Psychopomp Daydream
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Synopsis: When psychopomps disagree on what is most important to the living, Charon and the Grim Reaper must move into an apartment together. Enjoy their trials and tribulations as we present this odd couple comedy.

Setting: The Underworld and a mortal city

Time Period: Now?

**Cast of Characters:**

Note: Any of the characters can be played by anyone of any gender and pronouns may be edited to reflect that except for Valkyrie. She should be played by a female-identifying actress.

Anubis: The Egyptian god who judges and ushers in the dead.

Charon: The ferryman of the river Styx.

Valkyrie: One of the winged warrior women who brings the souls of heroes to Valhalla.

Grim Reaper: He’s grim. He reaps. He has a scythe.

Real Estate Agent: A perky real estate agent who just wants to get his/her commission. Fun mom energy.

Bartlett/Martlett/Hartlett: A trio of three characters who look oddly similar. They should be played by the same actor. Bartlett is a landlord. Martlett manages a supermarket. Hartlett works at a fish market.

Old Shopper: An old cranky person in a supermarket.

Extras are necessary to fill city streets and stores. They may have fish thrown at them.
Scene 1

(Charon sits at the edge of a dock on the river Styx. He currently facing away from the audience. We can see he has a fishing rod, but the dock blocks our view of what is on it. The rod bobs up and down and he pulls it in. There is a skull tied to the end of the line. Disappointment plays across his face before shrugging and putting it on the dock next to him. Then, he casts the line back out. Soon, dark Anubis arrives and pokes him on the shoulder. Charon turns to face Anubis.)

Anubis: Caught anything today, Charon?
Charon: Not yet.
Anubis: And how long have you been fishing for?
Charon: (looks at wrist as if to check watch. His wrist is covered by a giant cloak so it’s a pointless exercise) Eeeeh about two thousand and three hundred years, give or take a century.
Anubis: And how many fish have you caught in that time?
Charon: Well no fish...but I did once catch a baby!
Anubis: Achilles doesn’t count.
Charon: Then my record is stuck at zero. But, you never know, I might get lucky!
Anubis: If you can find anything alive down here, you’d be more than lucky. What’s the point of sitting here on a musty dock anyway?
Charon: Everyone needs to pass the time. It doesn’t matter if you’re living or dead, sometimes it’s just nice to dangle your legs by the water.
Anubis: I suppose, it just feels a bit pointless down here.
Charon: Much the same up there I’d figure.
Anubis: Have you no idea what goes on above our heads? Great monuments of glass and steel are erected as we speak. New books are being written, wonderous machines are being built. How can you not be curious about that?
Charon: I only know what people tell me. Normally, they’re too busy keening about unfinished business to mention any of that.
Anubis: Hmph, somedays I wonder how you’re able to see past your own nose. All you ever see are broken tools, not the statues they have carved.
Charon: Eh, aren’t those all just things they make to keep busy?
Anubis: (Much taken aback) Ra, preserve me! If we weren’t such good friends, I’d kick you right into that river. Did Van Gogh paint the night sky just to keep busy? Did Marie Curie discover radiation just to keep busy? Did Lief Erikson conquer new lands just to keep busy? (Valkyrie runs into the scene quickly as if she flew in.)
Valkyrie: Honestly, I wouldn’t be surprised if he did.
Charon: Hi Val!
Anubis: Ammit Shit! Valkyrie, what are you doing here? Don’t you have some mangled meat-pie of a corpse to rescue?
Valkyrie: Don’t you have some toilet-paper wrapped inbred to usher in?
Anubis: Hmph
Charon: (To Val) Want some fish?
Valkyrie: Do you have any?
Charon: (dejectedly) No.
Valkyrie: Thanks for the offer. I can’t stay long anyway. I’ve got some heroes to bring to Valhalla at 5. Got to fly, you know. Not that Anubis over here would know anything about the open sky; he only hangs out in musty basements.
Anubis: Tombs! They! Are! Tombs!
Valkyrie: Whatever. They smell.
Anubis: Well excuse me for caring about the souls of great people whose deeds will echo in the hallways of history for EONS!
Valkyrie: Like that matters. Nobody cares about a fire that burns softly and then dies quietly with a cough. I catch fireworks in the moment of their explosion.
Charon: Doesn’t that hurt your hands?
(Valkyrie and Anubis sigh deeply.)
Anubis: And they say his culture invented philosophy…
Valkyrie: You would think he’d care more about what matters in life.
(The Grim Reaper enters, his body covered in black robes, scythe in hand. Make this as dramatic and over the top as possible.)
Grim: None of it matters.
Anubis: Excuse me?
Grim: It all ends.
Anubis: Sure, but their accomplishments persist as long as there are humans to appreciate them.
Grim: Nothing that is golden lasts. Nothing.
Valkyrie: Geeze who invited the buzzkill?
Charon: It’s our weekly wine and bitch night.
Valkyrie: I guess you bring the whine and he’s the bitch.
Grim: Yes.
Anubis: I just don’t understand how you can usher these people to their final destinations and still be so nihilistic. You go out into the world itself more than any of us. Can you not see the beauty in it?
Grim: I see rotting facades, nothing more.
Valkyrie: Fine. If you don’t like what they do up there, what about how they get to you? Isn’t the roar of the battlefield exhilarating?
Grim: They all die the same way, alone and afraid.
Charon: Well your existence isn’t exactly a bundle of daisies either.
Grim: How so?
Charon: Floating around all menacingly, reaping souls without taking any joy in it. At least I enjoy rowing.
Grim: I like menacing.
Charon: Then where’s your Joie de Morte? I don’t think I’ve ever seen you smile.
(Grim stares blankly.)
Charon: I mean, come on, Grim, I’d kill to get to spend some time topside.
(In the background, Valkyrie and Anubis whisper conspiratorially.)
Grim: It is not so fantastic. Do not fool yourself. They have disease up there. And racism. And people who think pineapple belongs on pizza.
Charon: And songs and movies and wafer cookies. At least it’s a change of pace.
Grim: There’s music down here.
(Ambient screaming plays for three seconds.)
Charon: Yeeeah… that’s why I wear earplugs.
(Anubis steps forward with a dramatic flair.)
Anubis: I have a plan!
(Valkyrie shoves him to the side.)
Valkyrie: WE have a plan. You two spend a week up top, and live like people do. Get a house, drive a car, work a job.
Charon: What about my job down here?
Anubis: Don’t worry about it; Val and I can take your shifts for a week.
Grim: Why would I want to do any of this?
Anubis: If you can stand living for a week like humans, then I’ll buy you a new robe.
Valkyrie: And Charon, I can make you a new fishing rod.
(Grim sort of looks at his well-worn and moth-eaten robe a little self-consciously; Charon looks down at his old simple fishing rod.)
Grim and Charon: Deal!
Scene 2
(Grim and Charon enter onto a stage set to look like a city block. They are still dressed in their supernatural robes. A real estate agent meets them next to the doorway of one of the buildings. She looks at their outfits and cringes a bit, but doesn’t say anything. She is not losing good customers, even if they appear to be cultists.)
Real Estate Agent: Thanks for meeting here today, (She looks down at her phone for confirmation of their names.) Grime and Karen?
Grim: I prefer Grimothy.
Charon: And my name is Charon.
Agent: I said that. Karen.
Charon: Charon.
Agent: Yeah, Karen.
Charon: (sighs) Sure.
Agent: Anyways, this apartment has two bedrooms and two bathrooms. It’s right next to the city center, and there’s lots of natural light.
(Grim hisses.)
Charon: Can you find something a little more…. Basement?
Agent: Are you vamp... you know what, never mind. I know a place a block down that has a basement apartment.
Charon: (mumbling) You lot killed the vampires off during the Inquisition.
Agent: We what now?
Charon: I said, sounds like we will have to make a hard decision. Let’s go.
Scene 3

(Interior of a poorly lit apartment)

Agent: It’s a bit of a fixer-upper, but the location is fantastic. Also, the landlord has lowered the price a bit due to lack of interest.
Charon: That’s convenient.
Grim: It’s dark.
Agent: Well with a lamp in the corner you could really lighten up….
Grim: I like it dark. (Gives the agent a blank dead-eyed stare.)
Agent: (Starts to realize she probably shouldn’t have let herself be alone with these creeps. Yells upstairs.) Bartlett!!
Agent: Just calling for the landlord. Just, you know, so you can talk about the lease.
(An old slovenly landlord ambles onto stage, there is a stain on their shirt. Agent runs away, almost knocking them over.)
Bartlett: Yeah? Oh, renters. You actually want this place? It’s a hellhole.
Charon: (excitedly) We know!!
Bartlett: (studies them a little closer) Are you two Satanists?
Charon: Oh, we don’t go in for that new-fangled stuff.
Grim: We are old school.
Bartlett: Well, I don’t care if you worship the dark lord Cthulhu down here, as long as you pay me in cash.
Charon: Oh, well, I brought some coins. (He pulls out a large cloth bag and begins counting gold coins out of it) Will two hundred drachma be enough?
Bartlett: (mesmerized by the glimmering golden coins) Drach-what-now?
Charon: Oh I’m sorry, would it be better if I pay in denar? (He says this as he starts to put the coins back in the pouch.)
Bartlett: No no no, the first ones will do just fine. (They quickly hold out their hands like a greedy child and Charon pours a handful of coins into them.)
Bartlett: Let me know if you have any problems; I’ll fix them right away. (They run off stage with the handful of coins chuckling giddily like a child at Christmas.)
Grim: Food comes from the fridge, right? I’m feeling hunger. What did Anubis and Val do to us?
Charon: Let’s see. (He walks over to the fridge and opens it up with a creak to reveal nothing.) Well, it appears to be empty.
Grim: Perhaps we should wait and see if it will fill up.
Charon: I don’t know. It looks like it has been empty for a while.
Grim: It might be dead.
Charon: I’m not sure they work that way... I think we need to get something called groceries.
Grim: Ah yes, I once reaped a grocer. He was buried under several cans of peas. They crushed him quite quickly. He was practically two-dimensional by the time I met him... We’ll need to find a store.
Charon: Alright! I’ll grab us a car. I’m sure they work pretty much the same as rowboats.
(They exit stage and we soon hear a car crash.)
Scene 4

(Grim and Charon push a shopping cart through a large grocery store. Aisles of food stretch out before them and inoffensive muzak plays in the background.)

Charon: How is there this much food in one room?!
Grim: Capitalism.
(Charon is adding pretty much everything processed and bad for you into his cart. Grim adds a single carton of Earl Grey tea.)
Charon: I like your style, Grimothy.
(Grim nods. They roll the cart up to the final aisle, and there they see it. The Hallelujah chorus starts playing. It’s an entire half shelf of wafer cookies!)
Charon: Oh my Zeus. It’s the food of the gods. I’ve only ever heard about it. I have no idea there were so many flavors!
Grim: There are three.
Charon: That’s two more than I expected! (He grabs one of each.)
(They roll their cart up to a non-distinct cashier. He scans everything and bags it. As he reaches the tea:)
Cashier: Earl Grey, huh?
Grim: Yes, I helped to invent it.
Cashier: Sure, buddy. Your total is going to be… Two hundred dollars and seventy seven cents.
(Grim stares at Charon.)
Charon: I paid for rent.
(Grim sighs and pulls out a wad of cash. It definitely looks messy and as if it includes money from many different countries.)
Cashier: Um, thanks? Here’s your change.
(He hands over the change.)
(Grim and Charon start pushing their cart towards the door. The second they are technically legally outside the store, Charon stops short, pushing the cart into Grim’s heels.)
Grim: Ow.
Charon: OKAY, I AM GOING TO DO IT.
Grim: Why did you stop?
Charon: I am the official owner of wafer cookies according to this Pal-store receipt and the nice man who bagged our groceries. I cannot wait a second longer to take advantage of it.
(Grim sighs and sits on the ground.)
Grim: Go on.
(Charon ruffles through the bags until he finds the vanilla wafers. He opens the package carefully. If he tears it, who knows what could happen. Slowly, comedically, he pulls out a cookie and puts it in his mouth. He savor the taste for a second before he chews and swallows. He then immediately puts the package back into the bag and slumps over the carriage before beginning the walk back to the car.)
Grim: Didn’t you like it?
Charon: They were… fine.
Grim: What’s wrong?
Charon: Well, they weren’t bad, but… I was told they tasted like heaven itself! I expected sparks! I expected pizzazz! I got.. crunchy vanilla.
Grim: I could have told you that.
Scene 5

(Grim and Charon are eating breakfast in their apartment and getting ready for their day at work.)

Charon: How do you like your coffee, Grim?
Grim: Black.
Charon: I probably could have guessed that. (He brings Grim his cup before pouring a cup for himself.) Did you know that humans had managed to compress happiness down into a white powder?
Grim: Ah, you mean cocaine.
Charon: No, sugar! (Charon proceeds to pour approximately a whole bag of sugar into his coffee.)

Grim: What are you doing this morning?
Charon: I’ve got a job at one of the most amazing places on earth, a seafood market! Imagine it, Grim, a whole store full of fish. You don’t even need to sit out for eons to catch one, they’re just sitting there!
Grim: Sounds….fragrant.
Charon: (Blissfully) I know. Well I’m off, hold down the fort around here.
Grim: I will not.
Charon: Wait why?
Grim: I also have a job. I’m a greeter at that store where we bought the waf…er the tea.
Charon: (skeptically) A greeter? Really?
Grim: I feel I’m experienced welcoming people into other realms.
Charon: Well, I’ll see you back here at 6, good luck at your job!
Scene 6
(Split Stage: On one half you see Charon greeting his boss (Same actor as Bartlett) surrounded by fish, on the other half Grim greets people entering the store. Charon has an apron on and Grim wears a nametag labeled Grimothy.)

(Customers walk by Grim as he greets them; they give him odd looks.)
Grim: (waving mechanically, with zero enthusiasm and a look of sorrow) Welcome to Pal-Store, home of the friendliest employees this side of the Mississippi. Have you gotten your Pal Card yet?
(Grim continues to greet in pantomime as the focus shifts to the other side of the stage.)
(Charon is standing speaking to his boss about his duties.)
Martlett: Alright, so you’ll check the fish and throw out any that have gone bad. Just give them a sniff to check.
Charon: (Like a child at Disney World) I get to check all the fish here?
Martlett: Yeah, you’ve got to check all of them. That’s pretty much the gist of the job.
Charon: Thank you so much.
Martlett: (Confused) Don’t mention it. You got any other questions before you start?
Charon: Yeah, why do you both rent apartments and run a fish market?
Martlett: Ah, you must have met my twin, Bartlett. I’m Martlett.(Heading off) Good luck Karen, I’ll check back soon.
Charon: It’s Char...nevermind
(Charon begins smelling fish enthusiastically, he throws none of them out. Some of the shoppers walk over and smell the fish and give a disgusted look to the audience.)
(Martlett walks over to the other side of the stage and becomes Grim’s boss, maybe have them take off the apron or something)
Grim: (To a customer) Welcome to Pal-store.
Hartlett: What are you doing?!
Grim: You look familiar.
Hartlett: I sure hope so! I’m your manager, Hartlett. What do you think you’re doing?
Grim: Greeting customers.
Hartlett: You’re scaring them away is what you’re doing!
Grim: I know.
Hartlett: You’ve got to smile at them as they enter.
Grim: Like this? (Grim gives a very wide and forced smile.)
Hartlett: (Grimaces) Eh, maybe work on the smile a little first. How about you put some more energy into your greetings, make it personal. Ok?
Grim: I can do that.
Grim: (He says each of the following lines as a greeting to a separate customer.)
Welcome to Pal-Store. I hope you find it to be a fleeting distraction from your mortality.
Remember, kids, a grave awaits us all.
Welcome to Pal-store, home of meaningless trifles.
Don’t forget, even with the Pal Card, you’re still paying entirely too much for something you can’t take with you.
Enjoy your material wealth before death rips it from you.
(An elderly shopper walks up to Grim, begins to walk by then their eyes go wide as they recognize him.)
Old Shopper: Not today, Death! *(The shopper hits Grim in the knees with his cane, before running off.)* Not today!

Grim: Ow.

*(Meanwhile on the other side of the store, Charon has begun giving out fish to customers. He is basically throwing entire raw fish at them, without cutting or wrapping them up.)*

Charon: Friend, you look like you could use a flounder.

Ma’am, can I interest you in some Walleye?

This mahi-mahi has your name on it!

That’s the face of a man who has been missing swordfish in his life for too long.

Sir, it is a sisyphean tragedy that you do not presently have any crabs.

Man: If you give me crabs, I sue.

Martlett: *(Shouting)* KAREN! *(conversationally)* Can we talk for a second?

Charon: *(absentmindedly throwing an entire trout at someone)* Sure.

Martlett: I think you might have forgotten something?

Charon: What?

Martlett: TO MAKE THEM PAY FOR THE FISH!

Charon: Oh, I’ll go get them to pay before they head out. *(Muttering)* What’s a fish worth anyway?

*(He starts to run off after a customer but Martlett grabs him by his robes.)*

Martlett: How about you take your lunch break and I’ll sort this out.

Charon: Ok!

*(Charon proceeds to grab a fish and bite directly into it, raw.)*

*(Martlett looks angry, as if he might strangle Charon, but then thinks better of it, retrieves a flask from his pocket, and leaves stage for a ‘smoke’ break.)*

*(Time passes, as Grim continues to ‘greet’ (read: terrify) people and Charon continues to chuck fish at unsuspecting heads. Finally, they close up and exit through their respective doorways (on extreme stage left and right respectively) and loop towards the middle of the stage on their ways back home. The two of them notice each other, see how happy each one is about how they did today, and high five. Then, they walk off stage together.)*
Scene 7

(Time passes. We hear some cheerful music as the stage gets reset for the apartment interior and the lighting changes. Add a small pile of cups on Charon’s table)
(The interior of Grim and Charon’s apartment. Charon is wearing a Hawaiian shirt, cargo shorts, and Michigan State Spartans baseball cap. Charon is reading the newspaper alone. Grim comes in holding two mugs of coffee. He is wearing a leather jacket, MCR band shirt, black skinny jeans, and Vans. He hands a mug to Charon before sitting down. Charon takes a sip.)

Charon: Ah, just how I like. In only one week you’ve really gotten to know me Grim.
Grim: If you say so. Just hand me the obituaries when you’re done with them.
Charon: Don’t worry, I will. It doesn’t seem we missed out on anything too interesting. Just a few….
Grim: SPOILERS!
Charon: Alright, alright.
(The doorbell rings)
Charon: Oh, guests! (He hops out of his chair to grab the door.)
(Anubis enters wearing some bling and looking pleased with himself. Val enters with her hair wet and carrying a paddle; she looks a mess.)

Val: (She shoves the paddle into Charon’s arms) I. Don’t. Do. Boats.
Anubis: Well, I had a lovely week. I need to get one of those scythes for myself, they do wonders for mowing the lawn.
Grim: You used my scythe for yard work?!
Anubis: (winking) Don’t worry. It’s fine. Even gave it a polish before coming up here.
Sooooo, how was your week?
(Simultaneously)
Charon: Marvelous!
Grim: Fine.
Valkyrie: (maniacally) You lot ready to admit that I’m right, and end your existences on a burning pyre?!
Charon: I wouldn’t go quite that far, but I did learn that fish are great.. and wafer cookies are made of lies.
Grim: Humans are strange. Coffee is good.
Anubis: Well, I suppose you’ve won your bet. You managed to survive and dare I say thrive up here. You ready to head back down?
Charon: Actually, Grim and I had a little idea to help liven things up back home.
Val: Oh no.
Charon: Ta-da!
(Grim reveals a sign reading: Grimothy and Karen’s Afterlife Travel Agency. All clients welcome. Charon face palms at his name being spelled wrong yet again.)
(Curtain)