

**SLICE OF DEATH
(EVELINE'S GUEST)**

by

Luca Viganò

3 Heathfield Court
London W4 4LP
Tel: 079 03286551
luca.vigano@gmail.com

Characters

EVELINE (EVE)

The GUEST

EVE's home. The bell rings. EVE opens the door. The GUEST wears a trench coat.

EVE: Please, do come in.

GUEST: Thank you, ma'am.

EVE: Miss.

GUEST: Thank you, miss.

EVE: Did anybody follow you?

GUEST: I don't know. I don't think so.

EVE: Aren't you afraid of being followed?

GUEST: No. That stuff happens in the movies.

EVE: Is that so?

GUEST: Yes. Only in the movies.

EVE: That's weird. I got the idea of calling you right out of a movie.

The GUEST takes off the trench coat, hands it to EVE and sits on the couch.

GUEST: Thanks.

EVE: I'll take care of that. A trench coat... your work uniform?

GUEST: No. When I left my place it looked like rain.

EVE: I understand.

EVE hangs the raincoat and sits as well, on a chair in front of the couch.

GUEST: I told you, it's not like in the movies.

EVE: I ought to bear that in mind.

GUEST: How did you hear of me?

EVE: Oh, I asked around. I got your number and here you are. By the way, this is for
you. You haven't changed your mind, have you?

EVE hands an envelope to the GUEST.

GUEST: No. For a single service, that is the rate.

EVE: Aren't you going to count it?

GUEST: Sure. Afterwards.

EVE: And for a double?

GUEST: Beg your pardon?

EVE: For a double service, do you offer a discount rate?

GUEST: No. Double service, double rate.

EVE: No “group discount”?

GUEST: Why? Did you have something “bigger” in mind?

EVE: Pure curiosity. The single service is good enough for me.

GUEST: Fine. You paid what you had to pay, now, tell me.

EVE: Would you like a drink, before? Or don’t you drink “on duty”?

GUEST: A tonic water would be nice. But merely because I am abstemious, I’m not on duty yet.

EVE: Oh, but you are.

GUEST: You mean... here?

EVE: What?

GUEST: The service?

EVE: Yes?

GUEST: The person to “serve” will come here?

EVE: The person to serve is already here. It’s me. I pay you to kill me.

GUEST: I understand. No, actually, maybe I do not understand. I don’t. I’ve never been engaged for a, shall we say, self-service, where client and victim are the same person.

EVE: You want to reconsider?

GUEST: I’m not sure.

EVE: What’s your name?

GUEST: No names.

EVE: Eve. I’m Eve. It’s Eveline, but I prefer Eve. Eveline was my granny. I am Eve.

GUEST: I said no names!

EVE: Oh, yes, do get mad. It will make things easier.

GUEST: I’m not mad.

EVE: Pity. I’ll get your tonic water.

EVE goes in the kitchen and returns with a glass.

EVE: How do you plan to do it?

GUEST: I haven’t made up my mind yet. I thought I’d study the victim first.

EVE: Here I am. Study me as you please. Anyway, it won’t matter much to me how, as long as I die.

GUEST: How old are you?

EVE: How old are you, Eve? How old are you, Eve?

GUEST: How old are you, Eve?

EVE: Twentysix. Does that make me old enough to die?

GUEST: There's no age limit.

EVE: And now I gather you'll ask me why.

GUEST: I typically don't.

EVE: But this is a special case.

GUEST: Indeed.

EVE: How often in life does one feel like dying inside? There you go. This time I want to die outside. And you are being paid to that end.

GUEST: And I will do it. I took the money.

EVE: Good. That's what I wanted to hear you say. Now, let's get back to the how.

GUEST: Usually I use a gun, or a knife, perhaps to simulate a robbery or an attempted rape.

EVE: Gun. A knife hurts too much. With a gun... bang!... and that's it.

GUEST: As you wish. Should we do it now?

EVE: In a while, if you do not mind.

GUEST: Just tell me when.

EVE: Ten minutes? Ten minutes. I just want to hear the sound of my voice a bit longer.

GUEST: If you prefer, it could be tomorrow, or in a week.

EVE: No, no. It has to be today. I just want to live a few more minutes, just a few.

GUEST: I'm in no hurry.

EVE: I bet that's not true. I bet your girlfriend is waiting for you somewhere.

GUEST: No. She's at her place. I told her I'd drop by later tonight.

EVE: Does she know about your... line of work?

GUEST: Of course not.

EVE: And she never asks?

GUEST: She's grown tired of asking.

EVE: What do you gather she'd do, if she found out?

GUEST: She'd dump me. But I assume she'd call the police first.

EVE: Aren't you afraid?

GUEST: It's worth it, for the time being.

EVE: Do you want another drink?

GUEST: No, thanks.

EVE: Another tonic?

GUEST: I'm fine like this.

EVE: Tell me... would you make love to me?

GUEST: Oh, god, no! We can't fuc... we can't also sleep together before...

EVE: You're right! You're right, you're right. Of course, you are right. I will miss it, you know?

GUEST: Fuckin... Making love?

EVE: Yes. It's one of the few things that I will truly miss. Unless I'll end up in place where you are damned to do it from dawn till dusk, from dusk till dawn.

GUEST: Do you believe in God?

EVE: I don't know, do you?

GUEST: Well, if there's a God, He won't be too happy with my job.

EVE: Why not? After all, you only give Him a hand with His job. "I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth." Saint John, the Apocalypse. Granny Eveline would always read the Bible to me to lull me to sleep.

EVE takes a cigarette from her purse.

EVE: Do you smoke?

GUEST: No.

EVE: Neither do I. But today I bought a pack. I want to try, before... by the way, I also bought you a present.

GUEST: A present? For me?

EVE: For you, I told you. Here.

EVE takes a packet from her purse and gives it to the guest.

GUEST: I don't understand... the money is more than enough.

EVE: Open it, come on.

GUEST: As you wish.

The GUEST opens the packet: it's a gun.

EVE: I paid with my credit card. I thought that then they would rule it a suicide and you'd have no trouble.

GUEST: It's a nice gun.

EVE lights the cigarette but immediately coughs and puts out the cigarette.

EVE: This stuff will kill you. Blah, it's disgusting. Maybe you'd prefer to use yours?

GUEST: Oh, no, this one will do.

EVE: It's only a pity that you'll have to leave it here, afterwards. It is a present with an expiration date... an expiration time... five minutes to go, give or take.

GUEST: I might buy one like this, afterwards.

EVE: With my money?

GUEST: Maybe. Why not?

EVE: May I see yours?

The GUEST hands his gun to EVE.

GUEST: It's not that nice.

EVE: On the contrary. This gun has a history, it is "lived-in". This gun has shot to kill. Mine instead is still virgin and the first time typically hurts. The pleasure comes later on, with "practice". This is "your" gun. You know, I'd prefer you to kill me with this one. but it would create too many problems. Pity. How does it feel... to kill? To kill a complete stranger, I mean. I mean, one kills for jealousy, for anger, for vengeance. But people one knows. You, instead, no. Only complete strangers, and for money. Of course, assuming that you don't, once in a while, do some "service" on your own...

GUEST: No, I haven't done any, up to now. But I don't exclude that it might happen, one day or another.

EVE: Tell me, then. How does it feel to kill a complete stranger?

GUEST: I think it is almost like killing someone during an armed robbery. It's more risky, maybe, but I charge quite a fee, as you know. More importantly, in my case, the revenue is assured, whereas in an armed robbery, something might go wrong, terribly wrong, and you flee empty handed.

EVE: Have you ever done it? An armed robbery?

GUEST: No, I told you. I kill, that's all. And only on commission.

EVE: Do you work much? I mean, do you kill many people?

GUEST: Enough. Enough to enjoy a good life. In a couple of years I'll retire and enjoy my earnings, like an old whore.

EVE: You didn't answer my question. How many "services" did you do?

GUEST: On average, I'd say one per month.

EVE: And when did you start?

GUEST: Almost five years ago.

EVE: So, that makes... about fifty services rendered?

GUEST: Give or take.

EVE: And maybe I'm exactly number fifty?

GUEST: Number fifty was last month.

EVE: That's too bad. I would have loved to be the one to make it a round number. We could have celebrated.

GUEST: I wouldn't have accepted, anyway. There's nothing to celebrate, and even if there was, I'd do it in private.

EVE: That's really too bad.

GUEST: Also killing is. Bad.

EVE: And you don't feel any remorse for those fiftyone?

GUEST: Fifty, for now.

EVE: Fiftyone. It's fiftyone. So, don't you feel any remorse? Don't you toss and turn in your bed at night, unable to get some rest, wondering where those fiftyone souls might have ended up? Purgatory, hell or paradise? Their destination had already been determined, of course, but you contributed with a firm shove. Don't you feel guilty?

GUEST: Sometimes. It depends on the service. There are the easy ones, and those that are not so easy to digest.

EVE: Mine is easy.

GUEST: Less and less.

EVE: Come on?! The victim pays her assassin, prepares the crime scene for him, he only needs to show up and... bang!... isn't this the epitome of an easy service?

GUEST: I'll only know afterwards.

EVE: Hey! Let's make something clear! I do not want, I repeat, I do not want you to feel guilty for me. Absolutely! I want to die, and one way or the other, this evening I would have died, even if I had not called you up. Are we clear?

GUEST: Why don't you do it yourself, then? Why do you need me?

EVE: Are we clear? Are we clear?

GUEST: We are clear.

EVE: Good. Hence, you do your duty. Then you leave, smooth and cool, go to your girlfriend, and make love to her also for me. Deal?

GUEST: You are the client. And the client...

EVE: ...is always right! There you go. I'm even willing to chip in another envelope exactly like that, if you promise me that you'll do as I told you. Let me get it.

