

Death's Call Centre

Part 2

© Copyright Jackie Coupe 2006

All rights reserved. This book, or parts thereof, may not be re-produced in any form without permission.

Ok. As it gets nearer Christmas we see a massive intake. There's a big push on getting it **'right first time'** and making sure that **'first contact counts'**.

To be honest there are so many slogans and pieces of jargon I've mostly forgotten.

Service, service, service.

Get them bagged and tagged.

Christmas scenarios. I've got some crackers to tell you but we'll start with the obvious, turkey fatalities.

Last Christmas we got a call from Scotland, a turkey farm, owner and livestock to be picked up *STAT!* For a farmer and a head of 200 turkeys we had to put our 'Reaper Requisition' form into the big guy. That was a whole ten seconds, the 'Reaper Requisition' is like an amnesty if you will, it basically tells God that we have a big job on so we need him to abstain from taking anyone for up to 60 seconds. We have a crack team for these sorts of jobs. Not all Reapers can wrastle a turkey, feckless creatures that they are, they don't ever come quietly and more than one Reaper has had a case of castration at the hands of an angry Christmas dinner. Yes. Reapers have genitalia, how else so we think we do the necessities.

Anyway. The form comes back approved and all hell breaks loose, but its *organised* hell. The crack team of Reapers are put together, they get beeped, faxed and texted, in a further 12 seconds we had the whole compliment of 13, yeah, unlucky for some I know, and up they went to the farm that was burning merry clip. You can already see that this process has taken 22 seconds, remember the 60 second deadline.

You have 13 Reapers, 200 turkeys and one farmer and they have all got to be in arrivals within the next 38 seconds. So you know what they have, apart from the scythe, they have shotguns! The best way to take out a shitload of turkeys is to blast the bastards! It takes a steady hand and keen eye. *Pow, pow, pow, git along little doggies!*

It's symbolic of course. But something of the Reaper must touch the soul to be sent so the shotgun shells are 'Reaper' manufactured.

With five seconds to spare they haven't found the farmer of all things. All the birds are in arrivals, clucking and nibbling at Reaper shins as they please. *Feckless.*

We get a call from their team leader, *"Reaper to base, Reaper to base, we got us a situ here, please give co-ordinates on Farmer...out"* On our main floor of the centre we have a global screen that shows the exact location of each and every person, living and dead. Living green, red dead...easy eh? Pssst, we *know* where Jimmy Hoffa is buried and we have a pool going that they won't find him till 2027. We have us a good laugh over that one, when they *do* find him they're gonna kick themselves, talk about being under their noses.

Anyway, yeah, the farmer. The Reaper team leader gets the co-ordinates to his Blackberry and as luck would have it, it shows he's in the burning barn on the ground level mere yards from them. He gives the order to spread out and they are now working their way down the barn at a distance of three feet from each other. One of the line raises an arm and they look to where he's stood. The farmer's corpse is there. But the farmer himself has already gone. This is a failed collection. The sad fact is that the farmer has become a displaced spirit,

demon, angel or become part of something much worse, an elemental.

The Reaper Team Leader calls it in as he's obligated to do and he knows he's going to feel that on his next appraisal. I know the guy, very good and usually very thorough, but the 60 seconds were up and after 60 seconds all bets are off.

Turkeys. Yeah, it's THAT bad.

Smaller Christmas incidents involve snow of course. We had one last year where a couple were in their car, being amorous next to a huge snow bank. They were pulled over and it was a quiet road. Such is life and the mood took them half way to being home. If I were alive I'd have probably done the same thing. They'd stopped in a drift zone. Twenty feet further and they would have seen a sign, said 'Warning, Avalanches Anytime' But like I said, I'd have probably done the same. So they're pulled over, they've got the heater running and are going at it like you wouldn't believe. Poor sods. It might or might not have been the heat from the car or the vibrations of the motor but a drift tumbled down over the car. The drift had chunks of ice in it and that is pretty much 'good night Vienna', no chance of getting out through one of those. They're half naked and suspended in darkness. I guess that for a few moments they carry on doing what comes natural, then the car exhaust clogs with snow and fumes pour into the car. '666' on both their mobiles and they both answer, God love 'em! The Reaper on the scene picking them up said how he'd felt sorry for them, they were young and virile, and being dead an' all couldn't very rightly put their pants back on! Into the arrival lounge they went with their butts hanging out. We got them some gowns to put on so they could be processed with a little dignity.

More coffee? Good, good. I know its bitter, but not half as bitter as a guy who's had his dick stuck in his zipper for 53 seconds haemorrhaging blood because we got a call jam! I know, I know, but the old jokes are the best.

Christmas, Christmas, Christmas. Sheesh.

We get a lot of Santa's. You bet! Guys who have fallen off the top of houses is our biggest draw. Then we get guys who have been riding down the street in sleighs, real reindeer pulling them along, sometimes the reindeer get spooked by a car or something, the poor 'Santa' can end up in a ditch or under the wheels of a snowplough. We always, ALWAYS get at least a dozen calls about Santa's stuck in chimney breasts, and at least two of those will be burnt Santa's because it was a real working fireplace and they neglected to make sure and put it out before the festivities began.

We get Santa's who have been on a bad drunks, alcohol poisoning, car wrecks, suicides, Santa's with bags over their heads. Not too jolly I know but it's the God's truth. We had one Santa last year who had taken the extreme measure of getting himself harnessed to a helicopter so his little girl could see 'Santa' land on the roof. One low power line later and all that kid saw was a charcoal lump with a red hat, she never knew it was her daddy, but what she did know is that Santa was quite dead, guess she must have found that worse in a way.

Elves. We get elves up the wazoo at Christmas. Too many to mention but there was a whole busload of them come in at once, that was another Reaper SOS I'll tell you, pissed 'Elf' at the wheel of the coach, they were driving across three lanes of the motorway and he blindsided a bridge abutment. Elves everywhere! On the bridge, across the embankment, little green booties and pointed plastic ears for about 50 feet. The guy who was driving was very shamefaced when they got here, he was so drunk that when we called he answered, then asked if he could order a cheese and tomato extra crispy 12 inch and a bottle of Coke!

I see by the look on your face you never imagined any of this did you? That Reapers are people too. It's alright, you can admit it. Its only when you hear how we work and the pressures we're under that you can begin to appreciate the scale and problems involved with the soul collection business.

I won't hold it against you. Finished your coffee? I know. Bitter.

When you're ready I'm going to take you to the main floor. You'll get to see the whole call centre and the operators who help us do our jobs.

You haven't seen anything like it, I'll bet your life on it!

Merry Christmas and a Happy New year to all my evil friends and fans!

www.jackiecoupe.com