

Twelve: My Age of Reason

Written by

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Based on his novel of the same title

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Twelve: My Age of Reason

FADE IN:

INT. CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

SUPER: Monday, May 25, 1964, St. Theresa's Catholic School, Oakland, California.

Twenty-six sixth-grade students (male and females; 12) listen attentively to a nun, SISTER MARY-SOMETHING (40) lecture in a pleasant voice. The boys wear white short-sleeve shirts, salt and pepper chords, white socks, and black leather shoes. The girls wear white blouses, blue cross-ties, plaid skirts, white socks and black shoes. The nun is in a black habit with a rounded white-rim hat. The chalkboard reads, "God is all-loving. God is all-merciful." SUZI PARRISH (12, glasses) sits in the second row, TOMMY (12; short, cropped curly blonde hair) and BILL BENHAM (12; tall, handsome) sit in the back row.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING  
Miss Parrish, what is purgatory?

Suzi STANDS quickly and politely.

SUZI  
Purgatory is the state of those who die in God's friendship, assured of their eternal salvation, but who still have need of purification to enter into the happiness of Heaven.

TOMMY  
(mumbles)  
Show off.

Tommy stares at his religion notebook that reads, "1. Look like your paying atenshun, and keep your mouth shut."

Tommy looks up to look like he's paying attention.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING  
And how can we help the souls being purified in Purgatory?

SUZI  
By offering prayers in suffrage for them, by almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance.

Bill Benham and Tommy ROLL their eyes.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING  
 Good, Miss Parrish, you may be  
 seated.

MIKE MANN (12) in the front row raises his hand.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING (CONT'D)  
 Yes, Mr. Mann?

MIKE MANN  
 What's almsgiving, Sister?

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING  
 Giving money to the church.

MIKE MANN  
 So, if you give a lot of money to  
 the church, you can get someone out  
 of Purgatory?

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING  
 It's not that simple, Mike. See me  
 at lunchtime.

Mike GRUMBLES.

TOMMY  
 (whispers to Bill)  
 Like a "Get out of Hell Free" card?

Billy LAUGHS and gets Sister's attention.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING  
 Who is God, Mr. Benham?

Bill Benham STANDS.

BILL BENHAM  
 God is the Supreme Bean who made  
 all things.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING  
 (angrily)  
 God is our Supreme Being, not bean,  
 who is all-loving and all merciful,  
 and who made us in His likeness.  
 Billy, you'll write Catechism  
 questions one to thirty in cursive.

BILL BENHAM  
 Yes, Sister.

Tommy adds #2 and #3 in his religion notebook, which read,

"2. If God was all-loving and all-merciful, how come Bill Benham has to spend all nite writing stupid catekism in curssive?

3. Hell?????????"

Tommy RAISES his hand.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

Yes, Mr. Stohlgren?

Tommy STANDS, hesitates, and looks around the room. He sees a girl, STEPHANIE CROMARTI (12, cute), SMILING at him.

TOMMY (V.O.)

Stephanie Cromarti? Smiling at me?  
She's a, a, a girl!

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

(angry)

Mr. Stohlgren?

Keeping his eyes on Stephanie Cromarti, Tommy speaks up.

TOMMY

Sister, if God is really all-loving and all-merciful, and we were made in His Likeness, shouldn't we be all-loving and all-merciful too? My pal, Bill, shouldn't have to write all those catechism questions in cursive. You should be all-merciful.

The class TURNS to face Tommy in HORROR. But Stephanie is still smiling, and Tommy SEES her.

Sister Mary-something SLAMS her wooded ruler on her desk.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

Tommy!

The nun STOMPS towards Tommy.

TOMMY

And if God is all-loving and all-merciful, there could be no Hell. And if there's no Hell, there's not that much reason for being good!

The class HOWLS with laughter. The Sister GRABS Tommy's earlobe and pulls him down the aisle, out the door, and down to Mother Superior's office.

ROLL CREDITS

EXT./INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE - DAY

We HEAR the voice of a distinguished Professor, TOM STOHLGREN (60s), as we SEE the front door, and we enter into an older, tiny, two-bedroom home. As Tom speaks, we tour the living room (small sofa, two arm chairs, lamp), TV room (small B/W TV, one lounge chair, small sofa), small kitchen with yellow Formica table and six chairs). Catholic pictures and crucifixes are in every room.

TOM STOHLGREN (V.O.)

There comes a time in everyone's life when he or she cross a threshold from childhood to adulthood; when they quit believing everything their parents and teachers tell them, and when they unexpectedly devolve from being sweet, nice kids, to being smart-asses.

(beat)

Like they said on the Dragnet TV show when I was a kid.

(in Jack Webb's voice)

The story you are about hear is true. Some names have been changed to protect the innocent.

(regular voice)

The year was 1964. Gas was twenty-five cents a gallon. A dozen eggs cost fifty cents. A gallon of milk cost a buck. Two people could have lived comfortably on Pops' milkman salary, but with seven mouths to feed, and five kids in Catholic school, Ma had to stretch every penny. This story is about an eight-day period in my life when I unexpectedly began to: speak up in class; ask difficult questions to my parents, nuns, priests, and other authority figures; untether myself from the constraining bounds of my religion; and realize the awesome power afforded the other half of the human population on Earth. Girls became everything! But that Monday morning began like usual.

In the kitchen, MA (35, petite, Irish woman, old floral housecoat, hair in pink curlers) sets out five large cereal bowls, three boxes of off-brand cereal, and three quarts of milk.

TOM STOHLGREN (V.O.)  
 Consider our Irish-Catholic family  
 with five boys less than twenty  
 months apart.

The camera CONTINUES to a bedroom door.

TOM STOHLGREN (V.O.)  
 Our house had two bedrooms, which  
 means I shared I shared a bedroom  
 with my four wildly irreverent,  
 hilarious brothers. Sure it was a  
 little crowded, but we always had  
 an audience!

We SEE one small bedroom crammed with two dressers and four  
 twin beds containing Tommy, GEORGIE (10 1/2), JERRY (8 1/2),  
 and BILLY (7). JIMMY (13 1/2) is in a twin bed in a door-less  
 walk-in closet with a clock radio and lamp.

TOM STOHLGREN (V.O.)  
 I'm fond of saying, parents may  
 help you grow older, but brothers  
 help you grow up.

Jimmy's AM clock radio shows 7 A.M. and springs to life with  
*The Way You Do the Things You Do*, by the Temptations.

JIMMY  
 Everybody up! God-darn Monday. Get  
 with the program!

Tommy, Georgie, Jerry, and Billy wake up GROGGY, walk atop  
 beds to the dressers, sing along, and get dressed, taking  
 time to hit each other in the arms.

It's CHAOTIC with one bathroom in the house.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The camera follows everyone to the kitchen table where they  
 gobble cereal like pigs.

A small cocker spaniel (Bruno) BEGS for attention.

MA  
 Feeding time at the zoo!

JIMMY  
 Milk game! Did you see Ray Charles'  
 new piano?  
 (pauses)  
 Neither did he.

Giggles abound.

TOMMY

Hear about the poker tournament for lepers?

JERRY

(mouth full of food)  
Everybody lost a hand.

Laughter. Ma MAKES peanut butter and jelly sandwiches at the kitchen counter.

MA

Jerry, don't talk with your mouth full.

Jerry POINTS to food in his half-full mouth.

JERRY

It ain't full, Ma. I could fit more over here.

GEORGIE

How do you top a car?

BILLY

Tep of the brake, stupid.

Milk SPURTS from Jerry's nose. He LAUGHS hysterically.

MA

I don't get it.

TOMMY

Step on the brake, stupid. The guy can't say his Ss.

MA

No, I don't get why you all have to play the milk game at every meal, where you think you're successful by getting milk to come out your brothers' noses.

JIMMY

'Cause it's funny, Ma.

MA

Hurry up. Elsie's probably outside with her car, now.

Ma TURNS to Tommy.

MA (CONT'D)

Big day tomorrow. I read in Readers Digest that Jean-somebody says twelve is the age of reason.

TOMMY

Didn't hit Jimmy yet.

Jimmy HITS Tommy in the arm, he HITS Georgie, and so on, until Billy gets hit.

BILLY

Ow! No fair.

TOMMY

Age of Reason? Jean-somebody? I'll look him up at school, if Sister ever gives us time for the library encyclopedias.

JIMMY

We only got volume one of three encyclopedia sets here.

GEORGIE

The free ones from the grocery store, bank, and door-to-door salesmen.

TOMMY

So all our book reports are on aardvarks to Alaska.

MA

The complete sets are too expensive. Get your lunches and get going.

EXT. CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MORNING

ELSIE GIUNTOLI (35, short, Italian, glasses) SWERVES into the parking lot a 1959 Chevy Bel Air, full of Stohlgrens and JOHNNY GIUNTOLI (11).

The kids PILE OUT, and Elsie RACES off. A dozen other boys and girls (8-14, in uniform) RACE inside.

TOMMY

I prayed we'd make it here alive.

JIMMY

Look like you're paying attention, and keep your mouths shut!



Jimmy and the others RACE off, leaving Johnny and Tommy.  
Tommy puts his arm around his best friend.

TOMMY

Ever notice how all the Stohlgrens  
have regular boys' haircuts and you  
sport a crew cut?

Johnny RUBS his head.

JOHNNY

Made fashionable by Quasi-Modo in  
the Hunchback of Notre Dame.

Tommy POINTS to the temporary "part" on his left side.

TOMMY

The part surrenders by first recess  
to leave me looking like Shirley  
Temple or Harpo Marx.

JOHNNY

Match made in Heaven.

TOMMY

It's my birthday tomorrow. Twelve  
is the Age of Reason, ya know.

JOHNNY

Shoot! I gotta wait six more  
months.

TOMMY

Coming to dinner tomorrow night?

JOHNNY

Tuesday. That means your mom is  
making spaghetti with canned sauce.

TOMMY

Every Tuesday. It takes courage.  
But there will be angel food cake  
for dessert.

JOHNNY

I'll be there. Did you study your  
Latin for altar boy practice?

TOMMY

Nope.

JOHNNY

Did you study your catechism?

INT. CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MORNING

Tommy and Johnny ENTER the school's double doors.

TOMMY

Nope. So, what school are we going to?

JOHNNY AND TOMMY

Our Lady of Perpetual Guilt.

They LAUGH and RUN to their respective classrooms.

INT. CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Sister Mary-something greets each student with a SMILE as they come in the door. The same additional twenty-five Students are in class.

Tommy ARRIVES just prior to the morning bell.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

Good morning, Tommy. I see you're our scheduled altar boy for seven A.M. Mass on Friday. Good boy.

TOMMY

Morning, Sister. Yep, me and Johnny Giuntoli from the fifth grade are suiting up.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

Are you learning your Latin?

TOMMY

Yes, Sister.

Tommy HEADS to the back row. We HEAR his thoughts.

TOMMY (V.O.)

That was a Category One Lie, something you say to make your life easier. A Category Two Lie is when you make someone else's life more bearable.

Tommy PATS a boy on the back as he walks by. LEROY PAUL (12, shaved head, embarrassed) has a bad haircut.

TOMMY

(sincerely)

Hey, Leroy, your new haircut looks fine. Don't worry. It grows back.

Tommy steps toward his desk.

TOMMY (V.O.)  
That's a Category Two lie.

Tommy TOSSES his lunch in the cloak room, and takes a seat in the back row next to Bill Benham.

The bell RINGS.

TOMMY (V.O.)  
Look like you're paying attention,  
and keep your mouth shut!

Sister Mary-something WRITES on the blackboard: "God is All-loving. God is All-merciful."

We FAST-FORWARD through the OPENING SCENE ending with Tommy being dragged down the hall by the nun, and tossed into a chair outside "Mother Superior's Office."

INT. CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, OFFICE - DAY

Tommy SULKS in one chair. Two other chairs are empty.

TOMMY (V.O.)  
First offense. Probably get off  
with warning.  
(beat)  
She can be tough if you're fighting  
in the schoolyard.  
(beat)  
She can be soft-hearted too, like  
when she announced Kennedy was shot  
on the P-A system, and everybody  
cried. I mean everybody.  
(beat)  
She's a hell of a basketball shot.  
Maybe we'll talk basketball.

Mother Superior (50) is a short, stern nun, but she SMILES at Tommy, seeing only one of three chairs is filled.

MOTHER SUPERIOR  
Thomas Stohlgren. Come in. I'm more  
accustomed to seeing your brothers  
in here.

TOMMY  
Yes, Mother Superior.

They ENTER the office. Tommy STARES at a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary to avoid eye contact with the nun.

MOTHER SUPERIOR  
Disruptive in class?

TOMMY  
Yes, Mother Superior.

MOTHER SUPERIOR  
And challenging the church's  
teachings?

Tommy is STUNNED. He STARES up, bewildered.

TOMMY  
Huh?

MOTHER SUPERIOR  
Challenging the Church's teachings  
is a very serious matter. One that  
may require a visit with the  
Monsignor.

TOMMY  
(defensive)  
I can explain. I just didn't  
understand the meaning of the words  
all-loving and all-merciful. I'm  
only eleven. Won't be twelve 'til  
tomorrow. The Age of Reason. I was  
just being a stupid eleven-year-  
old.

MOTHER SUPERIOR  
Perhaps you blurted something out  
to gain attention?

TOMMY  
Yes, Mother Superior. I was really  
confused, is all. How could God be  
all-loving and all-merciful, and  
still watch people burn in Hell for  
eternity? That would be partly-  
loving or partly-merciful. Or maybe  
he's all-loving and all-merciful to  
Roman Catholics, the one true  
religion, but not others, like  
Baptists or Communists. See how the  
words all-loving and all-merciful  
confused me?

Mother Superior's eyes begin to TWITCH nervously. She looks  
side-to-side as she gets ANGRY.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

It's God's Will! You are not to question the teachings of the Church!

TOMMY

Yes, Mother Superior.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

You will remain in the library for the remainder of the day. No recess. No lunch. I'll be sending a note home for your parents to sign. You will make up all your assignments, and complete all your homework tonight. Good day!

Tommy TRUDGES out of the office.

INT. CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, LIBRARY - DAY

Elderly schoolmarm MRS. SCRANTON (60) OPERATES a loud, mimeograph machine, as Tommy walks in.

TOMMY

Hi, Mrs. Scranton. I'm Tommy Stohlgren. Sentenced here for disrupting class.

MRS. SCRANTON

Pick a book. I'm busy with a million fill-ins to copy.

TOMMY

Are there encyclopedias here?

MRS. SCRANTON

*Britannica*, in the far corner.

TOMMY

Thanks, Mrs. Scranton.

Tommy STROLLS to the far corner and looks at the "J" volume of *Encyclopedia Britannica*. He FROWNS.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

(mumbles)

Shoot. Jean is a first name, and everybody is in here by last name. John Paul Jones. Thomas Jefferson.

Tommy AMBLES back to Mrs. Scranton and waits patiently. Mrs. Scranton STOPS the mimeograph machine.

MRS. SCRANTON

Yes, Tommy?

TOMMY

Do we have a Readers Digest here?  
I'm looking for a lady named Jean-  
somebody and the Age of Reason. My  
Ma mentioned her.

Mrs. Scranton's eyes LIGHT UP. Her curiosity is aroused. She WIPES her hands on a towel and SCURRIES around the library. Tommy follows her like a puppy.

MRS. SCRANTON

Jean-something. Age of Reason.  
Sounds like philosophy to me.

TOMMY

Huh?

MRS. SCRANTON

Philosophy. The study of the nature  
of knowledge. From the ancient  
Greeks.

(pauses)

Jean may be a man.

TOMMY

Huh?

Mrs. Scranton cross-references Age of Reason in the index of the encyclopedia. She becomes EUPHORIC! Tommy is impressed.

MRS. SCRANTON

Jean-Jacques Rousseau. 1712 to  
1778. French philosopher. One of  
the most important philosophers of  
the French enlightenment.

She hands Tommy the encyclopedia, and writes him a note on scratch paper: "Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Philosophy, Socrates."

TOMMY

Hey, it talks about the Age of  
Reason. Ma was right! Thanks, Mrs.  
Scranton.

MRS. SCRANTON

You read, while I make copies.

She SMILES. Tommy SMILES back. Mrs. Scranton walks away as Tommy STRUGGLES with small print and big words.

TOMMY

Funny name for a guy, but he sounds pretty smart. Stay young and happy for as long as you can. Don't let parents and old people fill your head with fears. Age of Reason is twelve to fifteen.

Suddenly, Jimmy TAPS on the library window, and Tommy OPENS it up. They WHISPER.

JIMMY

Bill Benham said you stuck up for him against the nun, and you got yanked down to Mother Superior.

TOMMY

She's sending a note home. I'm screwed.

JIMMY

Tomorrow's your birthday. You'll be okay. Will you get out for lunch?

TOMMY

Don't think so. Nuns are pretty mad. I said there couldn't be a Hell if God was all-loving and all-merciful.

JIMMY

You are screwed. I'll see what I can do!

Jimmy RACES off.

TOMMY

What can Jimmy do?

Tommy goes back to READING. The mimeograph machine is so loud, Mrs. Scranton CAN'T HEAR a thing.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Rousseau book was burned in public because it pissed-off church leaders. People should be freethinkers, not through the forced feeding of the Church. Geez! Way to make enemies around here.

The library door SWINGS open with Jimmy being DRAGGED in by Mother Superior.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Seems that poor behavior runs in  
the family today.

She gently PUSHES Jimmy towards Tommy, turns, STOMPS out, and  
SLAMS the door. Mrs. Scranton IGNORES Jimmy and Tommy.

TOMMY

Caught skimming milk?

JIMMY

Burping really loud.

TOMMY

Amazing how you burp on cue.

JIMMY

Sister didn't see it that way.

TOMMY

Why'd you do it?

JIMMY

I figured you'd get in less trouble  
the night before your birthday if  
we both got notes sent home.

TOMMY

That's the bravest and dumbest  
thing I ever heard.

JIMMY

Hey, encyclopedias! Let's look up  
sex!

Jimmy and Tommy STUDY the section on "sexual reproduction."

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Looks like we can rule out the  
virgin birth idea.

TOMMY

What do ya mean?

The mimeograph machine STOPS, before Jimmy could prevent  
himself from speaking. Jimmy's back is to Mrs. Scranton.

JIMMY

Joseph had to dip his wick into  
Mary.

Jimmy and Tommy TURN toward Mrs. Scranton, who is giving them  
an EVIL LOOK.



The school bell RINGS!

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Jimmy, Tommy, Georgie, Jerry, and Billy Stohlgren; and Johnny, walk through Millionaires Row. A loose sole on Billy's shoe FLAPS as he walks.

JIMMY

Hurry up. Short-cut home so we get out of these stupid uniforms before Mack sees us.

TOMMY

Some choice! We either look like Catholic school kids or the Beverly Hillbillies in hand-me-downs!

They all walk a little faster.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

(suddenly excited)  
James Brown's got soul!

The group STOPS and STARES at Tommy.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Just thinking about Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, and these dead souls, I guess.

JOHNNY

The soul is an immortal spirit that goes to Heaven, Hell, or Purgatory. What's your problem, Tommy?

TOMMY

(yells)  
If God is all-loving and all-merciful, there ain't no Hell! That leaves Heaven or Purgatory.

GEORGIE

I don't want to go to Heaven.  
(beat)  
Heaven must be the loneliest place in the world. None of my friends will be there.

TOMMY

Grandma Nana loves to say, You're a long time dead. Live it up, while you can.

JOHNNY

Guess we do spend more time dead  
than we do alive.

TOMMY

(stares at huge mausoleum)  
From what I see, rich or poor, we  
all get eaten by worms.

JIMMY

Shhhh! You'll wake some-body up!

They HEAR the wind in the trees. The boys SCREAM, and RUN  
from the cemetery.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Jimmy and Tommy SHOW their notes from Mother Superior to Ma.

JIMMY

Nuns were on a rampage today.  
Everybody got notes sent home, even  
girls!

MA

What did you do, Jimmy?

JIMMY

I haven't seen the nuns so upset  
since Danny Bondi came to school  
with a Beatles haircut.

MA

What did you do, Jimmy?

JIMMY

I asked to go to the bathroom, and  
I held up two fingers and everybody  
laughed.

MA

Hmmm! What did you do, Tommy?

TOMMY

Winked at a girl in religion class.

MA

(shocked)  
You? You winked at a girl?

JIMMY

And it's Tommy's birthday tomorrow  
so you can't tell dad. He'll get  
real mad.

Ma STARES at the two notes. She is angry, but she SOFTENS.

MA

I'll sign this time, but I still  
might tell your father! Go on,  
change and get outside!

JIMMY AND TOMMY

Thanks, Ma.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

The five boys and Ma SQUEEZE around kitchen table and say  
grace. Bruno (the dog) is under the table.

ALL

Bless us, O Lord! For these Thy  
gifts, which we are about to  
receive from Thy bounty, through  
Christ our Lord. Amen.

Ma DISHES UP left-overs to the boys' plates. It's lumpy brown  
gravy with a few potatoes, carrots, peas, and very rarely, a  
small piece of roast beef. The table also has milk and white  
bread.

Ma DRINKS a glass of red wine and SMOKES during dinner.  
Everyone but Tommy is happy and laughing.

JIMMY

Monday night left-overs, or Marco-  
Polo-for-beef-chunks night.

GEORGIE

If it was Tuesday it would be  
spaghetti with canned meat sauce.

JERRY

Wednesday night, meatloaf.

BILLY

Thursday night, hot dogs.

JIMMY

Friday night, grilled cheese or  
cereal.

JERRY

Can't eat meat Friday 'cause we're Catholic.

GEORGIE

(looking for meat in the  
gravy)

Can't eat meat on Monday either, if we can't find it.

MA

Tommy, what's the matter?

GEORGIE

Lost his baseball glove.

TOMMY

(angry)

Didn't lose it! It was stolen by high school punks!

MA

Maybe it's God's way of getting back for, I don't know, disrupting a class, lying, having impure thoughts, or using God's name in vain on the baseball field.

JERRY

Ma just went four for four.

Everyone LAUGHS.

MA

It's God's Will, Tommy.

The wall-phone (next to Jimmy's seat) RINGS. Georgie RACES to phone but lets it ring a few times.

GEORGIE

I got it.

TOMMY

God's Will? More like the will of two punks!

Georgie answers the phone in a deep voice.

GEORGIE

Stohlgren's residence, the butler speaking.

(pauses)

Jimmy? Let me run upstairs and check.

Georgie puts the phone handle down by his feet and STOMPS in place. The boys GIGGLE quietly. Ma is PERTURBED.

GEORGIE (CONT'D)  
He's not upstairs. I'll check  
downstairs.

Georgie puts the phone handle down by his feet again, and STOMPS in place. The boys LAUGH more. Ma is MORE PERTURBED.

MA  
All your friends have seen our  
house. Why do you do that?

JIMMY  
'Cause it's funny, Ma.

GEORGIE  
I found him in the conservatory.  
It's Danny.

Georgie HANDS Jimmy the phone. The boys LAUGH.

JIMMY  
Hi, Danny.  
(beat)  
No, we all answer that way.  
(beat)  
Nope. No math homework. See ya,  
tomorrow.

Jimmy hangs up. Feeding time at the zoo continues.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
Milk game! The Italians at the  
Kingfish bar taught Pops to say,  
"La vita non è che una patata."  
What's it mean?

TOMMY  
Life is but a potato.

Everybody LAUGHS.

GEORGIE  
Why is Pops the strongest guy in  
any room?

MA  
'Cause he can raise five dumbbells.  
Now, eat your dinner! Hurry up,  
your father will be home any time.

Eating and laughter continue. Jimmy starts WASHING the dishes. Bruno, the dog, BARKS to go out the back door.

JERRY

Bruno didn't care for dinner, Ma.

MA

(in Irish brogue)

Quit your complaining! He's still alive, and so are the all of you.

TOMMY

It's another miracle, Ma.

MA

Watch it, Tommy.

TOMMY

Just kiddin', Ma!

The kitchen CLEARS, and Ma is FRYING a pork chop and BAKING a potato for Pops. His Manhattan cocktail is ready.

Pops (37, milkman uniform, alternately stern and humorous) STUMBLES in tired and tipsy.

MA

Hi, Dear. How was your day at work?

She HANDS him the drink before waiting for the answer.

POPS

Same old. Same old. Where are the boys?

MA

Tommy's in his room doing homework and studying his Latin to be an altar boy, and the others took Bruno for a walk.

POPS

Everything go okay today?

MA

Tommy got his baseball glove stolen.

POPS

Niggers, I bet.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tommy LISTENS from the next room.

TOMMY  
 (whispers)  
 Everybody calls them Negroes or  
 African-Americans, Pops.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

MA  
 Don't forget rocky road ice cream  
 for his birthday tomorrow.

POPS  
 Can't get the kids anything without  
 it getting stolen. They sawed  
 through a four-by-four to get a  
 bike from the backyard. And don't  
 forget my car battery a while back.

MA  
 Yes, Dear. Eat your dinner. You'll  
 feel better.

Pops eats and drinks, as Jimmy RACES in from the back door.

POPS  
 Hi, Pops. How was your day at work?  
 I gotta do my homework. See ya.

Jimmy RACES into the bedroom.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy and Tommy WHISPER.

JIMMY  
 Did she tell him about Mother  
 Superior's notes?

TOMMY  
 No. That's so boss.

JIMMY  
 Boss is out. Bold is in.

TOMMY  
 That's so bold.

Jimmy OPENS the bedroom window.

JIMMY  
 I'm going to watch cars at College  
 and Broadway. Cover for me.

He SLIPS OUT, and Tommy CLOSES the window. Tommy FINDS a note in the pocket of his pants: "Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Philosophy, Socrates."

TOMMY

Who the hell is Socrates?

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, BEDROOM - MORNING

SUPER: "Tuesday, Tommy's 12th Birthday"

In the boy's bedroom, Jimmy's clock radio alarm is extra QUIET. He wakes Georgie, Jerry, and Billy, and they TIP-TOE quietly around Tommy, who is fast asleep on his stomach.

Georgie, Jerry and Billy GRAB Tommy's arms and legs, while Jimmy starts SPANKING Tommy hard on the butt.

Tommy doesn't let on that it hurts.

JIMMY

One, two, three, four, five, six,  
seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven,  
twelve, and a pinch to grow an inch  
and a sock to grow a block.

Jimmy PINCHES Tommy and SOCKS him in the arm. Then, Jimmy holds Tommy, while Georgie SPANKS Tommy, and so on.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, KITCHEN - MORNING

A few minutes later, it's feeding time at the zoo.

Ma gives Tommy a KISS on the head, as Jimmy and Tommy WRESTLE for the off-brand Coco Puffs.

MA

I heard you boys! Happy Birthday,  
Tommy.

Ma turns as Jimmy WRESTLES harder to get the cereal out of Tommy's grip, and Jimmy's elbow CATCHES Tommy's right eye.

TOMMY

Ow!

JIMMY

Sorry, Tommy.

Ma RACES back to the table.



MA  
Get Tommy some ice.

Georgie RACES to the fridge, and WRAPS ice cubes in a dish cloth, and HANDS them to Tommy, who COVERS his eye.

TOMMY  
It was an accident, Ma.

MA  
Fighting over cereal!  
(Irish brogue)  
Idiots!

JIMMY  
Didn't mean to do it, Ma.

Georgie and Jerry give Tommy LESSONS on eating left-handed.

GEORGIE  
You gotta approach the bowl from  
the other side.

JERRY  
Like you're in a mirror.

TOMMY  
Ha ha. Very funny. I hope it  
doesn't swell and give me a...

Tommy RACES to the bathroom, and trudges back. He unveils a black eye between his right eye brow and eye lid.

TOMMY (CONT'D)  
Worst birthday ever!

While the other boys grab their lunches and head out the door, Ma grabs a flesh-colored make-up and applies it to Tommy's black eye and the black disappears.

TOMMY (CONT'D)  
How'd you know how to do that?

MA  
Never mind. Off to school with ya.

Tommy HUGS Ma and RACES out.

INT. CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Tommy HANDS in homework to Sister Mary-something, and none of the students notice Tommy's black eye.

He SMILES, and starts to walk to the back of the room to his desk. Sister TAPS her ruler, and Tommy TURNS to see her POINTING to the front row.

TOMMY  
(mumbles)  
Sentenced to the front row.

Tommy opens his desk to SEE his religion notebook open and corrected in blood-red ink:

- "1. Look like ~~you~~ you're paying ~~atenshun~~ attention, and keep your mouth shut.
2. If God was all-loving and all-merciful, how come Bill Benham has to spend all ~~nite~~ night writing ~~stupid catekism~~ catechism in ~~eursive~~ cursive?
3. Hell???????"

TOMMY (V.O.)  
Busted! Stuck in the front row!  
(looks around, smiles)  
Right next to Stephanie Cromarti!  
Best birthday ever! It's a miracle.

Tommy SMILES as he looks around at each of the girls in the class, until they all hear the bell RING.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING  
Let's begin with Catechism. Mr.  
Minetta, why did God make you?

John Minetta STANDS with confidence.

