

'A Dark Tale'

by  
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1 INT. NARRATOR'S CHAMBER

Track through the doorway to reveal THE NARRATOR sitting next to a roaring fire. Next to him is a table containing a GLASS OF WINE, a DARK-RED BOOK and a CLOCK. His face is HIDDEN throughout -- only his EYES are seen, blood-red.

Pull focus from the clock to The Narrator, who opens the Red Book and recites.

THE NARRATOR

The Clock of Life. Every second, minute, hour its hands decide our fate. But life has many possibilities -- too many to mention in this short tale. Only one of those lives concerns us, and while it would be easy for me to tell you the tale of a happy soul... Bob was something a little different....

The scene dissipates like steam INTO:

2 INTERCUT: INT. DIABLO HOUSE - HALLWAY/LANDING/BEDROOM - MORNING

TITLE CARDS, underscored, over:

Tracking shot through the doorway and up the stairs -- into the bedroom of BOB DIABLO, fast asleep.

THE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Bob Diablo! The slacker. The dead-beat.

Shot of "PA" DIABLO getting ready for work, dressing in undertaker's attire.

"PA"

The idiot.

Shot of "MA" DIABLO collecting a pile of Bob's clothes from the bathroom door.

"MA"

The unhygienic.

A JUMPER falls from the pile and hits DECEMBER DIABLO in the face as she's walking up the stairs -- she isn't happy about it.

THE NARRATOR (V.O.)

And, not entirely his own fault, the unemployable.

Sound: A HAMMER strike.

(CONTINUED)

BOB wakes up, yawning loudly.

THE NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Now, today was like any other day  
in the Diablo household. Bob was  
awoken at the crack of dawn by  
the sound of his sisters, May and  
December, fighting for the  
bathroom, to beautify themselves  
for the day....

Wide on MAY and DECEMBER squabbling on the landing.

Bob sits up in bed. Rummages beneath the covers and  
discovers a stale SLICE OF PIZZA from somewhere near his  
nethers. He EATS it.

3 INT. DIABLO HOUSE - KITCHEN/DINING ROOM - MORNING

CU on "Pa", dressed in a black suit with a white towel  
around his shoulders.

THE NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Downstairs, "Pa" Diablo was  
psyching himself up for the day's  
round of undertaking. As a matter  
of fact, he had just beaten his  
brother's record for --

"PA"  
Five thousand funerals, two  
thousand cremations.

Pan around to "Ma" making porridge.

THE NARRATOR (V.O.)  
While "Ma" Diablo was making  
breakfast -- very untidly.

She uses a BIG SPOON to get all the lumps out of the  
porridge. Match-cut to the SPOON now in a bigger bowl,  
"Ma" handing out the porridge.

THE NARRATOR (V.O.)  
We join the family at the  
breakfast table, where Bob has  
some decidedly familiar news....

All eating. BOB stands up ceremoniously.

BOB  
Well, after two weeks of waiting,  
they've finally given me an  
interview today, at eleven  
ayem... in the morning.

(CONTINUED)

"MA"

That's nice, dear.  
 (sotto voce)  
 Hopefully it'll last longer than  
 all the rest.

MAY

If it lasts until lunchtime I'll  
 be a record breaker.

BOB

Now, now, my last jobs were just  
 unfortunate misunderstandings.

DECEMBER

Yes, don't be so cruel, sister --  
 that's my job.

MAY

"Cruel" would be not telling you  
 about the pimple.

DECEMBER

What pimple?!

She hastily looks in her pocket mirror, shocked.

DECEMBER

Well, I've been Miss Gothic  
 Beauty three months running!

"PA"

May, December, pack it in!

DECEMBER

Actually, I was March, April and  
 May.

MAY

That should have been me! You're  
 only frigid enough for December!

"PA"

Settle down!

BOB

Er, as I was saying... they were  
 misunderstandings. [Joke about an  
 incident at work.]

"PA"

Enough. The only misunderstanding  
 here is that you claim to be my  
 son! I mean, really! Not  
 following in the family  
 tradition! Your grandfather would  
 be spinning in his grave -- if it

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

"PA" (cont'd)  
 wasn't so well padded with  
 top-quality interior quilting.

