[00:00:00] **Music:** Bright, cheerful acoustic guitar.

[00:00:08] **John Moe:** Jamie Lee Curtis was early. It was a few minutes before our interview was supposed to start, and I got a message from Gabe Mara—the producer of this program—that Jamie Lee Curtis was already in the Zoom room hanging out, ready to go. So, of course, I hopped on right away, and there she was on the screen in a cabin that she owns.

When I interview people, I always expect the more famous ones to be a little more standoffish, more guarded. But that's not always the case. And it was certainly not the case here. Turns out, Jamie Lee Curtis is one of those people that talks to you right off the bat like she's known you forever, like you're old friends. And on my side, having never met her but having seen her in movies since the early 1980s, I felt like I knew her too. I had expected to be intimidated, because you know, movie star. But this was a person seemingly without guile or ego or pretense. Instantly, I was hanging out with an old friend, but it just happened to be for a podcast.

It's *Depresh Mode*. I'm John Moe. I'm glad you're here, and I'm glad we can all be here together with Jamie Lee Curtis. Jamie's approach to conversation applies to how she talks about her substance use disorder. It carried on for years in secret, even while she was a huge movie star, because mental illness doesn't care if you're famous or not, successful or not. It comes for anyone. You want Jamie Lee Curtis's biography? Sure. Okay. Jamie's mother is JanetLee, legendary film actress. Maybe best known as being the shower scene victim in the movie *Psycho*. Her father was Tony Curtis, star of *Some Like it Hot*, *The Defiant Ones*. Go look up Tony Curtis.

Jamie's movie debut was in 1978 as Laurie Strode, the lead in the horror classic *Halloween*. She's done a ton of sequels for that one, including one coming out this coming October. More credits? Sure. Okay. How about *Trading Places, A Fish Called Wanda, True Lies*. More recently, *Knives Out*. And *Everything Everywhere All at Once*. I didn't even know that was her in that movie, that last movie, until the credits. It's a brilliant movie, especially brilliant about mental health. She's on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Won two Golden Globe awards, won several Fangoria Chainsaw awards, which is a—which is a horror kind of thing. Written several great children's books, co-created a fiction podcast series on Audible called *Letters from Camp*. Final season just debuted.

There's a reference to her husband in this interview, and that husband is Christopher Guest, from *Spinal Tap*, *Princess Bride*, *Waiting for Guffman*. I was eager to hear about Jamie's substance use, her recovery, her fame, and all that goes with that. But I started with some questions about terminology.

[00:03:00] **Transition:** Relaxed acoustic guitar.

[00:03:07] **John Moe:** Well, to prepare for this, I've gone through the laborious task of watching many Jamie Lee Curtis movies and interviews, because my job is so hard. The term that keeps coming up in interviews with you is show-off business.

(Jamie laughs.)

It's never show business. It's show-off business. And I wonder if you could talk about why you use that term.

[00:03:28] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** Because we get so much fucking attention. The amount of attention given to people nowadays—show-off business was a sort of a precursor to it. But the internet and social media has now turned us all into attention whores, and we are all just wanting the attention. So, for me, show-off business is—it's a way to not take any of it too seriously, which I try to do. I remind people it is a business, and there are business aspects to it that are crucial to its survival, and it's supposed to be fun. And so, I try to use the term show-off business just to, you know, not take any of it too seriously.

[00:04:15] **John Moe:** The other term that stood out for me is, when you talk about your history with addiction, you use the term dope fiend.

[00:04:25] Jamie Lee Curtis: Yeah. Look at you! Like, finding my repetitive phrasing.

[00:04:30] **John Moe:** Hey, man. I do my research.

[00:04:31] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** I say I am a dope fiend, because I wanna destigma-fy and demystify the term addict. To minimize my addiction is very easy to do, and I have to remind myself all the time that my addiction to opiates is no different than the person who is jonesing for fentanyl on the street today. So, I like to refer to myself in that same way, as a dope fiend, because it makes it a little less fun and a little less glamorous.

[00:05:05] **John Moe:** Yeah. The circumstances of your life happen to be that your addiction takes place in your world and not their world.

[00:05:13] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** Right. And it's important to me, very important to me, that I represent—(*sighs*) whatever version of truth I can represent. I need to represent it. It's very important to me that people don't look up to me as anything other than a human being who is trying, just like other people, to navigate all of this complex, emotional, physical, spiritual, political, world—show business world, show-off business world—and that I am struggling with it just like everybody else.

[00:05:53] **John Moe:** I wanna get into how that addiction developed and where it took you. But let's back up even further. You know, usually I say, "Well, where are you from? What were your parents like?" You're in a position where, you know, your parents were famous. You grew up in show-off business. What were your experiences as a kid with the idea of mental health and with the idea of addiction? What did it mean to you? How was that formed?