JOHN MINETTA  
God made me to know Him, to love  
Him, and to serve Him in this  
world, and to be happy with Him  
forever in Heaven.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING  
And, does God know all things?

Tommy is stealing GLANCES at Stephanie Cromarti.

JOHN MINETTA  
God knows all things, even our most  
secret thoughts, words, and  
actions.

TOMMY (V.O.)  
Uh oh. I'm in trouble.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING  
Mr. Benham, can God do all things?

John Minette SITS. Bill Benham STANDS.

BILL BENHAM

God can do all things, and nothing  
is hard or impossible to Him.

Sister is pleasantly surprised.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

Correct. Nothing is impossible for  
God. Are there any questions?

Tommy slowly RAISES his hand. Sister looks around for anyone  
else, but is forced to select Tommy.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING (CONT'D)

Yes, Tommy.

TOMMY

(slowly)

Thank you, Sister. Kids sometimes  
talk about stuff in the schoolyard,  
and we wanna know...

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

Yes, Tommy, get on with it.

TOMMY

If God can do all things, can God  
make a dinosaur so big He can't  
pick it up?

All students GIGGLE and LAUGH.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

No.

TOMMY

Then it's impossible for God to  
make a dinosaur so big he can't  
pick it up?

The students LAUGH harder.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

That will be all, Mr. Stohlgren.  
You'll remain after school for  
blackboard and eraser duty! You are  
lucky it's your birthday, or you  
would have earned another visit to  
Mother Superior.

Stephanie Cromarti SMILES at Tommy. Tommy SMILES back.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING (CONT'D)

Take out your religion notebooks.  
Today we'll discuss religious  
persecutions and Soldiers of  
Christ.

Sister quietly lectures.

TOMMY (V.O.)

(slowly, questioning)

If nothing is impossible for God,  
why does he allow war?

(beat)

and all those starving pagan babies  
in Africa?

(beat)

And why does he need us to be  
Soldiers of Christ to fight his  
battles?

RING!

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

I'd like a word with you, Mr.  
Stohlgren.

The students EXIT in an orderly fashion to recess.

TOMMY

Me, Sister? Is this about my  
science essay? I can explain. I had  
to do a science topic in the A's  
because those are the only  
encyclopedias we have, and so I  
picked astronomy, and that's how I  
found out Galileo, or whatever,  
almost got put in jail by a Pope or  
someone, because his telescope  
proved the earth revolved around  
the sun, when the Pope said the  
Bible said the earth was the center  
of the universe. But don't worry,  
Sister, Galileo said he must have  
made a mistake with his telescope,  
so he didn't go to jail.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

The Church later agreed the earth  
does revolve around the sun, Tommy.

TOMMY

You're sh... fooling me!

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

You were well-behaved all year,  
until yesterday. What's gotten into  
you? Why are you questioning our  
faith?

TOMMY

I don't know, Sister. Sometimes I  
don't see what's going on.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

Blessed are those who have not seen  
and yet believe.

(seriously angry)

If you question our faith, God will  
punish you! God will punish you  
forever! Is that what you want?

Tommy shakes in fear.

TOMMY

Yes, Sister!

(beat)

I mean, no, Sister!

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

Run along then.

Tommy, still scared RACES out to recess.

EXT. CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Outside on the playground, the day is hot, and Tommy and his  
friends are playing basketball.

Tommy MISSES an easy shot, and pauses to think.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

God will punish you! God will  
punish you!

Seconds later, Tommy's eye makeup begins to melt.

TOMMY

I'm open!

John Minetta THROWS a cross-court pass to Tommy, just as his  
black eye makeup MELTS into his eye, and the basketball  
CRASHES into Tommy's nose, causing a gushing BLOODY NOSE.

JOHN MINETTA

Sorry, Tommy, sorry.

Tommy WIPES his nose on his white uniform shirt sleeve to stop the bleeding. Tommy RUNS off the boys' rest room.

TOMMY  
My fault. I'll be back.

INT. CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Georgie FINDS Tommy in the rest room. He GRABS toilet paper. Tommy looks in the mirror as his black eye returns, and his shirt is BLOODY.

GEORGIE  
Happy Birthday, Tommy.

TOMMY  
(laughing)  
Worst birthday ever!

INT. CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, HALLWAY - DAY

Tommy's nostrils are STUFFED with toilet paper as Sister Mary-something MEETS Tommy at the door.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING  
How about a little quiet library time?

TOMMY  
Sure, Sister. Thanks.

INT. CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, LIBRARY - DAY

Mrs. Scranton GREETs Tommy in the school library.

MRS. SCRANTON  
What's the other guy look like?

TOMMY  
Happy Birthday to me. Ha! Gives me time to look up that Socrates dude.

MRS. SCRANTON  
(snarky)  
Same volume as Sexual Reproduction. Don't get blood on my encyclopedias.

TOMMY  
I won't, Mrs. Scranton.

Tommy READS about Socrates, and WRITES a few notes:

- "1. The unexamined life is not worth living.
2. The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing.
3. Wisdom begins in wonder.
4. False words are not only evil in themselves, but they infect the soul with evil. Geez!"

Tommy looks up philosophy, where he SEES a quote that stuns him.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Hey Mrs. Scranton, this lady Margaret Mead says "Children must be taught how to think, not what to think." I think St. Theresa's and the Baltimore Catechism have it backwards.

MRS. SCRANTON

Did you read where they ended up killing Socrates with poison?

TOMMY

No. Huh? Maybe thinking just doesn't pay! Maybe I better go along with the program!

MRS. SCRANTON

I'll get you a clean shirt from the lost and found.

TOMMY

(smiling)

Thanks, Mrs. Scranton. This is my best birthday ever!

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Jimmy, George, Tommy, and Johnny walk home through the cemetery.

TOMMY

Thanks for helping me clean the blackboards and erasers.

JIMMY

We stick together.

JOHNNY

Besides it's your birthday.

GEORGIE

This or that! Corvette or Mustang?

JIMMY  
Mustang.

JOHNNY  
Corvette. It's boss.

JIMMY  
Boss is out. Bold is in.

TOMMY  
I like the Corvair.

Everyone laughs. Tommy gets HIT in the shoulders by everyone.

JIMMY  
Ursula Andree or Ann-Margret?

GEORGIE  
This is going to take all night!

They LAUGH and walk.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

Tommy arrives last at the street corner to play baseball. He has no glove.

His brothers and Johnny WAIT for him, in their positions ready to play.

JIMMY  
Hey, Tommy. We got ya something for your birthday.

The brothers PRESENT Tommy with a used glove. A guy's name (David) is crossed out and "Tommy" is written under it.

TOMMY  
Thanks, guys.

JIMMY  
Your name is on it.

GEORGIE  
Must be yours.

JERRY  
Yours, now, that is.

BILLY  
Until it gets stolen again.



TOMMY  
Best birthday ever.

Tommy POUNDS his fist into his new glove.

TOMMY (V.O.)  
I never asked where my brothers got  
the glove or who David was. It  
would have been impolite.

A while later, Ma CALLS the boys to dinner, SCREAMING from  
the front door.

MA  
Time to eat!

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Johnny follows them into the kitchen, where any guest is  
tortured.

JIMMY  
Johnny will now lead us in the  
salute to the flag.

The Stohlgren boys STAND in unison and FACE a blank corner of  
the kitchen, hand over hearts. Johnny goes along.

JOHNNY  
I pledge allegiance to the flag...

JIMMY  
(interrupting)  
We may be seated.

TOMMY  
Johnny will now lead us in grace.

MA  
Stop torturing Johnny. Just eat!

They eat Ma's horrible spaghetti with canned meat sauce like  
feeding time at the zoo, with lots of laughter.

Ma BRINGS out an angel food cake topped with lots of white-  
powdered sugar, and twelve lit candles.

The boys all MOVE to the opposite side of the table from  
Tommy.

JIMMY

(stalling)

Tommy, make sure you think of a good wish; not for something too good, 'cause you'll never get it, but not for something too small or it'll get stolen.

TOMMY

Like a baseball glove?

The candles BURN lower.

MA

Sing already!

ALL

Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you, happy birthday dear Tommy, happy birthday to you.

As Tommy takes a deep breath and LEANS his face toward the cake, his brothers BLOW out the candles -- and BLOW the burning-hot, sticky powdered sugar onto his face!

TOMMY

Ahhhhhhh!

MA

Quick, get him a wet towel. Darn you, kids! That was not funny! Wait 'til your father gets home!

Georgie BRINGS Tommy a wet washcloth. Tommy COVERS his face with it.

TOMMY

They didn't know that was going to happen, Ma!

JIMMY

We didn't know, Ma!

Tommy DROPS the wet wash cloth to reveal a burnt-red face and a black eye from earlier.

Jimmy and boys LOOK SAD AND GUILTY.

MA

You boys are grounded for a week!

Ma CUTS the cake, while Tommy RACES to the bathroom and trudges back to the kitchen table.

TOMMY

Ma, the boys helped with blackboard duty after school, and found me an old baseball glove to use. Don't tell Pops, it will ruin my birthday. It's my birthday wish!

Ma stops and SMILES.

MA

Okay. Your father didn't bring home the rocky road ice-cream for you. I'm upset with him. But you boys are still grounded.

They eat cake and LAUGH.

GEORGIE

You'll make a fine-looking altar boy on Friday, Tommy.

MA

You got a few birthday cards. Nana sent you a five-dollar check, which will bounce, but Aunt Eleanor sent ten bucks cash. And I got you two things.

Ma hands Tommy a box.

Tommy OPENS it. It's a new purple Paisley short-sleeve shirt. Tommy loves it.

TOMMY

Bold, Ma. I love it!

Tommy HUGS his Ma.

MA

And I got you a pocket dictionary.

TOMMY

Was the bank out of toasters?

The boys LAUGH.

MA

You better get out of here before your father gets home.

JOHNNY

We could practice our Latin at my house? Altar boy practice tomorrow.

JIMMY  
I hear Pops' car.

MA  
Go on, get lost, boys. I'll deal  
with your father.

Tommy PUTS ON his new shirt.

TOMMY  
Best birthday ever.

The boys RACE out the back door.

EXT. GIUNTOLI HOUSE - NIGHT

Frustrated Johnny QUIZZES Tommy in Latin on the front steps.  
Johnny READS from an Altar Boy Handbook.

JOHNNY  
The priest says, Dominus-something.  
And we say...?

TOMMY  
I give up.

JOHNNY  
Et cum spírítu túo! Then the priest  
says, Glória tíbi, Dómine, and we  
say...?

Tommy is silent.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)  
If we screw up Friday morning mass,  
the priest won't let us go on the  
altar boy picnic at the fancy pool.

MACK (18, James Dean-type) STRUTS down the street like he  
owns the neighborhood. He smokes a cigarette.

MACK  
What are you punks doing?

Johnny HIDES his Altar Boy Handbook behind his back.

JOHNNY  
Just shootin' the breeze.

MACK  
What happened to your face, Tommy?

TOMMY

Bad day. Black eye eating  
breakfast, bloody nose playing  
basketball at lunch, and my  
brothers just blew hot sugar off my  
birthday cake into my face.

MACK

Didn't need the whole book! Anyway,  
I was eating lunch at Tech and the  
punk one table away was bragging  
about a baseball glove. I look over  
and see your name and phone number  
on the glove.

Mack REACHES behind in his belt and TOSSES the glove to  
Tommy. He SMIRKS.

TOMMY

Thanks, Tommy!

MACK

His face looks worse than yours.  
Happy birthday, punk. I joined the  
Marines after school. I go to basic  
right after graduation.

JOHNNY

Fighting Commies in Vietnam is  
good!

TOMMY

You can be killed!

MACK

Gooks are the one's gonna be dying.  
See ya, punks.

Mack turns and struts up the street.

JOHNNY

He's not Catholic, so he can't go  
to Heaven.

TOMMY

That's a stupid rule if God is all-  
loving and all-merciful!

JOHNNY

(angry)  
Half his hot rod is stolen parts.  
God's gonna punish him, like he did  
you, for questioning our faith!

TOMMY

What?

JOHNNY

Getting tossed from class, Mother Superior, your black eye, bloody nose, and burnt face! You don't think God is punishing you? It's God's Will for sure!

TOMMY

(angry)

God's Will, my butt! You're holier than me, but God gave you a million allergies, and I got none. Your dad was holier than my dad, but God gave your dad the brain tumor! Either God ain't fair, or God don't care!

Johnny PAUSES. His eyes TEAR UP, and he CRIES.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Sorry, Johnny. I didn't mean nothin'.

Johnny crumbles up his Altar Boy Handbook and TRUDGES into his house.

Tommy SULKS and POUNDS his fist in his glove.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Worst birthday ever!

Tommy TRUDGES home to the alley by his bedroom, and SEES Jimmy SNEAKING OUT the window. They WHISPER in the alley.

JIMMY

Gonna watch cars at College and Broadway with Danny Bondi. What you doin'?

TOMMY

Gonna do homework and study my Latin.

JIMMY

Huh? Is that your old glove?

TOMMY

Mack beat up a punk at Tech, and got it back for me.

JIMMY

Bold. I'll give you a boost up.

Jimmy BOOSTS Tommy up to the window.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, BEDROOM - MORNING

SUPER: "Wednesday, Tommy's Pious Day"

Jimmy's clock radio comes alive with Dionne Warwick's *Walk on By*. Tommy pops up, GRABS his school uniform, and RACES to the bathroom. His face looks better.

TOMMY

Maybe doing my homework and practicing my Latin paid off.

Ma HANDS Tommy a second pressed white shirt.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Morning, Ma! Thanks for washing the shirts. You're the best!

MA

Be good today!

TOMMY

I will, Ma. I'm gettin' with the program again.

EXT. CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Elsie DROPS OFF all the kids.

JIMMY

Remember, look like you're paying attention, and keep your mouth shut!

Tommy and Johnny walk slowly to the front doors.

TOMMY

I practiced my Latin last night.

JOHNNY

(laughs)  
'Bout time. Thanks to Our Lady of Perpetual Guilt?

Tommy SMILES.

EXT. CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Sister Mary-something STANDS in front of Tommy but she doesn't call on him. MARK WELLS (12, shy) STANDS. CATHERINE LANGLEY (12, smart, smug) RAISES her hand for each question.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING  
Who were the first man and woman,  
Mr. Wells?

MARK WELLS  
The first man and woman were Adam  
and Eve.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING  
And which are the chief sources of  
sin?

Tommy RAISES his hand, but is not called on.

MARK WELLS  
The chief sources of sin are seven:  
Pride, Covetousness, Lust, Anger,  
Gluttony, Envy, and Sloth.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING  
And they are called the capital  
sins, Mr. Wells. Learn them well or  
not at all! Miss Langley, are all  
bound to belong to the church?

