

**PRAISE BE TO GORDON**

**by Paul Sharville**

© 1997 Paul Sharville

28 Moorfield Road  
Orpington  
Kent BR6 0HQ

## PRAISE BE TO GORDON

By Paul Sharville

### ACT ONE

### SCENE ONE

In the kitchen/dining room of a small flat. The home of GORDON KLEIN and LUCY TAYLOR.

GORDON is seated at the table, reading the morning paper. A TV is switched on. Large, broadsheet-size ads for heaven and hell are taped to a wall. They are marked in red pen. LUCY enters the room in the first of many flamboyant fashion outfits, eating toast. Her attention is drawn to the TV ad break, and she watches them with interest. (TV ads in italic):

*ANNOUNCER 1: This is Daisy Cartwright at the grand old age of 91. Not such a grand old life though as she spends her last few days slumped in an NHS wheelchair smothered in crocheted blankets and surrounded by cheap get well cards. But all is not lost, because Daisy chose heaven as her final resting place.*

*FX: Up-tempo naff 'swinging' music. We hear the sound of a tennis match going on, then a great cheer.*

*ANNOUNCER 1: Now Daisy is heaven's tennis champion. Well done Daisy!*

*FX: A car is travelling at high speed.*

*ANNOUNCER 1: This chap signed up just in time.*

*FX: There is a screech of brakes and the sound of a car crash.*

*ANNOUNCER 1: When you apply you'll receive your very own membership card which means there's no turning back and eternal bliss is guaranteed. Now that you have the choice, phone the Paradise Line on 0900 777 999, and reserve your place in heaven. Where good things really do last forever.*

There is a brief pause.

*FX: Very fast nightclub soundtrack. Two sexy sounding beautiful young things promote the joys of hell.*

*ANNOUNCER 2: Hell. It's cool!*

GIRL: *When I died, I was 76 and had varicose veins. Now I'm 18 again, with a body like Cindy Crawford, and the only things that go up to heaven are my legs.*

GORDON absently stops reading his paper and makes notes on a pad, shaking his head each time.

BOY: *And I was 68 and five foot one with a gammy leg. Now look at me. Six foot two, eyes of blue and, hey, they've given me an extra nine inches!*

GORDON: That's obscene!

LUCY is goggle-eyed and sporting a broad grin.

ANNOUNCER 2: *Hell. It's cool! Freefone Hades and apply for your card. And don't forget, we're the only afterlife who has a 'no quibble' guarantee.*

There is another brief pause.

ANNOUNCER 3: *(fast) Advertisements for heaven and hell are monitored by the independent advertising watchdog, OFFAD. Successful suicide attempts made in order to jump the queue will be penalised with a minimum mandatory period of fifty years in a rather dubious two star bed and breakfast in purgatory, before being admitted to your preferred afterlife home. In the unlikely event that you have led a completely balanced life, your soul may go up as well as down.*

LUCY kisses GORDON on the forehead, leaving a large lipstick mark.

LUCY: Morning gorgeous.

GORDON: Did you see that bloke?

LUCY: I did!

GORDON: You see, this is the problem. Breakfast TV. The day hasn't even started and we're getting pornography with our corn flakes.

LUCY: Gordon. Don't be such a Mary bloody Whitehouse. It's harmless fun. That was just an early morning pick-me-up.

GORDON: It was certainly that alright! I'm not a prude Lucy. It's just that, at OFFAD, this is just the sort of thing I have to keep an eye on in order to protect the public. It's my job. These heaven and hell campaigns are highly suspect, and the consequences of making the wrong choice don't even bear thinking about. I mean, surely people don't think hell is really like that do they? We all know it isn't.

LUCY: How do we know? No-one knows. Seems like one long party to me. It's obvious why the Devil's doing so well and no-one wants to go to heaven.

GORDON: That's my point. The Devil, Lucy. Satan. Satan doesn't run Club 18-30 holidays. He doesn't do 'summer fun in the sun'. His job is to roast you slowly over an eternal gas mark 6 and stab your bottom with a big sharp stick.

LUCY: Gordon. For a man who spends his life trying to improve the quality of advertising, you're so full of clichés.

GORDON: But it doesn't add up. Anyone can see that. Hell is hell, and going there does not give you a healthy tan, a full head of hair and a big willy.

LUCY: Well if it does, he's going to do a roaring trade in day trips. And anyway, part of his success is due to Heaven's campaign being complete crap.

LUCY points to one of the newspaper ads, advertising heaven, which shows a picture of a man and woman looking like a couple from a 1970s fashion catalogue.

LUCY: I mean, look at this. These two look like they died on their way to a Showaddywaddy concert.

GORDON: You've got a point.

LUCY: Try not to get so worked up.

GORDON: I can't help it. I'm worried.

LUCY: Worried? For who?

GORDON: For who? For everyone. For mankind.

LUCY: Gordon Klein protects mankind from Satan. God, you do take your job seriously.

GORDON: I do actually.

LUCY: You need to relax a little. Come to April's party tomorrow night.

GORDON is putting on a beige duffel coat and getting ready to leave.

GORDON: There'll be complaints to deal with. I'll probably be working late.

LUCY: Boring! You'll go to heaven you will. All platform shoes and 'Kum Ba Yah My Lord'. Ideal place for you.

GORDON: I don't wear platforms.

LUCY: No, but you sail close to the wind in that coat. In fact, with it open, you could sail anywhere you like.

GORDON: What's wrong with this coat? It's practical.

LUCY: So is a colostomy bag, but you wouldn't hang one from your belt and parade it down the high street, would you?

GORDON: I'll go to the party if I can, OK?

LUCY: You know, people still talk about your unconventional dance style. The 'awkward shuffle' as it's known locally.

GORDON: And what are your plans for today? The usual digest of daytime TV or are you going to try and be a little more productive with your excess of free time?

LUCY: What are you, my dad? Listen, by the time you get home I'll have learnt how to rag roll an old Welsh dresser and paint a maritime landscape with a palette knife. Not to mention an up-to-the-minute, in depth knowledge of life in suburban Australia and a deep understanding of what it's like to live with your mother's boyfriend in Alabama. Oh, and by five o'clock I'll have added several new words to my vocabulary like quinquagenary, verisimilitude and kagool.

GORDON: (smiling) What did I ever see in you?

LUCY: Likewise.

GORDON: Chalk and cheese.

LUCY: (kissing) Toothpaste and haemorrhoid cream.

## SCENE TWO

An office. A sign on the door reads 'OFFAD - THE INDEPENDENT ADVERTISING WATCHDOG'. A woman, ERICA BLACKER, sits at a very clear desk reading a paper. A nameplate on her desk reads 'DIRECTOR'. GORDON enters and sits at a very cluttered desk opposite ERICA.

GORDON: (surveying his desk and comparing it with ERICA's) Morning. Looks like another busy day.

ERICA: (without looking up) You're coping admirably.

GORDON: Thanks for the support.

ERICA: I used to have a desk like yours Gordon.

GORDON: Until I arrived.

ERICA: I've done my time. And to be fair, you don't see a lot of what I get up to behind the scenes. Take today for instance. Soon I've got to go all the way across town for a long-winded meeting about strategic policy. It's going to be a complete drag.

GORDON: This wouldn't revolve around lunch would it?

ERICA: Lunch is only part of it Gordon. There'll be meetings before and after.

GORDON: All sponsored by the Campaign for Heavy Drinking.

ERICA: Without such meetings, we wouldn't function. They are integral to the running of this organisation and its prominence as a well-respected professional body.

GORDON: Aren't they also integral to your manoeuvrings as a prospective MP?

ERICA: Don't knock networking Gordon. There's nothing amiss about shaking the right hands when you need to. And don't forget, the sooner I make my maiden speech in the House, the sooner you'll occupy this hallowed position. Then you can spend your time 'doing lunch' while some oik sorts out the day to day stuff.

GORDON: Great. So I'm an oik that copes admirably.

ERICA: Oh, yes, I can see it now. Erica Blacker MP. The woman who brought the Tories back home to victory!

GORDON: You're an optimist I'll give you that.

ERICA: But before all that. I need to powder my nose and make sure I'm in tip-top form. As a woman, one does so have to compete with these city suits and old boys. If one so much as looks like one's just pulled off a pair of rubber gloves, they'll eat one alive.

ERICA leaves the room. GORDON shakes his head and carries on working. His pen runs out. He starts rifling through his drawers and can't find another pen. He goes to ERICA's desk, hesitates, and then opens the top drawer. He pulls out a bundle of scorched letters and starts looking through them.

GORDON: *'It's a nightmare, make it stop'. 'Save our souls'. 'I've been conned. I asked to be with Jerry Hall. They've put me with Jerry Lewis'.*

We hear the sound of a distant toilet flushing. GORDON hurriedly shoves the letters back in the drawer and returns to his desk as ERICA returns.

GORDON: Did you see the ads this morning?

ERICA: (uninterested) Which ones?

GORDON: TV.

ERICA: Mmm.

GORDON: I expect the phone will start ringing soon.

ERICA: Ah yes. The whine-line. Don't know what all the fuss is about. It's a fair fight and God appears to be losing. May the best deity win.

GORDON: Something I've never asked. How do we investigate the legitimacy of these ads? Usually it's fairly straightforward, but cold calling at the gates of hell does seem a tad impractical.

ERICA: I have the means at my disposal, should the situation arise.

GORDON: Any chance of letting me in on the secret?

ERICA gets up and starts to put her coat on. Gordon looks at his watch in surprise.

ERICA: Strictly a 'need to know' basis.

GORDON: There's only you and I.

ERICA:                   And only I need to know. I'm off to this meeting. I'll leave you to deal with things.

ERICA leaves. GORDON returns to ERICA's desk. He removes the letters from the drawer, and then spots something else. He takes out a small key and places the letters back in the drawer. He goes to a safe in the corner of the room, hesitates, then tries the key in the lock. The door opens. Inside is a small ornate wooden box. GORDON removes the box from the safe and places it carefully on ERICA's desk. With the back of the box to the audience, GORDON very carefully opens it. He is suddenly bathed in light emanating from the box and he leaps back in surprise, shielding his eyes as the room is filled with loud celestial music; 'The Ride of the Valkyrie' meets 'Carmina Burana'. Suddenly, from nowhere, the box is slammed shut - by ERICA.

ERICA:                   What do you think you're doing?

GORDON:               Erica! I didn't expect you back.

ERICA:                   Obviously not.

GORDON:               I...er...I...I want to open an investigation into the hell campaign.

ERICA:                   Answer the question. What were you doing?

GORDON:               I found it by accident.

ERICA:                   By accident?

GORDON:               My pen ran out. I was looking for another one.

