

SCENE 1

Front door area. DIANA and MICHAEL shuffle around.
Diana brandishes a duster. XAVIER lounges on the couch.

DIANA

Oh, did you vacuum the carpet? Gabriel is arriving any minute.

MICHAEL

Yes. Yes. I vacuumed. Did you finish clearing the table?

DIANA

I'm working on it. I have been mopping and moving junk out of his room.

XAVIER

Relax. He's not gonna care.

DIANA

He will notice and it would be nice if it didn't look like a tornado ran through here.

XAVIER

He used to live here too. Gabriel knows what this place looks like.

DIANA

I would prefer it if your brother came home to a clean house.

DOORBELL rings.

DIANA (CONT.)

Coming!

GABRIEL enters with a suitcase.

GABRIEL

Hi mom.

DIANA

Thank God your finally home.

Diana hugs Gabriel. He gently pats her back.

DIANA (CONT.)

How was college? Did you make any friends?

GABRIEL

College was fine
Hey dad. ... Xavier.

MICHAEL

How is my young man, huh?

XAVIER

It's good to see you, man.

Xavier gives Gabriel a handshake.

GABRIEL

Yeah, you too.

MICHAEL

You hungry? Dinner's about ready. How about you help your brother set the table.

Gabriel and Xavier exit.

SCENE 2

Dinner table. Evening.

Gabriel, Xavier, Diana, and Michael sit around a table.

DIANA

Let's say grace.

Diana outstretched her arms. Everyone joins
hands, and bows their heads.

DIANA (CONT.)

Heavenly father. We thank you for this meal. Thank you for protecting us and ensuring
we always have enough to eat. Thank you. Amen.

MICHAEL AND XAVIER

Amen.

GABRIEL
(mumbled)

Amen.

Gabriel begins to pick at his food.

DIANA

We missed you.

GABRIEL

Well, I missed you all too.

XAVIER

So, your get a girl-friend?

GABRIEL

No. Not yet.

DIANA

Oh, I'm sure he will find a girl eventually. He's just waiting for the right one.

GABRIEL

Sure.

MICHAEL

So how were the services in CITY NAME? Did you find any good churches?

GABRIEL

Uhh, yeah. I found some churches.

MICHAEL

What kind? Was it Methodist? Lutheran? Presbyterian?

GABRIEL

It was an okay church. The services were alright.

MICHAEL

What was wrong? Was the pastor not very good? Or was it just not your kind of scene?

GABRIEL

No, there wasn't anything wrong with it. The services were just ... fine.

DIANA

Mike. Don't bother him so much. Gabriel's probably just tired from the plane ride back.
Right sweetie?

GABRIEL

Yeah. I think I'm going to excuse myself. Thanks mom.

Gabriel EXITS.

SCENE 3

Gabriel's bedroom. Gabriel sits on the floor, leaning against his bed.

Gabriel gazes up.

GABRIEL

Are you really there?

If you are real, would you give me a sign? Show me without a shadow of a doubt that you are not some collective figment of imagination.

(beat)

Yeah. I didn't think so.

Xavier enters in pajamas with a wet towel.

XAVIER

Hey, man. Shower's ready. Were you talking to someone?

GABRIEL

No. I wasn't talking to anyone.

Gabriel gets off the floor and leaves.

SCENE 4

Church bells. A protestant church.

Gabriel sits on a church pew next to Michael. Behind them sit Diana and Xavier. PASTOR DAVID gives a sermon on the other side of the room. Everyone sits heads bowed and eyes closed.

PASTOR DAVID

If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us.

Gabriel begins to glance around. He checks
his family's faces.

PASTOR DAVID

The LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs I have performed among them?"

Michael peaks over to Gabriel

MICHAEL

Is something the matter?

GABRIEL

No. It's nothing.

MICHAEL

Are you sure? Why are you fidgeting so much. You need to use the bathroom.

GABRIEL

No. I'm fine. It's... its nothing.

Michael resumes his bowing position.
Gabriel keeps his eye open and glances at
Pastor David.

PASTOR DAVID

The LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs I have performed among them?"

Remember, God is with us all and in your faith, he will protect.

Amen.

ALL

Amen.

Pastor David leaves. Everyone rises from the pews. Michael puts his hand on Gabriel's shoulder.

MICHAEL

What was up? Did you need to use the bathroom? Tell me.

GABRIEL

It was nothing!

Gabriel leaves. Xavier, Diana, and Michael follow after him.

SCENE 5

Dinner Table. There is a silent tension.

Diana stretches out her arms. Michael takes her hand and hold one out to Gabriel. Xavier holds his hand out to Gabriel as well. Gabriel sits with his hands to his sides.

DIANA

Gabriel, lets say grace ... Gabriel ...

GABRIEL

I'm ... I'm good.

MICHAEL

Gabriel we are saying grace.

GABRIEL

I uh... I don't feel comfortable saying it right now.

DIANA

But we always say grace. We always thank the Lord for what we have.

GABRIEL

But you are the reason we have what we have. Didn't you work hard to make the life we live now?

DIANA

God gave us the opportunities we have. We thank him for the doors he opened for us.

MICHAEL

What is going on with you? You've been quiet since you arrived. Now you are refusing to say grace. Is there something you want to tell us?

GABRIEL

I'm sorry. I'll say grace.

MICHAEL

No, tell us what's wrong. Why are you acting this way.

GABRIEL

I just don't feel comfortable saying grace right now.

DIANA

You can tell us if something is wrong, we are here for you.

MICHAEL

Yeah, buddy. We are here, so talk to us.

Gabriel retreats into himself momentarily.

GABRIEL

I just don't see any point in saying grace. Why would God care or need to know?

