



Book, Music, and Lyrics
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Additional Book
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EPISODE 1: EARLY RETIREMENT



SCENE ONE

Narrator: Thank you, dear listener, for joining me on this lovely Thursday morning. We'll start with a gentle, scenic view of downtown Portland, through the eyes of one Todd Sterben.

Todd: Good morning, Velma. Nice to see you.

A mild street, with quiet cars passing, birds chirping, people chattering in the distance.

Narrator: Todd strolls down Hawthorn Street.

Todd: Hi, Princeton.

Princeton: You're less grumpy than usual.

Narrator: Todd works in advertising, optimizing clients' SEO—if you don't know what that is, don't worry—he barely understands it himself. Keeping up with the ever-changing world has always been difficult for him, but for the past few years he's been even more overwhelmed by the constant cannonade of coworker clamor, the frequent flareups of his age-appropriate arthritis, and the struggle to secure a single second of solitude. This morning, however, is a different story.

Reno: Hey Todd!

Todd: Reno!

Reno: I heard your agency just got bought out. You out of a job?

Todd: Yep, but the severance package is enough to complete my retirement savings.

Reno: No wonder you're smiling. You're out of the rat race!

Todd: Every morning is about to be this delightful.

Reno: Now, don't rub it in!

Todd: I'm entitled to one day of gloating. One last coffee in the neighborhood. Happy sigh.

#1 — McCobb Mortality Services

TODD

On this beautiful day
I make my way
to a local cafe
called Cannoli.
On this glorious morn,
I feel reborn.
Do I hear a car horn?

The sound of a car horn slowly enter. Brakes screech.

TODD

Holy—

Thud, broken glass. Screams, shop bells clang as people gather. The scene goes silent.

Narrator: When I said this journey was gentle and scenic, I meant for the rest of us, who get to enjoy the ensuing drama from the comfort of our armchairs.

The pandemonium resumes, with sirens.

Narrator: As an ambulance arrives, Todd's ghost wafts to a standing position.

Todd, mumbling: Coffee.

Narrator: There's a funny phenomenon among the recently deceased—without access to a physical neural network, their souls have to learn to think again. Everything is cloudy at first.

Todd: Ma'am. Lady! Looking for—*mumbles*.

Narrator: She couldn't hear him, or see him.

Todd: Blurry—why? Loud.

Narrator: He didn't know why the paramedics were there.

Todd: Body?

Narrator: It was his.

Todd: Why no see face?

Narrator: It's hard to say how long this fuzziness would go on, without external assistance. That's where the McCobbs enters our story.

Blunt: Hey, uh, dead guy. Yeah, you, Mr. Disembodied. Look, judging from this scene, it appears you were pummeled by a 1987 Buick, traveling at only thirty-eight miles an hour.

Amber: Okay, okay, I'm just going to step in here.

Blunt: Oh, uh, okay.

Amber: I'm sorry, sir, my trainee here is on his first day. Gerald, would you join the others there? I'm sorry, sir. I know this is all very confusing, so let's start from the beginning again. I'm Amber McCobb, and we are here to help you cross over to the afterlife.

AMBER

Everybody has to go sooner or later.
We make sure the going's easy.
Life's supposed to be tough,
but the way out should be breezy.
Don't be afraid of It.
It's not a bitter pit.
There's no reason to weep and wail.
McCobb Mortality Services:
we go above and beyond the veil.

Todd: Don't under...

Amber: It's okay, sir. It will take you a while to process what's happening, but your comfort is our number one concern. Come on, take a walk with me.

Todd: Car—

Amber: Yes, I'm afraid you were in an accident.

Todd: Hospit...

Amber: It's too late, I'm afraid. Your body won't be useful to you anymore.

Todd: Paraly...

Amber: Deceased. I'm so sorry. What's your name, sir? Can you remember?

Todd: Todd St... Todd St... St...

Amber: It's okay, you'll get it soon.

Todd: Heaven?

Amber: We'll help you cross through the Portal to the spiritual realm beyond, but I'm afraid knowing what's actually there is above my pay grade.

Todd: Angel?

Amber: We're Agents of Mortality—like social workers for the recently deceased.

Todd: Kill—

Amber: Oh, no, not the Grim Reaper.

Narrator: Dead?

Amber: No, we're all mortal—clairvoyant mortals. Something in our genes, dating back for many, many generations. This is our calling—helping people like you. We're going to send you on a journey to our headquarters—it's a bit of a trek, but fortunately you don't have to deal with muscle fatigue or friction. Once you're there, we fill out a bunch of paperwork for you, offer counseling services if you'd like them, and then we send you off through the Portal.

Todd: See my husband?

Amber: He won't be able to hear you, but you can take some time to say goodbye.

Persnickety: If he registers for the VIP Program.

Amber: What?

Persnickety: Didn't you see the email this morning?

Amber: One moment, Todd. One of my trainees just has a quick question. (*aside*) What email?

Persnickety: The new Premium Passage Plan. Only VIPs get to spend extra time.

Amber: You've got to be kidding me.

Persnickety: Exciting stuff.

Amber: Agents, I think we're good on training for the day. We'll implement these policies after I've had some time to review them and set up the infrastructure at the office.

Persnickety: It says effective immediately.

Amber: I read that, thank you. Todd, did you remember that last name yet?

Todd: St... Sterben.

Amber: Wonderful. Someone will be by later to check up on you at your home address.

Todd: It's 611 W, uh...

Amber: We can pull the rest. You know the way?

Todd: That way

Amber: Perfect. And Mr. Sterben, everything's going to be okay.

Todd: Thank you.

Narrator: Say goodbye to Todd, if you'd like—

Trainees: Bye, Todd!

Narrator: —because his contribution to our story has concluded.

Amber: I'm going to divide up the remaining reported deaths between you all. Just follow the procedures we've had up until now.

Persnickety: But—

Amber: Change doesn't happen overnight. You all have your bus fare? Good. Remember, our main goal is to be kind. I'll see you back at the office in a few hours.

Narrator: Amber spots a quiet corner, behind the nearby café—

A few rings.

Amber: Come on, pick up

Narrator: —while the new agents make progress on their assignments.

Kind: Hi, I'm so sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but

Insensitive: At 11:34AM, you were hit by a stray golf ball.

Persnickety: Actually, you're not.

Blunt: You're extinct. Defunct. Out of print. Inanimate.

A few rings.

Amber: Pick up the phone!

Kind Agent: But there's also good news!

Insensitive: You didn't even leave a scratch.

Persnickety: Actually, you can't.

Blunt: In the crispier. Tapped out. Taking a dirt nap. Traded to the Angels.

Amber: Let's try another option. *She dials again.*

Kind: And your pain is over.

Insensitive: We're pretty sure.

Persnickety: Technically—

Blunt: Flatlined. At room temperature. Past your expiration date. Terminated.

One ring. It's answered.

Genevieve: Oh, hi, Amber. How's it going out in Portland?

Amber: Genevieve, I need you to book me a flight.

Persnickety: Ma'am, I'm your guide to the afterlife.

Blunt: I noticed you're looking a bit translucent.

Insensitive: I don't really know else what to say.

Kind: But it's going to be okay, because

KIND

Everybody crosses by and by;
we'll make sure your welcome's warm.

BLUNT AND INSENSITIVE

Life's supposed to be finite;
No outrunning this storm.

ALL FOUR

Don't be afraid to move.

We'll help you find your groove.
 Sit back and follow where the winds may blow.
 McCobb Mortality Services:
 we reap what you sow.

SCENE TWO

Airplane sounds.

Narrator: Amber boards a plane bound for McCobb Headquarters

Attendant: Welcome aboard Spirit Airlines, the soul of luxury.

Amber: Thanks, I see the plane is mostly empty, can I sit closer—

Attendant: No.

Amber, under her breath: Wow, these seats are tiny. We're squeezing the dead for their money, and she still won't change carriers.

Narrator: The McCobb family was a longtime stakeholder in the airline. Despite their calamitous customer service, their safety record is impeccable, and surrounded by others' grief, the McCobbs are highly motivated to avoid it themselves.

Captain Chris Okawa : This is your captain from the cockpit. We at Spirit wanted to thank you for flying with us. We know you have many options when it comes to air travel. Should be coming in about 40 minutes ahead of schedule. Um, I know that that may confuse some of your, uh pickup, uh, routines, but in, uh, your downtime, I recommend you maybe pay a visit to, uh, thzz, the Cinnabon at the terminal, it is—I myself have found comfort many a late night at that, uh, Cinnabon.

Amber: Okay. Take a breath. Even if you get fired today, you won't be as sad as this pilot.

Narrator: Now that Amber's settled in on the journey, let's take advantage of my narrative omniscience and get a sneak peek at McCobb Headquarters. Though usually abuzz with a bustle of incoming and outgoing clients, the main floor of the office moves with an extra measure of mania as the employees tackle brand new company initiatives.

The office floor bustles, coming into earshot slowly.

VIP Rep: Right this way, VIPs, sorry about the mess. You can just walk right through them.

Narrator: A gaggle of once-wealthy ghosts gingerly pass through a clump of employees installing a state-of-the-art LED wall.

Architect Ghost: Pardon me, I was just wondering, who designed this building? It's—

VIP Rep: Dazzling?

Architect Ghost: I was going to say eclectic. The art deco entryway, the brutalist expansion there—

VIP Rep: Oh, an architect. We have some fun packages you're going to love.

Architect Ghost: Packages?

VIP Rep: I'll give you the whole introduction. Gather round, everybody.

Architect Ghost: I mean, half of this office looks ancient, and the rest looks like a tech startup.

VIP Rep: You can't have innovation without some renovation. Okay, everyone comfy? Welcome, VIPs, to the most exclusive club on earth. The twenty of you have been chosen to be the first participants in our luxury program, the Premium Passage Plan.

Architect: Y'all really like alliteration around here, don't you?

VIP Rep: Our job is to make sure everyone gets to the afterlife as efficiently as possible—I'm sure you've seen enough movies to know why we can't have a bunch of ghosts just hanging around on Earth. But what if there's a resort you've always wanted to visit? What if you have unfinished business and need to send subtle messages to living loved ones? What if you could get ahead of the curve, and buy a deed to a mansion on the other side now, so you don't miss out while you soak up just a little more sunlight? Folks, with the Premium Passage Plan, you can take it with you.

VIP Ghost 1: I seem to have left my wallet with my body.

VIP Rep: No problem, sir. We offer a variety of payment options, including posthumous will alteration, trade secret divulgement, and off-shore account passwords.

Architect: How—

VIP Rep: We have the best lawyers. Feel free to browse the packages for a moment, here on the screens. Once you've selected, we invite you to relax in your own private room, where have a number of audio book classics available for your listening pleasure. Recent additions to the catalog include, uh, Late Expectations, A Grave New World, Withering Heights, and, uh, The Man in the Iron Cask.

VIP Ghost 2: Do you have any Grateful Dead albums?

VIP Rep: I'm sure we could find one.

VIP Ghost 2: Thank you.

VIP Rep: You're very welcome.

VIP Ghost 1: Hey, what's... that?

VIP Rep: That's the Portal to the Afterlife.

Narrator: Right in the center of the main floor, the Portal to the Afterlife emits an iridescent glow, it's aged stones and vines obscured behind an automated gate.

VIP Rep: When you're ready to cross over, we open up the gate, and you make your glorious entrance into the beyond.

VIP Ghost 3: Can I just go now?

Architect Ghost: Yeah, I think I'm good.

Narrator: A striking woman, observing the presentation, steps forward.

Morgan: And miss all the fun we've prepared for you? Hello, my VIPs—my Vivaciously Incandescent Personages. I'm Morgan McCobb, the Head Honcho around here, and I'm here to make sure your afterlife is just as significant as your mortality.

MORGAN

Make a difference for your family;
spread your wealth among the living.
Life's the time to collect,
and death was made for giving.
Hand over what you've got

We'll get your killer caught.
Justice served at a bargain price!
McCobb Mortality Services:
we bring the heat while you're on ice.

VIP Ghost 3: Yeah, I'd like to sign up for the, uh, NBA Court Experience.

Morgan: Nice choice. Couldn't experience LeBron James running right through you when you were alive, could you? And what about you, Ms. Prather? You didn't get \$78 million in the divorce just to say goodbye to luxury now.

MORGAN

Die first class, among your equals.
Coach is for the bums and crazies.
You haven't lost your pull
just because you're pushing daisies.
Upgrade your final flight
We'll see you through the night
A premium, lavish eternal rest,
McCobb Mortality Services:
don't you deserve the best?

AGENTS

Skies are all blue from here.
Troubles are yesteryear.
You've passed through darkness
and come out on top.
McCobb Mortality Services:

Morgan: Ask your doctor if cutting off life support is right for you.

AGENTS

your ultimate last stop shop.

The doors fly open.

Narrator: Amber has arrived. She emerges from the entryway, pausing on the threshold at the sight of Morgan.

Amber: Hi, mom.

Morgan: Amber, darling, I wasn't expecting you home. And with a suitcase. Is everything okay?

Amber: You know, I was just feeling a little homesick, and all the training is going so well, so I thought I'd fly in for a day.

Morgan: I wish you'd have called. I would have reserved a table at Nina Compton's new bistro for lunch.

Amber: I did call.

Morgan: It's been very busy. Oh, you just crossed something off my to-do list. My office.

Footsteps. A door opens and closes. A desk drawer closes and opens.

Morgan: I saw this watch and thought of you. Now I don't have to ship it.

Amber: Thanks. It's—it's lovely.

Morgan: I'm sorry if I've been a little preoccupied lately. It's taking every ounce of my patience to get this Premium Passage Plan rolling.

Amber: I just saw the memo this morning. I was wondering if you could explain a few things.

Morgan: It's fairly straightforward.

Amber: I was wondering, here—pulling it up—the part about selling deeds to properties on the other side? How does that work?

Morgan: Oh, well, you know how our VIP clientele get. They'll show up with the paperwork, and one way or another, it'll all work out. It's just like the charter colonies. You think King Charles knew anything about Rhode Island?

Amber: Okay. And this part about the clients paying in "divulged trade secrets that may be useful for financial investment"? Couldn't that get us caught up in insider trading?

Morgan: The tipsters are dead, and we're an untraceable shadow organization with seventy layers of shell corporations.

Amber: I just—have you run these ideas past the ethics committee?

Morgan: I am the committee. It's time for you to get back to Portland.

Amber: Mom, you told us that our ideas and feedback would be important during this period of transition—

Morgan: The transition's over. Look at all the dust on your Grandmother's urn. Now, I have a lot of work to do. Death doesn't sell itself.

Amber: I only need ten minutes.

Morgan: I spent twelve hours in labor getting you into this world. Anything extra is generous.

Amber: Ten minutes. I came all this way.

Morgan: Amber, I hate to speak ill of my predecessors, but they were running this organization into the ground. Our investment portfolios and trusts are struggling. We're not even keeping up with inflation, and the only viable solution is innovation and expansion.

#2 — Dinosaur Age

MORGAN

I spent years wondering
 why I was put on this earth.
 Others looked to the future
 but I still couldn't make sense of my birth.
 But then I saw these financials
 and I finally found my clarity.
 They said, "Tear up the note your mother wrote
 and stop running this place like a charity."

The door opens, and she steps out back out onto the main floor.

Morgan: Honestly, no one profits off of non-profits. Jan!

Jan: Yes, Ms. McCobb?

Morgan: This budget still needs more snipping. What's left to cut?

Jan: The only discretionary funds are Friday night staff outings, the company holiday party—

Morgan: I know, I'll fire Fred.

Jan: Fred? But he's—

Morgan: We're not the Red Cross, Jan.

MORGAN

Toss out every SOP
and start from scratch.
Liquidate some capital,
find investors to match.
Scrap the old structure,
trim the excess fat.
Drain the swamp of every
obsolete bureaucrat.
We're getting close to rigging the lotto. Hey!
Who do I have to kill for a macchiato?
Get with the program.
Let go of the past.
Get with the times,
because time's moving fast.
Get on board or get off the stage.
It's time to get out,
out of the dinosaur age.

Amber: You wanna stop using fossil fuels, sure. Install solar panels, great. But monetizing our counseling services limits our help to only the wealthy.

Morgan: Yes.

Amber: Aren't all equal in death?

Morgan: Amber, this isn't a new idea. Previous generations just didn't have the willpower to catch up to the times. Millicent, why aren't you glued to your overwhelming array of monitors?

Millicent: Ms. McCobb, about the website—

Morgan: Talk to Sue. She oversees your department now.

Amber: The website?

Morgan: We're going live on the dark web.

MORGAN

Update the platforms,
Throw out the fax.
Get our people elected
and siphon estate tax.
Put in a spa,
I'll need to recharge in
Order to conjure up
A profit margin.
No more falling forecasts on a flimsy flip chart. Hey!
Who do I have to kill for better clip art?
Get with the program.
Let go of the past.
Get with the times,
Because time's moving fast.

Get on board or get off the stage.
It's time to get out,
out of the dinosaur age.

Melanie: Ms. McCobb, I have just been informed that the Séance Center is up and running.

Morgan: Oh Thank Thanatos! My coat and bag, please.

Melanie bring Morgan her coat and bag. Morgan prepares to leave.

MORGAN

People in turmoil
Want something to buy.
Where there's demand,
We will supply
a solution, perhaps,
Or just a distraction
Either way we'll give them satisfaction.
Wealthy people make the world better. Hey!
Who do I have to kill to get a decent shredder?
Get with the program.
Let go of the past.
Get with the times,
Because time's moving fast.
Get on board or you'll get my rage.
It's time to get out, get out, get out.
Get out, get out, get out.

Harry: Your medium sugar-free no-whip double-shot caramel macchiato, with oat milk.

Morgan: *Sips. It's nasty.* Get out, get out, get out! Melanie, trash can.

Morgan throws the coffee in a trash can.

MORGAN

Out of the dinosaur age!

Button.

Sue: Um, mom.

Morgan: Oh, look, it's the daughter I was expecting to see today. Sue, I need you to fire Fred.

Sue: Fred?

Morgan: And make sure your sister doesn't get reimbursed for her frivolous trip.

Amber: The Mother of the Year.

Morgan exits with a bang, as the button hits again.

Sue: Amber! I didn't know you were in town.

Amber: We need to talk.

They head away from the crowd.

Sue: How's Portland? Everything good with training?

Amber: Oh, yeah, it's fine. I—

Sue: No one giving you any trouble?

Amber: No, no. I mean, I always forget how young the kids are when they first come in.

Sue: Yeah, like, “Hi, I’m eighteen years old and have had no sorrow. I’m here to help with the intense sorrow you’re experiencing.

Amber: Exactly.

Sue: So what’s the problem?

Amber: I—well, I’ve been concerned for the last while, with all the changes. I thought that when a leadership transition occurred, there would be at least some continuity, like that Grandma would train mom on the new job before, you know—

Sue: Nice watch, by the way.

Amber: Oh, do you want it? I’m allergic to it, and Mom gets mad when I don’t like her gifts.

Sue: Hand it over. I’ll put it in a drawer until the re-gift anger period has settled.

Amber: All yours. Anyway so, when Grandma’s ashes show up and her note’s like, “Have a great time with the business! By the time you read this, I’ll be off enjoying my afterlife”—

Sue: —Who even helped with that? The cremation.

Amber: Grandpa?

Sue: He hasn’t left the nursing home in a while.

Amber: Wait, do you think someone killed Grandma?

Sue: Dark. Who would have the motivation?

Amber: *(just spitballing)* I mean, a disgruntled employee, someone who wanted to change things, who might want her job—*(lightbulb)* wait.

Sue: There’s no way mom killed her.

Amber: Right. Maybe Grandma just walked into the cremation place.

Sue: And died there? Oh, just a sec. Hey Fred, could you meet me in my office in like 20 minutes?

Fred: Uh, did I do something wrong again?

Sue: Oh, no, no, no, nothing’s wrong.

Fred: Oh, okay. Yeah, uh, yeah.

Sue: Okay, yeah, yeah, yeah, you enjoy that donut, okay? Alright. Okay, back to Grandma. Like euthanasia? If it were Grandpa’s ashes, yeah, but Grandma? She was still running on all pistons. I’ve been too busy to even question any of this.

Amber: I’ve been too busy questioning everything else.

Sue: Hitting that quarter-life crisis?

Amber: No, the new stuff here. The focus on numbers, rushed processing times, stricter schedules, and now the Premium Passage Plan? I can’t implement this in the new branch.

Sue: You have to.

Amber: No, I mean it. I can’t.

Sue: She’ll get someone else to do it.

Amber: If she would listen to me—

Sue: No, no, that’s a bad idea.

Amber: Yeah, well, I had to try.

Sue: Had to? Like you already did?

Amber: Uh, a little bit.

Sue: Amber, couldn't you call and warn me before you cause chaos?

Amber: I'm just responding to the chaos she's causing. This new plan takes everything that's wrong and corrupt in mortality and extends it into our clients' post-mortal lives.

Sue: Sure, but there's not really a way—

Amber: —So I gently suggested she reconsider the plan.

Sue: Yeah? And what was her response?

Amber: She preached the gospel of avarice. She proclaimed the virtue of fraud. She spoke as a prophet for profiteering.

Sue: Okay, yeah, she's definitely in money making mode, but in her defense, the financial situation has been pretty bed.

Amber: Then why are we installing flat screens?

Sue: Bad is a relative term. The investment fund isn't keeping up with expenses.

Amber: Like the flat screens?

Sue: Even before that.

Amber: So, what, she just throws away our legacy, instead of balancing budgets ethically? I just—I thought she was a decent human being.

Sue: When?

Amber: Like, until two months ago.

Sue: She's always been like this.

Amber: But she was a good mom.

Sue: I mean, she lied a lot.

Amber: About what?

Sue: Wednesday night book group was a cover for her ouija board scam.

Amber: What? Well, that explains the Séance Center.

Sue: Fluffy didn't get sick. She tried experimental gene editing on him, to see if she could make dogs clairvoyant, too.

Amber: I'm sorry, what?

Sue: And Harry? He wasn't her roommate.

Amber: Harry? Wait, when dad moved to Nova Scotia, was that a lie?

Sue: No, that's true. Maybe dad found out about Wednesday nights.

Amber: Or Fluffy.

Sue & Amber: *Beat.* Or Harry.

Amber: Okay, so waking her dormant conscience may be more difficult than I anticipated. Did Grandma know about any of that?

Sue: I mean, did Mom know about your teenage pyromania phase?

Amber: That food truck fire was an accident.

Sue: Uh huh. And your ex's bicycle?

Amber: I have changed my ways—so maybe there’s hope for Mom, too. There’s got to be something that will change her mind.

Sue: She won’t take criticism from us. When’s the last time she answered your call?

Amber: Two months.

Sue: I don’t think she’ll listen to anyone. Welcome to middle management.

Melanie: Cake of the day?

Amber: What’s happening here?

Sue: Melanie’s been promoted from junior hospitality intern to the role of Sentient Snack Cart. What flavor is this?

Melanie: Death by Chocolate.

Amber: More like Death by Compromised Values.

Melanie: What?

Sue: Go see if I.T. wants some.

Exit Melanie.

Amber: This is ridiculous. She wants to fire Fred for efficiency, but we have a Sentient Snack Cart?

Sue: If people stay at their desks for snack breaks, they work more hours and skip lunch.

Amber: Oh my god. We are going into Mom’s office together, and we’re bringing a presentation, and pamphlets from the Better Business Bureau—

Sue: Don’t drag me into this.

Amber: —and pamphlets from the Better Business Bureau—

Sue: Don’t drag them into this.

Amber: You’re my sister.

Sue: Switzerland. I am Switzerland.

Amber: My older sister.

Sue: Big Red Flag, white cross. Healthcare that makes sense. Switzerland.

Amber: You’re saying this isn’t wrong?

Sue: No, but sometimes we have to make temporary sacrifices—

Amber: Sacrifices?

Sue: And survive through less-than-enjoyable situations.

Amber: Less-than-enjoyable?

Sue: Amber.

Amber: My dedication and patience aren’t the issue.

#3 — Sell My Soul

AMBER

I’ll sacrifice my weekends
For emergencies, and “urgencies.”
I’ll skip my break when deadlines
start to crunch—who needs lunch?
I’ll stay past closing time,

as my prime years flush down the bowl,
 but I won't sell my soul.
 I'll fill out forms that never see
 the light of day, once they're filed away.
 I'll sit on calls I know
 will be a bore—and I hate to snore.
 I'll enter data 'til I lose my
 will to its mental toll,
 but I won't sell my soul.
 When clients get thrown under the bus,
 or undertaken while under the knife,
 they're forced to turn to us,
 the sentry to the entry of the afterlife.
 If we trade tradition for blind ambition,
 we're straying from the light,
 paving our own road to hell overnight!
 I'll compromise on issues
 with a narrow scope—just like the Pope.
 I'll play the games and politics,
 Even though it's a personal low.
 I'll check my ego and take no selfish
 stake in the common goal,
 But I won't sell my soul.

Sue: Amber, this conversation—

AMBER

Would you rather hear it in ¿en Español?
 ¡Mi alma está en mi contról!

Sue: You speak Spanish?

Amber: Yes, because I care about all our clients.

Sue: Amber, I'm not arguing.

AMBER

Picture the moment
 you cross through that Portal
 Who do you want to greet you?
 The people you love,
 the people you served,
 Your ancestors waiting to meet you.
 Now imagine you enter
 the land post-mortal
 to find an angry mob
 who want you to suffer the pain they felt
 when you didn't do your job.
 I'm standing in defense
 Of what our family built.

Sue: Lay on the guilt.

AMBER

I'll risk my job to do
 what's best for the clients.

Sue: Wow. Such defiance.

AMBER

This path we're following
will lead us straight down a rabbit hole
This train is off the rails
and still she's shoveling on the coal.
My stomach's sick
and no supply of omeprazole
will settle these feelings of ache and dread,
my conscience breaking inside my head.
I will spend my nights awake in bed
if I sell my soul.

Sue: To be honest, it sounds like you're going to have to quit.

Amber: And betray my duty as well as my conscience? No. We're going to fix this, even it means taking over ourselves.

Sue: What, like you're going to tie her to a chair and declare yourself the new Head Honcho?

Amber: When everyone else is ready to tie her to a chair, that's when we know we have a mandate. The whole company needs to call for her removal and a return to the old way. Otherwise we'll just have a series of coups, fighting over vision.

Sue: Amber, I get it. But if you stick around and cause trouble, you'll make things worse. Go back to Portland and we will make a plan together.

Amber: A plan.

Sue: For your rebellion.

Amber: You promise?

Sue: Whatever it takes to get you out of here, and into a place where we can think this through. *Sue's phone timer sounds.* Oh shoot, I need to check on the ghosts in the vault.

Amber: Excuse me, what?

Sue: Oh no.

Amber: Ghosts—in a vault!?

Sue: Amber.

Amber: She's locking them up!? Take me.

SCENE THREE

Narrator: Several floors down, the sisters enter a hall layered with fresh construction dust.

Sue: The ghosts who refuse to cross over—instead of providing them with the resources that are now limited to VIPs, we lock them in what she refers to as, “the waiting room.” It's a vault.

Sue enters a pin code and the door opens.

Amber: And they can't just go back out onto the streets until they're ready?

Sue: Apparently, collecting them again would be a, quote, “waste of resources.” Brace yourself. They're hysterical.

Amber: Sue, this is no laughing—(*gasp*)

Narration: Sue turns the lights on, revealing a transparent wall with a host of ghosts trapped behind it.

#4 — Conniption

GHOST 1

What happened to the gravity?

GHOST 2

Where is all the air?

GHOST 3

Is this a space-time vortex cavity?

GHOST 4

Or an evil scientist's lair?

GHOST 5

Are hallucinogens somehow tricking my mind
While I'm sitting comatose in a chair?

GHOST 6

This sensation defies description.

GHOST 7

I seem to be having a

GHOSTS

Conniption!

Amber: This is outrageous.

Sue: Hi, is anyone ready to cross over now?

GHOST 8

Who will feed my iguana?

GHOST 9

I had tickets to the ballet!

GHOST 10

I never called my mother back!

GHOST 11

I've never tried a parfait!

GHOST 12

Do I get another chance at nirvana?

GHOST 13

Can I relive just a single day?

GHOST 14

Is this my turn for "It's A Wonderful Life"

GHOST 15

Can I still make my life okay?

GHOST 16

Is there a post-mortal Xanax prescription?

GHOST 17

I wanted to choose my tombstone's inscription.

GHOST 18

I'm having an out of body

GHOST SET 1

Connption!

GHOST SET 2

Connption!

GHOST SET 3

Connption!

GHOST SET 4

Connption!

GHOST SET 5

Connption!

GHOST SET 6

Con-

GHOST SET 7

-nip-

GHOST SET 8

-tion!

GHOSTS

Connption!

GHOST 19

So it's true there's an afterlife,
But what am I in for?

GHOST 20

Am I headed for judgment?

GHOST 21

What did I sin for?

GHOST 22

I could have been more pious,
Though I wasn't irreligious.
It's just I've heard that God
Is prodigiously litigious.
Sorry for all the questions,
You're probably slammed,
But what I really must know is,
Am I damned?

Amber: These ghosts will remember this for the rest of their existence. They're still people, however disembodied.

Sue: Amber, I really don't know what to do.

A ghost begins screaming, looking at his own hand.

Amber: What's wrong?

Screamy Ghost: I'm dead?!

GHOST 23

I can't die still a virgin!

GHOST 24

I left my kids in debt!

GHOST 25

Will I get to see my dog again?

GHOST 26

I need a cigarette.

GHOST 27

I want revenge upon my surgeon.

GHOST 28

I want vengeance on Dr. Oz;
He told me to throw out my candy jar,
But my ashes are still in a vase.

GHOST 29

My wife will find my Bumble subscription.

GHOST 30

My journal's not locked with heavy encryption.

GHOST 31

I'm having an out of body

GHOSTS

Conniption!
So it's true there's an afterlife,
But what are we in for?
Are we headed for judgment?
What did we sin for?
We could have been more pious,
Though we weren't irreligious.
It's just we've heard that God
Is prodigiously litigious.
Sorry for all the questions,
You're probably slammed,
But what we really must know is,
Are we damned?
Do we know if God is the god of the West?
You'd think that, being dead, there'd be a way to test,
If God is Greco-Roman, Hindu, Muslim, or Egyptian!

GHOST 32

Does God's army recruit by conscription?

GHOST 33

I'm losing my mental gription!

Sue: Calm down, sir, you're having a—

GHOSTS

Conniption!

Amber: I'm never going to unsee this. How does thing work anyway?

Sue: R&D figured out a way to channel plasma from the Portal.

Amber: But how do they get in there?

Sue: The strike team herds the ghosts in there until the plasma is reactivated.

Amber: Herds them? How?

Sue: The strike agents also have plasma shock prods.

Amber: She's weaponized the Portal? Nope. Nope. You're right. We can't change Mom. We to have to get rid of her.

Sue: What?

#5 — Sell My Soul (reprise)

AMBER

If I catch a flight despite
my urge to fight and right
these wrongs, I might ignite—
I couldn't sleep tonight.
This family will not fall
into this grave she dug;
I'm pulling the plug.
Her crimes are piling up
like a laundry list;
it's time we resist.
I will not stand aside
as she swallows our heritage whole.
No, I wont—
I won't—
No, I won't sell

Narrator: Amber sees a button on the wall labeled, "Deactivate plasma." She hits it.

AMBER

my soul.

The plasma wall hums and turns off. Ghosts freak out.

Sue: What are you doing?

Amber, to the ghosts: Shhh! This is an escape!

Sue: How is this helping?

Amber: Please enjoy the sunshine a while longer, and come back when you're ready for the next phase of—

Journalist Ghost: Excuse me, I couldn't help but overhear that you're starting a revolution. I wrote an article entitled "12 Life Hacks to an Epic Takedown of Your Boss."

Amber: Where can I find it?

Journalist Ghost: It's on FuzzBeed dot com. Good luck!

An alarm sounds.

Sue: We need to get you out of here.

Amber: I have to pull up the article!

Sue: Come on, back stairs! It's a good thing the security cameras aren't arriving until Thursday.

Distant alarms, doors opening, boot trampling, Strike Team communications.

Narrator: The Strike Team barges down the other stairwell, in hot pursuit, enjoying the fresh opportunity to go on the hunt.

#6 — You Can't Run

STRIKE TEAM

You're next;
Death's coming soon,
And you're next!
It's strumming your tune.
Get ready.
It's starting your song,
And you can't run for long.

The building's back door swings open.

Sue: Quick, back in the trees!

Amber & Journalist: "Twelve Life Hacks to an Epic Takedown of Your Boss."

Sue: What is happening?

Amber: Epic times call for epic readings!

Sue: Omigod. Get down!

Amber: "How to succeed in mutiny with a reasonable amount of expected effort. Step One: Make sure you have a good reason to overthrow your evil corporate overlord."
Check. "Step Two: If you'd rather just buy a one way ticket out and leave everyone else to deal with the mess, do that instead." Running's not an option.

Sue: Says you.

Amber & Journalist: "Step Three: Find a base of operations where the tyrant won't expect to find you."

Sue: So you can't stay with mom. Or me.

Amber: Where can I go?

Sue: Benjamin's?

Amber, *scans her memory:* Benjamin.

Sue: The mortician.

Amber: Oh, yeah!

Sue: Incoming.

The back door swings open.

Strike Team Leader: Veer right!

Trampling boots emerge.

AGENTS

Make peace
With all your friends.

It's time
To make amends.
Get ready
To right every wrong,
'Cause you can't run for long.
Your clock's done ticking,
Your fate is sticking.
There's no use kicking and screaming.
Your balloon is popped,
Your show has flopped,
Your light has stopped gleaming.
Relax
And come with us.
Be calm;
Don't make a fuss.
Be brave and bold
And big and strong,
Because you can't run—
Yeah, shed your skin
And come on in.
At the sound of that heavenly gong,
Because you can't run for long.

Narrator: That's true for you, too, dear listener. McCobb Mortality Services will be back with you shortly.

Playoff Music: "You Can't Run."

EPISODE 2: RETIREMENT PARTY



SCENE ONE

Narrator: Welcome back to McCobb Mortality Services. Let's just get a few things recapitulated here before moving on. Amber discovered her mother's shenanigans, went AWOL on her assignment, and dragged her reluctant sister into starting a coup. When they awoke this morning, neither expected to be standing at the front door of Dunn Funeral Home.

Loud knocking.

Sue: Benjamin! Benjamin!

Amber: I don't think he's here.

Sue: The Hearse is, so he must be.

Amber: He doesn't have a normal car, too?

Sue: Don't get him started. "Think of it as a Stretch PT Cruiser, Sue."

Amber: Maybe he got a ride home?

Sue: Oh! Grab a couple rocks.

Amber: What?

Sue: His apartment is upstairs. That window there.

Amber: Before you break it, is there a back door?

Sue: Yes. Yes, there is.

Amber: I'm going to wait here, and let you do the talking.

Sue's footsteps start and fade.

Narrator: Benjamin Dunn leans over a slab in the Mortuary Prep Room, patching up a lifetime of wear and tear on one Mrs. Gertrude Morton.

BENJAMIN

(humming)

You were alive but now you're not.

Used to jive but now you rot.

The door slams open. Benjamin is startled.

Sue: There he is.

Benjamin: Sue?

Narrator: Benjamin instinctually covers Mrs. Morton up, so she blends in with the rest of the neighboring draped shapes.

Sue: Wow, it's even nicer back here than in the parlor.

Benjamin: You didn't tell me you were coming.

Sue: You said drop by whenever.

Benjamin: I said let me know when you want to drop by. I said that over two months ago. You've been ghosting me.

Sue: You know, that's a pretty great word for it. My grandma died.

Benjamin: Oh, wow. I'd offer my condolences, but you didn't call me to handle the burial. Who'd you go to, Mortimers?

Sue: By the time I found out, she was already in ash-form.

Benjamin: So who cremated her?

Sue: Probably Mortimers.

Benjamin: Typical. One of the Priests who does a lot of services here, and officiates at Mortimer's, says there's always something wrong. Misplaced dentures, weird smells.

Sue: Okay, no thanks.

Benjamin: So just think about that when you remember your Grandma.

Sue: Hey, again, wasn't my decision.

Benjamin: You could have said, "Grandma, you're getting up there in years. You should make some plans over at Dunn Funeral Home."

Sue: It never came up.

Benjamin: I gave you a stack of business cards.

Sue: I used them as party favors for my little cousin's birthday. Anyway, I was in the neighborhood, and I thought, "I'll go see if Benjamin has an extra room." My sister's in town and needs a place to stay.

Benjamin: So you didn't come to catch up.

Sue: Two birds.

Benjamin: Why can't she stay with you?

Sue: Fumes. In my apartment. I'm staying with my mom.

Benjamin: Why can't she stay with your mom?

Sue: Because they, they—we are planning a sort of party for my mom, and Amber came into town to help plan it, and it won't be a surprise if my mom sees her.

Benjamin: When's her birthday?

Sue: It's like—a retirement party.

Benjamin: It's like one?

Sue: It is one. But no one knows she's retiring yet, so we can't call it that.

Benjamin: Just you and Amber know.

Sue: Yes.

Benjamin: And me.

Sue: Yes.

Benjamin: And your mom.

Sue: Yes.

Benjamin: And then who takes over for her. You?

Sue: Me? No, I wouldn't know how to run the place.

Benjamin: Because you don't know enough about flowers?

Sue: Correct. So can she stay?

Benjamin: Can Amber stay upstairs?

Sue: Correct.

Benjamin: Sure. When?

Sue: Amber!

The door opens. Benjamin startles. Amber's footsteps enter with a rolling suitcase.

Amber: Hi, Benjamin.

Benjamin: Wait, she's here? With a suitcase? And you didn't think to tell me you were coming?

Sue: I was just telling Benjamin about the surprise party we're throwing over at McCobb Marigolds and Snapdragons. For mom's early retirement.

Amber: Ah, yes. You never quite realize what a toll the floral business takes on a person.

Sue: Before you know it, we'll be throwing her a party here!

Benjamin, flattered: That's a very nice thing to say.

Amber: Well, thanks for letting me crash! I see you're in the middle of—

*****Benjamin:** Restoring the Great Creator's masterpiece?

Sue: Oh yeah, what's this one titled?

Benjamin: Still Life of Gertrude, portrait of a woman who died, decrepit and alone, save for her pink parakeet, who happened to be gay and equally alone, because in her younger years she ghosted everyone who ever truly cared for her.

Sue: I was talking about Gertrude

Amber: Okay, so, can I put my stuff upstairs?

Benjamin: Sure. Here's the apartment key. There's a list of visitor instructions and house rules in the top drawer next to the fridge.

Amber: Thanks.

Exit Amber. Door.

Benjamin: I'm glad you came.

Sue: I'm glad we caught you at a good time.

Benjamin: What's with the nervous energy, Sue? Work stress? Family stress?

Sue: A little of both. Just burned out.

Benjamin: That's what you said last time. Hasn't improved?

Sue: Oh, it got much worse.

Benjamin: We do have an opening here, if your career needs a graveyard shift.

Sue: I do find your work revitalizing.

Benjamin: You're just into my bodies.

Sue: I don't know, they seem like lousy tippers.

Benjamin: Yeah, that's true—they're total stiffs

Sue: I mean, if you did all the hard work, I could do what— remains.

Benjamin, relaxing: Come, here. Let me introduce you properly to Gertrude.

Benjamin removes Gertrude's sheet.

Sue: Well, isn't she a dear?

Benjamin: Now lie still, Gertrude.

#7 — Wakeover

BENJAMIN

We're giving you a makeover,
Dress you up in the latest trends.
Every body needs some sprucing up,
For a party with that body's friends.

SUE

You've gotta be at your liveliest,
When you're the gala's honoree.
So even if her head hangs low,
Let's put some vigor in the VIP.

BENJAMIN

That makeover!

SUE

I love a makeover!

SUE & BENJAMIN

Let's put some vigor in the VIP!

BENJAMIN

All the ladies will lean to say,

SUE

"Gertrude, is this a hoax?"

BENJAMIN

"That sly little smile is taunting me!"

SUE

"Gertrude, is this one of your jokes?"

BENJAMIN

"Couldn't you be hideous for just one day?
I only came here to gloat,
But that smug little smirk will be haunting me."

SUE

"Along with that fashionable coat."

BENJAMIN

All the gents will dare to confess,

SUE

"You're as young as the day we met."

BENJAMIN

"Yeah, I know I never had a shot."

SUE

"Why did I choose that brunette?!"

BENJAMIN

"Gertrude, darling, I must profess,
I realize it should have been you.
My current wife isn't half as hot."

SUE

"And she's only 52!"

SUE

We're giving you a wakeover,
Get it, wakeover.
Dress you up in the finest threads.
Every body needs some love before
Lying in anti-tanning beds.

BENJAMIN

Even if you're feeling chill,
And your cheeks are looking gaunt,
We'll have you zesty in a zip.
Let's put the viva in the bon vivant!
That makeover!

SUE

It's a wakeover!

SUE & BENJAMIN

Let's put the viva in the bon vivant!

BENJAMIN

The key to seeming peaceful
Is the angle of the chin.

SUE

Looks like she could use a massage.

BENJAMIN:

That's rigor mortis setting in.
Here's the special paint we use.

SUE

I'm having a brush with death!

Sue: But really, she looks great.

Benjamin: What can I say, I'm Van Gogh. Oh, you should see my next challenge. Meet Eugene.

Sue: Yikes.

BENJAMIN

This one might take some quality time.

SUE

Looks like the poster child for meth.

BENJAMIN

Not for long!

BENJAMIN

We're giving you a wakeover;
Spare you some of that wear and tear.

SUE

Everybody pleads to God for you,
But blemishes need more than prayer.

BENJAMIN

So even though you passed your prime
Before the days of old Honest Abe,
You'll be blushing like a bride.

SUE

We'll have you fresher than a newborn babe.

BENJAMIN

That wakeover!

SUE

I love a wakeover!
You'll be

SUE & BENJAMIN

Fresher than a newborn babe.

SUE

The men will say,

BENJAMIN

"Eugene, old chum,
When did you become so cold?"

SUE

"Come and play some shuffleboard."

BENJAMIN

"Or have you gotten too old?"

SUE

"Come on, Eugene, don't be a bum."

BENJAMIN

"You're always lying around."

SUE

"I hate my phone calls being ignored."

BENJAMIN

"It's like you've gone underground!"

SUE

The women will sob, "Eugene, you brute,
Your money was so attractive."

BENJAMIN

"I wish I'd been willing to settle on looks."

SUE

"Can marriage be retroactive?"

BENJAMIN

"Eugene, if you'd been cute,
I might be a billionaire."

SUE

"Instead I'm dating low-life crooks,
Just because these ones have hair."

Sue: Too far?

Benjamin: Never.

BENJAMIN

For vocational longevity,
This job demands mild levity.

SUE

You mean it takes a little humor,
To hide symptoms of a tumor.

SUE & BENJAMIN

Irreverence is required,
When your clients are expired.

Benjamin: Sue, you're hired.

Sue: What?

Benjamin: Just fill out a W-4, an I-9, the benefits form, an at-will agreement, a non-compete, an NDA, the arbitration agreement, and your last will and—

Sue: Benjamin, I can't.

BENJAMIN

I'm giving you a wakeover.
Soon your closet will be full of black.
Your eyes will turn to dollar signs
At the sound of a heart attack.
Let your instincts take over and
Soon spare change will fill your purse.
Your eyes will shine at the sight of pine.
I'll even let you drive the hearse.

Sue: Really?

Benjamin: Eh, maybe not.

BENJAMIN

There's a sort of strange relief
Profiting from others' grief!
It's the perfect ambience for introspection,
Pondering the beauty of natural selection.
Your job is to think inside the box,
And you get to wear these stylish smocks.
It's a glorious life, the perfect money maker

SUE

Sue McCobb, the Undertaker

BENJAMIN

Watch out world, 'cause here she comes
To put the fine in your final affair
The service to your memorial
And the laughter to your aftercare

SUE

What sweet elation!

BENJAMIN

The joy of cremation!

SUE

Don't forget embalming!

BENJAMIN

It's just so calming.

O frabjous day!

SUE

Calooh! Callay!

BENJAMIN & SUE

Without a shred of doubt,

The shroud is out

And it's a Wakeover kind of day!

SUE

Oh, but what would my sister say?

The door opens.

Amber: What would I say about what?

Sue: Oh, uh, Benjamin thinks I should dye my hair gray.

Button.

Amber: Go for it. Thanks again, Benjamin. I grabbed the spare key in the drawer.

Benjamin: Will you be around much?

Amber: Depends on how well the party planning is going. Sue, I've got an errand for you.

Sue, to Benjamin: Benjamin, I promise I'll be back soon.

Benjamin: You should crash here, too. Plenty of slabs to go around.

The door opens and closes. The women speak in the hallway.

Amber: Nice cover-up.

Sue: What?

Amber: With the flowers.

Sue: Oh, yeah. Thanks.

Amber: Okay, so I read through some more of the article—

Sue: The article?

Amber: 12 Life Hacks to an Epic Takedown—

Sue: —Oh, yeah, oh yeah, Fuzzbeed.

Amber & Journalist: Step Four says, "Form an elite squad of trustworthy people. Their perspectives should be diverse, from inside your organization and from without, willing to challenge each other, and even more willing to cooperate toward your shared goals."

Sue: An elite squad, huh?

Amber: We should go back to work and look for candidates.

Sue: You can't go back yet.

Amber: Then you'll have to do it alone.

Sue: Nope.

Amber: Okay, then we're doing it together. Very few people know I'm not supposed to be there.

Sue: If Mom sees you—

Amber: We just need to distract her.

Sue: I guess that part's easy. She loves micromanaging projects.

Amber: Great. While you set that up, I'll go visit Grandpa and see if he can rustle up some retirees.

Sue: Interesting. Well, he could use the excitement. I'll call you a cab.

Amber: Shouldn't take too long. Call me when the coast is clear.

SCENE TWO

The Elderly distract themselves with puzzles, bingo, arguments in the background.

Narrator: The View Over The Hill Senior Care Center serves the same rotated meals every week. Paul McCobb can predict which argument between his fellow residents would break out again, just by looking at the day's letter on his pill dispenser. He's just about to quit doing crossword puzzles—the same words appearing every time in a different order—when he notices an unfamiliar clue.

Paul: Grim or ghastly, seven letters.

Amber: Hi Grandpa, how are you?

Paul: Oh, hi, Amber. I've got one foot in the grave and the other on a banana peel, so you can see where that's headed. *To himself:* The fifth letter is a "b."

Amber: I'll take that as a "doing well." I brought you some obituaries.

Paul: Woohoo! Oh, Lenny's gone. Good for him.

Amber: Keeping busy?

Paul: Oh yeah, this place is hopping'.

