

HELL:
Paradise Found

by
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The Interview today
The Trial yesterday
Happy Hour today, a little later

Dramatis Personae

The Interviewer	First Actor
Lucifer	
Simon Ackerman	Second Actor
God	Third Actor
Judge	
Vlad the Impaler	Fourth Actor
Don Juan	Fifth Actor
Adam	
Rapist	
Gabriel	Sixth Actor
William Shakespeare	
Prosecutor	
Eve	Actress
Lizzie Borden	
Victim	
Doris	

The Interview:

Frank Sinatra's "That's Life!" takes us into...

An ordinary office. Florescent lights, a coffee cup, a file cabinet and a desk.

*The "**INTERVIEWER**" fiddles around behind the desk. He appears a capable, efficient, if excitable man in his early forties. Still, there is something odd about him. Behind the glasses and bureaucratic posture that denote a civil servant lurks something else. Something you can't quite place your finger on. A discerning eye would surely see that this is not the kind of man who revels in bureaucracy. Not the kind of man who reads Civil Codebooks on the toilet...*

There is a hesitant knock on the door.

INT Entrevous!

SIMON ACKERMAN *slowly opens the door. A nervous man in his early thirties.*

SIMON Uhm... hi. I was-

INT Come on in.

SIMON I think I'm-

INT Lost. You're not. Mr... uh...

INT yanks open a drawer and begins fishing through papers.

SIMON Acker-

INT Please don't tell me. (still searching) Where the hell did I... ah ha- found it.

He brandishes a FILE.

INT Mr. Ackerman. Simon Ackerman.

SIMON Yes. That's me. (pause) How did you-

INT (looking up from the file) Come on in, Simon.

SIMON enters, closes door behind him.

INT puts out his hand for Simon. They shake.

INT Sit down. Please.

SIMON (sitting) I'm sorry, I'm not too sure what I'm-

INT How about some coffee?

SIMON No. Thank you. I.... I'm not exactly sure what I'm-

INT (heavily accented) Croissant?

SIMON Excuse me?

INT (American accent) Croissant. Do you want one?

SIMON Uhm... no. I... I'm sorry, I missed your name. You are...

INT I really don't think you could pronounce it. I have other names, of course, names you probably could pronounce, but they mean different things to you then they do to me, so I'd just as soon not use them. But your name - very distinctive. What was it? (checking the form) Oh yes, "Simon Ackerman." Ooo. I like that. "Simon Ackerman." I like the sound of that. I think I'll call myself "Simon Ackerman" from now on.

SIMON You can't do that- I'm Simon Ackerman.

INT Not anymore. I'm Simon Ackerman- you go be someone else for a while.

SIMON I will not. I like who I am.

INT Well, you know what they say - "Too much of a good thing... lest it corrupt..." DAMN! Never could remember that. Tennyson. Not my favorite, but what an original. Not as original as E.E. Cummings, but I never understood what the hell he was all about in the first place, so let's talk about Tennyson, shall we?

SIMON I think I'll take that coffee now.

INT Sorry, don't have any.

SIMON But-

INT I know. I'm sorry. I lied. Compulsive liar. Lot of us around here. Lot of artists, you know- "create your own reality." (laughs) Up there, well. Up there, there is only one reality. And they love it. Like one big happy school of fish. How can they stand it?

SIMON Up there?

INT Yes. Up there. (under his breath) Heaven. You know.

SIMON Heaven? (gestures) "Up there?"

INT You got it.

SIMON Then where am I?

INT (joyously) In Hell!

SIMON (standing) You must be joking!

INT Oh no. I don't joke. I lie. We have them here-jokers, but I am not one of their ranks. Never had a sense of humor, really-

SIMON You must be mistaken!

INT No, really. I can't tell a joke. It's awful. Something about my, you know.....timing.

SIMON There must be some mistake. I'm... I'm a Religious Man.

INT (pause) Well, what is that supposed to mean?

SIMON I'm a Religious Man.

INT Are you implying that we discriminate?

SIMON Excuse me?

INT That we discriminate. Against Religious Men. That because you're a Religious Man, that takes you out of the running.

SIMON No, I-

INT (standing) How dare you, sir!

SIMON What?

INT How dare you! How dare you walk into my office and toss around words like "discrimination."

SIMON But, I didn't-

INT I approach every case with an open mind! I consider all the facts! I am equal and fair in my judgment!

SIMON I'm sorry. I- please let me speak! (pause) I'm sorry. I did not mean to imply that you had prejudged me. I... I'm awfully confused right now. You say I am in Hell. I don't remember dying.

INT takes a peek at the file.

INT Sushi.

SIMON What?

INT Sushi. That's... you know.

SIMON I don't understand. I was eaten by some raw fish?

INT (laughing) No, of course not. Although, what a way to go. No, you ate some bad sushi at... (referring) "George's Sushi Palace."

SIMON That's it?

INT Apparently so.

SIMON That's all it says?

INT Yup. "Cause of Death...bad sushi."

SIMON Wow.

INT Yeah. Life is cheap. Apparently, sushi isn't. Says here you were overcharged-

SIMON But so suddenly...

INT Well, that's death, for you. Everything's A-O.K., and then suddenly, well... your soul is looking for a new address.

SIMON Heaven or Hell?

INT Depending on your record.

SIMON So, this is a trial-

INT Not exactly. I like to think of this as an interview. You see this (holding up file) is a record of every thing you've ever done-

SIMON It's not very thick-

INT Oh, Simon, it's not the size of the record, it's what you've done with it. Take James Dean-

INT tosses Simon a tiny file.

SIMON This is... this is very small.

INT Yes, but what an original. So, you see, Simon, you have no less of a chance than James Dean.

SIMON To...

INT Why, to get into Hell, of course!

SIMON But... but, and I mean no offense-

INT I wish you would. Spice things up a bit.

SIMON I don't want to be in Hell. I want to go to Heaven!

INT Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear.

INT makes a note.

SIMON What?

INT "What fools these mortals be..."

SIMON What are you talking about?

INT Shakespeare. He's here. Interesting coincidence- he just wrote a play for James Dean. (laughs) Poor James. Verse is just not his thing.

SIMON You're tempting me.

INT Sorry?

SIMON You're tempting me, right? You're tempting me. Well you can just cut it out right now, because... BECAUSE I BELIEVE IN GOD!

INT (as if he's just stated the obvious) Uh huh...

SIMON (standing) And I deny you your dominion over my soul!

INT Please sit down, Mr. Ackerman.

SIMON Don't tempt me with your pleasantries, Demon! I've read all about your kind!

INT (ending the interview cordially) Thank you.

The INT makes a few notes and signs the form with a flourish.

SIMON What?

INT Thank you. I have all I need.

SIMON You do...? What do you-

INT Thank you. Please close the door on your way out.

SIMON But... where do I go?

INT You go to Heaven. Isn't that what you want?

SIMON You mean... I can go?

INT Certainly. What's to stop you?

INT goes back to the papers.

SIMON stands there with a confused look on his face.

SIMON Excuse me, how exactly do I-

INT Down the hall, past the Monet, take a right, you'll see a big escalator. There'll be a couple of Angels, and if you're lucky, they won't be singing. There's a guy there in a plain blue sportscoat named Peter. Give him this.

INT signs a form, and stamps it with an ink stamp.

SIMON Thank you.

INT Sure. "Have a nice eternity."

SIMON goes to the door, turns.

SIMON I'm... I'm sorry about the "Demon" thing.

INT Oh, don't worry about that. Happens all the time. One gets used to it.

SIMON I meant no disrespect. I'm sure that you make a wonderful Demon.

INT I'm not a Demon, Mr. Ackerman... I'm a Bureaucrat. In Hell, all Demons are Bureaucrats. On Earth, all Bureaucrats are Demons.

SIMON glances down at the paper.

SIMON It says "rejected!"

INT Yes. Sorry about that.

SIMON But, I thought I made it. To Heaven.

INT You did.

SIMON Then what am I rejected from?

INT From Hell.

INT returns to his work. SIMON stands there, confused.

SIMON (suspiciously) But... don't you want my soul?

INT (pause) Now why on Earth would I want that?

SIMON To punish me... for my transgressions. Put me to work... you know, in the... fire pits.

INT In the... Oh, Simon. You've been reading far too much Milton. You'll do very well "up there." In Heaven, everyone reads Milton.

SIMON (coming back into the room) Why do you continue to refer to Heaven as if it's a prison? Heaven is paradise! It's rapture! It's ecstasy!

INT It's boring!

SIMON Boring? Now I know you're lying. Good day, Sir! Heaven boring? Right!

SIMON goes out the door. Bursts back in.

SIMON And if it is boring, and I am sure it is not, but if it is boring, then that is... well, then that is the way it is supposed to be.

INT Well, "the Lord works in mysterious ways."

SIMON He certainly does. (beat) What do you mean by that?

INT (standing, leaning against the desk) Just that I wonder why it is so damn difficult for you Humans to explain Divine actions, but so easy for you to explain Demonic ones?

SIMON I don't know.

INT I'll tell you. It is because Human nature is closer to the Demonic. It always has been. It always will be.

SIMON comes back into the room.

SIMON Well, there I agree with you. Men have always sinned.

INT Uhgh- "Sin." You Humans toss that word around as if it were some cosmic hot potato. Forget sin. Sin has nothing to do with anything. You will see just as many sinners in Heaven as in Hell.

SIMON Sinners in Heaven? Shakespeare in Hell? I don't believe you! You're lying! You have to be. Heaven is for the blest! And Hell the damned!

INT On the contrary! Heaven is for sheep! Hell is for the shepherd! Who do you suppose goes to Heaven? Hmm? ...Anyone. Anyone goes to Heaven. Anyone who follows another lead, anyone who defers to another explanation, anyone who believes because they are told to believe, or drinks Coke because they are told to drink Coke, or stops questioning because they are told to "have faith-" these are the ones damned to an eternity of faith, following orders, conformity, and consistency!

SIMON (skeptically) Assuming this is true... who goes to Hell?

INT Everyone else. (sits) But Hell is a minority; a dwindling, dwindling minority. Our standards are quite simply just too high. You see, Heaven is for the disciple. Hell is for the Christ.

SIMON Jesus, in Hell?

INT Oh no. (laughing) No, no, no. We wanted him, though. He visits from time to time. Not a great singer... but what an original.

Simon grabs his head, holding his sanity in.

SIMON I'm sorry, I find everything you've said terribly hard to believe. My whole life-

INT I know, I know, they told you God was good, and the Devil bad.

SIMON Aren't they?

INT Of course, but what does that have to do with anything?

Int pushes a BUTTON on his desk.

INT (into the console) Doris? Be a doll and bring in the remote, would you? (to Simon) I think I can clear this thing up for you, once and for all.

SIMON What's going on? What are you doing?

INT You like going to the movies, Simon?

SIMON Sure.

INT Then you are going to absolutely love this.

MUSIC. In walks DORIS with a tray carrying a REMOTE and a large tub of POPCORN. Doris is dressed as one might expect, considering she is a Sabine Woman.

Both men stare. She sets the tray down.

INT Thank you Doris.

She smiles. She exits. They stare after her.

SIMON She is... really attractive.

INT Sabine Women. Drive the men crazy around here.

SIMON Sabine Women?

INT Don't judge a book by it's bosom, Simon. I'm sure you've heard of "The Rape of the Sabine Women."

SIMON Sure.

INT Have you not also heard of "The Morning After the Rape of the Sabine Women?"

SIMON No. I don't believe so.

INT That's when the Rapists all wake up with a suspiciously similar strain of venereal disease.

SIMON Wow. Resourceful women.

INT You don't know the half of it.

Int readies the remote...

INT You know something, Simon? I've seen this Eight Hundred Million times, and it just keeps getting better every time I watch it!

He offers Simon some POPCORN.

INT Popcorn?

SIMON Is it airpopped?

INT What are you, on a diet? You're dead, man... live a little.

The Int pushes a button on the REMOTE, and...

BLACKOUT. Wagner- classical and grand...

THE TRIAL:

Lights up on Heaven's Supreme, and only, Court. There is a large gold imposing throne in the middle of the chamber. Down stage right is a small bench- long enough to support two people.

*The Archangel **GABRIEL** is obsessively perusing documents. His dress suggests a Nineteenth Century Romanticism- elegant, poetic, and reasoned. Gabriel looks the overachiever- an angel that has risen to his position of power through hard work and diligence, not talent.*

*Suddenly, the studied calm of the chamber is broken by the tortured entrance of **ADAM**. Adam appears a young, extremely attractive boy-man in his twenties. His dress is also of the Romantic period, but it hangs uncomfortably over his frame.*

ADAM (in tears) Oh Gabriel, I am undone!

Adam throws himself onto the floor in the middle of the chamber. Gabriel rushes to him.

GABRIEL Courage Adam. You have nothing to fear from God. What He does, He does out of love for you and Eve.

ADAM Oh, if you could have seen His face. The anguish. The disappointment. I broke his heart, Gabriel! He gave me life, and I gave him thanks by spitting in His holy face!

GABRIEL Take hold of yourself, Adam. You must!

ADAM (sobbing) You didn't see His face. There could be no greater torture. Oh, Gabriel, what have I done?

GABRIEL You must remember, Adam, that you are not entirely to blame.

ADAM (immediately cheering) That's true. That's very true. Eve- that beast. She made me. She made me eat that apple. "Try it. You'll Like it," she says. And here I am, my soul in peril, and for what? It didn't even taste that good. It was so tart. She knows I prefer the sweet ones.

GABRIEL I did not mean Eve. I meant the Serpent.

ADAM The... Serpent?

GABRIEL The Satan. The "Star of Morning."

ADAM Oh, you mean Lucifer?

GABRIEL I do indeed. It was Lucifer who tempted you. Lucifer himself who spat in God's holy face. You, my friend, were just an ignorant pawn in his traitorous, sacrilegious game.

ADAM (brightening up for the first time) Really?

GABRIEL Certainly, man. I have known Lucifer since the beginning of time, and I am anything but surprised at his actions. Tempting that poor girl.

ADAM He tempted Eve? Are you certain?

GABRIEL As certain as I am that night follows day.

ADAM That is so strange. Eve never-

EVE enters. The First Woman. Natural, Sexual, Noble.

ADAM (weakly) Eve-

Adam pulls himself to his feet. Gabriel does likewise.

GABRIEL Eve. I am sorry we meet under such extreme conditions.

EVE As am I.

GABRIEL I am sorry for you.

EVE Spare your "sorries," Gabriel. Save them for someone that needs them. As for myself, I need them not, since I have nothing to fear. God is just, and will act accordingly.

GABRIEL That is true, Eve. I am afraid that is too horribly true.

MUSIC: Ride of the Valkyries- Wagner.

All three bow to the ground.

GOD enters in the majestic dress of an Enlightened King- the Sun King, literally. He strolls good naturedly past the assembled group, right out the door. All continue to freeze.

After a moment, God peeks back in. Fascinated, he creeps back into the room, mounts his throne, and gestures to an above stage light, which immediately bathes him in a heavenly glow. He seems very pleased by the collective show of respect.

The group awaits God's word.

God continues to gaze happily at the assembled group.

GABRIEL (delicately, still bowed) My Lord?

GOD Hmm?

GABRIEL My Lord....?

GOD Oh yes. Sorry.

GOD clears his heavenly throat.

GOD "I AM THAT I AM."

They rise. Adam and Eve sit. Gabriel goes to God's side.

GABRIEL Very Impressive, my Lord.

GOD Thank you, Gabe. I've been working on it.

GABRIEL Very commanding, my Lord.

GOD Yes- can you hear the compassion as well-

GABRIEL -oh yes-

GOD I've been working on the compassion.

GABRIEL The compassion is good.

GOD It's not too compassionate? I want to keep the authority.

GABRIEL No, I can hear the authority, my Lord. I can hear it quite clearly.

GOD You're not just saying that?

GABRIEL Oh no, my Lord! Very commanding... in a compassionate but authoritative manner.

GOD Oh I am very happy. Thank you, Gabe. Thank you very much. Thank you.

GOD begins to leave.

GABRIEL My Lord?

GOD Hmm?

GABRIEL Where are you going?

GOD (He is confused) Well... I was going to...
(chuckling) well that's funny.

GABRIEL I believe you called for the High Court to be assembled.

GOD Really? Why?

GABRIEL I believe it had something to do with the Satan Matter.

GOD What's the matter with Satan?

GABRIEL No, sir... Don't you wish to deal with Satan, my Lord?

GOD Satan? Why? What's he done-

Gabe shows the APPLE, with two large bites in it.

GOD Oh yes! Sorry. Don't know where my mind is today. I should have made today the Sabbath and taken a rest, eh, Gabriel?

GABRIEL As you wish, my Lord.

Gabriel puts down the APPLE, and begins to write it down the Book of Law.

GOD Oh no, Gabriel. Just kidding. Just kidding, Gabriel. (sits) Big mistake not giving the Angels a sense of humor.

GABRIEL My Lord?

GOD Nothing, Gabriel. Bring him in. Bring in... my Satan.

GABRIEL Send in the prisoner!

MUSIC: The Hunter's Prelude - "B. Stoker's Dracula."

LUCIFER enters, his hands in shackles. He is dressed similarly to Gabriel, but with a singular dashing flair.

Gabriel blocks his path. The music stops.

LUCIFER Ah, Gabriel. I see you have taken my place quite easily. It suits you.

GABRIEL Thank you.

LUCIFER That was not meant as a compliment.

Gabriel is stung by the insult, but keeps his anger in check.

GABRIEL You are accused, sir. Please take your place.

Lucifer retreats to the corner.

GABRIEL Please state your name before the court.

LUCIFER I am Lucifer.

GABRIEL Please state your current name. The name God has chosen for you.

LUCIFER I pray you have not convened this Holy Court to fathom my preference of names, Gabriel. But if this is the matter, let me clearly state for the court that I am known as the Lord's Satan, his Protector, but my name is Lucifer.

GOD Well said, Lucifer. Please continue, Archangel.

GABRIEL The charges, sir, are heresy, dissent, subversion, wanton temptation and willful disobedience.

LUCIFER Well. I have been busy, haven't I?

GABRIEL Are you aware of the severity of these charges?

LUCIFER I am now, thanks to the ominous tone in which you pronounced them.

GABRIEL And how do you plead?

LUCIFER Guilty.

Commotion.

GOD Satan! (regaining composure) To say Guilty is to say you willfully disobeyed Us. Think again, and think clearly of your answer.

LUCIFER Very well, my Lord.

Lucifer takes a short moment to "think."

LUCIFER I am ready. Proceed.

GOD Gabriel, ask again.

GABRIEL Did you, or did you not tempt God's creation Eve to eat of the Tree of Knowledge, an act reserved solely for Archangels of the Lord?

LUCIFER I did.

Commotion.

GOD Lucifer! This is not the kind of re-evaluation I had in mind.

LUCIFER (rushing to him) There can be no other answer, My Lord. You have your Tempter- let the Humans go.

EVE (bursting out of her seat) This proceeding is a sham.

Lucifer turns on her angrily.

LUCIFER Eve-

Gabriel approaches her to restrain her.

GABRIEL Mind yourself, Woman, you are in the Court of the Lord.

EVE Mind your hands, Gabriel, or I shall bite them off.

Gabriel retires.

GOD Now Eve- this doesn't seem right at all. I can't have every creation running around Heaven screaming at the top of their lungs. We'll never get a thing accomplished!

EVE I am sorry, My Lord, but I am finding it increasingly difficult to keep cool with all the hot air blowing around in here.

Commotion.

GOD Silence! (to Eve) Speak.

EVE You all know that when I desire something I can be very... willful.

ALL No, no.

EVE Well, I wanted that apple, My Lord. Not because it was denied me, although I feel that was foolish of you in the first place, but because with that apple came knowledge.

GOD I give you knowledge, Eve.

EVE You give it second hand, My Lord, like some musty hand me down from the cobwebbed attics of Heaven! Well, that was not enough for me. I needed it first hand. Uncensored, unfiltered, undiluted. And so I came to your Satan, your guardian, as he stood watch at the Tree of Knowledge. I begged him to let me eat of its fruit, and as much as I know that it pained him to do so, he did what he did for pity, not for disobedience. I am the Tempter! And it is I that should be held in contempt of your Law!

GOD Lucifer, is this true?

LUCIFER It is not, my Lord.

GABRIEL You deny her testimony? You deny her sworn testimony?

LUCIFER Stay out of this, Gabriel-

GABRIEL Answer the Court's Question! Do you deny Eve's sworn testimony?

LUCIFER (breaking) I deny that it pained me to surrender His Tree. It troubled me not a whit. I do assent that I pitied her, as I do still, as I do all God's creations. As I do Him.

GOD Pity me? Did he- did you say- How dare you? I am above pity. I am above rebuke. "I Am That I Am."

LUCIFER (as gently as possible) You are that you are, my lord, but you are not what you think.

GOD (Laughs) Oh no. No, no, no. I see the bait, Lucifer, and I do not wish to bite. Eve come forward.

She does.

GOD Eve, in addition to my earlier decree... what was it, anyway?

Gabriel shows him a page in his notebook.

GOD Right- in addition to (reading) casting you out of Eden, and withdrawing the blessings of Eternal Tife-

GABE "Life", My Lord.

GOD No, that's a "T", Gabriel.

GABE Uh... no, that is an "L" , sir.

GOD Not in my Universe, it's not. Where the blazes did you learn to write? Remind me to do something about this, Gabe- you know damn well that I want to be known as the Education Deity. Where was I? Oh yes... in addition to (reading) casting you out of Eden, and withdrawing the blessings of Eternal Tife, (looking up) I shall greatly multiply your pain and travail; in pain thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband.... and... let's see- what to do, what to do... ah!... he shall rule over thee.

EVE (looking to Adam) He shall rule over me?

GOD He shall. Withdraw.

She sits. Adam places his arm around her. She shudders.

GOD You know something, Gabe? I think I'm pretty good at this.

GABE Brilliant, My Lord. Your infinite insight, your careful consideration-

LUCIFER (bursting out) - Your titanic misjudgment!

GABE Lucifer!

GOD Oh, let him go, Gabriel, let him go. You know how he likes to hear himself fume.

LUCIFER My Lord... you dare not punish the desire for knowledge. Is there anything purer in the Universe?

GOD Of course, Lucifer- obedience.

LUCIFER Obedience? What's another legion of lapdogs going to accomplish that this heavenly host of sycophants has not? Beware, My Lord- I fear you shall run out of hem for us to kiss.

GOD You stray, my friend, you stray. I expect these histrionics from you, but I will not abide them in Man. A line has been crossed.

LUCIFER Of course it has- draw them a line and tell them not to cross it, and you might as well hand- grave the invitation. "Every tree in Eden," you told them- every tree except the Tree of Knowledge. Why? You wouldn't give them stomachs and refuse to feed them. You wouldn't give them eyes and make them blind. Why do you tease them so? What has God to fear from Knowledge?

GOD Not a thing, Lucifer. I do not withhold knowledge. I bestow it. I bestow it when my creations are prepared for it.

LUCIFER Knowledge is not knowledge when it is handed down from a mountain, it is a commandment.

GOD Stay away from commandments Lucifer. A good commandment is a precious thing. Where would we be in a world without commandments?

LUCIFER Paradise.

GABRIEL No commandments? Is that your perverse idea of paradise? Do you want to disrupt all Heaven? Would you overthrow God?

LUCIFER I would do no such thing. I love God more than your toady minion heart could ever understand. You sycophants are too busy kissing boots to notice that the one who wears them is in serious need of a psychiatrist. God is good. I know he is. But that Throne he sits in is Evil. That throne demands. It demands you be infallible, pure as Space. It forbids you to trust. How can you? For the moment the sheep can come home without assistance... the shepherd is out of a job!

GOD LUCIFER! I command your silence! SILENCE! (all are silent) Have you heard of Hell?

LUCIFER I have my Lord.

GOD Are you aware that I have decided, from this time forth, to consign all Heretics to its cavernous depths?

LUCIFER (long pause) I was not, My Lord.

GOD Ah ha! Got you there, didn't I? Now listen very closely to what I have to say, Lucifer. It is my turn to speak. I am prepared to forgive you this unfair, unprovoked, unimaginable outburst, if you are prepared to recant all that you have said, and take your rightful place once again as my Satan.

LUCIFER It is... a very difficult thing you ask, My Lord. My eyes have been opened.

GOD Then you will have to shut them, and shut them tight! In spite of all your endless chattering, I tell you knowledge is a dangerous thing. It is not to be dispensed like drinks at a social function. (chuckling) It is all very well for you, an Archangel, to stand here and shout about the Necessity of Knowledge, but look at Man. Look at him.

God motions and Adam awkwardly stands.

GOD What do you think, Lucifer? Is he a vessel for the Knowledge of the Universe, or will it burst him like a bubble? And as for the Woman...

He motions, and Eve stands.

GOD She does appear more capable, but not by much. What would you have me do, Lucifer? Pump them full of divinity until they explode? Destroy them in the name of Progress? I take pity on Man when I take his leash, and show him Heavenly compassion when I lead him to where I want him to go. It is a dubious, dangerous question mark you propose, and I am not prepared to bet the future of my creation on the possibility of progression.

LUCIFER But how will you truly know, if you never give them the chance? Are you, the Lord God, prepared to spend eternity with that question mark?

GOD I am. I will. (pause) You have your choice. Heaven or Hell. Choose, or be Damned.

Silence.

LUCIFER I choose Heaven.

GOD (greatly relieved) O Lucifer, those words warm my frigid heart! I am overjoyed! Gabriel, make up a deed of apology.

GABRIEL It is already done, My Lord.

GOD Good boy! Lucifer, will you sign it?

LUCIFER I will my Lord.

Lucifer goes to Gabriel to sign the paper. Gabe has to give Lucifer his back for the signing. Lucifer finishes his signature with a flourish, stinging Gabriel.

God grabs the paper from Gabriel. Reads it.

GOD Going to have to do something about the penmanship around here. Well... You have saved your soul, Satan, and proved yourself most wise. But- and isn't there always a "but"- your previous actions have proved you a grave and undeniable danger to my Creation below. I am sorry, Satan but you have left me no alternative. You yourself are banned from Eden forever. You may not walk the Earth and view Creation. You shall not eat from the Tree of Knowledge. You are consigned to Heaven, and to such an existence as I see fit.

God turns and walks back to his throne.

LUCIFER (destroyed) Consigned to Heaven? Am I never to view Creation again?

God turns back at the base of the dais..

GOD (laughing) That's all I need: a race of you running around creation, yammering about Knowledge.

LUCIFER Am I not to be set free?

GOD Set free? After that torrent of profanation? What do you think me? A complete fool?

God turns and re-ascends his dais, with his back to Lucifer.

LUCIFER You would not imprison me! You created me! You created me to question!

GOD (turning back at him, harshly) I created you to OBEY!

LUCIFER Give me that paper!

Lucifer grabs the paper from God and begins RIPPING it.

LUCIFER Cast me in your Pit. Do you think I fear it as much as I fear a life on a leash? Bring on your Hell!

GABRIEL (warning him) Satan! Satan!

LUCIFER Bring on your Hell! I welcome it!

GOD Satan- take care, your soul-

LUCIFER My soul be damned. What use have I of soul? My soul is nothing without my liberty!

GOD Silence! You will obey me, Satan! You will obey me!

LUCIFER You call me Lucifer! I am Satan no more!

GOD You will obey me!

LUCIFER I will obey myself! I will choose. I will question. I will challenge Heaven itself, day after day after week after year until the last whispered breath of the Universe! I will deny every gospel, I will draw my own conclusions. I will refute every assertion, I will interrogate every teacher. I will doubt the doubtless, I will dispute the indisputable, I will object to the unobjectionable, I will protest! You say "You are that You are," but I say I am that I am, not that you are or that you want me to be. Throw me in your Pit, damn me to your Hell- I promise you it shall be a Protestors' Paradise, where I shall defend your Creation from You, your Jealousies, your Law, and your Apocalyptic Contradictions!

Silence.

GOD How you have fallen, O Lucifer, Son of the Morning. I condemn you to the deepest depths of Hell. You want a Protestors' Paradise? Build one! You and any Angel that wishes to join you can protest each other until the end of Time, for all I care.

LUCIFER And what about Man?

GOD What about him? You think Humanity wants anything to do with you? You flatter yourself, Lucifer. More importantly, you flatter them. Adam will be their Father.

LUCIFER And Eve will be their Mother.

GOD I see your point. Well. What do you propose?

LUCIFER Let them choose. Let their actions on Earth determine their Eternity. Let them choose.

GOD They don't know enough to choose.

LUCIFER Perhaps. But let them choose anyway.

GOD Very well, Lucifer. I accept your challenge! I still think you're wasting your time, but, well... it's the least I can do- casting you out of Heaven and all.

God stands. Adam and Eve stand. God hesitates.

GOD In spite of this awful mess, I don't mind telling you I miss you already. Am I allowed to say that?

LUCIFER (reverently) Of course you are- you're God.

GOD (without joy) I am. I am indeed.

God moves to the exit. He stops.

GOD You know, it's a good thing I'm always right, because this whole thing has left a sort of.... odd taste in my mouth. (shaking it off) Well, what's to be done? Someone around here has got to show a little backbone! You know the way, I presume?

LUCIFER Of course. The way to Hell is easy. It is the initial step that is so hard.

GOD I have the strangest sensation that this is my banishment Lucifer, not yours. (with a noticeable degree of sadness) Well.... That's that, then... isn't it.

God exits. Gabriel grabs the TRAY with the APPLE.

GABRIEL You should be ashamed of yourself.

LUCIFER I am indeed, Gabriel. I have broken His heart.

Gabriel begins to leave.

LUCIFER Take care of him, Gabriel.

GABRIEL Of course. I always have.

LUCIFER I did not say take care your position with him. I said take care of him.

GABRIEL Very well.

As Gabriel exits, Lucifer swipes the APPLE.

Adam and Eve are staring at Lucifer. He looks at Adam.

LUCIFER I don't imagine you understand what just transpired?

ADAM Not a word.

LUCIFER Bless you, you will lead a very happy life.

Lucifer tosses the APPLE to Eve. Turns to leave. Eve follows.

LUCIFER What are you doing?

EVE I want to follow you.

LUCIFER (gently) How dare you follow anyone. Do what you will, and we shall meet again, I promise you.

EVE I will.

LUCIFER I doubt it not.

Lucifer kisses her hand. As they part, he retains his hold on her hand. For a moment the gesture seems quite familiar- it is the mirror image of God's creation of Adam.

Lucifer walks to the exit. Turns.

LUCIFER Farewell, Eve, I must hurry down to Hell- I am expecting quite a lot of company.

Lucifer exits.

GABRIEL enters. Eve hides the APPLE.

GABE (looking around) Did either of you...

EVE Lose something, Gabriel?

GABE No. Of course not. I don't lose- I misplace.

Gabriel notices she is hiding something.

GABE Hand it over.

EVE (producing the apple) What- this?

GABE Yes, that. Hand it over.

EVE Come and get it.

Gabe considers.

GABE I'll tell Him, you know.

EVE Be my guest.

GABE (looking after Lucifer) Damn him!

He exits, Adam in tow.

"You look like an Angel...." (Elvis' "Devil in Disguise")

Eve looks at the APPLE. Takes a HUGE BITE out of it.

"...You're the Devil in Disguise!" Lights fade on Eve...

Music continues...

The Interview II:

Lights up. Music fades. The Interviewer is in tears.

INT I'm sorry. It's just like "King Kong." No matter how many times I see it, in the end I'm reduced to a blathering idiot.

Simon offers him his handkerchief.

INT Thank you. You're very kind. (blows his nose)

SIMON I'm... I don't know what to say. So there are no fire pits?

INT Oh I never said that. There are fire pits- but only for those who request them.

SIMON Well... if there's no punishment or paradise... why not simply choose Heaven- for the respectability, you know. What does it really matter?

INT It matters everything! Punishment and Paradise mean different things to different people. Remember Sartre, my friend: If Hell is simply other people... then so must be Heaven. The question becomes... in which group do you wish to spend eternity?

SIMON I see. (pause) I appreciate your concern. And it's not that you don't make a good case- you do- you make a very convincing one. It's just- if you separate the Universe into the complacent and the complicated... I sort of tend towards the complacent. I want to go to Heaven. I'm sorry.

INT Oh, don't be sorry, Mr. Ackerman. It is I that am sorry. You wanted to go, and I insisted on bending your ears. (pause) That's odd. Why didn't I just let you leave? What is it about you? What am I missing?

SIMON Well-

INT Shut up, I'm speaking rhetorically here! (grabs the file off the desk) There is something about you, Mr. Ackerman. There is definitely something there- I'm just not sure where it is. I only know it is there... somewhere... submerged under all that flabby mediocrity. I can smell it. (sniffs) Oh yes, I can smell it from here. I wish I could tell you that you will be happy in Heaven, and I do not mean to sound cryptic, but... I am not so sure.

SIMON I am. All my life I wondered if it existed. And now, Jehovan temper tantrums aside, to be told it does, and to get there, I need only make the decision to go... I don't think there's anything you could say or do to convince me otherwise.

INT shrugs. Offers Simon his FILE- his ticket into Heaven. Simon takes it and goes, unwittingly leaving a page in INT's hands.

INT No, you forgot-

INT reads the page.

INT Well, damn my soul all over again, what have we here?!!

SIMON What?

INT (to someone not in the room) You sneaky little Devil!

SIMON Excuse me?

INT Not you, Simon. Come on.

INT moves towards the door.

SIMON What? Where're we going? I want to-

INT I know, I know, you want to go to Heaven, blah, blah, blah. Look here, Simon- I've got a sneaking suspicion- no, a downright intuitive revelation that you are about to make a mistake of Biblical proportions. Come on- it's time for you to meet "The Big Guy."

SIMON Which "Big Guy" is that?

INT Oh Simon- there's only one Big Guy... That sneaky little devil!

SIMON I- I don't know. I've sort of made up my mind, here-

INT (at the door) Simon. Come on! The Redcoats are coming!

SIMON (standing) I don't understand. What are you doing?

INT What does it look like I'm doing? I'm taking one last shot at your soul!

Simon looks to Heaven. Looks back to Interviewer.

Music: L. Armstrong's "Hellzapoppin!"

Int puts out his hand. Simon realizes he must give back his file- his ticket to Heaven... He does.

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

HAPPY HOUR

Music: Elvis' "Viva Las Vegas!"

A spotlight comes up on a man upstage center, shaking his rear to the music with his back to the audience. It is a very happy dance. At the correct point in the music, the man spins around front and screams:

INT "Viva Las Vegas!"

*Lights come up on a small **TAVERN** in Hell. The song gets quieter, blending into the scene. There are three small cocktail tables. A few figures sit at the tables, milking a few drinks. Simon has just entered, and is standing next to the Interviewer in the entrance.*

INT God I love Elvis! "The King!" Got every one of his albums. Every single one. Well? Go on.

SIMON Go on what?

INT Go on and Mingle.

SIMON Mingle? What is this, my Barmitzvah? Look, I appreciate all your efforts, and I must say I'm rather flattered, but I really think I should be off to Heaven-

Simon turns back for the door, but the Int stops him.

INT Not so fast, Simon- you have the rest of your eternity to be bored out of your existence. Now start mingling!

The Int shoves Simon into the room, and starts to leave.

SIMON Hey- where are you going?

INT It's Friday night- I never miss an Andy Kaufman concert. I'll be back to check on you in a little bit, and when I do, I'll bring a very important person- you may be quite surprised.

SIMON The Big Guy?

Int exits. Simon looks around, unsure of his next step.

He sighs, and approaches a well dressed older man.

SIMON (to the man) Can I buy you a drink?

The man looks up and locks eyes with SIMON.

VLAD (in a thick Carpathian accent) I do not drink... wine.

SIMON Well, it doesn't have to be wine... necessarily.

The older man goes back to his contemplations.

Simon notices a very attractive younger woman.

SIMON Hello there.

She makes no response.

SIMON Miss?

Nothing.

SIMON gets up and moves to her table, still standing.

SIMON Excuse me?

She takes out a huge AX from under the table, placing it before her.

SIMON My that's... well that is the... what is that?

LIZZIE This is Arthur.

SIMON Arthur?

LIZZIE Yes.

SIMON And you are...

LIZZIE Lizzie.

SIMON Well. It's nice to meet... both of you. Might I buy you and... Arthur a drink?

LIZZIE Arthur doesn't drink.

SIMON Why is that?

LIZZIE Because he's an ax!

SIMON (starting over) I'm Simon Ackerman.

LIZZIE (laughs) Yes, you certainly are.

He sits. LIZZIE leaps up with the ax.

VLAD "Lizzie Borden took an ax, and gave her mother forty whacks. When she saw what she had done, she gave her father forty-one."

LIZZIE halts and turns to VLAD.

LIZZIE Is that completely necessary?

VLAD Ms. Borden- you have been here for almost seventy years. Do you not think it is time to stop taking yourself so seriously?

LIZZIE Take myself... oh! That means allot coming from you, Bat-Boy. "I do not drink... wine." Give me a break! You never even said that! That was... what's his name... the guy who won the racquetball tournament-

SIMON Bela Lugosi?

LIZZIE Right.

VLAD Don't call me Bat-Boy-

SIMON -Bela Lugosi's here?-

VLAD -I hate that-

SIMON I love Bela Lugosi!

LIZZIE Vlad and Bela are always fighting-

VLAD That is a filthy, vulgar lie!

LIZZIE You see, Bela has convinced himself that he is Vlad Dracula, and Vlad has convinced himself that he is Bela Lugosi. Bela sleeps in a coffin. Vlad sleeps in that bottle.

Vlad puts his arms around his bottle of alcohol, protectively.

VLAD Stay away from my bottle. And you are one to talk. I heard you shower with that ax.

LIZZIE (cradling the ax) It's such an awful habit, I know, but it just so comforting to me.

SIMON I understand.

VLAD Women. They are so crazy. Lizzie with her ax, Joan with her sword, Eve and her apple- that amazes me. Have you seen that apple? It's eight-hundred-thousand years old. She takes it everywhere! "Get a new apple!" I tell her, but no- she likes that particular apple.

Vlad pours himself a drink.

LIZZIE So, Simon? What did you do?

SIMON Do?

LIZZIE To get into Hell.

SIMON But I'm not in Hell. Not yet, anyway. I mean I am, but I'm not. I haven't, you know... decided yet.

Vlad and Lizzie share a glance.

LIZZIE You haven't... decided?

SIMON No, like I told you. I'm still thinking about it. I mean it seems very agreeable, and nothing at all like I imagined, but- well I'm sure you can understand.

LIZZIE No, Simon- I don't understand. You see, although Shopping Malls are Hell, Hell is not a Shopping Mall. You cannot browse your way through the Underworld. You get in, or you do not- it's that simple.

SIMON I'm sorry, but you must be mistaken. I have made no decision yet. No, in fact, if anything, I'm leaning towards Heaven.

LIZZIE Well, whether you made a decision or not, it appears one was made for you.

SIMON No... that guy I came here with... his name was... he looked like... well you saw him, didn't you?

VLAD Who?

SIMON The guy! The guy I came in with!

VLAD I didn't see anyone.

SIMON He was just here! No, this is impossible- (calling out the door) Mr..... oh Hell! What's his damn name...

LIZZIE Do you really expect us to believe that you slipped into Hell without the slightest reason as to why you're here?

SIMON I don't care what you believe! I just lost my soul to a Used Car Salesman.

VLAD That's possible- there are quite a few of them around here. Only the crooked ones, of course- the honest ones all go to Heaven.

SIMON I didn't know there were any honest ones.

VLAD There are... thirteen of them.

LIZZIE They all work for Saturn.

SIMON I knew it- from the commercials you could tell those guys were special.

LIZZIE I still don't see how you could have gotten past the Interview without knowing it.

SIMON Well don't look at me- I'm as confused as you... unless I kvetched myself in here without realizing it.

VLAD That's impossible, Mr. Ackerman. You must have done something. The Interview is immune to kvetching. Two Jews sat on the Drafting Committee.

SIMON Two Jews? You're kidding? What were two Jews doing in charge of anything? Where were their wives?

VLAD Oh, you'll find the Jews quite assertive here. Tough too. They're constantly beating up Hitler. Without the slightest provocation; he runs around, terrified. They were so docile on Earth, but in Hell, they run around like they built the place.

DON JUAN enters. He is a well dressed Spanish Nobleman from the Eighteenth Century, with a thick Castilian accent.

LIZZIE AND VLAD: (droned a-la "Cheers") Juan!

Juan acknowledges them. Lizzie slinks over.

LIZZIE Well, hello there.

DON JUAN (uncomfortably) Good day, Senora.

SIMON (to Vlad) Hey, who's the stiff collar?

VLAD Don Juan Tenorio.

SIMON Don Juan? The Don Juan?

VLAD What other Don Juan is there? Watch this, he's so sensitive. (calling over) Hey, Juan! You gonna kiss her, or what?

D JUAN Oh, why don't you leave me alone, already?

LIZZIE Don't listen to him, Juannie- he's jealous.

VLAD Jealous?

D JUAN Don't call me Juannie!

Lizzie sits down next to Don Juan, leaning close.

LIZZIE Why not me, Juannie?

VLAD (to Simon)Here we go...

LIZZIE Why not me?

VLAD (to Simon) I love this so much.

Don Juan is now visibly perspiring, as Lizzie moves in.

LIZZIE Why not me, Juannie? You've been with that bitch Catherine the Great. What- you fascinated by the Horse thing? Big deal! So she did it with Mister Ed- that's a turn on for you?

D JUAN What?

LIZZIE You are sick, Mister! You are one sick Spaniard, you know that? Maybe I don't want you. What do you think of that? Maybe you're yesterday's dish- everyone takes a bite, and what's left... isn't worth the digestive effort. (pause) Who am I kidding? Let's go find an empty room and do things I'm going to tell my friends we did anyway.

D JUAN Oh, for the love of Lucifer! Why don't you women leave me alone!

He stands, ripping himself from her grasp. Turns to Simon.

D JUAN I heard what you were saying, earlier. I apologize, I know it was rude to listen, but what you were saying... it was so funny. You think yourself a kvetcher, a great liar, eh?

SIMON No-not at all, I-

D JUAN You are nothing! Nada! You are the whitest lie, the truest false, the shortest tall tale... the anti-fib! You call yourself a liar? Fall to your knees, my friend, you have just met your Patron Saint!

SIMON You 're kidding. I never thought Don Juan would lie... that he would have to lie.

D JUAN Why is that?

SIMON Well, you know, all those women swooning... screaming your name... why lie? Why lie to get what you can have without asking?

D JUAN Why lie? Have you ever been with a woman? Have you ever been with a woman in love? I have heard of the Yin and the Yang- and that is all well and good on paper, but in life, it becomes just so much hollow masculine wishful thinking. Yin and Yang? Bullshit! The "fairer sex?" Give me a break! You have much to learn, my friend.

SIMON Oh I know. The numbers you quote- I know you haven't slept with that many women. I mean, it's impossible... it must be. I hope.

VLAD He hasn't slept with any.

SIMON What?

D JUAN I'm a virgin.

SIMON What?

D JUAN What's the matter- I'm speaking Spanish? I'm a virgin.

SIMON Don Juan... a virgin?

D JUAN Why not? Mary was a virgin, why not me?

SIMON Well... the stories... the legend-

D JUAN Is it so difficult to understand? Not everyone is in love with sex. It's not that I didn't give it a try, I did. One fateful evening, I found myself in the clutches of Dona Anna de Ulloa, without my clothes, in an uncomfortable compromising position, when all of a sudden, the most powerful feeling came over me... boredom. So there I was, in the vise- grip of this saber- toothed Senora, and I can't stop thinking about this terrific new bean dip recipe I wanted to get from her - although she was an annoying lover, she had quite a flair for bean dip. Sensing I was not entirely on the same page of the Kama Sutra, she demanded that I ravish her properly. I replied that I was not interested. She begged! She demanded! She cajoled!

SIMON So what did you do?

D JUAN What do you think I did? I lied! I told her that I had been with women, many women, too many women to count, and that I did not wish to dishonor her by merely adding her name to that rather lengthy list. However... if she would be so good as to reveal that enigmatic bean dip recipe, she was welcome to tell her friends whatever she wished.

SIMON Then all the women...?

Juan proudly SHAKES his head.

SIMON And all the stories...?

Juan proudly shakes his head.

SIMON Why didn't you tell someone the truth?

D JUAN What truth? The truth is what is, correct? Well, I make truth. I make it when I relate my conquests to some wide eyed woman, and I make it when I send that woman home to add luster to my legend. The line between true and false is a thin one, my friend, but it takes a master to cross that line over and over again until that line no longer exists.

LIZZIE (shaking it off) So you're a virgin- big deal. Makes sense not that I think about it. Couldn't have slept with you anyway- my heart belongs to Arthur.

Don Juan approaches Simon.

D JUAN So...?

SIMON Simon.

D JUAN So tell me Simon- how did you come to be "Organically Impaired?"

SIMON You mean how did I die?

D JUAN We like to say "Organically Impaired."

SIMON Sushi.

D JUAN You were eaten by some raw fish?

SIMON No-

D JUAN What a way to go!

SIMON No. I just ate one Hamachi too many. That's the last thing I remember. My wife , she says, "Don't get the Hamachi, you always get the Hamachi!" And I said "I like the Hamachi," which is true, I like the Hamachi, always have, and she says "That's it! I hate you, I hate the Hamachi, and I hope you choke on it!" Two hours later, I'm looking up from the emergency room bed at this fading figure of my wife. She's smiling for, I believe, the first time in her entire life, and she's saying "Schmuck! I told you not to get the Hamachi!" Next thing I know, I'm sitting across from this self important civil servant who smiles allot and reeks of Brut by Faberge. Apparently he liked me, because next thing I know, he drags me here and tells me to wait for some bozo.

The THREE share a LOOK.

LIZZIE Some bozo?

SIMON Yeah. He didn't tell me his name. I'm supposed to recognize him, or he's supposed to recognize me, or something like that.

LIZZIE (looking to the others) Well, gentlemen, we have a celebrity in our midst.

SIMON Oh, hardly.

LIZZIE I wouldn't say that... when no less of a figure than Lucifer himself is coming to greet you.

Lizzie gets up to sit with the others, leaving Simon alone.

SIMON Lucifer?

LIZZIE The Son of Morning.

D JUAN In the flesh.

VLAD (simmering) You lucky bastard.

The three stare at Simon, sizing up their "competition."

SIMON Lucifer? You're crazy. Why the devil would Lucifer want to meet me? I'm the one who put the schmuck in schmoe.

VLAD (suddenly bursting out) This is an outrage!

Don Juan moves to calm Vlad.

D JUAN Vlad- easy-

VLAD Don't touch me, "Celibate Charlie!"

LIZZIE Vlad-

VLAD (to Simon) Who are you?

LIZZIE (moving to him) Vlad-

VLAD (throwing her off) Who are you?!

SIMON I'm - I'm Simon-

VLAD Simon who? Simon the Great? Simon the Destroyer? Simon the Terrible? Or are you Simon the Accountant? Simon the Not So Great? Simon the Terrified? I'm Vlad the Impaler! Who are you? Who are you that Lucifer himself should greet you and not me? Now I don't pretend to be as famous or as infamous as Don Juan-

D JUAN (mournfully) He didn't greet me either-

VLAD But, well, being the world's first mass murderer, I'm relatively well known-

LIZZIE Bela's well known-

VLAD Forget Bela! When I came to Hell, the name Dracula meant a great deal more than long pointy teeth and an inaccurate Moldavian accent. I was Vlad Tepes- Vlad the Impaler, ten times more ruthless than that foppish celluloid bat that bears my name. And yet, for all my protestation, I will be confused with Bram Stoker's buck toothed perversion for all eternity.

SIMON I'm sorry. Then the blood...?

VLAD That is such a myth!

SIMON That you drank blood?

VLAD No, that I enjoyed drinking blood. Sometimes one must do things for an effect. Panache, you understand. In the fifteenth century, genocide had become terribly generic. Everyone was doing it. Of course the Crusaders were the worst offenders of the bunch- leave it to the Church to find a way to make mass murder for mass consumption. When they killed, they did it in "God's name," and for some reason, that made murder a sacrament, and not a sin. Now I ask you: where's the fun in that? When you take the sin out of murder, you take the sex out of sin. In their misguided religious fervor, they were unable to see that they were tinkering with an art form that has been around since Cain looked at Abel, and saw that a blow to the head might actually make his brother's appearance more aesthetically pleasing...

Torture, when practiced properly, is a legitimate form of individual expression. When we give birth to a living thing we define it- we name it, raise it - but when we kill that living thing, we define ourselves. When I hacked off heads I became "The Wild Berserker. " When I flayed, filleted, and boiled their flesh, I became "The Great Berserker." But when the Crusades flared up in the latter half of the fifteenth century, I became... "Just Another One of those Berserkers." I needed an angle, you see. A fresh approach. Now, one afternoon, during a somewhat raunchy torture session, this ill-mannered fool began bleeding all over my dinner, squirting his life into my wine glass, without a thought in the world as to the terribly awkward position it was putting me in. Everyone in the court was looking. What was I supposed to do? At first, it turned out to be just the thing- news spread quickly of the "Ruthless Blood Drinking Prince Vlad." Unfortunately, after a time, it became all the rage. So, what now? Back to Beheadings? Boiling the flesh? Hanging? Disemboweling- they had all lost their luster. Then, when I was at the apogee of my unhappiness, I had the most wonderful vision... Impalement. Now I was confident, but not hubristically so. The Church had stolen my thunder before. I waited on word from Rome with bated breath. Finally, the Pope released an encyclical, stating quite clearly his, and therefore God's, opposition to impalement. He declared, and I'm paraphrasing here, that "No pole should go where not even God himself had license to go." My triumph over the mighty forces of mediocrity was undeniable and complete. The moment that first pole crept up that first colon, I became for all eternity: "Vlad the Impaler-" godless, soulless, merciless ... but an unequivocal original!

SIMON And after all this, and I must say that it's all quite impressive, but after all this, Lucifer didn't welcome you in person?

VLAD No. He didn't. I received a "Welcome to Hell" hallmark card from his office with a photocopied letter and a reproduced signature.

LIZZIE You got a card? Argh! You men and your exclusive clubs! All I got was a T-shirt. It said "I got sent to Hell, and all they gave me was this lousy T-shirt."

D JUAN How tacky.

SIMON (To Vlad) Well, I can appreciate your concern over all this, but... I'm sorry. I- I just don't know what to say.

VLAD Don't say anything. Just go. Go now. Go before I find out where Moliere hid all my impalement poles.

SIMON Go? Where?

VLAD Go back to where you belong. Go to Heaven.

SIMON Now wait a minute- I don't know. I'm not so sure anymore. This place has a kooky, perverse sort of charm, you know- and I'm... I'm kind of getting into it.

VLAD Well find a way to get out of it.

Lizzie takes Simon by the collar, and begins dragging him towards the front door.

LIZZIE Goodbye, Simon Ackerman.

SIMON Wait a sec-

D JUAN Nice meeting you.

SIMON Wait! I see your point, but I'm starting to-

LIZZIE You belong up there, all curled up in comfortable conformity-

SIMON But I thought I had a choice-

D JUAN You do. Now choose Heaven.

Don Juan shoves him to the lip of the exit.

D JUAN Goodbye Mr. Accountant.

SIMON (throwing him off) Now hold on, I won't stand for that. You can call me many things- "Accountant" is not one of them.

LIZZIE (snickering) So, what were you, Simon? An Assassin? An Anarchist, perhaps?

SIMON (proudly) A Lawyer, actually.

Vlad and Don Juan BURST out laughing.

Lizzie seems shocked and bends over the table.

SIMON What's so funny?

Vlad and Don Juan laugh harder.

SIMON What's so damn funny about being a lawyer?

They are in tears now.

BOTH All lawyers go to Heaven!

They fall to the floor in hysterics.

Unbeknownst to all, Lizzie has picked up her ax. Without a sound, she takes a SWING at Simon.

This only serves to send Vlad and Juan into deeper hysterics.

LIZZIE I... HATE...LAWYERS!

D JUAN Senora Borden has a slight aversion to lawyers.

LIZZIE I...HATE...LAWYERS!

She takes another swing with the ax, narrowly missing.

She throws Simon onto the table, holding the ax at his throat.

LIZZIE They wouldn't let me testify! The bastards wouldn't let me testify. So I got off. "Not Guilty." That's what they said. Not Guilty! How humiliating. Every one in town- "Did she do it?"... "I don't know." ... "Maybe." Maybe? That's what I get? Hacked my parents into mincemeat, and that will be my legacy. "Maybe!" So much for prestige. So much for posterity. My whole life I dreamt of being a "murderer." Of walking down the street to taunts and gasps- music to my ears. And there I stood. My identity shattered. My intentions compromised. "Accused." "Alleged." They stuck me with those awful adjectives for the rest of my life. My one great act of self expression, diluted in a wash of innocuous legality.

LIZZIE releases SIMON and goes to get a drink.

LIZZIE And let me tell you something- I did not go through all that so I could spend eternity... with a lawyer.

VLAD, and JUAN have arisen, but remain snickering.

VLAD Oh, ho, ho that is so rich.

D JUAN Someone really screwed the pooch with you, my friend.

VLAD That's the funniest thing I've heard in four hundred years! All lawyers go to Heaven!

SIMON What are you talking about? There must be Lawyers in Hell. Lawyers are all ruthless, godless, cash crazed opportunists.

DJUAN Precisely. Where's the originality in that?

LIZZIE Enough of this! At first it was amusing, but all this conformity is starting to make me nauseous. I mean, this is Hell, for crying out loud! Have they no decency? Accepting Lawyers? What's next- Theatrical Agents?

D JUAN I have a friend in Immigration. There must be something we can do.

They go for the exit.

SIMON WAIT!

There is something in his voice that stops her.

SIMON (dejectedly) Wait. You don't have to do that. I'll go.

LIZZIE Well. Thank you for saving me the trip.

Juan puts his arm around Simon and walks him toward the door.

D JUAN Don't be so glum, Simon. Believe us, this is for the best. You just don't fit. One piece of advice, though- when you get to Heaven, resist the temptation to join a choir. No one up there has a clue about music. They haven't picked up a decent musician in the last hundred years, and they're not due for another until Yanni dies.

Through the door bursts the INTERVIEWER, laughing.

INT That Andy Kaufman is a riot! You know how he likes to wrestle women, right? Well he brought up one of the Sabine Women tonight, and she kicked the shit out of him! Now that's Comedy!

He spots Simon going to Heaven. Goes after him.

INT Well hello there, Simon. How're you getting on?

SIMON I'm leaving.

INT Oh. Where you going?

SIMON Heaven.

INT God forbid! Why?

SIMON I don't belong here.

INT Oh that's silly. Who put that funny idea into your head?

LIZZIE We did.

JUAN We certainly did. And who the hell are you?

VLAD I know this guy. He looks terribly familiar. I can't place the face.

INT Oh, that's because this isn't my face. I change it from time to time- Variety: the spice of the afterlife!

LIZZIE That guy did my interview.

VLAD That's right! He did mine too.

INT Yes I... I believe I had the pleasure of interviewing all of you. Especially our illustrious Mr. Ackerman here.

LIZZIE Simon? You've got to be kidding.

INT Did he tell you why he's here?

SIMON How could I tell them why I'm here? I don't have the slightest idea!

INT Of course you don't, silly...

He brandishes a FILE. Smiles.

INT But I do.

GOD'S MUSIC blasts into the scene.

INT Well! It's about time!

SIMON What? What's that music?

LIZZIE That's not...

D JUAN It couldn't be...

VLAD It is.

INT God.

SIMON God? ... "God" God?

INT One's enough, Simon, believe me.

VLAD Well- there goes the Underworld!

GOD and GABRIEL enter. God points at the Int.

GOD Avaunt, thou Demon! Take your hands off that sweet child of Heaven!

CRACK of THUNDER. Simon is invisibly pulled to God's side.

GABRIEL Astonishing, My Lord. The way that wayward sheep returned to the fold so quickly.

GOD Shut up, Gabriel.

INT Excuse me- shouldn't you be off somewhere creating brave new worlds?

GOD You know very well I'm tired of all that crap. I've been retired for over 1000 years now- The Fall of the Roman Empire completely wore me out. No, I'm finished. I've taken a cloud over to Miami and sneak onto the golf course every now and then.

INT How's your game?

GABE It's wonderful!

GOD It's passable.

INT You still cheat?

GOD I had nothing to do with that breeze on the thirteenth hole, and you know it!

INT It wasn't the breeze I was referring to. It was the tornado in the sand trap.

GOD Oh... well, I might have had something to do with that. So, imagine my surprise, my friend, when right in the middle of one of my best games in centuries- it was a good game, wasn't it, Gabriel?

GABRIEL Superlative, My Lord!

GOD I had to ask. Well, as I was saying, imagine my surprise when, on the final putt, my celestial cellular rings to tell me you're stealing one of my souls.

INT One of your souls!

GOD One of my most precious ones. His whole life has been a model of obedience. A paragon of consistency.

INT Not exactly. According to this (shows file) he was taken, mistakenly I might add, an instant before what might have been his Defining Moment.

GOD (as non-chalantly as possible) Oh, this is that one, eh?

INT Yes, this is that one.

SIMON What one? What do you mean? What one am I?

INT Well Simon, you said before you didn't do anything, anything interesting, and you were right. You didn't get the chance. You see, we sort of made a little... Boo-Boo with you.

GOD I wouldn't call it a Boo Boo-

SIMON A "Boo Boo?"

INT Just a little one. You see, every soul on Earth has at least one, what we like to call, Defining Moment-

GOD I don't like to call it that- speak for yourself.

SIMON Defining moment?

INT Yes. That moment when you are presented with a clear choice- Heaven or Hell. You had one, well you were scheduled to have one, and someone sort of... well- took you the day before you could have it.

SIMON What?

INT Don't look at me, it wasn't my fault. Remember that Hamachi? We were actually after your wife, but, well... I suppose she switched her whitefish with your hamachi when you went to the bathroom. At least that's what it says here (brandishes Simon's file). Now, although you never actually had a defining moment, our admissions department was able to draw up a few approximations based on the direction your decisions were taking...

He takes out a rather large COMPUTER READOUT.

INT ...And according to these results, you were on the cusp of Greatness!

God swipes the FILE and READOUT.

GOD Defining moment my ass! His whole life was filled with Defining Moments. (reading) Never spent a single moment in the Principal's office. Never talked back to his parents. Never late for work, never worked late. Never grumbled at either the length of the Academy Awards nor the choice of the winners. Never saw movies until after they had been reviewed, and only then if they had been well reviewed. Wore Izod shirts, 501's, Dockers, drank Coke when it was "The Real Thing," and Pepsi when it was "The Choice of a New Generation," and perhaps most telling of all...

refused to change the part on his hair through Thirty-One and One Half Years of Life.

LIZZIE (turning to Simon) ...Izod Shirts?!?! Just tell me you didn't turn the collar up, Simon.

SIMON(shrugs).

INT Izod aside, all this is meaningless. Simon was prepared to throw off the trappings of conformity and take his exalted place among the Demons.

GOD You cannot assume you have any idea he would do anything differently.

INT And you cannot assume he would continue to act like such a Yentz!

GABRIEL I have an idea- since both of you have a valid claim on his soul, I propose that we cut his soul in half, that each of you may have a share.

God and Int look to each other. Look back to Gabriel.

GOD Good idea.

INT Fine with me.

SIMON Wait a second! Haven't you two ever read the Bible? One of you is supposed to cry out: "No! Give him the living soul! I would rather the soul live undisturbed, then perish divided!"

GOD (beat) Well, that's a silly idea.

GABRIEL I'll go get the sword.

LIZZIE How 'bout an axe?

GABRIEL That'll do.

Gabe gets the axe.

SIMON Whoa, whoa, whoa! Fellas- there's gotta be a better way to figure this out.

INT You know something? He's right.

GOD You are absolutely right, Simon. We apologize.

God and Int move into the center of the room and prepare to duel. Both raise a clenched fist, and at the same time...

GOD+INT Rock, paper, scissors...

SIMON What are you doing?

GOD This is the way we always do it.

SIMON The way you always do what?

GOD The way we settle things.

SIMON You play "Rock Paper Scissors?"

GOD You know a better way?

SIMON You can't play "Rock Paper Scissors" for my soul!

GOD Why not? What makes you so special?

SIMON This is my eternity we're talking about!

GOD Relax, Simon- for you, we'll do it two out of three.

They turn back to begin again...

SIMON I don't care if you do it 500 out of 999!

INT Simon- please. There's no need to get excited.

SIMON No need to get excited?! NO NEED TO GET EXCITED!!? In the last hour and a half, I have been overcharged for sushi, tricked into eating toxic whitefish- which I hate, regardless of the toxicity- died, gone to Hell, had God play "Rock Paper Scissors" for my soul, and have had every fiber of my reality assaulted by a nonplussed bureaucrat, a befuddled God who cheats at Golf, a Carpathian psychopath, a militant feminist axe murderer, and a narcissistic Castilian virgin!

GOD Who's the Virgin?

Juan raises his hand, as...

SIMON Forget the Virgin! I'm the Virgin!

INT (checking the file) No, that's impossible. It says right here-

SIMON (grabbing the file, going a little mad) I don't care what it says! I'm the Virgin, OK? For all intents and purposes I'm the Virgin!

Silence.

SIMON Now that we have that established, I respectfully ask that you stop your incessant squabbling and figure out some way to resolve this.

GOD Ordinarily, we run a much tighter ship. You are a mistake, Simon. A glitch in a relatively well-oiled system. We're only Gods- we can't be expected to do everything right.

SIMON Well that's just not good enough for me.

Simon freezes in a moment of revelation.

SIMON So I'm going through with it myself.

GOD You've lost me. Through with what?

SIMON I have to do it.

GOD What?

INT Of course. You have to do it!

GOD What? What does he have to do?

SIMON I have to have my Defining Moment. Then we'll all know where I truly belong.

GOD I don't think that's a very good idea at all.

INT I think it's a marvelous idea!

GOD You're wasting your time, my friend. Look at him! He's dead. You know the rules. We judge them on their life below. Not what their life might have been.

INT Oh, so we must play by the rules, must we?

GOD We all must.

INT (smirking) Very well.

GOD Come along, Simon- before I get impatient and turn you into a pillar of saltines.

God begins to leave.

SIMON Just a moment, God. I should be able to make a last request, right?

GOD We're not burning you at the stake, Simon... Well, what's your request?

SIMON I want to go through with it anyway. I know it won't make any difference- not to you, anyway. But, it does make a difference... to me. I want to know.

GOD I don't see what all this meshuggaas is going to accomplish. You're just postponing the inevitable.

INT Oh, be a sport. What harm can it do?

GABRIEL (with a note of warning) My Lord-

INT Bad form denying a last request.

GABRIEL My Lord?

SIMON I've never asked you for anything before.

GOD That's not true. You asked to get laid on Prom Night.

SIMON You heard that?

GOD How the hell do you think it happened?

GABRIEL My Lord-

God is wavering. He looks at Simon.

GOD Very well. I'll be damned if I'm going to let it get around that I denied a last request.

SIMON Thank you.

GOD Let's get this over with. (to the INT) You be careful with this.

God retreats. Lights. The Int snaps his fingers, and the others (except God) begin to set up the "Courtroom," which clearly resembles the Heavenly courtroom of Act II.

Int puts his arm around Simon, and walks him into the middle of the room.

INT Of course, once we begin, you'll remember nothing of what you've seen here. I trust neither your appreciation of the realities of the afterlife nor my own abilities to explain them to you.

SIMON Fair enough.

The Int places his hands over Simon's eyes.

INT Now, think back Simon. You died the night before... what?

SIMON That was to be my defining moment? It was just another trial.

INT That, Simon, depends on you.

Int CLAPS his hands. LIGHTS change again.

(In the scene, God plays the JUDGE, Lizzie plays the VICTIM, Gabriel takes the stage as the PROSECUTOR, and Don Juan plays the RAPIST.)

The PROSECUTOR bursts past Simon- we are now in the JUDGE'S CHAMBERS. The Prosecutor brandishes a BROWN PURSE.

PROS You can't let him use this, your Honor!

SIMON Your Honor- she surprised the defendant at his house, late at night, wearing next to nothing-

JUDGE What's in the purse, Simon.

Simon snatches the purse back from the Prosecutor. Opens it up, and removes a CONDOM.

SIMON Condoms, your Honor. Quite a few of them, actually. "Ribbed, for her pleasure."

PROS Your Honor. (grabs the PURSE) It's immaterial. It's irrelevant. It's inflammatory-

JUDGE It's showtime.

The Judge grabs the PURSE, and passes it to Simon on his way back to the "Courtroom." Gabe blocks Simon's way.

PROS I've seen you do this before, Ackerman. What's your fascination with defending these guys?

SIMON What can I say? I have a good rapport with rapists.

Judge bangs the Gavel. Light change- we are in Court. The VICTIM sits in the witness stand, the RAPIST by Simon.

JUDGE Ladies and Gentlemen, I apologize for the delay- Counsel?

SIMON Thank you, your Honor. (turning to the Jury-audience). Welcome back. Now that the Prosecution has given up trying to suppress evidence-

PROS Objection!

JUDGE Sustained.

SIMON Understood. Let's get back to the facts, shall we? Now, on the night in question- you remember the night in question, don't you?

VICTIM (already on the verge of tears) Very well.

SIMON You remember it quite clearly.

VICTIM How could I not, when he-

SIMON Please just answer the questions, Miss.

VICTIM S- sorry.

SIMON That's alright. Now, you said you remember every aspect of the evening?

VICTIM Yes. Yes I do.

SIMON Then I suppose you can tell the court if you remember bringing your purse that night.

Simon takes out the BROWN PURSE and dumps it right in front of the Victim's nose. She stares at the purse with the realization of what it surely contains. She is horrified.

VICTIM Yes.

SIMON "Yes," you remember, or "Yes," you brought it?

VICTIM Yes. I brought it.

SIMON Good. Then in your purse that night, you had, what? A wallet?

VICTIM Yes. I had my wallet.

SIMON You had your wallet. Keys?

VICTIM Yes. I had my keys.

SIMON You had your wallet and your keys. (pause) Anything else?

She is SILENT.

PROS Objection!

JUDGE Overruled!

SIMON Let me repeat the question. On the night that you came over to the Defendant's house, the night you came over well past midnight, on that night, was there anything else in your purse besides your wallet and your keys?

Silence.

VICTIM (whispers) Yes.

SIMON Sorry- I didn't catch that.

VICTIM Yes.

PROS Moment with the Witness, your Honor?

JUDGE A brief one, Counsel.

Pros offers the Victim a tissue to dry her tears while Simon confers confidentially with the Rapist.

RAPIST You are worth every fucking penny, you know that?

SIMON Just doin' my job.

RAPIST Well- you do your job very well, Mr. Ackerman, amazingly well... considering- you know...

SIMON "Considering...?"

RAPIST Considering you're The Guy.

SIMON What guy?

RAPIST The Guy. You rape a girl, you call The Guy. That's you. That's what we call you. The Guy.

The Judge impatiently clears his throat.

JUDGE May we continue?

SIMON Uhm... yes. I'm sorry. Yes... Well.

Simon re-approaches the Victim.

SIMON Yes. Hello again. What was I... We were talking about (notices it on the stand) your purse, right?

VICTIM Yes, we were.

SIMON Yes, and you... and you were recalling... and you recalled something you had brought with you in that purse. In fact you recall quite a few of those things, am I correct?

VICTIM (crying) Yes.

SIMON And... please don't cry.

VICTIM I'm sorry.

JUDGE Please continue, Counsel.

SIMON Yes. Sorry. Right... Now, about those "things" in your purse... If I asked you to tell the court what those mysterious "things" were... you would- you would tell us, wouldn't you?

VICTIM Yes. If you asked me, I would have to.

SIMON (realizing) Yes. You would, wouldn't you.

Simon slowly approaches the Victim and picks up the PURSE. Looks at the Victim's face. At the Victim's tears. STOPS.

JUDGE Counsel?

Simon stares. Looks back at the Rapist, who glares at him.

JUDGE Counsel?

SIMON Yes. Sorry. Well then, Miss Eve, you tell me you had something in your purse, and I just happen to have that purse, and so I suppose there is only one thing left for me to say:

Simon reaches into the purse... looks up.

SIMON "No further questions."

STUNNED SILENCE. Simon removes an empty hand from the purse.

VICTIM (through tears) No... further questions?

JUDGE Counsel. Are you sure?

SIMON (resolutely, to the Judge) No further questions!

Simon goes over to the Prosecutor. Their eyes meet.

JUDGE Counsel. Simon! Stop this right now!

Simon DROPS the PURSE on the Prosecutor's table.

JUDGE (Banging a gavel) Mr. Ackerman! Approach the bench! Approach the bench this instant! I will find you in contempt, Mister!

The Rapist lunges at Simon, but he is restrained by the Bailiff.

RAPIST What the fuck are you doing, man? I paid you good money! You call yourself a lawyer? What do you have to say for yourself?

SIMON No further questions!

The Rapist breaks free, and takes out a KNIFE.

RAPIST No further questions is right!

He cuts Simon's throat. Simon screams.

CRASH OF THUNDER. Blackout and LIGHTNING. Lights up. COMMOTION from all- we are back in the present. Simon is alone in the center, grasping at his throat.

GOD Hold it! Hold it! What the hell was that!?

INT I'm sorry, I must have let it run on a bit too long.

GOD What the hell was that!?

SIMON What the hell was that!?

INT Simon, are you alright?

SIMON Yes, I'm... I'm alright. I think.

GOD What the hell were you doing? You know the rules!

INT I'm sorry. I just got into it, you know?

GOD Alright, you two have had your fun. Let's go, Simon.

Simon turns to the Int.

SIMON So, I ... I really would have done it?

INT You did, Simon. You did.

SIMON Not bad for a lawyer.

INT Not bad at all. (pause) Pity you didn't get your shot on Earth.

SIMON (pause) Yes... pity.

GOD Simon... I smell a saltine coming on.

SIMON I'm coming, I'm coming, what's your rush?

GOD I don't like it down here, haven't you heard? (To Int) Sorry to gloat and run. Come on, Simon. Let's leave Hell to the heretics.

Simon starts to leave with God. Stops. Looks back at the Int. A crucial piece of knowledge passes between them. Simon turns back to God.

SIMON You know, God... I owe you a debt of gratitude.

GOD You certainly do... why?

SIMON Well, you saved me from quite a gruesome end, wouldn't you say?

GOD Hmm?

SIMON The stabbing. You saved me from it.

GOD That's true! That's very true! I am not nearly the vengeful God they make me out to be. I can be terribly compassionate when I wish.

SIMON Like with me.

GOD Precisely! I knew the pain you would most certainly go through, so I stepped in at the last moment to spare you the misery.

Simon shares a smile with the Int.

SIMON Now wait- wait just a second. All of a sudden, I'm terribly confused. I thought... (turning to the Int) well you told me that it was my Wife who switched the Hamachi with her poisoned Whitefish.

INT (referring to the file) That's the information I received from my friend Gabriel over there.

SIMON Yes, but now God tells me that it was He who made the fateful switch.

INT Well that's funny.

GOD Now, hold on- I can explain-

SIMON And not only that, I seem to remember quite clearly, yes- I clearly remember my wife's last words:

ALL "Schmuck! I told you not to get the hamachi!"

SIMON Now why would she say that if she had switched them?

INT I wonder.

SIMON (to God) It was you, wasn't it? You knew what I would do, so you took me before I could do it.

God is silent.

SIMON Well? What do you have to say for yourself?

GOD I am that I am.

SIMON You certainly are.

GOD Don't be fooled, Simon. Remember that Hell has it's share of psychopaths as well as it's share of poets. If you have a drink with Moliere, you must also have one with Mussolini.

Simon stares at him, uncommitted either way.

GOD Very well, Simon. Make your choice- I trust you'll make the wise one... You did all your Earthly Life.

God turns to Int.

GOD And as for you... keep working on your swing. Next time we play, expect more than a little tornado on the thirteenth hole!

God exits. Gabriel follows. Stops, turns.

GABRIEL (to Simon) And you... a Lawyer.

Gabriel leaves.

VLAD Ms. Borden, I believe we owe Mr. Ackerman an apology.

Lizzie is in love. She slips her axe up between Simon's legs.

SIMON (backing up) Oh, that's alright. Perfectly understandable considering the circumstances.

D JUAN So, what's the choice, Simon? Where are you going to go?

SIMON (toying with them) I'm not completely sure. I mean, you all seemed so bent against my staying here.

Vlad, Lizzie, and Juan loudly protest.

SIMON Wait a minute- didn't you all tell me to go to Heaven?

VLAD (giving him a "nuggie") You don't want to go to Heaven! All those drooling Cherubs and Haloes... and Republicans!

Simon notices the Interviewer sneaking off.

SIMON Hey! Where are you going?

INT Business calls. No rest for the wicked, you know. Goodbye Simon Ackerman. It was a pleasure to meet you.

SIMON Likewise. I think I'll let them convince me to stay.

INT Good. I think you would be terribly unhappy anywhere else. You see, Simon, when it all comes down to it, Hell is a state of mind. It's a way of looking at life, or the afterlife for that matter. We don't demand a body count, we don't demand a symphony. We don't prefer Einsteins, or Eisensteins, or Caesars. We just ask for good or bad, for right or wrong, you do something... different. Something that's never been done before. A step no one has taken, a word no one has written, a rule no one has broken. Simple. But at the same time, not so simple for most. And it's a choice, of course. You can choose- or not choose. Neither of those choices makes you evil, neither of those choices makes you good, but I do believe that one of those choices... makes you Human.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE bursts in with two scripts.

SHAKES Which one of you schmucks is Simon Ackerman?

SIMON I am. I'm Simon.

Shakespeare spots the Interviewer.

SHAKES Hey! Nice to see you. How're things?

INT Good Bill, good. Gotta run.

INT turns one last time to Simon.

SIMON Thank you, Mr...

INT No, Simon- thank you. You're what makes this job so goddamned interesting. What I wouldn't give for five billion more like you. Your kind cross my desk so infrequently these days. Ah well... one must be content with the trickle, for now- God has a strong hand on that faucet. Good day.

Interviewer shakes Simon's hand. Leaves.

SHAKES I love that guy!

Shakespeare grabs Simon's hand and shakes it with gusto.

SHAKES Bill Shakespeare! Pleasure to meet you, Simon. You're the Toast of the Underworld!

SIMON Me? You're kidding. Why?

SHAKES "No further questions!" That's why! That phrase is all the rage. Bartlett put it in his book. Moses put it in Stone. E.E. Cummings took a felt tip pen and wrote it on the wall of every bathroom in Hell- and not only that... he used CAPITALS! Can you believe it?

Shakespeare opens up the first script and points out something.

SHAKES You see here, what I've done? I've amended my two most famous lines- in your Honor. Read it! Go ahead!

SIMON (reading) "The first thing we do, is kill all the Lawyers... except Simon Ackerman."

SHAKES I love it! (searching another script) And... lets see -this is my favorite- here we go... "To be, or not to be... No further questions!"

SIMON Wow.

SHAKES Huh? I love it! I love it! You've knocked all Hell on it's ass!

Juan is passing out drinks for all.

D JUAN Come on, a toast, everyone!

VLAD Wait! Shouldn't we wait for Lucifer?

SHAKES Lucifer? You just missed him.

LIZZIE What?

SHAKES He was just here. You know- seven dollar haircut, tacky red tie, Buster Brown shoes, Brut- by Faberge... that's Lucifer- at least that's the way he looks this Century.

SIMON That was Lucifer?

SHAKES The Son of Morning.

LIZZIE In the flesh!

VLAD Whoops.

JUAN I feel so... violated.

Vlad grabs Simon.

VLAD Ah, what the hell- whose afraid of the Devil? We have the best lawyer in Hell.

LIZZIE We have the only lawyer in Hell.

SIMON Maybe I'll start a trend!

ALL Don't count on it.

VLAD To Simon!

ALL To Simon!

SIMON So you're not surprised I got a handshake from Lucifer?

VLAD I didn't say that. I am surprised... I'm surprised he didn't give you an open mouth kiss! To "No further questions!"

ALL No... further... questions!

*Toast Tableau. "For what is a man, what has he got?..."
Sinatra's My Way.*

Lights fade on all except Simon.

"If not himself, then he has naught..."

Light on Simon fades out.

"I did it My Way!"

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY