

REVOLUTIONIZING DEATH

A one act play by Richard Duijnstee,

SYNOPSIS

A comedy that shows when spectres phone it in, even death can be put on hold. When Death comes to collect Mr. Parson, he finds himself not completely happy with the customer service offered to him. But does he really want management involved? 'Revolutionizing Death' is a funny one-act play that leaves you thinking: "Was this really necessary?"

CHARACTERS

MR. PARSON, a disgruntled customer, male, dressed casually

DEATH, a nervous customer service representative, female, same clothes as PARSON

CEO, a bored, high-ranking manager, female, dressed in a fancy red cocktail dress, a little slutty, a little bit inebriated

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS YET TO COME, a character from A Christmas Carol, female, dressed in the mandatory black robe with hood, black cocktail dress underneath the cloak

SETTING

MR. PARSON'S living room, morning. A comfortable chair, a standing lamp to read by, a side table with a hideous plant, and a newspaper.

OTHER PROPS

Scythe

Script for "A Christmas Carol"

CEO'S cell phone

GHOST has a watch

ACT I

(Interior, morning, we see PARSON sitting in a chair, reading the paper. He feels a sharp pain in his stomach area, registers it, takes a moment to process, then continues to read.)

(A knock on the door.)

PARSON

(looks up from newspaper, looks back down, mumbles)
Damn kids.

(Another, louder, knock on the door.)

PARSON

(Looks up, sighs deeply annoyed, pauses in doubt, almost gets up, goes back to reading.)

(Another round of knocking on the door)

PARSON

Scram! Leave me in peace! *(groans, touches stomach)* Ugh. *(To himself)* If they really wanted to see me, they should have used the doorbell, like a decent person.

(PARSON starts reading again.)

DEATH

(enters)

You should get that doorbell fixed. A decent person rings the bell, you know. And apparently, you don't respond to knocking.

PARSON

(Jumps from his chair, startled)
How? Who? What? How did you get in?

DEATH

Well, I normally ring the doorbell to be polite. Because I know that knocking is less accepted nowadays. Anyway, I really don't need you to open the door to come in. It's a formality.

PARSON

A formality? This is breaking and entering!

DEATH

Well, technically, I didn't break anything, so it would just be "entering".

PARSON

Whatever it is, I didn't invite you to come in, I am calling the police!

DEATH

It would be useless.

PARSON

To you maybe, but it's very useful to me.

DEATH

They wouldn't see me.

PARSON

Excuse me?

DEATH

They wouldn't see me.

PARSON

Who are you?

DEATH

Death.

PARSON

??

DEATH

I am Death. *Your* Death, to be exact. Your personal experience of Death.

PARSON

Are you ill?

DEATH

No, but you are. You just don't know it. Well, you know it now, but it's too late.

PARSON

Too late for what?

DEATH

To get cured.

PARSON

From what?

DEATH
Your illness.

PARSON
I don't feel sick.

DEATH
But you are. Very.

PARSON
How do you know for sure?

DEATH
I am Death.

PARSON
But not a doctor. I think I should see a doctor first. I'm getting my coat.

DEATH
You cannot leave, except with me.

PARSON
Come with me then, I don't care.

DEATH
You cannot leave your apartment.

PARSON
Except with you.

DEATH
Sorry, I was unclear. This is it. This is the end. You will go nowhere in life anymore. You are coming with me. To the "other side", "yonder", the "great beyond".

PARSON
Are you going to kill me?

DEATH
No, your illness will take care of that. I'm just here to (pause) collect you.

PARSON
Don't bother, I feel fine.

DEATH
It is unavoidable.

PARSON

I'm way too young to die.

DEATH

That's not up to me.

PARSON

What *is* up to you then? Do you have any influence at all?

DEATH

Not really.

PARSON

What a lousy job that must be.

DEATH

It's not that bad. Good health insurance, expense account, lots of travelling. No vacation days, though.

PARSON

Why are you dressed the same as me?

DEATH

We want to give everyone a personal death experience. Numerous studies point out that humans are more at ease with people that they have a lot in common with. And the person one has most in common with, is themselves. (*proud*) That's why your Personalized Death looks exactly like you!

PARSON

You are just wearing the same clothes. You don't *look* like me. You are a *woman* for crying out loud!

