

LEAPS OF FAITH

By

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Choosing to redeem himself, a corrupt soul travels through
time performing random acts of kindness while inhabiting
dead bodies.

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FADE IN

INT. CRAPPY DOWNTOWN APARTMENT

(Denver, Colorado - December 1, 2015)

History books, crime novels and comic books litter the shelves of a bookcase.

CUT TO

Fire.

CUT TO

Clothes are sprawled on the floor and over furniture. Perhaps dirty, maybe not.

CUT TO

Fire. Screams.

CUT TO

A badge and a gun lay on a table beside the couch that **BENJAMIN PHOENIX** is sleeping on. A man in his early 30's. His sleep is uneasy.

CUT TO

A young girl's screaming face appears in the flames.

CUT TO

Ben wakes up from the nightmare. He catches his breath as he rises to a seated position. The sheet falls from his shoulder revealing a well toned physique. He rubs his face as if attempting to shake off the horrifying dream. He looks around the room before collecting his pants from the floor. He reaches into a pocket pulling out his wallet and digs into one of the flaps. He retrieves a badly burned picture of the girl from his dream.

CUT TO

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX

Ben stands on the curb next to a bus stop. A few people sit on a couple of benches. A mother and young **DAUGHTER** holding hands, stand between Ben and the benches. A few older kids run past Ben to cross the street.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

Get out of the street you stupid kids!

The oldest **KID** stops and turns around.

KID

What are you going to do about it, arrest us?

BEN

You're setting a bad example!

KID

Yeah? My mom told me cops weren't anything but a bunch of...

BEN

Watch your Damn mouth kid!

The older kids run off laughing as gasps escape from the mother and the people waiting for their bus. The bus pulls in.

BEN

(to the mother)

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to...

DAUGHTER

You have a bad mouth mister.

The young daughter kicks his shin before her mother leads her away to the line of people getting on the bus. Ben is left nurturing his leg as the bus pulls away. An unmarked car pulls in where the bus once was. **SETH** looks out at Ben.

SETH

What happened to you, Ben?

Ben walks to the car and opens the door.

BEN

I don't want to talk about it.

Ben sits in the passenger seat and closes the door.

SETH

Suit yourself.

The car pulls away.

CUT TO

INT. UNMARKED CAR

(cont.)

 SETH
Coffee?

 BEN
Yep.

 SETH
The usual place?

 BEN
Sounds good.

Awkward silence.

 SETH
Look Phoenix, if we're going to be
partners we have to talk about more
than coffee on a daily basis.

 BEN
First off, you already know I hate
my last name.

 SETH
Oh, right. Sorry, Ben.

 BEN
Second... I don't see how knowing
your personal life is going to help
me when you get us in trouble.

 SETH
Just tell me one thing that you
enjoy doing.

 BEN
You really want to know?

 SETH
Come on man, what are partners for.

 BEN
Okay, I would really **really** enjoy
it if... I had a cup of coffee in
my hands right now.

 SETH
Alright, I can take a hint.

The car stops.

(CONTINUED)

SETH

Your coffee awaits your highness.

Ben looks out of the window at a coffee shop across the street.

BEN

I'll be back in a few.

CUT TO

EXT. (CONT.)

Ben exits the car and walks to a coffee shop. Looking in the window he sees **SOPHIE** standing behind the counter smiling and chatting with the current customer. He smiles.

CUT TO

INT. COFFEE SHOP

(cont.)

An electronic bell rings through the building as Ben enters. Everyone turns with interest as if looking for something entertaining. Finding only Ben they disappointingly resume their prior activities... Everyone except Sophie. Ben's eyes meet hers and they both smile. He waves. She turns her attention back to the customer.

Taking a place at the back of the line of waiting people, he looks around and notices how crowded the building is. He looks back at a busy Sophie before looking at his watch, then back at the entrance. He decides to leave. He turns and the door swings into his face as another patron enters. He grabs his face and starts to curse, before seeing Sophie walking towards him.

BEN

Son of a...

He turns away to nurse his face.

SOPHIE

Are you okay?

Ben swings around, acting as if nothing has happened.

BEN

Oh yeah, I'm fine.

(CONTINUED)

SOPHIE

Are you sure?

BEN

Yeah, this? I'm great.

Blood begins to drip from his wound.

SOPHIE

Maybe you should sit down.

BEN

Does it look that bad?

He reaches for his nose, pulling back a bloody hand.

BEN

Maybe I should sit down.

Sophie leads Ben to a table and pulls out a chair. He sits.

SOPHIE

I'll get a rag or something to stop the bleeding.

BEN

A couple of napkins should take care of it.

Sophie disappears into the back room as Ben grabs a couple of napkins from the holder on the table. A hand belonging to a **BUM** slaps Ben's shoulder. Ben looks at the dirt covered man.

BUM

Way to go Casanova. You'll definitely steal her heart now.

The vagrant walks off laughing.

BEN

Yeah, well nobody asked you did they. You filthy bum.

Ben looks around and notices some of the customers giving him questionable looks. He becomes uneasy and leaves the shop as Sophie returns.

BUM

Can I have a sandwich?

CUT TO

EXT. (CONT.)

Ben throws the bloody tissue into a garbage can beside the shop as he walks to the car.

CUT TO

INT. UNMARKED CAR

Ben climbs into the passenger seat.

 SETH
What happened?

 BEN
What do you mean what happened?

 SETH
You've got red on you.

 BEN
Oh this. It's nothing. Just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

 SETH
Well, where's your coffee?

 BEN
It was a little busy in there today. Besides we're going to be late.

 SETH
It's only a quarter past. What's your hurry?

 BEN
Jeez, what is this? Twenty questions?

 SETH
I was just...

 BEN
Can you **Just** drive.

 SETH
Alright, alright. Loosen your underwear why don't you?

Seth starts the car as Ben leans against the head rest and looks out at the shop. He lets out a sigh as they pull away.

FADE TO

INT. POLICE STATION

Coffee pours into a paper cup. A sugar packet is shaken and dumped into the coffee. Ben raises the glass to his lips. Too hot. He drops his coffee on the floor and grabs his mouth. A pair of officers walk by. **OFFICER 1** chuckles.

OFFICER 1

How many years have you been on the force Phoenix?

