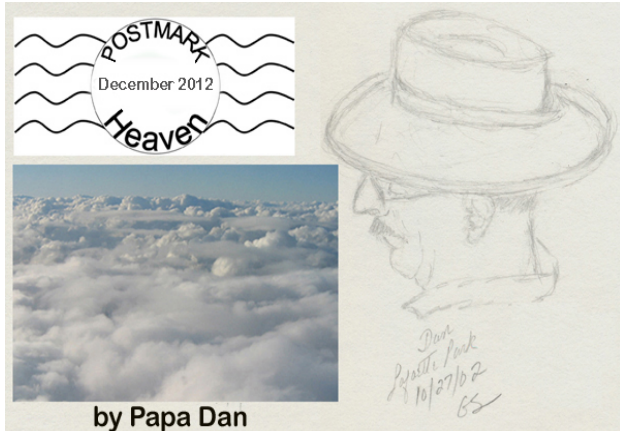


Some Explaining To Do — Act One

By Dan Sapone



by Papa Dan

The Scene:

The curtain opens revealing an office with a desk flanked by a small couch. The sign on the desk reads "A. Gabriel, Chief Messenger, Deputy Associate Admittance Officer." Behind the desk is a wall with three doors. The door in the center is labeled with a "G" and is open revealing a spiral staircase. The door on the right is closed and labeled with an "Up" arrow, as an elevator might. The left door, also closed, has a "Down" arrow. The Angel Gabriel sits at the desk, writing in a notebook, his famous golden trumpet resting on the desk. A Man named Anthony walks up from the back of the audience up the center aisle, climbs three steps to the stage, stands at Gabriel's desk, hat in hand, and waits.

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Gabriel: [Without looking up, gestures to his left.] "Please, take a seat."

Man: [Looks at the three doors, back at Gabriel and the trumpet, sits, places his hat beside him on the couch. After a pause] "It's not what I expected."

Gabriel: "I know it's not much, but nobody else spends much time here."

Man: [Matter-of-factly.] "No. Dying. It's not what I expected."

Gabriel: [Looks up.] "I suppose it never is; but to tell the truth, you haven't actually died. Not yet."

Man: "Well, the scene back there looked pretty ... final."

Gabriel: "I'm sure it may have seemed that way. Sometimes there are surprises."

Man: "Surprises?" [Looks around, dismisses the idea.] "I didn't have time to think this over much — look, I'm sure He [Pointing to the center door with the "G."] will have some hard questions. I guess that's what this is all about; I'm not sure I'm prepared."

Gabriel: [He's heard it before.] "Well, surely you knew there'd be questions?"

Man: "Yes, of course." [Thinks about it, frowning. After awhile:] "But, you know, I suppose I've got some questions ... for Him. He's got some explaining to do, don't you think?"

Gabriel: [Looking up.] "Questions? [Suppresses a grin.] You actually think you would be the one with the questions right now?"

Man: [Another pause.] "Right." [Thinks about it some more. Takes a deep breath.] "Well, I'm not so sure. I mean, I guess I only get one shot at this ... I've seen some pretty confusing stuff back there." [Points toward the audience.] "You know, some things just don't add up."

Gabriel: "Really. And what are those things?" [Not taking this seriously.]

Man: [Very seriously.] "Well, He's supposed to be all powerful. I mean, if a guy can create the universe and all — and don't get me wrong it's magnificent, and creating humans from dust ... well, OK that's pretty awesome — I'll give Him that."

Gabriel: [Sarcastic.] "I'm sure your approval is appreciated."

Man: *[Getting agitated.]* “Look, don’t patronize me. This is kinda new territory for me, if you know what I mean.” *[Calmer, thoughtful.]* “So, the things that happen back there, that must be what He intends, right? The way it happens is ‘*the way it’s supposed to be,*’ right?”

Gabriel: “Sure, *[Quoting.]*
“ ‘... in erring reason’s spite, one truth is clear,
Whatever is, is right.’ ”

Man: “Excuse me?”

Gabriel: “Alexander Pope, one of your poets.”

Man: *[Not sure what to make of Angel Gabriel quoting an 18th-century English poet, at this particular moment. Recovers his train of thought.]* “I was taught that God loves each of us and created us in His image to be happy with Him *[Points at the doors]* forever, right?” But what about back there?” *[Points to the audience.]* “If taking billions of years to create the universe had the sole purpose of paving the way for us precious humans, He sure hasn’t treated us very well.”

Gabriel: “You’re complaining?”

Man: “OK, I’ve had it pretty easy.” *[Taken back a bit.]* “But, you know, ‘the least’ of His creatures do some serious suffering. Life’s not a bed of roses. Justice isn’t part of the deal. Love can be pretty scarce. Life didn’t come with an instruction manual. And I’m not sure I buy this idea that all of life should be some kind of test. So, is God the ultimate terrorist who threatens us all with *the worst* just to get what He wants? I wasn’t taught to respect that kind of thing very much. Were you?” *[Realizes he may have crossed a line.]*

Gabriel: “Look, you can go on ahead if you want.” *[Gestures dismissively toward the door in the center and turns back to his notebook.]*

Man: *[Picks up his hat, steps toward the door.]* “You know, it’s not just me. Many of us have questions.”

Gabriel: “Again, your questions.”

Man: “There are many, questions like: ‘Where was God during the Holocaust.’ Many people think that, if a powerful God could have prevented it, a loving God would have. We’ve been taught that allowing evil to happen, if you have the power to prevent it, is the same as doing it yourself. He holds *us* accountable for that ... so I’ve been taught. And evil like that happens every day back there. So, unless he is powerless to intervene ... Yes, I think He’s got some explaining to do.”

Gabriel: “So, you’ve got a proposal for Him?” *[Gestures again to the doors.]*

Man: *[Defiant.]* “Well, you know, I’m not so sure He’s the right one for the job. He doesn’t have much of a track record. I’m sure He takes good care of those who end up behind one of those doors, but where I come from, *[Points to the audience.]* He’s not much good as far as I can see. The good things I’ve seen seem to be done by *people* and not all of them ‘*religious.*’ You know, we’ve got people with hungry kids and no way to feed them; we’ve got new diseases every day; rich powerful people got it all and poor people got nothing – millions of them; we’ve got guys with guns killing kids in schools and theaters; we get, floods, famines, droughts, earthquakes; homeless people all over the place; I could go on. He doesn’t seem to be working on it.”

Gabriel: “So, you think you can do better.”

Man: “Well, better than THAT — if I had the power He’s got. If He’s all-powerful, I think He’s got some responsibility for all that. You know, it’s worse than that. *[Steps closer to Gabriel.]* We’ve got powerful, wealthy institutions that claim to be speaking *IN HIS NAME.*” *[They stare at each other. Gabriel blinks.]* “The vulnerable among us listen to their every word, like it is the revealed truth or something. *[Notices the irony, but goes on.]* Groups with power and wealth support some awful stuff and do their best to make sure



that women are kept quiet and poor and have more children than they can feed. And it's the weakest and poorest who suffer the most, you know. *[Realizes he's ranting.]* The bottom line is that these things are done *IN HIS NAME*. I would think that He would feel some responsibility for that."

Gabriel: *[He's heard enough, looks up.]* "Since you have all the answers, maybe your time has come. Go ahead and take your chances." *[Waves at the door.]*

Man: *[With some trepidation, picks up his hat, decides he is ready, walks to the middle door, looks back at Gabriel, looks into the audience, and reaches for the doorknob.]*

Gabriel: "I suppose there's another option."

Man: *[Pulls back from the door.]* "Another option?"

Gabriel: *[Without looking up.]* "Before you put it all on the line *in there* *[Points at the door]*, is there something more YOU could have done?"

Man: "Well, just before I ... came up here, there was a guy ... well, I didn't ... he looked like he needed ... I mean, you know, every day there are so many ..."

Gabriel: *[Turns and looks at him directly, interrupting.]* "So, what if you had the chance to make it right. Do you think you could make a difference? I mean, you know, with ..." *[Points at the door in the center, the one with the "G."]*

Man: "You mean I could go back?"

Gabriel: "It happens, on occasion. For a few days, maybe a week or two. Since you're so unsatisfied with what OTHERS have done *[Nods at the door in the center]*, I suppose you could demonstrate, you know, something better. *[Turns back to his notebook]* It hasn't been long, I'm sure nobody noticed you were gone."

As the curtain slowly begins to close — the Man steps past the curtain, down from the stage, pauses to look back at Gabriel, who isn't paying attention to him, and walks slowly back down the center aisle. He stops half way, puts on his hat, straightens up, and walks quickly out the back of the audience.

As the Man exits the theater, the middle door, the one with the "G," opens a crack.

Voice from behind the door: "Is he gone?"

Gabriel: *[As the curtain closes.]* "Yes, he's gone; but he'll be back and you'll have some explaining to do."

Intermission

