

8. The Hereafter

(We are in a room. #2 is seated in a chair, apparently asleep. #1 is in a chair next to #2. #2 stirs and wakes.)

- #1: Hi.
#2: *(Tentative)* Hi.
#1: How are you feeling?
#2: Fine...I think. Where am I?
#1: Is that really important?
#2: I think so.
#1: OK. You are where you are.
#2: *(Pause)* Thanks. Is there any reason I shouldn't know?
#1: No. It's just kind of hard to explain, first thing.
#2: Try.
#1: What's the last thing you remember before you woke up here?
#2: *(Thinks for a moment.)* I was leaving work.
#1: Keep going.
#2: I left my office...got in my car...put on my headphones and started driving home. After that I'm drawing a blank.
#1: Then let's go to the videotape. I always wanted to say that. Makes me sound like a sportscaster. *(Pushes a button and we hear the audio of a car crash. #1 stops the tape.)* Didn't anyone ever tell you not to drive with headphones on? It's very dangerous.
#2: That's odd. That...that looks exactly like me.
#1: There's a good reason for that. It is you...or should I say was you.
#2: What do you mean, "was"? Define "was."
#1: "Was: Verb. Middle English from the Old English" meaning...you ain't an "is" anymore.
(#1 and #2 look at each other and both start to laugh.)

- #2: That's very funny. No, Seriously, what was that?
#1: Seriously? Your death scene. It wasn't as dramatic as say...Hamlet's, but it did have a certain...flair to it. Especially that final explosion.
#2: I don't believe you.
#1: No, you all never do. Just once I'd like to tell someone that they're dead and have them say, "OK, where do we go from here?"
#2: Well, I apologize for being skeptical, but I wake up in a strange place, with a strange person telling me I'm dead.
#1: I'm not strange.
#2: I don't mean strange...weird. I mean you're a stranger. Who are you?
#1: Let's just say, I'm the office manager for lack of a better description.
#2: OK...and you want me to just accept that fact that I'm dead because you say so?
#1: Well...yeah.
#2: Why should I?
#1: Because you are. Believe me, you bought the farm, checked out, shuffled off this mortal coil...
#2: I get the picture. OK, assuming for the sake of brevity that I did...
#1: Die?
#2: Yeah. Aren't you being a tad on the...insensitive side about it.
#1: Hey, I don't have the time to try and convince you. What do you think, you're my only appointment today? Things could go a lot faster if we didn't have to do the standard "No, I'm not...yes, you are" banter.
#2: But it's impossible. I'm too young to be dead.
#1: Hey, let me clue you in on something, when one drives off a freeway overpass doing sixty-five, age has very little to do with it.
#2: But I've got a lot more to do. More to accomplish.

#1: Not in that life you don't. They can stick a fork in you 'cause you're done.

#2: Isn't there anything I can do? Some...deal I can make?

#1: Sure. How much money you got?

#2: *(Starts frantically looking for cash, then pulls out a check book.)* Will you take a check?

#1: I was kidding.

#2: So you don't make any deals?

#1: Who am I, Monty Hall? Besides, I don't make deals with dead people. No percentage in it.

#2: So...I'm really...dead?

#1: Yes, you're really dead. You wanna see the tape again?
(#1 starts to push the remote button. #2 stops him/her.)

#2: NO! I believe you. *(Pause)* I'm dead!

#1: I know.

#2: So...where do I go from here?

#1: That's better. I don't know. I really can't answer that...precisely.

#2: What can you answer...precisely?

#1: Nothing. The final decision is up to the big guy. You're his next appointment.

#2: Does everyone meet with him?

#1: No. Some people get sent right along. Most, like you, have to be evaluated.

#2: Why do I have to be evaluated?

#1: Honestly? You had a dumb death. The boss doesn't like to send those on without a meeting first.

#2: He thinks my death was dumb?

#1: Well, what would you call catapulting off the freeway into oblivion with country western music blaring in your ears? Noble?

#2: No, but...

#1: Still, it was better than, say, drowning in a bowl of Jello.

#2: *(Pause)* Somebody actually did that?

#1: Hard to believe, huh?

#2: And what exactly happens at this meeting?

#1: You sit, you talk, then it's decided what's done with you.

#2: "What's done with me"? What are the options?

#1: They vary.

#2: Name some.

#1: OK. Some people stay here if the boss thinks they'll be useful. Then, some people are sent back to complete their lives. Some are...

#2: Wait! Are you saying that some people are put back into their old bodies?

#1: Yes, but...

#2: No, but! I like that one. Let's do it.

#1: Sorry, can't do that.

#2: Why?

#1: First, it's not my decision. Second, if I could, there'd have to have been a body to put you into. You blew up, remember? There's not much left except maybe a random finger or toe, and I don't think you'd want to spend the rest of that life as a toe, do you?

#2: No, not really.

#1: See the problem? So, if you are sent back, it's decided what form you're sent back in.

#2: Is there a possibility I might be sent back as an animal?

#1: Or a fish or maybe even an insect...

#2: I could come back as a spider?

#1: If that's what the boss needs.

#2: I don't want to be a spider!

#1: Have you ever been one before?!

#2: Not that I know of.

#1: Then how do you know you wouldn't like it?

#2: But...see...I...it would...

#1: Look, just go into your meeting and stop worrying. Everything in the universe is done for a reason. The boss knows what's best. You wanna second guess him?

#2: No.

- #1:** Didn't think so. You also don't want to keep him waiting. It's your turn. Just go right through that door.
(#2 gets up and starts to exit. He/she stops at the door and turns back to #1.)
- #2:** I do have one last question.
- #1:** What?
- #2:** You keep saying "the boss." Who's the boss and which ...way did I go?
- #1:** Let's just say, you got what you deserved.
- #2:** It's going to be a long eternity. *(Exits through the door.)*

9. The Hostage

(A warehouse. #1 is pacing. #2 comes around the corner while taking off a mask and joins #1.)

- #1:** What's he doing?
- #2:** Eating.
- #1:** Again? That's what, four times this morning? He's a skinny old man. Where the heck does he put it?
- #2:** I don't know. He says he's hypoglycemic and he'll faint if he doesn't eat something every hour. Have I mentioned what a mean son of a gun he is?
- #1:** Not since his last feeding. Well, we'd better make this call now or any money we get for him will go to food. You got the phone?
- #2:** Yeah. Here it is. *(Pulls out a cellular phone.)*
- #1:** Where'd you get it?
- #2:** Fat Mike sold it to me.
- #1:** Fat Mike? Fat Mike's a pickpocket.
- #2:** So?
- #1:** So, that thing is probably hot.
- #2:** We kidnapped an old man and were about to ransom him. Dealing in stolen merchandise is pretty much of a step backwards for us.
- #1:** Forget I said anything. What are you going to say?
- #2:** How's this. *(Takes out a piece of paper and prepares to read some copy. As he/she does, he/she uses a phony voice.)*
We've got your father. If you want to see him again...
- #1:** Wait a minute, wait a minute. What's with the voice?
- #2:** I'm disguising it so no one will recognize it.
- #1:** Who do you think you are, Frank Sinatra? Your voice is hardly a recognizable entity.
- #2:** What?
- #1:** Nobody knows you!