

LEFT BEHIND

(An empty stage except for a large, bare desk. Behind the desk sits a man dressed completely in white. Bach enters.)

BACH
Is this the complaint department?

ANGEL
The complaint department?

BACH
Yes.

ANGEL
How did you get in here?

BACH
I'm not sure. I mean, I woke up in the hallway.

ANGEL
You woke up?

BACH
Yes. Well, after I . . .

ANGEL
After you what?

BACH
You know.

ANGEL
No, I don't know. Did you just kill yourself?

BACH
No! Well, yes. I mean I did die. I think.

ANGEL
Did you or did you not kill yourself? You either did or you didn't.

BACH
Does it make a difference?

ANGEL
Of course it makes a difference. On a day like today? When the shit hits the fan, yes it does. If you were killed, welcome. How can I help you? If you did it yourself, you shouldn't be here.

That's my point. BACH

I don't understand. ANGEL

I killed myself because I was left behind. BACH

Left behind? ANGEL

Yes. I don't know how it happened, but I was left behind. BACH

I assume you're talking about the rapture. ANGEL

Yes. I'm talking about the rapture. I was left behind. BACH

A lot of people were left behind. ANGEL

A lot of nonbelievers. BACH

And your point? ANGEL

I'm not a nonbeliever. BACH

(laughs)
Yes. Well. ANGEL

What's so funny? BACH

A lot of nonbelievers say that. ANGEL

Are you listening to me? I'm not a nonbeliever. I believed on the Lord. I loved him, I served him, I preached his word for twenty five years. BACH

Uh huh. ANGEL

Over at Oakwood Baptist on Oakwood Boulevard. BACH

ANGEL
I'm not familiar with it.

BACH
How can you - It's one of the most faithful, spirit filled Baptist churches in Santa Rosa County. A membership of 300 under my leadership.

ANGEL
Congratulations.

BACH
And I'm still here!

ANGEL
I can see that.

BACH
My wife and two children were taken.

ANGEL
Okay.

BACH
I believed on the Lord as much as they did.

ANGEL
Sir.

BACH
Bach.

ANGEL
I beg your pardon?

BACH
Bach. My name is Bach. Like the composer.

ANGEL
Mr. Bach, I sympathize but I can't help you. There are thousands, millions of people who would love to complain, cajole, beg their way into heaven just like you - -

BACH
What do you mean, just like me? I'm not one of those people!

ANGEL
Listen to me. Even if what you say is correct, there is nothing I can do to help you. The rapture was eight hours ago. It's over. Finished. Finito. The people who were taken up were taken up. Just like the Good Book said, - - - -

BACH

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout"

ANGEL

Mr. Bach.

BACH

"With the voice of the Archangel and with the trump of God"

ANGEL

Mr. Bach.

BACH

"And the dead in Christ shall rise first - -"

TOGETHER

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds"

(Competing, louder)

TOGETHER (Continued)

"To meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord!"

ANGEL

First Thessalonians, chapter four, verses sixteen and seventeen.

BACH

Verse eighteen, "wherefore comfort one another with these words."

ANGEL

Very impressive.

BACH

I don't feel comforted!

ANGEL

Mr. Bach I'm very impressed with your knowledge of Bible scripture. However, it's not one of the qualifications for getting into the land of milk and honey.

BACH

I know that. I know that. I taught this stuff! It's not scripture knowledge, it's not church attendance, it's not being a preacher, a deacon, a Sunday school teacher. It's complete faith in, and total belief on the Lord.

ANGEL

On the Lord. You're absolutely right.

BACH

Which I did! I love the Lord! I am a bona fide, loving, diehard Christian servant of God!

ANGEL

Well, it's all very relative.

BACH

What the hell is that supposed to mean? What in God's name does that mean? You saying I didn't love the Lord?

ANGEL

It's not for me to say.

BACH (ready to fight)

That's like saying I didn't love my wife or my kids.

ANGEL

Well, I couldn't possibly be the judge of that.

BACH

And you can't judge this either. Trust me. I believed on the Lord. I loved him more than my own life! And I'm still here. Stuck on an earth, hurtling down the road of tribulation into the waiting arms of the Antichrist while everyone else who believed on the Lord is not here! You think that's fair?