OFFICER 2 nudges Officer 1.

OFFICER 2

You would think a detective could figure out how hot a cup of coffee would be.

Captain **TOM** opens the door to his office.

TOM

Ben, I need to speak with you for a moment.

The two officers cover their mouths.

OFFICER 1

Ooooooooo!

OFFICER 2

I think the Captain figured you out. I guess you can't pretend to be a competent detective forever.

Ben grabs a handful of napkins.

BEN

Sorry boys. Daddy's got a little business to take care of.

His presses the napkins into Officer 2's chest.

BEN

You rookies wouldn't mind cleaning this mess up for me... would you? Thanks a bunch. Remember, don't bend over. Squat, it's better for the back.

Ben walks away.

CUT TO

INT. CAPTAIN'S OFFICE

(cont.)

Ben pokes his head through the door.

BEN

You wanted to see me Tom?

Tom swings around in his chair to face Ben.

TOM

Come on in.

Ben shuts the door behind him and stands in front of Tom's desk.

BEN

What's going on Captain?

TOM

Take a seat.

Ben sits.

BEN

Do I finally get that raise I've been looking forward to?

TOM

It's not the raise. I just wanted to be the first to tell you that...

BEN

What, the boys didn't start a rumor about me did they? Cause you know their full of shit Capt...

TOM

No, no Ben. I just thought you should know that you're turning a lot of important heads in this city.

BEN

How's that?

TOM

The mayor wants to give you an award for your excellent service tomorrow, in front of the public.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

An award?

TOM

Of course, you deserve it. I mean, if we had more detectives like you I'd be out of the job.

BEN

Tomorrow?

TOM

Oh come on Ben, don't be modest. This year alone you've gotten us enough information to put away three crime families.

BEN

Well, I mean... I was just doing the job, you know.

Tom points out to the main precinct floor.

TOM

They are the ones just doing the job. You, well you're something else entirely aren't you?

BEN

I don't know about that Captain...

Distant sounds of a small girl screaming amongst a roaring fire as Ben's eyes glaze over.

TOM

Ben, there is nothing wrong with being proud of what you've accomplished. I'm sure if it was up to you every piece of filth would be off the streets by sundown.

BEN

(uneasy)

You know me.

TOM

Is everything okay?

BEN

(straightens up)

What? Oh Yeah, I just have a ton of paperwork to do.

(CONTINUED)

TOM
Always working. Well, I don't want
to keep you.

BEN
Thanks captain.

Ben stands and exits the office.

CUT TO

INT. POLICE STATION

Ben plops into the chair behind his desk. A sigh escapes his lips as he looks around the station. Everyone seems to be occupied with paperwork or conversations. Ben pulls his wallet out and retrieves the burnt photo of the little girl. His thumb traces the outline of her face.

SETH (O.S.)
Who's that?

Ben quickly slips the photo back into his wallet.

BEN
Who's who?

SETH
Come on Ben. I saw you looking
at...

BEN
I wasn't looking at anything kid.
Now, was there something you
wanted?

SETH
But I just saw... (Ben glares)
Okay, Okay. The captain says
there's a situation at an abandoned
building on 3rd street in the
slums. A few crooks with a load of
stolen goods. Looks like their
stocking up for the holidays.

BEN
What, they don't have enough guys
volunteering to go?

SETH
Yeah, but I figured we could give
them a hand.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

If they've got it covered, I think I'm going to finish the paperwork on the Jones brothers.

SETH

Give it to one of the grunts to fill out.

BEN

Why don't you go without me.

SETH

We're partners, I'm not going unless your coming with. Besides I'm sure it'll look even better for you tomorrow with this arrest under your belt.

BEN

How did you know...

SETH

We're partners, remember? There's not much I don't know about you.

BEN

You'd be surprised.

SETH

Then surprise me. Are we going or not?

Ben and Seth see the last of the officers rush out of the building. Seth looks antsy. Ben looks at his watch then back at Seth.

BEN

Alright.

SETH

Yes!

Ben stands up.

BEN

But if I die tonight, I'm blaming you.

Seth pats Ben's shoulder as they move to the exit.

(CONTINUED)

SETH

Don't worry, I got your back.

FADE TO

INT. SEEMINGLY VACANT HOUSE

Two thug types are loading boxes with a wide variety of electronics and clothes. **THUG** drops a television, shattering it. **JOHNNY**, the cousin of **AALIJAH MERKAVWITZ**, smacks the back of Thug's head.

JOHNNY

Watch what your doing! You just smashed a grands worth of profits.

THUG

I'm sorry Johnny, it just slipped.

JOHNNY

You're lucky Aalijah isn't here. The Merkavwitz's usually aren't the forgiving type. Hell, if this wasn't your first gig and I wasn't the one who told my cousin about you, you'd already be singing "Carry Me Home".

THUG

Don't you mean "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot"?

JOHNNY

What?

THUG

The song... it's called "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot".

JOHNNY

Are you brain deaf or something?

THUG

Huh?

JOHNNY

I said are you brain deaf.

THUG

I think you mean brain dea...

Thug realizes he is over stepping again.

(CONTINUED)

THUG

Yeah (beat) I guess I am brain deaf.

They go back to packing boxes. Johnny hears something outside.

THUG

The boss doesn't have to find out about the t.v. does he?

JOHNNY

Shut up.

He begins to attach a silencer on to his weapon.

THUG

I'm just saying. It was a simple mistake. It just sli...

Johnny smacks Thug in the back of the head with the weapon. Thug falls to the ground.

JOHNNY

I told you to shut up.

Johnny peaks out of the window and sees police officers ducking behind vehicles on the opposite side of the street. He smiles and hides beside the closed door of the room. The sound of the front entrance being broken into echoes through the house. Indistinct yelling is heard. Footsteps closing in on the room.

BEN

I'll cover the left, you get the right.

The door swings open and Johnny raises his weapon. Ben steps into the room. Johnny kicks the door into Ben, flinging him against the wall and onto the ground. Johnny aims.

JOHNNY

Ben? What are you doing here?

BEN

Johnny?

JOHNNY

The boss isn't going to like this.

BEN

It's not my fault. I didn't call this in.

(CONTINUED)

Seth walks in with his weapon drawn.

BEN

Wait Seth! Don't... (silenced gun shot)

Seth falls over Ben's lap. Ben aims at Johnny and shoots. Johnny hits the ground as Ben checks on Seth. He is dead.

BEN

No, no!

Ben looks at Johnny gasping for air. He rolls Seth off of his lap and walks over to Johnny. Kneeling down, he tries to stop the bleeding.

JOHNNY

(struggling)

You... shot me... in the lung.

BEN

What was I supposed to do, you shot my partner.

JOHNNY

You better hope... I don't make it. You're... as good... as dead anyways.

Johnny laughs while coughing up blood.

JOHNNY

Elevator... going down.

Ben stands up and points his gun at Johnny's head.

BEN

I guess I'll catch the next one.

Gun shot.

CUT TO

BLACK

FADE TO

INT. POLICE STATION

Ben is sitting beside a desk giving another officer his account of the raid. Tom is standing beside Ben.

BEN

Seth must have seen me go down and then rushed in after me. He didn't even see (beat)...

TOM

That's when Detective McFarland was shot and killed?

BEN

Yes. He fell on top... (shakes off the chill) Then I pulled my weapon on the suspect, hitting his left lung. He attempted to return fire when I discharged my weapon once more into his head.

TOM

And the second suspect?

BEN

I believe that an altercation happened between the two suspects prior to us entering the room. I didn't notice him on the floor until officer Benson arrived. That's when he started to come around and Benson escorted him out of the room. Then I went back to examine Seth's bo... (beat)

Ben's face is stained with disbelief.

TOM

We can finish this tomorrow if you're not feeling up to it right now Ben.

BEN

That sounds great. I... I just need some rest.

TOM

I'm going to need your weapon Ben.

Ben pulls his fire arm out of it's holster and hands it to Tom.

(CONTINUED)

TOM

I'll be sure you get it back to you
as soon as all this is over.

BEN

Thanks.

Ben stands up and walks out.

FADE TO

INT. BEN'S APARTMENT

Ben walks through the door to what appears to be a bedroom converted into a weird mural of newspaper clippings. He reaches out and touches a few of the papers pinned to the wall as he slowly makes his way past them.

Reaching a bare spot on the wall Ben pulls out Seth's name tag. He pulls the back covers off of the spikes. He places the tag to the wall and pushes the spikes into it. He examines the name for a moment before exiting the room and closing the door. He looks at the back covers of the name tag. He throws them across the room and falls against the door, grabbing his hair and sliding down to the floor as tears stream from his eyes.

FADE TO

INT. BEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

As Ben sleeps on his couch, his front door is kicked off it's hinges. Ben wakes. Two of Aalijah's henchmen rush in. Ben reaches for his weapon on the table. Nothing. The larger **HENCHMAN** grabs Ben.

BEN

Hey fellas, I think we can work
something out. Don't you?

HENCHMAN

Mr. Merkavwitz wants to have a word
with you.

BEN

Jeez. All you had to do was say so.

Ben is pushed out of his apartment door.

CUT TO

INT. AALIJAH OFFICE.

A large desk sits in the middle of a room that is filled with valuable looking objects. The large doors swing open as Ben is hurled into the room onto the floor.

BEN

Thanks for your service gentlemen.
I think I'll show myself in next
time.

The two henchmen walk to the desk and stand on either side.

AALIJAH

You've got some hutzpuh. I told you
he had a smart mouth, didn't I?

Ben stands up. Aalijah turns in his chair to face Ben.

AALIJAH

It's too bad his brain doesn't
follow suit.

BEN

How's it going Aalijah?

AALIJAH

How's it going? You shot and killed
my cousin, Ben. What, you didn't
think I'd find out?

BEN

I didn't know he was going to be
there. What did you expect? He
killed my partner. I couldn't have
just let him go. You want them to
figure out what's going on here?

AALIJAH

What is going on here, Ben?. The
last I checked, I paid you to get
the other families put away, not to
kill off my family.

BEN

I didn't know he was there. I
should have been told.

AALIJAH

Now you're blaming me for the death
of my cousin? You are supposed to
be where I tell you to be.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

Yeah, but my boss...

AALIJAH

Who?

BEN

My boss, he...

AALIJAH

I AM YOUR BOSS! I am your god. I say, you do. Is that clear.

BEN

I have a reputation to look after here. I am a detective if you've forgotten. I at least have to make it look like I'm...

AALIJAH

What you look like? (to the henchmen) My cousin has a hole in his head and he's worried about what he looks like.

Aalijah stands and walks around his desk.

BEN

Look Aalijah it was a mistake, you can't punish me for...

Aalijah grabs the back of Ben's neck.

AALIJAH

Ben, Ben. If I was going to kill you, I would have done it already. I understand, I do. Mistakes happen.

Aalijah's hand falls around Ben's shoulders as he leads him to the window.

AALIJAH

You see all this Ben.

Ben looks out onto a large property. Large men holding large guns are scattered about in various places.

AALIJAH

I have a very important business to run and I don't have time to deal with every little mistake that happens.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

You mean...

Aalijah turns Ben around and leads him to the large doors.

AALIJAH

(smiling)

I *mean*, I feel generous enough to let you walk out of this room today, *alive* and with all your body parts.

BEN

I...

AALIJAH

If you don't say another word.

Ben nods and walks slowly, watching Aalijah the whole way until the doors close. Aalijah's smile disappears as he turns and walks back to his desk. He sits down and begins doing paper work. He looks up at his henchmen.

AALIJAH

What are you waiting for? You know what to do.

The henchmen smile at each other and walk out of the room.

CUT TO

EXT. MERKAVWITZ MANSION - NIGHT

(cont.)

Ben steps out onto the front stoop. He pulls out his cell phone and turns to look at the front doors.

BEN

Oh, don't worry about how I'll get back home. I'll call myself a taxi. It's not like I was pulled out of bed or anything.

He turns back around dials and places the phone to his ear. Ben hears someone clear their throat behind him. He turns to see a fist.

CUT TO

BLACK

FADE TO

INT. RUNDOWN CAR

Ben is handcuffed and seated in the drivers side seat. He begins to stir from his unconsciousness. He notices the two henchmen standing outside of the car.

BEN

What the...

He struggles to free himself. No good. He looks at the locks and uses his teeth to try and pull them up. Again, no good. The henchmen begin to pour gasoline on the car.

BEN

Hey! Hey! Come on guys! I thought we were forgetting this whole thing.

One of the henchmen looks into the window and waves.

BEN

Come on, don't do this! I can make it worth your while. (to himself) What am I saying? I've got nothing worth while... I've done nothing worth while.

He begins to kick at the window.

BEN

Please don't do this. (beat) The medal! I'm supposed to get a medal tomorrow! If you let me go, you can have it!

HENCHMAN

What am I supposed to do with a pig's medal?

The second henchman lights a match. The flame catches Ben's attention, stopping his struggle.

BEN

Oh boy.

The match is tossed onto the car and the flame spreads. Ben begins to scream, flipping and turning trying his best to free himself.

CUT TO

INT. PURGATORY WAITING ROOM

Ben sits in a chair, frantically flinging his arms and legs around. He falls to the ground screaming. Opening his eyes, he realizes he is not in the burning car.

BEN

What's going on? Where am I? What is this?

A hand lands on his shoulder. He jerks his head to find the owner of the hand is the bum from the coffee shop.

BUM

You okay kid?

BEN

You! What are you doing here? What's going on?

BUM

What am I doing here? I'm just waiting for you kid. We're all waiting for you.

BEN

What?

Ben stands and looks around. The rows of chairs are filled with a colorful array of people. A man wearing bicycle clothing and a helmet keeps banging his helmet and murmuring self loathing complaints towards himself. **JUNE** sits beside Ben in a bathrobe smoking a cigarette.

JUNE

I tried to quit, I really did. No smoking in bed they told me. I tried to listen, I really did.

BEN

Ma'am, are you okay?

June looks at Ben and laughs.

JUNE

What are you in for Bud?

BEN

In for?

(CONTINUED)

JUNE

Yeah. What happened to you? Why are you here?

BEN

I don't know. I don't even know where I am.

BUM

Don't worry kid, the docs will explain everything.

The bum walks off talking to himself indistinctly. Ben takes another look around the waiting room.

BEN

Oh god, I'm in a nuthouse aren't I.

(O.S.)

Not exactly.

Ben spins to find **SIMON** standing behind him in a long white coat, holding a clipboard.

JUNE

Better watch this guy, Doc. He's real jumpy.

SIMON

Thank you Mrs. Johnson, I think I can handle myself. (beat) You should really quit those things.

JUNE

A little late for that, don't you think?

June laughs again. Simon looks at Ben.

SIMON

Hello... (looks at clipboard)
Benjamin Phoenix.

BEN

Just Ben please. What's going on Doc?

SIMON

No, I'm not a doctor. I'd make a horrible doctor. (beat) You can call me Simon. I'm your case worker.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

Case worker?

SIMON

Haven't figured it out yet, have you?

BEN

Figured what out? What's going on?

SIMON

Hmmm. I'm sure there is a better place for this back and forth. Follow me please.

BEN

Hold on! I'm not going anywhere until you tell me exactly where I am and what's happening.

SIMON

You got that right. Ben... This may come as a shock to you, but... Wow this is harder than I thought. How do I say this? (beat) You're dead. Actually, that wasn't that hard at all.

BEN

I'm... Dead?

SIMON

Oh, come on Ben. Don't be too down. I mean where you're headed you might as well be as up as you can, while you can.

BEN

Where I'm headed?

SIMON

You are a special case aren't you. Just follow me and we can straighten everything out.

Simon begins to walk away. Ben is struggling to come to terms with the current events. Simon stops and turns to Ben.

SIMON

Of course you can always stay here with your friend.

(CONTINUED)

Simon walks through a set of swinging doors as Ben Looks at June. She smiles and waves. He smiles back. Ben looks over to see the bum walking back to him. Ben rushes to the swinging doors and walks through.

CUT TO

INT. SIMON'S OFFICE

(cont.)

Ben runs into a chair as he walks through the swinging doors.

SIMON

Why does that keep happening? Maybe I should put in a hallway or something.

Simon presses a button on his desk intercom.

SIMON

Connie, could you be a dear and see if there is anyway we can install a hallway between the door and my office. (lowering his voice) Oh, Btw are we still on for drinks later?

Simon looks up at Ben.

SIMON

Never mind. We'll talk more on that later. Thanks sweetheart.

Simon begins to shuffle a few papers around on his desks as he clears his throat.

SIMON

Please have a seat.

Ben sits.

BEN

This is a joke right? I mean I'm not really dead, am I?

SIMON

This is no joke. You put yourself in a bad situation Ben. Now your just like disco.

Simon snickers at his own joke.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

So what, you're an angel or something?

SIMON

Sort of. Let's just say I'm a representative. Kind of like a lawyer. Right now I'm representing you.

BEN

If I'm dead... Then this isn't really my body?

SIMON

No, but we try to facilitate a similar environment that you're use to. It helps with adjusting you to... well, it kind of softens the blow of telling you your going to hell. I mean what would you think if I walked up to you with giant tentacles. (beat) Hmmm, Tentacles?

Simon pushes the intercom button again.

SIMON

Connie, could you make a reservation...(looks at Ben) Never mind.

BEN

Hell! I'm going to hell?

SIMON

Is it really so surprising?

BEN

Yes!.. I mean... Well no, but hell?

SIMON

You still keep the picture of her don't you.

BEN

What did you say?

SIMON

It's no secret to us up here Ben. We know about all of your indiscretions. Even the one that started you on the path of sin. But let's not worry about that. We

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SIMON (cont'd)
don't see any sin as more hell
worthy than the next. They all send
you to the same place.

BEN
Isn't there anything that I can do?
Aren't you supposed to be
representing me or something? Can't
I fight this? Can't I repent or
pray for forgiveness or something?

SIMON
Ah ha! I'm glad you mentioned it. I
did have to pull a few strings but,
I've made it to where you have a
choice.

BEN
A choice?

SIMON
It may not be too late for
forgiveness. But you're going to
have to work for it...

BEN
Work?

SIMON
Yes. In a project I created called
A.R.K.

BEN
A.R.K.?

SIMON
Acts of random kindness. (beat)
Don't you just love Morgan Freeman
movies. The man's a genius.

BEN
Morgan Freeman?

SIMON
Is there an echo in here? Come on
Ben, pay attention. I'm telling you
that you do have a chance to save
your soul. All you have to do is
sign a few papers and you'll be
placed into the project, which will
decrease your chances of going to
hell.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

What exactly do I have to do in this...

SIMON

A.R.K.

BEN

Ark project.

SIMON

You're not very good at this detective thing are you? What am I saying, you wouldn't be here if you were.

BEN

Are you sure I'm not already in hell.

SIMON

Ha Ha, you're pretty funny. Should have been a comedian. Of course with a name like Benjamin Phoenix I'm surprised you didn't become a super hero.

BEN

Simon...

SIMON

Yeah.

BEN

The project.

SIMON

Right. The A.R.K. project. What you have to do is perform random acts of kindness in someone's life in order to pay off your debt of being such a... Well, a pain in the rear end.

BEN

Wait, all I have to do is be nice to a few people and I win the "Get out of Hell free" card?

SIMON

Not even close. You'll be doing a lot more than just being nice to a lot more than just a few people.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

How many people are we talking about?

SIMON

How about we just see where this leads us. You don't want to get into semantics and all that, do you? Long conversations filled with large *Latin* words. It's so... so boring.

BEN

Boring? This is my life we are talking about.

SIMON

Actually it's your death we're talking about and unless you want to spend the rest of eternity facing all your *demons*... I'd suggest you choose the A.R.K.

BEN

Okay, okay. How do I get started?

SIMON

Don't look down.

Ben looks at the floor. In place of the floor is an emptiness overlooking the Earth. Ben jumps on top of the chair he was sitting on.

BEN

Holy...

SIMON

I love doing that.

BEN

Where's the floor?

SIMON

Ben. None of this is actually here. Haven't you been listening? Everything that you see is just a bunch of images that you can relate to.

Ben points at the floor.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

I can't relate to this!

SIMON

Well, no. That one's all me. I didn't really know of a good way to show you this.

Ben rips his attention away from the floor.

BEN

What, no T.v.'s in heaven?

SIMON

Television! Jeez that would have been a huge help. Oh well. (beat) Look Ben, you're dead and the sooner you understand nothing is going to be the same, these things will get easier. Now, if you please, watch the floor.

Ben looks at the floor again. The Earth zooms closer.

SIMON

What we do is hone in on someone who is about to die.

The Earth engulfs the floor space and continues to zoom in on a town in the United States.

SIMON

When we find that special someone, we wait until their... their... their time of passing and you take their place.

The image on the floor centers in on a church.

BEN

You mean I'll be possessing a person's dead body?

SIMON

What, Do you expect to share the body with another soul, or maybe we should give them an insightful vacation to purgatory while **you** work? (sarcasm) That would be great. We're not quantum physicists, Ben. This isn't a late eighties t.v. series. I've had to fight tooth and nail just to get

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SIMON (cont'd)
this project into consideration.
The **only** way you can go back to
earth is if you're inside of a body
that isn't already occupied.

BEN
At least let me wrap my head around
this. I'm going to be walking
around in the skin suit of a stiff,
trying to be a goody two shoes...
all in order to save my soul from a
one way ticket to a permanent
summer vacation.

SIMON
Hey. I told you it wouldn't be
easy, but this **is** your only other
option.

Ben looks down at the floor and sees a priest cleaning the
inside of the church.

BEN
Alright. Give me a pen.

SIMON
Actually, I just need your finger
print.

BEN
Finger print?

SIMON
Like I said. Just a bunch of images
that you can relate to.

Simon places a piece of paper in front of Ben and holds out
an open ink pad. Ben takes a hard look at Simon before
dabbing his thumb and placing it on the paper. Simon pushes
the intercom button.

SIMON
Connie, can you be a dear and have
a bottle of champagne ready for Mr.
Pheon... Ben's return.

Ben hears a gun shot.

SIMON
That's your cue.

Simon pushes another button on his desk. Ben and the chair
he is sitting on drops.

(CONTINUED)

CUT TO

INT. CHURCH

Ben wakes on his back gasping for air. He coughs uncontrollably. Rolling over, he gives one last hard cough. A bullet and a bit of blood fall to the floor.

BEN
He... shot me... in my lung.

SIMON (O.S.)
(snickering)
Ironic, huh.

Startled, Ben falls to his side and looks up. He sees Simon standing next to him holding the clip board. Ben continues gasping

SIMON
It's a good thing he didn't finish off with the head. How are you holding up?

BEN
I... can't... breath.

SIMON
What?

BEN
I... CAN'T... BREATH!

SIMON
Ben, how many times to I have to tell you. You're dead! You don't breath.

Ben stops gasping and realizes that he doesn't have to breath.

SIMON
That body doesn't need air anymore.

BEN
That information would have been great before you dropped me like last weeks garbage.

Simon holds his hand out to Ben. Ben grabs it and is pulled to his feet.

(CONTINUED)

SIMON

Quit your belly aching. What you need to worry about is getting all this cleaned up before someone sees and calls the cops.

BEN

Is that my good deed? Helping a dead priest finish cleaning a church. (beat) Who kills a priest anyways?

SIMON

Um, no. Wouldn't hurt though. (reads the clip board) The dead priest's name was Jerome... Jerome Watson. A very devout man apparently. Oh, he's going straight up. Good for him. Seems as though he was murdered trying to stop a thief from stealing the poor box.

Ben catches his reflection in the chrome finish on the podium. The eyes of another man stares back at him.

BEN

What exactly am I supposed to be doing here?

SIMON

That, my friend, is up to you.

BEN

Me? This is your project.

SIMON

You can't expect an act of kindness to count if you were told what act of kindness to commit.

BEN

Fine. Could you at least help with this mess?

SIMON

What is this, twenty questions?

BEN

I was just...

SIMON

Ben, I really can't be involved in the affairs of humans. That's why you're here.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

But...

SIMON

I'm sure you'll be fine. Don't worry I'll check up on you later.

BEN

Simon...

A blinding light shines down on Simon. As fast as it appeared, it disappeared along with Simon.

BEN

Jesus Christ!

Remembering he is in a church, Ben looks up.

BEN

Sorry.

Ben looks around the empty church. He looks down and pulls the bottom of his shirt away for a better look at his outfit. It is covered in blood.

BEN

This is just great.

He lets go of his shirt and walks off screen.

FADE TO

Ben walks to the front of the church with a bucket of bleach water and a scrub brush in his hands. A large apron is hanging around his neck. He places the bucket and brush next to the doors then takes off the apron and tosses it to the floor next to the bucket. He pushes the doors open.

CUT TO

EXT. CHURCH

(cont.)

Ben walks out onto the church stoop and gets smacked in the face with a newspaper. A **PAPERBOY** rides away.

PAPERBOY

Sorry Father!

Ben begins to curse when he hears whimpering. A young boy named **BILLY** is sitting on the church steps, crying. Ben goes to the boy.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

What's wrong with you kid?

Billy looks up. He wipes his tears from his face.

BILLY

(through sniffles)

My mom... left me... here.

BEN

She just left you? What's wrong with her...

SIMON (O.S.)

Ben.

Startled Ben looks at Simon who is standing beside him.

SIMON

This could be a good place to start. Don't you think?

Ben looks down at Billy.

BEN

Look kid, I don't know your mom, but I'm sure she had a good reason... to leave you.

BILLY

She said... that... god would look after me... while she worked.

BEN

Where does she work?

BILLY

I don't... know.

BEN

You don't have any idea where she could be?

BILLY

She... doesn't like to tell me about her job. She's always saying... where she works... is no place for a kid.

BEN

I'm sure she knows what she is talking about. Does she always leave you on the street.

(CONTINUED)

BILLY

Not always. When... my aunt Becky isn't working... I stay with her. Mom always says... it takes too long to walk... to her house and that her clients... are going to be angry with her... if she keeps them waiting.

Ben looks at Simon, then back at Billy.

BEN

Does your mom only have men for clients?

BILLY

I... think... so. She always tells my aunt that "he'll" be angry if she keeps "him" waiting.

BEN

Look kid.

BILLY

My name... is Billy.

BEN

Okay, Billy. I'm sure your mom loves you very much.

BILLY

But... why does she have to leave me?

BEN

Maybe she thought you'd be safer... Under the watchful eyes of (looks at Simon) the angels.

Billy jumps up and hugs Ben. Ben is slightly startled.

BEN

Look Billy, let's go inside and see if we can find something for you to eat.

Ben leads Billy into the church.

FADE TO

INT. CHURCH

Ben stands next to the confessional. He watches Billy sitting on a pew, eating a sandwich.

BEN

How could a mother, just leave her child on the side of the street.

SIMON

I don't know. You tell me.

BEN

What do you mean?

SIMON

I recall a special woman in your life having a "not-so-popular" career.

BEN

Hey, that wasn't her fault. We were poor. What do you expect a young woman to do when her husband dies and leaves her with all the responsibilities of taking care of a son. Especially me.

SIMON

Maybe that's why you're the perfect person to help this kid.

BEN

What am I supposed to do? I mean, look at me. I didn't exactly turn into a poster child.

SIMON

It's hard for a young boy to grow up without a father, isn't it? Maybe even harder on the mother.

BEN

I don't know. My mom did her best. How I turned out was my fault. I never let what she taught me sink in. I never let anybody in.

A man in his late 20's walk into the church wearing a military uniform. His name is **AVERY**. Avery makes his way to the confessional.

(CONTINUED)

SIMON

Looks like it's time to go to work
Padre'.

BEN

Wait. You don't expect me to...

SIMON

There's nothing to it. Just go into
this little door here and listen.

BEN

Just listen.

SIMON

Mostly listen, and try to impart a
bit of wisdom.

BEN

You want me to give advice?

SIMON

I believe in you Ben, you'll do
great.

Simon disappears with the blinding light. Ben shields his eyes. Ben sees Avery getting closer and hurries into the confessional.

CUT TO

INT. CONFESSIONAL

(cont.)

Ben hears Avery open the adjacent door. The door swings shut.

AVERY

Forgive me father, I have been
having sinful thoughts. It's been
three years since my last
confession.

BEN

I'm sure if you haven't acted on
them, it's not that big of a deal.

Ben slams his hand over his mouth.

(CONTINUED)

AVERY

I fear it's only a matter of time before I do act on them father.

BEN

Please go on.

AVERY

It's been seven years since I returned home from the war.

BEN

That's right. D-Day.

AVERY

Father?

Ben smacks his forehead.

BEN

Please, go on.

AVERY

Before I left, I was engaged. She was beautiful. Loving, caring to everyone she met. It was love at first sight. Her name's Amanda.

BEN

You've been away for a long time son. Having... carnal thoughts about your fiance' is more than normal.

AVERY

She married someone else while I was gone.

BEN

Oh. (beat) Sorry.

AVERY

The past few years, not a day goes by that I haven't thought about (trails off in thought)

BEN

Thought about what?

AVERY

Taking his neck and squeezing it until his eyes pop out of his skull, or cutting off his "prized

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

AVERY (cont'd)
possession" and feeding it to him
while she watches.

BEN
(quietly)
And I'm the one who has problems.

AVERY
What was that father?

BEN
(clears throat)
I was just saying that it sounds
like you have a real problem with
this guy.

AVERY
I really loved Amanda. Now I can't
think about her without my heart
burning in my chest. I just want to
rip it out so it'll stop hurting.

BEN
Maybe you just need to go out and
get a little... I mean, perhaps you
should focus on finding another
woman to settle down with.

AVERY
I don't know father. I've never
felt this way about anyone else.

BEN
At least give it a chance. I'm sure
it'll be worth it if it saves you
from eternal damnation.

AVERY
What if I'm already damned.

BEN
Everyone has a chance to be saved.
Trust me.

AVERY
Maybe your right father. I guess I
can... I can forget about Amanda.

BEN
Who's Amanda?

AVERY

I told you father, she's... Oh, I get it. (smiles) Thank you father.

BEN

Good luck.

The door opens and closes as Avery leaves. Ben lets out a sigh of relief. He wipes his brow and exits the confessional.

CUT TO

INT. CHURCH

Ben watches as Avery walks towards a pew and sits to pray. Simon stands next to Ben.

SIMON

Great job, Ben.

BEN

Did it actually help? I mean, I saved his soul, didn't I?

