

JOHNNY BURNS SOUL

By

Aaron Jakubenko

ORIGINAL

2010

Aaron Jakubenko

EXT. SUBURBAN COMMUNITY HALL - NIGHT

The night is quiet as a fluorescent light bulb flickers over a cheap A frame signboard sitting outside a small slightly neglected suburban community hall. Overgrown weeds covers the cracked concrete path leading to the door, clearly a venue for minor events. A mans face wearing a cheap grin plasters the sign, all greasy slick back hair, glowing white teeth and photo shop flames for pupils. The sign is layered with tacky font giving the impression the design came from a 12 year old. The slogans "Johnny Burns Will Save Your Soul", "Exercise Your Demons" and "Exorcist extraordinaire as seen on You Tube, Channel 31" cover the sign.

JOHNNY V/O

See the handsome guy on the poster, that's me. Should read Johnny Burns professional con artist though. I'm no exorcist...hell i never even read the bible. Just touching holy water probably would melt my skin right off.

INT. SUBURBAN COMMUNITY HALL - NIGHT

Cheap chairs fill the room, mostly empty except for odd piles of rubbish and furniture stacked in odd corners. The occupied chairs are filled by a mix of obviously desperate people, a worried mother and her sick looking son, sickly junkies, conservative couples. A random cross section of society unlikely to ever be in the same room again. On the cheap stage at the front of the room 6 people stand in a row, eyes closed, convulsing as if possessed. The stage is dressed in an underwater theme probably used for a primary school play. Glittery cardboard fish and cellophane coral provide a bizarre contrast for the events taking place on stage.

JOHNNY V/O

Demons are not real. People don't really get possessed. The only demons that exist are the ones in peoples tragic minds, fueled by broken dreams, broken hearts and broken minds.

JOHNNY (early 30's) prowls the stage with microphone in hand, sweating under bright spotlights dressed in a slick black suit. His slim figure and big hair make him out to be some kind of manic preacher, a sleazy snake in a suit. He screams spraying venom like spit in there faces as he forcefully pushes peoples heads and bodies back. The audience watches, enthralled but clearly emotionally disturbed by the event.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY V/O

Look at these fucking idiots.  
Thinking they are all possessed and  
shit. I'm trying not to piss myself  
laughing right now. I'm not some  
kinda soldier of god, I cant really  
help these people. I'm just good at  
pretending i can, preaching  
bullshit and putting on a fancy  
show...sure i'll take there demons,  
then i'll take there money.

On stage an overweight lady in a cheap floral dress, looking like a Jerry Springer guest over dramatically drops to the ground with a thud after JOHNNY pushes her head back. She twitches madly and convulses on the floor. Excess skin on her arms and chin jiggles like jelly as spit foams from her mouth.

JOHNNY V/O

God...I seriously cant believe this  
shit.

JOHNNY catches glimpse of an attractive lady in her mid 40's sitting alone in the audience in the very back row. She is staring intensely at the spectacle. JOHNNY is distracted by her as there eyes meet, he stares for a moment.

JOHNNY V/O

Oh, i like that.

CUT TO:

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

In the bare bones dressing room JOHNNY sits back in a chair with smoke in mouth, feet up and wearing a dirty singlet, the air is filled with the haze of cigarette smoke. He leans back taking a swig from a bottle of bourbon, staring at his reflection in the mirror with a look of self loathing. There is a soft knock at the door. He snaps from his daze and looks towards the door irritated.

JOHNNY

What!

A soft polite voice emerges from the behind door.

NATALIE

Mr Burns? I've been watching you  
for a long time. I was in the  
audience tonight. I saw what you

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NATALIE (cont'd)  
can do to people, how you can help  
people. How you pull demons from  
within people. Ive come to speak to  
you.

Realizing its a female JOHNNY turns on the sleaze.

JOHNNY  
Sure sugar. Come right in.

The door opens and NATALIE walks in, she covers her mouth to  
prevent choking on the thick smoke. JOHNNY sits up  
attentively realizing who it is.

JOHNNY  
Damn, I was watching you watching  
me do my thing. Sure, i can tell  
your clearly impressed. Sit down.  
Whats your name sweety?

NATALIE  
Thank you. My name is Natalie  
Mastema.

JOHNNY  
Bourbon, Natalie?

Natalie quaintly looks down to the ground.

NATALIE  
No thank you.

JOHNNY reaches into his pocket pulling out a pill container  
and playfully shakes it.

JOHNNY  
Valium?

NATALIE  
Umm...no.

JOHNNY replies sardonically.

JOHNNY  
Right...

NATALIE looks slightly confused by the behaviour displayed  
by JOHNNY. Clearly different to his onstage persona.

NATALIE  
I'm actually here to speak to you  
in regards to an urgent matter. I  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NATALIE (cont'd)  
am in desperate need of help from  
someone like you. I'm beginning to  
think your the only person who can  
help.

JOHNNY becomes disinterested as he realizes this is purely a  
business meeting. He returns his gaze back to his reflection  
and takes a long swig from the bourbon bottle. Liquid  
dribbles down his chin.

JOHNNY  
Yeah probably...whatever...what is  
it?

NATALIE breathes deep and struggles to speak.

NATALIE  
Something has taken my daughter?

JOHNNY tilts his head somewhat confused.

JOHNNY  
Do i look like a cop lady? Call  
them.

NATALIE  
No, i mean...something has taken my  
daughters mind, i don't know...i  
think she is possessed.

JOHNNY pulls a smoke which was tucked behind his ear and  
lights it.

JOHNNY  
You have a daughter? Does she share  
her mothers good looks and  
tight...so and how old did you say  
your daughter was?

NATALIE  
I didn't say. Michelle recently  
celebrated her tenth birthday,  
roughly the day after is when she  
changed, she became...different,  
distant, violent.

JOHNNY removes the near full cigarette from his mouth and  
butts it in the ashtray.

JOHNNY  
What the fuck. I don't deal with  
kids miss and besides I don't do  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY (cont'd)  
home delivery. You should have brought her in tonight and paid at the door. Really? Do you see a fucking Dominoes Pizza van parked out front? Am i wearing a little cap?

NATALIE gets up from the chair and stands above JOHNNY. Looking down at him with both shame and disgust.

NATALIE  
I'm sorry for wasting your obviously precious time Mr Burns, really. I was more than willing to reward your efforts financially but clearly your not interested. I really had you mistaken and my daughters safety has no time for antics, goodbye...

NATALIE turns and begins to leave as JOHNNY quickly jumps from his chair, knocking over his bottle of bourbon in the process.

JOHNNY  
How much?

NATALIE  
Me and my husband are offering you our entire savings, its all we have...\$10, 000.

JOHNNY grins, salivating at the thought.

JOHNNY  
You got a deal sugar.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE NATALIE'S HOME - DAY

NATALIE'S modest home is located in an isolated rural area outside of the city limits. The white picket fence and garden full of bright flowers depict a typically quaint family home yet strangely the windows of the home are barred up like a jail. JOHNNY is parked out the front. He is sitting hunched over the steering wheel of his black 1970's Plymouth Valiant.

CUT TO:

## INT. JOHNNY'S CAR - DAY

JOHNNY looks up at his reflection in the rear view mirror then reaches into his jacket pocket pulling out a pill container. He pours a handful in his mouth washing it down with a mouthful of a bourbon. He stares again into his own bloodshot eyes in the rear view mirror. Not his normal self, he is nervous and twitchy, wired from drugs and booze, running his hands through his hair.

JOHNNY

Possessed kids? Fucking hilarious.  
When are people gonna learn you  
gotta deal with your demons  
yourself...OK Johnny, its go time.

CUT TO:

## INT. NATALIE'S HOME LOUNGE ROOM - DAY

The interior of NATALIE'S home is full of kitsch furniture, covered in dust and lacking basically any common modern appliances such as television. Skinny, feral like cats freely roam the house. NATALIE and peeks through the curtain watching as JOHNNY gets out of his car and walks towards the front door. She turns to her husband, BELIAL. An overweight man in his mid 40's, bald with a moon face and tiny glasses, looks kind of simple. He stands in the middle of the room nursing cats in his hand, gently petting it. NATALIE closes the curtain turning to her husband.

