

‘‘A Day in Hell’’

Joseph Mack

Inspired by *Edgar Bronfmann*, *Nicholas Winton* and many well known jokes

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FIRST DRAFT
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I started writing this on reading the obit of Edgar Bronfmann NYT 21 Dec 2013. The initial parts about heaven were inspired by Jim Jeffries' piece about God at a party. This provided the initial skeleton, but was eventually discarded. Much of the properties of heaven and hell are from well known jokes. The piece was stuck there not really having anywhere to go. Then rescue was added in Jul 2015 after reading the NYT obit of Nicholas Winton (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas_Winton and the obits in SMH and NYT).

BEELZEBUB Beelzebub is sitting at his desk 1/4 way in from stage-left. He is seen facing 45deg towards stage-right. A trident is leaning on his desk.

FRANCESCA Beelzebub's secretary. She sits at a desk in the large outside office/waiting room, stage-right facing the audience. Initially she doesn't have many responsibilities and will spend as much time as possible applying makeup, buffing her nails, eating chocolates, brushing/spraying her hair. Francesca eventually becomes the heroine of the story. I don't know how much of a floosey to make her in the beginning. I have to make her enough of a caricature, to make a joke out of God wanting her as a girlfriend. I'll let the actor playing her handle this.

FRED DEMON Fred is the head demon; polite, cheery and competent. He dresses like the FreeBSD demon. http://clarus.chez-alice.fr/Museum/Mascots/FreeBSD_daemon_large.jpg He is the foreman in charge of the furnaces. Fred acts confidently throughout the scene. He's a trusted worker in good standing with Beelzebub. Fred can be played by a woman; in this case swap all references to Elsie and Fred.

EDGAR BRONFMANN He's elegantly dressed.

Comic Perspective: Hell is well run and a fine place to be. They are tormented by the residents of heaven. Hell is unpleasant only thanks to the conditions under which they're forced to live.

Flaw: Francesca has spirit and is incompatible with an orderly and polite world.

Humanity: everyone in Hell take pride in their work and lifestyle. Everyone is well treated.

Situation: Hell. Not the place you expect to work well.

Everything in Hell works and is run well. The citizens have great pride in the functioning of the place. They do their best with the limited resources and in the sometimes arduous conditions. There are no computers or modern technology in hell; everything is done by hand.

It's hot in Hell (at least in Beelzebub's office). The humans, Francesca and Edgar Bronfmann express distress about

the heat. Initially Francesca continually fans herself and pants. Edgar being a gentleman (and wearing a suit) takes out a handkerchief and mops his brow occasionally.

Beelzebub and Fred Demon are quite comfortable in the heat.

Heaven is depicted much like a govt bureaucracy, where nothing works, but great effort is made so that everything appears to work.

Between the inner office with Beelzebub and the outer office with Francesca, there is an (imaginary) wall with a door that opens in towards Beelzebub. The wall is edgeways to the audience.

people enter and leave the office on Francesca's side.

Thanks to Georgina for help with the names of Fred's three daughters.

Props: trident and (halloween devil) horns for all players. two office trident stands (possibly waste paper bins or umbrella stands), one at Francesca's desk and the other at Beelzebub's desk, to hold visitor's tridents.

The residents of hell wear halloween devil's horns (only 2-3" long, discretely small, small enough to be seen from the audience, but not large enough to be overwhelming.) The residents with horns initially are Beelzebub and Fred Demon. I'm not sure when to have Francesca start wearing horns. When she first starts wearing them, it's a signal to the audience that she's decided she belongs in hell. A good place might be when she appears riding the train with the kids. Another place would be at the final bow. Edgar doesn't have horns till the final bow.

When I need a property of heaven that I don't know, I use whatever they do in God's own country (the US), *e.g.* be on the lookout for suspicious activity which came from the security theatre in place in WDC, when I visited for the 4th Jul fireworks in 2015.

When I need a property of Hell, I use Australia (hot, universal health care, public transport)

Credits: The engineer appearing in hell by mistake (and installing air conditioning and flush toilets) is from a humorous comment on the tech website slashdot. This was a long time ago and I didn't record who said it.

God having a bothersome girlfriend is from a joke where a famous movie director arrives at the Pearly Gates, after a lifetime of dealing with big egos and prima donnas, hoping for an eternity of rest, only to find that he's expected to direct a movie starring God's latest girlfriend, who we're told "sings".

I made Francesca the heroine of the story after watching

a play at DA, set during WWII in coastal north east USA, following a landing of German spies/commandos from a boat/submarine. In a castle a group of actors are trying to write a play, following the murder of one of them. The chorus girl who initially appears to be the least likely to do anything useful, is actually a lieutenant in the navy, there to break the spy ring and at the end of the play has everyone figured out and knows who the murderer is. I thought if she can do this, then God's girlfriend can do the same in hell.

The Devil loosing so many from people repenting on their deathbed is spoken by Peter Cook in "Bedazzled".

The phrase "after that it goes into a bit of a decline" is from Douglas Adams, The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.

God loving unconditionally, is from Jim Jeffries "God at a party".

Shuttering the tram windows is from a movie depicting the Warsaw ghetto. The trams when they went through the ghetto were shuttered, so the passengers would not see the living conditions in the ghetto.

The payment in gold is from the Nazi era, when payment for services rendered to the Nazis was expected in gold, as much counterfeit money was in circulation.

The notion that that the celestial bookkeeping software could crash is from a cartoon by Gary Larson. He has a cartoon with a bunch of very happy pigs each on a fluffy cartoon cloud, with a wary nerd dangling his legs over the edge of one of the clouds, while a pig next to him looks at him somewhat askanse. The caption is "Due to a celestial bookkeeping error, Ernie winds up in hog heaven."

The christians who watch Fox news on big screen TVs are modelled on a friend I've known since I was a teenager. He taught me a lot about being a father, and has played a big role in my life in many other ways.

15 Jun 2016. Took this to Cary Playwrights forum last night. I thought it was brilliant and they'd want to stage it right away.

Most of the time I take a play to these people I come back thinking I've done it all wrong. I get so many ideas, that I can't figure out how to fit any of them it. The "Graduation Day" and "Robots" sketches are both jammed as a result of this. I don't want to write like they want me to write. Am I wrong? What is right? What is popular? Is there a better way to get my message across? Have they missed my message?

They wanted to know the point. I said "to show that hell isn't as bad as it's been made out to be". The response was to have balloons for the kids when they arrived at

the station. Balloons isn't what I think of as fun. Hell is too poor to be wasting money on fripperies. I then said "to show that God is mean". I wasn't real confident about saying this in front of people I don't know well, particularly when one black guy seems to be a christian. One woman (who had done a piece on a woman with Alzheimers, that I thought was worthless) said that I should show god being mean and that god should appear in the play. Having god say "I'm mean" (or it's equivalent) is tell, not show. It's much more evil to show God in the background, where he's not accountable and no-one can tell what he's thinking, with god's actions just seeming to be the way it is. I think stopping the 9th train is pretty mean. No-one said "well this is pretty neat". They didn't seem to get it.

Lydia asked if hell was a nice place, why do you need the 2nd half. I said that you can't just say hell is a nice place. You have to show the people in hell behaving in a way that shows that it is a nice place.

Lydia and a few other people thought if hell was a nice place, why were the kids crying when they got to hell? They should be happy eg balloons on arrival. I didn't say this, but I thought the kids would be unhappy leaving their parents. I thought of the kids leaving eastern europe being separated from their parents under duress. I was unhappy about being separated from my dad, but that was mostly because I was told I wouldn't be able to make it without my dad. On reading some of the stories of the KinderTransport program, some of the kids thought they were on a big adventure, so not all were crying. Lydia thought it was creepy the kids crying on arrival. I thought it was normal. I asked her if having the kids being happy on arrival would fix it. She said no. I got there were underlying problems here

People wondered why only the kids were being let out. I thought it was because god was being mean and wanted to make it as difficult as possible for the parents to let them go. Because it was a bureaucracy and no-one was ever going to tell you. I reluctantly said it was because god was mean. People offered suggestions, eg because god loved everyone unconditionally, and didn't want the adults to leave. I guess they didn't get it. The bit about a million years confused Phil at least. I'll have to cut the time down.

most people were familiar with the real KinderTransport program, so having this in my piece would not be a new idea to them.

The casting was terrible. Edgar couldn't read. Francesca was filled with ennui, like Danielle at NoShame, rather than being alive. Phil was a bored devil. Half of the people weren't there last time and so didn't know that hell was a nice place and that heaven wasn't.

They wanted to know if hell was better than heaven. They're different. Hell is poor, but the people are nice to each

other (like Australia). Heaven is like the US; everyone has an iPod and is told that this is what they want and that they have things that no-one else in the world wants, but they live a soulless existence, where society doesn't value them. Which is better, heaven or hell? The answer is not yes or no. It depends on what you value.

one person (the Francesca filled with ennui) saw too many phone calls. I said I needed those to convey that the other person was in heaven. I didn't get what was wrong with having the phone calls. She wasn't there last month. There is a fair bit of staging that got lost in a reading. Maybe that would help.

The conversion of Edgar to decide to join hell (someone said) should have been more dramatic. They thought he should have been the protagonist. I would have thought that everyone would have been watching Edgar to wait to see which way he goes. You don't need to see him gradually conveying that he's choosing sides. Clearly when there's no 9th train, he has to join hell.

I think that Francesca is the main person, but with the reader we had last night, you weren't going to see this.

ACT ONE

FADE IN

1. INT. OFFICE --- DAY

Beelzebub is doing a crossword.

BEELZEBUB

(loudly to get
through closed door)Francesca! An 8 letter word for a
creature that attends God.

FRANCESCA

(stops applying
lipstick, loudly)You mean cherubim? They're
mythical you know. The word is a
transliteration from the Greek.
No-one has a clue what they are.
There aren't any up there.

BEELZEBUB

(loudly,
disappointed)

Oh, Sure. OK. Whatever.

silence. Francesca resumes her makeup. Beelzebub looks
thoughtfully at his crossword.

BEELZEBUB (CONT'D)

(loudly)

Francesca! 13 letters. The
disease vector for "The Plague",
you know, which killed 30-60% of
Europe in the Middle Ages?

FRANCESCA

(somewhat annoyed,
gets up and opens
door and talks
through it at normal
volume.)*Yersinia pestis*. I thought you were
responsible for that. How come you
don't remember it?

BEELZEBUB

(looks up at sound
of door opening,

(MORE)

CONTINUED

BEELZEBUB (CONT'D)

talks at normal
volume.)

That was evolution. We had nothing
to do with it.

Francesca closes door and sits back at her desk.

silence.

