

Nose Joboholics

A Dramey in Two Acts

By Joseph Sanders

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## Cast of Characters

### **JAMIE SMUCKLER**

31 years old, a robust young man with bipolar. Two nose jobs and counting.

### **JACE SMUCKLER**

35 years old, Jamie's cynical, alcoholic brother in need of a heart transplant, literally and figuratively.

### **MAX**

40s-50s years old, a stellar Nose Joboholic, Jamie's Schnozer (Sponsor).

### **LUCY**

30 years old, Nose Joboholic, with bipolar, devastated by her malformed breasts from a botched plastic surgery procedure.

### **JOE**

30s-40s years old, a Nose Joboholic with a penchant for the absurd. Multiple rhinoplasties, which have destroyed his cartilage, leaving his nose like Michael Jackson's.

### **KATIE**

20s-30s years old, founder of Nose Joboholics, three failed rhinoplasties, otherwise attractive.

### **IMP GHOST**

Any age, a diminutive specter that haunts Jamie's dreams.

### **MARY**

20s-30s years old, a patient with schizophrenia. Lucy's roommate at Bellevue Psychiatric Hospital.

### **AARON**

20s-40s years old, Nose Joboholic, simple and dependable.

### **JIM**

Nose Joboholic, an everyman.

### **JESSIE**

20s-30s years old, Jamie's ex-girlfriend.

### **MS. VENEZUELA**

20s-30s years old, a former Ms. Venezuela.

Company Doubling

NOSE JOBOHOLIC 1, SUPERVISOR, MITCH, JIM

NOSE JOBOHOLIC 2, LADY IN STREET, MS.  
VENEZUELA, JESSIE, MOM, NURSE, JANE

NOSE JOBOHOLIC 3, DOCTOR ROMO, AARON, DOCTOR  
GREENFIELD

TIME

The present.

PLACE

New York City.

SETTING

Action takes place in a few locations which can be suggested by very minimal details. Mostly, a table and a couple chairs. Scenes run into one another without interruption. The monologues and dialogue indicate where the setting is. The Nose Joboholics Anonymous meeting needs around 12-15 actors to suggest some reasonable attendance. The meeting takes place at intervals throughout in a church basement.

ACT I

SCENE 1

SETTING:

NOSE JOBOHOLICS MEETING

NOSE JOBOHOLIC 1 is reading  
from their text:

"NOSE JOBOHOLICS ANONYMOUS"

NOSE JOBOHOLIC 1

"The nose came unclothed, untouched with simply two holes in it. It grew with you and me too. And one day our views became the same, that this nose, whether genetic or by accident, was ruining us. And would have to change. We saw through the vantage point of complete disruption, corruption, pain unlimited; indeed, pain that we asked God, pleaded, He would transport us from. But we continually heeded, not His clarion call, but the only medieval device we could hear was the cruelty of our modern day adherence to beauty standards that were unattainable. We had to come to the realization that our noses, like our lives, were out of our control."

SCENE 2

SETTING: PLASTIC SURGEON'S OFFICE

JAMIE sits in the examining chair as DOCTOR ROMO comes in and glances between JAMIE and his chart with an apathetic look.

JAMIE

You remember my situation?

DOCTOR ROMO

I see fifty people a day. How would I remember you?

JAMIE

I have the "nasal shell."

DOCTOR ROMO

You're the one that went to Australia?

JAMIE

Yeah.

JAMIE shows him pictures of his nose, pre-operation and pre-pre-operations.

DOCTOR ROMO

This you now?

JAMIE

No. This was ten years ago, and this was eight months ago.

DOCTOR ROMO

Yeah... over-resected...

JAMIE

Yeah, but now...

DOCTOR ROMO puts his hand on JAMIE's nose and grabs a magic marker, poising it over him. He pauses.

DOCTOR ROMO

I wouldn't do anything.

JAMIE

I mean, it's too wide.

DOCTOR ROMO

The evil of "good" is "better."

He starts drawing along the outlines of JAMIE's implant, which asymmetrically bulges out of the left side of his nose.

DOCTOR ROMO

I worked on this implant with O'Keefe. It's better than the original Porex made...

He hands JAMIE a tray with various implants, one of which is the "nasal shell."

DOCTOR ROMO

But it's unpredictable. That's why I dropped out of the project. How do you know if it's sitting on top or there's a cushion of air? It's too unpredictable.

(pause)

This is what I'd do. I'd use diamond rasps on the bridge, and I'd do osteotomies.

JAMIE

But you say I shouldn't do anything.

DOCTOR ROMO

Can it be better? Yeah. But do the risks outweigh the rewards?

JAMIE

I mean, what's the likelihood?

DOCTOR ROMO

What do you want me to say?

JAMIE

Have you done this before?

DOCTOR ROMO

I'm a doctor! I've done everything and seen everything! That's why I'm the best! You're coming to me with multiple surgeries. Surgery is risky.

JAMIE

There's kind of a numb sensation on the left side...

DOCTOR ROMO

That's gone. It's the nerves there. The circulation is fine. Anyway you won't know 'till eighteen months if that'll return.

JAMIE

So I guess I have time to think?

DOCTOR ROMO grabs his implants  
back.

DOCTOR ROMO

Yeah.

JAMIE

Paul says he's working on a thinner version.

DOCTOR ROMO

You still don't know what you're going to get.

JAMIE

So what are the odds?

DOCTOR ROMO

What do you want me to say? I use this stuff for everything!  
In kids' earlobes, they knock it around, it gets infected, I  
give them antibiotics, it's fine. See this one? This one's  
used for eye sockets. I've done thousand of surgeries with  
this stuff. I'm the preeminent surgeon. I've designed  
implants. If you have a problem, go to Australia.

JAMIE

All right, thanks.

They shake hands and DOCTOR  
ROMO's off. His RECEPTIONIST  
gives JAMIE the send off.

RECEPTIONIST

So Romo says if you have a problem...

JAMIE

Okay, thanks.

He leaves.

SCENE 3

SETTING: NOSE JOBOHOLICS.

NOSE JOBOHOLIC 2 reads from  
the book.

NOSE JOBOHOLIC 2

"It's a grievance. It's a great misfortune of mine. That I would be stifled by trifles. The trivialities would get the best of me. That I would sell my kingdom for a crumb. That I would trade in all my great potential for none. Oh, the pain does drive you to the brink of insanity. To utter shame. And makes you question the worth of your own dignity. Makes you question everything, and leaves you no good offers, like a barren spring. Everything you thought you sowed, everything you thought you knew, nothing to reap, but just weep at this barren place that you now see on the landscape of your body and face. 'Cause you invested so much in that reflection. Staring in a mirror that just reflected questions."

SCENE 4

SETTING: TRENDY RESTAURANT.

JAMIE sits with JESSIE at the table.

WAITER  
Can I get you folks something to drink?

JAMIE  
Do you have fluid on the lungs?

WAITER  
Excuse me?

JESSIE  
Um, can we have a minute?

WAITER  
Sure.

The waiter walks off. JESSIE puts her menu down.

JESSIE  
Jamie, I want to talk.

JAMIE  
You mean we haven't been talking?

JESSIE  
Jamie, I can't see you anymore.

JAMIE  
No talking and no seeing?

JESSIE  
Yes, that's what breaking up is.  
(beat)  
I'll always love you, Jamie.

JAMIE  
Did you know I have a piece of rubber up my nose?

JESSIE  
You told me.

JAMIE  
Funny story. Would you like to hear it?

JESSIE

I've heard it before.

JAMIE

So have I, but it still ceases to amaze! I blew out my septum snorting coke. So I grabbed the sole of my Nikes and peeled off a quarter inch around the heel and shoved it up my nose. Now when I snort coke I just burn rubber!

(laughs  
uncontrollably)

JESSIE

Are you going to be okay?

JAMIE

I don't know... That's an open-ended question. Get back to me at the end of my life and I'll tell you.

(realizing)

Or maybe you have. Ouch! Goodbye, my love. "Hello" seems obsolete.

JESSIE

Goodbye, Jamie. I'll always love you.

JAMIE

You loved me enough, thank you.

She leaves. He sits there  
devastated.

JAMIE

What do I do now? I know. I'll call my brother, Jace. He's good with matters of the heart, he was born without one!

He grabs his phone and calls.

SETTING:

JACE'S BEDROOM split stage.

JACE is smoking incessantly a  
vape device and typing a reply  
to a message on a dating site.  
He answers his phone fuming.

JACE

(on the phone)

What do you want?

JAMIE cries.

JACE

Look, you bastard. I'm seeing my chiropractor in fifteen minutes. Don't fuck this up for me!

JAMIE  
You don't love me.

JACE  
Why are you an idiot?

JAMIE  
I don't know. I've been thinking about this big piece of rubber in my face.

JACE  
I told you not to do that.

JAMIE  
But I had no choice!

JACE  
Everyone has choices. You just make the wrong ones.

JAMIE  
You take that back!

JACE  
You looked fine.

JAMIE  
Well, how do I look now?

JACE  
Like I said, you *looked* fine.

JAMIE  
Thanks! You know, I thought I was a little vain getting two nose jobs. But I felt so ugly. I was scared to look in the mirror. I had to settle for looking in girls' bedroom windows. That's how I met Jessie. Did I tell you the story?

JACE  
Yes.

JAMIE  
Do you want to hear it again?

JACE  
I don't have time...

JAMIE  
That's what she thought, but we were together almost a year! Ya know, you catch people at their most vulnerable, in their underwear, and they act like they gotta run and hide. Well, I told her even I can't hide from me. And there ain't nothing I ain't seen, 'cept maybe beauty. But I don't think many men have really seen that. They think they have.

(MORE)

JAMIE (CONT'D)

They hold a girl real close, and their heart beats real fast, but that's just 'cause it's gotta supply blood to the nether regions. That ain't love, that's instinct.

JACE

Are you done, moron?!

JAMIE

I guess so.

JACE

I'm going to Saint Vincent's. I'm hanging up now.

JAMIE

Okay.

JACE

Don't get excited, but you'll have no one to talk to, but you should be used to that.

JAMIE

Okay.

They hang up.

JAMIE

Check! Check! Oh, I didn't order anything.

He gets up and goes from the table.

SCENE 5

SETTING:

NOSE JOBOHOLICS.

NOSE JOBOHOLIC 3 is reading  
from the book.

NOSE JOBOHOLIC

"I will be a role model of sobriety. I will kiss the air as I speak, and my hearers will receive my words as kisses on their cheeks! I will not be self-willed, for the ego I have killed, but altruistic to the last syllable of recorded time. I will thrill with my rhyme, but not rhyme at the expense of making sense. This is how I shall from this day live: this day, one way, one day. I will be clean even when dirty. I'll be slow even when in a hurry. I will be calm, even in the face of bombs. I will continue to love, even when God Himself seems to prove His nonexistence. For a negation - a no - is just a yes that hasn't been guessed. So I'll lead this menagerie I meet in Nose Joboholics. Indeed, as a menagerie leads you to question God's intention. For with every color and form, His versatility baffles, and makes us appreciate His kingdom more. Agnostic or atheist, you can't deny diversity. For it is in adversity that diversity truly validates its reason. There's a species for every problem, as a feeling for every season."

SCENE 6

SETTING: AN EMPTY BANK.

JAMIE'S at his bank teller window, but no customers are there. He stares off into the abyss, and talks to himself methodically.

JAMIE

A slave is what you are. Do you realize you're a slave? That your talents could be used for so much more? Do you understand that, my friend? No. No, of course not. You just wake up every morning and embrace the day! Do you know how many people have come and gone before you? Nobody knew you before you were born, but will they after? That's up to you. They're all gone, and you're in a bank.

A CUSTOMER approaches his teller window.

CUSTOMER

Excuse me.

JAMIE

Oh, yes. I'm sorry.

CUSTOMER

You're open?

JAMIE

Yes.

CUSTOMER

Oh, I thought you were on your phone or something.

JAMIE

No, I was just talking to the voices in my head. Sometimes they're so loud I have to speak up to hear my own!

CUSTOMER

Um, I think I'll be right back.

JAMIE

Did you forget something?

CUSTOMER

I messed up this deposit slip.

JAMIE

Well, I have some here.

CUSTOMER  
But I like those, okay?

He scrambles off.

JAMIE  
They're all the same.

(beat)  
Everything's the same. Nothing ever, ever changes.

He starts to whistle and sings.

JAMIE  
Well, I tried to change the world, but the world changed me!

His boss, MITCH, comes over.

MITCH  
Jamie!

JAMIE  
Yeah, Mitch, what's going on?

MITCH  
Look, I told you about the talking to yourself business.

JAMIE  
Oh, I'm sorry.

MITCH  
I can't have it.

JAMIE  
I don't mean to.

MITCH  
Look, you're a nice guy, but this is a bank for Chrissakes!  
We're instilled with trust. And frankly I think you may  
need to go back for some psychiatric help.

JAMIE  
Oh no, Mitch...

MITCH  
Look, I made a promise to your father, and I've tried to  
keep that... but if you don't play by the rules, then neither  
can I.

JAMIE  
I gotta have a job, Mitch!

MITCH  
Get on some medication.

I'm fine!

JAMIE

Please.

MITCH

MITCH tentatively walks off.  
After a moment JAMIE glances  
out from under his teller window  
and walks off.

SCENE 7

SETTING: CITY SIDEWALK.

JAMIE is fuming.

JAMIE

I lost my girl. I lost my job. All I have is germs on my hands from all the dirty money!

He looks at his hands and is taken aback.

JAMIE

Look! I have "In God We..." right there! I touched so many Gods in the same position of my hand, I got it right there on my palm!

He runs off hysterical.

SCENE 8

SETTING: NOSE JOBOHOLICS.

On street. JAMIE walks by the church where Nose Joboholics is and sees the Nose Joboholics sign: "NOSE JOBOHOLICS." The sign has the first word, "NOSE" blinking, and when Jamie looks up it says "JOBOLICS" and considers it, then runs in.

KATIE

Hi Everyone, I'm Katie and I'm a Nose Joboholic.

ALL

Hi Katie!

KATIE

I started this group a few years ago after my second failed rhinoplasty revision. The doctor at my primary said he could make me look like a super-model. He didn't. I don't see any magazines of a former pretty girl with a maligned nose on the front cover. Some of you are under the notion that continual surgery can help your problem. If you keep having surgery you will just add asymmetry to your face. Your nose will look like an origami project a third-grader made haphazardly. There are other vital organs than the olfactory. If you don't believe me you will go through years of surgery and tens of thousands of dollars to have your fears confirmed. No one can help you but you. And when you die your skeleton will lose your nose. You can't take it with you. I've never seen a skeleton with a nose. So be glad that whatever civilization excavates your body and finds you, they'll never know of the wasted years you spent on your quest for beauty. It's just a shame that you cannot be as resourceful as future generations and find yourself. Excavate your true self, bones and all. Thank you.

She steps down and JAMIE stumbles onto the stage, looking around speculatively.

JAMIE

Hi, I'm Jamie.

ALL

Hi, Jamie!

JAMIE

I just lost my job, and I thought this was for jobs. Your "Nose" is blinking; it looks like "Joboholics." Anyway, I could really use a job. I was a bank teller and I'm glad they fired me! The other day my girlfriend came to the window, ex-girlfriend, and I said, "Jessie, we're not going out anymore, I can't handle your financial affairs." And she said it was just an accident, she was next in line. And I said, "Since when is waiting in line an accident?" And she said, "It is when it leads to you." And I was like... I don't know, she got me with that one. So I said, "All right. Give me your slip." But I must've had tears on my hand from the handkerchief I was using, 'cause I smudged the amount on her deposit slip. And I said, "How much is it for?" And she gave me that look, like, you asked the wrong question, and she said, "You have it right there." And I said, "I smudged it." And she said, "On the check." And I said, "Jessie, I don't want to look at your check and see where you work, so I can start stalking you, like you are here with me." And she said, "I'm not stalking you, and you already know where I work, dummy." And I said, "I'm not a dummy." And then she agreed. And so I deposited her check. And I swear all the gold in the vault of that bank walked out with her, 'cause I love her so.

He takes out his hanky and  
blows his nose.

JAMIE

Anyway, I've had two nose jobs, 'cause I didn't like the first, so I keep going back for more. And I hope you all find the noses you're looking for. Does anyone know of a job? I'm really a hard worker. "You gotta work for every penny, and pennies don't pay for much!" That's what my dad used to say. Of course, he was a cab driver, and that drove him to two heart attacks, which my brother took after him on, 'cause he was born without one. Thanks.

SCENE 9

SETTING: JAMIE'S HOME.

JACE is still on his laptop vaping. After a moment JAMIE sneaks behind him and starts reading over his shoulder an IM chat he's having.

JAMIE

(reads)

"Don't take away anyone's God-given right to be deluded."  
What are you saying?

JACE slams the laptop shut and slaps JAMIE.

JACE

I'm talking to myself! Do you mind?

JAMIE

Crazy.

(beat)

What are you doing, today?

JACE

I'm meeting Ms. Venezuela for a drink.

JAMIE

You're drinking again?

JACE

I didn't say what kinda drink, did I?

JAMIE

Well, a drink means...

JACE

No, nothing means anything. That's where you're wrong.

JAMIE

Okay, sorry.

JACE

(mocking)

Sorry, sorry.

JAMIE

How do you feel?

JACE

Like shit.

JAMIE

Well, I'm sorry, Jace. How can I make you feel better?

JACE

DIE AND BECOME THE COMPOST THAT YOU ARE SO MAYBE SOME NEW SHIT CAN BE GROWN OF YOUR OLD SHIT, YOU SHIT!

JAMIE

Okay, Jace. I'll do that.

JACE

What the hell is wrong with you?

JAMIE

Don't cuss like that.

JACE

What do you mean, "don't cuss?" That's all you do to me -- at me, with me. Whatever.

(beat. He completely  
changes his tone.)

Don't emulate me, Jamie. I am rotten.

JAMIE

Don't say that.

JACE

I am. I was born exposed right from the beginning.

JAMIE

Don't say that.

JACE

They looked at me and they could tell this one is bad. That's why God overcompensated with you.

JAMIE

Jace, He didn't, Jace.

JACE

Oh yeah, He did. Too much so, but He did. He's a queer kinda deity, that God. But He's up there, James. And I'll be going down there. But you will meet Him one day. But me and Him, we're estranged.

JAMIE

You're good, Jace.

JACE

Nah, I'm damaged goods. Look at me: Decomposing, aging faster than a squashed roach.

JAMIE

You're gonna live a long, healthy life.

JACE

Been too long already. Get outta here. Do something, damnit!

JAMIE

I'll do it for you, Jace.

SCENE 10

SETTING: BUSY STREET (INDICATED BY HORNS).

JAMIE is walking when he sees a LADY nearly run over as she screams, falling to the ground.

JAMIE

Oh my God, there was some lady just almost hit by a car!

He runs over.

JAMIE

Are you all right? Oh my God! Are you okay?

He helps her up.

She gains her senses and starts to fend him off.

LADY

Yes, what do you want?

JAMIE

I want to know if you're okay.

LADY

What's your motive?

JAMIE

I have no motive. I care.

LADY

Care? You do not care at all!

She gets her bearings and hustles off.

JACE

I do. I care... about... people.

His phone rings.

JAMIE

Hello?

MAX

Jamie?

JAMIE

Yes?

MAX

It's Max. Max S. from the meeting the other night?

JAMIE

Oh, hi.

MAX

How is your day going?

JAMIE

Uh, well I saw someone almost hit by a car and I tried to help them but they were all right 'cause... they were almost hit, ya know what I mean? Had they been hit then maybe not.

MAX

Well, that's good.

JACE

I'm trying to be a good citizen, I guess, 'cause there's nothing else to do.

MAX

Well, that's all we can do. You going to the meeting tonight?

JAMIE

Oh, there's another one?

MAX

Every night. That's what's great about a city like New York. Lots of meetings. Lots of help. You just got to ask for it.

JAMIE

Yeah, but I don't see anything wrong with most people. It's just me. I mean, you guys, you all look... I mean... I mean, I can't... I don't know. I mean, most people on the street, most people, they're just...

MAX

Ah, that's the insanity getting to you. You're confused. We isolate when we are confused, right? "Most people," "Not me," "I'm not like others," "They are not like me." Right?

JAMIE

Yeah, I guess.

MAX

Let me ask you, why does it take a car to hit us for someone to offer help?

JAMIE

I don't know.

MAX

It's a physical, tangible thing, my friend.

JAMIE

Well, so is my nose.

MAX

Right. The problem with us is we hold onto the tangible. That's what plastic surgery is. Just a shinier car to hit ourselves with, you follow?

JAMIE

No.

MAX

It's superficial. The problem is with ourselves, within ourselves.

JAMIE

Well, I already know that.

MAX

But "To know and not to nose," is another thing. You like that, funny right?

JAMIE

"To know and not to nose?"

MAX

Ah, it's cute. Still haven't figured out what it means. Just got your attention, didn't I? There's all kinds of slogans, my friend. But what is the origin of these feelings that are built within them? That beginning starts with you. Come to the meeting tonight. You looking for a job?

JAMIE

Well, yeah.

MAX

I'll introduce you to some fellas, good guys. You would never know them if you saw them on the street how ugly they truly feel, and yet how happy their lives are. That's what you want, isn't it?

JAMIE

Sure.

MAX

Well, I'll see you later, hey kid?

JAMIE

Okay.

MAX

Thanks, bud.

SCENE 11

SETTING:

NOSE JOBOHOLICS.

MAX is at the podium speaking.  
He's charismatic and gregarious.

MAX

They only want to harm. To charm. To take you in by way of their beautiful artisan scalpel that can caress your face, your breasts, and make you with this magic wand: "Mirror, mirror on the wall. The fairest of 'em all." That's what they do. That's what pop culture wants: the ultimate air brush, photoshop, or whatever term and modality we use now. Whatever software, there is none that is softer than your heart and soul, which you should wear on the outside, and then you would be beautiful.

