

Have you considered suicide as a solution to your problems?

A Conversation in one act

By Lee LaMarche

[James and Beth are sitting on a third floor study area in the Russet College Library. James has books on the table and Beth is sitting on the railing looking down at the library's atrium]

James

I just think you need to consider options.

Beth

Like what?

James

Start with your problems. Grades aren't that fantastic.

Beth

So I should kill myself?

James

Not necessarily. But how much does graduating mean to you?

Beth

I'd like to graduate.

James

Okay. Then don't kill yourself. Hard to walk the stage when you're dead.

Beth

Well, some schools will give a diploma posthumously.

James

Good point. There's something for you to research. Also, please don't sit on the edge like that. You make me nervous.

Beth

Okay grandad. We're in a library. It's not a cliff.

James

Yes but it is the third floor. You'd make quite the Jackson Pollock.

Beth

I like you.

James

I know.

Beth

So what are you actually telling me?

James

I'm telling you that there are options. One of them is suicide. People love to hate on it but a lot of people do it.

Beth

Is this where I ask about God?

James

Please don't.

Beth

Nothing about sinning? How about heaven? Hell? Jersey?

James

I'm from Jersey. You know that.

Beth

So you vouch that Jersey does exist.

James

Yes but on its own plane of existence from the rest of you.

Beth

Deep like the ocean.

James

Thanks. Yeah, move a seat closer.

Beth

Of course.

James

Thank you. there's always self-harm.

Beth

Cutting is for sad high school goths.

James

I guess.

Beth

What if I whipped my back with something?

James

Like what?

I dunno. Rope. **Beth**

Do you have rope? **James**

No. **Beth**

So you'd have to get rope. **James**

I imagine so, yes. **Beth**

How much? **James**

A length of it. **Beth**

Of rope. **James**

Yeah. A length of rope. **Beth**

From where? **James**

Dunno. The store? **Beth**

Too much time. You need to keep it simple. **James**

Rope isn't simple enough? **Beth**

Obtaining it is. But You, my dear, do not have a car to bring you to the rope store. **James**

Yeah but- **Beth**

James

And let's say you get that ride. How do you tell your friend with the car that you only need rope so keep the car running I'll be right back!

Beth

I'll say it's for a project.

James

And what project is this?

Beth

Um, well, shit. If I was an art major, I could pretend it was for some shitty sculpture.

James

And yet...

Beth

Stats major. No need for rope.

James

Wohwoh. Trombone noise.

Beth

Well what are my other options?

James

Drown in the pool. Just wait until the swim team is gone, tie some bricks to your ankles and glub glub you're a goner.

Beth

Drowning always sounds like an awful way to go.

James

Why?

Beth

I assume there's a lot of flailing and mind changing right up until you take that first big inhale of pool water.

James

If that scares you then we can edit it out.

Beth

Cool. Cool.

James

What about pills? Everyone on campus is on some sort of drugs. You could just take those. Pills and a bottle of... well, something strong.

Beth

You can't even think of a type of alcohol?

James

I'm not much of a drinker.

Beth

I know! But you could have just said beer and it would have counted! Aw, don't look so sad.

James

It's only a thing grownups do.

Beth

Look sad?

James

Nope. Drink.

Beth

Funny.

James

Sure. But think about this. Have you ever seen someone die?

Beth

Movies mostly. Thankfully I haven't had the chance to view too many bodies.

James

When my grandmother died it was awful. She was old, like seventy-four, and had that thing where your lungs fill with fluid like you're drowning.

Beth

And so old age isn't how you want to go?

James

Not like that.

Beth

You want to fall asleep in your comfy chair and die in your sleep.

James

If I need to live a long time? Yes.

Beth

Huh.

James

What?

Beth

Nothing. Just interesting.

James

You'd rather die young?

Beth

It does seem like a better option.

James

Why?

Beth

You do a bunch of cool things and then shove off before you get old and sick.

James

It's the inevitability?

Beth

I guess. A future of people wiping my ass while trapped in a body that doesn't want to respond anymore? No thanks.

James

Gun.

Beth

What?

James

Get. A. Gun. Shoot yourself. Right in the head. One squeeze and you're gone. No struggle, no added shit. Granted someone will have to clean up one hell of a mess.

Beth

People survive that all the time.

James

What? No. Come on. In the head?

Beth

Yup. Turns out you don't need your whole brain to live.

James

That throws off my entire narrative. It's true?

Beth

Yessir. True as the sky above us.

James

Says the girl sitting indoors.

Beth

Fine, as true as that dirty skylight above us.

James

Better. It's got to be placement. Like where the gun is actually pointed.

Beth

What does that matter?

James

Well... I think you probably need to find a soft spot. Roof of the mouth or that small spot behind your ear.

Beth

Soft spot?

James

Yeah. Feel it. Not on me! On you. See? You feel that?

Beth

Now I'm creeped out to know that my brain is exposed.

James

Potentially exposed. If you do it right.

Beth

Okay. I'm convinced. No guns.

James

What about poison?

Beth

What about it?

James

There's a science lab with all kinds of chemicals to choose from.

Beth

Why not just drink bleach?

James

Jesus. You know what that does to you? It's horrific and something you don't bounce back from.

Beth

I assume you mean it kills you?

James

Not at all. In fact, it just fucks up your throat and anything else it touches. But it doesn't kill you. Not outright. It burns you from the inside.

Beth

Jesus.

James

Yeah.

