



THE DEMON HUNTER

By Nat Cassidy

© 2014 Nat Cassidy
natcassidy@gmail.com

You're saying the Devil is persuading people to not believe in God. Couldn't there be other reasons to not believe?

SCALIA: Well, there certainly can be other reasons. But it certainly favors the Devil's desires. I mean, c'mon, that's the explanation for why there's not demonic possession all over the place. That always puzzled me. What happened to the Devil, you know? He used to be all over the place. He used to be all over the New Testament.

Right.

SCALIA: What happened to him?

He just got wilier.

SCALIA: He got wilier.

Isn't it terribly frightening to believe in the Devil?

SCALIA: You're looking at me as though I'm weird. My God! Are you so out of touch with most of America, most of which believes in the Devil? I mean, Jesus Christ believed in the Devil! It's in the Gospels! You travel in circles that are so, so removed from mainstream America that you are appalled that anybody would believe in the Devil! Most of mankind has believed in the Devil, for all of history. Many more intelligent people than you or me have believed in the Devil.

I hope you weren't sensing contempt from me. It wasn't your belief that surprised me so much as how boldly you expressed it.

SCALIA: I was offended by that. I really was.

- An interview with Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, conducted by Jennifer Senior of *New York Magazine*, on September 26, 2013

Characters

ELBERT – *male, 40s*

ARVIS – *male, 60s*

SAM – *female, 30s-50s*

ROBYN – *female, 30s*

A note about pacing

Line breaks should not necessarily be taken as indications to pause, simply as a break in the thought or rhythm of the thought. Especially in the Robyn/Sam scenes, once it's been established that Robyn is made uncomfortable by the silences, the tempo of her answers can pick up: after all, she doesn't like to sit in silence and wants this session over with.

Any "/" indicates that the next speaker can begin his/her line.

SCENE ONE

A psychiatrist's office. A desk, bookshelves, potted plant. A couple framed paintings.

Two comfortable chairs in the center of the room, facing each other.

ELBERT, male, 40s, unkempt and disheveled. sits on one chair, in the middle of droning on and on.

His therapist, SAM, female, 40s, sits in the other. She is a hair's breadth away from snapping.

ELBERT

And I guess part of it is, I don't know, I want her to know? But I also don't. You know? I *could* tell her, but if I tell her, then I've told her. And I can't untell her. So I don't want to tell her. (*Beat.*) But I also want to *tell* her. I want to say those words to her. Outloud. To her. My mouth. Telling her. And I mean, because otherwise, how will she know? You know? She should know. I want her to know. I mean, I don't, but I do. I do. I do. I do. I do. I do. I do. I do. I do. So I should tell her. Right? I don't know. It's like

Unnoticed, SAM heaves a deep sigh.

ELBERT

(cont'd; picking up speed)

you know what it's like? It's like that beetle thing. Right? You know? That German guy's thing about the beetle? In the box? Not the cat thing in the box, but the beetle thing in the box—lower case b, not, hahaha, not a British "oohgroovy." But it's exactly like that beetle thing, that experiment thing, I read about it online, I saved it, I have this special folder for my bookmarks, for all the things I find that are applicable to, you know, this. The beetle thing, I forget the guy's name, but it says I have a

box. And, you know, you have a box, she has a box. And our boxes all have a, a beetlebug inside. *All I can do is describe what's in my box, all I know is my box. What's in it.*

SAM gets up. She walks to her desk.

He doesn't notice - he's too focused now.

ELBERT
(*continuous*)

What's in hers could be so, so indescribably different from my box. Who knows if what she's calling a beetle is, like, a, a, a shoe or a, a, a wad of gum pasted onto the steaming, shaved genitals of a dead, crushed fucking rotting dog that's, ugh, that's a weird image, why would I picture-ugh! The point is, my beetle is a reference point for beetles, and ... you know what, I'm not entirely sure now that I'm saying it out loud that-Wittgenstein! That was the guy's name, see I have an excellent recall, this is what she always forgets when I get so upset with her, I have a very excellent recall-and, so, I don't know. It's just, it's MY SOAP! I bought it! With my money! She shouldn't be using it! And I want to tell her that but I just don't

SAM finally pulls open one of her desk drawers. She takes out a large gun.

She puts it to her head.

Then in her mouth.

ELBERT
(*cont'd*)

What does Wittgenstein know? Some dead German, they always have these, these ideas that don't make any sense, it's all hypothetical, and I should just tell her. I want to tell her. That's what I think I'm going to do, I'm going to just JESUS CHRIST WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

Blackout.

Immediately:

SCENE TWO

ST ARVIS

AND I AM CALLING DOWN TO YOU FROM THE DEPTHS OF HEAVEN, O CHOSEN ONES. LOOK ON YOUR OWN FUCKIN WORKS AND GODDAMN TREMBLE.

(Pause.)

Shit hurt my throat
Try that again.

ST ARVIS, homeless, dressed in rags and eccentric grace notes, like a large hat with deely boppers, gag sunglasses, etc., enters from the back of house. Looks to be about sixty years old, but underneath the grime, he could be eternal. He is electric, a natural showman.

NOTE: sometimes he talks to himself, sometimes to the audience. Throughout his speech, he's not entirely sure if they're actually there or on his side.

Ladies and gentlemen boys and girls

My name is Saint Arvis

That's right, I'm a motherfucking saint. But forget all that, forget all that. For I am also what is known as a Magician in Training.

I'ma learn some new tricks for y'all. Now ... I got no master, and I ain't no apprentice ... but someone had to learn on their own at one point! What's a saint good for if he can't whip up a few goddamn miracles? Miracle's just a magic trick with a halo on top. Halo's just another place to hide the wires.

So

He begins to set up a table, which includes a prominently placed, large, stained cardboard box and a haphazard pile of cards.

Some of y'all may be wondering why I wanna be a magician,
"Saint Arvis, you a saint, ain't that a more noble
profession." Well, you'd be surprised. Trying to get out of
that racket, tell you what. LOTTA STRESS
You see things
You ever get that feeling?
You don't know where or how but you can't shake it
You feel it in your back ... around your ribs
You might fall asleep in a Starbucks but you feel 'em get
close - and you wake up, knife in your hand, slicing like
wild, but all you slicing is air
Or if you're unlucky one time some girls face but what can
you do I said I was sorry
They're tricky like that
Tricky's the name of the game and they love to play
So it should be no surprise I wanna try to train and trade
trades
But there ain't no way but to do it.
LET'S GET TO WORK

SCENE THREE

Lights rise back in SAM's office. Two years later.

ROBYN, Hispanic, late 30s, a stressed-out single mother who looks anxious and unhappy, is the patient this time. One of her hands is wrapped in a bandage. She doesn't want to sit still.

The heat pipes clang for a moment and are quiet.

We sit in silence until ROBYN is compelled to speak.

NOTE: gone is the sense of boredom from SAM's previous scene. SAM begins this scene as quietly, calmly (almost predatorily) fascinated, particularly about the gender issues. That being said, of course, she is the strictest of professionals and is never mean about it. Only genuine.

ROBYN

I didn't think you were going to be a woman.

SAM

Is that going to be a problem?

ROBYN

No.

No.

Long silence until ROBYN is compelled to speak.

ROBYN

Is this how you normally, uh, start things? No intros, or—?

SAM

Depends.

ROBYN

Depends.

SAM

On the patient.

ROBYN

The patient that you haven't even met yet.

SAM smiles.

Long pause.

ROBYN

Okay. Hi. It's nice to meet you, I'm ... (*sigh.*) Do I ... I don't know// what to start with

SAM

There's no protocol or anything. Whatever you feel like you need to say, just say, we'll proceed from there.

ROBYN

Do I call you Doctor

SAM

Sam is fine.

ROBYN

I really didn't think you'd be a woman.

SAM

I apologize if you were misled.

ROBYN

I wasn't misled. I just

SAM

Assumed

ROBYN

Hoped

SAM

May I ask why?

ROBYN

It's stupid, never mind

Beat.

SAM

Want me to glue on a mustache? (*Lower voice.*) Talk like this?

ROBYN

No.

I just ... I didn't want to feel judged or

SAM

Are women more judgmental?

ROBYN

About some things.

SAM

Huh

Well if you change your mind. (*Deep voice.*) I'm very good at roleplay.

ROBYN

Great.

Have we ... met before?

SAM

Met? In what way?

ROBYN

I don't know

SAM

What kind of things do you think women are more judgmental of?

ROBYN

Heh

Do you have kids?

SAM

I do.

ROBYN

Yeah?

Five. SAM

Jeez. Bravo. (*SAM laughs.*) ROBYN
Do you love them?

Of course. SAM

Exactly. ROBYN
(*"See, I'll be judged"*)

What? SAM

So you weren't given, like, *any* information about ROBYN

From Doctor Ericson? SAM

Yeah. ROBYN

He said you were having trouble eating SAM

Yes ROBYN

Sleeping SAM

Right ROBYN

Pretty much everything SAM

Pretty much everything. Did he say why? (*No answer. Annoyed.*) Hello? You're not going to answer? ROBYN

SAM

What do you //think he said?

ROBYN

Oh, god. Fucking therapists!

SAM

Have you been in therapy before?

ROBYN

No

SAM

But you have an idea of how therapy

ROBYN

I had an idea it would go exactly like this
"What do you think what do you think," it's like arguing
with a fucking algorithm. Can you just please talk to me
like a person? Please?

SAM

Okay. "As a person."

*SAM gives an ironic, almost
imperceptible laugh and walks
over to her desk.*

Beat.

SAM

I need to hear you describe your problems in your own
words. I don't need to hear me say whatever Doctor Ericson
already did or did not tell me.
Does that make sense?

ROBYN

Yeah. I guess so.

*SAM is staring at the drawer
from which her gun came in
the first scene.*

SAM

Thank you
Cuz otherwise—(unsaid: "I might have to shoot myself in the
fucking head.")

Long pause.

ROBYN
What?

SAM
What?

ROBYN
You said "otherwise"

SAM
I did?

ROBYN
Yeah. Were you going to add

SAM
No I apologize.

Just

Did

Okay, just so it's out in the open before we begin, did Doctor Ericson tell you about me at all?

ROBYN
He said you were good, that's

SAM
Okay. It's not important
Please continue (*She sits back down*)
Let's talk like people.

ROBYN
Okay. (*She swallows.*)
Hi.

SAM
Hi//

ROBYN
I'm afraid I'm going to murder my son. Yeah. God.
I'm afraid I actually ... want to. And ... am going. To.

SAM
Okay.

Well. If it's any consolation off the bat, I can assure you that's a common fear for new moms.

ROBYN

Right. He's ten.

Blackout.

SCENE FOUR

ST ARVIS

Here we go! Here we go!
Awwwwwwwwshit

*ST ARVIS shuffles the cards.
They spill everywhere.*

He sets to picking them up.

Goddamn, this might be harder than I thought.
It is hard out there for a motherfucking magician!
Y'know? I got habits—you can probably tell—but one of them
is ... I join the ebb. I try to get in on that ground floor
but I'm always showing up when the building's falling down.
Ain't nobody giving shits about magic these days. IMAX in
your pocket and I make a napkin outta air? Ohhhh!! You all
typing on a keyboard knows what you're gonna say before you
say it, how'm I supposed to compete?
Still. Anything's better than my last gig.
Awright, we about to try this again. *(To a member of the
audience.)* PICK A CARD ANY CARD
Don't worry, they clean.

The audience member draws.

Alright. Put it back in.

ST ARVIS reshuffles.

Let me tell you about Saint Arvis.
Saint Arvis was once like y'all.
You know, he was on The Path.
He even had a touch of angel in him. More than a touch. And
that's a dangerous thing. See, cuz the thing about angels
is

*He starts to itch and the
cards spill out again.*

GODDAMN
I itch sometimes, you know.
Scabies fleas
It don't matter I don't mind
Or I don't matter and it don't mind!
Either way, I wanna scratch

Scratch till my skin breaks and spreads red all over
Saint Arvis made some bad decisions, tried to com-pen-sate
Wears his pants for 40 days and 40 nights.
Hard to atone when your music's atonal, you know what I'm
saying
Never mind the nether matters WAS THIS YOUR CARD?

*It is not the audience
member's card.*

Damn. Harder than I thought.