

## Satan Corporation

by Curtis Chang

Characters: Boss, Smithers, Johnson, Kinkaid

Scene is a corporate boardroom table with four chairs. Above the table is a corporate looking sign, "Satan Corporation: World Wide Leader In Temptation Technology" Smithers (dressed in business suit) is sitting with business notepad. Johnson, similarly dressed and with briefcase, enters the room and barely acknowledges Smithers. Finally, Smithers timidly clears his throat. He seems to be the shy, timid type while Johnson seems to be the bullying aggressive type.

Smithers: So, why do you think the Boss called this meeting?

Johnson: What, you don't know?

Smithers: No, I wasn't given the agenda beforehand.

Johnson: Well, of course you're weren't given it beforehand! No one just gives you anything around here -- what do you think, we're running a namby pamby charity here like the Competition. You're new to the marketing department, aren't you?

Smithers: Well, actually, yes I am new. Just arrived last week, as a matter of fact. But I've worked in marketing for years when I was still... uh, before I... you know, when I was still (pointing upwards)...

Johnson: We call it our internship years.

Smithers: Yes, hm, I do suppose it was my internship. It was shorter than I thought it would be.

Johnson: Which firm?

Smithers: Phillip Morris.

Johnson (slightly impressed): Well, they have given us some of our best new recruits. But, listen, rookie, this is the big leagues, so don't think you can just waltz in here and climb to the top.

Smithers: Oh, no. I guess I'm still trying to figure out everything. I feel so unprepared.

Johnson: Yeah, well, the best thing you could do is shut up and don't do anything. It'll minimize your appearance of stupidity. Just watch, kid, because today you're about to see the master here carve up someone who thinks he's a hot shot. You're about to see some moves you never saw while climbing that piddly Phillip Morris.

Smithers: I'm sorry. I don't understand what you mean.

Johnson: For Beelzebub's sake, you really are ignorant, aren't you? (eyes him for a moment). OK, the reason the Boss called the marketing department together is the Competition apparently has launched a new product in the Middle East Market, and he's asked---

Smithers: Why does the Boss care about such a tiny market?

Johnson: I don't know -- maybe the Boss knows something we don't know -- he never tells us the whole story. Like I said, Rule No. 1 around here: Figure things out for yourself. Rule No. 2: Don't ever interrupt me again.

Smithers: Uh, yes, of course.

Johnson: As I was saying, the Competition has launched a supposedly hot new product. It's got a brand name something like "Love of God" or something cheezy like that. Anyways the Boss is all worked up over it. So, he's called us to come up with a counter offensive. Now, I'm senior guy in this department, but my sources tell me that Kinkaid -- who is no. 2 here -- is going to use this meeting to try to upstage me. Kinkaid's been jockeying for my position forever and he thinks this is going to be his day to shine in front of the Boss. But, the little bastard is going to be in for a surprise.

Smithers: What are you planning to do?

Johnson (eyes him suspiciously for a moment and then decides to relax): Kiddo, I'm only going to tell you this because you are so incredibly naive I predict you are going to last about one day in management around here. See, the key in these situations is to pretend the other guy has center stage. Let him make his pitch first, but then BAM, shoot it down in front of the Boss. And then, you just happen to have your own proposal ready.

Smithers: Wow, that's really clever.

Johnson: Kid, you don't know what clever is. You should've seen me back when... [Kinkaid walks in]... never mind, it's beyond you. [whispers]: Just shut up and try not to get in the way.

Kinkaid [coolly]: Hello, Johnson.

Johnson: [just as coolly]: Hello, Kinkaid. Ready for the meeting?

Kinkaid: I was born ready.

Johnson: Yes, we'll see.

Kinkaid: You must be Smithers, the fresh meat they brought in.

Smithers: Uh, yes.

Kinkaid: Well, you've arrive just in time for, shall we say, [eyeing Johnson], a key time of transition here in Marketing.

Johnson grunts.

The Boss walks in. Everyone stiffens in attention. The Boss glares malevolently at everyone. He is clearly an intimidating figure. Johnson and Kinkaid compete to adjust his seat, get him a glass of water, etc.

