

# DESCENT

by Jean Gottlieb

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## DESCENT

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*Dedicated to actor/writer Susan Ferrara,  
whose encouragement and support made this play possible.*

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### **CAST:** *(in order of appearance)*

MARGARET WAGNER: Female, late 30's/early 40's, plain.

HENRY VALDEZ: Male, middle-aged, gregarious.

CORDELIA LEWIS: Female, middle-aged, confident.

JOHN FAUSTUS: Charismatic male, middle-aged.

MEPHISTOPHELES: Any gender, attractive/ageless/androgynous appearance.

LUCIFER: Female, mature, graceful, formidable.

ELIZABETH: Female, Faustus' deceased wife, 30's.

Diversity in casting is strongly encouraged.

**Setting:** The home of Dr. John Faustus

**Time:** The present

Inspired by *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe and *Paradise Lost* by John Milton

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ACT 1  
SCENE 1

*The scene begins with a voice in darkness.*

**LUCIFER.** The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n. What matter where, if I be still the same? Farewell happy fields where joy forever dwells: Hail horrors, hail infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell receive thy new Possessor: One who brings a mind not to be changed by Place or Time. Here at least we shall be free; Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heav'n.

*The high-rise apartment of Dr. John Faustus, Upper East Side, NY. A set of French doors USC are open, leading to a balcony. The living room is modern and minimalist, with a desk, computer, table, a few chairs, and books. There is a chess set midgame on a side table. It is raining. The occasional distant rumblings of thunder can be heard. There is an exit to the front door, another exit leads to the rest of the apartment. MARGARET WAGNER sits at the desk, updating Faustus' calendar on the computer, occasionally making notes in her planner. She is a plain, pleasant woman in her early 40's, well dressed in tailored business clothing. Her cell phone dings. She takes it from her pocket and checks who is calling.*

**MARGARET.** Hello Jason. *(Listens.)* Yes, thank you. Please send them up. *(Margaret finishes her work, shuts down the computer, closes her planner, puts it in her bag, removes her reading glasses, replaces them in their holder and puts them in her bag.)*

**VALDEZ.** *(Offstage.) (Knocking at the door.)* Hey Faustus! Open the door. I have to pee!

**LEWIS.** *(Offstage.)* Stop shouting!

**VALDEZ.** That wasn't shouting. This is shouting: Faustus! *(During this exchange Margaret calmly crosses offstage to open the door. HENRY VALDEZ enters followed by CORDELIA LEWIS. Valdez is gregarious and*

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*easy going. Lewis is confident and reserved, both middle-aged. They are wet from the rain. Margaret reenters behind them.)*

**VALDEZ.** Look at me, just from the cab to the door and look. My hair must be a disaster.

**MARGARET.** I'm sorry to say he's not back yet.

**LEWIS.** We didn't expect you to still be here - waiting out the storm?

**MARGARET.** That, and I want to see your next move.

**VALDEZ.** Excuse me, I must urinate. *(He exits off right.)*

**LEWIS.** *(Moving to the chess board set up on a side table.)* In that case I'll try and beat you quickly. Spare you the suspense and all that. *(Examining the chess board.)* You took my knight.

**MARGARET.** I did. Let me have your coat, you're dripping on the floor.

**LEWIS.** Interesting. That was either brilliant or suicidal. What are you up to?

**MARGARET.** You'll have to make a move to find out. *(Lewis studies the chess board. Margaret takes her coat and hangs it on a coat rack/hook near the door.)*

**LEWIS.** I can't figure you out, Margaret. You keep a Harvard chess club alumni on her toes yet aspire to nothing more mentally taxing than personal assistant to a retired ... what shall we call him - philosopher? Theologian?

**MARGARET.** Careful, Cordelia, your PhD is showing.

**LEWIS.** I'm not trying to analyze you - although I suspect you'd be an interesting nut to crack.

**MARGARET.** *(Referring to Lewis' chess move)* Mm, mmm.... I wouldn't....

**LEWIS.** I haven't let go yet - shoo, away, go on, you know intimidation isn't allowed.

**MARGARET.** I would never even consider it.

**VALDEZ.** *(Reentering, yelling.)* Faustus!

**LEWIS.** Is that necessary?

**MARGARET.** I told you he's not here. Let me have that wet coat.

**VALDEZ.** I know where it goes, you don't have to wait on me.

**LEWIS.** I don't know why you must shout all the time.

**VALDEZ.** I like to be heard.

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**LEWIS.** I'll let you in on something Henry. You are always heard.

**VALDEZ.** I am heard because I am vociferous. Word of the day.

**LEWIS.** You are heard because you are loud.

**MARGARET.** She is a vociferous defender of the underdog.

**LEWIS.** Her vociferosity impressed me.

**MARGARET.** Yeah, that's not a word. You're out.

**LEWIS.** Dammit.

**MARGARET.** Do you want something from the kitchen Henry?

**VALDEZ.** I need a drink.

**MARGARET.** You know where it is. Help yourself.

**VALDEZ.** His vociferousness is his most charming feature.

**MARGARET.** Sketchy, but I'll allow it.

**VALDEZ.** By the way, who is that marvelous new door man?

**MARGARET.** His name is Jason and no, I do not know his preferences, and no, I will not ask him.

**VALDEZ.** It was an innocent inquiry. Sheesh. You ask for a favor one time. *(Valdez pours himself a large glass of scotch and picks up a book from Faustus' desk.)*

**LEWIS.** I'd like some cheese and fruit, I think. Maybe some olives?

**MARGARET.** I picked up those disgusting stuffed ones you like so much.

**LEWIS.** So underhandedly thoughtful. Thank you.

**MARGARET.** I think you mean vituperatively thoughtful.

**LEWIS.** Save the word games for Henry, I'll stick to chess although damn if you haven't given me pause.

**MARGARET.** And me just a lowly personal assistant.

**LEWIS.** Hah. Touché.

**MARGARET.** Red wine?

**LEWIS.** Yes, it's definitely a red night.

**MARGARET.** Cabernet ok?

**LEWIS.** I don't suppose I could have a look at his list again?

**VALDEZ.** Oh dear Jesus just bring the first open bottle you come across. That's a good girl off you go. *(Margaret exits. To Lewis.)* Like you could tell the difference between a Château Lafite and cooking wine.

**LEWIS.** I like to know what I'm getting –

**VALDEZ.** I'll tell you what you are getting. Free wine. You shouldn't

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treat Margaret like she's the maid.

**LEWIS.** She is the maid.

**VALDEZ.** Personal assistant, you said so yourself.

**LEWIS.** You know as well as I she's much more than that.

**VALDEZ.** I know nothing of the kind. Why, have you heard something?

**LEWIS.** I certainly wouldn't tell you if I had. *(Lewis sighs and walks away from the chess game without having made a move. Valdez toys with conjuring items on a table.)*

**VALDEZ.** You suppose he's sick of us?

**LEWIS.** Why would you say that?

**VALDEZ.** This is the second time he's a no-show - he could at least text. I don't like schlepping all the way to the upper east side just to wait around.

