

I Am The Devil

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Act I
Scene 1

The play opens in a psychiatrist's office. An old desk is placed stage right. To its left is a reclining couch. Two men stand over the couch: KARL MELTZER and GABE LARSON. They stare at the couch.

KARL

How does that feel?

GABE feels the couch.

GABE

You use a couch.

KARL

I do.

GABE

Traditional.

KARL

Sometimes. Not everybody lies down. What do you think?

GABE

It's not squishy.

KARL

Right, you don't sink into it. You sit. If anything, you bounce on it.

GABE feels it again.

GABE

You do bounce.

KARL

I don't want sinking. Because people fall asleep. I can't treat them when they're asleep. It has to be firm.

He turns to GABE, deliberate:

Gabe, I want to know that you'll be OK with the couch.

GABE

I think it's great, Karl.

KARL

You mean that?

GABE

Absolutely.

KARL

Because from this point forward, it's your couch, too.

GABE

Thank you.

KARL

If you don't like it we'll get another one.

GABE

Karl, I'll work hard, I'll come in every day and try my best to hate your couch. But I don't think I'll do it. I think the couch will win.

KARL

And that goes for everything else, too; if something in this office works against you, it can be changed.

GABE

Karl, you're my boss. Stop being conciliatory; start telling me to do something.

KARL

I am. I'm telling to to make yourself comfortable.

GABE

I am very comfortable.

KARL

Good.

GABE

Thank you. I mean that, Karl. Thank you for rescuing me.

KARL

You worked for this.

GABE

I cried for help. Criminal psychology! Working for the state—I hit a wall. You rescued me from dusty police reports, courthouse basements—I get to see people now.

He looks at KARL.

GABE (cont.)

We are going to make a great partnership.

KARL

Yeah, I just wish we could be a partnership in name sooner. You've taken the tests, but until we pass this by the regional director, you'll still be under my wing.

GABE

Who's the regional director?

KARL

LeAnne McDermott, and unfortunately it's going to take at least a couple of weeks to get her clearance. It isn't because she's slow; it's because she's picky.

GABE

Is there something to be picky about?

KARL

Shakes his head:

She's going to sit on your application and watch us for a while. Making sure we have our act together.

GABE

I'm on probation.

KARL

It's fine. There's a limit on your number of patients, what you can do in the office, and other fine print. McDermott might breathe down my neck, but otherwise I'm fine. You're the one with one hand tied right now.

GABE

Tell LeAnne to hurry up. I chafe easily.

KARL

Absolutely.

KARL checks his watch.

What time is it?

KARL checks a clock on the desk.

I have a surprise for you, Gabe.

GABE

Ooh, surprise...

KARL

Your first patient.

GABE

Really?

KARL

Yeah.

GABE

You move fast.

KARL

I had a woman call up yesterday. She should be here in a few minutes.

GABE

She's starting today?

KARL

No no; she's not starting. She's just going to get to know you, decide what exactly she needs.

GABE

It's a free sample?

KARL

You could say that.

GABE

And you think I'm ready?

KARL

Oh, Gabe; absolutely. I think she's a good match. I don't know for sure; I only spoke with her for a few minutes on the phone...but, you've worked with felons, and—I don't know—but it sounded like she might be having problems with something...criminal.

GABE

I've done some counseling. Not a lot. No rehabilitation, and that seems like what I'd need to do here.

KARL

I might be misreading her completely, Gabe—she could be a saint. But you might be able to help her. And you'd get a fresh start.

KARL glances at the door.

Look, I'm going to see if she's out there. I'll send her right in.

GABE

Sounds good.

KARL

KARL starts to leave:

Gabe—

He gives a "thumbs-up." GABE returns it.

GABE

Smiles:

Thanks.

KARL leaves stage left. GABE watches him leave, then surveys the office. GABE comes center, pauses, then jumps on the couch, giddy with excitement.

Whee!

It's childish, but GABE knows it and enjoys it. However, he does not notice ALICE OSBOURNE entering from stage left. She eyes GABE with a cautious glance.

ALICE

Hello?

GABE turns, gasps, and jumps off the couch. He pauses, then awkwardly sticks out his hand.

GABE

Hi...

ALICE

Taking his hand, cautiously:

Hi... You're Dr. Larson?

GABE

Yeah, sorry about that; you... you caught me in the middle of my... It's not squishy...

ALICE

I see...

GABE

Here; come on it. Have a seat.

He motions for her to sit and goes to the desk.

ALICE

Complying:

Well, I certainly know it's sturdy...

GABE

What can I do for you?

ALICE

Well, therapy. I was thinking about it, and wanted to talk to you and hear any recommendations you had.

GABE

Interesting.

ALICE

I guess so.

GABE

Was there any moment that made you say to yourself, "That's it. I need a psychologist."?

ALICE

Apprehensive:

Are we getting into this already? Don't you want to know my name or anything first?

GABE

I like to start off patients by discovering what made them perform their last action—in this case, coming to this office—and then working backward from there.

ALICE

So we'll get to my name eventually.

GABE

Fair enough. What should I call you?

ALICE

I'm Alice. Alice Osbourne.

GABE

It's a pleasure to meet you, Alice. Now, you called this office; you wanted someone to talk to. What were you doing just before you made that phone call?

ALICE

OK...

She exhales.

You know, I'm going to sound silly....

GABE

I've been doing that the whole afternoon; it's your turn.

ALICE

OK. The moment I knew I needed help came when I was loading my dishwasher. I had loaded the dishes, and I was filling it with detergent as usual, when I noticed that the detergent was different. It had a “spill-proof bottle.”

GABE

Uh huh...

ALICE

Yeah, they pointed it out on the label, and you could see it in the spout. It was longer, and it had a reservoir around it to catch any detergent that dripped down the bottle. My first thought when I saw this was: “Wow.” My second thought was: “That’s so sad.”

GABE

That’s so sad?

ALICE

That was after I thought about it. I’ve never spilled dishwasher detergent before. I buy the gel form, so it’s almost impossible to spill anyway. And then I took it personally. It seemed like the detergent company didn’t trust me enough with their product; they couldn’t trust me to keep the gel from spilling without their help.

She sighs.

They didn’t believe in me. From there, I just thought of everybody else who didn’t believe I could do anything. I was a failure that needed to be guided—contained. And all because of dishwasher detergent. From that one spill-proof bottle, there was just a cascade—

GABE

Cascade!

ALICE

What?

GABE

Cascade, was that the dishwashing detergent?

ALICE

No. I was using the word in a sentence.

GABE

Oh.

ALICE

Anyway, I just felt this as a cascade through every other event in my life. If the dishwasher detergent didn't have faith in me, then it was obvious that everything else around me didn't have faith in me. And since all of this came from a detergent bottle, I felt both really silly and really, really sad, all at the same time...

She turns to GABE:

What do you think?

GABE frowns, pauses, and thinks.

GABE

What brand was the detergent?

ALICE

I think it was Palmolive.

GABE

Ah...

He scribbles. ALICE stares at him. GABE looks back up.

GABE (cont.)

Go ahead; continue.

ALICE

I'm done with my story. I just want to know if you think this detergent experience is a legitimate concern—a subconscious cry for mental help—or if it's just an overreaction.

GABE

Leaning forward:

Alice...

GABE leans back suddenly.

I don't know.

He frowns and taps his pencil.

Alice, what kind of dishwasher do you have?

ALICE

Dr. Larson, these are the same questions a repairman would ask me. And you're not that kind of repairman. What is this supposed to do?

GABE

I'm just curious. What kind is it?

ALICE

It came with the apartment. Whirlpool, maybe?

GABE

Ah...

More scribbling.

ALICE

Skeptical:

Have I had a breakthrough?

GABE

Miss Osbourne, you're lying to me.

ALICE

What?

GABE

You're lying to me, and that's not healthy.

ALICE

I'm lying to you? I haven't told you anything yet!

GABE

You've told me enough, Alice.

ALICE

It wasn't a Whirlpool, maybe?

GABE

That's not it.

ALICE

Gabe, what am I doing wrong?

GABE

Alice, deriving the meaning of life from a detergent bottle is very poetic. It's very nice to hear, but it can't happen in real life.

ALICE

Uh huh...

GABE

Affirming:

Uh huh.

ALICE

How many times did you fall off this couch while you were jumping on it?

GABE

Alice, your story, psychologically, doesn't add up. You just described an abstract thought process brought on during a task that's almost instinct. Do you know how difficult that is?

ALICE

I guess not.

GABE

You're doing the dishes for the umpteenth-thousandth time in your life. You won't notice a big sticker about a new spout. After a lifetime of using a product, you start to shutter out a few new words here and a different shape there. It's natural human behavior. You won't notice it.

ALICE

Dr. Larson, if I won't notice new packaging, why would companies change it — "psychologically"?

GABE

Oh, you can notice new packaging, while looking for it in the store or putting it away, but you're not going to look at it in the middle of a routine chore. Alice, if you told me you saw the label in the checkout aisle or

GABE (cont.)

something, I would have believed you. But as it stands, you're using the story to hide the truth from me, and I can't have that.

ALICE shakes her head.

ALICE

All that from the psychology of packaging...

GABE

Alice, I really need the truth. The truth about yourself. The truth about the root of your problems.

ALICE

The truth...

GABE

Yes.

ALICE

I could tell you the truth, but it's harder to believe than detergent. You could even say it's more tritely poetic than my original story.

GABE

I can't treat a lie, Alice.

ALICE

You want to hear it?

GABE

I need a straight answer.

ALICE

There's only one answer I can give. I am the Devil.

Dead Silence. GABE and ALICE stare at each other. Then GABE looks down and begins to write.

GABE

Still writing:

Uh huh...?

ALICE

I am the—

GABE

I heard you, I heard you. This is...metaphorical? It's—

ALICE

No; Gabe, look at me.

He does.

I am the Devil. Lucifer. Satan. The Artist Formerly Known as Prince of Darkness. Take your pick.

GABE

You're serious. You think you're the Devil...

ALICE

Not "think"—Gabe, that is my story. I am Satan!

GABE leans forward, about to speak. He doesn't; he merely sits there, confused. ALICE looks away and exhales, relieved.

Boy, it feels good to get that off my chest. I don't say it that often. Even when I'm surrounded by fire and brimstone, giving people blood-inked contracts, I keep up the charade.

She turns to GABE.

ALICE (cont.)

Dr. Larson, you're right. Honesty does help.

GABE

Alice... You say you're the Devil... What does the Devil need with psychotherapy?

ALICE

Well, that part of the dishwasher story was true, Gabe. It's the lack of faith.

GABE

Faith.

ALICE

People don't believe in me. You think God gets upset when everybody since Nietzsche tosses him aside? Well Gabe, I'm part of that package deal. Not only do I get dismissed in the sentence, "God is dead," I don't even get an honorable mention. I was a real, tangible figure for a long, long time. Now I'm a forgotten myth. It's sickening. I'm used to being rejected, cursed, exorcised—but I've never been so shut out as I am right now. I don't know if I fill a need anymore.

She turns to GABE.

Gabe, I need direction.

GABE

Well, Alice—Satan... Alice?

ALICE

Alice is fine.

GABE

Alice. There's still evil in the world, so I hardly think—

ALICE

Oh Gabe, you're out of touch. Being evil has never been the same thing as being Satan. I'd love to take that trophy for the origin of all evil, sure. But I can't. Evil was just another entry in the rulebook at Creation. My job has never been to produce sin, only to...process it.

GABE

But you can still process it, right?

ALICE

Distastefully:

It's something I'll have to do anyway, but it won't have that personal touch. Some cultures don't have a Satan figure, and I'm fine with that. But if no cultures have me anymore, then my job is really antiseptic. Gabe, it's like not being able to root for the home team.

GABE

Alice... You lost me a long time ago, but I'm still having trouble trying to envision what I can provide for Satan. I mean, if you're who you say you are, you're a supernatural kinda guy. With super powers.

ALICE

Condescending:

Right. X-Ray vision, ice breath. And if I get angry I turn into a big green hulk.

GABE

Well, three-faced, encased in ice— It's something along those lines, right? Is there really anything you can learn from a session with me? Don't you have a good idea of what I'm going to say, anyway?

ALICE

ALICE smiles.

Maybe. But just remember who I am; where I've been. I love seeing humanity up close and personal. There's just something there you can't get by acting like a high and mighty—or low and mighty—force of evil. If I want to understand how to get along with mankind, the best way to do it is as Alice Osbourne.

GABE

OK...

He raps his knuckles on the desk.

Alice, is there any way you can back any of this up?

ALICE

What do you mean?

GABE

I mean, being Satan.

ALICE

You want to see a membership card or something.

GABE

No no; just... So far everything you've told me could come from a regular old Alice Osbourne. An Alice Osbourne who just likes to pretend she's Satan.

GABE waits for a response. ALICE just stares.

So... Super powers could actually help right now.

ALICE scoffs.

I mean, I already know your secret identity.

ALICE

I don't believe this! Gabe, this is exactly what I'm talking about! You've taken the Bible and turned it into a comic book! I'm not part of faith anymore if I'm sitting on the shelf next to Doctor Octopus.

GABE

Yeah, but I can analyze him; first there's his jealousy issues, feelings of—

ALICE

Gabe, no offense, but I'm bigger than Marvel Comics. And I've heard enough about my jealousy issues. My envy, wrath, gluttony...

GABE

Right.

ALICE

...and so on—I've had centuries of therapy on that. What I need from you is help in today's world. How do I adjust? How do I cope? How do I become a modern Satan?

GABE

Alice, are you sure that you're not here so I can help you, I don't know... realize that you aren't really Satan?

ALICE gets up from the couch.

ALICE

Oh please, Gabe. The last thing I want to do is play Identity Crisis Ping-Pong every session. I thought a new practitioner like you would be the most receptive to that.

GABE

OK, OK; you're right. If it's Satanic psychosis you want gone, then that's what I'll provide.

ALICE

Thank you.

GABE

So, you want to start Thursday at 12:30, and then we'll go every week from there?

ALICE

That sounds reasonable.

GABE

Cool.

GABE gets up from the desk and shakes with ALICE.

ALICE

Very cool.

She begins to exit.

GABE

Wait.

ALICE stops.

Can we make it 1:00? Karl has someone in here.

ALICE

One?

GABE

I don't like to share.

ALICE

One is fine.

GABE

OK. See you then, Mrs. Osbourne.

ALICE

Oh, Gabe—

ALICE is cut off as KARL enters, reviewing a file. He does not see ALICE and crashes into her. ALICE is caught off balance. KARL drops the file and catches her. ALICE, recovered, finishes her statement, looking from GABE to KARL.

It's Miss Osbourne...

GABE

Alice. I'd like you to meet Karl Meltzer.

ALICE

Brushing her hair aside, extending her hand:

Charmed.

KARL attempts to shake her hand, but his arm is still wrapped around her. KARL attempts to maneuver his arm up around ALICE's head, but this is too awkward. Finally, KARL breaks away and weakly shakes ALICE's hand.

KARL

I spoke to you on the phone.

ALICE

That was you! Nice to meet you, Karl.

She kneels to pick up KARL's papers.

Here, let me help you—

KARL

Oh, no, no. I—I want them on the floor.

ALICE

Oh. Well, thank you for catching me.

KARL smiles, embarrassed. ALICE begins to exit.

Goodbye, Dr. Larson.

GABE

Bye.

ALICE

Goodbye, Karl....

ALICE exits. KARL stares off. GABE approaches him.

KARL

She's nice...

GABE

Mmmm Hmmm...

GABE stares at the papers on the ground. KARL follows his gaze, then kneels and begins resorting his file.

What's all that?

KARL

I was going over some of your files. Your psychologist's license, actually.

GABE

What about it?

KARL

You...don't have one.

GABE

Karl, you know I do. I got it through the state.

KARL

Right, you got it. You—past tense—had it. You were contracted by the state to practice criminal psychology, but you were not a criminal psychologist.

He presents GABE with one of the papers.

Apparently.

GABE

I don't understand.

KARL

Your license to practice disappeared when you quit working for the state.

GABE

No; they can't do that.

KARL

Gabe, don't worry. Working for me, you can still have Alice, practice, and do anything else I can sign off on. Once McDermott says yes, you'll be fine.

GABE

What if she says no?

KARL

Why would she? All you have to do is lie low for a while.

GABE

Karl, this is the doctoral equivalent of going on the lam. How long are we going to have to do this?

KARL

It shouldn't take more than two weeks. It's rough, but it beats getting the wrath of God from LeAnne.

KARL reassembles the file and puts it on the desk.

So, was I right about Alice? She's some kind of criminal?

GABE

She's done some bad things.

KARL

Wild....

KARL turns to see KIM BELL enter.

KIM

Hi, Karl.

KARL

Kim!

GABE

Panicked:

Kim?

*GABE flips over the couch, hiding from KIM on the other side.
KARL and KIM look at him.*

KARL

Gabe, it's Kim.

GABE

Still hiding:

Uh huh.

KARL

It's your fiancée. Say hello.

GABE

Hi, Kim.

KIM

Gabe.

KARL

Why are you hiding?

GABE

Because she's going to hit me.

KARL looks at KIM.

KIM

It's true. I'm going to punch him in the face.

KARL looks from GABE back to KIM.

KARL

Have fun.

He begins to exit.

GABE

Karl, don't leave me!

KARL

Too late!

KARL exits. A beat.

GABE

I missed lunch.

KIM

You missed lunch.

GABE

I'm sorry.

KIM

Don't tell me; tell my father.

GABE

Then he'll punch me in the face, too.

KIM

You deserve it. Gabe, I understand about your new job. I don't mind you running off every time Karl gives you a call, going through however many steps it takes for you to get into this practice. I'll overlook that you missed lunch with my father to discuss the wedding. You are both "Dr. Larson" and "the future Mr. Kim Bell" and I understand that it's tough to play both roles at once.

GABE

Uh huh...

KIM

So how about this? Let's put aside the wedding for now and talk about something Dr. Larson-related.

GABE

OK....

KIM

Get up from there.

GABE gets up from behind the couch. KIM sits.

I need Dr. Larson to give me a recommendation for my trip to Africa.

KIM presents him with a plane ticket.

GABE

Taking the ticket:

Africa?

KIM

Africa.

GABE

But you've already been to Africa.

KIM

The government was pleased with the job I did last month, so they're sending me back. This time I'll even get to meet the rebel leader and hopefully put this thing to an end.

GABE

Studying the ticket:

This is for a one way trip.

KIM

That's the way these foreign airlines work. They don't want to get your hopes up that they'll have another flight back.

GABE

That's encouraging.

KIM

I know. I'm more worried about the flight than I am of the rebel leader, despite his profile.

GABE

Profile?

KIM

He's a madman.

GABE

Terrific.

KIM

A certified madman! And before the government will let me meet with him, I have to prove that I'm psychologically capable of dealing with this certified madman. I need a note from my doctor.

She looks at him. GABE stares blankly for a moment.

GABE

Getting it:

Oh, you need a recommendation! From me!

KIM

You're the criminal psychologist.

GABE

Yes, I—I was last week.

KIM

Was?

GABE

Kim, look: I made dinner reservations. We should eat.

KIM

I want my recommendation.

GABE

Great. We'll discuss it over dinner, hash things out, and eventually I'll get Karl to—

KIM

Karl's not a criminal psychologist!

GABE

Kim, you know what? I've put it off long enough. You need to punch me in the face right now. I've disappointed you earlier today. I'm sure I'm going to do it again before the night is over. So just—

He closes his eyes and presents his cheek.

—go ahead. I'll understand.

A beat. GABE remains in place. After a moment, KIM moves in and kisses GABE on the cheek. He opens his eyes. KIM takes his arm.

KIM

Come on; let's eat.

They start offstage.

GABE

But the punch...?

KIM

It'll come when you least expect it.

They continue walking. End scene.

Scene 2

The scene opens in a restaurant. There is one table downstage left of center. There is another table upstage right. KIM and GABE are sitting at the downstage table studying menus, KIM in the stage left seat and GABE in the right. GABE looks up from his menu at KIM and sighs.

GABE

I don't know what I want...

KIM

Without looking up:

Give me a recommendation.

GABE

We'll get to that.

THE MAN enters from stage right. THE MAN will play several characters throughout the show. Right now he is dressed as a waiter, decked out with an apron and a pad of paper. It may or may not be funny if THE MAN looks noticeably like Jesus. He approaches the table, surveys the conflicted GABE and the withdrawn KIM. He coughs. GABE looks up.

GABE

Oh, uh... Well, we're just about... Honey, why don't you start?

KIM hands THE MAN her menu.

KIM

I'll have the steak, either blood-red or burned to a crisp. Or in between; I'm not particular.

THE MAN jots it down. He and KIM turn to GABE. He looks up.

GABE

Uh... I'll have the pasta special...

THE MAN writes the order.

...and, can I have that without onions?

THE MAN gives GABE a look, then revises his order. He turns to exit.

Oh, and can you make sure the pasta is al dente?

THE MAN turns slowly to face GABE, glares at him, then leaves.

KIM

You know, I told you this was a bad idea.

GABE

The pasta?

KIM

Your partnership with Karl. You jumped ship on a job you liked, a job you were good at—

GABE

Clarifying:

All to a point—

KIM

And now you're freelance, essentially. Karl thinks you're unlicensed—which I really don't think can be true—and now you're stuck.

GABE

Let's talk about the wedding.

KIM

Wry:

Speaking of being stuck...?

GABE

Smiles:

You and me, both, honey.

KIM

Major life decisions! I'm excited.

GABE

Reaching into his pocket:

You should be.

KIM

Let me look this up....

KIM opens a date planner and looks inside. GABE pulls out a small jewelry box. He opens it and holds it out in front of KIM. She does not notice.

We might as well nail down at least the date of this thing. The caterer alone has most of the month booked up already. My father wants to know if the 17th is our final final date.

GABE

It's final final enough for me.

KIM

It's more important if it's final final enough for your family. Gabe, we have arrangements to make, and we—

KIM notices the box.

KIM (cont.)

Gabe?

GABE

Kim?

KIM

Gabe! What is this?

GABE

It's an engagement ring.

She takes the box.

KIM

But, Gabe, we're already engaged!

GABE

I know.

KIM

Gabe, I told you I didn't need a ring. You—

She examines the ring.

Oh Gabe, it's a diamond!

GABE

You deserve diamonds.

KIM

Gabe, you can't afford this; not at all!

GABE

Kim, it's OK! When I proposed to you, I couldn't promise you anything. I was a state employee. Just a grunt with a hand-me-down suit. Well, I'm still that grunt, and I still don't have a better suit, but I'm on my way up. Soon I'll be a therapist. Soon I'll be the guy who would have given you this ring in the first place.

KIM

Only if you and Karl start charging more.

GABE

I know you think it's too expensive, but I did this for us. I wanted something to show that there was an us.

KIM

Oh... But Gabe...

KIM looks up from the ring at GABE. He smiles. She smiles.

Thank you.

GABE takes the ring and puts it on KIM's finger. He kisses her hand.

You are a charmer, Gabe Larson. It'll be tough when I'll have to leave you.

GABE

Hmmm?

KIM

For Africa?

KIM leans over and smiles.

I still want my recommendation.

GABE

Ehhh, let's keep talking about wedding stuff... Does your father have problems with the 17th?

KIM

Oh no; he's just going to be scheduling his surgery around that week.

GABE

If it's a problem we could just hold the ceremony over the operating table...

KIM smiles and looks at GABE.

...Wheel him through the emergency ward to give away the bride...

KIM leans forward.

KIM

The bridesmaids wear scrubs; I like it. Memorable and inexpensive....

Beat.

How was your first day of work?

GABE

Very good.

KIM

Did Karl start you off slow? You alphabetized his files?

GABE

No... No, actually I have my very own patient.

KIM

Wow, and he's not a hardened criminal?

GABE

Ah, "she." And no, she's a very nice woman. She's just... she's decided to take a very... unique outlook on life, and I think it's finally starting to catch up to her. I'm guessing—I'm hoping—that I'll talk to her, help her let go of some emotional baggage—

KIM

Light bulb above head:

Baggage!

GABE

Excuse me?

KIM

That's another thing I meant to ask you about. Remember last time I borrowed your suitcases, but they were too small to take all of the diamonds?

GABE

Huh?

KIM

This time I found other cases, so I'll only need to take your large green suitcase.

GABE sits, puzzled.

If it's a problem, I can go without it...

GABE

I remember the luggage... but what was that about diamonds?

KIM shakes her head, pauses, and leans toward GABE.

KIM

Whispering:

The diamonds... from the rebels...?

GABE

What...?

KIM

That I... take care of?

GABE

What?!

GABE pushes his chair back, ready to get up.

KIM

Gabe—

GABE

“Take care of”?! That’s a mafia term! You’re taking care of stuff?!

KIM

Gabe! Calm down!

KIM continues, angry, but controlled.

You know about this. You know about this, Gabe!

GABE

Know about what?! I know you’re a humanitarian!

KIM

I am!

GABE

"Taking care" of people isn't very humanitarian!

KIM

Gabe!

She sighs.

I'm doing the same thing I did my last trip. I am going to try and convince the rebels to lay down their weapons. Peripheral to this, I will be buying their diamonds to sell here in America.

GABE

Buy their diamonds? Kim, you know how bad that is.

KIM

These aren't blood diamonds, Gabe. This is just a technicality. The African governments have made it illegal for anyone to buy any diamonds taken from rebel mines.

It dawns on GABE:

GABE

Kim! You're a smuggler!

KIM

Keep it down!

Gabe!

GABE

All of a sudden you're a James Bond villain!

KIM

I'm not.

GABE

I'm marrying Goldfinger!

KIM

Stop.

GABE

You stop. Have you thought about this? How illegal, dangerous—?

KIM

I know all of it.

GABE

Kim, these are trained killers and warlords. There are consequences here!

KIM

There are consequences, Gabe. There's compensation. I was thinking, that with you still paying school debts, it might be nice not to worry about payments for our wedding, house, and...

She looks at the engagement ring.

...and you knew about this!

GABE

I didn't! I don't remember you telling me anything!

KIM

I guess you hear so many criminal schemes you get them mixed up, but I know what I said. And I've done this before; it went fine. But this time I need a permission slip.

GABE

Kim, geez...

Frustrated, GABE gets up and paces.

GABE (cont.)

Kim, geez! I mean, this is big. Kim, this isn't like having the cable guy get you free HBO or the cop let you off with a seat belt violation. When you deal with those guys, they go home and they're normal people. Kim, after you're done dealing with the rebels, they go home and kill people! They kill people!

KIM gets up.

KIM

Gabe, please! Sit down and let me reason with you!

GABE

Exasperated:

They kill people!

KIM

Gabe Larson, I do not have to take this! I'm going to the bathroom!

KIM whirls around and nearly rams into THE MAN, who has entered. They back away from each other. KIM makes a threatening start at THE MAN, who backs out of her way. KIM exits.

GABE

Calling after her:

They kill people!

GABE sighs and sits, his head in his hand. KARL and ALICE enter. THE MAN greets them and seats them at the empty table, KARL right and ALICE left.

Aggggghhhh...

GABE groans and throws himself backward, his head hanging over the edge of the chair. He notices ALICE.

GABE (cont.)

Alice?

ALICE turns and sees him.

ALICE

Hi Gabe!

KARL

Gabe?

GABE frowns and rights himself.

GABE

Karl?

He gets up.

ALICE

How are you, Dr. Larson?

GABE

Approaching them:

I've been better. What are you two up to?

KARL

Uh...

ALICE

Oh, well, after I got home, I called the office again. I guess I missed you. But Karl called me back, we got around to talking, and now we're having dinner.

GABE

You are, aren't you?

He turns to KARL.

Karl, come with me for a second.

KARL

Sure.

KARL gets up and follows GABE downstage. ALICE turns her attention to her menu.

GABE

Karl, we're working on becoming partners, right?

KARL

Uh huh...

GABE

Mi casa e su casa...

KARL

Right...

GABE

E pluribus unum...

KARL

OK...

GABE

Alles klar, Herr Kommissar...?

KARL

Sure.

GABE

So when you take my patient to dinner, that's tantamount to me taking her out, in the process violating some serious therapistical taboos.

KARL

Oh, no! No, Gabe, I admit: this looks like a very...delicate situation, but it's really, very explainable.

GABE

You don't have to explain it to me. I'm just worried about how it looks on paper.

KARL

It looks fine. First of all, it's just talk; just to get to know Alice Osbourne. Because of dinner tonight, I'll be better prepared to help you, my partner, with any assistance you need.

GABE

And, secondly?

KARL

If, hypothetically, anything did happen between Alice and myself, it would help move you from the "junior partner" role you currently have, and give you more autonomy in our work relationship.

GABE stares.

So, either way, this turns out to be a valuable learning experience for you, Gabe.

GABE

And you, too.

ALICE

Calling:

Karl!

KARL

To ALICE:

Be right there!

GABE

Karl, I just want to make sure that this isn't going to jeopardize my LeAnne McDermott thing...

KARL

Oh, no! Not at all.

GABE

On top of the fact that Alice thinks she's... in need of serious help.

KARL

Gabe, don't worry. I know my way around a patient.

GABE

Please don't elaborate.

KARL

Hey, are you here alone?

GABE

No; Kim's in the ladies' room. I think she's coming back...

KARL

All right; tell her hello for me.

GABE

Sure.

KARL

Enjoy your dinner!

He returns to the table, pulling his chair closer to ALICE's and sharing her menu. GABE watches this as he returns to his seat.

GABE

Amazing...

KIM

What?

GABE turns with a start. KIM is sitting across from him again. Meanwhile, the lights dim on the other table while THE MAN returns and takes the orders of KARL and ALICE.

GABE

Ah, nevermind...

KIM reaches across the table and grabs GABE's hands.

KIM

Gabe, you're upset with me. I understand, sort of. But I want you to hear me out. You want to be the psychiatrist, you have to know how people think. So listen.

GABE

I'm listening.

KIM

Gabe, the world is a stupid, stupid place. People are stupid. We get flashes of inspiration here and there, we advance civilization every once in a while. But not a lot. We can go our entire lifetimes being stupid. And stupidity grows.

GABE

I see.

KIM

Let me give you an example. If a pilot lands his plane perfectly once, twice, a thousand times, he gets nothing for it. He gets his paycheck, some vacation time, and maybe a watch come retirement. But that's it. Now, if he blinks once in his career—sneezes, scratches his bald spot, whatever—it's all over. He'll have crashed the plane, costing hundreds of lives and millions of dollars. The airline now has to deal with the insurance costs, the negative publicity, and one less plane. It doesn't matter if the pilot survives or not, because he'll never fly again anyway. One stupid mistake gets him more than a thousand correct landings.

She leans back.

Now, you're probably wondering why I'm using this example—an exceptional moment—if my argument is that people are stupid most of the time.

GABE

I'm wondering why you're using this example if you want to fly to Africa...

KIM

Gabe, the real stupidity isn't with the pilot, it's with our expectations. The pilot knows how important it is to keep his plane in the air, but rather than empathize with his high-pressure situation, we build on it. We promise that we will destroy the pilot, if he doesn't do it himself. Is that smart? Gabe, that's stupid. We put pilots in their worst mental states, work them long hours, and expect a perfect flight every time. What we get is the collective stupidity of our entire culture deposited on every flight.

Beat.

KIM (cont.)

Gabe, what I'm trying to do is a casualty of our human stupidity, but it shouldn't make things any worse. The bottom line is this: if the rebels don't get any more money, they will no longer be able to buy food or medicine. They have assured me that some of the money they earn from these diamonds will go to this kind of relief.

GABE

I'm touched.

KIM

You should be.

GABE

You just hand over cash—

KIM

That's arranged beforehand.

GABE

—shower wealth on armed psychotics who I'm sure have the best interests of their country at heart.

KIM

If it were up to the government, the rebels and their entire villages would be executed. Government aid would be a bullet in the head. Aiding the rebels hopefully reduces the number of bullets in the head and gives these people some of what they need. It's the least stupid thing I could think of.

THE MAN reenters, carrying two plates. He approaches the table and puts steak in front of KIM.

Oh, thank you...

THE MAN puts the other plate in front of GABE. The plate is empty. THE MAN reaches into his apron, pulls out a box of dry pasta, opens it, and dumps it onto GABE's plate.

THE MAN

Al Dente.

He gives GABE a look and exits. GABE looks at his plate and frowns. KIM enjoys her steak.

GABE

Dryly:

How's the steak?

KIM swallows.

KIM

It's good.

GABE

Good.

KIM

Gabe, I just wanted to make that one point. For this trip to Africa, I know what I'm doing, and I know it will help. I just need the recommendation.

GABE tries his pasta.

GABE

Yes, well... Kim...

He crunches loudly on his pasta, his face contorts in pain. He swallows, grimaces, and continues.

Kim, you haven't heard the last bit of my argument.

KIM

What?

GABE

They kill people!

KIM

Mouth full of steak:

Oh God...

KIM rolls her eyes and swallows.

Gabe, I don't know what you want me to do about that! The rebels are going to fight no matter what I do; I'm just doing business!

GABE scoffs.

GABE

Just business...

KIM

Softly:

Gabe, I would end all the wars in the world for you if I could. But I'm settling for the closest thing.

GABE

The closest thing would be to go to Africa and do your job; your non-criminal one. An even closer thing would be not to go at all. Stay here with me.

KIM

Quit my job, sit around and watch you play doctor?

GABE

I am a doctor.

KIM

Another bite:

You know what I mean.

GABE

And you're talking like someone I used to profile.

KIM

Please, Gabe.

GABE

Do you want me to be proud of you? Do you want to think of yourself as a freedom fighter?

KIM

Sure.

GABE

No.

KIM

Why not? This is a higher calling.

GABE

Scoffs:

Even better; you're doing the Lord's work.

KIM

I am, Gabe; really. Because I've seen the alternative. When I'm abroad I see evil. Every day. You only see evil in criminal profiles, or maybe now if it makes an appointment. Gabe, give me some credit.

GABE

No, Kim; no. What you've told me maybe isn't stupid, but it isn't noble, either. And it still makes you a James Bond villain.

GABE gets up.

I've got to get out of here...

He walks left.

KIM

Gabe? The bathroom's that way...

GABE

Still walking:

But the car's this way...

He exits. KIM stands.

KIM

The car? Gabe!

She runs after GABE. The sound of a car starting and pulling away. KIM walks back in, dazed.

I don't believe this!

She returns to the table and begins to collect her things. THE MAN approaches her with the check. He coughs. KIM turns, looks at him, takes the check with her free hand, crumples it and throws it on the floor.

Call me a cab.

THE MAN looks at her, frowns, and exits. KIM, frustrated, digs through her purse and gets her cell phone. She begins walking off.

KIM (cont.)

Or, I'll do it myself...

KIM exits. The lights come up full on ALICE and KARL. ALICE is laughing, while KARL smiles, self-conscious.

ALICE

I don't believe it...

KARL

Not so loud!

ALICE

It's funny!

KARL

It was painful! I had wires in my jaw.

ALICE

But now you're good as new.

THE MAN enters with their food.

And now I know to keep you away from the non-dairy creamer.

KARL

Stop...

To THE MAN:

Thank you.

THE MAN exits.

KARL (cont.)

Alice, let me ask you something now. What exactly made you decide on my practice?

ALICE blushes and turns away.

ALICE

Oh, well, Karl, I have to admit that I was a little less than scientific... I mean, I wish I could tell you that it was because I was recommended to you, that your reputation was excellent, but...

KARL

Coaxing:

But what?

ALICE

Laughs:

I just opened the Yellow Pages and saw yours was the biggest ad on the page.

KARL

My big ad?

ALICE

I'm sorry...

KARL

Oh, no, don't be sorry at all.

He smiles.

That's what I paid for...

ALICE

Karl, I feel bad. I don't want you to think I'm shallow.

She looks at him.

I see you as more than just a big ad.

KARL

Thank you.

ALICE reaches into her purse for a stick of gum.

ALICE

Want a piece of gum?

KARL

In the middle of dinner?

ALICE pushes her plate away.

ALICE

I can't eat any more of this; the pasta's overdone.

KARL

Oh.

ALICE

Enjoy your dinner. The gum will keep me busy.

A beat.

I'm sorry; you probably hate gum, don't you? I'm just chewing and chewing and driving you up the wall.

KARL

No, no; it's fine. Actually, I have some gum at the office.

ALICE

You're a candy man.

KARL

I get a medical catalog; one of their sections has chewing gum—medicinal chewing gum. For medicines that need to be time-released, you can put it in a piece of gum. When it's chewed, you get a steady stream of the medicine. They have time-release pills that do the same thing, sure. But a pill is a pill. We've got this culture of pills, of swallow and forget. With gum you get to be a little more active.

ALICE blows a bubble. She lets it pop.

ALICE

I see.

KARL

There's ritual to it. That's why you see nicotine gum. The drug is just one part; a nicotine pill would only do so much. Smokers take drags, they exhale, they hold something in their hands—that's ritual. A pill can't do that.

ALICE

That's true...

KARL

Beyond that, I don't know if medicinal gum will catch on. People don't take it seriously; gum is in the candy aisle, it doesn't come by prescription. But it doesn't have to be childish.

ALICE

Well I think candy is more than a kid's thing, too.

KARL

How do you mean?

ALICE

Candy is about satisfaction. It's primal. It's indulgent. All of the sticky-sweet biting and sucking—candy is sexual.

KARL

Well, yeah. There'll always be a link between... oral satisfaction and... well...

ALICE

Karl, I know, but it still amazes me how blatant they make it when you look at a bag of candy.

KARL

How so?

ALICE

Well, there's always something devious about saying product names like "Reese's Pieces" or "Milky Way," but it just gets naughtier the more you think about it. Take Skittles and M&M's, for example. They're both made by the same company, and they both have their initials on them...

KARL

Uh huh...

ALICE

All day long in the factory, they pound out little "S"es, and they pound out little "M"s. And if you put them together, what do you get?

KARL

Trying to pronounce the consonants together:

Sm?

ALICE

Smiles:

You get S & M...

KARL

Ohhh...

ALICE

And in the same product, we've all heard the rumors about "the green M&M..." This can't all just be coincidence. I mean, Almond Joy's got nuts; Mounds don't. What about jimmies, and sprinkles? What about "the Good Humor Man?" What about a Blow Pop lollipop?

KARL

Charleston Chew...

They giggle.

ALICE

But what I really wonder about is the Snickers Bar. Now, it's got peanuts, caramel, and nougat. What is nougat?

KARL

It's the... it's the filling.

ALICE

Yes, but it's just so different, it's just so... nougat.

KARL

It's a real thing. It's a confection. I've made it before.

ALICE

You've made nougat?

KARL

I've made vegan nougat.

ALICE

Karl...

KARL

You get nuts, you get some vanilla—

ALICE

Karl, don't think about it, just say it.

KARL

Why?

ALICE

It sounds racy. Nougat on the tongue. Say it.

KARL

Say nougat?

ALICE

Say nougat...

KARL looks at her.

KARL

Nougat.

ALICE

Nougat...

KARL

Nougat...

He giggles.

Nougat...

ALICE

Isn't it exhilarating?

KARL

Smiles:

I don't know what to say...

ALICE

Of course you do.

With a sideways glance:

Nougat.

KARL

All this talk about candy; can I tempt you with dessert?

ALICE

Tempt who in the desert? Oh, you mean... well, maybe...

KARL

I'm done with this, and I figured you might want something.

ALICE

Well...

KARL

What do you want? I bet you're the angel food cake type.

ALICE

I used to be...

KARL

You are again tonight.

He leans back and calls:

Oh, waiter?

KARL and ALICE look at each other. The lights fade and the scene ends.

Scene 3

The scene opens two Thursdays later in KARL's office. KARL sits at the desk. THE MAN lies on the couch, now dressed as one of KARL's patients.

KARL

Hey, look at me.

THE MAN does so.

Now, I want you to repeat what you just said. But say it to my face.

THE MAN hesitates. They stare at each other.

You can't do it, can you?

THE MAN rolls his eyes and looks away.

If you can't say it to my face then you can't say it to Cecily. And that's something you need to do. You have to confront her directly. Be honest, and tell her it's over. You can't hide behind your job relocation, your family, or any other excuse—she'll only try to adapt. She'll tell you she can change—she'll do anything—because she doesn't want things to be over. She won't even understand why things need to end; I'm not sure if you can even tell her why. All you can tell her is that it's over.

KARL shifts in his seat.

And if she takes it badly, tell her I can see her Tuesday mornings.

He checks his watch.

I guess that's it. I know you said you needed to leave on time.

KARL and THE MAN both stand. They approach each other and shake. KARL looks at the man and brings two fingers from THE MAN's eyes to his own—eye contact.

Good luck, man. I'll see you next week.

THE MAN nods and exits. KARL sits back at the desk. He pauses, then opens a desk drawer. He takes a pack of M&Ms from the drawer. He tears it open, then giggles.

ALICE

Entering:

Karl?

Panicked, KARL throws the bag of M&Ms behind him, sending them scattering all over the floor. He straightens himself and stands to meet ALICE.

KARL

Alice!

ALICE

You didn't call me.

KARL

I know; I'm sorry. I called you two nights ago.

ALICE

True...

KARL

I've called you every night for the last two weeks.

ALICE

Except last night.

KARL

I know, I know.

ALICE

Was anything wrong? Did you have non-dairy creamer?

KARL

No, Alice; no. It—I was going to call you. I had the phone in my hand. But I fell asleep.

ALICE

Oh.

KARL

I'm sorry, and I would love to make it up to you. Maybe tonight?

ALICE

Tonight? Yeah, sure!

KARL

Great! Hey, I'll go call a few places about reservations, and we can decide after your session.

ALICE

OK then!

KARL

Smiles:

Cool. I'll go tell Gabe you're ready.

KARL begins to exit. GABE walks in.

GABE

Hey Karl, have we heard from LeAnne yet?

KARL

Uhhh... no...

GABE

It's been two weeks.

KARL

I'd give them a day or two, I think. But don't worry.

GABE

Setting up his desk:

I kinda have to worry...

KARL

Gabe, don't sweat it. Your certification is definitely coming through.

GABE looks at him.

Almost definitely...

GABE

If she calls, let me know...

KARL

Sure thing.

KARL begins to exit. As he passes ALICE, he begins walking backwards, holding an imaginary phone to his face and mouthing, to ALICE, "I'll call." ALICE nods and mouths "OK." in return. GABE watches. KARL exits and ALICE watches. GABE loudly drops a folder on the desk, getting ALICE's attention.

GABE

Alice, I want you to take a look at something...

GABE hands the folder to ALICE.

This is a case I'm currently working on for the county. I thought you might want to take a look at it.

ALICE eyes it.

GABE (cont.)

Go ahead; read the intro.

ALICE

Reading:

"Here's a story, of a lovely lady, who was chopping up three very lovely girls."

She looks up, disappointed.

They let you publish this?

GABE

Are you horrified?

ALICE

Flipping pages:

It's awfully insensitive...

GABE

Are you Satanically satisfied? Look at the photos.

ALICE

Closing the folder:

I'm not in the mood.

GABE

Alice, this woman killed her children, then tried to overdose on antifreeze. What does that say to you about evil?

ALICE

Gabe, I really don't care about your Very Brady Human Sacrifice. I know about these things.

GABE

Alice, when you read this, how does it make you feel?

ALICE

I can't say it surprises me. Though you haven't told me why this massacre occurred, I don't doubt it could happen. But Gabe, just the news that Person A axed Persons B, C, and D doesn't make me feel much of anything.

GABE

Really?

ALICE

What would get an emotional reaction from me would be the motivation. What was going through this woman's head? What was the combination of thoughts, influences, and actions that drove her to kill? What unlocked the tumblers in her brain and brought that axe down? That knowledge would make me feel.

GABE

Yes, but make you feel what?

ALICE

I don't know... Delight? Disgust? Moral indignation? The important thing is that I would feel them, and share in another part of human experience. That's what I'm here for! Gabe, photos of dead children: big deal. I know dead children. I want to know why. Gabe...

She leans forward.

The world is a wonderful, wonderful place. People can sing about the praises of Heaven or the evils of Hell, but they're more or less what you'd expect. If you want the unexpected, you find it here. The world makes magic, Gabe;

ALICE (cont.)

there's no other word for it. From the tumbler lock of that woman's brain to waves of light and color from the sun, hitting the water, making you squint, causing you to drive off a cliff—there is a formula at work. Putting together horror and wonder, madness and clarity, despair and hope.

Beat.

When I look at this world, Gabe, I think of a garden. A huge garden. Acres and acres of different flowers. And when they bloom, on each flower, on each petal, another garden unfolds. No matter how close you get, there's still more beauty to see.

GABE

I'm allergic to flowers.

ALICE

Then there's more horror to see. But that's beautiful, too.

ALICE frowns.

That's part of my problem.

GABE

How's that?

ALICE

People can reach the ultimate depths of evil without any help from the Devil. I don't mind that; it's part of the world's natural beauty. But some of these acts, like this lady bludgeoning her children, aren't about the facts of life, they're about giving up on life. That's not what I'm about at all. Sometimes there is more evil in inaction than there is in the action of evil.

GABE

It's sort of like getting confused, Guns N Roses Appetite for Destruction and Megadeth's Countdown to Extinction.

ALICE

Gabe, you're terrible at this job...

GABE

Where is Axl Rose gonna end up, you think...?

ALICE

What do you mean?

GABE

Come on, Alice; you are Satan. You've got to have a list. Who's naughty, who's nice...

ALICE

Oh; you want to know if Axl is going up or down on the escalator of life...

GABE

Yeah, gimme the dirt!

ALICE

Sighs:

Alright...

ALICE reaches into her jacket and pulls out a small piece of paper.

...But I don't do this for just anyone...

She scans it. GABE marvels.

GABE

This is so cool...

ALICE looks up and gives GABE a stern look. She looks back down, following a list with her finger. She stops.

ALICE

There we go. Axl Rose is going to Hell.

GABE

Wow. So you just—

ALICE

It's all right here.

GABE

And you can tell even before somebody dies?

ALICE

More or less; there aren't a lot of surprises.

GABE

So what about my seventh grade science teacher, Mrs. Whittingly?

ALICE

Glances:

She's in Hell.

GABE

No kidding. And her husband?

ALICE

He's on his way there.

GABE

Wow. What about historic figures; what about Nixon?

ALICE

Hell.

GABE

Stalin?

ALICE

Hell.

GABE

Genghis Khan?

ALICE

Hell.

GABE

Napoleon?

ALICE

Hell.

GABE

I thought he might be on the bubble. What about Martin Luther King?

ALICE

Hell.

GABE

No.

ALICE

It's on the list.

GABE

Yeah, but it's—

GABE shakes his head.

What about Gandhi?

ALICE

Hell.

GABE

Mother Theresa?

ALICE

Hell.

GABE

George Washington?

ALICE

Hell.

GABE

Let me finish—Carver?

ALICE

Hell.

GABE

How about the last five popes?

ALICE

Hell, hell, hell, hell, and... hell.

GABE

Jesus...

ALICE

Hell. But only for a little bit.

GABE

How about Lincoln?

ALICE

Hell.

GABE

Moses?

ALICE

Hell.

GABE

Annoyed:

Hitler?!

ALICE stops, scans the list, and flips it over.

ALICE

Hell.

GABE

Let me see that!

He snatches the paper out of ALICE's hand. He looks at it.

Wait a minute. This paper is blank.

ALICE

Or is it...?

She gives GABE a look.

No; it's blank.

GABE

Alice, let's try something else. I want to know about your human form. Why Alice?

ALICE

Why Alice?

GABE

Yeah. I mean, as Satan, you could be imposing or sinister; somebody who could walk into the room and hit you with the power of evil. Alice, when you first walked in here, you just hit me with... Alice.

He spreads his hands.

What's up with that?

ALICE

Gabe, I don't need to wear my horns on my sleeve, so to speak. Alice has so much more to her. I think I'm easier to talk to this way.

GABE

But Alice is just another performance. At the end of the day, you've got to come back to being the Prince of Darkness. That's got to be awkward.

ALICE

How so?

GABE

Because deep down, you can never just be human. You've got to be Satan, too. And that has to make it difficult to be the human Alice.

ALICE

Gabe, I'd like to think I have some experience with the human form. After all, I've been using it for centuries. You've only been using it for a couple of decades.

GABE

That's true, but someone could play a doctor on television for 30 years; I'd still rather get operated on by a kid fresh out of med school. Alice, that's what you can never have. You can never have that authenticity.

ALICE

Ooh, authenticity...

GABE

Standing; approaching her:

I'm serious. You don't think that being Satan makes you a less convincing Alice?

ALICE

Alice isn't the problem here...

GABE

I think she is! I think that your real problem is that you're blocking off the inner Alice.

ALICE

What?

GABE

Alice, it's like a peanut M&M...

ALICE

Cautious:

M&M?

GABE

Yes...

ALICE

This isn't about sex, is it?

GABE

No.

He continues:

Alice, on the surface, you're Alice, a crunchy candy shell. Underneath that, you're Satan, the gooey milk chocolate. And underneath that is the inner Alice, the peanut. What we need to do is get to that peanut.

ALICE

Sliding over on the couch towards GABE:

Gabe, I think you have the wrong bag of candy. I'm distinctly a plain M&M. Underneath Alice, there's just your friendly, neighborhood Devil. There is no inner Alice.

GABE

There is!

ALICE

Why?

GABE

Because that's where your pain is, Alice. That's where your problem is. The inner Alice is being neglected.

ALICE

Scoffs:

Oh please...

GABE

So let's just drop the Satan bit for a while, huh?

ALICE

Getting up:

I don't believe this; you're not giving up! You're convinced that I'm a defense mechanism!

GABE

In short, yes!

ALICE

Gabe, I am the Devil!

GABE

Then prove it!

ALICE

No!

GABE

Anything short of demonic torture, Alice, and I won't listen!

ALICE

Oh, I'll show you torture...

*ALICE winds up and slugs GABE in the arm. GABE looks at her.
Beat.*

GABE

Whiny:

Owww!

*ALICE assumes a cocky posture, hitting her shoulders, stepping
around GABE, etc.*

ALICE

Come on!

GABE

What?

ALICE

Hit me back.

GABE

What?

ALICE

Hit me back!

GABE straightens himself.

GABE

Alice, I don't get what you mean, I—

ALICE

Time's up; my turn!

She hits him in the arm again. GABE staggers.

GABE

Owww! What was that for?

ALICE

You forfeited your punchback!

GABE

My punchback?

ALICE

Come on, hit for hit. You gonna hit me or not?

GABE

Hit you?

ALICE

Hit me!

GABE

Alice, I'm your therapist! We don't hit people, we find out who hit them as a child!

ALICE punches GABE again, and he crumples to the ground.

Owww!

ALICE stands over GABE and shakes her head.

ALICE

Mankind is doomed.

GABE begins to get up. ALICE begins walking back to the couch. GABE stands, looks at ALICE, and charges at her.

GABE

Arghhh!

GABE takes ALICE to the ground; they wrestle. As they grunt and grapple, KIM enters. She watches as GABE struggles to pin ALICE. GABE looks up.

GABE

Kim!

ALICE takes advantage of KIM's entrance to flip GABE, almost pinning him.

KIM

To GABE:

Do you want to tag out?

GABE

Just a second...

GABE and ALICE flip again. GABE pins ALICE's shoulders to the ground. She taps the ground.

ALICE

Annoyed:

All right!

GABE

Yes!

GABE raises his arms in triumph and gets up. He turns to KIM.

Sorry Kim. I had to lay the smackdown.

ALICE

I let him win...

GABE

Kim, this is Alice Osbourne. She's my patient.

ALICE

Hi.

KIM

Physical therapy, eh?

GABE

I owe it to my patients to try. I am a doctor.

KIM

Good. Because I really need to talk to Dr. Larson.

GABE

OK.

He turns to ALICE.

Alice, can we pick this up in a few minutes?

ALICE

Oh, sure. I'll just see what Karl is up to...

As ALICE crosses to exit, she hits GABE in the arm. GABE holds his arm and opens his mouth to whine again as he watches ALICE exit. But he looks at KIM again, and simply closes his mouth.

KIM

My plane leaves tonight.

GABE sits on the couch.

KIM (cont.)

Once I get there, I'll get to walk around the airport, see the gift shop—if you want a souvenir I can get you one. There will be a government car outside waiting for me. But there won't be much use getting in it if I don't have my recommendation.

GABE

Oh, geez Kim...

KIM

Gabe, I left you alone for a whole week about this. A whole week just to simmer down.

GABE

It doesn't make it any different, any less—

KIM

And you know, maybe you wrote me that recommendation a month ago.

GABE

Kim—

KIM

Maybe the date written on this recommendation is from when you were still working for the state...

GABE

Backdating? Kim—

KIM

You're no less qualified now than you were then. You would have done it a month ago. I know it makes you upset. But do you know why it makes you upset? I don't. What could you be upset about? Is it because I lied about the last time? Because I didn't. Is it because it's illegal? Not by U.S. law; only by the law of a regime that is just as bloody as the rebels. Is it because it's dangerous? Gabe, I'm a big girl...

GABE sighs.

GABE

Kim, it's all of that. It's my certification, and it's more...

GABE sighs. KIM sits next to him.

KIM

Gabe, if you really don't want me to go, I won't. But I need you to know just how important I think this is. Not for me, but for us. That's why I want the recommendation from you and not some other psychologist. This isn't about diamonds. It's about us. It's something to show that there is an us.

Beat.

So write the recommendation. I'll bring it with me; nobody in this country will need to see it until I come back. By then you should have your certification.

Another beat.

Gabe, talk to me. Tell me what you want to do.

GABE looks at her.

GABE

I guess I'm sending you to Africa.

KIM

Are you sure?

GABE

Kim, I trust you. And I believe you when you say we need this.

KIM looks at GABE. They embrace. KIM releases him and smiles.

KIM

Thank you.

GABE

I'll type one up right after my session.

ALICE and KARL walk in; ALICE is biting into a Snickers bar. As she bites, she looks at KARL, and begins to laugh. The two giggle. KIM starts off.

KIM

Gabe, thank you.

GABE

Yeah; come back in an hour or so.

KIM exits. ALICE sits.

Karl?

KARL

Yeah?

GABE

Any word about—?

KARL

Let's pretend I'm about to check right now.

KARL exits.

GABE

Perfect.

GABE sits at the desk, staring out.

Alice, what are your personal, Satanic opinions about love?

ALICE

Her mouth full:

Mmy Opnnyns?

She stops and swallows.

My opinions? I love love...

GABE

No, I'm not talking about abstracts right now. I mean you and Karl. Are you in love with him?

ALICE

Blushes:

Oh, well Gabe... I couldn't say...

GABE

Because you're not known to fall in love, although you are known for your wining and wooing.

ALICE

Actually Karl's been paying for dinner.

GABE

Hmmm...

ALICE

Gabe, I'm not after Karl's soul; you know that. I'm here for psychiatric help. I wasn't thinking about love at all...

She sighs.

I guess that's how it usually happens...

Snapping back.

Oh, but look at me, I'm getting mushy. That's not the right image for me. I feel kinda stupid...

GABE

Well Alice, love makes all of us stupid. I'm in love and I'm about to do something stupid.

ALICE

That's sweet.

GABE

I hope it is, Alice. I really hope so...

GABE stares out. The lights fade and the scene ends.

Scene 4

Later that evening. The lights come up on GABE's desk. The rest of the stage is in total darkness. GABE, his tie off, sits at the desk, tired. The phone rings. GABE answers.

GABE

Hello?

Spotlight on KIM, sitting in an airline seat that faces left. KIM is on a cell phone.

KIM

Gabe, hi!

GABE

Kim! You should be in the air by now. Where are you calling from?

KIM

The plane.

GABE

On a cell phone? Doesn't that interfere with navigational instruments?

KIM

Indifferent:

Eh.

THE MAN enters, dressed as a flight attendant. He offers cocktails to imaginary passengers.

I have been reading your recommendation on the plane. It's really great.

THE MAN approaches KIM.

Oh, no thanks...

THE MAN continues and exits.

GABE

Well, that's my job. As a criminal psychologist, you write a lot of letters; you write letters to convince states to keep crazy people in jail. It's sort of like a reverse Amnesty International.

KIM

Your writing skills are sure to persuade the officials.

GABE

Thanks.

KIM smiles.

KIM

Gabe, think of it. We don't need to hold our breath about school debts, or wedding plans, or anything. Right now we can exhale...

GABE

Yeah, well, I think I'll wait to exhale until you get back home.

Beat. KIM frowns.

Right?

Beat.

Hello?

KIM

Gabe, you're breaking up.

GABE

Kim?

KIM

I have to go. Love you!

KIM hangs up; her spotlight goes dark. GABE stares at the phone, sighs, and hangs it up. He shakes his head and raps his knuckles against the desk. He retrieves a stack of paperwork, preparing to review it. He searches for a pen. After a moment, GABE opens the desk drawer. He looks inside and stops. He retrieves a slip of paper and studies it, carefully. GABE checks his watch, picks up the phone, and dials. It rings.

GABE

Come on, Karl... You're not asleep...

Spotlight on KARL's bed. KARL, clad in t-shirt and boxers, blinks and picks up the phone next to the bed.

KARL

Hello?

GABE

Karl, you're not asleep.

KARL

Rubs his eyes:

No... no, I'm not asleep... What's up, Gabe?

GABE

I'm at the office. I found something in your desk drawer. A note. A phone message.

KARL

Yeah...?

GABE

It says "LeAnne" on it. She called?

KARL

Gabe, when is that from?

GABE

I think it's from today, Karl. It just says her name on it, in your handwriting, and then a few more letters I can't make out.

KARL

Gabe, I need to tell you—

KARL stops and frowns.

GABE

Tell me what?

KARL

Gabe, I'm getting a beep; hang on a second.

Lights down on KARL's bed.

GABE

Tell me what? Karl? Karl; hello!

GABE bangs the receiver against his head. Lights down on GABE's desk and up on KARL's bed.

KARL

Hello?

Lights up on the other side of KARL's bed. ALICE is there, on a cell phone, staring out.

ALICE

Hello Karl.

KARL

Alice?

He drops the receiver and turns to her.

Alice!

ALICE

Still into the phone:

Karl, who's calling at this hour?

KARL

Alice—

ALICE

Should I be jealous?

KARL

No; Alice—

He touches ALICE's shoulder. She turns.

Alice, it's Gabe. And it's kind of important, so could you just...?

ALICE

Oh, sure thing.

She ends her phone call. KARL smiles and pats her shoulder.

KARL

Thanks.

He leans over and grabs the receiver. Lights go down on ALICE and up on GABE, who is studying the slip of paper.

Hey Gabe?

GABE

"R - E - J"...

KARL

What's that?

GABE

You wrote three letters down, Karl: "R - E - J". Then you stopped.

KARL

I...guess I did?

GABE

A message from LeAnne: "R - E - J". I've been rejected? That's what she told you?

KARL

Gabe, let me—

GABE

She rejected me, and you're too afraid to tell me. You're too afraid to even write it down.

KARL

Gabe, Gabe, I'm sorry.

GABE

When was this? Have you been sitting on this all week?

KARL

No; Gabe, it was just this afternoon. And I didn't tell you because we can fight this. We can reapply.

GABE

Not for three months. Karl, I need those three months!

KARL

I'm sorry, Gabe.

GABE

I'm stuck.

KARL

Gabe, you still have everything my practice can give you. You still have Alice.

ALICE's arm appears from the darkness and wraps around KARL's shoulders. KARL looks at the unseen ALICE.

We still have Alice...

GABE

Karl, I can't leave it at that!

KARL's eyes go wide as ALICE pulls him out of the light. He drops the phone, but GABE doesn't notice.

It's one thing to be in a state of transition for a couple of weeks. Now it's a couple of months! And I don't even know why I was rejected. Did she give any indication what I did? You didn't write that down.

Beat.

Hello?

KARL reappears, flustered and adjusting his boxers. He grabs the phone.

Hello Karl?

KARL

Uh, yeah Gabe. Listen, tomorrow morning we can talk to LeAnne about this.

GABE

You tried that.

KARL

I know but—you know what? If we can't convince her, maybe Kim can.

GABE

Kim?

KARL

Mmmm Hmmm.

GABE

Kim Bell? My fiancée?

KARL

Yeah. She and LeAnne went to college together. Part of the same sorority.

GABE

How did you know this?

KARL

Kim mentioned it a while ago. Then this afternoon I called LeAnne's office. Her secretary said she had left early and gone out for a drink with Kim; wish her good luck on her trip.

GABE

This afternoon?

KARL

Yeah.

GABE

Like right after Kim left our office?

KARL

I guess so.

GABE

And LeAnne called you after that to say I'd been rejected?

KARL

Yeah. I don't even know if LeAnne knows you two are engaged. It's too bad; we should have had Kim put in a good word for you.

GABE

Dead serious:

Maybe that's what happened...

KARL

I guess we'll have to wait until she gets back.

GABE

Oh my God, Karl... I don't think she's coming back...

GABE holds the receiver limply and stares ahead.

KARL

Gabe?

GABE

She's the Devil, Karl. She's the real Devil...

KARL

Gabe?

GABE continues staring and hangs up the phone. Lights go down on his desk.

Gabe? Hello?

KARL frowns and hangs up. The phone rings again. KARL starts for the receiver, but stops. Lights come up again on ALICE's side of the bed. ALICE has the cell phone in her hand, tapping her fingers against her leg, waiting for KARL to answer. KARL looks at her, shakes his head, and finally picks up the receiver.

KARL

Into phone:

Alice...

ALICE

Into phone:

How'd you know it was me?

KARL lets out an amused smile.

Do you have Caller ID?

She quickly glances over KARL's shoulder at his phone. She sits back down.

No, you don't...

KARL

Alice...

He puts down the phone and turns ALICE's cheek so she faces him.

Let's talk, face to face...

ALICE hangs up the phone.

KARL (cont.)

Alice... You're an amazing woman...

ALICE

Oh, I know...

KARL

No, Alice, you're really the best thing that's happened to me in a long time. I've never connected with anyone on as deep a level as with you. Any other conversation I have with anyone, I feel like I always say too much. But Alice, with you, I can never say enough...

He smiles.

And it's got me all mixed up inside... Alice, one part of me wants to spend the rest of eternity with you.

ALICE

Oh, Karl...

KARL

But another part of me is cautious; our relationship is still so young. I don't know exactly what to do.

ALICE

Oh, Karl... I feel the same way...

KARL

So what should we do?

ALICE

You just have to live it. It's natural to be cautious, but Karl, there comes a point where you can get close, close enough to a person to know them as well as anybody can. And Karl, we're close.

KARL

Alice, I feel close, but still, I want to be cautious.

ALICE sighs.

ALICE

Maybe I do have a peanut center...

She turns to him.

Karl, I'm going to get up every day acting as if I'll be with you forever, and eventually that will be the cautious thing to do.

KARL looks at ALICE and smiles.

KARL

I think I'll do the same.

He leans over and kisses her deeply on the cheek.

There's no woman on Earth like you, Alice Osbourne.

She smiles.

ALICE

Give me a real kiss, Karl...

She pulls him closer, and the lights fade. The lights come up on GABE at his desk, on the phone. On the other side of the stage, on the other end of the phone, is THE MAN. He is dressed as a police officer, with a noticeable badge.

GABE

Hello, officer? There's a woman who'll be in your city soon. And she'll have a very interesting suitcase...

Light down. End of Act I.

Act II
Scene 1

Lights up on GABE and ALICE in the office. They look out into the audience. ALICE peers through a pair of binoculars.

GABE

What about that guy?

ALICE keeps looking. She thinks.

ALICE

He's married. Newlywed.

GABE

So, jealousy, seduction—that kind of temptation won't work for him. Or will it?

ALICE

It can be done. But it's no sure thing; I wouldn't waste my time.

GABE

What about money or power?

ALICE

I just don't see the ambition. He's not driven; he's not desperate. He plays bass in a cover band on the weekends. He's got everything he needs.

GABE

But that's salesmanship, Alice! Make a deal with him for something he doesn't need. Make him want it!

ALICE

Make him want a car; make him want a vacation—Gabe, this isn't a game show. I don't do trivial. He has to believe what he's getting is earth-

ALICE (cont.)

shattering. Something worth the exchange. I'm not going to pay off his mortgage or anything like that.

GABE

So, no deal.

ALICE

Handing GABE the binoculars:

No deal.

GABE

I'm sorry, Alice.

ALICE

Gabe, it's the truth I have to live with. Not many people are cut out for a deal with the Devil. Not anymore.

GABE

Using the binoculars:

It's OK; we'll find somebody.

ALICE

Don't look too hard. It isn't a busy intersection.

GABE puts down the binoculars and hands them to ALICE.

GABE

OK, you see that kid?

ALICE

A kid? Oh, Gabe, come on.

GABE

Just take a look.

ALICE

Using the binoculars:

Standing at the bus stop?

GABE

Yeah, the one with the skateboard.

ALICE

Hmmm...

GABE

He's loitering. That's one of the deadly sins, right? He should be a pushover.

ALICE

Of course he is; he's barely a teenager. It's too low stakes.

GABE

I figured a soul's a soul.

ALICE

It's just not sporting. I could offer him the car; he'd sign over his soul in a heartbeat. Even if he can't drive it. I'd give him the car and—let's see—make him hand over the skateboard.

