

PARADISE INN

Created by
Kris Krainock & Erin Granat

Pilot:
Better to Reign in Paradise than Serve Breakfast in Hell
By
Kris Krainock & Erin Granat

Amarcord Pictures Copyright 2014
Kris@amarcordpictures.com
Erin.hm.granat@gmail.com
702.581.6395

PRE-OPENING CREDITS TEASER

INT. HOTEL ROOM - AMBIGUOUS TIME

An OLD WOMAN and a YOUNG MAN sit between two BEDS in a HOTEL ROOM. The Old Woman holds the Young Man's hands in hers. Both their faces are remorseful.

OLD WOMAN
(to Young Man)
I know the last time we spoke, I
said things a son never wants to
hear from his mother.

Eerie SOUNDS come through the wall from a neighboring room distracting the Old Woman and the Young Man.

The Old Woman becomes unnerved by the sounds and wipes a bead of sweat from her forehead.

A FLY buzzes around the room.

OLD WOMAN (CONT'D)
Is it hot in here?

A THERMOSTAT on a distant wall is shown increasing on its own. 104 degrees. 105 degrees. 106 degrees.

INT. GRIM REAPER'S OFFICE - AMBIGUOUS TIME

THE GRIM REAPER sits at his DESK, his face shrouded in darkness and indistinguishable.

He is sharply dressed in a black suit, white shirt and black tie. He's thin, even skeletal, but he sits with poised dignity and grace. A NAME-TAG on his lapel reads "Manager."

A CHESS BOARD sits in front of him mid game.

He removes a POCKET-WATCH from his breast pocket and examines it.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

The Old Woman and Young Man continue their conversation.

OLD WOMAN
I know it's been years since I've
last seen you, but...(begins to
sob) I'm still not ready to accept
you for what you are.

The Young Man's face is pained.

OLD WOMAN (CONT'D)
I can't. I'm sorry.

The Young Man looks at the Old Woman with eyes of sadness and pity. He then gets to his feet and walks toward the door. He turns and looks at the Old Woman once more and then exits the room, closing the door behind him.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - AMBIGUOUS TIME

The Young Man from inside the room is revealed to be a female hotel employee, transforming into her true appearance once fully in the hallway. This is SARAH SUNDAY (20s/30s), an attractive woman with dirty blonde hair and dark features, capable of looking both trustworthy and devious. She is dressed in older 40s styled female fashion, a Paradise Inn NAME-TAG displaying her name prominently.

She finishes closing the hotel room door, smiles a devilish, mischievous smile and scurries down the hall.

INT. GRIM REAPER'S OFFICE

The Grim Reaper continues to sit patiently, face obscured throughout.

Suddenly the AIR TUBE DELIVERY SYSTEM attached to the office wall delivers a tube. The Grim Reaper reaches for the tube, his face still obscured. He opens the tube and removes a folded NOTE from within it.

The outside of the note reads: IN CARE OF A.O.D.

The Grim Reaper then opens the note. The inside contains only an ARROW pointing downward.

The Grim Reaper casually closes the note and places it delicately on his desk. He then leans closer to his chess board and proceeds to move a BISHOP piece into checkmate.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

The Old Woman walks toward her bathroom, drying her eyes with a TISSUE. She approaches the TOILET, lifts the seat and is horrified by a SNAKE sitting inside the bowl.

The Snake HISSSES at her, striking its head in a forward motion and showing its venom dripping fangs.

The Old Woman SCREAMS and lunges backward, tripping over herself and STRIKING the edge of the BATHTUB.

Her wound sprays BLOOD, covering the bathroom walls.

She lies lifeless on the bathroom floor, a pool of blood growing larger around her corpse.

TITLE SEQUENCE

A visual journey through the hotel set to the music of Ennio Morricone - "Morale ipocrita borghese"

We move through Paradise Inn's endless hallways, pass some of the various office-related rooms, float through the large, empty foyer, enter the elevator, go to the lower "Hell-like" floors, etc. Meanwhile, we see all main cast members in the middle of their "job."

We end on the Grim Reaper behind his desk, the OVERHEAD LIGHT shining down upon him ominously.

INT. MAIN OFFICE - AMBIGUOUS TIME

A small, cramped office full of disheveled and feverishly working EMPLOYEES buzzes with the sounds of paper-crunching and collective voices talking over one another.

In another, smaller office located in the back of the room sits an attractive woman (50s) smartly dressed in feminine business attire. This is PAM.

Pam sits in her DESK CHAIR and runs her finger along a route on a MAP, a coy smile across her lips.

PAM
(quietly, to herself)
Right on schedule.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

A modest CAR speeds down the empty, dark highway in the middle of barren, desert landscape. Driving the vehicle is an impish, slender man with poor posture. He's not intimidating in stature, but he drives with a determination, his hands clutched to the wheel. This is MILTON (40s).

Milton takes his eyes off the road and looks toward a BRIEFCASE resting on his passenger's seat.

His eyes are melancholy and fearful.

"King of the Road" by Roger Miller plays on the radio.

INT. PAM'S OFFICE - AMBIGUOUS TIME

Pam opens a desk drawer and removes a deflated BALLOON. She stretches it and mounts it on the nozzle of a HELIUM CANISTER beside her desk. The balloon slowly begins to fill with helium, expanding in size.

Pam then picks up a rotary-style TELEPHONE and dials "0."

She waits for a moment and then is connected.

PAM
(into phone)
Yes, this is Pam. Our special guest will be arriving shortly. Have everyone set. I'll be down in a moment.

Pam slams the phone down on the receiver and then picks it up again, this time dialing "7."

The balloon continues to inflate.

Pam waits to be connected. She leans back comfortably in her chair.

PAM (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Pam here. Put me through.

There is a pause. Suddenly Pam jolts forward and sits upright in her chair, a look of absolute confusion and worry in her face.

PAM (CONT'D)
What do you mean "he isn't in?!"
(pause) ...Well, that's impossible, he's always in. When someone's everywhere I'm not sure they can even be out... Did you check the bar?

The balloon continues to inflate, getting large now. It reads "Welcome Back!"

PAM (CONT'D)
...A note? What note!? ...Well, what does it say?!

Long pause.

PAM (CONT'D)
 (in a solemn, stunned
 voice)

My lord... (resuming her professional tone) You know what this means. Put plan R into effect immediately. Yes, I know what it says. No, it's never happened before. How the hell am I supposed to know? ...And put Chris on this... Well, wake him up! We've got to find him! Our new arrival will be here any minute!

Just as she finishes her sentence the balloon POPS.

EXT. HIGHWAY

Milton's car TIRE bursts. He is startled and moves the car to the side of the road. He gets out of the car and examines his tire. He huffs and puffs in frustration.

He moves to the rear of his car and opens the trunk. There is a dusty outline where a spare tire used to be.

Milton's shoulders deflate.

MILTON
 (flustered, to himself)
 Now what am I going to do?

He closes the trunk and standing miraculously before him, on the opposite side of the road, is PARADISE INN. From the outside, the hotel appears small and motel-like.

The hotel's SIGN is dark at first, but glows strong after a few flickers.

The sign reads: "PARADISE INN - THE LAST STOP BETWEEN HERE AND HEAVEN."

Milton looks toward the sign, puzzled. The light from the sign illuminates his face.

INT. HALLWAY - AMBIGUOUS TIME

Pam roars down the hallway in a frazzled hurry. She stops in front of an elevator and pushes the button marked with a downward arrow.

She looks up at the floor symbols slowly lighting up as the elevator is reaching her floor.

PAM
 (to herself, impatiently)
 Come on, come on, come on!

The elevator door opens. Inside is an elevator operator dressed in an old-fashioned hotel uniform. This is GABE.

Pam enters the elevator.

GABE
 (to Pam, welcoming)
 Pam.

PAM
 Gabe.

GABE
 (good-naturedly)
 Welcome to my 'lift away from home.' (peevd) Far from home...
 (good-natured again) So, where to?
 Up, down? ...Left, right?

The elevator is revealed to have an endless amount of floor buttons.

GABE (CONT'D)
 But I warn you, the lower floors can get a little warm. An air conditioning unit's out.

PAM
 Knock it off! You know where I'm going and hurry it up.

GABE
 (falsely understanding)
 Okay, okay. Whatever you say. Let's get a move-on.

Gabe then purposely falls forward, pushing his arm into several floor buttons, illuminating them.

Pam gives him a fiercely annoyed look.

GABE (CONT'D)
 (insincere)
 Oops.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - AMBIGUOUS TIME

The elevator door opens, revealing a large, subtly menacing Lobby.

It is a run-down, yet elegant grand room that looks as though it was last renovated in the 1940s. The room being vacant and silent, the sound of the elevator doors ECHO throughout the lobby.

GABE
(proclaiming)
Lobby floor!

Pam rushes out.

GABE (CONT'D)
(yelling after her)
And talk to him about my transfer,
will ya?!

Pam ignores this and continues her frantic walk through the hotel lobby, but is abruptly confronted by a thin, wide-eyed, wet-behind-the-ears, young man (20s). This is EDWARD.

EDWARD
(nervously)
Are you Pam?

PAM
(overwhelmed)
Who in God's name are you?!

EDWARD
(meekly)
I'm Edward. I start interning here
today.

PAM
(thinks to herself for a
moment)
Come with me, Edward!

Pam trudges forward again. Edward follows, trying to keep up.

PAM (CONT'D)
(speaking forward, but
directed behind her)
You've picked quite a day to begin
working here, Ed. Let me tell you.

EDWARD
(fumbling as he tries to
walk and talk)
Well, I'm quite excited. This place
is legendary. Around these parts,
anyway. I'm looking forward to
finding out what it is exactly that
I'll be doing.

PAM

You'll be a factotum, Ed. Do you know what a factotum is?

EDWARD

No, I'm sorry. I don't.

PAM

No need to be sorry, Ed. A factotum is a man of many jobs. You'll get a taste of everything around here. The man you're replacing was a true veteran of Paradise Inn... Korea, I think it was. He's visiting family in Connecticut now.

EDWARD

I see.

PAM

The important thing to remember around here is to be punctual, Ed. We run a pretty tight ship. People are always coming and going and if we don't keep things on schedule, the whole place can go to Hell. You know what I mean?

EDWARD

Yes.

PAM

Good.

Pam rounds the front desk and moves toward a door that reads "MANAGER."

There is a front desk clerk operating the counter in front of the door. This is JOAN, a sweet, ditzzy old woman (60s). She appears to be playing the word-guessing game "Hangman" on a PAD of paper.

Pam notices and stops to speak with her.

PAM (CONT'D)

What are you doing Joan?

JOAN

Playing Hangman.

PAM

(looking around)
With whom?

JOAN

With Mort, of course. He always chooses such hard words.

The pad reveals a nearly completed hangman and the word "In_alation."

Pam makes concerned eyes upon reading the word, but gives Joan a phony smile before leaning in close to Edward.

PAM

(whispering to Edward)
Mort is her hamster.

Edward is taken aback.

PAM (CONT'D)

(in regular speaking voice)

Okay. You stay here, Ed. I need to see the manager for a moment. He'll want to speak with you, being your new boss and all.

Edward suddenly looks uncomfortable and nervous again.

PAM (CONT'D)

Don't worry. You'll get used to that chill down your spine. He's a firm boss because he must be, but he's also fair. You'll see. Ask everyone who's met him. He makes things as painless as possible.

Edward nods, trying to appear cheerful.

Pam opens the door and pauses hesitantly before entering. The room is dark and no defining features are visible. She then suddenly turns toward Edward again.

PAM (CONT'D)

By the way, how'd you die?

EDWARD

A bike messenger clipped me.

PAM

Bloody menaces, they are.

Pam enter's the Manager's office and closes the door behind her.

INT. GRIM REAPER'S OFFICE - AMBIGUOUS TIME

Pam slowly inches into the Grim Reaper's office, which is darkly lit. There's immense tension building as Pam gets closer and closer.

Then with comic deflation, the Grim Reaper is revealed to be doing a CROSSWORD PUZZLE. He's so focused he doesn't realize it's Pam who has entered the room.

GRIM REAPER
Joan, I need a nine letter word.
Rhymes with 'daughter.'

The Grim Reaper turns his attention to Pam and sees that it's her.

GRIM REAPER (CONT'D)
(playful but with a sour
undertone)
Oh, well, if it isn't Pam, my
favorite harp jockey. What can I do
for you?

PAM
Sam...

GRIM REAPER
(upset)
Uh, don't call me that. You know
how I hate Samael. Call me Death,
please. Or the Grim Reap--

PAM
(interrupting Grim Reaper)
Sam stop!

There's a heavy pause. The Grim Reaper becomes serious and looks toward Pam.

PAM (CONT'D)
We've got a problem.

EXT. HIGHWAY/OUTSIDE PARADISE INN - NIGHT

Milton stumbles toward the front doors of Paradise Inn. He reads a BANNER written above the doors as he enters.

The banner reads: FORGET ALL TROUBLES HE WHO ENTERS HERE

INT. LOBBY - AMBIGUOUS TIME

Milton fully enters the lobby of Paradise Inn.

The inside of Paradise Inn is impossibly larger than the outside suggested. He is puzzled for a moment, but then sees Joan at the front desk waving him over.

INT. GRIM REAPER'S OFFICE

Pam sits across from the Grim Reaper.

GRIM REAPER

What's the problem? And can we make this quick, I'm expecting a mister....

The Grim Reaper runs his finger down a list of names in a large, ancient, leather-bound BOOK that sits on his desk and finds Milton's name.

GRIM REAPER (CONT'D)

...Milton. And I'm hosting a massive welcoming banquet in the ballroom. We had a 7-47 go down about 45 minutes ago.

INT. LOBBY/FRONT DESK

As Edward waits patiently, Milton stands before Joan at the front desk, looking absolutely numb and emotionless as she types incessantly on her computer, pretending to be searching for an available room. It's revealed that she's actually typing complete gibberish.

Milton holds his briefcase by his side. We see an x-ray shot of the briefcase and inside is only a folded NEWSPAPER and a very large PISTOL.

JOAN

Here's one! A room with two double beds.

MILTON

Do you have anything with a king?

JOAN

I assure you, all of our rooms are fit for a king, sir.

MILTON

No, I mean the bed.

JOAN

Well, that's a vulgar way of putting it, but yes, all the rooms come with their own bathroom.

