

# **Twelve: My Age of Reason**

Written by

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Based on his novella of the same title

C O N T A C T S

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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 female; 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 cords, 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 need 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, keep your mouth shut."

Tommy glances 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 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 draws the 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 cursive?

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, 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 merciful.

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

Sister Mary-something SLAMS her wooden 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 modest living room (small sofa, two armchairs, lamp), TV room (small B/W TV, one lounge chair, small sofa), and small kitchen with a 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 crosses 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 to 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 costs 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 eight days 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 to the other half of the human population on Earth. Girls became everything! But that Monday morning began as 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. Irish twins.

The camera CONTINUES to a bedroom door.

TOM STOHLGREN (V.O.)  
 Our house had two bedrooms, which  
 means I shared a bedroom with my  
 four wildly irreverent, hilarious  
 brothers. 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 doorless 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-dam 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 of your  
brother's nose.

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  
Reader's 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 the 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 cost too much.  
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, who's our patron saint?

JOHNNY & 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 twenty-five Students attend.

Tommy ARRIVES just before the morning BELL.

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

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

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.

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 a warning. She can be tough if you're fighting in the schoolyard. She can be soft-hearted too, like when she announced Kennedy was shot on the P-A system, and everybody cried. I mean, everybody. 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 that only one of three chairs is filled.

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

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.

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

TOMMY  
I can explain. I didn't understand  
the meaning of the words all-loving  
and all-merciful. I'm only eleven.  
I 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. 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 will not  
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.  
(MORE)

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)  
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 Reader's 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.

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

MRS. SCRANTON (CONT'D)  
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.

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

TOMMY (CONT'D)  
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. The 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 were all-loving and all-merciful.

JIMMY

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

Jimmy RACES off.

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

TOMMY

Rousseau's 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 loudly.

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've ever heard.

JIMMY

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  
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. It  
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  
I 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

Hmmmm! 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 Pop. He'll get  
really 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 the 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 leftovers for the boys' plates. It's lumpy brown gravy with a few potatoes, carrots, peas, and, 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 on Friday 'cause we're Catholic.

GEORGIE

(looking for meat)

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

MA

Tommy, what's the matter?

GEORGIE

He lost his baseball glove.

TOMMY

I 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)  
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 does 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 all of you.

TOMMY

It's another miracle, Ma.

MA

Watch it, Tommy.

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. He's a chain-smoker.

MA (CONT'D)  
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  
Did everything go okay today?

MA  
Tommy got his baseball glove  
stolen.

POPS  
Hoodlums, I bet.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tommy LISTENS from the next room. He whispers.

TOMMY  
Everybody calls them hoodlums. It's  
just hoods; anyone in the hood.

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.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, KITCHEN - MORNING

A few minutes later, it's feeding time at the zoo. Ma kisses Tommy 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, wraps ice cubes in a dishcloth, 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 eyebrow and eyelid.

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 ~~your~~ 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 eatekism~~ catechism in ~~eurssive~~ 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 Minetta 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? And all  
those starving pagan babies in  
Africa? And why does he need us to  
be Soldiers of Christ to fight his  
battles?

RING!

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING

Mr. Stohlgren, a word, please.

The students EXIT in an orderly fashion to recess.

TOMMY

Me, Sister? Is this about my  
science essay? I can explain.

(MORE)

TOMMY (CONT'D)

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 that 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, PLAYGROUND - CONTINUOUS

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 (V.O.)  
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 to the boys' restroom.

TOMMY  
My fault. I'll be back.

INT. CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Georgie FINDS Tommy in the restroom. 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 - CONTINUOUS  
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'd 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 - AFTERNOON

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 Andres or Ann-Margret?

GEORGIE  
This is going to take all night!

They LAUGH and walk.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - CONTINUOUS

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

His brothers and Johnny WAIT for him, in their positions and 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, anyway.

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 - EVENING

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 washcloth to reveal a burnt-red face and a black eye from earlier.

Jimmy and the 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'd 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 spíritu tuo! 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, Mack!

MACK

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

JOHNNY

Fighting Commies in Vietnam is  
good!

TOMMY

You can be killed!

MACK

Gooks are the ones who are 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! Don't you  
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.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

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 and puts an arm around Johnny.

EXT. CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sister Mary-something STANDS in front of Tommy, but she  
doesn't call on him. MARK WELLS (12, shy) STANDS. CATHERINE  
ANGLEY (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 seven chief sources of sin are:  
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 SHOOTS 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 will kill Gooks for us in Vietnam, he can't get to Heaven. Sounds like God is partly-loving and partly-merciful again. But, 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 to 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 on 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 off 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

We're 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

We 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 ends. 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 made. The creamery has Twenty Patrons (various ages, genders, and types, with ten of the Patrons at one "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 blindsided 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. A few Hail Marys is the most I ever got.

