

MID-DEATH CRISIS
Outline Draft

COLD OPEN

INT. PRIUS / CAR PARK – NIGHT

MO (40s, Asian-American, enthusiastic, awkward, wants to make an impact) preps her car for a passenger. She puts a water bottle in the cup holder in the back seat. Stocks some granola bars in a little compartment. Puts an assortment of magazines in the seat pocket. Takes a step back and admires her work.

She pulls out a thick, ancient-looking diary and flips through the pages, which are filled with small boxes like a CALENDAR. Each box has a cross as she counts down to... THIS DAY. She flips to the last page, where she fills out the FINAL BOX. She smiles, hopeful.

EXT. ROOFTOP – NIGHT

The roof of a beautiful brownstone in a gentrified part of Brooklyn. GREG and RACHEL, an attractive, affluent couple in their 20s burst from the stairway onto the roof, laughing and full of life. Rachel takes in the view: *It's beautiful.* Greg grins: *I know right? My dad says it was a steal.*

INT. PRIUS – NIGHT

Mo drives. She glances at her phone, attached to the dash. It displays a picture of GREG, along with an uber-like map leading to his location. Also, a TIMER, counting down: 4 minutes 28 seconds... 27... 26...

EXT. ROOFTOP – NIGHT

Greg and Rachel sit on the edge of the building, discussing their summer plans. Greg: *I can't believe it's actually happening. I've worked so hard to earn this internship.* Rachel frowns: *Doesn't your uncle own the hedge fund?* Greg: *I mean sure, but I didn't get any special treatment. Like, I still had to go in for an interview.*

INT. PRIUS – NIGHT

Mo pulls up at her destination; the phone displays a message "you have arrived at your pickup location." The timer ticks down: 8... 7... 6...

EXT. ROOFTOP – NIGHT

Greg stands up and looks at the beautiful Manhattan skyline. *The point is, this is the start of our lives, Rachel! We have so much potential!*

INT. PRIUS – NIGHT

The timer: 3... 2... 1...

EXT. ROOFTOP – NIGHT

Greg twirls around on the ledge. *Our whole lives ahead—*

Greg slips and falls off the roof, landing on the pavement below with a WET THUD.

EXT. SIDEWALK – NIGHT

Greg is very dead. His soul “ghosts” out of his body and he stares down at his mangled body. He freaks out and immediately goes into denial. *HOLY CRAP! This can't be happening, this can't be happening--*

At that moment, Mo – who is parked right there – rolls down her window and calls to him cheerily: *Hey! Greg! So, you're dead. I'm Mo, and I'm here to take you to the underworld.*

Rachel bursts out the front of the brownstone and runs to Greg's dead body. Greg tries to communicate with her, yelling in her face— but he's invisible to her. On the other hand, Mo is visible and can interact with Rachel (and all living people). Rachel notices her and yells: *Do you know CPR? Mo, upbeat: I'm sorry, I don't. But if it makes you feel any better, I don't think CPR would help, because his brains are outside of his head—* Rachel wails.

Mo returns her attention to Greg, who is still freaking out: *I know this is difficult, but this really works best if you can stay calm—* Greg howls to the sky *NOOOOOOOOOOO!!!* Mo sighs; it's going to be a long night.

ACT ONE**INT. CAR – NIGHT**

Mo drives as Greg cycles through denial, anger, and bargaining in the back seat. He berates Mo like an irate uber customer. *I can't be dead! My dad is on the board of Morgan Stanley! There's been a mistake, you're going to pay for this.* This is the kind of bs Mo goes through every day. It sucks.

Mo remains upbeat and changes the subject. She explains that, actually, she's not going to be doing this job any longer. Greg is her 10 millionth pick up, which means she's going to get promoted to angel – something she's been working towards for hundreds of years. She can't wait to be able to make an impact, and help spread goodness in the world.

They arrive at a noodle shop as Greg vomits all over Mo's car. Mo's pissed off, but takes a breathe, remembers that tonight's her big night, and keeps it together.

EXT. NOODLE SHOP - NIGHT

Mo explains that the noodle shop is a portal to the underworld, and encourages Greg to enter. Greg asks, *What happens now? I'm going to heaven, right?* Mo: *Have you ever eaten shellfish?* Greg: *Yes.* Mo: (beat, then, unconvincingly) *I'm sure you're going to heaven.* Greg enters the noodle shop, and there's a flash of light from inside.

INT. DISPATCH CENTER - NIGHT

Mo walks up the stairs to the space above the noodle shop, and enters what looks like a CALL CENTER, with tens of reapers working on phones and computers. It looks and feels like an office from the 1950's, dingy and depressing.

She goes to an elevator, excitedly mentioning to another reaper that she's going upstairs.

INT. UPPER-LEVEL OFFICES - NIGHT

Mo emerges from the elevator into a sleek, modern office space (think Apple or Google), in stark contrast to the grimy dispatch center downstairs. This is filled with attractive angels, sharply dressed in suits and designer wear. They stare at her as she enters the office, sticking out like a sore thumb.

She slips into a conference room and stands at the back as HARPER (20s, white, douchy angel in a suit, face you want to punch) gives a video presentation to MOTHER TIME (40s, African-American, aggressive executive vibes) about a recent successful campaign. The video depicts (in a sexy, sizzle reel-type format) how Harper and his team of angels to sent signs to humans to influence them to be good. Harper brags about the campaign's success: *we saw a 4% uptick in charitable giving, and an 8% uptick in hugging.* A "goodness chart" shows an upwards trend.

Mother Time is impressed. She also is clearly attracted to Harper; the two have a degree of sexual tension that is uncomfortable for everyone else in the room.

Mo watches all from the back, excited. In a few minutes, she is going to join the ranks of the angels, and this will be her new life.

CUT TO: The presentation now finished. Mo approaches MT and Harper, who are at the front of the room flirting. She interrupts, nervous but excited, and speaks to MT: *I just dropped off my ten millionth soul!* She beams at MT expectantly, but MT is clearly has no idea what she is talking about: *Why are you telling me this?* Mo laughs as if it's obvious: *we talked about this, like, three hundred years ago. I asked if I could*

get promoted to angel and you said when I dropped off ten million souls. I've been working towards this, just chugging away. I know I can make an impact on peoples lives – I want to help them be good!

MT and Harper stare for a beat. Then burst out laughing. MT: *Oh my god you thought I was serious? I'm sorry, I was totally messing with you. We can't just promote reapers willy nilly. Mo protests: What about Ted, he got promoted! MT: That was a special situation, he's someone's nephew.*

Harper, mansplains: *Being an angel's not for everyone. There's a delicate cosmic fabric at play here, it takes a very deft touch to not screw it up. You're a perfect reaper – you blend into the background, and don't interact with anyone. Basically, you're totally inconsequential which is perfect for a reaper. So, great job!*

INT. BAR – NIGHT

Mo drinks with her friend, ADI (40s, Indian-America, another reaper). She's devastated: *All this time I've been busting my ass for nothing. What's the point? Why am I even trying? I just want to make an impact on peoples' lives! Do you ever think there might be more to our existence than just ferrying people around?*

Adi: *Look, it is what it is. We're stuck at the bottom of the underworld hierarchy, always have been. We work the longest hours without any of the perks of being an angel – the healthcare, steady wage.*

They continue to grumble and commiserate about how death isn't a *thing* anymore (remember how the Egyptians used to do it?). Then Adi begs Mo to take one of his pick-up one of his assignments tomorrow so he can go to a little-ships-in-bottles convention (his passion). Mo begrudgingly agrees and says he owes her.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Mo drives, and loses it, her frustration pouring out. She pounds the steering wheel in frustration.

INT. MO'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Mo wakes up to her phone DINGING with the soul pick up information from Adi. The soul is a man named FRED. She groans and rolls out of bed.

INT. CHEAP HOTEL - DAY

Mo walks into a cheap dingy hotel, looking at Fred's face on her phone. She spots him hurrying out of a bathroom and watches as enters an event room with a sign for the one-day motivational seminar, ZEST!. From inside she hears a commotion... sounds like people yelling.

ACT TWO

INT. EVENT ROOM – CHEAP HOTEL – DAY

Mo enters the room and is hit with a wall of INSPIRATIONAL AND UPLIFTING ROCK MUSIC. She looks around to see about 30 seminar attendees scattered around the room yelling affirmations at each other: *I AM STRONG! I AM POWERFUL! I AM INCREDIBLE!*

Suddenly, JANE (30s, a large, muscular seminar attendee) grabs Mo: *Great, I've been looking for a partner.* Mo protests, but Jane is already screaming affirmations in her face: *I AM A BEAR! A HUGE BEAUTIFUL BEAR!* Mo is freaked out and disoriented.