ANGEL

I'm not to judge.

BACH

You goddamn right you're not to judge. Now, do your job, get me through the pearly gates or there's gonna be hell to pay.

ANGEL

Mr. Bach, I've got plenty of work to do. Now, if you'll excuse me . . .

BACH

You're sitting in front of an empty desk.

ANGEL (smiles)

The ways of the Lord are mysterious.

BACH

The ways of the Lord are fucked up! You have to find out what went wrong.

ANGEL

What went wrong?

BACH
Somebody dropped the ball on this one.

ANGEL
Excuse me?

BACH
Get off your sanctimonious ass and cut the crap! Find out who's responsible and get me the hell out of here!

ANGEL
How dare you! You arrogant, petulant little prick! Somebody dropped the ball, somebody screwed up. It couldn't have been you, could it?

BACH
I'm a man of God!

ANGEL
It couldn't be, perhaps you didn't love the Lord as much as you thought you did.

BACH
I loved the hell out of the Lord! Don't tell me I didn't love the Lord!

ANGEL
Stop shouting.

BACH
Why? There's nobody here! They're all singing and harpin' and hallalujah-ing! Please, you gotta help me! I'm telling you, I can feel it in the deepest recesses of my soul, something went wrong! I was supposed to be taken up into the heavens!

ANGEL
In the twinkling of an eye, I know, I know. Look. I sympathize with you. My heart goes out to you. I can imagine how distressful it would be knowing you're going to spend the rest of eternity burning in ceaseless agony and terror.

BACH
Oh my God.

ANGEL
I'm really sorry.

BACH
So what are you going to do about it?

ANGEL

What am I . . ? There is nothing I can do.

BACH

Bull shit.

ANGEL

My hands are tied. What do you want me to do?

BACH

You're not going to investigate, even if there's some kind of screw up.

ANGEL

A screw up? A screw up? The rapture is over. The big day is history. It's like missing a plane taking off to Paris. Whether you were late arriving at the airport or the airlines lost your reservation, bingo! The plane is over the middle of the Atlantic Ocean and you're out of luck, my friend.

BACH

In that case, I'll wait for another plane.

ANGEL

Wait for another - What? Another rapture? That's ludicrous!

BACH

No second chance?

ANGEL

I'm afraid not.

BACH

No post rapture investigation?

ANGEL

What for? God never screws up.

BACH

He did this time!

ANGEL

Will you stop shouting?

BACH (to the room)

Why? Afraid somebody will HEAR ME???

ANGEL

You missed the boat, pal. Now, look. I'm almost out of here. I'm just sitting at this desk for the next few hours sort of as a courtesy.

(Bach stands up and pulls a gun out of his coat. He points it straight at Angel's chest.)

BACH

Then do me the courtesy of getting me outta here.

ANGEL

What do you think you're going to do with that?

BACH

Tell me again you can't help me and you'll find out.

ANGEL

Are you out of your mind? I'm an angel, for God's sakes! You can't shoot me!

BACH

You wanna see?

ANGEL (laughs)

You're being ridiculous! It'll go right through me.

BACH

You sure about that?

(Pause)

ANGEL (nervous laughter)

Of course I'm sure. God wouldn't allow it. He's not gonna allow one of his angels to get killed by a, a bullet. Are you freaking kidding me?

BACH

Just like he wouldn't allow me to get left behind.

(Angel thinks on this.)

BACH (Continued)

Uh huh! Hah! See what I'm saying? Not so sure now, are you, Gabriel?

ANGEL

My name's not Gabriel.

BACH

Look at me. I. don't. Care.

ANGEL

Calm down. You're making a terrible mistake.

BACH

Maybe. Maybe not. Maybe I can shoot you, maybe I'm making a total ass of myself. Maybe I was accidentally left behind. And maybe you're going to get in touch with someone and let me take the peace train to the land of milk and honey.

ANGEL

Believe me, it's not gonna work.

BACH

Then let's see if this works.

(Bach pulls the hammer back.)

ANGEL

Hold on. I'll get my supervisor.

(Angel reaches in drawer and gets out a key and a little sign with string.)

BACH

Who's your supervisor?

(Angel gets up from chair)

ANGEL

None of your business. Jesus. Some people. They just can't fucking take no for an answer.

(Angel goes upstage and hangs sign on a nail. It says, "Back in ten minutes".)

ANGEL (Continued)

Fucking pain in the ass.

BACH

I'm sorry it had to come to this.

ANGEL

Yeah, right.

(Angel goes to upstage door and unlocks it.)

BACH

I'm a desperate man.

ANGEL

Just shut up and let me see what I can do.

(As Angel exits)

ANGEL (Continued)

I can't believe this. You know this is gonna make me look like hell upstairs.

BACH

I'll wait right here.

ANGEL

Yeah, wait right here.

(Angel exits. Bach sits there silently by himself. After several seconds of looking around and getting bored, he starts to sing to himself.)

BACH

"Swing lowwww, sweet chariot. Comin' for to carry me home. Swinngg lowwwwww, sweet - -"

(Door opens. Flustered woman comes in.)

MIRANDA

- - bunch of inept, arrogant, misogynistic cretins. I can't believe this. Oh. Hello.

BACH

Hello.

MIRANDA

I didn't know anyone else was here. I'm sorry if I disturbed you.

BACH

You're not disturbing me.

MIRANDA

I cannot believe this. I would never have dreamed that the powers from on high could screw up something like the rapture. My husband's gone. My kids are gone. Even the dog is gone! What the hell is that all about? The dog? He and my family take off in the rapture and I'm left behind? I'm a Sunday School teacher, for God's sake!

BACH

That has nothing to do with it.

MIRANDA

I know it has nothing to do with it. Don't you think I know it has nothing to do with it? I taught this stuff, okay? But it should count for something.

BACH

Did you believe on the Lord with all your heart?

MIRANDA

You know, that is so insulting. Why would I be upset if I didn't believe on the Lord with all my heart, okay? Yes, I did! I believed on the Lord with all my heart to the point where nobody even wanted to have anything to do with me because I talked about believing on the Lord with all my heart all the time, okay? Maybe that's why I was left behind. Maybe they thought I was a pain in the ass. Bunch of self righteous hypocrites. You gotta cigarette?

BACH

Nah. Sorry.

MIRANDA

Don't smoke?

BACH

I quit fifteen years ago.

MIRANDA

Right around the time you started believing on the Lord?

BACH

Yeah, as a matter of fact.

MIRANDA

Lotta good that did you.

BACH

It just seemed like the right thing to do. You know, your body the temple of the Lord and all.

MIRANDA

Right, right.

BACH

Sorry I can't help you.

MIRANDA

It's okay. No big deal. I quit years ago too. But with all this bureaucratic crap I'm running into, it's the perfect time to start up again. Jeez. Ain't that something. I haven't thought of smoking a cigarette since I was in college.

BACH

Bible college?

MIRANDA

Duh! My god! That's right! I went to Bible college for four years! Four precious years of my life, the prime years of my youth, never to be retrieved, and for what?

(Hollering at the wall to an imaginary jury.)

MIRANDA (Continued)

To be left behind and forgotten like some old hooker on a street corner? How's that for dedication to the Lord?! Buncha bureaucratic creeps!

(to Bach)

What are you doing here?

BACH

Waiting.

MIRANDA

For what? The rapture? It's over.

BACH

I know the rapture is over. I'm waiting for the gentleman that was here to return.

MIRANDA

To do what?

BACH

To get me in.

MIRANDA

They missed you too? Buncha creeps.

BACH

It was an oversight. He's straightening it out right now.

MIRANDA

Well, that's what I'm saying. It was an oversight, I'm not supposed to be here and somebody better get to the bottom of this because I've got people who were swooped up in the blink of an eye that are waiting for me as we speak. So, this guy's gonna fix it for you.

BACH

He's not "fixing" anything. There's nothing to fix. It was just an oversight.

MIRANDA

Yeah, right.

BACH

And he's straightening it out.

MIRANDA
They screwed you up too. Admit it.

BACH
It was an oversight.

MIRANDA
Call it what you want, Mister. Boy, talk about denial.

BACH
Bach.

MIRANDA
What's that?

