

SCRATCH, THE FIRST ENGAGEMENT: WON'T YOU GUESS MY NAME?

By

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FADE IN

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

The moonlight cast shadows of trees over a dimly lit hole-in-the-wall style bar.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The bar has two levels. The first level houses the bar itself and two pool tables. The second level, only a few steps elevated, houses booths that wrap around the outer walls of the bar. It is dimly lit, and a bit dusty. The jukebox is playing The Moody Blues' "Knights in White Satin."

There are six people in the bar. The BARTENDER, 56, stands behind the counter, cleaning glasses. A young couple, a BOY and a GIRL, sit in a booth on the back wall. Two men play pool. Finally, one MAN, 25, sits in a booth in the center of the right wall, opposite the bar. The MAN is wearing a black two-button, two-piece suit with a white dress shirt, a thin black tie, and narrow black wingtip dress shoes. He sits quietly, smoking a cigarette and drinking a scotch.

He stares at the scotch for a few moments, then glances up at the other people in the bar. He takes his last drink of scotch down quickly, then stands up. He takes his last drag of the cigarette as he stands, then as he leans over to grab his jacket, he puts the cigarette out in the ashtray on the table. As he exits the bar, he nods at the BARTENDER, who nods back.

The MAN exits.

INT. MAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The apartment is silent. There is a long table near the door, in the HALL, with two lamps and a small cloth tapestry on top. The doorknob turns. The MAN enters, though not much can be seen. He clicks on one of the lamps, then tosses his keys on the table. He drags his hand through his hair and sighs. He stares at the floor for a moment, with a look of fatigued disappointment on his face. He snaps himself out of it, and enters the LIVING ROOM. He sits on the couch, slips his shoes off, then lays down and takes a long, heavy breath.

INT. APARTMENT KITCHEN - A SHORT TIME LATER

The MAN enters.

He opens the refrigerator, the contents of which being a two-liter bottle of cola, a half-gallon of milk, a bottle of mustard, a bottle of hot sauce, a bottle of soy sauce, a jar of olives, a few slices of pizza on a plate, a half-eaten

submarine sandwich (still wrapped in the restaurant paper), a pack of hot dogs, several items wrapped in aluminum foil, several beers, and a fifth of bourbon.

He looks long and hard at the beer, then grabs the bourbon. He pours a scotch glass full with bourbon, sets the bourbon on the counter and exits the KITCHEN, with the glass of bourbon.

He enters the LIVING ROOM.

He sits on the couch, and turns the television on. He flips through a few channels, taking a few drinks. He shrugs, turns the television off, and exits the LIVING ROOM.

INT. APARTMENT BATHROOM - SOME TIME LATER

The MAN, now wearing only boxers and socks, brushes his teeth. He takes in a small cup of water, swishes, and spits. He wipes his mouth on a towel. He picks up a half-glass of bourbon sitting on the toilet seat, and exits the BATHROOM.

He enters the BEDROOM.

The room is extremely dark, with only the moonlight from the window outlining the furniture and casting bars across the wall from the blinds. The MAN stumbles into the end table next to his bed, grunts, and plops down on the bed. He lays down, breathing heavily. His breathing slows, his eyes flicker, and in a few short moments, he is asleep.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

This scene is nearly identical to the opening scene. The MAN sits in the same booth. The difference is a new set of people. Aside from the BARTENDER and the MAN, there are three people. A young man at the bar, drinking his third beer, and a middle-aged man drinking a whiskey at the pool table, playing another man of similar age.

The MAN takes his last drag, puts the cigarette out, grabs his jacket and stands up to exit. As he exits, he turns to nod at the BARTENDER, who doesn't acknowledge the MAN. The MAN does a slow double-take. When he looks back at the BARTENDER, the BARTENDER's eyes are overshadowed by his brow. He stands with little reactive behavior, cleaning a scotch glass. The MAN's brow drops a bit and he shrugs.

The MAN exits.

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - DAYBREAK

An ALARM sounds from the clock on the nightstand. The MAN grunts a few times, then forces himself to sit up. He looks at

the alarm clock, then reaches over and silences it. He looks off, seemingly vacant, toward the covers. He gives a look of question, then shakes it off and gets out of bed.

