. He hugs back.

MARY

Baby?

JOHN

Yeah?

MARY

Do I make you feel seen?

A small pause, from John. They both feel it.

JOHN

Mhm, totally.

Mary pulls back from the hug.

JOHN

I feel like... when Dad sins, he's just, he kinda just, he does it naturally. I don't think he thinks it's wrong, all the time. Why would God do that? Like, *make you want to do something bad?*

Mary's back stiffens. She stares intensely at John.

MARY

Are you talking about your Dad right now?

John's face freezes.

MARY

Are you doing anything more than kissing her?

JOHN

No. Mom, what? No, what are you-

MARY

It's a mortal sin if you are.

JOHN

I know that.

MARY

And you don't want to be with anyone who hurts your soul. Even if they make you feel less lonely.

John nods weakly.

JOHN

I swear on God, I'm not doing anything else. We don't even kiss, really. Kissing makes me feel impure.

Mary nods. She gives John a supportive squeeze on the shoulder.

MARY

I love you.

JOHN

(empty)

I love you extra.

57 INT. HOMEROOM - MORNING

57

John sits behind Lilith as the I Can Only Imagine MercyMe music video BLARES on the homeroom projector/speaker combo. He hands her the *World History* notebook over her shoulder.

JOHN

I love your drawings.

Silence. John scribbles out an apology note. He taps her on the shoulder. She doesn't respond.

John TOSSES the note over to her. We hear a RIP, then another RIP. Lilith FLINGS back the shredded note.

John sighs. He leans forward.

JOHN
 (whispers)
 Is there anything I can do to make
 this better? The eucharist pee thing?

Lilith raises her hand.

LILITH
 Mr. Myers?

Mr. Myers wipes the Christian rock-induced tears from his
 eyes, turns from the music video.

MR. MYERS
 Yes?

LILITH
 Could I please be seated near some
 more girls?
 (flutters eyelashes)
 I don't want to be turned into a slut
 by all these boys.

CUT TO WIDE:

John is the only boy sitting near Lilith.

MR. MYERS
 Ah. Well, that's very prudent of you,
 Miss Arquette. John, why don't you
 move to the back?

John, beet-red in the face, nods, and stands up.

58 INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

58

Connor leans in as Angelo speaks loudly, with hands
 outstretched.

John is quiet, munching on his food next to a dozing Garry.

ANGELO
 You know the fuckin' girl to guy ratio
 at these things? It's like, me and
 John, in a sea of boobs. And you know
 she's gotta make it look like she has
 guy friends, right, so I bet she gives
 me a candle-

CONNOR
 Shut up. A fucking *candle*?

JOHN
(to Connor)
Oh my god. He's *not* getting a candle.

Angelo frowns.

JOHN
I'm sorry. You're delusional, dude.

ANGELO
John's just mad he's datin' a slut.

Connor giggles at this comment.

JOHN
You told me to finger her!

ANGELO
No, I said you couldn't know if she was into you unless she was wet an' shaved. That's different.

JOHN
Whatever! All you do is jerk off to sluts! What does that make you?

Connor whistles, raises his eyebrows at Angelo. Angelo huffs and puffs, shifting uncomfortably in his seat-

ANGELO
Shut up and eat your fuckin' burger.

Angelo steals a fry off of John's tray. John GRABS the fry back-

JOHN
You're a fucking loser, you know that?
Why don't you just talk to girls
instead of being weird?

John SHAKES Garry awake-

JOHN
Here, talk to Garry like he's a girl!
A girl's just Garry with boobs!

Angelo looks at Garry, almost considering this idea. Garry offers a sleepy smile. Angelo shakes his head.

ANGELO
It's not that easy-

JOHN

Yeah it is! You're just scared!

Angelo's lips tremble. He PUSHES John in his seat.

John PUSHES him back-

JOHN

Fucking baby!

ANGELO

Fuck you!

JOHN

Fuck you!

