

Episode 1

THE WEIGHT OF HER SINS

1.1 Intro

[Int. basement. Lighting is concentrated on center area. Sparks occasionally jump from bits of equipment. Water is dripping somewhere.]

Chay: “*cough*”

Chay: “*cough cough*”

Chay: “It’s so bloody damp down here.”

???: “I know we’re in a cellar, but... I don’t suppose you have a window we could open or anything? It’s not a smart question but this place is weird, y’ know. Could be windows anywhere.”

Chay: “Yeah, we’ve got a vent that leads outside somewhere. Maddy, can you open it up, get some fresh air coming through?”

Maddy: “... I’m pretty sure it’s got a dumpster or something sitting on top of it right now.”

Maddy: “Besides, I’m busy. Just grin and bear it.”

[Chay looks annoyed.]

Chay: “Mmm.”

[Time skips. Can we subtly imply that this is happening with some sort of visual effect?]

Chay: “Can we get this over with?”

Maddy: “We’ve done this before, old man, you *know* it takes a while to set up. Calm your farm.”

[He looks even more unimpressed.]

Chay: “I do not appreciate your tone.”

Maddy: “...”

Maddy: “Sorry.”

Chay: “Can we get some more lights on, maybe?”

Chay: "With all the crap you've got scattered around the place, I'd like to at least know where I'm putting my feet."

Maddy: "Ashley, would you mind?"

*[*click!**]

[A spotlight pointed at the centre of the basement lights up. It illuminates the tree roots sprouting from the ceiling, as well as the wires and various bits of equipment attached to them. On the floor, under it all, is an elaborate chalk and wire diagram, with odd bits of script along the edges. Perhaps bits are oddly obscured because this is a flashforward?]

Maddy: "Thanks."

Chay: "..."

Chay: "You're more organized than last time, I see."

Maddy: "Practice makes perfect."

Ashley: "Hey, do we need anything else?"

Maddy: "I think that's enough."

Maddy: "Grab me the book?"

[Ashley passes Maddy the book she was reading from earlier.]

Maddy: "Great. Now..."

[She opens the book, and begins to pace around the perimeter.]

Ashley: "Chay?"

[off-screen] Maddy: "As above... so below..."

Chay: "What's up, little pea?"

Ashley: "I found you a chair."

[SFX: chair shifting on floor]

Chay: "Ah, thank you."

???: "So, this whole thing... surely it's not legal, yeah? Maddy wasn't clear on that."

Chay: "Yes, the [?????] found it... confronting. For good reason, I suppose."

Ned: "Because it utterly upsets the [?????] [?????], mate, it's not just bureaucracy-

Chay: "Shush, you."

Chay: "Most rules can be bent, after all..."

Ned: "Sigh."

Chay: "...and Maddy has a particular fascination with breaking rules. As I'm sure you've realized."

Ashley: "Hey, don't give her all the credit!"

[Ned helmetpalms.]

???: "Is this related to her [?????]?"

Chay: "Mm-hmm."

???: "So, the transfer..."

Chay: "Was the same sort of magic we're doing now, yes. Small scale, though. Doing it on a larger scale requires a bit more preparation."

Chay: "... the Council's successfully suppressed all available information about it, though."

Ned: "For good reason!"

???: "What happens if something goes wrong?"

Chay: "Well, you don't tend to mess it up more than once."

Chay: "Or try it again after you fail, for that matter."

Chay: "Stubborn scholars notwithstanding."

???: "What do you even call this sort of magic, then?"

[Another one of the wires begins to spark.]

Ned: "Question's irrelevant, because it's banned."

Ashley: "Badass? I call it badass."

Chay: "Well, by definition, it's a conduit ritual. That definition's a fairly lifeless one, if you ask me."

Chay: "But, looking past all the smoke and mirrors and fancy names, you can just call it..."

[beat – the room positively thrums with nervous energy. Camera behind Maddy?]

Maddy: "...necromancy."

[Cut to title card. Like [this](#), maybe?]

[black bg] ROUTE 59 GAMES PRESENTS
[external establishing shot] NECROBARISTA
EPISODE 1: \$EPISODETITLE

[I know we're running an OP at the end, but if we do this, we can establish visual/structural continuity for when we do this in the other episodes. This only needs to go for 5 or so seconds, anyway.]

1.2 Welcome

[Cut from previous to shot of Maddy preparing coffee. From behind is cheaper.]

In this scene, we drop text between each sound effect - pouring espresso, milk steaming, jug being tapped, milk poured, cup clattering on saucer.

Espresso. *Espresso/pulling shot sfx*

It was easy for Maddy's mind to wander while she worked.

Milk. *Milk steaming sfx*

Her boss, Chay, often chided her for it. He'd say "You've gotta pay attention to the customer," or "stop teasing the spirits," or "hey, you've set the espresso machine on fire again," - but, truth be told, she thought some of her best ideas came while she was mindlessly preparing lattes and being mean to dead people.

Polish. *Jug tapping sfx*

Not that she didn't take pride in her work, or anything. It was just that the latte-making process was second nature at this point. And she could process her thoughts while doing it.

Pour. *Pour sfx*

Too much introspection is a dangerous thing, though.

Serve. *Cup clatter sfx*

Maddy turns, and passes a cup to someone out of frame.

???: "Thanks."

She told herself that she was being productive with her internal dialogue, but in reality, she absolutely wasn't. She was stuck in a loop.

Maddy: "No worries. See ya later."

[SFX: The front door opens, and the bell on it makes a "ding!"]

The Terminal - her workplace, and home of a motley crew she'd adopted as her family - was like a spiderweb, and she sat at the centre.

If anything changed inside, whether it was a raised voice upstairs or someone muttering a forbidden incantation in the basement, she could tell.

And if you cause a twitch on a spider's web, well... the spider's probably gonna come and bite ya.

[SFX: The front door opens, and the bell on it makes a "ding!" (again - variant?)]

Maddy sighed, and began cleaning a glass. She glanced up at the person who'd just walked in, but he didn't seem quite ready to approach the counter, much less make an order.

The young man stood awkwardly in the middle space between the counter and the door, nervously rubbing his palms on his shoulders, as if he was trying to warm himself up.

It was generally fairly warm in the cafe, but new visitors sometimes took a little while to get acclimatized to the space.

So she waited as patiently as she could. Maddy was not a patient person by nature, but this place attracted plenty of nervous folk. She had to make concessions somewhere.

[Maddy glances at a clock, or her watch (if she wears one).]

The new visitor showed no sign of moving from his spot, and truth be told, Maddy didn't think he'd be able to unless she intervened.

Maddy: "Hey. Mate. You right?"

The nervous man started, as if he hadn't been expecting anyone to talk to him.

Kishan: "Ack!"

Kishan: "..."

Kishan: "You... you can see me?"

Maddy smiled, somewhat sympathetically.

Maddy: "Yeah, clear as day."

Maddy: "You gonna order something?"

