

**Death of a Goose Management Coordinator**

**A One Act Play  
By Camille Atebe**

*Lights come up on Greta seated at a desk with a laptop in front of her. A man enters with tangible uncertainty. He is Simon J. Grindle. He approaches the desk.*

Simon: Excuse me-

Greta: Sit down please. I'll pull up your file.

Simon: Excuse me? I'm just wondering-

Greta: Here we go. Simon J. Grindle, recently of #6-32345 Umbrage Way?

Simon: Yes. How did you-

Greta: Please. Sit down.

*He sits down across the desk from her.*

Greta: Name?

Simon: You know my name.

Greta: I need to hear it from you.

Simon: Simon J. Grindle.

Greta: And the J stands for?

Simon: Nothing. It's just J.

Greta: Correct.

Simon: Of course it's correct. It's my name.

Greta: Don't get snippy with me, Simon. Occupation?

Simon: I wasn't getting snippy- *(off her look)* Sorry.

Greta: Occupation?

Simon: Regional Goose Management Coordinator.

Greta: Are you making that up?

Simon: No.

Greta: After this interview is over I shall be asking you some very specific questions about why geese need a management coordinator. I wasn't aware that geese could reach management positions.

Simon: No, they aren't management, they're the ones being managed.

Greta: Ah. Of course. Seems obvious now.

Simon: What is this interview?

Greta: It's your post-mortality location designation interview. I'm Greta, I'll be your bureaucrat for today.

Simon: My what?

Greta: Your bureaucrat.

Simon: I heard that bit. It's the first part I wasn't clear on.

Greta: Your post-mortality location designation interview.

Simon: Meaning?

Greta: You're dead. This is the interview in which we decide how to process you, post mortem.

Simon: Ah.

Greta: You remember dying then?

Simon: Yes.

Greta: Cause of death?

Simon: Murder.

Greta: Murderer?

Simon: Yes.

Greta: That's not an answer. Who murdered you?

Simon: Oh. Um... I don't know.

Greta: What do you mean, you don't know?

Simon: What do you mean, what do I mean? It's perfectly possible that I wouldn't know. There are hundreds of unsolved homicides every year.

Greta: Even in the case of an unsolved homicide, there are at least two people who know who did it. The murderer, and the murderee.

Simon: You mean victim.

Greta: Perhaps you could think back and remember anyone in your life who especially disliked being corrected.

Simon: I'm sorry. And you're right, the victim often knows who killed them. But I'm sure a significant number don't know.

Greta: Were you poisoned with a slow acting poison?

Simon: No.

Greta: Stabbed in the back in a dark alley by a stranger?

Simon: No.

Greta: Shot in a drive-by shooting?

Simon: No.

Greta: Then what's your excuse for your ignorance?

Simon: Is there anyone else who can interview me?

Greta: No. Just me.

Simon: Don't you have a supervisor?

Greta: Never mind my supervisor.

Simon: I just think I'd be more comfortable with a different interviewer.

Greta: I told you, there's no one else. So back to the question; why can you not identify your killer?

Simon: Why do you have to know? I'm dead, aren't I? I've been murdered, cut down in my prime.

Greta: Listen, I need to fill out all the forms, okay? So just answer the damn question.

Simon: I don't know who killed me, okay?

Greta: Then we'll have to find out. How did you die?

Simon: I'm not sure.

Greta: Oh, come on! You're dead! You don't need to shield yourself from trauma. Just think hard and tell me how you died.

Simon: I'm serious. I don't know.

Greta: *(Rising from her chair and going to him, she starts examining him roughly)* Fine. Let's find out, shall we? Okay, not shot in the head, or stabbed anywhere in the torso. No holes in any major arteries, doesn't look like you've taken a beating...

Simon: Hey!

Greta: If you won't tell me, I'll have to figure it out for myself. Stop squirming. It wasn't poison, or a drug overdose. No blunt force trauma, no strangulation...

Simon: Something was shoved up my nose.

Greta: Sorry. Fingers slipped.

Simon: No, to kill me. Something was shoved up my nose into my brain.

Greta: *(Tilts his head back, looks up his nose)* Hah. So it was. Dental tool, by the look of it. Hurt much?

Simon: What do you think?

Greta: Some people are lucky and it's instantaneous.

Simon: This wasn't.

Greta: It's sticking out of your pre-frontal cortex. Want it removed?

Simon: Yes, but-

*She grabs his head and grappled with it for a moment. We hear his muffled curses.*

Greta: There you go. *(She brandishes a shiny, twisty tool)*

Simon: Augh! That was- that- that didn't hurt.

Greta: The dead don't feel pain. *(She tosses the tool on the desk and sits.)* So. Back to the interview. Cause of death; let's call it brain trauma. Causer of death; do you know any dentists? Dental hygenists?

Simon: I don't... it can't have been my dentist.

Greta: You are, once again, being unhelpful.

Simon: I'm sorry, I don't know who killed me.

Greta: Then you are impossibly stupid. How could you have failed to notice who was shoving a plaque removal tool into your brain?

Simon: Have you ever had it happen to you?

Greta: No. I have reasonable upper body strength. I would have fought the dentist off.

Simon: Okay, that's it. I want to speak to your supervisor.

Greta: You can't.

Simon: I'm not answering any more questions until I get to speak to your supervisor.

Greta: You're hardly answering any questions now.

Simon: Get your supervisor.

Greta: No.

Simon: Greta, get your supervisor.

Greta: Simon, I will not. Now let's get on with it, shall we?

Simon: No. I want to speak to your supervisor.

Greta: Fine. Wait here.

*Greta slams her laptop shut and stomps out. Simon puts his head in his hands and sighs. He lifts his head, stands, and starts to pace.*

Simon: Why don't I know who killed me? Maybe that thing destroyed the memory centres in my brain. But who hated me that much? Estelle? No. She hates me, but not like that. George? George might want me dead... but with a sharp implement to the brain? He hasn't got the manual dexterity for that. He'd have blown me away with his shotgun. Why can't I remember? *(He flops into the seat)* I wonder if anyone has found me yet. It'll probably be someone walking their dog. *(Pause)* It'll be a small funeral. Mum might be there. Dad won't. It would interfere with golf season, and he hates to let anyone see him cry. Maybe some colleagues. Maybe my friends. Probably my friends. *(Pause)* I never got to go to Tierra del Fuego like I'd always hoped to. Should have just gone after high school, the degree could have waited. *(Pause)* Maybe there are penguins in the afterlife. Still, it won't be the same. I wonder if there's any food here. I'm a little hungry. Maybe that pick damaged my hunger centers. I just ate a huge dinner.

*Greta re-enters, dressed as someone else. She affects a syrupy sweet tone, and does a fairly good job of being someone else. At first, anyway.*

Greta: Hello. Mr. Grindle? How are you? Greta tells me you're unhappy.

Simon: Yes. Are you her supervisor?

Greta: Yes. I'm the supervisor.

Simon: Hello. Yes. She was very rude.

Greta: Is that right? How odd. Greta is usually such a paragon of bureaucratic efficiency and impartiality. Must be having a bad day.

Simon: Well, so am I. And I'd prefer to be interviewed by someone else, if that's possible.

Greta: Oh no. Not possible at all, I'm afraid. If we gave new interviewers to every picky Pete who sidled through our doors we'd never get any work done.

Simon: I'm not being picky. Your interviewer was being very inappropriate and rude.

Greta: To bad for you, sonny boy. You'll just have to get used to her unique and endearing interview style.

Simon: Unique and endearing? Are you kidding me?

Greta: No. She's lovely.

Simon: Are you- *(He grabs the wig off of her head)* You're Greta!

Greta: Dammit.

Simon: Wow. You're impersonating your own supervisor. That's low.

Greta: No, that's ingenious.

Simon: No, that's stupid- look, just get your supervisor, okay?

Greta: No. I think you should give me a chance.

Simon: I gave you a chance. You blew it. Get your supervisor.

Greta: But-

Simon: I'm not dealing with you! Someone just stuck a dental tool into my pre-frontal cortex. I think I deserve to be processed in a friendly and un-insulting manner.

*There is silence. Greta sulks. Simon, now possessed of the upper hand, crosses his arms and glares at her. Finally she speaks.*

Greta: I can't get my supervisor.

Simon: Why not?

Greta: I haven't got one.

Simon: What do you mean?

Greta: It's just me.

Simon: Just you?

Greta: I'm not even sure where we are. I just arrived here, and there was a desk, and a computer, and I thought, oh good, I get to be a bureaucrat in the afterlife, too. This must be heaven. But I've had no directives from above. I've just been processing whoever walks through. I'm not even sure if I'm supposed to be doing that. I've had to manufacture all sorts of red tape all by myself. It's very lonely, and frustrating.

Simon: So I really didn't need to have been talking to you.

Greta: I like to think that you need to.

Simon: This is ridiculous.

*He flops into his seat. She sits, tentatively.*

Greta: So, can we continue?

Simon: No!

Greta: But-

Simon: No!

Greta: You can ask me questions.

Simon: I don't want to ask you questions.

Greta: If you let me finish processing you I'll show you around.

Simon: Show me around? Around where? Is there anything here?

Greta: No.

Simon: Where is everyone else? All the people that you process?

Greta: I don't know. They just seem to disappear. But only after I've processed them.

Simon: *(Deflating)* All right. Fine. Process me.

Greta: *(perking right up)* Excellent. *(Opens the laptop)* Where were we? Ah, yes. Murderer. Let's put person or persons unknown, shall we?

Simon: Thank you.

Greta: Marital status?

Simon: Single.

Greta: Really? You?

Simon: Are you flirting with me?

Greta: No. Sorry. Favourite cheese?

Simon: Favourite cheese?

Greta: I told you, I had to come up with this on my own.

Simon: Cheddar, I guess.

Greta: How many siblings?

Simon: I'm an only child.

Greta: Mother's maiden name?

Simon: Knash. Spelled with a K.



Greta: Is that Welsh?

Simon: I don't know.

Greta: Did you own or rent your home?

Simon: Rented.

Greta: The landlord's going to have trouble re-renting that place after they find your body.

Simon: I didn't die at home.

Greta: No? Statistically you should have.

Simon: Really?

Greta: I would assume so. But I'm not a statistician.

Simon: Did you die at home?

Greta: *(pause)* No. What was your father's occupation?

Simon: He was a dentist. *(Off her look)* He didn't kill me. He's been retired since I was five and living in Florida since I was eight.

Greta: How long were you in your current occupation?

Simon: Well, I started out four years ago as a municipal goose manager, then when my boss died I moved up to district goose manager, then Terry died and I became regional goose manager, then Regional Goose Management Coordinator, which I've been doing for two years now.

Greta: I'll put four years in goose management. And how did you achieve the exalted position of Regional... thingy?

Simon: Well, the old coordinator died.

Greta: Hmm.

Simon: Hmm?

Greta: Were they all old, these goose managers who came before you?

Simon: No.

Greta: And yet they all died. Then, after you took their jobs, you died.

Simon: That's true.

Greta: *(Leaping to her feet with excitement)* The game's afoot!

Simon: What?

Greta: Forget the forms- oh my goodness, I never thought I'd hear myself say that- there's a mystery to be solved!

Simon: Of how all the goose managers died?

Greta: Yes!

Simon: Sorry to burst your bubble, but I was the only one murdered.

Greta: Really?

Simon: The first woman I replaced was killed in a car accident. She drove off the road. Police said she must have swerved to avoid an animal. Terry, who was a pretty good friend of mine, drowned in Pincher Lake during the polar bear swim. Got tangled in some weeds, they said.

Greta: And the last one?

Simon: Suicide. Went out to the park and shot himself in the head.

Greta: That's sad.

Simon: Yes.

Greta: And highly suspect.

Simon: You think so?

Greta: Yes. How would you like to find out who killed you?

Simon: I guess I'd like to know.

Greta: Excellent. Let's do some sleuthing.

Simon: Why can't we finish filling out the forms first?

Greta: Listen Simon, in my millennia here in this limbo, processing people who go on to god knows where, I have had a lot of time to think about my own life. I, too, was murdered.

Simon: Stabbed by an enraged citizen you'd hamstringed with red tape?

Greta: Shot, actually. How did you know?

Simon: Lucky guess.

Greta: I wasn't the most accommodating person, I suppose. I may have frustrated a number of people.

Simon: And it only took you a couple of millennia to figure that out?

Greta: (*ignoring him*) So I think this is my punishment, to sit here for eternity, processing people without proper process, seeing them disappear and

go off to their final resting place regardless of what questions I ask or what outcomes I suggest.

Simon: Your point?

Greta: I think, no, I hope, that I might be able to earn my way out of this limbo by actually helping someone. And you might be that person. If I can solve this mystery for you, I might be allowed to move on, or move up, or get some sort of clarification about my function.

Simon: Okay. But you have to promise to finish processing me. You can't keep me here forever.

Greta: You'll move on, regardless. People always disappear after about an hour.

Simon: So I didn't have to answer any of your questions?! You-

Greta: Don't get mad, please. It's nicer to talk than to sit staring at someone for an hour.

Simon: I don't think I believe a word you say anymore.

Greta: Please, let me help you solve your murder.

*He stares at her for a minute, she adopts a pleading face. Finally he relents.*

Simon: All right. Let's solve my murder.

Greta: All right! So-

Simon: First you have to take off that stupid disguise.

Greta: Right.

*She takes off the glasses, wipes away the lipstick, kicks off the high shoes, removes the big rings and necklace, takes off the suit jacket and starts unbuttoning her blouse. She has nothing underneath, and Simon quickly stops her.*

Simon: Okay, that's fine. That's... just fine.

Greta: Okay. So. First things first. Enemies.

Simon: My enemies?

Greta: Yes. Names, reasons for hating you, possible alibis.

Simon: Okay. Um... Estelle. Estelle hated me.

Greta: And she was...?

Simon: My ex-girlfriend. She was...

Greta: She was...?

Simon: She was angry because I dumped her.

Greta: Was she unbalanced? Most people don't get homicidal over being dumped.

Simon: I don't think she was homicidal.

Greta: What happened? How did you dump her?

Simon: Well, we were on the same egg-addling crew, and I found out that she was breaking the eggs, rather than humanely addling them..

Greta: You've lost me.

Simon: It's part of goose management. We find nests, and shake the eggs to addle them, so that they don't hatch. Sometimes we oil them, but I always prefer shaking.

Greta: So you dumped her for breaking goose eggs?

Simon: If you break them, the geese just lay more eggs. Then we have to come out and addle again. It's a lot of work... and I'd just been bitten by an angry mother goose... that wasn't the only reason I dumped her. We'd been having problems and that was the final straw. So she was angry. But I don't think she'd kill me over it.

Greta: She must have thought you loved your job more than her.

Simon: No, I didn't. I mean, I took my job seriously, but I didn't love it more than her.

Greta: Hmm. Still, it's never a good idea to date someone you work with. It must have been hard for her, seeing you every day, having her emotional wounds rubbed raw on a daily basis...

Simon: We didn't work together. I didn't see her much at all after we broke up.

Greta: If you didn't work together, why were you coddling eggs with her?

Simon: Addling. We have teams of volunteers from the community who help us. We thought it would be nice to do something outdoors together.

Greta: Perhaps that was the problem. Your idea of a romantic date was committing serial goose infanticide together.

Simon: It was her idea to come along.

Greta: You're probably better off without her.

Simon: I am.

Greta: Who else might have hated you?

Simon: George. He was the building superintendent where I lived.