

DOYLE PILOT

Written by

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All of this is true. Some of it is even accurate.

COLD OPENING

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

ON THE TV -- ROBERT KENNEDY making a speech. MARK DOYLE (40ish) and BETTY DOYLE (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. Mark  
rises angrily.

MARK

Garbage.

BETTY

(at the TV)

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

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

SUPER-8 HOME MOVIES

Shirtless Mark on a stool in the yard of a pink stucco house.  
Betty 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.

Mark is now working on his metal lathe in the Logan Aerospace machine shop. Jet engines, rocket parts. Mark 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 Betty 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. MARK'S STATION WAGON - DAY

Betty 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 Betty pins a tiny veil atop her hairdo.

INT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

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

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

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

-- Mark, KEVIN (18), DAN (16), GREG (14), Timmy (12), CHRIS (8), Terry (6) and baby MATT in Betty's arms.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

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

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Betty, Mark 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.

Mark'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."

Mark rises, SLAMS off the TV and walks out.

MARK

Garbage!

The kids stare after him STUNNED.

BETTY

Music time! Chris.

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

INT. DOYLE KITCHEN - SUNDAY MORNING

Kevin and Dan 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 Dennis came home from college for the summer.

Dan suddenly LEAPS across the table at Kevin, knocking him and his cereal to the floor. Mark enters and Betty explains --

BETTY

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

TERRY (O.S)

He's here!

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

Mark, Betty, a few of the other boys enter and look out the front window as Dennis 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 Dennis in a place of honor atop the organ. Then CURRENT DENNIS gets out of his car with VERY LONG HAIR. Betty can feel Mark tense up.

MARK

What's that nonsense?

BETTY

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

MARK

Garbage.

END OF COLD OPENING

ACT ONE

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - LATER THAT MORNING

Mark's station wagon parks and DOYLES start flowing out...

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)  
Dennis 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 Dennis 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, GREG, CHRIS AND TERRY'S BEDROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Mark pulls the blankets off a sleeping Greg in the top bunk.

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

INT. CHURCH - LATER

The Doyles march SLO-MO like rock stars down the center aisle  
-- Dennis TURNING HEADS, Mark glowing with PRIDE.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)  
Having a future priest was a big source  
of status for us. Putting us way ahead  
of the Harrigans -- twelve kids and all  
they could manage was a nun.

ON DENNIS, waving to ADMIRERS.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)  
And Dennis 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 Dennis' 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 Greg are on the altar, as altar boys for the Mass. FR. LOOMIS (60) has reached the holiest part of the service.

FR. LOOMIS

"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. LOOMIS (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 Betty in the front pew. RING-RING! RING-RING-RING!

BETTY

That kid is a mental case.

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

EXT. CHURCH - LATER

The FAMILY out front of the church after Mass, Mark getting congratulated, Dennis and Betty smiling at WELL-WISHERS.

BETTY

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

DENNIS

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

BETTY

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

As Dennis greets Helen, Betty spots Timmy and crosses to him.

BETTY (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, GREG, CHRIS AND TERRY'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!!!!"

Chris 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. DOYLE KITCHEN - DAY

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

BETTY

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

Greg, Kevin, Dan and Terry RUSH IN and start piling plates.

DENNIS

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

BETTY

They teach Math there too?

Mark enters. Betty hands him a plate, already piled for him.

MARK

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

(to Dennis)

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

BETTY

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. DOYLE DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The other boys are already eating as Mark and Dennis enter.

MARK

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

KEVIN

Nixon's in the pocket of big business.

MARK

Nobody asked you, fathead.

(to Greg, re: Dennis)

Make room for your brother to sit.

Betty takes Greg's plate away.

GREG

I wasn't done with that pork chop yet.

BETTY

You can eat over the sink.

TERRY

(re: his food)

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

BETTY

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

DENNIS

(to Mark)

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

MARK

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

DENNIS

What about that Watergate break-in?

MARK

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!

Betty exits immediately, Dan trailing after her.

DENNIS

Sorry. I didn't mean to upset you.

MARK

I'm not upset...

KEVIN

You seem pretty up--

MARK

--You want to stay out of this?!

DENNIS

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...

Dennis files out awkwardly. Mark looking after him.

INT. TIMMY, GREG, CHRIS AND TERRY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

TIMMY

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

Betty JERKS the needle off the record. Dan is there too.

TIMMY (CONT'D)

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

BETTY

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

TIMMY

(carefully lying)  
Nothing. Just having fun.

BETTY

Well... stop that.

Betty exits. Dan eyes Timmy suspiciously.

DAN

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 --

-- Dan snatches the fliers and exits --

DAN

-- Mom!

