

JOHN looks up at her and nods. His face is open and as earnest as a young child's.

The HOST smiles down at him and scoots to the end of her chair. Watching. Indicates for him to continue.

JOHN Yes. Just like that. I could . . . it was so hot in there, and bright . . . the police had made it inside the room and I could hear a bunch of voices, like, on the radio and from outside . . . the sound of copters going overhead . . . and I was, I was trying to get to a safe place but he said to me, God is talking to me at that moment and he says, "Don't move. Stay where you are. All will be well and tomorrow go spread my gospel of goodness. That all men should work at this, that goodness is all that matters." (Beat.) I'm paraphrasing, of course, but it was basically that. / And he wanted me to go spread it . . . this message of good will.

HOST I see. / Wow. That's . . . it really comes down to that, huh? Just . . . being "good?" (Smiles.) Don't even have to worry about taxes, huh? Just-be-good.

JOHN I don't . . . I can only say what I heard.

HOST I suppose that's true. / So . . .

JOHN Yeah. / I mean . . .

HOST You lived so you could tell us that. (She imitates JOHN.) "Be good now."

JOHN Something like that . . .

HOST I see. (Bigger this time.) "Hey everybody, be good!" (To JOHN.) Sort of like a game-show host or something. / "WELL HEY THERE, FOLKS! Just keep on being good, okay!!"

JOHN What do you mean? / No, not like . . .

HOST It's a little simplistic, isn't it?

JOHN No, it's not simplistic . . . I'll tell you what it is—it's simple. That's what.

HOST What is? (Beat.) It's simple to be good?

JOHN Yeah, it is. It's just a choice.

HOST Well, I think about three-quarters of my viewing audience would probably disagree with you, John, but . . .

JOHN Because they're weak. Like I was. I would always choose the easy way out. The quick and safe path. Don't stand out and do not make waves. It's . . . you know what, it's much easier to do the wrong thing or make bad choices . . . it is. Who cares anymore?

HOST . . . well, somebody must . . . (To camera.) In fact, that's a great call-in question for a bit later in the show. Let's hear from some viewers: "Hey you out there, do you think that anyone really cares? Do you?"

JOHN All we want to do is get to the end. Most of us. Live life and get whatever we can for ourselves and screw anybody who gets in the way. We don't do crimes because we don't want to get caught, go to jail, get raped by some prisoner . . . not because it's a sin. Because we *shouldn't*. (Beat.) Being good is hard. I couldn't do it before, back when I was married and just living my life, it was almost impossible!! I did all kinds of crap every day that I'm ashamed of and got away with but that's not me now. God told me "no." He spoke right to me—you make light of it if you want, but—this voice as clear as you or I talking reached out and saved me and let me know what I need to be doing on earth. Life, it is precious, it's short and, and can be the most *amazing* . . . but you have to work

at it! You have to appreciate people and you have to do good.
Good, brave things and so that's . . . I'm . . . I do that now.

HOST Well, I certainly know what you mean . . . "prison rape" is definitely on my list of bad things, too! Morning breath. Ummmmm, FACEBOOK. Oh, and *sloth*—I am impossible at getting up in the morning!! (*Smiling.*) So, John, let's try and . . . (*startled*) An "ottoman!" That's the . . . the foot-thingie, that's what they're called. An ottoman. Thank God! I'm so glad I thought of that!

JOHN gets up, standing instead of sitting in his chair.

HOST John . . . you're not in our shot anymore.

JOHN Excuse me?

HOST You need to sit down. / John, we can't get both of us in the frame if you're . . .

JOHN No, I don't . . . / I see what you're doing now. You're just making fun of me.

HOST No, John, I'm not doing that—it's just a bit hard to swallow, you know? All this.

JOHN Then don't. Don't swallow it. That's up to you . . . / It's the word of God. Do with it whatever you want. (*Beat.*) I'm going.

HOST Don't leave. That's not the way to . . . / You can't just leave!

JOHN Good-bye. / Yes, I can. Watch me.

HOST John, please just sit down and we'll . . . / We should go to a commercial . . . can we . . . ?

JOHN No. This is . . . just stop! No. (*Beat.*) Look, we're all searching, every day people are out there trying to find the,

you know . . . answers, the *big* answer to what's wrong in their lives. Everybody is! It's not just me—I've had people spit on me and others chase me down the street, just to hold my hand. (*Beat.*) I didn't want this. I was at work, just doing my job and this thing happened. A guy went nuts shooting people and I survived. I got through it and I'm okay. I took a photo but I didn't . . . I don't even know what I'm saying now, but God spoke to me, he choose right then to take charge of my life and so be it! You think that's crazy . . . how 'bout Noah? And Moses? Or Adam and goddamn Eve? Huh? Read the Koran or the Bible or any of it. All of this is crazy! Every last guy in the belly of a *whale's* insane. Okay? Totally bonkers . . . but it's also *true*. (*Beat.*) So I don't care if you're not . . . just forget it. This is bullshit.

JOHN walks off. HOST is left sitting in her chair.

HOST I can't believe he's . . . "bullshit," huh? Well, that's not very Christ-like, now, is it? (*Smiles.*) That's okay, folks, that is alright. We'll buzz that out later—you'll never know we had a problem. Join us tomorrow when we visit with two transsexuals who are both suing the state of California for the right to sunbathe topless. (*Tries to hold her smile.*) Can somebody—are you gonna stop rolling or what? I mean, Jesus Christ—can we *please* go to break here, or . . . ? (*Beat.*) Please?

The TV HOST stares out toward the darkened auditorium.

A burst of intense light carries us on to:

A bed. A man is face down and naked, save for a few bits of well-placed leather. He is gagged and tied. Ass up in the air. Full mask over his head.

A woman in a leather outfit is next to him—this is DIVA MIDNIGHT. She whips him slowly and repeatedly. He flinches each time. After a while he holds up a hand and signals to her. Garbled speech.

She comes over, removes his mask and his gag. He looks up at her. It is JOHN SMITH, looking a little dazed.

DIVA . . . speak now.

JOHN Owwww. (Beat.) I mean . . .

DIVA Does that hurt, my pet?

JOHN Yeah, it kinda does. Ooohhh. Yes.

DIVA Do you like that? / You don't?

JOHN Ummmm, no, not really. No. / It, ummm, stings so it's not . . .

DIVA What?

JOHN It, ahhhh . . . it hurts? Like, ouch?

DIVA Hurts what?

JOHN Ummmmmm . . . I dunno, I'm confused . . . hurts me?

DIVA Yes. And? / And?

JOHN And . . . and . . . it hurts me a lot . . . ?/ Like, more than I want it to? I'm not sure what you're driving at . . . here . . .

A quick snap from the whip across JOHN's ass. He jerks to attention. He yells out.

DIVA "It hurts, Mistress."

JOHN Oh, sorry, that's right . . . "it hurts, Mistress." (*Cringes.*)

Wow. *Damn* . . . that thing really packs a, you know . . . /

Owww. Punch. I guess.

DIVA No, what? / Yes.

JOHN *turns on his side a bit, toward the woman as he tries to protect himself a moment.*

JOHN Can we just . . . ?

DIVA What?

JOHN Ummm . . . like, take a rest here for a sec? Hold off on the . . . all of the whacking for a minute? (*Beat.*) I'm kinda . . . I couldn't use that code word—what's it called? The "safe" word—because your gag was so . . .

DIVA Is that what you want? To stop?

JOHN I'm . . . just for a . . . it was hard to breath in there. And that zipper was kinda . . .

DIVA I thought you wanted me to control you—to not care what you wanted? Hmmm?

JOHN Yeah, no, I did say that, you're right, when I came . . . I wanted to try something that was, you know, like this. A bit more extreme to see if God would still . . . see if he'd still speak to me . . . / Yes, and . . .

DIVA God?/ Oh. (*Beat.*) And so? So? Did he?

JOHN I just . . . I don't mean stop the clock or anything like that . . . I'll just . . . I need, like, a breather, alright? Because this may be the wrong . . . sort of . . . ahhhh . . . / This feels more like . . . a *sin* now. This.

JOHN *scrambles for a moment, trying to think of the right word.*

DIVA I'm listening . . . / Ahh. I see.

JOHN I mean, I'm sure you're good at it . . . doing it the right way and everything, but it's not—this isn't doing what I thought it might do. For me.

DIVA No?

JOHN Uh-uh. I was sort of hoping for . . . I dunno, but the handcuffs are starting to pinch a little and—okay—and, ummm, I wanted to dare myself . . . with all this stuff you've been doing to me, but I never thought it through, I guess. Not completely, anyway, and I just feel like maybe it's not . . . you know . . . it's not for me to test God. Or my faith. (*Beat.*) It was a moment of weakness for me, of *lust*, and, and old habits that bubbled up, but I just . . . now I feel . . .

DIVA Yes? / Tell me.

JOHN I dunno . . . / Ashamed. Or something. Of *me*.

DIVA You do?

JOHN Uh-uh. Because I'm a new man. Yes.

DIVA Yes what?

JOHN "Yes, Mistress?"

DIVA Very good. (*Beat.*) And yet here we are . . .

She snaps her whip through the air for emphasis. Crack!

DIVA Are you sure we've never done this before now? You seem very familiar . . . (*Pinches him.*) . . . with this.

JOHN Aaaahhh! "Thank you, Mistress." (*Beat.*) But, see . . . about that?

DIVA Yes?

JOHN Umm, the thing is . . . I mean, how I came to find your personal ad in that magazine? Is this . . .

DIVA I'm listening. (*Checks watch.*) For another ten minutes . . .

JOHN Right, right—so, look, I did want to see if I'd have any more attraction to . . . *this* again. / Yes. This isn't . . . I'm not a first-timer. Not at *this*—I don't mean, like, chains or *peeing* on each other—I haven't done that but I've gone to women before. Paid. (*Beat.*) And your ad made me curious.

DIVA "Again?"/ About what, my pet?

JOHN A kind of darker lifestyle—after what's happened to me, I thought it'd be, like, challenging to try this—It's not always been easy for me to open up with people in my ordinary life so it . . . seemed kinda logical to try this . . . something off the beaten path and in private. Like yourself or some person who would . . . what you do. Who does things. To men.

JOHN *glances over at her to see how that landed. Waits.*

DIVA "Things?"

JOHN Yes. Things. Help me understand myself . . . *about* myself. Who I am. Or used to be.

DIVA I don't follow.

JOHN I was . . . I used to maybe . . . (*Beat.*) I was someone who probably used women before. Back when I was—earlier in my life. So.

DIVA I see. / Yes.

JOHN Got massages or, saw, ladies who . . . I also did a *lot* of porno. Understand? / You do?

She reaches over and rubs the whip across his back—over and around JOHN's body. Caressing him.

JOHN I'm . . . please don't hit me again . . .

DIVA Why did you come here, then? Tell me that, before your hour is up . . .

JOHN I'm . . . I needed to . . .

DIVA Tell your Mistress. Why-are-you-here?

She raises up the whip again—JOHN flinches and reacts.

JOHN Okay, okay! Look, I came here to . . . because of two things . . . like I said, to test myself and see if I felt any . . . you know . . . *draw* again . . . / And because I knew your mother.

DIVA Yes, and? And? / . . . excuse me? What?

Her voice is different and her whole demeanor is changed. She is now just a concerned young woman. She stares over at him.

JOHN I was . . . I worked with her. At Sanford-Gross. We were both very . . . yes.

DIVA I see. So, you're . . . are you trying to get me to sign that . . . ? / You are, aren't you?

JOHN No. / No, of course not! This has nothing to do with the court case. That's a civil thing. Honestly. I'm just here because . . .

DIVA . . . oh, my God . . . then why would you . . . ? (*Stops.*) That's where I know you from! On the TV. You're that . . . oh, God . . .

JOHN I didn't know how to approach you! One of my other colleagues, a woman from the sales department, Mrs. Reynolds, do you know her? Dolores Reynolds? / A redhead? She was sick that day and . . . it doesn't matter. She had your number, so I . . .

DIVA Maybe . . . / My mom was . . . she knew a lot of, I mean, she had friends all over . . .

JOHN I would never do this normally, come here to where you . . . work . . . and do all this . . . but I went through that whole thing, too, and I'm really struggling . . . / Can you . . . ?

JOHN *indicates toward the bondage devices. She responds.*

DIVA Oh. I see. / Sorry. Here, let me . . .

She pulls JOHN upright. He staggers to his feet in all his handcuffs and leg chains and spiked collar glory. He's quite a sight. She releases him from his bonds.

JOHN I was actually talking to her, your mom, maybe an hour before it all happened . . .

DIVA Really? / Wow, that's . . . really? She did?

JOHN Yeah, a lovely person, always upbeat and very happy. Had pictures of you out there on her desk . . . / Oh yeah! Right when I saw you I recognized you—even with the whip.

DIVA I'm surprised. We didn't always get along because of . . . you know. Partly this.

JOHN Well, she spoke highly of you. Very.

DIVA Huh. Okay, so . . . that's . . . ummm . . .

Her eyes well up a bit and she crosses the room to get a Kleenex. JOHN quickly pulls on his street clothes.

JOHN I'm the guy who took the picture. (Beat.) You've no doubt seen it . . . that was me in there, who did that.

She turns to JOHN, looking him up and down. Silent for the moment.

DIVA Oh. / So, I mean . . . you did all that? The snapshot?

JOHN Yeah. / I did, yes. (Beat.) I'm trying to go see as many people—families of the deceased as I can so that I'm . . . people need to understand that I was just . . .

DIVA She was in there. / My mom.

JOHN I know. / Yes, that's why I . . . that's . . .

DIVA You took a photo of her. Dead.

JOHN It wasn't . . . no . . . I didn't know what I was doing . . . it was happening so fast and I just kept . . . I was crawling along . . .

DIVA . . . and you stopped to take that picture? With her body all . . . like that?

JOHN Yes, but not for any . . . I thought maybe later that families might—it was the gunman that I . . . that's why I took it. Because of him. (Beat.) I'm sorry . . .

DIVA I see. (Beat.) I dunno what else to say.

JOHN I really am. Honestly . . . (Beat.) I thought that people would want to know the truth. The story of that day . . . you know? / After it was all over. But I never . . .

DIVA Okay. / And all that money? I know you sold it, so . . . that's . . .

JOHN It mostly went to charity and to, to . . . a bunch of . . . various . . . things like that.

DIVA I see. "Mostly."

JOHN I also came to give you some . . . I mean, out of what's left of the . . . I'd like to give you it to you. If it would help.

DIVA Help what?

JOHN I don't know, I'm just . . . to start a . . .

DIVA You're not going to insult me now, are you?

JOHN . . . no . . .

DIVA About my life and who I am, what I do or shit like that?

JOHN No, of course not. I just thought it . . .

DIVA It won't bring her back. Will it?

JOHN It can't, no . . . but I just . . . I thought if we could talk then maybe you'd see that I was . . . / You'd see that I cared about her, about . . .

DIVA What? / About my mom? You did?

JOHN Absolutely yes! I had lunch with her many times . . . over the years? A lot of times . . . we were friendly. On good, good terms.

DIVA Okay. Well, that's nice to know.

JOHN Janice was my friend. She really was.

DIVA Yeah? / Ummmm, no. Please don't.

JOHN Yes, Jill. She was . . . (Beat.) May I call you that? "Jill?" / I'm sorry?

