

DOYLE PILOT

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COLD OPENING

INT. DWYER LIVING ROOM (1966 - 1972) - NIGHT

ON THE TV -- ROBERT KENNEDY making a speech. MIKE DWYER (40ish) and PEGGY DWYER (40ish) watch, their faces lit by the GLOW.

ROBERT KENNEDY

"There is a Chinese curse which says  
'May he live in interesting times.'  
Like it or not, we live in interesting  
times... times of uncertainty..."

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

There's lots of tension in our country  
these days. Some say things have never  
felt so divisive. But I grew up in the  
late sixties, early seventies...

Kennedy now DISSOLVES into QUICK FLASHES of '60s/'70s turmoil  
-- Dr. King, Nixon, The Beatles, Vietnam, Roe v. Wade, riots  
in Detroit, Chicago riots, the Stonewall riots...

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

... an angsty time, everybody on edge.  
And all that sitar music didn't help.  
My parents weren't entirely sold on the  
changes the world was going through.

NEWS FOOTAGE of campus protesters confronting police. Mike  
rises angrily.

MIKE

Garbage.

PEGGY

(at the TV)

If you don't like the police, next  
time you're in trouble call a hippy!

Mike TURNS the channel knob over to "Gomer Pyle."

SUPER-8 HOME MOVIES

Shirtless Mike on a stool in the yard of a pink stucco house.  
Peggy with CLIPPERS cuts his hair into a classic '50s flattop.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

They were much more suited to the 1950s.  
They both liked Ike and hated Communism.

While she's at it she nips a few hairs off his huge shoulders.

Mike is now working on his metal lathe in the Logan Aerospace machine shop. Jet engines, rocket parts. Mike grinds away...

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

Dad worked at a big aerospace company, making parts for rockets and jet fighters. He was proud of the role his company played keeping Glendale safe from North Vietnamese invasion.

In the kitchen Peggy is working on dinner.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

Mom was a traditional housewife -- basically married to the house. Dad made the money, she made sure they didn't waste it. Her hamburgers were more breakfast cereal than beef.

She massages a big fistful of Quaker Oats into a pound of hamburger.

INT. MIKE'S STATION WAGON - DAY

Peggy rides in the back seat with a BABY in her arms -- no car seat or seat belts in sight.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

Mom didn't drive. She barely left the house, except when we went to church.

The car stops and Peggy pins a tiny veil atop her hairdo.

INT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

OVERHEAD SHOT of many, many Dwyers flowing from the vehicle like clowns from a tiny car --

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

All ten of us. Did I mention we were Catholics?

-- Mike, EDDIE (18), FRANK (16), JOEY (14), Timmy (12), WILLIAM (8), Pat (6) and baby ANDY in Peggy's arms.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

Eight boys, no girls. But not for lack of trying.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Peggy, Mike and the kids in pajamas overflow the couch onto the floor, as they stare rapt at "All In The Family" on TV.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

Other than church, Mom and Dad had no social life. TV was their refuge. But the changing world kept seeping in.

Mike's jaw tightens as ARCHIE BUNKER argues with MEATHEAD.

ARCHIE BUNKER

"I never said a guy who wears glasses is a queer. A guy who wears glasses is a four-eyes. A guy who's a fag is a queer."

Mike rises, SLAMS off the TV and walks out.

MIKE

Garbage!

The kids stare after him STUNNED.

PEGGY

Music time! William.

Eight-year-old William starts playing a jaunty version of "The Alley Cat Song" on the Hammond organ.

INT. DWYER KITCHEN - SUNDAY MORNING

Eddie and Frank at the kitchen table eating sugary cereal.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

Their struggle with the outside world came to a head in June of '72, when my oldest brother Lawrence came home from college for the summer.

Frank suddenly LEAPS across the table at Eddie, knocking him and his cereal to the floor. Mike enters, tying his tie, and Peggy explains --

PEGGY

I just let them know one of them would have to give up his bed for Lawrence.  
(glances down at fight)  
Right now, looks like it'll be Frank.

PAT (O.S)

He's here!

INT. DWYER LIVING ROOM/EXT. DWYER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mike, Peggy, a few of the other boys enter and look out the front window as Lawrence parks his VW BUG on the street.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

Our whole family under the same roof  
all summer. Ten people. Three bedrooms.  
One bathroom... No survivors.

ANGLE ON a framed crew-cut photo of Lawrence in a place of honor atop the organ. Then CURRENT LAWRENCE gets out of his car with VERY LONG HAIR. Peggy can feel Mike tense up.

MIKE

What's that nonsense?

PEGGY

It's just hair, Mike... I'd kill for  
all that curl and bounce.

MIKE

Garbage.

END OF COLD OPENING

ACT ONE

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - LATER THAT MORNING

Mike's station wagon parks and DWYERS start flowing out...

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

Lawrence had always been my dad's  
favorite. He fulfilled an obligation  
all large Catholic families felt...

We shift to SLO-MO and a BAD-ASS MUSIC CUE as Lawrence climbs  
out wearing a BLACK PRIEST SHIRT and CLERICAL COLLAR.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

... sending a son to the seminary...  
This meant the world to my father who  
was deeply religious.

INT. TIMMY, JOEY, WILLIAM AND PAT'S BEDROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Mike pulls the blankets off a sleeping Joey in the top bunk.

MIKE

Out of bed, fathead! Make us late for  
Mass, you'll meet Jesus sooner than  
scheduled.

INT. CHURCH - LATER

The Dwyers march SLO-MO like rock stars down the center aisle  
-- Lawrence TURNING HEADS, Mike glowing with PRIDE.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

Having a future priest was a big source  
of status for the Dwyers. Putting us way  
ahead of the Harrigans -- twelve kids  
and all they could manage was a nun.