MILTON

(confused, frustrated)

No, not 'head,' bed. Do you have a king-sized...nevermind. Is the bar open?

JOAN

You can park your car around back.

MILTON

(angry now)

No, you twit! BAR!

Edward suddenly jumps in.

EDWARD

(to Milton)

Allow me to show you the way, sir.

Milton looks toward Edward and then looks back at Joan with comical anger and wide-eyed disbelief. He picks up his ROOM KEY from the counter and follows Edward toward the LOUNGE.

INT. GRIM REAPER'S OFFICE

Pam and the Grim Reaper continue to speak.

GRIM REAPER

(in disbelief)

I can't believe this. For eons I've been listening to people tell me they feel like God isn't there and now he actually isn't. On the upside, at least no one should notice.

PAM

Believe me, they'll notice...We've got to move forward with Plan R.

The Grim Reaper becomes serious in tone.

GRIM REAPER

Plan R... Are you sure?

PAM

(panicked)

There's protocol to be followed.

(MORE)

PAM (CONT'D)

In the event of God disappearing we must to enact Plan R, which stipulates...

GRIM REAPER

(finishing Pam's sentence)
Heaven must stop accepting souls...

PAM

(overwhelmed)
And the precious balance that keeps the cream in our coffee gets so out of whack that...

Abrupt pause.

GRIM REAPER

Existence ceases to be...

Pause.

GRIM REAPER (CONT'D)

Luckily I've always taken my coffee black...

PAM

(frazzled)
I've already begun to organize a search party.

GRIM REAPER

Who's running it?

PAM

Saint Christopher.

GRIM REAPER

Oh, great. The patron saint of lost luggage. He should have no problem finding the most powerful force in the universe.

PAM

Well, what else do you suggest I do?

GRIM REAPER

All I'm saying is, if God doesn't want to be found, he won't be found. Have you talked with you-know-who?

PAM

He's missing, too. You know how they are, if one's somewhere so is the other.

GRIM REAPER

Yes, and forget the Holy Ghost. To question him would be like trying to get information out of Harpo Marx...(short pause) You don't think any of this has to do with the Second Coming do you?

PAM

(worried)
You don't think...

GRIM REAPER

I wouldn't be surprised. There are more "end-timers" these days than there were in the Dark Ages. Perhaps the boredom of the American Mid West has finally convinced God to put them out of their misery.

PAM

One thing's for sure. We can't let Downstairs know about this.

GRIM REAPER

Certainly not. That's the last thing we need.

INT. LOBBY

The elevator opens. Gabe sits on his small stool inside the elevator beside a large, imposing, darkly dressed figure. This is THE DEVIL.

GABE

Lobby floor! Going down!

Scarcely noticeable steam rises from beneath the elevator.

The Devil exits the elevator and suavely strolls through the lobby. He holds a large, ripe green APPLE in his hand, brings it to his mouth and takes a healthy bite from it.

He continues to walk passed the front desk, running his hand seductively across the counter. Joan is smiling foolishly, completely lost in her own world.

THE DEVIL
(to Joan)
Hello Joan.

JOAN
(confused)
I'm sorry, sir, have we met?

THE DEVIL
Come on, you don't remember?
France. 1431. Things got pretty
hot.

JOAN
(deflated, standoffish)
Oh, it's you.

The Devil takes another obnoxiously large bite of his apple.

THE DEVIL
You're looking older these days.

JOAN
You can't stay nine-teen forever.
Believe me, I tried. And besides,
not all of us can pull off a new
look as well as you can.

THE DEVIL
Want to know what John Wilkes Booth
told me Abraham Lincoln said when
people accused him of being two-
faced?

JOAN
Our dining room doesn't have
booths, but I'd be happy to get you
a table.

The Devil looks strangely at Joan for a comic beat.

THE DEVIL
So, where's our new friend?

JOAN
Oh, you mean Mr. Milton? The new
kid just showed him to the lounge.

The Devil winks at Joan and strolls off toward the lounge.

INT. GRIM REAPER'S OFFICE

Pam and the Grim Reaper continue their conversation.

GRIM REAPER

What are we going to do about everyone else? What's going to happen to them?

PAM

I have a plan.

Pam removes a WALKIE-TALKIE from out of view. She speaks into it.

PAM (CONT'D)

(into walkie-talkie)

How's it coming Maria?

A small, sweet Spanish voice responds through the Walkie-talkie. It belongs to the maid MARIA.

MARIA (V.O.)

(from walkie-talkie)

We're working on it, Miss Pam. There's a lot of rooms up here.

PAM

(into walkie-talkie)

Well, keep at it. Oh, and would you make sure that in every room you're folding the first square of toilet paper into a little flower. I always thought that was a nice touch.

There's a comic beat of silence.

MARIA

(annoyed, falsely cheerful)

Yes, Miss Pam.

Pam puts the Walkie-talkie down and looks toward the Grim Reaper.

PAM

All under control.

GRIM REAPER

Yes, after living righteous lives our guests will be relieved to find their reward is origami toilet tissue.

PAM

If you have better ideas, I'd love to hear them...

Pam pauses, breathes heavily in hesitation.

PAM (CONT'D)

I'm putting you in charge until I can sort this out.

The Grim Reaper tries to conceal a devious smile.

GRIM REAPER

I've been waiting lifetimes to hear you say that.

PAM

(earnestly)

Don't do that. This isn't permanent. And this isn't fun. You have a serious job to do.

GRIM REAPER

Allow me one moment will you, Pam? One moment to luxuriate. I've been doing God's dirty work for years. Whenever he couldn't decide who should go where, it was me who gave them one last chance to get on his good side. But instead of only being the anonymous hangman, the lowly attendant to the abattoir, I'll be making the decision... And who's better qualified than me? He's (motions toward the ceiling) been on autopilot the last five centuries anyway. There's no passion in the Death game anymore. It's all corporate protocol and paperwork... Remember when I had to personally visit each dying person? Watch as the light left their eyes, see their bodies shrivel into empty shells that once housed a human spirit? ...I miss that.

Pam thinks to herself, giving the Grim Reaper doubtful, peeved eyes.

PAM

This isn't a promotion, Sam. I'm not doing this because you deserve it. I'm doing this to maintain the balance of the universe, a *slightly* larger thing than your ego.

The Grim Reaper is completely ignoring Pam, lost in his own imagination, a smirk plastered on his face.

PAM (CONT'D)
Sam? Are you listening?

The Grim Reaper snaps back into the conversation.

GRIM REAPER
Yes, yes. You won't regret this.

PAM
I know I won't. If this doesn't work, I'll no longer exist.

GRIM REAPER
Encouraging words. Thank you.

PAM
Just focus on Milton. We're already behind schedule. What do you have planned for him anyway?

GRIM REAPER
Oh, he's a suicide. But I've got him cold on natural causes. What he doesn't know is his biological father died of heart disease when he was only two years older than Milton is now. The entire family have arteries like links of apple sausage (beat) ... Besides, I'm not sure he has the stomach required to go through with it.

PAM
Well, don't fool around. Suicides are not to be taken lightly. If he goes through with it before his time, he goes directly downstairs.

GRIM REAPER
I'm offended you'd even feel the need to say that to me. I'm a professional.

PAM
Don't you remember what happened in Jonestown?

GRIM REAPER
That was an isolated incident. Jim seemed to be on the up and up.

