

The Devil Rides a Limousine

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2003

The Devil is not a bad guy. I know because I dealt with him once. I had this run-in with him on my way home from work. It was one of those sweltering hot summer days with the sun beating down on you like a physical force. It really was a day made for the Devil.

Contrary to popular belief, the Devil does not hate God. For once, God's creation made the Devil possible. Without the world he would be nothing, just this pathetic demigod with a lot of power but nowhere to use them. Unlike God, the Devil has no creative powers you know. He couldn't make life if his own existence depended on it. But I digress.

In this ridiculous heat, naturally, the AC in the car broke down. It was just right in the circumstances and I barely gave it a second thought. It can't really break down in the autumn, when the temperature outside is just right because during those months you don't use it. It never really gets cold enough to use the heater either, so logic suggests that if the AC is going to break down in your car it will do so during a very hot day, when you are using it to its maximum capacity.

But what pissed me off, and which to this day I believe was in fact the doing of the devil himself, is that the car starts to boil as well. So there I am, in the middle of 5 o'clock traffic on the freeway, motor spluttering and dying, with sweat on my face and pouring down my torso under my shirt, which is now starting to stink, trying to make my way to the rightmost lane and the freeway shoulder where maybe I could turn off the engine, find some water somehow, cool the engine down and get going again.

Of course, I didn't quite make it and had to push my car out of the way, much to the shagrin of the other trafficants, none of which were bothered enough by the whole experience to actually get out of their cars and help me. They, instead, much more usefully stayed inside their well tempered vehicles, honking every 5 seconds to make me aware that they were there. During this physical assertion I, of course, tore open my old back injury and sweated, if possible, even more.

Landing my car on the shoulder, I turned on the warning blinkers, put out the warning triangle, at least 5 feet behind the car, and waited. I enjoyed the short warm puffs of exhaust-air from cars passing me by in 5 miles an hour, since the traffic now had almost come to a stand still, and tried to catch my breath. But not too hard since breathing hurt my back.

After this ordeal, starting to become aware of how much of the ordeal was still ahead of me, I formulated a deal in my head. A deal that would get me, something cold to drink, a new car with working AC which would faultlessly carry me home and a beautiful young thing to massage my back all the way there. In return, whomever helped me in this manner would receive my eternal soul.

You might think that under the circumstances this was a pretty lucid wish, and one without any obvious faults. Though maybe my soul would be a tad cheap, considering that it could be claimed immediately upon arrival at my homestead. Well, that was/is how my mind works. Short term solutions, but even deals with the devil I try to include all my problems and some provisions for which the deal can be broken.

For example, in this dream, the car must be a black limousine and the girl would have to be asian. No particular reason for either, but I prided myself in having some sort of loophole. Not that I thought that the Devil, had I at the time even thought for a second that he existed, would not have the power to produce any kind of car filled with any sort of women. However, I thought that

he might forget a detail or two, my notion of gods and devils being that they're not so perfect as people would like you to believe.

By pure chance, at that exact moment, a black limousine pulls up right behind my broken down car, steam still streaming from the hood. I had not even really caught my breath and the deal with the devil had hardly even been finished in my head. The limousine ran over my warning triangle and the front door on the driver side opened enough to let the driver get one leg out and stand up. His head just appearing above the car door like some feverish mirage in the quivering air.

"Hey! Mr. D wants to talk wit' you!" said the driver, strangely enough with a New York accent, this being L.A. and all.

With somewhat of a crippled walk I limped my way over to the passenger side back window, which lowered all the way to reveal behind it a smiling face. I couldn't tell you much about the Devil's visage, other than that it filled me with warmth. It was a charming man's face with a charming smile on it. This was such a face that you could believe whatever the man wearing it would tell you, because it would be the truth. Or at least so entertaining that the truth hardly mattered.

The man inside told me to get in and shifted sideways two steps to make room for me. I had to open the door myself, but I guess I had to show some kind of initiative in the matter for the deal to be sealed.

"Here, my good friend." he said as I sat down in the tanned leather seats inside the cool interior of the stretched vehicle. He was holding out a glass of some kind of dark bubbly drink with ice cubes in it, which I can only describe as tasting heavenly. Though describing it thusly is probably grossly inappropriate in this setting.

He had now almost magically moved from the seat next to me to the seat opposite of me, with his back in the direction of the traffic. He punted once on the window to the driver, without leaving a smudge with his hand, and the vehicle started moving.

"Mr Tangiers." the Devil said, for now there was no doubt in my mind that it was he. "I feel that I know you already. You have been so helpful in the past to bring people into my fold."

This just had to have something to do with my old job as a croupier in Las Vegas. I spent some years there cheating people out of their money. If the public knew what was going on in those places all casinos would be shut down. But there it is, a shining beacon of addiction and corruption.

"But never mind, I am here now because you made a deal with me."

"No I didn't."

"Hey" he responded, with a serious but assuring look on his face. He produced from inside his perfectly pressed suit a piece of parchment with large black gothic letters on it, the heading of which said: "Soul Contract". Beside him in the seat in front of me was a small, lovely, asian girl with a tight body, wearing just a skimpy dress which hinted more than it kept hidden, who now was starting to look impatient. "Is this not your signature here at the bottom?" he continued, and I had to force my eyes away from the lovely lady and look at the boring contract in front of me. It was indeed my signature.

"You forged it! I signed no deal with you."

"Physically, no, of course not. That's not how it works. If I had to have your physical signature, I wouldn't get anywhere. No, I conclude my work inside

your mind, my good man, when you have enough desire for something that I can provide.”

”So, let me get this straight. For just thinking about this deal with you, I signed it? How is that fair?”

”Fairness is not part of the deal.”

”Damn. I wish I had known about this. I would have made the deal more elaborate.”

”Well. ” The Devil looked almost embarrassed. ”Fact is, that since this is a mind-deal, you are allowed to amend the deal the first 30 minutes of it’s existence. You are even allowed to change some of the crucial elements, but only up to a certain point of course.”

”Where is that point?” I asked. My mind immediately started working on a loophole that would get me out of this mess.

”Well, for example you can’t ask for the contract to stipulate that you can keep your soul, or that the contract is only fulfilled after you have arrived in heaven or something like that.”

My heart sank. Of course it could not be that easy.

”You can make the contract last for your entire lifetime, though. Since your soul really is no good to me until you die.”

”May I ask what good my soul is to you, WHEN I die.”

”You may. I collect souls, as you might have gathered. But the purpose of my collection is not to torment them forever, at least not in the way that you think. I collect them so that HE does not get them. Fact is that hell is quite a nice place to be. It’s been getting a bad rap from his PR group, that’s all.”

”What? You’re telling me that Hell is a nice place?”

”Nice isn’t even the start of it. It’s a great place. Everything associated with sin is rampant. Drugs, sex, rock’n’roll.”

”Rock’n’roll isn’t sin!”

”Oh, didn’t you know? It is. Almost anything that’s fun is sinful.”

At this I had to shut up and think for a few seconds. This must be a trick, was my line of thinking. A trick to get me to choose everlasting torment. I made a quick addition to the contract.

”Good one. But I am not lying to you, nor have I lied to you so far. So I’m not in breach of the contract.”

I swore to myself.

”I do plan ahead a bit, and I did see this one coming a mile away. You’re one of few who have thought of it, but not the only one, and my memory is very long and thorough.”

”Besides, you can’t make me break the contract by adding a clause to it which I have already broken. It is only after the 30 minutes of additions have passed...” he looked at his wrist, where a golden rolex studded with diamonds told perfect time, ”and 10 of them have already passed, that I sign the contract.”

Again I swore to myself. My chances were deminishing by the second.

”I must also congratulate you in so quickly coming to grips with your predicament. You are a fast learning, Mr Tangiers. As I said, you have a very interesting soul.”

”But you never told me what happens with it when you get it.”

”It’s quite simple, really, you will percieve to have ended up in a place where your most sinful dreams have come true. You will enjoy all the vices that I have to offer and then... then you will suffer great agony and mental anguish.”

"What, remorse?"

"Yeah. You will regret everything you've done and promise yourself never to do them again, but just end up doing it all over again."

"Sounds like any party I've been to."

The Devil laughed at this.

"It is! It's just like that. That stuff is what I live on, you know. Only when it is under my jurisdiction the pleasures and the pains are a thousand times more potent."

"Really?"

"Really."

"Wow."

"Wow indeed. I do pride myself on that."

A silence spread inside the limousine as I considered this. I needed to think, and that asian girl, whom the Devil introduced as Mei Mei, was starting to look itching to do my back. So I took off my stinky shirt and laid face down on the back seat, which was surprisingly comfortable and didn't stick to my body as I would have imagined that leather seats would to sweaty skin.

As soon as I did so, Mei Mei's hands were all over my back, squeezing and pounding. Gently but firmly she was massaging the pain right out of my back. It felt heavenly, to again make this inappropriate comparison.

"'Perceive to be', you said. What will actually be happening?"

"Smart man." the Devil smiled at me. "You would in fact be a part of me. Adding your life energy to mine, making me stronger. I need smart guys like you in me to make myself more effective."

"Aha."

My mind was working as hard as it could, unfortunately the lady giving me my massage was sending some of the brain's much needed blood elsewhere and the massage itself was soothing to the point of making my faculties, mere student fraternities, after a huge kegger, some bong usage and several cheerleaders at the same time.

