

Shouting in the Wilderness

by

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SHOUTING IN THE WILDERNESS

ACT 1

SCENE 1

1986

A tidy East Village Studio apartment is very simple and uncluttered. It has religious and artistic touches. A single loft bed with a small desk and a bookshelf under it is tucked into the back right corner. A simple wooden cross is hung on the wall over the bed. A small wooden chair is under the desk. The ladder to the loft faces out and is partially blocked by a coat stand. Further downstage on the right wall is the entrance to the studio. On the back wall is an old fashioned sink that doubles as a wash tub with a dish rack on one end and a shower curtain pulled open on the other. Next to it is an old refrigerator. A nicked up butcher block that serves as a table with two wooden chairs on either side of it is at the center of the room. On the back left wall is the entrance to a commode. There's a closet and a dresser with a large mirror next to that also on the left wall. Down left is a lover's seat couch with it's back tilted toward downstage.

SARAH enters the apartment. She is 27 years old, beautiful and glowing in the most natural way. She wears no make up or jewelry. Her eyes are calm, divine in a Mona Lisa way. She carries a couple of grocery bags. She sets them on the butcher block. Shadowing her is INNER who speaks Sarah's inner thoughts. Her skirt and blouse are in black and white. She is the same age or bit older than Sarah. Inner is attractive, but more plain and severe than Sarah. Following Inner through the door is JOHNNY also 27 years old, with dark hair, big eyes and a handsome open face. He's edgy, but not in a threatening way. A restless, anxious energy underlies his outwardly easy demeanor. He carries a six pack of beer. Shadowing Johnny is INNIM, Johnny's inner voice. His slack's and tee shirt are shades of grey. Innim is the same age, handsome, but with broader features, more animated, and more nervous than Johnny.

INNER and INNIM mouth the words as SARAH and JOHNNY speak.

INNIM

Nice place. Really nice. She keeps things clean. That's a good sign. I gotta tell her I like it.

JOHNNY

You got a really nice place here. I can't believe how clean you keep it. My place... forget it.

INNIM

It's shit hole.

JOHNNY

This place is very together.

Sarah smiles and empties her grocery bags into the refrigerator. Johnny stands behind her waiting to put the beers in the fridge.

INNER

He appreciates it. That's good.

SARAH

Thank- you.

INNER

But don't kid yourself... he wants what he wants.
(sexual shiver)

INNIM

Look at her ass. Wow. I can't believe I'm here. It seems to easy.

INNER

There is something about him. I can feel him behind me.

INNIM

Well don't stand behind her like a porn star.

Johnny casually adjusts.

INNER

Careful girl... offer him something... remember your manners.

SARAH

Would you like something?

Sarah reaches into a grocery bag and pulls out a big red apple and holds it up to Johnny.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Apple?

Inner and Innim move away from Sarah and Johnny.

SARAH (CONT'D)
These are crisp and juicy...from
upstate. Really delicious.

JOHNNY
I'm good. Thank you.

INNIM
Dumb. Have an apple. It's good for
my breath anyway.

JOHNNY
Ya know what? I'll take it. It's a
beauty.

Johnny takes the apple and takes a big bite out of it. Sarah
cuts her apple into neat bites on the butcher block. Johnny's
behind her.

SARAH
I'm sorry I didn't get much. I
wasn't really expecting...

INNER
I thought you were just walking me
home.

SARAH
...but I'm glad you came up. Would
you like chips or something?

JOHNNY
(referring to apple)
This is good.

SARAH
There's some stuff for breakfast
tomorrow... some fruit.

Sarah smiles at him and continues cutting fruit.

INNIM
Breakfast... she wants to sleep
with me...

INNIM (CONT'D)

Can't wait. Boy do I need this. Brings me over late... she's gotta want it. With chicks though... you never know. Oh my God, look at the ass on her... the face,... the rack... this is going to be great. Have a beer. Get loose. Get fun.

INNER

(reacting to Johnny)
What's going on with him? What... he thinks he's staying for breakfast? I got to pull back. He's sensing me. I can't stop thinking about kissing that boy on the mouth... not happening. This isn't me.

Innim does a little jig. Johnny smiles seductively as he loads the beer into the fridge and grabs a couple bottles for himself.

JOHNNY

You want a beer?

SARAH

I don't drink.

INNIM

Not good. Uptight or she's a drunk.

JOHNNY

AA?

SARAH

No, I never drank. Never wanted to.

INNIM

What? That's weird... But, as long as she doesn't mind if I drink. Who cares.

JOHNNY

That's cool you don't drink. You mind if I have a beer.

SARAH

Why not?

INNER

As long as he doesn't suck down the whole six pack.

Johnny puts one beer back in the fridge.

INNER (CONT'D)

Why am I so attracted to this guy? He's handsome. But that's not it. I don't get it?

Johnny pulls out a Bic lighter and uses the bottom to pop the bottle top. He takes a long swig.

INNER (CONT'D)

So wrong for me. I don't get it.

Sarah pulls an orange out of the refrigerator and begins to peel and eat it. Johnny eyes her up.

INNIM

She is beautiful...angelic. It's scary how calm she is. But that's the type when ya get'em in bed...

INNER

He's rough in a sexy way, but I think there's a lot to work with.

INNIM

I'm gonna love this. I'm going to take my time...take my time.

INNER

He's nice.

INNIM

She's going to love it.

INNER

He's respectful.

INNIM

I'm an idiot.

INNER

He is sex. Sex and sex.

INNIM

A girl just ruined my life.

INNER

I can hold him off...

INNIM

I got run out of LA.

INNER

...me off.

INNIM

I just lost my fiance... ..my confidence and my whole fuckin' life. And now I'm back at it. It's sick. I'm sick.

INNER

I can handle him. I can handle him.

INNIM

Look at her though. She's
different. Thank you God.

SARAH

Would you like some orange?

INNIM

(referring to Sarah,
leering)

This is what I need.

JOHNNY

(kidding)

No thanks. The apple and beer is
going down great.

SARAH

You should eat fruit as much as you
can.

JOHNNY

Yeah, I should do a lot of things.
Eating healthy would be one.

INNIM

Then the ya got the coke, the pot
and the vodka...two, three and
four.

Johnny squirms.

INNIM (CONT'D)

I haven't been doing a LOT
though...

Johnny sniffs like he is sucking up coke.

INNER

He seems stressed. His eyes are
kinda sad... beautiful. Is this all
right God? Talk about the show.

SARAH

The play... it's going pretty well?

JOHNNY

Well enough. I'm not on stage that
much to tell you the truth.

INNIM

Oh yeah, that thing that happened
the other night.

JOHNNY

Oh yeah... the other night... The
other actors are having fits with
Victor James... the way he directs.
You know the English... he's like a
puppeteer. And you know Sammy
Coppala... Mr. Method. They clash.
Last Wednesday Victor was showing
Sammy how to answer a phone on
stage and I thought was going to
die.

(imitating Victor James
English accent)

"Sammy, let the phone ring
twice...ring, ring hop over to the
desk

(acts it out)

...on the fourth ring, snap it
up... face out to the
audience...'hello'... so we can see
you. People want to see you, Sammy.
They want to see your face and see
that you're awake. What you're
doing is too sloppy...mumble,
mumble, mumble..."

(out of accent)

I thought Sam was going to kill
him. But Sam's a riot. He played
with him.

(Imitating Sammy's New
York accent)

Victor, I hear ya. I'm gettin' ya.
How many steps you think from the
couch to the phone...four, five?
When I face the audience you want
me to count the seats? I know you
get a percentage." We cracked up.
Even Victor laughed.

Sarah is smiling and laughing a little.

INNER

(matter of fact)

He's funny.

INNIM

She liked it. She has a cute
laugh. Talk about **her** now.

JOHNNY

What do you think about working for Hooper? His sets are amazing. I mean it really looks like a cruise ship.

SARAH

A room on a cruise ship.

JOHNNY

Yeah, well...

INNIM

Sorry Miss perfect.

SARAH

I like working with Hoops. He doesn't say much. No drama... Methodical. But he's genius. No ego. If I had a design idea about the set, he'd listen. It's not just paint this and paint that... like most designers I've worked for. I'm learning a lot even now... backstage... just tending the props.

JOHNNY

I'm learning some stuff, but... the best part of it has been hanging backstage with you to be honest. I don't even mind that I have a small part. It's like, "Yes Captain, right away", and exit stage left and I get to hang with you... and get paid. What's so bad?

INNIM

Corny... oh my God, but it's true.

INNER

That was sweet. It was sincere... I think.

SARAH

Well, that's nice of you to say that. It's nice being around you too.

INNIM

(sarcastic)
How enthusiastic.

SARAH
 (notices her hands)
 My hands are sticky.

Sarah moves toward the sink. She turns on the faucet. Johnny follows to the sink.

INNIM
 Try that thing Tres told you about.
 This is the time. I gotta try it.
 Na, it's too weird. Too weird.
 Screw it... take a risk. Just to
 touch her.

He grabs the bottle of "JOY" dish detergent and holds it like he's ready to squirt some liquid into Sarah's hands.

JOHNNY
 May I.

SARAH
 What?!

INNER
 What? What is he doing?

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
 May I wash your hands. There's
 nothing like it.

Sarah is a little taken back but puts her hands out anyway. Johnny takes them and squirts a touch of liquid into her hands. He wets his hands and begins to gently wash her hands.

INNIM
 I can't believe I'm doing this.

INNER
 I don't believe this guy.

INNIM
 I always wanted to try this.

INNER
 He's washing my hands with
 detergent. This is ridiculous.
 (beat)
 But it does feel good.

SARAH
 (nervous)
 Oh?

INNER

Too good. I'm tingling. He's touching my hands, but my breasts are tingling. Oh boy. It's just the hands.

INNIM

(sing song)
This is working.

JOHNNY

I have to admit, I didn't think this one up on my own.

Sarah blurts out a laugh.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

A girl I did a play with told me about it.

INNER

(skeptical)
Told you about it?

INNIM

God, she was amazing... the greatest sex I ever had... in the afternoon.

JOHNNY

She was in Tuscanny at a cafe and goes to the bathroom. She comes out and there was a shared sink, for guys and girls. She goes to wash her hands and this Italian guy came up and started washing her hands for her. She said it was one of the most sensual things anyone had ever done to her.

SARAH

Really? And you think this is the same thing?

JOHNNY

Well...

SARAH

Well, first of all this isn't Tuscanny. And you're not a strange Italian man. You're strange, I'll give you that.

Johnny has a good laugh.

JOHNNY
 (playful)
 What?

SARAH
 (in fun)
 You're washing my hands with dish
 detergent.

More laughs.

He grabs the bottle of JOY.

JOHNNY
 I thought you'd like a little joy.
 Just a squirt. It doesn't feel
 good?

SARAH
 It feels good. I mean...

JOHNNY
 Now I add my own little twist...
 You are my master, let me wash your
 feet.

Johnny falls on his knees and fakes like he's going for her feet and she jumps about a foot with a little screech and then starts laughing at herself. Johnny cracks up laughing. Sarah has the giggles and can't help herself.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
 I'm kidding, we're not at that
 point in the relationship yet.
 You're jumpy.

He grabs a paper towel and dries her hand. They look into each other's eyes. While he's holding her hands, paper towel and all, he tenderly kisses her face. He pulls her close.

INNER
 Uh oh. What am feeling. I can't.
 This is okay. No it's not. My God
 No. No. No. No.

INNIM
 She feels so good. So sweet. Oh
 man.

Johnny plants a lingering kiss on her mouth

INNER
 No tongue. No tongue.

SARAH
I'm a Christian.

INNIM
And...

JOHNNY
You think I'm Jewish and that
would bother me. That's funny. I'm
Christian too.

INNER
Not getting it.

SARAH
No, I mean I'm really a Christian.

JOHNNY
Born again?

SARAH
No, always been. I've always been a
devout Christian.

JOHNNY
Really?

INNIM
Holy shit! You gotta be shitten'
me. A Christian... like a Bible
belt crazy ass holy roller. No way.
Not working in the theater.

JOHNNY
Wow.

INNER
He's stunned. Typical New Yorker...
it's like I have a disease.

INNIM
No friggin way. This is a goof.
This freaks me out!

SARAH
Does it bother you?

JOHNNY
No, it doesn't really affect me. I
mean... it's unusual...

SARAH
Haven't you ever met a Christian in
your life.

JOHNNY

Many. Just not 'Born-Agains' that often.

