

***Reprobate*** – Summary – *Kevin Yordy*

PROLOGUE. Two priests, one tall and the other older, convince a middle-aged woman in rural Missouri to let them see her troubled soon. They find the 12-year-old JAKE CARTER in the throes of a classic demonic possession. The demon possessing the boy first taunts the priests, but then recognizes them, becomes afraid, and complains that they're not playing fair. The priests' eyes flash green, and then they use a pair of strange relics to quickly expel the demon. But instead of leaving, the priests unexpectedly play a game of rock-paper-scissors. The TALL PRIEST loses. He briefly comforts the confused boy, but then conducts another brief ritual. After a dramatic burst of wind and energy and a shadow of massive wings dancing across the ceiling, the boy's eyes flash green and the tall priest's body slumps to the floor. He has now possessed Jake. He looks around the room from his new perspective and sees the walls adorned with a child's artwork, and more alarmingly, a copy of a book called, "A Child's Guide to the Destiny of the White Race" sitting on the end table. The Tall Priest/Jake says that it looks like he'll have his work cut out for him. Before leaving, the OLDER PRIEST reminds his friend to, "Recede into the background. Whisper and suggest. Take control only when necessary."

The Tall Priest/Jake watches out the window as the Older Priest comforts his mother outside and gets ready to leave. He goes to the bathroom and looks into the mirror. As the green in the mirror fades, the priest suddenly stands behind Jake. Then retreats into the bedroom and settles into a chair, watching. Jake can't see him.

PRESENT DAY. Jake is in his room again, but it has changed, and so has he. He's now twenty-five years old. The crude artwork on the walls has been replaced by framed paintings depicting epic religious scenes. He grabs a fresh t-shirt from the suitcase on his bed. The priest is sitting on the chair again, unnoticed. His mom calls for him.

MRS. CARTER serves Jake breakfast, and as he sits down, his sister CLAIRE, dressed in nurse's scrubs, comes into the kitchen through the back door. The siblings greet each other warmly. Jake indicates that he's in town just for the weekend. They discuss the logistics of carpooling into St. Louis for Jake's exhibition opening at the art museum there. Jake asks after his brother, MATT, and Claire's mood sours. She says some of Matt's friends got arrested for meth distribution, which escalated to federal domestic terrorism charges when the FBI stepped in. She asks if Jake is going to visit their father, alluding to the fact that he's in prison. Jake says he doesn't know.

Jake, Claire, and Mrs. Carter pile out of Jake's rental car and head inside the St. Louis Art Museum in Forest Park. The priest follows, still unseen by them. Inside, Jake's former Washington University professor talks adoringly about him to a packed crowd in a small room—how she could only help nurture his already explosive talent and how his religious-themed work caused such a sensation in the art world that it has leaked out into the wider culture. Afterwards, the embarrassed Jake mingles with the crowd and has an awkward conversation with some former classmates about, among other things, life in New York. Later on, in the bathroom, Jake overhears the same classmates making fun of him and calling him a hack.

Jake's brother Matt, along with two friends who seem drunk, crash the party. They cause a scene. Matt, wearing a MAGA hat, brushes by Claire to confront Jake. He says their dad would be embarrassed by this "fruity shit" and that he converted to Catholicism. Just when it's about to turn physical, the tall priest crosses the room and slips inside Jake's body (*NOTE: Whenever the priest is fully in control of Jake, the actor portraying the tall priest is swapped in for Jake*). But when Jake/Priest shoves Matt to the ground and threatens him, Matt sees the green flash in his eyes and is terrified (other than the eyes, he still sees Jake). He and his friends leave.

Back on the porch of their mom's house later that night, Jake and Claire drink beers and commiserate with each other. She playfully pokes fun at Matt's faith (she's an atheist), and asks if he still believes he was possessed as a kid. Claire talks about how much she hates their town, and alludes to being gay. Jake encourages her to leave, or to at least visit him in NYC. She asks again if he's going to visit their dad.

That night, while Jake sleeps, the priest sits at his computer and confirms Jake's registration for a conference in Peniel, Maine.

The next morning, on his way to the airport, Jake pulls his car over at the crest of a hill and looks down at the federal penitentiary below. He eventually drives on.

NEW YORK. Late at night, Jake wanders around the large, nearly deserted, collective art studio where he has rented space for himself. Another artist congratulates him on the new exhibition. He goes to his work area. Waiting for inspiration to come, he scrolls through his phone. Sees an article about the disturbance at his art show. He also notices that someone has printed out and pinned to his wall an article about Jake titled, "Genius El Greco or Pandering Thomas Kinkade?" and scrawled, "Poser" on it with a Sharpie. Jake fights tears.

An hour later, inspiration still eludes him. He repositions the canvas. Moves it in front of a mirror. Plays a favorite song in his headphones. The priest emerges from the shadows and whispers in his ear, telling him to relax. The priest reaches out and gently raises Jake's right arm. Guides it to the canvas. His phone buzzes and Jake sees it's a text from his sister. He glances at the mirror and he actually sees the priest wrapped around him. He screams and the priest disappears. Jake rushes out of the studio in a panic.

Jake rides the empty, late-night subway till it reaches the end of the line. He gets out at the station to wait a few minutes for the train to depart again in the opposite direction. He sits on a bench, listening to music to try to calm himself. A man sits down on the next bench and smiles at Jake.

AUGUSTUS FOX is handsome, thin, and English. He wears a tan overcoat and combat boots. He asks Jake if he's having trouble sleeping and says that they're lucky; the subway at night can be better than counting sheep. Fox confesses that he recognizes Jake as a famous artist and says he's a fan. Jake tries to blow him off politely, but then Fox wonders aloud if it's Jake or

“whoever’s behind the curtain” that has the real talent. Then Fox says, “You’re seeing him more often now, aren’t you? Catching him in the act. The priest.” He now has Jake’s full attention.

Fox introduces himself. Says Jake isn’t alone. He recounts what happened to Jake as a kid. Says that one side tried to take him over, but the “other side” intervened and took over instead. He says that Jake can expel the priest if he wants. Like he did this evening, but permanently. Fox says he’s from a very old organization called The Watchers. “I suppose you can guess what we do.” Says he’s not supposed to intervene, but Fox has never been one for following rules.

While Jake tries to make sense of what he’s hearing, Fox gives more advice for drawing the priest out. Says that mirrors help. Familiar sounds/songs. The presence of loved ones. And certain phrases have a power over them. He hands him a business card with a phrase in a foreign language and a phone number printed on it. Tells Jake to memorize the phrase, and to call him if he “needs more than incantations and mirrors.” Jake says he wants to be left alone. Fox, undeterred, presses a bit more. Tells Jake to go to the conference. He’ll find answers there. Jake asks “what conference,” but Fox disappears when a crowd of drunken college students arrive.

The next morning, Jake is awakened to a surprise. Claire is at his door, taking him up on his offer to visit—after another incident with Matt, resulting in Matt getting arrested. She had tried texting and calling, but Jake didn’t answer. While she’s in the living room, Jake’s agent calls and asks, annoyed, what this conference added to Jake’s calendar is. After a brief scolding, the agent says Jake should go, because there are a lot of “big names” on the guest list. Jake makes a decision. He asks Claire if she wants to come up to Maine with him.

During the picturesque autumn drive through New England, Jake drags a reluctant Claire into their 400<sup>th</sup> debate about religion. When Jake uses “faith” as an argument, Claire points out that if he really was possessed as a kid, then he has never really needed to have faith—the truth was shoved in his face and he didn’t have to *believe* anything. She asks him what faith means to him. She calls him out for quoting “Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street” in his answer, and says he loses by default if he’s using Santa Claus as an argument.

They make it to the hotel, which sits atop a small bluff above the sea. The car is full of limos and expensive cars. After checking in, they have dinner in the hotel restaurant. Their depressing conversation about Claire’s experiences in Missouri is cut short when two people approach their table. One is a pretty androgyne named LAILAH, and the other is the Older Priest who was present at Jake’s exorcism and re-possession. Jake seems to vaguely recognize him, but when he does, it’s as a US Senator from Maine.

Lailah and the priest/senator offer to buy Jake and Claire a round and they join their table. Eventually, after several drinks, the conversation inevitably circles back to religion, much to Claire’s annoyance. Lailah seems charmed by Claire’s position that she believes in higher powers only because humans are so tiny and significant. Claire, in turn, is charmed by Lailah,

who refers to Claire playfully as their “irrelevant little dust mite. My string of recursive code.” They soon go to the bar together and eventually Claire will disappear for the night with Lailah.

