

STEVE WOKE UP ON THE FLOOR IN AN EMPTY PLACE to an unfamiliar knock on the door. Feeling groggy and confused, he wiped his eyes in a vain attempt to wake up. As he shuffled to the door that he didn't recognize, a slight panicked confusion came over him; he was no longer in his apartment, and he couldn't recall much from recent memory. He reached the door. "Who is it?"

"My name is Lloyd," the voice called from behind the door. "I'm your orientation guide. If you'll please open the door I can explain a little better for you."

"What the hell is an orientation guide?" Steve asked.

"It's a guide that orientates you. There isn't a lock on your door. I was just asking as a formality. Please open the door and I will explain everything."

Hesitant, Steve obeyed. The sun was up—bright, but not too bright—and Steve was stunned; he had never seen greener grass, a bluer sky, a whiter fence surrounding a nice two-story white house with blue shutters. A man who looked in his thirties wearing a navy blue business suit coupled

with an amazing red-striped power tie stood at the door with a half-smile and a folder. "Good morning, sir," Lloyd said, extending his hand. "You must be Steven. So glad you could make it. I'm sure you have a lot of questions, and I have a lot of answers. If you would gladly follow me, I'll show you around for a bit, and hopefully the staff will have your new house furnished by the time we get back."

"What? Who are you?" He was still half asleep.

"My name is Lloyd. I know you are still waking up and confused, to say the least, which is why I brought you your favorite drink." Lloyd handed him a cappuccino. Steve eyed it, and then Lloyd, and then took a sip. This was the best cappuccino Steve had ever had. "How did you know this was my favorite drink?"

"I'll bet that's the best darn cappuccino you've ever had."

"What's going on here?"

"Come walk with me. I'll explain all you want to know."

Steve shut the door behind him and walked outside. The grass was ridic-

ulously soft, and Steve paused to take it in. The scenery was overwhelming, even without the confusion he already felt. "Where am I?"

Lloyd responded nonchalantly, "You're in hell. You died of a heart attack in your sleep; eighty-seven years old it says. Relax though; it's not what you think."

"I'm dead?"

"Yes."

"My wife . . . my, my children . . . all gone . . ."

"It's ok. They'll join us soon."

Steve glared at him. "You asshole. What the hell kind of saying is that? I don't want my wife and kids to go to hell! What kind of hell is this?!" Steve's attitude was more inquisitive than angry, and Lloyd could tell that Steve was going to fit in just fine in hell.

"Look, relax. One: your wife isn't *going* to hell, she's *coming* here. Two: it's not what you think. Let me explain. If you put two and two together already, then you figured out that there is a God. God created everything,

and passed down laws to every living thing on Earth."

"Every living thing?"

"Yes. Pay attention. I don't like repeating myself. Anyways, each creature and bug and bacteria and such all fall under the rules of God. Each organism has its own heaven and hell, and you are in the human's version. From what I'm guessing, you didn't believe in God, and so you went to hell because you didn't believe."

Steve took in his surroundings again. A few neighbors here and there waved at Lloyd and welcomed Steve to hell as the two strolled down the seemingly endless street. "So where's the eternal hellfire and all that jazz? Is this like a torturous beginning to fool me into thinking something so that I suffer more, or what?"

Lloyd chuckled, although he's heard this a thousand times before. "No, no, no. Eternal damnation just means you're condemned to hell with no chance of getting to heaven. You see, the Bible *is* right about one thing: if you don't believe in God and you didn't truly repent your sins, then you will be condemned for

---

**“I’m dead?”**

**“Yes.”**

**“My wife . . . my, my children . . . all gone . . .”**

**“It’s ok. They’ll join us soon.”**

---

all eternity. There are no absolute wrongs or rights aside from that. You can do whatever you want on Earth and those two rules must be followed, or else God condemns you to hell. What the Bible is incorrect about, however, is what hell is like.”

“Clearly. This place looks amazing. Too bad it’s probably filled with crooks and the like.” Steve looked around uneasily. “I can’t believe I’m lumped with the likes of Hitler.”

“On the contrary: Hitler went to heaven.”

“You’re kidding? How the hell did he manage to do that?”

“He repented. He was a great follower of Christ. According to the Bible, all he had to do was truly repent and declare faith in the Lord and such, and God had to save him. I’m sure that busted God’s balls

pretty hard.” Lloyd chuckled. “We don’t want him anyways. What’s neat about hell is: there are very few ‘criminal types’ as you might say; most of them repented and went to heaven, so there are only relatively good people down here, most of whom just didn’t believe in God. Hell is a pretty nice place. Lots of people leave heaven to live here.”

“Leave heaven? I assume that’s what my wife will do, since you said she’s ‘coming to hell?’”

“Yes. You can never get into heaven, but she can sacrifice heaven to come to hell, from what we guess. They always come down with no memory of heaven; it’s probably part of the sacrifice. Heaven and hell do share lists of people, and we can usually tell the heaven dropouts when we see them. Your wife is a strong candidate. People leave heaven to be with their loved ones in hell often-

times. Some even leave it to get *away* from the ones they loved, like a great divorce. Even though heaven is just like it is in the Bible, it doesn't replace loved ones."

Relieved about his situation, Steve drinks from his cappuccino casually as they stroll down the long block of houses, each as rich as the last. "So this is hell, huh?"

Lloyd smiled. "Yes, Steve, this is hell. What a wonderful place. A house for every family of souls, infinite time for you and your loved ones, very few worries and very good weather; I couldn't be happier about the last eight hundred years here."

Steve nearly spit up his drink. "Eight hundred years! Damn, man, you can't be over forty if I was being the least bit generous!"

Lloyd pulled out a pocket mirror, as if he prepared for this. He handed it to Steve. "Take a look. You don't look too bad yourself." Steve handed his drink to Lloyd and popped open the mirror. Wow, he thought to himself, I look *exactly* like I did in my thirties. "People always think they looked their best in their thirties, no matter the era. Who would have

thought?"

Steve's excitement was rising; with the promise of his wife, a new home, and infinite time, he could barely begin to imagine the possibilities. If what Lloyd was saying was true, that the people here *were* relatively good people; no real crime, no more murder or rapes or thieves, no worries, no *need*, just *want*, just time, just love and happiness, amazing friends, memories good and bad, and all the time to remember them and create new ones. Steve's eyes sweltered with tears, and he fell to his knees and sobbed the happiest whimpers in all his time and thanked God that he didn't believe in God. Lloyd's eyes watered, too. "It always gets to me when the newcomers grasp reality." He pulled out a handkerchief, dabbed his eyes, and then passed it to Steve after the moment passed.

"Welcome to the new world. You'll have all the time in the world to do what you want. There are social gatherings daily, although you are never obligated to go, and you'll find your neighbors are most pleasant as well. Your house should be furnished to your liking now. If you have any questions, ask around. Lots of folks have the answers and are

more than happy to share with you.  
I'll be around as well."

Lloyd smiled and went on his way.  
Steve collected himself and went  
back to his house to take a nap—for  
how long, though, was solely up to  
him. Tomorrow is forever, Steve  
thought to himself, smiling, and to-  
morrow is going to be a great day.