

A CARNY SIDE SHOW

CHARACTERS: (2)

BARKER, a male, any age, dressed as a carnival barker, with rolled-up sleeves, a vest, a straw hat, and a thin wicker cane, or some variation of this.

PASSERBY, male or female, any age

SETTING: a slightly raised platform suggestive of a carnival side show

BARKER: (to audience) Good day, good evening, good mid-morning, good late afternoon, good gracious, you sure look good. Would you be interested in a good time? Well, good! Because have I got a good time for you. And it's all absolutely free! I ask you, friend, do I look like a dishonest guy to you? No need to answer. Of course I don't! You're probably asking yourself why is this fellow talking to me. You know why? Because I can see in your face that you are honest to the core. To the core! Just like me. But you like a bargain too, is that not so? Well, don't be standoffish. Step right up. Come a little closer. I have the greatest bargain you will ever see in your lifetime! When? Right now, right here!

(The Passerby wanders in with a guidebook, not paying attention to the Barker.)

BARKER: How about you, sir or madam?

PASSERBY: (befuddled) What?

BARKER: Pardon me. I did not mean to cast aspersions on your personal identity. You obviously are a . . . ?

PASSERBY: (chooses the appropriate answer) Man/Woman.

BARKER: Can there be any doubt?!

PASSERBY: I think I'd best be moving on. I'm looking for –

BARKER: Not so fast, friend! Don't you want to know what you're going to get for free?

PASSERBY: (happy) Free?

BARKER: At absolutely no cost to you. Thanks to the generosity of my employers, and for one day only, if you act now, your life will be changed forever. How does that sound to you, my friend?

PASSERBY: Pretty drastic.

BARKER: Make that “pretty” but not “drastic.”

PASSERBY: I’m not so sure I want anything drastic.

BARKER: “Drastic” is good. When was the last time you had something drastic?

PASSERBY: Um, I can’t remember.

BARKER: Ever have a triple bypass?

PASSERBY: You have those?

BARKER: Not today. Have you ever had stomach stapling?

PASSERBY: Don’t think so.

BARKER: I’d think you would remember. How about a kidney transplant?

PASSERBY: Don’t believe so.

BARKER: (under his breath) How about a brain transplant?

PASSERBY: (not hearing) Huh?

BARKER: How about a limb re-attachment? Arm? Leg? A butt lift?

PASSERBY: A butt lift?

BARKER: Forget all those. I have something much, much better.

PASSERBY: What’s better than a butt lift?

BARKER: This is better than two butt lifts. Better than a heart transplant. Better than a multiple personality colon cleansing!

PASSERBY: (excited) What is it?

BARKER: An exorcism!

PASSERBY: Is that like when . . .

BARKER: Precisely!

PASSERBY: I don’t think I need one of those.

BARKER: Everybody needs an exorcism!

PASSERBY: I don't –

BARKER: Of course you do! How shall I put this? I can see your inner demons even as we speak.

PASSERBY: I have inner demons?

BARKER: You most certainly do, my friend And you need to get in touch with those inner demons and cast them out. I say cast them out! Don't you feel them inside you?

PASSERBY: Do I?

BARKER: Discontent. Don't you ever feel that?

PASSERBY: Maybe. Sometimes.

BARKER: Aha! How about restlessness?

PASSERBY: Well . . .

BARKER: You want *this*, and when you get it, you want *that*? Isn't everything not quite good enough? Yes, you peruse the travel brochures, but when you get there, it's ever quite what they said it was going to be. And anger, deep down inside, but you don't know exactly why or who you're angry at. And boredom, tying your shoelaces for the one hundred thousandth time. Wiping your butt till you're blue in the face. Peeling an orange — how annoying is *that*? Right? Never mind cancer, herpes, and rosacea!

PASSERBY: And urinary tract infections.

BARKER: You got it!

PASSERBY: You have something for all those?

BARKER: Would I lie? Would I try to cheat you? Would I tell you things that aren't so?

PASSERBY: Would you?

BARKER: Them was rhetorical questions, friend! Of course I wouldn't! I'm here to help you. Why else would I be standing outside in this rain if it wasn't to help you?

PASSERBY: It's raining?

BARKER: It's raining cats and dogs. It's raining hedgehogs and squirrels. It's raining

opportunities, and I'm not about to let you pass them up.

PASSERBY: I don't really think I need an exorcism. But thanks anyway.

BARKER: (suddenly) Hear that?

PASSERBY: What?

BARKER: (tapping the other's chest) Inner demons.

PASSERBY: Really? I don't hear anything.

BARKER: That's one of the clearest signs of possession. The demons are lurking just waiting for me to get tired and let you go. That's when they do their evilest.

PASSERBY: What will they do?

BARKER: They will torment you. They will lead you into lasciviousness and iniquities beyond your wildest imaginings!

PASSERBY: (hopefully) You're sure?

BARKER: Oh, yes, it may seem like fun for a while, thirty, forty, fifty, even sixty years, and then they lead you screaming into Hell, where you will curse every illicit pleasure, every syllable of sin, as you endure a thousand thousand pains where you once felt those pleasures! Especially fleshly pleasures.

PASSERBY: That doesn't seem fair.

BARKER: We're not talking "fair" here. We're talking reality.

PASSERBY: Uh, I think I'll pass.

BARKER: Okay then, how about a sample?

PASSERBY: Meaning?

BARKER: A partial exorcism. If you don't like it, you don't have to spend a penny.

PASSERBY: I thought you said it was free.

BARKER: Oh, it is, it is. (under his breath) For now.

PASSERBY: (refers to guidebook) I don't have a lot of time. I was hoping to see the —

BARKER: What if I give you the Medi-Cal Special?

PASSERBY: You take Medi-Cal?

BARKER: Not yet. But we're working on it.

PASSERBY: What do I get?

BARKER: Today only I can give you the Thousand Demons Detoxic.

PASSERBY: I have a thousand demons?!

BARKER: Man, you've got a thousand demons in your pinkie.

PASSERBY: (if played by a man, he quickly grabs his crotch, protecting it) My pinkie?

BARKER: This! (Waves a little finger)

PASSERBY: (grabs his crotch even more protectively) How can I have a thousand demons in my pinkie?

BARKER: Millions of them. Everywhere, and they want every part of your mind and body!

PASSERBY: Wow!

BARKER: Do you happen to have any holy medals on you? Scapulars? Rosaries?

PASSERBY: No. What for?

BARKER: (impatiently) For god's sake! (in Latin) "*Ab omni hoste visibili et invisibile et uinique in hoc saeculo liberetur!*"

PASSERBY: Wow, you speak French?!

BARKER: I do! I forgot my special materials. You sure you don't have a relic of St. Benedict on you? Maybe a Medal of the Immaculate Conception of Mary?

PASSERBY: Sorry.

BARKER: Damn. . . . I take that back. Not to worry. We'll improvise.

PASSERBY: Maybe another time.

BARKER: (in a sing song) You're *resisting*! I ask you, once and for all, do you want to be free of those million devils or not? Let's get down to it then!

PASSERBY: Devils? Are devils the same as demons?

BARKER: (doesn't know the answer, stumbling) You know what the answer to that question is . . . the answer to that question is . . . the answer to that question is *they all want your soul*. That's the answer to your question, my friend. . . . Are you ready for that exorcism?

PASSERBY: You know, I read somewhere that the exorcist has to have piety, prudence, and personal integrity.

BARKER: Are you inferring that I don't have those things?

PASSERBY: Implying.

PASSERBY: He must perform the work humbly and courageously, not relying on his own strength but the power of God, and have no greed for material benefit.

BARKER: You know something? You're beginning to piss God off. Here He is offering you a once-in-a-lifetime offer of a free exorcism with no strings attached and you're fighting Him? You're fighting God more than you're fighting those demons within you. And that's not a pretty thing to watch, my friend, not pretty at all. You're letting devils, demons – whatever you want to call 'em – dance around inside your bowels, your head, your heart. (an afterthought) Your elbows, your kneecaps. Your lumbar region.

PASSERBY: My aorta?

BARKER: Your aorta. Absolutely! You're one sick puppy.

PASSERBY: Okay, okay! I give in! Exorcise me.

BARKER: You're making it sound *dirty*. It's not dirty, my friend. It's a cleanser. And you are going to be so clean when I am done you won't recognize yourself.

PASSERBY: Will I die?

BARKER: Not if we're careful.

PASSERBY: What if we're not careful?

BARKER: Do I look careless? Do I look unprepared? Do you happen to have a purple stole and a white alb on you? I forgot mine.

PASSERBY: I'm afraid not.

BARKER: Not a problem! Not essential. I have you. You have me. You have demons. That's all we need. Let us proceed. Step up here. (Pulls the reluctant Passerby up.) Good. Well done! Now I place my right hand on the head of the victim.

PASSERBY: Victim?

BARKER: The victim of the demons. Those devilish demons. (touching the head) Recall how Our Lord blessed the little children this way.

PASSERBY: Ouch!

BARKER: Do you feel something? The exorcist's hands either calm or burn. Which do you feel?

PASSERBY: Not . . . calm.

BARKER: A burning sensation?

PASSERBY: A little.

BARKER: Aha!

PASSERBY: I think it's because your hands are hot.

BARKER: Or maybe, just maybe it's the Fire of Hell from the demons inside you that you feel! (makes hissing noise) HISS! HISS! The demons are trying to escape.

PASSERBY: They are?

BARKER: Do you happen to have a handkerchief that St. Paul touched to the sick?

PASSERBY: Not that I know of.

BARKER: A metal case to be worn around the neck with the Blessed Sacrament in it?!

PASSERBY: Not really!

BARKER: We'll just have to wing it. Know what this is? (Makes sign of the cross.)

PASSERBY: I do!

BARKER: (making another sign of the cross) Do you feel anything? A tingling? Elevation? Indigestion?

PASSERBY: Come to think of it, I do feel a little something.

BARKER: Aha! The demons are stirring! Take this, demonic ones! (Makes a series of signs of the cross very fast. The Passerby starts to react.)

PASSERBY: Oh, I feel my demons!

BARKER: Of course you do! Get out of there, demons! Be gone, devils! (Makes more signs of the cross.) Out! Out! Out!

PASSERBY: (Twists, then farts, silently if need be, but noticeably reacting to it) Excuse me. I'm sorry.

BARKER: No need to excuse the devil when he leaves your body! Be gone, Satan. Be gone! (He chases the bad air and says with a final sign of the cross) And take that, your nasty, nasty brimstone with you!

PASSERBY: I think there are some more inside me.

BARKER: Let the demons out! Let 'em out now!

(The Passerby begins twisting into all sorts of odd shapes and contortions.)

PASSERBY: A fart is not a joke. Wait. I think I feel a belch coming.

BARKER: No, it's a demon! Don't be afraid. I am here to guide you through this!

(The Passerby twitches and mutters. He belches.)

PASSERBY: The devil made me do it! The devil is in the details! I have a devil-may-care attitude! There are many devils but only one Jesus!

BARKER: I can see and hear the progress we're making.

PASSERBY: Are we almost done?

BARKER: Almost! Can you twist your head so that you're looking the other way?

PASSERBY: (tries it a bit, but it hurts) No!

BARKER: Just a tad more?

PASSERBY: I can't! I can't!

BARKER: Are those demons gone? (Listen for them.)

PASSERBY: I believe so.

BARKER: You can't be too careful. They appear to go away, and they'll tell the victim to say they are gone, but they are not gone! They'll say anything to get what they want.

PASSERBY: What do they want?

BARKER: Your soul!

PASSERBY: *Why?* What can you do with a soul if it's not yours?

BARKER: I don't know why. They just like other people's souls!

PASSERBY: You'd think they'd have enough by now.

BARKER: Evil is never satisfied!

PASSERBY: What do they do with my soul once they have it?

BARKER: You are asking too many questions. They *cook* it!

PASSERBY: I thought it was invisible.

BARKER: Do you want to save your goddamned soul or not?!

PASSERBY: I guess.

BARKER: You know something? I'm not so sure you deserve this exorcism. Maybe it should go to somebody else.

PASSERBY: Can I donate my exorcism to someone else? . . . Now wait a minute. I didn't say I didn't want it.

BARKER: Maybe to some autistic child in Bangladesh.

PASSERBY: Wait now.

BARKER: Or some schizophrenic in Fresno. A manic-depressive in Sioux City!

PASSERBY: I want it! I want it!

BARKER: All right. It's about time I saw some enthusiasm.

PASSERBY: We've gone this far. Let's finish. I've never had even one exorcism before.

BARKER: That's the spirit. You got a Bible on you?

PASSERBY: A Bible?

BARKER: It's always better to have the Bible's words instead of just any old words. But

let's make do. Kneel. (Passerby kneels.)

BARKER: Here we go! I lay these hands upon these evil spirits. (Does so.) And I command them to vacate these premises. I declare this house foreclosed to evil! (in pig-Latin) Egonebay evilsday! Be rid of all tricks and deceits, all wickedness and loathsomeness. I cast these out now and henceforth until the end of your days! . . . Do you feel anything?

PASSERBY: . . . I do. I feel a final stirring inside me.

BARKER: Hallelujah!

PASSERBY: It's growing. It's becoming very distinct.

BARKER: Double hallelujah! Out, devils! Leave this poor man or woman in peace! Out! Out! Out once and for all!

PASSERBY: Here it comes! The last one! Here it comes! (Bends over in agony, then stands up slowly.)

BARKER: I can see the difference. You're a new person.

PASSERBY: I am. There's just one last demon to be dealt with.

BARKER: (looking around) Where is it? Where is it?

PASSERBY: Right here. (Grabs the Barker's cane.)

BARKER: What?

PASSERBY: And guess what?! Its name is *you*!

BARKER: No, no!

PASSERBY: Oh, yes, yes! Be gone, evil! Be gone, demon, devil, whatever be your name! (Starts to beat the Barker with the cane.)

BARKER: Wait now. I think you're missing the point here.

PASSERBY: I think I just got the point. You scoundrel! You mountebank! You bullying shit! You guilt-tripping mother of all fuckers! (Hits him again with the cane.) Here's the real source of all devils!

BARKER: No! No! (The Passerby chases the Barker offstage with the cane.)

PASSERBY: Yes! Yes! And hallelujah! Hallelujah! I am exorcised at last!

BLACKOUT

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