GABE

Ah, a shortcut to maturity, but he loses the symbol of his youth. Growing up too fast, and all he has to show for it is a convertible and a space where his soul used to be. Good work, Alice.

ALICE

I came up with that in ten seconds. It's not fair.

GABE

Why play fair? You're the Devil!

ALICE

Gabe, please. Once I have the contract in hand I want to respect myself the next day. When you're a teenager everything is earth-shattering. He doesn't know desperation. He hasn't ruined his life yet.

ALICE hands GABE the binoculars.

No deal.

GABE

Looking through the binoculars:

Well, you have your reasons....

ALICE

Are we done yet?

GABE

Alice, this is for your benefit. You want to be an active, modern-day Devil, you have to learn how to—

GABE sees something.

Hey, here we go.

ALICE

Taking the binoculars:

What?

GABE

Check out the suit at three o'clock.

ALICE

You mean nine o'clock; you have no idea—

GABE

Just look at him. The slicked-back hair. Shouting into his phone at...anybody. Everybody, really. What's he doing here?

ALICE

That's his BMW further up the street. He hit a parked car.

GABE

He's terrible! He's a shining example of everything we hate about humanity. In Hell, he'd fit right in!

ALICE

Then I don't need to cut a deal. I'll wait a few decades and get his soul anyway.

GABE

Oh come on, Alice! What if he sees the error of his ways? If he joins Greenpeace or something it's all over. You'll have let him slip through your fingers. Seal the deal!

ALICE

No....

GABE

Walk up to him right now, contract in hand, and...help him with insider trading. Let him kick a puppy. Anything. He'll do it, easily.

ALICE

That's just it, Gabe. Easily. I don't want that.

She gives him the binoculars again.

No deal.

GABE

OK, I see what's going on here. You are making every excuse not to go to the gym, and yet you wonder why you're so Satanically flabby.

ALICE

Oh, Gabe.

GABE

Seize the opportunity, Alice. Live up to your name once in a while!

ALICE

Gabe, I'm going to use the ladies' room.

GABE

Another excuse!

ALICE

And it's a good one, pardon me.

ALICE begins to exit. KARL enters holding a fruit basket.

KARL

Alice.

ALICE

Karl, tell Gabe I'm not a saleswoman.

KARL

OK.

ALICE exits. KARL turns to GABE.

She's not a saleswoman.

GABE

Karl, should I ask why you keep a pair of binoculars in the office?

KARL

I do?

GABE

In the bottom drawer.

KARL

Oh, that's my collection of hands-off items; things I've asked my patients to give up. Totems, really. There's a photo album in there—I've never seen so many puppy pictures. It's heartbreaking, in a way.

GABE

What about that fruit basket? That doesn't fit in the drawer.

KARL

I have a patient who's taking a big step. He's getting out of a bad relationship, he's moving, and he's got a new job.

GABE

So this is a thank you.

KARL

It's also the new job. He makes fruit baskets.

GABE

Good for him.

KARL places the basket on the desk and sits.

KARL

You're going to help me with this. Along with Alice and all our other clients. We can't let it go to waste.

GABE

Every part of the buffalo.

KARL

If there's buffalo in here, let me know; I'll have to have a talk with him.

Half beat:

How's Kim? How's her trip going?

GABE does not respond. He doesn't know how.

Is that good?

GABE

Karl, about Kim... It's over. She left me.

KARL

She broke up with you from Africa?

GABE

Before that, even. She's the reason I lost out on my certification. I gave her a recommendation and she used it against me.

KARL

Why? You two were together for so long!

GABE

Karl, I know. Kim was getting into something dangerous, but I didn't know why it would involve deceiving me. I still don't know why. She's not coming back.

KARL

Gabe, this is insane.

GABE

It is insane. But it's done. And she's gone.

KARL

I'll tell you what, Gabe. I'm taking you out tonight. We're going out and getting drunk.

GABE

Karl, I'd rather—

KARL

Drunk. You deserve this.

GABE

Thanks, Karl.

KARL

I'll talk to you a little later.

KARL exits right. GABE slumps in his chair. He looks at the fruit basket, and takes it into his lap, swiveling his chair downstage. GABE rustles through the basket. He picks up a banana, considers it, but puts it back down. He picks up an apple and considers it.

ALICE

Go ahead; eat the apple.

GABE turns to see ALICE standing next to him. She smiles and sits.

GABE

Cute...

ALICE

Wow, that takes me back.

GABE

I'm sure.

ALICE

Gabe, is something on your mind?

GABE

Alice, there are lots of things on my mind. Why do you ask?

ALICE

Well, your whole Let's Make A Deal experiment seemed kind of contrived, like you did it to avoid talking about something else.

GABE

I can't put anything past you, can I?

ALICE

Smiles:

But I love it when you try...

GABE

Alice, I'm upset, because it turns out a woman I thought I knew wasn't the person she claimed to be. Let me explain...

GABE reaches in the desk and pulls out a deflated, plastic beach ball. He begins blowing it up. ALICE watches, disturbed.

ALICE

You like Gidget movies, Gabe?

GABE stops with the ball half inflated, and smiles.

GABE

It's a visual aid. I was thinking about our M&M story from last week, and there might be a better example...

GABE finishes inflating the ball. He gets up, bounces it against the ground once, and holds it.

Alice, you claimed that the two parts of you were Alice the candy shell, and Satan, the milk chocolate center. Well, I think that Alice is a beach ball... And the Satan inside is nothing but hot air...

He throws the beach ball at ALICE. She catches it.

ALICE

Gabe, we've gone through this. I am the Devil.

She throws the beach ball back to GABE.

Quite frankly, I don't like you wasting my time by—

GABE walks toward his desk.

GABE

I know, Alice, but now it's a different situation. I was in your neighborhood this weekend, and I discovered a few things.

ALICE

Excuse me?

GABE

It was aimless driving; I really wasn't all together Sunday, and I found myself on Highland, where your apartment is. I thought I'd get out of my car, stop by and see you, but you weren't there.

ALICE

I was antiquing with Karl...

GABE

Yeah, that's what your landlady said. I ended up coming in, sitting down, and talking with her for a while. It was interesting.

ALICE

Really?

GABE

Oh yeah. She mentions you've been a great tenant, and she's loved having you these past seven years...

ALICE

Matching GABE's condescending tone:

Doris is sweet, isn't she...?

GABE

Correct me if I'm wrong, Alice, but isn't seven years an awfully long time for Satan to just slum around in an apartment? If the Alice version of Satan was so good at expressing her feelings, why wait seven years before seeking therapy?

ALICE

Mere mortals have gone longer without seeking therapy. That's not unusual.

GABE

Yeah, but the Devil has the luxury of appearing and disappearing at whim, making the grand entrances, and fading into the night. Alice, you could have materialized yourself into existence seconds before entering my office; instead you lived as human for at least seven years before!

ALICE

Maybe I enjoy Doris' company...

GABE

Nodding:

Maybe... And maybe you did materialize at whim, only you've stuck around for an awfully long time... You're right though; it is possible. Maybe you really are the Devil...

Beat.

But I don't remember the Devil having a sister...

ALICE slowly, silently turns toward GABE.

Do you? My Sunday School memory is a little rusty, but I don't remember an extensive angelic family tree. The humans did all the begetting, but up above you've got the Father, the Son, and that's about it.

Beat.

But you have a sister, huh?

ALICE

I do.

GABE

Doris told me that.

Beat.

GABE (cont.)

You never told me you had a sister before.

ALICE

It never came up.

GABE

The Devil has a sister...

ALICE

Gabe, I control everything in my life. If I want—if I want to have a sister... I can have one...

Beat.

GABE

I'm sorry what happened to her.

ALICE

Don't be.

GABE

The accident—it sounds horrible. It's good that you visit her every day, though.

Beat.

Doris told me that you were supposed to go with her that weekend. But you canceled.

ALICE

I decided I didn't like kayaking.

Beat.

GABE

It isn't your fault—

ALICE

Begins clapping, interrupting:

"Isn't your fault," the magic words! Gabe, you too? I hear that from everybody. People say that automatically; "Alice's sister is in a coma and it isn't her fault." I thought you'd give me something new.

GABE

I've gotten to you.

ALICE

You've disappointed me. I thrive on new emotions, not the same, tired words over and over.

GABE

I know. And after all that repetition, you just can't believe people anymore when they say that. You have to believe it's your fault. But why? Why would an accident be your fault?

He looks at her.

Because you're the Devil. You're the focal point for all horrific, malicious, and evil acts in the world. Your hands are stained with the blood of a sin a human Alice cannot know, so you must be Satan.

ALICE

If you think this is sin only the Devil can bear, you're wrong. Gabe, I made a decision that horribly hurt someone I love, and that could happen to anyone; it could happen to you. As the Devil, my sins are so calculated and distant. But as Alice...

She winces.

ALICE (cont.)

I live close to my sins, everyday.

GABE

What sin? Alice, you're just trying to rationalize your sister's accident, but that's all it was! An accident! If you're the Devil, where did this sister come from, anyway?

ALICE

She's me, too. I created her with Alice. I wanted to feel the guilt, the pain... up close and personal...

GABE

Alice, I don't see how I can believe that. I've been willing to give you the benefit of the doubt that maybe you were the Devil in disguise this whole time, but things just haven't added up. Even if your sister was another Satanic fabrication, whatever that means, there's no reason that you wouldn't mention her to me. No reason except to hide a very human pain.

ALICE

It's a very private pain.

GABE

That's right, Alice. It's the therapy jackpot! You're not foolish enough to think I'm going to let you ignore this. I've been deconstructing religious myth for weeks now and it's gotten the both of us nowhere. This needs examination.

ALICE

What are you going to do, Gabe? I require the new; you know that. You have said nothing new to me.

She gets up.

When I came to you, I wanted to get back some of the fear I used to inspire. Fear of Hell; fear of ending up with me for eternity. Your little

ALICE (cont.)

exercise earlier with the businessman and the little kid? I'd have their souls without any of them breaking into a cold sweat. There's no satisfaction there and that's what I want.

GABE

I don't know how to help you.

ALICE

No, Gabe; it's worse than that. You're actively working against me. A therapist never wants his patient to be afraid. You always give them an explanation; there's always a way out. But that's a lie. There are things you should be afraid of.

GABE

Damnation?

ALICE

That's a start. Hell used to be a great motivator.

GABE

Do you think about your sister in Hell?

ALICE

I think we finished with that topic a few minutes ago.

GABE

She's comatose; she might not have long to—

ALICE

Gabe, you are not listening to me!

GABE

—oh, I’m listening—

ALICE

You are not helping me!

GABE

I won’t, Alice. Talk to Karl, get a refund—whatever you want to do. I can’t help the Devil. I can’t help you unless we talk about your sister. If you won’t—if you insist on repeating the phrase, “I am the Devil”—I can’t be your therapist.

ALICE looks down. GABE stands in front of her.

What’s it going to be, Alice?

ALICE looks at GABE, turns, and grabs her purse off of the couch. She starts off, then turns.

ALICE

I’ll see you next week. Maybe.

ALICE exits. GABE watches her leave. He picks the apple off of the desk and bites. Lights fade. End scene.

Scene 2

The scene opens in the restaurant. The left side of the stage is not lit. GABE and KARL sit at the right table, GABE in the right seat, KARL in the left. Both have plates in front of them. GABE's is empty, while KARL's has food. THE MAN, as the waiter, stands at their table. He cracks an egg in the air, and lets it land on GABE's plate.

THE MAN

Sunny side up.

THE MAN exits. GABE watches him leave. KARL eats. GABE stares at him. KARL continues eating. He looks up.

KARL

How's the frittata?

GABE

Why do we come here?

KARL

It's close. I love the food.

GABE

I'll take your word on that. Karl, the service is horrible.

KARL

Gabe, that's part of the atmosphere! One of my patients is a waitress. She says that the first thing they try to do is give us bread, salad, some sort of food, because the less hungry we are, the less temperamental we'll be. And, if they have a liquor license, they'll try and do the same with drinks.

GABE

We haven't gotten our drinks yet.

KARL

Atmosphere!

GABE

Right. I think we should start ignoring our patients; call it atmosphere...

KARL chews thoughtfully.

Hey, did you know that Alice had a sister?

KARL

Nods:

Mmm hmm. I think she's with her right now. Alice visits with her a lot.

GABE

Did she tell you she's comatose?

KARL stops.

KARL

No. She is? Oh my God...

GABE

Yeah.

KARL

I knew they were close, I just— Whenever Alice would mention her, it was all just so casual...

KARL shakes his head.

She never told me...

GABE

Don't feel too bad. Alice didn't even tell me she had a sister. She was hiding her from me.

KARL

Wow...

GABE

I think this is the key, Karl. Her sister cracked her skull while kayaking, and Alice feels responsible because she wasn't there to protect her. It explains so much about the things she told me, the things she was hiding from me, and the things she hid from herself..

KARL

I never knew she was carrying such an emotional load..

GABE

She buries it deep. Alice is tough, but she can keep a secret.

KARL

Yeah...

GABE

And it's great that she has you; it opens up her world a lot. It would be horrible if it was just her and her sister. And that's what I think I have to do. Make her sister more than just a secret guilt, and really bring the two halves of Alice's life together.

KARL

You've got a plan. Congratulations, Dr. Larson.

GABE

Don't go patting me on the back just yet. I haven't nearly finished therapy with Alice yet. I'm not even really a therapist.

KARL

You know, Gabe; about that—

KARL stops and frowns.

GABE

About what?

KARL

I'm vibrating.

KARL reaches into his jacket and retrieves a cell phone.

Alice!

Spotlight on ALICE. She sits in a chair.

ALICE

Hi Karl!

KARL

How are you?

ALICE

Just fine. Where are you?

KARL

I'm out to dinner. Where have you been?

ALICE

I just got back from my sister's.

KARL

Oh, how's she doing?

Beat.

ALICE

Why'd you say that?

KARL

Say what?

ALICE

"How's she doing?" Like you know how she's doing. Gabe wasted no time to tell you about her, huh?

KARL grimaces.

KARL

Yeah, he told me.

ALICE

So much for confidentiality.

KARL

Alice.

ALICE

What else has he told you about me? My kleptomania? My fear of clowns? My terrible taste in karaoke songs?

KARL

Alice, I—

He stops.

KARL (cont.)

You have a fear of clowns?

ALICE

Well, only a little...

KARL

Smiles:

Me too.

ALICE frowns. GABE picks food off of the distracted KARL's plate.

ALICE

Karl, I really feel like I've had my trust betrayed by the two of you. You're gossiping about my sister!

KARL

Alice, it's not gossip!

ALICE

How is spreading what I said in confidence not gossip?

KARL

Easy! We're professionals!

ALICE groans in disgust.

No, Alice, Gabe just told me one thing, and now I understand... And Alice, it isn't your fault!

ALICE

Upset:

Oh, go to Hell!

ALICE hangs up the phone. Her side of the stage goes dark.

KARL

Alice?

GABE

Bad move, Karl.

KARL

I've got to call her back.

KARL dials furiously.

GABE

Karl, it might not be—

KARL puts the phone to his ear. Spotlight on THE MAN, dressed like the patient in the first act.

THE MAN

Yello?

KARL

Ah! Wrong number.

The spotlight fades. KARL hangs up and begins dialing again. GABE stops him.

GABE

Karl, take it easy. I grilled Alice all morning about this same stuff, and she's still really upset. It's no good taking action when you're riled up.

KARL

You're right.

GABE

I know...

KARL

I just wish I knew about this earlier; I've said so much. We're going on a nature trail next weekend, and Alice mentioned that her sister loved hiking. I said she should come along...

KARL stares.

If I'd have known, that would have been the most horrible, insensitive thing I could have possibly said.

GABE

That's the way Alice wanted it. It was her secret guilt; your insensitivity is her fault.

KARL

Gabe, you're right. Wow; opening up is going to really hurt her.

GABE

It'll be tough, but it will work.

KARL

Yeah.

GABE

Now tell me about LeAnne.

KARL

What about her?

GABE

Just before Alice called, you were talking about me being a therapist. Do you know anything new about her decision?

KARL

No, not new. Old.

GABE

Old?

KARL

LeAnne and I have a history.

Beat. GABE stares.

She cheated.

GABE

You two were a couple?

KARL

No, we did our undergrad together. And she cheated in class. You know me, Gabe; I have a very sensitive moral compass. I always have. So, I told on her.

GABE

How moral.

KARL

She failed the class. Later that semester she transferred to another school.

GABE

And now she's a regional director.

KARL

Gabe, I'm just afraid that this is my fault. LeAnne didn't approve you because of me. You said it was Kim, but I wonder if LeAnne still holds a grudge.

GABE

She knows it was you?

KARL

She's never said anything, but I think she does.

GABE

Karl, you're telling me this isn't Kim's fault?

KARL

I don't know. What did she do?

GABE

She told on me.

KARL

Depending on what she told on you for, that might be a better explanation than my story. I don't know.

GABE

I don't know, either. God, Karl.

KARL

I'm sorry.

GABE

Karl, this is serious. Karl, you have to call LeAnne right now.

KARL

It's after office hours.

GABE

Find her number. You have to do this, Karl.

KARL

It's not going to make a difference.

GABE

I have to know.

KARL

We'll know. I'll call tomorrow.

GABE

Karl, I told on her.

KARL

It's OK, Gabe.

GABE

I told on her because she told on me. I thought she told on me.

KARL

I'm vibrating.

He answers his phone again.

Alice?

Light on ALICE.

ALICE

Karl, hi. I'm sorry I blew up like that...

KARL

No, Alice; I didn't realize how insensitive I was getting.

ALICE

Karl, I shouldn't be that sensitive!

KARL

You have every right to be sensitive; it's your family! I just want you to know that Gabe and I meant well. It wasn't just gossip. Gabe asked me what I knew about your sister, that's all. He didn't know I didn't know. And, now that I know, I think what you do for your sister is great.

ALICE

Slight smile:

Oh, Karl... I'm still sorry for what I said.

KARL

Alice, you're not allowed to be sorry. Not unless you let me be sorry, too.

ALICE

Well, I can't let you do that...

KARL

Then we're not sorry. We're both absolutely unapologetic. I like it that way.

ALICE

Me too.

They giggle.

ALICE (cont.)

Karl, you're eating.

KARL

I'm done, really.

ALICE

I'll let you go. Call me later?

KARL

Absolutely. Goodnight, Alice.

ALICE

Bye!

ALICE hangs up, her light fades.

GABE

I told on her. I told on her to murderers. Karl.

KARL

Gabe—

GABE

You and Alice have a fight and you make up in all of three minutes. I've done something worse.

KARL

You haven't.

GABE

Unless she did it. I don't know. I really don't know. You're the one with the perfect moral compass. And it's led you to Alice.

KARL

Gabe, she's incredible. I mean it. I've never had this kind of connection with another woman. Alice and I just get so silly, yet so deep, and it's just...

He smiles and sighs.

I love her, Gabe. I want to give birth to her children...

GABE

I've seen that movie.

KARL

I never thought I'd be in a relationship where I feel no pressure, no formalities... just a deep connection... It's so wonderful.

GABE

Congratulations, Karl.

KARL

And I'm here for you. At this point I don't know what that's worth, but it's true.

GABE

Thanks.

THE MAN enters, looks at GABE and KARL, and slaps a bill on the table. GABE looks at it.

You remembered our beverages.

THE MAN begins to walk away. GABE stops him.

Now wait a minute! The lack of service here is out of hand. I think I'm more than entitled to an explanation.

KARL

Now Gabe—

GABE

I'm perfectly willing to accept that your treatment of me is somehow all my fault. Really! I've been a jerk before, but I really don't want to be one now. If you've got a grudge, just tell me what it is. And then you've got my apologies, my condolences, my head on a platter, whatever. But tell me! What's your problem?

THE MAN stands, motionless.

Please, I really want to know what you think of me...

THE MAN frowns, thinks, and proudly extends his middle finger inches from GABE's face. KARL looks away, embarrassed.

Oh, well, that's very... I really don't think this gets us anywhere... I mean—

GABE attempts to look past the finger to see THE MAN eye to eye. But when GABE leans in one direction, the finger follows.

I'm trying to approach you with— If we can't even— I don't see how we can —

GABE grabs THE MAN's arm.

Look... What do you want?

THE MAN picks up the bill and slams it down in front of GABE. A beat. GABE reaches into his pocket and pulls out a credit card. He slaps it down. THE MAN slaps his hand down, smiles, and takes the bill and card. He exits right. GABE and KARL watch him leave, then look at each other.

KARL

Reaching for his wallet:

I've got the tip...

The lights fade and the scene ends.

Scene 3

The scene opens in the office a week later. GABE is at the desk, poring over something. ALICE is on the couch. GABE looks up.

GABE

Alice, what direction is the Leaning Tower of Pisa leaning in?

ALICE

Frowns:

Hmmmm, East?

GABE

Flips a card and checks it:

I'm sorry; it's South...

ALICE

Ohhh...

GABE

My turn!

GABE picks up a die and rolls it across the board on his desk. The die rolls off the board and onto the floor in front of his desk.

Uhhh!

GABE attempts to move out of his seat and over his desk to retrieve the die, whining as he does so. He gets himself on top of his desk, floundering, when ALICE turns. She stares.

Uh, game's over.

ALICE

Uh huh...

GABE

Anyway, Alice. The point of that exercise is—

GABE stops, gets off the desk, and stands.

ALICE

Do I want to know?

GABE

No. Alice, I think I need to say, "I'm sorry." And I think I need to say "thank you."

ALICE

Sorry?

GABE

For the last session. I was bad.

ALICE

Oh. Not that bad.

GABE

I really would, though, Alice, like to talk about your sister. However you want to. I think it'll help. And I think you're ready.

Beat.

ALICE

I have some old pictures of her. If you'd like to see them.

GABE, taken aback, pauses for a fraction of a second. He recovers.

GABE

Uh, yeah! I'd love to!

ALICE

Getting up:

I have them in my car.

GABE

Bring them up. I'd love to take a look.

ALICE

I'll be right back.

ALICE turns to leave as KARL enters, carrying various envelopes. They almost collide again, but miss each other. ALICE and KARL look at each other and laugh.

KARL

Almost!

ALICE

Almost! We're getting better at this.

KARL

Bye!

ALICE

I'll be back, Karl.

She exits. KARL dumps a few letters on the desk.

KARL

These are for you...

He notices the pieces.

KARL (cont.)

Trivial Pursuit. That's an interesting approach to therapy.

GABE

Oh, that's mostly not therapy. I just wanted to beat Alice into an intellectual pulp.

KARL

Uh huh. I guess that's why she has four cheeses and why your game piece is on the floor.

GABE

Four cheeses?

KARL

Yeah. The counters. They're cheeses.

GABE

I don't think that's what they're called.

KARL

The little cheese wedges?

GABE

I think they're just called wedges.

KARL

No, that can't be it. Because the colors all match up to different cheeses. You have the blue cheese, the yellow cheese, the green cheese... the orange cheese is American, the brown is Muenster, with the skin. And pink is, uh, some German-type cheese; you know, the kind they dip in the wax?

GABE stares.

KARL (cont.)

It all matches up!

GABE

Karl, you just started digging yourself a hole and kept going...

KARL

Well... I call it cheese...

KARL starts to exit.

I'll have to look that one up...

KARL exits. GABE shakes his head. He picks up a large manila envelope from the desk. The lights fade, except for the area around the desk. GABE begins to open the package, then stops. He reads the postmark.

GABE

Intercontinental Express Mail?

Concerned, he opens the envelope. He pulls out a letter. Spotlight on KIM. She sits on a stool, writing a letter against the same envelope GABE has just opened. THE MAN stands behind her, dressed in a monk's robe. As GABE reads the letter, KIM writes.

KIM

Gabe.

Beat:

I don't know why you turned me in. It's OK; I don't need an explanation. For a while, though, I was looking for one. I wanted to believe that somebody else could have gotten me in trouble. But Gabe, the only person who knew was you. You were the only person who needed to. Because I did this for us. I believed that there was an us.

KIM shifts in her seat.

KIM (cont.)

I'm safe, if you care about that. I'm not in prison, either. Not yet, at least. After being shuffled through a dozen different jurisdictions, I was let out—temporarily, on bail. As I can't leave the country, I've taken up sanctuary. They have a monastery a few miles outside of the capital. I have a gorgeous view from my room, and all of the monks are taking very good care of me, especially—

She stops writing and looks at THE MAN.

Excuse me, what is your name?

THE MAN

Al. Al Dente.

KIM

Resumes writing:

—especially Brother Al. It's a different way of life. I guess I'll never be a monk, but I think I'd be good at it.

Beat.

I don't know when my trial is. I don't know where my trial will be. I don't know what's to become of me.

Another beat.

They have this big mural at the monastery of the Last Supper. You've got Jesus, the apostles, and a particularly paranoid-looking Judas. It made me start thinking about the word "betrayal." I realized I never really thought about the word, what it really describes. A betrayal is a lie in reverse. You take the facts of the future, and you make them untrue. Gabe, you lied to me. You betrayed me.

GABE stands. Lights down on KIM.

GABE

No Kim, you betrayed to—you lied to me!

KARL

Gabe.

KARL has entered. He motions to the letter.

Is that Kim-related?

GABE

What is it, Karl?

KARL

I just spoke with LeAnne. It wasn't Kim.

GABE

What?

KARL

I didn't get a straight answer about your certification. But I asked her about Kim. She cancelled that drink. LeAnne hasn't seen her for more than a year. She must have gone straight to the airport.

GABE

Karl, I've got to finish this letter.

KARL

I'm trying to get you in for early readmission.

GABE

Karl.

KARL nods and begins to exit.

KARL

I'll let you know.

KARL exits. GABE picks up the letter and reads. Lights rise again on KIM and THE MAN.

KIM

You betrayed me. But there's no use dwelling on that. It just makes me feel... Stupid.

She sighs.

So I hope you're happy with what you did, for whatever reason. Don't worry about me; I'm not in a warzone. I'll be safe. Just incarcerated. And I guess we'll never have that debt-free life together.

Beat.

You said you wanted a souvenir. Here it is.

GABE frowns and picks up the envelope. He reaches inside of it.

Good luck, Dr. Larson...

