

HEAVEN'S OVERRATED

by

Matthew Ford

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E-mail: matthewford0902@gmail.com

1. INT. HEAVEN'S WAITING ROOM. DAY

A grand library. It's quiet. **CELESTIAL ANGELS** work behind desks. In the centre of the aisles stands a GLASS CABINET. Inside it, on a PEDESTAL, perched on a CUSHION, is a ROLLED-UP PARCHEMENT.

In a sectioned-off room, **BARTHOLOMEW** (20's) is frazzled, looks like he works in a bank; NAME BADGE pinned to him. Stood behind a desk, paper scattered across it, TYPEWRITER facing him, he paces, rehearsing lines in his head.

OFFSCREEN, a scream gets louder, nearer. Bartholomew quickly sits down, composes himself. OFFSCREEN, we hear a "thud." Dust launches in the air, Bartholomew gently coughing. Sat awkwardly in an armchair, **PETER (20s)** is dressed like he is from an avant-garde rock band.

Bartholomew straightens his BADGE, a cheerful smile on his face. Peter looks Bartholomew up-and-down, confused.

PETER

What? Where?

BARTHOLOMEW

Hello, Mr. Cole. Welcome to Heaven.

Bartholomew fires a PARTY POPPER.

BARTHOLOMEW

My name is Bartholomew, he/him (*points at badge*), your Heavenly Assistance Liaison Officer. Assistant Heavenly Assistance Liaison Officer, actually: you're my first death. It's my job to help with your transition from the mortal realm to --

PETER

(*interrupts*)

Heaven! Wait, am I dead?

BARTHOLOMEW

Yes, you very much are. The HVN-3 Deceased and Desist letter says you're dead. And if the HVN-3 letter says you're dead...

Bartholomew hands Peter the LETTER. Peter studies it.

PETER

Heaven? Oh, did Gaz put you up to this?

BARTHOLOMEW

Gaz?

PETER

The detail is something else; so realistic. Oh, I've gotta post this for the fans.

Peter stands, fishing through his pockets.

PETER
Wait, where's my phone?

BARTHOLOMEW
Back with the living, Mr. Cole.

PETER
What do you mean, "With the living?"

BARTHOLOMEW
I'm sorry for your loss. This I mean, not the phone.

The penny drops for Peter. Uncomfortable, Bartholomew reads off smudged ink on his palms.

BARTHOLOMEW
(clears throat) You've lived a long and happy life. You're in a better place now?

PETER
How did I go?

CUT TO:

2. FLASHBACK: INT. SPARE ROOM. NIGHT

A house party: lights flash, music plays. Peter sits in a high up, open window. Sat beside him is a **PARTY GOER (20's)**. They laugh, flirt; both drunk.

Peter pretends to yawn, goes to put his arm round the Party Goer. Instead, he falls back out of the window, screaming.

3. INT. HEAVEN'S WAITING ROOM. DAY

Bartholomew rifles through the pages.

BARTHOLOMEW
Mr. Cole, just so I can keep my records up to date, could you please confirm your previous occupation? I've got the phrase: "Danger to society?" written here.

PETER
Some say danger, I say innovator. You know how Jesus went round, helping the leppers, turning water into wine?

BARTHOLOMEW
Oh yes, one of my favourites.

PETER
Well, I turn the water into a good time, d'ya know what I mean? I just turn up the energy. Who cares if someone gets punched? That's me. Hashtag: zero fucks given.

A red light engulfs the room. Intense, dissonant choir music blasts from nowhere, like an alarm. Bartholomew jolts to his feet.

In the distance, behind them, are two thickset men, dressed like bouncers: **GUARDIAN ANGELS**. They walk towards Peter and Bartholomew. Peter gets up, backs away. Bartholomew's panicked but poised.

BARTHOLOMEW
It's alright, he's just settling in.
Sorry, sorry.

Lights switch back, the room silent. The angels walk away.

BARTHOLOMEW
(trying to stay calm)
I appreciate this is overwhelming, Mr. Cole, but you must mind your language.

PETER
You've got heavies?! God's vengeful, but breaking kneecaps 'cause a book's late?

BARTHOLOMEW
They're Guardian Angels. Break the rules and they grab hold of you, you fade away until you vanish, and wind up... *(checks no one's looking)* Downstairs. Darkness, flames, everlasting punishment.

Peter's disinterested. Something catches his eye: the GLASS CABINET with the PARCHMENT.

BARTHOLOMEW
While this is Paradise, we can't have people running around, happily doing whatever they want. Everyone abides by the terms and conditions laid out by God in that parchment there. Firstly, keep off the grass. If Eve kept off the grass, we'd all be in a lot less bother. Little industry joke there. Secondly, breakfast is from 7-7:30, followed by elevenses at 10. And it's jam first, then cream.

PETER
Where's the fun stuff?! Anything outdoors? Active? Unlike this, it's good for the brain, science proves it.

Everything flickers red, fearsome CHOIR MUSIC booms. Guardian Angels march over, putting on KNUCKLE DUSTERS. Bartholomew puts his hand on Peter's shoulder.

BARTHOLOMEW
(pleading) I do apologise. He really is turning a corner. *(whispers)* Say sorry.

PETER
Sorry, my bad.

The Angels back off, the library quiet again.

BARTHOLOMEW

You can't be using the S-word, Mr. Cole..
It challenges *Him*.

PETER

No S-word; right-o. Like Voldemort.

BARTHOLOMEW

Volde-who?

PETER

Some character whose name you can't say,
by an author who says too much.

BARTHOLOMEW

(exasperated)

I appreciate this is hard for you, but
please, a smidgeon of decorum from now on.
I'm trying to get my angel status.

PETER

Wait, you're not an angel?

BARTHOLOMEW

No, I'm a... Grade 3 celestial being.
There's a tier ranking system, you see.
I'm a grade 3 celestial, about four-to-six
million souls, give or take, away from my
grade 4. Not factoring in I'm on annual
leave for two weeks. Anyway, let's finish
this form so we can move on to the health
and safety declaration. Then there's
diversity and inclusion form --

PETER

(interrupts)

Crikey, you've got more forms up here than
a life insurance policy.

Bartholomew taken aback.

BARTHOLOMEW

Really? I love forms. Forms are my
friends. They're quiet, straightforward.
They don't stare at you when you get
something wrong.

Peter looks confused.

BARTHOLOMEW (cont.)

I imagine it's a bit rubbish being a
Seraphim, anyways. Those wings, singing
all the time..

Bartholomew starts to hum a hymn. The sound of a
church organ starts to play..

CROSSFADE TO:

4. FLASHBACK: INT. GRAND STAIRCASE. CHURCH. DAY

A **YOUNG BARTHOLOMEW** (6) runs up a flight of stairs. He's late. Garments on, he wears wings made from cardboard and tin foil.

4A. FLASHBACK: INT. CHURCH. DAY - CONTINUOUS

A **SERAPHIM CHOIR** are singing, bathed in light, wings spread in front of church organ pipes across two pews. Their harmonies are magnificent, garments immaculate.

SERAPHIM CHOIR

(sings)

God is my Light, my Saviour, and my BFF,

A **YOUNG BARTHOLOMEW (6)** bursts in. His voice is off-key. The Angels glance at him, annoyed.

SERAPHIM CHOIR AND BARTHOLOMEW

(sings)

He's the greatest, He's swell,

Young Bartholomew runs up to the right of the back pew, shuffles up on the end between two Angels.

SERAPHIM CHOIR AND BARTHOLOMEW

(sings)

You'll never go to hell,

An Angel nudges him out of the way. The Angel looks away, looks back: he's disappeared. The choir look to the opposite side: Young Bartholomew is magically there.

SERAPHIM CHOIR AND BARTHOLOMEW

(sings)

When you make God your B-F-F.

The Angel next to Young Bartholomew pushes him out of the line. Young Bartholomew's saddened, but not defeated.

SERAPHIM CHOIR AND BARTHOLOMEW

(sings)

He's really super-doooper,

WIDE SHOT: Facing the choir, on the bottom pew, Young Bartholomew squeezes his way through two sets of Angel wings.

SERAPHIM CHOIR AND BARTHOLOMEW

(sings)

You're never a party pooper,

Frustrated, the Angel places their hand on Young Bartholomew's face, pushing him to the side, the next Angel doing the same, so does the third angel until he's on the outside of the pew.

SERAPHIM CHOIR AND BARTHOLOMEW

(sings)

When you make God your B-F-F. B-F-F.

The hymn ends, the church quiet. Young Bartholomew is ecstatic, then he sees the choir looking daggers at him.

5. INT. HEAVEN'S WAITING ROOM. DAY

A flash of disappointment from Bartholomew, remembering. Peter looks at him, confused and fed up.

PETER

Alright, that's it; over this. (*stands to leave*) And people wonder why I'm atheist.

The room goes red, the choir starts up again. Guardian Angels charge over. Four red dots from laser pointers train on Peter, one on his forehead, one on each shoulder, and in the centre of his chest, like a cross.

BARTHOLOMEW

Oh Saint Matthew, Mark, and Mary! Please, gentlemen, five more minutes. Drinks on me at the Inn later?

Guardian Angels shake their heads.

GUARDIAN ANGELS

(*in unison*)

Not a chance.

BARTHOLOMEW

Are you trying to get sent down there?!

PETER

Go on then. You can't sing, so what powers do you have?

BARTHOLOMEW

(*self-assured*)

Admin. I do admin. All day, admin. I can type a thousand words a minute. And I never run out of staples.

PETER

No, I mean, can you do miracles?

BARTHOLOMEW

I've not attempted a miracle since I was a cherub. I'm a little rusty.

PETER

Think of this as your *Britain's Got Talent* audition. I'm Simon Cowell with a soul. And less Botox.

BARTHOLOMEW

I don't know what any of that means.

PETER

Try. I'll set the alarm off again.

Begrudgingly, Bartholomew closes his eyes, concentrates. He twists his neck: CRACK! Eyes open, he wears a proud smile. Peter looks down; on the table is a CACTUS in a clay pot.

PETER

Hardly the feeding of the five thousand,
is it?

Shunted, Bartholomew hands Peter the CACTUS POT.

BARTHOLOMEW

Thank you for your feedback.

CLOSE UP on Bartholomew, ashamed.

CROSSFADE TO:

6. FLASHBACK: INT. GRAND HALL. DAY

We look down on a lavish hall. Young Bartholomew wanders in, self-conscious, looks up.

YOUNG BARTHOLOMEW

Excuse me. Sorry to trouble you. I just
wanted to show you some miracles I've been
practicing --

BLINDING LIGHT and HEAVENLY MUSIC comes from the balcony, accompanied by **THREE ANGELS** looking down at him. Seconds pass: the light and the music vanish.

YOUNG BARTHOLOMEW

It will only take a --

The light and music get louder and brighter, cutting Young Bartholomew off again.

YOUNG BARTHOLOMEW

Just one --

More hot light and music. The hall returns to normal. Young Bartholomew, head down, leaves. Angels are heard sniggering.

7. INT. HEAVEN'S WAITING ROOM. DAY

Bartholomew remembers, staring off into space.

PETER

Why do you keep doing that?

BARTHOLOMEW

Doing what?

PETER

Is this all you do all day? It's all so
very boring. I'd hate it. That's why I do
what I do, well, did.

BARTHOLOMEW

But you were alive. Me? I can only
imagine...

CUT TO: DREAM SEQUENCE MONTAGE

8. INT. KITCHEN. DAY

We look out from inside an oven. Bartholomew, MARIGOLDS on, scrubs away, loving every second.

9. INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY

C/U on a PHONE: a text conversation with a call centre. A sentence reads, "My internet's not working." There are three dots as customer service types a reply. The three dots stay there, no change. Bartholomew grips the MOBILE, enthralled.

10. INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT

Shapes move under the duvet, suggesting two people rolling around. We pan up to find Bartholomew in bed, in his pyjamas, legs and arms wide. He struggles putting on a FITTED SHEET, but enjoys the tussle.

10A. INT. BATHROOM. DAY (ALTERNATE TO SC.10)

Bartholomew yanks at something. He pulls his arm back, fishing out a large clump of hair from the bathtub drain, delighted.

11. INT. KITCHEN. DAY

SLOW MOTION: Toast pops out of a TOASTER, Bartholomew losing his mind with excitement.

12. INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY

Bartholomew empties the BAG of a HENRY HOOVER. The BAG rips, dirt tossed into the air. SLOW MOTION: Bartholomew does a hair toss, from a shampoo ad, as dust covers him.

13. INT. HEAVEN'S WAITING ROOM. DAY

Bartholomew's eyes are fixed on the desk, daydreaming.

PETER

You're doing it again... I can't take this.
Please send me back; I won't tell anyone.

BARTHOLOMEW

I can't!

PETER

Why?

BARTHOLOMEW

Because!

PETER

Because what? Your precious rules?

BARTHOLOMEW

Yes! Rules! Clearly, you don't think about any of that. People. Feelings. From the sounds of it, you've done whatever you want without fearing the consequences, taking life for granted. You don't have to worry about other people anymore, I do.

Peter frowns: so much he could say but chooses not to.

PETER

Rules are broken all the time! Years ago, nobody shaved anything, then, they started using rocks as tweezers, then razors, now there's the Brazilian Wax! They're game changers, rule breakers.

BARTHOLOMEW

What's a Brazilian Wax?

PETER

I'm not explaining that. Point is, if everyone followed the rules to the letter, caring about what others think, you're living life for them, not you.

Peter picks up the HVN-3 LETTER.

PETER

Take this, make an airplane.

BARTHOLOMEW

Not with Susan.

PETER

Go on, I'm not asking you to set the scroll on fire.

Bartholomew places the page in front of him, closing his eyes. He CRACKS his neck, opens his eyes, chuffed with himself. The page is now a paper airplane; Bartholomew impressed, calmer.

PETER

See? No lights, no invisible choir.

BARTHOLOMEW

You're so self-assured. I could never be as care-free as you.

PETER

I've spent my life looking for the next crazy adventure, doing what I want. It's not about being confident, it's about

PETER (cont.)
being yourself. Forget what everyone else
thinks.

BARTHOLOMEW
Even when you're bound to upset people?

PETER
But those around you, who care, know it's
not intentional, or to spite them. I
think...

Peter's struck by a realisation.

PETER
Do you have, parents?

BARTHOLOMEW
The Holy Father?

PETER
Sorta. A Mum and Dad... mine were great;
funny those two, even when they'd lecture
me about galivanting off everywhere... Mum
always said, "It's so quiet when you're
not here."

BARTHOLOMEW
I know what quiet's like.

Beat.

PETER
Earth's not quiet.

BARTHOLOMEW
I know what you're doing, but --

PETER
(*interrupts*)
If you can conjure that plane --

BARTHOLOMEW
(*interrupts*)
And a cactus.

PETER
And a cactus, what's stopping you from
doing more?

BARTHOLOMEW
The Angels... this, me, those two (*nods to
the Guardian Angels*).

PETER
Screw 'em! I believe in you, mate.

BARTHOLOMEW
"Mate?"

PETER

Yeah, mate. A friend.

CRASH ZOOM into Bartholomew's face.

CUT TO:

14. FLASHBACK MONTAGE

We fast forward through Bartholomew's flashbacks, followed by his mortal montage. Bartholomew's mind is blown!

15. INT. HEAVEN'S WAITING ROOM. DAY

Staring at Peter, Bartholomew looks determined, heroic.

BARTHOLOMEW

There's a clerical error, Mr. Cole.

PETER

What?

BARTHOLOMEW

It appears you can go back.

PETER

Sorry?

BARTHOLOMEW

We can both be mortal. We can be pals, best friends. Bosom buddies. You have these musical instruments. Teeny tiny guitars. Fascinating.

PETER

Ukulele?

BARTHOLOMEW

That's it; always wanted to play the ukulele. I'll join a ukulele club.

PETER

Bartholomew, are you having a meltdown? Do grade 3 celestial beings have meltdowns?

BARTHOLOMEW

I've never been better, Mr. Cole.

Bartholomew unclips his badge.

BARTHOLOMEW

Hashtag: zero fucks given.

SLOW MOTION: Bartholomew flings the badge onto the desk.

Menacing-sounding choir music starts up, red light blazing. Bartholomew holds a KEY aloft. The Guardian Angels, on the other side of the room, march over.

Sprinting to the CABINET, he unlocks it, grabbing the PARCHMENT. The Guardian Angels freeze. Bartholomew chucks the PARCHMENT; the Angels chasing it.

PETER

They say God's got a plan but... do you?

BARTHOLOMEW

I have read these books, cover-to-cover.

PETER

But have you ever actually done this?

BARTHOLOMEW

I never got to the practical exam;
couldn't quite pass the theory one.

PETER

Wait, what?!

A Guardian Angel turns the corner and grabs Peter.

BARTHOLOMEW

Mr. Cole!

The second Guardian Angel pulls Bartholomew away from Peter and puts him in a headlock. Stretching out his arm, Bartholomew reaches for Peter.

PETER

Mate, please! I don't want to go to hell!

Determined, Bartholomew closes his eyes, flinging his head to the side. CRACK! The ground starts to shake, getting stronger, books falling off shelves. The Celestial Angels are confused.

Bartholomew throws his neck the other way. CRACK! The shaking grows. The PEDASTAL and GLASS CABINET fall over.

Bartholomew lurches forwards, grabs the CACTUS on his desk, and jabs the Guardian Angel, the Angel letting go. He charges at the other Guardian Angel and jabs him. The Angel lets go.

Bartholomew grabs Peter's hand, launches his head back. CRACK! A blazing white light appears behind Peter and Bartholomew. Bartholomew's shadow on the floor: wings are spreading. They both vanish.

CUT TO BLACK.

16. INT. CREMATORIUM. DAY

OVER BLACK:

PETER O.S.

Where am I? Bartholomew?

A COFFIN lid lifts up. Peter heaves himself up. Sat in the coffin, wearing a suit, he looks to his right. A **VICAR** stands behind a LECTERN, amazed; Peter spots him.

PETER

Oh, hi.

WIDE SHOT: Peter in the coffin, a framed photo of him and flowers to the side. From OFFSCREEN a woman SCREAMS. Peter sheepishly waves.

17. INT. HALLWAY. DAY

On the wall is a FRAMED NEWSPAPER CLIPPING, with a photo taken on a mobile of Peter sat up in his coffin. The headline reads: Influencer Rises to the tune of 100m new followers.

Further along is a FRAMED QUALIFICATION for Aviation Safety, and a Guinness World Record CERTIFICATE for most words typed in a minute; both with Bartholomew's name printed.

18. INT. BATHROOM. DAY

A shelf is filled with leather-bound books. On another shelf, a TYPEWRITER, STAPLER, and a few tiny CACTUS pots. Placed on a holder is a roll of toilet paper with musical notes printed.

Bartholomew, wearing a grey hoodie with the text: PORT TALBOT COMMUNITY CHOIR, puts his leg on the bath. He dips a WAXING STICK into a POT, examines the stick, wax dripping from it, before moving his arm towards his crotch. He lathers the wax, amused. Reaching for the waxing pad, he puts it over the wax.

He yanks the pad. We hear hairs being RIPPED, Bartholomew screaming.

CUT TO: A large, FRAMED PHOTO of Peter with his arm round Bartholomew, who's wearing a leather jacket over his sweater vest, sat on the same window ledge where Peter fell.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END.