

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



# As the World Warps

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by Cavan Gallagher

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EXTRACT

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77 Salamanca Place Hobart 7004 Tasmania Australia  
email [admin@ozscript.org](mailto:admin@ozscript.org)  
[www.ozscript.org](http://www.ozscript.org)  
ph +61 3 6223 4675  
fax +61 3 6223 4678

# AS THE WORLD WARPS

## CHARACTERS

**CHRISSEY:** Couch potato. Obsessive. Murderer. Our heroine.

**SATAN:** Prince/ss of Darkness. Businessman/woman.

**GEORGE:** Head of the household. Nice but sexually frustrated.

**CHASTITY:** George's wife. Nice but a man-hater.

**BRAD:** Their son. Nice but annoying.

**GILL:** Their daughter. Nice but paranoid.

**HELEN:** Bitch. Nymphomaniac. Lives in the mangled body of a recently-deceased actress.

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BLACK.

SFX: THE MUTED SOUND OF AN ENGINE FROM THE INTERIOR OF A CAR, FOLLOWED BY THE VOICE OF CHRISSEY, THE DRIVER.

CHRISSEY: Hey, is that..? No, it can't be, can it? Oh my God, it is! I don't believe it. Right!

SFX: THE CAR ACCELERATING.

CHRISSEY: Die, bitch!

SFX: A SCREAM; THE CRUNCH OF METAL AS THE CAR CRASHES. THE HORN GETS STUCK IN A HIGH-PITCHED FLATLINE WAIL. THIS FADES OUT TO BE REPLACED WITH A DISTANT, HELLISH MONTAGE OF THUNDER AND AGONISED SCREAMING.

RED WASH. A TERRIFIED CHRISSEY APPEARS IN A RED SPOT.

CHRISSEY: Oh hell. Where am I? What happened to the car? And what's that noise, those ungodly tortured cries? I haven't heard screaming like that since 'Sing-a-long-a Sound Of Music'

THE CHORUS OF A HELLISH CHOIR

A LURKING, SINISTER FIGURE EMERGES FROM THE SHADOWS: IT IS SATAN, RULER OF THE UNDERWORLD. ALTHOUGH IT IS DIFFICULT TO DISTINGUISH MUCH ABOUT HER, WE CAN SEE A BUSINESS SUIT UNDERNEATH HER CLOAK.

SATAN: Chrissy, Chrissy, Chrissy...

CHRISSEY: Who's that?

SATAN: Now what was all that about? And you've always been such a good girl. No criminal record, no dirty secrets. Not even the slightest slur or misdeed.

CHRISSEY: Who are you? Please tell me what's going on!

SATAN: First things first. Why did you run that poor woman over?

CHRISSEY: She's dead?

SATAN: Of course. That was the point, wasn't it? How're you feeling?

CHRISSEY: Like a supermodel. Weightless and sick.

SATAN: That's perfectly normal. Newcomers often find it difficult not having a body anymore.

CHRISSEY: Not having a body? What are you talking about?

SATAN: Back to the question. Why did you run that woman over?

CHRISSEY: Because she's Helen Channing! The nastiest, most conniving bitch in the world.

SATAN: Helen Channing: a character in the popular daytime soap opera 'As The World Pivots'. Known to have had every man on the show, and most of the women. Allegedly even house pets get nervous around her. Also a keen linedancer. (With relish) Evil. You didn't kill her.

CHRISSEY: I did! I did kill her!

SATAN: No, no. You killed Lisa Ryan, the actress who plays Helen. You were drunk enough to mix them up. Helen herself lives on; they've already found a new actress to play her.

CHRISSEY: Who?

SATAN: Danni Minogue.

CHRISSEY: Danni Minogue? They've got to be joking! How could she play Helen, she couldn't intimidate a kitten with manic depression.

SATAN: Well they had to find a replacement, thanks to you. And you know what they say, needs must as I drive and all.

CHRISSEY: I died, didn't I?

SATAN: A good woman, was Lisa. Godmother to six children, regular contributor to charity. In fact, right at this moment somewhere in Somalia a child is dying of starvation all because of you.

CHRISSEY: (Increasingly panicked) Am I dead? Hello?

SATAN IS LISTENING, BUT IS ENJOYING HERSELF TOO MUCH TO REPLY.

SATAN: It's just that kid's bad luck she had to run into you: a sad, lonely individual who found her sole comfort in a piece of low-quality programming. Brain valium. Designed for drugged-up students and pensioners who don't have the strength to change the channel.

THIS IS TOO MUCH FOR CHRISSEY.

CHRISSEY: (Screams) Will you please tell me if I'm dead!

SHE COLLAPSES IN A SOBBING HEAP. SATAN COOLY LOOKS ON.

SATAN: Quite frankly kiddo, on the credibility scale you were outranked even by Michael Jackson fanatics. Yes, you're dead.

CHRISSEY: Oh my God!

SATAN: (Scolding) Language.

CHRISSEY: I'm dead? Proper dead?

SATAN: As opposed to semi-dead? Trust me, you're deader than Stephen Hawking's todger.

CHRISSEY: It can't be. There was still so much I wanted to do. I never got to become an actress and travel across the world. I never learned to sing. And above all, I never got to make love with...

SATAN: Anyone.

CHRISSEY: (Hurt) That's not fair! Please... where am I?

SATAN: You're in the only place you could be. The place where bad people go: where all your worst nightmares come true.

CHRISSEY: I'm in Adelaide?

SATAN: Adelaide? No, you're in Hell! Do you know who I am?

SHE VISIBLY STRAINS WITH THOUGHT.

CHRISSY: That chick from 'The Weakest Link' ?

SATAN: You idiot. I'm the Devil!

SHE RECOILS IN TERROR.

CHRISSY: Oh! What's going to happen to me?

SATAN: Why, you've earned yourself a permanent residency, my dear. You're the lucky recipient of the most intense suffering anyone in Creation can offer. Imagine being stuck on a busload of 'Popstars' contestants for eternity, that's the kind of ambience we aim for. Only we've something extra special lined up for you.

CHRISSY: No!

SATAN: Yes!

CHRISSY: It can't be!

SATAN: Yes!

CHRISSY: Not the pitchfork!

SATAN: Pitchfork! For antichrist's sakes! Every time we get someone down here, the first thing they always mention is the damned pitchfork. I tell you, one little PR stunt and it's all you hear about for two millennia. No, I don't have a sodding pitchfork. And I don't have horns, or a tail, and I certainly don't look like a bloody goat! Jesus just told you people that to wind me up!

CHRISSY: What's going to happen to me?

SATAN: The punishment shall fit your crime. You like soap operas so much; a soap opera is what you shall get...

SATAN EXITS, LAUGHING. CHRISSY IS LEFT ALONE.

CHRISSY: What does that mean?

THE RED WASH DISAPPEARS AS A SOAP-STYLE, 'ANOTHER DAY IS BEGINNING'-TYPE JINGLE PLAYS. CHRISSY IS STANDING IN THE LIVING ROOM OF A SUBURBAN HOUSE.

CHRISSY: What? Where's Hell? Wait a minute; I think I know this place...

A DARKLY DRESSED YOUNG WOMAN – GILL LUCAS - ENTERS THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR. SHE IS CLEARLY UPSET.

GILL: Chrissy! Oh Chrissy!

CHRISSY: Gill? Gill Lucas?

GILL: Thank the Lord you're here.

CHRISSY: You're Gill Lucas!

GILL: Yeah, I know I am. Come here.

CHRISSY: But you're not... I mean you don't...

GILL BEGINS TO DRAG HER TO THE DOOR.

GILL: Oh, stop kidding. This is serious. Come here, sis!

CHRISSY: Sis?

GILL: You know that guy I was telling you about? That creepy guy who keeps following me around?

SHE OPENS THE DOOR JUST WIDE ENOUGH FOR CHRISSY TO SEE OUT OF.

GILL: He's back!

CHRISSY: Where?

GILL: Right there. On the motorbike, dressed in blue. The same time every morning he comes here. He just won't leave me alone!

CHRISSY: That's the postman.

GILL'S PARENTS, GEORGE AND CHASTITY, ENTER.

CHASTITY: What's going on, dear?

GILL: Mum, it's that guy again. The Creep!

GEORGE AND CHASTITY EXCHANGE A WORRIED LOOK.

GEORGE: I'll go and check it out.