ANGELO

Why don't you get a new table, you
little fuckin' asshole?!

JOHN

Why don't you get a new Dad, bitch?!

Regret on John's face, the second he says it.

Angelo's jaw drops. He hunches over, buries his head in his hands, and cries.

Connor STEPS UP, walks to John's chair-

CONNOR

Find a new table.

JOHN

Wait, I'm sorry-

Connor PICKS UP John's chair, and moves it away.

John scowls, turns away from the table. His gaze meets the large CRUCIFIX hanging over the front of the cafeteria.

59 INT. CHAPEL - DAY

59

We see a massive CONSECRATED WAFER. John's trembling hands reach out, opening the monstrance. He takes the wafer, the body of Christ, in his hands.

John looks down at it, sighs, stuffs it into his blazer pocket, turns around-

And sees Brother Phil leaning back against the wall of the

chapel.

BROTHER PHIL
What are you going to do with Him?

JOHN
Fuck-

JOHN
I'm sorry, this is really bad, I know it's really bad, but, my Grandpa, he's not doing well. I wanted to give him final communion.

Brother Phil sighs.

BROTHER PHIL
Don't make me an accessory to sin-

JOHN
I'm serious! My Grandpa's sick-

BROTHER PHIL
Please don't insult me.

Beat. John looks down, lips trembling.

JOHN
What are you going to do, get me kicked out?
(under breath)
I don't care. I hate it here.

Brother Phil steps towards John. His movement is slow, steady, unthreatening.

BROTHER PHIL
The Lord gave us free will, John... if you embrace Him, it'll be with an open heart, and an open mind. Anything less *wouldn't be a choice.*

Brother Phil steps back, gestures his hand to the door.

BROTHER PHIL
(warm)
I trust you.

John keeps his eyes locked on the ground.

60 INT. LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

60

We see John DOUBLE LOCK the front door to his house.

We see the blinds of the living room CLOSE.

We see a PADRE PIO statue sitting by Mary's Catholic artifact-laden windowsill. John turns it face down, along with a photo of the Immaculate Mother.

John stares into a portrait of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He looks at it, as Christ seems to stare back, boring a hole into John's soul.

61 INT. BATHROOM - LATE AFTERNOON 61

THE MASSIVE EUCHARIST WAFER plops onto the surface of the toilet bowl.

John's school pants bunch up around his ankles. He peers down at the bowl, huffing to himself. He takes in a deep breath, then leaves the room.

62 INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS 62

John texts Lilith while walking in circles - *Surprise apology gift! Going to pee on jesus soon. Just need to grab a snack, haha*

John stuffs his mouth full of Mallomars. He yanks open the fridge, running his hand over the options - milk, lemonade, orange juice, seltzer.

John pauses, his hand doubling back. *Lemonade?*

63 INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS 63

John dumps the lemonade into the bowl. The eucharist is puffy and deteriorating rapidly. He yanks out his phone, and snaps a picture of the wafer in the yellowed toilet water.

John puts his phone down, and looks back at the amorphous wafer. His mouth trembles.

JOHN
(whispering)
I'm sorry.

Suddenly, we hear the front door OPEN. John stares offscreen in terror.

64 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT 64

John sits tensely at the table, eyeing Mary as she eats.

Beneath the table, we see him gripping the SQUISHED YELLOW EUCHARIST in his hand.

65 INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

65

John sit silently. Ahead, projected on a screen, is a series of SIN PROMPTS for confession, each sin read aloud by a different student via pre-recording played over speakers.

The auditorium is deathly quiet, save for the broadcasted sins, the shuffling of feet, and the mumbling of PRIESTS offering absolution.

John stares at the sins - *"Have I thrown up food when I wasn't feeling ill?" "Have I eaten too much in one sitting?" "Do I have an eating disorder?"*

He glances at Bridget, sitting next to him, quietly weeping to herself. He spots Angelo sitting near her.

