

The Devil Makes Work  
Vol. 1: Soldiers of Fortune  
By  
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## The Story

"The Devil Makes Work" is an ensemble story about mercenary soldiers in the Mideast. The story centers around a band of Americans recruited into Iraq by a security corporation. Conceived in the sweeping style of "The Illiad" or "Gilgamesh," the play blends music, movement, poetry and drama that unfurls over an expansive time and space. The "Devil" is a 21<sup>st</sup> century epic in the post-montage age of TV and film. The play should not require massive props and sets. The emphasis is on the fluid and flexible.

## The Style

The scenes overlap and interplay with sparse pieces that modify themselves with the story. This isn't a minimalist style, as that word conjures up images of folding chairs, actors in black spandex, and existential angst that doesn't speak to contemporary America. Instead I want to employ an infrequently used phrase in theatre: transformation.

In transformational style of theatre everything should be capable of change, speed, disappearance. Actors can speed out onto stage on rolling chairs, vanish behind black sheets, move through scenes that are sometimes in different times and places. Transformational style also serves another purpose: to engage the audience. They witness a world evolving, disintegrating and building.

In fitting with that style, there is a DJ either on stage or very near it. This musician helps orchestrate the evening, laying down a sonic landscape for the play. Music flows in and out of scenes, flashbacks and mirages. Sound and light are the most important artifices and they both should be in a state of constant evolution.

Players and directors should feel free to montage certain sections, switch up rhythm-tempo, use the tools of dance and music. The play depends on a large, flexible cast of actors, creative directing, and vigorous energy.

## CHARACTERS

Ensemble and main characters are played by a relatively young cast in their early 20s to 30s.

1. NEBRASKA - angry young man
2. ELIZABETH - dancer and businesswoman always trying to think ahead
3. CURTIS - burnt-out veteran from first Gulf War
4. EVAN - Curtis's clever younger brother.
5. DIXON - a cynical drifter
6. NINO - naïve and restless teenager who can't keep a job

## ENSEMBLE CHARACTERS

The following roles can be played by a cast of 4 players.

1. SAM - loud promoter of security company
2. MATTHEW - disillusioned Iraqi exile going home
3. OVERALL MAN - gullible truck driver
4. JACOB - Elizabeth's intellectual husband
5. LANIS - Curtis's cranky wife
6. LARRY - trailer park trash
7. MOM - whining mother of Nino
8. POP - Nino's yelling father
9. MOMMA - Nebraska's mother
10. NICKY - flamboyant Wal-Mart co-worker
11. GUARDS/SOLDIERS - whole ensemble
12. JOB INTERVIEWER/CORPORATE INTERVIEWER - needling corporate officers.

## 1.1 Casting the Net

Setting: High school gym. A DJ scratches out a hip hop mix of "Star Spangled Banner" as people mingle. MC UNCLE SAM enters. Dressed in patriotic suspenders, sparkle pants and a top hat, Sam hands out fliers.

SAM

God bless America and God bless you. Each and every one, from daughter to son. God bless the red, the white and the blue and God bless you. God bless the waving flag and God bless the dog that wags, God bless the limp-wristed...ladies and gentleman, we don't discriminate or discrimi-hate, because America is about one thing: supply and demand. We need good, hard American bodies. Young bodies, old bodies, short bodies and tall. Fat, skinny, bowl-legged. You got two hands, you got two feet, you got two eyes to see you down the street. You got enough to be a patriot. Paid and proud, say it loud. Minuteman Security. Minuteman Security. Minuteman Security Inc. is looking for a few good Washingtons and a few good Jeffersons that will get paid in a lot of Benjamins. That's the supply, which makes you in demand. That's right, YOU. Out there are in demand. YOU. Out there are desired and requested. YOU. Out there can earn up to \$100,000 to protect and serve. \$100,000! Goodness gracious, great sakes alive! \$100,000 for one year of service. You could pay the car, pay the rent, you might even be able to pay-off your credit cards, but I wouldn't suggest it. 100 grand buys a lot of candy bars, boys and girls. And all you have to do is sip drinks in far-away tropical vistas like Phillipines, Indonesia and other paradises where America interests lie like...oh, let me see...where do American interest lie?

