

Will Elliott's  
THE PILO FAMILY CIRCUS

adapted by Matt Pelfrey

based on the novel of the same name

Sample Pages

THE PILO FAMILY CIRCUS was commissioned by Godlight Theatre Company, Joe Tantalo, Artistic Director. [www.godlightnyc.org](http://www.godlightnyc.org)

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**TIME:** Now.

**PLACE:** Various locations in our "normal" dimension, and locations in the Pilo Family Circus, located in a small "pocket" dimension attached to our own.

**CHARACTERS**

1. JAMIE/JJ THE CLOWN
2. STEVE/CARNIE/TRICK

**THE CLOWNS:**

3. GONKO
4. WINSTON/TRICK
5. RUFSHOD
6. DOOPY
7. GOSHY
  
8. KURT PILO/COP/RICHARD
9. GEORGE PILO/TRICK/CARNIE/OLDER JAMIE
  
10. FISHBOY/SVEN/CARNIE/TALO/PRIEST
11. RANDOLPH/SHALICE/GYPSIE/TRICK
12. ENZO/MUGABO/CARNIE/TRICK
13. SVETLANA/JAMIE'S WIFE/GYPSIE/TRICK

**NOTE:** This play cannot be performed or produced without first contacting Mark Orsini or Matt Pelfrey.

**PART ONE: SEND IN THE CLOWNS**

(1) **SOMEWHERE.**

**JAMIE.** Alone.

JAMIE

(out)

The first thought to pass through my head was "I almost killed IT, rather than: I almost killed HIM.

Black Out. Sound: A car slams its breaks. Jamie rushes from dark with flashlight.

JAMIE

Hello...? Hey?! You okay...?

Flashlight beam finds A MAN standing in the middle of the road. Back to Jamie.

JAMIE

Excuse me?

(to the man)

This shit's gonna get you killed, man! You're standing in the middle of the road! Are you drunk? Hey! Dude!

(beat)

Unbelievable.

(getting mad)

Are you insane?! You think you're funny?

It sloooooowly turns to face Jamie.

JAMIE

(soft)

Ho, shit...

Meet **GONKO**: A surly clown with cold eyes.

GONKO

Don't yell at me again, sport. A guy like me's got problems, wouldn't you say? You'd like me to keep my problems to myself, wouldn't ya? I'm bettin' that's a big fat yes.

Gonko swaggers up to Jamie.

GONKO

But that ain't gonna happen.

(beat, looking in Jamie's eyes)

Yeah. You just might fit the bill.

Gonko puts a red rubber nose on Jamie and EXITS.

JAMIE

(out)

What just happened?

He sees a VELVET POUCH where Gonko had been standing. He picks it up.

JAMIE

(out)  
Looks like Coke... but the bags heavy... too heavy... this ain't blow... what's this sound it makes.

WIND CHIMES sounds as he rubs it with his fingers.

JAMIE

That's trippy...

VOICE (O.S.)

WHERE'S MY FUCKING UMBRELLA!?

**(2) WENTWORTH GENTLEMEN'S CLUB**

Jamie at work. A RICH CUSTOMER named RICHARD chews him out. **SVETLANA** (20s) a hostess, stands nearby. She isn't paying attention to Jamie's situation.

RICHARD

WHERE IS IT?!

JAMIE

Sorry, sir, I-I haven't seen it.

RICHARD

That umbrella was a gift you idiot!

JAMIE

I understand, sir, could I offer you a complimentary --

RICHARD

Do you know who Danny Devito is?

JAMIE

Yes sir --

RICHARD

So find it!

JAMIE

I'm trying sir, let me just --

RICHARD

I'll be in the lounge.

JAMIE

Yes, *sir*. We'll turn the building upsidedown until we --

RICHARD

I don't have my umbrella in TEN MINUTES, I make *two* phone calls.

(Jabs JAMIE with index finger)

One to have you *fired*.

(again, lowers his voice:)

The *next* to have you *killed*. I've produced four action films that used drug cartels as major villains. I've *mixed* with dangerous people. I've partied with Michael Bay. Do you know

(MORE)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

what a Columbian necktie is? Because you *will*. Are we *clear*,  
sunshine?

JAMIE

*Absolutely*, sir. And again --

Richard EXITS.

JAMIE

(to Svetlana)

Shifts like this make me wonder why I got an arts degree.  
Know what I mean?

Nothing from Svetlana.

JAMIE

Eddie says we're gonna be swamped this weekend. But I kinda  
hope not. Hate it when it's busy.

SVETLANA

I love it. No busy, no tips.

JAMIE

Ever go out for drinks?

SVETLANA

Never. What's it like?

JAMIE

You're funny.

SVETLANA

No I'm not.

JAMIE

(*Is she being funny*)

Right!

(*pause*)

We should go sometime.

(*beat*)

Like after work.

(*beat*)

Drinks. Together.

SVETLANA

Do you mean tonight?

JAMIE

Yeah. That'd be great.

SVETLANA

I can't. Or tomorrow.

JAMIE

Some other--

Svetlana abruptly EXITS.

(3) JAMIE'S HOUSE

JAMIE

(out)

I share a big two story house on the top of the hill with a menagerie of thugs and creeps I've absolutely no connection with 'cept we answered the same roommates wanted ad.

Jamie goes to his BEDROOM. He crawls under blankets and falls to sleep. Goshy ENTERS from the dark. Slowly creeps up on him. Waits. Beeps his horn over and over like an alarm. Jamie jolts up. Slaps off his alarm. Goshy VANISHES.

**(4) JAMIE'S KITCHEN**

Jamie ENTERS. Finds a milk carton with his name written on it. It's empty.

JAMIE

Goddammit. Steve, you *dick*.

**STEVE (20s)** STRUTS IN without a care in the world.

STEVE

I hear someone use my name in vane?

JAMIE

You did this?

STEVE

What?

JAMIE

My milk's gone. *Again. Stop eating my stuff!*

STEVE

I didn't *eat* your milk, *douche*, I *drank* it, so *suck* a nut. And stop jumping all over me all the time.

Steve grabs a Chinese food container with Jamie's name written on it. Eats it loudly.

JAMIE

Do you not hear what I'm saying?? That's mine! That's my name. I'm Jamie! **THAT'S MY NAME. Now PUT MY FOOD DOWN!**

STEVE

(with a full mouth)

Jesus will you lay off! I got a lot going on right now. This is a very complicated time for me. Very complicated!

Jamie grabs for his food.

STEVE

*Easy*, hotshot or I *will* slap you down. I *will* unleash a savage beating. We *both* know I watch *way more* MMA than you do so beware.

Steve feints a punch. Jamie flinches. Steve EXITS with a laugh.

Jamie EXITS to work.

**(5) JAMIE'S HOUSE**

The clowns STEP FROM THE DARK. They trash the HOUSE. They find STEVE and abuse him in many disturbing ways. They leave STEVE whimpering.

**(6) JAMIE'S HOUSE**

Jamie ENTERS. His house is vandalized. Someone wrote "POLITICAL PIGGIES" in what we hope is chocolate ice cream.

JAMIE

No, no, no! What the hell? You gotta be kiddin me...  
(looks at wall, reads:)  
"Political Piggies?"

Hits the lights. Reveals STEVE in corner blubbering, near hysterics.

STEVE

No, don't! Don't turn on the light.

Check out Steve: pants down, drawn over with lipstick, hair in ponytails.

JAMIE

What happened?

STEVE

They held me down, put this...  
(indicates lipstick)  
...stuff on me.

JAMIE

Who did? Why is the house RUINED??

STEVE

Forget it... Just go...

JAMIE

Tell me.

STEVE

You won't--

JAMIE

TELL ME!

STEVE

CLOWNS! Funny noses. Floppy shoes. Clowns.

JAMIE

How many?

STEVE

Started downstairs. Heard all this banging, glass breaking... Thought it was you, so I went down there to tell you to shut up, you know? I was gonna smack you around a bit, teach you a lesson, but then... The skinny one grabbed me and... filled my mouth with shaving cream... 'least, I hope that was shaving cream. Had a knife. No, it was more like a sword. Yeah, a sword! Like yay big. Or yay-er. I mean, *it was huge*. Told me I didn't help 'em trash the place, he'd slice me up. He pulled the damn thing out of his pocket -- I HAVE NO IDEA HOW HE FIT IT IN THERE! No way did that thing fit!

JAMIE

You *helped* them?

STEVE

*What else was I gonna do, bro?* Four clowns against one'a me?

Steve stands, pulls his pants up.

STEVE

They asked about you.

JAMIE

What? Wait: Why?

STEVE

Had some sort of message. They want you to pass some kind of test. If you don't, they're gonna keep coming back. They're serious. I think maybe they're part of a -- what do you call 'em? Religious...

JAMIE

Cult.

STEVE

Yeah, you know, like Scientology or something. Scientology but with fucking CLOWNS. You gotta pass this thing or we're dead men!

