

Work Experience

By Alexander King

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CHARACTERS:

JAMIE: Teenager. Terrible posture.

SATAN: Satan. Dapper. Very British.

SATAN is pacing back and forth, checking his watch. JAMIE enters, shuffling.

SATAN: Ah! Hello! Jamie, is it?

JAMIE: Uh. Yeah.

SATAN: Terrific! Fantastic! Wonderful to meet you. I was expecting you at 9 but really, I mean, it's only twenty past isn't it. No problemo!

JAMIE: Yeah. Sorry. Traffic in Purgatory and all that.

SATAN: Right, yes. I mean - we have so many circles of Hell, you would have thought they'd have put a ring road in, wouldn't you.

JAMIE: *(Grunts)*

SATAN: Anyway! You're here now, that's the main thing. We're all - the team and I - we're all really pleased to have you here. I must say, we don't get an awful lot of requests for work experience placements here in Hell - I can't think why. But, you know, it's the least we can do for your parents.

JAMIE: My parents?

SATAN: Why yes! Superlative Satanists, both.

JAMIE: My parents are Satanists?

SATAN: Ah! Awkward! Gosh. Well, sorry I thought you knew. Those 'dinner parties' they go to once a month at David and Sarah's? Yeah, they're Satanic ceremonies - worshipping Yours Truly! They're ever so dedicated.

JAMIE: Christ.

SATAN: *(Pained)* Well - ah. We actually don't say His name down here. The demons are a pretty superstitious bunch, so... if you could not...

JAMIE: Uh, yeah. Sorry.

SATAN: But no, anyway. It's not just my old adversary God who's been seeing dwindling numbers, I must say I'm not being worshipped to quite the extent I used to. So when Jim and Debbie don those black robes and light the candles, well - all I can say is, it means a lot. Do you...?

JAMIE: Do I what?

SATAN: Well, do you ever... do any... worshipping?

JAMIE: Of you?

SATAN: Yes.

JAMIE: No.

SATAN: Oh. I just assumed, you know - all those death metal albums you listen to.

JAMIE: I'm just into them for the music.

SATAN: Oh yeah, cool. Cool. It's just... you know, I directly inspire them. It's a thing, that I do. Keep myself current and all that.

JAMIE: *(Shrugs)*

(An awkward pause)

SATAN: Anywho!!! Listen to me banging on. Let's get you set up. Now, I'm guessing you know what kind of stuff we do here - mainly keeping souls in elongated, perpetual agony. What kind of career were you thinking of pursuing after school?

JAMIE: I thought I might become an estate agent.

SATAN: So this could be right up your street, then.

JAMIE: *(Stares around sullenly)*

SATAN: Yes, so - I mean, unfortunately there's a lot of admin. Keeping track of who's done what in their life and what their punishment is, and really, it's tough because obviously nobody ever leaves and people arrive daily in their thousands. Most of our demons are office-based nowadays although we do have some still 'in the field' so to speak. Let me show you around.

DEMON: *(Off)* Hail Satan!

SATAN: Oop! Hello Kevin! *(Waves)*. You might hear a lot of that. Really not my idea though!

(Laughs) No no, it's kind of a traditional thing. We have a pretty... flat management structure here. We don't have doors - because obviously they'd just turn to ash due to the fierce flames of hellish damnation - but if we did I would have an open door policy.

JAMIE: Right. So, I'm just going to be sat at a desk am I?

SATAN: Oh no! No. I really want you to get a good feel of the whole operation. I'll get you to spend some time with Sandra in admissions - she processes people coming in...

JAMIE: Do you ever get it wrong?

SATAN: I'll be honest - we had a bit of a spate of sending 1970s kids TV presenters back upstairs. Quite embarrassing. We thought there had been some kind of computer error. Turns out... not.

JAMIE: But I mean like, have you ever accepted anyone into hell who didn't deserve it?

SATAN: Well... I mean, we're not here to stand in judgement - we're really just a punishment delivery service. Once they're here, we just crack on with the torment. No refunds!

JAMIE: So what's that over there?

DEMON: *(Off)* HAIL SATAN

SATAN: I... Thank you! Well, over there you can see some sinners being suspended in boiling faeces up to their neck.

JAMIE: Interesting that you've put them in head first.

SATAN: Saves on faeces.

JAMIE: Ah.

SATAN: And if you just peer over this balcony, you'll see some poor unfortunates being flayed alive and dipped in sugar.

JAMIE: Sugar?

SATAN: Massive salt shortage. We have to improvise sometimes. The good thing is, they're tossed into a fiery pit afterwards and it caramelises. Smells delicious.

JAMIE: Okay...

SATAN: That noise you hear? Flaming wheel.

JAMIE: Why is it so noisy?

SATAN: Honestly, I shouldn't say anything, but maintenance budgets have been slashed year on year. Bloody thing hasn't had a drop of oil in millenia.

JAMIE: That would get really annoying.

SATAN: Well, I mean we're all used to it - and I suppose the person strapped to it is on fire, so they've got bigger things to worry about, but I dread the day it comes off its spindle and shoots across Hell knocking demons into hell pits like bowling pins. Can you imagine the paperwork?

