

2018

## Coffee Strong Enough to Raise the Dead

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### Recommended Citation

Bordow, E.B. (2018) "Coffee Strong Enough to Raise the Dead," *Exile*: Vol. 64 : No. 1 , Article 28.  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/exile/vol64/iss1/28>

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The intense grey surrounds you as you lay in your “final” resting position. You had died only a day earlier, but you are already prepared, dressed in black tie, and put into position in the casket your mother ordered with such sorrow. Do you like seeing your mother like this? Her eyes are as red as yours were when you took that final noseful of Colombian Marching Powder, only she has a reason for the bloodshot. You now plead to be buried with a fifth of your favorite whiskey, or at least a few packs of cigarettes and a scandalous magazine, and I don’t blame you, how the hell else are you supposed to pass the time in here? Hopefully by now you know that death is not your final reward, that was not the case with anyone. The DA had been founded hundreds of year ago, tasked with keeping the brains of Da Vinci, Einstein, and Mozart “in circulation”, as they called it. Every person who has ever died has been through DA, and if you are lucky enough to make it through “sterile testing” (hint: you are not lucky enough to make it through “sterile testing”), then your significantly cell-deficient brain will be put back out there. How are you going to do it? What can you possibly come up with that will impress Death and convince him to let you keep going? You absolutely do not deserve to be put into this mythical category with the likes of a Hendrix or a JFK. But you will give it your absolute best, your 110 percent, not because you want to, but because you have to. That is how it goes when you die, so stop complaining. Please remember, the coffee is certainly strong enough to raise the dead, but it sure seems like you will be getting tea.

There is no preferred path for you to take. How ignorant of you to think that Death himself sticks to a specific regiment. There is no method to his affairs, you should have noticed that during your very first Dead Anonymous meeting. No one cares about your name; here you are Overdose21. That is the only detail that matters here. For Christ’s, the person standing in front of you is called HippoAccident37. Do you see how many ways there are to die? This man, well maybe a man, now he is just simply there, was killed by a fucking hippo. Do not assume for a second that death has an organized timeline and color coded schedule. And please do not suggest that to him. He will send you away with a cup of tea before you even have time to decide if you would rather have honey or raw sugar. Suicide33 welcomes you to your first meeting with a purple button

as you pass through the door. Maybe you are still getting acclimated to being dead, but it seems like you are not occupying any space. The closest real-world word it could be compared to is virtual, and for that case, virtually not. This place only exists when you and the rest of today's batch are here. When you leave, this grey room disappears into unbeing. While there are still things happening around you, and other "people" to interact with, you are not anywhere to be found in the real world.

As you take your seat, you are greeted by the "woman" next to you. She introduces herself as Janet, but is quickly reminded with a sharp pain to her wrist that her name is Stroke63. Whatever you do, do not follow her lead. She is going to try to seduce Death in order to sip on that wonderful cup of coffee, but it is guaranteed to fail. The only one who could pull that stunt was Marilyn (Overdose36), and Stroke63 looked like a failed painting of Overdose36's cancerous cat. Sorry, but stay away from that idea. Suicide33 has switched roles from hostess to "head trainer" of your small group of death siblings. She tells you that your group of 20 will train, test, compete, and attempt to win the heart of Death. Suicide33 has taken the ultimate sacrifice in remaining dead to train you, so you should be very thankful of that. She does not get the chance to come back, but you do, you lucky bastard. Her first assignment for you is to take the rest of the "day" to think of the five best qualities about yourself, or rather, the alive version of yourself. Death wants your alive traits to be shown in full color during judgment, so choose wisely, this is your only chance to dance with the Devil.

If you were to list the 5 greatest traits about yourself when you were alive, they would probably go something like this: 1. Drinking 2. Objectifying women 3. Watching porn 4. Yelling obscenities at people who do not deserve it whatsoever 5. Joint rolling. Now this is a great list if you are first and foremost alive, and in a very specific trope of college douchebag. Why don't you ask the infamous AlcoholPoisoning20 about his plight to Death? Well since he is not around anymore maybe you should take that as a word of warning. Just please do not challenge Death to a game of beer pong. It's like the "head trainer's" instructions just go in one ear and out the other with most people. Death wants individuality for god's sake. HeroinOverdose27 (Kurt) brought only a guitar with him, and played Death a song about living a full life. That was the only time in his history of existence that Death cried. You are absolutely nowhere near as talented or inventive as he was, all faith in you is already lost. At least you fit in, no one has hope here. There has to be something truly spectacular about the way you once were. Come on think! It will literally save your life!

“Yu knows, wen I’r wuz bout 22 I wen an’ get tooken by de military,” Dementia83 exclaimed with great pride. His dialect was one of extreme slowness. It was obvious as to the extent of this thing’s dementia, but you take note of his peacefully quiet, long-drawn voice. Before you can go and complete your assignment, you have to listen to this man’s story. “32nd Vermont infantry. I dun spend wut I reckon ter be my entire live up til’ den on mi uruncle’s ranch. I had ben’ raisin de cattles in the mawrnin, and done de hunted in de afanoon. One day I wuz out in de woods real deep, so fars that i reckon I had to star turnin back. Az I star makin my wayz back, i start heerin de strangist beetin of what i think to be certin deat. Nex thing i knows’ I’s bein lift off de groun wit some grimmy lookin muder fuckas yellin at me, an’ handin’ me a autermadic rifle. Now i knows dese boys was militry becuz of de--” I can tell you are bored with this old being, so leave if you want. It’s all up to you. This man is a coffee drinker, but you have decided to go occupy some other meaningless space. Good for you, an independent mind is something you want in your scenario.

Well your first “day” is over and now you have to get some sleep. What an interesting concept. You spent a third of your life asleep and vulnerable, and now it’s time to try that again. Something odd happens here when you dream though. You are laying in your bed, which of course is not actually a bed but just a bunch of jumbled ideas floating around about what something that you lay on to relax is. So now it is time to let your mind wander. It’s essentially dreaming, but instead of dreaming about naked girls and cocaine, you are dreaming about your dog that got sick when you were 9, and your older sister picking you up from elementary school with a car full of her babbling bimbo friends. Do not fret, there is no chance they will make it through up here. Death has an incredibly acute ability to sniff out bullshitters and assholes. Even though the “King of Pop” did so much for music with his incredible array of talents, SleepDeath50 ended up drinking a cup of chamomile with extra honey.

The power of your dreams in this state of being is incredibly underrated. A while back there was a young girl, BikeAccident11, who dreamed only of her teacher at school. She was distraught by the fact that Mrs. Lewis would have to go to class the next day and explain what had happened to the poor girl. In her dream, BikeAccident11 saw Mrs. Lewis getting out of her car to get a coffee, light brown and weak, unlike the extreme, full-flavored blend up here. A patch of black ice sends Mrs. Lewis slipping on the ground, and results in an oncoming car making her CarAccident56. When Death heard of this, he immediately--

Oh! You are having a dream! This was not to be expected from you, maybe you are on your way. This is the first step for many of the “regular randies” who get chosen for “recirculation”. You are in a car with your mother going to your very first soccer game. Pretty clichéd, but it is a good start. You better dream up some twist, or this is going to go nowhere. You see the cars passing by, you eagerly shake your foot as your first athletic competition draws ever closer. “Just a minute honey, we are going to stop at the store, and get you something to drink,” Your mother suggests. Between your boredom in the hot car, and the incredibly long line at the store, something prompts you to take the car for a little spin. Oh my god! This is terrific. You drive down the road with numerous signs of childlike excitement, but you are incredibly skilled as a driver. You throw on a pair of sunglasses, take your pants off, and stick your bare ass right out the window, exposing the world to the blue moon of your behind.

This was an excellent development for you, you have pretty much categorized yourself from that dream. You are destined to make Death laugh. While it is great that you now know where you stand in terms of convincing Death, you are up to your ears in expectation. Not many people can make death laugh, but you have real potential. Beware: Making stupid, drawn out jokes and expecting Death to giggle at the punchline is no way to go about this excruciatingly difficult task. “You have to make him laugh with the way you are,” Suicide33 tells you “That was an excellent dream you had, it’s those types of things that will make Death laugh. Focus on how to bring an image like that into your mind.” Now don’t worry, you will do plenty of this in your “free time”, but there are more pressing matters right now. Your test with Death is in 19 “hours”, and you need to figure out what to wear. You want something appealing, maybe not colorful as Death prefers greys and blacks, but something that is going to catch his eye. Do not embroider a jacket with a large phallic shape on the back, Death will actually throw the tea at you, it has happened before. You decide to wear a black button down with grey accents, good. A good pair of shoes does not go unnoticed either, so you made a great choice by picking those dress shoes. Sleek but comfortable. A simple pair of charcoal corduroy should do. You look great! You look like a man ready to look Death in the eyes and ask for a fucking cup of black coffee.

You need to get in one more dream before your test. Yes, you’ve had extensive time with Suicide33, and she has taught you fairly well. The real lessons you should be taking into account is that of your death sibling Starvation41. It sure is a shame he was starved to death, he was as incredibly funny. He is much

funnier than you are, the man dreamed of a tamed lion he kept in his backyard to scare off the ravens that keep stealing his dinner. Of course, he did everything wrong, and instead of feeding him the prescribed "lion food", he thought it would be funny to give the beast extreme doses of homemade tranquilizer. In no world would that be a rational idea, but who cares? He took a rather sad story of his own starvation, and turned into an idiotic, cartoon-like story. He's dead but he's having fun! You can not be put off by being dead, just have fun with it. Now let's go, get to your dreaming!

You have had your final dream, which is good. Rumor has it you dreamt up something hilarious, and you should absolutely pull out all the stops during your plea to Death. No matter what you do, please do not swear. Impure minds do not impress Death in the slightest, and unless you can make Him fall in love with you, which again you can not, you will be drinking tea with every other failure. Before you get in "final line", you notice Stroke63 running over her pre recorded verses, and trying, as she put it "sexy up". How foolish of this woman, continually being told not to try to seduce Him, but pushing that she would succeed anyhow.

"Listen honey, I had a stroke at 63. I was found dead surrounded by three naked men and 35,000 dollars on the bed. No one can mow them down like Janet." She was interrupted again by the sharp pain in her wrist.

As you inch forward in line, you can't help but wonder what all these people are doing to appease Death. "Surely one of these sad saps came up with something He will enjoy," You think to yourself. You are wrong. Of the 27 people who have appeared in front of Death from your line, 27 have gotten a cup of steaming tea. Even Starvation41 got a cup of tea. His plain black tea came after he tried to impersonate life, Death's impish cousin. It was hilarious, the "head trainers'" sides ached with laughter, but Death did not once change his stoic expression during the performance. He was sent to the left, and given the piping cup of tea.

An "hour" has passed and it is finally your time to beg death to move on to the next stage. If you make it to "sterile testing", you may go through hell or you may not. That is for circulators to know. That is for you to know. It is your time now, make death laugh and you will enjoy the hot brew that is waiting to the right of Him. You still have absolutely no reason to be in that category, amongst King and Gandhi. You will most likely fail, you have not changed much. Sure, you had a few good dreams, but nothing out of the ordinary. So step up and get ready for your-- Oh my god you haven't. Have you forgotten

everything you have learned? You imbecile! Where are your fucking dress shoes? Why are you wearing cargo shorts? Is that a beer in your hand? Put your goddamn cigarette out! You are doing everything wrong, everything. What are you going to ask Death? How can you look him in the eye in your state?

“I am here because I have to be, not because I want to be. I am Overdose21, this is who I am, do with me what you will.”

You fool! You just gave Death permission to serve you tea! You asked him to pour it down your throat for you. You have learned nothing! Why must these trainers put in such copious amounts of work, only to see hard skulled morons like you utterly fail. How selfish of you to take advantage of your trainer's death, she should be in your position asking for “recirculation”. You have done nothing to deserve even a shred of consideration for another life. Step forward and receive your punishment, you ignorant fool.

As you inch towards Death, you are confident with your tiny strides. At least you have some meaningless credence in yourself before you plunge into infinite nothingness. You hear a whisper from Death, reach up for your cup, and catch the faint odor of Sumatran beans through your nose. Head to the right side, you lucky fucking punk.