

MAGNIFICENT
MALEVOLENCE

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MAGNIFICENT MALEVOLENCE

Memoirs of a career in Hell

Derek Wilson



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For Dave, with thanks

Introduction

**“Nowhere do we tempt so
successfully as on the very steps
of the altar.”**

*Screwtape Proposes a Toast*¹

C.S. Lewis, who introduced Screwtape, a senior devil, to the world in 1942, knew that evil is powerful and personal and he understood that its main thrust is against God and the people of God. He believed that to envisage evil as a malign but vague influence located in the human gene pool is only a little less dangerous than thinking of “God” as an ethereal life force. The Bible has no truck with such formless concepts. Nor had Lewis. He took as read the biblical understanding of evil as resulting from a rebellion by fallen angels bent on mastering the human race and turning it against the creator. This erudite senior academic made no apology for propagating what many of his sophisticated compeers would have regarded as outmoded

¹ C.S. Lewis, 1959.

folklore and superstition. “It seems to me”, he wrote in a later apology, “to explain a good many facts. It agrees with the plain sense of Scripture, the tradition of Christendom, and the beliefs of most men at most times.”

That evaluation of spiritual realities remains as valid now as it was when Lewis introduced us to Screwtape, in the middle of the Second World War. The human scene has changed – profoundly – in the intervening years, but the old conflict continues to be played out on the planetary stage. It is still the same war but, as the human decades have passed, it has been fought with new weapons and different battle tactics. Every shift in international politics, every technological advance, and every development within the life of the church gave rise to new skirmishes between the forces of the Sovereign Lord and those of the “Old Enemy”. There can be no doubt that Lewis would agree that Screwtape and his diabolical colleagues have not ceased their operations in the last seventy years. Holding mankind in bondage and throwing numerous spanners into the works of the Christian church continues to take up all their energies. And, knowing this, the great Christian apologist would want twenty-first-century humanity to be aware of the wiles practised by the forces of Hell from the time that Screwtape laid down his pen right down to the present day.

Therefore, the fiftieth anniversary of Jack’s (he hated his baptismal names of Clive Staples) death seems to be an appropriate occasion for a “Hell update”. How fortunate, then, that the following account, rescued from the archives of the Low Command’s Ministry of Misinformation, has fallen into our hands. This remarkable manuscript outlines the career of the prominent devil Crumblewit, SOD (Order of the Sons of Darkness, First Class). It was in a much-mutilated

state and has only with difficulty been cut and pasted together to make a reasonably coherent narrative of the activities of a post-Screwtape generation of devils. It is not, of course, “true” in the sense of being an objective appraisal of the struggles between good and evil which have dominated human affairs in the period from 1942 to the present. The account is distorted by Crumblewit’s truly diabolical conceit and also his ability for self-delusion. However, it does shed fresh light on the ups and downs experienced by the church throughout this period. Crumblewit’s energies were entirely deployed in the religious arena. Any involvement in political events and international conflicts such as wars, acts of terrorism, rebellions, and the nuclear arms race was purely tangential. He was employed exclusively in undermining the attempts of Christians to bring to bear upon world events the prerogatives of love, peace, and justice and to carry out the mission entrusted to them by Jesus.

There were critics who disapproved of the “flippancy” of *The Screwtape Letters* and insisted that there is nothing remotely funny about evil. Lewis heartily agreed, but pointed out that humour is a divine gift and had been used in the service of religion by, for example, G.K. Chesterton, the performances of medieval mystery plays, and, supremely, Jesus. He used the light approach in dealing with spiritual profundities because, as he explained in one of his interviews, “There is a great deal of false reverence about. There is too much solemnity and intensity in dealing with sacred matters; too much speaking in holy tones.” Lewis believed that humour was a legitimate weapon in the Christian armoury and he used it to great effect in helping us to recognize our enemy and penetrate to the core of his numerous, subtle stratagems. This fresh exposé has

the same objective, and I believe he would have approved. At least, I hope so. I am just one of the millions of Christians who have been helped by his lucid, imaginative and insightful writings, and this book is a small gesture of homage.²

* * * * *

² Editor's note: Crumblewit had little interest in human chronology, and this has presented an editorial challenge. Dates have been inserted at the top of every chapter in an attempt to help the reader relate Crumblewit's story to contemporary events in the human world.

CHAPTER 1

How My Brilliant Career Began

(1942–1944)

In that time–space sphere of existence in which our great leader has set us to work for his glory there was an era the mortals called “the Second World War”. Of course, it was not anything of the sort; the real struggle to wrest control of that minuscule fragment of all the universes from the miserable creatures the unmentionable one has put in charge has been in progress ever since the beginning. Earth is our place, the only scrap of timeless immensity we have asked for. And yet we have been forced to wage war for it, and to go on waging war until we have completed the task of enslaving the pathetic little darlings the unmentionable one sets so much store by. Oh, the monstrous unfairness of it all! The enemy claims to be the very embodiment of justice but what could be more inequitable than to deny our kind the right to enjoy our way of life and establish our culture on one infinitesimal speck of creation?

I was a junior tempter then, but even in those days I showed phenomenal promise – a promise which, as all who

read this will know, has been amply fulfilled throughout a career of quite unprecedented guile, deviousness, and magnificent malevolence. Those who were present at my infernal investiture will recall the words of His Lowness, Prince Lobzubble, as he conferred on me the Order of Sons of Darkness, First Class: “Rarely in the annals of the Lower Dominion has so much been owed by so many to one demon.” Old Lobzubble certainly has a way with words.

I was at that time still a student at the Training College for Young Devils, then under the directorship of Principal Slubgob, a thorough, if unimaginative, pedagogue. It was, however, Slubgob who was responsible for introducing to the syllabus the Advanced Certificate in Enemy Literature.

Only the most sound and clear-headed students from each year were admitted onto this course. The material allocated for study was classified and potentially very dangerous. Naturally, Slubgob and his staff were under no doubt about my suitability for the ACEL. And what a fascinating field of study that library of hideous but seductive sedition turned out to be. No wonder these works have to be locked safely away in the archives of the Ministry of Misinformation. No wonder the direst penalties are imposed on any of our people found guilty of handling items on the List of Prohibited Books. No wonder it remains a top priority of all tempters to prevent their subjects from actually reading what the enemy has written. Remember the mnemonic we all learned at school – OIL. It is as important now as it ever was to convince humans that the Bible is Old-fashioned, Illogical and Laughable. But in order to achieve this particular objective those of us who can claim higher demonic intellect must actually be exposed to the unmentionable one’s propaganda. Familiarizing myself with

his nauseatingly pious poems and moralizing mischief-making has helped me to become the great lie-monger I am today.

I remember, as though it were yesterday, the flash of inspiration that set me upon the path to my later celebrity. In one of the letters written by the traitor Saul of Tarsus in the years after the disastrous Battle of Golgotha, he revealed to the enemy’s recruits one of the great secrets about our magnificent leader. “Satan”, he said, “can disguise himself as an angel of light.” Oh, the rapturous moment when that revelation came upon me! I was filled at once, not only with renewed admiration for His Supreme Lowness but also by a determination to emulate him. Fellow pupils and school staff had frequently commented on my acting ability and I always took the lead role in our dramatic productions. Why should this talent not be turned to a lower cause? I began immediately to construct a plan which would enable me to infiltrate the enemy citadel, to become a mole, to discover his secrets, to frustrate his objectives.

Having devised a plan, the next task was to sell it.

I knew that there would be no point in taking my audacious concept to Slubgob. He lacked imagination and would have been quite unable to grasp the exciting scheme that was steadily developing in my mind. At first I thought of seeking the advice of Drigwizzle, head of the Demonic Strategy department. We are all familiar with, and grateful for, his knowledge of Advanced Tempting. His inspiring biographical and analytical studies – *Masters of Infernal Warfare*, *Distortion Tactics for Beginners*, etc. – are unlikely ever to be surpassed. I actually got as far as going to present myself in Drigwizzle’s office. But, as I turned the corner into his corridor, I saw him coming the other way with his arm round the shoulder of

that insufferable ass Sharfly-Bickendrop, my contemporary student and arch-rival. I had never been able to understand how, term after term, “Sharparsed” (as we called him) was always a few points ahead of me in Demonic Strategy exams. Now I knew. I also knew that any confidences shared with Drigwizzle would not remain secret for long. The thought of Sharparsed stealing my brainchild was unbearable. Where, then, could I turn for support in laying my brilliant scheme before the Satanic Secret Service (SSS 666), for I was fully aware that it would need resources which could be sanctioned only at the lowest level of our intelligence service?

