

A MAN NAMED DEATH

by

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1 EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

1

SNOW cascades down. A thick FOG rolls across the screen. The only sound is of the howling wind blowing through the trees.

Suddenly, a DARK SILHOUETTE OF A MAN appears. He walks towards us. Tall, lanky and wears an old black duster. The only thing visible is the light from his cigarette.

This is DEATH. Out on another round to find his newest victim.

His pace is slow. His stride is casual. He's in no hurry to get to where he is going. He gets closer and closer until his silhouette devours the frame.

BLACK SCREEN:

TITLE: A MAN NAMED DEATH

2 INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

2

The lifeless body of ASHLEY BLOOM (16) hangs from a noose tied to the rafters. She sways back and forth.

Death emerges from the shadows and walks over to her. He puffs his cigarette as he stares up at her in pity.

He reaches into his jacket pocket and takes out a little RED BOOK. Flips through the numerous pages of crossed out names and stops on Ashley's. Still uncrossed.

Just before he puts his pencil down, something catches his eye. A hand-written SUICIDE NOTE pinned to her pant leg. He plucks it off and begins reading it.

ASHLEY (O.S)

Whoa...

Death turns to see ASHLEY'S GHOST standing next to him. She stares in awe at the sight of her corpse.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

(Amazed)

I did it. I actually did it.

DEATH

You sure did.

Ashley notices him.

ASHLEY

Who are you?

DEATH

Death. Nice to meet you, Ashley.

ASHLEY

Death? Like, THE death? Grim Reaper death?

DEATH

(Rolls his eyes)

Yeah, that kind of Death.

Ashley looks him over. Confused at his appearance.

DEATH (CONT'D)

You were expecting the black robe and that knife-stick thing, right?

ASHLEY

Yeah.

DEATH

Sorry to disappoint. You misspelled apathy by the way.

ASHLEY

Huh?

DEATH

(Points to the note)

In your note. You misspelled apathy. You forgot the second "a" after the "p". It just says apthy. You wanna fix it?

ASHLEY

Oh. Uh, naw. That's OK.

DEATH

This note is the last thing you're going to say to this world. You want it tarnished by a spelling error?

Ashley shrugs.

DEATH (CONT'D)

I'm gonna find a pen and fix this.

Death walks over to a workbench. He begins sifting around and opening drawers.

ASHLEY

Is it really that important? I mean, I didn't even wanna write that. It was a spur of the moment type thing.

Death pulls out a PEN from the top drawer.

DEATH

Ah! Found one.

Death is about to fix the spelling error when he notices a PHOTOGRAPH pinned to the corkboard above the bench. It's of a 5 year-old Ashley and her FATHER, proudly holding a prize rainbow trout.

DEATH (CONT'D)

Is that you in this picture?

ASHLEY

Yeah.

DEATH

With dad I assume?

ASHLEY

(Annoyed sigh)

Yeah.

DEATH

You look so happy here.

(Turns to her)

How did you go from this happy little kid to...

(Points to her corpse)

That?

ASHLEY

A lifetime of shit. That's what.

DEATH

Lifetime? You're 16 years, 11 months and 4 days-old. No terminal illness. No malnutrition. You live in a pretty decent upper middle class house. You're not exactly slumming it, kid.

ASHLEY

It's not all it's cracked up to be. Trust me.

DEATH

(Scoffs)

Listen to yourself. Do you know how many people I see everyday who would kill to be in your spot? Hell, I'd kill to have even a smidgen of your li...

(catches himself)

You know what? It's none of my business. I apologize.

Death crumples up her suicide note and tosses it aside.

ASHLEY

Uh, thanks.

DEATH

Let's just move on, shall we? There's a lot of people who need to die tonight. So, just take my hand and you'll be on your way.

He extends his hand to her.

Ashley goes to grab it.

Death pulls back.

