Screenplay by Christy Charles

He is running. Fast. Panting, his face is dripping with perspiration, his breath coming in short gasps. His surroundings is a blur as he runs past. His eyes show up the terror inside him. Every two steps he covers he looks behind. He runs like a man being chased. Like a man possessed. He looks back to see whether his pursuer is catching up on him. From the cry he gives it certainly seems so. There is something he can see which we can't. The landscape whizzes past faster as he runs faster. His face is wretched. We get glimpses of a night life area as he goes past. Bars, discos, cinemas, theatres, casinos... This gives into the blurs of sky scrapers and then the freeway leading towards Los Angeles. From the looks of things he is leaving the city of LA behind him so the sky scrapers, bridges and highways whiz past in the opposite direction to where he runs. There isn't much traffic. One or two trucks a handful of cars. It is very early in the morning when the light is just beginning to change. The man runs on, gasping, struggling to take in enough air to keep him going. He has left the city behind. The highway extends as far as the eye can see and at the end of it a faint glow like that of the rising sun. The man runs wildly towards it. His movement is getting less and less coordinate. He is tiring but persisting.

From behind him the earth starts to split, the sound of the earth ripping itself apart reaches him, he looks behind howls again and drives himself further on. A slit appears on the highway and grows wider and moves faster as if pursuing the racing man. The man looks back sees it coming and gives it the last of what he's got.

# 

His voice gives way to pure terror as he finds himself falling off a cliff. His road literally had come to an end. A nasty laugh echoes in the air around him. The splitting gash in the earth travels rapidly down the side of the cliff dividing it in two. it cuts it's way downwards as the man falls arms flinging screaming.

CUT TO BEDROOM

# 

The same man sits abruptly in the bed waking from a nightmare.

Close up on him. We see him clearly now. He is a Caucasian in his early forties. Slim, great physical shape. He wipes his sweating forehead. His chest is bare. Beside him a female props herself up on one arm and gazes at him. She is a black Rastafarian, early thirties. His name is John, hers is Iyla. 2

The room is flooded with light and in stark contrast to the nightmare in LA. Light floods in from an open window, its sorry looking frame doing its best to support and hold the window in place.

There are cracks between wooden slabs of wood which somehow hold themselves together and make up the bedroom walls. And light comes in from between those wooden walls and the unpainted galvanized roof of the room. The room is awash with rich wholesome Caribbean morning light. The sun is up here. It's morning.

> IYLA (shakes her head and laughs) Did he get you this time?

Her hips and legs are covered by a thin bed sheet. Above this she is naked.

The man looks at her with an empty stare and runs his hands through his hair. He is half here and half still over in nightmare land. He blinks and shakes his heads as if trying to clear his head. His gaze then moves off her to rest on a picture of God hanging on the wall behind her. He lets his gaze fall... sighs and covers his face in his hands.

Apart from that picture of God which hangs somewhat lopsided on the wall, the bedroom is sparse. A suitcase is half pushed under the bed, open. Some of it's contents spill out. A pair of man's shorts, a shirt. On the only piece of furniture in the room(save the bed) is a chair and on it is Iyla's beach wrap. A flimsy number which would do an excellent job of keeping it's occupant cool.

> IYLA Come on John, you'll be alright. You know once you cross water they can't get you. It's a fact. You've left all that behind you....

> > JOHN

(painfully agonizingly)
It's still behind me Iyla... and it's
getting nearer. He is coming for
me. I know it.

### IYLA

(irritated) Man John you're starting to freak me out now. I don't know how much of that I can take. It's only cockma John. COCKMA. Everyone gets it. It happens... you have this bad dream you're trying to struggle to-to-to break out.. bu-bu-but you can't. You wake up John and you forget about it. End of story. The devil is not after you. Trust me.

JOHN No Iyla... this thing is reel. He is coming to get me. And this time he means to.

IYLA What makes you so special? What special interest does the devil have with you. Don't flatter yourself John.

JOHN Look Iyla... there's a lot of stuff you don't know.

IYLA And to tell you the truth John, I don't want to know. You're starting to scare the living shit out of me. Day and night. Night and day. Either you're seeing it or you're dreaming it. I don't know John...I can take a lot but this, this... You, the devil, God... I don't know man. I just don't know ... (she jumps off the bed) Man! I need a smoke!

Iyla gets out of the bed brusquely. She does sleeps naked. She walks the two steps to her beach wrap and picks it up and throws it on. While we get a view of her lovely well endowed bum, shapely legs, long back, John's eyes follow her unseeingly.

#### LIVING KITCHEN DINNING QUARTERS

Iyla leaves the bedroom. She walks out into the adjoining room wearing her thin beach wrap with nothing underneath.

This room has less light filtering in than the bedroom as the one door and one window to the piece is shut. There is just about enough light coming in from the slightly ajar bedroom door to show up an older man asleep in a hammock attached to two beams of the 'hut.

Iyla opens the window a small bit. It's one of those type windows which opens from the bottom, with a stick hook contraption on the window sill to prop it open and hold it into place.

The man in the hammock covers his eyes with his forearm and half turns from the light. We see him better. He is an

albino, over sixty. He grimaces as the light comes into the room. His face looks painful and sore in it's puffiness. Under his hammock is a half empty bottle of rum. He falls back into his slumber and snores. Loud, like drunk men do.

Aniya hits a knob on the hi fi system, the only piece of modern technology in the ramble down heap. She kicks it and Marley's redemption song comes on. The older man in the hammock grunts loudly as if protesting. He moves around trying to get comfortable and starts to snore again. She stretches, walks to what should be the kitchen part of the shack (evident from the dirty plates and cups scattered on a table up against the wooden wall), sits on a ragged rickety thing of a chair, opens a box at her foot and takes out a small alumiunum ball. She opens a flat tobacco tin. Like a pro she spreads the tabacco good. A bit more at the end than in the beginning and almost the same width as her paper. Just a thin layer of tabacco. She puts her your weed in a line in the middle of the tabacco. (This way, when she starts rolling, the tabacco will falls around the weed and her joint will burn perfectly.) Iyla knows a thing or two about rolling joints and her fingers move with confidence as she produces a perfect joint. She pushes the roach in and taps the joint a few times against the table.

# BACK TO THE BEDROOM

4

John is sitting up in the bed. His face in his hands. His hands resting on his bent knees. He takes a really deep breath and exhales explosively. He grits his teeth and yells. We hear the older man groan from the other room and Iyla scrapes against the floor her chair.

#### JOHN

(lifting his head.)
I have had enough of this. I want
out.
 (he turns to the picture of God
 on the wall)
I want out, you hear me? I want out
of this. I just want to be a normal
man, living a normal life like every
other bloody human being on this
planet. Is that too much to ask?

John gets up from the bed and goes to stand in front of the picture of God. He regards it for a moment.

JOHN Can you hear me? (he raises his voice) Can you hear me? Can you fucking hear me? Just look at me. I am a tortured man. I can't sleep. I can't drink. I can't do anything. All I'm asking for is a bit of reprieve. A break. He bangs the flat side of hand against the wall and shouts..

JOHN Just give me a fucking break.

To his outburst the drunk groans again and Iyla slams the front door of the shack. The God picture on the wall shakes from the vibration. John then collapses in a heap at the foot of the bed. He is praying or his version of it. In disjointed sentences he makes himself understood.

#### JOHN

I don't know how you expect me to carry on like this. I gotta give this up or I'll go insane. I am asking you, no, I beg you, if there is something you want of me, tell me an I'll do it. Just tell me and I'll do it. Then set me free. No more. Please.

He focuses on Iyla's slipper next to him. He takes it in his hand, looks at it and lets it drop. Then he stares straight ahead. His face a serene and determined mask. The face of God in the picture above him is also serene and focussed.

ON THE BALCONY OF THE SHACK

Morning, about nine a.m. Caribbean light. Clear blue sky, water lapping lazily at the shore. Loud conscious music blares from inside and Iyla is standing on the 'balcony' grooving as she polishes her rolled up her joint.

The balcony is a slab of board extending two metres from the front room. It is sheltered by a jutting extension of a the galvanised roof.

Iyla sings in time with the music..

IYLA Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery; None but ourselves can free our minds. Have no fear for atomic energy, 'Cause none of them can stop the time. How long shall they kill our prophets, While we stand aside and look? Ooh! Some say it's just a part of it: We've got to fulfil de book.

She sniffs her joint, and lights it. She takes one drag and turns to the door. As she does we see her the outline her beautiful bum through the thin fabric of her wrap. A true local. She calls in through the door.

IYLA You coming down John? Water's looking lovely.

A muffled groaning sound comes from inside. Iyla turns back towards the water and continues to grove and sing ...

6

Won't you help to sing These songs of freedom? -'Cause all I ever have: Redemption songs; Redemption songs; Redemption songs.

She stares out towards the sea and does a double take when the sea splits in two before her eyes. A long rip from the horizon moving swiftly to the beach a few meters in front of the shack. Something is running along the sea bed. Something is moving just under the surface of the sea bed. Faster and faster and faster. Then it stops right where the waves break. The mound grows bigger and out from it the hand of a black male appears.

Iyla looks at her joint, shakes her head trying to clear her head. She thinks she must be high.

IYLA (under her breath) Strong fucking stuff. Whew...

She shakes her head as if trying to free her mind of what she has just seen. As she does her dread locks come undone from the top of her head where she has tied them and cascade down her back. She laughs at her self, takes another drag on the joint and looks up.

The hand is now a body of a gorgeous black male, ripping chest and abdominal muscles with a rogue smile, smiling lust and desire and he is walking confidently towards her, smiling I want you Iyla. The potential for wanton and exquisite satisfaction is written clearly all over his in his face.

The sea beach and horizon are back to normal.

# SATAN

### Hello Iyla.

Saying her name like he does is a very personal sensual massage.

Care to share that joint?

Iyla's hand and joint stop at her lips. Her eyes try to focus but she is having difficulty reclaiming her own mind and her body. The hand which she has brought to her hip in a typical West Indian act of defiance/attitude falls limply to her side. Her heaving chest and slightly dilated eyes let us know what Satan is doing to her, even without touching her. An **Ah** escapes her full lips large lips. We see her nipples erect through the fabric of her bikini top and Satan with his free hand caresses one of her breasts. She moves her body to him and he receives her by wrapping his arm around her waist and squeezing her other - harder. He takes the joint from her, the tips are wet with her saliva. He looks at the saliva smeared joint and looks back at her lips.

> SATAN Did those lips kiss John this morning? Did they .... (he pauses and looks longingly at Iyla's lips)

Iyla's lips open. He has made an adulteress out of her and she's loving every second of it. She has lost control of her mind, her body and is simply burning with the flame which he has ignited in her.

Satan moves his face closer to hers.

SATAN Let me taste him on you.

He kisses her. She swoons and passes out. He lets her drop unceremoniously to the floor of the balcony. She falls with a thud. He snorts and gets on with his business of changing form.

He is now a white man, white suit, business man's smile. Satan takes a huge drag on the joint and laughs. He walks into the shack.

INT. THE SHACK

7

**SHOW TIME** The track Redemption song comes to us louder as he opens the door.

Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery; None but ourselves can free our minds.....

The inside of the hut is dark in contrast to the bright light of outside. The light from the open door shows up the hammock and its occupant more clearly. One wonders how long it can remain supported by those worn looking strings which tie it to the beams and how many more whether the man may soon fall from the widen the tear in the hammock under his bum.

The old black man is half sitting up half lying in it. His face is puffy, his eyes can barely open but he tries to squint in the direction of the light which comes in from the open door.

Satan walks over to him like a nurse to a patient. He bends takes the rum bottle and pours the drunk a long one from a glass he whips out of the thin air. The drunk grins that silly childlike grin at the trick and takes the glass which Satan offers. Satan pours himself one too and they do cheers. 8

# SATAN From one spirit to another, huh?

Satan finds his joke funny and laughs aloud while the drunk knocks his back with one swallow, wipes his mouth on his naked arm, grins then falls back into a drunken stupor. Satan slowly nurses his checking for flavour and maturity, like one would a good wine. He is not disappointed. The rum is not bad.

A door leading to the bedroom opens and John comes out. He is wearing a T-shirt and knee length cut off jeans shorts, frayed. The neck of the T shirt shows it's age. It's stretched out of shape.

> SATAN (with his back to John) A man should build strong walls to his fortress John. I walk in and murder your soldiers and they don't even put up a fight.

JOHN Good to see you Satan. Godspeed was it? You sure didn't lose any time.

SATAN Still the same I see John, man of a few.. choice words. A simple hello would have sufficed. Iyla has lovely lips John. (Satan turns to face John.) They taste like you.

They look at each other. John is composed. He is calm. Unwaivering. He seems like a man ready to take on his destiny. Satan looks at him appraisingly, shakes his head and tosses his glass which disappears into where ever it came from. John doesn't blink at the trick. He remains silent. Satan walks over to the table away from the light which filters in from the front doorway and from the room from which John has emerged. He moves to where Iyla had sat earlier when she rolled her joint and and seats himself at the table facing John.

> SATAN John... you can't hide forever you know.

He gestures for John to come have a seat with him. John remains immobile, impenetrable. Satan takes another drag on

Great stuff. They grow it well in this little paradise of yours. Between this and the rum I have them...

Satan hesitates and laughs at an obvious slip. He is showing his hand. John's face registers interest in the point Satan is making by an almost imperceptible tilting of the head. But Satan doesn't continue. He merely laughs quietly to John's face.

> JOHN Blindfolds. That's what they are to them. Great tactic. It's working.

SATAN (Laughs) Always one to get to the straight to the heart of things huh John. If they think they're making communion (he snears) with Her (rolls his eyes heavenwards) why should I be the one to disillusion them. We all need our little distractions, don't we John. We all have them.

JOHN Distractions...? (he somewhat snorts) SATAN Iyla... (Pause) nice distraction wouldn't you say?

John swallows.

JOHN Why have you come?

#### SATAN

(deliberately ignoring him)
Bit of Paradise you've got yourself
here John. Eve, Eden...
 (he gestures towards outside.)
All you need is the serpent.

Satan hisses, laughs and then continues seriously.

Your time's up Buddy. The holiday, ah, no, the sabbatical is over.

JOHN Listen whatever you've come to say say it, and leave. SATAN (Making his ass more comfortable on the chair a difficult feat considering the chair.) You're not getting it are you John, I'm taking you back. We're taking you back..., Madam and myself. Back to LA. And you're gonna try to catch me hero. But I'm gonna catch you. And all this here, this life as you know it will be gone bye bye.

Satan rises...

Come John say bye bye to your old Pop
John. Come say bye bye to
 (he runs his fingers across his
 lips as if wiping off a lipstick
 stain)
lovely Iyla.

# JOHN

I'm not leaving. You are.

John makes to go to the corner of the room where there is a bowl of water with a crucifix above it. Satan points a finger at him.

### SATAN

(harshly tormenting) That won't work Johhny boy. From now on you're going to need her explicit permission for that. New game, new rule.

Satan sits again and tries to make himself comfortable in an uncomfortable chair. The chair is not helping. Two of it's legs rock to the left and thOne would think it were trying to throw him off. Satan continues...

JOHN It's been agreed? What are you talking about?

SATAN You're an important man John, the whole of Earth and Heaven are on those puny shoulders of yours. Can't figure out what she sees in you. (looking at his watch) Time to go Johnny boy. (he sings that line in Bob

# Marley's song) We've got to fulfill the books.

He points his finger at John and we know the inevitable will happen. But he stops... he listens. He postpones the inevitable for a while.

SATAN What's that? Did you hear that?

John listens but all he hears is the waves out side. Satan hears something else though and moves to the door. The drunk snores his bum sticking out through the hole in the hammock. Outside Iyla remains in her sexual stupor.

> SATAN (on his way out with his back towards John) Listen to that. Singing... I don't believe it. I can't believe it. They're singing. On a day like this? They're singing. Well what do you know?

A CHURCH FILLED WITH BLACK CHILDREN AND ONE OR TWO BLACK WOMEN LEADING THEM IN SONG

CHILDREN (singing...) I've got a joy joy joy joy down in my heart

Where?

Down in my heart

Where?

Down in my heart

I've got a joy joy joy joy down in my heart, down in my heart to stay?

I know the devil doesn't like it but it's down in my heart

Where?

Down in my heart to stay.

John sees it too. And smiles.

BACK IN THE SHACK

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SATAN (Mimicking the singing...) I know the devil doesn't like it but it's own in my heart. Where? Down in my heart... They've even got the little boysies and girlies against me. What can I do? (with faux resignaton) What can I do huh John? (He shakes his head.) What can ole devil Satan do? (suddenly changing tone to a raging psychpath) Let me show them what can I do. And that's for evoking the name of Satan in vain.

He points his finger and a tremor shakes the shack. A crack appears along the beach and extends itself into the country beyond the house. It reaches the church where all the the prettily dressed children start to scream as the earthquakes threatens to crack the very pillars of the building.

Satan turns to John who stands powerless yet defiant.

JOHN

Bastard

SATAN (sneering) Where is your God John? That's what they should be asking themselves. Where is the old hag? (he laughs) A good coroner she. Nothing else. Only turns up to claim souls at death.

The sound of wind which usually signals the passing of the holy spirit is heard. God alights in the room. She is magnificent. Beautiful and she is black. She looks early thirties.

GOD Not in the house of the lord Satan. Anywhere else, but not where my people gather to sing my praise. Satan be still.

God extends her arm and the earthquake stops.

Gentlemen.

With a small movement of her head she motions for them to join her at the table. She occupies the seat Satan had occupied. As she seats herself she looks over to Satan and smiles.

> GOD Been keeping it warm for me have you?

The chair seems to be holding itself together for God's sake. No swaying to the side. It will do it's damnest to keep her in it.

Satan sashays in ready for the show (or show-down)but John, spell bound and speechless can only stare at God in amazement. He has fallen for her and it shows. Big time. He watches her in unabashed awe and wonder. Never has this man been moved like this. The mask of stoicism and bravado in the face of Satan is lifted. Under it a man or even a boy finally understanding. Finally seeing the piece of the puzzle which had been missing and finally beholding the beautiful picture. He has never seen anyone so wonderful in his Godforsaken life. Oh God in heaven's above John is in Love, with God herself. And it's love at first sight.

Dragging out a seat in front of God Satan on the other side of the table so his back is to John, Satan pauses and looks to where God is staring at John. He doesn't like it one little bit. No siree.

> SATAN Look at him. Just look at him. Slobbering all over you like an - an animal.

God is openly returning John's adoration. In her eyes he is a mirror to herself. She sees his good and her love flows towards him copiously. Satan watches them and scrapes his chair louder and plonks himself into it like an insolent boy being deliberately rude but really only trying to get God's attention focussed on him.

GOD

With all the gentleness existing in the world God turns to Satan.

Have you already forgotten how it was?

Under that ever gentle Gaze of love Satan squirms but recovers quickly enough to put on his macho act.

SATAN He is going to fall the same way I did. What you forget G-G-G-G-GO-GO-G-G... Madam is (he stammers and chocks trying to sat the word God. Can't finish it.) Dammit. We're males. (Turning to John who is slowing remembering he has legs which support his weight.) She doesn't have favorites John ole boy. Treats all her subjects equally so if you're expecting special treatment for the rest of eternity - 13

forget it. And if ever you'd wondered and you're getting it straight from the source here.. that's it's exactly what got me thrown out of heaven in the first place. Wanting her all for myself. I think they recorded it somewhere in Genesis. You too will fall and bumped out of heaven in disgrace.

GOD

Lucifer...

SATAN Don't call me by that name!

It's agony for him to hear his name said so lovingly. Satan doesn't look at her directly. To her left, to her right but never directly in her eyes. She follows his gaze, but he evades hers.

> GOD Lucifer... Our love was wonderful. Mine still is. Have you forgotten Lucifer?

She says that so lovingly that Satan drops his macho act and is putty in her hands. John smiles incredulously, crosses his arms across his chest and relaxes to watch the play out.

GOD

You're losing Satan. Give up and come home.

#### SATAN

(he turns sarcastic) And then what? Drink from your well of endless love? All men at your fountain. There may be many men willing to play your game but I not. Man, dear Lady, or beast as it applies in my case, shall not live by bread alone...

GOD

Still waiting for the exclusivity contract huh Lu? Like all those paradoxes in life Lucifer, when you realize you can't get it you'll realize you've already got it and had it all the time. You've always wanted the toppings Lucifer forgetting the substance.

### SATAN

Parables, proverbs, psalms... When will you speak a language that I can

GOD If you would only look at me Lucifer.

SATAN (like a grouch) You know damn well I can't.

## GOD

When will you stop running from me? When will the prodigal son ever come home?

# SATAN

I am not your son.

#### GOD

(still speaking kindly) Words, they'll be the death of you Lucifer. Attachment to words and forms. Your need for the satisfaction of each of your five senses and then on top of it your mind.

(she shakes her head ) You will exhaust the world for acclaim and acknowledgment. For position and power. You have such a splendid mind, such a shame to let it go to waste like this. (dropping her voice a bit) Look Lucifer...

A glass ball materializes and through it we see the revelation of heaven. God about to take her position on the throne with a dashing young man who is splendidly dressed on her right. This man address the multitude on her behalf.

> See all that man on my right Lucifer, that's you... I will give to you all the kingdoms of the world if you will only follow me.

> SATAN No. Never. I shall never bow to you. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the most High.

#### GOD

But you will be brought down .... Again. You're like a beast gnawing at a bone not realizing the bone is his leg, Lucifer. You'll get no peace, no satisfaction, just the need. Do you not understand me Lucifer. Just the need, and no matter how often is is satisfied you'll always have the craving. Only your salvation can quench your thirst Lucifer. Come to me on your own accord, or I shall take you in thrashing.

SATAN (rudely) Will there be anything else Madam?

GOD How you have fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! Give up.

SATAN You said you were ready to play. Are you changing your mind? Getting scared are you? Come on send your only begotten son. (sneering at John) And let us boys fight it out like real men.

John gives Satan the finger, catches God looking at him and sheepishly puts it behind his back like a school boy. God smiles. And turning to Satan who has turned back to her.

> GOD I keep on sending him back Lucifer, only you don't seems to notice.

SATAN Then why go on?

GOD

Because you've changed the game plan Lucifer. What happen to the old scare tactics? Your old game plan suited me preferably Lucifer. I miss the old demons and possessions. They had the remarkable effect of sending men and women to me in droves. Thank you, it was almost embarrassing at times to be called upon with such passion.

SATAN So you've noticed that I'm gaining on you?

GOD Of course I have. I did say you had a splendid mind. Yet you lack wisdom. Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom Lucifer. I think it's about time I teach you what that means. (She looks at him pointedly) SATAN (sarcasm) Be my guest.... GOD Lucifer ...

