

Disconnected

Written By

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BLACK SCREEN

JOHNNY (O.S.)
What...is irony?

FADE IN

INT. CLASSROOM

Johnny stands in front of the class, engaged in some sort of presentation he is giving. No one responds to his question.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
What is it?

He looks around at his peers, who look back at him, anxiously awaiting the next words from this student of extreme confidence.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Anyone? Let's look at an example.

He walks over to a desk in the front row, where Patrick Foster is sitting.

As he does this, the teacher is seen going over to a student, taking something, and then walking away.

Johnny pulls up a desk and sits on it, facing Patrick Foster.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Foster, why do we use cars?

PATRICK FOSTER
Uhhmm transportation?

A couple chuckles.

JOHNNY
Okay, what else?

Foster shrugs.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Taylor, how did you get to school today?

TAYLOR
I drove.

JOHNNY
And how do you plan on getting home?

TAYLOR

My car.

JOHNNY

That's pretty convenient wouldn't
you say?

Taylor nods in agreement.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Convenience.... Jessie, what are
some cons to driving cars?

JESSIE RYANS

Well Johnny, pollutants from
emissions, roads destroying our
ecosystem, urban sprawl, and our
need for fossil fuels are creating
conflict world-wide.

JOHNNY

Well said Jessie.

Johnny winks at Jessie.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Can anyone tell me why this is
ironic?

The class stares emptily.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

We rely SO HEAVILY on something
that hurts us. Why do we do this?
Convenience?

FADE TO BLACK

INT. MATH HALLWAY

Johnny walks down the math hallway next to JESSIE RYANS.

JESSIE RYANS

You didn't hear about it?

JOHNNY

No, no, what is it?

JESSIE RYANS

Well, everyone at lunch was talking
about it, and apparently someone

(MORE)

JESSIE RYANS (CONT'D)

posted something **really** bad on Elizabeth Jones' wall.

JOHNNY

How bad?

JESSIE RYANS

Like, real bad.

JOHNNY

Oh, dang. Does the school know?

JESSIE RYANS

Yeah, I think Mr. Szymanski took someone's phone and saw the post.

JOHNNY

Wow, that's terrible. I've gotta go, call you later?

JESSIE RYANS

Sure. And good luck at tryouts!

She smiles at him and walks away as he walks into St. Martin's room.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. LOCKER ROOM

Fade in. Johnny is sitting on the bench, lacing up his shoes. Just then, Foster comes and pops a squat next to him.

PATRICK FOSTER

Cute presentation today, Johnny.

JOHNNY

Yeah, yeah whatever, Foster. Focus on the tryouts, will ya?

Foster mockingly salutes him.

PATRICK FOSTER

(sarcastically)

Yes, sir.

Johnny gets up off the bench.

EXT. GYM

The players are filing out the gym door, and St. Martin pulls Johnny aside.

ST. MARTIN
How do you think tryouts went?

JOHNNY
Well.

ST. MARTIN
That's good, that's good.

There is a beat of silence.

ST. MARTIN (CONT'D)
Hey, so, Johnny. I was thinking about the team this year and I pulled you aside because...I wanted to name you captain.

Johnny looks surprised.

JOHNNY
Captain? Coach, I hardly saw the court last year.

ST. MARTIN
Listen, Johnny, my captains aren't my best players. They're my best *team* players. You bring morale, attitude, and confidence to the court. You bring leadership. We need that.

JOHNNY
(speechless, yet ecstatic)
Oh, Coach, I

St. Martin holds out his hand.

ST. MARTIN
(smiling)
Congratulations, Johnny Wall.

JOHNNY
Hey, coach, so I was wondering about my neighbor, Tommy. He said he kinda wanted to be manager this year, but he had a detention so he couldn't make it.

ST. MARTIN
Couldn't make it? Johnny if our own
(MORE)

ST. MARTIN (CONT'D)

manager can't make it to tryouts
then will he make it to the games?

JOHNNY

... I guess your right. Thank you
for the Captain spot.

INT. CAR

Johnny sits in the driver's seat. After a few moments, Tommy
clanders in and buckles up. They don't speak. Johnny starts
the car.

CUT TO BLACK

INT. JOHNSON MIDDLE SCHOOL CAFETERIA - THE PAST

The cafeteria is bustling with kids.

JOHNNY'S TABLE

The table is packed, and two kids fling food at each other
from across the table. Johnny throws his tray down next to
them and sits down.

JOHNNY

What's up, boys?

BOY #1

Where were you sitting at lunch
yesterday, huh? We saw how you were
acting in ELA today, man.