DEATH (CONT'D)

Just so you know, you could be going anywhere. Could be heaven. Could be hell. Heck, it could be an empty void of nothingness for all eternity. I have no idea. I'm not privy to that information. So, do with that as you wish.

ASHLEY

Gotcha.

She goes to take his hand a second time.

He pulls it back again.

DEATH

If I'm being honest, they don't really look highly on the whole suicide thing up there. So, the smart money's not on heaven.

ASHLEY

I understand.

DEATH
So, with all that being said... Any second thoughts?

ASHLEY
Nope.

Ashley goes to take his hand for a third time.
Death pulls back again.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
(Annoyed)
Are we gonna do this all night?

DEATH
You do realize that I'm giving you a way out here, right?

ASHLEY
Thanks, but I just want to die.

Death looks at her perplexed.

DEATH
Alright, nope. I can't do this.

ASHLEY
What?

DEATH
You don't know what you're doing.
You're just a stupid kid.

ASHLEY
Excuse me?!

DEATH
Look, I'm sure whatever drama that's going on at school may seem world-shattering, but you'll soon realize this was a huge mistake.

ASHLEY
First off, screw you. Secondly, you don't get to choose when or how I die.

DEATH
Actually, I do. Perk of being Death.

ASHLEY
This is BULLSHIT. It's MY choi--

Death SNAPS his fingers and Ashley's ghost disappears.

WHIP PAN to Ashley's corpse. Her eyes POP OPEN and she is resurrected.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
(GASPS TO LIFE)

Death waves his hand and the noose around her neck vanishes.

Her body comes crashing to the ground.

She coughs and gasps for air.

DEATH
Just breathe. Thatta' girl.
You might feel numb for the first
little bit, but eventually the
blood will circulate and you'll be
as good as new.

Death walks over to the GARAGE DOOR and lifts it up. He takes out a fresh cigarette and lights it.

Ashley begins clawing her way over to him.

ASHLEY
H-hey! (Cough, Cough)... Wait!

He glances back to Ashley.

DEATH
No need to thank me. Enjoy your
life, kid!

Death lifts up his hand, about to snap his fingers...

Ashley grabs onto his pant leg...

FLASH OF WHITE!

The image becomes distorted and swirls around until...

SMASH TO:

3 INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

3

Ashley is spit out of a WORMHOLE and plopped into a chair behind a table.

She is disoriented from whatever just happend.

DEATH (O.S.)

What the...?

The camera SPINS AROUND to reveal Death, seated across the table from her.

DEATH (CONT'D)

Oh, you gotta be shittin' me!

Ashley looks around to see that they're in a quaint, Italian restaurant.

ASHLEY

Whu-wh-wha...?

DEATH

OK, calm down. You just teleported 600 miles in 0.002 seconds. Humans aren't really supposed to do that.

Ashley clutches her stomach and groans.

DEATH (CONT'D)

You're gonna feel a bit queasy and may have the urge to...

She PROJECTILE VOMITS all over Death's coat.

DEATH (CONT'D)

And there it is. Feel better?

He snaps his hands and the vomit disappears from his coat.

ASHLEY

Wh-where are we?

DEATH

Italy.

ASHLEY

Italy?!

DEATH

Well, Naples, to be exact. Yes.

ASHLEY

Why the hell are we in Italy?

DEATH

Cause it's home to one of, no, THE greatest restaurant in the world. Welcome to Maria's Ristorante!

Ashley takes another look around the room, unimpressed.

DEATH (CONT'D)

Isn't it great? So authentic. It's not trying to win you over with modern interior decorating, trendy music or attractive hostesses. It doesn't need to grovel at YOUR feet. YOU come here because you know it's the best. The chef is a 92 year-old woman. She can't speak, is blind in her left eye, and lost both of her thumbs. But she's been cooking everyday since she was 4 years-old without fail. She's forgotten more about the culinary world than most of the world's top chefs will ever know. It's the only restaurant to refuse a Michelin star. Can you believe that?

ASHLEY

Interesting. So, can I die now?

DEATH

Ugh, are we still on this?

ASHLEY

Uh, yeah we are!

DEATH

You know, since the dawn of existence every living creature has begged and pleaded for me to spare their life. But I never gave in. Now, for the first time ever, I buckle and give one of you a second chance, and you don't want it? Take the gesture, idiot!

ASHLEY

I don't want your damn gesture. I want to die!

DEATH

(Chuckles in frustration)
You're a real piece of work.
(Sighs) Alright, tell you what.
Let's have a nice meal together and we can talk this through.

ASHLEY

I don't want to eat OR talk, I want to...

DEATH

Die. Yeah, I got it. Listen, I'm on a bit of a time crunch, and I've been fantasizing about my first meal since the 17th century. So, if you don't mind...

ASHLEY

Wait, you've never eaten before?

DEATH

Angels don't eat. We never had the need or, frankly, the time to. I made a list of all of the places I would love to eat at if I were given the opportunity. I've added to it and replaced some here and there, but this place has always been at the top of the list.

Ashley picks up a knife from the table.

ASHLEY

Okay, slit my throat and then you can enjoy all of the food you want.

Death rolls his eyes at her. He pulls a fresh cigarette from his jacket pocket and lights it.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Come on, I'll be dead before the appetizers arrive. What do you say?

Just then, a WAITRESS walks over to their table.

WAITRESS

(Italian)

Benvenuti al ristorante da Maria. Che bella serata, vero?

(Sees Death's cigarette)

Mi dispiace, signore, ma qui non si fuma.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

Welcome to Maria's. Such a beautiful evening, right?

(Sees Death's cigarette)

I'm sorry, sir, but there's no smoking in here.

DEATH

Oh, scusate.

He puts out his cigarette in Ashley's water.

WAITRESS

(In Italian)

Posso iniziare con qualcosa da bere?

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

Can I get you started with something to drink?

DEATH (CONT'D)*(In Italian)*

***So già cosa voglio ordinare.
Innanzitutto, inizierò con un
bicchiere di Barolo
Cavallotto 2016. Poi vorrei,
i tradizionali
spaghetti e polpette.***

(To Ashley in English)

I've always wanted to try it.
I've heard great things.

WAITRESS

***Bellissimo! Le nostre famose
polpette sono preparate
fresche ogni giorno dalla
nostra splendida chef Teresa.
E per voi, signorina?***

Ashley looks at her, confused.

DEATH (CONT'D)

Lei non parla italiano.

WAITRESS*(Broken English)*

Oh. You... want... something... eat?

ASHLEY

No thanks. I'm just sitting here
waiting to die.

The waitress is confused.

DEATH*(Smiles)*

Solo gli spaghetti. Grazie.

WAITRESS*(In Italian)*

***Perfetto. Tra pochissimo
torno con il vino e un po' di
pane per la tavola. Oh, e
signore, non voglio essere
scortese, ma quelle sigarette
un giorno vi uccideranno.***

Death smirks. He nods and gives her wink.

The waitress smiles and walks away.

DEATH (CONT'D)

I already know what I want.
First, I'll start with a
glass of the 2016 Cavallotto
Barolo. And for my meal, I'll
have the traditional
spaghetti and meatballs.

(To Ashley)

I've always wanted to try it.
I've heard great things.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

Great! Our famous meatballs
are made fresh every day by
our gorgeous chef Teresa. And
for you, miss?

DEATH (CONT'D)

She doesn't speak Italian.

DEATH (CONT'D)*(Smiles)*

Just the spaghetti for me.
Thank you.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

Perfect. I'll be back with
your wine and some bread for
the table. Oh, and sir, I
don't mean to preach, but
those cigarettes are gonna
kill you one day.

DEATH

Why can't you be chipper like her?

ASHLEY

She's a waitress at a mom n' pop restaurant making less than minimum wage. Girl's one shift away from shoving her head into the deep fryer.

DEATH

You're such a joy to be around. No wonder you don't have any friends.

ASHLEY

Maybe I don't want friends. Maybe I find them useless and boring like this whole situation.

DEATH

OK, fine. I'll bite. Lay it on me.

ASHLEY

Huh?

DEATH

Your story. You know, plead your case.

ASHLEY

You can't be serious.

DEATH

If you want me to take your soul then you gotta convince me.

He leans in to listen with a smile.

ASHLEY

Alright. You wanna hear my story? Let's do this. My glorious existence is the result of a one night stand on new years eve, 2007. My parents, both 21 at the time and "good Christians", decided to forgo the abortion and 9 months later there I was. Mom gave the whole parenting thing a good 2 weeks before she peaced out and left my dad to raise me. My uncle John moved in to help cause, let's be honest, what the fuck does a 21 year-old engineering student know about raising a baby.

(MORE)

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Dad was away for a lot of my childhood, so I was left with my uncle most days. He was sweet to me. He loved to touch... a little too much. I just thought this was how all kids played house. My father eventually found out and proceeded to beat him to a bloody pulp at my cousin's 9th birthday. He did a year in jail while I bounced in between foster houses. I would cry, scream and hurt the other foster kids until my case worker got me tested. I was diagnosed with major depressive disorder and borderline personality disorder. Eventually, dad came back and I moved in with him and his new wife, Nicole. She basically ignored me. I can't blame her 'cause who wants to deal with the baggage of a molested step-daughter with a personality disorder, am I right? Things weren't any better at school. I quickly earned the title of "fucked up weirdo". The boys liked me, mainly cause I'd flash my tits behind the portables in exchange for weed. I got suspended 12 times and was expelled from 3 schools. Dad and Nicole decided they had enough and put me in a residence for troubled youth. There, I was befriended by a plethora of therapists and was pumped with every antidepressant imaginable. After about a year there I got cleared to go home, but when I got back things had changed. My dad didn't look at me like his daughter anymore. I was this tarnished, stranger. I got the hint that nobody wanted me around. Hell, I didn't want me around. So I said fuck it. And now I'm here, sitting across from literal Death in some restaurant in Italy. Oh, and my favorite color is orange.

She and Death sit in silence, staring at each other.

Just then, the waitress walks over with a plate of freshly baked FOCACCIA with olive oil and balsamic vinegar on the side.

She places it on the table and pours Death a glass of wine.

WAITRESS
*Ecco a voi, un piccolo
 antipasto per iniziare.
 Volete qualcos'altro?*

WAITRESS (CONT'D)
 Here's a little appetizer to
 start. Anything else I can
 get for you two?

Ashley and Death continue their silent stare off, not
 acknowledging her at all.

WAITRESS
OK... buon appetito.

She walks away.

DEATH
 That's it?
 (Laughs)
 Are you kidding me? I was expecting
 more than that.

ASHLEY
 I'm sorry my life isn't tragic
 enough to meet your standards.

DEATH
 I mean, come on. Give me, like, a
 debilitating disease, or that you
 were facing serious jail time or
 something. Look who you're talking
 to. I was around during the
 Medieval period. You gotta do
 better than that.

ASHLEY
 So, your new policy is that if
 someone's reason for dying doesn't
 meet your "standards" you're gonna
 just let them keep suffering?

DEATH
 I don't have a policy cause I quit.

ASHLEY
 Yeah, right. You can't do that...

Death stares back at her, dead serious.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
 Can you?

DEATH
 I dunno. I've never done it before.

ASHLEY

But... YOU'RE DEATH! It's literally
your name!

DEATH

Not anymore. I'm thinking Alonzo
Buckingham.

ASHLEY

(Slams hands down)
People need to DIE!!

The guests in the restaurant stop and look over at her.

DEATH

**Scusate a tutti. Il suo
cervello non funziona molto
bene. Buona cena.**

DEATH (CONT'D)

Sorry, everyone. Her brain
doesn't work very well. Enjoy
your dinner.

