Uhhh.

By Natalia Kelly

Hell is an office building. No, I’m not kidding you.

As a low-level sales*woman* there, I couldn’t make that into a joke if I tried. I speak only from the deepest and most regretful sanctions of my heart when I say, that selling my soul and becoming a demon only to be paid  *just above* minimum wage and deal with the same customers who would kick you in the balls at McDonald’s was not my wisest choice. Granted, as a weedy little 21-year-old, my other options weren’t much better than this, but now I’m an 804-year-old, and I would gladly have just lived with grease burns and acne.

Oh, another note.

*SATAN IS A DICK.*

I’d like to warn all the budding Satanists out there that the demon of their dreams won’t let me take vacation time with my wife, and hasn’t given me a raise in over seven centuries. Many brown-nosing employees in our complex would like to call him the Michael Scott of the netherworld, but he’s more like Ryan Howard without the crack addiction.

I am entirely risking my employment among the fire and brimstone by starting this way, so I’ll give you a run down of my schedule here.

I wake up at the ass-crack of however time works down here, shower, dress, apologize profusely to my spouse about these ungodly hours, and take off for the office. When I arrive there I flick my coffee straw at the receptionist, that absolute bastard. His name is Kent. Yes, Kent. Among the Beelzebubs, the Pazuzus, and the Asmodeus’, Kent is his real christian name. Now, you might be wondering why, after years of working under Satan’s clawed fist, why hasn’t he earned a proper satanic title.

It’s simple: Kent is the worst name he could have.

Nothing packs a worse punch than Hell’s receptionist-- Kent.

I should probably introduce myself before I go off on that milksop. I’m Zorroras, but don’t even bother remembering that. My name previous to the extraction of my soul was Zoey, but I rightfully earned this demonic name by working my red-colored ass off for most of the current eternity. Call me Zoz, if you’re really concerned. You already know my age and place of employment, so I guess there’s not much more you need to know before you can use me to catfish men on Tinder. I look like the demons you’ve probably always imagined, red skin, horns and a forked tail; although, I don’t carry a pitchfork.

However, I do carry a briefcase filled with sales reports.

You're probably asking, *what does a demon from hell sell?* The answer is simple, my friends: goods and services. *What kind?* I’m glad you asked.

The same way I got *my* start down here is the same way we rake in the bank. People contact us and if they’re older than 16, we can strike a deal, and yes, a lot of humanitarians in our ranks think that 16 is too young. I say, if the client is old enough to be sat down and forced to sign their life away to education, they might as well be allowed to do the same to the Devil. In fact, I spent my soul to graduate college, so, the two can coincide.

It’s an easy process from both ends of the line. Someone, by some means, comes across our contact information and gets in touch with Kent. Kent, then transfers their line to one of our sales associates, and we start making offers. We ask our typical interview questions to make sure they *truly* want to commit to this. We aren’t a pyramid scheme. I guess you could say I’ve been doing this for a while, and I’ve seen all the walks of life that I pick of the receiver to. I’ve seen the desperate, the angry, the tired, the unfocused, the lazy, the curious… but I’ve never seen someone like this.

It was early in my work hours, too early for me to be properly awake. I was drinking my coffee, which was entirely too thick to not be tar, and organizing reports. I scanned the dates as my thumb flicked over them, making sure none were improperly categorized. My office door creaked lazily as a faux breeze rolled through the halls, the scent of burning coal and tobacco came along with it.

“Hey, Zoz, you’ve got a call coming in on your line,” Kent called through the intercom, “the guy sounds pressed.” I gave him little response as I picked up the receiver, and accepted the call with the button-press of my clawed finger. There was the sound of shaky breath coming in through the other line, and I sighed to myself. Holding the phone away from my mouth, and covering it gently, I pressed the intercom call button.

I complained to him bitterly, not masking my distaste. Upon my original entrance to the company, I worked with Satan breathing down my neck all the time. Kent, being the complete ignoramus that he is, always put the emotional ones on my line,

“Hello,” I started, “may I ask who’s calling?”

“I’m  James,” he replied, sounding absolutely overwhelmed, “James C. Stierwalt.”

“Might I know what the ‘C’ stands for?” I asked, having needed his full name to put down on any potential records

“Caleb.”

“Thank you, James. I’m your partnered associate for today. How can I help?” James was silent on the other line for a while, and I told him to take his time and awaited a response. In the back of my head, I knew he wasn’t going to drop the call, so I turned to my desk computer and searched his name.