DIVA I'd rather that you . . . they don't know my real name here and we're not acquainted. I don't know you, Mr. . . . ? (Stares at him.) Although, yeah, I do recognize you now. From the news and, like, magazines . . .

JOHN I'm Mr. Smith. John. / What did I . . . ?

DIVA Mr. Smith, look, you are not anybody to me, so please don't do that again . . . / Use my name.

JOHN But I was—I know we got off on the wrong foot here with all the . . . but please . . .

DIVA I'm sorry, our session is over. There's a shower next door. Towel is complimentary. (Beat.) I hope you enjoyed yourself today and will return to Tina's Dungeon in the very near future . . .

She looks at him but doesn't leave. She hovers.

DIVA I'll see you in front. (Waits.) Let me ask you something, though, and think about it before you answer me. Before you go. Are you sure she was dead, when you took that picture?/ Was-my-mom-dead?/ For certain?

JOHN What? / . . . yes. / Well, I mean, I didn't . . .

DIVA I know how she looked, I know that, but this "friend" of yours, who you ate so many lunches with and was laying there bleeding on that marble floor—you took the photo, you lived that day, showed the world what happened there—all important stuff. But did you stop for two seconds to see if you could help her? My mother? Did you put your finger to her neck and check her pulse? Did you do at least that much, Mr. Smith? (Beat.) Did you?

JOHN . . . I . . . no, I didn't. / I did not. No.

DIVA No? / Huh. I wonder why . . .

She turns heel (all six inches of them) and heads off.

JOHN Mistress! / Diva Midnight!

DIVA Yes? / What is it?

JOHN Please . . . I know you don't owe me anything or, or know me from Adam, not really. I'm doing this thing—trying to change who I am and let the world know that—and it is really hard! You know? People don't want it, do not wanna hear it, or believe that I could be this . . . new . . . guy. But I am and I just want you to know—I'm sure she was gone . . . I'm sure of it! I feel completely sure . . . she was at peace and . . . that's . . . *(He holds out his hands.)* Diva, would you pray with me? Just for a moment, in the quiet of this room here . . . could we do that? Just two people who need the love of God in their hearts, might you do that with me? *Please? (Beat.)* I'll pay for . . .

She stares at him—he jumps up to his feet and goes to a hook on the wall where his jacket hangs. Reaches in his pocket and produces an envelope. He sits on the bed.

DIVA What's that?

JOHN It's nothing. Don't keep it if you don't want to—give it away. It's what I've . . . it's just money. It doesn't matter. Don't think of it as . . . just do what's in your heart. That's what God wants. Because he knows that if you search there—if you do it with kindness and grace—that you'll do the right thing. Every time. You will! *(Smiles.)* Please . . . take my hand and we can just . . . let's pray for a moment. Two of us who once were lost but now . . . please. I'm asking you with a pure heart. Please, I beg you. Please. *Please.*

DIVA nods and takes his hand. She sits next to him. She starts to cry. He holds her as they bow in prayer. JOHN continues to mumble a prayer in her ear.

JOHN *(Building.)* Hand yourself over to him, my dear . . . do it.

Do it now. Open your heart and allow the light of Christ to enter. To enter and fill you up. Let him fill you up! / Say it to him, say it now! Say “please enter my body and fill me up!!” / Let him hear you then, my child, tell him your name and let him know that you're here, that you want his love, that you need him . . . / Tell him again! Again! / And again!! Tell him who you are, my angel!!

DIVA *(Escalating.)* Please, yes. *Please* fill me up. / *Please!* /

My name . . . my name is Jill. I'm Jill! / Oh God, please . . . please! *Please!* I'm Jill! / I want you now! I need you! It's me! It's Jill! / Oh God, I'm Jill! I'm Jill! Jill!!

JOHN and DIVA sit on the bed, praying and clutching each other. She is working herself into a kind of frenzy.

A burst of intense light carries us on to:

An outdoor mall. Middle of some suburban tangle with lots of stores around and milling crowds. It's been raining.

JOHN is alone on a bench. Watching the clock. He is about to get up as a woman approaches him. This is JESSE, first cousin to Ginger.

JESSE . . . hey. Sorry. / Parking. *And the rain.*

JOHN Oh. Hi. Don't worry. / Yeah, it's . . .

JESSE The mall sucks. Especially this kind.

JOHN I know.

JESSE Why'd you pick this place? *Outdoors...*

JOHN I dunno. I just . . . *(Beat.)* Because of the press and all that, I guess. Sorry.

JESSE Yeah, well, they'll never follow you out here!

JOHN I know. *(Smiling.)* Thanks for meeting me.

JESSE Sure. *(Beat.)* Saw you on TV one night.

JOHN Great. / Ha! Terrific. It's the *hair*.

JESSE It made you look older. / Yeah, that shit is crazy! *(Beat.)*
Anyway . . .

JOHN You didn't really sound like you wanted to come when I called, said you're only doing me a favor . . .

JESSE . . . I didn't know for sure. You sending me an e-mail like that. / I'm still trying to make sense of it.

JOHN Look, I . . . I don't even know how to begin this . . . / I need to come clean, I do, but I want you to do it, too. / With me.

JESSE *What?* / Are you . . . ?! No.

JOHN We *have* to admit it! *All* of it.

JESSE No fucking way. What're you even . . . ?

JOHN Because I don't feel good about the past. I feel like shit.

And, and . . .

JESSE Okay, fine, but . . . / I hear you, but John . . .

JOHN I need to start feeling better about myself and I don't. /

So *that's* why . . .

JESSE I get it, John, but I can't do this right now! (*Beat.*) I can't have this shit in my life today or, like, even soon . . .

JOHN Why not? / Isn't it better to face it, get it over with instead of being . . . all . . .

JESSE What? / Really, you gotta ask me that?

JOHN Yeah, I do. Yes. Tell me. Why?

JESSE Because we're . . . you and I have had this, like, a very serious and, and longish relationship going, without my cousin ever knowing about it. Alright?

JOHN This is what I'm talking about! She's my wife and I've been deceiving her with . . . for so long! *Forever*, and I just . . . look, I want to be honest for once . . . I'm . . .

JESSE I know, I know! But listen, what do you think the world says when they find out that you've had an affair, and I mean a prolonged thing with the cousin of your ex-wife—that this happened *before* you were divorced—you think they're gonna believe another thing you say? A *single* word that comes outta your mouth? Do you? That'll be the end of all this . . . this . . .

JOHN Who cares? / I'm different now, right?

JESSE What? / Yeah, but you're . . . you *still* . . .

JOHN I'm saying "who cares?" If it's true, I mean, if it *really* is—if I'm a changed person—why do I care if people think I'm a liar or not about it all? / I know the truth now . . .

JESSE *Because.* / But they'll . . . people get all . . . they'll judge you! They constantly judge.

JOHN I know whether all that shit happened to me in there or not. Period. So screw it. I can take what they throw at me, but I need to release myself from the rest of it. (*Takes her hands.*) Please understand. It's not just me asking for this . . . it's God. It *is*. Please, Jesse! Let's do this. Together . . . we can do this now, the *right* thing. We can.

JESSE *doesn't react for a moment as she studies JOHN's face. JOHN sits and waits.*

JOHN I just wanted you to hear about it from me and not have Ginger get all . . .

JESSE Don't say shit about her, alright? Don't start in on that or I'm outta here, right now. I mean it. (*Beat.*) "Ginger."

JOHN Sorry. I didn't mean to . . .

JESSE Yeah, well, just don't. 'Kay?

JOHN Fine. Sorry.

JESSE Whatever. I have my own thing with her so that's my deal—you just worry about us.

JOHN Sure. (*Beat.*) I know that she can get in a place where she can't help but bad-mouth me sometimes, so. That's all I'm saying. (*Beat.*) This is me asking this, to bring us out into the open. To put away the old.

