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Does Anyone Really Know What’s Going on Upstairs?

A Short Play

by

Jill Elaine Hughes

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Does Anyone Know What’s Really Going on Upstairs?

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CHARACTERS

GOD; *a wise and powerful woman of any age/type*

BUDDHA; *a plump, jolly man of any age/type*

CONFUCIUS; *a severe, uptight man, preferably Asian but can be of any age/type speaking in a strong Chinese accent*

VIRGIN MARY; *a young, beautiful woman*

LUCIFER; *a sultry, voluptuous woman*

SETTING

Heaven; a poker game in progress

ETC

EARLY PRODUCTION HISTORY:

First produced at “Around the Coyote Festival, Chicago, IL, 2007.

PRODUCTION NOTE:

*All roles should be costumed such that it is immediately obvious to the audience who characters represent. Please note that this play works especially well with an **all-female cast** with male roles done in female “drag”.*

Does Anyone Know What’s Really Going on Upstairs? by Jill Elaine Hughes

(AT RISE: GOD is sitting at a card table in heaven with BUDDHA, CONFUCIUS, and the VIRGIN MARY. They are ALL playing poker; GOD is the dealer.)

GOD

All right, who’s in?

CONFUCIUS

Pot getting too big for me.

BUDDHA

The pot is too big for everyone. You know why? Because everyone is too attached to money. Lose attachment; you don’t care if you lose money! Like me.

VIRGIN MARY

Does that mean you don’t care if you win, either?

BUDDHA

No. I care if I win. I care if I lose. I care about everything, equally. That is compassion.

GOD

You are so full of shit, Buddha. Confucius, you in or out?

CONFUCIUS

I am out.

VIRGIN MARY

Well, are you going to play any more tonight or are you just gonna leave?

CONFUCIUS

I watch. Wise men always watch, never gamble.

VIRGIN MARY

Well, I’m in for at least a hundred grand a hand.

BUDDHA

Oh, wow. The Blessed Virgin is ready to play tonight. How did you get so much cash?

VIRGIN MARY

Last week was Assumption. My holy day. The Catholics send me millions every Assumption. It’s all the offering candles, you know. Each candle costs ‘em ten bucks, the suckers. Deal ‘er out, God, ‘cause I got money to burn tonight.

GOD

Mary, if I had known from the get-go that you were gonna end up getting all the cash I never would have impregnated you. I don’t get *my* own holy day.

BUDDHA

You are God. Every day is holy to you.

GOD

Yeah, a lot of good that does. There’s just too much of me to go around, that’s my problem. Haven’t you ever studied economics? Supply and demand. Too much supply, demand goes down, then you’re so abundant nobody’s willing to pay jack shit for you. I’m worthless.

BUDDHA

God, you’re having that problem with too much attachment to the material world again. This is why you are suffering.

GOD

I am suffering because I am broke. The only money I get is what I win at poker from you people. Nobody ever buys candles for me. They buy them for my son, they buy them for the broad I knocked up, they buy them for a bunch of lunatic mortal saints, they even buy them for that druggie loser, the Holy Spirit. But do they buy any for me? No. And all the cash offerings that don’t go to all the other guys just end up going to the frigging Pope. The Jews don’t even send me money anymore, and they’re my goddamn chosen people!

CONFUCIUS

You know why you have no money, God? You are woman. Women not keeper of money in household. Man keeper of money. Woman keeper of children and home. This is good fortune. This is way to wise happiness.

VIRGIN MARY

Bullshit, Confucius. I’m a woman, and I’m rolling in it. How do you explain that?

BUDDHA

Just deal the cards. You all need to forget about money. Concentrate more on nirvana.

GOD

All right, Buddha, but you better have real money to bet with tonight. None of that bowls of rice and incense crap you tried to pull last week.

BUDDHA

Not to worry. Just had Amida Butsu Bodhisattva holiday in Japan last weekend. They sent me billions. Toyota even sent me a car.

CONFUCIUS

Nobody ever send me a car.

GOD

That’s because China doesn’t make cars, dumbass. Maybe you need to get yourself a new country. Okay, deuces and one-eyed jacks are wild, minimum bet is a hundred grand, minimum ante raise is a thousand.

(GOD deals the cards. ALL take poker hands and ante up except CONFUCIUS, who sulks.)

VIRGIN MARY

You sure you in for that much, God?

GOD

Saint Peter floated me a loan. It’s cool.

BUDDHA

A loan, eh? Then I raise you one million.

VIRGIN MARY

I see your raise, and I raise you three million, for a grand total of *four* million. Match it up, God.

GOD

Four million! What the hell? I haven’t got that kind of cash!

CONFUCIUS

Women should not have that much money. Very bad fortune!

VIRGIN MARY AND GOD

Shut up, Confucius.

BUDDHA

So four million’s too rich for you, Almighty God? You are having problems with attachment again.

VIRGIN MARY

Do you fold?

GOD

No, I don’t fold. I’m in. I’m good for it.

VIRGIN MARY

Yeah, that’s what you said last time. You still owe me for that, too. You better pay up by next week, otherwise I’ll have my son come and break your legs.

GOD

He’s my son too, you know. He’s not gonna come and break my legs.

VIRGIN MARY

I don’t know—he’s still pretty pissed off about that whole crucifixion thing.

GOD

Okay, fine, I’ll pay up. And count me in on this hand. Just give me a sec, okay? I’m gonna have to make some other payment arrangements.

(GOD takes out a cell phone and dials.)

CONFUCIUS

Why everybody get to have cell phone but me?

BUDDHA

Maybe because China doesn’t make cell phones. You should really come to Japan more often. Talk to Sony. I can introduce you.

(GOD flips her phone shut in frustration.)

GOD

Why the hell does Lucifer never answer the phone? I always get her voicemail.

(Enter LUCIFER.)

LUCIFER

You rang?

GOD

Yeah. Um, I was kind of wondering—

LUCIFER

You need a loan.

GOD

Yeah.

LUCIFER

But of course. How much?

GOD

Five million, give or take. And I’ll need flexible repayment terms.

LUCIFER

Can do. But for that much money I’ll need some collateral.

GOD

What kind of collateral?

LUCIFER

The next five million souls born on Earth ought to do it. Only a dollar a soul. I think that’s a bargain.

GOD

Can I buy the souls back if I pay off the loan early?

LUCIFER

Only if you pay it back in full within the next three days, plus all accrued interest. Otherwise, those souls are all mine.

VIRGIN MARY

I might be able to help buy them back if you can’t, God. They love me down there, after all. I’m appearing on five different overpasses next week.

CONFUCIUS

All you women, you need go back to kitchen. Stop messing around with money and soul affair. Kitchen and cooking bring woman wisdom.

LUCIFER

What the hell is Confucius doing up here? You know you’re not supposed to leave your quarters without my permission. Get back downstairs.

CONFUCIUS

Yes, oh Great and Powerful Master.

(CONFUCIUS exits.)

GOD

Now Mary, if I were to let you buy those souls back for me, then I’d have to give you more privileges both up here and on Earth than you already have. And frankly, I’m not comfortable with that. I’d rather take my chances on winning back my money.

LUCIFER

A bit of a gambling problem there, Yahweh? I could help you out with that, too. For a price.

GOD

No thanks, Lucifer. I’ll call you when I can pay you back.

LUCIFER

All right. And remember, my door is *always* open.

(LUCIFER exits.)

BUDDHA

Okay, enough dilly-dallying. I call. Everybody show your cards.

VIRGIN MARY

Full house. Aces high.

BUDDHA

Oh yeah? Straight flush. All the Japanese sent me their luck, too.

GOD

Royal flush. That beats everything. Fork it over, folks.

VIRGIN MARY

What? How the hell did you get a royal flush? I thought I—

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes