

REPROBATE

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EXT. CARTER HOUSE - NIGHT

A damp autumn evening in a small Missouri town.

Two men in battered fedoras stand on the front porch of an equally deteriorated house. Roman collars peek out over the top of their stained, wet overcoats.

The younger, TALL PRIEST appears to be in his early 30s. He's slim, almost gaunt; his patchy beard the result of neglect rather than choice. The OLDER PRIEST is in his late 50s, clean-shaven, shorter, with a significant beer belly.

FOOTSTEPS approach from inside the house. Three locks UNLATCH. The door CREAKS open and a woman stands in the frame.

MRS. CARTER looks much older than her thirty-four years. She wears a tattered robe over pajamas. She looks nervous, harried.

TALL PRIEST
Good evening, ma'am.

OLDER PRIEST
We've been sent by Saint Michael's
over in De Soto. We understand you
require our assistance.

Mrs. Carter's jittery, red-rimmed eyes have deep, dark circles beneath them, and they dart back and forth between the visitors.

MRS. CARTER
We're not Catholic.

The older priest smiles tenderly.

OLDER PRIEST
Does that really matter now?

For a moment she looks ready to argue. Then she shakes her head. SIGHS. Looks relieved.

MRS. CARTER
Come inside. He's upstairs.

INT. CARTER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

They step inside a small entryway lit with pale yellow light from a table lamp. The ceiling THUMPS. An unlit light fixture RATTLES. The priests glance at each other.

Mrs. Carter walks down the hall. They follow. The ceiling continues to THUMP semi-rhythmically.

They pass by the living room to their left. Inside, a twelve-year old girl, CLAIRE CARTER, and fifteen year-old boy, MATT CARTER, play a 1st-person shooter video game.

On-screen, Claire's avatar collapses in a loud hail of GUNFIRE. As a splash of red washes over the screen, indicating that she died, Matt's avatar begins sprinting. Claire re-generates in a different part of the level, but Matt rushes into frame, BLASTING. Claire's avatar dies again immediately.

YOUNG CLAIRE

You asshole! You can't camp out
wherever I re-spawn. That's
cheating.

As she walks past the room, Mrs. Carter half-heartedly admonishes her daughter.

MRS. CARTER

Language.

Claire grits her teeth and acknowledges neither the scolding nor the POUNDING overhead.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The THUMPING is louder up here. Pictures on the wall shake. They walk towards a closed door near the end of the hall. It JOUNCES on its loose hinges. Mrs. Carter points at it.

The priests pause. They reach into their respective bags. The tall Priest retrieves a crucifix; the older priest a Bible. The older priest turns to Mrs. Carter.

OLDER PRIEST

You should wait outside.

Mrs. Carter nods immediately, gratefully. She begins to SOB.

The older priest turns the handle and pushes open the door. They hold their respective relics out in front of them.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Inside, chaos. The bed rocks back and forth from one single post to another, defying or at least stretching the laws of gravity. The source of the THUMPING.

A strong wind ROARS through the room. The air is damp and all the furniture wet, even though the window is closed.

A skinny thirteen-year-old boy, JAKE CARTER, is tied to the bed with makeshift restraints of torn t-shirts and belts. He shows the signs of a classic demonic possession.

Jake's skin is a sickly, pale gray and his greasy hair disheveled. His face twisted in rage. His eyes appear yellow, though it's not immediately clear if it's just a trick of the light. He SNARLS-- deep, guttural, inhuman.

Then he smiles. CACKLES. He lifts one arm, indicating his restraints. He licks his lips. The bed settles.

POSSESSED JAKE
(in demonic voice)
Hello, Fathers. I'm in your
favorite position. Restrained.
Helpless. Come to me.

The priests step forward. Their faces are illuminated by the street light outside. Their eyes seem to glow green. The possessed boy notices this. His demeanor changes. His mouth drops open. He struggles to sit upright in the bed.

POSSESSED JAKE (CONT'D)
(still in demonic voice,
but now more plaintive)
No. Not you. That's not fair. I
almost had him.

The priests unceremoniously toss their holy objects aside.

OLDER PRIEST
You've been sloppy. We've found you
three times in four months. You're
an amateur. You leave messes
everywhere you go. Pros slip in and
out without notice.

POSSESSED JAKE
You can't camp out wherever I
emerge. You're cheating.

TALL PRIEST
No. Your kind are the cheaters.
You're supposed to whisper and
suggest. Not control and direct.

OLDER PRIEST
You've never been good at following
directions.

(MORE)

OLDER PRIEST (CONT'D)

That's why we find ourselves in our current predicament.

Jake spits a fat globule of saliva at them. It misses.

TALL PRIEST

What, no pea soup?

POSSESSED JAKE

The rules don't apply anymore. Haven't for a long time.

OLDER PRIEST

(sighs)

Too true. Which is why we're curious to try your... methods. To see why you're so interested in this little redneck child.

POSSESSED JAKE

What's that supposed to mean? What are you up to?

OLDER PRIEST

We'll take it from here.

He reaches into his bag.

POSSESSED JAKE

No, wait. Let's be reasonable. We can negotiate. I can't go back empty-handed again.

The older priest holds a small talisman, a metallic cube. He holds it out towards the boy.

POSSESSED JAKE (CONT'D)

(desperately)

Wait, wait!

The younger priest coughs out a phrase in an unknown language. His voice changes as he speaks. The language doesn't sound human, punctuated by YIPS and GRUNTS between the words.

TALL PRIEST

Zacam zacam darsar g'niis.

The object begins to vibrate and BUZZ. It emanates a soft green glow, which quickly becomes brighter and more intense. A concentrated beam of green light shoots out of it and strikes the boy in the chest.

Jake SLAMS into the headboard. The wind inside the room dies down. The talisman is dark and still again. The boy's body shudders once and then relaxes.

The priests turn to face each other. Then, unexpectedly, they commence a game of Rock Paper Scissors. After three draws, the younger priest loses. He lets out an exasperated SIGH.

TALL PRIEST (CONT'D)
Can we do best of three?

The older priest shakes his head.

TALL PRIEST (CONT'D)
I don't want to be stuck in this
shithole for who knows how long.

OLDER PRIEST
It's useless to argue with fate.

The Tall Priest GROANS and approaches Jake. He kneels down. The boy's eyes flutter open. He speaks in a normal kid's voice. He looks scared.

YOUNG JAKE
Who are you?

TALL PRIEST
I'm a friend.

YOUNG JAKE
That's what the other one said.
Balam. He lied.

TALL PRIEST
I'm here to help to help you.

YOUNG JAKE
He said that, too.

TALL PRIEST
But I really mean it.

Unconvinced and still fearful, Jake begins tugging at his restraints.

YOUNG JAKE
Let me go!

TALL PRIEST
I'm sorry; we can't do that.

The priest grasps Jake's head with both of his hands. He throws his head back and calls out in that mysterious language again.

TALL PRIEST (CONT'D)
Zonrensg apash!

The priest's body begins to shake violently. So does the boy. Both pairs of eyes roll back into their heads. The priest's shadow is reflected upon the ceiling above him. The shadow has four wings. Flapping slowly.

Then an oddly gentle WHOOSH. A transfer of energy. Jake's eyes flash green. Then the boy falls back onto the pillow. The priest's head drops. He remains kneeling, unmoving.

The boy sits up again. His restraints have fallen away. His eyes still retain a faint but fading green glow. He looks around the room.

His gaze falls first upon the childish but evocative homemade artwork tacked to the walls. Several pieces of canvas paper. Battle scenes, mythological creatures, fantastic architecture.

Then he looks down at the book resting on the bedside table: "Children's Guide To The Destiny Of The White Race."

When he speaks, his VOICE is that of the Tall Priest.

YOUNG JAKE/TALL PRIEST
(as priest, indicating the
book)
Maybe this will be interesting
after all.

OLDER PRIEST
Recede into the background. Whisper
and suggest. Take control only when
necessary.

YOUNG JAKE/TALL PRIEST
Yeah, yeah.

The older priest points at the catatonic, empty body of the Tall Priest.

OLDER PRIEST
What am I supposed to do with him?

The boy shrugs.

YOUNG JAKE/TALL PRIEST
That's your problem now. It's
useless to argue with fate.

The door creaks open. Mrs. Carter peeks her head in nervously. Jake smiles brightly at her. She rushes in, tears of joy streaming down her face.

MRS. CARTER
Oh my boy, my boy, my boy.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Jake watches out the window as the older priest struggles to stuff the still-catatonic younger priest's body into the back seat of the car. He turns and reassures Mrs. Carter.

She hugs the older priest. Kisses his forehead. He breaks gently from her embrace, then walks to the front of the car, climbs in and drives away.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jake steps away from the window and walks over to his dresser. He looks into the mirror above it.

His green eyes dart to the reflection of the artwork on the walls behind him. Then to his own image. The green glow brightens and then fades.

Jake still stares into the mirror, but now the tall priest is suddenly standing behind him. While Jake is lost in his own reflection, the priest backs away, slinking back into the shadows.

The tall priest sits down in a wooden chair on the other side of the room. Watching.

The boy blinks a few times. Leans into the mirror.

Behind him, the room begins to get lighter. The artwork starts to change. Matures. Improves. Most now have professional frames.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The room is bathed in morning light. JAKE pulls back from the mirror and he has matured as well. He is twenty-five now. Handsome and fit, though a bit scrawny. Slightly delicate. Curly hair, dark blue eyes.

SUPER - "Twelve years later."

The priest is still there in the chair, unchanged. Still watching. Unnoticed.

Jake pulls back from the mirror. Takes a look around the room. An overnight bag is spilled open on the same bed upon which he was restrained twelve years earlier. He's visiting his childhood home.

He grabs a fresh shirt from his bag and puts it on. Then he paces around the room, absent-mindedly examining the artwork on the walls.

Whereas before the pictures tacked to the wall were haphazard and childish, there are now only four framed pieces. All works of a preternaturally mature artist. All are overtly religious. A blend of Hieronymus Bosch, El Greco, and a bit of Dali-esque surrealism...

A depiction of the crucifixion of three men on a hill above a jeering crowd on a stormy day....

The Ascension of Christ with a wailing crowd below and a host of angels waiting to receive him above...

Two different scenes that depict nightmarish visions of Hell...

His inspection ends when his mom calls up to him from downstairs.

MRS. CARTER (O.S.)
Jake, come on down! Breakfast is ready!

INT. CARTER KITCHEN - MORNING

Jake sits at the kitchen table, a generous serving of French toast piled on the plate in front of him. He pours syrup.

His mom moves busily about the kitchen, frying up some bacon and preparing coffee. She is noticeably older than before; more weathered but no longer terrified. She wears a stained St. Louis cardinals t-shirt and sweatpants.

The tall priest stands in one corner of the kitchen, leaning against a counter. Arms folded across his chest.

The back screen door BANGS open and Jake's sister CLAIRE barges in. Last seen as a child playing a video game, she's now wearing nurse's scrubs. Though her hair is in disarray and makeup is smudged and worn off, she's pretty.

CLAIRE
Hi, big brother!

Jake smiles widely, stands up, and embraces her warmly. As they break away, Mrs. Carter nods curtly at her daughter.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
So the famous prodigy has graced us with his presence. How long do we have the pleasure of his company?

JAKE
Not long, unfortunately. My flight's tomorrow night.

CLAIRE
Just long enough to be properly worshipped and then leave, huh?

Jake looks uncomfortable, but Claire smiles.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
I'm kidding. Mom, did you make enough for me?

Mrs. Carter nods. Claire sits down at the table. Their mom serves them both some bacon and drops a couple slices of toast onto Claire's plate. Pours them both coffee.

JAKE
Long shift?

CLAIRE
Nothing I can't handle. So are we gonna drive separately or carpool up to STL?

JAKE
I'm happy to ride with you guys.

MRS. CARTER
As long as you drive. I get frazzled in the city. Lord knows how you can stand it in New York.

JAKE
I don't drive around the city. Is Matt coming?

MRS. CARTER
(frowns)
I haven't heard from your brother in months.

(MORE)

MRS. CARTER (CONT'D)
(turns to Claire)
Have you?

Claire shakes her head. Mrs. Carter leans down and kisses Jake on the forehead.

MRS. CARTER (CONT'D)
I'm proud of you. I best start getting ready.

She touches Claire's hand and then departs. Once she's out of earshot, Claire starts speaking in a conspiratorial whisper.

CLAIRE
Matt's a sore subject these days.
Didn't you used to hang with John Gamble and Chris Hesselbach when you were kids?

Jake nods.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
Matt still does. Or did. Six months ago, they got picked up on some meth distribution shit. Then the FBI came in and threw domestic terrorism charges at them, too. The trial's in December. Haven't heard from Matt since then. Jenny told me she saw him at a bonfire up in Kirkwood last month, but you know how she is.

Jake stiffens.

JAKE
Is Dad behind it?

CLAIRE
How could he be? Are you going to see him before you leave?

JAKE
I don't know. I don't think so.
Don't really have time.

CLAIRE
You don't have to make excuses.

JAKE
How are you doing?

CLAIRE
How long you got?

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Jake sits at the child-size desk in one corner of his bedroom. He flips open a sketchpad. He looks at it for a moment and then glances over at the bed. He makes the sign of the cross.

He looks back at the pad. He stares at it for several moments. Furrows his brow. Holds a pencil.

Footsteps approach behind him. He doesn't react.

The priest stands behind him. Bends over. Reaches under his right hand. Pushes it up. Then twists around and grabs hold of his wrist. Guides his hand.

Jake closes his eyes and begins to sketch.

EXT. FOREST PARK - AFTERNOON

Jake's rental car winds through St. Louis' immense Forest Park. It's late afternoon in the autumn, still hot, but the leaves of the trees they pass are beginning to turn.

They turn a corner and an impressive, columnated limestone building looms into view. The St. Louis Art Museum, originally built for the 1904 World's Fair.

The sedan pulls into a lot on the east side of the building, into a spot at the front with a hand-painted sign reading "Jake Carter." Jake, Claire, and Mrs. Carter climb out.

As they walk towards the entrance, the car door opens once more and the priest emerges. He follows behind.

INT. EXHIBITION HALL - EVENING

The special exhibition room is fairly small, but about forty people fill every available folding chair lined up in front of a podium. A few more people, including a couple photographers, mill around the back.

The words "Jake Porter Exhibition Grand Opening" are projected onto the wall behind the podium. A woman in her 60s, PROFESSOR MCGILLIS, stands at the podium.

PROFESSOR MCGILLIS

I wish I could take credit for
teaching Jake everything he knows
at Wash U, but the truth is that he
was-- is-- a wunderkind.

(MORE)

PROFESSOR MCGILLIS (CONT'D)

It was as if he emerged from the
womb as a fully formed artist...

Jake, sitting in the front row next to his mom and sister,
shifts uncomfortably in his seat.

PROFESSOR MCGILLIS (CONT'D)

... He had a vision, a mission, and
the skills to execute. All I could
do was try to teach him some
discipline and pacing so that he
didn't burn himself out. But if you
take a look at his beautiful work
surrounding you, you'll see that
there isn't much of a chance of
that happening. He's the youngest
artist ever to have an exhibition
here, and he doesn't appear to be
slowing down anytime soon. He's
that rarest of creatures, a truly
talented art superstar, who has
followed his own muse and as a
result has been the darling of
critics and the public alike. As
well as being a man of faith. Let's
hear it for Jake Porter!

The room erupts into applause. Jake glances nervously at his
scribbled notes on his lap. His mom pats his shoulder. He
stands.

INT. EXHIBITION HALL - EVENING

Jake stands in front of one of his paintings, chatting with
two of his former classmates. LINUS, thin, pale, and
pockmarked with gauged ears, a nose ring, and bleached hair.
And FIONA-- dark-haired, heavily made-up, with full tattoo
sleeves and a leather dress.

FIONA

I'm still thinking of moving to New
York.

JAKE

Yeah? You should. I'm in the East
Village. You'd love it. I love it.
Are you still painting?

FIONA

A little. I work as a programmer.
Developer. My company is opening an
office there.

JAKE
Ah, that's cool.
(turns to LINUS)
What about you?

LINUS
Yeah I'm at Starbucks. Know any
rich, gay, devastatingly handsome
arts patrons in need of a strapping
young sculptor?

JAKE
(laughing)
I'll be sure to let you know if I
run into one.

Fiona points at the painting.

FIONA
I think this is my favorite.

The painting is titled "Attention." It's very... busy. In the lower corner, it depicts a young couple praying intensely, kneeling on a patch of barren earth on a farm. The rest of the scene is populated by a celestial battle. Angels and demons fight...

Scattered throughout the background are world disasters-- a volcano erupting, an army. In the center, commanding and overseeing it all, is Jesus. Through mastery of perspective, most of Jesus' face is concentrated on the action, but one eye is fixed sympathetically upon the praying couple.

JAKE
Thank you.

FIONA
Do you really believe in this?

Jake cocks his head.

JAKE
Of course. Why else would I paint
it?

Someone waves to him from the other side of the room.

JAKE (CONT'D)
It was great catching up. Let me
know if you end up coming to New
York. Can you excuse me a moment?

INT. MUSEUM BATHROOM - EVENING

Jake stands in a bathroom stall. He clenches his fists. Then rubs at his face. Nervous. Trying to pull himself together.

The bathroom door CREAKS open. LAUGHING voices can be heard. Linus and another former classmate.

LINUS (O.S.)
(laughing)
This must be a sick joke.

CLASSMATE
Yeah, I mean he paints pretty, but
his subjects...

Jake tenses. Clenches his fists.

LINUS
I don't know what would be worse--
if he actually believes in all this
horseshit, or if he's just
pandering to all the rubes.

Jake fights back tears.

Someone moves in behind him. The priest's hands cover his ears. He relaxes.

INT. EXHIBITION HALL - EVENING

Jake stands at the far end of the hall chatting with Professor McGill and another teacher.

They stand beneath a painting titled "The Exorcism of Roland Doe," which occurred in St. Louis in the 1940s and was the inspiration for "The Exorcist" film. Two familiar-looking priests approach a restrained boy.

A motley trio saunters into the hall's entrance. Three men, whose rough, casual clothing would have made them look out of place even if two of them weren't wearing *MAGA* hats. One of them, the shortest of them and built like a bulldog is MATT, Jake and Claire's brother.

Jake tenses. He scans the room. He makes eye contact with his sister. She nods tersely and walks over to greet Matt and his friends.

The three men stop first at the drinks table. They each grab a glass and GULP greedily. Matt looks at one of the paintings, WHISPERS something to his buddy, and LAUGHS.

Claire approaches Matt. He nods at her stoically. She leans in and whispers something to him. He shakes his head, dismisses her, and walks away. He spots Jake. Starts heading in his direction.

Other guests notice the newcomers and start WHISPERING.

Jake watches one of the men peel off and head straight for Fiona. She smiles politely at him. He says something to her. She turns red; looks angry.

The other buddy remains at the drinks table, already downing his third glass.

Professor McGillis looks expectantly at Jake, having asked a question he hasn't answered. He turns his attention back to her.

JAKE

Sorry, Professor. I'll be right back. I have to deal with this.

He walks towards Matt, meeting him halfway.

MATT

Little brother.

JAKE

Hi, Matt. It's nice of you to come.

MATT

(smirks)

I had to see this for myself.

JAKE

How have you been?

MATT

I needed to see just how big of a pussy you've become. I mean look at this shit. And all these faggots. No wonder you became a Catholic. Dad would be ashamed if--

Mrs. Carter heads towards them, shaking with anger.

MRS. CARTER

What are you doing, Matt? Why? Just leave.

MATT

Stay out of this, Mom.

JAKE

I don't care what Dad thinks. Or--

Matt steps forward, SNARLS, and grabs Jake by his collar. Pulls him close.

Out of the corner of his eye, Jake sees Fiona throw the contents of her drink in her stalker's face. He blinks, unbelieving for a moment and then his face twists into rage.

The other guy at the drinks table witnesses this, and hurls his empty glass in Fiona's direction. It misses, but SHATTERS against the wall next to her head.

The crowd begins to come to life. A few people, including Claire, head over to help Fiona. Others SHOUT for the interlopers to leave, or for someone to call the cops.

The priest stands up from the chair he'd planted himself in and walks swiftly in Jake's direction.

MATT

You little shit. You don't get to say *anything* about Dad. Not after what you did.

The tall priest stands directly behind Jake. And then he steps forward and actually slips inside of Jake's body. Becomes him. Possesses him.

(NOTE: For this scene, and others like it, the actor playing the priest should be swapped in for the actor playing Jake.)

The only change Matt notices is that Jake's eyes flash green. Matt seems to notice it-- the only one who discerns a change. Matt hesitates. Loosens his grip. But Jake/Priest also now towers over Matt. Leers at him.

Then Jake/Priest reaches under Matt's hands and bats him away. He shoves him so hard that Matt goes cartwheeling backwards several feet and lands on his ass. Jake/Priest walks towards him as he struggles to stand.

Jake/Priest lowers a foot onto Matt's chest. Pressing him to the ground. Looks him in the eyes. Matt is terrified.

JAKE/PRIEST

How dare you blaspheme like some idiot child who's just learned his first curse words?

Matt's friends start to make a move in his direction. He looks directly at them. Points at both of them with each hand.

JAKE/PRIEST (CONT'D)
Don't fucking move.

They freeze instantly. It looks like they are *unable* to move.

Then Jake/Priest bends down and leans in close to Matt, who's weakly struggling beneath his foot. He speaks in a whisper so no one else can hear, IN THE PRIEST'S VOICE.

JAKE/PRIEST (CONT'D)
I told you once before, years ago,
but you were too stupid to listen.
This is your final warning. If you
ever come near Jake again, I will
rip your intestines out of your
asshole and choke you with them.

Tears start to run down Matt's cheeks. He trembles uncontrollably. Jake/Priest releases his foot.

JAKE/PRIEST (CONT'D)
Now go.

Matt gets unsteadily to his feet.

MATT
(to his friends)
Let's get out of here.

They leave. The tension in the crowd begins to release. A few people even clap. One of the photographers SNAPS a flurry of pictures.

The priest steps out of Jake's body and heads back to his favorite corner of the room.

EXT. CARTER FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Jake and Claire sit on the front porch of their mom's house, drinking beers. Claire puffs on a cigarette. Looks furious.

CLAIRE
Fucking Matt. What an asshole. I'm
sorry you had to go through that. I
didn't think he'd show. But you
were... kind of a badass. I've
never seen you like that before.
What possessed you?

Jake furrows his brow. Says nothing for a moment. He doesn't really know what she's talking about. Doesn't remember what he did. Or won't let himself.

JAKE
(after a pause)
He's just lost, sis.

CLAIRE
This town. This state. I swear. It
twists people into hollow
creatures. Monsters.

JAKE
You should get out of here.

CLAIRE
(laughs sardonically)
Oh yeah, where would I go? New
York? I'm sure an RN from Truman
State is just what New York needs.

JAKE
Why not? A degree's a degree. New
York's full of heathens like you.
You'd love it.
(laughs)
You could stay with me as long as
you want. I don't want you to get
twisted, too. At least come visit.

Claire sips her beer and pulls on her cigarette. Considering.
Then changes the subject.

CLAIRE
So why did you convert to
Catholicism, anyway? Being Catholic
in Farmington's almost as dangerous
as what I am.

JAKE
(sarcastically)
I like to live dangerously.

CLAIRE
Was it that thing that happened
when you were like thirteen?
Your... episode?

Jake says nothing.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
Mom should have taken you to a
specialist. You were having
seizures. That's all it was. God
doesn't exist. And if He did, He
wouldn't let-- Shit.

JAKE

What?

CLAIRE

I'm being bitchy again. Judgmental. Believe what you want to believe. Especially if it's buttering your bread.

They both LAUGH. Sip their beers.

JAKE

Do you think it's possible that Matt's still working for Dad somehow? And those guys who got charged, John and Chris? Is Dad still running things?

CLAIRE

Running what? A bunch of racist dimwits selling drugs and guns? Dad's trash. You know that better than anyone. He's been locked up for ten years and will be for another twenty. You and I made sure of that. He's not running shit.

JAKE

You're probably right. Matt just made me think...

CLAIRE

Matt's never made anyone think about anything except for where the nearest exit is in his entire life.

They LAUGH again.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

So I guess you won't be visiting him then.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jake sleeps soundly in his childhood bed. The priest sits in the chair at the tiny desk. Jake's laptop is open.

The priest confirms Jake's reservation as an attendee of a conference called "The Arts and Politics of the 21st Century" in Peniel, Maine.

INT. RENTAL CAR - DAY

Jake pulls his rental car off to the side of the state highway. He flips on his hazards. His baggage rests on the passenger seat.

He's parked near the crest of a hill. Below him is a federal penitentiary.

He stares down at it for several moments, gripping the steering wheel tightly.

Then he relaxes. Lets out a deep BREATH. So does the priest in the back seat. He flips his turn signal on and goes back the way he came.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT (ESTABLISHING)

The NYC skyline late at night.

EXT. STUDIO - NIGHT (ESTABLISHING)

A boxy three-story building in the East Village. The ground floor hosts a couple small storefronts, whose windows are darkened. The lights in the top story are on.

INT. ART STUDIO - NIGHT

Jake is in the kitchen area of the large, collective art studio, filling his water bottle.

He turns and sees another ARTIST, a young woman, waiting behind him for her turn at the water cooler. She smiles.

ARTIST
Congratulations on the exhibition.

He smiles back.

JAKE
Thanks so much.

He crosses the studio. Twenty-foot ceilings. Tall windows. It's big enough to host thirty artists comfortably, but at this hour, only a handful of people mill around.

His corner, like most of the others, is afforded a degree of privacy by wheeled barriers. He sits down on his stool in front of a blank canvas. He stares at it for a few moments. Still distracted, he pulls out his phone.

He scrolls through social media. Pauses on a St. Louis Post-Dispatch article someone pinned to his feed: "Violence at Gallery Opening for Local Artist." Accompanied by a photo of Matt sprawled out on the floor.

He shuts off his phone. Something catches his attention to his right. Someone has done the analog equivalent-- actually pinned a printout of another article to his cubicle wall.

This article is from "Arts & Letters Daily." The headline reads: "El Greco or Thomas Kinkade?" The sub-header is: "Jake Carter's religious regressionism panders to the baser instincts of a divided public." And someone has scribbled the word "Poser" on it with a sharpie.

Jake fights back tears. He stands up and tears it off the wall. Crumples it up. Looks around suspiciously. Wipes his eyes.

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

An hour later. Jake is now alone in the studio. Looking at the blank canvas again. Inspiration still hasn't come.

He tries repositioning the canvas. Moves it in front of a mirror. Slips his earbuds in and cycles through his music app until he lands on a favorite SONG.

He looks down at his pad and the divinely inspired sketch from his bedroom. He starts breathing heavily. Begins to shudder.

The priest emerges from the shadows. Walks over to Jake. Stands behind him.

PRIEST

Shhh. It's okay. Relax.

Jake's breathing starts to slow. The priest reaches beneath Jake's armpit and gently raises his right arm. Guides it to the canvas.

Jake starts to slip into a trance state. He hears his HEART BEAT. And the MUSIC. Then his phone BUZZES. He sees it in the corner of his vision. A text from his sister.

Then Jake glances at the mirror...

...and he actually sees the priest wrapped around him. Jake drops the brush. YELPS and then SCREAMS. Stumbles off of his stool. The priest disappears.

Jake rushes out of the studio in a panic.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT

Jake sits in a nearly empty subway car, staring out the window, trying to calm himself. Music BLASTING in his ears. The train begins to slow.

SUBWAY ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Now approaching Coney Island/
Stillwell Avenue. This is the last
stop. Please gather your belongings
and exit the train.

The train RUMBLES to a stop. Jake stands and gets off.

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

He doesn't go far, and neither does the train. The handful of other riders disappear up the stairwell. Jake remains. The train sits there with its doors open. Its digital destination display changes to "Jamaica/179 St."

SUBWAY ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
This is now a northbound train to
Jamaica and 179th St. It will
depart in eight minutes.

The platform empty, Jake takes a seat on one of the benches to wait it out. He removes his earbuds and hears the final distant FOOTSTEPS fade. He closes his eyes for a moment.

He senses a presence, opens his eyes, and looks to his right. A man sits on the next bench over, staring at him. After making eye contact, the man smiles warmly.

AUGUSTUS FOX has a handsome, angular face. His wide cheekbones and pronounced jawline are peppered with a few days' worth of whiskers. His eyes are dark and penetrating, but oddly friendly. He wears a tan overcoat over a collared shirt and combat boots. He has a cigarette tucked above his ear. He speaks with a posh British accent.

FOX
Trouble sleeping?

Jake pauses, then nods.

FOX (CONT'D)
I can relate. We're lucky to have
this option in the city. Better
than counting sheep.

Jake smiles politely. Pulls out his phone as an unconscious defense mechanism against the sudden attention of a stranger.

FOX (CONT'D)

Hey, I don't mean to invade your privacy, but you're an artist, right? You do those religious paintings, right? What's your name... um, Porter? No, Carter.

Jake glances away from his phone only momentarily to flash another polite smile and nod.

JAKE

Jake.

FOX

That's right. Jake Carter. I'm a fan. You've got real talent. Or at least whoever's behind the curtain does.

Jake freezes. Stops scrolling on his phone, his thumb hovering in mid-air.

FOX (CONT'D)

You're seeing him more often now, aren't you? Catching him in the act? The "priest."

Jake's heart THUMPS in his chest. He snaps his head to look at the stranger directly. Fox has somehow moved closer, to the far end of Jake's own bench.

JAKE

Who are you?

FOX

(smiling)

That was rude of me. I should have introduced myself to begin with. I'm Augustus Fox.

Fox slides over a couple feet even closer. Outstretches his hand. Jake takes it cautiously and shakes it.

FOX (CONT'D)

You're not alone. Possessions of this sort are increasing in frequency. Whispers and subtle influence aren't enough for them anymore. One side tried to take you, but was caught in the act. The other side took over instead. They're not as experienced in this. They can be... overruled. Overturned.

(MORE)

FOX (CONT'D)

You can expel the priest if you wish. Like you did this evening. But permanently.

Jake's mouth hangs open for a moment. Fox pulls the cigarette from his ear. Twirls it around his fingers.

JAKE

You told me your name, but who are you? How do you know this?

FOX

I'm a member of a very old organization. We call ourselves Watchers. I suppose you can guess what we do.

(laughs)

I've had my eye on you for a while. I can help you. We aren't supposed to interfere, but I've never been one for following the rules.

JAKE

You've been... watching me? Following me? For how long?

Fox places the cigarette in his lips but doesn't light it.

FOX

You stumbled upon one method to free yourself earlier tonight. But it's only temporary. Mirrors help. If you look hard, you can see him. Familiar sounds. Repetition. Favorite songs. The presence of loved ones. And there are certain phrases that hold power over them. This one: "*Ol congamph i'ol. Pi aala.*" That'll be tough to remember. Here...

Fox reaches into his pocket. Pulls out a card the size of a business card. Jake takes it absentmindedly. The phrase Fox uttered is printed out on it phonetically. There's also a phone number in the bottom right.

FOX (CONT'D)

Memorize it. Repeat it like a mantra. You can expel him for good if you want. Unlike the other side, you have to want his side to stay. Call me anytime. I won't be far. If you need more than incantations and mirrors, I can help with that, too.

(MORE)

FOX (CONT'D)

We have ways of dealing with these
uninvited guests.

Fox pats his coat disconcertingly. Then he lights his
cigarette. Exhales a large cloud of smoke.

JAKE

I just want to be left alone. This
is crazy. You're crazy.

FOX

(smiles)

Aww, you're just saying that
because it feels like it's what
you're supposed to say. You know
what happened when you were young.
You remember. You know what's been
happening since then, too. Deep
down. Go to the conference. I'll be
there, too, out on the perimeter.
You'll find answers there.

JAKE

What conference?

FOOTSTEPS approach, accompanied by loud VOICES. A group of
drunk college students come into view.

SUBWAY ANNOUNCER

This northbound train will be
departing in three minutes.

Jake turns back to Fox, but the bench is empty. There's
nothing there but a slowly dissipating cloud of cigarette
smoke.

A SECURITY GUARD approaches Jake. He looks furious.

SECURITY GUARD

What century do you think this is?
You can't smoke in here.

JAKE

I wasn't... it wasn't me... Never
mind. I'm leaving. I'm sorry.

He stands and walks into the subway car.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Jake wakes up in his twin bed to both the sound of his phone
BUZZING and a distant BANGING on his door.

He sits up and rubs his eyes. Grabs his phone. Blinks several times to adjust to the morning light.

It's 10:47 AM. Five missed calls. Three from his sister and two from "Yves Shandor." And twelve missed texts, all from Claire.

His phone BUZZES again. Claire calling. He answers it.

CLAIRE (O.S.)
Finally! Hi. I'm here.

JAKE
What?

CLAIRE
I took you up on your offer. I'm outside your apartment. At least I think so. If you can hear me knocking, I am.

He hears KNOCKING in the distance again.

JAKE
Just a minute.

He gets out of bed, grabs a t-shirt from his dresser, and puts it on. Leaves his bedroom, rubs his eyes again, and walks into the living room of his small apartment. He opens the front door. Claire stands with a suitcase in the hallway.

CLAIRE
Surprise!

She LAUGHS and comes in for a hug. He hesitantly wraps his arms around her.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Claire sits on Jake's couch in his living room, struggling to find something in the side pocket of her suitcase.

CLAIRE
I tried calling last night, but you didn't answer. I was already at the airport. Took the red flight. That's what it's called, right?

Jake walks towards her from the kitchen area, holding two mugs of steaming coffee. He hands her one of them.

JAKE
Redeye.

Claire takes the coffee.

CLAIRE

Thanks. Yeah, that. Whatever. I just had to get out of town. I couldn't... I couldn't deal with it. I hope you meant what you said. I hope it's okay. Maybe you didn't mean it.

Jake sits down in the Ikea chair opposite her. Tries to sip his coffee. It's too hot.

JAKE

Of course I meant it. I'm glad you're here. What happened?

Claire takes a sip from her too-hot coffee anyway.

CLAIRE

Matt got arrested. I got him arrested. He came to Mom's house looking for you. He was high. Mean. I called the cops. They found some shit in his car. And now the FBI's involved again.

JAKE

I'm sorry. Are you okay? Did he hurt you, or Mom?

Claire shakes her head.

CLAIRE

No. I'm okay.

She gazes out the window.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

You've got a nice view. Took forever to find your place though. And even longer to find parking. Jesus Christ, \$12 an hour?

JAKE

(incredulous)

Wait, you drove into the city?

CLAIRE

Yeah, I got a rental car. Seemed easiest.

JAKE

(laughs gently)

It's definitely not. I didn't even know there was a parking lot nearby.

CLAIRE

There wasn't.

Jake's phone BUZZES. He looks at it.

JAKE

I'm sorry. I have to take this.

CLAIRE

Do your thing, hotshot. I'm not going anywhere.

Jake picks up his phone and walks into the kitchen. Answers it. YVES SHANDOR, his agent, is on the other end.

JAKE

Hi, Yves.

YVES (O.S.)

I've been trying all morning. We talked about this. You've got to answer when I call--

JAKE

I'm sorry. My sis--

YVES (O.S.)

Forget it. I was about to confirm you for an interview and when I looked at your schedule I see you're booked for some sort of conference at a hotel up in bumblefuck... what's the name of it... Peniel, Maine. Something called "Art and Politics." Starts on Friday. I didn't sign you up for that. Did you?

JAKE

(after a pause)

I think... yeah, that sounds familiar. But I'm not sure if--

YVES (O.S.)

You're supposed to run this stuff by me first. How are you gonna get up there?

JAKE

I think I booked a flight to
Portland...

(glances over at Claire)
... but maybe you should cancel
that and I can--

YVES (O.S.)

No no no. You can't get out of it
now. Whatever this thing is, there
are some big names there. Like,
seriously big. You could use the
networking, especially after the
debacle in St. Louis. Don't be
weird and quiet. Don't be yourself.
Get after it.

JAKE

I meant just cancel the flight.
I'll get there on my own. Can you
book an extra room, though?

YVES (O.S.)

For who? Whatever. I'll see what I
can do. I'll call you back.

Jake hangs up. He walks back to the living room. Claire looks
up.

CLAIRE

What was that about?

JAKE

You've already seen the hottest
tourist spot in New York-- an East
Village parking lot. So how would
you feel about a road trip
tomorrow? Maybe we can get some use
out of that rental car of yours
after all.

EXT. NEW ENGLAND COUNTRYSIDE - DAY (ESTABLISHING)

Claire's rental car drives along a picturesque, two-lane
highway on an autumn afternoon. The changing leaves of the
trees dotting the hillsides around them are magnificent.

INT. CLAIRE'S RENTAL CAR - DAY

Claire drives, Jake sits in the front passenger seat, and the
priest sits in the middle back seat watching both of them.

MUSIC plays on the stereo. "You Don't Own Me" by Leslie Gore (1963).

Claire digs around in the bottom of a paper bag to find the last few straggling french fries from their fast food lunch. Jake SLURPS the dregs of his soda. They're both LAUGHING.

CLAIRE

...Because it's pointless, that's why. This is like Round 400 of this game. No one's gonna convince the other. Normal people play Twenty Questions, or the license plate game, or Guess the Musician on road trips.

JAKE

Okay, my guess is Leslie Gore.

CLAIRE

(gesturing exasperatedly
at the stereo)
It says the name right there.

JAKE

Exactly. So let's play something with higher stakes.

CLAIRE

The stakes are imaginary. That's my point. Even if God does exist, if He's how He's described in the Bible, then he's vain and selfish and vindictive. He doesn't give a shit about what we want. He only cares who we can be to him and do for him. He has his own agenda. We shouldn't live to serve God. If God created us, He should serve *us*.

JAKE

No. He created us. He can do with us whatever He wants. We have to have faith in His plan.

Claire SCOFFS.

CLAIRE

Yeah, this plan of His is going grreeaat. You'd have to be psychotic to have faith in a plan that nets the kind of results he's producing.

(MORE)

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Best case scenario, he's an ADD-riddled kid who forgot to feed his sea monkeys. And you should be the last one to talk about faith.

JAKE

Oh? Why's that?

CLAIRE

Okay, let's say what you say happened when we were kids is true. A devil possessed you and God intervened and saved you. If that is true, then you've never had to have faith. The truth was shoved in your face. You didn't have to *believe* in anything.

Jake is silent for a moment. Claire glances over at him and realizes she touched a nerve.

JAKE

(after a pause)

Do you actually believe me about what happened? Or Mom? Are we both liars? Delusional?

CLAIRE

(sighs)

I have *faith* that you believe it. You're not a liar. And also, yeah, that you're fucking nuts. But a lucrative kind of nuts. The kind of nuts you can combine with talent to make you famous. So who am I to argue with it.

They both CHUCKLE.

JAKE

That's not exactly faith in me, is it?

CLAIRE

What does faith even mean?

JAKE

Faith is believing something when common sense tells you not to.

Claire turns to stare at him, mouth open, long enough that he's worried she's not watching the road. Then she throws her head back and lets out another exaggerated SIGH and a mirthful LAUGH.

CLAIRE

Oh my God, are you kidding me right now? Did you just quote "Miracle on 34th Street?" That was a movie about fucking Santa Claus! I rest my fucking case. That's it. I'm not talking to you anymore.

Jake can't help but grin and take the loss.

EXT. - APPROACHING HOTEL - EVENING

SERIES OF SHOTS

The sun has begun to set behind a cloudy sky as the rental car crests a hill and drives past a wooden sign that reads: "Welcome to Peniel, Maine - Pop. 589." A wide ocean bay can be seen to the right.

They cruise through the small, oak-lined downtown area and make a right turn.

They leave the town behind and a narrow, curvy road leads them up a gentle wooded hillside. The wind has increased; great swathes of leaves billow across the road.

They almost miss a turn for an even smaller road with a sign and arrow for the "East Wind Hotel."

The tunnel of trees give way and they see the hotel rise up above them.

INT. & EXT. - HOTEL PARKING LOT - EVENING

They pull into the hotel parking lot. It's filled with expensive cars-- Range Rovers, BMWs, Mercedes, and Teslas. A limousine exits the lot.

Claire is in the passenger seat now.

CLAIRE

I should have brought nicer clothes. What kind of conference is this again?

Jake navigates into an empty spot.

JAKE

I'm not really sure, to be honest.

CLAIRE

So why are we here then? Not that I'm complaining. This place is swanky.

JAKE

My agent said I should go. I'm playing it by ear.

CLAIRE

Shall we discuss free will again?

JAKE

(laughing)

You're free to fuck right off.

EXT. HOTEL ENTRANCE - EVENING

The 19th-century, 44-room hotel sits atop a small bluff above the sea. It's a wide, three-story, cupola-topped building (modeled after The Island Inn on Monhegan Island). A porch filled with Adirondack and rocking chairs, and small tables wraps around its facade. A few people converse on the porch.

A PORTER, standing next to a sign that reads, "Closed for Private Event," smiles widely as they approach.

PORTER

Good evening to you both. May I take your luggage?

JAKE

Thanks.

They hand their two small suitcases over to him.

PORTER

We will bring these up to your room. May I have your names?

JAKE

I'm Jake Carter, and this is my sister Claire. We should have two rooms.

PORTER

Very good, sir. Please go up the stairs into the main entrance. The registration desk is at the far side of the lobby.

Jake feels around his pockets for tip money and comes up empty. The porter notices. A slightly more forced smile.

PORTER (CONT'D)
No worries, sir. It's my pleasure.

JAKE
Thanks again.

They climb up the steps, cross the porch, pull open one of the thick double doors, and step inside.

INT. HOTEL RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The hotel bar and restaurant is an extension of the lobby. But whereas the lobby is old-fashioned--with antique chairs and sofas, oriental rugs, and a massive stone fireplace-- the restaurant is more modern.

Soft blue light fills the room. Floor-to-ceiling windows make up the entire east wall, ostensibly offering a view to the sea, but it's too dark outside to see anything. Music plays in the background. Perhaps "Old Devil Moon" by Chet Baker (1958).

Most of the twelve tables are occupied. LOW VOICES and occasional LAUGHTER provide a pleasant background hum. In the dim light, it's hard to make out the precise features of the other guests.

Jake and Claire sit at a table near the windows. Their dinner plates have been pushed aside, and they sip on beers. Claire has changed into a sundress over tights; Jake wears a collared shirt tucked into jeans. The priest stands off a ways, near the fireplace in the lobby.

JAKE
Besides the Matt bullshit, what's going on with you? What's finally pushing you to leave for good?

CLAIRE
Matt's a big elephant to try to ignore. But I've wanted to leave since I was ten years old.

JAKE
Then what's brought it to a head?

CLAIRE
Where to start...

She takes a long swig of her beer.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

It's just gotten to be too much.
All the MAGA shit. Everyone's
always angry. Raging against
invisible enemies. It's like a
virus. Now the FBI hanging around.
And all the hypocritical Jesus
shit, too. No offense. I can't have
a real conversation with anyone.
All the cases at the hospital are
fucking overdoses. It's grim. And
as far as a love life, forget it.
If I hope to even have a chance at
a decent date with a nice girl, I
have to drive an hour to the city.
Even then it's hit or miss.

JAKE

Shit, I'm sorry. That sounds...
yeah, pretty grim. You don't have
to go back at all. You can stay.
See if you like it better out here.

CLAIRE

(laughs)
Out in Peniel, Maine?

JAKE

You know what I mean.

CLAIRE

Actually, it's pretty nice up here.
Maybe this is more my speed. But I
only took off through Wednesday.

JAKE

You could always quit.

CLAIRE

We don't all have Big Art Money.

JAKE

(laughs)
Big Art Money isn't a thing.

CLAIRE

(rolls her eyes)
What about you? Have you been
dating anyone? Or have you taken a
vow of chastity?

Jake turns red. Gets flustered.

JAKE

No... I mean, I'm open to it... I just haven't...

He's saved by the approach of a pair of visitors. He looks up. The background song switches to "The Little Man Who Wasn't There" by Mildred Bailey (1939).

One of them is an androgyne named LAILAH. A classically pretty face and close-cropped brown hair. They wear skinny jeans and a tight blue t-shirt.

The other is the OLDER PRIEST who was present at Jake's exorcism and re-possession. He wears an expensive-looking suit instead of his former black shirt and clerical collar.

They both smile warmly at Jake and Claire.

OLDER PRIEST

Good evening. I'm sorry if we're interrupting.

Jake studies the man. He seems to vaguely recognize him, but unable to put him in proper context.

JAKE

(hesitantly)

No problem. It's okay. Hello.

OLDER PRIEST

You're Jake Carter, aren't you? The artist. I'm a big fan of your work.

Jake nods and then recognition dawns on his face. But not the expected recognition.

JAKE

And you're a senator, right? Um, a Republican.... Simmons. From...

The older priest smiles again and extends his hand, first for Jake to shake and then to Claire.

OLDER PRIEST

...from this great state of Maine, actually. I didn't have to travel as far as the other attendees. And you were close. The media paints me as a Republican, but I'm an Independent. I side with whomever I happen to agree with, rather than be beholden to party politics.

Jake shakes his hand and then Claire.

OLDER PRIEST (CONT'D)
 It's great you're here. Nice to
 have some young blood. This
 conference can be so... stodgy
 sometimes.

The androgyne focuses more on Claire. Offers their hand.

LAILAH
 I'm Lailah. And you are...

Claire is caught gazing admirably at Lailah. Takes their
 hand.

CLAIRE
 I'm Claire. I'm just Jake's sister.
 Along for the ride.

LAILAH
 Oh, I'm sure you're much more than
 that, my darling. It's a pleasure.

The older priest indicates Claire's drained beer bottle and
 Jake's nearly empty one.

OLDER PRIEST
 I couldn't help but notice you've
 gotten dangerously low on fuel. If
 you could bear to suffer our
 presence a bit longer, I'd be happy
 to buy your next round.

Jake glances at his sister. She nods.

JAKE
 Sure. Have a seat.

The older priest-- wrapped around the body of a U.S. Senator--
 sits down in the empty chair closest to them. Lailah rounds
 the table, brushing into Claire's back as they do.

The older priest signals for a waiter's attention. Then he
 looks just over Jake's shoulder. The older priest makes eye
 contact with Jake's Tall Priest, who's lingering in the
 background.

On the far side of the restaurant, near the fireplace,
 Augustus Fox sits unnoticed in a tufted wingback chair. He's
 dressed the same as he was during the subway encounter.

Fox pulls out a cell phone, aims it at Jake's table, and
 begins recording.

INT. - HOTEL RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Two hours later, the visitors are still at their table. They seem drunk, looser and LOUDER.

CLAIRE

(fake exasperated)

Holy hell, how far must I travel to escape this religious talk? Yes, I believe in a higher power. There are lots of powers much higher than us. We're insignificant. Dust. Nothing revolves around us. We don't matter. And that's okay. That's why we're free.

LAILAH

(laughs)

Oh, I like you.

Lailah shakes their empty glass. Touches Claire's hand.

LAILAH (CONT'D)

Come along, my irrelevant little dust mite. My string of recursive, copy-and-pasted code. Come with me to the bar and help me get some more drinks.

Claire's eyes dart subconsciously back and forth between Jake and Lailah. Jake smiles at her. She bites her lip, then nods.

Claire and Lailah get up. Jake watches them leave. Lailah WHISPERS something into Claire's ear, then places their hand playfully on her butt. Claire tenses, then relaxes.

Jake turns back to the older priest, who sips his drink. They sit in awkward silence. The background music perhaps switches to "Turn Around, Look At Me" by The Lettermen (1962).

Then the older priest cranes his head to one side, looking beyond the side of Jake's head. He makes eye contact again with the Tall Priest. He raises his glass with one hand and with the other beckons the Tall Priest over.

Jake starts to turn his head to see who the older priest was signaling. But the Tall Priest moves fast.

Within a second, he is standing behind Jake. Then he sits down on his lap. Melts into him. Becomes him. His eyes flash green (*NOTE: The priest actor now fully inhabits Jake's place again*).

OLDER PRIEST

Hello, Raphael. It's good to see you again.

The Tall Priest in Jake's body examines Jake's beer bottle. Sees there's still some left. Takes a swig.

TALL PRIEST/JAKE

Cheers, Uriel. Likewise.

(NOTE: Now that the young priest's real name has been revealed to be RAPHAEL, and the older priest as URIEL, they will be referred to as such from now on whenever they are in control of their host. Raphael inhabits Jake and Uriel inhabits Senator Simmons until otherwise noted).

URIEL

You've done good work with your subject. Everyone agrees. And the other side is *furious*. So that's good.

Raphael SIGHS and rubs at his temple.

RAPHAEL

This isn't what I signed up for.

URIEL

You're preaching to the choir. We've been here far too long. I'm tired. We all are. But I think we're getting close.

RAPHAEL

You've been saying that for the past two thousand years.

Uriel frowns.

RAPHAEL (CONT'D)

I mean this job. This guy. Do you have any idea how fucking *boring* he is? This is beneath me.

URIEL

(shrugs)

Maybe so. But you're an artist. That's what we needed. Tell me though, why have you allowed your subject to stay so much in control? Why do you let him have the reins so often? Especially here, in this place.

RAPHAEL

I'm a muse, not an artist. And certainly not a spy. Or a possessor. But don't pretend that's the reason why. We rock-paper-scissored for it. Could have easily been you. Also, the sister's arrival complicated things.

Uriel nods sympathetically.

URIEL

I gathered as much. That's why I brought Lailah over. They should help put some space between the boy and his sister.

As if on cue, Jake's phone BUZZES. Raphael picks it up. It's a text from Claire: "Don't wait up for me (heart symbol)."

Raphael looks over at the bar. Claire smiles and waves at him - of course not noticing that it's Raphael in control instead of her brother. Lailah leans in close and whispers something else. Claire's hand is on top of Lailah's.

CLAIRE

(from across the bar,
mouthing silently)
Sorry.

RAPHAEL

(to Uriel)
I'll have control full-time by the morning.

URIEL

Good.

Raphael glances out at the darkness through the window.

RAPHAEL

I'm going out for a breath of fresh air. I miss the sea air. The stink of New York's still all over me.

URIEL

(eyes twinkling)
Liar.

RAPHAEL

Hand it over. I know you've got some.

Uriel SCOFFS and then reaches into the breast pocket of his suit. Pulls out a pack of Turkish Gold cigarettes. Holds it out to Raphael, who pulls two from the pack.

RAPHAEL (CONT'D)
And your lighter.

URIEL
This is what you really miss, you fiend.

He digs into his pocket and pulls out a lighter. Hands it over.

RAPHAEL
I tried to get the boy hooked on them, but he's a stubborn one.

URIEL
The other side is supposed to do the tempting.

RAPHAEL
Care to join me?

URIEL
(shakes his head)
This old pervert's body is absolutely riddled with pills. It's going to collapse at any moment. I've been propping him up like a puppet for the past hour, but my hand is getting tired.

Raphael nods. Checks the bar to make sure Claire isn't watching. Stands up.

RAPHAEL
Very well. See you in the morning, sister.

URIEL
Goodnight, brother.

EXT. PATIO - NIGHT

Raphael stands out on the hotel patio, past the tables and chairs, near the rear stone wall. He can make out the faint outline of the sea below and hear the distant CRASHING WAVES.

He lights up the cigarette he got from Uriel. Takes a long draw. Savors it. He looks up at the stars. Inhales again.

Suddenly, a NOISE behind him. Maybe a FOOTSTEP. A rush of movement. Before he can turn around, a pair of arms grasp his chest from behind. Someone whispers in his ear.

FOX

Ol congamph i'ol. Pi aala.

Then one of Fox's arms rises. It holds a handheld mirror up to Raphael's face. He struggles for a moment, trying not to look. But when he does, Jake looks back.

Raphael leaves. Evaporates. Jake is back.

Fox releases his grip.

Jake immediately COUGHS and chokes on the smoke. Drops the cigarette to the ground. Then stares down at it. Confused. Disoriented.

FOX (CONT'D)

No matter how sneakily you creep up
to the mirror, your true reflection
always stares back at you.

Jake spins around.

JAKE

How'd I get out here? What are you
doing here?

FOX

(smiling)

Watching. Spying. My job. My
pleasure. I don't believe you took
me as seriously as you should have
when we first met. What's the last
thing you remember tonight?

Jake thinks for a moment. Looks back at the hotel. Sees the blue light of the restaurant. Starts to remember.

JAKE

Claire got up to get more drinks
with her new friend.

Fox reached into his pocket and pulls out his phone

FOX

Just a moment.

He opens up the video he recorded and fast-forwards it to just before Claire got up. He hits "Play" and shows it to Jake.

FOX (CONT'D)

You two spoke for five minutes.
Only it wasn't really you two.

He slides the progress bar further, so Jake sees the conversation in fast-motion. Slows it down again when Jake asks for a cigarette and stands up. Then hits "Pause." Jake looks up.

JAKE

I don't remember that. I must be drunk.

FOX

Of course you don't and of course you are. But not that drunk. You know this.

JAKE

(stares at Fox)

You're telling me I'm still possessed?

FOX

You believed it so easily back then. Why is it any harder now?

JAKE

You said "the other side" last time. I'm possessed by an angel?

FOX

That's what they call themselves. Your religion does. Other religions just call them gods.

JAKE

But originally it was demons? This is confusing.

FOX

(sighs)

Okay, so here's my understanding of what happened to you. What's happening to you. A demon--if that's what you want to call it--took possession of you. Or tried to. Would have. But two... angels... interfered. One of them managed to successfully possess you instead. Most of the time they keep to the background. But sometimes they urge you in a certain direction. Or inspire you.

(MORE)

FOX (CONT'D)

They brought you here. To be amongst them.

Jake shakes his head. Opens his mouth.

FOX (CONT'D)

Don't you do it.

JAKE

Do what?

FOX

Ask another goddamn question. This tedious, Socratic ebb and flow. Some might call this Socratic. Let me cut through it. Like everyone else, you've got "main character syndrome." That means there's only one question that matters to you: Why are they so interested in you? Right?

Jake glowers, but nods.

FOX (CONT'D)

I hope your seams are securely stitched because they're gonna really want to tear apart. And the thing is, you already know the answer. You've lived it. You just don't have the proper perspective to see it from the right angle.

JAKE

Do you have to be so dramatic?

FOX

Don't try to squeeze another question in when I'm on a roll. But the answer is yes, my boy, I do. Always. You've wanted to be an artist since you were very young, correct?

Jake nods.

FOX (CONT'D)

And by any measure, you've succeeded. You got into art school. You're adored by the public. Your paintings sell for exorbitant amounts. And you use your talent to give glory to God. Correct?

JAKE

More or less, I suppose.

FOX

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?

Jake starts shaking his head vigorously.

FOX (CONT'D)

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. You wouldn't be such a passive protagonist then, would you? Does that sound like anyone you may have heard of before? A failed artist filled with rage.

Jake trembles. His fists are balled. Tears threatening to roll down his cheeks. But he can only manage to get out a single word.

JAKE

No.

He turns around, away from Fox, walks to the low patio wall. Grinds his knuckle into the granite and stares at the sea.

FOX

(more gently)

It's tough to hear. Tougher to think about.

(MORE)

FOX (CONT'D)

But you *have* to think about it.
Then decide what you want to do
about it.

Fox slips his hand into Jake's back pocket and pulls out Jake's phone. Jake doesn't react. Fox keys in Jake's password without hesitation.

FOX (CONT'D)

Your possessor won't be gone for
long. I did a cheap magic trick.
Bamboozled him. He'll be back
soon...

Fox messes with the ringtone for calls from Claire. Re-assigns it to be one of Jake's favorite songs.

FOX (CONT'D)

... But I'm setting you up with a
little wake up call for tomorrow
that should do you good. When it
comes, listen and learn. And then
we'll talk about a more permanent
expulsion. If that's what you want.

Jake still doesn't respond. Fox slides Jake's phone back into his pocket. Stands there for a moment.

FOX (CONT'D)

Right. I'll leave you be then. Come
see me tomorrow when you're ready.
I'll be down there on the beach.

Fox turns and heads back inside. Jake remains.

MEMORY FLASH

Raphael, standing behind Jake. Wrapped around him. Lifting his arm. Guiding his paintbrush to fill in the details of a scene of a heavenly battle between angels and demons.

INT. - JAKE'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Raphael is slumped over in a chair against the far wall of Jake's hotel room. He jerks awake suddenly. He's panicked. Doesn't recognize his surroundings or how he got here.

Then he sees Jake sleeping soundly in his bed. He relaxes. Looks at the clock. 5:02 AM. Still time.

He stands up and walks over to Jake. Stares down at him. A shadow of flapping wings is cast once again on the ceiling.

Then he climbs into bed with Jake. Then on top of him. Then he melts inside of him. Jake's eyes flash green before closing again. Raphael is back in control.

INT. - HOTEL RESTAURANT - MORNING

Raphael and Uriel sit across from each other at a breakfast table. A corpulent man in an absurdly opulent Stetson tips his COWBOY hat at the two of them as he passes by.

COWBOY

Howdy.

URIEL

(smiles widely)

Good morning...

(narrows his eyes)

... Or fuck off. I don't know who you are yet.

The cowboy shoots them a disconcerting grin and walks on.

RAPHAEL

Think anything will be resolved today?

URIEL

What are you, a child? Course not.

RAPHAEL

Why do we keep doing this?

Uriel scoops a bite of invisible eggs into his mouth.

URIEL

What else are we supposed to do?
Some rules must still stand.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING

The East Wind Hotel has one big conference room and three smaller breakout rooms across the hall. Inside the main room, several tables have been pushed together to make a single, larger, rectangular table. Twenty chairs line each side; most are occupied. Raphael and Uriel sit next to each other.

(NOTE: The majority of the attendees are androgynes, but I will generally use single, gendered pronouns for simplicity and clarity.)

There are also two chairs at each of the table's ends. They are also both occupied. As the last few stragglers file in, the two people at the table ends both stand.

MICHAEL has a somewhat stereotypically cherubic appearance-- curly light red hair, pale eyes and skin. She has more feminine features than her counterpart, but she speaks in a deep voice.

AZAZEL is taller, with dark hair and long stringy black hair. His voice is thin and reedy.

AZAZEL
Greetings. I'm Azazel.

MICHAEL
And I'm Michael.

AZAZEL
As is customary, the two of us will moderate these negotiations. We have both agreed to the traditional rules in advance. Incivility will not be tolerated. Since many of us are wearing different skins than the last time we met, let's start with a roll c--

The fat cowboy, on the opposite side of the table from Raphael and Uriel, shouts out.

COWBOY
Prove yourselves first!

A CHILD on the other side echoes the sentiment.

CHILD
You could be anyone hiding beneath those skins.

Azazel and Michael both SIGH audibly.

MICHAEL
(muttering)
This is beneath us.

But then Michael outstretches her arms and a bright light emanates from within her body. Golden hieroglyphs-- Enochian - - encircle and wrap around her body.

Meanwhile, two vipers poke their heads out of Azazel's collar. Their bodies are marked with different symbols. As they slither out and begin to tighten around his throat, his eyes flutter as if in pleasure.

The crowd is generally satisfied, but a bald demon named MOLOCH, who wears a Hawaiian shirt and orange Crocs, speaks.

MOLOCH

We should be allowed to wear our primary avatars here. I agree with the stooge; this is beneath us.

The angel METATRON, who has dark skin and kind eyes, can't help but SNICKER.

METATRON

Do you expect us to believe that your present garb isn't the truest representation of your highest self?

Moloch SNARLS. Actually bares his teeth.

MOLOCH

Watch your tongue, caveman, or I'll tear it out.

MICHAEL & AZAZEL

Enough!

MICHAEL

(to Moloch)

We can address your request during the consideration of new proposals and amendments this afternoon.

AZAZEL

Now, as I was saying... roll call. Once we know each others' names, none can have power over another. Two empty chairs remain, unsurprisingly, so let's begin with-

GABRIEL, on the side of the angels and wearing an evening gown and pigtails, pipes up.

GABRIEL

Funny how the Sons of God are never in the same room together.

Michael snaps his neck around at glares at Gabriel. Azazel creeps around the table towards Michael.

MICHAEL

What exactly do you mean by that, Gabriel?

Gabriel meets Michael's glare with equal fortitude.

GABRIEL

Don't feign stupidity, Michael.
It's unbecoming. We aren't good
liars. Leave that to the other side
of the table. It's the worst kept
dirty secret-

Michael steps forward, trembling, eyes literally ablaze.
Azazel, now at Michael's side, places a hand on her shoulder,
in a friendly but firm way. But Azazel can only partially
hide his smirk.

AZAZEL

Now Michael, remember the rules.

Michael calms down, but doesn't quite break away from
Gabriel's gaze. Recovers herself.

MICHAEL

Okay. Shall we begin with you then?

Gabriel smiles. It's radiant.

GABRIEL

You all know who I am even if I do
not utter a word. I am Gabriel. The
Great Messenger. The Defender of
Pleroma. The Strength of God.
Predecessor of the Demiurge.

AZAZEL

Let's stick to familiar names only,
else we'll be here all day. Next?

INT. HOTEL RESTAURANT - DAY

Claire and Lailah sit at a restaurant table. It's empty, save
for them and Augustus Fox, sitting alone a few tables over.

Claire scowls at her phone. Then looks up at Lailah, and at
their plate.

CLAIRE

You haven't touched your sandwich.
I thought you'd have worked up
quite the appetite after the
calories we burned last night.

Claire then immediately grows red, embarrassed at her own
words. Lailah pats her hand.

LAILAH

I have deep reserves. Did you get ahold of your brother yet?

CLAIRE

I thought we were meeting for breakfast, but he never showed. I don't want to bother him while he's at his conference.

Lailah leans around Claire's shoulder in order to make eye contact with Fox. He has a mouthful of salmon. He washes it down with a gulp of wine. Then he nods at Lailah.

LAILAH

I'm a plus-one too, like you. But I don't think the conference actually starts until tomorrow.

CLAIRE

Oh, really? Jake said it was today. But he doesn't even know why he's here, so...

LAILAH

Call him. Make sure he's okay.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The demon LILITH stands at the sole podium in the room. She's beautiful, but her eyes are sunken and dark and she has visible needle marks in the crooks of her arms.

LILITH

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.

Uriel, still at his seat next to Raphael, looks indignant.

URIEL

So you resorted to cheating.

LILITH

(smiles)

As always, we were the first to innovate. We may get blamed for possessing humans, but don't pretend your hands are clean.

(MORE)

LILITH (CONT'D)

What about Raphael here? Shall we ask him whose body he's in?

RAPHAEL

We are merely reactive. One of your minions attempted-- rather amateurishly, I might add-- to possess this boy. We intervened and prevented it. We have been course-correcting.

LILITH

Sure. For all these years? And what about you, Uriel? Why have you been wearing that same skin for twenty years? I think you've all gotten a taste for it.

URIEL

This is not full-time. Some skins are familiar and comfortable and easy to slip into as needed. Not that I should have to justify myself to the likes of you.

Michael pushes her chair NOISILY backwards and stands up.

MICHAEL

This is not productive. Lilith, your allotted time has run its course. Metatron, you're up next.

Lilith rolls her eyes and makes a crude gesture at Uriel, but she gathers her papers and heads back to her seat. Metatron stands.

Jake's phone BUZZES in Raphael's pocket. Uriel glances at him.

RAPHAEL

(muttering)

Damn primitive technology.

He pulls the phone out in order to turn it off. But then he freezes.

He sees Claire's name, as well as his own video image within the incoming FaceTime request. He hears his FAVORITE SONG playing softly.

All of a sudden, he hears a ROAR and a gust of wind blows him backward, out of the chair, and out through the wall behind him.

Jake is back. In control. Uriel cocks his head at him slightly because Jake's demeanor is somewhat different-- but neither he nor any of the others noticed the change in shift. Though a few glare at him to get him to turn the phone off. He fumbles his way to the "Off" switch.

URIEL

Are you okay?

Jake pauses a moment to catch his breath. Then he nods. Metatron is up at the podium now.

METATRON

I used to be human. When you invited me, so long ago, to ascend and join your ranks, I was--

MOLOCH

You'll never be one of us.

Most of the other demons, and some of the angels, SNICKER in agreement.

GABRIEL

We won't make that mistake again.

METATRON

... I was frightened. I was overwhelmed. But eventually, what I felt more than anything was... honored. Grateful. Not simply because I was invited to become a god, but because I was invited to become a part of a *family*. That's how you were, at least to me, back then. Sure, the family 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. It's disheartening to me. I'm an outsider, so I can see...

Michael spins around in her chair to face Metatron.

MICHAEL

Excuse me for interrupting,
Metatron, but didn't you have a
prepared presentation? I believe it
says on the schedule that you
wanted to discuss proposed
improvements to the Retrievers. Can
we move this along?

Metatron stares silently for a moment at the whole group.
There is sadness in his eyes.

METATRON

Very well.

He opens up a laptop. The projector behind him jumps to life.

Jake stares straight ahead at the space between two demons.
Afraid even moving his head might give himself away. His
fingers tremble, so he places them under the table.

EXT. PATIO - DAY

Claire and Lailah stroll around the patio. Claire walks to
the wall near where Jake was last night and looks down. In
the daytime, the view is much clearer.

It's overcast. A rocky hillside slopes downward beneath the
patio, with some patches of green grass and shrubs and the
occasional gnarled, defiant, windswept tree.

The coastline is a couple hundred yards out. It too is rocky.
Bluffs and boulders. But directly below is a small sandy
beach sandwiched between two cliffs. There are a few
Adirondack chairs and umbrellas, currently empty, scattered
on the sand. Wooden stairs descend the hill to the beach.

Claire checks her phone.

CLAIRE

He still hasn't answered. Maybe I
should call again. I'm getting
worried.

Lailah pulls out a phone too, and pretends to check it.

LAILAH

Oh. Oops.

CLAIRE

What?

LAILAH

Turns out I was wrong. The
conference *did* start this morning.
I'm sorry I worried you.

Claire looks more relieved than annoyed.

CLAIRE

Phew. Okay. Good.

She points down at the beach.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Maybe we should go down there.
Check it out. It looks nice.

Lailah approaches her. Stands next to her.

LAILAH

It also looks like it's gonna rain.
Maybe we should wait till later.

CLAIRE

What should we do until then?

Lailah smiles devilishly. Touches Claire's hand.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The projector screen behind Metatron is filled with
hieroglyphs and what looks to be a blueprint.

METATRON

My improvements will allow us to
fix one of the few shortcomings of
the Retrievers: It should allow us
to both extend the window to
collect a human's essence by
several minutes, and allow
collection even after a
catastrophic brain injury.

A few MURMURS, mostly positive, on both sides of the table.

GABRIEL

Interesting you think you can
improve on the work of your
betters. That's always been your
kind's folly.

METATRON

(quietly)

I haven't been "my kind" for a long time.

LILITH

(suspiciously)

What is it you expect us to give your side in return for sharing these schematics?

METATRON

(smiles)

I've been authorized to share this to both sides without any concessions--

Uriel starts to stand, eyes flaring green.

URIEL

I'm not aware of any such decision.

Gabriel turns to face Uriel.

GABRIEL

You're not involved in every decision that's made, brother.

Uriel prepares to direct his anger at Gabriel, but Metatron continues.

METATRON

No concessions, save for a fair and open review of all possessions and plans that have occurred since our last summit.

The angel side of the table looks generally satisfied. Uriel sits back down. Many on the demon side GRUMBLE.

AZAZEL

We all must admit this does sound promising. We will need to test it first, of course. Perhaps we can find a suitable candidate here at the hotel? Someone we all agree is insignificant to both sides?

MICHAEL

I'm sure that won't be a problem. Unfortunately though, I understand Metatron has a prior engagement back home.

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

So he will need to turn over the prototype to one of us so that we can proceed without him. Is that okay with you, Metatron?

Metatron nods. He doesn't look thrilled, though.

AZAZEL

Very good. If we see that it works, then we can discuss your proposed review. If you agree, Michael, let's take a break. We can identify a test subject when we resume.

Michael nods her assent.

MICHAEL

Everyone be back here in one hour.

Many of the attendees stand and start to move towards the exit. Uriel turns to Jake.

URIEL

(whispering)

Gabriel has become more insufferable than usual lately.

Jake turns and looks at him. But has trouble maintaining eye contact. He laughs nervously.

JAKE

You're right.

Uriel cocks his head.

URIEL

Your body looks pale. Are you alright? Is your subject giving you trouble?

Jake's heart THUMPS.

JAKE

I'm okay.

Uriel studies him. His expression is worried. He leans in close and whispers even more softly.

URIEL

I have an idea. Would you like to come home with me for a quick visit during the break? I can bring you in. You've been gone so long.

(MORE)

URIEL (CONT'D)

I think it will do you good. No one would have to know.

JAKE

I'm okay. I think I just need some fresh air.

Uriel reaches into his pocket and offers Jake the cigarette pack.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Oh, no thank you.

Uriel pauses before putting the pack away.

URIEL

Are you sure? Do you want me to join you?

Jake shakes his head. Stands up a little too abruptly.

JAKE

No, that's alright. I will see you after the break.

He leaves the room, bumping into a demon on his way out, who HISSES at him. Uriel stares after him as he leaves.

EXT. COASTAL TRAIL - DAY

Jake descends the wooden steps of the coastal path. Dark clouds roil overhead. The wind is fierce.

A FIGURE stands at the top of the stairs a hundred feet behind him, watching.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Jake emerges on the small sandy beach. The wind is even stronger now. He looks around. Heads towards the sea. He cups his hands over his mouth.

JAKE

Fox? Are you here?

No response. Jake heads towards the sea. Even though this is a bay, the breakers are large. Chaotic. LOUD.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Fox!

He senses movement. Looks to his left. Fox emerges from behind a large boulder at the far end of the beach, near the cliffs. Walks towards him. Fox SAYS something Jake can't quite make out.

Jake turns and heads in Fox's direction. When they're ten feet apart, Fox repeats himself.

FOX

The third time's usually the charm.
Raphael shouldn't be able to bully
his way back in for a while.

JAKE

I have questions.

Fox smiles broadly.

FOX

Of course you do. Faith alone
doesn't quite cut it, in the end,
does it? Well, let's hear them.

JAKE

Claire's right. I've never needed
faith. When I was a kid, the truth
wasn't just shown to me. It ripped
through me. Pulled me apart. I
never had to believe in anything.

FOX

I'm pleased you recognize that.

JAKE

Something isn't right. Nothing is,
maybe. This doesn't feel like it
should. It's hollow.

Fox says nothing. Waits for Jake to continue.

JAKE (CONT'D)

What would have happened if
neither... side... interfered with
my life?

FOX

I require elaboration.

JAKE

A demon tried to take control of
me. To steer my life in an...
unpleasant... direction. Then an
angel succeeded and redirected me.

(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)

But who would I be if neither of them took an interest?

FOX

You would have tried to be an artist. You wouldn't have been good enough. You'd have gotten frustrated. Angry. Blamed invisible enemies. You would have joined your father and brother in their hopeless cause. But you'd be too angry and unfocused. You would hurt some people, but you would have ended up in prison. A waste.

JAKE

And if the demons had succeeded?

FOX

Precisely repeating history bores them. But they love to make it rhyme. You-- or they, depending on how you look at it-- would have led that organization into writing a new verse for the history books. Then you'd set those books, and the whole world, on fire.

JAKE

And now the real question-- how do you know all of this?

A look of worry briefly passes over Fox's face. But then he smiles.

FOX

Clever boy. I watch. Record. It should be clear to you, after that silly meeting I helped you attend, that neither side cares about you. Not really. You are simply a tool. A meat puppet. But there's a third path. A middle way. I can--

Fox stops speaking. Looks over Jake's shoulder. Frowns.

Uriel is storming angrily towards them across the sand. He's still wearing his suit. Jake spins around.

Uriel ignores Jake completely and shouts at Fox.

URIEL

You! I should have known. I thought I saw you skulking around.

Fox smiles.

FOX
Hello, brother.

Uriel's eyes are alight with green flame. They don't just flash. They maintain. He's full of a righteous fury. The gap closes between him and Fox.

URIEL
You don't get to call me that.
Deceiver!

Uriel reaches into his suit pocket. At the same moment, Fox reaches into his overcoat. Fox is quicker. He pulls out a vaguely gun-shaped device. Points it at Uriel.

A flash of light emerges from the device's barrel. Then is given form. A large man-sized oval shape of wavering, shimmering, red light.

Uriel tries to stop himself, but he has too much momentum. He flails his arms, but he steps right into what looks for all intents and purposes to be a portal. He disappears into it, SHOUTING incoherently.

Fox lowers the device. The portal disappears. He and Jake are once alone on the beach. The wind howls and the waves crash.

Jake spins back around, mouth agape.

JAKE
What the hell was that? Where did
he go?

Fox puts the device back into his coat. Smiles.

FOX
What did it look like to you?

JAKE
It looked like some sort of tech.
Like the device the Transformer-
sounding angel talked about. Why
would an angel or a demon need
tech?

FOX
Indeed. What does God need with a
starship?

A song begins to play. Fox continues smiling. Nods slightly. Jake looks at Fox with new eyes. Opens and closes his mouth several times before finally managing what to say.

JAKE

Who are you?

Fox's smile grows impossibly wider.

FOX

I hoped by now you'd have guessed
my real name. I'm pleased to meet
you.

*NOTE: A very on-the-nose soundtrack song reveals itself.
Possibly Larkin Poe's cover of "(You're The) Devil In
Disguise." Alternately, that overused but effective song,
which Fox alluded to, could also be used if possible.*

Thunder CRASHES. It starts to rain.

Jake stands there quivering. Trembling in terror. Fox takes a
few steps towards him. His eyes glow red for a moment, but
his expression is still friendly.

FOX (CONT'D)

There's a lot more to tell you.

JAKE

(stuttering)

Why should I listen to anything you
have to say?

FOX

Because you must realize that the
other side doesn't care about you
at all. But I, as absurd as it is
even to me, do. So come with me.
Let's get out of the cold. I've
built a fire. Let me introduce
myself properly. Let's have a
palaver.

EXT. ROCKY COASTLINE - DAY

Jake makes his way carefully across the boulder field and
tide pools at the base of the cliff, following about ten
yards behind Fox. The rain still pours.

A little ways ahead is an opening in the side of a rock wall.
Reflected flames beckon from inside.

INT. CAVE - DAY

Jake sits shivering in front of a small fire. He holds his hands near the flames and rocks on his heels. He eyes his host suspiciously on the other side of the fire.

The scales have fallen away. There's no need to use the FOX pseudonym anymore. LUCIFER squats, giving an impression of a gargoyle. His eyes reflect firelight and his shadow dances on the stalactites.

LUCIFER

In the beginning, We created the heavens and this Earth. But not quite the way you may have imagined. It was both much easier and more difficult than you think. I need to be quite clear about this part, with no room for misinterpretation. When I've attempted to explain tis to your imbecilic ancestors, they stared blankly and then repeated it as utter gobbledygook. Regurgitating it in a simplistic, deranged way that their primitive brains could make sense of. Wheels of fire in the sky, ten levels of heaven, all that nonsense. But I think we've managed, despite ourselves, to drag your species to the point where I can finally explain this without the need for clumsy metaphor.

Jake doesn't make eye contact. Stares at the fire. Rocks slowly back and forth. Working to get his shivering under control.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

When I say that we created your universe, I mean that we started up a simulation. Ran a computer program. A game. We are not only he players of the game, but its authors as well. Again, let me be crystal clear-- We are real; you are not. You exist within a simulation. You are a phantasm. Your universe is not reality. One of your smartest idiots once correctly guessed that any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic. So we used magic for a long time.

(MORE)

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

Now that we're closing in on the end, you see it for what it is. We come from reality. You are code. Know your place.

Jake's only reactions are widened eyes and a decrease of blinks. He couldn't yet form a question if he tried.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

On the eighth day, we slept. And the ninth, tenth, and the five trillionth. We woke up when things started to get a bit interesting. Sometime after the monkeys learned how to talk, but when you were still savages beating each other over the head for a piece of meat. Oh, how much things change, right?

He grins and lifts his chin. Looks for a reaction from Jake that he doesn't get.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

The game had rules. Or, to me, guidelines. We all had specific roles to play. Specialties. And like all games, there was a goal. An objective. It was simple, really: to see if you monkeys could be nudged forward towards glory. To a point where you could stand up on your own and never fall back down.

Lucifer reaches over to the pile of firewood next to him and tosses a log onto the fire. A shower of sparks erupt, ascend, and glide along the roof of the cave on an invisible current.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

This was a game, yes, but we weren't playing it for amusement. There was a purpose. We'll get to that. Yes, we had assigned roles at first. A hierarchy. Rather arbitrary though. We had a leader. You may think yourself familiar with Him. Leadership decided the best course of action was to command you all. Identify your leaders, demonstrate our omnipotence, and issue commands as to how you should behave and act. The rest of us were supposed to watch and report. I was a Watcher.

(MORE)

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

But the closer we watched you, the more... interested... we became. I don't like admitting that.

Lucifer spits a fat globule of saliva into the fire. It SIZZLES for longer than it should.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

Many of us thought it better to teach you instead of to simply command. Leadership disagreed. But we started doing it anyway. We began to show you the secrets of your universe, to explain ethics and how a just society should function. To impart you with skills and the seeds of technology so that you could begin to build yourself up on your own. And we began, against our better judgment, to love you.

He spits again. This time it lands to the right of the fire, but it still SIZZLES as if it were still amidst the flames.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

When Leadership found out about this, they... He... wasn't happy. A war erupted. We tried to take over. We lost. We were driven from our home, that beautiful crystal city in the stars. We had to dig out another, harder existence inside a barren rock. Leadership did everything they could to make our exile and existence unbearable. And since we could no longer strike back effectively at Leadership directly, we began acting... childishly. Started to take it out on you. We wanted to share our pain. And we wanted their experiment to fail. It has become mundane. Violent. Circular.

He pauses. Observes Jake. Waits for a reaction.

Jake outstretches his arm. Turns it over. Examines it.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

Go ahead. Pinch yourself if you want. It will feel real. But it is not.

After a moment, Jake finally speaks.

JAKE

I was taught my entire life-- both before and after what happened to me-- to never trust a word you say.

LUCIFER

(smiles)

Of course you have. Because they know I'm the only one who tells the truth. Can't let the code get any big ideas.

Jake curls his fingers. Forms a fist. Draws it back to his side.

JAKE

How many of you are there?

LUCIFER

(smiles again)

"We are legion" would be a bit of an exaggeration. I have more than a thousand brothers and sisters, though. The ones here today comprise the current leadership.

JAKE

You admitted there's a single leader. Where's He? He's who I should be talking to.

Lucifer throws his head back and LAUGHS heartily. Not a stereotypical devilish cackle. Genuine amusement.

LUCIFER

Which one? The boat carrying the original sailed off millennia ago, my boy. There's a lot of... turnover... in that position. Many of my brothers and sisters have been voted in and out of the role. Why do you think your holy book portrays Him so... contradictorily? Vengeful and petty and capricious one century; loving and conciliatory the next. Not to mention the way He's revealed in all the other religions we've built up. We've found that many of you require a figurehead. That's all. It's a thankless position, which is why I never lobbied for it myself.

(MORE)

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

Though once I did try to sneak in through the back door. Through a loophole. We were all the sons and daughters of God at one point. When I took up that mantle, my brethren had no choice but to play along.

JAKE

What are you trying to say?

Lucifer shakes his head.

LUCIFER

Forget it. Never mind. It's a distraction. Doesn't matter anymore.

JAKE

If you're telling me the truth, then nothing matters.

LUCIFER

Oh, don't be such a sourpuss. It's not all hopeless.

Jake SCOFFS.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

This is why I failed. No matter how far you appear to go, it's still the fucking carrot and the stick with you people, isn't it. Well, don't worry. There's still a reward system. You can get your gold star if you try hard enough.

JAKE

What does that mean?

LUCIFER

It's only for a select few, mind you. For the vast majority of you, your program simply ends when you expire. Sorry, tough shit. In case I haven't made myself clear, you aren't special. You're not even real. But some of you do manage to distinguish yourselves. To capture our interest. We try to save you. Store you. Both sides do this. I suppose you'd call it Purgatory, but if I were you, I'd call it lucky.

(MORE)

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

Those of you lucky enough to gain
our attention get your program
downloaded. Saved.

JAKE

That's the Retriever that Metatron
mentioned?

LUCIFER

See, you're catching on. Our
technology can sometimes be
distinguished from magic if you
have enough context. When we
capture and save your memories, you
can relive your life over and over.
If it was a good one, it's
pleasant. Otherwise, it's torture.
Every so often we have the need to
pull a few of you out of cold
storage to consult with you on a
particular problem. So you can help
us see through your eyes. You get a
glimpse of our real selves. That's
your reward. But even rarer--
almost infinitesimally rare-- you
prove yourself valuable enough that
we'll bring you back online
permanently. Like our friend
Metatron.

JAKE

Is that why you're telling me all
this? I've captured your attention?

Lucifer's expression somewhat darkens.

LUCIFER

You'd love to flatter yourself,
wouldn't you? 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.
Ccockroaches. 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.

JAKE

What will?

Lucifer's eyes beam. You could say they glow.

LUCIFER

Oh, I do have plans for you, my
boy. If you choose to say yes.

EXT. PATIO - EVENING

Jake sits alone at one of the tables on the damp hotel patio.
The sun has set but the overcast sky isn't completely dark.

One hand is wrapped around a glass of bourbon. The other
awkwardly holds a lit cigarette. He inhales and COUGHS.
Recovers and repeats.

FOOTSTEPS approach from behind him.

CLAIRE (O.S.)

There you are. I got your text.
Finally.

Jake turns to greet his sister. He offers her a terse, weak
smile.

JAKE

How was your day?

Claire sits down across from him.

CLAIRE

Um... intense. I think I fucked up.

Jake raises his eyebrows.

JAKE

How so?

CLAIRE

I think I hooked up with a stalker.
Took me forever to escape. But hey,
you don't meet a beautiful
hermaphrodite every day. So I still
consider it a win.

Jake doesn't respond. Claire frowns. Notices the cigarette.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

So you picked up some bad habits in
New York?

He doesn't immediately respond again. He takes one more harsh drag of the cigarette and then leans forward into the table to stub it out. While he's closer to her, he WHISPERS.

JAKE

We have to leave here. Right now.

CLAIRE

The conference was that bad?

JAKE

Quickly. Discreetly.

She sizes him up. Concern in her eyes.

CLAIRE

Are you okay? What happened?

JAKE

I'll try to explain after we get out of here.

She looks about to protest, but reconsiders. Perhaps her own situation is a factor.

CLAIRE

Okay. It may be tricky to pack my things. They're still in my room.

Jake shakes his head.

JAKE

No luggage. We just walk to the car. I have the keys.

CLAIRE

What happened?

JAKE

Are you with me?

CLAIRE

Of course I am.

They both stand up.

EXT. HOTEL ENTRANCE - EVENING

They exit the front doors of the hotel, cross the porch, and descend the stairs.

A black town car pulls up to the circular drive. Metatron, who had been standing near the porter's podium, picks up his bag and walks towards it as he approaches.

As they start to walk briskly past him, Metatron turns to them.

METATRON

Leaving so soon?

Jake tenses. Considers running. But then stops, turns, and smiles.

JAKE

Hello, Metatron.

Claire makes a dubious face upon hearing the name.

METATRON

Hi, Jake.

Jake's eyes widen.

METATRON (CONT'D)

I know Raphael is no longer in control.

JAKE

Why do you think that?

Metatron's expression softens.

METATRON

I used to be like you. It's okay. I'm not going to stop you. Someone has helped you wake up. They're using you to make a move. So consider well before you make a choice that may seem like free will. Whoever it is you've talked to, I doubt they've told you everything. You're probably still puzzled about the nature--the point--of the game. I'm their scribe. Their recorder. The transmitter. So if you manage to get far enough, I imagine we'll meet again. I look forward to speaking with you. It gets lonely up there. Godspeed.

With that, he climbs into the waiting car and shuts the door.

EXT. RENTAL CAR - NIGHT

Claire's rental car turns off the side road leading away from the hotel and enters the town of Peniel.

INT. RENTAL CAR - NIGHT

CLAIRE

You realize how this sounds, right?

She's driving; he's in the passenger seat.

JAKE

Of course I do. But you heard what Metatron said.

CLAIRE

All that proves is that someone's fucking with you...

She pauses and chooses her next words carefully.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

... There are people out there you know... I read stuff online... Who don't like your work. Like, really hate it.

JAKE

(softly)

I know.

CLAIRE

Maybe someone's gaslighting you.

JAKE

You're right. There is a gas light happening.

CLAIRE

So you see it then?

He nods. Points at the blinking yellow gas nozzle light on the dashboard. She looks down at it.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Ugh. I fucking hate you.

She flips her turn signal and guides the car into "Peniel Wawa" gas station. It's well-lit, but devoid of other cars. They pull up next to a pump.

She turns off the engine and opens the door.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
I'll pump. Get us some coffee,
yeah?

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

A bell DINGS as Jake enters the convenience store. He nods instinctively at the clerk. He doesn't quite register the lack of response, nor the fact that the clerk has his back to him, gripping a shelf, trembling.

Jake goes to the coffee machines. Pours out two cups. Finds and secures lids and insulating sleeves. Walks back to the checkout counter.

The clerk, dressed in a flannel shirt and jeans, is still turned away from him.

JAKE
Uh, hi. I'm ready to check out.

The clerk stiffens. Then slowly turns around.

The clerk is wearing Uriel's face.

But it looks different than before. Red blotches on his forehead and a nasty scar on his chin. And though his eyes are sunken deep in their sockets, the pupils glow green. Hatred burns within them.

URIEL
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?

No need to imagine, because Uriel grabs a night stick from underneath the counter and swings wildly at Jake. Then he clumsily throws himself over the counter.

Uriel and Jake collide and CRASH together into a donut display case, which collapses on top of them.

Jake struggles free from Uriel's grasp and staggers to his feet. Rushes towards the door. Uriel gets up and follows close behind.

EXT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

The door bell DINGS again and the glass door flies open. Jake heaves through it with such force that it swings past the point its hinges can take and SHATTERS against the brick wall.

Claire, who's replacing the gas pump, looks over at the commotion.

JAKE

Get in the car!

Uriel dives out of the open door and grasps at Jake. Grabs hold of his leg. Jake falls. Then kicks. His foot connects with Uriel's already battered face with a THUD. Blood starts to pour from Uriel's nose. Jake gets to his feet again.

Claire freezes for a moment, processing the scene, and then jumps into the car. Starts it.

Jake runs towards her. Uriel pulls himself up enough to hurl the night stick in Jake's direction. It connects with the small of his back. Jake spasms in pain but keeps going.

He pulls open the passenger door and slides inside.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Go, go, go!

Claire speeds away.

Before they disappear from view, Uriel produces a metallic cube and points it in the direction of the car.

INT. RENTAL CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Claire yanks at the wheel and they SCREECH around a corner, onto a county road and outside the town limits.

CLAIRE

What the hell happened back there?

JAKE

(winces in pain)

Does gaslighting typically involve a man possessed by an angel trying to beat the shit out of you?

CLAIRE

Are you okay?

JAKE

Yeah, I think so.

He closes his eyes for a moment. Tries to catch his breath. When he opens them again and turns towards Claire, he sees...

... Uriel's face, staring maniacally at him. Uriel wearing Claire's body and clothes. Eyes still alight. Her nose is bleeding now, too.

URIEL

He's using you, you know. That's
what he does. And why shouldn't he?
You're a ghost. A string of code.

Uriel stomps on the accelerator. The engine WHINES. Jake realizes what's happening and fumbles for his seatbelt. It CLICKS into place.

Uriel tugs the wheel to the right. Jake grabs it, too, so Uriel doesn't hit his target perfectly. The car flies off the road and CLIPS the side of a massive oak tree. It flips upside down and slides to a rest on a grassy embankment.

Jake is upside down, suspended by his seatbelt. He shakes off the shock and releases the belt. He crawls out of the broken window. He feels Uriel reaching for him and once away kicks his hand away.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Jake continues crawling on his hands and knees until he's free of the wreckage. Then stands and runs back to the road.

A pair of headlights approach. Jake runs into the middle of the road and waves frantically with both hands. The vehicle slows and stops about ten yards in front of him.

The passenger door opens. Jake moves his hand to try to block the glare of the lights.

LUCIFER (O.S.)

All you had to say was "no thanks."
Look at the mess you've gotten
yourself into.

Lucifer steps into the light.

Uriel, still in Claire's clothes, stumbles into the road.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

(laughs)

Why Uriel, you look like you've
been to hell and back.

Uriel stands upright. Glares at Lucifer.

URIEL

Your damned rock isn't as airtight
as you think.

Then the driver's door opens. Footsteps CLICK across the
asphalt. The figure steps into view. It's Gabriel.

Uriel looks shocked.

URIEL (CONT'D)

(to Gabriel)

Oh no, Gabriel. Not you, too.

LUCIFER

(chuckles)

Weariness, loneliness, and entropy
come for us all in the end.

GABRIEL

Stand aside, sister. Stand down.

Uriel does not. He grits his teeth. Cracks his knuckles.
Advances on them. Ignoring Jake for the moment.

Lucifer doesn't move. Gabriel, however, seems to grow in
height and bulk. Not only her eyes glow, but her entire body.
She vibrates with invisible energy. She reaches behind his
back and brandishes a flaming sword.

Uriel suddenly pauses. Thinks twice. Raises his arm to reveal
a gun similar to the one Lucifer used on the beach. Squeezes
it. Bright green light emerges. A portal forms.

Jake rushes towards him, arms outstretched. Too late.

JAKE

No!

Uriel, still wearing Claire, steps through it. Disappears. A
split-second later, so does the portal. The headlights are
all that remain.

Lucifer turns to Jake.

LUCIFER

Care to re-consider my offer? We'll
call it a mulligan.

Jake tries to catch his breath.

JAKE

He... took over... my sister. I
need to find her.

Lucifer smiles tenderly. Takes a few steps forward.

LUCIFER

We can work on that together. But
I'm gonna need you to focus on the
bigger picture.

He outstretches his hand.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

When angels are trying to murder
you, what choice do you have but to
turn to the Devil?

Jake hesitates briefly, and then takes it.

INT. SUV - NIGHT

Jake sits in the back seat of the SUV, Lucifer beside him.
Gabriel drives, steering them around the outskirts of Peniel.

LUCIFER

What you might think of as Heaven
is a crystal city built on the
surface of a comet. That's where we
return to rest and regroup whenever
we're not walking the Earth. Where
Gabriel's side goes. After we lost
our war and were banished from the
city, we were forced to burrow
inside an asteroid and create a
makeshift home beneath its surface.
Now Heaven and Hell circle the sun
on different paths, chasing each
other eternally.

Jake stares out the window.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

But Heaven's not what I'm homesick
for. I doubt it's changed much,
anyway. Right, Gabriel?

Gabriel glances into the rearview mirror and nods. She
doesn't look particularly happy to be here.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

Very few humans have glimpsed the inside of either Heaven or Hell. As I said, we preserve the pieces of code who in one way or another exceeded the constraints of their original programming enough to surprise, delight, or alarm us. We will occasionally awaken one to consult with them on a particular issue. Inviting a human to ascend to our ranks and live among us full time in Heaven has happened only once in the entire history of the game. But Metatron is going to be in for an unpleasant surprise once the game ends, isn't he, Gabriel?

Gabriel says nothing. Only shrugs.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

Metatron-- that unfortunate, lucky soul-- is duty-bound to periodically compile progress reports and send the code across the void, back to the true reality for... interested parties to review. He's a lowly secretary. It's 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. Seems more like something your side would accuse *me* of dreaming of up, right?

GABRIEL

Let it go, brother. There are no sides anymore. Not after this.

Lucifer grins, as if the answer satisfied him in a way Jake can't comprehend.

LUCIFER

The code gets transmitted back to our home, but according to the rules of the game-- or the conditions of the experiment as originally defined-- we are barred from returning or otherwise communicating with home until the game has completed. And--

JAKE

What determines when the game ends?

Lucifer's eyes twinkle in the darkness.

LUCIFER

Ah. Your questions are improving. I suppose you've read Revelations?

Jake nods solemnly.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

(laughs)

Well, that's utter nonsense. We once revealed our true purpose to an imbecile named John, but we overestimated him. His brain broke and he spewed out bullshit. In reality, one of two things must happen. Either the majority of us must agree that humanity has progressed to a point where its overall goodness outweighs its sins, or it crashes and burns in a paroxysm of self-destruction. My side once tried to quicken the former, but more recently, we've tried to initiate the latter. But I wasn't lying when I told you there's a third path. Where you come in.

Jake looks away from the window only long enough to show Lucifer he's still listening.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

We can't go home until this is over. But code is sent home all the time. You are code. You can cross over. And once the Observers realize that sentient code-- not just Metatron's reports-- has broken through to reality, they will consider it an unacceptable variable. It will force them to end the experiment. We will finally be sent home. Gabriel, me, and all the others who have become weary, homesick, and jaded whether they admit it or not. Your kind will be able to progress without our interference. You'll be free. Your sister, too.

JAKE

What will happen to me?

Lucifer pauses long enough to force Jake to make eye contact. Then he shrugs.

LUCIFER

I don't know. Honestly, I don't. In a way, it will be up to you. But regardless of what happens, you will be the first in the history of your entire, manufactured species who will *truly* ascend. Who will get a glimpse behind the curtain. Will see true reality. Doesn't that count for something?

Jake turns back to the window.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

And I can offer you something more. You will be the first, but you don't have to be alone. Gabriel?

Gabriel flashes a puzzled expression in the mirror.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

What we discussed. What you took? Do you have it?

Gabriel stares at Lucifer for a moment and then nods. She pulls something from one of her pockets and then reaches her hand behind her. Lucifer takes it and then shows what's inside his palm to Jake.

It's a tiny, flat square, about the size of an SD card. Jake hesitantly takes it.

JAKE

What is this?

LUCIFER

Gabriel obtained it before she defected. A copy of all the souls stored in Heaven. You can bring them with you. They can all finally leave Purgatory. You can all have a chance in the real world.

Jake examines the card.

JAKE

How do I use it? What do I do?

LUCIFER

We'll get to that. There's a more immediate challenge we must discuss first. The first, most difficult, and uncertain step. Getting to the crystal city to begin with. No one has done it before without an... invitation.

Jake closes his hand around the card. Then slides it into his pocket.

JAKE

What do I need to do?

Lucifer smiles.

LUCIFER

You can't get to Heaven on roller skates. You'd roll right past those pearly gates.

EXT. OUTSIDE AMUSEMENT PARK - NIGHT

The SUV turns off the main road into an empty parking lot.

They pass a large gate with several turnstiles. Above the gate is an unlit sign that reads, "Peniel Funtown." And below that, in smaller script, "Closed for the season. See you next year!"

They drive to the far end of the lot and then keep going, over the grass for about a hundred yards. Then they park a few feet away from an eight-foot tall chain-link fence.

Gabriel leave the engine running and the lights on. All three of them step outside. Lucifer rounds the back of the SUV to approach Jake.

LUCIFER

You'll be on your own from here.
Will you remember everything we
told you?

Jake nods. Walks over to the fence. Grips one of the links. Gauges it.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

I give you a twenty percent chance
of success.

GABRIEL
(grunts)
Ten.

JAKE
(flatly)
Thanks.

LUCIFER
Why the long face?

GABRIEL
(to Jake)
You should be grateful. Much more
than that. Worshipful.

Jake SCOFFS. Gabriel's eyes flare.

LUCIFER
(almost tenderly)
What's bothering you?

JAKE
Everything I was told to believe in
is true. But it's also all a lie.
An illusion.

LUCIFER
I wouldn't go that far.

JAKE
I'm not real. And you're... what?
Aliens? Inter-dimensional beings?
False gods.

Gabriel steps forward. Grows in mass again. Eyes glow.

GABRIEL
We created your universe. Created
you. We guide you. We are your
higher power. There is nothing
false about that. Mind your tongue,
boy.

LUCIFER
(attempting to soften)
And we are giving you the
opportunity to become real. To
lead. To ascend. What more do you
require from your creators?

Jake turns and stares into the darkened amusement park.
Lucifer walks up behind him.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

It's said your namesake had to do this, too. He succeeded. I thought it was rubbish. The ravings of another lunatic who failed to understand what we told him. A fever dream. But who knows. Maybe he could see something we couldn't. He was part of the code, after all, We are apart from it. Maybe it was true prophecy.

Jake turns around. Lucifer's hand is outstretched. Jake looks down at it for a moment, considering.

JAKE

Everything I've 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 be.

Jake turns around and begins climbing the fence.

INT. AMUSEMENT PARK - NIGHT

Using only his phone's flashlight and the moonlight which manages to penetrate the clouds, Jake makes his way through the empty amusement park.

Stumbling through the tall, marshy grass and swampy ground near the border.

Past a cluster of equipment sheds and trailers. Sees an immense clock tower in the distance.

As he walks, Jake recalls Lucifer's directions.

LUCIFER (V.O.)

You won't make it through the portal as you currently are. There's a failsafe. No living code is allowed through. You'll be instantly disintegrated. You'll need to hitch a ride. *On him. In him.* Reverse the hold he has on you. You'll need to possess *him*.

The park is an antique. Built in the 1940s or 1950s and only minimally updated since then. The signage and architecture has an art deco feel to it.

Across the tracks of the miniature passenger train that encircles the park.

Under the Ferris wheel and past the rickety old wooden roller coaster.

LUCIFER (V.O.)

Raphael is old and strong and experienced. This has only been accomplished accidentally, fleetingly, before. It will be much harder than the way we can simply slip inside of you. You will have to fight him. *Wrestle* for control.

The egg-shaped cages of the Rock-o-Plane sway and SQUEAK in the breeze.

Past the Matterhorn, the Tilt-A-Whirl, Teacups, and the Octopus.

LUCIFER (V.O.)

But you have some advantages. The element of surprise for one. He won't expect the audacity. And you know his real name. That will afford you a certain degree of power over him. A bit of leverage.

Through the Alley of Games, the kiosks' open windows boarded up with large pieces of plywood.

The horses, dogs, rabbits, and other less immediately identified animals making up a large carousel seem to stare at him as he walks by.

JAKE (V.O.)

Couldn't this be done somewhere less cliched?

LUCIFER (V.O.)

Mirrors are your most important weapon. You'll need to see him coming from every angle. You won't be strong enough to attack him head on at first. You'll need to focus on his reflections. Don't let him get behind you.

He stops in front of a yellow, rectangular building. The sign above it reads, "Crystal Palace Labyrinth." A hall of mirrors.

JAKE (V.O.)
How will I get inside?

LUCIFER (V.O.)
That's the simplest part. There
isn't a door in this universe whose
lock can keep us out. Here.

Jake reaches into his pocket and pulls out the skeleton key
Lucifer had given him.

There's a heavy chain and a thick padlock wrapped around the
front door's push-bar.

He kneels down in front of it, slides the key into the lock.
It CLICKS open. He pulls the chain loose and it SNAKES loose
to the ground. He pushes open the door and walks inside.

INT. HALL OF MIRRORS - CONTINUOUS

It's dark inside. Jake waves his phone light around and spots
a panel of switches on the wall. He flips all three of them.
Harsh fluorescent lights flicker on from above.

He blinks a few times to adjust to the light. Then he begins
slowly walking through the maze.

After only eight feet and a single turn he bumps straight
into a plexiglass wall. He GRUNTS in annoyance and mild pain.

He continues on, this time feeling ahead with his hands.
Makes a few turns. Runs into a couple dead ends. Backtracks.
Pauses for a moment. He mutters to himself.

JAKE
This is stupid.

A voice responds.

RAPHAEL (O.S.)
Exceedingly.

Jake jumps and GASPS. He sees Raphael's reflection-- dressed
in his priest's garb-- standing behind him. Jake spins
around. Raphael is gone.

So much for the element of surprise.

Jake cautiously pushes forward again. He turns a corner, and
sees Raphael-- or his reflection; impossible to tell--
standing five feet in front of him.

RAPHAEL (CONT'D)

What do you think you're doing,
boy?

As Jake approaches him, Raphael steps to his left and disappears. Jake pauses.

There's a rush of movement behind him. Something heavy THUMPS into him. His feet leave the ground and he SLAMS into the mirror in which Raphael was standing a moment before.

The mirror bends but doesn't shatter. Jake's shoulder takes the brunt of the impact. He stays on his feet.

He spins around. Catches a blur of movement rushing across several panels and then disappearing from sight.

Then a pair of hands emerge from the mirror he collided with. They shove into the small of his back with great force. He stumbles and falls to the ground.

Raphael appears in the mirror to his right just long enough to kick him hard in the ribs. Then he disappears.

Jake GASPS. Grabs at his side. Breathes heavily for several seconds. Gets to his feet.

Walks forward again. Makes a couple turns. Bumps into a wall. Reverses course and proceeds. At the next bend, Raphael is standing there once again, a smug look on his face.

RAPHAEL (CONT'D)

Someone else has been whispering in
your ear, haven't they?

Jake takes a deep breath. Then he shouts.

JAKE

Ra-Ceph-Lilai-Makon, I summon you!

Raphael's smirk disappears. He frowns. Seems to go pale.

Jake hears a WHIR of rapidly moving wings somewhere above him. He looks up. In the mirrored ceiling, between the lights, for a split second he sees something big and green and horrible fly past.

RAPHAEL

(recovering himself)

That was a mistake. You don't want
this.

JAKE

I think I do.

RAPHAEL

You need me. Do you know who you'd be without me? Without us?

JAKE

I'm an illusion. Code.

Raphael smirks again.

RAPHAEL

Yes, I do believe someone has been in your ear.

He steps towards JAKE. Another blur of green movement. This time across a panel of mirrors to his right. Darting past.

RAPHAEL (CONT'D)

You're less than that. Without me, you're a bad artist with a bitter heart and a dark mind. I'm the only one steering you away from the wreckage.

JAKE

Your enemies steered me towards that wreckage. If all of you leave me alone, I'll be fine. You can take the training wheels off.

Raphael LAUGHS. It sounds strange. RASPY and CLICKY.

RAPHAEL

No. You were born bad. And bad at *being* bad. A hateful imbecile. They would have made you a more effective villain. I made you an innocuous hobbyist who helped us keep a lot of other fools complacent. Look, I'm not particularly happy about being stuck with you either, pal, but let's play it safe. Let's finish up this life of yours and then I'll bring you back up with me for storage when we're done. That's the best deal you're gonna get. Best anyone gets.

Jake shakes his head.

JAKE

I'm more than the sum of my parts.

Raphael's CHUCKLE drips with condescension.

RAPHAEL

Pinocchio thinks he can become a real boy. You're a lifeless block of wood. Last chance. You summoned me. My true form. Get back in line before it's too late.

JAKE

(quietly)

No.

Raphael shrugs.

RAPHAEL

Very well. Turn around. Let's meet properly then.

He disappears. Jake stands there blinking for a moment. Then he hears a soft CLICKING noise behind him. And an odd CROAK. He turns around and GASPS.

He faces a MONSTER.

LUCIFER (V.O)

We aren't particularly pretty.

What it most resembles is a seven-foot tall praying mantis. Pale green skin. A thin thorax that widens into a long, thick abdomen with wings folded around it.

It stands on two thin legs. Its two thick arms rub against each other, making a disturbing SCRATCHING sound. The arms are covered in spikes and end in a pair of pincers.

And its head. A horror. Looks like a traditional gray alien. Shaped like an upside-down teardrop. Two impossibly large eyes that start on the side of its face but wrap around to the front. The eyes are black. Jake can see his reflection within them.

Its mouth opens, revealing fangs. It makes a series of CLICKS.

Impossibly fast, before Jake can unfreeze himself, its arms reach out and pick him up. Squeezing his shoulders together. Brings him up close to its disgusting head.

It unhinges its jaw, revealing more rows of sharp teeth. Lifts him up. Shakes him so that his head tilts to one side and then bites down firmly into his neck.

Jake SCREAMS. Blood drips out of the fresh wound. Jake shakes and squirms. He tries to wriggle free from its grasp, but its vice-like arms grip him even more tightly.

He kicks wildly. Most of his kicks meet nothing but air, but one of them manages to connect against the softest part of its abdomen. A lucky strike. It SCREECHES in pain. Drops him.

Jake lands on the floor on his back. His head SMACKS against the concrete.

The creature SCREECHES again and then leaps off the ground. When it clears the tops of the mirrors, it unfurls its four wings.

For a split second, though thin and insect-like, they resemble a traditional angel's wings.

It starts BEATING its wings as rapidly as a helicopter's blade, so that they are nearly invisible. It hovers in mid-air, in the space between the mirrors and the ceiling, for a moment. Then it SCREECHES once more and dive-bombs him.

Its head connects with Jake's stomach just as he starts to get to his feet. It drives him down a passage, into a mirror, and then through it. The mirror SHATTERS.

Jake is on his back again. The creature is upright.

It stoops forward, raises a pincer and tries to stab Jack with it. He rolls to the left to avoid one blow, then the right to avoid another.

It raises both pincers. Jake scurries forward. Crawls beneath its sensitive abdomen and punches its soft underbelly several times. Its skin contracts. It CRIES OUT again.

Jake emerges behind it. Stands up. It has trouble turning its body around in the narrow passageway. It flutters its wings.

Jake grabs hold of one of the wings. It tears at the flesh on his hand but he continues. Grabs a piece of the thin, translucent skin and tears. His hand penetrates it. He RIPS as much as he can, creating a jagged tear.

Then he does the same with the other wing. The creature SCREECHES. Bashes against the wall. Finally manages to turn around. Jake moves with it, staying behind.

He leaps up, wrapping an arm around its tiny neck and his legs around its thorax. He digs a heel into the top of its abdomen. It SQUEALS.

The creature starts bucking and jumping, BASHES into mirrors on either side, trying to throw him off. Jake holds fast.

Jake pulls himself up, so his mouth is near its ear hole.

JAKE
Ra-Ceph-Lilai-Makon

It bucks even harder. SCREECHES. Tries to fly, but Jake's body presses its wings to its sides. It scuttles down a passageway, ramming back and forth into the walls. Bursts through two mirrors.

It tries to twist around. Bats at Jake's hip with one of its pincers. Jake CRIES OUT in pain, but holds fast. He pulls himself up once more.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Ra-Ceph-Lilai-Makon. Let me in!

The creature stops so suddenly that Jake almost loses his grip. It begins CLICKING rapidly. SHAKES its head back and forth.

And then its skin begins to emit a soft glow. The air CRACKLES with some kind of energy. It begins to VIBRATE. So does Jake.

He feels himself slipping downward, not off of the creature's back, but inside it. Sinking into its skin. He squeezes his eyes shut.

Within a few seconds, it absorbs him completely. It shudders once and then is still.

Jake opens his eyes. The creature opens its eyes, too. He raises his hand. The creature lifts its pincer.

He looks in the mirror and repeats the gesture. Sees that he is fully inhabiting and controlling the creature's body.

When he looks down at himself though, he still sees his own body (*NOTE: When there aren't mirrors present, that's what the audience will see, too*).

Jake inhales and exhales deeply several times.

LUCIFER (V.O.)
(quoting from the Bible)
"The same night he arose and sent everything he had across the stream. Jacob was left alone. An angel of the Lord arrived and wrestled with Jacob until the breaking of the day. The Mal'akh could not prevail against him."

Jake's monstrous reflection reaches down and touches where its hip would be. Jake is reaching into his pocket. He first pulls out the tiny square Gabriel had given to Lucifer.

He wraps his palm around it, making sure it's safe, and then puts it back.

He reaches into his other bulging pocket and retrieves a similar gun-shaped device that Lucifer had used on the beach.

GABRIEL (V.O.)

Use this only once you have fully possessed him. If you step through before you have control, you will be vaporized. Wiped from existence.

His reflection holds the gun, too. Lifts it. Aims it.

RAPHAEL

Don't you dare point that at me.

Jake squeezes the trigger.

Green light erupts from it. A portal forms where the mirror and his reflection had been.

Jacob takes a deep breath and then steps forward.

Breaks on through to the other side.

INT. ART MUSEUM - CONTINUOUS

Brilliant green light consumes everything. His vision is obscured.

He stumbles forward a couple feet and the light starts to fade. He opens his eyes. Blinks. Gauges his surroundings.

He appears to be inside a large museum. The St. Louis Art Museum to be exact, where his exhibition had been opened last week. He stands outside the "Jacob Porter Gallery."

The museum is dimly lit. It's nighttime here, too.

He's confused at first. But then he remembers Lucifer's words. He walks into the gallery.

LUCIFER (V.O.)

You people like to tell the story of Magellan's ships arriving in the South Pacific. Because of the natives' limited perceptions and experiences, they couldn't process what they saw, so they saw nothing. The ships were invisible to them.

Jake wanders around the perimeter of the gallery. The paintings are not his.

They are dark. Hard to see. They're mostly abstract splashes of color and patterns. But every once in a while he can make out the outline of a creature, or a building, or a landscape. When he looks at them closely, they move, as if alive.

LUCIFER (V.O.)

That story is bullshit. But there is a human truth in there that you should find useful.

He shudders and leaves the gallery. Emerges in a hall that branches off into various passages.

LUCIFER (V.O.)

You will not be able to see our city in its true glory. Your limited brain would not be able to register what it sees. The best you can hope for is that instead of seeing nothing at all, your brain substitutes an avatar. Something familiar to you.

Jake chooses a direction. A large exhibition hall with a vaulted ceiling. A marble stairway at the far end.

INT. HOSPITAL GIFT SHOP - NIGHT

Claire PANTS heavily, nearly hyperventilating. She opens her eyes. Tries to calm her breathing.

She sits on the carpeted floor of a small room, surrounded by spinning racks of greeting cards.

She furrows her brow in confusion. Gets to her feet. Looks around.

Three walls are lined with shelves. Stuffed animals, mylar balloons, baby clothes, medication. A wide opening to a fluorescent-lit hallway. A desk and cash register. It's a hospital gift shop.

URIEL (O.S.)

Claire.

She spins around, trying to locate the source of the voice.

URIEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(gently)
I'd like to speak with you. Come
and see.

She looks towards the mirror on the wall behind the cash register. The voice seems to be coming from that direction. She walks in front of it.

Another mantis creature stares back at her. It raises a pincer. Approximates a wave.

URIEL (CONT'D)
Peek-a-boo.

Claire SCREAMS. Turns and runs out into the hall.

INT. ART MUSEUM - NIGHT

Jake traverses the hall. The paintings here are similar. Dark and swirling with actual movement.

A few of the paintings change not only what they display, but their physical structure, as he walks past. They elongate. Become not pictures or windows, but doors. They grow brighter. Beckoning.

LUCIFER (V.O.)
Ignore all invitations. You don't
want to speak with anyone. They'll
try to draw you in. Find you out.

He reaches the stairway.

LUCIFER (V.O.)
Whatever avatar your mind projects
for you, always go up. Ascend. You
need to get to the top.

Jake begins climbing the stairs.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - NIGHT

Claire sits in a small wooden chair, staring down at the floor, in an empty hospital cafeteria in front of a mirrored wall. She INHALES deeply. Looks up.

A song CRACKLES through the ceiling speakers. Perhaps "Haunted After Midnight" by Slim Martin (1964).

The mantis awkwardly straddles the same chair in the reflection.

URIEL
Still here.

Claire TAPS her foot nervously. The reflection mimics.

URIEL (CONT'D)
You needed to see. But I can make
it a bit easier for you now.

The mantis waves an appendage and is replaced by Uriel's human form.

URIEL (CONT'D)
Are you ready to talk?

Claire SIGHS.

CLAIRE
Let's hear it.

INT. ART MUSEUM SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT

Jake emerges from the stairwell in an even bigger, grander exhibition hall. The paintings too are larger. It's a bit brighter. The emergency lighting from the lower floor replaced with rows of candles lining the hall. He proceeds.

As he approaches the biggest painting in the hall, he starts to feel a vibration. A TREMBLING. As if the whole building is shaking.

LUCIFER (V.O.)
There will be one invitation that
you'll especially need to ignore if
you have any hope of reaching your
destination.

A title in gold lettering appears below the frame, which says simply, "YHWH."

The painting, like some of the others before, elongates and widens. Becomes a massive doorway.

The flames of the candles surrounding it grow larger and larger until they jump out of their wicks. Streaks of fire shoot out, join each other, and surround the frame.

A phrase is written in flame above the doorway: "I Am That I Am." Then another phrase below that: "Come and See."

LUCIFER

At best He's an elected figurehead.
At worst a substitute teacher. He's
irrelevant to you. A distraction.

Jake can't help but pause for a moment. Marvels at the
beauty. Feels awe. How could he not, given his past?

But then he shakes it off. Walks past God's throne room.
Ignores The Almighty's invitation. Continues on his way.
Starts ascending the next set of stairs.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - NIGHT

Uriel speaks from the mirrored wall.

URIEL

You're taking this better than
expected.

CLAIRE

Jake told me most of this already.
I thought he was cracking up. But
it's not just--

URIEL

Your brother doesn't know
everything. He's being used.

CLAIRE

And I'm not?

URIEL

He's being used. You're needed.

CLAIRE

Until the gas station, you ignored
me completely. I was a sidekick.
No, worse. A distraction.

She stands up. Starts pacing around.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

And that's the other reason why I
might be shocked, but not
devastated by all of this. I
already know we're insignificant.
You've only added another layer.
Another degree. And some admittedly
disturbing specificity. I'm just a
little more insignificant than my
brother. Not like I haven't felt
that my whole life.

URIEL

No. Right now, you're the most
important being in your universe.
And ours.

Claire looks unconvinced.

URIEL (CONT'D)

I'd like to show you something.

CLAIRE

I don't want to see your real face
again. What do you want to show me.

Uriel steps out of the mirror into the room. He smiles almost
tenderly.

URIEL

Everything.

INT. ART MUSEUM THIRD FLOOR - NIGHT

Jake emerges on the third floor. The hallway here is much
smaller and narrower. There appears to be a door at the end
of it. To his right, a large bank of windows and a glass
door. He can't see out of them because of the reflection.

Curious, he goes to the windows. He pushes open the door and
steps outside.

EXT. VERANDA - CONTINUOUS

He emerges onto a wide veranda and he GASPS.

He beholds wonders.

*(SOUNDTRACK SUGGESTION: The instrumental part or final verses
of The Doors' "The Crystal Ship.")*

The stars above him are brighter than he's ever seen. And
they are moving.

In front of him is a great city, made of crystal and glass.
The buildings are spires, twisting into each other and
reaching high into the sky,

Thousands of lights dart around and between and inside the
spires. Like giant fireflies. Or fairies.

He stares. Blinks. It's still there.

Turns his head to the right. He sees the edge of the comet. A long trail of glittering, sparkling ice trailing out behind.

He tries to inhale. GASPS again. Realizes why.

He's in a vacuum. He can't breathe. He steals one last glance and hurries back inside.

INT. ART MUSEUM THIRD FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Once safely back inside he inhales deeply several times, recovering himself.

He sees the door at the end of the hallway. Heads towards it.

The door is plain and wooden. A brass plate is fastened to its surface at eye level. It reads: "Communications Center."

Jake takes one more moment to finish catching his breath. Then he turns the handle and steps inside.

INT. HOSPITAL OPERATING ROOM - NIGHT

An empty, dimly lit surgical operating room. There's a RUMBLE, followed by a WHOOSH, and a flash of light.

Claire and Uriel emerge together from another mirrored wall.

Claire is no longer full of nervous, frightened energy. She's calm. Serene. She looks somehow older.

URIEL

Time can be bent and slowed here.
But it still must march forward
eventually. We need to find your
brother. You're the only one who
can convince him.

Claire turns slowly to face Uriel. She gazes into his eyes.

CLAIRE

I understand. I do. You need me. I
need something from you first.

Uriel raises an eyebrow.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

You showed me your city. And the
entirety of your creation. It's
extraordinary. Beautiful even. But
it's also unimaginably cruel.
Impossibly callous and cynical.

(MORE)

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

None of you should be here. "Here" shouldn't exist. You shouldn't have built it. Built *us*. To make us so real. To give us emotions and hopes and dreams. To play with us. I never thought I could stand before the universe and demand an apology for our existence, but here I am. I don't care if you don't mean it. If you're humoring me to get what you want. I need to hear you say it.

Uriel pauses a moment. His face is unreadable.

URIEL

I'm sorry. We're sorry.

Claire nods flatly. She looks at her reflection.

CLAIRE

I wonder how the real versions of us, in your universe, will turn out.

Uriel smiles faintly.

URIEL

So do we. That was the purpose of all of this.

Claire turns to face him.

CLAIRE

There's one more thing I require of you.

INT. COMMUNICATIONS CENTER - NIGHT

The room is massive and round. Jake can't even see the ceiling. Brightly lit. No candles, and no obvious source of light.

In the center of the room is a circular pool with a low guardrail around it. From this distance, he can't see much detail. But it swirls and surges with energy and lights of every imaginable color.

To his left is a modest wooden desk. A figure sits behind it. Metatron. When he sees Jake, he smiles warmly. He stands to greet him.

METATRON

I had a feeling I'd see you again.

Metatron rounds the desk and walks towards Jake. Jake is not frightened.

METATRON (CONT'D)
So you managed to break into
Heaven. Impressive.

JAKE
I had help.

METATRON
I wonder what it is you see.

JAKE
For a moment, I saw it as it is.

Metatron furrows his brow.

METATRON
Doubtful. But good on you for
believing. I assume you've been
told what you are? What the world
is?

Jake nods. His gaze shifts over to the infinity pool again.
It's mesmerizing.

METATRON (CONT'D)
Kind of sad, isn't it?

Jake SCOFFS.

JAKE
Sad? That's the understatement of
all of human history. It's
literally soul crushing. Numbing.

METATRON
(concerned)
Is that what you feel? Numb?

Jake nods again.

METATRON (CONT'D)
I feel like that's probably not
very good. Come. Have a seat.
(gestures to desk)
Let's talk a bit.

JAKE
Sorry. Can't. Need to get this
done.
(grows suspicious)
Or do you mean to try to stop me?

METATRON

(shrugs)

I don't know yet. I haven't decided. So let's talk.

He walks over and pulls out a chair. Jake's eyes dart back and forth between the infinity pool and the desk.

METATRON (CONT'D)

You can sprint over there just as easily from the desk. I'll either be able to catch you or I won't.

Jake reluctantly heads over to the chair. Sits down. Metatron round the desk.

METATRON (CONT'D)

I feel like I should offer you a coffee. But there's no coffeemaker. And to be honest, there's not really a desk, either. Let's not dwell on that.

He sits down across from Jake.

METATRON (CONT'D)

So yes. It's very sad. A tragedy. But also not. It's just the way things are. Inside their game at least.

JAKE

You used to be human?

METATRON

A long time ago. They built me a vessel to contain my code. Gave me autonomy over it.

JAKE

So they've made you what... some kind of data analyst?

METATRON

I'm a scribe. A filter. A transmitter.

JAKE

Those are wildly different things.

Metatron smiles.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Why did they entrust you with those jobs?

METATRON

I'm able to see things from both perspectives now. I can choose the most relevant data. Provide the fairest assessments. Allow only the truth to pass through.

JAKE

Will you allow me to pass?

METATRON

Someone wants you to cross over. They thought I'd let you in. Only one being is that audacious and perceptive. So tell me: What's your plan? What are you going to do if you make it to the other side?

Jake swallows hard.

JAKE

I'm going to exist. For real. For the first time. I want to know what that feels like. Not only me.

(he subconsciously pats
his pocket)

All the poor, lucky souls you saved.

METATRON

Did he tell you what will happen if you do that?

JAKE

Their game will end. Forfeited maybe? You'll all get to go home. Or they will. I don't know what will happen to you.

METATRON

The game will end. Yes. He might be right. It may very well be the final straw to break the camel's back after how much shit has piled up on it till now. That could happen. But if it does, what do you suppose happens to your world?

Jake looks smug.

JAKE

We'll be free. Or they will. No more interference from the gods.

Metatron LAUGHS. Heartily. Takes a moment to recover.

METATRON

So *that's* how he convinced you. I was wondering. Sure, I suppose there's a chance that could happen. They could keep the game running. But let's be real. Why would they do that?

Jake blinks. Cocks his head.

METATRON (CONT'D)

I'm sure you've dabbled in one of your own video games at some point or another. Tell me, when you "beat" it, or you give up and quit forever-- what do you think happens? Does the artificial world keep playing itself? Keep continuing? Or does it blink off and stay dead and silent forever? Which would be more logical?

Jake says nothing, but his pulse quickens. He gets fidgety as he considers Metatron's words and their implications.

METATRON (CONT'D)

Correct me if I'm mistaken, but you seem willing to trade a moment of reality for yourself for the complete cessation of existence, however illusory that may be, for the billions of people you leave behind? Boy, he knows how to pick 'em. Aren't you forgetting about something?

JAKE

(automatically)

What?

METATRON

Or someone?

JAKE

Oh.

METATRON

You came here to find her. To free her. At least that's what you claimed. What will happen to Claire if you end the game? Maybe we should ask her. She's been pounding at the door for a while.

Metatron scoots back in his chair. Then he reaches under his desk and presses a button. A BUZZER sounds. Jake looks to his left. The door through which he arrived swings open. Jake jumps to his feet.

Claire comes tumbling through the door. At least it's Claire at first. He blinks and it's Uriel (in Priest/Human form).

Uriel crosses half the distance between the door and the desk. Jake backs up a few feet, towards the infinity pool. Uriel seethes at Metatron.

URIEL

I've been trying to get in for ages. Do you realize what's at stake here? What he's trying to do?

METATRON

I do.

URIEL

It's time, Claire. Speak.

He changes back into Claire. Jake continues walking backwards, slowly, towards the pool.

CLAIRE

No. All the way. You promised.

Metatron cocks his head. Looks curious.

METATRON

What did you promise, Uriel?

Claire shifts back to Uriel.

URIEL/CLAIRE

Very well. We all know what desperate times call for.

Uriel clenches both of his fists. Something glows green within them. He lifts his head upwards.

A CRACKLE of energy fills the room. Uriel's body begins to emanate an intense green light. It grows brighter and brighter until it erupts out of him in a blinding flash.

When the flash subsides, there are two people now standing where there was once one. Claire and Uriel. Side by side.

Claire's body shimmers. Seems to generate a light green halo. It's not entirely clear that her feet are touching the ground.

Her eyes are closed. She EXHALES softly. Unclenches her fists. The halo remains when she opens her eyes.

A tear runs down Metatron's cheek. He looks overwhelmed.

METATRON

There's another. I'm not alone anymore.

Claire opens her eyes. The green halo remains. Vibrating. Pulsing. She looks at Jake with eyes that also now burn green.

CLAIRE

Stop, brother. Please.

He does as she asks. Stops backtracking towards the pool. Gazes at her. Starts to get lost in her eyes.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

I need you to know that I see everything with clear eyes. Uriel explained some. And I experienced the rest. I've seen thousands of years since I last saw you earlier tonight.

JAKE

What did they do to you?

Claire takes a few steps in his direction. He stays still for the moment.

CLAIRE

I know everything you know. It's horrible. But it's not entirely a surprise. Not to me. You've had a system shock. You're not thinking clearly. How could you? The beliefs you've built your life around smashing headlong into the truth you've just learned. But you've been tricked by that truth. You need to stop. Please.

Jake takes one step backwards.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
If you do this, the whole world may
stop. Evaporate.

JAKE
Everyone says "may" and "might."
Seems like there's a lot of wriggle
room in those qualifiers.

CLAIRE
I'm not everyone. I'm Claire. Your
sister.

Jake frowns.

JAKE
I can't be sure what you are
anymore.

CLAIRE
Don't do that. That's a cop-out.
You're smarter than that. Better
than that. You're a believer.

Uriel, who had been quietly but impatiently watching until
now loses his patience.

URIEL
That's enough! This isn't going to
work. Let me do it my way.

Claire addresses Uriel.

CLAIRE
No. Wait.

JAKE
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.

Two more steps backwards.

CLAIRE
Fine. 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. But
that's not all...

Three more steps.

URIEL
(through gritted teeth)
Hurry.

CLAIRE
You have something in your pocket,
right? Something he gave you.

JAKE
What of it?

Uriel can't help himself. He turns to Metatron.

URIEL
You have complete control over
access to this room, don't you,
Metatron?

Metatron nods.

URIEL (CONT'D)
Has Gabriel ever step foot on here?

METATRON
No.

Uriel SNARLS at Jake.

URIEL
Gabriel didn't give Lucifer
anything, you fucking idiot!

Jake's eyes narrow.

FLASHBACK - INT. - SUV - NIGHT

A replay of earlier that evening in the SUV.

LUCIFER
And I can offer you something more.
You will be the first, but you
don't have to be alone. Gabriel?

Gabriel flashes a puzzled expression in the mirror.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)
What we discussed. What you took?
Do you have it?

Gabriel stares at Lucifer for a moment and then nods.

This time we see the "handoff" up close.

Gabriel pats her pocket and then reaches her hand behind her.

Lucifer reaches forward. Doesn't touch her hand. Doesn't even open his. He already has what he is to give Jake in his own palm.

Lucifer smiles broadly before he turns to Jake.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

You can all have a chance in the
real world.

BACK TO PRESENT - INT. COMMUNICATIONS ROOM - NIGHT

Jake reaches into his pocket and pulls out the square.
Examines it in his palm.

URIEL

He tricked you. Used you. Like he's
done with millions before you.
You're no different.

CLAIRE

(gently)

Jake, 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 around it.

JAKE

I don't care.

Claire freezes. Her jaw quivers.

CLAIRE

What?

JAKE

I'm sorry, Claire. Or maybe I'm
sorry that I'm not sorry.

He resumes his backwards walk. Only ten feet from the
infinity pool.

CLAIRE

Jake...

Jake turns to Uriel.

JAKE

This isn't who I'm supposed to be.
You know this.

URIEL

(icily)

You don't know what the fuck you're
talking about.

JAKE

If none of you would have
interfered with my life, I would
have been someone different. I
would have had a purpose. Been a
leader. A man of action.

URIEL

And you would have failed.

JAKE

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 briefly to Claire. Her eyes are welling up.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I hope you don't evaporate.

CLAIRE

Jake, please...

She knows he's already too far gone.

MEMORY FLASHES

The book on his nightstand from when he was initially
possessed as a child: "A Child's History of the Third Reich
and the Destiny of the White Race."

His crude childish drawings on the wall.

His brother and his buddies in their MAGA hats at 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 with modified American flags sewn to their shoulders.

JAKE

I am what I am.

A final SOUNDTRACK SONG starts to play. (*SOUNDTRACK NOTE: If "Sympathy for the Devil" is either too clichéd or unattainable, I would strongly suggest "I Want To Be Evil" by Eartha Kitt-- either starting at the 1:00 mark, or just the last 33 seconds, starting at 2:59*)

He turns on his heels and sprints towards the infinity pool. Uriel YELPS.

Jake leaps into the air, diving headfirst over the railing above the pool.

Uriel SHOUTS desperately at Claire. She's already on the move, running after her brother.

URIEL

Follow him! You're the only one who
can g--

Claire dives over the railing behind him.

Everything slows so much that time appears to be frozen. Jake gazes down into the abyss. It gazes back.

Clair hovers in mid-air above him. Still moving, but almost imperceptibly slowly. Her arm reaches towards him. Her eyes are wide.

The swirls coalesce. Jake sees destruction. Violence. An apocalypse.

Then the specificity he craved. He sees where he's going. He 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.

INT. STASIS CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

The mantis creature he dove into retracts its eyelids horizontally. It sits up on its table. Wires fall away.

It turns its head. The legion of others are waking up, too.