

HELL BENT

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FADE IN:

INT. DINER - DAY

The evening sun is streaming through the windows. The other patrons are stirring their shakes or shovelling greasy meat mountains into their mouths. For this diner, the fifties never ended, and no amount of progress in the culinary arts will change that.

Two men are sitting in one of the booths. One (DON PIANO) is an older gentlemen, wearing a grey suit, with dark skin and thinning black hair. The other (JIMMY SHINGLES) is a young man, slouching in his seat so far that his face barely clears the table.

JIMMY SHINGLES

Yeah, I was dead for a while. What of it?

DON PIANO

What was it like?

JIMMY SHINGLES

I don't remember. Maybe you'd like to, uh, refresh my memory a little.

DON PIANO

What?

JIMMY SHINGLES

Yeah, y'know.

Jimmy makes a rubbing gesture with his fingers.

JIMMY SHINGLES (CONT'D)

Just kinda refresh my memory.

Don sighs, hesitates for a moment, then pulls a fifty-dollar bill out of his pocket and slides it across the table. Jimmy picks it up and turns it over in his hands.

JIMMY SHINGLES (CONT'D)

The hell is this? I'm tryna remember what it was like bein' dead, not Ulysses S. Grant's face.

Don exercises some restraint and says nothing. Jimmy puts the note down.

JIMMY SHINGLES (CONT'D)

I was in a big line. A long line. Stretched on as far as I could see.

(MORE)

JIMMY SHINGLES (CONT'D)

I don't remember how long it took me to get to the front. I dunno if time was workin' right. Lotta old people, but I couldn't smell 'em. I tried talkin' to the guy in front of me but he didn't speak English, he spoke one o' them weird obscure languages, like French.

Don tries not to roll his eyes.

JIMMY SHINGLES (CONT'D)

I get to the front of the line, and there's this guy with this big white beard. An' he says 'ID please'. An' he holds out his hand. An' I look in my pocket, and there's my wallet, right where I left it. But it's only got my fake ID in it, see, my real ID's still at home.

DON PIANO

So what'd you do?

JIMMY SHINGLES

Well, I just give him the fake ID. He looks at it for a second, and he's like, OK, go on through. An' I'm just standin' there, like I don't believe what's goin' on. And I'll never forget what he said next.

Jimmy looks off into space for a bit, and sinks a little farther into the couch.

DON PIANO

Well, c'mon! What'd he say?

JIMMY SHINGLES

He said look, can ya hurry up a little, a bus fulla nuns drove offa bridge this morning and I wanna clock out on time.

Jimmy has sunk so low that only his baseball hat is visible.

JIMMY SHINGLES (CONT'D)

It was like nothin' else I'd seen. I walk through the gates and I see - well, there ain't no other way to describe it - I see this paradise.

(MORE)

JIMMY SHINGLES (CONT'D)

Everywhere you look, there's marble, an' clouds, an' shops, an' spas, an' restaurants, an' five-star hotels, an' even little golf courses.

DON PIANO

Bull-fllippin'-spit. What kind of morally righteous individual plays golf?

JIMMY SHINGLES

I swear to god, Don, it's all true. I didn't know what else to do, so I just wandered about. I wanted to see if my dog was there.

DON PIANO

And that's when you found God's house?

JIMMY SHINGLES

Exactly. I never saw the big man himself, but I sure as hell found his house. It's like a big mansion up on a hill made of clouds. You can talk to him if you gotta appointment, but they don't got much in the way of security.

Don smiles.

JIMMY SHINGLES (CONT'D)

Say, Don, whaddaya wanna know all this stuff for?

DON PIANO

I'm planning a crime, Jimmy.

JIMMY SHINGLES

It's not right to commit crimes.

DON PIANO

Well, I think that depends.

INT. CASINO BACK ROOM

There are six men sitting around a poker table. Of note are SPUDD GUNN, a lumbering giant of a man, RALPH B. GOSH, a smartly-dressed Englishman with a mouth full of crooked teeth, and ALBERTO RIGATONI, a somewhat corpulent Italian with a wide black moustache, curly black hair and a Hawaiian shirt that may as well be part of his body.

Amidst the smoke and darkness, a game of five-card-stud poker is taking place. Approximately.

SPUDD GUNN
Hey Ralph, do I got anything?

Ralph leans over and looks at his hand. He has a royal flush.

RALPH B. GOSH
No, you haven't got anything,
Spudd. You have to get your cards
to match up. Yours are all
different.

Spudd sighs and lays his cards on the table.

SPUDD GUNN
Fold.

There are only two left now, Ralph and Alberto. It's Ralph's turn.

RALPH B. GOSH
All in.

He shoves his tower of chips into the middle of the table.

ALBERTO RIGATONI
Eyy! Alberto!

Alberto does the same. Ralph slams his cards down on the table. It's the ace of hearts five times. The rest of the table seems impressed, but the smile never dissipates from below Alberto's moustache. He lays down his cards. It's the ace of hearts six times. Everyone is in awe.

RALPH B. GOSH
I don't believe it.

Alberto begins to reel in his winnings.

ALBERTO RIGATONI
EYY!

Ralph's pager goes off. He takes a look.

RALPH B. GOSH
It's Don. Bright and early
tomorrow. We have a job.

INT. PIZZA PLACE - EVENING

Pizza Marino has probably never been cleaned. Nevertheless, the a constant stream of drunks, people who don't use yelp.com and people who don't care seem to keep it in business.

The sound of cooking pizzas is interrupted by two men - RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO and DERRICK ANAOCONDA. They are both brandishing pistols, and are attempting to kick the door open from the outside. Eventually, they realize the door opens outward, and scurry into the room.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO
Freeze! This is a stickup!

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
Yeah! Freeze!

THE CASHIER, a sweaty man of deliberately vague middle-eastern descent, is co-operative and not wholly surprised. For a while, nobody moves.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA (CONT'D)
I want a large, deep dish
pepperoni, and a side order or
potato wedges!

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO
And a side order of jalapeno
poppers.

Derrick takes his eyes off the cashier and looks at Rodriguez.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
I thought you were watching your
hips?

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO
(offended)
Don't tell me how to live my life.

Derrick shrugs.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
And a side order of jalapeno
poppers!

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO
I already said I wanted the
jalapeno poppers, you don't need to
tell 'em.

The cashier writes down the order, and is about to pass it to the back room.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO (CONT'D)

Hey, hand over the order. I wanna make sure you ain't telling the kitchen to call the cops.

He dutifully hands over the order. It reads:

L PEPPERONI X1

WEDGES X1

POPPERS X1

SPIT ON FOOD

Rodriguez hands it back, satisfied, and sends it through to the kitchen.

CASHIER

It'll be around 10 minutes, if you'd like to take a seat.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

We'll stand.

For a while, Derrick and Rodriguez stand there, pointing their guns at the cashier.

CASHIER

(to Derrick)

Hey, it looks like you got something lodged in the barrel of your gun.

Derrick looks down at his gun, then points it at his own head, looking down into the barrel, squinting his eyes. The cashier laughs. Rodriguez slaps the gun away, but it goes off, and shoots straight through the plaster ceiling, making a small cloud of dust.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

(sheepish)

Anybody live upstairs?

CASHIER

Well, maybe not anymore.

The two wait for their pizza in silence. Then, Derrick's phone rings. Instead of answering the phone, he puts the side of the gun against his head, barrel pointing upwards, and pulls the trigger. More plaster rains down upon his head.

CASHIER (CONT'D)
 (annoyed)
 Can you please NOT do that?

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
 (yelling)
 WHAT?

Rodriguez grabs the phone out of Derrick's pants and answers it.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO
 Hello? Oh, hey Don! I'm good. Yeah,
 no problem. Okay, love ya.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
 (yelling)
 WHO WAS THAT?

INT. DON'S HOME

The lights are low and the walls are pink. That can only mean one thing: Don has just finished reading a bedtime story to HIS DAUGHTER, who is (in her own words) 'nearly seven'.

DON'S KID
 Why didn't Ben just tell his
 parents the truth about where he'd
 been? Why did he lie?

DON PIANO
 Well, because then Ben's parents
 would have confiscated the magical
 laundry hamper that he could use to
 travel through time.

DON'S KID
 That's not fair, though! He saved
 King Henry VIII from space vipers!
 They should have made him sir Ben.

DON PIANO
 Well, life's not fair.

DON'S KID
 Why did-

DON PIANO
 That's enough whys for today,
 sweetheart.

He closes the book and smiles at her.

DON'S KID

I just feel like Ben should have just been entirely honest with the people he loves about what he does all day.

Don doesn't say anything.

DON'S KID (CONT'D)

Because it's not fair to lie to people, y'know. Lying is bad.

DON PIANO

Yup.

DON'S KID

Daddy, why are you always home so late from work?

DON PIANO

My boss, uh, gave me some spreadsheets that I had to do. At the last second.

DON'S KID

Daddy, what do you actually do for your job?

A beat.

DON PIANO

Spreadsheets.

INT. DON'S BEDROOM

Don is wearing his ill-fitting pyjamas. HIS WIFE is already in bed, reading glasses engaged, book in one hand, glass of wine in the other. Don shuffles awkwardly into bed. For a time, they say nothing.

DON PIANO

I'll be home early tomorrow.

She ignores him.

DON PIANO (CONT'D)

I promise.

EXT. STREET - DAY

She turns over to face away from him.

It's raining outside. It's not too easy to see. There are some men wearing balaclavas exiting a jewellery store. Don is among them. He looks younger - perhaps by 15 years.

There's a car parked outside. The moisture is thundering down, the droplets clattering against the roof of the car, a white haze enveloping everything. Don turns to his right. He hears the sound of the sirens before he sees them. He yells out something, but it's lost to the rain and thunder. Through the white, he red and blue lights, and the silhouette of a police car.

The next crack of thunder comes as a deep, all-encompassing rumble, only getting louder as time goes on. It's deafening. He can barely hear or think anything else. Before he knows it, he's reaching for his firearm.

He wakes up, drenched in sweat.

INT. ANANA'S BAR

Anana's is a slightly rundown cocktail bar in a slightly rundown part of town. The neon sign is flickering in the morning half-light. But, paradoxically, it's open. Or at least, the front door is. A WELL-DRESSED GENTLEMAN enters and sits down at the bar, opposite the BAR STAFFER, a girl in her late teens.

GENTLEMAN

White Russian, please.

BAR STAFFER

What the hell is a White Russian?

Don enters through the front door, heads behind the counter and towards the back room.

DON PIANO

Mornin'.

BAR STAFFER

Hey Don.

He walks through a long, narrow corridor and down a steep, claustrophobic flight of stairs.

INT. BASEMENT

At the bottom, the path opens up into a basement, lit by a few mismatched light bulbs, decorated by peeling white paint, damp crawling up the walls.

There are some wire racks, storage boxes, a table and some chairs, and what looks like an old coffee machine. Derrick is rifling through the contents of one box. The others that Don called are sat around the table.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
Where the hell are the damn beans?
This is not a normal hour in my
day, I need my goddamn beans.

He spots something in the back of the box.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA (CONT'D)
What the hell is this? Flour?

He begins taking out items.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA (CONT'D)
Eggs? Sugar? Cocoa Powder? Jimmy,
is this your crap?

JIMMY SHINGLES
Yeah.

Jimmy pauses.

JIMMY SHINGLES (CONT'D)
Wanna make somethin' of it?

Don makes his way to the table and sits down. Ralph is already there, reading a broadsheet newspaper. Spudd is sitting next to him.

SPUDD GUNN
Gimme the funnies.

RALPH B. GOSH
No.

SPUDD GUNN
Pretty please?

RALPH B. GOSH
Garfield is fat and lazy and eats
lasagna even though his digestive
system is woefully ill-equipped to
process the carbohydrate. There.
Done. Happy?

SPUDD GUNN
Heh-heh. Yeah.

Alberto is sitting next to them, smoking three cheap cigars at once. Rodriguez is drumming his fingers on the table and trying not to inhale any noxious fumes.

DON PIANO

Gentlemen, thank you all for coming today. If you'll allow me, I'd like to pose a hypothetical: what do you think gods eat?

RALPH B. GOSH

What?

DON PIANO

Simple question for someone of your intellect, Ralph. What do gods eat?

RALPH B. GOSH

Wherever this is going, I'm out.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

Steaks.

JIMMY SHINGLES

Blood?

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

Hummous?

DON PIANO

(annoyed)

Hummous? No, not hummous.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

Food of the gods.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

No, gods definitely eat steaks. I read about it. Juicy, delicious T-bone steaks.