Angelo frowns at Bridget's crying. He leans forward, taps her on the shoulder-

ANGELO

Hey, uh, don't take this stuff seriously, alright? It's fuckin' stupid.

She sniffles, and wipes her nose.

BRIDGET

Thanks. I just- it's hard enough to deal with food, without thinking of sin, or whatever-

ANGELO

Yeah, and even if you have an eating disorder, I still think you're cute, so.

A flash of confusion and discomfort, on Bridget's face.

BRIDGET

Uh, thanks.

Angelo's smile fades, as he realizes he's said something wrong. A nearby student is tapped by Mr. Myers and CALLED TO CONFESSION.

John sees the onscreen sin prompt fade away with a cheesy ripple animation effect.

New prompts arrive - *"Have I had impure thoughts about others?" "Have I touched myself to the thought of another's naked body or body parts?"*

John gulps at the sight. Angelo is CALLED FOR CONFESSION.

The ripple effect clears away, and new sins arrive - *"Have I touched another person's breasts, legs, buttocks, vagina, or penis outside the sacrament of Holy Matrimony?"*

John's lips tremble as he looks at the litany of evils.

66 INT. AUDITORIUM/KITCHEN DAY/NIGHT - CROSSCUT

66

(Note: Kitchen scene underlined to contrast Auditorium.)

We're back at the kitchen, from the night before.

Everything is silent, and moves in slow motion. John watches Mom pick up her hero, take a bite, chew it, and swallow.

Bridget is CALLED FOR CONFESSION.

John is next. Beads of sweat form on his forehead.

She takes a drink of water, emptying her glass. She stands up to fill her cup by the fridge.

New sins fade onto the screen-

HAVE I TAKEN THE LORDS NAME IN VAIN?

John's hands tremble.

John looks at her sandwich. Down at his hand. Up at his mother. He stuffs the slimy eucharist in her sandwich.

HAVE I SEVERED MY RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD BY DENYING HIS EXISTENCE?

John's breath quickens. He wipes the sweat from his face.

Mary sits back down. She picks up her sandwich, brings it close to her face-

HAVE I DISRESPECTED THE SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH?

We hear John's heartbeat THUMPING as-

Mr. Myers TAPS him on the shoulder. John LEAPS up out of his seat.

JOHN
 (panic)
 I can't do this-

John LEAPS out of his seat in the kitchen, grabs Mary's sandwich, and takes a MASSIVE bite, downing the desecrated eucharist wafer himself.

John shoves past Mr. Myers.

MR. MYERS
 M-Mr. Santucci?

Several STUDENTS, including Lilith, turn their heads in alarm as John STOMPS out of the auditorium, his head down.

Mary frowns at John in shock, as he wipes his mouth and places her sandwich back on her plate.

67 INT. LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

67

John holds back tears as he walks to the DOUBLE DOORS at the front of the lobby. He takes in labored breaths, clutching his chest, as he BUMPS into Mrs. Groff.

MRS. GROFF
 Young man? Are you fleeing confession?

John begins dry heaving. He stumbles towards the entrance, REMOVES his blazer.

68 EXT. ST. DYMPHNA'S ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

68

John TEARS OFF his tie, panting, wheezing to himself. He races down the steps, past the parked cars, OFF COMES his belt. He hops a fence, KICKS AWAY his penny loafers, runs-

69 EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

69

-into the cover of the woods surrounding St. Dymphna's.

John slides behind a tree, UNBUTTONS his shirt. He struggles for air, until his labored breathing turns to tears.

JOHN
 (through sobs)
 I'm sorry... I'm sorry... oh, God...

A light breeze shakes the canopies above. John snuffles, then looks up, at the sunlight peeking through the swaying leaves. They offer him a moment of peace.

70 INT. MRS. GROFF'S OFFICE - LATER

70

Mrs. Groff's office is tidy, and stuffed to the brim with Civil War History memorabilia.

MRS. GROFF

Four day's suspension, eight demerits.
John's next infraction will lead to
immediate expulsion.

