

Grand Design

Narrator:

Death can be described as the action or fact of dying or being killed; the end of the life of a person or organism.

To those surrounded by it, it can feel isolating, lonely, and overwhelming. It is often accompanied by feelings of grief, the need to reconcile with God or other deities, and the desire to apologize for the actions one has taken during their lifetime.

What is *not* commonly known, is that before death, there is one last step. One last conversation presented to the dying before their energy is released into the ether.

Ethan

Where.. Where am I? Why.. am I in the woods?

[SFX:Shuffling of grass, wind blowing through trees, chirping]

Dream

Hello there, Ethan! It's such a pleasure to meet you.

Ethan

Who.. are you?

Dream

You can call me Dream. I won't deceive you, you're dreaming, and I'm here to have a conversation with you.

Ethan

Oh. I'm.. dreaming?

Dream

I wouldn't be standing in front of you otherwise. Would you care to take a walk with me?

Ethan

This *must* be a dream if I'm capable of that. I guess I won't argue. I haven't had one of these in a long time.

Dreamer

I promise you, it will be pleasant. You're already taking this *very* well.

Ethan

So. What are you here for, if you don't mind me asking?

Dream

To talk to you, of course!

Ethan

Well, I can tell that much.. But, what are you here to talk to me *about*?

Dream

Whatever you want. This is *your* dream.

Ethan

Hmm.. I'm not really sure there's much to talk about.

Dream

Sure there is. You have an entire lifetime of memories and experiences to share. I'm positive there's something.

Ethan

Yeah. You're not wrong.. But I don't even really know where to start. My mind has been so clouded and messy lately. So I'm not sure what there is to say.

Dream

Why don't we focus on that, then? What are you feeling right now?

Ethan

I.. It's what I'm always feeling. I always feel like I'm going nowhere and running out of time. Like I've wasted so many months, days, hours, seconds.

Dream

And what is it that makes that time feel wasted?

Ethan

I think it's because I've taken so long to find any sense of fulfillment in my life. So it feels much too late to have really meant something to the world. I let those feelings of inadequacy completely devour me for most of my life. I've made excuses to push people away because I thought their lives would be so much better without my presence. As if it was easier for them to hate me and turn away than it was to simply tell them what's wrong with my head. Like I've driven a dagger into my own heart before they ever had a chance to. It's pitiful, really. It's a blanket of self loathing that only seems to sabotage me.

Dream

Not to poke and prod, but why do you think you've pushed people away?

Ethan

Hmm.. I think. Well.. I think I do it because it's easier to push than pull. It probably also has a lot to do with the fact that I don't know how much I really bring to the table. I put so much pressure on having value to offer that it seems to encompass everything in my life. I don't expect the same out of other people, but I put that pressure on myself quite a bit. I've gotten a little better about it lately, but the feelings still linger, and there are a lot of things I wish I could have taken back.

Dream

I believe everyone feels regret. It's human error manifesting into an emotion. Clearly you allow past mistakes and even harm done to you to shape your feelings of the future, limiting yourself behind ideas that you should be valuable or not exist at all. Is that right?

Ethan (sighing)

Yeah. That's pretty obvious, isn't it? I put so much weight on being useful and having a purpose that I often put a huge limitation on how I see my potential as a human being.

Dream

Have you considered that there are people that see a light in you? Those that truly, *deeply* care about you. They don't see you as a burden. If you open your eyes a little wider, perhaps you'll see that letting them in may have been an easier option.

Ethan

I ponder that.. Constantly. I should have let people in more instead of feeling like I owe them something for caring about me. I was just always worried about what I had to give back. As if it needed to be transactional for me to be worth their time.

Dream

You are extremely hard on yourself. You do show that those people mean a lot to you though, in how you feel you need to do something for them in order to be worthy of the friendship they give you.

Ethan

You have a point. They mean the world to me. All of my friends mean everything to me. I believe my real regret is all the time I could have spent chasing things I gave up on. In my small brush with reality, I've experienced so much. Felt so much.

Dream

Would you say that in that way, you've truly lived? You're allowed to appreciate the little things. No one says that you can't stop and listen to the wind in the trees or the pitter patter of raindrops flecking across the leaves. You see the world with so much color, yet you cascade dulled greys and shadows over yourself.

Ethan

In a way, I suppose I *have* lived. I've spent a lot of time reading books by ponds, staring into fire pits and admiring the falling showers that the clouds grace us with. It's not all bad. I still love the opportunities I have been given, and I so heavily admire the people I've surrounded myself with. It's possible that I've put so much energy into finding what reason I exist for that I've forgotten to stop and admire what's going on around me.

Dream

And what if you were to stop trying to discover this huge, overarching sense that you need to do one specific thing for your life to feel more full?

Ethan

..What do you mean by that?

Dream

Maybe life doesn't *need* a purpose. Maybe you don't need some grand design written in the sky above. Maybe it's enough to wake up each day and do the things that make you happy. It's okay to shape a life that feels soft in your hands, gentle, fulfilling, yet simple.

We're only here for a moment, a brief, beautiful moment. You were given the chance to experience the universe, to understand, to feel, to grieve, to smile. We exist in this small yet expansive sliver of infinity, and if you can spend your days chasing only what makes your heart beat a little faster, your soul feel a little lighter, then isn't that enough?

Ethan

Ya know.. I've never really thought about it that way. I've always tried to claw my way away from the end because I felt like I was running out of time, so I never saw those little happy moments as being deeper than they seemed. Now, here I am realizing all of this in what feels like a strange, all too late moment of clarity.

Dream

What makes it too late? You're realizing now that you have moments to look back on and smile. That alone has weight.

Ethan

I'm still making these realizations, so that's what's important in the end, right? Even if I don't have much longer to appreciate it.

Dream

I think you've always wanted to see these things, you simply haven't allowed yourself to stop recoiling against it.

Ethan

That adds up. Thank you.. You know, at least I came to appreciate these little moments before I left.. and.. I'm not stupid, Dream. I'm dying, aren't I?

Dream

Yes. To be blunt, you are.

Ethan

Is this the last conversation I'll ever have? Are my kidneys finally giving out?

Dream (caring)

It is, and yes. They are.

Ethan

So. I won't be waking up. That should probably hit me a little harder, but I did see it coming.

Dream

I would say that there's gravity in the fact that you came to understand and appreciate more aspects of your life before your time came to a close. Even if you saw this moment coming, you're at least able to take a sense of self appreciation with you when you go. It has been a great pleasure speaking with you.

Ethan

Is this goodbye?

Dream

If you would like for it to be, then yes.

Ethan

Dream? Can I ask you one more thing before I go?

Dream

Of *course* you can. Anything.

Ethan

Will it.. Will it hurt?

Dream (comforting, whispering)

Oh, dear Ethan.. It's already over. You can rest now.

[End]