THE UPSIDE TO THE END OF THE WORLD

(Working title)

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MR HAWTHORNE, the well-dressed CEO of Hawthorne Industries, sits behind his neat office desk organizing his work. The office décor boasts its occupant’s financial success. JENNY, his assistant dressed in a sharp suit and a tight bun, pokes her head in the office.

JENNY
Your 2 O’clock interview is here to see you Mr. Hawthorne.

HAWTHORNE
See him in Jennifer.

JENNY
Yes sir.

HAWTHORNE
Jennifer?

Jenny stops at the door.

JENNY
sir?

HAWTHORNE
You did remember to seal the main doors, didn’t you?

JENNY
Of course sir.

HAWTHORNE
Very good. See him in.

Hawthorne rearranges his tie and sits up straight. JIM, a mid-twenty clean shaved man, walks in nervously clutching his messenger bag. He’s already breaking in sweat and the bags under his eyes are prominent.

HAWTHORNE
Come in. Please have a seat, Mr...?
Jim
Handler. Jimmy Handler.

Hawthorne
Mr. Handler. Mind if I call you Jim?

Hawthorne gestures to the empty seat opposite him.

Jim
Not all all.

Jim takes his seat. He nervously lets out a small cough. Hawthorne hits a button on his landline. Jenny comes in.

Jenny
You called sir?

Hawthorne
Yes. Two cups of tea if you’d be so kind Jenny.

Jenny
Of course sir.

Hawthorne
How do you take your tea Jim?

Jim
Err...plain sir.

Hawthorne
Heat mine until it’s scolding, then wait a minute for it to cool before adding to exactly 3 teaspoons of sugar, a dollop of honey, a sprinkle of black pepper and just a hint of lemon. Jim will take his plain.

Jenny
We’re out of black pepper, sir

Hawthorne
Mind running across the street and getting some?
JENNY
Not at all

Jenny makes to leave.

HAWTHORNE
Oh, you’ll be needing this.

Hawthorne reaches under his desk and pulls out a pistol. He casually hands Jenny the weapon. Jim watches stoically as she takes it, tucks it in the back of her skirt and walks out the room. Jim lets out another cough. Hawthorne grabs a folder on his desk and begins to go through it. He seems impressed by what he’s reading.

HAWTHORNE
Princeton graduate. Top of your class. Near perfect grade point average. I gotta say Jim, I’m liking what I see.

Jim sits more confidently in his seat.

HAWTHORNE
So why do you want this job?

JIM
I have always been interested in Hawthorne Industries, I did my internship here. And I do feel like I will be a valuable asset in your company.

HAWTHORNE
We could use a man like you...
(beat)
...especially in these troubling times

Jim gives Hawthorne a sympathetic nod. He lets out another cough. This one is more wet.

HAWTHORNE
Are you alright?

Jim wipes the sheen from his forehead.
JIM
I’m fine, just a little under the weather.

Hawthorne stares at Jim suspiciously. SFX: RING. The telephone chimes to life. Hawthorne puts it on speaker phone.

HAWTHORNE
Hello?

JENNY
Sir. They seem to out of honey.

HAWTHORNE
No honey? That’s a shame. What about the black pepper?

There’s silence followed by a long distant moan and a sudden gun shot.

HAWTHORNE
Jennifer?...

JENNY
(panting)
Got the pepper.

HAWTHORNE
(smiles)
I’ll see you in a few then.

Hawthorne’s statement is left hanging. A shrill scream bursts out then the line dies. Hawthorne exchanges a look with Jim, who lets out a dry cough. The men share an awkward silence when SFX: Knock Knock.

Jim and Hawthorne both stare at the door. Jenny walks in with two cups of tea. She’s covered in blood and sweat. Her tight bun is running loose long the length of her neck.

HAWTHORNE
(Happily)
Oh, That was fast.
JENNY
(impassively)
I ran.

Both men watch Jenny place the teas in front of them while completely covered in blood. Jim lets out another cough. It’s more wet this time. Hawthorne pulls out the handkerchief from his breast pocket and hands it to Jenny.

JENNY
Thank you, sir.

Jenny wipes the blood from her face as she makes her way out of the office. She stops. She goes back to Hawthorne and pulls out the pistol from the waist of her skirt and places it on his table.

JENNY
I’m afraid it’s empty sir.

HAWTHORNE
No worries. Err...Jenny

Jenny stares at Hawthorne inquisitively.

HAWTHORNE
(hesitant)
Were you...

JENNY
No sir.

HAWTHORNE
Thank God. I’d hate to have to replace someone so exceptional. Do you mind...?

Hawthorne pulls out a magazine from his desk and hands it and the pistol to Jenny.

JENNY
Not at all.

Hawthorne favors Jenny with a smile which she politely returns before leaving the office, reloading the pistol. Hawthorne watches her go.
HAWTHORNE
Damn fine assistant. Don’t know what I’d do without her.

Jim looks on awkwardly and lets out another cough.

HAWTHORNE
You sure you’re alright?

Jim wipes his forehead again.

JIM
Yes.

Hawthorne gives him another suspicious look. He lets out a sigh. Hawthorne give the papers a quick read.

HAWTHORNE
Well. Everything seems to be in order. You can discuss salary and all that tosh with HR later… Welcome to Hawthorne Industries.

Hawthorne stands up and holds out a hand. Jim smiles. He leans across the table and takes his handshake. Hawthorne suddenly jerks Jim closer to him. With his other hand, Hawthorne pulls up Jim’s sleeve. There’s a large bite mark on his arm. Both Hawthorne and Jim share an awkward stare. The men slump back into their seats. Jim opens his mouth to talk but Hawthorne silences him with a finger. He hits a button on his telephone. Jim watches as Hawthorne takes a delicate sip of his tea with his eyes trained on Jim. Jenny walks in. She looks from Jim to Hawthorne. Hawthorne gives her a nod. Jenny pulls out the pistol. Jim’s eyes go wide.

JIM
Wait! No! please!!!

Jenny quickly shoots Jim. He slumps over the chair and falls off. Hawthorne watches the downed body and sighs.

HAWTHORNE
Another one. This zombie apocalypse is really bad for business.

Hawthorne sees the resume and laments.
HAWTHORNE
And he was perfect. At this rate
Lakestay Industries is going to
run us into the ground.
(re: Jenny)
Zero deaths to zombies!

Jenny looks pensively at Hawthorne.

JENNY
I heard that their CEO was
killed in a zombie attack.

HAWTHORNE
What?! When did that happen?

JENNY
(shrewdly)
...tomorrow.

Hawthorne smiles at his assistant. Jim begins to stir. He
lets out a long zombie moan. Jenny immediately blasts him
with 3 more bullets. They all stare at the downed Jim.

END