Fever Teeth
An Original Play by Remy Patrizio

Cast
Jane
Theo
Oliver
Rita
Priest
Boss
Patients
SCENE 1:

Lights up on Jane and Theo in their apartment. Jane is lying on the ground in a yoga stretch, prostrate, with a book in her hand. Theo is cooking an egg.

THEO: What are you doing down there?

JANE: Harnessing my chi.

THEO: Are you hungry? This egg is done.

JANE: I’m okay, thanks. It would interfere with the pose.

THEO: Right, right. Since when are you into yoga?

JANE: I just felt like stretching. My joints have been out of whack and I read this magazine that said yoga was good for loosening up.

THEO: What magazine?

JANE: A girly one.

THEO: You read everything; I can’t keep up. The New Yorker, Us Weekly, comic book bibles, knitting manuals.

JANE: A girl has to educate herself. And besides, what else am I going to do?

THEO: You could get a job.

JANE: A job? Phhhh.

THEO: I want to be supportive of your spiritual growth, or whatever’s going on here, but we need money. You remember that flimsy green stuff, right? What happened to looking for work?

JANE: I wasn’t inspired by anything I saw in the wanted section.

THEO: What kinds of jobs were you considering?

JANE: I’m open to anything: the stock exchange, assisting a curator at the Art Institute, cutting hair. I’d like to work with people, you know, since I’ve spent so much time alone
recently.

THEO: Yeah, that sounds like a good idea. I have something I thought you might be interested in.

JANE: Oh yeah? What is it?

THEO: I went to the dentist the other day to have my teeth cleaned and there was a sign in the window; they’re looking for a dental technician. Remember how you used to collect teeth? And make things out of them?

JANE: Yeah.

THEO: Mom gave you your first collection, didn’t she?

JANE: That’s right. I was sitting there, I had just blown my candles out, and she offers me this beautifully wrapped present. I tear the wrapping paper and inside is a shoebox. I take off the lid and what’s inside? My bloody teeth. She had saved them all.

THEO: She was never good with presents.

JANE: That was when I started making my sculptures. That was my awakening. I should make things again.

THEO: So working in a dentist’s office is perfect, then! You can be around people, teeth, hear their stories, hang out, play with instruments, gossip in the back room.

JANE: You’ve thought this over, haven’t you?

THEO: I just think you’d like it.

JANE: I don’t know…I mean I don’t even floss half the time.

THEO: Just don’t mention that in your interview.

JANE: We could use the money. And I need to get back on my feet.

THEO: You’ll be great.

SCENE I.5:

The Dentist Office
The set is simple as befits a modest business. It should appear that the dentist office is lucrative but not in the best neighborhood. (They get some sketchy patients). The rooms are sectioned from each other with curtains; there are two rooms for dental work, a bathroom, and a supply room (teeth).

When the play opens, The Boss is sitting in a chair in his typical white lab coat and goggles, working on the mouth of an old lady. He is concentrating hard, organizing his materials. Jane is by his side, with health report in her hand.

JANE (looking at chart): Well, Mrs. Levy, this is your third root canal in the last few months.

MRS. MUNCH: Is that so?

JANE: It is. Now, we don’t usually see patients as frequently as we’ve seen you.

MRS. MUNCH: Well, I’m not just any patient, am I?

JANE: No, of course not. The thing is, we want to see you taking better care of your teeth, Mrs. Levy.

MRS. MUNCH: Yes, I’ve heard it before. But please go ahead, call me by my real name. I know what he calls me (motioning to the Boss).

JANE: What do you mean?

MRS. MUNCH: He calls me Mrs. Munch. I eat too many sweets so he gave me that nickname some years ago. It’s alright, dear.

JANE: I’m sorry.

MRS. MUNCH: It’s alright. He’s a pistol. I like that about him.

JANE: You’re just the woman to put him in his place.

THE BOSS: What’s that, Jane?

JANE: I was saying that someone needs to put you in your place.

THE BOSS: Ah yes, she loves schooling me. Now Munch, this is your third root canal in thirteen weeks. Am I correct about that Jane?

JANE: Yes, sir.
THE BOSS: Munch, I won’t have you coming in here again. Are you going to put down the caramels?

MRS. MUNCH: I can’t.

THE BOSS: What do you mean you can’t?

MRS. MUNCH: I can’t give them up now, Jerry. I would lose my edge. My trademark. Those candies, they’re in my pockets, my dresses, my shoes. Hell, I sleep with some in my underpants. My husband had quite a surprise on our honeymoon.

THE BOSS: That will do.

MRS. MUNCH: I won’t give them up. Drill me. I’m ready.

THE BOSS: She is the only person allowed to call me Jerry. Understand?

JANE: Got it.

THE BOSS: We’re going to put some anesthesia into your gums and you won’t feel a thing, just a little pinch and then nothing, numbness.

MRS. MUNCH: I like this part.

JANE: You’re one of the best patients I’ve seen yet, Mrs. Levine.

THE BOSS: Jane here is new but she’s doing well. She has a real knack for dental care.

MRS. MUNCH: I wish you the best of luck.

JANE: Thanks. I’m learning.

THE BOSS: Here it comes. (He does his thing and then peels off his gloves). You handled it like a pro. I’m going to let Jane take it from here. I say this with love, but I hope I don’t see you for a while.

The Boss exits. Jane ties her hair back and sits in his place.

JANE: Are you alright?

MRS. MUNCH: Very well, thank you.
JANE: Unfortunately, I have to finish up. It won’t hurt too badly. Just lie back and try to relax. *(She works on the teeth for a while and then finishes up).*

MRS. MUNCH: Thank you for the help. Now be a dear and walk me out.

JANE: Of course.

Mrs. Munch takes Jane’s arm and they walk to stage left. Mrs. Munch exits. Jane looks after her with a puzzled expression. Jane stands by the door of the office, and surveys the room. *In walks Rita. Rita is a siren: she has red lips, big hair and big boobs. She pops out of her uniform. Jane and Rita are new friends, if an unexpected pair.*

RITA: How’s it going?

JANE: Oh, it’s fine. I just worked on Mrs. Munch’s root canal. The Boss was threatening her with his pliers when I stepped in. I can’t believe nobody ever sues us.

RITA: Oh, they do. But you learn how to handle the situation. I remember I used to get terrified when these crack addicts would come in with bleeding gums.

JANE: Jesus. It doesn’t bother you now?

RITA: I just put on some fresh rubber gloves and try not to think too much. We’re something of a safe haven for the…under-appreciated of society. I tell myself it’s a good thing.

JANE: Absolutely.

RITA: Do you feel like you’re learning something?

BOSS: Of course she is!

RITA: Did I ask you?

BOSS: See how they treat me here. A few weeks and you’ll be back talking too.

JANE: I wouldn’t, sir.

BOSS: I haven’t heard that in a while.

RITA: Can Jane help me with my 4 o’clock?

BOSS: Sure thing.
RITA: Fantastic. *(Handing Jane the chart).* Take a quick look at this and then call him in.

JANE: Sam! Is there a Sam here?

SAM: Yep, I’m right here. This is my wife, Pam, is it ok if she comes in with me?

JANE: Sure. Is she here to hold your hand?

SAM: Not exactly.

PAM: I knocked his tooth out.

JANE: What?

SAM: I asked her to make me some eggs and she threw a bowl at my head.

PAM: I was reading a book on feminism and he asked me to scramble up an egg and it seemed so dominant, so insensitive.

SAM: I just wanted some fucking eggs, Pam.

JANE: Sit down, Sam, and we’ll get started. This is Rita, she is going to be handling you.

RITA: Hi Sam.

SAM: Hi. I’m embarrassed about this but I’m hoping you see a lot of crazy things in this office. I used to be so scared to come.

PAM: I didn’t know that.

SAM Yeah, I was terrified.

RITA: Oh yes, the ever present fear of the dentist’s office. I’ll never understand it.

SAM: Of course not. You work here.

RITA: But even when I was a little girl, I enjoyed going. You got a new toothbrush and they gave you a sticker. It was a piece of cake.

JANE: Yeah but it’s invasive to have someone prodding around in your mouth.

RITA: We take good care of our patients.
SAM: That’s good to hear. Your mouth is something sacred, though Pam would tell you otherwise.

PAM: Oh and what’s that supposed to mean!

SAM: You threw a bowl at my head! You’re a crazy bitch sometimes, I swear.