TOMMY

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 SEEES 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)  
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 other 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, a  
bloody nose, and a burnt face.

JIMMY  
That was yesterday, idiot!

BILLY  
Oh yeah. You guys are 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. The funniest thing all day was when my class was marching down the hallway from lunch, and Georgie was 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 laugh.

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 by being 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 - MORNING

SUPER: Thursday - Tommy falls off the program, again.

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.

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.

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 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)	TOMMY (V.O.)
Let's examine the five requirements of Confession.	Examined my conscience? Nope.
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.	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 suppose you're 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 for his turn. Kids file in and out quickly.

Finally, Tommy goes into the confessional.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH, CONFESSORIAL - 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

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 that 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 so many  
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 suit (his), and  
one of which is Jimmy's. He RACES to the kitchen.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, KITCHEN - 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 the towel in?

Ma finds a grocery store paper bag.

TOMMY (CONT'D)  
(sarcastic)  
Great! Can I get some breakfast?

MA  
You can't eat before 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 into the rectory and throw on their altar boy gowns. Father Miguel reverently puts on 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 genuflection 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 spíritu tuo.

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! We 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 - NOON

Tommy STARES at the clock, while Sister Mary-something LECTURES until the school bell RINGS!

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING  
All of you remain in your seats,  
while our seven altar boys go to  
meet their bus.  
(MORE)

SISTER MARY-SOMETHING (CONT'D)  
You may go with them, Mr.  
Stohlgren, despite your  
disrespectful performance.

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 beach towels.

EXT. EXCLUSIVE POOL - DAY

The elegant pool in a 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's like to be rich.

TOMMY  
Or like the Beverly Hillbillies.

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

TOMMY  
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 cute 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 past Tommy.

Tommy HEADS to the side. 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 exits to the men's locker room.

INT. MENS LOCKER ROOM - AFTERNOON

Later, Johnny finds Tommy in the locker room.

JOHNNY

Tommy? I got your trunks and bag.

Tommy answers from a stall.

TOMMY

In here, dying of embarrassment.

JOHNNY

Nobody saw nothing! Everybody was swimming!

TOMMY

She saw me.

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 a new Paisley shirt. Johnny is in his swimsuit. Grocery bags are at their feet.

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

I 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 taller one.

Girl #2 glances at Tommy. Tommy STUTTERS.

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

GIRL #2  
Hi. Cool shirt.

Tommy SMILES and they share a moment. 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 said I was not altar boy  
material, but he liked my singing.

MA  
How was your Altar Boys' Picnic?

TOMMY  
I had fun playing Marco Polo. I'm  
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 joyous soul singing. Tommy SMILES.

TOMMY  
Fun church. Real soul music! Cool!

Tommy rides on.

EXT. STOHLGREN HOUSE - DAY

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

Tommy turns the corner on a rusty 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, tough).

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 he say?

TOMMY  
He didn't exactly have all the answers.

MACK  
Figures. Okay, get lost, punk!

They all LAUGH, as Tommy finishes the ride home.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Tommy is happily greeted by his Ma, who holds a letter.

MA

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

Ma SHOWS Tommy the letter. Tommy SMILES.

TOMMY

The same park that big Grandpa  
George was a mugger in?

MA

Don't mention that to your father.

TOMMY

Buck-twenty-five an hour. I'm 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  
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 are 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 Shippenn.

LIBRARY LADY

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

TOMMY  
Thanks.

Tommy sits quietly and looks at pictures in the books.

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 thing about science. More to learn all the time. Gee, the world wasn't made in seven days. It took billions of years. Shock! Very cool, huh?

TOMMY  
I got more questions than answers!

She SMILES.

LIBRARY LADY  
My homework is on the jawbone of a child about your age who lived over a million years ago! A common ancestor to 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 them. You can take two books home for two weeks with a library card. 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 laughing until Pops enters,

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 gotta half-day of school Monday.

Pops glares at the Sloppy Joe's. 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 a carpenter's mate on a 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 the 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.

The boys roll their eyes in worry.

INT. STOHLGREN HOUSE, TV ROOM - NIGHT

Tommy, Ma, and Pops are in the TV room.

TOMMY

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

POPS

The Bible's the only book you need.  
Don't get smart with me, Tommy.

MA  
 Tommy got that summer job with the  
 Parks Department.

POPS  
 As long as it's not Mosswood Park.  
 Bad history there. Tommy, go play  
 on the freeway, will ya?