Francesca engages in floosey activities. Francesca could resume her makeup, look at herself in mirror, blow bubble gum bubbles (Lolita style, except there's nowhere on stage to get rid of the bubble gum later).

While Francesca is applying makeup, Fred Demon enters stage-right. and stands far enough back that Francesca doesn't notice him. He doesn't notice Francesca. He is is carrying a trident in one hand.

Fred does activities to indicate that he's a demon. These activities (*e.g.* checking his garb) indicate that he is lower status than Beelzebub and must put in a good appearance. Fred knows he does a good job and that his efforts to put in a good appearance will be noticed. Fred first brushes down the front of his jacket, then reaches around and grabs his tail to check it, running his hands along it bringing the distal end into view. He outlines the arrow of the pointy end, indicating that his tail terminates in a point. He exaggeratedly touches the point gingerly and withdraws his finger in pain. He then checks the horns on his head, by touching the points, again indicating pain.

Fred steps into the office and is surprised to see Francesca at the desk.

Francesca, being new, is surprised too. She doesn't know what goes on in Hell. She's not expecting anyone.

FRED DEMON

(cheerily)

Oh Hello. I have an appointment to
see Beelzebub.

Francesca goes into "I'm in charge here mode" and is not about to let some mere tradesman through to the inner sanctum.

FRANCESCA

And who might you be?

FRED DEMON

(polite and
friendly)

I'm Fred Demon. I run the
furnaces.

CONTINUED

Francesca makes a show of checking the appointment book as if she expects not to find his name. She eventually finds that Fred is an acceptable personage. For a joke, you could make the appointment book a huge thick book, like the Akashic Record (or the book that Mickey Mouse has to flip through as the sourcerer's apprentice), which Francesca has to heave open, and whose pages are large and have to be flipped over with both hands.

FRANCESCA

(formally)

Ah. Thank you Mr Demon. Please have a seat. He'll be with you shortly.

Fred remains standing. He checks his watch and looks satisfied (he's on time).

FRED DEMON

(polite and friendly)

And who are you?

FRANCESCA

(Looking down her nose, as if she's been here all her life and owns the place)

I'm Francesca. I started yesterday.

Fred carefully touches each point of the trident, checking for sharpness, exaggeratedly withdrawing in pain with each one.

Fred looks around for somewhere to put his trident. Francesca points to the trident stand.

FRED DEMON

I'm not supposed to let it out of my reach you know.

FRANCESCA

(Francesca looking as if she'll touch it anytime she wants)

I promise I won't touch it.

Fred puts his trident in the trident stand, then gesticulates towards the ground in front of him, when he delightedly sees a sheet of flames spring out of the ground. He waves the smoke away, coughing.

Francesca runs around the desk waving the smoke out of the

CONTINUED

way, coughing and making a big deal about the smoke. She bends down to check the carpet. She's mystified to find that it's OK and looks up at Fred puzzled.

FRANCESCA (CONT'D)
There's no burn marks?! How did you do that?

Fred looks at his watch then knocks on the door, leaving the trident behind.

BEELZEBUB
(loudly)
Come in!

Fred strides across to stand in front of Beelzebub's desk. Beelzebub stands up and shakes his hand.

BEELZEBUB (CONT'D)
Well it's Fred Demon. How's things at the furnaces?

Francesca notices that the trident is still in the trident stand. She picks it up whereupon it starts to vibrate. Francesca's hands shake and she looks mildly alarmed. After trying a few things to stop it vibrating, she puts the trident on her shoulder, like it was a baby, and strokes the trident, when it stops vibrating. She walks through the door without knocking as if she owns the place.

FRANCESCA
(hands trident to Fred)
Mr Demon?!

FRED DEMON
(cautiously)
Er. Thank you. You aren't supposed to touch anyone else's trident you know.

FRANCESCA
Whatever you say Mr Demon.

Fred Demon puts his trident into the trident stand in Beelzebub's office.

Francesca returns to her desk, resumes fanning herself (because of the heat) and looking in the mirror, fixing her hair.

Fred turns to Beelzebub.

FRED DEMON
The furnaces? They're great,
(MORE)

CONTINUED

FRED DEMON (CONT'D)

great. We've had a record year of output and zero down time and zero time lost to injuries. Worker morale is at an all time high. It's our best year yet. Projections for next year, indicate a healthy 3% increase in output.

BEELZEBUB

Fantastic! One Hell of a good job.

About here Francesca decides to organise the office. She goes to the file cabinets, opens a few, looks at the files, has a look of dismay, or rolling of eyes, take a few folders out, puts them on her desk, reorders a few of them, throws a few out, puts them back in different filing cabinets. Repeat. Takes the trash out.

FRED DEMON

(stage whisper,
pointing to the
door)

Who's that?!

BEELZEBUB

Francesca. She's God's most recent girlfriend. She told God that he was full of himself. He told her to go to hell. She didn't think that such a bad idea and yesterday afternoon, caught the next train down here. After asking for directions, she appeared here looking for a job. She said she could organise an office, so here she is. She seems to fit in just fine. I don't think she'll want to go back.

FRED DEMON

I didn't think anyone ever got
out.

BEELZEBUB

The official position is that no-one wants to leave. In Francesca's case, God couldn't wait to be rid of her.

FRED DEMON

Have you looked at God's latest book? We really get a hammering.

BEELZEBUB

You're talking about the second one
(MORE)

CONTINUED

BEELZEBUB (CONT'D)

right?

