

HEAVEN IS NOT-FOR-PROFIT
(excerpt)

by

Kyoung H. Park

Kyoung H. Park

kyounghpark@gmail.com

“Please, Lord, prove that your power is as great as you have claimed it to be. For you said, ‘The Lord is slow to anger and rich in unfailing love, forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion. Even so he does not leave sin unpunished, but he punishes the children for the sins of their parents to third and fourth generations.’ Please pardon the sins of this people because of your magnificent, unfailing love...”
(Numbers 14:17)

THE PLAYERS

EXECUTIVE STAFF OF HEAVEN (AND HELL)

GOD	<i>A radiant black woman. Creator of our joy and sorrow. Mother of tears and smiles. Executive Director of Heaven.</i>
S (pronounced “é-sé”)	<i>A dominant Mexican “vato malo.” Development Director of Heaven. Program Director of Hell. Formerly known as Satan.</i>

DEVELOPMENT STAFF OF HEAVEN (AND HELL)

FAITH	<i>A statuesque white woman. Fundraising consultant, extraordinaire.</i>
ABS	<i>“Asian Bitch Slave.” Submissive Asian woman. Development Associate of Heaven.</i>
JOY	<i>A perky, young white girl. God’s Executive Assistant.</i>

PROGRAM STAFF OF HEAVEN (AND HELL)

SOLEDAD	<i>Program Director of the Homo-Sapiens program. A Mexican woman in her 20’s.</i>
SOCORRO	<i>Program Director of the Fauna program. A Mexican woman in her 20’s.</i>
CARIDAD	<i>Program Director of the Flora program. A Mexican woman in her 20’s.</i>
AMPARO	<i>Program Director of the ET program. A Mexican woman in her 20’s.</i>

SETTING: Heaven, Inc. A not-for-profit organization dedicated to serve life after death.

TIME: Running out. Relatively speaking. Towards the end of Heaven’s Fiscal Year.

ACT I

SCENE 1

At rise: Heaven's Board Room. GOD, a black woman in her mid-thirties, and SATAN (S), a Mexican vato malo, stand in front of the audience.

A power-point presentation, including organizational diagrams and illustrations, follows the description of Heaven, as presented by God and S. The presentation may allude to biblical imagery and contemporary world events, but even then, it resembles a dry business presentation.

GOD

Members of the Board: As God, Executive Director of Heaven—

S

(interrupting.) And Hell—

GOD

And *Hell*, it is my goal to update core values and programs of our organization. As you know, Heaven is *the* place for life after death. Our organization provides a caring and supportive world to life that ceases to live on Earth. We don't serve just people, we have a Fauna program for dead animals, Flora program for dead plants, and of course, we have extended our program to serve life that is extraterrestrial to reach out to the cosmos at large.

S

Diversity is *key* to what Heaven does.

GOD

But during the few years I've been running Heaven, I've noticed some problems, mainly administrative, in the organization. You see, Heaven is the *only* not-for-profit organization whose mission is to serve life after death. But we're struggling up here. Our operation is becoming too costly and the world we are sustaining for life after death is too complicated. We need your help.

S

Allow me to elaborate... When Nietzsche announced the death of God, he acknowledged the death of our *seventh* God leading the organization.

GOD

(interrupting.) We didn't have the heart to correct him. I mean, he didn't really need to know.

S

God, God Number 7, made a mess of Heaven, all the way from the Board down to the communities we serve. He made horrible decisions for the organization and unless we raise additional funds, Heaven will be facing trouble.

GOD

We prepared a short power-point presentation to elaborate on some of the key points we provided to you in your Board package. Please open them to page 2. *(Reading the power-point presentation.)* "Heaven is a two-thousand year-old not-for-profit organization."

S

Isn't that surprising? You'd think it existed before Jesus, but really, it didn't. He lied about it and then God, God Number 1, had to make one up.

GOD

Anyway, let me direct your attention towards our strategic planning outlined for the next years. During this first century of the new millennium, our plan is to mirror the economic globalization of the world and try to breach the differences between religions by merging all of them back into Heaven. To do so, we need the support from the Board to implement new marketing techniques for our people. God, God Number 1, thought it'd be best to give everyone a different kind of religion they could hold on to, but now, there are too many discrepancies in the message we've given. People have come to wars against each other in the name of their gods and forgotten what believing in God is all about.

