

DEATH TAKES THE A

an Atrainplay by
Craig Pospisil

songs by
Cornell Womack

Representation:

Bruce Miller

Washington Square Arts

310 Bowery, 2nd flr.

New York, NY 10012

tel: 212-253-0333 ext. 36

bmiller@washingtonsquarearts.com

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(MARK and CHRISTINE board the A train wearing Halloween costumes. Christine is dressed as a vampire with a cape and wild make-up. Mark wears a suit and a George Bush mask.)

MARK

Didn't we just do this?

CHRISTINE

What? Halloween? Not since last year.

MARK

No. Didn't we just go to one of Larry's parties?

CHRISTINE

That was weeks ago.

MARK

Three. It was three weeks ago.

CHRISTINE

Yeah, okay. Three. That's plural.

MARK

It just seems like we just took this train down to his place.

CHRISTINE

Ah, but we're in costume this time.

MARK

Don't remind me.

CHRISTINE

What's the matter, Mark? You said "okay."

MARK

I know, I know . . . but . . .

CHRISTINE

What?

MARK

I'm tired. There. I said it. I'm tired.

CHRISTINE

Oh, you'll wake up once we get there. It'll be fun. You always have fun.

MARK

No, I don't. I never have fun at these parties. And I hate Larry.

CHRISTINE

What?! How can you say that? Larry's such a cool guy. And he has great parties. There's always lots of good theater people there – producers, actors. Lot's of really connected people.

MARK

Lot's of really young people.

CHRISTINE

Oh, now, don't start.

MARK

I'm serious. Everyone at his parties is like twelve years old.

CHRISTINE

Oh, stop! I know for a fact that Dave is thirty-three.

MARK

(sarcastically)

Wow! That old? Really? Jeez, he looks really good for nowhere near forty.

CHRISTINE

What's the big deal?

MARK

The big deal is they make me feel like I've got one foot in the grave.

(DEATH enters. He's not very tall and on the slight side, wearing a full length black robe and carrying a scythe. He has black and white makeup on and his face resembles a skull. He checks his watch.)

CHRISTINE

You always make too much about our age difference.

MARK

How can I not? I'm almost a whole person older than you.

CHRISTINE

Well, I don't care.

MARK

And most of the time I don't either. Then we go to one of these parties, and no one gets my references, and I don't know what they're talking about. And they're all so much younger . . . and more successful. Damn hipsters.

SONG: "It's a Lonely World"

(Mark sings of how life and beaten him down and how tired he's become. Christine tires to convince him that the best may be yet to come.)

(Death checks his watch, listens to it, taps it and checks again. He approaches Mark and Christine.)

DEATH

Excuse me, do you have the correct time?

MARK

Yeah, it's 8:30.

DEATH

Oh, then you've got a little more time. My watch is fast.

CHRISTINE

I love your outfit.

DEATH

Oh, why, thank you.

CHRISTINE

Are you going down to the Village for the parade?

DEATH

What parade?

CHRISTINE

The Halloween parade.

DEATH

Oh! Is it Halloween already? That's my favorite holiday!

CHRISTINE

But . . . aren't you going to a costume party?

DEATH

No. I'm Death.

(off their blank looks.)

You know, the Grim Reaper?

MARK

Sure.

DEATH

No, really. I am.

MARK

I believe you.

DEATH

No, you don't. I can tell.

MARK

Yes, I do. Absolutely.

(to Christine)

Let's get off at the next stop, honey.

DEATH

I'm afraid you won't have time for that.

MARK

Listen, buddy, I'm not in the mood tonight, okay?

DEATH

But I am Death.

MARK

Look, no offense, but you're about as fearsome as a chipmunk.

DEATH

Oh, really?

(Death gestures and Mark falls to the ground dead. Christine shrieks and checks Mark.)

CHRISTINE

Oh my god! He's dead!!

DEATH

Oh don't get so worked up. I'm just making a point.

(Death gestures again. Mark comes to life with a start, checking himself and finding that he's alive.)

DEATH

I believe an apology is in order.

CHRISTINE

What kind of a freak are you?

MARK

No, don't make him angry with you, Christine. It . . . it's okay. I told you I was feeling tired. I guess it's just my time. I love you so much. I hope you'll live a long, happy life.

DEATH

No, no, no. I'm not taking you. I'm here for her.

MARK and CHRISTINE

What?!

MARK

Her?

CHRISTINE

Me?!

DEATH

Yeah. Christine Richards. That's what it says on the death certificate.

MARK

But she's so young!

DEATH

Yes, but she's going to have an aneurysm in . . .

(He checks his watch.)

five . . . four . . . three . . . two . . . one . . .

(Christine looks terrified. Mark watches her fearfully. Death looks on, amused. And nothing happens. Christine and Mark look relieved and smile. Then Christine grabs her head in pain, cries out and dies.)

DEATH

(looking at his watch)

I've got to get this fixed.

(Mark kneels down and checks Christine's lifeless body. Death steps forward to collect her, but Mark stands and blocks his way.)

MARK

You'll take her over my dead body.

DEATH

You're kidding, right?

MARK

But this can't Please don't take her. She . . . she's got so much life ahead of her. She's so talented. There's so much she has left to do.

DEATH

I'm sorry. Them's the rules.

MARK

Wait, wait! What about a game of chess? You play chess, right?

DEATH

Oh, no. Ever since that Bergman film my dad gave me very specific instructions. No chess.

MARK

Then take me instead!

DEATH

Look, I'm sorry, but I can't.

MARK

How do you live with yourself?

DEATH

Hey, it's a job okay? The family business. My father was the Angel of Death, and his father before him, and his father before him. That's the way it goes. I'm sorry, but I have to do this. But it's not like this was what I wanted to do when I was a kid, you know.

MARK

What did you want to do?

DEATH

You'd laugh.

MARK

No, I won't.

SONG: “I’m the Grim Reaper” aka “Sickle Guy”

(Death sings about how hard it was growing up. He had no friends. They all died. He wanted to be an actor, but at auditions the directors always would have a heart attack. So, he’s stuck.)

MARK

I understand completely! Christine and I are in the theater too. She’s an actress and I’m a playwright.

DEATH

You’re kidding.

MARK

No. If you wanted we could maybe help you.

DEATH

Me? You . . . you’d help me?

MARK

Sure. Christine knows everyone in the business, and . . . Oh, except . . .

DEATH

What?

MARK

She’s dead.

DEATH

Oh, is that all?

(Death gestures and Christine revives and sits up, coughing.)

MARK

Christine!

CHRISTINE

I . . . I’m alive! What happened?

MARK

We just got to talking here and . . . well, I thought Mr. Death could come to the party and meet Larry and everyone.

CHRISTINE

What? Look, I know you don't like Larry, but we can't do that!

MARK

No, no, no. He's an actor!

(Death's cell phone rings. He answers it.)

DEATH

Yes? Oh, hi Dad. No, I know I'm a little behind schedule. Well, my watch is broken, and . . . yes, I will. Uh, listen, Dad, I met some people and they invited me to this party and . . . Oh. Uh-huh. Yes, sir. Yes. I understand.

(He hangs up.)

I'm sorry. I have to take her.

MARK

What about your dream?

CHRISTINE

You can't just give up!

DEATH

Sometimes there just isn't enough time.

CHRISTINE

That's not true. There's always time if you want something badly enough. Look at Mark. He's still pursuing his dream of becoming a famous playwright even though he's over forty and realistically has very little chance for success.

MARK

Thanks, honey.

CHRISTINE

My point is . . . if you don't follow your dream now . . . you'll live to regret it.

SONG: "I'm the Grim Reaper" Reprise

(Christine and Mark sing new lyrics to the song and convince Death to change his ways and start a career on the stage.)

(As the A train pulls into the station, they the car singing and dancing.

Blackout.)