

Mind Over Matter (Evaluating life from the inside)

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ACT I

Scene 1

*A man is seen laying in a hospital bed. Eventually he sits up and looks around confused...*

CHRIS

What? Where...where am I? Is this a hospital bed? Am I dead or...god, what's happened? What's that? Is there someone there? Come out! What the hell. This can't be real. Come out! Help me!

*Eventually a well dressed old woman appears from the side of the stage and approaches Chris in the bed.*

ELIZABETH

Hello Christopher.

CHRIS

Mum?

ELIZABETH

Yes. Well, no. I'm merely a fragment of your own imagination manifested by you as the image of your mother, Elizabeth. So no, sort of.

CHRIS

What?

ELIZABETH

Oh darling, come on. Do you really need me to repeat that?

CHRIS

No, I got all that. Why am I imagining you?

ELIZABETH

You can do the math. Where are we? Or, more importantly where are you?

CHRIS

I don't know. Everything seems dark. Dark and bland.

ELIZABETH

It's a bit more obvious that that. What are you in?

CHRIS

A hospital bed?

(CONTINUED)

ELIZABETH

Correct. And that means?

CHRIS

Hold on. So if I'm in a hospital bed, does that mean I'm dead?

ELIZABETH

Think a bit bigger, dear.

CHRIS

Well, am I dying?

ELIZABETH

Close enough. This is getting boring so I'll just come out and say it. You know it all anyways, because I know it and I am you. I guess our subconscious mind can't be bothered to eek it out in dregs because I certainly can't.

CHRIS

What the hell is going on?

ELIZABETH

I'm getting to that. You're in a coma.

CHRIS

But why? Shit. And why is this happening?

ELIZABETH

Now THAT will all become clearer as this...what would you call this? Meta-intervention? Metervention? God, that sounds daft. Ah well, something like that. But yes, I'm here to talk to you about...YOU.

CHRIS

Why me?

ELIZABETH

Well, more so the your actions than you as a physical form. I'm here to talk to you about your life.

CHRIS

So...let me get this straight. This is my mind, as the form of my mum, that being you, that's telling me my life's shit.

ELIZABETH

Near enough yes. Well, you've led a shitty life, not so much that your life is shit. But more so will we, or more accurately your mind, be evaluating the choices you've made in your life rather than your life as a whole. The individual decisions that have led you to where you are...now. Here.

CHRIS

Ok. Well, I thought my life was alright I guess. I didn't think I made THAT many bad decisions. Did I? Surely I wasn't that much of a mini Hitler.

ELIZABETH

Well, that's for me, and in all tends and purposes you, to know and, well...for you to remember.

CHRIS

God this is crazy.

ELIZABETH

Quite the contrary. Arguably this is the sanest thing that has happened to us, to you, in a long long time. So, where should we begin?

CHRIS

At the beginning?

ELIZABETH

I suppose there's no other logical place to start. What do you remember of your childhood.

CHRIS

Shepherd's pie.

ELIZABETH

Is THAT it?

CHRIS

For the most part. Never liked the stuff but we had it near enough every day. You should know, you cooked it.

ELIZABETH

Not really your mum, remember.

CHRIS

Yeah, yeah, got it. You've certainly got her coldness down to a tee.

ELIZABETH

There we go. Now we've struck on something. Now we're getting somewhere.

CHRIS

OK, but I thought this was about me.

ELIZABETH

It is. And what do you think caused her coldness? What drove her away?

CHRIS

I don't know.

ELIZABETH

Think harder.

CHRIS

God, I don't know, OK.

ELIZABETH

Think closer.

CHRIS

I DON'T KNOW.

ELIZABETH

You were a little shit as a teenager. Ever think it might have been YOU that drove her away?

CHRIS

Well yeah, I wasn't the best behaved. But I wasn't THAT bad though. I mean, I made mistakes like any little kid, I...

ELIZABETH

You were a little shit. Remember the time you trashed the house, it took 5 days to clean up the mess.

