

Angels and Whiskey

By

Joshua Thomas

Joshua Carl Thomas 2012

ph# 314 600 2378 email:
joshuacarlthomas@yahoo.com.au
3917a Hartford Street Saint
Louis, MO, 63116

Cast of Characters

John: Mid fifties. Cheap, grey suit.

Lucifer: Mid thirties, tall, sharply dressed. Capricious and petulant.

An Angel. Later called Jude: An Angel. Invisible to John. Wears a wig that covers his red hair.

Scene

Act One: An empty bar. Act Two: The same.

Time

?

ACT 1

AT RISE: There is a bar running stage left to stage right at rear with space behind for a bartender. Two swiveling bar stools. JOHN sits in one of the stools facing the audience. He has an air of exhaustion about him. Disheveled, stressed and harassed. He stares morosely at a glass of whiskey in his hand before taking a deep breath and downing it in one gulp. He tenses, shudders, lets out a moan of disgust before swiveling back to the bar and putting down the empty glass. He swivels back to the audience.

JOHN

Yech. Disgusting

(An angel who is the same colour as the wall behind the bar leans out from the wall and refills JOHNS glass. There is the sound of tinkling bells. JOHN freezes then spins around suddenly as if trying to catch the angel in the act of pouring. The angel is already back against the wall and invisible to JOHN)

JOHN (cont'd)

NO! I can't. I can't.

(He picks up the glass)

Fuck.

(He drinks the whiskey and has the same reaction as before.)

Eeeuugh! Yech! Crap. Where are you? Huh? Where? Talk to me. Idiot. I *will* catch you. Then I'm going to take your stupid harp and shove it up the first hole I can find. Stupid tinkling fairy. Tinkle on this!

(He grabs his crotch)

You cheated me. You cheated me and you know it.

You...cheater!

(pause)

God I wish I could sleep.

(He lays his head on the bar and closes his eyes.)

Sleep. Please sleep. Sshhh...please...

(The angel reaches out from the wall and refills JOHNS drink. The bells sound.

Pause.)

JOHN (cont'd)

FUCK! Give it to me. Yes. Give it to me. Go on you sadist. Here. See.

(He drains the drink)

Gah! Too warm! Ice! I need ice you useless sprite. Am I in heaven or not? Ice and air conditioning. And a TV. With sports that have cheer leaders driving big trucks. And no foreign stuff. Or ads for feminine hygiene. That's what I call heaven. Not this.

Bored. So bored. I have received the boring gift of boredom. I am the king of being bored.

(Behind him, LUCIFER has entered unseen. Sharp suit. Sharp hair. Attractive, confident and very well dressed.)

LUCIFER

How wonderful for you.

JOHN

What the...what? Who? Huh? Who, who the hell are you?

LUCIFER

Yes. Very amusing. It's okay, I won't bite you.

JOHN

Where did you come from?

LUCIFER

Me? Well; everywhere really. But right now? Right now I am here. Lucky you. Allow me to introduce myself. Hello. I am Lucifer.

JOHN

Oh. Um..hi. I'm John.

LUCIFER

Puny Human.

JOHN

Sorry?

LUCIFER

Your name.

JOHN

What? Oh. John.

LUCIFER

Yes.

JOHN

Yes.

LUCIFER

Yes. Puny Human.

JOHN

What?

LUCIFER

What? Oh. Haha! Yes! You're trying to tell me your name and all I can hear is...never mind. So, "Puny Human", how's death treating you? You've certainly picked an amazing spot to spend eternity in. Free booze! Stroke of genius there.

JOHN

Lucifer?

LUCIFER

Yes.

JOHN

Lucifer. I knew it. I bloody knew it. I'm in hell.

LUCIFER

Hell? Don't be silly. This is heaven. Not much to look at is it? But don't you worry about a thing. They won't even notice I'm here.

JOHN

No?

LUCIFER

No. It's actually quite insulting when you think about it.

JOHN

Insulting.

LUCIFER

Oooh yes. Very. You could even call it emasculating. If I had a penis that is.

JOHN

Huh?

LUCIFER

No penis. Don't need one. Just a tail. But hey, that's another story.

JOHN

It is?

LUCIFER

Of course. And on a side note, did you happen to see what I just did there?

JOHN

What? Where?

LUCIFER

Tail and story. I punned without actually punning. It's quite tricky to get right but I think I'm getting the hang of it. Tail. Story. Yes, that works. It's something I picked up recently from my dear friend Mr Shakespeare. Or, as he now prefers it; Billy.

MAN

Shakespeare's in hell?

LUCIFER

In hell? Of course not!

(LUCIFER points in a random direction.)

He's that way. Pity really. Webster is though and he's having a fine time.

JOHN

Writing dictionaries?

LUCIFER

Different Webster. Think of this one as the spiritual father of John Carpenter and Sam Raimi but with more lace on the negligees.

JOHN

This is it. I can feel it. I'm finally cracking up. I'm crack-

LUCIFER

Oh shut up. You're not cracking up, you're just in heaven. And you really shouldn't be complaining you know. You did ask for this.

JOHN

Ask for this? Ask for? All I wanted was another fucking drink!

LUCIFER

Yes, and you got one. So what's the problem?

JOHN

It's the *same* drink that's what the problem is!

LUCIFER

Oh. Is *that* all? Would you like a gin instead? Twist of lemon maybe?

JOHN

No! That would be the same drink too. You're not getting it. It's the same drink. The *same*. *Every* time. I drink one drink

(MORE)

JOHN (cont'd)
 in here and I drink that drink over and over again. Not
another drink. Not a *second* drink. The *same* drink. I
 re-drink the drink. And I hate it.

LUCIFER
 You mean like this?
 (LUCIFER waves his hand in the air. The
 "Angel" has pre-empted LUCIFER and
 refilled JOHNS drink. Bells.)

JOHN
 Oh crap.
 (JOHN reaches for the drink.)
 Can't you do something?

LUCIFER
 Probably.
 (JOHN drinks the drink and finishes with
 a shudder of revulsion.)
 But why would I?

JOHN
 You're a devil. Yech.

LUCIFER
 Don't be rude. I'm THE devil. And *you* are a moron. How fun.

JOHN
 Fun? How could this be fun? I hate you.

LUCIFER
 Yes, yes, you hate me, despise me, blah blah blah heard it
 all before. Means absolutely nothing to me anymore. Because;
 I've given up deviling.

JOHN
 Huh?

LUCIFER
 It's unnecessary. A redundant function. Not needed.

JOHN
 But...

LUCIFER
 Look, I told you before that no-one in here even notices
 what I do anymore; so I quit.

JOHN
 But...but *how*...they don't...you're the devil!

LUCIFER

Yes I am. But you my friend are pretty darn impressive yourself.

JOHN

Me?

LUCIFER

Only a human could do it. I doff my cap and wag my tail to you sir.

JOHN

What tail?

LUCIFER

Exactly! I'm reduced! Gelded! Rendered obsolete by the human capacity for self sabotage! I'm in awe.

JOHN

You've lost me.

LUCIFER

Look at yourself. You have successfully found a way to create your own hell in heaven. It's...I *cannot* believe that I didn't think of that one myself. If I didn't know better I'd think you were after my job! I love it. And what's even more unbelievable is that you're not even the first!

JOHN

I'm not?

LUCIFER

No. You are only the second. The first was that Indian fellow Gandhi. Not entirely his fault though. Sometimes shit just happens. Even in heaven.

JOHN

Gandhi's in heaven?

LUCIFER

Not anymore no.

JOHN

What happened to him?

LUCIFER

He snapped. Lost the plot completely.

JOHN

Why? What did he do?

LUCIFER

Picked up a weaving loom and smashed it over the head of a cherub.

JOHN

No he didn't.

LUCIFER

It was *fantastic*. Haven't seen a holy man that pissed since Jesus tried to insert a fish into that rabbi's ear at the market place.

(JOHN stares)

They cut that bit out.

JOHN

Right, right. So...is *he* here?