(beat)

"Fair?" Not of them all. But fair, as in fair to mankind. 'Cause that's what this obsession with *me* is. It's an obsession of being unkind. And mankind should be called man-unkind, because really, he has a propensity for that, right? More than the other. And we - at least, I - had to speak to "the man in the mirror." And isn't it ironic how the man who sang about that had the most plastic surgery of 'em all, and lived on a ranch called Never Never Land, and still was asking himself to change his ways? And we all bought into it. Just 'cause it's a catchy tune doesn't mean you can really follow its advice. But these slogans you see here: "To know or not to nose," "A nose by any other shape would still smell," these aren't just mottos, catchy phrases, these are things that you have to work for. To realize and actualize every waking moment of the day. But it does get easier. It works if you work it!

He walks off to applause.  
Fifteen odd NOSE JOBOHOLICS  
get up and start socializing.

MAX comes down and grabs JAMIE  
by the shoulder.

MAX

Hey Aaron, I want you to meet Jamie.

AARON

Hey Jamie, what brings you around? Wait, I nose!

He points to his nose.

AARON

Just kidding. Didn't wanna make you self conscious.

They laugh.

JAMIE

Yeah, yeah, that was a good speech.

MAX

Speech? I just made it up. None of us know what we're saying up there. We live it, give it to God, ya know. Be humble and grateful.

JAMIE

Yeah.

MAX

Jamie here is looking for a job.

AARON

Oh, all right. What's your specialty, do you have any remarkable talents, or un-remarkable?

JACE

Ah, well, I wanted to be an actor.

AARON

Well, that line was delivered good. I believed you. You wanted to. Good luck!

He slaps him on the back.

MAX

What Aaron is getting at, Jamie, is, um, we have to think small. Start from the beginning. We can all accomplish our dreams, but first we need to know how to simply make our beds when we awaken from them. Discipline. Do you want to help making coffee on Thursdays?

JAMIE

Coffee?

AARON

Who's your Schnozer?

JAMIE

Schnozer?

MAX

Yeah, you know someone who gives you advice. This is a 12-Step program and you have someone of your choice who guides you through the steps.

AARON

You know, someone you can check in with everyday.

JAMIE

Well, I started therapy again, and this is like group therapy. I mean, I don't think...

MAX

Okay, look kid, you came here 'cause you wanted help.

JAMIE

I wanted a job. Your nose is blinking!

MAX

There's a reason for that. There's a reason for everything. Look, don't act in haste: Haste makes waste, just look at your face.

He laughs and slaps him on the back.

JAMIE

That's not funny.

MAX

I know. It's not.

AARON

Look Jamie, we don't mean to make you uncomfortable.

JAMIE

You don't make me uncomfortable. I was born uncomfortable!

MAX

I hear that.

JAMIE starts to go, then stops.

JAMIE

You've made me so self conscious. I can't walk out there. All those people are looking at me.

MAX

How do you feel about us, these people here?

JAMIE

You're freaks! Look at your noses, and it's so bad it makes me sick. And these boobs, they look like floatation devices, but they would just smother you instead of save you. Like my mother: Fake boobs, fake milk, no sustenance.

MAX

Kid, you think too much. This sounds like psychotherapy gone psycho. Jamie, you choose: Who would you like to be your Schnozer?

JAMIE

I don't know.

JAMIE overhears a conversation  
by two older NOSE JOBOHOLICS.

NOSE JOBOHOLIC 3

See, the problem with Nose Joboholics is that there seems to be a discrepancy between the way you treat the Newcomers with better nose jobs and the Old Timers who have old-fashioned nose jobs. There's a definite time period where the quality of the nose jobs got better, less invasive.

NOSE JOBOHOLIC 4

But you can't make that presumption.

NOSE JOBOHOLIC 3

I'm just saying, that is a perception we have to address. That these old-timers think their noses are worse. I mean, think about it, wouldn't you?

NOSE JOBOHOLIC 4

A bad nose job is bad because we needed it in the first place - in that, I mean, we *thought* we needed it. I don't care what it looks like.

NOSE JOBOHOLIC 3

I know what you're saying...

MAX

Hey, Jamie?

JAMIE

No! I mean, I don't feel well.

MAX

And that well is as bottomless as hell, isn't it?

JAMIE

Yeah, you speak like this all the time?

MAX

Only when I'm sharp, my friend. I've got five Schnozees, and they all need me. When they call I answer the call. You hear me? If you ever get a voicemail don't leave a message. You call back in five. You got me? Five!

JAMIE

Okay.

AARON

So you making coffee for us on Thursdays?

JAMIE

That's for free, right?

MAX

Of course, it's for free. Nothing that is good is earned monetarily!

JAMIE

Yeah, that sounds nice.

MAX

Sounds nice because it is harmonious!

JAMIE

Yeah.

MAX

Harmonious!

JAMIE

Okay.

The group gathers back and Jane speaks.

JANE

Hi, I'm Jane and I'm a Nose Joboholic.

NOSE JOBOHOLICS

Hi Jane!

JANE

I hate my lips, one lip is bigger than the other. I hate kissing people, even on the cheek, and don't even mention to me about the intimacy that's required for full on lip to lip kissing. I wonder what he thinks of the shape of my tongue as it enters in his mouth and squirms around in there like a dying mouse in a trap. Kisses are a trap for me. I hate my lip. Does anyone else see what I see? Redundant question there. Nobody sees anybody else's deformity than their own. Still my lip wades in the morass of human indignities, that we are forced to face by everyday interaction. This lip has endured brutal winter winds and bridal dreams from marrying friends. The good and bad, this lip persists in making me a clown in the bullring, distracting the bull I have to do with makeup and emphasizing my eyes, so you will not look at my lip...

(stammers nervously,  
sings a lyric)

"There's a pawn shop on the corner in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania."

(beat)

I don't know what else to say. I want to fill my time.

(MORE)

JANE (CONT'D)

But lips are a trip, imagine if we didn't have them. Your mouth would have a horizontal window that's always up.

(BLACK OUT)

SCENE 12

SETTING: A JUICE BAR.

JAMIE approaches the counter.

JAMIE

Hello, I hear you're hiring a fruit and vegetable juice machine operator.

SUPERVISOR

Yeah, uh, you have experience?

JAMIE

Well, I don't grow in the ground, nor am I picked from trees, but I've been known to pick 'em and squeeze them for my own benefit, yes sir.

The SUPERVISOR grabs an application.

SUPERVISOR

You're not crazy, are you?

JAMIE

Why would you ask that?

SUPERVISOR

'Cause you seem kind of crazy.

JAMIE

Well sir, I don't know about that. I mean, the only thing crazy about me are my thoughts, but I rarely act on them.

SUPERVISOR

Okay, fill this out.

JAMIE

Yes sir, you can feel good about this employee who never had a bad day that wasn't caused by somebody else.

SUPERVISOR

Well, you're not hired yet.

JAMIE

Of course not. I wouldn't presume to be accepted by such a worthy institution as the Juice Makers by simply showing a smile and an attitude that'll walk a mile for his customers. No sir, I'm sitting at your table here and I'm filling out your piece of paper. I even got my own pen for the occasion.

SUPERVISOR

That's great.

JAMIE

"Great" ain't the word for it. We'll make a new word for it. How about that?

SUPERVISOR

Just fill the form out all right, pal.

JAMIE

Hey, we're getting to be on an informal basis. No problem, Pal.

SUPERVISOR

Look, just give me the form back.

JAMIE

What?

SUPERVISOR

I'm sorry, we're not hiring.

JAMIE

What are you talking about?

SUPERVISOR

I just got a call from the owner. We don't need any more help.

JAMIE

You just got a call? I didn't hear a phone ring.

SUPERVISOR

I've got it in my ear, ear buds. You can't see it. He just called, please.

JAMIE

You're lying!

SUPERVISOR

I'm not, please, just leave here. You want a sample of the celery spritzer for your time?

JAMIE

No.

SUPERVISOR

Well, then I'm sorry.

JAMIE

You're an asshole!

Hey pal, I'll..!

SUPERVISOR

The SUPERVISOR refrains.

You'll what?

JAMIE

Look, I have customers.

SUPERVISOR

So what, you have enough employees to help them. You'll what?

JAMIE

What?

SUPERVISOR

You were going to threaten me.

JAMIE

Look, I'm sorry you're a little wacky.

SUPERVISOR

Oh, I got ya.

JAMIE

It's nothing personal.

SUPERVISOR

Pause.

JAMIE

Can I get the Marmalade Helsinki?

SUPERVISOR

Yeah. Excuse me.

He goes to the fountain and prepares it.

JAMIE

I was just fired by that guy.

CUSTOMER

Oh.

JAMIE

He almost hired me and then he fired me, so officially I never really worked for him.

SCENE 13

SETTING:

JAMIE'S HOME.

JAMIE comes in and finds a note left by Jace on the counter. He reads it:

JAMIE

"Surely as the sun never forgets the earth it shines for, so am I your brother. Wherever I may go and however you may feel I have abandoned you, I am always there. May you be guided by me and feel my warmth even when so far apart."

(beat)

Jace has nothing going for him, like me. Where could he go? I don't get it. It makes no sense.

SCENE 14

SETTING: NOSE JOBOHOLICS.

MAX and JAMIE are sitting.  
JAMIE is despondent over Jace.

MAX

It's very frustrating... to the point of infuriating. But that's okay, Jamie. Let me explain something to you. When we were sick and suffering we had no clue of humility. Even Sherlock Holmes, if you had been him, the greatest detective ever known, sick and suffering - the most bumbling, most transparent thief - he wouldn't have seen it. He wouldn't have seen the clues left behind of humility. Because humility is right in our faces. It is opposed completely to the ego. Has nothing to do with greatness, especially our own. It's God's greatness. Humility is God's greatness. It's a gift to us that we never want to receive. It's ugly, it's hard to open, because it's so easy to open. And we don't like easy. Because easy is ugly. And yet we want easy, and that's why we feel and look ugly. Do you follow me?

JAMIE

No.

MAX

Good. That shows you are sick and suffering. Do you understand that? Do you accept that?

JAMIE

Okay.

MAX

Well, that's ambivalent. I feel you're ambivalent. Are you ambivalent?

JAMIE

What's that mean?

MAX

Means yes, no. You really don't care do you?

JAMIE

I care.

MAX

About you, right? Not about me. Not about what I'm saying. Blah, blah, blah...

(The "blah, blahs"  
reach a feverish  
pitch.)

MAX

Blah, blah, blah... blabadahhh blabadahh blahbadahhh...!  
(He shakes his head  
furiously out of  
the fit.)

MAX

...is what I'm saying to you, right? Is that all you're  
hearing? Wake up, man, this is your life!

JAMIE

I'm sorry.

MAX

Yeah, you are. But are you willing to change so that you  
don't have to be sorry anymore? Where you stop apologizing?  
You start making a difference? Where's your list, man?

JAMIE

What?

MAX

Your list! I told you to write a list of your resentments!  
Where is it?

JAMIE

You didn't tell me to write a resentments... I don't remember.

MAX

You don't remember? Jamie! Jamie.

JAMIE

I mean... I'm sorry.

MAX

You are sorry.

JAMIE

(whimpers)

I just don't know what to do. I just don't know what to do  
anymore. I'm trying. I'm really trying. I look in the  
mirror and see this ugly person. And I made that person  
ugly.

(cries)

I made that person so ugly. I don't deserve to live.

MAX

It's all right, kid.

JAMIE

There's no way around it. There's no resounding truths.  
There's no use. No use.