SIMON

That's not up to you to do. It's his decision, but you've made it easier for him to decide.

Ben turns his attention to Simon.

BEN

So when do I leave?

SIMON

Leave? I'm not sure I understand?

BEN

Yeah, wasn't that an act of...

SIMON

An act of kindness? Technically yes, but it wasn't a random act.

BEN

What? I don't know if you realized, but all of this is pretty random to me.

(CONTINUED)

SIMON

You're pretty full of yourself aren't you. You were in the confessional... performing an act of kindness in there is a given. Plus I thought I told you, you've got a lot of work to do here... or did you forget all the...

BEN

Okay, I get it. (beat) I need some air.

SIMON

I already told you that body doesn't...

BEN

It's a figure of speech. Just give me some space so I can figure all this out.

Ben starts to walk to the doors.

SIMON

Aren't you forgetting something Ben?

BEN

What is it now?

Simon points to Billy. Ben sighs then looks at Avery. He smiles and walks to Avery.

BEN

Excuse me.

AVERY

Father?

BEN

I was wondering if you wouldn't mind looking after Billy (points at Billy) while I go and do... a bit of the lords work out on the streets.

Avery looks at Billy.

AVERY

Is he an orphan?

(CONTINUED)

BEN

No, no. His mother was just a little busy so... She asked if I could look after him.

AVERY

I guess it wouldn't hurt.

BEN

Great! I mean... Thank you, the presence of the... almighty is sure to... smile down on you.

AVERY

Are you alright Father?

BEN

Yes. I'm just a little late, so I'm going to get going.

Ben walks quickly away and out of the doors.

CUT TO

EXT. CHURCH

Ben closes the doors behind him and breaths a deep sigh of relief. He begins to cough and blood splatters into his hand. He looks at it. He rolls his eyes and pulls a handkerchief out of his pocket and wipes his hands clean.

FADE TO

INT. BAR

Ben sits on a stool staring at the body's reflection in the mirror behind the bartender. His clothes are clean. No sign of him being dead. He takes a shot and places it next to what seems like hundreds of empty shot glasses. He motions to the **BARTENDER** for another shot.

BARTENDER

You sure can hold your liquor father.

BEN

It must be my Irish roots.

Bartender pours a drink into a fresh shot glass.

(CONTINUED)

BARTENDER

I'm usually sending people to the hospital for drinking less than that.

BEN

Hospital. (chuckles) They'd get a kick out of me.

Ben takes the shot and shoots it down.

SIMON (O.S.)

Having fun?

Ben jerks around causing him to fall out of his seat.

BEN

I told you not to do that.

Ben gets up. The bartender walks over.

BARTENDER

Alright, Padre'. I think that should do it for the night.

SIMON

What are you doing Ben? You can't get drunk.

BEN

I think I found that out after the last 50 shots.

BARTENDER

Well, next time tell me and I'll stop serving them.

BEN

I'm not talking to you, I'm talking to him.

BARTENDER

Who?

BEN

The medical fairy.

BARTENDER

You've got some weird fantasies father. (beat) I didn't know your job allowed things like that.

(CONTINUED)

SIMON
He can't see me.

BEN
What?

BARTENDER
Sorry father, no offense. I mean I
can't really say anything. What I'm
doing now wasn't exactly popular
with the law 20 years ago.

SIMON
Only you can see me.

BEN
No one else?

BARTENDER
Don't worry father. I won't tell
anyone. Your secrets safe with me.

BEN
(to bartender)
What are you talking about?

BARTENDER
(gives a wink)
Exactly.

BEN
What? (beat) Never mind.

Ben pulls out the father's wallet.

BARTENDER
Don't worry about the tab. Just try
to get home in one piece.

BEN
Thanks.

Ben replaces the wallet.

BEN
Let's go.

BARTENDER
I'm flattered father, but I'm
happily married.

BEN

Not you (points at Simon) him...
Oh, forget it.

Ben rolls his eyes and walks out of the entrance.

CUT TO

EXT. STREET - DAY

Young men and women drive and walk by laughing. An air of Happiness and joy hangs everywhere. Ben begins to walk across the street. Simon appears in the street causing Ben to stop abruptly.

SIMON

Are you even trying?

An early 50's Pontiac breaks, barely missing Ben. The **GREASER** behind the wheel doesn't look pleased.

GREASER

Hey! Watch it gramps!

Ben glares at Simon before walking to the other side of the street. The car speeds off.

BEN

I get dropped into the past, I'm walking around in a corpse and you ask if I'm even trying.

Ben stops walking and turns around with his finger pointed to scold Simon.

BEN

You are a real...

Simon isn't there. Ben throws his hands up in frustration. He calms down and turns to continue walking.

SIMON

Does it matter what time you're in?

Simon is now in front of him.

BEN

Does it matter? (beat) No, but it would have been nice to have a heads up.

Ben starts walking again, Simon joins him.

(CONTINUED)

SIMON

If it's any consolation, you're in
(reads the clip board) 1951. May 25
to be exact.

BEN

Sixty-four years! Jesus, I haven't
even been born yet.

SIMON

Your first act of kindness.

BEN

My second, must be listening to
your jokes.

SIMON

Well, emptying a bar of it's entire
stock of alcohol isn't going to
count as one.

BEN

Okay look. I thought a drink would
help me handle all of this. Turns
out I can't get drunk, I don't
breath. Can I even eat? Can I...
Well you know?

Ben starts to gyrate a little. Simon looks confused.

SIMON

Dance?

Ben shakes his head and walks away. Simon starts to imitate
the "dance" Ben had done. His eye's grow wide.

SIMON

Oh, you mean... That's sick Ben!

Simon goes after Ben.

SIMON

I mean, you're dead. That's beyond
sick.

Ben climbs the church steps and goes inside.

CUT TO

INT. CHURCH

(cont.)

Ben walks in and finds Avery and Billy having fun putting a puzzle together. Ben smiles and makes his way to him. **Emily**, a young woman in her mid 20's enters the church.

EMILY

Billy! Billy! Where did you go this time son!

Billy jumps up and sees his mother. He runs to her.

BILLY

Mom!

They embrace in a warm hug.

EMILY

Oh Billy I thought I had lost you.

Ben walks over to them.

