

WHOSE LIFE

"Pilot"

Written By
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COLD OPEN

INT. EMMETT'S BEDROOM - DAY

EMMETT (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. Murmurs.

EMMETT

Basquiat.

Gets a call. Answers from computer.

EMMETT (CONT'D)

I'm busy.

DAD (O.S.)

We're all busy. I'm getting an MRI.

INT. HOSPITAL - SAME TIME

EMMETT'S DAD (55, looks like an older version of Emmett) in an MRI machine. He's somehow managed to bring his phone in.

EMMETT (O.S.)

Really? Again?

DAD

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

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

EMMETT

I could've sworn the container was childproof.

DAD

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

EMMETT

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

DAD

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

EMMETT

Jesus Christ.

DAD

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

EMMETT

Yes they are. They sell them at
CVS.

DAD

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

EMMETT

Gateway to what? Melatonin?

DAD

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

EMMETT

You called me.

DAD

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

Emmett's face changes. Takes a second to process.

EMMETT

Joe Kaylor?

DAD

Yeah.

EMMETT

How do you know?

DAD

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

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

EMMETT

How did he die?

DAD
It doesn't matter.

EMMETT
Of course it matters.

DAD
Why does it matter?

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

DAD
Christ, there was no river rafting, he-- he killed himself, alright?

Emmett stares at little boy from Honolulu. Bites his nails.

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

A NURSE talks outside the MRI machine.

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

DAD
I'm just talking to my son. I'm so scared!
(sotto, to Emmett)
But I'm not scared, Emmett. Maybe it's the CBD, but for the first time in my life, I'm not scared at all.

EMMETT
I'm hanging up.

DAD
The funeral's later today.

EMMETT
Are you going to come pick me up?

DAD
What, and get a DUI?

EMMETT
You can't get a DUI from CBD.

DAD

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

EMMETT

I'm just going to take the train.

DAD

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

EMMETT

I'm not going to do that.

DAD

Don't be a priss. Just add me--

Emmett closes his computer, hanging up. Beat, then he crawls
to the foot of his bed and opens a dresser.

Moves clothes aside to reveal several letters from Joe,
unopened.

He bites his nails more, hurting himself. Blood pools on his
thumb. He sucks on it.

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

INT. LISA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Emmett 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.

EMMETT
Sorry, sorry.

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

LISA
Baby need his binky?

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

LISA
(to Stranger)
He's *joking*. He stopped breastfeeding months ago.

EMMETT
Maybe I should start knocking.

LISA
Whatever gets you off, perv.

EMMETT
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. Emmett scowls.

EMMETT
Where's Daisy?

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

DAISY
Wouldn't you like to know, perv.

EMMETT
Jesus Christ.

LISA
What? Is our lifestyle too
"deviant" for you?

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

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

EMMETT
...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--

EMMETT
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."

EMMETT
(exasperated)
Why?

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

Lisa stands and wraps Emmett in a bear hug.

EMMETT
Something's poking me.

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

Lisa takes off her strap-on and chuck's it at the wall.

DAISY
Were you guys close?

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

LISA
How do you feel?

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

LISA
Right.

EMMETT
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 Emmett's room, holding a camera with a fuzzy mic.

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

DAISY/LISA/STRANGERS
Goddammit Paul.

EMMETT
Annnnddd 5 makes an orgy.

LISA
He was just filming.

Emmett gives Lisa a skeptical look.

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

EMMETT
I'm going to Connecticut.

SECOND STRANGER
Which part?

EMMETT
The rich part.

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

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

SECOND STRANGER
Why are all your clothes in the bathroom?

EMMETT
(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

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

INT. CHURCH LOBBY - DAY

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

BRUCE
Emmett Prior?

EMMETT
Hey Bruce.

Bruce grabs Emmett by the shoulders.

BRUCE

God, I hardly recognized you. You must've gained, what...8 pounds?

He wraps Emmett in a bear hug, inhaling his scent.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

In the best possible way, of course. More of you to love!

EMMETT

Thanks, Mom.

BRUCE

Don't be silly. I could never replace your mother.

Bruce looks to camera for a split second.

EMMETT

Something's poking me.

BRUCE

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

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

EMMETT

Probably worth unpacking that.

BRUCE

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

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

BRUCE (CONT'D)

So I heard you're in the Big Apple!

EMMETT

Living it up.

BRUCE

Nice apartment?

EMMETT

Not really. I live in the closet.

BRUCE

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

EMMETT

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

BRUCE

Friends from Yale? But I thought
you dropped out.

EMMETT

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

BRUCE

I like to keep tabs on you, you
little minx!

(beat)

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

EMMETT

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.

Emmett 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)

What kind of pervert wears briefs
to a funeral?

Emmett approaches his Dad, who stares at the shrimp fountain.

EMMETT

Can I get you some Tupperware?

DAD

It's weird, right? And not even at
the reception. At the church.
Before the funeral.

EMMETT

I thought you were allergic.

Dad talks with his mouth full of shrimp.

DAD

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

EMMETT

Chemo's hard to beat.

EMMETT'S DAD

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

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

EMMETT

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

EMMETT'S DAD

Come sit with me. It'll be fun.

EMMETT

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

INT. CHURCH NAVE - DAY

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

DAD

Should've brought my voodoo doll...

Then Dad looks over his shoulder to find a third woman in
even more dramatic New Orleans funeral garb behind him.

She takes out a doll dressed like him and starts stitching
something onto it. Dad's face falls, scared.

Beat. Then, an altar boy walks past.

EMMETT

Weren't you an altar boy?

DAD
Don't say it like that.

EMMETT
Like what?

DAD
Like I was molested.

EMMETT
I thought you were molested.

DAD
Why would you think that?

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

DAD
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) 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.

EMMETT
Ah shit...

Emmett slumps in his seat to avoid being noticed by SKYLER (24, tomboy) as she comes up to the altar.

Church organ starts playing an 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.

EMMETT (CONT'D)
Don't see me, don't see me, don't--

Suddenly, Emmett's Dad starts singing along, a single tear rolling down his cheek. Eventually, everyone joins in.

Emmett and Skyler make eye contact. She glares at him.

Behind them, the New Orleans woman is holding the Dad doll, stitching a blue tear onto its face.

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

INT. CHURCH LOBBY - DAY

Emmett and Dad walk out of the nave together.

EMMETT'S DAD
That song reminds me of your
mother. She never let me dance.

Emmett rolls his eyes. ATTORNEY (60) approaches.

ATTORNEY
Emmett Prior?

EMMETT
Yes?

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

Emmett nods, confused. Attorney smiles politely and leaves.

DAD
What's that about?

EMMETT
Probably something I left behind.

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

EMMETT
You invited Bruce?

DAD
Fascinating guy. Works for that
company that makes semiconductors.

EMMETT
No way. The company that makes
semiconductors?

DAD
Oh so you've heard of it--

Emmett wanders off, uninterested. Dad scowls.

INT. CHURCH CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Joe's loved ones around a conference table, somber. Emmett squirms in a hard-backed chair next to a child. Skyler mouths to him - "What are you doing here?" - but Emmett 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.

(reads)

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

(beat)

"To my girlfriend Skyler, I leave my archives. That she may catalogue my twenty-four years of thought and activity."

(beat)

"To my Cousin Danny, I leave my Xbox. That he may finish my Halo 5 campaign."

Emmett whispers to the child next to him.

EMMETT

Lucky bastard.

ATTORNEY

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

Silence. Emmett looks at Skyler but she looks as confused as everyone else. Emmett whispers to child.

EMMETT

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.

(MORE)

ATTORNEY (CONT'D)

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

EMMETT

Sorry, what?

ATTORNEY

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

EMMETT

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

More silence. Everyone stares at Emmett.

EMMETT (CONT'D)

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

Emmett looks across the table at Joe's Dad, dejected. Then looks at Bruce peering in through the window. Then looks at Skyler, who looks at him like, "Say something."

INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - DAY - FLASHBACK

Nurses hand out medicine. JOE (22), Skyler and Bruce play Monopoly in the corner, laughing.

Emmett tries to make an Irish exit with a box of his stuff, but at the last moment he and Joe make eye contact.

Joe's face falls, hurt, as he realizes Emmett is leaving without saying goodbye.

ATTORNEY (V.O.)

Emmett?

INT. CHURCH CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Emmett snaps back to present. Everyone stares at him.

ATTORNEY

Legally, you're not obligated--

EMMETT

I'll do it.

END OF ACT 1

ACT 2

INT. CHURCH LOBBY - DAY

Emmett follows Joe's Dad out. Makes eye contact with Skyler who looks bewildered. Emmett quickly talks to Priest.

EMMETT

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

PRIEST

I don't know who your dad is.

Emmett looks around for Dad, then sighs, defeated.

EMMETT

He's the one dipping shrimp in the
communion wine.

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

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

Moore's Law.

DAD

You're like the son I never had.

BRUCE

Or the wife!

They laugh together. Then Dad realizes.

DAD

Wait, what?

INT. CAR - DAY

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

EMMETT

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.

(beat)

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)

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--

EMMETT

Yep. Great. Love gardening.

EXT. LAWN - DAY

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

EMMETT

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

JOE'S DAD

It's not a memorial for him.

EMMETT

It's not?

JOE'S DAD

No.

(beat)

It's a memorial for the Gulf War.

Silence. Emmett nods as if he understands. Then realizes.

EMMETT
Sorry did you say the Gulf War?

Joe's Dad nods.

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

JOE'S DAD
He wanted to do one for the Iraqis.
A rock garden. With a rock for each
soldier who died.

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

JOE'S DAD (CONT'D)
To make things right.

EMMETT
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?

EMMETT
Yep. Yep.

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

EMMETT
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. Emmett stands bewildered.

LATER

Hours later. Emmett has little piles of rocks around him.

EMMETT
655, 656, 658, 65-- wait a second.

Emmett 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.

EMMETT
Are you going to sleep?

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

EMMETT
What movie--

But Joe's Dad has already shut the door behind him.

INT. JOE'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Emmett walks into Joe's basement bedroom. Bed unmade. Clothes on the floor. Preserved. Takes it in.

Then puts on Joe's Snuggie.

Takes a spin on the drum kit.

Stares at a half-finished bong, then hits it.

Finally, looks up to see Skyler standing in the doorway, on the other side of the room.

EMMETT
Jesus.

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

Emmett shakes his head.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - DAY - FLASHBACK

Emmett, Joe, and Skyler sit in the psych ward, Emmett holding his little pill cup. Joe and Skyler laugh.

EMMETT

You've got to stop calling me that.

JOE

Why would they have seltzer?

EMMETT

Some places just have it, like, on tap.

JOE

What do you think this is? A WeWork?

EMMETT

Just stop it, people are looking--

JOE

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

Joe wheezes. Emmett looks annoyed. Skyler looks sympathetic.

SKYLER (V.O.)

Oh my god...

INT. JOE'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Skyler smiles.

SKYLER

...I just remembered the bidet incident.

EMMETT

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.

Now Skyler shakes her head.

SKYLER (CONT'D)

The worst part is he got one.

EMMETT

What do you mean?

Skyler raises her eyebrows.

BATHROOM

They stare at the bidet attachment on Joe's toilet.

EMMETT

You've got to be kidding me. He
gave me so much shit for mine.

Emmett looks at pill bottles on the vanity.

EMMETT (CONT'D)

How long was he home.

SKYLER

A month. He said he wrote you.

Emmett bites his nails, exits to the...

BEDROOM

Emmett looks at an open dresser drawer with belts in it.

EMMETT'S DAD

Did he--

SKYLER

Not here. In the woods.

Emmett nods. Skyler sits on the bed. Hits the bong.

EMMETT

And you guys got back together...

SKYLER

Yes.

EMMETT

So you never told him.

SKYLER

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

EMMETT

A complex?

SKYLER

You stopped visiting. Then you
stopped calling. Then you stopped
writing. Plus you deleted your
Facebook. Bruce was worried sick.

EMMETT

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

SKYLER

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

Emmett looks at her, annoyed.

EMMETT

So what? This is like revenge?

SKYLER

Right. Because he was so vengeful.

EMMETT

Then what is it?

SKYLER

Don't ask me. He didn't tell me anything. The real question is why you said yes.

Emmett considers, then gestures for the bong, hits it.

Looks out the window at the woods. She looks up at him.

SKYLER (CONT'D)

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.

EMMETT

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.

EMMETT

Rehearsal?

SKYLER

You're going to make a great
Hamlet.

EMMETT

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.

Emmett nods. Then realizes.

EMMETT

Wait-- 7 a.m.?

But she's already gone. Emmett sighs.

EXT. COMMUNITY THEATER - MORNING

Emmett bikes into a mostly empty parking lot.

Goes to lock it but the lock gets jammed. Curses.

DIRECTOR

Suburban paranoia. Private
property. Etcetera, etcetera.

The DIRECTOR (45, enigmatic) leans against the wall, smoking.

EMMETT

I'm your new Joe.

Director leans in and sniffs his neck. Disappointed.

DIRECTOR

You smell nothing like him.

Director ashes cigarette against the wall and goes inside.

A bewildered Emmett follows.

INT. COMMUNITY THEATER, MORNING

Community theater actors fall silent as Director enters.

DIRECTOR

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

Emmett turns to UNDERSTUDY (12).

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

UNDERSTUDY
To be or not to be.

EMMETT
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.

EMMETT
I'm guessing you're the understudy?

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

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

EMMETT
(to Understudy)
Just give me your script.

UNDERSTUDY
No, get your own.

Emmett wrestles the script from the child's hands.

EMMETT
Suck it.

