

PUNISHABLE BY DEATH

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CHARACTERS

JUDGE	As the name suggests, a courtroom judge
FRANK	A guy who is very unlikely to jaywalk in the future
DEATH	The Grim (but hardly un-humorous) Reaper

SETTING

A courtroom.

SCENE

(Frank stands before a judge who has received a final verdict in his case. Frank is mostly just annoyed at having to be in court, not expecting that he has big problems ahead of him.)

JUDGE

Franklin Alan Durkins, this court finds you guilty of all charges. Based on your seeming indifference to the sanctity of the judicial process, but more importantly for your lack of concern regarding your responsibility as a citizen, we feel we have no choice but to sentence you with the most severe punishment allowable by the applicable legal statutes.

FRANK

Fine.

JUDGE

No. Not a fine.

FRANK

I meant, *fine*. Whatever. I mean, how bad can the sentence be for jaywalkin—

JUDGE

Your offense is...

FRANK

Just get it over w—

JUDGE

...punishable by Death.

(Frank sputters in shock...)

FRANK

What?! W-w-what did you say?!?

JUDGE

Punishable by Death.

FRANK

For jaywalking!?!

JUDGE

And loitering.

FRANK

You're gonna.... You would...

JUDGE

And not wearing a mask during a pandemic.

FRANK

Death?!? Death?!? You can't be serious!

JUDGE

This case is closed.

(The Judge stands, and starts to exit...)

FRANK

No! No, wait! There has to be something... Maybe I could, you know, do some community service, or....

(The judge exits, and the door closes behind him.)

A little jail time, but...

(Frank looks around, wide-eyed, terrified. After a moment, another door opens, and Death enters holding a clipboard. Frank screams in fear, then starts to shake.)

No. No no no. I can't... It can't end like this. I can't—

DEATH

FRANKLIN ALAN MORRISSEY...

FRANK

Please... please...

DEATH

FOR THE CRIMES YOU HAVE COMMITTED...

FRANK

Please... I don't wanna die!

DEATH
YOU ARE TO...

FRANK
Oh god oh god oh god!

DEATH
OH, STOP BEING SUCH A WHINEY LITTLE TWIT.

(Frank stops, stunned. After a moment he finds his voice.)

FRANK
What?

DEATH
I SAID TO STOP BEING SUCH A BABY. NOW, AS I WAS SAYING, YOU ARE SENTENCED TO... CLUCK LIKE A CHICKEN IN THE MIDDLE OF—

FRANK
I'm to... what was that?

DEATH
YOU DON'T LIKE THAT ONE? ALRIGHT, HOW ABOUT... YOU MUST SHEAR THE WOOL OFF A HERD OF INEBRIATED SHEEP?

FRANK
You're putting me on, right?

DEATH
YOU DON'T LIKE THAT ONE EITHER? WOW, TOUGH CROWD. ALRIGHT, HERE'S A GOOD ONE. YOU WILL CLIMB ATOP THE GAZEBO IN FENTON PARK, AND SING THAT 'I'M A LITTLE TEAPOT' SONG AT THE TOP OF YOUR LUNGS WHILE WEARING A POWDER BLUE JUMPSUIT.

(Beat.)

YES. I THINK THAT SEEMS FITTING.

FRANK
You want me to... what?

DEATH
SING THAT TEAPOT SONG—

FRANK

I heard you. I just don't... I don't quite understand what's going on.

DEATH

WHAT'S NOT TO UNDERSTAND? YOUR CRIMES ARE, AS THE JUDGE SAID, PUNISHABLE BY DEATH. I'M DEATH. NOW, I LIKE TO GIVE PEOPLE A CHOICE, BUT HONESTLY I THINK YOU'RE BEING A TOUCH RECALCITRANT, AREN'T YOU.

FRANK

You're Death...

DEATH

ALRIGHT, I THINK I HAVE ONE THAT MIGHT BE A GOOD FIT. YOU ARE SENTENCED TO ACCESSORIZE AN ENTIRE MONASTERY OF ABBOTS DRESSED IN MULTICOLOR, MOHAIR SUITS.

FRANK

You *are* Death, right?

DEATH

THAT'S WHY I'M SPORTING THE BLACK COWL.

FRANK

The Death. Last-horseman-of-the-apocalypse Death?

DEATH

LLAMAS.

FRANK

What?

DEATH

WE USED TO RIDE HORSES, BUT WE SWITCHED THEM OUT.

FRANK

Switched—

DEATH

PESTILENCE MADE A JOKE ABOUT KEEPING EVERYONE ON THEIR TOES BY SHOWING UP ON LLAMAS, AND, WELL, WE ALL THOUGHT IT SOUNDED LIKE A JOLLY GOOD IDEA. BESIDES, THEIR SOFTER, AND THEY DON'T EAT AS MUCH. SO NOW WE'RE THE FOUR LLAMAMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE.

FRANK

Llamamen...

DEATH

LLAMA RIDERS... LLAMARIANS... WE'RE STILL WORKING ON WHAT TO CALL OURSELVES.

FRANK

I don't believe this.

DEATH

SAY, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF... NOW THIS IS JUST A CRAZY IDEA, BUT... HOW DO YOU LIKE "HARBINGERS OF LLAMAGEDDON"?

FRANK

What?

DEATH

DON'T YOU GET IT? LLAMAGEDDON. LIKE ARMAGEDDON, BUT—

FRANK

Yeah. No. I get it, I just don't...

DEATH

YOU DON'T LIKE IT. IT'S FINE. I THOUGHT IT HAD A NICE RING TO IT, BUT...

FRANK

No. Yeah, it's... it's... good. Good. Real good.

DEATH

YOU'RE JUST SAYING THAT.

FRANK

No! I like it. Llamageddon. It's... It has... panache. Very ominous.

DEATH

YOU DON'T THINK IT, YOU KNOW, MAKES IT SOUND TOO WHIMSICAL?

FRANK

No. Not at all.

DEATH

WHEN YOU SAY "NOT AT ALL", DO YOU MEAN THAT IT ISN'T EVEN A *LITTLE* WHIMSICAL? WE WERE TRYING TO LIGHTEN THINGS UP A BIT, SO—

FRANK

Well, I mean, sure, it's a *little* whimsical of course, just not too whimsical.

DEATH

BECAUSE WE FELT LIKE WITH THE WORLD COMING TO AN END, EVERYONE WOULD BE FEELING KIND OF DOWN, AND COULD USE SOMETHING TO LIGHTEN THE MOOD A BIT BEFORE...

FRANK

Before...?

DEATH

UNIVERSAL BEREAVEMENT AND ALL THAT. FAMINE SUGGESTED BALLOONS, BUT THEY JUST GET IN THE WAY OF EVERYTHING, I THINK. DON'T YOU?

FRANK

...Yes?

DEATH

YES WHAT? YOU THINK THEY GET IN THE WAY?

FRANK

Yes?

DEATH

ALTHOUGH...

FRANK

Yes?

DEATH

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS: BLOWING UP THOSE TWISTY BALLOON ANIMAL BALLOONS, ONE AFTER THE OTHER, FOR AN ENTIRE WEEKEND.

FRANK

As a way of ending the world?

DEATH

NOO. AS PUNISHMENT. IT'S A GOOD ONE, ISN'T IT? OH, WAIT. EVEN BETTER. YOU HAVE TO MAKE THEM INTO HATS FOR STICKY CHILDREN WHO WANT TO GIVE YOU BIG HUGS AFTERWARDS. OOOH, I DO THINK THAT'S A FITTING PUNISHMENT.

FRANK

Can we go back to making chicken noises—

DEATH

NO, NO, NO. THAT OPPORTUNITY HAS COME AND GONE. WE NEED TO LOOK TO THE FUTURE.

FRANK

Couldn't I just pay a fine or something?

DEATH

FRANKLIN... FRANKIE. YOU NEED TO BE MORE CREATIVE. PUT A LITTLE AVANT INTO YOUR GARDE.

FRANK

Avante...

DEATH

OH! OH! I JUST HAD A TERRIFIC IDEA. THIS JUST CAME TO ME. HOW ABOUT: HARBURETORS OF LLAMAGEDDON?

FRANK

What?

DEATH

INSTEAD OF HARBINGERS. WHICH I ALWAYS THOUGH WAS A FUNNY SOUNDING WORD. I COULD NEVER FIGURE OUT HOW TO PRONOUNCE IT. HAR-BING-ERS? HAR-BINGE-ERS? HAR-BINGE-ERS? NONE OF THEM EVER FEEL RIGHT. BUT HARBURETORS. IT'S LIKE CARBURETORS, BUT WITH THE H SOUND FROM HORSEMEN.

FRANK

Didn't you say it's llamas now?

DEATH

AHH, THAT'S THE BEAUTY OF IT. THE H COULD ALSO STAND FOR 'LLAMA'.

FRANK

Llama starts with L.

DEATH

BUT TECHNICALLY IT IS PRONOUNCED YYYAMMA.

FRANK

Wouldn't that be a Y?

DEATH

OH, DAMN. YOU'RE RIGHT. IT WOULD. AND 'YARBURATORS' JUST SOUNDS STUPID REALLY. ALRIGHT, MAYBE THAT'S AN IDEA FOR THE MORGUE. WHERE WERE WE?

FRANK

I have no id—

DEATH

PUNISHMENT. RIGHT. OKAY. SO HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT WATERING PLANTS?

FRANK

Watering... You mean, like community service hours?

DEATH

SURE. WHY NOT. YOU CAN THINK OF IT AS BEING LIKE COMMUNITY SERVICE HOURS.

FRANK

Okay.

DEATH

IF YOU WERE IN A COMMUNITY OF BALLERINA CLOWNS.

FRANK

What?!?

DEATH

I HEREBY SENTENCE YOU TO FORTY HOURS OF WATERING DANDELIONS WHILE DRESSED IN A TUTU AND WEARING A BIG RED CLOWN NOSE!

(Death turns and starts to exit.)

FRANK

Wait wait wait!

DEATH

WHAT?

FRANK

I don't suppose you'd be willing to just kill me or something?

DEATH

WOULDN'T THAT JUST MAKE MORE WORK FOR ME?

FRANK

I...

DEATH

NO, I THINK THIS WILL BE FINE.

FRANK

Are you familiar with the phrase ‘cruel and unusual punishment’?

DEATH

NO, BUT I’D BE INTERESTED TO HEAR WHAT YOU HAVE IN MIND.

FRANK

I... You know what? Never mind.

DEATH

SO WE’RE GOOD WITH THE DANDELIONS?

FRANK

Yyyyeah.

DEATH

WONDERFUL. REMEMBER. FORTY HOURS.

FRANK

Right.

DEATH

AND PINK.

FRANK

Pi—

DEATH

THE TUTU. IT’LL MAKE IT GO WITH THE NOSE. OH MY, LOOK AT THE TIME. I’VE GOT SOME SOULS THAT NEED REAPING. THEY’RE PILING UP LIKE CORPSES. GET IT? CORPSES? NO? JUST A BIT OF MORTUARY HUMOR THERE.

FRANK

Ha ha.

DEATH

NO ONE KNOWS HOW TO JOKE LIKE A BAR-FULL OF UNDERTAKERS.

FRANK

That so...

DEATH

WELL, TOODLE-OO. SEE YOU ON THE OTHER SIDE, AS THEY SAY.

(Death exits.)

FRANK

Oh goody.

(Lights out.)