S

I mean, *just wait until they know that God is dead!*

GOD

Satan, please! Members of the Board, at this critical juncture in Heaven's history, we need to ask you for your support. We need to make amends in the world and I've decided, along with Ghandi, chairman of the Board, that the best thing to do is to merge all religions back into one giant corporation and make religion public, transparent, and universal to the general church-goer. Once they realize Jesus, Buddha, Muhammad, all talked about the same love for humankind, but merely in different tones, with a different *aesthetic* if you will, then maybe, we'll have the means to raise the earned revenue we need to continue our mission. We offer payment plans, deferred payment, we even took a grant challenge once, but bottom-line, we are asking the Board to consider making a fifty billion-dollar gift to Heaven.

Pause.

S

(whispering.) Mujer, they're not responding. Do something! Improvise!

The presentation moves to another slide.

GOD

This is a list of major supporters of Heaven. I think you'll be surprised to see who's on the list. *(Reads from the list.)* Michael Jackson. Michael Jordan. Michael Tyson. *Oh no...*

S

This is the presentation for African-American donor prospects!

GOD

I'm sorry. We've re-designed our presentations to specifically target donors by ethnicities.

God begins fidgeting with the presentation. It shows an array of pictures of lynching, black slaves, and wealthy African-Americans.

S

Oprah funded this version. Uh... *(Explaining the images from the presentation.)* Malcolm X. Martin Luther King. They all went to Hell by mistake. Oprah was very upset about that and gave us additional money to make amends.

GOD

(calling off-stage.) Joy, I can't log on to the network!

S

As you can see, things fall down the cracks, even in Heaven.

GOD

That's not true. We've got everything under control. *Joy!*

God shuts down the presentation.

S

But there's no need to panic. I've got a solution. Let's move on to my presentation.

SCENE 2

*In Heaven. God and S, have a fight.
Next to S is ABS, wearing tight
black leather and a dog collar.
ABS is Heaven's Development
Associate. She's chained to a pole
by the neck.*

God, you need help. S

No! I don't want a fundraising consultant! GOD

Look, *mujer*, you suck at fundraising. S

Satan— GOD

Don't call me Satan. I've repeatedly asked you to call me S. S

S, I don't appreciate the way you've been acting since God died. You've changed your name, imprisoned this woman— GOD

She's not a woman; her name is ABS and she's my pet. Isn't that true? S

ABS barks twice.

That's a good ABS. S

ABS barks once. S pets her.

This is ridiculous! GOD

Just meet her once. You know you have to. The Board said so. S

Greatly thanks to you. GOD

S

It was just a suggestion.

GOD

You brought her bio to the meeting. You had client testimonials. S, you set me up!

S

Look, you're not the only one that feels responsibility for raising our funds, alright? Since the Board decided that Heaven and Hell should merge, we have to learn to work together. Besides, *mujer*, I'm just trying to help you. If you don't like her, then fire her. Tell the Board it was a mistake and I promise I won't say a thing.

GOD

Do you promise?

S

I do. ABS, go get her.

S frees ABS. ABS exits barking.

GOD

Now that she's gone, I wanted to tell you that the interns are feeling a little uncomfortable with ABS around the office.

S

Why?

GOD

She's a human being.

S

She gave me her soul. Plus, I need an assistant. Running Hell in Heaven is harder than running Hell on earth.

GOD

Well, I'm asking you not to bring her around. What you do outside the office is not of my concern. But when you're here, in *Heaven*, I can't tolerate this kind of behavior.

S

Ay *mujer*, you've gotten so uptight with this job.

GOD

It's a lot of stress

S

Don't take it out on me. If you get to have Joy, I get to keep ABS.

ABS enters with FAITH, a statuesque woman, dressed in white.

S! FAITH

Faith! S

What a horrible office. Hell looked so much better. FAITH

Faith, this is God. S

Thank you for coming. GOD

Shall we get to business? I hate to chit-chat. FAITH

ABS barks.

ABS, be quiet! S

What a cute bitch. ABS, you call her? FAITH

ABS, short for Asian Bitch Slave. ABS

(to God.) It suits her, don't you think? She's Asian all right. FAITH

God, tell Faith what's going on. S

Well, we're having a slight issue raising our budget this year. This isn't customary in Heaven. We're a very capable team. GOD

What do your numbers look like? FAITH

S

ABS?

ABS

Board gifts: Four-point-three trillion, two-hundred eighty-five billion, six million, five hundred and thirty-two dollars and nine cents.

FAITH

That's decent.

S

Decent? We used to get five trillion from our Board, *easy*.

