

PROLOGUE

late night. 11:00ish. an underfunded episcopalian church serving a small, northern new hampshire town. it's dark, but the moon is bright through the windows. rural quiet.

then, MICHAEL and DYLAN crash through the side door. they immediately begin making out, perhaps a bit too frantically, with MICHAEL sitting his ass against the back of a pew.

DYLAN is a bit younger than MICHAEL—if the latter is 23 or 24 the former is 20 or 21. he is even more clearly a product of his hometown than MICHAEL, and that's saying a lot. he's wearing work boots and a flannel under stained overalls.

DYLAN makes a sudden movement and it knocks MICHAEL's glasses askew, or his hat, or knees him in the thigh, something of the sort.

MICHAEL

Ow.

DYLAN

Sorry. Sorry. I can't fucking see.

MICHAEL

Well, I'm not going to light a candle.

DYLAN

You have a candle?

MICHAEL

It's a church.

DYLAN seems to realize for the first time where he is.

DYLAN

Oh yeah.

DYLAN goes back to kissing MICHAEL, still a bit too aggressively, before:

DYLAN

Wait. Does that make it weird for you?

MICHAEL
(quickly)

No.

DYLAN

Okay. I don't want to be. Disrespectful.

MICHAEL

You'd do better to worry about drawing blood with how hard you're biting than disrespecting my pure immortal soul. Or whatever it is you were imagining.

DYLAN

Sorry.

MICHAEL

Don't be sorry.

MICHAEL starts kissing him again. he maneuvers so he can sit down in a pew and pulls DYLAN on top of him. a Book of Common Prayer falls to the ground with a loud thunk, making DYLAN jump.

DYLAN

Jesus, sorry. Sorry!

MICHAEL

You don't have to say sorry to Jesus either.

DYLAN

I didn't even hit it, I don't know how that fell.

MICHAEL

You made the Holy Spirit mad.

DYLAN

Ha. Okay.

DYLAN takes a moment to really study MICHAEL. after a moment or so, the latter returns to kissing him somewhere besides his mouth.

DYLAN

You're different from most gay guys I've met.

MICHAEL

How many gay guys in Shelburne do you know?

DYLAN

Only you. But I've been to Vermont a lot.

that makes MICHAEL laugh.

MICHAEL

What, you've never met one with the personal connection to the Lord that I have? I know, most guys, when they realize they're fags, they run from places like this as quickly as they can. Either that or they convert to Catholicism.

DYLAN

Well, that's not exactly what I meant. I don't know, you're... I don't know.

MICHAEL

Mysterious?

DYLAN

No.

MICHAEL
(slightly offended)

No?

DYLAN
I don't know, I guess I'm just surprised how much less reserved you are. Y'know, considering.

MICHAEL
You're surprised I'm not more like someone like.. fucking Tim Bailey.

DYLAN
Tim's not/?

MICHAEL
Oh yes.

DYLAN
He's not gay.

MICHAEL
Well he was roughly uhh.. two weeks ago? in the empty lot behind the Aubuchon.

DYLAN
(after a beat, pointedly ignoring this revelation)
Why were *you* at a hardware store?

MICHAEL
I can play butch. Anyways, I'm not like Tim. I got over the self-hatred and hand-wringing shit pretty fast. I was trying to avoid going down the Catholic route. The only thing worse than being gay.

DYLAN
Well. I don't know what it is exactly. About you.
But it's something I haven't seen before.

MICHAEL
(growing bored, trying to get things going again)
So I *am* mysterious.

DYLAN
You're annoying.

MICHAEL
Obviously. Listen, do you want me to suck you off in my dad's church or what?

that gets DYLAN's attention. he nods and MICHAEL promptly swaps their places.

DYLAN
Fucking... overalls. Hold on.

MICHAEL
(smiling, sincere)

I've got all night

shuffling of clothes, some more kissing.

a sharp, high note, like one that might shatter a window, rings out. neither of them seem to hear it.

SCENE IV

the next morning, 8:00am. the church, again. the side entrance clicks, opens, and ALEXANDER enters ahead of MICHAEL.

ALEXANDER

Sorry about all this.

MICHAEL

(visibly yawning)

It's fine.

ALEXANDER

The Reverend said there would be someone around to let me in, I assumed he meant a custodian /or something.

