

There's Been an Accident

A Play in 17 Scenes

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SCENE 1

Setting: a hospital hallway and room

At Rise: GWEN is in a hospital bed on the other side of a dividing wall. The stage is otherwise empty. In the distance, beeping

(EMMA enters on the edge of a breakdown, she searches for Gwen's room frantically)

EMMA

She can't be dead. I can't lose her, she can't be dead.

(RYAN enters. Catches up to Emma)

RYAN

She's not dead. If she was dead// they would have told you on the phone.

EMMA

I DON'T want your input.

RYAN

She's not dead. Her body// would be in the morgue.

EMMA

She can't be dead, she's all I have left. I can't lose her too.

RYAN

You have me, too.

EMMA

You?

RYAN

No matter what we find here, you'll still have me. You won't be alone.

EMMA

After everything you've done?

RYAN

Yes.

EMMA

After everything I've done?

RYAN

Yes.

(Emma stops as she finds Gwen's room. Beat.)

EMMA

I didn't even get to tell her I was sorry.

She knows. RYAN

I didn't get to say goodbye. I never get to say goodbye. EMMA

She's not dead. RYAN

I don't want to go in. EMMA

You can do this. RYAN

I don't want to. EMMA

Staying out here won't change what's in there. RYAN

(Emma enters Gwen's hospital room. The lights in her room stay down)

Gwen! No, Gwen, it can't be. I'm so sorry. EMMA

SCENE 2

Setting: A graveyard. A funeral.

At Rise: EMMA, GWEN, and a PRIEST stand before a grave. HENRY and CHRIS are seated in the audience. They are all dressed for a funeral, but Chris is in a full police uniform

PRIEST

We are gathered here today, June 15th, 2019, to say farewell to Elliot Branson and to commit him into the hands of God. On behalf of the family, thank you all for being here today. The loss of a loved one is a pain that is not easily healed. Uniting as a community and as one body under God will allow us to mend our wounds as a city. I understand that this family is not the only family who has lost a loved one, but they ask you to hear them and grieve with them just as they have for you. Elliot's widow, Gwenevere and his sister, Emma have a few words to say in his memory.

(Gwen steps up to ELI's grave)

GWEN

(practiced and even)

Eli was a great man and an even better husband. I miss him more than words can describe, and I don't think I will ever stop mourning him. It's so easy to feel alone, but I know he is with me when I see the sunrise, or when I see a polaroid picture. Eli didn't have much family, but the family he had was precious to him, and I know he is smiling down on Emma and I today, proud of the family that will live on without him. Until I meet you again, I love you, Eli, and I will protect our little family with everything I have.

(Gwen steps back and Emma steps up. RYAN enters the theater. He rushes to his seat. He trips over a few people's belongings. He apologizes to them. Emma waits a moment for him to stop fidgeting. A wide spotlight shines on her as she talks. She speaks to the grave, not to the crowd)

EMMA

(emotional and candid)

When Gwen called me to tell me you'd died, she said, "There's been an accident". What kind of sentence is that? "There's been an accident". Like a "shooting in the local bar" kind of accident or like a "burned the lasagna, we're ordering pizza" kind of accident? I mean, I can probably answer that one, because I haven't had pizza in years. But my point still stands. "There's been an accident" is vague and awful and terrifying and it's even worse when the person telling you is 10 years older than you and sobbing so hard that she can barely get the

EMMA (cont.)

sentence out and then you have to be the adult and comfort her, even though you just lost your brother and you really haven't processed the information yet, and she's crying into the phone and all you can think to say is "when was the last time you had pizza?" Yeah, that's worse than burning the lasagna. She wanted to put "Elliot Branson, he will be missed" on your gravestone. If I'm being honest, I think you might have appreciated a joke or an engraved polaroid camera more than some generic crap about how you'll be missed. Of course you'll be missed, you're all I have. Had. All I had. I guess I don't really have you anymore. I had you and you had me. I was yours first, your sister, your family, your everything. I still am yours, but you aren't mine anymore. I guess I'm alone now. Alone without you to lean on and for the first time in my life, I don't want to see you because seeing you means seeing your body and that means that you're dead. Still, I wish I could have seen you one last time. I wish I could have said goodbye. I've never gotten to say goodbye before. If you can hear me now, Eli, I want to say I love you and goodbye and I hate you and I wish you'd never gone to that bar at all.

(Emma steps back next to Gwen. The spotlight disappears. Gwen puts an arm around Emma. Emma shrugs her off and takes a step away. The priest steps back up in front of the grave)

PRIEST

Thank you both for your memories and your love for Elliot. We ask now that everyone spends a few minutes remembering Elliot before moving onto the next grave.

(Henry, Chris, and Ryan come onstage)

PRIEST

(to Gwen)

I'm sorry we couldn't do the full ceremony, but there's just too many graves to get to today.

GWEN

It's fine. Like you said before, we weren't the only people who lost someone that day.

PRIEST

I know your husband is smiling down at you. He couldn't be more proud of what you're doing.

GWEN

Thank you.

PRIEST

(to Emma)

I'm sorry about your brother's death. Were you close?

EMMA

As close as two siblings 12 years apart can be.

PRIEST

12 years? Was he your step brother? Half brother?

GWEN

Half// brother.

EMMA

Just brother. I like to round up.

PRIEST

Oh, well, I'm sorry for your loss anyway. I hope you'll both join us at the next grave.

(The priest exits. Chris approaches Emma and Gwen)

CHRIS

I'm so sorry for your loss. I know how hard this must be, and my wife and I offer our support to help you through this tough time.

GWEN

Thank you so much for taking the time to be here. We really appreciate it.

CHRIS

Of course.

(to Emma)

Sorry about your brother, kid.

EMMA

Thanks, Chris.

CHRIS

How are you doing? Is there anything we can do for you?

EMMA

Not really, but thanks.

(beat)

Is there anything I can do for you? I mean you responded to the// scene, right?

CHRIS

I'm fine. It's part of the job. I'm just tired of showing up to scenes for people I know.

EMMA

I'm sorry we keep// putting you in these situations.

CHRIS

I'm sorry you had to lose Eli.

EMMA

Thanks.

CHRIS

I'll see you at the next one, right?

EMMA

I've got no funerals left// to go to after this.

CHRIS

I meant the next grave.

EMMA

Oh yeah. Right.

(Chris hugs Emma. Exits. Henry approaches)

HENRY

It's hard to be personal about this when there's so many funerals today, but I just wanted to apologize. The name's Henry, I own, or owned the bar that got...

GWEN

Oh! Of course. I'm so sorry for your loss and for what you must have seen that night// it must have been awful.

HENRY

I'm the one saying sorry. So, sorry for your loss.

(Henry exits. Ryan steps up to Emma. He doesn't acknowledge Gwen)

RYAN

I'm sorry for your loss. I know what it's like to lose a sibling.

EMMA

You do?

RYAN

Yeah. My sister's Mary.

EMMA

Mary?

RYAN

Mary. Marilyn Harvell? From the bar.

EMMA

Oh. So she died in the// shooting then.

RYAN

Yeah. With your brother.

EMMA

Oh. Well, sorry for your loss.

RYAN

Thanks.

(Awkward beat)

Well, if you need anything at all, here's my card. We, or I guess just me now, own a pizza place downtown. Frank's? Feel free to stop by for a slice.

(Ryan exits. Beat.)

GWEN

You know that cop? Wasn't he the one who responded to the// accident?

EMMA

Chris. He was there for Eli and me when our parents died.

GWEN

Oh. I think Eli told me about Chris.

EMMA

He probably did.

(Gwen turns her attention back to Eli's grave)

GWEN

I wish I could see him.

EMMA

I told you.

GWEN

You were right. An open casket would have been better.

EMMA

Now we can't say goodbye. Not really.

GWEN

I said my goodbyes at the morgue. Everything else has been for the town.

EMMA

Screw the town, he was my brother.

(Emma exits. Gwen watches her go)

GWEN

Emma!

(Gwen looks back at the grave)

GWEN

(to the grave)

I love you and I miss you more every time Emma has an outburst.
You always knew how to comfort her.

*(Gwen kisses her fingers and touches them to the
gravestone. She exits)*