

THE SUMMONING OF EVERYMAN

A modern retelling
By

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THE SUMMONING OF EVERYMAN

The Cast

The eleven roles can be played by as few as six actors. The sex of each role as referred to in the text is only for the practicalities of writing the script. With only minor changes to the text and, where necessary, to the name of the character, a male or a female actor can play each role.

Everyman

Death

Friendship

Goods

Chattels

Kindred

Knowledge

Five Wits

Strength

Discretion

Good Deeds

The Set

The scene is the smart, city-centre flat occupied by Everyman and shared with Friendship. The entrance/exit at one side represents the 'outer door leading to the communal lobby, stairs and lifts. At the other side, the 'inner door' leads to the kitchen, bathroom and bedrooms.

Scene 1: The Shared Flat of Everyman and Friendship.

The audience enters to find Friendship reclining and asleep despite the loudness of the music from his headphones. He is not someone who takes much care or pride in himself, his diet or his appearance. The paraphernalia of video games, electronic consumables and pop-culture magazines lie on and about him mingled with empty fast-food cartons.

Death enters, dressed in black motorcycle kit as a courier or dispatch rider. She carries a satchel that contains the tablet computer on which is Everyman's account and reckoning of his life on Earth. She removes her helmet to speak.

Death: Know me.

Know me.

And know me well.

For I am she whom, some day, all must know,

And make of me a friend or foe.

Welcome me you may or no.

Resist or keenly with me go.

Though present at life's end its end is not my goal.

Not time, nor place, nor means is set in my control.

Feared I am by those who do not know the whole

Of my divine commission, of this my solemn role.

As even God's own son, who now with him resides,

Upon the cross did prove his love for all at Passiontide,

So to every human soul I am appointed guide.

All must place their hand in mine and walk with me beside.

Last friend in life and first in Heaven is my part.

From earth's troubled end to Heaven's glorious start.

All life is born of God's own heart,

All must return to him and from this world depart.

For I am Death.

Know me.

And know me well.

(Death replaces her helmet. Everyman enters the flat through the outer door. He wears running kit and carries a plastic bottle of water. He has clearly just returned from a long and fast run, but is nothing like exhausted. He picks his way through the detritus toward where Friendship lies, shakes his head in disapproval. Seeing no movement, he pours a little water onto Friendship's face. Friendship wakes suddenly and splutters into consciousness).

Everyman: It's your turn. Remember?

Friendship: I could have drowned. *(wiping the water from his face)*

Everyman: Don't exaggerate.

Friendship: Pneumonia, then. A few drops in the lungs...

Everyman: It's Wednesday.

Friendship: It happens, you know. Human body's a fragile thing.

Everyman: Philosophy club. My philosophy club.

Friendship: Needs looking after 24-7. *(makes to start an e-cigarette)*

Everyman: On the balcony.

Friendship: It's freezing out there. I'll catch my death.

Everyman: State of this place. *(performs a few stretches)*

Friendship: It's your stuff.

Everyman: You're using it.

Friendship: Yeh. Well. It's better than my stuff.

Everyman: And it's your turn.

Friendship: It was my turn last night.

Everyman: That was me. I cooked last night. And the night before –

Friendship: Chickpeas. Kale and lentils with black beans, carrots, spinach and... 'vegan bacon'. I mean what is 'vegan bacon'?

Everyman: Tempeh. Fermented soya. Fat free, I told you. Can't have been that bad. You cleared your plate.

Friendship: Only way I could get enough energy to survive the night.

Everyman: Well you can have what you like tonight, because you're cooking.

Friendship: And what a feast it shall be. Starting with monster mayo-smothered deep-fried cheddar wedges. Followed by belly-pork stuffed-crust extra-hot chilli-feast pizza, with triple-cream mega-choc cheesecake to finish. Topped off with a super-size caffeine-boost espresso blast. Oh, yes. And a green salad and mineral water for you.

Everyman: You'll never manage it.

Friendship: I'll be compensating for last night's rabbit food.

Everyman: Not eat it. Cook it.

Friendship: No need. I've got the 'Tappetite App' (*showing his phone's screen to Everyman*). One tap of the 'Tappetite App' and this veritable banquet will be delivered to our door.

Everyman: (*taking the phone from Friendship*) Not tonight. If you want it, you can go and get it.

Friendship: Tappetite's miles away.

Everyman: It's on the corner.

Friendship: We're thirteen floors up.

Everyman: Take the stairs. Exercise'll do you good. And take some money or you'll be walking it twice.

Friendship: (*leaving through the outer door*) Sorted. I've got your wallet.

(Friendship leaves. Everyman checks his pockets and the table, confirming that Friendship has, in fact, taken his wallet. Left alone, Everyman begins clearing the debris of Friendship's lazy afternoon).

Death: Unseen. Yet standing in plain sight.
Unheard. Yet never silent day or night.
Un-thought on by the thoughtless
Un-noticed by the heedless.
Taunted by the fearless.
Welcomed by the cheerless.
One heartbeat distant. One, no more.
Closer, with every breath that's drawn
Standing at your side, I wait.
For you will see me, soon or late.
To hear my voice, that is your fate
For I am Death, none may escape.
(raising his voice facing and speaking directly to Everyman)
Everyman. I call for you.

(Hearing Death speak his name and, face to face, seeing Death for the first time Everyman is completely taken by surprise.)

Everyman: What the... You scared me half to... (*taking Death to be the Tappetite delivery rider*) Sorry, sorry. I never heard the door. Look, erm... Friendship's got my wallet, honest. He'll be back in a second. I did tell him to get the stuff himself. Sorry. Should have known better. (*unsettled by Death's silence*) Errm... Yeh. He'll not be long. (*another uneasy pause*) So? Errm... Busy... night? Is it? (*failing to engage Death in conversation, Everyman moves toward the inner door*) Look, I'll erm... put the oven on. Keep it warm 'til he gets back. Where is it, where's the food?

Death: Think not on what I may come to bring, but what I come to take away.

Everyman: Well, yeh. I mean, if he actually learned to cook he wouldn't need all this take-away stuff, would he? I mean, look at it. (*indicating the debris of previous fast food meals*)

Death: I am Death.

Everyman: And that's refreshingly honest, don't get me wrong. But if you put in a bit more thought and bit less salt and fat ...

Death: Your safe conduct now I guarantee,
As pilgrim in my company,
To Heaven. There at last to see
Who made from nought all things that be.
By his command I now appear,
This night to lead a soul from here,
Which is my solemn duty clear.
All things must pass. Come, and have no fear.