

EXT. THE CELESTIAL THRONE - DEEP SPACE

Dark. Silent. An endless stretch of radiant stars fills the void. At the center, a round, bright red sphere glows - nestled in the vast stillness.

INT. THE CELESTIAL THRONE - DEEP SPACE

Blank white space stretches in all directions. No beginning, no end, no up or down.

Three celestial beings sit on white thrones with a sign above them: GODS OF ALL. They orbit a translucent image of Earth.

MIDGE, red skin, white robe, white ponytail extends her hand.

MIDGE

Thirty-nine...you...him. He's it.

OMEGA, red skin, white robe, white mohawk, squints.

OMEGA

Tell us, why did you choose - it?

Is it a Pope? A politician?

(glares at Midge)

Wait a millennium, you're joking?

MIDGE

He's - right for the task.

He points at Midge.

OMEGA

We heard you count. You chose the  
fortieth - IT!

MIDGE

IT is a human and forty's been  
lucky for me. He's the one.

Omega frowns.

OMEGA

Wretched creatures. They  
continually sin, destroy, and defy  
their purpose as caretakers. Earth -  
our child - is dying. You should  
have let me drown ALL of them. No  
need for -

MIDGE

- Dramatics? They help pass  
eternity.

(MORE)

MIDGE (CONT'D)

Besides, you know my rule as  
Creator of Souls. I must grant them  
a second chance.

OMEGA

Yeah, yeah, but that Jesus fella  
was a bore. I prefer death and  
chaos - now that's entertainment.

MIDGE

No wonder they nicknamed you Satan.

OMEGA

Whatever. This time, no water. This  
time, when they fail, BOOM. I'll  
blow them all to little pieces.

MIDGE

Calm down. Give them hope and  
they'll correct themselves.

ALPHA, red skin, white robe, bald, strokes his long white  
beard.

ALPHA

Let us not squabble. Midge, who  
will be their savior?

MIDGE

I choose Cordell "Crispy" Jordan of  
Detroit, Michigan.

Alpha raises both arms; an open book materializes before him.

ALPHA

The Soul Creator names Cordell  
Jordan humanity's healer. He has  
forty days to find one worthy soul.  
Fail, and all humans will -  
detonate. How say you, Midge?

MIDGE

I...

ALPHA

How say you, Omega?

Omega glares at Midge, annoyed.

OMEGA

Can I at least tempt IT?

Midge rolls her eyes and nods. Omega forces a smile.

OMEGA (CONT'D)  
I...

ALPHA  
It is written and so shall it be.

INT. JIMMY'S CHICKEN SHACK - ORDER AREA - EVENING

Dim and greasy, the yellow walls stained with years of fried smoke. No furniture. Grab your order and go.

OPEN KITCHEN

CORDELL "CRISPY" JORDAN, 30s, Black, thin, short twists, earbuds in, stares into the fryer...lost in thought.

Customers hover at a battered wooden counter. Behind it, BRENDA JACKSON, 20s, Black, braids, and long nails, mans the cash register with practice boredom.

BRENDA  
Next.

JIMMY RAY JR., 60s, White, pudgy, comb over, waddles out of a small office with two white envelopes. He hands one to Brenda.

JIMMY  
Here you go. Don't spend it all on more claws.

He giggles. Brenda snatches the envelope, tucks it in her purse, and rolls her eyes.

He waddles over to Crispy.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
Hey, convict.

Crispy stays lost in the fryer. Jimmy plucks one of Crispy's earbuds from his ear. Crispy spins around.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
Didn't I say no electronics while on duty?

CRISPY  
You said no cellphones.

JIMMY  
Cellphones, earphones, they're all electronics. Shut it down - NOW.

Crispy takes out the earbud. Jimmy tosses him the other one.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
Now that you can hear me - here's  
your pay.

Jimmy hands Crispy a white envelope and waddles to the counter. Crispy tears it open, counts the cash, frowns, then counts again.

BRENDA (O.C.)  
I need a number four fried hard.

Crispy turns off the fryer and meets Jimmy at the counter.

CRISPY  
Jimmy, my money ain't right. This  
is only four-hundred-and-fifty-  
three dollars.

JIMMY  
It's right, Convict.

CRISPY  
Man, I worked thirty hours of  
overtime. This is less than my  
regular forty. Naw, this a mistake.

Jimmy looks him over and grins.

JIMMY  
My drawer was short by three-  
hundred-dollars. There ain't but  
one new ex-con I employ.

CRISPY  
Wasn't me. I work the fryer.

JIMMY  
Who story your P.O. gonna believe?  
Now get outta' my face and back to  
work.

Crispy bites his lip, and turns on the fryer.

Jimmy winks at Brenda. She rolls her eyes. He shrugs his shoulders and waddles into his office and closes the door.

BRENDA  
That ain't even right. White devil.

CRISPY

Damn. I promised Gigi I'd get a  
stove and pay rent. I should rob  
his ass.

PASTOR MALVEAUX, 60s, Black, tailored suit, gold rings, pats  
the countertop.

PASTOR MALVEAUX

No, you shouldn't, brother. God's  
got your back.

Triggered. Crispy spins around. Mean mug fixed on his face.

CRISPY

Ain't no God. I got me.

Pastor Malveaux leans on the counter. Grin fixed on his face.

PASTOR MALVEAUX

He's real, brother. He's here,  
there, and everywhere. Amen.

(cups his ear)

What was that?

(to Crispy)

He just told me to bless you.

CRISPY

Ain't nobody told you shit. Go con  
somebody else with that invisible  
miracle man in the sky nonsense.

BRENDA

Crispy, you need to listen and stop  
blocking your blessings.

Crispy twists his lips at Brenda and folds his arms.

CRISPY

Okay, holy man. How is the fake man  
in the sky gon' bless me?

PASTOR MALVEAUX

Well, my church just got a new  
kitchen so I'm gon' bless you with  
our old stove. Can I get an Amen?

CRISPY

What's wrong with it?

PASTOR MALVEAUX

Nothing. Top of the line in its  
day. Made many a Sunday dinners.

CRISPY  
What does this miracle cost?

Pastor Malveaux does a holy dance, stops, and points at Crispy.

PASTOR MALVEAUX  
Real living is living for others.  
Amen. It's free if you come ova to  
the church and give a small  
testimony about your good fortune.

Crispy searches Pastor Malveaux's face. Considers.

CRISPY  
When can I pick it up?

PASTOR MALVEAUX  
I got three fundraising services  
tonight. Swing on by. Now can I get  
my number four fried hard? Amen.

BRENDA  
Amen, Pastor.  
(to Crispy)  
See - say thank you.

Brenda gently shoves Crispy's shoulder. He rolls his eyes.

CRISPY  
Good looking out.

Crispy turns back to the fryer. Smiles.

INT. DMC HOSPITAL ROOM - BREAK ROOM - EVENING

At a table, ANDREA GONZALES, 20s, Hispanic, green scrubs, scrolls on her phone beside a neglected salad.

REGINA "GIGI" LOWE, 30s, Black, short, floral smock, trudges in and plops down next to Andrea with a brown paper bag.

ANDREA  
Hey girl. Still rocking the PB&J?

Gigi rolls her eyes at the crinkled brown paper bag.

GIGI  
Gourmet's for the rich.

Gigi stares at Andrea's salad. Andrea slides it to her.

ANDREA

Take it. I'm not hungry. You should hop on Tinder. Find a man who will feed you.

GIGI

Stop. Crispy's working now. Any news on the RN school grant?

ANDREA

Frozen. HR's scared since the orange turd started whining about reverse racism.

GIGI

Damn. Receptionist money don't cut it. Thank God Crispy found a job.

The door swings open, DOCTOR HENRY COX, 40s, Black, fit, strides in, fiddles with the Keurig. Andrea puffs out her chest.

ANDREA

Hey, Dr. Cox. Need a hand?

DR. COX

Just caffeine. Thanks.

He makes eye contact with Gigi.

DR. COX (CONT'D)

Evening, Gigi.

Gigi waves. Dr. Cox strolls out. Andrea rests her cleavage.

ANDREA

(mocking)

Evening, Gigi.

GIGI

He's all yours, boo.

Gigi digs into the salad. Andrea leans in.

ANDREA

You tell Crispy yet?

Gigi sits up and presses her shirt flat.

GIGI

Soon. Just - not yet.

Gigi shrugs. Andrea checks her watch, then rises.

ANDREA

Just - don't let time make the  
choice for you. Alright, mama. I  
gotta run.

Andrea marches out. Gigi caresses her stomach and pulls out her phone.

GIGI

Hey - you busy?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. JIMMY'S CHICKEN SHACK - OPEN KITCHEN - NIGHT

Crispy sweeps chicken bits and stray fries into a pile while on the phone. Voice low.

CRISPY

Always. What's up, baby? You good?

GIGI

Yeah. You gon' talk to Tyree  
tonight?

Crispy sighs.

CRISPY

We just need time. I missed a lot,  
but I'm trying to fix it.

GIGI

He's fourteen, Crispy. Trying don't  
mean much when you won't talk.

Silence. Gigi softens.

GIGI (CONT'D)

Anyway, the grant didn't come  
through. You sure -

CRISPY

- Don't worry - I'll handle the  
stove and rent. I got us.

Gigi pauses. Her face says she's heard this before.

GIGI

You sure you got us?

Crispy glances at Jimmy's office door.

CRISPY  
We good. You'll see. I've changed.

Gigi eyes water. She rubs her stomach.

GIGI  
I need to tell you something.

Crispy hears Jimmy's office door open.

CRISPY  
Baby, my boss is coming, I'll holla  
at you later. Love you.

He hangs up.

INT. JIMMY'S CHICKEN SHACK - OPEN KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Crispy pockets his phone. Brenda stuffs cash and receipts  
into a black zippered bank bag.

Jimmy waddles out of his office.

JIMMY  
Brenda, you count my drawer?

BRENDA  
Nope. I'm off the clock. Here.

She shoves the bank bag into Jimmy's gut. He grabs hold.

JIMMY  
It's your job to close out.

BRENDA  
Not on my dime. Pay overtime or  
back up.

Crispy sweeps invisible dirt, eavesdropping.

JIMMY  
You people - ungrateful. You're  
lucky to have a job.

Brenda turns to Jimmy, zips her coat. Unbothered.

BRENDA  
You're lucky my uncle is the health  
inspector. MOVE.

Jimmy forces a smile and backs up. Crispy smirks.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
Later, Crispy.

CRISPY  
Be safe, sis.

Brenda marches out. Jimmy turns to Crispy, puffed up.

JIMMY  
She blackmailn' me. I give you  
people a break and y'all spit in my  
face. Just like you stealing  
another hundred dollars.

Crispy exhales loudly but keeps his composure.

CRISPY  
Wasn't me.

Jimmy steps close, as he squeezes into his undersized  
"America First," jacket.

JIMMY  
You're an ex-con with two strikes.  
Don't ever question what I pay you.  
Comprende?

Crispy clenches his jaws and swallows hard.

CRISPY  
Yeah, I got it.

JIMMY  
Good, boy.

Jimmy digs a folded one-hundred-dollar bill out his shirt.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
Looka' here - I found it.

He chuckles, stuffs the bill into the bank bag, and waddles  
toward cooked food under the heat lamp.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
Come flip this chicken.

Crispy flips the fried chicken. Jimmy snatches a leg, chomps  
hard, chews between ragged breaths.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
Damn good chicken. Be a shame to  
lose you over your mouth.