DEATH

No need to be sexist! Why can't a woman do well in this job? So narrow-minded to think Death should be a man!

PARSON

I didn't say a woman could not be Death. You said *my Death* looks exactly like me, to give me a personal experience.

DEATH

Aha, well, that is to say, there has been a little mix up.

PARSON

A mix up?

DEATH

At head office. They were trying out new software and had to turn everything off and on again. Some files were not saved and I got mixed up with a colleague. But we got the clothes right!

PARSON

Mixed up with a ... *(sees a way out, more confident now)* As a customer, I am deeply offended.

DEATH

What's that now?

PARSON

I have been in customer service for most of my career.

DEATH

You worked as a telemarketer for 3 months.

PARSON

As a professional Customer Service Officer, I know what good customer service is. And this is not it!

DEATH

Come on, it has been a long day.

PARSON

It's morning!

DEATH

Long night, for me.

PARSON

I don't care. I cannot die like this. I refuse to be a victim of your bureaucratic mess! I want to speak to your manager.

DEATH

She's not available at the moment.

PARSON

I'll wait. I've got time.
(Sits down again, gets newspaper)

DEATH

(Looks bewildered.)
(DEATH tries to say something, but doesn't know what. PARSON smugly reads the paper, hums a little tune). DEATH starts to leave, then thinks of something.)

DEATH
Coupons!

PARSON
What?

DEATH
I can offer you some coupons. For free stuff!

PARSON
What kind of stuff?

DEATH
(Panics, thinks quickly)
A more personalized experience?

PARSON
But you are screwing that up already! What are you going to do?
Try again and fail harder?

DEATH
I should talk to my manager.

PARSON
She is not available.

DEATH
I lied.

PARSON
Yeah, we did that a lot in customer service.

DEATH
Right? It's our job to get rid of the customer as fast and smoothly as possible.

PARSON
Exactly. *(Realisation, offended)* Hey!

DEATH
I'm sorry, that was rude. True, but rude. This is taking too much time. I'm already behind on my quota for today.

PARSON
Quota? You are supposed to be my personal death. Is there someone else?

DEATH

You're the only one for me right now. The others mean nothing to me.

PARSON

Others? As in "multiple"? I feel like a number. Do you even care about me? Am I just another one-time thing for you?

DEATH

Well, normally you do only die once. At least, you people do.

PARSON

"You people", now I am "you people"? What is that supposed to mean?

DEATH

You are not a Hindu, are you? They get multiple lives.

PARSON

Why should they get special treatment? I want more lives!

DEATH

That's more an issue for management.

PARSON

Good. I am done with you. I will speak to management now. I don't buy the whole "she's not available" thing. We said that a lot too in customer service.

DEATH

Management does get pretty ticked off when you get them down for nothing. I mean, technically, I could call for her, but she's not going to be happy about it.

PARSON

Do I look like I'm interested in that? No, so, stop stalling, get me your manager.

DEATH

Are you sure? I know she's in the middle of something at the moment.

PARSON

Busy "helping other customers", I'm sure?

DEATH

She said something about...

PARSON

I. Don't. Care. Your manager. Now!

DEATH

OK, OK, easy there, buddy. But don't say I didn't warn you, management can be quite tough. I suggest we just finish what we started here (*more nervous*), no need to get the "C-suite" involved. (*nervous laugh*)

PARSON

Aha! You are afraid management will find out your mistake. You are trying to cover things up. Well, that's not going to fly, missy. Get management in here, get the "C-suite" involved. Who is your manager? The CMO, the CFO, or the CSO?

DEATH

It's the CEO, to be exact.

PARSON

The CEO? Isn't that the highest manager there is? (*to himself*)
Wow, I must be important then. Jesus Christ!

DEATH

He's actually not the Highest.

PARSON

Who?

DEATH

Jesus Christ.

PARSON

Huh?

DEATH

It's God. Christ is second in command.

PARSON

So, you say your manager is God himself?

DEATH

Herself.

PARSON

God's a woman?

DEATH

Do you hate women? I already wasn't good enough for you. Mr. Parson thinks Death should be a man. And now God can't be a woman either?

PARSON

We're getting a little off track here. You were going to get your CEO, so I can get the customer service experience I deserve. Bring *her* here then. I'm ready to meet my maker. Well, actually, I am not, but ...

DEATH

(interrupts)

You think God is my CEO?

PARSON

Well, it makes sense, doesn't it? The CEO, Chief Executive Officer, is the highest-ranking manager in a business. Who is the highest-ranking officer in the business of death? God!

DEATH

Erm ... nope. The highest-ranking manager in the business of death is Death, of course.

PARSON

Death is higher than God?

DEATH

(nervously looking over her shoulders)

I didn't say that.

(shouts into the plant on the side table)

I didn't say that!

PARSON

Why are you talking into my plant?

DEATH

Oh, I forgot to mention. This conversation will be recorded for quality assurance and future training.

PARSON

Ah! Good.

DEATH

So, Death runs the business of Death, and God runs the spiritual lands of the Afterlife. It's kind of like the separation of Church and State.

PARSON

But I thought you were Death.

DEATH

I am a Death, *your* Death for this evening, but I'm not THE DEATH.

PARSON

It's all very confusing.

DEATH

(sighs)

You never really get used to it. I didn't come up with this "Personalized Death" thing either. Actually, I liked the old black hooded, creepy figure with the scythe. Where is the mystery? Where is the sense of tradition? Why should new management always come in and think they should reinvent everything, while things are perfectly fine the way they are!

PARSON

(taps plant)

So, this thing is on?

DEATH

(Startles out of her rant)

Erm, yeah.

PARSON

(shouts into plant)

I now would like to speak to the CEO, thank you!

DEATH

(covers top of plant with her hands)

Shhhhh ... not so loud, they might hear you!

PARSON

Good!

DEATH

Do you realize who the CEO is?

PARSON

The Chief Executive Officer!

DEATH

Nope. It's Christ's Execution Officer!

(Sound effect thunderclap, ominous jingle plays (music). DEATH & PARSON look around bewildered, frightened, and in sync.)

PARSON
Christ's Execution Officer?

(Sound effect thunderclap, ominous jingle plays (music). DEATH & PARSON look around bewildered, frightened, and in sync.)

DEATH
If we cannot handle a death, we escalate it up to Christ's
(beat) ... the CEO.

PARSON
Is she customer-oriented?

DEATH
Very.

PARSON
Good, I'm looking forward to it.

DEATH
You don't understand. *(panics)* It's Christ's Execution Officer!

(Sound effect thunderclap, ominous jingle plays (music). DEATH and PARSON look into the wings where CEO enters.)

CEO
(slightly inebriated)
Can someone explain to me why I'm being ripped away from the one night I get to spend at home? I had just cracked open a nice bottle of Fireball Whisky. But do they let me enjoy it? Noooo.
(Waves cell phone) That's what you get with this 24/7 availability!

PARSON
(to Death)
Is that the CEO? Doesn't seem like she's got it all together.
(Mimes drinking a glass of alcohol)

DEATH
(to PARSON)
Do you mind if I put you on hold for just a minute?

PARSON
(shrugs shoulders and picks up newspaper)

(As DEATH turns to CEO, MUZAK starts playing.)

DEATH

I am having issues with Mr. Parson here. He is a very difficult customer. He is not satisfied with our customer service.

CEO

Look, kid, I know you're just an intern here, but you cannot call down management every time you have a difficult client.

DEATH

Well, technically, he requested your presence.

CEO

Oh? *(Interested, glances interested at Parson)*

Maybe I should give him a special treatment then.

(Clumsily fixes bra, starts walking towards PARSON)

DEATH

No, wait, ma'am.

CEO

"Ma'am"? I'm not that old. Do I look old to you?

(Drunken-sobs a little)

I'm old, aren't I? Oh, damn, who am I kidding? That's why I cannot pick up anyone at a bar anymore. That's why I don't get right-swipes on Tinder.

DEATH

There, there now, it can't be that bad. You look *(beat)* fabulous, not a day over 18!

CEO

Really? You think that, kid? You are not just saying that because I'm your manager?

DEATH

No, no, no, not at all.

PARSON

Excuse me!

DEATH & CEO

Not now!

PARSON

But...

DEATH & CEO
No!!

PARSON
...I just wanted...

DEATH & CEO
What do you want?!

PARSON
This sad excuse for music is very annoying. Could you please put on something else?

DEATH
(to CEO)
Can we do that?

CEO
Of course we can.

(CEO claps hands and MUZAK changes into CLUB MUSIC with a heavy beat. CEO starts drunk dancing to the beat. DEATH shrugs shoulders to PARSON.)

DEATH
(shouting over the music to PARSON)
I'm sorry she's just a little bit... *(mimes drinking)*

PARSON
Crazy?

DEATH
No. *(Mimes drunk)*

PARSON
Unbalanced?

DEATH
(Mimes even more drunk)

PARSON
Dead drunk!

(DEATH puts hand over PARSON's mouth. Music stops. CEO keeps dancing.)

DEATH
All of the above. Shhh!

PARSON

(Removes hand)

It's all good. We'll skip the music, thank you.

(Weirded out, PARSON starts reading his newspaper again. DEATH turns to CEO.)

DEATH

So, erm, we still have a client on hold here, and I kind of did not meet my quota for the day yet. Could you hurry it up please? Get your Scythe and get it over with?

CEO

(Stops dancing)

Uh oh...

DEATH

What?

CEO

I forgot my Scythe at the bar. *(Panics)* Please, don't tell anyone, you have to promise not to tell anyone!

DEATH

OK, OK, I won't tell anyone. But I still have a client here who refuses to die because of bad customer service! How are we going to handle this?

CEO

Is he Hindu by any chance?

DEATH

Nope.

CEO

Bummer. Hindus are easy, just send them on to the next life. Is he Muslim then?

DEATH

I don't think so.

CEO

If he is, we could promise him 72 virgins if he dies without complaint.

DEATH

Where are you going to get 72 virgins at this hour?

CEO

Why, that's easy...

(Breaks fourth wall, looks into the audience, starts counting virgins in the audience, finds a lot, gleams with pride, gestures at audience)

See?

DEATH

Well, he's not Muslim, but he still has to die, go to heaven, kick the bucket!

CEO

Do you think he would swipe right?

DEATH

Excuse me?

CEO

You said I still look fabulous. A mortal might still want to date me.

DEATH

Are you insane? We're supposed to guide him to Paradise!

CEO

I'll show him paradise.

(CEO claps hands. Strip club music starts playing, for instance "You Can Leave Your Hat On" by Joe Cocker. CEO starts seductive (lap) dance for PARSON. Because she's drunk, it's not really seductive. PARSON is not enjoying it. CEO falls asleep with her head in PARSON's lap. Music stops.)

DEATH

This is not happening! Oh. My. God!

Thunder clap. Organ music. GHOST enters, cloaked and hooded.

GHOST

(dramatic voice)

I am the GHOST of Christmas Yet To Come! I will show you what your life will look like, if you continue on your current path!

PARSON

Yes, please!

Music stops.

DEATH
No.

PARSON
Oh, come on.

GHOST
What?

CEO
(Wakes up)
Huh?

DEATH
No! I have had it up to here with this mess!
(To GHOST)
What are you even doing here?

GHOST
(Removes hood, takes script for "A Christmas Carol" out of her robe, and reads)
I am here to show Mr. Scrooge what will happen if he doesn't change his ways. He has done very evil things and the only hope for him is to be a better person!

PARSON
It's Parson, not "Person", and, I don't mind changing my ways. If that means I'll live!

GHOST
Very well. Good job! Don't do all that evil stuff again and you'll live happily ever after!
(Throws script on the side table)

PARSON
Great!

DEATH
No! He has to die!

CEO
But I haven't gone on a date with him yet.

GHOST
And he just promised to better his ways!

PARSON
I did promise just that...

DEATH
(Frustrated)
Everyone just pause for a minute.

All characters freeze, except DEATH.

DEATH
What are you doing?

CEO
(From the corner of her mouth)
We're pausing, like you told us to.

DEATH
(To herself)
I'm surrounded by idiots.

PARSON
(Unfreezes)
Also very common in customer service!
(Freezes again)

DEATH
This is clearly not going anywhere. OK. I call a meeting, right now!

Everyone unfreezes and huddles around DEATH.

DEATH
Welcome to the meeting everyone. We only have one item on the agenda today.

GHOST
It might be polite to introduce everyone around the room. I don't think we've all met before.

DEATH
What?

CEO
She's right, you know.
(Starts drunk-hitting on PARSON, who starts to enjoy this)

(CEO)

I'll properly introduce myself right now, honey. I'm CEO, Christ's's's Evolution Officer. Wait, no that's not it. No! Wait! I'm Crisis Executive... Doesn't matter.

(Very close to Parson's face)

Hello, handsome.

GHOST

(To CEO)

Hey, take it easy, this is a business meeting. Hello everyone, I'm the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, but you can call me Carol.

CEO

(To GHOST)

Carol, it's you! I didn't recognize you in that cloak. Have you lost weight? By the book as ever, come here, give me a hug!

GHOST

(Looks hard a CEO, then the spark of recognition)

Luci? Wow, I can't believe it's you! Did you get promoted?

CEO

Yep, finally got that salary bump and a fancy title. It was getting a little boring in the basement; no windows, next to the heater. But, again girl, you look goooood!

GHOST

It's the black robe, very slimming.

CEO

Where are the other girls?

GHOST

Well, Christmas Past got fed up with the whole Yuletide thing and started writing historic novels. Christmas Present finally got unwrapped by a very handsome guy, if you know what I mean.

CEO

Holly finally found herself a man. Good for her!

GHOST and CEO laugh. They hug.

CEO

(To GHOST)

It's good to see you. You should come and get a drink with me!

GHOST

Well, normally I would frown upon drinking during working hours, but, I think the day is messed up anyway.

(CEO and GHOST start leaving.)

GHOST

Come along too, Scrooge!

PARSON

Parson!

CEO and GHOST

Parson!

PARSON

Great! Meetings are boring anyway and nothing ever gets achieved.

DEATH

(Losing it)

This meeting is not over yet. Come back here!

CEO

OK, OK, no need to shout.

GHOST

(To CEO)

Who is the party pooper again?

CEO

Some intern whose screw-up I have to fix.

PARSON

Well, I certainly could use a fix.

CEO

Oooo, saucy!

(CEO, GHOST, and PARSON laugh.)

DEATH

Are you three done? It's very nice that you two have found each other again and, by all means, have as many drinks as you want later on. But first we have to solve this problem! *(Points at PARSON)*

PARSON

Hey! That's rude! This is the worst customer experience ever!
(Hints at CEO and GHOST) I was just starting to feel more appreciated.

(All three women look at PARSON for a moment, then everyone starts talking at once.)

DEATH

Silence everyone, please! Let's have some order in the meeting, otherwise we'll be here for eternity.

PARSON

I don't mind, I didn't like the alternative anyway.

DEATH

SILENCE!

(Everyone is finally quiet.)

DEATH

Good.

(Takes deep breath)

Welcome to our meeting.

CEO

(Starts suggestively closing in on PARSON again)

Should we start introductions again?

DEATH

No, we'll skip the introductions, thank you.

(CEO backs off, disappointed. GHOST snickers.)

DEATH

As I was saying, we have one agenda item.

GHOST

So you've got a "problem customer"?

PARSON

Really?

CEO

Oh yes, darling, but not a problem I can't fix.

DEATH

Good. Fix it.

CEO

As I told you, I left my Scythe at the bar.

GHOST

We could go get it. And finally have that drink!

CEO and PARSON

Yes, let's!

CEO, GHOST, and PARSON start leaving again.

DEATH

No, wait a minute, the meeting!

CEO

Meeting adjourned!

(CEO and GHOST go off giggling. PARSON tries to follow, but cannot leave the room.)

PARSON

Hey, I can't leave the apartment!

DEATH

Well, boohoo, that sucks.

PARSON

No, DEATH sucks. I am not at all happy with the way things are unfolding here.

DEATH

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your customer experience?

PARSON

If the number was a temperature, it would be so low, hell would freeze over. The only thing that deserves a positive rating is that I am not dead yet!

(CEO and GHOST pass behind PARSON and DEATH, drinking and singing the refrain of "He is not Dead Yet" from Spamalot.)

CEO and GHOST

HE IS NOT YET DEAD
THAT'S WHAT THE GEEZER SAID
NO, HE'S NOT YET DEAD
THAT MAN IS OFF HIS HEAD

HE IS NOT YET DEAD
SO PUT HIM BACK IN BED
KEEP HIM OFF THE CART BECAUSE HE'S NOT YET DEAD.

