

DEAD, JUST LIKE YOU

Written by Bill Albert

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(DEAD, JUST LIKE YOU-1)

INT. - THE LOBBY - DAY

An empty space with no walls and a gentle whiteness floating anywhere. There are a few generic paintings hanging in the air, plants, classic hints of a lobby in a hotel.

A man, POPPAKINS, 40-50, professor type in suit and tie, grey beard, glasses, is sitting on a bench with ancient notebooks around him.

He is watching people, or shadows of people, walk past him and using ink and a quill to check names off a notebook. They are various sexes, ages, and styles and are coming by throughout. He checks the books as they pass and nods.

After a person passes by there are color flashes and ECHOES. This stream is never ending.

A male, DEWEY, 20, a punk in a ratty t-shirt and jeans, leaves the line and comes towards him.

POPPAKINS

Hello. May I help you?

DEWEY

I was told to wait over here.

POPPAKINS

Of course, have a seat.

There are so many notebooks it takes him a while, but Dewey sits. Poppakins goes about his business and Dewey watches shadows go by and the light flashes and ECHOES that follow.

DEWEY

(reluctantly)

Excuse me. Is there some sort of problem?

POPPAKINS

What do you mean?

DEWEY

Well, I have to wait while everyone else is... Goes right ahead.

(DEAD, JUST LIKE YOU-2)

POPPAKINS

Ah! Atheist?

DEWEY

Huh?

POPPAKINS

Were you an atheist?

DEWEY

Well, sort of, I mean, I never really thought about it much either way.

POPPAKINS

Ah! You see, it takes a bit longer for some people like yourself.

DEWEY

Oh, I hadn't thought of that. It's not like anyone expected it to be, is it?

POPPAKINS

What?

DEWEY

Heaven.

POPPAKINS

No, no, no, no. This isn't heaven. It's in between. Sort of a staging area between the moment you die and the rest of eternity.

DEWEY

(points to line)
So, all these people...

POPPAKINS

Dead, just like you.

(DEAD, JUST LIKE YOU-3)

DEWEY

At least it didn't hurt. I mean, I was a goner, there was no going back. It'll take them hours to get all of me cleaned up.

POPPAKINS

Yes, it does happen that way.

DEWEY

(points)

What happened to her?

POPPAKINS

(checks list)

Old age.

DEWEY

Him?

POPPAKINS

(checks list)

Heart attack.

DEWEY

Her?

POPPAKINS

(checks list impatiently)

Car accident. If you don't mind I have work to do?

DEWEY

Of course, sorry.

POPPAKINS

It's all right.

Dewey watches someone walk past, there is a flash of red lights, and ECHOES. He looks down.

DEWEY

I knew he'd go that way. I mean down.

(DEAD, JUST LIKE YOU-4)

POPPAKINS

Yes. Sometimes it's pretty obvious, others, it's not.

DEWEY

Are there certain types that always go one way? Up or down?

POPPAKINS

Well, yes, there are some types that usually go one way. Rapists, sadists, and gynecologists for instance. Down.

(Dewey looks at him in shock.)

Liars, blackmailers, and movie critics. Down. I'm pretty sure they meet up with Fox News commentators.

DEWEY

I guess I shouldn't be surprised.

POPPAKINS

And the Dutch. I'm really not sure why.

DEWEY

Hey, that guy! Why did he go down?

POPPAKINS

Child molester.

DEWEY

Who would have guessed?

POPPAKINS

He's in for a shock when he sees the small guillotines hovering a few feet off the ground. They are rotten bastards even by hell's standards.

DEWEY

Do you ever get anyone famous?

(DEAD, JUST LIKE YOU-5)

POPPAKINS

Of course, one way or another
everyone comes through here.

DEWEY

Professor Snape? Um...um...

Alan Rickman?

(Poppakins winks)

The Black Panther? Boseman?

(Poppakins nods)

Elvis Presley?

POPPAKINS

Not yet.

DEWEY

Elvis is ALIVE!

POPPAKINS

Yes. He retired after running
a coffee shop in South Bend,
Indiana.

DEWEY

I knew it. Yes! The king is
not dead.

(stops, suddenly)

Oh, wait a minute. Leonard

Nimoy. Mr, Spock.

(Poppakins nods, embarrassed)

What happened?

POPPAKINS

I couldn't help it.

DEWEY

What?

POPPAKINS

(shys away)

Well, I just did it.

DEWEY

Come on! Tell!

(DEAD, JUST LIKE YOU-6)

POPPAKINS

There he was. I just looked up and he was standing there waiting his turn. I couldn't help it. I gave him the Vulcan hand sign thing and said, "Live long and prosper."

DEWEY

Ouch.

POPPAKINS

It just slipped out. He gave me a very non-Vulcan hand sign and then went up.

DEWEY

Sorry.

POPPAKINS

Not a great moment.

They watch people go by for a while with more flashes and ECHOES..

DEWEY

(recognizes someone)

Holy crap. It's him! He's here already!

(watches person pass followed by an unusually bright red flash and ECHOES)

For some reason I kind of expected his to be orange.

POPPAKINS

Can't argue with that.

They watch more.

DEWEY

What happened to him?

POPPAKINS

Plane crash.

(DEAD, JUST LIKE YOU-7)

DEWEY

Her?

POPPAKINS

Plane crash.

(next person)

Plane crash.

(next person)

Plane crash, plane crash,
plane crash.

DEWEY

(pause)

So, tell me, what's your
name anyway?

POPPAKINS

Poppakins. Nice to meet you.

DEWEY

(smiles suddenly)

I thought it might be Clarence.

POPPAKINS

Off course. I saw that movie,
too.

DEWEY

I suppose you get that a lot.

POPPAKINS

Yes. Advertising never lets
us forget that one. Every year
they show it for us.

DEWEY

Advertising?

POPPAKINS

Yes, each place, up or down,
has a way of doing business.

DEWEY

I get it. Fast track everyone
to heaven. Encourage them.

(DEAD, JUST LIKE YOU-8)

POPPAKINS

Yes.

DEWEY

What's the other way?

POPPAKINS

Well, they have to be more subtle and sneak it in on you. Get you comfortable at first.

DEWEY

Like, politics?

POPPAKINS

Sort of.

DEWEY

Banking?

POPPAKINS

Getting closer.

DEWEY

Reality TV!

POPPAKINS

On the nose!!! Survivor my ass.

DEWEY

I knew that.

POPPAKINS

If only people knew.

DEWEY

Do most people know where they are going?

POPPAKINS

(thinks)

I think most people know, deep down inside. Sometimes good people can do bad things.

(DEAD, JUST LIKE YOU-9)

DEWEY

What about the others? The people who knowingly do bad things to others.

POPPAKINS

The thing is they don't usually think of them as bad, they think of them as doing good things for the right reasons. Sometimes they realize it, sometimes they don't.

DEWEY

And the ones that go down?

POPPAKINS

When they haven't faced it, they definitely go down. Eventually they will have to.

DEWEY

Can they change then?

POPPAKINS

No, not then. When you get there it's too late.

DEWEY

That's kind of depressing.

POPPAKINS

It's supposed to be. What's important is how you treated other people. Doing good things and generally being nice. It's too late here. If you could change it then everyone would. There would be no honesty.

DEWEY

(emotionless)

I feel odd.

POPPAKINS

Now you get it.

(DEAD, JUST LIKE YOU-10)

DEWEY

I see it.

POPPAKINS

Yes. The meaning of your own life. Money? Success? 42? No. Just need to be nice and honest to other people. That's what it takes.

DEWEY

I have to go on.

POPPAKINS

Yes, just join in the line.

DEWEY

(stands)

Thank you for your time.

POPPAKINS

Of course.

DEWEY

Are you God?

POPPAKINS

No, no, no, no. She is way too busy.

(DEWEY glances as he walks away)

Another thing that's going to surprise some people.

Poppakins watches Dewey walk off and there is a flash of lights and ECHOES. Poppakins shakes his head, sadly, then goes back to the rest of the line as they pass.

FADE TO BLACK