

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

THE REMARKABLY UNREMARKABLE CRUCIFIXION OF EMMA REYNOLDS

Written by

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

EMMA REYNOLDS: Teens. Any ethnicity. Female.

SETTING:

Right here.

TIME:

Right now.

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Emma Reynolds, Daniel Prillaman, 1.

Darkness.

*The audience sits in a quiet
nothingness.*

*A beam of light strikes EMMA
REYNOLDS.*

*She shields her eyes a little
from the light, perturbed, but
like everything else, she is
silent.*

She breathes.

Looks at us.

Looks around.

Perhaps smiles in wonder.

Finally, she speaks:

EMMA

I still don't know if I'm dead or not.

I feel like I'm in an ether
Floating
In some dormant energy
Older than anything I've known.

Either way
You're here
You see me
And I see you
So
We're all here
Together

Until you leave.

The social contract dictates that I explain myself
I suppose
You're here, you deserve it
I suppose
Maybe you've paid to be here
I don't know

You presumably came here to watch me, I do naturally feel
some obligation to talk

I'll tell you the same story I tell everyone
Who comes here.

(MORE)

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Emma Reynolds, Daniel Prillaman, 2.

EMMA (cont'd)

I don't remember the day anymore, but
It was morning
I got to school late

Sometimes
My dad, um
I don't really use an alarm, never have
And sometimes if my dad doesn't go into work early
He, uh
He'll let me sleep in
And I'll wake up after school has already started
And I hate it
I always yell at him to stop it
And I did that morning

I ask him, "why do you do that?
I've told you I don't like it."
And I never really get an answer
Just a, "Oh, it's okay.
I'll take you."

And he did that morning
So
I got to school late

And there was an assembly that day
I didn't know there was going to be
They never announce those things
But I basically have enough time to get to class before we
all leave to walk down to the assembly in the auditorium

I figured it was gonna be one of those "Don't do drugs" or
"Abstinence and You!" kind of deals
It was worse
It was
A magician

Hand to God
I don't know
I don't book the assemblies

Whoever booked this guy really didn't do their research

His name was "The Stupendous and Mystical Dr. Presto"
Yeah
Yeah, um
Yeah
He had a handlebar mustache
A ridiculous suit
It was yellow, it clashed with
Everything
And he spoke like an old-timey radio host

(MORE)

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Emma Reynolds, Daniel Prillaman, 3.

EMMA (cont'd)

Like he was
Narrating some old video about sexual harassment in the
workplace or
Nuclear bomb safety

So picture in your head that guy from school you knew
growing up
You know the one
The one most likely to actually become a magician
Like for a career
And imagine you sit down to find out you're about to watch
him for at least an hour
Yeah

He's okay
That's the weirdest part
He's not good
At all
But
He's not bad
Every like
Fourth trick or something
He genuinely manages to make you go
"Wait,
How'd he do that?"

The voice was entertaining, at least

And eventually
He says it's time for his final trick
And, of course
Because we've all been dreading this moment
He says he needs a volunteer
And, of course
This is where the story really becomes mine to tell

The other kids in my class all stood up and pointed at me
And
Volunteered me
Loudly
Because they are
shits

I promise, I would never have voluntarily offered my
services

I'll be real with you, I'm not the most popular kid in
school
I get
Bullied here and there
It's whatever

But Dr. Presto saw this

(MORE)

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Emma Reynolds, Daniel Prillaman, 4.

EMMA (cont'd)

I know he saw it
And he decided anyway to make a teenage girl's life worse
and said, "Ah, yes!
You, my dear, have the makings of a brilliant assistant!
Please make your way to me!"

Thinking back, I suppose I could have just
Not
I could have just
Not gotten up

But
I did

Everyone watched
Pleased with themselves
Giggled and snickered as I walked down the length of the
auditorium and climbed the stairs to the stage

"My dear girl, what is your name?!"
Said Dr. Presto

What was the "Dr." for, too?
What was his PhD in and where did he get it?
These were questions that occurred to me significantly after
the fact, and they have always puzzled me
To this very moment

But I don't ask
I just go
"Emma."

"Ah! What a lovely name. Miss Emma, it is so nice to make
your acquaintance, my young lady."

He takes my hand and kisses it

The audience dies
of laughter

I say
"Sure."

He says
"I am elated you're here. This particular trick.
It is a very good trick.
But it only works with the most perfect of assistants."

I say
"Sure."

The laughter gets less and less stifled every second

(MORE)

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Emma Reynolds, Daniel Prillaman, 5.

EMMA (cont'd)

And Presto hears it
I know he hears it
Because he leans closer
And he says with a wink
So softly only I can hear
"Don't listen to them, Miss Emma.
You'll be standing long after they're gone."

I don't know what to make of that.

And before I have time to
He turns back out and says,
"I call this trick,
The Vitruvian Man!"

Very briefly
I didn't know what that word meant
I'm guessing most of my peers didn't either
I don't know how many of you know
Suffice it to say
What happened next was something unexpected
And explicitly unwanted on my part

And nobody did a single thing to stop it.

*As EMMA describes the
following, perhaps it happens
to some degree.*

EMMA

Presto says,
"The Vitruvian Man!"
Also, girl, by the way, what the hell?

When he says
"The Vitruvian Man!"

Light hits this huge, wooden cross set up on the stage

Like a full-sized cross
Gnarly
Splintery
Bent

And before I can think
Two
Big hulking dudes dressed in black
Come on stage and grab me
And start dragging me towards it

I am almost too dazed by the shock of it to resist
But I do

(MORE)

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Emma Reynolds, Daniel Prillaman, 6.

EMMA (cont'd)

I'm not strong enough

These two dudes lift me up easily
And Dr. Presto
Takes a hammer and some nails out of his jacket pocket

Nobody does anything
They just watch

And my eyes are streaming tears
I'm trying to get away

I'm not strong enough

These two dudes hold me against the wood
And Presto saunters over
And he starts to hammer the nails in
And this is where it gets really weird

It doesn't hurt
At all
I don't even bleed
Not a drop

One strike of the hammer
I feel the nail pierce my skin
But it doesn't hurt

Another strike of the hammer
The nail exits my skin
Enters the wood
But it doesn't hurt

My feet
My hands
He nails me to this cross
I am attached to it
Hanging from it
But it doesn't hurt

I don't bleed
Not even a drop

And the whole time
My fellow classmates and my peers
The audience just
Stares

Shocked into silence or
Morbidly fascinated
I don't know
Nobody really says anything

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Emma Reynolds, Daniel Prillaman, 7.

EMMA (cont'd)

Except Dr. Presto

But he only gives a
"Ta-da."

And then he bows
And walks offstage
Followed by the two dudes

I am alone
Nailed to an actual cross
With the entire school watching me

And time
Just
Starts to pass

Hours pass

None of us move

I cry and
Plead for help

But none of us move

I went to Sunday School
You know
My parents made me
And the thing they nailed into us pretty hard
Pun intended
Was how much crucifixion was supposed to hurt

It wasn't so much the blood loss that was supposed to kill
you, but
The starvation
The dehydration
Thirst
It was a painfully
Drawn out death

It was a death designed to humiliate
The victim

But I still don't know if I'm dead or not

Because I'm here

You see me
And I see you
So
We're all here
Together

(MORE)

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Emma Reynolds, Daniel Prillaman, 8.

EMMA (cont'd)

Until you leave.

My class had to leave eventually
After a while the buses had come to
Take everyone home
The teachers had everyone exit in an orderly fashion
The laughs had stopped
Turned into wide-eyed stares
Mouths agog
Faces frozen in curiosity

I've been up here ever since

Days have turned into weeks
Weeks into months

I've lost count of the time
I've lost count of how many people have come here
To gawk at me
On some schedule unknown to me
Like a zoo animal

But I know it's been a lot of you
So I hope you are entertained

At some point
All of you are going to leave
You're going to have to
You're going to get out of your seats and walk out of here
Other people are going to take your place

Years from now
I'm going to still be here
When you're walking your dog
Obliging your kids with tea parties
For the rest of your trivial lives
After you are dead and in the ground
I will be here
Hanging from these planks of wood
I'm not hungry
I'm not thirsty
I'm not in pain

I'm just
Floating

I know what he meant now
When he said,
"I'll be standing long after you're gone."

Because he meant it literally

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Emma Reynolds, Daniel Prillaman, 9.

I mean, mostly
Hanging
But
He meant it literally

I will be.

Hell of a trick, isn't it?

EMMA is done speaking.

The play is over.

But there is no visual signal.

At least not right away.

*Maybe eventually, after a long
time, the house lights come up
and ushers enter to sweep the
floor and shut down the
performance space.*

*But whatever happens, EMMA
remains.*

*She remains until the last
person in the audience gets up
and leaves of their own
volition.*

She remains long after that.

*EMMA hangs and will hang from
the cross.*

Floating.

Floating.

Floating.