DEATH

(To PARSON)

Wait here.

(Follows CEO and GHOST)

PARSON

I wasn't going anywhere.

*(Starts reading newspaper again, hums "He is not Dead Yet".
Looks up, after a while, a bit puzzled. A moment of silence.)*

What just happened? I must have dozed off. Ghosts! Spectres.
Humbug! Parson, you don't believe in those! They could easily be
an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese,
a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of
grave about them, whatever they are.

*(PARSON happily starts reading his paper again, but cannot
focus)*

But, what if it is true? What if I do have a fatal illness? So
much stuff I haven't done yet. I haven't crossed off anything on
my bucket list yet. I don't even have a bucket list and I'm
already going to kick the bucket!

*(Stands up, starts panicking and speaking very fast, behind him
GHOST comes on again, without the black cloak, in a black
cocktail dress and pumps. GHOST is looking for something)*

I'm not ready for the Great Planes! I've never been on one
either, never saw the world. And now I'm off to the underworld.
What if heaven is a sham? What if there's nothing? What if there
is a heaven and a hell? What if I go to hell? I worked as a
telemarketer. I'm going to hell!

GHOST

(Slaps PARSON across the face)
Oh, the Dickens, snap out of it!

PARSON

Thanks.

GHOST

It's nothing. Have you seen my script by any chance?

PARSON

Script?

GHOST

Yeah, I'm not off book yet. I've been doing this Christmas Carol bit for a while now, but new management came in and they wanted to change it up. Modernize it. So, I do need the script and I can't ask for a new copy, because they screwed something up at head office. Something with new software. Files got lost. Anyway, they had to turn everything...

PARSON

Off and on again. Yes, I've heard about it.

GHOST

(Surprised)
OK, well, then you know.

PARSON

Yes. Erm. No! I don't know anything.

GHOST

(Imitates Ygritte from Game of Thrones)
You know nothing, Jon Snow.

PARSON

??

GHOST

Forget it, different project. *(Sees script and picks it up)* Aha! Now, back to business. *(Looks at watch)* There's still time. You are sure you're not Scrooge?

PARSON

Quite sure.

GHOST

It's a shame. We could have wrapped this up quickly and headed back to the bar, *(leafs through script)* it's almost the end of the play.

PARSON

Speaking of wrapping up. Where's your cloak?

GHOST

What?

PARSON

I'm pretty sure you had a cloak on when you came in.

GHOST

(Looks down at her dress)

Oh, for the love of ... left it at the bar!

CEO walks on.

CEO

I'm back! *(Sees GHOST)* Hey, what are YOU still doing here, Carol? For the last time, this is not Scrooge. We'll take him, thank you very much. Death for him, not some lame Christmas story.

GHOST

Oh, excuse me, Luci. You don't seem to be doing a very good job at the moment. He should have died a while ago now and he is breathing too much for a dead guy.

CEO

No one asked you to interfere with our department here. You go back to your little Christmas story, Carol. This guy is mine.

GHOST

If he's yours, why don't you take him?

CEO

I will take him, mark my words, one swing with my Scythe and he can neatly transition.

GHOST

And where is your Scythe, huh?

(CEO and GHOST both look for Scythe, ignoring Parson completely)

CEO
Can't find it.

GHOST
I don't see it either.

CEO
(Stops dead in her tracks)
Oh, for the love of ... it's still at the bar!

GHOST
So is my cloak.

CEO
Psh, this all can wait, right? Let's go to the bar. One drink
and then back to work?

GHOST
Deal!

CEO
Extremely sorry to snap at you like that.

GHOST
No worries, no worries, the stress of the job and all that.

(GHOST and CEO go off, arm in arm, laughing)

PARSON
(Looks bewildered, takes his paper slowly, and sits down)
Women!

*(Is startled by his own word and looks suspiciously and
apologetic to the plant, talks into it)*

I'm sorry, I don't hate women, I love women, really I do.

I have no idea what just happened.

(There's a knock on the door.)

PARSON
Go away!
(Is again startled, nervous)

*(DEATH in the black cloak, hood over her head, Scythe in hand,
enters)*

DEATH

Mr. Parson, I've come to collect you.

PARSON

You are Death!

DEATH

That's correct. But don't be afraid, it won't hurt a bit. I will guide you to greener pastures, to the beyond, over the River Styx, into Elysium, to Heaven.

PARSON

That actually doesn't sound too bad after the morning I've had. It nearly killed me! *(Laughs at his own joke)*

DEATH

(Takes off the hood, laughs as well)
So, you think this is better?

PARSON

(Throws his hands in the air)
Well, of course! This is how it's supposed to be done!

DEATH

Right? That's what I said to the CEO! But no, no, no, she had to experiment with this whole Personalized Death thing. Computers at head office couldn't handle it and it's just one big mess.

PARSON

It always is. They change something, but do they think it through? Nope! It's all marketing first. If it looks good on the website, it must BE good. Anyway, I'm still not happy to die, but at least you understand what a proper death looks like.

DEATH

Thanks! Shall we then?

PARSON

I'm ready if you are.

(DEATH puts on hood again, goes to stand next to PARSON and raises Scythe. They freeze.)

(CEO and GHOST come on, look at DEATH and PARSON from a distance)

CEO

Hey, that's my Scythe!

GHOST

And my cloak. But I must say, it looks kind of good on her, don't you think?

CEO

It is splendid, now I look at it. Classic Death, that's what it is. Kind of perfect in its simplicity. But, hey, we had to do things differently. It was nice to get a raise, get out of that bloody hot basement, come up with this "new and improved" version of dying.

GHOST

But why force it onto everyone, when they just like it the way it always has been?

CEO

We were Revolutionizing Death!

GHOST

Revolutionizing death? Why would you revolutionize death? That doesn't sound good at all.

CEO

It sounded great in the brochure, OK? I'll tell you what happened. We had a meeting, senior management, the "C-suite" got together. God, JC, and me. God says: "We've been kickin' it the same way for so long now, let's shake things up. JC is the messenger, Death is the creepy collector, I'm the good one, and you the bad one. It worked, people liked it, but I'm so incredibly bored by it."

GHOST

So, you change things because someone is bored? Were there surveys, polls, target audience studies?

CEO

When She (*points up*) gets something in her head...

GHOST

You completely lost track of what your key activities are!

CEO

My key activities were roasting people. Now my job is mostly paperwork and meetings.

GHOST

You can always turn things back the way they were.

CEO

But, what about the Revolutionizing of Death?

GHOST

Look, you don't need to revolutionize death. You know why people like death the way it was for centuries? Because it's predictable. Everything else about dying is uncertain for humans: "How am I going to die? Is there a debilitating disease or is it over in an instant? Do I get to say goodbye to my loved ones or will there be things left unsaid? Will I be in pain? And what happens after I die? Is there a heaven and a hell or eternal darkness? Are there 72 virgins waiting for me? Will I reincarnate into a hot new human, or a cat, or a cockroach?" Dying to human beings is a dicey experience at best. Fortunately, there is the one thing that they know for sure: The Grim Reaper is coming to get them. A mythological creature they all can imagine in their head: a ghostly figure, hooded and cloaked in black, with a Scythe, who will guide them in their transition to whatever comes next. That's why Dickens used the same figure for his "Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come"! A "Personalized Death" may get the investors on board, but your customers ... not so much.

CEO

Yes, but the investors; we have to keep them happy.

GHOST

For them, usually the bottom line weighs most heavily.

CEO

Heavenly?

GHOST

(Sighs)

HEAVILY.

CEO

Sorry.

GHOST

(Rolls eyes)

Look at the amount of resources it took today to convince Parson to go in peace. Look at the mess at head office! Is that worth it? Not from an investor point of view, that's for sure.

(GHOST)

And for the people themselves? Is this really turning out to be a smooth transition?

CEO

I must admit, he looks much more at ease now. But how to convince senior management? It's hard to persuade Her. *(Crosses herself)*

GHOST

I'll go with you. I can be pretty convincing when it comes to changing people's attitudes.

CEO

Thank you, I appreciate it. I'll ask for a meeting.

GHOST

Do you think we have time for one drink first?

CEO

We've got time, the day has just started!
(CEO and GHOST exit)

DEATH

(Removes hood, to audience)
Not for him though.

(With the sound of metal being scraped, DEATH swings the Scythe. A rumble of thunder. Lights go to instant blackout)