

License to Haunt

**A 10-minute ghostly comedy
by
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Cast of Characters

Laura

Female, 30's to 40's. A deceased person in the afterlife.
[This character could be any gender by changing name and pronouns.]

Clerk

Any gender, any age. A clerk in the Department of Haunt Services.

Place & Time

The Department of Haunt Services in the afterlife.

Synopsis

Recently deceased, Laura is looking forward to visiting her family as an apparition. To do that, she must obtain a haunting permit from the Department of Haunt Services. Unfortunately, she finds that bureaucracy follows us into the afterlife.

We are in the afterlife. LAURA sits at a chair in the Department of Haunting Services, a completed form in her hand. At a nearby counter, a CLERK speaks in the microphone.

CLERK
(Into the microphone)

Number 198567.

(LAURA stands and approaches the counter.)

LAURA
Finally! It feels like I've been waiting forever.

CLERK
There is no time here.

LAURA
Of course, I just mean --

CLERK
How can I help you?

LAURA
I am here to apply for a haunting permit.

(LAURA hands over her completed form to the CLERK, who takes it and looks it over.)

CLERK
Is this your first time applying for a permit?

LAURA
Yes. I'm very excited to visit my family.

CLERK
Your form is incomplete. You've left "cause of death" blank.

LAURA
Yes, I don't really know what to put there. I don't know how I died...another reason I want to go back.

CLERK

We need cause of death to issue a permit. If you don't know it, we can look that up.

LAURA

Oh! Great. Can you do that, please?

CLERK

I just need your full name, date of birth, date of death, home planet, and timeline.

LAURA

Laura Denise Coleman...born January 5, 1974...died April 9, 2021...planet, uh, Earth...and...I'm sorry but I don't know how to answer 'timeline'.

CLERK

(Exaggerated sigh)

You said Earth, right? Who was President when you died?

LAURA

Oh! Joe Biden.

CLERK

So that would be Earth timeline Zulu-Alpha-0-4-Charlie.

(The CLERK types into their computer.)

LAURA

Zulu-Alpha-0-4-Charlie. I'll remember that.

CLERK

Looks like you died from a brain hemorrhage while you were sleeping.

LAURA

Oh! That's...that kind of sucks, actually.

CLERK

Were you hoping for something else?

LAURA

Well, no I guess not. It just isn't very sexy. And it seems sort of unfair.

CLERK

Uh-huh. Well you're from Earth so that requires additional reading and paperwork.

LAURA

More paperwork? Why?

CLERK

There are additional rules for anyone wishing to visit any planet with exceptionally diverse religions and beliefs on the afterlife.

LAURA

We have exceptionally diverse religions?

CLERK

You have Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Sikhism, Taoism, Mormonism, Scientology, Confucianism --

LAURA

Ok I got it. Why didn't anyone tell me that I would need the extra paperwork when I picked it up?

CLERK

It's a new policy.

LAURA

I just picked up the paperwork an hour ago!

CLERK

There is no time here.

LAURA

Whatever. Fine. Where's the extra paperwork?

CLERK

It's at the check-in desk.

LAURA

So, I will have to wait again?

CLERK

Yes.

LAURA

How long?

CLERK

There is no time here.

LAURA

You keep saying that, yet it feels like there is.

CLERK

Is there somewhere you have to be?

LAURA

Well...no.

CLERK

You can pick another number.

LAURA

What if I just read it real quick right now? Can you just let me do the paperwork here without waiting again?

CLERK

There's a lot to read.

LAURA

Of course there is. Is there any sort of...loophole?

CLERK

Ma'am, this is a universal entity...of course there are loopholes.

LAURA

Great. What is it?

CLERK

There is no required additional reading if you are applying for a learner's permit.

LAURA

Great. And what's the learner's permit?

CLERK

With a learner's permit you must be chaperoned at all times.

LAURA

By whom?

CLERK

Your chaperone must be from your planet and timeline who has at least 500 Earth hours of haunting.

LAURA

Well, I guess that would be fine. And how long do I need the learner's permit for?

CLERK

It converts to a full haunting permit when you have completed 50 Earth hours of haunting and pass a written test.

LAURA

Hmm. Ok well now we're getting somewhere. Let's do it.

CLERK

Would you like us to assign you a chaperone or would you like to pick?

LAURA

I get to pick?

CLERK

If you'd like. There are 129,765 eligible chaperones from Zulu-Alpha-0-4-Charlie. I will get you the list.

LAURA

No! That's ok...I suppose you can just assign me one.

CLERK

Very well.

(Pause, as the CLERK types into the computer.)
Your chaperone is Elvis Presley.

LAURA

Elvis Presley?! *The* Elvis Presley?

CLERK

I do not know.

LAURA

My mom is going to flip when she finds out that she's being haunted by Elvis Presley!

CLERK

Shall we finish processing your paperwork?

LAURA

Yes, please!

CLERK

I just need your ID.

LAURA

ID? Like a driver's license?

CLERK

I need a valid form of afterlife-issued identification.

LAURA

I was never given any ID here.

CLERK

You should have applied for one when you arrived.

LAURA

How was I to know that?

CLERK

Your welcome host should have walked you through the registration process.

LAURA

Welcome host? What welcome host?

CLERK

Did no one greet you upon your arrival?

LAURA

No.

CLERK

That is very curious. Let me look up your welcome host.

(A brief pause as the CLERK types rapidly into their computer.)

CLERK (CONT'D)

Oh, that is very interesting.

LAURA

What is interesting?

CLERK

It seems that you were never assigned a welcome host.

LAURA

What does that mean?

CLERK

It must have been a clerical oversight.

LAURA

But...I died, right?

CLERK

It seems so.

LAURA

But then why wasn't I assigned a host?

CLERK

I did say it was interesting.

LAURA

Is there another afterlife I'm supposed to be at or something?

CLERK

There is only one afterlife.

LAURA

Well...can I still get the permit?

CLERK

Not without ID.

LAURA

Any way that I can --

CLERK

There are no loopholes for the ID.

LAURA

Fine. Where do I get an ID?

CLERK

At the Afterlife Registration Office.

LAURA

And where's that?

CLERK

It's where all souls arrive upon their death.

LAURA

But I arrived here.

CLERK

You arrived at the Department of Haunting Services?

LAURA

Yes.

CLERK

That should not have happened.

LAURA

What?

CLERK

All souls are to arrive at the Afterlife Registration Office.

LAURA

Ok so...how do I get to the registration office?

CLERK

You cannot get there.

LAURA

Why not?

CLERK

There is no space here.

LAURA

But then how am *I* here?

CLERK

You're here because you belong here.

LAURA

Don't I belong at the registration office?

CLERK

It's not my place to say.

LAURA

But I need an ID, right?

CLERK

All souls need an ID.

LAURA

Then I should be there, not here!

CLERK

It seems likely.

LAURA

Is there no other way to get to the Afterlife Registration Office besides when you die?

CLERK

All souls also pass through there after a haunting trip.

LAURA

Great! So I'll go on a quick haunt and then go to the registration office and get my ID.

CLERK

You need a permit to haunt.

LAURA

Can't you just give me a temporary permit?

CLERK

Yes, I can...

LAURA

Great!

CLERK

...but I'll need your ID.

LAURA

I feel like I'm getting nowhere. You said I need an ID to get a haunting permit, but I need to go haunting to get to the registration office in order to get the ID.

CLERK

That is correct.

LAURA

Do you not see how maddening that is?

CLERK

I do not make the rules.

LAURA

Who does?

CLERK

No one. They just are.

LAURA

I'm beginning to lose my patience...I would like to speak to your manager.

CLERK

There is no manager.

LAURA

Well, who do you work for?

CLERK

Nobody.

LAURA

Nobody?

CLERK

It doesn't work like that.

LAURA

Is there anyone here who can help me?!

CLERK

If you take another number, you may wait for another clerk.

LAURA

And how long will that take?!

CLERK

There is no time here.

LAURA

Ugh!

CLERK

Have a nice afterlife.

(Pause, then into the microphone)

Number 198582.

END OF PLAY