

PEARLY GATE ESTATES

Written by

James Crisp

Pilot: Submission Copy #2.

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james@choppyproductions.com  
+1 213-932-9097

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**EXT. CITY STREET - DAY**

JOSEPH WEST (30s) single, self-deprecating, and perpetually underachieving, strolls along completely immersed in a cheeseburger.

Ketchup cascades down his hands and face, splashing the job title "*Baseball Video Analyst*" on the I.D badge swinging from his neck as he walks down a crowded city block during his lunch break.

Unaware of his surroundings, Joseph steps out to cross the road just as a rogue piece of meat teeters on the edge of escape.

Reacting with lightning speed, he manages to snatch it just in the nick of time. As he drops his reward into his mouth, he... - SMASH! BANG! CRASH!

Is hit by an electric car. A white FIAT 500 with dual black racing stripes.

Joseph lies motionless, covered in the remains of his burger.

2

**INT. ELEVATOR - DAY**

Still attempting to consume the rebellious meat, Joseph realizes it has suddenly vanished, along with the rest of his burger.

Moreover, he's no longer on the street but inside an elevator. A once grand elevator, its former glory now fading.

The marble walls, cracked and discolored. While the gold accents, tarnished and chipped, cling desperately to their prestige.

With a CLICK and a CRANK, the elevator jolts upward, suddenly accelerating to a breakneck speed. Joseph stumbles, struggling to keep his balance as the floor trembles beneath him.

SHAKING VIOLENTLY, the sound of metal GRINDING against metal fills the elevator while small cracks creep like veins through the marble.

A jagged crack SLICES across the wall beside him. Joseph's eyes dart around before it SLAMS to a sudden stop, throwing him to the ground.

DING! The doors refuse to open, giving up after a brief struggle. Joseph lies still, listening to the sudden silence.

Then, whispers. Faint, almost like a soft breeze. Confused, Joseph starts to drag himself up, stopping on all-fours, listening closely as the whispers become murmurs.

The walls begin to bend inward as though pulled by something unseen. A sharp CRACK echoes, TEARING the walls open and revealing a DEEP, DARK VOID.

Joseph stares into the darkness, hypnotized by the growing chorus of voices. Slowly, he crawls closer, drawn to the abyss...

DEAD HANDS BURST OUT, skeletal and decayed, their flesh gray and rotting, clawing toward him. Their voices becoming clear.

WHISPERS (O.S.)  
*Help us! Please, help us! Save us!*

Dozens of hands reach for him - cold, desperate. Joseph GASPS, swatting them away, but more emerge, dragging him toward the void.

The voices grow louder, more frantic. Joseph thrashes with everything he has, fighting against the relentless pull of the countless fingers.

He manages to BREAK FREE, stumbling into the elevator doors. With trembling hands, he pries at the narrow seam, but they barely move.

Behind him, the arms STRETCH closer, grasping the air. PANIC surges in his chest. Digging his fingers in, he pulls with all his strength...

Until, with one final burst, the doors give way. Joseph LUNGES through the narrow gap and squeezes out.

### 3 INT. ELEVATOR BANK - CONTINUOUS

Joseph rolls across the floor as the elevator SLAMS shut. The muffled cries of the dead fade, swallowed as they DESCEND.

Dazed, Joseph looks around. He is surrounded by more marble, white with gold veins, polished to a dull sheen, giving the place an eerie stillness. His eyes land on a single door, its frosted windows obscuring what lies beyond.

Joseph pushes himself to his feet and makes his way over. Squinting through the glass, he can only see shadows. Reaching down, he tries the handle. Locked.

He jiggles it again. Nothing. Frustrated, he pulls harder.

WAAH! WAAH! WAAH! A blazing siren ERUPTS, and the hallway is bathed in harsh red light. Suddenly the door opens. A hand shoots through the gap, grabbing him by the collar.

Before Joseph can react, he's YANKED inside.

**4 INT. LOBBY - CONTINUOUS**

Joseph's shoes SQUEAK across the floor as he's dragged into ABSOLUTE CHAOS!

The noise is deafening as a DIVERSE CROWD, drawn from across TIME and FAITHS, rushes about in a chaotic, desperate frenzy.

They clutch at suitcases, shoes, torn garments, ANYTHING they managed to hold onto in the confusion.

The lobby, once majestic, now shows signs of neglect. Faded grandeur, crumbling walls, and a cracked chandelier swinging precariously overhead.

A towering GREEK ADONIS pulls Joseph, who is trying to take in the chaotic scene. The SQUEAK of his shoes ECHOES unnervingly, drawing the attention of the entire crowd. One by one, they stop.

The crowd watches in stunned silence, all eyes locked on him. The Adonis pulls him toward a desk under a large sign that reads 'CHECK IN'.