MAX

What you need is a template. What you need is to sort it all together again, to compile it, to configure it. That's what you need to do. And not lose your way through it. Not lose your way into it, but intuit. Intuit it. You can only destroy the toys that you enjoy. And the vices that they become are all of pain, hate, and not love. So I would tell you to be true, to be you. Who are you? If you endeavor in the moments of your greatest fears to employ the tactics, to employ the tools that you've learned, that give bravery a new trajectory, a propulsion out of the mire - you'll learn you can overcome anything. And you can stand under the great archway, through which you may walk hand in hand with God.

MAX starts singing the Nose Joboholic song. As he does, all the Nose Joboholics surround and dance around their table singing.

MAX

Call it what you call it  
 You're a Nose Joboholic  
 You can't pretend it ain't you  
 That this song is sung to

There's a phosphorescent glow  
 Right smack on your nose  
 It radiates all your woes  
 Call it what you call it  
 You're a Nose Joboholic

Pray now, don't wait  
 It's only your fate  
 And a faith in Him can't lessen  
 His love for you  
 So what do you got to lose?

Call it what ya call it  
 You're a Nose Joboholic

You had a funny way  
 Of seeing your own face  
 The only disgrace was the way you saw it,  
 As a Nose Joboholic

Condemned with two eyes  
 Separated by that which divides  
 And puts each on either side  
 A fence you tried to take down  
 Instead of respecting each other's ground.  
 Call it what you call it  
 You're a Nose Joboholic!

ACT IISCENE 1

SETTING: NOSE JOBOHOLICS.

JIM humbly speaks.

JIM

...and we just have to. I don't know why. Ya know, it doesn't matter. I can't give you the answer. I can't give myself the answer. It doesn't matter. I don't demand from my Higher Power an answer on these things. But it does make sense to start from this place, a clean slate, a tabula rasa, whatever they call it. Where it's like you start from this place of just complete ignorance, and then you get filled in. And you're gonna make mistakes. And you're gonna kick yourself. And the important thing is to love yourself - even if you're kicking yourself. If you love yourself while you're down, you'll feel the comfort of that cold ground. Rather than seek solace in, you know, six feet under it, and stand six feet over - or whatever your height, and whatever your capacity and ability is to ascend to new heights - over that ground.

(beat)

And I believe it is with love. And I believe, as clear as the slate we are given at the beginning, we are given love. We are given love. If a baby doesn't get love it dies. And that's a fact. So the mere fact that you are here means you were given love upon birth. Those babies that weren't given love, they didn't make it. But we can't think of the babies that didn't make it. We're grown adults that have to make it. And then we can help those right now that aren't making it. Thank you.

JAMIE is standing by the coffee machine when LUCY approaches.

JAMIE

Oh hey, how you doing?

LUCY

Oh, are you doing the coffee?

JAMIE

Yeah, yeah, I'm sorry. I'm Jamie.

LUCY

I'm Lucy.

JAMIE

Oh hey, Lucy, how you doin'?

LUCY

I'm good, I'm good. I like what you said. You talked, right? A few days ago.

JAMIE

Oh, I guess. I really don't remember a few seconds ago, let alone days, but yeah. Well, what are you... what's your deal?

LUCY

What do you mean, what my deal is? I want some coffee.

They laugh.

JAMIE

I mean, why are you hear?

LUCY

I know what you're asking, but it's the way you asked it. Are you always this abrupt?

JAMIE

No, I don't know. I don't know... I guess I'm not socially equipped with the proper, heh... I don't know, ways to say things, I guess.

LUCY

(skeptical)

Well, that's a start. Ah... you can't tell why I'm here?

JAMIE

No.

LUCY

Are you being honest or is that...? I get the feeling sometimes that's how we all act, right? We're all acting like we don't... Just to be complimentary, you know what I mean? We act like we don't know why each other's here.

JAMIE

I really don't know why you're here. Honestly, I... like all good things, I don't know why anything good's here. I can figure out why bad things are here and that's why I'm here. But you, you look really good to me. So I don't know. Anyway, how do you work a coffee machine? I don't even know.

(He laughs, looking over it.)

This is very sophisticated.

LUCY

Oh yeah, yeah, there's a kitchen in the back here. I'll show you.

They move it to the back kitchen. As he prepares the coffee machine, JOE, a wiry and dynamic speaker gets on the podium and begins to speak, almost in pain.

JOE

So hard to articulate the pain. The pain! *Hard* articulate the pain! It's hard to articulate the pain! 'Cause the pain hurts. To give mouth to the words hurts. To express it - otherwise buried deep in our bosom - hurts. It hurts... to feel this pain, let alone tell others of it. But it's only in telling others of it that we find some kind of alleviation of it. Some levity. Pain will drive you insane!

Beat. LUCY is helping JAMIE with coffee maker in kitchen.

LUCY

You really don't know why I'm here?

JAMIE

If you put a gun to me - and I would suggest something softer like your lips, whoa, that was real forward of me! I'm just kidding. I mean, if you put a gun to me and demanded the truth you would have to kill me for it because you wouldn't probably believe me anyway just like I don't believe you when you say I look fine.

LUCY

True. We seem to be at an impasse.

JAMIE

Yes, that's the understatement of a lifetime.

LUCY

Well, it's nice meeting you anyway.

JAMIE

Yeah, you too.

JOE

As I talk my nose may be bobbling all over my face, I've had so many surgeries the cartilage is destroyed. It may fall off in the middle of my speech. But I feel okay that if it does, that I'll still be accepted with unmitigating love from my brothers and sisters in plastic surgery adversity! It's painful, the world we live in, see. There's pain all around.

JOE

It's pain which drove us to the surgeon; to the plastic surgery people who said they'd make us pretty and handsome. So we could get better accepted, see? But the only acceptance we ever sought, or should have sought, was within.

(beat)

But it's hard to look within, 'cause even if you close your eyes it's so black and dark, you lose all perspective in the blackness and the darkness. If God wanted us to be in night all day there would be no day. It'd be all night. And of course there isn't. There's day and night, so it's easy to lose perspective. So I need you. That's why I need your ugly nose, and my ugly nose, and our beautiful woes. It's a paradox that if we share what pains us, we grow. Pain is the soil. Why do you think soil looks like...? It is the fertilizer which is expunged from our bowels! The things that makes us grow is the very shit we want to get rid of.

(laughs)

And that's what pain is. We have to have a total enema. And then we feel better. And we grow from that. It's crazy. But in order to be beautiful we have to be ugly. It's insane. Who made this game up? But the better you understand the game, the less pain you have to endure to play it well. And thus, we make a heaven of our hell. It's a beautiful world. I only hope that you find the beautiful girls and boys that you are. Not that you're looking for, but that you are! I love you all. You're so ugly. Ha ha! I love ugly people. They're the most beautiful people in the world!

He gets off the stage singing, mockingly the Streisand tune:  
 "People who need people / Are the luckiest people in the world," except he's changed the lyrics to "Ugly people who need people / Are the most beautiful people in the world."  
 He is greeted by MAX and JAMIE.

JOE

Hi, Hello!

MAX

Jamie, I want you to meet Joe.

JAMIE

It's nice to meet you.

JOE

Jamie! It's nice to meet you, mate! You came to the right place. Why it's written all over your face.

JAMIE

A lot of people rhyme here.

JOE

We rhyme because we have a good time. We rhyme, because it's a polyphony. It's polyphony. We're not phony anymore, we're poly-phony. You get it?

MAX

He's new, don't bombard him.

JOE

Okay. It's a fun way to live. We do things for people. We don't expect people to do things for us, and we have more fun consequently than any person ever before ever created. It's amazing. You're in good company.

JAMIE

Thank you.

MAX

You can't go wrong, if you just stay on the straight and narrow. You know. It's um... you just gotta be humble, ya know.

JOE

You gotta be humble. If you're not humble ya crumble.

(laughs)

Right? The ego's so, so frigid in its rules, you know. The ego rules. The ego has all these rules. It's ridiculous. It's amazing how we ever survived it in the first place. What do you do, Jamie?

JAMIE

Nothing.

(laughs nervously)

Just um... I don't know, I got fired.

JOE

Well, this is where you find your new life. This is where it comes. You don't need to go anywhere but here. Simple Simon.

JAMIE

It's actually my birthday today.

JOE

Hey!

MAX

Oh, Happy Birthday!

JOE

Happy Birthday! How old are you?

JAMIE

Ah... thirty-one.

JOE

Thirty-one and having fun!

MAX

Happy birthday, man. Today's like, uh, a new birth for you.

JOE

Right. Don't you know, it took thirty-one years for you to find us. You get to be a whole new baby again. Isn't that what we all want to be?

JAMIE

I don't know, is it?

JOE

I don't know. If God was to say to me, "Joe, would you like to be a baby again?" "Same mother, same father?" I'd ask. "Well, does it matter?" He'd probably respond, not to put words in God, but I would imagine He'd leave it a little open-ended to see what kind of person, what kind of soul, He was dealing with. Right? I tell you, if it was the same father or mother, I don't know. Right? What would you do?

MAX

I don't know. I have no idea.

JOE

You, Jamie, what would you do? Would you pick a new father, mother? Would you say a different one? One of 'em?

JAMIE

I don't know. Maybe if you were that specific with God, He would do something different in spite of you anyway.

JOE

Fascinating. What a great response! Eh, Max?

MAX

That's pretty good.

JAMIE

What do you mean?

JOE

Well, if you don't know what you mean I can't tell you what I mean!

(laughs)

That would be two meanings that are so far divergent they would never get back on course.

MAX

No, I think he means, um...

It's confusing. JOE

No, it's the First Step, right? MAX

It's the First Step. JOE

Yeah, right, it is. MAX

What's the... JAMIE  
 (he looks, reads)  
 "Came to believe..."

No. JOE  
 (JOE points at the  
 1st Step.)

We're powerless over our obsession. Our life was unmanageable. JAMIE

Yeah, right? To believe that you can pick your parents is to think that you're like a god. To have a conversation negotiating it, like you say, is to be negotiating with your own powerlessness, which is futile. And so God, in spite of that, will show you time and again, irrespective of the parents He gives you, that you are still a baby and you will never grow up until you follow these steps. You're brilliant, man! You're coming right along. Max is a great Schnozer. I like his work already. You're so new, but aren't we all so old, too? JOE

Yeah... yeah. JAMIE

What's your number? JOE

Oh, uh... JAMIE

Don't be shy, we won't bother you. Do you call people every day? JOE

Well, Max told me to. JAMIE

JOE

Well, don't be told to do anything. Hear things. And when you hear things... then maybe you'll hear more things. Like the ringing of the phone or the melody it plays. Make that melody ring in your heart and answer it. For in your darkest moments, just a little gleam of light sets off the whole stage of the world from what was the plight, to a wonderful, fanciful show. My name's Joe, Jamie!

(thinks)

Jamie. I like that. I like your name. You know why?

JAMIE

Why?

JOE

It has *me* in it. Did you ever hear the *me* in your own name?

JAMIE

What do you mean?

JOE

Jay-me. Jay-me. I'd rather be called a blue jay than a Jay-me.

(laughs)

That's just me. Well, Happy Birthday, Jamie. I hope this birthday is as momentous as your first. And if it isn't, I hope it at least isn't the worst.

