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Cast of Characters

JEFF EXELLY III: A CEO in Hell; he was an atheist in life, which he finds ironic now

KATHERINE: A high school math teacher in Hell. She hates people.

TONY GRANDING: A politician in Hell; he ran for President in life.

MAGGIE ANN: A 1950s American mom in Hell; she still bakes, however.

HAMMURABI: The world's first lawyer.

STEVE LYND: A telemarketer and recent addition to Hell.

PERSEUS: The Devil's right hand man/woman.

DEVIL: The Queen of darkness.

DEATH: The Grim Reaper

A COLD DAY IN HELL

by Keith J. Powell

(Open on the offices of Hell Incorporated. There are two doors present, one up center with the number 7 visible on it, and another stage left. Between the doors stands a long conference table, with a small box labeled “random acts” in the center. Standing around the table is TONY GRANDING, a politician; MAGGIE ANN, a mother from the '50s—she holds a tray of brownies and a large kitchen knife with which to cut them; KATHERINE, a high school math teacher; JEFF EXELLY III, a CEO; and HAMMURABI, the world's first lawyer. They sit around the table anxiously. JEFF begins to pace in front of the table checking his watch before finally exploding.)

JEFF. Well I'm not sure if I speak for the rest of you but I refuse to be treated in this fashion. We've been waiting here for hours! Why, I've got half a mind to refuse this assignment!

KATHERINE. Sounds about right.

JEFF. What was that?

KATHERINE. You said, you had half a mind, and I said sounds about right.

JEFF. You can't talk to me like that! Do you have any idea who I am?

HAMMURABI. Who you were.

JEFF. What are you muttering about?

HAMMURABI. Who you were. As in the past tense. You're dead. Who you were, doesn't really matter, does it?

MAGGIE ANN. I think he may have a point there.

JEFF. *(To MAGGIE ANN:)* Then I guess it's a good thing that nobody here cares what you think. And as for you, of course who we were when we were alive matters here, and aside from the most obvious reason too. I pity you if you believe otherwise.

HAMMURABI. Don't pity me quite yet my man, wait until you've been here as long as I have then tell me if you believe that.

TONY. I'm afraid I'm going to have to agree with...

JEFF. Jeff Exelly III.

TONY. Yes, I'm afraid I'm going to have to agree with Mr. Exelly here. Who we were during our lifetimes most certainly matters here.

JEFF. Thank you.

TONY. And as such, I think it would only make sense for the rest of you to place me in charge for this assignment.

HAMMURABI. Put you in charge? Check it, what makes you think you've got what it takes?

TONY. Judging by that bathrobe you're wearing, I'll assume that you've been out of the game a while longer than the rest of us, but I'm sure everyone else here knows who I am and why I am the most qualified?

(The group looks from one person to another with confused expressions.)

ALL. No not really. Nope. Not me.

TONY. *(Mildly annoyed:)* Well here, this should jog your memory

(He makes a fist and puts it across his chest, puffing it out and looking off into the distance.)

Now you recognize me, right?

(Again the group exchanges glances.)

ALL. Nope. Not really. I have no clue.

TONY. Well what do you think I did?

(Making the pose again. The group guesses excitedly at Tony's former occupation.)

MAGGIE ANN. You were a used car salesman?

HAMMURABI. Sitcom writer?!

KATHERINE. Ooh, a TV evangelist?!

JEFF. I've got it. A Sci-fi convention coordinator?!

TONY. *(Taking specific offense to this last guess:)* Good god no!

MAGGIE ANN. Then who were you?

(At this PERSEUS enters SR, carrying a clipboard and a folder with the contents of the David conspiracy contained within.)

PERSEUS. He was a politician, Margaret.

TONY. Thank you Perseus! Yes, I was a politician.

JEFF. What public office did you hold?

TONY. I was the head of a very important committee. It wasn't technically a public office, it was more of a privately funded committee, but nonetheless important.

JEFF. A privately funded committee for what?

TONY. For what, you ask? We did all sorts of things! Day in and day out we were constantly doing things! We did all sorts of big and important things!

HAMMURABI. Paint us a picture of these terribly important things, this committee did.

TONY. Well, just off the top of my head, we ran a national campaign for the presidency.

KATHERINE. A presidential campaign for whom?

