

CRUSHES, CROSSES, AND WORSHIP SONGS

Written By

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EXT. HERITAGE PARK (SAN DIEGO)- DAY

ART- a 20-something, roguish bass player with a button-up shirt and a soul patch- plays his electric bass in the middle of a park in Old Town, San Diego. The sound of PASSING TRAINS frequently interrupts his riffs. He carries with him a portable amp but the battery supply is dying.

SPARROW- a bubbly, post-college blond- approaches him.

SPARROW
You sound good.

ART looks up. He smiles at her.

ART
Thanks.

SPARROW
Have you been playing a while?

ART
Yeah.

SPARROW
Well it definitely shows. Keep it up!

ART
Thanks.

SPARROW
(reaching down to shake his hand)
I'm Sparrow.

ART stops playing his bass.

ART
Art.

SPARROW
Pleased to meet you, Art.
(she digs through her purse and pulls out a SMALL FLYER)
Hey, by the way, there's a new church in town, at the corner of Ashton and Moreno. You should come.

She hands him the flyer.

ART
Sorry. Christianity's not my thing.

SPARROW

Fair enough. Well, the invitation's always open.

ART laughs.

ART

Thanks. Points for persistency.

(he takes the flyer)

Tell you what, I have a gig coming up tomorrow. If you come to that, we'll talk.

SPARROW

Okay. Where is it?

ART

Rich's Jazz Cafe. Have you heard of it?

SPARROW

Can't say that I have.

ART

In the Midway District. Need directions?

SPARROW

No, I'll just Google it. Rich's Jazz Cafe. Midway District.

ART

Right.

SPARROW

What time?

ART

Downbeat's at seven.

SPARROW

Seven. Okay. I'll be there. Is it okay if I bring a friend?

ART

Sure. The more the merrier.

SPARROW

Sweet! I'll see you there.

ART

Bye.

She walks away. He looks down at his BASS CASE. Except for spare change, it is empty.

ART (CONT'D)
 (shaking his head)
 Never a tip.

He starts to play again. SPARROW rushes back.

SPARROW
 Hey!

ART
 Hi.

SPARROW
 Do you have change for a five?

ART
 (looking down at his empty
 case)
 Nah.

SPARROW
 Oh. Okay. Well, here you go then.
 (handing him the five)
 God bless!

ART, in a daze, stashes the cash as SPARROW walks away.

I/E. RICH'S JAZZ CAFE- DAY

ART takes the bus from OLD TOWN to the MIDWAY DISTRICT. He gets off and carries his bass over to RICH'S JAZZ CAFE. He enters the colorful cafe.

ART
 Hey buddy!

RICH- a weathered, burly man with a kind smile- comes out from behind the kitchen area. ART sets down his bass.

ART (CONT'D)
 (holding up the flyer)
 You're not going to believe this:
 I got pitched to again today. The
 whole Jesus spiel. What is that?
 The third time this month.

RICH
 Fourth, I think.

ART
 Fourth... That's once a week! What
 the heck?

RICH

Maybe you look like you really need Jesus. I mean, you do like hell today.

ART

Thanks.

RICH

I'm just saying.

ART

You're objection is noted. Now, how about a drink?

RICH

(looking at the clock on the wall)

It's not even three yet?

ART

And your point?

RICH

You got money? Or am I supposed to put this on your ongoing tab?

ART

(flashing RICH a coy smile)

My tab, naturally... No, I'm kidding you. I've got cash this time.

ART reaches in his pocket and pulls out SPARROW'S FIVE. He pounds the five down on the table.

RICH

Wow! Real money. Pigs are flying somewhere. Who'd you steal that from?

ART

The evangelist... Of her own volition.

RICH

So you scammed it out of her?

ART

Actually, she gave it to me. She liked my style.

RICH

Your style?

(MORE)

RICH (CONT'D)

You mean those worn-out sixteen bars you're always playing.

ART

Those sixteen bars, my friend, are genius.

RICH

Well, I'm glad you've finally found someone who hasn't hear that same ol' genius over and over and over-

ART

All right, you made you made your point.

RICH

Good. Then I can die a happy man.

ART

Please do.

RICH

Ouch. I ask you, who'd pay your bills if I wasn't bankrolling your curtailed creativity?

ART

There's a lot of venues just waiting for a guy like me to play in them.

RICH

Somewhere...

ART

Everywhere! And one day I'm gonna find a venue that will take me straight to the top!

RICH

Make sure you say hi to Jesus for me when you get there.

ART

I will...

ART reaches into his pockets. There he finds the FLYER.

ART

Ha! You know what I said to that Christian chick?

(MORE)

ART (CONT'D)

I said, if you'll come to my gig,
I'll come to your church.

RICH

Oh? What if she does? Will you
actually go?

ART

Goodness no! Besides, she won't.

RICH

You don't think so. I've seen
those Christians do some crazy
stuff to win a convert.

ART

Like what?

RICH

I know a guy who knows a guy who
knows a guy whose house was up for
foreclosure. He lived by a church.
Lived there all his life. Out of
options, he went to church and
pleaded for help. And you know
what happened? The whole church
rallied together to pay his
overdue mortgage payments. Next
thing you know, the man was on his
knees...

ART

Oh?

RICH

...giving his life to Jesus.

ART

(crossing his arms)

Oh. Well, that's not gonna happen
to me.

RICH

No?

ART

No. I don't have a mortgage.
Besides, my dear Rich, I am an
artist. By nature, I am against
the man. They represent the man,
and a man cannot go against his
nature.

RICH

Still, watch yourselves. They have a way of throwing a new nature in guys like you.

ART

That'll be the day... She was cute though.

RICH

And now the truth comes out.

ART

What?

RICH

A simple truth. The only truth: you wanna mess around with with this Christian chick.

ART

I do not!

RICH

Don't lie to me.

ART

(hesistantly)
Maybe a little.

RICH

Then, you'd better watch out.

ART

Oh, what now?

RICH

You go chasing women into a sanctuary and one of two thing is going to happen. A. You're gonna get stoned or 2. you're going to get saved... also, Jess'd kill you if you even came close.

ART

A? 2? Consistency, bro.

RICH

You know what I mean.

ART

So you think really think I'm going to get suckered into this religion thing?

RICH
Yeah. I do.

ART
Willing to bet on it?

RICH
(cautiously)
What do have that I could possibly want?

ART
Gimme a week. If I haven't run her off in that time, I'll learn a new song to play at your illustrious establishment.

RICH
(greedily)
More than just the same old sixteen bar?

ART
Exactly.

RICH
And if you win?

ART
Drinks for life?

RICH
Hmm. Ok. But only because those chords are driving me crazy.

ART
Really? Because I really feel like playing them right now.

RICH
(shaking his head)
Musicians.

INT. NEW HOPE CHURCH- DAY

PASTOR PAUL- a 50-yr old veteran of the faith- stands at the podium of his sanctuary. FORTY, YOUNG CHRISTIANS of mixed gender, eagerness, and ethnicity fill the seats.

PAUL
Welcome back, team. How did it go?

SPARROW
Great, Pastor!

MOSHE
Yeah, really fantastic.

PAUL
Good, good. Any praise reports or
prayer requests?

SPARROW, sitting very close to the podium, raises her hand.

PAUL
Sparrow?

SPARROW
Yes, I was talking to a boy about
my age today. He's a musician. He
said he would go to our church if
I went to his gig tomorrow.

PAUL
Fantastic!

SPARROW
There's just one thing. The place
he wants me to go: it seems kinda
shady and it's at night.

PAUL
Hmm, how do you feel the Spirit
leading you?

SPARROW
I think I should go. I'm just
nervous.

PAUL
That's all right. Stepping out in
faith can be one of the scariest
things you can ever do.

SPARROW
(rolling her eyes)
Tell me about it.

PAUL
I've been scared before too. I
remember this time I gave this
homeless man a ride down to the
border. I didn't know him. All my
friends told me not to do it, but
I felt the Spirit calling me, so I
did it. And you know what?

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

That was one of the best experiences I've ever had. By the time we parted ways, we felt like good friends.

SPARROW

Did you ever see him again?

PAUL

No. In fact, he could've been an angel in disguise. The Bible says that sometimes we entertain angels and never know it. It would be cool if that was one of those times. But, even if he wasn't, it was still a great experience

SPARROW

Cool.

PAUL

You'll have your share of amazing journeys by the time you're done, I'm sure.

SPARROW

Think so?

PAUL

I certainly do... Can I pray for you?

SPARROW

Please.

They bow their heads.

PAUL

Father, watch over Sparrow as she reaches to this young man. Keep her safe and bring him into our fold. Thank you for supporting us, loving us, and saving us. In Your precious Name, I pray... Amen.

They open their eyes.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Now, go get him.

SPARROW

Aye, aye, Pastor.

INT. RICH'S JAZZ CAFE- NIGHT

ART, accompanied by a PIANIST and a DRUMMER, perform a SPIRITED JAZZ NUMBER. A small crowd watches while chatting and drinking their lattes. SPARROW enters the cafe alongside MOSHE- a freckle-faced GINGER- from church. ART finishes the song. The audience applauds.

ART sees SPARROW come in.

ART
 (to his BAND)
 Take five, guys.
 (to the CROWD)
 We're going to take a short break,
 but don't you go nowhere. The best
 is yet to come.

He approaches SPARROW.

ART (CONT'D)
 Hey! You came?

He glances over to RICH, who laughs at him

SPARROW
 Of course I did.

ART
 Well... welcome.

SPARROW
 Thanks. These is my friend, Moshe.
 He's a musician too.

ART
 Pleased to meet you.

MOSHE
 Likewise.

ART
 Let me introduce you to the band.

He leads then to the STAGE.

ART
 (pointing to the PIANIST and
 the DRUMMER respectively)
 This is Rob and Jess.

SPARROW

Hi!

JESS

How's it going?

SPARROW

Good.

ART

Well, now that everyone's here,
can I get you guys something to
drink?

SPARROW

A water would be great.

MOSHE

Yeah, a water for me too.

ART

(to the CHRISTIANS)
All right. Waters all around.
(to his BAND)
The usual, guys?

ROB

You bet.

ART heads toward the bar. RICH is there, waiting.

ART

(confusedly)
They're here.

RICH

I know.

ART

(leaning in)
What do I do?

RICH

What you do best: improvise.

ART

You're enjoying this, aren't you?

RICH

To no end, my friend. To no end.

ART

Just get the drinks, okay?

RICH
 (with a grin)
 Sure, what can I get you?

ART
 Waters for the stiff's and the
 usual for the band.

RICH
 And free entertainment for me.

ART
 You're a real gem, Rich, you know
 that?

RICH
 Naturally. I was born that way.

RICH makes and serves the drinks.

INT. RICH'S JAZZ CAFE- LATER

ROB
 So, how do you know Art?

SPARROW
 We met this morning. He invited us
 to come.... We're part of a new
 church starting in Mission Bay.
 You're free to come if you want.

She digs through her purse, finds a flyer, and offers one to
 each of the BAND MEMBERS.

ROB
 (taking a tract)
 Cool.

ART arrives with the drinks.

ART
 My friends, refreshments have
 arrived.

ROB (CONT'D)
 All right! Love ya, man.

ART
 Right back at ya, dude.

ART passes the CHRISTIANS their waters.

ART
(to the CHRISTIANS)
Here you go.
(handing JESS a whiskey sour)
And to you, my queen.

JESS
You're beautiful.

ART and JESS kiss.

ART
Not as beautiful as you...
(raising a glass)
Cheers everyone!

ART raises his glass.

EVERYONE
Cheers.

ART
(to SPARROW)
I'm glad you were able to find the
place.

SPARROW
Yeah, well, you know what they
say, "nothing is impossible with
God."

ART
(taking a drink)
Um, sure.

SPARROW
So, I guess you'll be joining us
for Sunday after all.

ROB looks at him.

ART
Yeah sure, I'll bring my whole
band.

JESS glares at him.

SPARROW
Great! Services are at 9 and 11.

ART
(slapping his forehead)
Oh, hmm, you see, I haven't even
rolled out of bed by that time.
(MORE)

ART (CONT'D)
Do you think you could give me a
call?

