

DOOMSDAY

by Ken Bradbury



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(An acting exercise)

TAYLOR: *(hurrying in)* Oh, great. There goes the downtown bus. If I'm late to work one more day they'll fire me. *(pulling a bus schedule from his pocket and reading)* "Morning buses leave every ten minutes." *(looking at an imaginary watch)* I don't have ten minutes.

RILEY: *(suddenly appearing and screaming)* Repent!

TAYLOR: *(jumping away)* Ahh!

RILEY: Repent!

TAYLOR: Get away from me!

RILEY: The end of the world is near!

TAYLOR: *(looking around)* A cop. I gotta find a cop.

RILEY: *(puts hands on Taylor's shoulders from behind. Taylor freezes)* The end of the world.

TAYLOR: *(motionless and terrified)* You've got your hands on me. I can feel them. You've got your hands on me.

RILEY: The end of the world is near.

TAYLOR: That's fine but just take your hands off me.

RILEY: *(takes hands off ... Taylor relaxes a bit, then Riley screams)* Destruction!

TAYLOR: *(screams in fright)*

RILEY: Devastation! Ruin! The end of all things as we know it!

TAYLOR: *(still frightened, manages to produce a weak smile, a small laugh, then as he moves away)* ... uh ... Have a nice day.

RILEY: Don't take another step! *(Taylor freezes)* Carest thou not that you are about to witness the end to all living things?

TAYLOR: Are you going to hurt me? If you're going to hurt me, I have to warn you, I'm a bleeder. You'll get all messy.

RILEY: Woe until thee oh thou who heedest not this warning!
See-est thou not the destruction that is rushing toward us?

TAYLOR: (*turns around*) Where? The bus? The next bus is coming? I can't miss that bus. I'm already ten minutes late for work.

RILEY: Work? Oh the futility of common labor! The wastefulness of toil when the end of the world is upon us! Why workest thou, humble man/woman?

TAYLOR: I need a job. Look, if you lose me this job, you've had it. I don't care if you're bonkers, it's gonna be your fault.

RILEY: (*turning away, nearly in tears*) Sad! Sad! Oh how sad!

TAYLOR: It's not sad! It's a good job! I mean, it's not a big job but it gets me by, okay?

RILEY: Futility!

TAYLOR: Stuffing envelopes is very important!

RILEY: Sad! Sad! Oh how sad!

TAYLOR: How do you think that junk mail gets to people? Somebody's gotta stuff those envelopes. Look fella/lady, do I go around criticizing your job? Do I moan and wail and shout, "Oh how sad to go around saying 'Oh how sad!'"?

RILEY: (*dropping his spooky persona*) Do you always react like this?

TAYLOR: Like what?

RILEY: Do you always start spurring out the intimate details of your life every time you meet someone new?

TAYLOR: I haven't met you! I don't want to meet you! You sneak up on me and start shouting things ... I'm ... I'm just defending myself!

RILEY: By telling me you stuff envelopes? You call that defending yourself?

TAYLOR: I am proud of being a stuffer! (*a long pause as Riley first looks at Taylor, tries to stifle a laugh then is overcome with the ridiculousness of it and explodes in laughter.*) What's the matter? What're you laughing at?

RILEY: I'm sorry. I've never met a stuffer before. Did you train for this job or were you just born with the gift?

TAYLOR: You're making fun of me.

RILEY: Yes. Yes, I am. I'm laughing at the folly of anyone who would toil away at their meaningless job when the world is about to coming crashing down on their head! Look up! Look up, my good man/woman! It is nearly upon you!

TAYLOR: (*looks up, looks up again, then moves a bit*) Would it be better if I stood over here?

RILEY: There's nowhere to escape the destruction!

TAYLOR: Look ... I mean, not that I care and I really do think you're nuts and I'll probably be sorry I even asked the question ... but ... just what the heck are you talking about?

RILEY: What am I talking about? What am I talking about? (*grabbing Taylor and pointing his head toward the street*) Look! Look at that car burning precious fossil fuels! (*pointing his head to the sky*) Look at the hole in that ozone layer! (*pointing his head another direction*) Look at those birds choking on the pesticides and herbicides and fungicides!

TAYLOR: The birds are sick?

RILEY: (*pointing his head down*) Look! Look at mother earth!

TAYLOR: (*waving to the ground*) Hi.

RILEY: Look how we have ravaged her beauty!

TAYLOR: (*to the ground*) Gee. Sorry, Mom.

RILEY: (*moving away from Taylor and gesturing wildly*) The sky, the earth, the sea, the trees, the birds, the breeze, the very air we breathe!

TAYLOR: Gosh. I never noticed.

RILEY: (*grabbing his chest and feigning an attack*) Oh! Oh! Oh! He/She never noticed! He/She never noticed! (*dropping to his knees*) The world is about to end and he/she never noticed.

TAYLOR: Hey, I'm sorry. I'll try to notice things, okay. Now I've gotta catch that next bus.



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