Boss: Oh, stop it already, you bunch of sycophants. If you would spend more time doing your jobs instead of getting your lipstick all over my butt, maybe we would have already wiped out the Competition already. Maybe I wouldn't have to call emergency meetings like this!

Kinkaid: I'm sorry, sir, but don't you worry, I've...

Boss (enraged): Who said I was worried? Are you saying I'm nervous about the Competition? That old Fool never scared me! Everyone else at the company scurried around cowering before Him, but not me! That's why he pushed me out... the old Fool couldn't stand a strong presence like me. That's why the Competition just has a bunch of wimps working for it now. It wasn't fair, I tell you, He knew I was more chairman of the board material than He was.

Johnson (who has been smirking at Kinkaid's discomfort): Yes, sir, it was so unfair. But we'll nail Him this time, won't we, sir?

Boss: Yes, you bet we'll nail Him, especially now that the Fool has made a major blunder. He has unveiled a major new product at a recent gathering by the Jordan River. Hah -- a supposedly revolutionary new development and He unveils it in the middle of nowhere. Typical of His incompetence! Anyways the product is called "The Love of God." I know, I know, it is not only cheezy but it's actually not even really new. The Competition has repackaged their tired old line in a supposedly far more accessible form. The new gimmick that is supposed to make it "far more accessible than ever" is, get this, the Fool has sent his own son to represent him in the sales drive. Can you believe it, the Fool's Son is actually on Earth!

The three junior executives gasp, clearly frightened.

Johnson: Oh, my devil! The Son is on the move?

Kinkaid: Boss, you never said anything about going up against the Son!

Smithers: Are all our subsidiaries in danger then?

Boss: Idiots! Dolts! Must I do all the thinking around here? We're not the ones in danger, He is! This is the moment of our greatest opportunity! By sending His own Son, the Fool has left himself vulnerable. His Son is more accessible than ever to the mass market, yes, but He is also more accessible than ever to us! Don't you see? Not only can any pathetic man or woman get close to Him, but so can we! And if we can get close to Him, we can also buy Him out! We can make him an offer to leave the Competition and join us! And if we can get the Fool's Son to sell out to us, then...

Johnson: Then, we knock out the whole "Love of God" product line! This could lead to our monopoly on the whole market!

Boss: That's right, Johnson. Remember, Rule No. 1: Always go after the Competition's representatives first. And Rule No. 2: Don't you ever interrupt me again.

You see my brilliant plan: we buy out the Son and there's no one left to represent the Competition, the Love of God is driven from the market, and everyone will have to come to us. But, also, hah, hah, hah, this is what is best about my plan, the Fool is going to be so broken up over His Son, He's going to be wiped out. I know the old Fool, he loves His Son too much. I've always known that's His Achilles heel -- He loves too much. And now I'm going to grab that heel and break him!

Smithers: So, sir, excuse me, I hope I'm not interrupting, but if I understand correctly, what you want from the Marketing Dept. is to package an offer that will entice the Son to sell out to us.

Boss: Yes, yes, that's what you're here for. It's about time you nitwits earned your keep. Now, what I want specifically is an offer that will make him desert His own product line. You see, the Son is not just trying to gain market acceptance of this "Love of God," but He relies on it Himself. The guy is the biggest user of the product Himself -- that's what makes him such an effective representative. So, if we can offer him a package that makes the Love of God seem inferior, then, gentleman, He's in our pocket.

Kinkaid stands up: Sir, your plan is positively brilliant, just brilliant. And I think I have just what you're looking for.

(Johnson is smirking at Smithers, and signals with his hands in the manner, "Don't worry, I've got it")

Kinkaid continues: I've been working all night for a contingency such as this and I think you'll like what I've prepared.

Boss: Go on, Kinkaid.