INT. BATHROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER

The MAN brushes his teeth. He drinks a small paper cup of water, spits, and wipes his mouth.

INT. HALL - ABOUT FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER

The MAN ties his tie in the mirror above the long table. He pauses to look at himself. He sighs.

The MAN exits the APARTMENT.

Time goes by. The light in the windows of the door fade into night. The MAN enters.

The MAN turns on the lamp, tosses his keys on the table, and exits the HALL.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

The MAN enters.

The MAN opens the refrigerator, bearing the same contents as before, with the exception of the pizza. He sees the bourbon, now half-full.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - SOME TIME LATER

The MAN lays down, similar to before. He breathes heavily. His breathing slows, his eyes flicker, and he falls asleep.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Aside from the BARTENDER and the MAN, there are four other people in the bar. A middle-aged woman and a man of the same age at a booth on the far end of the bar, and two young men at a booth where the MAN sat on previous visits.

The MAN sits at the bar this time. He's very drunk. His vision is blurred, he reacts to some gaseous reflux, and smokes a cigarette. He takes a drink of his bourbon. As he sets the glass down, he begins to feel nauseous. He stands quickly, and leaves the bar counter.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

The MAN leans against the building next to the bar, vomiting. When he finishes, he stands up, breathing heavily, and leans his back against the building, looking up toward the sky. He

closes his eyes and tries to steady his breathing.

INT. BAR - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The MAN enters.

He pulls out his cigarettes, shakes a cigarette loose, raises the box to his mouth, pulls one out with his lips, puts the box back in his inside jacket pocket, and reaches to pull out his lighter. He looks up, a bit taken back. The bar is empty, with the exception of the BARTENDER. The MAN shakes his head, lights his cigarette, and heads back over to the bar. He sits.

THE MAN

Haven't been the closing drunk in quite a while, Sam. Haven't even sat at the bar. Can't remember why I chose to tonight.

The MAN takes a few drags, as a few moments pass. He stares at the bar top. A sound is heard.

There is a rolling sound coming from the dark end of the bar counter. The MAN doesn't seem to notice. A small tink sound is heard. The MAN looks up, and finds a RED APPLE next to his scotch glass. He gives a look of confusion. He picks up the APPLE, looks it over quickly, then holds it out toward the BARTENDER.

THE MAN

No thanks, Sam, I've never been fond of apples.

At that moment, a mid-toned, scratchy voice is heard from the darkness beyond the bar counter.

VOICE

Just a few thousand years too late for that, don't you think?

THE MAN

(Looking back up from the bar top at the BARTENDER.)
Excuse me?

VOICE

Out to save the world by destroying yourself, it appears.

The MAN notices that the BARTENDER's mouth didn't move as the VOICE spoke. He looks around, to see no one else in the bar. At that moment, all but a few feet surrounding the MAN and the BARTENDER fades into darkness. The MAN looks around, noticing

that nothing short of several feet surrounding him can be seen. His expression turns from confusion to fear. In his face, it can be seen that he is keeping as sturdy a composure as possible. He stands, saying not a word, and heads toward the door, fumbling in the darkness.

VOICE

You seem distraught by my presence,
yet you've only heard my voice.

(A beat.)

Come back to the bar, boy. I can't
let you leave in this condition,
you're far too drunk.

The MAN ignores the VOICE, and continues searching frantically, in attempted discretion, for the door.

VOICE

Very well. If you won't come to the
bar,

The entire bar under the dim lighting slides quickly up to the MAN. The moment it arrives, a CREATURE is sitting at the stool next to the MAN's. The CREATURE is a light green color, with the torso build similar to a human's, but the lower half of an old, matted goat. The CREATURE's face is horribly distorted. It has white eyes, with faint grey rings. Its skin is like that of an elderly man. He has a long, thin nose. But, the most recognizable feature is his mouth. It sets disturbingly agape, with widely torn corners, jagged and chipped teeth, and a deep green, split tongue. He has large, pointed ears, and from his back grow two large wings, like that of a dragon.

VOICE CON'T

then I'll make the bar come to you.
You aren't leaving, boy, now sit
down. I can promise you that you
will not find an exit.

The MAN turns to see the CREATURE before him. His expression turns from fear to distaste and anger.