JESSE Fine.

JOHN And I don't want that to be your only . . . there's a new "me" that I want to share with you, that's all. Isn't that okay, Jesse?

JESSE I guess.

JOHN I was gonna call you, I promise . . .

JESSE I'll bet. / I wonder about that . . .

JOHN Honestly. / I was! / I just wanted to . . .

JESSE Yeah, when? / Next year? Or maybe . . .

JOHN I need to have time, time alone with you so that you can see this guy, get to know the man that I want to be now. For you *and* for Ginger and, you know . . . for everybody. (Beat.) I want this to be the start of a new thing between us all. Whatever it is that we can sort out here and not feel . . . I'm *trying*, okay? I want it to end happily if it can . . . (Beat.) I hope that doesn't sound weird. Does it?

JESSE Kinda.

JOHN It's not, I promise, I'm just . . . I need . . .

JESSE I mean . . . can you even hear yourself when you're talking like that or does it just, like, *leak* out of your head? How can you even say shit that is so retarded? Huh? (Beat.)

JOHN It's not retarded. / Stop . . .

JESSE Come sit where I am and then say that. / You should hear yourself: "end happily."

JOHN You know what? Forget it. Just screw you, Jesse. (Beat.) I knew this was a mistake.

JESSE Ahhhh, there's my baby! *That's* more like the John I know . . .

JOHN You're an idiot and I don't have to sit here and, and, and deal with it . . .

JESSE Never have before, why start now?! / Nah, you're more of the fuck 'em and leave 'em type, right?

JOHN Just shut up. Okay? / . . . hey, watch your . . .

She puts her hands up in his face—JOHN pushes her away.

JESSE What? You wanna hit me, too—oohhhh, it's a really special outing here today!

JOHN You're so . . . I *knew* this would happen . . .

JESSE That's right . . . / 'Course ya did.

JOHN I did know! / . . . such an asshole . . .

JESSE Yep, you've *really* changed, good for you.

JOHN You try and talk to somebody, just have a goddamn *conversation* with a person and it blows up in your face! It always does.

JESSE You're not talking with me, you're just spouting shit in my direction, telling me all your little . . . *visions* and, and . . . and you want me to make you feel better about all the bad shit we've done . . .

JOHN . . . don't worry about it . . . / Ohhh, just . . .

JESSE . . . like this is some new, amazing deal! / Don't point your finger at me! Don't!

JOHN . . . we don't need to understand each other or anything like that, we don't, we can just keep limping along pretending that we're listening, that we care! Whatever.

JESSE Exactly right, baby. Just like the little kiddies say. "What-ever."

JOHN Wow, so . . . fucking funny . . .

JESSE Boy, listen to your mouth. Huh? You don't sound so much like Jesus in his little manger now, do ya?

JOHN Don't worry about me! / Then . . . *don't!*

JESSE I don't. / I won't!!

JOHN You think a person can't swear and still love God, huh? Of course I can, I'm just trying to be better. You think I can't be living in his embrace but know for a fact that you are a goddamn moron? Hmmm?! Is that what you think?!

JESSE I don't give a shit, that's what I think! I do not care what's going through your fucking head anymore, so there . . .

JOHN You think I can't realize that you're a *cunt*—and I don't like using that word, but—someone who wants to make trouble for her own family . . . / Who would go to somebody after messing around with the husband of her own *cousin* and then goes and make trouble when they're working to get through their problems . . . / For what? What's the *point* of that if not trouble?

JESSE Listen, you cocksucker, don't even . . . / You don't have a fucking clue about it, anything I'm saying here, so just don't! / You think you're changed, so prove it!! Show us all the amazing shit you have in your life now, go on!! Prove it!

JOHN You want . . . money or something, I suppose? Come on! Just say it! *YOU SAY IT. SAY IT TO ME. I WANT MONEY. I WANT ALL OF YOUR MONEY OR, OR TO GET BACK AT MY FAMILY OR TO HURT SOMEBODY BECAUSE MY LIFE IS SHIT! MY LIFE IS SHIT AND I'M ANGRY!! SAY IT!!! I AM AN ANGRY, GREEDY LITTLE BITCH AND I ALWAYS WILL BE!!!!*

They stop for a moment, both realizing again that they're in public. Silence. JESSE finally looks up at JOHN.

JOHN This has *always* been about using me . . . using *me* to get at her. *Always*. Why would you stop now? Huh?! *WHY?!*

Without warning JESSE smacks JOHN across the face. Hard. Several times.

JOHN's eyes widen. He tenses up, like he's about to hit JESSE; after a moment, though, he bursts into tears. Big torrents of tears.

Despite herself, JESSE begins to pat JOHN's back.

JOHN . . . *(Weeping.)* Oh, Jesse, I don't know . . . I'm so lost . . . I just feel so, so . . . I mean, I'm trying and I try but, shit, I'm just sinking out here! Can't help it . . . *Help me . . . please . . .*

JOHN puts his head down in an effort to hide his face. JESSE reaches out and cradles him.

JESSE Shh. Stop. S'okay. *(Holds him.)* You know what? As far as what happened goes, I, for one, kinda believed you. I'm serious.

JOHN . . . yeah? *(Fighting back tears.)* Really?

JESSE Yep. Since I first heard it. I'm the only person—on the news, mother, everybody—who believed you were gonna walk outta there okay.

JOHN You did?

JESSE Always. From the first minute.

JOHN That's . . . huh. I'm surprised by that.

JESSE Whatever.

JOHN No, I don't mean . . . I just am.

JESSE Hey, I'm a pretty positive person a lot of the time. *(Smiles.)* Every so often.

They smile at each other. Détente for a moment. Some kind of softening between them.

JOHN Yeah?

JESSE It's true . . .

JOHN I'm glad you did. That you thought that.

JESSE It was just this feeling . . . and maybe it's 'cause I need to believe in something now too, or that I'm, I dunno, suffering over my own shit, but I do think God came to you. I *want* to believe it and I do. And the warmth . . . the truth of it, the *faith* you have—it feels like maybe it's making me into a little bit better of a person.

JOHN Yeah? I mean . . . God, that'd be so . . .

JESSE I can't describe it, it's just . . . this glow I've got. Every so often, even . . . not that I'm going off to *Africa* to do nursing or shit like that! I don't mean I'm gonna walk on water soon, but I do feel something. Not so alone or, or . . . words suck! It sounds stupid now.

JOHN . . . no, please . . . go on. (*Beat.*) Jesse?

JESSE I just have this sense of things... of a kind of purpose or something. Concerning what I've done, too, which is probably why I've been feeling the guilt and all; it's just scary so I've been fighting it. (*Beat.*) But about you it's usually good things in my heart. / Nice, true things.

JOHN Really? / So you feel . . . what? Tell me.

JESSE It totally overtook me. This complete . . . like, utter sense of confidence in you . . . even when it was going on. I absolutely knew that you'd come out of it all . . . alive. I saw your face, up on the news there and, and I could tell you'd been lifted up. All, like . . . overcome. (*Beat.*) I mean, check out your fucking *hair*!

JOHN I know. It's crazy.

JESSE And look at you—you did alright. People even think you're a hero or something . . .

JOHN Ha! / Hardly.

JESSE Serious. / They do . . . some do. I've seen a few blogs on the Internet about it.

JOHN People don't know what to think . . .

JESSE Maybe.

JOHN And I understand that. If I saw my story on the news . . . I wouldn't know. / Probably think I was insane or, or . . .

JESSE I guess. / Yeah, prob'ly.

JOHN They certainly don't wanna believe the part about God, I'll tell ya that much!

JESSE Well, that figures . . . right?

JOHN I suppose.

JESSE You're one of those 20/20 type things, or CBS *48 Hours* investigations. Doesn't happen every day. You know?

JOHN True. But with the picture and all that, plus being the only person not killed . . . they've said some really mean stuff about me. In the papers and, you know. Online. (*Beat.*) *Time* magazine even called me "a charlatan." Whatever *that* means . . .

JOHN *reaches over and takes JESSE's hands in his. Holds them tight.*

JOHN Jess, help me prove to people that I'm . . . something. (*Beat.*) That all this . . . *amazing* stuff happened to me and nobody believes me—'cept maybe you. They don't want to or maybe afraid to. It scares them, I get that, but . . . something like this, a thing they can grasp and understand,

that I'm willing to be honest about. *That's what I need now.*
Proof. (*Looks at her.*) Be the proof I need, Jesse. That I've
changed . . .

JESSE places her hand on JOHN's knee and leaves it there.

JESSE . . . I'll think about it.

JOHN Alright. So . . . then you'll . . . what ?

JESSE I said I need to think. Okay?

They sit for a moment. Not sure what the next move is.

JESSE . . . you used to talk about marrying me. Do you
remember? In bed, you'd say that.

JOHN I do. Yeah.

JESSE Did you ever mean it? You always sounded like you did
but that's probably easy . . . saying shit. *Meaning it, that's*
tougher.

JOHN I was . . . sure . . . when we were like that, in that
moment, I felt like . . . you know . . .

JESSE Don't lie if it's not true.

JOHN I'm not. There was a time when I wanted that. I'd be with
you, or sitting outside your house in my car . . . and I can
remember wishing that. Yes.

She nods, looking over at him. JOHN forces up a smile.

JESSE . . . and now?

JOHN I think I'm . . . I'm just trying to get my own sense of . . .
to get myself back to . . .

JESSE It's okay. I already heard that you asked Ginger back. /
You don't have to hide it.

JOHN Oh. / I wasn't sure . . . I didn't know if . . .

JESSE I just wanted to hear you say it. I guess I thought if you
had really changed, were all *strong* and high-minded and
new . . . / I thought you could say it to my face.

JOHN I'm trying to be. / That's not fair . . .

JESSE No?

JOHN It's hard. To say things like that to a person you care
about—and you do know I care for you, Jesse, I know you
do—it's very hard.

JESSE I know. I know it is, but I figured you could . . . if you
really were all different. This new and decent man of God . . .

JOHN But I'm still . . . it's still just *me*. / I'm filled with . . .
this . . . but I'm only . . . I am still the same man you knew,
only I've been . . . I'm . . .

JESSE I get it. / You're still a *guy*. And guys always wanna hide
shit. Right? / Mostly, anyways . . .

JOHN I guess we do. / Yeah. Most times.

JESSE Yep. And not any amount of God's light in this world is
gonna change that fact . . . is it now?

*JESSE pats JOHN on the cheek, then stands. He goes to get up and
hug her but she grabs his face. Kisses him hard on the mouth.*

*He tries to respond but she is already gone. Off down the hall,
drifting into the crowd.*

JOHN looks around, starts to walk off. Returns. He sits as the sun slowly comes out. He reaches into a pocket for a pair of sunglasses. Puts them on to shield his eyes.

After a moment, he looks up into the sky. Continues.

A burst of intense light carries us on to:

A police station. Some observation room down a hallway.

JOHN sits by himself at a desk. Cup of coffee in front of him. He gets up after a moment, walking down (toward the audience) as if to stare into a large two-way mirror.

He looks around, checks his teeth. Smiles. Frowns. Does a bit of grooming, smiles again. Last check of his teeth.

As this is going on, a male DETECTIVE enters but he goes unnoticed by JOHN for a moment. He clears his throat and JOHN whirls around. Nods at him, laughs. Points.

JOHN . . . is there anybody out there?

DETECTIVE Hmm? / I didn't hear what you . . .

JOHN Sorry, I was just . . . / No, I was curious—are there, like, folks on the other side who're watching us? Looking in?

DETECTIVE You mean in heaven? / I'm kidding. Uh-uh.

JOHN No! Not in . . . I'm saying . . . (*Pointing.*) Out there. / Really? Nobody?

DETECTIVE Nope. People work here. We have work to do, criminals to catch and kids to keep out of the hands of perverts, shit like that . . . / It's a police station, not one of those TV shows that you've been on.

JOHN Oh. / True.

DETECTIVE We don't have time to watch you. You're just a member of the public, right?

JOHN Yes. I am.

DETECTIVE Yeah? That's what you've been saying . . .

JOHN I'm not anyone special. Really.

DETECTIVE Oh, I don't know about that, I wouldn't necessarily say that about you.

JOHN You wouldn't?

DETECTIVE No, I wouldn't, no. You seem special . . . I mean, you said it yourself, that you're some kind of . . . *(Refers to a file.)* You've been "chosen by God." Isn't that right?

JOHN I'm . . . *(Considering.)* I was, yes. Chosen.

DETECTIVE You said it to those first officers. / And you know what's interesting? They don't really wanna talk about it much . . . about when they first found you. Not *one* of 'em wants to. Not on the record. / Why's that?

JOHN That's true . . . / Hmmm. / I have no idea.

DETECTIVE Huh. *(Beat.)* So they went inside and they found you, down on the ground—they said you were, and I'm quoting here, "Subject was completely calm and seemingly in a state of grace." That's a strange way to put it, don't you think? *State of grace.* *(Beat.)* You said that you'd been "spared" by God—I'm assuming that is "God up in heaven?" / That's what you said to them.

JOHN It is. / I did, yes.

DETECTIVE Thirty-seven bodies in that building. I'd say you walk out without a scratch, a man like that is *completely* goddamn special. A bona fide novelty item.

JOHN Right. *(Beat.)* You know what, I'm gonna be honest with you . . .

DETECTIVE I would appreciate that. / It's my job.

JOHN You're making me nervous . . . / Oh. Why? *(Beat.)* What did I do?

DETECTIVE Nothing. *(Laughs.)* Sorry, I don't mean my job is to scare you—I'm saying it's part of the job. *This* job. It unnerves people.

The DETECTIVE smiles and nods his head. He takes a sip of his own java before thumbing through his file again.

JOHN You're not . . . I mean, that doesn't mean I'm in trouble. Or anything.

DETECTIVE Not that I'm aware of . . .

JOHN You could just say "no." *(Laughs.)* Right?

DETECTIVE I could. / What?

JOHN That would be a lot more . . . you know . . . / Comforting. For me.

DETECTIVE Yeah, you're probably right. It would be.

JOHN So . . .

DETECTIVE But I don't know that.

JOHN Excuse me? / Oh. That's . . . oh. *What?*

DETECTIVE I'm saying, I do not know for sure that you're not in trouble. / You're not with me, I'm just having you down for a few, you know, follow-up questions. Things that don't seem to add up in the file. A few minor—but otherwise we're good . . . no worries.

JOHN I see. Okay. Wheew! That's . . .

DETECTIVE But I don't know what anybody else down here wants with you, if anything. None of my business . . .

JOHN True. Alright, but with you, it's just . . . what? Some stuff about the . . . tell me.

DETECTIVE Obviously. That day. Questions that still stick out from that day. And since then, but mostly the day of. In

question. Even after 60 Minutes, I still got questions. (Smiles.)

That Ed Bradley, he seems like an okay guy. Was he?

JOHN Yes, he was very . . . look, whatever I can be of help with, I'm happy to . . . you can ask me. Anything. / I'm serious, I want to help put all this way behind me and just, you know . . . move on. I do.

DETECTIVE Great. / That's appreciated. (Pulls out a pen and makes a notation.)

JOHN Did I say something worth . . . ?

DETECTIVE Just a thought. I'll get back to it.

