

the guy who conquered death (?)

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the guy who conquered death (?)

by [Beans_McGee](#)

Summary

"Well," Joe says, staring at something on the floor, "I guess if I'm a philosopher, then I should say something super profound, right?"

Joe is mostly saying this out loud just to hear it, but the words also arguably benefit a tall figure in a black robe standing six feet to the left.

They are both observing the corpse slumped on the floor. It is Joe's corpse. It is unmoving.

"This sucks," the blue, translucent shade of Joe posits, putting his hands on his hips.

Notes

heehoo spooky time

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

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I HEAR THAT THINGS CAN GET BETTER FROM HERE, the figure says, swinging the long wooden handle down from its temporary position as a twisting staff. DEPENDING ON WHAT DESTINATION YOU HAVE IN MIND.

"Yeah, maybe," Joe says, nonplussed. "Hey, do I get, like, a closing statement or something? Some final words?"

CERTAINLY, Death says. I AM ALWAYS LISTENING.

"Maybe I should say something funny about pinball," Joe says, tapping their chin. "Well—maybe not."

The long-handled tool looks strange, in the way that all highly specialized tools do. There are a couple of weird sticking-out bits that seem to have no purpose at all, and a thin metal loop screwed to the top of the instrument that the figure fiddles with briefly. The long-handled tool also looks much realer than anything in Joe's kitchen, realer even than the sky outside, and it is well-worn with thoughtful use.

"I don't want to make my *last* phrase about pinball," Joe continues thoughtfully, adjusting her glasses. "That—you know, it's almost worth it to be the pinball guy, but not quite. So there should probably be pinball AND something. I contain multitudes, after all."

The figure shifts, to brace yellow-white feet on the floor just so.

"Oh, man, we could engage in witty banter, too, maybe," Joe says. "Just, you know, for the invisible audience or something."

I DON'T SEE WHY NOT, Death says, extending the scythe blade until it snaps into place. At the *click*, the blue-gray metal sings with the motion all the way down to the point, *ting*.

"Or a Hamlet reference! I bet I could squeeze in a Hamlet reference somewhere. There's plenty of Hamlet to make references out of."

Death swings.

"To lay your head down—" Joe says as the scythe blade swings down at the gossamer thread between body and soul, and then swings right through without affecting anything whatsoever, except for a couple of air molecules that are split in half. "'—perchance to dream.'"

Death swings again, and a third time.

"That's a good one," Joe says, having noticed approximately nothing that has happened in the past six seconds. "Or I guess, 'Alas! Poor Yorick.' But the Yorick is me, at this moment."

Death pulls an hourglass out of his pocket and taps the glass warily. The sand in it seems to be sticking to the funnel. Death shakes it a little bit; a few more grains fall into the lower bulb, but nothing else.

"Oh," Joe says, at last aware. "Am I stuck?"

ERM, Death says, inspecting the blade of his scythe.

"That's super awkward," Joe says. "Maybe if I wiggle a little bit, it'll—" Joe wiggles in place. When the translucent blue overlaps along a field of vision, it seems to look a little more solid than before, like milk glass. "—no, I don't think that's doing anything. Weird."

LET ME—LET ME TRY AGAIN ONE MORE TIME, Death says, raising the great scythe once more. This time, Joe watches the blade clip neatly and harmlessly through the cord that ties Joe's spirit to the lifeless body on the kitchen floor.

Joe inspects their hands again, translucent and vaguely bluer than before. "That's so strange! Does that mean I'm a ghost now?"

YOU KNOW, Death says, THAT'S NOT REALLY MY PART OF THE JOB. ARE YOU SURE YOU DIDN'T MAKE SOME SORT OF ELDRITCH CONTRACT? YOU DON'T HAVE, ER, A GREAT AND TERRIBLE NEED?

"I'm in an eldritch contract right now, it's called hermi—oh, you meant unironically." Joe scratches their beard. "I mean, I was really close to eating lunch, which was nice because I had, like, half a yogurt for breakfast, so I was really hungry. Is that a great and terrible need, d'you think?"

THAT MAY SUFFICE AS ONE, Death begrudges. He pulls the hourglass out and stares at it again.

"Oh, man," Joe says glumly, going a little more transparent. "If I'm going to be a ghost, it's really impolite of me to just leave my body on the floor. Cleo's going to be so upset, you know."

YES, Death says after a pause. WELL. He makes a dry rustling sound, like a mummy clearing its throat. IF, AH, FOR SOME REASON I AM NECESSARY IN THE FUTURE, PERHAPS YOU CAN GIVE ME AN UPDATE, BUT I MUST LEAVE. PLACES TO BE INEVITABLE IN. YOU KNOW HOW IT IS.