[00:06:18] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** My grandfather committed suicide before I was born. My grandfather, paternal grandfather, died a week before I was born. My grandmother, my maternal grandmother, died of alcoholism. I remember when I used to go visit my grandmother as a child. She lived in an apartment in Los Angeles on Hyperion, and she lived with her husband. And they lived in a one-bedroom kind of regular old apartment. And I remember she was always in the bedroom. And when you walked in the door—the door was

always shut. And when you walked in the door, there were twin beds. And she was bedridden, and she had a candle lit next to her bed to light her cigarettes.

And I remember as a child walking in her room and getting lightheaded, because if you leave a candle burning in a room with the doors shut, it eats all the oxygen. And I have a distinct memory of being six or seven and walking into this room and seeing kind of stars and getting very dizzy. And I would—my memory is that my grandmother had little burn holes on her blanket.

And years later, when my mother was smoking, I remember saying something to my mother like, "Hey, maybe you shouldn't smoke, because grandma died of a stroke."

And my mother said, "Oh, grandma didn't die from a stroke sweetheart."

I said, "Well, what did she die from?"

And she said, "She was an alcoholic." And I realized in that moment that my grandmother was a bedridden alcoholic woman who drank vodka from the beginning of the day to the end of the day, and used a commode in the bedroom that her husband would empty. That's where alcoholism took my grandmother. So, I have had plenty on my—both of my parents were alcoholic addicts. My father was, you know, a fairly—went to rehab and had a long history of drug addiction. My mother drank her whole life.

So, I have a—clearly, a very vivid painting of what depression, addiction, alcoholism—what that does to people and what that does to families.

[00:09:07] **John Moe:** Did it occur to you, okay, this is all over my family tree. Is it going to come for me? Is this going to—is this going to happen to me?

(Jamie denies it.)

No?! Why not?

[00:09:17] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** No! Because you don't think that way. You just don't think that way. You think you're immune to everything. And the last thing in the world I thought was that that would come for me. And for a very long time, played that game just fine with no repercussions, no near misses, no oopsie daisies at work. There was never—I never would be loaded at work. I would—you know, I was just a fun party girl and dabbled in all the things that people dabbled in when they had a little bit of money in their pocket. A little cocaine here, some alcohol here. I was a garden variety party girl.

[00:10:03] **John Moe:** And you know, most people aren't movie stars at age 19, as you were.

[00:10:10] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** Eeeeh, movie star—I mean, you know, I—

[00:10:12] **John Moe:** Movie star. Movie star, I'll say it.

[00:10:13] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** Okay. I was the <u>star</u> of a <u>movie</u>, but I would not—there was very little effect that occurred once that movie came out. That movie was a little, low budget horror film that made a little dent in a very specific niche, and I did not get much work after it. So, it was hardly like I had some sort of—all of a sudden people were interested in who I was and what I was doing.

[00:10:39] **John Moe:** Okay. But you had success fairly early in life, you know, into your 20s, certainly. And did that make you feel like, "Okay, I've got this all nailed. I've got this figured out. Nothing's going to catch up with me," or was there the anxiety and depression that might go along with fame at a relatively early age?

[00:10:58] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** Yeah. Yeah. No, I think the depression that comes along is your own individual depression. That it isn't manifested by your career; it's manifested by your genes and your life experiences and the imprints of your parents and the profound effect that divorce has. I am the product of 13 marriages in my immediate family, of my mother, father, and stepfather.

(John "wow"s.)

And I am the product of a warring set of parents. Tony Curtis left Janet Lee for a 17-year-old girl, who he married at 18 and had two children with almost immediately. So, the war between Janet and Tony was very powerful, and the alliances that divorce forces in families for a child is a terrible burden to put on a kid. So, I'm not gonna pretend that show-off business had anything to do with depression or addiction. I would say that those wounds were much younger and much more based on the imprint of my parents.

[00:12:16] **John Moe:** How old were you when your parents' divorce was at its loudest?

[00:12:21] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** Well, I like to refer to myself—(*playfully*) if you had done your homework! If you hadn't been watching like *Freaky Friday* and had done your homework—

[00:12:30] **John Moe:** (*Laughing*.) Things got tense in here. Uh-huh?

[00:12:32] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** You would have read that my favorite phrase is that I was the "save the marriage" baby who failed. You know, I think I was the "save the marriage" baby. And by the time I was born and walking around at two and a half, I think it was all pretty cooked at that point. And I think they were loud and aggressive alcoholics. And I think it took a toll. There's no question. If you look at pictures of me as a child—and I mean, I would show you one right here, now. I won't spend the time, 'cause this is—you're lovely, and I'm not gonna now look at my phone like all the teenagers do.

(John chuckles.)

And I joke you not, I look stunned and shocked and frightened and surprised in every picture. My sister, Kelly? Beaming, smiling, teethy, and I look like someone just shouted in a very harsh tone like, "Jamie!" And I look like I don't know what's happening and that I'm in

trouble. From a very young age, I really have this look of, "What did I do? Did I do something wrong?" And so, I think that obviously had a—you know, that had a fairly big effect.

[00:13:55] **John Moe:** It's formative. And so, how is that still with you?

[00:13:59] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** Oh, much less so.

[00:14:01] **John Moe:** Yeah. But do you find the little trails of it, though?

[00:14:05] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** Well, of course. I mean, yeah. I mean, I'm human. I've also raised two children. All and a lot of that comes back and bites you in the ass when you're a parent. But I have my own mind now, John. I have done good psychoanalysis. I've done good therapy. I am sober 23 years. I am a solid person. I know what I think. I know what I feel. I can communicate what I think and feel. My boundaries are strong. I am a solid person today.

(John congratulates her.)

Thank you. Much less protean and sort of unformed and shape shifting and subsuming into someone else and what you like, I like. And I look at life, John, as a game of—do you remember the game *Guess Who*?

(John confirms.)

Okay. I look at life now as the game of *Guess Who*, which is simply the process of elimination. I know what I don't like. That's how I found out who I am is I found out who I am by what I don't wanna be, what I don't like. What I like and don't like is based on an elimination of things rather than a real understanding of what it is I like. I have learned what I don't like.

[00:15:38] **John Moe:** What are some of the things that you've learned over the years that you didn't like or who you didn't wanna be, and how did you get that information?

[00:15:46] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** I don't wanna be a liar. I don't wanna be a fake. I have spent a long time trying to be real and have a relatable sense of reality to me. I'm the child—as you mentioned, I'm the child of famous people. There's an assumption, there's a special lens by which you're viewed by other people. There's a smell that is that precedes you when you walk in a room and follows you when you leave. People know who you are, even though you don't know who you are. Because they've attached and ascribed something of existence to you because your parents are famous. And that what comes with that is some assumption, lot of assumptions about who I am, how I was raised. And you end up defending your life.

And I no longer defend my life. I'm now very happy being who I am. I've tried to spend my adulthood demystifying any impression you might have of me so that my actual integrity about who I am and what I stand for—and the only thing I prepared for, since I knew what the name of your podcast was—I literally—I did my homework. Not ever listen—not ever

listening to it! And not reading anything about it. I heard from my young padawan, Russell Goldman, that it's one of his favorite podcasts.

(John thanks Russell.)

I'm a pun girl. I like a good pun.

(John laughs.)

And so, the title of your show has a lovely pointiness to it, and I figured out who you were or what you were trying to do. And this is what I brought you. This is my hostess gift. I like to bring a hostess gift. Here's my gift. I'm gonna read from it. "At such a time, it seems natural and good for me to ask myself these questions. What do I believe in? What must I fight for and what must I fight against? Our species is the only creative species, and it has only one creative instrument: the individual mind and spirit of a man. Nothing was ever created by two men. There are no good collaborations, whether in music, in art, in poetry, in mathematics, in philosophy. Once the miracle of creation has taken place, the group can build and extend it, but the group never invents anything. The preciousness lies in the lonely mind of a man. And now, the forces marshaled around the concept of the group have declared a war of extermination on the preciousness, the mind of man, by disparagement, by starvation, by repressions, forced direction, and the stunning hammer blows of conditioning. The free, roving mind is being pursued, roped, blunted, and drugged.

"It is a sad, suicidal course or species seems to have taken. And this I believe: that the free exploring mind of the individual human is the most valuable thing in the world. And this, I would fight for: the freedom of the mind to take any direction it wishes undirected. And this I must fight against: any idea, religion, or government which limits or destroys the individual. This is what I am and what I'm about. I can understand why a system built on a pattern must try to destroy the free mind, for this is the one thing which can, by inspection, destroy such a system. Surely, I can understand this. I hate it, and I will fight against it to preserve the one thing that separates us from the uncreative beasts. If the glory can be killed, we are lost. That is who I am."

That is from *East of Eden* by John Steinbeck. That is—that free, roving mind is my mind today. I have that mind. And I believe everything that he wrote here. Everything.

[00:20:22] **John Moe:** How long has that quote been with you?

[00:20:25] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** 15 years.

[00:20:26] **John Moe:** Sounds like it was pretty important.

[00:20:27] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** Maybe 20. It moves me to tears, as you heard me in that moment. I'm—"the forced hammer blows of conditioning." That's childhood. You know, there's an E. L. Doctorow quote: "When things go unexamined for a long enough time, certain things happen. They become very, very powerful. They create conformity, they intimidate." You know, that's what I was raised in. That conformity, that calcification over

"This is what we think. And if you think outside of that, that is not okay with us." And I'm worried that our country and our society and our species is heading in that direction.

[00:21:17] **Transition:** Spirited acoustic guitar.

[00:21:19] **John Moe:** Did I expect there to be John Steinbeck and E. L. Doctorow quotes in my Jamie Lee Curtis interview? No, I did not. But interviews are full of discoveries. In a moment, what Jamie did and did not discover about her famous parents and what happened when she discovered Vicodin.

(Music ends.)

[00:21:40] **Promo:**

Music: Orchestral music.

