

# The Devil and Pete Malloy

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A/N & DISCLAIMER: I don't own 'em, they ain't mine, yadda yadda yadda. They're the property of MarkVII/Universal. I also don't own the Devil, but if anyone should happen to see him, please tell him I'd really like my copy of Steel Magnolias back (and it better not come back scratched, or there'll be hell to pay, ha!). **All original characters and the content of this story are the sole property of Bamboozlepig and may not be used without permission.** Story may contain content not suitable for children, so reader discretion is advised. I welcome any reviews/critiques, and as always, thanks for reading!

This is the city. Los Angeles, California. Friday, May 18th. It was hot and muggy in Los Angeles. We were working the nightwatch out of Central Division. The boss is Sergeant MacDonald. My partner is...

"Pete, you're doing Dragnet again. Stop it. It's kinda annoying."

...Jim Reed. He is sitting in the passenger seat of our black and white patrol car, otherwise known as Adam-12 (or One-Adam-12, for the dispatcher and all you purists out there. And if you're the dispatcher? STOP READING AND GET BACK TO WORK!). I'm driving. Driving the squad car is something I always do. Why? Because then I don't have to get out and run after suspects and get all sweaty and icky. I prefer to leave that to my junior partner. He doesn't mind.

"Thanks a lot, Pete. I KNEW there was a reason why you never let me drive. And you're still sounding like Dragnet. If you're going to do Dragnet, don't you think now would be a wise time to introduce yourself?"

Oh yeah, I'm Malloy. Pete Malloy.

"Okay, now you're doing Bond. James Bond. And, FYI? You're not very good at it."

"This is coming from the guy who parroted the mynah bird that was in the back end of that VW bus we stopped."

"Down with the pigs! Oh...wait. I get it. Parroted. Right. Because it was a mynah bird. Good one, Pete."

The dispatcher's voice interrupts us. *"One-Adam-12, One-Adam-12, see the woman, neighbor trouble, 650 Devil Gate Drive."*

Reed writes the address down on the notepad attached to the hotsheet desk. "One-Adam-12, roger," he says into the mike. "Where in the world is Devil Gate Drive at anyway?" he asks. "I've never heard of it."

"I think it's out near Hollywood Hills. It's kind of down in the boondocks." I shoot him a look. "And if you start singing that 'Down In The Boondocks' song, I swear I WILL make you get out of this car and hoof it for the rest of our beat."

Reed, who is already humming the 'Down In The Boondocks' song, quickly stops. "You know, I keep telling you, Pete, that you're making an empty threat. You'd never stop the car and make me hoof it, and you know that."

"Don't be so sure. I may just do it someday."

"Nah, you wouldn't."

"Try me."

Reed looks over at me. "If you made me hoof it, then that means YOU'D have to get out of the squad car and chase after suspects. I seriously doubt you'd like that. You might get ICKY." He looks out the window. "Hey, I sure hope you know where you're going out here."

"Yes, I'm pretty sure. Relax, Reed. You worry too much."

"I'm just saying, these roads are kinda curvy and there aren't too many streetlights out here. Plus, if we get down in a valley, we may lose our radio signal."

"Yes, I am aware of that." I flick the headlights up to high beams to better illuminate our way.

Reed sighs and rolls his eyes. "Why do I have the feeling we're lost?" he asks under his breath. He pulls the map out and tries to read it by the light of the hotspot desk. "Cripes, it's not even on the map!" he says with exasperation.

"Just keep your eyes peeled for Devil Gate Drive," I tell him. I am loathe to admit that we are, indeed, rather lost.

"I KNEW IT!" Reed exclaims. "We're lost!"

"Well..." I hedge. "Not so much lost as just boldly going where no cops have ever gone before."

"Pete..." Reed groans. "We're not on the USS Enterprise. You are not Captain Kirk, and I am not..."

"Spock?" I helpfully supply. "Or would you rather be one of those guys in the red shirts that always gets killed off in the first five minutes of the show?"

Reed slaps his forehead. "Scotty, beam me up," he says.

"Wouldn't that be kinda neat if we could actually do that?" I ask. "I mean, imagine it...having the capability to be magically transported to different planets. That would be sooo cool."

"In your case, I'd suggest that you ask to be transported back to your home planet of Mars, Pete. I think they're calling you." Reed picks up the mike. "Dispatch, this is One-Adam-12. We are requesting directions to this call." All that answers him is static. He tries again. "Dispatch, this is One-Adam-12. Do you copy us?" Again, static. He plunks the mike back into the holder with dismay. "Thanks, Pete," he grumbles. "Nice sense of direction you have there. I thought you said you knew where we were going."

"Look, I'll turn around the first chance we get and we'll go back the way we came. Then maybe we can get better directions."

"We are NEVER going to live this down at the station," Reed says. "I can just imagine the special delight Wells will take in torturing us. Augh, I can't bear the thought of it," Reed groans.

"We'll give him a Tribble. They're trouble."

"You know, maybe you should consider cutting back on your television viewing. I suggest you start tonight."

"I already said at the beginning of the story that we are working the nightwatch. By the time we get off work, the only thing that will be on tv is the test patterns. Who wants to watch test patterns?"

"Maybe YOU should. You might learn something."

"What, like that they're annoying? That high-pitched EEEEEEE sound drives me nuts."

"And right now? You're driving ME nuts!" Reed stares out the window for a second. "Well, speak of the devil, there's Devil Gate Drive up ahead."

"Good," I say. "I was running out of irrelevant tv references."

We pull up to 650 Devil Gate Drive and get out of the squad car. We approach the house, but before we can knock, the door is thrown open and we are greeted by an elderly lady. "It certainly took you long enough to get here!" she snaps at us.

"Uh, yes ma'am. We're sorry about that. We had a bit of a problem finding the address," Reed says. "I'm Officer Reed and this is my partner, Officer Malloy. You called in about some neighbor problems?"

"I'm Ethel Myers and you bet your bootstraps I did, sonny!" she says. She jabs a bony finger in a westerly direction. "There!"

Reed and I attempt to discern what she is pointing at. "Down where?" I ask.

"Down THERE!" she says. "At 666 Devil Gate Drive! Can't you hear them? They're having a very loud party!"

I try to listen, but hear only the sounds of the night. "I'm sorry, ma'am, but I don't hear anything."

"Are you deaf, young man? Their loud noise has kept me up! And it's making Fluffy's hair stand on end! The poor thing's nerves are shot!"

"Er, Fluffy, ma'am?" Reed asks.

"My cat!" She points to a rather large grey ball of hair that is sitting at her feet, wide-eyed and jittering like a coffee junkie who has just mainlined an economy-sized can of Folger's. It looks like a tumbleweed with two eyes and four feet. Fluffy looks up at her pitifully. "MRROW!" it says.

Reed bends down to pet it. "Ooh, is he a Persian?" he asks.

"Or maybe dryer lint?" I ask.

"Don't try to be funny, young man," she says, fixing me with a glare. "I want you to go down there and tell those idiots to stop partying!"

Fluffy has taken offense at Reed's attempt to pet him and arcs his back, trying to hiss. Instead, he topples over into a twitching heap at the lady's feet. "THHPT," he says, blowing Reed a raspberry.

Reed stands up rather quickly, a look of horror crossing his face. A second later, the smell hits me. "I think Fluffy has a bit of, um, stomach trouble," he says nasally, holding his nose. I can only nod in agreement, since I am busy holding my own nose.

"Gee, you THINK? Really, what made you arrive at that deduction, Sherlock?" the lady says sarcastically. "That's why I called you! The poor dear has been this way all night!"

"Uh, I don't think the LAPD can do much about your cat's gastrointestinal distress," Reed chokes out as Fluffy casually blows another raspberry. He quickly pinches his nose again, fanning the air in front of us. "Ooh, dat's just nadsty," he mutters with a wince. "Pud a cork in it, Fluffy."

I am trying not to gag. "We can tell them to keep the party down, ma'am, but we can't tell them to stop having it. There's no law against having parties, providing it doesn't disturb others."

"It's disturbing me," she says. "And poor Fluffy may never be the same again."

"Alright," I say, turning to step off of her porch, in a hurry to get some fresher air. "We'll go down and talk with them."

"Yeah," Reed says, following me. "We'll go speak with them."

"You do that, sonny!" she snaps, scooting the four-legged farting tumbleweed back inside her house with a hefty shove of her foot. She slams the door on us.

Reed and I breathe in the stuffy night air, which is actually pleasant after Fluffy's aromatherapy. "Fluffy needs some Pepto Bismol," he says as we climb back into the car.

"Big time," I agree, starting the car up. "You know, I'm just curious. How in the world could she hear anything? I sure couldn't. She must have ears like a bat."

"You mean radar."

"Huh?"

"Radar. Bats have radar, Pete. That's how they catch their food."

I look over at him. "Thank you for that Wild Kingdom lesson, Mr. Marlin Perkins. I know I'll sleep better tonight knowing that bats have radar."

Low tree branches thud against the roof of the squad, brushing and snapping at the top lights as we drive the approximate half-mile from Mrs. Myers house to 666 Devil Gate Drive. "You know, Pete, I gotta admit, this call is kinda giving me the creeps," Reed says. "I mean, the address? The house number? We're talkin' Old Testament."

"You mean New Testament, Reed. The Old Testament was about Moses wandering the desert for forty years, the Ten Commandments, and Noah. The New Testament was about Jesus Christ. And the book that you're thinking of is the Book of Revelations," I tell him. And here Sister Mary and her Ruler of Evil said I never learned anything in Catechism class.

"Is that the one about the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, the end of the world, and seals?"

"That's the one."

"Why would the end of the world need seals? I mean, all they'd really be able to do is clap their flippers together and bark. Unless, of course, the end of the world requires sea mammals that can balance a ball on the end of their nose. That might make the end of the world a little more entertaining."

"Somehow, I don't think that's quite the same kind of seals God had in mind, Reed. And the balancing ball part? Any creature can do that if they learned how."

"Try getting a snake to do that, Pete," Reed says. "And I imagine a rhinoceros would have a hard time doing that, since their horns would pop the ball." He stares out the window. "I'm still not comfortable with this call. There's something hinky about it. I sense danger ahead."

"Have you been reading that Magic 8 ball again?" I ask. "I've told you that's not a good thing to take advice from." I laugh. "Besides, what are you trying to tell me, that you're afraid of ghosts?" But in all honesty, I am a bit spooked by this call myself.

"I swear to God, Pete, if Damien answers the door, I'm letting you handle the call while I wait in the squad."

I pull up to 666 Devil Gate Drive and we get out. The large, two-story residence is lit up from the outside by red floodlights. There is the sound of music and laughter coming from the house. The temperature has suddenly risen by at least ten degrees. I wipe sweat off of my brow with the back of my hand as we approach the house. "Is it just me or did the temperature suddenly go up?" I ask.

"No, I think it's gone up," Reed says, mopping his face with a handkerchief. "Man, I'd sell my soul to the devil right now for a nice cool glass of lemonade." And just as he says it, the door magically swings open...by itself. Reed and I exchange a glance.

Hand on the butt of my gun, I warily climb the porch steps. The hair on the back of my neck would be raised if it weren't for the sweat.

"You aren't seriously thinking going IN there, are you, Pete?" Reed asks. "That was just plain spooky."

"You've been watching too many late-night horror flicks. Anyway, we have to ask them to keep it down," I tell him. "You can stay out here if you want."

"Oh, HELL no!" Reed exclaims, quickly climbing the steps behind me. "You first, Pete." He pushes me forward with a hearty shove.

"Gee, thanks, Jim." I stop on the porch. "Hello?" I call out. "Police officers! You need to keep the party down!" I take a step towards the door.

Anne Boleyn meets us. She is dressed in medieval garb. We've obviously interrupted a costume party. "What doest thee want?" she asks.

"We need to speak with whoever's in charge of this party," I tell her. "We've gotten a complaint about the loud music."

She turns away from us. "Luci, my darling, thou hast visitors!" she calls out to someone behind her. "Thee may enter," she says to us.

"Um, thanks, but we'll stay out here," Reed says.

"I SAID COME IN!" she growls in a guttural voice, taking her head off and holding it in her hands.

Reed's eyes grow huge. He looks at me. "P-P-Pete, her HEAD just came off!" he stammers.

I start backing away. "I'm sure there's a logical explanation, Reed." I never take my eyes off of the headless Anne Boleyn, who is glaring at us rather disconcertingly from underneath her left arm.

"Like WHAT? A trick of the light?" he asks. "OW!" he yelps as I step on him. "Watch it, Pete!"

"MOVE!" I hiss.

A very dapper man comes to the doorway. "Ah, gentlemen, come in!" he says. He pats Anne on the shoulder. "Dear, the Imp Punch needs a little more demon rum added to it. Why don't you run along and fix it?" He is neatly dressed in an old-fashioned black waistcoat, with an elaborate black and red embroidered vest. A red shirt, thin black tie, black pants, and patent leather shoes complete the look. He has dark hair combed back into a pompadour and a trimmed mustache and goatee. Tiny gold earrings wink in his earlobes. He smiles at us, revealing extremely blinding, perfectly straight white teeth.

"Are you the homeowner?" I ask in my best authoritative voice. I try to keep the quiver out of it.

"Yes, yes," he says. "I'm the homeowner. Please, call me Lucifer." He has a deep purring voice, kind of like Barry White.

"We've gotten a complaint from one of your neighbors about the noise. You need to keep it down," I tell him.

He regards us for a moment, with pure black eyes. Tiny flames dance in what would be his irises. Then he raises his hands in a quick motion, and Reed and I are yanked unceremoniously into the house by the fronts of our uniform shirts...without ever coming into contact with Lucifer. "I bid you welcome," he intones as the door slams shut behind us. The entire interior of the house is blood red. A blaze crackles merrily in a huge fireplace, as party guests throng a buffet table laden with food.

"Hey, what's the big idea?" I ask.

Lucifer smiles at Reed. "I believe you said you'd sell your soul to me for a glass of lemonade. I'm ready to collect."

"I was KIDDING!" Reed cries. "And I don't see any lemonade, either, pal!"

Lucifer snaps his fingers and a wriggling imp sashays up with a glass of lemonade on a tray. She would have been kind of cute, except for the forked tongue, cloven hooves, and snakes for hair. Ewwww. I shudder in horror.

Reed shakes his head. "Nuh-uh. I'm not taking it. It's a trick!" He tugs at his uniform collar as sweat rolls down his face. "It's a trick, right Pete?"

"Yeah," I tell him. "Look, pal. Let's not play games here, okay? You need to keep this party quiet." I scan the room and see Rasputin sharing a joke with Genghis Khan. John Dillinger and Al Capone are deep in discussion by a huge punch bowl. Mata Hari tickles Lee Harvey Oswald under the chin. Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow are arguing with Billy the Kid. Adolf Hitler and Eva Braun polka by, waving to Hermann Goehring. Judas and Charles Manson hustle among the crowd with drink-laden trays.

"Charles Manson?" I ask. "I thought he's supposed to be in San Quentin."

"It's his doppelgänger," the Devil explains. "I hire the condemned souls of the future deceased to cater my parties. It's cheaper that way. I've got all of the notorious killers that will die in the future, from Ted Bundy to Jeffrey Dahmer. "

"Who's Jeffrey Dahmer?" I ask.

"Let's just say he gives a new meaning to the term 'finger food'," the Devil says with a sardonic smile.

The band, billed as Satan Stan and His Demonic Band, stops playing the polka and Yoko Ono takes the stage.

"Yoko Ono?" I ask in surprise. "What's she doing here? Surely she's not evil."

"Are you kidding? Have you ever heard her SING?" the Devil asks. "Sheer off-key torture in a Hello Kitty voice. You can't get any better than this." He turns to Reed as Yoko starts wailing and shrieking, forcing us to cover our ears with our hands. "I have other ways of taking your soul, you know. You just can't welsh on a deal."

The imp has grown weary of holding the tray with the glass of lemonade and wriggles off, leaving the tray to stand by itself in midair. Mata Hari and Anne Boleyn dance up to the Devil, arm in arm. Anne's head is back on her neck, albeit at a slightly crooked angle. "Luci, baby, come back to the party," Mata Hari urges. "You haven't mingled very much, and Baby Face Nelson is getting impatient because he wants to talk to you. He's threatening to shoot Legs Diamond with his gat." She giggles. "You know how he gets when he gets some of that demon rum in him!"

The Devil waves her off. "Have Ma Barker sit on him," he tells her. "That'll teach that little rat a lesson. Now shoo, I'm busy."

Reed stands his ground, his arms folded across his chest. "I am NOT giving you my soul," he says firmly.

Yoko Ono leaves the stage and the Rolling Stones take it. They launch into a rousing version of "Get Off Of My Cloud" as the partygoers shriek and clap along. The dance floor is suddenly crowded with infamous faces.

"The Rolling Stones?" I ask. "I know they do 'Sympathy For the Devil', but c'mon...they're not evil, are they?"

"You know, you'd be surprised at what a little primo marijuana, some fabulous acid, and a few high-quality hookers that are willing to do ANYTHING, even with that dratted Keith Richards, will do. They bore me with their silly caterwauling, but I have to hire them for the younger set. They've even gone and named themselves 'Their Satanic Majesties', as if I'd give them THAT kind of title. Silly fools."

"Um, yeah, too bad you didn't stop them at Altamont," I say.

"Believe me, it wasn't for a lack of trying. I hired the Hell's Angels to provide security, and just LOOK at what THOSE fools did. It was a complete mess. I had to hire a PR man to save my image."

"Guess good help is hard to find, even for the Devil," I quip. "But seriously, you need to keep the party quiet. We don't want to have to come back out here again tonight." I tug on Reed's shirt sleeve. "And now, if you don't mind, we'll be going."

"Just a moment," the Devil says. "Aren't you forgetting something? Your partner's soul?"

"So? He didn't drink the lemonade. I don't think you have much grounds here, buddy. You can't force him to give up his soul."

Reed nods. "What Pete said."

The Devil snaps his fingers and with a shout, Reed is swept off of his feet and hung upside down in midair. Demonic imps suddenly appear and begin to whack at him with sticks, shouting and dancing up and down. My partner, the Devil's Pināta.

"Ouch, hey, stop it!" Reed yelps. "Stop it, I said! That hurts!" The imps continue to jabber while they clobber him. "PETE, DO SOMETHING!" he yells. "ALL THE BLOOD IS RUSHING TO MY HEAD!"

"You know, that's just plain mean," I tell the Devil. "You should be ashamed of yourself. Reed was just making a statement when he said he'd sell his soul to you for a glass of lemonade. You shouldn't have taken it seriously."

"I never renege," the Devil says. "Just ask Robert Johnson. He said he'd sell his soul in order to learn to play the blues really good. Stick around. He's up after the Rolling Stones."

"PETE, FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, MAKE IT STOP!" Reed shouts. "They're hitting awfully close to the goody pouch!"

"The goody pouch?" the Devil asks, his eyebrow raised.

I pinch the bridge of my nose. "Don't ask," I say. I am trying to think how to get Reed and myself out of this mess. I decide on a rather bold tactic. "Hey, how do we know you're really the Devil, and not some fake?"

The Devil is taken aback. "You doubt me?" he asks in surprise.

"Well, yeah," I say. The partygoers gasp collectively and the room falls silent. All eyes are focused on me. "Oh no he dinnit!" someone says from the back of the room. Even the imps have quit smacking Reed and he dangles there, staring at me from his upside down perch.

"Even with the all the vile partygoers?" the Devil asks. "I've got all of the infamous ones from centuries and centuries ago. Isn't that kind of impressive?"

"Ehh," I say, waving my hand in an iffy kind of motion. "So you have some bad guys and girls. What's the big deal? I mean, Napoleon? C'mon. He's SO yesterday. Marie Antoinette? Passè." I scan the silent crowd. "Although, I will grant you Hitler. He's evil incarnate. Nothing is worse than Nazis. And he's more recent history."

"Why...why...I don't know what to say," the Devil says. "Most people are impressed by my guests."

I shrug nonchalantly. "Maybe. But I'm not, and neither is Reed."

"Right," he says, still upside down. "Ouch!" he yelps as an imp pokes him in the shoulder.

The Devil regards me for a second, the flames in his eyes getting huge. Then all hell breaks loose when he stamps his foot and roars. He waves his hands and the partygoers disappear in a swirling vortex of flames. "Now are you impressed?" he shrieks.

"Not really. It's just a nifty parlor trick," I tell him. I yawn and buff my fingernails on my shirt.

He waves his hands and behind him, a hellish panorama appears, complete with molten lava, dancing flames, and the wails of tormented souls. "Try THAT!" he shouts.

"Yeep!" Reed squeaks, his eyes huge. He flails his arms, trying to get down.

"It's a movie projection from somewhere inside the house," I say.

The Devil glares evilly at me. He waves his hands again and the temperature in the house rises to near boiling.

"Thermostat's broken," I say, running a finger underneath my collar as sweat soaks my shirt.

The Devil stamps about in frustration. With a roar, he ignites a circle of flame underneath Reed's head and laughs as the flames leap high.

"Oh, thanks a lot, Pete! You just HAD to go and piss off the Devil!" Reed yells, trying to keep his hair from singeing.

"Is that all you've got?" I ask. "Really, how lame can you get?"

The Devil shrieks and roars, dancing about in agitation.

"Hey, don't blow a gasket, bub," I say. "Or should I say Beezlebub?"

The Devil points to me and I am whisked off of my feet, joining Reed in hanging upside down. The Devil cackles. "Now I've got you!" he chortles as Reed attempts to curl himself into a fetal ball. He is rather unsuccessful.

"I wasn't the one who offered to sell his soul," I say. "So really you have no business with me." I rub my chin thoughtfully. "What about a trade of some sort...maybe someone else in place of Reed," I suggest. "After all, I'd have a pretty hard time explaining his disappearance to my sergeant. And can you imagine the amount of paperwork I'd have to do?"

"Hmmm..." the Devil ponders. "Keep talking, I'm listening."

"How about Ed Wells? He's not that pleasant, and I'm sure he'd make a lovely addition to your tormented souls section," I offer.

A scroll appears in the Devil's hand. He peruses it. "Nope, no Ed Wells listed here," he says, shaking his head. "I want someone who would be willing to sell their soul in exchange for any kind of favor I might grant them."

"Ummm...Josef Stalin?" I ask.

The Devil rolls his eyes. "Puh-lease. It has to be someone who is still alive. Besides, I already have Stalin down here. He's working as a Head Pitchfork Prodder."

"How about Sirhan Sirhan? Or James Earl Ray?"

"Sorry, they're already on here," the Devil tells me. "I'm getting impatient."

"C'mon Pete, think!" Reed says. "I don't want to spend eternity in Hell. How am I going to explain that to Jean?"

"Elvis Presley?" I offer.

Reed is shocked. "Pete, he's the King of Rock and Roll!"

"He also does 'Return To Sender' and 'It's Now Or Never', two songs that have a high hate ratio for me," I say.

"I can't take him," the Devil says. "He's due to enter Heaven in 1977...although I wouldn't mind scoring a couple of those rhinestone-studded jumpsuits of his."

"WHAT!" Reed exclaims. "Elvis dies in 1977?"

"Oopsie," the Devil says. "I shouldn't have told you that. Humans aren't supposed to know the future."

"How about Ziggy?" I ask.

"Ziggy?" Reed says. "Pete, are you crazy? He's cute!"

"He's also a cartoon character," the Devil informs me. "I can't take cartoon characters."

"Really," I muse. "Too bad. Someone needs to off Mary Worth big time."

"Pete, come ON!" Reed moans. "The blood has settled in my head now, and I'm getting dizzy."

"Okay, whoever invented brassieres."

Both the Devil and Reed look at me. "Brassieres, Pete?" Reed asks after a long moment of silence.

"Yeah, you know...bras? Have you ever tried to unhook one in the dark?"

"Pete, what goes on in your personal life is really none of my business, but honestly...why would you want to wear a bra in the dark?"

I roll my eyes and sigh. "Not ME, you idiot! I don't wear a bra..."

"Whew, that's a relief," Reed interrupts. "You had me worried there for a moment." He frowns. "But I still don't get it."

I rub my forehead. "Think about it, Jim. You dated Jean well before you two were married. And you can't tell me that you two used to spend your dates playing tiddlywinks."

"Hmmm..." Reed scratches his head, the circle of flames still dancing under him. "Oh...wait a second," he says as it begins to dawn on him what I'm talking about. His eyes fly wide open. "Ooh, Pete, that's just plain naughty! You have a dirty mind!" He blushes furiously.

"He's not the brightest bulb in the bunch, is he?" the Devil asks.

"Ya think?" I say. "5000 men in the department, and I draw him. Now I'm stuck with him."

"There's no need to be nasty, Malloy," Reed says. "You're not exactly a bowl of cherries yourself."

"A bowl of cherries?" I ask. "How could I be a bowl of cherries?" Suddenly a blue-checkered wall appears in front of me, a game show complete with a jovial host. "I'll take 'The Proper Platitude' for \$200, Alex," I tell the game show host.

"Fill in the blanks for the following term," the game show host grins. "You're not exactly a blank-blank-blank."

"Son-of-a..." Reed mutters.

"That doesn't fit," I say. "Alex, I believe it's 'what is bundle of joy!'"

"STOP IT!" Reed shouts. "Pete, I'm really getting a headache! THINK OF SOMEONE, PLEASE!"

Alex Trebek and the Jeopardy! set disappear in a puff of smoke. "That was weird," I say. "I don't even know who Alex Trebek is." I point to Reed. "Are you sure you want him? I mean, he's kind of annoying sometimes. He's always whining about wanting to drive the squad car. Plus, he is trying to get me married off. He and Jean don't like happy bachelors."

"And marriage is a BAD thing?" Reed asks. "I'm quite happy."

"That's because Jean does all the cooking and cleaning for you. You would be lost if you had to do your own laundry. You'd probably leave a red sock in with the whites and turn everything a lovely shade of pink. And, need I remind you of the Easter snafu? The one where you managed to dye your kitchen AND yourself several merry shades of bright, non-toxic rainbow colors? And Jimmy thought you were an Oompa-Loompa? And you had farm animals running amok in your house? And 'as long as no one actually EATS the eggs, they'll be okay?'"

"Oh, yeah, THAT one," Reed says. "That wasn't one of my better moments, that's for sure."

The Devil sighs, tapping his foot. "I'm getting tired, here, gentlemen. And I really need to get back to my party. If I find out that Baby Face Nelson has shot the place up with his machine gun, there'll be hell to pay."

"Really," I remark. "You mean, even in Hell, there's hell to pay for misdeeds?"

"I make the miscreant listen to Iron Butterfly, particularly In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida. Play it over and over enough times, and the miscreant learns."

"Ooh," I wince. "That's horrible. I wouldn't wish that punishment on anyone."

"I kinda like that song," Reed says. "At least the first few minutes of it. The second two hours of it? Not so much."

"I don't think it's that long, Jim," I tell him.

"No, it just seems like it," he says.

"A name?" the Devil says. "Seriously, here, I REALLY must be getting back to my party. When she gets drunk enough, Anne Boleyn strips down to her tighty-whiteys and starts dancing on tables. And that is NOT a pleasant sight, believe me. She takes her head off and tosses it around. Last week she lost it and I found the imps playing volleyball with it."

"I've got it!" I say, as suddenly a name comes to me.

"Ooh, I wanna play!" Reed says. "Is it animal, vegetable or mineral?"

"It's a person, you twit!" I tell him.

"Is it someone famous?" Reed asks.

"Yes."

"Are they male or female?"

"Male."

"Are they famous because they're in the movies?"

"No."

"Umm...are they famous because they sing or are in a band?"

"No." I notice that the Devil's head is whipping back and forth between Reed and I as he follows our game of Twenty Questions. I smile and wink at Reed, who grins and winks back.

"Ummm...are they famous because they have committed a notorious crime?"

"No."

"Are they a writer of some sort?"

"No...well, maybe."

"Do they appear in public frequently?"

"Yes."

"Are they mentioned in the paper regularly?"

"Yes."

"Are they involved in the government?"

"Yes."

"Is it J. Edgar Hoover?"

"No."

"ENOUGH!" the Devil roars. He sidles up next to me and I can smell the sulphur emanating from him like noxious aftershave. "Whisper the name to me," he croons.

So I do.

The Devil nods and snaps his fingers. With that, Reed and I find ourselves sitting on the ground outside of Adam-12. We scramble to our feet and hurriedly jump into the squad car, the sound of demonic laughter echoing in our ears. Party sounds begin to tinkle once again from inside the residence. I quickly start the car and pull out of there. I don't slow down until we hit the main road.

"Pete?" Reed asks.

"Yeah?"

"Did that really happen or were we both imagining it?"

"No, it really happened."

"I don't think I'll put any of that down in the log. It would sound kinda silly, don't you think?" He hastily scribbles something down in our logbook. "There. I put 'handled by officers.' That should do it, if anyone asks." He stares out the window at the passing night scenery. "I think I'm going to start wearing a clove of garlic when I come to work from now on."

"What do you want to do? Stink everyone on the watch out? I mean, I have to ride around with you in a car all shift. You wear a clove of garlic to work and I guarantee you that you'll be spending the entire

watch riding around outside on the roof of Adam-12," I tell him. "Besides, garlic is for warding off vampires."

"How about a wooden stake?"

"Again, vampires."

"A silver bullet?"

"Vampires or werewolves, maybe both. I don't remember which."

"Pitchforks and flaming torches?"

"That's for villagers wanting to do in Frankenstein. I don't think you're a bunch of villagers, Reed."

"A vial of holy water."

"Do you plan to perform on the spot christenings?"

"I've got it!" he exclaims, snapping his fingers. "I'll wear a big ol' crucifix, all tricked out with diamonds."

I eyeball him. "Not in THIS car, you won't!" I tap the steering wheel with my index finger. "Look, we got out of there with our souls intact, isn't that what counts?"

"Yeah, but I think I'd feel a whole lot better if I had some sort of back-up with me. I mean, no offense or anything, Pete, but you really had me worried when you couldn't come up with a name to give the Devil. And I'm waaaaayyyy too young to go to Hell, not to mention too cute." He looks at me sadly. "I wouldn't do well in Hell, Pete."

"Hey, what about me?" I ask. "Do you think I'd enjoy Hell any more than you would? It's not exactly a walk in the park."

Reed looks around the car. "He's not here," he says.

"Who's not here?"

"That Alex guy, the game show host. I thought maybe he'd pop up."

I sigh and roll my eyes. "Reed, what happened, happened. It was creepy and it was kooky..."

"Not to mention mysterious and spooky," Reed interrupts. "And altogether ooky..."

"Watch it, junior, you're treading the fine line regarding copyright infringement," I warn.

Reed falls silent once more. Then he speaks again. "Hey, Pete?"

"Yeah."

"What name exactly DID you give the Devil?"

"Richard Nixon."

Reed gasps in shock. "But...but...Pete, he's the President!" he exclaims. "Of the United States of America!"

"I know."

"You can't do that to the President! It's downright traitorous!"

"Relax, Reed. What are the odds that the President of the United States is going to sell his soul to the Devil for favors? It's silly. The President would never do that."

Reed shrugs. "I guess. But why him?"

"Reed?" I ask with a wicked grin.

"Yeah?"

"The Devil made me do it."

*And, a few months later, the Watergate scandal began to unfold. On August 9, 1974, President Nixon resigned from office. Whether or not the Devil had a hand in effectively ending Nixon's presidency is not known. Neither is the fate of Nixon's soul, but one can only imagine him at one of Lucifer's parties, arguing politics with Napoleon, while a headless Anne Boleyn dances on the tables in her undies, the imps playing volleyball with her head, as Hitler waltzes by with Eva Braun in his arms.*