TONY. Well, we gave that a great deal of careful thought, and after much debate we decided that I was the best, no, the only person capable of leading the nation into a new era of greatness. My slogan was, "A candidate so close to the people, you'll swear it was your finger on the button!"

JEFF. So you were the President of your own election committee?

TONY. It still counts!

MAGGIE ANN. Sure it does, sweetie.

TONY. Well what have the rest of you done that was so great and outstanding as to make you more qualified than myself for the position of Chancellor?

PERSEUS. Not that being the self-appointed leader of your own personal fan club doesn't more than qualify you for the position of Chancellor, Anthony, but I assure the others here are no less qualified. It is a moot point at best however as none of you have been selected to serve as Chancellor.

JEFF. What? If one of us isn't going to serve then just whom is it Perseus?

PERSEUS. All in good time Jeffery. All in good time. I will introduce you to your new Chancellor just as soon as he arrives.

(As this is said the door center swings open violently and a light shines out; DEATH stands revealed and throws STEVE savagely through the door.)

PERSEUS. And here he is now.

STEVE. *(To DEATH:)* But I keep telling you've got the wrong guy! I'm not supposed to be here! I was a good person!

DEATH. *(Dismissing him:)* Yes, yes good person, a saint. Probably some sort of clerical error, be back in the morning to clear it all up. Perseus, he's all yours.

(DEATH exits. STEVE takes a minute to get to his feet; he looks around slowly. PERSEUS approaches him.)

PERSEUS. Welcome to Hell!

(STEVE looks at PERSEUS for a moment before he runs for the door; as he pulls it open the light is gone; he's trapped in Hell.)

STEVE. What! Where'd the doorway go? The tunnel and the bright light and the whole shebang?

MAGGIE ANN. Funny thing about Hell, the laws of time and space don't really seem to apply.

HAMMURABI. Word.

(He takes it all in for a second, closes his eyes, and begins to click his heels together.)

STEVE. There's no place like home, there's no place like home, there's no place like home.

KATHERINE. Give it up, Dorothy, you're a long way from Kansas.

STEVE. This can't be happening, I can't be in Hell. This can't be happening, I refuse to believe that I'm in Hell.

TONY. Naturally. No one believes that they're going to Hell. Take me for example, I spent my life working for the little man, defending democracy, striving for truth and justice, and when *(starts to get emotional)*, and when my life, *(more emotional)* was cut tragically short by an assassin, *(more emotional still)* you can just imagine my surprise, not to mention disappointment when I ended up here.

KATHERINE. You can imagine all of our disappointments when he ended up here.

PERSEUS. Now Katherine, please. You really haven't given Anthony a fair chance. He's given us some brilliant work in the past, and that's why he has been hand picked for this assignment, as you've all been.

STEVE. What assignment? Handpicked? What the hell is going on around here?

MAGGIE ANN. Sweetie, Hell is going on around here. *(At this she breaks up into hysterics.)* I'm sorry, I just think that's so funny.

HAMMURABI. *(After staring at her for a moment:)* See that's where you're wrong. That's actually about as unfunny as it gets before you start coming back around to funny.

PERSEUS. People, please, can we get down to business here?

STEVE. You could start by explaining to me what's going on!

JEFF. Isn't it obvious?

TONY. You're dead.

MAGGIE ANN. This is Hell, honey.

(STEVE looks to PERSEUS who just nods.)

PERSEUS. Believe it my friend. You're dead. You are in Hell. And employed in the services thereof, and you Steven, are set to serve on a very special project. You all are, actually. You'll be pleased to

know that you were all hand picked by the Queen of Pain and Suffering herself.

STEVE. Ann Coulter? *(This name can be altered at the director's discretion.)*

PERSEUS. No, but she works for us too. I was referring to the devil of course. Satan herself has hand picked you six to work on an assignment very near and dear to her heart.

(She slams the contents of the David folder down on the table flipping it open.)

Meet David M. Lynd—

STEVE. What!

PERSEUS. The next target of Hell's conspiracy. It's up to you six to see that he falls right into our greedy little claws. And allow me to make one point abundantly clear, Satan wants this guy bad. I'm not sure what this sorry sap has done to warrant this special attention, but have it he does. Failure is not an option, you five are the best there is at this sort of thing and Satan thought you would be uniquely suited for this assignment, Steven. What with you having such a special relationship with the target and all, so just get to it. Don't let us down.

STEVE. This can't be right! What could the Devil want with David?

HAMMURABI. Yo, you know this dude?

PERSEUS. You might say that. You might also say that David is Steve's younger brother. Happy hunting, friends, and good luck.

(Exits.)

JEFF. Well this shouldn't be too hard. I mean we are the best there is and with you being his brother you'll know the perfect way to screw him over! Although I can't say as though I agree with Satan's choice of making you Chancellor. You are after all, hardly qualified.

STEVE. Listen friend—

JEFF. I'm not your friend—

STEVE. Listen guy with the stick stuck up his butt, I don't know what you're talking about. I'm not a Hellraiser. I'm hardly an expert on my brother. I don't belong in hell. I'm not serving as Chancellor on some stupid assignment!

MAGGIE ANN. Oh but you have to, Steve.

TONY. You have to work on the assignments. It's a rule.

STEVE. No I don't.

KATHERINE. Oh but you do. Hell isn't a free ride, you have to earn your keep.

STEVE. This is the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard! Earn my keep? I'm not going to be doing any assignments for Hell. I don't even know how I ended up here in the first place!

HAMMURABI. Well, dude, I mean, what part of 'Thou Shalt Not' didn't you get exactly?

STEVE. Very funny.

KATHERINE. What he means is, it wasn't necessarily one terrible horrible thing you did wrong, but rather a lifetime of little things.

JEFF. Take me for example. I liked to dabble in a lot of things, extortion, blackmail, embezzlement, manufacturing faulty products to cut costs. I owned a few sweatshops here and there. Never really thought too much about it because I always prided myself on being an atheist. Hey, who cares if some people call what I do wrong, it doesn't really matter because when it's over, it's all over. I mean there is no God right? Boy was my face red when I learned that not only was there a God, but she was really pissed off at me. And so here I am.

STEVE. Is that how the rest of you ended up here? Little things?

KATHERINE. Not exactly.

STEVE. What do you mean?

KATHERINE. I was a high school math teacher—

MAGGIE ANN. Ooh, that is bad.

KATHERINE. That's not why Susie Lee, you discount bin June Cleaver.

MAGGIE ANN. Maggie Ann. My name is Maggie Ann.

KATHERINE. Like I care. So as I was saying, I taught high school, and everything is going along well. The students had established a healthy amount of fear for me, and all was as it should be, when he came into my class. You know the type, perfect goody-good, the kind who on a Friday would say "teacher teacher, you forgot to assign homework." The type who absolutely could not stand to be anything less than above average. He irritated me from the get-go.

STEVE. So what did you do to him?

KATHERINE. I gave him a C for no other reason than I wanted him to know just how average I considered him to be. That taught him.

STEVE. And what happened?

KATHERINE. Funny story actually. Turns out he really couldn't stand to be anything less than above average. He lost his mind. Dropped out of school and from what I was told spent the rest of his days living under an overpass dancing for nickels by the highway. Oh well, so it goes.

STEVE. That's not a funny story, that's not a funny story at all! You destroyed a young man's life and that's all you have to say is so it goes?

KATHERINE. What, you would prefer I feign some sort of remorse?

STEVE. I would prefer it if you didn't have to feign it.

KATHERINE. Boo hoo, I ruined the life of some arrogant over-achiever who was so full of himself he squeaked going into turns. Oh, if I only had it to do over again everything would be different.

TONY. I do not regret the things I've done, only those I did not do?

KATHERINE. No, I don't regret what I've done. Why should I? The world is full of people just like him. So sure that they are some-

how special, sure that they are somehow above the rest of us. It makes me sick.

TONY. I couldn't agree with you more, the world is full of people who are under the misconception that their lives matter in the least. The sad truth of the matter is that most people are just taking up valuable oxygen. It's only the very rare diamond in the rough, such as myself, who makes any difference whatsoever.

STEVE. I recognize that from somewhere, where have I heard that before?

TONY. In my lifetime I was this close to becoming President, that was a line from a speech I delivered on education. You probably recognize it from that.

STEVE. Yes, that it. I knew you looked familiar! They were talking about you on this special on A&E. It was called "The most evil men in politics." Did you really propose that orphans be sold to pharmaceutical companies for use as test subjects?

TONY. What? It's not like anyone else wants them. Besides, the animal rights activists are always complaining about animal cruelty. Conservationists are always going on about population growth, I looked at it as two birds with one stone.

STEVE. Okay, well I guess I don't need to ask you why you're here. What about you though? *(To MAGGIE ANN:)* What could you have possibly done bad enough to end up here Mary Beth?

MAGGIE ANN. *(Delivering entire address just as sweet as can be:)* Maggie Ann. And it's all my husband's fault I'm here. You see my husband was cheating on me with one of my friends. Well actually with several of my friends. Well actually with my entire card club. When I found out about it I was understandably upset. So I confronted him and I told him I knew what he had been doing. And, well we got into a fight.

(She cuts the brownies and TONY takes one as does KATHERINE.)

STEVE. You got into a fight?

MAGGIE ANN. It was a bad fight. *(Pause.)* But it really wasn't his fault as much as it was the cheating tramps in my card club, and

they had to pay too. So I hid Frank's body in the basement and told everyone that he was out of town on business, and when our weekly card night rolled around, I put a little something special in the brownies.

(KATHERINE and TONY spit out the brownie in their mouths.)

I guess you could say, they got their just desserts!

(She collapses into hysterical laughing.)

HAMMURABI. Do you stay up at night trying to be this unfunny?

STEVE. *(To HAMMURABI:)* What about you, I'm almost afraid to ask but what's your deal?

HAMMURABI. Yo, check this, I'm Hammurabi.

(Confusion from the group.)

HAMMURABI. The world's first lawyer?

ALL. Oh.

TONY. I guess that just leaves you.

STEVE. Me?

TONY. Yeah, what'd you do to get in here?

STEVE. I have no idea.

KATHERINE. You have no idea?

STEVE. None.

MAGGIE ANN. Well, what did you do?

STEVE. I was a telemarketer.

KATHERINE. Well that explains it.

JEFF. And you had the audacity to question why you were here?

HAMMURABI. Dude, you make me sick.

STEVE. It was just a job!

TONY. Calling people up in the middle of their meals, trying to sell them things. I mean, you just have to draw the line somewhere.

STEVE. I was just doing my job!

KATHERINE. Just like the Nazis were just doing their job!

STEVE. I'm not a Nazi! Look, I'm not like the rest of you! I didn't do anything to deserve to spend eternity in Hell working on some stupid assignment!

TONY. I don't know why you keep complaining about the assignment, I mean come on, you've been picked out of the dozens and dozens of people in Hell to serve as Chancellor on one of the Devil's most important projects.

STEVE. Wait a minute, dozens and dozens of people? There are only dozens and dozens of people in Hell?

TONY. Well yeah, I mean only the worst of the worst end up here.

STEVE. I refuse to believe this, I refuse to believe I'm the worst of the worst. I honestly never did anything in my life that bad.

HAMMURABI. It's like this, man, it's not enough to not do anything wrong, if you spend your entire life and never do anything right, know what I'm saying. That's why I'm here.

MAGGIE ANN. Hey gang, Perseus made it pretty clear that this was a very important assignment. Maybe we should get started.

JEFF. Yes, Becky Marie has a point.

MAGGIE ANN. Maggie Ann!

JEFF. Yes, whatever. And as entertaining as your little post death crisis is here Steve, we really need you to get started now.

STEVE. What are you talking about?

JEFF. You're the Chancellor. You're in charge of getting this project started.

STEVE. What project! I don't even understand what I'm supposed to be doing!

KATHERINE. It's all here in the files. We're supposed to set forces in motion to screw over your fellow member of the shallow gene pool club, your brother David.

STEVE. What?

KATHERINE. Yeah, he's a soul the Devil has her eye on and so we have to trick him into coming over to the dark side, so to speak.

STEVE. And how are we supposed to do that?

JEFF. By breaking his will of course.

STEVE. I'm lost. What are we doing to David?

TONY. It's like this, Steve, when you were alive, did you sometimes get the feeling that the world was out to get you?

STEVE. Yeah.

TONY. Well it wasn't the world, it was just us.

MAGGIE ANN. That's what we do here, we conspire against a person.

HAMMURABI. Chipping away at them, until their souls are ripe for the picking.

TONY. So how would you recommend we screw over your baby brother?

STEVE. Even if I wanted to. I wouldn't know. I haven't spoken to him in years.

JEFF. What's the matter, you guys a feudin'?