VOICE

Well, now that you've seen my face,
you have a reason to be frightened,
and yet somehow you've found your
composure. How is this?

THE MAN

I know who you are. I know what you
are. And I know where you exist. I
didn't have to see you to recognize

the feeling of your presence. The hatred that makes you up is potent. Your potential may be mysterious, but your prerogative is not.

THE CREATURE

Well, then, who am I? What am I? Where is it you believe I come from?

THE MAN

You are my rage. My discontent. My primal instinct. Not quite an Id. You're too intelligent for that. But certainly a manifest representation of all I believe should be overcome. A culmination of every human personality characteristic that makes up my aptitude for social malignity and personal despotism.

...And you once resided as a faceless aura within my anima.

THE CREATURE

Well, that's quite a specific depiction. And yet you've only answered two of the three questions. Once you know the third, or respectively the first, then we can begin the process of overcoming all that wonderful probity you so tenaciously cling to.

I am here to break down the self-righteousness that so many you've alienated were subject to.

THE MAN

You are only a representation, and as such, you are only as powerful as you are given the power to be.

THE CREATURE

You know not who you address, boy. I am far more than you give me credit for. My power derives from the wealth of capitalism that can be eternally profitable simply by exercising the slightest puppetry over human nature.

THE MAN

You believe you're some kind of God?

THE CREATURE

Oh no, I'm not God. I don't have to be. However, I am the hand controlling this little wet rock. I have more power over your people now than any God ever has.

THE MAN

Not only are you far weaker than any God, you are put in your place by the likes of humanity, due to your dependence on their ability to choose.

THE CREATURE

You forget a great detail, my friend. Human nature has been, is presently, and always will be our will. You will seek love and be angered, you will seek apathy and find methods, and you will always feel that you require copulation to indulge in the most tangible pleasure.

THE MAN

And what of happiness? All people seek happiness, which is something you cannot offer.

THE CREATURE

(With anticipatory laughter.)

Happiness? Happiness has become our greatest interception in recent decades. We've redefined it's meaning. Many people, now, have grown into a beautifully discrete belief that happiness is the ability to grow comfortable with the world as it is, rather than what is traditionally "good."

THE MAN

Even sounds reasonable when revealed so directly. Yet, it sets no bounds for right and wrong.

THE CREATURE

Oh, but haven't you heard? There is no right and wrong, only popular toleration and intolerable population. This world is no longer black and white, it's a technicolor marvel of hedonism and free thinking! This world will be free of it's stifling moral compass within the coming century, my friend.

...You can bet your freedom on that.

THE MAN

And many will.

THE CREATURE

Blurring such a line will create the ideal scenario for molding a society into whatever one wills. The only requirement is patience. Man can easily slip into any societal norm with gradual movement.

THE MAN

The evidence is mounting, this is true. Looking over the past few decades, it was far from invisibly gradual. I can't say that it was all ill progress, but it does seem that man's moral compass has fallen greatly in certain areas. Though it has also risen sharply in others.

THE CREATURE

It is this belief that we thrive on. Gradual progression into certain areas will open windows to the kind of "free thinking" that will eventually infect the more sensitive areas of societal and sociological politics.

THE MAN

You're a politician.

THE CREATURE

Of course. How can one have such interest in the evolution of human society and not be a politician?

THE MAN

This is starting to sound too familiar.

THE CREATURE

And so it should. Step one was to tie faith so close to religion that many see no mutual exclusiveness between them.

THE MAN

And step two?

THE CREATURE

Step two is a prequel to step one, really.

...Create doubt.

THE MAN

Why is creating doubt both step three and step one?

THE CREATURE

Well, initially, one must create doubt to allow a level of comfort to coexist with rebellion. Once that's accomplished, a boundless sense of curiosity thrives. From curiosity comes research. From research come facts. And when one finds facts, it is in man's nature to depend on them for decision-making.

THE MAN

Well that's just simple logic. One can derive a more reasonable conclusion from facts than from theories.

THE CREATURE

While this is certainly true, information paths become more narrow. When one relies solely on facts to create more theories, one only inspects every branch of a single tree. Curiosity becomes welcome only when it's founded on prior facts, rather than whole new theories of a separate idea.

THE MAN

As if the man that inspected the tree climbed each branch and reached out for others to tie to his, rather than simply walk the ground to a new trunk.

THE CREATURE

Good to see that you're following. Once curiosity yields fact, and men become dependent, all ideas that have no identified evidence are thrown out. At that point, so much money is put into research that no one is likely willing to put forth the financial necessities to further an idea that does not originate from facts previously established.

THE MAN

It seems illogical to bet the farm on such specific hypothetical occurrences.

THE CREATURE

Which is precisely why it moves along so smoothly. People are not difficult to read. All one must do is look from a sociological viewpoint, and it becomes far easier to determine the actions any individual is likely to take, as long as you know what drives them.

The trick is this: Think of every human as an entire society. The inner conflicts of a single human are no more than a microcosmic representation of societal conflicts. All you have to do is find out what people rule the society, and you will rarely be surprised by the actions the individual takes. Find out what drives the individual, and you will find the voices within that rule the society.

THE MAN

No one seems to realize that many people have, individually, many conflicting voices of reason.

THE CREATURE

Which is why the theory works. Once a person knows how the game works, they can manipulate it, and if everyone knows, the theory is useless.

THE MAN

Wait, now, you still haven't answered my question. Why is creating doubt third?

THE CREATURE

Once a society becomes dependent on factual information that it narrows the areas of discovery, one must again create doubt in order to keep man on this track to narrow-minded free thinking.

THE MAN

Now, when you say that, I assume you mean that in order to create a moldable society, one must gain control of it's potential intelligence, and so the goal is to keep man from finding other trees of information to pool from.

THE CREATURE

Precisely. As long as man refuses to acknowledge the existence of anything with no prior factual evidence, we've accomplished something quite amazing. I'm sure you've heard an old saying...

"The Devil's greatest achievement was convincing the world that he does not exist."

THE MAN

Well, assuming man's ability to create a box around the box they think outside of, it's damn near an impenetrable system.

THE CREATURE

And I think we know that a change in that facet of man's logic is...well, unlikely, to put it mildly.

THE MAN

But how, exactly, do you plan on creating doubt?

THE CREATURE

That's the beauty of it. We don't have to. It's human nature to rebel from any set dogma. It was in your nature to slide right into the first step, so you can thank your creator for your natural decent from societal growth into the pine box of social and intellectual stagnancy.

THE MAN

Well, then, you've done nothing. Your plan isn't your plan at all, it's simply taking credit for the aftermath of free will under limited physics, no proof of origin, and a set scientific scenerio. God did this, not you.

THE CREATURE

And anyone who strays from "the plan" is stuck with the same realization that you've just had.

...You're own God doomed you.

THE MAN

You say you aren't what I believe you to be, but I've heard your voice before. I know these ideas. I've had this conversation before.

THE CREATURE

Many people have heard my voice. In many languages, over many lands, for many millenia. Even on separate levels of intelligence, in fewer words. You recognize my voice because it is a direct derivative of your mind's dialect. In a way, you weren't entirely incorrect.

THE MAN

What are you saying? That you're Satan?

THE CREATURE

I prefer to be called The Devil. It

has a bit more of a classic sort of ring to it, and after all, I am a classical creature of fiction, ha ha.

THE MAN

The Devil. Why would The Devil be sitting in a bar, on the outskirts of a second-rate city, talking to me about his plans to destroy the souls of humanity?

THE DEVIL

Don't get too proud, boy, I assure you, you aren't special.

THE MAN

Well, there's certainly something that brought you here, rather than to anyone else. As I recall, you aren't omni-present, as your creator is.

THE DEVIL

My creator didn't create me, he created my state of life. My beliefs and ideals come from a long line of understandings about our "benevolent" God. Before me, there was no being brave enough to counter the Alpha. My persona came from no genetic or environmental dictations. I am manifest anti-God, and as such, by definition, am also a god. But, unlike the Man upstairs, I am also a humanitarian. A fellow hedonist. If a god is to give his creations restrictions and a nature of their own, he should be proud of their actions, not punish them for the problems he created. He likes to believe that there is a black and white morality, and there most certainly is not. A god dictates what is good and what is bad, and because of this fact, at the core, all things are morally ambiguous.

...Man need not fear me, as I am their true support. I will be behind your race for any and all actions they take. You can never

disappoint me, and I will always be proud of what you choose to do. You have the devine right to unpunishable choice.