ON LAWRENCE, waving to ADMIRERS.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

And Lawrence was way cool, like Chuck-  
Negrón-from-Three-Dog-Night-cool. But  
as the forgotten middle child I felt  
even more invisible than ever.

ON TIMMY, looking around envious of all Lawrence' adulation.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

Remember, this was before Instagram,  
so if you were desperate for attention  
like I was you really had to innovate.

INT. NEIGHBOR'S PORCH - DAY - FLASHBACK

Timmy has rung the DOORBELL. The neighbor opens.

TIMMY

Hi. There's a new baby at my house and nobody's paying attention to me.

INT. BACK TO CHURCH - A BIT LATER

Timmy and Joey are on the altar, as altar boys for the Mass. FR. DUNNE (60s) has reached the holiest part of the service.

FR. DUNNE

"Take this and eat of it. This is my body which will be given up for you."

He holds up the host. Timmy, kneeling nearby gives the altar bell a good shake -- RING! RING! RING! The sound of it is pleasing and folks in the CONGREGATION smile at Timmy.

FR. DUNNE (CONT'D)

(holding up the chalice)

"Take this and drink it. It is the cup of my blood. Do this in memory of me."

RING-RING-RING! RING! RING! Timmy is now hot-dogging on the bell. RRRING-RING-RING! RING-ING! A lot of eyes on him now, including Peggy in the front pew. RING-RING! RING-RING-RING!

PEGGY

That kid is a mental case.

A HAND reaches down. Fr. Dunne takes the bell from Timmy.

EXT. CHURCH - LATER

The FAMILY out front of the church after Mass, Mike getting congratulated, Lawrence and Peggy smiling at WELL-WISHERS.

PEGGY

Your dad is helping run the bingo game Monday night. You should go too. It'd be a nice chance to talk.

LAWRENCE

I'd like to talk to both of you if --

PEGGY

-- Lawrence, you remember Helen Pizzo.  
(tactfully using pig Latin)  
Her daughter had that ild-chay out of edlock-way...

As Lawrence greets Helen, Peggy spots Timmy and crosses to him.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

You made a spectacle of yourself up there. Go wait for us at the car.

Timmy crosses away from the family, glancing resentfully back.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

In our family it was easy to get lost in the crowd. I figured out pretty early, if I wanted to be special I needed to look for a bigger audience.

Timmy sees a FLIER on a pole -- a children's theater is doing "Man of La Mancha." The headline: "DO YOU WANT TO BE A STAR?"

TIMMY

Yes. Yes I do.

The ROUSING SCORE of "Man of La Mancha" now KICKS IN!

INT. TIMMY, JOEY, WILLIAM AND PAT'S BEDROOM - DAY - LATER

Timmy SINGS with the record, STRUGGLING to learn the lyrics --

RECORDING

"...And a knight with his banners all bravely unfurled/Now hurls down his gauntlet to thee!"

TIMMY

"...And a knight la-la-la-la... banners unfurled/... hurls his la-la ...to thee!!!!"

William is on his bed listening with his customary DEAD-PAN. He knows music and what Timmy's doing is PAINFUL to hear.

LOUDLY TOGETHER

"I AM I, DON QUIXOTE, THE LORD OF LA MANCHA!!"

RECORDING

"Destroyer of Evil am I!..."

TIMMY

"... Something of Evil am I!..."

INT. DWYER KITCHEN - DAY

Lawrence watches as Peggy pulls a tray of fish sticks from the oven. Her dinners are a mishmash of bad processed foods.

PEGGY

So how's college, college man?  
(before he can answer)  
-- There's food!!

Joey, Eddie, Frank and Pat RUSH IN and start piling plates.

LAWRENCE

School's... okay. I took a math class.

PEGGY

They teach Math there too?

Mike enters. Peggy hands him a plate, already piled for him.

MIKE

Peg, you're embarrassing yourself. St. Joe's is a fully accredited university.

(to Lawrence)

Did you get into Pythagoras' Theorem yet? That's a hell of a theorem, Pythagoras'. I'm a fan.

PEGGY

I just hope they aren't short-changing new priests on how to do Communion. That Fr. McKay makes me gag every time -- too much thumb on my tongue.

INT. DWYER DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The other boys are already eating as Mike and Lawrence enter.

MIKE

I wanted to pick your brain about how young people see our president. I find it informative hearing all points of view.

EDDIE

Nixon's in the pocket of big business.

MIKE

Nobody asked you, fathead.  
(to Joey, re: Lawrence)  
Make room for your brother to sit.

Peggy takes Joey's plate away.

JOEY

I wasn't done with that pork chop yet.

PEGGY

You can eat over the sink.

PAT

(re: his food)

This tastes weird. I hear meat from farm animals can have trichinosis.

PEGGY

That meat's not from farm animals, it's from Ralphs. Put ketchup on it.

LAWRENCE

(to Mike)

The thing with Nixon is his rich friends. Does he even care about regular people?

MIKE

Aw, you're buying the lefty media line. I thought college men were smart.

LAWRENCE

What about that Watergate break-in?

MIKE

Nixon had nothing to do with that. Know what I call Watergate? Phony news.

(off TIMMY'S O.S. SINGING)

Tell him to cut that racket!

Peggy exits immediately, Frank trailing after her.

LAWRENCE

Sorry. I didn't mean to upset you.

MIKE

I'm not upset...

EDDIE

You seem pretty up--

MIKE

--You want to stay out of this?!

LAWRENCE

Anyway. I promised I'd drop in and see my friend AJ. And I promised to go...

(looks at his bare wrist)

right now, so...