DIANA

We say grace to thank God for his love. Because he cares about us and all his children. We say grace because he cares.

GABRIEL

I don't think he does care.

MICHAEL

Gabriel!

DIANA

Don't yell at him!

Gabriel why would you say that? Did something happen at college?

GABRIEL

No! Nothing happen. I just
...
I don't think God is real.

MICHAEL

Since when?

GABRIEL

For a while...

MICHAEL

Why? Why don't you think he is real?

GABRIEL

For, many reasons.

MICHAEL

What reasons?

GABRIEL

Evolution.
Why does the Bible say that God created the universe, animals and humans in seven days? According to science, the Earth is millions of years older than humans.

MICHAEL

It's a metaphor. No one actually believes the world was created in seven days.

GABRIEL

What's the metaphor? What does that even mean?

MICHAEL

I don't know. Pastor David could probably explain it better.

GABRIEL

What about the idea that God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good? He has done terrible things to people and allowed disasters to happen. How can a being that commits evil and is unable to stop evil be all of those things?

DIANA

God does not commit evil. Everything he does is because he loves us. When bad things happen, it is all part of his divine plan. We might not understand it, but God's plan is to the sake of all people.

GABRIEL

Then his plan is bullshit. "The point of a system is what it does." If people continue to suffer and commit terrible acts, then God's plan is not to the benefit of humanity. If anything, the world acts in a way that does not require God's plan, so it probably doesn't even exist. God is not real.

DIANA

If you don't believe, then what about your soul. Aren't you afraid what will happen if you can't enter heaven?

GABRIEL

You can't be afraid of something if you don't even think it exists.

DIANA

You don't believe in heaven? Then where do you go when you die? Do you just cease to exist?

GABRIEL

Yeah. I guess you do just cease to exist.

Gabriel gets out of his chair and begins to leave.

MICHAEL

Hey! You're not excused.

Gabriel stops in place. He runs away.

MICHAEL

GABRIEL!

SCENE 6

Gabriel's bedroom.

Gabriel sits on his bed with his legs tucked.
There is a KNOCK on the door. Gabriel
stares at the door.

XAVIER

Hey man. Can I come in?

GABRIEL

Yeah.

Xavier cautiously enters the room.

XAVIER

You okay.

GABRIEL

Yeah, I'm fine.

XAVIER

So, what was that downstairs?

Gabriel turns away from Xavier.

XAVIER (CONT.)

I won't say anything. I'll just listen. Please. Tell me what's up.

GABRIEL

I'm. I suppose I'm an atheist. I- No I am an atheist. I just wasn't sure how to tell anyone. I mean, how am I supposed to tell someone that I don't believe in something that they see as foundational to reality. Like, am I supposed to express that I believe in a reality different from theirs? That my reality asserts that theirs is wrong.

XAVIER

I don't know.

GABRIEL

You still believe?

XAVIER

Yeah I still believe.

GABRIEL

I mean, its every where. God is on our money, in the movies, the pledge of allegiance when we were in school. It's even in our politics. It's just everywhere. How do you reconcile with something everyone sees as a given?

Xavier puts his arm around Gabriel and embraces him.

XAVIER

I don't know how you do any of that. I never really thought about all that. God being everywhere, in that way.

...

I'm here for you man.

GABRIEL

Thanks.

Xavier releases his hug and heads toward the door.

XAVIER

I'll be here.

GABRIEL

Yeah, thanks.

Xavier leaves.

SCENE 7

Protestant Church. Pastor David is wiping down the pews.

Gabriel enters, his hands shyly clasped together.

PASTOR DAVID

Oh. Hey Gabriel. Why are you here on a weekday?

GABRIEL

Well I know you like to clean on Mondays. And I wanted to talk to you.

PASTOR DAVID

Alright. What about? Is it the language of the verses again? Because I know they can / be a little strange in modern English.

GABRIEL

How do you know that God is real?

PASTOR DAVID

Ah, well. I know he is real because it is written on our hearts. Everyone knows right from wrong intuitively, because God made us so. He is our source of objective morality.

GABRIEL

But people disagree on what is right and wrong all the time. People have disagreed over the morality of slavery, child marriage, interracial marriage, and when it is right to kill someone.

PASTOR DAVID

Those who go against what is right lie to themselves and ignore the intuition God granted them.

GABRIEL

Then how can you know if you are lying to yourself? We can't tell what people are thinking

PASTOR DAVID

Everyone has free will. They can chose whether or not they follow their hearts.

GABRIEL

Except the pharaoh in Exodus. Towards the end, God directly hardens his heart to make sure he resists Moses' plea to let the Hebrews go free.

PASTOR DAVID

But the pharaoh had already hardened his heart himself. He was acting against God, so God ensured that the pharaoh continued to resist so that it would lead to his downfall and the Israelite's safety. It was all for the greater good.

GABRIEL

So if I were to defy God, he would take away my free will to ensure that I act in accordance to his plan. That sounds like there is no real choice or free-will.

PASTOR DAVID

Gabriel, where is all of this coming from? You used to enjoy the story of Exodus.

GABRIEL

I started doing my own research. I saw that there were parts that you often glossed over or omitted.

PASTOR DAVID

Well we have small children in the congregation, they can't handle some of the grittier details. The important part is that they learn from the past.

GABRIEL

Except that past is a lie. You can't ignore the gruesome aspects and say that version is the truth.

PASTOR DAVID

Gabriel.

GABRIEL

I have to go.

PASTOR DAVID

Wait. Gabriel!

Gabriel Exits.

SCENE 8

Dinner table.

SCENE 9

Prayer circle.

SCENE 10

Front door.