GUEST: No. This is no charge. I'll do my best, OK?

EVE: OK. I will not ask you to give me your word. A corpse can't check whether she was lied to. But try, and make sure you succeed. I really don't feel like dying with the thought of somebody aching for me, even if he is my killer. But now, instead, I want you to answer to my first question. Yes, because you speak, you speak, but actually you say close to nothing. How does it feel to kill?

GUEST: Can't we talk about something else?

EVE: No. I paid you. I facilitate your work, and now I demand that you answer me, but for real, without changing the subject. Pretend it's the last wish of a death-row inmate.

GUEST: I did not come here to talk about me.

EVE: True, true. You came here to kill me. But, listen, if only you could answer, I would ask you "how does it feel to be dead?" But you can't, and anyway, in a while, I'll find out myself. Therefore, I ask you a question that I know you can answer: how does it feel to kill? I don't care if you do not feel like answering or if you think that it is a secret that you should not reveal to any living soul. As far as I am concerned, I have been dead for a while and, besides, even if it were a secret, I shall soon take it to my grave.

GUEST: Why do you sound so happy?

EVE: Because I am. Soon it will all be over.

GUEST: Why?

EVE: You don't answer a question with another question. It's bad manners. Before, I let it slide, but now my time is really running out. Please, for the last time, how does it feel to kill?

GUEST: To kill someone is like blowing on a candle. Some go out right away, others are die-hard. You know, sometimes you blow on a candle, and you only feed its flare. Some struggle, beg, offer money that they do not have and never will, but only if you give them time to do it. I always strive for a smooth job. I approach them from behind, or in their sleep, so that they don't have time to wonder for whom their last thought will be. You know, when all is said and done, I do them a favour. Movies, books, they say your entire life flashes in front of your eyes the second before you die, and that your last thought goes out to the ones you love. That's bullshit. I think that the last gasp of oxygen is only for yourself. Nobody really wants to die...

EVE: I do.

GUEST: I don't believe it. Tonight I will kill you, but still I don't believe it. The last gasp of oxygen screams "Fuck, I want to live!" And I steal that oxygen. Because killing is like stealing the oxygen of a candle. It goes out slowly or in a beat, but it goes out, and nobody can do a goddamn thing. My ashen horse stinks of death, I stink of death. I am a branch office of Death! There you go! Is that what you wanted to hear?!

EVE: Yes, more or less, yes.

GUEST: And did it make a difference?

EVE: No, of course not.

GUEST: Let's do it, then.

EVE: Yes, let's do it.

GUEST: Right here?

EVE: As good a place as any other.

The GUEST takes the gun and checks that it is loaded.

GUEST: Any last wish?

EVE: Already done.

GUEST: Where do you want me to shoot you?

EVE: Where is it more sure?

GUEST: The mouth, bottom up.

EVE: Not in the mouth, no. That's where this will go.

EVE takes off the thin necklace that she was wearing, and shows the coin with a hole in the middle that was dangling from the necklace.

EVE: Granny Eveline gave it to me before she died. It's a danake, an obulos. To pay Charon, the ferryman, to carry the soul to its destination. She told me to put it under my tongue. It's gold, you know. It belonged to her granny.

GUEST: Not the mouth, then.

EVE: How about the temple?

GUEST: Yes, but there's no guarantee that you'll die immediately.

EVE: If I were to be still alive?

GUEST: I'll shoot you again.

EVE: Good. Fine. You'll leave only after I'm dead. Promise?

GUEST: I give you my word. Ready now?

EVE: Yes.

GUEST: Close your eyes. It will be over in a blink.

EVE: Wait! Will there be much blood?

GUEST: Of course.

EVE: Then I want to do it in the bathroom, in the tub. I don't want to stain.

GUEST: As you wish.

EVE: In the tub, naked, without water. And then you'll put the gun in my hand and you'll leave as you came.

GUEST: Which hand?

EVE: Sorry?

GUEST: I wouldn't want to pick the wrong hand.

EVE: No, I am not left-handed.

GUEST: It's all set, then. Second thoughts?

EVE: None. But there's something I want to do.

GUEST: Tell me.

EVE: Can you give a me kiss? A real kiss? Pretend I'm your girlfriend.

GUEST: Not a good idea.

EVE hugs him and kisses him anyway. A long, gentle kiss. The GUEST, however, does not really reciprocate.

EVE: Thank you. Thank you anyway. Even if it was not real. The bathroom is there.

I'll go, take off my clothes and lie in the tub. My eyes will be closed. Try not to miss.

GUEST: I won't miss.

EVE: Ah, the coin! Could you please put it in place? I'm afraid my mouth might open during the shot.

GUEST: Under the tongue?

EVE: Under the tongue.

EVE exits towards the bathroom.

The GUEST waits for a beat, checks the gun and then goes towards the bathroom. When he is about to exit, he turns to face the stage: he puts his lips together and blows, gently but firmly, and the lights go out.