Steve scurries away.

JAMIE

*(out)*

Who were they? What did they want? What was this fucking test? And most important, why were they such dicks?

*(takes out the velvet bag)*

But I know that, don't I?

**(7) WENTWORTH GENTLEMEN'S CLUB**

Jamie and Svetlana on the job.

SVETLANA

I see many clowns in Russia.

JAMIE

You're not taking this seriously.

SVETLANA

Clown's aren't meant to be serious. They are here to make smile and laugh. To forget our problems. To giggle.

JAMIE

These aren't normal clowns. They're... deviants in grease paint. They want something from me.

SVETLANA

Get yourself a grip.

JAMIE

The clowns are coming for me, Svetlana. They're coming.

Svetlana looks at Jamie as if for the first time.

**(8) JAMIE'S HOUSE**

Jamie DRINKING. Trying to kill his fear. Then... HE hears GONKO'S VOICE. Jamie hides.

GONKO'S VOICE

Come out, come out, wherever you are.

The CLOWNS ENTER.

GONKO

Tag you're it. Marco Polo, sweet cheeks. Red Rover, I call over.

Jamie grabs a bowling pin. Holds it as a weapon.

JAMIE

Fucking stay back! Stay back!

GONKO

Ah, hello sport. We were just talking about you.

They rush JAMIE. A BATTLE. The CLOWNS WIN. Jamie on floor battered and bloody.

GONKO

I dig the bowling pin gag. We could use that. We could use YOU, too. You have two days to pass your audition. You better pass it, feller or it's lights out and a dive into the big black ocean. Make us laugh, sport. We don't care how. We don't care who gets hurt. Make us laugh or die trying.

The clowns EXIT.

**(9) JAMIE'S BEDROOM**

Jamie pacing. The CLOWNS lurk in the darkness on the edge of reality... watching him.

GONKO

Fourteen hours, you sniveling cocksucker. Get cracking.

CLOWNS

Tick, tock, tick, tock, tick, tock, tick, tock...

Jamie

Fuck!

GONKO

Time's a' running out... make us laugh, kid... Thirty hours. Clock's ticking, fuck face.

CLOWNS

Tick, tock, tick, tock....

Jamie

....I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO!

The CLOWNS make buzzing sounds!

GONKO

I think this kid needs to get his creative juices flowing. Boys? Let's have some fun.

**(10) STEVE'S BEDROOM**

Steve's taking bong hits to calm his shit. The clowns step from the dark and surround him.

STEVE

Not again.

The clowns PILE ON STEVE. The STAGE DRENCHED IN RED. It's unclear if they're beating him up, killing him, or raping him...

STEVE

Jamie! Help! Help meeeeeee!!!!

Steve dragged into the darkness. For just an instant, we HEAR SOUNDS OF A CIRCUS.

Jamie ENTERS. He heard his roommates final scream. The room is soaked with blood.

JAMIE

*(to the clowns - he knows they must be listening)*

You guys really wanna do this? I get it. I get the message loud and clear.

*(that rage Jamie has boils out suddenly)*

FINE YOU ASSHOLES! FUCK YOU! LET'S GO! LET'S GO!

The CLOWNS APPEAR on edge of reality.

GONKO

Nineteen hours. Stop blubbering you big wuss-tard. Tick, tock, tick, tock, tick, tock, tick, tock, tick, tock....

JAMIE faces Gonko.

JAMIE

Let's settle this.

He strips off his clothes.

**(11) AN OUTDOOR MALL**

TOURISTS and SHOPPERS mill. AN EXPLOSION! EVERYONE SCREAMS. They run around the stage in a panic.

Shoppers and Tourists stop to speak as if to a TV Reporter, then snap back into panic mode.

SHOPPER

The first thing I heard were explosions. It was like a bang!

SHOPPER #2

No, it was more of a Pop! Pop! Pop!

TOURIST

There was a man with a machine gun!

TOURIST #2

More than one! They were everywhere. I think it was those terrorists!

SHOPPER

I saw three men with long beards.

TOURISTS

No, he was naked. I saw a naked man with a very gay agenda!

Flashes! Explosions! Screams! Smoke!

HYSTERICAL VOICE

THERE'S A BOMB! THERE'S A BOOOOMMMBBBB!

TOURIST #2

Smoke everywhere! Chocking my lungs! I couldn't see~

SHOPPER

Help! Help! Help!

SHOPPER #2

One of them -- the naked one -- he burst from the crowd right in front of me -- his penis slapping frantically back and forth with every step...

Jamie RUNS IN PLACE. Wears a pillow case.

JAMIE

*(out)*

I swerved between families, university students and Japanese tourists aiming their cameras at me -- and to help keep everyone as calm as possible, I kept yelling -- THERE'S A BOMB! RUN! THERE'S A BOMB! WE'RE ALL GOING TO DIE!

He stops running, no longer in the moment. Rips off the pillow case.

JAMIE

*(out)*

There was no bomb. Just fireworks I'd bought. Jesus, I gotta say, I got no idea if this is gonna impress the clowns, or even if they can see this going down. But it's all I could think of. Honestly, if it wasn't for seeing Steve's blood splattered around, I might've just called the cops and saved myself some trouble.

SCREAMS start again. JAMIE back into RUN.

JAMIE

*(out)*

Of course, in a crowded mall like this, I couldn't keep it up forever -- I came to a wall of people and saw no way through so I just plowed forward -- not quite meaning to careen into two schoolgirls in uniforms -- I felt my penis brush against one of their school bags --

*(to the unseen school girls)*

I'm sorry -- you don't understand -- THE CLOWNS ARE MAKING ME DO THIS!

SHOPPER

Yes! That's right. He kept screaming about the clowns.

TOURIST #1

Apparently, he thinks the clowns control him.

GOOD SAMARITANS TACKLE JAMIE.

JAMIE

*(from under a pile of good samaritans)*

Was that good enough? How was that you goddamn clowns!?!

**(12) POLICE INTERROGATION ROOM**

JAMIE

*(out)*

I'm in serious trouble here: Disorderly conduct. Indecent exposure. Assault. Possible indecent assault. Possession of illegal fireworks. Perverting the course of justice.

From SOMEWHERE, circus music. Giggling. Beeping horns. Jamie paces. COP ENTERS. Startles Jamie.

COP

You're free to go, dipshit.

JAMIE

Why? I mean...How?

COP

You made bail. Don't leave town. Get a lawyer.

JAMIE

Who paid it? My bail?

COP

Some clown.

**(13) JAMIE'S ROOM**

Jamie enters, finds A CARD nailed to a DEAD BAT nailed to the wall. JAMIE picks up the CARD. Reads it as GONKO APPEARS.

GONKO

Congratulations, sport. You did okay. Not great. Nobody's standing in line to suck your dick or nothin'. Not by a long shot... but you did ok. I like your drive. There's something desperate about you that makes me think you got a chance at this, however slight. Was it the best audition I've seen? Not even fucking close. Rufshod still holds that claim. BUT. It was good enough.

*(beat)*

You're joining the circus.

*(beat)*

Signed --

JAMIE

*(reading)*

... Gonko, Pilo Family Circus.

GONKO

PS: Steal from me again, I'll cut your balls off.

Jamie snaps. Cackles like a madman, then collapses into his bed. CLOWNS APPEAR. Loom over him...then pick up Jamie in his bed and carry him, still asleep, into the dark.

**PART TWO: THE PILO FAMILY CIRCUS**

**(14) A DARK TENT**

Jamie on a soiled mattress. Bolts awake. Beat.

JAMIE  
That was a horrible, horrible dream.

Gets up. Something leaps from the dark, grabs him!

JAMIE  
NO! Let go!

It's Steve. Jamie = stunned.

STEVE  
Thought you'd show up sooner or later. Come on!

JAMIE  
Steve...?

STEVE  
Come on! It's a circus, man! A blow your mind out circus like you've never seen!

JAMIE  
Weren't you... the clowns. I mean: I looked in your room, *it was covered in blood!*

STEVE  
Wasn't mine! Pig's blood, bro! *Jesus*, will you hurry up?

JAMIE  
Are we... are we dead? Where are we?

Steve EXITS. CARNIVAL MUSIC and CROWD VOICES.  
Jamie dashes after Steve --

JAMIE  
Wait!!

**(15) CARNIVAL GROUNDS**

GYPSIES, DWARVES, CARNIES and CUSTOMERS walking like zombies.

JAMIE  
*(out)*  
He wasn't making that up...it was a circus. Families, old people, parents dragging their kids, bright colored balloons everywhere you looked...Gypsies hawking baubles, and dwarfs -- lots and lots of... dwarfs.

JAMIE wanders.

CARNIE VOICE #1  
See the fun house!

CARNIE VOICE #2

Meet the Fortune Teller! Find your fate!

CARNIE VOICE #3

Mugabo the Magician will captivate you! Step right up!