TINA (40s, Latina, 5' 3", headset microphone, pure energy and charisma) bounds through the room, clapping and dancing to the music: *become who you already are!!!*

She stops at Mo and Jane. Takes Jane by the shoulders: *I don't believe you! And if I don't believe you, I know you don't believe you!* Jane is stunned. She's right! She redoubles her efforts, yelling at Mo with even more energy. Tina notices Mo, takes her in but doesn't say anything.

Mo scans the room for Fred as Tina walks away.

Suddenly the lights cut out and the music stops. Complete darkness. Then Tina's voice over the speaker system: *return to your seats.*

When the lights come back on (dimmed), everyone is sitting except Mo. She scans the seats, trying to find Fred.

Tina stands at the front, on a stage: *Steve, give me the back lights.* The lights at the back of the room abruptly turn on, effectively spotlighting Mo. Tina grins: *There's always one. You thought you could sit at the back and hide, watch from a distance. But I always go for the ones at the back. Zest isn't about being comfortable. It's about breaking old patterns, shaking off your old life. So come on up!*

Tina's assistant, STEVE (20s, white, full of ambition, admires Tina with a fanaticism that's a little scary) suddenly appears and ushers Mo towards the stage, ignoring her protestations.

CUT TO: Mo sitting on stage, incredibly uncomfortable, Tina directly across from her, looking deeply into her eyes. Mo: *Look this is a mistake, I'm not meant to be here.* Tina cuts her off: *Oh yes you are. Something brought you here. Your whole life has been leading up to this moment.* Mo stands up and starts to walk away. Tina calls after her: *If your life has turned out exactly how you planned, go ahead, walk away. If*

you've already achieved everything you wanted, well, congratulations, get out of here . But if not... you better sit back down.

Mo hesitates. Then turns and sits back down. Tina prods her more, asking probing questions about what she wants and after some resistance... the emotion spills out of Mo. she opens up about her dissatisfaction with her job... and her life. She admits she tries to be upbeat and enthusiastic all the time, but really, is burned out and sick of it all. After being passed up for promotion, what's the point of even trying? The other seminar attendees are rapt, sympathetic. They applaud, and Mo is stunned.

Tina says: acknowledging that you want more is the first step to building the life you want. This course is about becoming the "Zest" you, so you can become the best you. And once that happens, you'll find that you spread goodness and inspiration wherever you go. Mo is affected by this – could this somehow be her chance to make an impact, and spread goodness?

Tina ends the seminar and reminds everyone to sign up for her 10-day intensive course to continue the work they began today.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Seminar attendees pack up their things and spill into the lobby. Mo stands there, stunned and buzzing. She's euphoric, feels like she's high.

Hi. She looks up to see FRED (30s, white, disheveled, scatter-brained but good natured) standing in front of her. *I thought what you did up there was really brave. A few of us are going bowling tonight if you want to come along. I'm Fred.*

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - EVENING

Mo hangs out with a few seminar attendees at the bowling alley. Mo looks at her phone: 32 minutes till Fred's death.

Over bowling and finger food, Mo hangs out with the other seminar attendees. She's having fun but also clearly shy and uncomfortable, having never done anything like this before. She (and we) learn a bit about why the other attendees took the motivational seminar. Jane is training to become an Olympic power lifter. AHMED (20s) wants to be a world famous social media influencer. BRUCE (30s) is trying to launch a start up. They all speak breathlessly about Tina's videos and books, and say she's made a huge impact on their lives.

Fred says that ever since he discovered Tina he's become a new person, who is going to follow his dreams... in fact he's invited his girlfriend to the bowling alley and is about to propose to her— she's the best thing that ever happened to him, and he's going to go after the life they both deserve. Everyone encourages him. At that

moment, Fred's girlfriend, BRENDA (30s) arrives, and Fred guides her away, winking at the group.

Mo gets a call from Adi.

INT. BATHROOM - EVENING

Mo takes Adi's call in the bathroom. He asks: *have you picked Fred up yet? Thanks again, this little-ships-in-bottles convention is off the chain.*

Mo says Fred hasn't died yet and confesses that she got sucked into this motivational seminar, and is hanging out with the attendees—*Whoa whoa*, Adi cuts her off. *What are you doing? Don't get to know them, don't talk to them, what is this, amateur hour? You're not meant to interact with people. Just let me know when you're on your way.*

She assures him she will. Fred's got 12 minutes left before he dies.