Mary holds back tears, nods firmly.

John, hastily clothed in his abandoned uniform, rolls his eyes. Mrs. Groff catches this. She leans in, plucks a stray bit of LEAF from John's shirt.

MRS. GROFF

I was ready to have you slum it in
Farmingdale High, Mr. Santucci. You
have a friend on the other side.

MARY

Brother Phil?

Mrs. Groff nods.

JOHN

(to Mary)
You know him?

MARY

He calls every week, to tell me how
you are.

John smiles at this show of concern.

JOHN

How does he think I'm doing?

MRS. GROFF

You have eight demerits, and I know
you by name. How do you think you're
doing?

John sneers at Mrs. Groff.

MARY

(to John)
He has a lot of compassion for you.
(glares at Mrs. Groff)
Brother Phil's very *Christlike*.

Mrs. Groff catches this. She straightens her back.

MRS. GROFF
 Christlike.
 (little snort)
 When you make excuses for bad
 behavior, you're forgiving. If you
 keep order, you're a square. A troll
 under the bridge.

Mary's eyes widen. Groff knows she's hitting a nerve.

MRS. GROFF
 Is John's father the cool one? Says
 yes to everything? And you're the one
 stuck with nasty conversations? Eat
 this, not that, go to bed, do your
 homework, no more videogames?

Mary quietly nods.

MARY
 I'm a single Mom.

Mrs. Groff smiles knowingly.

MRS. GROFF
 Two parents in one. Not easy.
 (gestures to John)
 But you need to try harder.

Mary blushes with shame. John looks down.

71 INT. PRIUS - LATER

71

Mary drives silently. John stares out the window.

MARY
 You're grounded.

JOHN
 Could it start next weekend? there's a
 sweet fifteen tonight-

MARY
 No negotiating.

JOHN
 What if I saw you instead of Dad for
 Easter and Thanksgiving? I can throw
 in Christmas Eve-

MARY

John!

John sits with Mary's silent disappointment.

72 INT. JOHN'S ROOM - NIGHT

72

John steps into his room, shrugging off his bag. He sighs, and goes for his only comfort - videogames.

He checks under his chair, and frowns. His hands scan his desk, opening up drawers, rummaging around...

John's back stiffens.

73 INT. JOHN'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

73

John frantically looks under the TV for his Wii. Not there.

John turns, eyeing Mary across the room, reading a World War II novel. She looks up from the book. John stares at her, incredulous.

74 EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

74

John RIFLES through the trash can, TEARING open the black bag. There's food scraps, wrappers, cardboard boxes.

75 INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

75

John storms in, staring daggers at Mary.

MARY

I donated them.

John tries his best to keep his face still.

76 INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

76

John lays in his bed, face smooshed against two pillows. He grips them hard, digging his nails into the pillowcases.

WHUMP! John flops his head against the pillow, squirming hopelessly like a worm in sunlight. WHUMP, WHUMP! WHUMP-

John's phone RINGS. He SHOOTS UP. It's Lilith.

John races into his closet, closes the door. He sits on the floor, against the wall, and picks up the phone-

JOHN

Hey.

LILITH

You were amazing today.

John's eyes widen.

LILITH

I've always wanted to run away... I guess with the slut thing, it felt like you were eating their shit up.

JOHN

Really?! After I poured, er-
(lowers voice)
peed, on Jesus? And fed him to Mom?!

LILITH

That's just stuff you do for me. Today was like... you.

JOHN

...so why did I have to steal Jesus and pee on him?

LILITH

Come to Bridget's. I want us to go to third base.

John takes in a shaky breath.

JOHN

Okay... so, like, do you love me?

LILITH

Are you dumb? What do you think?

John rests his head against the closet door.

77 INT. JOHN'S ROOM - NIGHT

77

John adjusts his regular tie in front of the mirror. He slowly opens the door to his room, peeks out-

78 INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

78

Mary sits downstairs, watching a cooking show.