THE MAN

(In a mocking, whispering awe.)

My God, you're made purely of human nature. Everything about you is human to it's core. Except, of course, your hideous disfigurement. No wonder it's so easy to believe you don't exist, you are human.

THE DEVIL

I most certainly am not, boy. I was here long before the likes of you.

THE MAN

Could it be so easy to manipulate you? Allow me to point something out. How can you be the humanitarian you present yourself to be if you would refuse with such disgust the idea that you can be leveled with humans? You're pride is certainly as present as God swears it to be.

THE DEVIL

(He laughs to himself.)

Well, I certainly can't accuse you of being unintuitive. You asked me why I would be here, with you. The answer is ancient. You have a spark about you that hasn't been seen in the likes of man for centuries. Something that really shines through your penchant for chivalry in a world of pansexual ambiguity.

THE MAN

You don't want to level yourself with man because he was created by God. That's why you hate them.

THE DEVIL

Much like the way you handled the situation with your dear friend. A great deal of work to save her from the fate of so many others growing up in a world as it is today.

THE MAN

Why do you insist on changing the subject?

THE DEVIL

Why do you insist on proving yourself better than others?

THE MAN

I don't consider myself better than others-

THE DEVIL

But you believe you're better than me.

THE MAN

And this should bother a "god," why?

THE DEVIL

Oh, it doesn't bother me. In fact, it will continue to aid in the points I intend to make against you during my frequent trips here.

THE MAN

Frequent? That's a bold statement to make, from a dream.

THE DEVIL

Oh, believe me, this isn't the last you'll see of me. Ha ha, despite your apparent disbelief, it wasn't the first, either.

...But, for now, it's time for you to go. I think you'll find the door in it's usual place.

The MAN looks toward the blackness where the door would usually be located, and finds it right where it belongs.

THE MAN

(Turning back to the bar.)

Well, at least something is-

The bar, the BARTENDER, and THE DEVIL are gone. He sits on a stool in an empty black space, ten feet from a wooden door. The MAN pulls out his cigarettes, raises the box to his face, and pulls a cigarette out with his mouth. He lights it, then replaces the cigarette box to his jacket and the lighter to

his pocket. He takes a drag and sighs.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - MORNING

The MAN tosses a few times in bed, then sits up. He looks around for a moment, then stares at the covers, thinking. His alarm clock sounds, and he snaps out of his thoughts. He sighs, then as he reaches to silence the alarm, he stops for a moment with a look of question. This look fades as he switches the ALARM off.

INT. SHOWER - A SHORT TIME LATER

The MAN is washing his hair. He rinses, and reaches for the wash cloth on the short bar by the soap shelf. Before he grabs the cloth, he opens his eyes, looking straight down at the drain. There is a small tangle of short hair hovering over it. The MAN takes a deep breath and sighs.

INT. BATHROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The MAN is brushing his teeth. He rinses his toothbrush, takes in some water from a small cup, and spits.

INT. KITCHEN DINING ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The MAN pours his dog, BOGIE, a miniature bloodhound, a bowl of dog food from a large bag.

The MAN sits at his table, eating cereal and watching the morning news.

TELEVISION REPORTER

-picketing on the White House lawn.
But this story isn't about the
Pro-Life church radicals-

THE MAN

Radicals? Suburban church
radicals...

TELEVISION REPORTER

-are actually picketing around the
Pro-Life activists. These
Pro-Choice lobbyists have literally
been picketing circles around the
Pro-Life advocates for hours, right
here at the 1600.

BOGIE whimpers.

THE MAN

What's the matter, Bogie?

BOGIE trots up to the MAN and throws his stubby, muscular paws up on the MAN's lap. The MAN pets BOGIE.

THE MAN

I know, buddy, I feel the same way.

TELEVISION REPORTER

-asking when these Pro-Lifers will
join the twenty-first century.

The MAN sighs, then looks at the CLOCK on the wall.

THE MAN

Fuck, I'm gonna be late. Down,
Bogie, down.

BOGIE jumps down and follows the MAN as he goes to pour out his cereal into the kitchen sink, puts the cereal box on top of the refrigerator, and rushes out of the KITCHEN.