Catherine Langley SHOTS UP.

CATHERINE LANGLEY  
All are bound to belong to the  
Church, and he who knows the Church  
to be the true Church and remains  
out of it cannot be saved.

TOMMY (V.O.)  
Poor Mack. Even if he returned my  
glove and kills Gooks for us in  
Vietnam, he can't get to Heaven.  
Sounds like God is partly-loving  
and partly-merciful again. I'm not  
saying a word!

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

Tommy and Johnny RACE through altar boy practice with a  
young, tall, handsome priest, FATHER MIGUEL (28).



FATHER MIGUEL

You enter from the rectory like this, bow, make the sign of the cross, answer in Latin, genuflect, then return your dugout bench.

TOMMY

Dugout bench! That's bold!

FATHER MIGUEL

If you ever forget what to do next, go to your dugout bench and await instructions from your priest.

The priest uses Latin-dance steps to show the pattern of the Mass. Johnny and Tommy follow him like puppies.

FATHER MIGUEL (CONT'D)

It's choreography! A dance! Like a musical! It has a rhythm! Feel the beat! See?

JOHNNY

Yes, Father.

TOMMY

Yes, Father. I'll just follow Johnny. He knows the dance better than me.

Father Miguel PATS the boys in the head as they go.

EXT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Tommy and Johnny SMILE and LAUGH.

TOMMY

Father Miguel is way bolder than the Monsignor.

JOHNNY

And Friday morning the monsignor golfs, so we'll get Father Miguel for Mass.

TOMMY

Sticking to the program works. I'm a new kid.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Jimmy, Tommy, and Georgie SHOVEL IN bowls of cereal, as Ma SMOKES and asks suspicious questions.

MA

How can you each go different directions for your Shopping News routes and get home at the same time?

JIMMY

All the routes take an hour, Ma.

TOMMY

So no paperboy has more work than another.

GEORGIE

I'm thinking about taking on a second route.

Jimmy KICKS George under the table.

MA

Isn't Georgie industrious? And what's the basketball for, Jimmy?

JIMMY

I put it in my bag, and stop of at Rockridge to shoot a few hoops before coming home.

MA

I see. They keep paying you, so you must all be doing a good job.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

The Stohlgren boys crowd at the table as Ma SERVES meatloaf (with lots of oatmeal in it).

JIMMY

Ma's meatloaf has so much oatmeal, that it passes for sawdust.

MA

The meat goes farther. This is how everyone made it during the war.

TOMMY

I see why. We can't cut it without a bayonet!

MA

Don't eat so fast! You'll choke.

JIMMY

More likely to get slivers.

Ma gives Jimmy a nasty look.

TOMMY

Or termites.

GEORGIE

All the bold cars are from Germany and Japan. Maybe we should have lost the war?

MA

You can't learn Spanish. How would you learn Japanese and German?

JERRY

Don't need Spanish. Odds are I'll never turn into a Mexican.

MA

I'm too embarrassed to dry the laundry, with your Spanish teacher, Mrs. Benitez, living right behind.

BILLY

She's flunking all of us. Si!

JIMMY

Tell her, "no comprende," Ma.

MA

Who needs more catsup?

ALL

Si!

Feeding time at the zoo is soon over. Jerry and Billy RACE out.

MA

Your father never brought home rocky road ice cream for Tommy's birthday.

TOMMY

That's okay. He had to work.

MA

I'm giving you each two dollars to go to the creamery.

TOMMY

Thanks, Ma! Must be God's Will for doing my homework, learning my Latin, going to altar boy practice, and surviving Monday meatloaf!

GEORGIE

The creamery! It's Heaven on earth, a twenty-minute walk away!

JIMMY

The only kind of sundaes I like. And Tommy won't have to spend his birthday money! Let's go!

INT. CREAMERY - NIGHT

Jimmy, Tommy, and Georgie are served the BIGGEST SUNDAES they make. The creamery has Twenty Patrons (various ages, genders, and types, with ten of the Patrons at a long "birthday" table.

Three waitresses (20s, cute, white uniforms) race around, and one Cashier (50, female, stern) runs the counter.

TOMMY

I was good for almost twenty-four hours, and in the last twenty-four minutes, I'm guilty of the sin of pride for wearing my new shirt, covetousness for wanting your ice creams too, gluttony for eating all of mine, and soon I'll commit the sin of sloth for being too full to walk home! And tomorrow afternoon is Confession!

JIMMY

Don't sweat it, Tommy. Do what I do. Tell the priest it's been only one week since your last confession.

TOMMY

It's been ten weeks.

JIMMY

Never admit to more than one week.

GEORGIE

Isn't he the wise one!

JIMMY

Then say you used God's name in vain when some kid blind-sided you with an elbow going for a rebound, and you forgot to make your bed once. That's it!

TOMMY

What about the capital sins of pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth?

JIMMY

Never admit to those without a lawyer.

GEORGIE

I said I had impure thoughts once, and Monsignor wanted to hear all about it in detail. Never again.

TOMMY

One week, minor sins. I get it.

JIMMY

Then, the penance is easy. Few Hail Mary's is the most I got.

TOMMY

Geez! I had to say a whole Rosary once.

GEORGIE

My penance was so big once, I had to carry a lunch.

JIMMY

Rookie mistakes.

They EAT and LAUGH until they can barely move.

The waitress brings the check: "\$6.04."

Jimmy SEES the big birthday table next to them.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Each of you leave a dollar tip, and follow my lead. Got it?

Tommy and Georgie, bewildered, nod, and leave the tip.

Jimmy STANDS and WAVES his hand to the birthday table, until someone reluctantly WAVES back.

Jimmy LOOKS at the Cashier, and POINTS to the person who just waved, and gives the okay sign to the cashier.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

(whispers)

Now, we walk out like we own the place.

Jimmy STROLLS out confidently. Tommy and Georgie follow.

EXT. CREAMERY - NIGHT

Once out the door, they stroll across the street (St. Leo's Catholic Church), then RUN like hell, LAUGHING as they run.

TOMMY (V.O.)

My twenty-four hours of pious living were officially over.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

The boys are in bed carrying on the time-honored tradition of preventing each others from sleep. They WHISPER, but their laughter is DIFFICULT to contain.

JIMMY

Funniest thing that happened all day?

BILLY

When Tommy got a black eye, bloody nose, and burnt face.

JIMMY

That was yesterday, idiot!

BILLY

Oh yeah. You guys dumping the shopping news in the dumpster and still getting paid every week!

GEORGIE

Strolling out of the creamery after dining and ditching, and heading to a church.

JERRY

Nope. Funniest thing all day was when my class was marching down the hallway from lunch, and there was Georgie getting paddled by his nun right there in the hallway. That's my brother, I said.

The boys have to BURY their heads in pillows to muffle their laughter.

JIMMY

Funniest thing that happened all week?

TOMMY

What Billy said. Me getting a black eye, bloody nose, and burnt face on my birthday.

JIMMY

Tommy finally getting a girlfriend, Stephanie Cromarti.

Everyone LAUGHS, but Jimmy LAUGHS the loudest.

TOMMY

We haven't even gone out yet!

GEORGIE

Oh, she likes you Tommy. Don't mess it up but saying something stupid!

They all LAUGH.

JIMMY

Billy, act like a funny clown!

BILLY

No! I'll get in trouble.

JERRY

Come on, Billy. Be a funny clown.

Billy stands on his bed and jumps up and down, and FAKES LAUGHING.

The boys LAUGH hysterically.

They HEAR Pops STOMP to the bedroom.

The boys PRETEND to be sleeping. Pops YELLS as he opens the door.

POPS

Hey, sh... sh... sh... shut up in there.  
Or I'll get the b- b- b- belt out!

Pops SLAMS the door and returns to his room.

GEORGIE

(whispers)

F- f- f- funniest thing that  
happened in t- t- t- two years?

The boys BURY their heads in their pillows to laugh.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

SUPER: Thursday - Tommy falls off the program.

It is feeding time at the zoo (cereal and milk), the boys eat like wild animals, and Ma tries to ask civilized questions.

MA

How was The Creamery?

TOMMY

It was good, Ma.

MA

Jerry and Billy can go next time.

JERRY

It's Thursday. Hot Dog Day at  
school. Can we have fifty cents?

MA

Yes, you and Billy may have fifty  
cents each for Hot Dog Day.

BILLY

Sister Inez is sick, so we got art  
all day.

(beat)

I like to eat the paste.

Everyone STARES, while Billy eats. They aren't sure if he's kidding or not.

MA

Save room for the hot dogs, Billy.

Jimmy WINKS at Tommy and Georgie.



JIMMY

Me, Tommy, and Goergie have our own  
money for Hot Dog Day, Ma.

Ma is about to correct Jimmy's grammar, but Tommy INTERRUPTS  
her.

TOMMY

It's also Confession Day for fourth  
through eighth grade.

JIMMY

Only one more week of this kids  
stuff before I graduate to St.  
Joe's high school, like Pops did  
for disciplinary reasons.

MA

It's a college preparatory school  
now.

Ma TUNES OUT the boys.

JIMMY

Don't need college to be a milkman,  
Ma! I'm gonna join the Teamsters,  
and buy a new Mustang.

BILLY

Keen. I wanna be a milkman too.

JERRY

Boss. I wanna be a bookie.

GEORGIE

Bold. I wanna be a shepherd. The  
annual conventions are in Las  
Vegas!

TOMMY

I wanna be a background vocalist in  
an all-black female vocal group.

Ma is LISTENING again.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Keen, boss, and bold are out.  
Cherry is in.

JIMMY

Duh, Tommy!

MA

That's exactly why slang should be avoided.

JIMMY

Cherry, Ma!

INT. CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Sister Mary-something LECTURES. The blackboard reads: "Confession is the telling of our sins to an authorized priest for the purpose of obtaining forgiveness."

The students have notebooks out, but they LOOK BORED.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

Many of you were confused on the last test, so here it is again. Any questions?

Billy Benham RAISES his hand in the back.

BILL BENHAM

Sister, you don't have to believe in My Favorite Martian or in other scary ghosts, but the Holy Ghost is real, right.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

Other ghosts are only seen by insecure people and in bad movies.

Tommy SMILES. While the nun mutters, Tommy thinks.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

(CONT'D)

Let's examine the five requirements of Confession. We must examine our conscience. We must have sorrow for our sins. We must make a firm resolution never to offend God. We must confess our sins to the priest. We must accept the penance.

TOMMY (V.O.)

Examined my conscience? Nope. Sorrow? A little. Never do it again? Easy to say. Confess that sin to the priest? I don't think so! Accept the penance? As long as it's short and easy. I'll take Jimmy's advice.

While Sister CHECKS the student's notebooks, Tommy lets his mind wander.

TOMMY (V.O.)

What if Jesus was like My Favorite Martian, and he made himself disappear when the Romans were nailing him to the cross? That would have been cherry!

Sister Mary-something SLAMS her ruler on Tommy's desk.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

I asked Mr. Stohlgren how the Holy Ghost makes us strong and perfect Christians.

TOMMY

(quick-thinking)

Like My Favorite Martian, the Holy Ghost has the power to make all our problems disappear, Sister.

The Sister's FROWN turns into a SMILE.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

I'd never heard it put that way, Tommy, but I supposed your right!

The school bell RINGS!

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

Tommy's class WALKS single file into the church and sits on the right side.

Georgie is the last in his class to go to confession.

Tommy maneuvers to be the last in line for the confessional.

Johnny KNEELS at the altar in the front of the church, does the sign of the cross, and walks down the aisle by Tommy.

He LEANS to whisper to him.

JOHNNY

You get Father Miguel. Monsignor did the other grades earlier. Lucky us, huh?

TOMMY

Whew! He's new to the parish. He doesn't know when my last confession was!

Johnny looks BEWILDERED as he exits the church.

Georgie ENTERS the confessional.

Tommy waits his turn. Kids file in and out quickly.

Finally, Tommy goes into the confessional.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH, CONFESSIONAL - CONTINUOUS

Soon, Father Miguel OPENS the tiny door. The opaque-covered screen prevents them from seeing each other.

TOMMY

Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been one week since my last confession.

The priest is silent for a moment.

FATHER MIGUEL

Yes, my son?

TOMMY

I used God's name in vain when some kid blind-sided me with an elbow getting a rebound. That's it!

FATHER MIGUEL

Go on.

TOMMY

I didn't make my bed once.

FATHER MIGUEL

I seem to have heard this before.

TOMMY (V.O.)

Georgie!

(beat)

Wait 'til he gets Jimmy! Ha!

FATHER MIGUEL

Anything else troubling you, my son?

Tommy is caught off-guard.

TOMMY

You mean, like breaking Commandments? I'm a little too young to be coveting thy neighbor's wife.

FATHER MIGUEL  
(giggling)  
I suppose you are.

TOMMY  
I do have a couple of questions,  
Father.

FATHER MIGUEL  
Go on.

TOMMY  
Is it true Church leaders used to  
sell Indulgence cards? A long time  
ago. And did Church leaders burn  
people to death because they were  
suspected of being witches? But  
there's no such thing as witches,  
Sister said.

FATHER MIGUEL  
Nobody's perfect, my son, except  
the Holy Trinity; Father, Son, and  
Holy Ghost. Any other questions?

TOMMY  
And Dominican priests used all  
sorts of torture devices like the  
rack, neck-chokers, masks with  
metal spikes in them, and...

FATHER MIGUEL  
(interrupting)  
The Inquisition. I'm afraid some  
Church leaders did some very bad  
things long ago. The Church took a  
very hard line against heresy.

TOMMY  
What's heresy, Father?

FATHER MIGUEL  
Heresy is a belief or opinion  
contrary to Christian doctrine.

TOMMY  
(mumbles)  
Like Galileo? Can my brothers get  
into Heaven if we believe in God  
and are mostly good?

FATHER MIGUEL  
Yes, but you may not be seated in  
the prime real estate areas.

TOMMY

And my neighbor is going to war in that Vietnam place to kill gooks. But we're supposed to love thy enemy, so is my neighbor gonna go to Hell for killing gooks?

Father Miguel pauses and SIGHS.

FATHER MIGUEL

That's a difficult question. We don't want communism or godlessness. But are we justified in killing? I don't think so, but I honestly don't have the answer.

TOMMY

Sorry, Father, for asking questions.

FATHER MIGUEL

You did nothing wrong. You need no absolution from me.

TOMMY

What? No penance?

FATHER MIGUEL

Keep asking difficult questions, my son. Even if they torment you.

TOMMY

The unexamined life is not worth living, Father.

FATHER MIGUEL

Socrates. Now get out of here. I have work to do.

The priest SHUTS the little door. Tommy SMILES and EXITS.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy ENTERS the confessional as Tommy leaves. Tommy goes up to the altar to pray. He is soon joined by Jimmy, who WHISPERS to Tommy.