PATRICK FOSTER

Yeah, we saw you talking to Jessie.

JOHNNY

Oh, shut up, Foster. Sorry I talk
to girls.

A kid overhears the conversation and leans in.

KID

Johnny, you selling your friends
out for a girl?

JOHNNY

What? No, guys, come on, let's be
real here. I don't even like her.

The three other boys all lean in towards Johnny.

BOY #1
You like her, Johnny?

After hearing the question, Johnny can't help but smirk a little.

The boys hoot and holler at Johnny's wordless confirmation of his attraction to Jessie Ryans.

KID
He likes her! He likes her!

PATRICK FOSTER
Johnny's got a girlfriend!

The yells have attracted the attention of the some of the other boys at the table. Johnny tries to quiet them down.

JOHNNY
Shhh! Hey, guys, stop it!

The rest of the table now looks at Johnny.

OTHER KID
Johnny, what's this I hear about you and Jessie Ryans?

JOHNNY
Nothing.

BOY #1
(throwing his arm around Johnny)
They're gonna get married.

KIDS
Married?

JOHNNY
No!

Johnny stands up.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
What's wrong with you guys, none you ever liked a girl before?

PATRICK FOSTER
Hey, at least he isn't Tommy Hooker, asking out Elizabeth Jones with a text.

This catches Johnny's attention.

JOHNNY

He did what?

PATRICK FOSTER

He sent Elizabeth Jones a text asking if she wanted to go out with him.

BOY #1

Hey, Johnny, isn't that Tommy kid your neighbor.

JOHNNY

(plainly)

Yeah. Why would he do that?

BOY #2

What's it to you?

BOY #3

Johnny's all about the girls now! That's all he cares about!

Johnny slaps his palm against his forehead.

JOHNNY

You know what? You guys are just too afraid to talk to girls. Well guess what? I'm gonna ask Jessie Ryans to be my girlfriend. And I'm going to do it tonight—at the dance!

Audible gasps escape from the mouths of the boys.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

That's right. So be there if you wanna see it.

Johnny takes his tray and leaves, and the boys all look after him, still shocked, calling after him.

BOY #1

Hey, Johnny!

KID

Johnny, wait up!

PATRICK FOSTER

No, Johnny! Don't do it!

TOMMY'S TABLE

The boys sitting around Tommy all have their faces buried in their phones. Johnny approaches them.

JOHNNY

Hey, Tommy, can I ask you something?

Tommy holds up one finger as he finishes his text.

TOMMY

(not looking up)

Yeah, what's up?

JOHNNY

Is it true that you texted Elizabeth Jones?

TOMMY

(after a beat)

I text a lot of people.

JOHNNY

Is it true that you texted her asking her out?

TOMMY

(bland)

Oh. Yeah.

JOHNNY

Well, what'd she say?

TOMMY

That she doesn't know what I look like.

The others all snicker quietly with Tommy.

JOHNNY

Well, why don't you ask her out in person at the dance?

TOMMY

Johnny, that's ridiculous.

The others murmur in agreement.

JOHNNY

(getting frustrated)

Who are you even texting right now?!

TOMMY
 (still hasn't looked up)
 Smitty.

JOHNNY
 Smitty is sitting right next to
 you!

TOMMY
 Thanks, Captain Obvious.

Johnny sighs and walks off.

INT. BLACKBURN HALL - THAT NIGHT

The lights are off, and the dance is complete with streamers, a DJ, and plenty of laser lights.

Upon looking at the dance floor, it is clear that there are two distinct sides: boys to one, girls to the other.

GIRLS' SIDE

The camera pans down the crowd of girls, who gossip to each other, a few on their phones here and there, but still some dancing. Snippets of conversation are heard.

GIRL #1
 Lemme see what he said.

GIRL #2
 No way he does it.

GIRL #3
 Way out of his league.

GIRL #4
 He's doing it tonight?

GIRL #5
 Is she going to say yes?

BOYS' SIDE

The camera pans down the crowd of boys, who stand in huddles, peering at the door, mumbling about Johnny.

BOY #1
 Already five minutes late. Maybe he
 wimped out.

PATRICK FOSTER
 Said he was gonna do it, I'm sure
 he will.

BOY #2
Didn't he say tonight?

BOY #3
He's not gonna show up.

BOY #4
You think so?

BOY #5
Shoot, I can't believe Johnny's
gonna do this.

DOORWAY

Girls on the right, guys on the left, the symmetrical shot shows the doorway, which now has someone walking through it: Johnny. Audible gasps are heard from both sides.

GIRLS' SIDE

A group of girls converse.

