

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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John Anthony Perry

MADONNA'S HOMECOMING

The late Lady Whitehouse strode purposefully up to the Pearly Gates, whose refulgence made her batwing spectacles glint more brightly than had the lights of a thousand television studios.

"It's high time I sorted things out here", she announced to herself. "There's far too much permissiveness everywhere these days, not least in Heaven. I shall have words with Him immediately."

She rapped briskly. With a thunderous clang, the Gates swung open - and a scorching blast of sulphurous flame belched forth, singeing the Lady's eyebrows off.

Beelzebub stood before her, bowing low. "Welcome, Madame", he said. "This is indeed a long-awaited pleasure."

"What the Devil....?" Lady Whitehouse expostulated.

"Who else?", he retorted. "You didn't think I'd leave this delectable treat to a mere low-grade imp, did you? I can scarcely wait to tell you what we've planned for your first ten million years in the warm-up regions."

"Now look here", said Lady W. firmly. "That's quite enough of this nonsense. A joke is all very well, I suppose, to those who like that sort of thing. But I've not got any more time to waste. And it's quite obvious that this place has got completely out of hand. Even St. Peter must be slacking - the Lord knows why. Speaking of Whom, pray inform Him that I have arrived to do His bidding: He must see me AT ONCE so that I can tell Him how I propose to set about it."

"I don't think you appreciate the situation", the Devil replied. "The Person you allude to is merely a figment of your imagination. I, on the other hand, am only too real. And it is I, not you, who will decide how you are to spend the next few aeons - just as I have already been doing, incidentally, throughout your most recent incarnation - of which I can say 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant'".

"But", gasped Her Ladyship, "I have been doing the Lord's work - not yours. I have come to claim my just reward, and to sit (though not idly) among the righteous."

"Exactly so", said Beelzebub. "Indeed you shall. But you will persist in misunderstanding the position. I am God of the self-righteous, and this is their only abode; and you'll soon discover that it's more of a roasting-place than a resting-place. Surely even you, totally humourless though you are, can appreciate the picquancy of the situation? Haven't you heard that the road to Hell is paved with good intentions? Well, here you are!"

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"I shall speak to my solicitor about this", gasped Lady Whitehouse. "It's a clear breach of contract and we will take out an injunction against Holy Ghost Celestial Bliss Tranports of Delight for delivery to wrong destination. I've been pledged to the Lord in Ernest since I was a slip of a girl, and we have both always known where WE were going. To bring me here is an outrage."

"Ah, Ernest, I nearly forgot", said the Devil. "His purgatorial preliminary is to act as caddy to Sir Denis Thatcher and Lord Bill Deedes round the Hadesshire Golf Course. They're the only WASP members, by the way - all the others are yids, wops, commies and queers: this millenium's president is General Galtieri, and the Pope is barman on the nineteenth hole. He's very popular; he tells the filthiest stories! Have you heard the one about you and Ian Paisley in the Dublin whorehouse?"

"No, but I shall sue at once", retorted the Lady. "And I shall speak to Lord Longford".

"Indeed you will", agreed the Devil. "Every day for eight hours for the next hundred thousand years. He is your Gridiron Visitor. He will read aloud to you extracts from his spiritual autobiography Moses, Me and Myra and other erotica, while you perform acts of perpetual lesbian indulgence naked in molten mud with Mother Teresa for the edification of my apprentice demons."

"You'll be telling me next, I suppose, that there is to be continuous foreplay music provided by Cliff Richard and the Gay Nuns' chorus", said Lady Whitehouse with feebly mustered sarcasm.

"You've guessed it!" the Devil replied.

"No, no. Anything but that!" she shrieked, and leapt headlong into the lake of boiling brimstone.

That night, there was high wassail at the BBC. For the High Priestess of Humbug had passed from the airwaves, and the Corn was Greene again.

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