



## It's a Wonderful Death

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Seventeen-year-old RJ always gets what she wants. So when her soul is accidentally collected by a distracted Grim Reaper, somebody in the afterlife better figure out a way to send her back from the dead or heads will roll. But in her quest for mortality, she becomes a pawn in a power struggle between an overzealous archangel and Death Himself. The tribunal presents her with two options: she can remain in the lobby, where souls wait to be processed, until her original lifeline expires, or she can replay three moments in her life in an effort to make choices that will result in a future deemed worthy of being saved. It sounds like a no-brainer. She'll take a walk down memory lane. How hard can changing her future be?

But with each changing moment, RJ's life begins to unravel, until this self-proclaimed queen bee is a social pariah. She begins to wonder if walking among the living is worth it if she has to spend the next sixty years as an outcast. Too quickly, RJ finds herself back in limbo, her time on Earth once again up for debate.

RJ is a snarky, unapologetic, almost unredeemable, very real girl. Her story is funny and moving, and teens will easily connect with her plight. Prepare to meet the Grim Reaper, who's cuter than you'd expect; Hawaiian shirt-wearing Death Himself; Saint Peter (who likes to play Cornhole); and Al, the handler for the three-headed hound that guards the gates of Hell. This cast of characters accompanies RJ through her time in the afterlife and will do their best to gently shove her in the right direction.

## **It's a Wonderful Death Details**

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## From Reader Review It's a Wonderful Death for online ebook

### Max Baker says

**Thank you Edelweiss for providing me a PDF version of this novel. This review is my honest opinion.**

I'd like to think of myself as a perceptive individual, especially when it comes to books. So, I was expecting a lot from one of my Top 5 Most Anticipated Books of 2015 and *It's a Wonderful Death* didn't disappoint. In fact, it surpassed every expectation I had for it.

It breaks my heart to know that this book was at BEA 2015 and almost none of the hauls I've seen has this book in their vast collection. I'm here to tell, no beg, you that this is a book that should be on your radar. It's funny, it's heartbreaking, and it's just so, so *good*.

This book was pitched as *Mean Girls* meets *A Christmas Carol*, ironic since the title makes me think of *It's a Wonderful Life*, and I couldn't think of a better way to describe *It's a Wonderful Death*. During a routine soul collection, a grim reaper accidentally harvests the soul of Rowena Joy "RJ" Jones. After much bureaucratic bullshit, the Afterlife and all their higher ups realizes they've made a mistake and must decide if RJ is worth tampering with the timeline to set her life back on track.

The entire plot of this book is absolutely brilliant. The portrayal of the Afterlife was not only unique, but frustrating beyond belief. It was amazing to see how an entire organization tried so hard to deny that they fucked up. In fact, one of the best parts about this book is the political power struggle, but I'll get to that in a moment.

Because RJ was kind of a huge bitch in her lifetime, putting herself before all others and being manipulated by the people around her, the Afterlife is hesitant to give her her life back. But because her life was cut so short, they have no idea if RJ would have made a significant impact on humanity. So, as a test, they send RJ back to three important moments in her life where if she can learn from them and become a better person, they will be able to judge her influence on the world.

RJ has got some of the biggest balls ever. Not kidding, she's driven, ambitious, and got more gumption than anyone I've ever met. She's not afraid to call out some of the most powerful figures in the Afterlife nor does she bow to the expectations set before her. I loved everything about this girl. Her narration made the story not only hilarious, in the dry sarcasm sort of way that I as a person seem to thrive on, but emotional as well. Her internal struggle and having to accept what she's done as a person gave this book an entirely new dimension. In fact, most of the characters comment on how different RJ actually is. And they're right. I've never read a book about a character quite like RJ before.