**LEWIS.** What else would you be doing? Besides, I pick you up, you never pay for the cab and you get free food and alcohol. Pretty good deal if you ask me.

**VALDEZ.** You show up every Friday too.

**LEWIS.** And I call him during the week. Offer a shoulder to cry on.

**VALDEZ.** Oh I see, you're here as the devoted friend, and I'm here for the free booze?

**LEWIS.** All I'm saying is that even though he may never admit it, he needs us right now.

**VALDEZ.** It would be nice if he showed it. Maybe I'll put a hex on him – something mentally annoying but not physically damaging.

**LEWIS.** Stop talking like some Harry Potter wannabe.

**VALDEZ.** You participate as much as I do, don't pretend otherwise.

**LEWIS.** The operative word in that sentence is pretend. I remind you once again not to give this nonsense any more credit than it deserves.

**VALDEZ.** I wonder why you never have this argument with Faustus.

**LEWIS.** You and John can dabble all you want. I'll just watch, thank you.

**VALDEZ.** I have never dabbled anything in my life.

**LEWIS.** You dabble in everything. That's your problem.

**VALDEZ.** You needn't tell me my problems. I have already had a bellyful of my shortcomings, thank you.

**LEWIS.** You've spoken to Steven. That explains the sullen mood all the way over here. I told you not to contact him.



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**VALDEZ.** If he'd only admitted it was his fault...

**LEWIS.** Yes. Well. If only they all did that.

**VALDEZ.** If he hadn't left me -

**LEWIS.** He would have gone insane.

**VALDEZ.** So instead I get to go insane. Lovely.

**LEWIS.** Found a job yet?

**VALDEZ.** Fuck you.

**LEWIS.** If you don't want to talk about it, fine.

**VALDEZ.** My getting fired was purely political.

**LEWIS.** Oh, of course. It had nothing to do with you teaching conjuring in theology class.

**VALDEZ.** One must understand evil in order to understand good.

**LEWIS.** Theology professors don't generally invite demons as guest lecturers.

**VALDEZ.** They overreacted. Besides, I was never successful at it.

**LEWIS.** One more item for your list of failures.

**VALDEZ.** Do you treat all your patients with the same callous harshness?

**LEWIS.** Are you my patient now?

**VALDEZ.** Do I look like a bored housewife?

**LEWIS.** Good one. But really, Henry, you just encourage him when you do things like that.

**VALDEZ.** I encourage *him*? Where do you think I got the spells?

**LEWIS.** And for your information, I have told John that I don't have faith in what he does during our Friday meetings. It is a useful distraction, the same as any role-playing game.

**VALDEZ.** Is that what we are doing - playing some twisted version of DND where God is dead and the Devil rules the world?

**LEWIS.** I've asked you not to say that -

**VALDEZ.** Oh no, I've said the bad words - God is dead - Uh oh I said it again. No thunderbolt, no lightning strikes. No one cares. People stopped caring about God a long time ago.

**LEWIS.** How is it that you are an atheist and a theologian at the same time?

**VALDEZ.** I am a theologian because I am an atheist. (*Refilling his drink.*) Religion is fascinating. It was created to control the masses and ease our

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fear of death. Unfortunately, most religions have become exclusive clubs that no longer honor or practice their original ideologies. Their dogmas have been twisted into ugly shadows of the original truths. The things human beings will do in the name of religion - it boggles the mind. Give a human a deity, and they will kill in its name. Without exception or fail.

**LEWIS.** Selfless acts of love and compassion will also be done in His name.

**VALDEZ.** The human animal is not capable of selflessness. There's always a payoff.

**LEWIS.** Reciprocated love is the payoff.

**VALDEZ.** Pacifist.

**LEWIS.** Anarchist. Ah, my wine, thank God. *(Margaret has reentered with a tray: bottle, plate of food, and wine glasses.)*

**MARGARET.** Started in before John is here to mediate? Isn't that a bit dangerous?

**LEWIS.** The only thing dangerous on Henry is his breath.

**VALDEZ.** Was that – are you trying to make a joke? Is that what that was? Aw. How cute.

**MARGARET.** I don't know why he's so late.

**VALDEZ.** Margaret, my love, please don't feel you have to babysit us. It's way past quitting time, I'm sure you want to get home.

**LEWIS.** You know very well he'll waltz in like nothing is wrong and harass you for staying.

**MARGARET.** Will you text me when he gets in?

**VALDEZ.** Of course.

**MARGARET.** *(Moving to the coat rack.)* See if you can get him to eat something.

**VALDEZ.** I'll certainly try.

**MARGARET.** And if he does get caught in the rain, make sure he changes into dry things.

**VALDEZ.** I will.

**MARGARET.** Thank you, Henry. And Cordelia, do let me know if you decide to make a move.

**LEWIS.** You can count on it.

**VALDEZ.** Goodnight Margaret. *(The front door opens. JOHN FAUSTUS*

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*enters in a rush. He is a charismatic middle-aged man with intense energy and focus. He carries one small and one large book covered in black cloth. As he enters and greets them, he deposits both books on his desk, takes off his wet coat and throws it over the books.)*

**FAUSTUS.** Ah! My honored and esteemed colleagues! Here you are, right where you should be. Already begun the party without me? Just like you Henry. I should have put a padlock on that liquor cabinet long ago. And Cordelia! Not keeping him in check with your trite chitchat? I'm surprised at you! He should not be exempt from the boredom you wreak on others.

**LEWIS.** You're certainly in rare form.

**FAUSTUS.** And why shouldn't I be. Pour me a scotch before it's all gone, you raging sot.

**VALDEZ.** One scotch, coming right up.

**MARGARET.** You're very late.

**FAUSTUS.** You rail at me about staying inside all the time, now you are angry that I went out? Make up your mind, Margaret, you can't have it both ways.

**MARGARET.** I was concerned.

**FAUSTUS.** And I have told you, there's no need. Henry! Isn't this the night you promised to produce this new boyfriend you've been talking about – what's this one's name? Sean? Stanley?

**VALDEZ.** Steven.

**FAUSTUS.** I was close. Do I get points for close?

**VALDEZ.** He's not coming.

**LEWIS.** Another one that got away I'm afraid.

**FAUSTUS.** Ah well, I'm sure you'll have another in no time. You always do. *(Sharply to Margaret as she moves to hang up his coat.)* Leave it. *(Cheerful again.)* Join us Margaret. Get yourself a glass and have some of my best wine that the esteemed Doctor Lewis is so fond of pouring down her throat. Or do you have a taste for a bottle of the aged scotch that Valdez drains weekly? Come on! Be a part of this godforsaken party for once!