Lawrence files out awkwardly. Mike looking after him.

INT. TIMMY, JOEY, WILLIAM AND PAT'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

TIMMY

... I AM I!! DON QUIXOTE!! THE LORD OF LA MANCHA!!/A NAME ALL THE WORLD SOON WILL KNOW --

Peggy JERKS the needle off the record. Frank is there too.

TIMMY (CONT'D)

Hey!? Mom, I have to learn these songs.

PEGGY

Why, to scare away bats? Nobody wants to hear you caterwauling. What is this?

TIMMY

(carefully lying)  
Nothing. Just having fun.

PEGGY

Well... stop that.

Peggy exits. Frank eyes Timmy suspiciously.

FRANK

What is really going on here?

TIMMY

Okay. I'll tell you but it's a secret. I'm auditioning for a very prestigious children's theater in Hollywood --

-- Frank snatches the fliers and exits --

FRANK

-- Mom!

TIMMY

No!!

INT. DWYER KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Peggy is feeding Andy in his high chair. Timmy and Frank look on.

TIMMY

Why can't I?

PEGGY

Nobody is driving you to Holly-weird to be in some ridiculous show.

TIMMY

I could take a bus. Or hitch-hike.

PEGGY

You know I don't approve of that, wasting good money on busses.

FRANK

"Look at me, I'm Timmy, I'm special."

PEGGY

Yeah, I'm sorry. We do not have the wherewithal in this family for any of you kids to be special. Thank goodness you mostly turned out uninteresting like Francis here.

(gives Timmy donation box)

No, here's a summer project for you, collecting for the foreign missions. The Church needs money to baptize poor pagan babies before they starve to death. Otherwise they go to Limbo.

Peggy throws Timmy's flier in the trash. She and Frank exit.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

The torments of Limbo versus me becoming a star... No contest.

Timmy pulls the flier from the trash and exits.

INT. DWYER BATHROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Eddie is there as Peggy hangs clean towels from her laundry basket. Pat and William run in breathless from the yard.

PAT

Mommy, my lungs hurt. I have asthma.

WILLIAM

You don't have asthma.

PEGGY

Honey, that's just smog. Go back outside and play.

Pat and William run off. Peggy exits. Eddie crosses off.

INT. LAWRENCE AND EDDIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lawrence is there adjusting his clerical collar as Eddie enters.

LAWRENCE

I'm going to bingo tonight with Dad.

EDDIE

And he's got you wearing your collar like his prize poodle.

(off Lawrence' look)

Hey, I don't mind you being the favorite. Less pressure on the rest of us not to suck.

LAWRENCE

Well, all that may be ending... I'm not just home for the summer. I'm not going back to the seminary at all.

EDDIE

Mike and Peggy won't like that.

LAWRENCE

It's my decision, my life.

EDDIE

You think so? Seriously, I'm the next in line. So if you don't join the priesthood, they'll definitely make me!

LAWRENCE

Just tell them "no."

EDDIE

I'm not you. I don't get to grow my hair and argue politics with Dad. Don't do this! I've got a girlfriend now -- a secret girlfriend. And she's really cool. But not so cool that she'll keep makin' out with me once I'm Fr. Eddie.

LAWRENCE

Be straight with them about her.

EDDIE

No way, Mom would wig out. She hates anything new that's not her idea. And Sheri -- she goes to women's lib rallies and reads "The Female Eunuch." Mom must never know.

A TOILET FLUSH and Frank enters grinning.

FRANK

... Then you shouldn't talk so loudly right next to the bathroom.

EDDIE

(a threat)

You didn't hear a thing.

FRANK

I'll have to sleep on that. Tonight, in my own bed. You'll like it where I've been sleeping, under the dining room table. You can still smell where the dog died.

LAWRENCE

Uncool, Frank, nobody likes a --

EDDIE

-- NARC!!!

Eddie SHOVES Frank hard. He hits the open window and FALLS through, taking the screen with him.

EXT. DWYER BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Frank PLOPS flat on his back in the patchy back lawn.

FRANK

(in pain)

Landed... on a sprinkler head.

Eddie DIVES out the window after Frank. The two roll around in a CLINCH. Frank finds a Tonka truck and nails Eddie's head. Eddie rolls off Frank, who jumps to his feet and runs.

INT. DWYER DINING ROOM - THE SAME TIME

Peggy is setting the dinner table. William enters with his usual low-key demeanor.

WILLIAM

Excuse me, Momma. You should probably know that Frank and Eddie --

PAT

(runs in FRANTIC)

Eddie is KILLING Frank!

WILLIAM

Yeah.

Peggy exits with Pat and William. Timmy now SNEAKS in, grabs the land-line phone and climbs unnoticed into the COAT CLOSET.

EXT. DWYER BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Eddie tackles Frank, knocking him face-first into the little wooden sandbox and pummeling him into the sand.

FRANK

(with each blow)

There's. Cat. Poop. In. Here.

Suddenly a GIANT HAND lifts Eddie by the head, up into the air so his feet DANGLE, then deposits him on a bench. Mike then lifts Frank by the face and sets him seated on a STUMP.

INT. COAT CLOSET - THE SAME TIME

Timmy on the closet floor with his flier. A flashlight ILLUMINATES his face as he whispers intently into the phone --

TIMMY

... Yes, I was interested in auditioning for your show... as the star, or some other very large role...

EXT. DWYER BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Mike towering over Frank and Eddie. Peggy is there too.

FRANK

I'll explain. I heard the whole thing.

LAWRENCE

No. Stop. I will tell them...

Lawrence, in the bedroom window, now climbs out over the broken screen and down into the yard.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

Mom, Dad... I decided I'm leaving the seminary. I'm not going to be a priest.

Mike and Peggy stare at Lawrence stunned.

MIKE/PEGGY

What?

FRANK

What?!

All eyes turn to Frank.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I didn't hear the priest part. All I heard about was Eddie's secret girlfriend.

PEGGY

Eddie has a secret girlfriend?

Peggy throws a sharp look to Eddie as Mike glares at Lawrence.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. DWYER BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Mike, Peggy, Eddie and Frank are as we left them.

PEGGY

How long has this been going on?

LAWRENCE

I've been meditating about this for --

PEGGY

I mean Eddie's girlfriend. I'd like to meet this person.

EDDIE

(to Frank)

I seriously hate you.

PEGGY

Oh, I knew something was up. Remember I do your laundry.

MIKE

(to Lawrence)

If you quit the seminary, what's Plan B, huh? What would you even study?

LAWRENCE

I'd like to study "me" for starters, And not in any classroom, but in the streets where it's totally happening.

MIKE

I'll tell you what's totally happening, pal. You're going back to school!

PEGGY

Yes, of course. Absolutely. Lawrence is going to be a priest. Or somebody is. If not him, Eddie for sure.

Eddie winces. Peggy gestures Mike toward the gate.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

But you need to get to the parish hall now and help Father set up the bingo.

MIKE

You're right. I made a commitment (pointedly to Lawrence)

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

-- a word you might want to look up in that new "collegiate" dictionary we had to buy you for twenty-two bucks because our old dictionary didn't contain hip new lingo like "congressperson" and "gorp." And so was wholly inadequate to your study of feminism and hiking snacks. I'll be back later to straighten you out.

Mike's ANGER hangs in the air over Lawrence.

MIKE (CONT'D)

And get a haircut!

Mike stomps off.

INT. DWYER DINING ROOM - THE SAME TIME

Timmy's muffled voice coming through the closet door.

TIMMY (O.S)

... Performing experience?...

INT. COAT CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Timmy still on the phone with the theater people.

TIMMY

Well... nothing you'd have seen. I sing the Chiquita Banana song whenever relatives come over. It's very good...

INT. DWYER DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nobody around, Timmy discreetly exits the closet and re-sets the phone UNSEEN.

INT. TIMMY, JOEY, WILLIAM AND PAT'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Timmy enters. Then from a space behind his headboard he pulls a band-aid tin, sits on the bottom bunk and pops it open.

TIMMY

Hey. I had more money than this.

JOEY (O.S)

You had nine bucks, an Abba-Zaba, and a picture of Laurie Partridge.

Joey has been in the top bunk all along. He peers over the edge UPSIDE DOWN at Timmy, then FLIP-ROLLS down to the floor.

TIMMY

What happened to my money, Joey?

JOEY

I saw Jethro Tull at the Forum on Saturday. That man don't blow his flute for free.

TIMMY

I have an audition tomorrow. It costs forty bucks!

JOEY

Okay. Take a chill pill, spaz, while I mull this over... We should probably reconvene elsewhere --

-- Joey OPENS the door suddenly to find Frank LURKING in the hall.

JOEY (CONT'D)

... where the walls don't have ears.  
Ten minutes, in my office. Bring ice.

INT. DWYER BATHROOM - THE SAME TIME

Eddie is at the mirror attending to his scrapes as Pat stares up at him worried. William is also there. Lawrence paces back and forth in the shower tub.

EDDIE

Mom is insisting on meeting Sheri tonight.

LAWRENCE

Why do we let them boss us around?

PAT

(Re: Eddie's head)  
That's a bad bump, maybe a subdural hematoma.

WILLIAM

It's not.

PAT

John Quincy Adams died from a subdural hematoma.

EDDIE

Pat, I'm not going to die!

WILLIAM  
(to Pat)  
Told you.

PAT  
I guess.

WILLIAM  
You sound disappointed.

PAT  
A little.

LAWRENCE  
(to Eddie)  
It's crazy. We're adults now. But we  
still can't stand up to our parents.

EDDIE  
I was raised to respect my elders.  
Also Dad would tear my head off.

LAWRENCE  
See, they control with fear, like the  
gestapo. Physical fear in Dad's case,  
and with Mom, it's fear of losing that  
tiny one-eighth of her affections she  
rations out to each of us. Well, I for  
one refuse to live in fear any longer!

A KNOCK at the door. They all FREEZE like startled lemurs.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)  
Who's there?

FRANK  
(outside the door)  
I need to use the bathroom.

EDDIE/WILLIAM/LAWRENCE/PAT  
Screw you!/Go in the yard!/Walk to the  
gas station!/Go to hell!

INT. TREE HOUSE - A BIT LATER - NIGHT

This former kid's tree-fort is now Joey's den of iniquity -- a mini-fridge, sexy blacklight posters and a sound system, powered by a tangle of cords. Joey sits in a beanbag chair sipping a cognac. Timmy climbs up through the floor hatch.

JOEY  
I've given some thought to your money  
problem.

TIMMY

My problem is you stealing my money.

JOEY

You really need to let that go.

Timmy offers a baggie of ice. Joey pops a cube in his drink.

JOEY (CONT'D)

Thanks. My suggestion is, take your little mission box up to the rich douche-bag neighborhood and ring a few douche-bag doors. With your big round eyes and big round head you'll clear forty bucks in an hour.

TIMMY

No. That money's for the pagan babies.

JOEY

Rich people don't care. They get off on giving their dough away. They just want to feel good about themselves and get you the hell off their porch. Anyway, that's my rap. In a normal family, you would just ask Mom or Dad.  
(off Timmy's objection)  
-- I said "a normal family." Our Mom would laugh in your face. And Dad...

TIMMY

Dad would just look sad the way he always does.

JOEY

Yeah... If he could, you know, Dad would love to toss his dough around. Buy that new Chrysler LeBaron, or a lavish family vacay to Honolulu. But they keep having all these damn kids.

TIMMY

I've never even been inside a restaurant with Mom and Dad.

JOEY

Nobody has. And he'd love it, taking us all out to a premium dining establishment -- a Ponderosa Steak House, say, or a Sizzler. But that Great Depression thing kicks in and instead we sit down every night to the taste of fried baloney and sadness.

Joey now notices something off through the tree house window. He moves around quickly switching off LIGHTS.

JOEY (CONT'D)

Okay, spaz. Blow.

In the WINDOW of the apartment building next door a WOMAN in a nurse uniform is changing out of her clothes. Joey watches intently as Timmy exits via the floor hatch.

INT. DWYER DINING ROOM - LATER

Peggy SEWS at her vintage Singer. Eddie enters with Sheri, small but formidable. Peggy holds up a pair of jeans for William to inspect, colorful patches sewn on the knees.

PEGGY

There. No more holes. And so groovy.  
You'd be right at home at a "love-in."

William takes the jeans SOLEMNLY and exits. Peggy calls after.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

Trust me, that is the style these days. Ratty dungarees with patches.  
(to Sheri re: her clothes)  
You certainly get it. Fashion is so much simpler now that our trend-setters are hobos from the city dump. Why even bother putting on hose, or ironing a skirt? Or bathing?

EDDIE

Mom, this is my girlfriend, Sheri.

PEGGY

Your girlfriend. Eddie has a girlfriend. How come?

SHERI

I'm sorry.

PEGGY

Nothing to be sorry about. I love Eddie. I love all my boys -- I have to. But how on earth would Eddie get a girlfriend?

SHERI

Lots of people our age are going steady.

PEGGY

Yes, but not with Eddie. How long have you two known each other?

SHERI

Around four months.

PEGGY

That explains it. I've always said it takes four and one half months before you really see the flaws in a person. So now you can move on to some other boy. And I just saved you two weeks.

Peggy smiles and goes back to her SEWING. Sheri has been dismissed. Eddie is crushed. But Sheri stands her ground.

SHERI

I think you are amazing, Mrs. Dwyer.

Peggy stops sewing, always intrigued by praise.

SHERI (CONT'D)

Running this home is a huge managerial achievement. We look up to Indira Gandhi and Golda Meir, but powerful women like you who choose a domestic career are no less viable a role model.

PEGGY

Oh that's silly. I'm no "role model"...  
(then persuaded)

But I'd enjoy seeing Golda Meir do all my housework with an infant under foot, and still cook a meal for her man.

(now best friends)

You're so slim, Sheri. I'm going to make you a shift. I have this Dacron fabric -- so colorful, like an LSD acid trip.

SHERI

I wouldn't know.

PEGGY

Correct answer.

Peggy takes Sheri's hand and leads her off. Eddie is left gawping after them. Frank enters in pajamas, ready for bed.

FRANK

Good night.

Frank ducks under the table and settles onto his air mattress bed.

EXT. PORCH IN THE NICE NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER THAT NIGHT

Timmy with an AFFLUENT HOUSEWIFE in her doorway. She gives him a few dollars which he stuffs into his donation box.

TIMMY

Thank you so much, ma'am, on behalf of the foreign missions...

(hesitates, then)

So listen, there's another good cause I wondered if you might give to. I've always had this dream of singing and dancing in shows, and my school doesn't ever do musicals...

The woman listens with a puzzled/indulgent expression.

INT. PARISH HALL - LATER

A smoky hall, PARISHIONERS at long tables with bingo cards.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

Bingo at our parish was nearly as compulsory as Mass. But my father didn't gamble, because of the danger he might have fun. So Dad just helped out.

Mike, at a counter, selling bingo cards to a LATE ARRIVAL. Fr. Dunne is calling the numbers over the LOUDSPEAKER.

FR. DUNNE

"I seventeen." "I seventeen" -- as in what you don't ever want to hear the girl say: "I seventeen."

An appreciative CROWD CHUCKLES as Lawrence enters. Mike spots him and makes a bee-line. They speak in TENSE WHISPERS.

MIKE

I said we would do this later.

LAWRENCE

(a head of steam)

You're not going to change my mind, Dad. The seminary no longer feels relevant. I want to go and explore myself and the world. I'm thinking I'll backpack across Europe.

MIKE

When I was your age I backpacked across Europe. Only there were Germans shooting at me.

A CHEERY PARISHIONER crosses past.

CHEERY PARISHIONER

Mike, is this the future priest? You must be so proud.

MIKE

Oh I am.

As soon as the parishioner's out of earshot, to Lawrence --

MIKE (CONT'D)

Get out of here! We will do this at home.

LAWRENCE

Not until I tell Fr. Dunne my decision.

MIKE

We haven't decided your decision yet!

FR. DUNNE

(over the loudspeaker)

I've just noticed a celebrity amongst us tonight, Lawrence Dwyer, our handsome seminarian.

The crowd APPLAUDS for Lawrence. He waves awkwardly.

FR. DUNNE (CONT'D)

Don't get any ideas, ladies. He's made his choice. Mike, maybe your boy could call a few numbers and give my old voice a rest.

MIKE

(through clenched teeth)

Do not say a word to him!

Lawrence crosses and sits at the ball machine with Fr. Dunne. Fr. Dunne pulls a ball for him, as Mike watches warily.

LAWRENCE

(over the loudspeaker)

Okay, let's see. "I twenty-two."

FR. DUNNE

The best route from Birmingham to Memphis, by the way -- "I twenty-two."

LAWRENCE

I thought you were resting your voice.

Fr. Dunne LAUGHS and hands Lawrence another ball.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

"B four."

The CROWD happily erupts in unison --

CROWD

And after!

LAWRENCE

"B four."

CROWD

And after!

The whole room feels lit up with good spirits as Fr. Dunne pulls another ball. Lawrence reads it.

LAWRENCE

"I twenty." That would be "I twenty."

Everyone looks to Lawrence expecting a witticism. Lawrence considers, throws a defiant look to Mike, and --

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

As in... "I" am "twenty" and ready to live my own life. And I don't want to be a priest and I'm dropping out of the seminary...

The room suddenly falls SILENT. Lawrence looks around, as the crowd, Fr. Dunne, EVERYONE just stares. Mike glares angrily. Finally an OLD LADY calls out --

OLD LADY

Bingo!

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. NICE NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - LATE NIGHT

Timmy steps off a porch, stuffing money into his mission box. As he walks to the curb Lawrence pulls up in his VW bug.

LAWRENCE

It's pretty late. Want a ride?

INT. LAWRENCE'S VW BUG - MOMENTS LATER

Lawrence drives Timmy home. He's got a lot on his mind --

LAWRENCE

... It's so oppressive. They're all over my life -- it's suffocating... But you somehow...

They pull up in front of the Dwyer house.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

You seem to have it all figured out. You go where you want, do what you want -- not a care about what they think.

TIMMY

Because they don't think of me at all. You know there's not a single picture of me as a baby? You've got whole albums. But the camera broke in 1960 and by the time Mom saved up enough green stamps, her Mixmaster broke... I lost out to an appliance.

Timmy climbs from the car. Lawrence looks after him.

TIMMY (CONT'D)

Are you coming in?

Lawrence shakes his head "no" and drives off.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Peggy is now feeding Andy a bottle. Mike stands with the fridge door open, picking meat off a ham.

MIKE

He said it, Peg. In front of the whole bingo. He's quitting the seminary! It's out there now. You can't put toothpaste back in the tube.

PEGGY

Don't be silly. I've been refilling  
that same Ultra-Brite for years.

(off Mike picking at ham)

If you're hungry, I'll make something.

MIKE

I'm too angry to eat.

(continues eating)

He changed. Something changed him --  
the hippy talk and the hair. He looks  
like your cousin Shirley.

PEGGY

Eddie's got a girlfriend now, so the  
whole world's upside down.

MIKE

This priest thing was his idea, you  
know. Not mine. From when he was  
little. Remember his tenth birthday  
where all he asked for was a chalice?

Timmy enters through the kitchen door with his mission box.

PEGGY

Where have you been?

TIMMY

Out being amazing. Ching-ching-ching!

(shakes box full of money)

You can baptize the babies now in fancy  
French water from France! Au revoir.

Timmy does a fancy bow and exits, leaving his box with Peggy.

MIKE

What's that kid going on about?

PEGGY

I told you, he's a mental case. So,  
how did you leave things with  
Lawrence?

MIKE

"You're a tyrant. You're oppressing me.  
Woodstock, Peace, blah-blah-blah." He's  
staying at his friend AJ's.

PEGGY

And where does this AJ live?

MIKE

Don't know and don't care.

FRANK (O.S)

In Burbank, across from Shafer Field!

ANGLE ON Frank on his air mattress under the dining room table.

PEGGY

Thank you.

(to Mike)

Okay, this is what you have to do. Go make things right with Lawrence.

MIKE

You're ordering me what to do now?

PEGGY

Yes, when you're being dumb. Mike, I know I'm not your intellectual equal on current events -- like Nixon and Pythagoras. But I'm smart when it comes to this house and these kids. Some might say I'm a role model.

MIKE

Who might say that?

PEGGY

Some! There's a whole "generation gap" happening out there -- which I know more about because I watch "Sonny and Cher." But I don't want any "gaps" in my house, with my kids... Truth is I never really cared about Lawrence being a priest. I don't care what any of our kids do with their lives. Just as long as --

MIKE

(dismissive)

I know. "As long as they're happy."

PEGGY

I don't even care if they're happy. I just want them around. They'll be scattered to the four winds soon enough. I won't have you pushing one out the door.

Peggy glares at Mike. He is persuaded but won't give ground.

MIKE

I'll... take that under advisement...  
Meanwhile, maybe a drive to clear my  
head... no particular destination...

He exits. As Mike crosses through the dining room --

FRANK (O.S)

(from under the table)  
Across from Shafer Field.

MIKE

Shut up.

INT. TIMMY, JOEY, WILLIAM AND PAT'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

In DARKNESS Timmy is undressed down to underwear. He pulls a wad of cash from his jeans -- he raised his FORTY BUCKS tonight. A glance toward Joey SNORING in his bunk. Timmy looks for a place to hide the money and settles on stuffing it down into his underpants. He climbs into bed, contented.

EXT. AJ'S APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

DAWN breaking. Lawrence' VW Bug in a driveway. Across the street in his car, Mike is watching and waiting.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

As a parent have you ever had that thing where you take a hard line with your kid, but you start to think maybe the kid was right? And now you need to back down and admit you were wrong? Yeah?... Well, that's a feeling no parent before 2010 ever had. And my parents sure as hell never did.

Mike finally gets out and marches toward the apartment.

INT. AJ'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

DOORBELL. AJ (20) opens the door. She's a girl in bedclothes and very surprised to see Mike, as is Lawrence who looks up NAKED from among the blankets of a water-bed on the floor.

AJ

Lawrence, I think it's your dad.

MIKE

And I guess there's no pretending  
you're AJ's mom.

(to Lawrence)

Hey cowboy, get dressed.

LAWRENCE

I have no intention of going home with you.

MIKE

I have no intention of taking you home. I want to show you something. And unless you want to show the neighbors something, you should put on pants.

INT. TIMMY, JOEY, WILLIAM AND PAT'S BEDROOM - DAY - LATER

Timmy combs his hair, humming the "La Mancha" song. He folds his FLIER and the FORTY BUCKS back into his pocket.

INT. DWYER KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Timmy enters. Peggy is sorting laundry with William and Pat.

TIMMY

Mom. I'm off to save more souls.

PEGGY

I don't think you're going anywhere...

Timmy freezes. Peggy stares him down. Is he caught?

PEGGY (CONT'D)

-- without your box.

(pulls out mission box)

Timmy, I know this wasn't the fun project you pictured for your summer. But you did it really well.

(shakes the box)

And, honestly honey, if you had any real talent, I think I would have noticed.

TIMMY

I gotta go.

PEGGY

Oh, take your brother with you.

(indicating William)

He hasn't ventured outside in days. He's going to come down with rickets.

Timmy sighs and exits with William.

PAT

Mommy, will I get rickets?

PEGGY

If you don't mind your Ps and Qs.

INT. HOLLYWOOD BUS - LATER

Timmy rides in thoughtful silence, then looks over at William.

TIMMY

Hey. Am I a bad singer?

WILLIAM

Yes.

(off Timmy's reaction)

But you really seem to like doing it.  
Liking it makes it better.

This weighs on Timmy, his normal confidence drains a bit.

EXT. MOJAVE DESERT/INT. MIKE'S STATION WAGON - DAY

Mike's car JERKS to a STOP. A sleeping Lawrence stirs awake and looks around, nothing but sand and scrub for miles.

LAWRENCE

Okay. What is this? ... The middle of the desert... You know a lot of people saw me get in the car with you...

Mike stews for another beat, then --

MIKE

You quit the priesthood for a girl?

LAWRENCE

No. AJ is... a recent development. I don't even know what's going on there.

MIKE

Don't worry. She'll decide and then tell you.

LAWRENCE

This isn't about celibacy, Dad. Although that is one of the things about the Church which make it feel stuck in the past. There are big changes happening in the world right now and I --

MIKE

-- Yeah, yeah, we know all about the changes. Your mom watches "Sonny and Cher." Look, you jerked our chain for years on this priest stuff.

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

And I got excited because, hey, it's respectable, a career... Certainly a step up for the Dwyers. My dad worked his whole life in a coal mine. Union Town, Pennsylvania. Terrible work, and that man never had two --

Suddenly, a FLASH and out across the sand, a ROCKET soars upward from a cloud of fire and smoke. A distant BOOM.

LAWRENCE

Whoa.

MIKE

There she is. The LGM Minuteman Three.  
(glances at watch)  
We're running a little behind.

LAWRENCE

It's going to the moon?

MIKE

Yes, we're sending a nuclear warhead to blow up the moon. We're fed up with having tides and women's periods.  
(off Lawrence' look)  
It's a test. She'll ditch in the ocean eight hundred miles that way. Maybe take out a few sea otters.

They watch with awe through the windshield as the missile soars upward, their FACES bathed in the PINK REFLECTION.

LAWRENCE

For something so dreadful which I abhor on principle, it's... cool. Did you design it?

MIKE

(a sigh)  
Son... I'm a machinist. The engineers, the scientists, they figure out what they need and I just grind a few pieces on a lathe -- a grommet, some sheathing... dumb guy work.  
(nods to the launch area)  
They're down there right now at launch command. My bosses. The big brains who took us to the moon. And Mars next, I imagine. They own the future. And I'm the guy holding their coats because I didn't go to college...

(a glance to Lawrence)

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

I know what you mean when you talk about getting yourself stuck in the past. If you're determined to quit the seminary, I sure as hell can't stop you. But if I could just suggest some version of a college degree... My father, Michael Lawrence Dwyer, he scratched at the earth for his living. I want my sons reaching the stars.

Lawrence stares hard at Mike, absorbing all this.

MIKE (CONT'D)

We should get back. Gotta go to work.

Mike STARTS the car, then pauses for one last look up at the missile -- high in the sky.

MIKE (CONT'D)

You know... there's this tiny fixed nozzle with the TVC system when the third-stage booster separates. Just a few centimeters, it has to hold up against four hundred thousand PSI.

They both watch as the second stage FALLS and the third stage FIRES OFF beautifully.

MIKE (CONT'D)

There you go.  
(quiet pride)  
I built that nozzle.  
(throws the car in gear)  
Screw it. Let's get waffles.

INT. DWYER KITCHEN - THE SAME TIME

Peggy comes in with more laundry. Frank is waiting for her.

FRANK

Timmy's not out collecting for the missions. He's auditioning for that show you told him not to. I heard him and Joey talking.

PEGGY

That kid is a mental case.  
(calling off)  
Eddie, watch the baby!

Peggy gathers her purse and keys.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD - LATER

The bus stops on a rough corner. Massage parlors, pawn shops. Timmy and William get off. He checks the flier and goes into a building with two signs, "Peep Show" and "Children's Theatre."

INT. FAMILY CAR - THE SAME TIME

Frank is driving, with Peggy in the back-seat like an Uber.

PEGGY

Who on earth would pay good money to see that kid in a show?

FRANK

The show is actually charging him.

PEGGY

Crooks taking advantage of a dumb kid.

She looks up and sees a pair of sneakers slung from a telephone wire.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

Those look like Eddie's size. Remember this street. We'll come back with a ladder.

INT. THEATER - A LITTLE LATER

Timmy and William now sit among waiting AUDITIONEES in a small black box theater -- a piano, drapes, a platform from which a KID is now intoning Shakespeare. Timmy looks very nervous.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

Part of what's fun about daydreams is how far away they are. They aren't real -- they're where you go to escape "real." And the day you start trying to make your dreams real might just be the scariest day of your life.

SHAKESPEARE KID

"... We are such stuff/As dreams are made on, and our little life/Is rounded with a sleep."

The kid finishes to polite silence and exits with her PARENT. JENNY (30s), a grizzled former child star, looks to her list.

JENNY

Okay. Next is Timmy Dwyer.

A very RATTLED Timmy crosses to her.

JENNY (CONT'D)  
Do you have sheet music?

TIMMY  
Sheet music?

JENNY  
(off his look of despair)  
Never mind. Just... you'll be fine.

Timmy steps up onto the platform. He looks out and hesitates. Can he do this? He looks to William, takes a fluttery breath and starts SINGING quietly, Karen Carpenter's hit "Sing A Song."

TIMMY  
"Sing. Sing a song... Sing out  
loud/Sing out strong..."

It's not strong. Jenny looks at her watch. Peggy and Frank run in but STOP when they spot Timmy and stand in the back UNSEEN.

TIMMY (CONT'D)  
"Sing of good things not bad... Sing  
of happy not sad..."

It's all pretty sad. His voice QUAVERS, about to falter...

TIMMY (CONT'D)  
"Sing... Sing a song..."

Suddenly a PIANO CHORD drops in under Timmy's vocal. William has found his way to the piano to give a bit of support.

TIMMY (CONT'D)  
"Make it simple, to last your whole  
life loooong."

Better, a breath of CONFIDENCE. More CHORDS from William...

TIMMY (CONT'D)  
"Don't worry that it's not good  
enough/For anybody else to hear/Just  
sing, sing a song..."

Timmy's starting to SELL IT NOW. Jenny takes notice, as does Peggy. Frank is growing impatient. Key change! The song BUILDS!

TIMMY (CONT'D)

"Sing. Sing a SONG/LET THE WOOOORLD  
SING ALONG..."

PEGGY

(abruptly to Frank)

Okay, we should go.

FRANK

But... what about Timmy disobeying?  
What about him wasting forty --?

PEGGY

-- He's EXCELLENT.

She cuts Frank off decisively and exits. Frank trails after her sputtering.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

Maybe the divisive times we're living  
in right now are the End of Days, and  
everything's going to suck forever. Or  
maybe tense, conflicted times like  
these are just something our country  
has to go through once in a while...  
to come out the other side a changed,  
more accepting place...

Timmy now fills the stage with his VOICE.

TIMMY

"SING of love there could be..."

Under Timmy's VOCALS we now see a MONTAGE of other Dwyers --

Eddie and Sheri, PLAYING WITH BABY ANDY, looking like the  
loving parents they might be some day.

TIMMY (O.S) (CONT'D)

"SING for you and for me..."

Frank is ATOP A STEP LADDER on the roof of the car, reaching  
for those telephone wire sneakers. Peggy directs him from  
below.

TIMMY (O.S) (CONT'D)

"Just sing, sing a song..."

A curtain pulls back on Joey ON A HOSPITAL EXAM TABLE. He's  
talking to a nurse, indicating a sore throat -- she's the  
nurse from the apartment building. Joey SMILES.

TIMMY (O.S) (CONT'D)  
"...Sing, sing a soooooong."

Mike and Lawrence, IN A COFFEE SHOP eating and talking politics. Everybody has their own song to sing...

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

INT. DWYER DINING ROOM - A FEW DAYS LATER

Peggy finishes SEWING and holds up an odd pair of trousers to Timmy, in underpants and a medieval helmet. Frank is nearby.

PEGGY

Time to try your pantaloons, m'lord.

FRANK

It's dumb going to all this trouble.  
He's just the understudy.

PEGGY

An EXCELLENT understudy. You heard him sing. He's practically an Osmond.

TIMMY

I'm a heart-beat away from the star.

PEGGY

And you'll be ready if something should happen. That boy could get sick...

(picturing it)

or maybe fall and break a leg on the way to rehearsal. And if there aren't any people around, who's to say if he fell or got pushed, right Joey?

Joey is nearby, picturing it as well.

JOEY

The kid sounds like a klutz to me.

(to Timmy)

You'll need to point him out.

Lawrence gets out of the closet with the phone. Mike is there.

LAWRENCE

Okay, I just got off with UCLA. She says it's looking good for the fall.

MIKE

That's great.

LAWRENCE

She also says there's tons of organizing on campus -- against the president and the war.

MIKE

Less great.

Eddie enters, dressed to go out.

EDDIE

Hey Dad. Can I have the car? I want to go see Sheri.

PEGGY

Actually, no. I need the car tonight.

MIKE

Why on earth would you need it?

Sheri now enters through the front door.

SHERI

Ready to go, Mrs. Dwyer?

PEGGY

(to Mike)

Sheri's gonna teach me how to drive. You always say what a burden I am whenever I need a ride somewhere.

EDDIE

(to Sheri)

Okay but... we had stuff to do tonight?

SHERI

What stuff?

EDDIE

(full of insinuation)

You know... plans. Going to your house... watching TV.

SHERI

That wasn't anything. We can do that anytime. I want to hang out with your mom.

Eddie looks helplessly from Sheri to Peggy.

PEGGY

Don't look at me, it's your fault for picking a good one.

(to Mike, exiting)

Take the pot roast out of the oven at five-thirty, but only if the potatoes are brown...

Peggy and Sheri exit. Eddie and Mike stare after them helpless.

END OF SHOW