They go back to eating their dinners.

DEATH

You wanna keep it down?!

ASHLEY

How is this even allowed? Won't
this mess up the balance of the
universe or something?

DEATH

Possibly. But that's God's problem
now.

(Under his breath)

It's about time he did something
around here anyway.

Ashley pauses. Contemplating what he just said.

ASHLEY

I see what this is.

DEATH

See what?

ASHLEY

You're pissed off at God.

DEATH

(Scoffs)

ASHLEY

You said it yourself. Angels don't get
to do things like eat at restaurants.

(MORE)

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

You wanna be human, but he won't let you, so, you're rebelling.

DEATH

(Sarcastic))

Wow. You're so insightful. How could I have not seen this before.

ASHLEY

I'm so dead-on that you can't even come up with a clever comeback.

DEATH

Maybe you're not as smart as you think.

ASHLEY

Maybe you're just full of shit.

DEATH

Maybe I'm just exhausted from our enchanting evening.

ASHLEY

Or maybe you're too afraid to admit that you're just as pathetic as me.

DEATH

I'm nothing like you, kid.

ASHLEY

You're exactly like me. You just refuse to see it. You don't like your life so you're bailing. You don't give a fuck what happens to anybody else as long as you get out... Sound familiar?

DEATH

The only difference is that you'll never truly know the value of a life, because you were never presented with the possibility of not having one. Every living thing on this planet has both the power to create life and take it away, so it becomes as meaningless to you as the sun rising and setting. And I've had a front row seat to see it all. Ever since the first of your kind crawled out of the primordial ooze and onto dry land, I've watched you. Learned your quirks.

(MORE)

DEATH (CONT'D)

Seen you rise and fall and rise and fall and rise and fall again. That's all I do. I don't stop. I don't sleep. I don't eat. I just do this. I'll never have family or friends to talk to or vent my thoughts to. It's just me. I've walked every inch of this world trillions of times, but I've never experienced it. I'm too busy collecting souls as per God's will. Whether it's some 18 year-old G.I. blown to bits on the battle field, or the unlucky sack who's sent flying through the windshield of his car on his way home from a long day at work, or an old lady alone in her hospital bed losing her battle to the cancer that's destroying her from the inside out, or ripping a still-born baby from the arms of it's mother. Take your pick. I've seen 'em all. They'd beg and plead with me to spare them, but I took with no remorse. I suppose I viewed them with a sort of indifference. Like in their final moments they had become like me. Lifeless. That was my job and I was good at it. A good soldier. But I'm tired, Ashley. Tired of taking souls. The saying goes "God decides when it's your time". Yeah, that may be true, but it's ME that comes to collect. You say we're the same. That you're just like me?

(Leans in)

Nobody's like me!

Ashley stares at him stifled. Lost for words.

Just then, the waitress walks over to the table with a nice, big bowl of spaghetti and meatballs.

She sets it down in front of Death.

WAITRESS

"I famosi spaghetti e polpette da Mari.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

Ah. Maria's famous homemade spaghetti and meatballs.

Death stares down at the plate. It is the most beautiful thing he has ever seen. He smiles from ear to ear.

WAITRESS
Volete qualcos'altro
qualcos'altro?

WAITRESS (CONT'D)
 Is there anything else I can
 get you?

DEATH (CONT'D)
No, e... perfetto.

WAITRESS
Buon appetito!

She walks away from the table.

DEATH
 (Staring at the plate)
 OK, here's how this is gonna go. I'm
 gonna eat this plate of spaghetti and
 then you and I are gonna...

Death looks up to see a handsome, clean shaven man dressed in
 a white suit sitting in Ashley's seat. This is MICHAEL; THE
 ARCHANGEL.

MICHAEL
 (Smiles)
 Brother...

Death deflates at the sight of him. After a beat he chuckles
 to himself.

He looks around the room. It is completely empty. It's just
 the two of them.

DEATH
 Old man can't do his own dirty work
 so he sends you, huh, Michael?

Michael smiles.

DEATH (CONT'D)
 Where is she?

MICHAEL
 Put away for safe keeping. I wanted
 to talk in private. Humans can be
 so nosey.

DEATH
 Wait till you get to know them.

MICHAEL
 Wanna tell me what this is about?

DEATH
 Just enjoying a meal.

MICHAEL

I can see that. Looks like a delicious bowl of spaghetti.

DEATH

Yeah.

MICHAEL

Maybe a little dessert after that?

DEATH

I'll see how full I am.

MICHAEL

I see. Tell me, what are you gonna do after you're done this meal and you walk back out that door?

Death says nothing.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You don't know?

DEATH

Nope.

MICHAEL

Playtime's over, Death.

DEATH

I'm not coming back, Michael.

MICHAEL

Don't make this more difficult than it already is. Defiance of our Master's will is strictly prohibited and subject to banishment. No angel is absolved. You know this. The last angel to pull something like this wasn't shown grace.

DEATH

You did not just compare me to HIM.

MICHAEL

Lucky for you, Master is willing to give you a chance to redeem yourself.

DEATH

He's getting generous in his older years. I'll pass.

MICHAEL

You have a duty to serve our Master! Same as I and all of our brothers and sisters.

DEATH

Michael, I... I can't go back.

MICHAEL

You really think you can be one of them? That's not our life.

Death smirks, somberly. Deep down he knows this.

He picks up his fork and goes to put it into the spaghetti.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

If you take one bite of that food you will undo everything our master planned for you, subjecting yourself to banishment from his kingdom for all eternity.

Death hesitates.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Think it through. Is it worth it?

Death sighs and puts the fork back down.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You made the right choice, brother.

DEATH

Yeah...

Death plucks a strand of spaghetti out of the pile with his fingers and dangles it over his mouth.

DEATH (CONT'D)

...I did.

Death drops it in his mouth. Chews it for a few seconds then swallows it.

Michael stares at him, confounded.

MICHAEL

Fool. You throw it all away for a measly strand of spaghetti. Why?

DEATH

Cause it was my choice to make.

Death pauses. A look of realization comes over his face.

MICHAEL
 (Scoffs)
 Pitiful. I hope you get what's
 coming to you.

Michael gets up from his seat and walks away from the table.

Death sits, alone. He smiles to himself in total satisfaction.

CUT TO:

4

EXT. SHORELINE- EVENING

4

Death stands atop a pile of jagged rocks looking out into the ocean. The waves crash down around him as he observes the sunset over the horizon.

Ashley awakens on the sands nearby. She sits up and looks around, confused to where she is.

She spots Death and makes her way over to him.

ASHLEY
 (Calling out to him)
 Hey!

Death turns to look at her.

DEATH
 Hey kid.

ASHLEY
 What's going on? Where are we?

DEATH
 At the end.

ASHLEY
 End of what?

DEATH
 Our time together. It's been fun,
 but it's time to move on.

Death extends his hand to her. Ashley glances at it, skeptically.

ASHLEY
 Is this for real or are we going to
 China next to debate over some egg
 rolls?

DEATH
No more tricks.

ASHLEY
And what about you?

DEATH
Dunno. I'm waiting here for someone
to tell me where I'm going.

ASHLEY
How does that feel?

DEATH
Weird. I'm not use to being on this
side.

ASHLEY
If I'm being honest, they don't
really look highly on desertion up
there. So, the smart money's not on
heaven.

The two of them share a laugh.

Ashley smiles at him.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Take care of yourself, Alonzo.

He smiles back.

DEATH
You too, Ashley.

They shake hands and Ashley VANISHES. Off to her afterlife.

Death takes a deep inhale of the sea air and looks out at the
setting sun over the horizon. He smiles.

FADE TO BLACK: