

EXT. GREEN HOME - EVENING

KNOCK KNOCK -- quietly. Unable to remain still and wait, Abby seems apprehensive. She fidgets.

THE DOOR OPENS. ROBERT (late 40s, loose tie) answers.

ABBY

Hi daddy.

INT. ARCHDIOCESE - HALLWAY - EVENING

Mother Clare sits alone on a chair in the hallway -- fuming. A clock TICKS, loudly. A YOUNG OFFICE WORKER walks out of a nearby office, leaving for the day. He barely acknowledges her.

She is bright red.

She brushes herself off -- maintaining her dignity, she stands to leave.

CARDINAL RAHAM

I'm so sorry, mother.

CARDINAL RAHAM'S voice is soft. He's tall, with a gentle goatee. The gold chain of his crucifix crosses his chest.

He seems genuinely embarrassed.

CARDINAL RAHAM (CONT'D)

Please, forgive me for keeping you waiting.

MOTHER CLARE

(curt)

It is clear where we stand on your radar, Cardinal. Forget this ridiculous investigation. If you were serious at all about this -- a first class relic that touched God Himself? You would have seen me hours ago. You're just --

She realizes what she's doing, and stops. He accepts the scolding.

MOTHER CLARE (CONT'D)

Forgive me. Good night, your Eminence.

CARDINAL RAHAM
I had to attend a last-minute
remote audience with the Pope about
our situation.

That's a darn good excuse.

MOTHER CLARE
And what did he have to say about
it?

CARDINAL RAHAM
He isn't satisfied.

MOTHER CLARE
Certainly not--

CARDINAL RAHAM
He wants us to go a step further.

Her look demands further explanation.

CARDINAL RAHAM (CONT'D)
He wants us to conduct a physical
investigation through the entire
convent.

Now she really turns red.

MOTHER CLARE
Excuse me?

The Cardinal lets it hang. Then --

CARDINAL RAHAM
Forensic investigators will be
there first thing in the morning.

MOTHER CLARE
This has gone too far.

CARDINAL RAHAM
(pleading)
What do you have to hide?

MOTHER CLARE
Don't you have any dignity? Shall I
sift through your private office?
The sisters aren't criminals --
don't treat them like it!

CARDINAL RAHAM
Neither was Jesus Christ, Mother
Clare.

Her stare cuts into him like a knife.

MOTHER CLARE

I guess that makes you Pontius
Pilot.

Maintaining her dignity, she departs as quickly as she can.

INT. GREEN HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Steak, collared greens, cheesy mashed potatoes, and a bright chandelier. This is it, baby.

Robert, a few bites into his rare piece of meat, avoids figuring out his feelings about his daughter by getting through the rest of it.

SYLVIA, also middle-aged but trying to hide it, does most of the talking past her pinot noir and northeastern accent.

Abby enjoys the steak, and avoids eye-contact with her dad --

SYLVIA

This summer has been so nice up here, really, your father and I have spent almost the whole thing outdoors, huh honey?

ROBERT

(offhanded)
That's right.

SYLVIA

Oh my gosh, the lake was beautiful.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Just beautiful!

ROBERT

Gorgeous, hun.

ABBY

That's great! Was it hot?

SYLVIA

Not as hot as the Bahamas last summer, right hun? But you would have loved spending that time up there. We were gone as much as we could have been. Your father even passed up on a big case to go during the fourth of July --

ABBY

Really?

ROBERT
(cutting them off)
Ahh yeah -- not that big of a case.

SYLVIA
Oh don't be so modest.

ROBERT
I did take on that case for the state though, remember?

SYLVIA
Yeah the state case that's true. Forgot about the state case.

ROBERT
Why don't I tell her about it?

SYLVIA
Baby, come on, we're eating here. No work at the dinner table. You know this.

ROBERT
No, no, I insist. She's pre-law, she should hear about the real world -- about what's in her future.

SYLVIA
In the middle of a conversation? Come on, tell me about your summer baby --

ROBERT
(announcing)
So earlier this summer I was the prosecuting attorney for the State of Massachusetts. The case was against a serial felon, just a kid though.

SYLVIA
(to herself)
Here we go. Should have known.

Sylvia takes a sip (gulp) of her pinot noir.

ROBERT
He ended up getting convicted of vandalism -- the federal building, over there on Sudbury St. -- and I almost felt bad for him.

(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)

But Abby the thing that you might find interesting is what really made our case strong, his record. He was actually a really good kid, you know, based on witness testimony. Good growing up, wide receiver in college while studying - - get this -- aerospace engineering, you believe that? At M.I.T. Super bright kid, but the thing that ended up biting him in the ass was not finishing his degree. He decided to take a year off, relax, make some money, you know, whatever it is that college drop-outs end up doing, but that's when his life went on a downward spiral. He started partyin', workin' minimum wage, then developed a pattern of behavior committing petty crimes and misdemeanors. Nobody ever saw it coming. Eventually he served time for a felony robbery charge. He got out just a few months ago but he seemed pretty bitter about it. Wanting to get back at the system that convicted him or something like that, but in the end it always catches up with them.

A beat. Abby stopped eating at "bit him in the ass." Robert begins an exaggerated reflection, looking up as if he could see the stars.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

You know if he just stuck it out -- no matter how done he thought he was -- he could have been supporting missions to outer space with NASA or SpaceX or someone like that by now.

(shaking his head)

Too bad he dropped out of college. That's what really screwed him.

Robert takes a good, long pause to think about it, then resumes attacking what's left of his steak.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

(chewing, to himself)

Could've happened to any of us, I suppose.

Abby stares at him, dumbstruck. Sylvia looks for an escape. She finds it.

SYLVIA

You done, honey? Let me take your plate.

She does so without consent from Abby. Her wine glass goes with her -- she needs a refill after that speech.

ROBERT

So you just here for a couple days? When are you heading back?

ABBY

I'm not really sure yet.

ROBERT

You finish your summer classes and then decide to take drive across the whole state during your only week off?

ABBY

Dad...

ROBERT

Talk to me, what's up?

ABBY

I'm not going back.

ROBERT

I knew it.

I can't.

ABBY (CONT'D)

ROBERT (CONT'D)

You know, I knew the moment I saw you on that porch that something was going on.

ABBY

It's not like that, dad.

ROBERT

(holding a finger up)
Abigail, I'm talking.

ABBY

It's not what you think!

ROBERT

Look, please, I'm asking you not to do this.

(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)

It's you're last year of pre-law,
honey. You mother and I have spent
hundreds of thousands of dollars
getting you a bright education --
the best education!

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Any school that you wanted to
go to!

ABBY

Dad, it's not like that.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

You're in your last year of pre.
You have to stick it out.

ABBY

If you would just--

ROBERT

I can't see any reason for you to
drop out.

ABBY

Dad if you would just listen to me!

It's a shrill, desperate cry. Robert tosses his arms --

ROBERT

Any reason. I can't see it. You
could not convince me.

ABBY

That's 'cause you're not listening
to me!

ROBERT

What are you pregnant or something?

Sylvia enters, glass more-than-half-full, and freezes. The
room goes completely silent. Abby goes ghostly white.

Robert's mouth opens.

A LONG BEAT.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

That's it, huh? You're fucking
pregnant?

SYLVIA

Robert...

ROBERT

Unbelievable!

(sarcastic)

(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Should have seen this one coming,
huh hun?

ABBY

Dad it's not what you think!

ROBERT

Oh it's not? You couldn't even make
it through pre-law without keeping
your legs crossed?

SYLVIA

Robert!

ROBERT

No, I'm not gonna just sit here and
take this.

(he stands)

I raised you better than this.
There's no way this could be
acceptable behavior.

Abby, done being bullied, stands.

ABBY

Haven't you thought for one second
that I might just need help?!

ROBERT

Don't try and turn this
around.

SYLVIA

Maybe we should try to stop
yelling.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

We've been "helping" you your whole
life.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

You got yourself into this
mess.

ABBY

Dad I came home because I
have nowhere else to turn!

ABBY (CONT'D)

I just need to take some time off
to figure this out!

ROBERT

Do you know the statistics of
dropouts that end up finishing
school?

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Do you know?

ABBY

I don't care, dad!

ROBERT (CONT'D)

13 percent!

ROBERT (CONT'D) ABBY
13 percent of dropouts finish I don't care!
their degree and end up being
successful.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
Even less if they've got kids!

ABBY
You know nothing about my
situation! You're not listening to
me!

ROBERT
Well I know that your screwing
around just cost you big time.

Abby purses her lips. Sylvia is getting close to needing
another refill.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
Cost all of us big time. Hundreds
of thousands of dollars, down the
drain if you don't go back.

ABBY
That's what this is about?

ROBERT
I want what's best for you Abigail.

ABBY
I just need a few days, dad, if
you'll just listen to me.

A quiet beat. Robert won't even look at her anymore.

ABBY (CONT'D)
Please.

ROBERT
Get out.