

## Death Smiled at Me

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FADE IN.

INT. FAST FOOD KITCHEN - DAY

A hand hovers over the oil of a fast-food fryer. It gets closer and closer...

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - EVENING

A black cat wanders across a city sidewalk, and FELIX, 22, shuffles into frame, crossing its path. He's in a fast-food restaurant uniform and he looks more dead than alive. He trudges down the sidewalks hardly raising his eyes to see where he's going.

What he certainly doesn't see -and no one else does either-is a young-looking woman named GRACE, who's dressed in shades of black and is following behind him with an impressive matte-black scythe. She casually walks through pedestrians as she follows him, and blows up her cheeks with air in a childish expression of boredom.

In a POV shot from Grace's perspective, we see a date and time superimposed above the pedestrian's heads, but most importantly we see Felix's time. Grace checks her shiny black watch.

GRACE

(to herself)

10 minutes to go. Will he make it home in that time? Maybe he'll get hit by a car.

(sighing)

Whatever.

## MONTAGE OF GRACE FOLLOWING FELIX

Felix bumps into a stranger and apologizes without warmth.

Grace starts twirling her scythe like a baton. She spins it from side to side and over her head. She lazily thrusts it into Felix and various strangers, but it passes right through.

Felix steps on every sidewalk crack.

Felix crosses the street and a car nearly hits him.

Felix absentmindedly walks under the ladder of a painter working.

The montage ends as Felix eventually reaches an apartment complex and enters.

## INT - FELIX'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Felix's apartment is small and messy. He steps over objects placed around it with obvious practice.

Grace checks her watch.

GRACE

(to an oblivious  
Felix)

Well, you made it home. What're you gonna do in the next two minutes?

He goes into the bathroom; Prozac is on the vanity.

GRACE (cont'd)

I doubt you'll commit suicide that quick, but maybe.

He washes his face and walks to the kitchen.

A storage block of kitchen knives sit on the edge of the kitchen counter.

GRACE (cont'd)

Hmmm, my bet's on the knives.

Felix accidentally bumps the knife block and they fall to the floor. Grace perks up a little.

He bends over and slowly picks them up one by one and returns them to the block.

FELIX

(to himself)

Was that all of them?

He leans down to check under the counter. It was all of them.

He starts to get back up.

He hits his head on the underside of the counter.

Felix's body turns lifeless as he falls back to the floor.

Felix dies.

Grace can't help but laugh.

She raises her scythe, but then lowers it as she laughs again.

She raises it again for the final time.

Suddenly, Felix takes a deep breath and his eyes go wide. He clutches the back of his head in pain, and looks up at Grace in terror.

FELIX (cont'd)

Ow! Who are you? What are you doing in my apartment?

GRACE

You can see me?

He suddenly processes the sight of the scythe she grips over her head. He tries to stumble to his feet but hits his head on the way up again. This time it doesn't knock him out, but it disorients him further. Grace laughs again.

GRACE (cont'd)

Just stop. Stop doing whatever you're doing.

FELIX

Get out of my house!

He pushes her. Not very hard, granted, but he pushes her! The effort of pushing her makes him fall again, while Grace merely takes a step back to mitigate the force.

GRACE

You can touch me?

Felix yanks her feet out from under her. She falls.

GRACE (cont'd)

Felix, just stop it.

Grace snaps her fingers and her scythe suddenly dissolves into thin air. Felix sees it and stops dead in his tracks.

FELIX

How do you know my name, and WHAT DID  
YOU JUST DO? How did that disappear?

GRACE

You didn't let me introduce myself: I am Grace and I am your grim reaper.

FELIX

I don't believe in grim reapers.

GRACE

Well, do you believe in disappearing and reappearing scythes?

FELIX

I must've hit my head too hard.

GRACE

Yes, but that's beside the point.

Watch this:

She brings the scythe into and out of existence with the snap of her fingers. Felix goes wide-eyed.

He reaches forward to touch the blade, but she snatches it away from him.

GRACE (cont'd)

I wouldn't touch that if I were you. Now that you've sort of died, just touching it might make it collect your soul.

She dematerializes the scythe again.

Once the scythe disappears, Felix looks her up and down and realizes that he's still on the ground on top of her. He becomes a little flustered.

FELIX

Sorry... I think.

He awkwardly crawls backwards off of her and sits on the floor opposite her. She sits up.

GRACE

You think you're sorry?

FELIX

I'm not sure yet...

(beat)

How did I die?

GRACE

You should know that part: you hit your head.

FELIX

But I didn't hit my head that hard? People don't die from hitting their heads that hard.

GRACE

You'd be surprised.

FELIX

(getting worked up)

Are you really a grim reaper? How could you be a grim reaper? How- Why am I dead? If I'm dead, why haven't you harvested me?

GRACE

You were dead, but you're up and about now... Seeing as you can see me, harvesting you would be boring wouldn't it?

Grace sees this hasn't calmed Felix down too much.

GRACE (cont'd)

Maybe we should take a minute and sit somewhere more comfortable.

Grace helps Felix up off of the ground and leads him to his couch. Grace sits in the chair opposite him. Felix takes a deep breath.

GRACE (cont'd)

I'm getting the sense that you have a lot of questions, but frankly, that's a bit boring. So I will give you three questions and three questions only. Whatever you ask I will answer truthfully.

FELIX

What, are you a genie now?

GRACE

Is that your first question?

FELIX

No! Can you just give me a sec?

GRACE

Is that your second?

FELIX

Shut up. Obviously not.

GRACE

Tsk Tsk Tsk. You shouldn't be so excitable. Well, I'll reset your question count, but this time, for every question you ask me, I'll ask you one in turn.

Felix takes a second to think about this, but is so tired and confused he dejectedly sighs and agrees to her conditions.

FELIX

...Okay, I guess.

GRACE

Remember, fair is fair: No lying. Complete honesty. No avoiding the questions.

FELIX

Fine. I'm going first though. Where would I go if you harvested me? Like-is there life after death?

GRACE

Maybe, maybe not. I don't know. I just do what I'm told.

FELIX

Told? By who?

Grace wags her finger.

GRACE



Nuh-uh-uh. My turn. I saw you talk to the girl down the hall the other day in the laundry room. Do you have a crush on her?

FELIX

Wha- What kind of question is that?

GRACE

A yes or no one?

Beat.

FELIX

No... I mean, she seems alright but... no, I don't have a crush on her.

GRACE

Alright. Ask.

FELIX

When you said you do as you're told, who does the telling?

GRACE

I'm not sure. It wasn't that long ago but I don't really remember when I became a reaper. I just remember knowing I was responsible for harvesting the souls of the people living in this complex. I'm sure there are other reapers responsible for other sections. I can't see them though.

FELIX

What do you gain from harvesting them?

GRACE

You're not very good at the whole "taking turns" thing are you?

FELIX

I feel like my questions are more important than yours.

GRACE

How vain of you.

FELIX

They are! Yours was frivolous.

GRACE

Well, here's another frivolous question for you then: How does it feel to know I've been watching over you and everyone here?

FELIX

You've been watching me?

GRACE

Watching *over* you.

FELIX

What's the difference?

GRACE

It sounds better. Answer.

FELIX

I don't know... I don't know. I mean it's strange. But I don't feel creeped out about it?

(MORE)

FELIX (cont'd)

(Felix squints his eyes at her suspiciously)

Maybe it's because you're so conversational. It does make me question why you'd watch me though.

GRACE

Is that your next question?

FELIX

No. I should ask about something more important. How about... what happens if you don't collect people's souls?

GRACE

Strange question. Honestly? I'm not sure. "Ours is not to reason why, ours is just to do..."

FELIX

That doesn't sound right, that's not how that goes.

GRACE

Sometimes the truth doesn't sound right.

FELIX

But I mean, what if you don't "do"?

GRACE

The soul is never collected. I leave them sometimes. There's a couple of coma patients who will never wake up.

Beat.

GRACE (cont'd)

I've had an idea.

Grace holds out her hand, and suddenly tendrils of darkness reach from each shadow in the room and swirl in her palm.

FELIX

What are you doing?

GRACE

Don't worry about it.

The swirling darkness concentrates in her palm and forms one impossibly black ring. Grace holds it up and looks at Felix through it.

GRACE (cont'd)

If you put this on, you might be able to take on a shadow form like me. Then you could travel through the shadows...

(she stops looking through the ring)

...I think.

FELIX

(uncertainly)

"I think"?

GRACE

I don't know if it'll work the same because you're not a grim reaper, but let's find out! I figure you've already died today, what's the worst that could happen?

FELIX

I die. Again. For good this time.

GRACE

Now, now, don't be a pessimist Felix, it's a waste. Either things go wrong and you're right or things go right and you're wrong.

(articulating the tautology with obvious glee)

Pessimists can never be happy and right at the same time.

FELIX

I think I could just be content with not trying and being neither wrong or right.

GRACE

But then you'd always wonder.

Ring in hand, she crosses the room and sits beside Felix on the couch. She then pulls another identical ring out of her own pocket.

GRACE (cont'd)

Give me your hand.

Felix, surprised by the sudden closeness, tenderly obliges.

It usually feels a bit cold and tingly, and it'll take a second to take effect.

(MORE)

GRACE (cont'd)

Maybe it'll do other things too, I am curious what it might...

She puts her ring on her finger and trails off as she slides his ring down his finger. After a couple of seconds, bits of black static swarm around the both of them.

For a moment longer than necessary Grace just holds his hand and studies it contently. Felix looks at her looking at his hand and blushes.

She drops his hand a little too abruptly.

GRACE (cont'd)

So yeah, let's uh, let's turn off the lights.

The room falls into shadow.

GRACE (cont'd)

I'll show you the coma patients. Hold my hand and picture the hospital. You've been there right?

He pictures it. The scene shifts and they appear from the shadow of a tree just outside the hospital.

EXT. HOSPITAL - EVENING

GRACE

Hey, that's not half bad for your first try -but it's not half good either. I don't wanna have to walk all the way inside.

FELIX

How can it be not half bad or goo-

Grace grabs his hand and they melt into the shadows and emerge in a dark closet next to the coma patients.

INT. HOSPITAL COMA WARD - EVENING

We hear the two of them through the closet door.

FELIX

Whoa! Hey! What are you touching? What are you doing?

Felix tumbles THROUGH the closet door and onto the ground.

Grace walks out after him.

GRACE

Now we know the ring means you can go through doors too. Isn't that exciting?

FELIX

You didn't have to push me to find that out!

GRACE

You're right. I didn't have to push you. But I didn't have to *not* push you either.

Felix is about to protest but sighs instead.

GRACE (cont'd)

Notice anything else strange?

FELIX

...What?

GRACE

The coma patients have an excuse, but none of the nurses even deigned to look at your feeble protestations. So either they take my side wholeheartedly, or...

She looks at him expectantly.

GRACE (cont'd)

Or...

She again tries to get him to finish her sentence.

FELIX

Or... I'm invisible?

GRACE

Ding Ding Ding. How does it feel?

She asks him but he's not listening. A nurse comes into the room to close a window.

FELIX

(to the nurse) Hello?

(louder) Hello!?

The nurse finishes closing the window, and as she turns to walk away, walks straight through Felix. Felix shivers.

FELIX (cont'd)

I feel disturbed.

GRACE

I'm not even going to ask what that means. Anyway, back to why we were here: coma patients. There they are. They're pretty boring. They kind of just lie there. But! They still have souls in there. As long I don't collect their souls they won't die. Well, don't get me wrong, if they get taken off life support their body will die, but then their soul will just be taken to their grave.

FELIX

I don't understand. Why don't you just take their souls?