ERICA:                   Ah, so you accidentally stumbled across the room to where my desk is, you accidentally pulled my top drawer open and took out the key. You then stumbled accidentally over to the safe, removed the box, and - because your day has clearly been plagued with accidents - accidentally opened the box and looked inside?

GORDON:               It wasn't quite as accidental as all that, I'll grant you.

ERICA:                   Damn right it wasn't! You hold a position of trust here Gordon, and this amounts to gross misconduct. I leave the office in your capable hands, come back to collect something I've forgotten, only to discover that you've been rummaging through my drawers and looking at my personal things...

GORDON:               Yes, and in your drawers I found a whole bundle of letters.

ERICA:                   What letters?

GORDON:               (retrieving them from the drawer) These letters.

ERICA: (dismissive) Oh, those letters. A campaign doesn't necessarily warrant investigation simply because a few complaints are received. And anyway, that's not the point. You are still out of order.

GORDON: A few? There must be fifty in there. It's precisely what we're here for. To investigate complaints.

ERICA: While I'm director of OFFAD, we will not discriminate against advertisers. Satan has not broken any rules.

GORDON: We don't know that until we take a closer look. His breakfast time slot alone is certainly enough for me to open a file. And if you don't think it's a problem, why did you hide the letters in the first place?

ERICA: I didn't hide them. I was...filing them.

GORDON: Sensitive issue is it? This wouldn't have anything to do with the joys of networking would it? Maybe Satan gives generously to Central Office. Or has he just got to you? Has Erica Blacker, bastion of suburban values, protector of all things xenophobic, queen of the curtain twitchers, finally been nobbled by Old Nick?

ERICA: (stunned) How dare you speak to me like that. How dare you! Are you accusing me of putting my political career before my role as director of OFFAD?

GORDON: Don't sound so surprised. You're certainly not acting in the best interests of the people we're supposed to represent. We have a specific duty to investigate complaints about misleading advertisements. That's what we're here for. If not, then I may as well get my coat and leave now.

ERICA: That sounds like a good idea. You're fired.

GORDON: Fired? Fired?

ERICA: Fired!

GORDON: Right. Fine. But I'll appeal.

ERICA: No you won't. You're a loser Gordon. You're a small man, with a small life who, at best, will only ever be a mediocre administrator. You'll never be successful because you care too much about others and not enough about yourself. You're a typical product of the dreadful caring 90s. OFFAD is better off without your insignificant meddling in big affairs. From now on, I'll get myself an efficient assistant who follows my orders without question. So why don't you put your silly coat on and go home to bedsit land and your awful girlfriend and tomorrow morning you can start looking for another job.

GORDON stands there, stunned at ERICA's verbal onslaught. He grabs his duffel coat and storms out.

### SCENE THREE

GORDON and LUCY's flat. The lounge. Evening. LUCY is reading a book, 'How to Keep a Gorilla'. GORDON is ensconced in the OFFAD Code of Practice. Each is lost in their own train of thought.

LUCY: Do you know what your average adult pet gorilla has for its dinner.

GORDON: (absently) Mmm?

LUCY: Four eggs beaten up in four pints of milk, eight lettuces, 2lb of root vegetables, eight bananas, six oranges, 1lb of dates, 1lb of biscuits, a large jam sandwich, a bunch of grapes and a cucumber.

GORDON: (miles away) That's nice.

LUCY: I wouldn't fancy cleaning out that litter tray. I assume they use litter trays. Maybe not. I mean, I suppose they go where they want really. Once a gorilla's decided to settle down for a dump, you can't exactly pick him up and point his bum into a giant tray of gravel.

GORDON: Mmm?

LUCY: Gordon! Here I am trying to decide on a new pet, and you're not paying the slightest bit of attention.

GORDON: Sorry, I was miles away. What are you reading?

LUCY: 'How to Keep a Gorilla'. (showing him a page from the book) Look. Cute.

GORDON: Lovely back in the wilds of Borneo. Not too practical in a one-bedroom flat though.

LUCY: They're very loving creatures. And you can train them. Back in the 20s there were two gorillas called Hiawatha and Minihaha who could ride motorcycles. So you could have a pet that not only chases the postman down the path, but actually jumps on a bike and hassles him all the way back to the depot.

GORDON: Well let me know when he's arriving and I'll pack my things.

LUCY: (putting the book down) What's up Gordon? Did something happen at work today?

GORDON: I can't really talk about it.

LUCY: Gordon. Sweetheart. You can talk to me about anything. You know that. That's what I'm here for. For you. That's why we're a team. (Looking at her watch) But make it quick, eh, because Home and Away is on in five minutes.

GORDON: It's OK. Really. It's just something I've got to sort out.

LUCY: All work and no play.

GORDON: You're exciting enough for both of us.

LUCY: You haven't eaten that dinner I burnt for you.

GORDON: I don't feel like it. Sorry.

LUCY: Don't worry. You can make it up to me by eating some of my petrified pizza at the party tomorrow.

GORDON: Like I said. I'll go if I can. I've got this...thing to sort out. With Erica.

LUCY: Oh, her. Now there's a waste of a good skin. What's up with the Wicked Witch of West Byfleet this time?

GORDON: The usual. Her mind's not on the job. She's more interested in becoming the next prime minister.

LUCY: What a revolting thought.

GORDON: Isn't it? Lucy. If you were me...

LUCY: Ugh!

- GORDON: Please, be serious. Just for a moment.
- LUCY: (feigning attentiveness) OK. Sorry. Go on.
- GORDON: If you were me and you'd received some complaints about an ad campaign. But your boss seemed reluctant, even actively opposed, to launching an investigation, what would you do?
- LUCY: I'd go behind her back, launch my own enquiry, expose the wrongdoing and take all the credit, forcing her to resign over her obvious inactivity. I would then become the boss and she'd be collecting glasses at the local Conservative club.
- GORDON: Yeah, that's sort of what I was thinking of doing.
- LUCY: Right. Then do it! Get up on that white charger! Wield that mighty pen of authority! Close down that shameless corporate and do the right thing! You know me, I'm a woman of action!
- GORDON: Right. Can I borrow your sunglasses?
- LUCY: Oh wow! Now you're ahead of me! I forgot! The most important thing of all is to look cool while you're doing it!

#### SCENE FOUR

The OFFAD office. Night. The stage is black. A torch is switched on. GORDON stealthily enters the office. He is wearing his duffel coat and a pair of black gloves. He is also carrying a briefcase. He shines his torch around the room and then goes over and switches on ERICA's desk lamp.

He removes the letters and the safe key from ERICA's drawer and, once more, he takes the box from the safe, placing it on ERICA's desk. This time he puts on a pair of large pink sunglasses. Slowly he opens the box and again, the light bursts forth and music fills the air. GORDON tentatively reaches in and pulls out a large hourglass. The music stops and the lights diminish, although the box still emits an ethereal glow. The sand begins to run through. He reads some wording on the hourglass:

- GORDON: *'You have very little time.'* Great. Maybe this wasn't such a good idea.

GORDON looks inside the box. He pulls out a folded piece of cloth which has ancient symbols and footprints marked on it. He reads it aloud.

- GORDON: (reading the cloth) *Place on floor...place one foot...on no account place both feet...state destination and...hold tight.*

Feeling more confident, GORDON grabs his briefcase. He shoves the hourglass in the briefcase and puts the piece of material on the floor. He steps towards the mat, placing his left foot on one of the footprints and balancing on one leg.

GORDON:               Mediocre administrator eh? I'll show her - in triplicate. Hell!

There is a blinding flash and the stage goes black.

#### SCENE FIVE

GORDON is seated in a rollercoaster car. Before him are two large gothic looking doors - the entrance to hell. Seated next to GORDON is CHUCK, an ageing Teddy Boy, cool and aloof with an immaculate quiff. GORDON surveys the scene with complete surprise as CHUCK casually rolls a fag with one hand. There is a sign above the door which CHUCK is reading slowly.

CHUCK:                'The doors of hell are open night and day. Smooth is the descent and easy is the way.'

GORDON hasn't seen the sign and he automatically recounts the next two lines from memory.

GORDON:             'But to return and view the cheerful skies, in this the task and mighty labour lies.'

CHUCK:                Eh?

GORDON:             I take it that's some sort of password then?

CHUCK:                What?

GORDON:             Virgil's Aeneid. It's a poem. And you must be a demon guardian, here to escort me into the fiery pits of hell.

CHUCK:                No, I'm Chuck. And I've got a one way ticket to the biggest rock 'n' roll extravaganza of all time.

GORDON:             Sorry?

CHUCK:                Hell bound. Like I asked.

GORDON:             So, you're just a passenger then and not some diabolical demon chargehand here to ensure that I go straight to hell and do not pass Go and do not collect two hundred.

CHUCK:                What are you talking about pal? I told you, I'm Chuck. Ex fairground attendant. Wurlitzer for four years. Air rifles for two.

Dodgems for the last twenty six. In fact, that's where I died - on the old bumper cars.

GORDON: Really? So you're a real live dead person then?

CHUCK: Don't sound so high and mighty about it. We're all in the same rollercoaster now, me old son. Yep, one sunny bank holiday afternoon, there I was, hanging off the back of a Super Dodgem 300, sporting a particularly impressive quiff - as you can see - when the old Barnet Fair makes contact with the conducting rod and, before I know it, I'm toast! Completely melted me brothel creepers.

GORDON: But the poem. You knew it.

CHUCK: No. I read it off that sign up there. Now if I was in charge of this ride, I wouldn't have all that poncey stuff. That would just say 'please keep both arms inside the car' and 'those of a nervous disposition should bugger off now' - or something like that.

GORDON: Bit late now.

CHUCK: True. Mind you, I'm sort of glad I died, and this is a very fitting way for me to enter hell.

GORDON: Glad?

CHUCK: You have to understand. The nature of my demise would have been looked down upon by my fellow professionals. A Ted should never lose control of his dodgem. The shame within the waking world would have been too much to bear. I would have been shunned from the travelling community. My reduced status would have meant a twilight existence on the very fringes of fairground life.

GORDON: Sorry?

CHUCK: Writing numbers on the bottom of plastic ducks, or chief goldfish buyer.

There is a loud screeching siren.

CHUCK: Here we go!

The doors fly open and the car jolts forward. The lights go out. We experience a heart-stopping rollercoaster ride. There is much screaming and shouting as the high-speed ride spirals and loops the loop in the pitch black. Occasionally, we see CHUCK's lighter spark as he attempts to light his cigarette on the way down.