SPARROW
Um. Yeah, sure. No prob.

ART
Great. You ready?

SPARROW digs into her purse and digs out her phone.

SPARROW
(with phone handy)
Ready.

ART
867-5309.

SPARROW

ART

SPARROW

09. Got it. Wait, the "Jenny" number?

ART
The "Jenny" number.

She dials the number. ART'S phone rings.

ART (CONT'D)
Told ya.

SPARROW
Fair enough. When should I call
ya?

ART
Half hour before. If it's in
Mission Bay, that'll give me
enough time.

SPARROW
Okay. Call you at eight thirty?

ART
Talk to you then.

JESS
Well, it's been fun, but we gotta
get back on-stage.

ART
Yeah, for sure. Take care you,
guys.

MOSHE
You too.

ROB
Bye.

The TWO GROUPS part ways. Once they are out of earshot, JESS leans in close to ART.

JESS
You're not really going to go to church, are you, babe?

ART
You bet, I am! It's gonna be a riot. A guy like me showing up at a place like that? Classic.

JESS
I'd love to see the look on their faces when you show up.

ART
You could come along to find out.

JESS
Not a chance.

ART
My sweet Jezebel.

JESS
My irresistable Adonis.

ART and JESS kiss as the BAND takes the stage and launches back into its SPIRITED GROOVES.

INT. SPARROW'S APARTMENT/JESS'S APARTMENT- DAY

SPARROW, all dressed up, stands alone in her MODERN APARTMENT. She checks the time on her phone and dials ART'S NUMBER. ART, laying in bed with JESS beside him, answers the

phone. His apartment is in tatters.

SPARROW
Hi!

ART
(groggily)
Hello?

SPARROW
Art? This is Sparrow.

ART
Oh. Hey, how you doing?

SPARROW
Good. I'm just calling to remind
you about church. You are still
coming, right?

ART
For sure! Oh, wait...

SPARROW
What is it?

ART
Well, I'd like to go, but I got a
flat last night. I can't make it,
that is, unless I got a ride...
I'd hate to be a brat, but could
you pick me up? I don't live that
far away.

SPARROW
I don't know...

ART
That's okay. Next time then.

SPARROW
No! No. You know what, I'll do it.
Where do you live?

ART
The Orchard Apartments, off
Hancock.

SPARROW
Ok, so right next to where your
show was last night?

ART
Exactly. Oh and if Jess comes to
the door, don't worry. It's
actually her apartment. I just
live there.

SPARROW

O...kay. I'll swing by but we have to be quick about it. We don't want to be late.

ART

Got it. How soon do you need me?

SPARROW

Fifteen minutes at the most.

ART

Okay. Let me hop in the shower, then I'm yours.

SPARROW

Thanks for being flexible.

ART

It's what I do best.

SPARROW

See you soon.

ART

Yeah. Bye.

THEY hang up. ART sits up. JESS giggles.

ART (CONT'D)

It's showtime.

He starts to get up. JESS stops him.

JESS

We've still got a few minutes.

ART

What should we do with it?

JESS pulls him close to her.

JESS

I can think of a few things.

INT. JESS'S APARTMENT- DAY

SPARROW arrives at JESS'S APARTMENT COMPLEX. She parks and makes her way to his apartment. Upon finding it, she knocks on the door. She waits. No reply. She knocks again. The door opens. ART stands in the doorway in nothing but a pair of worn-out, tight-legged jeans. His abs are rock hard. His hair is tousled and wet. SPARROW blushes and averts her gaze.

ART

Oh, hey, let me grab a shirt.

SPARROW

You go do that.

ART steps back into his apartment and disappears into the bedroom. Meanwhile, JESS emerges from the kitchen, wearing nothing but a t-shirt. She picks at a large slice of CHOCOLATE CAKE with a SALAD FORK.

JESS

Oh, hey. You're that girl... from the cafe.

SPARROW

Sparrow.

JESS

Sparrow. Yeah... Anyway, Art's really looking forward to this.

SPARROW

Yeah?

JESS

It's all he's talked about all morning.

SPARROW

We'll thanks for letting us borrow him for an hour or two. Of course, you could come too if you wanted.

JESS looks down at her lack of attire.

JESS

I'm not exactly at my Sunday best. I mean, I've heard of "come as you are;" but this'd take the cake... Speaking of cake, you want some?

SPARROW

No. I'm good.

JESS

Fair enough. Next time though.

SPARROW

Yeah, next time.

ART returns from the BEDROOM wearing his favorite button-up shirt.

ART

All right. You ready?

SPARROW

Ready, Freddie.

ART

Huh?

SPARROW

It's just an expression.

ART

Oh.

ART leaves the apartment and locks the door. Together, they head for the car, get in, and drive away.

SPARROW

So, Jess seems nice.

ART

Yeah. She's something all right.

SPARROW

Are you guys married?

ART

Something like that. We've never really pinned it down. Labels aren't really our thing.

SPARROW

Oh, well, she's nice.

The car winds through side streets towards its seaside destination.

ART

So does this church have a name?

SPARROW

It was in the flyer.

ART

Oh. I never was much of a reader.

SPARROW

Not me. I read all I can get my hands on.

ART

Good to know. I'm sure I'd make pretty great read... if you got your hands on me.

SPARROW
(hastily)
The church is called New Hope.

ART
Like the Star Wars movie?

SPARROW
Ha! Yeah. Our pastor is a bit of a
geek.

ART
I love geeks! They make great
roadies.

SPARROW looks down at the clock on the DASHBOARD. She speeds
up.

SPARROW
Art, are you happy?

ART
Yeah! Why wouldn't I be?

SPARROW
Well, you don't have God in your
life.

ART
And look how far I've come.

SPARROW
But don't you feel like- like
something's missing?

ART
Nope. Can't say that I do.

SPARROW
Oh.

ART
(leaning back in his chair)
How about you? You happy?

SPARROW
Most of the time.

ART
But not all the time?

SPARROW
No.

ART

Why not?

SPARROW

I get lonely.

ART

Ah, you see: there's your problem. You allow yourself the time to get lonely. The trick is to fill in the space with anything or anyone you can. Diversions are a gift from the gods.

