**BUMS**by Robert Shaffron *Evelyn*

I don\*t know when I stopped living my life and my life started living me. *(A beat.)* My mother was a Christian. A Bible slamming, fire and brimstone, halleluhjah Christian. I remember the day — the night — of her conversion. I was sleeping. She tore into the apartment — I slept on the couch — and she was out of breath, and her hair was, well, some of it had slipped out from under the elastic band she always had it pulled back in. And she ran around the room turning on all the lamps, and she turned on the light in the little half-kitchen, and she turned on the lights in her bedroom and left the door open so the light came into theliving room where I was sleeping. I sat up, I was scratching and trying to straighten the crumpled sheets under me with my eyes closed the lights were so bright and I asked her, "Ma why are you turning all the lights on like that it hurts my eyes." And she rushed over to me and she pulled me off the couch onto the floor and said, "Evelyn, we\*re gonna get down on our knees and pray. In the light. And we\*re gonna pray to the Lord that we may always live in the light. The clean, pure holy light that falls down on us from the good Lord in heaven." We\*d never prayed in our lives. I didn\*t even know what praying was, really. I knew people prayed in church. I\*d seen pictures of churches, and they always looked beautiful and scary with the colored lights all coming through the stained glass windows and shiny wood benches and gigantic stone arches, and I wondered how in hell we were gonna pray in our little apartment with the greasy walls and the chipped tile floors and bare lightbulbs — scary but not beautiful like the churches. *(A beat.)* All Mother wanted was a man who wouldn\*t leave her so she brought God home. And he stayed. Mother went crazy with religion. And as soon as I was old enough, I did the only thing I could think to do. I got pregnant and left home. Amen