Most authors try to pass off strength as badassery and not giving a crap about what people think about them. Schmitt takes a different approach. RJ is a strong character, but she's weak-willed and easily manipulated. Throughout the book RJ's story isn't about becoming a strong person; it's about overcoming the obstacles before you. A lot of books have a character overcoming something and becoming strong as an outcome. In this book, we have the opposite, a strong character having to overcome something she couldn't before. And I think that's what sets this book apart. RJ didn't need to become anyone, because she was already who she meant to be. But, RJ needed to overcome the obstacles she set before herself that prevented her from reaching her potential.

Bottom Line: RJ Jones, Love of My Life.

The supporting cast was amazing as well, including Death Himself, who is a Hawaiian shirt wearing surfer dude, and Azbaugh, and ambition angel who doesn't try to hide his disdain for humanity. RJ unknowingly becomes a pawn in their political power play. I won't give too much away, but I will say I enjoyed just how well these two characters interacted with one another. While neither truly cared about RJ's dilemma, both had their own reasons for choosing a side. And eventually, thanks in part to RJ, Death Himself eventually warms up to her.

We also get Madeline, a girl who died of cancer and is tied to RJ. She is essentially the sweetest character in the history of literature. Everything she said was encouraging and sincere. Her entire story line broke my heart more times than my fragile male ego cares to admit, but she was such an amazing part of the book I couldn't help but love her. Plus her relationship with her boyfriend, Daniel, was adorable.

*It's a Wonderful Death*, at its core, is about two things. Interaction and choices. Each of RJ's choices affects the world around her and we see just how much a seemingly small or harmless action affects people. The ripple effect in the book is expertly done and I thought the themes were perfectly woven into the story without being too obvious. I can't mention too much, because a huge chunk of this book relies on a pretty big spoiler.

(view spoiler)

In all honesty, I want to re-read this book over and over again, which rarely happens to me. This book is so easy to read, but so emotional and funny at the same time. I'm sure if I go back, I'll pick up on so many subtle themes and character developments I missed the first time. I cannot recommend this book enough. This is a must read for literally anyone with a pulse.

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## **Sarah says**

DNF @ about 20%. Not in the mood for this kind of book and I doubt I will read the rest of it in the future.

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## **Sarah (thegirltheycalljones) says**

In the words of the MC herself : "Wow".  
DNFed around 70%, after skimming a lot.

This is completely insufferable. Despite the interesting and important topics this book approaches like bullying, learning to be honest with yourself and be able to face the truth, learning that growing some balls to do the right thing is necessary, that acts have consequences, redemption and well...death, I was completely unable to take it seriously.

The writing is very faction-like and tries so hard to be fun and witty and snarky but is not, and the MC is one of the worst I've read about lately.

Let's get back to a quick summary : RJ's soul is collected by accident by a grim reaper and she will spend an awfully long time trying to convince a bunch of angels to send her back.

First, it makes no sense : why would they not send her back and erase her memory if it was an accident - and it was - and she was not supposed to die at this moment?

Sure, there would be no book, but it would have been better to give us a good reason, or at least better

reasons than the obscure and feeble ones we're given - that I don't even remember now because I was torn between bored and irritated and didn't write them down.

Of course RJ is right to be pissed : she's now dead and wasn't meant to be! It shouldn't be an issue to send her back. But well, it is because "reasons" so we have to follow her everywhere while she tries to earn her life back. This is very long and messy.

Also, RJ is one of the rudest, most inappropriately confident little brat you can meet in YA. She thinks the world owes her everything, doesn't respect anybody and make constant demands like a spoiled princess. Well, RJ...maybe you should...Shut. The fuck. Up? You definitely should be a bit more concerned about being dead and less about so-called snarky comebacks. Because that's always so sad in any kind of book : mixing "snark" and "big mouthed" with "rude" and "stupid". Here, you just want to scream at every pages: "WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?!" or "THAT IS SO NOT FUNNY, STOP THINKING YOU'RE A SMART ASS!"

