

A Bag Full of God

By Mary Jones

Geoffrey Landis: stepfather; about 40

Angela Landis: wife and mother; about 40

Samantha Jarvis: daughter of Angela; 15

Setting: the living room of the house. Two chairs with a table between them, and in one corner a small table with a bottle of alcohol and glasses.

Samantha is asleep in one of the chairs with a pad of paper and pencil in her lap, headphones on her ears. The door opens with Geoffrey and Angela whispering to each other. Samantha wakes up as they enter, but doesn't acknowledge them.

ANGELA

(quietly to Geoffrey) Are you going to talk to her?

GEOFFREY

Why should I? You're her mother—Shouldn't you do it? Or her father, how about that?

ANGELA

I asked. You said yes. I mean, I thought you were as upset as me, but obviously you think that this is perfectly—

GEOFFREY

Alright!

ANGELA

You can't keep putting it off. She'll listen to you. I don't know why she should, but she does. God forbid she should listen to me, but no, she'll listen to you—

GEOFFREY

I know, OK?

ANGELA

She can't do this. It's crazy! She's too young.

GEOFFREY

...Alright, fine—get me a drink and I'll talk to her.

Angela reluctantly goes to the liquor cabinet to pour him a drink as he sits on the chair opposite

Samantha. Angela slams the drink down in front of Geoffrey and storms out.

GEOFFREY

So. You're awake. *(no response)* Hello?

He gets up, pulls the headphones off her ears, but not roughly, and then sits back down. Takes a drink. Throughout the dialogue, he's drinking.

GEOFFREY

I said, you're still awake.

SAMANTHA

Obviously.

Samantha picks up her pen and paper, and begins writing again.

GEOFFREY

I, uh, your mother tells me—She says you have some news.

Samantha looks at the door where Angela left, and yells towards it.

SAMANTHA

Huh. I'm CNN now, am I?

GEOFFREY

Hey—look at me! Your mother says you're leaving. Or thinking of it, anyway.

SAMANTHA

(Looking up and into his eyes) Yes.

GEOFFREY

That you're thinking of becoming a...

SAMANTHA

A nun.

GEOFFREY

God, I was hoping it was one of her delusions.

SAMANTHA

(glibly) Nope. I'm going to become a sister of the Immaculate Heart.

GEOFFREY

(annoyed) Why?

Geoffrey gets up and begins to pace.

SAMANTHA

You don't know what a vocation is, do you?

GEOFFREY

Big word for a kid.

SAMANTHA

I'm fifteen.

GEOFFREY

I know. A kid. Look—I know what a vocation is. It's a job.

SAMANTHA

It's a calling.

GEOFFREY

Right. Sure. Catholic school shit. You know, they came in and talked to us one day, saying how we might all have a vocation in the priesthood. Is that it? Some penguin came in and brainwashed you? I thought it was dumb then, and it's dumb now.

Samantha throws down her paper and pen and starts to follow him around the room.

SAMANTHA

You would think that. Besides, it's not the boys you're into touching, is it? Don't think you'd make it as a priest, huh?

GEOFFREY

Don't make this hard. I can make sure you can't leave, and make it very difficult for you to live here.

SAMANTHA

Let's say I'm called by God. I become a nun, I'm married to God. Do you really want to take on the Creator? Believe me, I'd do anything to see that fight.

GEOFFREY

God has nothing to do with this, and you know it. I don't want to have to make this worse—

SAMANTHA

(scoffs) What could you possibly do to me to make things worse? I know you'd never hit me—that'd be too noticeable.

GEOFFREY

I didn't do anything you didn't—

SAMANTHA

(quietly) Shut up.

Geoffrey slaps her. Samantha slinks back to her chair, as Geoffrey steps away and starts walking around the living room.

GEOFFREY

I didn't want to do that.

SAMANTHA

I've heard that before.

GEOFFREY

Look—I don't know what you think—

SAMANTHA

You don't—that's the problem. It doesn't matter what I think, as long as I just shut my mouth—or I guess you'd rather have it open, ready to—

GEOFFREY

Don't make me hit you again.

SAMANTHA

My father—

GEOFFREY

Isn't here.

SAMANTHA

The Father is everywhere. He sees everything. He knows everything you've done, every time you've touched me, every time—

GEOFFREY

I told you, don't start that bullshit. ...Your mother insisted you go to Catholic school. "She'll get a better education there!" Wonderful. ...Do you really believe that you're called by God? I mean, what is this? The Middle Ages?

SAMANTHA

“My spirit rejoices in God my savior, for he has looked upon his handmaid’s lowliness. He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones and lifted up the lowly.”

GEOFFREY

What the hell is that?

SAMANTHA

The song of the virgin, called by God. ...Keep asking me why I’m doing this. Go ahead.

She goes back to writing. He gets up behind her, stops, and looks over her shoulder; she notices and tries covering her work.

GEOFFREY

What’re you writing?

SAMANTHA

A poem. It’s called, “Why My Stepfather Is Going to Hell.” Want to hear it?

GEOFFREY

No. ...So which is it now? A poet or a nun?

SAMANTHA

Both. I’m going to be like Hildegard of Bingen.

GEOFFREY

Who?

SAMANTHA

A medieval nun.

GEOFFREY

You want to be a medieval nun? Christ, you’re nuts.

SAMANTHA

(fiercely) She wrote poems, and songs, and operas and had visions and everything! She was a real Renaissance woman!

GEOFFREY

Yeah, a Renaissance woman about three hundred years too early.

Geoffrey goes back over to the bottle of alcohol and pours another drink as Angela enters to hear the rest of the conversation.

GEOFFREY

You're too young to be a nun.

SAMANTHA

Fine—I can wait. It's only a year and a half.

GEOFFREY

Two years. You're only fifteen.

SAMANTHA

I can wait.

He returns to his chair and sits.

GEOFFREY

You'll change your mind.

ANGELA

At least think it over.

SAMANTHA

You don't change your mind when you're called.

ANGELA

Called. What the hell does that mean? You're too young to be called for anything. Don't you understand? You're still a child!

SAMANTHA

You'd like to think so, wouldn't you?

GEOFFREY

You're so damn sure of yourself, aren't you? How do you know it isn't the devil? Heh. There you go, how do you know it isn't the devil telling you to do this? I mean, doesn't the Bible say honor your mother and father?

SAMANTHA

You're not my father.

ANGELA

No. You're real father's fucking some college student. Don't look at me like that.

GEOFFREY

...Anyway, who becomes a nun anymore? If you're so unhappy, why not just run away from home like all the other kids?

Angela hits him for this.

SAMANTHA

I'm starting a trend.

ANGELA

That's not funny.

GEOFFREY

Why do you really want to become a nun? Do you understand what you'd be giving up?

SAMANTHA

(to Geoffrey) Nothing that I want.

GEOFFREY

I won't let you. Do you understand? You can't be a nun. You can't leave. You're not leaving. Not me. I'm your father, I'm your—

SAMANTHA

(blankly) You're not my father.

ANGELA

Samantha!

Samantha gets up and stands over Geoffrey.

SAMANTHA

(Note: this isn't to be read too earnestly—more matter-of-factly, as if she's speaking to a small child)

I don't expect you to understand. That's not why I'm doing this. It's not to convert you or anything. I'm not a fanatic. It's not to make sure mom won't have grandchildren. That's nothing. I don't expect you to understand any of this—why I don't to live here, why I don't want to just leave, run away, why I'm going to be a nun. *(hands Angela the paper she's been writing on, while still addressing Geoffrey)* But this you will understand—even you wouldn't touch a nun.