

Pull My Finger

Setting:

The waiting room outside the Pearly Gates. St. Peter's desk is in the back, covered with paperwork. In front there is a bench on one side. On the other side is a table with a coffee pot and some cookies on the other.

Characters:

Bob: Nervous, fidgety. Bob is the kind of person who actually feels at home in a stuffy office full of formality, and he always seems out of place around people. His appearance is immaculate and conservative.

God: You average, every-day type of guy. He is dressed fairly loosely, but with some style.

St. Peter: Very busy. Peter spends much of his time walking on or off stage with paperwork in his arms. He walks with a purpose and has no time for pleasantries.

We start with St. Peter at his desk, processing paperwork, looking very busy, almost haggard. After a moment he gets up, grabs some paperwork and starts walking off-stage. Just at this time Bob enters from the side. He is looking around with wonder and uncertainty. Bob just manages to stop Peter as he's about to leave.

BOB: Oh, excuse... um, excuse me. *(Peter looks up at him.)* I understand... I mean, am I to understand that... well that it's true that I'm...

PETER: Dead?

BOB: Yes. Yes, and that this is... is...

PETER: The afterlife?

BOB: No. I mean, yes, but no. Is this where I go to... well, to see if I am to be admitted.

PETER: Yes, this is the Pearly Gates. Paperwork?

BOB: Sorry?

PETER: Paperwork. Have you filled out the application?

Bob just looks confused for a moment. There is a pause, then Peter walks back to the desk, grabs a clipboard and hands it to him.

PETER: Application. It's just a formality. Return that to me and we can review your file. Okay? *(waits, nothing)* Hello?

BOB: Yes, I um...

PETER: Good. *(walks off)*

Bob looks at the clipboard. Surveys the room. Sees the table with the coffee and cookies. Considers taking a cookie but thinks better of it. He sits on the bench and begins to fill out the form. God enters, looking very casual. He goes over to the table, pours some coffee, picks out a good cookie, etc. Meanwhile, Bob is looking a little uncertain about something on his form. He looks around nervously, spots God. They nod at each other. St. Peter walks across the stage quickly. Bob tries to get his attention but fails before Peter is already off the stage again.

BOB: Um...! Darn!

Bob finally decides to get up and address God.

BOB: Excuse me. *(God looks him.)* Oh, hi.

GOD: Howdy.

BOB: I'm sorry, you don't work here, do you?
GOD: Here? No. Not here. I'm just killing time.
BOB: Oh, you too? I'm sorry, but, well maybe you don't know this, but...
GOD: Yes?
BOB: Well here it asks that I list my references. I'm not sure if... well, if that's supposed to be references who are already...
GOD: Dead?
BOB: Yes. I mean no, not exactly. I... I assume that they would want references from people who are already... already admitted... to Heaven. Well, the thing is how would I know? Right? That would be presumption, wouldn't it?
GOD: Just put down your family and friends, I always do. Don't worry! You're not going to be crucified for any mistakes.

Bob cringes at the use of the word "crucifies". Obviously he is concerned that his present conduct could have a bearing on his admittance. He looks uncomfortable around this unknown person now.

BOB: Well, thanks. I'll just... Yes.

He sits back down at the bench, now totally engrossed in the application form. God wanders a bit upstage where Bob can't see him. St. Peter walks on stage with some papers, shows God something and gets him to sign it. Whispers some question, God shakes his head "no" and St. Peter walks off-stage again. God walks up behind Bob. Reads over his shoulder for a moment.

GOD: So d'ya think you got in?
BOB: Sorry?
GOD: Do you think you got in? Accepted. Cookie?
BOB: No thanks.
GOD: You've got to have an idea of your chances.
BOB: Well, now I think this is a dangerous topic to broach. I mean, I can't be sure if speculation, I mean here and now, if that might become damning. If I said I thought I was heaven-bound that might show a certain degree of arrogance.
GOD: What a load of crap. God's not going to throw you out just because of something you say in a waiting room! Hey, I promise I won't tell a soul.
BOB: Well, you've got a point. After all, what's the likelihood that the scales are so precariously balanced that something that small would tip it... I mean the outcome... one way or another?
GOD: Okay, sure yeah. So...
BOB: Let me just say that there are a number of admirable qualities that I pride myself in holding as important, such as...
GOD: Compassion...
BOB: (*Surprised*) Order! Strict attention to order. When you think about it, the laws that God has passed down—the ten commandments—they all explain to the common citizen how to function in society so that everyone can coexist peacefully. It's about making sure the rules of society don't break down! Look at this incredible world that God has created. All of the perfectly balanced facets that coexist in harmony. Life, the double-helix...
GOD: ...the US Tax Code.
BOB: Such feats couldn't be accomplished without strict attention to detail. Meticulous precision. Ergo...
GOD: Ergo God's some sort of neat-freak?

BOB: I can't wait to see heaven. Oh! assuming that I am admitted of course. I'm sure he has a wonderous system in place. None of the chaos, the messy inconsistencies, disagreements. Perfect harmony. Oh it sounds...

GOD: Just ducky. Thrill a minute.

BOB: I imagine Heaven is a place where we grow beyond needing thrills.

GOD: But how can art exist without thrills, conflicts, contrast? Spilling a little fucking paint and coloring outside the lines!

BOB: I'm not sure what "art" necessarily has to do with Heaven.

GOD: You think Heaven is all drab white clouds, hallways of light with no decoration?

BOB: I wouldn't presume. I mean, I'm sure it has a beauty beyond my wildest dreams.

GOD: I'd love to see that.

BOB: What?

GOD: Your wildest dreams. On the other hand, maybe I wouldn't.

BOB: So what how do you feel about your prospects?

GOD: Prospects?

BOB: About getting into heaven. I'm sure if you're up here you must have led a pretty pious life.

God doesn't quite know how to answer that one. He wanders back over to the table. Bob finishes his paperwork, starts to look around for St. Peter.

GOD: Sure I can't tempt you with a cookie?

BOB: Sorry, no.

GOD: Calories don't count up here?

BOB: No, thanks.

GOD: Coffee?

Peter walks on and off again. Too quickly for Bob to get his attention. It looks like Bob is trying to give the clipboard back to him.

BOB: I'm fine.

GOD: It's decaffeinated.

BOB: Oh, oh in that case. Sure. Um, thanks.

GOD: Cream? Sugar? Or do you like it (*mockingly*) **black**?

BOB: (*Shocked.*) Oh, um. Cream and... cream. Yes, that'll do nicely.

Peter comes the other way. Bob is caught off guard again, having just received the coffee. God grabs the clipboard from him and chases Peter off stage. He returns a second later without the clipboard.

BOB: Thanks so much for that!

GOD: You gotta stay on your toes up here. Lot's of people being processed, of course. If you're not careful Heaven might fill up. Relax! I was just kidding.

BOB: Do... do you have any idea how long... well, how long I might be waiting to... to hear if I...

GOD: Until you know if you're going upstairs or downstairs?

BOB: Yes.

GOD: Oh, that depends. References have to be checked, records have to be reviewed.

BOB: I can appreciate that. I mean it would be awful to allow the wrong sort of person into Heaven! Think of the havoc one could wreck!

GOD: The tedium one could induce.

BOB: Sorry?

GOD: I'm sure you'll know the answer within a few years.

BOB: YEARS!

GOD: Is that a problem?

BOB: Oh God, no! I mean, sorry, no. Of course, that's fine. I can wait, of course.

GOD: Hey, relax! Don't worry! You don't have to sit on this bench for the next ten years. There's a dining hall back there. A nice ballpark yonder. There's plenty to do. People to meet. (*Bob looks uncomfortable.*) It's a very social place. (*Bob looks even more uncomfortable.*) You might even meet "Him" wandering around here?

BOB: God?

GOD: Mmm. He was at a reception the other day.

BOB: You met him at a reception?

GOD: Yeah, sure. It wasn't a formal to-do. He'd just swung by to see how people were getting on. There's a lot of waiting around here.

BOB: Well they say patience is a virtue.

GOD: Yeah, whatever.

BOB: So what was He like? Was everyone awe-struck?

GOD: Nah. No point in doing the whole "awe and splendor" thing. People always bowing and praying, it gets boring. No, he's pretty sensible. Good sense of humor.

BOB: Sense of humor?

GOD: Of course! How else would you explain the existence of the Platypus?

BOB: Well, I guess when you think of it like that...

GOD: It was a great shin-dig. He likes that you know. Social events, cocktail parties. Bowling.

BOB: B-b-bowling?

GOD: Yeah, but up here we don't use bowling balls. Too predictable. You know God would always make that 7-10 split. Shit, he'd get strikes every time. He's infallible, right? (*Bob flinches at the profanity.*)

BOB: Of course.

GOD: So we use penguins instead.

BOB: P-p-penguins?

GOD: You got a s-sp-sp-speech imp-pediment? Yeah, penguins. You never know exactly what they're going to do after they make it halfway down the ramp. Usually try to belly-slide down the ramps. They get into that.

BOB: This, this is insane. God wouldn't bowl with Penguins. That would be cruel!

GOD: Oh he doesn't mind. He needs the handicap.

BOB: No! the p-p-penguins. That's animal cruelty.

GOD: You want cruelty, you should see what he does with the Platypus. Bartenders, the lot of them! That bill's not accidental. It makes the perfect bottle-opener. Poor bastards are all Betty-Ford-Bound anyway. But that's another story.

BOB: This is insane. I refuse to put up with... this is a test, isn't it? This can't be accidental. Not here. This is a test! God wants to see what I would do... oh how did I let this go on so long in the first place. You must think I'm pretty...

GOD: Sorry, I'm not into guys.

BOB: Pretty gullible.

GOD: You do make a pretty good straight man. You and me, we could go far. We could do the heavenly tour, then Las Vegas. Fuck, skip heaven. Let's go straight to Vegas. I know this nice little nightclub...

BOB: I never!

GOD: Don't worry, no need for practice. You're a natural. I like you. You make me laugh. See "ha ha". (*Okay, that needed some work.*) Anyway, you're in. Why not? How much harm could you do? I'll go tell St. Peter to skip the paperwork.

BOB: What... do you mean?

GOD: You're in. Admitted. Pearly gates and all? Why make you wait around here for a few years. (*Besides, you might enjoy it too much.*) I'll have St. Peter give you a key to the kingdom. Hell, have mine! I can always make a copy. What do you say?

BOB: WHO ARE YOU!?

St. Peter walks by at that time.

PETER: He's God. (*Rolls his eyes. He has God sign some more papers. Bob sees this and the realization hits.*)

BOB: NOOOOO!!!! This can't be happening!

GOD: Ah, sweet denial. Too good to be true?

BOB: Good? This is a nightmare! I refuse to subscribe to the notion that the... the Universe would be run by a... a...

GOD: Go ahead, you know you want to say it.

BOB: Buffoon!

GOD: (To St. Peter) Do people still use that word? We need to work on this boy's vocabulary!

BOB: I can't take an eternity like this. It'll kill me! (*Realizing the absurdity of the statement, Bob continues to get more flustered.*) I mean, I'll kill someone. (*Not any better.*) Tell me this isn't happening.

GOD: Okay, this isn't happening.

BOB: LIAR! Oh dear God, what am I going to do? There's got to be another choice... Wait a minute.

GOD: (*Feigning concern, badly.*) Oh oh.

BOB: You! I'm going to make you regret this!

GOD: No, please!

BOB: I know someone who could use an efficiency expert. Someone who doesn't have too much free time on his hands. Someone who might appreciate an analytical, calculating mind like mine.

GOD: You don't know what you're saying. Please, reconsider.

BOB: I'll bet the Devil would reward someone who could strategize the most efficient methods of turning souls. So it'll be a bit hot down there, at least I'll be able to get away from YOU!

GOD: Blasphemer!

BOB: AHA! You'll... you'll... you'll be sorry!

GOD: (*Aside to Peter.*) Satan's going to have to teach this kid how to swear properly. Do you think he can do it?

BOB: That's it! I'm outta here.

Bob storms off stage. There's a moment of silence. Then God and St. Peter look at each other. Another pause. Then they quietly shake hands. Then they slowly walk off the stage.

PETER: Good job. What a stiff!

GOD: That was close.

PETER: Bowling with Penguins? Where'd you come up with that?