She looks in the mirror and has a soul searching moment. What the hell is she doing here, getting to know the other seminar attendees?

EXT. BOWLING ALLEY - NIGHT

Mo goes outside. Hears a commotion coming from the roof – Fred is arguing with Brenda.

EXT. BOWLING ALLEY ROOF - NIGHT

Mo emerges onto the roof to see Fred pleading with Brenda. She's breaking up with him—he's a loser, an assistant manager at Best Buy who couldn't even make manager. *I'm gonna get it this year, I know it!* Fred protests. Brenda: *You invited me to a bowling alley to propose, you don't have a ring, what are you even doing? Sorry, but I can't do this anymore.* She walks past Mo down the stairs, leaving Fred standing there.

Mo looks at her phone—Fred has 1 minute left to live. He steps up to the ledge, devastated. About to jump. He starts to cry: *I just lost everything I ever wanted.*

Mo stares, unsure what to say. Then: *I know how you feel. I just lost the only thing I ever cared about. I guess you could call it a dream job, but it's more than a job. Pursuing this thing was my whole life's purpose. Now I have nothing. Part of me wants to end it all, too.* He looks at her: *But you're not going to.* Mo: *No. Maybe? Frankly, I don't know what would happen if I tried.*

Fred looks at her... then steps away from the ledge. *See you down there.* He walks back downstairs.

Mo looks at her phone, confused—the TIMER IS STOPPED with 2 seconds left. Mo's eyes go wide. Oh crap.

ACT THREE

INT. MO'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Mo calls Adi and explains what happened – Fred didn't die. She's confused – nothing like this has ever happened before. Adi is freaked out: *This is terrible. We operate within a delicate cosmic system. If one piece is out of whack the whole thing goes.*

Adi says that Mo has to make things right – she has to kill Adi to right the cosmic scales. Mo is terrified, and doesn't want to do it: *how would I even kill him?* Adi: *It can't be that hard, humans do it all the time! Just stab him, or hit him on the head with something. It has to be done.* Mo reluctantly agrees.

She lies in bed, staring at the ceiling, unable to sleep.

INT. DISPATCH CENTER - NIGHT

In a corner of the office, a small red alert light begins to flash on an unattended control panel: SYSTEM ERROR.

INT. MO'S APARTMENT – DAY

Mo – on the verge of a panic attack – tries to choose a murder weapon. Holds up a knife, then a vase, before settling on a hammer, which she puts in her handbag.

INT. BEST BUY – DAY

Mo enters the store to see Fred dealing with a customer. He's super excited to see her. She nervously asks if they can go outside and talk in the alley, because she has a surprise for him.

EXT. ALLEY – DAY

In the alley, Mo reaches for the hammer in her handbag behind her back... as Fred opens up about how grateful he is for what Mo did for him last night. He owes his life to her, and he vows to use it as a force for good. He hugs her. So what was that surprise she wanted to tell him about?

She puts the hammer back in her bag. She can't do it.

INT. BEST BUY - DAY

Together, Mo and Fred sign up for Tina’s 10-day session, both excited to be embarking on the journey.

EXT. SIDEWALK – DAY

Mo calls Adi and says she couldn’t do it. She won’t do it. He freaks out, but she downplays it—*thousands of people die every day, this is just one guy. How bad could it be?*

INT. MOTHER TIME’S OFFICE - DAY

A reaper office worker bursts into MT’s office. *You need to come see this.*

INT. DISPATCH CENTER – DAY

MT watches the system going crazy. Lights, alarms. A screen alert displays a picture of Fred’s face and a warning message: “DEATH DELAYED: BUTTERFLY EFFECT TRIGGERED.”

On a control screen, we see a visual depiction of the chaos spilling out from Fred’s delayed death: a node (representing Fred), from which many branches of different “butterfly effect” events spill out.

The reaper office worker explains. *This man was supposed to die yesterday by jumping off a bowling alley—but for some reason he didn’t. This disturbance has triggered a chain reaction that is going to disrupt every goodness initiative we have in the pipeline. 52 children will become orphans because of this. A future UN ambassador will be hit by a truck. Joe’s Pizza on 4th street will go out of business.*

On a separate screen, we see the a “projected goodness chart” (like the one from Doug’s presentation earlier) take a steep drop downwards.

MT asks: *which reaper was responsible for his pick up?*

A picture of Adi’s face appears on screen.

MT’s eyes narrow as we CUT TO BLACK.