

# **WHOSE LIFE**

**A LIVE-ACTION HALF-HOUR PILOT**

**Written by**

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ACT 1

**INT. ELLIOT'S BEDROOM, DAY**

ELLIOT (24, white, 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, white, 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, Latina, butch) and a STRANGER (23, any race, 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, any race, 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, any race, 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, any race, 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, Asian, 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...  
 (loooooongggg 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 wearing New Orleans funeral garb. Gigantic hats, fans, etc.

ELLIOT'S DAD

If'n only we hadn't played with dat dere voodoo doll...

ELLIOT

Jesus Christ.

ELLIOT'S DAD

What? It's a good impression.

Elliot's Dad 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, Black, 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, white, uncomfortable in her Sunday best). Church organ starts playing unexpectedly aggressive version of "Dancing on My Own." Skyler starts singing intensely. JOE'S DAD (57, Black, 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'S DAD

That song reminds me of your mother.

(choking up again)  
She never let me dance.

Elliot rolls his eyes. ATTORNEY (60, white, 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 and leaves.

ELLIOT

(to Dad)

Nice work.

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, Black, 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.

(MORE)

## ATTORNEY (CONT'D)

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, Black, scruffy), 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.

ELLIOT  
I thought the Seroquel was working pretty well for you.

SKYLER  
Suck my clit.

ELLIOT  
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, Black, New York intellectual look) 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, white, 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, any race, 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 out of 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, white, 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**