

A DATE WITH DEATH

CHARACTERS:

Hope Butterworth – a young, happy-looking woman

Death – dressed all in black with a black hood and cape, complete with scythe

Waiter – young man

SET:

Table with two chairs.

AT RISE:

HOPE is sitting at the table looking at her phone. DEATH enters, sees her and comes over.

Hello? DEATH

(Looks up, puts her phone away.) Oh, hi! HOPE

Are you Hope? Hope Butterworth? DEATH

I am. And you're Death, right? HOPE

That's me! DEATH

Nice to meet you. Why don't you sit down? HOPE

Love to. *(He sits)* Butterworth...any connection to the pancake people? DEATH

I wish. I'd get free syrup. HOPE

Sorry. That was so trite; I'm sure you've heard that before. DEATH

That's okay. I'm just pleased that you look like your picture. That doesn't happen very often on dating websites. HOPE

And you look like yours. A pleasant surprise. DEATH

(Waiter enters.)

Your menus. *(He hands them to the pair.)* Can I get you something to drink? WAITER

Water would be fine for now. HOPE

DEATH

For me as well.

WAITER

Of course.

(He exits.)

HOPE

Soooo. Tell me a little bit about yourself. Your profile said that you like to travel.

DEATH

Ah yes. I travel quite extensively.

HOPE

I can imagine. People are dying everywhere.

DEATH

True.

HOPE

I was wondering. How do you have time to date?

DEATH

It's tricky. But I have a sub.

HOPE

Really?! I thought you were the end-all and be-all. Literally.

DEATH

(He laughs.) I like to think so. No, there are a couple of us. When someone needs to take some personal time, the others will step up.

HOPE

And being with me doesn't mean that...

DEATH

That it's your time to go? Oh, no, Hope, no, no, no. And that's the biggest problem I have with dating. Everyone thinks that it's their time and I'm there to "take them away." Not at all.

HOPE

I'm sure there are a lot of misconceptions about you.

DEATH

Oh, indeed. People mix me up with the devil. I'm NOT the Devil. Just Death. And if it's not your time, me being near you isn't going to affect you at all.

HOPE

I hope not!

DEATH

Another misconception is that I can do all sorts of things, mystical things. Magic, I guess you would say. That's not true either. When it's your time, I'm just there to take you to wherever you're headed.

HOPE

Interesting.

DEATH

I do have one little parlor trick.

HOPE

And that is?

DEATH

I'll show you.

(WAITER enters. Sets down two water glasses.)

WAITER

Would you like to hear the specials for this evening?

DEATH

We would indeed.

WAITER

We have a lovely—

(DEATH touches WAITER on the arm. WAITER immediately drops to the ground.)

HOPE

What did you just do?!

DEATH

Don't worry. He'll be fine in a moment.

HOPE

Did you kill him?

DEATH

No, I told you. If it's not his time, my touching him will not lead to his death.

HOPE

I'm glad you waited until he set the water glasses down.

WAITER

(Pops right back up.) –salmon done with dill butter accompanied by fingerling potatoes and asparagus.

DEATH

Sounds lovely. Anything else?

WAITER

Yes, we also have a porterhouse steak—

(DEATH touches him again and down he goes.)

HOPE

That's amazing. Doesn't it hurt?

DEATH

No. *(He looks down at the WAITER.)* He's fine. He doesn't even realize it happens to him.

WAITER

(He pops back up.) –that comes with mushrooms, broccoli and a baked potato. Very nice.

DEATH

Sounds delicious.

HOPE

Can you give us another minute?

WAITER

Of course. *(He exits.)*

HOPE

How did you learn that you could do that?

DEATH

A long time ago, when I was just at the beginning of my career, I was on assignment in Indiana. Such a drab place, I'm surprised more people aren't dying there from sheer boredom. Anyway, my assignment was to take this older gentleman. He was walking in the city and was supposed to have a heart attack on the sidewalk. Just as I reached for him, a young man darted into my path and I ended up touching him and down he went. Since I was new at all of this, I panicked, thinking I had sent the wrong person into infinity. However, after a few seconds, the young man popped right back up like nothing had happened. I finished my assignment and went on my merry way.

HOPE

(She pulls back from him.) So, if you touch anybody that's what will happen? What about me?

DEATH

Oh, no. You're fine, you're fine. *(Sees her face.)* You're fine...I think.

HOPE

You think?!

(WAITER returns.)

WAITER

Are you ready to order or do you—

(DEATH touches him again. Again he drops to the floor.)

HOPE

Stop doing that!

DEATH

Sorry. It's rather fun. Plus, I get some insight into this person's life.

HOPE

What do you mean?

DEATH

Usually we aren't privy to the knowledge of how a person is going to die – that's all up to headquarters. We just know at the time someone is going to die and we're sent there to get them going. But, I've learned after I do this, I can see how they're going to die.

Fascinating. HOPE

(HE pops up again.) –need more time? WAITER

(To HOPE.) Are you ready to order? DEATH

In a minute. *(Pause.)* Do it again. HOPE

Really? DEATH

(HOPE nods. DEATH touches WAITER again. WAITER drops.)

DEATH
It’s more fun when they’re mid-sentence. Or mid-fart. That’s hilarious! My buddy Carl and I once—

Fascinating. What have you found out? HOPE

About? DEATH

His death. About how he dies. HOPE

I really shouldn’t share that with you. DEATH

Oh. Of course. I understand. I’m not in the death biz. I shouldn’t have asked you. HOPE

DEATH
(Pause. You can see that DEATH is dying to tell her.) I guess it wouldn’t hurt to tell you. In fact, I’m dying to tell you.

WAITER

(WAITER pops back up again. He has his notepad ready.) And what are we having this—*(DEATH touches him once again. He falls to the floor.)*

DEATH

He's an aspiring actor. Rather a cliché, don't you think? A waiter and aspiring actor? He tries to hit the big time, but gets knocked back at every occasion. He gives up, basically. Doesn't have the oomph to continue. He ends up dying at a very young age because he's lost his will to live.

HOPE

That's so sad!

DEATH

Yeah, well, death happens. Shall we order?

WAITER

(WAITER pops back up again and stands with pad and pen, ready to take their order.)
--evening?

(A cellphone goes off.)

DEATH

Are you kidding me? *(He looks at his phone.)* Seriously, Carl? *(To HOPE.)* I am SO sorry. I have to run. Small glitch in the universe and I have to go to work. *(He stands.)* I hope we can get together again another time.

HOPE

(She stands.) Oh, I'd like that. This has been fun. *(She reaches to shake hands and then decides better of it.)*

DEATH

Gotta run. *(To the WAITER.)* Sorry. *(DEATH starts to go, turns back to HOPE.)* Seriously Hope, so lovely to meet you. *(He exits.)*

WAITER

Does madam want to order anything?

HOPE

No, I don't think so, but thank you.

(WAITER turns to go.)

Wait. Have I seen you somewhere before? In a play, perhaps?

(WAITER turns back to her.)

WAITER

Why—I'm not sure if you've seen me in anything, but I AM an actor. *(sadly)* Actually, I'm more of a waiter trying to be an actor.

HOPE

(She lays her hand on his arm.) You're going to be a fine actor. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

WAITER

Well, thank you so much! I have an audition today, but I wasn't sure I was going to go. I've kinda given up hoping for a part.

HOPE

(She touches him again.) You'll get it.

WAITER

You know? I didn't think I would, but suddenly I'm feeling so different. There's something about you...Thank you. I mean it. Thanks so much. I'll go to that audition.

(WAITER exits.)

HOPE

(She watches him walk out.) Take that Death. All he needed was a little Hope.

(BLACKOUT)

END OF PLAY