MICHAEL

Please stop caring about this.

ALEXANDER

Okay?

MICHAEL

It's nothing. Its balancing my karmic debt.

ALEXANDER looks at him.

ALEXANDER

Okay.

MICHAEL

Great. You're welcome.

ALEXANDER

I've been told there's a coffee machine in here. I could make you some.

MICHAEL

(still being an annoying cunt)

You would do that for me?

ALEXANDER doesn't dignify him with a response. MICHAEL takes off his hat and flannel and throws them on a pew before dropping to the floor and slouching against the wall.

ALEXANDER

I didn't really need to be here until like 8:30, it really was nice of you to come so early/—

MICHAEL

Alex. Thank you. We don't need to harp on how kind and selfless I am and how early it is all day long. If you want to get me coffee I won't say no.

ALEXANDER
(after a beat, sarcastic)

Yes, sir.

he exits down the back hallway. MICHAEL adjusts to the brightness and clarity of the space, having been here less than 12 hours prior in a quite different situation. he's in the same clothes. he eyes the pew from last night.

ALEXANDER returns with two paper cups.

MICHAEL

Thank you. Ugh. Thanks.

ALEXANDER
(recalling their last conversation)

It's my pleasure.

MICHAEL

Smart guy.

ALEXANDER sits down on the floor criss-cross next to MICHAEL. MICHAEL is a little taken aback.

MICHAEL

Alright, so. Made any friends yet?

ALEXANDER

I think I met most of the people who work here.

MICHAEL

Not difficult.

ALEXANDER

Yeah. You, Rev Wright, Maggie, the organist... I don't—

MICHAEL

Steven..

ALEXANDER

Yeah

MICHAEL

Also, I don't work here.

ALEXANDER

Your dad—

MICHAEL

I'm kind of his indentured servant. But no. I work at the diner in Gorham.

ALEXANDER

Oh. Do you like it?

MICHAEL

It's a diner, I don't know. I have grease burns on my fingers and I've probably inhaled enough secondhand smoke to develop lung cancer before the age of fifty.

It's minimum wage so I'm stuck in the same cycle of poverty as everyone else I know which means I'll probably die in this town. My best friend works there and she's awesome.

ALEXANDER

Well maybe I can come by sometime. Then *you* can get *me* coffee.

MICHAEL

Right.

Why the fuck would you move somewhere where there's only one diner, one church, one bar, and no nightclub?

ALEXANDER

It's a beautiful town.

MICHAEL

Is it?

ALEXANDER

Yes. You don't think so? You can probably see the White Mountains out your window.

MICHAEL

My feelings on my hometown are multifaceted and poignant and could not possibly be encapsulated in a single conversation.

ALEXANDER

Maybe you're just not trying hard enough.

MICHAEL

How do you feel about the place you grew up?

ALEXANDER

I didn't really grow up in one place.

MICHAEL

Okay so that's a cop-out.

ALEXANDER

It's the truth. I would be grateful to spend my childhood in such an idyllic place.

MICHAEL

"Idyllic."

ALEXANDER

Yes. Do you want me to give you the definition?

MICHAEL

I'm good, thanks. You seem to have a lot of insights on this place for someone who moved here seventy-two hours ago.

ALEXANDER

I'm a pretty intelligent person.

MICHAEL

So I've heard.

a lull. ALEXANDER, feeling like he's regained control of the conversation, is comfortably silent. MICHAEL searches for something to say.

MICHAEL (CONT)

I mean, Dad told me you went to John's Hopkins. Very fancy.

ALEXANDER

I did. I graduated last year.

MICHAEL

Congrats.

ALEXANDER
(sincere)

Thank you.

MICHAEL

What's your degree in?

ALEXANDER

Political science.

MICHAEL

Ah, so you can make such well-informed voting choices.

ALEXANDER

You really think you're funny.

MICHAEL

Whoa.

ALEXANDER

Well, you do.

MICHAEL

I *am*. If you can say you're a 'pretty intelligent person' I can say that I'm pretty fucking funny.

ALEXANDER does a sort of alarmed laugh at that.

MICHAEL (CONT)

See. I can make even you laugh.

ALEXANDER

Ha ha.

Do you actually want to get to know me or do you want to just keep doing your little quips until I have to go to work.