The DETECTIVE smiles, then goes back to reading the file.

JOHN Don't they usually have cameras in here or something like that? To watch?

DETECTIVE Occasionally. Not always. / You nervous?

JOHN Oh. / No. No, I just . . . seems like I can't go anywhere these days without being . . .

DETECTIVE You must see a lotta cop shows. On TV.

JOHN Yeah. Some.

DETECTIVE Which do you like?

JOHN Oh, you know . . . any of the . . .

DETECTIVE I have no idea. If it's not in your file, it's not something I know. (Beat.) Which?

JOHN Ummmm . . . there's several good . . . Baretta, I guess. I used to like that one. Growing up. Mannix.

DETECTIVE Ha! The realistic ones, huh?

JOHN Yep! Kojak and all those guys. Classics.

DETECTIVE Right. Barney Miller. I like the one guy on that one . . . he was funny.

JOHN Who, Fish?

DETECTIVE Which one was that?

JOHN The old guy. Older. / He was popular.

DETECTIVE No. / Uh-uh, not him. The other one. He had that look on his face . . . / No . . .

JOHN Which one? The balding guy? Polish? / Was it "Wojo?"

DETECTIVE No, the . . . he was Black, maybe. Yeah, he was a colored guy.

JOHN Right. Sure . . . that's Harris. / Ron Glass.

DETECTIVE I dunno. / Maybe.

JOHN That was him. Ron Glass played the part. / He's the actor.

DETECTIVE Yeah? / Could be. He was good on the show, I remember that. (Does the "look.") He would do that about anything. He's funny.

JOHN I agree . . .

DETECTIVE So. (Reading his file.) How'd you do it?

JOHN Hmmm?

DETECTIVE The picture? Just between you and me?

JOHN I'm not sure what you're . . .

DETECTIVE I know we've gone over this—you said a little something in your first statement and more about it after—the photo. How the hell did you really get that shot? I use my camera-phone, pictures are shit and that's me at the beach. How the fuck did you take that, middle of that mess?

JOHN I just . . . that's . . . ummm . . .

DETECTIVE And why? Why would you do it?

JOHN Listen, I feel like you're being kind of confrontational about this, so can we . . . ?

DETECTIVE What?

JOHN I dunno. (Beat.) I came down here because I was asked to—I wasn't forced, my own lawyer said I could skip it if I wanted to—and now you're all . . . / You're up in my face with these . . .

DETECTIVE No . . . / I'm not even leaning forward.

JOHN You know what I mean . . .

DETECTIVE No, I'm a very literal person. If you say I'm "up in your face" it would mean more like this . . .

The DETECTIVE is suddenly out of his seat and right up in JOHN's face. Not touching him. Just hovering.

JOHN . . . ummmm . . .

DETECTIVE Like that. Right-up-in-your-face. That's what it means to me. (Beat.) Is that what I was doing? / Was I like that?

JOHN No. / No, you weren't.

DETECTIVE Alright then.

JOHN I meant . . . you know. You know *exactly* what I mean . . . the way your voice was all . . . and insinuating stuff about my . . .

DETECTIVE What? / If you want to. You are free to leave at any time, yes.

JOHN Nothing. Can I go? / But . . . ?

DETECTIVE I'd prefer it if you stayed and answered a few more questions. Put my mind at rest so that I can . . . whatever. Close the book. On you.

JOHN I see.

DETECTIVE Up to you, Mr. Smith.

JOHN Fine. Ask away. If that's how you're . . . I just wish that it didn't have to be so threatening. / Or *imposing*, you know what I'm saying!

DETECTIVE I'm not threatening . . . / All I'm doing is asking a few little . . .

JOHN Come on, be honest! (Beat.) You're trying to throw me off here. Make me sweat and I don't even really know . . . what's up?

DETECTIVE Nothing. Honestly.

JOHN I don't believe you.

DETECTIVE I'm sorry.

He smiles and sits back in his chair. JOHN fidgets a bit.

JOHN I don't believe that, either.

DETECTIVE Then I'm sorry twice. That's two times in a row now.

JOHN What more could you possibly need to know from me about this thing? Huh?

DETECTIVE I'm just curious—it's not even questions at this point, I'm really just wondering.

JOHN About?

DETECTIVE The picture, like I said. (Beat.) Why?

JOHN Because I was . . . as I've said before . . . it felt like someone should *document* what he was doing. / Yes! The horror of it.

DETECTIVE During a shooting? / "Document" while some motherfucker with a machine gun is going around and blowing heads off?

JOHN I wasn't thinking . . . I just . . . I . . .

JOHN *mimes using his camera. The DETECTIVE doesn't blink.*

DETECTIVE "Document." Huh. You decided to just . . . ?

JOHN Yes. / There wasn't . . . I'm not going to sit here and defend my . . . what I . . .

DETECTIVE A guy who could've got outta there, saved his own skin or maybe . . . just *maybe* helped somebody else out through the back door or whatever. Why didn't you do that? / *If you're such a big Christian now—got God there telling you what to do—how come he didn't direct you to save a few of those people who were getting shot in the face instead of snapping a photo? Hmm? Why do you think that is? A picture that you've now made a pretty good profit off of . . . made you famous . . . / You know they have.*

JOHN I kept very little of the . . . / Look, *most* funds from the picture sale were donated out to various charities and, and, and . . .

JOHN *finally stops trying to explain, throwing his hands up in frustration. Silence. DETECTIVE stays seated.*

DETECTIVE I'm just asking . . . (Beat.) In my job, you find that sort of thing interesting. Why people act one way. Or the other.

JOHN I didn't run off . . . I mean, I didn't just take off down the stairs and save my skin or anything, so . . . I'm . . .

DETECTIVE Very true. I've corroborated that.

JOHN Yes, so I didn't just . . . people need to be aware of that. What *really* happened.

DETECTIVE I'm sure we'll be putting out a statement that

supports all this, as well . . . they're also working on a documentary, CNN or one of those stations, so . . . / It'll happen.

JOHN Then good. / Fine. Because . . . I just . . .

DETECTIVE Which brings us full circle. / To you.

JOHN . . . and? / I don't understand.

DETECTIVE Nothing. Just "why." I'm gonna leave you with that.

(Beat.) As a cop and a man of a certain age and a Christian—I'm actually one of only a few people in this town who don't mind saying that they love the Lord and have Christian beliefs and values—as all of those things I find your story to be completely full of shit. Sorry. / And I want it to be true! I do! I touch you or put a hand on your shoulder . . . like this . . .

The DETECTIVE touches JOHN on the arm. Holds his tight.

DETECTIVE Nothing. I don't feel a thing. And I even met Billy Graham when I was younger so I do know what goodness is all about, I do—and I'm telling you right now, if I felt that from you I'd drop what I was doing, throw my fucking badge on the table this instant and follow you right outta this room. Promise you I would . . . (Beat.) But I don't get any of that from you. Not one drop. (Beat.) Now I wonder why that is . . .

JOHN What? / Why're you . . . *what?* I mean . . .

DETECTIVE Hey . . . It's just an observation.

JOHN Yeah, but . . . why would even . . . ?

DETECTIVE It's not libel because I'm not talking to Larry King, so don't worry . . .

JOHN Still, you can't . . . that's not very . . .

DETECTIVE I can say whatever the hell I want to. To you. Here. In private. / I just did.

JOHN But you're . . . / I did nothing wrong!

DETECTIVE You *survived*. That's always suspect, my friend.
Didn't you know that?

JOHN . . . but I'm . . . listen, I was . . .

DETECTIVE You lived. You took a photo. You made a fortune off it, whether you kept it or not.

JOHN What was I supposed to do? Huh?!

DETECTIVE Something. Anything other than take that *picture* of the guy, with your coworkers dying. Anything but that . . .
(Beat.) And when they do find you, finally get there to where you are—you're all blissed out like nothing ever happened.
Acting all . . .