SARAH

I told you, I'm not a born again.

JOHNNY

You're a Christian- Christian.

SARAH

If that's what you want to call it.

JOHNNY

It's not bad, it's just rare. You seem like one of the nicest people I've ever met. I mean, but really in all the time I've lived in New York... the only time I've seen born-again or Christian-Christians is in the subway handing out flyers.

Johnny cracks himself up.

INNIM

Easy... that was harsh. Show some respect.

SARAH

(defensive)

In the circles you travel... I'm not surprised. There are plenty of devout Christians in New York. Yes, you do have to look a little harder, but they're there.

INNIM

Oh geez. It was a joke. Christians though... not exactly a joking people. Da.

JOHNNY

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to sound disrespectful. I respect what you believe. I respect what anybody believes.

INNER

Oh, don't get me started.

(mocking)

"I respect what everybody believes." These people.

(looking to heaven)

(MORE)

Help me not to be mean. I don't want to be nasty with him.

SARAH

I just thought it was important to tell you.

JOHNNY

Why was it important?

SARAH

I try to live my life by faith. And in my faith I'm not supposed to do this. Do you want to be led on?

JOHNNY

It was nice to kiss you. If it's only that. What's so bad? You asked me to come to your apartment. I had thoughts, but really... weirdly enough, I'm just glad to be here hanging out with you. I feel good. If nothing comes of it... I'm fine.

INNIM

That was honest, but probably not true.

JOHNNY

I am disappointed, but I'm a big boy.

SARAH

Well, sex isn't happening. So, if you want to go home now I completely understand. No hard feelings.

INNER

Honest and to the point.

JOHNNY

No way. Come on, your painting me the wrong way. I really do enjoy your company.

SARAH

I've been enjoying yours and I liked the kiss too, but having casual sex is just not something I do.

JOHNNY

What if it's not casual. What if it's serious?

SARAH

You mean serious like married and devoted to a certain type of life...then yes, I'll have serious sex and I'll love it too.

Johnny and Sarah take each other in.

INNIM

Oh my God I'm so turned on right now. Is she perfect or what?

INNER

He's getting this.

(beat)

Did I just say I'll have serious sex?

INNIM

I'm out of my mind. This would never work. Wake up man. Wake up.

JOHNNY

So you just don't have sex until you're married, never, ever, period that's it. That's cool.

SARAH

It's not cool.

INNER

It's not cool.

SARAH

It's who I am. I'm a Christian, I live that way and it doesn't matter what anyone thinks about it...whether they think it's cool or not. It only matters what God thinks about it. I think you know what's right. I think you know what the right thing is. I see it in you. You just can't get yourself to do it... to do what's right.

INNIM

I wanna cry. She's right. She's so right. No. No way. I'm weak. It's unreal.

JOHNNY

When you say do what's right.... what do you mean by that?

INNER

(praying)

Jesus, help me to be honest right now.

SARAH

Let's get to what I really think you want to know and maybe you'll understand what I mean about what is right. I moved from Griffin, Georgia, my home town when I was 18. I went to 4 years of college and graduated with a BFA from the North Carolina school of the Arts. I interned at the Magic Theatre in San Francisco for two years after that and for the last three years I've been living in New York... making a living in the theater...

INNER

...the circus... the freak show... constantly tempted...

SARAH

I've kissed some boys here and there...

INNER

Four. Two were gay...surprise, surprise... and it never went past kissing. Thank you God.

SARAH

But I've never...never... I'm 27 years old and I'm still a virgin. Is that what you wanted to hear? I'm a virgin and I'm certainly not ashamed of it.

For a moment Johnny and Innim are frozen in shock.

INNIM

A virgin. What are you kidding me? No way. No friggin, way. Holy shit!

Johnny is speechless and can only muster a cockeyed grin.

JOHNNY

Huh. Why do you say ashamed?

SARAH

That's the world we live in. I'm not ashamed of it. I'm a virgin and so what?

Innim darts around the room. Sarah sits beatific looking as holy as Mary. Inner is behind Sarah, praying. Innim dances around the room.

INNIM

(still bounciing)
A friggin' virgin. All right calm down here. I'm not a jerk. I've never had a desire to have a virgin. It's not me. She's a gift, man. Seriously. Respect it. I can't friggin' believe it. She's a virgin!

INNER

Please God give me the strength. I'm so drawn to him. Why? I want to stop feeling this. He just looks at me and... give me the strength, Jesus. Please. Thank you, Amen. Oh yeah, and help Johnny, too. Amen.

Sarah gives Johnny a penetrating look.

JOHNNY

So you're a virgin. I mean...I don't know... Do I find it different, yeah. But, I'll be honest with you, I find it refreshing too. I like the purity of it. The insanity of it.
(laughs)

INNIM

Stay honest, man. Stay honest. It's good.

JOHNNY

I can say for sure that my life hasn't been so good the way I've lived it... at least in the last couple of years. I've just come out of the most scary disastrous time of my life because of how I live... because of the choices I've made. I'm not going to judge how you live, whatever I think about it.

SARAH

I believe that.

Sarah takes Johnny in as if she were looking into his soul. She is as solid as a rock. He is anxious. Inner is even more solid, statue like. Innim is a bundle of nerves.

JOHNNY

To really be honest. I'm not good enough for you.

INNIM

I mean that. I'm not.

JOHNNY

There are things that I've done, that I so regret. That I... I don't know.

INNER

Something heavy... something I might not be ready to hear. Ask.

SARAH

What happened with your fiance. You told me last week it was broken off, but you didn't elaborate.

INNIM

Yeah, you'll be disgusted. I'm not getting laid anyway. Tell her... But ease her into it.

JOHNNY

I used to pray before I went to bed... went to Sunday school. Never cursed. I haven't cursed in front of you, miraculously... I don't know why. I just haven't. I curse all the time. Mostly fuck and shit...I don't use the Lord's name in vain or say God damn it or anything like that. I try to avoid that. A little thing I guess.

INNER

Very little.

JOHNNY

I didn't have problems with my parents. I wasn't perfect, but I think I was a good kid. I look at myself now and I'm so far from...

INNIM

Get to the point man.

JOHNNY

I was going to get married. I had the girl...perfect for me...Susan Bakefield. Suzie.

(MORE)

Smart, pretty, fun... everyone loved her. You could take her anywhere. When we hung together we were so in tune it felt almost incestuous, like she was my sister, but she wasn't. We were very passionate for each other. When I say soulmates, I mean that... not in a corny way. We were going through this rough patch for a while. We were low on dough. She hated her job. I hated being broke. I couldn't treat her to anything and I don't care what you say. To a man... broke is broken. It's depressing. How many Blue Ribbons can you drink? It was rough, but I loved her totally. It was myself I was having the problem with. Not her.

INNIM

If I'm going to bail out I gotta do it now. Tell her... just to tell somebody. If she can get past it...

INNER

Here's the bad part. Tell me. I won't judge.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

I'm in this acting class... You know Rick Moss? He wrote this book, "Don't Act, Please". It's all about being real and everything. He has this girl up in class and he's got her doing an honesty workout. Basically, you just tell people whatever you think. And you're supposed to take risks and get deep. The actress is from Alabama and she's really polite and Eric is trying to break her... so she can expand her "emotional range".

She gets up there and it's like,
(imitating the actresses
Southern accent)

'I don't like to say it Frank, but I really don't think that color shirt is for you... Bobby, I didn't particularly like your comment about Ella's work. It was unfair.' Then she addresses me, 'Johnny, I really enjoyed the kiss we had rehearsing the other day.'

(out of imitation)

(MORE)

It was nothing. We were doing a scene from, 'The Rainmaker'. It was a peck on the lips. Rick's like, "Sorry honey, you're not going where you need to go". I mean the girl was emotionally in a straight jacket.

INNIM

Working on Broadway now.

JOHNNY

Sooo, Rick calls up this girl, Brandy to demonstrate. And she's amazing. Gorgeous, charismatic, and built like a dancer.

INNIM

But, a nice rack, too.

JOHNNY

And she had every emotion going at all times. So she's up there and she gets to it.

(imitating Brandy
addressing class)

'Ya know Larry, you are the phoniest person I've ever met and everybody knows it. You only fool your phony self with your phoney ass smile." Ya know... and this one's an asshole and that one's a jerkoff. Then Brandy looks at me and she goes, "Ya know somethin' Johnny, I'd like to fuck your brains out." I'm like wow...what.

INNIM

It knocked me on my ass... a girl that beautiful saying that. Stay with the facts...

INNER

He was finished. Easy catch. How does a girl say that? It's like throwing meat to hyaena.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

At the end of class... half joking I say, 'Hey Brandy, why don't you put your body where your mouth is?' Man, to have that line back... that one sentence...

INNIM

It didn't matter. I was cooked when I met her.

JOHNNY

She didn't flinch, 'Lets go to my place. Let's go now'. I'm out of there.

INNER

He had a fiance. This is depressing already... men.

JOHNNY

I tell her when I get there, 'Ya know, I have a girlfriend I live with in Brooklyn and I'm already running late. When we're done I really can't hang around. She didn't have a problem with it... just starts flickin' out lights and lighting candles...

SARAH

And you slept with her?

JOHNNY

Yeah.

SARAH

And you just went home to your girlfriend?

INNIM

Yeah, I'm the lowest.

JOHNNY

Yeah.

INNER

That is low.

SARAH

And when did you tell her?

JOHNNY

I didn't tell her... right away. I mean... I don't know...

INNER

Not 'til he had to.

INNIM

I thought it was just a screw...one time thing... I'd get past the guilt.

JOHNNY

...I don't know.

INNER
Is he going to make up a
story?

INNIM
Wrong. It was all wrong.
Everything about it.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
I really thought that was the end
of it. It doesn't make it right.

SARAH
I didn't think it did. You broke a
trust. You betrayed your love.

INNER
So weak. So low. It tears
your heart apart. Tore mine.
Everything is lost.
Everything that means
anything. Keep going.

INNIM
I didn't think I did. I only
loved Susan...And I hurt her
in ways I can't even face.
Women don't understand... you
can love one and sleep with
another.

INNIM
Oh my stomach. When is this ever
gonna stop? I wonder if she has
milk?

Johnny swigs his beer. Innim holds his stomach and groans.

INNER
This is too painful. He's
done. Good. I don't want to
hear anymore.

INNIM
I cheat on someone again I
should get my nuts shot off.

INNER
I need to hear this. He needs to
get it out. Slaughter him later.

SARAH
That was it?

INNIM
If only.

JOHNNY
Oh no. No no no.

INNIM
I'm cooked now anyway.

JOHNNY
The next time I see Brandy in
class, she's all over me, like we
were getting married. It was a turn
around you can't believe.

(MORE)

I let her know right away that I wasn't leaving Suzie. And then I can't even explain what happened. She was everywhere. At work, in class, on the street. She'd start screaming and yelling at me anywhere. She wouldn't take no. She threatened to tell Suzie. That was her biggest hold on me. I couldn't take Susan finding out.

INNIM

It was more than that. I got caught up in it. The sex was psycho amazing. I couldn't help myself.

INNER

(sarcastic)

So just keep doing it. That works. Sex addicts.

(beat)

Sexual abandon... what would that be like?

JOHNNY

I can't just blame her though. It takes two to Tango. I know that. I must have been somehow getting off on it...

INNIM

When someone wants you that bad... it's a turn-on. A sick one...

Innim holds his stomach and groans in pain as Johnny speaks.

JOHNNY

She was out of her mind. I went to LA for the pilot season and to get away. Things happened fast. In weeks I had an agent...going out on huge things...Paramount, CBS... but then comes Brandy gang busters out of nowhere...stalking me like a tiger. She smashed the windows at my apartment. She took a sledgehammer to the car I rented. She was always threatening suicide and I believed her. She punched me in the eye... gave me a black eye.

INNER

If only all cheaters could meet
this woman.

INNIM

The sick thing is I was still
having sex with her through all of
it.

JOHNNY

Her parents lived out there. It's
where she was staying. Her
stepfather calls me, 'Johnny, I've
unloaded all the guns in the
house...

INNER

Gun?!?! God help us.

JOHNNY

... If you leave town I'll pay for
your flight'. What could I do? She
was going to do something bad to
herself or me.

Sarah shows almost no expression except for the slightest
hint of a smile. Inner is more animated with reactions.

INNER

It's so insane and he seems so
nice.

INNIM

Finish it.