RITA: Alright, Sam, say ahhhhhh.

SAM: Aahhhhh!

RITA: Well, it’s definitely chipped. We’re going to have to repair it.

SAM: Will it hurt?

JANE: Not too badly.

PAM: This is all my fault.

SAM: Thank you, Captain Obvious.

PAM: I’m so sorry, Sam! I’m the worst Life Partner ever!

RITA: You two aren’t married?

PAM: Wife is too restrictive of an identity! BOO HOOO BOOOHHH HOH!

JANE: It’s alright! It could have happened to anyone. I mean, ideally you wouldn’t have thrown a bowl at his head, but we’ve all had our moments of domestic violence.

SAM: honey, don’t cry. I like my chipped tooth. It gives me character.

PAM: Oh, you’re so wonderful! I LOVE YOU SO MUCH! (smothering him with kisses).

SAM: Sit down. So how does this go?

RITA: I’m going to buff your teeth and then apply phosphoric acid to create crevices in the enamel. Then, I’ll apply resin that will slip into the cracks. I’ll sculpt the resin into a shape that fits in with your original tooth. I’ll polish the tooth and voila! No one will be the wiser.

JANE: In one second, you’ll be fixed, better.
SAM: Don’t you see this procedure all the time?

JANE: I’m new.

RITA: Jane has a curiosity we don’t usually see around here. Let’s begin.

SCENE 3:

*We see them next in a bar setting. They are both drinking.*

RITA: So how are you enjoying the office?

JANE: On a scale of one to enjoying it, I’m enjoying it.

RITA: It’s not too weird?

JANE: I guess that’s what I like about it. All the different personalities coming through keeps things interesting. How long have you worked there?

RITA: It’s been about five years. I went to dental school and started working with the Boss right after. I felt like I was moving up in the world, like I was a sort of public servant with my plastic gloves and facemask. My friends were tending bar or working desk jobs so I felt good. And I still do, I guess. People put their trust in you.

JANE: Yes, they do. And why shouldn’t they? One false move with the drill and you’ve got a cleft palate.

RITA: What about The Boss? Do you like him?

JANE: He’s good at what he does. He gets carried away from time to time but I like his commitment. There’s something under the surface though. I’m afraid to set him off.

RITA: He’s sensitive and more than he used to be. He changed when his wife left him.

JANE: He was married? What was she like?

RITA: I couldn’t tell you. He’s a man of few words. I’ve worked with him for all of these years but he doesn’t go into details.

JANE: People get divorced so often, it’s like it isn’t even worthy of conversation.

RITA: Are you speaking from experience?
JANE: Definitely not. I just don’t understand marriage I guess.

RITA: Why not?

JANE: It doesn’t make any sense. It’s shrinking yourself to be with one person.

RITA: Not necessarily-

JANE: How can two people be together forever if they’re hungry?

RITA: Hungry? What does that mean?

JANE: I don’t know how to explain.

RITA: Try.

JANE: There’s this one line I’ve always liked: “the seamless universe of the self.” I think that’s what I mean. There’s all this black matter inside of each of us; we have needs and desires and insecurities that one person can’t satisfy. It’s hunger.

RITA: You’re over thinking it.

JANE: Am I?

RITA: It could be simple. You could meet someone who makes you laugh and treats you right. Wouldn’t that be enough?

JANE: For me? Probably not.

RITA: I guess I’m setting the bar low. Are you seeing anybody?

JANE: No, it’s just my brother and I. Are you?

RITA: I was dating a podiatrist for a second there but it didn’t work out. Feet and teeth makes for a lot of boring anatomical discussions.

JANE I’m sorry to hear that.

RITA: Sometimes I feel like I’ll never meet someone but I try to keep my head up. When I first started, I thought I might get cute patients here and there. Little did I know: I haven’t had a normal man in that dentist chair in five years.
JANE: You could date the Boss.

RITA: Have you seen his hair plugs?

JANE: Yeah. They’re brutal. What are you looking at?

RITA: Do you see that guy over there? The one with the tie? I keep making eye contact with him.

JANE: Go introduce yourself.

RITA: You think I should?

JANE: There’s nothing to lose.

RITA: What was that line again? The one you quoted before.

JANE: The seamless universe of the self.

RITA: Right. I’m going to try to forget that.

JANE: Good luck.

Jane takes a pill from her purse and pops it.

SCENE 4:

Jane walks into her apartment and throws her keys on the table, and steps out of her shoes. Theo walks out of his room to greet her. The apartment is sparse but filled with stacks and stacks of books and magazines: cook books, science books, religious accounts, showing an interest in everything. It looks like the home of abandoned children, lots of odds and ends without order.

THEO: What’s up? How was work?

JANE: It was good. Some girl knocked her husband’s tooth out.

THEO: That sounds like disaster.

JANE: Yeah, but interesting.

THEO: I like your smock. Did you get to pick the print? (He sips his tea).
JANE: My superiors picked it. I wish I could say the same for you.

THEO: Hey!

JANE: What did you do today?

THEO: Well, I didn’t save any mouths but I tried to be noble, in my own small way. I made something.

JANE: Oh yeah? What is it?

THEO: Tennis balls with magnetic insides and a racket with the opposing strip. I was thinking of going to the court later.

JANE: You’ve never played tennis in your life.

THEO: That’s not true, I used to play with dad sometimes.

JANE: Oh yeah.

THEO: Mom called this afternoon actually. She wanted to see how you are.

JANE: See how I am. What does that mean?

THEO: I don’t know, it doesn’t mean anything.

JANE: She’s never been good on the phone. Did she have anything specific to say? Or did she just want to badger me about leaving school?

THEO: It’s hard to know. She wasn’t clear.

JANE: Sometimes I wish she would just stop calling.

THEO: That’s cold, Jane. Is it really that awful to talk to her?

JANE: Yeah.

THEO: What’s the alternative?

JANE: Screening her calls.

THEO: I’ll take the Mature Response for 500, please!
JANE: Do what you want. I’m tired.

THEO: Hey, I didn’t mean to stress you out. Ok?

JANE: It’s better with just the two of us, isn’t it? Did I make a mistake, asking you to come live with me?

THEO: Of course not. How are you feeling?

JANE: Great.

THEO: No headaches or anything?

JANE: I’m okay, Theo. Don’t worry about me. I see it all over your face.

THEO: I just want to make sure you feel okay. You know you should be careful and-

JANE I’m good. I’m just tired from work.

THEO: Relax than. I was thinking of cooking something. I found some recipes for soup that looked promising.

JANE: I’m going to read.

THEO: The botany book?

JANE: No, I’ve started one on Buddhism.

THEO: What did you switch?

JANE: I realized that I’ll probably never have a garden so I may as well water this (tapping her head) instead.

THEO: Very wise, young grasshopper.

JANE: You should read more. I have some books you might like. I’ll look for something.

THEO: (bowing to her mockingly) I bow to your knowledge.

JANE: (bowing back) Namaste. Is that what the Buddhists say?

THEO: I don’t think so.
SCENE 5:

Lights up. Time has passed. Consider a big clock on the wall. We’re back in the Dental Office. Jane has a new confidence, rushing about the office. She is efficient, looking at charts, organizing with the other staff members. She is in her element.

BOSS (with beard now): Jane, come here for a minute. Did you take x-rays for Mr. Jameson?

JANE: Yes, sir, I did.

BOSS: And what would you conclude?

JANE: It looks like Periodontitis.

BOSS: And what is that?

JANE: You don’t know?

BOSS: Of course I know. I’m testing you.

JANE: Right. Periodontitis is the advanced form of gingivitis. It is irreversible. The gum tissue and bone that surround and anchor the teeth could be weakened and so the patient’s teeth could become loose and eventually fall out. It’s also been linked to strokes and heart attacks. But that’s a side issue.

BOSS: Very impressive, Jane.

JANE: Thanks, sir. I’m learning, little by little. I made flashcards.

BOSS: Ha! No, but seriously, that’s very good. I hope you’re still finding time for fun.

JANE: Time for fun, I’ll write that in my palm pilot. Can I help you with anything else?

BOSS: I’ve been thinking, Jane, and I’d like you to start locking up around here.

JANE: Really?

BOSS: Yes. It’s a big responsibility, one that’s going to require some extra time and attention on your part.

JANE: I’d be happy to do that. It’s no problem.
BOSS: Excellent. Give me five minutes to finish up and then I’ll give you the instructions.

JANE: Great. (Leaving to find Rita). Rita! Rita! *Rita is holding a lead apron.* The Boss wants me to lock up tonight.

RITA: Wow. That’s great.

JANE: Yeah.

RITA: I have to say I’m surprised.

JANE: Surprised? Why?

RITA: He usually waits a long time to give someone that job. He’s never let me come anywhere near the office at night.

JANE: It’s just cleaning up, turning off faucets and organizing, locking the door. I’m glad he thinks I can handle it though. It’s been a while since people have put their trust in me.

RITA: Sure.

JANE: Well-

RITA: Listen, honey, I’m clocking out for today. Have fun.

JANE: Thanks. Boss?

BOSS: Yes?

JANE: It’s 5 o’clock.

BOSS: You’re right. *He digs into the pockets of his lab coat for the keys. The key ring is filled and filled with keys and doo-dads. He hands her the key ring.* There you are. The one for the office is this one.

JANE: So what do I do?

BOSS: You’re in charge of making sure everything is tidy. Make sure the tools are put away, the faucets are turned off, the sinks are clean, but most importantly: make sure the teeth are secure.

JANE: What do you mean?
BOSS: There is a safe in the store room; it’s on the back wall and on the top right. My most prized possession is in that safe. I want you to be sure it’s in there, and unharmed. Other than that, just lock the front door three times to the right.

JANE: Alright. Is there a code for the safe?

BOSS: Of course. *He dips into his pocket for a notepad and a pen and quickly writes it down for her.* Don’t show that to anybody. It’s our little secret.

JANE: I understand.

Boss: Good. Now I’ll clear everyone out of here.

SCENE 6:

As if on fast forward, we see everyone grabbing coats and bags and hurrying out until Jane is alone in the office. The lights dim and become bluer. Suddenly, everything is a bit mysterious, and exciting. Jane wanders around, touching instruments, looking in cabinets. She is enjoying the luxury of the empty environment. With some hesitation, she walks toward the safe. She looks down at the code, and punches it in. She pulls out the jar of teeth. She holds it in front of her, admiring it like a child. It catches a lot of light and we see all grimy, decayed, disordered teeth in it. There are hundreds. She undoes the top and sets it down and then sticks a gloved hand in, feeling the teeth with her hand. She appears to be enjoying it in a strange, fantastical, beastial way. She stops herself from enjoying it. Then she sticks a hand in and removes a tooth. A ghost materializes.

HARRY: Hello!

JANE: Calm down. You’re hearing things.

HARRY: No, you’re not.

JANE: AH! Who are you!!

GHOST: I’m a ghost, who are you?

JANE: Jane! I mean that’s my name. Where are you? I can’t see you.

HARRY: (materializing). Here I am. *He is a distinguished older gentleman, wearing a jacket and bow tie.* I’m even better than you would have imagined, am I right? Just kidding.

JANE: I wasn’t imagining anything.
HARRY: You sure about that?

JANE: Who are you?

HARRY: I’m a ghost.

JANE: A ghost? A real-live ghost?

HARRY: It’s something of a contradiction, isn’t it: a real ghost? But yes, I am here, right in front of you.

JANE: This can’t really be happening...What’s your name?

HARRY: It’s Harry. Nice to meet you, Jane.

JANE: Nice to meet you too. You’re pretty sharp for a ghost. Shouldn’t you be wearing a sheet or something? A paper bag?

HARRY: We’ve updated with the times.

JANE: Ah, I see. So, what are you doing appearing here?

HARRY: You summoned me.

JANE: I did?

HARRY: Yes.

JANE: How did I do that?

HARRY: That tooth that you’re holding contains my spirit. When you pluck it from the jar, I come forth.

JANE: *(She drops the tooth).* I’m holding your spirit?

HARRY: It’s intense, isn’t it?

JANE: Intense is an understatement. I don’t understand though, why are these teeth here?

HARRY: The Boss saves them.

JANE: Yeah but why?
HARRY: I’m not sure, dear.

JANE: I don’t understand this. You are dead, right?

HARRY: Yes.

JANE: You were buried in the ground? Ashes to ashes, carnations, crying relatives?

HARRY: That’s the basic idea.

JANE: This is unreal.

HARRY: It’s a new experience for me too. I’ve materialized before but the Plucker hasn’t had the vision to see me.

JANE: I see you, clear as day. Could I have a puff of that?

HARRY: Sure. Do you smoke?

JANE: This feels like the time to start.

HARRY: Do you like it?

JANE: (coughing). Yes. I (cough) think (cough) so. I’m talking with a ghost and smoking his cigar. My therapist from back in the day would be proud of how I’m coping, you know, opening myself up.

HARRY: I don’t mean to put you in your place but you had to know something would happen when you went near those teeth. They’re disgusting, all decayed and clumped together. It gives me a shiver.

JANE: Yeah, but they’re fascinating. Don’t you think?

HARRY: They help us to chew. And without them, we’d look quite strange. Other than that, I don’t see much there.

JANE: There is much more. Teeth tell you something about a person. There are people who floss, people who swallow mouth wash, people who forget to come in for years at a time. Teeth come in a lot of guises. There are yellow teeth, white teeth, mossy incisors, canines, molars, chipped and broken ones, rotting, decaying, shiny. I could take one look at your teeth and tell you everything.

HARRY: (baring his) What do mine say?
JANE: You’re probably pretty honest since yours are visible through your lips when you speak. They’re a little yellow so that’s either from cigars or the coffee you like to drink each morning, the tea you have before bed. They’re crooked, and you used to be self-conscious about that, but when your first girlfriend told you she liked your snaggle tooth, you accepted it. The color is uneven which means you don’t brush in front of a mirror but pace around in front of the TV. Am I right?

HARRY: I’m terrified by how right you are.

JANE: I told you. Teeth tell you everything.

HARRY: I hope you’re paid well; you’re good at what you do.

JANE: I do alright.

HARRY: Getting by isn’t good enough, is it?

JANE: You’re right about that. I’m really glad to meet you, Harry.

HARRY: (kissing her hand). And I you! I’ll see you soon. He disappears.

Jane pops a pill.

SCENE 7

The next day. The office. Jane is distracted while working on a patient. The patient sits there with mouth open, Jane has hands inside mouth.

RITA: So, how did the big lock up go? You figure out the keys and everything?

JANE: Oh, sure, sure, no problem.

RITA: Find anything interesting?

PATIENT: OW!

JANE: Sorry!

PATIENT: Watch it. It’s like you’re digging for buried treasure in there.

RITA: (speaking to patient) We’re all done here, thanks. (To Jane) You feeling alright?
JANE: My head hurts. You go on and get out of here, I’m going to lock up and then get going.

RITA: Okay. Call me if you need.

JANE: I will.

Everyone exits and once again, Jane creeps back to the safe. She opens the safe, and admires the jar of teeth, but then gets a guilty look on her face, like she is ashamed of her pleasure. She goes into her pocket for a jar of pills. She stops. She opens the jar instead and takes out a tooth. A ghost appears.

OLIVER: Hi there.

JANE: Oh! Hello!

OLIVER: Did I scare you? Sorry.

JANE: I was expecting someone to show up, it’s just a surprise when it happens.

OLIVER: Yeah, I can imagine. There you are, holding onto some teeth, minding your own business, and the heavens break, the clouds separate, and a ghost descends in a cloud of white mists. BOOM!

JANE: Does it happen like that?

OLIVER: No, but it would be nice.

JANE: Instead, we’re in this dingy stock room. Do you want to sit or something? You’ve been cramped in there (motioning to jar) for a while.

OLIVER: I’m okay. It feels good to stretch. (He starts walking around, inspecting the space). So. (He looks her up and down). Tell me about yourself.

JANE: Um. I don’t know where to begin.

OLIVER: Where are you from?

JANE: Here. Chicago I mean.

OLIVER: Any brothers or sisters?

JANE: I live with my brother, Theo.
OLIVER: And is he a good guy?

JANE: He’s the best. I love him a lot.

OLIVER: What do you do for fun?

JANE: I feel like you’re interrogating me.

OLIVER: Sorry.

JANE: It’s okay. Well, to be honest, lately this is my fun. I’ve been sneaking into this stock room and hoping for someone interesting to appear.

OLIVER: I hope I’m not disappointing you.

JANE: No, not at all. The last ghost I met was named Harry.

OLIVER: Oh, the Brooks Brothers guy? Yeah, I know him. He’s into bow ties.

