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When Death Calls

MARRISA- 22, a young woman pregnant by her degrading ex-boyfriend, Clay

DEATH- the ethereal embodiment of death itself, exploitative and abusive personality

DEATH. Hello, MARRISA. Miss me?

MARRISA. You always call at the most inopportune times.

DEATH. And yet, I seldom go unanswered.

MARRISA. Even someone like you can't keep a perfect record?

DEATH. Certain circumstances call for... reconsiderations. I answer to someone as well.

Though I don't expect a mortal like you to understand.

MARRISA. Is there a reason you called? I've got a lot on my plate without you butting into my life.

DEATH. Oh, believe me, I know. That's why I'm here, to... help.

MARRISA. I don't need you.

DEATH. (*Laughing it off*) Darling, I'm not here for you. I've heard about your problem, and I'm here to offer a means of assistance.

MARRISA. There's nothing that can be done.

DEATH. MARRISA, even you aren't that foolish. There is plenty that can be done.

MARRISA. (*Firmly*) I don't want—

DEATH. Let me bring you justice, Marissa. For the years of your life he took away.

MARRISA. I can handle myself, thank you.

DEATH. I don't think you're understanding my offer. I'll provide a way, you act, and Clay never bothers you again.

MARRISA. He's not worth one of your offers. I'm moving on—

DEATH. Oh yes, I can see how easy it would be to move on with that thing growing inside of you, reminding you of just how much he took away.

MARRISA. Please...just leave—

DEATH. Clay never wanted you. He was using you, preying on your *kindness*, squeezing out every last ounce of what you naively thought was *love* from your fragile little soul. He sought

after your memories and created new ones only to twist your reality to his will. Stole the intelligence from your brilliant mind by striking down your confidence. (*Softer, almost like a friend, but bleeding into monotony as it progresses*) Marissa, he never wanted you. He exploited you for your popularity, your body, and control of your life.

MARISSA. I don't care. I'm through with him now.

DEATH. You'll never be through with him. But you don't want your justice, fine. There are other ways to loosen his noose. Her, for instance.

MARISSA. Her? (*Realizing to whom Death was referring and touching her stomach*) It's a—I mean she's a girl?—How do you—? And how could she—?

DEATH. Part of the job is knowing who to take and keeping up with the numbers, darling. She's going to be the permeation of his shadow over your life.

MARISSA. She won't even know him. I'll protect her. You can't just run away from your problems. You address them and move on. She's the reason I can start over.

DEATH. (*Sing-song*) You're not listening to me, Marissa. (*Sly*) I'm not telling you to run away from your problems, I'm giving you an opportunity to lay one to rest. This child will only serve as a reminder of what Clay did to you.

MARISSA. She's my second chance at life!

DEATH. Then you treat her only as a means to that end. You exploit her the way he exploited you. That's all you humans ever do: take and use and corrupt each other and all that Jehovah-jireh ever gave you. All it takes is the sheen and the smell of the fruit for you to ache for it. The opportunity arises, and greed devours you even as the juice brushes your lips. So take it. Let this child become a lifeline, let her suffer through years of not knowing a father, of being the child of a pathetic, disgraced mother, of knowing that she was a mistake, that she's a painful shadow of your darkest memories. Let the world turn its back on her the way it turned on you, all for the sake of your *second chance*.

MARISSA. PLEASE! Stop. (*Beat. Quietly*) I— What should I do?

DEATH. Give her over to me.

MARISSA. But she isn't even—

DEATH. Which is why you have to act now. Let me take her away. She'll never suffer. She won't even feel a thing. There are people who can help you take care of it. Let them help.

Deliver her from pain into my arms.

MARISSA. Pain is not all there is to life.

DEATH. You're right. There's joy, laughter, love, anger, fear... even peace. But they are all tainted. Temporary. You have never felt anything that lasted more than a moment. Anger passes away; Joy and laughter are short-lived; love is nothing but a slow and painful tragedy.

MARISSA. She's all I have left. I've lost so much. I can't lose anything else.

DEATH. Give her to me now, and you'll never know the pain of losing her.

MARISSA. I don't know

DEATH. Marissa, trust me. We're friends, aren't we? I would never harm you. I know how much you're hurting. I just want it to stop for a while.

MARISSA. It won't hurt her?

DEATH. She'll fall right into my arms. When the time comes, you can even be with her again.
(Long beat as Marissa considers her decision. She takes a kiss in her hand and presses it to her stomach.)

MARISSA. What will her name be? When I see her?

DEATH. Zilla.

MARISSA. It's beautiful. My Zilla. *(She meets Death's eyes)*. Protect her.

Scene.