It was a whole lotta nothing. He was 45 years old, had a wife and a middle-school-aged son. He lived in Nebraska, went to college for a degree in mathematics, was a Catholic-ish agnostic. He looked the part too-- greying brown hair with a shiny bald spot forming at the crown of his head. I found his Facebook and scrolled through his pictures. He took a trip to Alaska last summer with his wife and went ice fishing. There didn’t really seem to be much wrong with him, although I did notice that he never smiled in pictures, which I found odd. Even the saddest of people could rightfully find a place in them to fake a smile for the sake of a photograph, but apparently not James.  I searched harder, growing perhaps a little too invested.

Near the beginning of his timeline, I saw that his mother had passed away of pancreatic cancer, but even in the photos before that unfortunate event, his face was as statuesque as slate. Before I could bother to find him on some other platform, he coughed into the phone and finally spoke to me.

“Yes, sorry, I got sidetracked,” he said and I heard the sound of him scratching his face as he hummed his way to the next sentence, “I was hoping to make an exchange.” My brow furrowed in curiosity.

“An exchange?” I chuckled and thought he might not know how things really work down here, “Yes, I figured you called to do business, not to loiter. What did you need provided?” The line was quiet again and he sighed. I swear I could hear the cogs turning in his head.

“I’d like to request a soul.” He said flatly.

Now that was a surprise.

Many *customers* have qualms with the idea of not having a soul, and often ask if they’ll ever regain it. The answer is yes, although the process is strange. A demon, such as myself, indeed has a soul, but it’s not the one I was born with. You see, when a deal is struck with a human, we take their soul, do whatever they exchanged it for (barring a few things, of course,) and they go about their lives-- soulless. A person with no soul is nearly the same as a regular person, just without the emotion or fleeting motivation. A soulless person has morals they can abide to, they aren’t zombies, but they often don’t feel any spectrum of feelings. Once they die, they become a demon, and get a whole new set of sentiments.

Of course there’s rules to what we can and can’t do in exchange for someone’s soul. We can’t grant immortality, we can’t bring back the dead, and we can’t bestow someone with weird, supernatural powers… but those are obvious. We also don’t act against children, and we can’t interfere with warfare. Those boundaries are well-known by every employee, but the prospect of returning a soul was new, and definitely against the rules.

“Ah, c-could you repeat that?” I asked gingerly, ducking beneath my desk to look through my customer records.

“Yes, er, could I get purchase a soul?” I set down the phone next to the port and thumbed over folders filled with past customers, my eyes scanning through them.

“Can I place you on hold?” I inquired, and he replied with a quiet ‘sure.’ I made true to my word and started looking for any indication of a record that would prove a past deal struck.

I swiveled back from my desk, breathing in deeply. *What the hell, man?* I stood, walking with purpose to the Boss’ office. God, I hated taking my problems to him, the patronizing bastard. He always gave me the same over-sympathetic eyes and cooed at my misfortune. The guy likes to think he’s being sweet but he’s really just a colossal dick. Despite this, I extended my hand to knock on his door. Office number 666, because he’s *terribly* creative… if you could call it that.

“Come in!” His voice sounded from inside, seemingly incredibly excited to receive a visitor from the bottom floor. I entered, the door creaking, his red-lit office. Between the wall sconces, the brick walls, and the assorted gothic paintings, I have to admit this is exactly what you think Satan’s office would look like. Although the abundance of ‘1# BOSS’ mugs assorted on his shelves happened to dampen the atmosphere. “Well if it isn’t my favorite saleswoman! Zorroras, how are you, buddy?” I forced a grin, my face feeling tense.

“Hiya, boss. Ah, I’ve hit a bump in the road with my latest client.” I explained, taking a second to think, “You see, err, he requested to purchase a soul--” That made him jump.

Satan sprayed a thick string of unsweetened coffee directly into my face, clearly about as shocked as I was. Although, *I* didn’t spittle all over my inferiors.

“Purchase a soul!? Whatever for?” He demanded, and I shrugged.

“I ended up leaving him on hold. Figured I could use your expertise.” Satan sighed, pressing the intercom and requesting that Kent transfer James’ line to his, which he did swiftly. He took him off of hold and made himself present.

“Eh? Hello?” James asked cautiously.

“Yes, hello, me and my associate were incredibly curious as to why you requested to purchase a soul? That’s unfortunately against our code and regulations.” James chuckled flatly into the line.

“Well, I was born without one.”

*AUTHORS NOTE: If this feels unfinished it’s because it is.*