INT. ENTRY HALL - MOMENTS LATER

The MAN stands in front of the mirror, ties his tie hastily, and pushes BOGIE back as he exits the FRONT DOOR.

Time passes, as the light from the windows around the FRONT DOOR fade to dark.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The MAN sits in the booth at the center, as he had so many times before. There are quite a few people in the bar tonight, many of which are young adults. Two middle-aged MEN sit in a booth near the FRONT DOOR, and an elderly couple sit in a booth at the opposite end of the BAR.

The MAN sits in his booth, smoking a cigarette and drinking a scotch. He can't help but drift in and out to a few of the conversations taking place around the BAR.

THE ELDERLY MAN

-eggs are too salty.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Oh, be quiet. You never complained
about my eggs, and I use twice as
much salt.

ELDERLY MAN

(Coughing.)

Look, now, I'm choking on this sludge, there's too much salt!

ELDERLY WOMAN

Now quit it, Sam, you're acting like a damn fool!

THE MAN

Hm.

The MAN approaches the BAR.

THE MAN

Hey, Les, can I get the omelette? All of a sudden, I'm kind of hungry.

THE BARTENDER (LESLIE)

Sure thing, I'll get Deb right on it. It might be a few minutes, we've got a bit of a crowd tonight. Saturdays, you know.

THE MAN

That's fine, I'll be in the usual place.

The MAN sits down back at his booth. He hears the middle-aged MEN talking.

MAN #1

-the Democratic Socialists of America. His defense policies are identical.

MAN #2

Oh, bull shit. The paranoia and conspiracy crap is getting old.

MAN #1

And you know, that's the scary thing. What he does is so unbelievable that rather than do the research, people settle into comfortable apathy, and assume "reasonably" that the idea that he's a Muslim socialist is nothing but conservative paranoia and propaganda.

The MAN sighs, raises a brow of discomfort, and takes a sip of his scotch. His attention is then turned to a few of the younger adults.

MALE YOUNGSTER #1

God has the characteristics of a human, how can a god possibly exist with all the flaws of a man? He gets angry, he gets sad, how can a perfect being, you know, a perfect being... how can God, a perfect being, be subject to human emotion?

MALE YOUNGSTER #2

Right. Yeah, I mean, I agree.

MALE YOUNGSTER #1

And, really, I mean, the obvious question, you know. There can't be an all-powerful being in the first place. Can God create a rock that he can't lift? There's no way around it, don't even try, man.

MALE YOUNGSTER #2

Oh, I'm not disagreeing, I get it. Absolutely, you know.

The MAN directs his attention to a few other younger adults across the BAR.

FEMALE YOUNGSTER #3

-finally got my mom to look after Ally. She got all pissed because I wanted to come out with you guys.

FEMALE YOUNGSTER #4

Wow, ha ha. What was she so bent out of shape about?

FEMALE YOUNGSTER #3

Well Ally's got a cold, but it's just like, how hard is it to give her some medicine and let her get some sleep. It's not like I haven't been dealing with it all week, I didn't just drop her off and tell my mom to take care of her.

FEMALE YOUNGSTER #4

Yeah, that's crap.

The MAN looks around the bar, looking as though he's scanning the room with a curious sense of disappointment. After looking the room over, his brow furrows with questioning confusion. He

runs his hand over his face, and finishes off his scotch.
Just then, a WAITRESS approaches with the omelette meal.

THE MAN
(Pointing at the empty
scotch glass.)
Thanks. Hey, can I get another?

WAITRESS
Sure, it'll be a few minutes.

The MAN tries to take a bite, but the omelette is extremely hot. As soon as it touches his tongue, he pulls the fork out and puts it back on the plate. He breathes for a second, expelling the heat. He then loosens his tie. He looks at the empty scotch glass and the hot food, then stands up and heads toward the FRONT DOOR.

THE MAN
Hey, Les, I'm going to step outside
for some air and a smoke, I'll be
back in a minute.

LES nods. The MAN walks out.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

The MAN stands against the wall on the left side of the BAR, smoking a cigarette.

THE MAN
Blurring the line... Hm.

The MAN puts tosses his cigarette to the ground and twists his foot over it. He stops. A SIREN is heard approaching.

EXT. BAR - SOME TIME LATER

The MAN is standing outside the front of the BAR, smoking a cigarette. An AMBULANCE is parked in the street with it's lights flashing. Two PARAMEDICS carry out the ELDERLY MAN on a gurney, and lift him into the back of the AMBULANCE. The ELDERLY WOMAN exits the BAR.

ELDERLY WOMAN
(To the PARAMEDICS.)
Is he going to be alright?

PARAMEDIC #1
Ma'am, we need to get him to the
hospital, he's had a mild heart
attack. Are you coming with us in

the ambulance?

ELDERLY WOMAN

Yes, well, I think I will.

PARAMEDIC #1

Alright, I'll help you up into the back, here.

The PARAMEDIC helps her into the rear of the AMBULANCE. He turns to the MAN.

PARAMEDIC #1

Thanks for omelette, we don't get to eat much when we're on call around here.

THE MAN

No problem, but I hear it's a little heavy on the salt.

PARAMEDIC #1

Thanks for the heads up.

The PARAMEDIC closes the back door of the AMBULANCE, and it drives off. The MAN is left standing alone in front of the BAR.

THE MAN

(Existential.)

...A salty bar omelette in the middle of the night. Now that... that's obscurity.

The MAN sighs, then looks at the CLOCK TOWER a few blocks away. The time shows 3:00 p.m.

THE MAN

Damn.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The MAN enters. The BAR is empty. He pulls a stool up at the bar and sits down. He sighs.

THE DEVIL (V.O.)

It appears you've been thinking about our little conversation.

THE MAN

What? When the hell did I go to sleep?

THE DEVIL

Your memory seems to be struggling,
as well.

THE MAN

I've been losing time between days.

THE DEVIL

Yes. Your dreams have been vivid.
Flowing from the night before into
the following morning.

THE MAN

Most people dream nonsense. Some
people seem to think the nonsense
is relevant. But this... This has
every element of reality. Except
you, of course.

THE DEVIL

Oh? Why does my presence seem so
unrealistic to you?

THE MAN

Well you aren't really a face in
the crowd. The last time I saw
something like you, it was perched
on a cathedral.

THE DEVIL

Hm.

THE MAN

Every night I go to the bar, and
every morning I forget how I ended
up at home. I don't remember
leaving the bar, and here I am at
the bar. But this bar was full when
I went outside. How could I have
missed thirty people leaving a bar
with one entrance...

(He sighs and runs his
hands through his hair.

Oh... Son of a bitch. This is
getting to a point of
ridiculousness. Tomorrow night, I'm
not going to the bar. I've got to
get my sleep schedule figured out.

THE DEVIL

Well, you've tried before, to no
avail. Things haven't been right
for some time now, have they?

THE MAN

I need to go grocery shopping,
anyway. The fridge has seen better
days.

THE DEVIL

You have a talent for redirection,
you know that?

THE MAN

What are you talking about, now?

THE DEVIL

(Confident and calm.)

You know damn well what I'm talking
about. It's been four years since
your last sober night. It's been
five since the catalyst.

THE MAN

And just what the hell do you know
about it?

THE DEVIL

If I'm supposed to be your
creation, that shouldn't be a hard
answer for you. Not to say there's
any truth to that, but if you
believe I'm a product of your
subconscious, as I have a suspicion
you do, then it stands to reason
that I'd know everything about you.

THE MAN

In that case, it's none of my damn
business what I've been through.

THE DEVIL

Funny. But you've still got some
time before morning, and you aren't
leaving this bar. You may as well
get yourself another scotch and-

THE MAN

Bartender, I want a Grey Goose
martini, extra dry, two olives.

THE DEVIL

You may as well start talking about
it.

THE MAN

(With energetic
restlessness.)

Why, what do you want from me? You
want to hear all about my past?
Well, like you said, you already
know all about me, so what the fuck
do you need to here?

THE DEVIL

This isn't about educating me on
your past.

THE MAN

(Aggitated.)

Well then what the fuck is it?

THE DEVIL

Humanity. You've lost your
humanity. You isolate yourself, you
drink like a fish, and you're body
is falling apart. What ails you
simple to identify, but enormously
complicated in it's value.

THE MAN

You want me to talk about her?