CARNIE VOICE #4

Get yer freak on! Trot over to the House of Freak. See Human Oddities. Obscene monstrosities.

CARNIE VOICE #1

Are you stronger than the strong man? Match your strength!

CARNIE VOICE #2

Pick fleas out of Rico the Man Chimp!

CARNIE VOICE #3

Acrobats! Death defying feats!

CARNIE VOICE #4

Step right up, smell the crying elephants!

**KURT PILO** appears. He's a seven foot tall demon!  
He speaks into a hanging microphone.

KURT

*(like an Evil Michael Buffer)*

Just relax. It's not important where you are. No questions please! It's the circus. You know... nothing more than a fun happy circus!

Jamie distracted by all the commotion.

KURT

Just relax....

Steve ENTERS from crowd, grabs Jamie, pulls him away. They reach a sign that says MUGABO THE MIGHTY MYSTIC. LIGHTS on a small stage loaded with magician's props.

STEVE

Shit, yes! We're not too late.

JAMIE and STEVE find seats. All LIGHTS DIM. A spotlight pops on but nobody shows up. Then, VOICES, angry, from the dark of back stage --

MUGABO THE MYSTIC (O.S.)

Bunny treek? I'll do your bunny treek, peeg!

I can light ze fucking sky, does he know zat? I can -- GET YOUR HAND OFF --

Sounds of a scuffle. Then a full on fight goes on for a brutal half minute before --

**MUGABO THE MYSTIC** is THROWN INTO THE SPOTLIGHT from the darkness. Uncertain applause greets him.

MUGABO THE MYSTIC

Stop your clapping! Okay, you fucks! You want ze bunny treek?

The audience continues clapping, egging him on.  
Steve especially, throwing out catcalls.

MUGABO THE MYSTIC

All right. I geev you your bunny treek. Here. I am Mugabo  
ze mighty mystic...

Mugabo reaches into a black top hat. Pulls out a  
fluffy white rabbit. Applause.

MUGABO THE MYSTIC

Yes, you like ze bunny? How nice! So...how do you lie...ZIS!

He holds the rabbit by the ears, waves his other  
hand and -- BAM! The rabbit EXPLODES into a gory  
mess.

MUGABO THE MYSTIC

HA HA!

Two CARNIES burst from the dark and pull Magabo  
kicking, flailing, off stage.

STEVE

Was that the best magic show you've ever seen? That rabbit  
blowin' up was hardcore sorcery, bro!

JAMIE

Why's he so pissed off?

STEVE

Dude, everyone here hates each other. That's like one thing  
to keep your head down about. The clowns hate the Acrobats.  
The acrobats hate the clowns. Actually, everyone hates the  
clowns. But Magabu hates the Fortune Teller. The two guys who  
run this place, Kurt and George, they hate each other...  
seriously it's practically like gang warfare. Even the dwarfs  
get crazed. I saw twelve swarm the Bearded Lady last night.

Audience members get up and numbly make their way  
to another part of the circus. JAMIE tilts his  
head when he hears the WIND CHIMES SOUND like he  
heard when he was handling the clown powder.

JAMIE

On the ground...you see those?

STEVE

Sparklies?

JAMIE

They weren't there before.

STEVE

Probably fell off someone's costume.

JAMIE

They're everywhere... shiney crystals... growing brighter and brighter... and that sound... that tinkling? Hear that? It's like with the powder...

WIND CHIME SOUNDS get louder... THE SHINY CRYSTALS glow more intensely.

STEVE

Dude, who cares? It's probably all part of the show.

CARNIES rush in and SWEEP UP THE SHINY CRYSTALS. Jamie and Steve lose each other in the crowd.

JAMIE

*(out)*  
Ever done acid? That's kind of what this place is like, everything glowing, throbbing, sizzling... brighter and more alive than anything can be...

Steve finds Jamie again.

STEVE

Jesus, man, I gotta put you on a leash or something.

Steve pulls Jamie into the FREAK SHOW TENT. They stand in front of a writhing, WHIMPERING MAN.

STEVE

*(reading sign)*  
This is Tallow. "His every living moment is hellish."

JAMIE

His skin's dripping!

STEVE

Yeah, I know! How wicked's that? Every few minutes he picks up the bits that melted off and puts them back on himself.

Tallow pick up bits of himself put the flesh back.

JAMIE

I gotta go, I can't handle this...

STEVE

No way. More to see. Check this out --

Steve drags him to **FISHBOY**. Fishboy wears a suit and tie and has a huge fish head with vicious shark teeth. Jamie is close to screaming.

STEVE

Meet my buddy from back home -- this is Jamie.

FISHBOY

The pleasure is mine, Jamie. My name is Fishboy, curator of the freak show. I hope you enjoy our exhibits as much as Steve does.

Jamie pulls Steve aside.

JAMIE

What is this place? This shit's not normal man! This ain't the real world -- it can't be!

STEVE

That's cause it's not!

JAMIE

How's that possible?

STEVE

Dude, I don't know. Just go with it!

JAMIE

Where are we?

STEVE

I just know what I've heard, but far as I can tell, this is some messed-up, like, magic dimension connected to Earth. Like Alice in Wonderland, bro. But way more twisted.

JAMIE

Then where the hell do these customers come from?

STEVE

They set up magic doorways on earth where there's a real circus going on, and they come in here without knowing it. They think they're at the county fair or whatever, but they're so NOT at the county fair.

Jamie breaks away from Steve.

STEVE

Dude, where you going?

JAMIE

Anywhere! Away! This is fucked up shit!

STEVE

You say that like it's a bad thing!

Jamie staggers OFF.

**(16) THE CIRCUS GROUNDS.**

JAMIE

I'm in deep, deep trouble here.

GONKO (O.S.)

JJ!

GONKO APPEARS.

GONKO

Get your ass over here.

Jamie points to himself: who me?

GONKO

Yes you!

JAMIE

*(out)*

This is it. I'm about to die.

GONKO

Looks like they turned the funny gas off you later than I asked. I want you watching us from backstage!

JAMIE

Would you please tell me what's going on?

Gonko approaches. There's an undercurrent of menace in everything this clown does.

GONKO

What's going on is you're a clown now. Ever heard news that good? Nothin' but chuckles from here on out, sport, with the odd giggle for good measure. Does it get any better m'boy? The fuck it does. Come with me, young JJ.

**(17) ANOTHER PART OF THE CIRCUS**

GONKO takes JAMIE to where the other CLOWNS mill.

GONKO

JJ, meet the crew. This is Goshy.

Goshy holds his PLANT, kissing it.

GONKO

*(Nods at DOOPY)*

And this is Doopy, who I believe you've seen before, destroying the shit outta your bedroom with yours truly.

DOOPY

*(stammering)*

How do you d-d-do?

GONKO

And that scary piece of shit is Rufshod.

RUFSHOD gives JAMIE a TWITCHY WAVE.

**GEORGE** BARGES IN. He is KURT PILO'S brother.

GEORGE

GONKO!

GONKO

Why, hello there, George. Gonna watch us? Maybe have a laugh or two?

GEORGE

Notice what's been done with the seating?

GONKO

Yes, George, we noticed.

GEORGE

Took three rows from your tent and put 'em in the acrobat's. They've got a bigger audience. They've earned it.

GONKO

Thank you, George, for bringing that to my attention. Tell me George --

GEORGE

If I have to put you personally on notice, don't think I won't do it. I know you're in bed with my brother, but I don't like you, Gonko.

GONKO

Not sure what you mean by that, George.

GEORGE

I don't like any of you. Things are changing around here. Changing. Hear me? For some of us, the party is over. For some of us. Kurt ain't gonna be top dog forever. And once my dear brother is finally gone, you and me Gonko, we're gonna discuss your future in detail.

GONKO

Thanks for the heads-up, George.

George EXITS.

DOOPY

I don't like George, Gonko. I don't like him.

GONKO

Shut your fucking word hole.

(to JAMIE)

Kurt and George got a bit of that sibling rivalry going on. We don't go a week without one of them trying to off the other. Each wants full control of the circus - blah blah blah, right? Office politics. You can't escape it.

APPLAUSE.

RUFSHOD

Sh-sh-sh-show time.

GONKO

(to the room)

NOW LISTEN UP! This show's gotta come off right or some of us will be very badly hurt. By me. Again. Let's go. Like we rehearsed, lead with Doops then Ruf. Milk the first three minutes for all it's worth, but it was piss-weak in rehearsal, and if they ain't giggling, I'm coming out early. Out comes Goshy when I clap the cuffs on Doops. Doops, if he blows it tonight, I'll give him something to whistle about. JJ, you watch, pay attention, and if you sneak off I will break your fucking skull. All right -- GO.

**(18) CLOWN STAGE**

The clowns perform their show until a POPPING SOUND from above. HISSING SMOKE billows from the floor, enveloping RUFSHOD and DOOPY. DOOPY and RUFSHOD GAGS, claw at their throats... APPLAUSE AND LAUGHTER. GONKO looks around in a panic.