FAITH

What about your other giving areas?

ABS

Major donors: Three hundred seventy-seven billion, six hundred and two dollars.

FAITH

Not shabby.

ABS

Other Individuals: Sixty-nine billion, six hundred and sixty-six thousand, six hundred and sixty-six dollars.

FAITH

Oh, that's bad.

ABS

Foundation grants: One trillion.

FAITH

Only one?

ABS

Corporations: Zero.

S

I can explain that. Since the merge of Heaven and Hell, we call projects under corporate sponsorship *special projects*, and all that money goes into a different area of our books so it isn't reflected as part of the organization.

FAITH

That's smart.

Thought it up myself. S

Shall I continue? ABS

Don't ask us questions. You do what *I* tell you to do! S

What's the total of the monies you've raised against your budget? FAITH

ABS? ABS, answer the question. S

(quiet.) I haven't added the new numbers yet. ABS

What? S

No one told me— ABS

You're supposed to know these things. Come here. S

S drags ABS by the dog collar and ties her to the dog pole.

I'm sorry. I'm training her but she's being a very naughty ABS. S

ABS barks.

I'll get back to you with those numbers. S

I see a lot of problems in Heaven. First of all, you'll need a lot more than her to raise the money you need. FAITH

Don't mess with ABS. She's just learning the rules. S

And if you really want to raise your budget before the end of the fiscal year, you're gonna' FAITH

have to let me help. From what I see, there are not enough fundraising systems to run Heaven. S gave me a brief about your board meeting last night.

GOD

What? You told her?

S

She wanted to know.

FAITH

It's very important for the *team* to know what's happening.

GOD

Excuse me, but we're not a *team* yet.

FAITH

I heard you cried when the meeting was over. You can't cry when you're asking for money!

GOD

But I was hoping—

FAITH

Fundraising is not about hope. It's about systems. Order. People need structure in their lives. They need to be told what to do.

ABS barks.

FAITH

People like ABS, they like to know. They like to believe. They like to have faith. That's why I've been so successful in my career.

GOD

But—

FAITH

I know life doesn't work that way. But as a team, God, we can *will* it that way. Between, S, you and me, we can save Heaven.

GOD

I'll have to think about this.

FAITH

There's no time to think. You need to take action. You need money *now* and I'm ready to take the lead.

S

Think about all the dead people that aren't being helped. ABS, how many people died this year?

ABS

Sixty-three million, three-hundred and two thousand, one-hundred and twenty one. No, two. Three. Four. *(ABS continues counting; her voice fades away gradually...)*

S

God, just think about all those people.

FAITH

I've prepared a list of the services I can provide.

Faith gives God the list.

FAITH

From what I know about Heaven, the organization needs to restructure its Board; strengthen individual giving, both from the living *and* dead; and throw a big benefit to encourage major—major—gifts. If we follow my action plan, I project we'll raise the money you need in just three months.

GOD

What do you charge for your services?

S

That's where it gets tricky.

FAITH

You haven't told her?

S

She didn't even want you here.

GOD

What's going on?

FAITH

There's a slight difference in costs I'm making to work in Heaven. Usually I ask for a percentage of the money raised—

GOD

We can't do that.

FAITH

Don't worry. Working for Heaven I'll only take a very standard consultancy fee, but I also want to be part of Heaven. I want my name in the Bible. I want my story to be told.

GOD

Faith, we already have stories about faith. Maybe not you, more like an idea—

FAITH

Well, I want to be Faith. In the flesh. I want my portrait commissioned for great paintings. Plays, novels and epic poems written about me. When people think of Jesus, they can picture him in their minds. From now on, when people think of Faith, I want them to think of me.

GOD

We can't manipulate people like that!

S

But mujer, just look at the list of things Faith can do. Think about all the needy you can finally help.

FAITH

What will it be?

GOD

As I said, I'll need some time. I need to consult the Board and talk to the staff.

S

Ay, the staff...

FAITH

Well, in that case, it was a pleasure to meet you. I'm going back to my office. Call me when you make a decision.

GOD

Thanks for your time.

They all shake hands. S laughs.

FAITH

What?

S

Who would have thought? Out of all the people in the world, that you'd work for Heaven? Who would have thought?

SCENE 3

In Heaven. Heaven's Conference room. God chairs the meeting, next to her is JOY, taking notes. Around the table sit SOCORRO, CARIDAD, AMPARO and SOLEDAD.

GOD

Socorro, Caridad, Amparo, Soledad, thank you for joining me for this very important meeting. Joy will be taking notes of our discussion. As directors of our Homo-Sapiens, Fauna, Flora and ET programs, I want to empower you to voice your opinion about today's agenda. I know you're aware of the struggle we've had in Heaven raising our budget this year. You've all done a great job in running your programs with your belts tightened. Heaven still looks wonderful, our population served is increasing in all areas, and while the facilities could be upgraded, we are still *the* place for life after death.

The ladies clap.

GOD

However, S and I have taken serious consideration of how to ensure the future of our organization and I want you to take this matter seriously. Heaven is in a fundraising *crisis*. For your review, I've printed out our budget and I want us to talk about our numbers.

SOCORRO

Wait a minute. Our budget is in the trillions?

GOD

Yes.

SOCORRO

Then why are we in a crisis?

AMPARO

Yo no entiendo.

CARIDAD

¿Qué quiere esta güera?

SOCORRO

Déjenla hablar.

GOD

OK—OK, before you go all Mexican on me, let me explain. If you look in our budget, you'll see S and I have projected a certain income for this year. Unfortunately, we're far from reaching those numbers.

SOLEDAD

What's that gotta' do with us?

SOCORRO

Are you cutting back our programs? Because I'm in the middle of all my projects.

AMPARO

Sí, that's not wise.

GOD

Please—order! I'm not going to cut programs.

AMPARO

Are you shutting them down?

CARIDAD

You can't. I'm making so much progress in the Flora program; we're expanding to save weed and shrubs this year.

AMPARO

I'm finally making connection with the Saturnians. At this rate, we'll have connections with the whole solar system in five years.

GOD

As I said, I'm *not* cutting programs. But as you know, as we grow the organization, we need to grow our staff.

SOLEDAD

I could use some extra staff.

AMPARO

Why her? I'm a staff of one.

GOD

Amparo, the ET program is a new initiative.

AMPARO

So am I supposed to outreach the whole universe by myself?

GOD

You know this is a challenging position; we discussed this when we hired you—

AMPARO

We also talked about support.

GOD

Amparo, diversity is critical to Heaven. Once we stabilize the budget, we will support you.

Why her? Why not me? CARIDAD

What about all the dead animals? SOCORRO

What about people? We need to help more people! SOLEDAD

*Ad lib: Soledad, Socorro, Amparo
and Caridad begin bickering in
Spanish.*

Order, order! GOD

My mother was not a *puta*! AMPARO

ORDER! Women, please! Listen very carefully. We need to hire a fundraising consultant.
But to grow our staff, we need to afford her salary. GOD

Is she going to say what I think she's going to say? CARIDAD

And to *afford* her salary, we need to reduce existing salaries. GOD

No, güera, no! CARIDAD

I want you to consider taking a pay-cut— GOD

You take the pay-cut. CARIDAD

She's God. JOY

Joy, no one asked for your opinion. AMPARO

All I'm trying to say is that God is not a salaried position. JOY

Perdón? You don't get paid? SOCORRO

I'm doing this for the honor. GOD

She must be independently wealthy. AMPARO

I had to climb my way up from being a dishwasher. CARIDAD

I was a live-in maid. SOCORRO

I was a sex worker. *What?* I'm good with people. SOLEDAD

Amparo, tell God how you had to climb your way up. CARIDAD

I didn't. I come from new money. AMPARO

In that case, you can give *her* a pay-cut. CARIDAD

Hey! That's not fair. That doesn't mean I haven't earned my salary. AMPARO

All I'm saying is I've paid my dues. SOCORRO

So did I. SOLEDAD

Be reasonable with God. JOY

No one's talking to you, Joy. AMPARO

I talk if I want. JOY

Ad lib: Amparo, Socorro, Soledad, Caridad and Joy start bickering.

S and ABS enter and watch from a corner.

AMPARO

And if there's any puta here, it's Soledad. She said so!

SOLEDAD

Hey! Not fair.

GOD

OK—I don't have time for this. Let's get to the point. S and I are seriously considering, for the survival of Heaven, and by extension, for your best interest, hiring Faith. So I'm not asking anymore, I'm telling you, that we may be cutting your salaries to hire her. She's a well-meaning person and I hope you understand this is for the best of all of us, the living *and* the dead. In the meanwhile, to be fair, if you can propose cuts in your programs to keep your salary, I'll consider them.

AMPARO

This is bullshit.

SOCORRO

You're doing this because we're pioneering, single, female Mexicans, isn't it?

AMPARO

You're exploiting our talents because you think we don't know any better.

CARIDAD

Shame on you God, shame on you!

Socorro, Amparo and Caridad exit.

SOLEDAD

God, if this was a Mexican telenovela, I'd slap your face and dig deep into your cheeks with my fingernails. Then, I'd spill a glass of champagne on your clothes, spit in your eyes and bring you down to the floor by the hair! But this isn't a telenovela. This is Heaven. We're civilized women, you and I. God, you are the one that sets the rules, you command the universe. You make it rain when you cry, you make it warm when you smile. You have the power to follow your heart unbound. So if you need money for me to help the dying you've hired me to help, to save the children that die from famines and war, then do what you must. If the people dying from illness and pests will be cured but first you *need* money, hire Faith; we'll greet her with open arms. But if you need *money* because there's an order, a structure, a budget that needs to be fulfilled and at the end, you're saving the *structure* of the organization instead of saving *people*, fuck you.

JOY

You can't talk to God like that!

SOLEDAD

Shut up Joy! God, people are waiting now, some of them have been waiting for years. They're getting anxious waiting for you to come and save them. They pray for you every day. Their prayers come in memos that have been pouring in through the fax and email. But I see Joy calling them back, telling them that God is listening, and then she shoves the memos in a bunch of files and puts them away in file cabinets.

JOY

That's all I can do for now!

SOLEDAD

So I hope Faith works. If we need Faith, I hope she is the answer.

Soledad exits. S and ABS walk up to God. God places her head on the desk in surrender.

S

Prepare the torture chamber.

ABS

Oh yes! We're going to torture them!

S

Not them. You.

S ties ABS to the dog collar and drags her off-stage.

ABS

What did I do? Oh master, please! No! Not the torture chamber!

SCENE 4

In Heaven. Hell's office. File cabinets around the walls. Many cabinets. S drags ABS onstage.

ABS whimpers. S opens a file cabinet. He dumps a load of paper on the ground.

File. S

Noooo! ABS

S
I want these ordered. Alphabetically. Chronologically. File, now!

S whips her.

Do it! S

God runs on-stage.

GOD
Have you lost your mind? What's going on?

S
Heaven is going under, that's what's going on!

GOD
Will you please stop torturing her? And keep your voice down.

S
We must document our fundraising. This isn't torture.

ABS
Yes it is!

S whips her.

S
File and shut up! ABS, this is part of your job description, alright? We have to have files.

GOD
S, you're scaring the whole office. An intern quit yesterday.

S

That's 'cause they're ignorant! No one in the office understands we're in the hole!

GOD

We'll survive.

S

How do you do it? Be so optimistic? We're trillions behind!

GOD

We'll work it out.

S

With what? With a Board good for nothing? Do you think Ghandi chairing our Board, and just sitting on that chair, is doing anything? Do you think Hitler raising our corporate sponsorships will offset our deficit?

GOD

They're doing all they can.

S

That's not good enough. We also need control. We need to know when and where we're supposed to get our money. And this bitch needs to file the paperwork.

S whips ABS. She whimpers.

S

God, *you* need to do what's right. You and I can't do this alone anymore.

GOD

Is ABS crying?

S

Stop crying.

He whips ABS.

GOD

Stop doing that!

S whips her again.

S

Stop crying ABS!

ABS sobs.

ABS

I don't want this job anymore.

S

Job? This isn't a job. This is life. I file. Even God files.

ABS

I don't think all my soul's gone!

S

What?

ABS

When you said you'd take my soul away to do fundraising, you said I would stop feeling lost. Instead, you promised me clear goals, purpose and objectives. That the tasks in my life would be specific and that I'd be rewarded financially and physically. But I hate this job, which means I *still* hate. I don't want to be alone, which means I still feel lonely. I don't want to be in pain, although it makes me so *hot*, and that means I still *feel* things. I *desire* things. I *want* things! Why do I still *feel* if I have no soul?

S

Stop bitching. I'll call the IT department and they'll fix you in no time.

ABS cries.

GOD

ABS, when I feel lost, do you know what makes me feel better?

S

You deal with one file at a time.

GOD

S, stop it. ABS, do you want to know what makes it all better?

S

You have Faith.

THIS PLAY HAS BEEN ABANDONED.

**BUT, IF YOU'D LIKE TO READ THE REST, PLEASE EMAIL ME AT
kyounghpark@gmail.com.**

THANKS!