

CLOSING THE DOOR

CAST:

HERMES:- The messenger of the Gods. In human form. Spritely, smart, inquisitive.

THANATOS:- God of Death. In human form. Gets a bad rep. Actually a nice guy, just has a morbid job. A guide between the world of the living and the underworld.

IRIS:- A random passerby. Hides a lot of her emotions. Is VERY tired of life, but you wouldn't know to meet her.

HADES:- God of the underworld. In human form. Dark physical presence, that gives way to a perfectly affable personality. The idea that the underworld is in some way evil or bad is an entirely man-made construct.

SETTING:

A random back alley. The door to the underworld should effectively occupy the "4th wall" space (the audience). A spot from the front with a lot of warm light dictates that an un-earthly light source is emanating from the door. Not evil, just different.

This is a fast paced, stand and talk type of play. Not a great deal of action. The dialogue keeps moving unless the moment feels naturally awkward or meaningful.

(Lights up)

(HERMES and THANATOS are staring at the "4th wall". It's confusing.)

HERMES

Well, that's weird.

THANATOS

Yep.

HERMES

It's a door.

THANATOS

Yes.

HERMES

To the underworld.

THANATOS

Yes.

HERMES

Did you open it?

THANATOS

No.

HERMES

Ok.

THANATOS

Of course I didn't open it./

HERMES

Ok.

THANATOS

/Why would I want to show you
a random door I opened/

HERMES

Ok!

THANATOS

The point is, I don't know who DID open it.

HERMES

Right. Who found it?

THANATOS

Nyx.

HERMES

You spoke to Nyx?!

THANATOS

She can, ya know, communicate with me sometimes.

HERMES

Really?

THANATOS

It's kind of weird.

HERMES

Ok.

THANATOS

You want me to close it up?

HERMES

Yeah, in a minute. Best not to leave a gaping whole to the underworld open for anyone to fall into. Gotta ask a few questions first though.

THANATOS

Yeah.

(Pause. HERMES gets his cell phone out. Starts texting.)

THANATOS

I usually always know when this kind of thing happens.

HERMES

Yeah.

THANATOS

A little concerning, right?

HERMES

Oh yeah.

THANATOS

So I did the right thing, telling you?

HERMES

Sure.

THANATOS

So what's the plan?

HERMES

Ummm well I think we'll head to The Office, ask a few questions.
First, I need a bagel.

THANATOS

Not filling me with confidence.

HERMES

What are you worried about?

THANATOS

Are you serious?

HERMES

Sure. We found the door, we're gonna close it. No one fell through. It's fine!

THANATOS

Been a while since you been to my neck of the woods hasn't it.

HERMES

Yeah I guess. Only ever really go on business you know.

THANATOS

Ok, hypothetical situation, imagine we're talking/

HERMES

We are talking.

THANATOS

In the hypothetical situation we are talking, I'm telling you some story, a true story BUT I'm lying. You'd know it immediately right?

HERMES

Before you even said anything.

THANATOS

You just know it. It's in the fabric of your existence. The message is either clean or false.

HERMES

Correct.

THANATOS

I KNOW when doors to the under world are opened. The boundary between them is the fabric of my existence. I open most of them myself. And if it isn't me, it's usually Hades or another guardian. But I always know.

HERMES

Yet this time...

THANATOS

I had to be told.

HERMES

(Gets it now) Ok. (back to the cell phone, dials) Hades! We have a little situation here. Can you come have a little chat? Ok.

THANATOS

Those things are so weird.

HERMES

You know we just do it to fit in. There's quite a few more humans on this planet these days. You know how they'd react if I called my uncle in the old way.

THANATOS

Fair point.

HERMES

Plus Solitaire is really addictive.

(HERMES continues to play on the phone. THANATOS stares into the door. A woman walks behind them and pays them no mind. At the edge of the stage, she freezes and then slowly walks backwards to the centre and turns to face the door. She is peering between them at the open door to the underworld, stunned.)

IRIS

What the hell is that?

(HERMES glances at her. Then at THANATOS. Oops. This wasn't supposed to happen. They stare at each other for a moment.)

HERMES

Hi.

THANATOS

What are you doing?

HERMES

Don't worry about it.

THANATOS

Hermes, what the fuck are you doing?

HERMES

It's fine, I've got this under control. *(Back to IRIS)* Hi. How are you doing?

IRIS

I'm good. *(Still staring at the door)*

HERMES

Great! That's just...great. Umm... I'm really sorry but we're going to need to talk to you about some stuff right now, would you like to go for a coffee?

IRIS

I'm on my lunch break, I gotta go back to work.

HERMES

Not any more.

(We hear a distant noise that sounds like an explosion in reverse, followed immediately by IRIS getting a text.)

THANATOS

HERMES!!!

HERMES

(To THANATOS) Sorry. I won't do anymore, I promise. *(To IRIS)* That's your boss. You're now on paid maternity leave.

IRIS

I'm not pregnant!

HERMES

I know. And your job doesn't offer paid maternity leave either. So I'm actually making your day really great right now!

IRIS

Why does my boss think I'm pregnant?

HERMES

Because I told him you are.

When I relay a message, it is almost impossible to not believe me. It's an odd gift, but a useful one. It's the reason armies come together in truce without fear of ambush, it's the reason your boss will now swear blind that you are 12 weeks pregnant with your husband that I know you don't have. And it's the reason you are believing every word I'm saying right now.

(At this point, light filters out of the stage, becomes more harsh, and centralised around HERMES and IRIS. HERMES is delivering a message)

HERMES CONT.

I am Hermes, messenger of the Gods. I was born the day of the first communication. Child of Zeus, parent of Pan. I am the God of transitions, boundaries, an emissary between the mortal worlds, the divine and the afterlife. And I can fly as well, which is pretty fun.

(Lights snap back to normal)

THANATOS

Hermes, real quick, just to remind you that your *uncle* is on his way here.

IRIS

And you are?

THANATOS

Thanatos, God of Death. I'm not the one that kills. You guys take care of that yourselves. I take care of you afterwards. Hence... this thing. (*Points at the door*)

IRIS

Yeah. What is that?

HERMES

That is a door to the underworld. Normally opened by Thanatos or other emissaries of the underworld.

IRIS

Normally?

THANATOS

Yeah, we got a problem with this one.

IRIS

You didn't open it?

THANATOS

Nope.

BOOMING VOICE FROM NOWHERE

And you can't figure out who did.

(HADES strides onto stage. THANATOS cowers slightly. HERMES appears amused. IRIS is confused.)

THANATOS

Hey boss.

HADES

Thanatos. Hermes, good to see you.

HERMES

Been a while.

HADES

Iris! You don't know me, but I was going to be meeting you very soon. It seems my nephew here has touched you enough to completely alter the course of your life.

HERMES

No way!

IRIS

Touched me?! Meaning what?

HADES

Until a few moments ago, you had an enormous brain tumour growing right there (*he lightly touches her temple*). You WERE scheduled to drop dead in around 3 months. Not anymore.

IRIS

You're kidding?!

HERMES

I genuinely had no idea. Is he right?

THANATOS

Yeah. I didn't want to say anything. I thought it was a bit too morbid to bring it up.

HADES

My apologies. I don't have a great compass for that kind of thing.

HERMES

Oh wait, have I kind of made her immortal now?

HADES

Slightly.

THANATOS

I TOLD you not to fuck around.

HERMES

Weird. This is how Hercules/

HADES

Yep.

HERMES

Interesting.

IRIS

Hi, I'm actually standing right here, I'd prefer if you talked to me, not about me.

HERMES

Sorry!

IRIS

So. I'm not going to die? Ever?

HERMES

It's going to be... really hard for you to die.

IRIS

So if I were to jump off the top of this building right now, I'd survive this fall?

HERMES

This one? 5 floors... yeah. Probably.

IRIS

Dammit.

(Pause)

(Suddenly everyone becomes very still. Almost reverential. IRIS is on the verge of tears. In fact, she has been most of the time. Just no one noticed. THANATOS is suddenly flooded with understanding. The following is slower, quieter.)

THANATOS

How long have you been thinking about suicide?

IRIS

Quite a while. I was heading up that fire escape over there.

THANATOS

It's been something you've thinking about a lot.

IRIS

Oh yeah. Everyday.

THANATOS

Since you were young. *(IRIS nods)* Since that first time you noticed that daddy's razor blades could detach from the handle.

IRIS

How do you know about that?

THANATOS

I guide the dead and the dying to the underworld. At this point, I just... receive all necessary knowledge. I know about every single time you held a handful of pills, or stood on a window sill.

IRIS

What for? Why do you know all of that?

THANATOS

It helps. It helps the transition. I think it helps for me to explain what the underworld is.

IRIS

You take it all on. You listen to everyones' sadness, hatred, fear. How do you do it?

THANATOS

It's... what I exist for.

IRIS

It doesn't get you down?

THANATOS

I... guess. I don't... really get out much.

(Pause. THANATOS looks back at HERMES and HADES, then makes his decision.)

THANATOS

So, I guess now you aren't going anywhere for a while. I think these two are going to go visit The Fates and see what's going to happen to you. In the meantime, seeing as this door is open... would you like to come see the underworld? I'll bring you back when we're done. At the very least I don't think you'll be going there permanently for a while yet. I can show you what you've been thinking about for your whole life.

IRIS

Ok. Thank you.

THANATOS

Boss, you mind closing this up for me when we're gone?

HADES

Sure. You kids have fun.

(THANATOS and IRIS exit)

HERMES

That was kinda cute.

HADES

He's right about not getting out often. Thanatos is older than all of us, remember. He doesn't get too much socialising other than his interactions with the dead.

HERMES

Nice to see his work in action. I've never seen the exact moment before.

HADES

It's quite a private thing for the most part...

HERMES

How did the door open on it's own?

HADES

Iris has been thinking about suicide since she was a child. She has visualised every possible way to do it, everyday of her life. It has become a companion for her. She has become so closely connected with death that it is practically following her around. So close was her link, that the corporeal world KNEW that today was the day, and began to expedite her journey.

HERMES

She manifested a door to the underworld?!

HADES

Yep. Humans are baffling. You'd think she'd be intensely depressing to know or to be with, but she isn't. You'd never know. She exists side by side with her thoughts of suicide, yet walks the earth as if nothing was wrong. No one knows. Even Thanatos didn't see until she admitted it. He couldn't see her, even as she subconsciously did his own job for him. He may be the God of Death, but he isn't Death itself.

HERMES

Humans carry such sadness in them. Constantly. How do they hide it?

HADES

They may not be as powerful as us, Hermes, but they are infinitely more complex.

HERMES

Well, I guess we'd better go see The Fates and see what mess I've made.

HADES

With any luck you've created another muscle-bound hero to lead the armies of the world to victory!

HERMES

Oh no, not again.

END