JAMIE: Hang on, surely paper would just burn down here?

SATAN: Figure of speech. I'm proud to say Hell is fully paperless. All digital.

JAMIE: Mac or Windows?

SATAN: Let's just say we have an exclusive contract. Where do you think Steve Jobs is right now?

(Gestures downwards)

DEMON: *(Off)* Hail Satan...

SATAN: Jonathan, that just sounded sarcastic. *(Whispers to JAMIE)* Jonathan is new here, transferred from the HMRC. A lot of people don't get on with him. Say he's too draconian.

JAMIE: I see. So, like, is there a social committee?

SATAN: Oh of course! It's not all work work work! No. We do occasionally go to the seventh circle and the Centaurs take a break from shooting arrows into the damned in the boiling lake of blood and give us archery lessons. Brilliant fun! If we hit our performance targets, of course.

JAMIE: Performance targets?

SATAN: Yes, I'm afraid we're all very target driven these days. We have key metrics to attain. KPIs, SLAs, it's all monitored.

JAMIE: By who?

SATAN: Who do you think?

JAMIE: You?

SATAN: *(Laughs)* Oh dear no! No, I'm just here to run this crazy crew. I have to answer to someone as well. Oops, watch yourself *(he pushes JAMIE back)*

JAMIE: *(Peering down)* what was that?

SATAN: In this area, sinners are tossed off a mountain onto a landscape of knives.

JAMIE: Delightful.

SATAN: NOT delightful. Do you have any idea how you clean that up?

JAMIE: Nope.

SATAN: Neither here. I do think, that whoever designed Hell really didn't have health and safety in mind. There's no amount of hi-vis vests or hard hats will protect you from slipping on a landscape made of knives, you know.

JAMIE: I guess. Okay, so I have a question.

SATAN: Of course! Fire away. Pardon the pun.

JAMIE: Is this just Christian Hell?

SATAN: Well... really good question *(steeping fingers to lips)*. You know, it's 2016, we seek to provide a cross-denominational, non-discriminatory eternal damnation. We don't shout about it, but yeah - honestly, we can accommodate Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Scientology...

JAMIE: Scientology has a hell?

SATAN: Yes, but they don't find out about it until they get to Level 16. I know the Scientologists get a lot of stick in the mortal realm, but down here, if you're having someone stung by scorpions for eternity, or doing endless manual labour until the end of time itself, you can't be concerned about the integrity of their in-life belief system.

JAMIE: I guess so.

SATAN: *(To an unseen demon offstage)* Linda? Did you get me that update on Dermot O'Leary?... Is he?... Still?... Disappointing.

JAMIE: Oh man, what's that smell?

SATAN: Sulphur? Oh you get used to it...

JAMIE: No, it smells like... actual shit.

SATAN: Ah yes, that will be the river of excrement the flatterers live in.

JAMIE: Wow. What kind of person deserves that?

SATAN: *(Silently counting heads)* Oh, mainly game show hosts and solar panel salesmen.

(An awkward pause)

SATAN: Toilets are over there.

JAMIE: Thanks.

SATAN: I should mention, we will provide full training, but how are you with a pitchfork?

JAMIE: Never used one.

SATAN: Powerpoint?

JAMIE: Is that a type of pitchfork?

SATAN: No, it's a piece of software for presentations.

JAMIE: No.

SATAN: Not to worry Jamie! We'll keep you busy, don't you worry. Now, I'll just pop you at this desk here, as you can see you've got a great view of the screaming tormented souls down below.

There's a sandwich demon who comes round at about 11:30. Are you a vegetarian?

JAMIE: No, I'm not.

SATAN: Just as well, it's mainly human flesh. Actually, it's all human flesh. I believe it's organic, at least.

JAMIE: So, do you have to be dead to work here?

SATAN: You don't have to be dead to work here - BUT IT HELPS! *(He laughs at his own joke)*

(Awkward pause)

SATAN: Yes. Yes you do.

JAMIE: But...

SATAN: *(Breezily)* But listen to me yammering on! I mustn't keep you - I've got some auditing to do. We're down year-on-year on sinners being crushed by boulders and the suicides who have been turned into thorny trees all have an aphid infestation.

JAMIE: But wait - if you have to be dead to be here... and I'm here... am I...?

SATAN: Dead? Well, yes of course dear boy.

JAMIE: *(Sulks)* Oh brilliant. But what did I do to deserve being sent to hell??!?

SATAN: Oh don't get upset... you remember how I told you your parents were excellent Satanists?

JAMIE: Yes?

(SATAN puts his arm around JAMIE'S shoulder)

SATAN: Well, there's nothing that pleases me more than a good human sacrifice, and being sacrificed to Satan is your ticket to an eternity working your way up the corporate ladder! Think of

it as the ultimate in job security! Now, get the kettle on dear boy - tea round is at 10. *(Starts to leave)* You see, the Devil really DOES make work for idle hands! Ciao!
(SATAN exits, JAMIE looks forlorn)

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