

# THE QUARRY

## God's Will

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My dickhead of a boss was Will, although he seemed to prefer his formal title: God. He always kept track of my work, gave me endless tasks to fulfil, and judged my every move. Though I do admit, I have seen a more relaxed side to him at his Christmas parties. After a couple of drinks, he actually seems like a pretty down-to-earth guy. Anyway, a boss is a boss.

As we all know, God created all life, therefore, it stands to reason that he created all death too. However, he doesn't like to get his hands dirty. So, he employs a Grim Reaper to carry out His gruesome bidding. This was my job for almost 17 years.

A few centuries ago I was a human. Me, my wife and two sons died on the same night in a terrible fire that enveloped our home. I can't believe how lucky we were. I mean, the whole dying part wasn't great, but afterwards, it meant we could all go to the 'after world' together. And we've never been happier. Basically, in our 'new world,' space is irrelevant. We are now 'Unseeables', we can travel anywhere in the universe but are invisible to the senses of the living. It's pretty cool actually, even after all this time I sometimes have to pinch myself just to check it's real. Anyway,

I've done lots of odd jobs since entering this plane of existence, like social work for new souls who need help adjusting, inter-dimensional invisible rubbish collector and, for a short time, was employed by the UN (Unseeable Nations). But I never expected to become the Grim Reaper. I was very underqualified but applied nonetheless because things were getting a little mundane at the UN. Not to mention the pay was fantastic.

After a long and tedious application process, I had an interview with God, and I guess my bullshitting paid off 'cos I was offered the job the next day. Like with any job, I've made my fair share of mistakes, you know... caught at at my mates birthday when I had someone to bump off, or letting a person or two go 'cos they reminded me too much of my wife or kids. I have to say though you do become immune to the whole 'killing' thing after a while.

God prefers to keep a pretty low profile on Earth. He once told me (after one too many) that he finds Earth rather dirty and unimpressive. He prefers to spend time on his other planets, that are far more developed and much cleaner.

Anyway, this story isn't about other planets. This story is about my day today, on Earth. The day I lost my job. The day I changed the course of human history forever. The day I condemned far more people to death than I ever intended. When I walk in the door, I'm gonna have to break the news to my wife. And she is absolutely going to kill me. Our eldest son starts high school next month. It's hard to get a job with 'The Angel of Death' on your resume. Not to mention that I'm sure God won't be giving me a shining reference. I feel terrible about what it means for humanity. But honestly, this could have happened to anyone, you've gotta believe me, cross my heart and hope to die.

It started off as your pretty average Sunday night shift. Visited a few nursing homes. Then a few gang fights. Couple of hospitals. Nothing out of the ordinary. Was just about to wrap up for the night when I looked down at my rolled up parchment. *JEREMY ANDREWS*. For a second I considered just crossing off the name so I could go home early (it was almost eight a.m. after all), but I'd been caught doing that a few times before. So, I decided to complete the job.

Jeremy lived in Australia, with his mother, Marie Andrews. He was a seventeen-year-old kid. No siblings, no father in the picture. Received average marks at school. Was rather plain looking, dark hair and a big nose. Had few friends. And

quite frankly, was a bit of an arse. The information about him flooded into my head. This happens with whoever is next on the list. You instantly know all there is to know, including exactly where the person is at that given moment, who they are with, and what they are doing.

So, Jeremy was in the kitchen, tapping away on his phone while his mother cooked sausages and eggs for breakfast. 114 Williams Street, Sydney, NSW, 2000. I repeated the address in my head and began gliding to the house.

Next thing I knew I was in the Andrews' kitchen. Jeremy was sitting on a tall wooden stool at the kitchen counter, texting. His mother was tossing around sizzling food on the stove. I'm guessing that she was in her late forties. She wore a very dark blue woman's dress suit. The type with a long respectable skirt, and shiny black heels that weren't too high. There was some kind of identification card hanging around her neck. To be honest, she looked pretty good for a single mum approaching middle age. Anyway, I stood right between them. Listening. Invisible. Jeremy spoke as if his Mother was in a different room,

'Mum!'

'Yes, darling?'

'When's it ready?'

'Won't be a minute sweetheart.'

'I'm hungry.'