SPARROW

That's one way of looking at it.

ART

It sure beats being in pain.

SPARROW

But pain brings us closer to God.

ART

What sorta God uses pain to draw people near Him?

SPARROW

I don't think He does it to be mean. I think He does it to mold us, shape us, and get our attention.

ART

Well, I stopped listening a while ago.

SPARROW

You don't have to come, you know?

ART

No, I want to come.

SPARROW

Really?

ART shrugs.

ART

I've got nothing better to do.

SPARROW
(turning her eyes briefly up
to heaven)
God, grant me patience.

ART
Funny, my mom used to say that
same thing all the time.

EXT. NEW HOPE CHURCH (PARKING LOT)- LATER

SPARROW drives the car up to the parking lot. ART looks out
the window towards the church's MODERN MINIMALISTIC DESIGN.

ART
It's not exactly Notre Dame. Looks
more like an office building.

SPARROW
It does the job.

ART
But seriously, where's the art in
all? It's so boring.

SPARROW
We're just grateful to have a
space. Real estate's hard to come
by nowadays.

ART
So you settled? You could have
held out for something great and
glorious, with all the stained
glass and whatnot, and you settled
for Church, Incorporated.

SPARROW
Like I said, it's more about
what's going on in the heart of
the people rather than what's
painted on the walls.

ART
Uh-uh. Your Body is a wonderland,
temple, whatever.

SPARROW
Tell you what, when you start your
own church, you can decorate it
any way you want to.

ART

Pastor Art. Hmmm... Dr. Pastor
Art: now, I like the sound of
that.

SPARROW

(turning red)
Can't you take anything
seriously?!

ART

Maybe, but what's the fun in that?

SPARROW shakes her head as she parks.

SPARROW

Try to behave yourself, at least a
little.

ART

No promises. You did invite me,
after all, not Mr. Rogers.

SPARROW

(taking a breath)
I did invite you and I really
appreciate you coming.

ART

My pleasure.

They get out of the car and head for the door. MOSHE
approaches them.

MOSHE

Sparrow! Hey, hi!

SPARROW

Hi, Moshe.

They hug.

MOSHE

And you're Art, right? I saw you
play the other night. You were
amazing!

ART

Thanks.

MOSHE

This your first time attending New
Hope?

ART
This is my first time attending
anywhere, period

MOSHE
Oh, well, welcome! I'm sure you're
gonna love it here.

ART
(sarcastically)
Oh, I'm sure I will.

MOSHE
Sorry to run, but I've got to help
prep for worship.

SPARROW
All right, see you inside.

MOSHE
See you there. Glad you came, Art.

ART
The pleasure is mine.

MOSHE runs off.

ART
That man is way too happy.

SPARROW
You two should hang out. Maybe
he'll rub off on you.

ART
Or maybe I can swallow a handful
of Valium. Same effect.

SPARROW
Just you wait, you're going to see
how wonderful God is and I wanna
be there to see it.

INT. NEW HOPE CHURCH (SANCTUARY)- DAY

The CONGREGATION, including ART and SPARROW, file into the
sanctuary and sit down. PAUL takes the stage.

PAUL
Good morning.

CONGREGATION

Good morning!

PAUL

Christ be with you. Would you turn with me to 2 Kings, Chapter six, verses eighteen through twenty-three.

SPARROW points ART to the BIBLE located in the seat-back in front of him. He takes it up and stares at it blankly. SPARROW turns to the proper page. Then, she leads ART into doing the same.

A great RUSTLE OF PAGES echoes through the sanctuary as the CONGREGATION flips to upon the proper place in the WORD OF GOD.

PAUL

The enemies of the people of Israel have just been given over into the hands of God and his servant, Elisha. They who walk in darkness have been rendered physically blind as well. Now, they are open to attack. The king of Israel, seeing this, offers to kill them, and wouldn't that be fair? After all is, are they not guilty before the Most High, Lord of Hosts, God Almighty? But look here how Elisha responds... "No sir," says the prophet, "make a feast for them and send them back to their master." That's right! God had delivered the Syrians over to Elisha not so that they might be slain by the sword, but that they might be slain by the Spirit of God. And so, the Syrians, the enemies of God and Israel, were fed and sent off and- I think the story ends much like a fairy tale right here- "the raiding band of Aram didn't bother Israel anymore." What a glorious ending! An ending

PAUL (CONT'D)

God wants for all people everywhere. The Apostle Paul calls us more than just conquerors, and so we are.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

This week, as you meet the saved and the unsaved alike, remember this: you have been given a gift, and that gift is love. Use it to glorify God and to redeem His people back to Him. Would you join me in prayer? God, thank you for not giving us what we deserve but giving us what we need. You sent Your Son in our place, so that we might live. Let us be life and light to others, as You, o Lord, are life and light to us. Amen.

CONGREGATION

Amen.

The WORSHIP BAND, assisted by MOSHE on drums, takes the stage.

I/E. NEW HOPE CHURCH (FOYER)- DAY

The CONGREGATION files out of the SANTUARY and begins to break into groups.

SPARROW

How did you like the sermon?

ART

It was good.

SPARROW

What part did you like most?

ART

The end.

PAUL approaches them, catching ART off-guard.

PAUL

Hi there! I'm Paul.

ART

Art.

They shake hands.

PAUL

Glad to have you is this your first time with us?

ART

Yeah. Sparrow invited me.

PAUL

Oh, you must be the young musician she was talking about earlier this week.

ART

(patting himself on the back)
My reputation precedes me.

PAUL

You think you'll come back?

ART

Well, I'm usually sleeping with the girl that's not my girlfriend around this time, but I might be able to fit you in.

SPARROW turns pale with embarrassment.

PAUL

Please, make sure you do.

ART

You've probably got the rest of your flock to tend to. No sense in wasting time with this one black sheep.

PAUL

The Lord did, and continues to do so. Something to keep in mind... Sparrow, I'll see you later this week. Art, take care.

ART

You too.

PAUL leaves. SPARROW not-so-gently elbows him.

SPARROW

You could have at least been polite.

ART

I am who I am. So, should we go out for brunch or what?

SPARROW

I think you should leave.

