

THE WORST POSSIBLE TIME FOR WRITER'S BLOCK (excerpt)  
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CHARACTERS

PETER, a man of any age.

ELAINE, his sister, a few years younger.

MINION OF DEATH, any age.

*AT RISE, PETER is sitting at a desk just off C. There's a pad of paper in front of him and a small wastebasket to one side. He's nervously tapping a pen against the paper. UR of him stands the MINION OF DEATH, dressed all in black, neat but casual, and preferably with a black hood. Peter is obviously worried, and focused on the paper. After a few seconds the Minion starts distractedly whistling an upbeat tune. Peter reacts, turning to glare at the Minion, who doesn't stop.*

PETER That's not helping.

*The Minion stops whistling.*

MINION Sorry.

*He glances at his watch, then at Peter.*

PETER And stop doing that! It's not funny.

MINION Sorry.

PETER No you're not.

MINION Just doing my job.

PETER I know. I'm just trying to— (*He points to the paper.*)

MINION I know.

PETER I just...I want to leave something behind. One thing, you know? Just one thing! This would be a lot easier if you weren't hovering over me.

MINION I'm all the way over here.

PETER That doesn't matter! You're *here*.

*Minion shrugs. Offstage there's a knock at the door.*

PETER Oh please, no, not another distraction. (*calling off*) Come in, it's open!

*ELAINE enters. Peter rises as she does, and she immediately throws a tight bear hug on him.*

ELAINE Peter, I got your message. I came as soon as I could. Are you—

*Elaine sees the Minion.*

ELAINE Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know you had company.

PETER I don't. Not really. Elaine, this is the Minion of Death. Minion of Death, my sister Elaine. Please don't shake his hand.

MINION (*happily*) Hi.

ELAINE Minion of— Oh, Peter, no! Then it really is time?

PETER Looks that way. The doctors only gave me six months. And I'm going on almost eight. I'm not surprised.

ELAINE How long has he been here?

PETER A day or so.

MINION Regulations. There's a 36-hour watch, just to be sure. It avoids untimely deaths.

*Elaine hurries over to Minion.*

ELAINE Please don't take him. I'll...I'll do anything.

MINION Can't be helped.

ELAINE No, listen to me. Just tell me what I need to do to stop this.

MINION Hey, that's "bargaining," right? I recognize it from training. I'm not allowed to get involved in any of  
MINION (cont.)  
those "five stages" kinds of things. That's somebody else's area. I just do deliveries.

ELAINE But you can't just—

PETER Elaine, it's okay. (*He crosses to her, and walks her back L of the desk.*) I've accepted it. I'm ready to die. The only thing is...

ELAINE What?

*He crosses to the desk, getting angry.*

PETER This! My poetry. I just wanted to...to get something out, you know? One more thing. Something that matters. I wanted to write something, anything, to leave some kind of legacy behind. And I can't.

ELAINE Why?

PETER Writer's block. I know I need to write something before I go, but every time I try to put pen to paper, nothing comes out.

MINION Is there ink in the pen? Just a thought.

ELAINE You mean you don't have any ideas?

PETER No. I can't think of anything.

ELAINE (*desperately*) Then...then....*think harder!*

PETER It won't work, Elaine. Inspiration is a gift. You can't force the Muse to just drop in when you need her.

MINION There was a knock on the door last night, and we were both sort of hopeful, but it was just the guy from the deli bringing supper.