GABE pulls something out of the envelope. He looks at it in his hands, and lets out an anguished gasp.

GABE

No...

KIM puts the letter into the envelope. She takes her engagement ring off her finger and puts it in. GABE reveals the engagement ring in his hands. He shakes his head. KIM seals the envelope and hands it to THE MAN. He walks off left. KIM stares out as the lights fade stage left.

Oh my God...

GABE holds his hand against his head as lights start coming up on the office. ALICE sits on the couch, staring at GABE.

ALICE

Awww, poor Gabe...

He looks up.

Your fiancée loved you all along, huh?

GABE

How did you—

ALICE

How could I not know? Gabe...

ALICE smiles.

I am the Devil.

GABE

The Devil...?

ALICE

That's what I've been telling you...

GABE

So, you set this whole thing up?

ALICE

Oh no, Gabe. I just saw it coming. The misery and tragedy here were completely orchestrated by you and Kim.

ALICE smiles.

I just wanted a front row seat to the pain.

GABE

Desperation; that's what you called it before. So this is the part where, if you were the Devil—which you're not—this is the part where I'd offer you my soul.

ALICE

I wouldn't take it.

GABE

No, you wouldn't.

ALICE

And I am the Devil.

GABE

Right.

ALICE

I could see this a mile away.

GABE

Then what else do you know? Why was I rejected? Was it Karl?

ALICE

That's not important; what's important is that you've just eliminated your best guess. And you've made it so much fun to watch.

GABE

That's sick, Alice. I feel so low I don't even want to look at myself. But yet that's all you want to do.

ALICE

Shrugs:

That's why I'm Satan...

GABE

Satan, right... A Satan who waits around seven years, just to feel the pain of losing a sister, and to see the pain of her psychiatrist.

ALICE

Well, there is one more reason...

KARL enters on cue. ALICE turns and looks at him.

Karl, I'm sorry. But it's over between us.

KARL is stunned. Beat. ALICE suppresses a laugh.

Oh wow, that was weird...

KARL

Alice, what was that?

ALICE

Karl, our relationship is through. We're finished. "X"ed. Past tense.

KARL

But... why?

ALICE

Stands:

In short, Karl, it's because I'm demonic. I get my kicks on Route 666. I'm the Notorious S-A-T-A-N.

KARL

Bewildered:

I don't get it. You're saying your name is really Stan?

GABE

She's the Devil, Karl.

KARL

The Devil?

ALICE

Walking to KARL:

I'm Satan, Karl. Right out of the comic books.

KARL

Alice, this makes no sense. Our relationship is over because you're from Hell?

ALICE

Oh Karl; I love you, but this is what I do. I torture souls, yours and mine.

KARL

Is that what this is about? My soul? Alice, you already have my soul; you know that. If you're the Devil, I'm a devil worshipper. I love you.

ALICE

Karl, that's... sweet, but that's beside the point. Karl, I came here as Alice to feel. And Karl, with you I felt love. Truly. But Karl, I have to feel the awful, irrational, disgusting feeling of throwing that love away. Gabe's felt it...

She smiles at him. GABE glowers.

KARL

But Alice—

ALICE

I know, Karl. I want to stay; I really do. But that's all the more reason for me to do this; to feel the nausea of knowing that whatever I do with my future, will never be as perfect as what I'm letting go.

ALICE pulls KARL close, and gives him a very sincere kiss. They pull apart and look at each other. ALICE lets go and begins to exit.

GABE

So that's it, then? You make sure that we've all thoroughly ruined our lives —yours included—and then you whisk yourself back to Hell?

ALICE

I might take my time about it, but that's the idea. I'm done with your services, Gabe.

GABE

Hardly. Alice, this is really some serious psychological self-destruction. We need to sit down and talk. Talk about your sister; explore your guilt mechanisms. We haven't even gotten to the bottom of the questions you had as Satan!

ALICE

Well Gabe, that was my original intent, and I think we've cleared that up. Maybe I'm not the biblical behemoth I once was, but this whole mess proves I still know how to cause a little bit of despair now and then... That's enough to renew a girl's self-worth.

GABE

Glad I could help.

ALICE

Ohhh... I thank you, Gabe; I really do. And I thank you, too, Karl. But it's time to go.

ALICE starts off again.

GABE

Alice, don't do this! I've thrown away a good thing. There's enough pain there for the both of us. If you leave now, though... It'll just make this Hell.

ALICE

With some regret:

I know. I tend to carry that with me. Goodbye guys.

ALICE exits. GABE and KARL stare after her.

KARL

She's not the Devil.

GABE

Karl...

KARL

You knew about this?

GABE

Karl, there's nothing—

KARL

She's a troubled woman. She needs our help.

GABE

She's had our help.

KARL

We've got to do something; we've got to say something to her and get her back. I'll call her tonight.

GABE

She won't answer.

KARL

I'll visit.

GABE

You won't see her.

KARL

What; she'll be in Hell?

GABE

She doesn't need to be. I realize that now.

KARL

Gabe, there has to be something—

GABE

Karl, can you make her feel anything new?

KARL

I can make her feel better.

GABE

No, Karl. That's nothing to her. There's nothing left to say.

Lights fade. End of scene.

Scene 4

ALICE sits on a train. She has a suitcase next to her, and her cell phone sits on top of an unopened book on her lap. As the train begins to move faster, the phone begins to vibrate. ALICE watches it ring; she does not answer. The phone stops. Beat. THE MAN enters, dressed casually.

THE MAN

Is this seat taken?

ALICE looks up.

ALICE

Oh, no. I'm sorry; let me move this....

ALICE grabs her suitcase and slides it underneath her seat. THE MAN sits.

THE MAN

Thanks.

ALICE looks at him.

ALICE

Have we met?

THE MAN

Hmmm?

ALICE

I feel like I've seen you before.

THE MAN

Shrugs:

I've just got one of those faces.

ALICE

Ah.

Beat. ALICE's phone begins to vibrate again. It rings twice, then ALICE snatches it up.

I'm sorry....

ALICE shuts the phone off and puts it away.

THE MAN

You don't want to answer it?

ALICE

No. No, that would be a bad idea.

THE MAN

Ex-boyfriend?

ALICE

Yeah.

THE MAN

I've been that guy. It's tough, you know? It's hard work to break up. Trying to get back together takes less effort.

ALICE

Yeah... I always end up doing things the hard way.

Waving her hands.

I'm sorry. You don't need to hear this.

THE MAN

It's fine.

ALICE

It's not fine.

THE MAN

I only asked because I wanted to let you know you aren't doing the wrong thing.

ALICE

But I am. This is doing the wrong thing. I knew that when I left.

Hesitant:

We...we would have made a very good couple. We would have stayed that way. I could see that.

THE MAN

You had your reasons.

ALICE

No good ones. No satisfactory answers. Just another mistake to live with.

THE MAN

So why don't you pick up the phone?

ALICE

I want to be dissatisfied.

THE MAN

That's a good a reason as any. You'll figure it out.

ALICE

Unconvinced:

Thanks.

Beat. THE MAN reaches into his coat and pulls out a pack of M&Ms.

THE MAN

Offering the candy:

M&M?

ALICE

Embarrassed:

We just met.

THE MAN

Huh?

ALICE

Shaking her head.

No. Thank you.

THE MAN shrugs and eats a few pieces of candy. Another beat.

THE MAN

You know, I'm making what some people would call a mistake, too.

ALICE

Really?

THE MAN

I am very, very, very likely to die soon.

ALICE

No....

THE MAN

Soon-ish. A couple months, a year.

ALICE

That's terrible. What are you going to do about it?

THE MAN

Nothing.

ALICE

You can't do that. No doctor would let you do that.

THE MAN

That's why it's a mistake, right? But I know what I need to do.

ALICE

You've got things to do. Ignore doctors. Ride a train. Fifty things to do on Amtrak before you die.

THE MAN

You can put it that way.

ALICE

Just a thought: It's my feeling that you can do your fifty things—and more—the longer you stay alive.

THE MAN

Not the way I'd have to live.

ALICE

Well that's determination. I'd love to change your mind.

THE MAN

I'm not going to do that. Don't worry about it, anyway. It's not like there's anything you can do; we're not going to make some sort of deal.

Beat.

ALICE

Actually, when you put it that way, maybe we can.

THE MAN

What do you mean?

ALICE

Searching for paper:

Oh, I'm totally unprepared for this....

THE MAN

That's not a problem.

ALICE stops. She looks at THE MAN.

ALICE

There are things I can do. Things that aren't exactly FDA-approved. If we come to the right arrangement, I may be able to keep you alive for a lot longer than your current timetable.

THE MAN

That's cagey. What, are you going to clone me?

ALICE

No, the techniques I use aren't cutting-edge.

THE MAN

So, leeches?

ALICE

Listen, you're a...polite guy. The world needs polite guys. I think you should stay alive.

THE MAN

I am. I'm staying alive on my terms.

ALICE

I can get you better terms.

THE MAN

Thank you; no.

ALICE

You know, dying isn't fun.

THE MAN

I never thought it would be.

ALICE

It isn't romantic. It isn't noble. Nobody dies for a cause, not really. You just die.

THE MAN

Hmmm.

ALICE

And if you can avoid dying, that's probably the right choice. What are we talking about, anyway? Is this some quality of life issue?

THE MAN

More or less.

ALICE

You don't want to live surrounded by tubes and monitors; I understand that. I happen to disagree with that decision, but it's common enough. But if you're alive...there's always a chance.

THE MAN

I know. But considering the odds, I have to be accepting.

ALICE

When another diagnosis comes along, be accepting of that, too.

THE MAN

If you say so.

ALICE looks through her purse and retrieves a business card.

ALICE

Listen, if you want to talk—you know, "talk"—I've been seeing someone.

ALICE hands THE MAN the card. He reads.

THE MAN

Gabe Larson.

ALICE

He isn't a very good therapist. But he listens.

THE MAN pockets the card.

You shouldn't give up.

THE MAN

We all give up sometime.

ALICE nods.

ALICE

I'm sorry I went on like that. It's, uh, important to me. The whole big parade of humanity.

THE MAN

Don't like to lose a drummer, huh?

ALICE

Or a bagpiper. Whatever; if you want to twirl a baton, that's fine, too.

ALICE smiles and extends a hand.

I'm Alice.

THE MAN

Shaking:

I know.

ALICE

Quizzical smile:

Do you?

THE MAN

It was on your bag.

ALICE

Right.

THE MAN

I wish you luck, Alice. With this guy or the next one.

ALICE

Thanks. And you should stick around a few more years. I think you'll like it.

The train begins to slow down.

THE MAN

Hmmm, we're here early. Do you transfer?

ALICE

I forget if it's this one or the next one. I don't think I've gone far enough.

As the train slows, a spotlight appears, KARL walks into the light. He is holding a black candle and upside down crucifix. He may also sport other Satanic accessories. As the train stops, he is directly outside of their train window. THE MAN notices KARL.

THE MAN

Check out that guy.

ALICE turns and sees KARL. KARL stands motionless.

ALICE

Karl....

THE MAN

Karl?

ALICE

I'm sorry; I've got to—

She begins to get up.

ALICE (cont.)

—excuse me....

THE MAN

Getting up, letting ALICE pass.

No, that's fine. We've got time. Well, a minute, at least....

ALICE

Thanks.

She stops and looks at THE MAN.

Take care of yourself.

THE MAN

Go see your Karl.

ALICE exits the train. Lights fade on THE MAN as ALICE steps onto the platform and walks up to KARL.

ALICE

Karl....

KARL sees her.

KARL

Alice.

ALICE

Hi Karl.

KARL

I summoned you.

ALICE

I know.

KARL

Alice, I summoned you.

ALICE

Karl, I'm going to get my bags. We should talk. I owe you that much. Do you want to...get coffee or anything?

KARL

Alice, I'm your servant.

ALICE

So that's a yes?

KARL

...Yeah.

ALICE

I didn't think you believed me.

KARL

Alice, I believe everything about you. I believe everything you ever said.

ALICE

You shouldn't. Stay right there.

ALICE walks back into the train. She approaches her seat. THE MAN moves over to her seat and hands her suitcase to her. She takes another bag from overhead.

Thanks.

THE MAN

How's Karl?

ALICE

We'll see.

THE MAN

Are you and him going to...?

ALICE

Like I said, if you live long enough, there's always a chance. We'll see what happens.

THE MAN

Have fun, Alice.

ALICE

You'll think about my deal?

THE MAN

No, but thanks for offering.

ALICE

I tried.

ALICE takes her bags and exits the train. THE MAN, now in ALICE'S window seat, starts to nap. KARL is still standing there with the cross and candle. ALICE looks at him.

ALICE

Why don't you give me those, Karl?

ALICE puts down the bags and grabs KARL'S hands. She takes the crucifix and puts it back into KARL'S hand right-side-up.

ALICE (cont.)

Let's get that coffee.

She blows out the candle. Lights fade on ALICE and KARL. A whistle blows and the train begins to move again. After a moment, GABE enters. He approaches THE MAN.

GABE

Is this seat taken?

Without opening his eyes, THE MAN rolls over, facing the window. GABE sits anyway. He carries KIM's envelope with him. He looks inside the envelope, then takes out a travel guide with the African continent prominently displayed on the cover. GABE begins to read as the lights fade. End of play.