ART

Don't mind if I do.

ART steps away. As he exits, MOSHE catches up with him.

MOSHE

Art?

ART turns around.

ART

Yes?

MOSHE

I was wondering, would you like to do something sometime this week. I think you're the coolest. I'd love to hang out sometime.

ART

Sorry, kid. One Christian groupee is one more than I need.

INT. RICH'S JAZZ CAFE- EARLY AFTERNOON

ART pridefully sips a shot of JACK DANIELS. RICH cleans dishes within earshot.

ART

I tell you man, this is gonna be the easiest bet I ever won.

RICH

Don't count on it just yet. You're only a couple days in my friend. There's still time.

ART

For what? A freak conversion? Face it: I'm a lost cause. A lost cause with lifetime access to your alcohol.

RICH

What do you have against Christians anyway?

ART

Nothing, except they're dumb. My dad always said, Christians fall into two categories: lemons and lemmings. They think badly of you if they think at all.

RICH

Hmmm. Somebody must have rubbed him the wrong way.

ART

Well, that's what happens when you watch your mom put every penny she owns in "miracle healings" (advertised on TBN) only to die slowly and painfully to cancer.

RICH

I never knew...

ART

Yeah, well, it's not a story I like to tell.

RICH

That girl, though, she seemed nice enough.

ART

That's why I'm trying so hard to break her out of this Christian thing. Give her a normal life, away from all the restrictions and the snake oil salesmen.

RICH

Do you think there is a God?

ART

If He's out there, we don't know Him. He's too big. You think the God that created all this could be all summed up into one little book. I don't think so! That's why my music doesn't even have words. Life's too big to encapsulate.

SPARROW

(off screen)

Mind if I try.

ART turns around. SPARROW stands in the doorway of the cafe.

ART

Back for more? Rich, get this lady a water.

RICH pours water from the tap. SPARROW approaches ART.

SPARROW

Sorry I rain you off earlier.

ART

It's okay. Not the first time I've been told to get out, right, Rich?

RICH

Sadly not.

SPARROW

Still, I'm sorry.

ART

Apology accepted. Water under the bridge.

SPARROW

Good. May I sit down?

ART

Please.

SPARROW sits beside him.

SPARROW

Why'd you come?

ART

To church?

SPARROW

Yes.

ART

To mess with you. It's what I do best.

SPARROW

No. I think you liked coming. I think you liked the sermon too.

ART

Putting words in my mouth: a great way to start a conversation.

SPARROW

I mean it. Be honest. Did you enjoy any of the sermon? Any of it at all?

ART fidgets in his seat.

ART

Maybe a little.

SPARROW

And that was?

ART

I liked that the guys didn't get fried at the end. I've heard sermons before: a lot of stuff about sinners getting what's coming to them. It was nice to see the Pastor put a little pressure on the home team for a change, rather than just on the visitor.

SPARROW

I agree.

ART

But that doesn't mean everyone in those seats is just going to run out and start loving everyone. I can see it now: they'll jump in their cars and go right on judging. It's not their fault. Human nature.

SPARROW

Some of them do their best to put that nature to death every day.

ART

Well, even if there are, there aren't enough of you to statistically validate the claim that Jesus changes people for the better.

SPARROW

I know.

ART

You know? As in, you agree with me?

SPARROW

Yeah. I see lots of people doing lots of stupid things every day. I'm one of them.

ART

So, why would I want to invest my life in a product that doesn't fully change me even if I truly wanted to be changed? What sort of a sales pitch is that.

SPARROW

Jesus isn't a sales pitch, or a product. He's a person, a person you need to know.

ART

So that I can be saved?

SPARROW

And so much more.

ART

Listen, you're sweet, but I've got a pulse, a passion, a super hot girl at my side. Is this Jesus better than all of that?

SPARROW

Yes. A hundred times, yes! Those are all great things, but they're just parts of life. He's life itself. One day, He's gonna ask us how we used His life. I don't want you to say you let your life, your talent, go to waste. All in vain.

ART

Listen, I can't say this any other way, so I'm just gonna say it: what you're selling, I'm not going to buy. Ever. Period. Go. Just go.

SPARROW begins to tear up.

ART (CONT'D)

Oh, now, don't do that. That's cheating.

SPARROW

I don't understand what I'm doing

SPARROW (CONT'D)

wrong.

ART

Nothing. It's just- your religion, it's just a crutch, a parlor trick, a coping mechanism. The sooner you realize that, the better off you are.

SPARROW

No, it's more than that.

(MORE)

SPARROW (CONT'D)

(pulling back her glossy hair
to reveal a horrendous scar)
When I was a kid, I was playing in
the street, back when kids played
in the street. We were playing
softball and this car came around.
The driver didn't see me and hit
me dead on. For a good minute, I
was dead, scientifically dead.
Then, I heard a voice, a man's
voice, the strongest, sweetest
voice I've ever heard. He kept
saying, "you're not done yet. I've
got far better things left for you
to do." Sure enough, after the
voice stopped, my heart started
back up again. The doctor's all
said I should've been dead, but I
didn't die. It was a miracle. God
for real.

ART

But what about all the good people
that pray to God and their
sickness isn't healed? What about
them? Are they not good enough? Or
does God just save at random?
"Sorry, you died. Better luck next
time."

SPARROW

I don't know why some recover and
others don't. I do know, though,
that we will all die one day. The
only question is when, and when
I'm called home, I'll get a new
body, one that will never see pain
or disappoint or fear or regret
ever again.

ART

It's a nice story.

SPARROW

Art, this world- it'll fail you.
Sooner or later, it just will.
Your fans will go away. Your band
might break up. You and Jess might
move on. But, God, He's always
there, waiting for us to
acknowledge and love him.

ART

But where is He? Where is God now?
In the sky? At church?

SPARROW

(shaking her head)

No. He's right here. All you have
to do is call on Him with all your
heart and He'll appear.

ART

And what if He doesn't?

SPARROW

Then I'll go away. I'll never
bother you again. I promise.

RICH

(from the sidelines)

And drinks will be on the house.

ART

(hesitantly)

Right here, huh?

SPARROW

Right here.

ART gets up and heads for the door.

