Take a Number

(ALEX, HENERY, and MARTIN wake up in a room. HENERY is laying on the ground, while ALEX and MARTIN are standing, with ALEX cowering, as if trying to protect her body from something coming at her. All three gasp.)

ALEX

What... where am I?

MARTIN

Well, obviously you would see we’re in a (pause for a second) waiting room.

HENERY

(HENERY Sits up)

Beyond that though? Why are we here?

ALEX

I-I don’t know, but this place just feels... Off. Where are all the other people?

MARTIN

Maybe it’s early. Of course all we need to do is look out the...

MARTIN

(MARTIN looks around the room)

...Window.

HENERY

Hey now, maybe this is one of them hidden camera shows my grandkids love. There are probably no windows so they can hide the film crew. Nothing to worry about, nothing at all.

ALEX

(Alex points to the sign in the background saying “Remember how you died, then take a number and wait for it to be called”)

Then what does that sign mean?

(The other two both turn to read it and they each let out little gasps. HENERY stumbles backwards a little)

MARTIN

Ha! what do you say to that old man?

HENERY

I- Uh...

ALEX

No no no no, not yet, I still haven’t-

HENERY

Hey, hey settle down now, it’ll be alright. How about we all take a seat in one of these... uh, comfortable chairs and maybe talk it out, play it up for the cameras, y’know?

MARTIN

Sigh, not like we’ve got anything better to do.

(The three sit down next to each other on a set of chairs)

ALEX

So, uh, how do you all think you d- I mean think you would have died.

MARTIN

(Smugly) Well I definitely would have gone out doing something heroic. Probably saving a child from being hit by a car or something noble like that.

HENERY

Well, uh, that sounds nice I guess...

MARTIN

Uh yeah it does. I bet you would have died in some...

(MARTIN looks HENERY up and down)

MARTIN

Boring way.

HENERY

Yeah, you're probably right. My life’s been a waste so I won’t bore you with what little of an old man’s life story I have.

MARTIN

Yeah. Don’t. Now what about you pipsqueak.

ALEX

Oh... uh prolly nothing interesting. Maybe... I choked?

MARTIN

Oh you can do better than that. Come on, you're a man. Or, a boy, at least. You can think of something cooler than choking.

ALEX

(ALEX shifts in her seat, clearly uncomfortable)

Oh, um... Nevermind. But it still probably wasn’t as cool as yours...

MARTIN

Damn straight.

(There is silence for some time)

HENERY

Say, isn’t some film crew supposed to come bursting through the wall telling us we ‘ran’ the prank or whatever that show was?

ALEX

(ALEX grabs her wrist, checking her pulse)

Um... I think we might actually be dead. I don’t feel a pulse...

MARTIN

(MARTIN Grabs ALEX’s arm)

Oh yeah, you're right.

HENERY

Maybe... maybe it’s a dream then.

MARTIN

Yeah, keep thinking that.

MARTIN

(Martin punches Alex in the arm)

Well, sorry man, sucks you probably had some sucky death. At least it couldn’t have been as bad as that old fart over there. Bet he didn’t even have a SINGLE person show up to his funeral. Not. Even. One.

HENERY

Hey now-

ALEX

(Quietly) -um could you-you maybe not... Call me... that?

MARTIN

Sorry dude, you gotta speak up if you want these ears to hear ya.

ALEX

(ALEX shifts in her seat, clearly very uncomfortable)

I asked if you c-could not call me that.

MARTIN

Call you what? You got use your words, man, I ain’t no telepath!

ALEX

Um.... Man?

MARTIN

Uh why not? You look pretty much like a guy to me, maybe not as handsome as me but you're getting there.

HENERY

I wouldn’t say you’re that handsome.

MARTIN

Actually yeah, you’re right, now that I look at him more, he really isn’t.

HENERY

(To MARTIN) I was talking to you.

(MARTIN gives HENERY a nasty look)

ALEX

(Louder, but still timidly) Just... please don’t call me that. I don’t like it...

MARTIN

Psh I’m just saying it like it is, don’t want me to lie do ya?

HENERY

Hey now, the kid said they don’t wanna be called man so don’t call ‘em man. It's that simple.

MARTIN

What, so you want me to lie? Is that what you want? To hide the truth?

HENERY

No, I just want you to be a decent human being.

MARTIN

I won't stop unless (to ALEX) you give me a good reason to than just... “Feelings”.

(MARTIN moves over to ALEX, backing her into a corner.)

ALEX

(Quietly, but loud enough to be heard) I-I just... just...

MARTIN

(Shouting) Come on! Out with it MAN!

ALEX

(About to cry) I’m not a man ok! I’m a girl! So- So just...

(ALEX pushes MARTIN out of the way, running to the opposite side of the room, crying. MARTIN starts to chase after her but Henery stops him)

HENERY

The hells your problem, man? Can’t you just leave the poor girl alone?

MARTIN

God, now everyone is against me. Sorry I'm not delusional.

(MARTIN pushes through HENERY and walks toward ALEX)

ALEX

Please just... leave me alone.

MARTIN

We were having a conversation, but YOU ran away like a little crybaby. You’re a man, so start acting like one!

ALEX

(Shouting, full of rage) Just shut up ok! You barely know me and you’re acting like a jerk for no reason! Do you know just how awful it feels to have died knowing that no one will know me for who I am? I’ll be eternally remembered as just some guy! Some GUY! I never got a chance to tell anybody who I am! You’re such an asshole! Hell, I bet you were a jerk just like this when you were alive. I bet you didn’t even have any friends show up to your funeral. Not. Even. One!

MARTIN

Why you-

(MARTIN attempts to hit ALEX, but HENERY runs in and pushes him away)

HENERY

Ok, everyone just-just settle down. Why don’t you just sit down over there while I talk to the kid?

MARTIN

(To himself) Psh, at least they’ll remember the real you.

(MARTIN walks over to the other side of the room and sits in a chair as HENERY sits down next to ALEX. There is silence for some time.)

HENERY

Hey now, don’t let him get to you. Sure, he sucks, but his words shouldn’t define who you are.

(There is another brief pause)

ALEX

(Mumbling, barely audible) ...Kid?

HENERY

Sorry, I didn’t quite catch that. (chuckling) Hearing fell out a year ago so I can’t hear much.

ALEX

So... You said you had a grandkid?

HENERY

(Chuckling, like he is thinking of a good memory)

Yeah. A couple actually. You probably would have gotten along with them too. I think each of them are prolly in what... eighth grade? Oh they just grow up so fast ya’know? (beat) I miss em. Their faces just glowed whenever I saw them. I hope my wife, our kids, their kids, anyone in our family really aren’t too upset over this whole... Death thing.

ALEX

It doesn’t sound like your life was that boring. To me, it seems like you’ve had a pretty nice life, actually. Loving wife, kids... A *real* family. I bet anyone would kill for something like that.

HENERY

Ha ha yeah, they were great. Shame I wasted it...

ALEX

Maybe this isn’t any of my business... But why do you keep saying you wasted your life? I don’t think it could have been THAT bad.

HENERY

I don’t know... I just... Never did anything. Never BECAME someone special y’know? No one is ever gonna remember ‘ol Henery.

ALEX

Your wife will. Your kids will, and theirs will too. Sure, you may have never become a celebrity or something, but you definitely left an impact on *some* people.

HENERY

Ha, tell that to the nurse in my hospital room, Bet I'll be the reason she never wants an old patient again. But she did make sure my family was there when I passed so she must have cared a little for me.

(There is a small pause as ALEX takes this in.)

ALEX

...Wait. Say that again.

HENERY

What? That the nurse made sure my family was in the room when I... Died. Huh. (Beat) I guess my life really wasn’t a waste. All those people showed up thanks to someone who... Who cared about me. (beat) Thanks for hearing an old man’s story.

(MARTIN walks over. ALEX glances at him before looking away.)

MARTIN

Ooh big whoop your life wasn’t a waste. Let's get to the point, old man. You realize you just said you *remember* right? You know, the thing we were supposed to be doing?

(ALEX shifts in their seat a little)

MARTIN

Oh what, you're still mad about that? God, why are you so persistent about this? What, do you want a parade or something?

ALEX

(Tired) Please, just go away.

MARTIN

(Sarcastically) Aw, did I hurt your fee-wings?

HENERY

Alright, come on now, let’s not start this back up again. Look, if you want to talk with us, maybe make a little progress on getting out of here, hows about you at least show us the slightest amount of respect.

MARTIN

With someone like *him?* Pft, maybe I can just kick it in here for eternity.

ALEX

God just what is your problem? I’ve seen hateful people like you before, but this is just cartoonish.

MARTIN

My problem? MY problem? Try having a little brother who was delusional like you. I just don’t get it, my folks were so supportive of him, but do you know what it was like for me? Always in the back? All anyone would ever yap about was him, him, him! God it made me so mad! Ugh, and the faces people would give me when we were walking together were JUST. TOO. MUCH. Jesus, I felt so embarrassed that I dropped out of the college we attended. So there, that's my problem. Good enough for you?

(ALEX stands, up clearly having had enough)

ALEX

(Out of patience) Jesus, is all you ever think about yourself? It’s always me me me with you! You keep bitching and moaning about how much this affected you, but did you ever think about how your poor sibling felt? Surrounded by people staring, endlessly judging them all while having to be around an unsupportive brother who can only think about what others think of him. Hell, the stares weren't even directed at you, so why be so embarrassed?

MARTIN

Ugh, you think I think about myself a lot? Well, what about *your* people, with all your parades ‘n crap being shoved in my face all the time.

ALEX

God, you’re insufferable. I would have killed to have a family as supportive as yours. Do you know how awful it felt knowing I would have been kicked out or maybe even worse if I told my parents anything?

MARTIN

Well, good to hear *someone* would have had some sense.

(HENERY socks MARTIN, sending him to the ground)

HENERY

NEVER say something like that again. That is a person’s life right there, you can’t just treat it so lightly! I had a grandson like that, and you know what? I was a little shocked at first, but hey, I was a decent god damn person and kept my silence. And, let me tell you, seeing his face light up the first time I called him my favorite little man made it ALL the worth it.

MARTIN

(Out of breath, still recovering from the punch) Oh, just rub it in will ya with your perfect life! Mine was awful! I wasn’t some hero! Just a nobody! I couldn’t even save a kid from getting hit by a truck before going home and chocking on some chips by accident. (Beat) God, what a pathetic way to go!

(MARTIN gets up and stomps to the opposite side of the room, his back turned away f rom the other two. HENERY and ALEX sit down. There is some time as the three cool down.)

HENERY

(To ALEX) Sorry you had to see me get like that. He just wouldn’t shut up.

ALEX

You’re fine. It got him to shut up, at least. (Beat) I wish I could speak up like you can. Maybe I could have had a chance to tell my parents before I... ya know.

HENERY

You mentioned them before. They really as bad as you say?

ALEX

Yes. No. Maybe? I don’t know. It’s... complicated. Talking with them was hard. I wrote a letter, but I don’t think they’ll ever get it now.

HENERY

Well, there is always a chance. I mean, you’ve been putting up a pretty good fight today, so maybe your words could reach ‘em.

ALEX

Thanks. They would have to find it though, and it was on me when I got hit by some... Truck. Huh. Just like in...

(ALEX turns their head towards MARTIN)

MARTIN

(Defeated)Was it by St. Peter’s Hospital? By the Walmart and the KFC?

ALEX

...Yeah.

HENERY

(Laughing) That was my hospital!

MARTIN

(Beat) I really am an asshole, huh.

ALEX

I... I guess I don’t hold it against you. It was a big truck.

MARTIN

Thanks, I guess.

(There is an awkward silence for some time as the three look at each other)

HENERY

So... I guess we can take a number now. Not much left to do.

MARTIN

Yeah... I don’t know if I really want too though. I’ve been such a jerk (to ALEX) to you, my- my sister, and everyone. I’m sure I’ll go to Hell or something.

ALEX

Are you sure, I mean this (gestures to the room) certainly wasn’t anyone's theory on what happens when you die.

MARTIN

I mean, I guess. I just... I just wish I could go back, apologize or something. I know I would never be forgiven but I just... I just want to make things right.

HENERY

Well, there is something you could do now.

MARTIN

R-right.

(MARTIN walks up to ALEX and looks down)

MARTIN

I-I'm... Sorry. For everything.

(ALEX takes this in for a minute)

ALEX

Thanks. I don’t really know if I can forgive you, but I accept your apology.

MARTIN

...Thanks.

(There is a pause.)

HENERY

Alright, for real this time. Lets take our numbers. I’m *dying* to find out what's next!

(ALEX and MARTIN give HENERY a short, sharp glare. The three take their numbers, With HENERY going first, followed by MARTIN and then ALEX. The three sit down in the original seats they sat in, waiting for their number to be called)

ALEX

So, uh. What do you think the afterlife is like?

HENERY

I bet it’ll be a nice place.

(The lights fade as the three sit, uncertain of their future.)