

Judas Iscariot's Day Off

by

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Setting

A law office.

Time

Now and then.

Cast

JUDAS ISCARIOT - Disciple and betrayer of Jesus Christ, 30s-50s.

DEBRA HORTON - Attorney, 30s-50s.

OMAR BAQRI - Attorney, 20s-30s.

ARCHANGEL GABRIEL - Winged seraphim, indeterminate age.

(Lights up on a law office. Sitting in a chair is JUDAS ISCARIOT, wearing clothing from around 30 A.D. He looks around the office curiously as DEBRA HORTON enters in a rush. JUDAS stands up.)

DEBRA

I'm incredibly sorry to keep you waiting! I had to file a last-minute brief at the courthouse and the traffic is just terrible at this time of day.

JUDAS

It's fine...although I am a little pressed for time.

(While his attire gives her pause, she snaps on a smile and extends her hand.)

DEBRA

I'm Debra Horton.

JUDAS

Judas Iscariot.

DEBRA

Oh, I see! And you're certainly dressed for the part! Now please, sit.

(JUDAS sits back down and DEBRA moves around the desk and sits down. She picks up a pen and a legal pad.)

DEBRA

So, I'm happy to refer to you by any name you're comfortable with, but for legal purposes I will need your real name.

JUDAS

That is my real name.

DEBRA

Judas Iscariot?

(off his nod)

Oh, I see! You legally changed it for...professional purposes?

JUDAS

No, that's the name my parents gave me. I was named after my Uncle Judas.

DEBRA

Your parents gave you the same name as the man who betrayed Jesus Christ?

JUDAS

Oh, I understand your confusion! No, I am the man who betrayed Jesus Christ.

DEBRA

You betrayed Jesus.

JUDAS

That's correct.

DEBRA

Well, I hate to be a stickler for details, but that would make you over two thousand years old.

JUDAS

Give or take.

DEBRA

You are aware that I charge three hundred dollars an hour.

JUDAS

Absolutely! And I'm happy to pay.

(JUDAS pulls out a canvas bag and pours thirty pieces of silver on the desk.)

DEBRA

Nice. Thirty pieces of silver.

JUDAS

It's kind of my thing.

DEBRA

Is this...?

(looks around, then closely at JUDAS, who is mystified)

I'm looking for the hidden cameras...for whatever prank show this is for, or practical joke my staff is playing on me.

JUDAS

I'm not sure I understand what you're talking about. Could we get to my case? Like I said, I don't have a lot of time and--

DEBRA

Of course! Can you just hold on a second?
(hitting a button on her desk phone)

Omar, could you come in here, please?

(She smiles at JUDAS and a moment later, OMAR enters. JUDAS stands up.)

DEBRA

Omar, this is Judas Iscariot.

(JUDAS extends his hand and they shake.)

JUDAS

Very nice to meet you.

OMAR

Likewise.

DEBRA

(to OMAR)

Do you know anything about this?

(OMAR shakes his head.)

JUDAS

Excuse me, my case?

DEBRA

Yes, of course! I'm very sorry. Please, sit down. Would you mind if Omar sat in on your case? He's one of our junior partners and I always like to share interesting clients with him.

JUDAS

Fine by me.

(They all sit.)

DEBRA

Now then, what can I do for you, Mr. Iscariot?

JUDAS

Well, here's the situation. As you may know...wait, are both of you Christians?

DEBRA

Used to be.

OMAR

Muslim.

JUDAS

Then maybe I should just catch you up real quickly. I'm the disciple of Jesus Christ who betrayed him for thirty pieces of silver, after which he was crucified by the Romans. Because of that, I am condemned by God to spend eternity in the ninth circle of Hell, which is pretty much as far down as it goes. However, thanks to an act of kindness that I once performed, I am allowed to leave Hell for one day every thousand years.

DEBRA

And today is that day?

JUDAS

Today is the day!

OMAR

(taking out his phone and
tapping at it)

And you decided to spend it in a lawyer's office?

