**IMPASTOR** 

Pilot Script

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FADE IN:

EXT. GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE - PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY - NIGHT

BUDDY DOBBS -- mid-30's, a likeable but luckless ne'er do well -- looks out at the water.

BUDDY (V.O.)

People kill themselves for lots of reasons.

Buddy takes a swig from a Jack Daniels bottle.

BUDDY (V.O.)

Me? I just have two.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO ALLEY - EARLIER THAT NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

CRASH! Buddy goes flying into a row of trash cans. He looks up at BRICK, a burly, menacing biker with a shaved head and full beard.

BUDDY

(gasping) I need more time.

Brick nods to BIG TURK, a giant biker with massive, tattooed arms.

BRICK

Take his balls.

Big Turk flips open a switchblade and steps toward Buddy. Buddy grabs a hunk of wood from the trash and smacks Big Turk across the face with it, stunning him. Buddy runs off.

BRICK (CONT'D)

(after him) You're a dead man!

BUDDY (V.O.)

One, I don't have long to live anyway...

INT. SAN FRANCISCO BAR - THAT NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Buddy rushes in, pushes his way up to the bar, where his attractive, put upon girlfriend, LEEANNE, is pouring a pitcher of beer.

BUDDY

I'm in deep shit, Leeanne.

LEEANNE

So what else is new?

BUDDY

I'm serious. I fucked up and some guys are after me. We gotta leave town.

Buddy glances nervously toward the front door.

LEEANNE

Jesus, Buddy, how can you pull this shit on me now? You know my mother's coming tomorrow.

BUDDY

Sorry, baby. We gotta go. Now!

But LeeAnne doesn't move. This is the final straw.

LEEANNE

No. I can't live like this anymore.

BUDDY

What? C'mon, LeeAnne, it'll get better. I promise.

LEEANNE

How many times have you said that, Buddy? (this is really hard) I'm sorry... we're done.

Buddy watches her take the beer to the other end of the bar.

BUDDY (V.O.)

And two, I have nothing to live for.

He steals a Jack Daniels bottle from the bar shelf and exits.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Buddy looks over the four-foot railing at the dark, swirling waters below. Downs a swig of Jack, then climbs the railing.

As he steels himself to jump, an SUV skids to a halt O.C.

JONATHAN (O.C.)

Don't!

JONATHAN BARLOW - 30's, a gentle, caring man - hurries over.

BUDDY

Get away.

JONATHAN

Whatever the problem is, it's not worth killing yourself over.

BUDDY

How the fuck do you know?

**JONATHAN** 

You're right, I don't. So tell me what's going on. I'm Jonathan. Who are you?

BUDDY

I'm a lowlife piece of shit who's about to make the world a better place. Go be a Good Sumatran somewhere else.

JONATHAN

Samaritan. It's "Good Samaritan."

BUDDY

Thanks. I'll think about that on my way down.

Buddy gets set to jump again.

JONATHAN

Wait! I know about despair. I've been where you are.

BUDDY

Yeah, right.

JONATHAN

A month ago, I had nothing... no job, no friends or family to speak of... life seemed hopeless. Then I answered an internet ad and now I'm off to start a whole new life in a new city--

BUDDY

Look, pal, I'm gonna jump anyway.
There's no reason to bore me to death.

**JONATHAN** 

The point is, it's never too late for redemption. (then) Have you thought about asking God for help?

BUDDY

I don't believe in God. That's just some bullshit concept people made up to start wars and let priests ass-bang little boys.

JONATHAN

I'm sorry you feel that way. Because God provides -- you just have to seize the opportunities He gives you.

BUDDY

Yeah, well, maybe in my next life. Good luck on the new qiq, Jonny.

Buddy gets set to jump again.

JONATHAN

No!

Jonathan climbs atop the railing.

BUDDY

What are you doing?

Jonathan reaches out to Buddy.

JONATHAN

C'mon, take my hand. We'll go get a cup of coffee and fig--

Jonathan slips on the wet railing and FALLS OFF the bridge.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

Aaaaaaahh!

BUDDY'S POV

Jonathan's flailing body plummets down, down, down toward the sea. SPLAT! It smacks the surface of the water... then sinks lifelessly below.

ON BUDDY, in total shock.

BUDDY

Oh shit... Oh God...