JIMMY

Apparently, Father Miguel heard the one about using God's name in vain because a kid blind-sided me with an elbow getting a rebound.

They LAUGH.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, BEDROOM - DAWN

SUPER: Friday -- Tommy's Altar Boys' Picnic Day

Ma SHAKES Tommy awake, while the other boys SLEEP.

MA  
Wake up for Mass.

TOMMY  
(groggy)  
What time is it?

MA  
Six A.M. Elsie will pick you up in  
thirty minutes. And you have to  
pack for the Altar Boys' Picnic.

Tommy HOPS out of bed.

TOMMY  
The picnic. It's today!

MA  
Shhhh! Don't wake your brothers.

Ma exits to the kitchen.

Tommy GRABS his clothes and a small bathing suits (his), and one of which is Jimmy's. He RACES to the kitchen.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ma smokes and drinks coffee.

TOMMY  
Ma, have we got a beach towel?

MA  
No. Take a bath towel, but bring it  
back or you're grounded.

Tommy RACES to the bathroom and trudges back to the kitchen with a tattered bath towel.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Tommy begins to speak. Ma stops him.

MA

Because brown hides the dirt!

TOMMY

Do we have a nice bag to put my  
clothes and towel in?

Ma finds a grocery store paper bag.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

(sarcastic)

Great! Can I get some breakfast?

MA

Can't eat before Mass -- Communion,  
remember. I'll put an apple in your  
decorative bag to eat after Mass.  
You'll make a fine priest someday.

TOMMY

Not if they get up this early.

EXT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

Elsie SKIDS to a stop in front of the church. Johnny and  
Tommy SING along to a song on the radio, *Do Wah Diddy* by  
Manfred Mann.

ELSIE

Go on. You'll be late for Mass.

JOHNNY

Bye, Mom.

TOMMY

Bye, Mrs. Giuntoli.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Tommy and Johnny RACE in to the rectory, and throw on their  
altar boy gowns. Father Miguel is reverently putting on his  
vestments.

JOHNNY

Just follow my lead, Tommy.

TOMMY

Easy for you to say. You're  
practically a priest.

Father Miguel LEADS Johnny and Tommy from the rectory toward  
the altar.



Halfway to the altar, Tommy sees eight nuns (various ages), including Sister Mary-something, six businessmen (suits, various ages), and Stephanie Cromarti and her mom (35, cute).

Tommy FREEZES, and smiles at Stephanie, while the priest and Johnny continue to the altar, genuflect, and make the sign of the cross.

Johnny SEES Tommy.

JOHNNY

Pssss!

Tommy catches up with a late genuflect and sign of the cross.

Johnny LEADS Tommy toward the altar boy bench, but Tommy looks out to Stephanie, steps on Johnny's robe, Johnny JERKS back, and sends Tommy to the floor ON HIS BUTT.

Father Miguel GLARES over, mid-prayer, while Tommy STUMBLES to the bench. Father Miguel continues. For Tommy, the Mass is a nightmare.

Later Johnny gets up and TUGS Tommy's robe to follow him. They STAND between the priest and congregation.

FATHER MIGUEL

Dominus vobiscum.

JOHNNY

Et cum spírítu túo.

TOMMY

(still stunned)

Do Wah Diddy Diddy Dum Diddy Do.

Everyone HEARS Tommy. Dead Silence. Father Miguel looks down at him with pity. The rest of the Mass is a blur.

After the Mass, the priest LEADS the congregation out of the church and returns to LEAD Johnny and Tommy to the rectory. Father Miguel pulls Tommy aside.

FATHER MIGUEL

We are not all called to serve the Lord.

TOMMY

Sorry for screwing up, I mean, messing up out there, Father. I was so clumsy, I wouldn't be called to serve the Lord lunch.

FATHER MIGUEL  
 Maybe you had other things on your  
 mind, like Manfred Mann? Do Wha  
 Diddy?

TOMMY  
 Sorry, Father. Just slipped out.

Tommy begins to walk over to Johnny.

FATHER MIGUEL  
 I'll remember that as long as I  
 live, Socrates!

Tommy TURNS back. The priest SMILES as he removes his  
 vestments reverently. Johnny helps Tommy hang up his robe.

TOMMY  
 Looks like no Altar Boys' Picnic  
 for us. Sorry, Johnny, I screwed  
 up.

JOHNNY  
 Father Miguel told your Sister that  
 he demands you still go to the  
 picnic.

TOMMY  
 Really?

JOHNNY  
 And, Stephanie Cromarti broke up  
 with you for not believing in Hell.

TOMMY  
 One thing! Didn't even talk yet!

JOHNNY  
 You're a bachelor right before the  
 Altar Boys' Picnic.

TOMMY  
 Cherry! Did you know Father Miguel  
 knows the Do Wha Diddy song?

JOHNNY  
 Everybody in church today knows the  
*Do Wha Diddy* song.

They LAUGH and SING *Do Wha Diddy* as they exit the church.

INT. CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Tommy STARES at the clock, while Sister Mary-something LECTURES.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

Let's review! Why does the Church forbid the marriage of Catholics with persons who have a different religion or no religion at all?

(beat)

I'll tell you why! Because such marriages generally lead to indifference, loss of faith, and to the neglect of the religious education of the children!

The school bell RINGS!

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING (CONT'D)

All of you remain in your seats, while our seven altar boys go meet their bus. You may go with them, Mr. Stohlgren, despite your disrespectful performance this morning.

TOMMY

(smiling)

Yes, Sister.

Tommy RACES out with his brown paper bag.

Johnny waits in the hall, with his brown paper bag.

The other six altar boys have nice bags, and fancy beach towels.

EXT. EXCLUSIVE POOL - DAY

The elegant pool in rustic setting in the Oakland Hills is everything that Tommy and Johnny dreamed. Thirty boys and girls (12-14) are splashing and playing in the pool.

Tommy and Johnny STRIP. They have their swimsuits under their school uniforms, and toss their clothes in their grocery bags on the far side of the pool.

They LAY on tattered brown bath towels, like kings.

JOHNNY

This is what it must feel like to be rich.

TOMMY  
Surrounded by non-Catholic pagan  
girls?

JOHNNY  
I meant, the nice pool.

TOMMY  
Yeah, me too!

JOHNNY  
I feel like a king!

TOMMY  
Or like the Beverly Hillbillies.  
Either way, we're here!

JOHNNY  
Bet these rich kids don't have as  
much fun as we do in our  
neighborhood.

TOMMY  
What?

JOHNNY  
The baseball games, the forts, the  
homemade fireworks, the go-carts,  
the eight-foot-tall kite we made.

TOMMY  
Yep, but they got pagan girls!

They HOP in and join in a game of Marco Polo with TEN other  
kids. Girl #1 (small, loud) is it.

GIRL #1  
Marco?

ALL  
Polo!

Girl #1 SWIMS and TAGS Boy #1 (small, loud).

Boy #1 covers his eyes and counts to ten, while the others  
SWIM away.

BOY #1  
Marco?

ALL  
Polo!

Boy #1 struggles, but TAGS Tommy.

TOMMY

I'm it.

Tommy covers his eyes and counts to ten.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Marco?

ALL

Polo!

Tommy HEARS a sweet voice not far from him, and expertly SWIMS her direction.

He TAGS a very cute, tall, Girl #2, by accident, ON HER BREAST.

She doesn't cause a scene.

GIRL #2

I'm it.

She STANDS in the water next to Tommy, covers her eyes, and counts slowly to ten.

Tommy is MESMERIZED by her beauty. He FREEZES. Time slows. His heart pounds in his chest.

GIRL #2 (CONT'D)

Marco?

Tommy is too stunned to speak. The others respond.

ALL

Polo.

Girl #2 SWIMS away from Tommy.

Tommy HEADS to the side of the pool.

Johnny stays in the game.

Tommy HOPS out of the pool, and his swimsuit that is two sizes too big, STAYS in the pool.

Totally embarrassed, he grabs his tattered bath towel, WRAPS it around him, and he EXITS to the men's locker room. He sits in a stall.

INT. MENS LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Later, Johnny finds Tommy in the locker room.

JOHNNY

Tommy?

TOMMY

In here, dying of embarrassment.

JOHNNY

Nobody saw nothing! Everybody was swimming!

TOMMY

Can you do me a favor? Get my clothes my bag for me.

JOHNNY

Sure, Tommy.

LATER

EXT. EXCLUSIVE POOL - DAY

Tommy and Johnny LOUNGE in deck chairs up by the snack bar. Tommy is in his Catholic-school pants and new Paisley shirt. Johnny is in his swimsuit. Their grocery bags are next to them.

TOMMY

I gotta tell you what happened during the game of Marco Polo. Promise you won't laugh?

JOHNNY

That never works.

TOMMY

I was it, and I swam eyes-closed toward a girl's voice, reached out, and tagged her, you know, up here.

Tommy MOTIONS to his chest. Johnny laughs.

JOHNNY

Is she pregnant?

TOMMY

Johnny! Said you wouldn't laugh.

JOHNNY

Said it never works.

Girl #1 and Girl #2 are heading to the snack bar. Tommy WHISPERS to Johnny. The girls are GIGGLING and talking.

TOMMY  
It's her. The tall one.

Girl #2 glances at Tommy. Tommy STUTTERS.

TOMMY (CONT'D)  
H- h- h- hi.

GIRL #2  
Hi.  
(beat)  
Cool shirt.

Tommy SMILES but can't speak. The girls walk on by.

JOHNNY  
Cherry is out. Cool is in.

TOMMY  
What a cool day!

JOHNNY  
This pool is cool, except for all  
the pagans.

TOMMY  
I think I like pagans.

Tommy SMILES. Johnny smiles back.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Tommy eats a bowl of cereal, while Ma SMOKES a cigarette in  
her floral housecoat.

MA  
I heard Mass this morning didn't go  
well.

TOMMY  
Father Miguel said I was not altar  
boy material, but he liked my  
singing.

MA  
How was your Altar Boys' Picnic?

TOMMY  
Had a great time playing Marco  
Polo. Really getting a handle on  
the game. Gonna ride the bike.

Tommy RUNS out.

EXT. BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

Tommy rides his bike on the sidewalk, and SKIDS to a stop when he HEARS singing inside -- choir practice. Tommy SMILES.

TOMMY  
Real soul music! Cool!

Tommy rides on.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD POOL - DAY

Tommy rides by the neighborhood pool and HEARS the splashing and laughter.

TOMMY  
Bet they're playing Marco Polo.

Tommy rides on.

EXT. STOHLGREN HOUSE - DAY

SUPER: "SATURDAY - Tommy's day of questions without answers."

Tommy turns the corner on a rusty old bike, just a few houses away from home, when he meets Mack and DENNY (16, Italian, slicked-back hair, tight jeans, rolled-up T-shirt, rock star look).

DENNY  
Hold on there, punk. Heard you screwed up my cousin's first mass as an altar boy.

TOMMY  
Had a bad day. Fell on my butt during mass. Then I answered a blessing with Do Wha Diddy Diddy Dum Diddy Do.

Mack and Denny LAUGH.

TOMMY (CONT'D)  
(relieved)  
Gave up being an altar boy, but I don't want to be a thug either.

Mack LAUGHS. Denny makes a fist.

DENNY  
Who you callin' a thug?



TOMMY

Nobody. You used to walk me to kindergarten.

MACK

Jimmy says you told a priest that I shouldn't go to hell for killing gooks in Nam. What did your priest say?

TOMMY

He didn't exactly have all the answers.

MACK

Figures. Okay. Get lost!

TOMMY

Okay. See ya later.

DENNY

Not if we see you first, punk!

They all LAUGH, as Tommy finishes the ride home.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Tommy is happily greeted by his Ma who holding an envelope and letter.

MA

You got that summer job at Mosswood Park! To keep kids off the streets.

Ma SHOWS Tommy the letter. Tommy SMILES.

TOMMY

Same park Big Grandpa George was a mugger in?

MA

Don't mention that to your father.

TOMMY

Buck-twenty-five an hour. I'll be rich.

MA

We'll tell your father that you won't have time to be an altar boy.

Ma SMILES. Tommy HUGS her.

TOMMY

Where are the boys?

MA

Jimmy is caddying at the country club; George needs the bike to ride with friends, and Elsie and I are taking all the kids downtown to see *Viva Las Vegas*. Want to go?

TOMMY

Do we have a public library?

MA

Don't be silly. Four blocks down of College. We used to go when you were four or five.

TOMMY

I'm going there.

MA

Instead of Ann-Margret?

TOMMY

I'll go to the movies next week. I need to go to the library!

MA

Fine. Make a cheese sandwich for dinner if we're not back.

TOMMY

Okay, Ma.

Tommy RACES out.

INT. BRANCH LIBRARY - DAY

Tommy ENTERS like an uninvited guest. A female college student is the Library Lady (21, cute, glasses, hippy-like). Two Elderly Patrons (65) are the only ones inside.

TOMMY

Can anyone come in here?

LIBRARY LADY

As long as you're quiet, you can stay 'til we close at five.

Tommy HOLDS out his hand to shake. He WHISPERS.

TOMMY

Deal. Where's your books on knowledge?

She SMILES, shakes hands, and POINTS all around.

LIBRARY LADY

Everywhere you look.

TOMMY

Not the Socrates stuff. They killed him with poison.

LIBRARY LADY

Actually, he took the hemlock himself rather than face a life without the quest for knowledge. I can show you my favorite book when I was about your age?

TOMMY

Sure, Lady. Thanks!

The Two Elderly Patrons exit. The Library Lady leads Tommy to a copy of *Men, Microscopes, and Living Things* by Shippen.

LIBRARY LADY

Here. Try this. I've got homework to do. Check in on ya later.

TOMMY

Thanks.

Tommy sits quietly and reads, and looks at pictures in the book.

He looks around at books on skeletons, dinosaurs, spiders, and mountains.

An hour later, Tommy goes to find the Library Lady.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

This is terrible!

LIBRARY LADY

How so?

TOMMY

Because the first people think they know something, then people come after them and find out something else, then other people come along and find a whole bunch of new stuff, and they never know it all.

LIBRARY LADY

That's the wonderful about science.  
More to learn all the time. Gee,  
the world wasn't made in seven  
days. It took billions of years.  
Shocker! That's what I learned when  
I was your age. Very cool, huh?

TOMMY

I got more questions than answers!

She SMILES.

LIBRARY LADY

Isn't it wonderful? My homework is  
on a jawbone of a child about your  
age who lived over a million years  
ago! A link between chimps and us.

TOMMY

The nuns say nothing can be found  
to disprove the Word of God.

LIBRARY LADY

I'm not here to change your mind.  
These books are here to open it.  
You can take two books home for two  
weeks with a library card.

TOMMY

My mom's not here.

LIBRARY LADY

I can give you your own card!

TOMMY

Very cool!

Tommy stays and READS until closing time, and takes out the  
book on science, and a book on Greek Mythology.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ma SERVES Sloppy Joe's (canned chili con carne, heated, and  
served on hamburger buns). A large bottle of barbecue sauce  
helps make it edible for the five boys. The boys are  
LAUGHING, eating, and playing the milk game.

JIMMY

Hear about the leper hockey game?

TOMMY

Yeah, there was a face off in the corner.

Pops surprises everyone by coming home early.

ALL

Hi, Pops! How was your day at work?

POPS

Got home early for the Memorial Day Holiday, but I gotta work Monday.

GEORGIE

We got a half-day of school Monday.

Pops looks closely at the Sloppy Joe's in disgust. The boys LAUGH.

POPS

Anne, I ain't eating that slop, but I'll take a Manhattan.

MA

(sarcastic)

Yes, Bob. Right away, Bob.

JIMMY

Tell us about the war, Pops.

Pops' eyes light up. Ma HANDS him a drink, and he retells the story they've all heard a hundred times.

POPS

I was on a carpenter's mate on destroyer!

Pops LAUGHS along with the boys.

JIMMY

A carpenter on a metal boat, go on.

POPS

I had to guard the beer locker.

BILLY

Biggest job in the war, I bet.

TOMMY

Didn't you have to build a ramp once for soldiers to get aboard?

POPS

Yeah, but the tide came in, and the ramp was so short, soldiers had to climb up at the end.

Pops and the kids ROAR with laughter.

JERRY

How did we ever win that war?

POPS

Then I came home, married your mom, and raised five knuckleheads.

They all LAUGH.

POPS (CONT'D)

Now I gotta go watch the bad news on TV.

The boys keep eating, while Pops YELLS from TV room.

POPS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Those idiots who burn their draft cards should be shot.

MA

(whispers)

He gets so upset. I'd better get him another drink.

JIMMY

(whispers)

I wouldn't want to get killed in Vietnam.

TOMMY

Me either.

POPS (O.S.)

Honey, the TV is on the fritz again. Did you call Benny?

MA

He's coming as soon as he can.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, TV ROOM - NIGHT

BENNY (55, huge, bald, slow), the TV repairman, RINGS to door bell, and walks right in. He carries a large brown suitcase.

BENNY

Hello, Bob and Anne. Here to fix your set.

Pops gets out of his chair to shake hands. The boys SURROUND Benny like a war hero.

POPS

I tried everything. Horizontal control, vertical control. Won't stay steady.

BENNY

Old sets like yours keep me in business.

JIMMY

Pops says we're getting a new color TV when his ship comes in.

GEORGIE

But when Pop's ship comes in, he'll be waiting at the airport.

POPS

Get lost boys, don't bother Benny.

Ma brings Pops another cocktail. The boys leave, but Tommy remains behind. Pops is chain-smoking *Camel* cigarettes.

MA

Benny, can I get you something?

BENNY

I'm fine. Thanks, Anne.

TOMMY

I'm gonna watch. I may want to be a TV repairman.

POPS

You'll be a milkman. A Teamster, like the other boys.

TOMMY

I took two books out of the library today. One's on microscopes.

POPS

The Bible's the only book you need.

TOMMY

Nothin' in the Bible about how to fix TV sets.

Only Benny and Ma LAUGH.

Tommy intently WATCHES Benny work on the TV.

POPS

Don't get smart with me, Tommy.

MA

Tommy got that summer job with the Parks Department.

POPS

Long as it's not Mosswood Park. Bad history there.

BENNY

I remember your father, Bob. Nobody messed with Big George.

POPS

Tommy, you're in Benny's way. Go play on the freeway, will ya?

Pops CHUCKLES. Tommy fakes a laugh, and heads to the back door.

EXT. STOHLGREN HOUSE - NIGHT

Tommy carefully CLIMBS up on the roof. He's afraid of heights, but the roof is an escape. He can SEE the Campanile (Sather Tower) on the U.C. Berkeley campus.

TOMMY (V.O.)

Ya gotta be smart and rich to go to college. I got nothin'. Probably be a TV repairman like Benny, or worse, a milkman like Pops.

Tommy STARES out at the Campanile in silence, but soon the song, *Up on the Roof*, by the Drifters, fills his head, as the sun sets.

LATER

TOMMY

I need a girlfriend!

Tommy slowly and carefully CLIMBS down to the backyard.



INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tommy enters the back door to see Ma in her floral housecoat, sitting alone in the kitchen, smoking, and drinking red wine.

TOMMY

Hi, Ma! Where are the boys?

MA

Jimmy and Georgie can watch TV for one-more hour; Jerry and Billy are asleep. I'm going to bed now. Keep the TV low! Your father's in one of his moods. Good night, Tommy. God bless you.

TOMMY

Okay, Ma. Good night. God bless you.

MA

Oh, don't wake Jerry. He's subbing on a friends Sunday morning paper route. I'll wake him at four-thirty.

Ma heads to bed.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, TV ROOM - NIGHT

Tommy JOINS Jimmy and Georgie, who are inches from the TV. They can barely HEAR it. They WHISPER.

JIMMY

*Phil Silvers Show*. Then the movie, *The Time Machine* comes on.

TOMMY

Ma says we only get an hour.

GEORGIE

They'll be asleep.

The boys watch TV. Tommy STARES at his book on *Greek Mythology* during commercials. A commercial comes on.

TOMMY

How do you get a girlfriend, Jimmy?

JIMMY

Not by reading! What the hell is that?

TOMMY

A book on *Greek Mythology*.

GEORGIE

We gotta a Greek library?

TOMMY

Shut up. Watch TV.

Later, another commercial comes on.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

The ancient Greeks had their own version of creation, dozens of gods and goddesses, a race of giants and tiny tree-nymphs.

JIMMY

We saw Jason and the Argonauts last year!

GEORGIE

Yeah. The Hydrox and the Golden Fleas.

TOMMY

The Hydra and the Golden Fleece.

JIMMY

They had golden fleas on the theatre seats.

TOMMY

Now I see why Zeus vomited up his brothers and sisters. But there's something that don't make sense.

JIMMY

No tips on getting a girlfriend?

TOMMY

They had gods and goddesses they thought were real, but we call them myths.

GEORGIE

Like Mythes Benitez, our Spanish teacher?

TOMMY

You know what I mean. Why don't we call our God a myth?

JIMMY

You'll never get a girlfriend, and Phil Silvers is on, so shut up.

Then, the movie, *The Time Machine* comes on, and they turn the volume even lower.

At the end of the movie, Jimmy turns the TV off. The clock reads: 11 PM.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

I know. Let's set the clocks ahead to four-thirty and wake Jerry for his paper route.

TOMMY

I'll put out cereal and milk for him.

GEORGIE

Yep. Really funny. We better strip like we were asleep.

Jimmy sets the clock in the TV room and kitchen back to 4:30. The boys STRIP to their underwear and wake Jerry.

JERRY

Thanks you guys for getting me up.

JIMMY

Didn't want you to be late.

TOMMY

Sun should be up in an hour.

GEORGIE

Quiet so you don't wake Ma or Pops.

They help Jerry get dressed and GUIDE him to the kitchen.

JERRY

Wow. You guys got me cereal?

JIMMY

Least we could do.

Jerry EATS CEREAL, half-asleep.

They GUIDE Jerry to the front door.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Papers should be waiting for you two blocks away at Manila and Clifton.

JERRY  
Thanks, guys.

TOMMY  
That's what brothers are for.

Georgie CONTAINS his laughter as Jerry EXITS.

JIMMY  
I'll get dressed and go get him in  
thirty minutes.

TOMMY  
We'll all laugh about this later.

GEORGIE  
Much later.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, BEDROOM - MORNING

SUPER: Sunday - Tommy's slice of Heaven

Ma WAKES everyone at 8 AM.

MA  
Everybody up! Your father wants us  
all at nine-o'clock Mass. Sunday  
clothes. School shoes. Jerry told  
me what you did. Not funny! Come  
on, get up!

TOMMY  
Can't do it, Ma. Not today.

MA  
Your father won't take no for an  
answer. And you older boys, don't  
eat anything. We got communion.  
Jerry and Billy can eat.

Tommy can't find his church shirt. Everyone else is dressed.

Tommy is late getting dressed, so he puts on his Paisley  
shirt.

EXT. STOHLGREN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

We see a station wagon filled with the boys. Ma, by the open  
passenger door, yells up to the front door as Tommy exits.

MA

Let's go. Your father's warming up  
the car.

Pops HOPS out of the car to hurry them along.

POPS

Let's go. We'll be late!

Pops SEES Tommy's Paisley shirt for the first time, and turns  
ANGRY.

POPS (CONT'D)

T- T- T- Tommy, what th- th- th-  
the hell are you wa- wa- wearing?

MA

That's the shirt we gave Tommy for  
his birthday. He looks fine.

POPS

He lo- lo- lo- looks like a G- G-  
God darn be- be- be- beatnik! He c-  
c- c- can't go to M- M- Mass like  
that!

TOMMY

Sorry, Pops. Go on without me. I  
guess I could have worn my altar  
boy robe, but that didn't work out.  
I'll change and take the bike over  
to the 9:30 Mass at St. Leo's. I  
got baseball practice over there  
this afternoon anyway. Won't happen  
again. I know you're late.

Pops angrily gets in the car and SPEEDS off.

Jimmy ROLLS down a window, and FLIPS Tommy the bird so only  
he can see it.

Tommy WAVES back insincerely.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

I'm all alone here! No family. No  
religion. Bye. I'll miss you.

Pops' car rolls out of sight.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Looks like I earned myself another  
free day!

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, KITCHEN - MORNING

Tommy is at the table in jeans and tennis shoes eating cereal with a smile. His birthday money and baseball glove are on the table.

TOMMY (V.O.)  
I've got time to kill before  
practice. Let's hear some singing.

EXT. BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

Tommy, on his bicycle, rolls up on the sidewalk next to the church, but he doesn't hear any singing.

A moment later, an Elderly Man (65, black, old suit, cane) walks by Tommy on the way into the church.

TOMMY  
Excuse me. How come there's no  
singing?

ELDERLY MAN  
Young man got his-self shot last  
night.

TOMMY  
(sadly)  
Sorry.

Tommy RIDES off.

TOMMY (V.O.)  
God's will? My butt! Poor guy. Poor  
family.

EXT. CREAMERY - DAY

Tommy is across the street from the Creamery. He is stunned and speechless to see Girl #1 and Girl #2 (from the exclusive pool) exit the creamery, and hop in the back of CONVERTIBLE SPORTS CAR.

Girl #2 SEES Tommy and waves and smiles at him as the car drives off. Tommy waves and smiles.

TOMMY (V.O.)  
I'm in love, and I get it!

Tommy is still SMILING, as Mr. Benham (40, gray hair) drops of Bill Benham in their new *Ford Galaxy 500*. Bill has his baseball glove.

TOMMY

Hi, Mr. Benham. Hi Billy.

MR. BENHAM

Bill has to come right home after baseball practice. His mom caught him smoking again.

Billy FROWNS.

TOMMY

They said practice was gonna run late today. It's the only time we can get the field.

BILL BENHAM

Be home right after practice, Dad.

MR. BENHAM

I'll be dropping off team caps for the coach tomorrow. Uniforms come in later, he said.

Mr. Benham WAVES and DRIVES OFF.

TOMMY

I saw her! The girl I'm gonna marry! And, I finally figured out why Jimmy watches cars at College and Broadway all day. Girls!

BILL BENHAM

'Bout time. See any good models? Any new rear ends?

TOMMY

A gentleman never tells. Let's go play some baseball!

Tommy excitedly tells Bill all about Girl #2 on the way.

LATER

Tommy and Bill Benham, filthy from playing ball, are near the Creamery again. Tommy FROWNS. He STOPS pushing the bike.

BILL BENHAM

What's up? You thinking about your mysterious girlfriend?

TOMMY

We dined and ditched here Wednesday night. I owe 'em six bucks.

BILL BENHAM

We could go eat at the Redwood Cafe  
where you're not wanted.

TOMMY

No, I gotta pay up.

INT. CREAMERY - DAY

Tommy and Bill Benham STROLL sheepishly into the Creamery.  
Tommy takes seven bucks from his pocket, and HANDS it to the  
Cashier (same lady from Wednesday night).

TOMMY

Here's seven bucks. My brothers and  
me forgot to pay the other night.

CASHIER

It's my brothers and I. And I  
remember that Paisley shirt.

BILL BENHAM

Busted.

CASHIER

Took some guts coming back. I'll  
take a buck, and give you a couple  
of ice cream cones for being honest  
about it. I hope you've learned a  
lesson!

Moments later, Tommy and Bill Benham WALK out with giant ice  
cream cones.

EXT. CREAMERY - DAY

Tommy EATS and pushes the bike. Bill walks next to him.

BILL BENHAM

Did you learn your lesson?

TOMMY

Hell, yes. Crime pays!

BILL BENHAM

Let's go watch some... cars!

They LAUGH.



INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, TV ROOM - AFTERNOON

The TV room is transformed into a dining hall. Jimmy and Georgie LIFT an antique fold-out table from the corner of the living room.

Jerry and Billy bring in folding chairs.

Ma is FRANTIC in her big blue muumuu, when Tommy STROLLS in.

JIMMY

Tommy, where ya been? Gotta set up for Sunday dinner with the old farts.

TOMMY

Been watching cars. Ma's in her muumuu still.

MA

Tommy, help your brothers. Your father's on his way back. Don't start with the muumuu jokes.

JIMMY

Hey, Ma, shouldn't those blue curtains be on the living room window.

TOMMY

Hey, Ma, if that's a muumuu, I know why they don't wear an oink oink.

GEORGIE

Hey, Ma, is the Air Force missing a parachute.

MA

Heard them all before! Get busy! Set the table.

The boys SET the table. Ma RACES into the kitchen.

TOMMY

I bet a buck Nana squeezes everybody's cheeks with both hands before kissing them.

JIMMY

I'll take that bet. Shake on it!

Instead of handshakes, Jimmy and Tommy SHAKE their entire bodies like wet dogs after a bath.

Jimmy turns and GRABS his butt cheeks.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

You didn't say which cheeks! You're going to owe me a buck!

Ma returns with a bottle of Sherry and a bottle of red wine. She sets them down on the table.

MA

Tommy, Nana's five-dollar birthday check bounced. Thank her like you got it.

TOMMY

Okay, Ma. It bounces every year.

JIMMY

She's deaf, but she ain't dumb. Nana stories!