**MARGARET.** I have no desire to try and run your household tomorrow with a hangover. One of us has to have their wits about them.

**FAUSTUS.** Right. One of us must. And since you already possess such

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admirable quantities of wit, grace, and organization, and - where's that scotch? Quit sulking, Henry, and bring me my drink.

**MARGARET.** I didn't mean that you don't have...

**FAUSTUS.** Of course not, you never do. Not a hard bone in this woman's body, my friends, she actually is the angel with the heart of gold. Or is it the whore that has a heart of gold? Have I turned into one of those old men who mix their metaphors? Oh good lord deliver me...

**MARGARET.** I'll bring your dinner before I leave.

**FAUSTUS.** Never mind dinner. This'll do. (*Referring to the scotch.*)

**MARGARET.** It will only take a minute -

**FAUSTUS.** (*Sternly*). I said never mind.

**MARGARET.** Very well. Goodnight then. (*Margaret crosses to the exit.*)

**VALDEZ/LEWIS:** Goodnight.

**FAUSTUS.** Margaret. (*Faustus crosses to Margaret, pauses, lightly touches her sleeve. Margaret nods, smiles, exits.*)

**LEWIS.** She cares about you. Quite a lot, I think....

**FAUSTUS.** A bit too much, isn't that what you're going to tell me? Of course your unsolicited advice is as precipitous as a biting winter wind, and just as unwelcome. We must have a toast.

**VALDEZ.** Well aren't we magnanimous this evening.

**LEWIS.** What are we toasting?

**FAUSTUS.** We are toasting an important acquisition. Come on now, aren't you curious? No guesses as to what I bought?

**LEWIS.** Something enormously expensive and hideously gaudy?

**FAUSTUS.** Enormously expensive, yes. Hideous and gaudy, well, I'll let you be the judge.

**VALDEZ.** Well, come on, what? (*Faustus crosses to his desk and retrieves the two books from under his coat. He holds them up and grins.*)

**LEWIS.** Books.

**FAUSTUS.** No, no. Not just books. (*Lewis and Valdez approach. Lewis moves away when she recognizes what they are.*)

**VALDEZ.** That's a grimoire.

**FAUSTUS.** Not just a grimoire. *The* grimoire. It's the Black Raven. The original Black Raven.

**VALDEZ.** I thought that was destroyed centuries ago.

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**FAUSTUS.** I thought so too, but here it is – authenticated by the Roman Catholic Church no less. This one is a lesser grimoire, but useful, nonetheless. Come on, Cordelia, they don't bite.

**VALDEZ.** I wouldn't be surprised if they did.

**FAUSTUS.** God, smell that binding, if that doesn't stink like evil, then what does?

**VALDEZ.** Where did you get them?

**FAUSTUS.** Think of what we could do once we've translated these.

**LEWIS.** You do realize that they are most likely fakes.

**FAUSTUS.** Do you really think someone would be able to fool me? This wasn't the result of an errant internet search. A well-connected antique dealer led me to a black-market broker of artifacts, who for an exorbitant fee connected me to a priest who occasionally - acquires - relics from various churches around the world. These particular gems were found in a tomb in a church catacomb in some God forsaken Latvian village. The priest told me the young thief who discovered them suffered a dreadfully painful end, but that might be a fiction created to justify the exorbitant price tag.

**VALDEZ.** Let's try one.

**LEWIS.** Don't be ridiculous.

**FAUSTUS.** This one is in German, which I can read – sort of - and the small one is in Latin, which I can translate more easily – some of it is already translated into English – look - someone made notes in the margins.

**LEWIS.** How can you possess all that knowledge about religion and science and ethics - and still think that this is a good idea?

**FAUSTUS.** There is nothing more to know in this world. It's time to branch out. Knowledge! *That* is the holy grail of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**VALDEZ.** To knowledge! *(Valdez and Faustus toast, drain their glasses. Valdez pours another round. They pick up the books and page through them.)* Alright. Let's do this.

**FAUSTUS.** Let's see...we need a circle, drawn on the floor...wait, I have some chalk around here somewhere.

**VALDEZ.** I like the Black Raven better. It has pictures.

**FAUSTUS.** Here, hold it up so I can see it as I draw. *(Valdez holds the*

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*book, Faustus begins to draw the circle as it appears in the book.)*

**VALDEZ.** (*reading*) First: You should trace the circulum with a sword that has nobody yet hurt. On one side of the sword...you should...inscribe the following characters. (*To Faustus.*) Wait, we need to do this with a sword. You need to write these on the sword.

**FAUSTUS.** What are the characters?

**VALDEZ.** (*Showing him the book*) Here. These on one side of the blade, and these on the other.

**FAUSTUS.** I haven't got a sword. (*Takes the knife from the plate of food.*) This will have to do. Let's see those symbols again. (*He takes a sharpie and draws on the butter knife.*)

**LEWIS.** I can't believe you are doing this. And doing it *wrong*, despite instructions otherwise.

**VALDEZ.** Relax, Cord, we're just role playing. Looks good. Okay. Uuuh. Let's see. (*Reading.*) Second: You should trace the circle with the sword – or in this case, butter knife - while you say the following words:...

**FAUSTUS.** Me?

**VALDEZ.** What?

**FAUSTUS.** Am I supposed to say them or you?

**VALDEZ.** I think you. The person tracing the circle. Right?

**LEWIS.** It's like watching a disaster movie in slow motion.

**FAUSTUS.** Okay. Here I go. (*He traces the circle and recites, hesitantly reading from the text Valdez holds up for him.*) O Le Ja meni sete...Mirari jael la mese mihi Jasala Ale Jona Masa criel...hold the book up a bit more please...Finamiel-Siona. Majasa...faliel mica sariel...olomisa lale masa Hajariel.

**VALDEZ.** I don't know *what* language that was -

**FAUSTUS.** What's next?

**VALDEZ.** After you have done this, you make three crosses, and you pray three Lord's prayers in the kneeling position.

**FAUSTUS.** Skip that, what's next?

**LEWIS.** You realize that's the protective part, right?

**VALDEZ.** Third: When you summon, you must put in front of you in the circle the following symbols that you should have traced in red color.

**FAUSTUS.** Let me see. (*Looking at the book.*) Hm. Does it mean draw

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them in the circle?

**VALDEZ.** It just says trace in red color. “That you should have traced in red color.”

**FAUSTUS.** Let’s put them on paper and bring them in the circle with us.

**VALDEZ.** Good idea. What have you got for tracing in red?

**FAUSTUS.** I’m thinking blood would be best.

**VALDEZ.** And I’m thinking you better have a red marker or two. *(At the desk.)* Ah, yes, here we are, saved by a sharpie. *(Sees Lewis is kneeling, making the sign of the cross.)* Aren’t you Jewish?

