

HEAVEN AIN'T ALL IT'S CRACKED UP TO BE

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INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A man is dead in a hospital bed. This is MARK COLMAN, age 38. In life he was a reserved but kind man, a loving father and conscientious citizen. But none of that matters now, because he is dead. His body is surrounded by family. His wife, LYDIA, 37, is softly crying. His kids, ELLA, 13, RILEY, 11, and SULLIVAN, 8, stand around him in shock. They are in the arms of various extended family. A plasmic glow appears around the body, and Mark's ghost sits up, blinking his eyes open. He looks around at his family, then down at himself.

MARK

Thank fucking god!

Upbeat music begins and the title card hits. Mark floats up and out of his body. He looks around in glee, and a glowing door appears 5 feet in the air at the foot of the bed. Mark flies to it as it swings open. A bearded man has opened the door from the inside and beckons him in with a welcoming smile. The light behind him is almost blinding. This is SAINT PETER.

SAINT PETER

Welcome home Mark.

Mark floats through the door and into the light.

EXT. OUTER GATE PARK - DAY

Mark "walks" the gravel path from the door to a long off pulpit. Saint Peter walks a few feet in front of him. He is actually walking, he is an angel with a solid body. We see that Mark is not the only one on this journey, there are countless paths wagon-wheeling out from one central circle of golden gates. The paths are in a large, luscious park that looks like it shouldn't exist. Saint Peter walks behind the pulpit and grins in waiting as Mark floats up. Mark reaches the pulpit, finishes gawking at his surroundings, and looks back at the angel.

SAINT PETER

Welcome to the afterlife! I'll be your Saint Peter today, how may I help you?

MARK

My Saint Peter?

Saint Peter gestures to the countless people on either side of them.

SAINT PETER

We can't send you all to THE Saint Peter, can we? Think of the line!

MARK

I guess not. Does that mean I'm not getting to meet the real Saint Peter?

Saint Peter looks miffed, like he gets this question all the time but has never gotten over it.

SAINT PETER

No, he only sees the best and brightest, a group you obviously don't qualify for.

Mark is now also miffed.

MARK

I thought people in heaven were supposed to be nice, you know, sin-free.

SAINT PETER

Oh, you're not in heaven yet. You have to wait til after judgement and all that. Besides, I'm just a receptionist, so I get away it.

Saint Peter pulls a piece of paper and quill pen out of thin air and places them on the pulpit.

SAINT PETER (CONT'D)

Now let's have a look at these statistics. Mark Colman, 38. Average intelligence, average career potential...

He looks up at Mark and says-

SAINT PETER (CONT'D)

...Less than average looks

He looks down.

SAINT PETER (CONT'D)

High mental instability.

He looks back up at Mark.

SAINT PETER (CONT'D)

Look, I don't even have to read this report.

(MORE)

SAINT PETER (CONT'D)

Let me guess, you were getting nowhere at work, unsatisfied at home, and you decided to kill yourself so you'd only have to disappoint everyone one more time.

MARK

You don't have to be so dismissive. My life was a dead end-

SAINT PETER

-So you ended up dead. I get it. We get your kind all the time up here. You're not the only one who chose himself over his kids.

Mark doesn't know how to respond to this. For the first time, he looks guilty. Saint Peter returns to his paperwork.

SAINT PETER (CONT'D)

Alright, sign here please.

Mark signs in silence.

SAINT PETER (CONT'D)

Don't look so worried! You're dead, what do you have to stress about?

A echoing boom is heard in the distance.

SAINT PETER (CONT'D)

Aside from what comes next of course.

He takes the paper back and signs it himself, then stamps it with the date.

SAINT PETER (CONT'D)

Alright, let's go.

The pulpit disappears, and Saint Peter turns and walks toward the gate behind him. Mark follows.

SAINT PETER (CONT'D)

You have any questions?

MARK

I can think of a few.

The angel startles, obviously not listening. He whips around and stops abruptly.

SAINT PETER

The tour!! Sorry, I always forget.

He clears his throat and stands up straighter.

SAINT PETER (CONT'D)

Welcome to Outer Gate Park, a once in a death-time experience. The recently deceased pass through these luscious gardens on their way to judgement. Does anyone have any questions?

Mark raises his hand.

SAINT PETER (CONT'D)

You sir?

MARK

Yes. I'm just wondering what any of this is leading to? Like, I'm a ghost now, don't I go off and do ghost stuff?

SAINT PETER

Would you have called yourself religious in life?

MARK

Yes, I went to church every week.

SAINT PETER

Well, it's not much, but it's enough to qualify your for our Christian Heaven Experience package. Or the Christian Hell Experience, but you don't seem fun enough for that. If you were non-religious, you wouldn't have gotten the door. But no, you have to go through the traditional judgement and such. We're on our way there now.

Sometime within the last line, they resume walking. Mark raises his hand again, and when Saint Peter can't see him he begins anyway.

MARK

What am I being judged for? I was a good person.

Saint Peter looks over his shoulder, eyebrows raised.

SAINT PETER

Well, first of all, you killed yourself. That used to be one of the cardinal sins, you know that?

Saint Peter looks forward again and continues talking. Mark looks taken aback.

SAINT PETER (CONT'D)

They had to take it out because too many people were killing themselves just to spite God. But yeah, it's up there. And you know, every other bad thing you've done in your life. You'll see.

They reach the gate and Saint Peter unlocks it. It disappears. Saint Peter checks his watch.

SAINT PETER (CONT'D)

My shift ends now so I'm gonna duck in with you. Good luck man!

Saint Peter swings it open and Mark is blinded once again. Saint Peter disappears into the door after him.

INT. THRONE ROOM - DAY

Mark walks through the light and into a pitch black throne room. A spotlight flicks on, illuminating 3 giant thrones at the other end of the room. In the middle throne sits GOD, age unknown, who looks like a heavily bearded cross between Santa Claus, Kurt Russell, and Willie Nelson. On his right stands JESUS, a 30-something middle eastern man. He is not paying attention at all, instead sawing wood on a pair of sawhorses in front of his throne. On God's left is THE HOLY SPIRIT, a being that appears to be a very short fire imp.

GOD

Come forward!

Mark approaches the thrones. As he gets closer he notices a HERALD angel standing at the base of God's throne. She must be Mark's height, but she is dwarfed by God and his crew.

HERALD

May I present Mark Colman, 38-

GOD

Oh, shut up, I know. Mark Colman, what do you have to say for yourself?

MARK  
Um, I'm sorry? Uh-

God's brows furrow.

GOD  
Do not deviate from the script!

Mark looks around in confusion.

MARK  
Sir, I didn't receive-

GOD  
Oh my god. Did your Peter not give you your lines?

MARK  
No sir.

God shakes his head.

GOD  
Which one did you have?

MARK  
I don't know, um, he had a beard-

GOD  
Of course he had a beard, it's regulation! Who was he??

At this point God's voice is booming incredibly loudly and Mark is shaking.

MARK  
P-P-Peter?

Thunder rolls and the room becomes blindingly bright.

HOLY SPIRIT  
Oh, oh, can I smite him please?  
Pleeeaaaase???

JESUS  
DAD.

The light returns to normal at the sound of Jesus's voice. Jesus stands, hands on his hips, facing God.

JESUS (CONT'D)  
You've already eternally damned 16 people today. Let this one slide. Damn the Peter if you must.

He turns to the herald.

JESUS (CONT'D)

Go out and get him will you Naomi?

The herald nods to Jesus and flies to the door Mark just entered from. As they wait for her return Jesus resumes his carpentry. Mark stares at his feet, shifting from side to side. The Holy Spirit turns and loudly whispers to God.

HOLY SPIRIT

Are you sure I can't smite him?  
Just this once?

Before God can answer, the angel flies up and stands beside Mark.

HERALD

Lord, there is no Peter out there,  
just a line of newly dead.

God's beard ignites and his eyes fill with flames.

GOD

I should have known it was him.  
Namoi, please retrieve Peter 281  
from the back of the hall before I  
eternally damn every one of you to  
the darkest, hottest depths of  
hell.

The Holy Spirit jokingly pouts as the herald does his bidding.

HOLY SPIRIT

Awww, even me God?

GOD

Especially you.

The pouting becomes real. A commotion is heard from the back of the hall. The herald flies back pulling Peter by his ear. She deposits him next to Mark and returns to her spot at the foot of the throne.