



CONVERSATIONS WITH MY DEAD BEST FRIEND

By Jasper Conley

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Conversations With My Dead Best Friend

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Disclaimer: This story is fiction. Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental and hilarious. Or maybe it's on purpose. I'll never tell.

Setting: The living room/entryway of a two bedroom city apartment belonging to cousins Esther and Annie. Modern day.

NOTE: Although I request that all four characters in this show are played as women, they do not have to be played as or by cisgender women. However, I request none of the characters are played as or by cisgender men.

Characters (4W) in order of appearance:

ESTHER: Central character of the play. Mid-20s or so. Pensive, sarcastic, and drily funny, but also very caring and sensitive at her core. May be somewhat of a loner, outside of her close relationships. Between jobs at play's start due to feeling a need to start over with her life. Interesting combination of skeptical and hopeful traits.

ANNIE: Esther's younger cousin and roommate. Upperclassman in college in Act 1, recent graduate in Act 2. She can display a bit of an attitude at times and is quick to hold a grudge, but really cares about her friends when it comes down to it. She also has a special fondness for her favorite cousin, Esther, who she looked up to as a kid.

ARIEL: Esther's late best friend. Mid-20s "starving artist" type. The perfect foil to Esther and her clear *platonic* soulmate. Much like Esther in personality, but more brutally honest. She appears to Esther in an almost ghostly form, taking on the perfection of her friend's memory.

MONA: Esther's ex girlfriend, then later on girlfriend again. Earthy, "granola," politely open about her beliefs even if they aren't always the popular opinion. Probably a couple years older than Esther and Ariel, but not dramatically so; an age gap shouldn't be emphasized. Late 20s?

Synopsis: After the sudden death of her best friend, a young woman trying to find herself reunites with a lost love...a situation that is complicated by her skeptical cousin (who is also her roommate) and the recurring appearance of her best friend's ghost after a drunken emotional night.

SCENE ONE

(Lights come up and we see Esther in the main room/entryway of a small apartment in the city. This is the apartment she shares with her cousin Annie. She is anxiously awaiting someone's arrival, and cannot seem to stand or sit still. Enter Annie, carrying a bag of groceries. She immediately notices that her cousin is anxious.)

ANNIE: Hey! You're back already? How did the job interview go?

ESTHER: I don't know. You never really know about these things until they're done.

ANNIE: Are you nervous? I know you really wanted this one.

ESTHER: A little. Nothing I can do about it now either way.

ANNIE: That's a good attitude.

ESTHER: I mean, from what they said at the end, I basically think I have it! I hope.

ANNIE: That's awesome. When will you know?

ESTHER: Hopefully sometime in the next couple of days.

ANNIE: What until then? More interviews? More applications?

ESTHER: Maybe. We'll see how this one goes first.

ANNIE: You sure don't seem too anxious about the whole job thing.

ESTHER: Relax, Annie. I made sure I had a bit of money saved up before I quit my old job. I can get through the month with what I've got.

ANNIE: And only that, right? What will you do if you don't have a job by then?

ESTHER: It won't come to that, I promise. I'll find a job soon.

ANNIE: But you don't know that. Are you sure you don't want me to try and get you a job at the restaurant? We're always looking.

ESTHER: No thank you. I would make a terrible waitress.

ANNIE: All right. Well, I hope you know what you're doing.

ESTHER: I do. I've sent out a couple dozen applications at least, okay? I've done interviews. I've almost gotten so many. And Annie, I really think this job is the one.

ANNIE: I sure hope so.

ESTHER: Relax. I'll figure it out one way or another. I always do.

ANNIE: Alright. If you say so.

(Annie starts to leave to put away the groceries. She stops when Esther starts to speak.)

ESTHER: Ariel's coming over.

ANNIE: Fun. I was supposed to go out tonight with Holly.

ESTHER: Supposed to? What happened?

ANNIE: She ditched me for Andy. Again.

ESTHER: Has anyone pointed out how weird it is that Holly has a best friend named Annie and a boyfriend named Andy?

