



*it's mine*



*Marco Ciaramella*

*Contract*

*Ernest  
Lucifer*

## CAST:

**Ernest:** Tillie's husband

**Tillie:** Ernest's wife

**Milo:** Friend of Ernest

**Ivor:** Friend of Ernest

**Frank:** Zoo employee

**Nancy:** Milo's wife

**Dotty:** Tillie's sister

**Gertrude:** Tillie's sister

**Marian:** Tillie's sister

**Lucifer:** Buyer of souls

## FIRST ACT

*The scene takes place in the living room of an apartment.*

*When the curtain opens, Ernest and Milo are present on the proscenium. They are sitting at a table.*

**Ernest:** *(After standing up)* Come on, stand up, we're going to be late!

**Milo:** *(Engrossed in reading the newspaper, ignores his friend)* Look what they invented!

**Ernest:** Forget the bullshit written in the newspapers! It's time to go.

**Milo:** *(After having a look at the clock)* At least half an hour is missing for the appointment, if we leave now, we will arrive too early.

**Ernest:** If we arrive too early, I don't think they'll kill us.

**Milo:** Stop being so anxious!

**Ernest:** You don't understand how important this job interview is to me.

**Milo:** Listen to me! If you think about it too much, it's worse. So sit down and try to relax! I promise you we'll leave in five minutes.

**Ernest:** You are right! I have to calm down, otherwise I'll make a bad impression. *(After sitting down)* Come on... tell me what they invented.

**Milo:** If you want you can sell your soul.

**Ernest:** *(Not taking the thing seriously)* Who could I sell it to? To the highest bidder, but...for goodness sake!

**Milo:** I assure you that it is written in this short article, I'm not making it up.

**Ernest:** *(Taking the newspaper to check that his friend is not making fun of him)* It will certainly be a hidden advertisement, perhaps they will have to launch some strange product...

**Milo:** The article is clear, it says that they even give fifty thousand pounds in return.

**Ernest:** And you believe it? You are really naïve!

**Milo:** Absolutely not. I didn't even believe in Santa Claus when I was a child, let alone believe this nonsense.

**Ernest:** *(Looking at the time)* It's time to go, so now take your newspaper back and let's go.

**Milo:** *(Checking the time)* That's right, it's time... this *(Alluding to the newspaper)* I leave it here, nothing else interests me.

**Ernest:** Have you already read the sports pages too?

**Milo:** Those are the first I read.

**Ernest:** Maybe, after the interview, I'll have a look too.

**Milo:** This is talking! Read, be patient and you will see that everything will be fine.

**Ernest:** Let's hope!

*The two leave the scene and immediately afterwards Tillie and Nancy enter.*

**Tillie:** They have already left.

**Nancy:** They aren't irresponsible! They would never risk being late.

**Tillie:** It's true! Ernest really hopes that this is the right time. Since he got sick and lost his job, he can no longer find peace.

**Nancy:** Sooner or later, he too will have his chance again.

**Tillie:** We have been telling him this for five years, but the facts show the opposite and he is completely disheartened.

**Nancy:** I know! It is for this reason that my husband tries to be close to him. It is no coincidence that he wanted to accompany him to the appointment..

**Tillie:** I'm really happy that he did it, because if that interview goes wrong... I don't dare think what... *(Preferring not to complete the sentence)*

**Nancy:** Are you trying to tell me something I don't know?

**Tillie:** I want to tell you something in confidence: I found him more than once while he was leaning out of the window.

**Nancy:** Are you telling me that...?

**Tillie:** I was the one who stopped him from jumping.

**Nancy:** I have no words.

**Tillie:** If he jumped, he wouldn't have any more either!

**Nancy:** *(Embarrassed)* Sorry, I didn't mean...

**Tillie:** Now I am speaking ironically, but I don't deny that, in that period, I really feared a rash gesture on his part.



**Nancy:** So recently hasn't he tried to...?

**Tillie:** No.

**Nancy:** God be thanked! In these situations we must rely only on Him!

**Tillie:** I pray to God every day and I also believe that he listened to me.

**Nancy:** From now on, I will also remember you in my prayers.

**Tillie:** And I will do the same with you.

**Nancy:** I'm going now. However, if you need anything, don't hesitate to call.

**Tillie:** Thank you. I will wait for Ernest to come back, to find out how the interview went.

**Nancy:** See you... in the meantime we keep our fingers crossed. *(And she leaves the scene)*

**Tillie:** Bye! *(While she is tidying up the room, the doorbell rings and she goes to open the door)*

**Dotty:** But how long did it take you to come and open?

**Tillie:** Actually I opened right away.

*Dotty, Gertrude and Marian enter the scene.*

**Gertrude:** *(After adjusting Tillie's blouse collar)* You're always messy, Mom didn't teach you anything!

**Tillie:** I didn't have time to iron it.

**Gertrude:** *(She approaches the library and after touching it with a finger to see if it is dusty)* I would never be able to live in this house, it is full of dust.

**Dotty:** *(She lets out a scream, startling her sisters)* I saw a cockroach. *(Pointing to the position)*

**Marian:** It's just a little piece of black paper, it isn't a cockroach.

**Dotty:** Are you sure? Otherwise I'm leaving.

**Tillie:** In that case nobody would cry.

**Gertrude:** As an older sister, I forbid you to talk to her like that!

**Tillie:** As a younger sister I tell you that every time you come to see me it's always the same story: you just come and break my balls.

**Gertrude:** It is certainly not our fault that this house is always dirty.

**Marian:** Don't be over the top!

**Tillie:** You talk like this because you are comparing it to your home where you clean up from morning to night. I am sure you would also find a hospital operating room dirty!

**Gertrude:** *(Annoyed by her sister's words)* We aren't always cleaning up, I remind you that we also have to think about her. *(Pointing to Dotty)*

**Dotty:** *(Who starts crying)* I knew I'm a burden!

**Marian:** *(Approaching Dotty to console her, glares at Gertrude)* She didn't mean that.

**Dotty:** So what did she mean?

**Tillie:** She meant you scream for no reason and with this excuse you do nothing.

**Dotty:** That's not an excuse, I'm really scared of everything.

**Gertrude:** But you could use your hands to clean anyway.

**Dotty:** If I sit, I don't run the risk of falling and hurting myself.

**Gertrude:** If you don't change your attitude, sooner or later I'll be the one to hurt you!

**Marian:** That's enough! The doctor advised not to make her overexcite.

**Tillie:** But do you always have to come here to fight? Can't you do it at home?

**Marian:** I assure you that we do it there too. *(Then she sits down and starts skimming through the newspaper)*

**Gertrude:** *(She sits next to Marian, but before doing so, she takes a rag from her bag and wipes the seat of the chair. Then, after taking a look at the newspaper)* Is your husband not home?

**Tillie:** He should be back any moment.

**Gertrude:** Did he find a job?

**Tillie:** *(Angry)* What is this? The third degree?

**Marian:** Don't get angry! You know our sister is just a little gruff.

**Dotty:** *(Screaming)* What?

**Marian:** Stop screaming! I wasn't talking about you.

**Gertrude:** *(Pointing to Dotty)* You tell me if she isn't weird, she always gets hold of the wrong end of the stick.

**Dotty:** *(Raising her voice further)* I'm not weird.

**Tillie:** Now you really broke my balls! Why did you come?

**Marian:** We came to check your health.

**Tillie:** I assure you that, for the protection of my health, it would be better if you thinned out these visits.

**Gertrude:** You are ungrateful!

**Tillie:** I know you care about me, but at this time it would be convenient to see each other less often.

**Marian:** Why?

**Tillie:** Frankly, Ernest and I are having a hard time, so I'd rather have a little more peace of mind.

**Marian:** About your spouse, at this moment, where is he?

**Tillie:** He's gone for a job interview and when he comes back I'd like to be alone with him.

**Gertrude:** You seem worried, do you think the interview will not go well?

**Tillie:** I'm not a fortune-teller but if, in the unfortunate hypothesis it doesn't go as I hope, you certainly won't find a way to console him.

**Marian:** Then we leave. *(Before they leave, Ernest enters the scene with a face that doesn't bode well. He greets his sisters-in-law with a wave of his hand and goes to the kitchen)*

**Dotty:** He looked angry.

**Gertrude:** I would say even worse.

**Marian:** Whatever his state of mind, it's better to go.

**Dotty:** But he looks well, he has nice bright face.

**Gertrude:** It's true, I haven't seen him for some time and he seems to be better.

**Tillie:** You just saw him a week ago. How can he be changed in seven days?

**Dotty:** In any case, what matters most is his state of mind.

**Gertrude:** Sisters, do you know what I just read in this newspaper?

*Tillie glares at her sister. The signal is picked up by Marian.*

**Marian:** *(Taking his sister by the arm)* Have you not yet understood that we have to go?

**Gertrude:** *(Before leaving)* But next time I want to find everything cleaner.

**Tillie:** *(Resigned, opening the door)* It will be done.

**Marian:** *(Who comes out last)* I'll call you to find out about the interview.

**Tillie:** Okay.

*Ernest enters the scene.*

**Tillie:** So, how did it go?

**Ernest:** Isn't my face eloquent enough?

**Tillie:** What was wrong this time?

**Ernest:** They were looking for a person with experience.

**Tillie:** But you have a lot of experience.

**Ernest:** They also wanted the applicant to be young.

**Tillie:** It seems to me a contradiction. How can they find a young and experienced person?

**Ernest:** That's what I asked him too. So the person who interviewed me said the problem was that I'm overqualified.

**Tillie:** And this would be bad?

**Ernest:** Evidently, yes. And do you know why? (*Without waiting for an answer*) For the salary. Hiring a young person certainly costs less.

**Tillie:** You could have told him that you were also willing to take the minimum wage.

**Ernest:** We didn't go so far as to talk about that. Dear wife, at the age of over fifty, a person no longer has any opportunities in the world of work.

**Tillie:** I'm sure you will soon find a job!

**Ernest:** Young people have difficulty in finding a job, let alone a man of fifty!

**Tillie:** Don't be disheartened! In any case we will be able to carry on.

**Ernest:** I remind you that with the current law, I will be able to retire at 66. How will we earn our living until then?

**Tillie:** We could pledge the house.

**Ernest:** Thirty years of contributions, twenty of mortgage to end up pledging the house? Not even dead!

**Tillie:** And what other solution could there be?

**Ernest:** Unfortunately there is no other.

**Tillie:** The rate of precariousness and poverty is increasing dramatically. There are people forced to rummage through the bins.



**Ernest:** Once our savings are over, you will see that we too will find ourselves like this.

**Tillie:** *(Interrupting him)* How defeatist you are! The time has not yet come to give up.

**Ernest:** Now, however, I need to be alone with my thoughts for a few minutes.

**Tillie:** Okay, I'm going to the kitchen to make you something good to eat.

**Ernest:** Don't get too busy, I've lost my appetite.

**Tillie:** Fasting does not achieve anything, so you have to make an effort to eat something. *(And she leaves the scene)*

**Ernest:** *(Skimming through the newspaper he finds a red handbill inside which he reads aloud)* Sell your soul, I'm willing to pay fifty thousand pounds for it. It's not a joke. Contact me at n. 666/666666. Hurry up, the offer is valid only for the first ten phone calls. Mah!

