

INT - BEN'S HOUSE - MORNING

BEN, 26, lays face down on his bed fast asleep in one of his work uniforms. Above him, a low snoring can be heard, which shakes the walls, and Ben awake.

BEN
One day at a time Ben.

BEN drags himself out of bed and changes clothes to a different uniform for a different company before forcing himself out of his room.

He goes through his normal routine, stopping briefly when he finds nothing in the KITCHEN.

BEN
Cool...cool...

BEN checks his watch for a moment in front of the fridge.

BEN
Should be able to squeeze it...

BEN shuts the fridge door.

EXT - BEN'S HOUSE - MORNING

BEN slams the front door shut as he leaves his house. He steps into his car and pulls out of his driveway. traveling down an unmarked dirt road until it pops out into a forest housing community. Merging onto a real road, driving past his well-off neighbors into town.

INT - PIZZA PLACE - MORNING

BEN arrives at work and pushes himself out of his car and into the building.

DARREL, BEN's boss, 18, stands behind the counter, stopping BEN the second he enters.

DARREL
Oh, thank God. We just got a big order
for some party cross-town Ben. Go
start your car.

BEN stops for a moment inside the restaurant and shakes himself awake.

BEN
On it Darrel

BEN turns to leave.

DARREL
Ahem!

BEN
....on it, MR.Green.

BEN exits the Pizza Place

EXT - PIZZA PLACE

BEN
...One day at a time Ben. One day at a time.

INT - BEN'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME

On one side of the door, BEN tries to unlock it while holding several bags. Murmuring to himself as he does, until something falls outside and the door comes tumbling open.

BEN
Wonderful...

BEN kicks the broken bag in the door. He starts unpacking when he hears DENIS lumbering his way downstairs. The attic door swings down and DENIS, 750, steps into view. DENIS is a Troll, a fat, bald Troll with a shag rug running from his shoulders to his waist. Wearing nothing but an old kilt and has two large white tusks shooting from his lower jaw, contrasting with his yellow teeth.

DENIS
Evening Ben. Darrel run you ragged again?

BEN
He did, Marcy too.

DENIS
Those teens sure do run a tight shift.

BEN turns his attention to stocking the fridge. Interrupted somewhat when DENIS reaches past him for a beer.

DENIS
Think they'd mind you disappearing on

them for a while?

BEN

Of course, they would. Those of us who work for a living tend to notice things like that.

DENIS

Maybe...but if you quit.

BEN sticks his head over the door to look DENIS in the eyes.

BEN

I'm not quitting Denis.

DENIS

Fine, don't quit, we'll call it an overdue vacation then.

BEN

What the Hell are you talking about?

DENIS

I have something I got to take care of in D.C and I was hoping you would drive me.

BEN

You can't be serious.

DENIS

Serious as a stroke Ben.

BEN

Putting aside me quitting or not, why should I?

DENIS

Cause I can pay you, more than what you'll make at all three of those places over the next twenty years combined.

BEN

This money comes from where, exactly?

DENIS

Same place I get rent every month.

BEN doesn't respond, just keeps looking at Denis.

DENIS

Not trying to stiff you or anything Ben. Enough people have done that plenty today. Think on it, not going anywhere soon.

DENIS slips a small coin onto the kitchen table before leaving back to the attic. BEN picks up the coin and studies it for a moment before heading back to his room. He puts the coin down on his dresser and starts counting up the tip money he made today. It all goes into envelope marked "Savings."

Before he closes the envelope however he takes another look at the coin then pulls out a money log in the envelope. BEN looks at two numbers at the top next to "Start Acting Full time." The first is a large sum of money and the other is 20 yrs. Ben then picks up DENIS coin in the other hand, rubbing it slightly.

INT - BEN'S HOUSE - MORNING

DENIS descends to the kitchen around noon and to his surprise finds BEN waiting for him.

BEN

I'll do it, but I'm not paying for gas.

DENIS lets out a bellowing, joyous laugh.

DENIS

It's a deal then.

DENIS puts out his hand to shake. For a moment Ben doesn't take it, then grabs hold. When he lets go he finds the coin in his palm. Now with a ring of chains around the border.

DENIS

I'd start packing if I were you.

BEN

How long are we going to be gone?

