

Summoning the Devil

So what do you do when you're really bored and looking for excitement? Try summoning the devil.

On second thought, don't. It almost got me into a lot of trouble.

How do you call on the devil? Apparently you need special instructions. I found this really old book of spells in the back of the town library last week. It looked pretty cool. What did I know?

Page six hundred and sixty six got my attention right away. It showed how to draw a geometric shape on the floor, and how to chant just the right words to get the devil to appear. I thought it was a joke.

But I gave it a try. Like I said, I was bored. I found some chalk and drew the appropriate lines on the floor in my basement. Then I read the words. They must have been in Latin or something, because they sounded like nonsense. I laughed and threw the book in the corner, feeling a little foolish.

The flash of light and plume of smoke startled me. And then in the centre of the drawing stood ... someone.

"You summoned me!" The someone spoke. He was kind of a short little guy, with a scraggly moustache, and he looked like he had a really bad sunburn. No horns that I could see, though. And the baseball cap was a little disconcerting. Definitely not the way I'd always pictured the devil. But could this really be happening?

"All right, let's get on with it. What do you want?" His voice was high-pitched, like a girl's. This was the devil?

"Uh ... what do you mean?" I stammered.

"You're new at this, aren't you, son. OK, here's the deal. You ask for anything you want. I give it to you. Then I claim your soul."

The part about 'anything I wanted' sounded pretty good. But I wasn't sure about that 'claim your soul' part. But first things first.

"You'll give me anything? Like, maybe ... a million dollars? Lloyd Robertson's job? Or my own reality show on TV??"

"That's what I said. Anything. But try and be a little more imaginative, OK?"

Visions of instant wealth, or even better, a date with Carrie Underwood, were making me feel faint. But wait a minute. What exactly did 'claim your soul' mean?

“What exactly does ‘claim your soul’ mean?” Whatever it meant, it didn’t sound good.

“Apparently I am dealing with an illiterate” the devil sneered. “What’s wrong with the educational system these days. Don’t you read *anything*?”

He looked at me for a moment, as if trying to make up his mind. Then he shrugged, straightened his baseball cap, and continued.

“All right, let’s start from the top. I’ll speak slowly and use really little words.”

I didn’t like his tone. Who was he to speak to me like that? After all, I was a grade 12 graduate.

“I’m the devil. I can grant you anything you want. You get it, you have fun. When you die, I get you. You spend the rest of eternity roasting in Hell, with pigs gnawing at your ankles and vicious little demons poking you in sensitive places. And the mosquitoes. Don’t forget the mosquitoes.”

This didn’t sound like any place I’d prefer to spend eternity in. Maybe I’d better forget the whole thing. Besides, Carrie Underwood was probably married or something.

“Look, uh ... Mr. Devil, sir ... I think I made a mistake. I’m not really interested. You can just go away now, all right? Sorry to have bothered you.”

The devil looked me right in the eye and laughed. Not a nice laugh at all. And I could smell the sulphur.

“It doesn’t work that way, son. You called for me. I’m here. You must ask for something. And when I’m done giving it to you, your soul is mine.”

He laughed again. I don’t think he was taking me seriously.

“No really, I don’t want to put you to any trouble. I don’t really need anything ...”

“ASK! Or I will take your soul anyway!”

I guess he really meant business. There was no way out of this. I’d have to ask for something. And then I’d be destined to burn in Hell forever. Not good.

“Well? I’m waiting!”

I thought furiously. Then a small smile appeared on my lips. I asked “Let me get this straight. I ask you to do something for me. When you’re done giving it to me, you take my soul. Did I get that right?”

“You got it. So what is it you want?”

“Sorry to be a pest, but I want to make sure I really understand this thoroughly. ‘When you’re done giving it to me’ ... that’s when you take my soul, right?”

The devil rolled his eyes, and seethed, “Idiots! I’m dealing with idiots! YOU GOT IT, all right? Now WHAT IS IT YOU WANT??”

I told him exactly what I wanted. His eyes grew large. And with a puff of smoke, he disappeared with a howl: “Nooooooooo”

I asked him to recite all the digits of PI. I imagine he’ll be busy for a while. Maybe for all eternity.