"I don't think I know how it is, but I suppose I'll learn," Joe says brightly, and waves goodbye. "Thanks!"

Death disappears. Joe is pretty sure there was a horse involved somehow, but suddenly the body on the ground becomes much more interesting than anything a seven-foot-tall skeleton could be doing, in that it begins to move when Death leaves.

"Oh," Joe says. "Uh."

The body's eyes begin to bleed bright green light out from between the eyelids, and at the same moment, a pair of bright green hands slowly take shape, lifting the thread that ties Joe to Joe's body.

One of the hands procures a pair of chartreuse scissors with a little flourish, and with no noticeable feeling at all, Joe watches the line between his body and soul get snipped neatly in half. It drifts faintly in the air like spiderweb.

"Oh, no," Joe says.

The rest of the green ghost materializes. It looks a lot like Joe, for some reason, but in a dapper striped suit.

"Thank you for the tip," The ghost says in voice more gravelly than Joe's but still too similar to

separate. "I've been wondering when someone would send a body my way."

"Hang on," Joe tries. "That's my body."

"Not anymore," The ghost in the striped suit says, waving the end of the line that stretches to Joe's body on the kitchen floor. "Finders keepers."

"That's not how that works," Joe says firmly.

"Oh yeah?" The ghost in a striped suit says. "Why's that?"

"I was using it last," Joe says. He shoves the ghost. For some reason, some like, ghost rule, Joe makes contact and pushes the ghost stumbling backwards a good five feet. Joe takes the opportunity to tie the thread between his body and spirit back together with a really fast and messy square knot.

Joe hears the door to the house slam shut, and footsteps in the hallway. Cleo's home. Cleo's home and he still hasn't picked his body up off the ground, which is very definitely still dead, actually.

"Oh, no," Joe mutters, pulling the knot tighter and trying to shake his own body's shoulders. "Wake up, wake up, wake up!"

"Aha!" The ghost in the striped suit says, or something equally devious-sounding. Joe thinks he can see the ghost tie another string to Joe's body, but it's a bit difficult to make everything out, because the world starts to go very blurry and indistinct.

Joe looks down at their blue-glass hands. They are fading fast.

"Dangit," Joe says. "It didn't work."

And Joe wakes up on the kitchen floor with probably the worst headache he's ever had.

He wakes up just in time, in fact, to see Cleo walk in and lose it a little bit. "Joe?" She says. "What's—why are you on the floor?"

"I died for a minute," Joe says. "I was almost a ghost. I feel better, though!"

"Joe," Cleo says in their "stop joking" voice, "there's blood all over the floor."

"Oh, really?" Joe tries to get u—nope. Bad idea. Joe pats the floor around their head. It's sticky, and his hand comes back red. "Wow, I hit the ground really hard."

Cleo sets down a couple of grocery bags. "Hold on," she says. "I'm getting some paper towels."

"Okay," Joe says, and sits on the floor thinking about things, namely how dirty the ceiling is. She should probably clean that at some point.

Cleo returns with some paper towels and starts spreading them out on the floor behind Joe. "Joe," Cleo says, "Did you actually die?"

"Yeah, I died for real," Joe says. "It was kind of interesting. I saw Death."

Joe sits up. The headache washes anew over him. He holds his head in his hands for a second.

"You... saw death," Cleo says.

"Yeah, like, the skeleton guy? He had the scythe and everything. It was pretty cool."

"Right," Cleo says. "How did you die, exactly?"

"I slipped on a banana peel," Joe says, and adds an "ouch."

"Joe, we don't even *have* bananas," Cleo says.

"I know," Joe says, taking Cleo's offered arm and standing up. "Maybe the ghost in the striped suit put it there."

"The—you know what," Cleo says, "that's fine. I'm going to bring in the rest of the shopping, and you're going to sit down and keep holding this ice on your head, and you can tell me about the striped ghost—"

"Ghost in a striped suit," Joe mutters, not unkindly.

"—the ghost in the striped suit later. And don't fall asleep. You're definitely concussed."

"Hey," Joe protests weakly, but honestly, that's fair. Nobody hits their head that hard and doesn't have a concussion.

Joe does close their eyes, though. Just for a second. And very faintly, a bit of bright, bright green shines through his eyelids.

End Notes

i saw second post something about how there needs to be more joe-hills centric fic out there. "yeah sure," i thought, reblogging it. "it would be nice if someone else wrote more joe-centric fic." three days later i was AMBUSHED by dialogue between discworld death and joe. so here you are. not very beta read or thought about. enjoy :)

edit: fixed some formatting and capitalization and such because I think i wrote this in a haze for halloween and it was also real late at night when i posted this? i think. thanks for reading :D

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