(Side note : she reaches Godwin's law way too quickly for my liking, it was the cherry on top)

That girl is not impressed by anything. I mean, she's in the Afterlife, you would expect more shock/trauma/respect/whatever... She talks to angels like they're her old-time buddies and still reacts like she's in high-school. Yes, all of this probably in the sake of character development because she will become a good person (woo, wild guess as I haven't finished! \*eyeroll and sigh\*), but not very logical and highly annoying.

The angels themselves are quite pathetic : it's a bunch of new adults, mostly hot and behaving like kids. They kinda deserve to be treated with no respect but RJ is such an asshole that I still prefer the dumb angels. So angels tries to make a list of pros and cons about sending her back or not and I stopped reading when we learn that (really, if you don't plan to read this book, read the spoiler tag, it's unbelievable) (view spoiler)

This was really bad. I might skim again just to find out how it ends because I'm kinda curious to see if it can get worse but probably won't because well, I've got a life. No pun intended.

Sorry if it sounds rude or aggressive, respect to people who enjoyed this one, it's only my opinion. Plus, hormones. (I will use that one until I can't anymore, that I swear!)

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## Sarah says

(Source: I received a digital copy of this book for free on a read-to-review basis. Thanks to Perseus/PGW/Legato and Edelweiss.)

***“Stop it! This isn’t fair, and you know it. You can’t erase my future because you don’t think my past was good enough.”***

This was a YA story about a girl who died too early.

RJ really knew how to complain, I wasn't surprised that someone called her a spoiled princess because that was exactly how she came across! She did improve a bit as the book went on, but she still whined and moaned a lot.

The storyline in this was about RJ trying to get sent back to her life after being taken by a reaper too early. This was entertaining to a point, but the pace was just way too slow for me, and I found myself losing interest as the book went on.

The ending to this was okay, but it definitely left space for a sequel.

6 out of 10

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## **Lola says**

### **3.5 stars.**

RJ wasn't supposed to die, because the Grim Reaper wasn't supposed to collect her soul by accident.

But well, stuff happens and here we are, at a very crucial point. Is RJ going to Heaven or Hell?

You see, she wasn't exactly an angel back on earth. Lucky for her, she's given a chance to redeem herself.

Oh, I loved the snarky humour. This is a story I would love to watch on the big screen, on a Friday night, with popcorn and friends over.

It's a lot of fun. And underneath the humour and mishaps, there is dept, too. There are messages to be transmitted to the readers.

But most of all, it's just a really enjoyable book that will entertain you from the beginning to the end. And what an unexpected ending at that! Not the kind of annoying open one we all want to close with a sequel, but if the author decides to write one, I sure as hell will read it.

Thank goodness for no romance. It was a breath of fresh air! This story really focuses on righting wrongs and exploring one's truest, good side. Though, of course, circumstances made it easy for RJ to be brave, which created some expected outcomes and cheese scenes, I still liked how the story progressed.

I've always been a fan of the A CHRISTMAS CAROL variations in literature and movies. How a person receives the visit of three spirits who help them realize all the bad things they've done. So, really, it's no surprise I enjoyed this.

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## **K. says**

This book is like the awkward love child of A Christmas Carol and Before I Fall. It features a queen bee teenage girl dying before her time, and having to relive three moments of her life and change the outcomes of those moments to prove that she's a person worth sending back to Earth to live out the rest of her life. So the concept was a pretty good one.

The execution, however? Not so much. RJ was a pretty awful character. The set up took way too long. The whole thing was RIDICULOUSLY Christian-centric. Like, all other religions just end up in Christian Heaven because "God doesn't care what you believe". And sure, Buddha's there waiting for you at the Pearly Gates, but the whole place is occupied by angels and run by St. Peter and the most non-Christian element of

it was the Cerberus still guards the gates of Hell, and basically? It made me really uncomfortable.

RJ went from evil queen bee to kind and caring member of the community in about two seconds flat, which was completely implausible, and the ending infuriated me to no end. (view spoiler)

So yeah. This was...not good. At least it only took me a couple of hours to read it.

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### **Arch Bala says**

Do you believe in the afterlife? Do you believe in Heaven? In Hell? What about Angels? Well, this book surely has it all when it comes to these things. I'm not really good when it comes to discussing such stuff seriously but these are the things I've grown up with hearing from my friends, family and just about everywhere. I thought the blurb was interesting and it sounds real fun.

When seventeen-year-old mean girl RJ found herself in the afterlife by being accidentally collected by a distracted Grim Reaper, all "hell and heaven" breaks loose. She found herself being tried on whether she deserves a second chance to live or not. But she's got to pass different tests in order to do so.

I honestly can't find it in myself all throughout the book to like RJ as a character. She's mean, selfish and just care about being popular. Very typical high school mean girl. Of course, she gets to redeem herself at the end but I'm still not a fan even after that. I think what made me keep reading this are the secondary characters. As for RJ and her fate – Uhm, no. I feel like I just didn't care at the end.

On a more positive note, I thought the story's very fast paced and most of the characters are pretty vibrant. I initially thought that there will be a bigger plot point in the story involving the ring but the story got pretty much about on how RJ could go back on earth. I was rather disappointed that the story didn't go much deeper.

There was nothing extremely unique about the story. It's funny and fun enough but it lacks charm that I thought should be coming from the main character. Perhaps, I'm too old and grouchy for the book so this may be enjoyed by others more. Overall, the writing and the story was decent. I'd still recommend it if you're up for a quick read.

**Rating: 3 out of 5 stars**

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### **Jessica (Goldenfurpro) says**

This and other reviews can be found on [The Psychotic Nerd](#)

*I received an ecopy of this book in exchange for an honest review.*

### **MY THOUGHTS**

RJ has just been told that she's to have a long life when she dies. It's a complete accident. The Grim Reaper wasn't even supposed to collect her, but now she's on her way to the afterlife. She tells everyone there how she's supposed to be alive, but everyone says it's just not worth it to send her back. It's eventually decided

that she can go back if she goes through three trials. She will be taken back to three defining moments of her life and if she makes the 'right' decision this time, she will get her life back.

I love books dealing with any aspect of the afterlife. The afterlife is something that none of us can possibly know what it's like, so I find it very interesting seeing different author's takes on it. I really liked seeing this afterlife. While some of the subject and plot are serious, the afterlife is portrayed in such a oddly humorous manner that I can't help but enjoy!

The afterlife takes up the gist of this book, but this book is about RJ. RJ is the kind of character that you just don't particularly like, at least in the beginning. RJ is a mean girl and she has that personality. I sympathized with her because she was taken early and mistakenly, but she did annoy me. She did bad things in her life and made bad choices, yet she didn't seem to realize. That is what this book was about, because it was known that RJ could've had a different life. The reason why she was that way was because of her choices and mainly how she didn't stand up to her so-called friends. Throughout this book, she went through an incredible amount of change. I loved seeing how she changed in this book. I thought it was beautiful.

As for romance, there is none! This surprised me because I always expect that in YA, but I think it made the book so much better! Otherwise, we would have been distracted from the plot.

### **IN CONCLUSION**

Overall, I really enjoyed this book! It was oddly fun at times, but with the serious-ness of a coming-of-age tale in death. This was a great read and it's yet another afterlife book that I can recommend to people!

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### **Paula M. of Her Book Thoughts! says**

"Don't discount your importance to the world. Each moment of your life has a purpose, even the ones you think don't matter. And don't forget to make the unexpected choice. You never know how that one moment can transform your life"

**Wow! Reading It's a Wonderful Death is such an adventure! And adventure that I know I'll remember forever.** There's a lot in this book that I didn't expect but that turned out to be such a good thing. This better have a sequel because I'm so not ready to let go yet.

**I'm not even gonna bother doing a recap because I admit, I cant. The blurb pretty much tell you about the gist anyway. What it didn't tell you though is that this novel is crazy. Crazy good! Crazy brilliant! Crazy memorable. RJ is such a riot. I'm no mean girl but for some reason, I see myself in her. Maybe because I also don't know when to shut up and I like asking ALLLL of the questions. You know what's the best about RJ? She was not made to be LIKED (HELLO, MEAN GIRL, REMEMBER?) And yet, you can't help but admire her. She's funny, a little annoying and a lot real. This girl has made a gazillion mistakes but her self growth is just enormous. RJ is pretty much 50% of the teenagers nowadays. She's the kind of character you'll hate to love.**





punch RJ in the face for the first half of this book.

(That was me reacting to RJ by the way)

I also couldn't buy her as a 17 year old girl. To me she sounded much more like a 10 year old to me. Her "snark" was whiny and bratty, and she pouted more than a 3 year old. **She says things like "totally" and "bestie" all the time**, which gets real old real fast.

I don't understand why in a book where we talk about suicide, drunk driving, and death there isn't any swearing. You're telling me Death Himself doesn't swear? That's honestly a minor qualm, but I think cursing would have made this book a lot more believable.

I got really tired of constantly hearing how speshul RJ is. She's vain and awful, but everyone's always sticking up for her and saying how good she is inside and that she isn't like everyone else. If you've been on Goodreads for longer than 5 minutes you know nobody likes those speshul snowflake protagonists.

I can't forget though, RJ undergoes a major personality change throughout the book, and by major I mean **she goes from bullying everyone in her school to hanging out with cancer patients and pushing kids out of the way of moving cars**. Yeah, sorry but I'm not buying it. Way too drastic to be believable.

Not to mention the entire depiction of the afterlife was absurd. First of all, there are no dogs, so if God forbid this is the real version of the afterlife, I'm not going. The angels and Death Himself acted more like idiotic teenagers than anything else, and the religious aspect didn't make any sense.

**Last thing, I've never read a book where a character asks that many questions!** They reference the fact that there's a ridiculous amount of questions in the book, but doesn't make it any less annoying.

I was going to say I thought of a drinking game to play when reading this book, which would be take a drink every time someone asks a stupid question, but considering that there's between 5-11 questions in every two pages, if my math is right (which it probably isn't) you'd have taken somewhere around 1200 drinks by the end of book. So basically you'd have alcohol overdosed by like chapter five. So don't play that game.

So obviously I wasn't a big fan of this one. **I wouldn't recommend picking it up, unless you want to just for the lolz**, because it's entertaining to read a book like this. 1 ½ stars

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## Kim at Divergent Gryffindor says

### Actual rating: 4.5

It's a Wonderful Death is by far the best book I've read about heaven and hell and there wasn't even romance in it! For those people who know me, you should know that I rarely read books that contain no romance at all, and it's even rarer that for me to like those books. Clearly, this book is an exception.

It's a Wonderful Death is about a girl named RJ who was mistakenly collected by a Grim Reaper when it was not time for her death yet. RJ, a queen bee in her school who was used to getting what she wants, demanded her case be heard and so a tribunal was convened. RJ was tasked to revisit three points in her life where she could alter her life for the better. If she could do this, then she would be returned to Earth. If not, she would stay in between heaven and hell while she waits for her actual time of death.

It's a Wonderful Death is an amazing eye-opening book about how our actions not only affect our lives and the lives of the people we know, but also those that we don't know. It also taught me that the smallest changes in our actions can cause really big difference to their outcomes. It made me realize that I should really think about my actions more since I might affect people that I didn't think I would. This book made me want to change for the better not because of the concept of going to heaven, but because I saw how good being kind to someone in need made RJ feel.

I really commend Sarah Schmitt for this amazing novel that is full of meaning. It deserves to be read by everyone and I hope that more people will read this and be enlightened by it as well.

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### **Kate Ormand says**

A Christmas Carol style read with a Mean Girls twist? Yes please! This ended up being so much more than I expected, though. It delivered on the humour and fun, but also had some really heartwarming and thoughtful moments. The story is told with a lightness that doesn't detract from its subject matter. Memorable and clever, with a clear message at its core.

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