

ANGELS INC.

A Play in One Act

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ACT I

SCENE 1

Lights rise on two figures at a chess table, in the middle of a game. The first, MICHAEL, wearing a blue button-up and black slacks, sits contemplating his next move. The other, LUCIFER, paces back and forth talking on the phone. He wears a red button-up, a blazer, and sunglasses.

LUCIFER

Listen, I got it all figured out. Two words: cover up... Look, I know they're your friends, but their butts are already toast okay? You've gotta do what you can to save your own hide now. Who cares about the tapes? They can't get to 'em. Throw your weight around, Richard. You have executive privileges, not to mention your American right to privacy. Hey, they don't call you Tricky Dick for nothing. Figure something out. If you gotta fire people, then fire them. If you gotta restructure your entire office then do it, but do not hand over those tapes. Trust me on this one Rich. I know what I'm talkin' about. Alright listen, I'm in the middle of a meeting. Let me know how it goes.

Lucifer hangs up and joins
Michael at the table.

MICHAEL

So how's Nixon?

LUCIFER

Scandalous. He's in some pretty hot water.

MICHAEL

Water you put him in if I'm not mistaken.

LUCIFER

Michael, you know I can't force someone to listen to me. It was his choice. But can you really blame him, though? His friends were only trying to help him out, and Rich just wanted to repay the favor.

MICHAEL

By lying.

LUCIFER

You make it sound so wrong when you say it like that. I prefer to call it... withholding information.

MICHAEL

(Laughs.)
You've always had a knack for paraphrasing.

LUCIFER

It's a gift. But I must apologize for taking that call. I really should leave my phone off during the lunch hour. But you know how it is running a corporation. Business never rests.

MICHAEL

Do what you have to do, Lucifer. You always have.

Michael moves a chess piece.
Lucifer surveys the game
and takes the piece that
was just moved.

LUCIFER

I have never understood your strategy. You sacrifice so many pieces.

MICHAEL

The game is to protect the king. That's my strategy. Even if that means losing a knight or two.

Michael moves a chess piece.

LUCIFER

It's a fool's strategy. The key to winning is attack and eliminate everything standing in your way.

(Makes his move and claims
another piece.)

One pawn at a time.

MICHAEL

Being ahead in the beginning does not mean you will win in the end.

LUCIFER

So proverbial. You've always had a knack for sharing insightful words of wisdom.

MICHAEL

It's a gift.

Michael makes a move and
takes Lucifer's piece.

LUCIFER

So how's Gabriel? Does he still follow you around like a pathetic puppy dog?

MICHAEL

Don't resent him just because he didn't follow you. It was his choice, and personally I think he made the right one. It's your move.

SCENE 2

Michael and Lucifer continue to play as A YOUNG GIRL enters and wanders the empty downstage, singing a tune to herself. She is carrying a doll and a candy bar. She sits herself in the middle of the stage and starts unwrapping the candy bar. A friend calls from offstage.

KID (O.S.)

Hey! Come here! You gotta see this!

The girl gets up to see her friend, but absent-mindedly leaves her candy bar. A boy, JOHNNY, zips onstage playing with his toy airplane. After a "crash landing," he stumbles across the candy bar. He looks around cautiously before sitting in front of it. Enter DESIREE. She is dressed in red business attire and carries herself with an immense amount of confidence. She approaches Johnny.)

DESIREE

Go ahead. Take it. It's right there. Take it. No one will even notice it's gone. Take it.

Johnny reaches for the candy bar. Enter ALEX, from the opposite side of the room. He is dressed like a novice office employee, white button-up and black slacks. He carries an angel-in-training beginner's manual.

ALEX

You shouldn't do that. That's stealing... and it's wrong. You might get in trouble.

DESIREE

You won't get in trouble if you don't get caught. There's no one around. Just take it.

ALEX

(Referencing manual.)

That candy bar doesn't belong to you, which means it belongs to someone else. And that someone else won't like that you took it from him... or her.

DESIREE

It's just a candy bar. Besides, if that someone else wanted it, they wouldn't have left it here. Finder's keepers. It's yours now. Take it.

Johnny reaches for the
candy bar.

ALEX

Don't!

JOHNNY

Why not?

ALEX

Because... It's wrong.

Johnny looks at Alex, and
then looks at Desiree. She
nods knowingly. Johnny
takes the candy bar and
runs off.

DESIREE

Because it's wrong? Solid argument there Slick. I don't know why he listened to me, your defense was iron clad.

ALEX

Knock it off Desiree. It's bad enough I lose to you over and over again. You don't have to dig the knife in deeper by gloating about it.

DESIREE

To the winner go the spoils, or in this case bragging rights.

ALEX

Well you're certainly not in short supply of victories these days.

DESIREE

People make hundreds of meaningless decisions every day. "What should I wear today?" "Should I order off the dollar menu or get a combo meal?" "Do I see the movie in theaters or wait for the DVD?"

(MORE)

DESIREE (CONT'D)

Then there are decisions that actually mean something: should I tell the truth? Do I stay faithful to my wife or have an affair? Should I act on my anger and kill someone? That's where I come in. It's my job to convince them that the wrong choice is the right choice.

The same girl from before
reenters and begins looking
for her candy bar, but
it's gone.

DESIREE

And I am damn good at it.

The girl runs offstage,
crying.

ALEX

And it's my job to convince them not to fall for your lies.

DESIREE

Are you calling me a liar? Alex, that hurts. And here I am without a handkerchief.

ALEX

People need to do the right thing!

DESIREE

Why? Is that what they tell you in your little beginner's manual? The right thing... Honestly, what is the right thing? People stretch the limits of what's right and wrong all the time. They'll look for any reason to justify their decision as being "the right thing" no matter how wrong it is. All I'm doing is providing them with new perspectives on the situation. Because no matter how grey something is, you can see white if you look hard enough.

ALEX

Is that what they tell you in your beginner's manual?

DESIREE

Clever. As I'm sure this recent embarrassment has already shown you, I am no beginner. I am on the verge of becoming a senior partner in the Demon Dept., and then it's just a hop, skip, and jump away before I'm running the place. Though I must admit, I'm going to miss these playful little exchanges between us.

(Her phone rings, as does
Lucifer's.)

As much fun as this is, I have a one o'clock appointment to get to. A demon's work is never done. Gotta run. Ciao darling!

Lucifer excuses himself
from the table, and he and

Desiree both exit with
phones in hand.

SCENE 3

Michael rises and focuses
on Alex.

ALEX

Typical. Alex the failure loses again. Maybe I should just crawl in a hole somewhere and disappear. The world might be better off. I joined Angels Inc. to help people, so I could be like those wise and hallowed angels people talk about who know just the right words to say. But I can't.

(Michael exits.)

When it's crunch time and the pressure's on, I freeze up. All my words escape me, and I have nothing.

(Beat.)

Well I may be a loser, but I am not a quitter! And I am not going to let Desiree get in my head, no matter what she says!

A breakroom table and a
water cooler are brought
on. Enter GABE. He eats
a bag of chips and works
on a crossword puzzle as
he sits down.

GABE

That's the spirit. Stay strong Karate Kid.

ALEX

She may think she's in my head, but she's not.

GABE

Nope.

ALEX

She is not going to get under my skin.

GABE

Not a chance.

Beat.

ALEX

She is so infuriating! She thinks she can twist anything and turn it into the truth. I mean, who does she think she is?

GABE

A demon.

ALEX

Well she can't! Not when there are angels like us around to stand up for what's right. Right?

GABE

What's a seven letter word for flounder?

ALEX

I mean yeah, I am new at this. I don't have all the answers. But neither does Desiree. She just thinks she does. Just because she's been around for a few hundred years doesn't mean she knows everything about the business. I'll show her! When I get a couple more decades under my belt, Desiree won't stand a chance! Right?

GABE

Halibut! Ha, I was way off.

ALEX

Right! So who cares if I haven't won any moral decisions with Johnny? There will be plenty more to come and those are going to be way more important than stealing lousy candy bars. By the time he has to deal with lust, envy and rage, I will have mastered the technique of persuasion and there'll be no stopping me!

GABE

Guardian. Five letters...

ALEX

And who knows? Johnny could be the start of a new moral uprising. A time where righteousness and justice will reign and demons like Desiree will have to look for new employment. Right?

GABE

Idiot.

ALEX

No wait, that doesn't sound right.

A sweet angel, MARY, enters carrying an armful of folders. She speaks as if someone poured sunshine and rainbows in her coffee.

MARY

Good afternoon! So sorry for interrupting your "guy time" in the break room. I understand it's a wonderful office bonding experience, but Michael really needs your signature on these decision contracts.

GABE

No problem Mary. Got a pen?

MARY

Yes indeedly do!

GABE

Thanks. Oh, this is Alex. He's new here.

MARY

Ooo! A newbie! So nice to meet you Alex! My name is Mary. I work for Michael and Gabriel.

GABE

Mary how many times do I have to-

MARY

Right! So sorry "Gabe!" Anywho, it's so nice to meet a bright new angel ready to share his light with the world!

ALEX

Right. Well first I gotta figure out how to turn my light on.

MARY

Oh that's easy! You just flip the switch!
(She flips an imaginary
switch on Alex's back.)

Boop!

GABE

Here you go Mary.

MARY

Thank you Gabriel- I mean Gabe.
(She starts to leave.)

Oh! And don't forget about the office potluck on Friday! I'm bringing my famous four bean casserole! Mmm mmm good!

Mary exits.

GABE

You'll get used to her. Alex, you've been a part of Angels Inc. for what, a full two weeks now? Well I have a few thousand years experience on you, so let me give you some advice. First of all, this whole "moral uprising" thing you're talking about is never gonna happen. So get that out of your head. Remember moral decisions lose all of their value if free will and choice are taken away; and where there's no value, there's no profit. And as much as I hate to say it, Johnny taking that candy bar is just the beginning. He's going to make a lot more, bigger mistakes down the line and why? Because people don't always do the right thing.

ALEX

It's just so frustrating.

GABE

I know it is. But that's the reality.

(Beat.)

Did you know I was the angel sent to convince John Wilkes Booth not to shoot President Lincoln? It was a crucial decision, one that would affect countless lives. Obviously the Demon Dept. didn't want to risk losing the job, so Lucifer himself came down to handle it. I never stood a chance. I could tell from the start that Booth was already leaning Lucifer's way, he bought everything Lucifer put in front of him: promises of the South winning the war, Booth being remembered as a war hero, killing Lincoln being the right thing to do. That was all it took.

ALEX

It's not fair! How could you have possibly won that? How could any angel? How are we supposed to fight for what's right and convince people to do the right thing if they're prone to want to do the wrong thing anyway?

Michael enters.

MICHAEL

We persevere. Gabe, Mary needs you to sign off on another decision contract.

GABE

She just came through. Already signed 'em.

MICHAEL

You missed one.

GABE

What? No I-

Mary comes back in.

MARY

Oh good you're still here. I think you missed one of these contracts.

GABE

You don't say.

(He gives Michael a look.)

Tell you what Mary, I'll walk you back to your desk and sign it there. My break's over anyway.

MARY

Okey dokey hokey pokey!

Mary exits.

MICHAEL

Thank you Gabriel.

GABE

Yeah yeah.

(Gabe grabs his crossword
and starts to leave.)

Hey, what's a nine letter word for a green veg-

MICHAEL

Asparagus.

Gabe looks at the crossword.
His mouth gapes open.

GABE

Okay, seriously Michael? That's just eerie.

MICHAEL

Lucky guess.

Gabe exits.

ALEX

Michael? As in head of Angels Incorporated?

MICHAEL

Nice to finally meet you Alex. I'm sorry I haven't gotten together with you sooner. Time has a tendency to get away from you when you're running a corporation. I've heard good things about you Alex.

ALEX

Well they couldn't have been all that good. I haven't won a decision yet.

MICHAEL

It's not about winning. Johnny's really lucky to have you as his angel. I can tell he's going to grow up and do some great things.

ALEX

You have too much faith in me.

MICHAEL

Sounds like you don't have enough faith in yourself.

ALEX

How am I supposed to believe in myself when I don't know what the heck I'm doing?

MICHAEL

No one knows what they're doing at first. Riding a bike, playing the piano, kicking a football, everyone is terrible... At first. The key is not giving up the first time around.

ALEX

Persevere.