DENIS

Long time.

BEN

How are you going to fit in my car?

Denis pulls out a large cigar, lights it, and takes a long draw off it.

DENIS
I got my ways.

EXT. BEN'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Ben stares down at a large guinea pig sitting in his car's cup holder, smoking a cigarette.

BEN
How long have you been able to do this?

DENIS
Awhile. Now, are you coming or what?

Ben stares at Denis's new furry form a bit longer, takes another deep breath, and calmly shuts the passenger door before entering the driver's side.

INT. BEN'S CAR - AFTERNOON

He puts his car in drive, takes one last look at his house through the rearview, and pulls out onto the road.

BEN
(to the house) Be back soon.

Ben pulls out into his neighborhood like he was going to work. Noticing a car waiting for him on the side of the road. When he passes, the car pulls onto the road to his house.

BEN
Denis. You weren't expecting someone today, were you?

DENIS
Not today... Don't speed up.

Ben looks back through his rearview. When he doesn't see the car comes back out, he looks back to the road.

BEN
Just who exactly are you running from?

DENIS
Running? Who's running?

Denis worms his way out of the cup holder and scurries along to the glovebox.

DENIS (CONT)

I got business to take care of, and some of it involves those fine gentlemen. Who I am not prepared to deal with at this point in time.

Denis pops open the glove box and hops down onto it.

DENIS (CONT)

Now close this hatch and pretend like you don't know what's going on.

BEN

Been doing that since I woke up.

DENIS

Then this'll be easy. Door, please.

Ben pulls to a stop sign quickly shutting the door, throwing Denis against the back of the glovebox with a soft thud. Ben lightens up a bit and is about to pull away when someone taps on his car window. He looks over and sees RORY looking in.

RORY

Scuse me mate, but you haven't seen a Troll round these parts have yah?

BEN

Yeah, live with one.

RORY

That so, must be a pain to deal with?

BEN

To put it mildly

RORY

Know where the lug might be then?

BEN

At home, asleep no doubt.

Rory scratches his chest, revealing his gun.

RORY

Strange, cause a couple of my friends dropped by this morning and didn't see, hear, or smell 'em. You don't think he's gone off somewhere.

BEN

Can't think of anyplace. The house had
booze and a toilet, so he's covered.

Rory keeps scratching, eyeing the inside of Ben's car,
noticing the bags in the backseat. Rory stops scratching,
tucks his jacket over his gun, and smiles widely.

RORY

Well, that's just my luck. Sorry for
the stop mate, have fun wherever
you're going.

Rory descends rapidly to the ground as a small earthen pillar
recedes. Ben looks down to find Rory about three feet off the
ground standing, walking back to the sidewalk. Ben keeps
watching from the corner of his eye until the light changes.
He opens the glove box and Denis comes tumbling out.

BEN

Why are polite little men with guns
asking about you? Be honest, or I'm
slamming the door again.

DENIS

I told you, I have some business with
the group that gentleman works for.

BEN

You mean the Syndicate?

DENIS

If you want to get technical, yes.

Ben glares over at Denis from the corner of his eye.

DENIS (CONT)

Hey, don't worry Ben. What we're doing
right now has nothing to do with them.
Plus thanks to your dead little eyes,
they don't know jack.

Ben continues to glare at Denis, watching the road from the
corner of his eye.

DENIS

Come on now Ben. You're going to kill
both of us doing this. Watch the road.

BEN

If this blows up in our face I'm

dumping you at the next stop.

DENIS

Appreciate the warning. Also, curve.

Ben snaps back to the road just in time to see the curve disappear under his car, jolting his head into the roof. Denis laughs as the two of them drive onto the highway.

INT. BEN'S CAR - LATE AFTERNOON

Denis has returned to his cupholder and is waving his cigarette around drawing with the smoke. Ben slouches in his seat, shifting between the road and his mirrors. He sees another car pull up next to him, inside a satyr in a dress shirt curls up over the wheel.

His horns, worn down to nubs, blankly watching the road ahead of him, eventually overtaking Ben and speeding further down the never-ending road. Ben watches him go until he disappears over the horizon, then a loud galloping behind him catches his attention.

BEN

The Hell?

The galloping gets louder as something comes into Ben's rearview. As it does, Denis stops drawing and stiffens.