MICHAEL

No I. I'm sorry.

Sorry.

I really do want to know why you moved here. In case you couldn't tell, not many people do. So I don't have many friends that I haven't known since kindergarten.

ALEXANDER

You want to be my friend.

MICHAEL

Don't push it.

he's smiling a little.

ALEXANDER

I moved here because I wanted to be in the middle of nowhere, no offense. I like being alone. I think it's kind of beautiful.

MICHAEL

Well you'll fit right in.

ALEXANDER

I hope so.

How's your book?

MICHAEL

Oh, I haven't had time to really get that far.

ALEXANDER

Busy past twenty-four hours?

MICHAEL

Yeah, you could say that.

he rubs at his knee conspicuously.

ALEXANDER

What's so funny.

MICHAEL shrugs lazily and stretches his leg out.

MICHAEL

Nothing's funny.

another brief silence.

ALEXANDER

What do you do when you're not at work? Are you in school?

MICHAEL

No. Like I said, indentured servitude to dad. Other than that and the diner, I don't know. I get around.

ALEXANDER

I'm trying to figure out how to connect with the community outside of this.

MICHAEL

Watch Red Sox games at The Corner House.

ALEXANDER

I don't really like baseball.

MICHAEL

Me neither. There's other ways to have fun.

ALEXANDER

I feel like I'm decoding a riddle whenever I talk to you.

MICHAEL

No riddles. It's fun to go out and get a drink on Fridays. You'll see everyone there at some point, even the most dedicated parishioners. And the least.

ALEXANDER

And are you counted among the latter?

MICHAEL

Don't tell dad.

ALEXANDER

Or what?

MICHAEL

I'll fire you.

ALEXANDER

I thought you didn't work here?

MICHAEL
(smiling)

Fuck. You got me.

ALEXANDER

Unless you've been lying about that too. Maybe Michael isn't even your real name.

MICHAEL

Well, there's lots of things you don't know about me. But, I confess, my name really is Michael. Yes, like the archangel. My dad is kind of religious, so.

ALEXANDER

Yeah, likely story.

they've both leaned in a little bit towards one another while sitting criss-cross on the floor. there's a strange beat where they don't know whether to feel excited or uncomfortable.

a sharp, high note, quieter but still recognizable as the one from the prologue, sounds. like before, neither of them register it.

MICHAEL reaches out and grabs the front of ALEXANDER's sweater loosely. ALEX leans forward microscopically. then—

MICHAEL

Is this cashmere?

ALEXANDER

What?

MICHAEL

If you want to fit in here I suggest swapping this out for some plain LL Bean. Even if I do love the color.

he lets go and sits back.

ALEXANDER

(smoothing down the front of his sweater)

I'll keep that in mind.

MICHAEL picks his coffee up off the floor next to him and takes a sip.

MICHAEL

I could lend you one of mine. If you want

ALEXANDER

Sure.

MICHAEL stands and finishes his coffee.

MICHAEL

What's even more fun than going out on Friday is going on *Saturday*, 'cause then you can get really fucked up and be hungover at service the next day.

And by more fun I mean sucks complete ass.

ALEXANDER

(playing along)

So I'm guessing that's your plan for tonight.

MICHAEL

Probably. I don't have a shift today so anything could happen. It's a big world out there. All sorts of trouble to get into.

MICHAEL crosses to the door and tosses the empty cup into a small trashcan filled with papers, mostly crumpled programs. he turns back to ALEXANDER with his hand on the door.

MICHAEL (CONT)

I'll see you at service tomorrow.

MICHAEL doesn't wink. he's not that corny. he does a smile that's the emotional equivalent of a wink and exits.

ALEXANDER takes a sip from his cup and waits a beat before turning to look at the pew MICHAEL was staring at instead of him for most of their conversation. he tries to see what's so interesting about it. he reaches out and touches it.

then, he stands, grabs his bag, and goes to leave. as he passes between the front pews and the altar, he notices that MICHAEL has forgotten his hat and flannel.

ALEXANDER

Hey—!

he grabs them and turns around stupidly, but MICHAEL is long gone. he stands there for a moment before absentmindedly folding up the flannel around the hat. he looks at it and then, slowly, like he doesn't realize he's doing it, lifts it to his face and inhales. a beat.

then, he wakes up, tucks it in his bag, and exits into his office.

SCENE VI

sunday afternoon. MARIAH is lounging in a pew reading a news journal. the pre-sunset light in the stained glass is brilliant. MICHAEL enters from the side door. A parallel of his and ALEX's first meeting. except it's nothing like that.

MICHAEL

MIZZz Collins! I did *not* see you at service this morning.

MARIAH

That is correct.

MICHAEL sits opposite her in the pew, crossing his legs over hers. she continues to read.

MICHAEL

Shame. Go do ten Hail Mary right now.

MARIAH

We're not Catholic.

MICHAEL

Goddamn it.

MARIAH

(in response to his blaspheming)

And in the Lord's house too.

MICHAEL

You missed the Genesis reading from today. Did you know it was women who first caused men to sin?

MARIAH

Seems likely.

MICHAEL

I don't hear you apologizing to me.

MARIAH

You're hardly a man.

MICHAEL

(putting on an obnoxious and quite offensive fag-cent)

What's that supposed to mean?

MARIAH

Oh my god.

MICHAEL

Okay but for real. I missed you today. It was just me and the secretary and he can only keep me entertained for so long.

MARIAH
I'll be there next week. I was in Montpelier.

MICHAEL
Doing what?

MARIAH
CPUSA meeting.

MICHAEL
Oh shit, right. How was it?

MARIAH
I like them. They're working on some Iraq protests in Boston. I think I'd go again, if you want to come next time. They meet every month I think.

MICHAEL
Yeah, I'll go.

MARIAH
Here, I have some of their info.

MARIAH rests the news journal face-down on her stomach and leans over the edge of the pew to fish around in her bag before producing a pamphlet with the logo for Communist Party USA on the front.

MICHAEL
(taking it)
Thanks.

(reading)
This is awesome. I'm gonna make copies and hide random pages in the hymnals.

MARIAH
Careful, we're a little too close to Salem to be inciting a new Red Scare.

MICHAEL
That's true. We've even got our own Joey McCarthy at the head of the whole operation.

MARIAH
Okay, he's not *that* bad.

MICHAEL
Well,/

MARIAH
You think he is because he's your dad. I mean, I hate my dad but I also realize to the rest of the world he really and truly is just a middle aged man with a Pats hat collection.

MICHAEL
Your dad hit you when you were seven years old.

MARIAH gives him a look like "Jesus."

MICHAEL
(*cont.*)

In front of me.

MARIAH
Yeah. Be grateful Clark isn't like that.

MICHAEL
He's done his share of damage. Just not physically.

MARIAH
Cut the melodrama Mikey. I'm not gonna fight with you on whether our Republican fathers should be hitting their children or not.

MICHAEL
I'm not fighting.

MARIAH
Right. Whatever. Don't you have a new Britney Spears album to be torrenting on the work computer right about now. I was peacefully reading about weapons of mass destruction before you came waltzing in.

MICHAEL
You wanna call me a fag so bad.

MARIAH
If I wanted to call you a fag I would call you a fag.

*MICHAEL laughs. MARIAH tries to go back to reading but doesn't get far.
MICHAEL pushes her magazine with his foot.*

MARIAH
Ew.

MICHAEL
Do you not get super depressed by constantly obsessing over reading the news.
How do you not feel really scared all the time?

MARIAH
Knowing about everything all the time is actually the only thing keeping me from feeling really scared.

MICHAEL
Oh.

MARIAH
I think it has something to do with growing up here.

MICHAEL
What do you mean?

MARIAH

I just constantly feel like I'm grasping at the edges of society. Of the real world. Sometime I drive all the way to Augusta and sit in a restaurant or park and try to feel like I'm a part of the rest of the world. Being here is barely better than not existing at all.

MICHAEL is quiet for a moment

MICHAEL

Knowing you is what makes me feel like I exist.

MARIAH

Yeah.

(pause)

Right now is where I should say I feel the same way about you. And I kind of do. I love you. But I don't know.

MICHAEL

It's okay.

he stands and takes the CPUSA pamphlet.

I want to go with you to the next meeting. I'll tell dad I got an extra shift or something.

But you should come to service next week. I missed you for real.

he exits. MARIAH continues to read.