Overwhelmed, he falls backward onto the bridge. He just lays there, stunned. Then he looks over at Jonathan's SUV. The lights are still on and it's still running.

JONATHAN (V.O.)

God provides -- you just have to seize the opportunities He gives you.

On Buddy, considering...

BEGIN OPENING CREDITS SEQUENCE.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

Buddy climbs into the driver's seat of the SUV.

INT. SUV - MOMENTS LATER

The back area is filled with suitcases, boxes, a laptop and other belongings.

A WALLET and CELL PHONE sit on the front passenger seat. Buddy opens the wallet. Sifts through credit cards, cash, a Florida driver's license. It reads "Jonathan Barlow."

The cell phone RINGS. He looks at it. RING. Does he answer or not? RING. Finally, something compels him to pick it up.

BUDDY

(into phone) Hello?

DORA (V.O.)

Jonathan?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CRAFTSMAN STYLE HOUSE - NIGHT

DORA WINTHROP, late thirties, attractive in a prim sort of way, is placing flowers on a table in the brightly decorated, neatly maintained living room.

DORA

(into phone) It's Dora. It's so nice to finally hear your voice.

BUDDY

(into phone) ... Uh, you too.

DORA

(into phone) Everyone is looking forward to meeting you. Where are you now?

BUDDY

(into phone) San Francisco.

DORA

(into phone) Oh good, you're only a few hours away. I'll meet you at the house. Say, ten a.m.?

BUDDY

(into phone) ... Okay. (then) What's the address again?

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - THE NEXT MORNING

Buddy guides the SUV down the dusty two-lane highway past a weathered sign reading "WELCOME TO LOOMIS."

BUDDY (V.O.)

So, on a morning I planned to be dead, I was now hoping to start a new life. Someone else's life.

EXT. CRAFTSMAN STYLE HOUSE

Buddy stops in front of the house, the nicest on the block. He sits there a moment, contemplating what he's about to do.

EXT. CRAFTMAN STYLE HOUSE - FRONT DOOR

Buddy takes a deep breath. Here goes nothing. He KNOCKS. Dora opens the door.

DORA

Jonathan?

He nods. She gives him a big smile and extends her hand.

DORA (CONT'D)

I'm Dora. Welcome to Loomis.

BUDDY

Thanks.

DORA

Come on in.

INT. CRAFTMAN STYLE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Dora leads Buddy inside, looking him over.

DORA

You're different than I pictured you.

BUDDY

Oh yeah? How's that?

DORA

I don't know. You're more... rugged.

BUDDY

Thanks, I guess. (looking around) Nice place.

DORA

I'm glad you like it. We hope you enjoy living here for a long, long time.

BUDDY

This is mine?

DORA

Yes, I told you in my email we'd provide you with housing. It's one of the perks of the job.

BUDDY

Cool. Uh, tell me more about this job.

DORA

I imagine it's pretty much like your last one.

Buddy smiles and nods. Big help that was.

DORA (CONT'D)

So can you give me a little preview of what you're gonna talk about on Sunday?

BUDDY

Talk about?

DORA

In your sermon, Reverend.

BUDDY

(stunned at this news) Jesus Christ.

DORA

Well, I assumed that, but what aspect?

BUDDY

Uh... I think I'd rather leave it a surprise.

DORA

Ooh, a man of mystery. I like it.

She grabs her car keys.

DORA (CONT'D)

C'mon, the church staff is dying to meet you.

EXT. LOOMIS/INT. DORA'S CAR - MINUTES LATER

Dora drives through the small, economically challenged town, chatting away. Buddy rides shotgun.

DORA

...and you didn't hear it from me, but ever since Reverend Willis passed away, some people in this town have let their devotion slip.

BUDDY

Well, everyone screws up. The important thing is to forgive.

DORA

That's not what Reverend Willis used to say. He said those who don't worship will burn in the fiery pits of Hell.

BUDDY

Reverend Willis sounds like an asshole.

Buddy sees Dora look at him, shocked. Oops.

DORA

(smiles) Yes, he was.

EXT. LOOMIS LUTHERAN CHURCH - DAY

Establish a white, clapboard church. On the front lawn, a sign with removable letters reads: "Welcome Rev. Barlow. Services This Sunday at 10:00 am!"

