

WHOSE LIFE

PILOT

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ACT 1

INT. ELLIOT'S BEDROOM, DAY

ELLIOT (24, tallish, scruffy) in a full bed that takes up three-fourths of a walk-in-closet-sized Manhattan bedroom. 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. Keeps scrolling.

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, burly with skinny legs, 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.

Another beat. Elliot bites his nails.

ELLIOT

He wasn't really my friend.

ELLIOT'S DAD

Oh great. Make sure to mention that
in the eulogy.

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

ELLIOT

How did he die?

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

Why the hell would he have died in
a river rafting accident?

ELLIOT

I don't know. Maybe he sucked at
river rafting.

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--

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 tomorrow.

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, hanging up. Beat, then he crawls to the foot of his bed, where there's a dresser wedged between his bed and the wall. Pulls the top drawer of the dresser open halfway before it hits the foot of the bed. Sighs in frustration, then 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. They quickly cover themselves with a blanket.

LISA
Hello. Hello. Hello.

ELLIOT
Sorry, sorry.

Elliot goes to the bedside table to get 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 unamused lover)
He's *joking*.
(beat)
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.

Elliot looks at Stranger sympathetically, but Stranger shrugs
and nods in agreement with Lisa. Elliot scowls.

ELLIOT
(to Lisa)
What happened to Daisy?

DAISY (27, butch) 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
No, I just wasn't expecting an orgy
on Veterans Day...

LISA

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

ELLIOT

My friend killed himself.

Silence. They're all stunned. Lisa breaks the silence with a long exhale. Beat. Then, SECOND STRANGER (29, androgynous) peaks 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)
Or wait, maybe I'm getting it backwards...

As Elliot talks to Second Stranger, Lisa comes and wraps him in a forceful bear hug. Picks him up a bit.

ELLIOT

Something's poking me.

LISA

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

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

LISA (CONT'D)

Were you guys close?

ELLIOT

Not really. We hadn't spoken in a while. I got to know him at a very...*specific* time in my life.

LISA

How do you feel?

ELLIOT

(murmuring to himself)

How do I feel?

(beat)

Not sure I want to open that can of worms.

LISA

Right.

ELLIOT

Because once you open that can of worms...

LISA

All the worms come out.

ELLIOT

Exactly.

A THIRD STRANGER (24, short) 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.

LISA

Goddammit Paul.

ELLIOT

Annnnddd 5 makes an orgy.

LISA

He was just filming.

Elliot gives Lisa a knowing look.

LISA (CONT'D)

*Fine...*he was doing stuff with the fuzzy mic.

ELLIOT

I'm going to Connecticut.

FIRST STRANGER
 (chipper, first time she's
 talked)
 Which part of Connecticut?

ELLIOT
 (exasperated)
 I don't know. The rich part.

He walks past Second Stranger into Lisa's en-suite bathroom,
 doubling as a 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	LISA
(defeated)	(angry)
I live in the closet.	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.

Third Stranger has the entire fuzzy mic in his mouth.
 Realizes everyone's looking at him. 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. Head
 lolling against the window to cool down. Biting nails. 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, darling suit).

Elliot tries to turn and walk back out before he's noticed, but it's too late.

BRUCE
Elliot Prior?

ELLIOT
(defeated)
Hey Bruce.

BRUCE
(grabbing him by the
shoulders)
God, I hardly recognized you. You
must've gained, what...8 pounds?

Bruce wraps him in a bear hug.

BRUCE (CONT'D)
In the best possible way, of
course. More of you to love!

ELLIOT
Thanks, Mom.

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

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, but then thinks better of 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
(frustrated)
No, literally. I live in my
friend's walk-in closet.

BRUCE
A friend from Yale? But I thought
you dropped out.

ELLIOT
No, she's a lesbian from Craigslist-
(realizing)
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,
come stay with me. It'll be just
like the good old days. Staying up
late, sharing secrets, *sharing a*
bed...

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

BRUCE
Really? I have a 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 Elliot looks over at his Dad
piling a plate with shrimp from a shrimp fountain, and
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...
 (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--

INT. CHURCH NAVE, DAY

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

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

He looks over his shoulder to find a third woman in even more dramatic New Orleans funeral garb behind them. She takes out a doll dressed like him and starts angrily stitching something into 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 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)
 Oh fuck...

Everyone stands, except for Elliot, who slouches further in his seat to avoid being noticed by SKYLER (24, uncomfortable in her Sunday best, it's so not her style). Church organ starts playing unexpectedly aggressive version of "Dancing on My Own." Skyler starts singing intensely. 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, loudly and emotionally, a single tear rolling down his cheek. He loves this song. Everyone looks at him concerned, but then one of the New Orleans women joins in. Eventually, everyone joins in, singing "Dancing on My Own" like it's a well-known church hymn. Elliot slouches further into his seat, but Skyler makes eye contact with him and gives him a look. Behind Elliot and his dad, the witch woman is stitching the final thread of a blue tear into the face of Elliot's Dad's doll. Behind *that*, Bruce is holding a doll that looks like Elliot, miming Elliot's every move.

INT. CHURCH LOBBY, DAY

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

ELLIOT
 When I die, save the karaoke for
 the reception, okay?

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

Elliot rolls his eyes. ATTORNEY (60, suit) approaches.

ATTORNEY
 Elliot Prior?

Elliot nods.

ATTORNEY (CONT'D)
 Could you join us in the conference
 room? Joe left you something in his
 will.

ELLIOT'S DAD
 (to Elliot, shocked)
 Christ, don't tell me you were
 lovers.

Attorney gives him a concerned look.

ELLIOT'S DAD (CONT'D)
 (backtracking)
 Not that that would be a bad thing.
 (beat)
 Although with everything that
 happened...maybe there was trouble
 in paradise?

Attorney looks even more concerned and leaves.

ELLIOT
 (to Dad)
 Stuck the landing.

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

ELLIOT
 Him? Really?

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

ELLIOT
 (walking away, sarcastic)
 No way. The company that makes
 semiconductors?

ELLIOT'S DAD
 (eager, missing sarcasm)
 Oh so you've heard of it--

INT. CHURCH CONFERENCE ROOM, DAY

Joe's loved ones seated around a conference table, somber,
 murmuring. Elliot squirms in a hard-backed chair. Makes eye
 contact with Skyler, looks away. Leans over to whisper to
 COUSIN DANNY (8, cherubic).

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.

(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 Danny)
Lucky bastard.

ATTORNEY

(still reading)

"And to my friend Elliot Prior, 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. That he visit my friends still in the psychiatric hospital, as I have visited."

ELLIOT

(under breath, panicked)
What the fu--

ATTORNEY

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

ELLIOT

(under his breath)

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

Everyone staring at Elliot. He takes a deep breath.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Is he fucking with me, or...

Silence. Blank stares.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Do I have to decide right now?

ATTORNEY

I don't think so.

Elliot nods, then looks across the table at Joe's Dad, who looks dejected, and exactly like Joe. Then looks at Skyler, also dejected. Elliot has a flashback to three years earlier.

INT. NORWALK PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL, DAY, FLASHBACK

Nurses milling about a psychiatric ward, handing out medicine, checking on patients, etc. JOE (22, long hair), Skyler, and Bruce, among others, 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.

ELLIOT

Yep. Yep...I'll do it.

END OF ACT 1

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

Elliot follows Joe's Dad to car. Makes eye contact with Skyler across the room, then looks away. 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
(looks around)
He's--
(sees dad, then, defeated)
He's the one dipping shrimp in the
communion wine.

Elliot runs out after Joe's Dad. Priest looks over in disgust. 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 "Centerfield" by John Fogerty. Way too chipper. Elliot's in a total daze. Joe's Dad kills radio. Silence.

ELLIOT

(stilted)

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

(beat)

I guess a couple weeks 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 you know what I mean--

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

(looking at him, confused)

It's not a memorial for him.

ELLIOT

It's not?

JOE'S DAD

No.

(sighing)

It's a memorial for the Korean War.

Another long silence. Elliot nods, then realizes.

ELLIOT

Sorry did you say the Korean War?

Joe's Dad nods.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Isn't there already a memorial for that? In D.C.?

JOE'S DAD

(exasperated)

Apparently it was a hack job. They misspelled a bunch of names. So now he wants to do, like, a Japanese rock garden, with a rock for each soldier who died. To make things right. As his legacy.

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

ELLIOT

But didn't the Japanese and Koreans kind of hate each other--

JOE'S DAD

(frustrated)

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

(trying to understand)

Counting the rocks...

JOE'S DAD

It's something like 36,000 Americans, you'll have to look up the exact number.

(MORE)

JOE'S DAD (CONT'D)

He wanted to do Koreans too but I
talked him out of it.

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

ELLIOT

(counting under his
breath)

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

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

JOE'S DAD

I think that's good for today.

Joe's Dad starts to walk away.

ELLIOT

Are you going to sleep?

JOE'S DAD

(over his shoulder)

Haven't been able to sleep lately.
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. He
awkwardly pats the pile to make it into a nice shape, but it
collapses. He sighs and follows Joe's dad inside.

INT. JOE'S BEDROOM, EVENING

Elliot walks downstairs into Joe's basement bedroom. Looks
around. Lots of space. Puts on a Snuggie. Takes a spin on the
drum kit. Hits a bong. 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 a bit stunned. Blows out smoke slowly,
caught in the act. Flashback.

INT. NORWALK PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL, DAY, FLASHBACK

Elliot, Joe, and Skyler sitting in the lounge of the psych ward. Elliot holding a cup of tap water and his little pill cup. Joe is buckled over 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)

Christ, I never thought they *had* a bidet, I just wanted to bring in my own, like, portable-- you know what, never mind. I don't have to explain myself to you.

SKYLER

I get it. You wanted a clean pussy.

ELLIOT

Someone's chipper.

SKYLER

Laughter's the best medicine. That
and Ketamine, of course.

ELLIOT

Speaking of, you killed at the
funeral. Hilarious.

SKYLER

Suck my clit.

ELLIOT

Only if you use the bidet first.

Skyler smirks and gestures for the bong. Elliot passes and
she hits it.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

I thought you guys were going to
break up...you know, after we--

SKYLER

Yeah, well, he needed me...so...

Awkward silence. Skyler blows smoke. Elliot bites his nails.

ELLIOT

So you never told him about us...

SKYLER

Of course not. Are you kidding me?
He had enough of a complex about
you already.

ELLIOT

A *complex*. Go on, doctor.

SKYLER

(shrugging)

Because he never got to go to
college. And you abandoned him to
go back to Yale.

ELLIOT

Oh come on, I didn't abandon him.
He wasn't a stray dog--

Skyler gives him a look like "don't go there."

SKYLER

You could've responded to his
letters. You knew how much those
meant to him.

(beat, takes a hit)

(MORE)

SKYLER (CONT'D)

What did they even say? He wouldn't let me read them.

Elliot looks away sheepishly.

SKYLER (CONT'D)

Wait-- Did you even read them?

Elliot won't make eye contact.

SKYLER (CONT'D)

(really pissed now)

Oh come on, you couldn't have been *that* busy--

ELLIOT

I wasn't busy. I dropped out of school. I just-- I've got my own stuff going on. I'm trying to figure out what to do with my life.

SKYLER

Welcome to the fucking club. That's not an excuse.

Long, tense silence.

SKYLER (CONT'D)

(exasperated)

You know what, who am I to judge. I was here and I didn't do anything.

(long sigh, then stands up, picks up a stack of composition notebooks and waves them)

At least his archives will endure. All the brilliant ideas he wrote down high.

ELLIOT

Anything in there about why we're building a Second Korean War Memorial in Wilton, Connecticut?

SKYLER

I'm pretty sure there was a major battle fought around here.

ELLIOT

Oh yeah. The Battle for Seoul Cycle.

Skyler wants to laugh, but doesn't. 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

(on her way out)

7 a.m. And then you have to visit his friends in the hospital.

Elliot nods. Then processes this information.

ELLIOT

(indignant)

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. Keeps trying.

DIRECTOR

Suburban paranoia. Private property. Etcetera, etcetera.

Elliot looks up to see DIRECTOR (45, New York intellectual look, think Stanley Tucci) leaning against the wall, smoking a cigarette. Elliot realizes no one will steal the bike, and props it up without locking. He approaches the Director.

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 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.

Elliot turns to UNDERSTUDY (12, preppy). He's gay but doesn't know it yet, and vicious.

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 takes center stage. Director gestures to begin.

ELLIOT

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

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

ELLIOT

No?

DIRECTOR

No. Most of us here are 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)
Christ, Margaret, get a grip. It's
been a *month*.

ELLIOT
You know what? I...don't think I
want to be here anymore.

DIRECTOR
(nonchalant)
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. You're here because you
can't be anywhere else.

Awkward silence. Elliot knows he's right.

ELLIOT
(resigned)
You don't even know me.

DIRECTOR
Know you? I *was* you. Hot young
thing, accepted to Yale...

ELLIOT
How did you know--

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. Director pivots out and starts
delivering a kind of Ted Talk with dramatic staging.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
Control control control. Because
mommy and daddy fought.
(MORE)

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

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

ELLIOT

(to Understudy)

Is he always like this--

Understudy shushes him violently, taking notes furiously on
 his script.

DIRECTOR

So what did I do? Dropped out of
 college. 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.

(caresses the face of the
 stage manager)

All of you. My children.

(makes grotesque baby
 crying sound, then
 suddenly withdraws his
 hand)

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

(on verge of tears)

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...

(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
Isn't this a community theater? How
much money do you guys have?

Spotlights swirl before converging on the Director's face, a single tear rolling out of his stunning blue iris. In the shadowy back row of the theater, the witch woman is stitching a single tear onto the face of a Director voodoo 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 Elliot, with finality)
From the eternal basement of our
minds.
(long beat)
And only once we accept this may we
walk as one into His everlasting
kingdom.

ELLIOT
Christ, I knew it was a suicide
cult.

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

DIRECTOR
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
(exasperated explaining)
Kind of. Technically it's my
friend's...but now I'm him...it's a
whole thing.
(beat)
Wait, why?

HEROIN DAD
I was going to steal it.

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

HEROIN DAD
(meditative)
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. NORWALK PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL, DAY**

Elliot, sweaty, in front of "Norwalk Hospital - Psychiatric Wing." He walked here, but now he's reluctant to visit Joe's friends. Bites his nails, debating whether to go in, until he shakes his head and turns to leave, at which point he 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)
Christ, this is what your mother never understood. It doesn't matter if it's psychosomatic. Either way, it's crippling.

BRUCE
(pedantic)
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

(defeated)

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

Elliot walks away.

ELLIOT'S 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.

Bruce hands Elliot's Dad an applesauce cup.

ELLIOT'S DAD (CONT'D)

(peeved)

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 carefully 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.

(MORE)

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

I'm realizing I've got a lot of my own stuff to deal with.

(beat, then more to himself)

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 (CONT'D)

What are you waiting for? Those rocks aren't going to count themselves.

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. NORWALK PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL, DAY, FLASHBACK

Joe and Elliot playing Monopoly. Joe counting money, Elliot staring blankly at him.

JOE

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

ELLIOT

(not paying attention)

I've got to get out of here.

JOE

(sarcastic)

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 looks at him, surprised. This is the first time Joe's been curt.

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 there.

END OF PILOT