

THE BURDEN OF ANGELS

by

Steve Weissman

Registered

13 Souter Street
Nerang, Qld 4211
Australia
+61 (0) 420 679 874
steve@theGreatQuest.net

FADE IN:

EXT. HEAVENLY CLOUDS - DAY

GOD sits on a golden throne, peers through bifocals that perch on his large nose as he reads from a gold-edged scroll.

Five glowing angels, wearing white robes, mid-20s, hover before him. The four closest, FLETCHER, SAMANTHA, BARBARA and ERWIN, focus their attention on God. Behind them, HUMPHREY plays with his hands.

GOD

Yes, well... Celestial Angel class Four thousand, nine hundred and fifty-two, now comes the hardest part of your training. A trip to Earth, to help humans dealing with extreme suffering. If you perform well, it will do much for your angelic career.

God BURPS.

GOD

Right. Fletcher?

Timid Fletcher kneels before the throne.

FLETCHER

Yes, Lord.

Humphrey reaches deep into his right robe's pocket and pulls out a piece of paper. He smiles and fiddles with it.

GOD

What is your project?

FLETCHER

With your approval, Lord, I have plans to rescue passengers aboard the Titanic.

GOD

You'll only save about seven hundred people. Why do you doubt yourself?

Fletcher drops his head.

FLETCHER

Uh, when I was a human, I, uh
--

GOD

Angels have more potential than humans.

FLETCHER

Sorry, Lord, next time I'll aim higher.

Fletcher stands, floats forward.

God sprinkles holy water on Fletcher's right hand and he disappears.

Humphrey puts the paper in his left pocket, closes his eyes and spins around four times.

GOD

Samantha?

Ex-Frenchwoman Samantha curtsies.

SAMANTHA

Wee wee, my Lord.

GOD

What are your plans?

Staggering, Humphrey reaches into his left pocket and pulls out the paper. He bounces with glee.

SAMANTHA

S'l vous plait, my Lord...
1619, Africa. Je long to assist le poor slaves.

GOD

Very noble, you might be able to save about ten thousand. Much improved.

God smiles.

GOD

Keep aiming high, Samantha. One day you may become a luminous Angel.

Samantha giggles, her whole body glows.

SAMANTHA

Merci beaucoup, my Lord.

Samantha floats forward.

God sprinkles holy water on Samantha's left hand and she disappears.

Humphrey sticks the paper behind one ear. He pretends he's looking for it, but can't find it.

GOD

Barbara?

Barbara steps very close to God, salutes and stands at attention. With a military roll call voice, she BOOMS.

BARBARA

Yes. Lord.

Rocked by her volume, God pulls out his hearing aid, turns the dial and slides it back in.

GOD

Good, uh, eager as ever I see. What have you chosen?

BARBARA

Calcutta. Lord. 1948. Lord. I wish to help Mother Theresa. Lord.

Humphrey reaches behind his ear, grabs the paper and laughs. But quickly puts his hands over his mouth as God and the two Angels frown at him.

GOD

Yes, um... very good, Barbara. You'll share in helping over a million people, which assures a good grade.

God taps his fingers on his scroll, raises an eyebrow.

GOD

But you do understand that one
day you'll have to be less
dependent on saints to lead
you.

Barbara's confidence visibly wanes.

BARBARA

(soft voice)

Right. Lord.

Humphrey grabs some cloud, forms it into what looks like
a large round beanbag.

GOD

Watch out for Indian men.

Barbara perks up, BOOMS.

BARBARA

I'll kick them in their you-
know-whats. Lord.

God's eyes widen.

BARBARA

Sorry. Lord.

Head down, Barbara raises her left hand.

God sprinkles holy water on it and she disappears.

Humphrey puts the paper under the beanbag cloud and then
pretends to ignore it.

GOD

Erwin?

Erwin bows stiffly, looks upward.

ERWIN

Lord, I have in mind a very
special project, which I feel
is of utmost importance. For
that reason I have decided...

GOD

Erwin.

ERWIN

In order to fulfill my
potential, I must collect all
my essential attributes...

GOD

Erwin.

ERWIN

In that way I will certainly
be able to succeed in my --

God waves his hand. A "STOP" sign appears in front of
Erwin's face. He freezes.

GOD

Erwin, I do have other work I
must attend to.

Erwin nods, grabs the sign and nonchalantly slides it
into his pocket. It shrinks as it enters, joins many
other STOP signs.

ERWIN

1665, London, Lord.