INT. LOBBY/FRONT DESK

Pam and The Grim Reaper exit his office. Edward has resumed his position waiting for Pam. He goes from a slouched, relaxed lean against the wall to a militant, upright stance. Joan stands behind the front desk. Pam notices Edward.

PAM
 (to Grim Reaper)
 Oh, yes. This is Edward, Paradise Inn's newest employee.

The Grim Reaper looks at Edward with an intimidating glare.

GRIM REAPER
 (to Edward)
 I remember you. Bike messenger, right?

Edward swallows hard, trying to find his voice.

EDWARD
 Yea-Yes, sir.

GRIM REAPER
 Murderous bunch.

PAM
 (to Edward)
 Where did Milton go?

EDWARD
 The man with the briefcase? I showed him to the lounge.

GRIM REAPER
 Way to show initiative. Here, I want you to take this.

The Grim Reaper hands Edward a Walkie-talkie.

GRIM REAPER (CONT'D)
 Keep it on you at all times. And stand by. I'm going to need your help with tonight's guest. There's no better way to learn than baptism by fire.

EDWARD
 Yes, sir.

PAM
 (to Edward)
 Go have a look around.
 (MORE)

PAM (CONT'D)
 Meet some of the regulars. You'll
 be spending a lot of time here.

EDWARD
 (to Pam)
 Thank you, Ma'am.

PAM
 Pam.

EDWARD
 Pardon me?

PAM
 Call me Pam.

EDWARD
 Yes, Ma'am.

PAM
 Pam.

EDWARD
 Pam.

Edward departs.

The Grim Reaper then notices the Devil's apple core on the
 end of the front desk counter and makes a concerned face.

GRIM REAPER
 (to Joan)
 Joan, did anyone else come through
 here?

JOAN
 I didn't hear anything!

The Grim Reaper rolls his eyes in annoyance.

INT. LOUNGE/BAR - AMBIGUOUS TIME

Milton sits at the bar inside a dark, mysterious, smoke-
 filled lounge. A bluesy female SINGER (30s) croons on a
 STAGE.

Milton's head is down between his arms in a pathetic,
 depressed stupor. He only raises his head to milk whiskey
 from a small GLASS.

The Devil enters the bar, finds a TABLE in the corner of the
 room, sits down and stares toward Milton menacingly.

INT. HALLWAY - AMBIGUOUS TIME

Edward leisurely strolls down the hallway. He eventually comes to a DOOR labeled "Records."

Edward pauses for a moment, looking around to see if anyone else is near. The hallway is completely empty and eerily quiet. Edward proceeds to cautiously sneak into the Records room.

INT. RECORDS ROOM - AMBIGUOUS TIME

The Records room is full of what is a seemingly endless amount of FILING CABINETS.

Edward aimlessly wanders through them in a daze.

He eventually sees a SIGN that reads "NEW ARRIVALS."

He moves toward it and starts flipping through the files. He finds a file labeled with his own name and opens it.

The file reads: "EDWARD LUCUS ROSENTHORPE. STATUS: DECEASED. CAUSE: BIKE MESSENGER. FULFILLED LIFE'S PURPOSE: NEGATIVE. REASON: PREMATURE DEATH. VERDICT: UNCLASSIFIED. PENANCE: EMPLOYED BY PARADISE INN UNTIL ASSESSMENT CAN BE MADE.

Edward closes his file and notices another SIGN labeled "SPECIAL GUESTS." The first file in the Special Guests is labeled "MILTON"

Edward opens it up and begins to read. His face becomes saddened.

EDWARD

(reading from file)

"Marital status: Divorced. Wife left him, citing irreconcilable differences of opinion. She thought it was alright to sleep with her entire office. He didn't."

Edward flips the page.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

(continuing to read file)

"Milton, while a polite and mild-mannered individual, never fulfilled his purpose in life. Feeling always a sense of aloneness, he utilized a fraction of his potential.

(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)

He was cursed with the desire to want more, but not the courage to find it. He had more love to share than he did and he deserved more love than he received."

Edward lifts his eyes from Milton's file and absorbs the words written about him.

Then suddenly, from behind a filing cabinet, the head of a hotel employee pops out, startling Edward. This is STANLEY (30s), a fast-talking file clerk.

STANLEY

You the new kid?

Edward jumps back and struggles to put the file back in its place and appear inconspicuous.

EDWARD

Uh, uh, yes!

STANLEY

Yeah, I heard about you. Actually I read about you. Your file, that is. Interesting stuff. Glad to have you aboard. I'm Stanley.

EDWARD

Nice to meet you Stanley, and thanks for the welcome.

STANLEY

Don't mention it. So whaddya think?

EDWARD

About?

STANLEY

Whaddya mean? This place!

Stanley opens his arms, presenting the Records room to Edward.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Welcome to Records! The file of every person who has ever lived and died is in this room. Though it's not really a 'room,' more of a matter-less vortex of space and time that takes the shape of a room so your mind doesn't explode.

Edward is in stunned silence.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

And I know what you're thinking. Why filing cabinets? Why not put all this into one big, mega computer? Huh? That's what you're thinking, right? Well, for some reason, the Big Guy stopped trying to keep up with technological trends after the invention of the *Game Boy*. So, I'm stuck with these babies.

Stanley slaps the slide of one of the filing cabinets with his hand and its ECHOES endlessly through the room.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Do you have any questions? I'd love to answer them for you. It gets pretty lonely in here. It would be great to have some company. Ya thirsty? Can I get you something? Water? Tea? Lamb's blood. Just kidding. That last one was a joke.

EDWARD

No, I think I better be going.

Stanley is disappointed.

STANLEY

Oh, so soon.

Edward starts backing away.

EDWARD

New job and all. Still learning the ropes.

STANLEY

Well, don't be a stranger. I'll be here, filing away. Oh, and if you want to get out of here, go back the way you came. Take your second left, your third right, another left, follow the zig-zag, another right, two more lefts and you're there.

EDWARD

Thanks!

Edward disappears behind some filing cabinets.

INT. LOUNGE/BAR

The Devil continues to sit at his table and watch Milton.

A male BARTENDER then approaches Milton at the bar.

BARTENDER
(to Milton)
May I do you in, sir?

Milton looks startled by the Bartender's words.

MILTON
(uneasy)
What did you say?

BARTENDER
It's last call soon. Would you like
one more drink?

MILTON
Oh, yes. Yes, please.

The Bartender begins to fill Milton's glass.

MILTON (CONT'D)
I suppose to you I'm just another
cliche, drowning my sorrows at a
bar.

Milton takes a big swig from his glass.

BARTENDER
(slightly sarcastic)
No, sir. On the contrary. People
who drink by themselves in the
middle of the night are usually
very jolly.

MILTON
You have it pretty easy here,
getting to look at that woman on
stage all night.

BARTENDER
Oh, luck has nothing to do with it,
sir. Between you and me...

The Bartender leans in close to Milton. Milton leans in as well.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)
(low voice)
I hate this job. I hate this hotel.
(MORE)

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

I thought there would be more than this for me. I'm miserable every second. I can't sleep. I can't eat. And the worst part is there's no hope to get out. It will just be this exact thing over and over, forever.

The Devil is shown writing down the Bartender's exact words on a NOTE PAD. He continues to write: "I want to end it all, but I'm too afraid. I don't know how."

The Bartender continues speaking with Milton.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

(to Milton, low voice)

There's no meaning to anything and I feel completely lost.

Milton is shocked by the Bartenders words. The Bartender then leans back and resumes his cheerful persona.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Top you off?

Milton looks toward the Bartender, comically stunned.

The Devil looks on, staring toward Milton. He focuses his gaze and then WINKS his eyes, as though sending a telepathic signal to Milton.

Abruptly, Milton's nose begins to BLEED, pouring blood into the bar top.

Milton panics and clinches his nose with his fingers.

MILTON

I'm bleeding!

BARTENDER

The restroom is right around the corner there.

Milton gets up and hurries toward the RESTROOM, his head tilted backwards.

INT. RESTROOM - AMBIGUOUS TIME

Milton bursts through the doors. The Restroom is empty, echoing each small sound.

He walks to the SINK and begins running the FAUCET, splashing water on his face.

A mysterious attractive woman appears beside him. It is the hotel employee Sarah.

SARAH
(to Milton)
Let me help you with that.

Sarah's voice startles Milton and he jumps backward and lets out a SHRIEK.

MILTON
(authoritative, frazzled)
Who are you?!

SARAH
I'm Sarah. I work for the hotel.

MILTON
What are you doing in the Men's Room?!

SARAH
What's the difference?

Milton is caught off guard by this.

MILTON
Well, you're a woman.

SARAH
Would you be more comfortable if I were a man?

This confuses Milton further.

MILTON
At this point, I think I would be equally uncomfortable.

SARAH
I snuck in here to have a smoke.
Would you like one?

MILTON
Oh, no. I don't smoke.

SARAH
Why not?

MILTON
It's bad for your health. That's what the packages with the skull and cross bones say anyway.

SARAH
 (mischievously)
 What's the point of living if
 you're not doing what you enjoy?

Sarah lights up a CIGARETTE.

MILTON
 Well, I've never really liked the
 flavor--

Sarah walks close to Milton and exhales SMOKE into his face.

SARAH
 Come on, let's get you cleaned up.

Sarah wets a PAPER TOWEL and starts to clean smeared blood
 off of Milton's face.

MILTON
 I feel like I've seen you before.
 Weren't you in the papers a few
 years ago? Something to do with a
 man and a woman going missing. I
 recall your face from the
 photograph.

SARAH
 Not me. But there's plenty of faces
 like mine. (changing the subject)
 So, how'd your nose start bleeding?

MILTON
 I don't know. It just did.

SARAH
 Spontaneous nose bleeds. That's a
 sign of a brain tumor, you know.

MILTON
 That's a horrible thing to say to
 somebody. Why would you tell me
 that?

SARAH
 Because you're going to die.

MILTON
 (frightened)
 Excuse me?

SARAH
 At some point...You should get used
 to these grim facts.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

No use in avoiding them. But, boy, I'd hate to go out that way. In bed for months, too weak to move, eat...make love. I'd rather take care of things myself. Nice and quick.

Milton stares at Sarah with curious, focused eyes.

MILTON

Oh yeah. How would you do it?

Sarah thinks to herself for a moment.

Then as Sarah speaks she begins ripping up a paper towel and stuffing it up Milton's nose, a disproportionate amount of towel left hanging from his nostrils.

SARAH

I guess I've always been a fan of Hemingway. Shot gun. Brains in my orange juice. Fast and messy. Then peaceful sleep. No more suffering, no more turmoil, no more searching...

Sarah looks deep into Milton's eyes and brushes a piece of hair off his forehead.

SARAH (CONT'D)

There you go, good as new.

Milton lets out a small, uncomfortable smile, the paper towel still stuffed in his nose.

INT. LOUNGE/BAR

Milton returns to the bar, the paper towels still stuck in his nose. He returns to his seat and makes eye contact with the bartender.

MILTON

(to Bartender)

Time for one more?

The Bartender fills Milton's glass.

The Devil approaches Milton from behind. Only his voice is heard.

THE DEVIL (O.C.)

Is this seat taken?

Milton looks in the direction of the Devil.

INT. LOBBY

Sarah strolls cheerfully through the lobby until she hears a pointed COUGH from the Grim Reaper.

The Grim Reaper approaches her.

GRIM REAPER
Where have you been, Sarah?

SARAH
(innocently)
The boy's bathroom.

The Grim Reaper gives her uneasy eyes.

GRIM REAPER
Something is going on around here
and I wouldn't be surprised to find
out you were somehow involved.

SARAH
And what if I was? What are you
going to do, *kill me*? You already
did that.

GRIM REAPER
(frustrated)
This is the last thing I need right
now!

SARAH
What do you want from me?

GRIM REAPER
That I know I can trust you, Sarah.

SARAH
Oooh, that one's a bit tricky.

GRIM REAPER
Yeah, because of your psychotic
boyfriend.

SARAH
What can I say? I have a thing for
bad boys...

GRIM REAPER

(sarcastic)

Well, you're the exception to the rule, aren't you? We have a very delicate special guest tonight, he's very fragile, not to mention big changes are underway around here. I'm trying to keep my head and I don't need you adding gasoline to the fire.

SARAH

I'm intrigued. Tell me more.

The Grim Reaper pauses, smirks and tries to contain his joy.

GRIM REAPER

I can't tell you. I want to, but I can't.

SARAH

Why not?

GRIM REAPER

Pam would yell at me.

SARAH

(frustrated)

Ugg, when are you going to stop letting her control you?

GRIM REAPER

She's a very powerful angel.

SARAH

More powerful than you?

GRIM REAPER

Well, no...(comically, childish) but she just gets so angry...

Sarah rolls her eyes.

SARAH

(reluctantly)

Well, I suppose you can count on me.

Sarah's fingers are crossed and hidden behind her back.

GRIM REAPER

If you remember correctly, I broke every rule in the book for you.

(MORE)

GRIM REAPER (CONT'D)
You had more life than you should
have because of me.

SARAH
Yeah, and a whole lot of good it
did me. I still ended up here. *The
Grey Zone.*

GRIM REAPER
Well, when you do what you did,
it's no surprise the state of Texas
had you executed. You're lucky they
didn't dusk off 'Old Sparky.'

SARAH
(deviously)
What can I say?

GRIM REAPER
Just say sharp tonight. Our mutual
friend may have something more
dastardly than usual up his sleeve.

INT. LOUNGE/BAR

Milton and the Devil sit side by side at the bar.

THE DEVIL
(to Milton)
I saw you sitting here all by
yourself. Seemed kinda down. Care
to unburden yourself?

MILTON
Boy, everyone around here sure
doesn't mind hearing a sob
story...or sharing one for that
matter.

Milton makes eye contact with the Bartender.

THE DEVIL
Everyone's got one. Does some good
to talk about it.

MILTON
Oh, you don't want to hear about
it.

THE DEVIL
As a matter of fact I do. People's
problems, it's kind of my business.

MILTON

A shrink, huh? I've been talking to you guys my whole life. No offense, but they were never able to help me.

THE DEVIL

Why's that?

MILTON

Because they were all suffering from the same thing.

THE DEVIL

Ah, I see. The big questions, huh? Why? Why you? What's the point?

Milton is surprised by The Devil's perceptiveness.

MILTON

How'd you guess that?

THE DEVIL

Call it a sixth sense. Besides, you seemed like an introspective guy. Some people float along, seeing the narrow view. But fellas like you and me, we can't help but see the big picture.

MILTON

That's exactly how I feel. Like I'm the only one asking these questions. I've tried praying. Talking to God. If he'd just talk back. Say something...I'd just like to know if there's going to be more than this. There's got to be. I want there to be...

Milton looks back at the female Singer seductively singing on the stage. The Devil notices Milton eyeing her and smirks.

THE DEVIL

And the picture comes into focus.

MILTON

No, no. It's more than that. Of course I want a woman like that, but...

THE DEVIL

Buddy, there is nothing more than that.

The female Singer finishes her song. The Devil begins to clap loudly and uses his fingers to whistle.

The female Singer walks over to the bar. The Bartender approaches her.

THE DEVIL (CONT'D)
(to Milton)
Offer to buy her a drink.

MILTON
(embarrassed, whispering)
No! I can't do that.

THE DEVIL
(to Singer)
Miss?

MILTON
(panicking)
Stop it!

THE DEVIL
Come on, you did great talking to
the woman in the men's room.

Milton is surprised by this.

MILTON
How'd you--

THE DEVIL
(cutting off Milton, to
Singer)
Oh, miss? Would you like to join us
for a drink?

SINGER
I'd love to.

Milton is red with embarrassment and nerves.

THE DEVIL
(to Milton)
Leave the rest to me.

INT. ELEVATOR - AMBIGUOUS TIME

Gabe and Edward talk inside the elevator as Gabe lights up a CIGARETTE and Edward tries to dodge the smoke.

GABE

(to Edward)

The first thing you gotta learn, kid, is these people don't know their head from their headstone. The living are oblivious. And don't get me wrong, I know plenty of souls that are a few eggs short of an omelette, but nothing compared to people still alive on Earth.

EDWARD

When they arrive here, don't they know where they are?

GABE

They don't have a clue. That's the way it is. That's the way it must be. People can't know they're about to buy the farm or the whole point's blown.

EDWARD

How long has this been going on?

GABE

The Paradise Inn has been here since the days of Eden, but it wasn't always a hotel and I wasn't always inside this bloody elevator. As time went on things became more sophisticated and more organized until the whole damned thing became nothing more than a big business. And boom! What's more efficient than a hotel for souls to pass through on their way up or down? In the old days, there was some showmanship to this racket; tornados of fire, beams of light. Now I push the button and away we go.

EDWARD

So the Grim Reaper manages this place...

GABE

He's the middle-man. God put him in charge because he's a notorious tight-ass, a real stickler for details. And to be honest, there wasn't anyone more qualified.

(MORE)

GABE (CONT'D)

I mean, when you have the Black Plague on your resume, there's not much competition left. And so the Angel of Death hung up his cloak and put on a suit. Now here we are...and here I am...stuck inside this lift dressed like a monkey for a thousand more years just because I conducted an unauthorized haunting on a few college girls who stayed with us a few summers back.

Gabe winks at Edward and pantomimes large breasts with his hands.

GABE (CONT'D)

Huge volleyballs, if you know what I mean.

EDWARD

(confused)

It seems so strange. Why would people come here in the first place?

GABE

Well, most don't. Most folks die in their beds and wherever they're meant to go, zip, they go. But, kid, when the bible said God was infallible, that was a bit of an overstatement. I mean, how else do you explain places like Cleveland? Anyway, every now and again you have these people that just sail through life. They're blips on the radar, cats that lived their whole lives too worried to take a chance, to ever do anything truly great or for that matter, insidiously evil. And some folks plain sit on that thin gray line between good and evil. When these things happen, God sends them here, right about the time their natural death is upon them to be evaluated. Based upon that evaluation, God decides. Up or down. Simple as that.

Edward ponders this concept silently.

GABE (CONT'D)

And it could be worse. I've seen the lower floors.

(MORE)

GABE (CONT'D)

I used to be an intern like you and trust me, it's better to stay in the Paradise Inn than serve breakfast in Hell.

The elevator bell "dings," alerting Gabe to begin lowering the elevator to the lobby. He does so and the elevator begins moving downward. A moment later, the elevator comes to a stop and the doors open revealing Milton and the female Singer locked into a gratuitously explicit kiss.

GABE (CONT'D)

Lobby floor!

The female Singer breaks away from Milton who is left in a comic daze of delight. She then takes Milton by the hand and leads him into the elevator.

Edward politely excuses himself and enters the lobby.

SINGER

Floor six, please.

GABE

Floor six! Going up!

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY

The elevator arrives on the sixth floor and the doors open.

GABE

Floor six!

The female Singer and Milton exit the elevator, but he leaves his briefcase behind. He lunges back to grab it before Gabe has a chance to close the gate and brings it with him into the hallway.

The elevator door then closes and the elevator begins to descend.

The female Singer lays another passionate kiss on Milton, whose body again becomes limp with intoxicating delight.

SINGER

(in a seductive whisper)
Let's go to your room.

MILTON

(eyes shut, still mouthing
a kiss)
Whatever you say...

They begin walking. Milton looks down the hallway and is unable to see the end.

MILTON (CONT'D)
This place looked a lot smaller
from the outside.

They continue to walk and finally arrive at his room. They enter.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - AMBIGUOUS TIME

Milton and the female Singer enter the hotel room. There are two double BEDS and an eerie atmosphere to the room.

The female Singer then sneakily takes Milton's briefcase out of his hand.

MILTON
Oh, be careful with that!

The female Singer carelessly throws the briefcase onto the DRESSER and it smashes into the attached MIRROR.

Another woman appears from inside the bathroom, dressed provocatively. This is Milton's ex-wife DEBBIE.

Milton is shocked.

MILTON (CONT'D)
Debbie! What are you doing here?

SINGER
(in Milton's ear)
She's missed you, Milton.

Debbie approaches Milton and puts her arms around his neck.

DEBBIE
It's true, Milton. I'm so sorry for
what I've done to you. I want you
back.

MILTON
(emotional)
I can't tell you how much I've
wanted to hear you say that. I've
been so alone And it hurt me so
badly when you left.

DEBBIE

I'll never leave you again,
darling. We'll be together now,
forever.

MILTON

Forever...

They begin a sensual kiss which turns into an erotic kiss. The female Singer kisses Milton sumptuously and sexual tension fills the room.

INT. GRIM REAPER'S OFFICE

The Grim Reaper sits at his desk and consults a long CHECK-LIST. The content written on the check-list is indistinguishable.

He then turns on a TELEVISION. The television broadcasts security-style footage of Milton's room. The Grim Reaper sees the female Singer in Milton's bathroom and becomes flustered. He reaches for his WALKIE-TALKIE.

GRIM REAPER

(into walkie-talkie)

Eddie, are you there?

EDWARD (V.O.)

(from walkie-talkie)

Yes, sir.

GRIM REAPER

Who are those women in Milton's
room?

EDWARD (V.O.)

I believe that's the singer from
the lounge, sir. I'm not sure who
the other woman is.

The Grim Reaper quickly switches channels on the television set to footage of the lounge.

The female Singer is still performing on the stage.

GRIM REAPER

Are you sure it's the singer from
the lounge?

EDWARD (V.O.)

I think so, sir. I saw him in there
talking to her and a man earlier
this evening.

GRIM REAPER
 (on edge)
 What man?

The sound of a large bite from an apple is suddenly heard.

The Grim Reaper looks toward the sound and finds the Devil leaning in the doorway of his office.

The Grim Reaper and the Devil share a look. The Grim Reaper then speaks into his walkie-talkie.

GRIM REAPER (CONT'D)
 (into walkie-talkie, to
 Edward)
 Stand by.

The Grim Reaper puts down his walkie-talkie and turns off the television.

GRIM REAPER (CONT'D)
 (to the Devil)
 I hate being right all the time.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Milton fidgets on the bed, visibly nervous.

Debbie and the Singer mount Milton, running their fingers through his hair, kissing him delicately.

The female Singer reaches down to the CLOCK-RADIO on his bedside DRESSER. She turns it on and surfs through the channels.

Small samples of the songs "Devil with a Blue Dress," "Sympathy for the Devil" and "Hotel California" can be heard as she passes various stations.

She eventually lands on Del Shannon's "Runaway" and begins performing a sultry dance for Milton. Debbie joins her. Milton watches, completely hypnotized.

INT. GRIM REAPER'S OFFICE

The Grim Reaper and the Devil eye each other, A CHESS BOARD sits set up between them.

GRIM REAPER
 What are you doing here? It's been
 a while since I've had the pleasure
 of meeting with you face to face.

THE DEVIL

How would you know? I rarely have the same face.

GRIM REAPER

Yes, one of the many fabulous traits you share with Joan Rivers.

The Devil smirks as he takes another bite of apple.

GRIM REAPER (CONT'D)

By the way, how's our friend Mr. Phelps doing? Adjusting?

THE DEVIL

He's well. In constant torment and pain, but well.

The Devil takes a seat in front of the Grim Reaper's desk. He picks up the KING from the chess board and examines it.

THE DEVIL (CONT'D)

What is with you and this game?

GRIM REAPER

It's dignified. Strategic. You can't cheat.

The Devil takes this as the dig it was.

THE DEVIL

You always play by the rules, don't you?

GRIM REAPER

Yes. If you don't compete fairly, how do you enjoy the victory?

THE DEVIL

I've found a few ways.

GRIM REAPER

I'm not sure when I asked you what you were doing here, I communicated my intended subtext. Allow me to rephrase. What the hell are you doing here?

THE DEVIL

No pun intended?

GRIM REAPER

No, it was intended. I'm not sure I ever used a pun that wasn't intended.

THE DEVIL

No, not you. That would be too *human*.

GRIM REAPER

If you're attempting to insult me by pointing out that I'm nothing like those cretins, I'm sorry to inform you, that's a piece of information I wear like a badge of honor. Now I ask again--

THE DEVIL

What do you think I'm doing here? Did you really think you could keep something as huge as God going missing from me?

The Grim Reaper pauses, troubled.

GRIM REAPER

How did you hear?

THE DEVIL

It's a small universe. People talk. Or scream in some instances.

GRIM REAPER

What do you plan to do?

THE DEVIL

Plan? I have no plan. If you want to know the truth, God and I have been on good terms this last millennia. He could no longer deny that I was a man of the people. Now, I'm more concerned about what I'm going to do to keep myself busy while he's away.

GRIM REAPER

What are you saying? You're bored because your pal has left town without you?

THE DEVIL

(defensive)

No! Not quite! He was just fun to be around.

(MORE)

THE DEVIL (CONT'D)

...You know, I get all the bad press, but the Big Guy, he really had some crazy ideas. The Crusades? All him.

GRIM REAPER

I think you should go. I'm desperately behind schedule and I have no idea what's going on with my guest.

THE DEVIL

Ah, Milton. Yes, I spoke with him at the bar. A conflicted gentleman. From the looks of it, I'll have plenty more time to get to know him.

GRIM REAPER

He's not going to go through with it. I've made sure of that. I've made other arrangements for him.

The Devil pauses for a moment and looks at the Grim Reaper with devious, villainous eyes.

THE DEVIL

Willing to bet on that?

INT. HOTEL ROOM

The female Singer and Debbie's dance continues. Milton continues in his hypnotic trance.

Debbie moves away from Milton as the Singer continues to distract him. Debbie lingers toward his briefcase, opens it and the "clicking" of the locks semi-snaps Milton back into coherency.

MILTON

(apathetic)

Don't go near there.

Debbie removes the pistol from the briefcase. She begins to wave it around haphazardly. She then motions with her finger for Milton to approach her. Like a zombie, he gets to his feet and stumbles toward her, the female Singer following behind.

Debbie leans in and kisses him, their tongues visible as hers penetrates his mouth like a snake.

When their lips part, she slides the gun barrel into his mouth, laughing while she does so. Milton's eyes widen and he begins to nervously laugh along with her.

It is then slowly revealed via the mirror reflection that Milton is alone in the room and is holding the pistol in his own mouth.

INT. GRIM REAPER'S OFFICE

The Grim Reaper and the Devil continue their conversation.

GRIM REAPER

Excuse me?

THE DEVIL

You seem like a betting man. What do you say we make a little wager?

GRIM REAPER

And what exactly would that entail?

THE DEVIL

Big Guy's gone, right?

GRIM REAPER

Yes.

THE DEVIL

Means you're in charge these days.

GRIM REAPER

That's correct.

THE DEVIL

Well, what do we say we bet on who can get little Milton's soul for the rest of eternity? If I can tempt him into killing himself by the end of the night, he's mine. If you can keep him from pulling that trigger, I'll let you have him and you can do with him what you please.

GRIM REAPER

This is some kind of trick. I know you. Milton is destined for Hell either way isn't he?

THE DEVIL

Now where would the fun be in that? He is completely neutral.

(MORE)

THE DEVIL (CONT'D)

A total clean slate. What are you so worried about? You've made sure he won't do it. What have you got to lose?

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Debbie pushes down on the pistol's trigger. The hammer slowly inches backward as the pistol prepares to fire.

Milton's eyes are wide and bloodshot. Sweat is visible on his brow.

INT. GRIM REAPER'S OFFICE

The Grim Reaper looks toward the Devil. His body language reads uncomfortable. The Devil reaches out his hand.

THE DEVIL

You'd make me a very happy supernatural being.

GRIM REAPER

No tricks? No cons?

THE DEVIL

Not on you, anyway. Come on, you said it yourself. How could I enjoy the victory? I've got no one else to play with.

The Grim Reaper reaches out his hand and he and the Devil engage in a handshake.

GRIM REAPER

You're on.

THE DEVIL

Good. But you better hurry, because Milton's about to blow his brains out.

The Grim Reaper frantically turns the television back on and sees Milton with the gun in his mouth. He grabs the walkie-talkie.

GRIM REAPER

(into walkie-talkie)

Eddie! Get to room 657 NOW!

The Grim Reaper turns toward the Devil, but he has mysteriously vanished.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY

Edward receives the Grim Reaper's message over the walkie-talkie.

EDWARD
(into walkie-talkie)
On the way!

Edward begins a mad dash toward the room.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

The pistol's hammer clicks back further.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY

Edward gets to Milton's hotel door and begins to rapidly bang on it.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Milton stands alone in his hotel room, about to pull the trigger of the pistol when the knocking on his door distracts him. He removes the pistol from his mouth and looks toward the door.

