

LAUGHING IN THE FACE OF DEATH

By Byron Lanning (2009)

Synopsis: Death takes a break from work, sits next to Everymensch and Couponsaver on a bench. When he scares them with his odd sense of humor, they use it against him.

Characters:

Everymensch -

Couponsaver - old person, carries a cane,

Death - dressed in black robes, carries a scythe

Garbage Collector

Staging Needs: Bench or a series of chairs, cell phone, garbage can

Time: More than 4 minutes

LAUGHING IN THE FACE OF DEATH

(Death sits down next to Everymensch on a bench. Everymensch looks at him nervously.)

EVERYMENSCH

It's not Halloween, is it?

DEATH

No. I don't think so.

EVERYMENSCH

Are you going to a costume party?

DEATH

No, I'm working.

EVERYMENSCH

What do you do for a living?

DEATH

I'm an escort, you could say.

EVERYMENSCH

An escort? You're dressed like Death.

DEATH

That's because I am Death.

EVERYMENSCH

Death, you mean like death as in meet one's maker, gone to kingdom come, pushing up daisies, that kind of death?

DEATH

That's me.

EVERYMENSCH

You're Death. And you're working now. Right now! Oh man. You can't take me yet. There's so many things I still have to do. You know I've never answered a \$64,000 question or come up smelling like a rose. I've never had six of one or half a dozen of the other. I've never even pulled myself up by my bootstraps or carried a coal to Newcastle. I've never even been there and done that.

DEATH

Calm down. I'm not here to pick you up. I'm just taking a work break.

EVERYMENSCH

Why didn't you just say that? Death sits next to person. What do expect him to think? He thinks you are going to take him away to the afterlife. What's wrong with you? You could scare someone to death.

(Death laughs)

What are you laughing?

DEATH

You said scare someone to death. I think it's funny, but I have an odd sense of humor. You have to have an odd sense of humor to do this job.

EVERYMENSCH

Don't sit so close to me. You smell like a dead opossum on the side of the road. You got flies all around you.

(waves the air, as if chasing flies away)

DEATH

What do you expect? I'm dead.

EVERYMENSCH

Sit over there. I don't want your, flies and smelly deathness near me.

(Enter Couponsaver. Sits next to Death)

DEATH

Sorry, I can't do that.

COUPONSAVER

(looks at Death, waves the air, shooing away flies)

You look familiar.

DEATH

That doesn't surprise me. I've been depicted in many paintings, plays, movies, television, even advertising.

COUPONSAVER

Art, movies, TV ... that's not it. Did you go to Erasmus Poindexter High School?

DEATH

I never went to high school.

EVERYMENSCH

I could tell that.

COUPONSAVER

You look just like someone I went to high school with. A kind of a Gothic guy. He was the president of the after-school Vampire Club.

DEATH

No, I told you I didn't go to high school.

EVERYMENSCH

Don't you know who that guy is? He's Death.

COUPONSAVER

Really. The death. The grim reaper himself.

DEATH

Yes, I'm death, but I don't like that term grim reaper. I'm not grim. I have a fine but odd sense of humor.

COUPONSAVER

So you're death, huh. You must have an interesting job.

DEATH

Eh, it's a living.

EVERYMENSCH

Why are you asking him so many questions? You could be on his list.

COUPONSAVER

What list?

EVERYMENSCH

The list of all the people he's supposed to escort to the afterlife.

DEATH

Actually, we don't use a list any longer. We use a smartphone.

(takes a phone out of his pocket and holds it up)

It's much more efficient. Before the smartphone, an angel of death had to write up a new list everyday and hand deliver it. Now the list updates automatically.

COUPONSAVER

That's amazing.

EVERYMENSCH

Did you ever think that maybe Death is sitting next to you because you're on that list?

COUPONSAVER

Oh, that wouldn't be good.

EVERYMENSCH

Yeah. Not good at all.

COUPONSAVER

Am I on that list?

DEATH

I don't know. I haven't checked. I'm on break. What's your name?

COUPONSAVER

Edward Couponsaver.

DEATH

(stands up, takes a cell phone out, and looks at it)

Let's see. Couponsaver. Yes, it's right here. You're my six PM.

COUPONSAVER

What! That can't be. I am far too young to die.

EVERYMENSCH

How old are you?

COUPONSAVER

I'm 112.

DEATH

Just kidding. Just kidding. You're not on my list. It's my odd sense of humor again.

COUPONSAVER

That's not funny! You nearly scared me to death.

DEATH

(laughs)

Maybe not to you. From here, it seems amusing.

EVERYMENSCH

We have an odd sense of humor too.

(Everymensch gets on all fours behind Death, and signals Couponsaver to push Death)

COUPONSAVER

Yeah, we also have a great odd sense of humor, and we'll show you.

(Couponsaver pokes Death with his cane and pushes Death over Everymensch. Death drops the scythe. Everymensch and Couponsaver laugh.)

DEATH

That wasn't funny.

EVERYMENSCH

Maybe not to you, but from here it's amusing.

COUPONSAVER

Very amusing.

(laughs)

(Enter Garbageman.)

EVERYMENSCH

I know something even more amusing.

(Everymensch, picks up Death's scythe and puts it in a trash can. Garbageman takes away the garbage can with the scythe in it)

DEATH

Hey come back here! That's my scythe. I can't be death without a scythe.

(Exit Death)

COUPONSAVER

He runs fast for a dead person.

EVERYMENSCH

Look at that. Those flies buzzing around him sure like that garbage can.

THE END