

The Tragic True Life & Deserved Death of A Benefit Scrounger by Himself, John Faust,

FAUST

The Tragic True Life & Deserved Death of A Benefit Scrounger by Himself, John Faust... No!

LUCIFER

I have thought of a better title for your book John, let's call it A Very Queer Nazi Faust! Bravo!

CAST

Bravo!

FAUST

But there aren't any Nazis in it?!

LUCIFER

Details John, leave those to me. You just write it all down and hang on behind.

Good evening Norwich! Are you ready? Welcome!

First please welcome our BSL signer tonight, Bobbi Hallsworth, and wish her good luck!

Welcome to this night of madness and mayhem cunningly disguised as live art! Now is a great time to check you've turned off your mobile phone, because this event is being photographed, filmed, and yes, live streamed... you are all live, right now, on the Disability Arts Online Facebook page, give them a wave and a cheer!

For those who don't know, Vince Laws is a poet, artist, and disability rights campaigner.

"An artist with something to say, and fearless in saying it." said Marcus Dickey Horley, Tate Modern Director.

Vince's 5m long DEAD PEOPLE DON'T CLAIM banner was made in 2016 for the Disabled People Against Cuts action called Rights Not Games, to protest the deaths of sick and disabled people caused by sanctions, work capability assessments, and withdrawal of services and benefits.

The banner has been seen in Norwich hanging off Grapes Hill Bridge, on stage at the Waterfront, and outside the Work Capability Assessment centre, St Mary's House, Norwich, now finally closed after 6 years of complaints because wheelchair users were labelled a 'fire hazard' in the event of a fire.

DEAD PEOPLE DON'T CLAIM has been marched through the streets of Birmingham during the Tory conference 2016, and in 2017 it was hung up inside Parliament, and held up outside Parliament while Iain Duncan Smith was being interviewed live on TV.

Vince spent 2016 writing and plotting, and in February 2017 Vince put out a call for volunteers who would like to help bring A Very Queer Nazi Faust to life. By March he'd recruited a crack team of 13 local legends to join him on stage and off, and with a budget of buttons, A Very Queer Nazi Faust was performed in the Comedy Tent at Norwich LGBT Pride 2017 to an enthusiastic audience and to popular and critical acclaim.

That might have been the end, but in December 2017 the cast gathered and unanimously agreed A Very Queer Nazi Faust was worth doing again, and they wanted to do it again, but wouldn't it be lovely to have a budget, to do it on a stage, with lighting, and a BSL signer, and photograph it, and film it, and live stream it, in front of a live audience... tonight all those dreams come true!

I am delighted to introduce the funded - yes funded! - world premier of Vince Laws's experimental participatory happening, A Very Queer Nazi Faust! Bravo! Commissioned and supported by Unlimited, celebrating the work of disabled artists, with funding from Spirit of 2012. Very much supported by Norwich Arts Centre. Supported with £300 of taxpayers money towards costumes and props by Norfolk County Council. And supported by Disabled People Against Cuts, DPAC.net.uk bravo!

Trigger Warning! A Very Queer Nazi Faust contains adult themes and language, suicidal thoughts, DWP Deaths, Lucifer, The Naked Abseilers, and Poetry, but no Nazis.

Now Hush! Hush. Some say on a dark and stormy night, here in Norfolk, if you listen to the wind, you can hear the desperate cries of benefit scroungers as they drag themselves across a cold stage floor... Listen...Listen...

FAUST

Nelson! Sweet Nelson!

PROMPT

He's changed the bloody script again!

CAST

Shhhh.

REPORTER (whispering)

This is Alice Fishfork, reporting live. The stage is set, a simple black box, across it hangs a washing line, pegged to the line are shrouds. Above the stage, two giant eyeballs hang down from the ceiling. Either side of the stage, hang a pair of giant ears. We are inside John Faust's head, literally.

NAN

Has it started?

PIP (Whispering)

Yes Nan. It's like the wind is whispering. Blowing the names off those sheets.

NAN

They're not sheets, they're shrouds. The names of the dead, may they rest in peace.

PIP

Here he comes now, Nan, this is him, John Faust.

NAN

Oo, he looks terrible.

PIP

No, that's the BSL signer, Nan. Look, he's at the back, crawling in through the shrouds.

NAN

Oh look! He's dropped something!

PIP

A book Nan, remember? He's writing a book.

NAN

How do you know he's writing a book?

PIP

I read you the programme, Nan, remember? He's writing a masterpiece but he can't finish it.

NAN

Aghhhhh!

PIP

It's all right Nan, it's just empty boxes. Empty pill boxes. He must get through a lot of pills Nan, a bit like you. Nan? Nan are you all right?

NAN

Zzzzzz (snoring)

FAUST

Heaven's bell tower rises to a crown of white napped flints
where a nest of straw sticks out the window slats.

Last time I was here

cow parsley made a wedding of these headstones.

It's a foolish game, I know, to give a crow a name

but a scrap of bin-bag black flaps in the grass.

Wait, Faustus wait! But this chick, eager to leap, edges, fledges,
sets off on this his first damned flight.

I press my hand against his back, lift one wing,

his eye a tiny screw, screwed in tight.

He knows nothing of this, of course,

slapped down face first, so keen to live he died.

(SOUND THUNDER)

REPORTER

The auditorium doors creak open... as if by themselves... and now Lucifer steps in, upright and commanding, her horns polished ebony, majestically slow stepping to Mozart's Lacrimosa. She's followed by a procession of cloak-bearers, all slow stepping in perfect unison, between them bearing Lucifer's ghostly white cloak, they follow her down the side of the auditorium and towards the stage. Here's Mrs May in Union Jack shoes, followed by Arlene Foster in a bowler hat and orange sash. Here's Hellen of Troy, dressed as a carrot, promoting her new vegan range. And Paris the Celebrities' Psychologist - what is she wearing? That jacket needs therapy! Here's Nelson the dog, he's not been well, unconfirmed reports suggest blood poisoning, as soon as we hear any news we'll get that too you. And that's Eric from the garage, and Scarlett the Photographer from Hell. They've come to a stop at the front of the stage. What a moving ensemble they make. Wow! Lucifer just clicked her fingers, and the five metre white cloak undid itself! Beautiful. The cloak bearers turn as one, face the audience, now they hold the cloak up, obscuring themselves, they are not important in this, they are but the messengers... now we see the writing on the cloak, and the blood red letters seem to come alive and bleed into the audience...

NAN (Wakes up)

Agggghhhh!

PIP

Nan! That's a bad time to wake up. You're all right Nan. It's a play. Remember?

NAN

I saw your Grandad!

PIP

That's Lucifer Nan, don't worry.

BEATRICE from BENEFITS

Why haven't you killed yourself yet, Mr Faust?

ROSEY POP

He still owes me for a clutch. I never learn.

MRS MAY

Dead people don't claim, and they should not claim, and that is right, and that is fair, and if they do claim, we will stop them.

HELEN OF TROY

I'm Helen of Troy. Fair Trade Vegan Carrots. Sign the petition.

ARLENE

All shall be hell, all shall be hell, all manner of things shall be hell.

REPORTER

I'm live at the scene, a trail of utter carnage, as this tragedy unfolds, how are you feeling now, John Faust?

NELSON the DOG

Awooo!

PARIS the PSYCHOLOGIST

The impossibility of thinking about something else when the thing you think with is sick.

(SOUND Lacrimosa ends with long AMEN.)

LUCIFER

'Clouds bedevilled the moon the night Lucifer leapt off Beeston Bump and claimed the life of this wretched Norfolk poet.'

FAUST

The Tragic True Life & Deserved Death of a Benefit Scrounger by Himself, John Faust - no!

LUCIFER

Hang on John Faust, you must finish this book. But I do think that title deserves a dandy tweak.

FAUST

It's shit, shit, it's all shit. My end is my beginning, Alpha and Omega, an end I had predicted in an epic, a poetic drama, a blasphemous book of state-sanctioned torture, these chains they claim are benefits! Dead people don't claim!

LUCIFER

Quite, John. All that, and splat! I love the way Iain Duncan Smith dies on every page! Bravo!

(CAST Bravo!)

If the system cripples you, you must cripple the system, Oscar Wilde! Bravo!

(CAST Bravo!)

FAUST

Oscar Wilde never said that.

LUCIFER

While it may be true he never wrote it down, John, he whispered it to me through the prison door in Reading. I have to say I've been reading your book, John, and I love my part.

FAUST

How dare you read it? This is not some commercial ham that trots out for mere splendour. It is a demon Sir, inside me, and yet it is myself.

LUCIFER

John, I think you should finish it. It's bold, timely, and I get great lines. 'I'd love a bigger part and a happy ending!' See? And in return I promise you... well, whatever you want?

FAUST

Relief! That's all I want. From all this... I want it all to stop. Am I John's mind or am I out of it?

CAST

Are we John's mind or are we out of it?

FAUST

Lies! Don't listen to them! Don't listen to them. Don't listen to them. Don't listen to them.

PARIS

You need to calm down, John, take deep slow breaths, in through your nose, John, one, two, three, and out through your mouth. He hears voices. He's not well.

CAST

The voice of God! Gods! An unstable text.

BEATRICE

Your benefits have been stopped, Mr Faust, but you can appeal.

FAUST

Appeal? I don't want to fucking appeal.

BEATRICE

Can you tell me why you haven't killed yourself yet Mr Faust?

CAST

Bitter metallic tongue, nausea, retch.

HELEN OF TROY

I'm Helen of Troy, Mr Faust, I'm your number one fan.

I think if you've got a platform you should use it responsibly, don't you Mr Faust?

ARLENE

I'm Arlene Foster and I hate lemon puffs!

I'm so sorry to interrupt, Mr Faust, but the vet just rang. She said Nelson definitely has blood poisoning, but she can't do anything, not until you pay your last bill.

NELSON THE DOG

Awooo!

FAUST

Just the white miraculous flash of light that leaves the lungs and cleaves a patch of starless sky.

ARLENE

Yeah but no one actually dies in a book, do they?

REPORTER

This is Alice Fishfork, live at the scene, with this week's News from Hell. Some viewers may prefer to look away now, we're inside John Faust's head, there's blood, vermin, Lucifer, a scene of utter carnage. John Faust, your dog's on his deathbed because you haven't paid the vet, you can't pay your rent, and look, the Bailiffs have just turned up in a pink van. Is this a very emotional moment for you John?

ROSEY POP

Did you drive yourself to this, Mr Faust? I told you, you'll never get that old chariot going. But you still owe me for that clutch. Did he leave a will?

ARLENE

Here she comes... the woman who's done so many u-turns she's looped the fucking loop!

(CAST Shhh!) Well. Needed saying.

(TO MRS MAY) Tell them about the biscuits.

MRS MAY

Oh do I have to Arlene?

ARLENE

Yes! Say it!

MRS MAY

Biscuits means Biscuits and I did get the best tin for Britain because that is what people voted for.

ARLENE

There'll be one extra biscuit for Northern Ireland. Say it!

MRS MAY

With one extra biscuit for Northern Ireland because that is what people voted for.

ARLENE

In a gold wrapper. Say it!

MRS MAY

Do I have to Arlene?

ARLENE

Say it! Say it!

MRS MAY

With one extra biscuit for Northern Ireland which will be wrapped in gold because that is what people voted for. I am delivering the biscuits people voted for. People voted for. It's true that dead people don't claim, and they should not claim, and that is right, and that is fair, and if they do claim, we will exterminate... er... stop them. Smile, look straight at the camera, and say something nice about the NHS.

PIP

Arg!! The NHS? (SOUND running footsteps away)

CAST

The impossibility of thinking about something else when the thing you think with is sick.

FAUST

Relief! That's all I want. From all this.

REPORTER

A bit more? For the viewers? Oh, hang on, that's all we've got time for. Back to Phil in the studio for Flirting with Bestiality.

FAUST

Just the white miraculous flash of light that leaves the lungs and cleaves a patch of starless sky. (SOUND Roaring Sea)

LUCIFER

Ah, suicidal poets, they get me here, every time. And here. Like a breath of fresh air. Oh the fun I had with Marlowe and that red hot poker! And that Greek chap. He tried to end it all just like you, John, but he couldn't stop himself from swimming. Hang on, John Faust, it doesn't end like this!

FAUST

La La La, I'm not listening... (SOUND Storm subsides)

LUCIFER

Ten times he swam out to sea, ten times I let him, John. But in the end he came home with me, obviously, polished off his masterpiece, and in the morning I bought him a sweet strong coffee and blew his brains out on that lovely beach. What was he called? I forget. But I have thought of a much better title for your book, John! Let's call it A Very Queer Nazi Faust! Bravo! (CAST Bravo!)

FAUST

Nazis? But there aren't any Nazis in it?

LUCIFER

Details, John, leave those to me. You just write it all down and hang on behind!

SCARLETT

Hi I'm... I'm amnesia, I've forgotten who I am! I'm Scarlett, ignore me, I'm not even in it. And neither is Eric.

LUCIFER

He's not filming is he? Heaven help us! Diversity gone mad. You get me from this side and you never get me eating. Like the Queen.

EPIC

I scream in the street but I have no mouth.

FAUST

This is what you did to my head, you turned my whispers into lies.

This is what you did to my heart, you turned my kisses into knives.

This is what you did to my hope, you turned my wishes into sighs.

This is what you did to my art, goodbye.

LUCIFER

Bravo John Faust! Bravo! (CAST Bravo!)

This is what I want from my poets! Life! Death! Sex! Bravo! (CAST Bravo!)

(SOUND thunder & lightning.)

CAST (Sing sea shanty.)

And a drop of Nelson's blood wouldn't do us any harm

And a drop of Nelson's blood wouldn't do us any harm

And a drop of Nelson's blood wouldn't do us any harm

And we'll all hang on behind.

And we'll roll the old chariot along

Yes we'll roll the old chariot along.

And we'll roll the old chariot along

And we'll all hang on behind!

PROPS

Shit! This is a health and safety nightmare.

And a damned good flogging wouldn't do us any harm
And a damned good flogging wouldn't do us any harm
And a damned good flogging wouldn't do us any harm
And we'll all hang on behind.

And we'll roll the old chariot along
Yes we'll roll the old chariot along.
And we'll roll the old chariot along
And we'll all hang on behind!

PROPS

Come on, come on, positions. Quickly.

And if the devil's in the road, we'll roll it over her
And if the devil's in the road, we'll roll it over her
And if the devil's in the road, we'll roll it over her
And we'll all hang on behind.

(SOUND people grunting, stretching, getting into position.)

And we'll roll the old chariot along
Yes we'll roll the old chariot along.
And we'll roll the old chariot along
And we'll all hang on behind!

LUCIFER

What are they doing? Please, tell me that's not meant to be Picasso's Guernica?

BEATRICE

You mean the cubist masterpiece that depicts the terror of the Spanish Civil War?

LUCIFER

That's the one.

BEATRICE

Oh no, that's the new improved Work Capability Assessment. Look, we've had these new T-Towels made. If they can hold that pose while he does one of his poems there must be something wrong with them.

FAUST

I went to the doctor's on my birthday.

He was so embarrassed he'd forgotten the date, he gave me a terminal illness.

Ever since, Angels have followed me relentlessly,

opening doors and showing me skies that the living never notice.

I am the impossibility of thinking about something else when the thing you think with is dark thick glass.

Hollowed out, I scream in the street but I have no mouth.

The voice of God, gods, an unstable text.

Bitter metallic tongue, nausea, retch.

The pills I take to stay alive, make me want to kill myself.

LUCIFER

Here you are, John! Is this not a bedazzling spot? Hunstanton, the best place to watch the sun set on the east coast, John. Reminds me of Ibiza. Ah, the lavender on the breeze! Earl Grey, John? Your favourite, I've ordered us a pot. Shall I be Mummy?

FAUST

What fresh hell is this? Shat back out on a shitty beach? Relief, that's all I want.

LUCIFER

Direct, John, I like that. Some people can be so shy about the sex. Smoke?

FAUST

Just the white miraculous flash of light that leaves the lungs and cleaves a patch of starless sky.

LUCIFER

Oh that. Oh do come back, John Faust, you're frozen. You won't feel like this, John, not with my help. If you don't smoke, take a brownie, John, for the journey? I can't eat two. Oh. Well, maybe I can. (Giggles) Poor John, of course, he cannot know he cannot drown. I will not let him. Sex, drugs and tragedy on my day off, I love it. I'll be waiting, John, on another washed-up Norfolk beach. Music!

(SOUND Song: You can't park that van round here, don't care what you think, you can't park that van round here, cos it's pink.)

BEATRICE

We've got a new policy now, Mr Faust, called Dead People Don't Claim.

Why haven't you killed yourself yet, Mr Faust? If you could just fill out this form explaining...

ROSEY POP

Did you drive yourself to this Mr Faust?

MRS MAY

Biscuits means Biscuits and I did get the best tin for Britain because that is what people voted for.

ARLENE FOSTER

Say No! to chocolate fingers! Blasphemy! All shall be hell, all shall be hell, all manner of things shall be hell.

HELEN OF TROY

Fair Trade Vegan Carrots. Sign the petition.

ARLENE

No cherries. No fudge. No lemon puffs.

REPORTER

Dramatic scenes, John Faust, you're live on News From Hell, please don't swear. How are you feeling now, John, can you put it into words?

PARIS the PSYCHOLOGIST

The impossibility of thinking about something else when the thing you think with is sick.

NELSON the DOG

Awooo!

ARLENE

No ginger nuts!

LUCIFER

Finish this book, John Faust, and I will give you whatever you want.

ARLENE

No chocolate fingers.

FAUST

I want all this noise to stop for a start!

(SOUND: screeching tyres, a crash, accordion explodes, finally silence.)

FAUST

Ah, that's better. Thank you. That was going right through my head.

LUCIFER

Welcome.

FAUST

Now will you please stop following me! Leave me alone, begone! Where is this place anyway?

LUCIFER

Well, er, I'd rather not say exactly where we are, John...

EPIC

Hemsby. Whoops.

LUCIFER

...as this is where I land my cocaine.

ARLENE

Nothing with a ring or hole or a jammy filling

LUCIFER

A little snifter, John, to wake you up?

ARLENE

No cherries.

FAUST

What do you want from me? Can't you see, I'm trying to drown?

ARLENE

Wafers are a sin!

FAUST

Go away!

LUCIFER

'Wing wide I soar, wider than your night is dark, and darker than the secret in my heart, I am despair!'

FAUST

You know my words.

LUCIFER

Ah, at last, the penny drops!

FAUST

That's not possible. I haven't finished it yet. I can't.

LUCIFER

I know your words as I know my own heart, John, and both are stopped!
I keep telling you, John, I love your work, just tell me what you want?

FAUST

Oh I don't know any more. You tell me.

LUCIFER

Excellent! I've written us a short contract, John. Kept it simple.

FAUST

Simple? Nothing is simple. Life is relentless.
(REPORTER screams 'Cuts!' and dies.)
Don't you understand? I just want it all to stop.

ARLENE

Backstop!

LUCIFER

Oh for goodness sake, John, listen to yourself!
You should try immortality, believe me, forever can be a terrible drag.
(HELEN OF TROY screams Carrots! and dies.)
I try to make a difference to the days, John, I delegate, but it's not easy, that's why
I'm here. Now. With you. On my day off. Look, I've even ticked the box for Perfect
Health.

FAUST

You're saying if I sign this I get perfect health? You're barking!

LUCIFER

Health so perfect, John, it purrs like a pussy stroked.

NELSON

Awooo! (NELSON dies.)

FAUST

You don't understand. I need money, right now, in my bank. No, it's too late. Don't help me now. I've been evicted.

LUCIFER

It's never too late, John, that's the truth.

PARIS & ARLENE (Scream and turn into petrified trees.)

Agh! It's too late!

LUCIFER

Listen, I can give you more than you have wit to ask, John Faust.

FAUST

I doubt it, I have wit to ask a lot. But if I sign this you promise to leave me alone?
Ouch!

LUCIFER

Just a little prick, John, enough to wet my nib.

FAUST

Well if I can have anything, my car does need a new clutch.
(ROSEY POP screams Clutch! and dies.)

LUCIFER

Why not a brand new car, John?

FAUST

Oh good idea. Why didn't I think of that? Perfect health and a brand new car? And while you're at it, I'll speak to that Prime Minister, give her a piece of my mind.
(MRS MAY screams 'BISCUITS!' and drops the biscuits.)

LUCIFER

That's the spirit, John! There. Tick that box.

FAUST

What's this? Meet the Pope. Why not? He needs to know how hurtful words can be.

LUCIFER

Brilliant, John! I've just had another thought! Let's get him to endorse your brand new book?

FAUST

Oh and Iain Duncan Smith at the DWP. Mr I believe I am right. He must die, some slow and gruesome death.
(SCARLETT starts to die a slow and gruesome death.)

LUCIFER

I'm ahead of you there, John. He's resigned.

FAUST

Resigned? I want blood! I want his head on a platter! I want him to suffer!

(SCARLETT dies again.)

LUCIFER

I'm sorry, John, I've been so busy bombing small children, but I'll give him my full attention from now on.

Multiple slow gruesome deaths, John, there, tick that box. Now make your cross!

(SCARLETT dies again.)

FAUST

John Faust. There! Now please leave me alone. Ahh! Oooo! What's happening to me?

(SOUND thunder and lightning. NELSON howls Awooo!)

LUCIFER

Look! You're here John, at the Norwich Arts Centre, showing these fabulous people your brand new book. Wave to the camera, John, and hang on behind! Perfect health can be one hell of a rush!

FAUST & CAST

WOWWWW!!! (FAUST only) I don't know what just happened, but suddenly... I feel fit for work!

CAST

And a drop of Nelson's blood wouldn't do us any harm
And a drop of Nelson's blood wouldn't do us any harm
And a drop of Nelson's blood wouldn't do us any harm
And we'll all hang on behind.

And we'll roll the old chariot along
Yes we'll roll the old chariot along.
And we'll roll the old chariot along
And we'll all hang on behind!

LUCIFER

Can you dance John?

FAUST

Well, not really, I've got two left feet...

LUCIFER

Not any more John.

FAUST (John taps a few steps.)

Oh my god, I can tap!

LUCIFER

Perfect health John! After you... (They tap off into the distance...)

REPORTER

Alice Fishfork here, live on News from Hell, John Faust has finally signed Lucifer's contract in blood, let's see that again in slow motion. What a beautiful moment. There they go, arm and arm, leading the dance, off for a quick costume change, which gives me time to try and catch some audience reaction. Hello, you're sitting here in the front row, what did you think of Lucifer's extraordinary performance?

NAN

Well to be honest, I slept through most of it. I've just been so tired, I'm on these new tablets, and I wasn't sure where I was. Funny, but when that poor man signed the contract, I felt a shudder go right through me too... and then... well, I feel so much better, it's almost like I got perfect health too.

REPORTER

News just coming through, the cast are a couple of people short. That's the trouble with letting sick people tell their own stories, I suppose, lightweights. What will that mean for Act two? We don't know yet, but clearly that could have a knock on effect, we'll have to see.

Dandelion

End of Act One. Does John Faust get perfect health? Does he give that Prime Minister a piece of his mind? Will he meet the Pope? Find out in Act Two, coming soon!

ENDS