Kinkaid: Yes, well, all right, then. (He is nervous, adjusting his tie. glancing at Johnson, etc. But he gains confidence as the presentation goes on.). Let's take a look at the profile of our target here. He's away from home for the first time, so he's feeling lonely. He wants to feel some comfort. Well, what is the biggest problem with relying on the Love of God for someone in that situation? It's too intangible! The guy wants to feel comfort, feel companionship, but you can't taste, touch, see, smell the Love of God. But our products? Well, huh, huh, huh, boy can you touch, see and smell them! (Flicks on the video showing images of food, sex, etc.). Sensuality, gentleman! That's the competitive advantage that has always marked Satan Corporation! It's what we're good at, and it's how we can win the Son over to us.

Boss: That's true, we have scored some of our biggest coups using the sensuality angle: David with Bathsheba, King Herod...

Kinkaid: So, we put together a package that makes him question, "Hmmm, maybe the love of God is not enough. Maybe I need something more tangible, that I can feel bodily." We get him to start testing what he has relied on for so long, to start demanding physical evidence of love. Before

long, he's got to turn to us for a quick hit of something physical and tangible. And after a few times, the love of God seems nothing but an abstract concept.

Boss: I like it. I like it. It's simple, yet plays to our strength and attacks the Competition's weakness.

Johnson clears his throat very loudly

Kinkaid: Do you have a problem, Johnson?

Johnson: The Good Kid Phenomenon.

Kinkaid: What are you talking about?

Johnson: The Good Kid Phenomenon. Your proposal isn't going to work.

Kinkaid: Sir, my colleague here is talking gibberish. Please ignore him. As I was saying...

Boss: No, wait, what's your point, Johnson?

Johnson motions to Smithers in the manner of "Watch this.": The Good Kid Phenomenon.

Kinkaid here says (Johnson imitates him mockingly): "Let's take a look at the profile of our target." Yes, let's do, shall we? The Son clearly comes from a religious background, right? He belongs to a respectable family, right? He's smart, done well in school, right? Sir, I know this profile, I've run some campaigns against religious weekend retreats of such kids, and 9 out of 10 of them grew up as the Good Kids. While the Bad Kids were out drinking or having sex, the Good Kids were at home studying. Sure, they have all sorts of sensual thoughts and desires, but they're too repressed, too guilt ridden to actually act on them. It's actually rather pathetic, but it's true. And in my opinion, this Son has got to be one of those Good Kids. He's not going to bite on just a crass offer of sex or drink or even food.

Boss: I see what you're driving at. Kinkaid's package may lack, how shall we say, the proper sophistication. Well, do you have any ideas of your own?

Kinkaid: Oh, I'm sure he does.

Johnson: Well, actually, I have been working on one. What we want is a package that will reveal the shortcomings of simply relying on the Love of God, right? OK, let's attack this from the angle of this, this, this Love thing. Think back to our internship years, when we still let ourselves get trapped by Love, at least of the generic variety. Smithers, you are our most recent arrival from internship, what was your experience of Love like that?

Smithers: Well, it seems so long ago, I've forgotten most of it. But let's see, hmmm. I remember writing a lot of poetry about a woman. And yes, waiting by the phone. I remember that: waiting by the phone for her to call.

Kinkaid: Oh, please, this is making me sick.

Johnson (ignores him): And Smithers, how did it make you feel?

Smithers: How did it make me feel? Well, it does feel so distant but actually Kinkaid is right, it did make me feel a little sick, sort of queasy and mushy inside. Everytime I was going to see her, I would feel a little limp and, and, I remember going to a party and always watching how she responded to me, anxiously figuring out if she was sending me signals or not.

Kinkaid: Johnson, why are you reminding us all of stuff we would rather forget? If you don't have a real proposal, then....

Boss: Silence, Kinkaid! I see where Johnson is heading... and I like it.

Johnson: Thank you, Boss. Let me make myself more clear for the more dull witted folks here. Before we arrived here, how did Love make Smithers and the rest of us feel? It made us feel WEAK! WEAK and DEPENDENT, gentlemen! When you experience love, it means you are dangling on the every whim of your lover. Your lover has POWER OVER YOU, power to make you feel vulnerable and needy, power to make you a weepy, waiting, poetry writing weakling!

Boss: (leaps up and pounds the table): And I said no!!!! I said no to that kind of weak and dependent existence!!! I said no to the Fool who would have me constantly look to Him, like some

sniveling mortal gazing on a woman at a party! I said no to the Fool who would have me wait for Him, like some wimp sitting by the phone! I said no to Love!!!!

Johnson: And that, gentleman, is why he is our Boss, and what makes Satan Corporation the greatest corporation in the universe. Because like our Boss, we say no to Love. Instead, like our Boss, we say you can only rely on yourself. Only your own will can give you security. Only your own plans can give you independence. Only your own power can free you from weakness and dependence. If I may use the slogan of one of our most financially successful subsidiaries, "You Are Your Own Rock!"

Kinkaid: So, Johnson, get down to specifics, what are you saying we offer him?

Johnson: I'm saying we offer him everything. Everything that will make him completely independent and self sufficient. All the combined power of all our subsidiaries. All our resources for Him to make his own plan and carry it out. Everything that the Love of God is simply unable to offer. We give him all, everything. He just has to say, "Yes, I want that" and boom - he's already deserted the Love of God and come over to us.

Boss: (walks over and pats Johnson on shoulder): Johnson, you, you are just so... wicked!

Johnson: Aw, gee, thanks Boss. You don't have to say that.

Smithers clears his throat and half raises his hand: Ah, um, excuse me Boss. By your reports, is the Son walking around the Jordan with a savings account?

Boss: What?

Smithers: Does the Son have a savings account? Does he have health insurance? Or do you know if he is a pre-med or pre-law? Does he show any anxiety about his G.P.A.? Is he on an internship right now?

Johnson: Smithers, what are you doing?

Smithers: I'm asking if the Son has shown any of the classic signs of pursuing security. I'm asking if He is trying to make sure he has enough power to acquire a safe future.

Boss: Well, no, all the reports show he's walking around with no money, no real home of his own, no real career track.

Smithers: I would expect as much. We all have heard about the Son, haven't we. We've heard he is like a lion, wild and passionate. They say he's reckless, willing to ignore what seems like the conventional odds. They say he seems to almost welcome danger and risk. That's why we're all scared of him, isn't it -- I mean except you, Boss, of course. What I'm saying is, this guy is not safe. And he's not out for safe plans and secure finances.

Johnson: Smithers, can I have a word with you outside...

Boss: Wait, so are you saying he wouldn't be interested in Johnson's offer? That it would seem too sterile, too predictable?

Smithers: That's exactly what I'm saying. Wherever this guy goes, excitement follows.

Whatever this guy does, adventure is in the air. I know his type. He's a thrill seeker, he wants to live on the edge. He wants to go all out. To feel passion.

Boss: But, but, but all those things sound suspiciously like a life of Love.

Smithers: Yes, but Love also requires something out of a person. Love requires deep commitment to experience true passion. Love requires steely discipline to follow through on a true adventure. And that is the product's main weakness! Why has our corporation succeeded in achieving divorce rates of over 50%? Because people don't want to put up the commitment and discipline! They like the feeling of falling in love, but they don't want to do what it takes to experience true love. They fear such a life will be boring! And that, by no great coincidence, is also why most people fear a life with God. They fear God's love will be boring!

Boss: There's more to you than meets the eye, Smithers.

Johnson: Tell me about it.

Smithers: So, I propose we offer him excitement and adventure -- but all with a coupon, "Free From Commitment and Discipline." We offer him thrills galore, without him having to worry about anything else. If my thinking proves correct, he's going to then start looking at the Love of God as restricting, as no fun. Pretty soon, the Love of God will seem like just a set of rules that constrain him. And then, boy, we've got him!

Johnson and Kinkaid begin to shout out loud to the Boss, advocating for their own proposals, with Smithers joining in.

Boss: Silence! Give me all of your proposals. One of them is bound to work. Kinkaid, call my secretary to book me a flight for the Jordan wilderness. Gentlemen, the time is now! We are going to nail this guy.