TOMMY

Every midnight Mass she sings one line behind everybody else!

GEORGIE

When Jimmy checks the oil when Pops stops for gas, she leans over and honks the horn!

JIMMY

When she bought live chicks for Easter, and put them under hats, and the Monsignor almost had a heart attack!

MA

He got a concussion when he fell back in his chair. Not funny!

JERRY

How did Big Grandpa George die, again?

TOMMY

He didn't die again, Jerry. He only died once.

MA

Grandpa drank too much. Died at age fifty-six.

JIMMY

They said he couldn't be cremated,  
because it would take three days to  
put out the fire.

TOMMY

They said he loved gardening. He  
woke up in one every morning.

MA

Enough joking around! I've gotta  
check the meat.

Tommy follows Ma into the kitchen.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

TOMMY

Hey, Ma, do you think we came from  
apes?

MA

Today, yes! But the Bible says God  
created the world in seven days,  
and Adam and Eve on the sixth.

TOMMY

So did Adam and Eve have belly  
buttons?

Ma CHECKS the roast.

MA

I don't know.

TOMMY

They had two kids, Cane and Abel.  
Both boys, so who did they marry?  
And Cane killed Abel, so where did  
we come from?

MA

Tommy, I'm too busy. Jimmy's  
outside. Go ask him.

Tommy RACES out the back door.

EXT. STOHLGREN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy is shooting the basketball.

TOMMY

Did Adam and Eve have belly buttons?

JIMMY

They didn't wear clothes so they had no buttons.

TOMMY

They had two kids, both boys.

JIMMY

Don't matter. Cane killed Abel. Got the electric chair. End of story.

TOMMY

Well at the library, they say they dug up bones that prove we came from apes.

JIMMY

(angry)

Look, Tommy, the Bible is a great old story. You don't have to believe every word of it. Noah's Ark, two of every kind of dinosaur and animal from every continent? Don't be stupid!

TOMMY

Why do Ma and Pops believe it all?

JIMMY

'Cause their parents did, and their parents, and so on. Just nod your head when they talk about it, and you'll be fine!

TOMMY

You don't believe in Hell, either?

JIMMY

Duh! What'd ya call 'em? Myths?

Jimmy HITS Tommy in the arm, hard.

TOMMY

Ow! What was that for?

JIMMY

Worrying too much! Game to eleven by ones, my outs!

TOMMY

Hey, I gotta girlfriend. Don't know her name, but...

They play a game of basketball, and LAUGH.

Ma POKES her nose out the back door.

MA

Come in. Your grandparents are here. And Tommy, change your shirt. Your father hates it.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, TV ROOM - EVENING

Tommy is in a clean T-Shirt. Billy wears his school pants. Jimmy and the boys stare at the front door with Ma.

MA

Remember, your best behavior!

BILLY

I ripped my jeans, so I have to wear my school pants!

MA

You look fine, dear.

Pops ENTERS with NANA (big woman; 60; deaf, sore feet). Nana PINCHES Jimmy's cheeks first and KISSES his forehead.

NANA

There's Jimmy, Tommy, Georgie, Jerry, and Billy.

Nana PINCHES and KISSES each of them.

JIMMY

You owe me a buck, Tommy.

POPS

Let's get everybody something to drink. I'll check the roast.

MA

Jimmy, get Nana some slippers. She can't walk in those feet. I'll get the onion dip.

The boys MUNCH chips and dip like feeding time at the zoo, as Ma drinks red wine, and Pops is in the kitchen cooking.

POPS (O.S.)  
Okay, dinner's coming out!

MA  
Tommy, no more religious questions  
at dinner.

TOMMY  
Okay, Ma.

Pops and Nana come in with plates of roast beef, potatoes, carrots, and peas. The dinner is peaceful and happy, partly because the grandparents can't hear well.

JIMMY  
Eat every carrot and pea on your  
plate.

POPS  
Who won, Giants or Mets?

TOMMY  
Still playing game two. In the  
twentieth inning.

POPS  
Don't lie to me.

TOMMY  
Heard it on my transistor radio  
before dinner.

MA  
Maybe it's true, Bob.

POPS  
Nobody plays twenty innings!

Soon the food is gone, and Nana drops a bombshell.

NANA  
My grand-nephew quit the  
priesthood. He's going to marry  
that floozy!

GEORGIE  
What floozy?

JIMMY  
Can we get her number?

JERRY  
What's a floozy?

BILLY  
It's like a cold.

MA  
No, it's a cheap woman.

TOMMY  
How cheap?

POPS  
Don't be disrespectful! My mom is hurt. I'll get her a drink.

Pops leaves to the kitchen.

Jimmy "MOUTHS" a question to Nana without speaking. She READS his lips.

JIMMY  
(silently)  
Nana, tell us about the floozy.

Pops comes in with a highball for his mom.

NANA  
She went to church every Sunday in a tight skirt, nylon stockings, and cheap V-neck sweater. Like a saloon girl!

Pops tries to quiet his mother, while the boys LAUGH.

POPS  
There will be no more talk about the f- f- f- floozy.

The boys can't contain their laughter.

NANA  
That Jezebel will burn in Hell!

The boys ROAR with laughter.

GEORGIE  
(mumbles too loudly)  
'Cept Tommy don't believe in Hell anymore!

Silence. Pops TURNS angrily to Tommy.

TOMMY  
It's one thing! I believe some stuff, like God. I'm just not sure about Hell. Big deal! One thing!

POPS

You'll b- b- believe what I t- t-  
tell you to believe. Go to your r-  
r- room!

Tommy gets up and begins walking to his room.

MA

Let him stay, Bob. Let's have no  
more talk about religion or the  
floozy.

NANA

I hope Tommy's getting us ice  
cream.

JIMMY

Who wants ice cream? Tommy and me  
will serve.

Pops regains his composure.

POPS

Okay boys, but clear the table  
first.

The boys go to work clearing the table. Jimmy EXITS to the  
bedroom. Pops can hear him yell from the TV room.

JIMMY (O.S.)

Tommy was right. Giants and Mets  
tied in the twenty-third inning!

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

In the kitchen, the boys CLEAN the dishes and LAUGH. Jimmy  
SERVES ice cream to the old folks. When the dishes are near  
done. Tommy looks at the dog, Bruno.

TOMMY

I'm taking the dog for a walk.

MA

Did you do your weekend homework?

TOMMY

Yep. And thanks for a good dinner  
party tonight.

Tommy starts to exit with the dog on a leash.



TOMMY (V.O.)

That was a Category One lie, to make my life easier, followed by a Category Two lie to make Ma's life more bearable.

MA

You'll miss *My Favorite Martian* and *Ed Sullivan* if you take too long.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - NIGHT

Tommy escapes with Bruno. He walks by a dark house around the corner and WAVES.

TOMMY

Buenos noches, Mrs. Benitez. We're not dumb. We just hate Spanish!

Tommy walks around the block to HEAR girls GIGGLING.

He walks closer to see LAURA MARTINEZ (16) and her sister, OLIVIA (12), outside their house. Laura (standing) prevents Tommy and Bruno from easily passing by.

LAURA

What's your hurry, cute boy who never stops to talk to us?

Tommy and Bruno stop. Tommy is strangely confident with the two girls.

TOMMY

Hey, Laura. Hey, Olivia, cool night, huh?

LAURA

You sure you're Tommy Stohlgren? Olivia's age?

TOMMY

You're Denny's girlfriend.

LAURA

We broke up. He's all hands. What's your dog's name, again?

TOMMY

Bruno. Part Cocker Spaniel, part idiot.

Tommy GLANCES at Olivia, who is smiling at him.

LAURA

We go to Saint Augustine's. You stutter when you talk to girls, but not tonight. Must be in love.

TOMMY

Maybe. Not sure, really.

Tommy notices he didn't stutter. Olivia smiles teasingly.

OLIVIA

Bet she's cute, smart, and Catholic.

Then Tommy smiles at Olivia again, and chuckles.

TOMMY

Two out of three ain't bad.

Bruno decides to slowly poop, and Tommy is embarrassed.

The Martinez girls RUN UP the steps and into the house. Tommy LAUGHS.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

G- G- God darn it, Bruno!

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

The boys are all in bed as Tommy RECOUNTS the story of Bruno's dump. The boys LAUGH into their pillows with every line of the conversation.

TOMMY

It was the slowest, steamiest dump Bruno ever took.

JIMMY

So, T- T- Tommy, how are you ever going to ask a girl out on a d- d- d- date?

GEORGIE

You could always, w- w- w- whisper in her ear.

TOMMY

Strangest thing. Didn't stutter. Wasn't nervous. I can do this, without Bruno!

The boys LAUGH too loudly, and Ma STORMS in angry, but she WHISPERS.

MA  
Knock it off, or I'll wake your  
father!

She SHUTS the door.

JIMMY  
O- o- o- okay, M- M- Ma!

The LAUGHTER continues.

INT. CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

SUPER: "MONDAY - Tommy's Day of Reckoning"

Sister Mary-something writes "MIRACLES" on the board. The class is restless, and Sister is on the war path.

One student CLAUDIO CARLINO (12) looks nervous and unprepared.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING  
I know it's a half-day of school,  
but I demand your full, undivided  
attention! Take out your religion  
notebooks. Quietly!

The students TAKE OUT their notebooks.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING (CONT'D)  
And fountain pens!

Several students GROAN.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING (CONT'D)  
Mr. Carlino, can you please tell  
the class, how did Christ show and  
prove His divine power?

Claudio STANDS sheepishly. He's clueless.

CLAUDIO CARLINO  
Magic?

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING  
No! The Son of God did not rely on  
cheap magic tricks! Christ showed  
and proved His divine power chiefly  
by His miracles, which are  
extraordinary works that can be  
performed only by power received  
from God.

CLAUDIO CARLINO  
That's what I meant, Sister. I  
reckon it was miracles.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING  
(mocking him)  
Reckon it was miracles? Miracles  
prove Jesus was the Son of God!

Tommy RAISES his hand.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING (CONT'D)  
Mr. Stohlgren? You may be seated  
Mr. Carlino.

Tommy STANDS.

TOMMY  
Sister, I read that Alexander the  
Great and Hercules claimed to be  
sons of Zeus in ancient Greece, and  
Apollo claimed to be the son of  
Jupiter in ancient Rome, people in  
the time of Jesus Christ probably  
just believe them anyway. Right?

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING  
(angry)  
Hercules and Apollo are myths - not  
the Son of God, Mr. Stohlgren! Be  
seated!  
(beat)  
Some of you may have already  
started celebrating the Memorial  
Day Holiday.

Stephanie Cromarti RAISES her hand.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING (CONT'D)  
Yes, Stephanie.

STEPHANIE CROMARTI  
Christ performed all his miracles  
in the last three years of his life  
in front of sinful men.

Stephanie GLARES at Tommy.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING  
That's correct.

Stephanie GLARES at Tommy, who sits down, bewildered.

STEPHANIE CROMARTI

And there are still a lot of sinful men.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

Yes, Stephanie.

Tommy bites his tongue, but Bill Benham RAISES his hand.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING (CONT'D)

Yes, Mr. Benham?

BILL BENHAM

I heard some kids on the playground say Lazarus was just in a coma, and that Jesus didn't really bring him back from the dead. Some kids said Jesus really couldn't cure lepers, He just made them feel a little better. And the same with the blind guy, but I believe in the miracles, Sister.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

There will always be doubters, Mr. Benham.

Sister GLARES at Tommy. She sees he has written "miracles?" ending with a question mark in his notebook.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING (CONT'D)

Doubts are like poison, Mr. Benham, and some of your classmates are trying to poison all of you. Please take out a clean sheet of paper to write me an essay on the miracles of Jesus Christ.

Many students GROAN.

Later, Tommy SMILES as he reads his essay to himself.

TOMMY (V.O.)

Jesus razed Lazarus from the dead.  
He made blind people see again.  
Jesus should work on our naghbor  
Mr. Furbush, 'cause he can't see so  
good. Jesus cured a leper. Not all  
the lepers, just one. He walked on  
water, but we don't know how deep  
it was. He turned water into wine.  
Now thats a pretty cool trick. And  
He made loafes of bread and a bunch  
of fish appear at a dinner party.

(MORE)

TOMMY (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 The way Ma cooks, we could use Him  
 at our house.

The bell RINGS for recess. The students TURN IN their papers.

Later, the students RETURN from recess to see their edited and graded essays on their desks. Tommy's has a red D- on his, with corrections in bright red:

D-

MIRACLES by Tommy Stohlgren

Jesus ~~razed~~ raised Lazarus from the dead. He made blind people see again. ~~Jesus should work on our nighbor Mr. Furbush, 'cause he can't see so good.~~ Jesus cured a leper. ~~Not all the lepers, just one.~~ He walked on water, ~~but we don't know how deep it was.~~ He turned water into wine. ~~Now thats a pretty cool trick.~~ And He made loaves of bread and a bunch of fish appear ~~at a dinner party.~~ ~~The way Ma cooks, we could use Him at our house.~~

RE-WRITE AS HOMEWORK! 200 WORDS!

Tommy SHAKES his head in disbelief. His fellow students are taking out pencils and paper.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING  
 Your math problem is on the board:  
 a grocery store clerk says your  
 bill is \$376.97 and asks you if you  
 would like to make three easy  
 payments. How much would you pay  
 each week?

TOMMY (V.O.)  
 Our grocery bill is under twenty  
 bucks, and if the store clerk would  
 trust us for three weeks, that  
 would be a miracle!

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Jimmy, Tommy, Georgie, Jerry, Billy, and Johnny cut through the cemetery on the way home.

JIMMY  
 I gotta write the definition of  
 sarcasm one-hundred times.

JOHNNY  
 What's your extra assignment,  
 Tommy?

TOMMY

Two-hundred-road essay on miracles,  
and Stephanie Cromarti still hates  
me, but I think the pagan girl  
likes me. Girls are everything!

JIMMY

Never forget that, Tommy!

GEORGIE

Don't forget the loafs and fishes.

TOMMY

It was loaves and fishes! And who  
knew it wasn't a dinner party?

Everybody but Tommy RAISES his hand. Tommy SHRUGS.

JOHNNY

Jesus cured a blind guy.

TOMMY

(angry)

I wasn't there! Maybe he just  
needed glasses. Thought she liked  
me?

JIMMY

I gotta lose my math notebook  
before we get home. Ma will never  
sign it.

GEORGIE

You lose your notebook every year?

Jimmy passes by a garbage can. He STOPS, removes the lid, and  
ceremoniously DUMPS in his math notebook.

JIMMY

It disappeared! Like magic!

JERRY

He turned us blind. None of us  
didn't see a thing!

TOMMY

I reckon it's a miracle!

