LORD, GIVE ME STRENGTH

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A 10-Minute Play
by
Annabelle Smith
Cast of Characters

Peter Norton: A middle aged-man, pro bono attorney. Driven by curiosity. Recently deceased.

God: A man with a big beard and white robes.

Scene

The In-between.

Time

The present.
SETTING: A completely white waiting room. There is a couch and a chair placed around a low coffee table. The room is very bright, as if lit from within. Stage right is an elevator with faintly glowing call buttons.

AT RISE: GOD is sitting on the couch, facing the audience. He’s waiting expectantly, as if he knows the exact moment something will arrive.

(The elevator dings and PETER steps out. He takes a few steps into the room.)

PETER Hello?

GOD Welcome, Peter. Have a seat.

PETER (PETER carefully sits in the chair.) Who are you?

GOD I am God, and this is the In-between. Your time on Earth has come to an end, but now you are journeying to someplace better.

PETER Wait, hold on, I’m dead? We’re not in New York?

GOD Yes. However, I promise that the place you are now is infinitely better than Manhattan.

PETER (PETER carefully surveys the room.) I don’t know, it’s kind of bland. Maybe some nice rugs, a couple of throw pillows, just a little something to brighten it up.
GOD

Thank you for the suggestions.

(GOD smooths the wrinkles from
his robes.)

Now, before you enter the afterlife, you may ask any question that you still seek to have answered. Any lingering doubt may be put to rest so you can be at peace.

PETER

I can ask any question? That’s pretty cool.

GOD

Yes, you may, although I urge you--

PETER

Question number one’s gotta be about this place. Is this my stop on the way to Heaven or... the other place?

GOD

Heaven, of course. You were an attorney, yet you never charged your clients a dime. You sought justice without demanding anything in return. That kind of goodness is a virtue few can claim to have.

PETER

Well, thanks... but are you sure? I mean, I was divorced, and I drank on Sundays, and I pierced my tongue on a dare in high school, and I was an...

(mumbling)

atheist.

GOD

I do wish you would speak up.

PETER

(Whispering, as if scanalized.)

An atheist.

GOD

Ah, yes. A shame, really. I always hoped that you would turn to my teachings, but your doubt was no sin. Why, your life was godly even if it was not a life lived for me. God always has a plan, it seems.
PETER
Did you just refer to yourself in the third person?

GOD
Yes, he did.

PETER
Huh. You’re pretty down to earth, aren’t you? Or, um, up to earth? Down to heaven?

GOD
Relax, I understand.

PETER
Okay, okay, question number two. Why do you look like a person?

GOD
I appear in the form that is most comforting to each individual passing through the In-between. Your exposure to religion was through “Baby’s First Bible,” which depicted me as a Santa Claus-esque figure, often floating on a cloud.

PETER
You’re right! So, is this your physical body? Can you feel this?

(PETER leans over and taps GOD’s nose. A long pause.)

GOD
No. I could not feel that.

PETER
(awkwardly)
Cool. So, um, moving on. Question number three: who killed Princess Diana?

GOD
That was--

PETER
Or what about Marylin Monroe?

GOD
Wait--
JFK?

Have patience, Peter.

What’s in Area 51?

A Maritan diplomatic colony. Do get off the table.

There are really aliens?

Of course there are. Do you truly believe I created an entire universe and only made one intelligent species?

So are they little green guys, or are we talking space worms or giant blobs or human-sized falafels?

Yes, there are giant, intelligent falafels.

Really?

No. That is biologically impossible.

Aw, man. Wait, so if aliens are real, are there mermaids too? Are birds secretly government spies? Is it crazy to believe in unicorns?

You do not truly believe in these wild theories. I know for certain that there are other questions you seek to have answered.
PETER
(PETER plops into his seat.)
Maybe I do believe in them. You don’t know everything.

GOD
Of course not. Only God can know everything.

PETER
Exactly.

(GOD sighs.)
I have another question.

GOD
Of course you do.

PETER
You’re Jesus’ dad, right?

GOD
In a very basic sense, yes.

PETER
And Mary is his mom?

GOD
Where are you going with this?

PETER
So, was Joseph like a stepdad? Was it a co-parenting situation? I think it’s great that both of you were active father figures, but it was probably awkward, you being God and all. Which one of you got to send Jesus to his room?

GOD
That is… wow. Your interpretation of Christianity is incredibly unique.

PETER
Did you at least take Mary on a couple dates before you…
(PETER gestures vaguely.)
You know.
GOD
You are drastically missing the point of the In-between.

PETER
You said I could ask any question.

GOD
Regrettably, yes. However, these questions should be self-reflective. They should be in search of the peace you require for an eternal afterlife.

PETER
I am at peace. I have so much peace right now. I’d have even more peace if you told me if the Illuminati was real or not.

GOD
Really? Or would you find peace in knowing why there are some cases you could never win? Why horrible people walked free despite the insurmountable evidence you presented against them?

PETER
(PETER hesitates. He is silent for a beat, emotions battling across his face.)
It doesn’t matter anymore. I’m dead.

GOD
Very well.

PETER
(PETER narrows his eyes at GOD.)
Do you know something you’re not telling me?

GOD
I know everything. You need only ask the right questions.

PETER
Whatever. I don’t even want to know.
(PETER crosses his arms and fidgets for a while before his curiosity gets the best of him.)
Jesus Christ, why are you so determined to make this difficult?

GOD
Do not bring my son into this.

PETER

Oh, sorry.

GOD

You are forgiven.

PETER

Woah. That felt good. Is this the kind of high Catholics get from going to confession?

(GOD pinches the bridge of his nose.)

Oh, I almost forgot. So, when Jesus healed blind people, it was a miracle. Does that mean opticians are holy?

GOD

I am beginning to understand why humans pray for patience so often.

PETER

Or what about--wait, what?

GOD

“Lord, give me strength.” There is no higher power to give me strength. Yes, I love you, and yes, you are my divine creation, but you must stop.

(PETER scoots his chair away from GOD.)

Are you angry? Can God be angry?

GOD

(The lights dim for a moment, and thunder crackles distantly.)

Yes. God can be angry.

PETER

Oh no, are you going to smite me? You’re not sending me “down there,” are you?

GOD

Not yet. But keep it up, and I might change my mind. You may ask me one more question, and then you will leave the In-between whether or not you are truly ready.
PETER
Wait, hold on, are you allowed to do that?

GOD
I am God. I am not bound by what I am “allowed” to do. Is that really the final question you want answered?

PETER
No!

GOD
Consider your next words carefully, Peter Norton. (A long pause. PETER is silent and contemplative. GOD checks his watch.)

PETER
Is there—-one is inquiring as to whether or not there is a time limit.

GOD
You may not exploit any loopholes. (pause) No. There is not.

PETER
One is also inquiring--

GOD
(growing frustrated)
Peter...

PETER
Look, I’m not going to ask one of your stupid, “self-reflective” questions! The truth sucks, and if anyone knows that, it’s an attorney. So here’s my question: why won’t you back off?

GOD
(GOD stands. Somehow, he is far taller than he seemed before. Wind whistles through the In-between.)

I made your body from dust. I carved your mind from the crevices of the universe, blew air into your lungs with my own breath.
You are my child, Peter, and I will not allow you to spend an eternity suffering from the pain of unknowing.

GOD (con’t)
(The lights focus on GOD, and he glows brighter than anything in the room.)
I command you, Peter. Open your heart. Do not be afraid.

PETER
(PETER stumbles back and falls from the chair.)
It’s a little late for that!

GOD
(The wind dies down, and the lights fade to normal.)
Let go of your doubts.

PETER
How am I supposed to do that? I didn’t believe in you for my whole life, then I get run over by a taxi and am faced with some guy with a beard who made the entire universe. And you know what? Your world sucked!
(PETER stands.)
I prosecuted human traffickers, pedophiles, even a guy who killed people then grilled them on his George Foreman. And for every whackjob I locked up, a thousand more went on living their lives. I didn’t believe in you because I didn’t want to believe in a guy who would let that happen.
(The lights grow bright until PETER is swathed in a pure glow of white.)

PETER
So? Is it true? Did you really let the world be so ugly?

GOD
I did.
(The lights go dark. As GOD speaks, they grow gradually brighter.)
Goodness must be earned, Peter. Beauty blossoms from cuts and bruises, glimmers in the darkest shadows of the world. The dandelion must die before you make a wish. The moon must wane before she is full again.

PETER
Your analogies suck. I know the sun is bright even if there isn’t a cloud in the sky.

GOD
Yet you must first live through the night.
(pause)
You are good because you have seen pain. You are good, not because you resisted the darkness of the world, but because a tiny piece of it lives within you. You are good because you do not let that shadow rule your life.

PETER
Then why let some people be so horrible? Why not make everyone good?

GOD
Who are you to say who is good and bad? No one is one thing.
(GOD and PETER walk to the elevator.
Quiet sniffing sounds.)
Are you--are you crying?

PETER
(crying)
No. I just have angel dust in my eyes.

GOD
Ah. I see.
(GOD presses the up button. The elevator dings a moment later.)

PETER
We’re not friends anymore. Have you always been that tall? Do you do that to everyone? Where did all that wind come from?

(GOD laughs. The interior of the elevator is faintly glowing.)

GOD
Goodbye, Peter.

PETER
I’ll see you around.
(PETER steps into the elevator. He smiles, waves at GOD, and the doors close.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)