

WHOSE LIFE
PILOT

Written by

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A New York 20-something is bequeathed his dead friend's life.

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ACT 1

INT. ELLIOT'S BEDROOM, DAY

ELLIOT, 24, on his phone in a barely furnished, walk-in-closet-sized Manhattan bedroom. Looks at bare walls. Googles "cool posters to own." Scrolls.

ELLIOT
(murmuring, intrigued)
Basquiat.

Gets a call from GRACE, 24. Perks up. Speaker phone.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
Well, well, well. Look who comes
crawling back.

GRACE
Where are you?

ELLIOT
I don't know. Maybe just the city
of dreams. Where I moved to *seduce*
you.

GRACE
Have you heard?

ELLIOT
Heard what?

GRACE
Joe died.

Silence.

ELLIOT
Joe Kaylor?

GRACE
Yeah.

ELLIOT
Are you serious?

GRACE
Yes.

ELLIOT
How?

GRACE
By suicide.

Silence.

ELLIOT
As in, "died by suicide?"

GRACE
Elliot.

ELLIOT
What?

GRACE
It's the preferred term.

ELLIOT
If only he'd had someone like you
to talk to.
(melodramatic)
"Please Joe. Don't die by suicide."

GRACE
Elliot.

Silence.

ELLIOT
How'd you find out?

GRACE
Your dad texted me.

ELLIOT
Why are you guys texting?

GRACE
(sarcastic)
We're worried about you.

ELLIOT
Christ, you're like my step-mom.

GRACE
The funeral's tomorrow.

ELLIOT
Can we train in together?

GRACE
I'm already here.

ELLIOT

What?

GRACE

I'm helping out with the
arrangements.

ELLIOT

Why do you do that?

GRACE

Do what?

ELLIOT

Get involved.

GRACE

What else am I supposed to do?

Elliot sits in silence for a second.

INT. TRISTAN'S BEDROOM, DAY

Elliot walks out of what we realize is literally a walk-in closet inside TRISTAN's, 25, bedroom, where Tristan and a STRANGER, also 25, are hooking up. They quickly cover themselves with a blanket.

ELLIOT

Sorry, sorry.

TRISTAN

All good, that's why we have the
blanket.

(funny voice)

The blanket of shame.

(looks at unamused lover)

He hates it.

ELLIOT

What happened to Stephen?

TRISTAN

Why would you bring up Stephen? In
front of Dear Derek?

(strokes Stranger's head)

But it's a great story, you're
going to love it, basically--

ELLIOT

My friend from high school killed
himself.

TRISTAN
(taken aback)
Oh my god. I'm so sorry.

ELLIOT
Not your fault.

TRISTAN
Were you guys close?

ELLIOT
Not really. We hadn't spoken in
years. I shouldn't even say friend.

TRISTAN
How do you feel?

ELLIOT
(exasperated)
You know, I've been there before --
a little forced exposition for the
boy toy here -- but I've been there
before, so I get it.

(beat)
And then on the other hand, you
know, it's a very private thing.
Maybe the most private thing.
Private from yourself even, like I
hardly know how I got there, let
alone how he got there.

(beat)
So then I feel nothing about it.
And then I feel nothing about
anything.

TRISTAN
(confused)
Right.

Silence.

ELLIOT
He was a big weed head--

TRISTAN
Got it.

ELLIOT
Yeah.

TRISTAN
Are you going to Connecticut?

ELLIOT
(belabored)
I suppose.

STRANGER
(eager)
Which part of Connecticut?

ELLIOT
(exasperated, absent-
minded)
I don't know. The rich part.

He walks into Tristan's en-suite bathroom which doubles as a closet. Full of clothes.

ELLIOT (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(from bathroom)
Can I borrow your suit?

INT. TRAIN, DAY

Elliot squirming in way too small suit on the train. Head lolling against the window to cool down. Small Connecticut towns pass outside the window. Fall foliage.

INT. CHURCH LOBBY, DAY

Elliot walks into a packed funeral. Everyone milling about. Ambushed by BRUCE, 24.

BRUCE
Elliot Connors!

ELLIOT
(not recognizing this
person)
Hey...there.

BRUCE
Or should I say, "Most Likely to
Succeed."

ELLIOT
(forced)
Haha. Don't wear it out.

BRUCE
(serious)
I won't.

Silence.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

So I heard you're in the Big Apple.
City of dreams.

ELLIOT

Pretty sure that's L.A.

BRUCE

Nice apartment?

ELLIOT

Kind of. My room's tiny. Basically
a closet.

BRUCE

Better than an actual closet.

ELLIOT

Sorry, I don't know why I said
that. It is an actual closet.

BRUCE

What?

ELLIOT

Like a walk-in closet.

BRUCE

I thought you were making good
money?

ELLIOT

What made you think that?

BRUCE

We're friends on LinkedIn.

ELLIOT

My salary's on there?

BRUCE

Your role, and then you can look up
the salary.

ELLIOT

Oh.

BRUCE

Like with houses on Zillow.

ELLIOT

Right.

BRUCE
100 to 120?

ELLIOT
(surprised)
Nice.

BRUCE
So why are you living in a closet?

ELLIOT
(exasperated, absent-
minded)
I don't know. I have this thing
about money. From my dad...

Elliot looks over at his DAD, 55, piling a plate with shrimp.
Goes up to him.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
Can I get you some Tupperware?

DAD
(staring at shrimp
fountain)
It's weird, right? And not even at
the reception. At the church.
Before the service.

ELLIOT
I think his uncle's a caterer.

DAD
(mouth full of shrimp)
I'm not complaining.

ELLIOT
I thought you were allergic.

DAD
Psychosomatic. I always felt like I
had to prove my pain to your
mother.

ELLIOT
Chemo's hard to beat.

DAD
Even before the chemo. She was
always very...
(long pause as he searches
for the word)
...withholding.

They see JOE'S DAD, 55.

ELLIOT
Have you asked him about the
insurance payout?

DAD
Come on, I'm not a miser.

ELLIOT
You can't say that.

DAD
What? Miser?

ELLIOT
(provoking him)
It's anti-Semitic.

DAD
Anti-Semitic?

ELLIOT
The *Jewish* miser.

DAD
(exasperated)
Christ, I didn't even say Jewish--
It's always something with you,
isn't it.

ELLIOT
Yale's fault.

DAD
Kind of made you gay, didn't it.

ELLIOT
Definitely can't say that.

DAD
(provoking more)
Sure I can. I have a gay son.

ELLIOT
(retorting)
Henry? I thought he was just quiet.

DAD
(suddenly serious)
Stop it. He might actually be gay.

ELLIOT
Jesus, I was joking.

DAD
It's not funny. He's your brother.
You have to have a relationship
with him.

ELLIOT
I know--

DAD
I think about how little time we
spent together before your mother
died--

ELLIOT
Jesus, *alright*.

Silence. Dad sighs.

DAD
I bet it was good, though.

ELLIOT
What?

DAD
The insurance payout. Because he
was so young.

ELLIOT
Jesus Christ.

DAD
Don't be such a priss.

ELLIOT
I'm going to go find Grace.

DAD
I'll save you guys seats.

ELLIOT
No, we're going to sit by
ourselves.

DAD
Just come sit with me. It'll be
fun.

ELLIOT
(walking away, absent-
minded)
No I don't think that would be
fun...

INT. CHURCH HALLWAY, DAY

Elliot standing right in front of women's bathroom. After a while, Grace comes out.

ELLIOT
(fast, scaring her)
Will you be my girlfriend?

GRACE
(scared)
Fuck.

ELLIOT
You were in there forever. We're
going to get terrible seats.

GRACE
How'd you know it was me?

ELLIOT
The smell.

GRACE
Gross.

ELLIOT
Sacrilege, what you did in there.

GRACE
You love it.

ELLIOT
Desecration.

GRACE
You look nice.

ELLIOT
(stilted)
Oh. Um. Thank you. And you also--

GRACE
What's wrong with you?

ELLIOT
I'm sorry. I got an erection and
then I got flustered.

INT. CHURCH KNAVE, DAY

Elliot and Grace squished in a pew between two women randomly wearing New Orleans funeral garb. Gigantic hats, fans, etc.

ELLIOT
(whispered, New Orleans
accent)
If'n only we hadn't played with dat
dere voodoo doll...

GRACE
What is that? Creole?

ELLIOT
Maybe.

GRACE
Not good.

Dad leans forward from the seat behind.

DAD
Hey Grace.

ELLIOT
Jesus Christ.

DAD
Nice work with the arrangements.
Loved the shrimp.

GRACE
His aunt's a caterer.

ELLIOT
(correcting her)
His uncle.

GRACE
No, his aunt.

ELLIOT
That doesn't sound right.

Altar boy walks past.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
(to Dad)
Weren't you an altar boy?

DAD
Don't say it like that.

ELLIOT
Like what?

DAD
Like I was molested.

ELLIOT
I thought you were molested.

DAD
Why would you think that?

ELLIOT
Mom said you mutter "Help me" in
your sleep.

DAD
(exasperated)
Christ, your mother-- All of my
brothers do that.

Beat. They all realize how it sounds. Then some noise at the
mic. Room quiets down. PRIEST, 65, comes to the podium.

PRIEST
Thank you all for coming. Joe's
girlfriend Skyler is going to sing
one of Joe's favorite songs to get
us started, so if everyone could
please rise.

Silence for a second as people stand. Then, church organ
starts playing unexpectedly aggressive version of "Dancing on
My Own." Throbbing vamp. SKYLER, 22, starts singing
intensely. Someone starts crying loudly in the front row.
It's a tense, chaotic scene, way too on edge for a funeral.
Joe's Dad and uncles carry the coffin down the aisle. All
gruff men, but Joe's Dad's face is streaked with tears. This
goes on for some time. Finally...

GRACE
(whispering to Elliot)
This was his favorite song?

No response from Elliot. Grace looks over and sees him almost
crying, tears welling, watching the pallbearers. Grace puts
his arm around him. Dad leans over and puts a hand on his
neck. Tender moment.

INT. CHURCH LOBBY, DAY

Everyone comes out of the knave. Grace speedwalks to
bathroom.

DAD
What's up with her?

ELLIOT
I don't know. IBS?

DAD
What?

ELLIOT
Irritable Bowel Syndrome.

DAD
That's a thing.

ELLIOT
Yeah.

DAD
Makes you shit?

ELLIOT
Yeah.

DAD
I definitely have that.

ELLIOT
Nice.

DAD
No question. Describes perfectly my
situation.

Silence. Elliot looks around.

DAD (CONT'D)
You alright?

ELLIOT
Yeah, I'm just tired.

DAD
Tired or depressed?

ELLIOT
Tired--

DAD
Because sometimes you say you're
tired when you're actually--

ELLIOT
Depressed, yes, I know,
congratulations, you cracked the
code.

DAD
(tender, gripping Elliot
by the back of the neck)
(MORE)

DAD (CONT'D)

You've got your whole life ahead of you.

ELLIOT

That's the problem. I don't feel anything about my life. Good or bad.

DAD

Oh come on--

ELLIOT

Really, I feel completely estranged from myself. It's like I'm lobotomized. Him killing himself, I felt nothing, but then the sensory overload of her singing and that person wailing and his dad, suddenly some synapse fires and it all comes loose but I still can't cry.

DAD

You think about things way too much.

ELLIOT

I think it's because Mom was so repressed.

DAD

Way too much.

ELLIOT

Thank you. That's helpful.

DAD

Really?

ELLIOT

No.

ATTORNEY, 55, approaches.

ATTORNEY

Elliot Connors?

ELLIOT

Yes?

ATTORNEY

Could you join us in the conference room? Joe left you something in his will.

Elliot looks surprised. Nods.

DAD
Nothing for me?

Attorney smiles politely and leaves.

ELLIOT
Probably something I left at his house.

DAD
Meet back here after. We'll get tacos.

ELLIOT
Why tacos?

DAD
I met this guy the other day who owns a taco franchise. One around the corner and then another one in Dubai.

ELLIOT
Are they good?

DAD
I don't know, that's what we're going to find out.

ELLIOT
(exasperated)
Okay.

DAD
I invited your friend Bruce.

ELLIOT
Bruce.

DAD
Bruce. The short one.

ELLIOT
I hardly know that guy.

DAD
You should get to know him. Fascinating guy.

ELLIOT
(exasperated)
Okay.

DAD
He works for that company that
makes semiconductors. What's it
called...

Elliot walks away. Dad still thinking.

DAD (CONT'D)
It's on the tip of my tongue.

INT. CHURCH CONFERENCE ROOM, DAY

Joe's loved ones seated around a conference table, somber,
murmuring. Elliot squirms in a hard-backed chair. Leans over
to whisper to COUSIN DANNY, 8.

ELLIOT
Anybody else's ass barking?

Attorney clears his throat and room quiets.

ATTORNEY
As many of you know, Joe left a
note that will act as his last will
and testament. So without further
ado, I'm going to read what he
bequeathed unto each of you.

Moment of silence. Attorney begins to read.

ATTORNEY (CONT'D)
"To my father, I leave my garden.
That he may realize its promise as
I never could."
(beat, people look at Dad)
"To my girlfriend Skyler, I leave
my archives. That she may catalogue
my twenty-four years of thought and
activity."
(beat, people look at
Skyler)
"To my Cousin Danny, I leave my
Xbox. That he may finish my Halo 5
campaign."

ELLIOT
(whispered to Cousin Danny
in funny voice)
Lucky bastard.

ATTORNEY
 (still reading)
 "And to Elliot Connors, I bequeath
 my life. That he may live as I have
 lived."

Long silence. Elliot looks around. Then whispers to Cousin
 Danny, explaining.

ELLIOT
 He means metaphorically--

ATTORNEY
 "More literally, I ask that he
 reside in my father's basement, as
 I have resided. That he perform in
 the community theater's production
 of Hamlet, as I have performed".

ELLIOT
 (under breath, panicked)
 What is going on.

ATTORNEY
 "In short, that he live, both
 metaphorically and literally, as I
 would have lived, had I not died by
 suicide."

ELLIOT
 (awkward, joking)
 I guess it really is the preferred
 term.

Silence. Everyone looking at Elliot.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
 Is he fucking with me, or...

Silence. Blank stares.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
 Do I have to decide right now?

Attorney leafs through papers.

ATTORNEY
 I don't think so.

ELLIOT
 Okay.

Silence. Elliot looking around.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
I'll do it.

END OF ACT 1

ACT 2

INT. CHURCH LOBBY, DAY

Elliot follows Joe's Dad to car. Intercepted by Grace.

GRACE

Where are you going?

ELLIOT

I'll explain later, I just-- I don't know the rules yet.

GRACE

The rules?

ELLIOT

Just tell my dad not to text me.

GRACE

What's going on?

ELLIOT

Nothing, I just don't want him to text me.

Dad is talking to Bruce across the room.

DAD

Every two years, I think, that's it. That's the best it's going to get. But sure enough, two years later--

BRUCE

Right.

DAD

Double the number of transistors.

BRUCE

Exactly.

DAD

Moore's Law.

INT. JOE'S DAD'S CAR, DAY

Elliot and Joe's Dad driving home in silence. CD playing "Centerfield" by John Fogerty. Way too chipper. "Put me in coach! I'm ready to play." Joe's Dad kills radio. Silence.

ELLIOT

I don't think we've ever met.

(beat)

Joe and I weren't that close.

(beat)

I used to come over sometimes to
smo-- uh, to hang out in the
basement.

(beat)

We hadn't spoken in years--

JOE'S DAD

I could use your help with the
garden when we get home.

ELLIOT

Yeah, of course.

EXT. JOE'S DAD'S LAWN, DAY

Elliot and Joe's Dad stand in front of Joe's garden. Looks like shit. Then, Joe's Dad starts working silently. Elliot hesitantly follows his lead. We cut to hours later. Elliot covered in soil, drenched in sweat. Desperate to be done, but waiting for Joe's Dad's cue. Trying to make conversation...

ELLIOT

Is your wife still around?

JOE'S DAD

No.

ELLIOT

What happened to her?

JOE'S DAD

She started taking acoustic guitar
lessons and then she got married to
the teacher.

ELLIOT

Oh.

Silence as they continue to work. Then, finally...

DAD

I think that's good for today.

Dad walks inside. Elliot looks confused about where he's supposed to go next.

INT. JOE'S BEDROOM, EVENING

Elliot walks downstairs into Joe's basement bedroom. Looks around. Lots of space. Bed, dresser, drum kit. Posters on the walls. Puts on a Snuggie. Takes a spin on the drum kit. Hits a bong. Starts looking around in Joe's drawers out of curiosity. Finds a note. Reads. Looks up to see Skyler standing in the doorway.

ELLIOT

Oh shit.

Shoves note back in drawer and closes it. Exhales smoke.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Hey.

SKYLER

Hey.

Silence.

ELLIOT

I don't think we've ever met.

SKYLER

We have.

ELLIOT

Oh. Cool.

She looks him up and down in the Snuggie.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

I didn't realize you were coming.

SKYLER

I'm just here to pick up his
"archives."

Picks up stack of composition notebooks.

SKYLER (CONT'D)

It's just ideas he wrote down high.
(flips to a random page
and reads)
"Worried I have mal de
debarquement."

ELLIOT

Mal de debarquement?

SKYLER

It's when you feel seasick but
you're not on a ship. He was so
paranoid about it.