JIMMY

It'll be a miracle if you ever  
learn your girlfriend's name,  
Tommy. Let's get to the pool!

They all LAUGH! Johnny SHAKES his heads in disbelief.

EXT. STOHLGREN HOUSE - DAY

Tommy exits the house in his small bathing suit, T-shirt, flip-flops, and carrying a tattered brown bath towel. Mr. Benham ROLLS UP in his car and hands Tommy a baseball cap with a "P" on it.

MR. BENHAM

The caps run a little big this year. Billy's grounded, and he can't go to the pool with you.

Mr. Benham WAVES as he drives away. Tommy YELLS, as his brothers exit the house silently behind him. Jimmy is not in his swimsuit.

TOMMY

Thanks for the cap, Mr. Benham. The "P" on it probably stands for Parochial school. Summer league is like throwing the Christians to the lions. We're so holy, we never steal a base, and all we do is sacrifice, sacrifice, sacrifice!

JIMMY

Funny lines, Tommy. Now where the hell is my swimsuit?

TOMMY

It's way too big for me. Haven't seen it lately, honest!

Tommy looks away to hide his laughter.

TOMMY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Category one lie to keep me alive.

JIMMY

Have fun at the pool, without me!

The rag-tag Stohlgrens and Johnny walk toward the public pool. Tommy WEARS his new baseball cap.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD POOL - AFTERNOON

It's late afternoon when the exhausted, wet Stohlgrens and Johnny EXIT the front door of the pool. Tommy is not wearing his new baseball cap, but NO ONE NOTICES. Tommy and Johnny LAG behind and talk as they walk.



JOHNNY

It's a lot like the fancy pool  
where we had the Altar Boys'  
Picnic, except no snack bar and  
everybody had old bath towels.

TOMMY

And a third of the lockers were  
broken into for wallets.

JOHNNY

And your girlfriend wasn't there.

They LAUGH.

They are one block away when Tommy FEELS the top of his head.  
He PANICS.

TOMMY

My new baseball cap! See you at  
home.

Tommy RUNS back to the pool.

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD POOL - AFTERNOON

Tommy RACES through the entrance to the pool. He sees two  
Lifeguards (18-22) helping an African American boy (12)  
slowly to his feet. His MOM (30s) helps him walk.

LIFEGUARD #1

He had stopped breathing!

LIFEGUARD #2

We used a new chest-compression  
technique.

MOM

You brought him back to life! It's  
a miracle! Praise the Lord!

LIFEGUARD #1

Training, actually.

Tommy WANDERS over to the side of the pool and SEES his new  
baseball cap. He puts it on, and EXITS slowly.

TOMMY (V.O.)

Johnny would say that was a  
miracle, the boy coming back to  
life. Jimmy would say it was a  
miracle my baseball cap wasn't  
stolen. Just glad the kid's okay.

EXT. STOHLGREN HOUSE - EVENING

Day rolls into night as Tommy reaches the front of his house. He HEARS Johnny's voice from down the street.

JOHNNY

Tommy, your dad caught a big striped bass off the Berkeley Pier after work. It's a miracle! My mom's cooking it up for the neighborhood. Come on, you're late!

TOMMY

I'll change and be there in two minutes! Kid's table outside?

JOHNNY

Yep! Denny and Mack are there, too. Hurry!

TOMMY

Very cool. I love Feast Days!

Johnny SCOWLS at Tommy and RACES into the house.

He emerges a minute later in his Paisley shirt, jeans, new baseball cap, and tennis shoes.

He RUNS down to Johnny's house, but stops at Pop's station wagon outside Johnny's house.

He looks inside the car.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

No fishing pole? Huh!

EXT. GIUNTOLI HOUSE - NIGHT

The Giuntoli's backyard has a noisy picnic table packed with the Stohlgrens, Johnny, Denny, and Mack. Johnny has a seat reserved for Tommy as he RUNS into the backyard. There are glasses of red punch, loaves of French bread, and butter on the tables.

TOMMY

I saw a kid who stopped breathing. Lifeguards brought him back to life.

DENNY

Like Lazarus? B.S.

TOMMY

No. They pushed on his chest to start his heart again.

JOHNNY

Almost a miracle.

TOMMY

And I found my baseball cap.

MACK

To get a baseball glove and cap stolen in the same week, you really gotta be a punk!

Everyone LAUGHS.

TOMMY

Come on. I had a tough week.

JIMMY

Pops got really mad at Tommy for not believing in Hell.

Tommy turns defensive and angry.

TOMMY

(whispers angrily)

Look, I bet half the kids here believe in the Easter Bunny, Tooth Fairy, Santa Claus and ghosts.

GEORGIE

So what?

TOMMY

By the time they're our age, they won't. We stop believing in stuff we can't see, and I can't see Hell! How do you prove it?

JOHNNY

Don't have to see things to believe 'em.

TOMMY

You don't, but I do!

MACK

Put up or shut up! I like it!

Mack, Denny, and Jimmy LAUGH. Johnny, Jerry, and Billy do not laugh. Denny changes to topic to lighten the mood, but Tommy DIVES DEEPER INTO THOUGHT.

DENNY  
 (pointing to Mack)  
 Wait 'til ya see what Mack did!

Mack RAISES his T-shirt sleeve to reveal a new tattoo that reads: "Dianne." Mack SHRUGS.

MACK  
 She didn't want me going off to war. Who knew?

DENNY  
 Broke up with him that night.

Everybody LAUGHS, but Tommy, who is DEEP IN THOUGHT.

Mack HITS Denny in the arm. Tommy blurts out to Mack.

TOMMY  
 Maybe you could write 'To Meet You' underneath so it says "DIANNE to meet you?"

Silence. Then Mack LAUGHS.

MACK  
 Good idea, punk.

TOMMY  
 I saw Denny's old girlfriend, Laura. She said he was 'all hands.'

DENNY  
 I tried to get to second base.

Tommy, George, and Johnny look bewildered.

TOMMY  
 That wasn't in the encyclopedias.

MACK  
 First base is when you touch a girl up here.

Mack GRABS his chest.

Tommy has a FLASHBACK of tagging the girl in the breast at the exclusive pool. He smiles.

GEORGIE  
 What's second base?

DENNY

Between first and third. I struck out with Laura.

MACK

It was a short game.

Denny HITS Mack in the shoulder, and Mack PUNCHES him back.

DENNY

(laughing)

I should have got pulled in the second inning. I think her father wants to kill me!

Everyone LAUGHS.

TOMMY

Darn! I gotta two-hundred-word essay due tomorrow morning!

Tommy RUNS home.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tommy grabs a piece of paper and a pencil, and his pocket dictionary, and sits at the kitchen table.

TOMMY

Pops caught the fish at the fish market. Some miracle! But it was a great party. Way to go, Pops!

Minutes later, he READS his masterpiece out loud.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John probably said Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Maybe he did. I wasn't there so I can't say for sure. The same four guys said Jesus made blind people see again. Maybe he did. I wasn't there so I can't say for sure. It is true that our nighbor Mr. Furbush, can't see too good. And lots of people today are blind or deaf. My Grandma Elizabeth is deaf. I'm just sad that Jesus isn't around today to help Mr. Furbush or my grandma with a miracle. Jesus died at age 33.

(MORE)

TOMMY (CONT'D)

In the three years before He died,  
He cured a leper, walked on water,  
turned water into wine, and fed a  
bunch of hungry people with loaves  
of bread and a bunch of fishes.  
Those were great miracles. I don't  
understand why Jesus had to die so  
young. He should've stuck around.  
He could've saved John F. Kennedy  
from being shot. He could've fed  
all those hungry pagan babies in  
Africa. He could've saved Johnny's  
dad from his brain tumor. He  
could've stopped that kid from  
nearly drowning at the pool. I just  
don't get it. I'm 12 years old now.  
I reached the Age of Reason, but I  
still don't get it.

He SMILES, proud of his essay. Tommy drops the essay on the table.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Two-hundred-ten words, and the only  
one to stump the dictionary was  
neighbor. I think Sister will like  
it, 'cause I was so honest.

The doorbell RINGS. Tommy runs to answer it.

Tommy opens the door to see Girl #2 smiling and holding up Jimmy's bathing suit. They smile and share a moment. Tommy looks to the street to see Girl #2's handsome, well-dressed DAD (mid-30s) driving the sports car.

GIRL #2

Found these at the Lost and Found  
at the Pool.

TOMMY

How did you find me?

GIRL #2

Name "Stohlgren" is written on the  
label. Only one Stohlgren in the  
phonebook.

She hands the swimsuit to Tommy who looks away.

TOMMY

Embarrassing, but still the best  
day I ever had in my life!

Girl #2 smiles.

GIRL #2  
I gotta go. My dad thought I was  
crazy...

Tommy leans in suddenly and kisses the girl on the cheek.

TOMMY  
Thank you so...

Girl #2 spins and runs back to the car, which drives off.  
Tommy whispers.

TOMMY (CONT'D)  
Wait! What's your name?

Tommy smiles and shrugs like her name doesn't matter. Tommy  
races to the back door.

EXT. STOHLGREN HOUSE - NIGHT

Tommy TIPTOES out of the back door and gingerly CLIMBS onto  
the roof. This time, he is more confident of heights. He  
crawls, and SLIPS, but doesn't fall off.

Tommy BALANCES himself with one hand, while POINTING his  
index finger angrily to an imaginary crowd below.

TOMMY  
Father Miguel was right! "Keep  
asking difficult questions. Even if  
they torment you." The unexamined  
life. I need to thank him!

He suddenly SMILES as the events of the past eight days  
REPLAY in Tommy's mind, as the song, "Up on the Roof" plays  
quietly in the B.G.

BEGIN MONTAGE

1. Tommy claims there could be no Hell, and is dragged out of  
class by the ear.
2. Tommy gets a black eye, bloody nose, and hot sugar blown  
in his face on his birthday.
3. Tommy dines-and-ditches at the Creamery with Jimmy and  
Georgie.
4. Tommy goes to confession. "I'm a little too young to covet  
thy neighbor's wife."
5. Tommy falls down as an altar boy and says, "Do Wha Diddy."

6. Tommy touches the pagan girl's breast, while playing Marco Polo at the Altar Boys' Picnic.

7. Tommy sees a boy "come back to life" at the neighborhood pool.

8. Girl #2 returns the swimsuit and he kisses her.

This is Tommy's MOMENT OF CLARITY. TIME SEEMS TO STOP.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

So, if I got this right. The Age of Reason hits you about the same time you start to notice the opposite sex!

He looks up to the sky and laughs.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

God has a great sense of humor!

He SEES the clock tower at U.C. Berkeley.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

I think I'll go to college, and find that girl to marry!

Tommy takes a MOMENT to look to the stars. The STARS SLOWLY COME INTO FOCUS. Tommy SMILES.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, TV ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tommy TIPTOES back into the house. He joins Jimmy and Georgie watching TV. They LAUGH and GIGGLE quietly. Tommy SMILES.

TOMMY

Jimmy, I found your swimsuit.

They whisper quietly and laugh as Tommy tells the story.

We HEAR the happy voice of the older TOM STOHLGREN.

TOM STOHLGREN (V.O.)

That was more than fifty years ago, but I remember it all like it was yesterday. My two-hundred-word essay on Miracles wasn't particularly well received by Sister Mary-something, but it didn't really matter to me.

(MORE)



TOM STOHLGREN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

In seventh grade, I went on to question the ethics of Father Junipero Serra for mistreating California Indians, and my questions grew from there.

(beat)

I finally learned that the best way to talk to girls was to be a good listener, and I never stuttered with them again. Pops and I didn't get along for a few years, a fact that I regret. I left home at eighteen.

We follow the voice of older Tom Stohlgren out the front door to greet a sunny day in a "gentrified" neighborhood.

EXT. STOHLGREN HOUSE - DAY

SUPER: "Current Day"

The camera, (like Tom), looks up and down the street.

TOM STOHLGREN (V.O.)

It all worked out great. I went to Junior College, taught myself to read and write better, and fell in love forever at the age of nineteen. I like to think Cindy was the girl I tagged in Marco Polo at the exclusive pool, and later kissed on the cheek. We're still happily married. I graduated from U.C. Berkeley, which you really could see from our roof. I went on for a Master's degree and later a Ph.D. I became a scientist and university teacher, probably because I took out that book on *Men, Microscopes, and Living Things*, when I went to the public library when I was twelve.

(beat)

What happened to everybody else in the story?

The actors who played Ma and Pops, POKE their heads out of the house, smile, and WAVE GOOD-BYE, while Tom talks.

TOM STOHLGREN (V.O.)

Ma died at sixty-two from a brain aneurism.

(MORE)

TOM STOHLGREN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Pops died at eighty-five after a long battle with Alzheimer's. I miss them more as I think about them these days.

The actors who played Jimmy, Tommy, Georgie, Jerry and Billy RUN from around the corner, right past Tom, and into the house. They are LAUGHING hysterically, and HITTING each other in the arms, while Tom talks.

TOM STOHLGREN (V.O.)

Jimmy, George, Jerry, and Billy became entrepreneurs in the dairy distributing business and other businesses in California, though we lost our youngest brother Billy a few years back. My brothers remain very close. We laugh a lot! They encouraged me to write this story.

(laughs)

And I couldn't very well deprive you of their wisdom!

The actors who played Johnny Giuntoli and Bill Benham RUN from around the corner to Johnny's house, while Tom talks.

TOM STOHLGREN (V.O.)

John Giuntoli, Bill Benham, and I remain close friends even today. Real friends last a lifetime!

Tom continues talking as the actors who played Sister Mary-something, Mother Superior, and Father Miguel CROSS the street with the "named" students (in uniform) from St. Theresa's crowd around them. Tom runs and HUGS the priest.

TOM STOHLGREN (V.O.)

I wish that I had fail-proof advice for everyone to discover his or her "Age of Reason." In the college classroom, I suggest to students to remain curious, ask difficult questions, demand proof, and become evidence-based learners.

(laughs)

But, what do I know? I was raised by four hilariously irreverent brothers, philosophers, and comics: Jimmy, Georgie, Jerry, and Billy.

The actors who played Jimmy, Tommy, Georgie, Jerry and Billy race out the house and begin to walk down the street

Old Tom joins them (we see his back). He puts his arm around Tommy as they walk.

TOM STOHLGREN

What do ya say we all go to the creamery?

ALL

Yeah!

ROLL CREDITS

INT. CREAMERY - NIGHT

The entire cast and the current Stohlgren's and Giuntolis (and their families), Billy Benham, close friends and family eat ice cream, laugh, and talk. The names of the real people are displayed on screen. When the credits are done, a waitress brings a check to Tom, and he and his remaining brothers RACE for the door to dine-and-ditch.

FADE OUT

THE END