THE DEVIL

You say it with such a sense of
embarrassment, but not the kind one
would generally expect. You're
ashamed that something so simple
could put you so near your grave.
You fear it's commonality. You
worry that others could never see
beyond the standard situation into
what you really felt. Of course,
like everyone else-

THE MAN

(Intense.)

It wasn't like everyone else. I've
seen what people do when they think
they feel something. They don't
understand what it is. What they
feel is littered with conditional
emotion. They will always be more
in tune with themselves than
others. They're the ones that fear,
they're the ones that refuse to
remove comfort from the equation
and truly understand the nature of
such a thing.

THE DEVIL

And what "thing" is that? What is it that others don't understand; that you so profoundly grasp?

THE MAN

You know what I'm talking about.

THE DEVIL

Why can't you say it?

THE MAN

It goes without saying.

THE DEVIL

How can you be so confident in the understanding of an idea whose name you can't even bring yourself to utter?

THE MAN

Because it's more than that.

THE DEVIL

More than what?

THE MAN

Than simple emotion, than attraction...

THE DEVIL

Than love. It's more than love. You can't bear to say it. You can't bear it because it's an intense emotional anomaly that is associated with the roots of human nature, and you can't stand to be compared to others of your race.

...See, now we have more in common than you care to admit. Part of you loathes the naivety of your people. They act as though they're responsible for all the greatness of their existence. They do everything in the name of ideals that they don't understand. They separate truth into sects of self-righteousness. Furthermore, in the name of truth, they investigate the necessities of their personal comfort and call it progress or

wrongfully express it to be a form of science.

...But, of course, to err is human.

THE MAN

And to arrogance goes humanity.

THE DEVIL

But, she was no different.

THE MAN

Yes, she was. She could look at people as a whole. She could see a larger picture, where others lost themselves in particular facets of society; politics, religious activity, finances, etc. Others would lose themselves in fields for which they were educated. No longer citizens of a people, but citizens of a company or division of one kind or another.

THE DEVIL

She looked at the world similarly to the way in which you do.

THE MAN

(Thinking.)

Yeah, but it wasn't just that. It... It was something else. There was more to it than the sociological appreciation, obviously.

...She was... I don't know, she was so... human. In a way, I think I was attracted to her mortality. She never had to think about herself as anything other than a human. She connected well with all walks of life, and unlike me... She was proud of people. I think she truly enjoys being one. Everything that I fear and hate about others... The naivety, the unbalanced E.Q., the compensation issues. All of it. Though she was undeniably human, she maintained one great difference. Whatever it was that she felt for people... It was unconditional.

THE DEVIL

Others sway frequently from love to hate to shame to pride...

THE MAN

Yeah. It was as if she felt them all at the same time. Everything about people that logic would deem abhorrent, she found a reason to appreciate. It's something I'm not sure I'll ever be great enough to understand or indulge.

THE DEVIL

But her humanity caught up to her.

The MAN pulls a box of cigarettes from his jacket, opens it, raises it to his mouth, and retrieves one with his lips. He returns the box to his jacket, and lights the cigarette.

THE MAN

...Yeah. It did. Just as it does for everyone.

THE DEVIL

Except you, it seems.

(His hand becomes a sort of amorphous organic coil, and returns to it's form having produced an APPLE.)

Temptation is a powerful negotiator. What is it that keeps you from such a death-threatening force?

THE MAN

Will power. Simple will power.

THE DEVIL

For others, it is rarely so simple. How do you measure up?

The MAN takes the APPLE from THE DEVIL.

THE MAN

(Examining the apple.)

Some people...

(He takes a large bite of the apple.)

...can take bigger bites of themselves than anyone else ever could.

THE DEVIL retrieves the APPLE.

THE DEVIL
And some people...
(His hand takes a
cylindrical shape.)
...just don't have the heart to
care.

THE DEVIL's cylindrical hand cores the APPLE. He peers through the hole in the center of the APPLE at the MAN.

THE DEVIL
Some people lack the basic elements
of a humanity created by God.

THE DEVIL sets the APPLE on the bar in front of the MAN.

THE DEVIL
I believe your drink is here.

The MAN look to the left of the APPLE, and there sets a Grey Goose martini, extra dry, with two olives. He looks to his right, and THE DEVIL is gone.