

AND THE LOTUS SHALL RISE

Screenplay by
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Based on the book
And the Lotus Shall Rise:
My Journey Through Clergy Sex Abuse

Written by
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INT. CLASSROOM - 8TH GRADE ENGLISH - MORNING

Title: **Spring, 1979**

Classroom filled with a variety of TEENS in Catholic school uniforms. SUSAN, 13, sits near the back of the class.

The ENGLISH TEACHER walks in leading FATHER MARK, a handsome, young priest, short, great posture, starched black suit.

ENGLISH TEACHER

Class, we have a guest. Please give your full attention to Father Mark.

The teacher walks over to his desk and sits. Fr. Mark walks to the front of the class. He smiles and looks around. He makes eye contact with Susan. She turns red and looks away.

FR. MARK

Hello everyone. My name is Father Mark.

His voice is deep, commanding. A hush falls over the class.

FR. MARK (CONT'D)

I recently joined this parish and moved into the rectory down the street.

Fr. Mark walks over to the first aisle and starts handing out printed forms as he moves through the aisles.

FR. MARK (CONT'D)

I have been asked, or called rather, to re-launch the Catholic Youth Organization in this parish.

He stops and looks around the class. No response.

FR. MARK (CONT'D)

If you are unfamiliar, the Catholic Youth Organization is the coolest thing the church does. We host dances, roller skating, game nights, and even overnight trips.

Fr. Mark stops at Susan's desk and looks her in the eyes.

FR. MARK (CONT'D)

And, your parents will always say yes, because we are the church.

Susan blushes. Fr. Mark winks, then moves up the aisle.

INT. SUSAN'S PARENTS' KITCHEN - EVENING

Susan sits at the table reading a book as her mother prepares dinner. There are pots on the stove and hamburger steaks in the skillet. She looks up.

SUSAN

Do you want me to set the table?

MOM

Not yet, honey.

BAM. Susan jumps in her chair. Mom looks up.

The sound of the door opening in the other room. Heavy footsteps then...

BAM. The kitchen door slams open.

Susan's DAD storms into the room and stops abruptly.

DAD

You just can never just leave it alone, can you?

Susan's mom turns

MOM

Leave it alone? You've traded away your family to run a bar.

DAD

It's not a bar.

MOM

It's nothing but a bar! You'd rather hang out chewing the fat with drunk old men then pay any attention to your own wife, your own kids...

DAD

Give me break, woman! I'm the Commander of the VFW. Any other woman would brag all over town.

MOM

Oh yeah, brag about a husband that comes home drunk, smelling like cigarettes, telling borrowed war stories from other old had beens.

Susan slides out of her chair, past her dad and out the door.

EXT. SUSAN'S PARENTS' FRONT DOOR - EVENING

Susan sneaks out the door with a tennis racket and ball.

EXT. SIPERSTEIN'S PAINT STORE - EVENING

Susan hits a tennis ball against the wall of the paint store over and over and over.

EXT. PARK - EVENING

Susan shoots baskets on the court with the tennis ball.

EXT. RECTORY - EVENING

Susan sits on a bench across from the rectory, crying. Her tennis racket at her side.

A car pulls up with boys singing out the windows. It pulls into the rectory driveway. A teenager gets out and lifts the garage door. The car pulls inside the garage. The boys all pile out of the car and laugh as they run inside.

Fr. Mark gets out of the drivers seat and walks out of the garage. He sees Susan across the street. He walks over to her. She wipes her tears and pinches her cheeks.

FR. MARK

Susan? From the classroom, right?

She blushes and nods.

SUSAN

Yes. That's me.

FR. MARK

I saw that you applied to work in the rectory this summer.

SUSAN

Everyone says it's great. All the kids like it a lot.

FR. MARK

That's good to hear. We have a lot of events coming up this summer. I could really use your help.

He touches her shoulder. She smiles. He turns and walks away.

INT. RECTORY WORKROOM - NIGHT

Susan sits on a couch next to another teenage girl, Linda, watching a black and white television. They hear loud noises from upstairs.

LINDA

What is all of that noise? Doesn't that bother you?

SUSAN

I don't even notice it, really.

LINDA

Seriously? What are they doing up there?

SUSAN

I've never seen it first hand. But, I bet they're wrestling.

BUZZ. The intercom buzzes.

BOY ON INTERCOM

A bowl of ice, please?

Susan pops up.

LINDA

What's that?

SUSAN

Don't worry. I got it.

Susan walks over to the intercom and pushes a button.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

On my way.

INT. RECTORY KITCHEN - NIGHT

Susan fills a glass bowl with ice from the freezer trays.

INT. RECTORY STAIRS - NIGHT

Susan carries a glass bowl of ice up the stairs.

INT. RECTORY HALLWAY - NIGHT

Susan walks to the end of the hall with the glass bowl filled with ice. She stops at the door and knocks.

The door opens. It's Fr. Mark. He has on a t-shirt and black pants. No shoes or socks. His hair is disheveled.

FR. MARK
Susan, you're the best.

She holds out the ice bowl and he grabs it. In the other room, two boys are on the floor wrestling. Both in pants, one with a t-shirt, the other without.

SUSAN
How's everything going?

He laughs and pulls the small cross out from under his t-shirt. He rubs the chain between his fingers as he talks.

FR. MARK
Oh, you know, Susan. It's going alright. Sometimes these guys just need a little space to be boys.

SUSAN
Boys will be boys, I guess.

They both laugh. Fr. Mark leans against the door frame.

FR. MARK
How about you?

SUSAN
What about me?

FR. MARK
What brings you here so many Saturday nights?

SUSAN
Oh, I love it. It's tons better than being at home.

FR. MARK
Is home kinda tough?

SUSAN
It's more loud. And lonely.

Fr. Mark sets the bowl of ice on the ground. He reaches over and shuts the door behind him. He holds out his arms.

Susan steps forward, puts her arms around Fr. Mark, and falls into his chest. She takes a deep breath.

FR. MARK
You're safe here with me.