MAX and JOE laugh.

MAX

Yeah, Happy Birthday, man.

SCENE 2

SETTING:

A BAR IN VENEZUELA.

JACE storms in, vaping, looking feverishly about him. MISS VENEZUELA waves him over.

Hola, Jace?!

MISS VENEZUELA

He stares.

Miss Venezuela?

JACE

Jace, I am so happy to finally meet you!

MISS VENEZUELA

Miss Venezuela?

JACE

Miss Venezuela, si!

MISS VENEZUELA

You're not her.

JACE

What?

MISS VENEZUELA

This obviously is not you.

JACE

He shows her the picture on his phone.

That's me!

MISS VENEZUELA

Show me your credentials. You're certainly not pretty enough to be a Miss-anything, except maybe a *mistake*.

JACE

Oh my God. You son of a bitch!

MISS VENEZUELA

Got that right.

JACE

I've never met someone so cruel.

MISS VENEZUELA

JACE

Listen, dame. I've got the life expectancy of a squirrel, which I've never inquired as to the length of their lives, but all I know is I've never seen an old squirrel. I assume those tree sprinters are all in the prime of life, and they just forgo old age, 'cause what old animal can climb vertically while their horizon is fading? Animals at least have the dignity to spare the young from caretaking, and thus their whole species has more fun. Now I intend to do the same. But also, you can see by my visage that I'm not just vicious, for not being young at heart -- but rather, for being young with disparate and falling-apart parts -- I've been blessed, or doomed, with a condition of a malfunctioning heart. Thus, I'm like a damn old man, and yet I'm thirty-five, but look twice, thrice that age. Furthermore, I haven't the words of a sage. I'm dumb, dulled from the cruelty I see. And not an ounce of wisdom someone else with my same experience should have. But that is more my fault than their great trait. For I forgo attributes that make people great. I'll never be a hero. Heroes don't get on a plane for former beauty pageant frauds that make you want to vomit rather than take one more glance to reconsider. You just made me want to die a hundredfold, more than I've already been accustomed to. However, if you can endure this kind of venom, maybe we could have some fun. Just don't ask me to treat you like candy - if only it's to lick occasionally.

MISS VENEZUELA

I am a former Miss Venezuela, and you are the biggest asshole I have ever met, and will soon forget!

JACE

Nice couplet.

She leaves.

JACE

But good couplets don't make for good couples.

SCENE 3

SETTING: NOSE JOBOHOLICS.

JOE is at the podium.

JOE

I came into a paradox. I came into a paradox. It's a parrot in a box, that's what a paradox is. It's a parrot in a box, 'cause it hears its own voice, but its voice is predicated on hearing others. So the parrot in the box... I don't know why I said that. Maybe it's a paradox. Maybe life is a paradox. Maybe it's not. What if it's not a paradox and you kept saying it was? Wouldn't you be disappointed? I think if you say it's a paradox, you are disappointed. So therefore it better not be a paradox, even if you say so. You should stop saying so and maybe it will stop being a paradox. Maybe the conundrum, the catastrophe is in your own head. Or unless you like a paradox. Maybe a paradox suits you. Maybe you like things to make sense as much as they don't. If in case you do, and you can function under the auspices of a paradox--I don't know.

(beat)

I've never heard of a fundraiser called "Paradox." Where did the money go? It's a paradox, we don't know. So anything instilled with trust... Like you don't hear about the police, like the New York Paradox Police Department. We want protection. We don't want paradox. We don't want paradox doctors. You never hear the hospital's name: Paradox Hospital. You wouldn't go to a Paradox hospital, would you? They're named for Saints and things like that. Who wants a paradox doctor? So why in the world do we think of God as a paradox? Why is it everything else we depend on with our lives are not paradoxes, and then when we think about them they are? Get over it! Grab hold of your Higher Power, not a Higher Paradox! It's insane!

(beat)

Why not a paragon? A paragon, but not a paragon of a paradox. A paragon of all that you want. 'Cause I don't think all that you want has anything to do with a paradox. Paradox might be sprinkled in your literature you like to read. Or the situational funny things that happen in life, which again is a story, which again goes to literature. We like a paradox in that respect, but we don't like a paradox when it has to do with saving our damn skin.

(beat)

We don't want a lawyer when we're falsely accused of killing somebody. Do we hire the Partners of Paradox? You better believe you don't. Do you want your lawyer to say, it's a paradox? "The truth is just a paradox. This man is innocent, but innocence is a paradox." You don't want that.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

(beat)

Look at all the things we don't want to be a paradox, and yet we wonder why if we don't accept the Higher Power - that's outlined in our book of action - we go right to the source of a paradox. Because isn't plastic surgery a paradox? It's *plastic* surgery. Look at the word "plastic." What kind of...? Why would we want to deal with a surgeon who deals in plastics? It's fake. Everything else, other surgeons deal with organs. Or actual extents of time, like pediatricians. This is a period of time that this doctor is working with the full variable, the full spectrum of childhood, children, and adolescence even, I don't know. But we don't want a paradox pediatrician.

(beat)

But we want a plastic surgeon? Plasticity is pretty close to paradox, because it does what it wants. It rebounds, it does this, it can be molded... it's ridiculous! We wonder why we're so friggin' ugly looking. Why we kept going back. Because we had no Higher Power. We had a Lower Paradox. It's that simple. And when you can get that simple, you stop being so estranged from the solution. I love a good paradox in movies and plays. But look at the word play, it's to play. It's all show. We don't want that for our fate. We enjoy a good show, but I never would like a story written by a cynic.

(beat)

I don't think cynics make flowers, let alone "the paragon of animals," which that paradoxical character spoke of. We like watching him, but somebody had to write all that beauty in him, because real people of paradox don't write like that, 'cause they can't. And yet we refuse the Higher Power. Right?

(laughs)

We like to sit on a seesaw with nobody on the other end, right? What's a seesaw with just one person on it? It's just a low seat on the ground. While other kids are playing, enjoying the playground. So may this be your ground for play. But may you rise up when someone decides to play with you and sit on your accompanying seat, the seat of opposition, that actually rises and lowers. Now that's a real paradox. Because we get our Other, and we rise as they get low, and we get low and they rise, and that's what these shares are about. You can look at my low and you can rise, and I look at your low and I rise, and then we all rise, and we're all on the seesaw. That's the paradox that I want. I just found a happy paradox.

(laughs)

I'm very proud of myself. I'm so excited, I think I'll write a book about the Happy Paradox. Thank you.

(BLACK OUT)

(END OF SCENE)

SCENE 4

SETTING: JAMIE'S BEDROOM.

JAMIE'S asleep as the IMP GHOST materializes and exclaims with a high, piercing, jovial voice:

IMP GHOST

I have found you! I've found you, here, hidden in a place of love and comfort and soothing relaxation. And I long for such sensation. And cessation of all the pain that has afflicted me, and my brothers and sisters, and all those of my race to be. For we don't do anything. We don't live up to the potential. We get afflicted with the chase; the constant stimulation of immediate gratification. Rather than doing some prolonged action that could have only the best benefit for ourselves, as industrious work does. But we are stuck in hate and not love. And we need love, and we do not love enough. Oh, it's so bad. You must help us. You must help our kind. We are dwindling and dwindling... and dwindling.

JAMIE

I'm sorry. I've never even seen you before. What are you?

IMP GHOST

I'm of some place and time out of space and mind. You may have never encountered us before, for we are somewhat formless. But we are bound, too. In a dimension, in and out of your conception. I've only made myself manifest to you, for you struggle with your own form. To instruct you, and to help you with yours. May you help us with ours.

JAMIE

I'm confused.

IMP GHOST

Of course you are. So are the stars, burning so far, so far. They have no idea whom they burn for, or for what. You think the sun knows of you? Your sun? Do you think?

JAMIE

I've never thought of it like that before.

IMP GHOST

Neither have I till this very moment, really. It just shows how many things there are to understand.

JAMIE

This is too much for me. What do you want again?

IMP GHOST

You have to realize your true potential. Once you realize through your eyes - as you see me - I will see me too. You will be confirmation for us. For our kind is dwindling.

JAMIE

You've said that already! You're making me upset!

IMP GHOST

I haven't the energy to argue with you. Your kind is of time, and your time is dwindling, too.

JAMIE

What does that mean?!

IMP GHOST

I don't know. Life is but a dream, as the lullaby goes.

JAMIE

I know that song!

IMP GHOST

But you are in a dream, too. Or are you awake, which is it?

JAMIE

Stop questioning with answers, or answering with questions! I...! God, the language! The language! The anguish!

JAMIE falls to his knees.

IMP GHOST

The anguish of it. It's the anguish of language. Of form. If you only saw how beautiful you were. But you only see the war and not the peace it's for.

JAMIE cries.

JAMIE

I've hurt myself too long to start healing... Won't you help me, God? Is... Are you my Higher Power? Are you my Higher Power?

IMP GHOST

I am just an imp. You are just a little kid with a body fully grown, yet a soul completely unknown. I hide so deep inside your soul. Pray, peace be in your mind.

He disappears.

(BLACK OUT)

SCENE 5

SETTING:

NOSE JOBOHOLICS MEETING

KATIE

I was looking at the Big Dipper the other day and I noticed how beautiful the stars were, and really they're just polka dots that loosely form a symbol of a ladle, but the stars they shined, glowed they had force, a power unto each other. I wonder if the Big Dipper ever wanted to change its look. Ya know, go to a celestial surgeon and say, "Ya know, we're tired of being compared to a ladle. It's archaic, it's so soup kitchen. We want to be seen as something greater." "Well, you are the *Big Dipper*," says the celestial surgeon. And the spokesman Big Dipper retorts, "But in this century, even the past one, the trend has gone to smaller is better, more potent. You split an atom and you don't just get a couple quarks fallen on the carpet, their filaments blending into the mohair, but an atom bomb that decimates as the victor celebrates." "We could always straighten the Dipper handle, I have noticed it a little askew." "Which will take a millennia for our trajectory and placement in the sky to change, but you are a celestial surgeon, are you not? You can change the way we are seen by straightening our handle with your artisan skill."

(beat)

And I think then how many people have looked at the Big Dipper and seen that bent looking handle. It rigidly arcs then connects to the cup of the ladle, such unwieldy stars connected to a symbol, has it perhaps endeared it to us more for its dilapidated handle? Maybe the weight of whatever the Dipper has in its cup has rendered its handle out of joint, maybe it's such a Big Dipper 'cause it's been used so much and it's falling apart.

(beat)

These are things no one talks about with the stars because we know they can't change, only if by their own course. We don't even enter into a conversation about changing stars, about a celestial surgeon, 'cause it's a non factor, we probably unconsciously are endeared toward the Big Dipper for its clunkiness, its lack of finesse, it looks like it's been used like us, and can we say, as we see in that that we've been well used? These are the funny questions I'm kept up at night with. I just wanted to posit that 'cause we struggle so much with our own form, the way people see us, are perceived by us. How do we know we aren't celestial, we aren't stars, and to change our irregularities, our wayward symmetry, our lack of perfection, isn't changing the stars that guide our destiny and not our looks, of which we are driven to distraction? Stars don't dally in such abstraction. They just are and we're lucky enough to capture their image as is, and not question them for not looking prettier.

(MORE)

KATIE (CONT'D)

You don't question why the sleeping beauty is sleeping, you just kiss her and come what may, if she doesn't waken you kiss again. For a beauty not awakened is just a fairy tale with a stubborn heroine. Kiss your own sleeping beauty and awaken. Thank you.

(BLACK OUT)

SCENE 6

SETTING: BELLEVUE PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL.

LUCY'S MOM enters the visitor's room and sits across from LUCY who's patiently sitting at her seat, adorning patient's attire of light blue shirt with a V-neck, and the same colored bottoms, both made of paper-thin cotton.

LUCY'S MOM

The effrontery of the guards. They act like this is prison, like I'm gonna sneak in a metal filer.

LUCY

Oh, why would I try to escape? Being institutionalized is a long term goal for me. It's taken a great deal of mental anguish and your run of the mill deep-seated depression to work up to this level. I'm doing so well at being crazy they say they're gonna ship me upstate.

LUCY'S MOM

Upstate? Are you crazy? I can't visit you up state.

LUCY

The benefits increase.

LUCY'S MOM

I mean, not as much, but that's for long term care. You're young.

LUCY

I'm 30.

LUCY'S MOM

And part way through what will be a prosperous life in the end.

LUCY

I'd settle for the prosperous part now.

LUCY'S MOM

You can give back. You have a wonderful personality, so funny and charming. People warm up to you, Lucy, they always have. I'm a proud mother. This is just a blip.

LUCY

On a radar screen full of them.

LUCY'S MOM

You're just being negative, because it's easier.

LUCY

Excuse me? Say that again.

LUCY'S MOM

Let's not fight.

LUCY

You think this is easy for me? Losing control is an effortless act, right? Attempting suicide is the easy way.

LUCY'S MOM

It's the wrong way, whether it's easy or not. You're just confused. What is Dr. Parker doing, are they changing your meds? You just need a tune up.

LUCY

I don't get to talk to Parker 'cause Bellevue has taken over, but they told me that he's aware and will be monitoring the situation.

LUCY'S MOM

What about the drugs?

LUCY

I don't do drugs.

LUCY'S MOM

Come on, have they changed your meds?

LUCY

And they're working fabulously. Wouldn't you agree?

LUCY'S MOM

You just need a respite, a time to reflect.

LUCY

I'm done reflecting, why you, anyone thinks about how shitty their life is with any kind of interest... I'm trying to escape life, not be in it mired in shit.

LUCY'S MOM

Don't talk that way. I raised you better.

Lucy's mom starts to tear up.

LUCY

Don't cry, Mom.

LUCY'S MOM

I did the best I could. Were there mistakes? Of course.  
(MORE)

LUCY'S MOM (CONT'D)

Do I not for one second take anyone else's accountability but for myself: I don't, I'm your mother. I blame myself.

LUCY

Dad left. That couldn't have been easy.

LUCY'S MOM

You made it easy. Loving you has been the most important and... And significant thing I could ever do. You made it easy, and now you can't even live. You need a kid. You need a child like you to cheer you up, and bring sense to this world.

LUCY

I have had my share of relationships, but as you know never settled down.

LUCY'S MOM

It's that damn bipolar, that's what made your father go crazy. That damn mania, he thought he was going to be president, such a smart stupid man, going off to South America 'cause the CIA was leaving notes for him to travel and disband some terrorism sect or something.

LUCY

Today it would be texts. Hell, I wouldn't have to be delusional to believe in texts if the government was going to recruit me.

LUCY'S MOM

Then he lost his license, his whole damn life was irreparably changed.

LUCY

Let's just address the elephant in the room. It's the plastic surgery.

LUCY'S MOM

You're beautiful, always have been, but when does my opinion matter more to you than some terrible columnist in the Post.

LUCY

I ruined my boobs.

LUCY'S MOM

Well honey, fortunately we don't walk around naked for the world to see our boobs.

LUCY

They're incongruous.

LUCY'S MOM

What's with congruity, symmetry? These are things that easily go out of whack. Why do you think God made it that we should produce offspring to further the species, instead of making people capable of living thousands of years?

LUCY

I don't know.

LUCY'S MOM

Congruity, symmetry, kids are naturally perfect, and we spend every day of our lives in demise of what we once were. We have kids to see the perfect form again, and then it's ruined over a lifetime, and you have kids, and there it is perfect, and so it goes.

LUCY

Great, not many of my visitors explain the purpose of life.

LUCY'S MOM

But isn't that what you're missing, a purpose?

LUCY

Yeah.

LUCY'S MOM

If you felt fulfilled.

LUCY

Our brains are different, Mom, I got bipolar from Dad.

LUCY'S MOM

Well, knowing where it comes from hardly matters, but you do, you matter. What's the matter?

LUCY

I don't like life. I don't like all the obligations, I don't like all the self grooming, I don't like preparing meals and exercising. I don't like life. I mean, I don't hate myself. I just hate life more, so that sort of thing lends to suicide, because life is so devoid of fun.

LUCY'S MOM

You should be dating.

LUCY

Nobody wants to date me.

Lucy walks downstage as the light fades and a spotlight rises on her. She looks 4th wall out a window.

## LUCY

I took your hand, you blanched. I didn't know you were so hypothermic to me. As if the intimacy turns you into a statue. As if with romantic gestures you've only watched in the shadows, having not experienced your own. I didn't know your isolation. I didn't know how much I meant to you like an accident isn't meant to be, but it happens that way so maybe it's better we think that it is. That's how I think our love was, and now you're gone, and I just have my thoughts of you. My sentiments live on.

SCENE 7

SETTING: BAR IN VENEZUELA.

JACE sits at the bar drinking,  
scoping the scene.

JACE

Brighten up. Here comes a viable option of the female persuasion that is often aloof to me and in opposition. I'll glance at her, then away, as if I was just looking at anyone. I'm ambivalent and cool, cute, but with my affections cruel, 'cause there are just so many dames in a cesspool of humanity where one dwells. I can offer heaven, but more often hell.

A VENEZUELAN WOMAN stops in  
front of him, blocking his  
view.

JACE

Excuse me.

VENEZUELAN WOMAN

Huh?

JACE

You're blocking my view. There's a gorgeous woman over there. My sight line stops at your right shoulder from my position, but if you like to get in positions I would recommend we talk some more. If not, please walk on 'cause it's the beauty of the pouting lips, arched brows and eyeliner that emphasizes eyes that see and are seen clearly for the perfect vision she is.

VENEZUELAN WOMAN

What?

JACE

Onward, hussy!

VENEZUELAN WOMAN

I don't understand.

JACE

'Cause you speak in broken English, whereas I, the King's, which I have as my domain as well as command.

Jace's phone rings. He answers.

JACE

Hello, this is an American in a foreign malaise of women who are beautiful, but as dull as the streets they walk on -- dulled by too many drivers who forgo their vehicles for prettier models they with their plush billfolds can control.

MOM

Jace?

JACE

That's me.

MOM

It's your mother.

JACE

How did you get my number?

MOM

From Jamie.

JACE

What's worse you have coerced my brother the same advances of love and affection -- if they are the traits which with you display to get in touch again won't work for me -- as they are dispensable. I only fain love to fuck, and I only have a mother to not think of.

MOM

I understand I haven't been in touch.

JACE

Cutaneously and verbally.

MOM

I'm sorry.

JACE

So enough of the ingratiating posture. What do you want?

MOM

I just need a little money.

JACE

Oh, well that is amazing, 'cause I was just thinking of spending a little on a whore, which many are, including you, but I prefer the ones you can just give a few rolled up bills to and forego the theatrics of courting, and just fuck like you loved them so much only your dick could coronate the new ship that sets sail, and yours set sail on me.

MOM

I'm so sorry, any amount you can afford.

JACE

I'm no Oedipus. I'm not going to pay you to fuck, and my father is already dead, and breaking with the analogy, you killed him, not me. You are more the black widow than any Greek tragedy from Freud's perversity.

MOM

I'll repay you.

JACE

I'm sorry, let me take another sip of my alcoholic drink.  
(he downs his drink)

Ah, it kills as it cures! And what's more so do you: a progenitor of hate, not love, that I harness and learned right from the source.

He hangs up. After a moment his phone rings.

JACE

Yes.

NURSE

Jace Smuckler?

JACE

This isn't scrabble, either you know me or not.

NURSE

We have a viable organ donation for you.

JACE

Ah... a... heart?

NURSE

Yes sir, congratulations.

JACE

Oh my God, you're serious? The bitch who just gave me one congenitally diseased just got off the phone with me.

NURSE

We are very happy for you.

JACE

I can live? I mean, at least longer than I was.

NURSE

For many happy, healthy years. When can you get to Saint Vincent's?

JACE

Ah well, I'm traveling, you know, for business, busy schedule, but I can reroute my flight to New York...

NURSE

Where are you?

JACE

I'm in an armpit of South America.

NURSE

Excuse me?

JACE

Is that a problem?

NURSE

The heart is only viable for a maximum of four hours. I'm sorry if you are not in the area.

JACE

I can take a jet plane, a personal jet. I can afford it. I'll put it on my Visa Gold Prime Amazon Apple iCloud... card.

NURSE

But you can't get here in time.

Pause.

He laughs.

JACE

I'm afraid I fucked up.

NURSE

These are very rare opportunities. I understand you're a very busy man, but your health has to take priority, and we ask that our patients not travel in matters just like this.

JACE

I'll never go anywhere again... Apparently on earth.

NURSE

I'm very sorry, Mr. Smuckler, but we're going to have to give the heart to another candidate.

JACE

Surely, and call me Jace. I'd prefer my executioner call me by my name in the first, as I can't see your covered face. At least your voice will address me as friend even though you act as foe, but you have to hang me. That is your job, and my surname is too cold and objective for a thing so close to my heart. Why, I'm sure another's heart my body would've rejected, as I am the perfect fit for this noose. My neck is strong, but the medical profession and their diagnoses and prognoses are often wrong.

(MORE)

JACE (CONT'D)

Not that they got the wrong man, but maybe in a more advanced time even the wrong man wouldn't have to die.

SCENE 8

SETTING: BELLEVUE PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL.

DOCTOR GREENFIELD meets with  
LUCY.

DR. GREENFIELD

Morning, Lucy.

LUCY

Hi, Dr. Greenfield.

DR. GREENFIELD

How do you feel?

LUCY

Uh, I feel great. I don't know. I mean, I feel fucked up. But then somewhere in the back of my brain I think you're not fucked up, you're just tired of all this fucking shit. You know?

DR. GREENFIELD

Like what?

LUCY

What? You're a fucking doctor -- Excuse my language, but...

Pause.

DR. GREENFIELD

What's going on?

LUCY

I just feel like I need a fucking drink, you know? I can't relax. I know I'm on a plethora of Benzos and mood stabilizers with a daube of antidepressants, but I just want to have a drink. You know? Like, kick up my feet on the ottoman and entertain the conversation of a prospective lover and watch Netflix and just enjoy the solemnity of being with someone without something to do.

DR. GREENFIELD

I understand, I really do. Do you feel anxious?

