

# A Letter From the Devil

by Robert Myers

Dear God,

This is probably the hardest letter I have ever had to write, which, when you consider some of the other things I've written—*Wealth of Nations*, *The Treaty of Versailles*, *The Book of Mormon*, Spiro Agnew's 1972 campaign speeches, just to mention a few—is saying a lot.

First, I'd like you to know that in spite of our little differences over the years, I certainly wouldn't be where I am today if it weren't for you. We've had some wonderful times together that I know I'll never forget. It seems like only yesterday we had our little fun with Job, and remember all those times we found out we were *both* working for the CIA?

Anyway, since we've been involved for as long as we have, I know I can be straightforward. I've decided to leave New York, permanently. I know this is all sort of sudden, and it's not as though I don't feel some personal attachment to the place. I have a lot of wonderful friends here—Ivan Boesky, the mayor, of course, Don Trump and the landlords, can't forget them. I can truthfully say I love it here, almost as much as I did Gomorrah and Rome under Caligula. It's been my kind of place, a real "hell of a town."

But the fact is I've come to realize you don't need me anymore, at least not here. Perhaps it's simply that I've done *too* good a job, or maybe I'm just old-fashioned. Part of me wants to take credit, and another part is, well, disgusted. I like a little vice, the usual stuff, I mean—greed, lust, sloth, envy, gluttony—as much as the next person. Maybe a little more than the next person. As you well know, I invented the unfriendly takeover. But it's gotten completely out of hand here. I don't think depraved is too strong a word.

I don't particularly mind being given credit when it's not warranted (You and I both know I was nowhere near New Orleans when Quayle was picked), but suddenly my name is being bandied about in places I wouldn't be caught dead: New York City courtrooms. Some of my dearest friends here are in the legal profession—Barry Slotnick, for instance, who defended Bernard Goetz—but I've never enjoyed trials (unless, of course, you'd call Torquemada's little proceedings trials) for one simple reason. I have no interest in preaching to the converted. Lawyers have certainly never needed my services.

All of a sudden, however, I'm being blamed in open court for every other crime that's committed in the city. And I'm not talking about arson or breaking and entering. For example, you remember Bess Myerson, don't you? She's on trial for bribing a judge, actually arranging a job for the woman's daughter in the office of Consumer Affairs so the judge would lower the alimony payments Bess's boyfriend had to pay his ex-wife. The boyfriend's a contractor, 20 years younger than she is, who's already in jail for tax evasion, and the last time Bess went to visit him she was picked up for shoplifting. So you figure *my* fingerprints are all over this one, right? Wrong.

The judge, Bess and her boyfriend are all defendants, and the main witness in the case is the judge's daughter, Sukhreet (an Indian word meaning "happiness," if you can believe that). At the beginning of the trial, Sukhreet would arrive every morning, stop at the defense table to give her mother—who, I forgot to mention, is 75 and almost blind—a kiss on the cheek, then walk to the witness stand and deliver extraordinarily damaging testimony against the three defendants. Sometimes she would stop her testimony and ask her mother how she

was doing, or just smile and wave.

She has, however, refused the \$35 a day the government usually gives prosecution witnesses, saying, "It's a kind of Judas money. I just couldn't do it." Happiness, for Sukhreet, is, it seems, testifying against her mother—free of charge.

As you can imagine, the defense attorneys have been questioning her sanity, which isn't terribly difficult since she's been in and out of mental institutions and lives on daily doses of lithium.

What's particularly distressing to me is the way everyone—spectators, the newspapers, and especially the defense attorneys—keeps asking, "What would make someone act like this?" It doesn't take a genius to figure out they're talking about yours truly.

And then there's the Steinberg case, the trial of the disbarred Manhattan lawyer accused of beating a 7-year-old girl he'd illegally adopted to death. The defendant, Joel Steinberg—who gives an entirely new meaning to the term "criminal" attorney—obtained the child, Lisa, as a baby from a Long Island woman, promising to help arrange an adoption. Unfortunately for the girl, he decided to raise her himself with his female companion, Hedda Nussbaum, in the apartment where they were arrested last year after the police responded to a call about a "sick" child. Ms. Nussbaum is testifying against Mr. Steinberg, asserting that he not only abused Lisa, but also abused a child he obtained from another woman, plus Ms. Nussbaum.

One of the first witnesses at the trial, a nurse in the emergency ward where Lisa was taken, testified that she told Steinberg the girl was "probably brain dead," and he responded, "Have you found anything else the matter with her?" An emergency room doctor testified that when he confirmed the nurse's diagnosis, Steinberg replied, "Well, I guess what you're telling me is she's not going to be an Olympic athlete," and started laughing.

Steinberg's attorneys originally contended that the girl died of "a reaction to vegetables," saying the bruises on her body might have resulted from attempts to "revive her." Since that strategy seems unlikely to convince the jury, they are now trying to prove Ms. Nussbaum was involved in a sadistic child pornography ring. (If they can also prove she was in the ACLU, I plan to recommend them to James Baker to do the Republican campaign commercials in 1992.)