Bob gets his coat.

BOB  
 You're all an embarrassment to  
 me. I'm off to show you all I'm a  
 Diablo to be proud of. And a Bob  
 you can depend on!

He SLAMS the front door.

"MA"  
 Don't be too hard on him, dear.  
 He's just following his heart.

"PA"  
 Heart! Weak-hearted, more like --  
 the boy's wetter than a Thursday.  
 A little tough love never hurt  
 anyone. Mark my words, these  
 career fantasies of his will just  
 hit another dead end.

Sound: The THUD of someone being hit by a car.

The scene freezes.

THE NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 That may perhaps have been a poor  
 choice of words. Let us rewind  
 the clock by a mere few seconds,  
 because there has just been a  
 twist in this tale....

4 EXT. STREET - MORNING

The scene REWINDS: BOB seeming to walk backwards. Scene  
 freezes and resumes in real-time: Bob walking along with a  
 determined grin.

5 INT. CAR - MORNING

A car speeding along a few blocks away. Inside are a  
 HONEYMOONING COUPLE, singing obliviously.

HONEYMOONERS  
*'We're going to make the best of  
 life; / See the world from a  
 different side; / Nothing is made  
 when you're sitting on your  
 backside!'*

(CONTINUED)

HONEYMOONER A  
'Backside, backside!'

HONEYMOONER B  
'Backside, backside!'

THUD. The car bumps.

HONEYMOONER A  
'Backside' ... what was that?

CU of the front of the car -- BOB can be seen crumpled up in the road with his backside sticking up.

We zoom into the HEADLIGHTS and transition into CEILING LIGHTS of:

6 INT. THE WAITING ROOM - EXTERIOR HALLWAY - DAY

PEOPLE walking up and down a flight of stairs. At the top is a RECEPTIONIST handing out tickets. THE GUIDE looks down on the scene.

BOB is motionless on the lower floor. TWO STRANGE WOMEN stop.

STRANGE WOMAN #1  
Hey, Phil! We've got a new arrival.

THE GUIDE runs down the stairs, pushing past people. He shakes Bob, trying to wake him up.

THE GUIDE  
Hey, mate -- hey, wake up, you'll miss your turn.

Bob wakes blearily.

BOB  
Turn--? Oh, yes, the interview.

THE GUIDE  
I'm hoping to get the post as the gardener. Always fancied meself as an outdoors type.

BOB  
Outdoors? I was hoping for a sit-down job.

Bob gets up dizzily. Strange Woman #1 tugs at his shirt. The Guide walks up the stairs with Bob and the two STRANGE WOMEN following. Walking in the opposite direction with a sly grin on his face is THE NARRATOR.

(CONTINUED)

STRANGE WOMAN #1

I've been waiting here for the last twenty years. Well, some people get all the luck. They'll decide on you soon enough.

BOB

Decide? What do you mean, I've only just got here.

STRANGE WOMAN #2

I heard all the sit-down jobs are taken, and they've only got vacancies down in the basement. Working for a right slave-driver. Twenty-four hours a day, no breaks, and only a cup of cold gruel for lunch!

BOB

That's against some kind of ethics code, surely? I applied for this job on the understanding they were an honourable firm -- the last place didn't pay me. Or feed me. Or even really check to see if I was still there, actually --

THE GUIDE

Honourable firm--? Hang on a tick, you mean you don't know?

BOB

What? Yes! No. What don't I know?

They reach a door. The Guide enters.

7 INT. THE WAITING ROOM - DAY

The Guide leads Bob into a large WAITING ROOM full of people in deep conversation.

THE GUIDE

Hey, everyone! Everyone, shut it! This is Bob. He's our new-starter.

All stop talking and look at Bob.

ALL

Hello, Bob.

BOB

Hello! Aw, that's nice!

(CONTINUED)

## THE GUIDE

Get a load of this; he thinks his mortal clock is still ticking!

## DEADITE #1

You could say, my friend, you've hit a dead end with this job application.

## DEADITE #2

I'm dying for my turn!

## DEADITE #3

Hey, mate, I didn't quite catch your name -- I'm a bit death!

All laughing at Bob's expense.

## BOB

Yes, yes, big whoop! Can I ask what the hell is going on?!

## THE GUIDE

Well, interesting you should mention Hell....

The strange women join in the conversation

## STRANGE WOMAN #2

Oh, stop trolling him. You see, dear --

## STRANGE WOMAN #1

-- what we've been trying to tell you is -- listen to this, you'll kill yourself...

## STRANGE WOMEN

-- you're dead, dearest.

## ALL

(shouting)

Dead!

Bob is stunned. He sits down in a daze.

## BOB

Dead...! Well, I did get out on the wrong side of bed this morning. I didn't think I looked that bad.

## THE GUIDE

Bloody Mary! Didn't you notice some rather peculiar-looking people when you woke up?!

BOB

I didn't want to be judgmental.

The Guide takes Bob by the arm and gives him a tour of the waiting room. Underscored.

THE GUIDE

Typical  
Man-With-an-Axe-in-His-Head.

AXE MAN

You haven't got any Anadin, have you? I've got a splitting headache!

THE GUIDE

Woman-Electrocuted-By-Nail-File.

She shakes Bob's hand, pretends to electrocute him, making him jump.

BOB

Er, how exactly did she--?

NAIL WOMEN

Don't ask, it was a bit of an electrifying experience.

The Guide moves on, checking off the rest of the room.

THE GUIDE

Hammer to the solar plexus;  
tripped on stairs; tripped on  
brick; tripped on wife; bike;  
chainsaw; pants caught on fire;  
and not forgetting, death by  
chocolate.

The last has a mouth covered in chocolate, looking thoroughly miserable.

DEATH BY CHOCOLATE

They were right: Never take the last Rolo.

THE GUIDE

Y'see, my friend, you're dead.  
Stone cold as the proverbial. You  
can't live with it, believe me --  
but you can learn to accept it.  
Where you go to next is decided  
through that door.

Long shot of a CLOSED DOOR. Underscored.

BOB

What kind of a door is it?

THE GUIDE

Through there is the Great Interviewer. He decides which way you go. Upstairs or downstairs.

BOB

I've been chasing after jobs since I was knee-high to a coffin -- now you're telling me this is the only interview I stand a chance of passing, and I'm dead on arrival? Ugh, and I wasn't even finished with my Bucket List yet!

THE GUIDE

Oh, I did one of those. Which number were you on?

BOB

Number Five: "Do something unexpected".

THE GUIDE

Well, I daresay you weren't expecting this, eh?

A VOICE emanates from behind the door, which SWINGS OPEN of its own accord.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Bob Diablo.

STRANGE WOMAN #2

That's your call, dearie.

BOB

You know, present company excepted, but I'd much rather be among the living and breathing right now.

STRANGE MAN

That's rather offensive, you know, to us respiratorially-challenged.

THE GUIDE

Gee, you lucky bugger. I've been waiting here since 1979. Seen some fashions come and go through that doorway.

Bob gets up to leave, straightening his clothes, turns back.

(CONTINUED)

BOB

Well, everyone... uh, have a nice death.

He walks off towards the doorway.

DEADITE #1

Charming, these new-starters.

THE GUIDE

So, anyone for a game of Spot the Corpse? I'll start!

8 INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

BOB enters. The room is dark and dusty, full of books like a Headmaster's office. The INTERVIEWER is in shadow.

INTERVIEWER

Ah, there you are. Well, come on, come on, don't let the cold in.

(Bob hesitates)

Oh, come in, dear fellow, rest your bones. Tea?

BOB

Uh. Two sugars, please.

INTERVIEWER

You've had rather a post-mortal experience, my lad. I find tea calms the soul for the journey ahead.

Bob drinks his tea, is pleasantly surprised. Relaxes in his chair.

BOB

That's not bad. It's rather civilised up here, isn't it?

INTERVIEWER

We aim to please. Now, let's take a look in your file, shall we?

He opens a folder and reads. Starts sniggering, trying to cover it with his hand.

BOB

Erm... what's so funny? What're you reading?

INTERVIEWER

Really! Well I never! The whole sausage! Where on Earth did they find it? Not to mention this business with the dog bowl!

(CONTINUED)

BOB

I'd had a lot of water in the night.

INTERVIEWER

Yes, I can see that. Well, Bob, your prospects aren't looking too good. Two hundred jobs... in less than two hundred days. You know, I didn't even think that was possible. You're quite, shockingly unemployable.

BOB

I was just a bit nervous... maybe some I wasn't exactly suited for.

INTERVIEWER

Let me be honest, Bob, in the afterlife we take our employment schemes very seriously, and we just don't have the openings for someone of your... unique caliber at the present eternity.

BOB

Oh, Lord, I'm a no-hoper in this life as well!

INTERVIEWER

No, no, don't misunderstand -- you're just here a little early, that's all. According to the supplementary notes you're not due for another fifty-nine years. Bit of a cock-up on the senseless death front, I'm afraid. My advice to you, Bob, before we meet again, is to just start believing in yourself. You wouldn't believe how many people we have to tell that to. I assure you, everything will start falling into place.

Bob jumps up and shakes his hand thankfully.

BOB

I will! I'll try, I will! I will try, I'll try, I'll try....

WHITE-OUT TO:

9

INT. HOSPITAL WARD - DAY

BOB lying on a hospital bed. Slowly his eyes open. A DOCTOR is leaning over him; it's the INTERVIEWER.

BOB

--I will! I'm gonna keep on going!

DOCTOR

Well, it's a good thing your heart had the same idea. Thought I'd lost you a couple of times in theatre, Bob. You're a real fighter.

BOB

Hang on, you're -- I was -- you interviewed me....

DOCTOR

Hm? Oh, yes, your father did say you were on your way to an interview. Terrible mishap in the road, hit by some singing honeymooners by all accounts. On their way to Fiji, but luckily their plane had a wing off; lovely couple came back and brought you here.

BOB

Dad... honeymoon... wing... uh?

DOCTOR

He sounded very concerned on the phone. He should be here soon.

Bob sits up, trying to puzzle everything out, though still groggy.

"PA" and the rest of the DIABLOS burst in.

"PA"

Bob, my lad! My son, the fighter! The champ!

BOB

Dad? Are you on the sherry?

"PA"

Son, I thought I'd lost you. Don't you worry about taking over the business, doesn't matter now. You do whatever you like.

(CONTINUED)

BOB

Thanks, Pa. You know, I've had some time to think about it... and I think I'm going to follow my heart.

The family look on with pride.

BOB

I'm going to open my own business... selling ornamental hats.

"MA"

Oh. That's... nice?

BOB

Little ones, you see. You put them on shelves. Everybody has shelves.

"PA"

Well, son, I'd take my tiny, ornamental hat off to you, if I had one.

BOB

I could sell you one! Family discount!

MAY

And if you need a head model...

DECEMBER

This is a new beginning, Bob.

Everyone hugs, Bob looking exceedingly pleased. Even the HONEYMOONERS enter, hugging Bob and starting to sing. Everyone joining in, all *Happy Days*.

The scene shifts into a line drawing in the Red Book. A chapter heading fades in: "A NEW BEGINNING".

10 INT. NARRATOR'S CHAMBER

Underscore starts up as the camera closes in on THE NARRATOR, still sitting in his arm chair.

THE NARRATOR

And so Bob finally got the big break he needed, and his ornamental hats were renowned all around the lower South-East area of Torbay. But above all else, he finally got the self-respect he had been looking for his whole life.

(CONTINUED)

He closes the Red Book.

THE NARRATOR

This tale has come to its end --  
and if you want to know my part  
in proceedings, well... it was a  
fairy-tale after all, so you  
could call me Grimm. Oh, yes, and  
you'd better make the story of  
your life a good read, because  
you never know when I'll be  
coming to end yours!

He lets out a prolonged evil laugh, and gradually calms  
down.

THE NARRATOR

Now, I quite fancy some tea and  
biscuits.

"THE END". The scene closes in a CIRCULAR FADE, with THE  
NARRATOR coming out through the circle.

END CREDITS: Clips of VARIOUS CAST and CREW trying on  
Bob's ornamental hats, underscored with a song.