

A Job Interview to Remember

by Paul Cavanagh

Characters:

- Jim
- The Grim Reaper
- Narrator

Synopsis: A middle aged man seeking employment attends a job interview with an obscure collection agency not realizing that his financial problems may be a thing of the past, although not in the way he might think.

Narrator: The year 2012. The place, the metropolitan bustling city of Brisbane Australia. Times are tough, the cost of living is through the roof. House prices are up, rent is astronomical, and our staunch premier firmly believes that a public push-bike scheme will help matters, accounts of head lice aside.

In these trying times, a man is out to make his mark. Or... at least his rent. That man is Jim Mitchell and today Jim has found an advertisement for a job that might just suit his set of skills.

Jim: (*Reading the job advertisement out loud*) Help wanted. Established business man seeking personal assistant for collection agency. Appropriate applicant would need to be competent with a range of filing systems, some particularly antiquated. Competency in the use of Microsoft office is required and he/she should be comfortable working with a wide range of people of different age groups and social strata. Applicant would also need to be comfortable around the sick, feeble, and possibly maimed. Must have strong stomach.

Should you feel that you fulfill the above criteria, please call the following number and arrange an interview. Resume' and appropriate references are required.

Narrator: Jim was the sort of person best described as invisible. Nothing about him would strike you as remarkable. Brown suit, well pressed white shirt, grey tie. The short, light brown hair was neatly combed back from his brow and his glasses, thick horn rimmed sat close up on the bridge of his nose with a piece of white tape holding them together. His complexion was fair, marked only by the occasional errant freckle. Overall, nothing would really make you look at Jim Mitchell.

A pragmatic individual, his last job had been a clerical assistant for a tax firm under a manager who could best be described as severely lacking in personality. At worst, the antichrist would have had better people skills. On this day Joe found himself in the most threadbare waiting room of the coldest building he had ever had the displeasure of being in. Dark marble was all he could see with the exception of the huge oaken door that led to his prospective employers office and the brass intercom that had instructed him to

wait until asked to enter.

Jim: The occasionally maimed, how odd. I really wish these job advertisements would be a bit less abstract in their wording. I still shudder remembering that last interview I went to. How does willing to wear a uniform translate to male exotic dancer? Ah yes, that was it. The 's' on the end of uniform.

Buzzing sound for intercom.

Grim Reaper: (muffled by intercom) Mr Mitchell, I am ready to see you now.

Sound of a large door creaking open accompanied by footsteps

Narrator: Thinking he had never seen an automatic door like it before he passed through and found himself in an office constructed of nothing but cold dark marble. Even the massive desk, which was one of only three pieces of furniture in the room, was made of the stone. There was a chair on either side of the table, one vacant, presumably for him.

Jim: Ah, hello. There was no name on the advertisement so I presume that you are Mr. GR.

Narrator: Mr GR was a man who resembled a statue carved from chalk. Tall, thin, gaunt, yet strangely familiar. The man sat still as stone, cobalt blue eyes burning into Jim's own, pools of freezing water that were ready to drown him. He slowly, yet gracefully gestured for Jim to sit.

Grim Reaper: And I presume you are here about the job. Oh wait, I know that's why you are here because you told me so over the intercom 10 minutes ago. Really Mr Mitchell, stating the obvious does not create a good first impression with an employer. Take a seat and lets begin.

Jim: Nice cloak by the way, is that a cowl on its collar? May I ask what do the initials GR stand for?

Grim Reaper: I don't believe on being too cordial with my employees Mr. Mitchell, one should always have a due respect for authority. And I do find the emotional distance helps when employees must be..... terminated. You may call me Sir. Or if that formality is beyond your comfort, Mr. Reaperre. Do remember the extension on the final vowel.

Jim: Mr Reaper, mmmmn. Oh I apologize, Reaperrr(*over extending the 'r' sound on the end*).

Narrator: Jim passed over the leather bound folder and waited for anxious minutes as his prospective employer scrolled through his personal papers. Not a word was uttered or a sound made until he shut the folder and softly slid it back across the table.

Jim: So, uh.... What do you think? I worked with Impsons tax consultancy for

four years before being made redundant. I've never missed a day of work and am willing to be flexible with my hours. I even have my own transport, it's a Volkswagen. I really....

Grim Reaper: (Interrupting) Yes, yes, yes. These eyes are more than just decorations. Well Mr Mitchell, I have to say I'm very impressed by your qualifications. It's rare that I get to interview a person with so much experience. Certificates in office administration, accounting software, experience with the public service. Good time to be out of that last one I might add. Overall you would seem to be a perfect applicant.

Jim: That's good to know.

Grim Reaper: I wonder though Mr Mitchell. Would you consider yourself a people person?

Jim: I'm friendly if that's what you mean.

Grim Reaper: Partly, and how are you with people crying and begging?

Narrator: At this point Jim began to feel slightly uneasy. It was a difficult feeling to define. Kind of like a moth batting around inside the internals of his stomach. His eyes shifted nervously around, needing a distraction from the icy glare of this most intense of employers. His eyes caught sight of an emblem on the far wall. On closer inspection he realised that it was not an emblem at all, but two scythes crossing over. A hand hitting the desk in front of him snapped him back to attention.

Sound of hand hitting desk

Grim Reaper: Really Mr Mitchell, try to remain focused.

Jim: Oh, I'm sorry Mr Reaper, my eyes caught the decorations on the back wall. An interesting choice if you don't mind me saying, does it have some significance to you personally?

Grim Reaper: Actually, it's more business orientated. All jobs have their tools Mr Mitchell; the builders trowel, the doctors knife. I see the scythe as a combination of the two. After all, we reap what is sown wouldn't you agree.

Jim: Yes, well, personally I am more comfortable around a calculator. I noticed on the advertisement that it said that this was a collection agency. I take it from your question about the crying and begging that I would be repossessing property for the firm?

Grim Reaper: Ah, once again, stating the obvious I can see Mr Mitchell. I really do hope that this isn't a habit. It would so strain our working relationship. To answer your question,

yes. Although I deal with a majority of the direct client contacts the increasing number of souls needing removal means that you would on occasion be filling in for me amongst your administrative duties.

Jim: Wait a second, did you say souls?

Grim Reaper: (slowly) Did I? I really think that you are missing the point. Do you think that you are up to being assertive if the case requires it or not?

Narrator: Jim was now beginning to find this interview extremely off putting. In the back of his mind he began to calculate exactly how desperate he was for work. At this point maybe being homeless was just more of an opportunity to spend some time outdoors.

Jim: Well, perhaps. Are there any clients who just come to us, save us the hassle of chasing them up.

Grim Reaper: Unfortunately no. My agency is one that requires us to go to the clientele. Typically I might add in the most unpleasant circumstances.

Jim: I'll be honest with you Mr Re...

Sir. I am in desperate circumstances currently and I really need this job, any job. I am at least two months behind on the rent and the VW sounds like it is being choked to death. It doesn't sound like the most pleasant of jobs from what I can tell, but I can promise you that if you take me on I will give it my all.

Grim Reaper: I would expect nothing less. And really, the choking simile is most incorrect. Chokers tend to gurgle and wheeze.

Narrator: Jims eyes widened until he convinced himself that he had misheard.

Grim Reaper: There are some potential benefits as well. It isn't all tears and screams.

Jim: Really, what like?

Grim Reaper: Well, it's secure employment. One might say you'll have a job for life.

Jim: That's a bonus, temp work is so unfulfilling. You never feel like your going anywhere.

Grim Reaper: Believe me Mr Mitchell. At the end of a term of service with me, one has no questions left about where they're going. Now one last thing to check before we conclude this interview. Have you ever been charged guilty of a criminal offence greater than a misdemeanor.

Jim: No, been good as an angel all my life Sir.

Grim Reaper: Please refrain from exaggerating Mr Mitchell. Once again, your similes are completely inaccurate. How does a creature with no free will claim to be good or evil? They simply exist, and are remarkably boring company too. I shall just check my conduct registry to confirm what you have told me. I apologize but I often have people lie to my face. Usually it's , 'I'm not ready yet' , or 'I still have so much left to do.'

Narrator: Mr Reaperre drew a large book from under his desk. More a tome than anything. Meticulously, he picked through the crisp white pages running his index finger down line upon line of miniscule entries till his finger came to a sudden stop. A look of disappointment crossed his pale features.

Jim: What is it Sir? I swear I didn't lie. I have never been convicted of a crime.

Grim Reaper: For a change, I can see that is correct. There is another problem however.

Jim: Really, I have all the required experience and qualifications. My references are all there. What could possible be wrong?
(pleading)

Grim Reaper: This really is quite embarrassing, almost funny really. I should have looked you up before letting you travel all this way. Though given what I have just read travelling anywhere today would be unfortunate for you. I'm afraid that I can't employ your services after all.

Jim: (agitated) Why not? I really need this job. I'll be out on the street if I don't find employment soon.

Grim Reaper: It comes down to a term of service. I just don't think that you can offer me the time I need of an employee. Again, I must apologize. If it makes you feel better, I have a feeling that your financial situation will be a thing of the past before long.

Jim: (Angrily) You can stick your feelings up your ass Mr. Reaperrrr (mocking with the final r's) . This is an age thing isn't it. You know what they call this... discrimination. You won't hire me because you think I'm too old.

Grim Reaper: Mr. Mitchell, I assure you, I am not one you could accuse of discrimination. I probably have the only agency in the world that is truly 'all inclusive' Now if you would please remove yourself from my office.

Jim: I assure you, you will be hearing from me again.... When I return with a law suit.

Grim Reaper: I've no doubt that we
will meet again Mr Mitchell. Good Day!

Narrator: Fuming at the disrespect he'd
been shown Jim stepped out on to the rainy street. He stepped out to cross the
road and turned back for a second to look at the building determined to follow
through with his threat. A vacant lot was all that his eyes could see. Bemused
and rattled he shook his head, its last turn catching a flash of a city bus two
feet from his face.