Pops CHUCKLES. Tommy snarls 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. He listens to a small transistor radio.

TOMMY (V.O.)  
 Ya gotta be smart and rich to go to college. I got nothin'. I'll probably be a milkman like Pops, or pick litter up in Oakland parks.

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

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 in the kitchen. She sadly drinks red wine.

TOMMY  
 Hi, Ma! Where are the boys?

MA  
 Jimmy and Georgie can watch TV for one more hour; Jerry and Billy went to bed. 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  
 Good night, Ma. God bless you.

MA

Oh, don't wake Jerry. He's subbing  
on a friend's 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.

TOMMY

Ma says we only get an hour.

GEORGIE

They'll be asleep.

The boys watch TV. Tommy STARES at pictures of *Greek Mythology* during commercials.

TOMMY

How do you get a girlfriend, Jimmy?

JIMMY

Not by reading! What's 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 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.

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 the nine o'clock Mass.  
Sunday clothes. School shoes. Come  
on, get up!

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

MA  
Your father won't take no for an  
answer.  
(MORE)

MA (CONT'D)  
And you older boys, don't eat  
anything. We've got communion.  
Jerry and Billy can eat.

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

Tommy is late and wearing 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 ready.

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 dam be- be- be- beatnik! He c-c-  
c- can't go to M- Mass like that!

TOMMY  
Sorry, Pops. Go on without me. 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.

Pops angrily gets in the car and SPEEDS off.

Jimmy ROLLS down a window and FLIPS Tommy the bird.

Tommy WAVES back insincerely as the car drives away.

TOMMY (CONT'D)  
I'm all alone here! No family. No  
religion. Bye. I'll miss you.

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  
A young man got his-self shot last night.

TOMMY  
So 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 to a 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 off Bill Benham in their new *Ford Galaxy 500*. Bill has his baseball glove.

TOMMY

Hi, Mr. Benham. Hi Bill.

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

I'll be home 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, filthy from playing ball, are near the Creamery again. Tommy FROWNS. He STOPS pushing the bike.

BILL BENHAM

What's up? Are you thinking about your mysterious girlfriend?

TOMMY

We dined and ditched here on 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 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!

Tommy and Bill 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 room. Jimmy and Georgie LIFT in an antique fold-out table.

Jerry and Billy bring in folding chairs.

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

JIMMY

Tommy, we're setting up for Sunday dinner with the old farts.

TOMMY

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

MA

Your father's on his way back.  
Don't start with the muumuu jokes.

JIMMY

Hey, Ma, shouldn't those 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 before! 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 anyway.

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, and she leans over  
and honks the horn!

JIMMY

When she bought live chicks for  
Easter and put them under hats, 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. He 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  
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  
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

The library lady said 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 did you 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.

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 the dinner table.

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, the Giants or the 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 heads 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,  
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 not sure about  
Hell. No 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 heads to the bedroom.

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

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.

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.

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. You must be in love.

TOMMY

Maybe. Not sure, really.

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

OLIVIA

Is she cute, smart, and Catholic?

Then Tommy smiles at Olivia again and chuckles.

TOMMY

Two out of three ain't bad.

Bruno decides to poop, and Tommy is embarrassed.

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

TOMMY (CONT'D)

G- G- God darn it, Bruno!

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 believed 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  
There are still many 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 loafs of bread and a bunch  
 of fish appear at a dinner party.  
 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 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 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-word 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. I thought Stephanie 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 TOSSES 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 head 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. Bill is 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.)

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. I'm 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 right over! The  
kids' table is outside, right?

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 Giuntolis' 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 and whispers in an angry tone.

TOMMY

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

GEORGIE

So what?

TOMMY

By the time they're our age, they  
won't.

(MORE)

TOMMY (CONT'D)  
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 said  
Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.  
(MORE)

## TOMMY (CONT'D)

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 neighbor 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. 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 nine 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

I found these at the Lost and Found at the Pool.

## TOMMY

How did you find me?

GIRL #2

The name "Stohlgren" is written on  
the label. There's 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 is not worth living!

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, if He's there, 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 and laugh as Tommy tells the story.

EXT. STOHLGREN HOUSE - DAY

SUPER: "Current Day"

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-nine-word essay on Miracles wasn't particularly well received by Sister Mary-something, but it didn't really matter to me. 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.

(beat)

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 GOODBYE, while Tom talks.

TOM STOHLGREN (V.O.)

Ma died at sixty-two from a brain aneurysm. 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. We laughed a lot for many years! 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." I taught 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 of 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 Stohlgrens 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