

The Hellish Struggle by Pollyanna Barratt-Saunders

(The Reach Free School – year 10)

Lucifer was having a decidedly off-day. Hell was having it's coldest winter in millenia; his most recent plan to enslave humankind was temporarily put on the back-burner due to budget overruns, and now it's been revealed that Jesus Christ's comeback tour outsold his own *Hellzapoppin' Extravaganza* by a considerable margin.

Normally, he would counter his depression with some mindless sadistic torture, but all the fun had been sucked out of that since Hell had been flooded with lawyers all too willing to countersue.

Walking amid the flames he contemplated throwing up a white flag. Running Hell wasn't the great job it once had been; how he longed for the days when he didn't have to fight unions on a daily basis, the Catholic Church could still be counted on to reach its quota of sinners, and any harm he inflicted on his tortured souls didn't warrant a lawsuit.

A couple of centuries ago he had almost handed over the reins of Hell to his eldest son, but he'd had doubts at the last minute and fed him to Cerberus. If he hadn't done that, someone else could have sorted out this mess while he sipped hot lava by the pool (also of hot lava).

Maybe he should call it a day, Lucifer pondered. See how they'll like that.

The next morning he officially resigned from his post, packed his bags and was never seen again. After a brief period of confusion and turmoil, an accountancy firm acquired a majority of the underworld and made plans to cut costs, maximise profits and increase brand potency among Hell's residents.

As Lucifer had foreseen in his cunning move, Hell had never been more insufferable, and he just watched from his Malibu penthouse – There is no place like home.