JANE: Yeah. Why do you wear that sheet when you could wear normal clothes?

OLIVER: I want to look like what I am. I’m a ghost and this is how they dress, or what people think of anyway. It’s something of a cliché, the white sheet, but it makes it easier for me to get along. I’m not pretending when I wear this.

JANE: That’s cool, that you accept who you are.

OLIVER: Don’t you?

JANE: Yeah, I know who I am, but I wonder if she’s nuts. Sometimes I’ll be talking and come outside myself and wonder if I’m making any sense. And this isn’t helping. Am I imagining you? Anybody would say I’m crazy.

OLIVER: There’s nothing wrong with enjoying this. We’re just two people, talking to each other.

JANE: You’re right. This is good for me. My head has been stuck in a book for too long anyway. What do you with your time?

OLIVER: I linger mostly. I’ve taken to jumping telephone poles or flying in and out of open windows. I just try to pass the time.
JANE: “One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.”

OLIVER: Robert Frost, right? Well I guess I’ve made it my mission to swing endlessly. And if I’m lucky enough, a pretty girl will call on me every now and again.

JANE: Ha! Well.

OLIVER: It was great to meet you, Jane. Call me again sometime.

JANE: I will. I think I will.

OLIVER: Bye.

JANE: Bye.

Lights down.

SCENE 8:

Jane, Rita, and the Boss are assembled, working on a patient.

BOSS: Can you hand me a prophy angle, I need to polish his teeth now. (Rita hands it to him). Now, the floss please. (Jane has a dreamy expression, fumbles, but hands it to him). Everything alright, Jane? You seem distracted.

JANE: I’m fine, sir.

RITA: We have it from here. There’s a little boy in the waiting room with three missing front teeth, go ahead and deal with him.

BOSS: Fuck, I love little league season. (He exits).

RITA: Okay. Tell me.

JANE: What?

RITA: I can see it on your face. You’re seeing somebody.

JANE: Me? Oh no no.

RITA: You’re such a liar. Come on. It’s not anybody I know, is it? Is it a friend of Theo’s?

JANE: I’m not seeing anyone, I promise.
RITA: Damn. I was so excited.

JANE: Rita, can I ask you something?

RITA: Sure, honey. What is it?

JANE: Have you ever doubted yourself? Like doubted whether your instincts were right?

RITA: All the time. Why?

JANE: I think maybe I’m relapsing, having visions, but I don’t want to make something out of nothing. If I tell Theo, he’ll freak out.

RITA: Do you think you should see a doctor?

JANE: No, I’ll be fine. Thanks though.

RITA: If you just want someone to talk to, you could always go to Church.

JANE: But I’m not religious.

RITA: It doesn’t matter. It’s good to have someone to talk to.

JANE: Maybe I should just talk to Theo. I don’t know the rosary and I think I’m allergic to incense. If I go to church, they’ll sniff me out right away.

RITA: Listen, just go and see how you like it. If it’s awful, you only wasted an hour of your life. *(She goes into her pocket for a piece of paper and pen, somewhat secretively writes down the information Jane needs).*

JANE: You’re such a good person, Rita.

SCENE 9:

JANE: (clears throat) Hi. It’s been twenty-two years since my last confession. Is that the correct way to begin?

FATHER: Yes, go ahead.

JANE: Okay. Well, I don’t usually come to confession but I wanted to talk to you, Father. I’m having troubles and I thought you might be able to help.
FATHER: What sort of troubles?

JANE: Troubles of a sublime nature, I guess you could say.

FATHER: Sublime?

JANE: Yes. A ghost appeared to me when I accidentally summoned him.

FATHER: And how did you do that?

JANE: I was given the code to a safe and I opened it but instead of pills or money or bars of gold, I found a jar of extracted teeth. I put my hand into it, which I shouldn’t have, and removed a tooth. And then, without meaning to, I summoned Oliver. He’s a ghost. It’s totally fucked up I know. (Father coughs) Sorry. I don’t mean to swear.

FATHER: Whose teeth are they?

JANE: My Boss’s. I work in a dentist’s office and I guess he’s been saving them over the years. You can’t believe how many teeth are in that safe.

FATHER: Is that normal dental practice?

JANE: Probably not, no. I was surprised and terrified when I first saw the teeth but kind of delighted too. I was drawn to them. I couldn’t resist touching the cracks and flaws and decay. Have you ever heard anything like this?

FATHER: I haven’t heard a tale like this one before but you’re not crazy. It’s a strange occurrence but the universe is a mysterious place. If this ghost revealed himself to you, than you shouldn’t turn him away. If you’re open, you may learn something.

JANE: My friend Rita told me to come to you. You would like her; she’s a good Catholic girl, nothing like me. I’m glad I took her advice.

FATHER: Unburdening yourself is good for the soul.

JANE: Who do you talk to? I mean everyone confesses to you but you don’t confess to anyone do you?

FATHER: God is my judge too. I talk to Him sometimes. Sometimes I’m afraid, just as you are, to really speak. But you have to. We’re in a constant cycle here of living and unburdening, making mistakes and rinsing ourselves clean. It’s important that we participate in the cycle.
JANE: You don’t really believe a cycle exists, do you?

FATHER: What do you mean?

JANE: You’re a man of God, so you must recognize that nothing is predictable. God doesn’t work that way. There’s no cycle that indicated a ghost would descend and speak to me from a decaying tooth. I wasn’t wearing a white gown, or waiting for revelation.

FATHER: I’m only guessing here, but I think you’re probably waiting for revelation all the time. You wouldn’t be here if you weren’t.

JANE: You’re good, you know that? You’re really good.

FATHER: I’m just a messenger. But I appreciate that and if I can help you, I’d like to do that.

JANE: Can I come back next week?

FATHER: You can come back anytime.

JANE: Okay. I will. And Father?

FATHER: Yes?

JANE: May peace be with you.

FATHER: And you.

SCENE 10:

Jane back at home. Jane is happy and settled on the couch surrounded by tons of religious and philosophical and dental texts. There are notes scattered every which way and the room is chaos but she seems pleased. Theo walks in. He looks puzzled.

THEO: Whoa, looks like an avalanche of knowledge in here.

JANE: Sorry! I didn’t mean to dirty up the place but I’ve been reading all day. I guess I lost track of the mess. What were you doing?

THEO: I played tennis with Dan.

JANE: Did you whoop him?
THEO: Of course. It’s a really gorgeous day out, you should think about taking a walk or something.

JANE: I’m comfortable here.

THEO: You’re going to get trapped in your brain. You should get some fresh air.

JANE: You sound like mom.

THEO: Ouch. No, I just want you to stretch your legs. You can be such a couch potato.

JANE: I have a lot of reading to do. (INSERT TEETH DREAM SYMBOLISM)

THEO: It’s always magic and mystery with you. Ever since I can remember.

JANE: Why not? If I can reach a transcendent place then why not reach for it.

THEO: I guess so. But aren’t you missing what’s in front of you in the meantime?

JANE: Maybe.

THEO: It’s funny, you know? I like my feet planted right on the ground. But with you, your wings are clipped if you’re not allowed to dream.

JANE: I wish I could be more like you. I think it would be easier.

THEO: Yeah. Me too.

SCENE 11

Lights up on Jane and Rita and the Boss with a patient. The patient is young.

BOSS: I’ve taken a look at your X- Rays and I’m going to need to refer you to a specialist; you need to have your wisdom teeth moved.

PATIENT: Are you sure about that?

BOSS: Yes. It’s a minor procedure, and a fairly non- invasive. I wouldn’t worry about it. Dr. Brown is a friend of mine, he’ll take good care of you.

PATIENT: How much is the surgery?

RITA: It’s about $750.
PATIENT: All that money just for someone to rip open my gums.

BOSS: I wouldn’t put it quite like that. It’s expensive but trust me, you don’t want those wisdom teeth shooting up spontaneously. You’re smile will be changed and the alignment of your teeth will be disrupted. The surgery is a good idea.

RITA: I didn’t have my wisdom teeth taken out. I guess I should do that. Did you have yours taken out?

JANE: Yeah, when I was in college. It was awful actually because I got this infection and my entire jaw turned black. I was cooped up for weeks eating baby food and then sometimes you felt how empty your sockets were, all airy and incomplete-

BOSS: That will do, Jane. Jesus Christ, we’re not trying to scare the girl.

PATIENT: Too late. I’d like some medication please.

