

Upper Management

By

SD CAPPER

INT. POSTAL ROOM - DAY.

We follow several rows of people, all dressed in ill-fitting overalls, working behind desks.

On one side of each desk sits a large mound of envelopes in different colours, shapes and sizes. A plaque identifies the piles as: 'Incoming Prayers'. The workers open one, and stamp 'DENIED', before placing it in an 'Outgoing Prayers' pile.

Open. Stamp. Open. Stamp. Again and again, rhythmically pushing through their workload.

We centre on KIRA, a young woman, leaning over her desk. She is reading the Prayer thoroughly, whilst making notes in the margin, before stamping 'ACTIONABLE'. She attaches a smaller file and places it in her, considerably smaller, outgoing tray.

Open. Read. Stamp. Fold. Open. Read. Stamp. Fold. Again and again.

INT. POSTAL ROOM - NIGHT.

The room empties as the others finish their piles for the day, and Kira is left to work alone by lamplight, barely halfway through. She is tired and unfulfilled.

Open. Read. Stamp. Fold.

A phone rings suddenly, jerking Kira out of a trance-like state. She looks around, and seeing no one, leaves her desk to answer it.

VOICE

Kira?

KIRA

Yes?

VOICE

Upper management would like to offer you a promotion to the Department of Souls following a vacancy that has opened unexpectedly. If you accept...

The rest of the conversation is not heard, though Kira nods enthusiastically, whilst unconsciously touching her lapel.

INT. STREET - DAY.

JACK is walking down the street with some friends. He is in his early 20s, dressed in jeans and a colourful windbreaker.

He receives a text and stops to reply as his friends cross the road. He looks up, and seeing them walking on ahead, jogs to catch up with them.

A car whizzes around the corner and JACK turns to see it speeding towards him, his eyes wide.

CUT TO WHITE:

TITLE: UPPER MANAGEMENT

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY.

Jack opens his eyes to find himself in a bare, white room. He looks around, confused.

He contorts his mouth uncomfortably, before coughing out a single gold coin. Horrified, he stands, searching for a way out. There is none: no doors, no windows. Freaking out, Jack throws the coin at a wall in despair.

After several moments an old man in a grey suit appears behind him; he has silver coins for eyes.

CHARON

If Sir would be so kind?

CHARON holds out a hand as JACK jumps at the voice and turns, scared.

JACK

What?

Charon sighs, and slowly walks towards the fallen coin as Jack backs into a corner. Charon examines the coin before smiling at Jack. He tosses the coin up...

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY.

...and when he catches it Jack is standing in a long white corridor. Several chairs line the walls.

CHARON

Please wait here Sir, someone will be with you shortly.

Charon begins walking away and soon Jack is left alone. After a while, the door opens and Kira, peers out.

KIRA
Mr Hale?

Jack turns to face her.

KIRA
Mr Jack Hale? If you'd like to come through Sir?

She holds the door open and a hesitant Jack walks through into an office.

INT. OFFICE - DAY.

Jack takes a seat as Kira, now dressed in a smart, pale blue dress, sits behind her desk, holding a computer, a phone and a potted plant.

KIRA
Soo, you're dead! Welcome to Purgatory & Co.!

She is talking in an overly-cheerful and chirpy manner.

JACK
(in shock)
But that monster it, it.. wait (beat)
I'm, I'm dead?

KIRA
Is this your first time dying?

Jack is bewildered, and she laughs to herself.

KIRA
Sorry, just a little joke we have here. Yes, you are dead.

JACK
But, but I can't be dead?

KIRA
You can, and you are.
(as a happy afterthought)
Condolences.

JACK
Are, are you an angel?

KIRA
Technically yes, but we're not quite
what you humans tend to imagine.

Jack is puzzled.

KIRA
My purpose *here* is to act in an
advisory capacity and designate you an
afterlife package.

JACK
Help-desks? Angels, are help-desks?

KIRA
Well that's rude! You know we're here
to help but we don't have to!

She crosses her arms and pouts.

JACK
(mumbling)
Sorry.

Kira reverts back to being overly happy and cheerful.

KIRA
That's okay!

JACK
So, I'm really dead?

KIRA
I'm afraid so.

JACK
..and I'm in Heaven?

KIRA
We're currently residing in Purgatory
& Co.; we work in partnership with
Hell Limited and the Heaven
Corporation as an intermediary branch
of the afterlife. Think of us as a go-
between.

She smiles again.

KIRA
Right! So we just need to go over your
account-

JACK
My account?

KIRA
Your history, of, you know, your life.

JACK
Right.

Kira gestures to the desk and Jack places his hand there. Kira draws a metal device, and examines it. She shrugs, and jabs it onto Jack's hand, and he cries out in pain.

JACK
Ow! What the hell! (*beat*) Or,
Purgatory or whatever.

She chuckles and smiles at him as he cradles his hand, a small red mark left in the centre.

KIRA
Just getting your details.

Kira slots the device into a port and starts tapping into the computer.

KIRA
So, let's see here.. generous,
supportive friend, oh, poor familial
relations.. relatively standard file,
wait, arson?

She looks up at Jack, raises an eyebrow. He smiles sheepishly.

JACK
When I was 3 I knocked over a candle
and set fire to the curtains, (*beat*)
it was an accident I swear!

Kira laughs delightfully. Jack just looks at her, but soon begins laughing too. After a moment, it winds down, and Kira turns back to the computer.

KIRA
Soo, it looks like you qualify for our
'Paradise Plus' package, courtesy of
the Heaven Corporation.
Congratulations!

Kira smiles at Jack who sits there awkwardly.

JACK
Er, thanks?

Kira beams, but after a brief moment of silence an alert comes through on the computer. She looks at the computer and frowns.

KIRA
(under her breath)
Oh, dammit..

JACK
What?

Kira frowns slightly.

KIRA
Your account, it's being regulated.

JACK
What? Why, what's wrong?

KIRA
I'm sorry Mr. Hale but it appears there's a Guilt Clause impeding your account and preventing me from signing you directly onto the package.

JACK
What's a, er, 'guilt clause'?

KIRA
It's a condition of most packages; basically it denies enrolment to any offers from the Heaven Corporation as a result of your death.

JACK
So I can't get this Paradise package thing because of how I died?

KIRA
More specifically because of the guilt it's created in future clients on Earth, but yes.

JACK
But it wasn't my fault! I didn't se-

Kira holds up a finger to shush him. She dials a few numbers, and holds the phone to her shoulder as it rings.

KIRA

Cases like yours are what I'm hoping to specialise in. I mean, there is a possibility that you maaaybe have to serve some time with Hell Limited but in the long run I could work a great deal for you, so don't worr-

The phone rings through and she switches to talking into the phone.

KIRA

Hello? Yes it's Kira.. uh hu.. I have a client up for review.. uh hu, yeah.. okay I'll bring him up, thanks.

She hangs up the phone and turns back to Jack, who is looking worried.

KIRA

Okay, Mr. Hale, I'm going to take you up now, and we'll get all this sorted.

Kira stands up and ushers Jack through the door.

JACK

Up? Where, where am I going? What's happening?

The door swings shut behind them.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY.

Kira and Jack are walking further down the corridor.

KIRA

I'm taking you to my supervisor. He'll be overseeing your plea.

They reach the end of the corridor and Kira presses a button on the wall.

JACK

Supervisor?

The lift doors ping open and Kira steps inside. She waits patiently, smiling at Jack, who reluctantly steps inside after a moment.

The lift doors close and take the two upwards.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY.

Jack and Kira are standing outside a room. Kira's eyes are closed; she is focusing on her breathing. A bell tolls twice and Kira's eyes snap open and after a moment she reaches for the handle, turning to Jack as she does.

KIRA

Leave the talking to me okay?

Kira opens the door and enters confidently; Jack follows.

INT. MEETING ROOM - DAY.

At the head of a long table sits URIEL, an intimidating figure, eyes bound by ceremonial cloth. At the middle sits PISCES: he is dressed in a red suit, a conceited air about him.

Kira sits opposite, and motions for Jack to join her.

URIEL

Mr Jack Oscar Hale, February 1998 -
April 2019?

KIRA

Yes, Uriel; qualifying for the
'Paradise Premium' package.

Uriel leans in, frowning ever so slightly, the corners of his mouth twitching upwards: he is curious. Pisces starts smiling cruelly, sifting through various papers in front of him.

URIEL

Very well. Pisces here will be serving
as Devil's Advocate. Proceed.

Pisces smiles smugly at Kira, who looks away.

KIRA

We feel that the current Guilt Clause
isn't representative of Mr. Hale's
needs, and as such it shouldn't
prevent him from accessing the
appropriate afterlife package.

PISCES

(reading from a document)
The clause clearly states that "deaths
inducing serious or lasting guilt upon
Earthbound souls are declined packages

offered by the Heaven Corporation".

He looks up and smiles at her before turning to Uriel.

PISCES

This is especially outrageous
consideri-

JACK

Wait, so I can't go to Heaven?

Kira shoots him a look that says 'shut up'. He ignores her.

JACK

(insistently)

It wasn't my fault okay? That guy hit
me! I don't deserve to go to Hell, or
whatever you people have here.. I mean -
ow!

Kira kicks him under the table. Pisces who had been watching
with glee turns back to Uriel, who has been watching in
silence.

PISCES

Clearly Kira is trying to bypass the
basic terms and conditions on soul-
bearing contracts and violate the
terms of negotiation! Plus, the client
she seems so keen to see on a Premium
deal refuses to accept any notion of
responsibility for his actions!

Jack stands angrily.

JACK

But it wasn't my fault! I shouldn't
have to go to Hell or anything! I
didn't see him comin-

URIEL

(booming)

Because all you were seeing was your
phone. This is: Your. Fault. Not his.

JACK

But I, I'm.. screw this! I don't need
you!

Jack heads back to where the door was, to find that it isn't
there anymore.

URIEL

Please be seated, Mr. Hale.

Kira glares at him until Jack slouches back to his chair and sits there, angry and scared.

PISCES

Now, I think you were about to explain yourself Kira..

KIRA

Allow me to apologise for my client, having reviewed his account I can assure you that this isn't typical behaviour. Remember, we allow for a policy of culture shock during the transitional phase, so I must ask you not to count this against him.

PISCES

I'd be *more* than happy to accept his apology Kira.

Everybody turns to Jack, who grumbles something close to an apology. Pisces smiles widely.

PISCES

..and on the count of violating contracts?

KIRA

You are correct: Heaven's terms and conditions rightly decline entry of this sort, however, under an interest rate these direct terms can be bypassed as long as the interest rate exceeds the guilt.

Pisces looks increasingly annoyed as Kira speaks.

URIEL

..and what rate would you suggest Kira?

KIRA

6.66% seems a reasonable rate.

PISCES

You're not seriously entertaining this Uriel? I know Heaven is in arrears and all but that shouldn't give a free

pass! Condemn him!

URIEL

Atonement is a fundamental part of what we offer in the afterlife, a critical part of the business plan, what else would you have me do?

Pisces stands, angrily.

PISCES

I would have you do your job, Archangel, and not play favourites with some glorified answer machine who's only here because Melchior was obliterated for embezzling souls!

Silence.

URIEL

..and you would be aware of this, how, exactly?

Pisces realises he's given too much away. Angrily, he raises his hands, and fire begins to crackle there. Uriel raises his own hand and snaps his fingers. There's a noise like thunder, and Pisces vanishes, his clothes falling to the floor. A hissing sound quietly fills the silence.

Jack stands up in shock, aghast.

URIEL

Please be seated, Mr. Hale.
(turning to KIRA)
Ask Ezekiel in, would you?

Kira nods and leaves, a suppressed smile on her lips.

JACK

What's, um, what's going on?

URIEL

Your soul is being sectioned off to Hell Limited and will remain with them an annual interest rate of 6.66% until the guilt is absolved on Earth, following this your soul will be transferred to the Heaven Corporation, on the package Kira mentioned earlier.

Kira enters with another man in red, EZEKIEL.

URIEL

We just need to borrow your signature
Ezekiel, and then this soul is
Hellbound.

Ezekiel quickly scans the document Kira presents him with,
and signs it.

URIEL

Now, Kira, we just need you to sign
and we're all done here.

Kira signs. Uriel collects the contract, stamps it, and rises
to shake Jack's hand.

URIEL

I'll send Kira to collect you once
your punishment is concluded Mr Hale,
shouldn't be more than a two and a
half thousand years or so.

Jack looks scared as Ezekiel nears him.

EZEKIEL

Mr. Hale? If you'd just like to come
with me, I have a fantastic group of
interns to start you off with, oh you
should see their portfolios, it's
very, very promising stuff..

Ezekiel puts his arm over Jack's shoulders, and escorts him
from the room.

URIEL

Very impressive Kira, I doubt many
could pass such a deal, especially on
their first day out. Trying to earn
your wings?

KIRA

Yes, Uriel.

Uriel smiles, and draws a small badge from his suit. He
slides it across the desk towards Kira.

URIEL

Congratulations. You did very well.

Kira examines it proudly, and pins it to her lapel, before
bowing her head as Uriel stands. With a flap of wings, he is
gone.

INT. OFFICE - DAY.

Kira examines herself in a full-length mirror. She is examining the pin badge: the Earth, with wings jutting out from either side. She smiles.

A bell tolls softly behind her, and she leaves the mirror.

We hear the door open, and Kira sits back down at her desk and smiles. As the door closes she looks up:

KIRA

Soo, you're dead! Welcome to Purgatory
& Co.!

CREDITS.