EXT. URBAN SIDEWALK - DAY

JESUS (not Christ) is walking down the sidewalk. Across the street, he sees a man round the corner. Jesus quickens his pace. The other man looks back and sees JESUS, he starts to run. JESUS pursues, closing the distance between them. They turn at the next street and both stop in their tracks when a grimy city bus teeming with passengers pulls into the nearest stop. Its doors swing open and a horde of people rush out, most making a break for the entrance of the large building nearby. It's Quazar Pete's Hololounge.

The crowd is racing to the establishment's doors and fighting for position. JESUS, determined, punches the guy he’s been chasing and wrestles his way up to the front of the throng. The automatic doors of Quazar Pete's Hololounge slide open and Jesus enters looking quite a bit worse for wear, his nose bleeding, a shoe missing.

INT. HOLOLOUNGE RECEPTION - DAY

JESUS pushes through a metal turnstile. A sign overhead reads "No Fighting In Queue". There’s a desk and a receptionist ahead. JESUS shuffles forward and waves his palm over a sensor.

The RECEPTIONIST is focused on her monitor as Jesus approaches, avoiding eye contact.

RECEPTIONIST

Game?

JESUS

Uh, that'd be Madden Caregiver Sim 2041.

The receptionist gives him a strange, criticizing look, squinting her eyes.

JESUS (CONT’D)

Yeah, I like it. So what? Madden's a legend and deserves to be looked after. It's a pleasure wiping his ass.

RECEPTIONIST

Fine, fine. Move along.

JESUS

Hey, almost forgot. I need to reserve a space for a second player.

RECEPTIONIST, irritated, points to a poster with the title "Know Your Local Quazar" hanging nearby. The font is unreadably small and crowded by garish artwork. Quazar Pete in a king's robes riding a rocket like a horse, assorted stars going supernova, very nearly intellectual property infringing depictions of popular sci-fi spacecraft, etc.

RECEPTIONIST

We've phased line rez out. All parties arrive together. Quazar Pete’s Hololounge appreciates your understanding and patronage. (Not.)

JESUS

Huh. Couldn’t help but notice it in the fine print on that eye exam behind you - nothing changes 'till next month. Gimme a rez.

RECEPTIONIST

Keep it down, little shit.

JESUS

You gonna give me a rez?

RECEPTIONIST glares in silence.

RECEPTIONIST

Your friend's number?

JESUS

DSN 225.

RECEPTIONIST types, reads screen for a moment.

RECEPTIONIST

Oh yeah, you guys. Again.

JESUS

Gimme a break, we’re not here that much.

RECEPTIONIST

Whatever. Here’s the ticket, go live out your twisted fantasies squeezing hemorrhoid cream into an ailing coach's crack. Wipe down the VR crotch attachment when you're done, you perv.

JESUS is annoyed. He takes his pass.

JESUS

Doesn't it somehow warm your shitty heart that maybe, just maybe, if something so sick as Madden Caregiver Sim has fans, there's hope at least a single fucked up human out there might someday share your company and not immediately vomit in their mouth?

RECEPTIONIST fumes.

JESUS enters the queue, it stretches down the hall and around the corner. He waits a bit. The guy he violently pursued earlier enters the line a few places behind him. The guy whispers something into the ear of the person ahead of him, who then whispers the same thing to the person next in line and so on until JESUS gets a tap his shoulder.

THE PERSON BEHIND JESUS

Hey, that guy you smacked wants a death match. We all think you can take him. Wait, you're playing last year's Caregiver Sim? What the fuck, man. (turns to the person behind him)

Check it out, he’s playing Caregiver Sim 2051.

TWO SPOTS DOWN

What? Oh god, I thought he was cool. Maybe he shouldn’t do it.

JESUS

C'mon, you jerks know the deal. Tell that shitbox, "No way douche bag," and then cut the line.

The guy turns around and passes it on. JESUS returns to waiting. He takes a step forward and can see around a corner down a hallway. In the room at the end there’s a robot beating on a guy tied to a chair. JESUS watches for a minute while he’s there. Suddenly a robot swings into the doorway and slams the door shut. JESUS is starteld and stares straight ahead. He takes a step forward. and can see the tv.

Some commercial. Water company. Slogan “The smart choice for home water” pictures of urban plumbing. Treatment plant. Forgets about robot thing. Takes a step forward. A robot taps him on the shoulder. He’s beside him. JESUS looks scared at the robot.

JESUS (CONT’D)

Oh yeah, shit.

TUPAC

(from behind the robot)

JESUS, hand him the ticket, man.

JESUS

Oh, TUPAC. God damn.

He hands the ticket to the robot and TUPAC gets in line behind him. The robot leaves.

JESUS (CONT’D)

Man, I saw a guy getting beaten down that hallway.

TUPAC

Shit.

JESUS

Should we still go for it?

TUPAC

Totally. The shit I went through to get it here.

JESUS

They looked pretty mean.

TUPAC

Fuck it dude. It’s because they’re mean that we have to. Or else it’ll just be more of that.

He points down to the Madden Caregiver Sim game box.

JESUS

This thing is a huge turd. You’re right. At least they can melt ‘em down to make that building

shit.

TUPAC

Yeah, my new apartment is made of Madden Composite, it’s great.

He looks down at the game with sadness.

TUPAC (CONT’D)

Let’s have it.

TUPAC opens the case and slips the game up his sleeve and slips the other out the other sleeve. (games on turbo grfx carts.) He hands it back to JESUS who just holds it.

JESUS

It all went ok?

TUPAC speaks over the visual truth where he visited some nice woman who baked him cookies and had tea with him. He brought her some special yarn. She hands him the game and sends him off with a bagged lunch.

TUPAC

Obviously. Met up with him down an alley off powell just like last time. They were all packin

and he had his dog with him. Nearly bit my head off. his goons patted me down and

blocked us in. He handed it over and took the cash then the goons through me out. It was

hard shit man.

JESUS

Damn.

4.

TUPAC

Just gotta wait now.

JESUS

Yup.

They wait. wait and wait. Times slows to a crawl. They nearly die from the wait. They take a step forward and are at the food counter. There’s a robot bolted to the counter handing out variously coloured snack-sized tubes of nutrient paste from a selection of tubs. People point left or right and are handed something accordingly.

JESUS (CONT’D)

Hmm...

He points right.

TUPAC

For real, purple? Fuck no, those are gross man.

JESUS

Oh c'mon, like it matters.

JESUS second guesses himself and points left.

TUPAC

I can taste the difference, man. It's totally worth paying more for the orange.

JESUS

You're so full of shit, dude. We're doing a blind taste test with these someday.

JESUS is handed a neon orange snack tube by the robot.

ROBOT

Thank-you for using: Robot Vending Ltd. Enjoy: Nutri-Paste Turbo Blast Gourmet.

They step past the counter and wait again. A screen mounted to a wall is broadcasting \*something\*.

TUPAC

Oh yeah, there was some girl that came up to me on the train yesterday. She seemed sane

enough but said that we did it at the Bronson’s Results gig. I would have a total

recollection of that.

JESUS

Bummer. Too bad you didn’t.

TUPAC

Yeah... Oh crap. I don’t have any flush credits on me.

JESUS

Shitty, man.

TUPAC

It’s serious man, I’ll need your card.

JESUS

No way man, suffer the shame. He’ll probably punch you.

TUPAC

Gotta flush our waste man.

Taps his inside pocket.

JESUS

Fine. Too bad for you though.

THE GIRL IN FRONT

What are you guys talking about.

JESUS

Um, nothing.

THE GIRL IN FRONT.

That’s obviously not true.

TUPAC

Nothing to do with you, sorry.

THE GIRL IN FRONT

Give me some too. Your guys are dropping, aren’t you?

JESUS

No, of course not.

TUPAC

It’s ok man, I’ve got enough.

He hands her some drug thing just before she goes into the toilet.

6.

TUPAC (CONT’D)

(whispers)

Shhh... They’re not for us, I’ll explain later.

JESUS looks forward. He’s very serious. The girl comes out, winks and gets

back into line. Jesus steps into the washroom.

THE GIRL IN FRONT.

Hey. Thanks, man.

TUPAC

Don’t mention it, eh?

The girl looks ahead, staring off down the hall.

JESUS comes out of the washroom. TUPAC enters with the card. A few cracking noises are heard. And then a few flushes before he leaves.

TUPAC (CONT’D)

Sorry dude. It wouldn’t flush.

JESUS

Fine.

TUPAC hands the card back. A sign on the wall declares the arrival date of the

updated system which will require new interfaces.

They round the corner and can see the doors to the games chamber. JESUS casually looks back to TUPAC only to spot several robots walking menacingly up the line. The robots seem to be heading directly towards them.

JESUS (worried)

Oh shit, man. The mean-looking bot there, back at the start of the line, I saw it hardcore thrashing a dude.

The robots stop right beside them.

LEAD ROBOT

Come with us.

LEAD ROBOT grabs them, one in each arm. TUPAC instinctively tries kicking the robot in the groin, causing its grip to instantly tighten.

JESUS (half-strangled)

That's it's hydraulic pump, you idiot!

TUPAC (half-strangled)

(some suitable 2pac rhyme, gurgled)

JESUS and TUPAC are dragged off.

INT. QUASAR PETE’S OFFICE

The boys are thrown into the office. PETE has his back to the door, sitting at his desk. PETE'S ASSISTANT is seated nearby at a computer workstation.

PETE turns around and eyes them.

TUPAC (slightly panicked)

Oh fuck. You must be Pete.

PETE, tackily dressed in a deluxe Quazar Pete's Hololounge uniform with a cape, rises from his desk and walks over to the boys, exuding arrogance.

PETE

Of course I am. Hand me the game, Jesus.

JESUS passes the game over. PETE inspects the case, scoffs.

JESUS

It’s not so bad once you get into it. If you squeeze the hemorrhoid cream tube from the bottom, starts to feel a bit like you're target shooting.

PETE stares blankly at JESUS for several seconds.

PETE

This game, this Madden Caregiver Sim? An atrocity, an abomination, an electronic embarrassment! Coaching legend or not, if I wanted to min-max a geriatric male's happiness by coordinating solids in and out, I'd sooner shoot for a high score emptying bedpans at the retirement prison across the alley.

PETE, while talking, pops open the case, removes the unlabeled game chip and hands it off to a nearby robot.

PETE (CON'T)

I've half the mind to let my roboheavies grind you into a new flavour of paste for even threatening to play this at my pleasure dome. However, a cunning ruse this is not. Don’t play me as an imbecile, I know what filthy, unlicensed software you've smuggled into my wholesome, life-enriching, empyrean paradise of a hololounge. Do you?

TUPAC looks at JESUS, both shrug.

TUPAC

Not really.

PETE

Oh, but wouldn't you, wouldn't we all, love to find out.

JESUS

How, uh.. what, what happens now?

PETE

Nothing much. I'll be plugging you in, you'll get to play the game for a bit, then be free, nay, downright *encouraged*, what with your undoubtedly spotless consciences and throbbing underworld connections, to frequent my fine establishment once more as you always have.

JESUS

What the fuck, man. What does that mean?

PETE, ignoring JESUS, waves towards a side room full of haphazardly-stacked unusual electronics and other gear. The robot henchmen push a resisting JESUS and TUPAC into it. PETE gets the attention of his assistant.

PETE

Give them a heavier wipe this time.

JESUS (in the background)

Wipe, what the..?

ASSISTANT

That could, you know, wreck them. Pretty bad.

PETE

I know, but do it.

EXT. THE BEACH - DAY

JESUS and TUPAC are standing on an impressive and remote beach.

TUPAC

What do we do, man?

JESUS pats his hips where he seemingly expects to find guns, guns that aren't there. He looks disappointed.

JESUS

I... don’t know. Do you even see a HUD? I've got nothing.

TUPAC

Our brains, our fucking *brains*, are pudding because of *this*? A boring enviro sim? We may as well have snuck in a dental hygenist training program for all the fun we can have in this sandy nowhere.

JESUS

Maybe if we wade out into the water we can go wrestle a dolphin or something.

TUPAC

The gentlest keeper of the seas... is goin' down.

CUT TO JESUS and TUPAC who are suddenly in the water. TUPAC is in the midst of a struggle with an unseen, thrashing foe.

JESUS

Block the blowhole! Block the blowhole, he'll submit!

CUT TO JESUS and TUPAC, sitting on a bench near the water's edge, soaking wet and breathing hard.

TUPAC

I could never commit to a jogging routine, but *that* everymorning...

TUPAC checks over himself quickly for injuries and finds a long, shallow bite on his neck.

TUPAC (cont.)

Asshole dolphin!

JESUS runs his hands through his hair and gets to his feet. He checks his pockets and finds a handheld object. JESUS laughs upon discovering it's a crummy outdated low-brand phone.

JESUS

Hey, check your pockets. I had a super shitty old phone in mine.

TUPAC

If I had anything on me, the dolphin probably made off with it.

TUPAC goes through his pockets, finding nothing. He shrugs.

TUPAC (CON'T)

Does that thing power on? Looks a little... damp.

JESUS fiddles with the phone, it powers on.

JESUS

Success.

JESUS continues fiddling.

JESUS (CON'T)

Hey, there's a demo version solitaire on here. And sudoku.

TUPAC

Jeez. Guess it's something to do, at least.

JESUS and TUPAC are intently concentrated on the tiny phone screen, sounds of buttons quietly clicking as they talk.

SLOW PANNING AWAY, SHOWING THE SHEER BEAUTY OF THEIR SURROUNDINGS GOING IGNORED.

QUICK FADE TO BLACK, POWERING DOWN NOISE.

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