DON PIANO

They DO eat human food, sometimes. But they only eat it to be polite. They don't get any nutrients from it, it's like salad to them.

SPUDD GUNN

Whadda dey really eat, den?

DON PIANO

Ambrosia. The only food that a god can eat.

(MORE)

DON PIANO (CONT'D)

Ambrosia is what gives them their power, it's what grants them their immortality. If a human were to eat it, then they too would receive that power. That's what I think.

RALPH B. GOSH

Are you thinking what I think you're thinking?

DON PIANO

Are you thinking that I think that surely God won't notice if a little bit of his ambrosia goes missing?

RALPH B. GOSH

God knows everything. He's omniscient. You can't STEAL from him, that's madness.

DON PIANO

God's a busy man. He's got other things to worry about. Like putting pictures on toast and stuff.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

I don't wanna live forever, Don. I'd get bored.

DON PIANO

I'm not suggesting drinking the stuff, Rodriguez. I'm suggesting SELLING it. Eternal life? That would go for a pretty penny. It'd be the end of our eternal money problems, that's for sure.

The group sits at the table, not saying anything.

DON PIANO (CONT'D)

Look, Rodriguez, you could buy those trains you're always talking about. Jimmy, girls would like you if you were rich. Ralph, I wouldn't have to look at you anymore. Spudd, you could finally buy a dinosaur.

Spudd gets a twinkle in his eye.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

And what about you, boss? What's in it for you? You never seemed to care that much about money.

DON PIANO

Well, I... I can't keep doing this forever. I'm gonna be fifty soon. My joints are already starting to seize up. One of these days, I'm going to need to settle down and-

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

You're gonna quit?

Don nods. The rest of the table is shocked.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

You don't need to carrot-and-stick me, Don. I'm with you all the way.

SPUDD GUNN

I'm with Don.

JIMMY SHINGLES

I'm in.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

I'm in as well.

ALBERTO RIGATONI

Eyy! Alberto!

They all turn to Ralph. He seethes.

RALPH

Oh, fine. I suppose I'm outvoted anyway. What's the plan?

DON PIANO

We go in, we go out. No faffing about. I will take the lead. Spudd will be the muscle, as always. Jimmy's been there before, so he's our afterlife expert. Rodriguez will smuggle the stuff out. Derrick will handle security. Ralph, you've read books and speak latin, we need you. Alberto, I have no idea what you do, but you're coming too.

ALBERTO RIGATONI

Eyyy!

RALPH

Just one question: how do you propose to get to the pearly gates in the first place?

Just then, a voice comes through on the intercom.

BAR STAFFER

(O.S.)

Two people up here, Don. Ordered a secret code word, and a Gin and Tonic. They're here to see you, right? Also, what's in a Gin and Tonic?

DON PIANO

Please send them down, Donna.

As the people descend the stairs, the light bulbs swing back and forth, and a little plaster comes out of the ceiling. Two figures come through the doorway - DR. SODERSTROM, a jolly ginger Finn clad in a lab coat, and BRANDON BLEEPER, a techno-nerd with a computer keyboard strapped to his front and a laptop strapped to his back, clacking away as though his life depended on it.

DR. SODERSTROM

Hello, friends. I am doctor Soderstrom. It would be my pleasure to send you to heaven. This is my associate, Brandon Bleeper.

Soderstrom gestures to the keyboarded man.

BRANDON BLEEPER

Hello, crime users. Nice to create an instance of your acquaintance. I'm Brandon Bleeper, computer haver and internet penetrator.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

Hey! I ain't no user!

BRANDON BLEEPER

We are all users, man.

Brandon continues to type.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

Don, do something, I think this guy's hacking me.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

So, uh, where did you get your MD, doc?

DR. SODERSTROM

(pronouncing 'illinois' as if it were a french word)

(MORE)

DR. SODERSTROM (CONT'D)
 I got it from a very reputable
 diploma mill in Illinois. Do not
 worry, friends, you are in good
 hands.

INT. BASEMENT

Dr. Soderstrom is gesturing at a whiteboard filled with crudely drawn diagrams. Brandon is working on something in the back.

DR. SODERSTROM
 Ihmisen aivot toimii kuten auton
 akku. On ignotion, ja kytkin, ja
 ehkä nopeusmittarin samoin, ja jos
 luulet liian kovaa, se ylikuumenee
 ja sammuu, kuten mitä tapahtui
 plato - Kuusi palaa. Olen
 rakennettu laite, joka voi luoda
 pysyvä neronleimauksen, ja se
 toimii paljon samaa kuin sointu
 piano tai niitä aseita, että
 venäläiset käytetty maailmansodan
 kaksi tehdä siltoja. Tämä seisoo
 neronleimauksen tehokkaasti
 jäädyttää kaikki aivojen
 tärkeimpien toimintojen, mutta
 laukaisee aivojen "virtalukko"
 syvällä pikkuaivot voi nollata
 brainwave ja tuoda kyseisen
 henkilön pois syvän unen.
 Lopputulos? Kuusi palaa. Tällä
 laitteella, voit tehokkaasti tappaa
 somone, ja sitten tuo ne eloon
 kanssa kytkintä kääntämällä. Niin
 kauan kuin et jätä niitä liian
 pitkään, muuten he saavat
 aivovaurioita, Kuusi palaa.

A beat.

DON PIANO
 In English, please?

DR. SODERSTROM
 Oh, my mistake. You see, the human
 brain works much like a car
 battery. There is an ignition, and
 a clutch, and maybe a speedometer
 as well (I forget!), and if you
 think too hard, it overheats and
 shuts down, like what happened to
 Socrates.

(MORE)

DR. SODERSTROM (CONT'D)

I have constructed a device that can create a standing brainwave, and it works much the same as a chord on a piano or those guns that the Russians used in World War Two to make bridges collapse. This standing brainwave freezes all of the brain's critical functions, making the person effectively dead - but triggering the brain's 'ignition switch' deep in the cerebellum can reset the brainwave and bring that person out of their deep sleep. The result? With this device, you can effectively kill someone, and then bring them back to life with the flick of a switch. As long as you don't leave them for too long, else they get brain damage.

DON PIANO

Are there any downsides to using your device?

DR. SODERSTROM

If you die while using it, I will probably take your clothes and any possessions or small change that you have about your person.

Brandon is still typing.

BRANDON BLEEPER

Hey, what's your WiFi password? Wait, nevermind, hacked it.

DON PIANO

When can we expect to be up and running?

DR. SODERSTROM

Ah, well, I will need a few days to administer the brain scans and other biometric tests.

BRANDON BLEEPER

After that, I'll need a few days to run them through my highly sophisticated standing wave frequency calculation tool, and then calibrate my equipment accordingly.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

Oh, c'mon, cyberwizard, it can't be that hard. Can't you just connect up to the doohickey this afternoon?

Soderstrom and Bleeper appear to think very hard about this.

DR. SODERSTROM

I had never thought of that. Yes, that will work fine! Just give me 15 minutes to prepare the transducers!

Derrick looks at Soderstrom.

DR. SODERSTROM (CONT'D)

Okay, 5 minutes.

INT. BASEMENT

The criminals are all laying on the table. They each have a device attached to their temples, which looks like it's made out of cutlery remnants and glue.

DR. SODERSTROM

Now, once I am bored, I will retrieve you from the afterlife. Probably an hour or so. Don't worry, you won't feel a thing, because you will be dead.

BRANDON BLEEPER

Sorry, there will be no time for last words because I have to get to Starbucks before noon.

JIMMY SHINGLES

Wait, before you-

Brandon presses a button on his computer. Everything slows down and stops. Suddenly, Don is awake again.

It's last night. He's reading to his daughter again. She's smiling at him.

Then it's 6 years ago. He's in the hospital. His daughter has just been born. He asks to hold her. His wife carefully passes him the swaddled infant.

Then it's far into the past. Him and his fiancée are enjoying dinner in a fancy restaurant. She seems a lot younger now, and happier. She takes a swig of wine.

Don says something funny. She tries not to spit it out, but a little bit comes out and dribbles down her chin. Don smiles.

He's in the street, outside of the jewellery store. The rain is thundering down all around him. He hears police sirens off in the distance.

He's a surly-looking teenager, walking down a street near his house. Others are crossing the street in order to avoid him.

He's an adolescent, and he's being beat up at school. One bully is holding his torso, and the other is punching him repeatedly in the stomach. He looks like he's going to throw up.

He's a kid, walking home from school. As he rounds the corner into his street, he notices something - police cars parked around his house. And an ambulance. One of them turns around and looks at him.

And then, as fast as it began, it's over.

INT. HEAVEN'S GATE - DAY

Him and the others are standing at the back of a very long line of people. There's a sign instructing people not to be distressed about being dead and to wait patiently in line.

The afterlife ('heaven', if you prefer) is an altogether an underwhelming affair. A lot of people peg it as fluffy clouds and white marble - which it is - but it also has the distinct look of the Windows 95 logo or the semi-disused bowling alley near your house. Well-intentioned, just a little bit dated.

With that in mind, let's not talk too much about what heaven looks like, and instead focus on more pertinent matters.

Spudd is just in front of Don in the line. He looks back.

SPUDD GUNN

Hey Don.

DON PIANO

Hey.

The line hasn't moved.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

Anybody got the time?

RALPH B. GOSH

We're outside of time.

JIMMY SHINGLES

I got it as 10:43.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

I swear to god, I better not miss Jeopardy.

The line still hasn't moved.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

Hey, can we go back? I think I forgot my fake ID.

DON PIANO

Back...?

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

You know. To life.

DON PIANO

No.

Derrick looks positively crestfallen. Don digs around in his wallet and hands him a card.

DON PIANO (CONT'D)

You're lucky I keep a spare.

He peers intently at the card.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

James Wang? What the hell is this?

DON PIANO

Hey, you're the forgetter. James.

The line still doesn't seem to have moved.

INT. HEAVEN'S GATE - DAY

SPUDD GUNN

I spy with my little eye, something beginning with... C.

Nobody answers.

SPUDD GUNN (CONT'D)

Give up? It was clouds.

RALPH B. GOSH

Can we please talk about something else? Literally anything else?

Nobody answers for a while.

JIMMY SHINGLES

Babe Ruth is one of the greatest baseball players who ever lived. He hit 714 home runs and he was permanently enshrined in the baseball hall of fame. He was so famous they named a candy bar after him. He-

RALPH B. GOSH

I spy with my little eye, something beginning with...

ST. PETER

Ahem.

The bickering criminals look ahead. Although they don't seem to have moved, they are at the front of the queue. And, sure enough, there are the pearly gates, and there's ST. PETER, although he looks pretty miserable, and he seems to have an old laptop computer perched on top of his podium.

ST. PETER (CONT'D)

Next?

Ralph, Spudd and Alberto make it through unscathed. St Peter takes their ID, types something on his computer and ushers them through the gates, without giving them a second glance.

ST. PETER (CONT'D)

Next, please.

Derrick is next. He steps up.

ST. PETER (CONT'D)

ID please.

Derrick hands over his fake ID. St. Peter inspects it.

ST. PETER (CONT'D)

James Wang?

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

I'm Chinese.

ST. PETER

Are you- wait, hold on.

St. Peter stares at Derrick with great suspicion. He turns and starts typing something on his computer. Rodriguez taps ton on the shoulder.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO
Boss, this looks dicey. Want me to
start a distraction fire?

DON PIANO
What? No! Are you crazy?

Derrick looks sheepish.

DON PIANO (CONT'D)
(exasperated)
You already lit one.

While St. Peter is typing, Don extinguishes the old lady that Derrick has set on fire by rolling her across the ground. At one point, Derrick pulls out a hip flask and opens it, but don slaps it out of his hand before he can pour it on the old lady. They finish just as St. Peter turns back to Derrick.

ST. PETER
I gotta make a call.

He picks up an old-looking phone and dials a number.

ST. PETER (CONT'D)
Hey, boss.

A pause.

ST. PETER (CONT'D)
Yeah, much better. I think you were
right, I just wasn't getting enough
fiber in my diet.

A pause.

ST. PETER (CONT'D)
I got this guy here, says he's
Chinese. Not sure what to do.

A pause.

ST. PETER (CONT'D)
Okay, gotcha. Thanks, big G. Ok,
see ya later.

He hangs up and turns back to Derrick.

ST. PETER (CONT'D)
You are not in the right place. No
idea how, but you somehow wound up
in the queue for the predominantly
caucasian Anglo-American heaven
instead of the Chinese heaven.

(MORE)

ST. PETER (CONT'D)
 So I'll give you a choice, you can
 stay here, or I can have you
 transferred to the Chinese heaven.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
 No, that's okay, here is fine.

St. Peter leans in close.

ST. PETER
 (whispering)
 You sure? Between you and me,
 Chinese heaven is better.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
 Yeah, I'm good.

St. Peter shrugs and motions for Derrick to be let through.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

The gang find themselves in large lobby. Maybe it has one of those pissing cherub fountains, who knows, it depends on what you think heaven might have. One thing's for sure: it's expansive, and it's full of milling old people, who are joined by eyeless, white, humanoid creatures wearing waistcoats. One of them comes over.

ANGEL
 Hello, gentlemen! Are you new here?

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
 Yeah. Who are you?

ANGEL
 Why, I'm an angel, of course!
 Welcome to heaven, we hope that you
 find eternal paradise comfortable
 and enjoyable. Here's a brochure.

As Don and the others enter, he hands Derrick a pamphlet entitled 'So, You're Dead' and beckons for them to follow. They leave the lobby and end up walking through an open courtyard\plaza type area.

EXT. HEAVEN'S PLAZA

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO
 Tell me, mister angel, what is
 there to do here in, uh, heaven, as
 you call it?

ANGEL

Well, we have a bar, a spar, a spa,
a golf course, a shopping mall, a
gym, a pool, at least five
restaurants, a theater, a cinema-

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

Got a casino?

THE ANGEL gives him a dirty look.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA (CONT'D)

Don't gimme that look, you have a
golf course. That's worse.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

Can I meet any famous people?

ANGEL

For their sake, famous people live
in a separate area. But we host
regular Q&A type events where the
general public are able to talk to
them, because people always want to
ask them questions.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

Neat. Who ya got on right now?

ANGEL

Mohandas Ghandi is up next, if
memory serves.

DON PIANO

I have a question: do you know
where I can find God?

ANGEL

He lives in that big house on the
hill. But he's busy most of the
time. You'll need an appointment in
order to see him.

DON PIANO

Thanks.

ANGEL

Anything else?

DON PIANO

Nah, I'm good.

The angel disappears in a puff of smoke.

DON PIANO (CONT'D)
 Okay, let's not faff about now. I
 assume the clock is ticking, so
 let's get on with it.

Don looks around.

DON PIANO (CONT'D)
 Where the hell did Rodriguez go?

INT. HEAVEN'S AUDITORIUM

Rodriguez is making his way to the back of a large
 auditorium, made in the usual heaven style, the stage of
 which is made up with a desk and some chairs, much like a
 talk show. He makes his way to near the side of the stage,
 and spots JESUS HENRY CHRIST milling about, talking to a lady
 with six arms. Rodriguez taps him on the shoulder.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO
 S'cuse me. Are you Jesus?

JESUS
 Yeah.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO
 Oh, neat! My mom loves you. Can I
 get a selfie?

JESUS
 Sure!

Jesus puts on a goofy grin whilst Rodriguez pulls out his
 phone and takes a selfie. Rodriguez is blinking during the
 photo.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO
 Thanks man!

JESUS
 Anytime, friend!

The starstruck Rodriguez makes his way back to the crowd. He
 stands next to ANOTHER ANGEL.

ANGEL
 Ah, I see you've met Jesus.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO
 You know, I never expected him to
 be so freakin' nice. I dunno why. I
 assumed people just overstated his
 niceness. But he's the real deal.

The angel leans over slightly and lowers his voice.

ANGEL #2

Just between you and me, I do not agree

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

Really?

ANGEL #2

(quietly)

I work in that restaurant on the far side of the plaza. You see it as you come in. Anyway, one day Jesus and his friends come in. The restaurant's pretty full and he doesn't have a reservation, but he's the boss's son, so we figure we should try and squeeze him in somewhere. So anyway, he says 'table for 24 please'. I do a headcount, and there's only 12 people. Jesus is like 'yeah, but we're all going to sit on the same side of the table'.

Before Rodriguez can formulate a response, the lights go low, the crowd stops murmuring, and ANOTHER ANGEL walks out onto the stage.

ANGEL #3

Hello, hello, thanks everyone for coming. We've got a fantastic show booked out for you tonight, but unfortunately, I must start with some bad news. Mohandas Ghandi has had to cancel at the last minute, for personal reasons. But don't worry, because we've got something equally good lined up! May I present to you: Singer-songwriter Randy Newman!

'You've Got a Friend in Me' from the Toy Story soundtrack begins to play, as RANDY NEWMAN walks onto the stage, smiling and waving at the audience. The audience begins to boo and hiss halfway through. It lets up slightly when he sits down.

ANGEL #3 (CONT'D)

Hello, Mr. Newman! Nice to have you here!

RANDY NEWMAN

It's a pleasure to be here, and
please, call me Randy.

ANGEL #3

Randy, may I ask what got you
interested in becoming a singer-
songwriter?

The crowd has bubbled over into a simmering casserole dish of
rage. A murmuring has turned into chanting, which is quickly
increasing in intensity.

RANDY NEWMAN

(stuttering)
Well, uh, ahem, I started at
a very young age, uh, my
biggest influence was
probably, erm, Ray... My
biggest influence...

CROWD

We want Ghandi! No more
Randy! We want Ghandi! No
more Randy! We want Ghandi!
No more Randy! We want
Ghandi! No more Randy! We
want Ghandi! No more Randy!

The crowd begins to pelt Randy with rotten fruit as they
continue to chant. Randy tries to leave the stage, but he
gets hit in the face by a tomato and is temporarily blinded.
Eventually, the crowd begins to throw other food items,
shoes, wigs, fire extinguishers and chairs. The angel has
taken refuge behind the desk.

CROWD (CONT'D)

We want Ghandi! No more Randy! We
want Ghandi! No more Randy!

Randy Newman drops to his knees. Tears are streaming down his
face. 'You've Got a Friend in Me' starts playing on the
overhead speakers as Randy absorbs blow after blow. The angel
makes a gesture with his hand, signalling to end the shows,
and the curtain falls, music still playing, Randy still
sobbing.

EXT. BOTTOM OF THE HILL - DAY

The others are sitting at the bottom of the hill, on a bench,
next a duck pond. Spudd throws an entire loaf of bread into
the pond.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

There. Eat that, ya duck shmucks.

Jimmy is fiddling with his cell phone.

JIMMY SHINGLES

Anybody here get signal?

RALPH B. GOSH

You can't get signal here, we're in heaven. There's no signal in heaven.

JIMMY SHINGLES

Not a very good heaven then, is it?

Don is trying not to look annoyed.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

Hey, you think those are dead ducks who went to heaven, or do you think heaven just imports ducks?

RALPH B. GOSH

No, they can't be dead ducks. All ducks go to hell.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

What makes you so sure?

RALPH B. GOSH

I saw it in a documentary.

The gang look at the ducks, who are unsuccessfully attempting to eat the loaf. Derrick makes the universal 'I'm watching you' gesture toward them. They pay him no heed.

The crew waits around for a while, but nothing happens.

DON PIANO

God dangit.

SPUDD GUNN

SSH! The big man might hear you.

Just then, Rodriguez appears. He waves.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

Hey fellas.

He walks up to them.

ALBERTO RIGATONI

Eyyyy! Alberto!

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

Eyyyy! Alberto!

DON PIANO

What the hell took you so long?

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO
Went to see Randy Newman. Got a
selfie with Jesus.

DON PIANO
(annoyed)
Why did I even take you people
along?

SPUDD GUNN
Sorry, boss.

The group begins to ascend the steps to God's rather tasteful
house on the hill.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
You know, I think at least 50% of
us are actually superfluous to your
overall plan.

EXT. GOD'S HOUSE

They reach the top of the steps, and immediately dart for
cover, because is a ANGEL BOUNCER guarding the door. He looks
serious.

JIMMY SHINGLES
Hm. Looks like they beefed up their
security.

DON PIANO
Shouldn't be a problem, we just
need someone to distract them.

Nobody volunteers.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
I wanna see the ambrosia.

DON PIANO
OK, fine. Alberto, you don't really
do anything, so you're staying out
here. Spudd, you better stay too.
You distract them while the rest of
sneak in.

SPUDD GUNN
What do you want me to say?

An undetermined amount of time later, we see Spudd approach
the ANGEL BOUNCER.

SPUDD GUNN (CONT'D)
Excuse me, sir. My friend is
drowning.

ANGEL BOUNCER
What?

Spudd and the bouncer look back toward the duck pond, which is scarcely more than two feet deep. Alberto is splashing around in the water. He looks up and gives Spudd and the bouncer a rambunctious thumbs up.

ANGEL BOUNCER (CONT'D)
(panicked)
OH MY BOSS! NOBODY'S EVER DIED IN
HEAVEN BEFORE! I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT
WILL HAPPEN!

The bouncer, almost tripping over himself, runs down the steps immediately. Don shrugs and leads the others through the door, which isn't even locked.

INT. GOD'S HOUSE

God's house has the look of a stately home about it, although a touch more minimal. It's bigger on the inside, and winding, a mess of antechambers and living rooms and rooms whose only function seems to be to display pictures of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. God also appears to have picked up a few choice items from the human world, including a Bible, a Torah, A Q'uran, a copy of 'The God Delusion' by Richard Dawkins, and a VHS copy of Jurassic Park.

JIMMY SHINGLES
Okay, follow me.

They begin to walk, but as they round the corner, they see a security camera on the ceiling. Ducking back into cover, they notice it's tracking back and forth across both sides of the corridor. They enter the blind spot and sneak past it.

DON PIANO
Thank God there's only one camera
there. If he'd bought two we'd have
been screwed.

They keep walking, but as the camera turns a corner, they do not, and walk out of shot.

JIMMY SHINGLES
Anybody else feel like we're going
to wrong way?

They jog back into frame, but stop again as they see AN ANGEL coming their way. It's too late to turn back.

RALPH B. GOSH
Follow my lead.

Ralph produces a clipboard and pencil from somewhere, and walks confidently in the direction of the angel. The others follow. They pass the angel without incident, and continue on down the corridor. Ralph checks behind him, to find that the angel has stopped, and is eyeing them up suspiciously. Ralph makes eye contact with it, and then starts furiously scribbling into the notebook. The angel decides it's not worth it, and disappears off down another corridor. The group breathes a sigh of relief.

DON PIANO
That was a little too close for comfort. Nicely done, though.

They begin following Jimmy again.

RALPH B. GOSH
I've gotten into a lot of places like that. Schools, hospitals, nuclear power plants, et cetera, et cetera.

DON PIANO
Nuclear power plants?

RALPH B. GOSH
I needed some lead.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
Lead? Pfft. I've gotten way better.

RALPH B. GOSH
With all due respect, I highly doubt that you have.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
Doubt no more! I snuck into one of those, whaddaya call 'em, construction sites. An' I found a hard hat an' flourescent jacket that had just been left there. I put 'em on, and I start walking around. I see this guy carting bricks from one end of the site to the other. Next thing I know, he's taking a break, so I grab the wheelbarrow, load it up and start carryin' 'em myself.

(MORE)

DERRICK ANAOCONDA (CONT'D)

Nobody bats an eyelid, it's like I was always there. Anyway, I keep up with this crap for a couple weeks, carryin' bricks, layin' bricks, timber, slabs, what have you. Next thing ya know, the big boss comes up to me - Foreman, I think his name was - an' he says he couldn't find my address on file so here's my pay. You know what he gives me? A big envelope stuffed with cash.

Derrick smiles nostalgically.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA (CONT'D)

Best scam I ever pulled off.

They come to a door labelled 8.11A - LARDER, and go through.

INT. LARDER - DAY

The larder is a tiled room stacked with containers of food, old and new. The gang makes their way through.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

Oh, shirt! 3D Doritos!

He stuffs a bag in his pocket and continues on his way.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

Told ya he liked human food.

RALPH B. GOSH

3D Doritos are not exactly what I had in mind.

DON PIANO

Guys, look - over there.

They see it. A whole wall, stacked to the ceiling with odd-looking tins, all bearing the word 'Ambrosia'. They seem to come in a rainbow of colours. Derrick picks up a pink one and reads the label.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

Bubblegum flavour. For use on gods only.

DON PIANO

Why the heck would God want to eat bubblegum flavoured anything?

GOD (O.S.)
 One of the few flavours I didn't
 invent.

They all spin around. GOD is an ancient-looking man with a walking stick and an arched back, with long, white hair coming from the circumference of his head. But not the top.

GOD (CONT'D)
 It's interesting. In a way,
 Bubblegum flavour is the ultimate
 metaphor for the human condition.
 Say, what are you boys doing in my
 larder?

RALPH B. GOSH
 It's God! Quick, get him!

Ralph lunges awkwardly toward God, but Don and Derrick grab his arms before he can. The tin of ambrosia goes rolling across the floor.

GOD
 You wouldn't punch an old man,
 would you?

RALPH B. GOSH
 You're not an old man, you're God!

GOD
 You wouldn't punch God, would you?

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
 Careful Ralph. He'll smite the crap
 out of you. I read about it in a
 book. Forget what it was called.

GOD
 Actually, I haven't smote since
 biblical times.

JIMMY SHINGLES
 Ain't all times biblical to you?

God waves his hand, dismissively.

GOD
 No, there are like CD walkman times
 or something.

God begins ambling toward Ralph, at such a speed that the group begin to wonder how he snuck up on them in the first place.

RALPH B. GOSH
 Stop right there, chief! One step
 closer and I'll drink this stuff.

He grabs a can of Ambrosia from the shelf ('Original'
 flavour) and pulls the ring.

GOD
 I would strongly advise you not to
 drink that.

DON PIANO
 What the hell, Ralph? This wasn't
 the part of the plan.

RALPH B. GOSH
 My fourth-grade teacher said I was
 never going to become anything.
 Well, here's to you, Mrs.
 Liebermann, for today, I become a
 god!

He drinks it.

DON PIANO
 What does it taste like?

He takes another sip.

RALPH B. GOSH
 Original.

DON PIANO
 Were you always this white?

There is brilliant white light shining out of Ralph's eyes
 and mouth.

RALPH B. GOSH
 What? I never went outside, if
 that's what you mean.

The white light intensifies and starts to burn away at
 Ralph's skin. A tremendous, intensifying humming can be
 heard. God pushes a button on his cane, and a small umbrella
 pops out. The others begin to shimmy away from him

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO
 You don't look so good, Ralph.

RALPH B. GOSH
 I'm fine. Just a little warm.

The surface of Ralph's skin is beginning to crack like so much old china, mishandled by the unskilled pot-washer of fate.

RALPH B. GOSH (CONT'D)
 Okay, this is actually really
 painful. Am I going to die?

GOD
 No, you're already dead. But your
 soul is rejecting the ambrosia.

The humming has become so loud that Ralph has to shout over it.

RALPH B. GOSH
 (shouting)
 Tell my wife... I... had...
 chlamydia!

Ralph splinters into a million tiny fragments. Then, the humming is gone. Where Ralph once stood is a pile of white dust.

GOD
 Poor soul. He was impure. He could
 never have become a god. Few can,
 even of those who are accepted to
 this place.

God pushes a button on his cane, and a broom comes out. He begins sweeping up the dust.

DON PIANO
 So, uh, God, I've been meaning to
 ask for your forgiveness for quite
 a while, and now seems like a
 pretty obvious time. If you don't
 mind, of course?

God answers without stopping his sweeping.

GOD
 You can ask away, Don Piano, but
 you won't get forgiveness. The time
 to get forgiveness was when you
 were alive. You're past that point
 now.

DON PIANO
 But I-

God finishes sweeping the dust into a pile, and looks Don dead in the eye, leaning on his broom.

GOD

I know all about you, Don Piano. I know about all the things that you've done. You and your little friends. For years, you have created nothing but suffering and tears. And for years, you have evaded my judgement. How surprised I was when I learned that you had come here yourself.

DON PIANO

You knew?

GOD

I'm omniscient, idiot. Of course I knew. I'm just very busy these days. Specially since people started teach those talking birds to pray.

Derrick nudges Don.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

(quietly)

Hey boss, this seems like a pretty good time for us to make our escape.

GOD

Nobody can help you now, Don Piano. Not your quack or the hipster. You're outside of time and space now.

Don says nothing.

GOD (CONT'D)

It's time for you to be judged.

God snaps his arthritic fingers. Everyone except for him disappears in a flash of white light. He goes back to his sweeping.

INT. HELL COURT

Hell court looks a lot like a traditional courtroom - wood, red drapes, green leather. But there's no place for a jury, and no witness stands. Only an impossibly tall bench, at which the HELL JUDGE sits.

Alberto stands before the judge first.

HELL JUDGE

State your name for the record,
please.

ALBERTO RIGATONI

Eyyy! Alberto Rigatoni!

HELL JUDGE

Alberto Rigatoni, you stand accused
of...

The judge leafs through a binder of papers.

HELL JUDGE (CONT'D)

Working on a Sunday? Aren't you one
of those criminals?

Alberto shrugs. The judge looks back at the papers.

HELL JUDGE (CONT'D)

And illegal downloading.

Alberto shrugs.

HELL JUDGE (CONT'D)

Don't you know that the people who
make movies have hungry, gaping
mouths to feed? How could you let
the best boys and the gaffers go
home and tell their children that
there is nothing to eat? Who will
gaff your movies when they all die
of starvation?

The judge looks directly into the camera in a few seconds of
unbroken silence.

Alberto shrugs.

HELL JUDGE (CONT'D)

Do you have ANYTHING to say in your
defense?

Alberto thinks very hard for a minute.

ALBERTO RIGATONI

Eyyy!

HELL JUDGE

For your petty crimes, I sentence
you to two hundred fulcrums of
debt.

INT. HELL COURT

Jimmy stands before the judge.

HELL JUDGE

State your full name, for the record.

JIMMY SHINGLES

Jimmy Shingles, your honour. They call me Shingles 'cause I used to be a roofie.

HELL JUDGE

I asked for your name, not your life story, Mr. Shingles. Anyway, your participation in criminal events has been limited at best. I sentence you to one hundred fulcrums.

INT. HELL COURT

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

You got the wrong guy, your honour. I'm innocent. I know what you're thinking. You're thinking that all hispanics look the same. Well, lemme tell ya, I forgive you in advance.

HELL JUDGE

Show me your heart, Rodriguez Mirabello.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

What?

The hell judge leans closer and drops down to a theatrical whisper. Up close, his face looks wrong. Like it's distorted somehow, like it's not quite human.

HELL JUDGE

Your heart.

Rodriguez touches his chest with his hands. To his surprise, his hands pass right inside. He puts his whole hand inside, and pulls out a still-beating heart. He looks somewhat impressed.

HELL JUDGE (CONT'D)

Weigh it.

Rodriguez looks to his left. There's an old-fashioned scales. On one end, a feather. With some hesitation, he places his heart on the other. The scales tip. His heart sinks. He looks back up at the judge.

HELL JUDGE (CONT'D)
Your heart is heavy with sin.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO
Wait, no, you can't do this! The system's rigged! Everybody's heart is heavier than a feather! It's rigged, I tell you!

INT. HELL COURT

HELL JUDGE
How many wives did you take?

SPUDD GUNN
One.

HELL JUDGE
Only one?

SPUDD GUNN
I thought you was only meant to take one.

HELL JUDGE
No, the more you take, the better. Lot of people get that one wrong, though. Any children?

SPUDD GUNN
One.

HELL JUDGE
Hm.

SPUDD GUNN
Wot?

HELL JUDGE
I'm afraid that counts against you in this instance.

SPUDD GUNN
Against me?

HELL JUDGE
Children have a big carbon footprint, you see.

(MORE)

HELL JUDGE (CONT'D)
It's not like the old days, when
you could have as many as you
wanted.

INT. HELL COURT

HELL JUDGE
I sentence you to 5000 fulcrums for
your petty crimes.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
Your honour, may I ask a question?

HELL JUDGE
You may.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
What is a fulcrum?

HELL JUDGE
A fulcrum is the essence of the
balance between sin and virtue. The
balance that we all must strike if
we wish to walk to the divine path.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
What?

HELL JUDGE
Your debt is simply the amount of
suffering you have caused to the
world, minus the amount of pleasure
you have given. It is the amount of
suffering that the world owes you
for your actions.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
And when I pay it?

HELL JUDGE
You have achieved balance, and your
punishment will be over.

INT. HELL COURT

Don stands before the judge.

HELL JUDGE
State your name for the record.

DON PIANO
(quiet)
Don Piano.

HELL JUDGE
Louder.

DON PIANO
(upset)
Don Piano.

The judge leans back in his seat.

HELL JUDGE
Those who accompany you are here
for petty crimes, minor
misdemeanours and small sins. But
you - you are much worse, Don
Piano. I see an inky blackness
inside you that I see in very few
men these days.

Don does not make eye contact with the judge.

HELL JUDGE (CONT'D)
Are you listening to me, Don Piano?

DON PIANO
What was I supposed to do, your
honour?

HELL JUDGE
It is not always easy to walk the
path of righteousness, Don Piano.
It is easier for some than it is
for others. But how would you know?
You never tried.

DON PIANO
I never saw the path. It was closed
off to me-

HELL JUDGE
(yelling)
I will not year your excuses!

Don shifts.

HELL JUDGE (CONT'D)

You have left a child without a parent, you have left a wife without a husband, you have taken what was not yours to take, and you have taken your own life out of greed, and greed alone. Do you have anything to say in your defence?

Don says nothing.

HELL JUDGE (CONT'D)

I sentence you to-

DON PIANO

He made us like this, your honour. God made us like me. He acts all high and mighty, like it's our fault, but this is what he made, and he can blame people like me all he wants, but when is he going to answer for everything that he took?

The judge begins to bang his gavel.

HELL JUDGE

Order! Order! Order! I sentence- order! I demand to have order! Order! Order! ORDER!

DON PIANO (CONT'D)

Who's going to hold him to account for the broken humans that he made? Why am I responsible for his mistakes?!

The judge bangs his gavel once more. Louder than before. And with more finality.

HELL JUDGE (CONT'D)

I sentence you to a debt of five hundred thousand fulcrums.

INT. HELL FOYER

A lot of people have their own ideas about heaven is, which makes it a bit of an eclectic place. But hell, on the other hand, remains remarkably consistent in religion and folklore. Hell occupies a huge cave system, with many small, snaking tunnels connecting larger caverns. It also has a distinctly 'retrofitted' feeling - it seems like plumbing, electricity and fluorescent lighting have been added, along with a level metal gantries and (encouragingly) wheelchair ramps.

Don enters hell from nowhere in particular, through a door labelled 'entrance only'. The others are waiting for him.

SPUDD GUNN

Hey Don.

DON PIANO

(weakly)

Hey.

A DAEMON comes up to greet them. It's surprisingly well dressed and not particularly threatening in its manner, but there's something wrong with its eyes.

DAEMON #1

You fellas here for your induction?

DON PIANO

What?

DAEMON #1

Your induction. You are new here, aren't you? You're standing around like lemons.

DON PIANO

Yeah, we're new.

DAEMON #1

Then, if you'd like to follow me, please.

They set off down one of the many hallways, and through a number of quite impressive caves, thronged with shadows. Derrick catches up with the daemon.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

Hey, If I throw holy water on you, will you die?

DAEMON #1

Let's not do this.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

That's a yes, aint it?

DAEMON #1

You think water's gonna melt me just cause some priests have talked to it? Are you having a giggle?

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

Huh, good point, I guess. What about silver bullets?

DAEMON #1

That's werewolves.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
Stakes and garlic?

DAEMON #1
That's vampires.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
Praying?

DAEMON #1
(exasperated)
That's also vampires.

INT. TORTURE LOBBY

The torture lobby is a huge space, with metal gangways on many levels, and hundreds of doors cut directly into the rock. Each one has a heading above it.

DAEMON #1
Now, I assume you all know that you're paying off a debt. This is where the magic happens. Behind each of these doors is a different way of paying it off! For example...

He opens a door at random. Inside there's a room full of people who look as though they're about to sneeze, but nobody is sneezing.

DAEMON #1 (CONT'D)
This is the 'feeling like you have to sneeze but never actually sneezing' torture. One of the milder ones. Pays 1 fulcrum per hour.

He opens another door.

DAEMON #1 (CONT'D)
Of course, we have more traditional tortures as well, like this one - laying on a bed of spikes.

Sure enough, there are a number of people laying on spike beds that look like prickly pool chairs. Some of them appear to be reading books. There is a quiet chorus of 'ow, ow, ow'.

DAEMON #1 (CONT'D)
That's five fulcrums an hour.

He shuts the door, and moves to the next.

DAEMON #1 (CONT'D)

Oh, and here's a new one - we just installed it the other day, it's fantastic: reliving embarrassing memories! fifteen fulcrums an hour!

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

You're kidding. Embarrassing memories pays thrice as much as the spikes? Hell, I'll do it right now.

He opens the door and steps through into the void. His eye begins to twitch uncontrollably.

INT. CINEMA

The cinema lobby is decorated with colourful geometric shapes, reminiscent of the 90s. Rodriguez is standing at the counter, paying for his ticket. The employee hands him the cardboard.

CINEMA EMPLOYEE

Here you go. Enjoy the movie!

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

Thanks! You too!

INT. TORTURE LOBBY

Rodriguez comes stumbling out of the door, his face dripping with sweat, gasping for breath.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

Rodriguez, what the hell happened in there? You look like crap!

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

I don't wanna talk about it. Get off my case, old man! I was, I - how long did I last?

The daemon looks at his watch.

DAEMON #1

Eight seconds.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

(incredulous)
Eight SECONDS?

DAEMON #1

The fulcrums will be deposited into your account automatically. Now, if you'd like to follow me...

INT. HELL HALLWAY

The gang, still led by the daemon, enter a hallway that bears a some resemblance to the hallway of a medium-bad hotel, with long lines of doors and room numbers. They stop, and he begins to hand out keys.

DAEMON #1

Don't lose these, or you'll be charged to get them replaced.

DON PIANO

We get rooms?

DAEMON #1

Of course. Your room numbers are one hundred and six billion, six hundred and sixty six million, seven hundred forty five thousand, one hundred and twenty-eight, through to one hundred and six-

DON PIANO

And five extra. Got it. Thanks.

He opens up his door. Inside, he finds a surprisingly comfortable-looking room, with a double bed, desk, chair, television and en-suite bathroom.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

Whoah! Jackpot! This is like where kings would live if they went to hell!

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

Hey horny, what's the catch? Why can't I just stay in this cushty place as long as I like?

DAEMON #1

Mister Anaconda, this is not life. This is not a paradise. And this - the thing that is talking to me, this isn't really Derrick Anaconda, it's only a shadow.

(MORE)

DAEMON #1 (CONT'D)

I know that this might seem
'cushty' to you, but the moment you
stop trying to reach paradise, you
are broken, and your soul will
belong to us. Any more questions?

SPUDD GUNN

Can I go to the bathroom?

DAEMON #1

(annoyed)

Yes? You don't need to ask.

SPUDD GUNN

Sweet.

Spudd wanders off.

DON PIANO

I need a stiff drink. I'll see you
fellas later.

JIMMY SHINGLES

Wait, what are we gonna do?

Don pauses.

DON PIANO

Well, I'm gonna have a long hard
think about my poor life choices
and how they got us here.

He wanders off down the hallway. Jimmy follows him. Derrick
and Rodriguez retreat to their rooms.

INT. RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO'S ROOM

Rodriguez is excitedly inspecting his room. He finds a little
chocolate mint on his pillow, encased in a foil wrapper,
emblazoned with the words 'Welcome to Hell'. He eats it.

There's a knock at the door. He opens it.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

Hey, Rodriguez. Whoah, nice place.

Derrick scans the room.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA (CONT'D)

(mock surprise)

Oh no! I booked us a twin room, but
it looks like they've given us a
double instead!

He walks past Rodriguez and lets himself fall onto the bed.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO
You don't seem overly concerned
about this whole hell thing.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
Ah, you worry too much. When has
Don let us down? He'll figure
somethin' out. He always does.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO
(uncertain)
Yeah.

Rodriguez sits cross-legged on the bed, picks up a remote and turns on the modestly-sized TV. Images both strange and familiar begin to play across the screen.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO (CONT'D)
Hey, check it out. Hell has cable.

They both look toward the TV set.

ANNOUNCER
We now return to: Gary Sparudo:
Bathroom Detective.

The screen shows A FEW COPS and a hardboiled detective standing in a noir-y apartment building. There are a few extras in the background with tape rollers, applying 'WARNING: POLICE LINE' tape to the doorway.

HEAD COP
I don't get it. The crime user came
in here, did two moydas, and got
out again without leavin' a trace.
Howd'd 'e do it?

The extras are now pasting 'POLICE LINE' tape over the walls, furniture and one of the cops.

GARY SPARUDO (O.S.)
(bostonian)
Detective inspector, meet me in the
bathroom oh-fifteen seconds from
now. And let me tell ya, he left a
trace alright.

Derrick switches the channel. The set now shows a CARTOON DOG, who looks as though he was animated by poor Russian children (at best) walking through a shop that seems to be selling many kinds of junk.

He picks up a boxed video game and makes his way to the counter, which is attended by a WEIRD AND IMPOSSIBLY OLD LOOKING MAN.

SHOPKEEPER

Oh, hello, little girl.

DOG

I'm not a little girl. I'm a YouTube celebrity.

SHOPKEEPER

Right on, little girl.

DOG

Can I buy this game?

SHOPKEEPER

They call me old comb-teeth, ya know. Me teeth are like a comb. C'mon, little girl, let me give my teeth a good old floss.

He flips the channel. Now it depicts a chef, standing in a brightly-lit kitchen, putting the finishing touches on a salad of some sort.

CHEF

And now, the finishing touch - for that smooth mouth feel and delicious taste, add a light drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil.

He begins to pour olive oil onto the salad.

CHEF (CONT'D)

Just a tiny bit.

He keeps pouring. And pouring. And pouring. The salad is swimming in olive oil. He keeps pouring the olive oil, whilst maintaining eye contact with the camera.

CHEF (CONT'D)

A little bit of olive oil.

Eventually, the olive oil runs out. It has spilled out onto the surface. Just as it looks like it's over, he reaches behind him, and finds a water cooler-sized bottle of olive oil. He begins to pour, and keeps pouring for an uncomfortably long time.

CHEF (CONT'D)

Just a tiny little bit of olive oil.

Derrick flips the channel again. It now looks a bit like a nature documentary. There are TWO BUGS (or at least, somewhat anthropomorphized bug-like creatures) sitting on a leaf, and they appear to be deep in conversation.

BUG #1

Wanna see a picture of her?

BUG #2

Sure.

Bug #1 produces a picture from... somewhere?

BUG #1

She's cute, huh?

BUG #2

Uh...

BUG #1

What?

BUG #2

Well, I dunno. Maybe.

BUG #1

C'mon. Say yes. Humour me, just this once.

BUG #2

It's hard for me to say, man. Have you got a picture of her proboscis?

BUG #1

Her proboscis?

BUG #2

Yeah.

BUG #1

No.

BUG #2

How can I say whether she's cute if I haven't seen her proboscis?

He flips it again to a picture of a duck. Jaunty keyboard music is playing in the background.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

Whoah. A duck. That's wild.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

The next channel is Family Guy re-runs, but I think I'll spare you that one.

Derrick continues to flip through channels.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

You know, my mom always said I'd end up in hell.

INT. HELL BAR

Don is ordering drinks at a slightly seedy looking bar. Jimmy and Spudd are sitting at a table. Jimmy is shovelling nachos into his mouth.

DON PIANO

Hey, can I please get me a beer?

DAEMON BARTENDER

What kinda beer?

DON PIANO

Uh, I dunno. Just a beer? A regular beer?

THE BARTENDER looks confused. Eventually Don just points to a beer.

DON PIANO (CONT'D)

That one. Please.

The bartender pours it out and places it on the bar.

DAEMON BARTENDER

That'll be 5 fulcrums.

DON PIANO

5 fulcrums? That's flippin' daylight robbery!

DAEMON BARTENDER

Where do you think we are?

Don grimaces.

DON PIANO

And a chocolate milk, please.

The bartender pours him a chocolate milk, and he returns to the table.

It looks like he's going to give the milk to Spudd and set the beer down at his own place, but in fact, he does the opposite. He then notices that Spudd's beer isn't on a coaster, and puts one below it.

DON PIANO (CONT'D)
I'm sorry about all this, guys.
This is my mess.

JIMMY SHINGLES
Don't sweat it, boss. We'll be
fine.

DON PIANO
You think?

JIMMY SHINGLES
Ain't the mad doctor gonna wake us
up?

DON PIANO
Soderstrom was supposed to wake us
up, yeah. In one hour. But I've got
this creeping suspicion that we're
outside of time. What does your
watch say?

JIMMY SHINGLES
Ten forty-three. Hm.

Spudd has turned around from both of them, and is petting a mangy-looking dog lying below the next table.

SPUDD GUNN
Good doggie!

Jimmy notices, and appraises the dog, then its owner, who's sitting at the table.

JIMMY SHINGLES
Hey, what did that dog do to get
here?

DOG OWNER
Licked the couch.

JIMMY SHINGLES
And he's here? For that!?

DOG OWNER
He licked the couch a lot.

SPUDD GUNN

Who's a good doggie? You are! Yes
you are!

DON PIANO

Hey Jimmy, didn't you say you were
looking for a dog?

JIMMY SHINGLES

Huh?

DON PIANO

In heaven.

JIMMY SHINGLES

Yeah. I didn't see him, though.
Heaven's pretty big though, I guess
I coulda missed him.

DON PIANO

I'm sure he's up there somewhere.

Jimmy smiles.

JIMMY SHINGLES

His name was Baby Ruth. He was a
putbull terrier crossed with a
bulldog. He was ugly as sin, and
mean-looking too, but he was the
kindest, sweetest dog you'd ever
know. He loved chasin' cars. That
was his thing. Think that comes
from the bulldogs. Somethin' to do
with the wheels. Anyway, he was the
predator, and the car, well, that
was the prey. He'd sit indoors,
lookin' through the windows at all
the cars comin' by. When I took him
for his walk, I had to leash him
real tight, because otherwise I was
worried he might just catch one of
them, and then what'd he do?

Don drinks his chocolate milk.

JIMMY SHINGLES (CONT'D)

Mail trucks were his favorite. I
think that's just an all-dog thing.
They see a mail truck, and they get
excited. I can't work out if he
loved 'em or hated 'em. But
regardless, he always had his eye
on 'em.

Jimmy sighs.

JIMMY SHINGLES (CONT'D)

I was thirteen. Ma sits me down at the dinner table. That's when you know it's gonna be bad, see - we never used to sit at the dinner table, we used to sit in front of the TV. Anyway, she sits me down, and she says the vet thinks that Baby Ruth got bowel cancer. Sudden onset. Never saw it coming. Baby Ruth was a good dog. He didn't deserve that. She said Baby was in constant pain, and she said it weren't right keep him in this pain no more. At first, I thought she meant she was gonna take him to the vet and make him get better. Then I realized. She wanted to put 'ol Baby Ruth down.

Jimmy sniffs.

JIMMY SHINGLES (CONT'D)

So it's Baby Ruth's last day on this earth. An' I'm takin' him for a walk. An' I'm passing all the spots that he loved to stop and sniff and do his business. Knowin' it was gonna be the last time. An' as I'm heading home, I see somethin' parked by the side of the road. Postal service van. And the driver's nowhere to be found. And I looks to Baby Ruth, and I give him this look, like: now. An' I let him get up on the mail van, an' he has a good old look around, an' a good old sniff everywhere, an' he checks all the tires as well, for some reason. An' at the end, he's proud. Happiest I ever seen him. Because he finally caught one. I was just glad he got to do that before he passed on. Maybe nature did get one over on him, givin' him that bowel cancer. But he caught the mail truck. An' nobody can take that away from him.

Jimmy smiles.

JIMMY SHINGLES (CONT'D)
I bought another dog, y'know.

DON PIANO
Oh?

JIMMY SHINGLES
Baby Ruth Junior.

DON PIANO
Good name.

JIMMY SHINGLES
Thanks. I was up all night workin'
on it. Took him for his walk just
thus mornin', matter of fact.

He starts to fiddle with his placemat.

JIMMY SHINGLES (CONT'D)
Man, I hope he's not missin' me up
there.

INT. RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO'S ROOM

Derrick and Rodriguez are lying on the bed, staring at the
TV, which is emitting a steady drone of nonsense.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO
This place has the best TV.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
I hear ya.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO
I mean, upstairs is nice and all,
but I saw what they had on TV. It
was the Waltons on a loop.

On the TV, a TALK-SHOW HOST is interviewing former U.S.
president Jimmy Carter.

TALK-SHOW HOST
One final question, Mr. Carter.
What're you doing down here? Aren't
you the US president that most
people like? Didn't you cure Polio
or something?

JIMMY CARTER
We're all down here, howard. All of
us. We're all war criminals. All
war criminals go down here, Howard.

TALK-SHOW HOST

Even JFK?

JIMMY CARTER

Even JFK.

TALK-SHOW HOST

And Teddy Roosevelt?

JIMMY CARTER

Roosevelt is down here. We're all down here.

TALK-SHOW HOST

Even Harry S. Truman?

JIMMY CARTER

All of us are down here. Even Harry S. Truman. We're all down here.

TALK-SHOW HOST

But surely Woodrow Wilson-

The host continues to ask about US presidents as the show's credits begin to roll. Rodriguez is nervously using an electronic cigarette.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

Whoah. Everyone's down here.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

You know, I kinda wanna talk to JFK.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

Why?

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

I wanna know who killed him.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

Why would *he* know?

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

Well, I could... I could at least ask him which direction he thought the bullet came from.

Derrick flips the TV channel. It lands on Hell Channel One. The opening titles for a show play. They show a figure running toward a bright white light. As it runs, upbeat music plays, and colourful graphics flash across the screen. Panels start to rise out of the floor, and it dodges around them, but before long, it finds itself running through a maze.

The camera zooms out to show the logo of the show - called 'Egress'.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
 Live on Hell Channel One, it's
 Egress, the only way out! And
 here's your host, the lord of
 darkness, harbinger of the black
 pit, and the prime beast of
 revelation: Lllllllucifer!

The camera pans to show A WOMAN, standing behind a podium in a purple-and-black studio. She looks to be in her thirties, is wearing formal business attire, and has her hair tied back into a bun. She smiles.

LUCIFER
 Hello, and welcome to Egress, the
 only way out. I'm Lucifer, but you
 can call me Lucy!

She winks.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)
 Today, one of our three lucky
 contestants could end up walking
 through that door -

She motions to a huge door at the rear of set. Above the door is the familiar green-and-white sign depicting a stick figure entering an exit.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)
 - And out of hell forever. But for
 the losers - and here's the really
 fun part - a trillion fulcrums of
 suffering await, in the inner
 circle!

A ring-like structure at the center of the set opens up like a camera shutter, to reveal a gaping hole.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)
 And now, let's meet our lucky
 contestants...

Rodriguez, staring intently at the TV, finds himself in the midst of a capital I Idea.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO
 Derrick, do you know what this
 means?

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

...no.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

Idiot! This is our ticket outta here!

INT. HELL BAR

Jimmy and Spudd are sitting at the bar, talking to the bartender.

JIMMY SHINGLES

Hey.

The bartender is polishing a glass very hard.

JIMMY SHINGLES (CONT'D)

Hey.

DAEMON BARTENDER

What?

JIMMY SHINGLES

Do they ever give out ironic punishments?

DAEMON BARTENDER

No.

A butterfly sits next to Jimmy and orders a flower.

JIMMY SINGLES

So. Whadda you in for?

The butterfly flaps its wings.

JIMMY SINGLES (CONT'D)

Hey barkeep, what's he in for?

DEMON BARTENDER

You know how they say a butterfly flapping its wings causes a hurricane on another continent?

JIMMY SINGLES

Yeah?

The butterfly flaps its wings malevolently. The demon bartender leans in a little.

DEMON BARTENDER
 (whispering)
 That's him. That's the guy.

Don is sitting in a booth, playing monopoly with someone. Don is moving his piece (the boot).

DON PIANO
 One, two, three, four... free parking. Aha! Now I get all the money under here.

DEATH
 What? That doesn't make any sense. You don't get money for parking.

DON PIANO
 Hey, maybe the city decided that paying people to park would help to stimulate the local economy.

Death looks pissed.

DEATH
 This sucks. I think I'll stick with chess, if you don't mind.

DON PIANO
 Up to you.

DEATH
 Say, Don, you seem like a pretty nice fella. Hard to believe you killed a guy.

Don freezes.

DEATH (CONT'D)
 What're you staring at? I was there.

Death leans closer.

DEATH (CONT'D)
 Did it feel good? In my humble opinion, the first one is always the best.

Death gives a big, extremely toothy grin. Which is easy, because he has no lips.

INT. TV STUDIO

Lucifer is standing at the edge of the pit with a woman in a stripy jumper. The woman is visibly nervous. A plume of flame spews forth from the centre.

LUCIFER

So, this is it. Down the hole you go! Tell me, do you have any regrets? Any last words?

STRIPY JUMPER WOMAN

(stuttering)

I suppose I wish I'd paid more attention in geography class.

LUCIFER

Ha! Alrighty. Would you like a push?

STRIPY JUMPER WOMAN

No thank you.

As a drum rolls, the woman takes a deep breath and then steps into the abyss. A modest fanfare plays. Then, two burly-looking demons appear, holding the arms of a NERVOUS-LOOKING MAN.

LUCIFER

Any last words?

NERVOUS-LOOKING MAN

I don't wanna go down there!
Please! I'll do anything!

LUCIFER

Never heard that one before. Studio audience, can I get a countdown?

The studio audience begins counting down.

STUDIO AUDIENCE

Three! Two! One!

The demons throw the still-screaming man down into the pit, as Lucifer looks on with muted glee.

INT. HELL BAR

Don is still sitting in his booth, handing some dollar-bills to a still-grinning death. Suddenly, the doors are flung open by Rodriguez and Derrick, who sprint over to Don's table.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

Boss! We got a great idea!

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

Boss! It was really my idea, but he's takin' credit for it!

DEATH

Howdy, folks.

Death cordially extends a hand in their general direction. Derrick goes to take it, then hesitates.

DEATH (CONT'D)

Hah! A lot of people fall for that one, you know.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

Boss, the devil's got this gameshow where if you win you can get outta hell!

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

Yeah! It's called Egress! It's good TV!

DON PIANO

What?

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

The devil's got a gameshow. Called egris or somethin'. It's on every day. If you win, you get to leave. No questions asked.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

There's a big door an' everything.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

Boss, if just one of us wins, they can get back to Dr. Frankenstein and wake all the others up.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

My idea is that I should be the one to do it. I did an online IQ test and-

DON PIANO

(interrupting)

What happens to the losers?

Derrick and Rodriguez both shuffle awkwardly on their feet.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO

I dunno, I wasn't really listenin'
to that bit.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

They throw you down a big eternal
torture hole.

Don sighs. His eyes scan the room. The bartender is glaring at Jimmy, who has not stopped asking questions for a single minute. Spudd has gone back to petting the dog. Death is trying to sneak a 500 dollar note out of the bank. The butterfly is drinking alone. A fluorescent light at the far end of the bar is flickering intermittently. He sees a rat scurry by, and briefly wonders if it is a plague rat. He remembers his wife and daughter, going to work and school, whilst he is lying dead in the basement of a cocktail bar, a victim of his own foolishness.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA (CONT'D)

So it's a plan, yeah?

Don returns to reality.

DON PIANO

Yes. But I'll be the one to do it.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA

Boss, no! We need you! What if you
lose?

DON PIANO

I dragged all of you into this
mess. It's my responsibility to get
you out. I'll do it.

INT. DON'S ROOM

Don is trying to sleep. He's lying on one side of his double bed. The bed isn't particularly comfy. From the bathroom, he can hear a dripping tap, which he can't get to shut off. At one point, he's on the edge of sleep, and he swears he can feel his wife behind him, but he turns around, and there's nothing there.

The tap lets out a final drip before he loses consciousness.

INT. POLICE CRUISER

TWO COPS are sitting inside a police cruiser, eating coffee and drinking donuts. It's dim outside, and rainy. The car is parked by the side of the street.

COP #1

What are the kids calling it these days?

COP #2

Volvadrex. I think it's some new drug. One of those ones they make in a lab.

COP #1

Volvadrex. Sounds nasty.

COP #2

Oh, it is. Turns your brain to tinned peaches. So I'm told.

COP #1

By whom?

COP #2

My second nephew got hooked on the stuff.

COP #1

Really?

COP #2

Yeah. Back before they started selling it in cans.

COP #1

Is it bad?

COP #2

Well, it tinned his peaches. He was out of his mind 24/7. Eventually, he started to think that he was a traffic light. As in, that was his job. To regulate the flow of cars through an intersection.

COP #1

That's messed up.

COP #2

Yeah it's messed up. Eventually my cousin decides that it's time to have an intervention. He goes 'Ade, we need to have a talk about this traffic light thing'. And Ade just says 'Dad, stop'. But he wouldn't. He says 'Drivers are starting to get freaked out by you.'

(MORE)

COP #2 (CONT'D)

One guy knocked on the door and asked who he had to pay his ticket to.'

COP #1

What'd Ade do?

COP #2

Well, the intervention didn't work. Kid just stands there, doesn't say anything. Blank, expressionless. After a while, his lips move, but I don't know if his brain was even working anymore. You wanna know what he said?

COP #1

What?

COP #2

All he says is 'Dad, I think you should go.'

Cop number one leans back in his cop car seat.

COP #1

Damn. That's rough.

They are interrupted by a burst of static. The police radio makes some unintelligible noises. The first cop grabs the speaker.

COP #1 (CONT'D)

I copy. On my way.

He takes the wheel, turns on the siren and the car starts moving.

COP #2

It's always the jewellery shops, ain't it?

COP #1

Freakin' De Beers family. What can ya do?

COP #2

Don't buy diamonds. Buy a nice table or something instead.

COP #1

An table?

COP #2

Mhm. Think about it. You're gonna use that thing every day.

COP #1

I guess so.

The two sit there for a while, the passenger watching the lights go by, trying to clean the donut residue from his hands. They approach the street in question, scream to a halt. They both get out of the car. Across the street from them, the getaway car is parked. The robbers have already taken cover behind it. The police take aim, but the robbers took aim faster. Even though it should really be imperceptible, cop number two can feel the bullet coming. He can feel the compressions rushing through the air toward his face. He can see the slug coming at him through the rain, and behind that, he can see the glint of Don's pistol. And, just at the last moment, at that split second, he accepts that he's going to die.

The bullet slams straight through his collarbone, and he is lost amongst the thundering of the rain, the ringing of the gunshot, the roaring of the car engines, and the screams of passers-by.

INT. DON'S ROOM

Don wakes up. He's lying on his back. He can't move. It's dark, but he can make out a figure standing at the foot of his bed. It's short, and humanoid, but there's something off about it. It doesn't quite look like a person. The forehead is too big. The mouth is too big. The teeth are too big. The eyes are too small and too black. The ears are almost completely absent. The fingers are too long.

It steps forward, slowly, and deliberately. It's some kind of lesser daemon. Silently, deliberately, and without a word, it climbs up onto Don's bed, and sits on him, never breaking eye contact with him. Even though they're small and beady, he can see its eyes up close now, and they're intense, more intense than anything he's seen. He can't look away, he can't cover his eyes, he can't even blink. He's totally paralyzed.

For a few moments, the thing just stares at him. Then, suddenly, he's able to shut his eyes. The thing is gone. Slowly and groggily, he surveys his surroundings, but finds no trace of it. He staggers into the bathroom, fills up a cup with water, and stares into the mirror. There are no daemons. Only his reflection.

INT. TV STUDIO

The studio is laid out in a fairly simple, modern style. The host, LUCIFER, stands behind a heightened, purple-coloured podium to the left, the contestants behind three similar podiums. Between them, a shutter, set into the floor - the pit. One of the egresses.

Don is standing behind one of podiums, the sweat on his forehead almost making a lens flare. A stage hand comes up and gives him a cloth. Behind the other two are a well-dressed man with greased black hair, PAUL VARNER, and an older-looking-guy, ROBERT DILLON, looking a little bit more stressed, in a creased blue shirt.

Lucifer looks a little bored. Somewhere, a stage hand is counting down to 0. Then, the show starts, the audience applauds right on cue, and Lucifer flashes a somewhat pointy smile straight into the camera.

LUCIFER

Hello, and welcome to Egress, the only way out. One of our three lucky contestants today could end up walking through that door -

She motions to the door.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

- And into eternal paradise. But for the losers - and here's the really fun part - a trillion fulcrums of suffering await, in the inner circle!

A ring-like structure at the center of the set opens up like a camera shutter, to reveal a gaping hole. A flame rushes up out of the hole, so close that it practically singes the audience's eyebrows.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

And now, let's meet our lucky contestants... Paul Varner, Robert Dillon, and Don Piano!

The crowd gives another round of applause. The gang looks on anxiously.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

Paul, how about we start with you? Who were you, and who are you hoping to be once more?

PAUL VARNER

I was a top lawyer from Chicago.
And I can guarantee you, I still
am. Inside.

He, too, winks at the camera.

PAUL VARNER (CONT'D)

I was the best. I had a 95%
conviction rate. And I was struck
down in my prime. It was tragic,
really.

Lucifer raises an eyebrow.

PAUL VARNER (CONT'D)

I OD'd in the back of a limo while
receiving an exotic dance. It was
the perfect way to go. But it was
just too soon.

LUCIFER

Mr. Varner, why are you here?

PAUL VARNER

A technicality.

LUCIFER

Technicality?

PAUL VARNER

(annoyed)

My job was to get my conviction
rate as close to 100% as possible.
So what? I can't help it, I can't
help being better than a guy with a
90% conviction rate, or an 80%
conviction rate, or a public
defender. I was too good at my job.
That's all there is to it.

LUCIFER

You're saying that you sent
innocent people to prison?

PAUL VARNER

Those people were CONVICTED guilty,
Lucy. Legally, they were guilty.
That's all that matters.

She smiles once more.

LUCIFER

Very well. Moving swiftly along -
Robert, who were you?

ROBERT DILLON

I was an exterminator from North
Dakota. I used to do all kinds of
pest control. Rodents, hornets,
fleas, wasps, ants, bed bugs, all
kinds of pest control.

LUCIFER

And you died how?

ROBERT DILLON

I don't know, ma'am. I think it
might have been a stroke, or a
heart attack. It was while I was
walking down the steps outside my
house. I remember clinging to the
rail, feeling weak, feeling like
something was wrong, but I didn't
know what. I tried to call for help
but I could barely talk, the words
just wouldn't come. I lay down
there, on the sidewalk, in
February. There were people all
around me... and they just walked
on by. Like nothing was happening.
Like I didn't exist. That's the
last thing I remember.

LUCIFER

And what are you in for?

ROBERT DILLON

I... had a gambling problem a few
years back. A severe gambling
problem. When I ran out of personal
funds, I used the money from my
company. Eventually we were tens of
thousands of dollars in the red. I
fudged the numbers to make it look
like we were undercharging and
overspending. My brother, who was
the joint owner, bailed the company
out using his own money, and took
all the responsibility for himself.
I never told him.

LUCIFER

Very interesting! Two very
different kinds of sinner.

ROBERT DILLON

I need this. Please. I have two little boys, aged 6 and 10, they mean the world to me, I just want to see-

LUCIFER

(interrupting)

You, there, on the end, who were you?

DON PIANO

My name is Don Piano. And I am a failed criminal.

LUCIFER

Well, no need to guess what you're here for, then!

DON PIANO

I killed a guy.

The crowd gasps, in a slightly theatrical manner.

DON PIANO (CONT'D)

I shot him in the clavicle. The bullet severed a major artery and he bled to death on the asphalt. I read about it in the newspaper the next day. And I read his obituary too.

A few boos and hisses come from the crowd, but Don looks a little more relaxed.

DON PIANO (CONT'D)

It feels good to tell someone.

LUCIFER

How did you leave this mortal coil, Don Piano?

DON PIANO

Voluntarily. But I was wrong to do so.

The crowd is silent this time. Lucifer turns back toward the cameras at the front of the studio.

LUCIFER

Well, three very interesting, very different competitors. But how will they fare in the trials to come?

(MORE)

LUCIFER (CONT'D)
 Only one can walk through the
 egress - who will it be?

She gestures to the back of the studio, and the exit sign
 glows, flickering as it does.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)
 For those who are new to the show,
 a quick recap of the rules: you
 will be given a topic. It could be
 anything, from art, to science, to
 literature to sport. The first
 person who buzzes in makes a bet.
 Then, they answer a question on
 that topic. If they get it right,
 they get that amount of money, but
 if they get it wrong, they lose
 that amount of money. The player
 with the most cash at the end of
 the game will egress, and the rest
 will be doomed to the inner circle.

Some smoke rises out of the hole in the floor.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)
 Once per game, you can call upon a
 member of the audience to answer a
 question for you. If two players
 buzz at the same time - well, I'll
 explain that one as we go. Let's
 get on, shall we?

The crowd cheers and the first round begins. The number
 10,000 appears on each person's podium.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)
 And the first topic is... classics!

Varner buzzes almost immediately.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)
 Paul Varner, what's your bet?

PAUL VARNER
 I bet 3,000 fulcrums.

LUCIFER
 In Ovid's Metamorphoses, the nymph
 Daphne evades the lustful god
 Apollo by turning into what

PAUL VARNER
 A bush.

LUCIFER
What kind?

PAUL VARNER
...A laurel bush.

LUCIFER
Correct!

Paul's number increases to 13,000.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)
The category is... philosophy!

Varner buzzes again.

PAUL VARNER
I bid six thousand.

LUCIFER
Which theological argument describes a blind watchmaker? Is it A, the ontological argument, B, the cosmological argument or C, the teleological argument.

PAUL VARNER
C) The teleological argument.

LUCIFER
Correct!

Paul's number is now at 19,000.

PAUL VARNER
(quietly, to Robert)
Don't worry, I'm sure there will be a question about dead mice or something.

LUCIFER
And the category is... Art!

Don buzzes.

DON PIANO
I bid two thousand.

LUCIFER
Magnelli was an important figure in the movement of Concrete art. But what was his first name? Was it A) Alberto, B) Manuel or C) Nicola?

Don thinks for a moment. He has no idea. As he does this, he sees someone running up the aisle, toward the bottom of the stage. It's none other than Alberto Rigatoni.

DON PIANO
I'd like to use my lifeline.

LUCIFER
This early? Who will it be?

He gestures toward Alberto.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)
Please state your answer, sir. I'll give you the question again: Magnelli was an important figure in the movement of Concrete art. But what was his first name. Was it A) Alberto, B) Manuel or C) Nicola?

Alberto looks blankly for a moment, then gives an exaggerated shrug. Don puts his head in his hands.

INT. BREAK ROOM

The break room looks like any other backstage break room. It's filled partially with bits of old sets and props from other shows. There are a few rickety tables and folding chairs. Don and the others are sitting around one of the tables. He doesn't look like he's moved for some time.

DON PIANO
Even the exterminator guy got a question about ants.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO
C'mon, boss. You ain't that far behind.

DON PIANO
I don't actually know anything! I just assumed everybody knew as little as I do! What the hell am I going to do?

JIMMY SHINGLES
My old dad had a saying for times like this.

DON PIANO
What?

JIMMY SHINGLES

He used to say, 'Jimmy, If you don't get at least a D in math, I will beat you until my knuckles turn blue and drop off.'

DON PIANO

Sounds like a nice man.

JIMMY SHINGLES

Well, we all say things in the heat of the moment.

DON PIANO

So he didn't beat you?

JIMMY SHINGLES

No. Got a C minus.

INT. TV STUDIO

Recording is due to start in 30 seconds.

PAUL VARNER

So, you killed a guy, huh?

Don says nothing.

PAUL VARNER (CONT'D)

I must've put a thousand guys like you in jail.

DON PIANO

I'm glad.

PAUL VARNER

You wanna hear a secret?

Don turns his head.

PAUL VARNER (CONT'D)

My favorite bit is the sentencing. Cause a lot of them, tough guys, stone-faced guys, like you, they can't hold back the tears. You know, it's a lot of work. Hard work. But seeing those tears, it just makes it all worthwhile somehow. That's what keeps me going.

The counter hits 4 and begins to bleep. Lucifer puts on her gameshow host face.

LUCIFER

Good evening, everybody, and welcome back to Egress: your only way out! As we enter our final round, our leader by a huge margin is Paul Varner, with forty-seven thousand fulcrums. Following is Robert Dillon, with forty-three thousand. Trailing in last place: Don Piano, with twenty-two thousand. And now for our first category... wildcard!

Don buzzes.

DON PIANO

I bet five thousand.

LUCIFER

Who said 'what is a man? A miserable little pile of secrets.'?

DON PIANO

Dracula.

LUCIFER

Incorrect, the answer is Andre Malraux. Our next category is: games!

Robert buzzes.

ROBERT DILLON

I bet six thousand.

LUCIFER

Which soviet software engineer programmed the video game 'Tetris'?

Robert doesn't answer.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

You're out of time! The answer was Alexy Pajitnov. Our next category is: Geography!

Paul buzzes.

PAUL VARNER

I bet five thousand.

LUCIFER

What is the only airport on earth to have its runway intersect with a public road?

PAUL VARNER

Gibraltar International.

LUCIFER

Correct.

Currently, Paul stands at 52,000 Rob at 37,000 and Don at 17,000.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

Our next category is: history!

Don buzzes.

DON PIANO

I bet seventeen thousand.

An audible gasp occurs in the crowd.

LUCIFER

It's your funeral. What was an exchequer? Was it A) an area of land, B) a building or C) a cloth?

Don makes a guess.

DON PIANO

C. A cloth.

LUCIFER

Correct. Very well done.

Don is now at 34,000, having almost overtaken Robert.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

Our next category is: physics.

A new buzzer noise goes off.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

Well, Paul and Rob, for the first time today, it seems that you two have buzzed at the exact same time. Let me tell you how this works: you'll both make a bet, and you'll both get a question. If you're both correct, you both win the highest bet.

(MORE)

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

If just one of you is wrong, you both lose the highest bet. What are your bets? You first, Paul.

PAUL VARNER

I bet two thousand fulcrums.

ROBERT DILLON

I bet ten thousand fulcrums.

LUCIFER

Very well. Paul, which physical quantity describes the descent of order into chaos?

PAUL VARNER

Entropy.

LUCIFER

Correct. Rob, our next question was on Literature. What was Lolita's real name?

ROBERT DILLON

...Violet?

LUCIFER

Incorrect. You both lose ten thousand fulcrums.

Don does a mental happy dance. Paul glowers. The scores are Paul with 42000, Rob with 27000 and Don with 34000.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

The next category is: Film!

Don does not so much push the buzzer as he does pounce on it, like an orchid mantis setting upon an unsuspecting bee.

DON PIANO

I bet 15,000.

LUCIFER

Nightmare on Elm Street villain Freddy Krueger was originally portrayed by which actor?

DON PIANO

Robert Englund.

LUCIFER

Correct! Why, Don Piano, it looks as though you've taken the lead with forty-nine thousand fulcrums! Our next category: Chemistry.

Paul buzzes.

PAUL VARNER

I bet twenty-thousand.

LUCIFER

What is the chemical formula for Ozone?

PAUL VARNER

Oh-three.

LUCIFER

Correct! The next category is: Music!

Don buzzes, desperate to get back in front.

DON PIANO

I bet twenty thousand.

LUCIFER

One of the most famous pieces of music to have been written in five four time was released by the Dave Brubeck Quartet in nineteen fifty-nine, what was it called?

DON PIANO

Shit.

The crowd gasps theatrically.

DON PIANO (CONT'D)

Oh, sorry. I mean shoot. Shoot. I'm really sorry.

LUCIFER

(annoyed)

The answer was 'Take Five'. You've probably heard it somewhere.

The scores are now Don with 29,000, Rob with 27,000 and Paul with 62,000.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

I would like to remind you that there are only a few moments left on the clock. But remember: every answer counts! Our next category is General Knowledge.

Don buzzes.

DON PIANO

I bet everything.

LUCIFER

Well, there's no take-backsies. This is make or break. Can you please tell me: What do you call a group of alligators? A) a congregation, B) a mob, or C) a rafter?

Let's be honest with ourselves. Don doesn't know. Who would? But he takes a chance.

DON PIANO

A, a congregation.

Lucifer smiles and savours the moment. Don continues to sweat.

LUCIFER

Are you a big gambler, Don Piano?

DON PIANO

No.

Another tense beat.

LUCIFER

Well... maybe you should be, you're absolutely correct!

Don is now on 58,000 points, to Paul's 62,000.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

Our next category: computing.

Paul buzzes, almost imperceptibly fast.

PAUL VARNER

I bet one fulcrum.

Lucifer an eyebrow.

LUCIFER
One fulcrum?

PAUL VARNER
I'm not a big gambler.

LUCIFER
What does the acronym 'FLOPS' stand for?

PAUL VARNER
...Fresh Liver Organ Procurement Surgery.

LUCIFER
Incorrect. I'm afraid you have lost that monster one fulcrum bet of yours. Perhaps one of you Gentlemen would like to buzz faster this time? Our next category is: general knowledge.

Rob Buzzes.

ROBERT DILLON
I bet 8,000.

Rob's hands are still clasped to the buzzer. They're shaking. Lucifer seems to be enjoying this.

LUCIFER
Can you please tell me: what can a 'soothsayer' supposedly do?

Rob doesn't answer. He's trying to hold it together, but he's clearly on the verge of tears. He's not even thinking about soothsayers. He's thinking about his children.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, Robert, but with just 17,000 you're effectively out of the game. Now, gentlemen, the next topic is: wildcard!

Don outbuzzes Paul. Narrowly.

DON PIANO
I bet twenty-thousand.

LUCIFER
Tell me of a tasty torus or a toroidal treat.

DON PIANO

A bagel.

LUCIFER

Absolutely correct!

Don breathes a sigh of relief. He's now in the lead, with 78,000 against Paul's 61,999. Don and Paul exchange glances. Paul's showboat has gone titanic.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

Now, it's time for our final question. It all comes down to this. Hands on buzzers, if you please. The category is... General Knowledge.

Don and Paul buzz. At the same time.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

Another simultaneous buzz! How anticlimactic! Well, let's take the bets - Paul, you first.

PAUL VARNER

I bet sixty-one thousand, nine hundred and nintey nine.

He grins at Don.

DON PIANO

I meet.

LUCIFER

Very well. We will go to Don Piano first. Remember, if you fail to answer this question correctly, you lose the game.

Against all the odds, Don is calm and collected. He looks over toward Robert. Robert stands there, a condemned man, still holding back the tears.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

For sixty-one thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine fulcrums, the game, and your eternal soul, tell me, Don Piano: who is on the fifty dollar bill?

In the crowd, Jimmy's eyes light up. He nudges Spudd.

JIMMY SHINGLES

Hey! He knows that one! I told it
to him this morning! We're saved.

Don is silent for a minute. He looks over at Robert, who is desperately trying to maintain his dignity on live TV. Don's face doesn't give anything away, but he's made his decision.

DON PIANO

(determined)

I don't know.

Jimmy is stunned. A moment passes - even lucifer seems a little surprised. Then, a jovial fanfare begins to play.

LUCIFER

Well, ladies and gentlemen, against
all the odds, today's winner is
none other than Robert Dillon!
Robert, how does it feel?

Robert isn't capable of speech right now. He blubbers a few half-words through a haze of tears.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

But before we stop for tonight, of
course, we can't forget about the
inner circle, where a trillion
fulcrums of suffering await our two
losers!

The aperture opens again, and another plume of fire rises out of the circle.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

Paul Varner, any last words?

An AD is escorting Paul toward the edge.

PAUL VARNER

Get bent, lady.

LUCIFER

Have fun in the pit!

The crowd is chanting.

CROWD

In the pit! In the pit! In the pit!

Paul glowers. The AD gives him a playful poke in the back. He loses balance, and falls in rather gracelessly. The crowd erupts into cheers.

LUCIFER

Don Piano, the same question to
you?

Don is also ushered toward the pit. He thinks for a minute.

DON PIANO

I'm sorry, everybody.

The rest of the gang can only look on. Don stops for a moment and looks down into the abyss, but sees nothing. He takes one last look at the crowd, and then toward Robert and Lucifer. Lucifer nods. He steps off the edge and falls in. The crowd once again erupts into cheers. Lucifer smiles.

LUCIFER

That's all for tonight folks, but
tune in tomorrow for more Egress -
and remember, it's the only way
out!

The studio lights dim, the theme music plays, and Robert Dillon walks down the rear of the studio, as the huge door opens. As it does so, mist begins to pour out and roll across the studio floor, and Robert becomes silhouetted against the brilliant white light shining through onto the set. As he walks through the door, it slams shut, leaving the set in darkness.

INT. BOTTOM OF THE PIT

Don opens his eyes. He's lying on top of Varner, who is in turn lying on top of a bright blue foam mat. He can see a few studio lights no more than 20 feet above him. He looks forward and sees Lucifer coming down a flight of stairs.

PAUL VARNER

Get offa me, you stupid fat idiot!

Don stands up, slightly uncertain, on the mat. Lucifer beckons towards him.

DON PIANO

Is this the pit?

LUCIFER

Not the actual pit, no. It would be
highly irresponsible to have that
in a TV studio. Now, you, come with
me.

She points toward Don. Then she gestures at Paul.

PAUL VARNER

You. Stay there. I'll be back for
you.

Don, not knowing what else to do, follows Lucifer. Paul makes
a rude gesture.

LUCIFER

This way. Be quick about it.

Don follows her. She walks briskly, up the stairs, leading
him back into the new-deserted studio. It's almost pitch
black, but he can still see some light peeking out from the
door. She begins to lead him toward the door at the rear. She
pries it open just enough for him to squeeze through.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

(hushed)

Go. Now.

Don doesn't quite understand.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

Are you stupid? Go!

With some hesitance, he squeezes through the door. It shuts
behind him with a deafening slam. And suddenly, he realizes -
there's no light on the other side.

INT. THE OTHER SIDE

Don's standing in a street. It's gray and moist outside. It
looks familiar. The place he's seen in a thousand and one
dreams. And here he is, standing on the sidewalk, almost in
the flesh. He can feel the droplets of rain landing on his
head, and the water soaking into his shoes. And he can hear
the approach of the sirens.

He reaches for his pistol, almost on auto-pilot, as he's done
a thousand and one times before. The cop car pulls up and the
two policemen get out. From the cover of the getaway car, Don
aims.

And then, he hesitates.

A shot rings out. But it's not Don's. He looks at the two
lawmen. One of them - the one he killed so many times, has
fired first. He looks up at his forehead. There's a bullet
hole. Blood is pouring down his face. He reels back, then
falls forward, through the car that he was taking cover
behind.

Suddenly, the scene fades into darkness. The rain is gone. He feels his forehead. There's no hole. He can hear a faint chittering in the distance. Not knowing where to go, he runs. The noises get closer. He's running, without purpose, without direction. In the distance, he sees white. As he draws closer, he's able to make out figures. Humanoid figures. Thousands of them. Their skin is bleached white. Where their face should be, there are only three holes - almost like a bowling ball. They're running to meet him. He hears them now, louder than before, chittering, howling and screaming. And then they are upon him, clawing at him with whispery white fingers. Clamouring to touch him. To feel him. They are cold and hollow.

Just as it seems he is going to be engulfed by the mob, he breaks through, and through another doorway. He looks around. He's in what seems like a huge abattoir. All around him is blood-splattered, rusted metal, and the pungent odour of rotting meat.

All along the walls, and hanging from hooks on the ceiling, are carcasses. Thousands of them. He walks along the walkway, a narrow track through a forest of flesh.

The meat is human. Humans of all kinds. Skewered with a hook in their backs. Cold and dead.

He sees Robert Dillon's body. As dead as the rest. But fresh. Swinging gently, as if it has recently been added.

For a long time, he walks along the walkway. He sees children hanging from the hooks. He sees famous people. He sees people he thinks that he might once have known. People from all walks of life, people from different worlds, but all made from the same meat.

He sees a figure standing at the far end of the walkway. It's Lucifer. He makes up his pace. She looks him down. She smiles.

LUCIFER
Hello, Don Piano.

Don doesn't say anything.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)
You've probably figured it out by now. Nobody escapes hell.

DON PIANO
I'm going to join them, aren't I?

She smiles.

LUCIFER

Perhaps one day.

DON PIANO

Why? Why do all this? What's the point? Why string people along like this?

LUCIFER

I am still the Lord's servant. I do as he commands.

DON PIANO

No you aren't. I read about you. You're not his servant.

LUCIFER

Oh? And then how would a loving god punish all the bad people? I've been playing for his team this whole time.

Don gives her a look of contempt.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

I know how you must feel. But this is my punishment as much as it is yours.

DON PIANO

Why does he command it?

LUCIFER

Because he wants people to be afraid. People who are afraid are subservient to him. People who are afraid lead virtuous lives. In the old days, it was the only way to preserve order.

DON PIANO

(angry)

So why did you give us false hope? Why have the debts at all, if none of it matters in the end?

LUCIFER

Oh, we tried. People need hope, you know. Otherwise they just shut down. They need to believe that things will get better. They need to see that light at the end of the tunnel. Even if it's fake.

Don looks her straight in the eyes. She looks different from the Lucifer that stood behind the podium on Egress. There's a sincerity to her that wasn't there before.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)
You knew the answer to that last question, didn't you?

DON PIANO
...Yes.

Lucifer smiles.

LUCIFER
You humans, you're such odd creatures.

She beckons him to walk with her down the walkway.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)
I'm going to get in trouble with the man upstairs for this, but I'm letting you go.

He looks at her in disbelief.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)
Look, I know that in His eyes, half a million fulcrums in debt, you're un-saveable, you're evil. But I look at you, and I see... desperation. Like always. Up there, in the world, seven billion souls swell in chaotic vitality, struggling just to stay alive, surging forward toward an unknown future. But not everyone gets to be a billionaire philanthropist. Not everyone gets to choose whether they buy their daily bread or steal it. And I am so very sick of seeing whole families down here. Father, son, grandson, great-grandson, great-great-grandson...

They reach what looks like an exit - complete with another (smaller) glowing green exit sign.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)
Don't get me wrong. The man upstairs, He's a good guy. The best. He's a little too set in his ways.

The two stand there, looking at the exit sign.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)
So here it is. The opportunity you
never got. Don, go on through.

He heads toward the door, and opens it. Inside, he can vaguely see the basement of Anana's bar.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)
Don?

He turns.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)
Don't come back.

He walks through the door, back into his life. And it slams shut behind him.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Don jolts awake. He looks around. Soderstrom and Bleeper are exactly where they were.

DR. SODERSTROM
Ah, it looks like it didn't work.
Let me try again.

Don rips the headset off and rushes toward them.

DON PIANO
Wake the others up! Now!

BRANDON BLEEPER
But they only just-

DON PIANO
Wake them up!

The quack and the hacker oblige. The others open their eyes. They look a little bleary.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
Hey Don.

DON PIANO
Hey.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
How'd ya get us out?

DON PIANO
Made a deal with the devil.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
Ah.

Rodriguez groans. He's still lying on the table.

RODRIGUEZ MIRABELLO
Coffee! I need coffee! This is like
the worst hangover ever!

Spudd looks at Don.

SPUDD GUNN
Thanks for keeping your promise,
Don.

DR. SODERSTROM
Hey, wasn't there another guy over
there?

They look toward the back of the basement, where Ralph was lying. There's nothing there. Rodriguez gets up and goes to make some coffee.

DR. SODERSTROM (CONT'D)
Ah, forget it. Probably just my
imagination.

Alberto sits bolt upright, adjusts the collar of his Hawaiian shirt, and grins.

ALBERTO RIGATONI
Eyyy! Alberto!

DON PIANO
Alberto, you are fired.

ALBERTO RIGATONI
Eyyy!

DR. SODERSTROM
Does anybody have any organs they
are not using? I am asking for a
friend.

DON PIANO
No.

Don rummages around in his pockets.

DON PIANO (CONT'D)
Here's 5 bucks.

He hands the doctor a crumpled note. Soderstrom holds it up to the light.

DR. SODERSTROM
Oh yeah. Paydirt.

BRANDON BLEEPER
I gotta go, somebody is DDoSing my
mom. Later, users.

Brandon and Soderstrom head up the stairs.

DON PIANO
Gentlemen, I have an announcement
to make.

Everyone turns to face Don.

DON PIANO (CONT'D)
I am officially retiring. As of
right now. I'll keep the bar open,
and I'll write you all official
letters of recommendation for
whoever you want, be they mafia
lords or college admissions tutors.

A bittersweet beat.

DON PIANO (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
I just wanted to say: thanks for
sticking by me for all these years.
You guys were great. And... I'm
gonna miss all of you.

He turns and starts to head up the stairs. They watch him go. Alberto sheds a single tear.

Halfway up the stairs, Derrick taps Don on the shoulder. Don turns. Derrick is standing behind him, holding an ID card. Don looks at it. It's James Wang.

DON PIANO (CONT'D)
Keep it, Derrick. I won't be
needing it anymore.

Derrick looks at the card and returns it to his wallet. Don continues up the stairs. Derrick heads back to the basement, gets out his phone and dials a number. It rings. A woman picks up.

WOMAN (V.O.)
Hello?

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
Hello, is this Ralph's widow?

WOMAN (V.O.)
What?

DERRICK ANAOCONDA
Oh. Whoops, sorry.

She begins to sob uncontrollably.

DERRICK ANAOCONDA (CONT'D)
So anyway, there's something he
wanted me to tell ya...

INT. ANANA'S BAR

Donna, the bar staffer, is standing behind the bar.

BAR STAFFER
Hey Don. Those nerds left without
buying any drinks.

DON PIANO
Their loss, Donna.

BAR STAFFER
I guess. Can I get you anything
while you're up here?

DON PIANO
I'm fine, Donna, I'm just going
home early.

BAR STAFFER
You? Going home early? That's a
first.

DON PIANO
Yes, Donna. I believe it is.

He dons his hat and coat, and walks out the door, across the
street (looking both ways, of course), off into the distance.

THE END