GIRL #4
He's here!

GIRL #5
Johnny just got here?

GIRL #4
Yeah!

GIRL #6
When is he gonna ask her?

BOYS' SIDE

A couple of boys are huddled in conversation.

BOY #1
You think so?

PATRICK FOSTER
For real! He will!

Just then, Johnny walks into the conversation.

JOHNNY
What's up, guys?

PATRICK FOSTER
Oh, hey, Johnny...

Everyone is silent for an awkward moment.

JOHNNY

Why is everyone acting so weird?

PATRICK FOSTER

Aw come on, Johnny.

JOHNNY

What? Hey is Jessie here yet?

The three of them look to the girls' side.

PATRICK FOSTER

Is that her right there?

JOHNNY

Yeah I think so. You guys coming?

They quickly shake their heads no.

GIRLS' SIDE

Three girls circle around JESSIE RYANS. They are giggling, and all look up when Johnny approaches.

Jessie smiles shyly, Johnny smiles back.

JOHNNY

Hi, guys. Hey, Jessie, did you wanna dance or something?

JESSIE RYANS

(being wise)

Or something?

JOHNNY

Yeah, you know, or dance.

JESSIE RYANS

(smiling)

Yeah sure.

As Johnny leads Jessie Ryans into the middle of the dance floor, all the girls exchange an excited look.

BOYS' SIDE

Patrick Foster taps one of the other boys.

PATRICK FOSTER

Look, guys, he's doing it!

DANCE FLOOR

Johnny and Jessie begin to dance, and, being in middle

school, its a typical, somewhat casual, friendly type of dance. No super awkward slow-dancing or anything. As the dance continues, the two side are somewhat assimilated, everyone trying to get a better view, but trying to pretend like they aren't watching all the while.

BOYS' SIDE

A gang of boys watch.

BOY #1

Man, I want Johnny to come hang out with us. I'm getting bored.

BOY #3

Yeah, same...Somebody text him.

BOY #5

I'll do it.

The boys watch him type out a text and send it. They all look to Johnny.

DANCE FLOOR

Johnny and Jessie Ryans are still dancing. The sound of a phone going off is heard.

BOYS' SIDE

The boys all watch for a moment longer.

BOY #1

Did he get it?

BOY #5

I don't know, it said it sent.

BOY #3

Did he hear it?

BOY #1

Foster, go tell Johnny his phone went off.

DANCE FLOOR

Johnny is still dancing with Jessie Ryans. Patrick Foster comes into frame.

PATRICK FOSTER

(shouting over the music)

Hey, Johnny!

Johnny doesn't turn his head away from Jessie Ryans, but responds to Foster.

JOHNNY
(shouting back)
Yeah!

PATRICK FOSTER
Your phone went off!

JOHNNY
(uncaring)
I know.

Johnny hasn't even turned his head to face Foster, and Foster simply looks confused. He heads back.

BOYS' SIDE

BOY #5
Well?

PATRICK FOSTER
I told him his phone went off.

BOY #3
And?

PATRICK FOSTER
And he said he knows.

BOY #1
Ah, whatever, man. I'm bored. Let's dance.

BLACKBURN

An upper view shows some of the boys going over towards the girls, and, soon, more and more people start dancing as the camera backs out.

CUT TO BLACK

HARD CUT TO:

INT. CAR - THE PAST

MOM sits in the car, reading a magazine, when the door open. Johnny gets in and throws his backpack in the seat.

Mom puts her magazine down and starts the car and drives.

MOM
Hey, you! How was school today?

JOHNNY

Good! Mrs. Williams gave me a golden star today!

MOM

That's great, sweetie! And how about that book project Mrs. Rizzo told me about?

JOHNNY

We got to pick our own groups for the book project so I'm doing it with Patrick Foster!

MOM

Oh, good!

JOHNNY

Mom, can I play outside when we get home?

MOM

(smiles)

After dinner, Johnny.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

Johnny, Mom, and DAD are seated around the table. They are eating dinner.

DAD

So when do you get report cards?

JOHNNY

Next week, I think.

DAD

Are we going to see good things?

JOHNNY

Mhm! I got an A+ on my math test!

DAD

That's great, Johnny! Any problems with school?

JOHNNY

Nope.

DAD

Making new friends?

JOHNNY
Yeah, and I'm in the same class as
Patrick, too.

DAD
Good good. Any girls?

JOHNNY
Ew, Dad, no.

DAD
(laughs)
What? You don't like any girls?

JOHNNY
No!

Mom and Dad exchange a grin and turn back to Johnny.

DAD
Really?