CHRIS

That wasn't me, that was everyone else.

ELIZABETH

And what was everyone else doing inside the house? Why were they trashing it?

CHRIS

I threw a party.

ELIZABETH

That's right. And when you left your mother with the fall out, how do you think she felt?

CHRIS

Bad.

ELIZABETH

A lot fucking worse than bad. And the suspensions! The expulsions! How many schools did you go through? Six? Seven?

CHRIS

Alright.

(CONTINUED)

ELIZABETH

And the car. God, the fucking car. I suppose you don't remember that now, do you? I suppose you didn't mean to do it. You fucking tried to drive the car and crashed it. Know how much it cost to repair that?

CHRIS

Alright. OK, I wasn't the greatest teenager in the world, but I did what teenagers do best: Push the limit. I had a few rocky years but I pulled it all together in the end.

ELIZABETH

Mmmhmmm. If you say so.

CHRIS

Whats that supposed to mean?

ELIZABETH

Oh nothing. You'll see soon enough.

CHRIS

This isn't a game. This is serious.

ELIZABETH

Alright. God, do you have my script or something? Of course I know it's serious because you know it's serious.

CHRIS

My head hurts.

ELIZABETH

So does mine.

CHRIS

Stop taking the piss.

ELIZABETH

I will if you will.

CHRIS

I give up.

ELIZABETH

And there's another problem of note. You always give up too easy.

CHRIS

I wonder why...

ELIZABETH

At the first sign of trouble you just throw your hands in the air, you mutter under your breath, you sigh and you walk away. And that's not right, Chris. That's not fair on all the people who's worked towards giving you an easy life.

CHRIS

Easy life? pah. Well, what else can I do when things don't go right?

ELIZABETH

Don't act spoiled, it's unbecoming. You can stand there and you can face them. You don't sigh and throw several litres of alcohol down your throat. How things would be different if you could face your problems and admit to your mistakes.

CHRIS

Don't you start about the drinking, I DO NOT have a problem. Ok then, name me one thing that would be different.

ELIZABETH

You would still have a decent relationship with your mother. You would be close. You would have a marriage that's not falling apart. You'd have a son that's not afraid every night his father stumbles in drunk.

CHRIS

We're doing just fine, thank you very much.

ELIZABETH

How often do you see your mother? How often do you talk to her? How often do you tuck your son in at night? How often do you...

CHRIS

Often enough.

ELIZABETH

Seriously? I know the answer...

CHRIS

So I must do too. Yeah I get it. Whatever. So what we get along well enough. We survive. We we're never too close to begin with. You. Jenny couldn't way to pull away.

ELIZABETH

Go on, I'm listening. Can't say I'm interested, though.

CHRIS

Look, I don't want to do this, Ok. I've had enough of this.

ELIZABETH

What's the matter? Am I cutting too deep into uncharted territory?

CHRIS

You're cutting my ego pretty deeply. When I woke up today, or whatever, I don't know if there's a fucking concept of time in my imagination, I didn't think 'Oh I know what I want. I want to feel shit about my life'

ELIZABETH

No one wants to. But you need it, otherwise this wouldn't be happening. Think of it this way, the very fact that you're imagining this intervention means you've entered the stage of acceptance. You know you have to change.

CHRIS

But it's just so hard to change the way I've come to be. It's not like changing a song on an ipod.

ELIZABETH

No, it's difficult. But I believe you have the capacity to change. Self belief is worth a lot more than people give it credit. You can't fully realize your goals without the self belief in your ability to achieve them.

CHRIS

What's with all the philosophical rubbish?

ELIZABETH

I'm as well read as you perceive me to be. Am I going to have to write it down?

CHRIS

No, I got it. I was questioning it's relevance.

ELIZABETH

Do you not see it?

CHRIS

Not really.

ELIZABETH

Well, I guess I'll just have to let it sink in for a while. I must be off now. Bye.



CHRIS

Wait, mum, don't go.

ELIZABETH

Not your mum.

*Elizabeth leaves the stage*

CHRIS

Fucking imagination screwing things up. I can't be dealing with this. Right, how do I wake up in...god, the real world. This is alien. God what does this even mean. Ok, so I wasn't the best behaved teenager and I'm certainly not the best son I could be, but god, it's not entirely my fault. Well, what should I do now? Do I just sit here until I wake up? What if I never wake up? Fuck, what if I have to spend eternity here? Distant? Problems? God, that was a load of bullshit. And that's coming from MY mind? Why do I have to listen to this toss? This isn't fair.

Scene 2

*Jenny enters the stage.*

JENNY

Not a lot is fair, nowadays.

CHRIS

Jenny! What are you doing here?

JENNY

Jesus, you really are a slow learner aren't you. Remember, this is all you! You're imagining us as a way to evaluate all the bad decisions you've made throughout your life. You're going to be here for a while, I would imagine. I'm here because you want me to be here.

CHRIS

God, I give up. Just tell me what I've done.

JENNY

And again, I'm here because you want me to be here. This is all for YOUR benefit. You tell me what you've done.

CHRIS

Well, erm, I've been a shit husband.

JENNY

And?

(CONTINUED)

CHRIS

A terrible father.

JENNY

Why?

CHRIS

Can we not go into this?

JENNY

I want you to say why.

CHRIS

I don't know.

JENNY

I'm waiting.

CHRIS

What's this all about?

ELIZABETH

You know.

CHRIS

Ok, so I have a few drinks every now and then, but so does everyone.

JENNY

Carved into the temple at Delphi is the phrase 'Nothing in excess'.

CHRIS

And?

JENNY

No reason. I just thought it poignant. A fun fact, if you will.

CHRIS

You think I was excessive?

JENNY

Who am I to say?

CHRIS

Me, if you're to be trusted. Hallucination or not, just say it. I can take it, I'm a big boy.

JENNY

Ok, yes, your drinking was excessive. To the point where you damaged every relationship you held. You're a ghost, skipping from one place to the other, neither here nor there, and certainly not ALIVE.

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CHRIS

Ok.

JENNY

Happy?

CHRIS

Not really, but maybe it's just one of those horrible things that I'm supposed to hear.

JENNY

Certainly. Do you know why you're here?

CHRIS

To find God?

JENNY

Don't make me laugh.

CHRIS

What's wrong with that?

JENNY

You're not religious. Think about the bigger picture.

CHRIS

I'm here to change the way I am.

JENNY

Better. And why are you here? In this mental purgatory?

CHRIS

This mental prison, you mean. I'm in a coma.

JENNY

Good. And do you know why?

CHRIS

No I don't.

JENNY

Think. Close your eyes. What can you hear?

CHRIS

Nothing. I can't hear any...I hear the sound of a car running, I hear screams. A crash.

JENNY

You're getting there. What can you smell?

CHRIS

Burning. I can smell smoke. And...I can smell alcohol. Wait? No! I didn't, did I?

(CONTINUED)

JENNY

You did.

CHRIS

God, I...I can't believe I did this.

JENNY

It's not the first time. Stop trying to avoid mentioning it! That's still a form of denial. Tell me, what was it you did? What brought you here?

CHRIS

I drunk and I drove...and I...I think I crashed into someone. The other...the other people, are they alive?

JENNY

Who knows?

CHRIS

I have to know.

JENNY

Just like you had to have that last drink. And the one after that. Did you have to know you'd kill someone before you did it?

CHRIS

I don't need to hear this.

JENNY

You do. Stop trying to excuse yourself. You don't care about the consequences of your actions, you never have. And as soon as the consequences catch up to you, at the first sign of trouble, you close your eyes, you cover your ears and you try to drown it out with bullshit explanations and oxymorons. You have failed me. You failed our son. You failed yourself. And you failed those people in the car you crashed into.

CHRIS

I...I'm sorry.

JENNY

I'm going. I can't be bothered to listen to this.

CHRIS

Wait, Jenny don't go. Don't leave.

JENNY

Goodbye, Chris. You've gone too far this time. I wish I'd left you sooner. Maybe then, it might have made you realize the gravity of the situation.

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*Jenny leaves the stage.*

CHRIS

I'm a disgrace. How could I have done this. If I could go back in time, I'd have never drove home. I'd have never gone out to the bar. I'd have never wronged anyone. God, it's so clear now. That last drink. The key in the ignition. The speedometer rising. I close my eyes. Just for a second and...then...I'm evil. I...I...I should just die.

Scene 3

*Marcus enters the stage.*

CHRIS

Who are you? I don't recognize you. Is it because of the crash? Have I lost part of my memory?

MARCUS

Near enough. I'm the person driving the car you plowed into. Was the person.

CHRIS

Oh God, I'm...I'm sorry. I...don't know what to say.

MARCUS

That's a nice start. I'm not here to demand retribution anyways, I'm here to help you. I'm here because you want me here. I'm here because you're here.

CHRIS

Are you dead? Did I...

MARCUS

I don't know. The resolution to me is as distant as reality is to you.

CHRIS

That's quite far away.

MARCUS

It is. And it seems to be getting farther and farther away. Do you mind if I ask you a question?

CHRIS

I don't think I'm in a position to refuse.

MARCUS

Are you really sorry?

(CONTINUED)

CHRIS

What?

MARCUS

Sorry. For everything you've done. To hurt your mother. To hurt your wife. To hurt your son. To hurt your liver. To hurt yourself. To hurt...me.

CHRIS

Yes. I mean, I wish I could take it all back. I don't want to live with the guilt. The thought of having hurt everybody I care about, and everyone and anyone else I could. I don't want to wake up. It's probably better for the world if I didn't.

MARCUS

No. That's not what this is about.

CHRIS

No, you don't see. I can't live on the way I have been. I've not been living. I've been surviving. I've been spreading misery to match my own. I'm never happy until I get the opportunity to scoff at other peoples misfortune.

MARCUS

And there's two ways you can deal with this. You can kill yourself, and I don't want that, no one wants that. You have a wife. You have a son! The other option...you can change. Change for their sake.

CHRIS

But how can I do that, when all I've left for them is the shit that is the foundations of hell I've laid.

MARCUS

You can stop drinking for one. And you can appreciate them for all they are, for all they've given you.

CHRIS

It's easier said than done. I've tried...

MARCUS

It's not going to happen overnight, Christopher. It's a long and uphill process. But you need to work at it. You need to stick with it. Conviction. Conviction is key.

CHRIS

Ok. I think I can do this. I think I can see the life I could have. I have to change. I WANT to change. For the sake of my son's childhood.

(CONTINUED)

MARCUS

That's good. That's the right attitude.

CHRIS

And to answer your question. I'm sorry. I really am. I really would go back and stop myself if I could. But I can't go back. I have to move forward.

MARCUS

That's right. Good luck.

*Marcus exits the stage. Chris goes back to sleep.*

Scene 4

*Chris wakes up in the bed to be surrounded by doctors and Elizabeth and Jenny.*

JENNY

Oh my god, he's waking up. Chris! Chris!

ELIZABETH

Chris, dear. Wake up.

CHRIS

What...where am I?

JENNY

You're in the hospital. Thank god. Jesus. Are you ok?

CHRIS

Erm...god, what?

ELIZABETH

Is he brain damaged? Whats wrong?

CHRIS

No...I, it's just my head kills.

JENNY

Do you know who I am?

CHRIS

Of course I bleeding do, Jenny. What happened?

ELIZABETH

You crashed. You've been in a coma for 24 hours.

*Chris falters as he remembers his dream.*

CHRIS

Right.

JENNY

Chris. Chris! Honey, how're you feeling?

CHRIS

Better.

*The END.*