**LEWIS.** It’s hard enough trying to remember this Catholic nonsense without you making jokes.

**VALDEZ.** I’m touched that you’d risk a lightning strike to save my mortal soul, especially after insisting this is all just a game.

**LEWIS.** No harm in being safe.

**VALDEZ.** *(Pauses, looks heavenward.)* We’re ok, right? All cool? Ok good. *(Faustus has jabbed his finger and uses his blood to write on the paper.)* Now that’s just unsanitary.

**FAUSTUS.** How does this look?

**VALDEZ.** Disgusting.

**FAUSTUS.** You do one too.

**VALDEZ.** Um – no. *(Faustus looks at Lewis.)*

**LEWIS.** Yeah that’s a hard no from me too. You’re lucky I’ve let you go this far. Are you satisfied now? Can we get on with our evening, maybe have a pleasant discussion about our society and its inevitable slide toward dystopia? At this point I’d even settle for a game of cards.

**FAUSTUS.** Come, my dear. You might even have fun. In the circle please. Humor me, Cordelia. *(The three of them stand in the center of the circle, Lewis reluctantly. They place the papers in front of them on the floor. Faustus holds the book.)* Ready? Here goes. *(He recites in a commanding tone)* The great infernal empire, as many millions of spirits as it has, I conjure you by the blood that has been shed for the human race and with which we are redeemed, and I conjure all the way into the farthest darkness, I will continue to do so until you fulfill my will exactly and immediately now. O Lamisamaia, Herimicala, Masamimema, limarascha, Jupirachiel, Minefira, Hopi Alali Maialiel misa + *(makes the sign of the*

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*cross +) fige + Riga. (Silence. The three wait. Nothing happens.)*

**VALDEZ.** Did you say the right one?

**FAUSTUS.** I recited the General Citation of all Spirits.

**VALDEZ.** I think you have to pick one. You know, instead of calling them all.

**FAUSTUS.** Which one? There are seventy-two demons. Each one can bring something different. Money. Fame. Power.

**LEWIS.** Destruction. Plague. Death.

**VALDEZ.** I thought you didn't believe in this stuff.

**LEWIS.** I don't have to believe to know this is dangerous.

**VALDEZ.** That's what makes it fun.

**LEWIS.** It's not demons I'm worried about. Give me the book.

**VALDEZ.** I wanna hold it.

**LEWIS.** Give it.

**FAUSTUS.** (*Louder, in a commanding voice*) O Lamisamaia, Herimicala, Masamimema, limarascha, Jupirachiel, Minefira, Hopi Alali Maialiel misa + fige + Riga.

**VALDEZ.** Jesus. They're not hard of hearing, Faustus.

**FAUSTUS.** (*Again, in a loud commanding voice. The upstage curtains ripple slightly.*) O Lamisamaia, Herimicala, Masamimema, limarascha, Jupirachiel, Minefira, Hopi Alali Maialiel misa + fige + Riga. (*A gust of wind flutters the papers out of the circle. Valdez moves to retrieve them.*)

**VALDEZ.** I can reach them... (*Faustus pulls him roughly back into the circle.*) Ow, take it easy.

**FAUSTUS.** Stay in the circle. (*The lights in the room go out. Silence.*)

**VALDEZ.** Anything in that book about getting the power back on?

**LEWIS.** It's the storm, Henry.

**FAUSTUS.** Don't be so sure.

**LEWIS.** The whole building is probably out. Give it a minute. (*During the dialogue Faustus pages through the book. Lewis uses the light from her phone to search through the Grimoire she took from Valdez. Noises increase.*)

**VALDEZ.** What is that smell?

**LEWIS.** My guess is the chili dog you had on the way over here.

**VALDEZ.** Can we get the lights back on? Seriously.



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**FAUSTUS.** They'll serve us if we ask them the right way.

**VALDEZ.** Go away go away go away...oh God something brushed my arm.

**LEWIS.** It was me.

**VALDEZ.** It's not you making that noise.

**LEWIS.** It's just the wind is blowing stuff around; we should have shut the doors.

**FAUSTUS.** *(Referencing his grimoire.)* I'm going to try something.

**LEWIS.** *(Reciting.)* Oh Spirits, Portam Benedictam

**FAUSTUS.** *(Speaking over her.)* Not that one – *(There is a crash of glass breaking in a far corner and more hissing and whispering.)*

**LEWIS.** sic tecum quasia

**FAUSTUS.** Stop!

**LEWIS.** horas siece milat. *(She makes the sign of the cross.)* Amen.

*(The air seems to go out of the room with a sigh. Silence. The lights flicker back on.)*

**VALDEZ.** What the hell was that?

**FAUSTUS.** *(To Lewis.)* Why did you...

**LEWIS.** This has gone far enough.

**VALDEZ.** *(Looking heavenward.)* You know I was joking before when I said all that about you being dead, right? Right? *(To Lewis and Faustus.)* I may throw up. Just FYI.

**FAUSTUS.** You have no right to interfere -

**LEWIS.** Stop this destructive behavior and turn your attention to what is important.

**FAUSTUS.** This is important.

**LEWIS.** Oh, John. This is simply grief. Grief and guilt. What she did was not your fault.

**FAUSTUS.** I'll thank you not to regurgitate any of your paperback wisdom for my benefit.

**LEWIS.** Give yourself permission to stop blaming yourself.

**FAUSTUS.** You can't resist trying to control me.

**LEWIS.** I go along with this diversion of yours, how is that controlling?

**FAUSTUS.** True to form, you turn away from life as soon as it starts to get

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interesting.

**LEWIS.** And true to form, you bring up old hurts to avoid talking about your feelings.

**FAUSTUS.** I knew it was only a matter of time before you hauled out that old song.

**LEWIS.** You can't deny you harbor anger from my rejection of you, it's the reason you constantly attack me.

**VALDEZ.** What now?

**FAUSTUS.** It always comes back to that, doesn't it? I'm the one who moved on and married someone else. You are the one harboring anger.

**VALDEZ.** You guys were going to get married?

**FAUSTUS and LEWIS.** No.

**LEWIS.** You blame others, you blame God, and you court the Devil because you want to punish yourself.

**FAUSTUS.** Analyze all you want, but you can't deny what happened here tonight.

**LEWIS.** And what did happen, exactly? There was a thunderstorm that temporarily knocked out the power. You left the doors open and the wind broke a wine glass. That's all.

**FAUSTUS.** You spoke the words to release them.

**LEWIS.** I spoke the words to release you, John.

**FAUSTUS.** I made the assumption that you understood the intricacies of my work here. It's apparent now that this is beyond your capabilities.

**LEWIS.** You can't dismiss me by calling me stupid. That hasn't worked since we were kids.

**FAUSTUS.** How about this then: if you stand in my way, I will throw you out of my house.

**LEWIS.** Anger is always your default mode when you won't face the truth.

**FAUSTUS.** Get out. And don't come back.

**VALDEZ.** Hey guys, I'm not feeling so great. Can't we just get drunk and pass out like usual?

**LEWIS.** (*Crosses and retrieves her coat.*) Keep it up, John, and you will get your wish.

**FAUSTUS.** And what wish would that be, in your *professional* opinion?

## DESCENT

**LEWIS.** You'll be left alone with your misery.

**FAUSTUS.** You are not capable of leaving anything alone, Lewis, why do you think you are such a bad shrink?

**LEWIS.** Fuck you Faustus.

**FAUSTUS.** Oh, now that's wit. Can't argue with that one. Oh, wait – yes I can. Fuck you back. *(She exits.)*

**VALDEZ.** What the hell.

**FAUSTUS.** What indeed.

## SCENE 2

*Next morning, at sunrise, the light shining in from the balcony is fiery red. Faustus is lying face down in the circle. The grimoires are beside him. Faustus stirs. Slowly sits up. He takes a moment to come to his senses. He looks about the room, groans and struggles to stand. He stumbles toward his desk and leans on it. MEPHISTOPHELES enters from the balcony and leans in the doorway. They are androgynous in appearance, with a pleasant face and a mischievous grin. They are dressed in an impeccable suit and tie. They study Faustus for a moment before speaking.)*

**MEPHISTOPHELES.** Beautiful sunrise. Do you not think?

**FAUSTUS.** What are you doing here?

**MEPH.** You invited me.

**FAUSTUS.** I did.

**MEPH.** Yes.

**FAUSTUS.** I'm pretty sure Henry has already left.

**MEPH.** I do not know Henry.

**FAUSTUS.** Can I get you something - do you require a taxi or – you didn't come with him?

**MEPH.** Your head hurts you?

**FAUSTUS.** Yes, as a matter of fact, my head hurts me a lot. Look, I don't mean to be rude, but -

**MEPH.** Of course you do.

## DESCENT

**FAUSTUS.** What do you want?

**MEPH.** I think the question is: what is it that *you* want. John. Faustus.

**FAUSTUS.** You have me at a disadvantage. I don't remember meeting you - but I had a lot to drink last night. My mind lately has been... Didn't you come with Valdez -

**MEPH.** *(with a sly grin)* No. *(Faustus stares at the stranger, his smile slowly fades from his face. He takes a step back into the circle on the floor. Mephistopheles grins again.)*

**FAUSTUS.** I sent you all back.

**MEPH.** And for that I thank you.

**FAUSTUS.** Then why are you still here? Be gone!

**MEPH.** *(Crosses to Faustus without regard to the circle.)* Why did you disturb my charges?

**FAUSTUS.** Who are you?

**MEPH.** Can you not guess?

**FAUSTUS.** Lucifer?

**MEPH.** If I was Lucifer, you would know it. You would feel it in your soul.

**FAUSTUS.** Are you a soul? I mean a spirit?

**MEPH.** As much as you are, so am I.

**FAUSTUS.** And you came here from Hell?

**MEPH.** Why this is hell, nor am I out of it.

**FAUSTUS.** What is your name?

**MEPH.** I am Mephistopheles, second Grand Duke of the Infernal Empire, at your service.

**FAUSTUS.** At my service.

**MEPH.** So to speak. Tell me, Faustus. You summoned my charges. I can only assume you meant to get my attention. What is it that you want of me?

**FAUSTUS.** What is it that you can give me?

**MEPH.** *(smiling)* The wise or the wary answer questions with questions. No matter. I serve Lucifer, and Lucifer alone. I can give you nothing without permission.

**FAUSTUS.** Then I will speak with Lucifer.

**MEPH.** Would you?

## DESCENT

**FAUSTUS.** I command you to summon Lucifer for me. (*Mephistopheles laughs.*) You will do as I command.

**MEPH.** I cannot.

**FAUSTUS.** Did you come here in response to my summons or not?

**MEPH.** Well, yes and no. We adore praise, and can there be any higher praise than prayer? You spoke words of adoration to us in the ancient language. Word gets back. Here I am.

**FAUSTUS.** I should never mix wine and scotch. I'm sorry, but I am not entirely convinced that I am conscious.

**MEPH.** Does it matter? Dreams can seem like reality, and reality can be as wonderful as a dream.

**FAUSTUS.** Can you prove to me that you are from Hell?

**MEPH.** Ah. Confirmation, the brass ring for mortal existence.

**FAUSTUS.** And that you serve Lucifer?

**MEPH.** Confirmation of Hell means confirmation of Heaven. If Heaven exists, then I have a soul. If I have a soul...

**FAUSTUS.** Are you an immortal spirit?

**MEPH.** Then I do not die.

**FAUSTUS.** If you cannot give me what I ask for I will speak to someone who can.

**MEPH.** Very well. But - one word of advice. Strengthen your circle. A child with sidewalk chalk could have drawn a more powerful circle than that one. The next demon you encounter may not be so...amicable.

**FAUSTUS.** (*Scrambles for his grimoire*) Wait! Wait. Mephistopheles, I command you to stay. Per Jehovam, Gehennam et consecratam, et per vota nostra, ipse nunc surgat nobis dicatus Mephistophilis! (*The lights dim and flicker, huge sound. Mephistopheles stops, then slowly turns (with a growl) to face Faustus. Perhaps his voice is amplified or distorted.*)

**MEPH.** What wouldst thou have with me?

**FAUSTUS.** I only want to talk with you. That's all.

**MEPH.** Thou shalt find me less than willing.

**FAUSTUS.** Then I do not command you. I ask you. I request your honored presence. As my guest. Talk with me, Mephistopheles. Please. (*A slow smile splits Mephistopheles' face.*)

## DESCENT

**MEPH.** I have only a moment of your mortal time, Faustus. But for that moment, I will speak with you.

**FAUSTUS.** Thank you.

**MEPH.** What is it you wish to know? Ask me anything, I will tell you what is true.

**FAUSTUS.** What is Lucifer – is he real?

**MEPH.** Lucifer is Emperor. Arch-regent and commander of all spirits.

**FAUSTUS.** So Heaven and Hell exist.

**MEPH.** There are those among you who would say that this earth is Hell.

**FAUSTUS.** Is it?

**MEPH.** There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.

**FAUSTUS.** Does Hell exist or not?

**MEPH.** Do you believe it exists, Faustus?

**FAUSTUS.** I was taught that these things were physical places you went after you died. A place where your soul spent eternity.

**MEPH.** Do you believe in Hell, Faustus?

**FAUSTUS.** No.

**MEPH.** Then it does not exist.

**FAUSTUS.** But if there is no Hell...

**MEPH.** Then where do I come from?

**FAUSTUS.** Yes.

**MEPH.** Perhaps the depths of your troubled mind...

**FAUSTUS.** Perhaps - although my dreams have never quoted Shakespeare.

**MEPH.** Then you dream small. Perhaps you doubt hell's existence – my existence – because you question your own.

**FAUSTUS.** I don't know what you mean.

**MEPH.** Do you not? My time with you is ended, John Faustus.

**FAUSTUS.** Before you go, answer me one last thing.

**MEPH.** Ask your question.

**FAUSTUS.** Tell me who made the world.

**MEPH.** I will not.

**FAUSTUS.** Is it that you do not know...

**MEPH.** Move me not Faustus.

**FAUSTUS.** ...or that you have not the power to say.

## DESCENT

**MEPH.** I have the power; I simply do not wish to tell. *(Standoff. Pause.)*

**FAUSTUS.** Thank you, Mephistopheles. You have honored me with your presence.

**MEPH.** It is I who has been honored. Farewell, Faustus.

**FAUSTUS.** Goodbye.

**MEPH.** May I mention your interest to Lucifer? He may have something to offer that is beyond my power to give.

**FAUSTUS.** I have not asked you for anything, Mephistopheles.

*(Mephistopheles has moved back through the balcony doors. He steps out onto the railing and turns to grin at Faustus.)*

**MEPH.** You will. I will come again, if you call. *(Mephistopheles leans back and falls off the railing. Faustus gasps and turns away.)*

### SCENE 3

*Later in the afternoon. Margaret Wagner enters. She goes to the desk, finds the grimoire, opens it and begins to read/page through it. She runs her hands over the other grimoire, picks it up, opens it and reads. Faustus enters quietly, unheard and unseen by Margaret. He watches her for a moment, she is absorbed in the book. He walks quietly up behind her.*

**FAUSTUS.** Imagine my surprise to discover that my trusted advisor, the keeper of my most personal secrets, is nothing more than a common sneak thief.

**MARGARET.** I am not a thief.

**FAUSTUS.** The evidence seems to suggest otherwise.

**MARGARET.** You have been hiding things from me.

**FAUSTUS.** And you have become a very good spy. *(Faustus comes very close to her. Margaret is shaken by his proximity but does not move away.)*

Margaret...

**MARGARET.** I was looking for the invitation to the charity ball on Saturday night.

**FAUSTUS.** This *(He leans in and reaches around her to pick up the*

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*grimoire*) is not an invitation. You must not touch this. Ever. Do you understand?

**MARGARET.** What is that book?

**FAUSTUS.** This is important. I need you to promise.

**MARGARET.** What is it for?

**FAUSTUS.** None of this is for you. Promise you won't touch these again. Ask me if you need to find something – or just keep out of here entirely. Yes, that's best, that's...

**MARGARET.** That's ridiculous, you can't ban me from your office.

**FAUSTUS.** Promise me.

**MARGARET.** Tell me what you are doing with those books.

**FAUSTUS.** No.

**MARGARET.** I could be a help to you.

**FAUSTUS.** This is not negotiable. You will not ask me about my work, you will not touch my books. Say it.

**MARGARET.** What, I'm a parrot now?

**FAUSTUS.** Please. For me, Margaret.

**MARGARET.** Am I not intellectual enough for you?

**FAUSTUS.** Don't.

**MARGARET.** Your drunken friends can work with you, but I must be satisfied with keeping your life in order and cleaning up your messes.

**FAUSTUS.** If you would be happier elsewhere, I encourage you to go.

**MARGARET.** I won't be happier elsewhere.

**FAUSTUS.** Then be content here. (*They are close enough to kiss. Faustus moves away.*)

**MARGARET.** I wish you would.

**FAUSTUS.** You flatter yourself.

**MARGARET.** Let yourself do what we both know you want to do.

**FAUSTUS.** And what is that? Throw you on the desk? We satisfy our passions, then what? Go back to our working arrangement like nothing happened?

**MARGARET.** Why not? It's what we used to do.

**FAUSTUS.** I am no longer that man.

**MARGARET.** And if I took the initiative?

**FAUSTUS.** I would fire you.



## DESCENT

**MARGARET.** No you wouldn't.

**FAUSTUS.** No. I wouldn't.

**MARGARET.** If there is anyone on this earth who knows you, it's me.

**FAUSTUS.** That may be true, but you will not be involved in this part of my life.

**MARGARET.** Then I will be content - for now. But I do need that invitation. You are a finalist for the Philosopher's Annual and I need to RSVP.

**FAUSTUS.** Don't bother.

**MARGARET.** You mustn't ignore the people who want to honor you.

**FAUSTUS.** They want money. They hope that by recognizing me, they will be able to get their hands on a few of Elizabeth's millions. I have a shelf full of awards and what am I known for? I am the widow of someone who was famous for being beautiful and rich. Even if I won the Nobel prize, I would still be the lucky egghead who landed the socialite.

**MARGARET.** Or, you could accept their accolades and support their causes and make a name for yourself.

**FAUSTUS.** Those people offer me nothing of value.

**MARGARET.** I could arrange for you to be invited to speak at some very prestigious functions. Academic functions, scientific, not the mindless society events you attended with her. I'll design your web page, put your lectures online, and set up your social media accounts. I've been working on some topics for a podcast - I think you'd be brilliant....

**FAUSTUS.** Margaret...

**MARGARET.** With your talent, your ideas, you would have so many followers and supporters. I can extend your reach far beyond what you have now.

**FAUSTUS.** To what end?

**MARGARET.** Any you can imagine, and more.

**FAUSTUS.** With you leading the way, deftly handling everything.

**MARGARET.** Assisting you.

**FAUSTUS.** Those are your dreams.

**MARGARET.** They were yours once too.

**FAUSTUS.** Margaret - I need you to do something for me.

**MARGARET.** *(With a sigh of resignation.)* Yes, of course.

## DESCENT

**FAUSTUS.** I would like you to go away from here.

**MARGARET.** Why?

**FAUSTUS.** You deserve a vacation, somewhere nice – sit on the beach and soak up some sun for a few weeks.

**MARGARET.** You're sending me away?

**FAUSTUS.** You've never taken a vacation that I can remember.

**MARGARET.** I need to be here.

**FAUSTUS.** I'm afraid I must insist.

**MARGARET.** Who will keep your schedule? Who will pay your bills and answer your mail?

**FAUSTUS.** Once upon a time I took care of all that for myself. I'm sure I can manage for a little while.

**MARGARET.** Who will keep you safe?

**FAUSTUS.** Safe? From what?

**MARGARET.** From yourself.

**FAUSTUS.** I assure you, my dear Margaret, that I can keep myself quite safe and sound. Plan something fun. Anywhere you like. I will gladly fund your trip with a generous bonus.

**MARGARET.** (*Angry.*) I don't want her money. (*Beat*)

**FAUSTUS.** When did things get so complicated?

**MARGARET.** It wasn't so complicated before –

**FAUSTUS.** Before she jumped off that balcony?

**MARGARET.** We don't have to spend the rest of our lives feeling guilty. Elizabeth is gone. I am here.

**FAUSTUS.** Some time apart will allow us both to clear our heads.

**MARGARET.** We don't need to hide anymore.

**FAUSTUS.** You make it so easy and so difficult at the same time.

**MARGARET.** Would you have it any other way?

**FAUSTUS.** Just think about it. Make a few plans. A week on a beach maybe, or some mountain retreat, or a spa. A luxury spa? Will you think about it?

**MARGARET.** Yes. I'll think about it.

**FAUSTUS.** And stop responding to those ridiculous invitations. I will never be the man you think I am.

**MARGARET.** My faith is not so easily shaken as yours. (*Margaret turns*

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*to exit.)*

**FAUSTUS.** What's the chance of you taking that vacation?

**MARGARET.** About the same chance as you going to the Philosopher's Annual. *(Margaret exits. Black Out.)*

### SCENE 4

*Evening, several days later. Lewis is standing, looking out the balcony doors, Valdez leans against the desk, he is drinking heavily. Margaret stands, her arms crossed, confronting them.*

**MARGARET.** There is no point in the two of you pretending you don't know what is going on. I want answers.

**LEWIS.** Two days isn't such a long time.

**MARGARET.** My other option is to report him missing to the police. I can still do that. Who would you rather explain all this to - them or me?

**VALDEZ.** I think you can probably put enough of it together on your own by now.

**LEWIS.** Shut up, Henry.

**VALDEZ.** She's not stupid.

**LEWIS.** Unfortunate that I can't say the same about you.

**VALDEZ.** He may need our help.

**LEWIS.** And he may simply want some time to himself.

**MARGARET.** He would never leave without telling me.

**LEWIS.** Perhaps he wanted to spare your feelings.

**MARGARET.** He's been receiving packages in the middle of the night. I managed to intercept a few. Why is he collecting swords and knives? He sits in here talking to himself, he doesn't eat or drink – unless you count scotch.

**LEWIS.** Have you spoken to him about this? Asked him who he was talking to?

**MARGARET.** He told me he was dictating notes for a book.

**LEWIS.** There. See? Mystery solved.

**MARGARET.** I've looked in those books he tries to hide. Those knives

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there? Those are sacrificial blades. I've seen pictures of them in the grimoires. And if that weren't bad enough – *(Margaret lifts a cloth covering several large bowls and a cutting board. There is a carcass on it.)*

**LEWIS.** Is - is that a dog?

**VALDEZ.** Ugh. Well, he was neat enough about it. Separated the organs quite nicely.

**MARGARET.** The mess in here the night he disappeared was nothing short of horrific. Aside from the room being destroyed, there was blood all over the floor, among other things. Well? Nothing?

**LEWIS.** I believe the best thing for you right now is to go home and let Henry and I handle this.

**MARGARET.** No.

**VALDEZ.** *(Moving to the liquor cabinet, pouring himself another drink)* We aren't shutting you out – well, in a way we are but not for the reason you think. We – and Faustus too I suspect – are trying to protect you.

**MARGARET.** Protect me from what?

**LEWIS.** We can do without the dramatics, Henry. And you could do without the alcohol poisoning.

**VALDEZ.** It's for stress relief, *Mom*. Not everyone can write themselves prescriptions for oxy.

**LEWIS.** I don't write myself - you know what - fine. Drink yourself into a stupor. You aren't so irritating when you are unconscious. *(To Margaret.)* Correct me if I'm wrong, but your job is to assist John in the running of this household.

**MARGARET.** Among other things.

**LEWIS.** Has he ever asked you to assist him with his work?

**MARGARET.** Not directly –

**LEWIS.** If I had to guess, I would say he probably has insisted you not meddle in his work at all. So. With those instructions in mind, I repeat my insistence that you go home.

**MARGARET.** I'm not going anywhere. I can hardly help caring for him, just like you. Just like Henry.

**LEWIS.** I believe you 'care' for him quite differently than either me or Henry.

**MARGARET.** Why are you – I thought we were friends -

## DESCENT

**LEWIS.** Letting you win an occasional game of chess hardly makes us friends, now does it.

**MARGARET.** (*Smiling.*) You almost had me. I was feeling it until the chess insult. You couldn't possibly ever *let* me win. I am not leaving.

**LEWIS.** Margaret, please.

**MARGARET.** (*To Valdez.*) Did he conjure a demon?

**LEWIS.** Don't be ridiculous.

**VALDEZ.** Honestly, I think he has.

**LEWIS.** Henry -

**VALDEZ.** He has the grimoires. All he needed was the right equipment and looky here, what do you know, all the right equipment. You heard her – he's been *talking* to them.

**LEWIS.** He may *think* he's conjured one, may even believe it, but in reality -

**VALDEZ.** Are you telling me you can't feel it? Something here isn't right on a really primitive level.

**LEWIS.** There is a rational explanation for this mess. Either he's had some sort of breakdown, or worse, he's tried to hurt himself to alleviate his guilt.

**VALDEZ.** Yeah? I'm favoring the third explanation – the one where Faustus manages to conjure something so powerful that he can't control it. So this is what the blond chick in the horror film feels like. We have to get out of here before the guy with the chainsaw shows up.

**LEWIS.** This is unexpressed grief at best. At worst it's mental illness.

**VALDEZ.** It's more than that, I'd bet my life on it. I don't know whether to shit myself or run. I may do both in a second.

**LEWIS.** That's your liver crying for help.

**MARGARET.** You're talking about him like he's gone insane.

**LEWIS.** He is under a great deal of emotional stress. That can look and act a lot like insanity.

**MARGARET.** John does not have a mental disorder.

**VALDEZ.** You just want to be able to box this up into a nice logical diagnosis so you don't have to admit there's something out there you can't explain.

**LEWIS.** I can explain it. Without all the drama. (*Faustus opens the door*

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*and nearly falls through. He pauses, leaning in the doorway, then straightens when he sees Margaret, Lewis and Valdez. His head is shaved. He is haggard and wild-eyed. Margaret rushes to help him into the room and to a chair.)*

**MARGARET.** John, oh my God - can you walk? Sit here -

**FAUSTUS.** I'm fine, let go Margaret, I'm perfectly well.

**VALDEZ.** Whoa. Interesting hair choice. When did you do that and my God by the looks of it you did it to yourself.

**FAUSTUS.** It's the style now.

**VALDEZ.** Ah, yes, new for fall, the haggard, nearly dead look.

**MARGARET.** Where have you been?

**FAUSTUS.** A little trip. Just to clear my head. That's all.

**MARGARET.** So you disappear for two days without a word?

**FAUSTUS.** I do not require your permission to leave my house. What are you two doing here?

**LEWIS.** Margaret contacted us. She thought something might have happened to you.

**MARGARET.** I want an explanation.

**FAUSTUS.** And you think I owe you one.

**VALDEZ.** How far have you gotten?

**FAUSTUS.** With what?

**VALDEZ.** Keep it up, and we'll leave. Then you can play around all you want and end up dead. Or worse.

**FAUSTUS.** *(Pushing Margaret away.)* I said stop. I don't need your help, what I need is for you to stop hovering and go home.

**MARGARET.** Let me take care of you.

**FAUSTUS.** No matter how often you beat the dog it still returns, cowering for affection. Lewis, since you insist on being here, why don't you make yourself useful and analyze her for once. I guarantee you'll find a treasure trove of daddy issues. *(Margaret hurt, backs away, rushes out the door.)*

**LEWIS.** That was unnecessary.

**FAUSTUS.** You should be thanking me.

**LEWIS.** She loves you.

**FAUSTUS.** And you love me and Henry loves himself and round and round we go.

## DESCENT

**VALDEZ.** Who do you love?

**FAUSTUS.** Nothing and no one.

**LEWIS.** I am beginning to believe that.

**FAUSTUS.** Believe this - neither of you know enough about any of this to qualify as my saviors.

**VALDEZ.** I know why you shaved your head.

**FAUSTUS.** Do you.

**VALDEZ.** You give them just one moment of inattention and they like to grab you by the hair. Nasty little buggers when they get a good handful, aren't they? How long did it take you to get it off - or did you have to shave your head with it still clawing at you?

**FAUSTUS.** I was protecting Margaret.

**VALDEZ.** Wise move. Once it was free of you, it would have loved to torment someone so vulnerable. If you manage such a blunder again, it has to let go after 24 hours. You could have been back here before she missed you.

**FAUSTUS.** I know that. By the time I got it off, I needed medical attention.

**LEWIS.** Are you ok?

**FAUSTUS.** I am now.

**LEWIS.** What happened?

**FAUSTUS.** Some unfortunate tearing in an area I would prefer left intact and an incredibly painful vomiting of needles.

**LEWIS.** Do you want me to take a look?

**FAUSTUS.** One doctor staring alternately up my ass and down my throat for twelve hours is quite enough for me, thank you.

**LEWIS.** And the diagnosis?

**FAUSTUS.** The fools gave me antacid and told me to stop eating spicy foods.

**VALDEZ.** Sounds like whatever got hold of you was a lesser demon. Imagine what the outcome would be if you summoned something with a bit of power.

**FAUSTUS.** You're an expert now?

**VALDEZ.** Call me silly, but I like to be prepared when dealing with the agents of Hell. Was this enough of a warning for you? Tell me you're done

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with them.

**FAUSTUS.** It doesn't matter if I'm done or not. I have no doubt that Lewis believes I've imagined this whole thing and I somehow buggered myself and swallowed pins on purpose. The truth is, I've managed to get the attention of a powerful demon and am now – what's the phrase? - paying my dues.

**VALDEZ.** Who have you been talking to?

**FAUSTUS.** You wouldn't believe me if I told you.

**VALDEZ.** Try me.

**FAUSTUS.** Mephistopheles.

**VALDEZ.** Is that who you've been sacrificing animals to?

**FAUSTUS.** Well, they prefer infants but I couldn't find any.

**LEWIS.** Ok. This has gone far enough.

**VALDEZ.** Have you promised them anything?

**FAUSTUS.** No.

**LEWIS.** I want you to get some help, John.

**VALDEZ.** Signed anything?

**FAUSTUS.** Not yet.

**LEWIS.** You don't need to talk to me – it's probably better that you don't – but I can refer you to someone – he's not in my office, but I know him well, he's a brilliant...

**FAUSTUS.** You think I'm crazy.

**LEWIS.** We don't use that term professionally, but yes, I think you are having psychotic episodes. I think you want to believe so desperately in something that will absolve you of guilt that you have created this demonic world that you need to conquer.

**FAUSTUS.** I didn't create the world - I just invited it in. It doesn't matter if you believe or not.

**LEWIS.** It matters that you believe.

**VALDEZ.** I am a drunk and I am a fool, but I am also your friend. I agree with Lewis. Is it exciting? Yes. Is it dangerous? Absolutely. It's also not a great choice for you right now. Give it some time, go back to work. You are a brilliant man, you have awards, you have respect...

**FAUSTUS.** (*Violently.*) I know nothing. I have nothing.

**VALDEZ.** You have your soul.



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**FAUSTUS.** That's not enough! None of it means anything. We have access to everyone's lives and thoughts at our fingertips but the knowledge is empty, it's meaningless. We humans have an innate need to know, yet ultimate knowledge is kept hidden from us. I have had a glimpse of it. I know it could be mine and I intend to master it by whatever means possible.

**LEWIS.** There is nothing hidden, there is nothing you need to conquer. You are imagining devils where there are none.

**FAUSTUS.** I don't know which is worse - your ignorance or your arrogance.

**LEWIS.** MY arrogance! You blind, conceited ass!

**VALDEZ.** It won't work. Whatever you mean to do, it will never work.

**FAUSTUS.** It already has.

**VALDEZ.** You're nothing more than a hypocrite, claiming God is dead and then seeking the Devil for comfort. You know as well as I do, they don't play fair.

**FAUSTUS.** You simply do not understand.

**VALDEZ.** Well, you are right about that. What you are doing is – destruction. It's suicide. Worse. It's damnation.

**LEWIS.** It's delusion. You are unstable and a possible danger to yourself. I will do whatever is in my power to stop you from harming yourself any further.

**VALDEZ.** Yeah, I gotta get in on that too. The stopping you part. From hurting yourself. Or me.

**FAUSTUS.** We are to be enemies then?

**LEWIS.** No, Faustus. We are your friends.

**FAUSTUS.** If that were true, you would be coming to my aid instead of getting in my way.

**VALDEZ.** We *are* coming to your aid.

**FAUSTUS.** You are weak. Both of you.

**LEWIS.** I won't let you destroy yourself.

**FAUSTUS.** I advise you not to stand in my way.

**LEWIS.** Good thing I never take your advice.

**VALDEZ.** You know what? If he wants to mess with this stuff, I say let him. He will either succeed or he'll kill himself. Most likely both.

## DESCENT

**FAUSTUS.** Oh, Henry, my foolish, drunken clown. You're afraid, so you create a reason to abandon me. Go then. Both of you. *(They don't move)* I'm about to summon a certain friend of mine and I really don't think either of you are prepared to meet him.

**VALDEZ.** You're inviting him back here?

**FAUSTUS.** I survived his little test. Aren't you at all curious as to what he has to offer?

**VALDEZ.** I know what he has to offer. I want none of it.

**FAUSTUS.** Good. I want all of it, and that leaves nothing for you. Now get out of my house. And *friends*. The next time I find you here, I will have you arrested. Or worse. *(They exit)*

**END OF ACT 1**

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—  
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