PARTNERS: A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH
CAST OF CHARACTERS

**LIFE:** An ethereal being responsible for maintaining life. Life is very dedicated to their work, and as a result take the idea of Death’s work as almost a direct affront to their own. As a result of this Life imagines Death as an enemy, and while they may not be fully aware of it, Life feels that the existence of Death undermines the value of life. Life can come across as distant, somewhat depressed, and cold in interactions with Death. Life is a nihilist.

**DEATH:** An ethereal being responsible for ending all lives. Death has no ill will towards Life, in fact Death considers them friends. While the Spirit of Life considers the concepts of life and death to be opposites, death negating the value of life, Death considers life and death to be equally meaningful. To them, the inevitability of death, and the struggle of the living to find meaning in their world in spite of it, is why life is valuable. They are energetic, usually in a good mood. They are kind and have a propensity to ramble on. They have a crush on Life.

**JIM:** Was off-roading searching for cryptids, bigfoot and aliens in particular, when his car broke down. Hours from the road he quickly ran out of water. He has been walking for nearly five days straight and is only barely alive.

(AUTHOR’S NOTE: I wrote Life and Death as not having genders nor physical descriptions, so feel free to cast whomever you see most fit for the roles, regardless of those factors.)
SCENE 1 - THE MOJAVE DESERT-HIGH NOON

(The stage is lit with blinding lights, and the floor is covered in canvas to resemble sand. There are several stones and sparse shrubbery. Crows can be heard in the distance. JIM comes down the center aisle, limping and moving slowly. He is wearing a X-Files shirt. He reaches the stage, and stumbles to his hands and knees. He half heartedly crawls to mid stage, where he stumbles again. He falls on his face and stops moving. LIFE runs up center stage to JIM, crouching down next to him)

LIFE
(Excited, bashful.) Hey! It’s good to...

DEATH
(Taken aback, mock offense, and slightly disheartened.) Alright, straight to business, no “hello” or anything...

LIFE
(Answeled. Answer the question!)

DEATH
(Looking down to JIM, then back to LIFE. Defensively and a little confused.) I thought it was obvious, I'm here to do my job and take this unfortunate soul. (pauses in consideration. intrigued) I'm curious as to why you're here.

LIFE
(Stubbornly.) He still has some time left.

DEATH
(Awed.) You're kidding. (walks to JIM’s side opposite LIFE.) I'm not too sure about that! The guy looks like a prune, what happened to him?

LIFE
Well, (Pausing.) he hasn’t had anything to drink in a while.

DEATH
(Pressing.) How long is ‘a while?’

LIFE
(Hesitant.) uh, something like, (Pausing.) five days

DEATH
(Shocked.) Jeeze! (Pausing, looking at watch, cringing, and rambling endlessly) Alright, if you say he’s got time left I’ll wait a while, but I don’t think he’s got more than ten minuets, he’s looking really rough. You said he walked five days? That’s determination for you I guess, hanging on against all odds you know? Honestly though, I’m not entirely sure why you’re still here.

LIFE
(Interrupting.) I want to wait.

DEATH
(Pausing, confused.) You don’t usually...(Pausing.)

(LIFE glares at DEATH, who quickly looks away. LIFE remains sitting by JIM. DEATH stands up and begins to pace around, never crossing to the side of JIM that LIFE is sitting on.

DEATH
(Sheepishly.) Hey, listen, I’m sorry.

LIFE
(Confused.) For what?

DEATH
When I was asking you why you were going to wait, it kind of sounded like I didn’t want you here.

LIFE
(Incredulous.) You want me here?

DEATH
(Obliviously.) Yeah, of course I do, I mean, (flusterd and stamering slightly.) I like you a lot, I mean, I like hanging out with you, you know...(trails off.)

(LIFE looks uncomfortable. DEATH notices and looks very embarassed but says nothing. DEATH sits down on the side of
Jim opposite life)

DEATH
So why’s he out here? (motioning twoards JIM.)

LIFE
(Frustrated.) It’s dumb, why anyone would come out to this barren dump is beyond me.

DEATH
(Coaxing.) Ah, I’m sure there was a good reason. It’s a lovely day to be outside. What was he, a hiker, a nature lover?

LIFE
He was hunting cryptids (pausing.) like bigfoot, UFOs, that kind of thing. His car broke a while back, he’s been wandering in circles since.

DEATH
(Cringer.) Poor guy.

(There is an uncomfortable pause.)

LIFE
(Perturbed.) It’s such a waste. He went out looking for things that don’t even exist, and soon he won’t either.

DEATH
(Confused.) Hey, not to be rude, but I’m not sure what you mean, he’s just dying after all.

LIFE
(Offended.) Just dying? How could you say that to me?

DEATH
Hey, hold on...

LIFE
(Standing up, interrupting, and yelling.) In fact, you have some nerve even talkng to me, You know that?

DEATH
(Hurt and concerned.) Hey, don’t be upset, I didn’t mean...

LIFE
You’re upsetting me by being here! (Pausing and glaring at DEATH.) I give things life, that’s my purpose. Every plant,
every animal, every person, EVERY SOUL! I follow them their entire lives. (Points to Jim.) He hasn’t had his whole life, he can’t die yet! He has a soul! He had wants, he had experiences, he was trying his best to do something with himself! And now it’s all going to be forgotten! If he dies here, then what difference did any of this make? What gives you the RIGHT to take him? You’ve never even met him! What’s the point of doing MY job if everything that I make ends up like him, If YOU just destroy everything, if everything I do is forgotten. (Begins to tear up in sorrow and rage.) Nothing I do makes any difference and it’s all because of YOU.

(LIFE sits back down and begins sobbing. For the first time, JIM can be heard, his breathing strained and ratteling.He is still laying facedown in the sand. DEATH looks remorseful, and stands up)

DEATH
(Heasitantly, gently, and remorsefully.) I'm, (pusing.) oh man, (pausing.) I didn’t know...

LIFE
(Bitterly.) Didn’t know what!?

DEATH
(Imploringly.) I didn’t mean for it to be like this between us! I never thought what I do would hurt you!

LIFE
(Confused and bitter.) How did you think it was then? Between us?

DEATH
(Pausing, then earnestly.) Well, I love your work first off.

(LIFE laughs bitterly.)

DEATH
(Embarased.) No, really, I do. The birds in the sky, the plants all around us, they’re all beautiful. I mean, I know I couldn’t come up with anything like that even if I had an eternity, (Pausing.) Well, I do have an eternity, we’re immortal after all... (trailing off.) Nevermind. The point is, the things you make, the struggles they have to go through, all the time, are what make this place signifigant at all. Withought you, this world would be a barren rock.
And don’t get me started on how much detail you put into your work. Like, you were talking about Jim right? He does have a soul, and it’s beautiful. Nuanced, full of imperfections. *(DEATH begins walking towards LIFE.)* He was worthwhile! Nothing I could EVER do would make his being less meaningful. *(DEATH sits down next to LIFE.)* *(LIFE looks up.)*

**LIFE**
*(Sad, almost pleading.)* But his soul is going to be gone! His soul won’t be meaningful after this, it’s going to be gone!

**DEATH**
It will still be meaningful though! His life will just be in the past, that’s all. Just because something isn’t happening now doesn’t mean it’s less meaningful than it was, *(Pausing in thought.)* and things that are happening now are still meaningful even though they’re going to end, *(pausing.)* You know, I don’t think him looking for cryptids was dumb.

*(LIFE looks at DEATH, dismayed and incredulous.)*

**DEATH**
Really, I don’t! Listen, whether he was fully aware of it or not, Jim knew I was coming for him. Whether I got him here, or twenty years from now. And he had to decide what was important enough to do before I got him. He knew it wouldn’t change much in the long run, but he decided to do it for its own sake. That’s what makes this not dumb, that’s why living isn’t dumb, *(pausing for a long time. Tenderly)* That’s why what you do isn’t dumb. We’re not enemies, at least I never saw it that way. We work together. We’re partners.

*(There is a long pause.)*

**LIFE**
*(Looks over at DEATH, then looks forward.)* I’m, *(pausing.)* I’m really sorry,

**DEATH**
You don’t need to...

**LIFE**
*(interrupting, regretful, and firm)* No, I do. I was really dumb. I was so angry for so long. I thought, all this time...
that you were antagonizing me, and all I had to do this
whole time was ask you you’re intent. I never even
considered there was another way to look it.

DEATH
(Smilng.) You’re forgiven, and besides, I never took the
time to ask you how you either. (Standing.)

LIFE
(Smilng weakly.) I guess that makes us about even. We’re
both dumb I guess.

DEATH
(Snickering.) Ah, well, it’s in the past now. (extends a
hand to LIFE.) Let’s move past this, eh?

(Life looks at the hand, before taking it and standing.)

DEATH
(Smilng warmly) You feeling a little better?

LIFE
(gives a reserved nod and speaks apreciativly) Thank you.

(JIM let’s out a raspy cough and they both look at him.)

DEATH
(Solemly.) I think it’s time.

(DEATH walks to JIM, and kneels next to him. DEATH looks
towards LIFE, and LIFE nods slowly. DEATH places their hand
lightly on JIM’s back. JIM stiffens momentarily, and then
goes limp. While this happens, life ambels to the front of
the stage, facing away from JIM and DEATH. DEATH takes a
moment, then stands up and stands beside life. All is quiet
but the sound of crows.)

LIFE
(looking up, quietly, reserved.) Do you hear that? The
Crows? (Pausing.) They’ll be here soon. (Pausing.) If he
wasn’t here, they would have gone hungry tongiht. They
wouldn’t have been able to feed their chicks. Soon, things
are going to grow here. Primrose and lillies, where he is
now. The soil wouldn’t have the nutrients for them if,
(pausing, looking at DEATH, then looking away, embarassed)
What I mean is, I think I’ve been taking you for granted
for a long time.
DEATH
(Graciously.) That means alot, thanks. We need each other, you know...(Realizing, flustered.) I mean like, we work well together! I didn’t mean it like... (Trailing off.)

(LIFE and DEATH stare at each other. LIFE looks touched, and DEATH looks apprehensive.) I mean, unless you want me to mean it the other way...

(LIFE looks nervous, leans in slowly, and gives DEATH a kiss. They both sit silently smiling for a moment.)

DEATH
(Standing up, smiling.) Thank you.

LIFE
(Confused, smiling.) For what?

DEATH
For letting me listen. (Pausing.) Come on, there’s still alot of day light left you know! We’ve got this whole desert, we could go look around me and you. (offering their hand)

LIFE
(Smiles coyly and takes DEATH’S hand.) This is a date then?

DEATH
(Snickering, smiling contentedly.) Yeah, I guess it is!

(They begin to walk down the center aisle, still holding hands, away from JIM.)

DEATH
(Excitedly rambling on.) I love days like this, it’s like you can see every grain of sand in this sun, right?! You know just on my way here I saw a falcon. It was crazy! The sky was all blue so you could see it really well...

(DEATH gets progressively quieter as they draw farther away, before they eventually fade from ear shot. Only crows are heard, before the lights dim.)

(CURTAIN)

(END OF ACT)