(Sam flips over chalkboard to show a map of the Mideast.)

Oh! Why yes. We got some interest over here. Now before you freak and run home to mommy, before you scream like lil' girl, before you piss your pants, I want to make it clear that you are just there to protect. You ain't doing patrol, you ain't running commando raids, you ain't strapping on a bandana being some Robo-Rambo hero. You're just like the security men you see in the mall. Just like the security you see at a golf course. Just standing around making sure our interests are protected. Don't need a college degree,

SAM

hell, you don't even need a GED. But we don't want no slow kids. You gotta be quick on your feet. We train you, feed you, clothe you, hell we'd wipe your ass if needed. Because you are in demand, folks. From Westchester to West Virginia, from Poughkeepsie to Portland, and right here, in...where the hell are we?

(DJ whispers into his ear.)

Ohio! Yes, my favorite state. The heartland, the rustbelt, the cowpatch flyover. The shat on, spat on, but never stand pat-on state. The kinda place that gets knocked down, stands up, and puts its hat on. When it's time to do your duty, you people always stand up.

(Mills through the crowd and picks out a pot-bellied man in hitched-up overalls. He's unbelievably excited.)

You! You look like you got a strong back. Gotta be to hold up that belly. I'm just clowning, man. You a patriot or a Frenchman?

OVERALL MAN

Excuse me?

SAM

You pull yourself up by your bootstraps or your bra strap?

OVERALL SAM

What?

SAM

You gotta pair, man?

OVERALL MAN

Pair of what?

SAM

A pair of aces, Jesus Christ. A pair of balls, man.

OVERALL MAN

Uhhhh...

SAM

Uhhhh...looks like we got a slow one. Will let me help you out, sonny. I'm gonna give you the benefit of the doubt and assume that you're swing deuce.

OVERALL MAN

Okay.

SAM

Alright Aristotle, why are you here?

OVERALL MAN

I heard there was free pizza at the gymnasium.

SAM

Charming. Now you came for pizza, but you'll leave with a whole lot more. Take a peak at Minuteman Security Inc. Free food, free uniforms, even get some travel in. Make a difference in the world.

OVERALL MAN

Oh, well I'd have to ask my wife.

SAM

Your wife, why? She holding your pair in her purse?

OVERALL MAN

No, but going all the way over there fighting for...

SAM

...you're not fighting. You are protecting and serving. Protecting and serving.

OVERALL MAN

Going halfway across the world seems like something I should talk over with her either way.

SAM

Well don't do that!

OVERALL MAN

Why not?

SAM

Because she'll tell you no! Oh, fine. Take another brochure. For your testicles in case you see them again. (to audience) Most of these schlubs aren't fit to sling mashed tatters to toddlers. But out of many, there are a few. You look for the young, the disaffected, the ones with the pissed off look.

(Sam spots NEBRASKA. His face  
and body are scrunched up

into a ball of rage as he's  
in mid-sip of his beer.)

Now here's a man who looks like he had two heaping helpings  
of shit sandwich for lunch. A monosyllabic mound of muscle.  
Look at that jaw, I bet he grinds his teeth. I bet you  
grind your teeth?

NEBRASKA

What?

SAM

I said I bet you grind your teeth.

NEBRASKA

Sometimes.

SAM

Sometimes as in all the time. My name is Sam.

NEBRASKA

This some sorta get-up for your job?

SAM

I beg your pardon.

NEBRASKA

I said is this your costume?

SAM

Stick to monosyllabic words son. I wouldn't wanna see you  
hurt ya'self.

NEBRASKA

Are you insulting me?

SAM

(aside)  
See that fire. I can work with that. (to Nebraska) In-sul-  
ting, I'm warning ya, you're gonna sprain a brain cell  
working that hard. Am I insulting you, I don't know. But I  
bet it happens a lot, don't it? You seem like the kinda guy  
that gets talked down to. You know why? They designed a  
whole system of rules and regulations to keep you poor and  
miserable, to keep you running from job to job, fighting to  
pay the rent, in debt up to your eyeballs with credit  
cards, insurance rates, mortgages, car loans. So you waste

away the finest years of your life just trying to figure out how to pay the bills. So you hop from stupid job to

SAM

stupid job. Not cause you deserve it, but because you're better than those people. Now I just summarized the rest of your life in about 30 seconds. Let me ask you how does that sound? Cause that's what you're headed for unless you pay attention, m son, my...what's your name?

NEBRASKA

Brad, but everyone calls me Nebraska.

SAM

Nebraska, my God that's a patriot's name. Strong and wholesome big name. Almost have to take a step back and do a lil' sweep of the hand to say it right: Nebraska. I'm assuming people shorten up and call you 'Braska.'

NEBRASKA

Yep.

SAM

Why do they call you 'Braska?

NEBRASKA

Cause I like corn.

SAM

Cause the boy likes corn, you hear that? Thank God you didn't like wheat or you might've been called Kansas or Dakota or some other name meant for a Midwest drag queen. But 'Braska' is good, like black beer or its aftertaste. Braska I like you, so I'm gonna get you outta you sit'ch-ation. By signing up with the Minutemen.

NEBRASKA

For how long?

SAM

One year and you get \$100,000. More money then you'd see working 5 years in this shitheel state, which is lovely place to visit by the way.

NEBRASKA

And I get a gun?



SAM

(aside)

Isn't that just the most precious thing? With that slight tone of agony and anticipation in his voice, like a boy at Christmas. (back) Well we ain't gonna send you over to Iraq with a waterpistol.

NEBRASKA

Iraq!

SAM

Sure, 'Braska.' You ain't scared of some ragtops are ya?

NEBRASKA

No, but...

SAM

...course not, you'll blow 'em away with your sawed-off shotgun.

NEBRASKA

We get a sawed-off?

SAM

You bet and a sub-machine gun and all you do is stand in front of some building. Any sand coon gives you any lip, you get right back up in there face. You're not scared of some runts in rags are ya?

NEBRASKA

Nah, no prob.

SAM

And you got back up, units of men, bulletproof vest and a big fat wallet at the end, all more than you'd get fighting in the regular army. And lets not forget about your future and all the things you can do with after a year or two. You gonna let some dune monkey stand in your way?

NEBRASKA

Fuck no, fuck those people.

(DIXON, 20-year-old black guy  
with diamond stud earring  
walks over.)

SAM

Absolutely, fuck them rags, dem sand nig- (notices Dixon)  
hey, boy..I mean, brother. What's your name?

DIXON

Dixon.

SAM

Dixon, how they hanging n' banging? What brings you to my  
hood?

DIXON

Saw the flier and thought I'd check it out.

SAM

Yo, I hear you. It's hard out there for a playa, am I  
right?

(DIXON stares at him.)

Anyway Dixon, how'd you like to change your life around?

DIXON

I'm not trying to be in anybody's army.

SAM

Well you're not. You're in security. Dixon, if you didn't  
have to work another day of your life what would you do?

DIXON

Nothing much.

SAM

Come on, I'm talking about aspirations and motivations  
outside of the daily occupations.

DIXON

I don't know. I used to be in the church choir and was  
pretty good.

SAM

Church choir? Church choir?!?

DIXON

Yeah.

SAM

Church choir. Boy, you don't know nothing 'bout no church choir.

DIXON

...sure, I do. I...I...

SAM

Your faith sounds kind of shaky. I bet you don't know no church choir like I know a church choir.

DIXON

Every Sunday since I could stand, I'd be down by the pulpit, rocking the mic. Pastor said I had a voice like angels.

SAM

Hell's Angels is more like it, I bet. You gotta make me a believer, Dixon. You gotta sing, hum, or whistle something. "Love Lift Us Up Where We Belong," "Wind Beneath My Wings," I don't care if you sing the "Macarena" but you gotta give me a Dixon sampler. Give me a taste of Dixon, gospel superstar. Come on, Dixon.

DIXON

All right. (clears throat)...Aaaa-

SAM

-fantastic! That was a grandslam-goddamn homerun.

DIXON

But I didn't even start.

SAM

I don't need to hear another note. Not another peep, chirp or burp to know genius is standing in front of me. Somebody call Barry Gordy. Somebody get me P. Diddy. Move Pavrotti's fat ass over to the buffet. Can you feel me?

DIXON

I did win my 5<sup>th</sup> grade talent competition. Thanks, for the compliments.

SAM

No, no. Thank you. Beauty and truth have a way of complimenting themselves. Dixon, now I know you definitely

need to sign up for Minutemen, my desert sparrow. You can't let a voice like that rust away. Your window of opportunity is short. You gotta leap through.

DIXON

What's the difference between this and the army?

SAM

Less work, better pay, and no bureaucratic Geneva Convention bullshit cockblocking your flow.

DIXON

And who do we answer to?

SAM

Well...

EVAN

No one. That's the beauty of it.

SAM

Finally someone who gets it. What's your name son?

EVAN

Evan Clement.

SAM

Evan, you seem like a square-jawed fella with a head on his shoulders. You know exactly what I'm talking about.

EVAN

Sure do.

SAM

Then why don't you enlighten these folks here?

EVAN

He wants us to be mercenaries.

SAM

No, not mercenaries, Evan. Heroes.

EVAN

Mercenaries aren't heroes.

SAM

Minuteman is a private security service. We're trying to sign up a few brave patriots. Men like you.

EVAN

Not me.

SAM

And why not, you Evan? You're as good as anybody else.

EVAN

My brother served in the first Gulf War.

SAM

Oh, I see. We got ourselves a hero worshipper. Well, Evan I guess you think your big brother is a hero, huh?

EVAN

Two purples hearts.

SAM

Two purple hearts? Well you add some yellow stars, blue moons, green clovers and you got yourself some cereal. What's Mr. Purple Hearts up to? He relaxing in a swimming pool? Traveling the world on a yacht? He surrounded by 72 virgins?

EVAN

He's back home.

SAM

Doing what? Nothing that's what. Yeah, our government sure knows how to sell you on who's a hero and who's a villains. Meanwhile they're sitting back counting cash money. Soldiers collect trinkets while they bank trillions. Now a pimp sends his whores out on the street. Buys them the finest wigs, watches over them and protects them from harm, because they are his investment. In the morning he takes a 70/30 cut, slaps 'em on the ass and says 'good job, baby. Keep bringing it home to daddy' A righteous, Christian man would call this slavery. A nation sends its troops out into streets. Bad equipment, lax security, no particular care about their safety. And how much do they take when the morning comes? 100%. And they slap the soldiers on the ass, the crippled and wounded, the disfigured and dead, and says 'good job, baby. Keep bringing it home to daddy.' And that same righteous man calls this honor. Now I want you shake

the fat off your brain and all those titles and medals that sound so much like 'baby, baby' pimp talk and for once in your dumb pathetic life, think.

EVAN

Are you saying my brother got pimped?

SAM

I don't know. What do you think? And before you answer that, can you tell me what's your hero up to now?

(CURTIS CLEMENT, Evan's older brother, enters. He's dressed in an uncomfortable suit.)

CURTIS

Yes, sir. I think I'm the right guy for the job. I served in the army back in the 90s. Fought in the Gulf war. My unit was the spearhead into Kuwait and I was awarded two purple hearts. I took some time off afterward. But now I'm ready and I know that I would make a great nighttime manager for your Burger King.

SAM

Dunkin Donuts, KFC, Circuit City. That's where your heroes are, if they're lucky. How many end up out on the street?

DIXON

But if everybody was looking out for themselves, who would defend us when we're attack?

SAM

Attack? Any nation attacking America?

BEAT

SAM

America hasn't been under attack since Pearl Harbor. But we've fought a lot of wars since then. A lot of people have died and a lot of money has exchanged hands. I say serve your country. Be a patriot but get paid to do it. This is the American way. You think any of the founding fathers were broke? No, but they could see the dollar signs at the end of the Declaration of Independence. Because what they weren't just declaring independence for a nation, they were declaring independence for themselves. The question is, are you ready to be independent?

