



## The Land of the Living: Into Eternity

**Penelope de la Haya**

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*This thought-provoking adventure explores the concepts of death and dying without fear.*

A young girl leaves behind the life she knows for a brilliant future—maybe even a happily ever after—in Penelope de la Haya's *The Land of the Living (Into Eternity)*, the final installment in a visionary trilogy that embraces the light at the end of the tunnel.

Escorted by two protective angels, Emery is thrilled to finally leave planet Earth behind and make her way through the Portal to a shining dimension filled with beautiful gardens, happiness, love, and a warm welcome from someone very special.

It is clear from the opening pages, where children are invited to write their names alongside the request “This is my book. Will you please read it to me?,” that Emery’s story is intended to be shared rather than read independently. While the text uses simple phrases and kid-friendly analogies, the complexity of the subject matter may require some explanation. Similarly, due to the abrupt midscene beginning and brief, vignette format, it is advised that the trilogy be consumed in the intended order to fully appreciate the nuances of Emery’s journey, which comes full circle from book one, *U Only Get 1: (Destination: Planet Earth)*.

Cheerful and bright stock imagery varies from white clouds and shadowy figures to clasped hands, fall foliage, and a woman in a lab coat examining charts and graphs in the sky. Singapore’s famous nature park, Gardens by the Bay, is even featured, with its copacetic mix of industrialized cityscape and blooming greenery. The soft, natural scenes are offset by a futuristic, science fiction feeling, furthered by Emery’s references to her “skin space suit,” “The Portal,” and “Planet Earth,” which give the impression of traveling through outer space.

The tone is exciting and lighthearted throughout, and Emery’s joyful observations and enthusiastic attitude gloss over any potential concern surrounding her death, which is implied but lacking in details. This leaves the door wide open for personal interpretations and analyses of the situation, including how Emery died and her family’s reactions to her death.

The focus is on what happens next. Created as a guide for parents or concerned adults to address the topics of death and dying in an accessible, nonfrightening manner, this story of Emery’s brief trip from Earth to “The Land of the Living” is full of Christian ideology, featuring quotes from the King James Version of the Bible, commentary from Jesus, a garden paradise where spirits reside, and several easily identifiable depictions of a bearded man in flowing robes.

A thought-provoking adventure and springboard for meaningful discussion, Penelope de la Haya’s *The Land of the Living (Into Eternity)* allows children, teens, and young adults to explore the concepts of death and dying without fear.

PALLAS GATES MCCORQUODALE (July 5, 2018)

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