INT. LOOMIS LUTHERAN CHURCH

Dora is introducing Buddy to three members of the church staff: OWEN SCHMIDT - late 40's, a stern, judgmental businessman, ALEXA CUMMINGS, early 30's, gorgeous, dressed in stylish clothes that tastefully reveal ample cleavage, and RUSSELL PERRY, a delicate soul in his late 20's.

DORA

...this is Owen Schmidt, our Church President, Alexa Cummings, our Head Trustee, and Russell Perry, the Church Secretary.

BUDDY

Nice to meet you all.

SCHMIDT

Reverend Barlow ...

DORA

He prefers "Jonathan."

BUDDY

Actually, my friends call me "Buddy." So let's go with that.

SCHMIDT

As I'm sure you're aware, we here at Loomis Lutheran have spent the better part of a year searching for Pastor Willis' replacement.

ALEXA

Mainly because no one would take the job.

RUSSELL

So we're very excited you're here.

SCHMIDT

Still, we need to talk about what happened in Florida.

BUDDY

What do you mean?

SCHMIDT

Your... problem... with the last congregation.

**ALEXA** 

We appreciate you being up front with that.

BUDDY

Well, honesty is the best policy, right?

RUSSELL

I, for one, think you were very courageous. It can't be easy for a religious leader to come out.

BUDDY

Of what?

Russell laughs, assuming Buddy's kidding. Buddy gets it.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

Oh, that.

ALEXA

Don't worry, you won't face any harassment here.

RUSSELL

Many of us see it as a point of pride that we have a gay pastor.

SCHMIDT

That being said, we are a conservative community. And we prefer to uphold the tradition of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

BUDDY

What tradition is that?

SCHMIDT

That gay men and lesbians be allowed to serve as ordained clergy as long as they remain sexually inactive.

BUDDY

Not a problem.

Schmidt is surprised and pleased to hear this.

SCHMIDT

So you won't be engaging in homosexual activities?

BUDDY

You have my word.

SCHMIDT

Excellent. Come on then, let's give you the tour.

Schmidt, Alexa and Dora start walking toward the altar. Russell lingers behind with Buddy.

RUSSELL

Not everyone feels that's a hard and fast rule.

He gives Buddy a smile.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO POLICE STATION - DAY

Two SF detectives, LOVELLO a handsome pro, and HYDE, an eager rookie with no people skills, are with Buddy's girlfriend, LeeAnne. She's looking at a torn piece of paper.

It reads: "LeeAnne - Please forgive me. I had no choice.
Buddy."

LOVELLO

Is that Mr. Dobbs' handwriting?

LeeAnne, her eyes wet with tears, nods.

LOVELLO (CONT'D)

We found that on the front seat of his vehicle, tucked into his wallet.

**LEEANNE** 

I can't believe he jumped off the bridge.

HYDE

Really? The Golden Gate is the most popular place in the world to commit suicide. People come from all over just to do it. Some even take a bus or a cab--

LOVELLO

Tim. (then) Had your boyfriend shown any signs of depression lately?

LEEANNE

No. But he was scared. He said some people were out to get him.

LOVELLO

What people?

LEEANNE

I don't know. Even if he jumped, it doesn't mean for sure he's dead, right?

HYDE

Fatality rate is 98 per cent. When he hit that water, he was going 86 miles an hour, so there's a good chance his skull was fractured.

LEEANNE

Oh god...

HYDE

Or his neck was broken or his heart was punct--

LOVELLO

Tim.

HYDE

(innocent) What?

Lovello gives him a "be gentle" look. Hyde gets the message.

HYDE (CONT'D)

Anyway, the good news is between the sharks and the tide, we'll probably never find the body so you won't have to see how mangled he got.

LEEANNE

That's your idea of good news?

LOVELLO

If we have any further developments, we'll give you a call.

LEEANNE

You call. (re: Hyde) Not him.

INT. PASTOR'S BEDROOM - DAY

Buddy sits in front of Jonathan Barlow's laptop, surrounded by Barlow's boxes, files, suitcases, etc.

BUDDY (V.O.)

I knew I couldn't fool these people for long, so I figured I'd clean out Barlow's bank account and hit the road. But first I had to crack his password.

Buddy sifts through a sliver of photos -- Jonathan with parish members, Jonathan in the Everglades, Jonathan with an Irish Setter at the beach. He flips the dog photo over. On the back it reads: "Rusty and me '10."

BUDDY

Come on, Rusty...

Buddy types "Rusty" in. Nothing. A KNOCK on the door.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

Just a second.

Buddy puts the photos away and closes the laptop.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

Come in.

Dora enters.

DORA

Settling in okay?

BUDDY

Yeah, thanks.

DORA

Marla Simmons is here to see you. (off Buddy's look) She's a congregant.

BUDDY

What does she want?

DORA

She said it's a personal matter.

BUDDY

Oh. Okay. Send her in.

DORA

(really?) To your bedroom?

BUDDY

Uh, no, that would be wrong. Where did Pastor Willis meet people?

DORA

In the study.

BUDDY

Let's do it there.

INT. PASTOR'S STUDY - A SHORT TIME LATER

Buddy sits across from MRS. SIMMONS, a meek, frazzled-looking woman around forty.

MRS. SIMMONS

It's my son, Jasper. I'm afraid he's headed on a path to Satan.

BUDDY

Why do you say that?

Mrs. Simmons reaches into her oversized handbag and pulls out a clear PLASTIC BAGGIE OF WEED. She puts it on Buddy's desk.

MRS. SIMMONS

I found this in his room. I think it's marijuana.

Buddy opens the baggie and sniffs it.

BUDDY

High quality, too.

MRS. SIMMONS

(taken aback) How do you know--

BUDDY

I took a course.

MRS. SIMMONS

I'm scared, Reverend. Jasper used to be such a good boy. But lately...

Her eyes well up with tears.

MRS. SIMMONS (CONT'D)

He's got problems. He needs help.

BUDDY

Mrs. Simmons, just because your son scored a lid of what looks to be Acapulco Gold, it don't mean he's on a path to Satan.

MRS. SIMMONS

It's not just that. (with difficulty) The other day I came home from work early and found him having relations with...

She's too humiliated to go on.

BUDDY

A girl?

She shakes her head no.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

Woman? (no) Man? (no) Boy? (no) Animal?

MRS. SIMMONS

Cantaloupe.

BUDDY

Cantaloupe?

Mrs. Simmons nods, ashamed.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, how does one...?

MRS. SIMMONS

He said if you bore a hole in the fruit and put it in the microwave, it can approximate the sensation of being with a woman.

BUDDY

Really? And that works?

MRS. SIMMONS

I don't know! (then) What am I going to do, Reverend? I can't talk to Jasper anymore. He just ignores me.

BUDDY

Is there a Mr. Simmons in the picture?

She shakes her head.

MRS. SIMMONS

He left us years ago. I was hoping you could talk to Jasper. Set him straight.

BUDDY

Me?

MRS. SIMMONS

Please. He needs a male role model. And who better than a minister, right?

BUDDY

Right. Okay, cool. I'll give it a shot.

MRS. SIMMONS

Thank you.

She indicates the bag of pot.

MRS. SIMMONS (CONT'D)

What should I do with that?

BUDDY

Better leave it with me. There's no reason you should have to deal with this burden.

Mrs. Simmons smiles gratefully and exits. As Buddy sniffs the weed again...

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

A lower middle-class three-story on a steep street.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING

LeeAnne and her mother, MAVIS, walk up the steps to Buddy and LeeAnne's apartment.

MAVIS

...on the bright side, with Buddy gone, now you can join that dating service I told you about.

LEEANNE

(appalled) Mom.

MAVIS

Too soon?

LeeAnne puts the key in her door, opens it.

INT. BUDDY AND LEEANNE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The place has been ransacked -- furniture overturned, drawers flung on the floor, knickknacks smashed to pieces. The words "YOU CANT HIDE!" have been spray painted on a wall.

LEEANNE

Oh my god.

INT. BUDDY AND LEEANNE'S APARTMENT - AN HOUR LATER

LeeAnne and Mavis are with Det. Lovello.

LEEANNE

They got everything -- my iPhone, my laptop, our TV, Buddy's baseballs... he collected autographed baseballs...

MAVIS

So he could forge 'em. He was real good at "Mickey Mantle."

LeeAnne shoots her mother a look, then:

LEEANNE

...and all my jewelry... which probably isn't worth that watch you're wearing.

