

KEEPER

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FADE IN ON:

INT. SHELTER LOBBY - AFTERNOON

Your typical shelter. Posters hang on stark white walls:
"Adopt today, save a life!"

A nearby window bears the sign: "Intake/Outake".

Just beyond the glass, a bespeckled BUREAUCRAT stamps papers.
The name "Peters" shines on a gold plaque.

In the room's center; lots of chairs. Two of them occupied.

GABRIEL (30s) stares at floor. Friend MICHAEL (40s), looks
around - alert.

MICHAEL

So, where's the fuzz ball now?

GABRIEL

Max? The staff's checking him out.

MICHAEL

(chuckles)

Checking him out? Or in?

GABRIEL

A bit of both. They need to make
sure he's in proper shape to be,
uh, returned. They can't take him
sight *unseen*, you know.

Gabe's voice cracks. Mike takes one look at his pal, melts.

MICHAEL

Gabe, you *really* sure you want to
give him up? Remember when you gave
me the news you'd picked him out?

Michael clears his throat, imitates Gabe's voice.

MICHAEL

"Mikey, when you meet him, you're
gonna die! That blonde hair. Those
big brown eyes! The minute I saw
him, I *knew* we were soul-mates!"

(back to normal voice)

Now look at you. One year later and
you're right back where it all
started. A few obstacles in the
plan, and already you're giving up?

GABRIEL
Don't judge me!

MICHAEL
Uh, judging's my thing.

GABRIEL
Still not fair. You know I tried!

Choking back tears, Gabe counts off Max's flaws:

GABRIEL
I made sure Max ate well, every night. But then he drank too fast, and threw up.

MICHAEL
(laughs)
Those chunky bits? Who could forget? He did it in public, too. Though it could have been worse. Imagine if he'd licked his butt?

GABRIEL
Did I tell you about the time Max broke the TV, then shit on the rug?

MICHAEL
You kidding? I was there for the reveal. Man, that took cleaning up!

GABRIEL
Then there was the time he humped -

Michael holds up a hand.

MICHAEL
You're justified. Say no more. Stop.

GABRIEL
I can't! *He* never did.
(wails)
Who knew Max would be so hard to discipline?

MICHAEL
He was a stray. You knew he'd be dicey when you picked him out.

Michael rubs his pal's shoulder.

MICHAEL
But you tried. That's what counts.

GABRIEL

I keep telling myself, this isn't betrayal. It's facing facts. So what if Max and I aren't meant to be? Someone else will adopt him, be better match.

MICHAEL

A match made in heaven. Right!

Heavy footsteps. A door opens. SQQQUUUEAK. Both Gabe and Mike's look up to see...

An ORDERLY in a white Nehru jacket, escorting:

A smoky, GLOWING FIGURE. MAX. Two legs: humanoid. The Figure's featureless head hangs, bummed out.

The Orderly bellows to "Peters" at the gate.

ORDERLY

Yo, Pete. One soul here for intake.
Inmate Max Jackson - Cage Three!

The Orderly frog-marches the glowing Max-Soul towards a door labeled "Human Spirits".

Gabe and Michael jump up. The ANGEL WINGS they've been sitting on unfurl.

Gabe runs alongside Max, guilt in every step he takes.

GABRIEL

Max, it's not you. It's me. You'll always be a GOOD boy. I promise, you'll find a forever home. Just not with me!

The Orderly and Soul-Max reach the door.

Max whimpers, one last longing look at Gabriel. The orderly shoves him inside. SLAM! A drooping Gabe turns to Mike.

GABRIEL

I've failed as a guardian angel, haven't I?

MICHAEL

No. You just need to find a charge... more your style.

Michael points towards another door, labeled: Canine Spirits.

MICHAEL
Look. Over there!

Michael drags Gabriel to the door's window. Gabe peeks inside. Gasps.

GABRIEL
Oh. My... G -

Saint Peter at Intake glowers:

SAINT PETER
Shhhh!

MICHAEL
(whispers to Gabe)
Pete's right. The big guy's always listening. Don't use his name in vain! Especially while you're trying to adopt!

MOMENTS LATER

Gabe cuddles a GOLDEN RETRIEVER PUPPY. He wraps happy wings around the pup. The cutie licks his face. Gabe giggles, looks up at Michael.

GABRIEL
You sure I should adopt him?

MICHAEL
Do Maxes shit on rugs? No doubt.
Yeah!

GABRIEL
But, what if I strike out on this one too?

MICHAEL
Please. Up here, second time's the charm. Dogs are more saintly than Humans. More fun, and less work!

Peter trots over with adoption paperwork. Michael signs off. His signature glows. Gabe hugs his new found charge.

GABRIEL
Boy, I'll call you "Asher"... a Happy Blessing! Wait'll you see the walks WE'LL take!!

FINAL FADEOUT: