

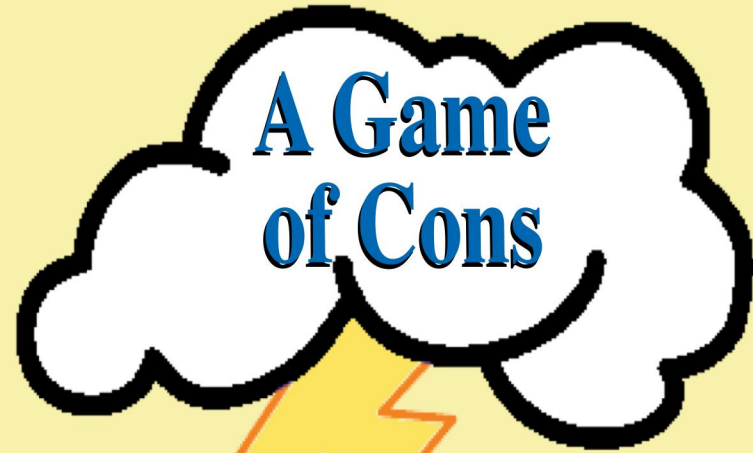
A Game of Cons

Savanna, the world's best con-artist is in big trouble! She finds herself waiting patiently (well, not so patiently) in St. Peter's office. She is saved from her well-deserved fate by a Post-it next to her name in St. Peter's Big Book. It seems God has a special need for her skills. She (God!) sends one of Heaven's denizens, Catherine the Pretty Good, to explain Savanna's mission, and to accompany her back to Earth for the mission. They are sent to the original site of the Garden of Eden (in Canarsie, Brooklyn), to rescue Eden House, placed there at the Dawn of History to house one of God's prized possessions: the famous Fountain of Youth. Pandora Addington, a demon-spawn vicious developer, wants Eden House, because it is the last parcel of property she needs to build her latest Mega-Complex.

It's a laugh-a-minute as Savanna works her greatest con ever to foil Pandora's schemes. She is helped by Calista, an angel who comes down to Earth to play at being fictional characters, such as Peter Pan, "Little Elvis", another angel who is such an Elvis fan, he dresses in an Elvis costume, and speaks only the titles of Elvis songs to all questions, along with Madeline and Leila, two daughters of Adam and Eve, who are the guardians of Eden House and Eden House itself, which has a life of his own!

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Great Stage Publishing



A Comedy of Heavenly
Proportions



by
Frank V. Priore

Great Stage Publishing

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Game of Cons

An original comedy

By
Frank V. Priore

ACT I

Scene 1

SETTING: *St. Peter's office just outside the Pearly Gates of Heaven; however, by its looks, you'd never know that. Steps lead up to the stage. The stage is practically bare, but the playing area is outlined with black curtains. There is an opening in the black curtain Up Left; however it is masked by the upstage and Left black curtains so that while the audience can see the opening, they cannot see what is offstage beyond the opening. There is a wooden church pew along the Right side of the stage. There are a few very old magazines on the upstage end of the pew seat Down Left, there is an ordinary desk (no adornments) with a wooden chair behind it. There is a small laptop computer on this desk. SAINT PETER is seated at the desk, and is working on the laptop. He appears to be just an ordinary man with granny glasses and a white beard. He is dressed casually (slacks, sneakers and a T-shirt that has a large infinity sign on it.)*

AT RISE: *From the back of the auditorium, SAVANNA, an attractive woman dressed to kill in an alluring outfit, fish net stockings and high heels, meanders down an aisle. She sees the steps and tentatively moves to them and up them to the stage. SAINT PETER takes absolutely no notice of her. She moves around the stage, looking it over with her high heels clicking, and she ends up in front of the desk. SAINT PETER still takes absolutely no notice of her. Annoyed at this, SAVANNA deliberately clacks her heels as loud as she can. SAINT PETER looks up, sighs and finally stops tapping keys on his laptop.*

SAINT PETER: *(Pointing to the pew)* Take a seat, please. And do stop making all that noise with your shoes.

SAVANNA: I was trying to get your attention.

SAINT PETER: *(Wryly)* Congratulations. You've succeeded. Now, please take a seat. *(She turns, moves to the pew and sits. As she is moving, SAINT PETER goes back to tapping keys on the computer, paying no further attention to her.)*

SAVANNA: *(After waiting impatiently for a few beats, still seated, she deliberately stomps her heels down several times.)*

SAINT PETER: *(Sighs again, looks up.)* Alright, now you're pissing me off!

SAVANNA: Well, I wanted to ask you a question.

SAINT PETER: So, ask. But take those shoes off first.

SAVANNA: *(She quickly takes her shoes off, places them alongside the pew, then)* Okay. My questions is this: Where am I?

SAINT PETER: Where do you think you are?

SAVANNA: I don't know. The last thing I remember, I was about to put the sting on the con I was running on this rich business man...*(She looks up pensively, as she tries to remember.)*

SAINT PETER: And then?

SAVANNA: I remember seeing a pistol in his hand...

SAINT PETER: And then?

SAVANNA: I suppose he shot me. I heard the gun go off, and then nothing. I wonder if he hit me.

SAINT PETER: Oh, he did. Nice big hole right where your heart used to be.

SAVANNA: *(She quickly looks and feels her chest area.) (Looking up)* Oh, my. Then I'm...

SAINT PETER: Dead? Yes. Congratulations again. You are correct.

SAVANNA: And this is...?

SAINT PETER: My office. Now, please sit quietly. I will get to you...eventually.

SAVANNA: And you are...?

SAINT PETER: Saint Peter, of course.

SAVANNA: Saint Peter? Get out!

SAINT PETER: Why should I get out? As I've already told you, this is *my* office.

SAVANNA: And you are the same Saint Peter who determines whether people go to Heaven or...*(She points downward.)*

SAINT PETER: Hell? Yes, Right again on both counts.

SAVANNA: From behind a desk? Where is the lectern and the big book with everyone's name in it? And for that matter, where are your heavenly robes?

SAINT PETER: *(Sighs)* Oh, drat! Another traditionalist. *(Rises)* Okay. I'll be right back. Stay there.

SAVANNA: *(As he begins to leave, heading upstage.)* Where else would I go?

SAINT PETER: True. *(He EXITS through a wing, Stage Left.)*

SAVANNA: More waiting! Like I don't have anything better to do! *(Think about it for a beat or two)* Actually, I guess I *don't* have anything better to do; I'm dead. *(She spots the magazines)* Oh. Magazines; just like a doctor's waiting room. *(She picks up the top one. These magazines are old. (She blows dust of the magazine.) Real old! (She read the title of the magazine aloud)* "Poor Richard's Almanac, Editor – Benjamin Franklin, Esq. *(She puts the magazine down and picks up the next one. Reads aloud)* Popular Butter Churning" *(She puts the magazine down and picks up the next one.)* Ah, this one seems to be a tabloid. *(Reads aloud from the front cover)* George Washington finally comes clean: "It was a *peach* tree!"

(SAINT PETER RE-ENTERS. He is pushing a lectern on wheels. On top of the lectern is a huge old book. He has a robe folded over one arm. He pushes the lectern to about Center, facing SAVANNA. Puts the robe on, grunting a bit as he does, then stands behind the lectern. He opens the book, wets his finger and turns some pages.)

SAINT PETER: *(To SAVANNA)* Now, what was your name again?

SAVANNA: Savanna.

SAINT PETER: Savanna, what?

SAVANNA: *(She rises, moves towards him)* I...er, don't remember. For as long as I can recall, I just went by "Savanna.". It's my professional name.

SAINT PETER: *(Turns a huge bunch of pages at one. He is near the back of the book.)* I'll check my professional names cross reference. *(After a few beats of turning pages, he looks up.)* Turn around.

SAVANNA: Huh?

SAINT PETER: Turn around. You do know how to do that don't you?

SAVANNA: Well, yes, but...

SAINT PETER: *(Annoyed)* No buts about it! Just turn around. *(She does. Once SAINT PETER is sure she can't see him, he quickly comes from behind the lectern, moves to his desk, and while standing, clicks some keys on the computer.)*

SAVANNA: I hear keys clicking.

SAINT PETER: Probably your teeth chattering. And to tell you the truth, if I led the kind of life you did, my teeth would be chattering, too. At least, until I reached my destination. There's plenty of heat there; you can count on that!

SAVANNA: Oh, wonderful. Maybe, I should just go look for the down escalator.

SAINT PETER: It's an elevator, actually. A lot cheaper to maintain. Particularly when it descends for about 1,000 miles.

SAVANNA: 1,000 miles!

SAINT PETER: Yep. Straight down. It gets there pretty quickly, though. It's an express elevator.

SAVANNA: You know, I was just joking about there being an escalator. I didn't think souls actually descended to Hell in an actual elevator.

SAINT PETER: Well, what did you expect them to do – go to Hell in a handbasket? *(He laughs, as he moves back to the lectern.)*

SAVANNA: No, but ... Say, can I turn around, now?

SAINT PETER: Oh, sure. Sorry. *(He is turning pages in the book, and he is saying things like: "Hmmm," "Uh oh," etc.)*

SAVANNA: So, what's the verdict? It doesn't sound so good.

SAINT PETER: It isn't.

SAVANNA: *(Sighs)* So, which way to the elevator?

SAINT PETER: Just a minute. *(Surprised)* Now, how did that get in there?

SAVANNA: What?

SAINT PETER: A Post-it in the book next to your name. Highly unusual. *(Takes it out of the book and silently reads it.)* Hmm. Interesting.

SAVANNA: Good interesting, or bad interesting?

SAINT PETER: I'm not sure. It has a phone number on it, and it is instructing me to call it. Excuse me. *(He takes a fancy cell phone from the folds of his robe.)*

SAVANNA: Wow! You guys have cell phones up here?

- SAINT PETER: *(As he is dialing the number)* Certainly. We have the latest and the greatest. This is Heaven, you know. This is an iPhone 34.
- SAVANNA: 34? They're only up to an iPhone 6.
- SAINT PETER: You forget. We have Steve Jobs up here with us now. *(On phone)* Hello?...Oh, Catherine. It's you. You left a note in my book...Uh, huh. I see. *(He ends the call on the phone and puts it away.)**(To SAVANNA)* Apparently, your case has been referred.
- SAVANNA: To whom?
- (CATHERINE ENTERS from an unseen opening in the curtains. She is dressed all in white, but not in a robe.)*
- CATHERINE: To me. *(She moves to SAVANNA, offers her hand to shake. SAVANNA, quite confused, shakes her hand.)* I am Catherine. Perhaps you've heard of me.
- SAVANNA: I know a lot of Catherines. Most of them are hookers. *(CATHERINE appears shocked at this.)* Oh, not you...I think. *(Pensive)* Unless you used to work the corner of Decatur and Vegas Drive in Las Vegas.
- CATHERINE: *(Very annoyed at this)* I most certainly did not! I've never even been to Las Vegas. I am Russian royalty, I'll have you know.
- SAVANNA: Okay. Then, I guess I don't know you at all. Russian royalty, eh?
- CATHERINE: Yes. Have you ever heard of Catherine, The Great?
- SAVANNA: Sure. Everyone has. *(Surprised)* You're Catherine, The Great?
- CATHERINE: Not quite. I'm her second cousin, Catherine, The Pretty Good.
- SAINT PETER: You don't need me anymore, do you, Catherine?
- CATHERINE: *(To SAVANNA, as she turns to ST. PETER)* Just a moment, dear. Please have a seat.
- SAVANNA: *(As she sits in the pew)* Don't tell me you're going to keep me waiting, too!
- CATHERINE: Not at all. *(To St. PETER)* I do not need anything further from you, Pete. You can go back to whatever you were doing. *(She reaches into an unseen opening in the curtains and brings out a folding chair, which she opens and positions so she can speak to SAVANNA, and sits in it.)*
- SAINT PETER: Wonderful! *(Over the next few lines of dialog, he takes off the robe, folds it over his arm, pushes the lectern offstage, re-enters without the robe, looking*

as he did at the opening of the scene, and goes back to the desk and begins tapping keys as he stares at the screen.)

- CATHERINE: (To SAVANNA) God has a special mission for you, Savanna. It requires someone with your unique qualifications.
- SAVANNA: Qualifications? I'm a con-woman.. God needs a *con-woman*?
- CATHERINE: Apparently, she does. (SAVANNA, *aside to audience, mouths: "She?"*) I assume you were very good at conning people?
- SAVANNA: The best. (She moves back to the pew and sits.)
- CATHERINE: Excellent. That's what your mission is. You have to work a con.
- SAVANNA: Easy as pie. Who's the mark?
- CATHERINE: It's a woman. Have you ever worked a con on a woman?
- SAVANNA: Certainly. Woman *are* harder to fool than men, but I can con anyone at all. Who is this woman?
- CATHERINE: A very powerful woman. One who is as ruthless as she is brilliant. One who does not care what happens to anything or anybody along the way, as long as she gets what she is after. She is not afraid to eliminate whoever she has to eliminate to get what she wants. Her name is Pandora Addington.
- SAVANNA: Even her name sounds ominous. Will I be in any danger?
- CATHERINE: She can't hurt you physically. You're already dead, remember? You'll have to be careful, though. She can spot a con a mile away.
- SAVANNA: Not if I run it.
- CATHERINE: I'm glad you have such confidence in yourself. You're going to need it. I want you to understand that there's a lot riding on this mission, If you fail, God may very well be forced to bring the curtain down on all of Creation. I'm talking The Apocalypse.
- SAVANNA: This sounds like a big deal.
- CATHERINE: Yes. Of course it is. (With her hands on her hips, annoyed) The Apocalypse is a *very* "big deal!" Trust me.
- SAVANNA: So, what's in it for me?
- CATHERINE: I beg your pardon.

SAVANNA: Just what I said: What’s in this deal for me? I don’t work for free, you know.

CATHERINE: Do you realize that your immortal soul is in jeopardy at this very moment?

SAVANNA: Yes. I got that impression from the big guy over there. *(Points to St. Peter.)*

CATHERINE: If you succeed, your soul will be “out of jeopardy.” You’ll get a pass through the Pearly Gates.

SAVANNA: Pearls? Ooo! I love pearls.

CATHERINE: You can’t steal these pearls!

SAVANNA: Too bad. *(Thinks about it for a few beats, with her chin in her hand. Then she looks up, and nods her head.)* Okay. I’ll take the job. So, where is this con going down?

CATHERINE: You’ll be returning to Earth to accomplish your mission.

SAVANNA: Well, then, I guess I will need my shoes, won’t I? *(She puts her high heels on over the next few lines.)* So where on Earth are you sending me?

CATHERINE: *We*, actually. I’m going with you. *(SAVANNA looks surprised.)* This is a big task. God thought you could use a little help. That’s what I’ll be along for.

SAVANNA: *(Skeptically)* Uh huh. And, just incidentally, you’ll be keeping an eye on me, too. Right?

CATHERINE: Well, you’ll be in your natural environment back on Earth. I just want to make sure you don’t get distracted. This mission is too vital to fail.

SAVANNA: Yeah, I got that part. Where did you say we are going?

CATHERINE: I didn’t, yet We shall be travelling to the original site of the Garden of Eden.

SAVANNA: Really! That’s somewhere in the middle-east, isn’t it?

CATHERINE: No. Actually It’s in Brooklyn. I believe the area is called Canarsie now.

SAVANNA: The Garden of Eden – the one with the apple tree and everything – was in *Canarsie*?

CATHERINE: Well, it wasn’t Canarsie back then. It was just a nice little lush garden spot with ponds and streams, and a short walk to the beach. By the time modern-day people settled there, the Garden was long gone. As soon as the original two residents got kicked out, God just pulled up everything and put it all into

storage. She got a little sentimental, though, and she left her favorite piece of the Garden there –the fountain of youth.

SAVANNA: I thought that was supposed to be in Florida.

CATHERINE: Trust me. It is not. If it were, you'd find a lot fewer little old ladies playing bingo down there.

SAVANNA: So, it's still in Canarsie?

CATHERINE: Yes. God built a house around it to protect it. She called it "Eden House."

SAVANNA: How original. So, this house we are going to save was there since the dawn of history?

CATHERINE: In one form or another. It started out as a stone hut, but a very comfortable one. God takes care of Her own. When the first Native-Americans appeared on the scene, it became a wigwam so that it would fit in. And then later a log cabin when European settlers arrived. It became what you see now sometime in the eighteenth Century.

SAVANNA: Who made all those changes to Eden House?

CATHERINE: Nobody, actually. When the house needed to change, it just...well...just *did*." It can do a lot of other things on its own. You'll see.

SAVANNA: Does anyone live there?

CATHERINE: Yes. Two lovely ladies, Madeline and Leila. They've been there from the beginning.

SAVANNA: The same people –since the dawn of history?

CATHERINE: Yes. They were daughters of Eve. She had them long after Cain and Abel.

SAVANNA: Get out!

CATHERINE: No. Really. There's no mention of them in the Bible, of course. God did a little judicious editing to keep everything secret.

SAVANNA: They must be ancient!

CATHERINE: Well, they take a little sip from the fountain every once in a while. Keeps away the wrinkles.

SAVANNA: Interesting. So, this Pandora person is trying to get the home away from them?

CATHERINE: Exactly. She’s using “Eminent Domain.” She plans to turn the entire area in a mega-business and housing complex complete with a mall and a sports complex three times as big as Madison Square Garden.

SAVANNA: Does she know about the fountain?

CATHERINE: No! And we don’t want her to find out about it. That’s why you have to con her into giving up her plans to acquire the house. She be marketing the water like crazy if she found the fountain. And soon, the entire Earth would consist of twenty-somethings and nothing else. And if that isn’t cause for The Apocalypse, nothing is!

SAVANNA: And we’re the last hope for saving this “Eden House?”

CATHERINE: Actually, the next-to-last. The house is pretty good at defending itself.

SAVANNA: Huh?

CATHERINE: I’ll explain it to you when we get there. We’d better get started on our way. The clock is already running on our mission.

SAVANNA: Clock? I always assume that time had no meaning in the afterlife.

CATHERINE: Not at all. Time is of the utmost importance in Heaven. And, believe me, God’s a stickler for punctuality. Look at how precisely she timed the parting of the Red Sea. It had to stay open just long enough for the Israelites to cross, and then close when the Egyptian army was right in the middle of it. If the timing was off, even by a few minutes – bang! No more Moses, no Ten Commandments, no Promised Land. And the Bible would have ended with Genesis.

SAVANNA: And I suppose Cecil B. DeMille would have been stuck producing spaghetti westerns.

SAINT PETER: *(Suddenly)* Ah ha! I’ve won!

SAVANNA: *(To CATHERINE)* Don’t tell me he’s playing “Candy Crush.”

CATHERINE: No. We have our own Heavenly sports leagues up here. St. Peter like to play “Phantasm Baseball.” *(To St. Peter)* Nice going, Pete! How is my team doing?

SAINT PETER: Not so good. Your team seems to be caught up in a scandal. I didn’t know you could deflate baseballs.

(Suddenly, LITTLE ELVIS ENTERS from below St. Peter’s desk. He is a strange creature, indeed. He is a cherub, complete with wings and halo; however, he is wearing a white “Elvis” costume. He is carrying a huge – at

least one foot diameter – gold pocket watch in front of him.[NOTE: A cardboard cut-out would work nicely.])

- LITTLE ELVIS: It's late! It's late! *(He runs up to CATHERINE and SAVANNA, shows them the watch.)* It's late! It's late! You have to start your mission!
- CATHERINE: I know. I know. We were just getting under way.
- LITTLE ELVIS: *(Ala ELVIS)* Thank you. Thank you very much. *(He then starts yelling "It's late, It's late!" again, and he EXITS Up Left through the curtain.)*
- SAVANNA: Who, or *what* was that?
- CATHERINE: That's our own "Little Elvis."
- SAVANNA: I'll say little! I thought he was much taller than that.
- CATHERINE: Oh, he's not the original. Elvis does happen to be up here with us, actually – the big hunk! But Little Elvis is a cherub who happens to be our in-house Elvis impersonator. .It's his sort-of hobby.
- SAVANNA: The real Elvis doesn't get angry?
- CATHERINE: Nah. He says the little guy makes him laugh.
- SAVANNA: What's with the pocket watch thing?
- CATHERINE: I told you God was a stickler for timing. She appointed him Heaven's Official Timekeeper. He really took to the job.
- SAVANNA: Obviously. The watch looks familiar, somehow.
- CATHERINE: That's because a long time ago, Walt Disney had a near Death Experience, and during the three minutes he was in Heaven, he ran across Little Elvis. He used the idea in his "Alice In Wonderland" cartoon.
- SAVANNA: Interesting. You know, for a con like this, I'm going to need a lot of props.
- CATHERINE: The Lord will provide, dear. Just think about anything you need, and before you even finish thinking about it, it will be there.
- SAVANNA: Cool. Boy that would have been so useful in Vegas!
- CATHERINE: I'm sure. All right, we really need to get going.
- SAVANNA: Now?

CATHERINE: *Right now. Come on. (She takes her hand and leads her toward the steps down to the auditorium) (To St. Peter, as she is walking) Pete, double down my bets for this week.*

SAINT PETER: Are you sure?

SAVANNA: I've got some inside information from two major leaguers who just died.

SAINT PETER: They passed through this office! *(He smacks himself in the head)* I should have hit them up for some info!

SAVANNA: *(To CATHERINE, as they descend the steps and head toward the back of the auditorium)* That's cheating. Did you really do that?

CATHERINE: *(Sotto voce)* Nah. I was just faking him out *(Indicating St. Peter.)*

SAVANNA: See! I told you men were easier to fool than women!

BLACKOUT

Perusal
Only FOR
NOT FOR
PRODUCTION

ACT I

Scene 2

SETTING: *The “Great Room” of Eden House. Eden House, in one form or another, has been at this location since the dawn of time. There are two wings on either side of the set, which create three entrances on either side (behind the upstage wing on either side, between the two wings on either side, and in front of the downstage wing on either side.)The will be identified as the UR, CR, DR, UL CL and DL wing entrance in the course of the play. There is no specific designation of where they lead to, because it changes according to the house’s whim. The steps leading down from the stage and into the auditorium are and additional exit from the room. There is a small sofa in the Up Right area, but moved far enough toward downstage to leave open access to the three wing openings on the Right side. There is a small bookcase along the upstage wall. It is filled to capacity with hardcover books. A furniture grouping of two armchairs with a small table between them is located Down Left. There is a pen on the table.*

AT RISE: The stage is dark. After two beats, the stage Right lights slowly comes up to about a third of full lighting, enough to see persons and objects on the Right side of the stage, but still dark enough so that a tight beam of light, which suddenly appears two beats later can clearly be distinguished . The beam of light flits back and forth across the stage. A jingling sound (ala “Tinkerbelle” in productions of “*Peter Pan*”) accompanies this flitting. After about five beats of flitting and jingling, the beam settles on the top of the sofa, next to MADELINE, a middle-aged lady dressed in an old-fashioned c.1940’s full length dress, who is seated on the sofa. She is knitting. There is a large snakeskin knitting bag alongside the sofa.*(Lights Right come up higher, but not so much that we can’t see the beam of light.)* The jingling gets louder, so as to catch her attention.

MADLINE: Oh, my. Who do we have today? *(more jingling, and flitting around in response to her question.)* Calista! How nice of you to visit! It’s been so long since I’ve seen you! How are things in Heaven? *(more jingling and flitting around)* Yes, yes, I know - eternal bliss that never changes there. I was just making conversation. Would you do me a favor, dear? Please materialize. All that flitting around is getting me dizzy. *(With one final jingle, the light darts into one of the Left wings. A few seconds later, CALISTA ENTERS from that wing. She is dressed in angelic robes and has wings and a halo. As soon as the light vanishes into the wings, the stage lights come up full. We can now see LEILA, who appears to be younger than MADELINE, and who is dressed in contemporary clothing. She is seated in one of the armchairs. She is reading a book.)*

CALISTA: Madeline, Leila - how good to see you again. It has been a while, hasn’t it?

- LEILA: *(Rises, moves upstage to them.)* Certainly. At least twenty years. I was wondering if you'd forgotten us.
- CALISTA: How could I ever forget you, dear Leila? Has it really been twenty years? You know neither one of you have changed one bit!
- MADLINE: *(She has put down her knitting, and she rises to meet CALISTA)* Well, we take a swig from that old fountain of youth every couple of years. Does wonder for the wrinkles. *(She looks at her wristwatch)* Say, aren't you arriving a little late in the day? It's almost our bedtime.)
- CALISTA: I wanted to see "Dancing With the Stars" before I left Heaven.
- MADLINE: I wouldn't think a show like that would interest you.
- CALISTA: I like to see all those movie stars while they're still alive. So few of them actually make it to Heaven when they die. Of course, if we angels want to dance with the stars, we *really* dance with the stars. The other day I was waltzing around a star from ten galaxies away. Did you know stars shine twice as brightly when an angel dances around them?
- MADLINE: No, I didn't. Will you be staying for a while? If so, you can use one of the rooms on the third floor. I reserve all of them for angelic visitors.
- CALISTA: Thank you. I will.
- LEILA: Who are you going to be this time?
- CALISTA: Snow White. She's always been one of my favorites.
- LEILA: Snow White again? I thought you'd be tired of that by now. How many times have you become Snow White – three or four times in the last fifty years, I'd guess?
- CALISTA: Six, actually. I told you she was one of my favorites. I just love when she sings into the well and gets an echo of her own voice. *(She spreads her arms out and sings: "Ah-ha-ha-ha-ha" as Snow White did in the movie.)*
- MADLINE: Oh, you do that so well!

(Suddenly an echo[with a little reverb] is heard repeating her : "Ah-ha-ha-ha-ha" CALISTA looks surprised.)
- LEILA: Aha! The house is playing right along with you!
- CALISTA: Oh, this sweet, lovely house! Is it really alive.
- LEILA: In a manner of speaking. Most of the time, it's just a plain old house. But once in a while, it likes to make its presence known.
- MADLINE: And of course, it will come to our defense if necessary.

CALISTA: How wonderful! Well, I'll be getting off to my room. I can't wait to change into Snow White. Which way do I go?

LEILA: Pick any hallway you wish. The house moves them around regularly. You'll find that any one you take will lead you directly to your room.

CALISTA: Wonderful! *(She EXITS through a wing on the left side.)*

(Shortly after she exits, a few measures of the opening of the "Hallelujah Chorus" is heard. It repeats after a few beats. Both ladies look up at this.)

MADLINE: Ah! The hot line. I guess they got our SOS.

LEILA: I'll get it. *(She quickly moves to the bookcase, removes a book, and opens it. The book is hollowed out, and a bright red cordless phone is in the hollowed out area. She takes the phone out of the book, puts the book down on the bookcase and puts the phone to her ear.)*

MADLINE: *(As LEILA is moving to the bookcase.)* Just love that ringtone!

LEILA: *(On phone)* Hello. This is Leila... Yes, Madeline is in the room also. I assume you got our call for help. ... Yes, the house is in extreme danger. Pandora Addington is determined to buy it. Have you heard of her?... You have. Then you know why the house is in so much danger. She has a reputation for getting whatever she wants...Really?...That's wonderful! Bye. *(She puts the phone back into the hollowed out book, and returns the book to the bookshelf.) (To MADLINE)* They said that help is on the way.

MADLINE: Did they say what kind of help?

LEILA: No, actually. But what are you worried about? The help is coming from Heaven.

MADLINE: True. *(A doorbell sound)* Well, that was fast.

LEILA: I'll get the door.

MADLINE: Any idea where the house put the hallway to the front door today?

LEILA: I'm not sure, but I'll try this one. *(She EXITS through the CR wing opening.)*

(A few beats after she exits, SAVANNA and CATHERINE ENTER from the UL wing opening. They are dressed the same as in Scene 1.)

CATHERINE: Hi, Madeline! Long time, no see.

MADLINE: Catherine! What has it been, seventy years or so?

CATHERINE: Has it been that long? I suppose it has. I was here on vacation, then, though. This time it's business. We're going to save Eden House for you! This is my partner, Savanna, by the way.

MADELINE: *(Looks SAVANNA over carefully [remember, she is still "dressed to kill" – fish net stockings and all.]) (Tentatively) Er, hello, Savanna. You are Catherine's partner?*

SAVANNA: Yes.

MADELINE: *(To CATHERINE) Catherine, is there something you've never told me?*

CATHERINE: *(With pursed lips) She's recently deceased, Madeline. She was dressed in these clothes when she died. They were her working clothes.*

MADELINE: What did she die of – exhaustion?

SAVANNA: *(Annoyed) I was a con-artist! And I worked in Las Vegas.*

MADELINE: I see. I'm so sorry. I didn't intend to insult you. It's just that, well, some parts of your outfit, particularly the stockings, are the same as the clothes worn by your adversary, Pandora Addington.

SAVANNA: Oh, really. I thought she was some sort of super business executive. I would have thought she'd wear pants suits.

MADELINE: Dear, she's running a business, not running for president.

CATHERINE: Where's Leila, by the way?

MADELINE: She went to answer the doorbell you just rang.

SAVANNA: Really? I didn't see her.

MADELINE: I'm not surprised. She obviously went down the wrong hallway.

SAVANNA: *(Astonished) Excuse me? ... Catherine said the two of you have been living here since the dawn of history.*

MADELINE: Yes. Give or take a century.

SAVANNA: And she *still* doesn't know which hallway leads to the front door?

MADELINE: Actually, she's pretty good at guessing. She gets it right most of the time. I'm wrong so often, I've given up answering the doorbell.

SAVANNA: Couldn't you leave a trail of breadcrumbs or something?

CATHERINE: It wouldn't do any good. Remember me telling you that the house could defend itself?

SAVANNA: I do.

CATHERINE: This is one of its defenses. It keeps changing the destination of its hallways. To an invader, it would be like being in a labyrinth that never ends. It's also, incidentally, a great source of amusement to the house. It loves playing games like that with Madeline and Leila.

SAVANNA: The house is alive?

MADELINE: *(Rises, moves to them.)* In a manner of speaking, yes, dear. But, of course, we get along wonderfully with Eden House. It plays that hallway switching game with us all the time, but never for too long. It won't let us stay lost for any length of time, just long enough for a good laugh. In fact, at times, I could hear chuckling coming from the walls.

CATHERINE: If the house can defend itself, why are we needed here?

MADELINE: Pandora wants to acquire this house so that she could demolish it to make way for her mega-complex of skyscrapers. And I'm afraid there's no defense against a bulldozer.

CATHERINE: Oh, dear.

MADELINE: She's bought up all the surrounding pieces of property. We're the only holdout. And she's determined to get this house. She's trying to get the government to use eminent domain.

CATHERINE: *(Shudders)* Ugh. Dreadful situation. Well, never fear. We're on the job now.

MADELINE: What are you planning to do?

CATHERINE: That'll be up to Savanna. She'll find a way to trick Pandora. She's a consummate con-artist.

SAVANNA: *The consummate con-artist!* I'm the best there ever was.

MADELINE: *(To Savanna)* You're going to try to con *Pandora*?

SAVANNA: Try and *succeed!* As I said, I'm the best in the business.

MADELINE: If you're so good, how is it you died so young? Did your final con go wrong?

SAVANNA: Oh, no. It was working perfectly, but unfortunately, he had a gun. And there also is no defense against a point blank bullet to the heart.

MADELINE: People do use bullet-proof vests, you know.

SAVANNA: I doubt I could hide it under these clothes! *(She strikes a sexy pose.)*

MADELINE: I see. I hope you know that on this job, you'll be up against one of the craftiest villainesses in the world. There's even a rumor that she is demon spawn. I don't think anybody's ever been able to con her.

SAVANNA: Until I came along.

MADELINE: Well, I hope you're as good as you claim to be. We and Eden House are counting on you.

SAVANNA: Don't worry. It's in the bag!

(A faint cry of "Hooray!" is heard coming from the wings.. [NOTE: If possible, sound should have a ghostly quality. From this point on in the play, this voice will be identified as (HOUSE) in the script.]

What's that?

MADELINE: I told you that sometimes you can hear the walls laugh. Apparently, you can also hear them cheer. The house is rooting for you. *(She calls out to the wings)* Leila is going to help also. Could you direct her to us, please?

(Suddenly, LEILA ENTERS from the DR wing. CATHERINE and SAVANNA are position so that LEILA does not see them when she enters.)

LEILA: That was fast. I thought housie was going to play "hide and seek" with me for longer than that.

MADELINE: I'm sure he would have, dear, but I just told him that you were going to help save him from Pandora.

LEILA: I am?

CATHERINE: Sure, Leila. We've worked together quite a bit over the years. Remember? It'll be just like old times!

LEILA: *(Turning to CATHERINE; surprised to see here.)* Oh, Catherine. You're here. I didn't see you. *(She looks at SAVANNA.)* Or you. *(A beat)* Who are you?

SAVANNA: My name is Savanna. The Boss thought my special talents would be useful on this mission.

LEILA: Okay. What is it you do? *(Seeing how she is dressed)* Although, I'm almost afraid to ask.

MADELINE: She’s a con-artist! Now, isn’t that just adorable?

LEILA: Perhaps. But this is serious business, here, Madeline. We don’t need adorable; we need capable. *(To SAVANNA)* Are you capable of going up against Pandora Addington and coming out alive?

SAVANNA: I’m already dead. Otherwise, I wouldn’t be here. But you can bet the farm on me succeeding. I’m the best there is.

LEILA: Actually, *we are* betting the farm, so to speak. *(Pensive)* Hmm, Savanna, you say. I don’t recall hearing your name in any newscasts about big-time cons. Have you done anything notable?

SAVANNA: The best con jobs happen without anybody realizing who did it. Do you recall hearing about what happened to Darcy Dinklehoffer?

LEILA: Dinklehoffer? Do you mean that nerdy Internet guy who made all that money on the Internet? The one who invented that social networking site, *BlabberBook*. He made millions overnight with it.

SAVANNA: And he lost it just as fast. It all ended up in *my* bank account. I worked one of my best cons on that little geek. It involved a tractor trailer, two hookers, and a rhinoceros in heat.

LEILA: Wow! You were responsible for that? I’m impressed. But Pandora Addington is no nerdy geek. No one has ever been able to con her. And many have tried. I’ve heard that all of them now, er... sleep with the fishes. She’s the most vicious businesswoman there ever was. And she has the sharpest mind in creation.

SAVANNA: The second sharpest. You just watch.

LEILA: *(Excited)* Okay. I’m in! So, what’s the plan?

SAVANNA: I haven’t thought one up, yet.

LEILA: *(Deflated, as a balloon!)* You...you *haven’t* thought...

SAVANNA: I will. I will. Don’t worry.

(HOUSE) *(A faint moan)*

MADELINE: Sounds like you’ve disappointed the house, too

CATHERINE: Oh, ye of little faith! Look, God, herself, chose Savanna for this mission. Do you doubt Her judgement?

LEILA: Well, no, but...

CATHERINE: No butts about it. Savanna is going to come up with a *super-con* to bamboozle Pandora! *(To SAVANNA, now with a touch of doubt in her voice)* Er, you *are*, aren't you?

SAVANNA: Count on it, sweetie. I've never failed...well, maybe once. *(She makes a gun with her downstage hand and pretends to fire it.)* But that was no fair. He used a gun

LEILA: And you don't think Pandora will hesitate to use a gun?

SAVANNA: Dead already, remember?

LEILA: Yeah, but Madeline and I aren't!

SAVANNA: *Can* you two die? You've been alive for what - tens of thousands of years, haven't you?

LEILA: We have. Actually, I doubt that God would allow any harm to come to us.

SAVANNA: Are you really daughters of Adam and Eve?

MADELINE: Oh, yes. We were her favorites, *(To Leila)* weren't we dear?

LEILA: Well, Mom always liked you best.

MADELINE: Oh, posh! She let you have the family heirloom, didn't she?

SAVANNA: There's a family heirloom from Adam and Eve! How exciting! What was it?

MADELINE: Dad's first fig leaf. She had it bronzed.

SAVANNA: Wow! How incredible! What was the world like back then?

LEILA: Wonderful. There were no lawyers, developers or politicians.

MADELINE: And no telephone robocalls! The garden was so lovely. Except for that pesky old serpent.

SAVANNA: The same serpent who tricked your parents into eating that apple?

MADELINE: Yep. But I got even with that sucker. Nailed his butt! *(She quickly moves back to sofa,, picks up the knitting bag, show it to Savanna.)* See. 100% pure snakeskin!

(After audience laugh, LITTLE ELVIS suddenly ENTERS from a wing. He still has his clock.)

LITTLE ELVIS: It's late! It's late!

MADLINE: Well, well. Little Elvis. You're here, too! I haven't seen you in a dog's age. Make that a *hound dog's* age.

LEILA: Good Grief! You're not going to sing again, are you? The last time you were here, all the neighborhood dog's started howling!

LITTLE ELVIS: Hey! Don't Be Cruel! God thought I could help you save the house.

LEILA: *(Sarcastic)* What are you going to do – sing “Heartbreak Hotel” while they're knocking it down?

LITTLE ELVIS: I could be your Good Luck Charm.

LEILA: Okay. But don't get in the way, or we'll Return To Sender.

MADLINE: Well, Little Elvis is right about one thing...*(Looks at her wrist watch)* It is getting late. We all really should be getting to bed.

CATHERINE: Savanna and I don't need to sleep. We're...

MADLINE: ...dead. I know. I thought you might like to relax a little. Take a load off, as it were.

CATHERINE: That would probably be nice. Will we be able to get to our rooms, or is the house going to lead us on a merry chase all night?

MADLINE: *(Calling out to the wings)* Housie, Leila and I need to get our rest, and Catherine and Savanna need to relax a bit before getting to work on a scheme to fool Pandora and save you.

(Suddenly, an “Oo-ee-gah” horn [or a train whistle if the horn sound effect isn't available] sounds twice, and a red light blinks over the DL wing entrance.)

Ah, there we go! *(To the wings)* Thank you housie! *(To all)* This way, folks.

LEILA: *(To Little Elvis)* We've got a special room we keep for you; it's sound proofed!

LITTLE ELVIS: *(ala Elvis)* Thank you. Thank you very much.

(All EXIT through DL wing. The stage is empty for about four or five beats, then suddenly PANDORA ENTERS from UL wing. She is an extremely attractive woman dressed remarkably similar to SAVANNA. She wears high-heeled boots rather than high-heeled shoes, however. She also has sunglasses on. She appears somewhat disheveled, and there is spider webbing all over her.)

PANDORA: *(Slowly takes off her sunglasses, looks around the room, then calls back into the wing she ENTERED from.)* Get out here, Barkley! I finally found a room!

(BARKLEY ENTERS. He is PANDORA's assistant (read flunky) BARKLEY also has spider webs hanging from his body. He stumbles a bit as he enters, and then rights himself)

BARKLEY: It's about time. We've been wandering through those halls for *(Looks at wristwatch)* over six hours. You're should pay me overtime!

PANDORA: *(Grabs him by the collar, pulls him eye to eye with her)* Overtime! You little weasel! I'm not going to pay you at all! You get paid to do work, not walk through halls.

BARKLEY: *You were walking with me.*

PANDORA: That's different. I'm the boss! *(Lets him go, and pulls at the spider webs on herself.)* And get these damned spider webs off me!

BARKLEY: *(As he does, and also removes them from himself).* I guess we shouldn't have walked down that dark hall that looked like cave walls. *(He spots something on her shoulder, and gingerly removes it.)* Oh, yuck!

PANDORA: What? What did you take off my shoulder?

BARKLEY: *(Looking at it)* I think it's bat guano.

PANDORA: Get rid of it, you jerk! It's a good thing bats didn't get into my hair. You've got some nerve leading me into a cave with bats in it!

BARKLEY: *(As he moves to bookcase, removes a book from a shelf, opens it to a random page, wipes his hand on that page, slams the book closed and replaces it on the bookcase shelf.)* Me? I was following you.

PANDORA: Well, next time, bring a GPS!

BARKLEY: This house is on a small piece of property – 50 by 100 at best. How could it have so many hallways...*and caves* ...in it?

PANDORA: I don't know, but I'll tell you one thing. I'm going to personally drive the bulldozer that knocks it down!

(SAVANNA and CATHERINE suddenly ENTER from CL wing. They are wearing full-length robes tied in the middle. SAVANNA has the outfit she began the show in under the robe.)

SAVANNA: Excuse me. Who are you people, and what are you doing here?

- CATHERINE: We're trying to get some rest. Whoever you are, if you must come calling, can't you do it at a decent hour?
- PANDORA: *(Slowly, but with vehemence)* I am Pandora Addington. *(There is a moment of silence as PANDORRA and SAVANNA look each other in the eye.)* And I did arrive here at a "decent hour." I have been wandering through these confounded hallways for the past six hours!
- CATHERINE: For Heaven's sake, if you wanted a tour, you should have called ahead. I'm sure we could have arranged it.
- PANDORA: I don't want a damned tour of this damned house! I'm going to knock it down, and in doing so I shall take 100% pure, unadulterated, unimaginable pleasure!
- CATHERINE: *(Intentionally acting as if she doesn't know what is going on with Pandora, in order to add to her annoyance.)* Well, whatever turns you on, I guess. But what makes you think you are going to demolish Eden House? It's been here an awful long time.
- PANDORA: Trust me, dearie, it's not going to be here much longer! I have a court order of eminent domain. This property now belongs to me. And as soon as I can get my bulldozers here, this house is history!
- SAVANNA: *(Stepping forward, in her face)* Not going to happen. I represent Madeline and Leila, the rightful owners. They're sleeping now. Please do try to keep your voices down. You said you had some sort of order?
- PANDORA: Not just "some sort of order." I have an order from the Supreme Court of the State of New York! *(To BARKLEY)* Barkley, give her the court order.
- SAVANNA: *(Turns to the audience and mouths "Barkley?")*
- BARKLEY: *(Hands her the court order. It is contained in a piece of light blue paper that it is stapled to, as are most legal documents)* You've been served!
- SAVANNA: Let me look at this. *(She opens it. As she does, she takes a step or two upstage and turns away from them. As soon as her back is to them, she quickly and surreptitiously tucks the order inside her blouse and pulls out another document from inside her blouse. It is also stapled to blue paper. CATHERINE is in a position to see this switch, and she puts her hand to her mouth to suppress a giggle at it.)* Hmmmm. *(As she turns back to them)* What is it you're going to serve me – chicken chow mein or moo goo gai pan?
- PANDORA: *(Annoyed)* What are you talking about?

- SAVANNA: Why, this isn't a court order at all. *(Shows her the document. It is a Chinese take-out menu stapled inside the blue paper)* Apparently, it's a Chinese take-out menu.
- PANDORA: *(To BARKLEY, viciously)* You idiot! How can you make such a boneheaded mistake? I'll demote you to third-class go-fer!
- BARKLEY: I put that order together myself. And I assure you, it *was* the court order.
- PANDORA: *(Grabs the menu from SAVANNA, and hits BARKLEY over the head with it, hitting him once for each word she says.)* Well, it isn't now, is it! *(To SAVANNA, almost spitting out the words)* I shall be back. And I *will* have that court order with me!
- CATHERINE: Not tonight, I hope. We were all in bed, you know, when you started shouting and waking the entire household up.
- PANDORA: There's more of you here?
- CATHERINE: Oh, lots more.
- SAVANNA: There's a lot more of me, too. *(She opens her bathrobe and lets it slip off her. PANDORA is surprised that she and SAVANNA are dressed almost identically. They approach each other, and then with eyes locked together, they circle each other. PANDORA is livid and practically hissing.)*
- PANDORA: Who do you think you are?
- SAVANNA: I don't know. Who do you think *you* are?
- PANDORA: Oh, you will find out, dearie. You *will* find out!
- SAVANNA: And my little dog, too? *Laughs)*
- PANDORA: You think you can mock me, do you? *(Spreads her arms and hands out as if casting a magic spell. Thunder is heard and the lights flicker. CATHERINE and SAVANNA are taken back a step.)*
- CATHERINE: So, it's true! It's always been rumored that you were demon-spawn. Now, I see that you actually are!
- PANDORA: Oh, yes. Yes, indeed. My father was an incubus. Do you know what that is?
- CATHERINE: Certainly. I know quite a few of them, actually. Nasty little things. They manage to sneak into Heaven every once in a while. I've kicked several incubus butts over the years.. It gives me great pleasure tossing them down the chasm back to Hell, where they belong.

PANDORA: *(A beat, then)* So, you’re an angel, are you?

CATHERINE: No. Just one of the saved.

PANDORA: And this one? *(Indicated SAVANNA)*

SAVANNA: Not quite saved, yet, but I’m working on it.

PANDORA: Really. You should come work for me, then. You’ll never be saved that way, but you *will be* awfully rich!

SAVANNA: I’ll keep your offer in mind.

PANDORA: See that you do.

BARKLEY: I wouldn’t trust her.

PANDORA: Oh, you wouldn’t, would you? I’ll bet she’d never mistake a court order for a take-out menu!

(Suddenly, offstage, the sound of a young girl singing “Ah-ha-ha-ha-ha, Ah-ha-ha-ha-ha,” ala Snow White singing into the well in the Disney movie, is heard.)

CATHERINE: Oh dear, I think now you’ve done it!

PANDORA: Done what?

CATHERINE: Awakened one of the guests.

(CALISTA ENTERS from a wing. She is no longer in angelic robes. The halo and wings are also gone. She is dressed as “Snow White,” She strikes a pose and once again sings “Ah-ha-ha-ha-ha”)

PANDORA: This is a guest – Snow White?

CATHERINE: Not really. She’s just pretending to be Snow White. She *is* an angel, by the way.

PANDORA: An angel, eh? I *thought* I smelled something.

CALISTA: *(Acting as Snow White)* Are you all going to play “Snow White” with me? You can be dwarfs! Catherine, you look tired to me. You can be “Sleepy.” *(To SAVANNA)* And you can be...*(seeing her outfit)* ..Oh, my goodness. I guess anything but “Bashful.” *(To BARKLEY)* “Dopey,” for sure. *(Moves to PANDORA)* And you... *(PANDORA hisses at her)*...definitely the Wicked Witch .Do you have a poison apple with you?

PANDORA: If I did, I’d cram it down your angelic throat!

CATHERINE: Now, now. Let’s play nice, kiddies.

PANDORA: I didn’t come here to play stupid games! I came to kick you all out of this damned house. I told you; I’m going to knock it down – personally! I’ll be back, and this time *I’ll* bring the court order. And I guarantee you that it will *not* be a take-out menu! *(To BARKLEY)* Let’s get out of here.

BARKLEY: Er, Miss Addington, do you have any idea which way is “out?”

PANDORA: The last hall we came through had a sign on the wall. It said “ This way to the Mud Room.” And it was pointing there....*(She points down the UL wing.)* Mud rooms always have a door to the outside. Let’s go.
(PANDORA and BARKLEY EXIT through UL wing.)

SAVANNA: *(To CATHERINE)* Will the house let them out through the mud room?

CATHERINE: Eventually. I’ve been here before. This house has a special mud room for unwelcomed guests, you see. The floor looks like one where people might scrape mud from their shoes, but actually it is a big *puddle* of mud, six foot deep!

PANDORA: *(Offstage)* What the...! *(A huge splash is heard.)* Ahhh! (Blub, blub)

(CALISTA moves to Down Center, faces the audience, spreads her arms out and once again sings: “Ah-ha-ha-ha-ha”

BLACKOUT
CURTAIN