ANNIE: Yes. You. Pretty much every time poor Andy is mentioned.

ESTHER: Hasn't gotten any less funny.

ANNIE: Well, some of us might be tired of it.

(Beat.)

ESTHER: You know, you can hang out with Ariel and me if you want.

ANNIE (a little too harshly): No. Thank you. (She catches herself.) I mean, I don't want to interrupt your time together. I know you've been really busy with the whole job search thing.

ESTHER: No, really, it's fine. You two are... old... friends.

ANNIE: I'm good. Thanks. But no thanks.

(Long beat. A knock on the door. Esther immediately springs into action.)

ESTHER: That's got to be her.

(Esther opens the door, and sure enough, Ariel enters and immediately tackle-hugs Esther.)

ARIEL: Esther!

ESTHER: Ariel!

(They have a moment. Maybe one picks the other up and spins them around in a circle, or a similar gesture. Ariel draws back so she can see and speak to Esther properly.)

ARIEL: God, I missed you. It feels like it's been forever, you know?

ANNIE (attempt to be funny, doesn't quite hit): Weren't you over here two weeks ago?

ARIEL (not missing a beat): Exactly, it's been too long.

(Ariel hugs Esther for a long time. Annie audibly sighs and walks out the door. Ariel notices and lets go of Esther. They watch Annie exit.)

ARIEL: What's up with her?

ESTHER: She's just mad because Holly canceled on her again for Andy.

ARIEL: Andy. Andy. That's Holly's boyfriend, right?

ESTHER: The one and only.

ARIEL: Wait. Andy and Annie? Like Raggedy Ann and Raggedy Andy? Is it just me, or is that weird to anyone else?

ESTHER: Right? What are the odds?

ARIEL: No wonder the two are practically rivals.

ESTHER: Oh, not just practically.

(They share a laugh.)

ARIEL: So, it's drama central around here, then?

ESTHER: Oh, it's nothing.

ARIEL: Doesn't sound like nothing if Annie's making that big of a stink.

ESTHER: Yeah, but this stuff happens all the time. I've gotten used to it, you know?

ARIEL: Some best friend Holly is. I'd never cancel on you for a boyfriend. Never ever. I don't care how funny and charming and perfect. You come first.

ESTHER: I wouldn't cancel on you for a boyfriend either.

ARIEL: Big surprise there, Sappho.

ESTHER (teasingly): Now a girlfriend, maybe...

ARIEL: And that would require you to get one first.

ESTHER: Hey!

ARIEL: I know, I know, you could get a girlfriend any time you want. Except you've been saying that for four years and nothing's ever lasted more than a month.

ESTHER: Hold on, that's not true. There was Mona.

ARIEL: Right. Weird Mona. With the crazy hair.

ESTHER: Mona wasn't that weird, you know.

ARIEL: How would I know? I never even met her! I was in London the whole time!

ESTHER: How could I forget? Your Blue Period.

ARIEL: Funny. You know, I heard a *lot* of intrigue about good old Weird Mona when I was abroad. You two got up to some things...

ESTHER: No! It wasn't like that at all. We just had fun.

ARIEL: Pardon. I forgot. No intrigue allowed for good-girl Esther. Not even with the mysterious Weird Mona.

ESTHER: Would you stop calling her Weird Mona, please?.

ARIEL: Are you serious? You're the one who started calling her that!

ESTHER: Annie started calling her that, not me. I... liked Mona. I liked her a lot, actually. Weird M... I mean *Mona* and really had something together. Something real.

ARIEL: Yeah, until it all went sour, right?

ESTHER: I mean, I--

ARIEL: I was surprised, too. When the whole thing with Wei- with *Mona* went south. You'd been all excited for me to meet her. You acted all like she was "the one."

ESTHER: There is no such thing as "the one."

ARIEL: Says you, the eternal romantic pessimist.

ESTHER: I prefer the term realist.

ARIEL: So if Annie started the Weird Mona thing...well, why?

