

SISYPHUS

Written by

Julia Wooten

Address
Phone Number

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

TWO UNCONCIOUS BODIES lay slumped in a slowly rising elevator.

On an overhead speaker, we hear the SCREECH of tires against asphalt, followed by a wet THUD, and then-

The elevator JOLTS to a stop, and PETER(19), an internet conspiracy theorist, gasps awake.

Vision BLURRY, he glances up to see-

Handprints - smeared with dirt and grease along the ceiling panels. He blinks rapidly. The handprints VANISH.

On a sharp inhale, he pulls his backpack to his chest.

WOOF, WOOF! He WHIPS around to see-

LES(23), a disoriented businesswoman, half asleep as she fishes her BARKING PHONE out of her pocket.

PETER
(pissed)
What kinda ringtone..?

She SHREIKS at the sound of his voice. BACKS into the corner.

LES
Who are - wait - *where the fuck are we?*

PETER
I don't know. Don't remember much...

She SCANS the room. Takes everything in.

LES
You think we were drugged?

PETER
Most likely.

LES
Why? By- by who? And why an elevator?

PETER
No idea - *wait* - check your phone.

She turns-on the screen. Tries to unlock it. Frowns.

PETER (CONT'D)
The location.

LES
 (annoyed)
 I'm trying, but it's just this
 weird, loading screen..?

He GRABS her phone. An animated tennis ball rolls indefinitely across a black screen.

PETER
 S'just a ball? Why wouldn't it be
 like, the normal loading screen?

LES
 Oh my god - *the ball drop!* It's New
 Years Eve. I remember now...

INT. RED SUDAN - DAY

LES (V.O.)
 ...I was on the phone with one of
 my tenets.

Rush hour traffic. Rows of agitated drivers. At a red, Les talks on the phone.

LES
 It's not about *if* you got the
 money, but *how*. I don't rent to
 dealers. *Be out by tonight.*

The tenet PLEADS, but it's unintelligible. She HANGS-UP.

The light turns green, but the car in front of her CRAWLS ALONG at a snails pace.

(Cutaway: At a dog park, a boy kneels to unleash his dog.)

She SCOWLS. HONKS at the car in front of her.

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

PETER
 You think it was him?

LES
 No - wasn't my tenet. Impulsive?
 Sure. But he's not *psycho*. What
 about you? *Got any enemies?*

Peter SNORTS.

PETER
I make 'em for a living.

INT. BUGGIE - DAY

Busy traffic. Peter frantically PROPS his phone against the dash. Starts recording.

PETER
At the ball drop, my next video comes out, exposing a notorious New York hotel. Some of you might be staying there tonight, if so, be warned... I hear they have *killer* decor...

His phone SLIPS from the dash, landing in the floor boards. He DIVES for it, vision blocked momentarily as-

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

LES
Wait, you're that - that youtuber! You expose the big corporations! That means anyone could be after you-

PETER
Yeah, *now let me finish*. I was exposing an escape room hotel, cause last year, this couple died trying to get out of one of the rooms. The building used to be a hospital in the 1930's, when infrastructure laws weren't as strict. They should've torn the building down and rebuilt from the ground up, but they didn't. I think there was a collapse and they tried to cover it up with the sudden remodeling... I was gonna expose them tonight, but if someone gave em a heads up, the hotel might've - god, I can't even remeber the name, something greek like-

LES
The Sisyphus.

PETER
Yeah, how... *oh shit.*

Over her shoulder we see-

An animatronic man, rolling a stone up a dial. Beneath the animatronic, a plated label reads "*The Sisyphus.*"

LES
It's mythology, right? The man trapped in purgatory, doomed to roll a stone up a hill for all of eternity-

PETER
(distracted)
Yeah...

A DRIVERS SAFETY POSTER hangs on the wall, depicting a boy chasing his dog through the street, racing to catch a tennis ball in oncoming traffic.

The ad reads: *He's got his eyes on the ball, but are yours on the road?*

In a flurry of motion, Peter starts pressing buttons, tapping random panels in the room, fiddling with the creasing of the poster until finally-

He finds it. A metallic tennis ball - protruding from the poster. He PRESSES it.

PETER (CONT'D)
(re: the animatronic)
I knew it. This is an escape room, and *that's* the countdown.

LES
Till the ball drops?

CLICK.

A skylight opens above them, revealing the suspension cords keeping the elevator dangling under their weight.

PETER
No - *till we do.*

The lights FLICKER and the elevator DROPS a foot. They CLING to the rails.

Peter GRABS her forearm. Eyes wide. *Frantic.*

PETER (CONT'D)

Okay - *fuck* - start pressing random buttons, mess with panels that look out of place, screws that don't fit right... Anything that could be a switch, anything that could tell us why they're after you too...

LES

Why would they be after me?! I've never even heard of this place. I just - it doesn't make sense-

Her brows FURROW as something catches her eye on the poster. Peter follows her gaze to see-

LES (CONT'D)

...That boy... he's familiar... I think I...

She trails her fingertips across his face.

PETER

Me too. I know his face.

FLASHBACK:

INT. BUGGIE - DAY

Peter DUCKS down under the dash. Reaching for his phone. A voice CRACKLES to life on the radio.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Most of you are in traffic right now, stuck in an endless matrix of agitation, half-crazed with the need to be somewhere else... but here at the Mythology channel, we know this, ***patience is the sole virtue in a sisyphian world...*** So just sit back, take a deep breath, and enjoy the ride, wherever it takes you...

Peters fingertips just barely SCATHE the corner of his phone when-

He SWERVES.

(Cutaway: In the park, a boy unclips his dog from the leash. A stray tennis ball rolls through green grass. Bounces off the curb. Rolls menacingly into the road.)

SLOW MO AS-

The dog runs after the ball, the boy, right on his heels.)

Peter GRAPPLES for his phone, finally getting a grip on it, when-

THUD. The dog SPLATTERS against the windshield.

Then, right after -

THUD. The boy dies on impact; cheek pressed against the windshield as blood pools at his temple, his curls slickened with black.

A car horn BLARES. Peter WHIPS around to see Les, face strained and knuckles white against the wheel.

Then he's BLINDED by her headlights, and CRUSHED on impact.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE BEGINS:

- In NEW YORK CITY, the ball DROPS.

- In the elevator, the Animatronic Sisyphus reaches the peak of the hill, clicking the boulder into place, only for it to ROLL BACK DOWN AGAIN.

- Then, finally, the elevator DROPS. Gravity's swift reversal SLAMS Peter and Les onto the ceiling. Peter THROWS his hands out in front of his face to break the fall, smearing frantic fingerprints against the metal before going unconscious.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

The elevator JOLTS to a stop, SLAMMING Peter and Les onto the floor. Once again...

TWO UNCONCIOUS BODIES lay slumped in a slowly rising elevator.

ZOOM-OUT TO SEE-

Rows upon rows of elevators, with thousands of souls trapped in purgatory, reliving their trauma, their deepest sins, over and over, for all of eternity...