Maebe, in the background: Stan, could ya bring old Surely her walker?

Paul: Or should I say hobblin'.

Amber: There are still some activities in this pamphlet you haven't tried yet. Might have some fun.

Paul: You call FroYo Socials and book clubs fun? Don't even get me started on Bridge. The only bridge I want anything to do with is the one leading to the afterlife.

Amber: You're that depressed?

Paul: I'm not depressed; I'm ready. Your Grandma's off having a good time, and I can't even take care of myself? Did I ever tell you we used to go dancing every Saturday night?

Amber: No, you didn't.

Paul: I met your Grandma at my uncle Henry's estate sale. She was trying to find his ghost, and I said, "Wow, miss, you're beautiful. Care to help me grieve my uncle with a night out dancing?" We went downtown to this little jazz joint below Delilah's Deli and cut the rug until two in the morning. So forgive me if I pass on acrobatic arthritis night.

Amber: You know what you need?

Paul: Yes—

Amber: You need an adventure. And I've got one for you. Take a look at this new company material.

Paul: I don't understand. The Premium Passage Plan?

Amber: Your daughter is exploiting the dead, extending class divisions to the afterlife, making promises we can't keep.

Paul: Doesn't surprise me. She's always been overambitious.

Amber: She's promising priority access to reincarnation—

Paul: That's interesting.

Amber: —and combined it with an exercise program, so you're guaranteed fast metabolism in the next life.

Paul: Weird.

Amber: All so she could brand it, "Soul ReCycle." She's insane!

Paul: Oh, she's coo-coo bananas, but so are most CEOs.

Amber: Destroying our legacy isn't success.

Paul: Well, what does everybody else think about this?

Amber: They don't think about it.

Paul: That's the cup of not-my-problem you should be drinking. She's going to run her ship the way she likes.

Amber: The way she likes is wrong.

Paul: When Morgan's gone, you and your sister will get your turn. Let things run their course.

Amber: That could be forty years. Grandpa, we're deposing her and I need your support.

Paul: You see this mug? It's up to the brim with not-my problem. *He sips.*

Amber: We could use the experience and wisdom of all the retirees, and most of them were gone by the time Sue and I entered the workforce. You're the one that can bring them together.

Paul: Your grandmother never involved me much. My only connection to the retirees was through her. Even that was only social. They'd come over for drinks, and nobody would want to talk about work. Too morbid. Too mundane. They'd rather ask me about what happened that day on the construction site than tell me how some crazy ghost—I can't even give you an example of what a crazy ghost would do. It was like my life as an electrician was an escapist fantasy to them.

Amber: I'm sorry, Grandpa.

Paul: It doesn't matter. Amber, you're better off just accepting things the way they are. And I'd be better off with a bunch of doctors standing over me, saying, "Sorry, Amber, he's got a DNR."

#8 — Sleep City

PAUL

I wanna go
To that land of promise,
Where they'll stop,

Forwarding my bills.
 I wanna sleep
 With the fishes,
 And I don't mean,
 I'm growing gills.

Amber: Grandpa, shouldn't we confront things that are wrong?

Paul: That's the attitude that got us into 'Nam.

PAUL

I wanna plop
 In a random bone yard,
 And give my spine,
 Some relaxation.
 I wanna move,
 To Sleep City,
 Where the citizens,
 Evade taxation.
 Sleep City,
 Welcome me home!
 The rent on earth,
 Is too damn high.
 Sleep City,
 Approve my visa.
 Here's my passport,
 I'm ready to die.
 I wake every day with a sense of decay,
 Ever since your grandma died.
 With her unavailable, joy's unattainable,
 And honey, believe me I've tried.
 I've played backgammon, Uno and checkers and you know,
 It all turns out the same.
 The most fulfillment an old man can get,
 Is winning a bingo game.
 I wanna stop
 This miserable routine.
 Day after day,
 Spinning my wheels.
 I wanna cash,
 My one way ticket
 And see what's spinning
 6 feet under these heels.
 Sleep City,
 Welcome me home!
 The rent on earth,
 Is too damn high.
 Sleep City,
 Approve my visa.
 Here's my passport,
 I'm ready to die.

Amber: Grandpa, I get that you're over it all, but is there anything I can do to persuade you to help? I could buy you contraband.

Grandpa: What I am going to do with contraband?

Amber: Call me if you change your mind.

Paul: Oh, you could give me a hundred dollars. Grandpa's out of gambling money.

Amber: I've got three twenties and a five.

Paul: I'll see what I can do. Oh, also, could you promise to euthanize me once my services are no longer needed?

Amber: I'm going to take a sip of that "not my problem" now. *She sips.* Bye, Grandpa.

Paul: See ya sweetie. *She leaves.* 42 down: "Wheat chopper." Six letters. Oh, that one's easy.

SCENE THREE

Narrator: Back at the ranch, by which I mean, the office, Sue pauses in the entryway. She looks in the mirror, trying to figure out which facial expression says, "Nothing is wrong. I have no idea who released the ghosts, and if anyone's been looking for me, I have a perfectly understandable explanation for my mid-afternoon absence." Walking onto the main floor, she settled for a look closer to, "I don't have time for your nonsense."

Millicent: Sue!

Sue: I don't have time for your nonsense. Oh, I'm so sorry, Millicent. I didn't mean that, at all. What's up in IT land?

Millicent: Well, Ms. McCobb has become mildly obsessed with the idea of the dark web, but she mostly doesn't know how it works.

Sue: I'm aware.

Millicent: Like she thinks I can set up algorithms that will predict who's about to die, and then subliminally inspire them to trust us more with targeted ads.

Sue: Insurance companies would love that code.

Millicent: Right, but wouldn't putting our name out there lead people to look for us before it's the right time?

Sue: Yeah, don't do that. Can you make it seem like you did?

Millicent: Definitely. But there's a bigger problem. She also wants me to set up a black market for trade secrets. That could hurt a lot of people.

Sue: And she'll want the money from that.

Millicent: Yeah.

Sue: And I'll have a hard time overseeing you in such a way that explains why no money is coming from the trade secrets.

Millicent: Exactly.

Sue: Oh, here she comes. Act natural.

Millicent: Yes, here we are just conversing about, um, internet service protocol—

Morgan: Pierre, they're just golf clubs. You don't have to pretend like they weigh three hundred pounds.

Pierre: Oui, madame.

Millicent: I'll be in my office.

Sue: Okay, put a pin in those thoughts.

Morgan, to the employee: Just leave them by Jan's desk so she can sell them, and make sure our VIP's name isn't on them anywhere—unless you can create a paper trail that explains why we have them. They'd be worth triple.

Pierre: I'll see what I can do.

Exit Employee.

Morgan: Sue, sweetheart, I need you to meet with marketing.

Sue: We don't have a marketing department.

Morgan: We do, and they've invented an ink that only ghosts can see. The color-blind can, as well, but most of them are illiterate. I want Premium Passage Plan ads in every hospital, hospice, and Walmart.

Sue: Walmart?

Morgan: Old people love Walmart. Anyway, I want that figured out by the end of the week, and then I'm going to have you figure out the logistics of monetizing the Séance Center. We're doing remote video sessions between the living and their dearly departed.

Sue: That's wild.

Morgan: I just love it. Now, where did I put my coat?

Sue: Taking off for the day?

Morgan: Visiting our hedge fund manager. I've got some juicy leads that'll make us a fortune.

Sue: Good luck! *Morgan leaves.* Well that was a freebie. *Sue dials on her.* *Amber picks up.* The coast is clear. Start with Millicent.

Amber, muffled: What did she think of the—?

Sue: Oh, I'm not having any of these conversations. I'm just the advance team. You're the one with the vision.

Narrator: Amber comes in the back way, and makes a beeline for Millicent's office. She'd often sneaked around these halls as a kid, pretending to be up to no good, but the adrenaline she now feels doing it authentically is that much sweeter. Before stepping in, she checks in with FuzzBeed.

Amber and Journalist: "Step Five: Undermining. Bring awareness to your opponent's oppression and abuse. If they're already flaunting their authoritarian ways, make sure those around you see this as a bad thing." Asterisk. Where's the asterisk again? *Sees it.* "Mass communication may be more powerful than word of mouth, but it's harder to control and may alert the dictator to your activities." Oh boy. Here we go. Hey, Millicent.

Amber enters Millicent's office.

Millicent: Amber, didn't realize you stuck around.

Amber: Congrats on the promotion.

Millicent: I mean, same job.

Amber: Yeah, but now you have a whole department. Resources.

Millicent: More resources, but not enough for the increased project list.

Amber: I can't say that surprises me. And you're probably having a tough time communicating that to higher channels, right? I think everyone's feeling that, and I think I have a solution.

Millicent: Really.

Amber: Companies have two options. They can deny those feelings, trying to keep everyone happy without addressing their concerns, or they can hold the leadership accountable.

#9 — In Charge

Millicent: You're going to hold her accountable? Gentle, diplomatic Amber, is going up against Morgan McCobb?

Amber: Not just me. You, too. I need you to help me create and send a survey to the employees.

Millicent: Your rebellion starts with a survey?

Amber: A series of pertinent questions designed to bring employee discomfort to the surface.

Millicent: What if they suspect it's from her? They won't answer honestly.

Amber: I don't need the answers. I need the entire staff to ask themselves one ultimate question: Why is she in charge?

AMBER

Does anyone give orders that don't make sense?

Does anyone make jokes at your expense?

Amber: Write this down.

AMBER

Does this individual make everyone tense?

MILLICENT

Why is she in charge?

Millicent: Okay, this is good. But she's not going to concede to oversight.

Amber: Giving us reason to form our own board and fire her.

Millicent: Whereas if she does give us a board—

Amber: —we fire her.

Millicent: Oh, you're playing the politics.

Amber: Yup. Write this down.

AMBER

Are you sleeping well at night?

Are you experiencing fight or flight

Responses when bosses are not polite?

MILLICENT

Why is she in charge?

AMBER

Do you long

For days gone by

When moral qualms
Didn't make you cry?

Are you scared at work that women will
Ask you to become a criminal?
Here's the query, in subliminal:
Why is she in charge?

Enter Office Personnel, with tablets.

Office Personnel 1: Have you seen this survey? It's wild!

Office Personnel 2: But accurate.

AMBER

Do you feel that, while you're working,
While you're busy office clerking,
Part of you wonders where the boss is lurking?

MILLICENT & OFFICE PERSONNEL

Why is she in charge?

AMBER

Do you suffer from low morale, you
See yourself sunk in the canal, you
Wish that someone would see your value?

Enter more employees with tablets.

OFFICE PERSONNEL

Why is she in charge?
Work would be
More easily enjoyed
If any of us felt
Worthy of being employed.

AMBER

So I ask, with humble heart,
Given that leading is an art,
And people here are pretty smart,
Why is she in charge?

Amber: "Step Six"—

Millicent: What's that?

Amber: My to-do list. "Step Six: Monitor the reaction. If possible, spy on your opponent."

Millicent: Should I—uh, should I—

Amber: Out with it.

Millicent: Morgan gave me some software she got from a recently deceased NSA officer.

Amber: Destroy it—as soon as we finish monitoring every email and cell phone conversation that occurs as a result of this survey. If you have any questions, you know how to reach me. I'm going to go do some face-to-face work. Starting with Marketing.

Amber pops into Fran's office.

Amber: Hi Fran, I just wanted to follow up – how’s that research project on grief in adoptive families coming?

Fran: It was canceled because it doesn’t contribute financial value.

Amber: But weren’t you working on that for three years?

Fran: And now I’m in marketing.

Amber: Huh. Kinda makes you wonder.

Fran: Yeah,

FRAN

Why is she in charge?

Fran: I mean, not that I would ever complain. Formally.

Amber: Maybe a safe opportunity will present itself.

Fran’s computer dings.

Fran: I just got an email with a company survey. Huh. Oh, is it snack time already?

Melanie: Tomato popsicle?

Amber: Say, Melanie—

Melanie: If you’re going to say something weird again, just—

Amber: You deserve a break. Why don’t I take that to wherever you were headed next.

Melanie: Accounting. Okay! Here you go!

Foley transition.

Accountant 1: I mean, how am I supposed to hide this from the feds? Purchasing a whole resort?

Accountant 2: I’d take a resort over this lobbyist crap. How am I supposed to disclose campaign contributions from an organization that shouldn’t exist?

Accountant 1: That anonymous survey really hit it home, right?

Amber, to herself: Looks like my work here is done. *To them:* Panini?

Accountant 2: Yes, please!

Amber: Save some for the psych department.

Foley transition.

Amber: Hi Michael, how’s the VIP counseling going?

Michael: It’s like all the rich people who want to be decent humans declined the Premium Passage Plan and I’m stuck with the ones who counsel me instead.

Amber: Did you expect things to get so terrible so quickly?

Michael: With your mother in charge?

Amber: Awful, right?

Michael: Yeah, I mean I’ve been asking since the beginning

MICHAEL

Why is she in charge?

Foley transition.

Amber: How’s it going, Millicent?

Millicent: I just intercepted an email from Sarah to Susanna. She said, “Remember when HR meant filing paperwork and resolving disputes, not reporting disgruntled employees and framing them for infractions?”

Amber: That information needs to become public.

Millicent: I can’t just publish—

Amber: Oh no. They’re going to share it. Look at all the whispered commotion out there.

The main floor buzzes.

AMBER

(whispered)

Do you feel a corrupt politician
Abuses and perverts her sacred position,
Inspiring you with the urge for sedition?

OFFICE PERSONNEL

(whispered)

Why is she in charge?

AMBER

(louder)

Will you take your neighbor’s hand
To form a united, renegade band
And seek together the promised land?

OFFICE PERSONNEL

Why is she in charge?

(louder)

We never thought
That we could deserve
A leader we believe in
And actually want to serve.

AMBER

Do you still think you like your job?
Are you content to plunder and rob
The public on behalf of Morgan McCobb?

AMBER & PERSONNEL

Why is she in charge?

Mild sirens. Boots rush through, with combat commands.

Sue: What’s happening?

Strike Captain: A clump of the escaped ghosts has been sighted. The game is afoot!

We follow the boots outside.

#10 — You Can’t Run 2

Determined Agent: There they go!

Winded Agent: I wish they were subject to the law of friction.

AGENTS

Time’s up!

Say bon voyage!
Cue up
The chase montage!
Come join
The heavenly throng,
'Cause you can't run for long.
Watch out!
We'll soon surround you.
Look out!
We're gaining ground.
You can't fight it!
So just say amen,
'Cause you can't run
Ever again!

Narrator: McCobb Mortality Services will be back with you shortly.

Playoff Music: "You Can't Run."

EPISODE 3: PARTY CRASH



SCENE ONE

Narrator: Welcome back to McCobb Mortality Services. Fresh off her revolutionary interdepartmental tour, Amber is eager to convert the momentum of office-wide dissatisfaction into a unified force, ready to correct her mothers' wrongs with fresh leadership. To keep her own momentum up, Amber is sitting in an empty casket at her new revolution's headquarters—Dunn Funeral Home—typing furiously and bingeing on Chinese takeout, energy drinks, and tootsie rolls.

Crunching sounds, typing, and little noises from Sue's phone game.

Amber: Top three priorities of the new McCobb Mortality Services. What do you think?
I've got One: Restore—

Sue: *Slurps her soda.* Aha! Gotcha!

Amber: Sue, is this really the time to play Bonbon Bonanza? I'm trying to finish this.

Sue: You're trying to get diabetes and surrender your hair to an invasive soy sauce forest.

Amber: I could use your help.

Sue: You could use a break.

Amber: I'm on a roll.

Sue: Yeah, a tootsie roll. The sugar is getting to you.

Amber: This needs to be ready for tomorrow.

Sue: You need sleep, a clear mind, and a thorough shower.

Amber: I'd have time to shower if I weren't writing this alone.

Sue: Fine. *Unenthused:* What's FuzzBeed making you write?

Amber & Journalist: Here's the prompt—"Step Seven: Message. Now that you've have a variety of perspectives, write out the promises your revolution offers. This is the second to last step before engaging in open war with the usurper, so be thorough."

Sue: Wow.

Amber: I want a three-pronged mission. So far I have One: Restore traditional policies, Two: Restore traditional services. I feel like the third should be about our employees. Empowering them, inspiring them, I don't know, it all sounds cliché.

Sue: What's wrong with a two-pronged mission?

Amber: One feels like you're just having a personal reaction to authority. Two feels like you ran out of ideas. Three says, "Bam. These ladies thought this through."

Sue: Your soy sauce hair says otherwise.

Amber: Would you stop wasting your verbal skills on my appearance and start applying them to the task at hand?

Sue: Amber, I don't know what your mission—

Amber: Our mission—

Sue: How about you make it a financial goal. Find sustainability.

Amber: The financial element isn't part of the mission statement. We have to base financial decisions on our core values, not the other way around.

Sue: Okay, so then here's your three-pronged mission. One: See a dead person. Two: Tell 'em it's okay. Three: Escort 'em to a door.

Amber: Bingo. You encapsulated the apathy (*callousness?) I want to replace with Mission Part Three: Cultivate an environment of compassion and care.

Sue: Congratulations. You've found the magic words.

Amber: Okay, enough. Just say it.

Sue: Say what.

Amber: Say what's on your mind. It's like you're trying to avoid saying something hurtful, so it's escaping out in little pin pricks instead.

Sue: I don't know what you're—

Amber: When you say "magic words," I hear "wishful thinking," like you don't think our staff will be inspired by the word compassion.

Sue: I'm tired.

Amber: Because you're not engaged. Is it me? Do you think I'm just getting carried away, or that I'm naïve.

Sue: Amber, let's talk about this later.

Amber: Is it fear? Like, what are the odds we take her down, and if we do, what if we suck at leading? Well, what do you think this mission statement is about? I don't want this to be about me. I want it to be us, and the people we're about to involve. You want to be the Head Honcho? Great. Act like it. You want Millicent to take over? That's fine.

Sue: Millicent needs her to stay in I.T. She's the only one—

Amber: Bad example. What I mean is that—I don't know what I mean, because I don't know where you're at and if you don't tell me, I can't do this. I can't do this without you.

Sue: You had no trouble opening the vault without me, or missing your flight home even though I told you not to. Abandoning your post certainly wasn't my idea.

Amber: You're still back there?

Sue: Six hours ago?

Amber: Before we saw a light emerge in our coworkers'—our friends' eyes. Back there, before we realized there was a completely viable way out of misery. Blame me if you want for finding it, but if that's it, get over it. We have work to do. We have a world to build.

The door swings open.

Benjamin: Uh—

Amber: We have an amazing, spectacular party ahead of us!

Sue: Benjamin! Welcome back.

Benjamin: *Senses tension.* Uh, I'll leave you the room.

Sue: No, we're done.

Benjamin: Okay, great. Just a few questions, then. First, why are there corn chips in the \$8,000 cedar box?

Amber: I'm sorry. I'll clean it up.

Benjamin: Second, is this a tasting for the party, because I know a few caterers who serve real food.

Sue: This is just stress Amber. You've only seen out-on-the-town Amber, the one who breathes and smiles occasionally.

Amber laughs sarcastically.

Benjamin: And that's my third question. What in Sam Clemens' name is going on here?

Sue: We're struggling with the decor.

Benjamin: You're florists.

Sue: And we have very different approaches.

Benjamin: It's one night. Pick someone. No, don't pick someone. I know there's something else going on. Amber?

Amber: Leave me out of this. I'm already stressed, remember? I just gonna pick up these takeout containers, and the, uh, candy, and the energy drinks, and the, uh, canned beets. Don't judge me, I can't be held accountable when I'm losing it.

Benjamin: Fine. Sue. We've known each other what, 5 years? You come here, talking to the walls, and when I hear you, you explain, "Sorry, I'm preparing for my audition with the police department. They're looking for a paranormal expert, and I figure anyone can fake it, right?" And to me, this makes sense.

Sue: It makes sense.

Benjamin: But every time I see you, I'm always left with more questions than answers. Consciously, you register as an average—above-average, but not out of the range of possible variations on sanity—an average—above-average woman.

Sue: Thank you?

Benjamin: But then, the second you're out of sight, something in my subconscious becomes unsettled.

#11 — You're Not Telling Me

BENJAMIN

I know your favorite restaurants,
Your every guilty pleasure.
I know your deepest needs and wants
And where you bury treasure.
With everything I learn, I feel
"I've finally reached the bottom!"
Yet with all these secrets you reveal,
I realize, "You've still got 'em!"

Benjamin: Tell me,

BENJAMIN

Do you owe the mafia a hundred grand?
Are you obsessed with Dave Matthews Band
Is your wardrobe a gate to a fantasy land?
What are you concealing?
Are you down with RZA and the Wu Tang Clan?
Can you hold your own against Jackie Chan?
Does your family own half of Uzbekistan?

For once, be revealing.
 Did Bow Wow make you sign an NDA?
 Did Samuel Beckett write your favorite play?
 Are you a major Sacha Baron Cohen fan?
 Are you the one who knows the muffin man?
 I'll bet you the odds are 9 to 3,
 There's a story you're not telling me.

Sue: You're imagining things, Benjamin.

Benjamin: What choice do I have, if I'm not getting any answers!

BENJAMIN

Did you steal Da Vinci's Mona Lisa?
 Are you planning to topple the tower of Pisa?
 Are you the hush hush daughter of Mother Teresa?
 I'm barely getting started.
 Is your attic full of illicit hydroponics?
 Are you freakishly fluent in both Yiddish and Ebonics?
 Does your aura wreak havoc on most electronics?
 I won't be outsmarted.
 Do you know where Jimmy Hoffa is buried?
 Can you prove that Jesus was married?
 What would you do for a Klondike bar?
 Did you take cookie from the cookie jar?
 I'm gonna bark up every single tree—

AMBER

I'm sorry, Sue, but I have to agree,
 There's a story you're not telling me.

Benjamin: You, too?

Amber: Yeah, and whatever it is, it's affecting her party planning.

Benjamin: Okay, you're both lying.

BENJAMIN

I'm sorry for interrogating,
 But make no mistake.
 I'm going to find out,
 If you like ketchup on your steak!
 Would you have one brow if you didn't tweeze?
 Do you know a way around Ticketmaster fees?
 Are you famous at the club for the way you tease?
 Don't think that I'm naive.
 Do you insist on your linens being satin or silk?
 Was your face ever featured on a carton of milk?
 Did you date Pitbull, or someone of his ilk?
 At this point, I'd believe.
 Do you see more in the sky than the northern lights?
 When you drive in traffic, do you leave on your brights?
 Do you run a cartel, moving drugs on the gulf?
 Are you afraid of the big bad wolf?
 I swear by the zig-zags on my family tree,
 By the all times I cheated in a Spelling Bee,

and by Kanye's honorary PhD,
There's a story you're not telling me!

Amber's phone rings. She answers.

Amber: Hi, Grandpa, what you do have for me? Yes, of course. We'll be right there. *Hangs up.* He says it's urgent.

Benjamin: Urgent. Is he dying?

Sue: We'll answer all your questions later.

Benjamin: You mean you'll conspire to give me yet another convincing cover-up? Tell you what. I'll let it go, as long as you give your Grandpa my card. Just in case.

SCENE TWO

Narrator: The Senior Care Center is normally locked after visiting hours, but the sisters find it unlocked, and eerily dark. On their way to Grandpa Paul's room, the sisters pass through the common room.

Paul: Hi, girls.

Amber: Oh, you startled me, grandpa. Why are you sitting out here?

Sue: Isn't it past your bedtime?

Paul: Wasn't my idea to call you here.

Meredith: It was mine.

Amber: Holy—

Sue: What in the luminescent-figure-in-a-hooded-black-cloak-wielding-a-scythe is happening?

Amber: No way.

Sue: Uh, Grandpa, I'm supposed to give you this business card for a funeral home before you die, and since it seems that's imminent—

Meredith: Don't encourage him.

Amber: Wait, I know your voice.

Sue: Grandma Meredith?

Meredith: Hi, Sue. Hi, Amber.

Amber: You don't look like a ghost.

Meredith: I'm not.

Sue: But your urn—

Meredith: Pixie sticks.

Sue: Pixie sticks.

Meredith: Because I'm so sweet.

Sue: I knew we should have tested those ashes.

Amber: You don't look alive, either.

Meredith: I'm in a temporary best-of-both-worlds situation.

Sue: That thing looks real.

Meredith: Oh, the scythe? Real deal. The ultimate swipe left.

Amber: And the robe—

Meredith: Oh, this old thing?

Sue: You're Death. With a Capital D.

Amber: You lied to me, Paul McCobb.

Paul: I said she was off having a good time without me, which is very true.

Sue: A good time, killing people. As The Destroying Angel. La Santa Muerte. Thanatos, Osiris—

Amber, to Meredith: Grandma, you've been visiting him this whole time?

Meredith: This place is on my regular route. It's no hospice, but—

Sue: Azrael, the Dullahan, Mictecacihuatl, Mot, Meager Hein—

Amber: Yes, Sue, we get it, she's the Grim Reaper.

Sue: I thought Benjamin had a lot of questions, but this is next level.

Amber: How did this happen?

Meredith: Like my progenitors before me, I inherited this job sometime after becoming Head of the Agency.

Amber: Like your progenitors before you? Why—why is this a secret?

Meredith: Imagine what a headache your life would be if people knew you were a cosmic, omnipotent force.

Amber: Omnipotent?

Meredith: Well, in that I wield this thing.

Sue: But, you're like, not a cosmic force, are you?

Meredith: I'm very impartial.

Amber: Wait, this means that Morgan is going to be Death? That cannot happen.

Meredith: Amber, your grandfather tells me you've been stirring up trouble.

Amber: Grandpa—

Paul: I only said it in passing.

Meredith: That's actually why I called you here. Amber, It sounds like your mother is making adjustments for the financial well-being of—

Amber: She's a maniacal, cash-grabbing—

Meredith: Amber, what's gotten into you? You may disagree with her approach, but—

Amber: Her policies are destroying the Agency. They are harming clients, demoralizing employees—we're talking about serious injustice, not minor—

Meredith: You can't magically solve injustice by enacting policies that try to—

Amber: No, it's the policies themselves! And if you don't choose another successor for that weapon, I—I mean, say goodbye to order.

#12 — Nice People

Meredith: Amber, our job is not to create order. Death is the most chaotic element in nature, and our blood, our instincts, our purpose honors that chaos.

MEREDITH

If you ate some cake and saw your stomach swell,

If you killed a man, then died as well,
 If the minute you sinned, you went to hell,
 Life would be an answer,
 Instead of a clue,
 So, nice people have to die too.

Amber: Okay, that's not what I'm talking about. When you said impartial—

Meredith: You think I don't know how the world works?

Sue: Oh my God, Grandma, where did you get this dancing ensemble of ghosts?

Meredith: Ugh, groupies.

MEREDITH

If karma were instant, like a burn,
 If the golden rule were easy to learn,
 If everyone paid the price in their turn,
 There'd be no discussion,
 'Bout what's morally true,
 So nice people have to die too.
 Yes, I make the decision.
 I'm the one to blame,
 If the only thing left of you,
 On earth is your name.
 But cut me some slack,
 I do more good than harm.
 If I weren't around,
 You'd never buy the farm!
 If the standard of living weren't so tall,
 If the world were kinder to us all,
 If we weren't surrounded by a melee brawl,
 We might all reach the,
 Ripe old age of ninety-two.
 But with things as they are,
 There's not much I can do.
 Don't look for rhyme or reason,
 It's all out of the blue.
 Nice people have to die.
 Nice people have to die.
 Nice people have to die too.

Paul: You know, I'm a nice person.

Meredith: You would be if you quit moping.

Amber: Here. Read Morgan's marketing materials. And then read our proposed mission statement. Come to your own conclusion. *Meredith reads.* We could use your support.

Meredith: This is indeed alarming.

Amber: This is what I'm talking about.

Meredith: I'm so glad this came to my attention before you got any further. Though her trajectory is clearly misguided, we cannot set the precedent of mutiny in our organization. The tradition of succession is important to its structural integrity.

Amber: You just advocated for chaos.

Meredith: Chaos in death. Not chaos in hierarchy. If we all did whatever we want, it would be pandemonium. But if the people in charge have the freedom to follow the whims of nature, everybody comes out on top.

Amber: What.

Meredith: I was negligent in training Morgan for this role. I will attempt to instill some dignity in her. She may never subscribe to your mission statement, particularly the part about compassion, but Sue will have an opportunity to adopt it soon enough.

Amber: And if Morgan refuses your mentorship?

Meredith: Let's make a deal. If this pattern continues, we will find a political way to remove her and give the reins to her successor, your sister. If Morgan tones it down, I will continue to keep an eye on her. In either scenario, you will work to restore peace and respect, in a support role.

Sue: *Beat.* Amber?

Amber: The staff is ready to see her removed.

Meredith: I am handling this. And if you interfere, in any way—it's best not to upset a cosmic force.

Amber: Then, please, remember—

Meredith: You've said your peace. Goodnight, girls. I'll let you know how it goes. Oh, and now that the cat's out of the bag, we should get together sometime next week. Nina Compton just opened a new bistro, and I would kill for some of her cow heel soup with smoked Bone marrow.

Exit Meredith. Amber follows.

Amber: Wait, Grandma! Wait! This conversation is not over!

Paul: And she's gone again.

Sue: How does Grandma get around? Teleportation? A vintage Bentley with flames pouring out the exhaust?

Paul: You know, I don't know. But I do know it's time I get to bed. Pray for me, that I don't wake up.

Sue: If she's Death, and you're not dead, don't you think she wants you to do something with the rest of your life?

Paul: If she did, she'd sign me out of here and give me a soldering iron to play with. But, no, I'm not "allowed to use dangerous things." I'm a "hazard to myself."

Sue: That part is true. Goodnight, Grandpa. I love you.

Paul: Oh, Sue, could I have a hundred bucks for gambling?

Sue: No.

Exit Sue.

Paul: I wonder if Oprah's on.

Narrator: Oprah is a daytime television show.

SCENE THREE

A quiet street, with some traffic.

Sue: Get out of the road. You're gonna get hit by a car.

Amber: She's gone—probably halfway to mom.

Sue: Or closer, if she can teleport.

Amber: If she can teleport, why would she walk out of the room?

Sue: The drama.

Amber: Ugh—what do we do?

Sue: Here's what's going to happen. Mom will refuse to change. Grandma will see the truth and give the reins to me. I will abdicate and hand them to you, and there's nothing Grandma can do about it, because it will be procedurally correct. The revolution is complete in the next hour.

Sue: Here's what's going to happen. Mom will refuse to change. Grandma will see the truth and give the reins to me. I will abdicate and hand them to you, and there's nothing Grandma can do about it, because it will be procedurally correct. The revolution is complete in the next hour.

Amber: Or we're both in exile.

Sue: Probably just you.

Amber: Sue, you should be in charge. People will listen to you.

Sue: Amber, I'm leaving.

Amber: What?

Sue: As soon as this whole situation is resolved, I'm out.

Amber: Out of—

Sue: I'm going to work for Benjamin.

Amber: Benjamin?

Sue: You asked why I'm not fully engaged? That's it. I don't want to do what we do.

Amber: We're not doing what we should be doing. Once it gets back to normal—

Sue: I was never happy. All the dead people—

Amber: Benjamin's a mortician.

Sue: The hysterical clients that never shut up, all the people who never left their unhappy circumstances before it was too late—most days, by the time I get home from work, I have nothing left to give myself.

#13 — Quit

SUE

I'm filled with anxiety,
 Never knowing what to expect in this place,
 Instead of variety
 I need time to self-reflect and some space.
 By the time I get home
 At the end of business day,
 I don't want to see another human being,
 So hidden in my room I stay.
 I don't go out.
 I don't socialize.

I lie on my bed and close my eyes.
 I don't make friends.
 I don't meet guys.
 I lie on my bed and fantasize
 Of a world this life will never permit.
 If I want that life, I have to quit.

Amber: What if you took a smaller role and all the vacation you want?

SUE

I'll just get stuck, in the same old rut,
 if I move down the hall, with a new view, but
 I don't take the leap, don't trust my gut.
 I don't know much but I do know what
 I'd think of myself, if I admit
 what I'd think of myself, if I don't quit:
 a woman who follows the family mold,
 only because she does what she's told.
 A woman too attached to apron strings,
 a woman too scared to spread her wings.
 I must go out; my choice is clear.
 I've got to try out a new career,
 away from the family atmosphere.
 I've dreamed of this year after year,
 but I never could go through with it.
 Now I've found the place where my talents fit.
 So though I wish I could somehow commit
 to this life, I can't,
 and I'm choosing to quit.

Amber: Sue, I know it's hard right now, but we're clairvoyant for a reason—we're supposed to help people who are having an even harder time.

Sue: I'm not spending the rest of my life miserable just to make a few people a little happier.

Amber: Sue, the Agency could make you happy, too. We just need to fix it—

Sue: —All of this reexamination of our loyalties has helped me see I'm not being true to my own desires. If choosing something else makes me selfish or a deserter in your eyes, I get it, but I'm not here to make you happy, either.

Amber: Again, this isn't about me.

Sue: But it's about your vision. The way you think I should be happy. If you're angry at mom for not listening to anyone, do a little introspection on the subject yourself.

Amber: I want your vision, too.

Sue: Fine, you want my mission statement for the agency? Burn it down. We act like we have some advantage over the rest of mortals, being able to see with a greater perspective, but what do we know? What value do we offer? Guidance to a Portal? A road map could do that. Wisdom? Look at us. We built this constrictive apparatus around a natural process, use tradition as the only reason for its continuation, and pretend like we're helping, when that's clearly not the case. The only thing about this whole operation that makes sense to me is the scythe.

Amber: So what, we just throw the whole thing out, when it could be something good?
That's stupid.

Sue: See, your vision. I don't need my work to change the world. I just want a peaceful environment, personal autonomy, and decent healthcare. That's what Benjamin's offering, and I don't trust our world to ever come close to matching it.

Amber: It's funny. I thought dad leaving would be my biggest disappointment.

Sue: Alright, I'm going home. Congrats on your impending promotion.

Amber: At least he had the decency to move to Nova Scotia and change his phone number.

Sue: I don't know who this Amber is, but she's not the one I know, and definitely not the one a revolution requires. *Her phone rings. She answers.* Mom? What's going on? I—At this hour?—Sure, I'll let everyone know. *Hangs up.* Mysterious mandatory staff meeting. Right now. I need to go home and change. Go to Benjamin's and wait. Do not come. *Hailing offstage:* Taxi! *To Amber:* I am going to keep everything from exploding. Do not come.

Sue gets into the taxi, and departs.

Amber: What am I gonna do? What am I gonna do?

#14 — An Early Grave

AMBER

What am I gonna do?
We had it under control;
the whole procedure was slick.
But all it took was one minor glitch,
and the tables turned,
at the flick of a switch.
I shouldn't have trusted anyone but myself.
I shouldn't have rushed it so quick.
It might have gone off without a hitch;
instead I'm all suddenly here,
at the flick of a switch.
I torched the patch to success;
it's too far gone to save.
I showed the world my heart and mind,
but the world didn't want what I gave.
I'm too mad to cry, my hopes were too high;
nothing left to do but wave
at my hopes passing by, on their way to where I
just sent them—an early grave.
There goes the groundwork I laid.
There goes the element of surprise.
There goes the wind from my sails.
There goes the hope in my eyes.
What chance do I have against Death,
When she's told me to stay away?
There go my demands; they're out of my hands.
What else is there to say?
The Reaper or my conscience?

Who should I obey?
 Nothing else has changed.
 My mother is still deranged.
 I won't find peace until she's deposed;
 maybe that door's not closed.
 If there's a path to success,
 it's a road only I can pave.
 I've still got a heart and mind to give;
 I can't just cower and cave.
 They can tell me to drop it,
 to shut up and stop it,
 to sit down and behave,
 but I'm not following orders,
 Nor will my supporters—
 it's my vision they crave.
 Mother Death, I defy you,
 so go ahead, try to
 stun me, shun me
 outrun and outgun me,
 but I'm not done until you
 Put me in an early grave

Amber: Sorry, Sue. I'm not missing this meeting. Taxi! *A taxi swerves in. Door opens and closes.* Corner of Arsenic and Old Lace Boulevard. Step on it.

SCENE FOUR

Pacing footsteps.

Narrator: Ordinarily, I'd take a break now and leave you in suspense, but I can't bring myself to put you through that. So onward we go, into Morgan's office. Morgan is pacing, waiting for Sue to arrive and confirm that the employees are assembled in Conference Room M. Morgan doesn't want their eyes on her, trying to gain a hint of the purpose of this surprise meeting before she's ready to lay down the hammer. Her door swings open—and Morgan is faced with her own surprise meeting.

Morgan: *Beat.* Hello, Meredith.

Meredith: Morgan.

Morgan: I wondered when you'd show up. Those ashes—you just emptied a dustbuster, right?

Meredith: I thought that if I left basic instructions and disappeared, things would be simpler.

Morgan: They have been.

Meredith: I didn't anticipate that you'd be so creative with the instructions. If I had known you wanted to experiment with the business model, I would have stayed on as an advisor and helped you work through it.

Morgan: If I had known you wanted control over the process, I would have suggested you stay alive.

Meredith: I've had other work to do.

Morgan: I see that. Your mother was Death before you?

Meredith: Yes.

Morgan: And I will succeed you.

Meredith: That depends.

Morgan: Go on.

Meredith: I may have neglected some of your training. We can sit down and, for now, make decisions together.

Morgan: You surrendered your responsibilities to me.

Meredith: Your priorities here are off-course. If exaggerated financial reward was a byproduct of your efforts, I wouldn't step in, but your main concern is not focused on the—

Morgan: I'll take that!

#15 — Sweet Mercy

Meredith: Morgan! Give that back!

Morgan: Wealth is never the ultimate goal.

Meredith: How did you—no one else can—

Morgan: This scythe is my inheritance and I'm claiming it now.

Meredith: Morgan, there is a proper order—

Morgan: I am no longer bound by order. I am no longer limited by legalities, constricted by calls for consensus.

Meredith: Please—

Morgan: And since we already grieved you, it's time you fulfill our hopes for your peaceful eternal rest.

Meredith: Mercy! Matricide!

Meredith screams, and falls to the floor.

Morgan: I am become Death!

MORGAN

Is this a dream or fulfillment of prophecy?
 Is this a scheme or a morbid prank?
 Just when I'm afflicted by all things office-y
 This gift appears, like a check that's blank.
 Is this real? Is this fate?
 And I don't have to wait?
 The future's here, there's no delay.
 Sweet mercy, I'm on my way!
 I could just scream, I'm so thrilled by this revelation.
 I could dance on every grave!
 Just at my moment of greatest frustration,
 The menu of life offers what I crave.
 The control in my hand,
 The whole world to command
 And no one dares to disobey.
 Sweet Mercy I'm on my way!

Narrator: Meredith's ghost slowly disentangles itself from her lifeless form. She's had one foot on the spiritual plane already, so her power of speech returns quickly.

Meredith: You hellion! You demon child!

Morgan: Welcome to the Afterlife, mother.

Meredith: You let go of me, you—

Morgan: What happens if I touch you with this thing now?

Electricity zaps.

Morgan: Shock therapy. Interesting. Maybe I don't want to send you through the Portal yet.

She opens her door.

Narrator: A few employees, having unfortunately arrived later than others, are still on their way to the conference room.

Morgan: Pierre, take this insane woman to the Vault.

Pierre: The vault?

Meredith: The vault?

Morgan: The waiting room, you imbecile.

Narrator: Pierre, terrified at the sight of an increasingly luminescent Morgan with a frightening weapon, can only eke:

Pierre: Oui, madame.

Meredith: When your father hears about this—

Morgan: He'll be dead, too—and more grateful than you. Pierre, tell the rest of your Strike Team buddies that I'm about to have a lot more work for them.

MORGAN

I can chalk my failures up to growing pains.
 I can free myself from bureaucracy's chains.
 My days of incubation are winding down.
 I'm hitting the big time, getting out of town!
 I'm tantalized; I've fantasized delusions of this grandeur.
 I'm infantilized, reduced to size, I can barely stand, you're
 an odd one, Fate, but I'm glad you've dropped by.
 I was born, yes, but I'm reborn knowing why.

Narrator: Millicent passes by, on the phone.

Millicent: I don't know, Amber.

Morgan: Millicent!

Millicent: Oh no. We have a major problem.

Morgan: I was recently made aware of a digital survey sent around the office. It seems to have caused quite a stir. You wouldn't know who was responsible, would you?

Millicent: I'm not sure what survey you're—

Morgan: Oh, talking to Amber? You've got to be more careful of the company you keep.

Millicent: Yes, Ms. McCobb, I just received the call—

Morgan: Shall we go investigate the source of the survey, or should I just save the trouble and immediately narrow it down to you.

Millicent: Ms. McCobb, I—

MORGAN

Everybody has to go sooner or later.
I'll make sure the going's quick.
Life's supposed to be short,
And it'll hit you like a brick.

Scythe slice.

Morgan: And even if it wasn't you, your example provides a valuable service to our community. The next I.T. director will catch insurrection before it spreads. Jean Claude! Millicent needs an escort to the vault.

MORGAN

This is just the beginning of a new world order
where I've become the Queen.
My will will soon transcend every border
with my cutting-edge guillotine.
Step aside, Illuminati
for this Head Honcho hottie.
The greatest Morgan since Madame le Fay!
Sweet Mercy is on its way.

Morgan: Jim, have you hooked up my printer to the network yet?

Jim: No, Ms. McCobb, it's too old for wifi. If we got you a new printer—

MORGAN

Everybody has to go one of these days,
And your ledger's heading red.
No streak can last forever;
Why not quit while you're ahead?

Scythe slice.

Morgan: Next time just get the new printer.

Narrator: A crowd of employees begin to gather, rubbernecking instead of burning rubber.

EMPLOYEES

Oh no. Hell no!

Morgan: Good news, everyone. Business is about to boom!

EMPLOYEES

Sweet mercy,
Shield us from her wrath!
Send refuge,
From destruction's path!
Sanctuary,
We plead to you:
Stop her doing any hewing,
Of our souls, too.

Morgan: Ernest, how about taking that retirement now?

Ernest: I still have work to do.

Morgan: Your exit means someone else gets a promotion. It's trickle-down necronomics.

Scythe slice.

ENSEMBLE

Sweet mercy,
Calm this mortal fear!
Sweet mercy,
Get us out of here!
God in heaven,
Hear us pray.
We're not staying if she's slaying,
Any more today!

MORGAN

You don't gotta be an intellectual brainiac,
To see I show the symptoms of a megalomaniac,
But please, believe me, it's more than vanity:
I truly know what's best for humanity.
Maybe the mindset to my message might be mixed;
Few people want their life subscription nixed.
But ponder on the problems that could be fixed,
If the parties at fault were eighty-sixed.
The only way the human race can be cured
Is starving the cancer and culling the herd
I won't just cast the souls of men aside—
It's not like I'm interested in genocide —
But watch out old folks, this scythe will raze ya
I'm absolutely bringing back euthanasia
Get ready to surrender your teeth and toupee
Let yourself go, Sweet mercy's on its way!

ENSEMBLE

Who knew the lady could be so villainous?
Who knew the lady would be killin' us?
She's winning worst boss of the century
Get this terror to a mental penitentiary!

MORGAN

Society's sobriety is dead, face the facts,
With armies growing, prisons overflowing their max.
The world is reeling, aren't you feeling the pollution?
It's time to prime crime for public execution.
I intend to rend souls to their end divine;
To I, alone, the way was shown, the throne is mine.
I'll chop though crowds to stop overpopulation,
The urns will burn as the wicked learn cremation!
No more will this world be led astray!

ENSEMBLE

Help!

MORGAN

Come and join this cabaret!

ENSEMBLE

No!

MORGAN

Can you feel this brand new day?

ENSEMBLE

No!

MORGAN

There's nothing left to say, so come out to play!

ENSEMBLE

Why?

MORGAN

Buckle up, Sweet Mercy's on its way!

ENSEMBLE

Sweet mercy, get on your way!

Amber: Oh my gahhhh—

Jan: Run while you can, Amber!

Morgan: Amber, you're still here. The rumors are true. Insubordination, sabotage. What happened to "Honor thy mother—"

Amber: Mom, please. Set aside your authority persona for just—

Morgan: You mean set my scythe aside? Not gonna happen.

Amber: No, well yes, that would—I mean, talk to me as your daughter. If you care about me—

Morgan: My daughter? Would a daughter betray her mother, go behind her back—

Amber: Somewhere inside of you, there has to be a voice of reason—

Morgan: Oh my God, I didn't raise to you be such a killjoy—

Amber: —something that connects you to the humanity of these people, of our employees, to our ancestors—

Morgan: Humanity is as much death as it is life, and no death is in itself good or bad.

Amber: Can you just put the twenty inch blade down for a moment?

Morgan: Your grandmother was not good or bad in serving her role.

Amber: Did she kill employees in a power grab? I'm sorry—I—can we —wait, where is Grandma?

Morgan: She's fine. We had a nice chat, and she loved my new approach, so she decided she'd take off through the Portal.

Amber: Really.

Morgan: Here. *She opens the portal.* You're welcome to check for yourself.

Amber: Oh, so now we're opening the Portal for dramatic effect?

Amber: How long have you known about Grandma being Death?

Morgan: I had my suspicions.

Amber: Just suspicions? So no preparation, no training—you're just jumping into this?

Morgan: *Beat.* I'm going to give you two options. The first is simple. You walk through that Portal, right now. As your mother, I don't want this for you, but I also know that your continuing interference with the evolution of our field will only lead you and I both to misery. I hear the other side is peaceful, and you can continue your existence there. Seeing as it's a permanent move, I will offer you a second, safer alternative. I will pay for a flight and a residence in any quiet location on the globe. Beaches, mountains, deserts, you pick. You won't talk to employees, you won't communicate with ghosts, and you won't share information with the public. Your rebellion is done.

Amber: *A long beat.* How could I find peace in either option, while I know you're endangering the innocent?

Morgan: I can choose for you.

Amber: If you continue down this path, you will someday be held responsible for every pain, loss, tragedy—every ripple left in your wake.

Morgan: Look at me. I'm not subject to karma. I am karma. I am the law.

Sue: What the—

Morgan: Sue, meet the new me!

Sue: No, no, no, no, no—Amber!

Amber runs at Morgan. Struggling sounds, shoe squeaks from Amber, heels from Morgan.

Amber: *(struggling)* This thing does not belong in your hands.

Morgan: Let go! Amber!

Sue: Okay, okay, what do we got, what we got? Scissors? Oh, golf clubs. Hang on, Amber!

Morgan: Hands off!

Amber: No!

Morgan: Accept

Amber: No!

Morgan: Your fate

Amber: No!

Morgan: Too late!

Amber screams, fading out of earshot.

Sue: No!

MORGAN

Sweet mercy, where did she go?

The sound of a golf club. Morgan reacts in pain. Button. Beat. Sue breathes, in shock.

Narrator: There will now be an intermission, the length of your choosing.

Playoff Music: "Sweet Mercy"

INTERMISSION MEDITATION



Narrator: Welcome to the Intermissional Meditation of McCobb Mortality Services, for those interested in a transcendental Broadway experience. If you came prepared with a yoga mat, please, put it away. Find the least comfortable chair near you. It should have arms, and a stranger on at least one side who is all over that arm. Place a water bottle in the place you are most likely to knock it over. For the most authentic experience available, I recommend a half-full metallic edition, sure to slosh and clang as it rolls.

A water bottle sloshes and clangs.

Narrator: Now take a deep breath, and prepare to apologize to the next six people you have to annoy in retrieving the water. Good, exhale. Apology one. Inhale, exhale. Apology two. Inhale, exhale. Oh, look they're passing it your way. Thank them. Inhale, exhale.

A meditation bell.

Narrator: Part two. Return to a sitting pose, where you may now use both arms as your neighbor is now blocking the aisle elsewhere, critiquing the show. You gather that he is a multi-hyphenate actor-singer-dancer-choreographer-director-dramaturg-music director-scenic designer-*graphic designer?* from the detailed Act 1 critique he's offering to an acquaintance at full Ethel Merman volume. He must be important, too important for the three-block-rule to apply, and—okay now his commentary is beginning to shift your perception of the show. He's right—there was a plot hole about halfway through the Act. Well, that's going to make enjoying the whimsical romp of Act II more difficult. You realize that you've become sidetracked, and that you sat wrong, so your leg is asleep. We'd better skip to part three, because we're on a time crunch and because, frankly, you need a drink.

A meditation bell.

Narrator: Part three: Imbibing. For this exercise, you'll need to retrieve out a bottle of wine, its purchase receipt, and your purse or wallet. Pour out 5 ounces of wine. Now, calculate the price of the wine, per-ounce. Multiply that by 5. Breathe in through the difficulty of carrying integers in your head, or modify to using a calculator. You now know exactly how much you paid for that glass.

Cash register sound.

Narrator: Multiply that number by 5 to arrive at the amount you would have paid for that glass, if you'd bought it at a Broadway theatre. Subtract the first total, so you know the markup value.

Cash register sound.

Narrator: Pull out cash equivalent to the markup value, and add your usual bar tip. If you don't have enough small bills, round up. You are now ready to complete the exercise. Oh, I'm sorry, I did forget one thing. A match.

Match light sound.

Narrator: Breathe in to prep, and as you exhale, burn the money. As the money ascends to the heavens, meditate on the fleeting nature of live theatre and the joy you receive further subsidizing the arts through social drinking. Now you are prepared to drink the wine, having paid the Broadway amount for it, while also engaging in mild pyromania that transcends Times Square's fire code. And exhale one more time, to make sure none of those ashy fibers makes it into your lungs. *Coughs.* I just need to get a drink of water.

A meditation bell.

Narrator: If you kept the money, instead of burning it, we really must insist that you part with it. Donate it to the creators of this production if you must—the link to do so isn't far away.

Cash register ka-ching.

Narrator: As a final exercise, let your consciousness reach down into your sacrum. Monitor the comfort of your bladder. If you feel at peace, you are ready to advance to Episode 4. If you experience discomfort—I'm sorry, you're going to wish I started with this exercise because the lines are going to be long now. Stand and walk to the nearest stairwell.

Cling to the guardrail, compacting your body into the smallest possible space. Breathe in, breathe out. Take a step in the direction of the nearest bathroom. Breathe in, breathe out. Take two steps back, representing the uncontrollable injustices of this world, like the person in front of you inviting two acquaintances to join them. Accept this, for you are unprepared with a snappy remark, and even if you were, these tourists have already learned to tune out the voices of common decency. Breathe in, breathe out. The crowded banter leaves all involved unable to hear their conversation partners, leading them to raise their voices together, and hear even less. *Crowd chaos.* Breathe in, breathe out. Repeat this pattern, one step, two steps back, until you hear the chimes announcing the intermission's impending close. Continue taking one step forward, breathe in, breathe out. Two steps back, breathe in, breathe out.

House chimes. The crowd slowly dissipates.

Narrator: Breathe into the discomfort you feel, understanding you will not experience true relief in the next hour. Let that discomfort sink deep into your heart, informing your future actions. Repeat the mantra, "I arrive half an hour early to performances and prepare my body for comfort." If you have a medical condition that requires more frequent bladder comfort regulation, modify to breathing in forgiveness toward the *(bleep)* imbeciles who haven't assimilated the first mantra into their lives," and then continue into a pose of gratitude towards those who bring you the aural experience of musical theatre, right to wherever you are, with an abundance of elbow room, privacy, inexpensive snacks, and restrooms.

A meditation bell.

Narrator: Namaste.

EPISODE 4: CRASH COURSE



SCENE ONE

Narrator: Hello again, dear listener. I'm sure you're wondering what happened to Morgan, ue, and Amber follow their dramatic confrontation at the Portal to the Afterlife. Set those concerns aside for a moment, and join me down by the riverside.

The sounds of gentle water, crickets.

Narrator: With the world's large rivers now increasingly polluted, the riverbanks industrialized, and the cities along them built up, it may take a moment for us to collectively imagine this particular river. Close your eyes, if it's safe to do so. Create an evening in your mind, with a sprawling river so wide you can't see the other bank, across from the one you're standing on. The water moves gently, reflecting the stars above you. You glance behind you to see fireflies dancing in the hazy brush. As your eyes focus beyond the foliage, distant, faint lights show signs of residences. The shapes are hard to make out, but you think you see castles, and skyscrapers, Victorian eaves, maybe. As you look closer, you realize your mind has been filling in gaps, empty space that conforms to your expectations. The ripples in the water, the glowing full moon ahead, the edges and the shadows—once you see their plasticity, they seem more like brush strokes than atoms bound to physical laws. You dip your toe in the river, expecting the cold water to give you a jolt. It does. You wish it were warmer, and suddenly it is. Welcome to the River Styx.

A foghorn.

Narrator: On the horizon, upriver, a large two-tiered riverboat comes into view, like one you'd expect to see on the Mississippi—though if you've seen one in real life, odds are you owe it to Walt Disney. Behind, you on the shore, emerge spirits, less translucent than they would be on earth. This is their reality. More spirits arrive on the scene from above, appearing half-way up in the sky and gliding down to join the spirits who've already made it down and formed a line. One of them, in a security uniform, directs them.

Dock Spirit: Keep it moving, keep it moving. We like to keep things orderly. Now, you all see the dock, in front of you, right?

Narrator: A dock appears quickly, piece by piece, each segment transforming from a three dimensional blueprint into wooden planks, blending perfectly in the surrounding scene. The ghosts don't seem to notice the phenomenon. It was there when they looked.

Confused Spirit: I don't see a dock.

Narrator: Not all of them get on board with the vision.

Dock Spirit: You'll have to swim over and climb on, then.

Narrator: The Riverboat hustles into the dock and comes to a pause. The gangway drops.

Sam: All aboard! All aboard the SS Psychopomp and Circumstance!

The crowd shuffles on.

Sam: Welcome the spectral plane, suspended between adversity and judgment, or whatever it is that comes next. Free from structure and subject to limitless imagination. Some call it Limbo, and this is the ethereal river that connects it all.

Hip Spirit: Wait, are you Mark Twain?

Sam: The same, or Sam Clemens if you ask my mother. As you can see, the reports of my death are not greatly exaggerated.

Frequent Flyer Spirit: Lay it on 'em, Sam!

#16 — Step On Up

SAM

Step on up; board my riverboat.
Just find a bucket and kick it;
That's your ticket.
Step on in and remove your coat.
We've no reason to hurry,
No cause for worry.
Consider yourself my guest.

New Spirit: Is this heaven?

Sam: If it were, would I be here?

SAM

Step on up; board the riverboat.
Find your plug and pull it;
Bite the bullet.
Step on in, take a leisurely float.
Even if you're a sloucher,
You still earned a voucher
When your soul was laid to rest.
I'm glad you took your time to come—
At least, it seems it was your time.
Your arrival caused such a revival,
You can ride without paying a dime.
Step on up!

SPIRITS

Step on up!

SAM

Yeah, come on board!

SPIRITS

Come on board!

SAM

Step on up!

SPIRITS

Step on up!

SAM & SPIRITS

Visit Netherlands remote!

SPIRITS

Step on up!

SAM

Grin and bear it!

SPIRITS

Step on up!

SAM

Find a toe tag and wear it!
The afterlife sure gets my vote.
I don't let dyin' get my goat.
It's a party here and you can quote,
Step on up and get on this boat!

Sam: We'll dispense with the safety procedures, seeing as you're all exempt from mortal danger, and cut straight to the tour.

Spirit 1: Is this the boat to eternal life?

Sam: No, like I said, this vessel wanders to and fro here in Limbo. When it's time to move on, a little light will appear, you'll walk through it, and that's all we know.

Spirit 2: But what if I'm not dead?

Sam: This is the River Styx, not Denial.

Spirit 2: But I want to go back!

Sam: It sounds like you don't know what it is you have to look forward to. Now, people, everything you see here is engineered by the power of communication. If you suggest something exists, and enough people agree, why there it is. Night clubs, dance clubs, book clubs, you name it. Now, you should find in your hands a map, everyone. Everyone's got one? You there, accept the map. Let go of that doubt.

Spirit 3: What's this Séance Center place?

Sam: That's a new attraction they've been testing out, where supposedly you can communicate with your loved ones. The Grand Opening is soon.

Spirit 3: Like tomorrow? A week?

Sam: We have no way of measuring time.

Spirit 2: That gives me anxiety.

Sam: Then I recommend Meditation Beach. Yoga is a lot easier without gravity. Oh, and don't miss The Menu. It's a restaurant where you the mere reminiscence of your favorite meals brings them to your sight, smell, and taste. Make sure you try my contribution to the drink menu — a description of a little tonic I call the Huckleberry Fizz. And now, I present your welcoming entertainment, the Legional Theatre Company!

LEGIONAL CHOIR

Step on up; board the riverboat.
Just find a towel and throw it.
Don't you know it's
moving on that we promote?
Ladies and gents,
Limbo proudly presents
the waiting-room beyond.
You know, you know, you know
we miss the sunlight and the rain.
But past the judgment day,
we'll bask in them again.
You know, you know, you know

we forget the taste of meat.
 But on the bright side,
 we don't watch what we eat!

SAM & LEGIONAL CHOIR

Step on up; board the riverboat.
 Just find your fiddle and hang it,
 like we sang it.
 Step on in, we've the antidote
 to weeping and wailing.
 You'll enjoy sailing
 this great immortal pond.

SAM

Step on up!

SPIRIT

Find a losing hand and play it!

SAM

Step on up!

SPIRIT

Rack up a debt and pay it!

SAM

Step on up!

SPIRIT

Find the Jordan and cross it!

SAM

Step on up!

SPIRIT

Run arsenic in your faucet!

SPIRIT

Find a daisy and push it!

SPIRIT

Find a harp and take it!

SPIRIT

Hear the surgeon say, "He didn't make it!"

SAM

Don't let the circumstances get your goat!

SPIRITS

Wow

SAM

Don't think about those hands around your throat!

SPIRITS

Ow!

SAM

Just relax for that money note!

SPIRITS

Pow! Pow! Pow! Pow! Pow!

SAM

And board my riverboat.

SAM & SPIRITS

Step on up!

Thunder clap.

Narrator: The sky cracks with light as a blur drops from the sky.

A falling sound, a splash.

Sam: What in the Halley's Comet?

Spirit: Over there! Someone's in the water.

Underwater. Currents, muffled shouting from above.

Narrator: Amber McCobb plunges into the River Styx and immediately knows she's going to drown—she wonders if this is what everyone experiences after crossing through the Portal to the Afterlife. It would be a failproof way of convincing the dead that their life is definitely over. On the other hand, it would be just as easy to see this as the continuation of a terrible, morbid nightmare. What if this is a dream? Where would it have started? Had she fallen asleep, drafting the revolutionary ideals in Benjamin's coffin? Was it still last night, before she learned about the Premium Passage Plan? Or was her whole life as a clairvoyant descendant of Grim Reaper matriarchs a simulation, created by the overactive subconscious of a woman she couldn't remember. She would happily surrender her existence to allow that woman to escape this terror—Suddenly, she sees a man gracefully swimming toward her. As he nears, she recognizes his gentle smile.

Fred, garbled, gurgly: Excuse me there neighbor, I noticed you're having some trouble. What's your name?

Amber makes garbled mutters, not opening her mouth.

Fred: Oh, there's no need to breathe, not physically at least. Welcome to your wonderful afterlife.

Amber mutters more.

Fred: You can always project your voice, if you don't want to open your mouth. Things work a little differently around here. Notice how your ears don't feel any pressure, this deep into the river? Notice the how the water curling around your hand looks like someone drew it? Why don't we go up to the surface? Make I take your hand?

Splash.

Amber: Mr.—

Fred: You can call me Fred. What's your name?

Amber: Amber. I think I'm still alive.

Fred: It's nice to meet you, Amber. That's a perfectly normal way to feel. Sometimes it takes a while to adjust to being in a new place, doesn't it?

Amber: My Grandmother was Death—you know, with the cloak and the scythe. My homicidal mother ended up the scythe, and when I tried to stop her, I ended up falling through the Portal still alive.

Fred: That's quite a situation to be in. I don't know how I would feel, or what I would do, in your shoes.

Amber: There's a way back to Earth, right? I have to interrupt my mother's means of mass murder.

Fred: That's definitely a worthy battle. I think any problem can be solved if you know which voices to listen to.

Amber: Where do I start?

Fred: Well, the ferryman knows the lay of the land. I would offer to join your quest, but my experience will be more helpful to you when it's time to talk about the sadness and anger you're feeling.

Sam: Gangway rising! You two coming?

Fred: Go on, Amber.

Sam: We haven't got all of eternity.

Amber: Okay, I'll—uh, I hope to see you again! Or—

Fred: It was so wonderful to meet you, neighbor.

Amber: You, too.

Sam: Let her go back on the larboard! Let out that headway!

Amber: You're the ferryman? I have so many questions.

Sam: Plain question and plain answer make the shortest road out of most perplexities. A

Amber: I need a way back to Earth.

Sam: There isn't one.

Amber: Definitely, or just based on your experience?

Sam: Owing to the uselessness in such travel. There's nothing back there for you.

Amber: I didn't die. I fell through the Portal here, still alive.

Sam: You were taking a casual afternoon stroll and—

Amber: I was wrestling this scythe out of the hands of a madwoman who'd just stolen it.

Sam: Quite a tale.

Amber: It's true.

Sam: Fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities. Truth isn't.

Amber: What?

Sam: I was quoting myself.

Amber: Oh my God, Mark Twain.

Sam: I'm no deity.

Amber: This is a dream.

Sam: A dream come true, I'm sure.

Amber: You know, I thought that growing up, reading your work, but then I read an article about your Angelfish Club, and—

Sam: Heavens, not that again.

Amber: I really don't want the details.

Sam: It's become a frequent conversation.

Amber: It should be, if the conversation makes you this uncomfortable.

Sam: It's repetitive.

Amber: You've made how many trips with this boat along this river over what amount of time?

Sam: *Beat.* You've got me there.

Amber: There's a very good chance I'm still alive. Look! Can you still taste things?

Amber: I can still taste.

Sam: The senses are no indicator of the truth here. The sooner you accept that you're here, the sooner you can start appreciating—

Amber: I have to get back.

Sam: Do not fear death. You were dead for billions and billions of years before you were born, and didn't suffer the slightest inconvenience from it. Here's a map.

Amber: Limbo?

Sam: If you had been here for the question and answer session, you would have learned that this is a temporary hub for spirits before they move on.

Amber: To where?

Sam: Beats me.

Amber: And here I thought I was sending people directly to the final destination. You've really never heard of anyone going back?

Sam: Many have tried. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have nothing interesting left to say on the subject.

Amber: Well, you haven't up until now.

Sam: You ought never to "sass" old people—unless they "sass" you first.

Amber: You're not old; you're dead.

Sam: Welcome to the club.

Narrator: Sam disappears into the crowd of spirits. Amber makes her way to the edge of the boat, gazing out onto the vast river.

#17 — Switch

AMBER

I can't be imagining this
 It can't be a mental trick
 My wildest dreams are never this rich
 It's like the world flipped
 at the flick of a switch.
 Can this be real? I'm too numb to feel,
 and yet I want to rant and rave.
 Karma should love me, so why did she shove me
 Into an early grave?
 And how is there no way back,
 When my blood is still running thick.

I cannot be stuck in this ditch,
 eternally snuffed
 at the flick of a switch
 My mother is a psychopath,
 violating every natural law.
 Yet somehow in the aftermath,
 I'm the one who draws the short straw?
 This turn of events deals no consequences
 to the campaigner of the Reign of Fear.
 That murderous crook is let off the hook,
 while I'm the one who ends up here?
 I think I'm going into shock.
 My stomach's on the verge of sick
 My skin is tingling, like it wants to itch,
 My eyes are burning, like they want to twitch.
 I'm never gonna forgive that—

Thunder clap, as before.

Narrator: The sky again cracks with light as another blur drops from the sky.

A falling sound. Big reverberant thud, commotion among the spirits.

Spirits: (*Improvising*) Terrifying! Oh my! I was almost temporarily decapitated!

Amber: What was that? Excuse me!

*****Peer Pressure Spirit:** Dude! Do it!

Amber: I need to know who that is.

Peer Pressure Spirit: Pick it up, dude!

Reluctant Dude Spirit: No, man, that thing is scary.

Peer Pressure Spirit: Fine, I'll do it. *Electric zap.* Ow, it's like, electric!

Suspicious Confirmed Spirit: I knew it! I knew the Grim Reaper was real.

Mystified Spirit: It just fell from nowhere!

Amber: The scythe? Okay, shut up everyone.

Suspicious Confirmed Spirit: Don't tell me to shut up.

Mystified Spirit: No, don't touch it!

Reluctant Dude Spirit: It's, like, electrified!

Amber: I think I'll be fine.

The scythe scrapes as Amber picks it up. Mutters and gasps from the crowd.

AMBER

Well here's a new development.
 Just a simple blade on a stick.
 Now doesn't this change the whole sitch?
 At the flick of a switch.

Sam: What in tarnation?

Amber: Believe me now?

Sam: What did you say your name was?

Amber: Amber McCobb. If I don't get this scythe back to Earth, back in my grandmother's hands, I think your welcome song isn't going to have any new audiences.

Sam: That thing is one-of-a-kind?

Amber: As far as I know.

Sam: You're saying that no one's going to die? What about people who get shot?

Amber: Irreversible coma?

Sam: Sawed in half?

Amber: I suppose their soul might be stuck in one side or the other. I didn't know this existed until a few hours ago, but it seems pretty important it gets back to Earth, and I'm going with it.

Sam: I hate to disappoint but, Amber McCobb, this is out of my depth

Amber: Talk to me about the Administration Building on my map here. Who's in charge around here?

Sam: You want to take your troubles to the dadgum government—and government a generous word for this one. It's more of a volunteer information desk.

Amber: So if anyone would know how to get out of here—

Sam: —No one does—

Amber: —If they did—

Sam: —then I'd suggest you start with the Department of Morbid Verdicts.

Amber: That sounds promising.

Sam: The desk will assume you want to appeal your death. You'll have to explain your unique situation.

Amber: Wait, you can appeal your Death? Why wasn't that the first thing you said?

Sam: Because I don't sell snake oil. The Spirits who volunteer there get sick pleasure from giving people false hope. For every appeal they get, they reject 2 more.

Amber: But it's theoretically possible.

Sam: An honest politician is theoretically possible, but the odds of such a phenomenon occurring are abysmal.

Amber: The odds? Didn't you coin the phrase about lies, damned lies, and statistics?

Sam: No, I borrowed it with attribution, you rabble-rousing, troublesome young woman. Now why don't you find a bench, enjoy a few moments of lazy dreaming while further productivity is impossible, and—

Amber: Oh, yeah, the girl holding the scythe is going to be relaxing.

Sam: And I will take the most direct route, despite my preference for nonchalant travel. *To the crowd:* People, change of plans. Next stop, Administration Building.

Ghost: But what about the Séance Center?

Sam: It'll just be a medium wait. Ship up to back!

SCENE TWO

Narrator: Benjamin takes a sip from his morning coffee. He puts on a pair of latex gloves and pulls back a sheet.

The door slams open.

Benjamin: *(startled)* Shni—

Narrator: Sue wheels in a body bag on a gurney.

Benjamin: Sue! Y'all never came back last night.

Sue: We had to move the retirement party up. The, uh, morgue just dropped this off so I signed for it.

Benjamin: Oh, thanks. Technically, only an employee can sign for—

Sue: Yeah, I work here now. See, I'm even gonna put on a smock.

Benjamin: But the paperwork—

Sue: Sent in all my forms. The W-4, the I-9—

Benjamin: —at-will agreement, non-compete—

Sue: —NDA—

Benjamin: —arbitration agreement—

Sue: —and my last will and testament.

Benjamin: Well, that's great! That's great.

Sue: Do you have any rope, by chance? *Digs through cabinets.*

Benjamin: Rope? Maybe in the cabinet? What's it for? *(Beat.)* Sue? Wow, really zoned in there. Hello. Earth to Sue. *(Sigh.)*

#18 — How Do I Proceed?

BENJAMIN

I want to tell her she's beautiful;
She's even stunning in a smock.
How do I share my feelings now that I
Only see her on the clock?
I want to ask her out for lunch,
Then dinner, too, if she's agreed.
In this workplace scenario,
How do I proceed?

Sue: Benjamin, I can't find it. Is there anywhere else—Benjamin. Hello. Earth to Benjamin.
(Sigh.)

SUE

I want to tell him my sister's gone.
My heart is bursting with the pain.
How do I bring all that up,
When the story's so insane?
I want to tell him my Mommie Dearest
Has killed more than a stampede.
But, with all I've withheld from him,
How do I proceed?

BOTH

Who else could I trust
With my being's every fiber?

BENJAMIN

If she were a magazine,

I'd be her first subscriber.

BENJAMIN

I want to tell her she makes this place,
Burst with life itself.
She makes my organs forget this place
Has organs on every shelf.
I want to tell her she's safe to be
Herself with me, that's all I need.
But with this "just friends" thing we've got,
How do I proceed?

SUE

I want to tell him my mother's here,
Unconscious in that bag.
I knocked her out while I had the chance,
What do I do with the hag?
She deserves worse than I can give her
A fate from which she'll never be freed
I need to ask his advice,
Ben, how do I—

Sue: I can't.

SUE

(concurrent)

Amber, I wish I could take your place.
I never knew what I was missing.
Amber, I worried too much about
My selfish pride.
Now, as far as I can tell
You're in hell and all alone.
I didn't love you until you fell and
Well, I should have known

BENJAMIN

(concurrent)

Sue, won't you let me take you out
We can eat sushi and fried—
Sue, what's that worry on your face?
That face I'd like to be kissing.
I want to be that shoulder guy,
That hold-her-guy until she's well.
I hope she doesn't want an older guy.
Hell if I can tell.

SUE & BENJAMIN

I'd wish I could spend
A lifetime at your side.

SUE

Now I have to turn to someone else for help.

BENJAMIN

You'd be a radiant bride.

Benjamin, still in soliloquy: Did I really just say that?

SUE & BENJAMIN

I'm losing my mind!
 This will change our friendship,
 But the truth has reached its time
 There's no one else I'd rather take
 As a partner in crime.
 Now is the moment, for better or worse,
 Though chaos is guaranteed.
 But, though the time is now,
 I don't know how to—

Sue: Benjamin, there's something I need to tell you.

Benjamin: Proceed?

Button.

Sue: My family—we're not florists.

Narrator: A hand bursts from Sue's body bag.

Benjamin screams.

Sue: No! The chloroform shouldn't have worn off yet!

Narrator: Sue rushes the bag, as Morgan emerges and grabs a nearby scalpel, swiping at Sue.

Morgan: Ungrateful child!

Benjamin is still screaming.

Narrator: Sue narrowly dodges and frantically scans the room for another potential weapon.

Sue: This needs to stop, mother!

Benjamin, pausing his scream: Mother?

Narrator: Morgan chases Benjamin down, and grabs him, holding him hostage.

He screams.

Narrator: Sue finds a fire extinguisher, wielding it as a blunt instrument.

Sue: We can talk this through.

Morgan: I will kill him.

Benjamin stops screaming.

Narrator: Sue slowly pivots, blocking the door. Morgan stabs at Benjamin.

Sue: Duck!

Narrator: Benjamin escapes and hides behind a slab. He starts throwing random objects. His aim is terrible.

Morgan: Get out of my way.

Sue: You gonna kill me, too?

Benjamin: I'm so confused!

Morgan: Sorry, hun.

Narrator: Morgan slices at Sue, who recoils in pain.

Benjamin: No! Sue!

Narrator: With a clear shot at the door, Morgan escapes.

The door opens and closes.

Narrator: Sue tries to follow, but Morgan locks the door behind her.

Click. Sue rattles the handle.

Sue: Benjamin, open the door!

Benjamin: Lie down! You're in shock! I'm in shock! We need to call 911.

Sue: Open the door!

Benjamin: She took the keys!

Sue: We're locked in?

Benjamin: Lie down. I need you to be still so I can stop the bleeding.

Sue: How is this compliant with fire code?

Benjamin: Corpses don't count as occupants.

Sue: You are the least helpful.

Benjamin: I'm literally saving your skin right now.

Sue: Is this glue safe for the living?

Benjamin: We ran out of sutures halfway through Ms. Armstrong over there.

An engine starts up outside.

Benjamin: Not the hearse! She's taking the hearse!

Sue: Does it have LoJack?

Benjamin: Is LoJack still a thing?

Sue: If we pull the alarm, the fire department will break down the door. But we'll need to start a fire so we don't get in trouble.

Benjamin: Fire is trouble! Being stabbed is enough justification. And they can get you better medical care—

Sue: We don't have time to go to the hospital. Oh, I could just blow up the door handle.

Benjamin: Have you lost your mind? Has your mother lost her—have I lost my mind? There, you're temporarily whole again. Now, to see about painkillers—

Narrator: He searches through a few drawers. Sue pulls a couple aerosol cans and a long string out of a cabinet, and then a lighter from her purse.

Benjamin: What are you doing?

Sue: Getting us out and filling you in.

Benjamin: Lie down!

Sue: First fun fact: my family can see the dead. Take cover, please.

She lights the string. It burns through the makeshift fuse.

SCENE THREE

Narrator: It's usually pretty difficult to find a secluded spot to stew on Mark Twain's riverboat, but with scythe in her possession, Amber doesn't have to walk far. Word of the scythe's electrical power travels, and the lower deck quickly becomes a—well, the opposite of a ghost town here. Inquisitive ghosts observe from a distance, as Amber paces.

Amber: Come on, Amber. Meditate. Meditate. Meditate. Why did you never learn to meditate? Why couldn't you have been more careful? Why did you involve Grandpa? Why did you send that survey out?

#19 — Uncharted Waters

AMBER

My mind is mapping
 all the moments I regret,
 tracing out a web of blame;
 trying to remember,
 while trying to forget;
 trying to give this feeling a name.
 All I hear are
 the cries of frightened voices,
 the world going up in flame.
 My mind circles back
 to all my careless choices—
 Oh there's the feeling—it's shame.
 I can't see
 where this river's carrying me.
 I'm metaphorically blind,
 along for the ride,
 and my hands are tied.
 I'm in a rhetorical bind.
 I've never been so full of doubt.
 I don't know if I can go the route.
 These are uncharted waters
 inside my head.
 These are uncharted waters
 through dismay and dread.
 How can I navigate my way back home
 When I'm lost inside my despair?
 I can't bear to mope, but I'm too afraid to hope
 that these uncharted waters lead me there.
 My heart aches,
 enduring the pain of my mistakes,
 Wishing I could try again.
 Though I'm aware,
 the guilt's not mine to bear,
 I can't shake that emotion when

 these are uncharted waters

with no help in sight—
 uncharted waters
 with no guiding light.
 How do I navigate my road back home
 when there's no one who can share
 a way that worked before, the paths I should explore
 until these uncharted waters lead me there.
 God or angels, powers that be,
 if you're listening, please feel free
 to lead, guide, and walk beside
 this poor, lost, refugee
 through these uncharted waters
 so I can ford
 these uncharted waters
 until balance is restored.
 Help me find my way back home,
 I offer this simple prayer.
 I'll listen and wait, please just lead me straight
 through these uncharted waters there.
 And Morgan, if you can hear, it's your turn to fear.
 Your dearly departed daughter's
 crossing these uncharted waters, I swear.

Foghorn.

Twain: Amber McCobb, this is where you get off.

Narrator: McCobb Mortality Services will be back with you shortly.

Playoff Music: "Step On Up"

EPISODE 5: COURSE CORRECTION



SCENE ONE

Narrator: Welcome back to the Afterlife. Limbo Administration's Department of Morbid Verdicts looks exactly like what you'd of a government building, post 1960. It's depressing, and drab, and the atmosphere would give you a headache, if you still had a head capable of aching. Beyond the many rows of seats, along the back wall, are windows, like you'd see at the Post Office.

#20 — Take A Number

Window 3: Step down to Window 3! Next!

MOMMA

My son's wedding is soon,
And my daughter's graduation.
I just need until June—

WINDOW 3

You died by immolation?

MOMMA

I was taken too early,
But it's not too late
Send me back
Through that creepy gate—

WINDOW 3

Life is unfair,
Then eternal slumber!
Find a chair,
And take a number!

Narrator: Amber McCobb stands observing from the doorway. She sees a spirit giving out numbers and attempts to catch his attention.

Window 17: Window 17! Next!

RESEARCHER

Just two more days,
Of studying radiation.
I'd have the cure—

WINDOW 17

Is that exaggeration?

RESEARCHER

I was taken too early,
But the time's not past.
Send me back;
I'll solve cancer at last.

WINDOW 17

Life is unfair,
Then eternal slumber!
Find a chair,
And take a number!

MOMMA & RESEARCHER

I'd like a rain check,
 A suspension, a hold.
 I'm willing to make a deal.
 I'm not asking to live
 Until I'm very old.
 Please just grant my appeal.

Window 8: Cut the chatter. Next!

Narrator: Weaving in and out of the rows of seats, Amber is still finding it difficult to reach the Spirit with the number tickets, as if he'd mastered PacMan on Earth and thought she was the ghost.

Amber: Excuse me!

SINGER

Mere weeks until
 My Met Opera Debut
 I caught a chill—

WINDOW 8

You died of the flu?

SINGER

I'm begging you, give
 My death a small stall.
 I just need to sing
 In that glorious hall.

WINDOW 8

Life is unfair,
 Then eternal slumber!
 Find a chair,
 And take a number!

MOMMA, RESEARCHER, & SINGER

I'd like a rain check,
 A suspension, a hold.
 I'm willing to make a deal
 I'm not asking to live
 Until I'm very old.
 Please just grant my appeal.

WINDOWS 3, 8, & 17

Life is unfair,
 Then eternal slumber!
 Find a chair

Everyone turns to Amber. The ghost hands a number to Amber.

ALL

And take a number!

Amber: I'm trying! Hello! Notice me!

Casper: Oh dear, I thought you already had a number.

Amber: You weren't actively avoiding me? Because it seemed—

Casper: Oh no, I'm very friendly. It's nice to meet you—

Amber: —Amber.

Casper: I'm Casper. Here's your number!

Amber: Four hundred and two.

Window 1: Step down, number three eighty six.

Amber: Not bad!

Window 2: Four billion, eight hundred seven million, two hundred ten thousand, six hundred thirty six.

Amber: Four billion? But there are less than a hundred people here.

Casper: The system is logarithmic, with some randomizers in there. I designed it.

Amber: But it's—

Casper: Confusing? Yes. Really adds to the drama of it all.

Amber: Listen, this scythe here—

Casper: Oh my god, I love cosplay.

Amber: It's not—

Casper: Such intricate detailing on that blade.

Amber: It's the real thing, and it needs to get back to Earth. Think you could throw some randomizers that get me up there next?

Casper: You think you can take advantage of me, just because I'm a friendly ghost? Sit down and wait your turn!

He storms off.

Amber: Okay, sorry... yikes.

Narrator: Amber takes a seat, figuring it will take longer to catch up to him again than to wait her turn. She watches spirits go to the window, make their plea, take more numbers, sit down, go back to the window, the process repeating itself. A woman returning from one of these encounters takes the seat next to Amber.

Amber: Hey, how many times have you spoken to them up there?

Patient Spirit: Seventy-six, but they said this next one is going to get my application through, for sure.

Amber: Oh my god. Nope. Nope. Coming through, sorry. I'm sorry, this is an emergency.

Window 3: Ma'am.

Territorial Spirit: Excuse me, it's my turn.

Amber: How many times have you been up here? What's one more? Meanwhile, this deadly thing doesn't belong here. I need to speak to your supervisor.

Window 3: I'm sorry, but I can't—

Amber: —Do you have a supervisor?

Window 3: Yes?

Territorial Spirit: Seriously, it's my turn.

Amber: Is your supervisor present?

Window 3: Maybe?

Amber: Why don't you go check?

Window: I can't do that.

Amelia: Hey there, dewdroppers, what seems to be the issue?

Narrator: Amber turns to find a woman with aviator goggles and a white scarf staring her down.

Territorial Spirit: It's my turn at the window.

Amber: I'm just trying to speak to a supervisor.

Amelia: I'm just trying to enjoy a nice card game over here, keeping these poor patsies entertained until they realize how much of their afterlife they're wasting, and I'd appreciate a little quiet. And what's with the prop?

Amber: It's not a prop. It's a... family heirloom, and it needs to get back to Earth.

Territorial Spirit: If you're going to chat, can you let me finish my business?

Amelia: Yeah, yeah, your business doesn't interest me. You, though, scythe lady—who's your family?

Amber: The McCobbs.

Amelia: Oh, wow. So that's the fickle sickle itself. I gotta hear this story.

Amber: This was my grandma's. My mom took it and started killing people. I grabbed it, but fell through the Portal, still alive.

Amelia: This is my lucky day. Oh this is good news, because your name might get you through this gobbledygook. Me, they ignore, but I also am not dead. I flew a plane straight through a freak vortex and crashed in yonder river.

Amber: When was this?

Amelia: 1937.

Amber: It's incredible to meet you, Ms. Earhart.

Amelia: You, too, McCobb.

Amber: Amber.

Amelia: Amelia.

Amber.: If you don't mind me asking, what did happen?

Narrator: The unfortunate part of telling the story of someone who meets a lot of new people is that the meeting part can't be left out, like many of the other moments of small-talk and meandering. As a result, I'm forced to include many of these sorts of personal introductions, and I apologize sincerely.

Amelia: [Muddled explation....] Instead of hitting the ocean, we landed in the River Styx.

Amber: As if the Portal weren't the only way in.

Amelia: For that moment. I've never met someone here with a similar story.

Amber: Hmm.

Amelia: Anyway, my plane disintegrated on the way down, and I was left with two options. Accept it or fight it. At first, I spent every moment here, aching to get home. Now I check in, easing the pain for the newcomers who haven't accepted the terminality of their condition, while pretending that I've accepted the terminality of my condition back out in the Limbo social scene. But now, now, I have a chance. They weren't expecting a McCobb to show up, because you

dropped in on such short notice, and here I meet you, and if anyone can get past their whole boondoggle, it's you.

Amber: Is this my family? Are we, like, in charge of the afterlife?

Amelia: It's unclear. This Administration office popped up a while ago, and the rumors point to it being a continuation of your family's work. Which I, unfortunately, did not experience, but you know, it's common knowledge. Let's get you some paperwork. *To the window:* Excuse me, we have a McCobb here. We need form 39S, 20Q, and 101D. It's urgent, so if you could give it some oomph—

Window 3: Did I call her number? Next! Number 24601?

Shawn Paul Shawn: Hey!

Amber: This scythe says I can have your number.

Shawn Paul Shawn: Okay, okay, fine.

Amelia: I see the forms right there, behind the window. I'm just going to grab them—

Window 3: This is—no—

Amber: I want to speak to a supervisor. You've got one shot, and the paperwork might end up being important. Most of this is self-explanatory. Death date may be tricky, if you're arguing that your blood is still pumping.

Amber: If I say 'Not Applicable', will it get more attention?

Amelia: Maybe an eye roll, which is better than nothing. Make that last name a little bigger. So let's say you somehow can get that thing back to Earth, but you can't go with it. Do you send it over, or do you insist the universe makes some great exception for you?

Amber: I guess it depends on if I knew who was getting it.

Amelia: Oh yeah. Wrongs hands. Probably best if you do it yourself.

Amber: If it's even possible.

Amelia: It took 400 years to get from Da Vinci to the Wright Brothers. Just because we haven't figured it out yet doesn't mean it won't happen soon. Maybe you're the key I've been waiting for. Give me those forms.

Amber: Thank you.

Furiously scribbling.

Amelia: Oh, I can just feel the yoke back in my hands, the wind rushing across my face, my seat vibrating as I head straight into a storm.

#22 — F16 to the Indies

AMELIA

I tell you, crossing the Atlantic,
Can feel rather frantic,
When you're fighting turbulence.
Flying the Pacific,
Ain't always terrific.
Try not to veer too far south.
And, while circumnavigation,
Is no dumbbell's aviation—
The world hasn't seen me since—

What's worse than headwind,
Is this "Doll face, you're dead" wind,
Blowing from that G-man's mouth.

Amelia hands the paperwork back. Amber begins reviewing and filling in more.

AMELIA

Put me on earth and I'm atmosphere bound.
I wanna take off from the solid ground.
I long for a boom when the speed of sound,
Gets lapped like a fool.
I want the latest Lockheed or Curtiss rig,
Or a 757—I hear they're big.
Give me anything with wings and I'll flip my wig.
I'm ready to burn some fuel.
That great horizon chase!
That quest for pie in the sky!
Sign me a second lease on life
And bid this half of a world goodbye.
People take note,
Today is Lady Lindy's.
Get me on the next F16 to the Indies!

Amber: Given the current political climate, I—*stops herself*. Ignorance is bliss.

Amelia: What?

Amber: The world would be lucky to have you back.

Amelia: Same for you. You're a real firecracker.

Amber: You're like the sister I never had. How do you feel about unscrupulous business practices?

Amelia: Hate 'em.

Amber: Where have you been all my life?

Amelia: You're looking at it. And I'm losing my mind.

AMELIA

Get me a rocket, and get it soon.
I wanna be the first to the moon.

Amber: Oh, uh—

Amelia: I know, I know, 1969.

AMELIA

I don't care if I fly a balloon,
If I'm the first one to Mars.
Launch me to that outer space.
I wanna rub it in old Lindbergh's face.
He's the king but I'm the ace;
I gotta beat him to the stars.
That great horizon chase!
That quest for pie in the sky!
Sign me a second lease on life
And bid this half of a world goodbye.
People take note,

Today is Lady Lindy's.
Get me on the next F16 to the Indies!

Amelia: Or really anywhere with a runway, sunshine, and a lemonade— no ice, with a splash of vanilla, mint, and—say—hibiscus. *Button*. Alright, we're square on these bust-out papers. Just chicken scratch your monogram here, here, here, and plop your full Susan B Anthony on the final dotted line.

Amber: On it!

Amelia: You know, if you don't get out, there's an upside for me. Playing cards with these chisellers is a real drag, with their metaphysical decks. They're always cheating. But this deck, this survived the crash, and you and I can both hold these cards.

Amber: And, done!

Amelia: Here, Window number 3. This paperwork says this McCobb here needs your undivided attention.

Window: Your paperwork will be added to our backlogged pile. When your number is called again—

Amelia: You see that, name—McCobb?

Window: When your number is called, we'll give you an update on whether or not we've lost the paperwork yet.

Amelia: We aren't leaving until this gets into the hands of someone who can help.

Window: Stay there as long as you want. Doesn't ruin my day.

Narrator: This went on for some time. Just as Amber begins to give up hope again, a hidden door along the back opens.

Amber: Grandma?

Sharon: Amber? I'm your grandmother's sister, Sharon.

Amelia: Now we're getting somewhere.

Sharon: I died when you were very young. It's so nice to see the woman you've become.

Amber: Thank you. It's a relief to see you.

Sharon: This, uh, scythe, this shouldn't be here, should it?

Amber: No.

Sharon: And neither should you.

Amber: No.

Sharon: I have an idea. Come with me, and tell me all about what happened on the way.

Amelia: Yippee.

Sharon: Not you, aviatrix.

Amber: She's been helping me.

Sharon: I'll take it from here.

Amber: I'd like for her to come.

Sharon: This is a family matter.

Amelia: I'd like to be adopted.

Sharon: Nope, come along, Amber.

Amber: Just a moment, Aunt Sharon. *Surreptitiously:* Amelia, can I have that deck of yours?

Amelia: It's my prized possession.

Amber: If I leave the building, I'd like to play a hand of Hansel and Gretel—if you follow the trail I'm laying down.

Amelia: Oh, I follow. Take it.

SCENE TWO

Narrator: Amber follows Sharon through a plain, winding hallway, recounting the whole sordid tale, from the policy changes to the Portal.

Sharon: Where's Meredith now?

Amber: I don't know.

Sharon: And Morgan?

Amber: Last I saw, Sue was swinging a golf club at her face.

Sharon: I must say I'm impressed that the two of you saw a homicidal woman with a blade and decided to rush her. You must truly believe in the cause.

Amber: I do.

Sharon: And now that you're here, you'll stop at nothing to see this ends up in responsible hands, your mother held accountable, and the honorable tradition of our ancestors upheld.

Amber: That's a fair assessment.

Sharon: It's hard to feel like the only sane one in a house of crazies. And I doubt there's a McCobb woman in history who got along with her mother.

Amber: I would settle for not getting along.

Sharon: You're a funny one, Amber. That office belongs to the recreation department.

Rec Official, in another room: Jackie, I've told you a million times. There is no fair way to play baseball, without real physics.

Jackie: No, I figured it out! Each player announces their intention, like in Dungeons and Dragons.

Rec Official: Oh, you gotta be kidding me.

Jackie: The ref has a set of dice that no one else can see or influence—

Rec Official: Jackie, I know you miss it.

Jackie: We then act out the results. People will love it.

Rec Official: As soon as they find out we're playing MLB D&D, the players will bail.

Their voices fade.

Sharon: That office belongs to the recreation department.

Amber: So our family is like, the government?

Sharon: Our familiarity with death gives us a sort of influence, and we use that to make sure the time that people spend here is enjoyable. If people want to argue, there's a place for it. If people don't want to argue, there's a place for that. And, of course, the most effective mass tactic for subduing problems is entertainment, so we try

to develop amusement parks, spectacle—whatever keeps people from bring the issues they don't truly want to resolve into places where others don't want conflict.

Amber: So the whole filing an appeal for your death—

Sharon: Somebody way back when got sick of hearing people whine about the unfairness of it all. So they created a forum dedicated to it, and now the worst cases are all concentrated here, granting the rest of Limbo the peace and quiet it deserves.

Amber: But isn't—

Sharon: Why don't we take a peek at the fireworks show they're dreaming up.

They pause. Sharon opens a door. Fireworks.

Amber: Oh wow.

Sharon: Never seen a flying dragon firework have you?

Amber: I mean, on the Fellowship of the Rings

Sharon: Not the same.

Amber: Um—

Sharon: I won't spoil the rest, in case we don't get you out of here—but of course, I'm sure we will.

She closes the door and they move on.

Sharon: Nearly there.

Amber: The Limbo Library?

Sharon: Let's see if it gives us any clues.

Sharon opens the door.

Narrator: Enormous, and open to the public, the Limbo Library is dazzling. Books upon books, floors upon floors, visible through the center atrium. It was here that spirits first mastered levitation in the post-mortal existence, weary of continually manifesting ladders into existence, just to reach the high shelves. Librarians pace the floor, proud that the system relies on their memory of each book's location and contents, instead of an impersonal numbering system.

Librarian: Can I help you?

Sharon: We're covered, thanks.

Amber: I can't believe it. I've never seen so many books in all my life.

Sharon: All re-created from memory, or original Limbo material. The librarians read them all, so they stay in the collective consciousness when the original transcribers leave.

Amber: Mark Twain said that a little light appears when it's time to move on from Limbo.

Sharon: That's right.

Amber: We have no further information?

Sharon: There are, of course, a number of theories, all of them impossible to disprove. Proponents of reincarnation are always thrilled when someone enters Limbo claiming they remember having been here before, but people usually cycle out of here within the span of a lifetime, so no one's left to verify the claim. Every once

in a while, someone will claim to be an angel. Oh, dear, watch out for these professorial types.

Lit Spirit 1: This copy of *A Tale of Two Cities* has Sir Percy Blakeney imprisoned for stealing a loaf of bread. Dickens, Orczy, and Hugo would all be upset.

Lit Spirit 2: How are we supposed to rest in peace?

Lit Spirit 1: We should go down to that Séance Center when it opens up and have someone read us the real version.

Amber: And the Séance Center, is that for real?

Sharon: I suppose it's possible, and if it is, your way back might be easier.

Amber: Does that section say, "Non-non-non-fiction"?

Sharon: I think it's a joke, but I wouldn't put it past academia to find sincere meaning in it.

Amber: I wish I weren't in such a hurry to leave. I bet the answers to all my questions are here. I guess I can always reach you via the Séance Center.

Sharon: Do me a favor, and glance over your shoulder. We're approaching our family's private library, and I try to keep it a secret.

Amber: No one in sight.

Sharon: Alright, we're just going to duck behind this staircase and I'll remove the wall.

Amber: Very clever.

The stone wall scrapes against the floor as it moves.

Sharon: Welcome to our little collection. I'm hoping we'll find some information on this shelf. It's fairly technical stuff, so it goes unread.

Amber: These look like they should be on my Grandma's shelf. "Selecting Naturally: Darwinism for a new age." "Morticulture: a guide to pruning populations." "Deathics."

Sharon: I did read "Scythecology 101." Ah, here's something. "The Afterlife Atlas." Give this a skim.

Amber: When did you learn that your mother was Death?

Sharon: When it was my turn to go. Not a family of transparency, are we? I suppose every family has its quirks, and perhaps the worst of our mistakes come from trying to be our best. Do you think, perhaps, the consequence of clairvoyance is a sort of blindness to things of a temporal nature?

Amber: I hope not—I mean, metaphorical blindness is curable, right?

Sharon: What if it's more than metaphor? What if it's enmeshed in our makeup?

#23 — Pay the Price

SHARON

If you like to paint or putt or play
Around with pottery,
How do you think you got that way?
The genetic lottery.

Amber: Well—

SHARON

Nurture or nature, it's all the same—
If raised by those who bore you.
They gave you a body, a brain, and a name
And changed your diapers for you.
Family gives and gives and gives,
And for a while it's nice.
But sooner or later, the longer one lives,
Family comes at a price.
Yes, family comes at a price.
No one's perfect. No one has a flawless
Plan of parenthood.
In each generation, by natural law, less
People know how to parent good.

Amber: Well—fewer—

SHARON

Childhood leaves emotional trauma
You carry for eternity,
So you and your mama and your mama's mama
Pass on that baggage through maternity.
When you don't address the past
It always shows up twice.
If you want the peace to last,
Family comes at a price.
Yes, family comes at a price.
Family disagreements,
Left unresolved,
Will come back to haunt you.
They've festered and sprouted—
They've even evolved—
And when you finally want to
Take upon yourself the role of
Family moral compass,
You'll only take upon yourself
The blame for all the rumpus.
Feuds and fights and falling out
Will follow when you cause it.
No one thanks you for calling out
The skeletons in the closet.

Amber: Amen.

SHARON

There's no way around it,
So take my advice:
Give up your passion in exchange
For semi-blissful paradise,
Or give up your family
If you can't pay the price.

Amber: That's quite the sentiment.

Sharon: Just the truth!

Amber: There's a page ripped out of this book.

Sharon: Out of the Atlas? A mystery. What sector is it in? The pages around it. Oh, that's near here, that dock marking is the Administration ferry stop. And on the opposite page, that's, oh that's a sort of monastery. I've never heard of it, so it's probably abandoned.

Amber: That has a similar layout to the family estate back on Earth. Could there be information there?

Sharon: Possibly, but we don't want the housing complex, we want to see why it's out there in the middle of nowhere, and that answer is probably on this missing page. It's not that big of an area. If we go back to the dock and leave the marked path here, near the sculpture of the red tape dispenser, and then head directly away from the buildings, we'll be in a good position to explore.

Amber: I'm in.

Sharon: I swear to you, on the grave of every deceased McCobb, if there's a way back to Earth, we're going to find it.

Amber: It took dying to find a relative who makes me a priority. I guess it's true:

SHARON & AMBER

Family comes at a price.

SCENE THREE

Narrator: Word of the previous night's events traveled quickly among the surviving employees. Still numb from the shock, and determined to continue serving their clients, they organized via Video Chat, only to realize that—

#24 — In Charge (reprise)

EMPLOYEES

We don't know how to run an office.
 Don't know how to run an office.
 Don't know how to run an office.
 We've never been in charge.
 Half our staff did not survive.
 Half our staff is not alive.
 Half our staff will not revive,
 And the killer's still at large.
 Do we call the police
 When they can't know we exist?
 She'd kill the arresting officer
 If she wanted to resist.
 And we still wouldn't know how to run an office.
 Couldn't know how to run an office.
 Shouldn't have to know how to run an office.
 Why are we in charge?

SCENE FOUR

Narrator: Meanwhile, back at McCobb physical HQ, Sue and Benjamin cautious search for Morgan. Sue carries a large knife.

Benjamin: So many bodies. Your mom is insane.

Sue: It looks like people put up a fight.

Benjamin: What is that?

Sue: I thought I closed that.

Benjamin: That's like, that's—

Sue: The Portal to the Afterlife. Stay focused. Let's see, Mom's office? Nope. No dice.

Benjamin: That rules out her office, the conference rooms, the kitchen... Maybe she left already?

Sue: The hearse is out front.

Benjamin: Do you have an armory?

Sue: I hope not. I'm afraid to go too far, and miss her leaving. Oh, look, the strike team guys left their radios. Take one. *She tests the radio.* Check, check. *It sounds on the other radio.* Stay here, watch the exit, and alert me if you see her.

Benjamin: You can't go off on your—

Sue: Watch me.

Benjamin: You can't leave me!

Sue: You can hide behind a desk the whole time, just keep watch.

Benjamin: I need a weapon.

Sue: Golf clubs are over there. Or here—

She swipes scissors from a desk.

Benjamin: Scissors?

Sue: Break 'em and you have two little knives. I'll just be upstairs.

Benjamin: But—but—*sigh*—there she's goes, yet again.

#25— In the Dark

BENJAMIN

I used to think friendship
Required full disclosure;
Trust was a matter
Of whole self-exposure.
I used to think honesty
Crucial to alliance,
But perhaps those new age books I read
Are simply pseudoscience.

Benjamin, startled: Ahh! *Radio beep.* Ghost?!

Sue, on the radio: No!

Benjamin: *Radio beep.* I felt a distinct shiver!

BENJAMIN

Knowledge is power;
Power is great,
Until the other powers
Want your head on a plate.
Knowledge is power;
Power is scary.
Sources of intelligence
Should make you somewhat wary.
Your questions may be driving,
But put them in park because
You're better off in the dark
Info is influence;
Influence is nice,
But new advantage
Always comes with sacrifice.
Info is access;
Access is key,
But getting it means
Giving people access to me.
Keep diving deep enough,
You'll always find a shark;
You're better off in the dark.
I've seen what's outside Plato's cave.
I'm begging to go back.
Who needs sunlight, when
The light you sought might now attack!?
If, again, the truth you crave,
Just remember this:
Facts may bring you satisfaction,
But ignorance is bliss.
Love is danger;
Danger's the worst.
Before you get enamored,
Get life insurance first. —
Love's an adventure;
Adventure's a dare.
You bite off more than you chew
And, buddy, beware:
You might not end up like old Lewis and Clark
You'll likely face, instead, the fate of Joan of Arc.
Or the species that strayed from Noah's ark.
I should add,
That love is worth,
Parting the sea,
And moving the earth.
But when I said keep nothing from me,
I did not know about her crazy mummy—
A homicidal, death-imbued matriarch—
Yet down this rabbit hole I embark.

Perhaps a world without knowledge might seem stark,
But you're better off in the dark!

Sue: Benjamin—where—did you turn all the lights off?

Benjamin: Oh, thank God you're back.

Sue: I found your keys in the Séance Center, and she's nowhere to be seen.

Benjamin: The Séance Center?

Sue: Uh, well, we apparently figured out a way to communicate with ghosts who have already crossed through the Portal. Meanwhile, there's no one else here, and this Portal was open after I definitely closed it. That means she jumped through it.

Benjamin: Like she felt guilty and—

Sue: No, like she knows she can get back. With the scythe. And that means Amber is in danger, because she probably has it.

Benjamin: Then Amber could also come back?

Sue: Yes. If I were to tell her.

Benjamin: With the Séance Center?

Sue: I don't know how to use it, and I don't think there's time. I have to follow them. Into the Portal.

She opens the Portal gate

Benjamin: What?

Sue, typing on her phone: Dear staff, I think Morgan jumped through the Portal and is pursuing the Scythe.

Benjamin: You can't just—

Sue: Shhh, I'm trying to type. Please be prepared to stop her should she return. Send a warning to Amber in Limbo via the Séance Center, if that's even a real thing. I'm going after her.

Benjamin: Sue, this is crazy—

Sue: I would rather get stuck there with my sister, than forever wonder if I could have saved her. Get out. Go to Mexico. No, go to Stamford, Connecticut. The internet and cell service there are so insanely slow, she'll have a harder time finding you.

Benjamin: Sue—

Sue: Goodbye, Benjamin. Here are your keys.

#26 — McCobb Mortality Services (reprise)

SUE

Most people go before they're ready,
But I will have a killer story.
And if I don't return,
At least it won't be gory.

Benjamin: Sue, please—

Don't be afraid of It.
It's not a bitter pit.
And even if I'll likely fail
McCobb Mortality Services,

We go above and beyond the veil.

Benjamin: Wait, Sue, I'm in love with you.

Sue: Now you tell me? | New choice

Benjamin: Will you marry me?

Sue: I'm sorry, what? | New choice

Benjamin: Let's make a baby!

Sue: I can't process that information at the moment. I gotta go.

Benjamin, *his voice reverberating*: Don't go. Don't—

Sue: Worst case, I'll see you over there in 60 years.

Benjamin: Sue! No! Suuuuuuuuee!

Narrator: McCobb Mortality Services will be back with you shortly.

EPISODE 6: CORRECTION CENTER



SCENE ONE

Narrator: Amber doesn't know it yet, but she's on the verge of finding the way back to Earth. Sharon leads the way, her gaze shifting between the Afterlife Atlas and the ethereal brush they're wading through. Amber considers using the scythe she's carrying as a machete, clearing the vines and branches, but doesn't want to risk any trouble.

Amber: What a maze.

Sharon: You dropped a playing card. Oh, I can't—I can't pick it up.

Amber: They're, uh, not made in Limbo.

Sharon: You seem to be short quite a few of them.

Amber: I just wanted a way back, in case we get lost.

Sharon: Wow. Good idea.

Amber: This is it! There's a clearing! And there, that stone looks like a Portal.

Sharon: So it does. Aside from all the moss, it looks just like the one back on earth! It doesn't seem to be active. Let me see—Oh! (*electricity*)

Amber: Are you okay?

Sharon: Just a little zap. Apparently, this Portal is off-limits to spirits.

Amber: There's some writing there, on the side! I can't read Latin.

Sharon: I can. The continuing education island has a number of courses on dead languages. The inscription says, "Only Death's Key may open this Portal to Earth. Carefully place it in the center of the dais and stand back." Try the Scythe.

Amber: Okay... setting it down.

Sharon: And step back, just a bit.

Amber: Come on, Portal. Glow, baby, glow.

Sharon: Maybe a little further?

Brush, running on dirt, running on stone, two bodies collide. Amber cries out on impact.

Amber: No! How—

Morgan: And, gotcha.

Amber: No, mom, please—Aunt Sharon, help!

Morgan: Sharon, hand me that rope.

Sharon: I'm a spirit, I can't—

Morgan: Stop resisting, Amber.

Sharon: Use your legs to pin her and grab the rope.

Amber: Aunt Sharon?

Morgan: And, got it.

Sharon: I told you we'd find the way back to earth. I left out that I already knew where it was. That missing page? I tore it out and showed it to your mother.

Amber, resisting: The Séance Center.

Sharon: Then I found you, and stalled for her to arrive.

Morgan: There. All that knot tying in Girl Scouts finally came in handy.

Sharon: I remember signing off on your outdoor skills patch. Just think, all those evenings tying clove hitches and quilting, while dreaming up your future—it's all paying off.

Amber: No—

Sharon: Oh, did I forget to mention I'm Morgan's mentor?

Morgan: I didn't know how useful reconnecting with Sharon would be, when we first got the Séance Center running, but look at what technology can do.

Amber: This whole time.

Sharon: Where do you think she got all those brilliant ideas? Out of thin air?

Morgan: The Premium Passage Plan was my idea.

Sharon: And it's very nice. Morgan and I used to have long chats, before my unfortunate demise. And then she grew up, bided her time, and finished what I started. It breaks my heart to do this to you, Amber, but the future of our family's legacy is at stake. My mother shunned me for my commitment to innovation, and when I refused to give up, she killed me. Now that my brilliant niece finally has a chance to take McCobb Mortality Services out of the dinosaur age, we can't let even the sweetest, most well-meaning traditionalist get in the way.

Amber: Mom, don't do this.

Morgan: I'll come back in a few years to see if you've changed your tune.

Amber: If not for me, for your own sake. I am the least of your worries out there. You're severely underestimating the reaction of ordinary people against tyrannical—

Morgan: Shut up, Amber!

Amber: Abandon me like this and you'll face the same fate.

Morgan: Enough! I wish I'd thought to bring a gag.

Amber: Aunt Sharon, please—

Morgan: Oh, I have a scarf.

Amber: This is inhumane—*she's now gagged, muttering for a long while.*

Morgan: Anyway, how does this thing work?

Sharon: Oh, I made that whole Latin translation up. Just touch the scythe to the Portal and it temporarily activates until the scythe has gone through. From what I understand, Death used to live nearby and only crossed over to kill people. The job got too busy, so this Portal's been inactive for a few generations.

Morgan: Interesting. Well, it's time to be off.

She activates the Portal.

Sharon: Wait, Morgan—are you sure you don't want to bask in your triumph, just a moment longer?

Morgan: You're right. I didn't get the chance to properly gloat.

#27 — Good Luck

MORGAN

When trusted colleagues fail
To stay up to speed,

And value opinions more than pay;
 When your vital ambition is
 Charged as mere greed,
 There remains only one thing to say:
 Good luck, good riddance, and goodbye!
 Enjoy your self-induced hell.
 Don't ask me to save you;
 You must admit I gave you
 Fair warning, fair people. Farewell!
 And so good luck, good riddance, and goodbye!
 Enjoy your self-righteous views!
 There won't be a memorial;
 You're stuck here incorporeal.
 Adioses, auf wiedersehens, adieus!
 Sure, in opinion polls, most'll
 Say Morgan McCobb's gone postal,
 But progress never cares for mass approval.
 The only action criminal
 Would be staying in this liminal
 Condition, given occasion for removal.
 And so good luck, good riddance, and goodbye!
 Forever your sorry selves are stuck
 With the lifeless, and the loners,
 And the former organ donors.
 Goodbye, good riddance and good luck!
 I probably wouldn't care if
 You weren't playing sheriff.
 But when your awful meddling resumed,
 I knew I must prevent
 Your troublesome intent
 To see my private plot exhumed.
 So I tell you I
 Must wish you my
 Good luck, good riddance and goodbye!
 Goodbye!
 Goodbye!

Sharon: Sweet mercy. I'm going to enjoy the memory of a nice stiff Death in the Afternoon at The Menu.

Fading footsteps.

Narrator: As the Portal's glow fades, Amber finds herself alone, left for mostly dead. She struggles again to get free, making no progress for what feels like an eternity. Then, to her surprise—

Running footsteps approach, branches and brush rustling.

Amelia (*distant*): Sue, card over here! I think we're close! Let's hope she didn't leave without us!

Sue, calling out: Amber! *Beat.* Amber! I think I see a clearing, over here! Amelia, over here!

Sue's footsteps arrive.

Sue: Omigod, Amber! No!

Muffled struggles from Amber.

Sue: Omigod, are we too late? I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry. How do these ropes come off. Oh, gag first. Sorry.

Amber: What are you doing here?

Sue: I had to stop her. Are you okay?

Amber: I'm okay. Careful with my hands.

Sue: Sorry. How did this happen?

Amber: Mom.

Sue: We were too late.

Amber: She just used the scythe to open the Portal back, and she's going to kill everyone, and now we're both stranded!

Sue: No.

Amber: That was my one shot!

Sue: If she got out, we'll get out.

Amber: I don't think so.

Sue: No, there has to be a way.

Amber: Sure, if you were to be there, where you're supposed to be, and you took the Scythe from her, brought it back here, and took me back with you. I can't believe it. I was so close.

Sue: Maybe someone will stop her, and then help us.

Amber: Who's going to stand up to her? It was me, or you. That's it. It's over. The world is toast. How did you even find me?

Footsteps approach.

Sue: Sam sent me after you, and then I ran into Amelia.

Amelia: What happened? What happened to Ms. Trotsky?

Amber: Who?

Amelia: The old lady.

Amber: She's also evil. *To Sue:* Mom was communicating with Grandma's sister, Sharon, using the Séance Center. It turns out mom's ideas started with Sharon, and she's been misleading ghosts here as well. I thought I'd finally found someone eager to help, but it wasn't me she was helping. She and mom conspired to get me to this spot and then Mom attacked me.

Sue: Oh my god.

Amelia: Okay, so old lady is not gonna help.

Sue: Where did she go?

Amber: I think she went to The Menu?

Amelia: That joint is so overrated.

Sue: This became a nightmare so quickly.

Amelia: Give me the rest of those cards. You two, stay put.

Amber: Shouldn't we—

Amelia: Park yourselves right there. I'm going for help.

Amelia's footsteps run off.

Sue: Amber, I'm the worst sister in the world.

Amber: No, you're not.

Sue: If we had gone together, right away, or if I had been more proactive in getting everything ready, or if I had found some stupid rope.

Amber: Rope?

Sue: Apparently wasn't a problem for Mom. No, I had her, Amber. I had her in a body bag, unconscious—

Amber: When?

Sue: While you were falling to your doom, mom was distracted and I knocked her out with a golf club, and took her to Benjamin's, because I didn't know what else to do. She escaped, before I could find rope. Seriously, if I had only taken you seriously.

Amber: No, this is not your fault. I didn't listen to you. I judged you for wanting your own life, while being totally careless with others' lives. You're here because of me—my brilliant, kind, wise sister stuck in limbo because I was impatient and reckless.

Sue: This is not a contest of who can be the most at fault.

Amber: I wish there was nothing after your cross through the Portal. I wish we just ceased to exist, and didn't have to confront the truth—that life is just a collision course with fate, and that the Afterlife is merely an extension of the trauma we endured on Earth.

Sue: Okay, nihilism. Can't you save it until we're sure we can't get out of here?

Amber: I just saw the way out, and we don't have what it takes. Even if we did, I would screw it up again. We'll never get to grow old, travel the world—I won't get to toast you and Benjamin as your maid-of-honor—

Sue: How did you know he proposed?

Amber: I'm sorry, what?

Sue: As I was about to jump in to follow you.

Amber: You were dating him? I mean, I knew you—

Sue: We were not dating.

Amber: But would you have said yes?

Sue: In like three years.

Amber: That is the most depressing thing I have ever heard!

Sue: What?

Amber: You could have married him.

Sue: Oh, you think that's worse than Mom proclaiming herself the goddess of death?

Amber: You could have had a long and fulfilling life, working alongside someone you love! And now—I just wish there was some Portal I could jump through to save you, to trade places.

Sue: Don't lose hope.

Amber: I don't want to hope. I don't want to feel anything—I don't feel anything. I don't want to cry, I'm angry, but I don't feel like it—I think I'm losing my mind.

Sue: It's okay, Amber.

Amber: Nothing is okay! Omigod, why is your arm all messed up?

Sue: Mom stabbed me.

Amber: What?

Sue: In the mortuary. She burst from a body bag, grabbed a knife, and fought her way out.

Amber: Okay, now that's hilarious.

Sue: What?

Amber: That's what I'm feeling. This whole thing—it's ridiculous. It's beyond reality. Tied up like a hostage, left for dead, silenced by the woman who taught me to speak, tricked into surrendering the tool that would have restored everything, stuck here because the cause I fought for gained no supporters. And she stabbed you.

Sue: I really don't understand.

#28 — Nothing Left

AMBER

When your cards come tumbling down,
 When Failure becomes your proper noun.
 When the world you know is a lie,
 the normal thing to do is cry.
 But then it all stacks up in a single week
 And you're also dead, so you're way past bleak,
 At that point—oh, and it's all your fault—
 Crying is a waste of precious salt.
 I won't mourn.
 I don't want to wallow.
 My tears would just fill a carafe.
 There's nothing left to do but laugh.
 When grandma kills and it's no sin,
 And grandpa wishes she'd do him in
 When your mother believes she's a star,
 but even Satan thinks she's gone too far.
 And you've reached the rotten end of your rope,
 And your missing sister is your one last hope.
 And she suddenly shows up to save the day,
 Seconds too late, and you see her dismay—
 I won't mourn.
 Sobs are too hard to swallow.
 You met your end on my behalf,
 and there's nothing left to do but laugh.
 They say comedy is tragedy plus time.
 Time is the one thing we keep.
 It's a subtle shift in paradigm:
 better to giggle than weep.
 I might be burying a mountain of grief.
 I'll just dig it up later,

But nothing feels better than comic relief,
 Is there any humor greater than
 watching yourself, from a birds-eye view,
 lose your mind and surrender to
 the unavoidable future you thought
 would destroy you—well, maybe not!
 For here you are, synapses still firing—
 your schadenfreude of self, still admiring,
 and if anything worse had occurred,
 the scene would've just seemed more absurd.
 I won't mourn.
 Sorrow feels empty and hollow.
 Tragic humor might come off like a tasteless gaffe,
 but it can't be taboo if that tragic one is you
 and there's nothing left to do but laugh.

Sue: Okay, no, I get what you mean.

SUE

When the last words you said to someone dear
 were full of spite, and you're full of fear.
 When your crush asks if you'll be his wife
 mere seconds before you surrender your life,
 and your mother takes a knife to your arm
 on her way to causing global harm.
 They're depressing moments when unaligned,
 but kinda hysterical when they're combined.
 I won't mourn. I don't want to wallow

AMBER

(concurrent)

There's a freedom that comes when you know
 that you've reached the all-time low.

SUE

That woman who slaughters?
 We're her daughters.

AMBER

File your injunction
 on our family dysfunction—

AMBER & SUE

Believe us, we already know.
 We're prodigal children who'll never come home
 and no one will slay the fatted calf.
 The tales we could tell, you'd never believe—
 they'd seem taller than a giraffe.
 Our mother sorted your wheat from your chaff?
 Well, at least you got an epitaph.
 Our lives didn't end, we just fell off the graph,
 and there's nothing left for us to do but laugh.

AMBER

When your broken howl subsides.

make a joke that splits your sides.

SUE

When your breaking heart is too full,
raise your chin with a grin slightly rueful.

AMBER

When good fortune suddenly switches,
put your sister in stitches.

AMBER & SUE

When your life was the cost for a prize you lost,
Here is the lesson to follow.
Find the nearest late-night show and get on staff,

AMBER

for there's nothing left to do—

SUE

nothing left to do—

AMBER

nothing left to do—

SUE

nothing left to do—

AMBER

nothing left to do.

AMBER

There's nothing left.

SUE

There's nothing left.

AMBER & SUE

There's nothing left.

Narrator: As the sisters hold each other, a stampede of spirits approaches

All the footsteps and rustling.

Amelia: Alright, ladies, I've brought a few friends to think this problem through. I've filled them all in and—

Sue: Lena Horne?

Lena: Hello.

Amber: Sammy Davis, Jr? Selena?

Sammy: Hey, there.

Selena: Hello, Amber.

Harry: Harry Houdini, at your service.

Sue: Sally Ride?

Sally: Sure thing.

Amber: Einstein?

Albert: Hello.

Amelia: Kittens, I brought them to talk, not for you to gawk.

Lena: This is the smartest collection of ghouls you'll ever see.

Sally Ride: And we all love breaking barriers.

Lena: You could say we're a sort of—

#29 — Think Tank

THINK TANK

Think Tank!

Selena: Every so often, when trouble pops up

THINK TANK

Think Tank!

Sammy: We assemble as a collection of slick perspectives.

Einstein: A coming together of intellectuals, with a common goal.

THINK TANK

Think Tank!

Harry: A communion of thought.

Sally: Like mission control.

THINK TANK

Think Tank!

Amelia: I'm telling you, these people really know their onions.

THINK TANK

Think Tank!

When you're in a bind,

Think Tank!

Get yourself a hive mind.

Think Tank!

When you're stuck in a rut,

Think Tank!

Don't just stick with your gut.

Get the brains storming!

Get the egg warming!

We're the thankless ones to thank,

Think tank!

SAMMY

We could send them through a sort of tesseract.

LENA

When's the last time you saw one?

ALBERT

It's too abstract.

With no friction, we could push them to the speed of light

SALLY

But the timing and direction has to be just right.

HARRY

We could catapult them through the atmosphere,

SELENA

And shock them into life through terror and fear?

AMELIA

What if they enter at altitude—

LENA

And fall to their death?

EINSTEIN

Then they'd really be screwed.

THINK TANK

Think Tank!
When you're out of steam,
Think Tank!
We're your favorite team.
Think Tank!
You need somebody smart?
Think Tank!
Here's the place to start!
The clock is running
But our flock is cunning.
Who's the quickest? I'll be frank.
Think tank!

SAMMY

Meditation is, in theory, problematic.
It could be helpful, but it might be traumatic.
In a sense it's grounding, yet also propelling.
You'll either head toward earth or to God's Eternal Dwelling.
But if God is all-powerful and totally just,
Maybe He

SELENA

Or she—

SAMMY

—is the One to trust.

THINK TANK

Think Tank!
Toss your thinking cap, because
Think Tank!
We're the brains on tap.
Think Tank!
When you hit a wall,
Think Tank!
We're the ones to call.
Get the neurons firing!
Get the gang conspiring!
Put a problem in and turn the crank
Think tank!

LENA

If the physical world is the destination

And their bodies still have that mortal vibration
Connecting that chain across dimensions' edge
Will pull them through the netherworldly hedge.

ALBERT

But what could provide that material link?

SALLY

What could send them safely across that brink?

AMELIA

Emerson would say that to transcend or to cross, he—

AMBER

I know what we need! Bob Fosse!

HARRY, ALBERT, LENA

Fosse?

SALLY, AMELIA, SAMMY

Fosse?

SELENA, SUE

Fosse?

Amber: Who better to connect our bodies to the physical world?

Lena: I think he's on a twelve step retreat.

Sue: What about Twyla Tharp?

Amber: Still alive.

Sue: Susan Stroman?

Amber: Very alive.

Bob: You called?

HARRY, ALBERT, LENA

Fosse?

SALLY, AMELIA, SAMMY

Fosse?

SELENA, SUE

Fosse?

Bob: I was over at this retreat over at the, uh, the monastery place next door. Heard my name.

Amber: Hi, sorry, I'm a huge fan. Love your work.

Sue: Amber.

Amber: Right, so we're still mortal and trapped in this spiritual realm. Can you reconnect our matter to the physical world?

Bob: Oh yeah, sure, no problem. I'll need your participation.

Amber: Count me in!

Sue: Oh no. Here we—

Bob: A 5 6 7 8—

Narrator: Fosse begins improvising, exploring the space. Dear listener, this is the moment I wish most that you could see what I see. I deeply regret the financial circumstances

preventing it, and if you are personally in a position to resolve them, I will start from the top, using the full three dimensional power of musical theatre.

Bob: That's it, now extend the arm further, and now, contract.

Sammy: Alright now!

Sally: It's irresistible.

Amelia: Now we're cooking with helium!

Selena: Siento algo que me mueve, un ritmo que me hace bailar!

Albert: I feel strangely compelled to shimmy!

Narrator: Oh, you know what will make this better? Let's just source the audio from the ground, and manipulate it to sound like they're all wearing tap shoes.

Sammy: Oh there will be no tapping—without me!

Tap dancing.

Narrator: The Portal starts glowing.

Amber: I think it's working!

Narrator: Amber, Amelia and Sue step onto the Dais.

Narrator: The barrier between the dimensions begins to thin.

Sally: Out of this world!

Amelia: We're flying the coop!

Sue: Amelia, you're going to be a nightmare for the FAA.

Amelia: Goodbye, astral plane. Hello, aeroplane!

Narrator: The three women feel their feet leave the ground, as the Portal pulls them through. Their eyes are assaulted by intense light from every hue, flying through a cosmic world of color. Inexplicably, Walt Disney appears.

Walt Disney: Hi, I'm Walt Disney, and welcome to the happiest place: Earth.

SCENE TWO

Narrator: The Séance Center has no candles, or circular tables, or flowers, or Pentagrams, or any other occult scene you were expecting. It shares more resemblance with a nuclear plant. Plasma runs in cables from the Portal, cleverly disguised there as vines, to the Center, where it connects with a variety of and screens.

The sound of Static. The music of Think Tank sneaks through, distorted and distant.

Paul: Something is interfering with the connection.

Meredith: You must have made a mistake when you reconnected—

Millicent: It's connected correctly.

Meredith: If we can just reach Amber and Sue—

The door bursts open.

Millicent: Amber!

Amber: They're in here!

Millicent: Sue! And you are—

Amelia: Amelia. New friend.

Sue: Wait, Grandma, you're dead dead?

Amber: And Millicent, you too? No!

Millicent: She got me right before she threw you in.

Meredith: Me, too.

Amber: Where is she?

Meredith: Oh, we took care of her already.

Amber: What?

Millicent: Yeah, she's been restrained.

Amber: When? How?

Millicent: We got Sue's message that we should be prepared in case Morgan came back with the scythe.

Meredith: So the employees got us out of the vault and we said, "What would Amber do?"

Millicent: And that's when Jim remembered,

Jim: "I just read a FuzzBeed article about taking down a formidable opponent."

FuzzBeed Journalist: "Step One: Set a trap."

Millicent: The moment she came back through that portal,

Jim, in memory, over intercom: Paging Morgan McCobb to the Séance Center. It's urgent.

Morgan, in memory: *Curious.*

FuzzBeed Journalist: "Step Two: Distract them with emotions."

Millicent: Meredith pretended she was calling from Limbo, when really she was in the next room, on our new ghost friendly webcam.

Meredith: I'm turning every soul in the afterlife against you. You will be alone for eternity!

Morgan: My mother finally has a mute button!

FuzzBeed Journalist: "Step Three: Use their weakness against them."

Meredith: When she tried to shut me up, by turning it off,

A flash of lightning and electric hum hits, pulsing.

Millicent: She felt two hundred kilovolts of electricity coursing through her body.

Paul: Booby trapped, baby!

Amber: Grandpa! I didn't see you. Why are you here?

Paul: They broke their favorite electrician out, so I could help!

Sue: And then what happened?

Millicent: She dropped the scythe, hit the floor, and they threw her in the vault, all within three minutes of her triumphal entry.

Morgan, in the memory: No!

Amber: That's incredible.

Sue: I mean, a little anticlimactic for us.

Amelia: Yeah, I really wanted to be here when she went down.

Amber: No, we've been through trauma today.

Sue: Yeah, now that you mention it, getting stabbed once was enough.

Amber: Thank you for saving the day.

Millicent: Do you already want to see for yourself, visit the Vault?

Amber: *(beat)* Not yet. Someone's on guard?

Pierre, entering the room: En garde!

Sue: *(startled cry)* Ah!

Amber: We're unarmed!

Pierre: Oh, I heard some ruckus and thought someone was fighting your mother. I went home earlier to get my sword so I could help take her down.

Sue: Nearly gave me a heart attack.

Amber: Pierre, she's down in the Vault.

Pierre: Ze vault?

Amber: All locked up, or so I'm told.

Pierre: Mince, I missed all the fighting?!

Sue: That's what I said.

Amber: We're sure it holds living people?

Millicent: Yes, we tried it on Ron first. Most of the staff are there, expressing their anger.

Pierre: And she does not, she does not have the scythe?

Millicent: Oh, I almost forgot, the Scythe is under that blanket there.

Pierre: *(relieved)* Louez la mort toute puissante.

Millicent: Turns out only direct descendants can touch it.

Sue: Oh my God, really?

Amber: Do you want it?

Sue: No? I just—no. I'll just hide it here behind all this machinery for now.

Scythe scrape, as she picks it up.

Amber: Pierre, why don't you go check on the Vault situation, maybe stand guard?

Pierre: After the many indignities I have suffered at your mother's bidding, it would be my honor.

Exit Pierre, door close.

Millicent: What should we do with Morgan?

Amber: That seems like something we should all decide together.

Sue: Mental institution?

Amber: Probably, but we should all cool off first.

Amber: Millicent, who else is dead?

Millicent: Ernie, Lucy, Genevieve, Fred—

Amber, tenderly: Fred.

Millicent: I'll have someone write up a list for you.

Amber: Thank you. Can it also list next of kin?

Millicent: Of course.

Amber: Millicent, I need you to stick around for a while. Please don't cross through the Portal. I know that's selfish, under the circumstances, but—

Millicent: I'm here for you.

Amber: Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Amelia: I'm here for you, too. I owe you my re-birth.

Amber: It's an honor, Amelia. Tell you what, I was going to return the company plane my mother bought, but maybe we'll spend one last underground, black-market effort to get you a new identity, and make you our international ambassador. Okay, I do have to see the Vault situation for myself. Sue, you should go find Benjamin.

Sue: He should be long gone. I told him to scram.

Meredith: Oh, no, I just saw him.

Paul: He gave me a ride here in that carsophagus of his.

Sue: His what?

Paul: His vehicular sarcophagus?

Sue: Grandpa, I love you.

Paul: I love you, too. I'm so proud of you both, and would be even more proud if you'd just take the scythe there, and, uh, knight me.

Sue: No! Grandpa, omigod.

Amber, laughing: Okay, I'm going. Sue?

Sue: Wait for me!

The door opens and closes as they step out.

Amber: Wow.

Sue: Yeah, I'm having trouble processing everything that just went down.

Amber: I, uh, thought I wanted to go the vault.

Sue: But now—

Amber: I do—it's not going to feel real until I see her in there.

Sue: But the curiosity is competing with dread.

Amber: Yeah.

Sue: At least we didn't have to put her there ourselves. Remember what you said? When the other people tie her up, without us forcing it, that's when the revolution has a mandate. That's exactly what happened.

Amber: It did.

Sue: It finally feels like we have a family here, with a legendary aviator as a bonus sister.

Amber: You know, you don't have to stay here. If you want to work for Benjamin, I am totally for that.

Sue: Maybe I'll split time between the two places. As the new leader, you're gonna need some help.

Amber: You sure you don't want to be in charge?

Sue: Nope, it's you. And I'll be available as an advisor—plus, we have the Séance Center with a Think Tank on the other end.

Amber: Oh, maybe they can dismantle the Limbo Administration.

Sue: Huh?

Amber: Sharon's whole racket—whatever our family's doing in Limbo is also ethically questionable. Sue, you were right. Your idea—burn the place down—that's what we need to do.

Sue: Amber, I was frustrated—

Amber: Even before mom, the structure wasn't organic. It was more about control.

Sue: So the centuries of tradition—

Amber: —Gone. Or maybe we're restoring it to the way this all started, before we put walls and a gate around the Portal. We could have a network of ghosts who stay on Earth and do the guiding and the counseling.

Sue: What about ghosts who, like, haunt people and try to cause chaos.

Amber: We could keep a small trauma intervention unit, in case someone turns into a Marshmallow Man, but I bet spiritual health workers can handle most of it.

Sue: So what do we do? The whole family.

Amber: We could work with the living. Share what we've learned, help people grieve, fact check some biographies.

Sue: We could get Amelia to write a whole life guide—under a pseudonym, of course.

Amber: We could do all sorts of non-profit work, and file legit paperwork with the government.

Sue: The accountants will be relieved.

Amber: Instead of this being headquarters, with one person responsible for worldwide decisions, we form a council comprised of the leaders of each branch.

Sue: Like a Think Tank?

Amber: Just like that. Do you think R&D could figure out how to build more Portals? So ghosts don't have to travel as far?

Sue: It's possible.

Amber: We do have a sharp object that cuts through spiritual matter.

Sue: But do we want people stumbling through Portals?

Amber: We could put all them all in private nature preserves, including this one.

Sue: This one?

Amber: We're surrounded by trees. Why do we need walls, too?

Sue: You want to demolish the whole building?

Amber: Yes.

Sue: I call dibs on triggering the explosives.

Amber: Imagine spending your last moments, walking through a garden, tranquil, grounded and truly on Earth.

Sue: I didn't know you like the outdoors so much.

Amber: Can't take fresh, mortal air for granted anymore.

Sue: That's true.

Amber: Thanks for jumping in after me.

Sue: Always.

Footsteps approach.

Benjamin: Sue! Sue!

Amber: Ope, loverboy's back.

Sue: Hi, Benjamin.

Amber: Maybe, as another legit income stream, we should franchise some mortuaries.

Benjamin: Crematoriums are always a good investment.

Sue: Benjamin! Why are you here, I told you to flee.

Benjamin: I tried, but I couldn't run for long. Your mom would find me, wherever I went.
And if she came back, it would probably mean you were permanently dead, so
worst case scenario, our reunion would just come sooner.

Sue: You're so sweet. And so sweaty.

Benjamin: I want to kiss you.

Sue: Um, can it wait?

Benjamin: Can it wait? I thought you were dead. After I said nothing for years, because
I'm an idiot!

Sue: Well, you're not wrong.

Amber: He did propose.

Benjamin: You told Amber?

Sue: She's my sister.

Benjamin: That means it was important to you.

Amber: She did say she'd probably say yes.

Benjamin: Really?

Sue: In like, three years, conditional on a whole host of other things.

Benjamin: One of those things being our first kiss?

Sue: You really want that to be here, after this conversation, and in front of my sister?

Benjamin: I don't care where, after what, or in front of whom.

Amber: I can turn around.

Sue: Pucker up, and get ready to be the beneficiary of my generous will.

They kiss.

Amber: Aww, cute you guys. Sorry, I'll shut up.

Benjamin: Wow.

Sue: Um, yeah, actually. Wow.

Amber: Welcome to the family.

Sue: Okay, we just started dating.

Benjamin: Oh, we're dating? I'll take that.

Amber: He knows the family secrets, so you'd better make this work. I'll leave you to it.

Benjamin: Oh, Amber, I just finished moving the last of the recent victims over to the
home. We can have a service when you're ready, on the house.

Amber: Thank you, Benjamin.

Benjamin, fading into the background: I heard y'all were back, but I didn't hear how. I need the details.

Sue: Oh, it's a long story involving Bob Fosse, the deus-ex-machina of dance.

Benjamin: Fosse?!

Sue: There were ghosts, transdimensional wormholes, and all that jazz.

Benjamin: Sweet Charity.

Narrator: Amber leaves them to make it work, work it out, or just make out, and heads to the Vault.

The sounds of a small but very angry mob.

Narrator: The employees had originally gathered in the Vault to confront Morgan over the murders of their colleagues, but the conversation had grown to include other frustrations that festered under her leadership.

Jan: I have back problems now, after all those hours scrubbing your stilettos.

Harry: The coffee shop has banned me for life after the reviews you posted.

Michael: I was verbally abused by our VIP clients day after day, encouraged by your prosperity gospel and entitlement rhetoric.

The door opens.

Amber: Hi, everyone.

The room goes silent.

Jan: You're—you're alive?

Amber: I'm back, and we've got a new plan for the business.

Muttering and cheers from the crowd, celebrating her return.

Michael: Hey folks, let's give her the room. Do you want the room?

Amber: I do. It'll be brief. Staff meeting, first thing tomorrow, and then we'll take the rest of the week off.

The employees file out, with some banter. The door closes.

Morgan: Congratulations. You lucked out. All my years of waiting, planning, dreaming canceled overnight, while you make a miraculous escape from exile. I'll understand if you take your turn to gloat. *(beat)* I'll bet it takes six months for you to bankrupt the company. And in the meantime, what are you to do with me? Try to redeem me? Make me a martyr? Turn me over to the Feds? Let me rot here?

Amber: I won't be making that decision alone.

Morgan: Oh, you're going for democracy? You're even more doomed than I thought. Even your good ideas will be compromised enough to fail.

Amber: When you gave me that watch, did you remember that I'm allergic to jewelry? When you choose places for lunch, do you know what my favorite meals are? You've always made decisions on my behalf, and told me how to see the world, and I thought that was normal parenting.

Morgan: You clearly needed it.

Amber: But it didn't occur to me until I saw the extremes of your abusive behavior that other mothers listen to their children. And see their children.

Morgan: Oh, you think I don't see you?

Amber: Other mothers give guidance from a place of love, not self-serving control.

Morgan: The typical Amber guilt trip.

Amber: Other mothers sacrifice for their children, instead of sacrificing them. I will never have that.

Morgan: At least you're done trying to redeem me.

Amber: I won't have it, but I can give it to my children and the people around me. Thank you for showing me how important it is.

Morgan: Your therapist will be so proud.

Amber: Finding one of those is the next thing on my to-do list. After changing this Vault code so that I'm the only one who knows it.

Amber reprograms the vault.

Morgan: So much for democracy.

Amber: As much as I'm enjoying your quips, I've given you enough of my energy today.

Morgan: Good luck!

Amber closes the vault door behind her. She sighs in relief.

SCENE THREE

Scuffling.

Meredith: Grab him, Benjamin!

Paul: Let me go—

Benjamin: If you jump through now, you won't ever—

Meredith: Paul, you're going to dislocate your hip again.

Amber: Grandpa, don't jump through the Portal.

Paul: Amber, you swore that if I helped, I could finally die!

Meredith: You can't mysteriously disappear and then die. We have to check you back in at the nursing home before—

Paul: You can't make me go back there!

Meredith: Grab him.

Benjamin: Where's he gonna go? The parking lot?

Meredith: Paul McCobb, you're going to hurt yourself.

Clangs and bumps and crashes.

Sue: Omigod, I step away for one second.

Amber: Grandpa! Wait!

Narrator: The sisters stumble through the obstacle course he leaves for them, bringing down every Premium Passage Banner and easel and vase—oh, that one was an urn. What a mess.

Sue: Benjamin, come on!

Benjamin: I'm an undertaker, not an overtaker!

#30 — You Can't Run/McCobb Mortality Services (Finale)

SUE & AMBER

Slow down!
You're past your prime!
You're down
To your body's last dime.
Your energy
Is a sight to behold,
But you can't run, you're old!

The hearse's engine revs.

Benjamin: Not the hearse!

Sue: You left the keys in the ignition??

The hearse peels into gear.

SUE, AMBER & BENJAMIN

Please stop!
Just hit the breaks
Just stop,
And lower the stakes!
You're losing
Your time riddled mind
And you can't drive, you're blind!

Narrator: The truth is that Paul's driving is excellent. The teenage boy with perfect vision driving the opposite direction, however, is busy looking at his phone and doesn't realize he's swerving right at the hearse.

The cars crash.

Amber & Sue: Grandpa!

Benjamin: My hearse!

Meredith: Sue,

Sue: Omigod, you scared me, Grandma.

Meredith: Go put him out of his misery. The teenager, too.

Sue: Me?

Meredith: You're Death now, and if you don't, they'll just stay in comas.

Sue: Are you serious?

Meredith: Oh, I know a coma when I see it. Sue, you've been to the afterlife. You're more prepared than I was.

Amber: And I know a few books you can read. It's just a quick trip to Limbo.

Meredith: Go get the Scythe.

Sue: Uh, okay?

Benjamin: Do it, babe.

Footsteps.

Sue: Alrighty, then, I'm just gonna saunter over to the uh—

The pace quickens.

Amber: I've never seen her run that fast.

Meredith: Amber, I thought you were hot-headed and wrong, but it turns out you were hot-headed and right. I'm happy that you're in charge.

Amber: Thanks, Grandma. What's your plan?

Meredith: It's time to see the afterlife for myself. Recent events have proved that your grandfather and I need to get to know each other again.

Sue runs again.

Benjamin: There she goes. Gonna kill her own grandpa.

Amber: It's going to be okay, Benjamin.

Narrator: After a few quiet minutes, Sue and Paul emerge, their smiles wider than anyone can remember seeing.

Meredith: Hi, Paul.

MEREDITH

Your clock's unwinding.
Your gears are grinding.
The light is blinding; walk toward it!
There's no need to fear,
Be of good cheer.

PAUL

Our train is here, let's board it!

Paul: I feel like I'm 50! Wait, 40! Hang on, 30!

Amber: Wow, you're adjusting quickly.

Paul: I've been emotionally dead for years!

Meredith: We're going to need a good therapist over there, aren't we? Come on inside.

Paul: You better believe it. Meredith, let me carry you over the threshold one more time.

Meredith: Oh, and look, the staff is all here to see us off.

AGENTS!

You're blessed
Beyond belief!
Come rest!
It's sweet relief!
You hear that bell?
You hear it swell?
You hear that chime?
That means it time!
Go forward, lunge!
Just take the plunge
Into seas of unending song.

Because you're not done for,
No you're not done for.
You're not done for long.

Meredith: I'm going to miss you girls.

Amber: Aww, grandma.

Sue: We'll see you soon enough.

Paul: I hope you don't have to wait as long as I did.

Amber: Go on, get outta here.

AMBER

Leave behind the people you love.
Journey into lands unknown.

SUE

No goodbye is forever,
And you won't be alone.

AMBER

Embrace your brave new sphere.

SUE

We'll handle it from here,
cheering on as you ascend.

AMBER & SUE

We're with you until the end.

Narrator: The elder McCobbs step forward and vanish into the darkness. Amber closes the Portal.

Amber: Hey Sue, you want to take a leisurely stroll through the woods out back?

Sue: On one condition. No talking shop.

Amber: Oh, but I have an idea for the—

Sue: Nope. My vacation starts now.

Amber: Death takes a holiday, huh?

Narrator: The sisters take a walk through the trees, soaking in the sunlight they thought they would never feel again.

A moment.

Narrator: Thank you, dear listeners. To you, we say,

AMBER

Get your life in order now.
Check yourself before it's too late.

SUE

The legacy you're leaving
has an expiration date.

MILLICENT

If you are hashtag blessed, it's your time
to stand up for the oppressed.

BENJAMIN

Time to buy that electric car.

AMELIA

Time to write a brief memoir.

AMBER

Time to decide just who you are,

AMBER & SUE

Because the reckoning day's not far.

COMPANY

All this will fade away
All we have is today
to fight and love through this crazy ride,
this cosmic, emotional slip and slide.
And as your gentle tour guide,
we'll be here at your side.
Don't be afraid to choose.
Don't be afraid to lose.
Every pathway you could explore
Still leads you back to this open door,
With adventures in life and death in store,
And who could ask anything more?

Narrator: We'll see you soon on the other side.

CREDITS

Nicole: McCobb Mortality Services, directed by Dana Iannuzzi. Produced by Belén Moyano. Written and edited by Drew Nichols, with additional book by Maria Pedro. Sound designed by Jeff Sherwood, with sound effects by Chris Okawa. Starring:

Valerie: Valerie Torres-Rosario as Amber,

Santina: Santina Umbach as Sue,

Oyoyo: Oyoyo Joi as Morgan,

Devin: Devin Ilaw as Benjamin,

Johanna: Johanna Carlisle-Zepeda as Meredith and Sharon,

Quentin: Quentin Oliver Lee as Paul,

Maria: Maria Pedro as Millicent and Amelia,

Chris: Chris Okawa as Sam and Pierre,

Jeffrey: Jeffrey Scott Stevens as Todd and Fred,

Nicole: And Nicole Paloma Sarro as your narrator. Also featuring the voices of

Steve: Steve Carroll

Kierna: Kierna Conner

Kayla: Kayla Cyphers

Julian: Julian Decker

Chanel: Chanel Frederick

Jeff: Jeff Gonzalez

Marcus: Marcus Hopkins-Turner

Ryan K: Ryan Kleinman

Ryan H: Ryan Hunt

Darrell: Darrell Morris Jr.

Belén: Belén Moyano

Landon: Landon Soelberg

Rebecca: Rebecca Soelberg

Jeffrey: Jeffrey Scott Stevens

Cherry: Cherry Torres

Mario: and Mario Yniguez

Nicole: With Ricky Roshell on flute, clarinet, and tenor sax; Tanner Dawson on alto, clarinet, bass clarinet, baritone saxophone, and bassoon; David Torres on trumpet solos; and Steve Picataggio on drums. Visit McCobbMusical.com more info. Follow us on social media @mccobbmusical.