

Two Options

By

D. Matthew Beyer

(Lights up on a somewhat ramshackle room in the Municipal Girls Orphanage. Everything is the violent shade of pink associated with small girls and Pepto-Bismol. Everything in the room has been pushed to the wall, leaving a clearing in the middle of the room. PEPPER lazily draws a pentacle on the floor with chalk and candles, occasionally stopping to look at a huge grimoire. KATE enters in a hurry.)

PEPPER.

I think that looks just about done, don't you? This had better work.

KATE.

Pepper, you still haven't drawn the symbols. You had one job-

PEPPER.

Oh, silly me. Sorry! What do those even say? I can't read these moon runes.

KATE.

I don't know, but if it's in the picture it'll do something.

PEPPER.

Fine, I can do it. Hand me the silly string, will you?

KATE.

Serious string.

PEPPER.

What?

KATE.

We're contacting the dark forces of Hell. There's nothing silly about it.

PEPPER.

If you say so. Hand me the serious string so I can draw the runes.

KATE.

Here you go.

(KATE hands PEPPER the serious string. PEPPER sprays the runes into the pentacle, talking as she does.)

PEPPER.

How do you even know all this stuff, anyway?

KATE.

Oh, I've been studying magic for several years now.

PEPPER.

Really? I did not know that.

KATE.

That's because we never talk.

PEPPER.

And whose fault is that?

KATE.

Mine. I still hate you. All of you.

PEPPER.

As long as you help me, I'm surprisingly okay with that.

KATE.

Yeah, and this way we both get what we want. I might even have the demon kill you last.

PEPPER.

What was that?

KATE.

I said I'll have the demon kill you last.

PEPPER.

That's what I thought you said. You're just so friendly, Kate.

KATE.

I have no friends. Only problems. Problems to be solved. Preferably with fire.

PEPPER.

You know, I really think I liked you better when you didn't say anything.

KATE.

Oh, I've been planning all of this for years. Tonight's the night.

PEPPER.

Do I want to know why-?

KATE.

It's too late now. You're down the rabbit hole, Alice. There's no coming back-

PEPPER.

Pepper.

KATE.

(Deeply confused.)

Can you use salt? That's all we have-

PEPPER.

No, I'm Pepper.

KATE.

I knew that. I'm psychotic, not stupid.

PEPPER.

You called me Alice. I was correcting you. Who the hell is this Alice, anyway?

KATE.

No, it was a reference. Lewis Carroll? Alice in Wonderland? Through the Looking-Glass?

PEPPER.

That sounds like one hell of a bad trip. How much did she drop to think she was falling through a mirror?

KATE.

No, I'm not talking about someone tripping balls- okay, maybe I am the books get a bit trippy- it was an allusion. Goddammit, have you ever read a book?

PEPPER.

Uh, duh. I'm reading one right now to draw the moon runes.

KATE.

It was a rhetorical question.

PEPPER.

And I gave you a rhetorical answer!

KATE.

No! You don't answer a rhetorical question. That's what makes it rhetorical!

PEPPER.

Now you're just arguing Semitics.

KATE.

Semantics.

PEPPER.

Yeah, that's what I said.

KATE.

No, you said "Semitics." I'm not arguing with an old Jewish man, I'm arguing with an idiot.

PEPPER.

You're not making any sense at all, Kate.

KATE.

(Anguished phlegm-filled scream. Aside.)

I swear to whatever god can hear me I'm killing her first.

PEPPER.

(Finishing the runes.)

Right. All done. Let's do this!

KATE.

Okay. Here goes nothing.

(Reciting while she walks around the finished summoning circle.)

Blood of the innocent, teeth of the pure. Hand of fate, wheel of time, and book of days. We call out to the dark, and wait for the dark to answer. Come forth, arcane spirits, speak with us as you once spoke with Solomon the wise. We offer two virgin souls-

PEPPER.

Um. About that.

KATE.

Oh my goodness. In the middle of the incantation, really?

PEPPER.

Well, you said "virgin" souls. And that's not really true. I'm, uh, not.

KATE.

Shit. Well, the plan should still work.

PEPPER.

Unless unwanted lesbian experiences don't count.

KATE.

What?

PEPPER.

Well, there was a girl, a ferret, and a potato and one thing lead to another and-

KATE.

Do not finish that sentence. Right. We offer one and... a half? Virgin souls to feed the armies of darkness! Come down, oh Lucifer! Rise from the ashes, fallen ones! Yekop yekoh, tup ruoy tfel dnah ni dna ekahs ti lla tuoba!

(There is a huge puff of smoke, and the room goes dark. A high-pitched scream is heard. Lights come back up, and some douche with an acoustic guitar is sitting in the center of the circle, screaming. He does have horns, though. This is JOSH, the worst demon ever.)

KATE. (cont'd)

Uh, hi?

PEPPER.

Mr. Demon sir, why are you screaming? Didn't you turn off the lights?

JOSH.

Yeah, but... the dark is scary, man.

KATE.

Who are you? Murmur? Azazel? Asmodai?

JOSH.

No, no, nope, nope. Hey. I'm Josh. All the big guys are out of the office right now, so, uh, yeah. Me. What's up?

KATE.

You're not a demon.

JOSH.

Well, not technically. Not yet, anyway. But I've got horns and I can do stuff, so yeah. If you want you can leave a message and wait for one of the big guys to call you back.

KATE.

You're kidding.

JOSH.

Nah. Sorry bro, I'm all you got right now.

KATE.

What about Belial?

JOSH.

He's at lunch, give him an hour or two.

KATE.

Astaroth?

JOSH.

On vacation in the Bahamas, won't be back in the office for a month.

KATE.
Nebirous?

JOSH.
We lost him.

KATE.
Ah, dammit. He was always my favorite in the book. I wanted to meet him.

PEPPER.
I am so sorry, it must be hard to lose a friend-

JOSH.
What? Nah, man. Dude's not dead. Demons can't die. We just lost him. And now we can't find him.

KATE.
Ugh, you're useless.

JOSH.
If you need to file a complaint about my service, man, just look up the appropriate pentacle for my supervisor. He'll get to it in 69 years.

PEPPER.
6 to 9 years? That's a long turn around on a complaint.

JOSH.
No, 69 years. Old bastard's mired down in complaints. So, bros, who requires the intervention of darkness today?

PEPPER.
I might! Do you grant wishes?

JOSH.
Company policy requires I say no. You'd have to go to the other place and ask for an R. Williams. We can, however, make deals. We specialize in Faustian bargains, man.

PEPPER.
I don't know what that means.

KATE.
Good. Um... Josh, we're both looking to make deals tonight.

JOSH.
Excellent, excellent. Is your deal related towards 1. personal gain? 2. revenge against your enemies? 3. unlocking the secrets of the universe?

KATE.
Is hell a fucking CALL CENTER?

JOSH.
Yeah, what else did you think it would be?

PEPPER.
I think I want option 1.

KATE.
I'm going to pick option 2.

JOSH.
So that's a vengeance and a gain. Alright, just let me get out our terms and conditions. Demon code, you understand. Quid pro quo, etcetera, etcetera.

(JOSH pulls two massive reams of paper from out of nowhere and hands one to each of the girls.)
Just read those over right quick and sign to signify you've read and understand. All standard procedures, man. If you have any questions, just ask me.

PEPPER.
Can we recant if we decide we don't like our deal?

JOSH.
Uh, no. Hell has a strict no take-backsies policy. Lucifer's commandment. Um, though there is the rock-off option-

PEPPER.
The what option?

JOSH.
Demons can't back down from a rock-off, man. Part of the code. If you can play a bitchin' guitar solo or a super acid bass line, then and only then you can force me to break the deal.

PEPPER.
(Singing.)
Well, Josh it's time you accept my rock-off challenge!
(The other two stare at her.)
What?

KATE.
What the hell are you doing?

PEPPER.
I'm singing. I got really emotional okay, and I thought I needed to sing a song to let it out.

KATE.

Nobody bursts out in song when they get emotional. Except maybe Annie. Do you want to be like Annie?

PEPPER.

Ugh, no. Except yes. Because adoption, you know. It's a hard knock-

KATE.

No you fucking don't.

PEPPER.

Hard-

KATE.

No.

PEPPER.

It's a hard knock-

KATE.

No no no no.

PEPPER.

It's a hard knock life!

KATE.

NO NO NO NO NO NO NO! Josh, stop her from singing-

JOSH.

Hey, hey. Let's all be friends. Just sign the papers for your friendly neighborhood hellion and you can do whatever you want.

(KATE signs immediately. After a few moments and some angry looks from KATE, PEPPER also signs.)

JOSH. (cont'd)

Well, that's all the bureaucracy out of the way. What do you guys want? Huge bag of weed, pizza, drunk debauchery, what?

KATE.

Why would those be your suggestions?

JOSH.

Isn't that what the young people are into these days?

KATE.

No, we're into arson and revenge.

JOSH.

So that's what the kids are calling it these days. Man, back in my day we just called it thrust and run-

KATE.

Shut up and listen.

JOSH.

Sure you don't want a pizza?

KATE.

I'm sure.

JOSH.

I could get you stuffed crust. Just a tiny bit of soul, stuffed crust pizza.

KATE.

I know what I want-

PEPPER.

Pizza! Pizza!

KATE.

Pepper, we have a mission-

PEPPER.

But stuffed crust, Kate! You can eat it in reverse!

KATE.

Kill all of them.

JOSH.

Uh, all of what?

KATE.

The other orphans, kill them all.

JOSH.

Dude, no. They lost their parents, that's just cruel. Besides, I'm not fucking with Batman-

KATE.

Not all the orphans in the world, the other orphans in Miss Hannigan's Municipal Orphanage Girls' Annex. And Annie.

JOSH.

Well, Annie's not an orphan... so... yeah. That's an issue.

KATE.

Kill them.

JOSH.

Here's the thing. It's small, but I'm contractually obligated to tell you that I don't have authorization to kill anyone. I can forward your request to the proper authorities and they'll deal with it, but they've got a bit of a backlog.

KATE.

How long is the backlog?

JOSH.

Um, nothing too serious. Just like a century.

KATE.

They'll have died of natural causes by then. Dammit.

JOSH.

Dude, sorry.

KATE.

You're the fucking worst demon ever. Seriously. Fuck you, Josh. What kind of name is Josh anyway?

JOSH.

Hey man, I don't appreciate your tone. I am doing my best, and you're just being abusive. That's not nice. Demons got feelings too, bro.

KATE.

Stop calling me that. I am not your "bro."

JOSH.

Chill out, Broseidon. Just go back to the brocean and feel the waves. Everything will be fine. Feel the ocean. Become the ocean.

KATE.

I swear to God I'm going to burn the world to the ground.

PEPPER.

Um, excuse me? Do I still get my wish?

JOSH.

Ma'am, it's not a wish. It's a deal. For wishes you'd have to find my nemesis up in heaven.

(A part of "Friend Like Me" from Aladdin plays from heaven.)

Ah! Fuck off, Robin Williams! We don't need any of your family friendly shenanigans! Go hang with George Carlin and River Phoenix, I've got this!

PEPPER.
Sir? Are you alright?

JOSH.
I assure you I am not too blazed to help you.

KATE.
Purify this world...

PEPPER.
I want to be loved by an old bald man.

JOSH.
What?

PEPPER.
That's my wish.

JOSH.
Loved? Like, like, like loved loved or loved?

PEPPER.
Loved. Like Annie.

JOSH.
That's kinda sketchy. That's like telling make a wish you want to be sexually initiated by Herbert down the street-

PEPPER.
What, no! Like Annie and Mr. Warbucks! Adopting her and pulling her out of poverty.

JOSH.
Uh, he's not going to be pulling out of anything. I'm a demon I know how this song goes.

PEPPER.
Oh? You do? Sing it!

JOSH.
That's a figure of speech. It's not actually a song. I'm not singing.

PEPPER.
Why is everyone so against singing?

JOSH.
Uh, because we're functional people and not idiots?

KATE.
Cut down the rainforests! Burn fossil fuels! Buy Mercedes-Benzs!

JOSH.

Okay, I take that back.

PEPPER.

Just find me my old bald man.

JOSH.

I don't feel right about this.

PEPPER.

Please? Pretty please? I just want a better life.

JOSH.

You could've asked for that, dude. Not an old bald guy.

PEPPER.

Annie found pleasure in life through an old bald guy and I want to do the same.

JOSH.

Goddamn watch your phrasing! Fine. Fine.

(JOSH claps. An old bald man, MR. ORANGE, enters, ad libbing as he does. He's a few fries short of a happy meal.)

MR. ORANGE.

Ah! The commies are invading us with demons again! Just like 1969!

JOSH.

Mr. Orange, that's not why you're here.

MR. ORANGE.

Don't use my name, boy. It's supposed to be a secret!

JOSH.

Don't worry, I'm not going to blow your cover. Just look.

(JOSH gestures to the girls and the pentacle.)

MR. ORANGE.

Oh. What's all this then?

JOSH.

You're adopting an orphan.

MR. ORANGE.

Oh? Really? I don't remember agreeing to that!

JOSH.
You don't remember what day it is.

MR. ORANGE.
Pudding day!

JOSH.
Not a real day, Mr. Orange.

MR. ORANGE.
DON'T YOU LIE TO ME BOY, I KNOW MY DAYS. It's pudding day.

PEPPER.
(As if she is looking at a unicorn,
instead of some crazy old guy.)
He's perfect.

KATE.
The hell's this? The hell's that? What the hell have I been
doing?

JOSH.
Satisfied?

PEPPER.
Oh yes, I'll take him.

MR. ORANGE.
Are you my daughter?

JOSH.
Mr. Orange, you don't have one of those.

MR. ORANGE.
Oh. Would you like to be my daughter? I just love children
so much. There's a hole in my soul that requires tiny hands
to fill. Children touch me in very special ways. And I like
to think I touch them too. Right where it counts.

JOSH.
I've made a horrible mistake.

PEPPER.
I'd very much like to be, Mr. Orange! I'm Pepper!

MR. ORANGE.
Well, Pepper, if you're going to be my daughter there's
something you should know.

PEPPER.
Oh?

MR. ORANGE.

I'm actually a secret agent, but you can't tell. It's a secret to everybody. I'm disguised as an old bald man so no one will know I'm actually an old bald man!

KATE.

That's not a disguise-

MR. ORANGE.

It's the PERFECT disguise!

KATE.

How's that fair?! You give her an old bald man like that but you just can't fix my problem?!

JOSH.

50% is good enough for me. If you have any complaints you can file them with my supervisor.

PEPPER.

Come on Dad, it's going to be just like Annie! Singing and all!

MR. ORANGE.

Don't sing! You'll blow my cover!

PEPPER.

Dammit, foiled again!

(PEPPER and MR. ORANGE exit together.)

KATE.

Josh, what the hell?

JOSH.

Sorry. Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose, sometimes you get a crazy old guy.

KATE.

He's totally lost his marbles.

JOSH.

I'm aware.

(Holds up a bright orange bag of marbles.)

He'll be back to get them.

KATE.

I don't understand.

JOSH.

See, the problem with old bald men is they're either all sexual deviants or insane. So I went with the lesser of two evils. Even devils got to draw a line somewhere.

KATE.

What about Annie and Mr. Warbucks?

JOSH.

All of them. No exceptions. Two options.

KATE.

But Mr. Warbucks isn't insane-

JOSH.

Exactly.

KATE.

Oh- oh god.

JOSH.

Not so jealous of Annie now, are you?

(KATE shivers in disgust. JOSH snaps his fingers and disappears. End of scene.)