

(Interior of an elevator)

RECORDED VOICE (INTERCOM): Hello and welcome to the Pinnacle of Passion dating service. You will be traveling through several floors of our building in order to find your one true match. In the last three years, we have celebrated a 100% success rate and thousands of couples have formed deep, lasting connections. You-

EZEKIEL speaks from a pre-recorded message.

EZEKIEL: (awkward and stilted): Ezekiel Williams

RECORDED VOICE (INTERCOM): — will be our 3,724th success story. When you're ready, please enter the elevator in front of you.

(There's a DING from an intercom above Ezekiel.)

MAE: Hello Ezekiel! You can call me Mae. Do you need me to remind you why you're here today or are you ready to begin?

EZEKIEL: I'm here for the "Precipice Package." A do or die experience for the dejected, forsaken, lovelorn individual who thinks there's no one out there for them." Guilty as charged. "A hundred floors, a hundred dates — make it to the top and seal your fate!"

MAE: Oh, wow, that is almost exactly what is on our brochure.

EZEKIEL: I either find my true love or take a dive, right?

MAE: We call it a leap of faith and, to be clear, no one has ever made it to the top. Our success rate—

EZEKIEL: Yeah, yeah. Okay. Let's do this.

(The elevator moves up.)

MAE: Your first match is—

EZEKIEL: No. Don't tell me.

MAE: Are you sure? It almost always—

EZEKIEL: I wanna go in fresh. Just get to know them.

(The elevator stops a few floors up. Ding.)

MAE: Oookay. I'll be listening.

(The doors open.)

LARA: (immediately): Hi! I'm Lara, and you must be —

(LARA sits at a table directly in front of him in a small room.)

EZEKIEL: -E-Z.

LARA: Sorry?

EZEKIEL: (stammering): My friends. E-Z, they call me E-Z.

(He steps back into the elevator and rapidly taps the “Close Door” button.)

LARA: Wait, where are you—

(The doors close.)

EZEKIEL: You didn't tell me they'd be that close, like, right in your face!

MAE: (earnest): You didn't want me to tell you anything.

EZEKIEL: Just—next floor, Mae.

MAE: Are you sure? She'll probably think it was kind of cute—

EZEKIEL: NEXT FLOOR.

(The elevator moves up.)

MAE: Would you like me to tell you about your next date?

(There's another DING as the elevator stops.)

EZEKIEL: (sigh): Yes, I would.

MAE: On Floor 2 you are meeting Idalia Verano, a 27-year-old Exotic Animal Veterinarian.
(beat) Here. Take a look.

EZEKIEL: She's pretty.

MAE: Each candidate has been chosen to specifically match your preferences, E-Z.

EZEKIEL: Maybe a little tall . . . Uh, and I think I'm gonna stick with Ezekiel.

(The doors open.)

EZEKIEL: Hi, I'm Ezekiel . . .

IDALIA: Uh, hi, Idalia . . . Why are you looking at me like that?

EZEKIEL: Well, I can tell . . . you recognize me. Happens sometimes.

IDALIA: Oh. Nooooo. Should I?

EZEKIEL: Quizotic?

IDALIA: Doesn't ring a bell.

EZEKIEL: It's only the greatest game show on cable television. Ezekiel Williams? I won it three times.

IDALIA: Cool! You must be pretty smart to—

EZEKIEL: Oh! Not just smart. You had to have nerves of steel to get through that . . . (fades)

(The elevator doors close behind him.)

EZEKIEL: (sighs): That went nowhere.

MAE: You DID spend the entire time talking about yourself. How about you try asking more about them?

(DING. Doors open and close.)

EZEKIEL: What went wrong that time?

MAE: It's a date not an interrogation. There's a balance to this whole thing. A give and take.

(DING.)

MAE: You're doing better! Maybe try talking about each other's past?

(DING.)

MAE: To be fair, the amount of sexual partners he's had really isn't your business.

(DING.)

MAE: You should probably mention your mom a little less.

(DING. Doors open.)

LUCINDA: (mocking): OOOOOH! I'm a big game show winner look at me!

EZEKIEL: Three times! Three time winner!

(Doors close. Ezekiel collapses to the floor.)

EZEKIEL: (sobbing): Why does everyone hate me?

MAE: Ezekiel? Buddy. Hey. Hey. Let's not—

EZEKIEL: (Lets out an exaggerated wail.)

MAE: Okay then. Just let it out. Let it all out.

EZEKIEL: (It turns into a quiet whimper.)

MAE: What are you afraid of —

EZEKIEL: (whining): Clowns.

MAE: No. (sigh) Why aren't you opening up? What's holding you back?

EZEKIEL: I've opened up plenty.

MAE: You talk about things you've done but not who you are.

(A beat goes bye)

MAE: You can't expect to be someone who's loved if you spend half your life behind the curtain, E-Z.

(There's a few seconds of silence between them.)

EZEKIEL: Y'Know, I wish there were more people like you, Mae. Ever thought of trying this whole service out?

MAE: Oh . . . uhm, I can't —

EZEKIEL: I know, I know. It'd probably be weird to have an employee run the whole gauntlet.

MAE: Right. That. Definitely that.

EZEKIEL: (groans loudly.): Why is this so hard!

MAE: Look, I know what it's like to wear multiple faces. And that'll get you by for a while, but not in any meaningful way. It's okay to be afraid sometimes, vulnerable. (beat) Why did you sign up for this?

(Ezekiel readjusts so that he's sitting up.)

EZEKIEL: There was someone I cared for. A lot, actually. We met online like most people. She lived on the other side of the continent so we'd write these letters to each other. It started out with a pun here or there, but it wasn't long before each message would take a couple of hours — at least. We never talked about the game show which, believe it or not, was a big relief. She just seemed interested in getting to know me. We'd made plans to meet eventually, but she was in a car wreck on the way to the airport.

EZEKIEL: She was fine, but she wouldn't be able to come. I knew it would've put her under quite a bit of financial burden, so I offered to pay for the repairs.
(beat): The letters started getting infrequent after that. I tried to make new arrangements, maybe I could fly to her. I wanted to make it work. . . .

MAE: You never heard back?

EZEKIEL: No, I did. After a few weeks of silence, a notification popped up in my inbox. (beat) It was the exact same message she sent me the first time. And that's when I knew she was a bot or something designed to get schmucks like me to give away their money. I came here to find someone real. To spend my life with.

MAE: You're not a schmuck, you just opened your heart. And that's what needs to happen here.

EZEKIEL: You really think I'll find someone?

MAE: It's okay to be afraid. That's the best time to take a leap. Just follow your heart.

(Ezekiel takes a deep breath and lets it all out.)

EZEKIEL: So this is my next match? Jeremy. Social worker. He's cute.

(He clicks the button to open the doors.)

EZEKIEL: Hi Jeremy, I'm Ezekiel.

(Montage:)

EZEKIEL: NO! You didn't!

JEREMY: You bet your ass I did, threw it right out the window!

MAE: Date 71.

EZEKIEL: You must be Fan!

EZEKIEL: Did they ever find out?!

FAN: Not a single soul!

MAE: Date 87.

EZEKIEL: –believe me I wish things were different, but I'm deathly afraid of your occupation.

(A clown honks a horn sadly.)

MAE: Date 93.

EZEKIEL: Mae.

MAE: Yes, Ezekiel?

EZEKIEL: I'm scared.

(The doors open and close. DING. End montage.)

MAE: Date 100.

(He paces around in panic.)

EZEKIEL: Oh god. Oh god. Okay. Okay. Breaaaaaathe. Breeeeeathe. Breaaaaaathe.

MAE: Saying it and doing it are two very different things. Slowly. In. Out.

(He stops pacing but continues to breathe heavily.)

MAE: We saved your best match for last.

EZEKIEL: (Gasping for air): You did? Why.

MAE: It's a safety precaution. Isn't that comforting?

EZEKIEL: (gasping): No.

MAE: Why not?

EZEKIEL: I have no idea. Maybe it should help. But I'm also a single floor away from death so actually I think this is a fairly reasonable place for me to be in right now.

MAE: I'm sorry. No one's ever made it this far —

(He immediately catches his breath.)

EZEKIEL: Wait. What was that?

MAE: There's just not exactly a protocol for—

EZEKIEL: No no no, the other thing.

MAE: No one's ever been this far before?

EZEKIEL: (proud): I'm the first. (beat) You know what I think I can do this.

MAE: I know you can.

EZEKIEL: Hey, in case we don't see each other again . . . thanks. Like, I know it's your job, but I feel like you really get me. I'm going to miss you.

MAE: I'm going to miss you too. (beat) Now get in there. Don't keep them waiting.

(The doors open.)

(We fade into the next scene. Ezekiel and Jordan are laughing.)

JORDAN: I wasn't sure what to think about this whole thing at first, but I'm starting to feel really good about this. I know they told us not to talk about it, but which date is this for you, if you don't mind me asking? Number seventeen for me.

EZEKIEL: I'm a little further along.

JORDAN: Is that so? Then how about we get a bit more serious. Have you ever been in love?

EZEKIEL: I thought I was, once. But it didn't really work out.

JORDAN: That's a shame. You know what they say though; there's a first for everything.

EZEKIEL: You might just be right.

JORDAN: This is so weird for me. I've always thought I need to start by being friends first, you know?

EZEKIEL: I've never dated a friend. (beat) My friends call me E-Z.

JORDAN: Uhm, okay. (beat) I just think it's so important that you know they get you. But I've tried that whole thing and it blew up in my face. But a couple of my friends that I actually dated ended up going through this and—

EZEKIEL: (distracted): I'm sorry. I have to stop you. This is crazy, Like really fucking crazy. But I'm scared right now.

JORDAN: Oh, I'm sorry I—

EZEKIEL: No, it's not you; it's something a friend said.

(Ezekiel pushes himself up from the table. And backs toward the elevator.)

EZEKIEL: I'm sorry, you've been so lovely, but I have to go.

(The elevator doors open and Ezekiel rushes in.)

EZEKIEL: Mae! Mae! Are you there?

MAE: Ezekiel? Did you not like Jordan?

EZEKIEL: They were great but—

MAE: Then what are you doing here this is your last—

EZEKIEL: They're not you.

(Silence.)

MAE: Oh. Oh no. Nonono —

EZEKIEL: You get me unlike anyone else, Mae. Take a leap. That's what you said. And goddammit I'm following my heart and it's telling me—

TECHNICIAN: All right! I'm stopping you there.

EZEKIEL: Uh, Mae?

TECHNICIAN: No, we've shut her off for now.

EZEKIEL: "Shut her . . . ?"

TECHNICIAN: You need to understand the situation, sir. You have completed your final floor.

EZEKIEL: But I found someone.

TECHNICIAN: That means, given your contract and the state's laws-

EZEKIEL: I found someone!

TECHNICIAN: -regarding assisted suicide-

TECHNICIAN: (sigh): You didn't find anyone. Mae is a personality partitioned from our AI, specifically designed to guide you through this experience.

EZEKIEL: You're telling me I fell in love with a computer . . . again?

TECHNICIAN: It's a little more complicated than that, but that was your final stop.

EZEKIEL: I-I, but-

TECHNICIAN: Now, as it states in your contract "in the possibility that the client does not discover a match—"

EZEKIEL: Then I've sealed my fate.

TECHNICIAN: But, you are our first client to make it through one hundred dates. . . . Maybe we can make an exception. We could send you back down to Jordan's floor and give you a second—

EZEKIEL: No. I don't want Jordan, or Fan, or — I want Mae. That connection I felt with her is what I signed up for. (beat) Couldn't I take her with me or something?

TECHNICIAN: Intellectual property rights notwithstanding; no. Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way.

EZEKIEL: And your 100% success rate? You don't care about that anymore?

TECHNICIAN: (hesitant): Well there is something we've been working on.

EZEKIEL: And that is?

TECHNICIAN: We're able to separate you from your corporeal form by uploading your consciousness to our mainframe where a part of you will exist as a basis for our AI's personalities.

EZEKIEL: Will I be with Mae?

TECHNICIAN: We're not sure how much of yourself that you'll retain . . . but it's the closest you'll ever get.

EZEKIEL: C-can I talk it over with her?

TECHNICIAN: (sigh): Sure.

(The technician cuts out. Mae boots up. The elevator ascends.)

MAE: I'm sorry.

EZEKIEL: You have nothing to apologize for. (beat) Will it work?

MAE: You'll be the first client to undergo this process . . . if it does work out, we'll be working together . . . kind of.

EZEKIEL: If it doesn't?

MAE: If there is a hitch in the upload process, the data will likely corrupt and there won't be much of you left.

EZEKIEL: Fuck. (beat) What happens next?

MAE: We'll deploy the equipment intended for the client's termination. Our technicians will scan your brainwaves and upload them directly from there.

EZEKIEL: Will . . . Will it hurt?

MAE: I'm unsure. The termination sequence for the client is designed to be painless. Since this is uncharted territory, I can't grant you any guarantee. (beat) However, I can do this for you.

(The elevator stops and the doors open to a gorgeous view.)

EZEKIEL: So this is what 100 stories looks like. . . . It's nice.

(An electric whirring as a helmet comes down from the ceiling.)

EZEKIEL: Thank you, Mae. For everything. (Screams)

(He puts on the helmet and screams as if falling from a great height.

Ezekiel comes through an intercom after a few moments:)

EZEKIEL (INTERCOM): Hello and welcome to the Pinnacle of Passion dating service. You will be traveling through several floors of our building in order to find your one true match. In the last four years, we have celebrated a . . .

(The recording fades out and becomes incomprehensible by the time it is to confirm the 100% success rate.)