

SUING GOD

Written by

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INT. A ROOM. DAWN.

Darkness. The numbers "6:59" seem suspended in air, a bold, bloody red.

A light stabs through the dark, spreading like a slow fire, illuminating the scene.

We see the numbers are on a digital clock. The clock is on a shelf. The shelf hangs over a bed. On the bed, someone sleeps.

There is a RUMBLING in the distance. The room begins to shake. An earthquake?

The clock teeters on the edge of the shelf like a digital pendulum. The RUMBLING becomes a deafening ROAR.

CUT TO:

THE BED.

JAKE BOYLE(45) stirs as an ELEVATED TRAIN rockets by his window, flinging the clock onto his head.

The machine comes alive, blaring Bobby McFerrin's "Don't Worry, Be Happy". Jake tries, but he just. Can't. Shut. The. Damned thing. Off!

He surrenders, placing it back on the shelf, where it finally STOPS.

As he rises, the music starts again, twice as loud.

THE BATHROOM.

Jake showers with the posture of a man who dreads facing the world. His every move is deliberately slow, as if he is stalling.

He lathers his face with soap and the water shuts off. Blinded, he reaches for a towel that isn't there.

He stumbles to the sink, but there's no water there, either.

Jake slips and falls, hard. He lays on the floor, as if contemplating whether he should bother to get up at all.

As he rises, Jake catches his reflection in the mirror.

It is not a happy face. He takes his finger and draws a smile over the reflection of his frown. The mirror cracks.

THE KITCHEN.

Jake drops a bagel in the toaster and begins to dress, but:

---he can't find a matching pair of socks...

---all of his shirts are stained/wrinkled...

---none of his ties match...

---that damned song is still playing...

---and the burning bagel sets off the smoke alarm.

He tosses the bagel and the smoke alarm into the sink, but there is still no water.

Despite the chaos, Jake Boyle dresses slowly, like a man going to the electric chair.

Two "post-it" notes on the 'fridge taunt him: "8:00 Presentation!" and "Ask Maggie out today!"

Jake grabs the notes and exits before the radio and alarm claim his sanity for good. As if they were waiting for him to leave, the two machines go silent. Until...

He re-enters and, of course, they go off again.

Jake grabs his BRIEFCASE, and exits. Once again, the radio shuts off and the alarm goes silent.

As if on cue, the sink unleashes a torrent of water.

CUT TO:

EXT. JAKE'S BUILDING. DAY.

A modest apartment building in an urban neighborhood.

It doesn't look like rain, but as soon as Jake's foot hits the curb, it begins to pour. A dozen taxicabs ignore him until one pauses, only to speed off as he approaches it.

As the elevated train pulls in, he decides to make a dash for it.

INT. THE TRAIN STATION. DAY.

Jake wades through the patrons with the dexterity of a wounded animal, but somehow, the train hasn't left yet.

He reaches the doors, and they close in his face.

But wait! The doors re-open! Jake dashes in just as they close again--on his BRIEFCASE. He tries to pull it free and it snaps off at the handle.

A HOMELESS WOMAN picks up the briefcase. As the train pulls away, she flashes him "the finger" and a toothless grin.

CUT TO:

INT. AN OFFICE BUILDING. DAY.

Jake actually makes the elevator! Maybe his luck is changing? Of course not. Stuck between floors, he checks his watch: 7:58. He's going to be late.

The elevator starts moving again. He's going to be on time. Or, is he?

THE 13TH FLOOR.

The busy office is alive with RINGING phones and the CLICK-CLACK of computer keyboards as people zigzag to and fro.

Jake dashes out of the elevator and into MAGGIE(30) a strangely attractive automaton with zero personality.

JAKE

I'm sorry, Maggie!

MAGGIE

You have post-it notes stuck to your palms, Mr. Boyle.

Jake reads them: "8:00 presentation" and "Ask Maggie out. Today." He almost doesn't do it. Almost.

JAKE

Maggie, I've been meaning to ask you something.

MAGGIE

Is this business-related, Mr. Boyle-

JAKE

Please, call me Jake.

MAGGIE

--because company policy prohibits fraternization.

JAKE

But there's nothing wrong with two friends going out for a cup of coffee, is there? And we're friends, right?

The busy office stops cold as everyone waits for her answer.

MAGGIE

Your therapist called. He wants to reschedule.

The office resumes. As Maggie walks off with his heart, Jake makes sure everyone knows that:

JAKE

Dr. Papa's not a therapist. He's a "life coach".

No one cares. His watch goes off. It's 8:00 a.m. and he's officially:

JAKE (CONT'D)

Late!!

INT. THE CONFERENCE ROOM. DAY.

A group of wealthy BUSINESS MEN sit at one end of a large oak table. At the other end sits Jake's very angry BOSS. Jake dashes into the room.

BOSS

Boyle! You're late!

JAKE

Yes sir! Good morning, gentlemen!

The business men GRUMBLE. They are not accustomed to waiting.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry for the delay. You see, I was the victim of a robbery this morning.

They GRUMBLE once again.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I managed to fight them off, but my briefcase was stolen by three large black men.

You can hear a pin drop because:

They are all "large black men". The Power Point screen tells us that Jake's audience is the Board of Directors for "Big, Tall, Dark & Handsome" men's clothing stores!

You can almost feel the air being sucked out of the room.

MONTAGE.

Jake makes his pitch, badly. The PowerPoint malfunctions, his charts are upside down. Mercifully, it is over.

JAKE (CONT'D)

And that's how we can ensure that
"BIG, TALL DARK & HANDSOME"
clothing stores will continue to
turn a profit into the next decade!

They file out, unimpressed and angry.

BOSS

You're fired.

CUT TO:

INT. THE OFFICE. JAKE'S CUBICLE. DAY.

Jake packs his effects into a BOX.

JAKE

Okay, gang! I'm moving on to bigger
and better things! Give me a call
sometime! We'll do lunch!

No one cares. They carry on as if Jake is invisible.

INT. THE ELEVATOR. DAY.

Jake struggles with the box as Maggie approaches.

JAKE

Maggie. I don't know if you've
heard, but I've decided to leave
the company!

She places a large envelope on top of the box.

MAGGIE

Your termination papers, Mr. Boyle.

JAKE

Oh. Maggie, we've worked together
for--

MAGGIE

Two days and 1.5 hours.

JAKE

--and I've always tried to keep things professional, but now that I'm gonna be moving on, I was wondering if you'd like to go out for a cup of coffee?

The busy office freezes once more. They just have to hear her answer!

MAGGIE

Not even if Jesus Christ was pouring it.

The office resumes.

JAKE

Oh. Okay, then. I guess this is goodbye.

He attempts to embrace her, but she moves, causing him to fall. Maggie steps over him and into the elevator.

Jake throws his stuff in a nearby garbage can. The elevator doors open and he comes face to face with the business men he's just pissed off.

As the doors close in his face, one of them gives Jake "the finger".

JAKE (CONT'D)

I give up.

His spirit finally broken, blinded by tears, Jake enters the staircase, misses a step and falls.

INT. THE OFFICE OF DR. PETER PAPA, THERAPIST. DAY.

Jake lays on the couch, battered and bruised from the fall. Dr. Papa listens patiently, taking notes.

JAKE

I wake up everyday, and I just wanna get back in bed.

PETER

Hiding from the problem isn't going to solve it. It's a process. We acknowledge our mistakes, learn from them and move on.

JAKE

But I just keep making mistakes! I get this great job and I get fired! I meet this incredible woman and she totally shoots me down!

PETER

We've also talked about setting yourself up for failure. You knew your interest in her was a lot stronger than vice-versa.

JAKE

But am I that much of a loser that she wouldn't even give me a chance?

PETER

You shouldn't base your self-worth on someone else's opinion of you, Jake.

JAKE

I feel like this was my last chance at happiness, and I blew it.

PETER

That depends on your perspective. You can see these events as a negative, or, you can choose to see them as an opportunity. A chance for a new start. It's your choice.

JAKE

I've made my choice, Dr. Papa.

PETER

Decisiveness. That's a sign of real progress, Jake.

JAKE

I choose suicide.

PETER

Jake, you can't kill yourself.

JAKE

No, Doctor, I think I actually can.

Jake points a gun to his own head!

PETER

No Jake! Stop!

BANG! Jake falls to the ground in a cloud of gun smoke!

PETER (CONT'D)

Damn it.

The smoke clears and Jake rises, very much alive!

JAKE

I missed!

Determined to die, Jake sticks the gun in his mouth.

PETER

You didn't miss! You can't--

BANG! The smoke clears and Jake is alive and confused.

PETER (CONT'D)

You can't kill yourself because
you're already dead.

BOOM! The office door is kicked in! A Police
Officer(D'ANGELO) enters, gun drawn.

D'ANGELO

Drop it!

D'Angelo's "gun" morphs into a gleaming SWORD(?) as he
completes his transformation into an ARCH-ANGEL.

JAKE

Holy shit!

D'ANGELO

There is nothing holy about
excrement, blasphemer!

PETER

It's okay, Mike! I've got it under
control!

D'ANGELO

Very well! But the sooner you get
him to his destination, the better!

D'Angelo sheathes his sword, becoming a COP once again. He
gives Jake a hard "shoulder block" on the way out.

JAKE

What a douche! Peter, what's
happening to me?

PETER

Here. Let me show you.

Peter's hands begin to GLOW as he places them on Jake's head.
c/u Jake's eyes: the windows to his soul.

FLASHBACK. THREE DAYS EARLIER. INT. A SUITE IN THE PLAZA HOTEL, NYC. DAWN.

Darkness. "6:59" becomes "7:00" as an alarm clock rouses Jake Boyle from a king-sized bed to the tune of E.L.O's "MR. BLUE SKY".

SONG

"Good Morning! Today's forecast
calls for blue skies!"

He pulls back the curtains and greets the New York skyline with some nude jumping jacks.

Rousing a 25 year old CUTIE from the bed, Jake pushes her out into the hallway, half-dressed.

INT. THE BATHROOM. DAY.

He exits the shower and admires his reflection. He performs some nude "kung fu" poses, then winks at himself.

INT. THE HALLWAY. DAY.

Impeccably dressed, Jake glides down the halls. The reaction from employees and guests lets us know he's famous.

Basking in the attention as he makes his way through the hotel, Jake Boyle.....

--narrowly avoids being hit by a falling scaffold....

--finds a \$100 bill on the floor.....

--and catches the eye of an attractive MAID. They jump into a broom closet. He exits, his zipper open and a lipstick stain on his cheek.

Jake Boyle has the world by the balls and he's not letting go.

INT. PLAZA HOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM. DAY.

A large room full of RICH MEN and expensive furniture. Without speaking a word, Jake gives the fastest presentation ever:

A singular chart reads: "Avg. Price Boyle Industries Stock" with an arrow pointing straight up. The room erupts with applause. Meeting over.

EXT. THE PLAZA HOTEL. DAY.

A rainy summer day in NYC. As Jake's foot hits the curb, the rain stops. He enters a waiting limo and it begins to rain once more.

INT. THE LIMOUSINE. DAY.

Jake's chauffeur, REGGIE(40, black), sits behind the wheel.

REGGIE

Good morning, Mr. Boyle. How was your meeting, sir?

JAKE

Outstanding!

REGGIE

I can see that.

He hands Jake a handkerchief for the lipstick stain.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Your fly's open too, sir.

JAKE

What would I do without you, Reggie?

REGGIE

You may find out soon enough, sir! Mrs. Boyle threatened to fire me this morning! Accused me of lying for you!

JAKE

Lying? That's such a strong word! I prefer, "protecting"! It's like football! I'm the pitcher, my wife is the goalie, and you're those fat black guys that keep me from getting hit!

Jake lights a cigar.

REGGIE
 (coughing)
 Excellent analogy, sir. How's your
 book coming along?

He tests the weight of his BRIEFCASE.

JAKE
 You know, the hardest thing about
 writing your life story is knowing
 when to stop!

REGGIE
 (still coughing)
 Well, you have had an interesting
 life sir!

JAKE
 "Interesting?" Try "amazing",
 Reggie! They don't call me "Mr.
 Lucky" for nothing--hey, this thing
 isn't bothering you, is it?

REGGIE
 Well Mr. Boyle, you know that I'm
 allergic to smoke-

JAKE
 That's a relief! I thought I was
 going to have to fire you!

As they arrive at their destination, Reggie lowers his window
 and gasps for air.

REGGIE
 Here we are, sir. Good luck! Not
 that you'll need it.

JAKE
 I won't be needing you either. I've
 got another "business meeting"
 tonight.

REGGIE
 I understand, sir. Shall I pick you
 up at the Plaza again?

JAKE
 No! She works there! Never shit
 where you eat, Reg!

REGGIE
 Words of wisdom, sir. I'll await
 your call, then.

JAKE

You're the best. Hey, have dinner on me tonight! There's that new fried chicken place in Harlem! You people love that stuff, right?

REGGIE

(wryly)

It's finger licking good, sir.

JAKE

Don't mention it. Oh, and if Mrs. Boyle happens to call-

REGGIE

I'll tell her you have another "meeting" tonight, sir.

JAKE

Good boy!

EXT. TIMES SQUARE, MANHATTAN. DAY.

Billboards and huge electronic signs overwhelm the senses.

As Jake exits the limo, the rain stops and the sun comes out, as if it were waiting for him.

Swamped by reporters, Jake is the center of attention at the center of the world, and he wouldn't have it any other way.

He walks a red carpet that would embarrass The Oscars on his way to a stage the size of Broadway.

Times Square is big, but Jake Boyle is bigger.

A smug and sleazy DARWIN SHAW(55) gives us the scoop for "T.O.T"(Talk of the Town), the celebrity gossip network.

SHAW

And here he is, folks, Jake Boyle, better known to the world as "Mr. Lucky", here to launch his newest product! "Talk of the Town" is here for an exclusive interview!!

A HOMELESS MAN crosses Jake's path.

HOMELESS MAN

Change?

JAKE

Why not accept things the way they
are?

Jake laughs at his own joke as Shaw and the "T.O.T" camera
crew approach.

SHAW

Mr. Lucky! Thanks for giving
"T.O.T" a few minutes of your time-

Jake ignores him. A flabbergasted REILLY(35) tries to
intervene.