**SCENE SIX**

The rollercoaster car pulls into a beautiful oasis. GORDON is visibly shaken and the heat is intense. CHUCK's quiff is splayed out around his face and an unlit cigarette hangs from his open mouth. As the car jolts to a halt, CHUCK's fag spontaneously ignites.

CHUCK:                   (shaken) Good ride!

At first glance, hell is the eternal paradise that it claims to be: golden beaches, clear blue water, paradise music. But in the background, there is darkness. An eerie red glow attempts to permeate through the holiday facade.

GORDON climbs out of the car, leaving CHUCK smoking his fag, admiring the view. Beside the car is a sign on a pole which reads: 'Hell welcomes Gordon Klein'. GORDON looks around then sees, standing in the shadows, a very tall, dark figure - SATAN. SATAN moves into the light and towers over GORDON and CHUCK. GORDON is starting to sweat profusely.

SATAN:                    So, the hourglass has been used officially. That didn't take long.  
Welcome to hell.

CHUCK:                   Blimey. He's not exactly Billy Butlin is he?

GORDON:                 Er...hello. My name's...

SATAN:                   Gordon Klein.

GORDON:                 And I'm...

SATAN:                   From OFFAD. I know.

GORDON:                 You must be...

GORDON extends his hand and SATAN shakes it with a crushing vice-like grip. GORDON winces in pain and drops his briefcase.

GORDON:                 Jesus!

SATAN:                   No. Satan.

GORDON:                 That's what I was going to say.

SATAN:                   Follow me.

GORDON:                 Right.

GORDON picks up his briefcase and turns to CHUCK.

GORDON: Have a nice stay.

CHUCK: Don't you worry pal. I will. I'm going to look for Elvis. We can talk about the good old days. Before the rhinestones and the white flares. You take care son.

GORDON: Thanks.

GORDON is led into SATAN's office, an elaborate Gothic affair. SATAN sits down at a large desk. GORDON is forced to sit on a very small chair, which makes him look hunched and pathetic.

SATAN: So, OFFAD is on the trail of deception for the benefit of the little people. God's greedy creatures who just have to buy so much that we have to protect them from themselves.

GORDON: We move fast when we have to. And I'd like to sort this out as quickly as possible.

SATAN: (testily) I wouldn't want to stand in the way of the mighty OFFAD. Speak!

GORDON: I'm here to investigate some...complaints...about your campaign.

SATAN suddenly goes berserk. He leaps from his chair and rages around the room spitting his words out with venom. GORDON is completely frozen with fear. SATAN's rage is furious and intense.

SATAN: Complaints! Aah! No! Not complaints! Those bastards! Those spineless little bastards! (mockingly) 'I say dear, it's rather horrid down here, isn't it? Where's my Basildon Bond? I really must dash off a strong letter to those nice people at OFFAD. I'm sure they'll get us out of here. Even though we fucking well chose it in the first place! Maybe we'll even get all our money back and then we'll see if we can get something free, like a year's supply of some shit we don't really need. Then we can be really smug about how fucking stupid we've been!'

SATAN flies out of the office. GORDON remains frozen to the spot.

SATAN (off): You! Come here!

VOICE: (off): Yes?

There is a terrible bone-crunching ripping sound, followed by a blood-curdling scream. SATAN walks calmly back into the office and sits down. He is completely composed but smoulders, staring at GORDON intensely from under a dark brow.

SATAN: Sorry. Do go on.

GORDON nervously opens his briefcase and removes the letters.

GORDON: Er...yes. I have the letters with me. You have a right to see them.

SATAN: (taking the letters) How fair of you.

GORDON: We...I try to remain impartial.

As GORDON locks his briefcase, SATAN looks hard at the letters and they burst into flames.

GORDON: My letters!

SATAN: Sorry. The heat. They're probably hoaxes anyway. Someone trying to discredit me because I'm doing so well.

GORDON: I think they were genuine.

SATAN: Do you? That's not very impartial of you.

GORDON: I mean, I have to assume they are genuine.

SATAN: I see. It's going to be hard for you to be fair on this one isn't it Gordon? Me versus God. Evil versus good. It's going to be an uphill struggle for me to show that I'm not deceiving the public.

GORDON: If you're innocent, you have nothing to fear.

SATAN: Me? Innocent? I'm the Devil. Satan. Victim of one of the earliest recorded miscarriages of justice. What do you think? Do you think I'm just a victim Gordon?

GORDON: (uncomfortably) I'm not sure. You have a reasonably poor reputation back on earth.

SATAN: There. You see? You've already made your mind up. But you're wrong. I am innocent. I really am.

SATAN leans across the desk and stares GORDON out with a fixed smile upon his face.

GORDON: (unable to hold SATAN's gaze) Th...that's what I'm here to establish.

SATAN is virtually sprawled across the desk and inches from GORDON's face. His voice has changed to a wooing charm.

SATAN: And mankind has nothing to fear from me, young man.

GORDON: (looking back in the direction of the earlier violence) It doesn't?

SATAN: No. Your vision of hell is just the popular image that's been around for far too long as a result of God's only 'successful' advertising campaign.

GORDON: What's that?

SATAN: Religion.

GORDON: Oh. It doesn't seem too bad here.

SATAN: (getting quickly to his feet) Thank you.

GORDON: But something's not quite right.

SATAN: (blowing again, but slightly less so) Give me a chance! I've only just decided to change tack! Try to see hell as a new holiday resort. Some of the hotels aren't quite finished. Exposed wiring, that sort of thing. The reps aren't quite up to speed on the knobbly knees contests and you get the odd turd floating past as you sunbathe on your li-lo. But we're getting there. God's not the only one who can knock up paradise in seven days, you know. And even he had problems getting started. It's a little known fact that the first time he said 'let there be light', nothing happened! If I remember rightly, he was fiddling around for hours in some back room with a torch and a screwdriver. The trouble is you don't hear about his teething troubles in the Bible. No mention of the Duck Billed Platypus in that piece of marketing hype.

GORDON: I hadn't really thought of it like that.

SATAN: (sadly) No one ever does. Alright, I'll admit I got off to a bad start. But I was angry. I'd been thrown out of the celestial answer to Disneyland and made to spend an eternal wet Wednesday in Dymchurch.

GORDON: But the wars, the plagues, the famines? All the suffering you've caused.

SATAN: Sure, I threw the odd wobbly. I lost my rag a bit. But like I said. I was angry. All I'm trying to do now is get back on the straight and narrow. Hell really is the only place to spend all eternity. If you don't believe me, ask Katie.

GORDON: Katie?

SATAN backs out discreetly and a girl enters the room to seductive musical accompaniment. KATIE is a stunning beauty wearing a pink duffel coat.

KATIE: Hi Gordon.

GORDON: Hello.

KATIE: I'm Katie. Mmm. Where did you get that coat? Why, it's just like mine. Except... I'm not wearing anything underneath.

GORDON: (shakily) Really? Well, it does get very hot down here.

KATIE: Would you like to undo these...toggles?

GORDON: Er...I, It's really an official visit.

KATIE: (undoing the coat) Relax. Don't be shy. I'm not.

And with that she holds open the duffel coat and gives GORDON an eyeful of naked body.

GORDON: Superb! Whoa! But I already have a girlfriend.

KATIE: I don't want to be your girlfriend, silly. Don't you find me attractive?

GORDON: No, you're very beautiful.

KATIE: Am I the right size? Say when.

Her breasts start to increase in size.

GORDON: I'm really not that kind of... perfect! I mean, when!

KATIE moves in close to GORDON and places her arms around his neck. She gently pushes him to the floor and sits astride him, her coat open and hanging off her shoulders.

GORDON: Oo-er!

KATIE: I'll still respect you in the morning.

Suddenly, SATAN comes back into the room and claps his hands sharply.

KATIE: (whispering, frightened) Please help us Gordon. We've made a terrible mistake!

KATIE runs off into the shadows.

SATAN: So you see, Gordon. Anything you want you can have.

GORDON: (getting up) But she...

SATAN: (leading GORDON back to the rollercoaster) ... is a member of one big happy family. And you can be a part of that. You too have a choice. Now, you must excuse me. I have a resort to finish.

At the car, SATAN extends his hand. GORDON hesitantly shakes it. This time, the handshake is gentle.

SATAN: Goodbye Gordon.

GORDON: We'll... be in touch.

SATAN: Just give me a chance to get things right.

The car jolts forward and trundles off. As GORDON leaves hell, he hears another scream, this time a female. He checks the hourglass and jumps from the car, which continues on its way. Then, slowly, hell is transformed into a pockmarked landscape of glowing red holes and fissures. Demonic music and the sound of wailing fills the air. More screams, followed by a distant, but familiar voice.

CHUCK (off): Elvis! Where are you? Where are you? It's a bit bloody dark down here all of a sudden!

GORDON looks around as the scene changes. He tries to keep his footing and edges down towards a fast flowing river.

CHARON (off): Ere. You're not dead. How did you get down here?

GORDON peers into the gloom. A hooded, robed figure emerges. CHARON the Boatman, ominous looking but chatty, stands beside the river. A boat is moored nearby.

GORDON: I came down on the rollercoaster. Official visit.

CHARON: Official visit? I wondered why it was looking like Camber Sands round here this morning.

GORDON: So this is the real hell then?

CHARON: Your actual pit of suffering, yes.

GORDON: And you must be the Boatman.

CHARON: Correct again. Charon's the name, punting's the game. Oh, and that's C H, not S H, in case you were wondering. The Stygian Ferryman. Guardian of the river that surrounds hell. I prefer

Tyrone, but Christian names aren't allowed down here. Which is a funny thing, 'cos if you take the first A out of Satan, he's called Stan. Doesn't sound so scary being condemned to spend eternity in a place run by a bloke called Stan, does it?

GORDON: No.

CHARON: I do worry about the name Charon though, when you consider that I'm supposed to strike fear into the cold hearts of sinners bound for hell. Having said that, with new arrivals I do play the silent and ominous card well. Just pointing and that. If you saw me at my work you wouldn't recognise me. Scare myself sometimes.

GORDON: How did you know I wasn't dead?

CHARON: Oh I can tell. When you've been doing this job as long as I have, you can spot a live one a mile off.

GORDON: How long have you been doing this?

CHARON: About two thousand years. It's a small family business. My old dad did it before me. He could spot a live one and all. 'Son,' he'd say, 'see that bloke over there? Warm blood still runs through his veins. We've got trouble on our hands.' 'Heartbeat equals hassle' he used to say.

GORDON: I shouldn't think you get many live ones down here, do you?

CHARON: You'd be surprised. We've had a few. Dante. Orpheus. Perseus. We had terrible trouble with Perseus. He stabbed my uncle with a spear. Lug. He popped in. And a few Vikings. And now we've got?

GORDON: Gordon.

CHARON: (disappointed) Gordon? Well, it won't sound so good in the annals of mythology, but Gordon it is. Usually looking for a bird, they are. And they always give us boatmen gyp. Are you going to give me gyp?

GORDON: I was just leaving actually. I've seen enough.

CHARON: You wouldn't even have got in if I was still in charge of arrivals. These days they all come in on that metal monstrosity up there. There was a time when people could enjoy a pleasant river crossing before being subjected to pain and suffering. Now they

arrive on the bloody 'looping star' and they're all stressed out. It's not fair.

GORDON: So things haven't really changed around here then?

CHARON: Changed? Changed? What do you think this is? Alton bloody Towers?

GORDON: I was beginning to wonder.

A phone rings from inside CHARON's robes.

CHARON: 'Scuse me.

CHARON pulls out a phone, the cord of which disappears into his robes, implying that the rest of the phone is in there somewhere.

CHARON: Hello, Charon here. Yes... yes... OK. Yes... Bye.

CHARON turns to GORDON.

CHARON: You'd better watch out. He's on his way down.

GORDON: Who?

CHARON: Stan.

There is a loud roar and SATAN appears, raging. CHARON makes himself busy.

SATAN: You were asked to leave! Not many people get the opportunity!

SATAN strikes GORDON, knocking him to the floor. GORDON is shaken but manages to get to his feet.

SATAN: I've come up against some adversaries in my time, but you really take the biscuit as the most pathetic loser whose ever crossed me. Can you even begin to imagine the power I possess?

GORDON: Under the Control of Misleading Advertisements Regulations 1988, amended by the Broadcasting Act 1990, I must inform you...

SATAN begins to laugh mockingly.

GORDON: I must inform you that you are advertising illegally under section 23A of the OFFAD Code of Advertising Standards and Practices.

SATAN: Don't waste your breath! You're here without authority and you know it.

GORDON: I'm on official OFFAD business.

SATAN: (grabbing GORDON by his coat) Liar! Don't try to deceive me. I saw this one coming a mile off.

GORDON: You must give people a chance to reconsider.

SATAN: (throwing GORDON to the floor again) And please, please don't ever try to appeal to my better nature. You really are a total amateur aren't you? I've won this campaign. There's nothing you can do. Nothing! The advertising is irrelevant. Go back and file your report. It doesn't matter. Ban my ads. I don't care. Membership cards have been issued to millions of unsuspecting fools, binding them to me. Once you get a card there's no turning back. You've sold your soul to the Devil. And believe me, I'm very good at collecting my debts. Soon hell will swell with the souls of the damned. And then the party really starts. Oh yes. Yes. But you shouldn't worry too much Gordon, because they'll all get to heaven eventually.

GORDON: What?

SATAN: They'll march there under my banner, as the Army of Eternal Night ascends on Paradise, tears down those Pearly Gates and rules supreme. And God? I have special plans for God.

GORDON: Then I'll instruct people to destroy their cards.

SATAN: You are clutching at straws Gordon. They are made here and they can only be unmade here. You can't destroy them on earth. They are a product of the underworld. Specially produced here in hell. You could melt them here, but like all good plans, that would be academic by then. Because, once you're in, you ain't going nowhere! And incidentally, each one produces more CFCs than a Chinese fridge factory because I wanted to do that extra bit of damage to God's precious little planet along the way.

GORDON: What about your 'no quibble' guarantee?

SATAN: True. That is in the ads. What it means is, if you quibble I guarantee to kick the shit out of you!

SATAN kneels GORDON in the groin.

GORDON: (high pitched) You're mad!

SATAN: There you go again. Don't pin your pathetic earthly badges on me. But then that's humans for you. Always need a point of reference for everything, or it just gets too damn scary.

GORDON: I have to leave. There's nothing more to discuss.

SATAN: Did I allude to releasing you?

GORDON: That's what I inferred.

SATAN: Oh, that's what you inferred, is it? Yes, I'm going to let you go. You're an unimportant little toss-pot, armed with a 'Briefcase of False Bravery' and a 'Duffel Coat of Geekiness' - and the adventure is over for you, our brave little bureaucrat. But you do need to be taught a lesson. What I've got planned for you will hurt you much more and give me much more enjoyment.

GORDON: Threats will go in my report.

SATAN: (flares up) Don't push it!

Again, SATAN strikes GORDON, this time knocking him out cold.

SATAN: Get him out of here.

CHARON: Right.

As CHARON drags GORDON's body to the boat, SATAN claps his hands and summons the FIVE HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE.

SATAN: Assemble the Five Horsemen!

The Five Horsemen, WAR, HUNGER, CIVIL STRIFE, DEATH and STOMACH UPSET appear from the darkness. They are completely cloaked in black, but have their initials on the front and back of their robes - W, H, CS, D and SU. They walk in single file towards SATAN. They are also distinct by their different shapes and sizes.

WAR has an array of large weapons slung from his waist. HUNGER has the remains of a recent breakfast down his front. CIVIL STRIFE wears a London Transport bus ticket machine and an LT money bag. DEATH wears only the sinister black robes. STOMACH UPSET has a toilet chain complete with handle acting as a belt.

They form a line in front of SATAN, with the exception of DEATH, who stands away from the group. They all jostle irritably for the best position, pushing and shoving each other.

SATAN: Settle down, my loyal servants.

Each of the Horsemen nods respectfully as names are called.

SATAN: War. Hunger.

SATAN reaches CIVIL STRIFE.

SATAN: Which one are you again?

CIVIL STRIFE: Civil Strife, Lord.

SATAN: Yes. And what is that exactly?

CIVIL STRIFE: (stepping forward) Civil Strife? Well, it can cover a multitude of sins really, Lord. Anything from all-out rioting and looting to the buses not running on time.

SATAN: Right. Get back in line.

CIVIL STRIFE: (bowing and moving back) Yes Lord.

WAR: (to himself) But these days, mainly just trouble on the buses.

The others, except DEATH, snigger. As CIVIL STRIFE tries to step back into the group, the other Horsemen, with the exception of DEATH, have closed ranks, and CIVIL STRIFE has to elbow and jostle his way back into place.

SATAN: And Death.

DEATH bows his head respectfully.

SATAN: How's the new trainee coming along? Stomach Upset.

STOMACH UPSET: (nervously) Not too bad, thank you Lord. I had a bit of trouble getting started, but now I've got an evil wind behind me and I'm ready to get stuck in up to my elbows.

SATAN: Good. Good. I have a task for you all. A little bit of fun.

Long, manic, satanic laughter.

**END OF ACT ONE**

## ACT TWO

### SCENE ONE

Heaven. GORDON arrives through a white mist into a beautiful celestial scene. It is quiet. It is peaceful. GOD appears. He has long white hair, a beard, and wears a white robe with brown sandals. He is blowing the mist away with a pair of white bellows. Behind him is a throne, with two smaller seats, one either side.

GORDON is looking down at himself. He is no longer dishevelled and bruised, but clean and healthy looking.

GOD: Ah, you must be Gordon. Sorry about the clouds and the mist. Feature of the place I'm afraid. I try to keep it down with this, but I don't have much luck.

GORDON looks up into the face of GOD. He is transfixed.

GOD: (slightly embarrassed) What?

GORDON: Are you...God?

GOD: (kindly) Yes, Gordon, I am. You've had a busy morning. Hell and back, I understand. I take it you used the hourglass and the mat to get here?

GORDON: Er...yes. Yes I did.

GOD: (showing off his clothing) What do you think of the outfit? I thought this was how you would expect me to be.

GORDON: Looks great. Why, is there a choice?

GOD: (sitting down on his throne) Of course. One of the great things about being God is that you really can be all things to all men. And women. Come to think of it, any living thing. For instance, if you were a pig, I could probably arrange to be an impressive looking boar.

GORDON: Right. Er...I'm here about your advertising.

GOD: (sitting down) Of course. Have a seat.

GORDON goes to sit down in the right hand chair.

GOD: No. Sorry, not there. You sit over here on my left hand. In the guest chair.

GORDON sits down at GOD's left hand.

GORDON: So, people really do get to be seated beside you?

GOD: Oh yes. I'm always available. Mind you, we have to have a kind of rota system to make sure they all get a go. I shouldn't say this, but even when they're dead, you can still tell where they came from. The French always push in. Usually, in front of the British, who queue for everything. The British never complain, so the French carry on. The Germans always get here early. I've even come down in the morning and found a towel laid out on it. But, the Americans are the most baffling. They have to accessorise everything. Apart from my throne, these are the most comfortable seats in creation. But an American will make it just that bit more comfy. They arrive with inflatable neck pillows, footstools and little hand-operated fans. Incredible. Anyway, let's get down to business. What's the problem? I've been very careful with my advertising. Nothing deceitful.

GORDON: Well that's why I'm here really. The ads aren't working are they?

GOD: I suppose not. We've had a good response from the churches. Several block bookings from them.

GORDON: It seems a bit quiet here though.

GOD: It's always peaceful. But, you're right. Things have slowed up a bit recently. Well, more than a bit.

GORDON: Satan is doing very well. Hell is filling up with innocent souls.

GOD: They have been beguiled by his false promises. He lies. I can't do that. Advertising is a deceptive art form. His forte.

GORDON: But it feels really good here. Why can't you get that across in your campaign?

GOD: I can't. You can't describe eternal peace and deep, deep happiness on the television or in a newspaper.

GORDON: These big agency's are good. They'd kill for a blue-chip client like you.

GOD: Why should I? Frankly, I'm disappointed at the fickle nature of the public. They've done alright by me. I've got a good track record. I would have expected a bit more loyalty from them.

GORDON: Like you say, they're fickle. And they're mesmerised by imagery. Show them the right images and fill they're heads with a cool soundtrack and they'll buy anything. Advertising is a freelance Pied Piper who works for anyone. The bigger the client, the sweeter the tune. It doesn't matter if a pair of trainers is made in Mexico by a worker who gets sixty cents a day. Hit 'em hard with the right image and they'll be queuing up to buy them.

GOD: And so why do I want a Pied Piper playing a dishonest tune for me?

GORDON: Normally, I would agree. But you've got to do something to save humanity!

GOD: I thought I'd already done that.

GORDON: But if Satan's plans are anything to go by, soon you may even have to save yourself. He's only succeeding by appealing to people's basic desire for enjoyment and rejuvenation. That's the simple essence of his campaign. You've got to play him at his own game. But you don't have to lie. You just have to tap into people. Say the right words. Your own words if you want. Not those of an advertising agency.

GOD: Is Satan using an agency?

GORDON: I don't know. Probably. His minions have probably done lunch with some yuppie... Wait a minute. Of course! Erica Blacker. The Servant of Satan from Surrey!

GOD: Sorry?

GORDON: No, Surrey. Sorry. No, nothing. Listen, I have an idea. Why not visit earth? Get a feel for the place. See what people want.

GOD: Go back? I didn't have any immediate plans to return at the moment.

GORDON: A fact-finding tour, that's all. It's changed.

GOD: I can see that.

GORDON: You needn't stop long. I'll show you around.

GOD: But how will that help me?

GORDON: It's your USP.

GOD: My what?

GORDON: Your USP. Your Unique Selling Point.

GOD: No. I'm still not with you.

GORDON: You can go to earth. You can meet the punters. Eyeball your customers.

GOD: Punters? Eyeballs? You're putting me off with these words Gordon.

GORDON: Sorry. I'll calm down. Out of the two of you, only you can go to earth. Satan can't. He has to rely solely on his adverts. Although, he's got help down there. But you can do a whistle stop tour of your old stomping ground and, believe me Lord, when people meet you, they'll be hooked. You're your own best advert. You can kiss babies. Shake hands. All that sort of stuff. You'll knock 'em dead!

GOD: I wouldn't want to do that. Knock them dead.

GORDON: It's a figure of speech. It means they'll love you. And I know who's behind the hell ads on earth. My boss, Erica Blacker. And that's where I come in. I can sort her out. Get the hell ads off the air, leaving you with a clean run. Who needs advertising?

GOD: (fired up) Now that's what I like to hear. I'll do it!

In his excitement, GOD lets off a thunderbolt from his finger.

GOD: Oops. Sorry.

GORDON: That's the sort of thing that'll really impress them.

GOD: (gleefully pointing at GORDON) Do you think so?

GORDON: (ducking) Definitely.

GOD: (keen) Right, when and where do you want me? I'll need to get a few things together. An overnight bag. Get out of this gear.

GORDON: Yeah. Something more appropriate might be better. Don't get me wrong. You look great. But down there you could get mistaken for a complete loony.

GOD: I understand completely. You can trust me to attire myself with some apparel more appropriate to the modern age.

GORDON: (taking a notebook and pen from his briefcase) What day is it today? I've completely lost track of time.

GOD: Er... Friday.

GORDON: Any idea what time?

GOD goes to the back of the stage and looks down on earth.

GOD: I'd say it's about three PM...ish, where you live.

GORDON: Great. Erica will have left for the weekend. That means I can get back to the office and put the hourglass back. I suggest we meet at my flat, say about eight. Lucy will have left for the party by then. The party! Yeah, that'll be good. I'll take you to a party. I'll give you my address. Try not to get there early though or you risk disturbing Lucy during daytime TV and I wouldn't wish that on anyone.

He tries to get the pen to work, but can't. GOD pulls out an elaborate white fountain pen and hands it to GORDON.

GOD: Here, borrow mine.

GORDON: Thanks.

He scribbles on the pad, tears off the page, hands it to GOD and absently pockets the pen.

## SCENE TWO

GORDON and LUCY's flat. The lounge. LUCY is seated on the edge of the sofa with her feet on a pouffe. She is in the frightening state known as 'mid make-up'. Her face is covered in a pale face pack, her hair is a mixture of curlers and those twisty sponge things that make her look like Medusa. She has sponge separators between her toes (the toe nails of which have just been painted) and she is painting her finger nails. She is completely absorbed in the popular daytime TV quiz show 'Laughter Lines' hosted by Lenny Bendit. Once again, the TV faces away from the audience, but the programme can be clearly heard (TV programme in italics):

*FX: Quiz show theme tune. Fading applause*

*LENNY: Welcome back to Laughter Lines with me, Lenny Bendit. The show where gags are our currency and punchlines mean pounds. Next up we have George Warren from Eltham and Elsie Spanner from Pinner.*

*FX: Applause.*

*LENNY: Welcome George. Welcome Elsie. George, you're first to pick a category from the board. The grid is showing the following tittering topics: Loopy Limericks, German Humour (tricky), My Mother-in-Law, Religious Rib Ticklers, Cruel But Fair, or Doctor Doctor.*

*GEORGE: Doctor Doctor please, Lenny.*

*LENNY: Nice easy one to start with. A man goes into his doctor and says 'Doctor doctor. I've just been told I've got three minutes to live. Is there anything you can do for me?' And the Doctor says...*

*LUCY: I could boil you an egg.*

*FX: Buzz.*

*LENNY: George.*

*GEORGE: I could boil you an egg.*

*LENNY: I could boil you an egg! 10 points.*

*FX: Applause.*

*LUCY: Yes!*

*LENNY: George. Pick a category.*

*GEORGE: Religious Rib Ticklers.*

Four of the Five Horsemen enter: WAR, FAMINE, CIVIL STRIFE and STOMACH UPSET. They hang around Lucy's front door and shamble about, not sure exactly what to do now they're here.

*LENNY: OK. Two nuns driving down a country lane, when a vampire lands on the bonnet of their car. One nun shouts to the other: 'Quick, Sister Margaret, show him your cross.' What does Sister Margaret do?*

*LUCY: She shouts: 'Oi, Dracula! Off the car, now!'*

*FX: Buzz.*

*LENNY: George.*

*GEORGE: Shouts: 'Oi, Dracula! Off the car, now!'*

*FX: Laughter.*

LUCY: Yo, Lucy!

Eventually, the Horsemen encourage WAR to knock. There is a loud, slow bang at the door. LUCY completely ignores it.

LENNY: *Well done George. 10 points. Pick a category.*

GEORGE: *Cruel But Fair.*

LENNY: *OK. Here we go. What did the dyslexic devil worshipper do?*

LUCY: He sold his soul to Santa!

*FX: Buzz.*

LENNY: *George.*

GEORGE: *Sold his soul to Santa?*

*FX: Laughter.*

LENNY: *Is correct. Well done, George.*

*FX: Applause.*

LENNY: *10 points. George, you lead by 30 points. Elsie, you've yet to bring the house down. Pick a category, George.*

The door bangs again.

LUCY: Go away!

GEORGE: *Loopy Limericks please, Lenny.*

LENNY: *I want the last line of this Limerick:  
There was a young girl from Devizes,  
Who had breasts of differing sizes.  
The left one was small,  
And did nothing at all...*

LUCY: And the right one was huge and won prizes!

*FX: Buzz.*

LENNY: *Elsie.*

ELSIE: *And the right one was huge and won prizes!*

*FX: Laughter.*

*Lenny:* Nice one, Elsie. You've broken into the comedy circuit. 10 points.

*FX:* Applause.

The door bangs again. This time even louder.

*Lucy:* (jumping up angrily from her seat) Right!

She stomps angrily over to the TV and switches it off. Suddenly the door bursts open and the Horsemen all try and enter at once, thus getting stuck in the door. The smallest of the Horsemen, STOMACH UPSET, comes through first, takes one look at LUCY, screams, raises one leg, and lets out an enormous fart before trying to scramble past the others in the doorway. They push him back in and follow in behind.

*Lucy:* Whoever you are, you'd better have a bloody good excuse for barging into my flat and, worst of all, interrupting my favourite programme – Laughter Lines.

*Famine:* What?

*Lucy:* Laughter Lines!

*Famine:* Oh, I like that.

The others look at him with complete disdain.

*Famine:* Sorry.

*Civil Strife:* Our apologies for the intrusion, but we're on a mission. And nothing stands in the way of the Five Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

*Lucy:* Who did you say you were?

WAR, tired of the apologies and the small talk, steps forward and adopts a broad, legs apart, hands on hips, stance.

*War:* Do we not turn your heart cold with fear, soft woman? For we should. As he said, we are the Five Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

*Lucy:* The Five Horsemen of the Apocalypse?

*Stomach Upset:* That's right. There's us four, and Death, who's downstairs trying to park the Hellfire Chariot.

*War:* Yes, we are the Five. I am War, and I command this group and speak for them.

CIVIL STRIFE:      Here. Hold on a minute. Death's in charge and you know it.

WAR: (irritably) Yes, alright! I was going to say that next! I was going to say, in the absence of Death, who is actually our leader... Anyway, as I was saying. I am War. And these are my fellow harbingers of doom. Civil Strife. Hunger. And our new recruit, Stomach Upset.

STOMACH UPSET: (proudly) I'm in training.

HUNGER: Actually. If we're stopping I don't suppose I could make myself a peanut butter sandwich could I?

HUNGER heads for the kitchen, but the others pull him back into line.

LUCY: You stay right where you are!

WAR: (moving forward) You are Lucy Taylor and you are one of the many millions of souls who have signed up for the joys of hell as your chosen afterlife.

LUCY: That's as maybe. But I'm not bloody going yet.

WAR: Well, I'm afraid that's where you're wrong. We're here to administrate your early departure. The Lord Satan requests the pleasure of your company.

LUCY: (adopting a freestyle Karate stance) Give it your best shot.

WAR: (swaggering forward) Oh, I see. A right little Boadicea. So the little lady wants to play cat and mouse, does she? (glancing back) This won't take long lads.

As WAR moves in on LUCY, she despatches him with a series of karate manoeuvres that leave him writhing around on the floor.

LUCY: Next.

The other three Horsemen huddle together. STOMACH UPSET lets out another long, loud fart.

CIVIL STRIFE: Why don't you just come quietly love? There's no need for all this violence. We're not used to this kind of 'in your face' aggression. We normally just sweep quietly through large areas unnoticed, leaving death and destruction in our wake.

HUNGER: One to ones aren't really our bag.

LUCY: You're the ones who broke into my flat. As long as you're trespassing on my property, rent arrears or no rent arrears, I'm going to defend myself. Hang on, is that what this is about? Some sort of council SWAT team, sent to deal out swift justice to tenants who have got a little behind with their payments.

HUNGER: Like he said, we really are the Five Horsemen of the Apocalypse and we've been ordered to bring you in.

STOMACH UPSET: And we'll get in terrible trouble if we go back empty handed.

CIVIL STRIFE: And anyway, if we don't do it, then Death will come up and he doesn't hang around.

DEATH comes quickly through the front door.

HUNGER: Talk of the Devil.

He swiftly descends on LUCY. She attempts to defend herself but she is no match for his unearthly strength. Death efficiently clasps her by the heart. Slowly, LUCY falls to the floor, as the life fades from her. There is silence as Death stands in triumph, trance like, over the body. The others look uneasily around the room, scratching their heads and fiddling.

CIVIL STRIFE: That's precisely what we were about to do.

HUNGER: Yep. You just pipped us at the post there Death.

STOMACH UPSET: We were just finalising tactics before you came in.

WAR: (getting up off the floor) Another couple of minutes and you'd have been surplus to requirements.

DEATH looks up slowly and then turns to the other Horsemen.

DEATH: (irritated) Does it always come down to me in the end?

CIVIL STRIFE: I suppose it does really.

HUNGER: But we lulled her into a false sense of security.

WAR: Yeah, we softened her up for you.

STOMACH UPSET: That's what we do, isn't it? Pave the way. That's what's in my job description.

DEATH: Well this time, we've all got to take part.

Groans from the Horsemen.

CIVIL STRIFE: She's dead though!

DEATH: We have our orders. You know it's different when we take one before it's due. We don't want to have to come back and do it all again. Now gather round.

HUNGER: I'll put the kettle on and rustle something up...

DEATH: I said gather round! All of you!

More groans. The Horsemen form a circle around LUCY's body. The lights dim and she is bathed in an eerie green light. The Horsemen move slowly around her in the dim light. Sombre, demonic music fills the air.

Outside the front door, GOD appears. He is wearing a pair of open-toed sandals, white flared trousers, a zig-zag tank top and wing collar shirt. His hair is tied back and he is sporting a pair of 'Elvis style' chrome sunglasses. He stands at the front door checking the door number against a piece of paper. Inside the ritual continues.

GOD looks at his watch, then thinks for a moment as if deciding what to do. Eventually, he knocks at the door. GOD waits for a little while, oblivious to what's going on inside. He checks his watch again. Then he decides to sit down outside the front door and wait.

Back inside, the Horsemen are concluding their ritual.

DEATH: Ignore it. I shall begin the final countdown. Five.

They continue to encircle the body of LUCY.

CIVIL STRIFE: Four.

Outside, GOD sits in silence. Inside, STOMACH UPSET stumbles into a table. GOD turns his head sharply towards the door. Something is wrong.

STOMACH UPSET: Sorry about that. I can't see a bloody thing in this hood.

WAR: You get used to it. Three.

GOD approaches the front door and knocks again, this time more urgently. The Horsemen reform in a circle. GOD bends down and peers through the letterbox.

HUNGER: Two.

GOD: No. Lucy!

The front door flies open and GOD stands in the doorway. His voice booms above the noise.

GOD: Stop!

The music and lights cease instantly. The Horsemen wheel round to face GOD. All of them, except DEATH, recoil in fear as GOD enters the room.

GOD: Stop what you are doing. I command you!

DEATH: (standing his ground) Stomach Upset. Complete the countdown.

STOMACH UPSET remains frozen.

DEATH: Say it!

GOD: Go no further with your meddling or you shall pay dearly.

DEATH: I said 'say it' you useless heap of shit!

STOMACH UPSET gets slowly to his feet, trembling. His only contribution - a long loud fart.

GOD: This is my domain. You are not welcome here.

DEATH: I do not fear you.

GOD: Leave the girl and go.

DEATH: We shall not.

CIVIL STRIFE: No, we don't mind going.

The others agree enthusiastically.

DEATH: Stay where you are!

GOD: Leave now or you will know my wrath. Leave!

Death stays put but the others cower and flee.

GOD: Death. I see you have moved from your neutral path for the first time and have a master who has given you false courage and ideas above your station. You are a fool.

DEATH: I do his bidding now. You have no authority over me.

GOD: Maybe so. But I shall fight you if necessary.

DEATH: (triumphantly) So you admit it? You can no longer control me. I have made the right decision. My lieutenantship under the new order is assured. You have lost. And what is more, Satan's new found success has made you weak!

With that he lunges at GOD, attempting to seize his heart in the same way he efficiently despatched LUCY. But GOD moves quicker, extending his arm to ward off DEATH. DEATH is immediately thrown violently back, crashing into the furniture. GOD drives home his attack, never actually touching DEATH but using a kind of kinetic energy to throw him around the room like a rag doll. Eventually, GOD draws DEATH across the floor towards the door. He raises him up to his feet, where he hangs, breathless and groaning, twisted in front of the door.

GOD: Did I say I was weak? Has he filled you with so much arrogance that you would even dare face me in conflict? I could decimate you with one crush. Crawl back to your dark master. And hope that you never have to face me again!

With one final burst of energy, DEATH is propelled violently through the front door, emitting a last, loud painful scream of defeat. GOD gets his breath back, then remembers LUCY.

GOD: Lucy!

He rushes over to her. He sits down beside her and cradles her in his arms, speaking softly to her.

GOD: It's a good job I got here early. Come my child. Come back. Come back and join us.

There is no response.

GOD: Lucy. Come back.

She starts to stir. But her eyes remain closed.

LUCY: Alexander Graham Bell. The Great Wall of China. I know the answers, but they won't let me talk.

GOD: That's OK. Leave them to me. Come home.

LUCY: Specialist subject, The Krankies. But I don't want to go in the sound proof booth with Derek Batey.

GOD: You don't have to. I'm with you now. Come on. Come back.

LUCY: OK then, but I won't leave empty-handed. I want my BFH. My Bus Fare Home.

GOD: That's fine.

Still asleep, but now back in the land of the living, LUCY puts her arms around GOD's neck and sits up.

GOD: Welcome back Lucy.

GOD picks the sleeping LUCY up and lays her gently on the sofa.

GOD: Sleep now.

GOD makes his way out of the flat, quietly closing the front door. As he does so GORDON returns home. GOD is caught off guard.

GOD: Ah, Gordon.

GORDON: (fishing for his keys) You made it then. You're a bit early.

GOD: (panicking slightly and standing in front of the door) Yes. Quite. Er...nice place.

GORDON: You haven't seen it yet.

GOD: Um...er...front doors are a dead giveaway.

GORDON goes to open his front door. GOD blocks his way.

GOD: I think we'd better get straight off. I have a hectic schedule and not much time.

GORDON: Fine. Let me just dump my coat and briefcase. Why haven't you knocked?

GOD: Er...I did.

GORDON: Maybe Lucy's not in.

GOD: I'd take them with you if I were you. You might need them.

GORDON: What?

GOD: The coat. And the case.

GORDON: Even I don't normally take a duffel coat and briefcase to a party.

GOD: I really would like to get going. Satan's on the attack. We may not have much time.

GORDON: She should be in.

GORDON opens the door, and GOD finally gives in.

GOD: I would rather have left this until later.

GORDON: Left what?

GORDON looks into the room. The sofa has its back to the front door, and Lucy is curled up on it. GORDON cannot see her.

GORDON: Strange. She's not in.

GOD: Er, how do you know?

GORDON: Telly's off.

GOD: Right. Well, no doubt I'll meet her in due course.

GORDON: You can't miss her.

GOD: So let's get going then.

GORDON: Well, we're a bit early for the party, so we'll start with the pub shall we?

GOD: Lead on.

### SCENE THREE

A pub. GOD and GORDON are seated at a table having a drink. They are surrounded by a rowdy but reasonably good-natured crowd. GORDON is drinking a pint and GOD has an elaborate cocktail. In front of them is a small stage, complete with Karaoke machine and a backdrop of silver metallic strands.

Several rowdy young people are seated at the table next to GOD and GORDON. Two of them, 1<sup>ST</sup> PUNTER and 2<sup>ND</sup> PUNTER, inebriated and happy, strike up a casual conversation.

GOD: Are these clothes alright? Give or take a few decades?

GORDON: They look fine to me.

1ST PUNTER: (to GOD) Like the Jesus sandals mate.

GOD: Actually these aren't Jesus' sandals. They're mine. I'm two sizes bigger than Jesus.

1ST PUNTER: Ha, ha. Like it. Nice one mate. What, were you expecting a 70s night then?

GOD: No, I'm just here to watch the show.

2ND PUNTER: The show! Christ, you're optimistic. This is Karaoke.

GOD: (to GORDON) Karaoke?

GORDON: It's a form of self-inflicted humiliation. No quarter given.

1ST PUNTER: (to GOD) So you probably remember Bobby Crush then?

GOD: No.

GORDON: (with fond recognition) Oh yeah. Bobby Crush.

1ST PUNTER: Well, this is far worse than that.

GORDON: I didn't think he was too bad.

2ND PUNTER: What about The Pipkins. Ever heard of them?

1ST PUNTER: 'Gimme That Ding'.

GOD: Afraid not.

GORDON: Now they were quite good.

2ND PUNTER: Well, this makes them look like The Beatles at Shea Stadium.

1ST PUNTER: Hang on. I've got a good one. David Dundas. You must remember him. (singing) *I put my blue jeans on. I put my old blue jeans on*.

GORDON: I liked that. I've got...had his album.

GOD: Sorry. You've got me there again.

2ND PUNTER: St. Winifred's School Choir?

GORDON: Aah. That was...

1ST PUNTER: Crap!

GORDON: Yeah, crap.

GOD: Do you ever get up and sing?

1ST PUNTER: Leave it out mate.

2ND PUNTER: We just sit here and take the piss out of everyone else.

An old man gets up on the stage. HARRY JENKINS is 82; a small chirpy cockney wearing a flat cap and oversized jacket. There are derisive groans from the audience. The backing track to 'What a Wonderful World' starts up on the Karaoke machine.

HARRY: (nervous) I'm Harry Jenkins. I used to sing this to me missis. This is for 'er.

2ND PUNTER: Get on with it!

HARRY: I thank you.

HARRY begins to sing. His voice is tremulous and wobbly, and has an exaggerated cockney twang.

HARRY: *I see trees of a-blue...*

1ST PUNTER: Green, you silly old sod!

HARRY: (struggling) *...a-red roses too.  
I see them bloom for me and you.  
And I think to meself, a-what a wonderful world.*

2ND PUNTER: Pick a window, you're leaving!

Lots of derisive laughter from the crowd. GOD gets up from his seat.

HARRY: (to himself) Gawd help us.

GOD picks up another microphone and joins HARRY on stage.

GOD: Mind if I join you, old timer?

He puts his hand on HARRY's shoulder and begins to accompany him. GOD sings with a superb voice that is the perfect embodiment of the Louis Armstrong style and passion.

GOD: *I see skies of blue,  
and clouds of white.*

He motions to HARRY to sing. HARRY's voice, while still retaining its cockney twang, is now full of confidence and has improved greatly. The crowd is stunned into silence.

HARRY:                *The bright a-blessed day,  
the dark a-sacred night.*

As they sing together, their voices blend in perfect harmony.

BOTH:                *And I think to myself,  
what a wonderful world.*

GOD:                 *The colours of the rainbow,  
so pretty in the sky...*

HARRY:                *...are also on the faces of people passing by.*

GOD and HARRY are now beginning to break into an unchoreographed routine. Abba meets Flannagan and Allen.

BOTH: (turning back to back and looking out on the audience)  
*I see friends shakin' hands,  
 sayin' 'How do you do?'*  
 (The duo simultaneously reach out to the audience)  
*They're really saying 'I love you.'*

With that last line, GOD and HARRY sweep their hands across the audience in a gesture of affection. Then they turn together and re-enact the Flannagan and Allen 'walk' for the last verse.

GOD: *I hear babies cryin',  
 I watch them grow.*

HARRY: *They'll learn much more than I'll ever know.*

GOD: *And I think to myself,  
 what a wonderful world.*

HARRY: *Yes, I think to myself,  
 what a wonderful world.*

BOTH: *Oh yeah.*

The pub erupts into a standing ovation. HARRY turns to GOD.

HARRY: Thanks, mate. My Doris would have loved that.

GOD: I'm sure she would. And by the way, she's fine, but she says keep your eyes off that Florrie Atkinson down the Legion or as sure as your name's Harry Jenkins, she'll send you another dose of piles.

HARRY is stunned and as GOD leaves the stage, the lights go down.

#### SCENE FOUR

The opposite side of the stage is lit with a single light. Beneath it, SATAN is seated at a desk. He is incandescent with rage. He slams his fist down again and again.

SATAN: No! No! He can't do this to me. This must not be!

#### SCENE FIVE

Evening. The house of LUCY's friend, APRIL. A party is in full swing. GOD and GORDON are outside the front door. GORDON has the obligatory carrier bag full of drink. GOD is carrying two empty milk bottles and a packet of frozen waffles. GORDON rings the doorbell. It plays the American national anthem (*The Star-Spangled*

*Banner*). It stops, and as GORDON turns to say something to GOD, the doorbell repeats itself. GOD and GORDON wait once more for it to stop.

GORDON: I still don't understand the significance of two empty milk bottles and a packet of frozen waffles.

GOD: Oh ye of little faith.

APRIL, bubbly party hostess, enters and goes across to answer the door. LUCY comes through wearing another migraine-inducing outfit.

APRIL: Hi Gordon! Come in!

LUCY: (rushing across and throwing her arms around GORDON)  
Gordon! I knew you'd come.

She looks at GOD, suppressing a giggle at his outfit.

LUCY: Hello, I didn't know you had any friends.

GORDON: This is God...frey. Godfrey. An old friend of mine from university.

LUCY: Hi Godfrey, Nice to meet you.

GOD: Hello Lucy. Er, shall I take the drink through Gordon?

GORDON: (handing him the bag) Oh right. Yeah. Thanks.

GOD goes off to the other side of the room, where the usual selection of cheap drink and a rather poor display of nibbles is on offer. Other PARTYGOERS enter and start to mill around. The music plays at background level.

LUCY: (cuddling GORDON) I love you Gordon. Thanks for coming. He's sweet isn't he? Don't quite get the milk bottles though. How's your day been?

GORDON: Mixed. Dare I ask if anything interesting happened to you today?

LUCY: Funny you should say that...but no. In fact I don't know where the day went to. I think I slept through most of it.

GORDON: Lucy. When are you going to do something positive and actually start making some plans?

LUCY: Well, believe it or not, I have done something positive. Real planning for the future. But I'm not sure you'll approve.

GORDON: Try me. It can't be that bad.

GOD sidles up to GORDON.

GOD: Gordon. What's a popular drink these days?

GORDON: People still like wine.

GOD: That's a relief. I'm not sure I can do... Viking Lager.

GORDON: Eh?

GOD: Well, I like to play my part. And it went down well the last time I was here.

GOD wanders back to the drinks table.

LUCY: What is he on about?

GORDON: Search me.

APRIL turns the music up and joins GORDON and LUCY for a dance. The other PARTYGOERS join in. In the meantime GOD is placing the empty milk bottles and the waffles on the table next to the other drink and food. He looks around and then spots a tablecloth which he uses to cover the items laid out on the table. Everyone now has to shout to be heard above the music.

APRIL: Don't often see you letting your hair down, Gordon.

GORDON: Thought I'd make up for lost time. Keep an eye on Lucy.

LUCY: You don't need to do that, silly.

APRIL: Haven't got any Rubettes for you I'm afraid.

GORDON: That's OK. I've got a 'Best of Roy Wood and Wizzard' cassette in my pocket. I was going to put it on later.

APRIL: Don't you dare. Gordon, who's your friend and what exactly is he doing with my finger buffet?

Unbeknown to GOD, who is busily working away under the cloth and seems to be having difficulty remembering exactly what to do, the PARTYGOERS gradually stop dancing and watch him with interest. GOD adds a final few touches and then, still without realising he has an audience, whips the tablecloth off to reveal a very impressive food buffet complete with carafes of red and white wine.

GOD: (to himself) Yes!

He turns around and modestly gestures to the table.

GOD: Tuck in.

The PARTYGOERS are amazed and rush forward to fill their plates and glasses.

APRIL: (to GOD) This is incredible! What is this? Home brew or something?

GOD: Sort of.

APRIL: And where did all this food come from?

GOD: Oh, you know. A few basic ingredients and there's no stopping me.

APRIL: You can come again.

### SCENE SIX

The party. A little later. The evening is in full swing. Once again, the PARTYGOERS are gathered round GOD. This time, he's in the middle of a very impressive elaborate dance routine to the sound of 'Get Off of My Cloud' by The Rolling Stones. The PARTYGOERS clap and cheer him on. He really is giving it his all. In fact, he gets so excited that he lets loose a lightning bolt which scorches the ceiling and sends plaster crumbling to the floor.

GORDON: (to LUCY) Static. From his sandals. The nylon carpet.

LUCY: What a mover! How come we've never met him before?

GORDON: He's been out of the country for a long while.

LUCY: He's great!

### SCENE SEVEN

The party. Later still. Everyone is now seated around GOD, who is telling jokes.

GOD: And so the man says to the doctor: 'Dover Sole and pancakes. That doesn't sound too bad for a man with a highly contagious disease.' 'Actually,' says the doctor, 'it's the only thing we can get under the door!'

The partygoers fall about laughing. GOD suddenly looks serious, and a little strange. He stands up.

GOD: Excuse me.

He goes over to GORDON.

GOD: (gravely) Gordon. I have to leave.

GORDON: What's up? You look strange.

GOD: Satan is interfering. I must get back.

GORDON: He can't do that to you. Can he?

GOD: You were right. His power has grown. We have a fight on our hands.

GORDON: We?

GOD: He must be halted. You are key to that and you have very little time. Goodbye Gordon.

GORDON: Hang on, I'll come with you.

GOD: No. Stay here with Lucy.

GOD places his hands on GORDON's shoulder. There is a light ringing sound.

GOD: Talk to Lucy.

GORDON: But. What now? I thought we were on the home run. You were going to take the world by storm. They love you. They're ready for you.

GOD: We'll see about that. After this.

GORDON: After what?

LUCY appears behind GORDON.

LUCY: Gordon.

GORDON: (turning round) Lucy?

GOD quietly leaves.

LUCY: Gordon. I've been trying to tell you. I signed up for my afterlife.

GORDON: You what? Oh. I think I know what's coming next.

LUCY nods her head slowly.

LUCY: Sorry.

GORDON: No. Not hell? Tell me you haven't signed up for hell.

LUCY: Oh Gordon. I don't want to spend an eternity where tank tops are the height of fashion and their idea of an 'all nighter' is a hymn-singing marathon.

GORDON: Do you realise what you've done!

LUCY: Gordon. Calm down. You're showing me up. It's bad enough you wear that bloody coat like a second skin, without drawing more attention to yourself.

GORDON: Calm down? Calm down? It's not really like the ads. It's a nightmare.

LUCY: How do you know?

GORDON: Because I've...Couldn't you have thought about this?

LUCY: I did think about it. A bit.

GORDON: Oh, so it was an informed decision then? What did you do? Fill in the forms during the ad break on Home and Away?

LUCY: Wrong! Shows how much you know, see.

GORDON: Yeah?

LUCY: Yeah. It was Countdown actually. And I suppose you've signed up for heaven have you?

GORDON: I haven't signed up for anything! I'll go where I go, like it's always been. Until this whole fucking fiasco started!

ALL: Gordon!

LUCY: Sorry about him. He's had too much jelly and ice cream.

GORDON: You're not taking this seriously, are you?

LUCY: No, I'm not. Not really.

GORDON: But why? This is your whole future we're talking about.

LUCY: Because, Gordon, I'm not worried. The place has a 'no quibble' guarantee. It says so on my card. If I don't like it, I'll be straight back up. And besides, you're always telling me what to do. You're always telling me to think about this and plan for that.

You tell me I'm not responsible and when I do make a decision which, as far as anyone knows, could actually be the right one, you're straight on my back, criticising me for being stupid. And in front of my friends. Your trouble is, you never take any chances. Ever. I know what I want Gordon, I want fun!

GORDON: Well you're going to have exactly the opposite down there!

LUCY: You don't know that! You're just cynical about it, like you're cynical about everything. And because of that, you never do anything, you never go anywhere, you never buy anything. Because of your total inactivity we're not even going to be together after we've died. And we could have been!

GORDON: You never even told me you were going to sign up!

LUCY: No, and I know why now.

GORDON: You're a very stupid woman!

LUCY: And you're a complete wanker!

ALL: Lucy!

GORDON: Well, in that case you can just go to hell!

GORDON angrily pulls open the front door to leave. Two masked assassins, dressed in black, stand on the doorstep, holding machine guns. They open up on GORDON. Bullets rip into his duffel coat. The attack is violently sustained for several seconds. There is panic and screaming. The attackers vanish. An hysterical aftermath follows as people rush forward to help. LUCY kneels beside GORDON, who is smouldering on the carpet.

LUCY: Gordon!

The panic subsides as GORDON starts to come round.

GORDON: Lucy.

LUCY: Lie still.

GORDON: Sorry. Forgive me.

LUCY: No. No. You were right. I have been stupid. I just wanted to do something on my own. Without having to consult my very own oracle.

GORDON tries to raise his head. LUCY undoes his coat and opens it up.

LUCY: Hold on. There's not a mark on you. It hasn't gone through your duffel coat.

GORDON looks down at his body. He sits up. There are gasps from the onlooking partygoers as he gets to his feet.

GORDON: He must have blessed it. He has. God has blessed this coat!

APRIL: He's delirious. It's shock.

LUCY: Blimey. Wool and polyester armour.

GORDON: Lucy, have you got your card here?

LUCY: My card?

GORDON: Yes, your card. You received a card from hell. It commits you to the afterlife you've chosen. It's a contract Lucy. Between you and Satan.

LUCY: Oh that. Yeah. It's in my purse somewhere. Why?

GORDON: (taking his coat off) Right. We have to move fast. Put this on.

LUCY looks appalled at the prospect of wearing a duffel coat.

GORDON: I'll explain on the way.

### SCENE EIGHT

OFFAD. Night. GORDON and LUCY enter the dark office.

LUCY: So, hang on. Using an ancient Twister mat and holding a giant egg timer, we go to hell and do battle with Satan? You're having me on.

GORDON: You saw those assassins.

LUCY: Worst gatecrashers ever. Whatever happened to a bottle of Olde English and a limp excuse about knowing the host.

GORDON switches his desk lamp on. ERICA moves into the light, holding a gun.

ERICA: Bad move Gordon.

GORDON: I don't believe this.

LUCY: And there I was saying you never do anything.

GORDON: You don't know the half of it.

ERICA: No, but I do Gordon. You were right. Satan's a popular person and I can't afford to upset the voters. Now, you've used the equipment without my permission. I'm afraid this is more than just a sackable offence, Gordon. Interfering with a future prime

minister. Why, that's probably treason. I'm going to have to kill you.

LUCY, wearing GORDON's duffel coat, quickly moves in front of GORDON and stretches her arms out to protect him.

LUCY: Over my dead body.

ERICA: Fine.

ERICA aims the gun at LUCY's body (the duffel coat) and then raises it slightly to point at her head.

GORDON: Oh.

LUCY: Ah. Down a bit.

ERICA moves forward. Inadvertently, she places both feet on the mat.

GORDON: (to himself) No. Not both feet together.

ERICA: I hope you've made a choice between...heaven and hell.

There is a gunshot followed by a scream and a ripping noise, as ERICA is torn in half. GORDON and LUCY look on in horror.

LUCY: What happened?

GORDON: She's been torn clean in half. Unless, I'm mistaken, half of her now resides in heaven and the other half in hell.

LUCY: Either that, or she's being pop-riveted back together in purgatory.

GORDON takes out the hourglass. The sand has almost run through.

GORDON: The sand! We've got to get going.

GORDON picks LUCY up and carries her over to the mat. He steps on and raises his right leg.

GORDON: Are you sure you don't mind doing this?

LUCY: (impressed) This is getting good, hero boy. Wait 'til I get you home.

GORDON: Hell!

## SCENE NINE

Hell. The rollercoaster pulls in. GORDON and LUCY's heads pop up out of the car. LUCY surveys the abyss.

LUCY: I want my money back.

GORDON: Stay with me and don't take the coat off.

They both move slowly down the side of the rollercoaster until they come to a gaping hole filled with the fire of hell. They stand before it.

GORDON: Now listen to me very carefully. Under the Consumer Protection Act 1987, you've been misled. But unlike the others who have only realised it when it's too late, you can change things.

LUCY: Why me?

GORDON: Because you're the only living being – apart from me – that has witnessed the deception before the final journey.

LUCY: The final journey?

GORDON: Before you die, and it's too late!

LUCY: God, you're in a morose mood today. You're starting to depress me.

GORDON: Destroy the card before your soul is committed to hell, then the contract becomes null and void.

LUCY: Couldn't I have just cut it in half and stayed at the party?

GORDON: It has to be destroyed here. By you. And by doing so, you'll also save the souls of all those that have signed up, and possibly even those that have already been lured here.

LUCY: Blimey, I'll be famous. Will I be on Richard and Judy?

GORDON: Undoubtedly.

There is a deafening roar in the distance. SATAN is awakened to GORDON and LUCY's presence.

LUCY: What the bloody hell was that?

GORDON: Shit! Quick, destroy the card!

LUCY: (rifling through her purse) Hang on. I've got to find it first.

She pulls cards out, one by one. The roaring continues and gets closer.

LUCY: Spend and Save. No. Air Miles. No. Blockbuster Video. No.

GORDON: Come on!

LUCY: Hang on...Miss Selfridge...No.

SATAN appears, raging. LUCY gets ready to take him on, but GORDON steps in front of her.

GORDON: I'll deal with this.

LUCY: Gordon. I'm the black belt. You're a wimp remember?

GORDON: No Lucy. This is a fight I have to win on my own.

SATAN pulls GORDON up by his throat. LUCY moves forward.

LUCY: Put him down you bastard!

SATAN: Get back or, with one crush, he dies.

LUCY backs off.

SATAN: (to Lucy) That thing in your hand. Give it to me.

LUCY: Sod off!

SATAN tightens his grip on GORDON's throat.

SATAN: Give it to me!

GORDON is wildly gesturing 'no'. LUCY reluctantly hands SATAN the purse.

SATAN: (throwing Gordon to the floor) That's better. You miserable minions of God! It's over. I have a special place for you both. Not together, of course, but within earshot.

GORDON staggers to his feet and starts to rummage around inside the duffel coat LUCY is wearing. LUCY is not quite sure what GORDON is up to.

SATAN: Oh no. Don't tell me. You've got a note from your mum?

GORDON pulls out GOD's fountain pen and holds it before SATAN, like a crucifix before a vampire. SATAN jerks his head back indignantly.

SATAN: What's this? A lucky charm? God, in his cowardice, has sent you here to do battle with me, and what does he give you as a

weapon? A cheap trinket from the heaven souvenir shop. A magic Biro. (mockingly) I give in.

GORDON: It's not magic. It's holy.

SATAN: Holy? Really? What are you going to do? Scribble 'Jesus Loves You' on my forehead?

GORDON: OK!

With that GORDON leaps on SATAN and stabs the pen into the middle of his forehead. SATAN screams, clutching his head and howling with pain. He gets up slowly as GORDON and LUCY back away. Suddenly, CHUCK emerges from the shadows wielding a large shovel. He belts SATAN across the back of the head, sending him sprawling across the floor.

CHUCK: Heard there was a rumble going down. Thought you might need some help.

SATAN is temporarily disabled, groggily rolling around on the floor. LUCY grabs the purse and GORDON gingerly edges toward SATAN and plucks the pen from his forehead.

LUCY: Indiana Jones meets Paddington Bear. What now, all action hero?

GORDON: (gesturing in the opposite direction to SATAN) This way. To the river!

They head for the river, where CHARON is pacing up and down, watching the action. GORDON, LUCY and CHUCK stumble down to the rivers edge.

CHARON: You won't get past me.

GORDON: Get us out of here!

CHARON: No can do, old chum.

GORDON violently thrusts his pen towards CHARON.

GORDON: Now!

CHARON: They say the pen is mightier than the sword. In you get.

GORDON and LUCY climb into the boat. CHUCK stands guard with the shovel as SATAN staggers blindly towards the boat. Suddenly KATIE appears in her pink duffel coat.

KATIE: Gordon. Wait for me sweetheart.

LUCY: Who is that?

GORDON: Ah. That's Katie.

LUCY: Katie, eh? We might have a chat about her when we get back.

GORDON: Damn! The card!

LUCY: The card. Don't change the sub...The card!

LUCY starts to rummage again.

GORDON: (exasperated) Just throw the whole purse in.

LUCY: My purse?

ALL: Yes!

LUCY: Now this is what I call a sacrifice for all mankind.

LUCY throws the purse. It flies through the air and goes straight down a fire pit. The stage is consumed with a fiery red glow as the card is destroyed. SATAN raises himself weakly from the floor and watches in horror as the purse disappears into the fire. CHARON, with a full complement of passengers rows across the river.

SATAN: No! No! I haven't finished with you, Klein. You are doomed. Doomed! Nooooo!!

### SCENE TEN

OFFAD. Day. Newly appointed chairman GORDON KLEIN is seated at his plush new desk. LUCY is measuring for curtains. GORDON is arranging pens and paperwork on his desk. GOD's fountain pen has pride of place on his new blotter.

LUCY: I was thinking maybe orange festoon blinds with yellow and green swags and tails, and perhaps purple bow tie backs.

GORDON: It's not very corporate. Still, I'm in charge now, and it's fine by me. How do you feel about becoming my PA? I don't want to patronise you.

LUCY: As long as I can have my own telly in here, I'm very happy about the whole thing. Anyway, it was either me or the busty bimbo from beyond the grave.

GORDON: Katie and Chuck have moved on now (gestures upwards).

There is a knock at the door. GORDON and LUCY look at each other.

GORDON: Come in.

The door opens and in walks GOD.

LUCY: Godfrey!

GORDON: God!

LUCY: God?

GOD: Hello Gordon. Hello Lucy.

LUCY: Hang on. You're not...

GORDON: Lucy. This is God.

LUCY: What, the God? God God?

GORDON: Yes.

LUCY: So that's how you created that great spread at the party.

GOD: Just a variation on the old water into wine routine.

LUCY: (angrily) And then you left early and dropped us right in it.

GORDON: Lucy!

GOD: (calmly) Lucy, I can see why you're angry. You've been through a lot. But I helped you where I could.

LUCY: Right. Like a hardy duffel coat and a nice pen. Thanks a lot.

LUCY is sulking (as much as LUCY can). GOD is gentle in his approach.

GOD: More than that.

GORDON: You did leave the party rather quickly.

GOD: Satan's new power had weakened me considerably. That's why I had to leave. He was forcing me back. This time, you were the only ones who could solve the problem. Hell is Satan's domain. The shift in the balance of power meant that I couldn't go there. But you could. And you did well.

He moves closer to LUCY.

GOD: I needed you. We all needed you. Both of you. The boy – and the girl – done good.

LUCY suddenly bursts into tears and throws her arms around GOD.

LUCY: But I was scared!

GOD: (comforting her) I know.

LUCY: (sniffing) Gordon, you haven't half got some funny friends.

GORDON: So, what now?

GOD: You were right. It is time I made a second appearance. This place could do with a bit of re-centring.

GORDON: So, you're going to do it then?

GOD: (nods) The second coming.

LUCY: The second coming?

GOD: That's right.

LUCY: Not dressed like that you're not.

GOD: What? But Gordon said this gear was fab.

LUCY: (grabbing GOD by the hand and leading him out the door)  
Gordon? That's like asking Stevie Wonder to pick out your wallpaper. Come on, I'll sort your touring wardrobe out. Something in green Lycra I think.

LUCY takes GOD by the hand and leads him stridently off the stage. GORDON smiles to himself and returns to his paperwork.

Behind GORDON, at the back of the stage, enter ELVIS, complete with 70s regalia (chrome sunglasses, white rhinestone flared body suit, etc.). The stage darkens and the spotlight falls on 'The King'.

ELVIS: Howdy folks. It's good to be back. I'd like to sing a little song for y'all now:  
*When I was a lad  
and old Shep was a pup...*

The stage goes black and the song stops dead.

**THE END**