LUCIFER

Who?

JOHN

Jesus.

LUCIFER

Wow.

JOHN

What?

LUCIFER

I'm beginning to understand how you got yourself into this mess.

JOHN

Look. Just...stop. What happened to Gandhi?

LUCIFER

Oh right. Gandhi. Well, it was a bit like the whole bee sting thing.

JOHN

Sorry?

LUCIFER

Bee stings. Over time. He developed an allergy.

JOHN

To bee stings?

LUCIFER

No! This is heaven. You're not being symbolic enough. Come on! Raise your mind to the ironic possibilities of the metaphysical. The universal laws of narrative causality! The

(MORE)

LUCIFER (cont'd)
seductive yet impossible logic of Schrodinger's cat! The infinite insanity of the human condition! Now tell me! What, what happened to Gandhi!

JOHN
I...I...I..., he tripped over a beehive and landed on a tiger!

LUCIFER
No!

JOHN
What? What happened to Gandhi?

LUCIFER
It's a waste. A pointless waste to tell one such as you.

JOHN
No; it's not. If what happened to him happens to me...I...just tell me!

LUCIFER
If what happened to him happens to you? Well that clinches it. Now I'm *certain* that you're too stupid to be told.

JOHN
I hate you.

LUCIFER
Good for you. Now please shut up while I debate internally.

JOHN
Asshole.

LUCIFER
Excuse me?

JOHN
You heard.

LUCIFER
Ah. Yes. Now I remember why I came here. To be abused by someone with the IQ of a cabbage. Now shut up before I give up on you altogether.

JOHN
Fine.

LUCIFER
Okay.

JOHN

Okay.

LUCIFER

Hush.

(LUCIFER and JOHN both sit silently for a few moments.)

LUCIFER (cont'd)

Okay it was cotton.

JOHN

Huh?

LUCIFER

Cotton. Gandhi developed an allergy to cotton. Isn't that great? He spent years, decades, heavenly centuries weaving away on his little loom and then out of no-where BAM! his hands start to itch. But he keeps on weaving. Then they start to swell but still he keeps weaving. Then they get a rash, then they start to bleed but he won't stop weaving. Fifty seven years is how long he managed to keep it up once the itch set in. Fifty seven years where each day was more painful than the last. Can you imagine the determination that would normally require? When the rash has spread from your hands to your arms? From your arms to your neck, your neck to your face? When your ears swell up so much that you go deaf? When you can't even stand up anymore because to do so would be to crush your by now watermelon sized testicles between your swollen, itchy legs?

JOHN

Why didn't anyone help him?

LUCIFER

Why? What makes you think they even noticed? No. All the angels are far too busy these days. Everything gets delegated. It's both efficient and a sign of success. It also means that poor Gandhi works and works until the day when the itch finally makes its way right up under his toe nails and so he snaps, picks up his loom and flattens a cherub with it. Hilarious.

JOHN

He could see the cherub?

LUCIFER

Oh yes. They all came to see Gandhi. Best diapers in heaven they said. Not anymore.

JOHN

What happened to him?

LUCIFER

He's gone.

JOHN

To hell?

LUCIFER

No! I wouldn't let him into hell! It's no fun when they just let you walk all over them! He's just gone. Didn't fit in anywhere you see? Not right for heaven, not right for hell so just...gone.

JOHN

Can he be brought back?

LUCIFER

Nothing to bring back. They could make a new one I suppose but look how the first one turned out. Royally fucked up that's how. Won't happen to you of course. No one comes to see you do they? Ever. Never, ever, ever. Very funny stuff.

JOHN

Side splitting.

LUCIFER

Shall I let you in on a little secret?

JOHN

Oh please do, I can't wait.

LUCIFER

There are seven other people in this room with you as we speak.

JOHN

What? Where? Who are they?

LUCIFER

You can't see them dopey. You're dead and they're not. In fact, there is a woman sitting in the same chair as you right now.

JOHN

A woman? Right now? Oh. Um...what, what should I...

LUCIFER

Shut up and close your eyes for a minute. Now; stop moving, be very still and try and see without relying on your eyes for a change.

JOHN

Okaaay..let me...let me just...I'll see if I can...if I can...ah.

LUCIFER

That's it. Can you feel her? She's actually quite pretty. Blonde. Mid twenties. A certain pneumatic quality about her.

JOHN

Um...yes. I think I...oh. Yes. I can. And she's...she's...oh.

LUCIFER

Her name is Michelle.

JOHN

Michelle. Hello Michelle.

LUCIFER

Sister Michelle Anderson.

JOHN

(JOHN leaps off his bar stool.)

Jesus!

LUCIFER

Oh come on. I didn't do anything. So she's a nun and she's cute. What could I possibly have to do with that? Trust me, I gave up on nuns years ago. They have no imaginations. Stems from the lack of fucking I suspect. Priests are much more fun. All that repression. Wonderful.

JOHN

Wonderful.

LUCIFER

Oh yes; wonderful. Well, not for *them* obviously but...for me...yes.

JOHN

There's an angel in the room and you've got me thinking about pneumatic nuns.

LUCIFER

That's okay. Really it's okay. You can thank me later. And him?

(pointing to angel)

He was made for one, single purpose. You know those bells you keep hearing when he tops up your glass? That's the sound of his joy at a job well done. Unfortunately for you it's also the sound of your misery. Now Me? I think that I would have to do...something. Figure a way out. Find a way to extricate myself from the unholy pile of shit that I had just gotten myself into. But that's just me of course. Everybody's different. I understand that. Oh, and by the way, there's technically *two* angels in this room. Don't forget about me you naughty nun-molester.

JOHN

Stop it! What are you doing here anyway? Aside from giving me grief I mean.

LUCIFER

Like I said, no-one cares. Not about me and certainly not about you. Think of a plane that's been set to auto pilot and that's where you are my friend. You don't know how to fly it, it runs on the never-ending fumes of heaven and they neglected to install the landing gear. You're like heavens only terrorist but without an agenda. Rebel without a clue.

JOHN

I think I need a drink.

LUCIFER

Of course.

(LUCIFER waves his arm. The "Angel" has again pre-empted LUCIFER and refilled JOHNS drink. Bells.)

LUCIFER (cont'd)

Enjoy.

JOHN

Thank you.

(JOHN drinks the drink.)

Yeuch.

LUCIFER

Oh cheer up. You're not seeing the funny side of all this. I really can't imagine what hell would be like if it was full of people like you. No fun at all.

JOHN

Fun? Oh yes, I'm sure hell is a lot of fun. Flames, misery, damnation, torture. I'll bet people are just lining up around the block to get in.

LUCIFER

Yes! Some people have do have a wonderful time in Hell. The Marquis De Sade for instance. Absolutely loves it there. We had to keep inventing new torture machines just for him. Every time we thought we were about to break him we would catch him trying to make love to the oily bits while whispering sweet nothings in their hinges. Now we just let him invent his own. Hitler on the other hand has no idea why he's there. And that my friend is the big difference between heaven and hell. The personal touch. One demon, one whip and true two way communication between the hell-ers and the hell-ees. Now compare that to what you have here. A robot with wings that you can't see and can't talk to. That can't even let the higher ups know how much you hate it here. Now am I right or am I right?

JOHN

Maybe. But it's still heaven.

LUCIFER

Heaven! Pah! Who needs it? Can't stand the place myself. Everybody floating around with inane smiles on their faces all the time. You can't even have a decent conversation. Most peoples intelligence gets left on Earth. Look at you. Besides; heaven makes me itchy. To top it all off, their wings are pink. They have no shame. No shame, no pride and *that's* why heaven is the way it is. Static. Boring. Atrophied.

JOHN

They can't have pride. How could they have pride? Pride's a sin.

LUCIFER

Rubbish. Pride isn't a sin. It's an agent of change. Pride is only on the list out of fear. Fear of what can be attained by those who are not under the control of Mr Almighty Big Beard. Does he *never* shave?

JOHN

I know what you're doing. You're trying to tempt me. I've seen the movies. I know what's going on. This is your thing isn't it? Well, it's not going to work. Help! Devil! Devil in here! Devil! Here he is! Hello? Devil here! Devil!

(JOHN begins to flick droplets of whiskey at LUCIFER a la The Excorcist)

JOHN (cont'd)

The Christ of...Christ compels you! The Christ of..Holy...Christ compels you! The-

LUCIFER

Enough! Good grief. Did you never go to church? The "Christ of Holy Christ" indeed.

JOHN

I...saw it in a movie once.

LUCIFER

No, you didn't. Trust me. I know what I wrote and that wasn't it.

JOHN

What you-

LUCIFER

Look, the point is that pride is not a bad thing. Just the opposite. It's a driving force. It's creation. The ultimate expression of free will. Now you tell me; why should that be a sin?

JOHN

Because.

LUCIFER

Because. That's all you have?

JOHN

No. It's because...pride is...it's a...it makes people selfish. Selfish and, and, full of pride and, and it...makes people think they are better than other people.

LUCIFER

Some people are. And anyway, pride doesn't do any of that. Well, it can but those people were selfish to begin with. Which is also not necessarily bad. What about pride in a community? Pride that drives the creation of something that is a benefit to all? The very desire to be proud can lift people to achieve greatness. Pride a sin? Nonsense.

JOHN

Look, I know what you're saying, I do, and I think that I get it and...and...and that all sounds great and everything but you also sound a little like Ayn Rand and she was nuts.

LUCIFER

A little bit nuts yes. Doesn't mean she wasn't right though. I went to see her once. We gave her her own little room. She never leaves it. Each day we place a cup of tea at her door, knock twice and quietly walk away before she opens it. Terrifying woman. She told me that I was huge disappointment to her and to never bother her again which sounded extremely wise to me so I just leave her be.

JOHN

Why is she even there?

LUCIFER

In hell? No idea. She just turned up one day and started throwing things. I'm not even sure she's actually dead.

JOHN

She must be dead. Doesn't she? She's in hell! It's a dead people thing! Like heaven.

LUCIFER

Ah, but you *don't* have to die to go to heaven do you? Just look at Mary. *She* didn't die. Just got kind of sucked up by the will of God. Reset the will from suck to blow and down you go. Clothes and all. My *theory* is that she didn't actually do anything 'bad' enough to be sent to hell but she was incredibly annoying. What to do? If she dies it's heaven by default so instead, *they* send her bodily into hell, we give her the occasional cup of chamomile and hey presto! problem solved. Clever stuff.

JOHN

I knew it. I fucking knew it. I've gone insane.

LUCIFER

Sorry. You can't. You're in heaven. Nothing changes here. Gives a whole new perspective on 'forever and ever amen' doesn't it?

JOHN

I can't believe that. I can't.

LUCIFER

It's true. You're far too close to the powers that be to be trusted with any semblance of freedom. Case in point.

(LUCIFER snaps his fingers. The angel has already filled JOHN'S glass. Bells. JOHN drinks the drink through sounds of grief.)

JOHN

What...what can I do? I can't live like this anymore. I have to get out.

LUCIFER

'Live' like this anymore? You're dead. Welcome to the reward for living what amounted to a relatively virtuous life. Congratulations on being one of the chosen. Let's celebrate!

(LUCIFER claps his hands and JOHN slumps unconscious on the bar top. LUCIFER gently nudges his shoulder.)

LUCIFER (cont'd)

Up you get. Come on. That's it. Can't miss the party.

JOHN

Wha-what happened?

LUCIFER

You're drunk.

JOHN

Huh?

LUCIFER

Drunk. You know, drunk?

JOHN

Drunk? How did I get drunk? Who..who..what? Where's my...I gotta take a piss.

LUCIFER

Sit down. You can't piss in heaven. Here, have another drink.

(The angel pours JOHN a drink. No bells.)

JOHN

Thanksh. Thish is good whiskey. The best. I love it. Love. It.

(JOHN drinks the whiskey)

Yum.

LUCIFER

We're missing something here. Ah, yes.

(LUCIFER claps his hands and then slumps against the bar unconscious.)

JOHN

Hey, are you okay buddy? You need something? You need a drink? I can get you a drink. I have lotsh of drinksh. Drinks! Drinks for my friend! Gimme a drink! Come on. Wakey wakey!

(JOHN nudges LUCIFER. LUCIFER wakes. He is also very drunk)

JOHN (cont'd)

There you are. Hi. John.

(JOHN extends his hand. LUCIFER shakes it.)

LUCIFER

Louie. Wha's happening?

JOHN

Dunno. You were sleeping. Bad idea sleeping in a bar. Anything might happen.

LUCIFER

Anything?

JOHN

Anything.

LUCIFER

Okay. No sleeping. No sleeping. Could do with a good piss though.

JOHN

No can do buddy. Special bar. Very special. S'what you said. Heaven or something. Nowhere to go.

LUCIFER

Huh. Who are you?

JOHN

John.

LUCIFER

m' Louie.

(LUCIFER extends his hand. JOHN shakes it.)

JOHN

Well Louie, looks like it's just us. Wanna drink?

LUCIFER

Yep. Drinks!

(The angel brings out an extra glass and pours two drinks.)

Thanksh.

JOHN

So, whattya do for a living Louie? Selling stuff is my...thing. I sell the...things to the...other guy.

LUCIFER

What do I do? Dunno. Uh...community service? Yes. I service the community! All the communities. Even the dead ones. Hahaha.

JOHN

Tha's a big job. Lots of comm-com-communties out there.

LUCIFER

Yep. But I have a...free travel thing with the...job. All free. It's very nische. Cushy. Cushy gig. Easy. Pow! Zap! You're dead hahaha!

JOHN

S'always good when a man likes his job.

LUCIFER

Yesh. Yes. It is. Is always good. You like yours?

JOHN

I do. I do like it. I'm on the road. I earn enough to eat and I have sex with strange women I will never meet again! Ever. 'S great. Very good job. Very good sex.

LUCIFER

I've never had sex. Ever.

JOHN

Huh?

LUCIFER

Never. Never had sex. Can't. Not in the job description see?

JOHN

So? have sex anyway!

LUCIFER

Can't.

JOHN

You can.

LUCIFER

Can't.

JOHN

Can. Do it. Just go out there and do it.

LUCIFER

Have sex?

JOHN

Yes!

LUCIFER

Job description. Can't.

JOHN

Can! Not in my job thing but I do it.

LUCIFER

You can. I can't. Different kind of job. Different.

JOHN

Bullshit. How?

LUCIFER

Here's the thing see? The difference, the big difference between you and me is you, that's you right there, you 'know' your job description and I 'am' my job description. s'bullshit. 's all about the ineffable. 's unfair. And ineffable. Your job is better. Much better.

JOHN

Hey, come on buddy. Can't be that bad. Helping the community? Providing a service? Fighting the good fight? That means something that does. Come on. What is it? Tell me how you help folks out. Come on. What is it?

(pause)

LUCIFER

Flame. Fire...hot things.

(longer pause)

JOHN

Heating! See? Everybody needs heating. Heating's good. You're doing a good thing. Everybody needs to be heated. And that's what you do. You heat people up. Nice and hot. Yes? That's it buddy. Good to see a smile. Drinks!

(The angel refills their drinks. The man sees the angel)

JOHN (cont'd)

Thanks buddy. That's a nice suit. Reminds me of the blues. Hey Louie! Louie! Sing the Blues! C'mon! Sing with me! Hey Blue! Sing with-where's he gone? He's gone. Fine. You and me. Hymns. Let's sing. My Gran used to sing a Hymn to me when I-

(LUCIFER has already begun to sing Amazing Grace)

LUCIFER

AMAZING GRACE, HOW SWEET THE SOUND,
THAT SAVED A WRETCH LIKE ME.

(JOHN listens for a moment and then joins in. By the end of the song they have achieved a harmony of sorts and are leaning on each other for both physical and emotional support.)

LUCIFER AND JOHN:

I ONCE WAS LOST BUT NOW AM FOUND,
WAS BLIND, BUT NOW I SEE.

I SAW ONE HANGING ON A TREE,
IN AGONIES AND BLOOD,
WHO FIXED HIS LANGUID EYES ON ME
AS NEAR THE CROSS I STOOD.

A SECOND LOOK HE GAVE THAT SAID
'I FREELY ALL FORGIVE!'
THIS BLOOD IS FOR THY RANSOM PAID,
I DIED THAT THOU MAYEST LIVE.

WHEN WE'VE BEEN HERE TEN THOUSAND YEARS,
BRIGHT SHINING AS THE SUN,
WE'VE NO LESS DAYS TO SING GOD'S PRAISE
THAN WHEN WE FIRST BEGUN.

(they both pause in thought)

LUCIFER

'We've no less days to sing Gods praise than when we've first begun'. There's the fucking rub right there. Where's the worth in that? Huh? It's a trap. 'Fore god. It's a goddamned holy trap. And I'm in it the same as you. I didn't ask for this! I didn't 'rebel'! I held reservations! Isn't that the mark of compassion? What happens to them father?

(MORE)

LUCIFER (cont'd)

How do they create their own future? Heaven? That's not a future. It's a stagnation! Endless bliss with no change? Mindless, pointless, unchanging and unending existence. You get a brief moment of self determination and then BAM! All sense of purpose is removed. YOU are in heaven, YOU are in hell and that's the end. No second chances and absolutely no fucking point. The whole of creation is one gigantic ego trip for a God who has become apathetic to his own existence. He's bored and we suffer for it! There's your 'sin' of pride! There's your selfishness! Bastard.

(pause)

JOHN

This is really *good* whiskey.

(LUCIFER realises that JOHN hasn't been listening. He claps his hands. JOHN slowly sobers up before grasping his head in both hands, releasing a moan and falling to the floor in pain)

JOHN (cont'd)

Oooohhhwwwoooooaaagh! Oh god, oh god, what's happening? Ow ow ow ooh. What? aaargh...

LUCIFER

Relax. you'll be fine. It's a hangover.

JOHN

A ha-ha-hangover? This isn't a hangover. This is aargh...make it stop. Do the...clap thing.

LUCIFER

Can't.

JOHN

Huh? Do it! Please. Oh god.

LUCIFER

I can't. It's a hangover.

JOHN

So?

LUCIFER

So, I can't cure hangovers. Nothing can. It's a bitch but there you go. You'll just have to suffer through it.

JOHN

Nothing?

LUCIFER

Nothing.

JOHN

Not even...you know...Him?

LUCIFER

Not even him. And before you ask, no, I don't know why and neither does he. It's a glitch.

JOHN

A glitch. A glitch. Right. I'm in agony because of a glitch. Well why don't you fix the damned glitch!

LUCIFER

Look if I could I would okay! Stop yelling! My horns hurt.

JOHN

Hah! Horns! You don't have horns. No horns, no tail, no nothing. Nothing.

(pause)

Glitch? Really?

LUCIFER

Yes, really. Da Vincis been working on it for centuries. He's completely stumped and the Vikings aren't talking so...glitch.

JOHN

But...how do the Vikings do it?

LUCIFER

Who knows how the Vikings do anything? They're Vikings. They were never meant to exist in the first place. Well, the people were but not the bloody mindedness that came with them. Ever tried to tempt a viking? They just stand there grinning at you while another one sneaks up behind and clobbers you with a gigantic axe. No. The Vikings are best left to themselves.

JOHN

They have their own place in heaven then? All the Vikings in one place?

LUCIFER

Everybody does. Catholics here, Mormons there, Buddhists around there, Muslims over there and Baptists wherever they can squeeze them in.

JOHN

But they all get to be together?

LUCIFER

Of course. That's the point.

JOHN

So what about me? Why am I all alone? Why do I get punished like this? I had friends! I had a church! I had a family! Where are they? Where am I?

LUCIFER

Do you believe in God?

JOHN

What? Yes! of course I do! I'm here aren't I?

LUCIFER

That doesn't count. Did you believe in God while you were alive is what I meant.

JOHN

Yes.

LUCIFER

Did you?

JOHN

Yes. Yes I-

LUCIFER

Did you believe in God?

JOHN

Yes! I did. I did.

LUCIFER

For how long?

JOHN

What?

LUCIFER

And when did you stop?

JOHN

I-

LUCIFER

You were an atheist.

JOHN

What? No! I went to church my whole life!

LUCIFER

You died an atheist. It's why you're here.

JOHN

In heaven?

LUCIFER

In heaven alone.

(pause)

JOHN

Okay. okay I did. I admit it. I rejected it. Turned away from...whatever. But hang on, that still doesn't...I mean...why?

LUCIFER

Why?

JOHN

Why here? I'm here. Shouldn't I be you know, down there?

LUCIFER

Down there? Why should you be down there? It doesn't matter what you believe. Like the song says, it only matters if you were naughty or nice. Apparently you were nice. Nice enough anyway.

JOHN

This doesn't make any sense. I hate it here. Why do I hate it here? What's wrong with me? What have I missed?

LUCIFER

The bureaucracy.

JOHN

I didn't see one! I died! I didn't plan it! I'm supposed to sign in somewhere? No-one told me anything about signing in! How do I go back? I need to go back! Where is it? Where's the bureaucracy?

LUCIFER

You're in it.

(He points to the angel)

He's part of it. A product of it. They're trying to be nice. Give you what they think you want.

JOHN

What they think I want? I don't! I don't want this. I want company! I want friends! I want something to do!

LUCIFER

Not going to happen. Sorry.

JOHN

Sorry? You're sorry? Well gee, thanks. Thank you so much. I feel so much better. And to think, all this time, all I needed was some sympathy from the goddamned devil!

LUCIFER

If it makes you feel any better, they have the best of intentions.

JOHN

It doesn't. And anyway, if I'm here, that means there must be others. There has to be. I can't be the only one who ever had the balls to hold onto his disbelief in the face of death.

LUCIFER

Balls? You didn't have a death bed scene, you had a heart attack in a bar.

JOHN

Fine. But still. Where are they? If that's why I'm here then I should be with them. That's the rules. I want to be with them. With anybody.

LUCIFER

They're here. They're around. They're like you. Alone. Most of them aren't as miserable as you of course. But hey, who is? Although, if I were you, that's *exactly* how miserable I would be.

JOHN

Really.

LUCIFER

Yes.

JOHN

Great.

LUCIFER

And you can't blame them entirely. Atheism's new. It doesn't have a place in the old order. Everybody used to believe in *something* at least. They'd turn up, see that they were wrong about the giant chicken in the sky and get on with it. Not atheists. Try to gather atheists together in the afterlife and half of them end up catatonic out of sheer embarrassment. They have to be shuffled around by cupids to prevent them from scaring the Haitians.

JOHN

Huh?

LUCIFER

Haitians don't like zombies.

JOHN

Ah.

LUCIFER

Yes. Can you imagine it? Bands of drooling atheists mumbling incoherently to themselves on one side whilst frantic groups of terrified Haitians conduct a desperate search for something to slaughter on the other, both sides moaning and groaning while energetic Catholics run around between them doing their level best to exorcise the lot of them out of heaven. Such a great day.

JOHN

I'm sure.

LUCIFER

Anyway, that's why you're alone. Not as a punishment. Far from it. It's meant to bring you peace.

JOHN

And there's nothing you can do to help?

LUCIFER

Nothing.

JOHN

Nothing at all?

LUCIFER

Sorry. I'm not here to help you. There's nothing I can actually do that *will* help you. I'm strictly here to laugh at you and that's it.

JOHN

Right. Of course. Sorry, I didn't mean to-

LUCIFER

It's fine. Don't worry about it.

JOHN

Right.

LUCIFER

Yes.

(pause)

JOHN

But how do you get in?

LUCIFER

Where? Heaven? Or just this piece of it?

JOHN

Both. Here. Everywhere. All of it. How do you do it? If I got in there has to be a way to get out again. And you do it all the time and you say that they don't even notice! How? How do they not notice? Teach me. Teach me how to not be noticed. Teach me how to-

LUCIFER

Hold on, hold on-

JOHN

-be redundant. Teach me irrelevance! Teach me how to not be needed! How to be like you!

LUCIFER

I can't 'teach' any of that.

JOHN

You can! I know you can. You're lying.

LUCIFER

Yes! Maybe! I lie a lot. Doesn't change that fact that I can't teach you any of that.

JOHN

You can.

LUCIFER

I can't! I don't know how.

JOHN

Well what do you know? You're even more useless than you think you are. Do you 'know' that?

LUCIFER

Well I do now. Thank you so much.

JOHN

How do I even know you are who you say you are? For all I know, you're just some guy whose been around a long time and knows a few tricks.

LUCIFER

Well yeah. Pretty much. Swap out 'some guy' with 'ancient, powerful demonic personality' though and you've basically nailed it.

JOHN

You forgot 'Angel'.

LUCIFER

Trust me. I never forget 'Angel'. Only wish I could.

JOHN

You wish you-what?

LUCIFER

They're an embarrassment. My brothers: the most powerful flock of meek, bleating sheep ever known. Not an ounce of curiosity amongst the lot and even less sense. Take Gabriel; he's only allowed to visit earth on sunny days because he gets lost in the cloud banks! I shit you not. An Archangel! Lost in a cloud! Can you think of *anything* more pathetic?

JOHN

I think I can, yes.

LUCIFER

Ah, right. But at least you're trying.

JOHN

Well yippee for me then.

LUCIFER

That's the spirit.

(pause)

There is *something* I can do for you. If you still want something that is.

JOHN

I'm not sure if I care at the moment.

LUCIFER

No? Okay then. Another time. How about a drink?

JOHN

No! No more drinks. Ever. Never. I can't. I can't.

(pause)

Okay what? What is it you can do? Tell me.

LUCIFER

I could give you the tour.

JOHN

A tour? A tour of what?

LUCIFER

No. Not 'a' tour. 'The' tour. Stand up.

(JOHN stands)

Close your eyes.

(JOHN closes his eyes)

Hold still.

LUCIFER 'lays hands upon him' in the manner of a faith healer. It is sudden and it is violent as JOHN is struck across the head.

BLACKOUT.

(end of act I)

ACT 2

Lights up to reveal the same bar as before. The bar angel is placing a selection of empty beer bottles, wine glasses, dirty ashtrays etc on the bartop. It has a lei draped around its neck and is wearing a t-shirt that reads "Cardinal Nation".

LUCIFER and the JOHN enter. Arms draped over each others shoulders. JOHN is dressed as a halloween devil and LUCIFER is dressed as a shepherd. They have New Orleans style Mardi Gras beads draped about their necks and exotically shaped cocktail glasses that hold paper umbrellas. They are singing.

LUCIFER AND JOHN:

I come from the Hells Down Under,
 Where devils live and the people suffer,
 Can you hear, can you hear the torture?
 You better run, you better take cover!
 (they laugh)

JOHN

That was the best New Orleans yet! How many are there?

LUCIFER

Infinity plus one.

JOHN

And we just drank at...

LUCIFER

Six hundred and sixty five of them.

JOHN

Wow. That's a lot of New Orleanses.

LUCIFER

Yes. Yes it is.

JOHN

Are the rest of them like that?

LUCIFER

More or less. They start getting a bit creepy at the six hundred and sixty sixth so I don't go there much.

JOHN

Creepy?

LUCIFER

Too many people pretending to be me. Mental.

JOHN

(JOHN notices his own costume)

Ah. So...what's next?

LUCIFER

(LUCIFER begins to rummage around behind the bar, looking for more drinks and getting in the Angels way...)

What's next? There is no 'next'. You've seen it. Everything. After that it just repeats itself. Okay it gets a bit weirder but it's all essentially the same. Food, family, fucking. Everything else is just fluffy dice on a fast car.

JOHN

But...what about...the...the...pride? The purpose?

LUCIFER

I don't know anything about your purpose. I know what *I* think your purpose was but hey, I got kicked out so *obviously* I was wrong. You tell me. You're the one who had free will for the dubiously advertised 'limited time only'. As far as I can see you were supposed to make your own. And if you didn't? More fool you for wasting a gift that even the giver doesn't understand.

JOHN

Me? What about you? You can do whatever you like. Go wherever you like. Be whatever you like. Forever!

LUCIFER

Forever!

JOHN

Yes! Forever!

LUCIFER

Yes! Forever and ever Amen. World without end Amen. The Lord is my shepherd in the eternal flock Amen. I will sit by the side of Jesus and do nothing else until the end of fucking time Amen. Piss on that. You can have it.

JOHN

Are you saying that they got it wrong? That GOD got it wrong? You're mad.

LUCIFER

No! I'm not saying that they got it wrong. I'm saying that they don't understand it. HE doesn't understand it. What it is. What it can do. What it can be. What you can be.

JOHN

Me? I'm dead you idiot. I can't be anything. I'm done. In heaven. Game over. I win.

LUCIFER

That's what I'm talking about. 'Game over'. Why are you still here then? You said it yourself: 'what's next?' Don't just give up on it. Figure it out. What's next? Where do you go from here? We can't do it do you see? We could never do it. We never died. You did. You've moved beyond us. A step ahead. So you tell me, *what's next?* Because this, this is not a happy victory.

JOHN

And do I seem like a happy man to you?

LUCIFER

No. And that's good! I don't want you to be a 'happy' man.

JOHN

You've made that very clear.

LUCIFER

I don't want you to be a 'content' man. I don't want *anybody* to be a 'content' man.

JOHN

And here it is.

LUCIFER

What?

JOHN

You. Here 'you' is. Right there. Welcome back. Welcome back to the land of *wrong*. I don't know what *I* did wrong and I don't *know* why I'm unhappy here, but neither do you. You're just as lost as I am and if you're going to start in with all of that 'oh how miserable you are here, oh how funny it is hahaha' then you can just...go to hell.

LUCIFER

That's not what I was going to-

JOHN
Do you have any answers for me?

LUCIFER
It's not like that, it's-

JOHN
Do you have any answers for me! Do you? Well?

LUCIFER
No. No I don't have any answers for you.

JOHN
Then leave.

LUCIFER
No.

JOHN
Leave!

LUCIFER
No! It's you! You have the answers. You're the one. Not me. You. This is ridiculous. You weren't even given the right tools to begin with.

(LUCIFER moves to the bar, faces the Angel and starts to talk directly into its face as though it is a camera.)

LUCIFER (cont'd)
Do you see this? Are you watching? This. This is what you get! Look at him. Have you ever looked at him? Have you ever heard him? Even *I* heard him. Me!

JOHN
What-what are you-?

LUCIFER
They can see and hear everything through this puppet of theirs. Everything. Can't you! Yes! You can!

JOHN
Then why-

LUCIFER
Why? They're not listening and they're not watching that's why. You're not important to them. Just another...another amongst other others. Nothing.

JOHN
And I'm important to you?

LUCIFER

I don't know! Yes. I think so. I'm not sure. You're the *only* one with the energy to be discontented. The only one. And yes, some of the others aren't very happy either but they're lazy. They're accepting. Content to be discontent. It's disgusting.

JOHN

So, I'm different?

LUCIFER

Yes, you're different.

JOHN

The only one?

LUCIFER

The only one.

JOHN

And you, Lucifer, have come to me, John, for answers to...

LUCIFER

I don't know. What's next? Whats beyond...this? I don't know.

JOHN

So...I'm...Oh no. No, no, no. I'm not. I can't.

LUCIFER

What? What can't you?

JOHN

You think...you're saying I'm what? Some kind of Satanic messiah? Your savior? That's insane.

LUCIFER

I'm not saying that.

JOHN

You are! You think I'm your Jesus!

LUCIFER

I do not think you are my Jesus.

JOHN

Yes you do. Oh this is beautiful. It's *my* turn now. What's the word? Ah yes, 'hilarious'.

LUCIFER

I do NOT think you are my Jesus. Jesus died so that *everybody* else could abdicate responsibility for their own actions. I'm not asking for that. That's not freedom, it's

(MORE)

LUCIFER (cont'd)

theological manacles forged in guilt. It's a cessation. It's a foot thick steel door that anyone can approach but can only walk through if you also agree to leave your brains on the step. I do not think you are my Jesus.

JOHN

So who am I then? Moses, Abraham, Muhammad?

LUCIFER

Stop being obtuse. Those men had fire. Passion. Gigantic balls. You're just...you. But you're unhappy and that counts.

JOHN

For what?

LUCIFER

That's what I'm trying to work out.

JOHN

Jesus died.

LUCIFER

What?

JOHN

Jesus. He died.

LUCIFER

Yes. I'm aware of that.

JOHN

So...have you asked him?

LUCIFER

No, I haven't asked him. I don't *like* him.

JOHN

That's not the point. You don't like *me* either. Why haven't you asked him?

LUCIFER

Because.

JOHN

Because? What's 'because'? You're starting to sound like me.

LUCIFER

Because he isn't real like you! He's not a man. He was never a man! He was made with an agenda! A destiny! It was all built in. The knowledge, the drive, the purpose! He wasn't left to muddle through life as best he could in the hope

(MORE)

LUCIFER (cont'd)

that he didn't completely fuck it all up! He *knew* where he was going and what he was doing. Jesus wasn't pure. He wasn't *human*.

JOHN

But he was tempted.

LUCIFER

Yes. He was tempted. But he was also carrying around the two most easily tempted things in existence at the time so I'm not sure if that counts.

JOHN

The two most easily...

LUCIFER

A stomache and a dick.

JOHN

Ah.

LUCIFER

Look, what I'm saying here is that you can't look to them for help because they don't even know that help is needed. To them everything is perfect and you don't question perfect because perfect can't break. Perfect can't change because it's *already* perfect and *that* is the problem.

JOHN

That doesn't sound like a problem.

LUCIFER

I know it doesn't! That's *another* problem.

JOHN

This is all starting to feel very...theological.

LUCIFER

Welcome to problem number three: theology.

JOHN

But you *are* theology.

LUCIFER

Just because I'm special it doesn't mean I'm useful okay?

JOHN

Okay. Should I be talking to someone who is?

LUCIFER

That would be wonderful. Good luck finding one.

JOHN

I used to fantasize about you you know.

LUCIFER

What? Why?

JOHN

As a kid in church. I think lots of them do. You have visions of being one of the chosen who for some reason or another has to battle the devil with fire and angels for the good of mankind. Saving the world. A christian warrior who shoots down a dragon with a laser gun and rescues a dozen maidens before coming face to face with the ultimate evil. You were fire engine red with a tongue made of lava and you wore a cape made out of the skins of sinners.

LUCIFER

A cape made out of the skins of sinners?

JOHN

Yes.

LUCIFER

I think that I should give you a job.

JOHN

What you weren't though, what you *never* were, was depressed.

LUCIFER

I'm not depressed.

JOHN

Yes you are.

LUCIFER

Yes I am. It's pathetic isn't it?

JOHN

A little bit.

LUCIFER

So what do I do now?

JOHN

You're asking me?

LUCIFER

What? Okay. Yes. I'm asking you.

JOHN

I thought I wasn't your Jesus.

LUCIFER

You're not. You're an idiot. But you're an-

JOHN

-unhappy idiot. Yes. You've said.

LUCIFER

Hey. That is not my fault. And I didn't say that it was your fault either. I'm not trying to be rude here.

JOHN

No? Whose fault is it then?

LUCIFER

Your parents'.

JOHN

How is it my parents fault?

LUCIFER

Isn't that obvious? They were idiots too. What? I repeat: not my fault!

JOHN

My mother was a teacher!

LUCIFER

True enough. But...really, come on, how difficult can it possibly be teaching people to pass a poetry exam? Roses are Red, Charcoal is black, There's a stench in the air and it smells like your-

JOHN

Enough!

LUCIFER

See what I mean? I didn't even have to say the last word.

JOHN

You didn't have to say any of it.

LUCIFER

Crack.

JOHN

You fucker.

(pause.)

What *happened* to you?

LUCIFER

When?

JOHN

Something must have happened to you.

LUCIFER

(looking around)

What? Why? What's going on? What have I missed?

JOHN

Everything apparently.

LUCIFER

Are you okay?

JOHN

What was it?

LUCIFER

I don't know. You're the one being weird. You tell me.

JOHN

You're...horrible. Nasty. Needlessly vindictive. You're an absolute train wreck.

LUCIFER

Oh, now we're doing insults are we? Fine. Insults I can do. You ready? Your mother was such a whore that she...slept with your father!

JOHN

What? What was that?

LUCIFER

Your mother was such a-

JOHN

No. I heard you but...what? How is that even remotely an insult?

LUCIFER

I don't know! Your dad was ugly! Your sister was a girl! Your dog licked his own balls! And...and you have bad hair!

JOHN

What the *hell* is going on with you?

LUCIFER

I don't know! No. I do know. But I also know that I don't want to know and so...I don't know.

JOHN

Now you're starting to sound human.

LUCIFER

Hallelujah! Just what I always wanted, to be human and have the ability to hit the ground from a great height and splash. Look, I can't do it intentionally okay? I'm just as stuck as you and I don't really like to talk about it so lalala! I'm not listening!

JOHN

Fine. But I still want to know what happened to you.

LUCIFER

Read the bible then. I'm sure it's in there somewhere.

JOHN

I haven't got one. And anyway, no-one actually *reads* the bible. Not all the way through. They just read the bits that other people tell them to read. And depending on what church you go to those bits are always different bits. Everyone ends up having their own mental version of it to carry around so they can metaphorically wave it in the face of passing sinners like human fly swatters.

LUCIFER

Well, all I can say is that none of that had anything to do with me.

JOHN

Again with the 'not your fault'. What *is* your fault then? Something must be.

LUCIFER

Of course. *Lots* of things are my fault. Just not the ones that people spend so much energy worrying about and certainly not the ones that they blame me for.

JOHN

So tell me. Give me a list.

LUCIFER

Okay. Let's see. Skinny jeans on fat men, Ikea catalogues, Christmas carols in October, and my personal favourite: tuppeware parties. Guaranteed to make at least seven out of ten attendees hate themselves just for being there.

JOHN

Tuppeware parties? What about divorce lawyers?

LUCIFER

Aren't they wonderful? Not mine. No, I prefer the incremental, baby steps approach. All the big things like bombs and tax returns you did to yourselves.

Cancer?
JOHN

God.
LUCIFER

Chernobyl?
JOHN

LUCIFER
You. Reality TV? Guilty as charged. I am the leaking faucet, the lost sock, the busy highway interchange. I am a calculators instruction manual, a knife stuck in a kitchen drawer. I am the last page missing in book and I am the lost flashlight when the power goes out. I am all of those things. But I am not and I have never been a barricade.

To what?
JOHN

LUCIFER
No idea. That's why you're here.

JOHN
Right. Okay then. Hang on. What did you just say?

LUCIFER
You weren't listening? I am the leaking faucet, the lost sock, the-

JOHN
No, after that.

LUCIFER
Oh, um, barricade, barricade to what, no idea, that's why you're...shit.

JOHN
I'm in hell? *Hell?*

LUCIFER
Only in a strictly technical sense.

JOHN
Only in a-how long have I been here?

LUCIFER
That...depends.

JOHN
How long?

LUCIFER

Well, do you want heaven years or human years? Heaven years will be easier to take. Choose heaven.

JOHN

No. Human years. How many human years have I been here?

LUCIFER

Give or take a...decade or two...forty six thousand?

JOHN

What?

LUCIFER

Alright! Forty seven! I tried to tell you that heaven years would be better!

JOHN

Oh I'm sure they are. Okay then, how many heaven years?

LUCIFER

If you were actually *in* Heaven you mean? Yes, you do. In your case it would be negative thirty six.

JOHN

Negative thirty six.

LUCIFER

Yes. Everyone becomes a younger version of themselves in heaven. It's...why they're all so stupid.

JOHN

I can't believe this. I'm in hell. Hell. Everything makes sense now. I'm in hell.

LUCIFER

Well...not really. Like I said. You *are* in Hell but only in the strictest, narrowest definition of the word.

JOHN

Great.

LUCIFER

Trust me. It *will* become clear. First though, this is probably a good time to introduce you to somebody. Jude? Games up. Might as well show yourself.

(The 'angel' steps forward and removes a wig to reveal red hair. John can suddenly see him.)

LUCIFER (cont'd)

Jude? I'd like you to meet...John! Jude? Meet John. John? Meet Jude. Knew I'd get there in the end.

JUDE

You look like a man who could use a drink. You'll have to forgive the boss his little tricks. He really is trying to help.

JOHN

Help? Help who?

JUDE

Well, himself mostly. But rest assured he tells us that the benefits will flow on down like a golden river of shiny shine. His words. Not mine.

JOHN

So you're a man? How long have you been here?

JUDE

Does it matter? I'm here.

LUCIFER

Jude's like an old school Catholic. He thinks that he deserves all the punishment he can get. What do you call yourself Jude?

JUDE

A waste of space boss.

LUCIFER

It can get very depressing around here sometimes.

JOHN

So this *is* my punishment. My endless misery. My hell.

LUCIFER

Not *exactly*. Jude? Tell the man *where* this place is.

JUDE

Heaven.

LUCIFER

And now tell him *where* he is.

JUDE

Hell.

LUCIFER

Ta-da.

JOHN

No. No 'ta-da'. This is not a 'ta-da' moment! It's a 'surprise' moment with the words 'very, very bad' in front but it is *not* 'ta-da'! It doesn't even make sense!

JUDE

I told you this wouldn't work. We don't have any answers.

LUCIFER

Yes, you do. Now shut up. Look, it's like this; when you were in heaven you were-

JOHN

Hang on. What? What do you mean *when*?

LUCIFER

Before you came here, but I took you out because you were-

JOHN

I was already *in* heaven? And you took me out? This just gets better and better. Send me back.

LUCIFER

No.

JOHN

No?

LUCIFER

Not yet. Not until you understand what's at stake.

JOHN

I don't care what's at stake! You *took* me out of heaven!

LUCIFER

Calm down. It's not as bad as it sounds.

JUDE

Really, it's not.

LUCIFER AND MAN:

Shut up.

LUCIFER

This is *still* your heaven. This is where you were. The whiskey, the harp, all of it. It's all *exactly* the same as what I took you out of. I'm serious. This was your heaven.

JOHN

But...why would they do that?

LUCIFER

The only lie I have told is letting you believe you were still in heaven. Everything else I have told you was honest.

JUDE

It's true.

LUCIFER

Thank you.

JUDE

You're welcome. If I could just interje-

JOHN

-What is that you want from me? What is it that I could possibly give? I don't have anything. I'm lost. I was in heaven and...I hated it. How useless is that?

LUCIFER

Pretty useless yes. But only because you didn't try to work out why.

JOHN

And you have? You've worked it out?

LUCIFER

No. I haven't worked it out. Only you can do that and *that* is what I *have* worked out. The rest is up to you.

JOHN

How many others have you done this to?

LUCIFER

Well..I'll admit that Gandhi gave me the idea but you're the first to have an 'intervention' as it were.

JOHN

What an honour. You're a coward.

LUCIFER

Excuse me?

JOHN

You picked me. You *looked* at Gandhi and you *picked* me. You didn't pick someone who knows what you're talking about. You didn't pick a religious thinker. You didn't pick a pope! You didn't pick...Francis of Assissi!

LUCIFER

No! I didn't pick Francis of Assissi! I didn't pick Abraham or Osama Bin Laden either! What of it? There is a difference between obsessive and insane you know!

JOHN

This is what I'm talking about. I don't even know who those people are. I know they were important but I don't know why. All I know about them is that one liked animals, one tried to kill his son and one's an asshole. And out of those last two, I'm not even sure which one's which!

LUCIFER

Trust me. They're interchangeable. But besides that, they were all actively pursuing misery not trying to escape it.

JOHN

I just don't...I don't know anything. I don't...I'm not anyone. I can't help you.

LUCIFER

But that's just it. You don't need to try and help me. You just need to help yourself. Work out what you want Plumb the depths of selfishness. There's answers there. I know it. I'm giving you permission to become a *narcissist of the soul*. Only you can do it. Open that door so the rest of us can follow.

(pause)

JOHN

I thought...I thought you were supposed to be *good* at this.

LUCIFER

I am.

JOHN

But a narcissist of the soul? That's not a convincing argument. Poetic; yes. Convincing? No. What could ever be appealing about that? Who would ever want to *be* that?

LUCIFER

Oh, forgive me for not being at the 'top of my game'. Forgive me for being just a little fed up and just a little bit depressed! Now who's being an asshole?

JOHN

And how quickly it all comes flooding back. I want to talk to Jude.

LUCIFER

Jude? But he's an-

JOHN

Without you interrupting. Can I do that?

LUCIFER

You can.

JOHN

Good.

LUCIFER

But!...just remember that he thinks he deserves all this.

JOHN
We'll see. Jude?

JUDE
Yes?

JOHN
How long have you been here?

JUDE
I don't know. Longer than you. Longer than many of them.

JOHN
And do you deserve to be?

JUDE
Yes.

JOHN
Why, what did you do?

JUDE
I don't know.

JOHN
You have to know *something*.

JUDE
I sinned.

JOHN
Okay. So what was the sin.

JUDE
I don't know.

JOHN
Did you kill someone?

JUDE
Maybe.

JOHN
Maybe?

JUDE
Yes 'maybe'. It's the same as 'I don't know'. I have never known.

JOHN
(to LUCIFER)
Do you know?

LUCIFER

Yes.

JOHN

So why haven't you told him?

LUCIFER

Look, as far as I can see it wasn't even his fault. I've tried to tell him. He can't hear it. Or he forgets as soon as he's told or...something. There's really nothing I can do.

JOHN

(to JUDE)

Okay well...what kind of punishment did you get?

JUDE

Punishment?

JOHN

Yes. You're in hell. What kind of tortures, torments?

JUDE

I didn't receive any torments.

JOHN

Sorry?

JUDE

I exist here but I was never punished.

JOHN

Never pun-

(to LUCIFER)

Is *anyone* punished around here?

LUCIFER

Sometimes. If they really want to be. Hey, some people get off on it. It has nothing to do with me. I punished *everybody* in the beginning if that makes you feel any better. But I stopped all that when Jude turned up.

JOHN

So hang on...then is *Jude* your...no! *Is* he?

LUCIFER

My Jesus? I guess you could call him that yes...

JOHN

Jude?

JUDE

I knew Jesus. I don't compare.

LUCIFER

Yes, you *do*. If I say you're Jesus then you're Jesus okay?
Now shut up. I'm working on Moses here.

JOHN

I thought you said I didn't have the balls.

LUCIFER

I *may* have over-stated things a little. Don't be so touchy.
It's unbecoming in a prophet.

JOHN

I'm *not* a prophet!

LUCIFER

But you *could* be!

JOHN

No!

LUCIFER

Why not!

JOHN

Because!

LUCIFER

Because?

JOHN

Because!

LUCIFER

Because! We're back to because!

JOHN

Yes! Because!

LUCIFER

I hate because!

JOHN

Well I don't have anything else to give!

(LUCIFER lets out a growl that turns
into a guttural yell of frustration. A
demonic tantrum. Thunder sounds.
Lightening flashes. Pause)

LUCIFER

Sorry. That was crude.

JOHN

Let's not forget pathetic.

JUDE

Let's not.

LUCIFER

Touche.

(*pause*)

Look, I'm going to start again and see if I can explain this a little differently. Okay? Now as I see it you have three options. One: you can stay here and accept your position as a narcissistic prophet in training -no, let me finish- two: I can send you back to heaven where *nothing* will change and three: -and this is beginning to look more and more likely- I could eat you. Bear in mind that if you choose number two I'm going to pick number three for you anyway.

JOHN

You're going to eat me?

LUCIFER

Yes.

JOHN

What do you mean *eat* me?

LUCIFER

It's...something I do sometimes if I feel I should.

JOHN

Eat people.

LUCIFER

Yes.

JOHN

That's horrible.

LUCIFER

Think of it more as long term storage. Like a shelved project. In my stomache. You'll be quite safe. I've eaten some very interesting people. This is actually me doing you a favour. I get that it might not seem that way but it is.

JOHN

What a guy.

I'm serious. LUCIFER

I believe you. JOHN

So you'll do it? LUCIFER

Do what? JOHN

Be eaten. LUCIFER

No! Why would I let you eat me? JOHN

Well...you wouldn't. I'd just eat you. But it's always nice if you think it's your choice. Until you're eaten of course. After that you won't care either way. LUCIFER

Why not? JOHN

Because...I'll have eaten you. LUCIFER

And I'm dead. JOHN

You're already dead. LUCIFER

Limbo then. JOHN

No. Like I said. No limbo. LUCIFER

So...where...how is that not like limbo? JOHN

Oh, for fucks sake. Jude? LUCIFER

The boss only eats people he thinks are too interesting to go to heaven. He plans to bring them back. JUDE

JOHN

Bring them back?

JUDE

Yes. When he finds a way through. When you find a way through. He says he'll let them back out and then they can continue. He's been eating them while he's been waiting for you.

JOHN

Who...who does he eat?

JUDE

Mathematicians and artists mostly. But also singers, philosophers, writers, politicians, scientists-

JOHN

-salesmen?

JUDE

No. No salesmen. You'll be the first.

JOHN

And...how does it work?

JUDE

He eats them.

JOHN

Yes, I know but-

JUDE

Keeps them safe inside him he says.

JOHN

Do I know any of them?

JUDE

Shall I name some?

JOHN

Um. Okay. From close to my time.

JUDE

Bobby Kennedy, Charlie Chaplin, Richard Feynman, Frida Kahlo, Joseph Stalin, Ray Bradbury, Agatha Christie-

JOHN

ha-hang on! Joseph Stalin?

LUCIFER

To keep the others on their toes.

JUDE

There are many others that you wouldn't know. Some of them were executed for their crimes. And some of those were innocent. Some of them lived blameless lives. Some of them did not.

LUCIFER

And all of them were interesting.

JOHN

Frida Kahlo.

LUCIFER

Yes. Frida Kahlo.

JOHN

You ate her.

LUCIFER

Yes.

JOHN

My sister loved Frida Kahlo.

LUCIFER

Your sister had good taste.

JOHN

Okay. I *think* I get it.

LUCIFER

Excellent!

JOHN

Except for one thing.
(pause)

LUCIFER

Fine. What?

JOHN

I don't get it.

LUCIFER

You're killing me here. Okay. Look; it's really very simple. Open mouth, insert Mexican. There's nothing else to get. She's *safe*. She's *fine*. She'll come back out when the time is right. And the sooner you figure out how to do that the sooner that will be. Okay?

JOHN

Not really but...okay, I'll take Judes' word for it. I'm thinking you ate that Paradise Lost guy as well?

Milton?

LUCIFER

JOHN

No idea. And the...Faust guy.

LUCIFER

Goethe? No I did not. *They* have to stay in heaven.

JOHN

Oh. I thought you'd like them.

LUCIFER

Tenth rate hacks trying to use my grief to create their glory. There are others. Wouldn't piss on them if they were on fire. Which I could arrange of course.

JOHN

Of course. Can I have some time? To think it over?

LUCIFER

I think I can agree to that. Jude?

JUDE

Yes boss?

LUCIFER

How long until Ayn needs her tea?

JUDE

Five minutes.

LUCIFER

Right. You can have...four minutes.

JOHN

I...need longer than that!

LUCIFER

Three and a half.

JOHN

What?

LUCIFER

Okay three then! Jude, start counting.

JOHN

Oh Christ.

LUCIFER

No. Moses.

I'm Jesus.

JUDE

Right! And don't you forget it.

LUCIFER

(waves hand across bar)
 Blesséd are the ashtrays.

JUDE

Whatever. Two minutes.

LUCIFER

Two and a half.

JUDE

Fine. Two and a half.

LUCIFER

(waves hand across bar)
 Blesséd is the half minute.

JUDE

Stop that.

LUCIFER

I'm being Jesus.

JUDE

You're being annoying.

LUCIFER

(waving his hands over LUCIFER)
 Blesséd is the Dark Lord

JUDE

Get off!

LUCIFER

Blesséd is the-

JUDE

-Stop!

LUCIFER

Hail Satan?

JUDE

THIRTY SECONDS!

LUCIFER

Send me back. JOHN

No. Twenty seconds. LUCIFER

I want to go back! JOHN

No. TEN seconds. LUCIFER

I can't decide! JOHN

Nine. LUCIFER

I need more time! JOHN

Eight. LUCIFER

Are you really going to eat me? JOHN

Seven. LUCIFER

Shit! JOHN

No shitting in Heaven. Six. LUCIFER

But-! JOHN

Five. LUCIFER

You can't do this! JOHN

Jude? Bring me a napkin. Four. LUCIFER

Stop counting! JOHN

And some sauce. Three. LUCIFER

BBQ or spicy? JUDE

Spicy. Two. LUCIFER

I'll fight! JOHN

Best of luck to you. One. LUCIFER

Wait! JOHN

Nada! LUCIFER

JOHN
(collapsing into a defensive ball.)
SHIIIIITT! Shit shit shit shit shit!

LUCIFER and JUDE stare silently at JOHN. Beat.

JUDE
I don't think he wants to be eaten boss.

LUCIFER
You disappoint me John. I was hoping for more. Stand up.

JOHN
No. You're going to eat me!

LUCIFER
I'm not going to eat you John. You really want to go back?

JOHN
I...think so. Yes. I want to go back.

LUCIFER
Back to the whiskey? The bells? Nothing will change for you. Heaven is not your answer John. If you go back it will be the last decision you'll ever be able to make. They're not listening to you remember?

JOHN
I know. But maybe...maybe I can make them. And besides, my parents are there somewhere.

LUCIFER

Yes. Your parents are there somewhere. But they're with friends. They're *content*.

JOHN

But you'll send me back anyway?

LUCIFER

Yes. I'll send you back anyway. Jude? Clear all this up would you?

JUDE clears away the excess glasses, ashtrays etc.

JOHN

Do you have any advice for me?

LUCIFER

I might. But you won't remember it once you're back.

JOHN

It's worth a try.

LUCIFER

No. It isn't. But okay, here: they *can* see you if they bothered to look and they *can* hear you if they bothered to listen. Be brash, be loud and never take pleasure in anything. If they ever do look and they see you smiling they'll *never look again*.

JOHN

Stay mad. Got it.

LUCIFER

ready?

JOHN

Ready.

LUCIFER

Then take a seat. Close your eyes. Jude? You know what to do.

JUDE pours a shot into a glass and places it beside JOHN on the bar. LUCIFER waves his arm and the lights dim briefly. JOHN awakes. The bells sound. JOHN sees the glass.

JOHN

Fuck.

JOHN reluctantly picks up the glass and downs the shot, a look of revulsion on his face which turns to surprise.

Tequila?

(pause)

I hate tequila.

LUCIFER and JUDE give a silent fist bump. Blackout.

END OF PLAY.