UNDERSTUDY
Watch those kneecaps, Kerrigan.

EMMETT
How old are you?

Emmett takes center stage. Director gestures to begin.

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

DIRECTOR

Stop.

(long beat)

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

EMMETT

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?

EMMETT

Multiple people you've worked with
have committed suicide?

DIRECTOR

Suicide, heart attack, Crohn's
disease--

EMMETT

People don't die from Crohn's
disease.

STAGE MANAGER (80) 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.

EMMETT

(sotto)

What am I doing here?

DIRECTOR

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

EMMETT

You don't even know me!

DIRECTOR

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

EMMETT

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.

Emmett looks at him weird. Director 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.

EMMETT

(to Understudy)

What is he talking about?

Understudy shushes Emmett violently, taking notes.

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.

(beat)

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
papa would be to once again see my
father in myself. To once again be
trapped in that *eternal basement* of
his psyche...

Director mimes being trapped.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

...desperate to sleep but awoken by
every footstep...

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

EMMETT

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, summoning something. Spotlights light up the auditorium ceiling like stars.

EMMETT

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 stitches 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)

(MORE)

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
From the eternal basement of our
fathers' minds.
(to Emmett)
And most of all, from ourselves.

Lights fade to black. Rapturous applause. Director bows.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
Time, Margaret?

STAGE MANAGER
7:05 a.m.

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

Emmett stands stunned as people filter out.

EXT. COMMUNITY THEATER - MORNING

Emmett emerges to find HEROIN DAD (45, sallow) on his bike.

HEROIN DAD
Is this your bike?

EMMETT
Kind of. Technically it's my
friend's...but now I'm him.
(beat)
Wait, why?

HEROIN DAD
I was going to steal it.

EMMETT
I'd prefer if you didn't.

HEROIN DAD
It's funny. We all have these
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, rides towards the sunrise. Emmett sighs.

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

END OF ACT 2

ACT 3

EXT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - DAY

Emmett in front of the hospital. Bites his nails.

Then sees Bruce pushing Dad in a wheelchair.

EMMETT

Christ, not again...

DAD

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

EMMETT

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

DAD

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, Emmett.

EMMETT

What is he doing here?

BRUCE

Hurtful.

DAD

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

BRUCE

Also hurtful.

DAD

I've been looking for you everywhere.

EMMETT

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

DAD
Which priest?

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

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

EMMETT
Like what?

DAD
Like I'm being *molested*.

Dad looks up to see "Psychiatric Wing" sign.

DAD (CONT'D)
Christ, not again.

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

DAD
What does that mean?

EMMETT
He asked me to live his life for him.

DAD
Why the hell would he do that?

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

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

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

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.

EMMETT

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

Emmett walks away.

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 Dad an applesauce cup.

DAD (CONT'D)

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

(beat)

Straw please.

Bruce hands him a straw out and Dad uses it to puncture the
aluminum lid. Slurps.

EXT. PORCH - DAY

Emmett knocks on Joe's Dad's door, defeated, but no answer.
Knocks again, no answer. Eventually goes out back.

EXT. LAWN - DAY

Finds Joe's Dad lacquering the retaining wall. Emmett stands
a couple yards away and talks to him.

EMMETT

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)

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

(beat)

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

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

JOE'S DAD
Sorry, did you say something?

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

Emmett takes a beat, then sighs and starts counting rocks.

LATER

Night again. Emmett still counting. Stops, considers.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - DAY - FLASHBACK

Joe and Emmett play Monopoly in the psych ward. Joe counting money, Emmett staring blankly at him.

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

EMMETT
I've got to get out of here.

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

EMMETT
Aren't you looking forward to
anything after this?

Joe considers, then smiles.

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

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

Joe stops counting money. Stares at Emmett.

JOE
You don't know anything about my
life.

Joe keeps counting. Emmett watches, unsettled.

JOE'S DAD (V.O.)
Emmett?

EXT. LAWN - NIGHT

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

EMMETT
Sorry, did you say something?

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

EMMETT
Oh. Yeah.

JOE'S DAD
Avatar?

Emmett considers, then nods.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

They watch Avatar. One of the weirdly sexual hair scenes.

Emmett looks over to find Joe's Dad curled towards him, mouth
ajar, sleeping for the first time in a long time.

Emmett smiles, touched. He knows why he's here.

TAG

INT. EMMETT'S DAD'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Bruce and Emmett's Dad also watch Avatar. Dad yawns.

DAD
Do you want to sleep over in
Emmett's bed?

BRUCE
We actually shared a bed in the
psych ward...

Dad considers. Then shrugs. "Why not?" Bruce looks to camera.

END OF PILOT