

WHOSE LIFE

"Pilot"

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ACT 1

INT. ELLIOT'S BEDROOM, DAY

ELLIOT (24) in a walk-in-closet-sized Manhattan bedroom. Lying in bed, computer on lap. Looks at bare walls. Googles "cool posters to own." Scrolls.

ELLIOT
(murmuring, intrigued)
Basquiat.

Gets a call from his DAD. Answers from computer.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
I'm busy.

ELLIOT'S DAD (O.S.)
We're all busy. I'm getting an MRI.

INT. HOSPITAL, SAME TIME

Elliot's Dad (55, looks like an older version of Elliot) in an MRI machine. He's somehow managed to bring his phone in.

ELLIOT (O.S.)
Really? Again?

ELLIOT'S DAD
Someone left their CBD gummies in my glove compartment. I ate half the pack thinking they were Haribos.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

ELLIOT
I could've sworn the container was childproof.

ELLIOT'S DAD
It's not funny. I could've died. Or worse, murdered somebody.

ELLIOT
Why do you need an MRI? Can't they just give you a cold compress? Or a bubble bath?

ELLIOT'S DAD

I may have exaggerated some of my symptoms. Now they think I have a tumor.

ELLIOT

Jesus Christ.

ELLIOT'S DAD

Who knows, I very well might. These things aren't FDA approved.

ELLIOT

Yes they are. They sell them at CVS.

ELLIOT'S DAD

Exactly. Like Oxy. They're a *gateway drug*.

ELLIOT

Gateway to what? Melatonin?

ELLIOT'S DAD

If you're just calling to make fun of me, I'm going to hang up.

ELLIOT

You called me.

ELLIOT'S DAD

That's right. Listen, I have bad news. Your friend Joe passed away.

Elliot's face furrows. He takes a second to process.

ELLIOT

Joe Kaylor?

ELLIOT'S DAD

Yeah.

Elliot bites his nails.

ELLIOT

How do you know?

ELLIOT'S DAD

His dad posted on Facebook. Don't tell me you're still off Facebook.

Elliot googles "joe kaylor obituary" but only finds random people: an old man from North Carolina, a little boy from Honolulu.

ELLIOT
How did he die?

ELLIOT'S DAD
It doesn't matter.

ELLIOT
Of course it matters.

ELLIOT'S DAD
Why does it matter?

ELLIOT
Because it's a big difference if he died in, like, a river rafting accident versus if he overdosed or something.

ELLIOT'S DAD
Christ, there was no river rafting, he-- he committed suicide, alright?

Elliot stops scrolling. Stares at little boy from Honolulu.

ELLIOT'S DAD (CONT'D)
(concerned)
But listen, that doesn't mean--

We hear a NURSE from outside the MRI machine.

NURSE (O.S.)
Sir, are you on the phone?

ELLIOT'S DAD
(to nurse, hysterical)
I'm just talking to my son. I'm so scared!
(lowered voice, to Elliot)
But I'm not scared, Elliot. Maybe it's the CBD, but for the first time in my life, I'm not scared at all.

ELLIOT
I'm hanging up.

ELLIOT'S DAD
The funeral's later today.

ELLIOT
Are you going to come pick me up?

ELLIOT'S DAD
What, and get a DUI?

ELLIOT
You can't get a DUI from CBD.

ELLIOT'S DAD
That's the drug talking. It makes
you feel invincible.

ELLIOT
I'm just going to take the train.

ELLIOT'S DAD
Listen, do me a favor and add me on
Find Your Friends so I can track
your location.

ELLIOT
I'm not going to do that.

ELLIOT'S DAD
Don't be a priss. Just add me--

Elliot closes computer. Beat, then he crawls to the foot of his bed and opens a dresser. Moves a pair of underwear to reveal several letters from Joe, unopened. Elliot bites his nails more, hurting himself. Blood pools on his thumb. He sucks on it.

INT. LISA'S BEDROOM, DAY

Elliot walks out of what we realize is literally a walk-in closet inside an actual bedroom, where LISA (25, butch) and a STRANGER (23, femme) are hooking up.

LISA
Naked. Naked. Naked.