DENIS

Throw me at the back window.

BEN

What?

DENIS

Throw me at the back window before--

Ben's driver-side mirror explodes into shards.

BEN

Holly--

DENIS

Throw me God--

Ben grabs Denis from the cup holder and hucks him over his shoulder at the rear window. He collides with a soft thump, and the window flashes gold. Denis breathes a sigh of relief just as shotgun pellets pepper the rear window.

BEN
Who the hell is shooting at us?

DENIS
Best guess, Stampers on Syndicate pay.

BEN
I thought they didn't know anything.

DENIS
And I was wrong, now speed up.

Ben grits his teeth before flooring it. Weaving in between lanes as best he can, but the bug can only push 65. Centaurs in police uniforms come into focus, each armed and ready.

DENIS
When's our next exit. Where we at?

BEN
Mile Marker 45. But I don't see--

DENIS
45? You see a dirt road coming up?

BEN
Yes, but I don't think we should--

DENIS
Take it.

Ben wants to argue but one of the Stampers is charging up the left door, pointing his gun at one of the tires. Ben jerks the wheel, flying onto the dirt road. Denis bounces around like a fuzzy rubber ball having the time of his life.

BEN
One day at a time Ben. One day at a time. One. Day. At. A. Time!

They speed down an old side road into the forest. The Stampers give chance, but begin to back off. Around the time they start seeing signs for someplace called, "The Mound." Soon they arrive at the Mound, without a Stamper insight.

EXT. THE MOUND - LATE AFTERNOON

The Mound is a large hill, springing from the forest floor. Covered in lush grass and flowers, with a stone archway in the front, leading into the Mound.

INT. BEN'S CAR - LATE AFTERNOON

Ben sits in the parking lot of the Mound, white-knuckling the wheel. One eye twitches while the rest of him remains motionless. Denis scurries out of the backseat, laughing.

DENIS

We live my friend. How does it feel?

Ben doesn't respond, he doesn't even move.

DENIS

Ben? Ben? You still in their buddy?

Ben opens the door and steps out of the car and starts unloading. Denis also steps out, shifting to his normal form.

EXT. THE MOUND - LATE AFTERNOON

DENIS

Ok, your mad, I get that. Honestly, had no idea that Rory would be this paranoid; didn't seem clever enough.

BEN

Seem to know a lot of people. Let's hope some are in there.

DENIS

You want out, that's fine. You can go back to your plan but wait a while inside. The Stampers are waiting for you to come back out.

BEN

Fine. Nobody better jump us though.

DENIS

Don't worry, they love me here.

Ben gives Denis a skeptical look before ignoring him and making his way into the Mound.

INT. THE MOUND - LATE AFTERNOON

Ben and Denis move through the stone archway into the interior of the Mound. In a blink of an eye, the whole scene changes. They now find a large speakeasy, well lit and packed with all sorts of strange people, some with wings, multiple arms, no eyes, barked skin.

BEN
Where in the Hell are we?

DENIS
Paradise my friend, follow me.

Denis leads Ben to the bar. As they sit down, the band comes on the stage behind them, filling the room with soft jazz. MOLLY, a youthful 207, approaches Denis smiling as she does.

MOLLY.
As I live and breathe, how are you,
Denis?

DENIS
Still living. Ran into some of Rory's
boys on the way here. Mind if we...

MOLLY
Of course. Let me get you boys
something to drink while you wait.

DENIS
Thanks, Molly.

As Molly pours drinks, Ben looks around the room baffled but delighted with what he's seeing.

BEN
What is this place?

DENIS
Where the strange folk can come and be
themselves. We got Fairies, Gnomes,
dancers, actors.

BEN
How often do they get to do this?

DENIS
Most of them do this full-time.

BEN
How?

DENIS
They live here, or in the woods
outback. It's not glamorous but it's
better than what we've been living in.

BEN
There has to be a catch.

DENIS
No catch. Molly owns the place, pays her taxes, doesn't give shit to the Syndicate, and knows when to snitch.

Ben starts drinking in the surroundings mesmerized. Lost in the music, watching people dancing, singing, living. Molly slides two mugs onto the table, Denis grabs his and strums his fingers around it.