LOVELLO

I'm sorry about your losses, but I'm more concerned that whoever did this will come back. Obviously they believe Mr. Dobbs is still alive.

MAVIS

I knew something like this would happen. (to LeeAnne) Didn't I say that bum was nothing but trouble?

LEEANNE

Mom, please. A little respect.

MAVIS

You could've done so much better. (to Lovello) Look at her, she's a beautiful girl, am I wrong?

LOVELLO

No, ma'am.

MAVIS

Hey, what about you? I don't see a ring on your finger. Are you available?

LEEANNE

Mom, for Chrissake.

MAVIS

What? You can't grieve forever, honey.

EXT. PASTOR'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Buddy sits, looking at the stars, toking on a joint.

BUDDY (V.O.)

The fruit-fucker's weed was primo, and I got pretty baked. I started thinking about all that had gone down in the last 24 hours and my mind kept coming back to one thing... I had to let LeeAnne know I was all right.

INT. PASTOR'S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Buddy dials the land line. After a few rings, the phone is picked up, but no words are said.

BUDDY

(into phone) LeeAnne? It's me. (nothing)
LeeAnne?

Buddy senses something's off and hangs up. There's a KNOCK ON THE DOOR. He freezes. He's too stoned to deal with anything right now. The KNOCK persists.

SCHMIDT (O.C.)

Reverend? It's Owen Schmidt. The church president.

Seeing no choice, Buddy opens the door.

BUDDY

Hey. How ya doing?

SCHMIDT

I saw your lights on, so... (noticing) Are you okay? Your eyes are very red.

BUDDY

I'm just tired. What's up?

SCHMIDT

I need your guidance on something. May I come in?

BUDDY

Uh... sure.

Schmidt enters. Buddy notices the roach in the ashtray.

SCHMIDT

It's my daughter, Isabella. She and her husband Michael are having terrible financial problems and it's affecting their marriage. She says they fight all the time now.

Buddy scoops the roach into his pocket.

BUDDY

That sucks.

Schmidt reacts to Buddy's language, but proceeds.

SCHMIDT

I believe in times of crisis, God's word is what pulls us through. And I was hoping you could help them find the strength to deal with their problems by giving them some scripture.

BUDDY

Some what now?

SCHMIDT

Scripture.

Buddy's stoned mind races. What the fuck is scripture? After an awkward beat:

SCHMIDT (CONT'D)

Reverend? Could you give them a passage from the Bible, please?

BUDDY

Uh, sure, I could do that. But I don't have a Bible.

Schmidt takes a St. James off a nearby table, hands it to Buddy.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

Oh good. There's one.

Buddy starts thumbing through it like he knows what he's doing.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

Let's see... oh yeah, I know just the passage.

Stops on a random page.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

Here. This is one of my favorites. I think she'll find it very helpful.

Buddy hands the Bible to Schmidt, pointing to the passage. Schmidt scans it, then looks up, confused.

SCHMIDT

How does a list of people who "beget" other people relate to Isabella's financial situation?

RUDDY

I can't do all the work, my son.

Schmidt looks at Buddy suspiciously.

BUDDY (V.O.)

I could tell Schmidt was on to me...

INT. SUPERMARKET - THE NEXT DAY

Buddy pushes a cart into the produce section.

BUDDY (V.O.)

...but I couldn't run with no money and I still hadn't cracked Barlow's password. So I thought I'd take one of his credit cards for a test run...

Buddy comes to the cantaloupes. He picks one up, considers the possibilities, then shrugs and throws it in his cart.

RUSSELL

Buddy?

Buddy turns, sees Russell.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Remember me? Russell, from the church?

BUDDY

Yes, of course. How are you?

RUSSELL

I'll be a lot better if you accept my dinner invitation.

BUDDY

Dinner?

RUSSELL

You eat, don't you?

BUDDY

Yeah...

RUSSELL

And I cook, so we're a perfect combination.

Russell smiles at him. Buddy smiles back, not knowing how to handle this.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Plus it'll be a great way for you to meet some of the members of our community.

BUDDY

Oh, so there's gonna be other people there.

RUSSELL

Yes, silly, I'm not asking you on a date. (smiles) At least not yet. So, how's Friday night at seven?

BUDDY

Sounds... fine.

RUSSELL

Great. You can get the address from Dora. See you then.

Russell smiles at Buddy, holding his eyes a little longer than Buddy would wish.

INT. SUPERMARKET - CHECKOUT AREA - A SHORT TIME LATER

Buddy's in line as the teenage checkout girl, CHELSEA, finishes ringing him up.

CHELSEA

That'll be \$31.47.

Buddy takes out Jonathan Barlow's credit card. Hands it to her, trying to look casual.

BUDDY

Can I get a hundred dollars cash too, please?

CHELSEA

Do you have i.d.?

Buddy flashes his most winning smile.

BUDDY

No, I'm afraid I don't.

CHELSEA

I can't swipe a credit card without a picture i.d.

BUDDY

See, the thing is, I lost my license and I haven't had a chance to get a new one yet.

CHELSEA

I'm sorry, my manager won't let--

ALEXA (O.C.)

It's okay, Chelsea.

Buddy turns to see Alexa Cummings, the gorgeous woman he met at the church.

ALEXA (CONT'D)

You can make an exception in this case. This is Reverend Barlow, the new minister.

CHELSEA

Oh, I'm sorry, Reverend. I didn't know.

She swipes the card. Buddy smiles at Alexa.

BUDDY

Alexa, right?

She nods. Buddy tries to avert his eyes from her voluptuous chest.

ATIEXA

So I have to ask, why would a goodlooking young minister choose Loomis of all places? We're in the middle of nowhere.

BUDDY

Let's just say... when the Man Upstairs tells you where to go, you don't argue.

Alexa smiles.

ALEXA

Well, I'm glad you listened to Him. We sure need you here.

CHELSEA

Here you go.

She hands Buddy the cash.

BUDDY

Thanks.

He grabs his grocery bag.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

And thank you, Alexa. See you around.

ALEXA

Oh, you will.

Buddy walks off. As Alexa watches him leave, Russell comes up behind her.

RUSSELL

Get that look out of your eye.

**ALEXA** 

What look?

RUSSELL

He plays for my team.

Alexa watches Buddy get into his SUV.

ALEXA

I'm not so sure about that.

EXT. LOOMIS LUTHERAN CHURCH - DAY

Schmidt and Dora exit the church in mid-argument.

SCHMIDT

...I'm telling you, there's something "off" about him.

DORA

Look, we all know you were against hiring a gay pastor--

SCHMIDT

It's not that. He didn't even seem to know what "scripture" was.

DORA

Or maybe he was just tired, and you're looking for any excuse to find fault with him.

SCHMIDT

Or maybe hiring someone sight unseen over the internet was a bad idea.

Having reached her car, Dora turns to confront Schmidt.

DORA

Do you want to spend another year looking for a new pastor? Because I don't. I corresponded with Reverend Barlow for weeks and all my instincts say he's a good man.

SCHMIDT

Yes, and everyone knows how good your instincts about men are.

Dora looks stung.

DORA

Owen Schmidt, for a Christian, you can be very hurtful.

Dora gets into her car and drives off.

EXT. SIMMONS HOUSE - LATER THAT DAY

Buddy pulls the SUV into the driveway of a modest, one-story home. He walks to the front door, KNOCKS. After a beat, Mrs. Simmons opens it.

MRS. SIMMONS

Hello, Reverend. Thank you for coming.

INT. SIMMONS HOUSE

Mrs. Simmons leads Buddy to a closed door with a BLOODY SKULL AND CROSSBONES POSTER. Knocks.

MRS. SIMMONS

Jasper, Reverend Barlow's here to see you. (no response) Jasper?

BUDDY

You don't think he's... busy?

Mrs. Simmons opens the door. Jasper, a gangly teen with greasy hair and pimply skin, sits at a desk, looking at his computer.

MRS. SIMMONS

Jasper, didn't you hear me? Turn that thing off.

He continues to stare at the computer, ignoring her.

MRS. SIMMONS (CONT'D)

Please.

Nothing. She turns to Buddy.

MRS. SIMMONS (CONT'D)

See? He won't listen to me.

BUDDY

Why don't you give us a minute alone?

She nods and exits, closing the door. Buddy approaches.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

Hello, Jasper.

Jasper swivels his chair to face Buddy.