Humphrey drops to his knees and dives under the beanbag
cloud. Only his legs show, kicking madly.

GOD

The Great Plague. Over one
hundred thousand will die, but
you might save ten times that
amount. Even for Angels, that
disease poses extra dangers.
Impressive, Erwin. For once
you appear to be more than
talk.

Erwin sports a smug grin.

ERWIN

Thank you, Lord. I'm so glad
that you finally realize my --

The STOP signs in Erwin's pocket vibrate madly. He slaps
his hands on them and stops talking.

GOD

Be careful with your lengthy speeches on Earth. Germs enter the mouth easily when it stays open for so long.

Erwin "zips his mouth shut" and nods assent. He floats forward.

God sprinkles holy water on Erwin's right hand and he disappears.

Humphrey pulls out the paper and hops up.

God eyes poor Humphrey who seems oblivious to anything other than playing with his paper. God shakes his head.

Humphrey grins, tosses the paper in the air. It vanishes, he puts his hands on his hips and smiles childishly.

HUMPHREY

Howdy, Lord.

GOD

Humphrey, are you practicing a new dance?

HUMPHREY

Lord, I've got my sights dead set on helping a man who lost his paper.

God stares astonished.

GOD

One man who lost some paper?

HUMPHREY

Yup.

GOD

You're only going to help one man?

HUMPHREY

He'll sure be happy if I do, Lord.

God frowns.

GOD

Do you realize what sort of grade that will give you? Have you missed everything I have said about Angelic potential?

Humphrey fidgets.

HUMPHREY

Well, I thought it was a good idea.

GOD

Fine, Humphrey, go and help your one man.

HUMPHREY

Thanks a lot, Lord.

Humphrey ambles across the cloud to God.

GOD

But I dare say you will have to repeat this class.

God pours the rest of the holy water over Humphrey's head and he half disappears.

GOD

Humphrey, you can go now.

HUMPHREY

I'm trying, Lord.

Humphrey squints his eyes tight, as he becomes 90% invisible. He gives a little wave and vanishes.

EXT. OUTER SPACE

Curled into a ball, Humphrey clutches onto his knees with one arm, his other over his eyes. He whizzes through space toward Earth. Holding his breath, his cheeks puff out.

He enters Earth's atmosphere, closes in on the United States. He spreads full eagle, eyes clamped tight. He heads to Pennsylvania and belly flops onto the ground.

A road sign reads, "GETTYSBURG, Two Miles."

EXT. TENT - DAY

Anxious Civil War Union soldiers huddle in front.

A man SCREAMS.

MAN (O.S.)
I can't find it!

The soldiers cringe.

Dressed as an Army three-star general, Humphrey swaggers up to the tent. He half-salutes the soldiers who zap to attention.

HUMPHREY
I have urgent business with the
President.

The soldiers allow Humphrey to enter.

They turn to each other.

SOLDIER ONE
Who was that?

The second soldier shrugs.

INT. TENT - CONTINUOUS

ABRAHAM LINCOLN sits on a cot with elbows on knees, head in hands. A trashcan lays on its side, the contents spilled on the ground. Humphrey enters.

HUMPHREY
I say, Abe, you're a bit
stressed.

Lincoln looks up, tears in his eyes.

LINCOLN
General, my eyes are so blurred
I can't even see who you are.

HUMPHREY

Lost your speech?

LINCOLN

It was perfect, absolutely perfect. But I can't remember it! I'll never be able to write it again. And without it, millions are still doomed to suffer.

HUMPHREY

Beg to differ, Sir, but not if the Lord has his way.

Humphrey bounds up and down, psyching himself up.

Lincoln's eyes bug out.

Humphrey stops, takes a huge breath.

HUMPHREY

Ready, set... go!

Humphrey dives under the cot. His legs kick wildly as he slides in as far as possible. He wiggles out, paper in his mouth, The Gettysburg Address speech.

LINCOLN

Wonderful, General! You're an angel. You have my utmost gratitude.

Lincoln stands, secures his top-hat and adjusts his coat. He strokes his beard and eyes Humphrey's three shoulder stars.

LINCOLN

I'll get you a fourth star tomorrow.

Humphrey beams.

HUMPHREY

And a pair of wings?

Lincoln tips his hat, winks and strolls out.

God ROARS.

GOD (O.S.)

Humphrey!

Humphrey looks upward. A ray of light shines down,
encircles him.

GOD (O.S.)

You didn't say it was that man
and that piece of paper. Well
done, an A+!

Humphrey smiles.

FADE OUT.