

A Conversation with God

By Raniya Chowdhury

Here is the girl, dying. Bright, blue lips on a colourless face, body contorted and twitching. An empty bottle of pills made its presence known as the weapon of choice. The weapon she chose to murder herself with on a seemingly average Saturday evening. Her final thoughts revolved around a girl she loved and a boy she did not, a terminal illness and a chemical imbalance in her brain which ran in a family she did not particularly care for. These thoughts all swam through her mind before it started to shut down, as she suddenly realized she had a lot more left to say than she had said, and a lot more things to do than she had done. And then the problems faded to nothingness as her lungs fought for her. She grappled with the terms of her death one last time, with a silent plea. She prayed to God, Satan, to the universe, to whichever celestial or omnipotent being would listen for one thing as the last of her breath escaped her: the girl simply requested to wake up one final time.

Here is the girl, waking. She is ambushed with sensations; something coarse beneath her feet, something crashing in the distance, a crisp breeze trailing its gentle fingers across her flesh and a bright sun beating against her eyelids. The girl's eyes flutter open, meeting the glare of the sun as it shone like a ball of butter, melting into a wide, wide sea. Her skin prickled against the evening wind as she looked at the sky which was a vibrant display of colours, puffy clouds boasting bright trumpets of pinks and oranges. Waves struck against each other, dragging the tide up the shore, spilling cool water over the sand beneath her feet. There was a faint pull in her chest as she breathed it all in. A tugging of sorts, pattering against her ribcage. It was the lurch of

her phantom heart, like the feeling of falling in love. The girl pondered who she was falling in love with, confused by this sudden sensation.

“Life,” responded a friendly voice to her right. “You are falling in love with the feeling of being alive again.” She tore her eyes from the picturesque sea as she looked toward the stranger. It was a rather stout old man whose rosy-cheeked face was wrinkled from smiling. “I can not blame you, child,” he continued. “This has to be one of my finest works.”

“You’re God,” she breathed.

The man chuckled softly. “Always were a bright one, weren’t you? I believe that I am something of the sort, yes.”

“That means... I’m dead. I died?”

God blinked. “Was that not your intention? Are you pleased with your success?”

The girl looked back at the sea, overcome with grief. Was it possible to grieve for yourself? She did nonetheless. Her voice caught in her throat and she shook her head.

“Suicide is not something to be glorified, my dear, but don’t be ashamed. What has happened, happened. You are right where you are meant to be, so come and join me for a walk. We have some matters to discuss. Death, in most cases, is a mess,” God said as he began walking along the coastline, which seemed to stretch on infinitely. The girl did not hesitate as she followed behind him.

“You can be anyone, right?” she asked bluntly as they wandered. It was like the questions slid off her tongue and tumbled into the air before she could stop them. “You’re... not a man or a woman or an animal?”

He nodded. “Correct. I simply take the form that is most gentle to the human mind. Hence the kind, elderly fellow.”

The girl hummed, understanding. “About me being dead,” she began cautiously, observing the drifting clouds on the horizon. “What happens to everyone I know? Will they miss me? Will anyone remember me?”

“They mourn for some time. And then continue muddling about their existence for the time which remains. Eventually, they will also die and soon nobody will know anything of your existence to begin with.”

“What? So, I’ll just be... *forgotten*? Just like that?” she asked. She started wishing she could unkill herself, a dreadful feeling when one is familiar with the permanence of death.

God stopped and so did she. He gestured towards the ground. “Think of your life as a footprint upon the sand. No matter how large your foot is, or how hard you step, the tide will erase it from the beach's surface,” he explained as the tide pulled in and dragged sand over her footprints, leaving a clean slate in its wake. “It is simply a matter of time. Everyone will fade into obscurity someday. That’s the way existence is designed.” With that, he continued walking, the girl trailing a few steps behind.

The silence between them which followed was not uncomfortable, filled by wind whistling and water sloshing and God humming a tune that the girl could not place. It hazed her mind with the faint sense of recognition and nostalgia. “I can tell you have more questions. Ask while you still can,” God mused, a kind smile toying upon the face that was not really his.

The girl scrambled to collect her thoughts, walking up to meet his side. “Wait... if we all get forgotten, then what’s the point of being alive if nobody remembers that you were? What’s... the *meaning* of it all? There has to be a meaning, right?”

God sighed, gingerly draping an arm around her shoulder. “Live for the sake of living, not because you know you will die someday. Be kind for the sake of being kind, not to find

paradise in the afterlife. Life is simply what you make of it and nothing else. It is stubborn and fleeting, hideous and beautiful, profound and ostentatious and everything else you can think of, should you make it so. There is no order to life or death,” he looked at her, the corners of his eyes crinkling with joy. “Life is meaningless until you want it to mean something, and that is the very thing that makes it worth dying for.”

Her eyes glazed with tears and she frowned, frustrated. “I don’t... I don’t understand. You have all of this power, you created the *universe*. So *why?* Why do you kill good, innocent people and let evil ones walk freely? That has to have meaning or reason because otherwise, how is that... fair?!” For a brief moment, God was silent.

“Death is the most just property of existence. Death does not see race, colour, height, weight, gender, sexuality or class. Death is simply an appointment every human must wait for,” he finally said. He put his hands into the pockets of the white linen pants the old man wore. “Without *death*, there would be no value to *life*. Everyone will pay for their actions once they die. And everyone will die eventually.”

As they continued walking, the girl frantically asked: “But what about Heaven and Hell? Do they exist? Am I going to one?”

God chuckled. “Tell me, my girl. When you decided to take your own life, the one I had given you, did you not think that life was already Hell enough?”

The girl wiped away the tears that slid down her cheeks. “I suppose you are right. But now I know better! This time, I’ll cherish life. I’ll create my own Heaven. I’ll tell the girl I love her, I’ll mourn the passing of my grandpa, I’ll get help for my inner struggles, I’ll do anything if it means I can try again and fix my mistakes!” she said desperately.

“I’m afraid there is only one opportunity.” A sad smile surfaced on God’s face.

“But there’s so much I didn’t do! I accomplished *nothing!*”

God tutted. “That is entirely false, my dear. People will surely remember you.”

“You just said that everyone gets forgotten, though?”

“Eventually, yes. But for a brief flicker of time amongst billions of years, *you* touched someone’s heart. You made someone smile. You inspired someone. You made art and stories and music and put some beauty into a world that you had grown so tired of. Right now, your mother is crying, her heart broken at all the things she could have done to save you. Your father is clutching your stuffed animal and coping with the fact that he is no longer a father. Your best friend has decided to start a donation campaign in your name someday. News articles are headlined with your name on them. An outpouring of people, all thinking and talking about how *you* have shown them how to appreciate the people in their lives before they are gone. *You* have shown people what happens when they neglect to really care. Today, your death has motivated someone to extend an act of good faith and kindness to another person. It’s a shame it had to come to such circumstances, but do not think that it was for nothing. Not for a second.”

The girl couldn’t help but cry, heaving wracking sobs. Her shoulders shook and tears streamed down her face. God passed her a soft handkerchief from his pocket, which she used to dry her face as her hysterics tapered off into faint sniffles and hiccups. “Was... was it enough?”

“You are more than enough,” God said, before adding, “I would know, I made you.”

To her surprise, the girl laughed. “In that case, what happens now, God?”

“Well, my dear, you become space and time. Your soul is used to expand the infinity of the universe and its timeline until there are no more human souls left to use. You return to stardust.”

“So I’ll just... stop existing?”

“I wouldn’t call it that.”

“Then what will happen to me?”

“I suppose... you’ll become a force. It is difficult to explain in a way you will comprehend. There’s truly only one way to find out, my child.” There was a glint in his eyes as a seam in the air tore open before them, blazing like white fire. The girl looked afraid as she clutched the handkerchief closer. The endless beach stood still in time now, droplets of seafoam hanging in midair as they struck rocks on the coastline.

“Will it hurt?”

He shook his head. “You will not even realize what is happening. Are you ready?”

“Not in the slightest.”

“Nobody ever is. I’m afraid such is the nature of death.”

“Is it normal to be so... scared?” she asked timidly, creeping towards the tear in space-time.

The entity, God, whoever or whatever he may be, grinned. Warm and bright and reassuring. The girl found herself comforted by the simple gesture. “There is always trepidation before beginning a new journey. Do not see death as the end of something. See it as the beginning of something else entirely. Go forth with courage, and make the most of this new life. I will watch over you with so much pride.”

She grinned back at him. “Thank you. I promise that this time I’ll have no regrets.”

Here is the girl, turning away and stepping forth.

Here is the girl, engulfed by the bright light.

Here is the girl, remade into something brand new.

Here is the girl, dead, and yet more alive than she had ever been.