

The Snakelex Report

What Hell's elite don't want you to know.

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Dedicated to my daughter Paige, a real
champion when it comes to reading. Thanks for your
help sweetie.

CHAPTER 1

Genesis 1-11

Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so.

In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth. He created the Garden of Eden, a national park beyond any human comprehension. This paradise had a brief moment in time and was soon closed off to the public and placed on the Heavenly conservation list and so began Greenpeace. The sons of God thought the women born of man were beautiful and decided to pay earth a visit. Morals abruptly dropped to an all time low, which greatly displeased the Almighty Father, who gave the massive sphere a cold shower, this defused the situation for a time.

Now back at the drawing board, God was busy town planning and allocated a plot of earth for a small, sleepy, rural town. As God often does, He gave this town a name with a significant meaning. Unfortunately, Satan looked upon this plot with favour, as he did the entire Earth. He sent demons to lie in wait for the first settlers to arrive in the district. Their mission was to be mischievous and divert anything from the truth, which in years to come would supposedly be to their advantage.

Several years after the little town sprung to life, its origins and name were under dispute. These

demons had influenced many of the town's population into stretching the historic truth. From then on, the name was left to the resident's imagination or class distinction and tended to change frequently without notice. Today's generation, through no fault of their own, continued the fictitious beginnings.

One tall tale, still told by the minority of the locals, had its beginnings way back in the eighteen hundreds. Apparently, two escaped convicts set up camp for the night and after having consumed a little too much rum, a fight broke out between two of the men. In the skirmish, a nugget of gold was spat from a mouth, along with a number of other teeth, and presto; the gold rush was on for young and old. Gold is still sought by those who believe the tale, trying their luck in the local creek and dams. Truth is, no gold had ever been found in the area; mind you; there is a considerable amount of bull dust.

Another quaint little tale, more widely accepted, told of a tribe of Aborigines, who long ago named the town after their ancestors. The name translated into English meant, 'Speedy Bunyip' from which the locals derived the name 'Ballistic Bunny' presuming Bunyip and bunny, the same animal. If the locals, past and present, took the time to familiarise themselves with Australian history they would know that the introduction of these cute little fur balls didn't occur until after white man arrived on Australian shores. Nonetheless, this little fable wins the affection of tourists, who from time to time accidentally stumble upon this small community. It is one of those places that the world has forgotten and hopes to keep this way.

City folk may wish to picture rural landscapes as flat golden pastures, fields of flourishing crops, sheep and cattle wandering carelessly about the

paddocks. Let's add the homestead on the hill, surrounded by a wire fence and a windmill in the background, turning with the gentle breeze. Reality bites the normal farmer, who curses God as part of their daily prayer ritual for dried up water holes, cracks in the earth from scorching heat, over clearing and bones scattered from ages past and last years drought. However, this place is neither. This rural setting would be more appropriately described as a lunar surface whose air breathing inhabitants attempt to encourage patches of growth. Walls of wild blackberries hold up fences, yet fail miserably to divide properties allowing sheep and cattle to frequently visit neighbouring craters. The majority of houses give one the impression they were built from the same blueprint and some hardware store once did a booming trade in whitewash.

Unbeknown to the residents of this small town, they were the subjects of an intense spiritual dispute. The Almighty God had sent in an army from warriors to the simplest of guardian angels. All had their instructions, having already taken up strategic positions throughout the small town. One mighty angel in particular, who was on assignment in another country, was due to make an appearance in this town at a later date, when presumably the heavy artillery would be most needed.

Angels are known for their thorough and expeditious methods of examination. There is no tiptoeing around the spirit world or she'll be right attitude; when angels are on the job, they treat it as life or death. Be assured, they are dedicated, loyal, trained to perfection and unique in their abilities. The Heavenly S.W.A.T team is on call twenty-four hours a day and can be at any given destination, ready to lock and load, before the human brain has told the eyelids to blink.

On the other side of the spiritual spectrum, we have Hell's band of screaming meanies, consisting of small insignificant, disposable imps, who are lazy, unmotivated and untrained. These pitifully ugly imps look malnourished with lanky limbs, nobly joints, squashy, flat, pale faces, huge green eyes with too many teeth in their frog-like mouths. Bald and ragged loincloths are the trend this season and every other for that matter. Imps hang out downstairs in the cesspools of the demonic domain and like to think they have fun.

Demons on the other hand are exceptionally fierce, cunning and very proficient in influencing humans. Though their rightful appearance is likened to imps, they were the push behind plastic surgery. Depending on the fad, they can look like your next-door neighbour to something dreamed up by pc gaming designers. They greatly tower the low establishment and prefer to wear black dinner suits when not on assignment.

One extremely ambitious demon in particular is Mr. Snakelex, Snakelex to his friends and entertaining to his enemies. In between assignments, demons waste time betting on the lower ranks, as they brawl in the sludge pits. Unlike the majority of brothers, Snakelex finds stimulation in a small but painstaking manual entitled, *'How to impress one's peers'*. As he is not yet on a health plan, plastic surgery has been out of his reach, so put mildly, he ugly.

When one is summoned to appear before the big boss, the head of the fiery cesspool himself, the concerned party has no choice in the matter. Without warning, one finds him or herself transported to the boss's personal domain. The level of dimension between the principalities and powers compared to the lower establishment is an adrenalin rush in itself, which Snakelex has experienced on a few occasions.

Transportation is described as a hair-raising experience.

The contents of Snakelex's stomach rose to the occasion and his face reacted to gravity, as it did the impossible, reshaped into something more hideous than it already was. Six million, six hundred and sixty five floors up, Snakelex arrived at the plush office of Sir Crepton, the boss's secretary. There is no darkness, unbearable heat or bubbling sludge pits here; Crepton works in luxury, a thermostatically controlled environment with all the creature comforts that one could wish for.

Snakelex underwent the usual security routines, starting with the recitation of the Hades' Oath. There is also a thorough interrogation, frisked for possible signs of wings and other abnormal growths, tail and horn measured for shrinkage or total loss. After all that, he is ordered to sing Hell's National Anthem, which is a test of intelligence, as demons are not encouraged to sing and there is no National Anthem. The demon had passed the tests. Now although Snakelex's name appeared in the boss's directory of excellent achievers, having master's degrees in everything from bragging to spiritual murder, he was just not quite officer material. The low life's enthusiasm and ruthlessness impressed the boss, but the demon was too inquisitive for his own good. Snakelex had made his mark quickly, rising through the ranks by literally stomping on heads to secure his position.

It is common knowledge that one's health is severely at stake when attempting to gain brownie points with demonic officers, let alone the big boss himself. Snakelex has had many an opportunity to witness those who have been a little too confident and reaped an unexpected reward for their efforts. In his younger days, Snakelex learnt the art of grovelling.

In addition, the study of leeches enabled him to perfect an admirable sucking technique, earning him his first master's degree. Familiar was Snakelex's expression of pleasure whenever describing the gory fate of a brother to an audience. Mocking ever so gleefully, he always concluded with, 'it was an exhilarating experience'.

Snakelex had not been this excited since Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt. Mind you, Hell suffered great losses that century at Sodom and Gomorrah, but this did not discourage the big boss. Satan was determined to demonstrate to his enemy above that the old and new testaments were merely a practice run for the twentieth century. The boss and his cronies instigated World War one; however, again the Almighty opponent upstairs got the last laugh when the bad guys lost. Snakelex found himself out of a job and ended up spending several decades on the bench with nothing better to do than watch his dark cohorts fight and throw sludge at each other.

Though Snakelex knew he would not get to see the boss himself, he still felt privileged to be with the higher ranks that literally stabbed each other in the back to gain position. There was no idle chatter, words of encouragement or tea and biscuits; no, just the usual crude gestures, filthy looks and move your ugly butt your ride leaves in ten minutes.

The demon stood at Hell's back door, being fitted out with all the necessary attire for the job. Snakelex's gigantic ego rose to the occasion before he had even started the mission. The demon imagined pulling off the job single-handed, beating the enemy in one foul swoop and gaining extra points ensuring him another promotion. He lived in anticipation of the day when he might become the boss's right hand man and this new assignment might just be the ticket he had been waiting for.

Snakelex was ever so pleased, having jumped a few rungs of the promotional ladder to knock Shutenhog off his perch. The former dark spiritual authority of a certain small town was considered by many to be a top ranking slime. Snakelex could not quite comprehend why a demon in Shutenhog's position had been sent there in the first place. The town was considered nothing more than a sleepy hollow for lazy imps. Nonetheless, Shutenhog had been dethroned, thrust to the bottom of the boss's list, under the heading of nobodies.

Browsing over the report, Snakelex became agitated and began to question. Why was the boss sending him to observe only? Why was it so important to send reports immediately back to head quarters? Why was he not to act unless given authority to do so? Why were they sending him when he was renowned for being a doer and not a procrastinator? He was inhumane, not a wimp.

The small town was nestled at the bottom of the valley. Its only entry was via an insubstantial, treacherous road infested with pot-holes so deep; cars swallowed up by the gaping cavities were left as fillers. Snakelex had already anticipated what would be hovering around the entrance to this town. The guardian angel, a goody two wings in Hell's language, was frightfully big and obviously aware of the demon's presence. To safeguard himself from being reduced to something resembling a puddle of murky slime, Snakelex defied gravity and nervously floated by on the opposite side of the road. Satan's children feared the presence of angels, whose sheer illumination was enough to put a demon out of commission for the term of a human's natural life. The enemy's glance alone had Snakelex nauseous and cringing at the thought of an angel's touch. It was a

fate worse than death, as it embarrassed the boss, who frowned on such stupidity.

Once Snakelex set foot on solid ground, the beady-eyed demon looked back and made a rude gesture at the angel, who responded with a gleaming smile. Irritated, Snakelex took a few steps forward only to stumble over a twisted root protruding from the earth. His eyes slowly followed up the trunk of the huge ghost gum in front of him, which brought back memories of a time of misfortune.

Snakelex once tried, without permission, to counter-act the thing upstairs, God's handy work, by attempting to put a hole in a certain ark. At the time, Snakelex was young and naïve. For all his efforts, he only received a free ride to the top of Mt Ararat where he remained for centuries until a board rotted away and his horns were finally freed. The only reason the big boss did not reprimand Snakelex was due to the immature demon swearing he had deliberately latched onto the ark to spy on the Noah family.

The gatekeeper, the position the angel held, shook his head and looked up at the Heavens. Without spoken word, the message was passed on concerning Snakelex's arrival. Before the blink of an eye, another large, illuminating angel appeared on the opposite side of the spiritual gateway to the town. Both acknowledged each other with a pleasant smile and a nod of the head. Standing in their magnificence, each held a shimmering sword and with slow deliberate movements, crossed the blades. This signified that the spiritual gateway had now closed to this small town and the Almighty had delegated sufficient forces and if the other side hadn't; then that was their problem.

Snakelex had not noticed the large sign plummeting towards his head. The angels watched

with the demon finally surfacing from under the degenerating timbers. Trying to suppress a chuckle, as it was rude to laugh at another's expense, the second gatekeeper smiled and spoke to his companion.

"Isn't that..."

"Yes. He's the one." In unison they laughed.

"The ark assignment!"

The ark assignment was not the first for these mature angels. They were two amongst many angelic beings sent by God to oversee and safe guard 'Project Noah' and his boat building adventure. These two angels had to combat many imps trying to swipe timbers, contaminate tar and influence the crowds into mocking poor Noah and his family. These people had no idea what rain was and so individual groups hindered Noah's efforts. One in particular was the Eco-terrorists, who taunted and shouted at God's favoured ones; the group's spokesperson was the rowdiest of all.

"Noah you big fig! Don't you know if you cut down all the trees there'll be none left for future generations?" Noah ignored them, yet they continued to harass and chant.

"Save the trees. Save the environment. Save the rain forests. Stone Noah!"

Another lobby group sprung up that took the heat off Noah by opposing the Eco-terrorists. These were the entrepreneurs of development, who egged Noah on for a short time. The entrepreneurs were very excited about Noah's new theory of water from Heaven and the building of his big boat. They had all sorts of plans to cash in on Noah's work; especially the concept of harbour cruises. Real Estate was at an all time high around the ark and primitive apartments and condominiums sprang up everywhere. There was even talk of a shopping mall and a red light district.

Adversity struck when the wood merchants got their noses out of joint. They threatened to demolish the ark, complaining that the timber industry had suffered due to lack of supply and the Eco-terrorists fiercely protested about areas they wanted to be kept sacred. By the time the rains came, the different groups were ready to stone each other.

It had been a busy time for angels, but finally the day came and the rains pelted down. Noah and his family were safely aboard the ark when the two gatekeepers heard a banging sound and investigated. It was no surprise to them to find a certain little demon attempting to put holes in the bottom of the ark. The angelic security guards took control of the situation. With the ugly little vandal having penetrated the wood, they placed spiritual bolts on the demon's horns and tarred him to the boat. The rest of the story is history.

Ignoring the angel's laughter, Snakelex went to kick the large sign on the ground; however, the town's name, FLOP WOD caught his attention. Several additional letters were obscured by many years of weathering and neglect by those responsible for the upkeep of public property. Snakelex gave himself credit for adding a few letters of his own. With enthusiasm, he loudly spat the word, Flopswood, like it was a bad taste. The supposed name of the town brought a gleeful smile to his wretched features. Picking up the sign, he faced it in the angel's direction. Buoyantly, he pointed to the name of the town, before dropping the sign against the tree and making a rude finger gesture at his enemies.

CHAPTER 2

The first human dwelling Snakelex came across was a large, Victorian, two-story building coated with peeling whitewash. Its gabled, corrugated, red roof was in need of repair and several bricks were missing from one of the chimneys. The surrounding lawns made Snakelex cringe; neat and trimmed spelt enthusiastic gardeners. A mixture of native and European trees towered the once stately home, giving it appeal and the impression of being the residence of a rich and influential family.

For the simple human intellect, demons have a special way of communicating with the principalities and powers. They have what is called 'the window', likened to a paper-thin computer screen, which floats freely and can be called upon whenever the demon wishes. The window can be used to request files on humans, view reports from other demons and to send and receive messages from the boss's office. It is forbidden for an imp to use a window and to have access to human files, but demons have full privilege when on assignment.

Snakelex called on the window. Shutenhog's report appeared and with reading just a few short lines; the demon was jumping up and down throwing a tantrum.

"Shutenhog you idiot!" Snakelex squirmed and continued to speak aloud, as though the demon in question was present. "No wonder you got the boot. You never start a report with upstairs has a firm

grip here or we're having trouble getting your name on their lips. Blind-me-teddy! Never, never, never ask the boss for suggestions." Severely irked, he felt the shiver run from head to frumpy toes with the thought the demon's ignorance. "Always start a report with, it's in the bag; your name's brighter than a zillion watt bulb. Even something like, upstairs is about to poop their pants, is better than this you stupid low life!"

The term 'upstairs' is the nickname given by the demonic realm to Heaven and those who reside there. It is considered blasphemy if one uses the correct appellation and the act is a punishable offence. Satan's insignificant ranks have an imaginary picture of the enemy and snicker with the mere thought of God being a senile, white haired old man, who cannot get off his throne. According to their journals, God has ailments such as rheumatoid arthritis, which He decided to inflict on his earthly children, as a sign of old age creeping in. Alzheimer's disease explains 'Grace'; He does not forgive, He just forgets everyone's sins.

Demons are led to believe that Jesus is like a universal soldier with a sidekick named Holy Spirit. Between the two, they have a spiritual arsenal and a bad attitude when it comes to evil. These spiritual beings are deadly and are to be avoided at all cost. The majority of demons take the warnings very seriously, some even fear Him, more than they fear their own boss.

Most disappointed by the report, Snakelex expected more from Shutenhog, who wrote.

To Satan

C/O Six hundred and sixty six Principalities and Powers International Hell.

Report by Shutenhog – Rank - demon first class: Assignment - business and residential.

Many years ago, the stately mansion was converted into a grocery store. This incidentally is the only one in town and serves as a newsagent, hardware and petrol station. The locals have no other choice than to shop at this address, unless they wish to travel some sixty-five kilometres to the next town. This they do not wish to do, as we have encouraged a lazy streak in many of these creatures. We have been successful in our objective to dominate many of those who enter in and out of these premises. Included in this report is a list of names and addresses that are already under our influence. Warning, those in red lettering are off limits and definitely upstairs property.

Snakelex scrutinised the first name in Shutenhog's address book. Mrs. Norma Mack appeared in big red capital letters, known in Hell as one of those detestable holy rolling fanatical halo heads. In the spirit world, a Christian is spotted a mile away by their halo of happiness. Norma Mack is the store's proprietor, her husband is deceased and she has two son's Harold and Bertram.

"Yuck! Halos of haughtiness." Snakelex grumbled. "Blast that ring of confidence!" Snakelex read on.

Norma Mack has the fear of Him upstairs and does not respond to the usual routine of influence. Her knee bending antics constantly holds us back, but this creature is somewhat disappointed. It is to her understanding that she has been given a direct line to Him upstairs. We can only conclude, He does not wish to speak with her. She is often heard saying, to another of the same sex; quote, 'I wish He would talk to me like He does to you'. We can only presume that A, Norma Mack picks an inconvenient time in which to contact the enemy. B. His number is constantly engaged. C, His message bank is on the blink or D, He is on the Internet. Although having no direct

correspondence with her, it is evident that He acknowledges the creature's existence. For some unknown reason, a goody two wings of awesome power and privilege guard her day and night. Norma and her sons worship the enemy every Sunday at the forbidden zone - church.

Though Snakelex cringed at the thought of worship, he was confident he could succeed where Shutenhog had not. He was quick to remind himself of the boss's favourite saying; 'there is no such word as can't, said the atom bomb to Hiroshima and Nagasaki'. The demon hissed with his eyes skimming the report. He knew all too well that such descriptive words as love, forgiveness, beauty, etceteras, etceteras held demonic health warnings and are to be avoided at all costs. Shutenhog claimed that the storeowner, Norma Mack, had a big heart and known for her goodwill to all, whether it be women, children, animals or strays of any kind.

It was the next few lines, which gave Snakelex bright ideas. The report stated that Norma, an anxious widow, longed for affection and commitment from an accommodating man. She is not fussy; any willing and capable male body is welcome. He did not hold much hope for the creature, considering she was not at all attractive and had an extreme weight problem. According to Shutenhog, Norma had only two alluring features; her dyed red hair with striking grey roots and a voice that could be heard on the other side of town. Skipping over the rest of the long list, Snakelex began his own report on Norma Mack.

To the Boss

I can confidently state that the store of goodwill will soon become the store of bad will and bad manners. Shutenhog neglected many major avenues of attack here. Norma Mack lacks confidence in her personal appearance. We can definitely use this

to the fullest, thanks to a most wonderful curse, which you incited and He upstairs inflicted upon women, namely, their desire for a husband. The creature often tries to speak with the enemy, yet has not the understanding of the true line of communication. I know I can successfully continue to disrupt the transmission from this end.

Shutenhog mentioned in his report that Harold and Bertram have the same characteristics and faith as their mother; however, I think it was a vile perception on Shutenhog's behalf even to mention that these two creatures were off limits. There are countless avenues I can take; for example, they are identical twins and their mother is known to boast about her children. Shutenhog did not attempt to play one against the other for the mother's repulsive affections nor has he attempted to influence rivalry in female relationships. It makes me sick to my stomach to think of the gross misconduct of one of my brothers. Shutenhog's list is despicable. He describes these humans as youthful, strong, having brown hair, blue eyes, extremely handsome, introverted, well mannered, trustworthy; the more I read the more violently ill I feel.

Snakelex briefly discontinued his report as the contents of his stomach rose to the occasion, vacated to land on his feet where he sighed contented and continued. The demon thought it might be in his best interest to reword his report, leaving out the details, as he did not wish to agitate the boss.

The Mack boys were barely seen out of overalls and gumboots, except on Sunday mornings when they escorted their mother to church wearing suits inherited from their father, who was a short, plump little fellow. Norma's wrath was enough to deter anyone noting her boy's attire, as her sons were God given and her pride and joy. Both men are a hit

with the young single women of the town. Harold and Bertram's idea of romancing a woman is a tractor ride across the back paddock to their favourite creek to fish for eels or a night of skeet shooting using dry cow pads.

Heaving a sigh of frustration, Snakelex had read enough for the moment. While the demon looked over the surrounding area, he took a head count of imps. This was a simple task as the majority, a mere handful, was sprawled out over the luscious green lawn. Sleeping against a petrol pump, a small scruffy imp felt Snakelex's wrath.

"Get up you fairy!" Snakelex again kicked the imp, who abruptly roused to its senses, though remaining high on fumes. "Pixies! I have nothing more than a platoon of pixies under me!" Flustered, he flapped his arms and continued his verbal assault. "Get up you lazy insignificant moron and straighten yourself up when in the presence of authority!"

"Who, you?" The rattled imp lisped. "Authority, ha! And where do you get off calling me a pixie?" He appeared a little livelier. Snakelex was accustomed to insubordination as it came with the job and always had a word to stimulate fear.

"Not me you insignificant pixie, the boss!" Snakelex raised a snide brow. "Enjoy your swim in the sludge pit." He watched the imp cringe, leap to its feet and frantically look for Satan. The imp soon realised he had been deceived.

"You liar!" The imp's blood shot eyes glared cranky. "The boss isn't here!" He sunk down against the petrol pump, not impressed with the demon sarcastically grinning at him.

"I do it so well, don't you think? No, don't answer that; just go back to sleep. I'm wasting my time on you lower ranks. You deserve everything you get." A quick glance at the other imps sprawled out

over the grass and Snakelex was again verbally attacking the immature brother. “Pitiful; absolutely pitiful! You lot have the perfect opportunity to get a strangle hold on these miserable creatures and what do you do? Absolutely nothing!” The imp’s eyes nervously widened and with a finger, gestured for him to turn and look behind him.

Snakelex did and wished he hadn’t. He barely had time to swallow his fear with a breathtaking angel rising from behind the dwelling like a tree spreading its branches. The light from this illuminating angel quickly spread over the roof, upon the vegetation and out across the lawn. Naturally, Snakelex was not going to stand by and be engulfed in the angel’s radiance, unlike the imps, who would reap their reward for their laziness. Having hastily backed out onto the road, relieved and at a safe distance, the demon began whistling *Amazing grace*.

Snakelex did not wish to hang around, just in case the big fairy decided to do a sweep over the entire area for any hangers on. The possibility of being observed by the surveillance mob at head office prompted Snakelex to stand his ground for the count of ten. He could never be one hundred percent sure of his assignments; upcoming officers were always tested. Thinking it better to be safe than sorry, he presumed that being impertinent to an angel would surely gain him a few brownie points.

“Why don’t you try lightening up a little, huh,” the demon hollered. “Let’s face it; you fairies aren’t exactly a colourful mob. Look at you; your whole wardrobe is so outdated, even Adam would be embarrassed to be seen with you. I advise you forsake your designer.” It was no skin off his nose whether his cohorts could hear him or not. Their composted condition would see most of them out of action for the duration of eighty years, if not more. One brother,

having not been in the full light of the attack, crawled out from under a bush and lay in the driveway with third degree burns.

“What do you want us to do?” The imp groaned.

“Carry on,” Snakelex responded without so much as a glance whilst moving off. “You’re doing a fine job!” He floated away, thinking his brothers were about as useful as a cork on the Titanic.

CHAPTER 3

Snakelex did not have to have an I.Q of a hundred to realise the enemy was observing his every move. He steered cautiously down the main street lined with old semi-detached houses, once coated in whitewash, but now reflecting the years of neglect. The demon smirked at the peeling paint, corrugated, red iron roofs in need of repair. This spelt a non-committed neighbourhood, which reflected in Shutenhog's report. The ex-demon had made comment on a range of elderly citizens residing in these premises from the old to those who were around when Moses was a boy.

Some years ago, the local doctor Fred Jones, implemented his idea for the less mobile members of the community to be in one area. He presumed as they all had so much in common, they could exchange conversation, memories and ailments, counteracting boredom and the tendency to become hypochondriacs. This also cut down on Fred's travel time and petrol bills.

On the subject of the good doctor, there was not much to tell according to Shutenhog. Mr. Jones is the average general practitioner, tall, lanky, late fifties with a receding hairline. He writes prescriptions during the flu season, delivers the odd baby, stitches cuts and signs death certificates that usually state, 'died of old age'. The man consumed a flagon of port weekly, supposedly for medicinal purposes and indulges in the odd cigar on special occasions. Residing only a kilometre from the main street, his

humble mansion is naturally coated in whitewash, but has a tiled red roof in good condition and magnificent gardens.

Fred is a divorcee whose wife ran off with a younger man a few years back. The Doc was stung by a hefty divorce settlement and paid a hefty price for her share of the matrimonial home and the humble practice. His three children nicknamed him moneybags, encouraged by the mother, who used to send them to their father when she wanted something. Fred's offspring are now grown up; he only sees them once a year when he goes to the city for holidays where a tradition has been handed down to the grandchildren, who call him 'the piggy bank'. Fred is not interested in seeking out another partner; he considers one horror story in a lifetime, one too many. It does not stop single or those women of his age or older trying to woo him into relationship.

The lack of information made Snakelex cringe. The small icon of a halo at the bottom of the report meant Christian, yet this was only considered a minor hiccup. Snakelex had seen many of these small religious icons on files, which meant nothing to him. As the doctor's name was not highlighted or in plain red lettering, he concluded this so-called Christian must have steered off the road a little.

The demon was quite correct in his assumption of Fred's spiritual condition. These days, Fred rarely thought about God; mind you, the man could still confidently quote Scripture. Once upon a time, Fred would not have missed a Sunday service, yet now seldom attended; nevertheless, he retained the title and position of deacon in the only church in town. Them upstairs continue to watch over him, but unfortunately, these patrol angels are considered by demons to be nothing more than fairies.

Somewhat amused by the thought of Fred's angelic baby-sitters, Snakelex made out a report.

To the Big Boss

Shutenhog's report leaves many questions unanswered concerning the subject Fred Jones. I am confident that this creature has relinquished his spiritual beliefs and is an open target for repression. I will influence the human into using his occupation to manipulate all those who are exposed to him. I will insight stress to encourage his drinking problem and.....

Snakelex paused to think up more ideas to unleash on Fred, but his eyes diverted to the front door of a poky, little house. On either side of the door were terracotta cherubs. The demon shook his head whilst watching the cherub's eyes move and focus on him; he was not about to fall for this trick again.

Many years ago, when bored out of his brain, Snakelex decided to amuse himself by attempting to vandalise a nice old lady's front veranda. The demon got the shock of his life when his fun turned to horror and two colourful gnomes attacked him. Reduced to slime, Snakelex was discarded into a ceramic pot. Fortunately, the plant was plastic as demons do not make good fertiliser and there he remained for quite some time. Feeling an irresistible urge for revenge, Snakelex picked up a large rock and hurled it at the ornament.

"It's payback time." Snakelex snarled, delighted with the thought of hitting an undercover goody two wings. With the smash came a yelp and a sadistic grin from the demon, who continued to float on thinking aloud. "What's that saying? Oh yeah; revenge is mine said Satan, but I like to help." Unbeknown to the demon, one of his brothers, barely

conscious, arose from the remnants of the cherub
plucking the rock from his face.

CHAPTER 4

One can see from the main street many houses dotted amongst the stark hills and those built in craters; most are easy to spot, as all have corrugated red roofs in need of repair. At the end of the street, which incidentally becomes a T intersection, one looks directly at the grand old stone and wood structure of the local hotel. A large weatherworn sign swings in the breeze, which reads, 'The Golden Peacock Inn, Est. 18', something or other, 'Proprietors Morris and Anne Knight'. Snakelex's eyes popped at Shutenhog's report on the proprietors of the Golden Peacock Inn.

Morris has no regard for religion, politics, or children. He likes to be in charge of the conversation and the majority of his customer's refrain from arguing with him. The topics conversed at the inn usually start with the weather; move quickly to family issues and then linger around the sports pages. Morris began a second business several years ago as the town's taxi service, but the clientele mainly consist of his own patrons, who find themselves unable to stagger home under their own steam. From a personal point of view, he is fat, unintelligent, arrogant and is a delight to work with. Morris has a tattoo of a woman on his stomach and with vigorous belly movements she dances, which he constantly exhibits for perverted customers. The tattoo, the creature's pride and joy, was obtained in his youth whilst in a drunken stupor. To sum him up, he's a middle-aged man with a beer gut.

Anne Knight is a different kettle of sludge all together. Like her partner, she too has a second job, as the local mobile hairdresser. Anne is repulsively affectionate towards other creatures that consider her fair game to unload their personal garbage on. She enjoys listening to gossip and has a soft spot for the elderly. It is absolutely crucial that the name Mary Anne Collins, the name given to this creature at birth, be kept on record and is passed on to those she comes in contact with. It is by this name that I am able to keep her captive to the memory of a lewd youth. Mary Anne Collins was once the subject of the town's gossip due to her mating habits. Unfortunately, with maturity and her marriage to Morris, the past is rarely mentioned, but we like to incite emotions that keep her in torment.

I regret to inform you, that we have not been successful in keeping Anne out of the clutches of a certain interfering halo head. This other party is classified off limits and is a threat to our work with the subject of this report. We do however have one thing in our favour, Anne Knight fears her husband more than she fears Him upstairs and she has had to resort to our influence to keep this secret from Morris. It gives me much pleasure to inform you that through our influence, both of these creatures have a wicked sense of humour and inflict it on their customers, who are easily excitable. End Report.

Demons and imps consider the Golden Peacock Inn as too squeaky clean and organised for their liking, but to the human eye, it is nothing to brag about. The interior has worn carpets, smoke stained walls and ceilings, dusty benches, dusty artificial plants, dusty cocktail glasses, dusty shelves and poor lighting. The toilets are outside with no exterior or interior wall space left to add your titbit to the graffiti. Morris often comments on the works of art, having

already decided to leave the ablution facilities to the National Trust, believing them to be of historic value.

You would be extremely lucky to get an order from a top shelf selection. Beer, stout, wine and scotch are the limit and counter meals are only as good as Anne feels on the day or whom she is preparing it for. Admittedly, the Golden Peacock Inn has a friendly atmosphere, as long as one has no objection to belching, bad language, smoking, and a dog named Slops.

Morris calls the local Christians, 'those who reside on the hill'. They are rarely seen in the pub and only a handful come in for the odd counter meals. Mind you, Morris does a booming trade out of those on the hill, via the back door bottle shop. Fred Jones is no longer classed as one of those on the hill and is a frequent customer.

One very Christian lady in particular has demons in a panic when she, on a regular basis, visits the hotel collecting on behalf of a charity. Snakelex sent a memo to the boss's secretary; informing head office he was making his base here and to direct all his calls to The Golden Peacock Inn. Regarding Morris and Anne Knight, Snakelex made a personal note in his diary, which read, another promotion coming up.

Snakelex entered the bar. The whole place crawled with brothers, but what good were they when these excitable little imps were easily intoxicated by the mere smell of alcohol. They also snorted hysterically at mortal humour, whistled and constantly screamed at Anne and female customers to get their gear off and for Morris to keep his gear on. The imp's foul language far exceeded their human counterparts and the noise was spiritually unbearable. Snakelex would resort to violence to sort them out before continuing with his assignment.

CHAPTER 5

The town consists of around nine hundred people, sixty-percent averaging middle age, or over. One qualified teacher runs the local school with volunteers like Stella Brown, who is the loving wife of Pastor Philip Brown; both are in their early sixties. The school curriculum is considered very old fashioned compared to modern city education; still in use is the abacus and the children are quite skilled in tablet engraving. Children have little or no understanding of computers, seeing it as nothing more than science fiction or something to do with the space program.

The youngsters of this town have to rely on an imagination, unlike their counterparts in the city who have technology available. It is the norm to see after school activities, such as children playing cricket in side streets or girls jumping rope. A parent has no problems trying to drag junior away from the television set, as reception is so poor, most have given it up. Adults rely on the radio and newspapers for outside information and most teenagers tune in to modern city radio stations for the latest in pop idols.

Those who know her would say, you would have to search long and hard to find a woman like Stella Brown; the type of person one takes an instant liking too. She is a breath of fresh air and would offer you a bed, meal and her husband's shirt in one breath if she felt you needed it. In a disciplinary situation, even her spectacles perched at the end of her nose, is about as intimidating as the tooth fairy. This frail

looking woman has no offspring of her own and fills the void by reaching out with an abundance of love and affection to everyone else's children.

Mrs Brown is a firm believer in the power of God's love and with this attitude, she usually achieves what some would say, the impossible. Stella presumes even the most beastly child can be tamed with love, affection and God's word. Schools are schools no matter where you live, not every child is easily tamed, not all have a conscience and this school is no different. There is a minority of little horrors, which Stella would insist you call, 'misunderstood angels'. Many have unsuccessfully tried to convince her to give up, but her patience and persistence are until death do she part or God tells her different. Stella Brown has a nickname, Saint Sucker, lovingly given by those misunderstood angels.

Snakelex had requested the old files on the Browns as Shutenhog's reports were considered, 'God sent'. Both old and new files on Stella Brown were barely legible; her name was in such gigantic red capital letters that the window files had become distorted. An end of report memo stated that Stella had a bodyguard more on the ball than any security device known to man. It is able to leap mountains in a single bound, faster than any speedy demon or starving vulture and made Sir Creepton, the boss's secretary, look like a gnome. Snakelex cringed at the thought, but felt a little easier when the memo finished with, 'the goody two wings is still inferior and no where near as ugly as 'Gargles'.

Gargoyle, the official title for this demonic creature from the principalities and powers, is Satan's number one creep and considered by Hell to be the equivalent of the warrior angel Michael. Mind you, demons and imps are led to believe that this angelic dude is merely a myth.

Snakelex was not impressed with members of his establishment. Numerous dark brothers had nothing better to do than hang over fences, off basketball rings, incite bullying and watch Stella express her loving ways to all who come in contact with her.

“So you’re the halo head Shutenhog referred to,” Snakelex thought aloud. “And I thought Noah’s wife was scary. Blind me teddy, I hope they don’t name a perfume after you, I couldn’t stand the stink.” The demon made himself comfortable on the decrepit fence and took a good hard look at the surroundings. He made a note, describing the small school building and his recommendations.

The kid’s lack artistic flare, I will see to it that this is corrected as there is an abundance of wall space for them to practice on. The fencing is substandard; it can still keep the little tackers captive in some areas. I have sent in a crew to introduce a new game for the tiny creatures to play; vandalism will keep them occupied for a while and give them hours of fun. Snakelex liked to put his ideas into practice and suddenly screamed to a bunch of deadbeat brothers.

“Get off your big, blubbery butts and go do some repair work.” He received rude hand signals in return.

Snakelex was busily running the place up in his report when he was suddenly drawn to the appearance of a multitude of imps. Shutenhog had requested the reinforcement to be awoken some time ago, but the memo got lost in the system. Snakelex wondered why head office ever bothered with imps, as they never knew how to conduct themselves when on assignment and the end result was always the same.

Stella continued to walk around the schoolyard talking with groups of excited children. She had no idea that six hundred enthusiastic little imps were now racing towards her with arms outstretched. The screaming meanies, confident they could attach themselves to the woman, presumed they would penetrate her defences, destroy her faith, massacre her hopes and establish a house of fear.

“Like ice-cream in a furnace.” Snakelex thought aloud then sighed and shook his head in disbelief at the stupidity of his brothers. Watching from a safe distance, what followed was no surprise to him. A spectacular melt down resorted with imps slamming into a glowing figure of monstrous proportions. This was one super sonic superior guardian angel, a goody two wings of the most dangerous kind. Snakelex made a personal diary entry. Have just witnessed the splat of the century; it would have been so exhilarating, except for the fact that I am in charge and this will not wear well on my record. Warning, this frail pathetic creature has armour guard for deodorant.

After much thought, Snakelex called on his window and send an urgent memo to the boss’s secretary.

To Sir Creepton

You need to send more re-enforcements. Preferably, mature dark demons with some knowledge of what to expect and the proper procedures when dealing with them upstairs, not those who are so enthusiastic to become part of the cesspit.

Having sent the message, Snakelex shuddered with the thought that it may appear as though he was requesting backup; fortunately, it was his lucky day. Sir Creepton was in the middle of deleting files when

he partly deleted the demon's message that arrived garbled and so his memo read:

To Creep

Need no more dark demons, with some knowledge will proceed upstairs; I'm not enthusiastic to become part of the cesspit. With Sir Creepton not wanting to appear incompetent, in return he sent Snakelex a message stating, 'server is down until further notice'.

Pastor Philip Brown is truly an old-fashioned God-fearing man whose heart is good, but not so willing to change and catch up with the modern spiritually. Shutenhog described him in the report.

He is an uninteresting, boring old man who falls asleep during his own sermons. We started the Pastor Brown gossip column many years ago when Morris Knight attended the forbidden zone with his parents. Once we influenced the congregation into detrimentally judging Morris's old folks, we encouraged the couple to get out of town, which they did, leaving Morris to fend for himself. We also played on this lad's shame and incited him against the Holy rollers. Philip Brown walks with a cane and has done so for some years due to a hip injury.

Pastor Philip Brown hates dogs, as a fox terrier once bit him. The story always begins with a little ball of fluff that supposedly conspired against the good pastor and apparently for quite some time. The dog, which wishes to remain anonymous, followed him, jumped up onto a small concrete ledge, took aim and ferociously latched onto the seat of his pants. In severe pain, Brown carried the mutt for two kilometres to the nearest medical facility, where he underwent excruciating surgery; two stitches from the local vet.

"Uncontrolled pets are like serpents," Pastor Brown often curses the animal kingdom to members

of his congregation. "Satan's weapon against trusting Christians!" He would add a few biblical remarks, but no one takes any notice. Shutenhog finished with; unfortunately, I cannot take the credit, as I had nothing to do with what the dog in question did. Nonetheless, the dog is hailed as a hero and once a year imps dedicate an hour of drinking to the bravery of this little champion.

Disgusted, Snakelex shuddered and shook his head, before blurting his thoughts aloud.

"You fool! You do not get anywhere in this job by telling the truth. What was going through his head? Perhaps he saw too much of the light. Oh what a horrific thought!" Snakelex threw up over his feet.

Feeling much better, the demon sat back, glancing over the mounds of ooze. He watched the remainder of his idiotic brothers retreat to a safe distance and make rude gestures at the angel.

"I bet that really hurts." Snakelex rolled his eyes at the trivial display of ridicule towards the angel. "Why don't you just throw a kiss at the big fairy!" He spat out in tempter. "Better still, why don't you throw yourselves! Give it something to talk about over dinner!" Though ignored by the imps, Snakelex received a smile and a wave from the angel. The demon gasped with embarrassment and suddenly felt violently ill.

CHAPTER 6

Pastor Philip Brown's congregation boasted of around one hundred people, yet they were never all present at the one time. The church itself is situated on a hill overlooking the town and all members would agree, it is a magnificent view. Constructed of grey stone, the large building has a corrugated red roof in need of repair and would easily be snapped up by the National Trust, if they knew it existed.

The interior, coated with whitewash over lath and plaster is a feature in itself. If one were bored during a sermon, they could follow the fine roadwork of cracks to cobwebs on the Blackwood ceiling, also in need of repair. The traditional wooden pews with their odd coloured cushions could tell a few interesting stories if one cared to look close enough. Lumps on the under-wood are not ornamentation but petrified chewing gum varnished over.

Sunday service is a good time to catch up on reading, knitting and gossip. Many a good recipe has been exchanged during the service, not to mention, sale of stock or machinery. The congregation has grown quite accustomed to seeing their pastor seated behind the ornately carved Blackwood pulpit. Members who sit in the front row can hear Philip's words of wisdom, yet cannot see sweet Fanny Adams. Members who sit in the back row get a bird's eye view of the pastor; however, the ability to lip-read is essential. Church regulars have a belief that their position on the pew is sacred and no one in their right

mind would dare invade their space unless given permission.

The church folks have the hymns down to a fine art, as Miss Armstrong, an introvert and the organist, is tone deaf and relies solely on the original Sankei's Hymn Book. It is not often that you hear a joyful noise unto the Lord from this lot.

The majority of members firmly believe that announcing one is a 'Christian', and their position on the pew, entitles them to a one-way ticket to Heaven. In addition, it places them on the Holier-than-thou list and entitling them to sainthood on leaving this world.

"Where does God draw the line on such sins?" Philip Brown once asked his congregation.

"God's grace covers all," Twelve-year-old Sam yelled at the top of his lungs, thinking he had scored a few brownie points with the Pastor.

"I don't think so!" Sam's grotty nosed younger brother got in on the act. "Not after what you said about Pastor Brown this morning. I don't reckon he's a senile, boring old f..." His mother, who shone with embarrassment, quickly silenced the boy.

"Dad said it first," Sam protested; as his father dragged him out of the service by the ear. This was not the first or the last time a child would be scolded for parroting or tarnishing the halo of a parent.

There was definitely a lack of spiritual enlightenment and as Philip had been brought up in the traditional ways, the charismatic movements in the city churches left this small band of Holy rollers looking spiritually dead. What hope did the Pastor have when the majority of his congregation asked questions like; 'would you know the Holy Spirit if you saw him in the street? How long will the Holy Spirit stay and do I need a spare room? Is it the same as communion wine?"

A sermon on the gifts of the spirit, preached by Philip some years back, saw his congregation in total confusion. Some who bothered to follow up on Philip's words continued to pray for gifts, but really did not believe their requests would be answered by the Almighty. Some hounded the postman and were bitterly disappointed when their parcels did not arrive, where others saw the sermon as a history lesson and went back to sleep.

Stella once mentioned the subject of talking in spiritual tongues and received the response; 'I don't think I would like to learn Greek or Hebrew, I have enough problems with English'. Stella gave up the idea of trying to educate people on the spiritual realm and decided this was her husband's job.

Communion wine, abolished years ago was substituted with sickly sweet blackberry juice, compliments of Norma's very large still, once used by settlers for whisky. Communion bread consisted of a frozen bun, which usually had to be thawed out in the sun during the service. Church began at ten a.m. and finished around eleven thirty a.m. Night services were discontinued in nineteen hundred and two.

Sunday school is just a rumour, as it never got past the planning stages, except one Sunday many years back when the kids got too rowdy to remain in the main hall. On that particular morning, Stella listed the aid of teenagers. Sibling rivalry broke out; Stella had to do the miraculous and separate glue from hair whilst retrieving little angels down from the rafters.

Strategically placed in the adult brain is the excuse department. From here, one can reel off excuses, especially when asked to volunteer as helpers for children's activities or any other church roll for that matter. Parents find it easier to grasp their own kids by the ankles, as they crawled under the pews seeking to sink their choppers into some unsuspecting

elder. To counteract such attacks and embarrassment, a parent will threaten the death penalty, torture without mercy and even a sugar fix, all whilst listening to Jesus loves you. Now the victims of these attacks, by child militia, have had to resort to military tactics for their own protection; grin and bare it is no longer an option. The snarl and embarrass feature only works if accompanied by the collar and short chain and threatening with a grin, to push junior down the church stairs for fun.

The title 'youth group' is not recognised in church vocabulary. All information on the church can be found somewhere in a book buried at the bottom of a cardboard box in a garden shed on the property of Mr. and Mrs. Brown. Somewhat impressed, Snakelex has christened this particular shed a shrine to procrastination and the cardboard box, a treasure chest that he would kill to keep buried.