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A Dog with a Tail at both Ends

Stageplay

A.N. Williams

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Characters

Jo: A teenage girl with Down's syndrome
John: senior consultant
Cathy: senior consultant
Todd Barrett : Medical student:
Jo's Mother:
Jo's Father:
Todd's friend: (who also plays the talk show host)
Judge

Anonymous offstage voices are played by members of the cast

Summary

Jo, a teenage girl with Down's syndrome, is initially profoundly disabled but at the point of death is given a treatment without her knowledge or consent which restores her to "normality."

Unfortunately, events do not work out as planned.

Jo finds living in the world with the growing awareness of her difficulties and the discrimination she faces, too hard to bear.

Jo in her anguish accidentally kills John the doctor who initially undertook the procedure.

Jo asks that her treatment is withdrawn, and her wishes are finally respected.

At the end of the play Jo is as she was at the start.

The author is a full time NHS consultant community paediatrician specialising in paediatric neurodisability. Although in his work he daily sees disability, he rarely sees it in the media and more rarely still actors with Down syndrome He was inspired to write this screenplay in the hope of giving a meaningful part to an actor with Down syndrome. The author is happy for this version of the play to be used for stage performance only. All that he asks is that he is informed as and when such performances will take place, and that after each performance there is a collection, all the monies raised to be used for disabled children.

The play is performed without an interval.

An apparently open stage although the front half is obscured. From a projected screen on the backstage a film of a Charlie Chaplin Head mask rotating slowly round is shown.

<http://www.richardgregory.org/experiments/>

This demonstrates a profound optical illusion. As the head turns over to show the hollow side, the nose sticks out rather than sticks in. This is because the brain overrides the sensual information that it receives. It has only ever seen faces with their noses sticking out and never sticking in. It demonstrates the power of top down processing and the ability of the brain to override the information which it receives.

The film is accompanied with a short commentary by Professor Richard Gregory who has given permission for this clip to be used for this play.

The film finishes.

A short silence

VOICE (offstage) Disabled Bitch !

Enter TODD an apparently clueless but well meaning medical student led by CATHY, a senior consultant who is his supervisor. CATHY leads TODD from the side of the stage.

CATHY: And Todd you must always remember to ask about.

TODD and CATHY (*together*) - Family History.

Spotlight onto JO. A girl in her late teens sitting motionless in a wheelchair. The wheelchair is of the type for those who are totally wheelchair bound. It has a molded padded inside, has support of the neck, and the feet are strapped down onto the two footplates at the front of the chair. The chair could also have a few faded stickers or badges placed on it to try to give it some individuality. At the director's discretion JO could be wearing a blank face mask. JO has Down's syndrome and appears to be completely unaware. In her lap is Eddy, a battered old cloth toy elephant. She is wearing the somewhat worn outfit of a long stay residential patient but is also wearing special orthopaedic type boots. Her lower abdomen is baggy as she is wearing an adult sized Pamper's style nappy. She has a hospital name tag attached to her wrist.

CATHY: (*entering onto the stage followed by Todd*) Medicine is simple, really. It's all about description.

CATHY gives a presentation of JO to TODD.

CATHY: Accurate description based upon precise observation. Simple. But it can take a lifetime to master. Ok ?

TODD: Yes.

CATHY: Here's a patient I prepared for you.

TODD; Thanks

CATHY: Now I want you to imagine that I'm a blind man. Tell me what you see.

TODD is briefly shaken as he recognizes JO. He feigns ignorance.

TODD: Ummmm.

TODD appears completely clueless.

CATHY: Anything ?

An embarrassing silence.

CATHY: Todd, if I hadn't once been even more ignorant than you, I would have sent you home. Now listen and learn.

CATHY turns to JO.

CATHY: This young lady used to be called a mongol. Of course, on racial grounds that has long been discarded as a valid term. But, you see Todd, the descriptive powers of names are so important. All so right in their time, but oh, all so wrong now. Now all should have equal worth.

They approach alongside. JO is motionless, sitting in her chair.

TODD hesitates.

CATHY: Go on.

TODD hesitates

CATHY: Todd, Let me help you. You can tell Jo's name from her hospital band.

TODD hesitatingly approaches JO and reads from her hospital wrist band.

TODD *(shaken)* Jo, her name is Jo.

CATHY: She is a young lady you clearly fear has special needs. That should satisfy the examiners, they won't be able to do any better- anything else is just polish.

Jo is totally care dependent. She has no means of expressing her wants, her needs, or as far as we can now tell, her desires. She is fed, cleaned, toileted, dressed, and as far as we can tell she is happy - whatever that really means - but there's no real way of being certain. Her devoted carers, her parents do the best they can and hope for the best. Someone calling themselves a specialist helpfully informed them a long time ago that Jo just had developmental delay. - But in my eyes, delay is a dustbin diagnosis, deferring the acceptance of unpleasant facts. Anyway as far as Jo's parents are concerned, all they can do is wait... Are you ok ?

TODD is wiping a tear from his eyes.

TODD: Yeh, sorry. I've not seen many patients like this.

CATHY: You're right. You won't have. Most aren't. When she was five years old, Jo unfortunately developed difficult epilepsy, which means she kept on having prolonged fits in spite of what medication we gave her.

*CATHY crouches down alongside JO and gently touches her.
There is no response from JO.*

CATHY: Who knows what Jo feels.

*CATHY picks up JO'S toy elephant from her lap. There is no response from JO.
She gently rolls the toy across and between JO'S hands. JO remains unresponsive.*

CATHY: Jo remained drugged for years. For reasons that remain unclear the fits burnt themselves out, but even without her medication, sadly, still left her like this.

CATHY replaces the elephant gently back to its original position on JO'S lap. Jo remains unresponsive.

CATHY: But for a short time she was just like you and me -whatever that means- but you know what I'm getting at. I'm sure you're familiar with the story about the dead seagulls on the beach.

TODD nods

TODD: Yeh.. I heard.

CATHY: That's enough for today. For the next tutorial I want this case prepared.

TODD leaves.

FADE OUT

PROJECTION ON THE BACK OF THE STAGE: Five Years earlier.

FADE IN

At that moment JOHN, the other consultant enters. He is the same age as CATHY. JOHN is seen initially as flashback in CATHY'S mind. JOHN is a driven yet compassionate man who drives the drama with his quest for healing. (They ultimately fall out because of the issue of informed consent.)

CATHY then recounts the past events from her mind's eye. It is clear she is adding her own interpretation on the events.

JOHN: Ah, Cathy, still up to your old tricks ?

CATHY: Hello John. Just teaching.

JOHN: That's what you call it.

CATHY: It's the same as yours.

JOHN: Ah, thought it sounded familiar.

CATHY:It pays the bills.

JOHN: So long as it keeps the Dean happy.

CATHY: And the students aren't around long enough to learn any better.

JOHN: Fifty per cent of what we will teach them is absolute rubbish.

CATHY: Of course.

JOHN: *(continuing)* only nobody knows which fifty per cent is which.

CATHY: By which time, they've forgotten it all anyway.

Both JOHN and CATHY laugh.

JOHN: So you've found a new one then ?

CATHY: Jo – No, I've just been keeping her out of hospital.

JOHN: And now, she's in. Are you trying to poach my patients ?

CATHY: I wouldn't dream of it. Besides Jo's mine now anyway.

JOHN: Of course.

CATHY: I'm just trying to use the best materials to hand. After all John, as you so often say, "I have the real rubbish."

JOHN: I never said that !

CATHY: I know- I was joking.... Like me, you take the patients no one else wants.

JOHN: They're all made in the image of God.

CATHY and JOHN: *(together)* And have immeasurable worth.

An uneasy pause.

JOHN: Exactly.

Another uneasy pause, as if both are in agreement with this but for completely different reasons. CATHY is happy with the status quo of chronic disability but for JOHN this is a challenge that must be overcome at all costs.

CATHY: Well, *(noticing Jo's parents)* I like to think so.

JOHN: We all have to find our own path. It keeps us steady from nine o'clock Monday 'till five pm Friday.

JO suddenly convulses into a severe decerebrate posture – a very ominous clinical sign.

CATHY: Anyway, as you can hear, I've got a difficult chat to give.

JO spasms again.

JOHN: Oh. The chat ?

Pause

Enter JO'S PARENTS. Late middle aged and very caring. They have devoted their lives for JO. They stand momentarily staring at JO.

CATHY: I think so.

JOHN: I'm sorry.....Call me if you –

CATHY: *(interrupting)* I probably will.

JOHN waves and nods respectfully to JO's PARENTS before he exits.

JO'S PARENTS approach and hug JO.

JO is lying in her chair in acute distress and her body is suffering from severe spasms. Alongside are her somewhat elderly PARENTS, looking helplessly and despairingly on, while giving JO what comfort they can.

CATHY silently approaches JO'S chair. She compassionately smiles to both parents, perhaps even gently touches one of them, before holding JO'S hand - as well as taking the pulse this is a genuine mark of compassion for her patient.

There is a long silence as she assesses the situation and completes the rest of her examination, mainly by sight and using her free hand. CATHY finishes the examination and composes herself. The PARENTS are very fearful.

Pause

CATHY: I'm truly sorry, Mum and Dad.

MOTHER doesn't know what that means. FATHER looks directly at MOTHER, who then understand the true situation.

JO's body goes into a severe spasm at that point. Her parents comfort her and look despairingly at CATHY. CATHY still holding her hand waits for the spasm to pass before continuing the conversation.

CATHY: I'm afraid things have moved too far.

(Pause)

CATHY: Its only a matter of time.

The MOTHER breaks down completely, the FATHER comforts her as both embrace their daughter.

CATHY waits for their acute grief to pass.

CATHY: I've long found that Morphine is one of the few drugs you can rely on. I'll start Jo on it and we can up the dose to keep Jo comfortable, but nothing more - you understand.

MOTHER: You mean ?

The MOTHER doesn't understand. The FATHER does and instinctively hugs JO..

Pause

CATHY: Let's remain fully honest with each other - as we always have done.
(both PARENTS slowly nod)

Pause and both parents nod again.

CATHY: This way we can keep Jo comfortable and with time she'll just slip away.

Pause

CATHY: But at her own time....However long that takes.

The FATHER looks at the MOTHER who silently nods through her tears. Both PARENTS agree. CATHY touches JO'S held hand with her other hand, as if a mark of deep fellowship with her. CATHY then releases her gentle grip on JO'S hand and reaches out in compassion to hold the MOTHER'S other hand in comfort. The MOTHER clutches Cathy's hand and that position is held.

Fade out. PARENTS and CATHY leave.

PROJECTED SLIDE "MENTAL RETARDATION TREATMENT FOR TOMORROW"

Enter JOHN. He stands behind the lectern to deliver a lecture about his research and its possible implications. The lecture is supported by audiovisual slides of the neuroanatomy and basic science. The nature and content of these slides are left to the director.

Presently hidden from the audience behind the lectern is a life-size coloured plastic model of a human brain.

JOHN: Ladies and gentlemen, for one group of patients tomorrow never comes. They hear that medical science has made wonderful progress but see no substance. They hear about its certain coming triumphs but for them its always ten years away. For them any answers raised are never translated into clinical practice. For them, tomorrow never comes.

For, ladies and gentlemen, there are a certain group of patients who are never even considered. They could have been our own children and most of you would thank God that particular cup was spared you - if you hadn't been blessed with such a child - yes and I do mean blessed - and seen the riches they can bring and the full lives they can and do live. But aside from their difficulties, their medical lot is very very different. They don't have to bother worrying about waiting times - They aren't placed on the list - and that's deemed fine ! Those who we do not name because we choose not to. Its more convenient that way. Those patients, deemed absolute contraindications, for any great medical procedure or treatment incurring any expense. Who are they, you ask ? I'll tell you, the mentally retarded with severe physical difficulties. "Isn't that discrimination in another name ?" You may rightly ask - and you'd be right. There are of course limits to what is available and these always fall beneath the line.

(Pause)

Enter CATHY, JO'S MOTHER and FATHER. CATHY comforts both Parents before all 3 exit. During this JO is sitting in her chair and is settled.

JOHN: What if you could reverse retardation ? Some may say that is wrong would even call it a form of genocide. After all, don't the retarded have a value in themselves and considerably enrich those whose life paths they cross ? I hope I've already made clear I wouldn't dispute that point for a moment. But that doesn't mean we should remain stationary with our views. If you have the means to make the lame walk, would it be right to withhold it ? No, they'd be uproar. So what's wrong in restoring and lets be frank, I mean healing mental retardation ? Impossible some might say, but they'd be wrong. For the last one hundred years its already been possible - for a few anyway. *(referring to projected illustration)* These are cretins - that's right you heard me !.. I mean children born with a deficiency or absence of the hormone, thyroxine. Retarded, stunted and to be pitied. And then it was discovered that if you gave these children thyroid extract they not only grew but their intelligence was preserved - or very nearly so.

Pictures projected behind him of children born with congenital hypothyroidism before and after their successful treatment with thyroxine.

JOHN: So it is possible in at least one group of children to reverse retardation. And the cost, before anyone asks is just a few pence a day for life and for a healed life. So no problem there, then ?

JOHN freezes.

CATHY and TODD reenter. CATHY moves forward to demonstrate further clinical signs from JO. TODD is still shaken.

CATHY: It doesn't matter how equal you make society, Todd. Handicap isn't going to disappear. Cerebral palsy is still cerebral palsy... Excuse me Jo. *(CATHY starts to examine JO.)* *(examining Jo's wrists)* Look for contractures. Fortunately Jo doesn't have any. *(checking both hips by placing her hand on JO's greater trochanter)* Jo's hips are in socket. Dislocation can be a real problem and cause a great pain. *(moving to the back of Jo's wheelchair)* When a patient is in a chair for long periods, always check the back. Excuse me Jo.

CATHY gently bends JO forwards JO is completely passive during this..

CATHY: There (*gently pulling up Jo's shirt, then rubs her hands to warm them for the patient's examination*). Check the back for a scoliosis (*examining*).... See ? (*TODD moves behind her and checks JO's back too*) What do you think ?

TODD: It looks fine.

CATHY: I agree. Scoliosis is bad news. The corrective surgery is often more than the body can bear. Both are miserable ways to die. (*reverting to normal position*)
And check the skin for pressure sores. Excuse me, Jo.
(*looking more closely under the nappy area*) They're not glamorous, but they can bloody hurt. Looks fine. See. (*demonstrating*)

TODD: Yes.

CATHY: (*Carefully tidying JO up*). That's great Jo.
And make sure you leave your patients presentable.
There, you look lovely today, Jo.

*CATHY gently touches JO'S hand and also the toy elephant on JO'S lap. CATHY then pretends to wash her hands again. TODD does the same.
They both move away from JO to the other side of the stage.
TODD looks slightly shaken. CATHY mistakes this for sensitivity, but she does not now that TODD once knew JO.*

CATHY: Todd, You'll going to have to toughen up. Todd, you'll have to – if you want to be of any help. You'll notice I frequently mention Jo's name. That's important. It reminds us off our patient's humanity and to the patient's family it brings comfort that their child is being seen as a human being. The little things can count for so much, Todd, even though very often the lights are on but no one's in...
We keep the Joes of this world comfortable so that they aren't in pain, but can give and receive love.

TODD breaks down. CATHY places hand on Todd's shoulder.

CATHY: It's hard seeing a life reduced to this, Todd. But you have to remain objective if you want to help your patient. Tears have their place, but only at the right time.

*TODD nods and exits still overcome.
CATHY freezes.*

JOHN unfreezes. The lecture continues

JOHN: But just say we could produce a new treatment for the retardation ? Shouldn't we offer it to our patients and their families ? Imagine the possibilities should it work. A burden of care lifted. But for the patient himself/ herself - a once totally dependent life given greater if not complete independence - the chance to live a different way and enjoy greater opportunities....But I will not say to live a more rewarding life, because the ability to give and receive love is rewarding in itself, irrespective of the severity of disability. Finally, a reduced burden of care that all of us have to pay.

A human brain is projected onto the back of the stage. Perhaps also JOHN takes out a demonstration model of a brain from behind the lectern and holds it to the audience. Ideally the model of the brain will be partially dissected to show the deeper brain structures.

JOHN: Whatever we are, we are all reduced to this. The human brain. Marvellous isn't it? We still speculate about how within is encapsulated all that makes us human. Our emotions, feelings, impulses, memories - everything about us. In short, how we work. How it still works, really works is of course a mystery. Just because you can create a mathematical model, a computer program, use an animal experiment doesn't mean that it is relevant or indeed useful in understanding its workings. The brain itself is very plastic with billions of connexions which give it its function and flexibility. That's ok until part of the brain is damaged. malformed or destroyed. Then of course, there's a problem - and that's where we have stayed. You see ladies and gentlemen, a major cause of retardation is significantly reduced connexions in important parts of the brain. Not enough connexions means retardation lies below that threshold. What is needed is that the brain has to be stimulated to grow, to heal itself. Impossible according to traditional neuroscience and you'd be right. Outside the womb, the brain won't do it by itself, it just can't grow new cells - it's one of those things - so it needs to be helped. *(DIAGRAM ON SCREEN BEHIND)* And this is where modern science offers very real hope.

The projected diagram seemingly comes alive during JOHN'S lecture, showing first the harvesting from the patient's own bone marrow, the placement of the pipettes then finally the injection of the stem cells and the positive effect predicted.

JOHN: Stem cells taken originally from the patient's own bone marrow are injected into specific areas of the brain. We use very small pipes, *(demonstrating a fine filament)* micropipettes one hundredth of a millimetre across: and through these growth hormones, neurotrophins are added to kick start the brain grow again.

A DEEP ANATOMICAL DISSECTION OF THE BRAIN IS PROJECTED. JOHN could also produce an invisible strand of such a micropipette, together with a small coin shaped structure - the pump.

JOHN: The leads are placed deep within the brain. The best places would seem to be the globus pallidus, amygdala and in the reticular pathways. All can be controlled from outside by this little controller.

JOHN shows the controller which looks nothing more than a mobile phone.

JOHN: *(continuing)* Which is very simple to use. Our studies remain however experimental, and frankly we're still finding our way. Until we undertake the research in man, then we can't really be sure. But I for one am extremely confident that they herald a major step forward and consequently, a brighter future for our patients, their families and society as a whole. Thank you for your time.

FADE OUT and exit JOHN.

Enter JO'S PARENTS. They approach CATHY who unfreezes. They approach Jo's chair JO is more settled now. JO looks exhausted.

A prolonged silence.

CATHY: When we're at this stage I always ask another colleague to go over the case.....
I find it helpful not only for the patient's care but for me too..... *(releasing herself, standing and moving distantly from the bedside.)*
Also in the years to come it makes the memory less bitter knowing that everything possible was done.

THE ACTORS STAY MOMENTARILY STILL

(JOHN is the second opinion)

Enter JOHN with a stethoscope around his neck. He crouches alongside JO, listens with the stethoscope, puts the stethoscope back around his neck and stands up.

JOHN: *(Sighs)* Well, there it is. I've seen enough. It's all pretty clear.

Pause

MOTHER: Are you sure doctor, there is nothing- absolutely nothing ?

JOHN: Ah (*slight hesitation*) Weell...

CATHY looks at JOHN in utter disbelief

MOTHER: Nothing more ?

JOHN: Not really.

FATHER: Nothing at all ?

JOHN: It's not that simple, I'm afraid.

FATHER: It's either a yes or no.

A short silence as CATHY stares at JOHN. (CATHY becomes progressively more agitated with what she is hearing from JOHN.)

JOHN: (*hesitatingly*) Yes, but it is experimental and may not work.

The PARENTS hug each other in joy and relief- and then separate.

MOTHER: I don't care.

FATHER : Neither do I.

JOHN: I assure you it's not that simple.

MOTHER: That's not a problem.

JOHN: Well frankly it is. In fact it's a treatment that has never been tried out on humans before. No one, can really be sure how it will turn out. Jo could quite easily die during the procedure.

FATHER : Procedure ?

Pause

JOHN: Its..Its an operation, Mum and Dad.... Its very risky.

FATHER : Then what does she have to lose ?

CATHY: But isn't there another factor, John ?

JOHN: (*surprised*) I'm sorry, Cathy.

CATHY: Oh, well, what would Jo feel about this ?

MOTHER: Oh, she would definitely want it.

CATHY: With respect how can you know ?

MOTHER: I'm sorry !

CATHY: With her difficulties Jo's always lived in a world of her own.

MOTHER: I'm her mother, of course I know.

CATHY: I'm afraid Mum that's not really the same as knowing what Jo would want. She can't answer for herself. She doesn't have the ability to understand her condition, She can't weigh her options and so can't give her opinion.

An uneasy silence. The MOTHER glares at the FATHER

FATHER: Cathy, we've known each other for years now.

CATHY; Yes.

FATHER: We understand what you're saying – but we know our daughter, what she can't do even when she's well and we'll go through with the procedure.

Prolonged pause

JOHN: Are you really sure ?

MOTHER: You've said the only other choice is death.

JOHN: But I advise caution.

FATHER: Then why did you mention it then ?

JOHN: You asked me.... And its my duty to tell the truth.

CATHY: I agree. Just because there is an option, a potential option, it doesn't make it the right one, for Jo, your daughter.

There is a prolonged pause. Both PARENTS look at each other and silently nod.

MOTHER: Cathy, we trust you, but with respect, you've said there is nothing more

you can do and we believe you. But this doctor has given Jo a chance of something. Don't you see that however small it is, we've got to take it. Will you work with this doctor to help, Jo, our little girl ? Please...

CATHY: Ok, of course, I'll try.

JOHN: We both will.

Fade out on the bedside scene.

Fade in

CATHY and JOHN walk to the other side of the stage from JO and her PARENTS.

CATHY: John, what was in your head ?

JOHN: Don't take it so personally, Cathy. This is an opportunity.

CATHY: You should have said 'no' to their question.

JOHN: She's going to die anyway, even if we prolong her life, that's something.

Pause

CATHY: Do you really believe that this can work?

JOHN: *(sigh)* I just don't know. It should still stop the pain.

CATHY: Well..Great !!! It was bloody stupid to mention this to them in the first place. You knew what the parents would say ? There're very few who turn down that chance given the -

JOHN: *(interrupting)* I agree, it wasn't my best day.

CATHY: Look, you could still refuse. Say the experimental evidence was still insufficient. I'll support you. Just end this before it gets out of control.

Prolonged pause

JOHN: I'm not so sure, it will.

CATHY: It's never been done before, John.

JOHN: Are you scared ?

CATHY: When the patients are taking all the risks, of course I am.

JOHN: But Cathy what have we got to lose ?

CATHY: I'm not happy, John. It doesn't feel right.

JOHN: There has to be a first.

CATHY: It's not right for Jo.

JOHN: It's her only chance.

CATHY: Is it ?

JOHN: Oh, for Christ sake Cathy she's going to die anyway - it's her only hope.

CATHY So you say. No one is thinking of her. No one has asked her. As far as we can tell she was happy where she was.

Pause

JOHN: You saying she's happy now ?

CATHY: She can't give her opinion. She can't give her consent.
Jo needs to be heard or someone speaking for her. That's my point.
(*Prolonged pause*) And you still feel the parents are the best judges ?

JOHN: Who else is ?

Prolonged pause

CATHY: I think... I think we need a judicial review.
(JOHN BECOMES DEEPLY UNHAPPY)
To protect Jo. It can be held in camera and everything else afterwards too if you like, until the appropriate time.

Pause

JOHN: Can it be done quickly ?

CATHY: I'll see that it is.

JOHN: What will you say ?

CATHY: The present medical facts - nothing more.

JOHN: And if the judge agrees ?

CATHY: Then, you'll have my full support.

JOHN: Agreed. And, if not ?

CATHY: Of course.

JOHN: The original plan ?

CATHY: Yes.

CATHY walks back to the PARENTS. JO is now settled, with the PARENTS alongside her. CATHY carefully inspects JO for any signs of distress and reassured finds none.

CATHY: Jo's ok, now. The pain is controlled – she's unaware of it.

(Pause)

She's aware of you – She knows you're here... Things will be fine.

Pause

MOTHER: Look, Cathy. You're right.

FATHER: Things are good now... But we've got to –

CATHY: *(interrupting gently)* You don't, you don't have to.

FATHER: But for how long, Cathy ? None of us knows.
We could be back where we were any time.

CATHY: I think that's unlikely.

MOTHER: But you can't rule it out.

CATHY: No.

FATHER: And where do we go from then ? But John, that doctor offered a chance, which we've got to take for Jo.

Pause

CATHY: ...I'm not sure I understand... We agree to disagree...
When the judge has seen Jo –

MOTHER: He still hasn't ?

CATHY: *(interrupting)* I'm afraid, not.

MOTHER: Oh.

FATHER: When then ?

Pause

CATHY: All I know is it's supposed to be soon.
(Pause)
When the decision comes, we'll all know where we are.

Prolonged Pause

FATHER: I'm never going to walk Jo down the aisle.

MOTHER: You're little dream.

FATHER: And you'd be there, right up at the front, crying -

MOTHER: *(continuing)* My heart out.

Pause

FATHER: Least you'll have a new hat.

MOTHER: Thanks.

The PARENTS lovingly reach out, hold and squeeze each other's hands, each smiling to the other.

FATHER: None of that will ever happen. It doesn't mean we love Jo any less.

Prolonged Pause.

The PARENTS separate their hands and together they embrace JO. CATHY stands silently by watching before walking over to the other side of the stage towards JOHN.

(OPTIONAL offstage SOUND OF GAVEL)

A silent TODD ENTERS and hands CATHY a letter. CATHY stops and takes the letter. TODD then exits.

CATHY opens the letter, briefly reads it, stares in utter disbelief and is deeply shaken. She silently takes the letter to JOHN who also reads it.

CATHY and JOHN are looking over the letter.

CATHY: How could the judge possibly decide seeing Jo was "unnecessary for the present purposes", but still required an independent opinion ?

JOHN: They have their reasons too.

CATHY: Still, I think it would've been useful for them to at least to see Jo. Even if Jo is sedated up to her eyeballs.

JOHN: Perhaps it's better for the judge's conscience.

Pause

CATHY: What do you think of the "expert witness" ?

JOHN: Its shite isn't it.

CATHY: Shite isn't the word. He hasn't bothered to see Jo either –

JOHN: Look, he's given the same reason as the judge.

JOHN: Christ, he's still taken the full fee for that and bought those letters after his name.

CATHY: So long as he's not asked again. I don't care if he's on the circuit.

JOHN: I agree. Still it says what needs to be said.
It's an opinion we can both live with.

CATHY: John, I'm not –

JOHN: Cathy, you gave your word.

From the back of the stage, John wheels in a trolley packed full of modern medical equipment, with a monitor and keyboard on top. It is clearly state of the art but nevertheless from a trained eye still looks as if it has been bodged together.

CATHY: So that's it. (*JOHN is still in a world of his own*) So that's it, then ?

JOHN becomes aware of CATHY and his unspoken question.

JOHN: The present working model, yes.

CATHY: (*closely examining*) Bit Heath Robinson, isn't it ?

JOHN: It's still a prototype.

CATHY: So you say.

JOHN: Better to then call it 'a work in progress' It'll take time.

CATHY: Which Jo does not have.

JOHN: She'll manage.

CATHY: She'll just 'take care of it' ?

JOHN: Yes ! She'll be fine.

CATHY: Well, that's comforting, I'm sure Jo's parents will be reassured.

JOHN: Cathy, I'd be lying to you if there still wasn't much to learn about this technique. Very much more, most likely. In fact, I'm not even sure if there are other better places to site the micropipettes.

CATHY: So it's just a lucky guess?

JOHN: I'd prefer 'scientific' or 'inspired' enquiry.

CATHY: That's the judgement of history.

JOHN: Science has to push boundaries.
Hindsight will show who took the right path.

CATHY: (*Sighs*) I can't see why Jo would want to be cured, to change.

JOHN: It would ease her suffering.

CATHY: But Jo's settled now... John, is this really all about you ?

JOHN: No, its not.

CATHY: Be honest, John.

JOHN: What are you implying ?

CATHY: Its nothing personal. But, won't this just replace one type of suffering with another ?

JOHN: That's washing your hands, Cathy.

CATHY: It's dealing with the facts.

JOHN: And what if they change ? Shouldn't they be reconsidered ?

CATHY: Some facts are best left unchanged. Jo's pain can be controlled with morphine. She can be kept comfortable.

JOHN: And what happens to scientific progress ?

CATHY: It takes a different path.

JOHN: You mean it stops.

CATHY: No ! It takes another, - the right path.
John, why not just leave things as they are ?

JOHN: It's our duty to do this.

CATHY: My duty is to my patient. Whose is yours too?

JOHN: Cathy, your problem is you're just too focussed on the patient. You need to look wider. As a scientist and as a physician, just accepting this as an irreversible fact of life is something I just can't agree with.

Pause

JOHN stays frozen in this position. CATHY walks to the front of the stage.

CATHY: Don't get me wrong. John was caring. He wanted to be useful but deep down like all of us desired some memorial of his life, some form of immortality. If he could deliver one of the great cures, well, he was made. I took a different view. Until her last illness, Jo was as far as we could tell, happy. She had a good quality of life. Why change anything ? Why make her something she is not ?

JOHN unfreezes and CATHY'S mind slips back to another argument with him.

CATHY: She can't explain, give an opinion, MAKE A CHOICE. There are many issues. The risk of the operation, if things go wrong.

JOHN: You're just risk averse.

CATHY: No, just cautious.

JOHN: We'd never have invented the wheel.

CATHY: You're mistaking the point.

JOHN: Am I ?

CATHY: The point is that Jo biologically may be a young woman, but emotionally at best she's just a young child. It will take her years to develop an understanding of herself and her relationships with other people. It'll take years and a lot of hard work before she can live a normal life. Not to mention the risk of harming others or suicide... We should take the safe option.

JOHN: And do nothing.

CATHY: We still care.

JOHN: Doing nothing doesn't help her.

CATHY: Its hardly nothing. Remember its Jo who's taking the risk.

JOHN: You don't want to be first, that's all.

CATHY: That's right. Someone else can get the glory. I'll just stick to using the best treatment for my patients.

JOHN: I've got better things to do than discuss this. We know each other's view that's perfectly clear.

CATHY: Don't worry, I'm not going to stop you, but I'm not going to continue being involved either. You take over the entire case.

JOHN: My door is always open.

JOHN exits.

CATHY reverts to the present.

CATHY: Later I discovered some members of the hospital ethics committee had their reservations but since their chairman applauded John and the Institution for having the "moral courage" to undertake this research, there was no problem. John's ace card was that no Institution is remembered for coming second in anything. My problem is that Jo was not in a position to give her informed consent – not only for the operation, but also for the consequences to herself for being the first. Why should it be different for Jo than for you or me ?

Fade out

Fade in

JO'S PARENTS are sitting on 2 plastic chairs. There is an empty chair facing them. Enter JOHN carrying a clipboard. He sits down opposite them.

JOHN: I'm afraid Cathy will not be joining us.

MOTHER: Oh.

JOHN: She feels she can't continue - I thought I should be honest about it. I'm happy to defer, if you want to reconsider.

FATHER : No, its fine. There's no need. We still want this.

The PARENTS hold hands and look at each other.

FATHER: ...for Jo.

Pause

JOHN shows dummy parts of the elements to be used in the procedure on JO. The PARENTS hold them not really understanding what they are.

JOHN: What I'm proposing - neurorestoration - is extremely experimental. No one has ever done this before. To help the brain heal itself.

CATHY: We have a duty to be honest and to explain.

JOHN: The stem cells and neurotrophins are given through the leads placed into Jo's brain. A small pump and reservoir are placed in her abdomen. *(indicates where the abdomen is)* _The pump can be controlled *(showing a controller)* by this device which as you can see is very light and portable.

CATHY: Parents trust us to act in their child's best interests.

JOHN: To guide us, EEG records will, I believe, show the damage in Jo's brain gradually being healed.

CATHY: They'll say "Yes" to anything, anything at all when the only other option, is death. Sometimes the best thing we can do is to protect them from themselves.

JOHN: Hopefully, it will go smoothly, but we just can't know until it's been done... Any questions ?

There is a prolonged pause as JOHN waits for the question and for further details as well as implications of this treatment to sink in on the PARENTS' minds. The PARENTS are holding hands.

MOTHER: You know, we always knew there'd be problems.

FATHER : We were offered an abortion, after the chromosomals came back.

MOTHER: (*horrificed*) The doctor said we should just “write this one off as a bad job.”

FATHER : But, we couldn't do that, could we ?

MOTHER: We couldn't kill - that's what it is, really, isn't it ?

Pause

FATHER: Not that we didn't feel guilty afterwards.

MOTHER: Oh, yes.

FATHER: But, we're so glad she's here.

MOTHER: Yes.

Pause

FATHER: But every time I see someone, even a child in the street, point and laugh at Jo, I feel wrenched by guilt.

MOTHER: Me too.

FATHER: Life, is as they say, hard. We have to make the best choices we can. At least Jo has never known what it feels like not to be accepted –
- not to fit in.

Pause

MOTHER: We have never treated her any differently.

Pause

FATHER : We were told Jo would have “developmental delay”, that she would “catch up” with time.

MOTHER: Neither of us are Einstein's,so we thought what's the problem ? But nothing's happened. Nothing. That's not delay, is it ?

Pause

FATHER : The first five years were fine and then the seizures started
- and.... That left her – Well...

Pause

JOHN: Until she was so recently.

MOTHER: Yes and until then she was happy. But this....

Pause

JOHN: What did Jo used to do ?

MOTHER: She used to dogsit, for a neighbour.

JOHN: Really ?

FATHER : Oh, yes. For some reason the neighbour's dog really enjoyed her company.

MOTHER: *(smiling)* Well it stopped barking.

JOHN: Jo didn't seem to mind ?

MOTHER: It did no one any harm.

FATHER : And it was a nice little earner.

JOHN: So, she has a good life them ?

FATHER : We'd say so.

MOTHER: We just want our little girl back.

FATHER : Of course we're both getting older and looking after Jo is getting harder –
Things haven't always been easy, but we stuck by each other

MOTHER : There's no other place for her. Where else can Jo go ?

FATHER : So, if what you're going to do will make Jo better- that will be a
welcome bonus.

MOTHER : We were told Jo had developmental delay, but nothing's happened.
Nothing. This is her only chance.

PROLONGED PAUSE

JOHN: Thank you for sharing that with me. I fully understand. Unfortunately, I still have to go through this consent form with you.....
I'm afraid it will take some time.

*JOHN hands over a sheet of paper to both parents, which they in turn sign.
The PARENTS stand and each in turn gives a farewell kiss to JO with JOHN watching..*

JOHN stands and wheels JO offstage .

The PARENTS sit down, hold hands and wait.

FADE OUT

*Here there could be a short video montage at this point of the operation itself, leaving the audience's imagination to fill in the rest. The initial image is of an MRI brain scan of JO'S brain with offstage sound of a cranial borehole being drilled.
There is an EEG recording of slow waves in all channels also being seen.*

JOHN: *(voice offstage)* Right, the final borehole is clear. *(offstage sound of suctioning)* Ok gentlemen the leads are going in now... There. Steady, steady... The EEG pattern changes when we get to the germinal layer. *(pause as the EEG demonstrates this)* There. That's fine. We'll hold them there.

Further MRI brain scan showing the leads having being placed within the deeper structures.

JOHN: *(voice offstage)* The scan looks satisfactory - the leads are in the right place.

A later subtle changing rhythms of EEG could also be seen. They appear to change from slow and gently to peaked and fast - almost if the brain itself is angry at having been violated.

JOHN: *(offstage)* There, that's fine.

FADE IN

Enter JOHN pushing JO on her wheelchair. JO is unmasked and is wearing a large bandage covering the top of her head.

JOHN: *(on entering)* Good news.

*The PARENTS stand up and hug each other with relief.
The PARENTS then gently touch and embrace JO to comfort her.
JO is completely unresponsive as before.*

JOHN: The infusion into Jo's brain are controlled by this (*he takes out from his pocket the little control box*). It links with the pump buried under Jo's skin. We'll run things gently for a start.
(dramatically pressing it) There.... It's started.

The PARENTS are extremely expectant as if they will be witnessing a momentous "switching on" of JO.

THERE IS A PROLONGED PAUSE as the PARENTS and JOHN look at JO. (CATHY too is looking on from the side)

Nothing happens and the PARENTS' disappointment is almost palpable.

JOHN: (*hesitantly*) It may take some time before we can be sure there's been any effect.

MOTHER: How long, doctor ?

JOHN: I can't be sure, but if there's been no obvious change over the next few days, we'll send Jo home anyway and take things from there.

Pause

FATHER: If you feel that's-

JOHN: (*interrupting*) We'll take things one day at a time.

JOHN undertakes a final cursory check at JO and looks back at the MRI brain scan and live EEG tracing visible on the projected screen.

The PARENTS sit by JO'S wheelchair waiting for the "miracle" to take place. CATHY looks from the side

FADE

Offstage sound of a dog yelping as if it has been kicked by surprise.

FADE IN

JOHN is standing facing the audience. He is at a press conference. The opening of this scene is perhaps marked by multiple flashes as if from photographer's camera. It is clear that initially he is perhaps not as perturbed by this as one would have expected

suggesting perhaps that he has secretly been looking forward for such a day for a very long time.

All the questions are asked, perhaps in some cases shouted, anonymously from the audience.

QUESTIONNER ONE: *(offstage)* How does Jo feel ?

JOHN: I'm delighted to say Jo's fine.

QUESTIONNER TWO: *(offstage)* Fine? What do you mean, fine ?

JOHN: Doing very well.

QUESTIONNER ONE: *(offstage)* How does she feel about all of this ?

JOHN: Jo has always been a full partner in the process. I believe she's happy with how things are progressing.

QUESTIONNER TWO: *(offstage)* What of her future ?

JOHN: Jo's career is as the first person to have had this treatment.

QUESTIONNER ONE : *(offstage)* Does she have any plans ?

JOHN: We have every expectation of Jo's continuing success.

Pause. JOHN feels that he has said all that needs to be said at this point.

QUESTIONNER TWO: *(offstage)* Nice presentation. Some disability groups are protesting that your work means genocide of the disabled ?
What do you have to say about that ?

JOHN: *(exasperated)* All I'm doing is relieving suffering and giving hope...
Its not an oppression its an advance...Look, Jo's now living at home with a good and improving quality of life. Her parents trust you will respect her privacy. *(pause)* And on that point, we shall end here.
Of course, if there are further developments, we'll keep you posted.

JOHN walks to the other side of the stage symbolizing the end of the press conference. CATHY crosses over towards the middle of the stage. JOHN approaches CATHY and they meet in the middle.

CATHY: How's she doing ?

JOHN: Unchanged.

CATHY: Any progress ?

Long pause as JOHN considers

JOHN: At least she's still alive. Frankly, I was glad to get her home.
All that expectation on the ward was unbearable.

CATHY: Being at home is at least one blessing.

JOHN: You shouldn't have tipped off the press.

CATHY: I didn't ! I thought it was you.

JOHN: Really ?

CATHY: Yes, really.

JOHN: Hospital Management, then ?

CATHY: Must be. It's out of your hands now, anyway.

JOHN: At least, they seem to be still on our side. That is the press and
management...For the time being at least...
Anyway, I thought you were no longer supportive ?

CATHY: Just morbidly curious John - nothing more. Jo was once my patient.

Pause

JOHN: Look, why don't you come on my next home visit ? - To show there's no
hard feelings.

CATHY: Thanks. I will.

JOHN: Alright.

*CATHY and JOHN walk across in front of JO and then behind JO before approaching her. JO's head is bare and she is sitting motionless in her special wheelchair, with the toy elephant lying in her lap. The monitor is alongside the chair showing an EEG.
(Alternatively CATHY can be holding a sheet of paper an EEG recording)*

MOTHER: (*noticing CATHY*) Oh Hello.

CATHY: Hello Mum. I just wanted to see how the young lady was doing. We all
live and learn.

MOTHER: Thank you, that's very kind.

The PARENTS closely watch as JOHN and CATHY consult.

JOHN: All the signs are fine.

CATHY: Yeh, look at that EEG. It's definitely changed - it's now far more normal.

JOHN: Clearly.

CATHY: She's definitely conscious.

JOHN: Or should be.

CATHY: How is she ?

JOHN: The same, apparently.

Pause

CATHY: And where's the dog ?

FATHER : He's in the garden.

MOTHER: (*addressing JOHN*) We had expected something by now doctor.

JOHN: Jo's no longer in pain, we've completely stopped the morphine - and she's very settled now...

Pause

FATHER: Yes, but something - surely ?

JOHN: Jo's no longer distressed and that's important.

MOTHER: You promised.

JOHN: I promised I'd do my best that's all.

FATHER: Frankly doctor, we expected something more.

An uneasy silence.

JOHN: I'm sorry, but there are no guarantees.. Jo will be ready in her own time.

Long pause as the PARENTS are very unhappy

JOHN: I want to show everything to Dr Cathy.

MOTHER: OK, I'll put the kettle on.

The PARENTS leave.

JOHN starts to examine JO and then the entire support and monitoring system.

JOHN: ... It's all very strange..... I'm going for that cup of tea.
Coming ? *(Exit)*

CATHY: I'll be along in a minute. Mine's no sugar.

CATHY: *(said theatrically)* I wonder.

Pause

CATHY kneels down opposite JO and stares intently at her face and gently brushes JO's hair.

After a long pause CATHY then gently blows on JO's face.

A PROLONGED PAUSE.

CATHY then blows slowly again onto JO's face.

Then slowly JO opens one eye and then another.

CATHY winks at her. JO winks back.

Pause.

CATHY: Hello, Jo.

JO opens her eyes fully.

JO very slowly lifts her head and then equally slowly lowers it to where it was before.

JO then closes her eyes .

CATHY walks to the front of the stage.

FADE OUT ON JO

CATHY: People think that recovery is the easiest part. I beg to differ. How do you

recover from somewhere you've never been ? As Jo learnt about our world we began to learn a little more about hers.

FADE IN

Enter JO now walking slowly and still quite unsteady in her Pedro boots, followed JOHN just behind her. JOHN is carrying the toy elephant in his spare hand.

JOHN: That's great.

JO stops. She is standing unsteadily.

JOHN: *(stopping)* Take a breather. How are you feeling ?

JO: *(JO sighs and says simultaneously)* Great.

JOHN: He's really proud too.

JOHN gives her the toy elephant.

JOHN: Here.

JO looks at it and smiles.

JOHN: I think that's enough for today. Do you want any help –

At that moment JO topples backwards onto her bottom.

JOHN *(concerned and embarrassed)* back ?

JO: No, I'm happy just to be here.

JOHN: Sure ?

JO: I'll be fine.

JOHN: *(exiting)* OK.

JOHN pauses to tap JO gently on her head, and exits.

Enter CATHY who approaches JO. She is carrying a packet of toy farm animals.

CATHY: Hello stranger ?

JO: Oh, hello !

CATHY: I'm glad to see you up and about.

JO: This is more fun. It's better than being stuck in that chair all the time.

CATHY: I can imagine. *(pause as she gently shows the packet of toy animals)*
I brought you-

JO: *(interrupting)* A present ! Thank you.

CATHY: I thought you'd like them.

JO: Thanks, they're great. Eddy was getting lonely.

CATHY: Eddy ?

JO: Eddy the elephant stupid.

CATHY: Of course, how silly of me.

JO: I'm going to play with them right now.

JO eagerly opens the packet of toy farm animals and takes them out. Then she sits down and places them individually out of the packet lined up opposite the toy elephant.

CATHY: Do you mind if I join you ?

JO: As long as Im in charge.

CATHY: Of course Jo - just as you say.

JO hands over one of the toys to CATHY, but it is one of the less important ones, such as a toy piece of fence or a rock. They both happily play with the toys as they are taken out of the packet.

JO: That's a cow isn't it ?

CATHY: That's right.

JO: And that's a sheep ?

CATHY: Yes, Good.?

JO: I'm glad I've got Eddy as there doesn't seem to be another elephant there.

CATHY: No,... there isn't... sorry.

JO: I've never seen a set of animals that has one. But elephants are animals too aren't they ?

CATHY: Yes.

JO: Then why aren't they in the packet then ?

CATHY: Well, they can't put one of every animal in - otherwise the bag would be (*spreading her arms*) ENORMOUS - far too big for me to bring to you.

JO: (*copying her*) ENORMOUS.

They both laugh.

Then a shared silence as they play with the toys.

JO: Still, I'd like it better if there was one.

CATHY: Well, I'll mention that to the toyshop owner next time I see him.

JO: OK.

Pause as they continue to play with the toys.

CATHY: But I do have a small suggestion.

JO: What's that then ?

CATHY: Well (*pointing to JO'S large Pedro boots*) We could pretend those were two big elephants instead.

JO: Yes, let's do that.

JO starts to take off her boots, assisted by CATHY.

CATHY: Right, that's the first.

Then Jo stops.

CATHY: What's the matter ?

JO: Don't I have to keep them on ?

CATHY: There's no reason for you to, Jo.

JO: (*a dawning realisation*) Oh! But I thought the doctor –

CATHY: It's up to you.... You decide. Just you. *(pause)*
(pulling off the second) There. Now then what are we going
to call these two big elephants?

JO: Mummy elephant and daddy elephant, because they're much bigger than
Eddy.

CATHY: Ah, that's a good idea.

They continue to play with the toys and JO places both the boots opposite Eddy as well.

JO: There. They've all said hello to Eddy and they're all friends.
And he's really happy he's got a mummy and a daddy.
I like elephants. I don't know why - I just do. My mum said they're just
like a dog t with a tail at both ends.

CATHY laughs.

JO: Well, I saw one yesterday.

CATHY: Did you ?

JO: Yeah, at the Zoo. Mum said it was my treat for getting better. *(extending
arms outstretched)* And it was much bigger than this.
It was HUGE !!!

CATHY: How big ?

JO: *(smiling and demonstrating again)* HUGE !!! And it was different colour
to Eddy, and it didn't feel like Eddy at all. It was all squidgy.

Enter JOHN closely watching

CATHY: Oh, how do you know ?

JO: I touched its front tail.

CATHY: Good for you.

JO: It blew its nose at me and I got wet.

CATHY: Urrghh.

Both CATHY and JO laugh.

JO: Anyway, I'll play with these alone now.

CATHY: Of course, I'll see you later.

JO nods absorbed in her play.

CATHY stands up and moves away just to observe JO.

JO continues to play with the toy animals, making occasional animal noises and CATHY continues to watch her. Although this is quaint and clearly a mark of the substantial progress which JO has made, nevertheless it demonstrates she is still markedly intellectually delayed and in a very real sense how innocent she is.

JOHN stands alongside CATHY.

JOHN: Its quaint isn't it, Cathy ?

CATHY: A child's play is their work, John.

JOHN: Her fine motor skills are better - there's greater precision and her gait is nearly normal now.

CATHY: But Jo's a teenager. They're not many her age who share this interest in farm animals and toy elephants.

JOHN: Give her time Cathy, all she needs is time.

CATHY: John, it takes twelve years sustained development to make a teenager and you're just giving her a month or two ?
What chance does she have ?

JOHN: Cathy, your problem is that you have such little faith.

CATHY: You're ignoring the facts. It takes years for a human being to fully develop. Years. (*angrily*) I tell you, Jo won't be able to cope.

JOHN: (*equally angrily*) And I say we wait and see.

JOHN and CATHY keep and angry silence. Clearly there is no common ground. They continue to watch JO.

Suddenly JO gets angry and starts repeatedly hitting the real toys with one of her Pedro boots, before then starting on Eddy.

JO: No ! Naughty Eddy. (*bashing him on the floor*) Naughty !

CATHY waits and seeing JOHN do nothing, then intervenes. CATHY approaches JO, sits down alongside JO and forcibly takes the Pedro boot off her.

CATHY: OOOhhhhhh ! Oh, what's going on here, then ?

JO sulks, crosses her arms and turns her head away from CATHY.

CATHY: Mummy and daddy elephant ...have decided... they're going...
to have a party... for Eddy.

JO with her arms still crossed turns to face CATHY.

JO: A party ?

JO immediately turns her head away from CATHY.

Pause

CATHY: It's a surprise !

JO immediately turns her head to face CATHY.

JO: Oh, wow !

CATHY: And ? You're invited.

JO: Me ?

JO now gently takes Pedro boot and Eddy, the toy elephant They all play happily together at Eddy's party

CATHY: Jo - I'll leave you to play with them.

JO: OK.

CATHY rejoins JOHN.

CATHY: You know that play symbolises. her first stresses – she can't deal with it –
she's not coping. She can't understand.
John, I'm worried she's too innocent.

JOHN: Nonsense, she'll be fine.

CATHY walks to the front of the stage.

*ENTER JO'S PARENTS. The FATHER takes out a comb and starts to comb JO's head.
JO takes the comb from his hand and uses it on herself. Her MOTHER looks at the*

FATHER with contempt while she tidies up all of JO's toys. The FATHER puts the Pedro boots back onto JO's feet and secures the straps.

JO and her PARENTS exit.

CATHY: Sometimes you can see trouble coming with patients. It's beyond test results or investigations It boils down to a feeling. You can't quite place it, but one day, you'll know what I mean...
Sometimes I wonder if Jo ever saw the world quite as we do. The problem was that others weren't so easily prepared to change their view of Jo, as she changed.
As a child matures they naturally become more assertive. Understandably the same was true for Jo. And as one could predict, because it happened to all of us when we were that age, there was increasing tension between Jo and her parents.
Now she could choose what and when to eat - or not to eat at all. What to wear - In short how to live. I hoped that as Jo developed, the parents would gracefully give way, but old habits die hard. Also its hard once you've become the centre of attention to let it go...

Scene: A somewhat tacky daytime TV Talk show with JO's PARENTS sitting facing the audience on a sofa that is too small. Nearest the parents is an empty sofa chair as well as another empty chair opposite for the TALK SHOW HOST.

Projection of the host of daytime TV talk show with its tacky titles and introductory music.

Enter from the back of the audience the TALK SHOW HOST, seemingly anodyne, talentless and selectively ignorant. He is carrying a microphone. As he approaches the stage, he randomly salutes and pretends to recognise members of the audience. There is canned cheers and applause in addition to the music.

*He cavalierly jumps onto the stage, stands to acknowledge the applause and then flamboyantly sits in the empty chair.
The music stops.*

TALK SHOW HOST: Hello welcome back today on "Matthew", with me, Matthew. In the first half we heard about Jo and her operation from her parents.
(to MOTHER) That's one hell of an ordeal for anyone .Are you glad you put Jo through this ?

MOTHER: Of course.

TALK SHOW HOST: Any feelings of guilt ?

MOTHER: No ! Why should we ?

TALK SHOW HOST: Really ?

MOTHER: Absolutely none at all.

TALK SHOW HOST: It was – is very risky. She could have died.

FATHER: We were told she was dying anyway.

MOTHER: That nothing more could be done.

FATHER; So what then did she, did we have to lose ?

TALK SHOW HOST: Surely you were worried, scared ?

MOTHER; Of course, and that's a different matter.
I was scared for her.

Pause

FATHER Me too.
(pause) And for us.
It's not easy to sign and then watch your daughter being taken away. It could be *(breaking up)* the last time – you see her al-

Pause as FATHER wipes away a tear.

MOTHER: You just don't know – and that's the worst part.
That's what you have to live with

Pause

TALK SHOW HOST: Then tell me- what has brought you the greatest joy ?

FATHER: That's easy. Jo's first smile.

MOTHER *(to FATHER)* You're such a softy.

FATHER: When she did that – I – we – knew, she'd be alright.

MOTHER: Yes.

Pause

TALK SHOW HOST: Were there any setbacks ?

MOTHER : None.

FATHER: Not really.

TALK SHOW HOST: Any disappointments, then ?

(Pause)

MOTHER: Well.

TALK SHOW HOST: Go on.

MOTHER: I'm not trying to sound ungrateful, but it did seem,

TALK SHOW HOST: Yes.

MOTHER: *(continuing)* well, it was all a bit slow at the start.

FATHER: Yes – nothing happened for ages.

MOTHER : I don't think that doctor really knew what he was doing.

TALK SHOW HOST: Give him a chance
 – Jo was the first to ever have this done.

Audience laughs

TALK SHOW HOST: You don't think that's being a little unfair ?
(pause) By all accounts Jo just sat in a wheelchair all day.

MOTHER: That's hardly fair.

TALK SHOW HOST: That's the truth though.
(Pause)
 You had to do everything for her, everything, right ?
(MOTHER nods)
(pause) Now Jo can walk and talk and I guess do lot more
 for herself too.
(MOTHER stares impassively before slowly nodding)
 That's surely a pretty good treatment – a miracle.

Pause as TALK SHOW HOST looks at MOTHER but there is no reply.

FATHER: Jo's caught up now

MOTHER: Yes,

FATHER: Just as we were told she would.

MOTHER: Now, she's as right as rain.

FATHER: Just so long as she does what she is told.

MOTHER: Of course.

Pause

TALK SHOW HOST : That's as good a link as any. You've heard the parent's story. Lets have a big hand now for, Jo.

JO walks onto the stage bemused and holding onto bored. She sits down on single empty chair. She seems very uncomfortable and bored.

TALK SHOW HOST : Thanks for coming Jo.

JO just stares blindly forward. The TALK SHOW HOST stares at her. JO's mother notices

MOTHER: *(prodding Jo to smile)* Smile for the cameras, Jo. You're on the telly

JO smiles back inanely. The TALK SHOW HOST looks at the audience as if he is tolerating a fool.

Some of the audience laugh

TALK SHOW HOST: *(to JO)* I just can't imagine how you coped.

MOTHER: *(butting in)* You just do.

TALK SHOW HOST: For all those years too.

FATHER : You just get on with it.

The TALK SHOW HOST patronizingly pats JO on her forehead

TALK SHOW HOST: And then the chance of this fabulously fantastic brain Operation, Jo..

MOTHER: You were at death's door.

TALK SHOW HOST: Dying ?

FATHER: Obviously.

MOTHER: The doctors said there was nothing more to be done.

TALK SHOW HOST: That must have been -

JO: *(interrupting)* Can I go back to my toys now ?

MOTHER: *(embarrassed)* No.

JO: Why not ?

MOTHER: It's just for a few more minutes.

JO: But, I want to leave, now.

MOTHER: Look Jo, people are watching.

JO: I can't see them. Its just two boxes on legs.

TALK SHOW HOST: Yes Jo, boxes on legs –
Offstage laughter as if from an audience.
He then indicates for the laughter to stop
-And then you had the chance of this wonderful operation.
Did you feel a bit of a guinea pig ?

JO: I'm not a guinea pig, I'm a person.

TALK SHOW HOST: *(perturbed)* Sorry. I meant Jo, what you felt about having the operation.

JO: I didn't ask for it. No one asked me.

MOTHER: I keep on telling you, Jo, that none of us asked to be born.
Offstage laughter as if from an audience.

JO: What is a guin..guinea pig ?
There isn't one in my farm set.
Are they like elephants?

TALK SHOW HOST: Jo, I'm supposed to be asking the questions.
Offstage laughter from audience.

JO: *(continuing)* because I've now got three,

TALK SHOW HOST: *(mockingly which Jo does not perceive)* Really ?

JO: *(continuing)* Well one real and two pretend.
They're my boots.

TALK SHOW HOST: Her boots are pretend elephants ladies and gentlemen .

Laughter again from audience, which again he signals to limit.

JO: *(loudly aside to her mother which all can hear)* Mum, what
is a guinea pig ?

MOTHER: *(smiling but embarrassed)* It looks like a rabbit.

JO: But I want to go now !

MOTHER: *(smiling but embarrassed)* If you're good I'll show you one
later

JO: I want to see one now !!

The MOTHER briefly, firmly holds onto JO.

*The TALK SHOW HOST starts to become more nervous, increasingly aware that the
interview is becoming out of control and concerned about JO's behaviour on the
background of her limited understanding. He clearly receives a message through a
concealed earphone.*

Pause – the MOTHER has let go of JO. The TALK SHOW HOST changes tack.

TALK SHOW HOST: Jo.... Jo ? Aren't you happy to be here ?
With those who love you?

*An awkward silence as JO does not respond. The TALK SHOW HOST receives another
instruction through his earpiece.*

Pause

TALK SHOW HOST: Can't you see how pleased they are for you ?

Another awkward silence.

MOTHER: Jo...Jo....

An awkward silence.

JO: I was happier where I was.

TALK SHOW HOST: *(flabbergasted)* Really ?

MOTHER; Jo, you're just being ungrateful for what's been done.

JO: Mum, I knew nothing.

MOTHER: How can you –

JO: *(interrupting)* Life was a blur
- I didn't even know who I was.

TALK SHOW HOST: That's me on a Saturday morning. Or any morning...

Offstage laughter from the audience.

JO: *(continuing oblivious to the laughter)* and now
I've been dragged -into this. Its like being born twice I
guess. But everyone else, everyone, they had a choice in
this and I didn't.

TALK SHOW HOST: But you have a choice now, Jo ?

MOTHER: Jo, you don't know what you're saying.

JO: Yes, I do !

JO becomes very angry and stands up.

TALK SHOW HOST: Jo, what's the matter ?

JO: I've had enough and that's my fucking choice too.