LUCY

I feel everything all at once, and it's not fair really.  
(MORE)

LUCY (CONT'D)

I mean, if your car did every function it was programmed and made to do: put on the gas, stop, accelerate, break, exhaust, ingest all of it with a tube running from the exhaust pipe into your cracked open window, filling your interior with carbon dioxide or monoxide, whichever way, nowhere to hide, but to kill you as it simultaneously takes you there, a destination on the GPS, but it's not where you're going. I mean, I have a memory of my uncle, kind eyes, ugly face, like receding chin, hair, big nose like some kind of shape that resembles like a philosophers ugly but beautiful on the inside for all the outside deprived, and he touched me, and it felt good, like you feel the table you're banging your head on, gripping with your hands, slamming this think-machine, blocking it out, liking it all the while, wanting it to stop, because it is pleasurable. He molested me. I loved him, but not in the way he wanted and he violated this thing that is attached to me, a clit, a vaginal offering to whoever chooses to touch it, ecstasy in a second, regret for an eternity. He did that, and then, like, he came, he went, a piece of his soul, a chunk of it, like in the whatever-the-fuck age, era, when the -- what is it? Pangaea broke apart, so did my heart, and yet I was not separate from him, the edges of me still fit the piece of him from which I broke away, and I longed for that connection again of my origin, but oceans came in between, there is no vacuum, nature abhors it. Nature is a whore filling my empty space with a man's inlet, fills my hole and ironically creates life from the one he stole!

DR. GREENFIELD

I'm sorry.

Pause.

DR. GREENFIELD

You said a lot.

LUCY

I don't know what it's worth; just the ramblings of my stupid mind. I just want to be a constructive human being.

DR. GREENFIELD

I know, and you are making great progress.

LUCY

Yeah, what are you supposed to say? I mean, I've ruined my breasts.

DR. GREENFIELD

I can't see any problems.

LUCY

Well, you want me to show you?

She pulls up her shirt violently  
and shoves her exposed breasts  
towards him.

LUCY

There!

DR. GREENFIELD

Lucy, that is not necessary.

LUCY

But do you see the...?

DR. GREENFIELD

Please, put your shirt down.

LUCY

Why? Why! This is what I'm here for? If I looked normal  
I'd think normal, and I'd be normal, and I wouldn't be headed  
upstate, 'cause life is too much for me, when all I did was  
make a mistake!

DR. GREENFIELD

I understand that you are very concerned with your looks...

LUCY

But that's not real, right? Which is it? My looks that  
aren't real or my concern for that which is not real? My  
preoccupation with nothing, which is why I cannot contribute  
to society, because I am deluded, 'cause I am fucked in the  
head!

She slams her head with her  
fists.

DR. GREENFIELD

Stop that.

LUCY

Why, or you'll restrain me?

DR. GREENFIELD

If we have to. I want to see you healthy, not hurting  
yourself.

LUCY

Better me than someone else! Beat them to the punch; someone  
who I care about rather than myself!

She slams her head into the  
table.

Dr. Greenfield gets help.

LUCY

Ah! Just kill me! Even I'm not good at that! Can't live  
life and can't end it all the same. I'm insane!

SCENE 9

SETTING: MAX'S APARTMENT & SPLIT STAGE WITH LUCY'S ROOM AT BELLEVUE.

JAMIE and MAX are sitting at a coffee table and JAMIE reads from his notebook.

JAMIE

Where...? What did I do? I was doing coke and crystal, I was manic, I was too intense, though I couldn't study any other way, I was desperate.

LUCY and MARY (20s), LUCY's roommate, sit on their beds across from each other.

MARY

I mean, you know, I'm schizophrenic, ya know, and I deal with... I don't know what they are. I mean, sometimes my illusions, or mirages, as I like to call them, because it's like, I don't think they're really illusions or hallucinations. I really feel they're manifestations of me in a dry desert...

(gasps)

...expended of all my vital energy and walking endlessly in this oppressive heat, in this, you know, many-moleculed sand, these particles that just separate as soon as I step on them, and my feet go in, like, quicksand rather than a firm earth, and I'm forced to traverse this ground that wasn't made to be stepped on, let alone walked on. You know, which is what I think depression is. You can't stand on depression, you can only fall with it. And it's like... so I have -- I have mirages, you know what I mean? They're like, they're like the collective unconscious of the world, of the hope we all seek if we only had a fucking divining rod to point to the water, to the reservoir. But many times you don't, even with these fucking navigational systems, we don't. Ya know? We program where we want to go and it tells us the exact routes and the lefts and rights we are to turn and the miles in which we are to travel, but that robs us of finding out the way in which humans work. Humanity works, as Shakespeare said, "Through indirection direction we find out." And as much as I want to dispel my mirages, say they're not there and they don't exist, my hallucinations are personal and important to me, and I own them. And I... they, I'm owed them. Ok?

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

(beat)

If I'm gonna imagine a beautiful spring lake, or a river running with tranquility, caressing every rock it smoothes as it runs over, then that jagged edge, I... I... with all my will and sanity and my fucked up life, want to smooth over too. 'Cause I am a spring! I am a river that comes from a divine source. Ok? Lucy?

JAMIE

(reads)

Um, so I was selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, frightened. No clue to be a... star?

(stops)

I don't know, I can't even read this shit.

MAX

It's ok, you're doing good.

JAMIE

(reads)

Where had I been frightened? I had a ski slope nose job from the first nose job at 17, and I thought industry types, casting directors, directors, everybody could tell I wasn't authentic, I couldn't play, like, a period piece, you know, with the phony nose, you know, like in the Revolutionary War there were no nose jobs. There were more, you know, like, more things were important, like independence. And, um, I don't know, I was... I don't know. Who gives a fuck?

JAMIE puts notebook down.

MAX

Ok.

JAMIE picks notebook up.

JAMIE

(reads)

I'm resentful at Dr. Paul, you know.

LUCY

Listen to this, Mary. I want to read you something...

LUCY picks up a book.

LUCY

Um... I respect, ya know, the issues that someone with a mental illness goes through. I mean, I have it too.

MARY

Yeah, but you don't have it like me.

LUCY

Well, I guess to retort in an objective way like you are making me see the way of, um, nobody really has the same perspective, because we are all so individual, based on our experiences, which are, ya know, can, uh, derive from our genetics, and which are made from all our ancestral experiences, and infused with God's divinity... And all that shit. Um... Uh... I wanna read you...

(exhales)

Shit.

(looks for page and reads)

"Now we launched out on a course of vigorous action. The first step of which is a personal house cleaning, which many of us had never attempted." Alright, well this goes into the fourth step, fourth step was -- I don't wanna get into details. I think this book is more inspirational, but it says, "Resentment is the number one offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stems all forms of spiritual disease. For we had not been only mentally and physically ill, we had been spiritually sick." I mean, I love that. I don't know if that gets you.

MARY

Yeah, it makes sense.

LUCY

This was written in 1939 by a... a terrible, um, recidivist alcoholic. Who was, uh, in his forties and he'd been drinking his whole adult life, and he'd been wandering and squandering, you know, he was in speculation, um, department of, ya know, like of investors and stocks and then of course in 1929, right? Was it Black Tuesday or something? And you know, the stock market crashed?

MARY

Yeah.

LUCY

I mean, that was a big point. That was almost a hundred years ago. I mean, we had the Great Recession in 2008, but I didn't even fucking notice it, 'cause I don't have any fucking real estate, or I don't have any income or capital.

MARY

I got ya.

JAMIE

(reading)

So he tricked me. He was friendly and he said I might as well wear a sign on my face, ya know, that says, "Nose Job"

(exhales. reads.)

Self esteem -- Whatever, man.

(exhales)

I'm just so fucking -- this is too hard, Max!

MAX

Take it easy, kid. You're doing a great job. You know why it's hard? 'Cause it's from the heart. And you can't hide from the heart, you can't escape it. It follows you, it's in you, it's with you just like God who created it. And when you confront God and His heart it's intimidating. It's... It's kinda frustrating, 'cause you're hitting a wall, 'cause God's power is beyond anything imaginable by mortals! The Greeks tried to figure it out, the Romans, the Egyptians before both of them, the Mesopotamians before all of them. Every culture in every existence in this mighty life has tried to figure out what God wants from them. And what God means. And what they mean to Him. It's hard, Jamie. This is an exploration, not only that will cure you of your addictions, but that will cure you of the bondage of self. And selfishness and self-seeking and ego and your own sense of who you are, or who you were and now who you must become...

LUCY

(reading)

"It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock and trade. One object is to disclose damaged or unsalable goods, to get rid of them promptly and without regret. If the owner of the business is to be successful he cannot fool himself about values. We did exactly the same thing with our lives. We took stock honestly."

JAMIE

(reads)

So I was frightened. I just saw everything through the prism of my nose. All I could see were noses. The subtle way the nasal bone and bridge just juts out in certain places that looks like a bone, or the smooth... contours, natural, that could never be mimicked through plastic surgery, but I deceived myself in believing it could, that this one surgeon would restore what was stolen from me. I also knew he probably couldn't, but, I don't know, I guess I'm stupid. Inconsiderate...

LUCY

"We went back to our lives. Nothing counted but thoroughness and honesty. When we were finished we considered it carefully. The first thing apparent was that this world and its people were often quite wrong. To conclude that others were wrong was as far as most of us could get."

JAMIE

I guilted my Dad into giving me...

(exhales, pauses)

Where the fuck am I? I lost my place.

(searches)

I guilted my Dad into giving me...

(fumbles with pages)

The money...

(exhales)

I was inconsiderate, I blamed him for everything. I blamed him for being an awful Dad. Not getting help for me when he saw me languishing, not living up to my potential. He just drank and did drugs with Mom when we were kids and making her a drug addict and chasing her away and he had no expectations...

(gasps)

For me. Jace was the smart one, but he was sick, he'd never live long enough to live up to his potential. I told him he was responsible for ruining my life! That when I threatened to kill myself to Mom if she wouldn't get me that first nose job at seventeen he should've stopped me. I needed a male role model in my life and he was a terrible one: Hated his job, just gorged himself on food, and drugs, and beer, and neglected us.

(exhales)

Whatever. Jace was left to care for me, 'cause he's the older child, and he tried to be nice, but he was nasty, 'cause he was miserable and he was sick! But I still love my Dad.

(cries)

And... I told him that the first nose job ruined my life, I was a phony, everyone could see. I just wanted another one, not another father, which I did, but another nose job, which I really did.

LUCY

"Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened? Though a situation had not been entirely our fault we tried to discard the other person involved entirely. Were we to blame? The inventory was ours not the other man's. When we saw our faults, we listed them, we placed them before us in black and white. We admitted our wrongs honestly and willingly to set these matters straight..."

MARY

But Lucy, I mean, you know, it all sounds great and flowery and spiritual, and that's wonderful. But how is it adding to your life?

LUCY

(exhales)

Wha..? How dare you!

MARY  
What?

LUCY  
This is important to me.

MARY  
Yeah, I understand that, but you're kinda fucked.

LUCY  
Don't tell me that! Who are you to tell me that?

MARY  
I don't have to tell you that. Look where you are.

LUCY  
And look where you are, too! We're in the same spot! So don't tell me what I don't know, which you don't, which you think I need to know, which you can't possibly think, because you're here with me in this same situation and improbability that you never thought would happen, and is happening right now, so you're a frustrated bitch just like me!

MARY  
True, but we have different... diseases.

LUCY  
Yeah, so what does that mean?

MARY  
I'm not an addict.

LUCY  
Neither am I.

MARY  
Then why are you in Alcoholics Anonymous?

LUCY  
I'm in Nose Jobs Ana - Analysis - Analysis? - Anonymous, get it right!

MARY  
Ok. So you have a problem with nose jobs?

LUCY  
No! I had a bad boob job.

MARY  
Alright, whatever. So you're not an alcoholic, but you're reading from Alcoholics Anonymous, and you're not a Nose Joboholic, because you had a bad boob job, and you're lecturing me on spirituality that you have no prerequisites or experience for having. So what are you blabbing about?

LUCY

Don't you get it? Aren't you hearing this?

JAMIE

(reading)

But I still loved him. And I told him that first nose job ruined me. I was a phony, everyone could see, and I just wanted another one to make... I wanted another nose job - who cares?

(exhales. beat.)

I wanted another nose job to make the first one not look like it was a nose job, but the second one made it worse!

MAX

Of course. You know, when we try to cover our mistakes rather than correct them the outcome is one of further lies. And no matter how many layers of lies you cover the original lies in the ground that it's buried in will inevitably reject it, and the very tectonic plates, the very design of the earth, will clash and push forth that which you buried, and it becomes volcanic. It erupts. And you are the only one burned by your own cover up.

LUCY

I mean, don't you fuckin' schitzos understand what self exploration and recovery sounds like?

MARY

Fuck you. Who are you? You're some ugly bitch who used to be pretty, who fucked up her boobs, who thinks she knows the shit, but she's going upstate, because she can't deal with her own shit.

JAMIE

(reading)

I just wanted to make it normal again. I just wanted to look like I didn't have a nose job. And then it was made worse, even more noticeable. I forced my dad to give me ten thousand dollars, 'cause I said I'd never talk to him again: "That you had two boys who loved you just as much as you were supposed to love them. But you didn't, and now you don't." He just cried. He was begging me, Max!

(cries)

Begging me! Ya know how awful it is to make your father cry? How it broke my heart. How he could get old and be alone, that he once had sons!

(gasps. pause.)

That he gave me his pride! He had nothing left but to buy it back from me. To buy back my love. And then I got that other nose job. I did that, I'm so ashamed!

(cries)

JAMIE

I broke his heart, ya know. How sad it is to tell your parent that you're not gonna love them no more? That maybe you never loved them? All for my own vanity. All to fix this - to fix this fake looking nose, which hardly anyone noticed at all!

LUCY

Hold on a second. Why are we arguing?

MARY

Does it matter?

LUCY

Yeah it matters. I mean, we are the residents who are paying for this institution, if not through our own money, through our insurance's, and these motherfucking doctors, who have many more degrees than I'll ever even know, are making decisions for our lives. Right?

MARY

True.

LUCY

Why are we fighting, Mary?

MARY

Because you think you know the reasons.

LUCY

So what? I mean, I'm sorry if I attacked you.

MARY

Well, I'm sorry if I attacked you.

LUCY

Do you want to hear anymore of this AA book: Big Book?

MARY

Not especially. I'm kinda tired.

LUCY

Ok.

Their side of stage goes black.

JAMIE

I had a complex problem because of her. When she came back later I had no respect for her. And I guess had no respect for myself.

JAMIE exhales, pauses.

MAX

That's good, Jamie. You discovered and uncovered a lot of truths. I appreciate you, my friend.

JAMIE

Alright, Max.

MAX

I know how you feel, because we are both Nose Joboholics. But bigger than that we are human beings with a spiritual malady. A hole in our soul that we try to fill with plastic surgery -- and guess what? All of humanity has their various, multifarious... Ya know, degrees of the same disease. We're trying to fill a hole that only God can fill. I mean, why do you think so many people take opiates and are addicted? Because their pain is a physical manifestation of the spirituality that they are devoid in. And they can't take the daily minutiae and monotony and the moment-to-moment torture that this physical realm inflicts on us sooner or later, and later it becomes even harder, exponentially! But that's when we need to seek God even more so. Because with age we don't have to witness or be afflicted with the decaying, uncompromising, decompensation of the body and brain. Even though we feel it and we see it and we can't do or think the same way as fast, or as clever as we once did. As the years pile on, kid, we must look to our Creator, and once we have to come to amends with Him we start to begin our healing again and again. It never ends until we end. And I don't know about you, Jamie, but I have no idea what's after the end. It may very well be another beginning again. We don't know, and Alcoholics Anonymous, and the twelve step groups that spring from it, that sprout from it, that grow from it, that valiantly go forward with its message of as, you know, everything it involves -- we don't claim to know the afterlife and anyone who does is a fool, or is probably wrong. Because who the hell can figure out God's will? Let alone what He has planned for us in this life and the after one, even including the earlier one, which from we have no memory from which we sprung! So let me tell you, Jamie, when you go home you sit an hour alone and, um, you turn to page -- look at me the sage fumbling through pages of a text he should be scholar of, but only hollers in the darkness where from he came and still remains -- um, right here page 75 "Into Action." I want you to do this, my friend: You will go home and you will open the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, which I will give you, um, which you have a Nose Joboholics Anonymous, but I prefer the originator of the text, so I give you this loved, well-loved, and well-worn text. Bottom of 75 highlighted:

(reads)

"Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour. Carefully reviewing what we have done. We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better.

(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)

Taking this book down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the twelve steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last. Is our work solid so far? Are the stones properly in place? Have we skimmed on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand? If we can answer to our satisfaction we then look at Step 6. We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can He now take them all, every one, if we still claim to something we will not let go we ask God to help us to be willing!" One more paragraph, my friend: "When ready we say something like this." And this is a prayer I command you, but I don't demand you to do. As all great souls revolt against demands, but commands they seem to flow: "'My Creator, I am now willing that You should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to You and my fellows! Grant me strength as I go out from here to do your bidding. Amen.'" We have completed Step 7."

MAX puts down the book.

MAX (CONT'D)

And that's where I plan for you to be tonight after an hour of solemnity, my Schnozee. I appreciate you, Jamie. I appreciate your attentiveness. I have no idea if what I said struck home with you, but thank you for listening. I'm a proud Schnozer. We have bad noses, we have bad woeses, let's smell the roses before our lives closes.

(laughs)

Ok? And excuse me of making my syntax a little lax, or the word choices I enact to, uh, satisfact my knack for rhyming. Ya know, phonetics is a very interesting study. Ya know, it's linguistics, and, I don't know..

JAMIE

Yeah, I noticed that. I don't know what it is. I mean, I studied phonetics in acting school.

MAX

I don't know, I mean, uh, "King Lear" Act 1 scene 5: "Thou canst not tell why one's nose stands in the middle of one's face. Why to keep one's eyes of either side's nose, so what a man cannot smell out he may spy into." That was the Fool talking to King Lear, his sidekick, who, ya know, demeans him. I don't know if you've read much Shakespeare.

JAMIE

Of course I have. I was in an acting conservatory.

MAX

Sure. Well, I mean, I think what happens with people with plastic surgery calamities and adversity in their own appearance, and the hope they have in one day being normal, we give it up, we give up, we give up our ego, we give up our lives to God, and God in turn imbues us with beautiful language. There is nothing more beautiful than divine, inspirational *language!* That once you get away from the appearance, the... corporeali -- corporeal -- corporeality..? Huh, well, that was interesting. I said corporeali... -- I was trying to say "Corporeali--ty," I was trying to say, you know, it means a physical thing, right? A physical, uh, being, uh, a mortal being... but it was interesting when I said, "corporeal," and "corporeality," it sounded like, um... It sounded like something a minute ago, which I can't grasp...  
(chuckles)  
But you understand, my friend.

JAME

I got you, Max.

MAX

Ya know, when we lose something the other door opens, but as Helen Keller said, "Oftentimes we're still looking at the door that closes that we don't see the open door and notice it." And, um, fascinating that a girl with no sight or hearing could say that. It's fascinating. And I think that's what we do, we understand that the physical life, the corporeality of this life no longer applies, and we go into the mind and we synthesize a new language, and it's beautiful, my friend.

(beat)

You are beautiful, my friend. Not because the way you look, but because of the way you think. Just remember that, my friend.

JAMIE

I got ya, Max. I'm feeling it.

MAX

And God's revealing it.

SCENE 10

SETTING: JAMIE'S HOME.

JACE walks in.

JACE

Hey, Jamie.

JAMIE

Jace!

JAMIE runs over and hugs him hard.

JACE

Ok, kid!

JAMIE

I missed you! Are you ok?

JACE

I am now.

JAMIE

Where did you go?

JACE

It doesn't matter where unless it's your home.

JAMIE

It's real good to see you, Jace.

JACE

Yeah, I learned a lot of lessons.

JAMIE

Me too.

JACE

Life is a lesson, you know.

JAMIE

Yeah, I'm finally coming around to that notion.

Jace laughs.

JACE

Yeah, I got a call from Saint Vincent's.

JAMIE

And?

Pause.

JACE

It doesn't matter now. I've accepted my fate, at least for the time being, and that's all any of us have, right? The time we are in right now by God's grace somehow.

JAMIE

Yeah man, definitely.

JACE

You know, it's funny. I thought about that thing you say about me all the time.

JAMIE

What?

JACE

You know: "I'll call my brother Jace. He's good with matters of the heart he was born without one."

JAMIE

Oh, I say that?

JACE

Well, you did I guess, once.

JAMIE

Oh, I don't remember.

JACE

Well, I guess I do, 'cause I saw you when you said it.

JAMIE

Huh?

JACE

I've been watching you. There's a little camera as big as the pores on your nose. In fact, it's in one of your pores.

JAMIE

What?

JACE

A camera, you know. I chose a place where you'd never find it. Why it's as clear as the nose on your face.

JAMIE

I don't get it. You've been watching me?

JACE

I said I'd always be with you, didn't I?

JAMIE

Oh, like the sun, the note you wrote!

JACE

Sure, my brother. You are more of a son to me than our parents could... You know.

JAMIE

Yeah.

JACE

We had no parents. You are my bloodline and I'd give you my heart. I'm always watching you, Jamie. You can change the shape of your nose, but not your heart. And I think you got so much plastic surgery to do just that. Right?

JAMIE

But I don't get it. There's a camera in my nose? Where?

He starts frantically feeling around his nose.

JACE

Don't touch it, you'll mess it up more. We should touch things only to feel and not so much to change.

JAMIE

Ok.

JACE

For you are my brother and that will never change.

Pause.

JAMIE

I love you, Jace.

JACE

I love you, Jamie.

They hug.

They let go and step back.

Pause.

JAMIE

So?

JACE

How's your fellowship going?

JAMIE

It's good. It's great.

JACE

You want to go to a meeting?

JAMIE

Oh, these are private meetings, members only. And you don't have a body issue.

JACE

No, but I have another one, and it's alcohol. And it's ruining my life, as it ruined our parents, and it goes from there. So would you like to go to a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous with me?

JAMIE

Sure. Of course, Jace.

Pause.

Jace raises his fist to Jamie's nose, instead of his chin, and lightly fake-punches it.

JACE

Here's looking at you, kid.

They smile and walk off.

End of Play