# The Final Caveat of Phineas Bartholomew
## A one-act horror-comedy
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# The Final Caveat of Phineas Bartholomew

<u>CAST (4 men, 3 women)</u>
PHINEAS BARTHOLOMEW:  62. The narrator. Somber.

YOUNGER PHINEAS :  30 years earlier. Naïve.

TERISE D'VILLE:  Late 50s. Boss at Ancient Antiquities art dealership. Russian. Eerily calm.

SMITTY:  Grizzled female hillbilly assassin.

THE WIFE:  The long-suffering partner of a madman. 58 with Phineas, 28 with the Younger Phineas.

MONSIEUR DEPARDIEU:  30s. French warrior.

MR. MARLEY:  Early 50s. British. Multiple accents.


Other small roles and groups are filled in with the ensemble. It is recommended that the Guy in Line is played by the same actor as Depardieu and the Ticket Agent by Mr. Marley.

<u>SET</u>
Phineas' study is downstage right. There is a regal armchair facing the audience. Directly behind the chair, a short set of stairs lead to a platform. In the center of the platform is a door; on either side of it the door is a bookcase filled with hard cover tomes.

The other side of the stage is empty. Phineas' memories of the adventures of his past are played out here.

<u>TIME</u>
2018 and 1988.

*(A dim spot comes up on PHINEAS in his chair. Everyone but his wife stands upstage left, gazing at him from the shadows. He speaks gravely to the audience.)*

PHINEAS

I regret to inform you, but we have come to the end of humanity's reign on earth. There is nowhere for you to run, so I hope you'll stay in your seats as I relate how I first learned of mankind's impending demise, and my role in bringing it about. I rue the part I have played, but it hardly matters. This day was inevitable. The creeping horror was there, whether or not we knew of it, fought against it or not. It only waited for when it could escape and claim its ascendancy.
        *(pause)*
1988. Hellraiser is the popular in theatres, giving people the impression that hell and eternal torment is good for a few jumps and giggles. I had an interview for a job as a private courier and personal assistant at Ancient World Antiquities. I was newly married, newly graduated, and desperate for someone who carried about my Creative History degree from Brown.

*(Lights come up on stage left and dim partly on PHINEAS. The YOUNGER Phineas enters, filling out a form on a clipboard.)*

The final application form deviated from the more standard application materials that had garnered me the interview. Questions like "what will people say about you when you are dead…"

YOUNGER

Uh…

PHINEAS

And "are you afraid of evil."

<div align="center">YOUNGER</div>

What the hell.
<div align="center">*(marking his form)*</div>
"Not at all scared of evil."

<div align="center">*(D'VILLE enters behind him, carrying a folder.)*</div>

<div align="center">D'VILLE</div>

Good to hear that, Mr. Bartholomew.

<div align="center">YOUNGER</div>

Ah! Miss DeVille.

<div align="center">D'VILLE</div>

But if you're not scared of evil, why so jumpy?

<div align="center">YOUNGER</div>

Sorry. Just nervous, about the interview. You know.

<div align="center">D'VILLE</div>

There is no interview.

<div align="center">YOUNGER</div>

What? Look, if you've already filled the position, fine, but I would have appreciated.

<div align="center">D'VILLE</div>

You have the job, Mr. Bartholomew. You are the only candidate.

<div align="center">YOUNGER</div>

Really? I can't believe—

<div align="center">D'VILLE</div>

Don't start out by being an idiot. There were other applicants. A screening process. Your resume indicated that you have had previous employment… you may have heard these words before?

<div align="center">YOUNGER</div>

Right. Like I said, nerves. And now I'm edgy and disconcerted. I was planning on interviewing you, too.

<div align="center">D'VILLE</div>

You have accepted no position yet. But you will. Americans. So worried.
> *(passing him the folder.)*

I think you'll find the first reason why you'll be accepting our offer of employment is apparent.

<div align="center">YOUNGER</div>

Wow. That… is a lot of money. I'm back to it: why me? What on earth could make me the only one who applied worthy of this? Don't get me wrong. I can do this job, and I can be great at it. But frankly, I was expecting to end up supporting my history hobby with a university job. Why me?

<div align="center">D'VILLE</div>

The problem with science is that it doesn't take intangibles into account. You have a lot of intangibles.

<div align="center">YOUNGER</div>

Such as?

<div align="center">D'VILLE</div>

Your persistence.

<div align="center">YOUNGER</div>

All right, fine, I'll stop bluffing, where do I sign?

> *(She proffers him a pen.)*

<div align="center">D'VILLE</div>

I am very excited you are joining Ancient World, Mr. Bartholomew.

<div align="center">YOUNGER</div>

*(signing)*
You don't really seem excited.

<div align="center">D'VILLE</div>

I have never had anyone as young as you working here before, Mr. Bartholomew. Should I be hopping about in some fashion?

<div align="center">YOUNGER</div>

Call me Phineas. My friend's call me Phin.

<div align="center">D'VILLE</div>

I prefer more formality in the workplace. I work in antiquities because the world has become vulgar. It is shit. Only in the past will you find truth and nobility. There was a day when people understood that knowing someone's given name is how demons take their hold. You understand?

<div align="center">YOUNGER</div>

Um…

<div align="center">D'VILLE</div>

Our names are the armored gate to our souls.

<div align="center">YOUNGER</div>

I'll keep that in mind. I'll just have everyone call me Ishmael.

Why did you choose antiquities, Mr. Bartholomew?

<div align="center">YOUNGER</div>

*(pause)*
I love that artisans and craftsmen made things, in the moment they lived in, and now they show us how people thought hundreds of years ago. And that's how we can grow as a civilization, by understanding how we are the same people, just at a different time.

<center>D'VILLE</center>

Yes, graduate school was fun. Why do YOU care?

<center>YOUNGER</center>

Well… I suppose I've never felt at home… now. I get by, but everything is so fast. I have trouble keeping track. History moves and changes, but it's slower. I can grasp a hold of it, interpret it, make my mark on it…

<center>D'VILLE</center>

You long for it?

<center>YOUNGER</center>

Uh… I guess. I wouldn't put it that way.

<center>D'VILLE</center>

When the time comes, Mr. Bartholomew, will you fight the past to save the future?

<center>YOUNGER</center>

Come again?

<center>D'VILLE</center>

Some of the past, we keep track of it not to preserve it… we would destroy it if we could. Since we can not, we instead make sure it doesn't get up to any funny business.

<center>YOUNGER</center>

"Funny Business Preventer." Is that what it will say on my card?

<center>D'VILLE</center>

Antiquities Investigator.

<center>YOUNGER</center>

I guess that'll have to do…