RITA: That’s no problem. Dr. Brown should prescribe you Hydrocodine or Oxycotin. You don’t have a history with either of those do you?

PATIENT: What do you mean?

BOSS: People sometimes experience addiction or repulsion with pain medication though hopefully you won’t have either. We just want to be sure we’re not giving a junky some pills to play with.

PATIENT: I used to like the sugar coating on Advil but other than that, I’m okay.

BOSS: Good. Rita will give you Dr. Brown’s information.

PATIENT: Thanks so much. (Patient and Boss exit).

RITA: You think I should have my wisdom teeth taken out?

JANE: I don’t know. When they tried to take my wisdom from me, my jaw turned black and blue. Maybe it’s better to let the teeth stay where they are. That was the beginning of my sickness I think.

RITA: But you’re alright now right?

JANE: I’m okay I guess. Theo and I are getting a drink after work, are you coming?
SCENE 12:

JANE: (Making introductions) Rita, Theo, Theo, Rita.

RITA: Nice to meet you.

THEO: Yeah, you too.

JANE: I can’t believe you two haven’t met yet.

RITA: I know it’s crazy when I’ve heard so much about him.

JANE: It’s my fault; I get distracted and just keep everything separate. Home life, work life. Anybody want a beer? (Theo and Rita nod).

RITA: So Theo, what is it that you do?

THEO: I’m in between jobs.

RITA: That sounds nice and relaxing.

THEO: I’m too old to be directionless. Just ask our mother.

RITA: You don’t get along?

JANE: Not exactly.

RITA: That’s too bad. I wish I saw my parents more but they live in Texas now and I don’t really have the money to visit.

JANE: I didn’t know they lived that far away.

THEO: You could always save up and go more often. Flights shouldn’t be too expensive right?

RITA: You’re just like your sister, always optimistic.

JANE: I’m not optimistic I don’t think. It’s something else.

RITA: If you don’t mind me asking, what happened between all of you? What happened with your mom? I mean it can’t be so bad.
THEO: I don’t know if-

JANE: No, it’s fine. It’s really my fault. Theo would be closer with her if it weren’t for me. I used to get sick all of the time with headaches and blurred vision and I started taking pills for the pain. My mom wouldn’t take me the doctor even though I pleaded with her. Maybe we didn’t have enough money for appointments or maybe she thought I was lying but I started taking pills. I didn’t want to but I had these hallucinations and I didn’t know what else to do. Theo took really good care of me and always took my side but he couldn’t stand up to her and she threw me out. The visions never went away but I started feeling better and got my life in order. I went to school, made friends, the whole bit. I graduated and spent a lot of time trying to find myself and she didn’t agree that goal. She was hoping “my strangeness” would go away. So here I am, working with you, running back to a jar full of teeth. (She gasps, surprised that she mentioned that).

RITA: God, Jane, I’m so sorry. That’s really terrible. Did you just mention a huge jar full of teeth?

THEO: Yeah, what?

JANE: Did I say jar full of teeth? No, I didn’t mean that. That would be weird.

RITA: Yeah, it would be.

JANE: No, guys, I misspoke. I’m going to go to the bathroom. (She exits).

RITA: It was really good of you to take care of her all that time.

THEO: It wasn’t easy. I would come home from school and she would be passed out, draped over the couch, like some rag doll. And she’s a smart girl, you know, really smart and I had to stand by and watch. It was worse when she wasn’t drugged up because she had these visions, like terrible dreams, and no one could comfort her. Her head would be aching and she would just yell endlessly but we couldn’t see the things she said were right in front of her.

RITA: Jesus. She seems healthy now, although she was a little agitated the other day. I sent her to my priest, hoping he could soothe her.

THEO: What? When did that happen? She didn’t say anything to me about a priest.

RITA: She went to confession. She seemed stressed so I told her to go.

THEO: Why would you do that?
RITA: I wanted her to have someone to talk to. I’m sorry, I didn’t realize it was such a big deal.

THEO: She should be able to talk to me. I don’t want some priest taking her higher into the clouds. She’s barely here as it is.

RITA: She’s a dreamer. Is that the worst thing to be?

THEO: You don’t know her, okay? So you don’t tell me about what she can and can’t be.

RITA: Theo, I’m sorry. I just wanted to help.

THEO: Yeah, well you did a great job. (Jane Returns)

JANE: Everything good?

THEO: We’re going, get your stuff.


THEO: I said we’re going.

JANE: I’m sorry, Rita. I don’t know what’s wrong with him. I’ll see you tomorrow, okay?


Lights down.

SCENE 13:

Back at home.

JANE: What was that about? You just embarrassed me in front of my friend.

THEO: Were you going to tell me you went to see a priest?

JANE: What’s the big deal? I wanted someone anonymous to talk to.

THEO: What did you need to say that you couldn’t tell me?

JANE: I had something private to confess.
THEO: What’s going on, Jane? Be straight with me.

JANE: I can’t tell you everything, Theo. Other girls have friends, or a boyfriend, or a mother, a person that they tell their secrets to. I have a priest.

THEO: Oh, who am I? The stranger you live with?

JANE: No, that’s not what I meant. You take such good care of me but I don’t want to worry you, you know? You’ll panic.

THEO: No, I won’t.

JANE: Then why are you shaking right now?

THEO: I’m fine. I’m just offended that you don’t feel you can talk to me. I came here to live with you, to take care of you, and now you act like we’re acquaintances. I got you your job, I look out for you, I would do anything for you.

JANE: Yes, you got me a job and yes, you have always taken good care of me but I’m okay. You don’t have to be so protective anymore.

THEO: Are you popping pills again? Is that what you’re confessing?

JANE: No, it’s not that. I’m tired. Can we finish this later?

THEO: Okay. I’m sorry to jump to conclusions.

JANE: You’re just trying to be a good brother. I do think you owe Rita an apology though.

THEO: Yeah. I’ll talk to her. I’m sorry.

JANE: It’s alright. Go to sleep, you’re exhausted.

THEO: See you in the morning.

JANE: Yeah. (Theo exits. Jane gathers her things and leaves the apartment).

*Lights down. Lights up on Jane back at the dentist’s office, in the room with the safe. She unlocks it. She opens the jar. She takes out Oliver’s tooth.*

JANE: Oliver? Where are you? Will you come talk to me?
OLIVER: Hey!

JANE: Hey! Sorry to call you so late.

OLIVER: What’s wrong?

JANE: I shouldn’t be here but I really wanted to see you. I had a fight with my brother and the first thing I wanted to do was come here.

OLIVER: I’m happy you came then. What happened?

JANE: He’s worried about me and he started yelling. I’m worried too. I went to confession for the first time in my life and I talked about you. I hoped the priest would understand because he’s this person who’s supposed to be connected to the greater mystery of the universe but I can’t talk to anybody else. I feel like you’re the only friend I’ve got but nobody can see you. Nobody else has this power but me.

OLIVER: But that’s amazing, isn’t it? You’ve got to savor it: your lungs pumping oxygen and the trees dripping honey and the sky as an infinite place. That’s what life is: seeing and being seen. You don’t have to be ashamed of it. I’m right here with you and I don’t think you’re crazy. You’re the first friend I’ve had in a long time myself. We belong to each other now, in this black space that no one feels but us.

JANE: You belong to me?

OLIVER: Yes, if you’ll let me. (He steps closer to her). Are you going to let me?

JANE: Yes. (They kiss). You don’t taste like a ghost. You feel warm.

OLIVER: You do too.

JANE: I should go. Theo’s going to realize I’m not there and he’ll be worried.

OLIVER: Stay just for a little bit longer. Stay here with me. *(He puts a hand to her eyes and she falls asleep. He places her into the chair and she is asleep).*

Lights down.

SCENE 14:

JANE: Hello Father, it’s been one week since my last confession.

FATHER: Go on.
JANE: Last week I confessed to meeting ghosts and they’re still haunting me, one in particular that is.

FATHER: He’s come back to you?

JANE: I went to see him after I had a fight with my brother.

FATHER: Why?

JANE: I wanted to talk to him. And that’s the part I feel guilty about. I also feel guilty about coming here to speak with you.

FATHER: because you aren’t a “good catholic?”

JANE: It’s not that. My brother thinks my loyalties have changed and I’m beginning to wonder myself. I come here to talk to you because I know you’ll understand this black matter that I’m floating in. Because of these teeth nothing is real and everything is imagined, or is it the opposite? My brother deals in tangibles but I need something more than what I can hold in my hand. I want that electric fizzing feeling, the one I used to get from drugs. Now I think I get it from the teeth.

FATHER: Let me ask you a few questions, Jane.

JANE: Sure.

FATHER: What is your purpose here on this earth?

JANE: God. I thought you were going to ask me something basic.

FATHER: It’s not meant to be an intimidating question. I just want to know you better. What is your unique purpose here? What do you feel your role to be? You’ve seen enough to have an idea.

JANE: I'd like to splice open the world with a thin blade and stick my hands inside it and feel the muscle pulsating there at my fingertips. I want to put on a spacesuit, an enormous plastic helmet, and just fucking face it all. I think I’m good with people, with learning their stories, and I want to show them that their flaws are interesting and not tragic. I want everything and then some. I want an important story of my own, something I could write down and savor.

FATHER: See? You do know what you want. I believe that if your eyes are open and you follow your gut, you won’t be misled. You’ve got to be safe, never veering too far into
darkness, but you have to listen to your ghosts. You can deny your proximity to the sublime, or you can open your arms and see where the winds of God take you.

JANE: But what if it means alienating those who love me?

FATHER: It’s a balancing act, Jane. You’ll do the best you can. Have faith in yourself.

JANE: There’s one more thing, Father.

FATHER: What’s that?

JANE: I think I’m in love with Oliver.

FATHER: The plot thickens.

JANE: This is absurd! I cannot be in love with a ghost. I don’t care if I want a story—this is ridiculous. I kissed him but it didn’t mean anything. How could it have?

FATHER: Jesus was conceived in the womb of a virgin.

JANE: What’s your point?

FATHER: Stranger things have happened.

SCENE 15:

_Theo on the phone, indeterminate location_

THEO: Hi Mom. How are you? I know, yeah, I haven’t called in a while. No, no, everything is fine, well, not fine exactly. I’m calling because I’m worried about Jane. She’s been coming home late from work and I don’t know what she does there; I’m afraid she’s popping pills. And her friend told me she’s been seeing a Priest, confessing God knows what to him. What’s wrong with that? What’s wrong? It’s psychobabble. I know you love the candles and incense but my sister doesn’t need some pseudo spiritual polluting her. Jane needs to be grounded; you know that. How did I let this happen? Where are you? You’re her mother. You’re the one who should be here instead of me. I’m just a kid, I don’t know what to do to help her. I’m sinking, mom. Can you come here and talk to her? I’m just a kid. Don’t make me the bad guy. I’m just a kid. My boat is sinking.

SCENE 16:

_Jane re-enters the apartment. She puts her stuff down hastily and sits on the couch. She closes her eyes for a second and smiles._
OLIVER: Don’t you look peaceful.

JANE: What are you doing here! I didn’t summon you.

OLIVER: There are exceptions to the rule.

JANE: I didn’t know that.

OLIVER: There are a lot of perks to the ghost gig. I can just appear and disappear as I please.

JANE: Can’t anyone do that?

OLIVER: I guess so.

JANE: Sorry, I don’t mean to diminish you. I’m just in a bad mood. You want to talk to me about something nice? Tell me about your childhood or something. I want to know more.

OLIVER: My childhood. What to say? I’m one of four so the house was always overrun with kids. We lived on a farm with lots of acreage so we would go outside and play, it was pretty wholesome. When I got older, I spent a lot of time in the woods by myself. I liked the peace and quiet. Eventually I moved to an empty barn on our property but it was pretty lonely: just a lot of useless equipment and dust. At one point, I was shooting rats with a BB gun for fun.

JANE: Jesus. That’s low.

OLIVER: Yeah. I wish I hadn’t told you that actually. I sound like a sketch ball.

JANE: Yeah, you do.

OLIVER: Hm. How can I redeem myself?

JANE: I don’t know.

OLIVER: I could kiss you.

JANE: That’s true. (He leans in but she stops him). Sorry, I keep thinking about the rats. I can’t believe you did that.

OLIVER: Yeah but you don’t know me.
JANE: That’s true.

OLIVER: It was stupid. I’m not cruel to animals; I had a horse I loved named Gilda. You remind me of her actually.

JANE: I remind you of a horse?

OLIVER: Yeah. She had beautiful black eyes, ones that looked right into you. I felt like she saw everything. At the end there, it was just Gilda and me.

JANE: What do you mean, at the end?

OLIVER: She was my only friend right before I died. I didn’t talk to anyone for weeks but I would feed her and clean her and stay with her in the stall till the sun rose. Around 4 am, when everything felt tired and close, that was the best time for Gilda and me.

JANE: Oliver. How did you die?

OLIVER: I hung myself. I found a dirty rope on the ground and I tied it to a rafter in the barn. It’s funny because I wasn’t a mean person, not to anybody, but I punished myself in the worst way possible.

JANE: (starting to cry) Why would you do that? How could you hurt yourself like that?

OLIVER: Hey now. Hey. Don’t cry.

JANE: How could you do that, Oliver? You hurt everybody. You left them with no explanation.

OLIVER: Yes. I did. And I hate myself for it. But I was depressed, really depressed, and had no one to turn to. I didn’t have someone like Theo. I didn’t have anybody.

JANE: That’s such an awful story.

OLIVER: Do you hate me?

JANE: Of course not.

OLIVER: Can I still kiss you? I feel awful.

JANE: Okay.
OLIVER: *(They kiss. They stop. They kiss again. Oliver eyes her for a second). I love you, Jane. I know it sounds crazy but— *(They kiss more. SEX) *

SCENE 17:

*Back at the office.*

BOSS: Mrs. Munch. We meet again.

MUNCH: Hello, Jerry.

BOSS: Couldn’t put down the caramels could you?

MUNCH: Didn’t want to, Jerry. Do I need another procedure?

BOSS: I’m going to have Jane take a look at you and then we’ll know for sure. I’m disappointed in you.

MUNCH: I know, Jerry. You’re an excellent dentist though, I want you to know that.

BOSS: I’ll see you on your way out. (He exits).

JANE: Alright now, say ahhhhhh!

MUNCH: AHHHHHHHHHH!

JANE: Ok, your enamel is worn down and I see bacteria. You’re going to need a filling.

MUNCH: That’s not too bad.

JANE: Mrs. Munch, I don’t want to tell you what to do but it breaks the Boss’s heart, you coming in here with your rotten teeth. Can’t you stop eating the candy?

MUNCH: Jane, have you ever tasted something so delicious, so sinfully good, you felt like your entire happiness was condensed into one little morsel? That’s how the caramels make me feel. I don’t have sex and I don’t sleep. Caramel is the closest thing I have to an out of body experience. If my teeth are rotten and all fall out, I’d have dentures for the rest of my days just to have that moment of sincere bliss. Can you understand that?

JANE: *(She starts to cry). Yes, I do.*

MUNCH: What’s wrong, sweetheart?
JANE: I’m in trouble.

MUNCH: What is it? Your family?


MUNCH: What happened?

JANE: I’m in love.

MUNCH: He doesn’t love you back?

JANE: No, he loves me. We’re just dating…long distance.

MUNCH: Well, sweetheart, a long distance love can work itself out. Why, my Harry and I were married after 6 years of back and forth. But he was the greatest love I had ever known and we were good to each other. You just need faith.

JANE: Your husband’s name was Harry?

MUNCH: Yes. He was a charming man and handsome too. They don’t make them like that anymore.

JANE: What did he wear? I mean… why was he so handsome?

MUNCH: He was always in a bow tie, cigar in hand.

JANE: But he died?

MUNCH: Yes, many years ago. I think about him everyday, even now. I wish I could see him again. I did love my sweet Harry.

JANE: Mrs. Munch, I’m not feeling very well. Can we reschedule for another day?

MUNCH: Yes, dear. I hope you’ll feel better.

JANE: Thank you. (She walks Munch out. She approaches the Boss). Could I talk to you for a second?

BOSS: Sure. Is everything alright?

JANE: No, everything isn’t alright.
BOSS: What’s the matter?

JANE: I don’t know how to say this. I’m not sure if you’re aware of what you’re containing in that jar but there are ghosts living in your safe. I know I sound crazy but they’re living in this office. I’m frightened because—

BOSS: You don’t need to be frightened, Jane. They won’t hurt you.

JANE: So you know about them?

BOSS: Yes, of course. Why do you think I keep the safe locked?

