

1 INT. TECH BOOTH - DAY

ALEX sits, clearly bored (doodling on a program, fighting, messing around on his phone, etc.) behind a sound board that has clearly seen better days as the PASTOR drones in the background. A laptop beside him runs an extremely stock-looking funeral slideshow.

Alex glances at his own watch and slumps over, impatient for this to be done. Suddenly, his attention catches on NATALIE getting up and briskly walking out of the room, semi-slamming the door behind her.

Alex his attention back toward the front as we suddenly cut to.

JUMP CUT TO:

2 INT. RECEPTION HALL 1- LATER

Alex stands against the wall, staring aimlessly, watching the people milling around.

Through Alex's eyes we see the dramatic difference between people's behavior. Most people are just talking in clusters, some more sad, others laughing. One lady is clearly crying while hugging somebody, while only a few yards away, JAXON piles far too many snacks on a small, disposable plastic plate. He lingers on the sobbing woman for a moment longer, then looks away, feeling awkward.

PASTOR DAD comes up beside him and places a hand on his shoulder, startling him just a bit.

PASTOR DAD
Hey, thanks again bud.

ALEX
Yeah, of course. No problem- um,
hey- can I go home with Mom?

PASTOR DAD
She left to pick Casey up- you're
stuck with me for ooh, a couple
hours maybe? Hey, actually-

Pastor dad fishes out a ring of keys and hands them to Alex.

PASTOR DAD
-would you mind resetting for
Sunday? Its just the extra rows of
chairs in the back- just leave two
rows of-

ALEX
(Overlapping)
..Two rows of eight. I know the
drill.

PASTOR DAD
You could grab some of your
buddies- I think Jaxon's here..

ALEX
(Muttering)
Jaxon. Great...

PASTOR DAD
(Continuous)
..Oh! And I thought I saw Sarah
Jenkins! You know Sarah, aren't
you both in the same grade this
year?

ALEX
No! I mean, not THAT well, and
she's SARAH...

PASTOR DAD
And??

ALEX
(ignoring the question)
I'll take care of it.

Alex starts to walk off.

PASTOR DAD
Oh! And you'll need to reset the
hymnals as well. Think they got
put in the reception closet. Five-

ALEX
(Overlapping, without
stopping)
-Five hymnals per row. I know.

3 INT. RECEPTION HALL 2- LATER

Alex approaches the less-populated back of the reception room, navigating around the plastic round tables littering the room, but suddenly stops a couple tables away. A small circle of people stands in front of the closet door— a small, VERY EMOTIONAL circle of people clearly having a really deep, heartfelt conversation. Alex shifts back and forth uncomfortably for a moment before accepting he'll have to wait.

He glances over and sees SARAH JENKINS sitting at the table right next to him, scrolling through her phone aimlessly. He stares at her intensely. She looks up and makes eye contact.

ALEX
(simultaneously)
Hi... Sarah.

SARAH
(simultaneously)
Hi.

They both stop as they realized they interrupted the other. Both turn away. Awkward silence.

ALEX
Sorry— I don't mean to intrude, I
just have to get into— there, and...
didn't want to interrupt...

Alex gestures towards the emotional group blocking the doorway. Sarah looks at them and nods with understanding.

SARAH
Ah.

ALEX
Yeah.

Another even more awkward silence.

ALEX
You... ah... here with your family?

SARAH
Yeah! Yeah... they're somewhere
around here.

ALEX
So... were you close to—

SARAH
(interrupting)
No! No. I mean, we used to be, but
we hadn't even talked since gosh...

Sarah shakes her head.

SARAH
-Old family friends.

Beat.

SARAH
You?

ALEX
Oh! No, I mean I saw him at church
a handful of times, but yeah- no,
I'm just helping out.

SARAH
Ah. That's... nice of you.

ALEX
Yeah.

Beat.

ALEX
Well- I mean, didn't exactly have
a choice in the matter. Pastor's
kid. Part of the job description.

SARAH
What, hovering awkwardly by closet
doors to avoid people's emotional
conversations?

ALEX
Yeah, wouldn't be the first time.

SARAH
Oof. Rough gig.

ALEX
Yeah, a bit sometimes.

Both chuckle, the tension broken. Sarah sees the group has
broken up leaving the door free. She points at it.

SARAH
There's your opening.

ALEX
(with a laugh)
Right.

Alex turns to go with some reluctance, but pauses. He spins around to Sarah

ALEX
Would you want to help? I mean you
don't have to

SARAH
Oh, sure! Hang on just let me see
if-

Sarah pulls out her phone to text, but stops when she sees JAXON approaching them.

