

CRAIG FORGRAVE

Devil
Dazz



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Preface

As I now realize, the Devil has been playing jazz with mankind since the apple and the snake. His subliminal seduction has been a battle of ideas floated into our collective unconscious to undermine the true faith in the core of our souls. This book is another subtle warrior in the battle between good and evil. The battle is in our minds and our souls, being fought century by century and with the ultimate fate still uncertain.

Mankind hungers for answers, preferably ones with proof to back them up. Undermining faith is the Devil's role in our lives, and his grand scheme is to establish the Great Ideas, delivered through his unwitting voices.

Consider the first Great Idea: Modern Science and the Scientific Method. Modern Science is based on rigorous proof, evidence, and experiments. Modern Science was born in an English

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garden in the seventeenth century, when Sir Isaac Newton contemplated the falling of an apple. Perhaps he didn't see the snake in the tree, but the falling apple led to his discovery of the laws of motion and universal gravity, optics, calculus, and modern scientific theory. As he unraveled the mysteries of the universe, with empirical proof, faith took a back seat to reason.

The Scientific Method has allowed man to play God, no more so than in understanding the human mind and body. To save lives with modern medicine is to play God, cheat death, and control one's own destiny. Is it any wonder that the symbol for medicine involves a snake wrapped around a staff?

Consider the second Great Idea: Political Revolution. Democracy and the rise of the individual concept of freedom were inspired, justified, and populated by the philosophers of the Enlightenment. The spark that drove the French and American Revolutions (and all others since then, including the crumbling of Berlin Wall) was the power of the individual, the shattering of tyrannical rule, and, above all, the freedom of speech. Voltaire was the father of revolution and the champion of justice. He was the soul that influenced the leaders of his century and beyond. Taking the philosophies and ideals of many before him, including Newton, Voltaire spread the ideals of independence and justice for all that are still the foundations of modern democracy. It was Voltaire who said, "I may disapprove of what you say, but I shall defend to the death your right to say it." In *Candide*, he proposed a philosophy of "cultivating one's own garden," which Voltaire did in Ferney, contemplating his revolutionary ideas in the tranquility of flowers, plants, and a few apple trees. And a few snakes in the grass.

Consider the third Great Idea: Social Revolution. If the Devil could sum up his life's work, it would

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probably be sex, drugs, and rock and roll. With reason, science, and liberty well established in the Western world, we now turn to the unbridled pursuit of happiness. Perhaps the greatest favor given to the Devil was the ten commandments. Ten is a big number. One or two, sure. Anyone can obey one or two. No killing, no coveting thy neighbor's wife or his ass or any of his household staff. Okay, got that. But ten? Who can remember ten? Let alone obey them all, all the time? Get real, man!

It is no coincidence that all these concepts have coagulated in the greatest democracy in the history of mankind: the United States of America. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Free speech, separation of church and state. The freedom of the individual. Sex, drugs, and rock and roll. And what's the cultural capital of the USA? New York City. The Big Apple.

In a quick wander through American ideals, the snake and the apple are everywhere, if you care to look. Robert Kennedy's famous quote, "There are those who look at things the way they are, and ask why . . . I dream of things that never were, and ask why not?" This line originated in a George Bernard Shaw play called *Back to Methuselah*, spoken by the Devil. If there is one piece of advice that the Devil would whisper in your ear, it would be "why not?" Ten commandments? Come on, who can remember all ten?

The Kennedy brothers, Marilyn Monroe, the Beatles. The sixties. The start of the sexual revolution. America embraced the Beatles with their long hair as alien prophets. Not only did John Lennon remark that the Beatles were "more popular than Jesus," but their record company was named . . . Apple. America embracing foreigners, in fact a land of foreigners, landed aliens. The sixties kicked off the last phase in the complex plan of the three Great Ideas: Scientific, Political, and Social revolutions.

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Thus, as I complete this text and await the arrival of The Alien, who will come one day, I become yet another unwitting voice of The Great Beast. So be it, for I also cannot name all ten commandments.

The devil hath power
To assume a pleasing shape

—William Shakespeare,
Hamlet, Act 2, Scene 2

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(as dictated to me by the forces
of the inevitable reckoning)

“By means of shrewd lies, unremittingly repeated, it is possible to make people believe that heaven is hell—and hell heaven. The greater the lie, the more readily it will be believed.”