Benjamin Partridge: You, there. Have you considered listening to the *Beef and Dairy Network*, an award-winning comedy show in the form of a newsletter podcast for the beef and dairy industries? Well, maybe you should. And why don't you try our most recent episode, episode 99, which features American man, Paul F. Tompkins, playing Queen Elizabeth II's former personal beef sommelier.

Paul F. Tompkins: Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, and I laying on the floor of her bedroom, just helplessly laughing 'til tears run down our faces, as corgis are jumping on us, over us, licking us. That is a day that I will treasure forever until I'm executed.

Benjamin Partridge: Find the show at MaximumFun.org.

Paul F. Tompkins: I hope there's beef in heaven.

(Music fades out.)

[00:22:21] Music: Relaxed acoustic guitar.

[00:22:17] **John Moe:** Back with Jamie Lee Curtis: show-off business star, self-professed dope fiend, and child of movie stars Janet Lee and Tony Curtis.

(Music ends.)

When you grow up with parents who are already famous and you can read about your parents in the tabloids, and the spotlight is always there, does it seem weird to you? Or do you just think that's the way things naturally are? And has that made you comfortable with getting a lot of attention later in life when you became a performer yourself?

[00:22:54] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** I don't think I read anything about my parents. Really, what would happen is simply other people would talk about my parents, because they were

famous. And you had to always be, you know, trying to be aware of was someone interested in me for me or was someone interested in me for some attention—access of attention, access to fame. Fame is a very—it's a very desirable commodity, and people wanna be close to it. So, that was always the tricky part about being a child. So, I wouldn't read anything about them necessarily. That's—you know, and remember, the social media didn't exist. So, you would have to go look for something, which is not what you do.

[00:23:36] **John Moe:** You'd have to find an Army Archerd column in order to find out.

[00:23:38] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** Right. And be interested in it. And that, you know, I was like most children. I don't know about your children. My children are not interested in what I do.

(John agrees with a laugh.)

They appreciate it when it's good. They don't appreciate it when it's bad. They'll let me know how they feel about it.

[00:23:57] **John Moe:** Which is which. (*Chuckles*.) Yeah, okay.

[00:23:59] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** But they are not—they are on their own lives. They are in their own lives. They are not required to know anything about my work. They don't look back at any of my old work any more than I looked back at my parents' work.

[00:24:12] **John Moe:** Yeah. So, let's talk about the dope fiend. Let's talk about Vicodin. When did that enter your life? When did that phase begin?

[00:24:22] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** So, I had a minor plastic surgery procedure on a movie—after I finished a movie, when the cameraman had said that my eyes were too puffy to shoot one day. And I had minor eye surgery. And there were some complications. And the first day that I had that surgery, I was given Vicodin. And it was just this magic elixir. It was like, whoa! This is amazing.

But even at the time, I managed to keep it at bay. I don't even remember how and when—it was about a 10-year run. Often, I would steal them from people.

[00:25:02] **John Moe:** That—I—yeah, that's interesting to me. But you say, "Wow, it was amazing." In what way was it amazing? How did it feel? Find the words for that rush.

[00:25:12] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** Well, no! Because then anybody who's a dope fiend out there is going to like start jonesing for dope. You know, it's—I refer to it as the warm bath of an opiate. It's like sinking into a warm bath. It's that feeling that starts at the tip of your toes and goes all the way up to your head. It makes you feel safe, and it was a wonderful—you know, there's a reason that the world is now addicted to fentanyl. It is—opiates are a very powerful drug, and they make you feel really good. I'm very lucky that I never did heroin, or I'd be dead today.

[00:25:52] **John Moe:** And so, after the surgery, you just never stopped taking Vicodin?

[00:25:57] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** I would—I would take them to the degree that I had them. I don't even remember. And honestly, there's no need for me to go back. I drank and, you know, somebody would break their leg, and then I'd go over to make them a cake, and then they'd go, "Oh, I can't take those pills."

I'd go, "Oh! I'll have them." And use them as a recreational drug, as a sort of—in lieu of any sort of alcohol or—I never liked smoking pot or anything. So, it was just a nice feeling. It was a buzz. It was a very lovely high for while it—when it was pleasant. When it became addictive and I became addicted to it, it then became a dance of how do you find it? And again, if it was available on the internet when I was in my use, I'd be dead today. If I had gone to heroin, I'd be dead today. I was lucky. I got—one time on a movie, a stunt man hooked me up with about 300 pills, which was the only time in my usage where I had that many. Prior to that, it would just be some manipulation of doctors, all of whom I've gone back to. I've cleaned my side of the street up. I'm a card-carrying member of many recovery groups. I work with people every day. It'll be the single greatest thing of my life is that I have survived drug addiction and alcoholism to this moment. You know, here sitting and talking to you.

[00:27:26] **John Moe:** So, how long did it take from being just the casual, "Hey, this is kind of fun," to what you would consider full-blown addiction?

[00:27:34] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** Uh, not very long. Not very long. It lasted about 10 years.

[00:27:39] **John Moe:** Yeah, that surprises me that—and I know you have a genuine sense of humility about yourself, but you're Jamie Lee Curtis. Like, how could—how could it be hard for you to get drugs in Los Angeles? I would think they would bring them to you on platters.

[00:27:56] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** Well, again, I didn't want to acknowledge that I needed drugs. So, you know, you would take them how you got them. It wasn't—it wasn't that. I was never that person. It was just—any addict knows it's the habitual part of it. It's the needing that feeling and wondering when you are going to get it. People have it with alcohol. When am I gonna next get a glass of wine? How many people form their days around what time they get their wine? I dabbled in that to the degree that I did. It was serious enough with me that it would've killed me. That moment of clarity and then the recovery that I've had since then is incredibly important to me.

And in the last, you know, 23 years, I've also started a whole new creative element of my life that I think would've been very difficult to do had I still been drinking and using drugs. So, I don't. I'm clean and sober, very happily clean and sober. I don't try to sugarcoat it, and yet at the same time, I have a lot of other things that I now focus my life on.

[00:29:14] **John Moe:** Yeah. Yeah. It sounds like you were very what they would call "functional" in that you were still working. You were getting work.

[00:29:23] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** Oh! No, no, no, no, no.

[00:29:25] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** No, no, no, no, no. No one knew in my entire family. No one knew. I refer to myself as an Everest bottom. You know, people call themselves low bottoms. I was an Everest bottom. I lost nothing. I got more fame, more prestige, more work. My family life was good. I had a lot of friends, so I lost nothing except my self-worth. Which is an internal job. So, when I was looking in the mirror, I was looking at the problem. The problem was not outside me. It was a secret. I only talked about it because it's important to talk about your secrets, because it can save the life of other people. And honestly, John Moe, it was a journalist who wrote an article in *Esquire Magazine* called "Vicodin, My Vicodin", which I read in January of 1999 and got sober February 3rd.

[00:30:25] **John Moe:** Tom Chiarella, right?

[00:30:28] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** Tom Chiarella wrote an article about his own addiction to painkillers, and the preamble to the whole article—and I paraphrase 'cause it's—his writing is so good, you need to read the writing. But he basically said, "I don't know where my wedding certificate is. I don't know where the birth certificates for my children are, but I can tell you where every single Vicodin is hidden in my house." And then proceeded to say that there were two in the left cowboy boot toe in the guest closet. There were three in the bill of his Chicago White Sox hat. You know, he knew where they were. And that level of obsession was my level of obsession.

And when he outed himself in that magazine, he did so to save his life. He was saying to his wife, to his family, to his boss, to his editor, to his doctors, "Hey everybody, guess what? I've been, you know, on this hunt for a while." And by doing so, the jig was up. And honestly, he saved—I have contacted him. I'm friendly with him. He saved my life, because it made me feel not so alone.

[00:31:44] **John Moe:** Okay. So, that—you wanted the relief that you saw in him.?

[00:31:48] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** I just—I somehow felt like him telling that secret that I so identified with. I thought, "Oh, I'm not—I'm not terminally unique. There's somebody else out there who has become addicted to this." And it required me to look in the mirror. And it really did help me.

It's the reason why I've been so public, John. I've been very public about my recovery specifically so if there's one person in the universe who identifies with anything I have said here today and ultimately gets sober, then any public exposure is worth it for me. I will say this to you. There's a phrase in recovery; I'm sure you know it. You're only as sick as your secrets. And for me, Tom Chiarella exposing that secret in an article—and by the way, why the fuck did I pick up *Esquire Magazine*?

[00:32:55] **John Moe:** (*Laughing.*) Were you on a flight somewhere? Because that's what I mostly see it on.

[00:32:58] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** No! Literally, I have no idea why I saw an article in *Esquire Magazine*—

[00:32:06] **John Moe:** Of all things!

[00:32:07] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** That had—who was that horrible—? It was like a reality TV show host man. Anyway, he's on the cover of this magazine. I have <u>no</u> idea why I would see that article. And that article changed my life.

[00:33:21] **John Moe:** Yeah. Well, maybe there was—maybe you were subconsciously looking for an article like that.

(Jamie confirms.)

[00:33:29] **Transition:** Relaxed acoustic guitar.

[00:33:30] **John Moe:** That TV host Jamie mentioned who was on the cover of *Esquire*, January of 1999? Jerry Springer. I looked it up. Just ahead, Jamie learns a lot more about her substance use disorder and she moves forward.

(Music ends.)

[00:33:51] **Promo:**

Music: Bouncy synth.

Tre'vell Anderson: Hey there, beautiful people! I am your favorite authoress, Tre'vell Anderson, of *We See Each Other: A Black, Trans Journey Through TV and Film*.

Jarrett Hill: You know this is supposed to be a promo for our show, *FANTI*, and not your book. Right?

Tre'vell: It's called multitasking!

Jarrett: I can't with you right now.

(Tre'vell giggles.)