EMILY

I thought I told you to stay put.

BILLY

Yes mommy, but the priest took me in and gave me a sandwich.

Emily looks up at Ben.

EMILY

Thank you father. I don't know how I could repay you.

BEN

It's no problem ma'am.

EMILY

Please, call me Emily.

BEN

Emily. Do you mind if I speak with you for a moment?

EMILY

Sure father.

BEN

I know it's not my place to say anything, but I don't think Billy

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BEN (cont'd)
appreciates you leaving him alone
while you go and do a bunch of...
while you go to your job.

EMILY
You're right. It isn't your place.

BEN
I'm just looking out for the kid.

EMILY
That's exactly why I go to work
everyday. I don't know what world
you live in father, but life isn't
a necessity in this country
anymore. It hasn't been for a long
time. Just because Billy's father
died to protect our freedoms
doesn't mean we get to live for
free.

BEN
There's no one who can watch him
while your away?

EMILY
I barely get paid as it is. How am
I supposed to earn enough to give
Billy a good life if all I do is
spend every penny I make on a
babysitter?

Avery appears next to Ben.

AVERY
Is there a problem, here?

EMILY
No and if you don't mind, My son
and I will be leaving now.

Emily turns to leave and Ben grabs her arm.

BEN
Listen Emily...

Avery grabs Ben.

AVERY
It's not very nice to grab a woman
like that father.

Avery looks into Emily's eyes and she looks into his.

(CONTINUED)

AVERY

Especially one as beautiful as you.

Emily smiles then shakes her emotions away.

EMILY

I don't need your help. I don't need help from any man.

AVERY

I didn't mean to...

Emily turns to leave. Ben runs to block her path.

EMILY

Father, please get out of my way.

BEN

You may not need help from anyone, but don't you think you owe it to Billy. He needs you to give someone a chance to be there for him. To be there for you.

EMILY

I... I mean... I don't know.

Avery steps back.

AVERY

I'm not too sure if I'm overstepping my boundaries here ma'am, but I've spent some time getting to know your son and I believe you are very lucky to have him.

EMILY

You don't have to tell me how lucky I am to have him.

AVERY

I'm sure of that the way he talks about you.

EMILY

Is this supposed to be going somewhere?

AVERY

Well, yes. I was speaking with the father earlier about how horrible love and relationships can be and... Well, he seems to think

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

AVERY (cont'd)
otherwise and told me that I should
give it a second chance. Now, I
don't know if I deserve you and
your son's company but... I'd
really appreciate it if you gave me
a chance to see.

Emily looks at Billy. She looks back at Avery and catches
his eyes. Her barriers break down.

EMILY
Okay.

AVERY
Okay?

EMILY
Okay, I'll give you a chance...
Just one.

AVERY
Yes ma'am.

EMILY
Don't call me ma'am. It's Emily.

AVERY
Well, Emily. It's nice to meet you.
My name is Avery and I'd love to
take you and your son to dinner and
a flick this weekend.

EMILY
You'll have to ask my son.

Billy looks up at his mother.

BILLY
What movie are we going to see?

Ben watches a few steps away. Simon stands by his side.

SIMON
I think this one's going to count.

BEN
So I'm done here.

SIMON
Sort of.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

What do you mean?

SIMON

Just some more semantics. Don't worry about it. Just give it a few minutes and you'll be out of here and on to the next one.

BEN

I don't know how much I can take of this place.

SIMON

Oh, stop whining. Admire your handy work.

Ben watches as Emily, Avery and Billy talk and laugh.

BEN

You know, for some strange reason she reminds me of Sophie.

SIMON

It's funny you mention that.

AVERY

Did you say something Father?

BEN

It was nothing. (beat) I just remembered I have to feed my bird Sophie.

SIMON

(laughing)

Bird?

BEN

Yeah I know, weird name for a bird.

AVERY

That's funny. I've always wanted to name my first daughter Sophie.

Ben looks at Simon. Simon smiles. Avery walks with Emily and Billy to the church doors. Suddenly the doors swing open and a man in a hood rushes in. He sees Ben and freezes. Avery stares at the thief and then Ben.

(CONTINUED)

AVERY
Is everything okay Father?

SIMON
That's the guy that killed you.

BEN
No it isn't.

SIMON
Not you, you. I mean the priest.

The thief pulls out a gun and fires a few rounds into Ben's chest before Avery tackles him flinging the gun from his hands. Ben falls to the ground.

CUT TO

INT. SIMON'S OFFICE

(cont.)

Ben wakes, gasping for air. He catches his breath and realizes where he is. He lifts his shirt. No bullet wounds. He sees Simon sitting behind his desk. Simon has a huge grin on his face.

BEN
What are you so happy about?

SIMON
You did it Ben! I'm so proud of you. I knew you could do it.

Ben rubs his chest and winces.

BEN
Why does it hurt?

SIMON
Don't worry. The pain will subside as soon as you realize it's all in your head.

BEN
I thought I didn't have a head.

SIMON
You're a fast learner, aren't you? Just for that I'm giving you a gold star on your first report.

(CONTINUED)

Simon slams a giant gold star sticker onto an empty page. Ben chuckles at the gag.

SIMON

Oh good, you're feeling better. How about a drink.

Simon pours champagne into two glasses.

BEN

Is that really necessary?

SIMON

No... but what's a celebration without a little drink?

He offers the glass to Ben. Ben reluctantly takes it.

SIMON

It's not that bad... and if you think really really hard, you may even be able to taste it.

They clank their glasses together. Ben takes a sip.

SIMON

Good?

Ben nods his head.

SIMON

Good.

Ben finishes off his glass and places it on Simon's desk.

BEN

So, what happens now? When's the next (beat) what exactly am I supposed to call them?

SIMON

You know, I haven't thought about what to call them. What about jumps? Drops? Leaps?... Nah. I guess it really doesn't matter.

BEN

Okay, but how long do I have until the next... whatever it is.

The sound of a rope pulled tight and a chair hitting a hardwood floor echoes through the office.

(CONTINUED)

SIMON
Funny you should ask.

Simon presses the button on his desk and waves bye to Ben.
Ben's face twists in fear as he grips the arms of the chair.

FADE TO

BLACK

UNTIL NEXT TIME...