STEVE. Hey Exelly, why don't you go play in the lake of fire. *(Turning his attention back to HAMMURABI:)* So let me get this straight. We're going to conspire to make everything in David's life go wrong so he will end up in hell?

KATHERINE. Think of it like divine intervention in reverse. Speaking of which, since our Chancellor doesn't seem to be exactly chock full of ideas, I think I have a good way to start. It says here in the file that a few years back David had some sort of religious transformation. He found God, went to medical school, and now runs a free clinic. I was thinking that we could have him be involved in a car accident and have him lose the use of his hands.

STEVE. I can't believe this.

TONY. Hey that's good. But I've got an idea how we could make it even better. Instead of losing the use of his hands why don't we say that one of them has to be amputated. And when he goes in for surgery...

JEFF. We can have the wrong one taken off!

MAGGIE ANN. Ooh ooh, and then the driver of the other car can sue him for emotional distress, and win 10 million dollars!

JEFF. These are great. Here write them down.

STEVE. I don't want any part of this. He's my brother!

JEFF. It doesn't matter if you want to be a part of this or not, it won't work unless you put it in the box. You're the Chancellor.

STEVE. I can't do this.

KATHERINE. Well gee, why not Steve? According to this file you've had no problem screwing your brother over in the past.

STEVE. Shut up.

JEFF. Do tell Katherine, why exactly hasn't our dear Chancellor here spoken to his brother in years?

KATHERINE. Well it would seem six years ago Steve ran off with a lovely girl named Saroj, who just happened to be David's fiancée. David apparently was quite in love with the girl. It destroyed him when she left. Seems Steve and David haven't spoken since.

TONY. You're kidding!

STEVE. No. It's true.

TONY. I just can't believe it!

STEVE. Well believe it okay. It's true.

TONY. I mean, what kind of a name is Saroj. It's like her parents picked letters out of a hat.

STEVE. It's a very common name in India, okay.

TONY. I'm just saying that it's not that common of a name and—

STEVE. Look, that's not really the point is it? The point is I did it, I'm not proud of it but I did do it. Want to hear the funny part? She left me too. Our entire relationship lasted like two months. And when it was over and I went back to my family did they forgive me? No. I'm still being punished. He got my family to completely disown me. Do you know what it's like to have your own mother tell you she doesn't know you?

ALL BUT HAMMURABI. Yes. I do. Me too.

JEFF. You already screwed him over once. What's the harm in doing it again? You're already dead. You're already in Hell. What are you afraid of going to Hell plus?

TONY. Jeff is right, the only thing you should be worried about is getting on the wrong side of Satan.

KATHERINE. Which is what you'll be doing by making such a big deal over this assignment. Believe it or not she can make Hell even more unpleasant than it already is.

MAGGIE ANN. You're making this more complicated than it need be. Just put the note in the box and watch it happen.

STEVE. I can't believe you people! None of you have a problem destroying an innocent person's life? I mean, David is doing good, he runs a free clinic, for crying out loud! It's not like Satan would spend all this time and energy on some guy just because he smarted off, she has to want him for a reason.

HAMMURABI. Hey man, I don't like it any more than you do. He may not be my brother but I still don't like the idea. Not like we've got a real big choice though right?

STEVE. Of course we have a choice! We don't have to do it. I mean ask yourself, do you really want anyone else to have to suffer Hell?

TONY. Sort of.

STEVE. What?

TONY. I mean, why should we be the only ones?

STEVE. I don't believe you people, have you all really become this cruel and unfeeling?

JEFF. Become?

STEVE. I for one refuse to use this stupid box to ruin my brother's life. I for one... Wait a minute. Whatever I write down and put in the box will happen right?

HAMMURABI. That's what we're saying, yo.

STEVE. Let me see the file for a second. Does it work both ways?

JEFF. Does what work both ways?

STEVE. The box, if we write something good down will that happen too?

JEFF. Presumably, why? Oh no, don't even think about it.

STEVE. But we could.

JEFF. No we couldn't.

MAGGIE ANN. Couldn't what?

STEVE. Don't you get it Susie Jean?

MAGGIE ANN. Now you're just doing it on purpose!

STEVE. We could make good things happen to him.

TONY. Why?

STEVE. Because we could!

HAMMURABI. Wait a minute maybe he's on to something. Like what could we do?

STEVE. I could put the wrong things right. I could have him run into Saroj again and—

HAMMURABI. And we could have her painfully killed for revenge!

STEVE. I was thinking that we could just have them get back together

(Writes it down.)

HAMMURABI. Dude! That's even better! It's going to take me a while to get used to this good deeds angle.

JEFF. No no no! We don't do nice things (*Mocking him:*) just because we can. We do what we're told to do, which is to make David's life a living Hell, so he can come see what the real deal is like. (*To HAMMURABI:*) I can't believe you of all people are even considering this. You've been here longer than the rest of us, you know this is the only way things are done.

HAMMURABI. But—

JEFF. No! You know this is how it has to be.

HAMMURABI. Okay, okay, you're right.

STEVE. What happens if someone besides me puts a note in the box?

KATHERINE. Nothing happens.

(Everyone stands around for a second before STEVE dives for the box; the rest try to tackle him. As everyone is piled on top, STEVE worms his way out the back with the box but the rest don't notice. He stands to the side and watches them. Finally MAGGIE ANN looks up.)

MAGGIE ANN. He's over there!

(As they spin around STEVE grabs TONY and one of the brownies, shoving it towards TONY's mouth.)

STEVE. Back back, or he gets it.

(They look around and then dive at him anyway. STEVE shoves the brownie down TONY's throat, and grabs HAMMURABI, pushing the box up by his head.)

Now I mean it. I will give him such a splinter and not even blink!

(At this PERSEUS re-enters. He pulls HAMMURABI away, takes the box, and throws STEVE center stage, hard.)

PERSEUS. What is going on around here!

JEFF. He won't do the assignment. He's got morals.

PERSEUS. Well that's just stupid, morals don't matter here. You're already dead, Steven.

STEVE. I don't care, I won't ruin a man's life!

TONY. He even tried to make his life better!

KATHERINE. He tried to put good things into the box!

PERSEUS. You didn't let him did you?!

STEVE. No. They didn't.

PERSEUS. Thank Satan for small favors. Steve listen, why are you having such a hard time going along with this?

STEVE. Because it's wrong! I'm in Hell I can accept it. I did something wrong, maybe it was because of what happened with Saroj, I don't know. David hasn't done anything though. You want us to conspire to break this guy's will. To make him weak enough so that he'll become what you want him to be. Well I'm sorry but I'll be damned if I'm going to go along with that!

PERSEUS. But don't you get it Steven, you're damned already? You're here for a reason, so this sudden burst of morality is too little too late. So stop thinking so much and do your job!

STEVE. No. I refuse.

PERSEUS. You really are asking for it you know? I'm going to have no choice but to report you.

STEVE. I don't care.

KATHERINE. But we do! Steve, don't be a fool, you're not the only one who is going to catch grief over this little protest! I worked long and hard to get out of level six, and I'm not going back.

JEFF. Think about the rest of us!

STEVE. I am thinking about the rest of you. We don't have to do what they tell us to do just because we're here. It's not too late to try and do the right thing! Just because we don't have bodies anymore doesn't mean we don't have hearts!

MAGGIE ANN. (*Confused:*) Well actually Steve—

STEVE. I meant figuratively, Maggie Ann.

PERSEUS. Steve, give it up, this little protest is over.

STEVE. As long as I'm assigned to this assignment it will be nothing but protests.

PERSEUS. Fine come with me then. If word got back as to what you tried to do here, as your supervisor, I'd be in just as much trouble as you, so if you come along quietly I'll just re-assign you somewhere else, and we will just forget this whole nonsense about putting nice deeds in the box.

STEVE. What about David?

PERSEUS. I'll just leave that up to your co-workers here. I'm sure it is well within their realm of control.

STEVE. Are they still going to conspire to break him?

PERSEUS. Yes. But who knows maybe it won't work.

HAMMURABI. You got that right it won't work.

(He grabs the box from PERSEUS.)

Steve, catch!

(HAMMURABI throws the box, which STEVE catches and immediately shoves the note into.)

PERSEUS. You idiot! Do you realize what you've just done!

HAMMURABI. Steve was right, just because you tell me to do something don't mean I have to, and I'm not going to do your dirty work anymore. The Devil may have my soul, but I still have my own mind.

(Sirens go off and lights flash.)

STEVE. What was that?!

PERSEUS. Speak of the devil, and she shall appear. Gentleman, sounds like the lady of the house is back.

HAMMURABI. She's here! Oh God!

(Enter the DEVIL in a businesswoman suit. As she does this, HAMMURABI and STEVE move to one side while the remainder of the group huddles together against the back wall.)

DEVIL. Not quite. Perseus, let me ask you a question. You've worked here for a while yes? And in that time, I've always been in charge of these nether-worlds, correct? See that's what I thought. Now, I also remember putting you in charge of overseeing this little conspiracy of David, right? And on this sort of project traditionally the idea is to make their lives on Earth miserable right? Not to improve the quality? Okay so then I guess that brings me to my final question, *(At this she grabs PERSEUS by the ear:)* Why is it that while I'm on helping Pauly Shore *(Name may be changed at director's discretion.)* win an Oscar, when I notice that the quality of David's life just improved by leaps and bounds! *(Noticing STEVE:)* Oh Steve, welcome to Hell, I thought you'd be here much sooner than now, but better late than never I guess.

STEVE. You're the devil?

DEVIL. No I'm the Pope. Of course I'm the Devil you silly little phone salesmen.

STEVE. Telemarketer!

DEVIL. Like there's a difference.

MAGGIE ANN. *(Speaking up from the huddled group:)* Actually the title phone salesmen would imply that he sells phones, whereas a telemarketer—

(The DEVIL shoots her a look and JEFF clamps a hand over her mouth.)

DEVIL. Now, Perseus, please explain to me why these people are doing the exact opposite of what I instructed them to do?

PERSEUS. It wasn't my fault oh Dark One. It was Hammurabi and Steven. They rebelled!

DEVIL. You were supposed to be in charge of this assignment Perseus. You were supposed to be in charge of this very important assignment, and you let these two little meat puppets foul it up.

STEVE. Meat puppets?

DEVIL. It's a phrase. People use it.

STEVE. It wasn't Perseus' fault. He tried to make us do the assignment, but we refused.

DEVIL. Why?

STEVE. Because it's wrong to mess with someone's life like that!

DEVIL. So?

STEVE. Why do you do it anyway? Aren't there enough people in the world who are already at a point low enough so that you can get their souls?

DEVIL. Yeah but this way is really funny.

STEVE. For whom?

DEVIL. For me, of course.

STEVE. Who cares about you?

(At this the four in the back shoot their hands into the air.)

DEVIL. *(Noticing them:)* Perseus, get them out of here, and leave me alone with my little rebel rousers here.

(PERSEUS opens the door and motions that they all go, which they all do in a hurry. JEFF is the last one to go.)

JEFF. Good luck, you're going to need it.

(PERSEUS grabs him and yanks him through the door.)

DEVIL. Now, where were we? Oh yes, you were just telling me that it didn't matter what I thought?

STEVE. No, what I was saying is that life is not for your amusement!

HAMMURABI. Yeah man, and it just isn't right to mess with people like you've been having us do. Taking a person to their lowest point and then tricking them into signing over their souls.

STEVE. What's the matter? Don't have what it takes to trick someone who hasn't just lived through a tragedy?

DEVIL. Of course not! I have what it takes.

HAMMURABI. Prove it!

STEVE. Yeah, I'd be willing to bet our souls that you couldn't convince a regular person to sell you theirs.

DEVIL. I already have your souls.

STEVE. Okay, good point. But how's this? If you win, we go back to work for you, doing whatever you want to whomever you want. If you lose though, you have to forget about my brother's soul.

DEVIL. (*Thinking it over:*) Okay, it's a deal. But you know Steve, you'd really think you'd learn to stop betting souls.

STEVE. What?

DEVIL. Think back several years ago. You were still in school, on vacation in California. You were talking to a stranger in a barber-shop. Do you remember what was said?

STEVE. (*Thinking back:*) Not really.

DEVIL. You were talking about the new crystal cola.

STEVE. Oh yeah. We were talking about cola, and I said I'd wager my soul that this new crystal cola was going to be the next big thing and he said—. Wait a minute you've got to be kidding me! I'm here for that!

DEVIL. Hey don't get angry with me, I'm not the one going around betting his soul all willy nilly now am I? I mean I guess I can see how you'd be angry but what can I say, you seemed so sure, I figured I'd take you up on the bet. I knew you would eventually become a fairly good telemarketer, and I figured that job would teach you the kind of heartlessness you would need to be a great Hell-raiser. And when I realized David was your brother, I knew this was the perfect assignment for you.

STEVE. I'm not here for stealing my brother's fiancée, I'm here for betting on crystal cola? That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard!

HAMMURABI. Word, why would anyone think that crystal cola would be a hit?

STEVE. You're not helping!

DEVIL. It's no use getting angry now, what's done is done. I suggest you focus on your most recent foolish gambit.

STEVE. Okay, okay, you're right. Let's get this over with.

DEVIL. Perseus!

PERSEUS. (*Dashing in:*) Yes my liege?

DEVIL. The moron twins here have proven they are even dumber than they look, and have entered into a bet with me. Write down the terms of this for us, so there will be no confusion or hurt feelings later on when they lose.

PERSEUS. Yes my lord.

DEVIL. I the Devil, Queen of the Damned, must procure one soul of a mortal without the aid of my Hellraisers. If I am successful, then Steven Lynd and Hammurabi must return to work for me, doing whatever I deem worthy of their services. However, in the unlikely event that I lose, I shall consider the soul of David M. Lynd off limits. How does that sound?

HAMMURABI. Put a time limit on it. We don't want you spending the next few centuries wandering the earth.

STEVE. Hey that's smart.

HAMMURABI. I was the world's first lawyer after all.

DEVIL. It will hardly take me a few centuries, I could get dozens of people in a single day.

HAMMURABI. A day it is then.

STEVE. We'll give you until nightfall. How's that? Should be plenty of time if you're as good as you claim to be.

DEVIL. Agreed.

STEVE. Did you get that?

PERSEUS. Her Excellency has until nightfall to obtain one soul, if successful Steven Lynd and Hammurabi must follow and obey the orders of the evil one doing whatever tasks she sees fit. However, if

the devil should fail in the task of obtaining a soul before nightfall, Steven Lynd and Hammurabi shall be declared the winners and the soul of David M. Lynd will be declared off limits to the Devil. Is that it?

DEVIL. Fine with me.

STEVE. It's good with us too.

(Both parties sign the document.)

DEVIL. Well then I guess this is it then. Don't get too comfortable, this won't take long.

(She exits through the door labeled seven.)

HAMMURABI. Okay Steve, quick what are we going to do? There's no way she's going to lose this bet!

STEVE. Oh, she's going to lose.

PERSEUS. Pardon the expression Steven, but you haven't got a chance in hell of winning this bet.

STEVE. That's what you think.

PERSEUS. That's what I know.

STEVE. I guess that makes you obnoxious and stupid then doesn't it?

PERSEUS. You're calling me stupid? I'm not the one who lost his soul betting on the appeal of crystal cola now am I?

STEVE. Hey, they had a very strong marketing campaign! Besides, we're still going to win.

HAMMURABI. Do you know something we don't?

STEVE. I guess I just have a better memory is all.

(He picks up the random acts box.)

HAMMURABI. Steve you're a genius!

PERSEUS. You can't do that, it's cheating!

STEVE. It doesn't say anywhere in the contract that we can't do to her what's she's been doing to others.

HAMMURABI. So what should we have happen to her?

(As this goes, the pacing increases as the excitement does.)

STEVE. How about we have dogs chase her?

HAMMURABI. Yeah, and we have her lose just one shoe??!

STEVE. And then we could have someone ask her for money, and then throw up on her!

HAMMURABI. Oh that's good!

STEVE. How about we have her struck by lightning a few times?

HAMMURABI. Yeah! And when she's stumbling around in the street let's have her get hit by a truck!

PERSEUS. *(Getting caught up in it:)* Carrying rendered fat!

(They look at her.)

Sorry.

(He writes it down and stuffs it in the box.)

STEVE. And now for the final touch. An eclipse of the sun.

HAMMURABI. How's that going to help?

STEVE. Think about it? What happens during an eclipse?

HAMMURABI. The sun gets blocked...and night falls early.

PERSEUS. That's not fair Steven

STEVE. She won my soul on the appeal of crystal cola! Don't tell me about fair!

(He writes it down and stuffs it in. As he does this the door swings back open, and the DEVIL re-enters. Her hair stands straight up, dirt is on her face, a shoe is missing, something is spilled over her leg. She looks like Hell.)

DEVIL. That was low.

STEVE. What's the matter, you don't like it when people toy with your reality?

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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