TIMMY

No!!

INT. DOYLE KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Betty is feeding Matt in his high chair. Timmy and Dan look on.

TIMMY

Why can't I?

BETTY

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

TIMMY

I could take a bus. Or hitch-hike.

BETTY

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

DAN

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

BETTY

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 Danny 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.

Betty throws Timmy's flier in the trash. She and Dan exit.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

Limbo was Catholic dogma I never really got. I pictured sad unbaptized babies dancing under a stick for all eternity. But saving them couldn't compete with my chance to be a star...

Timmy pulls the flier from the trash and exits.

INT. DOYLE BATHROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Kevin is there as Betty hangs clean towels from her laundry basket. Terry and Chris run in breathless from the yard.

TERRY

Mommy, my lungs hurt. I have asthma.

CHRIS

You don't have asthma.

BETTY

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

Terry and Chris run off. Betty exits. Kevin crosses off.

INT. DENNIS AND KEVIN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dennis is there adjusting his clerical collar as Kevin enters.

DENNIS

I'm going to bingo tonight with Dad.

KEVIN

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

(off Dennis' look)

(MORE)

KEVIN (CONT'D)

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

DENNIS

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

KEVIN

Mark and Betty won't like that.

DENNIS

It's my decision, my life.

KEVIN

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

DENNIS

Just tell them "no."

KEVIN

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. Kevin.

DENNIS

Be straight with them about her.

KEVIN

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

A TOILET FLUSH and Dan enters grinning.

DAN

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

KEVIN

You didn't hear a thing.

DAN

I'll have to sleep on that. Tonight, in my own bed.

(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)

You'll like it where I've been  
sleeping, under the dining room table.  
You can still smell where the dog died.

DENNIS

Uncool, Dan, nobody likes a --

KEVIN

-- NARC!!!

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

EXT. DOYLE BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

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

DAN

(in pain)

Landed... on a sprinkler head.

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

INT. DOYLE DINING ROOM - THE SAME TIME

Betty is setting the dinner table. Chris enters with his usual low-key demeanor.

CHRIS

Excuse me, Momma. You should probably  
know that Dan and Kevin --

TERRY

(runs in FRANTIC)

Kevin is KILLING Dan!

CHRIS

Yeah.

Betty exits with Terry and Chris. Timmy now SNEAKS in, grabs the land-line phone and climbs unnoticed into the COAT CLOSET.

EXT. DOYLE BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

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

DAN

(with each blow)

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

Suddenly a GIANT HAND lifts Kevin by the head, up into the air so his feet DANGLE, then deposits him on a bench. Mark then lifts Dan 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. DOYLE BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Mark towering over Dan and Kevin. Betty is there too.

DAN

I'll explain. I heard the whole thing.

DENNIS

No. Stop. I will tell them...

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

DENNIS (CONT'D)

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

Mark and Betty stare at Dennis stunned.

MARK/BETTY

What?

DAN

What?!

All eyes turn to Dan.

DAN (CONT'D)

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

BETTY

Kevin has a secret girlfriend?

Betty throws a sharp look to Kevin as Mark glares at Dennis.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. DOYLE BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Mark, Betty, Kevin and Dan are as we left them.

BETTY

How long has this been going on?

DENNIS

I've been meditating about this for --

BETTY

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

KEVIN

(to Dan)

I seriously hate you.

BETTY

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

MARK

(to Dennis)

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

DENNIS

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

MARK

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

BETTY

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

Kevin winces. Betty gestures Mark toward the gate.

BETTY (CONT'D)

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

MARK

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

(MORE)

MARK (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.

Mark's ANGER hangs in the air over Dennis.

MARK (CONT'D)

And get a haircut!

Mark stomps off.

INT. DOYLE 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. DOYLE DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

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

INT. TIMMY, GREG, CHRIS AND TERRY'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.

GREG (O.S)

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

Greg 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, Greg?

GREG

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!

GREG

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

-- Greg OPENS the door suddenly to find Dan LURKING in the hall.

GREG (CONT'D)

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

INT. DOYLE BATHROOM - THE SAME TIME

Kevin is at the mirror attending to his scrapes as Terry stares up at him worried. Chris is also there. Dennis paces back and forth in the shower tub.

KEVIN

Mom is insisting on meeting Cheri tonight.

DENNIS

Why do we let them boss us around?

TERRY

(Re: Kevin's head)

That's a bad bump, maybe a subdural hematoma.

CHRIS

It's not.

TERRY

John Quincy Adams died from a subdural hematoma.

KEVIN

Terry, I'm not going to die!

CHRIS  
(to Terry)  
Told you.

TERRY  
I guess.

CHRIS  
You sound disappointed.

TERRY  
A little.

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

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

DENNIS  
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.

DENNIS (CONT'D)  
Who's there?

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

KEVIN/CHRIS/DENNIS/TERRY  
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 Greg's den of iniquity --  
a mini-fridge, sexy blacklight posters and a sound system,  
powered by a tangle of cords. Greg sits in a beanbag chair  
sipping a cognac. Timmy climbs up through the floor hatch.

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

TIMMY

My problem is you stealing my money.

GREG

You really need to let that go.

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

GREG (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.

GREG

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.

GREG

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.

GREG

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.

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

GREG (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. Greg watches intently as Timmy exits via the floor hatch.

INT. DOYLE DINING ROOM - LATER

Betty SEWS at her vintage Singer. Kevin enters with Cheri, small but formidable. Betty holds up a pair of jeans for Chris to inspect, colorful patches sewn on the knees.

BETTY

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

Chris takes the jeans SOLEMNLY and exits. Betty calls after.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Trust me, that is the style these days. Ratty dungarees with patches.  
(to Cheri 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?

KEVIN

Mom, this is my girlfriend, Cheri.

BETTY

Your girlfriend. Kevin has a girlfriend. How come?

CHERI

I'm sorry.

BETTY

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

CHERI

Lots of people our age are going steady.

BETTY

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

CHERI

Around four months.

BETTY

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.

Betty smiles and goes back to her SEWING. Cheri has been dismissed. Kevin is crushed. But Cheri stands her ground.

CHERI

I think you are amazing, Mrs. Doyle.

Betty stops sewing, always intrigued by praise.

CHERI (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.

BETTY

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

CHERI

I wouldn't know.

BETTY

Correct answer.

Betty takes Cheri's hand and leads her off. Kevin is left gawping after them. Dan enters in pajamas, ready for bed.

DAN

Good night.

Dan 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.

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

FR. LOOMIS

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

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

MARK

I said we would do this later.

DENNIS

(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.

MARK

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

A CHEERY PARISHIONER crosses past.

CHEERY PARISHIONER

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

MARK

Oh I am.

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

MARK (CONT'D)

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

DENNIS

Not until I tell Fr. Loomis my decision.

MARK

We haven't decided your decision yet!

FR. LOOMIS

(over the loudspeaker)

I've just noticed a celebrity amongst us tonight, Dennis Doyle, our handsome seminarian.

The crowd APPLAUDS for Dennis. He waves awkwardly.

FR. LOOMIS (CONT'D)

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

MARK

(through clenched teeth)

Do not say a word to him!

Dennis crosses and sits at the ball machine with Fr. Loomis. Fr. Loomis pulls a ball for him, as Mark watches warily.

DENNIS

(over the loudspeaker)

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

FR. LOOMIS

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

DENNIS

I thought you were resting your voice.

Fr. Loomis LAUGHS and hands Dennis another ball.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

"B four."

The CROWD happily erupts in unison --

CROWD

And after!

DENNIS

"B four."

CROWD

And after!

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

DENNIS

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

Everyone looks to Dennis expecting a witticism. Dennis considers, throws a defiant look to Mark, and --

DENNIS (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. Dennis looks around, as the crowd, Fr. Loomis, EVERYONE just stares. Mark 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 Dennis pulls up in his VW bug.

DENNIS

It's pretty late. Want a ride?

INT. DENNIS' VW BUG - MOMENTS LATER

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

DENNIS

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

They pull up in front of the Doyle house.

DENNIS (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. Dennis looks after him.

TIMMY (CONT'D)

Are you coming in?

Dennis shakes his head "no" and drives off.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Betty is now feeding Matt a bottle. Mark stands with the fridge door open, picking meat off a ham.

MARK

He said it, Bett. 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.

BETTY

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

(off Mark picking at ham)

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

MARK

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.

BETTY

Kevin's got a girlfriend now, so the  
whole world's gone mad.

MARK

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.

BETTY

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 Betty.

MARK

What's that kid going on about?

BETTY

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

MARK

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

BETTY

And where does this AJ live?

MARK

Don't know and don't care.

DAN (O.S)

In Burbank, across from Shafer Field!

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

BETTY

Thank you.

(to Mark)

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

MARK

You're ordering me what to do now?

BETTY

Yes, when you're being dumb. Mark, 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.

MARK

Who might say that?

BETTY

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 Dennis being a priest. I don't care what any of our kids do with their lives. Just as long as --

MARK

(dismissive)

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

BETTY

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.

Betty glares at Mark. He is persuaded but won't give ground.

MARK

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

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

DAN (O.S)  
(from under the table)  
Across from Shafer Field.

MARK  
Shut up.

INT. TIMMY, GREG, CHRIS AND TERRY'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 Greg 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. Dennis' VW Bug in a driveway. Across the street in his car, Mark is watching and waiting.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)  
As a parent have you ever had that thing where your kid defies you and you take a hard line, but then 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.

Mark 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 Mark, as is Dennis who looks up NAKED from among the blankets of a water-bed on the floor.

AJ  
Dennis, I think it's your dad.

MARK  
And I guess there's no pretending you're AJ's mom.  
(to Dennis)  
Hey cowboy, get dressed.

DENNIS  
I have no intention of going home with you.

MARK

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, GREG, CHRIS AND TERRY'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. DOYLE KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Timmy enters. Betty is sorting laundry with Chris and Terry.

TIMMY

Mom. I'm off to save more souls.

BETTY

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

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

BETTY (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.

BETTY

Oh, take your brother with you.

(indicating Chris)

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

Timmy sighs and exits with Chris.

TERRY

Mommy, will I get rickets?

BETTY

If you don't mind your Ps and Qs.

INT. HOLLYWOOD BUS - LATER

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

TIMMY

Hey. Am I a bad singer?

CHRIS

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. MARK'S STATION WAGON - DAY

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

DENNIS

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

Mark stews for another beat, then --

MARK

You quit the priesthood for a girl?

DENNIS

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

MARK

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

DENNIS

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 all big changes happening in the world right now and I --

MARK

-- 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. And I got excited because, hey, it's respectable, a career... Certainly a step up for the Doyles. 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.

DENNIS

Whoa.

MARK

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

DENNIS

It's going to the moon?

MARK

Yes, we're sending a nuclear warhead to blow up the moon. We're fed up with having tides and women's periods.  
(off Dennis' 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.

DENNIS

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

MARK

(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 Dennis)

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...

(MORE)

MARK (CONT'D)

My father, William Dennis Doyle, he  
scratched at the earth for his living.  
I want my sons reaching the stars.

Dennis stares hard at Mark, absorbing all this.

MARK (CONT'D)

We should get back. Gotta go to work.

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

MARK (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.

MARK (CONT'D)

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

INT. DOYLE KITCHEN - THE SAME TIME

Betty comes in with more laundry. Dan is waiting for her.

DAN

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

BETTY

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

Betty gathers her purse and keys.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD - LATER

The bus stops on a rough corner. Massage parlors, pawn shops.  
Timmy and Chris 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

Dan is driving, with Betty in the back-seat like an Uber.

BETTY

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

DAN

The show is actually charging him.

BETTY

Crooks taking advantage of a dumb kid.

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

BETTY (CONT'D)

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

INT. THEATER - A LITTLE LATER

Timmy and Chris 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 Doyle.

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 Chris, 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. Betty and Dan 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. Chris 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 Chris...

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 Betty. Dan is growing impatient. Key change! The song BUILDS!

TIMMY (CONT'D)

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

BETTY

(abruptly to Dan)

Okay, we should go.

DAN

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

BETTY

-- He's EXCELLENT.

She cuts Dan off decisively and exits. Dan 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 Doyles --

Kevin and Cheri, PLAYING WITH BABY MATT, looking like the  
loving parents they might be some day.

TIMMY (O.S) (CONT'D)

"SING for you and for me..."

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

TIMMY (O.S) (CONT'D)

"Just sing, sing a song..."

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

TIMMY (O.S) (CONT'D)

"...Sing, sing a soooooong."

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

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

INT. DOYLE DINING ROOM - A FEW DAYS LATER

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

BETTY

Time to try your pantaloons, m'lord.

DAN

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

BETTY

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

TIMMY

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

BETTY

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 Greg?

Greg is nearby, picturing it as well.

GREG

The kid sounds like a klutz to me.

(to Timmy)

You'll need to point him out.

Dennis gets out of the closet with the phone. Mark is there.

DENNIS

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

MARK

That's great.

DENNIS

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

MARK

Less great.

Kevin enters, dressed to go out.

KEVIN

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

BETTY

Actually, no. I need the car tonight.

MARK

Why on earth would you need it?

Cheri now enters through the front door.

CHERI

Ready to go, Mrs. Doyle?

BETTY

(to Mark)

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

KEVIN

(to Cheri)

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

CHERI

What stuff?

KEVIN

(full of insinuation)

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

CHERI

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

Kevin looks helplessly from Cheri to Betty.

BETTY

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

(to Mark, exiting)

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

Betty and Cheri exit. Kevin and Mark stare after them helpless.

END OF SHOW