She slopped a horrible looking greasy breakfast onto a plate. He picked up his cutlery and dove straight in.

'Jerry, sweetie...'

'What?'

'Look, I know that you've been smoking.'

He replied with a mouthful of disgusting food, 'Have not.'

'You know how I feel about it.'

'Well, I don't smoke so you're an idiot then.'

'Darling, I can smell it in the house.'

'Well you're even stupider than I thought. I don't smoke.'

'Alright,' she looked at her watch. 'Shii...I'm going to be late for work! I'll see you later Jerry.'

'I hate when you call me that!'

‘Sorry. Jeremy.’

‘Bye,’ a piece of sausage fell from his mouth.

‘Bye, darling. Have a lovely day.’

I watched her scoop up her handbag from the kitchen counter and hurry out the door, her heels tapping as she went. The door clicked shut and I stayed in the kitchen with Jeremy. The way he ate honestly made me sick. He shovelled it in like a gravedigger shovels away mounds of dirt. Not a beautiful sight. Then his phone rang.

‘Yes?... Oh hi,’ he swallowed. ‘Yeah, yeah, I’ll be there in a second for fuck’s sake. Yeah, I know you bloody loser...’

His mother had left in such a hurry that she’d forgotten to turn the gas off on the stove. While the kid was distracted on the phone, I took the opportunity to blow out the flame and turn the gas up. He hung up and gobbled up the rest of his breakfast then, out of his pocket, the little shit took out a pack of cigarettes and placed it on the table. I looked over at the stove and could see those blurry lines wriggling above it, you know, similar to when you look at a scorching road in the middle of summer as the heat radiates from the ground. Jeremy took out a red lighter from the front pocket of his backpack and went to light up. But before he did, his phone beeped. He put the cigarette on the table and picked up his phone again. What is it with kids and technology these days?

His thumbs moved about the screen, creating that really annoying tapping noise. He sniffed in a couple of times. Pocketed his phone, picked up the cigarette, and sparked his lighter. The ripples were still curving away from the stove. He lit the cigarette. The gas lines were still there. Fuck. I must have turned it on too late.

Jeremy whipped his schoolbag over his shoulder, glanced up and said, ‘stupid bitch’ under his breath. He strolled out of the room, and the front door slammed shut. I stayed in the kitchen. Shit. Shit. Shit. What now? I’m gonna have to follow this kid. Try to get a car to hit him? Or maybe he could trip and hit his head in just the wrong way? Alcohol poisoning? I was meant to be home half an hour ago. My wife is going to kill me.

I was so exhausted by this point. But I dragged my feet out the front door. Moving slowly and calmly (The Grim Reaper can never be in a ‘rush’). Jeremy stood at his front gate. Smoke from the kid’s cigarette blew into my dark hood as I trailed behind onto a quaint suburban street. It’s funny how second-hand smoke still bothers me, even though I couldn’t be more dead.

He stood there until the cigarette was almost finished then went to cross the road. I saw a car coming. Perfect. I stared at it and it automatically sped up. Jeremy wasn't even looking. It was getting faster and faster, I could imagine it already; Jeremy's limp body being tossed over the roof, his cigarette flying in the air, the crunch when he would land on the solid road behind. I felt the relief of a job well done. I might be able to get home in time to see my two sons before they leave for school. Suddenly, the sound of shrieking tires on the quiet street made Jeremy leap forward. The car's wing mirror hit his schoolbag sending him into an awkward twist before he fell into the gutter with a smack. The car let out a long beep and sped off down the road, the cigarette rolling after it. Jeremy yelled,

'You fucking bastard! Get off the fucking road you fucking idiot!'

He got himself up, brushed himself off, and was practically unharmed, apart from a long graze down his left arm. Why won't this little shit just die already? He walked off straight ahead and let himself into the house opposite his, where his friend Dale lived. I followed.

Dale was playing Xbox in his bedroom.

'Come on. Make it two player,' Jeremy really was a demanding fella.

'Hang on, let me finish this.'

Dale seemed like a pretty nice boy. After years in the occupation, you acquire a 6th sense for these things.

'Nah mate, I wanna play,' Jeremy snatched the controller out of Dale's hand. Before Dale could react the game had been exited and Jeremy started setting up a new one. I stared at the power cords that connected the console to the wall. The screen went black in an instant.

'What the hell Dale? What's wrong with your shit?'

'I dunno...'

Jeremy started vigorously pressing buttons on the controller. When nothing changed, he went searching through the serpent-like tangle of cords connecting the Xbox to the wall. He yanked out the plug.

'Wai...'. Dale tried to forewarn. But Jeremy was far too stubborn to listen to anyone. He thrust the cord back into the power point. The connection sparked and a static sound zapped through the room. He pulled his arm away and fell backwards on the floor.

‘You alright mate?’ But he didn’t answer.

‘Mate?’

At bloody last, my job was done.

‘Mate??’

I felt bad for the Dale boy. I hadn’t planned on having some poor kid witness this on a Monday morning.

‘Jeremy?’

‘Fuck that hurt!’

You’ve gotta be kidding me!

‘You alright?’

‘Yeah, I’m fine.’

‘That looked brutal. Maybe we should call an ambulance.’

‘Nah, shut up Dale. We’re meant to have left for school remember?’

‘Right.’

The boys went on to play a game of Xbox. I just stood, waiting, in the corner. At this point, I had to double-check my parchment. Was this definitely the soul I was meant to harvest? Yep. There it was in clear inky letters. *JEREMY ANDREWS*. How was I gonna off him now? I looked out of Dale’s bedroom window and could see Marie across the street, walking up the path towards the Andrews’ front door.

‘Right. I’m gonna go home,’ I heard Jeremy say.

‘Er, okay, bye.’ Dale kept his eyes on the tv screen.

Fantastic, at least he was gonna get in shit for not being at school.

‘I’m taking these right. Bye loser.’

Jeremy helped himself to a packet of crisps that were sitting on Dale’s desk and walked out. I drifted after him. He opened the packet as he headed down the hallway, stuffing a few crisps in on the way. He opened the front door, swung it shut and poured a ridiculous mound of chips into his mouth as he turned to face his house over the road. He walked a couple of steps forward when, from nowhere, a ground shuddering boom shook the street.

The gigantic bang made Jeremy gasp in fright. He tried to breathe again, with a crisp lodged throat, but little air went in. He tried again. And again. And again. His hands clutched at his neck. He stumbled forwards, his eyes were wide as he started to go blue. I watched as tiny red veins started trailing their way up from his neck and

slowly into his face. Success! With all his strength he pathetically reached out towards his home and then fell forward. Smack on his face. Dead. Thank God! Across the road, clouds of flames rolled outwards from the Andrews' kitchen.

I flew into the middle of the street in excitement. Examining my achievement for a moment before heading home after a terribly long day. That's when God's voice bellowed down.

'FRANK.'

'Y... yes, Will?'

'Do you have any idea what you have just done?'

'I...'

'YOU'RE FIRED! You hear me? FIRED.'

Turns out that Maire Andrews' went home to collect her purse that she'd left on the kitchen counter. That wasn't supposed to happen. The plan was for her to find Jeremy dead in the kitchen. But things obviously didn't quite work out that way. Instead, she found the room full of gas and quickly went to turn the stove off. But, in a panic (when most humans make dire mistakes) she accidentally sparked the stove as she twisted the knob.

Killing a close relative of a name on the list is a big no, no. Sends particularly abundant ripples through the space-time continuum, or something along those lines. I have been told that it was going to be a pretty important day for Marie Andrews. Later that afternoon she was going to finally oil the creaky door to her cellar, complete her mortgage payments, find true love, recognise her self-worth and um ...oh yeah, find the cure to cancer. Which is a big deal for humans.

After the discovery she was meant to make, more than a billion lives would have been saved within the next 2 generations alone. But once a life has been taken from Earth, it can't be undone. Earth is very black and white when you think about it. So yeah. God's furious. As much as he finds earth boring, he thought it was about time something good happened there.

You know what? If I survive breaking the bad news to my wife. I've always sorta wanted to work in a café. I'm pretty good with people, love a good chat. Or

maybe I'll become an inter-dimensional Uber driver. Should be able to maintain a high rating because I'm great with directions and will have plenty of interesting stories to tell, even if they are slightly grim.