

Three Ghosts, One Eternity

"Don't tell me how to live my life!"

"You're a ghost."

"That is not the point Jim. I may be dead but I still have a life. It's called the AFTER LIFE!"

"Will you two please stop arguing. Haven't we already had this discussion a hundred times before?"

It was early in the morning and the sun was slowly peaking over the hills on the horizon. The light shone through the open door of the mausoleum, dancing over the numerous plaques that lined the walls. Three people sat at the end of the large room, lounging over a stone bench. Although, people wasn't the most accurate way to describe these transparent figures.

The first, a tall woman in her forties, sat at the end of the bench examining her nails, looking extremely bored. The other two, a man and a woman in their mid-twenties, sat with their arms crossed and ignoring each other's gaze.

"We have had this discussion, but Jim continually thinks he can tell me what to do, just because he's been dead fifty years longer than I have," huffed the younger woman.

"Yes, I have been dead longer than you, which means I have a little bit more experience when it comes to the afterlife!" replied Jim, standing up and pacing in front of the bench.

"You make it sound like I've only just died! I've been stuck in this mausoleum with you for the past twenty years! If someone had told me this is what the afterlife was like, I would have made sure I never died!"

"You were murdered! It's not like you could have stopped that guy from robbing the bank and shooting you!" Jim yelled, waving his arms about in frustration.

"That is entirely beside the point. If I had known that I'd be stuck with you for eternity I wouldn't have gone in the bank to begin with!"

"Would you shut up!" yelled the older woman, turning to look at the other two like they were children.

Jim and the younger woman stopped and stared at the older woman, shocked that they'd been yelled at. This was hardly the first argument the pair had had in the past twenty years, and it certainly wasn't the first time Meredith had yelled at them, but for some reason they were always surprised when she did raise her voice. It was such a change from her usually quiet demeanour.

Meredith had been stuck in the mausoleum for over a hundred years, and had been enjoying the peace and quiet. Yes, it was lonely at times, but someone usually came to visit one of the graves at least once a week, so she always had someone to keep her company, even if it was just for five minutes and the person didn't know she was there. When Jim arrived seventy years ago, she was glad to finally have some company that actually responded to what she was saying. She came to see Jim as a son, and the pair enjoyed the afterlife together.

However, the peace and quiet came to a stop twenty years ago when Billie came on the scene. Her and Jim were at loggerheads from the moment she arrived and the pair had been fighting like cats and dogs ever since. Most of their arguments were the same – Billie continued to believe she'd be able to leave the mausoleum and explore the cemetery, despite Jim continually saying that if he and Meredith hadn't been able to leave the entire time they were there, then neither could she. But, this didn't stop Billie trying to leave every couple of weeks, only to complain about being zapped by the invisible force that kept them trapped in the mausoleum. Naturally, Jim would then come in with 'I told

you so' and this would lead to another argument. It was a never-ending cycle and Meredith was beginning to get fed up.

"Sorry Meredith, but you heard what he said. He keeps telling me what to do and I hate it!" cried Billie, sliding across the bench to Meredith. It was typical of Billie to blame everything on Jim, especially when she caused all her own problems.

"Oh that's right, blame me when you get zapped for the millionth time. I've told you time and time again that you can't leave the mausoleum, so you should just really stop trying. It'd be better for everyone, believe me," said Jim as he walked over to the door and watched the sun rise higher in the sky.

"If you were sorry Billie, you'd stop trying to leave. We know it's boring in here. I've been here for over one hundred years and it sucks, but get used to it. You never know, one day we may be able to leave, but that day isn't today, and it probably won't be any time in the near future. So please just stop arguing with Jim every five minutes," insisted Meredith, hoping that the message would finally sink in. It probably wouldn't since it hadn't already, but she could still hope.

The pair sat in silence and watched Jim at the door. The sun continued to rise and a warmth spread over the mausoleum. Even though the trio couldn't exactly feel the warmth, they still got that fuzzy feeling as they remembered what it was like when they were alive. This was one of the few moments throughout the day that they all found happiness as they reflected on their past.

"Here comes our first guest," said Jim, as he turned back to the women, "It's a bit early though."

As Jim took a seat next to Billie, the trio watched as a young man crossed the mausoleum's threshold. He was dressed in a grey suit, had black hair, and green eyes, and wore round glasses. They sat in silence as he crossed the large room to one of the newer plaques:

BETHANY YOUNG
10 MAY 1989 – 17 NOVEMBER 2014
GONE FROM THIS WORLD, BUT LIVING IN OUR HEARTS
PER SPIRITUM AETERNUM LIBERARI

"I know I've asked this before," whispered Billie, despite the fact that this man wouldn't be able to hear her, "but how come everyone buried in the mausoleum doesn't become a ghost here?"

"I've been here for so long but I still don't know. I always believed it was because of the whole 'unfinished business' thing, but I don't think that's the reason. I can't really believe that out of the fifty or so people buried in here that only we three have unfinished business." Replied Meredith. This question had crossed her mind on numerous occasions, but she still couldn't come up with an answered that made sense. Why were Billie, Jim and herself destined to spend the afterlife in the mausoleum and cemetery while everyone else seemed to crossover to another world?

They continued to watch the man, who placed a small bouquet of white and purple flowers in the holder. As they watched, they noticed him whispering something over and over again. Curious, Billie stood up and walked over to him, returning a few moments later.

"He keeps saying 'Spiritus vester ut ligaretur liberi militum' over and over again. Do you think he's having a stroke?" Billie asked as she sat back down between Meredith and Jim.

"He's speaking in Latin. Wonder what it could mean?" pondered Meredith.

"You mean you don't know Latin? I thought you did."

"Just because I was alive during the eighteen hundreds doesn't automatically mean I know Latin. It was almost a dead language when I was alive, I was hardly going to learn it in case I came across it in the afterlife." Meredith replied, rolling her eyes at Billie.

"Remember that service that was completely in Latin? Talk about the longest two hours of my life! Stuck in a room with complete strangers speaking in gobbledygook is not how I planned to spend my afterlife." Added Jim as he watched the man make the sign of the cross.

As the man turned to leave, he scanned the room, his eyes seeming to meet those of the ghostly trio. Billie smiled and raised her hand in a wave. Jim rolled his eyes.

"You do realise he can't see you?"

"Just because he can't see me Jim doesn't mean I should be rude and not wave."

When the man vanished out the door, Jim noticed that he had left behind his wallet. Getting up, he jogged to the door, calling back the man as he went.

"Jim, you know he can't hear you." Called Meredith.

"I know, but maybe I can tap into the whole ghostly moan thing that Hollywood kept talking about," he called back to her, continuing his jog to the door.

"This isn't Hollywood Jim, this – "

But Meredith was cut short. Jim had suddenly jogged out of the mausoleum, into the fresh air of the cemetery. Turning around, his face mirrored the shock that was written all over the faces of Billie and Meredith.

"Hey! How come you can walk through the door fine but I get zapped everytime!" said Billie angrily as she strode across the room to the door.

Billie tentatively poked her fingers outside the doorway and was relieved not to be zapped by the unknown force that kept them there. She stepped outside and let out a sigh of relief as she looked at the world around them. The cemetery was so much nicer than the mausoleum. Meredith followed suit and soon the three of them were standing outside, looking at the world they had only been able to see through the mausoleum windows.

"How could we be allowed out when you only tried to get out a few hours ago," Jim said, looking at Billie, "what could have changed since then?"

Meredith, who had been reciting the Latin quote over and over again in her head let out a gasp.

"He set us free" she whispered.

"Who did? How?" Billie and Jim said in unison.

"That man. He was saying 'Spiritus vester ut ligaretur liberi militum' and it sounded familiar. It's what's written on another plaque in there, and I remember a few people coming in, one of them asking what it meant."

"Well, what does it mean?" asked Jim.

"May your spirit be free of the forces that bind it."

They stood in silence, each of them thinking over the phrase. Looking around, they took in the bright green grass, the aged headstones, the blue sky and the blazing sun – it was so much better than the gloominess of the mausoleum.

"See, I told you he could see me waving." Billie teased, as she skipped off, excited to finally explore the large cemetery.