

INT. BARBER SHOP - DAY - ESTABLISHING SHOT

An old barbershop from the 1980s. A vintage door that rings a bell when opened. Inside, a single barber chair. A barber in his 40s stands inside.

A man in his 50s enters. He wears a uniform-like outfit. On his collar, a 6-digit number is written.

MAN

Bright days to you.

BARBER

Bright days. Welcome.

Please, have a seat.

The man sits in the chair. The barber heats water on a small stove. He pours the water into a large bowl. He places a small towel inside, soaking it in the hot water, then lays it on the man's face. He takes out an old razor from the drawer and begins to sharpen it.

BARBER

The big day. I wonder who the three lucky ones will be.

MAN

Everyone thinks about the lucky ones. I don't see it that way. What about the losers, what happens to them?

BARBER

The Founders made these rules for us. So we don't forget. So we don't make the same mistakes again. These rules came out of necessity. Everything is done for us.

MAN

Rules and rule makers. They always have an excuse. All for our good, right? I was born into this world of rules. And apart from a few storybooks from the old world, I know nothing else. No one has ever asked me what I thought about these rules. If I work, I eat. The system has invented ways to keep me alive. As long as I'm needed. They let us pretend to be free. And we play along.

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BARBER

Don't say that. I know they work for us. Day and night, without rest.

MAN

I wish I could be that naive. But I can't. This lottery, everything, it's all about population control. No one cares about us. That's why I stopped looking at that stupid counter. Winning or losing doesn't matter to me anymore. I don't even know why I'm telling you all this. The barber doesn't listen carefully. He looks at the 6-digit counter on the wall. Next to it is a red warning light. After a while, a siren sounds and the light begins to rotate.

BARBER

Here it comes. The man remains indifferent, still sitting with the towel on his face. The counter numbers spin rapidly, then slow down. When the final number stops, the light goes off. The counter shows six digits: 279500. The barber looks at the number on the man's collar. They match. The barber slits the man's throat with the razor. Blood splatters on the mirror. He presses the towel to the man's throat. His white apron is covered in blood. After struggling briefly, the man dies of blood loss. The barber takes off his bloody apron and throws it on the ground. He is also wearing a uniform, with a 6-digit number on his collar.

FADE OUT.

ON SCREEN: STAGE

FADE IN.

INT. BARBER SHOP - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The barber picks up the receiver of a wall-mounted phone with no buttons. It is clear it connects only to a central switchboard.

VOICE ON PHONE

Yes.

BARBER

I won.

VOICE ON PHONE

Stay where you are. The control team is coming.

BARBER

Okay.

The door opens with the sound of the bell. A soldier and an officer enter, both with similar numbers on their collars. The barber sits in the corner on the floor, terrified, holding the razor. The officer approaches, takes the razor from his hand, lifts him up, straightens his clothes. Meanwhile, the soldier checks the dead man and his collar number. The soldier nods to the officer. The officer shakes the barber's hand.

OFFICER

Congratulations. You are the last winner of the Freedom Society. You and two people of your choice have 8 hours to leave the Freedom Society and join the Paradise Society. After signing the necessary documents, you and your chosen ones will be taken to your cell to prepare. The soldier picks up the phone and speaks to the central.

SOLDIER

The winner is confirmed. You can send the cleaning crew to the barbershop.

INT. OFFICER'S CELL - NIGHT

The officer sits in a cell-like room with his 9-year-old son. He prepares his son for bed.

OFFICER

Come on, bedtime.

CHILD

Dad, will you tell me?

OFFICER

Aren't you tired of hearing the same things?

CHILD

Please, Dad.

OFFICER

Alright. After the Third War, our world suffered great losses. We are the last remaining community of humans. Survivors built this quarantine zone called the Freedom Society. The Founders decided on this method because we wasted our right to live through wars and greed. Everyone who turns 18 is given a number. Each month, the winners are taken to the Paradise Society, where the Founders live. There, people live in bigger houses. They sit in gardens. And they can eat whatever they want.

CHILD

Even chocolate?

OFFICER

Yes, even chocolate.

CHILD

Will we go too?

OFFICER

If we're lucky, why not?

CHILD

Is Mom in the Paradise Society too?

FLASHBACK - INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY

Two women iron clothes. Suddenly, a siren sounds. The younger woman puts down her iron and looks up at the counter. The numbers spin. When they slow, the winning number is hers. She looks at the number on her collar: 456732. Across from her, the older woman watches her with a sly look.

YOUNG WOMAN

Please, I have a child.  
The older woman stabs her in the throat with scissors she had hidden behind her back.

INT. OFFICER'S CELL - NIGHT

The officer's eyes fill with tears.  
He covers his son with a blanket.

OFFICER

Now sleep. Your mother is waiting for us. You must be strong, so when we go, you won't get sick.

CHILD

Okay, Dad. Good night.  
The officer sits at the table. He takes out a photo of himself with his wife from the drawer and stares at it.

FADE OUT.

ON SCREEN: ONE MONTH LATER -  
LOTTERY DAY

FADE IN.

INT. HEADQUARTERS - DAY

The officer and the soldier sit at a desk, waiting for the phone to ring after the lottery.  
The soldier spins a revolver on the desk like a bottle.

OFFICER

The cursed day again.

SOLDIER

Fucking lottery. Anyway, it doesn't matter to me. It's just me and my girlfriend. One bed, one room is enough for us. Soundproofing would be better though. (grins)

OFFICER

There are already complaints about the noise you make.

SOLDIER

Our biggest fantasy is to do it when the siren goes off. But every time it goes off, I'm on duty. Maybe one day. Who knows.

OFFICER

Stop talking nonsense. Yes, it's time.  
The siren wails. The counter spins. It slows, stopping at the officer's number. The soldier reaches for the gun, but the officer grabs it first and points it at him.

OFFICER

So, it's my turn. This is it. This time the phone won't ring. This time I won't go.

SOLDIER

You know the rules. The winning number loses.

OFFICER

I know. Fucking rules. Sacred rules no one knows who created. Rules that took my wife from me. Rules the creators themselves don't have to follow. Yes, my friend. I know. Enforcing them is my duty.

SOLDIER

Then put the gun down.

OFFICER

Don't tell me what to do. The rules say you're the one who should walk out of here alive. But exceptions are always possible.

SOLDIER

If you kill me, your son will die with you. You know that. Give up and accept it.

OFFICER

What should I give up? My son or my life? I have another idea. Another formula for enforcing the rules. I kill you and myself. It will look like a firefight. It ends here, and my son lives. Or you swear to me, you take him with your girlfriend, and go. Only I die here.

SOLDIER

I swear. I'll take your son with me. I'll care for him as if he were my own.  
The officer presses the gun to the soldier's head.

OFFICER

What are you swearing to?

SOLDIER

I swear I'll take your son with me.

OFFICER

Alright then. I trust you.  
The officer puts the gun to his own head and pulls the trigger.

The soldier flinches, jumps up in shock. After a moment, he runs to the phone and picks it up.

INT. OFFICER'S CELL - EVENING

The officer's son plays in the cell. The soldier and his girlfriend enter.

SOLDIER

Playing a game?

CHILD

Yes. Where's my dad?

SOLDIER

He had some things to do. He asked me to tell you. This time we won the lottery. We're taking you with us. He'll join us later.

CHILD

I won't go without my dad.

SOLDIER

No sulking. I promised your father. If we don't go, others will take our place. We can't waste our chance. So I have to take you. Meanwhile, the soldier's girlfriend gathers the child's belongings. She also takes the photo from the table.

WOMAN

I've got everything. We can go.

SOLDIER

Come on then. Your dad will join us. And your mom is waiting too. Let's not keep her waiting. Let's go.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The soldier, his girlfriend, and the boy walk down a long corridor. At the end, a massive metal door opens to both sides. A blinding white light shines inside. When the light fades, two men in white uniforms appear, their collars showing 5-digit numbers. They take the newcomers' belongings. Together they walk down another white corridor.

At the end is another massive door.  
On it is written: STAGE 2.

FADE OUT.  
(Sound of the metal door  
opening)

THE END