Satan whips up a chess board and as it bangs on the table the pieces rattle. His king falls and he picks it up again. But God notices and laughs, her laugh is like cristal clinking, the sound of pure happiness with a tinge of amusement. John moves a bit closer in to look at the game.

> GOD You and your games Lucifer. (sighs) I don't play chess John, do you? It's my move.

John from the other side of the room from where he has been taking in the duel comes over to God's side of the table and has a look at the board. His sees a miniature of himself. His eyes open wide when he sees where he sees where he is positioned. He looks at God.

> GOD Yes John. JOHN No. Not again. I'm not the pawn. SATAN The game must go on. GOD John. (she looks at him imploringly) You go before me. SATAN What is he, John the Baptist?

(snorts - something he does very well.)

JOHN (He ignores Satan) What if I'm captured?

GOD What if you're not captured John.

John nods towards Satan.

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JOHN

No

I am in need of a fisherman man John.

SATAN (Satan taunts) And you're the bait John. Catch me if you can. JOHN And if I'm caught? GOD Heaven falls. I give up all claims to the celestial throne. I hand earth and man over to Lucifer. I'm getting old John, it may just be time to give the blessings to the first born. (she smiles at Satan) JOHN No fuc-(he stops remembering whose presence he is in) Over my dead body Satan. God smiles a small smile. SATAN (laughing) I have to promise to take you in alive John. (turning to God) So do we have a deal? Are you going to play him or keep him under your divine protection. GOD You heard him Lucifer. God and John stare at each other while Satan seethes between them. GOD (kindly) Does it please you so John? JOHN (blushing in embarrassment. He raises one shoulder makes an arm gesture...how could I have known? He catches himself, he is being sent on a mission.) How will I know what to do? GOD I can tell you only this now John. I am a man unto every woman and a woman onto every man. A mother onto every

child and I take care of my own. I

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shall be sending you the knowledge and wisdom you need.

SATAN I thought that was something you didn't want them to have, wisdom and knowledge? What about the tree of life? (Satan grins incitingly.) GOD (looking at Satan) That tree John, was the tree of distinction, discrimination, of definition.. of meaning derived from the mind. (She says mind like it were a mere triffle, nothing which mattered really. Turning to John.) You had knowledge and wisdom as it was already. All you needed to know. A pure and undiscriminating mind. Till the serpent came along and tricked you and gave you a self, an identity, a naked ego which you would die to protect - OH it would take several lifetimes to explain something which you already know but wish not to face. Your simplicity, your nakedness, under the human nature lies your godliness. (looking at Satan) Have you seen that snake Lucifer? (back at John) John, mount guard over your heart and mind. It's time, it's time now to end this ..... war.

SATAN

There is no way in *hell* I'm going to let you win this.

GOD Then *heaven* be praised.

SATAN It will be my Glory. On Earth and in heaven. The victory is not yet yours to proclaim.

God only shakes her head at his outburst which makes Satan mad. He doesn't like being treated like a tantrum throwing kids.

SATAN What makes you even think you can win it. Look how long it's taken you and still nothing. Nothing to show for all those years you've called yourself God! I've surely lost count of how many lifetimes you've been holding court. If you haven't managed to bring me in yet what makes you sure you can now?

GOD There are many ways to paint a picture Lucifer.

#### SATAN

I would have been content, rather content to continue as was. You win some, I win some but if it's closure you want, then you'll have to to earn it. I'm hardly about to hand myself over to you on a plate.

GOD As much as I am ready to be put on a skewer and roasted in hell.

That shuts Satan up and a look of a shadow of a doubt crosses his face. Maybe just maybe she knows what she has got them both into.

> GOD John, it's time. Let me have your hands.

She passes her hand over his wrists as if washing and wiping away his past. She enlaces their fingers.

John forget who you were, forget where you were. Enter with fresh eyes as a child and let me lead you. Forget also who you think you ought to be and what you think you ought to be doing. (with pained expression on her face) Are you ready?

She lets her hand drop and John raises his eyes to Satan.

JOHN (He looks at Satan) I am ready.

# SATAN

About high time too, I was getting a bit tired of.. of all this going in slow motion. Time as you rightly said has meaning down here Madam, it flies.

Let's go John the Baptist.

(He turns to God who is getting up from the seat...) See you in LA Madam.

GOD (cattily and lovingly) I am always with you Lucifer. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

This makes Satan ballastic and grabs hold of John and drags him out of the hut and disappears into the blinding morning light. God smiles and shakes. She starts to tidy the hut.

> GOD Time...(she smiles to herself and repeats it) Time... what do they know about time. It happened only yesterday. What a long dream they live. Anyway...

First she tosses the alcohol bottle away into nowhere. Just like Satan had done. She makes the old drunk comfortable in the hammock, runs her hand under his bum and patches the gapping hole. He moans as peace floods his body. God rinses out his glass which had fallen onto the floor and makes that disappear to. The she heads outside, takes Iyla up into her arms and carries her to the bedroom. She lays her on the bed. She passes her hand over Iyla's face. With this Iyla relaxes and goes into a restful sleep.

> GOD My dear dear children...

And she disapears.

ON THE TOP OF A TALL BUILDING IN LOS ANGELES. NIGHT TIME. WITCHING HOUR

The devil lands with John atop a skyscraper which provides a panoramic view to the city of Los Angeles at night. The top is flat, could be a helipad.

SATAN (conversationally, like they're just up there for an evening chat.) Sorry about the time delay John I prefer to work at night. Look below you John. All I need, one night and everything down there and over there will be mine.

JOHN You can hope.

John steps a bit away from the edge of the building. Satan still looks down, he could lick his lips. Oh how he waits for the day when all this will be his.

SATAN (with mock seriousness) How about this John... I give you all the kingdoms of the world (he gestures expansively) if you would fall down and worship me... He raises one eyebrow at John. Just kidding John. I have tried this line before.. JOHN And it didn't work. SATAN (changing tactic and becoming more serious) John, I hope you didn't believe a word of that sweet placating nonesence which she heaped on you. The ancient hag is done for. And she knows it. Now, from one man to another get your balls out from where she hid them. Here's the test John. Call her bluff. Jump John. Jump. For she loves you so. She'll send her angels to catch you. Make her show tangible proof of all that love she has for mankind. Don't just go in blindly like a fool. JOHN

(pauses as if considering Satan's words)

I have proof enough Lucifer for I, have seen the glory of the Lord.

SATAN

(losing his patience) Let's see whether you'll still feel that way when I catch your sorry ass poor on the streets of LA.

Satan holds John by the neck of his T shirt and hangs him over the edge of the edge of the building. John doesn't bother to struggle. He grits his teeth and spits out at Satan...

> JOHN (with attitude) For a little love Lucifer,I would go...

SATAN Don't tempt me John.. I would go through ice..

SATAN You're asking for it ...

JOHN I would go through a fucking storm you sorry assed son of a ... (he stops.)

SATAN You're making your bed John...

JOHN'S VOICE Like I was saying, for a little love Lucifer, I would go to the end of the world, like a man who stands at the door and begs. And shove that up your sorry ass, Fallen Angel.

SATAN Look who falls.

We hear the devil laugh and he drops John off the edge. John thrashes about as gravity pulls him certainly and steadily down screaming the same panic stricken scream which woke him up that morning.

God alights near Satan and leans over and watches the falling John.

GOD Great move Lucifer, is the game over before it has even started. We did agree that you were to bring him in alive.

Satan suddenly realises what he has done, he's sending John to heaven and will lose. Forsaking the pleasure of having John a crumpled heap of bones at the bottom he regretfully stretches out his arm and causes John to glide down to the ground instead.

> GOD Anger, alongside foolishness, is one of the three fires of the world. The other is greed. Don't burn yourself up Lucifer.

LUCIFER (under his breath) Bloody Buddhist.

God disappears. John lands unceremoniously on the ground right onto a begger who pushes him off roughly. It's not warm John clad only as we saw him in Eden is shivering.

### SATAN

Satan looks over his shoulder, God is gone. He adjusts his damn she caught me with my pants down look and shouts down at John.

SATAN The third temptation of the son of man begins now John. (he tosses some small stones down) Hail stones drop on cars and the homeless who are huddled over in street corners. They stare up in disbelief.

> SATAN Turn those stones into bread. Ha Ha Ha Ha

JOHN (dodging hailstones.) Fucker...

A BEGGAR (hearing all that and seeing all that..) Mary mother of God....

John looks over to the beggar and they make eye contact. Beggar takes in John's not suitable attire, smiles his nicotine stained teeth at John and offers him a bit of space and warmth under his shreds of cardboard. John shakes his head walks on through the hail and brimstone.

John walks along the sidewalk trying to keep dry under the shop awnings. Not particularly effective. He wraps his arms around his body, his T shirt is not helping much in terms of protection from the cold. On top of this he is walking aimlessly to nowhere.

He stops on a deserted kerb. The night is silent. Still. John stands in the middle of the side walk. He spins round 360 degrees. Where to go? He doesn't know.

> JOHN (to himself, to no one in particular, to God...) Some direction would come in handy I would think.

A yellow taxi pulls up next to a kerb and the driver dives into a side shop cursing the weather. John sees an opportunity not to be missed. He climbs into the back seat and lowers himself. The driver walks out of the kiosk pockets his newly bought cigarettes gets back into his taxi and starts his engine. He drives round and scouts for clients. His tour takes him into the night life area area. He drives past Cafés, restaurants, cinemas, discos, casinos and private clubs. John from the bottom of the car sees the passing 'landscape' and recognizes it .

JOHN Number 36, please.

The driver jumps right of his skin and looks through the rear view mirror as John struggles to rise from his crouched position behind the driver's seat. The driver panics for a split second and his face registers fear that John may be a lunatic ready to chop his head off. He brakes and swerves wildly and John struggles to re-gain his balance.

DRIVER

Get the fuck out of my car you crazy fucking bastard. Are you out of your God damn mind?

They have a 'little' confrontation. The driver is more covertly afraid than raging mad, though he covers it up with false bravado, slinging every imaginable name he can at John. John is more than happy to grant the drivers wish and vacate the cab. He walks the few steps to number 36. The name is written in big bold gold letters. **LE SALON de DIEU et Le DIABLE** (God and the devils salon) And underneath in smaller blood red letters, **non-stop Soul Service**.

> JOHN So he's still in the business.

John walks up to the huge beefy bouncer who looks at him.

BOUNCER Main dish or side dish?

JOHN

Pardon Me?

BOUNCER (looks around him to make sure no one else is listening.) All in one go or in installments. Main dish is fish.

John looks at him puzzled.

BOUNCER It looks like you're in the wrong place pal.

John looks up and reads the Neon sign which says Le Salon de Dieu et Diable.

JOHN So you don't do the 'guess what's behind the card' thing anymore?

BOUNCER

(laughs)

No, that was a long time ago. We're open to the general public except on feast days. (he laughs again) But we have another card game if you're interested. Called Go Fish. You up to it?

JOHN

Sure.

BOUNCER Bet your life you are. You're dinning. Bon apétit. Next time Sir, remember we have a dress code.

John nods and walks in. The neon light are red, blue and purple in the hall. The carpet is red. the walls are wod panels. The first sound which reaches him as he walks into the hall leading to the main room is the soft voice of a female relating an anecdote. John can't pick up all her words. But whatever she says brings on a laughing response. He comes out of the corridor and into the main salon and sees...

A huge chandelier gives out light to the round room. In the middle an oval table. Heading it a lovely black girl. One would almost say African priestess from the way her movements flow with the magestic grace of one accustomed to holding court. Yet she wears the most extravagant pieces of western haute couture. The red gown, slit all the way to her upper thigh. Diamanté lining the split. The neck dips all the way down to the point where her rib cage meets. The dress as well see later ties behind the neck so from the front we see her amazing collar bones. It is backless and cinches at her waist and hugs her hips from where it flows generously to the floor. Both the girl and the dress cut a striking figure.

A smile which wins souls. Twinkling eyes. Not more than thirty two. She holds her audience enchanted. A small group of men and women all dressed with casually elegance lines an oval table which she heads. She is some sort of dealer as she holds a deck of cards in her hand, some silver tipped pens and paper lie on her right. If she were looking up she would have seen John enter but she is relating her tale to her audience that she doesn't notice or feigns not to notice his entrance.

# GIRL

(continuing)
So the bouncer tells him we "no no no
we don't do that card thing any more
but we have another card game if
you're interested called Go fish.
You wanna try that?"
 (sniggering from the group, John
 startles)
Sure he says... the bouncer replies
Bet your life you do."

(the audience cracks up and the girl laughs with them)

GIRL (lifts her eyes to John) So you're having fish are you? We all are. You're just in time. We were just getting warmed up. (she shuffles a pack of cards in her hands) Remember, rules of the game. If you're caught, you're taken in. But if you're not, you get to take it home. Your chance of winning is one in (she puts one hand on her hip and with the other counts the heads around the table, pause lastly on John) One two three four five six seven and you make eight. The odds are very good tonight. Remember, if you win you name your price... whatever your heart desires. But if you lose... my prize is you. (she winks at a guy down at the table. She passes round a sheet of paper to each player and a silver tipped pen which John sees is as sharp as the tip of a scalpel) Write down your divine wish on this paper in your own blood and stamp it. (she laughs) Remember, this game is not for the faint of hearted. You risk your life but you may inherit the earth. Just like Crazy Eights, Uno.... we call it Go fish. Are you ready?

One of the young women at the table bites her lips. A man nods his head. She passes them a silver tipped pen each. The first man inserts the tip into his forefinger, a blob of blood appears and he dips the pen into it and scribbles...CEO Pertus and Grumble... He then presses his finger into the sheet to make a finger print. All the others are busy doing the same. The girl looks at John who isn't pricking and writing... who hasn't even advanced to take a place at the table.

> GIRL If you've changed your mind leave now before I take you in.

The group at the table turn briefly to look at John and continue their pricking and scribblings.

JOHN I'm here to see Darkness.

### GIRL Why didn't you say so before John.

John raises his eyebrows and she signals a waiter who comes over. He is an older man of about 55 years. She whispers in his ear. The waiter eyes John up and down taking in his attire and motions for John to follow him. The girl and John exchange one more look before John leaves. She resumes the games...

Ok every body let's go fish. (fading)

The waiter walks John a past some empty private rooms one is occupied. Passing past it John turns his head and gets an eye full of an offering being made. A man lies on a narrow bed surrounded by seven men and women. One very tall afro american man, an oriental woman, an Indian man, a white woman, a gay man, a very French looking man and a white male. All chanting and going slowly round in a circle deep in concentration.

WAITER

(out of earshot)
Followers of Satan. The Secret
Seven. Good that you gave Go Fish a
pass. That could have been you.
 (he shakes his head)
You youngsters come in and ready to
sell your mothers your fathers your
own souls for what... I don't know.
I don't know what's happening to the
world these days. I just don't know.

JOHN

Well you seem to have done the same working in a place like this.

# WAITER

#### (he stops)

I'm undercover. I try to get them to leave before it's too late. For most of them it is, sooner or later anyway. When you get a taste of it once, you come back and one day you're caught. Be a smart boy, go home. You're not meant to be here (he points to the door in front of them) no matter if you think you are.

John smiles at him.

#### JOHN

You're right. But like you I'm also undercover.

#### WAITER

Once you go past those doors you're

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done for. Go home, walk while you can John.

JOHN You all seem to know me here. Well you should know that I've been here before.

The waiter shakes his head.

# WAITER

John...that was five years ago John. Things change. Even I have. So much that you don't even recognize me.

JOHN (stopping and looking at the wiater closely) Who are you?

# WAITER

That doesn't matter now John. The past is dead. What matters is that that they're selling their souls in installments in that room. (he points to the door in front of them from which not a sound escapes) That's the only way most of them can pay for the ride.

JOHN The ride? Things certainly hve changed around here.

#### WAITER

Their ride which answers the questions of how, when, when to anything they wanna have. (He runs his hand through his hair, what's left of it.) Nice young men and women, selling their souls in installments and getting hooked... You haven't heard of a better drug.

The door opens in front of them and a young woman nearly falls out whooping. The noise which comes out with her through that previously soundless door makes both John and the waiter fall back a step. It sounds like a great party was going on in there. A carnival, an Amusement Park. The sounds of a block buster film, men and women screaming with the headiness of an andrenaline rush... Every imaginable pleasure known to man mixed and shaken pours out of that door. And just as suddenly as it had come it stopped as the door shuts behind her.

She is wearing a very short skirt, short top her navel exposed. Despite this daring get up there is a certain amount of innocence about her. It is in her face. She is hardly YOUNG WOMAN Whooo Larry. This is the fucking best ride I've ever been on. Ever. Man Larry, let's go get it. Let's get out of here. I've got the bit we need, lets go.. Larry Larry. Larry where are you?

She looks around her expecting to see her friend. She walks down the corridor some paces, turns back. She becomes wide-eyed not seeing him. She returns back to the closed door and touches it. She bites her bottom lip. She turns to face John and the waiter.

#### WAITER

(he bows his head like one with the task of imparting bad news.) His last eighth is gone Ma'am.

# YOUNG GIRL

No No No.. That's not possible. He told me he still had enough left to cover this. He was sure. We only needed this one last ride. They showed..

(her voice falters, her voice dropping like she wants to cry.) they us how to get the money for the baby's things

> (there her voice cracks and she sobs. She pulls herself together and looks the Waiter and directly in the eyes, her eyes moving like lasers from one to the other.)

NOOOOOOO. That's not true. They can't take him. We had enough credit to cover this.

(looking directly at the waiter.)

That's can't be right. That can't be true. We only started coming here together. And we've been here only six times. I kept track.

#### WAITER

No Ma'am he'd been here once before and took the ride to find his soul partner - you. And you Ma'am according to the books have been here seven times. One more ride and you'll go meet him.

Her eyes turn cold and brutal. John takes another step backwards as her cold gaze rests on him. She pulls herself together, her mascara has stained her pretty face. Just a ordinary girl, ruined. She stands looks at the two of them and walks right back into the room. The sound of fun comes at them again and then stops. The waiter turns to face John.

WAITER Go home. He's just got three souls.

JOHN I'm not here to be taken on a ride. I'm here to see Darkness.

WAITER Then we're at the wrong door.

They move to the left and start climbing some stairs.

# INSIDE PAPA DARKNESS'S

The room is a long rectangle. Somewhat narrow but not too narrow. The door which John and the waiter comes in at is the shorter side. The room is well lit. The carpet is the same blood red as the floors downstairs. There is one big window at the opposite end to the door. A rectangular desk stands in the middle of the room. On it a red ledger, a pen's stand with some pens and a bowl with one apple. A few chairs surround the desk. Against one of the longer walls a sofa. Above it an artsy type picture of a she devil. On the opposite call is a painting of God. A small desk with a lamp on it stands on the floor to the left of that painting and completes the decor. What is specially interesting about this room is the ceiling. Of a metallic greyish silver material it seems to reflect the contents of the room. At the door is Darkness. Late forties. He gets his name from the colour of his skin.

#### DARKNESS

I see sleeping beauty has finally found her prince. What brings you here little brother?

JOHN Brotherhood is sealed by a mutual destiny. I don't think we share that. I see you've changed the decor. What's the deal here Darkness?

Darkness laughs and walks into the room. John follows him. The waiter waits at the open door.

#### DARKNESS

Just doing what it takes to pay the bills John. You should know where my allegiances really lie.

#### JOHN

I hope for your sake that you do and that they are painfully clear to her.

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I hope you have a really good motive for sending innocent individuals to hell. Darkness motions for the waiter to leave. He leaves shutting the door behind him. DARKNESS Not everyone has the liberty you do John. Some of us are constrained. Restrained. Let's just say I'm paying my debt. We all have them. Then I'm out. But you said her, little brother. Her. So you've seen her. What was she like? Darkness comes over to his side ... JOHN Darkness, I didn't come here to chat about her magnificence. I need your help. John sits himself in one of the chairs at the shorter end of the table. Darkness takes his seat, he is on John's right, directly ahead of him is the sofa an the artsy Satan. DARKNESS (sitting) What kind of help? JOHN Basic stuff.. food, clothing, shelter... (he points to his clothes and reaches for an apple on the side.) DARKNESS I wouldn't bite that if I were you... JOHN Fuck you Darkness. (He bites into the apple) DARKNESS Did the Secret Seven get a look at you. JOHN No, they were too busy offering it up. I got past clear. Whose brilliant idea was this? DARKNESS Whose do you think it was? Sure wasn't mine. And your being here compromises me.

> JOHN It is the least you can do to balance

things. You're going to burn anyway.

DARKNESS That is the point John, I am trying to balance things. I don't want to get further down in the red.

A soft knocking at the door.

DARKNESS

Who is it?

FEMALE VOICE(THE VOICE OF THE DEALER DWNSTAIRS)BEHIND THE DOOR

It's me.

DARKNESS Then why are you knocking Aniya?

The dealer girl comes in.

ANIYA (to John) I see you made it here safely. I told Gabriel downstairs to take you on the Roller Coaster. (She laughs) I see he convinced you otherwise. You were smart not to have gone.

Aniya sits herself down on the comfortable sofa and stretches. She lifts her feet, silver high heeled sandals and all and extends her long shapely legs on the sofa and lies back. The back of her head faces John.

> DARKNESS John this is Aniya, my baby sister. Aniya John.

ANIYA I know his name and I know why he is here too. What a night Darkness! When do we get to stop? (turning to John) He said if I came on board we could pay things off faster. Looks like we're going no where fast. (falls back on the sofa) DARKNESS Patience little sister. According to the books... (he flips open the red ledger) ANIYA You know yourself he fixes the books.. in his favour. (turns back to John) Did he tell you John how we got in trouble with Satan himself in the first place. My brother who is

always so cautious to play the balances right. You wanna know how how we got into the red? How we ended up fisherman and women for Satan?

(she laughs bitterly)

### DARKNESS

Easy Aniya, there's no need.... What's done done.

### ANIYA

Of course there is, big bother. If he knows that we're selling souls to get the devil off your back (she sits up )

because you Big brother steered off the straight and narrow path and helped him.

(she points to John) Gave him tools... special bullets, some sort of cross, a ride in the magic chair... shall I make a list? So that he here could go after Satan's ...

#### DARKNESS

Aniya.. quit it. This was like five years ago. I did what I had to do. And I hold myself totally responsible... This has nothing to do with John.

John starts and stares at Darkness and back at Aniya.

### ANIYA

It damn well does Darkness. Maybe now he knows, he can feel responsible enough to help out a little around here and we can finally quit this joint.

JOHN

Darkness?

#### DARKNESS

Yeah, after you fucked him up good and proper last time and pulled your disappearing act under the royal auspices of the Almighty *herself*, he came for me John. My life or this. (He spreads his arms out to take in the business)

ANIYA

And this

(making the same wide-sweeping motion as Darkness) is starting to weigh a bit too much on my conscience. You know how many whole ones we got in tonight John... so far twenty and the night is still young. DARKNESS They know what they're getting into Aniya. We tell them. It's a choice. ANIYA Isn't it always. Oh Darkness, I just want to be done with this. I just want out. (to John) You know how many outfits like this he has? (she laughs her bitter laugh and sits up aniated) One on every block. In every city all over the God-damn world. They sprung up from no where from one day to another, made you wonder how many people he had in his pockets.. It's the new craze, the new fad! Gimmie piece of your soul, I show you your beautiful destiny. Gimmie another piece, I give a piece of the how to get it. Gimmie another and bring two friends I tell you the when part and give you one 8th soul credit back, four friends and another 8th you get the where part. By then so you're frigging hooked on the rush of the ride he takes you on you're ready to sell the other half of your soul for peanuts. Time Share John. He's buying shares in their souls John. Listen ... you hear that....

A wild whooping sound wafts up to them. Darkness goes over to the window and opens it. John and Aniya go over to it. Aniya falling in step behind John. She chcks him out as she walks. It looks on to the exit of Le Salon du Dieu et Diable. They range from age fifteen to seventy. And they're all in a state of ecstatic release. There's some serious kissing going on in lots of groups. Some women are ripping off their shirts and their boy friends fall on them with guiltless passion. Young men are running up and down the street like their favorite team won the European championships. Others are crying like they won a gold medal in the sure Olympics. All around there is laughing, hand shaking, back slapping and hugs. One or two sit or stand still as if in a happy daze. A woman weeps into the arms of a girlfriend. She is so overcome. More and more bodies push out from the door and flow out in a drunken highly animated mass?

JOHN You sure can't beat that. What happens when they wake up?

DARKNESS They want more.

ANIYA And we serve them for breakfast.

JOHN And then what, when he gets them they can't just disappear into hell.

DARKNESS That's the beauty of the plan, John. He keeps them for a few hours and sends them back as...

ANIYA The living dead. Ready and waiting till the day comes when he has enough to claim victory.

JOHN Jesus Christ.

ANIYA You can say that again.

Darkness closes the window as as they turn away from it the door to the room bursts open and in walks the secret seven, the men and women who were doing the soul offering service earlier.

The leader walks in first and the other six spread out three to each side of the door.

DARKNESS This used to be private quarters guys. You could knock.

The seven ignore him.

DARKNESS (to John) He sure does treat his tenants with respect.

The leader, a very tall one goes over to Midnights desk and flips through the big red ledger stops when he comes to the page he is looking for. He fills in some details under date name and age. The others just hang about like unnecessary body guards. Till one nudges another and she focuses on and John grins.
DARKNESS Did we we miss something?

FEMALE SATAN WORHIPPER (to Darkness) We hope you have the sense to stay away from him this time.

The book keeper looks up from his entry and focuses on John too. Then he looks at Darkness.

BOOK KEEPER You're just about to break even Darkness... I'd watch my step if I were you. Then again don't. Your record is pretty amazing. You and that sister of your here...

He makes eye contact with Aniya and they keep it for a heavy two seconds and finishes

You two are doing a fabulous job. Flawless impeccable service. We're pleased.

John steps forward.

JOHN I don't think we've met.

BOOK KEEPER We will get better acquainted later John. The night is still young.

JOHN Give my regards to your patron. Tell him the game is still on.

BOOK KEEPER He knows John, he's playing as we speak.

He turns and leaves the other six follow him out. Darkness shuts the door behind them.

DARKNESS What's going on John? Why did you come back?

ANIYA Brother, I don't think we really want to know. I don't think we want to get get involved... again.

She walks over to the red book which matches her red dress and looks at the page which the book keeper had just filled. A smile crosses her face.

We're down one hundred souls.

DARKNESS No way! Really (he comes over and looks at the book. he whistles under his breath.) One more night of business and we're through with this.

Aniya puts her arms around her brother and looks at John over Darkness' shoulder daring him to say or do anything to pull Darkness back in the fracas. John looks back at her.

> DARKNESS (extricating himself from his sister's embrace) John, whatever it is you're here for I can't help you.

ANIYA Won't. Tomorrow we pack our bags and retire on an island paradise. And we don't come back. Do you miss St Lucia John? The shack on the beach? (and more pointedly) Iyla?

John doesn't even bother to look surprised. He just waves his hand as if saying whatever.

DARKNESS (he chuckles) Aniya, stop showing off. (to John) She surfs, she sees things... my little sister. Aniya take John downstairs. Get him some clothes, food like he asked for... but John I can't take care of you. Can't man. Aniya you go get some shut eye, I can manage this last bit. Truth is you deserve a break. If the devil had you on his side full time, earth would be won in no time.

ANIYA Don't kid, Brother. Could do with the early night but..I still have my day job... night shift. See you in the late morning.

She hugs her brother and kisses him on the cheek. Darkness turns to John and laughs.

> DARKNESS You'll be alright in her hands. (He smiles at Aniya who nods.)

The leave via a doorway at the back of Darkness's office. We didn't see it before.

# INSIDE PAPA DARKNESS'S APARTMENT

Darkness' private chambers are tastefully decorated and furnished reflecting the tastes of an up and coming well off guy. Aniya brings out some clothes and gives them to John.

ANIYA Here you go. Those should fit. He used to wear them before he got so successful.

JOHN He never told me he had a baby sister.

# ANIYA He doesn't generally mix his business with his private life. Do you know what he does when he's not here? He teaches baseball to fatherless boys from the projects.

JOHN As usual he's balancing the equation.

# ANIYA

She holds John's hand, taking him a back and looks into his eyes.

There are lots of things you don't know about him.

JOHN I wouldn't be surprised.

## ANIYA And me for that matter.

John cocks his head to one side... Aniya leans against a table in the room.

ANIYA And here comes the difficult part... Convincing you.

JOHN

Of what?

ANIYA That I'm the one whom she sent to help you.

#### JOHN

That certainly looks like the more difficult part. She could have chosen a a less involved helpmate.

ANIYA But that's the beauty of it John. Don't you see. The same trap which Satan has set is that which is going to ensnare him.

JOHN (not entirely unconvinced) Hum... really.

She moves back towards him and holds his wrist. With her thumb she rubs the same spot on his wrist which God had in the shack.

John looks into her eyes. They're warm they're soft, they're inviting. He looks deeper and she lets him take in her substance. He cocks his head to the other side and she continues to caresses his wrists and then entwines her fingers with his in the same way God had.

John looks at her.

JOHN Who are you? And why doesn't your brother know anything about this.

## ANIYA

Not every one is born to look the devil directly in the face John. My brother least of all.

JOHN Who are you?

ANIYA I am just a form John. A receptacle. I use my body to hold what the universe has to offer. She summoned me and I came.

JOHN You're her, aren't you. (He smiles happily and incredulously) Wow.. She said she'd be sending me someone.

They hug and Aniya shuts her eyes and a slow smile spreads across her face.

ANIYA A woman unto every man. And a mother onto every child. (She breaks their embrace to look at John again.) John I am only a receptacle. I don't presume to be so great. I only receive. Perhaps a small part of her but I'm not her. I'm far too flawed for that. You've seen that yourself. But I'm hoping that I can help even the score around here with the exquisite plan she has put in place. We're going to free all those souls he's got. You me and Haz. We've got to go to work. We've got to free Haz.

### JOHN

Haz? What's he got to do with all this. He's dead Aniya. He died five years ago when we took on Satan.

## ANIYA

Didn't she tell you? Of course she couldn't, Satan would have heard. But she told me. She told me that you would come and I was to lead you to Haz and help you liberate him and give him my form.

## JOHN

What's Haz got to do with this?

### ANIYA

Haz is the messanger John.

John gives her an 'I'm lost look'

### ANIYA

You don't have a clue what you're going into do you. I really thinks she meant it to be that way. I've got to get dressed myself.

She kisses his check and moves to her room, leaving the door ajar.

JOHN Where is Haz?

### ANIYA

(She comes out. She is wearing white starched trousers and shirt. She buttons the shirt up as she speaks.) Haz is in the body of a near death experience. Stuck. With the message. God's plan for how you're to save the world this time and free mankind from the clutches of Satan. Once and for all. She couldn't tell you in front of Satan. We are going to get him out. Haz has something very important to tell you John. We need to hear it.

JOHN

Where to?

ANIYA (smiling in an innocent cheeky way) The beauty of it. My office. I do have a day job.

John looks outside. It's witching hour. She leads him outside again through an exit which is separate from the club. Flags down a taxi. Taxi driver takes one look at John and with a squeal of tires takes off. John laughs.

> JOHN (to Aniya) Long story

Seconds later another taxi pulls up and Aniya and John climb in.

#### HOSPITAL

Aniya and John walk up to the entrance of the hospital. It's dead quiet. She steps in and walks to the aide at the reception and asks whether she has any messages. John hangs back at a respectable distance. The receptionist shakes her head, no messages. The waiting room is all but empty. A young man waits almost asleep on an uncomfortable metal chair , his head resting against the wall.

A doctor comes to the front desk and Aniya turns to her.

ANIYA How's the patient?

DOCTOR Rearing and ready to go. He insists that we sign him out. We'll have to let him go tomorrow Aniya. (turning to John) You must be Doctor Stanley. Doctor Aniya told me you'd be in. (she jokes) You must keep some long hours.

ANIYA John this is Janet Wise. Janet, John Stanley from the Los Angeles Unit of near death experiences. (they shake hands. John plays his role perfectly)

ANIYA Has he had another...relapse? Anything unusual?

JANET No. Nothing. He was very shaken up after you left so we gave him something to make him sleep. He came out of it an hour ago. No memory of the incident. Now he is demanding we release him. ANIYA What do you think? JANET We'll have to. No medical reason why we should keep him. And the oyher thing is (looking at Doctor Stanley -John.) way is beyond my sphere of competence. (she is nervous and a bit afraid)

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Perhaps you Dr Stanley can help us make sense of this.

# JOHN

Let's have a look at him then. From what Doctor Anya says it sounds like a straight forward case of possession complicated by cohabitation. Bodies are most vulnerable at the point when the soul has just vacated, for a few seconds afterwards it provides the perfect conditions for habitation by another soul seeking a body form. Most times theses souls have to wait in line for their turn but some very aggressive ones or others having a burning reason to come back may jump the queue. And this happens.

Doctor Stanley looks around. No one seems to be listening to them but she takes no chances and moves them away from the reception desk. John continues...

> Sorry, like I was saying... what seems special in this case is that though the patient was clinically dead...he came back. That certainly sounds like a bit of... for want of a better word divine intervention to me. As if God changed her mind suddenly and now this man is what we would happily conclude as a schizophrenic.

Doctor Stanley looks at him incredulously. Very bewildered not to mention very very uneasy.

We'll see him now. Try to persuade him to stay on a bit.

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#### JANET

Don't do that. Let him go. If this begins to affect his life he'll seek help. We're not equipped to deal with this. We're doctors Aniya, not exorcists. As far as James is concerned nothing has happened. He had a heart attack, we dissolved the clot, now he can go home.

THE PATIENT'S ROOM

On the bed a man sits reading the Financial Times. He lowers it as they enter.

ANIYA Hello James, I've brought someone in to see you. It's John.

#### JAMES

(he looks across at John then lifts the newspaper and continues to read.) I don't know any John who looks like he does. Do you think you could get them to let me have my mobile phone. Good time to place some bets it seems. Have you seen the markets, doctor Aniya, ripe for the picking. I could make a killing.

ANIYA

Well that's what got you here in the first place James, if you continue working so hard you'll just come down with another heart attack and the end mightn't be so lucky.

# JAMES

(lowering the paper) I feel as fit as a fiddle Doctor.

# ANIYA

It amazes us.

(checking his pressure) We thought we'd lost you when you came in but some how you performed a miracle. How are you feeling?

### JAMES

Like I told you I've never felt better. Don't understand it myself. First those gripping pains, like an elephant on my chest I wake up and I'm a new man. You guys are brilliant. Who's he?

### ANIYA

James we'll sign you out tomorrow but there's something which you should know before you go. You had a - how do I say it? An unusual experience. We'll show you a video of what happened. Dr Stanley is from the LA Unit for near death experiences, he's here to help you. And later if ever you wanted to contact him...

### JAMES

What are you talking about? Show me a video..? Who is this guy and why do I need a doctor specializing in near death experiences?

#### ANIYA

We don't want to worry you James, but it would unethical of us not to let you know what happened when you were out. So to speak.

> (She takes out a portable video player from her bag and hits play. She sits on his bed side.)

James, you were officially pronounced dead before you game back. We record all major interventions as we can't afford to be sued for malpractice. And it serves as great raw material for our interns. This is what happened to you.

(the video starts)

In the video the doctors are looking at the monitor the line has gone flat the beeping sound tell us the patient has gone. The patient lies lifeless on the operating table, all colour drained from his face. Doctor Janet Wise all decked out in her surgeon's greens speaks to Doctor Aniya.

# DOCTOR JANET WISE Call Paul down in Antartica, tell him to come get this one. (she hardly finishes his sentence when..)

The patients body starts to thump and thump on the bed. Like it's having a seizure. He starts to froth at the mouth his muscles jerking, he is straining to speak. For a split second the medics stand shocked then move into action. A nurse screams. They try to hold him down.

# THE PATIENT GET HIM OUT OF ME. GET OUT. GET OUT FUCKER. GET THE FUCKER OUT OF ME. NO NO NO. I'M NOT GOING. YOU ARE.

The nurse screams again. The patient wide eyed and stack staring mad tries to make eye contact with a doctor. Pleading...

Doctor doctor, get him out. Get him out of me. Do something, get him out.

DOCTOR ANIYA Don't worry James, it will be alright. Try to relax. We're here. (she looks up at the monitor which is showing the man is very much alive) It is ok. You're doing really well.

At the sound of her restful voice he seems to deflate and fall into sleep, only the occasional twitching of his leg let us know he is still alive. Then his mouth begins to moves as if on its own accord independent of the body. The rest of his body lies immobile.

VOICE FROM INSIDE PATIENT

Get JOHN

The man opens his eyes and focuses specifically on Doctor Aniya above him and repeats..

Get John.

BACK TO THE ROOM.

John reacts like someone walked over his grave. James is shocked, putting it mildly.

JAMES (pointing at the screen) What the fuck is this? What happened there? Who the hell is this guy.

JOHN James, you're alive because this guy is keeping you alive.

JAMES No. No No No no no. I don't believe in that kind of crap. You can't food mo any of your mumbo jumbo poar

feed me any of your mumbo jumbo near death nonsense. I'm a stock broker for chrissakes.

JOHN

Looks like someone's just bought some shares in you. What may have happened is this.. either you hang on too long, or he jumped in too quickly. Or you came back in when you noticed your body had new life.

James has no words.

ANIYA James, you can walk out of here tomorrow, you may never remember this...
 (James exhales ... there is
 mercy in this world)
But..
 (James looks sharply back at
 Aniya. That but doesn't sound
 so promising after all)

# ANIYA

But... in less than twenty four hours you will be dead. Either he will leave you and go find another (searching for the right word) host... And you will go on to where

you were before the mix up happened. On your way out. You don't have strength to keep this ship going on your own James.

### JAMES

You mean this thing... I mean ,had I died, it would be walking around in my skin.

# JOHN

But not in the circles you frequent, no one would know. You least of all. But I don't think this is the case here. If that were so he would have left already. He's hanging on. And that can only mean, he's planning a hostile take over James, and you're going to be the minority partner. The sleeping partner.

# JAMES

What?

#### JOHN

As we speak he is breaking you down slowly from the inside James. It takes twenty four hours. Right now, he's lying dormant in you building his strength and when he does we will never hear from you again. You're not strong enough to house him and have a say. (pointing to Aniya who nods)

She is.

JAMES

She a doctor.

ANIYA Amongst other things... 47

(mad, yet lucid) What kind of fucking game are you playing? You've just given me the scare of my life with that little video of yours, then you tell me I am on my way out in a day. Now you offer the wonderful solution that you can house him in her. I may not know a lot of things about your other so called spirits and habitation but I'm no fool. What happens when she houses my life force? Did you think about that? If I had any sense I should sue....

JOHN

You won't live to file the complaint James. There is something called incomplete departure James. Where we 'exorcise' most of him but leave enough to keep you going. It's a trade off.

JAMES How about fucking off.... you your video and (he sneers) your doctor. What I'm gonna do is call her supervisor and

He reaches for the bedside phone but John stops him from dialing.

JOHN I understand what you going through buddy, but we didn't make that video.... That something you can see with your own rational, logical eyes.

James doesn't dial. Instead he looks back at the paused video and shakes his head. John really does have a point and he can't fail to see that. James takes his head in his hand. This is not your usual day at the hospital.

> JOHN James, I am John. The guy he was calling for. I am an exorcist. The guy inside you is my friend, a good guy.

JAMES And he's just gonna let me die. Well that good, that's really good.

JOHN We're not going t let you die James. For now till you decide...

# ANIYA

(interrupting) And we don't have much time.

JOHN For now the two of you can co exist. Let him speak through you.

JAMES Over my dead body. (shaking his head and acting sarcastic) No no. I'm not playing host to this ...parasite.

## ANIYA

(slowly enunciating each words like she is talking to a retarded child) What would you give to live James?

JAMES (sarcastically) My right hand. How about that. My fucking right hand.

JOHN

Ok.

JAMES What do you mean OK.

## JOHN

(passing Aniya's ledger and pen to the bedside table near James' right hand.) Let him write then.

JAMES

(folding his arms across his
 chest.)
I'd rather die first.

## ANIYA

And at this rate that's exactly what's going to happen James. In fact you should be dead. Sorry for being so brutal but you don't understand. We're trying to find a way to keep you alive. With a stroke like what you suffered James you should not be alive. Am I making this clear. He is keeping you alive. He is your life force. So strangle him at your own loss and peril. You have been given an extra lease on life, if he goes, you go. Think about that.

JAMES (agitated)

I don't believe in any of this shit. I have a stroke, you guys rush me here, I wake up and you feed me the nonsense that I am occupied, I am a host. When I am out of here I'll get my lawyers down on you guys like a ton of bricks... Look look at me, see anything strange or spooky going on? I'm fine man. I'm fine. Get me my stuff, sign me out. I'm out of here.

We hear an tap tap tapping sound of someone tapping his fingers in impatience. It's James' right hand. James looks at it and grabs it trying to get it still. He is pure panic. John goes round to him and lays his hand on James'.

#### JOHN

It's alright Buddy. I know what you're going through. But this is a good ones, if it were the other type you'd probably be walking on the ceiling by now or screaming obscenities in a weird language. Just let him talk to me.

> JAMES (Panting) He says he doesn't want to. JOHN

Why?

James pauses like he is listening to something in his head.

JAMES He says he's not going to now.

JOHN Why? Ask him why. Tell him its John.

JAMES He says he knows who the fuck you are. But he's not talking now. And he is not saying why either...not now (panting heavily - this was a real strain) Now leave me alone.

He falls back on the bed his forehead wet with cold sweat. Janet wise chooses this second to knocks at the door and enters. She takes in the scene with the precision of a surgeon. James lying in a crumpled heap on the bed. Looks at the paused video and John hovering over an broken James. She tightens her lips. She doesn't like it one bit. She Looks at Aniya. Aniya is caught and is facing mal pracitice. We've seem to have a small situation on our hands Doctor, can I talk to you out side.

They head out and shut the door. As the door swings shut behind them the hand starts to move again. It feels around on the table for something. James is too exhausted to speak or move or pull up a fight. The hand searches around on the bed stand for pen and paper and finds the Aniya's note pad. It begins to scribble fast.

John reads.

Get away from... (the hand pauses)
She is the... (hand pauses again.)
The devils whore.
 (John hears the two doctors out
 side.)

JANET WISE'S VOICE (FROM OUTSIDE) What happened in there? He was perfectly fine when I saw him last Aniya. It seems to me you're blurring the lines between medical responsibility and self interest. I want to see you in my office with a full report in five minutes. Tell Dr Stanley that the seance is over.

John hears Janet's footsteps fading away. The hand drops the pen and quickly pushes the paper towards John. John pockets the paper. Quickly The Hand grabs John's hand at the wrist. With his the thumb he makes a cutting movement across the palm of John's hand and presses their palms in together with urgency. Then as if nothing happened The Hand lies motionless on the bed just as the door opens and Aniya comes in.

> JANET We're going to lose both of them John. And I'm going to lose my job.

JOHN I heard her. (indicating with his head, Janet) Give me five minutes here to talk to the kid. Then I'll leave and meet you back at Darkness's ... at the flat.

She looks at him with those soft gentle eyes but John doesn't return her look. He looks down at James.

ANIYA What is it John?

JOHN We were so close. ANIYA I'll beg Darkness to let me take The Chair later find out where he's gone. We'll find him.

JOHN Alright. (still not looking at her) You gotta go save your job.

ANIYA Everything alright John?

JOHN (running his had through his hair) It's been a long day.

Aniya rubs his back and leaves. Soon as she does, he wastes no time searches the room for something sharp. He breaks a drinking glass in a sheet to muffle the sound and takes one of the broken pieces of glass out.

> JOHN (shaking his head) Man, thought I was done with all that. Sorry James about this James.

John cuts James' palm first. James is so out he doesn't feel a thing. Then John cuts his own palm. He hesitates only for a brief second then does it. As the blood starts to run down his wrist, he takes James' left palm and brings it to his bleeding one. He holds their bleeding palms together and then the miracle happens. The room is a glow. As their blood fuse 'Haz' and all the power behind him flows into John's being. Like a picture of the resurrection John looks sacred, divine, all powwerful. John opens his eyes to see James lying limpless and dead on the bed. He assumed all the power.

JOHN

Damn

He performs his first miracle. He places his hand on James' head and commands him out of his 'sleep' (think Lazarus and Jesus)

JOHN Rise up and walk. Get up James.

James sits up. The gash in his hand completely healed itself. No trace of blood. He looks at his hand, his legs in disbelief. He feels a new man. Like Lazurus waken from the dead. He looks up John who smiles at him 'I got you covered brother'. James wastes no time in getting off the bed and into his clothes. Aniya chooses that second to come in.

ANIYA John , I came back to tell you.... (pauses) She looks at the scene, James getting dressed to leave, John somewhat majestically transformed and John looks at her.

ANIYA John....? JOHN (He stretches an arm out in her direction)

What did you come back to say?

Aniya steps boldly into the room and shuts the door.

ANIYA Do you really think you can coexist with....

JOHN Get behind me Satan.

ANIYA John...you're a fool.

JOHN Tell me Aniya, what exactly did you intend to do with Haz when you recieved him, when you housed him?

John removes every trace of her from earth. Turning to James who is frozen, his trousers half way up his thighs.

JOHN Not bad. One birth, one death. Balance. See you buddy. Got my work cut out for me. Considering the circumstances Dr Wise will be more than willing to sign your release.

PAPA DARKNESSS

A taxi stops and John steps out. He walks to the door of Le Salon du Dieu et Diable. No bouncer stands ready. In fact a sign is over the door - CLOSED FOR BUSINESS.

John turns the door handle. it is locked. he stares at it for a second. Then places his hands on it keeps it there for a fraction of a second and tries it again. This time it gives and the door opens.

John enters. The house is quiet. The room where the others had played fish early is empty. He walks towards the door where the the Secret Seven were doing the chant and offering up the lost soul. As he reaches it a tall calls out.

> TALL MAN So it's true. You've crossed sides. Welcome.

John pauses and turns right, into the room. The seven are seated around a long table. The one to the back, the tall of

of earlier - the book keeper, is the one who'd spoken. They look at him their expressions unveiled smugness.

JOHN Sons and daughters of Satan beware. Your hour is near. (he takes in the seven of them) What makes any of you believe I would ever join your ranks.

TALL MAN We can't be mistaken John.

The others laugh....

TALL MAN You've been taken in John.

JOHN Let me prove to you whose side I am really on. All of you, prepare to meet your master and give him my regards.

The wicked rise to counter his attack. John stretches out his hand preparing to annihilate them like he did to Aniya. But he is stopped. A voice booms down at them. It's Darkness. The ceiling has changed and is now transparent. Darkness from his office upstairs stares down at them. His office reflected in it's silver ceiling.

> DARKNESS (to all) Remember the rules of my house. Especially now it is **MY** house. (to John) John I'll see you now. Feel free to use the stairs as I'm not likely to let down my golden hair.

The wicked sneer. John walks out past them unaffected.

DARKNESS'S OFFICE

Darkness looks a bit tired. His white shirt pulled out of his trousers. Yet he looks like he's had an uplift of spirit since we last saw him. He has a broom in hand which John eyes as he enters. We notice that the she devil picture has come down and lies at an angle on the sofa.

> JOHN (to Darkness, sarcastically) Thanks for saving my ass. It's good to know I'm in good hands with you. Thinking of flying off on that?

DARKNESS Spring cleaning well warranted by the recent change of ownership. I'm finished here. It's over. I'm a free man and don't think of jeopodising that. What are you doing here?

JOHN I need to know whose side you're really on.

John's eyes go to the picture of the she devil on the sofa. He smiles. Turns to Darkness.

> JOHN (getting straight to the point) So you knew your sister was the devil's whore Darkness.

### DARKNESS

I shall murder you.

He moves towards John but John raises his hand and Darkness stops in his tracks. John points two fingers at Darkness, and by some unseen force Darkness is propelled across the room under the picture of God. Darkness hits the wall smack, his head only a millimeter away from the frame. John continues to hold up the fingers and Darkness shakes as if being hit by one thousand bullets from a machine gun.

> JOHN God dammit Darkness, do I have to send you to meet her.

DARKNESS (panting) I swear to God I didn't know.

John stops and Darkness crumples to the floor. He stands dragging himself up by putting his weight on the small desk on his right. In doing so he knocks over the lamp. Up now, Darkness limps to a chair and sits. John sits too.

# JOHN

I bought it too. Nice act. Nice sweet innocent Aniya with a back bone of steel against the opposition. Sees thing, surfs... I swallowed it. Helps her brother pay off the debt. Unbeknowst to you a receptacle to house the power of God for Satan. Right now she'd be walking around with God's power and only hell know"s what she'd be doing with it.

DARKNESS Hang on a sec man... I don't follow you. That last bit.

JOHN Haz. We went to get him.

# DARKNESS

Haz? What the hell are you talking about man? Haz is dead.

JOHN

(proudly)

Was dead.

DARKNESS Who told you that?

### JOHN

(bangs his head on the table) Holy fuck. I should have known.

# DARKNESS

And the penny finally drops. Who's paying your bills buddy boy? Better you than me. I'm out of here.

JOHN

He's a genius. You have to give it to him. Brilliant fucking mind.

DARKNESS Well he's certainly got yours.

JOHN Darkness you've got to help me man.

DARKNESS

No.

JOHN We gotta get him out.

### DARKNESS

Uh uh. No. The answer is no. And no. No way man. I'm not getting involved. I just got back in the black here man. I'm not going down again. No. If you want to mess around with Satan, you go on your own. Count me out. John, Not everyone can stare Satan in the face and live.

### JOHN

Do it, or you'll find your soul in limbo where assholes like you belong. Or better yet hell.

(John quotes a scripture passage for John) Remember this Darkie.. because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot,

(John's left hand points to the picture of the she devil and his right to the God picture.) I will spew you out of my mouth. Here's your chance to save your soul
my friend. You may be in the black
here
 (John points to the red book
 still on the table)
But up there you're in the red
brother.

DARKNESS John don't force me.

JOHN Do it. Do it now, or your soul be

damned.

DARKNESS Alright. I shall die for this. I know.

JOHN Then you can gaze upon her magnificence. Consider yourself lucky.

DARKNESS

I hope you're right John. I hope you're right. Cause the way things stand now, I'll be going flaming down. Choose your bed. I don't keep equipment any more.

John looks around, the only possible place is Darkness' long desk. He goes over to it and wipes everything off onto the floor. Pens, red books, papers...Darkness comes over to him.

DARKNESS We only have two belts between us.

JOHN Use your shirt.

Darkness takes off his shirt, he is a bit on the soft side. He walks to the fireplace and takes up a poker and proceeded to gash three holes in his long wide desk.

> DARKNESS Ok lie tight.

John takes off his belt, hands it to Darkness and climbs onto the desk. Lacing the belts and shirts through the holes he made Darkness bounds John crusifixtion style to the desk.

> DARKNESS (feeling for John's wrist.) Under normal conditions you would have 24 hours before he dissolves you.

I know the drill Darkness.

# He locates John's pulse

### DARKNESS

Shit, the fucker is working fast. Two hours at the most before he breaks you down from the inside. He's moving fast. Hold on John. Fuck. It's years since I have done that sort of thing.

### JOHN

Don't tell me that now soldier. Just get him out. You've got to or we're all done for. You understand what I'm saying? We've all done for. Earth, heaven everything. You wanted to know what the game plan was, now you do. If he gets me, God goes under.

DARKNESS Whew..man that's one tall order.

JOHN

Just do it.

### DARKNESS

Save your energies Mister. You're gonna need it. Mirror mirror on the wall...whose the fairest of us all? What Am I gonna use as a mirror.

Darkness hits a switch under his desk and a light illuminates the ceiling. John on the desk reflects a lot clearer than before up on the ceiling.

Ah, Bible .. where's the bible?

Darkness proceeds to gets the bible from a drawer in his desk. Through all that John follows him with his eyes.

### DARKNESS

Now which scripture passage was it John?

JOHN Which scripture passage? (hissing) Listen to me Darkness, you're not dealing with your ordinary demon here. This is Satan. Forget the fucking bible. Forget the fucking Latin. Forget the mirror - you really want to see the beast? Words alone ain't gonna get him out. You need faith. John and Darkness stare at each other. The door to his office starts to open and darkness launches himself at it, breaking a finger or two of whoever the ill-mannered Satan Worshipper was. The beast screams in agony.

> DARKNESS (from in front of the door hissing) If any of you dare come in here now I'll kill you. Stay away from this door if you value your life. (He turns back to John ) Faith. Think I know just the thing.

> > JOHN

Just hurry.

Darkness goes to the corner of the room, runs his hands over a collection of CDs and chooses one. He puts it into the player. 'Music' to put it mildly floods the room. John smiles a bit. It's some wild African drum beat. Wild, daring and empowering. Someone knocks behind the door and this time Darkness, visibly empowered and changed by the music throws the small desk at the door. The knocking stops. The music blares on. Darkness heads back to John. His eyes are focussed and concentrating. Sweat beads form on his forehead. He looks deep into John's unblinking eyes.

DARKNESS

Get out!

John starts to strain. His eyes roll upwards into his head and he starts to thrash on the bed. Darkness places his hands on John's shoulders and bores his eyes into John's Something moves below John's shirt. Darkness rips the shirt up to reveal a distortion moving under John's skin.

> DARKNESS (he shouts) Get out Satan.

The thing under the shirt grows bigger. John's skin stretches with it. John yells.

DARKNESS By my father and my father's father. By my mother, my mother's mother. By the strength and power of all those you have fought I command you to rise out of this man.

The thing obeys stretches within John's skin to a standing position. Darkness is momentarily taken aback by his success and falters.

DARKNESS Oh shit, it's working. (growling) No shit Darkness. Faith is never surprised by it's result.

Satan stretches its arms and encircles Darkness' neck. Darknesses eyes pop right out of his sockets and hang down in front his face. Satan tosses him across the room and right through the window. The whole building shakes. Slowly Satan settles himself back into John. The door burst open and the Secret Seven come in, stepping over the desk. The tall nurses his broken fingers lead the way. They know their boss is in residence and go in to pay homage. They fall on their knees around the big desk.

From the mirror on the ceiling Satan holds court. We see his true form reflected in the silver of the mirror. Orange flames leap downwards and in the middle of it Satan's face's changing like one who wears a thousand masks. Every face on earth is represented. Blacks, whites, Asian, Indian... he wears their faces. Female and male and gay he incarnates their form. Never scary but very real in that he could be your very neighbour. Then he changes and in a split second all these forms merge into one and become for one split second downright ugly. He changes again to the white man white suit figure. His audience brays and cheers at the show. John lies still on the bed.

SATAN

Hear hear hear.

I know you are enduring patiently, and are bearing patience for my name's sake and you have not fainted or become exhausted or grown weary.

I am coming quickly, hold fast to what you have, so that no one may rob you and deprive you of your crown my faithful.

Satan, arm extending from the mirror above the bed hands each of the seven men and women a bowl. They each rise to take it and lay it before them on the floor and they resume their kneeling position. John lies in a stupor oblivious to the happenings around him. Satan looks down at John and speaks directly to John's form. The Secret Seven raise their heads to look at John.

### SATAN

I know your record and what you are doing. You are supposed to be alive, but in reality you are dead. (Turning to his subjects) Rouse yourselves and keep awake and strengthen and invigorate what remains. (he finishes handing out the bowls and each of the seven wicked look into his in turn and smile their ugly approving smile) Soon, very you shall inherit the earth.

The first Satan worshiper looks into his bowl. He sees a convent, a church, a monastery. One nun in a pew in the chapel begins to rub the top of her wimple. The itching becomes more insistent and she starts to scratch. Next to her another nun starts to scratch her thigh under her habit. The priest in the church lifting the silver bowl and round host feels compelled to put it down and scratch his back. Over in the monastery the bald heads of the monks burst out into swelling oozing ulcers whose contents flow into their eyes and blind them. Fowl and painful ulcers came upon people who were marked with the sign of God. Priests, nuns, believers etc...

The second Sata worshipper looks into hers, smiling at what he sees there. A boy swimming in the sea is attacked by a small baracuda. He bleeds and his blood pours from him and flows into the sea, thick and ugly and every living thing that was in the sea perishes. This angel of Satan is loving what he sees in his bowl.

The third looks into his bowl. Farmers slaughter and dump tons and tons of sick animals into nearby springs and rivers. Their blood colours the water. A mother opens the tap to fill the bath tub for two three year old twins to have their evening bath. Instead of water blood flows out of the tap and she strugles to resue her son from the red swirling mass of blood only to be dragged in her self and drowned. Chefs at a restaurant suddenly find their meals cooking in blood. Water rafting and cannoeing fans find themselves screaming as the water below them changes in consistency and colour. Springs, rivers and all water sources turn to blood. The water from the taps run blood. Kiddies drink bottles out of water which suddenly transform into bottles of blood. They gulp it down and die. This worshipper falls to his knees and applauds Satan's brilliance....

> Righteous You are in these your decisions and judgements. Because they have poured out the blood of your people you have given them blood to drink, such is their due.

> THE OTHERS CRY OUT TOGETHER Yes Oh Satan the Omnipotent, your judgements are true just and righteous.

Forth bowl - The sun becomes ten times as large and the earth transforms into a baking dessert. The sun is seen to scorch all of humanity with heat. The people dry up and burn in the heat. They cry out for God. This angel of satan laughs approving at Satan's cunning.

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Fifth bowl - earth is in darkness and the people blastphem and give up on God. The preist are giving up faith. They tear off their priesly clothes, lock the church doors. People pelt stones at the windows of the churches. They laugh bitterly at the heavens. God is dead. God is dead they scream. He has fosakeen us. All the wicked demons laugh.

In the sixth bowl a mighty river is dried up and a road is being prepared. Workers labour to sift gold under the blazing heat to line the road bed which leads to a jeweled thrown. (expensive gold asphalt)

The seventh demon empties is bowl into the air and the mighty voice of Satan booms and fills the room. He walks up the asphalted road bed towards the thrown. About to sit on it he calls out to his seven subjects now dressed in robes around the thrown.

## SATAN (FROM THE CEILING) IT IS DONE

His worthy seven roar a chorus of AMENS to lightning flashes, loud rumblings,peals of thunder,and a tremendous earthquake. The vibrations of which wakes John up. Satan vanishes in a huge flash of fire from the ceiling mirror above the bed. This flash separates itself into seven flames and land on each of the secret seven. (A bit like Pentecost - the decent of the Holy Spirit.) The flame lands on each of them and they transform into ghost like creatures each holding a flaming staff. The Worthy Seven go round the desk chanting.

# FLAMING SEVEN Here he lies in slumber deep Our Lord and Master he will keep Till the dark of night goes down Our Lord will rise and take his crown.

John comes to with a gang of demons over him in a flaming circle singing Satan's praises. Not a pretty sight. The tall one of the Seven steps forwards towards John and puts a flaming crown on his head.

TALL MAN It is finished.

JOHN (rising from the bed he sends the crown flying. It goes out through the window.) It's not finished, yet.

John gets up, walks out of the room. he makes a consious effort to stand up right. Going down the stairs he leans on the banister for support. He steps out of building with the seven on his heels. As the seven leave Salon they trnsform back to their old selves.

John walks and as he does he seems to draw the darkness to

him. Night animals scurry into their holes. Doors of corner shops bang shut and bolt. It's as if by some special sense people know that the devil is out and about. Dragging chains and the pounding of hooves replace John's foot steps. Behind him his troop follow their patron. This is not a night to be out. Dark clouds cover the moon. John walks from street light to street light with firm determination. He reaches the ...

## CHURCH

John climbs up the steps of the church. Every step is an effort. He grits his teeth. He forces his will to carry his legs. He enters the church and holds on to the door for support. He looks up and focuses on a statue of God. John smiles, then he laughs. John then pulls himself upright and walks into the church. He's made it.

# JOHN (to himself) We're taking you in.

Mary the mother of God smiles at him in her Mona Lisa sort of way. The angels look down at him. Jesus and the host of heavenly saints look down on John. A figure in the shadows observes John him and a man John's right is hunched over praying with passion. John can't see his face.

### PENETANT

I have sinned, I have done wrong and have dealt wickedly. If I turn to you in the land of my captivity, and praying, facing the land which you gave to their fathers ..

(John is taken in my the passion of his prayers and momentarily

forgets his own mission) Then hear from heaven, your dwelling place, my prayer and supplications and maintain my cause and forgive your people who have sinned against you.

> (John makes to go towards him but stops. The waiter is praying with passion enough to shake the pillars of the church)

Now Oh my God I beseech you, let Your eyes be opened and your ears attentive to the prayers offered in this temple. Oh Lord God, turn not away the face of your anointed one, remember your good deeds, mercy and steadfast love for Your servant.

The waiter weeps and lifts his head. It's the waiter-Gabriel. John starts to see him and then comprehension dawn. He walks the few steps to his pew. Gabriel hardly notices John's presence, so strong is his repentance. JOHN (standing behind his pew) Your iniquity an guilt are taken away, and your sin is completely atoned for and forgiven. THE WAITER (looking up expecting to see a priest) John... JOHN Gabriel. GABRIEL THE WAITER (explaining) When swelling and pride come, then emptiness and shame come also. JOHN (gently) But the unjust, they know no shame. GABRIEL (responding to his understanding and searching for a reason for this timely coincidence.) Do two walk together unless they have made an appointment and have agreed?

John had temporarily forgotten his mission and now that Gabriel asks why are they both here together, could this be a divine intervention he gets back on the path.

> JOHN (as if giving him a piece of a puzzle only he can understand due to her vast knowledge of the bible.) Time and chance happen to them all.

And Gabriel fills in the rest of the scripture understanding John's predicament

# GABRIEL

(rising)
As the fishes are taken in in an evil
net, and as the birds are caught in a
snare, so are the son's of men snared
in an evil time when calamity falls
suddenly upon them....
(He understands and reaches for

Oh John... (he doesn't respond to him just turns his head and stares ahead. Then he speaks..)

JOHN (bitterly) For without cause they hid for me their net, a pit of destruction they dug for my life. (as he rises, he raises his voice) Let destruction befall my foe unawares; let the net he hid for me catch him; let him fall into that very destruction.

John walks purposely though haltinly to the alter and genuflects. He stands and raises his head to the mosaic ceiling of the church.

I also will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when the thing comes that will cause you terror and panic.

We hear the flapping of anxious wings trying to escape a cage. John holds his chest. the flapping is coming from inside his rib cage. A haunted terrified NOOOOOO fills the church. It seems to come from inside of John and echos and fills the church. It is Satan screaming in terror at the fate which awaits him. The flapping is him trying to escape. The wings flap even harder trying as if to break open the cage. Focus for a brief instant on the other figure in the shadows for a brief instant. It's a female. She is calm with a gentle smiling knowing face taking in the proceedings. John moves unsteadily towards the receptacle which holds the holy water. The wings are flapping harder inside his rib cage and it takes a lot of effort to make each step. Gabriel helps him make the last one. John reaches the Holy Water. It takes all the strength he has to lift his arm and bless himself.....

> JOHN In the name of the father, and of the son (Gabriel is standing behind him resting his hand on John's shoulder) and of the holy spirit Amen.

Silence. The NOOOOOO is silenced. The wings stop beating. John is able to stand easily. We hear wings wings again. Soft ones, like that of a graceful bird landing., light wings, soft gentle wings. All the candles in the church suddenly light up.. The angels on the wall, mother Mary, Jesus all change their expression painted expressions to one of a happy and joyous welcome. A choir of angels sing Hallelujah!

God alights.

GOD Thank you John you have captured the king. Whoever leads into captivity will himself go into captivity. If any one slays with the sword with the sword he must be slain. Welcome home Lucifer. You know now to

Welcome home Lucifer. You know now to fear the Lord.

God undoes John's shirt and runs her hand over his stomach. Something small moves there. We see the outline of a small foot, a hand perhaps. God caresses it.

> GOD This is my son, my Beloved in whom I delight. (to John) John, you shall writhe in pain and labour to bring forth. Take my yoke upon you.

Pain envelopes John whose abdomen cramps and he is doubled over in pain. He falls down on his knees hunched over. God places her hand on his head. He is hit by another spasm and groans.

> GOD Lie back John.

Gabriel appears with some cushions and places them behind John's back as John reclines in extreme discomfort. The baby starts to move upwards and the John is looks like he is splitting inside. He thrashes his head and arms and legs wildly. Sweat pours down his forehead.

> JOHN I can't do this. Oh God I can't I can't I can't do this.

Expanding his esophagus beyond natural stretch his voices is now chocked and his moaning is muffled pain. He can hardly breathe, he raises his pelvis and beats the floor with his fist. His eyes rolling up into his head, his lips are dry and God dips the hem of her dress into the Holy water and dabs his forehead. John starts to scream and chocking sort of scream and God's merciful eyes fill up. Already bent over John and wiping his forehead She kneels over and straddles him, her pelvis very close to his face, her hand on John's neck assisting the baby uphead. God raises her face and written on it is the pain and agony of childbirth. John is visibly in less pain. God has assumed some of the pain. God writhes and cries while John's mouth stretches beyond imaginable widths to reveal the head of the baby. God's entire body contracts and she pushes. her face is now covered in sweat and Gabriel hesitates for a second before taking out his handkerchief and wiping her brow. She gives an animal roar and the baby falls out from John unto her waiting thighs, into her waiting arms under her loving gaze.

John opens his eyes sees the baby and is seized by a need to retch, out comes the after birth. God smiles down at him. Wipes his face with the hem of her dress. She then proceeds to each the after birth (just kidding)

> GOD (to John, smiling... panting) It is finished. (turning to Gabriel) Gabriel, the water.

Gabriel takes the entire receptacle out of the holy water stand and lays it before God next to where John lies. John is still straddled by God. God holds the baby over the receptacle of holy water.

> GOD (kindly speaking to a child) Wash me thoroughly from my inequity and guilt and cleanse me and make me wholly pure from my sin.

She submerges the baby totally in the holy water, the baby opens its arms like babies do when they're startled. Gods lifts it up and standing steps over John who rises to a sitting position, exhausted, bloody and shaken. The baby coos. God undoes her tunique and puts the baby to her breast. She smiles her mother earth smile closes her eyes as her milk flows into her new baby's mouth. The baby sucks hungrily.

GABRIEL

(falling to his knees) Father I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

God opens her eyes, looks at Gabriel and bids him to stand. For a brief second we see God in his beauty as a king looking on to Gabriel. God extends his arm and from the blessed air he pulls out a fine (yet simple)robe. God clothes Gabriel, puts a ring on Gabriel's finger and sandals on Gabriel's feet. Last he gives him wings. Gabriel is overcome. God then looks at John. God is now again Female. She rises with the baby still suckling at he breast. John raises himself up onto an elbow still much too overcome to do much else.

> GOD Now John, may the God who gives the power of patient endurance, and who

supplies encouragement grant you to live in such mutual harmony and full sympathy with one another.

John is at first puzzled, trying to decipher God's meaning. God lifts her beautiful head and looks to the back of the church where on one bench the female is rising. John rises too and follows God's gaze. She is in the shadow but John makes out a shape of a female moving along the pew. He sees only her side profile.

> GOD She is your companion, your wife, your helper.

> That together you may with united hearts and one voice praise and glorify the God.

Go in peace John, to love and serve.

Gabriel, God and Lucifer ascend and John walks towards the figure who is half in the light. She, we suppose is the human incarnation of God herself. His earthly wife.

# THE END

CREDITS GO UP TO BOB MARLEY'S REDEMPTION SONG.

Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery; None but ourselves can free our mind. Wo! Have no fear for atomic energy, 'Cause none of them-a can-a stop-a the time. How long shall they kill our prophets, While we stand aside and look? Yes, some say it's just a part of it: We've got to fulfil de book. Won't you help to sing Dese songs of freedom? -'Cause all I ever had: Redemption songs -All I ever had: Redemption songs: These songs of freedom, Songs of freedom.