*The doorbell rings, Ernest folds the handbill and puts it in his pocket, then goes to open the door.*

**Ivor:** May I?

**Ernest:** Sure, take a seat!

**Ivor:** I wanted to tell you... *(Meanwhile, Tillie enters the scene)*

**Tillie:** Hi Ivor! Did you come to talk about that job...?

**Ivor:** Yes, I was going to tell Ernest about it, but since you are there too...

**Tillie:** Come on, tell us everything!

**Ivor:** My friend Frank told me that a place should be vacated at the zoo where he also works.

**Ernest:** But when exactly should it happen?

**Ivor:** I don't know, but it should happen soon.

**Tillie:** Can we contact your friend to find out more?

**Ivor:** I'll tell him to come here. It won't be a problem for him, as he lives nearby.

**Tillie:** Very well! We will look forward to him and, if he likes it, we will also offer him a coffee.

**Ivor:** A better idea came to me: by now he should have finished his shift, why don't we go to him?

**Tillie:** Now?

**Ivor:** Yes.

**Tillie:** I think it's a good idea! *(Then, seeing her husband who stood still)* Aren't you coming?

**Ernest:** Do me a favor: you go and arrange an appointment.

**Tillie:** Okay! Maybe I also take the opportunity to go to Nancy for a chat, since lunch is already ready.

**Ernest:** Take your time, I have to do something first.

**Tillie:** Bye!

**Ivor:** See you!

*Tillie e Ivor leave the scene.*

**Ernest:** *(Left alone, he picks up the phone receiver and dials the number of the handbill. While waiting for someone to answer from the other end of the line, he thinks aloud)* Even if that job becomes free, who knows when it will happen! And we are short of money. I'm sure it's a hoax, but I'm curious to hear what these crazy people say. Hello? I'm Mr. Parker and I'm calling for an advertisement in the newspaper... I don't know if I'm in time, because I also saw the handbill where it was written ... ah very well, I am the tenth call ... What is my address? 21 Jump Street... Ah! You even come to my home to deliver the money. Really efficient! *(Sarcastic and incredulous)* I want to see if that's true! ... No... I didn't say to you. Goodbye! *(Once the conversation is over)* This is the biggest nonsense I've ever heard!

*The doorbell rings. Ernest goes to open the door. Enter Milo.*

**Milo:** Did you swallow the bitter pill?

**Ernest:** Not yet!

**Milo:** Don't get angry! That man is just an idiot who wants to exploit young people.

**Ernest:** In addition to the refusal, the mockery! He dared to say he wanted someone with experience.

**Milo:** Tomorrow, to distract you, I'll take you with me to the rehearsal of the theatrical play. Maybe the director could assign a role to you too.

**Ernest:** Let alone if I start being a theater actor!

**Milo:** I didn't propose to you to be a drug dealer!

**Ernest:** Maybe it would have been better. Don't you know that you can't earn living with art?

**Milo:** For now, my dear, for now!

**Ernest:** What do you mean?

**Milo:** I mean, the future may hold some surprises for us. Maybe we could embark on a new career.

**Ernest:** You make everything look easy!

**Milo:** You are very wrong! I know how difficult it is. But I can assure you that theater is therapeutic.

**Ernest:** I don't like being an actor.

**Milo:** Why, have you ever tried?

**Ernest:** No, but I don't have your passion, and that's it!

**Milo:** As you want! But remember that the door will always be open for you.

**Ernest:** For me you can also close it immediately.

**Milo:** Yet I'm sure if you tried to do a small part you would fall in love....

**Ernest:** *(Interrupting him)* I have other things to think about.

**Milo:** This is precisely why I insist. You could distract yourself from your problems.

**Ernest:** Thank you, maybe one day we'll talk about it again. Now I'm sorry but I have to go to the kitchen for a snack, I suddenly got hungry.

**Milo:** Well said! Eat and don't lose that beautiful complexion you have. In the meantime, I'm going to see Ivor.

**Ernest:** I don't know if you'll find him at home, he went with Tillie to a friend of his.

**Milo:** In that case, I'll wait for him to come back. *(And he leaves the scene)*

**Ernest:** *(He goes into the kitchen, but after a few moments, the doorbell rings and returns to the stage. After opening the door)* Hi, what do you want?

**Lucifer:** I am Lucifer, nice to meet you. Are you Mr. Parker?

**Ernest:** Yes, I am, but how do you know?

**Lucifer:** I read the surname on the doorbell.

**Ernest:** Actually there is only that of my wife when she was unmarried, that is Angels.

**Lucifer:** Maybe that's why I misread.

**Ernest:** Why did he play right here?

**Lucifer:** Without glasses I go to intuition. Reading the other surnames written on the doorbells, the only one who had a certain number of letters was this, that's all.

**Ernest:** So what do you want?

**Lucifer:** I would rather say that you are the one who wants something from me.

**Ernest:** So, you are...

**Lucifer:** Exactly!

**Ernest:** *(Incredulous, looking at the briefcase Lucifer is holding)* So, in there...?

**Lucifer:** There is money.

**Ernest:** No doubt you are efficient and fast!

**Lucifer:** One must seize opportunity on the spot.

**Ernest:** Before starting the negotiation, I would like to check the contents of the briefcase.

**Lucifer:** It is your right.

**Ernest:** *(He opens the briefcase and does a quick account of the money)* At a rough estimate it's fifty thousand.

**Lucifer:** This is our peculiarity: precision, both in giving and taking.

**Ernest:** *(Distracted by all that money, he doesn't pay attention to the words of his interlocutor)* You, however, have the cheek.

**Lucifer:** I don't understand! It was you who called, don't you remember?

**Ernest:** But it's you who appeared with all this fake money.

**Lucifer:** Ah! Do you think...? *(Then he takes an object out of his briefcase)* If you plug this into the current-tap you can verify the authenticity of the money yourself. Take your time, I'm not in a hurry.

**Ernest:** Actually my wife will be back soon, so hurry up!

**Lucifer:** Why? Do you think she would object to your choice?

**Ernest:** Yes, because she is a pious woman.

**Lucifer:** *(He closes the briefcase and gestures to leave)* So why did you make that phone call? To waste my time? Go ahead and pray with your wife, so I have many other requests.

**Ernest:** Wait up! I said she is very devout, not me!

**Lucifer:** For obvious reasons, I don't beg anyone, so if you aren't interested, I go straight to the eleventh person who called. The offer was only extended to ten people. If you were to give up, I would close the deal with the eleventh.

**Ernest:** Come on, tell me what I have to do to get the money.

**Lucifer:** You just have to sign here. *(Showing him a contract)*

**Ernest:** *(Seeing all those written clauses)* I don't have time to read everything, if my wife came back...

**Lucifer:** Maybe I can sum it all up in two words. Let's start with the guarantee that this is real money and if the contrary were to be established, you could withdraw from the contract. Finally, if you decide to get your soul back, you could do it only under two conditions: paying double what you just received, or bringing two souls willing to sign the same contract that I am submitting to you.

**Ernest:** After I sign, what will happen to my soul?

**Lucifer:** Nothing, at least until you die.

**Ernest:** But it is precisely that moment that interests me.

**Lucifer:** It will be better than you imagine, an expert tells you.

**Ernest:** So, will I be damned forever?

**Lucifer:** How tragic you are! Do you know how many customers we have over there? And nobody complains.

**Ernest:** Maybe they can't do it.

**Lucifer:** Do you want to give up?

**Ernest:** I don't believe in hell or even in heaven.

**Lucifer:** So why do you worry so much?

**Ernest:** You are right! It is useless to have so many scruples. Come on, give me the contract and I'll sign it right away.

**Lucifer:** *(After making sure Ernest is done signing)* You just made a deal.

**Ernest:** So there are no deceptions, are there?

**Lucifer:** It's all specified here, in black and white. Now, however, I have to go, I too have to give account...

**Ernest:** But you, aren't you... the boss?

**Lucifer:** *(Laughing)* Life hasn't really taught you anything! Everyone knows that above us there is always someone more important. *(And he leaves the scene)*

## SECOND ACT



*Same scenography of the first act.*

**Ivor:** Where will he have gone?

**Tillie:** I don't know, but I'm sure we'll see him appear suddenly. Rather, in your opinion, will they hire him?

**Ivor:** The problem, in my opinion, is another. I don't know if he will be willing to adapt to that job.

**Tillie:** He will have to do it.

**Ivor:** It wouldn't be the ideal job for him, but I haven't been able to find a better one for the moment.

**Tillie:** The ideal job doesn't exist. There is always the reverse of the medal even in the best occupations. However, have you already mentioned something about this to him?

**Ivor:** No. I tried to probe the ground a little, but he started making defeatist speeches and I didn't feel up going into details.

**Tillie:** I see what you mean. Having seen him suffer to get out of the tunnel of depression, I too hesitate many times.

**Ivor:** I would like to find him a job worthy of his abilities to see him smile again as he used to. After all, it's not his fault that he got sick and lost his job.

**Tillie:** But he hasn't lost his good friends. And you are one of them.

*Someone knocks on the door.*

**Ivor:** Damn! Frank must have arrived and Ernest has not yet come back home. Anyway, you should go and open the door.

*Tillie goes to open the door, but it isn't Frank who enters. It is Ernest, very pale in the face.*

**Tillie:** Ernest, what have you done?

**Ernest:** *(Worried, but above all regretting the choice made)* Nothing, why?

**Tillie:** You don't look well.

**Ivor:** *(Agitated)* For God's sake, go to the doctor, you have a deadly pale face.

**Ernest:** What, already? And then please don't mention Him, it hurts too much.

**Ivor:** If it hurts, then you need to go to the doctor right away.

**Ernest:** I don't think he will be able to help me.

**Ivor:** If you consider him incompetent, change him! *(Ernest shakes his head)*

*The doorbell rings.*

**Tillie:** I'm going to open the door.

*Frank enters the scene.*

**Frank:** *(Smiling)* I'm Frank, sorry I'm late.

**Ivor:** Come in!

**Tillie:** Please, take a seat!

**Frank:** Who should I talk to? With you? *(Turning to Ernest)*

**Ernest:** Maybe another time, today I'm not well. *(And goes to the bedroom, leaving everyone nonplussed)*

**Frank:** Is he interested in work or not? Because, if so, it might make an effort.

**Tillie:** Absolutely yes. Now I'm going over there and bringing him back here. Don't go away. *(She is about to join her husband when the doorbell rings)* Ivor, can you please open the door? *(And she leaves the scene)*

*Milo enters the scene.*

**Milo:** Hi Ivor! *(Then, realizing Frank's presence, politely introduces himself)* Hi, I'm Milo.

**Frank:** I'm Frank, nice to meet you.

**Milo:** Where is Ernest? I absolutely have to tell him something.

**Ivor:** He's in the other room with Tillie.

**Milo:** Then I join them, I know the way. *(And he leaves the scene)*

**Frank:** I would have arrived before him.

**Ivor:** Explain everything to me, I report him and then let you know.

**Frank:** Okay! However, I thought that proposing a job, in the current times, would have given greater satisfaction.

**Ivor:** You have to excuse my friend, but he's not feeling very well.

**Frank:** In fact, he had a rather meagre face.

**Ivor:** Did you notice it too?

**Frank:** Yes, it was pretty evident.

*The doorbell rings.*

**Ivor:** I'm sorry, I'm going to open the door, I've now become the usher of this house!

*Dotty, Gertrude and Marian enter the scene.*

**Gertrude:** *(As soon as she enters, she arranges the collar of Ivor's shirt)* Of course your wife doesn't know the verb to starch!

**Ivor:** But...

**Gertrude:** *(Then, turning to Frank)* You, on the other hand, who would you be?

**Frank:** I am a friend of Ivor and I came...

**Gertrude:** *(Interrupting him and arranging his tie)* You will tell me later.

**Frank:** Thank you, even if it was not necessary. I didn't come for a fashion show, but to propose a job.

**Marian:** Don't pay attention to my sister! She is a bit grumpy. Rather tell us what job you intend to propose.

**Frank:** It is about working in a zoo.

**Dotty:** *(Screaming)* Ah... I'm afraid of animals.

*Frank taken by surprise is frightened and walks away from Dotty.*

**Marian:** Don't scream, he doesn't have them with him.

**Dotty:** *(Continuing to scream)* He left them in the car and they could escape.

**Frank:** *(Which is starting to lose patience)* I don't have any animals in the car, God forbid that too!

**Gertrude:** Your shoes are too dirty. Did you clean them before you left the house?

**Frank:** *(Turning to Ivor)* But who are these women?

**Ivor:** They are Tillie's sisters.

**Marian:** Forgive my sisters, they are a bit crazy.

**Frank:** I would say they must be placed in an asylum. So I'm leaving.

**Ivor:** Wait up! We haven't talked about that job yet.

**Frank:** If you want to do it, it will be better to go somewhere else.

**Ivor:** *(Glaring at the three women)* It's a great idea, there is no peace here.

*They're about to open the door when Dotty...*

**Dotty:** *(Turning to Frank)* Excuse me, are you married?

**Frank:** *(Shocked, on hearing the question)* Why?

**Dotty:** The fact that you are a bit neglected makes me think this. I'm unmarried.

**Marian:** Dotty, how dare you?

**Gertrude:** Think about it! She wouldn't be a bad match.

**Frank:** Rather than marry her, I'd rather marry a howler monkey. *(And he leaves the scene with Ivor)*

**Gertrude:** How rude that is!

*Tillie, Milo and Ernest enter the scene.*

**Dotty, Gertrude e Marian:** *(In chorus)* How pale you are!

**Ernest:** Then it is really evident!

**Milo:** Yeah, you need to be treated my friend. You really suck!

**Ernest:** In this case, I better go.

*Ernest is opening the front door when...*

**Tillie:** Where are you going?

**Ernest:** I'm going to look for two jerks like me. *(And he leaves the scene)*

**Tillie:** He's gone crazy! What is he raving?

**Marian:** I think he was infected with our family.

**Dotty:** *(Screaming)* Why, are we crazy?

**Marian:** You contribute a lot to driving us crazy.

**Tillie:** That's enough! I'm sick of you, come out there and let's clear things up once and for all.

*The four sisters leave the scene. Only Milo remains on stage.*

**Milo:** What crazy sisters Tillie has! *(The doorbell rings and he goes to open the door)*

*Ivor enters the scene.*

**Ivor:** Are you left alone?

**Milo:** Tillie went out with her crazy sisters.

**Ivor:** And where did they go?

**Milo:** They will surely have gone somewhere to fight.

**Ivor:** Those women are really weird!

**Milo:** There are even worse than them! So, did you talk about Ernest's job with that friend of yours?

**Ivor:** I was just coming to report what he told me, or at least that was my intention, but I don't know if I will really have the courage to do so.

**Milo:** Tell me, maybe I could do it myself.

**Ivor:** I don't think even you will be able to sweeten the pill.

**Milo:** Is it that bad?

**Ivor:** Unfortunately.

**Milo:** Won't you be too catastrophic?

**Ivor:** His work shift would begin at three AM. Every day, including Saturday and Sunday.

**Milo:** He will get used to it. It will be enough he goes to bed early in the evening..

**Ivor:** Will he also get used to traveling one hundred and twenty kilometers a day to come and go?

**Milo:** In fact with that wreck he has, I think it isn't possible.

**Ivor:** Besides he should take care of poisonous snakes.

**Milo:** I haven't the courage to tell him everything.

**Ivor:** It wouldn't even end here.

**Milo:** What else is there?

**Ivor:** The salary is seven hundred pounds a month.

**Milo:** But those aren't even enough to pay for fuel.

**Ivor:** So now, what do we do?

**Milo:** I would temporize. If we offer him this job, he, seeing how depressed he is, throws himself straight out the window.

**Ivor:** But if he asks me something about it, what will I answer him?

**Milo:** Invent something, but don't propose him that job.



**Ivor:** How right you are! But now I have to go back to my wife. Bye! *(And he leaves the scene)*

**Milo:** *(Picking up the newspaper on the table)* I'll take this away. *(And he leaves the scene too)*

*Tillie and her sisters enter the scene. Dotty is screaming like a madwoman.*

**Marian:** *(Trying to silence Dotty)* Stop screaming like this!

**Dotty:** *(Pointing to Gertrude, continues to speak too loudly)* She told me I'm a spinster.

**Gertrude:** How touchy you are! Anyway, you're right, you aren't, those generally clean at home, you, on the contrary, never do anything.

**Dotty:** *(Continuing to scream, she also starts crying and turning to the other two sisters)* Can you hear what she says?

**Marian:** *(Turning to Gertrude)* You are unfair. She's also trying to find a husband. For example, she tried to ensnare that guy, earlier.

**Gertrude:** It doesn't seem to me, however, that she has been successful!

**Dotty:** *(Turning to Tillie)* But that isn't my fault.

**Tillie:** Gertrude, that's enough! Remember that she is under the influence of psychiatric drugs.

**Gertrude:** Instead of getting upset, why don't you keep this crazy woman for some time in your house?

**Marian:** I remind you that you are talking about your sister, not a stranger.

**Tillie:** And in your opinion, where should I put her? Also doesn't it seem like you I already have my problems?

**Dotty:** *(Desperate)* Nobody wants me.

**Marian:** Keep quite! I'm with you.

**Tillie:** *(Turning to Dotty)* I want you, but I can't keep you here.

**Marian:** I suggest we go to the kitchen for a drink so we can calm down.

**Tillie:** I think it's a good idea!

**Gertrude:** In fact, I'm thirsty too.

**Marian:** Me too. *(And opens the kitchen door inviting the sisters to enter)*

**Dotty:** I want a peach fruit juice.

**Tillie:** I'm sorry, I don't have that.

**Dotty:** (*Screaming, annoyed*) I knew it!

**Marian:** Stop it! I'm going to buy it at the bar nearby.

**Tillie:** Then buy a bitter orange juice for Ernest too.

**Marian:** It's nice to see, sister, that in your thoughts, in the first place, there is always your husband.

**Tillie:** Speaking of him, I'm starting to worry. I have no idea where he went.

**Marian:** I'm sure you'll see him coming home soon.

*Marian comes out of the main door and the others go to the kitchen. Ernest and Milo enter the scene.*

**Ernest:** Come in, I have to tell you something. But I don't know how to do it, it's a bit embarrassing.

**Milo:** We've been friends for a lifetime and you know you can tell me everything.

**Ernest:** Will you promise me you won't judge me?

**Milo:** I promise you!

**Ernest:** I sold my soul.

**Milo:** What have you done?

**Ernest:** I replied to that ad in the newspaper.

**Milo:** Did they really give you the money?

**Ernest:** (*He takes the briefcase he had hidden*) This, otherwise, where do you think I would have taken it?

**Milo:** Hide it, for God's sake! If your wife comes back, then what do you tell her?

**Ernest:** I just wanted to show the money you, that's all.

**Milo:** Now I've seen it, so you can put it back in place.

**Ernest:** I don't know why, but I have the impression that you are not surprised.

**Milo:** Between you and me, I had called too.

**Ernest:** Don't tell me you were the eleventh?

**Milo:** Unfortunately. I decided too late. But I don't see you happy, why?

**Ernest:** For the money I am, but I am missing something.

**Milo:** Are you referring to your soul?

**Ernest:** Exactly! I want it back, it's mine.

**Milo:** Do you think you can have it back?

**Ernest:** That man told me I can only get it back by paying double the amount or finding two substitutes.

**Milo:** Don't look at me like this! I don't have a hundred thousand pounds.

**Ernest:** But do you believe in these things?

**Milo:** Absolutely not! In fact, if you hadn't phoned before you...

**Ernest:** Then I just need to find another one.

**Milo:** What are you raving?

**Ernest:** Since you aren't religious and don't believe in these things, you may be one of the two to offer in return.

**Milo:** Forget it! I don't want to be damned for eternity without taking even a cent.

**Ernest:** Luckily you didn't believe it!

**Milo:** Find another solution and leave me out of this story!

**Ernest:** I don't have another one, otherwise I would never have asked you.

**Milo:** Maybe I know how to help you...

**Ernest:** *(Seeing that his friend doesn't continue, impatiently urges him to do so)* Come on, tell me how you can help me!

**Milo:** I have an idea of which souls we can offer in return for yours. We can trade your soul for those of Tillie's sisters.

**Ernest:** I like your idea!

**Milo:** Out of three, we just need to convince two.

**Ernest:** In fact, two are deceivable.

**Milo:** Clearly we have to think up a ruse to convince them.

**Ernest:** Maybe I know how to do it.

**Milo:** Then do it! Now I have to go home.

**Ernest:** Why don't you stay and give me a hand?

**Milo:** The soul is yours, so fight your own battle!

**Ernest:** *(Sarcastic)* A friend in need is a friend indeed.

**Milo:** I did what was in my power, what else do you want from me?

**Ernest:** If you hadn't brought that damned newspaper into this house, I wouldn't be in this trouble.

**Milo:** I didn't force you to call, so don't blame me for your actions. *(Then reflecting aloud)* This is the reward received just for trying to do you a favor!

*Milo is about to leave when Ernest stops him.*

**Ernest:** Wait up!

**Milo:** Excuse me but they are waiting for me.

**Ernest:** Ten thousand for each soul.

**Milo:** *(Stopping instantly)* What do you mean?

**Ernest:** I mean, for every person you convince, I pay you ten thousand pounds.

**Milo:** But what was your grade in math in school?

**Ernest:** Why?

**Milo:** Because half of fifty thousand is twenty five thousand, not twenty thousand. So for two people I want at least that amount.

**Ernest:** Okay, twenty-five thousand, but I have to tell you: you are really a miser!

**Milo:** Then I accept.

**Ernest:** But if I convince Tillie's sisters first, you don't get anything.

**Milo:** *(Clasping his friend's hand)* Of course! *(And he leaves the scene)*

*Tillie enters the scene.*

**Tillie:** You're finally back! But you have grown paler. It is better if you go to rest.

**Ernest:** There is only one way to get better.

**Tillie:** So, if you already know how to do it, what are you waiting for?

**Ernest:** I was just waiting for you.

**Tillie:** I remind you that I am not a doctor.

**Ernest:** It is true, but you could become one.

**Tillie:** What's going on in your head? Speak clearly!

**Ernest:** I'm in desperate need of help, but I don't know how to tell you.

**Tillie:** Whatever the problem I will help you.

**Ernest:** You have to swear it!

**Tillie:** Of course, unless it's about killing someone.

**Ernest:** In a certain sense...

**Tillie:** But is the situation so serious?

**Ernest:** *(He takes the briefcase and shows the money to his wife)* I don't know, however this is the result.

**Tillie:** *(Worried)* My God! Where does this money come from? And who should be killed?

**Ernest:** The money is mine and we don't have to kill anyone.

**Tillie:** *(Desperate)* Do you want to bribe the business consultant?

**Ernest:** It is not about the tax return, the matter is even more complicated.

**Tillie:** What's more complicated than taxes?

**Ernest:** You are completely on the wrong track! The reason why you should help me, without killing anyone...

**Tillie:** *(Interrupting him)* But first you said...

**Ernest:** I talked about a kind of killing, in short, you have to find two souls to trade mine with.

**Tillie:** *(Shocked)* What should I do?

**Ernest:** Now I'll explain everything to you in detail. These people, in turn, will exchange their souls with those of others... and so on ... in this way no one will go to Hell. *(Showing the signed contract)*

**Tillie:** You must be really stupid.

**Ernest:** Remember you swore!

**Tillie:** And who are the wretches to whom I should make this absurd proposal?

**Ernest:** None of the important.

**Tillie:** *(Impatiently)* Will you tell me or not?

**Ernest:** *(Embarrassed)* Your sisters.



*Tillie starts screaming and inveighing against Ernest.*

**Ernest:** *(As he runs out of the scene)* She took after her sister!

### **THIRD ACT**

*Same scenography of the two previous acts.*

*Tillie, Marian, Dotty and Gertrude are on stage.*

**Tillie:** Sisters, I have to tell you something.

**Dotty:** *(Amazed)* Me too?

**Tillie:** Yes, I have an offer to make to all three.

**Marian:** Come on, talk!

**Tillie:** Do you see this document? If you sign it, your life will change.

**Gertrude:** Why, what's it written?

**Tillie:** That I will strive to improve it.

**Marian:** But we are already happy with our life as it is, what is there to improve?

**Tillie:** A lot of things.

**Dotty:** Explain yourself better, otherwise I get anxious and...

**Tillie:** Please don't scream, I'll explain right away. Let's start with Gertrude first.

**Gertrude:** *(Amazed and intrigued at the same time)* With me? I'm all ears...

**Tillie:** I promise you that I will keep the house cleaner and I will also help to fix yours.

**Gertrude:** This wouldn't be bad.

**Tillie:** In addition, I will undertake to help Dotty find a boyfriend who understands and appreciates her as she is.

**Dotty:** *(Screaming)* Why, how am I?

**Marian:** You are a bit shouter. This is why the boys run away. So start now to lower your voice a little.

**Tillie:** And you Marian, from now on, you will have a partner to go to the theater. You won't have to do it alone anymore, I'll always come with you.

**Marian:** that would make me happy!

**Gertrude:** All very tempting, but what would you like in return?

**Tillie:** Your souls.

**Marian:** Is this a joke?

**Gertrude:** God forbid it was also true! *(The three go to the door with the intention of leaving)*

**Tillie:** Wait up! I'm not joking.

**Gertrude:** In my opinion, by going to church too much, you have become an idiot.

**Tillie:** I haven't lost the light of reason, but Ernest has sold his soul and now, in order to get it back, he needs two souls to offer in return for his. *(Showing her sister the contract signed by her husband)*

**Gertrude:** And do you want to offer ours?

**Tillie:** I certainly couldn't turn to some unknown emeritus.

**Marian:** But what will become of us later... don't you think about it?

**Tillie:** Of course! In fact I already have the solution.

**Marian:** And what would it be?

**Tillie:** You will ask some tenants who live in the same building as you to do the exchange.

**Marian:** How could we be able to convince them?

**Tillie:** You will use her. *(Pointing to Dotty)*

**Marian:** How?

**Tillie:** If they don't sign you will make her angry all the time, especially at night.

**Gertrude:** *(Thinking aloud)* It might work...

**Marian:** We practically blackmail them!

**Tillie:** In some cases, any means is legitimate. However, they will be able to negotiate with others and so on and in the end no one will ever pay the duty.

**Marian:** Unless someone dies in the meantime.

**Gertrude:** It seems a bit risky to me.

**Marian:** It seems to me a surreal situation.

**Gertrude:** Sister, ours is a strange world and we shouldn't be surprised at anything.

**Tillie:** *(Anxious)* So, do you accept?

**Marian:** At least give us time to think about it.

**Gertrude:** We want to carefully read this contract first. Then we will come back to give you our answer. *(Then they leave the scene)*

**Tillie:** *(As the sisters are leaving)* But don't take too long.

*The doorbell rings. Milo and Ivor enter the scene.*

**Milo:** Hi Tillie! Is Ernest home?

**Tillie:** No, but he should be back soon. Come in. In the meantime, I go to the kitchen, I would be busy.

**Ivor:** All right!

*Tillie leaves the scene.*

**Milo:** I don't know if I'll have the nerve to propose it to him.

**Ivor:** We have to do it! It is for his own good.

**Milo:** Are you really sure?

**Ivor:** Of course! The expert recommended it.

**Milo:** In today's world everyone pretends to be experts then...

**Ivor:** But he really is. And if he said to do so, it's better listen to him.

**Milo:** Does it seem normal to you to propose to Ernest the exchange of his soul with that of two gorillas?

**Ivor:** If the expert said to do so...

**Milo:** It seems too absurd to me.

**Ivor:** In my opinion it is more than plausible, after all, even the pope said that animals have souls so...

**Milo:** When I propose it to him I will surely laugh.

**Ivor:** For an actor of experience like you it should be child's play to get into the role.

**Milo:** *(Laughing)* Let's hope, though, that my friend Frank has two orangutans to lend us.

**Ivor:** It doesn't seem to me you're getting into the role.

**Milo:** Excuse me, but when I think about the time when they will have to sign I just can't restrain myself!

*Infected by his friend, Ivor too begins to laugh.*

*Tillie enters the scene.*

**Tillie:** Here the situation is dramatic and you laugh.

**Ivor:** Sorry, you're right!

*The doorbell rings. Tillie's sisters enter the scene.*

**Gertrude:** *(Seeing the two men)* Can we speak freely?

**Tillie:** Yes, they are trusted people.

**Gertrude:** We have carefully read the contract and, based on what is written, Ernest should have received fifty thousand pounds.

**Tillie:** Exactly.

**Marian:** *(Showing a briefcase)* Then by adding them to these fifty thousand, he can buy back his soul.

**Tillie:** But...

**Marian:** Instead of staring at us like an idiot, move on and give them back. You never know what can happen at any moment!

**Gertrude:** So call the buyer of souls right away.

**Tillie:** I have no idea who he is and how to contact him.

**Milo:** I have his phone number.

**Ivor:** Why do you have it?

**Milo:** *(Embarrassed)* I kept it because that ad in the newspaper caught my attention. *(Then he dials the number with his mobile)* Hello, Lucifer? ... I'll call you from Mr. Parker. He would like to withdraw from the contract... he has decided to opt for the payment of the hundred thousand pounds... okay... we are waiting for you.

**Tillie:** *(Impatiently)* So what did he say? When does he come?

**Milo:** Immediately. But he have to talk to Ernest first.

**Marian:** He'll have to sign something.

**Gertrude:** Then we just have to wait for his arrival.

*Ernest enters the scene.*

**Ernest:** Why are you all here? What's up?

**Tillie:** We were waiting for you.

**Ernest:** Why are you looking at me like that?

**Tillie:** We don't have time to explain, because Lucifer will soon arrive. So take these two briefcases and return the money to that man.

**Ernest:** But I...

**Gertrude:** Just think about remedying for the bullshit you did. Don't ask where the money came from, or we could change our minds. Sisters, let's go. *(And they leave the scene, accompanied by Tillie)*

**Milo:** Before handing him the money, ask him if he accepts the souls of two gorillas in return.

**Ernest:** What?

**Milo:** If he accepts, you could avoid giving him the hundred thousand pounds.

**Ernest:** Okay, I will try.

**Ivor:** Good luck! *(Ivor and Milo also leave the scene, leaving Ernest alone. After a few moments the doorbell rings)*

*Lucifer enters the scene.*

**Lucifer:** So Mr. Parker how are you?

**Ernest:** When you take these two suitcases away from me, I'll be worse off.

**Lucifer:** You can think again.

**Ernest:** No, for God's sake!

**Lucifer:** *(Glaring at him)* Could you avoid...?

**Ernest:** Excuse me... I forgot!

**Lucifer:** *(After opening the briefcases)* Very well, I'm not counting it, I'm sure I can trust. Now if you sign me...



**Ernest:** Before signing, I would like to make you a proposal.

**Lucifer:** Do you have an exchange in mind?

**Ernest:** More or less.

**Lucifer:** I remind you that I will only accept two for the price of one.

**Ernest:** They are surely two and also quite big! In short, would you accept the souls of two gorillas in return for mine?

**Lucifer:** This is the first time such a proposal has been made to me.

**Ernest:** You aren't answering the question. *(Clutching the briefcases tightly)*

**Lucifer:** *After taking Ernest's bags after a series of back and forth* I'm sorry, but the contract specifies that we only deal with the souls of human beings.

**Ernest:** Animals are better than human beings.

**Lucifer:** This is why we don't accept their souls, there is no kind of evil in them.

**Ernest:** *(Resigned, he signs)* What a pity!

**Lucifer:** Goodbye, it was a real pleasure doing business with you! *(And leaves the scene)*

**Ernest:** I have no doubt!

*After a few moments the doorbell rings again. Milo and Ivor enter the scene.*

**Milo:** How did it go?

**Ernest:** I had to say goodbye to the hundred thousand pounds.

**Ivor:** You will explain the details to us later, now go and inform Tillie that the matter has been resolved. She was quite anxious.

**Ernest:** But I don't know where she went.

**Ivor:** She is in my house. She arrived, along with her sisters, just before I came to you.

**Ernest:** Then I'll go immediately to reassure her. You wait for me here, I'll be back soon.

**Ivor:** Okay.

**Milo:** *(As soon as Ernest is gone)* Come on, call Lucifer, I'm curious.

**Ivor:** *(Takes the phone and dials the number)* Hello? ... Come to Ernest's house, it's safe here, my wife will keep the hosts until I ring.

**Mio:** Is he coming?

**Ivor:** Yes, he had stayed in the area.

*The doorbell rings. Lucifer enters the scene.*

**Ivor:** *(After opening the door)* Doctor, come in!

**Lucifer:** The briefcases are in a safe place. When you wish, you can come and take them back.

**Milo:** Very well! But, excuse my curiosity, is this strange therapy to help people with depression really effective?

**Lucifer:** More than you can imagine! Haven't you just seen it?

**Ivor:** It is an ultra-proven method, otherwise I would not have entrusted him with the task.

**Lucifer:** By making the patient think of the supernatural, we insinuate in him the doubt that suicide isn't the solution to solve the problems.

**Ivor:** Because, by choosing that loophole, he would solve the problem in this life, but inevitably he would have to face a bigger one in the next.

**Milo:** And this should make him desist from the extreme gesture?

**Lucifer:** Of course, also because by starting to ask questions about such a big topic, we distract him from thinking about the problem that afflicts him.

**Ivor:** With his depression, sooner or later, if we didn't do something...

**Lucifer:** I know it is a somewhat alternative way, but it allows me to psychoanalyze patients who refuse to undergo an examination.

**Ivor:** I was also your accomplice because, if we hadn't come up with this trick, he would never have accepted any money from us.

**Milo:** This is true!

**Ivor:** I must admit that we were a great team!

**Milo:** The idea for the handbill and the ad was mine.

**Ivor:** But who asked Tillie's sisters for money?

**Milo:** You. And that must have been a tough stumbling block.

**Ivor:** On this you are wrong, they immediately accepted.

**Milo:** However, we too have put in a tidy sum.

**Lucifer:** And I gave up on the fees.

**Ivor:** For this we thank you so much.

**Lucifer:** Anyway, it was not wasted time, it was useful for my studies.

**Milo:** Did it help you to test the effectiveness of your method?

**Lucifer:** Yes. And I'll tell you more: I think the patient reacted very well. I am confident that he will recover completely.

**Ivor:** Especially when he starts working in the newsstand bought by Tillie's sisters with those hundred thousand pounds we have set aside together.

**Milo:** With his illness, that's the only job he can do.

**Lucifer:** But none of you will demand your money back?

**Milo:** Absolutely not! Helping a close friend is the best investment we could make.

**Ivor:** Money doesn't give these satisfactions!

**Lucifer:** I better go now, I wouldn't want to be found here.

**Ivor:** Thanks again and see you soon!

**Lucifer:** *(Laughing)* Hopefully not soon, that would be a bad sign!

**Ivor:** Now I call my wife and tell her we're done here.

**Milo:** What geniuses we are!

**Ivor:** *(After dialing his wife's phone number)* Hello, Lidia? You can say goodbye to guests... bye!

**Ivor:** By now Tillie's sisters will have already explained the newsstand project to Ernest.

**Milo:** Everything has been accomplished and I would say that our credulous passed the exam brilliantly.

**Ivor:** And he will never know that we concocted this plan and that the newsstand didn't cost two pennies at all but a hundred thousand pounds.

**Milo:** My friend, what do you say now to go celebrate with a refreshing ice cold beer?

**Ivor:** This is talking! *(And they leave the scene)*

*After a few moments Ernest and Tillie enter the scene.*

**Ernest:** Life is so strange! How can things change in a matter of hours. A little while ago I no longer had a soul or even a job and look now!

**Tillie:** Fortunately my sisters bought that newsstand for two pennies and offered you a job. Now you will have a salary again.

**Ernest:** And the miracle happened right after I bought my soul back.

**Tillie:** I always tell you to pray, but you never listen to me.

**Ernest:** After all, it was right that the soul returned to his rightful owner.

**Tillie:** Take away a curiosity: what was that man like?

**Ernest:** Apparently he seemed like a very normal person.

**Tillie:** But we two know perfectly well that he wasn't.

**Ernest:** Otherwise how could he find the right apartment, without the help of the surname on the doorbell.

**Tillie:** *(After reflecting)* I, however, would have noticed a somewhat suspicious coincidence.

**Ernest:** Which?

**Tillie:** The briefcase given you by that man and the one my sisters brought were identical! Same size, same color and moreover the same brand.

**Ernest:** It's true.

**Tillie:** And do you know what this means?

**Ernest:** *(Looking his wife, after a short wait)* It means we are very lucky indeed! *(The two embrace and the curtain closes)*

**THE END**