SARAH
Oh, there you are. Alex, you know
Jaxon right?
(to Jaxon)
You mind helping?

Jaxon and Alex stare at each other. There is tension and neither one really wants to interact with the other. Jaxon looks at Alex, then at Sarah's upbeat expression, and finally around the room at the distinct lack of literally anything else to do.

JAXON
(cynical)
Why not.

CUT TO:

4 INT. SUNDAY SCHOOL ROOM DOOR- LATER

Alex unlocks the door with a ring of keys, and then pushes it open to let Sarah and Jaxon in.

5 INT. SUNDAY SCHOOL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

All three walk in carrying stacks of hymnals, which they set down half-haphazardly. Jaxon in particular is not careful and his pile tips over into a messy heap of flailing pages.

They start rearranging chairs and grabbing the extras. Jaxon pointedly ignores Alex, and Alex avoids him. Sarah is semi-aware of the tension and tries to start a conversation.

During the following conversation, Alex and Jaxon continue grabbing more and more chairs to the point where it becomes excessive.

SARAH
So... Alex do you... play any sports?

ALEX
No... Not- not really.

Sarah leaves an expectant pause, waiting for Jaxon to join the conversation. He does not.

SARAH
So... what do you do for fun?

ALEX
Um... I dunno, I read a lot...

JAXON
(fake coughing)
Big shocker.

ALEX
(defensive)
What?

JAXON
Oh nothing... just-it's impressive

ALEX
How does reading make me
impressive

JAXON
Just saying, perfect pastor kid
reading all of Dad's theology
books in his free time-

SARAH

Right, if you both are quite done
... are you going to need me to get
the door?

Jaxon and Alex look at each other. They both have an absurd amount of chairs to the point where they can just barely hold them. Sarah, who has a very reasonable stack of chairs to carry, stares at them flatly with disapproval.

CUT TO:

6 INT. CLOSET DOOR- LATER

Alex, maneuvering around his stack of chairs (it is not as big as it was previously) with difficulty, pulls out his same ring of keys and grabs the door to unlock it, only to realize that it's already open.

7 INT. CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

The three walk into the space, dragging chairs, to see NATALIE leaning against the wall on her phone, holding the stub of a cigarette.

SARAH

Nat?

Alex looks around taking stock of the situation.

ALEX

Woah... Who are- I mean, you can't-
wait, how did you even get here.

NATALIE

Door handle's a piece of junk.

While Alex talks, she deliberately puts out her cigarette stub, pulls out a new one, and lights it, staring straight at Alex the entire time.

ALEX

Okay... Okay... Look-, and- I don't
want to be... I'm sorry, but you're
really not allowed-

JAXON drops his chairs and eagerly plops down next to Natalie. He attempts to be cool and casual, but clearly he has no idea what he's talking about.

JAXON
Mind sharing?

NATALIE
(refusing)
No.

JAXON
(losing the cool facade)
Oh, come on!

Almost at the same time as Jaxon, SARAH sets her chairs down as well, stepping between Alex and Natalie.

SARAH
(to Alex)
Hey, just... let her have this.

Jaxon and Alex look a bit confused at Sarah's line. Sarah flushes, and quickly sits down to cut off any further questioning. But before she can say anything, Natalie interrupts.

NATALIE
Don't even ask.

SARAH
Nat, I'm not a kid-

NATALIE
(to Alex, sarcastically)
What about you PK? I mean you seem like a real, grown-up man-of-the-world

Alex, who already looked uncomfortable, now goes completely red. He sets down his chairs sloppily and backs up, trying to leave.

ALEX
(interrupting)
Look, I don't want to tell you want to do, but I'm sorry I just can't- I don't want-

JAXON
(overlapping Alex)
Hey, you're in the room with us, and you're the only one with a

key. You snitch and you'll only
end up IMPLEMENTING yourself and-

While speaking, Alex backs into the door, grabs the handle and tries to get it open. It is jammed. He shimmies it frantically, trying to get it open when suddenly the handle falls off with a bang, completely silencing everyone in the room.

After a stunned moment, Alex pulls out his phone.

NATALIE
Yeah, there's like no reception
down here,

ALEX
(under his breath)
Crap.

JAXON
(sarcastically)

WOAH um...language?

Alex turns back questioningly to Natalie.

NATALIE
Don't look at me. I got in because
the handle was a big wiggly. I'm
not a lock pick

SARAH
Look, give it an hour-somebody
will come look for us.

Sarah gestures. Alex sighs and sits.

ALEX
Remind me next time my Dad asks- I
am never doing sound for another
random funeral ever again.