A split-second later his finger involuntarily squeezes the trigger and the pistol fires, the bullet flying past his head and digging into the hotel room wall.

Edward then proceeds to burst into the room.

EDWARD
Stop! Stop Mr. Milton!

Milton snaps out of his trance and realizes that he almost just killed himself. He then looks around the room for Debbie and the female Singer.

MILTON
(to Edward)
Where are they?!

EDWARD
Where's who, sir?

MILTON
Debbie! And the woman that was here! They were here just a moment ago!

EDWARD

There were no women when I came in,
sir. Just you.

Milton looks toward Edward and begins crazily laughing to himself which immediately turns into crying. He slumps down on the bed, still holding the gun.

MILTON

(through tears)

Great! Now I'm crazy, too! Maybe I
should just kill myself!

He quickly raises the pistol to his temple. Edward dives toward him and pulls the gun away.

EDWARD

No! That's not the answer, sir.

MILTON

What is the answer?! There is no
answer! ...There's no meaning,
there's no reason...there's
nothing! What does it mean?!

EDWARD

Maybe it's not supposed to mean
anything, sir.

Milton looks toward Edward, shocked by this proposal.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

I mean, when has it ever really
mattered why you're here or not?
You are. You're here now. So maybe
you should just try and be happy
about it.

Milton listens intently to Edward's words.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

You never know, it could all be
over. You could be stepping off a
curb and be hit by a bike messenger
for all you know.

MILTON

Maniacs on two wheels those bike
messengers.

EDWARD

Come on, let me show you to the
steam room in our state of the art
spa.

Milton begins to get up, but then he puts the pistol to his temple again.

MILTON

No! I want certainty or nothing! If
God won't talk to me, then I'll
give him a piece of my mind!

Milton begins to pant for breath hopelessly, pushing the barrel of the pistol hard against his temple, but then he notices a warm glow coming from beneath the window curtain.

He lowers the pistol, walks over to his window and parts the curtain. Outside, on the ground is a burning BUSH.

Tears fill Milton's eyes.

MILTON (CONT'D)

(to bush)
God?

GRIM REAPER (V.O.)

(as bush)
Yes, this is God.

INT. GRIM REAPER'S OFFICE

The Grim Reaper speaks into a microphone donning a Godly voice.

GRIM REAPER

(in Godly tone)
I've appeared to you to tell you
that you are a good person, Milton.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Milton continues to speak to the burning bush.

GRIM REAPER (V.O.)

(as bush)
And now you have a choice. You can
take your own life or you can trust
in me.

Milton looks at the pistol in his hands and lets it fall to the floor.

INT. GRIM REAPER'S OFFICE

The Grim Reaper smirks and draws an UPWARD ARROW on his note pad.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Milton lets out soft, silent tears.

MILTON

I'm sorry I ever doubted you were there.

GRIM REAPER (V.O.)

(as bush)

I understand completely. I've been called aloof, among other things. Now go forth and be well. Try to live a happy life and be good to others.

MILTON

(to bush)

I will. It will be so much easier knowing you're watching over me.

GRIM REAPER (V.O.)

(as bush)

Well, even if I wasn't, you know, *hypothetically*, you should still try to be a nice guy.

MILTON

(to bush, cheerful)

Okay, God. And thank you.

A moment later the SPRINKLER SYSTEM bursts on and covers Milton and Edward in water.

INT. WINE CELLAR - AMBIGUOUS TIME

In a vast, dark Wine Cellar Sarah Sunday stands beside a large LEVER labeled "SPRINKLER SYSTEM" in the down position. Beside it are slightly obscured, older, rusted LEVERS covered in COBWEBS. The first is labeled "FROGS." The second, "LOCUSTS." The third, "FLOOD." The levers continue, but their labels are completely obscured.

Heavy FOOTSTEPS are heard approaching Sarah.

She looks off-screen toward an unidentified Devil.

SARAH

It looks like the better man won
this time...

THE DEVIL (V.O.)

I suppose that depends on what you
mean by "better."

Sarah smirks.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - AMBIGUOUS TIME

The Grim Reaper meets with Edward in the lobby.

GRIM REAPER

(to Edward)

Great job up there, Ed.

EDWARD

Thank you, sir.

GRIM REAPER

That was some first day, huh?

EDWARD

(changing tone)

Sir...that man...with the
apple...was he who I think he was?

Suddenly Pam appears, walking toward the Grim Reaper and
Edward, visibly stressed and upset.

PAM

Can someone explain to me why the
sprinkler system was set off?!
We've got an entire floor soaking
wet!

Joan then walks by with a BOX OF MATCHES and a FIRE
EXTINGUISHER.

The Grim Reaper turns to her.

GRIM REAPER

(to Joan)

Oh, thank you, Joan. Wonderful job.

Milton enters the lobby with his briefcase looking cheerful.

EDWARD

(to Pam and Grim Reaper)

Hey, there's Milton.

Milton waves at Edward. Edward waves back.

MILTON
 (to Edward)
 Thanks again!

EDWARD
 You're welcome, sir. And we took
 the liberty of repairing your car.
 It's out front all ready to go.

Milton smiles and exits the hotel. The Grim Reaper, Pam and Edward approach the front of the hotel and watch him get into his car.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
 (to Grim Reaper, Pam)
 What will happen to him now?

GRIM REAPER
 Well...

EXT. OUTSIDE PARADISE INN - DAY

Milton starts up his car and begins to back out of the hotel parking lot.

Paul Evans' "Happy-Go-Lucky Me" plays on the radio.

Milton continues to back out into the street when his car is abruptly SMASHED by a large passing TRUCK.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - AMBIGUOUS TIME

Edward watches in horror as the Grim Reaper and Pam have little reaction.

EDWARD
 Oh my god!

GRIM REAPER
 Nope. That one was me.

EDWARD
 But why? After all that? Trying to
 keep him from killing himself.

GRIM REAPER
 Because, Ed, it was his time.

PAM

I thought you were going to give him a heart attack.

GRIM REAPER

Well, this seemed a little more theatrical. I wanted to kick things off with a bang.

PAM

(to Edward)

Don't worry, Ed, we've got a room upstairs ready for him.

Edward walks away, deflated.

PAM (CONT'D)

(to Grim Reaper)

So, your first special guest. How'd it feel? There's a man who is currently not burning for all eternity because of you.

GRIM REAPER

It's my job, Pam. It's all about keeping things in "check."

PAM

Was that hotel humor?

GRIM REAPER

More of a chess joke, but...

Pam ignores this.

PAM

We've got to get housekeeping upstairs and prepare for our next guest.

GRIM REAPER

Yes, a mister Leech if I remember correctly.

PAM

He's a writer.

GRIM REAPER

So straight to Hell, then?

Pam smirks.

GRIM REAPER (CONT'D)

And by the way, I found a great
remedy for getting blood stains out
of carpet.

PAM

Oh, fabulous.

GRIM REAPER

Yes, it's just a mixture of water
and dish washing detergent. Gets it
right up.

The Grim Reaper and Pam begin walking together.

A rotting apple core sits on the front desk counter as The
Grim Reaper and Pam exit frame.

THE END

Copyrighted, Kris Krainock 2018