What's annoying to me is that the attorneys have recently started spreading rumors that Ms. Nussbaum was involved in a "satanic" cult on Long Island. (I'm not claiming that when I have friends out to my place in Westhampton it's exactly a prayer meeting—no offense intended—but usually about the worst thing we do is plan evictions of senior citizens from buildings going co-op. Evil, as you know, is rather banal.) Even more disturbing is the prosecution's attempt to portray Steinberg as "some kind of devil." He may be some kind, but certainly not mine.

It didn't particularly bother me when Flip Wilson was running around a few years ago claiming I was making everyone in the country do all sorts of things they wouldn't do otherwise—Watergate, the bombing of Cambodia, that sort of thing. But those quaint days are over, at least as far as the New York lawyers are concerned. Now their clients are charged with such heinous and inexplicable acts that apparently the only defense left is to prove the one accusing them of the crime is actually me.

This strategy provided a happy—if that's the right word—ending in the case of Andrew Crispo, a New York art dealer acquitted several months ago of torturing a young man in his 57th Street art gallery. The

drew into our icy little bedrooms, awaiting the day all illness would be cured, so we could emerge to reshape the world yet again. Think of it: we'd led the Youth Revolt, the Taxpayer Revolt, the Senior Revolt . . . and now the *Immortal Revolt!* Damn. Did our selflessness know no bounds?

And of course we made sure that we'd all keep our voting rights by proxy while we were in cryogenic suspension, just like we made sure our stock portfolios would remain aggressive and we'd have continuous Beatles songs piped into our freezers. And all you had to do to preserve this precious human resource

for the future was honor the deal and pay the bills.

But *nooooo!* You had to usurp the government! You had to invalidate our proxies, fill Congress with post-Boomers and . . . and bring an end to the greatest generation the world has ever known.

These last fifty years have not been sweet. Living on the reservation, seeing all my peers defrosted and allowed to die, denied even the credit cards which gave my life form and substance. Well . . . *form* anyway. President Gonzalez wanted me to speak to you today, but what's the point? You've never under-

stood us. All you care about are your debts, your dependence on foreign powers, your masses of have-nots, your . . .

You don't care about the world we could have made, the world we almost had, the world we deserved, the world we lost . . .

But I didn't lose it all. I've got them here, things you said I shouldn't have . . .

A tab of acid . . . a video tape . . . pop one in my mouth . . . pop one in the slot . . . my head swells, the music swells, June stands by the door with the lunches . . .

Beaver smiles . . .

And the world is *mine* again.



man, a film student named Leslie, described a night of unremitting terror at the hands of Crispo and four assistants, including whips, chains, a leather mask and a mock police interrogation. Crispo's lawyer got Leslie to admit he liked "light S&M" and "a little pain."

Leslie also admitted he had met Crispo when he answered a pay phone in front of an S&M bar, and acknowledged that after the torture session he had gone to dinner with the defendant and paid the check. (I hope you won't take this the wrong way, but Crispo reminds me a little bit of you. The old you, I mean. No progress without pain, that sort of thing.)

Last year, this demonizing of the accuser was extended to the deceased victim in the case of Robert Chambers, who claimed he strangled Jennifer Levin in Central Park because she hurt him during "rough sex." I should add that I've arranged for Mr. Chambers, a handsome young preppy who eventually pleaded guilty and is serving a five-year prison sentence, to find out what rough sex really is.

The final straw for me came last week when I got two calls on the same day from the attorney for Leona Helmsley and the attorney for Imelda Marcos. Leona and husband Harry have been charged with tax evasion (though it looks like Harry may get off by claiming he is mentally incompetent to stand trial) for building a swimming pool on their Connecticut estate and charging it to their real estate business, and Imelda and Ferdinand are charged with racketeering for stealing a hundred million dollars from the Philippine government. As you know, we've all been great friends for years. I went with George Bush to the Philippines in 1982 when he gave that lovely toast to Ferdinand, and my suite here is in the Helmsley Palace.

I would have been more than happy to do a little jury tampering for both couples, but Leona and Imelda want me to *testify*. And not as a character witness. They want me to take the stand and *confess*. Imelda even offered to hire Mick Jagger to sing *Sympathy for the Devil* during jury deliberations.

So I've decided to leave, not just New York but the whole country.

Please don't bother trying to convince me to stay. For you it's been your name on the money, your name in the Pledge of Allegiance, and preachers praising you 24 hours a day on four dozen cable channels. For me it's been installing wiretaps, sleeping in Honduran jungles, making Supreme Court appointments, and evicting old ladies from rent-controlled apartments. And when I finally do get some recognition, it's for beating a child to death and squeezing a preppy's gonads in Central Park.

I'm already packed and I'm catching a plane tomorrow morning for Moscow. I've decided if I'm going to be blamed for everything the Soviets do, I might as well set up shop in the Evil Empire. Besides, I find all this talk of *glasnost* and *perestroika* a little nauseating. I liked things fine just as I left them in 1938 with Joe Stalin running the show. Now *there* was someone who knew how to put on a really good trial.

Regards to the Son. I still say if you'd given me another week with him in the wilderness, he'd be working for me.

Yours always,  
Satan

## A Day in the Life of Albert Goldman

*Editor's Note: What follows is an excerpt from the secret diary of Albert Goldman. It was stolen from his safe, along with other valuables, by a thief who owed The Realist a favor. Mr. Goldman is the unauthorized biographer of Lenny Bruce, Elvis Presley and, most recently, John Lennon.*

December 3, 1980

What a day! It started out in an ordinary way. I performed my morning ablutions—shaved, showered and shat—then I put all the fecal matter into the blender and pressed the Liquefy button. I wrapped a red necktie tightly around my arm, poured the brown juice into a disposable hypodermic and injected it slowly into my bulging vein. Ahhhh! Someday I hope to be a good enough writer to be able to articulate that incredible rush. But this time, just as I was peaking, the phone rang, like some kind of audio omen.

It was my contact at SLAY—the School for Lone Assassins Yearbook—returning my call from yesterday. I know him only by his code name—Captain Bile. He is a liaison between the CIA and the NSC, but he runs the school as his own enterprise. He is absolutely reliable, but obsessively greedy. He had arranged for the ostensibly

accidental drug overdoses of both Lenny and Elvis for 50% of all my earnings, but later he told me that they had given Elvis the option of being eliminated or paying them a *million* dollars to fake his death. Lenny had no such choice; he could never afford a fuckin' million.

And if that wasn't greedy enough, this afternoon I was in for an even bigger shock.

"Look," Captain Bile explained to me at his office, "our latest intelligence report on Lennon indicates that he's preparing to perform at a counter-inaugural rally in Washington on the same day that Reagan gets sworn in. We've also been planning to neutralize the other two most politically active musicians—Bob Marley and Harry Chapin—but now Lennon has obviously become a priority. The deportation procedure is going too slowly. And we just can't afford to have a free rock concert compete with the return of the hostages. But we're charging your 50% anyway. I'm sure you understand."

"I feel totally cheated," I said, "but you've got me by the proverbial balls."

When you realize that once you start doing business with SLAY, you can always become one of their *practice* targets, then you learn to be very submissive.

"At least you'll be guaranteed an even better contract for *this* necro-biography," Captain Bile replied, "because your publisher knows full well that the dead never sue."

Looking through the Yearbook, I found one John Hinckley Jr. He had just the right look, that of a crazed nerd. The thumbnail sketch below his photo included Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* as his personal Bible.

"I'll take him," I told Captain Bile. "I especially like that little literary touch."

"Oh, sorry, this guy is already taken," he replied. "He's scheduled to neutralize Reagan a couple of months after the inauguration. Then the Company will have their boy Bush right up there in the White House through the side door. And you'll love this. We've been hypnotizing Hinckley so he'll pull the trigger in order"—Captain Bile began chortling—"to impress Jodie Foster, you know, that young actress who was in *Taxi Driver*"—his chortle turned into a guffaw—"a motivation so bizarre that the public would never take it at anything *but* face value."

"Yeah," I interposed, "but according to my Hollywood source, she's a militant, albeit closet, lesbian."

"Oh, no!" He was reacting with mock horror. "Jesus, if Hinckley ever finds out that he's sacrificing himself for a goddam *dyke*, the President might still be *alive* next spring."

We sat there howling and slapping our knees and laughing ourselves to tears. Those are such rare and precious moments.

Finally, Bile said, "If you liked that Salinger reference with Hinckley, you'll really appreciate *this* guy"—he opened the Yearbook to a photo of Mark John Chapman—"not only is he an absolute *fanatic* about *The Catcher in the Rye*—planting the seeds, by the way, for us to indulge in future bookburning in order to suppress rebellion, all the way back to *Mad* magazine—but Chapman is *also* totally obsessed with John Lennon. What we have here is a psychiatrically efficient case study indeed."

When I got home, I was quite aroused. I watched a wrestling match on cable, and when my erection was ready, I got a sheet of coarse sandpaper and masturbated with it. I was so excited the neighbors almost heard me shout in pain: "Oh, God! Oh, Albert! I hate you!" Fortunately, I was drowned out by a compact disc, *The Best of Muzak*, blaring from my truly state-of-the-art stereo. It certainly is a fine piece of electronic equipment. What's so wrong with living comfortably?

But it was during the silence of my afterglow that I had what can only be described as an epiphany. Yes. I have decided to fake my own death—that is, *after* I get a humungous advance for my masterpiece, *The Lives of Albert Goldman*, which I shall base on this journal. I know I have sinned beyond redemption. Nevertheless I will try to redeem myself by exposing at last the godawful truth about SLAY, even though it means revealing my own unspeakable evil in the process.

So I will have the last laugh on Captain Bile after all. And then I'll be able to begin a new life under another identity. It'll be Goodbye Goldman, I've got those start-all-over-again, do-it-yourself-reincarnation blues. . . .