NATALIE

He is here.

CUT TO:

## EXT. NATALIE'S HOME FRONT DOOR - DAY

A knock is heard from the front door. BELIAL walks over to the door opens it to see JOHNNY standing there, leaning up against the door frame somewhat disheveled.

BELIAL

Good day Mr Burnsy. Me and my wife  
are so pleased you came. My name is  
Belial Mastema. We have seen you on  
the television.

JOHNNY looks at BELIAL confused. NATALIE joins BELIAL at the door. NATALIE'S demeanour seems colder than when her and JOHNNY previously met.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

Right, so...you two are married?  
Weird. Lets get this show on the  
road shall we.

NATALIE

Yes please, come in. I'll show you  
to my daughters room.

BELIAL

Yes, come in Mr Burnsy.

JOHNNY enters the house and turns to BELIAL who is still  
standing in the doorway patting the cat.

JOHNNY

Oh and catwoman, its Burns not  
Burnsy.

BELIAL

Yes Mr Burnsy.

JOHNNY

Whatever.

BELIAL looks cautiously around outside then slowly closes  
the door.

CUT TO:

INT. NATALIE'S HOME HALLWAY- DAY

The inside of the house is dark, illuminated by the glow of  
a few lamps. NATALIE leads JOHNNY through the lounge room up  
a hallway towards her daughters bedroom door. As he walks  
JOHNNY looks around the home noticing no photos, no  
television and bizarre gothic paintings adorning the walls  
depicting hellish images and scenes. BELIAL shuffling with a  
slight limp follows behind. As they approach MICHELLE'S room  
a thick stench catches JOHNNY off guard, he cringes before  
keeling over against the wall and dry reaching.

JOHNNY

What the hell is that smell?

NATALIE

Its our poor Michelle. Im sorry.  
You will see when you go in.  
Please, help her.

JOHNNY looks up at NATALIE, as if gasping for air and wipes  
his mouth.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

You really need some of those  
little smelly pine trees for in  
here.

Both NATALIE and BELIAL are straight faced.

JOHNNY

Before i go in, when do i get paid?

NATALIE

We will have the money waiting here  
for you tonight Mr Burns.

JOHNNY regains his composure and looks around at the couple,  
becoming increasingly unsure of the situation he finds  
himself in. Both NATALIE and BELIAL seem unphased by the  
situation.

JOHNNY

OK...sure.

JOHNNY begins doing stretches as if wasting time. Avoiding  
the responsibility he has accepted. As if he is afraid.  
NATALIE and BELIAL watch on strangely confused.

NATALIE

Is something wrong?

JOHNNY nervously replies.

JOHNNY

Na, Na...i do this all the time.  
Its just prep.

CUT TO:

INT. MICHELLE'S BEDROOM - DAY

JOHNNY slowly opens the door to MICHELLE'S bedroom and peaks  
in. The odor is stronger and immediately attacks his  
senses, he cringes but moves forward. He peaks in first then  
cautiously enters into the room. Un-noticed a cat scurries  
in the room behind JOHNNY the instant he closes the door. He  
glances around the dark room. The curtains are pulled shut  
but beams of light barely crack through. They illuminate  
areas of the room. What appears to be vomit and other fluids  
stain the ground and walls, food scraps litter the room.  
Strange hieroglyphs are scrawled over the walls and posters  
of pop bands and teen idols in black crayon, depicting  
shapes and spirals and unknown letters.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY looks around the room in shock and fear. He hears a sick wheezing or breathing sound coming from the corner of the room. JOHNNY fixes his gaze on the source as his eyes adjust to his surroundings. MICHELLE stands there. Arms by her side, not moving and staring at the ground, her unwashed long blonde hair covering her face. Her pink overalls are covered in dirty stains. Her small frame expands as she breathes deeply in and out, her wheezing slowly grows in volume. JOHNNY cautiously takes a step forward and leans over at eye level.

JOHNNY

Hey kid. What you doing there?

JOHNNY takes another step as MICHELLE'S breathing becomes a growling noise, slowly growing in intensity. Calmly talking to the kid.

JOHNNY

Those drawings on your wall, yeah,  
they are pretty...different.

JOHNNY takes another step closer and is within arms reach, he reaches out his hand to grab her shoulder. The cat innocently wanders between the pair.

JOHNNY

Definitely not all unicorns and  
rainbows huh...

JOHNNY is inches away from grabbing MICHELLE on the shoulder when she looks up and releases a howling scream. JOHNNY pulls back in terror as MICHELLE swoops down picking the cat up around the neck, the cat squeals before she bites into its skull and rips off hair and flesh. JOHNNY falls back in terror, he gets to his feet, turns and runs.

CUT TO:

INT. NATALIE'S HOME HALLWAY- DAY

The bedroom door flies open and out JOHNNY runs between NATALIE and BELIAL who watch calmly. He sprints for the front door and out of the house.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE NATALIE'S HOME - DAY

Without even turning back JOHNNY jumps in his car and speeds off, tyres screeching.

CUT TO:

EXT. SEEDY MOTEL - NIGHT

Neon lights flicker and reflect over JOHNNY'S car which is parked outside his motel room. His silhouette can be seen pacing back and forward in the room from the window.

CUT TO:

INT. SEEDY MOTEL - NIGHT

JOHNNY is pacing around his room in a manic state. The noise of a squealing alley cat pierces the night and sends him into a panic. He kills the light, and closes the curtains, quickly peeking through the window, his eyes darting in every direction. He turns on a cheap radio, Blue Oyster Cults "Dont Fear the Reaper" is playing. He gulps down vodka and various pills he has on the table.

JOHNNY

What the fuck, what the fuck.

He keeps repeating it over and over as his mind plays visions of MICHELLE eating the cat. He stops moving.

JOHNNY

Gotta get your shit together  
Johnny. This shit ain't real, shit  
didn't really happen. Too much  
drugs, messing with my head. I need  
coke...

He raids the bedside drawer looking for his stash. He pulls out a bible and tosses it aside. He finds the drugs but he also finds a letter he recently received. JOHNNY picks it up and stares at it. His hands are trembling. The letter is made from magazine font cut outs like a ransom note, it reads "Last warning Johnny, I want my money". JOHNNY tips out the contents of the bag on the bed and slams his face into it. He lays for a moment just inhaling as much up his nose as he can. His body appears limp.

JOHNNY stands up like a zombie, turns off the radio and walks into the bathroom. He stares at his reflection in the mirror. His face is white and sweaty, his nose covered in

(CONTINUED)

cocaine. He breathes in and out deeply. He is almost crying in the mirror. In the mirrors reflection a black shape can be seen standing behind a shower curtain in the bath behind JOHNNY.

JOHNNY

Your a piece of shit Johnny Burns.  
Wait, no, I'm Johnny fucking Burns.  
No one can fuck with me, no one.

The radio suddenly turns on, music blasting louder than before, playing Aphex Twins "Come to Daddy". JOHNNY both startled and confused turns his head to the source. A hand begins to slowly pull back the shower curtain behind him. He walks out and turns off the music then returns to the mirror where the shower curtain is back in its original place. He runs cold water and splashes it over his face. The radio turns itself on yet again. He quickly turns and walks to the radio. MICHELLE is standing before him, she releases a high pitched animal like scream before she sprints, arms outstretched towards him. In a split second he snaps to find himself looking back at the mirror, alone and in silence. He looks up at the mirror on the verge of a breakdown.

JOHNNY

...Fuck.

JOHNNY picks up the letter from the bedside table and tears it apart. He then leaves the apartment, the radio turns itself back on.

CUT TO:

INT. NATALIE'S HOME LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT

NATALIE is seated in the room reading a weathered old book when JOHNNY knocks on the door. She looks up unsurprised. NATALIE opens the door and JOHNNY charges through in an agitated manic state, nearly knocking her to the ground.

NATALIE remains extremely calm.

NATALIE

You returned Mr Burns.

JOHNNY is now screaming.

JOHNNY

Give me my money. I want my money now. Don't screw me around with your illusions and shit. Using your daughter for some twisted practical joke, you make me sick.

(CONTINUED)

NATALIE still remains extremely calm, even somewhat bemused.

