

# Game of Souls

(play version)

by John Waterhouse

**(excerpt)**

Angelo and Sanctimosa, two demons, sit talking whilst playing chess. One suggests that they play Hell Chess, using the souls under their control as pieces. Angelo plays White and Sanctimosa plays Black.

## **A play for three men and three women**

### **Characters:-**

#### **The Demons:**

Sanctimosa.....a female demon (using Black pieces).

Angelo.....a male demon (using White pieces).

#### **The Chess Pieces:** (played by two males and two females doubling up)

The White King.....Giles Newsome - politician (M1)

The White Queen.....Ruby Ellerman - Pop Star (F1)

White King's Knight.....Sir James Tetley - Press Baron (M2)

King's Bishop.....Natasha Kuznetsov – Actress (F1)

The Black King.....Terry Cross - TV Chat Show Host M2)

The Black Queen.....Harriet Ponsonby – Lawyer (F2)

Black King's Rook .....Jade Thompson - Olympic athlete (F2)

Black King's Knight.....Anthony Crown-Derby - Top Civil Servant (M1)

#### **PLUS the following minor roles, all played by the demons (or possibly by other cast members):-**

Photographer (Sanctimosa)

Waiter (Angelo)

Reporter (Angelo)

Speaker of the Commons (Sanctimosa)

Interviewer (Angelo)

Radio Announcer (Sanctimosa)

Advertisement voices (Angelo and Sanctimosa)

**'Game of Souls' Scene listing.**

**Act One.**

<b>Scene 1. Hell</b>	Angelo and Sanctimosa.
<b>Scene 2. A Hotel</b>	Giles and Ruby.
<b>Scene 3. A Newspaper office</b>	Sir James, Giles and Harriet.
<b>Scene 4. The TV Studios</b>	Terry Cross, Ruby and Giles.
<b>Scene 5. A Restaurant</b>	Giles, Natasha
<b>Scene 6. Parliament</b>	Giles, Harriet, Sir James.
<b>Scene 7. TV Studios</b>	Terry, Jade, Natasha.
<b>Scene 8. Restaurant</b>	Sir James, Natasha.
<b>Scene 9. TV Showbiz party</b>	Angelo and Sanctimosa.

**Act Two.**

<b>Scene 1. Hell</b>	Angelo and Sanctimosa.
<b>Scene 2. Parliament</b>	Harriet.
<b>Scene 3. Barbados</b>	Terry, Jade.
<b>Scene 4. A Hotel</b>	Sir James, Giles.
<b>Scene 5. Parliament</b>	Anthony, Harriet.
<b>Scene 6. The TV Studios</b>	Sir James, Ruby.
<b>Scene 7. Parliament</b>	Harriet, Sir James, Anthony.
<b>Scene 8. The TV Studios</b>	Ruby, Terry, Giles
<b>Scene 9. A Hotel</b>	Giles, Ruby.

## **Act One Scene 1. A lesser part of Hell.**

*SANCTIMOSA is alone, sat looking down at an empty Chessboard.*

*SANCTIMOSA:* Is all the world really a stage, where characters move according to their own wills and emotions? Might it not be compared more to a chess board, where men and women act according to the wills of those who manipulate them?

*(ANGELO walks on stage)* The choices people make and the people who are chosen, for whatever purpose, by whomever; in the swirling mass of emotions, ambitions and appetites, how much free will do mortals really have?

*ANGELO:* Ah, Sanctimosa. How very eloquently put.

*SANCTIMOSA:* On your way somewhere, Angelo? I was just musing about the lot of a demon.

*ANGELO:* I'm surprised to find you here. Resting, are we?

*SANCTIMOSA:* There is no rest for wicked but one tries to find rest, where one can.

*ANGELO:* I don't think the Boss ever likes to see a demon even trying to rest!

*SANCTIMOSA:* Well, let's just say I'm biding my time.

*ANGELO:* Ah, time! That's one commodity that's not in short supply here!

*SANCTIMOSA:* You know perfectly well that I refer to human time. Are you going to tell him that you've found me slacking?

*ANGELO:* Me? Oh, but you misjudge me, Santimosa. Why would I want to do a thing like that? In any case, I'm sure that you have plenty of human souls well under control so he can't judge you too harshly, can he now?

*SANCTIMOSA:* It's nice to know that I have at least one friend here, Angelo.

*ANGELO:* But of course.

*SANCTIMOSA:* Anyway, I was contemplating more than musing. Contemplating. Just how much free will mortals really have. We tell them for the most part what to read and what to watch, don't we?

*ANGELO:* And what to listen to. Often as not who to desire or who to follow. *(ANGELO moves close to SANCTIMOSA: and observes the chessboard)* What's this I see, before me?

*SANCTIMOSA:* A chessboard.

*ANGELO:* Indeed it is! Are you hoping that someone will give you a game?

SANCTIMOSA: Why not? Do you play?

ANGELO: Chess? From time to time. I'm feeling quite buoyant so I don't mind giving you a game.

*ANGELO sits down.*

SANCTIMOSA: What reason do you have for feeling so buoyant about?

ANGELO: Things having been going well recently. I destroyed three marriages just last week, also, two suicides and introduced several people to various nasty deceases. AND I caused live television coverage of the F.A. Cup final to break down in the last two minutes; quite proud of that one. How about you?

SANCTIMOSA: I've got quite a few significant souls under my control.

ANGELO: Under your control, eh? In that case, why don't we play with people's souls; those under your control stake against those under mine? Strict rules of Hell, of course!

SANCTIMOSA: You mean that each piece must represent a real human being, under the influence of the chess player?

ANGELO: Naturally. As each piece is removed from the board, the opposing player takes possession of the soul of the person represented. Until of course, the King is taken.

SANCTIMOSA: And you have enough souls under your control to field a side?

ANGELO: Oh yes, certainly. The question is, do you?

SANCTIMOSA: Yes, I do as it happens. And whom are you having as your King? Or do you need a little to think about that?

ANGELO: Strict rules of Hell, Sanctimosa! The identity of each piece is only revealed once it is brought into play. It goes without saying that the standing on earth of each human being in question, co-opted for purposes of play, must be commensurate with the rank of the representational piece on the board.

SANCTIMOSA: Run that by me again.

ANGELO: The important pieces on the board must represent important people on earth. You can't have a garbage collector as your King!

SANCTIMOSA: Naturally. I do hope you haven't started something you'll later regret. (*SANCTIMOSA: holds out two clenched fists, each holding a chess piece.*)

ANGELO: (*pointing to the left fist*) That one! (*SANCTIMOSA: opens his palm, revealing the piece*) White! (*SANCTIMOSA: and ANGELO set out all the chess pieces on the board.*) My move then. (*ANGELO moves a pawn*). I'm moving one pawns.

SANCTIMOSA: Pawns? I thought we said 'Hell Chess!

ANGELO: Just testing, SANCTIMOSA:. I only wanted to be reassured that you understood the stakes.

SANCTIMOSA: Only too well!

ANGELO: I'm moving my King forward. Giles Newsome, the politician.

*Enter GILES NEWSOME.*

SANCTIMOSA: I'm bringing on my Queen. Harriet Ponsonby.

*Enter HARRIET PONSONBY.*

ANGELO: A threat from a Queen? Then my King need the protection of another Queen; Ruby Ellerman, the singer.

*Enter RUBY ELLERMAN.*

RUBY: Do you mind? We were just busy.

*Exit HARRIET.*

SANCTIMOSA: Where exactly are they?

ANGELO: In Giles' hotel bedroom, well away from prying eyes.

**Act One Scene 2. A room in a hotel. RUBY ELLERMAN stretches out, seductively on a divan as GILES NEWSOME enters, carrying a bottle of champagne.**

RUBY: Not bad. I prefer Klug.

GILES: It's all I could find but what the hell! I've won. That's what matters.

RUBY: I thought you 'won' when you got into office last year.

GILES: I got into parliament sure, but that was only the first step. I buried Allenby this evening; His reputation is now in tatters! With him out of the way, and most of the party behind me, I've as good as got the Treasury.

RUBY: But are you sure that the Prime Minister will choose you to replace him?

GILES: Taylor has no one else he can choose, without taking a huge gamble! He'll be gone by the end of this term, mark my words, and then it should be me for PM!

RUBY: And you're sure that Allenby is finished?

GILES: His projections have all been wrong. No growth, employment set to continue rising and inflation spiralling. I can't wait to see tomorrow's papers. 'Financial Shambles!?' 'A year of broken promises'? (*looks at RUBY directly*) Oh, darling, it couldn't have come at a better time.

RUBY: But will you still have time for me?

GILES: Of course I will. (*lies down beside her*) We can go to the house in Devon.

RUBY: I was thinking of Paris. (*kisses him*) And Rome (*kisses him again*) And St. Lucia!

GILES: I'll see what I can do. (*laughs*) I am supposed to be helping the PM sort out the economy as well, you know!

RUBY: You don't need to worry about it. It'll sort itself out, given time. We've a lot to catch up on. (*wraps herself around him*).

GILES: Only because you insist on going away on world tours. (*pushes her off him*). It's you that needs to start putting more time aside.

RUBY: You wouldn't want me to let my fans down, would you? If they don't see me perform, I won't sell so many records. And records means yachts, champagne and parties!

GILES: I know but couldn't you cut it down, just a bit? You'll wear yourself out!

RUBY: Performing before a huge audience gives you lots of energy but I have to do something with all that energy, once the show is over. (*wraps herself around him again*).

GILES: You're insatiable; like a glutton.

RUBY: Don't you think it's time we got serious, Giles? You find me sexy, I think you're funny.

GILES: Don't be impetuous, Ruby. You know I love you truly but there are things to get done first. Don't worry; we'll share good times; holidays, romance like you've never had such fun.

SANCTIMOSA: Bring up his wife!

ANGELO: You can't influence the opposing player's pieces, Sanctimosa! That's illegal.

RUBY: (*holds out glass*) Maybe you can.....fill me up? Unless your wife has worn out?

GILES: She'd struggle to wear anything out. Even her knickers look like carefully preserved items from the Victorian age.

RUBY: I don't know how you put up with her!

GILES: I don't, much. She thinks I'm married to my work and so long as she has enough money for herself, she's happy.

RUBY: Leaving time for the two of us; how considerate your wife is!

GILES: Isn't she just (*starts to move hand up her thigh*)

SANCTIMOSA: Don't stop there!

ANGELO: I'm warning you, Sanctimosa!

RUBY: But if you could somehow....leave her, wouldn't that be better still?

GILES: We've been through that. Not whilst I'm still in the government. Politics isn't rock and roll.

RUBY: What if something were to er.....happen to her?

GILES: The public would never wear it. If I was seen to carry on as normal, they'd say I was cold and unfeeling. Don't think I haven't thought about that.

RUBY: I know but I was thinking....

ANGELO: Shut her up!

GILES: Later darling (*starts kissing her and she responds*)

ANGELO: Ha Ha. That's sorted her.

SANCTIMOSA: For the moment! But I've a pawn to hand..

ANGELO: What?

*A knock at the door is heard. Enter HARRIET PONSONBY.*

GILES: *(not looking up)* Just leave it on the table.

HARRIET: I'm not interrupting anything, am I?

GILES: No, not at all. *(looks up and sees HARRIET)* What the ...on no!

RUBY: Who the hell's she?

HARRIET: 'She' is the legal advisor to the Parliamentary Committee on Standards and Conduct, Madame! We're particularly concerned about evidence of MPs who are corrupting family values. We've been keying an eye on you and I think we've enough evidence of debauchery now. You should be ashamed of yourself, carrying on with a fancy woman whilst your wife is at home!

RUBY: I am not a fancy woman; I am Ruby Ellerman!

HARRIET: Trudy Killer man? A very fitting name for an adulterer, indeed it is!

RUBY: Ruby! Ruby Ellerman!

HARRIET: Never heard of you.

RUBY: Ruby Ellerman, the pop star.

HARRIET : Ell-er-man. Is that with two 'l's? *(writing down)*

RUBY: Yes it is.

HARRIET: That'll be all. Thank you and good night.

*Exit HARRIET*

RUBY: Nosy busybody. Who does she think she is? Claiming she's never heard of me!

GILES: Oh God, what have we done?

RUBY: What are you worried about? You're not bothered about old biddies like that, are you? How can she have never heard of me, with four gold discs and a Gammy?

GILES: Old Biddies, like that make up most of my constituents. This will get straight back to party headquarters, the press will get to hear about it, my career will be ruined and my wife will probably want a divorce. I might even be asked to leave the golf club!

RUBY: Don't worry; you can still come and party on the yacht. You won't need to bother about making excuses to wife either.

GILES: I'm ruined.

*Exit GILES NEWSOME and RUBY ELLERMAN.*

SANCTIMOSA: You King is under pressure and the game has hardly started!

ANGELO: As you say, the game has hardly started. My King is well supported. By my King's Knight!

SANCTIMOSA: Who is your white knight?

ANGELO: Sir James Tetley, the Press Baron. Looks like he's got a visitor!