

DAY OF DEATH

A Comedy

by

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SYNOPSIS

The Grim Reaper is tired of their timeless job. Having worked a 24/7 work schedule since the dawn of humanity, they are intrigued when their friend, the god Pluto, suggests a new concept to them: a “vacation”. Death sets out on a vacation, to try and invigorate their existence by experiencing something entirely new. They travel to a rural city in the middle of nowhere, and hire local failing travel guide Riley. Together with a very doubtful Riley, the two tour the city-Death experiencing the every day life they have never seen before.

CHARACTERS

All roles can be played by any gender. Characters other than DEATH can use any names, and pronouns may be changed according to casting choices.

DEATH.....grim reaper
 PLUTO.....middle-aged
 RILEY.....everyman

DYING PERSON / MS. BECKETT
 SHOP WORKER / OVERWORKED EMPLOYEE

ADDITIONAL CHARACTER NOTES

DEATH: Avoid use of pronouns or gendering. Wears all black. Some variation white vanity on their face- white makeup, a white mask, a white crown, etc. Costuming / casting can be varied and esoteric. Should be visibly recognizable as the Grim Reaper (in popular iconography). If at all possible DEATH should stick out, perhaps in being taller than the rest of the class, carrying around a long scythe, having long robes, etc. They aren’t like everyone else.

PLUTO: Should be dressed fancily compared to the rest of the cast. Gold, colorful, visibly not “modern”- potential skull or bone motifs, if not played by a masculine figure, consider renaming

to keep the name close. Should be recognizable as something associated with DEATH- Hecate, Charon, Hel, etc.

RILEY: Should be a “everyman”. Gender ambiguous. Recognizably MODERN clothing- should be able to identify the setting the second you see them.

SETTING

Several indoors offices, then the streets of a small midwestern city.

TIME AND PLACE

The dark of midnight. Then, the following morning, and the rest of the day up to the afternoon.

Day of Death

PRESHOW: *Shrouded in darkness.*

Lights down.

AT RISE: *Lights shine on entrance to the stage, wherever DEATH will enter from.*

Scene One: Hospital.

(In the center of the stage is a white bed, and a bedside table covered in get well soon cards. Recognizable as a hospital bed. There is a OLD WOMAN in the bed, sickly and attached to equipment.)

(Soft but audible hard footsteps. DEATH enters opposite the woman. Stage light should follow DEATH as they approach her.)

DEATH. It is time to go.

SICKLY WOMAN. Well, who are you ought to be? One of the nurses? No, no, they all wear white, I know that well enough. (cough)

DEATH. I am the usher to beyond. I have been given many titles by those I shepherd from their coils.

(The SICKLY WOMAN gives a fuzzy stare at that. She looks through Death, not at them- she does not fully understand what she sees.)

SICKLY WOMAN. Oh. No, I mean more, y'know your name. See, my nephew's always saying I gotta try and memorize these things, see? Helps keep the old brain sharp.

DEATH. I see. Death.

SICKLY WOMAN. Hm?

DEATH. My name.

SICKLY WOMAN. Oh. Interesting name, that. Are you here to do a checkup, then?

DEATH. In a sense.

SICKLY WOMAN. See, I feel like that's all it is these days. Checkup, checkup, maybe the occasional visit from the nephews.. (sigh) See, it's all so tiring. You know.

DEATH. I do not. Ms. Beckett, it is time to go.

(Death places a hand on the SICKLY WOMAN's arm.)

SICKLY WOMAN. See, some days I just want to lie down and never get up, you know? See, I've had a good long life, very long indeed, see, but there's always a new treatment, and the nurses are always assuring me it's all fine, but, see-

DEATH. *(More forcefully.)* Ms. Beckett.

(The SICKLY WOMAN looks at DEATH for the first time, and slumps down. She recognizes what is happening now.)

SICKLY WOMAN. Ah, I see.

DEATH. *(Humorlessly)* You do a lot of that.

SICKLY WOMAN. (Sigh) This is it, then? You'll hit me with a scythe, cart what's left off to what's beyond?

DEATH. My hand takes no action. I am simply here as a shepherd for your soul.

(The SICKLY WOMAN looks down at her body, then squints at DEATH.)

SICKLY WOMAN. Well, ain't there supposed to be a horse?

DEATH. Retired. Feed is expensive in this era. So few leave the coins for me that they once did. Ms. Beckett, it is time to go.

SICKLY WOMAN. See, it's just, there was another grandchild on the horizon, and you know, we had this wonderful vacation planned out this summer, just these beautiful isles, and-

DEATH. *Ms. Beckett.*

(She winces at their tone, and pushes herself up out of the bed. An eerie blue light shines at the EXIT.)

SICKLY WOMAN. Alright, alright. I'm up. Let an old woman talk, will you? See, you'd think that scythe is right up your..

(She makes a rude gesture. Death stares at her, confused.)

DEATH. Up my...? I fail to understand what you are getting at.

SICKLY WOMAN. *(Laughing)* Oh, I don't suppose you would. You should try and live a little, will you? Nobody likes the rude and silent type.

DEATH. That falls quite low on my priorities. Ms. Becke-

SICKLY WOMAN. *(Interrupting)* I know, I know. It is time to go. Well, I'll be off. See you around, Grim?

DEATH. I truly do not expect you will.

SICKLY WOMAN. Goodbye, life.

(She turns and walks into the light. Blue light covers her as she does so. The light fades, leaving only DEATH illuminated on the stage.)

DEATH. Farewell, Eleanor Beckett.

(DEATH turns to leave, but something on the bedside table catches their eye. They pick up a travel brochure and face it towards the audience.)

DEATH. What a woman.

(They furrow their face- The first time they have shown emotion in this scene.)

DEATH. And what in the darkest of nights is a “vacation”?

Scene Two: Pluto’s Cave.

(The scene changes. There is an ostentatiously dressed man fussing over papers on a table, PLUTO. He is clothed in gold and silk, and has a laurel wreath on his head. He sits in what appears to be an oddly modern looking LIVING ROOM.)

(Soft footsteps fill the air, startling PLUTO. He looks around, acting surprised as DEATH enters.)

PLUTO. Oh, you nearly gave me a heart attack, old chap. You’re supposed to knock, aren’t you?

DEATH. My presence is inevitable. I do not “knock”. As a matter of fact, the door was unlocked.

(Pluto gives a long, suffering sigh.)

PLUTO. Well, it's the principle of the matter. Can’t a man be entitled to his own thoughts and privacy? I should get around to installing a lock or two. Maybe a deadbolt, hehe?

(He laughs at his joke and grins at Death, who does not grin back.)

DEATH. I fail to see what business a divinity like you would have with “locks”, their bolts dead or alive. Should you not be busy judging souls regardless, Judge Pluto?

PLUTO. Oh, that? I stopped doing that in-person *centuries* ago. The commute to the halls of judgment was so exhausting, honest.

(He waves his hand.)

DEATH. You mean to tell me you have abandoned your fundamental duty as a shepherd and judge of the hallowed dead, for life as a.. Couch potato?

PLUTO. *(Scoffing)* Oh, no, no. See, I just do it from the comfort of my own home, now! *(He holds up the papers, which are covered in red ink and comical, large letter grades)* No need for any of those drawn out trials, any of that nonsense. They just bring me a list of each souls' data, and whatnot, and I give em' each a grade.

DEATH. I... see. Do you not need to know their deeds in life to judge their fate in death? How do you pass judgment without their final testimonies?

PLUTO. Oh, they fill out a survey.

DEATH. *(Incredulous)* Pardon?

PLUTO. A survey. See, they go to this nice little waiting room. Lil' skeletal clerks give em' a survey, they fill it out- "Did thee, in hallowed life, commit any sins?" "Did thee expire in glorious battle or inglorious despair?" Stuff like that. Then I read through their answers and y'know, send them up there *(He points up.)* or down. There. *(He points down.)*

DEATH. Could they not lie?

PLUTO. Oh, no, no. see. *(He hands the survey he's holding to DEATH.)* See that question at the end there?

DEATH. "Are thee telling thy truth, pinky promise on your immortal soul?"

PLUTO. Almost everyone always answers “Yes” to that, and they very well can’t be lying if it’s on their immortal soul, eh?

(DEATH places the paper down.)

DEATH. That.. makes sense.. From a certain point of view.. If you... I suppose.

PLUTO. Jolly! *(They hum, leaning over the papers on the table. DEATH observes them on their couch with mild horror.)*

DEATH. How often, pray tell, do you exit your.. hollowed abode?

PLUTO. Oh, quite frequently. Pop out every month to check the mail.

DEATH: The mail.

PLUTO. Well, I try to, at least. Turns out ancient gods of death don’t get much postage. A veritable voyage it is to reach that mail, though!

DEATH. And this hypothetical mail to, you would search for it.. In your mailbox?

PLUTO. That’s the one. Anything particularly confusing you, here?

DEATH. This mailbox you voyage to is five feet from the door.

PLUTO. Yep.

DEATH. Hallowed Pluto, Judge of the graceful dead, shepherd of primal spirits, do you have any respect for station left?

PLUTO. Oh, oh, of course I do, old chap. I've simply learned to *relax* a bit. It's been thousands of years I've had to do this gig. Don't you ever want to kick back and delegate for a bit?

DEATH. No.

PLUTO. Really, honored friend? Do you ever take a vacation? I kinda figured at one point or another you did. I mean, you spend all day and all night running about, grabbing people's souls, patting them on the back, sending them off into the beyond, et cetra et cetra. Feels like it'd get a bit tiring.

DEATH. I have.. Never considered the idea. A vacation?

PLUTO. A relaxing trip. You take a break for a bit, go see.. Exotic things, chill out for a bit.

DEATH. Exotic things.

PLUTO. Yes. Things you've never seen before. Like, uh.. The beach.

DEATH. I am no stranger to sands. I am the attendant to many shipwrecks on their shores.

PLUTO. Fair point. The jungle?

DEATH. Disease and predation.

PLUTO. Grim. One of those pretty mountain ranges, then.

DEATH. Slipping and falling.

PLUTO. Well- Ok, I guess maybe there isn't much out there that you probably *haven't* seen. But my point is that you do gotta dip out every once in a while. See.. normal human things. Relax a tiny bit. Don't you ever feel tired?

DEATH. I... perhaps. Occasionally. But I have no desire to succumb to such.. Sloth as you.

PLUTO. Sloth? I'm simply working from home. And, old friend, there's no need for you to relax quite like me. Just try taking a day off, one of these days. I promise it does wonders. You've really never taken a single day off, since the dawn of time itself?

DEATH. Nah.

PLUTO. Give it some thought. I'm sure the universe owes you *some* off time.

DEATH. I will consider it.

(A loud RING echoes through the room, as Pluto's big red phone begins to ring. DEATH puts a hand on their chin, now in thought.)

PLUTO. Now- Ah, I'd love to talk to you some more, love checking in, but I think that this meeting might be important. It's the old twelve o' clock. They want my opinion on funerary practices, again, I'd expect. See you around?

DEATH. ...I suppose so.

(Still lost in thought, DEATH turns to exit. PLUTO lifts up the phone, watching them go and shaking their head in amusement.)

Scene Three: Riley's Office

(The scene opens on a harried looking RILEY, dressed in visibly modern clothing at a desk. They are on a call.)

RILEY. (*Harried*) Look, look. Mr. Stelford, are you *sure* you want to cancel this visit? It's a very wonderful city, you know, and I do kinda need the mone- Well, I do very much want to be able to share our wonderful, er, city with you, on this tour, and- Mr. Stelford? Mr. Stelford?

(The line goes dead. RILEY slams down the phone with frustration.)

RILEY. Another cancellation. If this continues, I might... Might.. Ugh! I need business.

(Loud knocks ring out from the door.)

RILEY. If this pattern continues, I'll be out of shop by this.. December, at best, and at worst by.. By.. *(RILEY slumps their head on the table. The knocking rings out again, impatient.)*

RILEY. And I'm so out of it that.. Wait, wait, someone's knocking? Am I hallucinating, or, uher.

DEATH. *(Muffled)* Open the door.

RILEY. Oh, oh, oops oops. Sorry, sorry, I didn't hear you and- Door. Right. I'll get the door.

(RILEY shoots up from their seat, frantically opening up the door. DEATH takes a step in.)

RILEY. Welcome to Riley Relock's Local Tour, Travel, and Recreation Service, how can.. I help.. You.. What's with the, uh, costume?

(They take a step back.)

DEATH. What costume?

RILEY. The whole, er, uh, shebang. The cloak, and mask and the y'know, everything? Early Halloween outfit?

DEATH. I have worn this guise for time immemorial.

RILEY. *Really* early Halloween outfit, then, gotcha. I see. Uh. And you're here for, uh.

DEATH. Local tours and recreation. That is your role, is it not? You are a ferry tender, taking wayward souls to and fro. I seek to enlist your services.

(RILEY looks around and paces around the room, very confused by this individual.)

RILEY. Ok, ok- I mean, yes. That is my job. I'm a tour guide. I lead people on vacations, around the city, all that jazz.

DEATH. Exactly. A vacation. This fleeting concept of ephemeral whim. I wish to take a chance to explore it.

RILEY. Right. A customer is a customer, I suppose. What did you say your name was, exactly?

(RILEY picks up a pen and paper.)

DEATH. Death.

RILEY. *(Nervous laugh)* No, no, I know you have the costume and all, but.. Your real name, please. For tax purposes. And all that.

DEATH. Need I state it again? I am Death. I am a shepherd and a savant. I take only one name and I have told you it.

RILEY. Right. I'll put you down as first name D-E, last name A-T-H, that'll probably do.

(DEATH stares at RILEY with something approaching disbelief, crossing their arms.)

DEATH. It is one word.

RILEY. Tax purposes. What city excursions are you interested in, exactly?

DEATH. A trip.

(RILEY looks up from the paper to side-eye DEATH.)

RILEY. Well- that's a rather vague descriptor, I think. I do need some direction here. What exactly are you looking for, on your, uh, trip?

DEATH. To relax. That's what trips are for, no?

RILEY. Ok, ok, but, *why*. With what?

DEATH. I yearn for a break from the monotony of eons. In this vacation I seek a temporary respite from a thankless work, and a brief glimpse into the everyday life of those I shepherd. What drives their lives and souls?

RILEY. O-K. I can, uh, work with that. You want a break from your work, I'm hearing? And you wanna.. Experience everyday life? That seems awfully mundane for a vacation.

DEATH. I have a very unusual job. I wish to experience the unknown.

RILEY. Right. I'm not complaining, customer is always right, or whatever. When are you looking to go on this.. Trip? Should've lead with that, probably, but-

DEATH. Tomorrow?

RILEY. *Huh?*

DEATH. Is there an issue with that? I can only afford a respite from my work for ever so long.

RILEY. No, no, I can.. Probably have something ready. So you want me to plot out a little trip around the city? I can do that pretty easily. And.. Really, do you just want a guided tour?

DEATH. Of?

RILEY. The city? That we were talking about. I mean, it seems kind of silly to write out whole plans for you for just a day, and it'd be a much better experience if I can personally lead this kind of stuff. Something about your attire tells me you might need, uh, some supervision on your own, anyway.

DEATH. What about my attire?

RILEY. Exactly. And, of course, there's just a minor price hike for the guided tours vs the excursion, obviously, just about, fifty percent more, haha. Sound good to you? Meet up tomorrow, I give you your little trip of the city?

DEATH. I raise no issue with it. And price is no issue.

RILEY. *(Surprised)* It isn't? That's good, then, because I think I was misremembering- it's actually about, uh, double for the guided tours. Yep.

DEATH. My deepest well wishes to you. A fading memory is a horrible curse to suffer.

RILEY. Right, haha. Just meet me at the park, tomorrow? I'll meet you there and then bam, tour, explore, cash, all that. You really just want to see the uh, "mundane life" of the city?

DEATH. It is one of the few things I have never experienced. I will be there, noble guide.

(DEATH turns and strides briskly out of the room. RILEY slumps back down on their desk, watching DEATH go.)

RILEY. Ok, cheer up, Riley. You have a client. You do! It may be a minor wackjob dressed like a corpse, but you do have a! Client! A very wealthy one, too..

Scene Four: Excursions

(There is a park bench. DEATH enters, standing next to it. RILEY enters a moment later, with a large brochure in their hands, fussing over it.)

RILEY. Ok, ok. Great. So, you ready for-

DEATH. You're late.

RILEY. What? I'm here just on time. Crack of dawn. Park. City guide. Everything. How long have *you* been here?

DEATH. Since the first minute of this new day. That is what you meant, no?

RILEY. *(Blinking)* You've been here since *midnight*? No, I meant like, in the morning! When people wake up! Did you even get any sleep?

DEATH. I need not sleep.

RILEY. Don't be ridiculous. Everyone sleeps.

DEATH. Everyone is a strong word.

RILEY. Whatever you say. Look, I've plotted out your whole trip for you. Of one day. "Normal human experiences" are maybe the one thing this city *does* have in abundance, so it wasn't actually that hard. Tour of the market, tour down the museum, the river, and.. That should be about the day. Maybe it's a blessing you only have one day for this trip of yours, because this city really.. Doesn't have a lot.

DEATH. An interesting place to establish a service like yours, then.

RILEY. Well, I do live here.

DEATH. May I ask why you do that?

RILEY. ...I grew up here?

DEATH. And why did you do that?

RILEY. Well, we all make mistakes in life.

DEATH. Hmph.

RILEY. Hm indeed. You're the one who chose to *visit* Middle of Nowhere, USA, anyway. Any snide comments on the itinerary, then?

DEATH. None at all. It sounds fine.

RILEY. Fine?

DEATH. Would you rather I disparage it?

RILEY. ..I guess not. I suppose I'm a bit too used to hearing complaints out the wazoo from every prospective customer.

DEATH. In my line of work, I am forced to bear far too many trifles and complaints. I would wish that ornery on another in a similar role.

RILEY. ...Riiight. I'm not complaining. Want to get this tour on the road, then?

DEATH. Lead the way.

(RILEY lets out a deep breath, then points dramatically. They lead DEATH forward down the streets of the City, passing STREET SIGNS and various DECORATIONS.)

RILEY. Now, the market is just up ahead. Usually, y'know, a good whole tour of the city would visit the restaurants, but I'd like to save you from any debacles over the outfit.

DEATH. What about the outfit?

RILEY. Exactly. Do you have any preference for cuisine? I'm sure we can find you something in the market.

DEATH. No.

RILEY. No? You have to have some favorite food, or something. Everyone does.

DEATH. I rarely eat.

RILEY. I suppose you are rather skeletal. But- I mean, are you sure about that?

DEATH. Have I failed to make myself clear, at any point on this venture? I do not tire nor hunger. I am Death, again.

RILEY. *(To herself)* Count to three, three, two, one, stay calm, it's just a mildly deranged tourist....

DEATH. Hm?

RILEY. Nothing. I suppose I'm in too deep now- (*Sarcastic*) O wise and graceful Death, what kind of food do thou wish to sample from the market?

DEATH. I know not.

RILEY. Any preferences?

DEATH. None.

RILEY. Anything against spice?

DEATH. Nay.

RILEY. Anything *for* spice?

DEATH. Nada.

RILEY. (*Frustrated*) Why are you here, remind me?

DEATH. A vacation to sample the human experience.

RILEY. Which you have none of?

DEATH. None.

RILEY. You have no preferences, no tastes, and no prior experience? Are you allergic to opinions?

DEATH. I've never considered it. Is there something confusing?

RILEY. Only my life. Come on, I know a place that absolutely *reeks* of human experience.

DEATH. Where would that be? A graveyard? A church? A village hub? A-

RILEY. The food truck. Come on.

Scene Five: Food Truck

(A OVERWORKED EMPLOYEE manages a large food truck. Menus and utensils plaster it, and there's a nearby table. RILEY and DEATH approach, RILEY whispering to DEATH.)

RILEY. Ok, so, don't let them scam you?

DEATH. Scam?

RILEY. Charge you more than it says on the menu.

DEATH. Like you?

(RILEY stops in place.)

RILEY. I'm sorry? Are you questioning the perfectly reasonable price of Riley Relock's Local Tour, Travel, and Recreation Services?

DEATH. You misremembered the price of the guided tour, did you not?

RILEY. That's different.

DEATH. Why?

RILEY. Because I'm in charge. Now stop asking questions, and go figure out an order. It's the most human experience you can get, trust me.

(DEATH approaches the counter. RILEY sits down at a table. The OVERWORKED EMPLOYEE looks at them and waves.)

EMPLOYEE. What can I get you, sir?

(DEATH draws out their scythe and taps it against the menu as they think. The EMPLOYEE leans away, visibly disturbed.)

DEATH. No.

EMPLOYEE. ...No? Nothing?

DEATH. No sir.

EMPLOYEE. My apologies, ma'am.

DEATH. No ma'am.

EMPLOYEE. My apologies. What should I call you, then?

DEATH. Just Death. I'd like the number five.

EMPLOYEE. Death- Whatever you say, valued customer. Anything else?

DEATH. Perhaps the number six, too.

EMPLOYEE. The number six? Daring.

DEATH. And the number eight. Maybe the number twelve, too?

(As they list meals, DEATH flicks their scythe from entry to entry, rapidly tapping the menu. The employee's eyes follow it.)

EMPLOYEE. Eight, and twelve? Would you like that fried?

(DEATH suspiciously stares straight into the EMPLOYEE's eyes.)

DEATH. Does that cost more than it says on the menu?

EMPLOYEE. It's just a matter of preference, s- ma'- ..Death.

DEATH. Hmph. Likely story. I'll take numbers eighteen through twenty two, as well.

EMPLOYEE. As in, eighteen, nineteen, twenty, t-

DEATH. That's the order those numbers go in, the last time I checked. Is there some manner of issue with that?

EMPLOYEE. Well, that's rather a lot of food, isn't it? Ordering for a party?

DEATH. Hm? No. Just me.

EMPLOYEE. ..I see. So that'll be the number six, the number eight, the number twelve, eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty one, twenty two, and.. Would you like a drink??

DEATH. Water would be nice.

EMPLOYEE. Of course. Do you want sauce with any of that?

DEATH. What kinds of sauce?

EMPLOYEE. Well, we have ketchup, mustard, ranch, mayonnaise, and of course our county-famous Mystery Sauce.

DEATH. I'm surprised it hasn't been solved yet.

EMPLOYEE. What?

DEATH. The mystery, if it's so famous.

EMPLOYEE. It's just a name. Do you want any?

DEATH. I suppose I'll try my hand at cracking the mystery. A snowcone would be nice, too.

EMPLOYEE. *(Tired)* Of course. What flavor?

DEATH. Surprise me.

EMPLOYEE. I'll do my best. Any allergies?

DEATH. I've been told I may be allergic to opinions.

EMPLOYEE. Really. Well, we'll call you out when your order is ready.

DEATH. Thank you kindly.

(DEATH turns and walks over to where RILEY is sitting, taking a seat on the bench across from them.)

RILEY. ..Aren't you worried you ordered a bit too much food?

DEATH. Well, I wish to sample many an experience.

RILEY. I suppose you're not wrong. Still, I hope you *are* hungry. With all of that, you'd probably be less full from eating a horse.

(RILEY laughs to themselves.)

DEATH. *(Confused)* Why would you do that?

RILEY. What?

DEATH. Eat a horse. I can't imagine they'd taste very good. Rather like stables and feed, I imagine.

(RILEY gesticulates with their arms as they talk, miming someone eating something with their hands.)

RILEY. Oh, no- No, it's just a saying. You know, someone's really hungry, they go "I'm so hungry, I could eat a horse!". And you know, horses are really big, and you don't typically eat them, so its a dual prong joke of "Wow, I'm very hungry!" and "Wow, I'm so hungry I could eat anything!" and I'm realizing now you're kind of looking at me weird so maybe I sound crazy. Saying this out loud, that is.

DEATH. I suppose I have just never heard this joke before.

RILEY. Well, maybe you need to broaden your horizons.

DEATH. Well, I am trying. Should I try eating a horse?

(RILEY sputters, surprised.)

RILEY. I- No, no, probably not. It's just a joke. Har har. Hee hee! You don't actually eat horses. At least not here. Maybe out in the country they do, or maybe rich people do. They'll probably eat anything. But- no, don't go eating a horse.

DEATH. *(Thoughtfully)* I once met a man who ate a horse.

RILEY. Really? What was he like?

DEATH. Quite insane.

RILEY. Oh.

DEATH. As a result of the untreated horse meat. I expect. The food poisoning had done a number on him.

RILEY. I.. see.

DEATH. His name was Gerard, if you're curious.

RILEY. Fascinating. Did he, uh, get better?

DEATH. I suppose you could say he's in a better place now.

(RILEY eyes DEATH up and down.)

RILEY. What, did you kill him?

DEATH. Why does everyone have this impression? I do not *kill* people.

RILEY. I mean, that's what that statement usually implies. The whole "better place" thing. Like when my mom told me my hamster went to visit my aunt's. I don't even have a aunt.

DEATH. Oh, Gerard is quite dead. Food poisoning, again.

RILEY. But-

DEATH. But I didn't kill him. I simply led him to what is next. Nobody dies of death. That would be quite silly. I am merely a.. Complicating factor. Like a stop sign.

RILEY. What, you're tall and red and get run over? That'd make a pretty bad riddle.

DEATH. A stop sign does not determine when the road ends. It merely warns you of a ending that is already occurring, of an intersection that already exists.

RILEY. I really hope that you don't drive.

DEATH. Sometimes I ride a horse.

RILEY. Hopefully off the streets, then, if that's your impression of stop signs. So without you, people would.. Crash their souls? Not stop when they have to?

DEATH. Something like that. Some souls would linger. Cling to the world of the living, like a car stalling in the middle of the road. Try and sneak back into bodies, do hauntings, what not. A revenant car crash, if you would.

RILEY. I don't think the car analogy is really working for you here, to be entirely honest?

DEATH. Hm. Maybe not.

RILEY. Also, this sounds completely insane.

DEATH. Maybe so.

EMPLOYEE. Hey! Order for.. Er.. Death! Ready!

RILEY. Also, I think your food's ready.

DEATH. So it goes.

(DEATH gets up and retrieves the food, returning with a comically large platter of food- chicken legs, pizza, burgers, a snowcone, assorted vegetables.)

RILEY. Told you.

DEATH. This does not even begin to approach a horse in size nor sustenance. I suppose it is rather unlikely to drive me insane, though.

RILEY. Food poisoning is still on the table, at least. And the horse thing is just a saying, again. Not even a very funny one, now that I've explained it out loud.

DEATH. Hmph. Well, give me a moment to eat.

RILEY. ...a what?

(DEATH leans in, enveloping the plate of food with their dark cloak. The lights go dark, and there is a loud humming noise. They withdraw their cloak off the plate and the lights turn back on. When they do, the plate of food is totally empty. RILEY stares on, horrified.)

DEATH. That was rather tasty, actually.

RILEY. Did you just- Ea- Did- Huh?

DEATH. I don't understand the mystery of the sauce, though. I believe it was simply dyed mayonnaise.

RILEY. You ate all that food!

DEATH. Yes?

RILEY. You ate all of that food in a few seconds!

DEATH. Is there some issue with that?

RILEY. I... not an issue, I guess.

DEATH. It was quite tasty. I believe you said the museum and the river were next?

RILEY. R-Right. Follow me, then. Did you pay already?

DEATH. Oh, yes. Three gold marks covered the price quite easily.

RILEY. *..gold.*

DEATH. Is something the matter?

(RILEY eyes DEATH's coin pouch, then sets off again, motioning for DEATH to follow.)

Scene Six: Outside the Museum

(RILEY and DEATH walk down to a FANCY BUILDING. In front of its door is a sign reading CLOSED FOR THE DAY - IN MEMORIAM. There is a sign next to it bearing a picture of MS. BECKETT. Next to the BUILDING is a GIFT STAND, laden with trinkets and assorted merchandise. A bell ringer sits on the GIFT STAND.)

RILEY. It's *closed*?

DEATH. Deeply unfortunate.

RILEY. Oh, come on, come on, why on earth would they be *closed*! I have a tour to run, thank you very much!

(RILEY storms up to the sign and squints down to read the fine print. Their eyes widen, and they hop back.)

RILEY. And uh, rest in peace, too.

DEATH. Hm?

RILEY. Their, uh, curator died.

DEATH. I see.

RILEY. You wouldn't happen to know anything about that, would you? I mean, since you proclaim to know so much about the death and all.

DEATH. The death.

RILEY. Yeah. The death. Big Death? Scythe swinging? The thing you're so obsessed with.

DEATH. I see. Her name was Eleanor Beckett.

RILEY. I'm sorry?

DEATH. I saw her off last night. She was a sprightly woman. Made no mention of the fact that she ran a museum.

(DEATH thoughtfully taps their scythe against the picture of BECKETT. RILEY hops away from the scythe blade.)

RILEY. You don't have to pretend to have known her, you know.

DEATH. I'm sorry?

RILEY. I know you're from out of town. You don't need to make things up, even if you're still dressing up like that. It's kind of weird to make things up about a dead woman.

DEATH. She was planning a vacation.

RILEY. Still weird.

DEATH. In the isles. And she had another grandchild on the way.

RILEY. Weird, weird, weird.

DEATH. Buttercup.

RILEY. Wei- what?

(DEATH sits down on the steps, placing their SCYTHE on their lap. RILEY crosses their arms and stares at them.)

DEATH. You believe my knowledge of Beckett is fictitious, no? Buttercup. That was the name of your hamster. The one that went to live with the aunt you don't have.

RILEY. This really isn't helping the weirdo case. And you probably guessed that, Buttercup isn't exactly a uncommon name for a hams-

DEATH. Orange and white, died of old age.

RILEY. ..orange and white hamsters are also common. You can guess that, too.

DEATH. What about ones that were say, flung off ceiling fans at the age of 2?

RILEY. It didn't even die of that! I've never told anyone that I did that. I was three years old and curious and it was kinda really funny and- How on earth could you guess that?

DEATH. I asked it.

RILEY. You asked the hamster.

DEATH. When it died, yes.

RILEY. You speak hamster.

DEATH. I speak ghost. The hamsters have a sort of New York accent.

RILEY. I..

DEATH. Do you believe me, now?

RILEY. Believe that the actual incarnation of Death, the Grim Reaper itself, a self proclaimed primordial entity, decided to visit the city of Nowhere, USA, and hire a dinky little tour service?

DEATH. Believe that, yes.

RILEY. Can you see why I might doubt that? That- that you're some sort of primordial entity.

DEATH. Not particularly.

RILEY. Not even a little?

DEATH. I've never doubted I exist.

RILEY. Well, most of us aren't you.

DEATH. I can tell.

(RILEY paces back and forth. After a moment, they take a seat next to DEATH, throwing their hands in the air and laughing nervously.)

RILEY. I guess you did eat that food very fast. And there's no other way you could've known that about my hamster, and... I guess you could be an insane stalker, or whatever, but..

DEATH. I am simply Death. Are you only just registering this now? I have not been subtle about my identity.

RILEY. Yes, but- I don't know. Why would.. Uh, well, Death, again, come out in the middle of nowhere, USA, and ask for a *tour*? It doesn't really make much sense. Unless you are just a weirdo in a black coat, which makes a lot more sense, for a given value of sense, but then how would you know what you know or-

DEATH. *(Interrupting)* I was tired.

RILEY. *(Incredulous)* Tired.

DEATH. Of the job, yes.

RILEY. Of being Death.

DEATH. And somewhat bored.

RILEY. Of being *Death*.

DEATH. I've been at it for a very long time.

RILEY. I suppose I see that. And so you wanted to see, uh, 'normal human experiences'? Get the spice of life?

DEATH. I suppose so.

RILEY. ..Why here?

DEATH. It is a long, long, story. One that this locale may not be most suited for.

(DEATH looks pointedly up at the PICTURE OF MS. BECKETT, and waves their scythe.)

RILEY. What, she's listening?

DEATH. You never know. But I would like to continue my tour, before I speak more on my work. It is a tiresome topic and there is still much I wish to see.

RILEY. I- I guess so. What, though? The museum isn't exactly open.

DEATH. What about the stand?

(RILEY frowns.)

RILEY. That's closed too, no? That feels a bit disresp-

(The OVERWORKED EMPLOYEE pops up into view behind the stand, wearing a identical outfit. RILEY jumps in surprise. The EMPLOYEE clears their throat.)

EMPLOYEE. Do you need any help?

(DEATH rises and strides over to the GIFT STAND, surveying it.)

RILEY. Wha- How long have you been there?!

EMPLOYEE. Oh, since the crack o' dawn. But if you were having any surreptitious conversations on the steps, don't worry a inch, I wasn't listening. Pinky promise.

(RILEY rises too, walking over to stand next to DEATH. They squint suspiciously at the EMPLOYEE.)

RILEY. Weren't you..

EMPLOYEE. Running the food truck? You're thinking of my identical twin. Happens a lot, believe it or not.

DEATH. I believe it.

RILEY. Isn't it a bit, uh, incongruous, to have this stand open, if the museum is currently closed for..

(They gesture vaguely.)

EMPLOYEE. Ms. Beckett? No, no. She specifically requested that the stand be kept open during her mourning period. Wanted to make sure there were absolutely no lost profits from it. But don't worry, though! She also specified that we bump up all the stand prices, see, while the museum was, closed. Account for the lost ticket revenue, eh?

RILEY. That seems-

DEATH. That makes perfect sense. Let me pursue your wares.

(RILEY shrugs, and crosses their arms while DEATH goes over the stand's merchandise.)

RILEY. Are you sure this is where you want to be picking up your souvenirs, uh, here?

EMPLOYEE. Hey! I mean, fair, but, hey!

DEATH. Oh, I don't know. They seem to have quite premium merchandise.

(DEATH holds up a plastic piece of jewelry, meant to look like metal.)

RILEY. That's plastic.

DEATH. I am not one to judge. All that glitters, they say.

RILEY. Do they?

DEATH. I do. I'll take it. These potions seem of interest, as well.

RILEY. ..the hand sanitizer?

DEATH. A modern miracle, I have heard. Why, look at all the ingredients listed on the back! So many elements that they need shrink the text to fit them all. If only I had my reading glasses, now..

EMPLOYEE. Oh, we have museum branded sunglasses, for the low, low price of-

DEATH. Perfect. I'll take two pairs.

RILEY. Why do you need two pairs?

(DEATH holds up the plastic jewelry, two bottles of hand sanitizer, and a hat.)

DEATH. Well, I'm buying two bottles.

RILEY. I feel like you're getting scammed, o primordial entity.

DEATH. How so? *(DEATH passes the merchandise over to the EMPLOYEE, who adds two pairs of SUNGLASSES to the pile.)* I am paying the same price as what's on the tags. Is that not the opposite of your described scams?

RILEY. Yes, well, it's like.. A different type of scam? Where they get you to buy a bunch of things you don't need. You don't need any of this stuff, really! It's all- Are you listening to me?

(The EMPLOYEE is whispering to DEATH. DEATH adds a TOTE BAG to the pile.)

RILEY. You have a big ominous cloak! What do you need a tote bag for!

DEATH. To hold the hand sanitizer.

RILEY. But you don't need hand sanitizer!

EMPLOYEE. Oh, everyone needs hand sanitizer. Germs, they get everywhere.

DEATH. Disease is a killer, Riley.

RILEY. You're Death! Apparently.

EMPLOYEE. Not with hand sanitizer. Keeps all those killer viruses away!

DEATH. See? Very useful. I'll take it all.

(RILEY looks away and shakes their head and arms, incredulous.)

EMPLOYEE. That will be...

DEATH. This enough?

(DEATH procures several shining golden coins from their cloak, handing them to the EMPLOYEE. The EMPLOYEE's eyes widen.)

EMPLOYEE. More than. I think. Is.. is this real gold?

DEATH. Don't spend it all in one place.

(DEATH sweeps the bottles of hand sanitizer and jewelry into their bag, puts the hat on their head, puts a pair of sunglasses on the hat, a pair of sunglasses on their face, and turns to face RILEY. They facepalm, then grab the top pair of sunglasses and props it up on their own head-not covering their eyes.)

DEATH. I do believe those are mine.

RILEY. Consider it a finder's fee.

DEATH. What did you find?

RILEY. Patience. Come on, let's get out of here before you kill your fashion sense.

DEATH. Once again, I do not *kill* anything or anyone-

RILEY. Yadda yadda. It's almost the evening. Wanna see the river?

DEATH. Very well.

(RILEY shoots the still-amazed EMPLOYEE a look, then drags DEATH off the screen.)

Scene Seven: Bench

(DEATH (still wearing the merchandise) and RILEY (still wearing propped up sunglasses) walk down a pathway, beside a RIVER. There is a BENCH further down the walkway.)

DEATH. It is a pretty fine river.

RILEY. ‘Pretty fine’ sure is a way of wording it. Is that why you chose to visit?

DEATH. Hm?

RILEY. The river.

DEATH. Oh. No. I have already told you. I was tired, and bored, and I yearned for a vacation somewhere... else.

RILEY. And you picked.. Here.

DEATH. Nowhere, USA, as you keep so respectfully dubbing it.

RILEY. Indeed. So like.. Why here? Why me? If you really are a kajillion years old, and you’re tired and bored.. Why pick here, and hire a dinky little tour guide to show you the sights?

DEATH. I don’t get to see places like this very often, if at all. People don’t very often drown in ‘pretty fine’ rivers, you know.

RILEY. Shocker.

DEATH. I have seen much opulence in my.. 'Life'. Many forests, wars, raging rivers, deep seas, blazing battles. I have not seen much of Nowhere USA.

RILEY. Hey, it's catching on.

DEATH. Shush.

RILEY. So you wanted something.. Different?

DEATH. Different.

RILEY. But, I mean, surely people die here. Beckett. The hamster. The old guy who ran the corner store.

DEATH. Oh, of course. But I have my attention split so many places so often. After all this time I find myself lingering more on those firefights and opulent deaths, then these.. Quaint ones.

RILEY. So you came here because we're boring.

DEATH. One man's boring is another man's treasure.

(DEATH holds up the plastic jewelry.)

RILEY. See, you're saying treasure, but then you're holding up plastic again.

DEATH. It is a saying.

RILEY. That's my line.

DEATH. Learn to share, then. Relocks, I am very tired. Your boring experiences are things I have never seen nor touched. Things I have never considered, because all of my existence is other people's ends. It is fascinating.

RILEY. I.. can get that. I suppose I get a number fewer customers then you, and business for me is much slower then I imagine it's ever been for you, but.. I can get that, in part. Wanting to feel something new. Stuck in a rout every day. And just wanting, sometimes, a break, not just from the job, but from..

DEATH. Life.

RILEY. Yeah. Kinda why I run the tourism biz, y'know? Live off of other people seeing cool stuff, since I can't really travel myself.

DEATH. Mm.

RILEY. ..Is that why you picked me? Because we're kindred spirits, kinda, sorta, a bit?

DEATH. Oh? No.

RILEY. Why, then?

DEATH. Your rates were the cheapest.

RILEY. I- you- My rates are the ONLY ones in town!

DEATH. Exactly. And perhaps we are kindred spirits, Riley Relocks. Still, the day is not over yet. I cannot lie. This tour's events have been some of my most exciting experiences the last millennia.

RILEY. Standing in a park, eating food, and getting scammed by a dead lady? Well, the day's still young.

DEATH. Is it?

RILEY. Come on, Death. I've got a lot of life still left to show you. And even more, if there's a tip in it.

(For the first time, DEATH smiles.)

DEATH. Perhaps there is. Lead the way.

FIN.