JOHNNY

As bad as it was, what I went
through... it was far worse for
her. I felt like dirt. Absolute
shit. Because I was a part of it...
a cause of it. If I had done what
was right...

SARAH

And Suzie?

INNER

Remember her?

INNIM

The jerkoff part. What happened Mr.
Compassionate?

JOHNNY

I get back to New York and I had to tell Suzie the whole thing. I was so freaked out about telling her and all she did was punch me in the chest and didn't talk to me for two days. I couldn't believe it. That's it. A month goes by and she goes to Florida to see her brother. I call her brother's to talk to her. I ask for Suzie. 'Suzie? Suzie's not here. Is she supposed to be?' Aaaaaah, I sank. I knew she was with someone else. She called me a day later like nothing was wrong. I'm going, 'How's your brother and his wife doing?' And she was answering, covering...lying.' I loved her. How could I let her twist like that? How could I be so cruel. Not just then, but for the whole thing. I deserved what I got.

Innim, distraught, slumps in a corner.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

I finally put it to her...about the call to her brother and it all came out. I was right. I laid in bed that night lonelier than I'd ever felt in my life. It was pure emptiness. I felt like a speck in the universe. She wouldn't even come home early. I couldn't get out of bed for a week... until she came back. I still thought we could work it out. I was glad almost that it happened, because it made me feel less guilty. So, I asked her, 'Are you in love with this guy'? And she said, 'Yes I am.' And that was it. What else needed to be said. It was the end of it and I deserved everything I got... more.

INNIM

Much more.

Johnny fights back emotion. Innim is in tears.

SARAH

You were living two lives. For how long?

JOHNNY

A year.

INNIM

A year and a half...two.

SARAH

That's a nightmare. A horrible nightmare. Why didn't you just tell Suzie right away. It would have been better.

INNER

It didn't help William when he told you.

JOHNNY

I thought I could get away with it. Suzie would never find out and I'd fix it.

INNIM

I hated myself.

JOHNNY

I hated myself. I was scum. I couldn't even look her in the eye and I loved her. I don't know how I could do it. I still don't. I wasn't in control... for the first time in my life I even doubted who I was.

INNER

The devil does this. Without faith nobody stands a chance.

SARAH

I don't think you understood what you were dealing with...

INNER

Don't say the devil yet. You'll lose him.

SARAH

...forces and dynamics beyond what your prepared to deal with. You're not the first man who cheated on a girlfriend or wife. There are all kinds of temptations. Sex might be the strongest.

INNER

For men it is. For him it is. Sex
steams off of him.

INNIM

Strong. I've slept with forty women
at least. Don't go there.

SARAH

And look where it got you.

INNIM

She's reading my mind.

INNER

He would do the same to me. How
could I trust him? How can you
trust any man?

SARAH

Even if Suzie never found out, you
were hurting her. You were
dishonoring her and yourself... and
most importantly... God. You can't
just have sex and not be married
and it not have consequence. It
sounds like a good idea, but it
never works. Someone usually gets
hurt and usually it's the woman.

INNER

Both get hurt.

SARAH`

In your case everyone got hurt.
Look how you're feeling about
yourself.

JOHNNY

I've never felt so low in my life.

INNIM

Miserable. I'm a sick lowlife
shithead fuck... a phony. If
I get into her pants will it
make me feel better? For a
moment. I'm scum. But with
her it could be different.

INNER

I think he's repentant, but
if I undressed, he'd jump on
me like a dog... make love to
me in ways I can only
imagine...I'm sure he's good
at it. God help me. Thank
you for faith. He needs
faith. That's all.

SARAH

You don't have to go it alone. You
don't have to go through life lost.
(MORE)

And whatever you may think about
what you did, know that it can be
forgiven.

Innim, with tears in his eyes, looks to heaven and opens his
arms. Johnny begins to crack. Johnny looks into Sarah's
eyes. Johnny wells up.

INNIM	INNER
Jesus God, could you forgive me? I can't believe I've done what I've done. I hardly know this person.	Look at him. Twisting... no faith. How scary. How sad. Thank you God for compassion.

INNIM

Have you sent this woman as an
angel. I wish I could believe that.

INNER

I feel sorry for him. I can help
him.

INNIM

If I can't forgive myself... how
can I expect to be forgiven?

INNER

Help me Jesus. I need to hold him.

Sarah puts one arm around him and with her other hand strokes
his hair. Inner prays.

INNIM

I'm not sure what I'm feeling. I
don't feel anxious. I've never felt
anything like this. I got to open
my mind to it. This is beautiful.

Sarah kisses Johnny in a soothing gentle way on the head.

INNIM (CONT'D)

Damn, I'm getting a hard on. I
don't believe it. Aaaaah.
Unbelievable. Don't move. She won't
notice.

Sarah goes wide as she notices Johnny's crotch.

INNER

What is that? Don't panic. Don't
panic. It's perfectly natural...
perfectly natural...

Johnny twitches a bit in his seat. Inner starts pacing around all worked up.

(reverses)

He's unbelievable! Here I think he's having a deep moment, maybe finding something. Next thing I know I'm looking at the Tower of Babel... Unreal. Stop.

(reverses)

I want him though. I want to kiss him on the mouth and grab his chest right now. I want to take my clothes off. I want him naked next to me. Jesus help me. Stop this feeling.

Sarah kisses Johnny on the mouth and lays her hand on his chest, but does not grab it. Johnny tenderly returns the kiss. They French kiss, but tenderly and sweetly.

INNER (CONT'D)

STOP! STOP! STOP! STOP! STOP!
STOP! STOP! STOP!

INNIM

Stop! Stop! Don't go there yet. Don't do anything stupid. She'll hate you later. This girl is special. Pull it back. You'll ruin it. Chill!!!!

INNER (CONT'D)

(chanting)

OFFER TEA! OFFER APPLES! OFFER A
BEER! NOW! NOW! NOW!

Sarah gently pulls away, but can't look away from Johnny. They are both under a spell.

SARAH

You want something? A beer? Tea?

INNIM

You need a beer, but say tea.

JOHNNY

Tea.

Sarah goes to make tea. Johnny lounges in the love seat. Inner and Innim are exhausted and take a breather.

SARAH

I have chamomile... English breakfast... I have sweet tea.

JOHNNY

Sweet tea? What's that?

SARAH

It's the way Southerners drink tea.
You brew it... then add sugar first
and then you chill it with ice.

JOHNNY

The sugar first. The chill last.
Sounds Southern. I'll try some.

Sarah grabs a couple of glasses, goes to the refrigerator and pours some tea.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

You know, you don't sound like
you're from the South.

SARAH

I've been in New York for awhile
now and I was a Military brat. I
was all over the place, but we
always went back to Griffin. My
Dad'll retire there.

JOHNNY

What part of the military?

SARAH

He's a Marine Captain... Helicopter
pilot.

JOHNNY

Vietnam?

SARAH

Yes. Was.

JOHNNY

Was he raised in the Bible belt?

SARAH

Oh yes, very much so.

JOHNNY

He's a Christian?

SARAH

Christian. Christian...

Johnny nods.

INNIM

(sarcastic)

...And he probably maimed and
killed, but that's okay.

INNER

I'm not taking the bait. I'm too exhausted.

INNIM

Don't go there now. Things are good.

INNER

I hope he doesn't have the nerve to start getting self righteous now.

INNIM

Leave it alone. This girl just listened to some real nasty stuff about me I've never told anybody and was cool about it. I feel so relaxed. Am I at peace? I feel peaceful.

JOHNNY

Thanks for listening to all that. It helped. Thank you.

INNIM

This could be a turning point. I don't know... I've got to change. I've got to.

JOHNNY

If I was more religious...maybe... I don't know... this stuff I went through would've never happened. I'm not saying I want to be a holy roller, but I need to change my life.

INNIM

Did I say that because I want get laid or do I really mean it.

SARAH

Maybe it's that time.

Inner kneels into prayer.

INNER

Dear God. I hope this is you showing him the way. I don't know what it is about him... I know he just told me an awful story but he knows he's done wrong and I think he wants to change. I've only known him a couple of weeks, but he's really sweet to people. He does have goodness in him. I see it. He has a weakness. He just needs the strength. Help him find it, because I think I love him. I hope that's the feeling I'm having. I've never felt like this before. I love you above all Jesus and could only be with someone who felt the same way. Please if it's right, help me.

INNIM

No, this is real. God is sending me a message. Why can't you make it easy? Why can't you just appear? And say this is it. I forgive you all the pain you caused. She is your chance for salvation. Why do you make me crave women... make it so enjoyable? Just wave your hand and stop it. Send a message that this is it. What more of a message do I need? Is this you saying, 'I am real. I am here. Go by the rules. It's better. It'll be better.'

JOHNNY

When did you know for sure? When did you know? When did it come to you?

INNER

Thank you God.

INNIM

Convince me. I want to believe what she believes. But, how could it all be? How?

SARAH

I'm from the Bible belt. We're raised on religion. It's not just Sunday school. It's a way of life... a culture. But, I didn't learn about the real power of the Lord... his grace, until later. I was spending the summer with my Grandmother in Leander Texas... central Texas... and there was a hail storm with thunder that was so intense. The hail was falling like rocks. My uncles were talking about tornado warnings... I never felt so scared in my life. I was twelve... and I went to bed and tried to be brave but I couldn't help but cry.

(MORE)

My Grandmother came into my room, my Grandma that I love as much as anybody on earth and she said 'Rah'... she called me Rah... 'are you all right?' I said, 'no Grandma, I'm so scared.' And she said, 'Do you want to stop being scared?' 'Yes Grandma'. My Grandmother got on her knees next to the bed and she motioned me next to her. I knelt next to her. I was shaking, like I was freezing cold. She said as calm as if it were a sunny day with the thunder cracking behind her. 'You never have to be scared. Jesus is here. He's next to you. He loves you and he will protect you. Take him into your heart and you will fear nothing.' And she prayed and I prayed with her with the storm behind us and the presence of the Holy Spirit showed itself to me, vividly, a presence so powerful that nothing in this world could ever stand up to it. I wasn't afraid anymore. I don't go through life alone and you don't have to. Just let it in.

INNER

Let it sink in. Let him feel it.

SARAH

Will you pray with me?

INNIM

Do it. I have nothing to lose. It might be good for me. It doesn't make me a "Born-Again".

JOHNNY

Yeah.

SARAH

Dear Lord, Thank you for being here in our presence now.. Help us to find peace within ourselves through you. Fill our emptiness with the Holy Spirit, so that we can resist temptation...

INNER

That's enough.

SARAH

...In Jesus' name, we thank you.
Amen.

INNIM

Painless. I'd even say I feel a
little better.

Johnny and Sarah sit quietly with each other.

SARAH

You have a funny expression on your
face.

JOHNNY

What?

SARAH

It's beautiful. Your face is
beautiful right now.

INNIM

Wow. Really? Beautiful?

Johnny strokes Sarah's hair and runs his fingers gently down
her face.

JOHNNY

Beautiful?

SARAH

I really like you. I like you a
lot. I would like to see you again.

INNIM

I guess I'm leaving.

INNER

Be very clear now and honest.

SARAH

I don't want you to be offended by
what I'm going to ask.

INNIM

Uh-oh. What's up? Here we go.

SARAH

Did you ever go to church?

INNIM

Of course I went to church. What is
she trying to make me out to be?

(MORE)

I talk to God everyday. I think that's who I'm talking to.

JOHNNY

I went every Sunday with my Mother until I was about 18, when I went away to school.

SARAH

Catholic?

JOHNNY

My father was Catholic but he didn't go to church, so we went to my Mother's church... she's Congragationalist.

INNER

Northern protestant... easy religion... just on Sundays.

JOHNNY

I even liked Sunday school. My family was kind of wound up all of the time. So it was nice to get away where people were weirdly nice.

INNIM

Some of it was phony. Mrs. Brown was real. She believed it.

JOHNNY

I had a Sunday school teacher named Mrs. Brown. Her husband was the pastor. I even had a little crush on her.

INNER

Oh, his problems go way back.

JOHNNY

She was so sweet and so sincere. And she had a way with the parables... It stuck with me.

INNER

Not enough.

SARAH

Really?

INNIM

I had fantasies about kissing that teacher on the cheek... at twelve.

JOHNNY

I certainly don't consider myself a good Christian. I'm not saying that. But, I'm not a non-believer. I believe in God. I believe in Jesus. Most of the time. Do I think it's the only way... I don't know. I have a lot of doubts.

