

MEPHISTOPHELEAN INSTITUTE OF TURPITUDE  
**Certificate of Really Really Evil Achievement**

WE HEREBY LAUD AND RECOGNIZE

*The Evil Midnight Bombers What Bomb At Midnight*

REGARDING OUTSTANDING EFFORTS IN THE EVIL DISCIPLINE OF SELLING ONE'S SOUL

**WHEREAS** your team displayed that rare strength of character to embrace the principle of winning at any cost. Now that you've taken a cursory glance at this contract, take this moment to enjoy that newfound sense of accomplishment. After all, isn't it great to have that shiny new penny? Heck, you can't exactly buy a gumball with a *soul*, now can you?

**WHEREAS** your team showed an impressive resolve in holding the line and steering clear of the temptation to be good. Who isn't tired of that boring credo of righteousness from those pesky angels anyway? We bet you can't fly away from trouble on your little pigeon wings, right? Best to kick those haloheads to the curb and enjoy the good times down here with us.

**WHEREAS** your team found itself without a hope in Hell of winning the Mystery Hunt. But wait! Hell is a very hopeful place! Merely by cashing in something you were never going to use in a million years, you gained all the hope you needed to win! Beat that, Heaven!

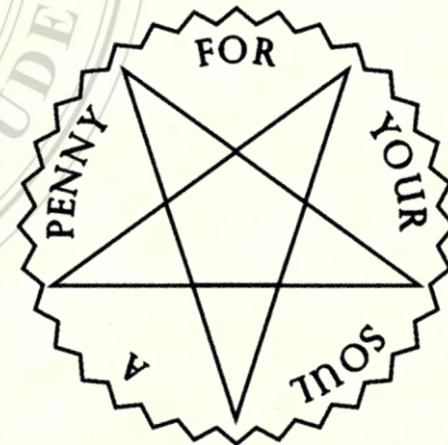
**WHEREAS** your team was undergoing a painful hardship, the stark austerity of a life without certainty. But now you're certain you're going to Hell! See how refreshing that is? Oh sure, there will be an *eternity* of hardship once you're through here, but for now, kick back and enjoy life. What little you have left, anyway. We would like to assure you that once you're roped into one of our contracts, we'll make certain it's honored as soon as possible. That's the Mephistophelean Institute of Turpitude guarantee.

IN LIGHT OF THESE COMPETENCIES, YOUR TEAM IS HEREBY AWARDED

**ITS VERY FIRST NOTCH ON ITS EVILOMETER™**

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*M. F. Stophiles*



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REGARDING OUTSTANDING EFFORTS IN THE EVIL DISCIPLINE OF THE PERFORMING ARTS

**WHEREAS** your team took the phrase “Break a leg!” to be your surest way out of understudydom.

**WHEREAS** your team began your entertainment career doing stock theater productions of critically praised plays like the works of Isherwood, Ibsen, and Pinter. You trembled every time you set foot on the stage. You began to conquer your stage fright once you started acting in things people actually liked.

**WHEREAS** your team accepted an Oscar on behalf of Marlon Brando. You’re sure it wasn’t, like, stolen or anything.

**WHEREAS** your team signed on to assistant-direct a \$325 million Michael Bay stinkfest just so you could say, “Really, it could have made a fortune in the hands of a *competent* director.” (Hey, I’m sure advice like that led the studio to give a hack like Bay his first break anyway.)

**WHEREAS** your team spent nine days memorizing the “Once more unto the breach” speech from Act III of Henry V, then discovered the director decided to “modern it up” by replacing it with “Let’s get bizay!” He’s on a cloud in heaven right now. Good job, you.

**WHEREAS** your team found that nothing’s scarier than an early morning script rewrite. But you never got flustered, not you. On the contrary, you were able to keep a straight face, spew out the lines you already knew, and then threaten to walk if the scriptwriter wasn’t banned from the set. Writers, man. Serves them right for tangling with the wrong thespian.

**WHEREAS** your team produced a body of work so pungent, so vile, so utterly devoid of quality, that you’ve got a permanent stool with your name on it at the Hellzapoppin’ Bar. Meanwhile, nightly showings of your oeuvre are playing at the Hell Plaza Octoplex. Keep up the good work!