Tre'vell and I have an award-winning show, called *FANTI*, that we both host. And it's a podcast where we dig into the complex and complicado conversations about the gray areas in our lives.

Tre'vell: Perhaps there is a public figure of some sort, and you're like, "Oh, that person's so smart and so charming." But you're also like, "Ugh, that person gets on my <u>nerve!</u>"

Jarrett: Okay, okay. You can catch us every week, right here on MaxFun or wherever you get your slay worthy audio.

Tre'vell: And you can watch us on the YouTube every Friday.

Jarrett: That's *FANTI*. F-A-N-T-I.

(Music ends.)

[00:34:37] **Transition:** Energetic acoustic guitar.

[00:34:41] **John Moe:** Back with Jamie Lee Curtis. We've been talking about her years of active addiction to Vicodin and her ongoing recovery.

(Music ends.)

The type of addiction that you're talking about, is it similar in any way to love?

[00:34:59] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** No. No, no, no. Love is love. Addiction—

[00:35:05] **John Moe:** You're not in love with the substance, then?

[00:35:09] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** Here's something interesting. My husband and I randomly started to watch *The Wire* the other day. Many people, if you're fans of a certain type of show that you watch and many people will say, "Well, did you see *The Wire*?" And you go, no. And they go, "Oh. Gotta watch *The Wire*."

And so, it's been on a sort of a list of ours that, you know—and the other day, we watched a couple of them. And there was a scene where there was an undercover cop trying to look like a junkie, and they brought in a real junkie who was an informant to vet him as—the guy was showing off what he was gonna wear and he hasn't bathed in a few days, and he's urinated on his pants so that they have the smell of urine. And the guy was wearing a wedding ring. The undercover cop was wearing a wedding ring. And the junkie said, "What's that?"

And he goes, "My wedding ring."

He goes, "Uh-uh. You're married to the junk. You're not married to your wife. You're married to the junk. Gotta take that off. You would've pawned that ring for dope." I don't want to refer to addiction as love. And I—as I said—am a very high bottom. I did not lose my marriage. My husband did not leave me. He did not take my children. I did not lose my job, my profession. Many, many, many, many, many women do. Many men and women, but I'm a recovering woman alcoholic, and there are many women in prison today. Under the lash

of alcoholism, they drove a car, they killed people. They are normal people. They are good people. They are not bad people. They are alcoholic. They are addicted to substances. And under the lash of that, their lives changed irrevocably forever.

That was not my story, but the reason I talk about being a dope fiend is so that I don't forget that that is where my addiction wanted me. My addiction wants me dead, period. End of story. The only thing my addiction wants is me dead. Then, it will move on to the next person. And I like to demystify it to remind myself that when I'm in a room of recovery and there is a junkie coming off the street, I am <u>no</u> different than that junkie. No different at all. Doesn't matter who my family was, what my economic background is. Drug addiction, alcoholism knows no boundary. It doesn't give a fuck about gender, ethnicity, religion, education, none of it. It wants you dead, whoever you are. It doesn't give a flying fuck who you are. It just wants you dead.

[00:38:14] **John Moe:** Did anybody who you didn't want to know about your addiction ever find out? Did you ever get spotted before you got sober?

[00:38:24] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** You must have read the article about my Brazilian friend, Ruthie. I did.

[00:38:28] **John Moe:** I remember something. I didn't remember her being Brazilian or named Ruthie.

[00:38:32] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** She's Brazilian. And Ruthie is a healer, a body worker, a beautiful human being, a friend, and someone who I have employed and known and is part of our family—friend family—for a long time, knows a lot of people I know. And she—in December of 1998, she was staying with us in this very cabin where I am right now. And it was, you know, Vic-o'clock, about 5:30. And I was, you know, doing the quotidian part of my day. I had two kids; I was making dinner. Christmas was coming. I was making the mental lists of what else I needed to get and what I needed to get for the Christmas dinner and all the myriad things that all the women in the world take care of. You men don't do shit!

(John chuckles.)

And I was having a glass of wine, and I had about five Vicodin in my pocket. And I, you know, pocketed them and downed them. And from behind me—I'm looking out the window, and I'm in a beautiful mountainous location. Trees, snow, beautiful late afternoon light, and from behind me—

[00:39:50] **Transition:** Upbeat acoustic guitar.

[00:39:52] **John Moe:** Ruthie had spotted Jamie taking those pills, and she called her out, told her that, you know, Jamie might think she's so great, but in reality she's actually dead. According to Ruthie, Jamie was a dead woman.

(Music ends.)

[00:40:09] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** There was that moment where I was embarrassed and, you know, probably cried and said how hard my fucking life was or whatever excuse I made. And that was December of 1998. And then, I read the article in January of 1999, and the combination of those two moments propelled me to seek help.

[00:40:33] **John Moe:** And then, you came back alive from having been dead?

[00:40:38] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** Oh, I'm so fucking alive. It's—

[00:40:40] **John Moe:** You're very alive now! But did you come alive again as soon as—?

[00:40:44] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** You know what? I was a high bottom. I was acting alive. I was acting alive. Now, I am fully—full-tilt boogie alive. I am on fire alive.

[00:40:57] **John Moe:** This is not a performance. (*Laughs.*)

[00:40:59] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** There is no performance. I let go of performing anything. I don't care anymore. I am 100% alive. And if I'm gonna write a book, which I'll never write, it's *Live Like You're Dead and Die Alive* is the name of the book. Live like you're dead and die alive. I wanna die alive. I wanna die in my full aliveness creatively, emotionally, spiritually, physically. You know, I don't wanna die dead. I don't wanna be some calcified, old version of me. I keep shedding myself. I am a constant shedder. I peel off layers of myself every day.

[00:41:41] **John Moe:** That's a book right there.

[00:41:42] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** And live like you're dead means all the things that people say about you, all of the philanthropy that's gonna happen when you're dead, all of those things—do it when you're alive. You know, say it to the people that you care about now. Don't wait till they're dead, and then stand up there on a lectern and weep. Tell people who they are and that you love them.

[00:42:05] **John Moe:** It's really interesting to me, and you've brought this up already, that in the years following your sobriety—and it's been quite a while now and congratulations.

(Jamie thanks him.)

You've branched out in many directions. You've got brands. You've written children's books.

[00:42:19] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** Well, I wrote children's books before. I wrote children's books before, but since then I have raised two children to adulthood. I have married both of my children in the backyard of our home. I'm still married to my first husband. I am only gonna be married to my first husband. I have thought I was done with something creatively, and all of a sudden it gave me new opportunities to work, and now I am taking full advantage of it, and now have a creative company. And I actually get to take ideas and buy books and

develop them into movies and television shows and podcasts. And I'm alive creatively in a way that I've never been.

[00:43:07] **John Moe:** That's wonderful. Tell me about *Letters from Camp* and what that is.

[00:43:11] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** *Letters from Camp* is a scripted comedy podcast for families and tweens. It's set in 2005, because we didn't wanna deal with the internet and the Evils of the internet. And I say that with a capital E. I think it's a very dangerous thing that's happened to our children. We wanted to set the show in in a time of nostalgia when, in fact, going to camp was just going to camp and having that wonderful experience. You met your wife at camp.

[00:43:42] **John Moe:** Yeah. There's a timelessness about camp. It doesn't exist in any particular time.

[00:43:47] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** Well, it does if it involves social media, it does. Where back in the day there was—it is timeless and something that everyone who went to camp can identify with. It's also about coming of age. It's about figuring out who we are. The motto of the camp, which is a fictional camp called Camp Cartwright, the motto of the camp is "be you". And so, for three seasons we get to meet a girl named Mookie Hooper, who's a New York, sophisticated girl whose mom is a news woman and kind of famous. And she goes to sleepaway camp where her mother once went, where her mother was very famous. And it's about learning who you are.

So, it's a coming-of-age story about Mookie Hooper and the people she meets. There's a little mystery in the middle of it. And they're really funny performances and music, and it's something that Audible has gotten behind from the beginning. We knew we were gonna do three seasons from the beginning, and this is our last season. It's the final summer, and Mookie gets bitten by the love bug. A wonderful actor named Jacob Tremblay plays Tallahassee Goldman, who's the beautiful Jewish kid from Florida who captures Mookie's heart. It's also—there's some real depth in the show, and I cannot give it away on this recording. But when we are done, I will tell you the very emotional end of the show, which has been tracking for three years. But there's a real emotional moment of who we are as human beings. And it has depth and humor and sort of everything good that you would want for a young person to hear.

[00:45:41] **John Moe:** What do you want young people who hear this to take away from it?

[00:45:45] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** That you are enough, that being you—and that you don't have to know everything. And that everyone is struggling, and everyone's trying to figure it out. And even the popular girl, I promise you, will never be as happy as you think she is. And people who get that big success in sports or arts or whatever in high school and junior high, all of your struggles will be worth it, that it is an exploration of your own life. And the minute you compare yourself to another person, you're gonna end up in despair. And that you are enough, and that life is for living.

[00:46:33] **John Moe:** It's funny, I wrote a memoir that came out a couple years ago about mental health. And after it came out, a girl who was around 14/15 who I—when I was 14 or

15—wrote to me and said, "This surprises me. I thought you were the one who had everything together. And then, you wrote this book about how much pain you were in."

And I wrote back to her, and I said, "You were a cheerleader. I thought you were the one who had everything together." And she was just as messed up as I was. And then as I talk to people, I'm like, oh my gosh, we were all putting on an act. We were all performing as if we had our shit together and we didn't.

[00:47:11] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** I will tell you that my favorite quote, if we're gonna have a like—I'm throwing out pithy quotes to you—

[00:47:18] **John Moe:** Yeah, keep 'em coming.

[00:47:19] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** —is from *The Princess Bride*. "Life is pain, Highness. And anyone who says differently is selling something."

(John chuckles.)

I believe that life is pain. Life is painful. Life is challenging for everybody. No one gets out alive, and no one gets out unscathed. No one. And what we need to try to teach our children is to have their own mind—that the individual mind of a human being is the transformative tool to peace on earth, goodwill toward men, cures for diseases, all of the ills and problems of the universe are cured by individual minds having ideas, building on those ideas, and then creating, you know, the cure for polio! I mean, all of the things. You start thinking about the great cures in the world.

Well, I think the individual mind of a human being is the most precious thing in all being, and it's being hunted. And as Steinbeck said, it's being drugged. And the stunning hammer blows of conditioning. What is conditioning? (*Clapping rhythmically*.) "Be like us. Think like us. This is what we are." That's conditioning, and it's a suicidal course our species is taking if we don't protect the individual mind and liberties of human beings. And we're in trouble. We have a lot of work to do.

[00:49:02] **John Moe:** We certainly have work to do. I have a couple of questions that might be mildly annoying. One, if you're a huge fan of *The Princess Bride*, was it troubling to you when your husband played the baddy in the movie of that?

[00:49:20] Jamie Lee Curtis: Um, hardly!

(John laughs.)

I wasn't a fan of *The Princess Bride* until my husband, the six-fingered man—thank you—portrayed him. No, my husband is fantastic. And that movie's a great movie. That is a great—that is a perfect movie, that movie.

(John agrees.)

That's like *The Godfather*, honestly. *The Godfather* is a perfect movie. *Godfather II* is a perfect movie. *The Princess Bride* is a perfect movie.

[00:49:42] **John Moe:** No argument there. I know we're heading for wrapping up here, but when you were growing up, did you have a shower in your house? And if so, did your mom let you use it?

[00:49:54] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** So, my mother pretended that she never took another shower, and I think that was all kind of fun. And you know, she had a shower in her bathroom, but she didn't—she took baths. She did take baths. I'm not afraid in the shower. I've had—by the way, I've had my own person come at me with sharp objects for—by the way, for 44 fucking years. Thank you!

[00:50:20] **John Moe:** The next time we're on, we're gonna talk about trauma, but we don't have time for it now. (*Chuckles.*)

[00:50:24] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** Yes, and I know—I've seen the meme. It makes me laugh too. But the truth is trauma, man. Trauma. Trauma, trauma, trauma.

[00:50:34] **John Moe:** It's a real thing. It's a very real thing.

[00:50:35] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** It's a real thing. Yeah. Thank you so much. You're so lovely.

[00:50:39] **John Moe:** Jamie Lee Curtis, thank you so much.

[00:50:41] **Jamie Lee Curtis:** Thank you. Super fun to talk to you, John Moe.

[00:50:45] **Music:** "Building Wings" by Rhett Miller, an up-tempo acoustic guitar song. The music continues quietly under the dialogue.

[00:50:50] **John Moe:** We put all those quotes Jamie mentioned from Steinbeck and E. L. Doctorow and *The Princess Bride*—we put them all on our show page, and the trauma meme that she just mentioned as well. *Letters from Camp*, Jamie's fiction podcast, is available on Audible. *A Fish Called Wanda* is available for streaming online, and it totally holds up. And go see *Everything Everywhere All at Once*. Or as my mother-in-law calls it, *Everyone Everything Here We Go*.

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Our electric mail address is <u>depreshmode@maximumfun.org</u>. If you're on Facebook, come check out our mental health discussion group, Preshies. Sometimes it's about the show,

sometimes it's just people helping each other out with information and support about mental health. It's a really wonderful community. Our *Depresh Mode* newsletter is available on Substack. Search that up. I'm on Twitter @JohnMoe. Hi, credits listeners. If you watch the show *City of Ghosts* on Netflix, you will like it. I have an interview with the show's creator, Elizabeth Ito, coming out soon here. But go check it out and get ready for that interview by watching *City of Ghosts*. It's so wonderful. It's not spooky. Don't worry. *Depresh Mode* is produced by Gabe Mara. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson, and we get booking help from Mara Davis. Rhett Miller wrote and performed our theme song, "Building Wings".

[00:52:49] **Music**: "Building Wings" by Rhett Miller.

I'm always falling off of cliffs, now

Building wings on the way down

I am figuring things out

Building wings, building wings, building wings

No one knows the reason

Maybe there's no reason

I just keep believing

No one knows the answer

Maybe there's no answer

I just keep on dancing

[00:53:26] **Kyle:** Hi, this is Kyle from Appleton, Wisconsin, reminding you that this too shall pass.

[00:53:34] **John Moe:** *Depresh Mode* is a production of Maximum Fun and Poputchik. I'm John Moe. Bye, now.

(Music fades out.)

[00:53:46] **Sound Effect:** Cheerful ukulele chord.

[00:53:47] **Speaker 1:** MaximumFun.org.

[00:53:49] **Speaker 2:** Comedy and culture.

[00:53:50] **Speaker 3:** Artist owned.

[00:53:51] **Speaker 4:** Audience supported.