He wiped a drop of sweat from his brow, and just stared at her.

Maddy: "I wonder... do you know where you are?"

Kishan: "I... I don't. I, um... I've been walking around for hours. Nobody was listening to me... I don't know how I ended up here..."

Maddy: "I think you'll find it was the front door. That's how you got in, I reckon."

The guy seemed to be regaining his composure. He chuckled nervously, and took a deep breath.

Kishan: "Right, uh... where am I?"

She put down the glass, and picked up one of the cafe's branded mugs.

Maddy: "This, dearly departed, is the Terminal. Carlton's finest."

Kishan: "Wh-"

Maddy: "They say our coffee's to die for."

DEMO END

Upon hearing her last words, uttered in a singsong cadence, his breath hitched in his throat.

Maddy: "And what's your name?"

Kishan: "I-it's Kishan... I think. You... you said it's... to die for?"

Maddy: "Yep. Pretty proud of that tagline. Multiple levels of meaning and all that."

[beat]

Kishan: "..."

Maddy: "'Cause it's a place where dead people come to get coffee. Sorry. Should've made that more clear."

Kishan: "So, I'm..."

He took a moment, obviously trying to pull himself together. Maddy had been regarding him skeptically, trying to suss out if he was just some awkward dude having a bad brain day, but this cemented it. Anxiety wasn't his primary issue. He was...

Maddy: "You can say it. It's okay, it's not a bad word here."

Kishan gulped.

Kishan: "I'm... dead, right? Is that what's going on?"

Maddy: "Yeah. Sorry. Most people who come in, ah..."

She made a noncommittal gesture.

Maddy: "Most of 'em have already figured it out."

Kishan: "Oh."

Kishan: "Sorry, I... I think I need a moment."

[Maddy's eyes soften.]

Maddy: "Take your time."

Kishan: "The thought had, like... crossed my mind, you know?"

Kishan: "But I'm so used to people ignoring me in general that I thought maybe I was just having a really bad day."

Maddy: "Ah... man. I'm sorry."

[beat]

Maddy: "So, you want some coffee?"

Kishan started.

Kishan: "Oh. This is actually a coffee shop, huh. I'll guess I'll have, uhhh... a double shot long black."

She rolled her eyes, and turned to start making his coffee.

Maddy: "Hipster."

1.3 Calm Down

---Skip forward--- (maybe drop a cut to black, and sfx)

Maddy and Kishan lean on the counter across from each other, a ways down from the machine/ordering area.

Kishan looks awkward. He's leaning facing the rest of the cafe - away from Maddy - and she's more hunched down on the other side (or just leaning, un-hunched, if it's a high counter), with her elbows on the counter. She's watching him, somewhat guardedly.

Kishan: "So, uhhh."

Kishan: "I don't really know how to... go about this."

Maddy: "Ask me anything, man. It's not like you're the first disheveled and disoriented dead dude to drop in."

Kishan: "Hmm."

He sipped his coffee, and took a moment to think about it.

Kishan: "What does everyone else ask?"

Maddy: "Well, they generally start with that one."

Kishan: "Ah, shit."

Maddy: "And they *always* say that."

[beat]

Maddy: "Then there's the embarrassed silence..."

Kishan: "Alright, alright. I get it."

Maddy smirked.

Kishan: "You always this mean to everyone who comes through, or just the pitiful ones like me?"

He looked back at her, smiling slightly, and she arched an eyebrow.

Maddy: "Only the pitiful ones."

Kishan drew back a little, a miserable expression crossing his face.

Kishan: "I guess that's consistent."

Kishan: "Always felt like people saw me as a pitiful guy."

Maddy: "Nah, I'm just kidding-"

Kishan: "No, I promise, you're right. I'm a fuckin' sad sack."

Kishan: "I don't even know how I died but I bet it was pitiful and meaningless, just like everything else about me."

Kishan: "I'm-"

Kishan: "I'm never even gonna have a chance to make things better for myself. I'm stuck like this."

[She vainly tries to get him to calm down.]

Maddy: "C'mon."

Kishan: "And now I'm sitting in a cafe for dead people falling apart in front of the barista-"

Maddy: "**PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER, MY DUDE.**"

He blinked, and slowly came back to earth.

Maddy: "No breakdowns in the cafe, please."

Maddy: "I promise, man, you are *okay*. I know how it is."

Kishan: "Are... are you...?"

Maddy: "No. But I've had a hundred people like you walk through the door."

Kishan: "So I'm just averagely messy. Can't even do that right-"

Maddy: "Kishan, you have twenty-four hours left on this plane until you have to move on to the next place, and I don't think you want to spend them having one big long extended panic attack."

Kishan: "T-twenty-four hours?!"

Maddy: "Ah, shit. What I'm saying is, uh, everything's okay. Just take some deep breaths, we'll sort this out."

Kishan: "I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I don't want to be a fuss."

[Maddy gestures to the mostly-empty cafe.]

Maddy: "It's not like I have anything else to be doing. Don't worry about it."

Kishan: "Are you... sure...? I'm kind of a burden..."

Maddy: "You're not. Chin up, mate. Lemme tell you about this place. It's pretty cool."

Maddy: "So, I first wandered in here about four years ago..."

---Skip forward---

[Maddy's midway through preparing a drink. Kishan's hovering at the bar.]

Maddy: "...and that's how long you've got before you've gotta move on. Twenty-four hours."

[She pulls a shot.]

Kishan: "Twenty-four hours to find out who killed you..."

Kishan: "That'd probably be a good detective movie, right? Race against time?"

Maddy: "I guess. But what's the point if you have to move onwards at the end anyway? It kinda strips it of meaning. I don't even know if you'd care once you're in the next place."

[She begins steaming the milk.]

Maddy: "I dunno. Maybe I'm too much of a nihilist to be anything but a constant buzzkill."

Kishan: "Yeah, I guess the pressure sounds like a lot... honestly, I'm still wrapping my head around all this."

Maddy: "Seems a bit outlandish, doesn't it?"

Kishan: "Mmm. That's the word."

Kishan: "I guess it'd be disappointing if you found out that you just died quietly in your sleep or something, though."

Maddy: "Yeah. Most people don't die from being murdered. It's mostly sickness, or old age, or lawn mower accidents."

Maddy: "Well, they call them accidents, but, really, loads of lawn mowers are possessed by evil spirits."

Maddy: "That said-"

[He looks incredulous.]

Kishan: "Wait, wait, wait. Hold on. You can't just drop that like it's nothing. Possessed lawn mowers? Seriously?"

[She pours the milk.]

Maddy: "Anything with spinning blades tends to attract 'em. Garden equipment, garbage disposals, blenders. They're a right pain in the arse. Gotta exorcise the blender at least once a month."

Kishan: "That's wild."

[beat, in which Maddy places the coffee cup on an (Ashling) which walks out of frame. If possible, can we frame this just showing the top of it (platter) and hiding the legs, so that the joke about cutlery later on hits harder?]

[it'd be cool if Kishan gave it a weird look but very obviously decided not to question it]

Kishan: "So. I dunno if it's weird to ask, but."

Kishan: "Is everyone in here..."

Maddy: "Dead?"

Kishan: "Yeah. You said that this was a cafe for dead people. Does that mean it's everyone? Or are some of these people just really into ghost cafes?"

Maddy took a look around, craning her neck to check the corners.

[Perhaps some medium shots of different parts of the cafe would be good here.]

Maddy: "That might be an oversimplification. Not everyone in here's dead, but this is one of the only stopping points between here and there, so we get a lot of your type."

Maddy: "Also, that's also why the rent is so high. 'Cause those vampires who own the place know we get a lot of foot traffic."

Kishan: "Literal vampires?"

Maddy: "No, just baby boomers with lots of money."

Kishan: "Ah. Same thing, I guess."

Maddy: "So, to answer your question, there are nine customers in here right now. Out of those nine - yourself included - I'd say four or five of them are just passing through on their way to the next place."

Kishan: "How can you tell?"

Maddy: "Once you've worked here for a while, you get a sort of sixth sense for this kind of thing."

She didn't think it was important to tell him that spirits emitted a very specific ozone-tinged odor. It wasn't particularly offensive, but some found the factoid impolite, so she tended to keep her mouth shut.

Kishan: "Gotcha."

Maddy turns her head towards the stairs, as if she's heard something.

Maddy: "Speaking of sixth senses... I've got one for trouble."

Kishan: "You have two sixth senses?"

1.4 Ashley

---Skip forward through cut to black---

Kishan's still leaning casually. Maddy stands with her hands on her hips. Ashley stands between them, trying to look innocent.

Maddy: "Hello, Ashley."

Ashley was a young girl who'd adopted Maddy and Chay a couple years back, much in the same way that a puppy adopts a squeaky toy.

She was ferociously smart, and a budding genius, but still a kid nonetheless.

Today, she smelled strongly of motor oil. Her right arm was coated with it - Maddy knew she'd have to help her clean it off the joint later - and she wore a look on her face that said, "I'm an invincible genius".

She was mostly right about that one, and Maddy hated it.

[Maddy inspects Ashley, giving her a scrutinizing gaze.]

Maddy: "Alright, I know that look. Spit it out."

Ashley: "Whaaaatttt. I don't know what you're talking about."

Maddy: "Cut the crap, kid. What do you need *this* time? I'm dealing with a customer here."

[Kishan raises his hands.]

Kishan: "Ah, I'm not really needing any attention-"

[Maddy shoots him a look.]

Maddy: "I am *dealing*. With. A customer."

Ashley: "I need someone to hold a joint for me while I screw something in."

Maddy: "Don't you have any clamps? We got you a bunch for your birthday last month."

Ashley: "They're all being used for other **very important** things!"

[Cut to a shot of a pile of clamps on a table upstairs, being used for absolutely nothing.]

Maddy: "I'm pretty sure I saw one upstairs about ten minutes ago."

Ashley: "I need a helper!"

Maddy: "Ashley, I'm busy..."

[Ashley screws up her face.]

Ashley: "Pleeeeeeeeeeeeeaaaaaaa-" *[large text]*

[Maddy massages her temples.]

Kishan: "Hey, I could probably..." *[small text]*

Ashley: "-aaaaaaaseeee!" *[medium-large text]*

Sometimes she could be very convincing. This... wasn't one of those times. Maddy knew she just wanted attention, but didn't have the energy to deal with it at that specific moment in time.

Kishan: "Um," *[small text]*

Kishan: "Ah," *[small text]*

Kishan: "Hey..." *[small text]*

Kishan: "Egh," *[small text]*

Kishan: "Eh," *[small text]*

Kishan: "Err..." *[small text]* *(I think these would all pop up at the same time in the background, or on 1 second intervals continuously until next line is passed)*

Maddy: "Ashley, you've gotta let us work. We're not gonna get anything done if I have to keep going upstairs to hold screwdrivers and confiscate steak knives."

Kishan: "I could..." *[small text]*

[Ashley puts on a ferocious pout]

Ashley's pout was legendary, but over time, Maddy had grown immune to it.

Maddy: "No dice."

Ashley: "What about Chay? He can help me!"

Maddy: "He's in the kitchen, emptying the dishwasher."

Maddy: "You know, the dishwasher that you were meant to empty an hour ago."

Ashley: "O-oh... heh..."

Kishan: "It's really no trouble..." *[small text]*

[lightbulb moment for Ashley. Can we put a literal lightbulb above her head?]

Ashley: "Hey!"

Ashley: "Why don't I take this guy? He doesn't have anything to do, he's dead."

Kishan: "H-hey... c'mon..." *[small text]*

Maddy: "**Ashley!** I don't have the energy to argue with you."

Maddy: "I'm sure he just wants to relax. Dying takes a lot out of you."

Maddy: "Also, manners! God, we've talked about this! You've got to be more respectful in front of customers."

[Kishan finally manages to raise his voice]

Kishan: "Please! I'm happy to go upstairs! Really. It's fine. I don't have anything better to do. And I'm super dead. I'm cool with it. That's me, Kishan, very dead guy."

Maddy gave him a skeptical look. The kid was notoriously good at browbeating customers into going along with her schemes, and Maddy was worried that her antics were beginning to scare people off.

Maddy: "You sure? I can just send her back upstairs."

He held up his hands in surrender.

Kishan: "Promise. It's fine. I'd just sit around and be a pain otherwise."

Ashley grinned wolfishly.

"Perfect."

"Come, peon! We've work to do."

She disappeared upstairs in a flash, and Kishan followed, somewhat reluctantly. Maddy watched them go, and slipped back into her own thoughts.

[She sighs, and begins cleaning a glass.]

1.5 Chay

[beat]

Deep down, Maddy knew that she wasn't giving Ashley enough attention, and that was causing her to act out.

She felt guilty as hell about it, but at the same time, she didn't think she'd be able to solve that particular problem any time soon. For both their sakes, she had to work on keeping the cafe afloat, even if it meant that Ashley would be required to deal with stuff on her own for a little while.

And she knew she was being callous - her internal monologue was doing a very good job of whispering cruel nothings to her in quiet moments - but, even then, she had to truly wonder if there wasn't-

Chay: "So, you reckon we need more plants?"

[Maddy jumps. Chay's leaning on the counter right next to her, extremely nonchalantly. He wasn't there before... perhaps emphasize this by putting him right in the middle of a camera shot we used before?]

Maddy: "Goddamn it, Chay!"

[She punches him in the arm, and grins.]

Maddy: "Don't sneak up on me like that, you old bastard."

Chay chuckled.

Chay: "What's on your mind, Maddy?"

Maddy: "Ah, I was drifting off. Did I look like I was thinking weighty thoughts?"

Chay: "Extremely."

Maddy: "It's nothing important. Just my resting bitch face."

Chay: "Nah. It's different this time."

Maddy: "How so?"

Chay: "You've got a look on your face that reminds me of when you challenged that samurai cosplayer to a knife fight."

Maddy: "Oh. You mean the one who barged in, waving his gift-store katana around and demanding satisfaction?"

Maddy: "That's... a weirdly specific facial expression to refer to. What's it look like?"

Chay: "The natural reaction of someone who's just heard the words 'thousand-fold nippon steel'."

Chay: "You don't have to reenact it. The memory's precious enough that I can picture it clearly."

Chay: "A sort of deep disgust, mixed with a tinge of pity and just a touch of derision."

Maddy: "Ha. It me."

Maddy: "Big mood."

[beat]

[a really long beat]

Chay: "You alright?"

Chay: "Real talk."

Maddy: "I'm fine."

Chay: "Is this a 'I'm actually fine' fine or a 'I'm having trouble processing and/or expressing my feelings and would like the conversation to move in a different direction' fine?"

Maddy: "The latter."

Chay: "Fairo."

Chay: "Offer's still open if you'd like to talk things out."

Chay: "In the meantime... sorry, can I grab that tea-towel? My hands are wet."

Maddy: "Oh! Yeah, here you go."

[Maddy hands him a tea-towel, and he dries off his hands]

Maddy: "So, did you just feel like doing the dishes by hand, or...?"

Maddy: "I could've sworn that I told Ashley to empty the dishwasher earlier."

Chay: "Nah. It's busted. Door latch broke, so we'll have to get someone in to fix it."

Chay: "I don't want to make Ashley wash 'em by hand, anyway. Her arm'd get rusty, so... I did it. No problem."

Maddy: "Yeah."

Chay: "So, anyway, we're going to have to organize a repair, unless you want to let Ashley give it a shot."

Chay: "I'd make the call myself, but our landline stopped working last week."

Maddy: "We have a landline?"

Chay: "Yes. Ancient technology. You can transmit sound through a physical cable. It's very fancy."

Chay: "Technology only works when you pay the bill, though."

Maddy ignored his jibe, and mentally tallied up the cost of getting a repairman in versus the cost of just buying a new dishwasher and giving Ashley the old one to tinker with.

The costs were pretty close, all things considered. She sighed heavily, and Chay clapped a hand on her shoulder.

Chay: "Hey. Don't stress. You'll worry yourself into an early grave."

[She scoffs.]

Maddy: "Coming from some old guy whose job was to dig holes for fifty years? I'm sure you were perfectly calm and collected for all of that."

Chay: "Ow. 'Some old guy'..."

Maddy: "Make a call on a mobile phone sometime and prove me wrong, old guy."

Chay: "And, hey... I dug holes for way longer than that."

Chay: "Just started digging up things more interesting than gold after a while."

Maddy: "Psh. Shame you didn't dig up any bloody phones, eh? Could have gotten a head start on learning how to work 'em."

[Maddy turns towards an unseen customer.]

Chay *[in background]*: "Phones didn't even exist when I was a miner..."

Maddy: "Hey. What can I get for you?"

???: "Mocha, please. Can I get two shots in that?"

Maddy: "Sure. Go take a seat, we'll bring it over."

???: "Thanks!"

[She begins preparing it.]

Chay: "Hey, so..."

[She glances his way, but doesn't turn.]

Maddy: "Mmm?"

Chay: "I know you're a bit stressed right now, but I think we need to put in an order from the kitchenware supplier soon."

Maddy: "Ugh."

Chay: "I know, I know. It's another thing that costs money."

Chay: "We're beginning to run out of cutlery, though. It keeps disappearing to somewhere, so I don't know how long it can wait before we get some more."

[the Ashling returns from delivering that previous coffee. It has cutlery for legs. It's a ~visual joke~!]

Ashley tended to treat the entire cafe, including the cutlery drawers, as a parts repository.

Maddy: "Ughhhh."

Maddy: "I dunno if I can balance the books to fit that in this month."

Maddy: "Just, y' know... everything's a bit too pricey right now. Doesn't help that the coffee bean cartels keep pushing prices up."

Chay: "I don't think the importer two suburbs over is part of a cartel. They seem quite nice."

Maddy: "You ever spoken to them? They're obviously criminals, with the prices they charge. Wholesale, my arse."

Chay: "Yet we keep buying from them."

Maddy: "Well, yeah. The beans are good, my dude."

Maddy: "It's just everything else on top of them that's stressing me out."

Chay: "Ahh. Yes. I'll happily accept the blame for some of that."

Maddy: "It's fine, you don't have to. I know it's all on me. I've just got to figure out how to pay everything off."

Chay: "Everything... and everyone."

Maddy: "Ugghhhhhhhhhhhhhhh." *[can this line display really slowly? Really wanna draw it out. It's a very long "ugh".]*

Maddy: "That's the last thing I want to think about right now"

Chay: "I'm here to help. I'm worried about you, y'know?"

Chay: "You've had a lot of responsibility dropped on you in a very short period of time."

Chay: "And I can't help but feel a little bit culpable for that."

[Her face screws up.]

Maddy: "I know... yeah. I know. And, you... I can't thank you enough-"

[She sniffles.]

Chay: "Shh. It's alright. Hold yourself together."

Chay: "We'll figure it out."

Maddy: "I just don't want to deal with it, you know?"

Chay: "I get it. And I don't want you to feel like I'm imposing or interfering too much."

Chay: "You're the boss now, and even though things are a bit much right now..."

Chay: "I sound like a jerk saying this, but I don't know how much time we have to deal with all of this before things start falling apart."

Maddy: "Things are already falling apart."

[Chay suddenly grows serious.]

Chay: "Regardless, you're going to have to face reality at some point."

[Maddy GLARES. Her fingers dig into the countertop.]

Maddy: "Oh my god, I **KNOW**."

Maddy: "I don't need any more reminders from you. Back off, man."

Maddy: "I think about this stuff *constantly*. And I'm doing my best over here. Just because you're my best friend, it doesn't mean I need you preaching at me about all of my problems."

[He raises his hands, and backs off (body language-wise). He's hurt, but isn't going to push it.]

Chay: "Alright. No worries. I'll give you some space. Might go check on Ashley. You seen her recently?"

[Maddy turns, so that we can't see her face.]

Maddy: "She's upstairs. Dragged a customer up there, talking about clamps or something."

Chay: "I'd better go rescue them, then. Be back in a bit."

Maddy: "Sure, yeah."

[Chay heads off; Maddy waves him off without looking him in the eye.]

[beat, in which Maddy turns her face up and looks across the cafe.]

Maddy: "..."

Maddy: "We need more plants."

[cut away to black or outside or something visually palate-cleansey.]

1.6 Battlebot

[cut to upstairs.]

[Chay walks up the stairs, and stops halfway up. Some conversation is filtering down from above.]

Ashley: "...so we're gonna strap a big ol' steak knife to it..."
"...and make 'em fight each other!"

