

**GRAHAM:** What the ...? *(He looks wildly around the room, then out at the door. DEATH appears not to notice him.)* Who the hell are you? How did you get in?

**DEATH:** Graham Hinckley, isn't it?

**GRAHAM:** Who are you? And how did ... ?

**DEATH:** So many questions.

**GRAHAM:** What?

**DEATH:** So many questions, and yet one wonders why.

**GRAHAM:** Does one?

**DEATH:** Come on now, Graham. You don't mind if I call you Graham, do you?

**GRAHAM:** What, as against the sheer bloody cheek of strolling in as though you own the joint, d'you mean?

**DEATH:** Yes.

**GRAHAM:** Right, well, fine. I don't really care what you call me, because frankly, you're a weirdo!

**DEATH:** I've never before been called a 'weirdo'. Not in my entire ... existence.

**GRAHAM:** 'Existence'? What kind of word's that?

**DEATH:** An accurate word. I always strive to be accurate.

**GRAHAM:** Well then, I'll strive to give you accurate bloody instructions as to what you can now go and do to yourself, shall I?

**DEATH:** *(calmly)* They nearly always turn out to be anatomically impossible, but give it a try by all means.

**GRAHAM:** This won't be. You can get out!

**DEATH:** Hmm. You've got me there, I must admit. I can't leave yet. I need to ask you something first.

**GRAHAM:** *(shouting)* Who are you!

**DEATH:** Ah! Now! We're back to the questions! And that was my original point. Why are you asking them?

**GRAHAM:** Because I want to know!

**DEATH:** Yes, but why?

**GRAHAM:** Because a bloody great clown has just strolled into my cottage and settled on my sofa, that's why!

**DEATH:** You don't understand me. Why are you asking *any* questions? Why do you care?

**GRAHAM:** What are you talking about?

**DEATH:** *(standing up and pulling out the clipboard)* Why should you care about anything now? Why would a man concern himself with the things of *this* world, when he's about to leave it?

*Long pause. GRAHAM stares, horrified, at the clown.*

**GRAHAM:** Who in God's name are you?

**DEATH:** *(looking slightly embarrassed)* Oh! Not in His name, exactly. I'm Death.

*There is another, longer pause. Then GRAHAM gives a loud snort of relieved laughter.*

**GRAHAM:** Oh, I get it! Okay. Er ... right, you'll have come from some sort of ... institution, right? Presumably the 'Let's All Band Together And Be A Pain In The Arse To Graham Institution'.

*He starts hunting around the desk.*

**DEATH:** Denial is always so embarrassing! I'm not an escaped lunatic, Graham. I'm Death.

**GRAHAM:** *(still searching the desk)* Yeah, yeah. Course you are.

**DEATH:** Graham!

**GRAHAM:** Actually ... how d'you know my name?

**DEATH:** Because I'm ...

**GRAHAM:** ...Death, yeah, I know.

**DEATH:** ...Omniscient. *(Pause)* I know everything. Well, practically everything.

**GRAHAM:** Well, that must come in handy. Always knowing tomorrow's weather, and the racing results.

**DEATH:** You do not believe.

**GRAHAM:** Well, now you come to say that, no!

**DEATH:** Who but Death would know you were planning to kill yourself?

**GRAHAM:** *(waving a hand towards the window)* Every bugger in the county, apparently! It's been like Piccadilly Circus in here tonight! I assume there's some sort of queue forming outside!

**DEATH:** Stop searching for that telephone directory, and listen to me!

**GRAHAM:** Look, whatever your name is, just sod off and leave me alone, okay? I've got things to do tonight and I don't need weirdos in fancy dress popping up out of a trap like the Demon King in a pantomime!

**DEATH:** I have already told you: my name is Death.

**GRAHAM:** And you're standing by that, are you?

**DEATH:** Yes.

**GRAHAM:** Okay. Prove it.

**DEATH:** I beg your pardon?

**GRAHAM:** Prove it. Go on. Do something Death-like.

**DEATH:** *(coldly)* I do not perform tricks to order. Certainly not when the order is from a human!

**GRAHAM:** Right, then, so bugger off!

*Pause*

**DEATH:** Very well, mortal.

*DEATH turns impressively, and exits stage right. GRAHAM stares for a moment. DEATH re-enters. GRAHAM looks horrified.*

**GRAHAM:** Wh ... wh ...what did you just do?

**DEATH:** I did something Death-like. Happy now?

**GRAHAM:** You're D...Death? Really?

**DEATH:** Really.

**GRAHAM:** You walked right through that wall!

**DEATH:** Yes.

**GRAHAM:** Right through! A solid wall!

**DEATH:** Yes.

**GRAHAM:** You just went right through!

**DEATH:** Yes.

**GRAHAM:** Twice!

**DEATH:** This seems to be preying on your mind, rather.

**GRAHAM:** Right through!

**DEATH:** I think, if you don't mind, I'll just catch up on some paperwork while you deal with that.

**GRAHAM:** *(not really listening)* Right.

*He crosses to the stretch of wall, and apparently runs his hands over it. Satisfied that it really is a solid wall, he turns and stares at DEATH, now seated at the desk with his clipboard, discovering that his pen has run out.*

**DEATH** Do you have a pen I could borrow?

**GRAHAM:** What?

**DEATH:** *(patiently)* A pen. May I borrow one? Mine always seem to be just on the point of running out. How do they do that?

**GRAHAM:** Erm ... yes. I dunno. *(He hands a pen to DEATH, taking care not to touch him. DEATH puts his own pen in his pocket.)* You're really ...?

**DEATH:** Yes. I'm Death. I am the personification of the ending of life, of the final cessation of vital functions in an organism.

**GRAHAM:** Right. Got that now, I think.

**DEATH:** Excellent. Be with you in just a moment.

*He scribbles something on the clipboard, while GRAHAM sinks onto the sofa. Then he turns and offers the pen back to GRAHAM, who shudders and doesn't take it.*

**GRAHAM:** No, that's fine. You keep it.

**DEATH:** Oh, are you sure? Thanks.

*DEATH apparently puts the pen into a capacious pocket in his clown costume. In fact, it needs either to be palmed back onto the desk, or a second pen should already be there, unnoticed*

**DEATH:** Now, are you ready to resume?

**GRAHAM:** *(startled)* Resume what?

**DEATH:** Resume the taking of your life.

**GRAHAM:** Hang on. What was that you were saying earlier, about questions? You said I'm not supposed to ask any?

**DEATH:** That's not what I said at all. I told you before: I'm a very accurate person. I have to be.

**GRAHAM:** But you're not a person, at all, are you? Isn't that the point?

**DEATH:** I am a personification. I represent the human image of death.

**GRAHAM:** What, dressed like that?

**DEATH:** *(looking down at himself)* What's wrong with this?

**GRAHAM:** *(becoming more heated as he speaks)* What's wrong with it? Just look at yourself! I mean, okay, you can walk through walls, but what else is to say you're Death? Do I see any agricultural implements? Do I see black robes? No! You seem to think any human being would accept you for what you are, when you're dressed like Coco the Clown! Doesn't that strike even you as a bit odd?

**DEATH:** Ah, yes. I sensed that this was giving you problems.

**GRAHAM:** No, really?

**DEATH:** You see, things have changed.

**GRAHAM:** Pity you didn't. What, are you on a job share? Halfway through a kids' party – “bugger it! I was meant to be in that bloke's cottage”!

**DEATH:** No. The world has changed. And my former appearance seemed ... out of date.

**GRAHAM:** Death is worried it's not fashionable?

**DEATH:** Your forefathers saw the world in farming terms: seeds were sown, and grew, and were cut down as the year waned, to be replaced by new seed the following year. My appearance grew out of their minds.

**GRAHAM:** This is saying some very sick things about my generation.

**DEATH:** The black, the scythe, the pale horse ... all these are now passé ... derided ... misunderstood.

**GRAHAM:** Oh, whereas the baggy pants won't be!

**DEATH:** I sense anger in you.

**GRAHAM:** Yeah, and you know why? Because when I *do* drop dead, I'd hope not to see *that* face grinning down at me! I mean, without the scythe, what do you do? Sling a custard pie at me?

**DEATH:** Death has always grinned.

**GRAHAM:** That's because Death has always been a skeleton! Skulls tend not to have any other facial expression!

**DEATH:** The same is true of this face. It is a painted face, and cannot change.

**GRAHAM:** Yeah, and there are other major differences!

**DEATH:** Oh, I see! You are concerned with *style*!

**GRAHAM:** Well, at least the pale rider had some!

**DEATH:** Modern humans are so obsessed with this.

**GRAHAM:** We are not! We just have certain standards.

*During DEATH's next speech, he comes closer to GRAHAM, and looms over him. GRAHAM looks increasingly scared*

**DEATH:** Standards. We have looked into the face of humans for generations without number since the dawn of time, when your kind crawled from the primordial oceans and turned their faces to the sky, seeking answers, we were there. We have mirrored their fears: the fear of starvation; the fear of being cast out; the fear of isolation; the fear of death. Yours is the first to fear looking wrong.

**GRAHAM:** *(recovering slowly)* This is a ... a .. wholly inappropriate look for Death! Why not just look the way you used to!

**DEATH:** We must move with the tide of human affairs; we must ... *(he pauses and takes a grubby piece of much-folded paper from a pocket and reads from it)* we must embrace progress as a positive synergistic framework, striving always to own the flow of change in order to seize the opportunity of marching in the vanguard of forward thinking. *(DEATH folds up the paper again and puts it away)* Apparently.

**GRAHAM:** But a clown?

**DEATH:** It seems highly suitable to me.

**GRAHAM:** Sorry, we are talking about the same thing here, aren't we? Circus performers; lots of laughter; wheelbarrows full of custard pies?

**DEATH:** How many people do you know who truly find a clown amusing? How many songs are there of the sadness behind his smile? (*He leans closer to GRAHAM*) How many souls are really terrified of this white face?

**GRAHAM:** (*nervously*) Yeah, okay, see your point. But ... a clown? I mean, what happens at the end of the world? The Four Unicyclists of the Apocalypse? What do they do? Famine bibs your nose, while War runs around with a ladder, pouring whitewash down Pestilence's trousers? It doesn't quite have the same terrifying image, does it? What do you do for a finale? The four of you form a pyramid and dive into a bucket of water?

**DEATH:** I can always tell when I'm in England. They have to joke. All the time. It's quite relentless.

**GRAHAM:** (*ironically*) Well, I'm really very sorry.

**DEATH:** That's quite all right. Anyway, are you set?

**GRAHAM:** Sorry?

**DEATH:** Are you set? To carry on? Killing yourself? I mean, that *is* what this is all about, isn't it? That's what I'm doing here. Omniscient I may be, but you're playing merry hell with my schedules, you know. (*He consults his clipboard*) I had you down for pills and whisky, but you don't seem to have taken them. What's the delay? The letter's written; the affairs are all in order. What, in short, is keeping you?

**GRAHAM:** Are you allowed to do this?

**DEATH:** (*quickly*) Yes.

**GRAHAM:** Anyway, you don't seem to have the slightest idea of how difficult it all is.

**DEATH:** You're saying that to me?

**GRAHAM:** Yeah, but you only turn up for the last bit. (*Pauses significantly*) Normally. All the work's been done already.

**DEATH:** Work? Work? You call unscrewing a cap and pouring out whisky 'work'? Try being in three million places simultaneously, for all of eternity, for every mortal ever born, and then try telling me what work is.

**GRAHAM:** Yes, but you're not human. It's not work to you is it? It's not like you're alive. You don't have to deal with life.

**DEATH:** What are you talking about? I deal with it every day. People who reject life; despise life; ignore life; waste life; love life and don't want to leave it. Trust me: I'm an expert.

**GRAHAM:** Well, I'm not. I did try, but I was warned off the pills by someone.

**DEATH:** Ah, yes. *(He makes a note on his clipboard)* Rose Samuels.

**GRAHAM:** You leave her out of this!

**DEATH:** There you go again; thinking about this world all the time. I thought you were about to leave it? Now, what other methods have you tried? *(He consults the clipboard again. GRAHAM tries to see what's on it, but DEATH holds it away from him)* I know there was a bit of sloppy staff work - that cooker, for instance - but there are plenty of other ways. You could have been a bit more determined with that corkscrew, for example. Why have you poured the bath water away?

**GRAHAM:** It was cold.

**DEATH:** You wimp!

**GRAHAM:** Look, it's my suicide, and I'll do it my way, okay? It's supposed to be a hot bath and slit wrists, not hammering pipes and a corkscrew!

**DEATH:** Tccchh! You could still have used the water to drown yourself!

**GRAHAM:** Only if I was a hamster! There was only about a teaspoonful in there! And it was bloody freezing! I'd have got pneumonia!

**DEATH:** There's a problem with this? *(GRAHAM glares at him)* All right, how about electrocution? That's very popular

**GRAHAM:** I can't find any sockets! There's only that one there *(pointing to the charger socket)* or the one the kettle's plugged into.

**DEATH:** Well, stand in a bowl of water, man!

**GRAHAM:** There isn't one! I've looked! *(DEATH makes another note.)*

**DEATH:** There's a sink, isn't there?

**GRAHAM:** Oh, yes! It's bad enough killing yourself, without looking ridiculous as well!

**DEATH:** Once again: you're saying that to *me*? Well, there's a perfectly good car outside. How about an accident?

**GRAHAM:** No. The reason I came here is to be out of everybody's way. I'm not risking other drivers or innocent bystanders.

**DEATH:** Oh, very moral and high-toned!

**GRAHAM:** Well, I'm not!

**DEATH:** Yes? Who was going to find you, then?

**GRAHAM:** Er ...

**DEATH:** Poor innocent Mrs. Jenson, I suppose? (*GRAHAM looks uncomfortable*) How about a nice tall cliff? There's one near here.

**GRAHAM:** I don't like heights.

*There is a very long pause, while DEATH glares at GRAHAM*

**DEATH:** You see? You're just setting out to be difficult!

**GRAHAM:** No, I'm not! I had a very bad experience as a child, that's all.

**DEATH:** Well, have a bad experience as an adult, then.

**GRAHAM:** No!

**DEATH:** It's nonsensical anyway; you're not scared of heights at all - you're scared of falling - and that can hardly be said to be a problem here.

**GRAHAM:** I am *not* jumping!

**DEATH:** Oh, suit yourself! (*Pause, while they both think furiously*) Got any rope?

**GRAHAM:** You're very keen.

**DEATH:** Not really, I just want to get on, you know?

**GRAHAM:** Places to go; kids to scare?

**DEATH:** That sort of thing, yes.

**GRAHAM:** (*slowly*) I'm just not sure now ...

**DEATH:** Haven't you got a tow rope?

**GRAHAM:** (*after a pause*) I might have.

**DEATH:** We'll try that again: Haven't you got a tow rope?

**GRAHAM:** *(reluctantly)* There's probably one in the boot.

**DEATH:** *(standing)* There you go, then! I'll leave it to you. *(Significantly)* I'll see you later.

**GRAHAM:** Well, it will be later. I've got a bloody plumber in the kitchen now!

**DEATH:** *(winningly)* Do it now, and it won't be poor Mrs. Jenson that has to find you. She has a weak heart, you know.

**GRAHAM:** How can I do it now, while the plumber's here?

**DEATH:** That's all right, you won't be in his way. *(Graham glares at him)* Well, get on with it when he's left, then, man!

*Enter DEN*

**DEN:** It was an air lock. All done. *(He checks his watch)* Nice little bit of overtime there.

**GRAHAM:** Oh, right! Thanks. Erm ... *(glancing uneasily at DEATH, who is now standing unconcernedly at the edge of the stage, by his exit. GRAHAM jerks his thumb at DEATH)* Don't mind him.

**DEN:** Who?

**GRAHAM:** *(pointing to DEATH)* Him.

**DEN:** *(completely baffled and staring straight through DEATH, who quietly backs off stage)* Sorry, mate, don't know what you mean.

**GRAHAM:** Can't you see him?

**DEN:** *(staring around)* You having a laugh?

*There is a long pause, while GRAHAM realizes DEATH is no longer there. He and DEN stare at each other*

**GRAHAM:** Er ... yeah ... that's right. Erm ... what do I owe you?

**DEN:** Are you paying? I thought it was the woman who rang me.

**GRAHAM:** No, no. I'll do it.

**DEN:** I'll write you out a receipt. *(He searches his pockets)* Got a pen?

*GRAHAM glances over to DEATH's 'corner', then goes to his cardboard box to look for another pen, but DEN turns round and sees the pen that*

*DEATH was supposed to have taken, lying on the desk. He picks it up and begins writing his bill. GRAHAM stares at the pen in his hand.*

**GRAHAM:** Where did you get that?

**DEN:** Oh, it's all right. I found one on the desk.