JANE: Jesus, I don’t know! People do lots of things without explaining themselves.

BOSS: I figured they would speak to you.


BOSS: I saw something in your face, an innocence and openness, and I knew you were the one I’d been waiting for. The one who would see things just as I had.

JANE: The more I try to reason the more this makes no sense. I’m frightened of what I’ve seen and learned and I’m frightened of you and what I don’t know. What are you doing with so many extracted teeth? What kind of an office is this?

BOSS: Why are you so upset? Those ghosts are magic. They’re the best thing to ever happen to you.

JANE: You don’t know me.

BOSS: I saw you looking for something. I saw it in the way you listened to the patients, in the way you lingered.

JANE: You’re not my therapist. You’re an old man with a closet full of teeth and a missing first name.

BOSS: Let me try to explain, okay? Some years ago I had my own mystical experience with the teeth. And after that, I couldn’t put the teeth in a garbage bag and dispose of their spirits. But I was scared and I needed an ally, someone who could care for them and be responsible.

JANE: You’re not making any sense.
BOSS: They do this thing in Australia-

JANE: What-

BOSS: Just listen to me. In Australia, the aboriginal people sometimes knocked out teeth during the puberty initiation. And then the extracted teeth were safeguarded because they believed that whatever happened to them would happen to the owner also. Do you see the point? Your teeth shouldn’t just be swept away like trash. They’re a crucial part of the human experience.

JANE: Keeping somebody’s tooth doesn’t make you closer to them.

BOSS: You really believe that? Think about your bad dreams, the ones you had a kid.

JANE: What about them?

BOSS: People dream of their teeth rotting away or falling out or being misshapen. Teeth have always been a trope of the subconscious. You don’t think that’s intimate?

JANE: But why do you want to hold onto all of that sadness? You can get rid of decay and baggage.

BOSS: I’ve held onto those teeth because they’re precious. I gave up my life for the mystery they provide.

JANE: What do you mean?

BOSS: My wife left me over them.

JANE: That’s why she left? Rita mentioned you were married but—

BOSS: She thought I was mad and she left. She’s married to an accountant now.

JANE: But that’s ridiculous.

BOSS: I had to make a choice. And I did.

JANE: You gave up the woman you wanted to spend your life with for ghosts? What you collect and save and hide away, that’s insubstantial. You shouldn’t have given her up.

BOSS: So you would have chosen differently?
JANE: Yes, I would have.

BOSS: Look at what you’re doing, Jane. You’re no different than me. You’ve chosen a universe of your own creation, where is the love in that?

JANE: You’ve got it wrong. Oliver is real for me. He’s realer than anything I’ve ever known and he makes me feel alive.

BOSS: Take a look at yourself in the mirror, Jane. You love a shadow. You’re angry with me but mostly you’re angry with yourself. Nothing real would ever be enough for you.

JANE: That’s not true, that’s not true, that’s not true.

BOSS: If you’re going to preach to me, you should give up your own ghost first. Tell me how it feels.

JANE: I can’t.

SCENE 18:

*Theo and the Priest, confessional.*

THEO: Hi, my name is Theo, it’s been 24 years since my last confession. Is that how this goes?

FATHER: Yes, go on.

THEO: I wanted to talk to you, Father, because I’m having some trouble.

FATHER: What is the matter, my child?

THEO: I believe that you’ve been advising my sister and I need you to stop.

FATHER: I’m not sure I understand.

THEO: My sister Jane has been coming here to see you, is that correct?

FATHER: She has come in a few times, yes.

THEO: And you’ve been filling her head with all sorts of nonsense, am I right?

FATHER: Heavens no! I’m not at liberty to say anything about my conversations with Jane but you’re quite mistaken about the nature of our time together.
THEO: Listen, you can spare me, ok? Jane is a good girl and she doesn’t need your phony enlightenment confusing her.

FATHER: I know Jane is a good person. I respect her. I’m not interested in converting your sister or persuading her of truths she isn’t interested in. I’m here to listen and accept.

THEO: Then why has she been acting so strangely ever since she’s come to see you? You must be telling her something. She’s been reading up on religion and witchcraft and spirits. Are you trying to tell me that her behavior is in no way related to her visits with you?

FATHER: She’s interested in transcendence and we’ve talked about that but she came to me after-the-fact. She came to me because she experienced the sublime.

THEO: She experienced the sublime? What, did she have an orgasm or something?

FATHER: in a manner of speaking.

THEO: Well, that’s awkward but she could have told me about it.

FATHER: Has she told you about the boy she’s fallen in love with?

THEO: She’s seeing somebody?

FATHER: Jane has fallen in love with a spirit. She was scared and she felt that she could talk to me, since my role here is that of listener and interpreter.

THEO: She’s in love with a…spirit? I don’t follow.

FATHER: She’s in love with a ghost. Let me explain. (Father and Theo now speak to each other through hand gestures and facial expression. They mime conversation with Theo gasping silently to understand. Humorous moment).

THEO: WHAT THE FUCK. YOU TOLD HER WHAT.

FATHER: I told her to be open to the experience. Why are you so angry?

THEO: WHY AM I SO ANGRY? My sister was at the edge of the cliff and you pushed her off.

FATHER: I did no such thing, Theo. I want to help Jane. I would never hurt her.
THEO: I want to hurt you, you piece of shit. I’ve spent my whole life trying to heal her, make her whole, keep her afloat, and you’ve ruined all of that. She’s all I have and now I don’t even recognize her.

FATHER: Theo, please calm down, please try to understand—

THEO: No, I won’t calm down! *(He exits his side and comes around to the Priest’s. He opens the door of the Priest’s side and pulls him out and beats him furiously).* You’ve hurt her and I’ve hurt her. She should have talked to me, I should have helped her, I wanted to help her, I hate myself. I hate this. I’m just a kid. I’m just a kid.

SCENE 19:

*Jane alone in the apartment. She has Oliver’s tooth in her palm.*

JANE: Oliver, where are you?

OLIVER: I’m here.

JANE: Where have you been? I haven’t heard from you in days.

OLIVER: I’ve been thinking.

JANE: Walking along telephone wires?

OLIVER: Something like that.

JANE: Are you alright?

OLIVER: I have to say something to you and it’s hard. Okay? I want you to know that I’m hurting when I say it.

JANE: What is it? You’re already dead, it can’t be that bad.

OLIVER: My stomach is turning in on itself.

JANE: What is it? Just tell me.

OLIVER: I have to leave you.

JANE: What? Why?

OLIVER: I’ve been following you and listening to your conversations and I’m hurting
you. I can’t do it anymore.

JANE: You’re not hurting me! No, you make me alive. You’re the best thing to happen to me.

OLIVER: You say that but it isn’t true. You’re lonely and afraid and you would never say it but I know.

JANE: I’m trying to tell you how I feel.

OLIVER: I can’t be responsible for this. I ruined my own life; I won’t ruin yours. Your heart is still beating and your blood is warm in your veins. You look at me and you think I’m breathing but I’m not. If you dug me up, I’d be ashes and dust. I’m not alive. I’m dead, Jane. And that’s all I’ll ever be.

JANE: I can feel you. I touch you and you’re warm. I can feel your heart when I lie next to you. I know I can.

OLIVER: It’s your imagination.

JANE: IT’S NOT! It’s not my imagination! Jesus, when will someone listen to me? I’m thinking straight, I know what this is. This is love.

OLIVER: I CAN’T LOVE YOU. Do you understand? You’ve got to give me up, Jane.

JANE: I don’t—

OLIVER: Think of this in real terms. Think of what you can’t do with me. You can’t bring me to a dinner party, you can’t sit with me in your living room, you can’t tape up pictures of us.

JANE: I wouldn’t do that stuff anyway. It’s like you don’t know me and maybe that’s the real problem.

OLIVER: Don’t say that. You know it’s not true.

JANE: Oh, so I should let you push me around? You’re allowed to call all the shots?

OLIVER: Listen to me. You’re funny and beautiful and sad and true and I’ll never forget you. But I’m meant for the air, for walking along telephone poles, just an invisible spirit, and you’re meant for everything else. You’re meant for the real world, even if you don’t like it. Do you understand?
JANE: You’re really going to leave me, aren’t you? You’re serious. I made you up and still I can’t get you to stay with me. Jesus. I’m suffocating.

OLIVER: Take a deep breath.

JANE: No. If you’re meant for that then I am too. I’ll go with you.

