

CHARACTERS

MAUREEN	<i>Metatron, the voice/scribe of God, alias HR facilitator and change-management agent.</i>
ROBERT SPAT	<i>Atheist, lost soul, the guinea pig.</i>
MICHAEL	<i>Archangel, Commander of the Heavenly Army. Top brass Angel reporting directly to God.</i>
MALPHAS	<i>Demon, all-powerful Great President of Hell, reporting directly to Satan.</i>
VOICEOVER	<i>Pre-recorded in the style of an 'Alan Partridge'-type character..</i>

PLOT

Heaven and Hell need a re-set. Overcrowding has reached critical mass in both traditional after-life options. A more selective approach, along with a new 'holding zone' option, are urgently required to cope with the ever-growing influx of non-believers. As undecided souls will no longer be hosted in Heaven or Hell, God and Satan are collaborating on a new project to accommodate the non-believers. 'Hellansville Holdings' is a shiny, new development designed to meet the needs of an increasingly secular society who have shuffled off this mortal coil but have nowhere to go. Before the project goes live, the top representatives from both sides meet to discuss the issues at hand: Michael, the effortlessly cool Archangel, and Malphas, a powerful demon in a crumpled suit. Together, they thrash out the details of Hellansville under the watchful, omnipotent eye of the mysterious Maureen. Enter Robert, the recently deceased, faithless guinea pig. All Michael and Malphas have to do is sell Robert the Hellansville dream. All Robert has to do is sign up for the deal of an after-life time. But he has to believe; a tough ask for a cynical, stubborn atheist.

CHARACTER SYNOPSIS

ROBERT SPAT: A 35-year-old machine operator. Keen on football and nights out with the lads but is lonely. To his friends, he is considered to be a good laugh and handy to have around when a punch-up ensues. A working singleton, he is bullish, stubborn, confrontational yet sharp, witty and intelligent. Both of Robert's parents have passed away. His mother died suddenly after a severe concussion that led to a brain tumour. His father was a God-fearing, bible-bashing bully,

prone to drinking and fits of rage, which he invariably took out on Robert and his mother. He was raised a strict Christian, but as a final act of defiance against his father, he became a devoted atheist. Robert is dismissive of all religions and forms of faith but feels an emptiness because of his stubborn stance as a non-believer. If truth be told, he is a true lost soul, perfect for the guinea pig role he is needed for.

ARCHANGEL MICHAEL: A fast-talking, sharply dressed, smooth operator. He is efficient in his approach to everything and will use all tools available to him, including the latest high-tech gadgets and gizmos. He is devoted to God but is frustrated by His less-than-enthusiastic approach to the latest modern technology. Michael reads everything and understands it instantly; he just effortlessly gets it. He is pompous, condescending and sarcastic, sometimes going so far as to give the impression that he knows more and knows better than his boss. He's a true-blue corporate ladder climber, which has led to some friction at head office. Michael is feeling the pressure. Michael and Malphas have known each other for millennia, and although they work for teams with diametrically opposed styles and approaches, there is camaraderie between them and an almost grudging admiration - but only just.

MALPHAS: Mal to his friends, he is the Great President of Hell. He's not quite sure how he got the job long ago and now fears he's becoming obsolete, worried that he might get found out. Mal is the polar opposite of Michael, who he calls Mike, just to annoy him. Although they are dressed similarly, Mal looks unkempt and shabby. He is old school; he likes paper, carbon copies, documents printed in triplicate, Tippex (liquid paper), staples and paper clips. He is devoted to Satan and loved the pure evil of the good old days but is frustrated by Satan's growing obsession with all things technical. He struggles with new concepts and fears change. He is a firm believer in 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it.' He understands there is a problem but doesn't subscribe to trying something new when the old ways have worked well enough. Mal knows that if he forgets anything, Michael will have it covered. Mal is an agitator and wants to derail progress, but this time, he can't. He is capable of great acts of evil, but he's getting old and lazy, and his boss knows it.

MAUREEN. Unexpected change management and meeting facilitator employed by God, her role in the process is also ratified by Satan. She is tasked with keeping the meeting between the two entities on track and constructive. Secretly, she is assessing Michael and Malphas closely, as both are under scrutiny by their respective bosses – neither realises the extreme fragility of their job security. Maureen is, in reality, Metatron, God's heavenly scribe; she writes the word of God. Her reach is wide, and she is trusted by both Chief Executives - God and Satan. Her powers are pretty much unlimited, with permission to dismiss Michael or Malphas without explanation. Neither of them knows this. For God, she is loyal and fearless. She's flirtatious with Satan, who is convinced he could convert her, an assumption that she uses to her advantage. She constantly checks her wristwatch, keeping proceedings on track, and marks time with the turning of the sand timer.

SET

White: office table, four chairs, whiteboard on wheels, markers/board rubber, sticky name labels, notepads, pens/pencils, a carafe of water and glasses - standard conference boardroom set up. Two coffee mugs with instant black coffee (off SR). Projector screen (can be back wall/cyc). Reception counter with office telephone. The storage beneath holds general props.

PROPS

General: Large sand timer, Starbucks takeaway coffee holder; Maureen's business shoes, suit jacket and glasses; mug and saucer of hazelnut latte with a walnut whip; three beer mugs and one barmaid's apron; menu and three white linen napkins; one pair of DJ style headphones and four pairs of ravers' sunglasses; three animal glove puppets/toys.

Individual: mobile phones, laptops, Mal's battered briefcase (filled with old-school stationery, manila files, mushy sandwich in clingfilm), Malpahs's pitchfork/trident, Michael's Archangel sword. Presentation packs, Maureen's sheet of paper with bullet points (off SR), glossy magazine (Hellansville Holdings).

COSTUMES

MAUREEN: Receptionist, dark skirt, white blouse, smart white trainers, wristwatch. Change to business attire for the meeting: heels, smart jacket and glasses.

ROBERT: Casual attire: jeans/cargos, T-shirt, flannel shirt, trainers. Two sets of the same outfit, one bloody, the other clean. Wallet with ID inside. Hospital gown.

MIKE: Sharp suit and corporate. Complimentary shades of deep purples/maroons/lilacs – ecclesiastical. Gold cross pendant and Commander Archangel's golden sword of truth.

MAL: Suit, but shabby and unkempt. Complimentary shades of deep reds/yellows/browns/oranges - fire and brimstone. Carries a Satanic pitchfork/trident.

MUSIC

Stayin' Alive, The Bee Gees. *Justify My Love*, Madonna.

It is a legal requirement to apply for music rights from APRA prior to performance.

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

Curtains are open as the audience enters, showing a pre-set reception area of a sparse clinical hospice, deep into a night shift, a 'Saint Helen's Hospice' logo projected onto the back wall/cyc. Office table and chairs are aside upstage centre. Whiteboard is SL. Everything is quiet, the lighting subdued, with a soft tick-tock in the background. Maureen sits behind the reception counter (upstage right), silent and bored, coolly observing the audience as they settle. She checks her watch and looks towards SL doors. Lights up as an alarm suddenly sounds. The main doors SL crash open, and a man staggers in, clutching his stomach. There's a lot of blood. The action happens downstage centre.

MAUREEN. *(She's been expecting this. Turns the sand timer over. Switches to faux-panic)*
Christ! Holy shit! Are you alright?

ROBERT. *(Fast and desperate)* Help me! Doctor! I've been... There was a fight... *(Sees the blood on his hands)* Oh fuck.

MAUREEN. *(Comes out from behind her desk, keeping up the pretence)* I'm just the receptionist. I know... Ambulance, we need an ambulance...

ROBERT. Shit, this is bad. This is really bad. Get me a doctor. I think I'm...

MAUREEN. *(Apologetic)* This is a hospice; there are no doctors. I'll get the nurse. She's got a first aid kit - she might have a plaster or something.

ROBERT. Are you shitting me? Get me a fucking ambulance. Now. *(Looks down)* Blood - there's so much blood. This is fucking bad.

Maureen goes to her desk to the main phone. It's not working. She pulls out her mobile. It's not working. She checks the sand timer.

ROBERT. Jesus, I... I'm... *(falls to his knees and rolls onto his back)*

Maureen runs to him. He is still.

MAUREEN. You're going to be fine; don't move. I'm going to stop a car, get you to a hospital.

Robert starts to wheeze, his breathing reduced to a soft gurgle.

MAUREEN. (*Shouts directly at Robert, making sure he hears*) Don't you dare. Do not do this to me. (*Aside*) They're not ready for you yet.

She rushes to the internal door SR. It's locked. She runs to the external doors SL. They're locked.

MAUREEN. What the hell? Come on, come on... Why won't you open?

Robert groans. Maureen runs to him, grabs his phone, and dials the emergency services, but the battery dies.

MAUREEN. (*Dismayed*) Oh, you've got to be bloody kidding me. (*Checks sand timer and watch*) I said, not yet.

Robert coughs, splutters and becomes still. Maureen tries CPR, but it's a half-hearted affair. Big change in her demeanour now Robert is unconscious - the 'act' is over. She sits down next to Robert, calmly checks for ID, and pulls out his driver's license, humming 'Que Sera, Sera.'

MAUREEN. (*Panic and emotion gone*) Whatever will be, will be. So, Robert. Robert Spat. What kind of a name's that? (*Wryly*) Chewed up and spat out. (*Checks watch and turns officious*) Well, Robert, you're the one. The non-believer, the final third of the new trinity - the angel, the demon, and the atheist. The keys to Hellansville are in your hands.

She leans back, pulls out her mobile phone, now miraculously working, and dials. Satan answers.

MAUREEN. It's me. (*Giggles*) Well, aren't you a horny devil! (*Beat*) Yes, it's done. (*Pause*) Hang on - I'll see if I can link Him in. (*Dials a number and proceeds with respectful yet resigned patience*) Hello, Sir. Just merging you into the video call. (*Pause*) Turn your camera on, Sir. It's the icon at the top of the screen. Just press it. Press the... (*Loses Him*) He's gone. (*To Satan*) Not quite everywhere, then. I'll try again. (*Dials again*) Found you! (*Pause*) I can't hear you; you're on mute. (*Loudly*) Mute, you're on... Unmute it, Sir. The icon... looks like a... (*Sighs*) Just nod if you can hear me. Okay, good. (*Checks Robert's pulse*) He's almost there, but he's stubborn. I'll let the doctors do their thing - the old '1-2-3-Clear'. It'll give us more time to get our respective ducks in a row. (*Pause*) Great, will do. Bye now. Yes, Sir. Bye. Press the button, Sir. (*Satan makes a lewd comment*) Not you! Stop! (*Ends call, grinning*)

Kneels next to Robert. Hands clasped in prayer, she struggles for words, sighs, and looks at him.

MAUREEN. Just try not to be a dick, okay? A lot is riding on you. (*Pats his head*) Amen.

Lights down.

SCENE 2

Lights up to reveal a sparse meeting/boardroom. A smart, slick logo for Hellansville Holdings is now projected onto the back wall/cyc. The boardroom table is set lengthways centre stage with carafe/glasses etc, with two chairs at either end and one dead centre, facing the audience. Whiteboard upstage left. Maureen stands discreetly behind the reception desk, changing into business attire: heels, smart jacket and glasses. A well-dressed man enters SR, early, officious and self-important. He ignores Maureen, sits at the right end of the table, and efficiently sets up for the meeting, laptop open, logged on, with a well-presented pack to the side. Pens, phone and water glass are set specifically in place. He checks his watch and rearranges everything to align neatly. He's eager to start proceedings. The door suddenly swings open SL. Another man enters in a flurry. He wears similar clothes as Michael but without the style; he's rumpled, unironed and flustered, with a battered old briefcase in hand.

MAUREEN. (*Bright, bold, in control*) Good morning, Michael. Malphas. Welcome to Hellansville Holdings.

MAL. (*To Maureen*) Er...morning? (*Walks to the table and sits across from Michael. Loud whisper*) Who's the new girl?

MICHAEL. (*Uncommon uncertainty*) I'm not sure. I've not been briefed. She seems... (*reaches for the word*) familiar. (*Back on track*) Never mind her, Mal. You're late.

MAL. (*Tips out the contents of his briefcase across the table*) Hell of a morning.

MICHAEL. (*Deadpan*) Very funny. Not quite as funny as it was all those millennia ago. Maybe it's time for something new?

MAL. (*Chuckles*) Nah, if it ain't broke, etc. How about you? Good morning?

MICHAEL. Heavenly. (*Mal giggles - he's heard it so many times, but it never fails to amuse.*) Happy now?

MAL. (*Flat*) Never.

MICHAEL. (*Perturbed by Maureen's unexpected presence*) Excuse me, er... (*the last word hangs, waiting for her name*)

MAUREEN. I'll be with you in a tick. Write your names on the sticky labels and pop them on. Thank you.

MICHAEL. (*Bemused*) Right. (*Tries to regain authority, condescendingly*) Be an angel... fetch us a couple of coffees?

MAUREEN. (*Bats straight back, unflustered*) The facilities are in the kitchen. Help yourself to milk and honey.

MICHAEL. Right.

The men exchange glances, not knowing how to react to this unexpected, strong female presence. Michael would prefer a subservient female to call on while the men get on with the main business at hand.

MAUREEN: (*Taps her watch*) Well, chop-chop, gentlemen. Grab your coffee so we can make a start.

Not knowing how else to react, Michael follows orders.

MAL. Make me one, Mike?

MICHAEL. (*Sardonic*) Milk and sulphur?

MAL. No thanks, (*Patting his stomach*) I'm cutting back on the old sulphur. Black's fine.

Michael exits SR, returning immediately with two mugs. Maureen arches an eyebrow and smiles as he passes, smoothly getting a posh, refill Starbucks coffee takeaway mug from beneath the reception desk. Michael, snubbed again, takes the two mugs to the table.

MAL. (*To Michael*) Bloody hell, that was quick.

MICHAEL. Instant.

Maureen crosses to the boardroom table with her top-notch coffee, sand timer, meeting files and laptop. She sets up decisively and efficiently at the centre spot, writes her name on a sticky label, places it on her blouse, sits, checks her watch, starts the sand timer and surveys them both, very much in charge. The men react according to their characters.

MAUREEN. Right then, let's make a start, shall we? A little icebreaker to start? Good! Say your name, what organisation you work for and what you want out of the day. (*They gawp. They've known each other for millennia and have never been 'managed'*) Time's ticking... No? I'll start, shall I? My name is Maureen. I'm head of HR, business partner and today's facilitator. I want nothing more than a positive outcome from your respective assessments (*this is a shock*) and for Helensville Holdings to be the success we know it's going to be. Now, your turn. (*Michael is gob-smacked – assessment? Him?*) Mel?

Michael smirks at the mispronunciation. Mal is angry but covers it.

MAL. My name's Mal, or Malphas when I'm in trouble. (*Chuckles, hoping they will laugh along. Awkward pause*). Like now... it would seem... (*nervous cough*). Right, yeah. So, er... I'm here today for Satan and, er, hell, I guess. I... er, I suppose I want the... er, thing we're here to do to go smoothly and... um... good.

MAUREEN. (*Tapping her pen throughout, she writes a note*) Thank you, Malphas.

MICHAEL. (*Eyes Maureen's notetaking. Decides on the approach: 'If I'm being assessed, I'll ace it.' Game face on.*) My name is Michael, Archangel Michael. Clearly, I'm representing God and Heaven, and I am super psyched to be here. Buzzing beyond belief, in fact - to get this groundbreaking, faith-affirming, Heaven-sent project over the line. I'm cock-a-hoop. I do believe it will be a... a... boon for all concerned.

MAL. (*Dripping with sarcasm*) Cock...A boon?

MICHAEL. Yes, a boon.

MAUREEN. (*Hiding her smirk, she writes a note*) Well, we all love a boon, don't we? (*Snaps up*) As I said, I am here to facilitate as well as assess you both. You will lead the session, but I will interject if you hit a serious snag or veer off on a tangent. Talk openly and freely. No pressure. But please be aware - we are on a strict time crunch.

MAL. Great! Well, I think...

MAUREEN. (*Cuts in*) Sorry, Malphas, may I interject? Michael, you lead off, please.

MICHAEL. (*All business and smarm*) Of course. Thank you, Maureen. I think we can all agree on the initial proposals in Sections One and Two and move straight on to the nitty-gritty. We'll start with Section Three, points A through to F.

MAL. (*Hesitantly*) Section Three, Section Three. Mmm, okaaaaay... Section Threeeee...

Mal rifles through his stuff on the desk – no laptop, no file. Searches his briefcase - paper clips, old bills, a squashed sandwich in clingfilm, and finally, a file. Relieved, he thinks it's the correct one. It isn't.

MICHAEL. (*Pointedly ignores the chaos*) Sections One and Two are just preliminary introductions. Who will do what, where and when... so on and so forth, etcetera, etc

MAL. (*Clueless*) Sounds good. Yeah. Really cool. The three W's - (*rapper style*) What, Where, When! Yeah. (*Makes a W with his fingers; all attempts at being 'cool' totally fail*)

MAUREEN. (*To Mal*) Perhaps the agenda would help, hmm, Malphas? We'll wait for you. (*She makes another note, then taps her pen impatiently*) No pressure. (*Turns the sand timer over*)

MAL. (*Frantically shuffles through his file*) I have it here; hang on...

MAUREEN. (*Pointedly looks at her watch*) In your own time.

MICHAEL. Mal, just stop. You haven't read it, have you? (*To Maureen, rolling his eyes*) This is so typical of him. Wasting our time like this. (*To Mal*) You haven't even looked at it, have you? Be honest for once.

MAL. *(Annoyed)* Not entirely, no. *(Sheepishly to Maureen)* I don't think this is the right file.

MICHAEL. *(Dripping sarcasm)* Well, I'm sure Mo will let this one slide, won't you? I can call you Mo, can't I?

MAUREEN. No. *(To Mal)* Here's a copy. *(Slides a file over, makes a note)* No pressure.

MAL. *(Despairingly)* Sorry, the heat's been on big time. I just haven't had a chance. I'm working on a huge, HUGE project, and everything has just snowballed... Well, not snowballed exactly... would've melted, you know, kinda impossible, fires of hell and all that...

MAUREEN. This IS the huge project, Malphas. Hellansville Holdings. *(Mal looks vague)* The human trial? This is Robert Spat, our guinea pig. *(Robert's face appears on the projector screen, smiling and gormless)*

MAL. Is it? *(Sotto)* Bugger.

SCENE 3

MAUREEN. Michael, perhaps you'd like to talk us through what you know about project Hellansville and Mr Spat here.

MICHAEL. Of course, Mo...Maureen. *(Officious, corporate, self-important, in control, enjoying the upper hand, presentation mode)* This is the first bilateral project undertaken in at least three millennia. My *(beat)* esteemed colleague and I have been chosen as the departmental heads to get it over the line... thrash out the details, as it were. What's been written here is the first chapter of... 'The New Book.' This is unprecedented, and as my under-prepared friend has already alluded to, this is huge. *(Proclamation)* A new doctrine. An article of Faith for the Faithless, the Lost Souls, those mortals who don't care about Heaven or Hell. *(Tries to get Mal's attention, who's still busy clearing up the mess on the table)* An added bonus, Mal - it'll make both our businesses more efficient.

Mal has dropped his paperwork under the table. His head pops up with a bump.

MAL. *(Vaguely)* Will it?

MICHAEL. *(To Maureen)* How in Hell's name has he still got a job? He's an apocalyptic catastrophe. *(Meant as a criticism, but Mal looks rather happy with this description. In response, Mike condescends.)* Let me explain. This is the biggest gamble we've taken since the Boss decided it'd be a good idea to let his Son take the reins.

MAL. *(Takes the opportunity to deflect, putting the pressure on Mike)* Oh, that was a disaster, wasn't it?

MICHAEL. *(Indignant)* Your team didn't help - made it incredibly difficult for Him. You were the catalyst for His inevitable downfall.

MAL. We had nothing to do with it! It was us who gave him the three great miracles: *(1 middle finger)* Water into wine. *(2 V-sign)* Loaves and fishes. *(3 rock concert devil horns)* Cure the sick. We made Him... *(grabs pitchfork as electric guitar, singing)* 'Jesus Christ, Superstar!' *(Finishes posing in the sign of the cross)*

MICHAEL. Oh, come on, that's a bit of a stretch.

Mal hums the tune of 'Jesus Christ Superstar', not-so-frantically tidying his desk and shuffling papers back into some semblance of order – all still a mess. Maureen, unimpressed at this exchange, jots down a note in her book.

MICHAEL. We gave him the perfect start! A loving mother, an incredibly open-minded stepfather - a fantastic childhood! Exemplary, solid education. He excelled in anthropology, theology and woodwork. An exceptional young man - vibrant and essential. *(Wistfully)* It's such a shame we lost his earlier files. There was some brilliant stuff in there. *(Turning back on Mal)* Where did those pre-33 files go, Malphas? The whole failure reeked of your organisation.

MAL. You didn't need our help on that front, or have you forgotten that episode in Galilee?

MICHAEL. What episode?

MAL. The lovely lady of the night. Miss Magdalene and her dirty feet. Need I say more?

MICHAEL. It was innocent - a beautiful example of repentance and forgiveness.

MAL. He gave her a toe job.

Maureen raises an eyebrow and makes a note.

MICHAEL. She washed his feet with her tears. It's all documented.

MAL. Come on, Mike! You know he's got a foot fetish. The truth is, they were tears of laughter, not sorrow. You can always tell those touched by his hand - they all have immaculately clean feet. He might be the son of God, but he's only human.

MAUREEN. No tangents, gentlemen. As fun as this is, we still have work to do. Take a look at points A to F. Back soon. *(Exits SR)*

MICHAEL. *(His phone rings. The ringtone is a Heavenly Host choir)* Good morning, my Lord. Yes, we're just getting started on Section Three. *(Pause)* What do I think of Maureen? Honestly? I think she's a bit of a... *(She returns to turn the sand timer. Mike is deliberately loud)* I think she's very professional. *(Sotto)* You think I'm lying? Well, I can assure you I'm not. *(Pause)* No, of course I haven't forgotten who you are. *(Holds the phone away from his ear)* Yes, Sir. Of course. We'll talk later. *(Maureen exits with a raise of her arched eyebrow)*

MAL. Someone's in trouble. *(His phone rings. The ringtone is 'I Should Be So Lucky' by Kylie Minogue. Michael shoots him a withering stare. Indignant, Mal refers to the fact that Kylie is one of Satan's creations)* What? She is one of ours.

Mal answers, listens, says nothing, loosens his collar and looks visibly rattled, then puts the phone down.

MICHAEL. *(Mimicking Mal)* Someone's in trouble.

MAL. Oh, because you've never been in trouble?

MICHAEL. No, not really.

MAL. Your office must be wall-to-wall 'Employee of the Month Awards'.

MICHAEL. Pretty much. I've never got my boss's name wrong, that's for sure.

MAL. I'm never going to live that down, am I? How many times do I have to explain? Spell check didn't pick up the error and, well...

MICHAEL. I've still got a framed copy of the actual memo. Who else saw it? Oh, that's right, everyone. Everyone saw it. How did it start again?

MAL. You know very well.

MICHAEL. 'To the Prince of Darkness, The Father of Lies, Lord Morningstar...', or as you like to call him... 'Santa.' *(Clearly amused)* Tell me, how does one sell one's soul to Santa? Did you get the red suits mixed up? It's an easy mistake to make, I'm sure.

MAL. Yeah, yeah. Laugh it up. I said I was sorry!

MICHAEL. It's ok. You're forgiven.

They freeze, stare at each other, and then break into hysterical laughter. It's an age-old joke between them; divine forgiveness will never lead to the salvation of Malphas.

MAL. You almost had me! Forgiveness from you? I'd be out of a job!

MICHAEL. Your face, though!

Maureen reappears with a sheet of paper with bullet points listed. She eyes them suspiciously.

MAUREEN. Gentlemen. Might I suggest we start moving this along at a pace? Mal, why don't you take this section of the meeting? Here's a list of the main bullet points to help you catch up. No pressure.

She places the list conspicuously on the table in front of Malphas. He takes the sheet of paper and reads the bullet points.

MAL. (*Incredulous*) Have you read this? This is actually huge, but...

MICHAEL. You've caught up then?

MAL. (*Grabs the file, rushing to scan the pages*) Seriously, Mike, it's not making any sense. A festering tower of babble.

MICHAEL. Babel. It makes total sense. We have to stop overcrowding in both Heaven and Hell. Hellansville is a perfect solution. It'll reduce the numbers, both upwards and downwards.

MAL. (*Incredulous*) Reduce the numbers? What - we're just supposed to turn souls away? Think of the redundancy payouts... your St Peter's been in service for eons! And my hounds of hell - they'll be baying for blood. The demonic unions will cause anarchy. I'll be damned if this goes through. (*Starts to laugh*) Whose idea was this, anyway? Never in a million years.

MICHAEL. The figures add up.

MAL. (*Reads some more*) This is bullshit.

MICHAEL. Look, the proposal is good for everyone and works on so many levels. For one thing, it's ecologically sound, offsetting the environmental crisis mankind has created. We are all responsible for reducing our carbon footprints.

MAL. Carbon footprints?! We're both angels - we don't leave footprints! Your angels might fear to tread, but my dark ones certainly don't. Why would we want to halt an environmental crisis? It's genius.

MICHAEL. It's a terrible thing, Mal.

MAL. (*UK-US pronunciation*) Tomato, tomato. (*To Maureen*) Wouldn't it be prudent, as part of the review, to check that everyone is aware of the implications? Of what will happen if we go through with this?

MAUREEN. At this point, it's fair to say that everyone who matters... (*pointedly looking at Mal*) has read it and agreed to it.

MAL. Then they clearly haven't read the small print. This changes the very core of both our businesses. The faithful, on both sides of the coin, put their heart and souls into what we promise. (*Leans forward and whispers*) And I've made promises to some very dangerous people.

MAUREEN. The big decision has been made. What we're doing here is looking at the detail. And we all know who's in the detail, don't we?

MAL. (*Defiantly*) I need to make a call.

MICHAEL. Have it your own way. But I'm with Maureen on this.

Mal stands, dials, impatiently pacing while he waits for his call to be answered.

MAL. Hi, just checking in regarding these ridiculous proposals. Whoever thought this up needs a visit to the insertions pit. Section Three is laughable. Seriously, if we go ahead with this, this... 'Hellansville,' everything we've put into the company will be lost. Just say the word, and I shall have the fool spit roasted by the end of the day. *(Listens intently)* The author's name is on the back page. Is it now? I will. Okay, hang on. I tell you what... when I find out who... Oh. *(Beat)* Oh, Christ Almighty. *(To Michael)* Sorry. *(To Satan)* No, of course I'm not apologising, boss! *(Sheepish, embarrassed)* No, I didn't. I really should've done. I'm just looking at Section Four as we speak, and I must say, it's genius. *(Listens some more, looks at Maureen)* Yes, Sir, I do. *(Pause)* That's an unnecessary... *(Pause. Deadpan)* I put the 'ass' into assessment. Thank you. *(Pause)* Yes, of course. Goodbye.

MICHAEL. How did that go?

MAL. He wants a chat when I go back down.

MICHAEL. A chat? That's not good. *(Sarcastic)* Will you need a support person?

MAL. I'm in the shit.

MICHAEL. You always are.

SCENE 4

MAUREEN. Okay! We've caught up with the what; let's look at the why. Section Four. Your sales pitch to our guinea pig must be confident, your Hellansville proposals must be robust, and your recommendations to the client - Section Five - must be tempting and ultimately persuasive. Bottom line: He has to sign up. No pressure. Michael, you start. I'll whiteboard the buzzwords.

Maureen writes the six underlined words on the left-hand side of the whiteboard.

MICHAEL. *(Smug lecture)* Well, as you know, when He started Project Genesis, it was on a much simpler scale. Brilliant but very low-tech. In the beginning, *(laughs at his own joke)* it did the job, but serious problems have arisen: Malware *(eyeroll nod to Mal)*, hackers, trojan horses, software Easter eggs, viruses... So, we upgraded.

MAL. *(Laughs)* Who knew that Apple would become synonymous with evil? Ruined everything - brilliant!

MICHAEL. We told Eve, 'Don't touch the apple.' That bite *(Maureen writes byte)* of knowledge led to free thinking and advanced intelligence (AI). The sudden ability of mankind to question rather than just accept what is, what was and what would always be: the truth, the light, the way.