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Randy Hoyt

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own place, and in itself / Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven' (1.254-255).”

Squidgeoodle said, “It has been one of our notable successes to induce most of the American and European academics to take this approach, not to mention the politicians.”

Moloch suddenly roared. “Who can

listen to this counter-infernal nonsense?”

He threw himself upon Astaroth, who ran toward the door with a shriek. The rest of the committee followed, texting bets to each other on their cell phones.

The cock crowed, the committee dispersed, and the meeting was adjourned.

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Ravana Questions Hanuman

by

Randy Hoyt

Vibishana hurried to Ravana’s throne room after he heard the destruction of the Asoka Vana. What could have caused this? Had the Gods launched an attack on Lanka? Vibishana had to push his way through the gathering crowd.

“And who sent you?!” he heard Ravana shout angrily, though he could not yet see at whom.

“Rama, the Holy One who has been sent to earth to destroy you,” came the soft reply of the creature. It was not a human or a rakshasa voice, he could tell.

“Rama! So he can find no one to help

him in his war against me but monkeys!” He burst out laughing hysterically, and the entire mob joined in his laughter. So it was a monkey that Vibishana had heard. That sent a cold chill down his spine. Why was that? He searched his mind for some reference to monkeys ... and then he realized: Nandi had cursed Ravana, saying that his end would come through a monkey.

“You can laugh all you want at me and at my lord Rama, but you will be destroyed if you do not hand over Sita to me. She is the Holy One’s eternal bride.”

More laughter erupted throughout the

chamber.

“Is that what you have come to tell me?” asked Ravana. “That if I do not give back this whore, then you will destroy me?”

“No, I will not destroy you,” said the monkey. “My master Rama has forbidden me, or I would have done so already. *He* will destroy you, and it will be soon.”

“Rama did not even have the power to keep his own wife,” replied Ravana. “She came with me willingly: blame her for what has happened! She practically *begged* me to take her away from her misery in the forest. She wanted a queenly lifestyle, though she is just a common whore. She pleases me, so I provide her what she wants.”

Vibishana had never fully believed this story Ravana had told, and he sensed that no else believed it either. But the others did not seem to care about the truth. Something about this monkey struck Vibishana and made him care. Maybe this Rama was truly God incarnate. This monkey had an air about him—was it the air of one who has seen God?

“I conclude from your statements that you will not release Sita, so I will take my leave,” said the monkey. “Consider yourself warned: Rama will destroy you and everything you hold dear. You once received favor from the Gods; you could have lived in harmony with the world and enjoyed peace and prosperity throughout all the ages. But you have forsaken the Gods and all goodness, and so now you will suffer. Rama will cleanse the world of your filth.”

The monkey’s words were powerful and forceful; a hush fell over the crowd.

Everyone looked at Ravana. The demon king was taken aback, but he quickly recovered.

“You think you can just march in here, speak contemptuously, and then stroll out?” said Ravana, rising from his throne and walking towards the monkey. “You are sadly mistaken. You will pay for you insolence with your life!” He grabbed the monkey by the throat and began to strangle him.

“Stop brother!” cried Vibishana, pushing his way to the center of the room. “Stop! Would you stoop so low as to kill this monkey, you who have battled with even the Gods and won? Let this monkey go. It is not he who has challenged and harmed you—it is Rama.”

Ravana glared at Vibishana, and then back at the monkey. The monkey was not struggling to get free; he just stared back at Ravana intently. Ravana chuckled to himself. “So my own brother is a monkey-lover.” He threw the monkey to the floor. He ordered his guards to let the monkey go, but only after having a bit of fun torturing him.

Vibishana was relieved. The guards took the monkey outside and the crowd cleared out of the throne room. Only the top generals in Ravana’s army remained with Ravana and Vibishana. The tension in the room was great, and no one spoke; Ravana sat on his throne deep in thought. The silence was broken when a guard ran into the throne room and declared, “The monkey has caught the whole city on fire!”