OLIVER: Jane, no.

JANE: I’ll go with you, I’ll go with you, I’ll go with you (she is mad, scrambling for her pills).

OLIVER: Jane, please no!

JANE: (She finds them). I could go with you. I’ll build us a spaceship, a silver one with windows. We’ll stick our flag in a planet made of ice. A life of magic a life of magic a life of—

OLIVER: Don’t do this.

JANE: It’s already done. (She takes all of the pills. She collapses).

OLIVER: no no no no no no no.. (Oliver talks to Theo but Theo can’t hear him). Theo! You have to help her! Do something quickly!

THEO: Jane? JANE! (Picking up the phone) Help, please! It’s my sister. She took some pills. Come here now, 1530 Mckenzie St. Apt 2B! HURRY. (Rocking Jane in his lap). Jane, wake up, oh Jane, please.

SCENE 20:

At the hospital. Consider converting the dentist chair into a hospital bed. Jane is unconscious, hooked up to an IV. Rita, Theo, Boss, Father, Munch all visit.

RITA: (Taking Jane’s hand) Oh, you poor thing. What happened? You probably can’t hear me but I want you to know that I’m here. And you can talk to me, when you feel better that is. You’re a firecracker; we need you around. Who else will make fun of the Boss’s hair plugs with me? Keep your eyes closed and rest. (She half-smiles at Theo when he enters). I’ll leave you two alone. (exits)

THEO: (He sits down and takes both of her hands). Can you hear me? Nod if you can. I just talked to the doctor; he says you should wake up soon, so that’s good news. Jesus,
listen to me. How did we get here? One day we’re Jane and Theo, the next we’re in a hospital room. You must be hurting so much. How did I miss it? I used to feel like I knew everything about you. Now I look at you and I can’t be sure of anything. I know a few things. I know you’re honest and kind and you would never hurt anyone. So why did you do this? Maybe it doesn’t matter. Maybe we’ll look back and laugh. Maybe mom will come and take care of everything. I don’t always know what the right thing to do is but I’m trying so hard. I’m so sorry I couldn’t help you, I’m so, so sorry about that. But I promise to be better and take care of you. I love you so much, Jane. You’re a mystery to me but I love you, even when I want to shake you. Forgive me, for everything I didn’t do. Please, forgive me. (Lays his head down on her). It’s hard getting older.

BOSS: (Coughs) Sorry to interrupt.

THEO: No, it’s fine. It’s nice of you to come.

BOSS: It was the least I could do. Mind if I talk to her for a second?

THEO: She can’t hear you.

BOSS: That’s okay.

THEO: I’ll go get a coffee or something. (He takes a long look at Jane and then exits).

BOSS: (Sitting down beside her). How are you feeling, old girl? You probably can’t hear me and that’s alright. You relax. It’s a nice room you have here, not as nice as our office but they’re trying. I wonder what kind of bills they pay for this set-up, I wouldn’t mind a nice flat screen TV for our place. (Putting his fingers on the IV) I guess this IV is bringing you water and nutrients, all of that good stuff to help you get better. I don’t know much about medicine unless it concerns teeth. I don’t know much of anything unless it concerns teeth. No, you’re smarter than I am. When you came to the office, I hung back and watched you from a distance. I saw your potential, and your wisdom because I’ll tell you: you’re a wise girl, Jane, you don’t know how wonderful you are. It had been such a long time since I had shared my secret with anybody and I wanted to show you. I wanted you to have a taste of magic, the sublime, whatever you want to call it, because I knew you would appreciate it. But I did something bad. I brought you pain. I never wanted to hurt you or make you unhappy but I can see now that I did. I know you’re going to wake up and get better and when you do, I hope you see something good in what’s happened to you. It’s made you strong, whole, and open. But you were all of that to begin with. Yes, you were. (Jane opens her eyes). You’re awake!

JANE: Where am I? Oh God. What did I do?

BOSS: You’re in the hospital but you’re okay.
JANE: Where is Theo? And Oliver?

BOSS: Theo’s just outside. Who is Oliver?

JANE: He’s my friend but he left me. He’s gone, oh no no, he’s gone.

BOSS: Shhhh, relax. We’ll find him.

JANE: Oh no, he’s gone.

THEO: (entering) You’re awake! Oh, I’m so happy.

JANE: I’m sorry. Oliver was with me and I was upset and I took too many pills and—

FATHER: Knock knock. May I come in?

JANE: Father, what are you doing here?

FATHER: Theo called and asked me to stop by.

JANE: That was nice of him.

FATHER: Yes, it was. (To Theo) May I speak with her?

THEO: Yes, we’ll clear out for a while. (they exit).

JANE: Why do you have a black eye?

FATHER: Theo and I had a few words…don’t worry about it.

JANE: He hit you? I didn’t even know he could throw a punch.

FATHER: He’s full of surprises.

JANE: He must be so mad at me. I can’t believe what I did. Oliver came to me and said he was leaving and I was so scared and overwhelmed that I just ran for the pills. It was the only thing I could think to do. Is he really gone? God, he can’t be.

FATHER: I don’t know.

JANE: I hurt everywhere.
FATHER: I know, dear.

JANE: I feel like I fell down the rabbit hole.

FATHER: On the walk here, I recalled a story. Do you know anything about Zen Buddhism?

JANE: No. Why?

FATHER: When I was in Seminary, I found a story that is pertinent for you now. In the story, there are two characters: a man called The Seeker and a bull. The story begins when the Seeker intuits the bull, which is a representation of the self. The Seeker looks down and sees hoof marks, and these are the beginning of the teachings. The Seeker catches and tames the bull just as he hones his mind and body. Together, the bull and Seeker become friends and merge into emptiness, wholeness, beingness, and then absolute truth. Finally, the realized Seeker returns to life, living in the world, yet in the self.

JANE: Am I the seeker?

FATHER: Yes, and now it’s time to return. What you experienced with Oliver was beautiful and mystical but maybe he was just a conduit. Maybe Oliver brought you into Truth so that you could see the beauty of this earth. Earthly life can be graceful and mystifying and transcendent. Maybe your job here is to see that.

JANE: I’m afraid to stay here, with my feet on the ground. The truth is I’ve always been a dreamer.

FATHER: Dreaming doesn’t do any harm but do it with your eyes open.

JANE: You always know what to say.

FATHER: You should hear me in mass, I really get rolling. Think you’ll ever show up?

JANE: Don’t hold your breath. (Father stands to go). Father?

FATHER: Yes?

JANE: Peace be with you.

FATHER: And also with you. (He exits just as Munch enters). Mrs. Munch!

JANE: Everybody came to see me.
MUNCH: A friend was in trouble. Of course I came.

MUNCH: Would you mind if I have a moment alone with Jane, dear? For some lady talk?

FATHER: No, that’s alright. *(He winks at Jane and exits).*

MUNCH: How are you feeling, dear?

JANE: He left me.

MUNCH: I know he did, dear.

JANE: How do you know?

MUNCH: My sweet Harry came to me in sleep and told me all about you.

JANE: You saw Harry!

MUNCH: Yes, I did. And he looked just the same. I awoke to him sitting beside me, tipping his ashes into my water glass, just like old times. I couldn’t believe it but he was there.

JANE: Why did he do it?

MUNCH: He told me he had been afraid to appear to me but after the way you handled it, he wasn’t scared anymore. After all those years, I saw my sweet man again. I can’t tell you happy it made me and it’s all thanks to you.

JANE: No, no, you did it yourself. *(She begins crying).* I’m sorry, I’m so happy for you. I just. I’m so sad he left me. *(Weeping).*

MUNCH: Oh Jane, sweetheart, I’m so sorry.

JANE: It’s alright. He wasn’t real anyway.

MUNCH: Well, of course he was. What’s real to you is real. How could it be otherwise?

JANE: In my experience, what’s real for me is nonsense for everyone else.

MUNCH: You’re just one of the lucky ones. For you, Jane, the world is an infinite place. You see stars dripping honey where other people get tangled in telephone poles; you hear symphonies in people’s conversation. You’re not crazy, you’re just hopeful.
JANE: I want to change. I want to be better.

MUNCH: Then you have to do something for me. You have to keep your palms up, and your heart open. No matter how much it hurts, or how lonely you feel, you keep those palms up and remember who you are. You’re a symphony, Jane, you’re a gem. So can you do that?

JANE: Yeah, I think I can. *(Spreading her palms up).*

THE END