THE UNDERTAKER’S PRIZE VEGETABLES

Written by

Richard Neville

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richard@animl.co.uk
+44(0)7500082338
First competition (Plump and Tasty)

EXT. ENGLISH COUNTRY TOWN – MARKET SQUARE – DAY

An enormous parsnip dominates a display table.

The UNDERTAKER looks down upon it, a gaunt gangly lanky man in black, marvelling at this incredible vegetable.

His reverie is disturbed and he is pushed out the way by a gaggle of CHILDREN and VILLAGERS who want their turn.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
(always wise, fatigued, jaded in commentary)
When a man sees something that he wants, woe betide those who stand in his way.

Villagers bustle around – especially at the trestle tables marked:

“Vegetable Show”.

An A-frame sign beside a bench reads:

“This year’s theme: Plump and Tasty”.

A couple of ELDERLY CHAPS on the bench ogle a PAIR OF LADIES hurrying past.

INT. PUB – EVENING

While Villagers make merry noise and motion in the background, the Undertaker drinks at a table alone.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
No-one chooses to be an Undertaker. There is invariably another factor. Whether it’s the family tradition or the only vacancy, it is a role that other people choose for you.

The FARMER is surrounded by Villagers, drinking. A ruddy, hearty and sociable man, he holds court, telling tales.

- He spreads his arms with dramatic false modesty to indicate the size of his winning parsnip.
- He winks at his admirers, and thumbs his winner’s sash.
- He ensures his rosette is in clear view, and mock polishes it to the crowd’s delight.
- As if that weren’t enough, an impressive trophy stands on the bar directly behind him.

Alone and ignored, the Undertaker slams down his empty glass and leaves the pub.

On his way past the serving table, he palms an item of cutlery through practised sleight of hand.

EXT. VILLAGE STREET - NIGHT

The Undertaker stalks along dark Autumnal streets. Back to his bleak-looking shop:

“Frederick Paine, Funeral Directors”.

The door swings closed behind the Undertaker. A sign hangs upon it reading:

“R.I.P. - We are Closed”.

INT. UNDERTAKER’S WORKSHOP - CONTINUOUS

From pitch blackness, a reading lamp is switched on to reveal an odd sitting room.

The Undertaker sits pensive in a comfortable arm chair, beside a small table with the lamp, a book and a steaming cup of tea.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Lonely minds make strange pastimes...

He fumbles without looking for a teaspoon beside his cup. Stirs his tea, and flings the spoon casually off to the side.

The flung spoon lands with a pile of similar teaspoons on the floor, all to be tidied up some other time.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
... And strange choices, that more sociable company might warn against.

This relatively cosy nook is just a corner of a much larger open-plan workshop - a sprawling draughty space filled with coffins and wood saws and implements and a pile of discarded men’s and women’s clothing.

The Undertaker lifts the book from his chairside table and begins to read. The book is titled:
“Vegetables: Bigger, Better, Bolder. Your way to a winning crop.”

He is increasingly fascinated, devouring each word as his eyes race backwards and forwards across the page.

Finally he reaches an ecstatic epistemological climax... and slams the book shut with his two hands almost in prayer.

EXT. UNDERTAKER’S GARDEN - NIGHT

In thunderous rain, the Undertaker digs up his vegetable patch maniacally. Lightning flashes.

Second competition (Curious and Colourful)

EXT. VILLAGE STREET - MORNING

Sparrows twitter in hedgerows - and scatter as the long coat of our Undertaker swooshes purposefully past.

EXT. MARKET SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

A banner proclaims:

“Vegetable Show”.

An A-frame stand declares:

“This year’s theme: Curious And Colourful”

A gaggle of colourfully-dressed Children jostle on the adjoining bench.

In amongst the browsing Villagers, the Undertaker strides across the square to trestle tables displaying produce in open crates.

His eyes scan the contents of the crates, reading them like he reads his book.

He pulls open the breast of his long coat and reaches inside.

From an inside pocket, he lifts out a couple of root vegetables - earthy and perhaps a little unhealthy. They compare poorly.
NARRATOR (V.O.)
Sometimes our dreams can be found wanting.

The Undertaker sweeps away, disappointed.

In his wake, we see crates of extraordinarily beautiful and colourful root vegetables. The Farmer chuckles knowingly as he perfects the arrangement of his produce.

INT. UNDERTAKER’S WORKSHOP - DAY

The Undertaker seems angry and frustrated. He is working. He grabs a hammer and some aggressively long nails from the worktop.

From a side view, we see a problematic coffin, laid flat on the floor. It’s occupant is too large to fit comfortably, so the lid is a little raised.

The Undertaker seats himself astride, and aggressively bangs in the nails, squeezing the coffin shut tight.

EXT. CREMATORIUM - DAY

MOURNERS, including a bereaved WIDOW, file respectfully in to the crematorium.

A coffin is passed in - it’s lid is not properly nailed down. The Undertaker ushers people in, looking distracted.

EXT. OUTSIDE CREMATORIUM - UNDERTAKER’S CAR - DAY

The leggy Undertaker is crammed into his compact car, waiting for the ceremony to complete, reading his Vegetables book.

Nearby, smoke drifts from the high crematorium chimney.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
When you dream small, life will treat you small...

Eyes widen with interest and revelation at a chapter about:
“Fertiliser”.

EXT. UNDERTAKER’S WORKSHOP - DAY

Through a window, the Widow confers with the Undertaker in his workshop.
NARRATOR (V.O.)
... If you want life to treat you different, dream different.

She exits, brusquely ushered out, clutching an urn – clearly her loved one’s remains. She is aware the urn is oddly small.

The door closes behind her. The sign now reads:

“Welcome the living – We are Open”.

EXT. UNDERTAKER’S GARDEN – EVENING

The Undertaker spreads a large amount of fine grey ash on his vegetable plot.

Third competition (Bulgy and Beautiful)

EXT. VILLAGE STREET – DAY

A dog has left a turd on the pavement. The Undertaker’s wheelbarrow speeds towards it, with no attempt to avoid this obstacle.

The Undertaker is in excellent mood, bright-eyed and jiggling to the music in his mind. Transporting his as-yet-unseen entrant to this year’s Vegetable Show.

His barrow purrs across Autumn leaf mulch, and then rattles along cobbled stones on the market square. The difference in sound is emphasised, a la “The Shining”. This is an intent and purposeful journey.

EXT. MARKET SQUARE – CONTINUOUS

An A-frame sign proclaims:

“This year’s theme: Bulgy and Beautiful”.

On the adjoining bench, a cheerful larger gentleman sits.

The Undertaker’s wheelbarrow pushes past, containing an enormous onion, packed lovingly with protective straw: right on brief.

The barrow weaves between Villagers at rapid pace, towards the trestle tables of the show.
Suddenly it brakes and halts. Something is up.

The Undertaker’s face is a portrait of dismay.

On an especially reinforced trestle table, there is an absolutely gigantic onion, surrounded by smaller but still impressive supporting vegetables.

This champion onion dwarves the Undertaker’s effort.

Somewhere nearby, the nonchalant Farmer chuckles.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Failure can spur a person to new heights and achievements he could never before imagine...

The Undertaker performs an awkward three point turn with his wheelbarrow, and withdraws.

EXT. OLD PEOPLE’S HOME – DAY

NARRATOR (V.O.)
... Or failure can drag a person down to strange depths and unimaginable deeds.

The Undertaker extricates himself from the bushes by the window of an Old Person’s Residential Care Home. It is unclear what suspicious actions have been executed.

By the main entrance, he straightens his clothes and adjusts his hair to smarten himself up. He surreptitiously tucks a Scream mask into the waistband of his trousers.

As he enters the building, two ORDERLIES run past the reception desk – there must have been an emergency with some of the patients.

EXT. VILLAGE STREET – EVENING

Crammed into his compact car, the Undertaker eats a sandwich.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
It is possible to be too determined.

Suddenly activated, he throws the sandwich aside, twists the ignition key and jams the car into gear.

An ambulance zooms past.
The Undertaker pulls out from his parking place, in as hot pursuit as a cheap compact car will allow.

NARRATOR
It is not always a good thing to stop at nothing.

EXT. MARKET STREET - DAY

The Undertaker walks along with a notepad. He eyes one shop, and makes a mark in his book.

He looks to another shop, and makes another mark. He passes to the next, where a sign hangs in the window saying:

“Closed - due to bereavement”.

The Undertaker is walking along the deserted High Street and marking the shops that have suffered a bereavement. It seems to be most of them.

EXT. UNDERTAKER’S GARDEN - EVENING

Match cut the row of shops to a row of bags queued against a wall, marked:

“Fertiliser”.

The Undertaker is framed in a window, looking out at his garden, a strange smile upon his face.

Fourth competition (Hale and Hearty)

EXT. MARKET SQUARE - DAY

The Market Square is not looking good. The “Vegetable Show” banner flaps over a desolate scene. Leaves whirl about. Children are called in by anxious Mothers.

An A-frame sign says:

“This year’s theme: Hale and Hearty”.

A gust of wind catches it and it rattles the chain that holds it to an empty bench.
At the trestle tables, though, the Undertaker smiles. He has a titanic marrow laid out on the table in front of him, like some kind of fantastical manhood. Surely this year, he’s a winner.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
We should all be cautious of our own hype...

The Farmer arrives with his wheelbarrow. It is like a Mexican stand off.

The Farmer’s barrow contains a marrow that puts the Undertaker to shame. Ginormous. Tumescent.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
... Criticism can be helpful.

EXT. PUB - NIGHT

The Farmer exits the pub.

He turns to offer one last amusement to the Villagers he is leaving behind. He makes a gesture to indicate short length, and then points to one of the adjoining windows of the pub.

Laughter.

The Undertaker is framed in the adjoining window, all alone.

He has several glasses on his table. Some full, some done already. He is drinking heavily.

EXT. VILLAGE STREET - NIGHT

The Farmer walks along through darkened streets, chuckling to himself.

An ominous pale hand reaches up above his shoulder. It withdraws, having not found quite the right moment.

The Farmer continues, oblivious.

The hand reaches up again, poised. And then descends sharply. Taps the Farmer lightly on the shoulder.

The Farmer whirls around. It is the Undertaker, who makes the drinking gesture: would you like a drink?

The Farmer touches his heart in relief at the surprise, then claps the Undertaker on the arm and they walk off together for a nightcap.
INT. UNDERTAKER’S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

The Farmer sits in the Undertaker’s comfortable chair. He gazes idly around, and sighs in a drunken satisfied way.

His eyes light upon something on the side table, which he picks up.

It is the Vegetable book.

From nowhere, a garden spade clangs down on his head. The Undertaker has killed the Farmer.

**Fifth competition (Every One’s A Winner)**

EXT. MARKET SQUARE - NIGHT

The Market Square looks apocalyptic. The “Vegetable Show” banner has come loose and flaps around on a badly parked car, whose alarm is flashing.

Another car is abandoned at an uncomfortable angle on the road, perhaps having swerved to avoid something.

Behind this car’s back wheel, the A-frame has been driven over. It has tyre tracks on it and it says:

“This year’s theme: Every One’s A Winner”.

EXT. VILLAGE STREET - NIGHT

The Undertaker walks home, happily drunk. He wears a Competition Winner sash, and he has a trophy.

He walks past the churchyard, and waves his trophy as if to show his friends.

A noise startles him - spooks him - and his triumphant gesture is withdrawn fearfully.

Clouds scud past a silver moon.

INT. UNDERTAKER’S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

The Undertaker plops himself down in his armchair.

He places his trophy down upon the side table, upon his Vegetable book. He sighs, and looks around.
It is not a warm happy, winning scene. We are in a shadowy and spooky place.

His winner’s smile fades. He attempts to resurrect it, to force himself to grin. But the corners of his mouth are pulled down as if by gravity.

The Undertaker is uncomfortable - sat alone at night in a workshop full of coffins and aggressive-looking implements.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
One way or another, through the force of man or nature or other...

A noise makes him startle. He looks around.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
... Your intentions will be judged, and your actions will come back to haunt you.

A mouse runs to hide behind some funeral urns.

The Undertaker’s eyes shift about.

Sound of a jar smashing. The Undertaker gets up to have a look.

It is one of his funeral urns. Grey ash has sprayed with some violence around the broken urn. Strange.

A shadow moves across a patch of moonlight. Possibly.

The Undertaker hurries to his front door. As he pulls across the bolt to lock it, the handle turns determinedly. A second later and whoever it was could have entered. The handle stays turned... and then slowly turns back.

The Undertaker closes his eyes thankfully.

A thought strikes. He looks across the workshop at:

The door to the garden.

It’s not fully closed - open a crack and moonlight streams in.

He darts forward, but before he gets close a shadow slides in to fill the crack in the door.

Someone knocks - a deep judgmental knock.

The Undertaker does not know what to do with himself. Where to hide?
Another knocking at the door. Earthy particles and fine ash fall and scatter with each knock - a cloud of ash leaks through the crack in the door, backlit in the moonlight.

Shadows of multiple earthy dead Villagers appear at windows.

The Undertaker climbs into a coffin to hide.

The door opens. Silhouetted on the floor, the shadow of the deceased Farmer, about to enter.

The terrified Undertaker slides the lid of the coffin closed.

Outside, the moon covers over with cloud.

Briefly, a burned blackened earthy hand grab a hammer and nails from a worktop.

EXT. UNDERTAKER’S WORKSHOP – CONTINUOUS

Credits over exterior views of the Undertaker’s house.

A muffled banging noise throughout: could be the sounds of nails being hammered, could be the banging of someone trapped in a coffin.

EXT. MARKET SQUARE – DAY

Somebody sets up the A-frame sign. It says:

“Vegetable Show Cancelled Due To Circumstances”.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
(even more wearily)
Life. It’s so much easier when we stick to what we know. Wouldn’t you say?