Beth

Lots to unpack with that one.

James

Mhmm. And then if you live they take parts of your lower intestine and replace your esophagus. No more solid foods after that.

Beth

How do you know all that?

James

I get bored sometimes. Google is a great place for one's mind to wander.

Beth

You say you have friends?

James

Many.

Beth

Do you tell them these fascinating facts?

James

Only you, darling.

Beth

Uh huh. Lucky me.

James

Would you rather not know? This stuff could save your life.

Beth

I guess that's true. Okay so we're narrowing this down.

James

I think I'm too smart to die just to pass a test.

Beth

Too smart? Good for you.

James

Shut up. You know what I mean.

Beth

Yup. Just a brilliant mind. If we cracked your skull open it would be gold plated.

James

Sounds about right. Are you actually suicidal?

Beth

Nah. Well, it depends.

James

On?

Beth

The day. The moment. How much time I've spent with you on a given day.

James

Does that make it better or worse.

Beth

Aw. You're sweet for not knowing.

James

Thanks.

Beth

Welcome. No I think when it comes down to it I'd cheap out at the last minute. Do something that comes off more as a cry for help.

James

Got it. So you want sympathy.

Beth

I don't think it's sympathy.

James

Attention?

Beth

Mmmm.

James

What about a hug?

Beth

That would be a nice start. But not if that person was some random dude.

James

Really? Guy saves your life and-

Beth

Saved is too strong a word. Remember I'm just crying for help.

James

Yeah. I get that. The guy is there because he thinks you are dying.

Beth

Okay. But I'm not.

James

So you brush him off? Not even a charade of being grateful?

Beth

Did he save me?

James

In a manner of speaking.

Beth

What manner?

James

I can't believe that this, out of everything else, is where you find fault in the narrative. This guy only wants to help someone he has been led to believe is trying to kill herself!

Beth

I guess. Fine. I'll give him a hug.

James

Don't hug him for me. You hug him because he was the first person there. He wants you to not die.

Beth

And I don't know him?

James

Right. In this scenario you don't know him.

Beth

What's his name?

James

I dunno, how about Jake?

Beth

Blech.

James

Jesus Christ.

Beth

What?! Jake is a name for a dog.

James

So he saves your life and you want nothing to do with a guy with a dog's name.

Beth

Give him a more human name.

James

Fine. Josh.

Beth

Not better.

James

Frank.

Beth

Ew.

James

Lou Diamond Phillips.

Beth

Oooh. That's exotic. Where did that come from?

James

Made it up just now.

Beth

I like that one. I'd hug that guy.

James

I figured as much.

Beth

Aw, did you want me to think it was you coming to be my savior?

James

No!

Beth

Mhmmm. Suspect.

James

Stop wagging your finger at me.

Beth

Suspect.

James

Well in any case we all want to be saved in some way, right?

Beth

Philosophical much?

James

I'm not wrong and you know it. People want to be someone else's savior every so often and they need saving too. We've all gone through it.

Beth

What about with Haylee last year?

James

That wasn't someone needing to be saved. That was a girl on the edge of collapse.

Beth

But you were there for her.

James

To a point but she was just bad news.

Beth

Which made you her good news. Do you see that?
We all get low.

James

I don't think she was suicidal.

Beth

Because you were there like some kind of pressure release valve. She needed you.

James

Yeah but it left me a bit of a mess.

Beth

Suicidal?

James

No, I wouldn't say that.

Beth

But hurt. Maybe a little broken?

James

Yeah.

Beth

Because you didn't have anyone to save you.

James

Like a rebound?

Beth

Sort of, I guess. But an emotional one. Not a physical one per se.

James

Well that was around when you and I met.

Beth

Oh so it was me that saved you.

James

You are so full of yourself. It's great. One of your best qualities actually.

Beth

Come on. It's me. Did you want me around back then?

James

Yeah.

Beth

Did you think I would sleep with you?

James

What?

Beth

So surprised? It's nothing bad. Emotional openness does sometimes lead to physical stuff.

James

Well then fine. If we're being honest I'm pretty sure I thought I loved you.

Beth

Yeah. You're sweet. See, I saw that and knew it. So I never let my being there for you get too misconstrued.

James

Arms-length thinking.

Beth

Right. But you got better. And I don't think you wanted to actually kill yourself.

James

But I thought about it.

Beth

We all think about it. It's getting past it that's the hard part. But you did. And here we are.

James

I thought we were talking about you making an attempt.

Beth

Yeah, but I'm tired of talking about me. How would you go?

James

Hm. A mountain.

Beth

Now translate.

James

Like, get to the top of a very tall mountain and jump.

Beth

Jesus! Why?

James

Because if I could actually take the leap with how scared I am of heights then I'd know I really wanted to get rid of myself. But if I climb and can't do it I can just head back down knowing I accomplished something.

Beth

I like that. I think you've got something there. What about skydiving and refusing to open the 'chute?

James

Way too scary!

Beth

I know, right? Ugh. Just got the chills. No skydiving. Bunch of idiots.

James

So, seriously, scoot over here. I want to put my arm around you.

Beth

Okay.

James

I know this was never going to be a romantic relationship. But I want you to know that I'm here if you need to talk. I think we have something special.

Beth

Kiss me.

James

Really?

Beth

No.

James

Can I still say I love you?

Beth

Sure. I love you too. You damn softy.

James

Do me a favor.

Beth

Okay.

James

Don't die.

Beth

Wouldn't dream of it.