

RECOVERY ROOM

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CAST: HAROLD: male, age 21
 VOICE: off stage, male or female, age 20 - 60
 COUNSELOR: male, age 20 - 50

SET: a small room with a bed center stage , a chair beside it, a mirror on a wall.

[HAROLD is in bed. He wakes up, sits up, he is dressed in white pajamas.]

HAROLD

What the hell is this? Hello. [goes to door. Bangs on it.]
 Hello! Hey! Is anybody there?

VOICE [on intercom]

Hello, hello. Yes we are here.
 How are you feeling, Mr. Isenberg?

HAROLD

Isendorf.

VOICE [on intercom]

Oh. Sorry. Harold Rupert Isendorf. Correct?

HAROLD

Yes. Where am I?

VOICE [on intercom]

Don't worry. You are in no danger. There is nothing to fear.
 A counselor will be with you shortly.

HAROLD

Counselor? Where are my clothes? Hello. Hello!

[Looks at his hands as though there were something strange about them.]

My arthritis is gone. [Feels his face & head.] My God, I've got hair!

[Goes to mirror on wall & looks in it.]

Oh wow!

[Enter COUNSELOR]

COUNSELOR

Mr. Isendorf?

HAROLD

Yes.

COUNSELOR

I see you've found the mirror.

HAROLD

Yeah. I look twenty years old!

COUNSELOR

Twenty-one. Are you feeling well?

HAROLD

Great! I'm thirty pounds lighter. My whole body is like I was in college. What the hell's going on?

COUNSELOR

The easiest way to explain it is to say that you are dead. Not in the absolute sense, of course, but your life as Harold Isendorf is now over. You died of a heart attack at sixty-two. Sorry for the bluntness, but our records indicate that you're not much for hand holding. I can back it down a notch if you like. [pause]

Attaboy. Your youth has been restored as a compensation for what might otherwise be considered bad news. Now I know you have questions, and I'm here to answer them, but there's no rush. Many people request an adjustment period at this point. Would you like me to come back later? [pause]

I understand. Just call when you're ready. [starts to exit]

HAROLD

Wait. Where am I?

COUNSELOR

You're in a recovery room. The location is irrelevant, except to say that it's not Earth.

HAROLD

Who are you?

COUNSELOR

I'm your recovery counselor. You may call me Bill. Do you feel up to answering a few questions? ... for our records.

HAROLD

I don't know. Try me.

COUNSELOR

Okay, have a seat. This will only take a few minutes, if you simply answer the questions.

HAROLD

How long does this body last?

COUNSELOR

As long as you need it, don't worry. First, let me say that it is in your best interest to answer my questions honestly, without reservation, and without regard to consequences.

HAROLD

What consequences?

COUNSELOR

That's part of what it's not in your best interest to be concerned about.

HAROLD

Why not?

COUNSELOR

Yeah. I can see this is going to take some time. But that's okay. That's what I get paid for. Let me check something here. Oop! Lawyer. Why me? Okay. I am required by law to inform you that the best thing you can possibly do for yourself is to answer my questions honestly. Now, my first question is, do you believe what I just told you?

HAROLD

I'm not sure.

COUNSELOR

Fine. [taps keyboard] "Doesn't know". Next question: According to our records, you were an atheist for the final twenty-eight years of your life.

HAROLD

Give me that. [Grabs the clipboard]

COUNSELOR

Hey!

HAROLD

What language is this?

COUNSELOR

Verugi. Don't push any of those buttons.

HAROLD

What alphabet is this?

COUNSELOR

Jaibot. May I have my board back, please.

HAROLD

Not until I get some answers.

COUNSELOR

Okay. The first thing you should know is that everything you say and do in this room is being recorded. It will be used at your evaluation.

HAROLD

Evaluation?

COUNSELOR

Placement evaluation. A panel of professional evaluators will decide the form, conditions, and location of your future existence.

HAROLD

You talking about a trial?

COUNSELOR

Evaluation is the accepted term.

HAROLD

[Returns the clipboard]

Okay, I'm returning the board voluntarily.

COUNSELOR

Thank you.

HAROLD

Undamaged.

COUNSELOR

Yes. The record will show that.

HAROLD

But I'm not answering anything until I see an attorney.

COUNSELOR

Harold, you'll be assigned an advocate in plenty of time before evaluation.

HAROLD

I demand to see an attorney *now!*

COUNSELOR

Okay, then, first answer is changed from "doesn't know" to "No". You do not believe me.

HAROLD

You leave my answer as it is.

COUNSELOR

Harold, if you believed that it was in your best interest to answer my questions without reservation, you wouldn't be demanding an attorney. Now, do you demand to see an attorney or not?

HAROLD

[pause] Yes.

COUNSELOR

Fine. Would you like that attorney to be an atheist?

HAROLD

[pause] Uhh... I'm not sure. What are the implications of that?

COUNSELOR

It implies nothing more than that you prefer an atheist attorney.

HAROLD

Are the evaluators atheists?

COUNSELOR

If you wish. Do you want atheist evaluators?

HAROLD

[pause] Do I have the right to uhh... refrain from answering certain questions until I know more about what happens when you answer them certain ways?

COUNSELOR

You have the right to refrain from answering. You may shut up and stare at these walls as long as you like. But you do not have the right to be informed as to what answers get what results.

HAROLD

Oh. Okay. Well, aren't you supposed to read me my rights or something?

COUNSELOR

If you were illiterate, yes. It's a rather lengthy document. You have the right to see it in your own language, and to study it for as long as you like - in this room.

HAROLD

Fine. Let's do that.

COUNSELOR

Okay. [taps keyboard] "Demander of rights". I have no further questions at this time. Will that be all?

HAROLD

Wait a minute.

What are the implications of being a demander of rights?

COUNSELOR

Really Mr. Isendorf, that's a very involved question.

HAROLD

Well God damnit, man! ... No, I mean... shit. No, uhh...
Gosh darn it!

COUNSELOR

Harold, you mean God damnit. You are welcome to say God damnit. We encourage you to say exactly what you mean. We don't have poles up our asses here.

HAROLD

Okay, That's good. Thank you. That's valuable information. Keep it coming. What else can you tell me?

COUNSELOR

Concerning what?

HAROLD

The uhh... big picture. What's actually going on?

COUNSELOR

Well, the best analogy is, this is sort of like a post office.

HAROLD

Post office.

COUNSELOR

Yes. Think of me as a postman, and you're a piece of mail. Now in order for me to get you to where you belong, I have to read your address. I don't need to understand the whole address, just the country is sufficient. Then I send you on to another post office where they decide what state you go to, and so on until you get to exactly where you belong.

HAROLD

Oh. Okay. Well how about if you just show me a catalog of places, and travel guides and...

COUNSELOR

Actually it's a lot more complicated than that, Harold. There's body type, family compatibility...

HAROLD

Let's talk about body type.
Are we reincarnated, or is it some kind of eternal thing?

COUNSELOR

Your choice.

HAROLD

I can take my pick?

COUNSELOR

It's a package deal. We ask you some questions.
Your answers determine what package you get.

HAROLD

What about body quality? What determines the quality?

COUNSELOR

It's whatever your evaluators think you deserve.

HAROLD

Do some packages have higher living standards than others?

COUNSELOR

Definitely.

HAROLD

Which ones have which... ?

COUNSELOR

I can't answer that.

HAROLD

A few general statistics would help.

COUNSELOR

Harold, really! This is not going to get you anywhere. Try to relax.

HAROLD

Relax. Well listen uhh ... what was your name again?

COUNSELOR

Bill.

HAROLD

Bill. Well listen, Bill. I realize this is just another work day for you, but it's a rather unique experience for me, and I'd like to proceed rather carefully if you don't mind. I have to admit, there's something that really concerns me here, If you remember, the very first question you asked me was about religion. Why is that so important?

COUNSELOR

All of my questions are important. Atheists usually don't expect to wake up after they die. When they do, sometimes they reconsider.

HAROLD

Sometimes?

COUNSELOR

You've never really thought it out, have you? Why should the existence of an afterlife imply the existence of any particular God? ... Huh? ... or a Supreme Being for that matter?

HAROLD

I don't know.

COUNSELOR

That's right; you don't.

HAROLD

Do you?

COUNSELOR

No.

HAROLD

You mean *nobody knows*?

COUNSELOR

I don't know if anybody knows or not.
Lots of people *claim* to know all kinds of things.

HAROLD

So there's no guy on a throne giving orders?

COUNSELOR

Hey, there's a lot of guys on a lot of thrones giving orders.

HAROLD

Who's in charge?

COUNSELOR

That's really not important at this point. First we need..

HAROLD

[interrupt] *I demand to know who's in charge!*

COUNSELOR

Harold, you don't have the right to make that demand.

HAROLD

I have the right to know what governmental authority I'm dealing with, do I not?

COUNSELOR

Only in terms you can understand from your present perspective.

HAROLD

Well then I demand that you explain it in terms I can understand from my present perspective.

COUNSELOR

Okay, there is a being who is more powerful than anybody else. Some people say that person is the Supreme Being by default. Others say the Supreme Being is above all that. Others say the universe *is* the Supreme Being. I don't know if any of them are right. I have an opinion, but I'm not allowed to tell you.

HAROLD

Do any of them claim to be the Supreme Being?

COUNSELOR

That's hard to say?

HAROLD

You don't even know *that*?

COUNSELOR

We have spin doctors here too.

HAROLD

What? You mean there's *nothing* but opinions?

COUNSELOR

No. There's definite true and false on this issue. I just don't claim to know it.

HAROLD

What religion are *you*?

COUNSELOR

I'm not allowed to answer that. Undue influence.

HAROLD

No. Of course not. Okay, what about this heaven versus hell issue? Surely you can't expect intelligent people to take that seriously.

COUNSELOR

Well, some intelligent people actually do, but just between you and me, that's very simplistic. There are many different levels of wealth and poverty - different cultures - lots of variables within the categories. I wouldn't even know where to draw the line between them.

HAROLD

Ah. So you don't have any particular place where lawyers go?

COUNSELOR

No, no, we do not stereotype people here. You'll be judged as an individual on your own merit.

HAROLD

By whose rules?

COUNSELOR

Your own, as much as possible. We'll try to match your panel of judges - *Ach!* You got me doing it. - evaluators. We try to match your evaluators to your own ethical standards.

HAROLD

So what if I were a murdering rapist scum bag?
Would I be tried by other scum bags?

COUNSELOR

If that's what you ask for.

HAROLD

Then what? Where would I go from there?

COUNSELOR

Someplace in scum bag land. But that's not your concern because you're not a scum bag, right? Really there's no reason to worry about anything at this point. The evaluators are very competent. Just answer the questions honestly, and you'll get exactly what you deserve. I'll have your bill of rights sent in.

HAROLD

Uh, wait a minute. Just a few more questions.
What if I don't *want* exactly what I deserve?

COUNSELOR

Oh. I see. Would you prefer to live in an unjust universe?

HAROLD

Well to be honest with you, I wasn't really counting on living anywhere. Don't get me wrong. I'd love to stop in and say hi to uncle Al, tip a few beers, but uh... really one or two ball games would about do it for me.

COUNSELOR

What are you saying, Harold?

HAROLD

What if I prefer to just not live at all?
Like total termination of existence?

COUNSELOR

You have that right, but only after all debts are fully paid.
Let me check your balance sheet. [pause] Mmmm.

HAROLD

Mmmm?! What does "Mmmm" mean?

COUNSELOR

You're definitely in the red.

HAROLD

Like, how would that translate out into...

COUNSELOR

I'm not allowed to offer any estimates or advice in these matters. Your advocate will handle that.

HAROLD

So get me an advocate.

COUNSELOR

You haven' t yet told me what kind of advocate you want.

HAROLD

Really first rate.

COUNSELOR

Of course. Theist or atheist?

HAROLD

Uhh... Just hold it a minute, okay. What if I were to say that, uhh... I' m not really an atheist? What if I converted right before I died?

COUNSELOR

That' s not true. Our records are quite reliable.

HAROLD

Okay, well what if I convert now?

COUNSELOR

No one can stop you. Convert to what?

HAROLD

Well, I' ve heard that if I accept Jesus as my personal savior, I won' t get charged for uhh... "sins" as they call it.

COUNSELOR

I' m not allowed to comment on that.

HAROLD

Right. Okay, chief. It' s hallelujah time. I' m a Christian - born againer, right here and now.

COUNSELOR

Mr. Isendorf, I strongly advise honesty. That much I' m allowed to do.

HAROLD

Fine. I' m advised. Now, you mark on my chart that I' m a Christian, and send me a Christian attorney.

COUNSELOR

Why specifically Christian? If you're going to arbitrarily pick a religion, you could at least be fair about it.

HAROLD

Hey. Like I care about fair?
I'm looking for the best deal I can get. Is that a problem?

COUNSELOR

As you wish. [taps keyboard] Any particular denomination?

HAROLD

Whichever one has the highest living standard.

[COUNSELOR indicates that he can't divulge that information]

Okay, Episcopalian. They seem to do alright.

COUNSELOR

Episcopalian. Okay. Will that be all?

HAROLD

Yeah. You did a fine job, uh...

COUNSELOR

Bill.

HAROLD

Bill. Thank you; I'll give you a good reference.

[COUNSELOR starts to exit.]

HAROLD

Hey, counselor. I played it right, didn't I?
I'm going to heaven, right? Admit it.

COUNSELOR

Mr. Isendorf, You are going to be represented by an Episcopalian advocate in front of a panel of Episcopalian evaluators. After that, you're going to spend a very long time in a place governed by Episcopalians. If you want to call that heaven, praise the Lord, bro; you made it.

[Exit COUNSELOR.]

[HAROLD thinks, sits on the bed, puts his hand to his head.]

HAROLD

[mutters] Jesus Christ.

Blackout