

Dante's Limbo

By

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Cast of Characters

Mickey: 20s, upstart mobster

Dante: 20s, mobster adopted by
Mickey's family

Loreto: 18, female med student

DANTE'S LIMBOScene 1

The attic of a Chicago brownstone. There are cardboard boxes piled around, a few books, and a couple of chairs. A door leads to the rest of the house.

MICKEY sits on one of the chairs, reading. He's wearing slacks and smart shoes, but just an undershirt up top. His braces hang by his sides. The undershirt is bloody from a bullet wound in his torso.

Hustle and bustle from the door.

DANTE

(off)

Thanks again, Mrs Pellegrino! We'll be fine. You keep an eye on dinner, yeah?

DANTE enters, carrying a thin mattress. He's in slacks, shirtsleeves, braces, and a tie.

MICKEY claps the book shut and looks at him.

DANTE

Awright Mrs Pellegrino, you take care.

MICKEY

Fuckin' finally.

DANTE slams the door shut, scandalized.

DANTE

Mickey!

MICKEY

What?

DANTE

Swearin' like that! You want the ol' lady to hear you and have a fuckin' heart attack, ya dumb asshole?

MICKEY

You can't go comin' in and out whenever you goddamn please, knucklehead, we're supposed to hidin' out here! *Hidin'!*

DANTE drops the mattress.

(CONTINUED)

DANTE

Well, we couldn't sleep on the *floor*!

MICKEY

I'll sleep on you if you don't quit the back-talk.

DANTE

W-what?

MICKEY

Where's the other mattress?

DANTE

She's only got one.

MICKEY

She's only got one?

DANTE

She's only got one.

MICKEY

Well, what're we supposed to do?

DANTE

Vito's bringin' another one later.

MICKEY

Man, Vito always forgets! Why'd ya have to suggest this dump?

He stands up in anger and immediately faints onto the mattress DANTE brought in.

DANTE

Aw, jeez.

DANTE helps him back up onto the chair. MICKEY wakes up, though he's groggy.

DANTE

You've lost a lotta blood. Mrs Pellegrino says they're sendin' over a new doc, Loreto, he'll be here soon, okay? You alright?

MICKEY

I've got a slug halfway through my fuckin' body, whaddaya think?

DANTE

Yeah, but, apart from that.

MICKEY

(calmly)
Oh, apart from that, I'm fine, yeah.

DANTE

Oh yeah, great.

MICKEY

Yeah
(shouting)
of course I'm not fuckin' alright! I blew my first big job!

DANTE

Nah, things are okay.

MICKEY gestures towards his wound.

DANTE

We got all the diamonds out. Nobody got caught.

MICKEY gestures towards his wound more urgently.

DANTE

Mrs Pellegrino's makin' us lasagne.

MICKEY

If Mrs Pellegrino's makin' us lasagne, then hey, case closed, just gotta make sure it doesn't slide outta my new third asshole!

DANTE

Third?

MICKEY

Jesus, Dante, I'm twenty-two and I'm gonna die on my first assignment.

DANTE

Did you say third?

MICKEY

That all you heard me say?

DANTE

Shut up, y'ain't gonna die. I won't let you.

MICKEY winces.

DANTE

Shit.

MICKEY

Jesus, when's Loreto gettin' here?

DANTE

Soon, okay, soon, just try to relax.

A knock on the door. DANTE hurries over and exits.

MICKEY

We're hidin'!

DANTE comes back in with a little tray of sausage, bread, cheese, and drinks.

DANTE

Mrs Pellegrino got us some snacks!

MICKEY

You gotta stop bargin' in and out like it's a goddamn barn.

DANTE

Listen, what's the point of survivin' your gut gettin' the Swiss cheese treatment if you're just gonna starve to death.

MICKEY

(muttering)

Starve to death, he says...

DANTE

We ain't eaten in two hours. In the old country they'd put you on life support.

MICKEY

Just cut me some sausage, Dante.

As DANTE does this, MICKEY looks at the wound.

MICKEY

Maybe plugging the wound'll help.

DANTE

Explain how.

MICKEY

Stop the blood comin' out for starters.

DANTE

You can't put a foreign object inside your body, stupid, you'll get an infection.

MICKEY

Who you callin' stupid?

DANTE

The guy suggestin' we plug his open wound! What'd we even put in it?

As DANTE talks, he gesticulates with the sausage. When he finishes his line, both men slowly look at the sausage, then at the wound. Pause. They discard the idea with simultaneous 'nahs.'

MICKEY takes the plate with the sliced sausage and starts to eat.

MICKEY

Could be my last meal.

DANTE

Shut your canolli-hole.

MICKEY

I mean it. I always thought I had what it takes to make it in this biz, you know? Guts -

He gestures to the wound in his abdomen.

MICKEY

- literally -

DANTE

- literally -

MICKEY

- dedication, respect... and now I'm gonna bleed out in an attic eatin' a couple slices of sausage.

(perks up)

And cheese.

He cuts off a little piece of cheese.

DANTE

Loreto'll be here soon.

MICKEY

I wish... I coulda had a girl, at least.

DANTE

You had a girl. You had loadsa girls. Brunella.

MICKEY

Brunella... hair like buttered spaghetti, tiddies like overstuffed raviolis, skin the colour of linguini. They called it jaundice. I called it love.

(CONTINUED)

DANTE

Never knew why you broke it off.

MICKEY

I couldn't...
(he mutters)

DANTE

Huh?

MICKEY

I couldn't...

*MICKEY makes a fist and raises his forearm,
implying an erection.*

DANTE

Oh, you mean -

MICKEY

Couldn't beat up her other boyfriends.

DANTE

Right.

MICKEY

And I couldn't get it up.

DANTE

What?

MICKEY

The radio aerial, she couldn't listen to the Baby
Snooks show.

DANTE

Oh.

MICKEY

And I had trouble gettin' wood.

DANTE

Er -

MICKEY

To fix my floors. Creaks drove her up the wall.

DANTE

Okay.

MICKEY

Not to mention my debilitating erectile dysfunction.

(CONTINUED)

DANTE

Oh. I always see you with some broad hangin' off your arm, though, real pretty ones.

MICKEY

Ah, they never last long. They like the whole mob thing, you know, guns and suits and deep-seated toxic masculinity, so I get a decent turnover, but they always get bored 'cause of my *problem* or they get scared when a job gets too hot.

DANTE

You get arrested for arson *one time*...

MICKEY

Right? Jeez.

Pause.

DANTE

So you've never -

A knock at the door.

DANTE

That's gotta be Loreto!

MICKEY

Finally.

DANTE jumps up and opens the door.

LORETO enters. She is a young woman in a blouse, trousers, and an overcoat. DANTE and MICKEY stare at her.

LORETO

Where's the patient?

The men don't say anything, trying to look around her for the real doctor.

LORETO indicates MICKEY.

LORETO

Him, I'm guessing?

DANTE finally snaps out of it.

DANTE

Whoa, whoa, whoa. You lost, girlie?

LORETO opens her coat, revealing a selection of medical tools and supplies hanging inside, including a stethoscope, a handsaw, etc.

LORETO

I'm here to treat a gunshot.

She takes off the coat.

MICKEY

You're Loreto Bartolomeo? Yikes, buddy, you gotta check out whatever's makin' you look like a schoolgirl.

LORETO starts observing the wound, lifting his undershirt.

LORETO

That'd be the oestrogen and progesterone.

DANTE

Love the progesteroni at Big Sal's.

LORETO

I am a schoolgirl.

MICKEY pulls his undershirt down.

MICKEY

Whoa!

LORETO

In college. Medical school.

MICKEY lets go of his undershirt.

MICKEY

Oh?

LORETO crouches in front of MICKEY and starts to observe the wound in earnest.

DANTE

Vito sent you? But - you're called Loreto!

LORETO

Unisex name.

DANTE

Whazzat?

LORETO

It's a name for men and women. In Italy.

DANTE

Who cares about your bisexual name! What're you doin'
to Mickey?!

LORETO

Saving his life.

DANTE

Bullshit, little girl.

*He makes to grab her arm, but she points a scalpel
at him.*

LORETO

You think you can do better?

DANTE

I'm not a doc.

LORETO

Exactly. I am. So shut up and support your friend.

DANTE sits on the spare chair, sulking.

MICKEY

Damn, you got told, Dante.

DANTE

Can you stitch up his mouth, too?

LORETO

I'll do the both of yous if you don't keep quiet.
There's whiskey in my coat.

DANTE

Good idea.

DANTE grabs the whiskey and takes a swig.

LORETO

For *Mickey*. I'm gonna have to operate, he needs to be
out of it.

DANTE

I'm not some girl's nurse.

MICKEY

(loudly)
Just do it!!!

DANTE

Alright, Jesus.

(CONTINUED)

*He pours himself a glass and passes the bottle to
MICKEY*

DANTE

To your health, buddy.

MICKEY

To mine.

They clink glasses. Lights down.

Scene 2

Lights up.

*MICKEY is passed out on the mattress, LORETO has
bloody hands, and DANTE has a thousand-yard stare.*

DANTE

Your hand was inside his body.