DENIS
Look, Ben. I know I haven't been totally straight with you, didn't think Rory was that onto me. It's going to be risky going forward.

Denis takes out a coin similar to the one he gave Ben.

DENIS (CONT)
If you want out, I'll let you out.
I'll even pay you for your troubles.

Ben turns his attention back to Denis. Taking out his coin and studying it.

BEN
How many places like this do you know of?

DENIS
Quite a few. At least one in every state.

BEN
And the chance of me dying before I get to one?

DENIS
70/30. Not zero, but not a coin flip.

Ben paws over the coin.

BEN
I can't take that chance, Denis.

Ben slides his coin onto the countertop. A few seconds later the chains around the rim vanish. Denis nods.

DENIS

Been good knowing you Ben. Hope your plan works out. For your troubles.

Denis pulls out a small leather pouch and tosses it to Ben. Ben pulls it open to find several small gold coins. Denis moves away from the bar, mixing into the crowd leaving Ben alone, Ben watches him go until he disappears completely.

MOLLY

So what's this little plan of yours, honey?

BEN

Go home, get my jobs back, keep working until the dream comes true.

MOLLY

And when will that be exactly?

BEN

Depends on how much those coins will get me. Best guess...15 years, give or take?

MOLLY

That's an awful long time to wait for someone who only lives for so long.

BEN

I can manage.

MOLLY

Can you honey? Or is that just what you've been telling yourself.

Ben doesn't respond and looks down at his drink. He quickly drains it, snatches the pouch, and leaves just as fast; only slowing down once he's cleared the bar. As he moves through the crowd to the door the music grows quiet and the lights begin to fade, until Ben's standing in the parking lot again.

INT. BEN'S CAR - EARLY EVENING

Ben gets into the driver's side but doesn't start the car. Instead, he lays the pouch on the dash and rummages through the bags in the back until he finds his plan. He unfolds it in his lap and goes to open the pouch when he sees Denis's coin again.

Ben pauses, but brushes the coin aside and opens the pouch.

He counts the coins inside, crunching the numbers of his plan. Running down his "Act full time" number from 20 years to 18. He smacks the wheel and falls back into his seat.

He then flips out his phone and dials Darrel. As he waits, Ben notices the coin again, shimmering on his dashboard. He reaches out to touch it again when Darrel picks up.

DARREL

Avalon Pizza, where kings go to dine;
this is Darrel how can I help you?

BEN

Hey Darrel, it's Ben. I was calling
about my schedule; plans fell through.

DARREL

Bummer to hear that man, but I already
gave your shift to Jody. I can get you
a new one, but the only ones left are
the nights and weekends.

BEN

Will it pay the same?

DARREL

Yes, but you'd be working at least
five extra hours a week.

Ben, breathes deep, pulls the phone away from his ear, and starts bashing the wheel with his other hand. The vibrations cause Denis's coin to roll down onto Ben's plan. When the coin hits the plan Ben stops and slowly picks the coin up, studying it in his hand, oblivious to Darrel.

DARREL

Ben. Ben. Ben!

BEN

What? Oh, yah Darrel?

DARREL

Mr. Green. When are you going to be
back?

Ben doesn't respond right away.

BEN

I'll call you back on that Darrel.

Ben hangs up, gets out of his car, and renters the Mound.

INT. THE MOUND - EARLY EVENING.

Ben crashes through the entrance and into the crowd.

BEN
Denis! Denis, you still here!

From the back of the room, Denis stands up and waves to Ben.

DENIS
Yes. Now stop shouting.

Ben makes his way over to Denis.

BEN
I want to make a change to our deal.

DENIS
That being?

BEN
Each new state we cross though we stop
at a place like this. Especially if
the odds of dying drop below 50/50.

DENIS
I can make that work since you're so
insistent.

Denis holds his hand out to shake and Ben grabs it right away. The coin reappearing in his hand with the chains.

BEN
Ready to get going then?

DENIS
Always.

The two leave together and slide back into Ben's car.

INT. BEN'S CAR - EARLY EVENING

Ben pulls his car out of the parking lot, stopping at the exit when he hears police sirens.

BEN
One day at a time.

Ben guns it, leaping back onto the main road, speeding down the open road sirenes and galloping hooves echoing behind them. END