JOHN . . . yes? So?

DETECTIVE I mean, if you had *really* been converted that day . . .
/ Seems to me that if God had *really* taken the time to come down and to choose somebody, pick out some guy to . . .

JOHN What? / What? Go on, say it.

DETECTIVE I, for one, don't think we'd be sitting here talking today.

JOHN No? / Well, I'm . . . that's not my . . .

DETECTIVE No way. / Not at all.

JOHN Why? I mean . . .

DETECTIVE Because you would've done something dumb! Folks who think they have God inside do the stupidest shit on earth. They attack the enemy in their *underwear*, they stop a bank robber with their *purse*, grandmas lift *Cadillacs* up and off of babies . . . crap like that. So. (Beat.) You would've confronted this guy, you would've tried to talk him down and you would've

gotten shot in the chest for your troubles . . . You'd be dead now. *If* God was actually with you that day.

JOHN That's not true. You don't know . . .

DETECTIVE I know enough. I've seen so much shit in my lifetime as a cop that I can guess how a person is going to act or what they'll say or figure out what the heart of the matter is *ninety-nine* times outta one hundred. Seriously. That many times.
(Beat.) And your story . . . it stinks.

JOHN Don't say that.

DETECTIVE . . . I already did. You lived, that's *your* problem. You get to go around and talk to Leno and sell your photo . . . but you know the truth . . . inside you *know*. Somehow this is all connected and you're not . . . / You are not being honest with me. You're not!

JOHN I'm . . . / Look, I'm going . . .

JOHN *gets to his feet. The DETECTIVE sits and watches him go. JOHN turns back to him abruptly and speaks.*

JOHN God came to me . . . he came and told me to wait. He *commanded* me to, to, to stay in there . . . / Stop saying that!! God came to me . . . he came and he *lifted* me up . . .

DETECTIVE No, he didn't. / You're a liar.

JOHN I'm not! No, I'm not!! I'm leaving now . . .

DETECTIVE Run. / Run if you wanna but you're lying. You are *holding* something back!

JOHN Stop it!! / Stop saying that!!!

DETECTIVE You are lying to yourself and everybody you know.

JOHN . . . this is ridiculous . . . you can't . . .

JOHN *turns and heads toward the door again. The DETECTIVE calls out again. Holds up his notepad.*

DETECTIVE Wait! Mr. Smith. One question. Let me ask another question and I will never bother you again, not ever. / Promise.

JOHN Yeah? / Really?

DETECTIVE I said "promise."

JOHN Go ahead then . . . (Waits.) Go on.

DETECTIVE Was there any reason that you can think of, any at all, that our shooter would single you out *not* to kill?/ Mr. Diaz, who sat very near you day in and out for however long—why would he let you go?

JOHN What? / I have no . . . I mean, why're . . . ?

DETECTIVE He seemed to have a grudge against one of your bosses at least and pretty much the whole place—he had a lotta *wrath* in 'em, obviously, and hell, you're the guy who let 'em go! *Fired* his ass—so is there a reason that if he was in there, *blasting* away at people and he comes upon you . . . that he wouldn't kill you? (Beat.) Anything? You gave him lunch money one day or, I dunno, smiled at him once? Whatever. I always wanted to ask you that . . .

JOHN This is . . . that's . . . what're you implying?

DETECTIVE Nothing, I'm just asking.

JOHN I'm . . . no . . . I have to leave . . .

DETECTIVE It's just a question. / Just answer the . . .

JOHN I'm going . . . / No! I'm leaving now.

DETECTIVE Tell me the *truth*!

JOHN I have! I told you the truth and now I'm leaving!

DETECTIVE Why won't those cops talk about what they saw in there? Tell me that, Mr. Smith?! What did they see?!?

JOHN *goes to the door and pulls the handle. Won't budge at all. He tries again, each time getting more desperate.*

JOHN It's . . . / It isn't working. / It's stuck!

DETECTIVE . . . you have to push to get out. / (Mimes a pushing motion.) No, just give it a little bit of . . . / You have to . . . that's it. Push.

JOHN *keeps trying it—the door finally swings open. JOHN slips through and disappears down the hall.*

After a moment, the DETECTIVE gestures toward the mirror. Makes a cutting motion across his throat. Sits back.

A burst of intense light carries us on to:

A perfect circle of stained glass overhead. Dominating everything else. JOHN, in a suit, stands looking at us.

JOHN This is what is left, my brothers and sisters. For me to cleanse myself. Just the truth now. Thank you for joining me at this service today as I need to tell you all this, and then you can do with it whatever you will. I can live with that, because this is necessary, doing this has been on my mind for some time and I need to get it out in the open. Unload myself of it. Is that alright? *(Beat.)* I hope so, because—wiser minds than my own say it's so. *(Beat.)* You are my flock and you grow day by day—others do not hear, or hear and hate what they hear. But not you. You've stood next to me as I've slowly made my way into the divine light of His glory. Others scoffed when they heard my past—infidelities and the rest—as I have slowly washed myself clean. And yet more remains. If you leave me now I will both understand and forgive you—but if I am to do what God wants of me, what I have been *singled* out to do . . . then you must first know the complete truth. Hear me now.

JOHN moves about, talking to the congregation in front of him. His confidence growing.

JOHN I never wanted this—I'm like most every other person out there . . . meaning I just wanted to finish working with a bit of money in my pocket and retire to Florida or, or, I dunno, *Arizona* and hang out in a bar with friends and that'd be it. I'm not a guy who wants to be senator, to be an elected official or noticed when he's walking down the street. I've got as much ego as the next person but not to where I have some inflated

sense of worth. Nobody knows more than me what it's like to be a regular person and I'm good with that. No need for any fanfare here. *(Beat.)* This is the work of something—if you don't like saying “God” then call it whatever else you wanna say, but he spared me on that day. He did, and you can laugh at me or giggle as you recount the story to your friends, but I know what happened there. It wasn't luck. It wasn't skill or the *cavalry* charging over the hilltops one morning—and it won't make me live any longer or give me special powers. Nothing like that. If anything, my life is worse now because I'm *aware*. I know what I'm set apart to do, how I am supposed to live. I have to be kind every day, try and set an example for the world and hope that others will follow me, even change their ways. *(Beat.)* They might not. I just might turn you *into a smoker* for all I know, just 'cause you dislike me so damn much once you hear my story . . . well okay. That's on you. But that's what I get for surviving, for coming out of there alive. I need to try and set an example while I go about living my life. I can't deny it and I can't escape it. *This* is who I am now. I'm John Smith and I'm not—I am a child of God and one of those Christian soldiers you hear about, in that one song . . . marching as to . . . yes.

He waits a moment, considering what to say. Starts once and stops. Begins again.

JOHN It wasn't always so. I have been cleansed by the love of my Father in Heaven and in the blood of his son, Jesus Christ, but I harbor a dark and horrible fear. It isn't a sin nor something any priest or pastor can ever lift from my

shoulders . . . *(Beat.)* Juan Diaz was well known to me. He wasn't good at his job—that hardly matters now but it's true and may be of note to this somehow in the end—he was a useless part of the Sanford-Gross team and we all knew it. He was protected under some branch of affirmative action and no doubt some man or woman of a whiter shade of skin lost out on the job due to filling a quota in our company by hiring him. No doubt about that at all. He barely spoke English, had terrible phone skills, and was constantly asking—if not me then my assistant or those around me—for help with our filing system, computer issues, the works. The man was out of his league and he knew it. He could not keep up! The fact that this hasn't come up in any of the published stories about the incident surprises me, but I've kept quiet about it for obvious reasons, as you will see . . .

JOHN shifts his weight now. Clears his throat. Starts in once again on his story.

JOHN . . . Mr. Diaz—“Juan,” was his given name, it was “Juan”—was not a friendly man or a guy who you could, you know, you wouldn't warm to him, nobody did, over the time he was in our office. He was an outsider and I suppose a few of us—me maybe even more than the rest—eventually started making sure that he remained that way. It wasn't anything that most people would notice . . . that's probably why nobody has said anything—my colleagues went unaware of what a few of us were doing to him over the course of six or seven months . . . *(Beat.)* When a detective asked me once if I could think of why he might've let me live I almost laughed . . .

really, almost in his face because that's such an absurd idea! If anything, it was the exact opposite. Mr. Diaz probably, no I'm *certain* of it, he no doubt hated me—my coworkers and me—more than anybody on the face of the earth. I cannot say that things we did caused him to go over the edge because I'm not sure . . . wasn't mentioned in his e-mails, which surprised the hell out of me! I was relieved, too, obviously . . . but that was unexpected. And no one else knew . . . or they died on that day. Carried it to their graves and I was the only one left who knows what happened. Or, why it happened, I guess. "Why." (Beat.) We would call his phone. Buzz it constantly from various rooms in the building, send him on errands to meet employees down in the lobby who didn't exist and would not be waiting. He was a fairly religious person, I believe, from what I've been told, and we would send him porn to his computer . . . the nastiest sort of girls-with-animals-or-licking-cream-out-of-some-man's-ass-porn we could find. It was so filthy! God help us, I'm a man in my forties and I was . . . well, I was acting like a child! (Beat.) A friend of mine . . . a salesman who was shot that day—he did this, like, massive poop in his desk one time. Over lunch. I mean, he did it out in the bathroom but carried it in on a paper towel and laid it out in the lower drawer. Unbelievable . . . (Waits.) That made him cry, actually, now that I think about it. Juan sat at his desk and wept when he found that. He sat looking around the room with these short little turns of his head . . . not knowing why or who or what for. But that's the sort of thing we did. (Beat.) And then he was let go. He was given two weeks' notice but he never came back to us once he got that letter handed to him. I did

it, I mean, put it in his hands—as the Operations Manager, that was my job. I gave him a little smile and a wink, even—I was a complete and full-time asshole in those days, I admit it—I handed it to him and off I trotted, back over to my friends and laughing. And Juan never showed up during those two weeks at all. It was almost a month before he came into the, well . . . you're aware of what he did.

JOHN stops, takes a couple of deep breaths, looking hard into the light. He continues.

JOHN That moment . . . when he was standing over me—I've gone on record as saying that I don't know what happened. That there were lights and noise and God came to me . . . all that is true. It is. But I did see more. More than I've let on, until now. (Beat.) He's now standing over me—Mr. Diaz—with this gun in my face and a look . . . I don't feel like I've ever seen a face like that on a living person. He wasn't there, I mean . . . obviously he was, he was doing all this but he was in some other place. Talking in, in, like, Spanish but babbling—I'm able to speak a little and it wasn't any that I'd ever heard—with his eyes almost completely rolled back, just the edges of his pupils were visible but he's looking down at me. Smiling. Licking his lips and this gun pointed in my face. He put this huge . . . gun . . . its *barrel* . . . into my mouth and he pulled the trigger. And nothing. And again. Nothing. Click. Click. Click. Without looking away he discharged the clip and slammed in another. As it went in I could see the bullets spilling out the top of it—completely full. He made me take it back into my . . . (he wavers) . . . this is very hard for me

to . . . I had to put it back into my throat and then he did it again. Pulled the trigger . . . click. Oh Christ, I was . . . I dunno, this couldn't be happening! There I was, on my knees with a machine gun in my face and he's . . . it's impossible to explain. You try it. I don't know how. (Beat.) A second later there's the sound of police in the hall, the screams of people dying and Juan looks at me. He looks at me and do you know what he did? He turned the gun on himself. He shrugged like, you know, like I'd asked him a science question that he couldn't figure out—he *shrugged* and put the gun in his own mouth. Pulled the trigger once and it roared. BAM! This spray of blood went, oh-my-God, it was . . . everywhere . . . and he dropped to the ground. At my feet. The police came past us, on the run down the hall seconds later and there was the light pouring in now, the noise of all the . . . but I was completely lucid at that moment, just before . . . and I promise you this: what I've just told you is the absolute and God's-honest truth . . . I have no reason to lie now, or hold back on the facts. It's been eating me alive . . . all that I still knew about it, but I didn't think the world would be . . . ready. That I had the *right* to say all this. To offer up this gospel *truth*. Until now.

JOHN *leans forward now—intent on telling the rest of his story.*

JOHN I was not a good person. In my life. That must be obvious to you by now. There was no reason for God to single me out, use a man like me for any reason other than it being a part of his almighty and infinite plan. Why else? Hmmm?

(Beat.) I can't go and change the world—I can barely make anybody believe what's happened to me! But I *must*—I have to soldier on now to let others know my story, and I think I now understand the reason. Why I'm here. Because I'm not a doubter. No matter who I was and what . . . *ill* . . . I did before with my life, now is different. I'm filled to the top with a spirit that can't be left out or pushed aside—I know what God is expecting of me. Do all the wrongs I've made get washed away with each hand that I shake, every time someone smiles over at me and whispers, "I believe you, John"? I dunno. I'm not sure. Will the thirty-seven dead ever be worth the lives I'll change or any good I might do? Impossible to say. But I do know that a life half-lived is better than one not lived at all and what used to be my unrepentant heart is now awash in the love of Christ!

JOHN *gets down on his knees. Motions toward the heavens.*

JOHN I was lost but now I'm found. I despair over the human cost but know it is not mine to consider. (Beat.) I am only a man and time will answer my questions: My wife will return to me or not. The world will accept my calling or they won't. No more sadness will come from my adultery or there will be a hell for both of us to pay—I can't know the future and do not wish to. But I accept it! I do not and never will again fight the feeling of righteousness in my heart. This spark of light I feel right here . . . (Pointing.) We all have it, every one of us. We know when something sits correctly with us or not, secretly we do, but we try to shake it off, say it's just us being weak or

superstitious or whatever works in the moment. Chest pains!
(Beat.) But we know. We *know* . . . we all know on the inside.
We do. I know we do. I *know* it!

JOHN's eyes close as his head falls back. He is talking feverishly now, caught up in the moment.

JOHN If you could . . . I so wish that any of you might've shared that moment with me! That day, as I knelt there, a dead man at my feet and not understanding, not able to comprehend the magnitude of . . . with this light, a kind of heavenly light spilling in and, yes, I'm aware of police and all the people running, the tear gas clouds swirling around, but I was steadfast . . . the voice of God was there and I could hear the . . . sound of angels from above. And for a moment—the briefest of tiny moments in my lifetime—I was free. No past to regret and no future of worries. Just the moment, hovering there, filled with tears and love and golden blessings. And I began to fill up . . . to be filled up with the goodness of a thousand tomorrows and, my God, I was floating . . . there I was in my suit and my tie but I was *floating* above it all . . . just . . .

And for a moment it's true—JOHN SMITH rises slightly off the ground. Eyes closed, hands and head turned up. Smile spread wide across his face. An ethereal music begins to build.

JOHN For a single moment the sun broke through the clouds at noon and I was one with all goodness that had ever come before me and all that would ever grace mankind again—

and it was peaceful and I was filled with hope and bliss and promise. Oh God, oh my sweet, sweet Lord on high! Such glory and such promise!

JOHN SMITH is hovering there, somewhere between heaven and earth. Lost in a moment of complete and utter reverie.

A burst of intense light surrounds him. Swallows him up. He is gone as we too must avert our gaze from the stage. The brightness is simply too overpowering.

Silence. Darkness.