John creeps out of his bedroom. Step by step, he makes his way to-

79 INT. MOM'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

79

John sidles in. He scans the room - there's an adoration corner, filled with prayer cards, devotional statues, scented rosaries.

On a bench in front of her bed lies MARY'S BAG. John rifles through it, takes out a few twenty dollar bills. He stuffs them into his pocket.

He turns to leave, but stops short as he notices a BOX sticking out of Mary's closet.

John peers inside, and sees ALL OF HIS GAME SYSTEMS neatly piled on top of one another.

John can't help but smile. Mary's more bark than bite.

80 EXT. ROOF - NIGHT

80

The window to John's room opens with a slight CREAK. John pokes his head out, looks down.

81 EXT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

81

A yellow cab pulls up, as John steps out. The window rolls down - it's Mitch, from John's first date. He shouts after John-

MITCH

If I find out this cash is fake, I'm
gonna rip yah fuckin head off-

John flashes a thumbs up over his head as walks without looking back.

82 INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

82

John steps in sheepishly, taking in the crowd of TEENS dancing in the center of the room. He eyes Angelo standing at the edge of the party, nursing a coke, watching the dancers.

In John's hand, he clutches a hastily scrawled out birthday card made from FOLDED LOOSELEAF PAPER.

John scans the room for Lilith, when his arm is TUGGED-

Lilith kisses John on the mouth.

LILITH

(sly)

Let's go.

JOHN

Shouldn't I say hi to Bridget first?

LILITH

Who cares? Just leave this-

She grabs John's 'card' and does a double take. She chuckles to herself.

LILITH

What the fuck is *this*?

JOHN

(ashamed)

Sorry, I didn't have time to buy a card card.

Lilith stuffs the 'card' in John's pocket.

LILITH

Tell her you left your card at home.

She pulls John towards her-

83 INT. MEN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

83

Lilith shoves John into a stall, locks it tight. She kisses him passionately. John kisses back, but freezes up as he hears the bathroom door CREAK open.

JOHN

(whispering)

Should we go to a more quiet place?

Lilith undoes John's belt, grabs his crotch. She does so performatively, like she's seen it in a video somewhere.

LILITH

(whispering)

Shh... I'll do you, then you do me.

Lilith gets on her knees.

LILITH

You've been so bad for me, John...

John gulps.

JOHN
 (guilty)
 Yeah, pretty, pretty bad...

John leans forward, rests his hands on the other end of the stall. He looks up, forward, anywhere but down.

LILITH
 What's wrong?

JOHN
 Sorry, I just, uh-

LILITH
 Oh my god.

Lilith gets up, adjusts her dress.

LILITH
 My dress looks like shit, doesn't it?
 I'm breaking out, and my hair's a
 mess, and-

JOHN
 No, no, you look beautiful-

Lilith throws her hands in the air.

LILITH
 So what is it?!

John looks at the floor.

JOHN
 (whispering)
 You're really mean sometimes... I, I
 don't like the things you make me do-

LILITH
 I don't make you do anything. I'm
 putting myself out for you and you're
 completely fucking rejecting me.

JOHN
 I don't want to reject you. But the
 stuff I have to do makes me want to
 throw up, and, and, can't you just
 like me? Why do I have to steal and
 burn things?

LILITH

Cuz that's the only time you're actually *saying* anything. Everything you say is so fucking wishy-washy-

JOHN

What?! I just want to BE with you, and you're sending me on demonic quests-

LILITH

No you don't! You don't actually want to be with me!

JOHN

Yes I DO! I DO!

LILITH

When I kiss you, I want to kiss you. When you kiss me, you like, you like the fucking idea of kissing me, like, what it means about you that you got a girl to kiss you-

JOHN

What the fuck?! That's insane-

LILITH

No it's not! It's like, one day I'm a trophy you wanna have, and the next I'm an urn that you broke, and like, I just want to BE here! I want to kiss! And you know what? The only thing I have *any* control over, is what I can get your dumb ass to do for me. So why don't you get on your knees and bark like a dog?

