

Eric Hunter

about 2,000 words

hello@ericmhunter.net

Ericmhunter.net

Death Drives a White Ford Pinto

By Eric M. Hunter

Jerry's throat was dry enough to wake him up in the middle of the night. It was so bad in fact that it forced him to swing his legs over the side, stand, and make his way into the kitchen to pour a glass of water. He grabbed the glass he had used last night from the sink, turned on the facet, and filled it up to the brim. He took a deep breath and tipped the glass to his lips. When he finished, he wiped his mouth with the sleeve of his tee-shirt and filled the glass up again. The second glass

went down just as smoothly, but he was still thirsty; his throat still dry.

He turned on the facet for the third time but shut it off quickly when he heard something coming from the dining room. After he was satisfied that it must have just been his imagination, he went back to filling up his glass.

Right before the water slipped over the glass's edge, he turned off the faucet. The noise came again. Sounded like a low short hum that came from the dining room.

Jerry's house was on the smaller side and there was only a skinny wall separating the two rooms. The light that hung over the sink wasn't strong enough to pour into the dining room so he occasionally had mental bouts with shadows he thought was there that wasn't. But this time, something *felt* different.

He put the glass to his lips once more, took a small sip, and then slowly peered over the wall's edge and into the dining room. His head poked out ever so slightly like he was staring in a Three Stooges movie.

At the end of the dining room table sat a man, leaning back in his chair, legs crossed, face illuminated by the cell phone he thumbed at in his hand. His face grinned as he scrolled through whatever memes that were making him laugh.

Jerry stood in full view, his mind trying to place the face of the stranger. He took a loud sip of his water which brought his guest's attention to him.

"Oh, you're awake. Good. I wasn't sure how long I'd be sitting here." He put the phone down and adjusted in his seat to appear more professional. Jerry's guest wore straight jeans and a flat teeshirt. His face seemed to shift and move to the point that Jerry had a hard time getting a good memory of what it looked like. Jerry had a fair amount of alcohol the night before. That could have been it.

"What... what are you doing?" Jerry asked taking another sip of his water. He was surprised at how steady his voice was. Had to be the water, he thought. It was pretty good for being just basic tap water.

"Oh, sorry. I was just farting around on Facebook. This is yours, by the way," he picked the phone up and flipped it to Jerry who didn't even attempt to grab it from the air and let it come tumbling to the floor. "Ah, I didn't know if I had to come in there and get you or--" the stranger stopped and peered really hard at Jerry. Jerry's muscles turned to stone, the stranger's gaze pierced right down into him. His body felt cold all over.

"What?" Jerry asked. He forced himself to take a sip of his water, his body coming back under his control.

The stranger jumped out of his seat. He leaned in really close to Jerry then pulled back again. He stomped his foot, spun on his heel once around, and balled his fists to his waist.

"Son of a bitch. Jerry?" he asked. The only part of Jerry's body that responded to the question was a slight shrug of his shoulders. The stranger laughed sharply. "Damn it. I knew it! I fucking knew it! I knew it was too good to be true. Jerry? Jerry Seinfeld." Again, Jerry just shrugged his shoulders.

"Ah... yeah?" he responded. The stranger scuffed.

"Not like Jerry Seinfeld, Jerry Seinfeld. Shit. I knew it was too good to be true. I mean, I thought for a second like 'Oh damn, I got tagged for *the* Jerry Seinfeld. Fucking the king of situational comedy!' But yeah, no."

"Yeah, sorry. I'm just a computer programmer," Jerry admitted. He went for another drink of water but found that the glass was empty.

"Damn, well, whatever I guess." Jerry shook his head slightly and extended a pointed finger.

"Wait, I'm sorry, what are you doing in my house?"

"Oh, yeah, my bad. I'm here for you," the stranger said. Jerry's mind went blank. He turned and looked at the digital clock on the oven: 3:23 a.m. He knew that one was right. The other clocks in the house, maybe not, but this one was always right.

"Me?" he said weakly. The stranger nodded.

In an instance, Jerry was standing in the doorframe looking into his bedroom. An unknown force moved his right arm and flicked on the room's light. In his bed laid Jerry, quiet, arms crossed over his chest, a faint smile on his face. Jerry thought he looked peaceful while he slept. That was nice.

"Wait, but I'm--" Jerry looked down at his body. He was wearing the same clothes he had on for work. He was sure that he had taken them off when he got home. Tee shirts and sweats were the name of the game when work was over.

"Yeah, dude. You're dead. Brain aneurysm: the silent killer. They say that's one of the best ways to go. You fall asleep, slip into a dream, and then you never wake up from the dream," the stranger said, who had pivoted to peer into the room with Jerry, his head crowding Jerry's shoulder. Jerry suddenly couldn't breathe. He couldn't think. Then he laughed quietly. This is a dream, he thought. A weird one. One probably put on by

those three chili dogs he ate the night before. He knew he shouldn't have, but you always get a discount when you buy three so he thought the math worked out.

"Yeah, dude, it wasn't the chili dog. You are legitly dead. D-E-A-D. Dead. I don't know any other way to explain it," the stranger said frankly as he turned to walk down the hallway. Jerry turned his head and watched him.

"Well, then who the hell are you suppose to be?" Jerry called after him. The stranger stopped, turned, and shot out his hands like he was up on a stage.

"Can't you tell?" He extended his pointer finger to the ceiling. "Well how about this?" Jerry's vision became blurry and dark at that moment and when it finally cleared he saw a whirlwind of black cloth whipping at each corner of the ceiling and floor. A chill ran up Jerry's spine and his arms and legs hung heavy like cement. The black cloth turned and twisted into robes wrapped around a pale skeletal body. In the clutches of bony fingers held a scythe three times too big to fit in this tiny hallway. A low growl rumbled from the depths of the floorboards and crept up each inch of Jerry's skin. He finally found the strength to put his hands in front of his face to block whatever was about to take him away.

The scene was broken by the sharp laughter from the stranger. Jerry slowly opened his eyes through his fingertips.

"Sorry, sorry. I've always wanted to do that. I'm Death, dude. I'm here to take you to the other side." Death outstretched a hand waiting for Jerry to take it. Jerry took one last drink from his empty cup. He turned to see his body lying peacefully in his bed. That was it. He reached out his empty hand for Death's.

They were standing in the driveway outside of Jerry's house.

"Why isn't your car in your driveway?" Death asked. He pointed to Jerry's car that was parked along the side of the road across from them.

"Oh, that. That's because my neighbor Laura asked to park here so no one scratches her Lexus because her boyfriend's car and his friend's car can't all fit in her driveway," Jerry explained and then realized what a stupid thing that was to do. His face felt physical pain.

"Yeah, well, that's dumb. Is she at least hot?" Death asked. Jerry nodded. "Well, I can't blame you then. Unless this ends up being a thing then--"

"No, no. It was just with her," Jerry lied quickly running over all the times that he'd gone above and beyond for people that didn't deserve it in his mind then stopped because he realized that Death could read his thoughts like before. He turned towards him uneasy. Death just nodded and snapped his fingers.

A bright shot of light came from up the hill in the form of two headlights and a car came screeching down towards them. It reminded Jerry of when the DeLorean came from the past in Back to the Future. Except it wasn't a DeLorean. It was something a lot worse.

"Here we go," Death said spreading his arms and walking confidently towards the car.

"Jesus, what the hell is this?" Jerry asked. He didn't know much about cars, but he knew that they weren't supposed to be completely rusted out from the bottom up or have a busted back windshield. Death turned back looking offended.

"I'll have you know that this is a 1977 Ford Pinto: grey interior, original hub caps, with a jet white paint job. Only 102,000 miles. Absolute classic." Jerry walked up to stand shoulder to shoulder with Death in front of the car. They both looked at the car in silence.

"They just gave you whatever they had lying around, didn't they?" Jerry asked.

"Pretty much," Death said shortly. "Hop in." Death opened the driverside door and did a small jump sliding into the car in one smooth motion. Jerry, on the other hand, slowly moved around the front of the car realizing that the car came here on its own with no one behind the wheel. The car lunged a little bit as if trying to nip at Jerry's leg forcing Jerry to run around to the passenger side and fumbling his way with the doorknob.

When he sat down, he instinctively went for the seat belt but found it was missing. He looked over at Death curiously.

"Ready?" Death asked.

"Do I need to bring anything?" Jerry asked.

"I don't think so. I'll tell you what, it's a bit of a drive, so if you do need something, we'll just pick it up on the way." Death said. Jerry took another minute trying to figure out Death's face.

"Why can't I see you?"

"Oh, that. Sorry. I look pretty much however you want me to. It's supposed to help. Like a coping mechanism or something." Jerry tried his best to look through the fog that surrounded Death's face and then a strange thought crept up from

the back of his mind: his old buddy Kevin from high school. He hadn't seen him since they graduated. Since before Jerry went off to college at Texas Tech, he and Kevin were inseparable.

The fog that swirled around Death's face moved and shifted and behind it was the face that Jerry was just thinking about: it was Kevin. Death smiled and then took a look in the rearview mirror.

"Damn, Kevin ain't a bad looking dude. Thanks man." Death smiled rubbing his hand on his cleanly shaved chin. He put his foot down to the floor, shifted the gear into drive, and hit the gas. The Pinto pulled, shuddered, and then came to a stall coasting them further down the hill.

"No, no, no, shit, shit, shit," Death cried into the steering wheel. They came to an abrupt stop.

"Everything alright?" Jerry asked.

"Oh, yeah, yeah. This happens every once in a while. Hold on. I'll get her." Death pumped the break and twisted the key on the column. The car turned and turned and finally roared to life. Death squealed, shifted into drive again, and floored it up the hill leaving Jerry's house behind them.