ELLIOT

Like the opposite of wanderlust.

SKYLER

No like feeling so much wanderlust
that it makes you sick. Like a
hysterical pregnancy.

Silence as she leafs through the journals.

ELLIOT

How do you feel?

SKYLER

(affected)

I feel sick for the sea.

Skyler gestures for bong. He passes. She hits it.

SKYLER (CONT'D)

We broke up a while ago. We didn't
tell his family. They were worried
about him.

Elliot nods.

SKYLER (CONT'D)

He was really difficult. I can't
feel guilty. I did everything I
could.

Elliot silent.

SKYLER (CONT'D)

"I did everything I could." "I did
everything I could." Obviously not
true, but you repeat it enough
times that it becomes its own kind
of truth.

Elliot silent.

SKYLER (CONT'D)

You are who you tell yourself.

ELLIOT

(hesitant)

Right.

Silence. Smoking.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Do you know why he chose me?

SKYLER

I think he had a complex about you.
Because he was like this pseudo-
intellectual who never went to
college and you went to Yale.

ELLIOT

So this is...revenge?

SKYLER

(confused)

For what?

ELLIOT

I don't know. Being successful.

SKYLER

Are you successful?

ELLIOT

Touché.

SKYLER

No I think he just wanted to prove
something to you. Impress you.
Challenge you.

ELLIOT

It's sad. I'm not even smart.

SKYLER

Yeah. It is sad.

Silence. Smoking.

ELLIOT

I liked your singing at the
funeral.

SKYLER

Thanks.

ELLIOT

I cried.

SKYLER

Really?

ELLIOT
Well. Almost cried. I never cry.

SKYLER
He cried all the time.

Silence. Smoking.

ELLIOT
I don't want to sleep together or anything.

SKYLER
What?

ELLIOT
I just think it would be weird.

SKYLER
Why would we sleep together?

ELLIOT
Just because I'm Joe.

SKYLER
What is wrong with you?

ELLIOT
I thought--

SKYLER
I don't even know you.

ELLIOT
Okay, Jesus, I didn't want to either.

Silence.

SKYLER
What *do* you want?

ELLIOT
In general?

SKYLER
No, from this. From being here.

ELLIOT
I want to feel like a real boy.

SKYLER
Seriously.

ELLIOT
I haven't told anyone this but I
was recently diagnosed with
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity
Disorder.

SKYLER
What?

ELLIOT
ADHD.

SKYLER
No, I know, but why'd you say the
whole thing?

ELLIOT
I'm trying to destigmatize it.

SKYLER
Funny.

ELLIOT
Like, "We *can* focus long enough to
say it."

SKYLER
Did you go to a doctor or
something?

ELLIOT
No, it was a woman in a café.

SKYLER
A woman in a café diagnosed you
with ADHD.

ELLIOT
I was jiggling my leg, I do it all
the time, but when you're in a
booth, the other person can feel
it, so suddenly she grabbed my knee
and was like, "I think you have
ADHD."

SKYLER
She grabbed your knee?

ELLIOT
I know, but turns out she's an
expert in ADHD. Or at least in kids
with ADHD.

SKYLER
So you're like a kid with ADHD.

ELLIOT
Apparently she saw me google "cool things to google."

SKYLER
Anything good?

ELLIOT
If you google recursion, it says "Did you mean: recursion" and if you press on that, it leads to the same page, "Did you mean: recursion," and if you press on that--

SKYLER
I get it.

ELLIOT
Because recursion--

SKYLER
Yep.

ELLIOT
It's like if you died and asked me as Joe to live as Skyler.

SKYLER
I know what recursion is.

ELLIOT
I know, I was just thinking, that could be interesting.

SKYLER
This is already interesting.

ELLIOT
(beat)
You're right. There's something wrong with me.

Silence. Smoking.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

The thing she said that really resonated is that kids with ADHD need an extraordinary amount of input to produce an ordinary response. Just an extraordinary amount of stimulation to feel like a normal person. And that's why it's often misdiagnosed as anxiety or depression. Because these kids are practically dissociated, ten degrees removed from normal feeling, and in that vacuum, they develop these thrilling, almost violent interiorities that remove them even further from reality--

SKYLER

I'm bored.

ELLIOT

What?

SKYLER

I'm bored by this conversation.

ELLIOT

Really?

SKYLER

Really.

ELLIOT

Maybe you have ADHD.

SKYLER

Maybe.

ELLIOT

The expert said that girls are underdiagnosed.

SKYLER

Girls?

ELLIOT

Sorry.

(clears throat, then in southern drawl)

Women.

SKYLER

Maybe it's because we're always
expected to sit tight and listen to
boys wax poetic about their ADHD.

ELLIOT

Boys?

SKYLER

Sorry. *Extraordinary* boys.

ELLIOT

Come on. I haven't spoken all day.
His dad doesn't talk.

SKYLER

He talks.

ELLIOT

Not to me.

SKYLER

Maybe he doesn't like you.

ELLIOT

(affected)

But I'm his son.

SKYLER

You're not taking this seriously.

ELLIOT

Do you want me to?

SKYLER

I don't really care.

ELLIOT

Then who am I doing it for?

SKYLER

Why do you have to do it for
anyone?

ELLIOT

Because when it's just for me I
don't feel anything. That's the
whole point.

SKYLER

(affected)

Then do it for all the poor suckers
out there who've already bought
their tickets to Hamlet.

ELLIOT
Fuck. I forgot about that.

Skyler gets up to leave.

SKYLER
You should get some sleep. You have
rehearsal tomorrow.

ELLIOT
What time?

SKYLER
(as she walks out)
9 a.m.

ELLIOT
(indignant)
9 a.m.--

EXT. COMMUNITY THEATER, MORNING

DIRECTOR, 45 leaning against wall next to back door of
theater, smoking a cigarette. Exhausted Elliot approaches.

ELLIOT
Hey.
(beat)
I'm your new Joe.

Director looks him up and down.

DIRECTOR
Well you smell nothing like him.

Director ashes cigarette against the wall and goes in through
back door. Elliot looks confused for a second, then follows.

INT. COMMUNITY THEATER, MORNING

Director enters with Elliot close behind. Room full of
community theater actors falls silent.

DIRECTOR
Good morrow. A lot to overcome
today so let's get right into it.
From T.B.O.N.T.B.

Actors hurry off stage. STAGE MANAGER, 19, stands by.

ELLIOT
T.B.O.N.T.B?

STAGE MANAGER
(whispering)
To be or not to be.

ELLIOT
Isn't that the same number of
syllables--

DIRECTOR
(to room)
Would anyone else like the role of
a lifetime? Anyone?

ELLIOT
(to Stage Manager)
Can I use your script?

Stage Manager hands him script. Elliot goes to center. Looks expectantly at Director. Director gestures to begin. Elliot clears his throat.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
To be or not to be--

DIRECTOR
Stop.

Silence.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
There was something very convincing
about Joe's performance of this.

ELLIOT
Because he was suicidal.

DIRECTOR.
I don't like to think of it that
way.

ELLIOT
No?

DIRECTOR
No, I like to think it was because
he'd been humbled.

ELLIOT
Humbled.

DIRECTOR
Humbled enough to entertain what
might come after consciousness.
After releasing control.

ELLIOT
Because he was suicidal.

DIRECTOR
No. The other way around. He was
suicidal because he'd been humbled.

ELLIOT
Humbled by...

DIRECTOR
By the realization that thought had
gotten him nowhere. That after
years of rationalizing,
narrativizing, meta-cognating, he
still awoke every day in the same
basement. The same body. The same
quote-unquote "life."

ELLIOT
Not sure I follow.

DIRECTOR
Last four lines. From "the native
hue of resolution."

ELLIOT
"The native hue of resolution / Is
sicklied o'er with the pale cast of
thought..."

Director joins in.

ELLIOT AND DIRECTOR
"And enterprises of great pith and
moment / With this regard their
currents turn awry / And lose the
name of action."

DIRECTOR
What's he saying?

ELLIOT
That thought is impotence.
Impotence is death and death is
life.

DIRECTOR
(surprised)
Bit neat, but good.

ELLIOT
So what? You want me to kill
myself?

DIRECTOR

Please. You don't have what it takes.

ELLIOT

I'll have you know I was in the psych ward for like a month.

DIRECTOR

Ha! You and everyone else here. This theater is practically a hotline. Do you know how many lives I've saved on this stage? Do you know how many I've lost?

ELLIOT

Multiple people you've worked with have committed suicide?

DIRECTOR

Suicide, heart attack, Crohn's disease--

ELLIOT

People don't die from Crohn's disease!

Girl bursts into tears and runs out.

DIRECTOR

Tell that to her step-grandfather. Oh wait. You can't. He's deceased. *From Crohn's disease.*

ELLIOT

I don't want to be here anymore.

DIRECTOR

None of us want to be here. You think I want to be here?

ELLIOT

Then why are you here.

DIRECTOR

The same reason you're here.

ELLIOT

I'm here because a dead guy asked me to be.

DIRECTOR

Wrong.

(beat)

(MORE)

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

You're here because you're a coward. Scared of feeling, scared of not feeling. As afraid of this life as whatever comes next.

ELLIOT

You don't know me.

DIRECTOR

Know you? I was you. Hot young thing out of Yale. Quarter-million dollar education, and yet, I was interested in nothing. Because to be interested was to be surprised, and to be surprised was to admit the limits of my knowledge. My precious knowledge. My precious control.

ELLIOT

Stop.

DIRECTOR

Control. Control control control. Because mommy and daddy fought. Every day they fought and if I didn't intervene, if I didn't stop them, then what was I but a creature born from hate. A creature born from hate who would never know love.

ELLIOT

(getting agitated)

Stop it, Jesus.

DIRECTOR

So what did I do? Changed my name. Lost 150 pounds. Gained back 60. Started wearing colored contacts. Became unrecognizable to myself. Became an orphan. Traveled town to town. A regular Harold Hill. Not in search of parents but of children all my own. All of you. My children. And yet. The second one of you sees me as Papa. The second I see it in your eyes. New contacts, new weight, new town. I'm gone.

BOY FROM WINGS

No!

DIRECTOR

Because for any of you to see me as Father would be to once again see my father in myself. To once again be trapped in that eternal basement of his psyche, desperate to sleep but awoken by every footstep, every creak of the floorboards, every disquiet in his world echoing into my own in that insomniac's undying twilight of grief. Grief. For my mother. For his love. Long petrified, now a talisman, as incandescent and impenetrable as the moon hanging low outside our windows.

ELLIOT

(on the verge of tears)

Enough.

Silence.

DIRECTOR

So why are we here? We are here because we have all suffered those slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. We have all experienced that heartache that flesh is heir to and we have realized, it is hard to be. Yet have we any interest in dying? No. Not yet at least. Maybe we're afraid, maybe we're not ready to give up. Either way, we need somewhere to escape to in the meantime. Somewhere between life and death, feeling and not feeling, conscious and unconscious. Between ourselves and others. The stage. That liminal realm. Where we might feel vicariously, limitlessly, painlessly. Where we might transcend ourselves. For what are we all if not avatars of the same native and unthinking resolve. The same primordial yet fragile humanity. To be is the choice of the individual, but to become is the choice of the collective. And only once we realize this may we walk as one into His everlasting kingdom.

Long silence.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
 (to Stage Manager)
 Time, Sarah?

STAGE MANAGER
 9:07 a.m.

DIRECTOR
 Good. Let's pick this back up
 tomorrow. Great work everyone.

EXT. COMMUNITY THEATER PARKING LOT, DAY

Emotionally exhausted Elliot comes out to an empty parking lot, where a COP, 60, has just put a boot on his bike wheel.

ELLIOT
 Hey. That's my bike.

COP
 You're parked illegally.

ELLIOT
 What?

Cop gestures up at a sign that reads "Director's Parking."

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
 Seriously? There are like a million
 other spots.

COP
 And yet you parked in the only one
 you weren't allowed to. What does
 that say about you?

Elliot looks long and hard at the cop.

INT. JOE'S DAD'S CAR, DAY

Joe's Dad driving Elliot home. Silence. Then...

ELLIOT
 Sorry again.
 (beat)
 I don't even know why towns like
 this have cops.
 (beat)
 Seriously, the only time I've ever
 heard of them doing anything was
 when they shot that pit bull.
 (beat)
 (MORE)

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

And they didn't even get there in time. The woman's arm was already torn off.

(beat)

Maybe I just have a problem with authority.

(beat)

I really don't want to be a burden on you, so if you ever want me to leave--

JOE'S DAD

I could use some more help with the garden when we get home.

ELLIOT

(beat)

Of course.

EXT. JOE'S DAD'S LAWN, DAY

Elliot again drenched in sweat, covered in dirt. They've been working for hours. Then finally...

JOE'S DAD

Think that's good for today.

Elliot nods. They start to clean up.

JOE'S DAD (CONT'D)

Do you want to watch a movie tonight?

ELLIOT

Sorry?

JOE'S DAD

A movie. Do you want to watch a movie?

ELLIOT

Oh.

(beat)

Sure.

JOE'S DAD

Avatar?

ELLIOT

Yeah.

INT. JOE'S DAD'S LIVING ROOM, NIGHT

Elliot and Joe's Dad watching Avatar. One of the weirdly sexual hair scenes. Elliot looks over to find Joe's Dad sleeping peacefully on the couch. Tender moment.

END OF ACT 2

ACT 3

EXT. JOE'S DAD'S LAWN, DAY

A couple days later. Sprinklers come to life. Garden is newly lush. Idyllic suburban afternoon. Elliot and Joe's Dad gardening. Skyler floating on a pool raft, reading, drinking. Picturesque. Happy. Then honking. Crunch of gravel. Elliot looks over to see his dad in the driveway.

ELLIOT
(under his breath)
Fuck me.
(to Joe's Dad and Skyler)
I'll be back in a sec.

EXT. JOE'S DAD'S DRIVEWAY, DAY

Elliot goes up to car. Talks to Dad through window.

ELLIOT
What are you doing here?

DAD
What are you doing here? I've been looking for you everywhere.

ELLIOT
I told Grace to tell you.

DAD
I couldn't find either of you. I had to get tacos alone with Bruce. Weird guy. Seemed cool on first pass but then you get to talking to him.
(shakes head)
Weird guy.

ELLIOT
Joe bequeathed me his life.

DAD
What does that mean?

ELLIOT
He asked me to live his life for him.

DAD
Why?

ELLIOT
I don't know. No one knows.

DAD
Maybe he had a crush on you.

ELLIOT
What?

DAD
I had the same roommate all four years of college. Thought he was just my friend. Totally in love with me.

ELLIOT
What makes you think he was in love with you?

DAD
He told me.

ELLIOT
When?

DAD
At graduation.

ELLIOT
Are you serious?

Dad nods solemnly.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
That's really sad.

DAD
It is sad. I think about him a lot.

Silence.

DAD (CONT'D)
So what? You're Joe now?

ELLIOT
It's not that simple.

DAD
What?

ELLIOT
It's more like, I've always been Joe and Joe's always been me.

DAD

What the hell are you talking about?

ELLIOT

We all share a native, unthinking resolve. A fragile humanity.

DAD

Jesus Christ, you're having another breakdown.

ELLIOT

I'm not having a breakdown.

DAD

No really, you sound exactly like you did in the hospital.

ELLIOT

This is different.

DAD

Yale messed you up so bad.

ELLIOT

This isn't Yale. I've just-- I've been getting into theater.

DAD

(exasperated)

Christ, even worse.

ELLIOT

It's good. It makes me feel something. I'm emotional.

DAD

You're emotional because you're on vacation. Everyone's emotional on vacation. But the novelty wears off.

ELLIOT

I don't want to think about that right now.

DAD

What about your job?

ELLIOT

It's remote.

DAD

So what? You're doing it from here?

ELLIOT

No, it's remote. I don't have to do it. That's the whole point.

DAD

Jesus, no wonder you're lost. This is your generation's problem. You don't know what it means to be a part of something bigger than yourself.

ELLIOT

Like a corporation?

DAD

Exactly, like a corporation.

ELLIOT

I was joking.

DAD

You joke but it's true.

ELLIOT

I am a part of something bigger here.

DAD

What?

ELLIOT

The community of everyone who's ever lived and everyone's who's ever died.

DAD

Christ almighty.

ELLIOT

I'm a part of a *family*.

DAD

If you want to be part of a family, just come live with me. I would actually like that.

ELLIOT

No, it's just-- it's too close to home. I can't be trapped in your eternal basement.

Elliot starts to leave.

DAD
(confused)
Eternal-- I don't even have a
basement. Or a finished basement at
least. Maybe one day, but it ain't
cheap. I'd have to rewire all the
electrical.

Elliot gets on bike and rides away. Dad shouts after him.

DAD (CONT'D)
At least let me give you a ride.
(beat)
It's a plug-in hybrid. It doesn't
need gas!

INT. TOWN HALL, DAY

Sweaty Elliot comes in to find CLERK, 65.

ELLIOT
Hello.

CLERK
Hello!

ELLIOT
I'd like to change my name.

CLERK
To another man's name or to a
woman's name.

ELLIOT
(confused)
Does it make a difference?

CLERK
No. Just curious.

ELLIOT
I want to change it to Joe.

CLERK
So another man's name. Interesting.
(takes out paperwork)
That'll be 435 dollars.

ELLIOT
435 dollars?

CLERK
That's right.

ELLIOT
Bit steep, no?

CLERK
Poor people don't usually change
their names.

ELLIOT
(exasperated)
Fine. Okay. Do you take Apple Pay?

CLERK
Apple Pay?

ELLIOT
The tappy thing.

CLERK
No. Only cashier's checks.

ELLIOT
Cashier's checks? What's a
cashier's check?

CLERK
It's a special kind of check. You
get it at the bank.

ELLIOT
But my bank's online.

CLERK
Online?

ELLIOT
Yes online. They don't have any
physical locations.

CLERK
Then where do you get your
cashier's checks?

ELLIOT
That's what I'm ask-- Forget it.
I'll just chat them. They have this
24/7 chat thing that's pretty good.

CLERK
And you'll need a copy of your
notice.

ELLIOT
My notice?

CLERK
You have to run a notice in the
paper for four weeks announcing
your name change.

ELLIOT
Or what? The cops'll come after me?

CLERK
No, your name just won't be
changed.

ELLIOT
(under breath)
Christ, everything's a battle.

CLERK
You don't have to change it. You
can just have a nickname--

ELLIOT
No, I need to make it official.
(beat)
What about my legal guardian?

CLERK
What about it?

ELLIOT
Can I change that?

CLERK
How old are you?

ELLIOT
24.

CLERK
24 year olds don't have legal
guardians. You're your own legal
guardian.

ELLIOT
What about Britney?

CLERK
Who?

ELLIOT
Britney Spears. She got one.
Because she was incapacitated.

CLERK
Are you incapacitated?

ELLIOT
I have Attention Deficit
Hyperactivity Disorder.

CLERK
What?

ELLIOT
Never mind. What about my emergency
contact?

CLERK
Contact for what?

ELLIOT
Like if there's an emergency. The
people you'd contact.

CLERK
Like if there's an emergency right
now? While you're in the lobby?

ELLIOT
You know what, forget it. Forget
it.

(as he exits)
This is why people are fleeing the
heartland. This is the death of
Middle America!

CLERK
We're in Connecticut--

EXT. TOWN HALL PARKING LOT, EVENING

Elliot comes out to empty lot where his bike has again been
booted. Looks up to see sign that says "Clerk's Parking."

ELLIOT
I'm going to fucking kill my--

INT. JOE'S DAD'S LIVING ROOM, EVENING

Elliot comes in the front door sweaty and exhausted.

ELLIOT
Hey.

JOE'S DAD
Where were you?

ELLIOT
I tried to get my name changed but
apparently I have to take out an ad
in the paper. So it'll just be a
few more weeks.

JOE'S DAD
Changed to what?

ELLIOT
Joe.

JOE'S DAD
Why?

ELLIOT
Oh. I don't know. I thought that's
what you'd want.

JOE'S DAD
Why would I want that?

ELLIOT
Just because--

JOE'S DAD
He's dead.

Long silence. Then, a knock at the door. Elliot goes to
answer. Skyler. She's dressed up, clearly made an effort.

ELLIOT
Hey.

SKYLER
Hey.

ELLIOT
You look great.

SKYLER
Thank you.
(to Joe's Dad)
You ready Bert?

JOE'S DAD
I'm going to stay in. I'm not
feeling well.

Joe's Dad goes upstairs. Skyler looks at Elliot, who looks
away.

INT. COMMUNITY THEATER DRESSING ROOM, NIGHT

Elliot in dressing room getting makeup put on by a 14-year-old stagehand. Checks phone. Several texts from Grace over the past couple days: "Where are you?" "What's going on?" etc. But now she's texted, "Pregnant." Elliot pauses. Then responds. "Hysterical?" "Mal de débarquement?" She responds. "Je ne pense pas." "I was vomiting at the funeral." "Thought it was the shrimp."

ELLIOT
(under his breath)
What the fuck is going on?

STAGE MANAGER (O.S.)
5 to curtain.

ACTORS
Thank you 5.

ELLIOT
(under his breath)
Thank you 5.

Murmurs in the background. "Has anyone seen Mr. P?" "Should we just start without him?" Elliot puts his phone away and takes a deep breath, looking at himself in the dressing room mirror.

INT. COMMUNITY THEATER LOBBY, NIGHT

Elliot emerges to theater lobby after show. Notices Director wearing all black and sunglasses in the corner, clearly trying not to be noticed. Elliot approaches.

DIRECTOR
That was terrible.

ELLIOT
Where were you? We needed you.

DIRECTOR
Really terrible.

ELLIOT
I didn't have time to learn the lines. Why didn't you cast an understudy?

Director takes off sunglasses. His eyes are blue now.

DIRECTOR

Because great art can't have a safety net. Sometimes you have to take a fucking risk.

ELLIOT

Wait a second, weren't your eyes brown before?

DIRECTOR

Goodbye my son.

Director leaves. Elliot's a bit stunned. Skyler comes up to him.

SKYLER

I thought it was cute.

They exchange a look.

INT. JOE'S BEDROOM, NIGHT

Skyler and Elliot come barging in making out. Skyler's driving, Elliot's a bit clumsy. Fumbling. They get into bed. Sex position, but Elliot can't get hard.

SKYLER

What's up?

ELLIOT

I don't know.

SKYLER

Are you not into it?

ELLIOT

No I am. I'm just confused.

SKYLER

Confused about what.

ELLIOT

I'm like dissociating a bit. Like about whether I'm Joe or Elliot.

SKYLER

What? Forget the Joe stuff. You're Elliot.

ELLIOT

Then what am I doing here?

Silence. Skyler's pissed. She starts putting on her clothes.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
Wait, I didn't mean it like that.

SKYLER
You're a dick.

ELLIOT
Skyler--

SKYLER
No, you think you're too good for
his life. For anyone's life. And
it's going to make you fucking
miserable.

Skyler leaves. Elliot lies in bed, looking at the ceiling.

INT. JOE'S DAD'S BEDROOM, NIGHT

Elliot walking up the stairs. Joe's Dad is completely still.

ELLIOT (O.S.)
Bert?

Elliot comes into the room.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
Bert?

Tries to shake him awake. Checks pulse.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
Fuck me.

END OF ACT 3

ACT 4

INT. CHURCH KNAVE, DAY

Joe's Dad's funeral. Almost no one there this time, but Elliot still finds himself squished between two women in New Orleans garb.

PRIEST

Please rise.

INT. CHURCH LOBBY, DAY

People milling out. Elliot sees Cousin Danny and some other kids.

ELLIOT

Which one of you bastards polished
off the shrimp?

They stare at him blankly then walk away. Elliot sees JOE'S
UNCLE, 60. Approaches.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

You must be Bert's brother.

Joe's Uncle stares blankly at him.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

I don't know if you remember me
from last time. Joe bequeathed me
his life.

Joe's Uncle stares blankly at him.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Anyyays, congrats on the house. I
just wanted to introduce myself.
We'll probably be seeing a lot of
each other, since I live in the
basement.

JOE'S UNCLE

I'm going to sell it.

ELLIOT

Sorry?

JOE'S UNCLE

The house. I'm selling it.

ELLIOT
Oh. Really?

JOE'S UNCLE
Yeah.

Silence.

ELLIOT
For how much?

JOE'S UNCLE
You're not really supposed to ask that.

ELLIOT
Right. Okay. Well, I guess I'll keep an eye out on Zillow.

Joe's Uncle stares at him blankly. Elliot walks out awkwardly.

EXT. SKYLER'S HOUSE

Raining hard. Elliot knocks on the door. No answer. Knocks again. Skyler comes.

ELLIOT
Hey.

SKYLER
Hey.

Silence.

ELLIOT
You didn't come to the funeral.

SKYLER
I didn't.

ELLIOT
Busy?

SKYLER
Not particularly.

ELLIOT
Tired?

SKYLER
No, I just-- I need to move on with my life.

Silence.

ELLIOT
I'm sorry about the other night.

SKYLER
I was being harsh.

ELLIOT
No, I think you were right.

SKYLER
I don't even know you.

ELLIOT
You know me as well as anybody.

SKYLER
I hope that's not true.

ELLIOT
Maybe not.

Silence.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
I really thought I'd tapped into something bigger there. Bigger than my life or his life, some fundamental truth that would sustain me. But I think my dad was right, the novelty wore off and then I felt out of control and I panicked.

SKYLER
That's your problem. You go too big. Sometimes you need to go small.

ELLIOT
I have Attention--

SKYLER
No. Stop it. It's not that. You're just-- You're a control freak. You feel like you need to outsmart everything before it touches you. You've convinced yourself you need some extraordinary amount of stimulation to feel anything but you haven't even processed the stuff right in front of you.

Silence.

ELLIOT
I think I'm scared it won't be
enough.

SKYLER
No. You're scared it'll be too
much.

Silence.

ELLIOT
What if it is and I can't handle
it?

SKYLER
You don't have to do it alone. You
can lean on people.

ELLIOT
Okay.

SKYLER
We're not novelties. You can let us
in.

ELLIOT
I know.

SKYLER
He tried to do it alone and he
killed himself.

Silence. Then Elliot starts crying.

ELLIOT
I'm sorry.

SKYLER.
It's okay.

He's crying hard now. She hugs him.

ELLIOT
I'm really sorry.

SKYLER
It's okay.

He cries in her arms on the porch.

INT. TRAIN, DAY

Elliot in way too small suit on the train back to New York. Head lolling against the window. All the leaves have fallen off the trees.

INT. TRISTAN'S ROOM, EVENING

Elliot walks into Tristan's room to find him hooking up with a new stranger.

TRISTAN
The prodigal son!

ELLIOT
What happened to Derek?

TRISTAN
(confused)
Derek? Who's Der-- Where have you been?

Elliot opens closet door to find another STRANGER IN HIS ROOM, 45, laying on the bed.

ELLIOT
Who the fuck is this?

TRISTAN
I didn't know when you were coming back so I sublet your room.

ELLIOT
You sublet my-- Until when?

TRISTAN
I don't know if we landed--
(to stranger in Elliot's room)
Elliot did we land on a date?

ELLIOT
His name's also Elliot?

TRISTAN
No, I just call him Elliot. To keep things simple.

ELLIOT
(to stranger in his room)
Get out. I'll Venmo you.

STRANGER IN HIS ROOM

What?

ELLIOT

Out.

STRANGER IN HIS ROOM

Okay. I just need to get my stuff--

ELLIOT

I. Will. Venmo. You.

STRANGER IN HIS ROOM

Jesus, alright.

Stranger in his room leaves.

INT. ELLIOT'S BEDROOM, EVENING

Elliot goes into his room. Slams door. Sighs. Relieved. Stranger has hung a Basquiat print on the wall. Elliot tears it down. Tapes up the letter he found in Joe's dresser. "Elliot- Good luck! - Joe." Camera stays on the letter as we hear Elliot get on the phone with Grace. Sound and lights fade.

ELLIOT (O.S.)

Well, well, well. Look who comes crawling back.

(beat)

I know. I'm sorry.

(beat)

Whose is it?

(beat)

Yeah, well, I have a lot to tell you too. I'll going to come see you tomorrow...

End of episode. Every episode is Elliot thrust into and out of another person's life. Next episode is about Grace's pregnancy, from a one-night stand with a stranger. Elliot convinces himself he's going to have to raise this child that's not his, only for Grace to get an abortion. Another episode is about him giving a kidney to a stranger and making it all about himself (à la Bad Art Friend). Another episode is about Bruce visiting New York for what is supposed to be a week but soon becomes an indefinite and intimate stay in that tiny closet room. Whose life!