

CROSSROADS

written by

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INT. MEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A TALL dark man peeks through a SLIGHTLY CRACKED WOODEN DOOR. The MOON provides the sole source of light in the room. Only the man's EYES are visible and fixated on what seems to be a SLEEPING PERSON.

His HANDS are hesitantly GROPING his penis from outside of his PAJAMA PANTS. He BOBS back and forth between the CRACK of the DOOR and the DOOR FRAME attempting to simultaneously remain unseen and get a better view.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH -BATHROOM- MORNING

MEL (17) a young girl fighting to be a normal teenager, cries in the bathroom stall swallowing down of air as she WIPES THE TEARS from her face and PANTS HEAVILY in distress.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. MEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

MEL lies still with her eyes closed tight and is REVEALED as the SLEEPING PERSON in the BED from before. She peeks out every so often as she PRETENDS to be asleep.

We see the GROPING MAN QUICKLY appear and then disappear in the TINY CRACK in the door.

MEL closes her eyes tighter as if the act will make the figure go away. Her body remains lifeless as ONE TEAR ROLLS DOWN HER EMOTIONLESS FACE.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. CHURCH- BATHROOM- MORNING

MEL gathers herself and steps out of the stall. At the sink she is met by one of the church mothers SISTER JENKINS (67) her hat takes up most of the mirror space. MEL and SISTER JENKINS look into the mirror at the same time.

SISTER JENKINS

Pastor P is sho nuff preaching
today chile. You need to be out
there receiving that word.

MEL shakes her head in agreement. Forces a fake smile.
Manages to push out a giggle as she leaves the bathroom.

INT. CHURCH- HALLWAY - MORNING (CONTINUOUS)

Mel continues to walk into church as a group of kids run and play in the vestibule.

BJ (3) MEL'S BABY BROTHER, runs up to MEL and extends his arms to be picked up by her. MEL smiles and embraces him. MEL tickles BJ and kisses him lightly on the cheek. He LAUGHS and she proceeds to carry him on her hip into the service.

The double doors that lead into the sanctuary are opened and MEL is handed a PROGRAM.

The HAND OFF reveals that the hand of the USHER is also the HAND THAT GROPED the PENIS from the FLASHBACK. BRIAN (31) MEL'S Stepfather, proceeds to smile at the two children as they walk through the church doors into the sanctuary.

BJ

Daddy!

BJ reaches for BRIAN.

BRIAN

Good morning kids.

BRIAN stares directly into MEL'S eyes. She looks off into the opposite direction.

MEL

(mumbles)

I'm not your kid.

MEL hands BJ over to his father and continues the journey to her seat.

INT. CHURCH - SANCTUARY

THE MEMBERS are STANDING. CLAPPING. LIFTING THEIR HANDS. SMILING AND LAUGHING. PASTOR PAUL (48), grabs the microphone and begins to speak in a cheerful voice as he takes a sip of water.

PASTOR P

(on the Mic)

Turn to your neighbor and say GOD
is telling my story...

The MEMBERS face whoever is standing next to them.

MEMBERS

God is telling my story!

Pastor P chuckles.

PASTOR P
So you can put your pen down!

MEMBERS
SO YOU CAN PUT YOUR PEN DOWN!

ALL OF THE MEMBERS shift as they clap and laugh lightly. Some members high five and others embrace their neighbors with hugs.

PASTOR P
(on the mic)
As we continue to praise to God, I want to ask Sister Jill and her spirit filled voice to come bless us with a solo as we prepare for the altar call.

MEL approaches her row and stands in the aisle as JILL (39) MEL'S visibly PREGNANT MOTHER is coming out of the same row and the two intersect.

They begin to pass each other as JILL KISSES MEL on the cheek. MEL doesn't respond or react she just keeps walking to her seat.

PASTOR P (CONT'D)
Let's give her a handclap as she makes her way down the aisle.

MEL sits down as her phone VIBRATES. She receives a text message: BESTFRIEND with a "100" EMOJI flashes across the screen.

JILL reaches the front of the church and grabs the microphone.

JILL
Yall bare with me my voice aint what it used to be. But I'm gone be obedient--

She turns to Pastor P and smiles.

JILL (CONT'D)
--And bless ya spirit on today. Lift ya hands and tell God thank you.

She whispers to the ORGANIST and he begins to play. The rest of the musicians catch on and JILL begins her solo.

MEL's head is bent in the audience as she proceeds to open the TEXT MESSAGE: "Staying over again tonight?". JILL begins to sing as MEL focuses on the TEXT MESSAGE and drifts off into another FLASHBACK continuing to stare at the TEXT.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. CAR - ON THE WAY TO SCHOOL- MORNING

The TEXT MESSAGE is used as a transition. We see MEL'S PHONE the SCREEN READS: BESTFRIEND: "He's such a fucking creepy ass hole. You have to tell your mom"

BJ is in the backseat counting his fingers.

BJ
Eight, Nine, TEN!

BJ claps for himself. JILL joins in.

JILL
Goodjob Baby you are going to be the smartest kid in daycare.

MEL looks uneasy, but finally speaks out.

MEL
Mom?

JILL
Yes ma'm Melonie.

MEL
Umm.. what time did you go to sleep last night?

JILL
Early.

JILL turns a corner.

MEL
Oh.. well - Um-

MEL (CONT'D)
I think somebody was looking in my room last night.

JILL
Somebody?

MEL
Yeah. Somebody Ma. Your husband.

JILL looks back at BJ. Swallows hard. And laughs MEL off.

JILL
Why would you think that Mel?

MEL
Mom I saw him.

JILL'S eyes are focused on the road.

JILL
Are you sure you weren't dreaming?

MEL
I was wide awake Mom.

JILL waves and smiles at the crossing guard as she stops the car.

JILL
Okay kids we're here.

MEL starts to look down at her phone while still facing her mom.

MEL texts back: "Girl she doesn't believe me" followed by a SAD FACE AND BROKEN HEART EMOJI"

JILL (CONT'D)
BJ get that toy out of your mouth NOW.

A ding comes from MEL'S phone.

MEL
Mom!

JILL
What do you want me to say Melonie!

MEL
Why was he looking at me?

BESTFRIEND texts back: "You should stay at my house tonight"

JILL
I know you never liked him. But- -
he's your Fathe--

MEL
--He is NOT my Father.

JILL
 Look! Melonie.
 Im sure he had a good reason baby.
 I'll ask him. Will that make you
 feel better?

MEL shrugs her shoulders. Texts BESTFRIEND back: "Toothbrush and tomorrows fit are already in my backpack. See you after school" She hurries out of the car. JILL starts to unbuckle BJ from his car seat.

JILL (CONT'D)
 (yells to Mel)
 Now go to school and have funnn.
 Its the first day of Senior year.
 Make Mommy proud!

CUT BACK TO:

INT. CHURCH - SANCTUARY- MOMENTS LATER

JILL is at the end of her solo. She is hitting all the high notes and the congregation is now emotional as they cheer her on.

JILL
 (singing) NOBODY TOLD ME
 THE ROAD WOULD BE EASY...

TEARS cover her face and she begins to palm her pregnant stomach.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. MEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

THE TEAR drops down from MEL'S FACE. BRIAN is in the doorway. The empty hallway behind him is dark. Down the same dark hallway JILL is hidden behind the corner using her hands to cover her own mouth as she watches her husband in disbelief.

An abrupt COUGH comes from inside the room that stabs the silent air and both BRIAN and JILL jump at the noise.

BRIAN carefully closes the door all the way. And JILL scurries back into her BEDROOM with tears in her eyes.

HER VOICE begins to slowly FADE BACK IN.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. CHURCH- SANCTUARY (CONTINUOUS)

JILL (CONT'D)
AND I DONT BELIEVE HE BROUGHT ME
THIS FAR TO LEAVE MEEEEEEEE!

JILL finishes her solo.

The MEMBERS are CLAPPING. CRYING. LIFTING their HANDS. And
RUNNING IN PLACE WHILE ROCKING SIDE TO SIDE.

JILL waves her hand in the air as she goes back to her seat.
She hands the MIC over to DR. LINDA KYLE (57) a very stylish
church prophetess that doesn't look any where near her age.

The musicians continue to play the song softly.

DR. LINDA KYLE
The doors of the church are now
open.

DR. LINDA KYLE extends her arm out towards the congregation.

DR. LINDA KYLE (CONT'D)
If you have not yet accepted Jesus
Christ as your Lord and savior
today this altar call is for you.

Some people start to walk to the altar.

DR. LINDA KYLE (CONT'D)
And if you feel alone, hopeless,
and know God wants to change your
life around--

Her voice begins to fade. As we move in closer on her face.

CUT TO:

INT. DR. LINDA KYLE'S OFFICE- DAY

DR. LINDA KYLE sits and sips her herbal tea. And robotically
nods her head as JILL continues to speak with fury and
confusion.

JILL

Melonie stays out all night and doesn't come home until morning time. So I rarely have time to help BJ with his numbers because I'm up worrying about her all night. He starts daycare in a month. And he (points at Brian) doesn't even help me. He expects me to cook and clean and have another baby. Im not super woman!

BRIAN

You wanted another baby. Not me.

JILL

I am trying to help our family.

BRIAN

When I told you I needed help. It wasn't your help I needed.

The room is quiet and DR. LINDA KYLE flips through her notebook. She circles and underlines as JILL and BRIAN stare at her waiting for a reaction.

DR. LINDA KYLE

It seems like your daughter is putting a big strain on your marriage.

BRIAN

She is.

JILL

I wouldn't say that.

DR. LINDA KYLE

Well she is clearly acting out. This is the 3rd session we've had and I hear about Mel more than I hear about the two of you.

Both BRIAN and JILL look off.

DR. LINDA KYLE (CONT'D)

I think this is more than a marriage issue. We may have to turn this into family counseling.

BRIAN

Absolutely not.

JILL

Maybe.

DR. LINDA KYLE

Remember Mark 10:9, What GOD has joined together. Let no one separate not even your offspring.

Dr. LINDA KYLE peaks over the top of her glasses and glances at JILL then at BRIAN. Her phone rings and interrupts the silence.

DR. LINDA KYLE (CONT'D)
I'm going to take this call. You
marinate on family counseling.

The door slams behind her. JILL looks back to make sure she is gone.

JILL
We have to tell her.

BRIAN
I'm not a criminal. So why condemn
me. I have this under control. I
haven't touched anyone. I would
never hurt my daughter.

JILL
Well Brian she is your stepdaug- -

BRIAN
See its that! Stop that! And just
leave me alone. So I had some
thoughts. Or feelings. Whatever. I
see now this is what honesty gets
you.

Brian storms out of the office and slams the door.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. CHURCH- AT THE ALTAR- PRESENT

MEMBERS are gathered at the ALTAR some kneeling. Some are lifting their hands and praying to themselves. Some MINISTERS are walking around laying hands on people and praying with them.

DR. LINDA KYLE
Yes. Lift your hands up and tell
God thank you. Are there more? Are
there more.

More members start to come down to the altar.

MELS phone vibrates.

DR. LINDA KYLE (CONT'D)
God wants to help you. The Spirit
is telling me there is one more.
(MORE)

DR. LINDA KYLE (CONT'D)
 You've been looking around for
 answers, You think you're Crazy. Im
 here to let you know you're not
 crazy. Just ask God for the help
 you need.

MEL looks up from her phone. She takes a look at BRIAN who is
 playing with BJ in the back of the Church. Then her mother
 who is in tears at the altar.

DR. LINDA KYLE (CONT'D)
 God wants you to come to him. Clap
 your hands and let him know you
 love him.

MEL claps her hands as she passes up a FAINTING MEMBER. An
 USHER rushes to the FAINTING MEMBER'S aide with a WHITE
 SHEET. SURROUNDING MEMBERS scream out in both desperation and
 relief.

CHURCH MEMBER 1
 (with tears covering her
 face)
 Thank you God!

MEL keeps walking.

CHURCH MEMBER 2
 Hallelujah! WE PRAISE YOUR HOLY
 NAME JESUS.

She reaches the altar and tilts her head towards the ceiling.

DR. LINDA KYLE
 (whispers in Mel's ear)
 God wants to help you baby.

MEL nods her head as she begins to cry.

DR. LINDA KYLE (CONT'D)
 (on the Mic)
 We have a 16 year old baby up here.
 And we all know what its like to be
 16. We deal with things that it
 seems like nobody understands.

DR. LINDA KYLE looks MEL in here eyes. Tears stream down
 MEL's face. She grabs her shirt sleeves and wipe them away.

DR. LINDA KYLE (CONT'D)
 (to Mel)
 Let the tears flow and lift your
 hands and tell God you need his
 help.

MEL mumbles and lifts her hands up right under her chest. DR. LINDA KYLE goes under elbows and pushes her hands up higher in the air.

DR. LINDA KYLE (CONT'D)
 (to Mel)
 Don't be scared baby. God wants to help you. Let him.

Mel throws her arms up in submission as tears stream down her face. A MINISTER hands DR. LINDA KYLE a bottle of OIL and she dabs some on her index finger. She DRAWS a CROSS on MEL'S FOREHEAD. Mel closes her eyes.

DR. LINDA KYLE (CONT'D)
 (On the MIC)
 Let's gather around this baby and give her our support, church.

JILL is seeing what is happening DR. LINDA KYLE begins to pray harder. DR. KYLE motions for JILL to come closer to MEL.

DR. LINDA KYLE (CONT'D)
 GOD WE ASK THAT YOU TAKE THE DEMON
 OUT OF THIS BABY. SHE IS HARBORING
 THE TEENAGE DEMON OF DESTRUCTION
 AND WE ASK THAT YOU BRING IT OUT!

DR. LINDA KYLE PRESSES DOWN ON MELS FOREHEAD. MEL opens her eyes and look around. MEL uses her thumbs to rub her other fingers. Tears of fear start to come down her face.

DR. LINDA KYLE (CONT'D)
 BRING IT OUT!

MEMBERS crowd around her in a circle as they yell out in agreement with DR. LINDA KYLE. "Yes, God"s "Amen"s come from the small crowd of people.

DR. LINDA KYLE (CONT'D)
 You can't have our baby, devil, you can have our Baby!

SPIT flies from Dr. LINDA KYLE'S mouth onto MEL'S lips as DR. LINDA KYLE presses down harder on MEL's head. MEL looks around for her mom. JILL stands next to MEL lifting her HANDS.

MEL stops all movement of her body. Her eyes are red. She has tuned out. The members are Yelling. Reaching their arms out. But we hear nothing. MEL stares off at the ceiling as she takes everything thats being thrown at her.

INT./EXT. FAMILY CAR RIDE HOME- DAY

JILL and BRIAN are in the front seat talking. BJ is in the backseat next to MEL and she is looking out of the window with the same blank stare on her face.

JILL
I'm so glad you went to the altar
today baby. I know you feel better.

MEL continues to look out of the window.

INT. MEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Most of MEL's belongings are packed except some Barbie Dolls and bears in one corner.

Her CROSS NECKLACE lies on her jewelry box. She stares at it before stuffing it into her pocket. She grabs her suitcase and bags. She turns out the lights and walk out.

FADE TO BLACK.