—*Adolf Hitler*

“Hollywood is a place where they’ll pay you a thousand dollars for a kiss and fifty cents for your soul.”

—*Marilyn Monroe*

“Come on, buy a friggin’ painting! It’s a perfect size for your friggin’ sofa! Come on, give me a friggin’ break! Officer, I’m just standing here! What permit? You don’t need a friggin’ permit to sell friggin’ paintings on the friggin’ street corner!”

—*Vincent van Gogh*

EXCERPT

In a deluxe hotel suite in Washington, D.C., three people sipped coffee as the late evening stretched out beneath their penthouse windows. The two men and a woman sat apart, aimlessly killing time, not speaking. One of the men was a homicidal maniac who had killed millions of people in his short time in power. The other was a poor, frustrated artist whose paintings had recently sold for the highest sums in history. He had never seen a dime of this wealth, hence the frustration. The woman was probably the most beautiful woman who walked the earth since Helen of Troy. The homicidal maniac was on his fifth cup of coffee, four sugars and cream. The artist was on his seventh coffee, black. The woman let her only cup go cold as she blew air kisses to the boys just to watch them squirm. The men were nervously eyeing the bathroom door. They all sat, sipping coffee, waiting for it to open. They didn't talk to each

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other, because they had nothing in common save for one tiny detail of their lives. They were all dead. Had been for years.

Adolf Hitler twitched impatiently in his SS storm trooper uniform. He still had that crazy look in his eye, and his trademark moustache, and little-boy's haircut. He sat at the table, topographical maps spread out before him. He used a red pencil to draw sweeping pincer movements around a long-vanished Russian Front. He licked the pencil constantly, which made his tongue black.

Marilyn Monroe was lying on a sofa, falling out of a white bathrobe. She leafed idly through a *Premiere* magazine. She smelled of peroxide and lavender soap, sex and leather. She scratched her leg absently, like a bored tabby cat in the sun.

Vincent van Gogh sat in the far corner in a hard-backed chair, wearing a dirty suit and a gray bandage around his head, which held a large cotton pad over his right ear. Vincent had kept his scruffy beard and wore a peasant's hat stuffed low over his forehead, hiding those crazy eyes that wanted to jump out of their sockets and run away. Vincent had some new paintings propped beside his chair.

They waited for the bathroom door to open, ignoring each other. They heard a long, rude fart, a flush, and then the doorknob turned. He was ready for them.

Satan kicked open the bathroom door and belched. He grabbed a liter bottle of champagne and staggered to the sofa, where he shoved Marilyn to the floor and sat down. In his true form, Satan was a powerfully built man, with dark, handsome features. His charismatic sexuality attracted all sexes, all beasts, all creatures. Even now, in this hotel room, insects flew at him, caressing his body. His eyes glowed red, barely covered behind mirrored sunglasses like two red starbursts about to supernova.

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“Welcome, my demonic possessions. Glad you could make it. I have need of your unique services, and speed is of the utmost importance.”

Hitler snapped to attention. “Strike quick, strike hard, show them no mercy! Blitzkrieg!”

“Ja, mein Fuehrer! We have three targets and only six days until the end of the world. There are three groups of people that still have a minuscule amount of goodness left in them.”

“Nein! Give me ten minutes alone with this scum!”

“Okay, I see you’re hot to trot as usual, Adolf. I’m giving you the biggest job. The innocent youth. The young people, clinging to their ideals. They make me sick. They go to Sunday school, they behave themselves and turn up their noses at the other kids taking drugs, having sex, and shoplifting smokes.”

“The innocent youth is my specialty! I shall have them brainwashed by the end of the week!”

“Good. Have you ever heard of heavy metal, Adolf?”

“Is that some new material to make panzers? Super panzers?”

“Ha! Where have you been the last forty years?”

“Planning the invasion of Russia!”

“No, Dummkopf, heavy metal is a kind of music very popular with young men . . . Hitler Youth kind of stuff. Loud, rebellious shit played at incredible volume to piss off parents and foment terror and violence.”

“There is much to admire in this music, then!”

“Exactly, Adolf! And you would be perfect to lead it on to new heights! What do you think?”

Adolf stroked his moustache before replying, “Does it have a marching beat?”

“Adolf, trust me on this! Think of it as an electric Wagner!”

“Whatever you say, mein Fuehrer!”

“Ja, ja, Adolf. Whatever I say!”

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“What do I do with this heavy metal?”

“It’s a lullaby to the children. Suggest oh, I don’t know, killing their parents or something. Strip away their Sunday school morality and get them sinning big time. Can you do that for me?”

“Ja, it is clear. I go to possess this heavy metal.”

“That’s a good boy. Run along now.”

Hitler saluted Satan and goose-stepped out of the suite. Satan shook his head as Hitler closed the door.

“Nice guy that Adolf, but so intense. Now, Vincent. How are you these days?”

Vincent van Gogh stared at the floor, not daring to look at Satan.

“I have brought my latest paintings to show you. Perhaps you might be interested?”

“Vincent, Vincent. When are you going to accept the fact that you paint like shit!”

Satan grabbed one of Vincent’s paintings. He spun it around, looking at it all ways, even from the back.

“What is this? Give me a hint, is this a portrait or a landscape? Maybe if you took some drawing lessons I could figure it out. Come on, give me a hint?”

“It is a seascape.”

“No way! Look at this purple blob! What the hell is that? And this is a face! Look at it, Vincent! It’s a face! And what’s all these yellow swirls on the top here? Is that somebody’s forehead or a volcano? Whatever it is, a seascape it isn’t! I don’t see any water, any sky, or a boat anywhere. You’re not getting any better, Vincent.”

Vincent meekly held up another painting. This painful routine had been acted out many times before, but Vincent refused to give up. He was an artist, and someday he would get Satan to admit it.

“Perhaps this painting is more to your liking.”

Satan leaned into it until his nose touched the canvas.

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“Now this, this is definitely a house, right? But the color is all wrong. Look at this sky! If I painted like this, I’d shoot myself! But then I guess you already did, didn’t you Vincent. You poor bastard!”

Satan smashed the painting over Vincent’s head.

“Now listen to me, Vincent. The second group I’m having trouble corrupting are these starving artists. They enjoy poverty! Can you believe it? They are total masochists. They’d rather starve than steal a loaf of bread. All day they scratch shit on canvas and suffer for their art. You know these people. Break through to them! Offer them whatever it takes but corrupt the bastards! Here’s my personal checkbook.”

Satan handed Vincent a fat checkbook and a gold pen.

“You want me to buy their paintings?”

“Buy whatever shit they’ve got. And give them at least a million. Top, top dollar. I’ve never met an artist yet who didn’t sin like a preacher once he made his first million.”

“But what if their art is no good?”

“Pay double for it. I know this is going to be hard for you Vincent, but you are in everlasting Hell, don’t forget. My slave for eternity. Now run along.”

Vincent slowly gathered himself up and trudged out of the suite. Satan waited until he left and then burst out laughing.

“What a loser! Thank God for suicides. Like you, my sweet Marilyn.”

Marilyn tugged on her robe, pulling it tighter around her voluptuous body. Marilyn was the elixir of sex; to be drunk only in small quantities. She was blond in all the right places and hungry in all the wrong places. Her face was sweet innocence itself: her sleepy eyes suddenly teasing, her lips obscene with expectation, and her tongue the strawberry in a whipped-cream complexion. She

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had breasts that roamed around any room like a two-year-old learning how to walk; touching and grabbing at anything warm or colorful. Her legs were equal halves of a common pursuit too hot to be closed in and too dangerous to be left out in the open. Her sweet voice was misty with a thousand years of intimacy.

"I suppose you want me to seduce somebody. Like usual."

"Oh, not just anybody. I have a select few on this list. I don't want you to wear yourself out."

"You've never cared about that before."

"Now, let's not be bitter. You like it, you slut!"

"I do not! Well, maybe a little. Well, okay this will be fun! Who's the first on the list?"

"The pope. It'll take you ten minutes."

"Maybe I'm not his type."

"I've known a lot of popes, babe. Believe me, you're his type. So just go down the list. We've only got six days, so hustle your ass, sweet cheeks!"

Satan threw his list to Marilyn. She opened her robe.

"Don't you want me . . . before I go?"

Satan ran his hands over her body, then stepped away.

"Later, baby. I've got a whole world to screw. Now run along."

Marilyn walked out of the suite like an old soldier returning to the front lines. Her life had been hell, and now her afterlife was worse. She hoped it was really all going to end soon. Eternity had a way of making a girl feel old.

She closed the door quietly behind her. Satan grinned in sick pleasure at the future unfolding as he planned. He loved being the boss, ordering people around, making moves. He had a plan, and it was going smoothly so far. Leadership, that's what it was all about. Take the lead, and people will follow you to the depths of Hell.

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He picked up the phone, dialed room service. "Yes, this is room 666? Could you send up a dozen jelly doughnuts, a barbecue fork, and a hockey stick, please? Let's see . . . grape jelly? That will be fine. And do you have the number of the president of the United States? Thanks, I'll wait."

. . .

There are one hundred and four lost souls living in Doomsday Harbor, Long Island. One hundred and three of them have left their homes to join me in a march to New York City where I will spread the truth about the end of all things. It is now the sixth day and counting.

Mary, the waitress from the diner, remains behind, promising to turn out the lights. Her hands bleed from the effort she made to scrub my face off the toilet wall. It was that effort that drained her faith in me, despite all my pleas to the contrary. She kisses me good-bye, tucking her bottle of aspirin into my robe as she leans into me for one last hug. She hopes we will meet again, but I fear it will not happen. Her soul does not want salvation. It is a feeling I have. I have feelings about everyone I meet. Feelings of judgment. Perhaps I am mad, or just sensitive. The people think I have the gift, that I am the man. I do not know, and I cannot think it through with the constant pain in my head. I am human, like them. That is all I know for sure. That and the certainty that overwhelms me. The certainty of the coming Apocalypse.

We leave Mary waving good-bye from the steps of the First Presbyterian Church as we march towards the interstate highway and the destiny that waits for us.

To say that things have gotten out of hand would be an understatement. My disciples—for

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they insist I call them that—are a determined and focused bunch. Since my face matched the image on the wall of the diner's bathroom, they have interpreted that as a sign of great importance. They insist they will sacrifice themselves for me, if necessary. I insist that this kind of sacrifice is not necessary, but they are enthusiastic at the prospect of it. This blind obedience is disturbing to me, but I enjoy their company and take strength from them. I think they have more confidence than brains, and thus they are the perfect companions for myself, as I have no idea what the hell I am doing.

Last night, I slept in the white church that I saw from the lifeboat the day before. The shelter of that simple house comforted me. I did not sleep well, with the visions crowding my thoughts and the pain of my wound ever present, but I rested.

The next morning—this morning—the town insisted that I speak to them. There was no way I could refuse, so I had a hearty breakfast at the Domsday Diner and then walked back to the white church to speak to my flock of admirers.

When I climbed those few steps into the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church—was pushed, to be more accurate—I saw a hundred and three lost faces desperate for the truth. I forget what I said, but I must have touched a nerve, because they all cheered when I suggested we march to New York City and raise the alarm. Our mission? To save mankind from the flames of everlasting Hell. Dramatic stuff, no doubt. Anyway, I think most of them had nothing better to do on this particular day. Only time will tell how many will stand with me at the end.

Oh yes, since the aspirin kicked in, the pain has become bearable. I have no recollection of my identity or my past, but I know with absolute certainty that the world will end in six days. How I know this is beyond my understanding, but I am

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confident this information comes from an impeccable source.

I had one recurring vision during that first night in the church. I know of no other word for it. It was a vision, not a dream. I was awake, yet I could not see reality. Instead, the vision took control of my senses, transporting me to another place, where I could observe events as they occurred. It was a vision that I saw in extreme clarity. It repeated seven times that night, without variation.

In the vision, I saw an old man sleeping in a leather recliner. Beside him was a globe on a stand, with a light inside and a motor that rotated the globe slowly. The old man snorted in his sleep, waking himself up. He looked at his watch and got very excited, jumping out of the recliner and running to another room off to his left. He slammed the door, and then there was a loud flushing noise of water swirling furiously down and down and down. The old man opened the door, exhaled a deep, satisfied sigh, and then sat back down in the recliner. He had only seven fingers on his hands, four on his right and three on his left. He fell asleep as the toilet filled up with water and then ran on, trickling into the bowl. I watched the old man sleep, fighting the urge to walk over to the toilet and jiggle the handle.

The vision was so vivid I feel I must have seen the old man before. He seems so real. The toilet was a metaphor of profound significance that eludes any rational meaning to me. I need solitude to wrestle with this vision to discern the meaning of it. I hope to experience further visions, but things are getting busy at the moment. Solitude and understanding seem to be luxuries that I cannot afford, as events sweep over me at an astounding pace.

My disciples have taken to calling me Jesus Christ, which disturbs me greatly, as I am sure I

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am not a son of God, certainly not "the" son of God. I have convinced them to shorten it to the more colloquial "JC." This I can live with. My seven disciples are with me now, marching arm in arm. At one end is Luke, the tall one. Beside him is Matthew, stocky and coarse in his language and manners. Mark has a limp and only eight fingers, testament to the hard life most fishermen have if they're the least bit clumsy. I see his eight fingers as another sign, linking him with my vision.

John and Paul are twins, young and broad-shouldered. George is quiet, with the look of a poet. He drinks a lot and smokes, too. I have told him to quit both habits, but he cannot see the wisdom of it. Finally, on the other end of the line is Ringo. He is a sullen bastard who eyes me with suspicion. He and I will have a reckoning before the end, this is obvious to me.

So we march down the highway, singing songs and stopping traffic. We enter the Hamptons and spot a burger stand on the side of the road. Behind it is a small grassy knoll. Ringo is the first to stop, but the rest need no encouragement.

"This is as good a place as any to rest."

"You are correct, Ringo. Let us all replenish our bodies and our souls. The journey ahead will be long and difficult."

Matthew, ever practical, brings up the question of money. "How are we going to feed all these people? Who's got money?"

I know I have nothing in my pockets, so I just smile like a dummy and shrug.

"The Lord will provide."

"I knew you'd say that, JC." Matthew steps aside, allowing me to walk up to the order window.

"Come on, he's not going to get any food for free! Let's take up a collection!" Luke takes off his cap and makes the rounds of the faithful. He returns with twenty dollars and some change.

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"That's all I could get, JC. It won't be enough."

"We have to make do with a little so that we may do a lot."

I smile at the young man at the window and place the money on the counter with a great deal of ceremony.

"We'll have one hundred and three burgers with fries please."

The young man, whose name tag says BRIAN, smiles back at me, then looks down at the money. "Sure. That'll be two hundred and sixty-two dollars and sixty-five cents, plus tax."

"Oh, I only have this much money. It is all that we have. For the rest, I must rely on your good Christian charity."

Brian's smile fades. "Move along, dope freak."

Matthew comes to my defense: "But this is Jesus Christ."

"Yeah, and I'm the Virgin Mary. You got the money, you get the burgers, pal. That's how the system works."

I spread our collection out, so that he can see it all.

"Please give us whatever this money will buy. We will content ourselves with whatever you can provide."

"That'll get you six burgers and fries and drinks. Okay?"

"Truly that will be most satisfactory, my good man."

In mere seconds, Brian returns with six burgers, fries, and drinks. I dare not look behind me at the crowd of people waiting for me to provide for them. My only thought is that I will go hungry. I pick up the burgers and hand them over to my disciples. Then the fries and then the drinks.

"Give this food to those in greatest need."

Luke takes the food and walks into the crowd. I am about to follow, when Brian yells at me.

"Hey mister. Don't you want your order?"

I turn back to the counter and look down. Six

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burgers and fries sit on the counter. But I . . . never mind. I pick these up and hand them to Paul. He turns and walks into the crowd. Eager hands grab at him. I turn back to the counter and see six burgers and fries. I pick these up, pass them to John. Six more remain on the counter. I stare at them, not believing my eyes. I pick them up, pass them along. Yet six more burgers and fries remain on the counter.

I hear a gasp from the crowd, then a heavy silence. I continue passing out burgers to my followers. They are on their knees now, praying. My disciples quickly distribute food until everyone is fed. Brian backs away from the counter, hands up.

“Hey mister, you’d better leave now. You’re going to get me in trouble with this shit.”

“I urge you to join us, for the end is near.”

“Yeah, right. Just move along, pal. You’re bad for business.”

I smile at him and turn away. Paul holds up a hand, asks me for more drinks.

“Hey JC, we could use a few more Cokes.”

I point to the water fountain nearby. “Let’s not push our luck, Paul. Water will suffice.”

“But . . .”

“Let us gather on that hill and enjoy what has been provided to us. We shall rest and unite our spirits for the journey ahead.”