

SETTING: Hell, present day.

CHARACTERS:

ELLIS: a bright, 13-year-old boy. Any ethnicity. Has a general excitement about life (and death, as the case may be).

DEMOM: a.k.a. Shelley. Ageless, any ethnicity. She is very good at her job and has a soft spot for people.

STEVE: Ellis' father. 40s. Any ethnicity. He doesn't make very good decisions.

PENTAGRAHAM: a demon. Ageless. Any gender, any ethnicity. They enjoy being helpful and are proud of Hell and its work.

SCENE ONE

Hell. It's barren. And very red. ELLIS enters.

ELLIS

Huh. I thought there'd be more fire. And a general sense of damnation.

Dramatic demon entrance.  
Lots of flashing lights.  
DEMOM enters.

DEMOM

WHO DARES—aw heck. You're just a kid. I can't be scaring a kid like this. What is this, hell? (She laughs at her own joke.) That's a little demon humor for you.

ELLIS

Demon humor?

DEMOM

Guess we'd better get you checked in. Time and date of death?

ELLIS

I'm not dead. At least, I'm pretty sure I'm not.

DEMOM

Right, okay. (A pause, before she launches into a clearly prepared speech.) It may be hard to accept that your time on earth is over, and denial is a very normal part of the grieving process. We want to give you the time in which to heal, but there comes a time in every person's life... er, death... where they are forced to accept a hard truth.

ELLIS

(has been evaluating his mortality and not listening)  
Nope. Not dead.

DEMOM

Work with me, kid. Fine, lemme look at you. (examines ELLIS.) You're... you're really not dead. Wait a minute, do you have a lute? The last time a guy came down here with one of those, it was a major pain in my neck, I'll tell you that.

ELLIS  
I'm lute-less.

DEMOM  
Lyre?

ELLIS  
No, I'm telling the truth.

DEMOM  
What? No, I mean... forget it. I'm going to have to speak to corporate about this. Why are you here? How'd you even get here?

ELLIS  
I rode my bike.

DEMOM  
Your bike?

ELLIS  
It's a good bike. It's got racing stripes and everything. (A beat.) I'm Ellis.

DEMOM  
Uh... nice to meet you. I'm (horrific Lovecraftian screeching). But you can call me Shelley.

ELLIS  
I'm looking for my mom.

DEMOM  
Aw geez. Look, kid, I can't send anyone back. She's dead. A spirit. And not a particularly nice one, if she's down here. Uh, no offense. Now, you can fill out the appropriate paperwork to request a transfer to Heaven, but honestly, it's really not worth the hassle.

ELLIS  
No, not like that. You see, my dad-

DEMOM  
That's ballsy, sending you to do the revenge plot, but I'm gonna have to insist that you take the Hamlet-stuff elsewhere. I have enough trouble with Shakespeare as it is—he's down here, you know, on account of all that witchcraft and homosexuality and stuff. Still writes a smash hit once in a while, but always insists on performing in the middle of the fire pits. Says the

lighting is better. The number of times I've had to chase him out of there...

ELLIS

I don't think you get it. My mom is a demon.

DEMOM

Say what now?

ELLIS

My dad traded his first-born child for three tacos and the Cubs to win the World Series.

DEMOM

You got traded for *tacos*?

ELLIS

They were really good tacos.

DEMOM

And he just sent you down here *alone*. By yourself. To find your mother, who's a demon.

ELLIS

Uh, he's gone Down Under-.

DEMOM

Kid, I told you, no bringing parents back from the dead.

ELLIS

No! Down Under. Like Australia. He's studying... kangaroos for the summer. And it was either go to Australia with him or come stay with my mom.

DEMOM

That doesn't seem like good parenting.

ELLIS

He sent her an email.

DEMOM

No one uses email down here! This is hell, not 2009!

ELLIS

I'm thirteen! I can take care of myself.

DEMOM

Kid. You're a... well, you're a kid. Thirteen is not old enough to be traversing the Underworld all by yourself.

ELLIS

Who are you, my mom? (A silence, during which nothing is figured out by either party.) And I would have come anyway. I've never met my mom, and finding out that she's a demon has been the coolest thing that ever happened to me. I just want to meet her, y'know?

DEMOM

I mean, no. Demons don't exactly have parents. Come to think of it, we don't exactly have kids either—.

ELLIS

Haven't you ever wanted to be with someone so badly you'd do anything?

DEMOM

That's human talk, kid. Demons do the tempting, we don't get tempted. I can't let you go wandering around Hell, but it doesn't look like I'm getting rid of you any time soon, so... I guess I'll help you find your mom.

ELLIS

Thank you!

He runs forward to hug her.

DEMOM

Whoa there, kiddo. We don't do that kind of stuff down here.

ELLIS

Sorry. Hey, can I wear a disguise?

DEMOM

What for?

ELLIS

Going undercover! If I'm not supposed to be here, I shouldn't be walking around with my face out in the open, should I?

DEMOM

Not supposed to be here?

ELLIS

I mean... like, I'm not dead, right? So I technically shouldn't be here. Will I get in trouble?

DEMOM

You're already in hell, buddy. What kind of trouble could you get into that's worse than this?

ELLIS

Oh, this isn't that bad. It's sorta hot, but that's okay. Hey, can you take me to see all the fire and brimstone and stuff? That sounds cool!

DEMOM

You've been watching too much TV.

They exit. A beat, and then Steve rushes on.

STEVE

Ellis? Ellis! You here? I should never have told him... ELLIS!

Demon entrance. PENTAGRAHAM enters.

PENTAGRAHAM

WHO DARES-oh wait a minute, you're not dead.

STEVE

I'm trying to find my son.

PENTAGRAHAM

Oh boy. Sir, you can't bring anyone back from the dead. It's just not happening. We had to change our policy after that Orpheus guy, and that PR scandal is not something I want to repeat.

STEVE

My son isn't dead! I told him about the deal I made, and he ran off. You have to help me!

PENTAGRAHAM

Okay, okay, calm down. We'll find your kid. Let's go talk to my boss, she'll know what to do. She knows everything. Number one

in trade deals, you know, especially after vampires became a thing. The demon in charge back then sure made a mess of that one. That Stoker guy really had a hard-on for coffins...

As they exit one way, ELLIS  
and DEMOM enter from

ELLIS another.

... and that's why werewolves are better than vampires.

DEMOM

Fascinating.

ELLIS

I really like mythology and stuff like that. That's how I found my way down here. I tried Google Maps, but that didn't give me very clear directions. But I've read enough books, so I figured that I'd make it here eventually. And here I am!

DEMOM

That's actually pretty impressive, kid. I know some demons who still get lost trying to get back from your world.

ELLIS

You don't really look like a demon.

DEMOM

What did you think we looked like?

ELLIS

I dunno... red. Horns. Spiky tail. That sort of thing.

DEMOM

What are they putting on television these days? Nah, we just look like regular people. Maybe a little fiery around the eyes. We couldn't blend in up There if we were all scary.

ELLIS

That's a good point.

DEMOM

That's why deals are so easy to make. You just gotta dress the part and fit in.

ELLIS

I wish that worked for me. Everyone at school thinks I'm a freak. That's why I wanted to come find a demon, so that I could—.

He stops abruptly.

DEMOM

What was that?

ELLIS

Nothing! I didn't say anything; did you hear something?

DEMOM

Ellis...

ELLIS

Oh hey, I think I see something over there! We should go check it out!

DEMOM

Your dad doesn't know you're here, does he?

ELLIS

(dejectedly)

No. I came down here by myself. When my dad told me about trading me, I thought that I could make a deal too, and get the other kids at school to stop making fun of me. And maybe have the Cubs win the World Series again. I thought that if I told you I was looking for my mom, you'd feel bad for me.

DEMOM

So your mom isn't a demon.

ELLIS

No. She died when I was a baby. I tried asking her, but she never answered. Not that I blame her. Heaven must be much better than helping a dumb kid out.

DEMOM

Ellis, look-.

ELLIS

I thought that maybe I could ask This Side. Hell. If my mom wouldn't help me, maybe the demon who owns my soul would. That's sort of like being a mom, isn't it?

DEMOM



Hey, hey. It's okay. I'm sorry about your mother... but WHO in their right mind lets their husband trade their firstborn child's soul?

ELLIS

I don't think she knew.

DEMOM

You think? I'll tell you, if you were my kid, I would never let your soul get traded, especially not for tacos and baseball.

ELLIS

I think you'd be a good mom.

DEMOM

Really?

ELLIS

Yeah. A Demom.

DEMOM

Well. Thanks, kid.

PENTAGRAHAM and STEVE enter.

PENTAGRAHAM

Oh hey, there she is! Hey, boss—!

STEVE

ELLIS! (He runs to Ellis and hugs him.) I was so worried! Don't you ever go to hell without permission again!

ELLIS

I'm sorry, Dad.

STEVE

I know, buddy. I'm just glad you're safe. (He looks up to DEMOM). Thank you for finding my—Shelley?

DEMOM

Steve?

STEVE

Uh. Long time, no see.

ELLIS

You know each other?

STEVE

Yeah. Ellis, this is the... um, woman, I made the deal with.

DEMOM

You're Tacos Dad?

STEVE

You forgot about our deal?

DEMOM

The specifics, yeah! Do you know how many deals I make? How many I'd have to keep track of? Way too many! That's what Pentagraham is for.

PENTAGRAHAM

Ooohh, Tacos Guy. I remember him. Is this the Firstborn Child?

ELLIS

Hi, I'm Ellis.

PENTAGRAHAM

Nice to meet you.

ELLIS

Wait, if you're the one that my dad made the deal with, that means... (He flings his arms around DEMOM). You ARE my Demom!

DEMOM

Oh. Hey, kid, I told you, we don't really... aw, what the hell?

She hugs him back.

ELLIS

I'm glad I found you.

STEVE

And I'm glad I found you. C'mon, sport. We should probably get going.

DEMOM

You're not going anywhere. Not until you and I have a talk about letting a kid ride his bike down to hell. He shouldn't have known about the deal at all, and then he just happened to find his way down here? That's some shoddy parenting, Steve.

STEVE

I know, but he deserved to know that I sold his soul!

DEMOM

And that's another thing! In what world is a human soul worth three tacos and a Cubs game?

STEVE

I'm not proud of it! But if you think that's ridiculous, why did you make the trade in the first place?

DEMOM

I'm a demon! It's what we do!

PENTAGRAHAM

He does have a point, if I can play Devil's Advocate. Wait, no, that doesn't make sense...

DEMOM

You know what? Ellis, you can have your soul back. Enough people have asked for the Cubs to win the World Series that your deal doesn't have to hold up. And the tacos were like seven ninety-five. We can call it square.

ELLIS

Wow, thanks!

DEMOM

Don't barter your soul away lightly, kid. Save it for something good, like college loan debt. (A beat.) Well. I guess this is it.

ELLIS

I'll be back next weekend!

DEMOM

Oh, kid, I'm not sure...

STEVE

Ellis, I don't think that's entirely a good idea. This *is* Hell, after all.

ELLIS

Well, you know what they say! All's Hell that ends Hell!

LIGHTS OUT.

END OF PLAY.