

# Up Pops the Devil

Excerpt from uncorrected page proofs

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## Prologue

Sean Jones paced outside The Boss's door. He was in trouble and he knew it. He paused in front of the plate glass windows that comprised the left wall of the reception area and stared at his reflection. He might have the look of a successful 3Sixes executive with his tailored suit and designer shoes, but the summons from The Boss told a different story.

Sean had joined 3Sixes a couple of years ago, worked his way up the ranks from rookie tempter to his present position as closer. Once a soul was deemed a strong candidate for 3Sixes, it was Sean's job to close the deal and reel him in. His normal caseload was about a thousand souls, more than any of his peers. Sean took great pride in his work and his eighty percent close rate indicated he was good at it, though this summons from The Boss did make him wonder.

Sean cast a quick glance at the receptionist, who had done nothing more than acknowledge his presence with a slight incline of her head. Evidently, pacing executives were nothing new to her. He didn't know if that made him feel better or worse. He began pacing again.

"Jones!" a loud voice bellowed. "Get in here, now!"

Feeling like a chastised little boy, Sean cast a baleful glance at the receptionist. He was grateful this time for her indifference. She didn't even look up.

"Pull yourself together," he muttered to himself as he turned the knob on The Boss's office door.

"Are you an idiot, Jones?" The Boss began before Sean could even close the door fully. "How did you lose one of our best men? All you had to do was keep him busy doing our work and you couldn't even do that." The Boss paused in his tirade and let his eyes travel from the top of Sean's balding head down to his Gucci shoes. "Tell me why I shouldn't demote you on the spot? There's a seat in Third Hades with your name on it."

The mention of Third Hades sent shivers of fear up Sean's spine. That's where The Boss sent employees who were no longer useful to him. He moved closer to The Boss's desk. "Give me another chance. I know I can win him back."