Kishan: "I love it. This is gonna be great."

Ashley: "I wanna build something that gets put on that TV show **Robattle Royale**. With flamethrowers on it."

Kishan: "Uhh... you're not gonna put one on this little guy, are ya?"

Ashley: "A flamethrower? Prob'ly not. But I want you to record the fight on my phone so we can send it to the producers."

Kishan: "Yeah, sure thing. Let's get this knife attached!"

Ashley: "Heh heh heh."

Ashley: "Pass me those zip ties."

Kishan: "Zip ties!"

Ashley: "And the knife!"

Kishan: "Knife!"

Ashley: "And my coffee!"

Kishan: "..."

Kishan: "Are you sure?"

Kishan: "Who even gave you that?"

Ashley: "**COFFEE.**"

[Throughout this exchange, Chay's face goes from "⋮" to "D:". After, he continues to the top of the stairs.]

[Kishan and Ashley sit side-by-side at a bench, with an Ashling upside down in front of them. There's also just, like, a bunch of junk there. And a cup of coffee.]

Ashley: "Dammit, it's empty."

Ashley: "My coffee is empty, Kishan."

Ashley: "The world is BEGINNING TO VIBRATE?"

Kishan: "Maybe it's good that your cup runneth empty, yeah?"

Ashley: "I THINK MY CUP NEED TO RUNNETH WITH MORE COFFEE IN IT."

Kishan: "I just... how many shots did you put in there?"

Ashley: "TOO MANY, KISHAN."

Ashley: "BUT DID ANYONE ASK ICARUS HOW MANY SHOTS OF ESPRESSO **HE** HAD?"

Ashley: "YEAH, I'M READING A BOOK ABOUT ICARUS. HE FLEW TO THE SUN. I'M CULTURED."

Ashley: "IN UNRELATED NEWS I HAVE A HEADACHE."

Kishan: "Uh... I think you might wanna read a little more about Icarus. There's a twist ending to that one."

Ashley: "NO SPOILERS. I'M HOLDING A KNIFE, KISHAN."

[Kishan leans away from her. She is, very suddenly, holding a large knife.]

Kishan: "Ahh! No spoilers! Promise."

Chay: "**gulp**"

[shot with Ashley threatening Kishan with knife, Chay in foreground]

Chay watched them for a few moments, and steeled himself. He didn't want to surprise her - she could hurt herself with that knife. Or, worse, him. Or, even worse, the wall behind him.

He raised a hand to his mouth, and coughed as unobtrusively as possible.

Chay: "Hey, kids."

Ashley: "AHH! Intruder!"

[We can do a little trickery here to make it asset cheap.]

[Close-up on Chay's face as a steak knife flies past him and embeds itself in the wall or the bannister or whatever's convenient. What's important is that there's a knife, and Chay's rather surprised face. Also the knife's gotta wobble.]

[Cut to Ashley lying on the floor spread-eagled, like an overturned turtle, and Kishan, still in his seat, looking horrified.]

Ashley: "Kishan... my buddy... my pal... did I get him?"

Kishan: "No, uh... you missed."

Ashley: "Dammit."

Kishan: "But..." *[beat]*

Kishan: "You threw it on purpose?!"

Ashley: "Extremely on purpose, yes."

Chay: "I'm fine, by the way!"

[She turns her head to look at him.]

Ashley: "Oh, it's just you."

Kishan: "Would it have been worse if it was someone else?!"

Ashley: "...probably..."

Ashley: "...unless they were an actual spy, come to steal my robot designs. Then it would have been good."

[She looks back up at the ceiling.]

Ashley: "I think I'm crashing..."

Ashley closed her eyes, and within moments, she'd fallen into a deep slumber. Kishan cast a panicked look at Chay.

Kishan: "Oh no... uhh... is she... okay? Did I kill her?"

Chay snorted.

Chay: "She'll wake up in about fifteen minutes with no ill effects."

Chay: "But you probably shouldn't give her any more coffee. She turns into a real goblin."

Kishan: "Oh... she told me that it'd make her 'immeasurably powerful'."

Chay: "I mean, she's not wrong."

Chay: "But, you know, great power, great responsibility, yadda yadda yadda."

Chay: "She's thirteen. Kid's got plenty of energy already."

Kishan: "Yeah, uh... I don't even know how I ended up attaching knives to robots. She's very convincing."

Chay: "You don't have to tell me, mate, she basically lives here."

[He turns, and pulls the knife out of the wall.]

Chay: "Her parents would kill me if they found out she'd nearly killed me."

[beat]

Chay: "Pretty good blind throw, though. She makes me proud in the weirdest ways."

Kishan: "Huh. Did she learn from the best?"

Chay: "Pff."

Chay: "She did, but 'the best' wasn't me."

Chay: "Maddy's pretty good with knives. Bad habit, probably."

[He waggles the knife.]

Chay: "Anyway - I'm sorry, I'm being very rude. My name's Chay. I used to own this place. Now I just sort of sit around and cause trouble and sometimes have knives thrown at me, I guess?"

[Kishan offers a hand.]

Kishan: "I'm Kishan, and I'm dead."

[Kishan smiles sadly.]

Chay: "Well... obviously."

[cut away to visual palate cleanser/black/whatever.]

1.7 Downstairs Again

[cut to downstairs.]

[Maddy's sitting on one of the chairs next to the tree, sipping a coffee and brooding/reading something. Dialogue is filtering down from upstairs - the guys are slowly heading down the stairs towards the bar, so we can portray that with their dialogue boxes slowly tracking downwards as new ones appear.

They end up at the bar, but it's out of shot, so they're just talking off-screen while Maddy idly flips through the pages of a book or magazine.

I wonder if it'd be possible to just use the same animation a bunch of times, but with creative recycling? Turning the page with a DRAMATIC CLOSE UP SHOT and HEAVY SLOW-MO SOUND EFFECTS, for example.]

Kishan: "Man... I'd love to see that. I could use a pick-me-up."

Chay: "I can't promise it'll be there. It's kind of inconsistent."

Kishan: "Still, though. A hallway that's only there *sometimes*? How do you get to the kitchen otherwise?"

Chay: "There's another, slightly longer one that we use instead. It's much less exciting, but, on the upside, it's consistently there."

Chay: "I love telling new people about it, though. The reaction's always hilarious."

Kishan: "Man, I didn't expect to be getting enthusiastic today over a weird quantum hallway. Or, enthusiastic at all, 'cause I'm actually extremely messed up about this-"

[Maddy turns the page.]

Chay: "Quantum? Nah, nothing as exciting as that. This one's just conceptually weird but sort of boring otherwise."

Kishan: "Dude."

Kishan: "I gotta know more."

Chay: "To be honest, I'm not sure I could properly explain a lot of what goes on in here. We're not even sure about most of it, we just go with the flow and hope the building's feeling amenable."

Kishan: "So is it... alive?"

Chay: "Not by my definition, no. There's plenty of things that have come to life in here, but never the building itself, as far as we can tell."

*[SFX: clattering of saucer; *clink!*)*

Chay: "But, that aside, I'm generally happy with how things go around here. Should probably get some more plants, but hallways? We've got the best hallways."

Chay: "I'm making myself a cuppa - you want something?"

Kishan: "Nah, I'm good for now."

Kishan: "Also..."

Kishan: "What's the barista's name? I didn't actually catch it and I feel like a jerk."

Chay: "Ahh. Maddy? She's the owner now, not just the barista."

Chay: "Still makes coffee, of course. But, since she's the owner now, she has a lot more to juggle."

Chay: "Why you asking? Got your eye on her, eh?"

Kishan: "No, I have a boyfriend."

[beat]

Kishan: "Had?"

Kishan: "Oh, jeez, this is a lot."

Kishan: "I can't imagine how he's feeling-"

Chay: "Try not to think about it."

Kishan: "I... okay. Yep. Okay."

Chay: "You want that drink now?"

Kishan: "I think I want something a little more potent than coffee right now, sorry."

Maddy: "Don't enable him, Kishan."

Chay: "Shush. I can get you something stronger, mate. Would you like bourbon, or is that too weak?"

Kishan: "I... I thought this was a cafe?"

Chay: "Well, it is, mostly. We do serve alcohol, though, and stronger things on request."

[Kishan's face: confused, a little bit of derision happening. What's stronger than alcohol?]

Kishan: "Stronger? Like what? Erguotou? Absinthe? Pure ethanol?"

Chay: "You think a place like this wouldn't have anything stronger than that?"

Kishan: "Stronger than pure ethanol?"

Chay: "Sure. Remind me later and I might pull out some of my special reserve."

Maddy: "Don't enable him, Kishan."

Chay: "Hey, someone's gotta drink it. I know you're not gonna touch the stuff aside from setting it on fire."

Maddy: "I have perfectly good reasons for wanting to set a puddle of distilled soul on fire!"

Chay: "..."

Chay: "We'll agree to disagree on that one."

Chay: "So! Kishan! What'll it be?"

Kishan: "Actually... I changed my mind on the coffee. Can I order something complex? Gotta treat myself on my last day on Earth. I'm after a sugar rush."

Chay: "If we have the ingredients, it shouldn't be an issue. Maddy can whip it up for you."

Kishan: "Cool, cool."

Kishan: "In that case... can I have a"

"large quadruple shot"

"double vanilla caramel"

"no foam"

"super hot"

"reverse"

"coconut milk macchiato,"

Chay: "..."

Maddy: "Oh my *god*."

Kishan: "with two sugars and whipped cream on top?"

Chay: "Err. Maddy?"

Maddy: "Yes, dearest?"

Chay: "Can you, uh... I don't quite... know how..."

Chay: "Is this real?"

Maddy: "Hm."

Kishan: "Oh, is it too much? I was gonna ask for a splash of bourbon in it, but that seemed a little extra."

Chay: "Well-"

Maddy: "Yes. It is too much."

Maddy: "It is a bad order, and I hate it."

Chay: "How bad? Worst one you've ever seen?"

Maddy: “No, I just hate it.”

Kishan: “Dang.”

Maddy: “Every single word of that increased my urge to set the espresso machine on fire so I wouldn’t have to think about making coffee ever again. Except the bourbon bit. I put that in my coffee too.”

Maddy: “So, with all that in mind, I have a counter-offer.”

Kishan: “Yeah?”

Maddy: “I’ll make you another double shot long black, **and** I’ll put bourbon in it, but I won’t call you a hipster this time.”

Kishan: “Hmm...”

Maddy: “If you decline my offer, I will strip your soul from your body and use it to scrub the counters at closing time. They will smell delicious afterwards, if that’s any consolation.”

Kishan: “Uh, yikes.”

Kishan: “That *does* sound like a competitive counter-offer. Not the soul thing. I’ll take the coffee.”

Maddy: “My generosity knows no bounds.”

Maddy: “Normie.”

[cut to external view]

[SFX: pulling shot]

1.8 Gathering Storm

[back inside-]

[everyone’s sitting in seats along the window, looking out into the afternoon sun. They are ordered as such: Maddy, Ashley, Chay, Kishan. Ashley looks sleepy.]

[Throughout this scene, the weather slowly shifts to grey/cloudy/stormy.]

Maddy: “So, in conclusion, that order sucked because it’s **inordinately complex** to make, has a **heart attack** worth of sugar in it, and is something that only **impatient jerks** ask for.”

Kishan: “...Is it possible to die twice?”

Chay & Maddy, simultaneously: “Yep.”

Maddy: "You can die twice if you're brought back from the dead..."

Chay: "...or if you manage to *really* annoy someone between here and the next place, which is more likely, because resurrection is *illegal*."

Maddy: "But, if you're asking whether you can get a heart attack or whatever, the answer is no. Life and death have a slightly different meaning here."

[Chay looks slightly uncomfortable.]

Chay: "It's a bit complex and weird and we're still in the process of figuring out how it all works. I'm over two hundred years old and I still haven't made proper sense of it yet. Just got some vague ideas."

Kishan: "Right."

Kishan: "So what's keeping me from just... staying here? Like, I'm already dead, why do I have to go to the next place?"

Maddy: "You've got a certain number of hours you're allowed to remain on the edge of the mortal realm."

Maddy: "Hours are... fungible."

Kishan: "Fungible?"

Maddy: "They can be bought, sold, and exchanged. Generally speaking."

Maddy: "But the Council of Death always collects on debts owed to them. And you'll start running up a debt if you stay here too long."

Chay: "Your soul starts to get itchy, too. It's not something you want to experience. We've had a few stay past their allotted time, and they've gotten very uncomfortable very fast."

Chay: "It starts with general irritability, and then, worse things begin to happen..."

Kishan: "Uh-huh."

They were all silent for a moment.

Kishan: "It's a weird thing to wrap your head around."

Kishan: "How long do I have before I need to make myself scarce?"

Maddy: "You get twenty-four hours. Any longer, and we start to pick up the tab, since you're on our premises."

Maddy: "And, as charming as you are... we're deep enough in the hole as it is, hours-wise."

Chay (interjecting): "And cash-wise! We're extremely poor!"

Maddy: "We've been a bit too lenient in the past. Letting people stay just a little longer instead of gently shooing them onto the next plane of existence, et cetera. You know the drill."

Maddy: "But, hey, you can always find some more hours some other way."

Maddy: "There's something happening tonight, actually, that you might be interested in."

Chay: "Seriously? You're still doing that?"

Maddy: "Shush."

Chay: "You *know* the Council doesn't look on that stuff favourably. Ned said so himself."

Maddy: "It draws customers, and helps us shave down the debt. I'll take whatever I can get."

Maddy: "And, hey: fuck Ned."

Chay: "We have a thirteen-year-old right here, you know."

Ashley: "*yawn*"

Maddy: "... She's heard enough coarse language for a lifetime. I'm not too worried about her."

Ashley: "She's right, though."

Chay: "What?"

Ashley: "Every time Ned comes around he makes you guys really stressed out."

Ashley: "Maybe not you so much, but Maddy gets nervous and it brings down the mood, maaaaan."

Ashley: "So, fuck Ned."

Chay: "I think you've had too much coffee today, young lady."

Ashley: "I am crashing so hard right now you have no idea. It's like I was crashing earlier but that was just a pre-crash and I'm having a double crash or something."

Chay: "*sigh*"

Chay: "Try not to swear around the customers, though, please."

Ashley: "Okay."

Ashley: "Does Kishan count...?"

Kishan: "It's fine. A couple of my housemates are tradies, so you learn to ignore it pretty quick."

Kishan: "Are tradies? Were tradies...?"

Kishan: "Ugh..."

Kishan: "They're still tradies, unless they changed career in the last couple days, but they're not my roommates any more... but..."

Kishan: "Hey, mates, have I mentioned how much being dead sucks? Because it sucks and I feel extremely bad about it. And I'm barely holding my shit together right now."

Maddy: "Yyyyyyyep."

Maddy: "Even just adapting your language is a pain, isn't it?"

Maddy: "Want a proper drink now? Without coffee in it?"

[A drop of rain hits the window, and is soon followed by several more.]

Kishan: "Yeah... that'd be good."

Chay: "The TV didn't say anything about there being a storm tonight."

Maddy: "Huh. It looks like a decent-sized one's rolling in."

Kishan: "Melbourne weather strikes again."

Chay: "I'll go upstairs and close the windows."

Maddy: "Cheers."

Chay: "C'mon, Ashley. Let's clean up your workbench while we're up there, yeah?"

Ashley: "*groan*"

Chay: "Do you need a bribe?"

Ashley: "Yes."

Chay: "I have some chocolate hidden away..."

Ashley: "... Acceptable."

[Exeunt Chay and Ashley.]

Kishan: "Wait. Dead people can still get drunk, yeah?"

Maddy: "Why else do you think we serve alcohol?"

Kishan: "To make money?"

Maddy: "Well... yeah..."

Kishan: "Hang on, do I even have my wallet?"

Maddy: "Doubt it."

Kishan: "I... don't, yeah. How does *that* work? Why do I have my clothes, but not the contents of my pockets?"

Maddy: "I dunno, dude. Everyone's experience is different. Death doesn't follow many rules. Only universal rule I can think of is that you can't stay."

Maddy: "People don't generally come in naked, though."

[lightning flash outside]

Kishan: "Mmm."

Kishan: "So, about this drink... I guess you're gonna give me straight vodka or something?"

Maddy: "Why's that?"

Kishan: "You don't like making complex drinks..."

Maddy: "Haha, dude, no. I don't like making dumbass caffeine-laced milkshakes for overcompensating soccer dads. I'm happy to mix a cocktail, within reason."

Kishan: "Oh, okay. What've you got, then?"

Maddy: "Chay's got everything you can think of. And then some."

[lightning flashes again]

Kishan: "I could go for a mint julep."

[these next two lines should play concurrently (no pause between; first should stay up while second plays)]

Maddy: "Sure, I can get started on that-"

Kishan: "Hey, what's that outside?"

[okay we can do a cool visual thing here - move the camera back, directly away from the cafe, until we get a shot of Ned in silhouette, standing in the rain]

Maddy: "Outside?"

Maddy: "Some guy out in the rain...?"

Maddy: "Ah, *shit*."

Kishan: "Maddy?"

[cut to black]

Kishan: "Maddy, what's up?"

Maddy: "Let's get started on that drink."

1.9 Ned

[SFX: Front door jingling]

[cut back: Maddy and Kishan are seated on opposite sides of the counter, both looking towards the front door/camera. Maddy has a pissed-off/distasteful look on her face.]

Maddy and Kishan regarded the visitor. He had a dangerous energy about him; his shoulders were menacingly broad, and atop them sat a blackened and heavily dented steel mask. In any other cafe, he'd be asked to take it off, but Maddy wasn't sure what – if anything – was under there, and she didn't really want to find out.

The visitor regarded them back, somewhat haughtily.

Ned: "Morning."

Kishan looked for Maddy to guidance, but beneath her veneer of practiced coolness, she held the demeanor of a deer caught in headlights.

So he decided to say hello to the weird tin-hat man, and damn the consequences.

Kishan: "Hi!"

The mask swiveled upon the man's shoulders so that its eye slit was facing Kishan.

Ned: "Hello, recently-departed."

Kishan took a big sip of his mint julep, and as he did so, the new visitor slid onto a seat beside him. Or, at least, he assumed it'd gone that way - one moment he was standing in the space between the counter and the door, and then he was sitting.

To move between those spots in an instant would require inhuman speed.

[for a quick cut to black, with no animation.]

Kishan: "Inhuman speed..."

Ned: "So how'd he die?"

She spat the man's name out with obvious distaste.

Maddy: "Good morning to you too, *Ned*."

Ned: "It's five o'clock in the afternoon, Madeline."

Maddy: "Piss off, Ned. That's not even my full name."

[I have a really strong image in my head of Kishan sipping his drink through a straw with a totally gormless look on his face while his eyes dart between Maddy and Ned]

Ned: "Isn't it, Maddy? Chay said it was, and he never lies."

Maddy: "He never said that."

Ned: "Well, no. But it was worth a try."

Maddy: "A try at what? Catching me off balance? Some shit along those lines?"

Maddy: "Mate, I am so off balance right now that a light breeze would knock me head over arse. Don't push me."

Kishan: "Hey, this mint julep is great."

Ned: "So, you catch the game last night?"

Maddy: "Yes. I know that Carlton beat Collingwood, *again*. I don't care."

Ned: "Oof. Just making polite conversation. You should try it sometime."

Maddy: "Maybe. Not for you, though. You've never come in during daylight hours before. What do you want?"

Ned: "Nothing much. I'd like to talk to Chay at some point, but it can wait, seeing as he's... missing? I'll assume he's gone missing, since he's not at the bar."

Maddy: "Planning on sending out a search party?"

Ned: "Might do. It'd be a shame to lose an old friend by letting him wander onto some train tracks or something."

Maddy: "Yeah, well."

Maddy: "Shut up."

Maddy: "He's upstairs, last I saw."

Ned: "What was the last you saw, Maddy? Tell me."

Maddy: "Why are you like this?"

Ned: "What was it?"

Maddy: "Last saw him walking upstairs."

Ned: "So he could be anywhere, then."

Ned: "Probably left the country to flee his debt."

Maddy: "He can't go far. I've got him on a pretty tight leash."

Maddy: "And in regards to the debt..."

Ned held up a finger to shush her.

Ned: "Ah-ah-ah. It's not your problem."

Maddy: "Uh. You must not have heard-"

Ned: "Not your problem."

She sighed, and took a deep breath.

Maddy: "Chay! Your dickhead friend Ned is here!"

Ned: "Oi. I'm a distinguished gent, not a dickhead."

[upstairs] Chay: "I'll be down in a sec!"

Maddy: "Yeah, sure, but you also work for the Council of Death, so even if you *are* a 'distinguished gent', it cancels out."

Kishan: "Is the Council of Death like a normal city council, except for... wherever dead people live?"

Maddy: "Yeah, but the only trash that needs to be collected is right in front of me."

Ned: "This guy?"

Kishan: "Me?"

Maddy: "No, you.

You're the trash, Ned.

The trash... is you. It's you,

Ned, the trash man from Hell."

Maddy: "Because councils pick up trash. That's the joke."

[with this line, we can zoom/tighten the field of view on the shot with each bit, giving us some breathing room outside the frame to pop Chay in.]

Kishan: "Oh, cool."

Maddy: "You've even got a head shaped like a rubbish bin. It's totally fitting."

Ned: "..."

Ned: "Hmph. I'm not from Hell."

Maddy: "I don't care. And, to be clear, Ned, in case we weren't already: you are the trash."

Ned: "Yeah, I get it."

Ned: "You know how long Chay's going to be?"

Maddy: "Dunno. He was busy upstairs with Ashley."

[and then we can return to the original shot, with Chay sitting just out of our previous frame.]

Chay: "Yeah, I had to hide, like, five steak knives from her. I didn't even know we *had* five steak knives."

[Ned (or Ned's head) turns to look at Chay]

Ned: "Bit quiet there, mate. How long've you been sitting there?"

Chay: "Does it matter?"

Ned: "Well, your employee's being very rude to me. So if you'd heard any of that..."

Maddy: "I keep trying to tell him--"

Chay: "Ahhhh."

He took the 'a'-vowel and rolled it around in his mouth, as if he were trying to use it to filibuster the conversation.

Chay: "My employee... yes."

Chay: "We have some catching up to do."

Ned: "I don't follow. Did she quit? Did you fire her for gross incompetence?"

Chay: "Ha, far from it. There's been a bit of a shakeup in the café's management structure since you last visited."

Ned: "Oh no. Don't tell me you gave her the whole thing?"

Chay: "Okay, I won't tell you."

Maddy: "I tried to tell you before, man."

Kishan: "Hey does anyone else like mint juleps? Because this is great and I'm nearly done but also my tongue is numb and I'm wondering what the deal is with that?"

Chay: "Was there something you wanted to discuss?"

Ned: "I... need a drink before we go through all that."

Chay: "Sure. The usual?"

Ned: "Yes, please."

[Ned shifts pose on the chair, but now has a beer stein with a curly straw on the counter next to him]

Ned: "Ahhhhhhhhh. Delicious."

Kishan: "How come **he** gets a curly straw?"

Ned: "So, Chay, spin me a tale of how and why you handed down the café to... **this** person."

[Maddy notices Kishan and actually pays attention to him; we zoom in on them for a little bit]

Maddy: "Every man's got his price."

Kishan: "Can my price be a curly straw too?"

[off-screen] Chay: "Well..."

Maddy: "Buddy, I'll give you two if it means you'll stop complaining about numb lips."

Kishan: "Yeah, um, what did you make this with?"

Maddy: "I couldn't find half the ingredients so I put in a bunch of erguotou and, um... chilli seeds?"

Maddy: "It's got some of the stuff, though, so it's a mint julep in spirit, if nothing else."

[off-screen] Ned: "You serious?"

Kishan: "Does this have any mint **or** julep in it? At all?"

Maddy: "It definitely may be lacking mint, and I cannot confirm nor deny the existence of the mythical **julep**."

Maddy: "You asked for erguotou earlier, though, so there ya go. Mission complete."

[off-screen] Ned: "I can't believe it."

[off-screen] Chay: "Nah, I trust her. She'll do a good job."

Kishan: "Maddy I am getting very drunk very fast."

[off-screen] Ned: "But-"

Maddy: "Erguotou does that to ya."

[off-screen] Chay: "You've got a point there."

Maddy: "Here, I think you should have a little lie down. I'll get you some water."

Kishan: "I'm as strong as an ox, I don't need a lie-down."

Maddy: "Kishan, my dude, you absolutely need to get horizontal as soon as possible."

Maddy: "You can sober up in one of the booths up the back. It's nice and quiet over there."

Kishan: "*hic* I'll fight ya."

Maddy: "No, you won't. Up you get, mate."

[back to Ned and Chay.]

Ned: "Bloody hell... it would've been helpful if you'd told me about this before."

Chay: "Probably. I'm not worried about it. Maddy knew what she was getting into with this whole café situation, and it's natural that it might take a while for her to get the hang of running a business."

Ned: "Bloody hell."

Ned: "Bit of a dog's dinner, though, isn't it?"

Chay: "Oh, for sure. But it'll get better. Like I said, not worried about it."

Ned: "Well... you might want to hold your judgement on that for the moment."

Ned: "I am, unfortunately, here on official business."

Chay: "Oh."

Chay: "I shouldn't have given you the straw, then."

Ned: "No, you shouldn't have. I look quite silly."

Chay: "Want me to get rid of it?"

Ned: "It's just Maddy. She won't use it to derail our conversation or make me look like a fool or anything like that."

[beat]

[off-screen] Maddy: "Straw? No, I'll get you one after you have a nap. You can sip the water like a normal person."

Chay: "I'll put it with the dirty dishes, then."

*[the curly straw disappears with a *ding!]*

Ned: "The sacrifices I make for this job."

Chay: "Hey, you met me through it, so can't've been all bad."

Ned: "That was - bloody - a hundred years ago!"

Chay: "Man, really?"

Ned: "Longer."

Chay: "Time flies when you're immortal, huh?"

Ned: "Quasi-immortal. This ol' rust bucket's still got an expiry date somewhere down the line."

[return Maddy]

Maddy: "What's this about immortality?"

[off-screen] Kishan: "Hey, you should buy more plants!"

Maddy: "**Shut up!**"

Maddy: "Sorry, continue. Immortality?"

Ned: "Nothing that I'd trust you with, that's for sure."

Maddy: "Aww, don't you wanna see crotchety old me being rude to youngsters in a hundred years?"

Ned: "Truly, I do not. The far future doesn't need amateur necromancers."

[Maddy shrugs.]

Maddy: "Your loss."

[to Chay] Maddy: "So, you two heading upstairs?"

Chay: "Actually... Ned does, in fact, have something fairly important to discuss with you."

Maddy: "Oh?"

Ned: "It's about the debt you owe. To the Council."

Maddy: "Yeah, I know. What about it?"

Ned: "Maddy, it's time. You owe us over six hundred hours."

Ned: "Chay signed a contract. The hours, or the cafe. You own the cafe, so you own the debt."

Ned: "And, tonight, I've come to collect."

End of episode 1; run OP