The Adonis releases Joseph, motioning toward a small bell. Joseph hesitates, glancing around nervously. He reaches out and taps it.

DING! Nothing. The Adonis nods again, urging him to try once more. DING!

A door behind the desk opens, and the CONCIERGE (50s), who wasn't expecting company, steps out, straightening his suit as he approaches the desk.

He glances at the Adonis, who offers a shrug. Forcing a wide, insincere smile he turns to Joseph.

CONCIERGE  
Hello, sir. Welcome to Pearly Gate  
Estates.

BLEEP! BLOOP! The Concierge and the Adonis freeze, shocked as the computer turns itself on.

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)  
Huh... I didn't think this thing  
worked anymore.  
(beat)  
Joseph West. Age 37. Religion...  
Agnostic humanist?

The Concierge looks at Joseph, wanting an explanation.

JOSEPH  
Um... I don't really know what that  
means, either? I'd honestly prefer  
not applicable.

The Concierge steps in front of the desk. On the floor  
beneath Joseph is a large red door, painted onto the marble.  
The Concierge STOMPS on it a couple of times. Nothing  
happens.

CONCIERGE  
We streamlined the system a while  
ago. But, you know, some still  
manage to slip through the cracks.

Another stomp proves useless, and he returns to the desk.

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)  
You'd think Agnostic humanists  
would have an express lane into  
Hades...

Unsure, the Concierge shares a helpless look with the Adonis  
before he gestures to a line in front of the gap leading  
behind the desk.

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)  
Would you mind stepping over here?

The Concierge and Adonis instinctively back away, bracing for  
something. Joseph hesitantly steps forward... But nothing  
unusual happens. They exhale in relief, and the Concierge  
gestures.

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)  
This way, please.

Before Joseph can move, a frantic SCREAM erupts from the  
crowd. ONE OF THEM leaps over the ropes, sprinting toward the  
desk like a warrior charging into battle.

ONE OF THEM  
NOOOOOOOOOO! TAKE MEEEEEEEEEE!

The Concierge casually backs away as SPLAT! One of them crosses the line and EXPLODES in midair, showering Joseph with a clear, watery goo, drenching him from head to toe.

Frozen, Joseph stares at the Concierge, who remains unfazed. He wipes a stray droplet from his jacket.

CONCIERGE

That's what we thought would happen  
to you.

The Concierge leads Joseph toward a small waiting area, seating him gently.

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)

Let me get you a towel.

The Concierge walks to a door, enters a code, and slips inside. The door CLICKS shut behind him as the chaos in the lobby ERUPTS again.

5

**INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

The Concierge enters a darkened room, more like a control center than an office.

Lights flicker across banks of monitors. The low BUZZ of equipment, glowing keyboards, and panels of indicators. He moves with urgency, adjusting dials, tapping buttons, his eyes flicking to the ceiling.

CONCIERGE

(calling out)

Peter...!

The Concierge slides into the seat at a cluttered desk and begins typing furiously. The screens in front of him shift, flipping through security feeds, rewinding footage.

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)

Peter? Get down here, quick!

PETER (70s), a larger-than-life figure in a rumpled tracksuit, finally peeks down from a hatch in the ceiling. His face flushed from exertion or annoyance, he lets out a belch as he begins to descend.

The Concierge motions urgently to the screens.

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)

Come look at this!

Peter stumbles down the last few steps, landing behind the Concierge, who points to a monitor displaying a live feed of Joseph seated outside.

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)  
There. See?

Peter leans in, his brow furrowing. He watches in disbelief, holding his breath for a moment.

PETER  
Oh my...

The Concierge replays footage, rewinding to the moment Joseph pried open the elevator doors. Peter's face twists, searching for an explanation.

PETER (CONT'D)  
How long has it been since the last one?

Peter sighs, breaking his gaze from the screen.

PETER (CONT'D)  
Will he make it back?

The Concierge taps the keyboard, lines of code flashing on another monitor.

CONCIERGE  
I think so... But I can't change the configuration.

Peter frowns, the unease spread across his face.

PETER  
Well, let's hope he's adaptable. Do we know anything about him?

The Concierge pauses, glancing at Peter over his shoulder.

CONCIERGE  
Joseph West. Thirty-Seven. Agnostic humanist...

Peter chuckles to himself. The Concierge points to a screen showing men in suits carrying clipboards.

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)  
If they find out, they'll slap a price tag on him.

PETER  
(whispering)  
Well, you better go get him.

Peter straightens his tracksuit as the Concierge leaves his post to retrieve Joseph.

**6 INT. LOBBY - CONTINUOUS [SURVEILLANCE FOOTAGE]**

The office door opens, and the Concierge motions for Joseph to follow him inside.

Still soaking wet, Joseph hesitates before stepping in.

**7 INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

Joseph shivers in a chair, his clothes soaked through, dripping onto the floor. He glances up at Peter and the Concierge, looming over him.

The Concierge SNAPS his fingers and quickly spins toward a cupboard. He pulls out a towel and tosses it to Joseph, who begins drying himself.

PETER  
Hello Joseph. My name is Peter.

Joseph's eyes widen. The towel isn't just drying him, it's absorbing every drop, his clothes becoming bone dry, as if they were never wet at all.

PETER (CONT'D)  
We have a bit of a predicament on our hands, and unfortunately, time is of the essence. So, I need you to consider the intricate balance between metaphysical entropy and the diminishing etheric resonance-

CONCIERGE  
No, no, no...

The Concierge sighs as Joseph, still distracted by the strangely effective towel, drags it across his hair and dries it completely in one pass.

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)  
We talked about this! He's not going to understand...  
(to Joseph)  
It's like a company going bankrupt.  
Faith on Earth, faith in...  
(MORE)



CONCIERGE (CONT'D)  
no one is making the right  
investments anymore!

PETER  
Oh, right. Yes. If you think of  
each religion like one of your  
human stocks, you'd see that the  
market is going through... a Black  
Sunday, I guess?

Joseph pauses mid-wipe. With the towel now draped across his  
lap, he finally looks up.

CONCIERGE  
And that's important because each  
religion needs to generate enough  
value here to... Pay rent.

Joseph looks confused.

PETER  
And the occupants of this  
particular complex have fallen a  
little behind.

The Concierge points to a monitor, where men in suits stand  
over "*The Eternal Scroll*," debating its value.

CONCIERGE  
Those are liquidators sent by *The  
Eternum*, a cold, impartial force  
that governs the afterlife. Once  
they finish appraising, everything  
will be sold off, and the space  
will be put up for tender.

Joseph's eyes dart between Peter and the Concierge before...

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)  
Unfortunately, we've lost most of  
our access. So, it's important for  
you to remember that when we send  
you back, it's going to be ten year-

He finally BURSTS.

JOSEPH  
I'm sorry!? What are you talking  
about? Send me back from where?

Peter hesitates, then with a slight grimace...

PETER  
The afterlife.

Joseph absorbs the words, but his attention is caught by the monitors. He watches the lobby chaos on one. Movers are hauling boxes on another. The men in suits appraising on several.

He notices something on a smaller screen. A short clip playing on loop. He steps forward, squinting at it.

**8 EXT. CITY STREET - DAY [SURVEILLANCE FOOTAGE]**

Joseph drops the rogue piece of meat into his mouth as the car comes from nowhere - SMASH! BANG! CRASH! Joseph's body lies motionless, his burger splattered across the pavement.

The video loops. SMASH! BANG! CRASH! Joseph's body crumples onto the asphalt.

**9 INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

Joseph's shoulders slump as he stares at the monitor, tears welling up as he watches himself die over and over.

JOSEPH

I'm dead?

Peter and the Concierge exchange a solemn look. Peter steps forward, nodding.

PETER

You're dead.

Joseph turns to them, barely holding it together.

JOSEPH

Dead? What? That's not fair!

His hands clutch the towel, knuckles whitening. He fights back tears as he returns to the monitor, watching intently.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I spent eight years... eight years being single! Then, out of nowhere, I meet this brilliant, intelligent woman. Combined with the type of beauty that makes you want to stop eating so many cheeseburgers before they *kill* you! You idiot!

(watching other monitors)

And *of course* there's an afterlife! Am I surprised it has the decor and decorum of the Ritz being converted into a Motel 6? Not really.

(MORE)

JOSEPH (CONT'D)  
It's probably what I deserve. That  
or being sent back as Diddy's  
cellma-  
(suddenly remembering)  
Wait!

Joseph wipes his eyes, turning back to Peter and the  
Concierge, suddenly filled with hope.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)  
You said you need to send me back!?

PETER  
That's right, but it'll be ten-

Joseph interrupts, desperately grasping at the chance.

JOSEPH  
OK! What do you need me to do? Find  
someone? Deliver a message?

The Concierge looks upward, concerned by the arrival of  
FOOTSTEPS.

PETER  
Uh... well, it's a little more  
complicated than that.  
(beat)  
The essential forces governing  
existence-

The Concierge cuts Peter off, pausing on his way to the  
monitors.

CONCIERGE  
We need you to go back and  
reinspire faith in humanity.

Joseph stares at the Concierge as if he's grown a second  
head.

JOSEPH  
You need me to... what?

PETER  
Reinspire faith in humanity.

Joseph shifts his glare to Peter, eyebrows raised.

JOSEPH  
That's a little broad, isn't it?  
Any faith in particular?