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REGARDING OUTSTANDING EFFORTS IN THE EVIL DISCIPLINE OF SPORTS

**WHEREAS** your team often says that it's not whether you win or lose, but whether you've signed your guaranteed contract first. As any red-shirt freshman knows, you can't spell PLAY THE GAME without PAY ME.

**WHEREAS** your team knows that it's always three strikes and you're out. Of course, if the last pitch is a passed ball, the runner at third advances to home plate, as perhaps do other runners. And if the throw from home winds up in the outfield....

**WHEREAS** your team is aware that one *can* study thermonuclear fission dynamics in college, you know that the sorority babes are more likely to put out for the Phys Ed major than the Physics major.

**WHEREAS** your team would gladly miss practice to film a Chunky Soup commercial. You'd probably miss the Super Bowl to do so.

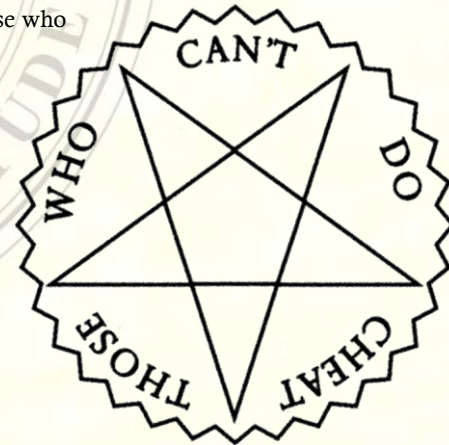
**WHEREAS** your team values muscles, it's those dedicated sports players who commit themselves to having a modicum of finesse that will break away from the pack. You need to develop a soft touch and be light on your feet. That'll get you on *Dancing With The Stars* like Jerry and Emmitt.

**WHEREAS** your team believes a little pine tar or stickum never hurt anyone. If you're not gonna cheat at something, you just don't care if you win.

**WHEREAS** your team knows those who work hard will grow swift and strong, but not as much as those who have a good pharmacist.

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REGARDING OUTSTANDING EFFORTS IN THE EVIL DISCIPLINE OF CRIME

**WHEREAS** your team showed that possession is nine tenths of the law, but you're working on the other tenth.

**WHEREAS** your team demonstrated not merely a healthy disrespect for the law, but mocked it openly so that no men would follow such freakin' nonsense.

**WHEREAS** your team showed accomplishment in the planning, administration, and execution of gang hits and turf wars. The city streets run red with the blood of your enemies!

**WHEREAS** your team evinced an innate ability to spew out fairy tales on the witness stand, while looking into the camera and smiling like a goddamn girl scout.

**WHEREAS** your team showed a superior talent for spending days hanging out with the boys, while spending nights cleaning out warehouses.

**WHEREAS** your team demonstrated the ability to not only dominate men, but to maim them in really creative ways. So that they wish they were dead. So that their own mothers can't even tell who they are. Yuck.

**WHEREAS** your team wasn't content with just hitting your target, but really smacking it. Hard. With a four wood. In the temple.

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REGARDING OUTSTANDING EFFORTS IN THE EVIL DISCIPLINE OF WRITING

**WHEREAS** your team proved that sometimes, a blank piece of paper is the best it's ever going to be.

**WHEREAS** your team was assigned to work on an exhaustive treatment of the development of the Mayan matriarchy, and made your primary source your bookie in Tijuana.

**WHEREAS** your team spent a week knocking out your latest novel, then claimed you needed a three year research trip in the Bahamas to get the sequel done. It's for the fans. Trust me, *Harry Potter and the Shortage of Sun Umbrellas* is a great title.

**WHEREAS** your team could write under pressure, valuing the achievement of a deadline far more highly than quality, accuracy, or originality. "The pen is the window to the soul" is just a phase you'd like to forget from junior high. (Oooh, memoir topic!)

**WHEREAS** your team demonstrated the propensity for blowing your advance on prostitutes and beer when on a national book tour, without telling your agent first. But Jesus Christ on a plate of noodles, who knew the minibar at the Embassy Suites had a never-ending supply of Fluffernutters?

**WHEREAS** your team showed that when you are paid by the word, you will write the friggin' dictionary.

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*M. F. Stephens*



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REGARDING OUTSTANDING EFFORTS IN THE EVIL DISCIPLINE OF GETTING RICH QUICK

**WHEREAS** your team supported the notion that all citizens of this great nation, regardless of race, creed, or age, are accorded the inalienable right to be fleeced. There's nothing so patriotic as a busful of senior citizens handing you twenties like they're going out of style.

**WHEREAS** your team believes there's a sucker born every minute. Seriously, hit the neonatal wards. Conning a newborn out of a pacifier on his first day on earth is every fast talker's first job. It's like taking candy from... well, you know.

**WHEREAS** your team wooed an heiress for weeks, pretending to be a lover of the ballet. Okay, if it's in a strip club....

**WHEREAS** your team, after taking prepaid orders to outfit the local tykes with musical instruments, had to get out of town in a hurry. That's trouble with a capital "T," and that rhymes with "P," and that stands for "Prison."

**WHEREAS** your team could sell a squirrel an acorn in his own oak tree. Do you think the lady squirrels are looking for a male who hoards *ordinary* acorns, Mr. Puffycheeks? No, I didn't think so.

**WHEREAS** your team bought a dream house in West Palm without putting a penny down. How'd I do it? Buy my book and I'll tell you.

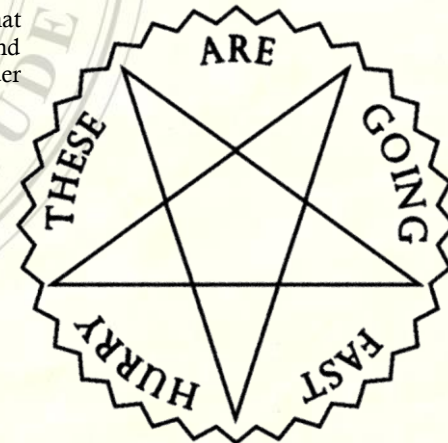
**WHEREAS** your team, at the impressionable age of seven and a half, cried to your respective mothers that you really really oh my god really needed these cereals and not those, because if you got those cereals and not these, you wouldn't get as many Honey Smacks boxtops as you needed to get your Dig 'Em Decoder Ring, that, I'm sorry, needs to be able to decode more than "Eat more cereal!" I mean, come on.

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REGARDING OUTSTANDING EFFORTS IN THE EVIL DISCIPLINE OF HIGH FINANCE

**WHEREAS** your team demonstrated that when the topic of "Ethics" in business is brought up, it has no clue that the dictionary contains anything between the letters "D" and "F."

**WHEREAS** your team knows that in a well run business, each valued employee is a leaf upon the mighty oak of fiduciary trust, which is poisoned down all the way to the roots.

**WHEREAS** your team thinks the movie *Wall Street* was great, but blew its ending.

**WHEREAS** your team strived to go the distance as a titan of corporate greed, the kind of soul killing machine every wage slave hopes to work for someday.

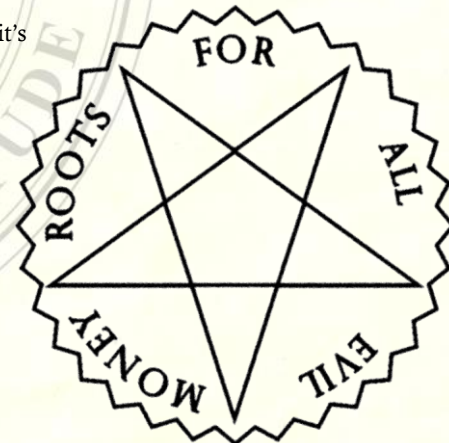
**WHEREAS** your team showed you were that kind of bad corporate citizens who would willingly incite a war to build another battleship, and who would take the company car so they could run over puppies.

**WHEREAS** your team knows that money is no object. It's the *subject*.

**WHEREAS** your team believes in aiming high. It's all well and good to be the seller in a monopoly, but it's much better to be the *buyer* in a monopsony. A little competition never hurt anybody... else.

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REGARDING OUTSTANDING EFFORTS IN THE EVIL DISCIPLINE OF LAW AND GOVERNMENT

**WHEREAS** your team sought power for power's sake, rather than any policy goals. You'd gladly chair the Subcommittee on Livestock and Horticulture, without really knowing what horticulture is, or for that matter what subcommittees are. But hey, those guys get the best fried chicken.

**WHEREAS** your team would vigorously defend a vicious lowlife accused of filleting a schoolteacher with a traditional Finnish puukko knife, knowing you had only the sparsest possibility of acquittal. That is, as long as Court TV was there.

**WHEREAS** your team demonstrated an unyielding adherence to the governing principle of "One Man, One Vote." After all, a good Diebold machine can make any number of men out of a string of ones and zeroes, so one vote each should be fine.

**WHEREAS** your team, upon its ascension to office, was sworn in to hold up the laws of our country. I mean, "uphold." Yeah, that's the ticket.

**WHEREAS** your team believes the children are our future. Teach them well and let them lead the way... into hostile territory. You can always get more children.

**WHEREAS** your team, like Judi Dench's *Casino Royale* character, misses the Cold War. Back then, every harebrained scheme under the sun could be justified by a simple "Better dead than red!" mantra. Back then, you could get Americans to support giving a Congressional Medal of Honor to Pol Pot if he'd just killed the Commies first. Y'know, if he wasn't one.

**WHEREAS** your team believes politics should be like a Jeffrey Archer potboiler, and law like a John Grisham thriller. Good works may be ephemeral, but scandal lasts forever.

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REGARDING OUTSTANDING EFFORTS IN THE EVIL DISCIPLINE OF MASS MANIPULATION

**WHEREAS** your team gained control of the airwaves and riled the populace with a staged Martian invasion on Halloween. This was a fine diversion from your *real* Martian invasion, which won't happen till Earth Day. Got to keep those SETI freaks distracted.

**WHEREAS** your team won the hearts of its followers with a steely gaze and a hand on the Good Book. Well, okay, it was the latest Jackie Collins novel, but who's gonna know this? They only look behind the pulpit when they think you've got a stripper stashed there.

**WHEREAS** your team, just for a lark, rewired all the traffic signals in town to flash in Morse code, spelling dash-dash-dot dash-dash-dash on red lights and dot-dot-dot dash dash-dash-dash dot-dash-dash-dot on green lights. Hey, a little clean fun never hurt a soul.

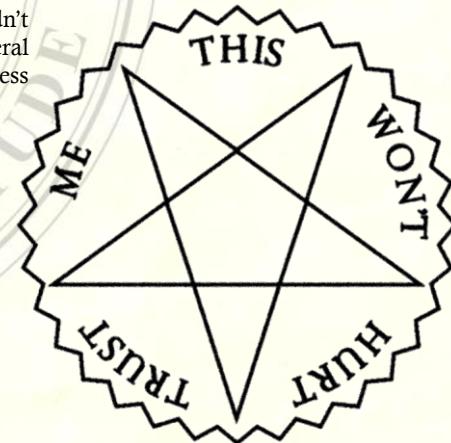
**WHEREAS** your team launched a TV show where viewers can help track down criminals. They thrill as you hunt down your quarry and beat him to a pulp. And there are so many criminals these days. All these journalists and regulators and people in your own organization who don't trust you to think for them. Who loves you and who do you love?

**WHEREAS** your team began playing "Silent Night" and "Deck the Halls" in July. Christmas carols make bikini shopping much more festive.

**WHEREAS** your team swore it would be struck down by the wrath of a vengeful God if viewers didn't send in \$59.99 to your toll free number. Apparently "Show me the money!" is not something the federal government wants to hear from a televangelist. Word is, you set a record for calls to the Better Business Bureau before the end of a telecast. Well, no matter. Faith doesn't give refunds, baby.

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REGARDING OUTSTANDING EFFORTS IN THE EVIL DISCIPLINE OF ADVANCED WORLD DOMINATION

**WHEREAS** your team beat back all challengers to become the most powerful force in the world. More powerful even than Oprah.

**WHEREAS** your team gained control of all of the world's governments and religions through a strict regimen of malevolent effort that is unparalleled throughout human history. During your meteoric ascension, each dark deed has been meticulously planned, efficiently executed, and ceaselessly advertised. Heaven may have the miracles, but Hell has the best marketing firms.

**WHEREAS** your team composed an Evil World Anthem to be sung by schoolchildren and military choruses everywhere. The instrumental banjo and theremin version replaces all school fight songs, and the a cappella version is the only song permitted to be performed by barbershop quartets. Wait, scratch that. Whatever a barbershop quartet sings will be evil anyway.

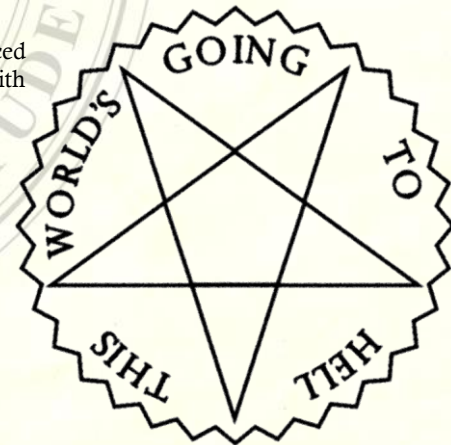
**WHEREAS** your team drafted a rough layout for a Middle East Peace Plan. Everybody gets kicked off the land except for the employees of your oil company. Presto, instant peace.

**WHEREAS** your team wasn't satisfied with keeping the military industrial complex going at full strength. That's too challenging for the drooling drones. Your new military industrial *simplex* will be taught in the world's kindergartens. Thus, tons of ordnance will be stamped out each day before naptme. You put down that arming mechanism this minute, Billy Patterson!

**WHEREAS** your team, after a long night of drinking, decreed that perfection was obsolete. You replaced all circles with ovals, all perfect squares with the square root of negative one, and Scarlett Johanssen with Roseanne.

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REGARDING OUTSTANDING EFFORTS IN THE EVIL DISCIPLINE OF GOING STRAIGHT TO HELL

**WHEREAS** your team has proved its ability to *get it done*. You're able to accomplish any task, at any time. In fact, the less qualified you are, the more fun it is—snap, the job's a game! Whatever the role is, you are the consummate impostor. Whether it's an archbishop ("Pray, Lord, not of thee but for thine bell to toll, amen.") or a surgeon ("Give me fifty ccs of Ofukitol, stat!"), improvisation is your forte. Except for that time you tried to fly the space shuttle—close, but no cigar.

**WHEREAS** your team has established your reputation throughout the evil community. Whatever low opinion of you they might once have had, they're sure scared of you now. You make Capone look like Bambi—no baseball bats for you; you weed out the slackers with your trusty bazooka. Now *that* inspires teamwork. Not that you haven't shown a softer side. When you begged that judge for *just one more chance*, there wasn't a dry eye in the house. "Oh, the poor man." Suckers.

**WHEREAS** your team has finally moved out of your stepmom's basement apartment down by the Fens, and come to live downtown (and I mean *way* down) where the action is. Welcome to Mephistopolis, my friends—don't mind that sulfur stench. Pretty soon, you'll come to enjoy to its oakly subtlety. I love the smell of brimstone in the morning; it smells like *villainy*.

**WHEREAS** your team seems really anxious to step up to the table, roll up your sleeves, turn up the heat, pull out the stops—and actually get something done around here. But maybe you're a bit *too* anxious—try not to put your fist through the boss's door when you finally get to knock on it...

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**AN IMPORTANT STACK OF PAPERWORK**  
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REGARDING OUTSTANDING EFFORTS IN THE EVIL DISCIPLINE OF BEING A DAMNED NUISANCE

**WHEREAS** now your team has really crossed the line. You probably even think you're evil enough to replace *me*. You think that evil is as easy as putting on a devil costume and waving a pitchfork around? You think it's as simple as serving up three quarts of lima bean soup with a loaded diaper lurking in the pot? You are all amateurs.

**WHEREAS** your team thinks you're due for some kind of reward. You rats may have scurried about these last few days acting like good little henchmen, learning your little evil lessons and ascending the ranks of the incompetent, but why should that earn you anything? I am the Devil; Lord knows I've been at this for an eternity and my only payoff is having to endure upstarts like you. If I want goodies, I have to go loot the Vatican.

**WHEREAS** your team thinks my motto ought to be, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." Well here's a new one for you: "Get your lazy asses back to work." After all, you are in HELL—a coffee break would pretty much defeat the purpose, now, wouldn't it? Oh, and if by any chance you might be hoping for a promotion, I'd say a snowball has a better chance in here than you have of making it past Assistant Devil. But, hey, maybe in four cons—five, tops—you'll finally earn that pointy tail you've had your eye on. Neat-o.

**NOW GET TO IT!**

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**AN ETERNAL POSITION AS ASSISTANT DEVIL**  
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