FRED DEMON

Are you going to write a rebuttal?

BEELZEBUB

(calmly dismissive)

No, that wouldn't do a thing. Besides the book is just *ad hominem* attacks, name calling and invective. There's nothing of substance there. It's not like they can point to anything we've done wrong.

FRED DEMON

What about all the accustions of torture and roasting people's souls for eternity?

BEELZEBUB

That's Dante. Listen, the people who come here are liars, cheats, thieves, whores, whorers, as well as adolescents who stay awake late at night thinking about people of the opposite sex that they like. They're MY people. Does anyone really believe I'd do anything like that to MY people?

FRED DEMON

Of course not.

BEELZEBUB

Besides if anyone thinks about it, they already know what it's like here. You remember the last time they took all the drunkards, misfits and people who challenged authority, locked them up, clapped them in chains and shipped them off to live in primitive conditions, to a hot, dry, godforsaken place, inhabited by the most venomous creatures in existence, where the vegetation burst into a conflagration of flames every summer, reducing everything in its path to ash, and from where they could never get back?

FRED DEMON

You mean Australia?

CONTINUED

BEELZEBUB

Yes! Exactly! This place is just like Australia.

BEELZEBUB (CONT'D)

Besides the only people who'll read it are Americans. The Buddhists are amused by it; they opt to reincarnate everytime, even when they don't have to. The Muslims will recognise the book as the work of Infidels and not of God. The rest of the world couldn't care less. They're just going about their business, working hard, raising kids, taking them to soccer, and baking cookies for their kid's school.

FRED DEMON

About the engineer ...

BEELZEBUB

(most pleased)

Oh yes. Wasn't that incredible? We've never had an engineer here before. The Celestial Bookkeeping software went down in a server crash. Next thing they'd lost track of him and somehow he wound up here. From what I can tell, they're not sure if he's missing or he never existed. God keeps calling up to ask if we've seen him. I always say I don't know a thing about him.

FRED DEMON

(mock concern)

That was most unfortunate.

BEELZEBUB

Of course, no-one accepted responsibility for the crash ...

FRED DEMON

(Fred nods in resigned agreement)

I expect they were all too afraid.

BEELZEBUB

(becoming a little worked up)

... and WE were blamed for it. God tells everyone that these

(MORE)

CONTINUED

BEELZEBUB (CONT'D)

things happen because they've sinned. Of course they haven't, so there's nothing they can do to prevent the next disaster. This keeps the residents of heaven in constant turmoil. The populace is told to be ever vigilant and to be on the lookout for suspicious activity. It's all theatre, but it keeps them on edge and thinking that God cares about them.

Francesca does physicality to show that her cell phone doesn't work. She starts in time to finish the physicality when Fred leaves. Francesca takes out her cell phone, looks at it puzzled, presses buttons on it, shakes it gently, rotates it, getting no satisfaction from it. She opens up her handbag, retrieves the charger, plugs it into the cell phone and then walks around the room trying to find a power plug, but without success. She gives up and returns to her desk.

FRED DEMON

Ah ... the engineer

BEELZEBUB

Oh right, sorry. So how's he doing?

FRED DEMON

In the beginning he wasn't real happy to be here, but once he saw how much work there was to do, he's as happy as a clam. First thing he did was install air conditioning. It's set at 25degC day and night for anyone who wants it.

Francesca reaches a peak of heat distress (fanning...)

BEELZEBUB

ah yes, blessed relief. Well of course we don't need any airconditioning here in the admin building and we've never turned it on. We kinda like it at 37degC. The hotter, the better, I always say.

FRED DEMON

Next he's working on flush toilets.

BEELZEBUB

Great. Say how's the family doing?

CONTINUED

FRED DEMON

Elsie is fine

BEELZEBUB

The girls?

FRED DEMON

They're great. I'm so happy with them. Aurora dances, Calyptra plays soccer and Phaedra plays the violin and piano.

BEELZEBUB

I expect you're busy then, running them around everywhere.

FRED DEMON

Well gotta go, idle hands and all that you know.

BEELZEBUB

yes, a minute lost is a minute wasted.

Fred Demon and Beelzebub shake hands. Fred Demom forgets his trident and exits through door.

Francesca looks at Fred as he leaves, noticing that he's not carrying his trident. She walks into Beelzebub's office without knocking. Both look at the trident in the trident stand

BEELZEBUB (CONT'D)

(slightly bemused,
elbow on table, chin
in hand)

he does this a lot

Francesca strides purposefully towards the trident

BEELZEBUB (CONT'D)

(cautiously)

You're not supposed to touch anyone else's trident you know.

FRANCESCA

(authoritatively)

we're on good terms

Francesca picks up the trident and puts it on her shoulder like a baby, where to Satan's surprise, it doesn't vibrate. Francesca walks back to her desk, and leans the trident against her desk. (She doesn't put it in the trident stand.)

Francesca checks the next appointment (in a book, perhaps

CONTINUED

the very big and heavy book) and smiles as if she's ready for the next person.

Here I have to let the audience know who's coming next.

FRANCESCA (CONT'D)

Ah, Edgar Bronfmann

Edgar walks into the office. He's hot (wipes forehead).

EDGAR

(graciously)

Hello. I'm Edgar Bronfmann. I have an appointment.

FRANCESCA

Good afternoon Mr Bronfmann. We're expecting you. Please take a seat. He'll be with you shortly.

Edgar remains standing.

I suggest some physicality to show a connection with whiskey, also to show Edgar being graciously dressed. *e.g.* straightening tie (also mops brow from heat). Edgar looks with consideration at the shelf, noticing that it contains items of interest and picks a bottle from it, uncorks it, tests the smell as if savouring the vapours, pours a shotglass of whiskey, and drinks it slowly enough to be testing the taste of Beelzebub's whiskey.

FRANCESCA (CONT'D)

You may go in Mr Bronfmann

Edgar walks in. Beelzebub and Edgar shake hands like gentlemen.

Francesca had not noticed the contents of the shelf. She scrutinises the shelf and takes a bottle back to her desk, and pours herself drinks, without any of the elegance of Edgar, while fanning herself and applying makeup.

EDGAR

Hello Beelzebub. Nice 100yr old single malt you have there. Better than anything I ever produced.

BEELZEBUB

Hello Edgar. Nice to see you. Yes we make it ourselves. Nothing like it in the other place either (points overhead) of course.

BEELZEBUB (CONT'D)

I'd heard you were on your way. The other place knows who's coming

(MORE)

CONTINUED

BEELZEBUB (CONT'D)
of course, but they never tell us.
Makes it hell for planning.

Beelzebub and Edgar suddenly cringe and cup their hands over their ears.

EDGAR
What's that?

BEELZEBUB
It's the heavenly choirs. Everyone has to stop whatever they're doing, and sing to God, telling him how much they love him. We get a specially amplified version down here.

Francesca searches through her desk drawers, and pulls out over-the-head ear protectors.

Edgar and Beelzebub continue by shouting.

EDGAR
It's a bit over the top isn't it? If he's still feeling unloved, after all this time, he must realise that it's not working. Shouldn't he try therapy?

BEELZEBUB
As we all know, therapy doesn't work, All the psychologists are up there, while their clients, all wind up down here, depressed and convinced it's their fault that all the years of therapy didn't work.

music stops. The audience is shown this by everyone stopping talking, taking their hands off their ears and cautiously looking around. After checking, Francesca removes ear protectors.

BEELZEBUB (CONT'D)
(brightly)
So you're moving in, eh? I expect with all the money you and your family made in Montreal during prohibition, you'd all wind up here eventually.

EDGAR
Well actually, it's a bit complicated. I also negotiated to help people out of Russia
(MORE)

CONTINUED

EDGAR (CONT'D)

during the communist era; Jews and prisoners of conscience, and I helped recover looted money from Swiss banks. Now would you believe it, I've been declared a righteous man.

BEELZEBUB

(incredulous)

No way! You're going to be up there?! Goddammit, there's no justice. You belong down here fair and square.

EDGAR

It's not that simple. God doesn't know what to do with me, so he's going to let me choose. I get a free pass; I can go backwards and forwards whenever I like, for as long and often as I want.

BEELZEBUB

Well at least you didn't repent on your death bed. We loose so many that way. Well, we'd love to have you here, Edgar. Take your time and have a look around and see if there's a place you like.

EDGAR

(changing from
graceous to serious)

Listen; I'm not just here to chit-chat. Everything isn't as it appears. I had a quick look around and there's a bunch of people up there who want to get out.

Francesca perks up and walks to the door to listen in.

BEELZEBUB

(puzzled)

oh?

EDGAR

As you know, the biggie in heaven is bliss for eternity. Most people are delighted; these are the ones who spend their lives in front of a 210 cm TV screen watching Fox news and spectator sports, and who go to church on sunday to sing praises to God. The problem is that these

(MORE)

CONTINUED

EDGAR (CONT'D)

people are driven by the terror of going straight to hell. To make sure they don't go to hell, they marry as virgins, never smoke dope and never divorce. Can you imagine these people as neighbours?

BEELZEBUB

(shakes head or recoils in horror)

No. Absolutely not.

EDGAR

The big surprise about bliss is that the rest of the people can't stand it. If you have any creativity or drive or you're the slightest bit restless, you're quickly bored out of your skull with bliss. At first it's great, then it's OK, but after that it goes into a bit of a decline. These people look down here and see all their friends. It's an open secret that these people want out. Of course they're all vilified by the other residents.

BEELZEBUB

Can you get them out?

EDGAR

I'm going to try. It seems that no-one has ever wanted to leave.

BEELZEBUB

Yes, that's the official position.

EDGAR

The problem is that God doesn't want them to go. He loves them unconditionally and thinks that they'd be better off staying with him. Besides if half of heaven bolted for the door, the people left behind might wonder what was going on. It would be a PR disaster of the first order.

Beelzebub and Edgar shake hands as if they hold each other in high esteem.

BEELZEBUB

Let me know if I can be of any help.

CONTINUED

Francesca hurries from Beelzebub's door, where she's been listening, to her chair, Edgar leaves. Francesca and Edgar exchange pleasant glances of acknowledgement.

Fred Demon comes running in to retrieve his trident, he notices it leaning against Francesca's desk and not in the trident stand.

FRED DEMON

you're not supposed to touch anyone
else's trident!

FRANCESCA

It's mine now. It wants to be with
me. You keep forgetting it. Go
learn to be nice to a trident and
then get yourself another one.

Fred reaches for the trident, which vibrates strongly in his hands. He puts it back down looking at Francesca, who gives him a "see?!" look. Fred backs away from Francesca and leaves the room.

edit

Edgar is in heaven. I don't have any great ideas on how to show this. For simplicity, I suggest he stands on a chair behind Beelzebub, against the back wall of the stage. He will be elevated and a bit remote. Edgar picks up phone. Beelzebub picks up.

BEELZEBUB

(cheerily)

Hi Edgar. How's things?

Francesca picks up phone to listen in on conversation.

EDGAR

(serious)

It's done. They're going to let
them all out, every one of them.
It's a one time deal. They'll need
passports and travel documents.
I'll get you a list.

BEELZEBUB

(changing mood to
fit the gravity of
the situation)

Can do. We have the best forgers
here.

EDGAR

There's going to be a levy for
each person leaving. This is
to compensate for alienation of

(MORE)

CONTINUED

EDGAR (CONT'D)
 affections. God wants want payment
 in gold. Can you handle that?

BEELZEBUB
 (pause, thinks
 carefully)
 ...Yes.

EDGAR
 There'll be multiple train
 loads. All the carriages will be
 shuttered.

BEELZEBUB
 so they can't see the rest of
 heaven on the way out?

EDGAR
 so none of the other residents know
 that anyone's leaving.

BEELZEBUB
 Get us the list. We'll handle it.

They hang up. Edgar steps down from his chair and walks off stage. Francesca hangs up by pushing the cradle down with her fingers, and then putting the handset down.

Francesca starts looking through the rolodex, phone book (or something) and dials the phone. This scene shows Francesca starting to take initiative.

FRANCESCA
 Forgery, It's Francesca. Oh,
 you know who I am? Great! Well
 listen. This is a heads up.
 They're letting a bunch of people
 out from heaven. Yes, isn't that
 wonderful news? It's a one time
 deal. We'll need passports and
 travel documents. You'll handle
 it? Great. I'll get you the names
 and photos.

Beelzebub walks into Francesca's office.

BEELZEBUB
 They're letting a bunch of people
 out from heaven. I'll get you a
 list. Can you let forgery know
 we'll need passports and travel
 documents.

Francesca is not doing to explicitly let Beelzebub know she's already handled it.

CONTINUED

FRANCESCA

I'll get right onto it.

edit

Beelzebub at desk, reviewing reports. You could have him riffling through IBM fanfold printouts from the 1960's.

Francesca walks into her office, carrying passports and travel documents. Puts them on the floor next to her desk.

FRANCESCA (CONT'D)

(calls out to
Beelzebub)

The passports and travel documents
are here!

Francesca makes a couple of trips to bring them all in.
Sits at her desk.

Don't know whether to have Beelzebub relieved, happy, or
think this is routine.

BEELZEBUB

Great (or great! or whew)

Edgar steps up and stands on chair on back wall, as if in
heaven. Edgar dials, Beelzebub picks up. Francesca picks
up straight after Beelzebub picks up.

EDGAR

There's been a change of plans.
They're only going to let the
children go, children 6 and under.
I don't know what happened, I'm
sorry. Everyone's stopped talking.
There's 930 children. It's called
KinderTransport. Can you handle
that?

BEELZEBUB

We'll find a way.

EDGAR

Each kid is allowed a small bag for
personal possessions, like a teddy
bear, the clothes they're wearing,
passport and travel documents.
Their nametag will be pinned to
their jacket. There will be 9
trainloads. No adults will be
allowed to accompany them on the
train. They'll be coming tomorrow,
all unaccompanied.

They all hang up, Francesca by pushing down the cradle

CONTINUED

first. Beelzebub sits stunned.

BEELZEBUB

OMG the kids are going to be on the train by themselves? What are we going to do with a bunch of kids with no parents to look after them?

Beelzebub sits down, looks lost.

Francesca confidently and resolutely pulls a pile of folders out of the cabinets and puts them on her desk. Takes the top passport off the pile on the floor (opens passport crossways and looks at photo etc), and then starts looking through the pile of folders on her desk for a match. She finds a match, and holding the passport in front of her, picks up the phone.

FRANCESCA

Hi Francesca here. Yes it's me. You know about me? Oh great. Listen, I'm calling about operation KinderTransport. You know about it? Oh, good. Yes, there's been a change of plans; the kids are coming by themselves. Yes there's no parents coming. We're looking for families to take them in. Would you like one of the children? We've found one that we think is a perfect match for you. His name is ... (looks at passport) ... Oskar, he's 4 yrs old and he's very handsome.

FRANCESCA (CONT'D)

You'd love to? Oh wonderful. He'll be on train 4 tomorrow. Fred Demon will be at the platform to handle the arrangements. I know you'll be very happy with Oskar. He's such a sweet child. Thanks very much.

Francesca puts the now matched passport and folder together on a separate pile on the floor.

She looks at the clock on the wall ruefully and rubs her tummy as if she's hungry. She takes the next passport off the floor, and starts looking for a match in the pile on her desk.

Beelzebub walks out of his office, still confused, to talk to Francesca. Francesca has her fingers on a folder and a passport in her hand, and is miming talking on the phone. As she sees him at her desk, she speaks into the phone

CONTINUED

FRANCESCA (CONT'D)
 (into the phone)
 Can you wait a second. Sorry, I
 won't be a moment.

then puts her hand over the phone.

BEELZEBUB
 Francesca, there's been a problem

FRANCESCA
 I'm onto it

she puts her hand up to stop Beelzebub from talking and
 resumes talking on the phone.

FRANCESCA (CONT'D)
 Her name is ... (looking at
 passport) ... Liselle. She's
 6 yrs old and is as bright as a
 button. I just know you're going
 to love her. She's wonderful.
 She'll be on train 3. Thanks so
 much.

Francesca look up at Beelzebub with "well?". Beelzebub
 looks at the folders on her desk and the floor, figures out
 that she finding families for the kids, looks at the clock
 on the wall to show that he realises that Francesca should
 have left work by now and will be hungry.

BEELZEBUB
 Don't go away. I'll be right back.

Beelzebub exits, through the same door that Fred used.
 Francesca keeps miming talking on the phone, matching
 folders. Every now and again she'll say

FRANCESCA
 ... Hans ... he's just lovely.
 Oh thank you so much.

FRANCESCA (CONT'D)
 ... Anna ...

FRANCESCA (CONT'D)
 ... Roland ...

Beelzebub walks in carrying a grocery bag. He pulls out
 trays of fast food, which Francesca looks at with interest.
 Beelzebub goes into his office (dont' forget to open and
 close door) and retrieves his chair. Francesca moves her
 chair over to allow Beelzebub to sit down with her.

CONTINUED

FRANCESCA (CONT'D)
 (inspecting trays of
 food)
 Cafe duPont? We have french fast
 food?

BEELZEBUB
 God finds the French insufferably
 arrogant.

FRANCESCA
 He'd know.

BEELZEBUB
 There's not one of them up there.
 They're all down here, every last
 frenchman.

both eat. Francesca hands him a pile of folders

FRANCESCA
 Listen. It's going to be a long
 night. Here's a pile of 100 kids
 to match. I've taped the standard
 spiel on the top. Want to make a
 start?

Beelzebub looks daunted. Both continue to eat as they work
 the phones.

BEELZEBUB
 sure.

Beelzebub opens passport and holds it in front of him.

BEELZEBUB (CONT'D)
 Hi! Mephistopheles here. ...Yes,
 it really is me. Well, nice to
 talk to you too.

BEELZEBUB (CONT'D)
 Yes (haha), you haven't seen me for
 a while. I know I used to lead
 the midwinter parade. Yes, I got
 all dressed up, looking mean and
 evil, and you all shook your fists
 at me and pelted me with rotten
 vegetables.

BEELZEBUB (CONT'D)
 Well, yeah, I don't do it any
 more. It got a bit hard after
 a while. I always felt a bit
 depressed after the parade, hours
 of people yelling abuse at me. I

(MORE)

CONTINUED

BEELZEBUB (CONT'D)

know it was a parade and everything and it was supposed to be fun, but year after year, it wore me down. Back in the dark ages, when everyone was terrified of me, I had to do it, to give everyone some relief, but since then we've had the enlightenment, the renaissance, modern medicine, science, universal healthcare and universal education. People aren't nearly so afraid of me anymore ... thank goodness.

BEELZEBUB (CONT'D)

When the big bad wolf came along, he jumped at the chance to lead the midwinter parade. He turned the whole thing around. Now all the girls dress up as Little Red Riding Hood. They carry baskets full of goodies and give out cakes to friends and the people watching the parade. The boys all dress up as the three little pigs. They make oinking noises at each other and eat cakes, with their hands behind their backs, which the little girls offer them. Other boys dress up as wolves in sheep's clothing. The big bad wolf loves doing it.

BEELZEBUB (CONT'D)

Do I miss doing the parade? No. Not really. It wasn't fun, at least the way I did it.

BEELZEBUB (CONT'D)

Oh, I mostly just do management now. It's much less stressful than in the old days. I used to have to deal with people who were terrified. They'd been told they were sinful and I was going to do horrible things to them. None of it was true of course, but they were all traumatised. It took them ages to recover and they were never quite the same afterwards.

BEELZEBUB (CONT'D)

(picks up spiel,
changes tone)

Say, have you heard about the KinderTransport program? You have?

(MORE)

CONTINUED

BEELZEBUB (CONT'D)

My, my, word gets around. We have a lovely little girl we think you'd like. Her name is (holds up passport) ah ... Lotte She's 5yrs old ... and (back to reading the spiel). she's as bright as a button. I just know you're going to love her. You'd love to have her? Oh wonderful. She'll be on train 5 tomorrow. Fred Demon will meet you at the platform to handle the arrangements. Thanks very much.

Beelzebub and Francesca mime more phone calls

edit

Beelzebub and Francesca look at the completed piles of matched documents on the floor, shake hands, look exhausted, and both put their heads and arms down on the desk asleep.

edit

two chairs against the back wall in separate spots (one behind Francesca's desk and one behind Beelzebub's desk). Francesca and Edgar will stand on them whenever they're in heaven.

there are several people on the stage at one time. They are in different locations (heaven, hell). Usually only one pair are active. You could show this by only lighting the people speaking. If there are no lights, the inactive people on stage, could remain motionless.

Beelzebub at desk, with trident leaning against desk.

Francesca standing on chair on back wall (ie in heaven). She doesn't have to have her trident.

Fred Demon on floor mid stage right. Has his trident.

Francesca picks up phone, Beelzebub answers.

BEELZEBUB (CONT'D)

Francesca, where are you?

(Joe: this is tell rather than show. How do I show?) maybe Francesca could walk through the train, looking at kids, comforting some of them.

FRANCESCA

I'm riding the train. Someone needed to be with the kids. Some
(MORE)

CONTINUED

FRANCESCA (CONT'D)

kids are just bewildered, they don't know if they're going on a picnic or what. Other children are sobbing convulsively and pleading not to be sent away. The kid's peers, who are staying behind, teased them, telling them they've been bad and are being condemned to hell. The scene on the platform as the train was about to leave was just searing. The parents were crying their eyes out, trying to let their kids go. There's still another 8 trainloads of parents and kids back there on the platform, saying goodbye to each other over and over. I've never seen such a scene.

BEELZEBUB

Can you blame them? The parents and kids are never going to see each other again. How did you get on the train? I thought no-one was allowed to accompany the kids.

FRANCESCA

Everyone here remembers me for what I did to God. When I approached the train, they all turned a blind eye and I just stepped on board. I'm going to ride each train, to be with the kids.

Francesca and Beelzebub hangup

edit

train arrives. Assume the end of the train is facing the audience. Francesca is standing mid stage right (not standing on the chair anymore). She's in the train. Fred steps forward and opens two doors simultaneously outwards, like french shutters. Francesca picks up a kid with one arm and reaches down to hold the hand of another kid. Assume there is a line of kids holding hands behind her. She gently encourages the kids to follow her off the train.

Francesca steps out of the train with the kids.

using the following names

... Oskar ...

... Liselle ...

CONTINUED

... Anna ...

... Roland ...

... Lotte ...

she looks at the kid she's holding, and then looks at the kid's nametag calling out the name. Fred checks the name. Francesca kisses the kid and hands him/her to the new parents. After she's given the kid to new parents, she waves good bye to the kid. Francesca picks up the next kid and repeats the process for bunch of kids, enough to raise emotions amongst the audience. Francesca then steps back on the train. Francesca gives a co-worker type good-bye wave to Fred who shuts the train doors. Francesca exits to the back of the stage, strap hanging, to indicate that the train is moving and she has to hold onto something.

Fred Demon calls Beelzebub.

BEELZEBUB

Fred, how's things at the station?

FRED DEMON

The first trainload has been dropped off. Everything went according to plan. Francesca stepped off the train holding the hand of the first kid in a chain of kids. We matched the kids to their new families. All the kids on the first train are now accounted for. The train is on it's way back now.

FRED DEMON (CONT'D)

The kids are wondering if this is a strange day out. They all want their mommies and daddies. Many are crying. It's going to take them a while to adjust to what's happened today.

I need to show that the sequence of trains, train 2 through train 7, is arriving one at a time. I don't have a good idea of how to do this. One way is the following mime. Francesca picks up the phone and then Beelzebub picks up the phone. Francesca holds up two fingers, to indicate that the second train has left. Beelzebub holds up two fingers to show that the 2nd train is in transit. They hang up. Nothing is said.

A couple of beats.

Fred pick up his phone and holds up two fingers. Beelzebub holds up two fingers again.

CONTINUED

The cycle repeats till Fred and Beelzebub are holding up 7 fingers and then put them down.

Possibly have Francesca be on the train and depositing a set of kids, in a loop, like in fast motion, to show 6 trainloads of kids arriving.

BEELZEBUB

We're almost there. This is going to be the second last train. Only one more after that and we're done.

everything stops. The rhythm of the numbers is broken. Francesca does not pick up her phone. The devil looks at his watch. The audience knows something has changed.

Edgar has been offstage. He steps onto his chair. Edgar calls. Beelzebub is not expecting him to call.

BEELZEBUB (CONT'D)

(concerned)

Edgar, where are you? What's happening?

EDGAR

I'm on the platform talking to the officials. There's going to be no 9th train. The 8th train is the last train. No-one will look me straight in the face and tell me what's going on. There's 250 kids for the 9th train still left on the platform. They are not going to be coming. They'll all be staying here. The parents have spent all day here at the platform, saying goodbye over and over and crying their eyes out, expecting to be sending their kids off to a better life, to a place, where they'll never see them again. The parents all expected the kids to be gone by now. The loudspeakers are saying there'll be no 9th train and ordering everyone to disperse and go home, and to take their kids with them. The parents don't know whether to be happy or to cry. They're just stunned and silent.

BEELZEBUB

OK Edgar. What are you going to do? Are you staying there or coming back here? Will they even let you back down here?

CONTINUED

Is "This place is hell. I'm never coming back." too heavy handed?

EDGAR

I'm throwing in my lot with you.
This place is hell. I'm never
coming back. I'm boarding the
train with Francesca.

Francesca picks up the phone and holds up 8 fingers.
Beelzebub holds up 8 fingers.

Repeat the train arrival as for the first train, except that Edgar is at the back of the imaginary line of kids. He's holding one and encouraging the other kids (who are in front of him) to follow Francesca. After Francesca hands over the kids to be checked off by Fred and passed to the new parents, Edgar steps forward with the last kid, who he's holding in his arms, and repeats the process.

Fred calls Beelzebub.

FRED DEMON

The 8th train arrived with
Francesca and Edgar. All 669 kids
are accounted for. Everyone of
them is crying and wants their
mommy and daddy. I've never seen a
scene like this.

edit

At the end of the play, when everyone lines up to bow, Beelzebub has his trident, Edgar has a trident and horns for the first time, Francesca has horns and is holding her trident, and a second trident, while Fred Demon doesn't have one. Fred and Francesca are standing next to each other. Before anyone bows, Francesca taps Fred on the shoulder with a knowing smile

FRANCESCA

Mr Demon?

and hands Fred his trident.

bows.

FADE OUT

THE END