NATALIE

Now Mr Burns, I explained to you my daughters condition...

JOHNNY

You explained nothing lady. Give me money and I go, simple.

NATALIE

And i was under the impression you were an experienced professional quite use to handling situations like this.

A shadowy black cloaked figure emerges from the end of the hallway and slowly creeps forward. JOHNNY has his back turned and is unaware. As the figure gets closer it is clear he is carrying a metal baseball bat. JOHNNY continues screaming as the figure limps towards him.

JOHNNY

Yeah your right. I am a professional and I am use to dealing with lunatics like you. Last chance, give me my fucking money...

NATALIE begins smiling.

JOHNNY

What the fuck you smiling at?

The cloaked figure is standing right behind JOHNNY who is totally oblivious. The figure raises the baseball bat over his head in preparation to swing. He starts giggling.

BELIAL

Hey Mr...

BELIAL swings and smashes the bat directly over the back of JOHNNY'S head.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. MICHELLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

JOHNNY regains consciousness to find he has been strapped down to a table. As he comes to he glances around to realize he is back in MICHELLE'S room, he spots MICHELLE standing in the corner of the room, head down and standing still. The

(CONTINUED)

room is illuminated by candle light, they light flickering over the walls. He struggles to free himself and begins screaming in panic.

JOHNNY

Help! What the hell is this? Let me go or I'm gonna kick your ass.

His screams anger MICHELLE who looks up directly at JOHNNY. Revealing her bloated, scabbed face and solid black eyes. She begins growling and hissing at JOHNNY who is terrified.

JOHNNY

Somebody help me. What the fuck, that's not a fucking kid.

JOHNNY hears the door open but he cant turn to see who it is. MICHELLE calms down in the presence of NATALIE and BELIAL who have entered the room. They stand above JOHNNY and look down upon him.

NATALIE

Oh, looks whos awake.

Both NATALIE and BELIAL are dressed in black druid like cloaks. There faces painted in the same symbols which cover the walls of the room.

JOHNNY

What kind of sick shit are you people into?

BELIAL begins reciting some kind of incantation while preparing various tools. JOHNNY struggles to look at what he is doing but cant see. The noises are enough to terrify him.

NATALIE

Its no sicker than what you do Johnny.

JOHNNY

You don't know me, you don't know shit about me.

NATALIE

Oh your wrong Johnny. Like i told you Johnny, Ive been watching you a long time. Your not magic Johnny. You lie cheat and steal from innocent people. You have a serious drug habit for which you owe some very dangerous people a lot of money. You have no family, no real friends.

(CONTINUED)

BELIAL picks up a giant syringe and jabs it into the side of JOHNNY'S neck. He screams and tears run down his face as the needle sucks out his blood.

NATALIE

You just have your little scam sideshow and not much else really. Makes you the perfect sacrifice for our daughter. You see Johnny, she is possessed by a real demon.

BELIAL removes the syringe then squirts the blood into a bowl. He hands the bowl to MICHELLE, she snatches the bowl and gulps down the blood, licking the bowl clean of every last drop as if she hasn't eaten in days. JOHNNY has tears streaming down his face.

NATALIE

And by sacrificing you...she can live for another 10 years. Its very noble of you Johnny.

JOHNNY

Fuck. Just let me go. Please. I'm sorry for the things I've done. Just let me go and no one will see or hear from me again. Please.

MICHELLE walks towards JOHNNY. Her mouth opens wide making disturbing animal like snarls, her mouth stretches so unhumanly wide flesh rips and the jaw bones crack revealing razor like teeth, her tongue extends and grows longer like a tentacle with a giant protruding fang at the end. It hovers in the air towards JOHNNY before suddenly impaling his neck. It begins sucking blood from the puncture wound in his neck as he screams in pain, crying louder and sobbingly begs.

JOHNNY

Get that thing away from me.

NATALIE

Your right you know. No one will hear or see you again Johnny Burns.

BELIAL playfully giggles as he raises a huge blade in the air above JOHNNY'S chest.

BELIAL

Bye Mr Burnsy.

The last thing JOHNNY sees and hears before BELIAL plunging the knife deep into his chest is MICHELLE eating his flesh around his neck.

THE END