ESTHER: They never got along. Annie didn't like that Mona still hung out with her ex. Said it was a red flag. And Mona, well... she was the type who didn't mess with people who weren't about what she was about, you know?

ARIEL: Yeah. I know.

(A beat.)

ARIEL: She really does have jealousy issues, doesn't she? Annie, I mean.

ESTHER: No! She just-

ARIEL: Esther. Come on.

ESTHER: Okay, yeah, she does. But it's just because... well...you know...

(Esther trails off. Beat.)

ARIEL: Oh my god, don't tell me all of this is because of David. It's been *two* years! And anyways, it's not like she owns him.

ESTHER: David was supposedly the "love of her life," so when he dumped her for you...

ARIEL: Hold up. David did *not* dump Annie for me. He--

ESTHER: I know, I know, he's womanizing scum who doesn't keep his own commitments.

ARIEL: Damn right. And I was the first warm body he found. I wasn't even that into the guy. And I certainly didn't *steal* him from her. He pursued *me*, and I dumped his sorry ass after I realized what he was all about.

ESTHER: Try telling that to Annie.

ARIEL: I have.

ESTHER: I know, I know.

ARIEL: I just can't believe she was willing to throw away years of friendship over a boy.

ESTHER: I can.

ARIEL: Shit, you're right.

(Another brief pause as the two think.)

ARIEL: Look, I know Annie's your cousin and all, and it's really great that you're giving her a place to stay while she's in college--

ESTHER: She's fine most of the time, I swear. She's just going through some stuff.

ARIEL: I know, I know. (Beat.) I still do like Annie, you know. Despite everything.

ESTHER: You just wish she wouldn't be such a bitch to you over some guy you both dated.

ARIEL: Wouldn't you?

ESTHER: Yeah. I mean, I do. For all of our sakes.

(At that moment, Annie walks into the room, dressed up as if for a night out clubbing.)

ESTHER: Oh, hey, Annie! Where are you going?

ANNIE: I have plans tonight.

ESTHER: I thought Holly ditched you for Andy.

ANNIE: She did. I made other plans.

ESTHER: That fast?

ANNIE: I may have had another invitation for tonight.

ESTHER: It's a boy, isn't it?

(Annie looks sheepish, but does not respond.)

ESTHER: Oh my god, it's Riley from the library, isn't it?

ANNIE: No! I mean, okay, yeah, it is. But it's not like that!

ESTHER: So you're finally giving him a chance, huh?

ANNIE: You know what? I guess I am. Why not, right? Seize the day and all that.

ESTHER: That's the spirit.

(Beat)

ARIEL: I like your dress, Annie. That's a good color on you.

ANNIE (coldly): Thanks.

(Sound of a phone ringing. Annie picks up her cellphone and answers. Ariel fiddles with her own cell phone during the ensuing conversation.)

ANNIE: Hello? ... Oh, hi Holly... No, I understand... No, you and Andy have fun, I have a date actually... Ugh, no, that'd be weird, I'm not bringing him on a double our first time out... He's not gonna *murder* me, Holly, he's from school. He works in the library... Riley, yeah... No, not glasses Riley from the library, *tall* Riley from the library... Listen, Hol, I gotta go. Have fun with Andy, okay? ... Yeah, see you around. Bye.

(Annie hangs up.)

ESTHER: Was that Holly?

ANNIE: Yeah. She wanted to invite me out with Andy and some of his friends. I think she just doesn't want to be the only girl.

ESTHER: And you don't want to bring *tall* Riley from the library?

ANNIE: Nah. The last guy didn't get along with my friends. Don't want to ruin first date vibes.

ESTHER: The last guy was thirty.

ANNIE: He was *twenty-nine*.

ARIEL: She's got you there.

ESTHER: Anyway, have fun on your date. And call me if you need a ride home.

ANNIE (sarcastically): Thanks, Mom.

ESTHER: We're gonna order takeout later, if you want me to get you something.

ANNIE: I'm good, thanks. We'll probably eat while we're out.

ESTHER: All right. Text me if you change your mind, ok?

ANNIE: Okay. I'm gonna be late, though, I gotta go now.

ESTHER: Have fun, then. See you later!

ANNIE: Bye, Esther. Ariel.

ARIEL: See you around, Annie.

(Annie leaves without saying anything.)

ARIEL: I told you she hates me.

ESTHER: She doesn't hate you. It's just-

ARIEL: The David thing, I know. Jeez. Girl really knows how to hold a grudge.

ESTHER: She'll let go of it eventually.

ARIEL: I sure hope so. I can't imagine spending the rest of our lives like this.

(Beat.)

ARIEL: But enough about that. Girl's night!

ESTHER: Hell yeah! Did you bring the movie?

ARIEL: But of course. What good is Lazy Tyler for if not his massive collection of BluRays?

ESTHER: And sex, I've been told.

ARIEL: That was *one time*.

(Esther gives Ariel a knowing look.)

ARIEL: Okay, maybe two or three times. But that's over now. I'm a free agent. A single woman.

ESTHER: And you're living with a guy you used to fuck. And his new girlfriend.

ARIEL: *And* three other people!

ESTHER: Hey there's still time.

(Ariel playfully smacks Esther)

ARIEL: Oh, shut up.

ESTHER: I don't know how you can stand living in a three bedroom house with five roommates.

ARIEL: Easy. I get my own room.

ESTHER: It's *literally* the size of a closet.

ARIEL: You know a thing or two about closets, don't you?

ESTHER: Shut up!

ARIEL: Never.

(They both laugh raucously, the laughter of two old friends.)

ESTHER: I wish there was space for you here.

ARIEL: Me too. Maybe when Annie moves out, huh?

ESTHER: Yeah. Like we talked about in high school.

(Beat.)

ESTHER: You know, I had that job interview today.

ARIEL: Oh my god, that was today, wasn't it? So, how'd it go?

ESTHER: They said they'd get back to me soon.

ARIEL: I know you'll get it. I mean, how could they not hire you? You're perfect.

ESTHER: No, you.

(Laugh.)

ESTHER: So what movie did you bring?

ARIEL: One of my roommate's spaghetti westerns. So I thought we could order spaghetti from Delfino's and watch. You know, to just be on theme.

ESTHER: That sounds perfect.

ARIEL: Good, because I put in the food order while you were talking to Annie.

ESTHER: Always one step ahead of the game, aren't you?

ARIEL: Yep! You know me.

(Ariel's phone goes off. She looks at it.)

ARIEL: It's the delivery guy. He's down in the lobby. I'll go get it, since I'm paying.

ESTHER: Come on, let me at least pay the tip or something, you bought last time.

ARIEL: No. It's my treat. We're celebrating your great job interview.

(Esther starts to protest, but thinks better of it.)

ESTHER: Thanks, Ariel.

ARIEL: Anything for you.

(Ariel gets up and starts to leave.)

ESTHER: Wait. Ariel.

(Ariel stops in her tracks with the door half open and turns around.)

ARIEL: Yeah?

(Esther starts to say something, but stops.)

ESTHER: I- never mind.

ARIEL: You what?

ESTHER: I'm actually really nervous about this job thing.

(Ariel comes over and puts a hand on Esther's shoulder.)

ARIEL: Hey. You'll do fine. You're... you. You're amazing. They'd be dumb not to hire you.

ESTHER: Thanks. You're the best.

ARIEL: I try. Hey, was there something else on your mind?

ESTHER: No.

ARIEL: Ok, as long as you're sure. I really gotta go get the food, though. Be right back!

(Ariel leaves the apartment. Esther watches her go.)

ESTHER (quietly enough that Ariel can't hear): Do you think I'm in love with you?

(A pause, as Esther realizes the weight of what she just said.)

ESTHER: Because I'm not. Never have been. And I'm tired of everyone saying I am.

(Esther sits on the couch as the lights go down. END SCENE.)