ELLIOT
Sorry, sorry.

Elliot gets Kleenex for the blood, thumb still in his mouth.

LISA
Baby need his binky?

ELLIOT
I'd prefer mother's teat, but seems
like that's occupied.

LISA
(to Stranger)
He's *joking*.
(beat)
(MORE)

LISA (CONT'D)

He stopped breastfeeding months ago.

ELLIOT

Maybe I should start knocking.

LISA

Whatever gets you off, perv.

ELLIOT

Says the one who likes being walked in on.

LISA

Grow up. We *all* like being walked in on.

Stranger nods in agreement with Lisa. Elliot scowls.

ELLIOT

Where's Daisy?

DAISY (27, non-binary) pops out from underneath the blanket.

DAISY

Wouldn't you like to know, perv.

ELLIOT

Jesus Christ.

LISA

What? Is our lifestyle too...

(scare quotes)

..."deviant" for you?

ELLIOT

I just wasn't expecting an orgy on Veterans Day...

DAISY

First of all, this is exactly the kind of freedom our veterans fought for...

ELLIOT

(looking at watch)

...and at 10 in the morning...

LISA

...and second of all, an orgy is five or more. But you would love that, wouldn't you?

DAISY
If we had a gay little orgy. You'd
love it, you little perv--

ELLIOT
My friend killed himself.

Silence. Then, SECOND STRANGER (29, androgynous) peeks their
head out of the bathroom.

SECOND STRANGER
I think you're supposed to say
"died by suicide."

ELLIOT
(exasperated)
Why?

SECOND STRANGER
Because then it's like, the suicide
killed *him*...
(getting confused)
Wait, that doesn't make any sense.

Lisa comes and wraps Elliot in a bear hug.

ELLIOT
Something's poking me.

LISA
Don't worry, that's just my dick.

Lisa takes off her strap-on and chucks it at the wall. Hugs
Elliot even harder.

DAISY
Were you guys close?

ELLIOT
Not really. We hadn't talked in a
while.

LISA
How do you feel?

ELLIOT
How do I feel? Not sure I want to
open that can of worms.

LISA
Right.

ELLIOT
Because once you open that can of
worms...

DAISY
All the worms come out.

A THIRD STRANGER (24, straight guy) emerges from behind the
door to Elliot's room. He's holding a camera with a fuzzy mic
on top.

THIRD STRANGER
(morose)
I'd probably feel like it was my
fault.

DAISY/LISA/STRANGERS
Goddammit Paul.

ELLIOT
Annnnddd 5 makes an orgy.

LISA
He was just filming.

Elliot gives Lisa a skeptical look.

LISA (CONT'D)
*Fine...he was doing stuff with the
fuzzy mic.*

ELLIOT
I'm going to Connecticut.

SECOND STRANGER
Which part?

ELLIOT
The rich part.

He walks past Second Stranger into the en-suite bathroom,
doubling as Lisa and Daisy's closet.

ELLIOT (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(to Lisa)
Can I borrow one of your suits?

SECOND STRANGER
Why are all your clothes in the
bathroom?

ELLIOT
(defeated)
I live in the closet.

LISA
(angry)
He lives in the closet.

LISA (CONT'D)
 (to Second Stranger)
 His friend just *died by suicide*.
 Show some *respect*.
 (beat, then to Third
 Stranger with camera)
 But speaking of, we're going to
 have to cut all the suicide stuff.

Cut to Third Stranger, who has the entire fuzzy mic in his mouth. Takes mic out.

THIRD STRANGER
 (assertive)
 I deserve pleasure too.
 (quieter)
 I deserve pleasure.

INT. TRAIN, DAY

Elliot squirming in way too small suit on the train. Small Connecticut towns pass outside the window. Summer foliage.

INT. CHURCH LOBBY, DAY

Elliot walks into a packed funeral. Everyone milling about. Ambushed by BRUCE (24, short, metrosexual).

BRUCE
 Elliot Prior?

ELLIOT
 (defeated)
 Hey Bruce.

BRUCE
 (grabbing his shoulders)
 God, I hardly recognized you. You
 must've gained, what...8 pounds?
 (bear hugs Elliot)
 In the best possible way, of
 course. More of you to love!

ELLIOT
 Thanks, Mom.

BRUCE
 (inhales Elliot's scent)
 Don't be silly. I could never
 replace your mother.

Bruce looks to camera for a split second.

ELLIOT
Something's poking me.

BRUCE
Don't worry, that's just my penis.
Something about funerals...

Bruce lets Elliot go and makes a slide whistle sound while gesturing an erection with his finger.

ELLIOT
Probably worth unpacking that.

BRUCE
I let it breathe at night, but when
I'm out in public, I prefer briefs.

Elliot opens his mouth as if to clarify, then shuts it.

BRUCE (CONT'D)
So I heard you're in the Big Apple!

ELLIOT
Living it up.

BRUCE
Nice apartment?

ELLIOT
Not really. I live in the closet.

BRUCE
I always wondered...because you
were so moody...

ELLIOT
No, I literally live in my friends'
walk-in closet.

BRUCE
Friends from Yale? But I thought
you dropped out.

ELLIOT
No, they're lesbians from
Craigslist-
(realizing)
Wait how did you know I dropped
out?

BRUCE
I like to keep tabs on you, you
little minx!
(beat)
(MORE)

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Listen, if you're short on cash,
come stay with me. It'll be just
like the good old days. Staying up
late, *sharing a bed...*

ELLIOT

We didn't share a bed, we had two
separate beds.

BRUCE

Really? I have this vivid memory of
us sharing a bed. Not in a sexual
way, of course, but more like a
mother and son. Though God knows
that line gets blurry.

Elliot looks at him weird. Then looks over at his Dad piling
a plate with shrimp from a shrimp fountain. Wanders off.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Nice job idiot. You blew it.

(beat, then murmured)

What kind of pervert wears briefs
to a funeral.

Elliot approaches his Dad, who's staring at the shrimp
fountain.

ELLIOT

Can I get you some Tupperware?

ELLIOT'S DAD

It's weird, right?

(starting to eat)

And not even at the reception. At
the church. Before the funeral.

ELLIOT

I thought you were allergic.

ELLIOT'S DAD

(mouth full of shrimp)

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

ELLIOT

Chemo's hard to beat.

ELLIOT'S DAD

Even before the chemo, she was
always very...

(MORE)

ELLIOT'S DAD (CONT'D)
 (loooooonnggg pause as he
 searches for the word)
 ...withholding.

Dad brings a little saucer of cocktail sauce with a straw to his lips and slurps.

ELLIOT
 I'm going to see if I know anyone
 else here.

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

ELLIOT
 No, I don't think that would be fun-

INT. CHURCH NAVE, DAY

Elliot and Dad squished in a pew between two women wearing New Orleans funeral garb. Big hats, fans, etc.

ELLIOT'S DAD
 (whispered to Elliot)
 Should've brought my voodoo doll...

Elliot's Dad looks over his shoulder to find a third woman in even more dramatic New Orleans funeral garb staring at him.

She takes out a doll dressed like Elliot's Dad and starts stitching something onto it. His face falls and he turns forward, scared. Beat. Then, an altar boy walks past.

ELLIOT
 Weren't you an altar boy?

ELLIOT'S DAD
 Don't say it like that.

ELLIOT
 Like what?

ELLIOT'S DAD
 Like I was molested.

ELLIOT
 I thought you were molested.

ELLIOT'S DAD
 Why would you think that?

ELLIOT
 Mom said you used to mutter "help
 me" in your sleep.

ELLIOT'S DAD
 (exasperated)
 Christ your mother-- All of my
 brothers do that.

Beat. They realize how it sounds. Then some noise at the mic.
 Room quiets down. PRIEST (65, classic priest) begins.

PRIEST
 Thank you all for coming. Joe's
 girlfriend is going to sing one of
 Joe's favorite songs to get us
 started. So without further
 adieu...Skyler.

ELLIOT
 (under his breath)
 Ah shit...

Elliot slouches further in his seat to avoid being noticed by
 SKYLER (24, tomboy). Church organ starts playing unexpectedly
 aggressive version of Robyn's "Dancing on My Own" as Skyler
 sings. JOE'S DAD (57, gruff, stoic) and Joe's uncles carry
 the coffin down the aisle. Tense, chaotic scene.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
 (under his breath)
 Don't see me, don't see me, don't--

Suddenly, Elliot's Dad starts singing along, a single tear
 rolling down his cheek. Eventually, everyone joins in. Elliot
 and Skyler make eye contact. She glares at him.

Behind them, the New Orleans woman is holding the Elliot's
 Dad doll, stitching the final thread of a blue tear onto its
 face.

Behind her, Bruce is holding an Elliot doll, stitching a
 heart onto its sleeve.

INT. CHURCH LOBBY, DAY

Elliot and Elliot's Dad walk out of the nave together.

ELLIOT'S DAD
 That song reminds me of your
 mother.
 (choking up again)
 She never let me dance.

Elliot rolls his eyes. ATTORNEY (60) approaches.

ATTORNEY
Elliot Prior?

ELLIOT
Yes?

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

ELLIOT
Oh. Um. Sure.

Attorney smiles politely and leaves.

ELLIOT'S DAD
What's that about?

ELLIOT
Probably just something I left behind.

ELLIOT'S DAD
Meet back here after. We'll get tacos with Bruce.

ELLIOT
You invited Bruce?

ELLIOT'S DAD
Fascinating guy. Works for that company that makes semiconductors.

ELLIOT
No way. The company that makes semiconductors?

ELLIOT'S DAD
Oh so you've heard of it--

INT. CHURCH CONFERENCE ROOM, DAY

Joe's loved ones around a conference table, somber. Elliot squirms in a hard-backed chair next to a child. Skyler mouths "What are you doing here?" but he looks away. 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 to each of you.

(clears throat)

"To my father, I leave my memorial garden. That he may realize its promise as I never could."

(beat, people look at Joe's 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 child)

Lucky bastard.

ATTORNEY

"And to my friend Elliot Prior, I bequeath my life. That he may live as I have lived."

Long silence. Elliot looks at Skyler but she looks as confused as everyone else. Elliot whispers to child...

ELLIOT

I think 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. That he visit my friends still in the psychiatric hospital, as I have visited."

ELLIOT

Sorry, what?

ATTORNEY

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

ELLIOT

Christ, I guess it really is the preferred term...

Everyone staring at Elliot.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

I'm sorry...I'm just trying to...

Elliot looks across the table at Joe's Dad, who looks dejected. Then looks at Bruce peering in through the window. Then looks at Skyler, who looks at him like, "Say something." Elliot has a flashback to 2 years earlier.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL, DAY, FLASHBACK

Psychiatric ward. Nurses handing out medicine. JOE (22), Skyler, and Bruce are playing Monopoly in the corner, laughing. Elliot is trying to make an Irish exit -- walking towards the door with a box full of his stuff, with his dad -- but at the last moment he looks at Joe in the distance and Joe makes eye contact with him. Joe's face falls, hurt, as he realizes Elliot is leaving without saying goodbye.

ATTORNEY (V.O.)

Elliot?

INT. CHURCH CONFERENCE ROOM, DAY

Elliot snaps back to present. Everyone is looking at him.

ATTORNEY

I have to say, legally, you're not obligated--

ELLIOT

I'll do it.

END OF ACT 1

ACT 2**INT. CHURCH LOBBY, DAY**

Elliot follows Joe's Dad to car. Eye contact with Skyler who looks bewildered. Elliot quickly talks to Priest.

ELLIOT

Tell my dad I'm going to be gone
for a while.

PRIEST

I don't know who your dad is.

ELLIOT

(sees dad, then, defeated)
He's the one dipping shrimp in the
communion wine.

Elliot exits. On the other side of the room, Elliot's Dad is dipping shrimp into a chalice and talking to Bruce.

ELLIOT'S 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!

ELLIOT'S DAD

Double the number of transistors.

BRUCE

Moore's Law.

ELLIOT'S DAD

You're like the son I never had.

BRUCE

(joking back)
Or the wife!

ELLIOT'S DAD

(laughs, then confused)
Wait, what?

INT. JOE'S DAD'S CAR, DAY

Elliot and Joe's Dad drive home in silence. Radio playing.
Elliot's in a total daze. Joe's Dad kills radio. Silence.

ELLIOT

I don't think we ever met in the hospital. I was only there for a month.

(beat)

I guess a month sounds like a long time to be in a psychiatric hospital. But don't worry, I'm not crazy or anything.

(realizing, backtracking)

Not that being in a psychiatric hospital for a long time makes you crazy. I mean, people with cancer are in the hospital for years and no one thinks *they're* crazy.

(beat, then clarifying)

And I think that's a *good* thing, I think it's a *good* thing they're in the hospital for a long time.

(beat)

Well not a *good* thing, but--

JOE'S DAD

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

ELLIOT

Yep. Great. Love gardening.

EXT. JOE'S DAD'S LAWN, DAY

Elliot and Joe's Dad stand in front of a large suburban lawn, empty except for a shed. Long silence.

ELLIOT

So are we thinking, like, a statue of him, or...

JOE'S DAD

It's not a memorial for him.

ELLIOT

It's not?

JOE'S DAD

No.

(sighing)

It's a memorial for the Gulf War.

Another long silence. Elliot nods, then realizes.

ELLIOT
Sorry did you say the Gulf War?

Joe's Dad nods.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
Isn't there already a memorial for
that? In D.C.?

JOE'S DAD
(exasperated)
He wanted to do one for the Iraqis.
A rock garden, with a rock for each
soldier who died. To make things
right.

Joe's dad unlocks the shed to reveal it's filled with small
rocks. They spill out. Another long silence.

ELLIOT
As like an anti-Bush thing? Or an
anti-Saddam thing--

JOE'S DAD
I don't know. I don't know. Can we
just-- can we just do it, please?
And then it'll be done?

ELLIOT
Yep. Yep.

JOE'S DAD
I'll start building the retaining
wall and you start counting the
rocks.

ELLIOT
Counting the rocks...

JOE'S DAD
You'll have to look up the exact
number. I think it's on Wikipedia.

Joe's dad wanders off to get tools. Elliot stands bewildered.
Cut to hours later, night. Elliot has little piles of rocks
around him, and an old Casio calculator.

ELLIOT
(counting)
655, 656, 658, 65-- wait a second.

Elliot stares at the pile, realizing he's going to have to start over. Joe's Dad stands up to leave.

JOE'S DAD
I think that's good for today.

He starts to walk away.

ELLIOT
Are you going to sleep?

JOE'S DAD
Can't sleep. I'll probably watch a movie.

ELLIOT
What movie--

But Joe's Dad has already shut the door behind him. Elliot looks confused about where he's supposed to go next.

INT. JOE'S BEDROOM, EVENING

Elliot walks into Joe's basement bedroom. Looks around. Puts on Joe's Snuggie. Takes a spin on the drum kit. Stares at a half-finished bong, then hits it. Looks up to see Skyler standing in the doorway, on the other side of the room.

SKYLER
Well if it isn't the Prince of the Psych Ward.

Elliot looks at Skyler. Flashback.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL, DAY, FLASHBACK

Elliot, Joe, and Skyler sitting in the psych ward. Elliot holding his little pill cup. Joe and Skyler laughing.

ELLIOT
You've got to stop calling me that.

JOE
Why would they have seltzer?

ELLIOT
Some places just have it, like, on tap.

JOE
What do you think this is? A WeWork?

ELLIOT
Just stop it, people are looking--

JOE
Why don't you get me a kombucha,
while you're at it.

Joe wheezes laughing. Elliot looks annoyed. Skyler looks at Elliot sympathetically.

SKYLER (V.O.)
(in present)
Oh my god...

INT. JOE'S BEDROOM, EVENING

SKYLER
...I just remembered the bidet
incident.

ELLIOT
(annoyed)
I never thought they had a bidet, I
just wanted to bring in my own,
like, portable--

SKYLER
--portable bidet, right. Because
that made a lot more sense.
(off Elliot's eye roll)
The worst part is he got one.

ELLIOT
(sarcastic)
Ha ha.

Skyler raises her eyebrows. Cut to Elliot and Skyler standing at threshold of bathroom, staring at a bidet attachment.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
You've got to be kidding me. He
gave me so much shit.

SKYLER
Yeah well...you could never quite
tell with him, could you...

Elliot looks at pill bottles on the vanity.

ELLIOT
How long was he home.

SKYLER

A month. He said he wrote you.

Elliot looks at an open dresser drawer with underwear and belts in it. Opens his mouth to ask a question...

SKYLER (CONT'D)

(matter of fact)

Not here. In the woods.

Silence. Elliot nods. Skyler goes to sit on armchair. Picks up bong, hits it.

ELLIOT

And you guys got back together...

SKYLER

(exhaling)

Yes.

ELLIOT

So you never told him.

SKYLER

Of course not. He had enough of a complex about you already.

ELLIOT

A complex?

SKYLER

You stopped visiting. Then you stopped calling. Then you stopped writing.

(beat)

Plus you deleted your Facebook. Bruce was worried sick.

ELLIOT

I had my own stuff going on. I dropped out of school.

SKYLER

(a bit cutting)

I thought you were going to do something with your life...

Elliot looks at her, annoyed.

ELLIOT

So what? This is like revenge?

SKYLER

Right. Because he was so vengeful.

ELLIOT
Then what is it?

SKYLER
Don't ask me. He didn't tell me
anything.
(beat, looking around)
The real question is why you said
yes.

Beat, then he goes over to her, gestures for bong, hits it.
Looks out the window at the woods. She looks up at him.

SKYLER (CONT'D)
Isn't anyone waiting for you in New
York?

ELLIOT
The orgy's probably over by now.
And they got someone else to film
this time, so--

SKYLER
You know what, I don't want to
know.

She picks up a stack of notebooks.

SKYLER (CONT'D)
I'm just here for his archives. All
the brilliant ideas he wrote down
high.

ELLIOT
Anything in there about why we're
building a second Gulf War Memorial
in Wilton, Connecticut?

Skyler smiles. Turns to leave.

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

ELLIOT
Rehearsal?

SKYLER
You're going to make a great
Hamlet.

ELLIOT
Christ, I forgot about that. What
time?

SKYLER

7 a.m. And then you have to go to
the ward. He was still doing group.

Elliot nods. Then processes this information.

ELLIOT

Wait-- 7 a.m.?!

EXT. COMMUNITY THEATER, MORNING

Elliot bikes sluggishly into a mostly empty parking lot. Goes
to lock it but the lock gets jammed. Curses.

DIRECTOR

Suburban paranoia. Private
property. Etcetera, etcetera.

Elliot looks up to see DIRECTOR (45) leaning against the
wall, smoking a cigarette. Elliot approaches.

ELLIOT

I'm your new Joe.

Director leans in and sniffs his neck, intrigued. Deep
inhale, then sighs with disappointment.

DIRECTOR

You smell nothing like him.

Director ashes cigarette against the wall and goes inside.

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.

Elliot turns to UNDERSTUDY (12).

ELLIOT

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

UNDERSTUDY

To be or not to be.

ELLIOT

Isn't that the same number of syllables?

UNDERSTUDY

You know usually, when the lead offs himself, the silver lining is that the long-overlooked understudy gets a chance to shine.

ELLIOT

I'm guessing you're the understudy?

UNDERSTUDY

I'm guessing I'm your worst fucking nightmare.

DIRECTOR

(to room, impatient)

Would anyone else like the role of a lifetime? Anyone?

ELLIOT

(to Understudy)

Just give me your script.

UNDERSTUDY

No, get your own.

Elliot wrestles the script from the boy's hands.

ELLIOT

Suck it.

UNDERSTUDY

Watch those kneecaps, Kerrigan.

ELLIOT

How old are you?

Elliot takes center stage. Director gestures to begin.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

To be or not to be--

DIRECTOR

Stop.

(loonngg, pregnant pause)

There was something very convincing about Joe's performance of this.

ELLIOT

Because he was suicidal.

DIRECTOR

Please. Everyone here is suicidal.
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.

STAGE MANAGER (80, classic grandma) starts wailing.

DIRECTOR

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

Stage Manager wails even harder.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Jesus, Margaret, get a grip.

ELLIOT

(under his breath)
What am I doing here?

DIRECTOR

The same thing we're all doing
here. You're running away from your
life. By pretending to be someone
else.

ELLIOT

You don't even know me!

DIRECTOR

Know you? I *was* you. Hot young
thing, fresh out of the psych
ward...

ELLIOT

What--

DIRECTOR

...and yet, I felt like I had no future. Because to dream was to be vulnerable, and to be vulnerable was to relinquish my control. My precious control.

Elliot looks at him weird. He pivots out to monologue.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

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

(to Understudy)

What is he talking about?

Understudy shushes him violently, taking notes furiously.

DIRECTOR

So what did I do? Dropped out of school. Changed my name. Lost 150 pounds. Gained back 60. Started wearing colored contacts.

He pries open an eyelid to reveal a stunning blue iris.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Became unrecognizable to myself. Became an orphan, traveling town to town. Not in search of parents but of children all my own.

(to actors)

All of you. My children.

(makes baby crying sound)

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.

UNDERSTUDY

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...

(MORE)

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
 (miming being trapped)
 ...desperate to sleep but awoken by
 every footstep...

Director mimes giant steps. Every time his foot lands, a timpani sounds, and he cowers, scared.

ELLIOT
 Is that a timpani?

DIRECTOR
 ...awoken by every creak of the
 floorboards...

Backstage, an anxious PERCUSSIONIST squeaks a rubber mallet along the top of a timpani to emulate a door creaking.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
 ...awoken by every disquiet in my
 father's world, echoing into my own
 in that insomniac's undying
 twilight of grief.

Director throws his arms out, as if summoning something. Several spotlights suddenly light up various parts of the auditorium ceiling, like stars.

ELLIOT
 Did you rehearse this?

Spotlights swirl before converging on the Director's face, a single tear rolling down it. In the shadowy back row of the theater, the New Orleans woman is stitching a single tear onto the face of a Director doll.

DIRECTOR
 So why are we here? We are here
 because we are all *running from*
something.
 (to Margaret)
 From loss.
 (to Understudy)
 From the *truth.*
 (to ceiling, towards Joe)
 From the eternal basement of our
 fathers' minds.
 (to Elliot)
 And most of all, from ourselves.

Lights fade to black. Actors erupt into applause. Full lights back up. Director bows solemnly.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
 Time, Margaret?

STAGE MANAGER

7:05 a.m.

DIRECTOR

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

Elliot stands stunned as people filter out.

EXT. COMMUNITY THEATER, MORNING

Elliot emerges exhausted to find a random guy -- HEROIN DAD (45, classic suburban dad, but a bit sallow) -- about to get on Elliot's bike.

HEROIN DAD

Is this your bike?

ELLIOT

Kind of. Technically it's my friend's...but now I'm him...

(beat)

Wait, why?

HEROIN DAD

I was going to steal it.

ELLIOT

Oh. Well...I'd prefer if you didn't.

HEROIN DAD

It's funny. We all have these little preferences for our lives. These outcomes we try to control. And yet, things never turn out the way we want them to, do they?

Heroin Dad chuckles to himself, then casually gets on the bike and rides towards the sunrise. Elliot is stunned.

ELLIOT

I've got to get back on my fucking antipsychotics.

END OF ACT 2

ACT 3**EXT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL, DAY**

Elliot, sweaty, in front of the hospital. Bites his nails, debating whether to go in. Then, sees Bruce pushing Elliot's Dad in a wheelchair.

ELLIOT
Christ, not again...

ELLIOT'S DAD
Those fucking shrimp. I swear to God I woke up the next day and I couldn't walk.

ELLIOT
You're not even allergic. It's psychosomatic.

ELLIOT'S DAD
(exasperated)
This is what your mother never understood. It doesn't matter if it's psychosomatic. It's still crippling.

BRUCE
Your mother was a very...*complicated* person, Elliot.

Dad nods solemnly. Elliot looks at them weird.

ELLIOT
What is he doing here?

BRUCE
Hurtful.

ELLIOT'S DAD
He's been helping me out. Ever since my *real* son *abandoned* me.

BRUCE
Also hurtful.

ELLIOT'S DAD
I've been looking for you everywhere.

ELLIOT
I told the priest to tell you I'd
be gone for a while.

ELLIOT'S DAD
Which priest?

ELLIOT
What do you mean which priest? How
many priests do you interact with
regularly?

ELLIOT'S DAD
Oh come on, don't say it like that.

ELLIOT
Like what?

ELLIOT'S DAD
Like I'm being *molested*.

Dad looks up to see "Psychiatric Wing" sign.

ELLIOT'S DAD (CONT'D)
Christ, not again.

ELLIOT
No, I'm just-- Joe bequeathed me
his life.

ELLIOT'S DAD
What does that mean?

ELLIOT
He asked me to live his life for
him.

ELLIOT'S DAD
Why the hell would he do that?

ELLIOT
I don't know. It doesn't matter. I
can't do it.

ELLIOT'S DAD
Of course you can't do it. It
doesn't make any sense.

ELLIOT
I wanted to do right by him, but--
I've got to figure out what I'm
doing with my own life.

ELLIOT'S DAD

Listen, if you can't hack it in New York, why don't you come stay with me. I'd actually really like that.

ELLIOT

No I-- I can't let you trap me in your eternal basement.

Elliot walks away.

ELLIOT'S DAD

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.

Bruce hands Elliot's Dad an applesauce cup.

ELLIOT'S DAD (CONT'D)

What is it with you and the applesauce? You know I can still eat solid food, right?

(beat, then resigned)

Straw please.

Bruce hands him a straw out of his fanny pack and Elliot's Dad uses it to puncture the aluminum lid. Slurps.

EXT. JOE'S DAD'S PORCH, DAY

Elliot knocks on door, defeated, but no answer. Knocks again, no answer. Eventually goes out back.

EXT. JOE'S DAD'S LAWN, DAY

Finds Joe's Dad lacquering the memorial garden retaining wall. Joe's Dad doesn't notice him. Elliot stands a couple yards away and talks to him.

ELLIOT

Hey. I really appreciate you taking me in and everything, but I think I should get back to New York.

(beat)

I know Joe wanted me to do this, but I don't think I'm cut out for it. I'm realizing I've got a lot of my own stuff to deal with.

(beat, then more to himself)

(MORE)

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

I know how hard it is, uh, to lose someone. My mom-- we had a complicated relationship.

(sigh, exasperated)

I don't want to say she was withholding, but--

Joe's Dad turns around, notices Elliot there. Takes out earbuds.

JOE'S DAD

Sorry, did you say something?

Elliot stands there, trying to work up the courage to say it again. Just as he's about to, Joe's Dad puts earbuds back in and keeps working.

Elliot takes a beat, then sighs and goes back to rock counting. Hours pass. It's night again. He's staring blankly at one of the piles. Flashback.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL, DAY, FLASHBACK

Joe and Elliot playing Monopoly in the psych ward. Joe counting money, Elliot staring blankly at him.

JOE

25, 26, 28...wait a second.

ELLIOT

I've got to get out of here.

JOE

Try rolling doubles. Or pulling a Get Out of Jail Free Card.

ELLIOT

Aren't you looking forward to anything after this?

JOE

(beat, then)

I'm excited to watch a movie with my dad. He's got this great setup. With Dolby and everything.

ELLIOT

No, I meant like-- something in *your* life. Don't you want to do something with your life?

Joe stops counting money but doesn't look at him.

JOE
You don't know anything about my
life.

Joe goes back to counting money. Elliot watches him.

EXT. JOE'S DAD'S LAWN, NIGHT

Elliot snaps back to present. Joe's Dad is looking at him.

ELLIOT
Sorry, did you say something?

JOE'S DAD
I asked if you wanted to watch a
movie.
(beat)
I've got a great setup. With Dolby
and everything.

ELLIOT
Oh. Yeah.

JOE'S DAD
Avatar?

Elliot nods.

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 curled towards him, mouth ajar, snoring, sleeping for the first time in a long time. Elliot smiles, touched. He knows why he's here.

END OF PILOT