LORETO

That's surgery. I did what I could. Now it's up to him.

DANTE

God?

LORETO

Mickey.

DANTE

Oh.

LORETO

Not bad for a broad, huh?

DANTE

Ah, don't take it personal. I was worried about him.
He's all I got.

LORETO

Dead parents?

DANTE

Mickey's family took me in, and we got roped into the
mob business along with 'em. Been doin' grunt work for
two, three years, and just when we get our big break -
bang!

Pause.

LORETO

Literally.

DANTE

Yeah. Yes.

LORETO

Mob's alright. Gettin' me through med school.

DANTE

Yeah, but you gotta take care of goombahs like us in return.

LORETO

It's practice, don't lump it.

(she yawns)

Ain't slept in two days. You want a coffee?

DANTE

Thanks.

*LORETO exits.**MICKEY stirs.*

DANTE

Mickey?

MICKEY

Ugh... Dante?

(wincing)

My head.

DANTE

Lotta whiskey.

MICKEY

(wincing)

My stomach.

DANTE

Bullet's out.

MICKEY

(wincing)

My balls?

*DANTE shrugs.**MICKEY tries to stand.*

DANTE

Hey, take it easy, you just had surgery.

MICKEY

Yeah. Loreto, huh? What a gal. Think she's into me?
What? Look at the way she was talkin' to me.

DANTE

'Where's the patient?'

MICKEY

Actively lookin' for me.

DANTE

'I'm a schoolgirl?'

MICKEY

Actively tellin' me she's female.

DANTE

'I'm in med school?'

MICKEY

Actively tellin' me she's made better life choices than
I have. Did you see how she ripped off my top?

DANTE

She was treatin' your bullet wound, jackass.

MICKEY

I'm allowed to be excited. 's furthest I've gone with a
broad. Second base.

DANTE

Whaddaya mean, 'second base?' When'd you get to second
base?

MICKEY

She was wrist-deep in my gut, it's gotta count for
somethin'!

DANTE

Aw, Mickey.

MICKEY

Count it as first base, then.

DANTE

For cryin' out loud!

MICKEY

I got shot in the fuckin' stomach, lemme spin it in a
good way, will ya?

(CONTINUED)

DANTE

What about me? Do I get any credit for stickin' around and helpin' your sorry ass?

MICKEY

What's your problem?

DANTE

You coulda died!

LORETO comes in with two cups of coffee.

LORETO

You fellas okay? I could hear youse from the stairs.

DANTE

I'm fine. I gotta take a leak.

DANTE exits.

LORETO

What's wrong with him?

MICKEY

Ah, he's always been a big baby. It's how he was born.

LORETO comes closer and sips her coffee.

LORETO

How you feeling, Michael?

MICKEY

Hey, call me Mickey.

LORETO

Mickey. Pain manageable?

MICKEY

I'm tougher'n you think, doc. Already on the mend.

LORETO

Good. It's nice when they survive. I like the feedback.

MICKEY

You tellin' me I'm some sorta guinea pig?

LORETO

Some sorta pig anyhow.

MICKEY

I guess I can't complain, with you fixin' me up and all.

(CONTINUED)

LORETO

Dante helped a lot.

MICKEY

Coulda fooled me.

LORETO

He cares about you. What were you yellin' about anyways?

MICKEY

I dunno, I was just sayin' you saved my life, I was lucky to be here, you're real pretty -

LORETO reacts in surprise.

MICKEY

It's true!

LORETO

You're my patient!

MICKEY

Come on, ain't you gonna fall for my brash, disrespectful, but charming personality?

LORETO

No.

MICKEY

Well, I tried.

LORETO

I'm sure he'll be less annoyed when he comes back.

MICKEY

He's always like that about broads I like. Jealous 'cause he ain't never had a girl. Not like I ain't tried. He's never that interested.

LORETO pauses.

LORETO

How long you fellas known each other again?

MICKEY

Since we was five or somethin'.

LORETO

He ever done anythin' seemed... peculiar?

(CONTINUED)

MICKEY

Lessee... I walked in on him forcin' the dog and the cat to kiss when we was eight?

LORETO

I -

MICKEY

The cat was wearin' mama's pantyhose, which was pretty queer, 'cause it was a Friday and everybody knows the cat only gets to wear the pantyhose on Wednesday -

LORETO

Let's stop talking about this. Anything else?

MICKEY

Er... when we was twelve, he shaved our names into the cat's fur 'cause he said the other kids was tryin'a steal it -

LORETO

Are there any stories that don't involve the cat?

MICKEY thinks, then thinks some more. He raises his finger like he's about to speak, but just goes back to thinking.

LORETO puts her head in her hands.

LORETO

Nevermind. I got the wrong -

MICKEY

There was that one time we were on the roof, lookin' at the stars, and he turned to me and took my hand and promised he'd watch out for me for as long as we lived, 'cause I was the most important person in his life and he'd decided to devote it to me when my family first took him in.

Pause.

MICKEY

I remember it 'cause he combed his hair to the left instead of the right that night like some kinda freak.

He yawns.

LORETO

You oughta sleep more.

MICKEY

Ah, I'm as fit as I'll ever -

He falls asleep instantly. LORETO packs up her things and puts on her coat.

DANTE comes in, sheepish.

LORETO

You got it outta your system?

DANTE

Yeah... Mrs Pellegrino walked in on me strokin' the cat and she freaked out for some reason, so I figured I'd come back up.

LORETO

Hm.

DANTE

He okay?

LORETO

Yeah. I'll be back tomorrow to change his bandages -

DANTE

I can do that.

LORETO

- and give him morphine.

DANTE

I can't do that.

LORETO

Vito'll be here later. If you need me, ask him.

DANTE nods.

LORETO starts to leave, but stops and turns round to look at him.

LORETO

You should tell him how you feel.

DANTE

Huh?

LORETO

You're riskin' your hides when you go out on a hit, it'd be a real waste if he never found out.

DANTE

Hey, hey, if you're implyin' I got some sorta barely repressed homosexual love and desire for Michael d'Amato...

LORETO

Yeah that's what I'm implying.

DANTE

Ah, he wants broads, dames, not a bozo like me.

LORETO

You're tellin' me you can run into a jewellery store all guns blazin' but you're scared of your feelings?

DANTE puffs out his chest, tough, then deflates.

DANTE

(pathetic)

yes

LORETO

Just think about it like this. You ever been beaten up?

DANTE

Never been in a fight I didn't win.

LORETO

Well, your shitty little fears are just electric currents whizzin' through your brain. That's what you're up against. You think you can beat up your own brain?

DANTE

I can kill God.

LORETO

Dial it back.

DANTE

I can beat up my brain. Walnut-ass lookin' bitch.

LORETO

Then let 'em taste your fist, Dante. I'll see you tomorrow.

DANTE looks poised to punch himself in the face.

LORETO leaves and slams the door. MICKEY bolts upright immediately, then doubles over from gut pain.

MICKEY

Where's Loreto?

DANTE

Gone home. Back tomorrow.

MICKEY

Man. Couple more minutes alone and I coulda wrangled a date outta her.

DANTE

A date where, genius? We're stuck in this attic for the next month.

MICKEY

Mrs Pellegrino makes a mean carbonara, and you could probably sing us a couple ballads.

DANTE

Ah, go to hell, Mickey.

MICKEY

You tellin' me to go to hell?

DANTE

Yeah, yeah I am!

MICKEY

Yeah?

DANTE

Yeah!

Both men are standing up, as if angling for a fight, speaking angrily.

MICKEY

What, you wanna go?

DANTE

You wanna go?

MICKEY

You wanna go?!

DANTE

You wanna go? Out? With me?!

MICKEY

Yeah, you know it, bitch!

(CONTINUED)

DANTE

Fine, asshole!

A short pause, where they keep the tension at the same level. They continue to speak in the same volume and tone.

DANTE

What!

MICKEY

What, 'what,' I gotta clean your ears out?

DANTE

I didn't!

(his voice goes down to normal gradually)

Think you. Were gonna say yeah. Didn't you like Loreto?

MICKEY

I known her maybe a couple hours, and I was passed out for most of 'em. I'm not *stupid*.

DANTE does an 'eh' gesture with his hand.

MICKEY

Almost dyin' sorta made me realise... I can't just take shit for granted. 'specially not my blood brother.

DANTE

Ya big lug!

They share a little kiss.

MICKEY

I got a big lug for ya right here.

DANTE

Hm.

MICKEY

Well. We both know that's not true, I guess.

DANTE

It's alright, buddy. We'll figure it out.

MICKEY

Yeah.

(beat)

Hang on...

Both slowly look over at the sausage still on the plate, but discard the idea with simultaneous 'nahs.'

(CONTINUED)

MICKEY

We'll have a night on the town when we get our cut.

DANTE

You know it. In the meantime - I think I'll go ask Mrs Pellegrino to make us that carbonara tomorrow, huh?

MICKEY

Now you're speakin' my language.

DANTE

English.

He walks over to the door.

MICKEY

Hey, Dante. I think we can tell Vito to forget about that second mattress.

DANTE

Yeah. Sounds good.

End.