

1st place winner

A Dreamy Death

by Ainsley Burns

People always say they're afraid of death. Well, most people say that. There are the exceptions of course. Suicidals, insane people, people that enjoy skydiving. But most of the population is afraid of death. I am not one of those exceptions. Well, I wasn't.

I remember everything quite vividly. How the hospital bed felt, my family's voices, my grandson's hand in mine. I remember the beeping of the heart monitor and the other machines keeping me alive. I remember the smell of the hospital room, the sterilizing, nose burning chemical smell. The fluorescent lights that would flicker every couple minutes.

Saying goodbye to my family was challenging. All my grandchildren were crying, and I think I might have been too. It felt like it was time. It had felt like it was time for a while, but it wasn't easy.

But then there was a warm feeling on my face like the sun rising in the summer. I smiled at the warmth. Just as I thought the world would fade to black, I saw flashes of light, I felt bed sheets around me, and the hospital smell was changing into a softer, lighter scent. The warmth on my face grew, and as I blinked, the flashes became one solid light.

Everything was all of the sudden very heavy, and I sat up with a gasp, sucking in too much air. I coughed and looked around. *Where.. am I?* I looked around the small flat and looked down. Two long, muscular legs stared back at me. I let out a yelp and moved backwards only to find the legs were following me. I screamed and began hitting them with my fist, but...wait... ow. That hurt. These are my legs. My twenty three year old legs. My fit legs that I hadn't seen since... since the accident. I gaped at them. Was this heaven? It just puts you in your fittest state and in your old flat in Plymouth? My flat in Plymouth... that's where I was!

There was a loud knock on the door, and I nearly jumped out of my skin. I looked down, I was just in my knickers so I pulled the bed sheets up over my body and moved to open the door. When it swung open, a tall, slender man stood looking at his shoes. He looked up and gave me a once over.

"I didn't know you drank," the man said, pushing past me and coming in. I studied him. *Who was he?*

"They have alcohol in heaven?" I asked, watching the man fill a glass with water. He looked at me, obviously confused.

"How should I know?" He walked over and studied my face. "How much did you have to drink last night, Ed?"

"Grant Redding!" I shouted. That's who the man was, my old mate. When had he died? And why was I unaware?

He stared at me, like I was the biggest idiot he'd ever laid his eyes on, his glass half way to his lips. "Yes, Ed, that is the name my mother gave me." He shook his head and set the glass down. "Maybe you'd better lie down." He guided me to the rickety bed and sat me down.

"When did you die?" I asked him. He froze and turned his head towards me.

"Pardon?"

"I- I'm sorry I wasn't at the funeral, I hadn't even known you had passed. This is so odd. I should've checked up on you, but after..." I trailed off looking at him. He was utterly confused.

"Mate, are you sure you're alright? Do we need to take you to hospital?" He looked truly concerned.

"No, no I was just there." I waved his hand away that was coming closer to my forehead.

"You were at hospital? Why?" he turned to me, worried.

"Yes, I was there just before I died." His face went pale and he looked at me, confused.

"You were dead?" he squeaked out.

I narrowed my eyes. "Yes, aren't you?"

My heart pounded as I watched Grant shake his head. His eyes turned narrow like mine as his head moved left to right. "No."

My stomach dropped. I felt my hands shake. "No?" I repeated softly.

"Ed? What's wrong, what's going on?" He knelt down next to me.

"W-where am I?" my voice came out shaky.

"Ed. you're in Plymouth, in your flat."

"If I'm not dead then where am I?" I yelled.

"Ed I think-"

"Wait." Grant stopped. "What is the date?" My eyes moved around the flat searching for a calendar.

"April 12, 1967."

Once again my heart beat faster and my hands shook. "I've gone back 55 years in the past." I whispered.