JASPER

So you're the new homo pastor everybody's got such a hard-on for.

Buddy lets that slide.

BUDDY

Your mom came to me because she's concerned about you.

JASPER

You mean concerned I'm banging cantaloupes, right?

BUDDY

Among other things. Why do you think you did that?

JASPER

'Cause mangoes are too small and watermelons fall apart too easy.

BUDDY

I meant, why do you feel the need to... get intimate... with fruit?

JASPER

How long you been in this town, Rev?

BUDDY

Just a couple days.

JASPER

You'll find out soon enough. This is the most boring shit hole on earth.

(MORE)

JASPER (CONT'D)

And despite my movie star looks, I don't get a lot of pussy. So why not?

BUDDY

Because it's freaking out your mother. And she seems like a decent lady.

JASPER

She's a controlling, neurotic bitch.

BUDDY

JASPER

Yeah, I hit the friggin' lottery. I can't wait to get away from her.

BUDDY

And when is that happening?

JASPER

'Soon as I finish high school. (indicates a wall calendar) Sixty-three days.

BUDDY

Okay, here's how it's gonna go down. When you leave this house, you can smoke weed and fuck fruit all you want, but for the next sixty-three days, you are gonna be a model son.

**JASPER** 

Oh yeah? Why's that?

BUDDY

'Cause you may not know this, but there's a special place in Hell for little snot-nosed bastards who disrespect their mothers. And if you don't start treating her better, I will personally use all of my clout with the Big Guy to make sure you fry your ass off for all eternity.

JASPER

You can't do that.

BUDDY

Oh no? Try me. (in his face) So what's it gonna be, hotshot, two months of good behavior or eternal fucking damnation?

JASPER

You don't sound like any preacher I've ever met.

BUDDY

I'll take that as a compliment.

**JASPER** 

And you sure don't seem gay.

BUDDY

Well, I don't know what you think a gay person is supposed to seem like. But make no mistake, I like cock.

On Jasper's reaction...

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Establish the small but well-kept funeral home.

WALLACE (V.O.)

And who is the deceased?

INT. SAN FRANCISCO FUNERAL HOME

LeeAnne and Mavis sit with JACOB WALLACE, the genteel funeral director.

LEEANNE

My boyfriend, Buddy.

WALLACE

My condolences. Will there be a burial or is this a cremation?

LEEANNE

Neither. His body was lost at sea.

WALLACE

I'm so sorry. Boating accident?

MAVIS

He jumped off the Golden Gate.

LeeAnne gives her mother a look, then to Wallace:

LEEANNE

I just want to hold a service for him. He was a good man.

Mavis lets out a snicker.

LEEANNE (CONT'D)

He was, Mom. You didn't know Buddy like I did.

MAVTS

Leeanne, don't you go making him into some kind of hero now that he's dead. Buddy Dobbs was a good-for-nothing coward. That's why he killed himself.

LEEANNE

No, he killed himself because the one person he loved in this world abandoned him. Buddy's dead because of me!

She starts crying. A beat, then Wallace presents a brochure.

WALLACE

We offer two rooms for such occasions...

EXT. LOOMIS POST OFFICE PARKING LOT - DAY

Alexa emerges from the post office, talking on her cell.

**ALEXA** 

(into phone) ...Hi, Jen, it's Alexa. I was thinking we should throw a little welcoming party for the new pastor. Give me a call and let's talk about it, okay?

Alexa hangs up as she reaches her car.

KENNY (O.C.)

Lookin' good, girl.

Alexa is so startled by this voice, she DROPS HER PHONE. She turns to see KENNY LAMEIRAS -- 30ish, long hair, tattoos -- a man whose muscles and resolve have been hardened by prison.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Didn't scare ya, did I?

ALEXA

No. (nervous laugh) Well, a little maybe. I just didn't expect...

**KENNY** 

To ever see me again? Surprise.

He hands Alexa her phone. She does her best to keep it together.

ALEXA

So... when did you get out?

KENNY

'Bout six months ago. Took me that long to track you down. (pointedly) You didn't make it easy.

ALEXA

Kenny, I...

KENNY

You and me gotta talk.

Alexa looks around.

ALEXA

Not here. Meet me at the coffee shop on Route 9 tomorrow at ten.

**KENNY** 

Lookin' forward to it.

Alexa gets into her car, looking like a woman whose whole world is about to change.

INT. PASTOR'S STUDY - LATER THAT DAY

Buddy's at his desk, working on Jonathan Barlow's laptop. He types in another password. Fails again. Frustrated, he smacks the keyboard. Then glances out the window.

BUDDY'S POV - a POLICE CAR pulls into his driveway. Owen Schmidt and an OFFICER get out.

BUDDY

Shit.

Buddy closes the laptop, panicked.

BUDDY (V.O.)

My time was up. I had two choices.

He hears the DOORBELL RING.

BUDDY (V.O.)

Tell the truth and face murder charges when no one believes my story. Or make a run for it.

Buddy bolts for the door.

INT. PASTOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Buddy hurries down the hallway, sneaks into the kitchen. Just as he opens the back door...

DORA

Buddy?

He stops, caught.

DORA (CONT'D)

You have some visitors.

INT. PASTOR'S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Dora leads Buddy to the living room, where Schmidt and the cop, MICHAEL, a powerfully built guy in his twenties, await.

BUDDY

Hey.

SCHMIDT

This is my son-in-law, Michael. He wants to ask you something.

MICHAEL

Who <u>are</u> you?

BUDDY

Uh...

Buddy sizes up the cop. Can he overpower him? Maybe get his gun?

MICHAEL

I mean, are you some kind of psychic? How did you know?

BUDDY

Know?

MICHAEL

That Isabella and I had been fighting over when to have a baby. That's what you meant by giving us that Bible passage, right? That the time is now?

BUDDY

So you got that, huh?

MICHAEL

I've been telling her money shouldn't decide when we start a family. But it took your passage to convince her. I just had to come over and thank you.

He shakes Buddy's hand.

BUDDY

You're welcome.

There's a KNOCK on the door. Dora opens it, revealing Mrs. Simmons.

DORA

Hello, Marla.

Mrs. Simmons enters, goes directly to Buddy.

MRS. SIMMONS

What did you say to my son?

Uh oh. Just when he thought he was out of the woods.

BUDDY

Uh... just some stuff.

MRS. SIMMONS

Do you know what he did after you left?

All eyes are on Mrs. Simmons.

MRS. SIMMONS (CONT'D)

He said he was sorry. For everything.

BUDDY

Really?

MRS. SIMMONS

Then he hugged me. He hasn't done that in years. You're a miracle worker.

BUDDY

Now, now, I'm just God's humble servant.

DORA

And to think, some people weren't sure you were qualified.

Schmidt smiles weakly.

MRS. SIMMONS

It is such a blessing to have you here, Reverend.

DORA

(to Buddy) Funny, that's the word you always use... blessing.

BUDDY (V.O.)

And suddenly, I knew Jonathan Barlow's password.

INT. PASTOR'S KITCHEN - THAT NIGHT

A fierce rain pours outside. Buddy's at the table with Barlow's laptop. He types in "blessing" and smiles.

BUDDY (V.O.)

Twelve thousand, four hundred bucks. Not a fortune, but enough to hit the road with.

Buddy gets up.

BUDDY (V.O.)

But all these questions kept nagging at me. What if there was a reason Barlow died on that bridge? What if somehow I was meant to be here?

DING! The microwave bell sounds. Buddy opens the microwave and takes out a CANTALOUPE with a hole carved into it.

BUDDY (V.O.)

What if this melon thing really works?

The phone RINGS.

BUDDY

(into phone) Hello?

ALEXA (V.O.)

(through phone, upset) Buddy, it's Alexa Cummings. I'm in trouble. Can I come over and see you tonight?

BUDDY

(into phone) Sure, Alexa.

Buddy looks around at his new home.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

I'm not going anywhere.

INT. PASTOR'S LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

The raging thunderstorm continues outside. Buddy combs his hair in a mirror, preparing for Alexa's arrival.

BUDDY (V.O.)

Maybe the real Jonathan Barlow was right. Maybe it is never too late for redemption... even for a fuck-up like me.

There's a KNOCK ON THE FRONT DOOR. Buddy does one last check of the hair, then crosses to the door and opens it.

(CONTINUED)

HIS POV

Standing in the doorway are the huge bikers, Brick and Big Turk.

BRICK

Hello, Buddy.

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF SHOW.