JAXON
(snorting)
Classic Alex. You didn't even know
the guy and volunteered-

Sarah, incensed, elbows Jaxon to get him to shut up and not be disrespectful.

ALEX

You did?

Beat. Jaxon shifts uncomfortably.

JAXON

I mean, kind of... yeah- we're- we were both on the Basketball team.

Alex turns towards Natalie, curiously, about to ask.

ALEX

Natalie, did you-

SARAH

(cutting him off)

We almost dated once.

Sarah stops, flushing.

SARAH

(back-peddling quickly)

Well, sort of? I mean, we were barely eighth grade? And we were family friends and I thought he was kinda cute and we had that summer sports camp thing together and I even kissed him that one time but...

Pause.

SARAH

(softer, more to herself)

Yeah. Never went any further, we just talked. I always thought if we both ended up staying in town that maybe...

Sarah stops and looks at Natalie then looks away, super uncomfortable

JAXON

He seemed to be a pretty cool guy. I mean he was a Senior, but he- all those guys- they made us into a TEAM you know? And I mean, I came in not knowing any of them and not-

Pause. Jaxon glares at Alex just a bit.

JAXON
Well, not having anyone I'd really
count as a friend.

Alex stares at him in hurt and some disbelief. Jaxon glares
harder.

JAXON
(to Alex, bitter)
Yeah. I mean pretty sure HE
wouldn't have thrown a guy under
the bus just to keep his spotless
image PERFECTLY intact-

ALEX
(interrupting)
Yeah, well I bet HE wouldn't have
kept dragging me into mess after
mess, when I SAID I didn't want
to-

JAXON
(overlapping)
~~Oh, well so sorry that you can't
grow up and handle anything even
SLIGHTLY outside of your comfort
zone. Cause heaven forbid that
Daddy's little angel-~~

ALEX
(overlapping)
~~Since when did breaking rules just
"to try it" become a requirement
for "growing up." And I was just
HONEST. We got caught and it was
YOUR fault-~~

The boys get steadily more heated. Sarah tries to
intervene, but fails. Natalie stares straight ahead, still
holding her lit cigarette but not smoking. She squeezes it
harder and harder until she starts to mangle it. Finally,
she snaps and stands up.

NATALIE
(shouting)
Oh will you all just SHUT UP!

The boys stare in confusion. Dead silence for several
moments. Natalie takes a few shaky breathes.

NATALIE

(understated, forcibly
calm)

If we are all going to be stuck
down here, I would appreciate it
very much if you all could just
shut up and stop shoving your
words into my dead brother's mouth
to justify your own crappy
decisions.

Beat. Very long beat. Strong moment of "oh shoot" as Jaxon
and Alex take in what she just said.

JAXON

(honest and earnest)

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said
that.

Beat.

JAXON

Your brother was a good guy.

NATALIE

It's whatever.

Natalie slowly sits down, a bit shaky. Sarah hands her the
cigarette which she dropped during her rant. Natalie sits,
holding the now-unlit cigarette and rolling it between her
fingers.

Alex grabs the lighter, which had also skidded to the
floor, and holds it out to Natalie, a peace offering.

ALEX

I'm sorry. I don't have any right
to say anything about a guy I
barely knew.

Natalie doesn't take it, but keeps rolling the cigarette in
her hands.

NATALIE

(More to herself)

Yeah, well... me too.

Natalie shakes her head softly. She looks up and takes the
offered lighter, rolling it around between her fingers. She
laughs.

NATALIE

You know these aren't even real
right?

Beat. Reaction.

NATALIE

He got them for me when I started
High School as a joke. But then I
found they were a great way to
make mom and dad loosen up. Don't
want to push the "struggling teen"
too hard.

ALEX

Seriously?

NATALIE

Oh yeah. Just whip one out and
make a couple comments about how
you were so close to quitting.
Guilt factor works every time.

JAXON

So what are they?

NATALIE

Green tea. Also a great way to
feel super badass.

The kids keep talking and laughing. There's still a weight
in the room, but an air of comradery binds them all
together. They talk about nothing at all but somehow it
means everything to them, especially Natalie. They pass the
"cigarette" around, each trying it. Jaxon attempts to do an
impression of a Film Noir detective with it, which sends
them all into peels of laughter.

Just when Alex has it and is mid-smoke, the door suddenly
rattles and opens. Pastor dad enters, carrying some chairs
to see the circle... with Alex with the cigarette in his
mouth.

ALEX

(blurted out rapid-fire in
uncontrolled panic)
I WAS SO CLOSE TO QUITTING.

Natalie DIES laughing and we see Pastor Dad's confused
face.

CUT TO BLACK: