

Death Gets Wings

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Eleventh Grade

Available

CHARACTERS

EMILY: Trigger happy with herself. Depressed but hides it well through sarcasm. She/her pronouns.

DEATH: Not terribly good at their job. Ageless and genderless.

NOTES

Tw/Cw: mention/implication of suicide.

Gender is entirely unimportant for both characters. EMILY is intended to be female but she doesn't have to be and DEATH can be played by anyone.

SETTING

Bridge, present day, evening

Lights up on EMILY. She's alone on a bridge. It's evening and the sun is setting behind her. She's drinking a Red Bull and shaking. The wind rustles her hair and she sighs. She approaches the edge and DEATH appears out of the darkness, scaring EMILY. She is startled and stumbles.

DEATH

Careful! Don't fall!

She steadies herself.

EMILY

Who are you? How'd you get up here? Nevermind, you have to go back, it's not safe.

DEATH

You're up here.

EMILY

Well that's different.

DEATH

How?

EMILY

I have a death wish.

DEATH

How do you know I don't?

EMILY

Well that would be extremely rude.

Steal all my thunder.

Do you?

DEATH

No.

EMILY

Then why are you here?

Please don't tell me you're here to talk me down. I don't want you to fall on my account and become another bullet point on the list of reasons why Emily is a complete failure as a human.

DEATH

I'll be fine. I won't fall.

EMILY

So? Why are you here?

DEATH

I like the view.

EMILY gives them a disbelieving look.

That's all.

EMILY

You know, suicide is supposed to be a private thing.

DEATH

So?

EMILY

So please. Can you go away so I can kill myself in peace?

DEATH

Why?

EMILY

What?

DEATH

Why do you want to kill yourself?

EMILY

Everything sucks. And I know that's basically a given at this point what with the state of the world but also I am a terrible person who is terrible to everyone around her. Like I want to be a good person and do the right thing and get good or at least decent grades but then I just...don't. Like I'm watching myself tell someone off and I think geez Emily that was kinda mean, you're a bad person, you should fix that. Then I go to sleep 'cause that's the only thing I feel capable of at the moment and when I wake up, I don't care anymore. I think I just forgot to care for like the past three years and now I'm not going to college and I don't have a job and my girlfriend wants to have "a serious talk about the state of our relationship" which, well, it's not exactly a mystery what she means by that so then the one good aspect of my life will be gone. See? Everything sucks, or I suck. Or whatever.

DEATH

It's not hopeless.

EMILY

Not helping.

DEATH

What would?

EMILY

You think I know?

DEATH

Yes? You're the one who's going to-
Sorry. I've never talked someone out of suicide before.

EMILY

Okay.
Well it was nice meeting you.
Enjoy the view.

DEATH

Wait!

EMILY attempts to jump. It's not working.
She tries again.

EMILY

I can't move.
Why can't I move?
Are you doing this? What is happening?

DEATH

Before you proceed, we need to talk.

EMILY

I'm kinda in the middle of something.

DEATH

There are matters of great import at hand-

EMILY

I'm not interested.

DEATH

Listen to me, it's not yet your time. You cannot do this.

EMILY

And why won't you look at me?

DEATH

Most people prefer it if I do not directly gaze at them.
For that matter, most people can't see me.

EMILY

Why?

DEATH

They fear me.

EMILY

You don't seem like something to be afraid of.

She looks him straight in the eyes. DEATH reaches out and touches her. She shudders.

DEATH
My apologies.

EMILY
Why did you do that?

DEATH
I was merely checking to see if you are truly human.

EMILY
And?

DEATH
You are.
It appears you've just consumed so much caffeine your body has become more Red Bull than person.

EMILY
Cool.
Can I leave now?

DEATH
No. It's my job to ensure you survive tonight.

EMILY
Oh God. Is this some sort of religious obligation thing?

DEATH
More like a career obligation. You aren't the Emily who's supposed to die tonight.

EMILY
I feel like I should be offended.

DEATH

Don't be! You've merited a visit from Death Itself!

EMILY

And that's a good thing?

DEATH

(hurt)

It's a huge honor.

EMILY

(sarcastic)

Oh yeah.

I feel so blessed.

Wait, what happens if you fail?

DEATH

You die.

EMILY

Oh. What happens after that?

DEATH

I can't tell. Or rather, I could, but to what end? It would ruin the surprise. Besides, I won't fail.

EMILY

Wait, go back!

Who even are you?

DEATH

I. Am. Death.

Were you listening to anything I just said?

EMILY

That's not even possible. You're just a weirdo.

DEATH

I assure you I am. If I am not Death, then how exactly am I able to keep you frozen this way?

EMILY

I dunno. Maybe this is just like a weird caffeine hallucination thing

DEATH

I don't think that's possible for you. I would think it should be hard to see any side effects after your, what is it? Tenth? Fifteenth can?

EMILY

More. My veins flow with Red Bull and spite.

DEATH laughs

EMILY

You think I'm kidding?

DEATH

How ARE you still alive?

EMILY

Well ideally I'm not.

Am I dead? Is that why I can't move?

DEATH

You aren't dead. Yet. Your life isn't supposed to end.

EMILY
(Insistent)

No, I'm supposed to be dead.

DEATH

Who's the authority here?

EMILY

ME! It's my life and I don't want to go back.

DEATH

Listen Emily, it's my job to ensure everyone who is supposed to die dies and that everyone who is supposed to be alive is alive. And you are supposed to be alive.

EMILY

Why?

DEATH

I don't know. I don't make the rules, I just enforce them.

EMILY

But I don't want to be alive. Personally, I want a refund on the whole "being human" thing.

DEATH

Can I change your mind?

EMILY

Nope.

DEATH

You're entirely certain?

EMILY

Uh-huh.

DEATH

Even if I were to tell you why I'm here for you in particular?

EMILY

No...

DEATH

Shockingly, I'm not sure I believe you.

EMILY

Okay fine, I wanna know. But this better be good.

DEATH

You, uh, Emily, uh?

EMILY

Bird.

DEATH

You, Emily Bird, are uh, very important.

EMILY

Gonna have to do better than that, buddy.

DEATH

You're, uh, going to save the world!

EMILY

Oh really.

DEATH

Yes, and that's why I had to come! To save the world. Because that's what you're gonna do.

EMILY

How?

DEATH

What?

EMILY

How am I gonna save the world?

Assuming I'm even interested. Which I'm not. The world sucks.

DEATH

I, uh, THAT'S CLASSIFIED!

EMILY

Tell me or I'm out.

Tell me!

DEATH

I, uh...

EMILY

Yes?

DEATH

I...um...I...I DON'T KNOW.

EMILY

(deadly quiet)

You don't know? You tell me that there's actually some worth to my sucky sucky life but you can't actually tell me anything?

DEATH

It's um...

EMILY

Yeah?

DEATH

Well, you weren't listening, you were being impossible and I thought maybe this way you'd actually listen to reason, so I, uh, lied.

Pause. Then all hell breaks loose, specifically EMILY. She has wrenched free of the spell and runs full force at DEATH.

EMILY

I AM GOING TO KILL YOU!

DEATH

You...you can't kill death...

EMILY

WATCH ME!

EMILY pushes DEATH to the ground, then realizes she can't move again.

EMILY

Let me go or so help me-

DEATH

I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry if you just let me explain-

EMILY

You just interfered? For no reason?

Why not literally anyone else?

That's not fair.

DEATH

Life isn't fair.

EMILY

How would you know?

DEATH

That's sort of my job.

You know, I would give anything to have what you have. To be alive.

EMILY

Believe me, you don't know what you're talking about.

DEATH

I know your life isn't perfect by any means.

EMILY

Understatement of the century.

DEATH

But you have choice. You have free will. And sure, you are certainly limited. But you can be anything, do anything simply because you're alive. Every morning you can wake up and decide what to eat, what to do, who to be with. Since the beginning, I've been alone. I'm a guide, nothing more and nothing less. I had no choice in the matter. Life existed and thus I existed. I didn't choose any of this.

EMILY

But why me? Why today?

DEATH

Most of the time I have to take life away. Constantly, actually. And I have seen so, so, many kids like you who weren't special.

EMILY

Gee thanks. I feel better already.

DEATH

You didn't let me finish.

I have had to take the lives of so, so many kids who weren't perfect. Some of them weren't even good. But they didn't deserve death. Just because they talked back to their parents or failed their classes or were cruel to people or they weren't even bad, just not particularly smart or kind or funny. But that doesn't mean they didn't deserve life and years and years to grow and change and improve.

EMILY

What makes me different?

DEATH

You saw me. You shouldn't be able to, not until you're actually dead. You can't exactly save someone who can't see you. But you saw me and I knew it wasn't your time. I knew I could save you. (beat) In my line of work, I don't get to be a hero very often. I have to do my job and that means taking away life and breaking hearts and being the villain. I can't save most kids like you. But I can save you. Please let me save you. For all the kids I've been forced to take.

A long silence as EMILY processes. She realizes she can move again.

EMILY

I think-

I think I'm gonna go home now.

I gotta- I don't really know.

DEATH

Will you be okay?

EMILY

Not really, but I'm alive. I can work out the rest.

I feel like I, uh, should thank you.

DEATH

It's okay. You should go. You have a whole life ahead of you.

EMILY

Are *you* gonna be okay? I feel bad leaving you alone.

DEATH

That's okay. I'm used to it.

EMILY

That makes me feel worse!

DEATH

I'll return for you one day,
Until then, I can wait.

EMILY hugs them impulsively and quickly exits. She leaves them her can of Red Bull. DEATH stands alone and takes a sip of the Red Bull. The lights become blindingly, painfully bright. Blackout.

(End of play)