MOTHER: Jo !

(The audience laughs)
JO pulls off her microphone and hidden wires.

TALK SHOW HOST: Jo, what are you - there's no need to - please -

JO exits stormily, her PARENTS and the interviewer embarrassed by the unexpected turn of events.

TALK SHOW HOST: Thank you, Jo. *(direct to audience as if to a camera)*

And next after the break is the weather followed by our weekly fashion roundup.
(*making pistol action to audience*) Don't go anywhere.

This scene means that in spite of her rapid progress in fine and gross motor skills, JO'S social skills are impaired. Her learning difficulty and considerable lack of life experience place her in a situation within which she is unable to cope.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

JO and her PARENTS enter. (we cut into a row a short while later)

JO: Why can't I wear trainers ?

MOTHER: Because Jo, the doctor said you should wear the boots instead.

JO: I couldn't walk then, that's why I had to wear them. I can walk now.

JO deliberately stumbles onto her bottom. Her FATHER comes to her aid.

JO: See, if I have to wear them, I'm always bloody falling over.
I'm sure that's not what the doctor really wanted.
(*Pause*)
Dad, I'd really love some red ones...Please.

The FATHER is now crouched down alongside JO, checking she is not injured.

MOTHER: Dad, you please tell Jo, she's got to do what's she's told.

FATHER: But sweetheart, Jo's not as she was - she's a young lady.

MOTHER: Then we've lost her.

FATHER: She's a teenager - and what's the harm with some red trainers.

JO hugs her FATHER and buries her head in his chest. The FATHER returns her hug.

MOTHER: This is NOT what I asked for. I wanted either Jo to live, but for everything else to remain the same or for her to be normal.
(*pause*)
Just normal !

Pause

FATHER: Darling, nothing is ever normal.

MOTHER: What do you know about anything, anyway ?

The MOTHER storms off and exits followed a few seconds later by an angry JO in the opposite direction.

The FATHER vacillates in frustration before exiting in JO's direction.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

Scene: A seashore, with a bench, for which the director may choose to use the front edge of the stage. The gentle rolling of the sea and distant sounds of seagulls are heard.

Enter CATHY, wearing a coat, she walks across the stage.

CATHY: You coming ?

CATHY sits down on the front edge of the stage (the bench).

CATHY: Come on, slowcoach.

Enter JO, wearing a coat, happily ambling along. She is also wearing new red trainers. She sits alongside CATHY. Theirs is a pure friendship. JO is swinging her legs happily like a little girl.

JO: This is my special place. Every summer I was here in my chair by the beach. I liked to sit and listen to the seagulls. It was if they were dancing and singing for me all at the same time. Now I wouldn't mind joining them up there. But I can't. They won't let me.

CATHY: I'm sorry Jo, I don't understand.

JO: Before - all this, the seagulls used to land on my hand when there was some food in it. Eddy the elephant was safely put into mum's bag because we don't want Eddy being taken by the birds do we ?But now... but now they don't come to me at all. Not one. It can't be Eddy the elephant, because he's safely tucked in my pocket and no bird can see that. I wonder if it's that machine that's inside me. Perhaps, that pump frightens them. Maybe somehow they can hear it.

CATHY: I don't know.

JO: All I want to do is to feed the birds, have them land on my hand again.

CATHY: Well (*producing some imaginary bread perhaps from an old sandwich*)

Jo. We'll both try, eh ?

JO: *(taking some of the bread)* Yes, we'll give it a go.

CATHY: There we go.

They both throw out some imaginary bread to entice the seagulls.

CATHY: Let's see, shall we.

JO: *(throwing out a second hand full)* There.

They wait expectantly.

CATHY: Here they come.

JO: *(excitedly and loudly)* Come here...Come here.

CATHY: Gently, Jo.

JO: *(much quieter)* Yes.. sorry.... *(to seagulls)* Come on... Come on.

The actors play the scene as if there are real seagulls there. They are not imagining the seagulls.

CATHY: Look, there Jo.

JO: Yes.

Their heads both track a single seagull's flight from far out in the auditorium until it lands on the stage not too far from them.

Pause

CATHY: Go on.... Go on.

JO: Come one *(Jo coaxes an imaginary seagull in front of her)* There. There. *(watching it feed)* That's nice isn't it ? Do you want some more ?... *(giving out some more)* There.

JO nods and smiles with great happiness as she throws feed to the seagull.

CATHY walks out of the scene and watches JO.

CATHY: She was at her happiest then. The treatment made surprising effects upon

her vision. She disliked the look of her face when she saw herself in the mirror for the first time. You see this wasn't the way she saw the world.

In the background JO is steadily encouraging an imaginary seagull with food to feed from her hand.

CATHY: Also as Jo became more aware, she increasingly realised what she had lost, what she still didn't have and felt increasingly angry that she wasn't consulted. The fact that she couldn't have, never registered with her. She was enrolled as the latest modern medical curio.

At this moment JO in the background successfully gets the imagery seagull to feed from her hand. As she raises her hand with the imaginary bird feeding from it, her face is one of pure triumph and joy.

JO exits

Pause

Enter JOHN, seemingly absorbed in something else. He doesn't see CATHY.

CATHY: John, can I have a word ?

JOHN: Sure.

CATHY: I'm concerned about Jo.

JOHN: That old chestnut.

CATHY: She's not coping. She can't understand.

JOHN: Do you think she's becoming depressed ?

CATHY: Well, she told me "Everyone's seen my brain, but no one asked me". And "I don't want to be like this anymore."

Pause

JOHN: What did you say ?

CATHY: I said I'd have to talk with you as you're now in charge. The parents have to let go, at least ease off, let her develop.

Pause

JOHN: Its hard for them. Perhaps they too expected some reward, some "thank you". That's why they did that bloody TV show.

CATHY: Embarrassing wasn't it. Well, it's not the father.

JOHN: I know, its the mother. Walk in her shoes for a moment. She's just realized her life has been devoted to caring for Jo, and as Jo, gets better - improves without any care she is putting in, she has very little to show for her life. She has done nothing else.

CATHY: I thought I should let you know.

JOHN: Thanks. *(pause)* Do you know the ethics committee has stopped the programme ?

CATHY: No !

JOHN: That damned TV show did it. It shook their confidence. "Not good for the Institute's reputation." *(produces an envelope and opens it)* I got a letter this morning – *(handing letter over to Cathy who skim reads it)* "no further human subjects are to be sourced until further rigorous evaluation."

CATHY: So, you've been kicked into the long grass. *(handing the letter back)*

JOHN: I'm afraid so.

CATHY: Anyway we have to do the best we can.

CATHY moves to the side of the stage and watches.

Enter JO and her parents. They are in the midst of a row over who should be holding the controller.

JO struggles with her MOTHER for control of the pump.

JOHN approaches them.

JO: It's mine.

MOTHER: Really Jo.

JO: It's mine. I decide.

MOTHER: No Jo, we know best.

FATHER: Count me out, she's a big girl now.

MOTHER: *(to father)* You're just spineless.

JO: You just like being in charge *(quickly snatching the controller and*

struggling with her mother over the controller). Give it to me.

MOTHER: Nonsense.

JO and her mother stare angrily at each other. The MOTHER is clearly surprised with JO's strength and aggression.

JOHN: Excuse me, ladies.

MOTHER: I'm sorry, doctor, but she's being difficult again. I look elsewhere for a moment and she snatches this from me...Really.

The MOTHER wrenches the control panel from JO's hands.

MOTHER: Jo, just won't listen.

An uneasy silence.

JOHN: About what, Jo ? What won't you listen too ?

JO: *(grasping the controller again and struggling against her MOTHER)*
That's mine. The control. I want to use it

Pause

MOTHER: Well Jo, listen to what the doctor says. You know we must always do what the doctor -

JOHN: *(interrupting)* Give it to her.

MOTHER: *(continuing)* say....You heard Jo - What !

JOHN: Give it back to Jo....

MOTHER: But !

JOHN: Please.

MOTHER: Are you -

JOHN: *(interrupting)* It's her treatment - she must have the choice.

MOTHER: But we signed !

JOHN: Jo's in charge now.

MOTHER: But-

JOHN: *(interrupting)* Jo can understand, so she's in charge.

JOHN stares at the mother.

A prolonged silence as MOTHER first looks at FATHER who indicates he is not going to support her, looks at JOHN who features remain unchanged and lastly back to JO again. The MOTHER after further unspoken prompting from the FATHER reluctantly gives the control panel to JO.

JO gently fondles the control panel. The FATHER gently places his arm around the MOTHER and comforts her.

JOHN: There, that wasn't too bad was it.

An uneasy silence.

JOHN: I think Jo and I need to have a chat...alone.

The PARENTS reluctantly exit, the MOTHER angrily silently muttering to the FATHER, who resignedly just lets it pass over his head. It is the first time the parents have ever lost control over deciding about JO and her life.

Pause

JOHN: That's better. Don't get angry with them. They've had a lifetime of looking after you and letting go is the hardest part. Now, you've got your own life to live.

JO smiles.

JO: I will.

JOHN: Good.... Good. *(exiting)*

CATHY: So Jo was free. For the first time in her life free to do as she wanted..

Enter TODD from the back of the stage.

JO standing at the front of the stage notices him, blushes and turns away, whilst conspicuously tidying herself up.

However JO's responses are very immature. She faces the audience who can clearly see the powerful emotions crossing her face. This part of the scene should be warm in its humanity.

TODD slowly and silently approaches JO from behind. He touches her right shoulder, and moves to her left so she sees no one.

TODD: Hello... (*surprising her*) How are you.... Have we?... Do I know you ?... I feel like we've... Anyway I came to tell you that you have such lovely eyes.

JO responds in a positive but very immature way throughout.

TODD: I like them.... You are so beautiful.
(*reaching out and holding her hand*) Do you know what ?

*TODD and JO walk around the stage holding hands.
TODD whispers into JO's ear. JO nods happily.
TODD releases JO and walks ahead, stops and looks at her.
JO pauses, then follows after him.*

TODD and JO exit.

CATHY: (*oblivious to this*) It's no surprise what happened next.

RE ENTER TODD and JO.

TODD and JO are holding hands as they walk around the stage. They are clearly post coital. TODD is smiling and embarrassed (it was all too easy). JO does not understand that as far as TODD is concerned, she is just another casual fling.

JO: Does that mean that I'm your girlfriend and you're... my boyfriend.

TODD: Well, ummm.

TODD nods, too embarrassed to answer.

A prolonged pause as they continue slowly walking around the stage while holding hands..

Growing Background noise of a party.

JO: A party !! I'm just so excited.

TODD: (*slight unease*) Yeh, we'll have a good time.

JO: Eddy will be so jealous.

TODD stops walking, disbelieving that JO could possibly be two timing him.

TODD: Who ??

JO: Eddy the Elephant, silly.

TODD and JO now stand in the middle of the stage, in the middle of the party scene. TODD is acknowledging imaginary other party goers, from the audience and the sides of the stage. However, TODD is clearly becoming increasingly embarrassed with JO's company.

Jo is just blissfully and naively happy and completely unaware of TODD's true feelings.

TODD'S FRIEND (*offstage*) Todd ! Todd !!

TODD notices, JO is unaware as he releases his hand from hers..

Enter TODD'S FRIEND-running onto the stage towards TODD (He is the same age as Todd, callous and slightly drunk.)

TODD'S FRIEND: Yeeeeehhhhhh !!

TODD'S FRIEND drunkenly embraces TODD,

TODD (*simultaneously*): Yeeeeehhhhhh !!

TODD returns the embrace, and they revolve through a 360 degree turn. At mid point TODD'S FRIEND notices JO, immediately appraises the situation, and after completing the one full turn separates from TODD.

TODD'S FRIEND: You.. (*pointing at JO*) You'll shag anything in a skirt.

Pause

JO: (*to TODD*) I need a wee.

TODD'S FRIEND: (*explodes with contemptuous laughter*) I need a wee !

TODD is now extremely embarrassed.

TODD: (*embarrassed, to JO said under his breath*) Shut up.
(*hastily beckoning her away*) Go away ! Go on !!

JO moves offstage, but from the side of the stage witnesses the conversation.

TODD (*to TODD'S FRIEND*) OK, She was fair game.

TODD'S FRIEND: (*placing his arm around TODD*) She's just trash mate - human rubbish. A fucking muppett

TODD: - A medical muppett.

They both laugh at the shared "joke".

JO is deeply shaken

TODD: I couldn't take that home to my parents.

TODD'S FRIEND: You have had a close escape there, Todd.. Disabled bitch !!
Come on.

TODD: I don't like her....

TODD'S FRIEND laughs contemptuously

TODD: What ? I don't like her.

Both turn to walk away in the opposite direction from JO and exit to shared laughter.

RE ENTER TODD.

He stares at JO, their eyes meet.

TODD (*looking JO in the face*) I don't like her.

TODD EXITS

JO is now distraught as the pernicious backchat continues between TODD and TODD'S FRIEND.

TODD'S FRIEND: (*offstage*) I need a wee. (*echoing repeatedly amidst their mirth*)...

TODD : (*offstage*) I'm sorry mate, I shouldn't have.

JO utterly despondent, now lies on the floor in a foetal position. She cries bitterly.

CATHY looks with deep pity at the prostrate JO. (CATHY is unaware of who it was who had done this to JO) She gently places a cardigan over the prostrate figure.

CATHY: As adults we forget how hard it is growing up. But it usually turns out right and we move on.... Jo started to hoard adult nappies. Her parents denied they were indices of stress. She was, they said, "just being silly" Life just didn't turn out well. Her face never quite fitted. To make things worse, Jo's parents put her into a mainstream school, Even John protested. What chance would she have there ? As her parents saw it, she had delay but now at last a cure had arrived. They bought John's story hook line and sinker. To be fair, John didn't say that, but that is what the parents believed - and it's what people believe that really matters. Anyway, no surprises it went very badly. Jo left after a term because she couldn't cope. Her

happiest day there was apparently when she went back to her old special school. Its rather poignant isn't it ? Apparently while there-

JO: *(proudly)* I filled in the missing numbers, Cathy.

CATHY: - basic subtraction. She could at least succeed in something. Frankly no one else apart from me wanted to listen. Even the local team for people with learning difficulties refused to see her. Jo's treatment was supposed to cure her learning difficulty. In spite of the clear evidence it wasn't, they "felt the referral inappropriate". Who'd believe it could possibly be going wrong ?

JO crawls quietly across the stage as if she is stalking.

She lures an imagery bird towards her with feed as before. JO pretends a bird is feeding from her hand.

CATHY: But the damage was done.

JO quickly catches the bird and kills it brutally.

OFFSTAGE a seagull screaming in distress, merges into the cries of a flock of seagulls.

CATHY: Jo killed some seagulls at a beach and used their bodies to spell the word "Why." Course, it was in all the papers. Can't have that sort of thing happening, can we ? Mug an old lady and it's a slap on the wrist, harm an innocent animal and you're a bloody monster.

*BACK PROJECTION OF NEWSPAPER HEADLINES.
PICTURE OF JO WITH LARGE HEADLINE 'EVIL BASTARD'*

CATHY: *(to JO)* Why Jo ?

JO: I'm sorry, Cathy.

CATHY: It's too late now, Jo.

JO: I was just so angry..... and so sad.
Am I in trouble ?

CATHY: I'm afraid so.

JO: Eddy the elephant said it was a silly thing to do.

CATHY: Well he was right ! What did Eddy suggest ?

JO: He said I should talk to you. You're my friend. You'd know what to do.

CATHY sighs and sits alongside JO.

CATHY: Have you spoken to John about this ?

JO: No. He wouldn't understand.

Pause

CATHY:And, I would ?

JO: You're my friend.

CATHY distressed, briefly turns her head away to wipe a tear.

Pause

CATHY: Jo...Are you happy with John being your consultant ?

JO: *(hugging her)*I want Yoouuu, Cathy, yoooooooouuuu !!!

CATHY returns the hug then gently releases Jo.

CATHY: *(deeply moved)* Thank you ... Thank you Jo I can't.

JO: Why ?

CATHY: I can't be your doctor, Jo. I don't have the expertise.

JO: But, you're a doctor.

CATHY: Yes, but I don't know enough.

JO: I want you.

CATHY: I can't, Jo. It has to be John.

JO: You told me I could decide and I want you.

CATHY: I'm sorry.

JO: Then why did you say it then ?

CATHY: I shouldn't have. Look, only John knows about all this.
I know nothing. I can't help you.

JO: *(tapping her head)* So it's this, this that's stopping you.
(Pause)
I don't want this anymore..

CATHY: Jo, just forget I said –

JO: *(interrupting)* No, really. I want to stop. I've had enough.

Prolonged Silence

CATHY: You know what that means, Jo ?

JO: I'll be as I was before.
(Pause)
I will stop, Cathy. I've decided.

Pause

CATHY: Have you told John this ?

JO: No.

Pause

CATHY: Shall I tell him ?

JO: No. I will.

Pause

CATHY: Ok. Good luck.

They separate, CATHY moves to the side of the stage.

*Enter JOHN. JO walks over to JOHN. JOHN is holding the controller.
There is a short silence as if JO has just spoken and JOHN is considering his reply.*

JOHN: People can be real bastards Jo, that's the way the world sometimes is.

JO: But look at me ?

JOHN: Jo, you're a beautiful girl.

JO: I'll always be seen as different.

JOHN: We're all different. No one's perfect, Jo.

JO: At least you can fit in. My face doesn't fit. It never has and it never will.

JOHN: There's always plastic surgery.

JO: What's the point ? So that I can look 'normal.' In spite of this (*tapping her head*) I'll never be accepted.

Pause

JOHN: I'm sorry you feel like this, Jo.

Prolonged Pause

JO: Can't you make me a friend ?

JOHN: Sorry, Jo. No.

JO: Why ?

JOHN: I can't.

JO: Why not ? You - made me.

JOHN: I didn't make you. It doesn't work that way.

JO: But why ?

JOHN: I can't - I'm not allowed to - until 'further evaluation'.

JO: That's not good enough.

JOHN: Jo, I have no choice.

JO: I had no choice. You gave me no choice remember ! None !!

JOHN: That's not fair.

JO: Isn't it ?

JOHN: Your parents and a judge decided for you.

JO: Then decide for someone else to be my friend.

JOHN: It isn't that easy.

JO: Isn't it ?

JOHN: Friendship has to be freely given, Jo. I can't make someone be your friend.

JO: And you won't make another ?

JOHN: I don't like that phrase.

Pause

JO: Will you ?

JOHN: Sadly Jo. No.

JO: But, why ?

JOHN: Its just not possible. I'm sorry.
Jo, you'll be a one off for some time.

Silence

JO: So, that's it ?

JOHN: No, we carry on.

JO: It's hardly a choice is it ?

JOHN: Jo, what do you mean ?

JO: Do you know I've often felt like I just want to end all this.

Pause

JOHN: I'm sorry to hear that.

JO: Bit late now....Will you help me ?

JOHN: I can't Jo.

JO: Then what can you do ?

JOHN: I can't kill you or and I can't help you kill yourself.

Prolonged pause

JO: I was happy before...Do you know that ? I didn't know who I was, but I was happy. And then, all this I just want to stop. Stop this. Just be left alone, Be what I was before.

JOHN: Jo, think of what you're saying.

JO: I didn't ask for this. I didn't want it. I didn't choose it !

JOHN: You couldn't Jo. You were in no condition.

JO: But, I'm in the right condition now ? Yes ?

Pause

JOHN: Yes.

JO: Well, I don't want this.

JOHN: Jo, we did this for your best interests.

JO: I choose to stop.

PROLONGED PAUSE

JOHN: Jo, its not that simple.

JO: Isn't it ? You said I had control.

JO snatches the controller from JOHN and starts to violently bash it..

JOHN: What are you doing?

JO: I'm stopping.

JOHN grabs the control and unsuccessfully tries to wrestle it from JO. They start to fight over control of the control panel.

JOHN: No you can't. !

JO: Stop ! I want to stop !

JOHN: Jo ! Listen ! Jo !!

JO: End it end it end it (*said repeatedly*)

JO frees her hand with the controller from JOHN'S grip, strikes out hitting JOHN's head. JOHN is caught by surprise, is rendered unconscious and falls to the floor.

JO: End it end it end it (*said repeatedly*)

JO in her anger is unaware of this as she continues to beat JOHN with the controller.

A PROLONGED SILENCE

MOTHER (*offstage*): Jo, what have you done ?

JO: Now will you listen !!!

IMMEDIATE CUT TO BLACK

PROLONGED PAUSE

Spotlight on CATHY- Her mobile phone rings

CATHY: (*answering*) Hello...She did what ?

CATHY freezes

LIGHTS ON

ENTER TODD and TODD's FRIEND who first carry JOHN'S body to the side of the stage and unceremoniously drop it there...

Then they return and grab JO

JO: (*struggling*) No ! No, I don't want to go ! I don't ! Leave me alone. !!
(*Eddy is grabbed by one of the assailants*) That's Eddy. (*struggling*)
He's my friend.. (*struggling more*) He's mine. (*greater struggle*) Mine.....
He wants to be with his mummy. (*shouted struggling*)Ask him.
(*screamed as Eddy is torn from her*)
Eeeeeeddddddddddyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy.

JO is forcibly carried to the front of the stage by TODD and TODD'S FRIEND – and then thrown onto the floor.

TODD and TODD'S FRIEND both promptly exit without so much as a backward look.

JO, stunned lies on the floor, before slowly sitting up and starting to rock incessantly to and fro.

CATHY unfreezes

CATHY: You're certain ?.. Right. ...I'm sorry..... And Jo ?
No, no no – That's..... (*sighs heavily*) Ok. OK !!!
....Look. -I understand. It - This was never my idea. Right. I suggested something else remember and the committee decided otherwise. ...
We are where we are....
I know there's no body else. I'll do my best, but that's all I can promise.
No. No press conference.

CATHY abruptly switches the phone off and sighs deeply.

(It is left to the Director's discretion whether CATHY's mobile phone call conversation and JO being roughly manhandled occur simultaneously)

CATHY walks across the stage picks up Eddy and conceals Eddy behind her back.

JO is sitting unresponsive, rocking back and forwards in a highly monotonous manner in the middle of the stage, which is supposed to represent a prison cell.

CATHY watches JO in her monotonous movements.

CATHY cautiously, approaches her.

CATHY: Hello, Jo.

Silence as JO continues rocking.

CATHY: Jo

JO continues rocking

CATHY: Jo !

JO: (*still rocking*) I thought you were my friend.

CATHY: Jo !!

JO abruptly stops rocking.

JO: I trusted you, Cathy. You didn't back me up.

JO resumes rocking.

CATHY: Jo ?... Jo. ...Jo. I was always there for you and your family.

JO stops rocking.

JO: You let me down !

Prolonged Silence

CATHY: Jo.. Jo, I'm sorry. I just did what I thought was best.

Prolonged silence

JO: And where do we go from here, Cathy ?.... This room isn't very nice. It's not nice at all and I can't get out. I bang on the door, but it stays closed and there are no toys for me to play with. That's not very nice is it, Cathy? And Eddy isn't allowed to come. They took him. I cried and pulled Eddy to me, as hard as I could, but they just took him from me. They pulled so hard I thought Eddy was going to rip apart and I had to let him go... We don't want Eddy getting ripped do we ?

CATHY: No, I'm sorry Jo. They were just being silly.

JO: It's not fair. What harm has Eddy ever done to anyone ?

CATHY produces Eddy from behind her back.

JO takes Eddy eagerly, hugs him and then examines Eddy closely before cuddling him again.

CATHY: He's been missing you.

JO: Eddy and I need to have a talk – Alone.

CATHY: Ok, Jo. I'll come back later.... Do you need anything ?

JO: No, Eddy and I will be fine.

JO begins to play with Eddy.

CATHY also takes out the controller from her pocket and silently, places it alongside JO, who appears not to notice.

CATHY moves to the side of the stage.

ENTER Jo's MOTHER -angrily.

ENTER JO's FATHER – who just paces – angrily but speechlessly around, his wife.

MOTHER: This is all your fault Cathy. You say one thing and do something else.

CATHY: What ? When !!

MOTHER: You should have stopped -

CATHY: *(interrupting)* I gave you my opinion, which you choose to ignore.
I did warn you, but you wouldn't listen.

The FATHER stops pacing around.

MOTHER; You shouldn't have asked John.

CATHY: I had to put Jo first – so that you knew that everything, everything that was reasonably possible was done for her. I didn't know about his research, if I had, then that would have been different.

MOTHER; But –

CATHY: *(continuing)* I'm sorry, but doctors, can't know it all. Not this one anyway.
I have no fault in this.
Look to yourself and ask the same question.

Uneasy silence

Look, we can't go on like this- we all need to talk.

MOTHER is about to answer then pauses, stares at CATHY and then at the FATHER

FADE OUT

FADE IN

JO and her PARENTS are sitting on a sofa. The MOTHER is sitting next to JO, the FATHER on MOTHER's other side. JO is holding Eddy. CATHY is sitting on the armrest, next alongside JO.

CATHY: We need to find another way.

JO: I don't want this any more.

FATHER : Jo.

MOTHER: She's just ungrateful doctor. How could she ? - that poor man.

CATHY: She has rights.

MOTHER: So did he.

JO: I didn't mean to kill him, I didn't. (*bursting into tears*)

Pause while JO is comforted by her PARENTS.

CATHY: John made his decision when he started on this. Although I said I would support you and have supported you, you may recall I didn't agree with his advice – it was all too unpredictable.

Pause

FATHER: You're not blaming us ?

CATHY: No, of course not.

FATHER : Then what then ?

CATHY: It wasn't the right time - for Jo and for others.
But we have a problem and there's nothing that can change the past.

MOTHER: I wish we hadn't agreed to this.

Pause

The FATHER rests his hands and head on the MOTHER's shoulders

JO: I don't want it now.

CATHY: It's too late for all that now. What are we going to do?

PROLONGED PAUSE as CATHY stands up and walks in a large circle around the stage before turning to face JO and her PARENTS.

CATHY: Jo, I'm just going to have a little chat with your parents.
Can I leave you with Eddy ?

JO: Eddy the elephant will be fine with his mummy.

JO sits down on the floor and starts to play with Eddy .

CATHY: Look everyone's suffered in this. You, Jo and of course, John. But it could get a lot worse for you and especially for Jo. Look at her ! She's never happier when she's with Eddy the elephant is she ?

Both PARENTS nod their agreement.

CATHY: Jo is one of life's innocents. She needs to be loved and protected during her life. She shouldn't have to face what's coming. *(Pause)* Do you want Jo to stand trial ? Go to prison ? For you not to see for weeks at a time and live hundreds of miles from you ?

The PARENTS start to become deeply unhappy.

CATHY: And how will you cope ? For that matter, how will she ?

The PARENTS are deeply shaken and silently show they don't want this..

CATHY: You have to support her. You have to let her go.
What other choice do you have ?

*FATHER stands up, walks over to JO, and crouches down alongside her.
JO stops playing with her toys and hopefully looks up.*

FATHER : I guess I'll never walk you down the aisle.

JO: No, sorry dad.

JO and her FATHER hug each other. The MOTHER stands up.

MOTHER: *(walking towards JO)* You shouldn't have done it, Jo.

JO: I didn't mean to do it, but he wouldn't listen. None of you would listen !

The MOTHER crouches down, breaks down and comforts JO.

Very Prolonged Pause as the MOTHER recovers her composure

MOTHER: You know, it wasn't Jo who needed fixing after all.

FATHER: She was the only one of us who wasn't broken.

MOTHER: We should have valued her for she is – not for what we tried to make her into... We all let her down- everybody.

JO and her MOTHER look into each other's faces and smile.

Prolonged Pause

MOTHER: *(to CATHY)* What do you suggest ?

CATHY: The Judge who will be reviewing Jo's case is the same one from the first

review. I asked her to come.... She's outside.....I think we can find a way where we can keep Jo's interests safe.

The PARENTS look at each other, nod in agreement, slowly stand up and exit.

PAUSE

Enter the JUDGE from the audience where she has been sitting throughout the play. She is gentle looking and middle aged. She carries a small folder with a fountain pen on top.

JUDGE: Hello Jo. *(sitting alongside)*. Jo. I wanted to see you privately - I've already gone through the expert testimonies with the lawyers and that's why they're not here, and it's just us.

Pause

Jo gives the judge Eddy the elephant.

JUDGE: Thank you.

JO: He's Eddy the elephant. He's my favourite toy.

JUDGE: *(looking closely)* He's lovely, Jo.

JO: I know....Can we play, now?

Pause

The JUDGE returns Eddy the elephant to JO.

JUDGE: Jo, I'm sorry. I should have met you, when this all first started. I ... I allowed the operation to happen.

JO moves away from the JUDGE and becomes more anxious.

JUDGE: The other doctors said that I didn't need to see you - the scans and accompanying reports were deemed sufficient and I unwisely took that advice.... Look, not seeing you was a grave mistake on my part. *(pause)* You do forgive me ? *(JO becomes less anxious)* I only acted for your best interests. I didn't want to have to drag you and your family through the court when there seemed so little point on such a clear cut matter.
Of course it seemed clear cut at the time but no one was to know how events would turn out. If I had had any suspicion Jo, any at all, then I would never have agreed. I want you to know that, Jo.

Pause

JO: Thank you.

Pause

JUDGE: Now, Jo. Do you still want to continue with this treatment ?

Jo shakes her head.

JUDGE: You understand what this means ?

JO: I'll be as I was before.

JUDGE: That's what the medical opinion says. and it can get things wrong.

JO: I still want it stopped.

Pause

JUDGE: So you are determined ?

JO: Yes.

Pause

JUDGE And there is nothing I-

JO: *(gently interrupting)* No.

VERY PROLONGED PAUSE

JUDGE: Alright, Jo. I believe you do.

The JUDGE takes her folder, opens it and using the fountain pen writes a few words on a sheet of paper.

JUDGE: You're free to make your own decision.

JO: You mean I can -.

JUDGE: *(overwhelmed with emotion)* Yes, Jo. You can.*(continuing to write and controlling her emotion)* At this moment Jo is able to give a competent opinion. However, her fully informed consent to an action whereby her treatment is stopped, will in a short while inevitably make all her later opinions difficult to interpret. Later still, these actions will become

incompetent in the eyes of the court. That will be the final position of this Court. It means that Jo, will in my judgment, from the moment she takes the action of stopping her treatment, will never be fit to stand trial.
(concluding with a florid signature)

The JUDGE offers her pen to JO who signs underneath as well but with a very immature pencil grip and action.

The JUDGE stands and then approaches CATHY.

JUDGE: Witnessed by.

CATHY signs.

JUDGE: There. It's done.

*A silence as the magnitude of what has been agreed sinks in.
The JUDGE nods to CATHY*

JUDGE: God bless you, Jo.

The JUDGE compassionately embraces JO

JO: Thank you.

The JUDGE exits and returns to take her seat in the audience.

JO sits on the sofa with Eddy on her lap, staring unresponsive at the audience..

*CATHY, MOTHER and FATHER approach JO from behind,
They stop a metre or so from JO and look at her.*

Pause

FATHER: *(said repeatedly)* I guess, I'll never walk you down the aisle.

MOTHER: *(said repeatedly)* You shouldn't have done it, Jo.

CATHY: *(said repeatedly)* Everything will be ok.

CATHY, MOTHER and FATHER, approach and touch JO, going down on their knees and repeating their lines.

FATHER: I guess, I'll never walk you down the aisle.) SAID
MOTHER: You shouldn't have done it, Jo.) REPEATEDLY
CATHY: Everything will be ok.) “ ”

*Throughout JO remains unresponsive
Then at a time of JO's choosing*

JO: I'm ready now. *(the last words she speaks)*

FATHER, MOTHER and CATHY. Immediately stop speaking, stand up and take a step backwards.

JO stares at Eddy and gently places Eddy alongside her on the sofa.

The following sequence is played without a single word from any of the actors apart from CATHY.

Background music of Arvo Part's "Speigel im Spiegel" which slowly crescendos throughout this scene.

CATHY: So Jo was deemed mentally competent- : sane if you like - and the treatment was stopped - at her request.

After a brief pause. JO, still sitting on the sofa eloquently takes off each of the red trainers.

CATHY: There you have it. Those parents did the bravest thing I have ever seen. You know, I never stop admiring my patients and especially their parents or carers. I'd be so bloody angry if it was to happen to my child, but that's something I've very rarely seen in my experience. All love their child for who they are, not mourn what they'll never be. They're all better human beings than I am, or will ever be.

These events occur at the same time that CATHY is speaking.

Her PARENTS ENTER from the back of the stage. Her FATHER is carrying JO's former Pedro boots whilst her MOTHER carries JO's former hospital clothes – a hospital gown. JO's FATHER kneels in front of JO puts on her former Pedro boots. JO stands up and her MOTHER places on her, her former hospital gown.

While MOTHER is going JO, TODD enters from the back of the stage pushing the wheelchair, to the front of the stage. He has the blank mask concealed from the audience behind his back.

The PARENTS sit on the sofa and comfort each other by holding each other's hands.

After CATHY has finished speaking she approaches JO, gently touches her and leads her towards the wheelchair we saw her in at the start of the play. JO, caresses the chair

gently with the back of her hand, sits in it and makes herself comfortable, adjusts her clothes, and finally places her arms in her lap (in the same posture we first saw her in the start of the play) and nods.

TODD standing immediately behind the wheelchair places the blank mask over JO's face.

If this scene is performed with JO being unmasked, when CATHY approaches carrying the controller, JO stares into CATHY'S face and smiles with a most beautiful smile as if she is at last finding peace for herself.

CATHY takes out the controller and passes it to JO, before walking behind and to the side of JO's wheelchair .

There is an uneasy pause for a moment as if she is having last minute doubts but in reality it is to take in this final moment.

JO looks up and turns her head in the direction of where that first seagull came from earlier in the play. Holding the controller in the left hand she slowly raises her right hand with the index finger extended.

She momentarily holds the hand in this raised position before dropping it sharply and precisely onto the controller.

AT THAT MOMENT

THE LIGHTS CUT IMMEDIATELY TO BLACK AND THE MUSIC ABRUPTLY STOPS.

THE END

(9)

The Director may decide having read the play that he/she would wish for Jo to be covered by a blank mask for the duration of the first Act up to the moment she returns after having had the innovative treatment. The mask would also be placed on Jo's face by Todd prior to Jo has pressing the controller to terminate her treatment.

I leave this to the Director's discretion.