SARAH

That's fair. Would you ever read the Bible?

JOHNNY

Yeah, why not. I have. The whole thing? I don't know about that.

SARAH

Just start with like John and Romans. They're small. Take your time.

INNIM

What's with the pressure?

SARAH

I have the New Living Translation. It's a modern translation with the red letters and it's easy to read.

INNIM

I'm not an idiot. I can read. What's red letters?

JOHNNY

Red Letters?

SARAH

The words Jesus actually spoke are highlighted in red.

JOHNNY

Oh...interesting. I'll pay close attention to the red.

INNIM

Maybe she's throwing me a life preserver.

SARAH

Do you want to take it with you?

JOHNNY

Okay, I'll read it. But only if you read, *The Joy of Sex* before I see you again.

INNIM

I'm an idiot!

INNER

He's kidding. Relax. It's funny..

JOHNNY

I'm kidding.

SARAH

I know.

Sarah gets the bible off a bookshelf and gives it too Johnny.

INNIM

Be smart. Don't wait until she throws you out. Try a kiss at the door.

JOHNNY

I guess I should roll. It's late. When can we do this again? Maybe Monday after the last show.

INNER

I don't want him to go, but it's probably best.

SARAH

Next Monday will be great. Here?

JOHNNY

Let's get dinner first... on me. I'll pick the place.

SARAH

That's fine. I'll look forward to it.

JOHNNY

Okay then.

Sarah follows Johnny to the door.

INNER
I want to hold him. I want to hold him. I want to hold him.

INNIM
I don't want to go. I don't want to go. I don't want to go.

At the door.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Thank you for listening to all my...

INNIM
Shit.

JOHNNY
...you know... I'm sure it was hard to listen to.

SARAH
I'm sure it was hard to say.

Sarah takes Johnny in.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Forgive yourself. You have to.

JOHNNY
Tonight here. Right now. You're perfect to me.

He grabs Sarah gently by the shoulders and gives her a small kiss on the cheek and then exits.

End of Act 1 Scene 1

Act 2 Scene 2

Sarah's apartment. Evening. It's the next Monday. Sarah and Inner enter. They're followed by Johnny and Innim. All are in happy spirits. Sarah is wearing a cotton spring dress with a high neck line and a zipper down the back. Johnny is wearing jeans and sneakers with a hip button down shirt. Johnny has a slight buzz on. He goes to the table where he left the bible before they went out. He picks it up and moves it to Sarah's desk, under the loft bed.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
That's like the best meal I ever had and I got fired from the place.

SARAH
I can't believe it. The owner and you were like old friends.

JOHNNY

The food is the best. I wanted to make sure it was going to be good... for you.

INNER

That's very sweet.

SARAH

You didn't tell me why you got fired?

JOHNNY

Aaaaa.

INNIM

I was trying to avoid this. She's not going to think it's cool. Had to open the big mouth.

INNER

What's he hiding?

SARAH

What happened? It couldn't have been too bad. The owner was nice.

JOHNNY

Yeah well, usually when somebody gets fired, they don't come back for dinner... it took him by surprise. Whatever.

SARAH

Okay, Don't tell me.

JOHNNY

It's not that big of a deal.

INNIM

It's funny to me. Not to her.

JOHNNY

Those guys are funny. They're brothers. They're French, but they've been living in Brooklyn so long they have like a French-Brooklyn accent, like...

(French-Brooklyn accent)

'Johnee. What are you so stupid? You can't read? Are you stupid? I don't know.' You can't read oder?'

(own voice)

Ya know, everything's in French.

(MORE)

I'm the new bus boy. You know what French service is... bust the new bus boys balls. You do everything. I'm not kidding...

INNER

I don't think he's one to understand the work concept.

JOHNNY

One day I get there. I'm changing in the basement and another waiter comes down and lights a joint and he offers it to me. And I'm like, 'No, you know it's my first week and I really don't have this down yet'.

INNER

He was actually considering it?

JOHNNY

But then I started thinking. I have a couple of hours to kill before the place gets busy. What's the big deal?

INNIM

Plus it was hydroponic knockout weed. I had to try it.

JOHNNY

I took maybe three hits...just to taste it.

INNER

That's all. Fine. He's a drug addict

JOHNNY

I'm not a pot head. I smoke once in a while.

INNIM

Just once a day.

SARAH

Go ahead. I'm not saying anything.

INNER

But I will.

JOHNNY

So we finish and the waiter with the weed... he goes upstairs and I finish dressing. Two minutes later, down comes Alain the younger brother.

INNIM

I got set up.

JOHNNY

I mean we just smoked a joint. It smelled like a brush fire in Columbia. Alain starts giving me the stare, but he doesn't say anything. He just goes upstairs all mad. Okay. I get up on the floor. Right away it's like,
(accent)
'Jo-nee. Jo-nee? How do you fold de napkeens in de breadbasket? I don't... It looks like sheet to meee.

Sarah cracks a smile.

INNER

(matter of fact)
He's ridiculous.

INNIM

Oh my God, she cracked a smile. Keep going.

JOHNNY

I tell'em, ya know... I put the napkin in the basket, flat nice...put the bread in and cover the bread...no?

(accent)

'I don't beleive Jo-nee... What are you stupid? It looks like sheet...like you don't care. You do it like deese'.

(no accent)

So, then like in two seconds he does this crazy napkin fold...

Johnny, cartoonish, makes like he's folding lightning fast.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Ya know, I'm stoned. It was like friggin' oragami. I got side by side and tried to follow him.

(MORE)

Couldn't get it.
 (accent)
 He's like, 'Jo-nee are you stupid?
 I don't believe. You are like an
 idiote. I don't know... What to
 dooo.'

Sarah is laughing. So are Innim and Inner.

INNER
 You are an idiote.

INNIM
 I am an idiote.

SARAH
 Then he fired you.

JOHNNY
 Not actually. He owed me money from
 the week before. I asked for it at
 the end of the night.

INNER
 (sarcastic)
 Perfect timing.

JOHNNY
 He tried to tell me I was training
 and I didn't get paid for it. I put
 in forty hours. So, ya know, we had
 a little back and forth and I ended
 up saying something stupid like.
 Hey asshole, I don't need my
 greencard! And right before I
 could quit, he fired me. Only time
 I was ever fired. But you know
 what...I was a jerk... no hard
 feelings. They were just hard
 working guys that were passionate
 about their place. That's why the
 place is good. I went over there
 because I respect them and I knew
 I'd get a good meal. They
 appreciated it. They were nice.
 They loved you.
 (accent)
 'Sarah this., Sarah that....so
 Beautiful.'

SARAH
 They were fun.

JOHNNY
 They gave us a nice bottle of wine.

SARAH

You asked him for one to go, which is illegal if he charges you. You kind of put him in a position.

INNIM

She is so uptight.

JOHNNY

People do it all the time, especially if you know the owner.

INNER

People do a lot of things all of the time. It doesn't make it right.

SARAH

It's not legal. It's his liquor license.

JOHNNY

(teasing)

You don't even drink. Now you care about the liquor license.

SARAH

It's his livelihood.

JOHNNY

Come on. It's not a big deal. They gave us a hug when we left. It's all good. We're all happy. We're still happy.

Sarah skeptical, shoots him a look.

INNIM

It's about the pot. She is so uptight. How could this work?

INNER

He is so not right for you.

INNIM

Don't give up so fast.

JOHNNY

Listen, don't get the wrong idea. I'm not a screw up. Maybe I do this or that, but I don't do too much and I don't go too far. I'm a good worker whatever the job is. I'm on time. I come in a good mood. I'm doing all right with my career.

(MORE)

I'm working here and there. I'm just making fun of myself. I like to see you laugh. That really does it for me.

SARAH
I'm not really the laughing type.

INNIM
(sarcastic)
Really?

JOHNNY
All the more reason. And that story I told you the other night... it never happened before in my life. It'll never happen again.

INNER
I hope that's true.

JOHNNY
You know what... enough about me. What do you think about me?

Sarah smiles.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Really though. I haven't heard almost anything about you.

INNIM
Maybe take a breathe and she could get a word in. I'm excited. I can't help it.

SARAH
My life isn't as exciting as yours. Or it might not seem so to you maybe.

JOHNNY
Try me. What's the most fun you had all week.

SARAH
Besides hanging out with you? I know you're going to laugh...

JOHNNY
Don't tell me... Church.

SARAH
Yes.

JOHNNY

That's what you like.

SARAH

It's a Baptist church up in Harlem. The Memorial Baptist Church. The service is almost all gospel. The sermon...everything. It's amazing actually. The sound coming out of that church is hard to describe... Everyone is singing and dancing and praising God. It's an amazing, amazing... place of worship. Everyone is dressed up and filled with the spirit. It's beyond anything I've ever experienced.

JOHNNY

I'd like to try it one Sunday.

SARAH

(kidding)

Maybe after you finish your reading assignment... John and Romans. I don't want the place to fall down.

INNIM

That ain't right.

JOHNNY

Well Miss Mother Superior. I'll have you know I did read John and Romans and more.

INNER

I'm impressed. Why didn't he mention it before?

JOHNNY

I even marked some things down that I'd like to discuss.

Johnny grabs the bible and shows her the markers.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

I brought it. But I warn you that I did almost go to law school. I love a good argument.

INNER

Argument, he's unbelievable.

INNIM

I would have been a great lawyer...
the performing I liked... the work
part... eh.

JOHNNY

I know this is simplifying it, but
really... Jesus isn't asking that
much.

Sarah blurts out a laugh and can't stop giggling.

INNER

He's so ridiculous.

INNIM

Take a laugh where you can.

JOHNNY

I know it's not that simple, but
it's pretty much... Love, peace, do
the right thing and believe in
Jesus Christ.

SARAH

That's what you got out of it?

JOHNNY

I got more out of it than that. I
just don't want to talk about it
now. I have a little buzz on and I
want to be clear headed about it.

INNER

(sarcastic)

When would that be?

JOHNNY

I said I would talk about it and
maybe later we can have a
rabbinical debate.

SARAH

Yeah well, bring the yarmulke.
You're going to need it.

Johnny laughs.

JOHNNY

Easy there girl. No need to get
competitive.

SARAH

You're trying to be funny. To me it's not funny. It's important to me.

JOHNNY

I know it's important to you.

SARAH

I'm sorry. I don't mean to press.

JOHNNY

That's okay, forget it.

There is a quiet moment between all the characters as they size each other up.

INNIM

She's so serious. but it's sincere... she's just beautiful. She would be a beautiful bride. Pure as pure. Healthy. She'd be the on it, Mom. I wouldn't have to worry. Gorgeous kids. This is the real deal if you want it. Right here. But then you'd have to change so much. That might be good. But she's soooo strict. So serious.

INNER

I want to kiss him again. I wonder what he looks like naked... what it would be like to be naked next to him? I'm horny... what an awful word for this feeling. Are these evil thoughts? Are they God? There's something about him that makes it okay. I know God, I know. I'm ignoring obvious signals. Alcohol, Marijuana... his sexiness.

Inner and Sarah glaze over a bit.

INNER

Think about something else. How does a microwave work? Look at him in those jeans... stop!

INNIM

We need something fun here. Dancing.

JOHNNY

I know. Let's dance.

SARAH

I really don't know how to dance. I don't dance. It's not me.

JOHNNY

Stop! I'm going to teach you how to dance.

INNER

What?!! He's out of his mind. I can't dance.

SARAH

There's no room here.

INNIM

Don't take no.

JOHNNY

You could dance in a phone booth if you had to. You can dance to anything.

SARAH

I just have a radio.

JOHNNY

You can put on any station. We'll just do a two-step. It works for any song.

Johnny demonstrates with one hand around her waist and another leading her by the hand. She follows, but stiffly. Johnny's a good dancer and moves her around very well.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

One two. One two. One two.

INNIM

And spin.

JOHNNY

Good. That's it... no seventeen lessons...you're a fast learner...

There's an alarm radio on Sarah's desk. She points to it and Johnny puts it on. Johnny Cash's, *Folsom Prison Blues* is already playing. Johnny grabs Sarah and away he goes, dancing ridiculously with her in tow. Johnny does a lot of extravagant, awkward and over the top spins with her and she's going with it. Innim and Inner follow them around the room dancing together. They dance for maybe thirty seconds and the next song cuts in- Jerry Lee Lewis's, *Great Balls of Fire*. Johnny gets even crazier. Sarah follows and starts to get the giggles. She is actually following his easy two step. Johnny holds Sarah like she's his forever gal. Innim and Inner do the same.

INNER

I think I'm actually dancing.

INNIM

I was joking, but she's actually a good follower.

JOHNNY

I thought you said you couldn't dance.

SARAH

I can't really. I can with you I guess... you're a good leader. I guess when nobody's watching it's not as embarrassing, so it's easier.

They continue to dance.

JOHNNY

(french accent, playful)

I don't think you give yourself enough credits. You cannot teach what you have... grace. I don't know... It's called grace. That's all.

Johnny takes Sarah into a quick spin.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

(spinning)

Sa va. Sa va. Merci Beaucoup. Mademoiselle is so graceful. So beautiful.

Sarah gets giddy with laughter and can no longer dance. Johnny carries her to a chair. He goes to the radio and changes it to a classical station. Dvorak's, *Symphony in E minor* is already playing.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

(French accent)

Mademoiselle! Mademoiselle! My solo. My solo. You must sit down my lovely one. I dedicate this to you.

Sarah sits at the table with Inner behind her as Innim does a form of improvised over the top ballet, comically to the music. Johnny does the same. Inner and Sarah collapse laughing. The more they laugh the more florid Innim and Johnny's moves become.

INNIM

Look at her laugh. This is good. This is so fun.

(MORE)

This is somebody I could be with if
I cleaned up my act.

INNER

He is the silliest person on the
face of the planet. He doesn't care
that he looks like a total fool.
People think I'm serious, but I
love silly. That's what I loved
about William. William could be
silly like this. William, I hope
you're not mad. I hope you're in
heaven and happy and don't have a
care. I haven't laughed like this
in a long time.

INNIM

Huge leap and a flourish.

Innim and Johnny do a huge leap and a flourish.

INNER

Nobody was ever this much of a
mess, though.

Inner and Sarah laugh.

INNIM

Finish on a high note.

Inner and Johnny spin and end up kneeling at Sarah's feet,
head bowed like a humble servant, panting like a dog with
barely enough air to laugh.

JOHNNY

(accent)

Mademoiselle! Mademoiselle! Dese
dance was for you. Your beauty is
beyond my looks. Beyond my looks,
Mademoiselle

SARAH

(giggling)

Okay stop. No more Mademoiselle. I
can't laugh anymore. Please sit
down. Stop! You are the silliest
person I know.

Johnny sits with Innim behind him.

JOHNNY

I know. I'm a goof ball. I don't
know what got into me. You inspire
me. I'm happy.

SARAH
Have you ever done this dance in
the mirror and seen yourself?

JOHNNY
(deadpan)
That's how I perfected it.

Johnny laughs. Innim laughs real hard. Sarah and Inner
smirk.

SARAH
I'm glad you get a kick out of
yourself. Really.
(playful)
It's very charming.
(beat)
I haven't laughed like that in a
long while.

Sarah takes Johnny in.

JOHNNY
What?

SARAH
You remind me of someone.

INNIM
Uggg, I hate when I remind people
of someone else. Especially her.

INNER
You bruised his ego.

SARAH
You're totally different than he
was in most ways, but he was silly
and fun.

JOHNNY
I'm honored. How was he different?

SARAH
Well he was Southern first of all.
(kidding)

INNIM
Old boyfriend.

SARAH
He wa'nt no Yankee. He had manners.
Not that you don't have them.
(MORE)

You kind of have them, the spirit of them, but they came more natural to him. It's the culture. There's a way of behaving.

INNIM

Oh, I have the spirit of manners... Well, La dee da dee do. This is coming from the cracker...hee haw! Don't say it. It won't be funny to her. I'm being defensive.

JOHNNY

Well, my mother used to say that manners are really about being considerate. If you can keep that in mind, you're probably on the right track.

SARAH

There's certain etiquette that needs to be learned. For example. At dinner tonight... you were using a knife and a fork and most of the time they were even in the right hands. But, you ate so fast, you were like a human vacuum cleaner...

INNER

That wasn't nice, but you could have said worse...

SARAH

I had a dog once that ate slower....
(laughs)
I'm exaggerating... a little.

INNIM

Now she's Miss Funny. Don't attack back. What would Jesus do?
(laughs then serious and quick)
Sorry God, I'm not making fun of you.

JOHNNY

I love food...I can't eat it slow. My Father eats fast. I sat next to him growing up and I had to keep up. I'll be slower next time.

SARAH

I don't really care. I was fascinated actually. Honestly, I've never seen anyone enjoy food like you.

JOHNNY

I don't usually have lamb, and it was so good, I don't know...

SARAH

I totally loved dinner and you were very generous to pay for it.

JOHNNY

Thank you. I enjoyed sharing it with you.

SARAH

I didn't mean to compare you to anyone. You just made me think of someone. In a good way.

INNIM

The boyfriend.

JOHNNY

A boyfriend?

SARAH

A fiance.

INNIM

A fiance.

INNIM (CONT'D)

What? When was this gonna come out? I went on and on about my fiance and all she says was, 'Oh I kissed a few guys'...what?

INNER

I can't take that back. I can't go there. Why did I bring it up? I'd have to eventually. Not now. Not now.

JOHNNY

Fiance. What happened?

SARAH

Well, I don't know... it's complicated.

Inner lets out a sigh and primal groan all at once.

Sarah is glazed over and in despair.

INNER

Oh God, help me to be honest.

INNIM

I have a feeling this is deep. Give her an out.

JOHNNY

If you don't feel like you want to share it right now, I'm cool with that. But if you do...

SARAH

The other night when you told your story... you don't know how it hit me. I understood it. To lose someone you care about...love... I loved William... the only man I ever loved.

INNER

I love you. No, I don't know. But I something you.

SARAH

When you said that you and your girlfriend were like brother and sister. That was William and me, but I actually knew him since we were both eight... when his family moved across the street from us. He was an only child too, so we became close allies.

JOHNNY

Where did he move from?

SARAH

His parents were high school teachers... great people. There was always an adventure. You were either going on a hike, bird watching and when we were kids there was always arts and crafts... so different from my house. We were military. My Dad wasn't mean, but he was very strict. He got along fine with William's Dad and Mom. They weren't Baptists and that bugged him a little bit. It was more that they weren't devout. They went to a church, but...

INNER

...not serious Christians.

INNIM

What do these people want?

SARAH

It wasn't that big of an issue in the beginning. It wasn't for me. William showed me so much.

INNER

The world.

SARAH

We'd hike through the woods with a field guide, marking all the species we would see... plant and animal. Meet at six in the morning to go bird watching. We'd sit in this hunters blind he found and fixed up. And we'd sit there all quiet with the sandwiches we made and cookies... one set of binoculars between us. And one day we looked up into this pine and there were two huge Hoot Owls perched and snuggled next to each other like we were, in the blind. I was twelve years old and I was so in love with him.

INNER

I miss you.

SARAH

(laughing)

My first interest in the arts was through William. He'd write little plays and put on shows in the neighborhood. Of course I'd make the sets and costumes. He would always sing something funny.

INNIM

How am I going to compete with this?

SARAH

We were separated a lot because my Mom and I would stay with my father when he was stationed overseas. And every time we got back together it was so exciting.

(MORE)

We started dating the last two years of high school when my Dad was home for a while. I was never interested in anyone else and neither was he... that I know of. He even started coming to church with me. He became a youth group leader. He took Christ as his Savior. We dated through college. He went to Duke and I went to North Carolina School of the Arts. He proposed to me Junior year under the lilac bushes behind his house that we used to use as a stage when we were kids. It was early spring. I can smell it. I said yes.

INNIM

That's beautiful. This guy had imagination... this guy sounds too good to be true. Ask it. What the hell.

JOHNNY

In all that time he never pressured you to have sex... suggest it... nothing?

SARAH

No... some kisses lingered longer than they should... I suppose. We skinny dipped once.

INNIM

Wild times in the Bible belt.

JOHNNY

You were naked together in the water and nothing.

INNER

This is the Son of Sodom. The guy from Gomorrah. He's relentless.

SARAH

He knew I was a devout Christian. He respected it. He respected me. Maybe you're thinking there was something wrong with him.

JOHNNY

No.

INNIM

Gay maybe.

SARAH

When we kissed, I assure you, he wasn't gay.

INNER

He was hard.

SARAH

He was willing to wait.

INNIM

How. How is that done? Tell me.

SARAH

When someone truly loves someone. When it's pure... when it's God's love... why would you cheapen it?

JOHNNY

I can respect that. I'm not sure I get why it's so important. Or I should say maybe I forgot why it's so important. I certainly believed it when I was younger.

INNIM

Thirteen years old.

JOHNNY

He sounded perfect for you.

INNER

I thought so.

SARAH

In college he started to drink. There was a lot of pressure on him from his Dad to be a doctor. That's what his Dad wanted. It's not what he wanted. He wanted to write songs. I think that's what made him unhappy. His heart wasn't in it. The drinking got worse. He would binge and then pass out. Not usually with me. I would hear about it. And for the most part he was a happy drunk.

INNER

That doesn't make it all right.

SARAH

But then it started happening with me. He always wanted to go to bars and then he'd make a scene. It got embarrassing. At a birthday party for my Dad at our house he got drunk and loud and then passed out in the bathroom. It was awful. He was mortified... so embarrassed. I couldn't talk to him for weeks, I was so mad. He tried to apologize a million times...to my parents...to me... guests.

INNER

It was so pathetic.

SARAH

Finally I calmed down and confronted him. I mean, who was I marrying? We went at it good...real good. I asked him to pray for what he really wanted. I wanted to pray with him. I wanted him to be happy.

INNER

That's what set him off.

SARAH

He said it was ridiculous that anybody should pray for anything... that I was naive... like a kid still believing in Santa .

INNER

I reached to him God and he put this in my face.

SARAH

So when we went to service together, was that all fake? You didn't believe?' 'No', he said, 'I did it for you, because I love you and it makes you happy'. 'How can you be stupid enough to think there's a God. Would God starve children... bring famine... kill with earthquakes... hurricanes. Would God give us this drudgery?' He ranted on. Like he had it all pent up for years. I didn't know who he was. In that moment he became another person to me.

(MORE)

After all the years, this is what it came down to? He was a fraud. No matter how much he said he loved me, he didn't love God. He didn't believe in the Lord. I couldn't even comprehend what that meant. Everything he was and I was, was no longer. I gave him the ring back. He was devastated. I was devastated. I told him he should pray anyway and that when he came to his senses he should call me. He never did. It was over. I was destroyed. If I wasn't a praying person I don't know what I would have done.

JOHNNY

And you've never spoken to him since?

INNER

I can't tell him that William is dead.

Sarah pauses. Inner weeps. Tears well up in Sarah's eyes.

INNIM

There's more to it. It's the south, man. The tragedies are in layers. I hate to see her cry... not her. It kills me.

JOHNNY

(comforting)

It's okay. It's okay. You don't have to say.

INNER

Why do I need to tell him? Why? Why God, do I feel I have to express this to him? He won't judge.

SARAH

Six or seven months went by. He seemed fine. He even started dating a girl from Duke.

INNER

Not the whore he cheated with.

SARAH

He came home in the summer. He and his Dad went camping one weekend.

(MORE)

On the way home on a perfectly sunny day, the car hit a slick from an oil truck spill. The car skidded and hit a utility pole. William's dad was tossed from the car and died on the scene. William came out of it without a scratch. It was a horrible freak accident. I went to his house when I heard about it, but he wouldn't meet me. He wasn't mean, he just told them he didn't want to talk to me right now. I tried a couple of other times, but he wouldn't...

Inner weeps. Sarah weeps and Johnny comforts her.

INNER

I cried and prayed and cried for him. I loved him, but he thought I'd turned my back on him. But he's the one who turned his back on me.

SARAH

His dad and him were so close. I could only imagine the hell he was living through and I couldn't do anything about it. I couldn't do anything to help him. He wouldn't let me. How could that happen?

INNIM

You broke his heart girl. Don't you understand that? In a time of doubt... his doubt, you walked away. She doesn't see it. I feel sorry for her.

SARAH

It's the devil. What else explains it. Even at the funeral...Johnny, I don't know why I'm laying all this on you. I don't talk about this, but you...I don't know.

JOHNNY

It's okay. It's okay. I'm here.

Johnny caresses her face and hair and then stops so as not to intrude.

SARAH

At the funeral he really couldn't look at me or anyone else for that matter. He was crippled with guilt and still half in shock. But he did what I consider the bravest act of love I've ever witnessed. That boy sang at his Daddy's funeral... *Amazing Grace... what everybody sings at a funeral, but this was...*

Inner and Innim sing a sincere, heartfelt version of *Amazing Grace*.

SARAH (CONT'D)

(voice cracking)

He told me he didn't believe, but he did. He sang in the voice of a believer... a voice that was pleading for his soul. And it tore us all apart.

Sarah breaks down. Johnny, also in tears, puts his arm around her for a moment, but it's no use. Sarah continues to sob. Innim and Inner sing bravely, like William may have, fighting back most, but not all of the tears. Johnny gets up and uncorks the bottle of wine he got from the Frenchmen. He grabs a glass, and pours the wine. Sarah exhausted from emotion, offers no resistance. She takes a sip and quickly puts it down. Johnny and Sarah hug each other, intensely, as if they were trying to hold each other's souls. This goes on for a long beat with one hug leading to another. Johnny then kisses Sarah tenderly on the head and cheeks. He gently turns her around and lifts her hair to kiss her neck and shoulders. Sarah, impulsively turns back around and kisses Johnny fully and passionately on the mouth. Inner and Innim stop singing. Johnny pulls back and looks at her. He kisses her again tenderly with his hand holding the back of her neck. The hand gently undoes the snap at the top of the back of Sarah's dress. His hand grabs the zipper and slowly pulls it down as far as it will go. Innim and Inner begin breathing heavy and in sync. It should be a sound as haunting as it is passionate. Lights out.

Act 3 Scene 3

Sarah's apartment. Early morning of the next day. The studio is dark. Discarded clothes lay around. A bit of light sneaks out of the bathroom from a small window past the open door and on to the drawn shower curtain that covers the bathtub/sink. Inner is perched on the counter next to the tub. Sarah, naked and in the tub is silhouetted behind the shower curtain.

There is a faint sound of splashing as Sarah sponges herself. Sarah converses with Inner through the curtain.

INNER

There ain't enough soap in the whole wide world...

Sarah sighs and sniffles, already passed crying.

INNER (CONT'D)

It's all right. I'll be all right. It's all right.

SARAH

It's not all right. It's not at all. I don't even know who I am right now.

INNER

Come on now, you're still you. You're still Sarah.

SARAH

No I'm not. What happened last night... never even entered my mind before.

Sarah closes her eyes as Inner prays.

INNER

Will you forgive me Jesus? I was in the hands of the devil. He seduced me at my most vulnerable. He delivered a man to me that reminds me of William. The Devil tricked me. I'm under his spell. I think he can make me do whatever he wants. Forgive me for the pleasure I felt. I dishonored you... sinful pleasure. Forgive me. Help me God. Give me the strength against him. Thank you God. Amen.

Inner comes out of prayer.

INNER (CONT'D)

Do I feel better?

SARAH

No. Yes. No. I enjoyed it. That's what scares me. I've never felt pleasure like that before. I've never allowed it. I want more.

Sarah weeps.

INNER

This is bad. This is bad. I have to put my mind on other things. Think of my parents... the cross. Eat something. When I see him, I'll see he's just a person. And that's it and bye-bye. Forget the sex...this guy would emotionally destroy me.

SARAH

I know it. Oh, I know it.

INNER

Stop being so weak! I've got to find my strength! Get dressed! Buck up! Remember who I am.

SARAH

Yes. Yes. I'm good. I'm okay. God will forgive me and I'll go on being good. I'll do everything not to ever sin again.

Lights up on Johnny on the loft bed lying on his stomach with his head up facing downstage. A reading lamp lights the Bible, which covers Johnny's mouth as he speaks. Johnny is reading intently. Innim is by Johnny's side, perched like a gargyle on the side of the bed. Johnny reads the bible.

INNIM

'Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.' That's Jesus. I like that.

He looks toward the bathtub/sink. Johnny puts the Bible down and Innim and him have a conversation.

INNIM.

Alleluia. I think she finally stopped crying. Wow. She's really struggling with it.

JOHNNY

(face in Bible)

She'll be all right. Thank God I didn't go all the way with her. Thank you Jesus for giving me the strength not to go all the way.

INNIM.

I did everything else with her.

JOHNNY

I know. It was so beautiful. It was tender. Wow man, it was just amazing period. The crazy part of it is that... she's like the most sexual being I think I've ever been with. You touch her anywhere and it's...

(shivers)

INNIM

I know. I know. And there was the whole feeling of it. This is a good woman, man. She's good. She's got to loosen a little bit, but...

JOHNNY

Just a little, though. I want her to be the way she is. It's a turn on. She's pure. It's okay she's a little upset she had some sex.

INNIM.

Yeah, most of the girls you've been with, they'd be draggin' on a cigarette and kicking your ass out the door.

They both laugh.

JOHNNY

That's the truth. I'm diggin' this though. I've never felt so good. She'll be okay. I'll go easy.

The shower curtain opens revealing Sarah standing in the bathtub/sink completely wrapped in towels.

INNIM.

(not looking)

She's out of the tub

JOHNNY

I'd love to look, but I'm not. I want to see her body again... She was so... who would have known. Don't look. Don't freak her out.

Sarah steps out of the tub followed by Inner. Johnny and Innim freeze. Sarah frantically scoots around the place picking up her clothes.

She goes to the dresser and pulls out fresh clothes and then steps into the bathroom. Inner follows. Sarah closes the bathroom door. Johnny and Innim un-freeze. Johnny picks the Bible back up and starts to read.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

I'm reading this and I have to say. What are all the complications about? It's mostly common sense.

INNIM.

Come on it's more than that. The Old Testament is very complicated. 'Don't kill', one minute and then in the next minute it's , 'An eye for an eye'.

JOHNNY

In the New Testament, which trumps the old I would think... Jesus is like, 'be nice, be good... love each other and believe in me.' That's it. Where's all the, 'Simon says', stuff? I've got a couple questions for Miss Religious.

INNIM.

Slow down, Boy. You read a few chapters of Scripture and now you're a Biblical expert. You think you can take her on? Your ego is out of control, man. You're the last one...

JOHNNY

I read what I read. I got things marked. That's what I'll comment on. That's all.

INNIM.

Don't bring it up unless she does. Please just do that. But avoid it period if you can?

JOHNNY

If she didn't want me to talk about it why would she want me to read it?

INNIM.

Go with the flow.

JOHNNY

That always works.

INNIM

Maybe go down and put some clothes on while she's in the bathroom. Walking around half naked isn't going to work for her.

JOHNNY

Yeah, good idea.

Johnny goes down the loft ladder. He's naked except for his underwear. Innim follows. He quickly and quietly picks up and puts on his clothes as Innim stands by. When he's got his jeans and shirt on Sarah pops her head out the bathroom door. Johnny sees her.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Hey.

SARAH

I don't really feel well right now.

JOHNNY

You only had two glasses of wine. Can I get you something? A good ham, egg and cheese is really good for a hangover.

SARAH

(yelling from offstage)
I'm not hung over!

INNER

I don't want to throw him out, though. What?!! Throw him out!

SARAH

It's not the alcohol although I can't believe I drank.

Inner pops her head out of the bathroom.

INNER

Get'em out.

SARAH

I just feel sick... of myself. I could vomit actually. I'm sorry to be so blunt, but... I think you should leave.

INNIM

What!?! You're the girl that's supposed to save me. What happened?

JOHNNY

(shocked, stalling)

I don't...what... I'm sorry. I don't know what to say. Why are you sick with yourself? You have no reason to be. Come on. It was... I can't really describe it... it was amazing. It was sweet. It was tender.

INNER

(sarcastic)

Sweet? Tender? I wanted it like a whore. I couldn't stop! God forgive me.

JOHNNY

What? Oh man. I'm sorry. I had no idea.

SARAH

You had no idea? Where have you been? Have you listened? What part don't you understand? What I did last night is a violation against everything I am and have tried to be. I've been a devoted... a devout Christian my whole life. I am grateful to God for my life and grateful that he blessed me with a a divine gift that will someday create the miracle of a new life. If the instrument of that miracle is not sacred, what is? Can you follow that? Did that go over your head?

Johnny is stunned.

INNIM

Did something happen last night that I missed. What is going on?

JOHNNY

We didn't really even have sex last night, I mean...

INNER

Are you kidding. Were you there?

SARAH

If that wasn't sex, what is? What is sex to you.

INNIM

You didn't put the thing in the thing.

JOHNNY

You're still a virgin as far as I remember unless something happened I wasn't aware of.

SARAH

You're kidding.

INNER

Throw him out now.

SARAH

Maybe you find humor in this...

JOHNNY

I'm not trying to be funny at all. I'm serious. Isn't it enough to be a virgin? At your age... today...

INNIM

It's a fuckin' modern miracle.

SARAH

This world is not what concerns me.

JOHNNY

What do you mean this world doesn't concern you? It has to concern you. You're here.

SARAH

You're here for seconds in time. You'll be in the afterlife for an eternity.

JOHNNY

So we should make this the most miserable experience we can make it.

SARAH

There is nothing miserable about God's glory. Live in it and maybe you'll understand.

JOHNNY

Oh so you, little Miss Perfect lives in God's glory. Well congratulations to you.

(MORE)

You the perfect being who never
 does a thing wrong. You're the
 Simon says champion of the world.
 Only you know Jesus. Only you have
 God.

SARAH
 Get out! Get out!

JOHNNY
 Is that your answer?

SARAH
 I don't have time for you. What is
 your life... doing whatever comes
 your way regardless of the
 consequences. "Somebody smoked
 marijuana at work. Oh it smells
 good, let me try some. That's
 cool." You lost your job. An
 actress tells you she wants to have
 sex with you, that she wants to
 screw your brains out... of
 course... why not? It's no
 different than having a piece of
 chocolate. Except the only
 difference is a piece of chocolate
 can't ruin a person's life. You
 ruined a person's life. The person
 you loved. She may never trust
 another person as long as she
 lives. You did that. Why... because
 it felt good.

INNER
 Take that devil!

INNIM.
 She's burying me.

JOHNNY
 I cheated on a person I loved more
 than anyone in the world. I hate
 myself for it. Is that enough? I
 ask forgiveness everyday, ten times
 a day for what I did. I'm a sinner.
 I admit it. There, does that make
 you feel superior? I hate myself
 and you don't.

INNER
 How does he do it!!!? And he
 doesn't have a clue! Control!

SARAH
 (measured)
 (MORE)

You hate yourself because you have no control over yourself and now you're here with me and you're doing the same exact thing. You're sorry, but what? It means nothing.

JOHNNY

It's not the same thing. I can't agree with you. You're disgusted by what happened last night. I'm not. It's different. First of all, we're not tied to anyone. I thought what happened last night was... when I was holding you, a feeling of peacefulness... of calm came over me and I felt I was experiencing something I had never experienced before. I was with you in a way I had never been with anyone. You didn't feel any of that?

SARAH

I felt something. Yeah, I felt something. You have some power over me... not necessarily good and probably bad and it scares me. I don't know... then I look at you... the way you are now and I feel like I've known you forever and I feel like I love you...

Johnny, Innim and Inner freeze up.

INNER

I didn't say that.

INNIM

Woah.

SARAH

But I don't love you and I can't love you.

Johnny goes to Sarah and puts his arms around her. She allows it but keeps her arms at her side. He tips her head back to look her in the eyes.

JOHNNY

Why? Why can't you love me?

SARAH

Johnny, you haven't taken Jesus as your savior. You live in sin.

(MORE)

You don't even want to be saved.
 Unless you've lived with the Holy
 Spirit inside you, how can you
 know? If you don't change, you're
 going to hell.

INNIM

What?!!!

JOHNNY

What?!!! I'm going to hell? Are
 you...

INNIM

...fucking kidding me? I can't
 allow that. Buck up man. Wake up.
 Don't just take it.

JOHNNY

Are you kidding me?

SARAH

I wish I was.

JOHNNY

Where do you come off? I love how
 self righteous you are. You know
 whether I'm going to hell or not. I
 want to get mad, but I actually
 feel sorry for you. Because you are
 about the most naive person I've
 ever met. We just had a sweet,
 tender and passionate night. You
 wake up and you're horrified. Jesus
 is going to be mad at you.

INNER

He's the devil. He's the devil.
 Hold tight.

JOHNNY

With all the disastrous shit going
 on around the world right now...
 people being slaughtered, children
 starving, innocent people dying
 ...women, kids. That's just the
 extreme stuff. How about the little
 things like... one guy makes twelve
 million a year and he pays another
 guy 5 bucks an hour...

(MORE)

and he'd pay three bucks if he could get away with it and go to church on Sunday with a smile, but I'm going to hell because I made love to you...almost. Please.

INNER

Hell is a big place.

SARAH

Believe me, there's room for everybody. Why don't you grab the Bible. I saw where you had it all marked... Mr. almost went to law school... why don't you grab it?

JOHNNY

I'd love to.

Johnny climbs up on the loft bed to get the Bible he was reading.

INNIM.

What am I doing? I'm not playing to my strength.

Johnny comes back with the Bible.

JOHNNY

Got it. What do you need?

SARAH

Try first Corinthians, six, eighteen, nineteen.

Johnny flips through the pages. He is has difficulty finding the Scripture. She takes the Bible and finds it quickly and then hands it back to him..

SARAH (CONT'D)

I could recite it for you, but I want the words in front of you so you believe me.

INNIM

She's just so happy with herself.

JOHNNY

Got it. Go ahead. Let's see if you know it.

SARAH

'Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. Don't you realize your body is the temple of the holy Spirit, who resides in you and was given to you by God?'

JOHNNY

(correcting)

The Holy Spirit, who lives in you. But resides I suppose is the same thing.

Inner and Sarah roll their eyes.

SARAH

Okay, lives in... Do you understand what that means? You say you are a believer... that you pray and that you've had religious instruction. Explain it.

JOHNNY

It's not in red, Jesus didn't say it? What Jesus said is in red, right?

SARAH

(like he's child)

Yes, in the red letter Sunday school version. But it doesn't matter. Paul said it and Jesus passed the word to Paul.

JOHNNY

Well something was lost in the translation, because Jesus seems very cool and chilled out from what I read... peaceful. Paul is kind of out of his mind... big ego... I,I, I all the time....controlling... frankly just like a lot of people attached to organized religion... of all persuasions

INNER

He didn't just say that? He's a jerk. Get'em.

Inner hums a few bars of a hymn.

SARAH
Try Matthew five twenty-seven,
twenty-eight.

Johnny flips through the pages.

JOHNNY
Got it. Go ahead.

SARAH
You read it.

JOHNNY
(reading)
'You have heard the commandment
that says, 'You must not commit
adultery. But I say anyone who even
looks at a woman with lust has
already committed adultery with her
in his heart.'

INNIM
Well, if that's true, me and every
guy I know is going to hell.

JOHNNY
So God, who is responsible for
creating everything... makes guys
the horniest animals on the
planet... and that is a fact. I
read it. The only species on the
planet that is capable of wanting
sex twenty-four-seven
anytime...anywhere...

SARAH
What were you reading... *Hustler*?

JOHNNY
Natural History. We're so dosed up
with testosterone that most of the
laws ever made in this world were
made to control it.

SARAH
So, where are you going with this?

JOHNNY
God makes us so horny we can't
control ourselves, but then gets
mad and wants us to rot in hell for
wanting it. It doesn't make sense.
What kind of shit is that?

SARAH

(mocking)

What kind of **SHIT is** that? If you're an animal it doesn't matter. What makes a person human and hopefully Christian is self restraint. If you want to lift your leg and pee on the table... maybe I'll get a leash for you.

On all fours, Innim barks like a hound dog and cracks himself up.

Johnny starts laughing.

INNER

He's an imbecile.

SARAH

(sarcastic)

I know, it's so funny isn't it? What are you laughing at?

JOHNNY

(laughing)

I just had a funny image.

SARAH

What?

JOHNNY

(cracking up)

You putting me on a leash. Me barking.

(more cracking up)

Forget it.

INNER

What?!!!!

SARAH

What?!!!!

Johnny starts barking and jumping around Sarah like a big dumb goofy dog. Sarah and Inner start to laugh at how ridiculous it is. Johnny and Innim finally quit.

JOHNNY

(to Sarah)

Would you come over here for a second? Can we just hug and say we're okay with each other? Please? A three second hug.

INNER

He's like a big ole piece a chocolate... but I can't.

SARAH

No. If I get close to you... I can't.

JOHNNY

That's too bad really. I mean it and I apologize sincerely if you had a some sort of a crisis of faith last night. I respect your belief. For me, it's too... I don't think God is that strict. Yeah, I could use some spiritual shaping up. I'll admit that. In that way I think you would be good for me. But, you're probably right. As much as I could try, I probably couldn't tow the line. Not yours.

SARAH

Towing the line is a good way to put it. I'm Bible Belt and there's no getting around it. I'm raised on it Johnny. It's not something I half think about. And some people down from where I come from feel they're being encroached upon. The Bible Belt...it's just that, a belt, a thin belt. Look at the world around us Johnny. You know it's spiritually sick. The decadence is rampant. Our country's children are raised to be sinners and it's okay. Look around, watch...read. This is Egypt and those with God in their heart are today's Israelites. And that's how people feel in the Bible Belt. When you have the Holy Spirit in you, you live in the light of God and it's not hard to determine those who are in the light and those who are not. Those in the light are towing the line... holding the line against what is evil. I could never be with anyone who doesn't believe... ever.

Johnny and Innim are dumbfounded.

INNIM.

Time to pack up. Let's go. Roll'em out.

INNER

Now he gets it.

JOHNNY

What can I say? That doesn't give me a lot of room does it. I guess I should get my rampant decadent self out of here so I can start tearing through society.

INNER

I don't want him to go Jesus. I want you to help him to see... he's so close.

JOHNNY

Can I ask you a question?

SARAH

Yes.

JOHNNY

Anyone who doesn't feel the same way as you about it...do they go to hell?

SARAH

If they don't take Jesus Christ as their savior, they surely will. There is nothing I'm more sure about.

JOHNNY

So the Jews, the *original* Israelites, no matter how moral a life they lead... they're all going to hell?

INNER

Don't let him pin you. John, eight twenty-four.

SARAH

Jesus said... ya know, the red part.

(quote)

'For unless you believe that I am who I claim to be, you will die in your sins.' What does that tell you?

INNIM

Show her what you read last night.

Johnny looks for a spot in the Bible

JOHNNY

I asked the question because of something I read last night. I have it marked. I marked a couple of things I have questions about.

(finds the verse)

Romans twelve twenty-eight, 'Many of the people of Israel are now enemies of the Good News and this benefits you Gentiles. Yet they are still the people he loves because he chose their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' Okay they are enemies of the Gospel, but he still loves them.'

SARAH

That doesn't mean they are not going to hell.

JOHNNY

Oh, come on. I have friends that are Jews who are completely moral... to a fault.

INNIM.

Not all of them.

JOHNNY

They go to Synagogue every Saturday. They're already starting families. They don't cheat on their wives or girlfriends or drink too much. When I've been in a bind, you don't even have to ask them and they help you out. They've been lifesavers. There is no way those guys are going to hell.

SARAH

They could be the greatest guys in the world... it doesn't matter. It's your faith that gets you into heaven.

JOHNNY

I can't believe God would be like that. What are you telling me?

(MORE)

All the Buddhists, Muslims, Hindu's
and whatever are all going to hell?
That's ridiculous!

SARAH

They don't have faith.

JOHNNY

The Bushmen of the Kalahari desert,
who have never even seen a white
man and have never heard of Jesus
Christ are all going to hell?

SARAH

Yes.

JOHNNY

So he put people on the planet in
places so remote that they'll never
hear the word Jesus, but they'll
burn in hell anyway. Come on, how
could you believe that? How can
you really feel that way? This is
coming from fear. You fear God. You
fear sex... you fear the
encroachers...the non-believers.
Are you supposed to have faith or
are you supposed to have fear to be
a Christian?

SARAH

You are supposed to have both.

JOHNNY

Well, I don't see both in you. Or I
should say. I don't see both in you
right now. Last night and I'm not
talking about the sex... I saw
something else. I get the bit about
living with morals. I've seen the
light, but this bit about, 'This
one's going to hell and that one is
the Devil and we're the victims...
If the only enjoyment you get in
this world is worshipping God and
holding the line... what is the
point? You're not the only
religion, sect, group whatever that
thinks they know the way. You're
not the only ones holding the line.
Everybody thinks they're right.
That's the problem.

SARAH

I don't care what everybody else thinks.

JOHNNY

Neither do they. The Born-Agains aren't the only ones. The Hasedics...they know the way. The Amish... they know the way. The Islamists... they know. And they all wear black to prove it. Liberals are always right. The Conservatives... always right. Scientologists... always right... and they're even famous. The Neo-Nazis. Greenpeace. The abortionists. The anti abortionists. I could go on and on.

SARAH

You are.

JOHNNY

Hang on. Hang on. My question is... how could they all be right? And what's even worse with these people... they think everybody else is wrong. Every body else is a heathen because they can't follow the rules ...all their many millions of rules! They demonize everyone else so they can feel like saints. They know the way and poor you, if you don't. Is this what God wants? Is this what you get when you read about Jesus Christ? I don't.

INNIM.

I'm on it man. I'm speaking the truth now. She's got to think about what you said.

Inner and Sarah stand stoically.

INNER

Ya know, he'd actually be a good preacher... if he knew what he was talking about. That he thinks in terms of Jesus Christ is good.

SARAH

So you read a bit of Scripture, and now you think you're John the Baptist, shouting in the wilderness. You want to throw me in with Neo-Nazis and Scientologists, that's up to you.

JOHNNY

No.

INNIM

Tell the truth.

JOHNNY

Yes. I mean, I don't think you want to kill Jews or give stress tests, but the, 'I'm right and your doomed stuff'... that's what's the same. It's arrogant and belittling.

SARAH

I think you're misunderstanding me. Maybe it's my own fault because I want you to understand so bad what I feel and how I feel about Jesus that I am pushing too hard. Being a Christian you have to love people and I do. In the theater, you know, there are all types. I don't have a problem with any of them. I like a lot of them and they like me. I care about them and most are friends. I could love someone deeply, even passionately... it doesn't mean they're not going to hell. I don't care who, what or where you're talking about.

INNIM.

Why are you so attracted to her right now? Especially when she says stupid shit like that.

JOHNNY

Why am I so attracted to you?

SARAH

Because you can't have me.

JOHNNY

Says who?

SARAH

Says me.

JOHNNY

Really. Because I'm not getting that right now from you. That's not what you're giving off.

SARAH

What am I giving off?

JOHNNY

I see a sensuality... you don't see it. You're not cold or frigid, which must make it even harder for you. If you were uptight in a physical way it would be easier. On the outside you give off uptight. But now that I've been with you... You're holding back a river... Your body wants it, but your mind won't let go. Because when it does... look out and you know it.

INNER

I know I'm sexual. I want to have sex, my body wants it... I want him in me. No, I want it the right way... at the right time. I've been true to you God. Help me. Forgive me.

JOHNNY

No response?

SARAH

What response could I have? I am a human being... a sexual being and yes it is hard... especially with you. I'm having sinful thoughts that I can't get out of my mind... I want you to leave but I can't make you leave.

Johnny moves in for a kiss and grabs her solidly. She responds. In contrast to their earlier contact this is much more aggressive. Inner and Innim also embrace, but their contact has more the appearance of wrestling as they push and pull each other to and away from each other. Sarah straddles Johnny's waist. Chairs recklessly are pushed away as he lifts her onto the butcher block table with his back to the audience. They kiss violently, hugging. Inner pulls away from Innim and starts slapping him all over. He covers himself and just takes it as it comes.

INNER
 Get away from me devil. Get
 away. Jesus help me. God
 help me. Send him away. Help
 me. Help me.

INNIM
 Go ahead. Get it out. Get it
 out. You're filled with rage.

Sarah struggles to push Johnny away from her. He steps back. Sarah slaps him across the face. Johnny ritualistically turns the other cheek. Sarah slaps him again. They both stand for a moment in shock.

JOHNNY
 Well there it is isn't it? Did you
 need to slap me? I'm not going to
 rape you. If you don't want to kiss
 me... just don't.

SARAH
 I apologize for slapping you, but
 how else do I deal with you?

JOHNNY
 How do you deal with yourself...
 always trying to be perfect. You
 don't think you ever sin and your
 virginity is the symbol...

SARAH
 I don't sin. Not like with you.

JOHNNY
 You don't curse. You don't lie. You
 honor your parents. You honor God.
 You never stole anything. You're
 not greedy or materialistic. You
 never have doubt. You're just
 perfect.

SARAH
 I'm not perfect. I do everything in
 my power to live by the Lord's way.
 No, Johnny I don't sin. Not never,
 but almost never and I never doubt.

JOHNNY
 What about forgiveness? Do you
 forgive?

SARAH
 Of course I do?

JOHNNY
 You couldn't forgive the love of
 your life.
 (MORE)

The man you were destined to be with. If you can't forgive him, who can you forgive?

SARAH

Forgive what? Being drunk. That was nothing. He said what he said about God.

JOHNNY

He had doubt. He was going through something that was horrific. You turned your back on him. You broke his heart because he had a moment of doubt. Or maybe not a moment, but you gave up on him so fast. Is that living by God's law?

SARAH

You're going to tell me what living by God's law is? I've lived a devoted life. I know the Bible inside and out and I live by it.

JOHNNY

I bet you do. You probably tell the pastor how to run the church.

INNIM.

Read the passage from Romans. Read it to her..

JOHNNY

Even Paul, who can be so strict is easier than you when it comes to this. Here.

Johnny, picks up the Bible, opens a marked spot and recites verse.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

'But the people of Israel, who tried so hard to get right with God by keeping the law, never succeeded. Why not? Because they were trying to get right with God by keeping the law instead of by trusting in him.'

SARAH

You're just picking and choosing verse to suit your arguments.

JOHNNY

Don't you do the same? Isn't that what everyone does? There's all kinds of things we can choose in the Bible. No?

INNIM.

Leviticus.

Johnny picks up the Bible and starts leafing through it.

JOHNNY

Let's go Old Testament. 'If a man has sex with a slave girl whose freedom has never been purchased but who is committed to become another man's wife, he must pay full compensation to her master. But since she is not a free woman neither the man or the woman will be put to death. The man however must bring a ram as a guilt offering.' Do you think God as you know him actually sent down that law?

SARAH

You're so smart. You can recite Scripture that doesn't make sense today.

(sarcastic)

I'm sure you're the first one to do that. Believe me, there are reasons for all of it with meanings your here-and-now brain would find impossible to understand.

JOHNNY

You can't let it go, not one bit of it can you? What do you think would happen if you had just had one moment of doubt... a question about anything? What do you think would happen?

INNIM

She'd become a human being.

INNER

I would be like the rest of the dregs who have no morals who have no respect for God. I'm tired. I don't know what would happen. What is he doing to me?

JOHNNY

I don't want to keep going on about it, but let me ask you something. This really stuck out to me... I don't understand it.

INNER

I can't take much more of this.

SARAH

I can't answer all the questions. I don't have all the answers. Some things are unexplainable. Okay, I admit it.

JOHNNY

Your father's in the military... is he a Christian?

SARAH

Yes and I know where you're going.

JOHNNY

How does he justify that he is in the business of killing with his Christian beliefs. You have heard of 'thou shall not kill'.

SARAH

(firm)

My father is not in the business of killing number one. What the commandment really means is ,Thou shall not murder and there is a huge difference. You certainly have the right to defend yourself, your country and your faith.

JOHNNY

I might agree with you on that, but it's not the message of Christ. There is nothing in the 'red letters' about going to war. How could Jesus be saying, 'turn the other cheek, he who is without sin should cast the first stone, the Golden Rule...do unto others as you would have others do unto you'... and then think it's okay for people to annihilate other people? What am I missing?

SARAH

He doesn't say don't defend yourself. By defending our country we defend the right to practice our religion.

JOHNNY

I disagree. It's not about defending your religion. It's about honoring God and believing in him and having the faith that there is a heaven. If you believe as you say you do, that there is a heaven and you're going there...then you have nothing to fear.

INNER

Amen, preacher.

SARAH

Lay it down preacher man. Look at him go.

INNIM

You're telling the truth brother.

Johnny's delivery hints at a preacher's cadence.

JOHNNY

Here's one that you had circled. I don't know if this has meaning to you now. Luke twelve-four. Jesus speaking to the crowd, 'Dear friends don't be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot do any more to you than that.' That says it. Bang! You get shot. You go to heaven. What's so bad? Jesus didn't resist when they came to put him on the cross. So why should anybody else? Stand there and take the bullet because in a moment you'll be in heaven. Is your faith that strong? Mine isn't. But I don't claim to be perfect. I don't claim to know who is going to hell and who isn't.

SARAH

(worn down)
Stop. Stop it...

JOHNNY

(going off)

If everybody who claims they believe in God refused to pull a trigger, then things would change. How many Generals, Presidents, Popes... Ayatollahs have claimed how religious they are as they charge to war? Too many to count. But how many leaders have claimed they live in the spirit of God and instead of taking up weapons, just sat down. Let me think... Mahatma Ghandi, Martin Luther King... aaaaah. It's a small list. Were they effective? Did they have God behind them? Ghandi overthrew an empire. Martin Luther King changed the course of our nation... our empire. And like Jesus they weren't just preaching and pointing fingers. They paid with their lives. That's faith. They walked through the valley of death. They feared no evil. They are the real martyrs. They didn't die holding a gun.

INNIM

I don't even know where all that just came from.

Sarah and Inner begin to weep.

INNER

William said the same thing, except he said he didn't believe Christ was God.

Sarah barely controls her weeping..

JOHNNY

Are you all right? I'm not trying to get you upset. I'd rather you hollered back at me. I don't even know what I'm talking about. It just came out of me. You got me all religious here, now. It's not even me.

SARAH

What your saying is beautiful. It's not just what you're saying.

(MORE)

The night William and I had our fight he was saying the same thing as you. It's so strange... Ghandi and Martin Luther King were the greatest leaders of the Twentieth Century and that Buddha and Jesus Christ were the greatest figures of all time...that the world needed love to survive. But he didn't think they were divine. They were just rare, exceptional men. He was all revved up. He fell on his knees and asked me to forgive him.

INNER

Why can't I tell him the truth? What am I ashamed of? I hate myself for it. I'm a fraud, too. No, I had a right.

SARAH

He met this girl at school and he drank and smoked some pot with her and he went home with her... He was always a gentleman with me, respectful, not like others... but then he goes home with this...this...

INNER

... whore.

SARAH

I was devastated. He said how awful he felt and that he had to tell me as hard as it was. I was so hurt. I couldn't forgive him, not then and I said horrible things to him that I wish I could take back. I said to him, 'Because you never tried it with me I thought you were either gay or a gentleman... maybe both, but you're neither... you're just a whore like the rest of them.' That's when he lost it and that's when he said there was no God and that I was no better than the lowest heathen and that at least a pagan wasn't a hypocrite.

(weeps)

He asked forgiveness and I couldn't give it... The person I loved more than anyone in the world.

(MORE)

He was right. You're right. I'm just afraid. God help me.

Johnny is surprised at her vulnerability.

JOHNNY

Okay. Okay. It's all right It's alright. You got hurt, you lashed out. You're human. It's okay. You need to forgive yourself. You need to forgive him. Ya know, it's not too late. You call him. You get in touch and tell him what you told me and he'll come around. You'll see. He was hurt. He didn't mean what he said.

SARAH

I can't call him.

INNIM

Oh boy.
(serious)
He's either dead or married.

SARAH

After his Dad died William started hunting.

INNIM

Dead.

Sarah is having difficulty.

INNER

Hunting. Hunting. He was a damn bird watcher. I know what happened. Everybody knows, but they won't say it. I can't say it. The lie is easier. But God knows.

SARAH

He was in the woods...ahead of everyone...the friends he was hunting with... they saw it. He slipped going over a stone wall... the shotgun went off...
(beat)
That's what they said happened...

INNER

But, he killed himself.

SARAH

He wasn't a hunter. He was a bird watcher... the type of person who would grab a cricket and carry it out of the house rather than step on it. Do you understand what I'm saying?

JOHNNY

Yes, I do. I'm sorry.

INNER

(screams)

Say it!!!

SARAH

He killed himself Johnny.

Sarah breaks down and collapses on the couch. Johnny goes to her.

JOHNNY

I know. I'm sorry. I didn't...

INNIM

... know. I had it wrong! I knew there was more, but I would have never guessed this. I'm an idiot for what I said. This poor thing...

SARAH

He came to me and I couldn't forgive him, Johnny. All that crap, that he didn't believe in God. I didn't believe that for a second. God was so in him... the way he lived...the way he was...

(beat)

I couldn't forgive him for what he did with that girl and I used God as an excuse. I was so angry. I was so hateful.

INNIM

So what she was angry? Why wouldn't she be? Remind her, she's not the living Jesus. She's been torturing herself, holding it all in. Pull her out of it, man. Come on.

Johnny pops up.

JOHNNY

Ya know, the more I think about it... I can't figure out exactly what you did wrong. Why wouldn't you be angry? Why wouldn't you let him go? I don't get it. He was out of control... the drinking. He cheated on you... said he didn't believe in God...to hurt you... like your whole relationship was a lie. But you feel horrible because you didn't forgive him and you're taking the blame for everything, even his death. I see that. I know it's tragic... my heart goes out to you, but it's his tragedy... not yours. They were his demons... not yours. He triggered all of it... like I did with my girl ... except he had really horrible luck thrown in and nobody has control over that. Not you. Not anybody. So you're beating yourself up for what? Because you lied to yourself about why you let him go. Come on. You're a person... a human being. You really didn't do anything wrong except not be perfect... God forbid.

Sarah takes Johnny in.

Innim, standing, puts arms out front of him like Superman and makes like he's flying, looking over the land.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Oh my God, look in the sky. There she is.

Johnny does the same Superman bit that Innim is doing, miming dives and turns. They both zoom by Sarah and Inner.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

(narrator voice)

It's **Super** Sarah... The greatest human Christian of all time... She's only made one mistake in her whole life.

The flying continues.

INNER

(deadpan, referring to
Johnny)

Two.

Sarah cracks a smile at her own/Inner's joke. Innim and Johnny fake going through turbulence.

SARAH

(french accent)

Johnnee... you are an idiote.

Innim swoops in and scoops up Inner like Superman would Lois Lane and keeps flying stoically. Johnny does the same with Sarah. Inner and Sarah finally give in and laugh. Johnny and Innim tire. Innim and Inner fall exhausted on the back of the couch. Johnny collapses with Sarah, side by side on the couch. Exhausted, their heads are back, looking at the ceiling. Innim and Inner look into each others eyes. Johnny and Sarah hold hands.

INNER

God... these are mysterious ways...
thank you for Johnny. I feel like I
can finally breathe. I feel like
I've been holding my breath for
forever.

INNIM

Wow, I haven't thought about sex in
a while. It's not on my mind. I
feel like I'm twelve again... just
happy to be with a girl and not
know why. This voodoo girl... the
straightest exotic woman I ever met
in my life, thank you God.

INNER

I'm not perfect. I don't want to
be.

INNIM

I'm a lowlife. I don't want to be.

INNER

You send the sinner instead of the
saint. I hear you. I'm not the gate
keeper.

INNIM

I should get going and leave it
where it's at. Do what's right.
Don't even go for a kiss.

INNER

I love Johnny. I could hold him all day... but... he would tear me apart. He's relentless.

INNIM

I could never follow through. Not the way she would need me to.

INNER

It's not even noon and I've cried more in the last couple hours than I have in my whole life.

INNIM

Take what's good out of this and leave on high note.

JOHNNY

Sarah, you're beautiful. You're unbelievable. You're amazing... there's nobody in this world like you.

(beat)

I look at myself and I have such a long way to go.

SARAH

You're closer to the kingdom than you think.

Johnny is surprised.

JOHNNY

The Kingdom? I wish I could believe that. All of it... That there even is a kingdom.

SARAH

There is. And you could be there. I want you to be saved Johnny.

JOHNNY

I know and I believe you're sincere but I could never buy it all. You believe it completely and that's what I love. I love that more than anything.

Sarah smiles.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

I'll get going in a minute. Not yet. Let's just sit.

Johnny and Innim close their eyes and take a deep relaxing breath.

SARAH

Yes. Let's just sit for a minute.
Sit it out. Quiet.

Sarah and Inner close their eyes with a deep relaxing breath.

JOHNNY

This is nice.

SARAH

Yes.

JOHNNY

(sighing)
Yeah, this is really...

SARAH

(soothing)
Shhhh.

JOHNNY

Shhhh.

Sarah and Johnny hold hands with their eyes closed subdued on the couch. Inner and Innim do the same.

Curtain.