

## The A-Poker-lypse

By C. Smith

\*\*Writer's Note: These are the intended appearances of the Four Horsemen.

WAR- a middle aged man (mid 40s-early 50s) wearing an army print t-shirt and cargo pants. Slicked back hair and sunglasses.

FAMINE- a woman (mid 20s to mid 30s) wearing a sundress with a fruit pattern on it and a large, floppy sun hat.

PESTILENCE- an older child/younger teenager (9-13) wearing a Victorian nightgown. Gender doesn't particularly matter.

DEATH- the stereotypical portrayal of death. They've got the tattered cloak, the face obscured in shadow, the massive scythe, etc. No discernable features at all.

INT. THE COUNCIL OF PRIMORDIALS- TIME UNKNOWN

*The Council of Primordials is a marble palace in the sky. Instead of walls and a ceiling, debris orbits the area, flown around by torrential gusts of wind. The sky is lit with a bright crimson hue. A large slab of marble tiling floats in the middle of it all. On top of it is a small circular table. THE FOUR HORSEMEN- WAR, FAMINE, PESTILENCE, and DEATH- sit at the table on swivel chairs. They're in the middle of a heated debate.*

**WAR:** I'm telling you, it's been too long since the last bout of senseless bloodshed.

**PESTILENCE:** If anything, we've had too much of it these days. You need to get your subordinates under control, War.

**WAR:** Oh you're one to talk about control, Pestilence. What about the COVID-19 disaster?

**PESTILENCE:** That's different. We haven't had a good pandemic in decades.

**DEATH:** I think you both need to get under control. You're sending too many people to me. It's completely ruining my system.

**WAR:** You have a system?

**DEATH:** Of course I have a system. People can't just go wherever they like.

**FAMINE:** Personally, I think it's time for me to have some fun. Nobody talks about famines anymore. The end of the world would be a perfect opportunity for me.

**WAR:** Or me. Please let me do it. It would be so easy.

**DEATH:** I'm the one who's going to be stuck with everyone forever. I should be the one to choose how they die.

**PESTILENCE:** We're going to get nowhere fighting over this-

**WAR:** Yeah, no shit.

**PESTILENCE:** -so how about we settle this through a little game?

**FAMINE:** What do you have in mind?

*Pestilence conjures up a deck of playing cards and a box of chips.*

**FAMINE:** You don't mean...

**PESTILENCE:** Yes I do. Welcome to the A-Poker-lypse, everyone.

**WAR:** This is ridiculous. Why can't we just fight until we reach a conclusion?

**FAMINE:** Because this isn't a war, genius.

**PESTILENCE:** The rules are simple- play an ordinary round of poker. Each round, you will bet the life of a certain number of humans. Those humans will succumb, but not die, to whatever fate you assign them. Just to raise the stakes a little, get everyone excited. We continue to bet until the round is over. The one with the highest hand at the end gets to decide how the world ends. Does that seem fair?

**FAMINE:** Fair enough, as long as you don't cheat.

**PESTILENCE:** I don't need to cheat. I consider myself quite the gifted poker player.

**WAR:** Very well, I accept your terms.

**FAMINE:** As do I.

**DEATH:** Quick question: what is poker?

*The other three horsemen turn to Death.*

**WAR:** Are you serious? You don't know what poker is?

**DEATH:** Look, I'm stuck down in the Underworld all the time. There's no cards down there. Just souls.

**WAR:** It's a pretty simple game. You'll figure it out as you go.

**FAMINE:** I'd say it's actually quite compli-

*War shoots Famine a look, silently screaming at her to shut up.*

**FAMINE:** Let's just get started, shall we?

*Pestilence deals out the cards to everyone. They look at their hands.*

**PESTILENCE:** We can start with Famine. I know she used to be a champion poker player.

**FAMINE:** Indeed I was. That was way back in the day.

**PESTILENCE:** Starting bet is ten thousand humans.

*Pestilence pushes a poker chip towards the center of the table. Ten thousand people, each scaled down to an incredibly small size, spawn on top of the poker chip.*

**FAMINE:** I'd like to raise the bet to fifty thousand.

*Pestilence pushes four poker chips forward. Four more sets of ten thousand tiny humans spawn on top of each chip. As soon as they're pushed into the center, all fifty thousand people start screaming.*

**HUMAN #1:** Aaaaaaa! Our crops are dying.

**HUMAN #2:** How can this be? They were fine only yesterday.

**PESTILENCE:** *(over the screaming)* War, your turn.

**WAR:** One million.

**PESTILENCE:** That's quite the high starting bet. Feeling confident, are we?

**WAR:** Absolutely.

**PESTILENCE:** Whatever you say.

*Pestilence pushes forward a large stack of chips. The sounds of fighting and gunshot emanate from the chips. A gust of blood spurts out from the stack, completely drenching Famine.*

**FAMINE:** Ewww. Disgusting.

*She snaps her fingers and the blood disappears.*

**PESTILENCE:** My turn. I'll raise a hundred thousand.

*She pushes a handful of chips forward. The people who spawn in immediately start to cough.*

**FAMINE:** Oh that sound is going to be so annoying.

**PESTILENCE:** Wait until they start hacking up blood. That's always fun.

**WAR:** Your turn, Death.

**DEATH:** I'm not entirely sure how I'm supposed to do this.

**FAMINE:** Just raise a bet based on how good your cards are. Or you can call and sacrifice a hundred thousand humans like Pestilence did.

**DEATH:** Uh... pay the hundred thousand I guess?

**PESTILENCE:** That's a call.

*They push in another handful of chips. The humans on them stand there, confused.*

**PESTILENCE:** I guess because you're Death, you can choose how they suffer.

**DEATH:** Oh okay. How about... the Dancing Plague?

*Classical music starts playing. The people on the chips launch into an elaborate choreographed ballet number.*

**WAR:** What the hell?

**DEATH:** I mean, it's dancing.

**PESTILENCE:** Fair point. Famine, back to you.

**FAMINE:** Let's up the ante a little. Five million.

*Pestilence pushes in more chips.*

**WAR:** TEN million.

**FAMINE:** Twenty million.

**WAR:** Thirty million.

**FAMINE:** FIFTY MILLION.

**PESTILENCE:** Guys, it's not your turn anymore. You know what though, I'll add the chips in. Just for fun.

*Pestilence summons a new box of poker chips and dumps them all out in the center. They add to the cacophony of screams.*

**FAMINE:** Oh that's too many for me. I fold.

**WAR:** Ha! Serves you right for challenging me.

**FAMINE:** But you were the one who challenged me first.

**PESTILENCE:** My turn.

*War and Famine stop arguing. Famine sinks back in her seat while War leans forward.*

**PESTILENCE:** I agree with what you said about upping the ante, Famine. And I have to say, this game is taking a little too long for my liking.

**WAR:** No. You can't mean...

**PESTILENCE:** All in.

*They snap their fingers. Millions of chips appear in the center, creating a column that spirals upwards into the sky.*

**WAR:** Uh oh.

**PESTILENCE:** What's the matter, War? You weren't bluffing, right?

**WAR:** Of course not. All in.

*Even more chips stack on top of the others. They've started being pulled into orbit with the debris, filling the room with screams and sobs and noises of conflict.*

**DEATH:** All in I guess? Not entirely sure what that means, but everyone else is doing it.

*The absolutely unholy amount of chips in the center starts to overflow. Chips slide across the table, over the sides, and waterfall into the void of nothingness.*

**PESTILENCE:** Alright. Let's see what we've got.

*War flips over his cards.*

**WAR:** *(nervously)* Haha. Any chance you guys did worse than a pair of sevens?

*Pestilence flips over their cards to reveal three Kings and a pair of Queens.*

**WAR.** NOOOOOO. A FULL HOUSE. DAMN IT.

**PESTILENCE:** Hehe.

**WAR:** How did you know I was bluffing?

**PESTILENCE:** You're wearing mirrored sunglasses.

*War takes off his sunglasses, revealing blood red eyes. He turns them around and confirms that they are indeed mirrored.*

**WAR:** Shit.

**FAMINE:** I had three tens. No pairs though.

**PESTILENCE:** Death, what have you got?

**DEATH:** I don't know. Can you tell me if this is good or not?

*Death flips over their cards to reveal an Ace, King, Queen, Jack, and Ten of Spades- a Royal Flush.*

**FAMINE:** Holy shit.

**WAR:** It's not fair. He doesn't even know how to play.

**PESTILENCE:** Congratulations, Death. You win. You get to choose how the world ends.

**FAMINE:** Whatever you want to do. Floods, fire, meteors-

**DEATH:** The rollercoaster from Phineas and Ferb.



*Confused silence.*

**FAMINE:** ...what?

**DEATH:** The rollercoaster. From Phineas and Ferb.

**WAR:** Yeah, we heard you.

**PESTILENCE:** Elaborate.

**DEATH:** Gladly. The coaster was constructed across an interstate highway and through several lots of private property by two nine year olds who forged their building permit in crayon. The whole thing is held together by melted peanut butter and untightened screws. There are no safety measures, and the only way to leave is by walking down the precariously-balanced rails. Projectiles are launched at the rider, and they are fully submerged in a vat of mud. The ride is then lifted into the air by a giant magnet and the car derails. The car flies through and is propelled by dangerous construction equipment. The children are hurtled into orbit and are launched all over the world, including New York, South Dakota, France, and Outer Space. If the altitude suffocation and massive fall risks didn't kill them, re-entering the Earth's atmosphere will. The car catches on fire, moving at an unchecked velocity, and deposits its riders out on top of a tree. It is the most deadly thing in human history.

*Long silence.*

**WAR:** Jesus christ.

**PESTILENCE:** Alright then. It's settled. The world will end through... forced admittance on the rollercoaster from Phineas and Ferb. Meeting adjourned.

*The Four Horsemen rise from their swivel chairs. In the distance, we hear the roar of a rollercoaster and the screams of suffering souls.*

FIN.