REILLY

Jake, Mr. Shaw's company has just
offered you a very generous advance
for your autobiography!

Reilly hands him Shaw's OFFER. Jake stuffs it in his
briefcase without a look.

JAKE

Look at this crowd! You're a lousy
lawyer Reilly, but a hell of a
promoter!!

Jake continues to the podium.

REILLY

I'm sorry, Mr. Shaw!

SHAW

Don't be. I've been around long
enough to know that, eventually,
even the mighty fall. But just in
case they don't, I'm here to help
them. See you around, kid.

THE STAGE.

A huge object hangs over the center of the stage, a large
curtain draped over it.

JAKE

Hmmmm. I wonder if that's big
enough!

An angry Reilly intercepts him.

REILLY

Since when do you blow off people
who want to give you money?

JAKE

Since when do you make deals with
"gossip queens" like Darwin Shaw?

REILLY

He offered the most money!

JAKE

It's not about money, Reilly! Okay,
it is, but have you forgotten how
he plastered a picture of my ass on
his front cover?

REILLY

You mooned the camera, Jake!

JAKE

Hey, I won the lawsuit, right? No
Darwin Shaw! Get me somebody
respectable, like the guy who runs
"Penthouse".

He blows smoke in Reilly's face.

REILLY

(coughing)

You should ditch the cigar. It
doesn't look good on camera.

JAKE

Good idea!

He stuffs his still-lit cigar into Reilly's breast pocket and
steps to the podium.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Good morning. You know, in my life,
I've been called many things. Some
of them have even been printable.

LAUGHTER.

JAKE (CONT'D)

But it was "Mr. Lucky" that seemed
to stick. Along with a whole lot of
"Benjamins".

More LAUGHTER. The crowd adores him.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Yes, I've done pretty well for
myself. So now the time has come
for me to "spread the wealth", so
to speak.

(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)
 Not literally of course, because,
 well, why should I give you my
 money?

Even more LAUGHTER.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 But I felt if I could share some
 small piece of my own good fortune,
 I'd like to do that. Which brings
 us to why we're here today. Ladies
 and gentlemen, without further ado,
 I am extremely proud to present to
 you, the luxury timepiece of the
 future! I give you: Outrageous
 Fortune!

The curtain falls to reveal a giant WATCH. Jake wears a
 matching one on his wrist. The crowd claps in appreciation.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 Our initial run of seven hundred
 and seventy seven watches will
 retail for seven thousand, seven
 hundred and seventy seven dollars!

The giant watch above his head has comes loose.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 We're gonna smash the competition!

Jake looks up just as the giant watch descends upon him.

DARKNESS. END OF FLASHBACK.

INT. THE OFFICES OF DR. PETER PAPA, THERAPIST.

Peter removes his hands from Jake's head, "turning off" the
 flashback.

JAKE
 So I was an a-hole. Is that any
 reason to send me to hell?

MR. PAPA
 This isn't hell, Jake.

JAKE
 Right. I'm a horny, unemployed
 loser who can't even kill himself!
 It must be heaven!

PETER

I know this is difficult for you.

JAKE

And now you tell me this Jesus guy was the real deal?! I'm a Jew! This is too much change for me at one time! Oh no! That's why I'm here, isn't it? Listen, I don't practice! I haven't been to temple in years! I'm not even circumcised--

Jake tries to unbutton his pants to prove it.

PETER

That won't be necessary!

JAKE

God! What a stupid way to die!

PETER

Technically, you're not dead. You're in a coma.

JAKE

Some people wake from a coma, you know!

PETER

You're not one of those people.

JAKE

How about everybody else? They all laid up in the hospital shitting themselves too?

PETER

No. Most of them are dead. And watch your language, please.

JAKE

How about Maggie? What'd she do?

PETER

Suicide. Her married lover dumped her.

JAKE

That explains a lot. I guess suicide is a big "no-no" here, huh?

PETER

The biggest. You up for a walk?

JAKE

Only if it's off the Empire State Building.

PETER

You can't kill yourself here!

JAKE

I'm kidding! Jesus Christ, can't you take a joke?

PETER

You shouldn't blaspheme either.

JAKE

You were a "yenta" in your previous life, weren't you?

EXT. THE "CITY". EVENING.

Jake and Peter walk the busy streets of Purgatory, which, strangely, looks a lot like New York City.

JAKE

So when is my sentence up?

PETER

This isn't a prison, Jake. It's more like a layover between flights. Those who aren't ready for heaven come here and wait until they are.

JAKE

How do you know when you're ready?

PETER

It's kind of like falling in love: when the time comes, you'll just know.

JAKE

What if you're never ready? Can they send you "downstairs"(hell)?

PETER

Yes.

JAKE

Ouch. How do they break the bad news to you?

No answer.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 Anyway, what did you do to get
 stuck here? Besides being a
 humorless prick.

No answer.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 Ok, fair enough. Listen, I'm sorry
 about the whole suicide thing.

PETER
 So am I.

They approach an old-fashioned RAILWAY STATION.

JAKE
 Hey, I never noticed this before!

PETER
 That's because you couldn't see it.
 No one can see it until it's time.

TRAIN CONDUCTOR
 All aboard!

Peter hands Jake a ticket.

JAKE
 But, it's not my time? Is it?

PETER
 You broke the rules, Jake. A person
 comes here to learn the value of
 life, but you tried to take your
 own. You have to leave. I'm sorry.

CONDUCTOR
 Tickets, please. Tickets.

JAKE
 But am I going "downstairs" or
 "up"?

PETER
 I don't know. I just know you can't
 stay here anymore. Good luck, Jake.

Peter hugs him as if he were an old friend.

JAKE
 I'm not going!

Jake backs into Officer D'Angelo, who pulls him towards the train.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Send me back! If I can't stay here,
send me back to Earth, Pete! I'll
change! I swear, I'll change!

Jake breaks free, only to be chased down. He kicks D'Angelo in the crotch. There is the sound of clanging metal as Jake drops to the floor.

JAKE (CONT'D)

A metal jock? Really? I thought
angels didn't have "johnsons".

D'ANGELO

Get up!

PETER

Hold on, Mike! That might actually
work. Okay, Jake. It's a deal.
We'll send you back.

A peeved D'Angelo walks off in a huff as Jake feigns kicking him in the ass.

JAKE

Great. Where do I sign?

PETER

It's not that simple. We'll need a
lawyer. There's one close by.

JAKE

Really? I always thought lawyers
went to hell.

PETER

Nah. Only O.J.'s.*

(*O.J. Simpson)

INT. A LAWYER'S OFFICE. EVENING.

The door reads "Moe Zez, Esquire". MOE(think Heston in "The Ten Commandments") hammers away at a stone tablet.

PETER

So how's the contract lookin', Moe?

Moe drops his tools in frustration.

MOE

You want me to work or you want me to talk? You can't sit on two horses with one behind! Do I come to your office and tell you how to do your job? No! So don't tell me how to do mine!

PETER

Okay! Sorry. Yeesh! Jake, here are the terms of the contract--

JAKE

I sign, I wake up, see you at the pearly gates in 40 years!

Moe drops his tools again.

PETER

What's wrong now?

MOE

What's wrong? I can't hear myself think with this one talking! Some are born with silver spoons in their mouths, this one was born with a bullhorn! I can't work under these conditions!

JAKE

If you stop complaining, you'd be twice as fast!

MOE

And if you were twice as smart, you'd still be an idiot!

JAKE

Listen, you old "schmuck"--

MOE

Oy! The dead man tries to kill himself, but I'm the schmuck?

PETER

Enough! We'll keep it down, Moe. I promise.

Moe gets back to work, MUMBLING under his breath.

JAKE

Back to business. Now, 40 years sounds fair, give or take a year.

PETER

Jake, you don't have 40 days let
alone 40 years! The most I can give
you is a week.

JAKE

A week?! Are you kidding me?

Moe drops his tools again.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry! Was that too loud? Let
me try it again: A WEEK? ARE YOU
KIDDING ME? How's that? Better?

MOE

I don't know what you're screaming
about, "putz", but I'm finished.

Moe tosses the heavy tablet across the table and it morphs
into a piece of parchment: the CONTRACT.

JAKE

Oh. My bad.

PETER

You've got a week to find
forgiveness. If you do that, things
are looking good for a trip
"upstairs". If you don't, well--

MOE

You're toast. A human shish-kabob.

JAKE

"Find" forgiveness? Where?

MOE

You can start with me, you
ungrateful bastard!

JAKE

This isn't fair! I don't even know
who I've pissed off!

MOE

Oy, it's a least two hundred
people, easy. Maybe even 300.

PETER

I'm sorry, Jake. Considering the
circumstances, seven days is the
best that I could do.

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

Unless you want to take your chances with the train.

JAKE

Hold on. What happens if you guys don't hold up your end of the bargain? Can I sue?

MOE

Sue God? What are you, a moron?

JAKE

Nobody's talking to you, old fart! Well, Pete?

Moe lets out a samurai SCREAM, aiming a large scythe straight for Jake's head! He stops short, gently pricking his thumb.

MOE

Okay! We're good!

As a drop of Jake's blood stains the CONTRACT, the room begins to spin.

MOE (CONT'D)

Good luck, schmuck!

PETER

Remember, Jake, find forgiveness. Forgiveness, forgiveness.....

Blackness. The beeping of an EKG machine.

INT. A HOSPITAL ROOM. DAY.

Jake opens his bleary eyes and focuses on a darkened image. The image becomes the outline of a person. A face. He hears a deep voice of a young, rapper-type.

VOICE

Dad! Oh shit! He's awake! Crystal, get over here, girl! He's awake!

As his vision clears, Jake comes face to face with BILL. Sixty years old, ugly and very white, Bill dresses and talks like a young rapper.

BILL

Dad! My nigga!

Bill smiles, a mouth full of gold teeth. Jake passes out!

EXT. THE HOSPITAL. DAY.

Darkness. A light at the end of a tunnel. A distant roar growing louder. It is the sound of a large crowd.

Jake awakens on a stretcher. He is being pushed past a throng of reporters towards a waiting AMBULANCE.

Crowds of PROTESTORS line the strip, "right to life" people on the right, the "right to die" crowd on the left.

Gossip maven Darwin Shaw and his "T.O.T" crew give us the scoop!

SHAW

Who doesn't know the story of Jake Boyle? The sole survivor of a horrific train accident, the baby known as "Little Lucky" soon lived up to his name! A lottery winner at age 18! Striking oil at 20! A multi-million dollar empire by 25! The tales are legend! And all was right in Jake Boyles' world until three days ago, when "Mr. Lucky" finally rolled snake eyes!! Here he is right now! Mr. Boyle! Are you upset with your family? What do you have to say about rumors of late night romps at the Plaza Hotel?

Jake passes out again. The doors slam as the ambulance takes off, tires screeching.

INT. THE AMBULANCE. DAY.

Jake "comes to" and finds himself surrounded by:

ELI(19), who sits quietly, bored and disaffected. LINDA(45), who feels Jake's stare but avoids his eyes.

And CRYSTAL(20), who throws her arms around Jake, SOBBING. She is the DEFINITION of "drama queen".

CRYSTAL

I knew you weren't dead!

She collapses on his chest in tears.

JAKE

Um, thanks. Who are you, again?

CRYSTAL

Oh God! He's got amnesia! I can't take this! I just can't!

She collapses onto a visibly annoyed Linda.

ELI

The "amnesia" scam again? Really?

LINDA

(skeptical)

She's Crystal. Your daughter.
That's Eli. Your son.

JAKE

And you are....?

LINDA

Linda. Your wife.

JAKE

Linda. My God, you're gorgeous.

LINDA

And you're still full of shit! Cut the act, Jake!

CRYSTAL

Mommy! He got hit on the head!
Maybe he really doesn't remember us
this time?

The look of total confusion on Jake's face softens Linda's attitude. Maybe he really doesn't remember?

JAKE

What's going on out there? You know, the protesters and stuff?

The family exchanges glances.

LINDA

Well, Jake, I don't know how much you remember...

JAKE

Who's Jake?

LINDA

....but you've been in a coma, and we had experts, the finest physicians in the world, tell us that you were basically a vegetable. So-

ELI
-we were going to pull the plug on
you.

CRYSTAL
Eli! Can't you see he's in enough
pain as it is?

ELI
It's the truth.

JAKE
How long was I gone?

LINDA
Three days.

JAKE
And you guys were ready to kill me?

CRYSTAL
Not me, Daddy! I knew you would
make it back to us!

She switches from clutching Linda back to Jake, SOBBING and
CRYING.

JAKE
Are these our only kids? I mean, we
didn't adopt any, right?

LINDA
Right.

JAKE
Thank goodness. I had the craziest
dream! Some old, wanna-be
"schvartze"* was calling me "Dad"!
Had to be the ugliest human being
I've ever seen-

(*schvartze-yiddish slang for "black person")

The ambulance screeches to a halt. The driver looks back. It
is Bill.

BILL
I told y'all he saw me!

Jake lets out a scream and closes his eyes. He opens them.
Bill is still there. He screams again!

BILL (CONT'D)

They call me "Dollar Bill", you know, like the song? "Dollar, Dollar Bill, y'all!" But you can just call me "Bill", Dad!

JAKE

I'm not your father, you ugly old bastard!

Crystal composes herself, grabbing Bill's hand.

CRYSTAL

Daddy!! I won't have you insulting Bill! I may be your daughter, but I'm his woman! Mentally, emotionally, and physically! Yes, physically!! We've made spectacular, sweaty, inter-racial love! And I'll tell the world that I love this black man! You hear me? I love him!!! And we're going to be married!

She starts to well up.

JAKE

"Black man"?

The look on Linda's face confirms that Crystal is nuts.

BILL

I can't wait to see your fat ass walk down that aisle!

CRYSTAL

(moved to tears)

You say the most beautiful things!

They exchange a long, deep kiss. He clutches her tush.

LINDA

Take us home, Bill.

BILL

You ain't said nothing but a word!

Blasting "gangsta" rap music, Bill takes off at great speed, rapping all the way.

EXT. THE BOYLE MANSION. DAY.

A large mansion smack dab in the middle of New York City.

The ambulance pulls up to a scene: reporters everywhere! A police roadblock waits at the mansion's entrance.

BILL

Yo! What's the "Po-Po" doing here?

As Linda exits, Reilly approaches nervously.

LINDA

I thought I told you "no reporters"!

REILLY

Linda, I've never seen anything like it. I mean, talk about a colossal stroke of bad luck--

LINDA

Get rid of all these people!

She pushes past him.

REILLY

You can't go in there!

LINDA

Reilly, I haven't slept in two days, these heels have ground my pinky toes into hamburger and on top of that, I just got my period! So unless you're ready to rub my feet or you've got an extra sanitary napkin in your pocket, I suggest you get the hell away from my house!

REILLY

It's not your house anymore!

LINDA

What?

REILLY

I think we need to sit down.

INT. A DIMLY LIT ROOM. EVENING.

Bill tends to a reluctant Jake as the family sits around a large dining table.

REILLY

...and that's it in a nutshell. It was a freak accident.

LINDA

A lightning bolt strikes a squirrel that falls into an air vent, jams up the ventilation systems and sets off an electrical fire that burns our manufacturing plant to the ground, and you call that an "accident"? It sounds more like an act of God to me!

ELI

There is no God. Religion is just a form of social control!

CRYSTAL

How could you say that after the miracle that just happened with Daddy? And look how God brought a white girl and a black man like Bill and I together, against all odds! How much more proof do you need?

BILL

Preach!

JAKE

But, he's not black!

CRYSTAL

What's the matter, Daddy? Too hard for you to accept that your little girl is marrying a...a...negro?!

BILL

Chill, "Snowflake"! Not the "n-word"!

CRYSTAL

I'm sorry, my African prince!

They exchange sloppy kisses.

JAKE

Am I the only one who can see that he's not black?

LINDA

What about insurance?

REILLY

Jake reduced the coverage so he could sink more money into his "Outrageous Fortune" project, which was a big flop.

They all stare at Jake, angrily, save for Eli, who could care less.

LINDA

We'll sell his stake in the company, then.

REILLY

Too late. It's worthless. With the plant going down, investors and lenders panicked, loans started being called, people dumped their shares, and the rest as they say, is history.

LINDA

Well, at least you kids still have your trust funds.

CRYSTAL

(to Eli, smugly)
Thank God!

REILLY

Yeah, about that.

CRYSTAL

Oh please, no!

LINDA

Another "accident"?

CRYSTAL

I can't take this!

REILLY

It appears that Jake also used the money from Crystal and Eli's trusts to fund the "Outrageous Fortune" project, which was a big flop.

They angrily stare at Jake once more, save for Eli, who still doesn't care.

CRYSTAL

(crying)
You stole our money, Daddy?

ELI

Whatever.

LINDA

I've got some money squirreled away
in a separate account--

REILLY

--which Jake also sunk into
"Outrageous Fortune". After getting
voted down by the board, it looks
like Jake sunk his own money, and
all of yours, into this venture,
and it was--

JAKE

A big flop?

LINDA

So what are you saying, Reilly?

REILLY

You're broke. All of you.

BILL

Oh snap!!!

Crystal faints into Bill's arms. Everyone sits in stunned
silence. All eyes turn to Jake.

JAKE

Uh, sorry?

LINDA

"Sorry"? Is that all you have to
say for yourself you lousy son of a-

There is a loud metallic BANGING to their rear. A gate is
raised. A MOVER stands at the door. We see the whole scene
has taken place inside of a large MOVING VAN.

MOVER

Okay folks, time's up.

They file out leaving Jake, Reilly and the table behind.

CRYSTAL

I don't have a home anymore!

BILL

Let's go to my crib, baby. I'll
make you a neck bone hero!

CRYSTAL
Soul food always cheers me up!

ELI
I'm gonna crash at a friend's
house.

Linda storms off as Reilly hands Jake his BRIEFCASE(pg.13).

REILLY
I've been holding on to this for
you.

JAKE
It's not full of money, is it?

REILLY
Jake, there's something you should
know.

JAKE
If you're gonna tell me we're
lovers, don't! I've had enough
surprises for one day.

REILLY
I took a job with Darwin Shaw.

He hands Jake a BUSINESS CARD with the "T.O.T" logo on it.

JAKE
Ok. I understand.

REILLY
You do? Jake, you hate Darwin Shaw.

JAKE
Reilly, I don't know who you are,
much less this Shaw person.

REILLY
You mean, you really don't
remember? This whole amnesia thing
isn't one of your scams?

JAKE
Why does everyone keep saying that?

REILLY
Well, there was the time you were
caught in bed with Eli's
girlfriend, and claimed you had a
blackout.

JAKE
Oh. That's why.

REILLY
It was an interesting experience
working for you, Jake Boyle.
Goodbye.

JAKE
Reilly, wait. Be straight with me:
what kind of man was I? Besides the
kind of man who sleeps with his
son's girlfriend, I mean.

REILLY
Jake, at this point, maybe the real
question is, what kind of man do
you want to be?

As Reilly walks off, Jake stuffs his business card in the
pocket of his robe, where he finds the CONTRACT(pg.23)

As Jake touches the parchment, he hears Peter's voice:

PETER(V.O.)
Remember Jake, find forgiveness.

JAKE
Forgiveness? Oh shit! Forgiveness!
Wait! Everyone! I'm sorry! Please!

INT. REILLY'S CAR. CONTINUOUS.

Linda is in the passenger seat.

LINDA
Well? Did you tell him?

REILLY
I didn't have the heart.

She pulls him close and kisses him.

LINDA
Don't you want us to be together?

REILLY
More than anything. But you want a
divorce, you've got to tell him
yourself. I'm not your lawyer
anymore.

LINDA
Get out, you son of a bitch!

REILLY
It's my car.

LINDA
Oh. I'm going to have to stay with
you for a while.

REILLY
What about Jake?

LINDA
What about him?

They drive off not realizing Jake has been watching.

A convoy of moving trucks departs the complex as the gates
slam shut. Sheriff's deputies padlock what was once the Boyle
Mansion.

Jake stands alone, a bathrobe and a briefcase to his name. As
if on cue, it begins to rain heavily.

EXT. MIDTOWN MANHATTAN. BROADWAY. DAY.

Jake Boyle is a ghost wandering long-forgotten haunts.
Dressed in a bathrobe, he walks aimlessly down Broadway as
people rush to and fro, out of the rain.

We see a billboard for "Outrageous Fortune by Boyle" being
replaced by an ad for the "T.O.T" Network.

He spots a HOT DOG VENDOR and his stomach growls. He hasn't
eaten in days. He reaches for his pockets, but there is no
money in his robe.

JAKE
Damn it.

The Homeless Man steps in his path once more.

HOMELESS MAN
Change?

JAKE
Really?!

BANG! Two taxis collide! The CABBIES begin ARGUING. The HOT
DOG VENDOR is distracted, so Jake reaches into the cart and
prepares himself a "dirty water dog" AS....

A beat COP walks up to the scene of the accident.

The Cop and Jake lock eyes as the Cabbies begin brawling. The Cop forgets about Jake, who ducks into the 5th Avenue Library.

INT. DAY. THE 5TH AVENUE LIBRARY

Jake scarfs down the hot dog as if it were his last meal.

JAKE
Tastes so good! So good!

Loud snoring draws Jake's attention to a FAT WOMAN sleeping on a chair. On her chest is a copy of "T.O.T" Magazine with Jake's face on the cover.

It reads "SNAKE EYES: the life(and death) of Mr. Lucky". He tries to remove the magazine, but she sleepily pins his hand between her boobs.

He tries to pull free and instead grabs the bag of POTATO CHIPS she hid under the magazine.

She awakens to find Jake's hand pinned between the chips and her left boob.

JAKE (CONT'D)
I didn't eat any! I swear!

The fat woman SCREAMS!

FAT WOMAN
Pervert alert! Security! Pervert alert!

Jake takes off, SECURITY GUARDS in pursuit, as she retrieves the bag of chips and begins eating.

EXT. THE LIBRARY. DAY.

The Cop has just finished clearing the taxi accident when Jake bursts through the doors of the library. The Cop recognizes Jake as the hot dog thief and gives chase!

COP
Hey, you! Police! Don't move!

EXT. A BUS STOP. DAY.

A panicked Jake turns the corner and sees a line of oddly-dressed people filing into a dilapidated SCHOOL BUS.

He runs onto the bus just as the doors close.

INT. THE BUS. CONTINUOUS.

Jake takes a seat as he surveys the rest of the PASSENGERS: a motley collection of hobos, drunks, and the mentally ill.

HOBO

Hey! You're that "lucky" guy, ain't ya? Give me some money!

JAKE

Man, oh man, oh Manischewitz!

HOBO #2

You've got Manischewitz? Gimme a swig!

HOBO #3

Where da wine? Where da wine? Where da wine!

The noise riles up the rest of the patrons, who claw at his briefcase, demanding wine, food and money. Among the kooks is, of course, The Homeless Man.

HOMELESS MAN

Change?

JAKE

Get away from me, you freaks!

MARILYN, a 7 foot tall drag queen, leaps to his/her feet!

MARILYN

Who you calling a freak, little man?

HOBO

He's got money in that bag! Get it!

Marilyn grabs at the briefcase. It becomes a tug of war. As they close in on Jake, the bus comes to a sudden stop.

The BUS DRIVER rises. A fat Hispanic man in his 40's, he spreads his arms and speaks with authority.

BUS DRIVER

Let he who is without sin cast the first stone!!

Miraculously, everyone falls silent and the bus returns to "normal". A visibly shaken Jake takes a seat by his rescuer.

JAKE

Thanks, man! I thought those kooks were gonna kill me! I'm Jake.

BUS DRIVER

I know, my son. Does the shepherd not know his sheep?

JAKE

What's your name, friend?

BUS DRIVER/JESUS

I'm Jesus Christ.

JAKE

Of course you are.

Jake is suddenly struck with a SHARP PAIN in his head. A few seconds pass and it seems to fade.

As the bus pulls away, we see the words "New Canaan Men's Shelter" on its side.

INT. THE NEW CANAAN MEN'S SHELTER. DAY.

A priest(FATHER RAY) leads Jake to his room, a cramped space with two cots. It is clean but antiquated.

FATHER RAY

I know it's not the Plaza, Mr. Boyle, but it's the best we could do on short notice.

JAKE

"Short notice"? You're too kind. We both know I shouldn't be here.

FATHER RAY

You're exactly where God wants you to be, Mr. Boyle.

JAKE

Really? Then He's got a hell of a sense of humor!

FATHER RAY

I'll be in my office if you need anything.

Jake lays down on the cot, clutching his briefcase. To his surprise, a tear runs down his face. He closes his eyes and sleeps.

FADE TO:

DARKNESS.

Jake awakens to find a woman on top of him. We do not see her face.

JAKE (O.S.)

Linda?

WOMAN (O.S)

Shhhhh.

JAKE (O.S)

I had the worst dream! I was poor and living with a bunch of freaks in this flea bag men's shelter! Linda? What's that on my leg?

Jake opens his eyes to find Marilyn on top of him.

MARILYN

I know you got money in that bag! I need it to get my boobs done!

Jake knees Marilyn in the wrong spot, knocking he/she to the ground.

Jake is pulled down by the larger man, who winds up ass-to-face on top of him. Father Ray busts in.

FATHER RAY

Marlon!

Marilyn pulls the briefcase away. It strikes the wall, scattering papers all over the floor.

MARILYN

My name is Marilyn! It's not my fault God made a mistake!

FATHER RAY

God doesn't make mistakes, Marlon! Now what the devil is going on here?

MARILYN

I can't help it if he wants some of this!

Father Ray is un-convinced.

MARILYN (CONT'D)

Fine. Take your stupid bag! It's gay as hell, anyway!

He/she storms out. Jake looks as if he is about to faint.

FATHER RAY

I'm sorry, Jake. Marlon is a troubled--are you okay?

A woozy Jake picks up the contents of his briefcase.

JAKE

I'm fine. What's this?

He pulls out the manuscript of his biography.

JAKE (CONT'D)

"Confessions of a Lucky Bastard", by Jake Boyle. Hey look, I wrote a book.

Darwin Shaw's OFFER drops from between its pages.

JAKE (CONT'D)

And they wanna pay me two million for it?

Jake faints. Darkness.

INT. THE NEW CANAAN MEN'S SHELTER CHAPEL. NIGHT.

Jake awakens in the chapel. The statues seem to stare. Jesus, the bus driver steps from the shadows.

JESUS

Peace be with you, my son.

JAKE

You scared the hell out of me!

JESUS

That's my job, kid! Are you okay, papi*?

(*papi--Hispanic term of endearment)

JAKE

No. But thanks for asking. And thanks again for saving my ass on the bus.

JESUS

It's all good! I've been saving asses for two thousand years.

No response.

JESUS (CONT'D)

So, what can I do for you, bruh?

JAKE

I don't recall asking for your help.

JESUS

"Ask and you shall receive! Seek and you shall find! Knock and the door shall be opened to you!"

There is a knock on the door.

JESUS (CONT'D)

Come in, player!

Father Ray walks in.

FATHER RAY

You gave me quite a scare back there, Jake.

Jake stands up like a shot. He remembers the:

JAKE

Briefcase! Where's my briefcase?

FATHER RAY

In the pew there.

He shoves Ray aside and practically leaps into the pews.

FATHER RAY (CONT'D)

Are you looking for this? You were holding it when you passed out.

Jake rips the paper out of Ray's hands.

JAKE

Oh, thank God. I thought I lost two million bucks!

JESUS

Money is the root of all evil, my son!

JAKE

Says who? This is my ticket to heaven!

JESUS

Have you never heard me say that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven?

JAKE

No.

JESUS

What kind of Christian are you, bruh?

JAKE

I'm a Jew.

JESUS

Word? So am I, bro! Gimme some love!

FATHER RAY

You sure you're okay?

JAKE

No, actually, I'm dying. That's why I need the money.

JESUS

You can't take it with you, Jake!

FATHER RAY

I'm not sure I understand.

JAKE

You know that place you go to when you die, but it's not Heaven or Hell?

FATHER RAY

Purgatory?

JAKE

When I died, that's where I went. And let me tell you, it sucked! So I tried to kill myself, but I was already dead, see?

(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)

So I probably was going to Hell,
but then I cut a deal to come back
and try to straighten things out,
but they only gave me a week!
Imagine that?

They can't.

JAKE (CONT'D)

It's all here in black and white!
Look!

He hands them the CONTRACT(pg.22). However, the parchment is
now blank.

JESUS

I got this, Father Ray.

Ray leaves. Jake immerses himself in reading the CONTRACT.

JESUS (CONT'D)

So, Jake. Have you ever talked to
somebody about your problems? You
know, like a therapist or a
psychologist?

JAKE

I just wanna make sure I'm not
getting cheated here. HMMMMM.

JESUS

You know, back in the day, like,
2,000 years ago, people used to
call me crazy.

JAKE

You don't say.

JESUS

They didn't believe I was the
messiah, you feel me? So, I was
like, how many times I gotta feed
5,000 "niggas" and walk on water
before they believe?

JAKE

I can't read this! It's in
"legalese"!

JESUS

You took a mean blow to the head,
you know? Sometimes that can cause
hallucinations, you feel me?

JAKE

Dude, you're a fat Puerto Rican who thinks he's the son of God, and you're trying to psycho-analyze me?

JESUS

You know you're trying to read a blank piece of paper, right?

JAKE

Blank? What are you, blind?

JESUS

Oh, hold up. Let me get my glasses.

Jesus pulls on a pair of glasses with no lenses.

JESUS (CONT'D)

Oh yeah. I see it now. My "bad"!

The page, of course, is still blank.

JAKE

I don't assume you know anything about law.

JESUS

King Solomon once said "when you assume, you make an 'ass out of u and me"! I worked corporate law for ten years, "pimp"!

JAKE

Now the deal was, I get seven days to get everyone I've pissed off to forgive me, and then I go to Heaven. Is that what it says?

JESUS

Yeah. That's it. That's exactly what it says.

JAKE

Now do you understand why I need that money? I sell the book to Darwin Shaw-

JESUS

The "gossip queen"? Dude's an atheist, man! Not to mention a total douche!

JAKE

-I pay my family back the money I stole from them-

JESUS

You stole from your family? That's some foul shit, yo!

JAKE

-they forgive me, I drop dead and I go straight to Heaven! Sounds like a plan, no?

JESUS

Whatever happened to saying "sorry"?

JAKE

"Sorry" goes down a lot smoother with \$2 Million for a chaser!

JESUS

Yo, a great prophet once said, "more money, more problems"! If I was you, I'd try to apologize, start over again with your family!

JAKE

Is there a phone in this place?

JESUS

In the TV room. You're dreaming, bro! Shaw's not gonna take your call!

Jake shows him Reilly's business card.

JAKE

I don't need him to. I've got the next best thing: his lawyer.

Jesus looks up at the ceiling as Jake walks off.

JESUS

I tried, Father, I tried! But between me and you, that dude is buggin'!

INT. NEW CANAAN MEN'S SHELTER TV ROOM. NIGHT.

Jake moves like a man possessed, wading through the "kooks" as they "watch" the TV, which is blasting at FULL VOLUME. He reaches the phone, but it's:

JAKE
A pay phone?!

A sign says "change at the front desk". He looks over and sees Marilyn sitting there.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Damn it!

He grabs a passing resident, unaware that it's the Homeless Man.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Hey, buddy, do you have any-

HOMELESS MAN
Change?

Jake walks over to the couch and grabs the first guy he sees, an old BIKER DUDE.

JAKE
You! Give me change, now!

The BIKER DUDE rises, all 6'6 of him, and raises a fist as if to throw a punch! Instead, he removes a quarter from a tiny change purse in his hand.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Thanks.

BIKER DUDE
(squeaky voice)
You're welcome!

Jake dials the number, but he can't hear over the volume of TV.

JAKE
Guys! Lower the TV, please? Guys!!

A MIDGET walks over to the phone and rips it from the wall. Terrified and frustrated, Jake bumps into Marilyn, who hands him a cell phone.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Oh. Thanks, dude!

MARILYN
Don't thank me for shit! When you get back on your feet, you owe me a set of boobs! And don't call me no dude!

JAKE

It's a deal, brother, I mean,
sister! I don't mean "sister"
because you're black, I mean--

MARILYN

Hurry up! I only got five minutes
left on my plan!

EXT. NEW CANAAN MEN'S SHELTER VESTIBULE. NIGHT.

Jake makes the call, waking:

JAKE

Reilly! Jake Boyle!

REILLY(O.S.)

Jake!! My God, everyone's been
worried sick-

JAKE

Yeah, right. I need a favor.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. REILLY'S BEDROOM. SIMULTANEOUS.

Reilly in bed with a sleeping Linda.

REILLY

(whispering)

Sure, sure. Just tell me where you
are. I'll send a car for you in the
morning.

JAKE (O.S.)

I need you to set up a meeting with
your boss.

REILLY

Shaw? I don't think he'll see you,
Jake.

JAKE (O.S.)

It's the least you could do after
stealing my wife.

REILLY

I wanted to tell you. I tried to-

JAKE (O.S.)
 You can make it up to me, say,
 11:00 a.m. tomorrow?

REILLY
 What's this about, anyway?

JAKE (O.S.)
 My book.

REILLY
 I really don't think-

JAKE(O.S.)
 Don't think. Just do it. Or I'll
 give Shaw's competitors the scoop
 on your affair with my wife!

REILLY
 Remember when you asked me what
 kind of man you were? Well, this
 sounds a hell of a lot like the old
 Jake Boyle I'm talking to.

JAKE
 I'm at the New Canaan Men's Shelter
 on the Bowery. Be here tomorrow at
 9 a.m., sharp. Oh, and bring me
 some clothes.

REILLY
 Jake, I-

Jake hangs up, and catches his reflection in a nearby mirror.
 He looks terrible.

INT. NEW CANAAN MEN'S SHELTER. MORNING.

Jake stands in front of the same mirror, clean shaven and
 wearing a suit. Reilly stands behind him. There is a quiet
 tension between them.

JAKE
 Tell me about this Shaw guy, your
 boss.

REILLY
 Shaw owns "T.O.T": "Talk of the
 Town". It's a gossip conglomerate.
 Websites, a cable channel,
 magazines.

(MORE)

REILLY (CONT'D)

He makes his living off of celebrities: who they're sleeping with, what drugs they're taking, plastic surgery, family secrets, the works. It's like an empire of slime.

JAKE

And you work for the guy.

REILLY

He pays well.

JAKE

Well enough for you to keep my wife comfortable?

Reilly gets in his face.

REILLY

You've got a lot more skeletons in your closet than I do, Jake. I'd be happy to remind you of some of them.

They stand toe to toe, dangerously close to blows. Father Ray steps in.

FATHER RAY

Gentlemen! Jake, you and your guest-

JAKE

He's not my guest.

An angry Jake exits, making a beeline for Reilly's limousine.

INT. REILLY'S LIMO.

Jake's former driver, Reggie, sits at the wheel.

REGGIE

Mr. Boyle! Good to see you're feeling better, sir!

JAKE

Who the hell are you? Take me to Shaw's office!

REILLY

(entering)

Let's go to the office, Reggie.

REGGIE
(sadly)
Yes sir.

Jake briefly clutches his head in pain. It passes.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY. T.O.T. STUDIOS.

A large office building in Midtown Manhattan.

Jake walks with a determined stride, giving us a glance of the man he once was. Suddenly, he is joined by Jesus, dressed in an ill-fitting suit and glasses.

JAKE
What are you doing here?

JESUS
You need legal representation. I got your back.

JAKE
My "back" is fine. Go home.

JESUS
"And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age!" I'm not going nowhere, bruh!

JAKE
This is important to me, okay? Don't blow it! Just stay out here. I'll be back in an hour.

JESUS
Fine. I'll just stay out here and preach "the word" to all these sinners until you get back!

JAKE
No! Okay, you can come in. Just let me do all the talking, okay? What the hell are you wearing, anyway?

JESUS
This is my lucky suit. I wore it when I failed the bar exam.

JAKE
"Failed?" You said you worked corporate law for ten years.

JESUS
I did. In the mail room.

JAKE
Jesus Christ.

JESUS
Will you stop the God-damned
blaspheming?

INT. DAY. THE OFFICES OF DARWIN SHAW.

A lavish office in a posh midtown building.

Jake and Reilly sit silently. Jesus cracks his knuckles and neck, much to Jake's annoyance.

JAKE
Please stop that!

Jesus spies a candy dish and begins to help himself.

Shaw makes a grand entrance. Impeccably dressed, not a hair out of place, his haughty arrogance makes Jake feel instantly uncomfortable.

SHAW
Well, well, well! How the tables
have turned! I'm usually the one
chasing celebrities, not the other
way around! How the hell are you,
Jake?

JAKE
I've been better.

Shaw lights up a cigar.

SHAW
No doubt. You look great, though.
The last time I laid eyes on you,
you were sprawled out in Times
Square with a giant clock on your
head! Cigar?

JAKE
Let's get down to brass tacks,
shall we?

SHAW
Ah, now that's the Jake Boyle I
remember! No nonsense!

JAKE

I've advised Reilly that I'm prepared to accept your offer to publish my book.

SHAW

Yeah, about that: when I made you that offer, you turned me down flat. As I remember it, and correct me if I'm wrong, Reilly, you wouldn't even look at me, Jake.

JAKE

I can have my lawyer, here-

JESUS

(mouth full of candy)
Jesus Christ, Esquire!

JAKE

-hammer out the minor details with your people.

SHAW

I'm sorry, Jake, but the answer is no.

JAKE

Listen, I know we've had some issues in the past, but I'm willing to let bygones be bygones.

SHAW

How charitable of you.

REILLY

Maybe what Mr. Shaw means is-

SHAW

What "Mr. Shaw" means is "no". As in "no deal".

Jake is furious, but won't let Shaw see it.

JAKE

I see. Well, thanks for your time.

Jake makes his way to the door, but Jesus doesn't want to leave the candy dish.

SHAW

Sit down.

Jesus rushes back to the candy dish.

JAKE

Excuse me?

SHAW

It's not that I don't want to buy your book. I do.

JAKE

I'm listening.

SHAW

Here's the deal: I'm in the paparazzi business.

JAKE

The gossip business.

SHAW

And you see, Jake, no one's interested in you anymore. Oh, they used to be. I made a lot of money off of you these last few years. Then you had your accident. Your family tries to pull the plug on you, then you wake up! And then you lose everything! Great stuff! We did gang buster ratings. For a day. Second day, our ratings plummeted. By the third day, we dropped coverage altogether. Jake, we live in an "A.D.D" world! The public's attention span is three seconds long, then, "poof", you're old news. On to the next big thing. Understand?

JAKE

I think I do.

SHAW

Right. So I couldn't possibly justify paying you a million bucks for your story anymore, because no one cares, capeesh?

JAKE

Two million.

SHAW

We've gotta get you hot again. Generate some buzz, some "pizzazz"! Get everyone talking about Jake Boyle again, then, bam! We hit 'em with the book! "

(MORE)

SHAW (CONT'D)

You think you know the whole story?
You don't. You want the whole
story? Buy the book!"

JAKE

And how do you propose to do this?

SHAW

I'm developing a show for your old
friend, Reilly here.

JAKE

I don't care. What's your proposal,
Shaw?

SHAW

My "proposal" is we schedule you
for Reilly's show to stir the
hornet's nest. Then, we put the
book out, it's a best seller and we
all live happily ever after. Now
how does that sound to you?

JAKE

Is it a talk show?

SHAW

Better. It's called "Celebrity
Lawsuits". It's like "Judge Judy",
but with has-been celebrities.
Reilly of course, plays the Judge
role. You'll be the plaintiff.

JAKE

You mean, the "has been". Who will
I be suing?

SHAW

Your family.

Jesus almost chokes on the candy.

JESUS

Are you bugging?

JAKE

(to Reilly)

You knew about this?

REILLY

It was the only way he would agree
to see you, Jake!

SHAW

Think about it: you gave your family the best of everything, and when the chips were down, they tried to pull the plug on you!

JAKE

I don't believe this.

SHAW

"Mr. Lucky" sues his own family! Think of the headlines!

JAKE

Thanks, but no thanks.

SHAW

C'mon, Jake! It's not real! No "reality show" is! Your family would be compensated for appearing and we'd work everything out before the cameras ever start rolling! I'm sure the wife and kids would appreciate a nice pay day right now. It's the least you could do after stealing their money.

Jake gets in his face, but a sharp head pain freezes him in his tracks. Jesus gently pulls him away, grabbing a handful of candy for the road.

JESUS

C'mon, Jake. Let's get out of here.

They do.

SHAW

You'll be back.

Shaw puffs on his cigar, smiling with satisfaction.

EXT. A MANHATTAN STREET. DAY.

JESUS

You okay, Jake?

JAKE

Of course I'm not okay! I'm going to hell, you idiot!

Jake clutches his head. There is a roaring in his ears. His nose starts to bleed.

JESUS
Stop talking like that, man!

JAKE
Don't you understand? That money
was my last hope, you fool!

JESUS
No, God is your last hope! Trust in
Him! Have faith!

JAKE
Will you shut up with this "Jesus",
b.s.? I'm sick of your-

Jake falls to the ground, unconscious.

DARKNESS.

Jake awakens in a hospital room. As DOCTOR BAKER enters, Jake
attempts to rise from his bed.

DOCTOR BAKER
Please, stay in bed, Mr. Boyle.
You're not well.

JAKE
Tell me about it. But I've got
things to do.

He fails to rise once more.

DOCTOR BAKER
Mr. Boyle, I assumed these fainting
spells your associate described
were related to the head trauma
from your accident. However, we ran
some tests, and I'm afraid I've got
some bad news.

JAKE
Let me guess. It's a brain tumor
and I've got five days to live.

DOCTOR BAKER
More like three days, actually.
Maybe less.

JAKE
I don't believe it!

DOCTOR BAKER
I'm very sorry.

JAKE

The contract was for seven days,
not five! This is bullshit!

DOCTOR BAKER

(confused)

I've scheduled emergency surgery.
I'll be honest with you, Mr. Boyle,
the chances you'd survive it are
slim, but it's the only chance
you've got.

JAKE

No. No surgery! I've got three days
to keep myself from going to hell!
Understand?