SPARROW

Where are you going?

ART

I'd say running from God, but
apparently there's nowhere I can
go.

As soon as ART exits, SPARROW starts to get up.

RICH

Let him go.

SPARROW

But, maybe I said something wrong.

RICH

Or maybe you didn't. Maybe he
needs time to process. Trust me,
you don't think about things like
God lightly. If you want him to
even consider pursuing your God,
you've got to give him time.

SPARROW

What about you? Do you believe he exists?

RICH

I don't know; but, if your God can win over someone like Art, I'd be willing to entertain the possibility.

SPARROW turns her gaze back to the door.

EXT. MISSION BAY- AFTERNOON TO SUNSET

ART takes the bus down to MISSION BAY. He takes a long walk across the shoreline. He watches children building sand castles there. He watches the gulls lift off from the ground and glide through the heavens. He watches couples cozy up to one another. He watches families gather up their belongings and head for home. In silence, he takes a seat and watches the Sun go down.

INT. JESS'S APARTMENT (KITCHEN)- EVENING

ART enters into his apartment. JESS is in the kitchen, preparing a salty stir-fry.

ART

Hey.

JESS

Wow. Full day.

ART

Yeah, seriously.

JESS

You go to church after all?

ART

Uh-huh.

JESS

How was it?

ART

Interesting.

JESS

And you lived to tell the tale.
Good for you.

ART

Yeah.

ART enters into the KITCHEN and takes a seat at the table.

JESS

Must've been a long service.

ART

Well, I took a walk, a long walk afterward

JESS

Uh-oh. Nothing good comes out of long walk.

ART

I know, right?

JESS

You thinking about becoming a Christian? Joining up with the mindless hoards?

ART

No.

JESS takes the food off the burner and scoops it into a serving bowl.

JESS

Good. Would you set the table?

ART

Sure.

ART retrieves utensils, napkins, and plates from the cupboards and drawers they were hiding in. He sets them down on the table. Then he goes to the fridge to grab his drink and hers.

ART

Jess?

JESS

Yes?

ART

What would I do if I became a Christian?

JESS

I'd break up with you.

ART

Really?

JESS

Yeah! Christians are no fun.

ART

No. I guess not.

JESS

You're not seriously thinking of becoming a Christian aren't you?

ART

Maybe a little.

JESS

(rolling her eyes)

Why baby? What've they got to offer that I don't? Why trade all the good things you have right now to join the Order of the Religiously Upright and Sexually Constipated?

ART

It's funny: I don't want anything to with them. I don't want to play their music or join their church or talk to their people; but their God, there's something about their God.

JESS

But you can't have one without the other, babe? The moment you start believing in God is the moment they start guilting you out of your rent money and sending you chain e-mails.

Forks and knives scrape against ceramic plates.

JESS (CONT'D)

Tell you what, next time you get the urge to be spiritual, we'll buy you one of those nature tapes- you know, with the sound of rushing water or dolphins or whatever- and you can meditate all day long.

ART

Sounds riveting.

JESS reaches over and sets a hand on his.

JESS
There's something else that you'd
miss out on too.

ART
Oh?

JESS
(tipping her head towards the
bedroom door)
Just saying

ART
Wouldn't want to miss out on
that...

JESS tips her head toward the door again.

JESS
Care to have some fun?

ART
Lead the way.

JESS takes his hand. They leave the table.

INT. JESS'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM)- NIGHT

JESS cuddles up to ART underneath the sheets. A warm smile crosses her face. She sleeps soundly. Meanwhile, ART'S EYES are wide open. His lays frigidly in their bed.

A clock melodically ticks in another room. The breeze gently whips around outside.

Slowly, he separates himself from the tangle of limbs he and JESS have knotted themselves into. He makes his way over to the window and looks out into the night. JESS stirs and ART

turns his gaze back to her; but, when she doesn't wake up, he turns his gaze back to the window and up to heaven.

ART
(quietly)
What are you doing to me?

INT. JESS'S APARTMENT- DAY

ART is in the shower. His phone is on the nightstand beside his bed. JESS is bundled up in sheets. The phone rings. JESS glares at the phone. She picks it up.

JESS

Hello?

SPARROW

Hi Jess! How's it going?

JESS

Fine. Look. I want you to stop calling.

SPARROW

Why?

JESS

Just stop.

SPARROW

Can I talk to Art about this?

JESS

No. No more talking. Please, just go.

SPARROW

Wait! Jess-

JESS hangs up the phone. ART comes out of the shower.

ART

Who were you talking to?

JESS

Nobody. Sales call.

ART

Oh. Thanks for taking that. I hate those calls.

JESS

So do I.

He walks over to his phone. He picks it up and recognizes the number in his CALL HISTORY.

ART

Jess, this isn't a sales call.

JESS

No.

ART

What did you say to her? What'd you say to Sparrow?

JESS

Sparrow? You're attracted to her, aren't you?

ART

Don't be ridiculous. It's not like that.

JESS

Isn't it? This God, this girl, they're gonna nab you right from out of my arms.

ART

Jess, we'll always be us. I promise.

JESS

No. We won't.

ART

Why won't you believe me? Why won't you at least consider that they're good people?

JESS

Why? You really wanna know? Because- because I was abused. By a priest. As a kid. In the House of God. They're not good people, Art. They mess you up and leave you to dry. My advice: leave them alone.

ART

Jess, I love you.

JESS

(tearing up)
Get out of here.

ART

But-

JESS

If you're not going to leave them alone, just go.

ART
I'm not ready.

ART moves towards her. She steps away. ART makes his way out the door.

INT. NEW HOPE CHURCH (PAUL'S OFFICE)-DAY

SPARROW comes up to the door to PAUL'S OFFICE and meekly knocks on the door.

PAUL
Come in.

She enters.

SPARROW
Thanks for meeting with me,
Pastor.

PAUL
Not a problem. What's up?

SPARROW
It's about Art.

PAUL
Your musician friend?

SPARROW
Yeah. He's going through a lot of
stuff right now, and I think it's
all my fault.

PAUL
How so?

SPARROW
Well, every since I started
sharing the Gospel with him, it
seems his life has been turning
upside down. I've gotten only
rejection from his band and his
sort-of-girlfriend and, besides,
he seems all over the place.