I snapped out of it after a few moments, however, when again I was reminded of the seriousness of my predicament.

"How much time have I left?" I asked. The Devil did not even check his clock this time.

"You have five more minutes. You slept for fifteen."

"What!? Damn!"

"Indeed."

I was now almost desperate for a way out. I examined my options. I started to amend my deal.

"Good. Now we're talking. We're almost at your house and will most likely be there within 10 minutes which would have concluded the original deal. Now I see good fortunes for the rest of your natural life, which is stipulated to be the same as it would have been before the signing of the contract. Good idea, Mr Tangiers, but unnecessary. The rule of 'man's free will' was my idea and I stick to it. It has screwed over God more times than it has bothered me really."

"What? Not only do you claim that man's free will is for your benefit but that also it was your idea?"

"Yeah, in fact the whole business with man was my idea. I made him create you guys."

This boggled my mind.

"Well, since this is coming out of your amending time, I would be more than happy to explain but perhaps you'd like to wait a few more minutes?"

I unbogged my mind quickly and continued to think. He was unable to change my will, or indeed shorten my life-span.

"So you couldn't make someone love me, for example?"

"No, most likely not. But it's amazing what can be produced by changing someones looks, giving them money and power and so forth. I've yet to see a woman not be impressed by a man with a warm smile, good wit and a large bank-book. If you were thinking along those lines, no, the contract can not stipulate that I have to make someone love you. But it can stipulate that they have to make love to you, or stay your wife forever or something like that."

"The difference being that you can't really change what they think, but you can make them do things by trickery?"

"Exactly. You're catching on quickly."

"So, why don't you just trick me out of my soul?"

The Devil just laughed at me. I would have felt foolish had it not been that his laugh was so sincere and catchy that I laughed myself at the question.

"What do you think this is?" he answered smiling, and even before he said it I knew it.

"Your time is almost up."

"Can I amend that you must grant my every wish?"

"No. That would be like signing a blank check. Not even the Devil would make such a deal. But you can have one wish."

I instantly added that.

"Good addendum! Most people miss that. So now you have to say 'The wish that I want granted by the Devil is...' before any wish you make." The Devil laughed. "If you only knew how many people have killed their wives or their daughters, won the lottery or simply died because they failed to make that connection."

The car stopped and I heard the door open. I was still lying on my stomach on the seat but Mei Mei had stopped massaging my body and had sat down beside the Devil. I slowly got up, amazed how well my back felt, and put on my shirt, which now smelled nice somehow.

"Good fortune, remember?" the Devil beamed at me.

"Can I go with him, Mr. D?"

The Devil laughed. "I do believe that Mei Mei has become infatuated with you, my good man. She better go with you. But be aware, Mr Tangiers, that you have one year in which to decide upon your wish, then it is gone. This is your copy of our contract." He handed me the parchment. Below my name, written in red ink, or possibly blood, was the signature of Belziebub himself. "There are two things you must know about Mei Mei. She can appear as any woman you like, but she'll still be Mei Mei. Also, she is not human.

The door closed behind me and the car drove off. He had never told me I only had a year in which to decide upon my wish. But then again there were probably other things he had not told me. Right then and there I decided on two things. I was firstly going to have sex with Mei Mei, who was clinging to my arm like silk shirt on sweaty skin and secondly, I was going to hire a team of lawyers to go over my contract with the Devil.

A year went by and of course I tired of Mei Mei. I did however learn that her actual name was Ramshulzaham the Tormentor of Lost Souls. She never showed

me her true form, thankfully, but assured me that she was indeed female, which made me feel a little better, and that she had enjoyed having sex with me most of the times we had done it. Which is of course more than can be said for most of my human partners I imagine. Perhaps this has something to do with the fact that Ramshulzaham always could meet my expectations in size, limbness and tightness. It also, probably helped that she could turn herself into any woman that I could imagine, and I joined the list of men who have slept with Marilyn Monroe, for example. Or a likeness of her, anyway.

Also, even the most cunning lawyers in the business had been unable to find an out in my contract with the devil. I was not surprised at that, but I was downtrodden that I myself had not been able to come up with a satisfactory solution to my problem.

Ramshulzaham went back to her old job, with Mr. D, before the year was out, but my good fortunes stayed with me. I won a ton of money on a lottery ticket I found on the street. I suddenly found that some stock I had bought in a small company called Amazon.com, was suddenly worth millions and I was able to buy myself a nice home, a very very nice car and a small staff to take care of them for me.

But through all this, I was unable to enjoy myself, for I knew two things: that within one year my final wish, and my last chance to be free of the contract with the Devil, would be gone and that most likely, according to all the stories about deals with the devil, I would be cheated out of all my good fortunes because that's what the devil did. He gave you what you asked for, not what you wanted and then he took your soul away.

The day came and I took my Lamborghini out onto the road, let the engine stretch its proverbial legs a bit on the highway, and think. Then there he was. I was expecting him, so I was not scared. But I was surprised about his appearance. He did look exactly like he had a year ago and he had appeared in the seat next to me, where no one had been a millisecond ago. Without saying a word, I slowed down and stopped the car at the side of the road. I turned off the engine and turned to my passenger.

"You started to tell me, a year ago about your hand in the creation of man's free will."

"Ah. You have an excellent memory. Well, much more than so, I was in fact instrumental in the creation of man himself. You would not be here today, if I had not planted the notion into God's mind that he needed to create a creature in his own image."

"So you duped God into creating man?"

"Yeah. You know, he was perfectly content in populating the earth with animals and unicorns and whatnot. Perfectly lovely creatures, mind you, but about as exciting as watching paint dry, which is by pure coincidence the ninth ring of hell."

"I thought you said that hell is a nice place?"

"It is. Unless you end up in the ninth ring. Only the worst offenders end up in there, you know, Gandi, Mother Teresa, Disney."

I was flabbergasted.

"Surely you must have put it together. Without my help, how in the world would a man be able to sell the image of a pathetically simple cartoon mouse to millions and millions of people?"

I looked at my rolex watch. I had ten more minutes.

"Well, anyway, I am, as you might have gathered, not a god of creation. I can't make a bad gas, which makes you think where that comes from. But I am a master manipulator. You might say that that is my forte. So I told God that his creation would not be complete without a creature with free will. I mean, all the animals unconditionally loved the man. They adored him, like all animals do. They brought him fruit, laid themselves up on platters and cooked themselves for him. At that point I had only been able to corrupt some of the unicorns, which really were his first attempt at creating life and less than perfect. He smote them all for that. All except one or two which were killed during the dark ages. Pity that, I always loved them and their seemingly innocent looks. Fooled many a virgin maiden into fornication with their help."

At this image my mind quivered.

"God seemed content until I instilled in him the doubt. I told him that what good is the beauty of his creation if there is no one to share it with. What good is love if there is no chance of that love being directed elsewhere. Complete poppycock of course, but he was so full of himself that he decided to make man in his own image, without even my influence. He was also completely sure that he could make you all love him even with free will. Well, we all know how well that's gone."

"So if it was not for you. None of us would have free will."

"Or exist for that matter. He was content with elephants you know."

"Elephants huh."

"And blue whales. He isn't loving you guys for killing the whales. Some of you are going to hell for that one."

"I've never killed any whales!"

"No you haven't, and that's why I'm here." beamed the Devil. He had the power to make me feel good, even when I knew that I was screwed.

"But it's time, my good friend. The conclusion of our contract, or at least the end of the time limit on your wish. Make your wish now or forever hold your peace."

"The wish that I want granted by the Devil is..." and as I spoke those words, I suddenly remembered that clause in the contract that I had added. I remembered a faint sign of worry on the Devil's face as I had added it. The Devil was afraid of that one clause. I drew out my words. My mind raced. The Devil looked at me expectantly. Then I got it. "that he tells me that my soul is going to go to heaven when I die."

The disappointment on the Devil's face almost made me sad I had tricked him. But it soon disappeared and was replaced with that same charming smile.

"I can only tell the truth, yet I have to tell you that your soul goes to heaven. A clear breach of contract that, whatever I do." The parchment in my hands went up in flames, which almost burned my hand. It singed my suit. "Good one. That truth-clause has actually foiled me before. I don't think I'll get into any more contracts like that in the future."

The Devil started to get out of my car.

"Of course, since the contract is invalid, so is our deal and the good fortune is gone from this day. But, I am a decent bloke, I won't screw it up for you, even though I could you know. I could take it all away like that." he snapped his fingers.

I liked him, I felt in my heart. I really did like him. Even though he had tried to take my soul and send me to everlasting torment.

"Thanks." I said. "Thanks for helping us into the world."

"Ah. No thank you. Without you guys, it would be so very boring here. Besides, I'll get another chance on your soul some day. I'm sure of it."

With these words, he closed the door and for that instant that the door was falling down into its place when he was obscured by it, he was gone. I turned on the engine, pumped the gas a few times to hear that roar of the engine and made great tracks in the sand as I speeded out into the highway.

On the way back to the house I was of course stopped by the police and given a ticket for speeding. I also found that my maid had run off with my gardener and some of my more expensive art acquisitions, but essentially most of my fortune was still intact. I invested it wisely, lost some of it, but I am still able to live off of it, after all this time.

All in all, the Devil's not all that bad. But I still don't think that Hell is such a nice place. If it was, why wouldn't everyone want to go there. It seems so much easier, you know?