

WELCOME
to HELL

CREATED BY: ERICA WESTER

STORY:

Welcome to Hell follows the story of Sock, a sweet but somewhat unstable teen who commits suicide after the accidental murder of his own parents.

In Hell, he meets Mephistopheles, the amicable manager of the underworld, who offers him a job: Sock is to become a demon, tasked with haunting humans and driving them to suicide.

At first this seems like Sock's dream job - a way he can finally act on his desires without consequence - but after meeting his first target, a disinterested highschooler named Jonathan, he finds himself with another desire that just might be stronger... and just might have a consequence.

THEMES @ TONE:

Welcome to Hell is a character-centric dark comedy about an unfortunately friendly demon and the apathetic highschooler he's supposed to be haunting.

Sock is portrayed as sympathetic, despite his messed-up morality, and in rooting for him to befriend Jonathan, you understand his conflict.

Jonathan is closed-off emotionally, and you want to see Sock's company gradually break down that barrier, but it's easy to see why he's hesitant to let someone like Sock in.

The character dynamics are what drives the story, and much of the charm is in the dissonance of how genuine they are, despite the morbid set-up for their interactions.

Recurring themes are morality, *mortality*, redemption, the value of a human life, and, of course, friendship.



CHARACTERS:



NAPOLEON "SOCK" SOWACHOWSKI (age: ambiguous, but at least 15)

This is Sock. He's the ~~protagonist~~ ~~antagonist?~~ *main character*. He's outgoing, friendly, charming, and an all-around positive guy, who you'd never suspect had been struggling with repressed homicidal urges his whole life. It all comes to a head in a sleep-walking incident where he accidentally murders his own parents, taking his own life shortly after. He's currently employed in Hell as a demon who's job is haunting humans and driving them to suicide, but he's a little nervous after meeting his first target, who he inexplicably wants to befriend. His internal struggle will always be his desire to kill, and his desire for Jonathan to like him.



JONATHAN COMBS (age: 16-17)

Jonathan is an apathetic loner and disgruntled high school student who just wants to be left alone and definitely not haunted by a demon named Sock. He isn't even sure if he believes in demons or not, but he seems to be the only person who can see Sock. Jonathan continually brushes away the thought that he might be crazy, and tries his best to live the uneventful life he had before Sock came into the picture. Jonathan would never admit that Sock's company is starting to grow on him, but if what Sock says is true, how could they ever be friends?



MEPHISTOPHELES (age: just shy of eternity)

Mephistopheles is Sock's boss and the self-proclaimed narrator of the story. By nature he's charismatic and talkative but lately he's been really stressed over his own decision to renovate Hell.

Mephistopheles is very touchy about his reputation as the Devil, and considers himself much more sophisticated than humans have made him out to be. Despite his distaste for them, he's taken a real liking to Sock, even going so far as offering him a job, in place of eternal torture. Or maybe they're one in the same? He'll never tell. His dialogue is somewhat self-aware, but he never directly breaks the 4th wall. He also has an affinity for puns.

OTHER CHARACTERS:



MAGILL "LIL" NANCY (age: 16-17)

Lil, as she calls herself- is actually really sensitive, despite being known for having an aggressive and unfriendly attitude. She feels a lot of ways about a lot of things, but has found that it's just easier to close herself off and toughen up. She's easily-provoked, which makes her a target for getting picked on. She shares a few classes with Jonathan, who kind of admires her, from afar. They've never really interacted before, but then again, they've never previously had a reason to, until...



JOANE "JOJO" PATAFIZYCK / PATAFIZZIK (age: also at least 15)

JOANE, or "JOJO" as she likes to be called, since the silent 'e' makes her name read like Jo-anne – is very easily set off. As a guardian angel, you're sort of expected to be polite and caring, so Jojo puts on the best act she can in order to score her position. She requests to be assigned to look after Lil, although she has pretty clear ulterior motives; getting back at that demon kid with the stupid hat who used to bring her dead animals as a token of their 'friendship'. Jojo also compulsively dismisses any questions about how she died.



PROVIDENCE (age: ∞)

Providence is the "she" Mephistopheles is always mumbling about under his breath. Simply put, she's God. Her and Mephistopheles used to have whatever the deity equivalent of a romantic relationship is. Providence is cheery and energetic— Mephistopheles has a hard time keeping up with her. She's very creative and likes to plan really intricate experiments and projects (humanity, for instance), which she often gets absorbed with. She's also a little on the spontaneous/impulsive side, so she frequently does things on a whim. This isn't to say she doesn't think about the consequences of her actions, but her general outlook is to just roll with things, even if — or inevitably *when* — they don't go as planned. She enjoys the chaos that ensues.

OTHER CHARACTERS (CONTINUED):

DEBBIE COMBS (age: mid-40s)

Debbie is Jonathan's mom, caring and friendly, but a little blunt. She's a nurse, so if she's not at work, she's usually too exhausted to notice what Jonathan's up to, but she knows he's a good kid so she trusts him to handle himself. Even though she's not around much, the two of them try to take care of each other the best they can.

ZACK MELTO (age: 16-19)

Zack is a jock and a bit of a trouble-maker. He tends to encounter Jonathan in the midst of a bizarre interaction with Sock (who, of course, no one else can see), and the seemingly erratic behavior gives Zack a lot of material to work with when picking on him. There might be something more to Zack... but there might not be.



SETTING & PLACES:

HELL

Hell is constantly "under construction" due to Mephistopheles' insistence on renovating it. He feels the Fire and Brimstone Hell is passe', and his new 'personal hell' model will be much easier to manage - each sinner will have a self-generated hell, catered to their individual fears and regrets. The complications of this can provide multiple plots, and because it's constantly in a state of flux, there's a lot of room to play with ideas.

Lines of dialogue that reference Hell's operations should combine ideas from both the older and newer versions of Hell. A phrase like "Hall of Crippling Phobias" is great because it's both a 'physical' place that could exist in the old hell (a hall), and it contains an abstract concept that can be used in the new hell (crippling phobias).

Most of the time, when we see Hell, we're primarily in Mephistopheles' office, which is the only place unaffected by the changes; though the background paintings are deteriorating into sketches, and there are bits of an alpha-channel checkerboard pattern showing through. Just as Mephistopheles leans on the fourth wall, his office does as well.

SCHOOL

Jonathan's high school is a pretty typical public school - overcrowded and under-funded. Jonathan's certainly not popular and doesn't have many close friends, but he's not quite an outcast

either. He just keeps to himself and goes mostly unnoticed. Well, he *used* to.

Our other student character, Lil, is notably unpopular, standoffish, and easily-provoked. This tends to get her picked on, and she's prone to winding up in fights when people try to get a rise out of her.

JONATHAN'S HOUSE/NEIGHBORHOOD

Jonathan lives in the suburbs, in an ambiguous part of what's probably Missouri. There's an old-timey covered bridge in his neighborhood near a creek, which he sometimes hangs out around when he needs to go somewhere and think. He lives with his Mom, who's always either working, or too exhausted to notice what Jonathan's up to. His dad isn't around, so they both look out for each other the best they can.

Lil lives with her single dad, not too far away.

HEAVEN

Heaven is the reason Mephistopheles is renovating Hell. Everyone experiences Heaven a little differently because each individual's heaven is catered to their personality and sensibilities, and because Providence is a more powerful being than Mephistopheles, generating an experience of this magnitude isn't a problem for her. Because of the subjective nature of Heaven, we won't see much of it in the story. What we do see can be represented using abstract/experimental animation, to give the sensation that there's no 'physical' layout to it. (This also goes for any animated elements or settings that are supposed to depict something beyond human comprehension).



DEMOGRAPHIC:

Welcome to Hell is aimed at anyone ages 13 to 30. Based on my youtube analytics for the original short film, most of my viewers are ages 18-24 (40%), followed by the next largest group, ages 25-34 (20%), and ages 13-17 (16%). Gender is practically split evenly, at 49% male and 51% female.



EPISODE IDEAS:

"A STUDENT FILM EXPLORING THE IDEA OF A PILOT"

An unfortunately friendly demon named Sock learns that his new job convincing a teenager to commit suicide isn't so easy.

"WELCOME TO HELL 2: WELCOME 2 HELL."

Sock finds Jonathan's secret sketchbook full of furry art, and is appalled and confused to discover that Jonathan's sona is a fish. Now, he's about to find out what 'sleeping with the fishes' really means.

"A LIL BIT OF TROUBLE"

Lil gets sent to the principal's office after physically retaliating with a bully who's been kicking the back of her desk for weeks. After a particularly crappy day and the threat of in-school-suspension hanging over her head, she encounters a weird barefoot girl who claims to be her gaurdian angel, though she certainly doesn't seem like one.

"THE DOG EPISODE"

Sock is struck by the sudden realization that during the disorienting aftermath of murdering his parents, he completely forgot about his pet dog, Silver. He begs Jonathan to help him find out what happened to his beloved pet. Meanwhile Mephistopheles has taken to leaving food out for a stray Cerberus that's been running around Hell.

"DEMON PUBERTY"

Sock begins growing pointy teeth and throwing up blood, which is exciting at first because it grosses Jonathan out, but after awhile the negative effects start to set in and he realizes that turning into a monster isn't as cool as he thought it would be.

"CHRISTMAS EPISODE"

Sock discovers a way to posess Jonathan, despite not technically being allowed to. Using his newfound physical form, and being very careful to cover his tracks, he decides to 'take care' of a classmate who's been bothering Jonathan lately. Everything's wrapped up in a neat little package! So Sock doesn't understand why Jonathan doesn't appreciate the gift.



ERICA WESTER:

Wester has a BFA in Animation from the Kansas City Art Institute – not to be confused with the Art Institutes, which coincidentally has a location in Kansas – and she makes sure to clarify this every time she mentions it, as if it actually makes a difference here in Los Angeles.

Welcome to Hell started life as a webcomic and was reborn as her graduation film in 2013. After 200,000 subs on Youtube and years of a dedicated cult-following, she decided the least she could do was have a pitch bible ready. She also likes to play piano.