PAUL
That's what happens sometimes. You
bring Jesus in people's lives and
Satan doesn't want that, so he
messes everything up to convince
the potential believer that
they're better off without God.

SPARROW

But when does that transition happen? When do things start getting good?

PAUL

Depends. Sometimes, it never gets good- at least on the outside, but we know that the second we accept Jesus into our hearts is the second we are armed with a peace to take on all the troubles Satan throws our way.

SPARROW

But what can I do? To help, you know?

PAUL

Be there for him. Not as a coach or an instructor or a parent, but as a friend. Let him know you care and, most importantly of all, let him make his own decisions. If we force Christ on people, they'll see Him as a burden; but we know Christ to be the One who takes our burdens away. Show him that Christ.

SPARROW

Yes.

PAUL

Let me assure you, Sparrow, there is no more powerful witness to the love and goodness of Jesus Christ than the friend who stands by our side in the midst of trouble.

SPARROW

Thank you, Paul. I'll try to keep that in mind.

SPARROW'S PHONE rings. She looks down. ART is calling.

SPARROW (CONT'D)

It's him.

PAUL

Go to him, and God bless. Thanks for coming in today.

SPARROW
Thanks for having me.

INT. MISSION BAY- DAY

ART and SPARROW walk along the shoreline.

SPARROW
She kicked you out?

ART
More or less.

SPARROW
It's my fault. Isn't it?

ART
No. No... okay, maybe a little.

SPARROW
Art, I'm so sorry.

ART
Don't worry about it. I'm like a
cat- always landing on my feet.

SPARROW
Do you have a place to stay?

ART
Not yet. I'm thinking about asking
Rich if I could crash at his
place, unless something else comes
up.

SPARROW
I'd let you stay at mine, but...
You know...

ART
I don't follow.

SPARROW
It wouldn't be appropriate.

ART
I see. Gotcha.

SPARROW
Does Rich live far from here?

ART
No. In fact, can I tell you a
secret?

SPARROW

Sure.

ART

He lives in the cafe.

SPARROW

No way!

ART

Way. There's a little room by the kitchen. He does everything there. Everything. I think he showers at a gym right down the road, but he might just do it in the sink.

SPARROW

Ew. Why? He seems to make decent money.

ART

I don't know. I guess he just loves the place. There's nowhere he'd rather be. It's crazy and unconventional; but, for him, it works.

SPARROW

It's... strange, but I follow. In fact, I kinda admire his devotion.

ART

I mean, I'd sleep with bass if Jess... if Jess... Yeah, guess I don't have to worry about that any longer.

SPARROW

(setting a hand on his arm)
It's going to be okay.

ART

For sure. I bet ol' Rich has some room for me in his broom closet.

SPARROW

Maybe you can stay with me, just for a night. Then, maybe Pastor Paul knows somebody that can help you out.

ART

Thanks. I appreciate it, even though its inappropriate.

SPARROW

No problem.

INT. SPARROW'S APARTMENT- DAY

ART and SPARROW enter her apartment.

SPARROW

Well, here we are: home sweet home.

ART

Looks cozy.

SPARROW

Can I get you anything?

ART

No, I'm good.

SPARROW

Fair enough. Let me show you around then.

(stepping into the living room)

This is the living room.

(pointing to a sixties-era furniture set)

The couch you'll be sleeping on is here. The TV is free reign. I don't get many channels but you can watch any I do have.

(pointing to the small, white kitchen area)

The kitchen is over there. I try to keep everything pretty organized, so you should be able to find everything pretty easily. Feel free to eat whatever you want. Mi casa, su casa, etc.

(pointing to various wings of the apartment)

SPARROW (CONT'D)

The bathroom is over there. Make sure to flip the toilet seat down. My room is there. And... that's pretty much it.

ART

Sounds easy enough.

SPARROW

So, yeah.

ART leans over and kisses her. SPARROW pushes him back.

ART

I'm sorry. I wasn't thinking.

SPARROW

No, it's my fault. I should've-

ART

I can leave?

SPARROW

No. Stay the night. I want you to stay. Please stay.

ART

All right, I'll stay.

SPARROW takes a seat on the couch. ART sits beside her.

SPARROW

Listen, Art, I think you're a great guy and I know you're hurting, but I just want- I just want you to come to Christ with a clean slate, not because you think I'm cute or we made out, but because you think He's Lord. Does that makes sense?

ART

Yeah.

SPARROW

(putting a hand over her mouth)

Oh my gosh! Jess...

ART

I'll deal with Jess. I'm gonna sleep now.

SPARROW

Art?

ART

Yeah?

SPARROW

You really are a wonderful guy.

ART

Thanks.

SPARROW goes into her room. ART turns on the television. After a few minutes, SPARROW comes back out again, carrying a BIBLE. She walks over to ART and hands him the WORD.

SPARROW

This was a my grandfather's. He gave it to me, but I think he'd like it if you had it. He was a painter. You'd've gotten along well.

ART takes hold of the BIBLE. There are paint smears all over its worn, leather cover.

ART

Where should I start?

SPARROW

I like Ruth. Esther's good. Or John.

ART

(flipping through the Bible)
How about Song of Solomon?

SPARROW

Sounds like just your style.

ART

I, um, I'll do your grandfather proud.

SPARROW

I know you will.

MONTAGE: ART reading long into the night. He falls asleep with the BIBLE resting on his chest.

INT. RICH'S JAZZ CAFE- NIGHT

ROB sits at his piano. ART tunes his bass.

ROB

Where's Jess?

ART

I don't think she's coming.

ROB

What? Why not?

ART
Artistic differences.

ROB
That's great, just great. What are
we gonna do now?

ART
Find us a drummer.

ROB
Who?

ART
I have an idea.

ART grabs his phone. He dials SPARROW'S NUMBER.

ART (CONT'D)
Hey, Sparrow, you know your
friend, Moshe... Yeah, can help us
out with drums tonight?

ROB rolls his eyes.

ART (CONT'D)
Yes, tonight... all right, thanks.
Call me as soon as you know.

ART hangs up.