When they leave for the bar, they pass Augustus Fox, who is watching Jake from a distance. Fox pulls out a phone and records Jake’s conversation with the priest. Once Jake and the older priest are alone, Jake’s tall priest emerges from the shadows and takes control of Jake’s body.

The senator/older priest greets the tall priest as RAPHAEL, and Raphael calls the older priest URIEL (for clarity’s sake, that will be how they will be referred to from now on whenever each is in control of their host). Uriel congratulates Raphael on the work he’s done, while Raphael complains about how boring Jake is. Uriel is surprised that Raphael let Jake have control at all while here at this conference. Raphael says Claire complicated things, but he will have full-time control by the morning. Raphael asks Uriel for a cigarette. “I tried to get the boy hooked on them, but he’s stubborn.” Uriel hands one over, but declines Raphael’s invitation to join him outside. “This old pervert’s body is absolutely riddled with pills. It’s going to collapse at any moment.”

Raphael is smoking on the back patio when Fox sneaks up behind him, shoves a mirror in his face, and whispers a foreign phrase in his ear. Raphael leaves; evaporates. Jake is back. And very confused. Fox shows him the footage of Raphael and Uriel speaking through Jake’s body. He tells Jake that he’s still possessed, this time by an angel, who had interrupted a demon trying to possess him as a kid. Raphael turned him into a respected artist giving glory to God. But there was an alternate path: “You grew up poor, in a time of unprecedented political turmoil, anger, and racial tension. Most of your friends and family are deep into a white supremacist terrorist movement whose goal is the violent overthrow of a democratic republic. Sure, they’re rudderless and the closest thing they’ve got to a leader is your bone-headed father, no offense. But think about what could have been. What if you didn’t get into art school?... What if that pain of rejection festered into anger? What could have happened if you focused that brain of yours... elsewhere? Channeled that rage and pain. Make your rejectors into scapegoats and then into more abstract boogeymen. If the world had rejected you, then you would re-shape the world to a more pleasing shape. And you’d make your enemies pay... Does that sound like anyone you may have heard of before? A failed artist filled with rage.”

Jake refuses to accept it. Fox says he only temporarily expelled Raphael. But that he has set up a “wake-up call” for Jake sometime tomorrow. Advises him to listen and learn. And then come find Fox to talk when he’s ready.

In the middle of the night, Raphael wakes up with a start in a chair in Jake’s room. Confused and alarmed. But he relaxes when he sees Jake sleeping. Goes over and takes over his body.

In the morning, after exchanging some odd pleasantries with other attendees, Raphael and Uriel go to the conference. About twenty attendees, sitting around a conference table, two empty chairs. The two emcees sit at the ends of the table—MICHAEL and AZAZEL, an angel and a demon. They try to kick the meeting off civilly, but attendees first demand they “prove

themselves,” since they could be “anyone” under the skins they’re currently wearing. So they do, to terrifying effect, involving the appearance of golden hieroglyphs and snakes. The meeting—which is in effect a regular “negotiation” between the angels and demons—gets off to a rocky, argumentative start.

Meanwhile, Lilith and Claire have breakfast together. Claire hasn’t been able to reach Jake. Claire insists that the conference starts tomorrow, so Claire should call Jake to find him.

In the conference, the demon LILITH stands at a podium presenting a history and list of grievances. “It used to be easier. Like chess. All we had to do was nudge the right pieces around at the opportune time. Now there are far too many people. Too many variables. Nearly impossible to even find the right pieces.” Both sides argue over who is the biggest cheat.

Jake’s phone buzzes. Raphael curses and tries to silence it, but first he catches a glimpse of Claire in a video call request, and some chords of his favorite song as the ringtone. Jake is back in control. Uriel seems to notice something is off.

The angel METATRON—who once was human, a fact both angels and demons mock him for—takes his turn at the podium. He tries to offer them constructive criticism by detailing his feelings when he was invited to join their ranks. “...I was invited to become a god, but... I was also invited to become a part of a *family*.... Sure, you had split into two clans by then, but there was still a sense of love. Though you employed different methods, you still shared the same goal. Many of you switched sides. Many times. Because though you had separated, you were still in this together. And that common goal was the only way for you all to leave. To *ascend* yourselves. But now it feels different. A sense of nihilism has crept in...” Michael interrupts him and asks him to re-focus on his original presentation.

Outside, Claire starts to sense that Lailah is lying to her and staying uncomfortably close.

Back in the conference, Metatron finishes up his presentation on his improvement to devices called “Retrievers,” which seem to be used to capture human souls. The angel GABRIEL is particularly interested and offers to share the improvements to the demons for nothing in return. This provokes another argument, which leads to a call for a break. Jake, obviously unnerved and pretending to be Raphael, turns down an invitation for a smoke from Uriel, which raises Uriel’s suspicions.

Jake descends the wooden stairs down the bluff to the small beach. Uriel watches and follows at a distance. It’s overcast and windy, about to rain. He calls out for Fox, who eventually appears. Jake asks what would have happened if neither side interfered in his life. Fox says he would have tried to be an artist but not been good enough. He’d get frustrated and angry but not focused enough. He would have hurt people, but not set the world on fire. He’d be in jail. Then Jake asks the “real question”—how Fox knows this. Fox says neither side really cares for Jake—he’s a tool/meat puppet to them—but Fox can offer a third path.

Suddenly, Uriel shows himself, full of righteous fury. Fox greets Uriel as “brother.” Uriel says he can’t call him that. Uriel reaches into his pocket and pulls out a vaguely gun-shaped device. Fox is quicker with his own. Uriel disappears into a portal. Jake is shocked. He asks why an angel or demon would need tech. Then asks Fox again who he is. Fox says, “I hoped by now you’d have guessed my name. I’m pleased to meet you.”

Fox tries to calm him and invites him to have a “palaver.” Faced with no other real choice, Jake follows Fox/LUCIFER (now that he has revealed himself, he will be referred to as such) into a cave for a fireside chat. Lucifer tells him directly what is really going on.

“They” are the creators of this universe in that they started up a simulation. Ran a computer program. Started a game. “Let me be crystal clear—we are real; you are not. You are a phantasm. Your universe is not reality... You are code. Know your place.” The game had rules, assigned roles, a hierarchy, and a simple objective—“to see if you monkeys could be nudged forward to a point where you can stand up on your own and never fall back into savagery.”

The original “leadership” decided the best course was to command humans—identify leaders, demonstrate omnipotence, and issue commands as to how to behave and act. The rest, including Lucifer, were supposed to observe. But Lucifer and many of the others started to grow affectionate to humans and wanted to *teach* them instead of order them. This resulted in a war between the two sides. Lucifer’s side lost. They were driven out of their home, “a beautiful crystal city built on a comet,” and banished to an asteroid where they had to dig out an existence beneath its barren surface. Eventually, Lucifer’s side started taking out their anger on humans—torturing and corrupting them, in order to end the game early in failure so they could all go home.

Lucifer further explains that there was never a single “God,” but an elected (or occasionally seized) position that changed over time—explaining why depictions of the most powerful god changes at different parts of the Christian Bible; not to mention all the other religions. They reveal themselves in different forms in non-Christian religions.

Jake obviously falls into despair, but Lucifer assures him it’s not all bad for humans. For the vast majority, their program simply ends when they die. But a select few who manage to capture the angels and demons’ interest, are downloaded, saved, and stored (often with Metatron’s “retriever” device). Something like Purgatory, but where they can live their lives over and over. Occasionally when there’s a new problem requiring human perspective, they are brought out of storage for a time, either in “heaven” on the comet or “hell” in the asteroid and consulted. Only one human—Metatron—has ever been allowed to be brought back online permanently and live amongst the gods.

Jake asks if Lucifer is telling him this because he is one of the lucky few who has captured their attention. Lucifer says, “You’re not the first. You might not be the last. Unless you’re very lucky. It’s more that I’m just tired. I want to go home. I’m sick of this. It’s a failed experiment. Too many variables. Too many religions. Too many people. Cockroaches. And you don’t change. Not

really. You just multiply. The other side knows it, too. But I accept it. I embrace failure and I don't deny the truth. I miss my home. Maybe this will shake things up. End it." He says he has plans for Jake.

Later on, Claire finds Jake smoking a cigarette alone on the back patio. Claire tells him she fucked up; that she's pretty sure she hooked up with a stalker. Jake says they have to leave right now without packing. Claire, confused but trusting her brother, agrees.

On the way out, they pass Metatron as he's leaving, too. Metatron knows that Raphael is no longer in control. He says he used to be like Jake, and suspects someone is helping him "wake up." He cautions him that whoever it may be is using him and hasn't told him the whole truth, so consider well before he makes a choice that may feel like free will. He says that if Jake finds himself puzzled at "the nature—the point—of the game," to come find him. He's their scribe. Recorder. Transmitter. "If you manage to get far enough, I imagine we'll meet again."

By the time they stop at a gas station outside Peniel, Jake has told Claire his story and she's predictably skeptical. She fills up while he gets them coffee for the long drive back to NYC. When he approaches the counter, the flannel-decked clerk turns around, revealing he's "wearing" Uriel's face (for clarity, that means that of the Senator/Tall Priest). Uriel/clerk snarls, "I've suffered through centuries of torture over the past eight hours. Crawling across that cursed rock. Stumbling and bleeding and biting and killing and dying over and over again. All to see your hillbilly talking monkey face again. Can you imagine what I'm going to do to you?"

Uriel grabs a night stick from beneath the counter, swings at and misses Jake, and then throws himself over the counter at him. They collide and Jake stumbles outside. They struggle and fight until Jake is able to kick free. He yells at Claire to start the car. They speed off, but not before Uriel hurls his nightstick and striking Jake in the back—and pointing a device at their car.

Claire demands to know what happens, but then suddenly she stops talking. When she turns to him, she's now wearing Uriel's face. He has possessed her. Uriel says, "He's using you, you know. That's what he does. And why shouldn't he? Why shouldn't any of us? You're a ghost. A string of code."

Uriel tries to kill them both by crashing the car into a tree. Jake struggles with the wheel, so Uriel succeeds only in driving and flipping them off the road. Jake crawls out from underneath the car and staggers up to the road. Uriel/Claire follows.

A car approaches. Lucifer steps out of the passenger seat. He says to Jake, "All you had to say was 'no thanks.' Look at the mess you've gotten yourself into already." When Claire/Uriel stumbles into view, they banter back and forth. Then the driver's door opens and Gabriel steps out. Uriel is gob smacked. Betrayed. Gabriel has switched to Lucifer's side. "Weariness, loneliness, and entropy come for us all in the end," Lucifer says.

Uriel grows angry. Advances on Lucifer and Gabriel. Gabriel produces an intimidating sword. Uriel thinks twice, pulls out the gun-device, opens a portal, and steps through. Jake, distraught at losing his sister, tries to follow but the portal closes. Lucifer asks Jake to reconsider his offer. He offers his hand, and eventually Jake takes it. Lucifer says, “When angels are trying to murder you, what choice do you have but to turn to the Devil?”

Jake and Lucifer sit in the back seat of the car. Gabriel drives. Lucifer explains pieces of his plan. He says that very few humans have ever glimpsed the inside of either Heaven or Hell, and only one (Metatron) has every truly ascended. He says that Metatron’s role is to periodically compile progress reports and send the code across the void, back to the true reality for “interested parties” to review (“a subtle yet cruel punishment for the poor bastard who believes himself to be our equal—to have him communicate with a reality he will never know”). The code gets transmitted back home, but none of the “players” are able to return home or even communicate directly until the game has “completed.” Lucifer reminds him that Jake *is* code. So he could cross over... And when that happens, those in charge will determine the game has been too corrupted and will end it. And then humanity—including Jake’s sister—will finally be truly free. Lucifer confesses that he doesn’t know what will happen to Jake when he crosses over. But isn’t the risk worth a chance to steal a glimpse behind the curtain and see true reality?

And Lucifer offers him one additional enticement. He asks Gabriel, who’s puzzled at first, to give him “what we discussed. What you took.” Gabriel reaches back and hands Lucifer a tiny square the size of an SD card. Lucifer says that Gabriel stole this from heaven when she defected. It contains copies of all the souls that had been “saved” and stored over the millennia in Heaven. Jake can bring them with him. They can all finally leave Purgatory. All have at least a chance in the real world.

But the first step is the most difficult. Getting to Heaven (which, again, is essentially located on a comet). “You can’t get to Heaven on roller skates,” he says.

They drive to the parking lot of an amusement park that’s closed for the summer. All three climb out of the car and walk to the fence. Lucifer asks why Jake is still so depressed and Gabriel is upset that Jake isn’t more grateful, worshipful. Jake says that everything he was told to believe is true, but it’s also a lie. An illusion. “I’m not real. And you’re... what? Aliens? Inter-dimensional beings? False gods. While Gabriel rages, Lucifer calmly says, “We created your universe. Created *you*. We guide you. We are your higher power. There is nothing false about that... And we are giving you the opportunity to become real. To lead others to salvation. To ascend. What more do you require from your creators?”

Before departing, Lucifer mentions Jake’s “namesake” (Jacob from the Bible), who “had to do this, too. He succeeded.” Jake says that everything he’s ever been taught has warned me against this. Lucifer: “Take a leap of faith. For the first time. Become who you were always meant to me.” Then Lucifer and Gabriel leaves and Jake scales the fence.



As he wanders through the empty amusement park, he recalls more of Lucifer's instructions in VOICEOVER. That Jake won't be able to make it through as he currently is. No living code is allowed into Heaven. He has to hitch a ride. "*On* him. *In* him. Reverse the hold he has on you. You'll need to possess *him*... Wrestle for control." Jake had asked if it could be done somewhere less clichéd, and Lucifer had said that mirrors will give him an advantage. Jake will see Raphael coming from every angle. "Don't let him get behind you." Lucifer also told Jake Raphael's real name, which is the ultimate key to gaining power over him.

Jake breaks into the "Crystal Palace Labyrinth" hall of mirrors with a key Lucifer had provided him. He steps cautiously around for a while. "This is stupid," he says aloud. Then Raphael answers, "Exceedingly so." There's movement flitting around in the shadows. Jake summons Raphael by shouting his real name. Raphael says that was a mistake. Tries to reason with Jake, reminding him who he would be without Raphael's help. "A bad artist with a bitter heart and a dark mind. I'm the only one steering you away from the wreckage." Blurs of dark, green, disconcerting movement keep flashing across the mirrors, through the shadows, and on the ceiling. Creepy croaks and clicks. When Jake argues that it was Raphael's enemies who steered him towards that wreckage, and if they allow him to take off the training wheels, he'll be fine. Raphael is insistent. "No. You were born bad. And bad at *being* bad. A hateful imbecile. They would have made you an effective villain. I made you an innocuous hobbyist." The bargaining and mocking continues. Raphael calls him Pinocchio. Says this is his last chance. When Jake refuses, Raphael says, "Very well. Turn around. Let's meet properly. We aren't particularly pretty"

Jake sees Raphael's true, terrifying form. What he most resembles is a seven-foot tall praying mantis, with black eyes, a thin thorax, and wide abdomen with wings folded around it. It has pincers. And very sharp teeth. Rows of teeth. It unhinges its jaws. Grabs Jake. He struggles free.

For a long time, they fight. It's mostly Jake running for a while. Screeches and kicks and screams and flapping of wings. Jake wrestles his angel. Eventually, Jake is able to get on top of its back. It tries to throw him but he stays on. Says its name over and over. Forces it to stare into the mirror. And then it calms. Energy crackles. Jake slips downward, not off its back, but sinking into its skin. Now, in the mirrored reflections, Jake controls the creature. When he raises an arm, it raises a pincer. He is in control (when no mirrors present, Jake will still be seen in human form). Jake finds Raphael's gun-device, fires it, and steps through the portal. Lucifer in voiceover quotes Jacob's battle with an angel from the Bible. Jake breaks on through to the other side.

After the brilliant green light recedes, Jake finds himself in strangely familiar surroundings. The main hall of the St. Louis Art Museum. He stands outside the "Jacob Carter Gallery." He recalls Lucifer's guidance that he likely won't be able to see or comprehend Heaven as it truly is—his mind will shape it into something familiar and understandable. He begins walking through the empty hall.

Meanwhile, Claire awakens on the floor of a hospital gift shop. Confused, she stands up and looks around. An uncharacteristically gentle voice (Uriel's) beckons her to the mirror behind the

cash register. Another mantis creature stares back at her from the mirror. “Peek-a-boo,” Uriel says. She screams and runs out into the hall.

Jake emerges on the second floor of the museum, recalling in voiceover more of Lucifer’s guidance—that no matter what kind of structure his mind will conjure to represent Heaven, to always ascend. To get to the top. And to “ignore all invitations. You don’t want to speak with anyone. They’ll try to draw you in and stop you.” As he walks, the paintings change shape. They come to life. Elongate. Become bright doors, beckoning him. He walks to the next set of stairs.

Claire sits in an empty hospital cafeteria in front of a mirrored wall, trying to pull herself together. The mantis in the reflection asks if she’s ready to talk. “Let’s hear it,” she says.

On the third floor, one painting beckons him even more insistently. It turns into a doorway, and the candles surrounding it jump to life and create a halo of fire. Words form in the flames. Above, “I am That I Am” and below, “Come and See.” Lucifer’s directions ring in his ears about one invitation in particular he’ll want to ignore. “At best,, He’s an elected figurehead. At worst a substitute teacher. He’s irrelevant to you now. A distraction.” After a brief awed pause, Jake shakes it off. Walks past God’s throne room. Ignores The Almighty’s invitation. Ascends again.

In the cafeteria, Uriel tells Claire that Jake is being used. “And I’m not?” she says. He says, “He’s being used. You’re needed.” He needs (they need) her to try to talk to Jake. She complains that she has felt like a distraction, a sidekick. And that’s why she isn’t shocked by what Uriel has told her about the nature of reality. She always knew we were insignificant; her just a bit more so than her brother. This is just adding another layer. Another degree. “And some admittedly disturbing specificity.” Uriel insists that right now she’s the most important thing in any universe. He asks her if he can show her something. He steps out of the mirror into his human form. She asks what he wants to show. “Everything.”

On the next floor of the museum is a large bank of windows and a glass door. He pushes the door open and steps outside. He emerges onto a wide veranda and gasps. The stars are brighter than he’s ever seen. And they move. Before him is a great city, made of crystal and glass. Spires twisting into each other and reaching into the sky. Thousands of lights darting around between and inside the spires. Then he sees the edge of a comet. A long trail of glittering ice. He tries to inhale and gasps again. He realizes that he’s in a vacuum and he can’t breathe. He steals one last glance and hurries back inside. At the end of the hallway is a door marked, “Communications Center.” He opens it.

Uriel and Claire step through a mirror together and into a hospital operating room. She no longer looks nervous. She’s serene, and looks somehow older. Uriel has bent and slowed time in order to take her on a long tour. She admits that what he showed her was extraordinary, and even beautiful in a way. But also unimaginably cruel, callous, and cynical. She says they never should have built it, “built *us*... I never thought I could stand before the universe and demand an apology for our existence, but here I am.” She doesn’t care if he means it. She just wants to hear him say it. He does. She says, “I wonder how the real versions of us, in your universe, will

turn out.” He says, “So do we. That was the purpose of all of this.” She says there’s one more thing she requires of him.

Jake enters the communications center. A large oval-shaped room. On the far end is a circular pool. Inside, energy and lights surge and swirl. He can’t see it well from here. Nearer to him is a modest wooden desk, at which sits Metatron, who greets Jake warmly and says he knew he’d see him again. Metatron manages to convince Jake to stop and talk for a bit before proceeding. Jake says that feeling “sad” is an understatement. It’s soul-crushing, but he now just feels numb. Metatron agrees that it’s a tragedy, “but also not. It’s just the way things are.” Metatron explains why he is the only one who can transmit code/reports across the void.

Metatron asks what he plans to do if he makes it to the other side of reality. Jake says he’s going to “exist. For real……. Not only me. All the poor souls you saved.” Metatron asks what Jake thinks will happen if he crosses over, ends the game, and they all go home to their reality. Jake thinks everyone will be free. Metatron realizes this is how Lucifer convinced him. He acknowledges that *could* happen, but the far more likely scenario would be that the game/the universe would be shut off forever. Video games don’t keep playing once the game ends.

Metatron reminds Jake of his sister. Jake seemed to have forgotten all about her. Metatron tries to reason with him by asking what will happen to her. And then he says that she’s at the door now, and asks if it would be okay to let her in. Jake says so.

The door unlocks. Claire bursts in. Then shifts back to Uriel (in Priest/Human form). Uriel asks Metatron if he knows what Jake is trying to do. Uriel then speaks to himself/Claire. Asks her to talk to Jake. He shifts back into Claire. She says, “No. All the way. You promised.” Metatron, curious, asks Uriel what he promised. Uriel reluctantly agrees. And then, with a crackle of energy, he and Claire split into two distinct beings. Claire’s body shimmers. She generates a light green halo. It’s not entirely clear that her feet are touching the ground. A tear runs down Metatron’s face. He looks overwhelmed. “There’s another,” he says. “I’m not alone anymore.”

Claire finally addresses Jake. Tells him that she has seen everything with clear eyes. She understands. She’s seen thousands of years since she last saw him tonight. Jake remains suspicious of her, asking what they did to her. She tries to sympathize with him. And she says that though he knows the truth now, he has also been tricked by it. “If you d this, the whole world may stop. Evaporate.”

Uriel, growing impatient, says he wants to do it his way now. Claire tells him to wait. Jake says, “...we both know I’ve never had to have an ounce of faith in my life. I do what I’m told and then I act on what I feel.” Claire says, “Fine. But you don’t have to have faith to know that you don’t make a deal with the fucking Devil and not expect some... dishonesty.” She asks him about what he has in his pocket--the saved souls. Uriel can’t help himself and interrupts, asking Metatron if anyone—especially Gabriel—has stepped inside this room until tonight. Metatron says no. Uriel snaps at Jake, “You fucking idiot, Gabriel didn’t give Lucifer anything.”

A brief FLASHBACK to earlier that evening in the car. A close-up on the “hand-off” of the souls. Upon closer inspection, Gabriel did not hand Lucifer anything. Lucifer used sleight of hand. He already had the square.

Back in the communications center, Uriel says, “He tricked you. Used you. Like he’s done with millions before you. You’re no different.” Claire tries a gentler approach. She explains that those souls weren’t stored here. They’re souls he has been preserving in Hell. “He wants you to unleash them on the other side. He wants revenge. He wants you to end this world and destroy theirs.”

Jake rubs his finger over the surface of the square. Then he clenches his fist and says, “I don’t care.” Claire is shocked. He says, “I’m sorry, Claire. Or maybe I’m sorry that I’m not sorry.” He starts walking backwards towards the infinity pool. Uriel is getting frantic. Everything is more and more tense. “This isn’t who I’m supposed to be.” Jake says, “If none of you had interfered with my life, I would have been someone different. I would have had a purpose. Been a leader. A man of action.” Uriel says he would have failed. Jake says, “I won’t this time. You’ve opened my eyes. I would have rattled the world. Now I’ll break it. Yours, too. I’ll be a leader. You made me. But I’ll take over now.” He turns to Claire and says, “I hope you don’t evaporate.”

Then a MEMORY FLASH of the racist book on his childhood bedstand, his crude childish drawings on the wall. His brother and buddies in the gallery. His previously unseen DAD pacing around his prison cell. A stockpile of guns and explosives. A bloody battle in a US city street. A goose-stepping militia marching through a burning wasteland.

Jake says, “I am what I am.” (*SOUNDTRACK NOTE: One option is for **that** “sympathetic” song, the go-to one for movies when the Devil’s plan is fully revealed, to have started during the flashback to Lucifer’s sleight-of-hand and start to peak now. If that’s too cliched or unattainable, then maybe the last minute of “I Want To Be Evil” by Eartha Kitt plays now*). Then he turns on his heels and sprints towards the infinity pool. Uriel yelps. Jake leaps into the air, diving headfirst. Uriel shouts at Claire, who’s already on the move, running after her brother. “Follow him! You’re the only one who can g—”

Claire dives after him. Time slows down. Jake gazes into the abyss and it stares back. Claire hovers in mid-air above him. Still moving, but incredibly slowly. Her arm reaches towards him. Her eyes wide. The swirls coalesce. Jake sees destruction. Violence. An apocalypse.

Then the specificity he craves. He sees where he’s going. Sees the eyes of one of the mantis/angel creatures. Their true forms. He sees thousands of them, lying motionless on stone tables with wires connected to their heads. He smiles. Zeroes in on one of the creatures. Time resumes its normal pace. He dives all the way through. Claire follows.

In the statis chamber, on the other side of reality, the mantis creature he dove into retracts its eyelids horizontally. It sits up on its table. Wires fall away. It turns its head. The legions of others are waking up, too.