I needed a patron in low places. Only the most gifted of strategists would be able to recognize the sheer brilliance of my proposal. I decided to go to the very bottom – First Minister Blubwarp. Inevitably, my initial letter went through the bureaucratic mill of being passed from one unimaginative, plodding functionary to another. I was quite resigned to my brainchild being crushed beneath the weight of meaningless memoranda in tedious inter-departmental despatches in some dreary official’s in tray. Every great artist has to do battle with crass incomprehension, and in me the art of malevolence had reached depths rarely plumbed in the history of the Infernal Regions. It was therefore a pleasant surprise when I received a brief, handwritten, personal note from Blubwarp himself. He summoned me to an informal lunch at his club.

I duly arrived at that impressive and exclusive rendezvous and was shown to an alcove where His Eminent Lowness sat at his private table. We are all familiar with Blubwarp’s much-publicized visage: the oily sheared brow, the needle-sharp fangs. Being close to the reality was an awe-inspiring experience. Yet the minister was affability itself. When I mumbled my thanks

for his condescension in seeing me, he replied that he was always on the lookout for promising young devils and was impressed by my ambition and self-confidence.

The lunch was superb; Blubwarp, as I have since learned, is an acknowledged connoisseur. I particularly recall that this was the first time I ever tasted compote of politicians’ promises with a cynicism coulis. My enjoyment was, however, somewhat dampened by those shrewd eyes, which fixed themselves on my every move and facial gesture. Our amiable chat about Hellish affairs in general was merely a polite prelude, and it was not until we had retired to the library and were sipping vintage acrid feminism that Blubwarp sniffed the pungent bouquet appreciatively and stared at me across the rim of his glass.

“In your letter you spoke of your – what was the precise phrase? – ‘master plan’.”

I took a fortifying gulp of the wine and began the speech I had practised over and over again. “What I have in mind”, I said, “is a solo undercover operation, which will make a significant contribution to the war effort.”

“Go on,” Blubwarp said, in a tone of manifest dubiety.

“Well, the infuriating foe we’re up against claims to know everything.”

“He *does* know everything!” he snapped, in a sudden change of mood. “If you haven’t learned that, your education has been wholly wasted.”

I took a quick sip of wine and pressed on under the old devil’s unblinking gaze. “But has that ever been put to the ultimate test?”

“What kind of nonsensical question is that?”

It took all my nerve to stick to the plan I had conceived.

“What I am suggesting is not nonsensical, Your Awfulness. Bold, certainly, but not nonsensical. I think I know how to lay a smokescreen that will confuse the enemy for long enough to enable us to launch an important attack, unseen.”

Falteringly at first but with mounting passion, I outlined my plan. My host did not interrupt and when my galloping eloquence eventually slithered to a halt he merely sat back in his armchair with a long-drawn-out “Hmm”.

In the silence that followed I could almost hear the cogs whirring inside his bulbous head. Eventually he said, “If you have done your research properly you will know that the enemy keeps a very close watch on the leaders of human affairs. It takes much more experience than you have to gain access.”

“Yes, but... ”

Blubwarp halted me with an impatient wave of his hand. “You will know from your research how apparently foolproof schemes can come unstuck. Take the shocking Judas Iscariot affair. That is one of the most shameful episodes in our history. Everything seemed to be going so well. A public holiday had even been announced throughout Hell in celebration of our victory. Then it turned out that the enemy was fully aware of our stratagem and had actually turned it to his own advantage. Many heads rolled over that.” He glared at me and I could see the flames dancing in his eyes.

“Heads rolled, young Crumblewit, heads rolled. Think on that. I, for one, intend to keep my head firmly in place. I have no intention of risking it by aiding and abetting the hare-brained scheme of an overambitious junior devil.”

My balloon had been well and truly pricked and I was, as you can imagine, shattered. All I could think of was to mumble

my thanks for the lunch and make my escape. I rose to my feet with whatever dignity I could muster and had just opened my mouth to make my farewells when Blubwarp spoke again.

“Sit down!” he snapped. “I have not finished. I said I would not be connected with an *overambitious* junior devil. However, if a level-headed and intelligent young tempter able to control his zeal... ” He sat back in his chair and closed his eyes. There was another long silence. It was almost as though he had succumbed to that odd state humans call “sleep”. Then, “Arspissble,” he murmured.

“Sorry, Supreme Deviousness, I didn’t quite catch... ”

“I said, ‘the art of the possible’. It was an aphorism of one of my best subjects, Otto von Bismarck. He lapped up the thoughts I put into his mind so completely that he became one of the leaders of human society – a master of betrayal and subtlety. Oh, the wars he started! The souls he hastened on their way to our dominion! He had a short way with the kind of idealism the enemy likes to encourage. ‘Politics’, he said, ‘has nothing to do with justice, or helping the poor, or creating a society in which individuals can develop freely. It’s the art of the possible.’ In other words, it’s about compromise between good and evil in the interests of whomever happens to be in power. Oh, yes, I did an excellent job with Bismarck.”

“You are a master... ”

“Of course I am! And you do well to seek my guidance. Now, as it happens, I could use... that is to say... I could help your career – on two conditions.”

“Anything you say, Abysmal Awfulness... ”

“Number one, you agree to be guided by me. Number two, no one must ever know of our professional connection. If you are ever questioned about this meeting it was purely

an example of my well-known encouragement of young tempters. You will not contact me again.”

Of course, I agreed readily to the minister’s terms. And, of course, I was determined to break free of his tutelage at the earliest possible opportunity.

A few moments later Blubwarp dismissed me, and it was some time before I heard from him again. Then a letter arrived by special SSS 666 courier with “Top Secret” stamped all over it. It summoned me to a special briefing at a secure location somewhere in the Lower Depths. I was to place myself in the hands of the courier, who would arrange transport.

“Kidnap” would have been a better word. Two more SSS 666 agents appeared. They blindfolded me and, for good measure, thrust me into a sack. There followed a long and bumpy journey before I was finally released in a featureless, windowless room. Its only furniture consisted of a table and two chairs. In one of them sat an emaciated, grey, lizard-like devil whose skin emitted a pungent smoke. He glared at me for several seconds after the door had been closed behind me.

“Sit,” he said eventually.

When I had taken my place opposite him, he continued, “You are nothing. Who are you?”

“Crumblewit, Sir,” I faltered.

“Are you deaf?” I was stunned by the thunderous bellow that came from his spare frame. “I said, ‘You are nothing.’ Now, who are you?”

“I... I am nothing,” I mumbled.

“Good. I am Instructor. We do not use names here. The enemy has infinite resources. We can never be sure that even here, deep in Hell, he has not planted listening devices. So anonymity is the first rule.”

Of the period that followed I can, for obvious reasons, report nothing. The training was hard and thorough. I learned invaluable lessons in infiltration techniques. However, I must make one thing clear: the career plan which I subsequently executed so brilliantly was utterly mine, MINE, and don’t you forget it! Pay no attention to the jealous talk of devils whose niggardly achievements are shown up by my brilliant successes. Hell would be a better place if these disruptive elements concentrated their efforts on teaching humans how to envy, backbite, and criticize, instead of wasting their abysmal talents on each other.

Those weeks in the Lower Depths were very useful. They enabled me to refine my strategy, but I had already worked out my objective – had even set my sights on specific targets. The instructors in the Lower Depths were able to advise on the “How” but I was already very clear about the “What”.

In keeping with the plan outlined to Minister Blubwarp, the first thing I had to do was disappear. Crumblewit would have to be destroyed.

* * * * *