GONKO

What in the fuck is this???

More SMOKE. More POPPING NOISES. FLASHING LIGHTS.

GONKO

AGGG! My eyes are on fire! I'm fucking burnin'!

Chaos! The Clown's show is ruined. The audience stampedes. Many die.

JAMIE

*(out)*

Something tells me that wasn't how it was supposed to go.

**(19) CIRCUS GROUNDS**

The CLOWNS walk.

DOOPY

How'd they get 'em to go off like that, Gonko? How?

RUFSHOD

It's not how, it's who!

GONKO

When I get my hands on 'em they're fucked. I'm going balls deep with ZERO LUBE!

The ACROBATS: SVEN, RANDOLPH AND ENZO, APPEAR.

GONKO

Now what the freakin' fuckeroo is this?

DOOPY

What's the problem, Gonko? Gonko, what's the problem, you gotta have'ta tell us!

GONKO pulls a HUGE KNIFE from his pants.

JAMIE

*(out)*

I have no idea how he fit that in his pockets.

GONKO

Fucking acrobats. I'll do the talking. And the stabbing. But if it's on, everyone in. You too, JJ. You look like yer made of elbows and gristle, but you swing them chicken-arms like you're tryin' to break 'em.

RANDOLPH

Heard you boys had quite a show. Five whole minutes.

ENZO

More like two. Shocking! Sven, what will Mr. Pilo say?

SVEN

I'm not sure. Maybe he'll suggest the poor dears need some time off doing other jobs, like scrubbing the gypsy shitters!

ENZO

But he won't be impressed, Sven, will he?

SVEN

I don't think so, Randolph, not the teeniest bit impressed.

GONKO

Fuck off.

RANDOLPH

Oh, touche! Fuck off indeed! That is why I turn to you for a battle of wits, Gonko. Your sophistication!

Gonko tries to fight. Acrobats easily spin away from him, laughing. They start to leave.

GONKO

Faggots!

The acrobats stop.

RANDOLPH

What did he call us?

ENZO

He called us faggots!

SVEN

You know what they say; a male who humps a male is a double male.

ENZO

You want some balls to juggle, clown? They're right here when you're ready.

The acrobat's laugh and DISAPPEAR.

GONKO

If I'd wanted to knife that bastard, I would've. But the way you lazy shits performed tonight, I wouldn't trust you in a scrap if it came to that.

DOOPY

I don't like those guys, Gonko. I don't like 'em!

RUFSHOD

I think they might be the ones who sabotaged our show.

GONKO

Gee, Ruf, you think? And do not fear, there shall be a comeuppance. This will be a steady campaign of fuckery, but we gotta do it just right. Coming up now is the foreplay. Nice and slow...but then when we get 'em nice and juicy, oh my loves, we're gonna ram it in hard.

**(20) CLOWN TENT**

Clowns enter. It looks like a a nursery for oversized children. Props, clown pants and trinkets everywhere.

GONKO

This is our private space, JJ. No one comes in without our say-so. Anyone does, we can do what we want to 'em, even if it means the circus is looking for new staff come morning.

JAMIE

Um, I don't quite know how to put this...

GONKO

You're among friends. Speak from the heart.

JAMIE

Who are you people? What am I doing here?

GONKO

Like I said: You're a clown.

JAMIE

NO. That's just it: I'm not a clown! I got a job. I'm a concierge! I have an arts degree!

GONKO

Nah, JJ. You're a clown. I smelled it on you. Like sweat made a' the sweetest sugar. You reek with it my boy.

JAMIE

Yeah, okay, but...hey, what's that!

JAMIE points. The clowns look. JAMIE runs.

GONKO

Sonofabitch!

DOOPY

He's running, Gonko, he's running!

The Clowns chase JAMIE all around.

JAMIE

*(shouting over his shoulder)*

How the hell you guys move in those shoes!

GONKO

Trade secret, and you ain't learned the trade yet!

GONKO pulls a baseball bat from pocket and knocks Jamie out.

GONKO  
He's spunky, I'll give 'em that. Still, think this boy needs a dose of the old coulda-shoulda-woulda.

RUFSHOD  
Shalice the Piece!

GONKO  
That's right. Rufshod, Doops, grab 'em and follow me.

The clowns pick up JAMIE and EXIT.

**(21) SHALICE'S TENT**

JAMIE in chair. Slowly wakes up.

JAMIE  
Owe.  
*(Touches his head)*  
OWE!

**SHALICE** THE FORTUNE TELLER steps from the dark.

JAMIE  
I think my skull is bleeding.

SHALICE  
Gonko told me you have questions.

JAMIE  
That Gonko fella seems to think this is a good place for me. And no offence intended, but I'm not seeing that. You know where I can grab a cab? I just wanna get outta here. I promise not to sue anyone. I'll be totally cool.

SHALICE  
You're here because you've been given a second chance.

JAMIE  
Yeah, well, I don't need a second chance. Just a cab.

SHALICE  
Being here is the only thing that will keep you from a life of misery and early death. Let me show you.

Forty-year old version of JAMIE appears.

SHALICE  
Just five years away. A dead-end government job. You're as alcoholic as they come. You're a punchline for your co-workers. You're not married, but you have a son...if you can call it that.

A GURGLING, spastic child appears or is heard

SHALICE

He was born retarded. Not handicapped... retarded. The mother of your child is your first girlfriend. You were together two years. But it fell apart after your son was born that way...She blamed you.

JAMIE

Fuck this!

SHALICE

Keep watching!

OLD JAMIE at work. Buries his face in his hands.  
His phone rings.

SHALICE

This phone call will be important. It's from the mother of your child. She's suing you for more child support. Every time you think of her you just want to kill someone.

OLDER JAMIE

*(answers phone)*

Yes. Okay. Fine. It'll be in the mail by tomorrow.

Hangs up phone. JAMIE'S SAD WIFE appears.

WIFE

Jesus, what now?

Older Jamie stalks his wife with a big knife.

JAMIE

NO!

Jamie rushes at Older JAMIE but he can't stop Older Jamie. Older Jamie kills his wife. Older Jamie and wife VANISH.

SHALICE

That's the only thing waiting for you if you go back.

JAMIE

I can avoid it. Now that I know --

SHALICE

You can't. If you try to leave the clowns will knock you out, the appropriate rituals performed, and you'd wake thinking you'd had a very strange dream. Your present and this future would at some point coalesce. And you'd be finished. It's better this way.

Jamie staggers OFF. Gonko ENTERS from dark.

GONKO

He buy it?

SHALICE

Of course. Some of us are masters of our craft. Now get out of my hut, clown.

**(22) CIRCUS GROUNDS**

A MYSTERY MAN in a MASK spray paints FREEDOM on a wall, then runs off. (Maybe also an "F" in a circle, like the old "anarchy" tags.) Hold on the dripping slogan.

**(23) CLOWN TENT**

Rufshod, Goshy, Doopy and his Plant Bride play poker. Jamie broods in the corner.

RUFSHOD

I'm out, bastards.

Rufshod pulls a KNIFE. FORCES IT into JAMIE'S hand.

RUFSHOD

Take this.

JAMIE

What? Get away!

RUFSHOD

Just do it.

JAMIE

No! Cut yourself!

GONKO

One thing you're gonna have to become accustomed to, around here, is a little violence.

Jamie struggles with Rufshod. GONKO pulls a BASEBALL BAT from his bottomless pockets.

GONKO

It's good for you. Bracing, like a cold shower. Just don't get too used to it, or you'll end up like this twist.

GONKO beats RUFSHOD with baseball bat. Rufshod writhes in pain...and pleasure. Jamie slides Rufshod's knife into his pants for future use.

GONKO

There, genuine slapstick. That'll keep him happy for weeks.

*(Hits RUFSHOD again)*

STOP BUMPING THE FUCKING TABLE!

KURT PILO

Knock kno-ock!

GONKO

We don't want any!

A DEEP CHUCKLE from OS.

GONKO

Come in, boss.

KURT ENTERS. He has a **PRIEST** on a leash. The Priest is missing teeth.

GONKO

Still enjoying our little birthday present?

KURT PILO

Oh, most certainly. I'm finding all kinds of wonderful things for him to do.

GONKO

Glad to hear it boss.

KURT PILO

Actually, I just stopped by to meet our newest clown.

GONKO

Yeah, no probs, boss. JJ, front and center!

KURT PILO

Oh, splendid! Come closer. Let's shake hands.

They shake hands. LIGHTS CHANGE.

JAMIE

*(Out)*

I had to grit my teeth from the power of his grip. And his smile...on the surface it looks like he's finding everything around him dandy and amusing...but there's something in those eyes that makes me think what he really finds amusing is the thought of everything drowning in a river of blood...I fought the urge to yank my hand back and scream...

LIGHTS BACK. They release hands.

KURT PILO

Tell me, JJ, do you believe in Jesus?

JAMIE

Sometimes?

KURT PILO

I like that. What a lovely answer. Do you find it odd we pay homage to the device used to torture and kill him? The crucifix is such a beautiful artifact. You could whip a god...all day long.

JAMIE

Yes, sir. They knew how to treat a criminal in those days.

A tense moment. Finally-- KURT LAUGHS.

KURT PILO

Thanks you, JJ. I needed that. Lifted my spirits.

GONKO  
Oh, one other thing, boss?

KURT PILO  
Yes?

GONKO  
Well, Goshy's gonna get married, and I figure, since we got a priest around, maybe we could borrow him for the ceremony?

KURT PILO  
I think that's a lovely idea. How about now?

GONKO  
Uh...I think Doopy wanted to invite some guests.

KURT PILO  
*(disappointed)*  
I see.

GONKO  
But! Hey! Who else would be invited anyway, right? The gang's all here. No time like the now! Doopy?

DOOPY  
Yeah, I, sure....Goshy? Are you ready to say the vows, are you ready Goshy?

Goshy's eyes bug and he seems to vibrate.

DOOPY  
Okay, Goshy, that's swell. Goshy's ready.

KURT PILO  
Wonderful. Isn't this romantic? Such a good day for a ceremony if I do say so myself.

GONKO  
Couldn't agree more, boss. Excellent suggestion.

Doopy offers a paper to the Priest.

DOOPY  
These are the vows Goshy wants, he wrote them himself, he really did...I only helped a little.

Everyone takes their places.

KURT  
Please begin.

PRIEST  
Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today...Ah, to witness the union of ah, between...

*(Kurt puts hand on Priest's shoulder)*

To witness the union between, ah, Gosh...Goshy? And...

Doopy stage whispers to the priest:

DOOPY  
AND THIS ATHYRIUM FILIX-FEMINA.

PRIEST  
Uh, the importance of love is...all through God's teachings...and, ah...

*(Kurt whispers to Priest)*  
So, ah, if anyone here can see why these...these two shouldn't be wed, may he speak now or forever hold his piece? Okay, I pronounce you...oh, god help us. You may, uh, kiss the...kiss the...bride?

GOSHY Kisses the Plant. Everyone applauds. Goshy makes a weird noise and vibrates some more.

JAMIE  
What's that mean?

GONKO  
I think it means he's happy, but that's only a guess. Okay, people. It's not everyday a clown gets hitched. Time to celebrate!

The CLOWNS PARTY. After a while...A new clown appears. His name is **WINSTON**. He watches Jamie still hiding in the corner.

GONKO  
Rufshod! Get new meat a uniform.

Rufshod goes to the corner, finds a bundle of material and throws it at Jamie.

GONKO  
Don't chuck it, you filthy flyblown shit! That's the uniform! Show some pride!

Jamie puts on the uniform. It's a clown costume.

JAMIE  
*(out)*  
I feel ridiculous.

The clowns check JAMIE out... and APPLAUD.

DOOPY  
He looks like a clown. He looks like a clown, Gonko!

GONKO  
Very astute, Doops. He sure does. I was right about you JJ.

JAMIE  
Does nobody here get that I go by "Jamie?"

Everyone stares at JAMIE expectantly.

JAMIE  
*(out)*  
I get the feeling they want some kind of speech, but it's  
(MORE)

JAMIE (CONT'D)

hard to get a straight thought staring into all those eyes  
sunk into layers of greasy face paint.

(clears his throat)

Thanks for...

Goshy gets up abruptly, GETS SUPER CLOSE TO JAMIE.  
Stares at him.

JAMIE

WOULD YOU STOP DOING THAT! WHAT THE FUCKING HELL DO YOU WANT  
FROM ME? STOP STARING! LEAVE ME ALONE YOU INSANE FREAK!

The clowns -- with the exception of Goshy --  
applaud with gusto at Jamie's spastic freak-out.

GONKO

Nice to have you aboard, JJ. Alright. One last bit of  
business: Pay day.

Gonko throws small velvet pouches to everyone.

GONKO

(To Jamie)

This is an advance. Consider it a welcome to the circus, JJ.  
But don't think I'm Santy Clause -- Gotta earn the next one.

JAMIE

(Out)

It's the same stuff I found before. The white powder.

(To GONKO)

What is this shit?

GONKO

Wish dust.

JAMIE

The circus pays in *wish dust*?

DOOPY

You throw it the air, don't you Gonko? All you do is throw it  
in the air and make a wishy-wish!

GONKO

More or less. The powder gets you what you want, within  
reason.

JAMIE

(Takes a bit of powder, throws  
it in the air)

Ha! Fuck you guys! I wish I was back home! Right now!

Beat. Nothing happens.

JAMIE

(Throws more powder in the air)

I wish you were all dead!

Beat. Still nothing has happened.

GONKO

JJ. Love the sense'a humor. All wishes must pass muster with the spooky powers.

JAMIE

Spooky powers?

GONKO

The ones who run things.

JAMIE

I thought Kurt and George ran things.

GONKO

Everyone has bosses. Even Kurt and George.

JAMIE

Who are they?

GONKO

Well, they don't show their faces and trust me, you don't want them too.

DOOPY

They live in the hot place, don't they Gonko, don't they--

GONKO

Shut up, Doops. But basically, the rule is this, if your wish doesn't directly hurt the circus or anyone in the show, it will be granted. If your wish is denied, you've just wasted some powder. Think small and you'll be in good shape.

George ENTERS. He looks positively gleeful.

GEORGE

Gonko! Let's have what you might call an open dialogue about your last show. Do you feel you lived up to your own expectations, first off?

GONKO

A little rusty, to be honest, George.

GEORGE

That's one way to put it. Another might be to call it a cluster-fuck that cost us the lives of nine tricks!

He slaps a piece of paper down.

GONKO

What might that be, George?

GEORGE

Notice of suspension.

GONKO

What if I were to tell you our act was sabotaged?

GEORGE

If you were to tell me that, I would ask you to bring forth the mountain of evidence you presumably have to prove your wild allegation.

GONKO

We found smoke bombs and flash bombs.

GEORGE

I'd then remind you that each performer is solely responsible for their act, including upkeep of their performance facility and, or, if applicable, their stage.

GONKO

Thanks for clearing that up, George.

GEORGE

And thank you for respecting due process. Your act is suspended indefinitely. Don't worry, though, I have other duties for you. Report to my trailer next Friday night for outside jobs. You'll be working directly for me. Aren't we both lucky?

George EXITS.

GONKO

Well that blows mud. But onward and upward my pets.

(Exasperated sigh)

All right, you shits. Ten minutes free time, then we polish this turd and get back in the game. That means rehearsal. No rest for the wicked, my sweets. Fresh paint, all of you. Winston, you're the most grandpa-like. You paint up JJ.

WINSTON nods, motions JAMIE to follow as the rest of the clowns SCATTER.

**(24) CIRCUS GROUNDS**

TWO MYSTERY MEN in MASKS spray paint MORE FREEDOM SLOGANS around the stage. SHOUTS. They run off.

**(25) WINSTON'S ROOM**

Jamie and Winston.

JAMIE

Didn't see you perform.

WINSTON

Gonko gave me the night off.

JAMIE

You don't seem like the other clowns.

WINSTON

Maybe I ain't. Then again, maybe I'm just like them boys.

JAMIE

What am I supposed to do here? I don't know why they recruited me. I'm not a clown.

WINSTON

The face paint'll bring out the clown. Keep you from breaking bones while doing the act. Makes you damn near indestructible unless someone uses an axe on ya. Paint like this ain't sold over the counter, I can tell you that much. But listen, cause I'm gonna tell you something very fucking important: At night, take it off.

JAMIE

Okay...

WINSTON

You'll wanna remember who you were before you came here. You forget that, you lose everything. Take Goshy. He started off normal, and now he's married a piece of vegetation.

JAMIE

Why's the paint do that? What's in it? I mean, is it gonna be bad for my skin. I don't wanna break out or anything...

Winston snickers.

WINSTON

Nobody knows what's in this crap, and you probably don't wanna...

JAMIE

You can paint me up all you want, but then I'm using my ten minutes of free time running the hell away, no matter what that fortune-teller says about it.

WINSTON

That what you think?

JAMIE

Bet your ass. And why that plan never occurred to you, old guy, I can't fathom.

Winston puts face paint on Jamie. Beat.

JAMIE

Tell me more about the spooky powers they were talking about? Are they really demons?

WINSTON

Gods, demons, spirits -- whatever they are, they made a deal long ago with Kurt and George's father. Gave him this little corner of the universe for the Pilo Family circus.

JAMIE

So we're in some other dimension?

WINSTON

More like a growth hanging off the ass of our normal reality. Here, I need more light.

He positions Jamie so his back is to us.

WINSTON

Holds still....close your eyes.

(Applies more paint)

Effects of the face paint's pretty drastic. Most important it makes you pretty much able to take any kind of punishment that gets dished out. But the price you pay is it has a way of warping your personality. There's a huge difference between you with the make-up on and you without it. A very different fellow will be walking out the door to the one who walked in a few minutes ago.

Pause. Winston continues his work.

JAMIE

And the wish dust crap? What's the deal with that shit?

WINSTON

Sure you wanna know how all the sausage gets made?

JAMIE

If I'm gonna be here...I wanna know what's going on.

WINSTON

You see the customers wandering around? We steal their souls. That's what the white powder really is. In this dimension, the natural laws ain't the same, the soul can be translated into something physical. You called it wish dust...but it's soul dust.

JAMIE

I wish that was the strangest thing I've heard in the last twenty-four hours, but it's not...

WINSTON

The circus caters to every human weakness. The tricks are deceived and conned to part with their soul. For some it's greed. They gamble in Sideshow Ally and lose more than they know. Little diamond crystals fall to the ground like beads of sweat. The dwarfs collect them at night. The acrobats appeal to vanity. The magic show appeals to those who crave power. The clowns appeal to the rebellious, the cruel, the wicked.

(beat)

All done.

JAMIE

That it? I feel a bit tingly but not all that different. Still feel like me.

WINSTON

Hold on... missed a few important details.

Winston puts the CLOWN NOSE and HAT on Jamie.

WINSTON

Go take a look in the mirror. Over by the door there.

Jamie struts over to the mirror. Adjusts his hat.

WINSTON

Well, what do you think, Jamie?

No response.

WINSTON

Jamie...?

JAMIE

(His voice becomes sneering and  
gravely -- "JJ's VOICE" --  
Think Tom Waits)

Y'wanna know what I think oldster?

JAMIE turns around. He is now JJ THE CLOWN. A  
total PSYCHOTIC. JJ approaches WINSTON and  
BRUTALLY SLAPS him across the face.

JJ

Y'ever call me Jamie again I'll *rip* that withered heart outta  
your chest and *finger-fuck* it right in front a'your eyes.  
The name's JJ MOTHER FUCKER!

JJ EXITS.

WINSTON

Nicer the man, meaner the clown.

**PART THREE: JJ THE CLOWN**

**(26) CIRCUS GROUNDS**

JJ barges through a group of CARNIES.

JJ  
Carnie rats! Yah! Out of my way!  
(shove!)  
Clown coming through!  
(bump!)  
Fuck yourselves, y'hear me?

And they do. To JJ's surprise.

JJ  
Shit, I could get used'ta this. Yeah, you respect me, carnie scum. Stay back, y'slimy shits! Y'know who's boss. RESPECT THE CLOWN!

JJ causes mischief and chaos all over the circus. He pees on a Carnie's prop.

ELDERLY CARNIE RAT  
NO, SENOR! DEBO MANTENER ESTE LIMPIO!

JJ  
(shaking it off)  
Bless you, sir.

JJ moves on until he sees -- The acrobats -- RANDOLPH, SVEN and ENZO. JJ picks up two handful's of ELEPHANT DUNG from the ground.

JJ  
Why hello pansies. I'd like to introduce myself. Name's JJ.

RANDOLPH  
Go home little clown.

SVEN  
Yes, run along.

ENZO  
Don't even think of throwing that at us.

JJ  
This? This dripping, stanky mound of animal crap? You don't want me to throw *this* at you?

ENZO  
Yes, thazz right.

JJ  
BOW BEFORE THE FIST OF THE CLOWN!

He throws the dung at the nearest acrobat --

RANDOLPH

Guh!

JJ laughs in wild, exaggerated manner.

RANDOLPH

Oh, you think tha'ss funny?

ENZO

Big mistake!

Still laughing, JJ picks up another fistful of reeking crap, preparing to throw it...

JJ

Ohhh, this pile a'poop is gonna be even better!

SVEN

I would not be throwing that shit again little man.

JJ

And that's why you sissies could never make it as a clown. Laugh motherfuckers! Laugh!

He throws the new handful. It spatters all of them. To JJ's surprise, the Acrobats CHARGE and surround him...they seem eager to kick his ass.JJ's instantly frightened, cowering and whimpering.

JJ

Holy shit! You fight back?

RANDOLPH

Tha'ss right silly clown. You think we just let you throw shit at us?

JJ

Kind of.

ENZO

Stupid little clown-boy.

JJ

Fine! Put 'em up!

JJ puts up his dukes but the Acrobats make a circle and beat him badly. It looks like JJ's dancing as he's knocked around. They finally stop. JJ teeters on his feet.

JJ

....put 'em up...

JJ falls still in a boxing stance.

RANDOLPH

You want some more?

JJ  
(clearly kicked senseless)  
More? Did we start yet?

The acrobats close in for more kicking. JJ jumps up, turns tail and BOLTS, SHRIEKING WITH PANIC, racing through crowds of carnie rats. The Acrobats give chase. Finally, JJ loses them.

JJ  
(out, and whimpering)  
Why hadn't anyone warned me about doing that? The danger! The unfairness of it all. Why hadn't a single carnie rat seen the situation unfolding and give me a heads-up?

JJ BURSTS OUT SOBBING!

**(27) JJ'S ROOM**

JJ curls up on his bed, pondering the days events then FALLS ASLEEP. He tosses and turns on the cot in the grips of various nightmares. His face paint is wiped off.

JAMIE wakes up. It's still night. He holds his head and writhes in pain.

JAMIE  
(soft)  
Somebody help me...

Winston, APPEARS watching from the darkness.

WINSTON  
You'll be okay, son.

JAMIE  
(startled)  
Shit!

WINSTON  
Shhhh. Just me. Nasty business, being in the show. Nasty, nasty, business.

JAMIE  
This it then? I'm trapped here? Until I die?

WINSTON  
Maybe. Maybe not.

JAMIE  
If there's an out, tell me. Please.

WINSTON  
There's hope. You just gotta hang on.

JAMIE  
I need more than that man!

WINSTON

You seen the graffiti been showing up?

JAMIE

No... what graffiti? What's it say?

WINSTON

Freedom.

JAMIE

Freedom?

WINSTON

That's right. Just keep that word in your mind. Freedom. It may seem like that word can't exist here...but it does... That's all I can say now.

Winston EXITS.

JAMIE

I need something *normal*. Something I remember from my real life... Never thought I'd ever say this, but... I need Steve.

**(28) CIRCUS GROUNDS**

Jamie passes "FREEDOM" graffiti. This time he notices. He moves on. A light that reads FREAK SHOW flashes. JAMIE, searching, sees --

JAMIE

STEVE!

STEVE

Yo, man, what's up?

JAMIE

It's good to see you.

STEVE

No shit?

JAMIE

Yeah.

STEVE

Cool.

(nods, looking around, in a great mood)

Man, this is the life. You know those dwarfs? I'm going to dinner with one of the females. Her name's Loretta. Met her when I was oiling some gears on the Ferris wheel. She's only like four foot something but she's still a fox. I'm gonna try and fuck her on the first date. Wish me luck.

JAMIE

You're talking like you like it here?

STEVE

Sure, why the hell not? You seen the kind of shit you can do with that powder they pay us with? The wish dust? I've had sex with Jennifer Love Hewitt ten times already! It's choice.

JAMIE

But... Our lives... THEY'RE OVER!

STEVE

Our lives sucked. Especially yours!

JAMIE

We'll never see our families again.

STEVE

Make a new family. My old one blew. Stop complaining. Damn, you got lucky. You get to be a clown. You're here bawling like a bitch and you got the best gig in the whole place!

JAMIE

They're insane! They smell -- these guys never take showers. They just stew in that grease paint and clown pants. It's all whisky, cig smoke, armpit funk and ball-cheese.

STEVE

So what! You ever got a whiff of the freaks!? Bottom line: You get to wear bad-ass make-up and fuck with people! You're living the dream so stop complaining. Clowns are pretty much the top of the food chain among the performers. But I'm not doin' that bad -- Fishboy's pretty cool to work for. Hey, why were you such a prick the other day! I saw you running around throwing shit at everyone!

JAMIE

It's wasn't me. You know the face paint? When I put it on it does something to me. I can't control it. I become JJ the Clown...

STEVE

Nah, man, it was you. You're such a prick, man, I swear.

JAMIE

Yeah, well.

(Pause)

I better split. Good luck on your date.

STEVE

What? Oh yeah, Loretta. She's all right -- kinda short though. Hey, come get me next time you rehearse, okay? I wanna watch.

(Jamie backs away)

Where you goin', man?

JAMIE

I don't know.

STEVE

Seriously. I wanna watch some rehearsals! Call me bro!

JAMIE EXITS.

STEVE

Call me!!

**(29) JAMIE'S ROOM**

Jamie takes out the clown make-up.

