

## **MID-DEATH CRISIS**

### **Series Overview**

**by Paul Chang**

#### **LOGLINE**

When a depressed grim reaper in the midst of a mid-life crisis stumbles into a motivational seminar, she decides to complete the life-affirming motivational program.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

You know that feeling when you're stuck in a job that you hate? When it feels like you're dead inside?

This is a show about that feeling, and how finding a purpose can give you a new *zest!* for life.

Mid-Death Crisis is a live-action half-hour dark comedy about literal Death – a grim reaper named Mo. When we meet Mo, she's depressed and firmly in the midst of a mid-life crisis. She used to take pride in bringing death and ferrying souls. Now, for the first time in millenia, she feels burned out and sick of it all.

She wants out. The thing is, there is no *out*. She's stuck in this job. Forever.

In the pilot, Mo finds herself at a motivational seminar when she is assigned to ferry the soul of a man who dies of a heart attack. While there, she overhears an inspirational speech given by the charismatic motivational speaker – think Tony Robbins, except a five-foot-four Latina woman named Tina. And something about Tina's speech moves Mo – ignites a spark of curiosity that grows into a steady flame over the course of the pilot, at the end of which Mo decides to complete the life-affirming motivational program. MID-DEATH CRISIS will follow her on that journey.

In short, this is a show about Death learning what it's like to feel alive.

#### **THE WORLD**

The show is set in a version of New York that resembles our own. Hot dog vendors on street corners. Steam coming out of manhole covers. That smell.

But also, grim reapers walk the earth among us. They look like normal people, not skeletons in dark cloaks. By the way, Mo appears as middle-aged Asian woman. Reapers' responsibilities are to bring death and ferry souls to the underworld.

They bring death by touching people – skin to skin contact, after which the person dies in 24 hours. As a result, for Mo and other reapers, intimacy is out of the question, which is one of the reasons Mo has become isolated and lonely over the years.

Also, these days “ferrying” souls looks more like “uber-ing” souls – reapers use an uber-like app, which tells them where their next soul pick-up will be. After pick-up, they drive the soul to one of the many portals to the Underworld scattered across earth. For Mo, the closest portal is located in a noodle restaurant in Queens.

Which leads us to the bureaucracy of death.

As the world population has grown, the underworld has become increasingly corporate to keep up with the high volume of souls. Gone are the days of Death riding in on a black winged horse and a golden carriage made of skulls, looking like a badass. Nobody’s got time for that. These days it’s all about efficiency. Hitting your numbers. And don’t even get Mo started on maintaining a high “star rating” average for her trips.

Which is all to say: Mo’s job sucks. It’s boring. It’s stressful. It’s a grind.

## **MAIN CHARACTERS**

**MO:** a reaper who looks like a middle-aged Asian woman but has been around since the dawn of humanity. At the start of the show, she’s cynical, jaded, and depressed. As the series progresses, she becomes increasingly invested in the motivational program – for the first time in a long time she feels happy and alive. And at the end of the first season, she decides she wants to become a motivational trainer herself.

**TINA:** the charismatic founder of the motivational program, “Zest!”. She is ambition personified. At the start of the season, her dream is to be as influential and successful as Tony Robbins, and to help people unlock their potential. She’s driven to help people because of her own difficult childhood, which she managed to overcome. Over the course of the series, her almost maniacal desire to help people will evolve into a darker tendency – the desire to control. Through Tina, we’ll get a glimpse of the dark side of motivational programs and how some toe the line between support group and cult. As Mo finds the light, Tina will descend into darkness.

**FRED:** an earnest and bumbling middle-aged seminar attendee who quickly develops a crush on Mo – and she finds herself resisting a sneaking suspicion that the feeling might be mutual. As the series progresses Mo will find it harder and harder to keep Fred at arm’s length, because of her growing feelings of affection.

**MOTHER TIME:** the boss of all reapers. She recently took over the underworld from Father Time and has something to prove. She expects all the reapers to hit their numbers – and has no qualms about banishing them to purgatory if they fail to deliver.

## RECURRING CHARACTERS

GERALD: an old-time reaper, like Mo. Good natured and a bit of a rogue. The two go way back and frequently do each other favors and help each other out.

CORY: a millennial reaper, meaning he's been reaping souls for 1000 years, which is young in cosmic terms. With his hipster aesthetic and comfort with technology, he represents the new generation of reapers.

BRUCE: Tina's sycophantic assistant. Believes in Tina unreservedly and will do anything – *anything* – to make sure that the motivational program goes over smoothly.

OTHER SEMINAR ATTENDEES: they all have big dreams, but not the confidence to achieve them. Among them are THE NERVOUS TEEN, THE ENTREPRENEUR, THE SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER, and THE ASPIRING OLYMPIAN.

## PILOT OVERVIEW

In the pilot, we see Mo performing her reaper duties and are introduced to the world of the show. She picks up the soul of a guy who has drunkenly fallen off the roof of a Brooklyn brownstone. In the back of Mo's beat-up camry, the guy has a full-on existential crisis, grappling with his death and questioning whether he lived his life to the fullest – but it's clear that for Mo, this is just another tedious day at work. Especially when she has to clean up when the guy's vomit.

When Mo receives a low "star rating" from the soul, she is accosted by her boss, MOTHER TIME, who tells her that if she doesn't raise her average ratings soon, she'll be banished to purgatory.

In her tiny apartment, Mo receives a visit from her friend and fellow reaper GERALD, who asks her pick to up one of his souls the next day as a favor. Mo begrudgingly agrees, and so finds herself at the motivational seminar the next day as she searches for soul. While there, she gets swept up in Tina's inspirational speech, which jolts something deep within her. Unable to stop thinking about the experience over the next few days, she shirks some reaper duties to go back to the seminar, where Tina challenges the attendees to get out of their comfort zone and do something crazy that they would normally never do.

Mo's next assignment is to pick up suicidal man and – with Tina's words ringing in her ears – she engages him and convinces him to not kill himself. This first taste of autonomy and rebellion gives Mo a huge rush, breaking her out of her pattern.

Still riding that high, Mo signs up for the 10-week motivational seminar as Gerald bursts into her apartment. He explains that Mo convincing the man not to kill himself has triggered a chain

reaction that they have to fix before Mother Time finds out. And with that, the pilot of MID-DEATH CRISIS comes to an end.

## **SERIES OVERVIEW**

Each episode, Mo will struggle (and fail) to fulfill both the obligations of the motivational program and her reaper responsibilities. Example episodes:

- When assigned to do a “random act of kindness” through the program, Mo agrees to make one last stop for a soul before taking him to the underworld. But he chains himself to a radiator and refuses to leave.
- In order to make time for her gratitude journal, Mo starts ferrying multiple souls at the same time (like an uber pool). But the souls start to fight in the car, causing Mo’s rating to plunge, rousing Mother Time’s suspicions.
- A gas explosion in the east village causes a surge of deaths, including a relative of one of the seminar attendees. Against her better judgement, Mo agrees to convey a message from beyond the grave to the seminar attendee, which causes more harm than good.
- When Tina stipulates that Mo has to “be there unconditionally” for another seminar attendee for one full day, Mo misses a soul pick-up – and the soul goes on a haunting rampage.