

THE COMPROMISE

Characters: Eligo, burnt out worker for The Universe, sarcastic, any age/gender, non-human, 'unique' features
Ian Russel, made mistakes but has a good heart, getting married soon, 20s
Graham Young, an idiot, not much substance, Ian's good friend, 20s
Vivienne Greene, cold, selfish, abusive mother to Iris, 30s-40s
Iris Greene, timid, afraid of her mother, mature for her age, 12 years old

Setting: An empty room save for an office desk center stage that faces away from the audience. Four chairs sit in front of this desk to accommodate each human character, visible to the audience. There is a door on upstage left where characters may enter/exit. Behind this door is a white glow.

(The stage opens with the desk and four chairs already set up with people sitting in them. It is very dark but the audience should still be able to make out what they're seeing. GRAHAM is sitting in the chair farthest to stage right, IAN is to his left, IRIS is to his left, and VIVIENNE is to her left. All are unconscious until ELIGO enters. Lights come on when he claps. VIVIENNE gasps and looks disgusted. IAN cringes/winces. GRAHAM laughs. IRIS screams.)

GRAHAM (to Ian)
What the hell is that?

IAN
I don't know but it's scaring me.

ELIGO
ALRIGHT. That's enough. So rude. You know this is why everyone hates humans? The superficiality? Dogs never act like this. And they always go Up.

(Iris pulls her iPad from off of her lap. She snaps a picture of Eligo.)

ELIGO
Hey! How did you get that? You're not supposed to- ugh, whatever. I don't care anymore. They're serving libum in the cafeteria right now and I'm hungry. So let's make this quick.

(Eligo opens the orange envelope he has brought in with him and looks through the enclosed documents.)

IRIS (to Vivienne)
Uh, mom, where are we? I-I thought we were going home after Grandma's?

ELIGO (quietly, to himself)
Oh?

Vivienne (to Iris)
Why the hell are you asking me like I know?

ELIGO (still to himself)
Ohhhhh...

IAN
No, really, what is this? My fiance-

GRAHAM
Oh, you're in trouble, dude. She's gonna freak the fuck out.

VIVIENNE
Excuse me. There is a child present.

ELIGO (louder, to himself)
OH! That's crazy!

IAN (ignoring Vivienne)
I know, she was already so worried about the party. Now I don't even know where I am... Did you set this up? Is this some kinda prank?

GRAHAM
Nah bro, I honestly thought this was a dream. Like I'm hella confused.

IAN
Okay so then... where the fuck are we?

ELIGO
Okay. Whew. This (*referring to envelope*) is a lot. I am Eligo, your placement manager for eternity. To answer your question, you're all dead.

IAN
Just my luck! A week before I get married to the love of my life.

GRAHAM
That sucks, bro. You didn't even cheat on her. Technically.

IAN
Right. First and a last time for everything...

IRIS
So, are you God?

ELIGO
Ha, wouldn't that be fun! Nah, I'm just a helper. To Them. The Universe. I help keep it balanced by assigning and notifying placements to an entity once it has passed on.

VIVIENNE
Assigning placements?

ELIGO
Yes. I usually decide whether you individuals would be going Up or Down but your case is a little more complicated. Which means we can have a little more fun.

GRAHAM
Fun? I like fun.

ELIGO

Me too! You know, it has been SO boring here the past couple millennia. Just dull and repetitive, really. A human comes in, screams at my face, gets sent Up or Down, and I'm on to the next. I'm almost feeling depressed so-

VIVIENNE

I'm so sorry you're bored with your job but could you please explain WHAT IS GOING ON.

ELIGO

Right. Right. My apologies. Let me make sure everyone is here first, I feel like we're missing someone...

(ELIGO looks through each document as he calls out the names.)

Ian Russel?

IAN

Here.

ELIGO

Graham Young?

GRAHAM

Yo.

ELIGO

Iris Grenne?

IRIS

I'm here.

ELIGO

Vivienne Greene?

VIVIENNE

Yes.

ELIGO

Oh! That's what it is. There's another Greene that is supposed to be here.

VIVIENNE

Of course your father escapes death. Of. Course. Just like he escapes everything else.

ELIGO

No, no, no. This one hasn't been born yet. Congratulations Vivienne!

IRIS

You're pregnant?

VIVIENNE

I'm pregnant?

(There is a look of concern on both of their faces. This is not a good thing.)

ELIGO

Okay, now I can get on to explaining! So what's not interesting about your deaths is that you were in a car crash, huge collision, run of the mill, blah blah blah. What IS interesting is that you two hit at such a specific point that it created two possible outcomes. Either you two (*referring to Ian and Graham*) will die or you, er, three (*referring to Iris and Vivienne*) will die. So exciting! Now, I do already have your placements based on who dies. If it is Ian and Graham, both will be going Down.

IAN

You keep saying 'Up' and 'Down'. What is 'Down'?

ELIGO

Ah, there's a word humans always use but it is slipping my mind at the moment. I know it starts with an H.

IRIS

Hawaii?

GRAHAM

Houston?

VIVIENNE

Hell?

ELIGO

Ah, yes, that's it! The Greene's will get to live - definitely a bit of physical and emotional trauma coming from this crash but you'll be alive nonetheless. And you two will be sent straight to Hell.

GRAHAM

Hell?! For what!?

ELIGO

Do you remember what happened right before the incident?

IAN

Last thing I remember was my bachelor party. It was wild, bro. Best party of the year probably.

GRAHAM

For real, it was hella fun. We were dancing and laughing and taking shots and shit.

IAN

The speaker blew out though. It ain't a party without music. So we went- (realization sets in)

GRAHAM

I got one of those expensive ass speakers at home so we left real quick to get mine. Real quick.
So I drove-

VIVIENNE

After taking shots?

GRAHAM (annoyed at the dumb question)

Yeah, after taking shots. I drove- (*He gets it.*) Oh shit.

ELIGO

Ding, ding, ding. I thought you got in trouble for that intoxicated driving thing on Earth?

GRAHAM

You do... I'm sure my dad could get me out of prison though. Right?

ELIGO

Oh, well that brings me to option two! You two drunken assholes survive, still dealing with whatever the consequences are of your drunk driving and all the Greene's must die.

IRIS

Including me?

ELIGO

Yup! You, your mother, and the soon to be little one. But lucky for you, you'll be going Up!

VIVIENNE

Oh thank goodness.

ELIGO

Not you, though. You will be getting sent down, Vivienne.

VIVIENNE

What for?!

ELIGO

Most people going Up have not had (*looks to her file*) 11 visits from Child Protective Services.

You may have been able to get away with what you've done to Iris on Earth but They were watching.

VIVIENNE

That is ridiculous. And that is wrong. Iris is cared for perfectly fine. She is clothed, fed, she-

ELIGO

They were watching. And They have decided you aren't the mother you pretend to be. It's really not in my job description to care what you think.

IAN

Wait, but I'm going down too. What'd I do? Graham was the one driving!

GRAHAM

Dude, probably every single thing you did before you met Holly.

IAN

Yeah, but I've turned myself around for the most part. I've been better. Doesn't that count for something, Eggo?

ELIGO

ELIGO. And, yes, it does. (He pulls out Ian's file.) There's a lot that's been redacted here. Good job. I guess. You do still have some unredeemable infractions here. Would you like me to read them?

IAN

Sure. Can't be that bad.

ELIGO

Here's the most recent, about 4 months ago: 'Ian Russel used an internet browsing engine to search "Big Booty-"'

IAN

NEVERMIND. Nevermind. I've accepted it. I'd be going Down.

ELIGO

Last thing. Whoever lives does have their file reset once returned to Earth. If you'd be going Down now, you have a chance to turn things around and go Up when it is finally your time. None of you will remember this but I thought it might be worth mentioning.

(ELIGO's stomach rumbles something fierce.)

ELIGO

I'm leaving you all to figure this out. Compromise. Cause I gotta eat. I'll be back in 7 deciseconds to finalize your decision. Chop chop!

VIVIENNE

You're making US decide? You're letting the 20 year old toddlers decide-

ELIGO

CHOP CHOP.

(ELIGO runs out of the room. Everyone sits in a silent, awkward stupor for a moment. Then-)

GRAHAM

I think we should be the ones to live, no cap.

VIVIENNE

Hell no. Are you serious? You'll be sentencing a pregnant mother and her children to their death.

GRAHAM

Uh, yeah, I'm serious. Should we give the abusive mother a chance to fuck up another kid instead?

VIVIENNE

You have no idea what you're talking about. Tell them, Iris.

IRIS

I-I...

VIVIENNE

Iris, dammit, just say something. Be useful for once.

IAN

Ah, there it is. Who says stuff like that to their daughter?

VIVIENNE

You don't have children. You wouldn't understand. You're a child yourself.

IAN

I understand how to treat people with some decency.

VIVIENNE (scoffs)

Oh really? Then what're you going Down for? Being kind?

(VIVIENNE sees the envelope on the desk and makes a grab for it. IAN reaches and tries to take it from her. They wrestle over this envelope.)

VIVIENNE

You're crazy if you think I'm going to die for YOU TWO. Selfish drunk driving maniacs... You don't deserve to live!

IAN

NEITHER DO YOU.

(Their tug-of-war ends up with VIVIENNE jolting so hard that it hits IRIS in the shoulder. IAN immediately stops wrestling with VIVIENNE to make sure IRIS is okay while VIVIENNE looks through the files, uncaring.)

GRAHAM

This is pointless. Pointless. How are we supposed to compromise when it's just us four?

IAN

You're right... That's the first smart thing I've ever heard you say.

GRAHAM

Aw, thanks, bro.

IAN

Yeah. If we die, I'll miss you, Graham.

GRAHAM

Damn. That's deep.

IAN

Yeah.

(They dap each other up. Then decide to hug. IRIS watches the hug and looks at her mother with a twinge of hope that her mom might do the same. She does not. VIVIENNE sighs.)

VIVIENNE

So, should we just let the thing decide?

(Everyone but IRIS nods in agreement. ELIGO walks in with the libum.)

ELIGO (through chewing)

Made your decision? This is so good.

GRAHAM

Nah, we leaving it up to you, chief.

ELIGO (spits out libum)

UGH. Humans can't follow instructions to save their lives. Literally. Hey, where is the envelope?

(VIVIENNE hands it over to him with a smile. ELIGO glares at her. It's a bit ripped up. He looks at the envelope. Then to the groups. Then the envelope. Then the groups. Beat. He pulls a gold coin from his pocket.)

One human gave this to me when I sent her Up. Told me about a game she played with her grandchildren. Heads or tails. Are you all familiar with that game?

(Everyone nods.)

GRAHAM
We'll be heads.

ELIGO
Great. Greene's are tails. Ready?

IRIS
Wait! I'd like to go Up.

VIVIENNE
NO. What are you doing? That means we die and they live. They killed us.

ELIGO
Actually, you guys killed each other. Just saying.

VIVIENNE
They killed themselves! I wasn't the one driving under the influence. I have a brain.

IRIS
But you weren't looking. I remember. You weren't looking at the road-

VIVIENNE
Stop lying, Iris.

IRIS
You were trying to hit me.

VIVIENNE
That is a lie. I would never do that to you. I would never do that to her.

ELIGO
Girl, just give it up. (Reads from file) 'Vivienne Greene removed her attention from the road to inflict punishment on Iris Greene for a disagreement over the iPad.' Ohhh, that's what that thing is.

IRIS
I just think my little sibling will like it up there better than on Earth, don't you?

VIVIENNE
What about me? Your mother? I do so much for you. I give you shelter, I feed you, I clothe you, I-

IRIS
But you've never loved me. You don't care about anyone but yourself.

VIVIENNE

I don't care about anyone but myself? Really? You're killing your own mother for revenge and letting two murderers walk the Earth, Iris. You are such a child.

IAN

Iris, it's okay to do something for yourself for once. What do *you* want?

VIVIENNE

He's trying to manipulate you.

IRIS

I don't want revenge. I don't want to hurt my mom. I just...

IAN

I will go with whatever you choose.

IRIS

Really? You'd go to Hell for me?

IAN

Your mom is right about one thing; you're just a kid. If I were the same person I was before I met Holly, I would tell that weird little creature to hurry up and flip the coin and pray it landed on heads. I was so selfish until I met my fiance. And even though Holly's not here and I'll probably never see her again, I wanna make her proud. I can tell you've been through a lot - I didn't have great parents either. But I've been able to grow up, move on, be better than they were. You haven't had that chance yet. I can already tell you have a good heart and I couldn't go back to Earth knowing I didn't try to give you the same opportunity. So I'll pay for what I've done in the past so you can have a future. I'll go to Hell for you.

(IRIS smiles. Nobody has ever cared for her like this. VIVIENNE smirks. She knows she is going to live. Beat.)

GRAHAM

I'm going to fucking die.

IAN

Sorry about your game Eligo, but we're going back to voting. We found a compromise.

ELIGO

It's alright. Graham, which group do you want to live?

GRAHAM

Me and Ian. Worth a try.

ELIGO

Vivienne?

VIVIENNE
Me and my children.

ELIGO
One vote for Graham and Ian. One vote for Vivienne, Iris, and the baby. We need three votes to determine. Iris, your answer next please.

IRIS
Ian and Graham.

VIVIENNE
WHAT?! No, Iris, please!

IAN
Hold on, Iris, are you sure that's what you want?

IRIS
I'm sure. I want me and my little sibling to go Up. And I want you to marry Holly.

ELIGO
Alright. Ian, you're still voting whichever way Iris does?

IAN
Yes. I want Graham and I to live.

ELIGO
That's 3 votes for Graham and Ian. So to officially conclude, Ian and Graham, you will go back to Earth. Vivienne, you will be going Down. Iris, you and your little brother will be going Up.

IRIS (dreamily)
My brother.

ELIGO
Everything is settled then! Vivienne, Iris... come with me.

(In slow motion, ELIGO leads VIVIENNE and IRIS to the door that he would enter/exit from. As the door opens, VIVIENNE and IRIS exit into the white glow and there is a faint sound of police sirens. The lights and sound of police sirens fade as the door is shut and the silhouettes of IAN and GRAHAM exit the stage.)