DOCTOR BAKER

Um, very well, Mr. Boyle. I can't
force you, of course. But as I
said, some chance is better than
none. You sure I can't change your
mind?

JAKE

Doctor, God Himself couldn't change
my mind right now.

INT. THE HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM. DAY.

Jesus prays, rosary beads in his hand. Jake bursts through
the doors and heads for the exit.

JESUS

Jake! Thank God!

JAKE

Thank Him for what? Double-crossing
me?

JESUS

What are you talking about?

JAKE

The doctor says I've got three days
to live! I made a deal for seven!
Your God is a cheating bastard!

JESUS

Don't you blaspheme!

JAKE

What the hell am I gonna do now?

JESUS

You tell your family that you're
sorry and ask for their
forgiveness!

JAKE

You know how stupid you sound? I
don't even know these people! How
can I get them to forgive me for
stuff I don't remember doing?

JESUS

Let's calm down and think about
this logically. Now the problem is,
you're dying--

JAKE

Wait a minute! I'm dying!

JESUS

Duh! Didn't we just go over this?

JAKE

Maybe I can make this work. I mean,
what kind of a person wouldn't
forgive a dying man? Only a-

JESUS

-real sack of shit.

JAKE

Exactly! I'm gonna need your help.
You have a car?

JESUS

The bus, but I gotta take it to the
shop in the morning.

JAKE

I can't wait that long! What if I
die in my sleep?

JESUS

Have some faith, Jake!

JAKE

Faith? To hell with faith!

We hear the BOOMING of thunder. It begins to rain as Jake
looks to the sky and yells.

JAKE (CONT'D)

You think you can double-cross me?
I'm gonna win this thing anyway.

(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)
 You hear that, God? I'm gonna win
 anyway! I'm gonna win!!

EXT. NEW CANAAN MEN'S SHELTER. DAY ONE OF THREE.

A hot and sunny day. Jake enters the New Canaan bus.

JAKE
 Whoa! What happened to the A/C?
 It's hot as hell in here!

JESUS
 Hell? Really? You just had to "go
 there"?

JAKE:
 Why, yes, as a matter of fact, I am
 going there!

JESUS
 (ignoring him)
 The A/C is broken. That's why I was
 taking it to the shop, man! Maybe
 we should take a cab?

JAKE
 And how are we gonna pay for it?
 With your good looks?

We get a good look at Jesus. He is u-g-l-y! Jake takes a
 seat. He looks like a dying man.

JESUS
 You look like shit, bro! You sure
 you're up to this?

JAKE
 No. But this is my last chance, and
 I've gotta take it.

Jake looks down at his manuscript and opens it as Jesus
 begins the long drive to Long Island.

JAKE (V.O.)
 "It's often been said that you can
 choose your friends but you can't
 choose your family. But what
 happens when your family doesn't
 choose you?"

FLASHBACK. SIX MONTHS AGO. EXT. THE BOYLE MANSION. PRE-DAWN.

Jake's limo pulls into the courtyard. He clutches his stomach in pain.

JAKE

Remind me to stay away from
Columbian food, Reggie.

REGGIE

You mean, stay away from Columbian
girls!

JAKE

Now you're asking too much! See you
in a few hours.

REGGIE

Actually, sir, I was gonna ask for
the day off so I can go see my Mom
in the hospital.

JAKE

No can do, Reg! The car can't drive
itself, right? Tell you what, send
the old gal some flowers and I'll
go "half-sies" with you! Gotta go!

Jake runs into the house in search of a bathroom.

REGGIE

Thanks, Mr. B. You're all heart.

INT. THE BOYLE MANSION GREETING ROOM. PRE-DAWN.

Jake enters the bathroom and finds Eli smoking a bong.

ELI

Sorry, Dude. Linda won't let me
smoke in my room!

Jake rushes off to the next bathroom and finds Crystal sitting on the bowl. She screams.

JAKE

Sorry honey!

He heads up the stairs.

CRYSTAL

Aren't you going to ask me how I'm
feeling?

He heads back down.

JAKE
How are you---?

CRYSTAL
Too late!

JAKE
Great! Good night!

He heads for the stairs.

CRYSTAL
Didn't you get my text? I tried to
kill myself today!

He checks his phone. There are multiple texts and missed
calls.

JAKE
Oh. "Flintstone" vitamins again?

CRYSTAL
No! And you still haven't asked me
how I'm feeling!

JAKE
How are you feeling, Crystal?

CRYSTAL
How would you feel if you swallowed
a bottle of laxatives?

She starts to cry. He heads back down.

JAKE
I think I know exactly how you
feel, honey! Can we talk about this
later?

CRYSTAL
Sure, Dad! Later! But what are you
gonna do when "later" becomes "too
late"?

JAKE
Okay! Bye!

He runs up the stairs into the master bedroom, making a bee
line for the toilet. Linda rises and beats him to it.

LINDA
 (frostily)
 Good morning, Jake. How was "work"?

She shuts the door. We hear the ripping sound of Jake loosening his bowels.

JAKE
 Shitty.

INT. THE BOYLE MANSION. DAY.

Jake hands a bag containing his soiled underwear to the MAID.

JAKE
 Get rid of that, will ya?

Linda sits at one end of a long table where an incredible breakfast spread has been laid out. Jake takes a seat at the other end and speaks into an intercom.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 (into intercom)
 Good morning, darling!

She walks over to him, but does not sit.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 Not eating? You're not dieting again, are you?

LINDA
 Does it look like I need to diet?

JAKE
 No. You've got the best body money can buy.

LINDA
 Why am I not enough for you, Jake?

JAKE
 Do we have to do this again? Every time I come home late--

LINDA
 You don't think I know what's going on?

JAKE
 You knew what you were getting into when you married me, sweetheart! I'm a man! I have needs!

LINDA

And I don't? And your children
don't need to spend time with their
father?

JAKE

I spent some quality time with Eli
and Crystal just this morning! And
when the rest get home-

LINDA

We only have two kids! I was
calling you all night! Crystal
tried to kill herself again!

JAKE

Last time I checked, laxatives
never killed anybody, Linda!
Obviously, the girl wants
attention!

LINDA

Which you never give her! Or any of
us!

JAKE

Take a look around you! Our kids
have everything they could possibly
want! You've got everything! What
the hell do you want from me?

LINDA

A divorce.

As she leaves, his cellphone rings. Crystal is on the line.

JAKE

Crystal! Time for breakfast, honey!

We see Crystal is at a TRAIN STATION.

CRYSTAL

I'm running away, Daddy!

JAKE

Baby, you can't be a runaway when
you're twenty five!

Eli walks in.

ELI

Jake, do you have a fire
extinguisher laying around?

CRYSTAL (O.S.)
I'm going somewhere where people
will actually talk to me!

JAKE
Honey, you know the staff at
Bellevue has a restraining order
against you!

ELI
My room is kind of on fire. Freak
accident. Bong meets drapes, you
know?

He follows Eli to his room. The drapes are indeed on fire and
it's spreading fast.

JAKE
Call the fire department!

CRYSTAL (O.S.)
I'm leaving for New Orleans, Daddy!
Don't try to stop me!

JAKE
Is it Mardi Gras already?

CRYSTAL
I'm going down to volunteer! To do
something with my life!

Jake grabs a bottle of water and spills it on the drapes. The
fire rises.

ELI
That was vodka, dude! Linda doesn't
let me drink in the house!

JAKE
Crystal, can we talk about this
later? We've got a little bit of an
emergency here--

She hangs up. The Maid puts out the flames with a fire
extinguisher.

JAKE (CONT'D)
How could you be so stupid, Eli?

ELI
Hey, don't judge me, man!

JAKE
You're using drugs in my house!

ELI
I thought it was "our" house, man.

JAKE
Well, it isn't! I built this house, understand? It's mine! When you build your own house, you can make your own rules! Until then, you follow my rules or you move the hell out!

ELI
Fine. I'll just move out, then.

JAKE
Fine!

THE BOYLE MANSION. THE FRONT DOOR. DAY.

Eli walks out, followed by Linda, who is followed by the maid.

JAKE
Where are you going?

MAID
I don't get paid enough for this shit.

End of flashback.

INT. THE BUS. DAY.

Jake closes the book.

JAKE
Jesus H. Christ!

JESUS
Yes?

JAKE
(to himself)
I'm going to hell in a hand basket.

EXT. REILLY'S HOME. POOL SIDE. DAY.

A modest but lovely home in an upper-middle class Long Island neighborhood.

Reilly paces back and forth, dialing his cellphone as if his life depended on it.

PHONE (O.S.)
You've reached the cellphone of
Darwin Shaw. Please leave a
message.

He begins "texting" furiously as a bikini-clad Linda walks in.

LINDA
Here's the mail.

Reilly opens a Foreclosure Notice from his mortgage company.

REILLY
Damn it.

LINDA
What's wrong?

REILLY
Nothing.

He grabs the cellphone and dials once more as Linda reads the letter.

LINDA
Oh, so a foreclosure is "nothing"?
If I wanted to live with a liar,
I'd still be with Jake!

REILLY
This is all his fault! Shaw offered
him a book deal yesterday and Jake
turned him down, flat! Now Shaw
won't take my calls and I might be
out of a job!

LINDA
What? When were you planning to
tell me about all of this?

REILLY
What was I supposed to tell you,
Linda? That I'm broke? That Jake
screwed you guys again? You'd just
lost everything you ever had! I
couldn't do that to you!

LINDA

Forget about Jake for a second.
You're getting your own show. How
could you possibly be broke?

REILLY

I don't know how to say this.
Linda, Shaw hired me contingent on
my being able to "persuade" you to
sell him Jake's memoirs.

LINDA

What?

REILLY

He offered Jake a deal before the
accident, but turned him down! When
Jake died, I guess he saw you as an
easier target.

LINDA

And so did you. So all of this was
to get me to sell Jake's book? I
thought you--! I can't believe I was
so stupid!

REILLY

Don't think I don't care about you,
Linda! I do! I've loved you since
the first time I laid eyes on you.

LINDA

Don't do this. Don't do this to me.

REILLY

It's not my fault! Don't you see?
It's Jake! He's destroyed our
lives! It's all he ever does! All
he had to do was sign a piece of
paper and you'd be rich again!

LINDA

And so would you. Right?

The doorbell rings. She tosses Reilly's cell phone in the
pool and storms off.

CUT TO:

THE FRONT DOOR.

Linda opens the door to find Jake standing there.

JAKE
Hello, Linda.

LINDA
I'm actually glad to see you, Jake.

JAKE
I know what you're gonna say--you
are?

He looks back at Jesus, who gives him the "thumbs up". Linda proceeds to smack Jake in his face.

LINDA
You son of a bitch! You had a deal
that would've taken us out of the
poorhouse and you turned it down?

REILLY
What the hell are you doing here?

JAKE
I'm trying to speak to my wife!

REILLY
Ex-wife!

JAKE
Linda, let me explain.

REILLY
I'll do it for you. He had me set
up a meeting with Shaw, which he
totally blew. You put my whole
career in jeopardy, you moron! Shaw
won't even take my calls right now!

JAKE
Did you tell Linda what he wanted
me to do for that contract?

LINDA
It was for your family, damn it! If
Shaw wanted you to streak naked in
Times Square with your hair on
fire, you should've said "yes"!

JAKE
He wanted me to sue you on national
television! Bet your boyfriend
didn't tell you that, did he?

REILLY

That's pathetic, Jake. You turned down Shaw because you wanted more money, plain and simple!

JAKE

You lying bastard!

REILLY

Who are you going to believe, Linda? A man who cheated on you? Stole your money? Or me-

LINDA

I don't know what to believe anymore!

Jake grabs his head in pain, almost collapsing.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Jake! Are you okay?

JAKE

Five minutes. That's all I need. Please.

REILLY

Get out of my house.

LINDA

(to Jake)

I'll be right out.

EXT. THE STREETS OF REILLY'S NEIGHBORHOOD. DAY.

Linda and Jake walk as Jesus keeps pace in the bus.

LINDA

Who is that guy and why is he following us?

JAKE

Ignore him. Pretend he isn't even there.

Jesus removes his shirt, exposing his large gut.

LINDA

I'll try my best. You've got five minutes.

She sets an ALARM on her phone.

JAKE

I know you're angry with me, but I need you to listen.

LINDA

To more of your lies, Jake? I can't do this anymore. I'm really confused right now. The last thing I need is you showing up here slinging your b.s.

JAKE

I promise you, everything I'm about to say is the gospel truth.

LINDA

You promise! Hah! Like you promised to love me 'til death do us part?

JAKE

News flash, Linda: you cheated on me too!

LINDA

I thought you were dead!

JAKE

You could've waited until the body was cold!

LINDA

Do you have any idea what living with you was like?

JAKE

Just listen to me, please.

LINDA

You were never home, and when you were, your mind was always somewhere else. It was never on the kids, never on me! For God's sake we moved out for a week once and you didn't even notice!

JAKE

I'm sorry.

LINDA

And you were never faithful.

JAKE

I'm sorry.

LINDA

Maybe it's my fault. Who meets a man at divorce court, right? What did I expect?

JAKE

Is that where we met?

LINDA

You really don't remember. You got loaded in Vegas. Married a show girl you'd met an hour before.

JAKE

How long was I married?

LINDA

About 12 hours. As soon as your private jet touched down, she took a cab to my office and filed for divorce.

JAKE

You were her lawyer?

LINDA

Best damned divorce attorney in the country. I helped that little slut take you for \$2 Million bucks.

JAKE

Ouch. So how did we..?

LINDA

The hearing lasted four days. You asked me out twice a day, every day.

She giggles wistfully. He can't help but laugh himself.

JAKE

So I take it you eventually said "yes"?

LINDA

Once the settlement was read, you asked me to marry you. For some crazy reason I said "yes". The judge performed the ceremony right there in the courtroom.

JAKE

Wow. I guess I wasn't much of a romantic, huh?

LINDA

It may sound tacky, but it was romantic. You were romantic. I'd spent years helping women destroy their husbands. Marriage seemed like an insane proposition. One day they were vowing to stay together for life, next thing you know they're fighting over who gets to keep the cat!

JAKE

Did we have any pets?

LINDA

You had a pet tiger once.

JAKE

You can keep the tiger. Give it to Reilly.

They share another laugh.