JOHN

No. I don't want to bark!

LILITH

Arf! Tell me you love me!

JOHN

I'm sorry, okay? I know I'm not good at this. I'm sorry I think about you and other guys, but like, that doesn't mean we have to base everything on you making me do horrible stuff.

LILITH

Well, what else is there? You can either be in control, or a little slave like my Mom. And I'm not gonna be my Mom.

JOHN

You just sound really afraid, and, I am too. But love can't come from a place of fear.

John knows it's cheesy the second he says it. Lilith reels back, scoffing.

LILITH

Is that some shit you read on a postcard?

John throws his hands in the air.

JOHN

Why do you have to be so mean?! I told you weeks ago I loved you and all you said back was, "you're stupid"!

LILITH

I can't just say shit I don't mean!

Beat. John scoffs.

JOHN

I meant it when I said it.

LILITH

You said it so I would say it. That's not the same thing.

John stares daggers at Lilith. He shakes his head.

JOHN

I don't want any of this.

LILITH

You don't want any of this?

JOHN

Yeah.

LILITH

Does that mean what I think it does?

JOHN

Yeah.

Lilith's lip trembles. She shoves John back towards the toilet as she yanks the stall open and storms out the bathroom door.

Beat. John snuffles, stands up, trudges out.

He locks eyes with Angelo, sitting by the sink, a look of shock on his face.

84 EXT. OUTSIDE BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

84

John sits on the stoop with Angelo. They stare out into a quiet parking lot full of cars.

JOHN

You should be in there dancing. You might meet the love of your life.

Angelo pats John on the back.

ANGELO

(struggling)

Nah, man. I'm not much of a, you know.

John turns to Angelo.

JOHN

What?

Beat, as Angelo looks down. He crosses his arms.

ANGELO

...you know, I'm, awkward and ugly.

JOHN

What? You're not awkward! You are hideous, though.

Angelo smiles a bit. He punches John in the arm. They sit in the calm, slow silence that only close friends can share.

ANGELO

You ever get that Bible back?

John stares into the night sky above the parking lot.

JOHN

Uhh... still waiting on the priest to get back to me. He can't figure out how to use email, it's a whole thing.

ANGELO

Right...

Angelo picks up a pebble of the ground. He FLINGS it across

the parking lot.

John rubs his neck. He lowers his gaze, and looks at Angelo. He sees a weight in his friend's eyes. John sighs.

JOHN

I'm sorry. I burned your Bible so I
could finger Lilith.

Angelo blinks. He stares at John, aghast.

THUMP! Angelo SHOVES John so hard, he falls on his side.

Angelo stands up, walks away without looking back. John lets him. He sits in silence, staring up at the trees.

JOHN

(to the sky, hopeless)
Could you give me a sign? I'll take
anything. Just, drop an acorn or
something.

Suddenly, we hear wheels SCREECHING. Mary's car ROARS across the parking lot, stops short of the curb.

JOHN

(puts head in hands)
Ohh, fuck.

85 INT. PRIUS - NIGHT

85

Mary drives. John stares out the window.

Their silence is deafening.

86 INT. JOHN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

86

John steps through the front door. He throws himself face down on the couch. Mary stands over, watching him.

MARY

Sit up.

John slowly turns himself over.

MARY

You'll know a tree by its fruit.

JOHN

What?

MARY
You're godless.

We hold on John's face as Mary continues.

MARY
You've lied, and stolen. Your
conscience is so guilty, you fled
confession.

John begins breathing heavily.

MARY
I'm not going to do this, John. I'm
not going to raise a *piece of shit*.

John hyperventilates as he bursts into tears.

JOHN
I'm sorry, Mom! I'm so sorry, I'm so
sorry, I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry, I
don't want to be like Dad-

Mary's expression softens.

JOHN
I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm
sorry-

Mary reaches out and embraces John. He cries into her
shoulder. Mary tears up.

MARY
Baby? Can you look at me?

John looks up at his mother. For a second, we see her the way
he did when he was five years old.

She rubs John's back. His breathing calms down.

MARY
I just want you to be a good man.

John pulls back. He holds Mary's gaze steadily.

JOHN
I've got this little space in me that
lives for you... my Mom part. And I've
got my Dad part, and my Lilith part,
and my Brother Phil part, and... I
don't think I have a *me* part. I don't

know what that looks like.

Mary nods, listening for a crack in John's armor.

MARY

If all we had were "me" parts... does that sound like a world you'd want to be a part of? Everyone living for themselves?

JOHN

No, I don't know- ugh! Why does everything have to be a rule?!

John throws himself back into the couch, shoving his head between the cushions.

MARY

When you're older, you'll figure it out. Maybe you'll agree with me then. But for now, you have to play by my rules.

JOHN

(muffled in cushion)
I thought they were *god's* rules!

MARY

My rules are God's rules.

JOHN

(muffled in cushion)
Well, your rules make me feel *really bad*.

Mary leans down, touches John's arm.

MARY

That's a good thing. God gave you a conscience for a reason.

John pulls himself out of the couch. He takes in a breath, for bravery.

JOHN

You know what I think? On my first day of school, I saw a goose on the bus ride home. And this thought came into my head, that the goose was god. There he is! God's a goose! And that goose didn't even care about me. It was just

flapping around and having fun. It didn't care if I was serving the eucharist, or kissing before marriage, or, or, touching a girl *down there*-

MARY

WHAT?!

(disgust)

JOHN!

John sits up straight.

JOHN

You know what?! Lilith sucked my penis tonight! And I didn't even LIKE IT!

Mary shakes her head vehemently, not letting the words in.

MARY

You're DISGUSTING-

JOHN

You're telling me I'm going to Hell for something I DIDN'T EVEN LIKE!? Your rules fucking suck!

MARY

Stop cursing!

JOHN

FUCK! SHITTY FUCK FUCK!

WHAP! Mary slaps John across the face.

Beat, as Mary sees her son wince in pain. John's look of pain quickly turns to pleasure, as he looks at his Mom, a *sinner*.

JOHN

Go to confession.

MARY

You're not the son I raised.

JOHN

Good.

John smiles. Mary is distraught, overwhelmed. He's won.

MARY

I can't believe you'd put those *images* in my head.

She stands up, and leaves. As she goes, John shouts-

JOHN
(mocking)
I LOVE-

87 INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

87

JOHN (5 YEARS OLD)
-you, Mommy.

We're back in the basement, from the beginning of our story. Young John looks up at Mary, smiling.

JOHN (5 YEARS OLD)
Can I show you my game?

Mary nods, nuzzling John close. We get the feeling this is the most love they will ever feel for one another.

John stands up, holding Mary's hand. He leads her to the couch, sits down.

We're still at the file selection screen. John's name is entered - J, O, H, N. He presses start.

CUT TO BLACK.

Silence. Then, the rising sound of STUDENTS shuffling through a nearby hallway as we FADE IN:

88 INT. CHAPEL - DAY

88

The school chapel - **decorated for Christmas** with a large TREE and some wreaths, but otherwise empty. The door cracks open.

John steps inside. He sits down, wipes his face with his hands, as if to clean the morning stress from his body.

He looks forward at the monstrance, and the Eucharist wafer inside of it. He stares, and stares, and stares, as the tightness drains from his face.

Brother Phil steps in. He grabs a seat far away from John.

John turns to him, gives a slight smile and a wave.

John nods kindly, and returns to his meditation.

89 INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

89

John sits alone, eating lunch at an empty table.

He looks up, stares across the way. He spots Angelo and Connor engaged in an ARM WRESTLE. Garry sleeps next to them.

Angelo loses. Connor pats him on the back, and Angelo gets up from the table to throw out his food.

As Angelo walks, he goes out of his way to stop by Bridget's table. John sees him mouth out something like a joke - Bridget laughs genuinely in response. Angelo keeps walking, an ear-to-ear grin on his face.

A slight smile from John, as he watches the exchange.

Angelo turns, and catches John's eye. They share a pregnant stare... before Angelo continues walking back to the table.

90 INT. HALLWAY - DAY

90

John kneels down, getting his books. A hand shoves a book into his lap. John looks up.

LILITH

Hi.

Lilith stands awkwardly. It's as if handing John this book is the most intimate thing she's ever done.

LILITH

It's a little cheesy, but, I don't know, I really like it.

John looks down at the book. It's *I'd Tell You I Love You, But Then I'd Have to Kill You*, by Ally Carter. He smiles, and looks back up at Lilith.

JOHN

I like the title.

She smiles faintly, and nods.

LILITH

Yeah.

The two look at one another. A moment passes.

LILITH

Okay, bye-

Lilith zips away. John shouts after-

JOHN

Wait!

Lilith turns around. John walks up to her.

JOHN

The first time I told you I loved you, it slipped out, and I meant it. But the ones after... I wasn't feeling. I just wanted you to say it. And I was angry. And I'm sorry for that.

Lilith looks at John, smiles gently.

LILITH

I love you.

She turns, and walks away. John smiles.

He peers down, opens the book- he discovers a WORLD of drawings in the margins - pixies pranking goblins, ivy-covered cottages, baby dragons and dancing skeletons and bridges to nowhere.

91 INT. DAD'S OFFICE - DAY

91

Pete sits, raiding a dungeon in World of Warcraft.

John turns away, and peers out the office window. Outside, he sees a MOTHER (30s) walking with her young SON (5). They're holding hands. John watches them, tender guilt on his face.

JOHN

Hey, Dad?

John moves from the window, looks at Pete.

JOHN

Could you take me to Mom's?

Pete frowns.

PETE

Oh. You sure that's a good idea?

JOHN

Yeah.

PETE
Should I get out of the Scarlet
Monastery first?

JOHN
I'd really prefer it if we went now.

Pete turns, and looks at his son. John stands tall.

92 INT. LIVING ROOM - SUNSET

92

Golden light streams into the living room, as Mary silently prays a rosary. We hear a key turn in the front door.

John steps inside. Mary sits up, surprised.

JOHN
Hi.

Beat. It's clear the two of them have been speaking to one another in monosyllables for the last two months.

MARY
Did you need something?

JOHN
I was wondering if you wanted to go on
a walk.

Mary's expression softens.

JOHN
The lake by the bike trail entrance
looks really nice at sunset.

A cautious warmth spreads on Mary's face.

93 EXT. BIKE TRAIL - SUNSET

93

John and Mary walk silently. Breeze gently pushes through the trees around them.

94 EXT. LAKE - SUNSET

94

John and Mary watch the sun disappear over the horizon, behind the lake. Mary looks out on the water, and sees a PAIR OF GEESE swimming together.

An astonished, sad smile crosses her face.

MARY

Did you know geese mate for life?

John shakes his head.

JOHN

No... that's really nice.

Mary nods. The two watch the lake in silence.

MARY

I was praying for you when you came
in... are you doing okay?

JOHN

(whisper)
Yeah, I'm good.

John tries to stop his eyes from watering. He can't.

JOHN

Mom?

Mary looks at John, sees his tears.

JOHN

I know I'm not exactly... the person
you were expecting me to be, but-

Mary pulls John in close. Beat, as he hugs her back. She
speaks under her breath-

MARY

You're a gift.

If only for a moment, we witness this love between a mother
and son - perfect, pure, unbreakable, as tender now as it was
when he was just a baby in her arms.

And then... that moment ends, as John's eyes begin searching.

CUT TO BLACK.