MOM
You don't have a girlfriend,
Johnny?

He shakes his head immediately.

MOM (CONT'D)
(grinning)
That's funny, because Mrs. Foster
was telling me that Patrick was
telling her that you have been
talking to Jessie Ryans a lot.

JOHNNY
(trying to hide a smile)
No! We're just friends.

Mom and Dad exchange another smile.

Johnny says nothing, but they all sort of laugh a bit.

EXT. DRIVEWAY

Johnny plays basketball with his dad.

They laugh as Dad steals the ball and dunks it.

The next time, Johnny grabs onto his dad's leg and pushes
him into the grass as they fall down laughing.

Dad gets up, clearly worn out.

DAD
 Why don't you go next door and ask
 Tommy to play for a bit?

JOHNNY
 He never can!

DAD
 It couldn't hurt to try, Johnny.
 Never be afraid to just ask.

JOHNNY
 Okay.

Johnny runs out of the driveway and the camera follows him
 as he runs onto the front steps of:

EXT. TOMMY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

He rings the doorbell. The door opens.

TOMMY'S MOM stands there, phone to her ear, and cell phone
 in her hand; she looks quite preoccupied.

JOHNNY
 Hi, can, Tommy—

She cuts him off with a cold finger in the air.

TOMMY'S MOM
 (into phone)
 Yeah, yeah, hold on a second
 Daniel.

She holds the phone against her neck as she types a message
 on her cell.

TOMMY'S MOM
 (not looking up)
 What is it?

JOHNNY
 (very nervous)
 Um, I just wanted to know if Tommy
 can play outside with me?

TOMMY'S MOM
 Sorry, we are just about to eat
 dinner. Maybe another time.

JOHNNY
 Okay.

He runs off the steps as she walks back into the depths of the house.

The camera follows Johnny as he runs down the sidewalk, but it stops at the edge of Tommy's yard, letting Johnny run out of frame, at which point the camera floats back to the front steps of Tommy's house, and then enters the house.

The camera shows the extensive range of technological gadgets that are littered throughout the house.

INT. DINING ROOM

Tommy and his family are seated around the table. The parents have their noses in cell phones and iPads; Tommy has his focus directed towards the handheld games in his lap. The atmosphere is awkward and silent. They all look down at their laps for the entirety of this scene, and the food goes untouched.

The shot lingers for a while with no conversation.

Dad tries to break the silence.

DAD
(awkwardly)
How was school?

TOMMY
(plainly, without looking
up)
Good.

This uncomfortable shot lingers for quite a bit of time.

INT. CAR - THE NEXT MORNING

Mom is driving the car on the phone, while Tommy is in the backseat, wrapped into his iPad, head down as usual.

She slows to a stop and Tommy clammers out.

MOM
Have fun.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. JOHNSON MIDDLE SCHOOL CAFETERIA

TOMMY'S TABLE

Tommy sits on his phone like the rest of the boys around him. Silence does not describe the atmosphere: the clicking and tapping of keys and screens is a chorus that rings

throughout the cafeteria. One kid leans over to Tommy without picking his head up.

SMITTY
Did you ask Elizabeth out yet?

TOMMY
Yeah. I texted her a few hours ago.

SMITTY
Cool.

Back to silence. Smitty leans back over.

SMITTY (CONT'D)
Can you send that to me?

TOMMY
(without looking up)
Yeah.

SMITTY
Cool.

Just then, Johnny comes up to the table.

JOHNNY
Hey, Tommy, can I ask you something?

Tommy holds up one finger as he finishes his text.

TOMMY
(not looking up)
Yeah, what's up?

JOHNNY
Is it true that you texted Elizabeth Jones?

TOMMY
(after a beat)
I text a lot of people.

JOHNNY
Is it true that you texted her asking her out?

TOMMY
(bland)
Oh. Yeah.

JOHNNY
Well, what'd she say?

TOMMY
That she doesn't know what I look like.

The others all snicker quietly with Tommy.

JOHNNY
Well, why don't you ask her out in person at the dance?

TOMMY
Johnny, that's ridiculous.

The others murmur in agreement.

JOHNNY
(getting frustrated)
Who are you even texting right now?!

TOMMY
(still hasn't looked up)
Smitty.

JOHNNY
Smitty is sitting right next to you!

TOMMY
Thanks, Captain Obvious.

Johnny sighs and walks off.

INT. BLACKBURN HALL BASEMENT

In the basement, there are a few kids milling about drinking sodas and eating snacks. The beat of the music can be heard from the basement. There are two groups of chairs somewhat facing each other and clustered together. One group is occupied by girls and the other by boys.

GIRLS' SIDE

The camera pans across the cluster of sitting girls, texting. One girl is not texting. She wears a bright top with a loose sweater over it. This is ELIZABETH JONES. Her eyes are locked on something across from her.

BOYS' SIDE

The camera pans across the group of boys who are also attached to their cell phones. The camera slows to a stop on Tommy, whose head is also down.

GIRLS' SIDE

Elizabeth, looking quizzically at Tommy, hesitates for a moment before getting up and leaving.

BOYS' SIDE

Smitty leans over and taps Tommy on the shoulder. Tommy doesn't look up. Their conversation is bleak and awkward.

SMITTY

(in an almost whisper)

Hey, Johnny, what app are you on?

TOMMY

(without looking up)

The new one?

SMITTY

Oh that one?

TOMMY

Yeah.

SMITTY

Is it any good?

TOMMY

Yeah, of course it is.

CUT TO BLACK

JOHNNY (O.S.)

What...is irony?

FADE IN

INT. CLASSROOM

JOHNNY

Johnny stands in front of the class, engaged in some sort of presentation he is giving. No one responds to his question.

TOMMY

Tommy, takes half of a second to acknowledge Johnny before going back to his phone.

JOHNNY

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

What is it?

He looks around at his peers, who look back at him, anxiously awaiting the next words from this student of extreme confidence.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Anyone? Let's look at an example.

He walks over to a desk in the front row, where Patrick Foster is sitting.

TOMMY

Tommy still doesn't lift his head up. Szymanski comes into frame and leans into Tommy's face.

SZYMANSKI

(holding his hand out)

Cell phone, Tommy.

TOMMY

What? No-

JOHNNY

JOHNNY

Taylor, how did you get to school today?

TAYLOR

I drove.

JOHNNY

And how do you plan on getting home?

TAYLOR

My car.

TOMMY

Tommy half-heartedly resists before Szymanski rips the phone out of his hands. The phone screen ends up right in front of Szymanski's face. His eyes widen.

JOHNNY

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Can anyone tell me why this is ironic?

TOMMY

Szymanski has finished reading the screen, then leans into Tommy's face.

SZYMANSKI
(whispers)
You're in **big** trouble.

JOHNNY

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
We rely SO HEAVILY on something
that hurts us. Why do we do this?
Convenience?

HARD CUT TO:

INT: SCHOOL LIBRARY

Tommy sits, without a phone, with his friends around a table in the library. All of his friends are on their phones. Tommy looks bored with his surroundings.

He looks around him trying to find something that may capture his attention, but there is nothing.

A voice breaks the awkward silence.

ELIZABETH
Are you Tommy?

TOMMY
(Clearly flustered)
Oh, uh yeah.

A beat of silence is felt.

ELIZABETH
You're the one who posted on my
wall.

TOMMY
(feels around for phone)
Uh ye-yeah, I-I

ELIZABETH
Ha, and you wonder why I wouldn't
go out with you.

TOMMY
Well I just....

ELIZABETH
You're a joke.

Elizabeth Leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. IMBUSCH'S OFFICE

Tommy sits, slouched in a chair across from Imbusch. He is grumpy, and stares at something on the desk:

His cell phone.

Imbusch cuts the silence.

IMBUSCH

Tommy, your post on Elizabeth Jones' wall is incredibly inappropriate and you are going to face serious repercussions for it. Her family is involved, and so are the police. Do you realize what this means for you?

Tommy doesn't even stir, he appears to not even care.

IMBUSCH (CONT'D)

Well how about I just tell you: you will be suspended until your legal punishment is determined, at which point, matters can then be settled. I'm disappointed, Tommy Hooker, disappointed.

Tommy still doesn't stir, eyes still on the phone.

IMBUSCH (CONT'D)

Well, I guess our time here is through.

He gets up and moves towards the door.

Tommy gets up as well, but, when Imbusch has his back turned, snatches the phone.

CUT TO BLACK

A car door opens and then slams shut.

FADE IN

INT. CAR

Johnny sits in the driver's seat, Tommy in the passenger's. It is silent. Johnny starts the car. Tommy pulls out his

cell phone and immediately begins texting. A brief moment of silence.

JOHNNY

Well?

TOMMY

(head down)

What?

JOHNNY

What was all that about?

TOMMY

I dunno.

JOHNNY

What do you mean? Are you in trouble?

Tommy just goes on texting, not responding to Johnny.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

(terribly frustrated)

Dude, will you get off your phone for a minute and just talk to me?!

CUT TO BLACK

ROLL CREDITS