LINDA

I never even thought about getting married. But then you came along with that goofy grin of yours and swept me off my feet.

JAKE

I've still got the goofy grin here. Somewhere.

LINDA

What happened to us, Jake?

JAKE

Something tells me that even if I could remember, the answer wouldn't be good enough.

They walk in quiet reflection. Jake breaks the silence.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Linda, this isn't easy for me, but I need to ask you for something.

LINDA

I knew it. Why else would you be here? You may not remember who you are, but you haven't changed! I hope you don't have the balls to ask me for money!

He looks at Jesus, who has now exited the bus, wearing nothing but his boxer shorts.

JAKE

I don't need money.

LINDA

Pity? Is that what you want? Well you came to the wrong place!

He watches Jesus dump a large bottle of water over himself, ala "Flashdance".

JAKE

I know I can never make it up to you, but I can only say I'm sorry so many times!

LINDA

Well say it again!

JAKE

I have no right to ask you for anything, I know that. But what I want, what I need, is for you to say that you forgive me!

Her alarm goes off. Time's up. Reilly's car pulls up.

LINDA

You would've been better off asking me for money. Goodbye, Jake.

JAKE

Linda, I'm dying.

LINDA

Of all the lies you've ever told me, that one is the most pathetic. Have a nice life.

She and Reilly drive off. It begins to rain heavily. Jesus stands in his underwear, arms spread, enjoying the relief from the heat of the bus.

JESUS

Rain! Thank you, Father!

JAKE

Yeah. Thanks, God. For nothing.

INT. THE BUS. DAY.

They sit silently, the rain and the whirring of the windshield wipers the only sound.

JAKE

Take me home, Jesus. There's no use going on with this charade.

JESUS

You're amazing bro. You've got to be the only person I've ever met that doesn't have one ounce of faith.

JAKE

It's not a question of faith.

JESUS

Of course it is!

JAKE

You can't really be that stupid! I need to get my family to forgive me, right? And Linda is never going to do that! So that's it man! Game over! What don't you understand about that?

JESUS

What is faith, Jake?

JAKE

Spare me the Sunday school bullshit, okay? I'm not in the mood!

JESUS

They say seeing is believing, right? Well, faith is believing without seeing.

JAKE

Yeah, thanks, "Master Yoda". Now take me home.

JESUS

Why do you believe that you'll go to Hell if no one forgives you?

JAKE

Because that's what the contract says!

JESUS

And who gave you that contract?

JAKE

You want me to say "God"? Fine. It was God! Happy?

JESUS

So what you're saying is, it's in God's hands.

JAKE

I think that's pretty obvious, no?

JESUS

I was wrong, then. You do have faith.

JAKE

What the hell are you talking about?

JESUS

You just said your fate is in God's hands. That's called faith, bro! So all you gotta do is leave it in His hands!

JAKE

But I can't take that chance!

JESUS

Jake, don't you see? God isn't a chance! He's a sure thing! If you give up now--

Once more, Jake feels a sharp pain in his head.

JAKE

Fine. Take me to my son. Just promise me you won't talk anymore!

The pain passes.

JESUS

I promise. (pause) So, like I was saying...

INT. AN ART GALLERY, WEST VILLAGE, NYC. DAY.

The "art" falls somewhere between children's finger painting and "steam punk" pornography.

Eli takes questions from the crowd. A BOHEMIAN CHICK points to a white canvass with a giant red ZERO painted on it.

BOHEMIAN CHICK

Hey, Eli, this painting here, like, does it, symbolize like, the hopelessness of the world in general and, like, capitalism in particular? 'cause it's like, "wow", you know?

ELI

I'd like to sit here and say that, like all art, mine leaves the interpretation to the individual, but you're on the right track with this one.

The crowd BUZZES, exchanging WOW's and SO DEEP's with each other. A question comes from the back of the crowd.

JAKE

Why do you go by your first name?

ELI

Last names imply ownership, you know? A woman gets married and she has to take her husband's name. That really reeks of possession issues, right? So I just go by my first name. Three letters, man. It's easier to sign my art.

The crowd LAUGHS. The AUCTIONEER steps to the mic.

AUCTIONEER

Thank you, Eli. Okay, folks, bidding starts in five minutes. Please take your seats.

The crowd CLAPS as Eli makes his way towards the bathroom. Jake intercepts him.

JAKE

Hello, son.

ELI

Oh, hey Jake. How are you making out?

JAKE

"Jake"? How about "Dad"?

ELI
C'mon, bro. I've been calling you
"Jake" for years.

JAKE
Do you have a minute to talk?

ELI
I really don't. The auction's gonna
start. But leave your number at the
desk, okay? We'll do lunch or
something.

He enters the bathroom. Jake follows him in.

INT. THE GALLERY UNISEX BATHROOM. CONTINUOUS.

JAKE
Son, I just need a minute of your
time. Please.

ELI
Okay, this is weird, but "shoot".

JAKE
Where are you, you know, living
these days?

ELI
Oh, here and there. I crash at
friend's houses, most days I sleep
here at the gallery.

JAKE
That sounds pretty rough.

ELI
Oh, no, it's fine, man. Today's a
big day, though. The auctioneer
says my painting should fetch about
\$100,000. I'm gonna use the cash to
open up my own studio.

JAKE
That's not enough to open a studio.

ELI:
Of course not, man! You need at
least double that. But I got an
offer to go in with another guy, so
it's all good. Then I don't have to
sleep at the gallery anymore.

JAKE

Eli, I know I wasn't a good father. I wasn't always there for you, when I could've been. I should've been.

ELI

No worries, man. It's a big, bad world out there, and you gotta learn to fend for yourself. I dig it. If that's what you were aiming for, it worked. I'm surviving.

JAKE

And about your trust fund. I'm sure I probably thought it was a safe investment.

ELI

It's all good, Jake. It's only money, man.

JAKE

I just want the chance to make things right with you. With all of you.

ELI

You finally got tired of being a fraud, huh?

JAKE

Is that what you think of me?

ELI

Man, when I was growing up, Mom called you "fraud" so often, I thought that was your first name, dude! Why are you even here? What is it that you want from me?

JAKE

I know I don't deserve it, but I'd like to ask you to forgive me.

ELI

Forgive you? For what?

Jake mistakes this to mean "all is forgiven".

JAKE

Eli. Son. Thank you--

ELI

For missing birthdays, graduations,
baseball games? My bar mitzvah?
Forgive you for all those times Mom
had to take Crystal to the
hospital, alone? Forgive you for
stealing our money?

JAKE

I thought you said-

ELI

You do all these things and now you
wanna let bygones be bygones? Is
that how it works, Jake?

JAKE

Eli, I'm dying.

ELI

You may have lost your memory,
Jake, but you still suck at lying.

Eli reaches for the door. Jake blocks his path.

JAKE

No lies, son. Not this time. I
swear to God.

ELI

God doesn't exist, man!

JAKE

You're wrong son! He does exist.
When I was in a coma, I went to
another place. It wasn't heaven, it
wasn't hell. But they sent me back
here for another chance. To try and
make up for the things I've done. I
know I can't make up for
everything, but with your
forgiveness, maybe we can save what
time we have left.

Eli stares at him, silently. Has Jake touched his heart? Eli
starts CLAPPING.

ELI

Now that is one crazy story, Jake!
Considering this is the longest
conversation we've had in years,
you made sure it was a memorable
one. Thanks.

THE GALLERY FLOOR.

The auction is about to begin. A shell-shocked Jake watches Eli leave the gallery as SHEILA(25), hands him a numbered fan.

JAKE

What's this?

SHEILA

It's for the auction. You're a bidder, correct?

JAKE

Yes. Yes I am.

The auction begins.

AUCTIONEER

May I remind you this is a silent auction. Up first is a piece entitled "Nothing" by Eli!

The bids fly! \$2,000...\$,3000....\$5,000. It stalls at \$25,000. Jake raises his fan.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)

I have 25. Can I have 30? Anyone for 30? I've got 30!

The number climbs closer and closer towards Eli's goal of \$100,000. Whenever the bidding is stuck, Jake bids to push it along.

Soon the auction is down to three bidders. \$65,000, \$75,000, 80, 85, 90, 95! It stalls once more.

JAKE

(to himself)

Come on, hundred thousand! Come on!

He thinks about bidding and is about to raise his fan when somebody bids:

AUCTIONEER

100! We've got 100! Can I get 105?

Jake is elated! The bidding gets down to TWO MEN, and it is fast and furious! Soon, the bid is up to 195! It stalls.

ELI (V.O.)

You need at least double that to open your own studio.

Jake eyes the two bidders. They look ready to pull the trigger, but no one makes a move.

AUCTIONEER
 Can I get 197? Looking for 197!
 197! Okay, 195 going once, 195
 going twice...

Jake raises his fan.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)
 197! Can I get 198? 198?

One of the final two bidders raises his fan.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)
 There it is! 198! Can I get 199?

The other bidder rises his fan.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)
 199! Can I get 200? 200? Anybody?
 Okay 199 going once. 199 going
 twice--

Jake raises his fan.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)
 200! Can I get 201? 201? 201? Okay,
 200,000 going once, going twice...

Jake panics.

JAKE
 (whispering)
 Hey, fellas! You can have it for
 201! Guys? Guys! Don't walk away!

They do. Eli re-enters just in time to hear the number has reached:

AUCTIONEER
 200,000 going three times
 and....sold!!

The auctioneer bangs the gavel. Eli is elated. Jake tries to sneak off. He almost makes it to the door when Sheila intercepts him.

SHEILA
 Congratulations sir! May I remind
 you we offer an excellent delivery
 service. How would you like to pay?

ELI
What's going on here?

STAFF MEMBER
This gentleman is the winning
bidder on your piece!

JAKE
Son, I can explain!

ELI
Have security escort this guy out
of here.

SHEILA
But, he's the winning bidder?

ELI
No he isn't. He's a fraud.

INT. THE NEW CANAAN BUS. DAY.

A somber Jake enters the bus and takes a seat. We see blood coming from his nose. He faints.

INT. CRYSTAL AND BILL'S APARTMENT. DAY.

A modest apartment in a Brooklyn neighborhood slowly becoming gentrified. Bill cooks dinner as "old school" rap plays in the background.

Crystal enters, looking tired and very stressed.

BILL
Hey, snowflake! I'm making your
favorite: pig's feet and collard
greens!

She walks past him silently and plops down on the couch.

BILL (CONT'D)
Babe, you okay?

She begins BAWLING. He rushes over to her.

BILL (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

CRYSTAL
I lost my job!

BILL

Oh, no. Don't worry, we'll be fine.
I'm working, you'll find another
"gig".

CRYSTAL

That's three jobs in three days,
Bill!! I'm just not cut out for
work!!

BILL

Did you take your medication today?

CRYSTAL

You should leave me, Bill. I'm no
good for you! I've become white
trash!

He reaches for a bottle of psychiatric meds. It is empty.

BILL

Why didn't you tell me you were out
of your meds? I'll go refill it.

CRYSTAL

That was my last refill. I don't
have coverage since I don't have a
job!

BILL

Why don't you go take a nice hot
bath, then we'll eat and watch
"Mandingo" on DVD.

CRYSTAL

Oh, that's my favorite.

She begins BAWLING anew. Bill guides her towards the
bathroom.

BILL

C'mon. Go wash off all that
negative energy and we'll make a
night of it.

INT. THE NEW CANAAN BUS. DAY.

Jake awakens on the floor with Jesus tending to him. He tries
to get up but is groggy.

JESUS

Whoa, whoa. Sit down.

He does.

JESUS (CONT'D)

You need to get to a hospital, bro!

JAKE

I need to go see my daughter, tell her that I'm sorry.

JESUS

Maybe that's not a good idea. Why not give it a few days, rest up.

JAKE

I don't have a few days, you idiot! I'm getting a little tired of your stupid advice! Especially when you have no idea what the hell I'm going through!

JESUS

You think I don't know what you're going through?

JAKE

Do I think you know what it's like when you're dying and everyone hates you? No, I don't, okay?! Oh, excuse me! I forgot; you got hung on a cross, "Jesus"! Beats the hell out of my worst day, right?!

Awkward silence. Jesus starts driving.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Listen, man. I'm sorry. You've done nothing but try to help me when you didn't even have to. And I've just treated you like-

JESUS

I forgive you. The Father forgives you. He forgives all of us, always. No matter what we've done. No matter what we will do, He forgives. You remember that, Jake Boyle. Remember that.

INT. DAY. BILL'S "CRIB".

Bill puts the finishing touches on the pig's feet and collard greens as he waits for Crystal to exit the bath.

BILL
 Crystal! C'mon girl, the pig's feet
 are ready!

There is a KNOCK at the door. Bill answers it. It's Jake,
 looking sick and disheveled. Bill isn't happy to see him.

JAKE
 Hello, Bill.

BILL
 Wassup, Mr. Boyle.

JAKE
 Please, call me Jake. Is my
 daughter around?

BILL
 She's in the bath. We're just about
 to have dinner.

JAKE
 I'd like to talk to her for a
 second. Can I come in?

Bill stares at him blankly then walks away, leaving the front
 door open. Jake enters.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 Smells wonderful. What's on the
 menu?

BILL
 Pig's feet and collard greens. I'd
 offer you some, but seeing as how
 you don't like black people, you
 probably don't like our food
 neither.

JAKE
 But, you're not(black)...! Have you
 looked in the mirror lately, Bill?

BILL
 Have you?

JAKE
 Never mind. I know we got off on
 the wrong foot. I may not know much
 about anything anymore, but I know
 you love my daughter. And that's
 all a man could want from a son-in-
 law.

(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)

I guess what I'm saying is, could you give me another chance, "son"?

Jake extends his hand. Bill thinks about it, then gives Jake a tremendous "bro-hug".

BILL

Dad. My nigga.

JAKE

That's me. Your, uh...

BILL

It's cool, you can say it. "Nigga" ain't the same thing as "nigger", you feel me?

JAKE

Yeah. I feel you. But I can't breathe.

Bill lets him go.

BILL

Sorry. Come sit down, Dad. Hey, you don't look so good. You okay??

JAKE

I'm fine. So, how's Crystal been these days?

BILL

Not too good, to be honest with you. She lost her job today.

JAKE

That's awful. Bill, can you let her know I'm here?

Bill yells so loud it startles him.

BILL

Crystal! Your dad is here to see you! Crystal!!!

No answer.

BILL (CONT'D)

Excuse me, Dad. I'm just gonna knock on the door.

Bill notices the water running from under the door.

BILL (CONT'D)
She fell asleep in the tub again!
Crystal! Wake up, girl! You're
gonna flood the house!

He BANGS on the door. No answer. The door is locked.

JAKE
Is she okay?

BILL
I don't know! Stand back!

Bill kicks the door in and finds Crystal in the tub, her
slashed wrists bleeding profusely.

BILL (CONT'D)
Oh God! Crystal!! Dad, call 911!

He grabs a towel and rips it in half, tying each half around
a wrist. Jake passes out. Darkness.

INT. A HOSPITAL. DAY.

Jake comes to in a hospital room. He stumbles out of his bed
towards the Intensive Care Unit where:

Linda sits nervously with Bill, Eli and Reilly. Jake
struggles to make his way towards them.

A DOCTOR approaches. It's obviously bad news.

Bill collapses back into his seat as Linda buries her face in
her hands, sobbing. Eli embraces her.

Jake collapses onto the floor. The DOCTOR helps him up.

JAKE
Doctor, my daughter?

DOCTOR
I'm sorry, Mr. Boyle. She's gone.

JAKE
My fault. All my fault.

LINDA
You're damn right this is your
fault, you son of a bitch!

REILLY
Linda, let's not do this here.

Reilly guides Linda away from Jake and towards the exit.

JAKE

Eli. Bill, I'm so sorry.

They leave.

DOCTOR

Mr. Boyle, please come back to your room.

Jake shoves the Doctor and heads for the exit.

INT. THE HOSPITAL. GENERAL WAITING AREA. EVENING.

Jesus sits in the waiting room, rosary beads in his hands. Jake stumbles past him.

JESUS

How is she?

JAKE

She's dead.

JESUS

Oh man, I'm sorry, bro.

JAKE

Why would He take my daughter? Just to hurt me? Why is God so cruel?

JESUS

Jake, I know you're upset. I can't imagine what you're going through. But you can't blame God for this.

JAKE

Yes I can! Why even give me a second chance when he knew this was going to happen? Why bring me back just to destroy me? Was this His idea of a joke?! Answer me!!!

Jake clutches his head in pain, dropping down to one knee.

JESUS

Jake! You okay? Help! Somebody help!

Jake struggles to get to his feet, and exits the hospital.

EXT. THE HOSPITAL. EVENING.

Jake leans against a wall to collect himself. Suddenly, a microphone is shoved in his face by:

SHAW

Darwin Shaw for "T.O.T", Mr. Boyle!
Can you confirm the rumors of your
daughter's suicide?

Jake musters his strength and grabs Shaw by the collar, slamming him against the wall. He gets in his face.

JAKE

You want a show, Shaw? I'll give
you a damned show.

SHAW

(scared)
Can you confirm--

JAKE

I'll give you the greatest show on
earth! "Celebrity Lawsuits",
starring Jake Boyle, but I won't be
suing my family.

SHAW

(shaky but defiant)
Well, then it's no deal.

JAKE

I'm gonna sue God!

Shaw's fear melts into confusion and then into a devious smile.

SHAW

Oh, it's a deal.

CUT TO:

INT. "T.O.T" STUDIOS. THE OFFICE OF DARWIN SHAW. MORNING. DAY
TWO OF THREE.

Shaw meets with his crew.

CREW MEMBER #1

This is crazy! Who ever heard of a
person suing God! It's unrealistic!
It's never been done before!

SHAW
Actually, it has!

He slams a folder down on his desk.

SHAW (CONT'D)
In Auschwitz. The night before they were sent to the gas chamber, a group of Rabbi's convened a council to put God on trial for the Holocaust! And guess what? They found the old boy guilty!

Silence.

SHAW (CONT'D)
There's been at least half a dozen lawsuits against God. But you're right in one respect: it's never been done on live TV before. And that's where we come in.

Reilly enters the room.

SHAW (CONT'D)
And here's our star! Judge Reilly, everyone!

REILLY
I don't want anything to do with this insanity!

SHAW
Do you hear yourself? This is a chance to jump start your career!

REILLY
Linda is sick over her daughter! Now you want me to help Jake make a fool of their family on national TV? I can't hurt her like that! I won't!

SHAW
How hurt will Linda be when she finds out you tipped me off about her daughter?

REILLY
I called to cancel our meeting, not for you to show up with a camera crew!

SHAW

You think she's going to believe that?

REILLY

Why are you doing this? Because Jake sued you once? That was five years ago! Get over it!

SHAW

That bastard took me for a million bucks. Then he had the balls to turn down my offer! You think I'm gonna let that go? I'm just getting my money's worth.

REILLY

So that's what this is all about? You getting revenge on a sick man?

SHAW

Oh, he's sick alright. Does your girlfriend know that her husband is dying?

REILLY

What?

SHAW

Yeah, it's unfortunate, really. Brain tumor. He's got a day. Maybe hours. Let's hope he has the decency to die after the show!

REILLY

Can't they operate?

SHAW

I know for a fact a doctor offered to try, but Jake shot him down!

REILLY

Why would he do that?

SHAW

Because of this.

Shaw hands him:

REILLY

A blank piece of paper?

SHAW

Not according to Boyle. In his twisted psyche, that blank piece of paper is, get this, a binding contract between him and "God".

REILLY

Jesus Christ, he really is crazy.

SHAW

Come, come, now. No blaspheming! Jake was kind enough to explain the whole thing to me. You see, while he was in "limbo", he made a deal: he'd come back to Earth for a week and if his family forgave him, he'd go to Heaven. If not, well, the rest is easy to figure out.

REILLY

I can't believe he turned down the surgery. He needs help.

SHAW

But here's the rub, and I'm no lawyer, but I feel it's why he's got a good case against the "Big Guy": with his daughter dead, that's one person who won't get the chance to forgive him, and now that he's dying, he's basically out of time. "God" really screwed this poor bastard. I'm just giving Boyle the opportunity to fight back.

REILLY

You're a sick man. I quit.

SHAW

I know that the bank is going to foreclose on your house, Reilly. Maybe I'm wrong, but I don't see Boyle's wife shacking up with a homeless guy. But then again, maybe love does conquer all.

REILLY

You have all the bases covered, don't you?

SHAW

It's what I do. It's your choice, of course.

(MORE)

SHAW (CONT'D)

But if you quit, I get to run the story of your affair with Jake's wife. So you see, either way, I win.

REILLY

I guess I've got no choice, then.

SHAW

Excellent. Taping starts tomorrow. See you there, "Judge"!

INT. THE PLAZA HOTEL. A HALLWAY. DAY.

The same hallway we saw Jake buzzing down once before.

He sees some of the same people, but they don't seem to recognize him. He passes the same maid he once had a "quickie" with, but she looks at him disapprovingly.

He makes his way to same room he once slept in and opens the door.

INT. A SUITE IN THE PLAZA HOTEL. EVENING.

A luxurious suite with a gorgeous view of the NYC skyline. Jake can't seem to relax.

He feels the sheets, but doesn't lay down. He checks the refrigerator/bar, but there is nothing he wants.

He decides to take a shower but is unfamiliar with the sophisticated knobs.

He turns on the TV. A commercial for the "T.O.T" Network advertises:

TV

It's "J.O.B vs. G.O.D" as "Celebrity Lawsuits" with Judge Reilly kicks off this Friday! Watch as "Mr. Lucky" sues God! Only on the "Talk of the Town" network!!

Jake changes the channel to the local news, where the lead story is, of course:

REPORTER

The sad tale of "Mr. Lucky" has taken a strange twist today, as the "T.O.T" Network announced that Boyle will be featured on a new show called "Celebrity Lawsuits". And as we found out, this show is about more than botched botox or failed face lifts. Indeed, the defendant in this case, is God Himself.

He turns the TV off and stares at his manuscript on the coffee table. Jake opens to the first page and begins reading.

INT. JAKE'S SUITE. DAWN. DAY THREE OF THREE.

An alarm clock goes off. We see the bed is empty.

Jake turns the last page of his book over. It's obvious he hasn't slept.

He shuts the alarm off and walks into the bathroom. The alarm goes off again. He returns and tosses it in the trash. The alarm stops.

He re-enters the bathroom as the alarm goes off again.

Jake stares at his haggard reflection and sees Peter(pg.7)standing behind him. He washes his face, trying to ignore him.

PETER

Hello, Jake.

JAKE

You come to take me to hell? Well I'm not ready to go yet. Not until I've had my day in court.

PETER

Jake, this is ridiculous.

JAKE

I'll tell you what's ridiculous: life! Because it's rigged! You're born, you live, you die, and you've got no say over any of it!

PETER

You're looking at it all wrong. There are no guarantees in life, except for these: we are born, we die and God loves us the whole time.

Jake picks up his manuscript, shaking it at Peter.

JAKE

God loves me? Did you know I lost my parents when I was two weeks old? That my adopted parents were alcoholics who used to beat me? If that's love, God can keep it!

PETER

And I know that you've also been incredibly lucky in your life as well.

JAKE

Lucky? I've lost everything! My family! My fortune! My life! And the worst thing is, I don't remember any of it! I feel like I'm paying for another man's sins! You tell me how that's fair!

PETER

Everything happens for a reason, Jake. Sometimes, that reason isn't clear to us, not until years later, when you can look back with the benefit of hindsight--

JAKE

I don't have years. I've got a day, if I'm lucky! How can you say that God has some "grand design" for my life when all I see is randomness and pain?

PETER

Remember when you asked me what I was doing in that place?

JAKE

Lemme guess: you were there to help me! Well, you sucked at the whole "therapist" thing, thank you very much! In fact, you're the reason why I'm in this mess!

PETER

You don't know how right you are.

JAKE

What's that supposed to mean?

PETER

You're not the only one looking for forgiveness Jake. The train accident that killed your parents? I was the conductor.

JAKE

What? So all of this, my whole stinking life, it was your fault?

PETER

I used to think so. That's why I was there. I spent a long time in that place between heaven and hell, reliving the accident over and over. Hoping that the next night, things would be different. I would save everyone on that train. But every night it was the same. The crash. The screams. Those sounds were burned into my mind. That was my purgatory, Jake.

JAKE

Am I supposed to feel sorry for you?

PETER

I don't expect you to forgive me. What I needed to do was find a way to forgive myself. I thought helping you was my chance.

JAKE

And we know how that worked out.

PETER

Eventually I realized what happened that night was God's will.

JAKE

He took my parents, my daughter. Everything I ever had! He destroyed me! I'm supposed to just chalk it up to "God's will"?

PETER

Yes. Because it's the only way to find peace when things go wrong! If you accept--

Jake clutches his head in pain.

JAKE

I accept nothing!

PETER

I'm trying to help you, Jake. Please let me.

JAKE

Maybe this tumor screwed up my brain so bad that I imagined all of this. You're probably not even real! So I'm gonna close my eyes, and when I open them, maybe you'll be gone.

Jake closes his eyes. He opens them. Peter is gone.

INT. T.O.T. STUDIOS, MIDTOWN MANHATTAN. DAY.

A TV studio dressed up as a "courtroom".

As the studio audience begins to file in, Jake spies some of his "friends" from the New Canaan Men's Shelter. Among them are Biker Dude, the Midget, and the Homeless Man, who, of course, approaches Jake and asks for:

HOMELESS MAN

Change?

In walks Jesus, dressed to the "nines".

JAKE

I'm surprised you came. Thanks.

JESUS

Don't thank me yet.

SHAW

Ah, "J.C."! Glad to have you! Hope you don't mind me hiring your "attorney", Jake, but God needs a lawyer, too! And I see you've brought some of your friends from the shelter along! How sweet!

JAKE

After all that religious crap you were always talking, you sell out to this guy? How much is he paying you, huh?

JESUS

You got it all wrong, bro. I'm working "pro porno"--that means "for free".

JAKE

It's "pro-bono", you idiot! I can't believe you would do this to me.

JESUS

That's funny. I was gonna say the same thing to you.

SHAW

Two minutes, people!!

Jake takes his place at the left podium. Jesus takes the podium to the right.

The presence of two PARAMEDICS unnerves Jake. He clutches his head briefly after a sharp pain.

Eli and Linda enter. Shaw grabs the DIRECTOR.

SHAW (CONT'D)

Make sure those two don't leave.

THE STUDIO SEATING AREA.

JAKE

Hello, Linda. Hello, son.

LINDA

I didn't come here to have a conversation with you.

JAKE

So why are you here?

LINDA

To convince you to have the operation. It's bad enough Eli lost his sister, does he have to lose his father, too?

JAKE

I'm sorry, but I can't. It's too late for that.

ELI

I told you this was a bad idea. Let's go.

The doors of the "courtroom" close.

LINDA

Open the doors!

DIRECTOR

No can do, ma'am. We're about to start. Thirty seconds, people!!! Places!

THE PODIUMS.

The director gives Jake and Jesus the lowdown.

DIRECTOR

You get an opening statement. You call your witnesses, we go to break. We come back, you get a final summation, the judge renders his verdict and then you get 30 seconds to do an interview. Got it?

The show begins! Paparazzi footage of Jake is interspersed with artist's renderings of God. The intro ends with footage of Jake's accident.

Shaw plays the role of host/Greek chorus:

SHAW(V.O.)

"Mr. Lucky" Jacob Osmond Boyle had a life most can only dream of: Fame! Fortune! Family! But in the blink of an eye, he lost it all! Was it bad luck, or an act of God? Does God even exist? We'll find some of those answers tonight as it's "J.O.B vs. G.O.D" on Celebrity Lawsuits with Judge Reilly!

THE COURTROOM.

Jake's old "roommate" Marilyn enters the studio, in a bailiff's uniform, bellowing:

MARILYN

All rise!

REILLY

You may be seated.

MARILYN

Court is in session! Honorable Judge Reilly presiding! All parties in the case of Boyle vs. God, step forward, please!

REILLY

State your name for the record.

JAKE

Jacob Osmond Boyle, representing myself.

JESUS

Jesus Christ, Esquire, representing the defendant, the Almighty God.

There is a STIRRING among the audience. Some LAUGHTER.

REILLY

We'll proceed with opening arguments. Mr. Boyle?

Jake collects himself. He stares at his wife and son, then into the camera.

JAKE

Your honor, I will prove today that the defendant, commonly referred to as "God", initiated a contract that was unfulfillable. Therefore, I am asking that the contract be declared null and void, and that I no longer be held to the conditions therein. Thank you.

SHAW (O.C.)

A contract with "God"? Has Mr. Lucky lost his mind?

REILLY

Defense counsel, proceed with your opening, please.

JESUS

Yeah, thanks, Judge. Listen, my client don't owe this guy shit---

REILLY

I will remind you to watch your language in this courtroom, counsel!

JESUS

My bad. Yeah, like I was saying, God doesn't owe Mr. Boyle nothing--anything--because my client basically hooked this dude up his whole life. He had the world by the balls, you feel me? A deal's a deal. That's it. I'm done.

The audience begins BUZZING again. Some people LAUGH.

REILLY

Order! Mr. Boyle, I understand you have evidence to be put into the record?

JAKE

Yes, your honor. This is the contract I signed with God.

REILLY

Hand it to the bailiff, please.

Jake hands the contract to Marilyn, who in turn hands it to Reilly.

SHAW (O.C.)

Forget the Bible, folks! This is the "greatest story ever told"!

The "Judge Cam" posted behind the bench allows us to see that:

REILLY

Let the record show the plaintiff has submitted a blank piece of paper.

SHAW

(to staff)

Cue the "cuckoo" bird music!

We hear "CUCKOO, CUCKOO, CUCKOO". The audience BUZZES.

JAKE

Blank? What, are you blind?

REILLY

Order! Order! Mr. Boyle, that's your first warning. Tread carefully!

JAKE

That's good advice! Maybe you should've followed it yourself instead of sleeping with my wife!

SHAW (O.C.)

Whaaaaat? Oh, no, he didn't!

The camera faces Linda, who sinks into her seat as the director begins the countdown to a commercial.

SHAW (CONT'D)

(to staff)

No commercials!

JESUS

Objection! Irrelevant!

REILLY

Sustained!

SHAW (O.C.)

We'll have more on Judge Reilly's affair with Linda Boyle on "Celebrity Meltdowns" at 9!

Reilly hands the "contract" back to Marilyn.

REILLY

Mark it "Exhibit A"!

SHAW (O.C.)

The verdict is in!! Boyle is nuts!

REILLY

Proceed.

JAKE

Well, after signing the contract, I woke up in the hospital and I couldn't remember a damned thing. By the time I recalled the terms of the agreement, I found out I only had three days to live, making it a total of five instead of the agreed-upon seven days! And that's only one reason the contract should be declared void.

Shaw speaks into his headset mic. Reilly hears via an earpiece.

SHAW
 (to Reilly)
 Ask him about his daughter.

Reilly shakes his head in disgust.

SHAW (CONT'D)
 Do it.

REILLY
 (to Jake)
 Are there any other reasons?

Jake looks over and Eli and Linda. Eli shakes his head "No".

JAKE
 Yes. You see, your honor, I discovered that one of the people I had wronged was my daughter. But before I could apologize--

SHAW (O.C.)
 As we reported yesterday in a "T.O.T" exclusive, Crystal Boyle recently took her own life!

JAKE
 ...she killed herself.

The crowd gasps. Linda shoots Reilly an angry look.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 So now I can never get my daughter to forgive me. Therefore, I can't fulfill the contract, so how can God hold me liable?

REILLY
 Mr. Christ, your opening statement?

JESUS
 Thank you, your honor. Everyone here knows Mr. Boyle's story. As a baby, he lost his parents in a train accident. Now you may ask yourself, how could God do that? Well, God didn't do that. We all have free will, and because God gives us that freedom, people make mistakes.

(MORE)

JESUS (CONT'D)

Sometimes, those mistakes cause people to get hurt, sometimes people die. But Jake Boyle didn't die. In fact, I would argue that God saved his life!

AUDIENCE

Amen! Alright! Praise the Lord!

JESUS

He could've, should've died, twice, but God had a plan for him. And this man, who started life behind the eight ball, was blessed, by God, with such good fortune that "lucky" became part of his name! Now the accident that almost killed him, that wasn't his fault. But where he wound up after his "death", well, he chose to be there. You wanna say I'm crazy, fine.

SHAW (O.C.)

I'll say it: this guy's crazy!

JESUS

But it all goes back to free will. You see, God doesn't choose people to go to Hell: people go to Hell because they don't choose GOD!

AUDIENCE

Alright! Amen! Ain't that the truth?

JESUS

The contract wasn't impossible! It was a gift! Another chance to choose God. No one ever promised it was going to be easy! We do things in this life and we've gotta answer for them, now or later. Now, what happened to his daughter was a tragedy, but it wasn't God's fault, it was--

Jake leaves his podium. The crowd starts to hoot and holler like a Jerry Springer audience.

SHAW (O.C.)

Uh oh!

JAKE

It's not my fault she killed herself! It's not my fault!

REILLY

Order! Mr. Boyle! Return to your podium! Mr. Boyle!

JESUS

I didn't say it was!

Jake shoves Jesus! The crowd goes wild. Jesus doesn't react. The bailiff, Marilyn, separates them!

Jake feels a sharp pain in his head again. He leans against the podium, clutching his forehead, and collapses.

Linda rises. Shaw smiles.

REILLY

(to director)

Cut to a commercial!

SHAW

No!

The PARAMEDICS rush over to aid Jake.

PARAMEDIC

No pulse!

They shock Jake with a defibrillator in order to restart his heart. They do it once, twice, three times.

Jake awakens! He steps to the podium.

JAKE

I call my first witness! I call God to the stand!

A bolt of lightning strikes the studio! The lights go out as we hear the BOOM of thunder.

CUT TO:

THE AUDIENCE.

The Homeless Man makes his way towards Jake.

JAKE

Really? Dude, I don't have any damned change!

HOMELESS MAN

I was never asking you for change.
I was asking you to change.

The Homeless Man makes his way to the witness stand.

HOMELESS MAN (CONT'D)

Do we have to do the whole
"swearing" thing? It's a little
redundant, don't you think? "So
help me", yadda, yadda, yadda.

JAKE

You're not....

He gives Jake a knowing smile.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Prove it.

The Homeless Man snaps his fingers. The lights come back on.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Coincidence.

HOMELESS MAN/GOD

You can believe that if you'd like
to.

JAKE

When I was ten years old, I--

HOMELESS MAN/GOD

You stole a quarter from a blind
beggar and used it to buy a candy
bar. Feeling guilty, you ate half
and threw the rest in your
neighbor's mailbox.

Jake is taken aback. He's--

JAKE& GOD

(together)

...never told anyone that story!

JAKE

Wait, how do I even remember that
when I lost my memory?

God smiles at him, and His eyes seem to sparkle. Jake finds
himself smiling back, despite his anger.

GOD

You have something you want to ask me.

JAKE

Yes. Yes I do. You know everything, right? The past, the present, the future.

GOD

Yes.

JAKE

You must've known that my family was never going to forgive me. That Crystal was going to kill herself. That this tumor would kill me before I had the chance to make things right. Why did you give me another chance when you knew I would fail?

GOD

Jake, you love your children, correct?

JAKE

Of course I do.

GOD

Over the course of their lives, they've disappointed you. They've made some bad choices, just like every other kid. Maybe they hung out with the wrong people, maybe they stole a quarter from a blind man.

He smiles at Jake.

GOD (CONT'D)

But no matter how much they disappointed you, you'd forgive them. You'd give them another chance to prove that they'd learned from their mistakes, because you're their father and you love them. Right?

JAKE

Right.

GOD

Well, I'm your father. You're my child. Before you were even born, I knew you and I loved you. So when you do wrong, it hurts me even more than it does you. But I'll always give you the chance to learn from your mistakes because that's what a father does.

JAKE

But you can stop people from making mistakes, yet you don't! You let us do wrong!

GOD

Yes.

JAKE

But why?

GOD

I gave you life so that you can live it, Jake.

JAKE

That's not good enough! I want an answer!

GOD

Do you deserve any more of an answer than a parent who loses a child to cancer? Than an innocent baby aborted by it's own mother?

JAKE

But why do you let things like that happen? Why do you let evil exist?

GOD

Son, I did not bring evil into this world. When I made the Earth, it was a paradise. There was no evil, no sin, no death. Man chose to loose those things upon the world when he rejected my gifts.

JAKE

But why even give us the choice between good and evil?

GOD

You teach your children values and morals, then you send them out into the world, hoping they do the right thing, but it's not guaranteed. I'm no different than any other parent. I let you find your own way.

JAKE

So you just abandon us?

GOD

Of course not. If one of your children needed something, you'd drop everything to help them, wouldn't you? I'm no different. I'm always there.

JAKE

But when I needed your help, you weren't there for me!

GOD

Wasn't I?

JAKE

Were you there for me when my parents were killed? When that clock fell on my head? When Crystal slit her wrists? Where were you then?

GOD

Right beside you. When you hurt, I hurt. When you wept, I wept. Your joys were my own, your sadness, mine as well.

JAKE

But why did you take my parents from me? Let me lose everything? Why did you take my daughter from me?

GOD

Son, did you listen to a word of Jesus' opening statement?

JAKE

You're not gonna tell me he's "the" Jesus, are you?

GOD

He's a great kid, but he's
absolutely nuts.

JAKE

Oh, thank God.

GOD

You're welcome! But that doesn't
mean he wasn't right.

JAKE

I don't understand.

GOD

He was talking about free will. The
same freedom that allows you to
choose good or evil gives you the
chance to make mistakes. Mistakes
have consequences. Sometimes
terrible ones. I feel the pain of
those choices, just as you would
feel it if one of your children
lost his way. I feel all of your
pain, the suffering of every last
one of my children.

JAKE

Then why don't you stop it? Why
don't you end suffering?

GOD

How can you appreciate the good
without the bad? The sweet without
the bitter? Love without hate?
Peace without suffering? These are
the things you learn in this world.
But if you believe, if you have
faith, you know that suffering, no
matter how great that suffering is,
is only temporary. There's a world
beyond this one, where no one
suffers ever again.

JAKE

But according to this contract,
I've got no shot of getting there!

GOD

Says who?

JAKE

I didn't fulfill the terms! I didn't receive forgiveness from anyone!

GOD

Do you think you need to be forgiven?

JAKE

Well, that's what it says in the contract.

GOD

I'll ask you again. Do you think you need to be forgiven?

JAKE

Well, yeah.

GOD

Why?

JAKE

Look at all the things I've done! I was a lousy husband, a terrible father!

GOD

Go on.

JAKE

And now that I think of it, there's so many people I screwed over, I couldn't possibly get them all to forgive me, even if I had all the time in the world.

GOD

Exactly.

JAKE

Then you know I had every reason to sue you! The contract was impossible to fulfill!

GOD

That's if you read the contract the way you're reading it.

JAKE

There's no other way to read it!

GOD

Isn't there? What are the terms?

JAKE

That if I find forgiveness, I get the chance to go to heaven when I die.

GOD

Correct.

JAKE

I don't understand. You're agreeing with me, but you're saying I'm reading it wrong. Who else do I have to get forgiveness from?

GOD

You're not always gonna get people to forgive you, no matter how sorry you may be. Sometimes the hurt you've caused them is just too great. So really, there's only two individuals who need to forgive you. The first one is the hardest: you have to learn to forgive yourself. The second is the easy. All you need do is ask.

It suddenly dawns on Jake what the contract really means.

JAKE

I was angry about the things you'd taken from me, when all this time you'd given me everything I'd ever needed. Even this.

Jake holds up the contract.

JAKE (CONT'D)

This wasn't some special deal. It's the same offer you give everyone. Isn't it?

GOD

Yes.

JAKE

Then I know what I have to do. God, Father, I'm sorry for...so much. I know I don't deserve your forgiveness, but I'll ask for it anyway. Please forgive me.

GOD

I forgive you, Jake. I'll always
forgive you. Now, wasn't that easy?

He smiles at Jake. Jake smiles back.

JAKE

No further questions, your honor.

God rises from his seat and walks over to Jake. They embrace.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Hey, God?

GOD

Yes?

JAKE

You realize you just let yourself
be seen on national television?

GOD

Oh, I wouldn't worry about that.

Jake looks over at the floor where the Paramedics are still
working on his body as Linda and Eli helplessly look on.

JAKE

You mean, they never saw you?

GOD

Nope.

The courtroom is in chaos as Shaw gives us the play by play.

SHAW

And there you have it, folks! Jake
Boyle sues God, and loses! Maybe
there isn't a God after all!

God SNAPS his fingers and Shaw's perfectly coiffed mane falls
right off of his head! Jake gives God a goofy grin.

GOD

What? It was hair plugs anyway!

They share a LAUGH.

GOD (CONT'D)

Ready to go home, son?

JAKE

Actually, no. There's something I
need to do first.

GOD
I know. See you soon.

JAKE
Yeah. Soon.

They embrace once more. God disappears. The paramedics "call it".

PARAMEDIC
He's gone.

Jake's soul walks over to a distraught Linda and wipes a tear from her face. She pauses as if she felt his touch, and is suddenly calm and peaceful.

He drapes an arm around Eli's shoulders. He, too is suddenly calm. Eli and Linda embrace as Jake's soul fades into a bright light. He is gone.

INT. A DOCTOR'S OFFICE. RECEPTIONIST'S DESK. DAY.

RECEPTIONIST
The doctor will see you now.

We see the back of a woman's head as she rises and makes her way down the hall to the office. She passes a happy, smiling, Maggie(pg.3)in the hallway.

WOMAN
I'm looking for the doctor's office?

MAGGIE
Right there, honey. Let me tell you, he's terrific. He's really gonna help you, girl!

The woman knocks on the door.

DOCTOR
Come in.

CUT TO:

INT. THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE.

Jake sits behind a desk. A plaque reads, "Dr. Jake Boyle, Psychiatrist".

The door opens and we see the woman is Jake's daughter, Crystal. She peeks in, shy and unsure of herself.

CRYSTAL

Hello, Doctor? I'm Crystal. I was
told you could help me.

JAKE

Yes I can, Crystal. Yes I can.

THE END.