

THE FOURTH CIRCLE

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EXT. HELL DESERT - NIGHT

A faint HEAT GLOW everywhere. Surreal sand flickers like hot embers. A RIVER sparkles in the background.

It could be Earth if it wasn't so HOT.

A WOODEN DOOR juts out of the ground. Carved into it, an ancient symbol for the number 4.

PLUTUS, a wolf-like demon, in the shape of a man, stands in front of the door, arms crossed. He's like a statue. He could be resting. He could be stone.

MARK, 30s, an over eager BIG OIL suit, wanders towards the door. He's totally lost. He looks at his surroundings. He's not in Kansas anymore.

MARK
Where am I?

Plutus doesn't answer. Keeps his head down.

PLUTUS
You don't know?

MARK
(grabs his briefcase to
his chest)
Who are you?

Plutus raises his head.

PLUTUS
I ask the questions.

Mark begins to dance a bit. The ground is hot. The soles of his shoes are burning.

PLUTUS (CONT'D)
Are you a hoarder or a waster?

MARK
What does that have to do with--
(beat)
Wait a second...

Mark just woke up.

FLASHBACK

Pitch dark. The sound of CRUSHING METAL; then an AMBULANCE.

BACK TO DESERT

MARK (CONT'D)
Where's my car? I was in my--

PLUTUS
Yes. You *were*.

MARK
Where the hell am I? I was just in
my car--

PLUTUS
(sarcastic)
Do you see your car anywhere, young
man?

MARK
--Going to the press conference--

Mark looks around. Nope. No car.

MARK (CONT'D)
(incredulous)
Did I fall asleep?

PLUTUS
(sly)
You could say that.

Plutus walks towards the door and opens it.

SCREAMS come from inside.

MARK
What the--

PLUTUS
(slams the door shut)
Precisely. So, are you a hoarder
or a waster?

MARK
Neither... I'm an oil executive.

Plutus laughs. It's a low, poisonous laugh. Likely to put
someone to sleep if they weren't ready.

PLUTUS
Are you one of *those people*
responsible for all the *spills*?

Mark panics. Sweat is beading on his forehead. He removes
his suit jacket.

He struggles to open his briefcase. It falls onto the ground and opens. Contents, papers, his cellphone, go flying.

He bends down to pickup everything, and falls over.

His papers catch on fire.

The ground is HOT. He fumbles to get back up. His pants are singed.

He finally picks up his cellphone. It's melted a little.

Plutus grins.

PLUTUS (CONT'D)
That's of little use here. Very
bad reception, I'm afraid.

Mark tries the phone anyway.

ON SCREEN: NO SERVICE.

He shakes it. Holds it up to the sky.

PLUTUS (CONT'D)
(mocking)
I told you.
(beat)
Why doesn't anyone ever listen?

MARK
I've got a meeting to ma--

Plutus walks around Mark, as an animal would stalk it's prey.

PLUTUS
You're not going to tell me, are
you?

Mark's scared now.

MARK
Stop it. This isn't funny anymore.

PLUTUS
It's certainly not meant to be,
funny.

Mark tossed his cellphone back in the briefcase and snaps it shut as --

Plutus opens the door again. The SCREAMS get louder.

MARK

I demand to know where I am!

Plutus SIGHS. His least favourite part of the show.

PLUTUS

You're dead. You're stuck here,
just outside the fourth circle,
with me, because...well...you
either hoarded wealth or you
squandered wealth. Either way.
You're here.

Mark is in shock.

MARK

I...I...What?

Plutus, exasperated.

PLUTUS

(to himself)

It's like they never figure it out.

SLAM! The door flies shut.

MARK

I don't under--

PLUTUS

Nothing much to understand. You
were a bad guy. You did bad
things.

MARK

I didn't...I--

Plutus waves him off.

PLUTUS

This morning, you kissed your
beautiful wife and brilliant
daughter goodbye.

MARK'S FLASHBACK - MONTAGE

KITCHEN - Mark walks in. His wife, SHEILA, cooks eggs, his
DAUGHTER picks up her book.

PORCH - Mark kissed them both goodbye.

CAR/DRIVEWAY - Mark waves at them as pulls away.

PLUTUS (V.O.)
You got into your fancy car.

Mark is driving to work past a few houses, towards downtown.

PLUTUS (V.O.)
On your way to work, drinking your
over priced coffee...

Mark takes a sip of coffee as he turns a corner.

PLUTUS (V.O.)
...you were side swiped by a
transport truck that ran a red
light. You're dead.

BACK TO SCENE

Mark doesn't move.

MARK
This can't be--

PLUTUS
(throws his arms up)
Why do you doubt me?

MARK
I'm a Christ-

Plutus laughs, LOUD.

PLUTUS
A Christian! The way you
manipulated the world? You helped
destroy things, all for the love of
money, *I'm assuming*, so you and
your friends could live...RICH.
And, you did it without even so
much as *one conscious thought* in
your head.

MARK
But, I--

PLUTUS
Okay, maybe one... How do *I* make
more money?

Plutus doesn't let up, yet.

PLUTUS (CONT'D)
So you thought that you were
guaranteed to go to...

Plutus looks at Mark. Mark is silent.

PLUTUS (CONT'D)
Do you realize what you've done?
Do you get it yet? You bet on the
wrong horse.

Mark drops his briefcase.

PLUTUS (CONT'D)
(sarcastic)
You see how this works? You do bad
things...you come see me and my
friends here. Now, I can only
imagine since you happened upon my
gate that you did one of two
things. You either hoarded
truckloads of money or you
squandered it.
(beat, thinks)
I'm thinkin' both, in your case.

MARK
This is crazy.

Mark walks towards the door. He runs his fingers along the
door frame.

PLUTUS
Looking for something?

MARK
The hidden camera.

PLUTUS
You'll find nothing like that here.

MARK
Look, I made money for my clients--

PLUTUS
--For what?

MARK
(closes his eyes)
I am not dead. I am not dead.
This is a dream. I am not dead.

PLUTUS
You're right. Technically, you're
not *really* dead. Your soul is here
now, with me. Lucky you.

Mark looks around again. He grabs his briefcase and walks away from the door.

Plutus watches him go, then--

PLUTUS (CONT'D)
You can't escape.

Mark pays no attention.

MARK
(to himself)
Like hell I can't.

PLUTUS
How right you are!

Mark, frustrated, turns around --

MARK
I didn't do anything wrong.

Plutus motions with his finger to come back.

PLUTUS
You see, that's your first problem.
You need to wake up.

Mark walks back, mad, but a little dejected.

PLUTUS (CONT'D)
Nobody seems to notice. Nobody
seems to care... Until, well, the
shit hits the fan, and you die.
Then it's all... "help me, save me,
this isn't real", bullshit.
(beat)
See what I mean?

MARK
I'm really...dead?

PLUTUS
You're wife's at the hospital.

Mark puts his head down. Drops his briefcase. He doesn't care.

MARK
I can't change this?

PLUTUS
No.

MARK

Then...

PLUTUS

Nothing.

Plutus opens the door again. This time it's all quiet.

PLUTUS (CONT'D)

Inside, you and your companions get
to roll weights to and fro, against
each other until the end of time.
Doesn't that sound like fun?

Mark peers into the dark doorway.

PLUTUS (CONT'D)

Remember... Until the end of time.

MARK

I would never have--

PLUTUS

Save it. I've heard it all before.

MARK

But, the presentation I was going
to give...

PLUTUS

What about it?

MARK

I guess it doesn't matter.

Plutus waits for him to continue.

MARK (CONT'D)

We were going to do some good work.

PLUTUS

Sometimes, Mark, the work comes too
late.

Mark takes out his wallet. He removes a FAMILY PHOTO.

MARK

Do they know I loved them? At
least I did that right.

PLUTUS

Yes, they do.

MARK

Good.

PLUTUS

Mark? One more thing...

INT. HOSPITAL - MORNING

Sheila paces in the vestibule of the ER. She's wringing a napkin through her fingers. Nervous.

A DOCTOR comes out through the large double doors.

SHEILA

Oh my god. Is Mark okay?

DOCTOR

Well, it was touch and go, to be honest. We did lose him for a few minutes.

SHEILA

He's alive?

DOCTOR

Yes, but we did lose him. We won't know how much damage has been done for maybe a few weeks.

SHEILA

All I care about right now is that he's alive... I prayed all the way here.

DOCTOR

I'm sure he feels the same.