GRACE

I can't be bothered.

FELIX

Don't you just have to touch them with your scythe? We're already here.

GRACE

Then I guess it's because I don't feel like it.

FELIX

Couldn't they just wake up?

GRACE

Nope.

FELIX

But what about their families...those who are waiting for them.

Grace shrugs.

FELIX (cont'd)

You shouldn't put them through that.

GRACE

What does it matter? Their families know they're not waking up.

FELIX

Why did you even bring me here?

GRACE

Partially because I thought it would be fun to test out the ring. Partially because I felt bad that my answer to all three of your questions boiled down to "I don't know." Mostly because I thought it would be fun though. Anyway:

She grabs him by the hand and drags him through the closet door.

FELIX

Wait!

The scene shifts, and they are back in Felix's apartment.

INT. FELIX'S APARTMENT - EVENING

FELIX

You should go back and reap the coma patients.

GRACE

Why?

FELIX

It's the right thing to do. Letting their families worry about them is horrible.

GRACE

And what if I told you that I didn't know for certain whether they would wake or not? And that really this is a test to see if I could save people?

FELIX

I wouldn't believe you. When you said they wouldn't wake up, I believed you then.

GRACE

But if I did keep them alive for that noble reason, would you still be admonishing me? Surely whether I think they will wake or not is irrelevant. I'm not stopping them from waking.

FELIX

You're- you're just using irrelevance to rationalize irreverence.

GRACE

Well then, I have a little idea for you Mr. Noble. Come over here.

She leads him to the wall.

FELIX

What?

GRACE

Walk through this wall.

FELIX

That leads to next door... Is it empty over there or is someone living there or what? I've never seen or heard anything coming from there.

GRACE

Just do it.

Felix obliges.

INT. ABIGAIL'S ROOM - EVENING

Felix and Grace enter an immaculate apartment living room, without a single speck out of place.

FELIX

We shouldn't be here. This is  
someone's apartment.

GRACE

I'm a grim reaper? I already told you I, uh, "people watch" in my spare time.

FELIX

Then *I* shouldn't be here.

He turns go back through the wall. Grace extends her hand and the ring on his finger turns back into shadows that slip through the air and into her hand. Felix is out of his shadow form and back to normal, which becomes immediately apparent as he walks straight into the wall he was trying to pass through. Grace disappears.

FELIX (cont'd)

Ow! Uh, Grace?

GRACE (V.O.)

Wait, can you not see me any more?

FELIX

No, where are you?

GRACE (V.O.)

I suppose someone who isn't in shadow form can't see someone who is... but you can still hear me...interesting...

FELIX

No it's not! Give me the ring back.

GRACE (V.O.)

Shhh, Felix you don't want Abigail to hear you, do you?

FELIX

(in a whispered hiss) There is someone here?

GRACE (V.O.)

Relax, she won't actually hear you, follow my voice.

(jokingly making fake ghost noises)

OOOoooOoOOOhhh

Felix reluctantly follows her voice through the apartment.

GRACE (V.O.) (cont'd)

Now just open this door.

From beyond the door, the faint sound of singing and piano is heard.

Felix opens the door hesitantly and finds that the faint piano playing wasn't from inside this room, but is coming through the wall of next door. What *was* in the room was Abigail, 31, a conscientious woman with headphones on.

She was facing away from the door, so she didn't see as Felix quickly and quietly shut the door again.

GRACE (V.O.) (cont'd) She can't hear you. She's got noise-canceling headphones. Top-of-the-line. Sometimes she listens to audiobooks: the classics mostly, but a couple romances sneak their way in too.

(MORE)

GRACE (V.O.) (cont'd) But she keeps the headphones on most of the time, even without listening to anything. She works online but she never even lets herself listen to an audiobook on the job; she's very conscientious that way.

FELIX

(hissing) Give the ring back!

GRACE (V.O.)

I'll give the ring back, only if you promise to let me finish showing you what I have to show you.

FELIX

Fine.