JUDAS

Well, I do have some other plans, but yes, this is my first stop.

DEBRA

So, this would only be the second time you've been released from Hell since...?

JUDAS

The incident.

DEBRA

The incident, right.

JUDAS

Yes. The first time was during the Dark Ages, and that did not go well. My big mistake was still only speaking Aramaic. I should have learned Latin if I wanted to get anything accomplished.

OMAR

I was going to say that your English is excellent for a Middle Eastern man who died two thousand years ago.

JUDAS

Thank you! I've been practicing, and I have a lot of time on my hands. Mark Twain has been a tremendous help to me.

OMAR

Mark Twain is in Hell? The Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn guy?

DEBRA

Well, he would be. He was an atheist back when there weren't too many atheists.

JUDAS

Wonderful man! Such a sense of humor! He really lightens things up down there. And he's been advising me as to what I should do today...him and Mahatma Gandhi, Oscar Wilde, Hypatia of Alexandria, George Carlin, and so on, and they all agreed that I should see a lawyer to try and--

(There is a knock at the door. It opens a crack and the head of the ARCHANGEL GABRIEL appears.)

DEBRA

Excuse me, we're having a private meeting. Could you please wait in the lobby?

(GABRIEL comes into the office, clad all in white, with a pair of wings.)

GABRIEL

Do not be afraid.

DEBRA

Oh boy. Must be a full moon.

(to JUDAS)

I take it this is your partner in...whatever this is?

JUDAS

My partner? Can't you see his wings? He's an angel!

GABRIEL

Archangel, actually. Hello everyone. I'm Gabriel.

JUDAS

What are you doing here?

GABRIEL

Nothing. Just...in the area.

JUDAS

God sent you.

GABRIEL

Maybe yes, maybe no. His ways are inscrutable.

JUDAS

That means He's worried about me visiting a lawyer.

GABRIEL

Nooooo...God doesn't worry. He's just interested in...things.

DEBRA

Would you excuse me and Omar for a moment?

JUDAS

Of course.

(DEBRA and OMAR get up and huddle together. Behind them, GABRIEL points to his own eyes, then to JUDAS. JUDAS stands up and he and GABRIEL circle one another like two playground antagonists.)

DEBRA

Okay, what do you make of this?

OMAR

What do I--oh, I see! This is a test, isn't it? You want to know how I would handle a bizarre and unusual case as an attorney. To see if I would be a good fit as a full partner.

DEBRA

Omar, no--

OMAR

Well, here is my analysis. Either this is a test of some kind or a practical joke created by someone in the firm.

(MORE)

OMAR (cont'd)

Or, let's not forget that Greenvale Performing Arts College is only a few blocks away. This could be two actors trying out parts, or even a fraternity prank of some kind.

DEBRA

What were you looking up on your phone while Judas was talking?

OMAR

Just checking the details of his story. He's completely correct. Judas Iscariot is allowed to leave Hell for one day every thousand years. Oh, and you'll find this interesting. Do you know the first thing an angel says when he encounters human beings?

DEBRA

Do not be afraid.

(off OMAR's nod)

So, they've clearly done their research, or...you know what? Let's see what else they have to say.

(turning back to JUDAS and
GABRIEL)

I'm very sorry! Do go on with your story.

JUDAS

Well, I'm happy that Gabriel is here, because he can back me up on this. So, point number one. Is God all-knowing?

GABRIEL

Of course!

JUDAS

And God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit; that is, the Trinity, are all one?

GABRIEL

Yes!

JUDAS

Which would mean that Jesus is all-knowing too, right?

GABRIEL

Where are you going with this?

JUDAS

It's quite simple. My sin was that I betrayed Jesus Christ, correct?

GABRIEL

Which you did!

JUDAS

Ah, now that is where you have fallen into my trap! How can you betray someone who is all-knowing? You see? God and Jesus are all-knowing. That means they knew that I was going to betray him. Clearly, since they allowed it to happen, that was part of their plan all along. I was merely the scapegoat in their scheme.

DEBRA

Hang on. So you're saying...what you're saying is that you were caught up in a sting operation.

JUDAS

I don't what that is.

OMAR

It's when the authorities, the police, or God purposely allow a crime to be committed. In this case, Jesus played the role of the victim, knowing full well that you would betray him. It's a form of entrapment, which is basically illegal.

DEBRA

And you know, I remember enough from Sunday school that during the Last Supper, Jesus did predict that one of his disciples would betray him, just like he predicted that the Apostle Peter would later deny knowing him. That definitely suggests that Jesus knew the future.

JUDAS

Exactly! So I ask you, based on your expertise and experience in law, am I guilty? Should I have to spend eternity in the ninth circle of Hell?

OMAR

Absolutely not.

DEBRA

I agree. Any decent defense attorney would be able to get your charges reduced, if not dismissed completely.

GABRIEL

What? No! He betrayed our Lord and Savior for money! Jesus died on the cross because of you!

JUDAS

Which was their plan from the very beginning! Without me, without my so-called "betrayal," there would have been no crucifixion, which means there would have been no resurrection, which means that Jesus would never have brought salvation to humanity through his death.

DEBRA

So, what you're saying is, if I'm understanding you correctly, is that in terms of the whole story, you're actually kind of the hero...

OMAR

...that Jesus the son of a carpenter wouldn't be Jesus the savior of mankind without you and your actions.

GABRIEL

Hold on! Just hold on one minute here! Are you on his side?

DEBRA

We're on the side of justice.

GABRIEL

But he's the bad guy! Judas has always been the bad guy!

OMAR

Only because he didn't have a decent lawyer.

GABRIEL

That's your attitude? Seriously? You know God is watching all this, right?

DEBRA

Is that a threat?

JUDAS

Yes, that's exactly what it is! That's how they operate! Threats! Intimidation! Do what we say or you're going to Hell!

GABRIEL

Listen, you--

JUDAS

What? What are you going to do to me? I'm already in the ninth circle of Hell and that's as far down as it goes!

GABRIEL

You know what? I give up. There are some people you just can't save.

(GABRIEL shakes his head in disgust and storms out, slamming the door behind him.)

DEBRA

Well, Mr. Iscariot, while we're both clearly sympathetic to your case, I'm still not sure if I understand how we can help you.

JUDAS

Just a formal legal letter would be nice...pointing out that you can't betray someone who is all-knowing and how I never had any decent representation.

DEBRA

I'd be happy to write that up. Do you think it will help?

JUDAS

Not really. God's pretty fixated on the whole being infallible thing. I'm just making a point, I suppose. But who knows, maybe I can move up to the fifth or sixth circle of Hell. A change of scenery would be nice.

DEBRA

I'll have that letter for you by this afternoon.

JUDAS

Wonderful!

(shaking hands with DEBRA and
OMAR)

And thank you so much for seeing my side of things. It really means a lot.

(JUDAS heads for the door.)

OMAR

So...any other big plans for today?

JUDAS

(turning)

Oh, absolutely! I want to find a decent meal and a prostitute.

DEBRA

Well, we'd be happy to recommend a restaurant or two, but just so you know, prostitution is illegal these days.

JUDAS

Seriously? So, what do men do when they want to have sex with a woman who isn't their wife?

DEBRA

Omar, maybe you'd like to escort Mr. Iscariot to the elevator and tell him a little bit about the internet.

OMAR

The...oh! I'd be happy to.

(OMAR escorts JUDAS out the door, then turns back to DEBRA.)

OMAR

I know this might sound ridiculous, but you don't suppose that...?

(They share a look for a beat, then...)

OMAR AND DEBRA

Noooo...

(OMAR exits, closing the door behind him. DEBRA picks up one of the pieces of silver on her desk and looks at it pensively, her gaze shifting to the door as lights fade.)

END OF PLAY.