ROB
A worship guy? You're replacing
Jess with a worship guy?

ART
Not replacing. It's just for a
night.

ROB
Do you know anything about him?
Can even play outside of 4/4 time?

ART
He'll do fine.

ROB
If he shows up at all.

ART
Listen, have you got a better
idea?

ROB
Yeah, I quit.

ART
What?!

ROB
Yeah, man, this's no good. Jess is gone and who knows what's up with you. I've got better things to do with my time than worry myself with all this.

ART
You're joking.

ROB removes his piano off its stand.

ROB
Not at all, man. Call me when you've got your head screwed back on straight.

ART
Rob...

ROB
No, just no.

ART
At least let me help you load your car.

ROB
What are you... Crazy? You don't help somebody to their car that quits on on you.

ART
Well, I'm doing it.

ROB
That's not right.

ART
It's not right. It's God.

ROB
God? Dude, are you becoming a Christian?

ART
It's looking that way.

ROB
Oh, man. Really? I'm sorry.

ART
I know. Me too.

ROB
Does Jess know?

ART
Yeah, she knows.

ROB
That's why she's not here, isn't
it?

ART
Yeah.

ROB
Man.

ART
I know.

ROB
I was not expecting that.

ART
Neither was I.

ROB
Well, kudos... Or whatever.

ART
Thanks.

ROB
You sure this guy'll play good.

ART
No clue.

ROB
Fair enough. Just as long as I get
paid.

INT. RICH'S JAZZ CAFE- LATER

The ROBBERS, ART's jazz trio, plays well with MOSHE handling the drums. SPARROW watches from the closest table to the stage. RICH hurries frantically about while waiting on the packed house. JESS sips a WHISKEY SOUR at the bar. The TRIO plays its set, then eventually strikes a final chord.

ART

We're gonna take a short break,
but don't go nowhere. The best is
yet to come.

(turning to MOSHE)

That was pretty good man. Thanks
for joining in.

MOSHE

Not bad for a churchie, huh?

ART

Yeah. Sorry I gave you the brush-
off earlier, I totally undersold
you.

MOSHE

Water under the bridge.

ART and MOSHE shake hands.

ROB

Man, you were really swinging
today.

MOSHE

Thanks. Glory to God.

SPARROW, wearing a cotton sundress, approaches the stage.

SPARROW

Well done, you guys.

ART

Thanks. Your friend here knows how
to play.

MOSHE

I'd love to join you guys again if
you'll let me.

ART

No prob. Anytime.

NOAH

Sweet.

JESS smashes her shot glass onto the floor.

JESS

Well, isn't this adorable?

RICH

Hey, Jess, you're going to have to pay for that.

JESS

Can it, Rich. I've got business to attend to.

She walks over the glass to the stage.

JESS (CONT'D)

Look how easily I can be replaced.

ART

It's not like that, Jess.

JESS

Oh, no? It sure looks like it. Doesn't it, Rob?

ROB

Nothing personal, Jess. It's just a gig.

JESS

Just a gig. Just a gig! Ha. It's more than that. You're wrong. It's very personal...

(she looks over the group and glares at SPARROW)

I see you made up your mind, Art. Good job. Sad to say it wasn't me.

ART

It could still be you. Join us.

JESS

Not today, babe. Not today.

SPARROW

It doesn't have to be like this, Jess. We can still be friends.

SPARROW (CONT'D)

Jesus loves you, Jess.

JESS

Jesus loves me?.. But He loves you more. I'm sick of playing favorites.

ART

If that's the way, you wanna be, then go. You're done.

JESS spits on him.

JESS

Now I'm done.

She storms out.

SPARROW

I'm sorry, Art. I really wish we could have worked it out.

ART

It's not your fault. The decision is hers.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE- NIGHT

ART sleeps in the spare bedroom. His phone rings. He picks it up.

ART

Hello?

JESS

You may talk the the talk, but I know who you really are.

ART

So do I. And you know what? I'm okay with it.

JESS

But are they?

ART

Yeah, I think they are.

JESS

So you're drinking the Kool-Aid?

ART

Downing it completely.

JESS

That's too bad. I'm gonna miss
you. You were a great lay.

She hangs up the phone.

ART

Jess? Hello?... Hello?

ART signs and sets the phone down.

INT. NEW HOPE CHURCH (SANCTUARY)- DAY

PAUL stands before the CONGREGATION. MOSHE and the WORSHIP
BAND play in the background.

PAUL

The time has come for the altar
call. If you would like to receive
Christ in Your life please come
forward.

ART sits with SPARROW.

PAUL

It is never too late. What is lost
can be found again. That which is
dirty can be cleaned.

ART squeezes SPARROW'S HAND.

PAUL

Let no one say to you that you are
beyond hope, for Christ is our
hope. He died to be our hope; He
rose from the grave to be our
life; and He has the power to give
both to us if we want them.

ART stands up.

PAUL (CONT'D)

These things are not rewarded us
because we are perfect but because
He is perfect and because He loves
us perfectly.

ART makes his way down the aisle toward the podium.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Won't you let Him be your peace?
Won't you let Him be your guide?
Most importantly, won't you join
us

PAUL (CONT'D)
 now in prayer to receive Him into
 your heart, to commit to Him
 always, and in doing so become
 heirs to all the wonderful
 promises of God Most High?

ART reaches the stage and bows before the cross.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 Dear God, I have lived in enmity
 with You, but no more! I want Your
 ways to be my ways; Your thoughts
 to be my thoughts; and Your life
 to be my life. I celebrate now in
 Your death, burial, and
 resurrection. Come into me now,
 Holy Father. I am yours. Amen.

ART lifts up his head. The CONGREGATION cheers.

INT. RICH'S JAZZ CAFE- NIGHT

ART tunes his base. ROB and MOSHE stand ready for his cue.

ART
 (to the audience)
 This next song goes out to my
 buddy, Rich. It's called, um, "New
 Song."

RICH gives ART a thumbs-up.

ART (CONT'D)
 It's a work in progress, okay?
 Anyway, I hope you like it.
 (to his band)
 Ready, guys?

ROB
 Let's do this.

ART
 Okay, Moshe, count us off.

MOSHE
 One and a two and a three....