BACH
Bach. My name is Bach.

MIRANDA
Like the composer.

BACH
Exactly.

MIRANDA
My name's Miranda. Like the rights.

BACH
Right.

MIRANDA
That's what my husband always said. Always joking with his pals, "I have the right to remain silent!" We met at a singles social at our church.

BACH
Did he believe on the Lord?

MIRANDA
That's why I went out with him. He believed on the Lord, I believed on the Lord. That's why I'm so confused. What am I doing sitting in a bare office chatting with some nonbeliever when everybody else - - -

BACH
I'm not a nonbeliever! What are you talking about? I'll have you know I was a preacher of God's word.

MIRANDA
A lot of good that did you.

BACH
About as much good as being a Sunday School teacher.

MIRANDA

Touche'.

BACH

I'm tired of talking about this. Where is that guy?

MIRANDA

I just wanna know what I gotta do to fix this because this is not right. This is wrong! Can you imagine how I felt when I came home?

BACH

I can imagine.

MIRANDA

Nobody was around. I thought something was weird, but I never, never in my wildest dreams would have thought it was the rapture. Why would I? I was still here! My family was gone, my friends were gone, my dog was gone!

BACH

You mentioned that.

MIRANDA

Everyone was missing. Except crazy Mrs. Fowler. I knew if the rapture happened she wasn't going anywhere. But I never, never in a million years would have thought I'd be staring at her ugly mug when the big dance went down. God, how humiliating! So, now what? Now I'm gonna have to spend the end times with her? Go through the tribulation with that old bag while everyone I ever cared about is partying in Paradise? Is that's what's going on here? We're gonna await the arrival of the Antichrist together with the mark of the Beast stamped on our foreheads while the whole world goes to hell in an apocalyptic nightmare?

(on the verge of tears)

Spunky!

BACH

What?

MIRANDA

(she begins crying.)

My dog. I had him since he was a puppy! I treated him better than a person! And he's the one who get's sucked up in the twinkling of an eye, little bastard!

(She's sobbing.)

BACH

Hey, hey, hey. What are you doing? Come on. You don't want to do that.

(MORE)

BACH (Continued)

This angel comes back in here and sees you blubbering like that, that's not good. He's gonna think you're desperate or something. It might screw my thing up, you know?

MIRANDA

He was an angel? You talked to an angel?

BACH

No. I mean, I don't think so. I - - well, I think he was an angel, I mean, he looked kind of angelic, he was all in white.

MIRANDA

That doesn't mean anything.

BACH

He sounded kinda like an angel, authoritative and all. Kind of a pain in the ass, actually, but . . . Yes, I'm sure he was an angel.

MIRANDA

How'd you get him to help you?

(Pause)

MIRANDA (Continued)

Come on! How'd he help you?

BACH

I just told him the situation and there had been a mistake, I mean, some kind of oversight and could he look into it for me and that's what he's doing right now. He's looking into it for me. He'll be back. He should be back in a minute and then I'm outta here. As a matter of fact, you might want to wait out in the hall there, because he's gonna be dealing with me for a few minutes and then I'm sure he can get to you.

MIRANDA

What do you think this is, the DMV?

BACH

You know. Protocol.

MIRANDA

Wait a second. What's going on here?

BACH

Nothing.

MIRANDA

What are you hiding? Why do you want me to leave?

BACH

I don't, I'm just saying, when he comes in here, he's gonna see you and then it's gonna start a whole different thing and I'm gonna be sitting here waiting. So, I'm saying, when he gets done with me I'm sure he'll deal with your little problem after that.

MIRANDA

My little problem.

BACH

Yeah.

MIRANDA

Something's going on here. This isn't some little oversight. They screwed you just like they screwed me.

BACH

No, no.

MIRANDA

You believed on the Lord with all your heart, right?

BACH

Well, yeah.

MIRANDA

And you got left out of the rapture just like me! It's not just us! How many of us are there anyway?

BACH

Of who?

MIRANDA

Us!

BACH

No, don't clump me with a bunch of nonbelievers.

MIRANDA

Do you think - - -? What if there's people all over the world like us that got left behind? What if there's thousands of people who are just like us, people who believed on the Lord and now there sitting in sterile, white offices just like this one trying to get to the bottom of this - - -

(to the wall again)

Big, BUREAUCRATIC NIGHTMARE!

BACH

I don't think hollering is gonna help.

(Pause)

MIRANDA

Wait a second. You think maybe this is some sort of test?

BACH

What? Waiting in this room?

MIRANDA

Yes! Like a test of our faith.

(she looks suspiciously around the room)

Maybe somebody's watching us right now.

(Bach scrutinizes the empty room.)

BACH

I don't see any cameras.

MIRANDA

Why would you? I mean, God being all knowing and omniscient. I'd be very surprised to see a camera in here, you know?

BACH

Yeah. Yeah. Maybe you're right.

MIRANDA

They're letting us think we were left behind, that we're separated from our loved ones and they're testing our faith because we were the strong ones. We were the ones who believed on the Lord more than anybody and so we're part of this little exam, to see if we have what it takes to be the most faithful of all. That's it. That's it! We've got to be on our best behavior so when this angel guy comes back he'll let us in and everything will be okay.

BACH

Wait a second, this is my angel guy.

MIRANDA

He'll be laughing and pointing at us and telling us it was all a test, a big cosmic joke and he'll step out of the way and open that door and swoop his arm in a grand gesture and say, "Come on in, you knuckleheads!"

BACH

Sort of a heavenly Candid Camera, huh?

MIRANDA

Exactly!

BACH

A celestial Alan Funt looking through a peephole behind the diner counter while we get squirted with a ketchup dispenser.

MIRANDA

Why didn't I think of this before, before I got all bent out of shape? I hope I didn't blow it.

(to the wall)

I'm sorry! Everything's fine!

(sings)

"When you least expect it, you're elected, laughter's on its wayyyy . . ."

BACH

I wish this guy was on his way. This is ridiculous.

MIRANDA

Don't worry, we're in like Flint. Faith! Faith!

BACH

I hope you're right.

MIRANDA

What do you mean? You losing faith?

BACH

With all your blubbering and dissing Mrs. Fowler and . . .

(Bach shows the gun in his hand.)

BACH (Continued)

. . . this.

MIRANDA

You pointed a gun at him?

BACH

Well, yeah.

MIRANDA

An angel? A representative of the Kingdom of God?

BACH

I told him he didn't do something, I was going to blow him away.

MIRANDA

And he fell for it? What is a gun going to do to an angel?

BACH

That's what he said.

MIRANDA

I thought angels were more clever than that.

BACH

If he was an angel.

MIRANDA

You said he was an angel.

BACH

I said I believe he was an angel. Wouldn't have mattered anyway.

MIRANDA

What do you mean?

(Bach pops open the chamber and holds it up to her.)

BACH

It's empty.

MIRANDA

Oh. Oh! Well, I'd think if he were really an angel he would've known it was empty.

BACH

Whatever. It did the trick.

MIRANDA

I wouldn't be flaunting that around, just in case, you know. Somebody's watching.

(At this thought, Bach quickly shoves the gun back into his coat.)

BACH

Where the hell is he anyway?

MIRANDA

Maybe he's not coming back.

BACH

What are you saying?

MIRANDA

Maybe he has no intention of letting you in. Maybe he just told you that to get you out of his hair. Maybe he's watching you right now, waiting for you to get fed up and leave.

BACH

No. No, that's bullshit. He said he'd be right back. He better be right back or. . . .

MIRANDA

Or what?

BACH (to the walls)
Or somebody's gonna suffer the consequences!

MIRANDA
What are you talking about? What consequences?

(Bach pulls the gun out and
brandishes it.)

MIRANDA (Continued)
What's the matter with you? You've got the gun in here, he's
out there. You threaten him, he leaves and you think he's
gonna come back? You think he's stupid? He's probably off
somewhere having lunch, laughing his ass off, telling his
fellow angels what a moron he just met.

BACH
Hey!

MIRANDA
I'm just saying.

BACH
No. He said he was coming back.

MIRANDA
And your point?

BACH
He's an angel. He has to come back. He gave me his word.

MIRANDA
And we weren't supposed to be left behind in the rapture.

BACH
No. No, this is bullshit! He promised me.

(Bach gets up and starts
scrutinizing the room, looking for
a sign, a clue.)

BACH (Continued)
He said he was coming back and if he doesn't come back. . . .

(Bach looks at Miranda. She looks
quizzically at him. Bach suddenly
grabs her and holds her facing out
and holds the gun to her head.)

MIRANDA
What are you doing?

BACH

Somebody's gonna suffer the consequences!

MIRANDA

What the hell is the matter with you? I'm on your side!

BACH (under his breath)

Shut up and play along until somebody comes in here to rescue you.

MIRANDA

What do you mean, "play along"? What the hell has gotten into you? Let go of me!

BACH

That's right! I'm snappin'! I'm snappin'! Somebody doesn't fix this big snafu right now, there's gonna be hell to pay!

MIRANDA

They might not even be able to hear you! What if nobody's even watching?

BACH

No! They're watching us, all right! You said it yourself!

MIRANDA

I was speculating! Can't somebody speculate?

BACH

"When you least expect it, you're elected, laughter's on its wayyyyyy!"

MIRANDA

You're hurting me!

BACH

"It's funnnn to laugh at yourself! Like other people dooo!"

MIRANDA

Please! I just wanna go home!

BACH

Home! With weird Mrs. Fowler and watch the tribulation on TV? You don't wanna go to Paradise and see ol' Spunky?

MIRANDA

I don't know! I don't know what I want! I don't want this!

BACH

Follow my lead. Come on, I'll get us both out of here.

MIRANDA

You're crazy! Helllpp!

BACH

There ya go! There ya go! Keep it up! Let those bastards hear you!

MIRANDA

You're out of your mind!

BACH

You damn right I'm out of my mind. I've had it! Let me in, dammit! Let me in or I'm gonna blow her away!

MIRANDA

Helllp!

BACH

Keep screaming!

(The door opens.)

MIRANDA

Oh, God!

(Angel enters. Bach lets go of her.)

ANGEL

Mr. Bach.

BACH

Yes.

ANGEL

I have some wonderful news. I'm so embarrassed. It seems there was some bureaucratic snafu as you called it and you were inadvertently left behind.

BACH

What?

ANGEL

It looks like you made the grade after all.

BACH

You mean it? You're serious?

ANGEL

Have a great time in Paradise.

BACH

I can go now?

ANGEL

Why wait? Your family and all the saints are eagerly awaiting your arrival.

BACH

Oh. I. I . . .

(Bach looks around, ecstatically
confused. He looks at Miranda.)

BACH (Continued)

Goodbye. I'm sorry about the

MIRANDA

He molested me!

ANGEL

He what?

BACH

She's kidding! I didn't molest you! Come on, you're next!
I'll see you up there.

MIRANDA

What? I . . . yes. Okay. See you up there.

BACH

It was nice to meet you. Good luck.

MIRANDA

Likewise. Have fun in eternity.

BACH (to Angel)

Thank you. Sorry for the altercation.

(Bach exits. The door shuts. Angel
stares silently at Miranda.)

MIRANDA

He did it.

ANGEL

Can I help you?

MIRANDA

He went to Paradise, because he believed on the Lord. Right?
Am I right?

(Pause)

MIRANDA (Continued)

I believed on the Lord too.

ANGEL

Miranda.

MIRANDA

How do you know my name?

ANGEL

Why don't you go home? You look exhausted.

MIRANDA

Why can't I go too?

ANGEL

Go home. You'll be better off. Believe me.

MIRANDA

He didn't go to Paradise after all, did he? Did he??

ANGEL

Go home. Go back to Mrs. Fowler. She's waiting for you.

MIRANDA

No.

ANGEL

Yes. Mrs. Fowler could use your company. You could both use each other's help in the weeks to come.

MIRANDA

What did you do to him? Where did he go?

ANGEL

None of your concern. I think it best you leave now.

(Miranda backs up to the door.)

MIRANDA

I. I believed on the Lord.

ANGEL

I'm sure you did.

(Miranda begins to exit. One last, horrible thought.)

MIRANDA

Oh my God.

(Miranda exits.)

(LIGHTS DOWN.)