JAMIE

*(putting make-up on)*

No more Facebook. No more Twitter. No more Gears of War. No more Mass Effect. No more hunting Bowie or Devo on vinyl. No chance of ever getting a regular girlfriend. No more reading the new Stephen King or... No more anything.

He's almost done.

JAMIE

Jamie, old buddy...you're not meant for this world.

He finishes becoming JJ.

JJ

AHHH! Much much better. This is gonna work out just fine, yessireeeee! Little wussy can't make it around here for five minutes. Yah hear me Jamie? You sleep and let JJ stay in charge. I think we can both agree it's best for all of us!

Kurt APPEARS in his own light talking into his microphone.

KURT PILO

Ladies and Gentlemen. It breaks my heart to alert you all to the sad fact that despite my constant pleading, vandals continue to spray paint slogans on circus property. You know what I'm talking about. The word "Freedom" and such. I find myself forced to offer a bounty for anyone caught desecrating our place of work. It's a sad day for me personally that I need to offer incentives for something that should be happening out of pride. Let's all pitch in and stop this scourge. If you see something, say something.

Kurt VANISHES.

GONKO

This is fuckin' rotten. And what is this "freedom" crap?

JJ eyes Winston.

JJ

Where've I heard that word before Winston, you old goat? Hmm? "Freedom." I have a weird memory kicking around with you ...

WINSTON

Wouldn't know anything about it.

JJ

Maybe I'll wake Jamie up and ask him. Maybe it's something he talked with you about...

WINSTON

Now you're just babbling.

JJ

You're up to something and that bitch boy Jamie ain't gonna be able to keep it hidden. You'll get yours, saggy balls.

WINSTON

We'll see about that. We'll just see who gets what and where.

Winston EXITS.

JJ

How could Jamie fall for that kindly grandpa act? Oh, Jamie, you'll get yours too. Don't think you won't. You're gonna get it the worst of all. And sooner than you think... And I gotta fucked up idea that can help me make it all happen... but I could use a little bit of help....

**(30) RUFSHOD'S ROOM**

JJ creeps up on Rufshod, asleep.

JJ

Hey, Ruffy. Wakey wakey!

LIGHTS UP. RUFSHOD'S ROOM. JJ kicks Rufshod awake.

JJ

Don't grin at me like that you sick pervo. You'd think you were having yourself a wet dream or something.

RUFSHOD

What's going on? Whatever it is, I didn't do it, unless you're gonna kick me again, and in that case, I did it all.

JJ

We're breaking the rules.

RUFSHOD

Go on...

JJ

You know the fortune-teller?

RUFSHOD

Oh yeah. So sweet and tender...

JJ

She pulled her creepy hocus pocus bullshit on me. Now I wanna get her back. Fix her good.

RUFSHOD

I'm in. I love the idea, I don't even know what it is yet.

They sneak through the parlour...

DOOPY

(mumbling, asleep)

No...Don't poke her, Goshy... s'not fun. Goshy been poking...all over town...twice more in the sore spot...ate her up in the sore spot, Goshy...

JJ

Fucking Space cadets!

JJ and RUFSHOD sneak to the fortune-teller's hut.

RUFSHOD

So what're we gonna do?

JJ

Steal the bitches ball.

RUFSHOD

Yes!

JJ

Go watch her door. If she comes out, make a noise like an owl. Or, like a goat. No -- keep it an owl. Or any kind of bird of prey Okay? Then run, baby, run.

Rufshod nods. Waits. Watches. JJ sneaks into the hut, laughing and sputtering the entire time. We hear a long beat of silence, then a LOUD NOISE of wood being ripped apart inside the hut.

RUFSHOD

*What're ya doing JJ?*

JJ (O.S.)

Shhh!

RUFSHOD

Me??? You're the one making all the --

An even LOUDER CRASH from inside the hut.

SHALICE (o.s.)

Who's there?

Shalice APPEARS with a flashlight scanning the darkness. JJ sprints from the doorway clutching the crystal ball.

JJ

Mission accomplished!

They run away, giggling madly. They get back to the CLOWN TENT.

RUFSHOD

What was all that noise?

JJ

Didn't know she boards the place up at night. Had to rip off the planks. Think I knocked over a couple of shelves. How you turn this thing on?

He runs his hands over it. Shalice appears in the "crystal ball light" examining the wreckage.

RUFSHOD

Wait until she has her bath. We'll see that BUSH of hers. Wow. I bet her ass-crack is unbelievable! Can I barrow it?

JJ

HELL NO.

RUFSHOD

But I helped! You son-of-a-bitch! I wanna see her get naked and raw.

JJ

I don't know...

RUFSHOD

If she gets naked and raw, you come get me, okay? That's all I care about.

JJ

Deal.

Rufshod EXITS.

**(31) JAMIE'S ROOM**

JJ stares into the CRYSTAL BALL.

JJ

*(out)*

And the next morning guess what? She did get naked! And raw! I saw jiggling tits. I saw sweet, perfectly sculpted bush. Did I call Rufshod? He can suck my clown meat. I had myself a good stroke-stroke, shot my grease paint against the wall -- BLORP! -- Then --

GONKO (O.S.)

Everyone! Let's go! Up and at 'em, we got work to do.

JJ joins the others in the CLOWN ROOM.

GONKO

Listen up. It's an insult, odd jobs, but we're gonna take it on the chin and do the bit. Let's get this over with.

They're about to leave when --

KURT APPEARS in a SEPARATE POOL OF LIGHT at his ANNOUNCERS MICROPHONE making another circus-wide announcement.

KURT PILO

This is turning into one of the worst weeks in the history of the Pilo Family Circus. This is Kurt Pilo with a sad but necessary special announcement. It seems, somehow, someone...this is so very hard for me to even say...someone has stolen...the fortune teller's crystal ball.

(KURT takes a deep breath, the first sign of his temper)

Whoever did it, please give it back. Is this how a family treats one another? By stealing? I don't think so. And if you didn't take it but know who did, please, don't hesitate to turn them in. In the long run, you're doing them a favor. Cary on.

KURT disappears.

GONKO

Any of you shit-nuts take the scag's ball?

RUFSHOD and JJ shove each other and snicker.

GONKO

Yeah, well...See no evil, hear no evil or however that goes.

**(32) FREAK SHOW TENT**

Winston finds Fishboy cleaning out the cage of Jasper the Human Drumstick.

WINSTON

Fishboy.

FISHBOY

Greetings, Winston.

WINSTON

You heard Kurt's announcement?

FISHBOY

I did.

WINSTON

Hold on to your fin: It's in the new guy's room.

FISHBOY

You sure?

WINSTON

Eyeballed it this morning.

FISHBOY

This changes everything.

WINSTON

Sure as hell does.

FISHBOY

It's now or never.

WINSTON

Yup. Get the word out. Make the plans.

Winston slinks away. LIGHTS SHIFT TO GEORGE PILO'S TRAILER: Gonko KNOCKS. George rips the door open to find GONKO and the other clowns standing there. Winston joins them.

GEORGE

What do you want?

GONKO

Only to serve, George. Only to serve.

Beat. Then George remembers.

GEORGE

Right. Stay.

A moment later George appears again.

GEORGE

(Handing GONKO slips of paper for each job.)

Simple job. Get up top, burn down the house at this address. Got that you useless cunts?

GONKO

Yes, George, clear as day.

GEORGE

Then get to it.

George EXITS. Gonko addresses his troops.

GONKO

Alright Knuckle-heads, gather 'round. Get your pass-outs.

From his magic pockets, Gonko pulls out laminated badges you wear around your neck. Hands them out.

DOOPY

I don't like going up top, Gonko. *I don't like it.*

GONKO

No complaining, Doops. If bein' a clown was easy, everyone would be doing it.

JJ

What're these?

GONKO

Like magic exit visas. Can't leave the circus without 'em.

Lights rise on WOODEN BOOTH with the PILO FAMILY CIRCUS LOGO on it and a "Freedom" spray-painted on one side. The clowns pile in. It shakes. Wild lights!

**(33) NEW YORK CITY**

The WOODEN BOOTH rotates so we see the rear, which looks like typical port-o-potty. Clowns pile out.

GONKO

Good ol' New York. Festering suck hole.

JJ

Gonko, that how tricks get to the show?

GONKO

What do you think, JJ? A hundred people simultaneously walk into a goddamn port-a-potty. Keep your grip on reality.

The clowns CLOMP through NEW YORK CITY...

WINSTON

Ticket collectors find circuses in the real world, then set up their gate in place of the actual entrance. Tricks wander through into our show. And don't ask how the gates work 'cause I don't know anymore'n I know how the face paint works.

GONKO

Shut it, you two.

...GONKO stops. The rest of the clowns crowd behind him, bumping into each other.

GONKO

House here's got a one-month-old baby named Louis Chan.

WINSTON

And we're burning down the house?

GONKO

Yes we are, Winston. We are going to burn this fucker down. With fire and flame and cinder and ash and whatnot.

JJ

Why they want this stuff done? Besides the obvious entertainment value.

GONKO

This baby, according to Shalice, will grow up to be a researcher of some kind, and discover a miracle cure. The Spookie Powers don't want that shit to go down, so it won't.

JJ

That's some heavy shit, boss.

GONKO

Oh, it gets bigger than this.

JJ

How much bigger?

GONKO

Let's put it this way. A failed Austrian painter owes his political success to Kurt.

JJ

Right...

(to Winston)

I have no idea who he's talking about.

But Winston is distracted and disturbed. JJ takes note.

JJ

(Mocking)

I'm scared, WINSTON. I never smelled cooked baby before. I --

Winton turns grabs JJ by the shirt.

JJ

Easy on the threads, oldster. Don't lose your cool.

WINSTON

Don't worry kid, you'll know when I have.

GONKO

JJ! Front and center.

JJ

At your service.

GONKO pulls bottles of ACME LIGHTER FLUID from his bottomless pockets. Hands two to JJ.

GONKO

Pour the lighter fluid along the back door. Doopy take the left side. Goshy, you go right over there. Winston, hit the garage. Now no fucking noise. We gotta make sure the fire is burning before anyone knows what's going down. Leave the match tossing to me. Fly, my retards! Fly!

They all scatter. Spread the fluid... all except WINSTON. He makes sure nobody is watching, empties his fluid onto the ground, then throws the empty bottle through a down stairs window.

GONKO

Cock in a box! Who threw that??

WINSTON

Sorry, Gonks. That was me. It slipped.

GONKO

Hope it didn't wake 'em up. Ah well, not my problem. Beat feet miscreants!

Gonko lights a match and throws it. WOOSH! THE STAGE GLOWS FROM FLAMES. The clowns RUSH BACK THROUGH THE NEIGHBORHOOD. JJ slows, turning to

watch the fire. His face glows from the orange heat. Rufshod also stops.

JJ

I did that! Me!

RUFSHOD

Don't go hogging all the credit. It was a team effort.

JJ

That pansy Jamie's gonna crap his pants when he finds out what I did. This is exactly how his parents died! Isn't that *classic*?!!

(He cackles with glee)

How *cool* is that? He's gonna wake up and this is just gonna...RUIN HIM!

(He jumps up and down,  
excited.)

Burn, baby, burn!

(Rufshod laughs)

Glad you're having a good time, Ruffy.

RUFSHOD

If you think you're stickin' it to Jamie doing this burn, that ain't the half of it!!

JJ

Oh?

RUFSHOD

Not even close! It's WAY WAY WAY better than that!

JJ

Well clue me in. Not polite keeping a joke to yourself.

RUFSHOD

Check it out. I never wet myself before. Shit, this is good.

JJ

So *tell me* already!

RUFSHOD

You gotta promise to keep it zipped.

JJ

I promise for fuck's sake!

RUFSHOD

You said Jamie's gonna freak when he finds out you burnt a family up, right?

JJ

YES GODDAMMIT!!!

RUFSHOD

Guess who burnt Jamie's family way back then?

JJ

NO!

RUFSHOD

YES!

JJ

You guys killed his family?

RUFSHOD

YES! THEM SPOOKIE POWERS'VE HAD THEIR EYE ON HIM A LONG TIME.

JJ

THIS IS SOOOOOO GREAT!! HOLY SHIT!

RUFSHOD

When we had to recruit a new clown, Gonko suggested using an orphan of one of our outside jobs, and Kurt just thought that was the most hilarious thing he'd ever heard.

JJ

Well... I couldn't agree more. This is priceless.

Gonko ENTERS.

GONKO

All right my loves, that's a wrap. This night of utter bullshit has come to an end. You've set the bar high.

Clowns go back to the Port-o-potty.

**(34) JAMIE'S ROOM**

JJ grabs the CRYSTAL BALL. He giggles and waves his hand over it. CRYSTAL BALL LIGHT RISES on WINSTON talking to RUDOLPH THE ACROBATE.

JJ

Now what is that old fart talking to one of the acrobats about....very interesting...I'll be sure to file that for future use, you bet your ass about that Winston...

He moves his hands over the CRYSTAL BALL and Shalice APPEARS.

JJ (CONT'D)

C'mon, baby, don't be so stuck up, walk around in your birthday suit...you're wearing too much clothes!

SHALICE suddenly looks up like she heard that.

JJ (CONT'D)

Uh, no way can she hear me...right...?

SHALICE POINTS AN ACCUSING FINGER at him --

JJ (CONT'D)

Okay, moving on!

MOVES his hands. SHALICE disappears. Lights rise on KURT. He's pulling more of the Priest's teeth.

JJ

Nice to see the boss enjoying himself. Let's see what my clown brethren are up to.

LIGHTS RISE on GOSHY, humping his plant bride.

JJ

Ug! Those freaks! Jesus! Sometimes being able to see anything comes with a fucking darkside, man.

He puts the CRYSTAL BALL away. Then he: snorts lines, does Karate, hurts his hand, sobs, tries to break dance, goes back to bed.

JJ has a NIGHTMARE involves the SOUND OF FIRE, BABIES CRYING, GONKO and RUFSHOD. Make up rubs off and he awakes as JAMIE.

JAMIE

Oh, my God...

JAMIE races into WINSTON'S ROOM.

JAMIE

Winston!

WINSTON

No time for your shit, JJ. I'm on the way out.

JAMIE

No -- It's Jamie. *I'm Jamie! What'd we do last night?*

WINSTON

What the bosses wanted. The clowns have caused everything from economic catastrophes to shuttle disasters.

JAMIE

I need to get outta here now.

WINSTON

Even if you could, they'd pull you back.

JAMIE

I can't become JJ again!

WINSTON

Sorry, son. You're gonna have to be strong for a while. Now, Don't mean to be abrupt, but there's somewhere I gotta be...

JAMIE

Rufshod... he said something to JJ... about my *family*. About how they died.

(beat. Choked up)

The clowns... they did it. Killed them. Lit the fire.

WINSTON

Can't trust everything you hear.

JAMIE

Then you weren't part it?

WINSTON

Can't even count how many houses we've torched. Was one of them houses yours? Maybe. Then again, maybe it's just a mind game.

JAMIE

How can you sit back and be a part of this?

WINSTON

Same way you are kid. Ain't easy moving against the Pilo Brothers.

JAMIE

Well, watch me, cause there's no way I'm gonna do that shit again. Nope. You watch. I'll slash my own throat first.

WINSTON

Don't even think about it. You got no idea where your soul will end up.

*(Pause, thinks)*

There are reasons to have hope.

JAMIE

You can honestly say that to me after telling me this place is too evil to even risk KILLING MYSELF??

WINSTON

Remember what I said about "freedom?" There's a group of us. We've waited *decades* for a chance to stop this show. And 'cause of you and that crystal ball, the time is now.

*(off Jamie's look)*

I saw it in your room.

JAMIE

It's JJ's. He took it.

WINSTON

Point is, with the crystal ball out of their hands, we have a chance to make our move against them. Shalice still has powers of sight, but...not like with the ball. Things are happening fast now. You're gonna see what I'm talking about. The rebellion's been just a *pipe dream* until now... We're not gonna miss this chance.

JAMIE

I want in.

WINSTON

No chance. Just be comforted knowing things are happening.

JAMIE

No! Whatever it is. I need to be a part of it.

WINSTON

They won't go for it.

JAMIE

Who?

WINSTON

The others.

JAMIE

If I don't start doing something to fight back... I'm not sure I'll have the power inside to keep JJ at bay.

WINSTON

I ain't promising anything. Don't get your hope up.

JAMIE

You don't have to worry about that.

WINSTON

Follow me.

They journey across the show grounds.

JAMIE

*(out)*

Winston grabbed me and headed towards Sideshow Alley. I could feel eyes on me. Peering from the dark and behind curtains. We dipped through endless nooks and came to a place where the tall wooden perimeter fence appeared at the end of a dead-end lane, behind a broken wagon.

**(35) A FAR CORNER OF THE CIRCUS**

REBEL'S MEETING PLACE. RANDOLPH, FISHBOY, MAGABU, TALLOW and others. Jamie and Winston ENTER.

WINSTON

Jamie, this is the freedom movement...

RANDOLPH

Winston! What are you thinking? Explain yourself!

WINSTON

JJ stole the ball. We can fuck him over if he says anything.

RANDOLPH

He's clown through and through.

WINSTON

Not without the face paint he's not.

RANDOLPH

And when it's on? He'll go straight to the Pilos.

WINSTON

I took photos of the crystal bal in his room. I'll make it clear if he crosses us he gets burnt too.

RANDOLPH

Fishboy? You just going to stand there? Say something!

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**INTERESTED IN READING THE REST? PLEASE CONTACT  
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**THANKS FOR YOUR INTEREST.**

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