

BG LOCKE
The author of Soul Destination
Presents:

A VALENTINE'S FUNERAL

“Nothing like being lost in the middle of nowhere!” DeShadow said aloud as he drove down a quiet country road.

The attendant at the gas station had given such simple directions, “Take that there left at the next light. Go on down that road a spell and then take a right on to the 30 bypass.”

He should've known not to take the word of anyone who used the word “spell” as a unit of measure. He had gone past seven intersections on this road and still had not seen any sign of the 30 bypass. His odometer showed that he was now 13 miles down this back country road and it wasn't getting any more populated the further he went. He was about to turn around when he went around a sharp turn and slammed on his brakes.

He had come to the worst case of a dead end in history. The road stopped and directly in front of him was a cemetery. He couldn't believe his eyes, there had been no indication that this road was a dead end, but there it was. The cemetery was straight-ahead and woods all around it. When he put the car in reverse to turn around his headlights flashed on an elderly man standing in the graveyard. He stopped and put the car in park. Perhaps this guy could help him find his way out of here.

The old man walked slowly towards him as he got out of the car.

“Evenin.” The old man said. “You lost or visitin kin?”

“I'm lost.” DeShadow smiled. “Can you tell me how to find the 30 bypass?”

“Ayup. I surely can.” DeShadow was now getting a closer look at the man. He was about 5'2” tall and couldn't have weighed more than 100 pounds. “You just go on back out this here road til ya get to the 2nd stop sign. Take a left there, go down about two mile or so and you'll come across it.”

“I appreciate that. I need to be at the airport in Louisville in three hours. I was starting to get worried.”

“Could ya possibly give me a hand for a minute before ya head out?” The old man coughed for what seemed like 10 minutes before continuing. “I need to set up my grandfather's head stone, seems it's been knocked over and it's just too heavy for me ta lift by m'self.”

DeShadow smiled and agreed. He followed the old man back into the unkempt cemetery. Amazed at how no one had done any upkeep on it in what appeared to be

years. Most of the tombstones were knocked over, broken or just missing. The old man stopped at one of the stones that laid flat on the ground.

“My granpappy was the first to be hanged from this here tree. Rather than move him, they just dug a hole under where he was and cut the rope. His body fell in and they shoveled dirt on him.”

DeShadow looked at the old tree and the branch that was above where he was now standing and shuddered. Somehow that was more information than he wanted. He bent down and picked the headstone up. The quicker he got out of there the better. In his haste, his hands slipped and the stone fell back the other direction from the way it had been. When it hit the root that was above ground, it cracked into two pieces. DeShadow’s eyes widened with horror looking down at the now broken piece of marble. He glanced up at the old man and saw the look of hatred on his face.

“To defile a man’s grave is to defile the sanctity of death. I curse you to an eternity of damnation in this forgotten cemetery. Welcome, to the Gate of Hell.” Before DeShadow could speak the old man vanished into thin air. Once again his eyes grew wide and he rubbed them.

“Now that was one hell of a hallucination!” He said to himself and looked briefly down at the broken stone before turning and walking back to his car. He climbed in his car and began to back up, when his headlights went past the tree, he hit the brakes. Hanging from the tree was the old man. His eyes glaring at DeShadow and then his head fell forward. Moments later, he was no longer there.

“Knew I shouldn’t have had that rum and coke after dinner.” DeShadow said to himself and drove out of there as quickly as he could. Instead of following the old man’s advice, he backtracked completely, through Elizabethtown and back onto I65. It was an extra hour out of his way, but he couldn’t afford to get lost again.

The accident happened just one mile from the airport. It was a freak accident in every way. An enormous tree fell over and landed on DeShadow’s car. Crushing him inside of it. There was no strong winds, no lightning, no apparent cause for the tree falling over. It just happened. That’s what all the eyewitnesses reported. It just happened.

The reading of the will was a somber time for all involved. It’s one of those necessary evils, no one wants to attend because it makes them seem like a ghoul, but at the same time they must. Snickers sat listening, her eyes bloodshot and redder than any person’s should ever be. Everything was just as she had remembered until the final stanza. “It is my wish, that I be forever laid to rest in my plot at Grandlake Cemetery in Elizabethtown, Kentucky.”

“Are you sure?” Snicks asked the lawyer.

“That’s what it says. I even have documentation as to the location of the plot.”

“I had no idea he had a cemetery plot there. But, if that’s his final wish, I’ll grant it without question.”

DeShadow’s body had been flown out to California from Kentucky, it was now going to make a round trip flight. The lawyer assured Snicks that he would take care of the transportation arrangements and everyone hugged her and left.

In an effort to accommodate everyone, Snicks arranged a memorial service in California in addition to the funeral services at GrandLake Church in E-Town, Kentucky.

Information was passed around Iplay as to where they could go to pay final respects. Even though time was highly constrained, over 30 people affirmed they would attend the services in Kentucky.

February 14, 2004 was the day everyone would say goodbye to DeShadow and his body would be laid to rest permanently. It would be a Valentine’s Day that no one would forget.

PART TWO

Funeral Attendees

BedrmiiZ	Dave	Paragod
Snickers	Pammie	SayNO2Sanity
RealNut	Flirt17	PicturePerfect
AnnieOkrie	RagingThunder	Stardust
Texanna1	Trachelle	HollyKnows
Minnie432000	GiftofSunshine	XanthousFlame
Kicknit	Calle_Kitten	PerkyOne
Maresy	Bobbi	McGowan007
LuvYaBaby	Mickey_Mouse	Looksie
LikestoTease	CandySoSweet	JustJoe
Swampwitch57	Simply_Sweet	BuyMeaRose
PunkieGirl	SudiT	SneakyStormy
Lacy	AJW	Venusatsunset

On the day of the funeral, everything was in disarray. Three of the arranged pallbearers could not make it leaving just Dave, Paragod and SayNO2Sanity. Dave assured Snicks this was not a problem and that it would be taken care of. She looked frayed and rundown, her eyes were completely red and she barely spoke with any coherence at all. The memorial service in California had drained her and she had very little energy left.

When the mourners began to arrive, Dave arranged for the first three males to be additional pallbearers. Kicknit, JustJoe and AJW were asked to perform the task and all agreed to do so graciously. People began to arrive an hour early, all following the same pattern. Giving Snicks a hug, paying their respects at the coffin and finding a seat. The conversation was minimal and quiet, as was the case at most funerals.

To this point the minister of the church was only seen once, that was to unlock the doors and let everyone in. Minutes later he was nowhere to be found. As the clock neared 5:00 p.m., this became a concern. Dave walked up to the front of the church just as the last of the guests arrived and took their seats.

He was about to address the crowd when the minister once again appeared from a back area of the church. Dave saw him, nodded and breathed a sigh of relief. He was not looking forward to speaking at this type of function. The minister moved into the pulpit and watched as Dave took his seat. He looked around at the small, disheartened crowd slowly before speaking.

“One day, all of us will cross beyond the earthly plain and stand before The Lord.” He began. “This is a truth that is inevitable and irrefutable. We gather today, not to say goodbye to DeShadow, but to say “see you on the other side”.”

The minister paused and his countenance grew even more saddened. “I did not know, DeShadow, in this life. So I look forward to making his acquaintance when I too cross over.” Once again he paused and looked at the faces of the crowd, he could see the questioning in a few of their faces. “Yes, my brethren. I look forward to the day I will join my Lord. We refer to the end of life on earth as death, but in reality, it is the end pain and suffering. Our sorrows are wiped away and we bask in the glow of our Heavenly Father.”

“I realize that in our hearts we feel pain over the loss of a dear friend. This is part of life’s process. Our emotions are a gift to us and even though we may not always appreciate them, they enable us to weep and carry on. Rest assured dear friends, DeShadow is watching us all. There is no sorrow in his heart, he is instead filled with the knowledge that we shall join him soon enough and all be united for eternity.” The minister stopped and took a deep breath.

“Lower your heads and join me in Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me beside the still waters...” Everyone repeated along with the minister as he spoke. “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of The Lord forever. Amen.”

“Perhaps no other verses within The Bible portray what death truly means than this one. “I will dwell in the house of the Lord, forever.” This verse does NOT say, “I might dwell in The Lord’s House.” NO! I WILL DWELL IN HIS HOUSE!” The minister spoke strongly now as he addressed the bereaved and then lowered his tone once again.

“All He asks of you is that you believe in Him. Put your trust and faith in Him, such a small request for such rich rewards. Rest assured, DeShadow is in the House of God and you will once again be united someday. Friendship never dies. It is eternal. Many will tell you that as long as a person is not forgotten, he will never be gone. The fact is, that no one ever leaves us in the first place. They just move to a new location, a better one, and await our time to join them.” The minister stopped and stepped around his podium. “Go to your vehicles now and follow DeShadow to the site of his final earthly resting place. Where I’ll conclude today’s service.”

Quietly everyone stood and exited the small country church. The pallbearers took their positions and carried the coffin to the pale blue hearse parked to the side before going to their own vehicles to follow long to the cemetery. Slowly the procession began moving down the narrow country road. Inside the hearse the minister and driver conversed briefly.

“That was quite moving.” The driver said.

“Yeah, same old shit different day. Amazing how much stock I put in these things when I first started doing them.” The minister responded.

“Well, life was much different then.”

“Isn’t that the truth? Back then, after a beautiful sermon, we’d bring the dearly departed in and lay them to rest. Then, we’d go to a wake and talk about them as if they were still with us.”

“So what changed?” The driver asked.

“Stupidity reared its ugly head. The day they hung that drifter in the cemetery and buried him below the place of his demise, that was the day they cursed us all. Feb 14, 1804. I remember it like it was yesterday. They hung the man just after midnight. By 5:00 a.m. he was buried and no trace of their actions remained. Then, when we buried Gretchen Milford that day, he got his revenge. No one left the cemetery alive.”

“Makes me glad I died in 1801. Least I got a proper burial.” The driver commented as he pulled up to the cemetery.

“Feel fortunate indeed. Like the 79 of us that perished that day, these people will be condemned. All because of the same man.” The minister sighed. He opened the car door and got out, watching everyone else pull alongside the road. The parking area for GrandLake was not big enough to accommodate any sized crowd. No one had been buried here since 1904, 100 years ago today.

The minister and the driver opened the rear doors to the hearse and then closed them after the pallbearers had taken out the body of DeShadow. The minister quickly took his position in front of them and the driver stood quietly watching as everyone else walked past him.

When they reached the plot where DeShadow would be laid to rest, the pallbearers slowly lowered the coffin on the area provided. The minister stood in front of the hole that had been dug and everyone else gathered around him. There were no chairs provided for comfort, no tents to shelter the cold wind, just an area of frozen ground.

“Is there anyone here who wishes to say anything?” The minister asked the group. When no one volunteered, he concluded his services with a small prayer. “Heavenly father, we ask that you guide us in the days to come. Show us that although we feel remorse, brighter days lie ahead and we will indeed be reunited with our loved ones. We submit to the ground the body of DeShadow now. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, risen again, in The Lord we trust. This concludes today’s services. Thank you all for coming, good luck, I mean, best wishes for your safe return home.”

Everyone shook hands with the minister and thanked him for his kind words and service. He walked away from the crowd while people turned their focus to Snicks who had begun to weep uncontrollably. Near the back of the crowd, SayNO2Sanity was shaking his head in disbelief.

“Para.” He whispered. “Where’d the minister and the hearse go?”

Paragod looked back towards the entrance of the cemetery. “Man left quickly didn’t he?”

Say decided to leave it at that. He had watched the minister vanish into thin air seconds before the hearse did the same thing. “Guess my mind is playing tricks on me.” He muttered to himself and turned back toward the rest of the crowd.

Even though it was only 38 degrees outside, no one was in a hurry to leave. The mourners instead gathered round DeShadow’s final resting place and began tales of “I remember when”. Snicks started the conversation, if she didn’t lighten the burden of sorrow it would most assuredly drive her insane and she knew it.

Nearly everyone participated with a fond memory, their was even laughter amongst the group by the time it was over. Immediately after Pammie completed her memory of DeShadow a voice came from the back of the pack.

“I remember when DeShadow?” It began. It was a male voice and sounded startled. “You all have fond memories, huh? I bet you’ll remember this day then. The day DeShadow appeared at his own funeral.”

Everyone was watching the area the voice seemed to be coming from and when that last sentence was spoken jaws dropped open and eyes grew wide. Suddenly, standing among them, was DeShadow.

AnnieOkrie, XanthousFlame and McGowan007 fainted. Most of the remaining people backed away quickly. “Guess you folks aren’t happy to see me?” He smiled at the mourners.

“This can’t be real.” Dave said, half shocked.

“Cool.” SayNo2Sanity responded. “Way to go DeShadow!”

“You would say that.” Swampwitch57 responded looking at SayNO.

“Well, of course! Wouldn’t everyone here love to be able to do what he’s done?”

Before anyone could reply, DeShadow spoke up again. “Snicks, I heard about that party you and Pammie are cooking up. A celebration of my life is one thing, but bare-chested men?” He paused and his smile faded. “Unfortunately, I have some bad news for you guys and some suggestions. You are all in danger here. This cemetery contains evil and a lot of it. Within this small area are three safe spots. I can’t tell you where they are. I can tell you that if you use your awareness, you’ll know when you’re in them. I’m s...” Just as he had appeared quickly, he had now vanished.

There were several minutes of silence before PunkieGirl spoke up. “Still think it’s cool?” She asked with a look of sarcasm on her face.

“Yup.” SayNo quipped, smiling.

“You’re warped.” Not just one but four people said this simultaneously.

“I’m getting out of here.” Pammie said and she began walking back toward her car. PunkieGirl, HollyKnows, PicturePerfect, Flirt17, LikestoTease, Simply_Sweet, BuyMeaRose, SudiT, SneakyStormy all liked this idea and headed in the same direction.

AJW, Paragod and Dave were escorting the now semi-conscious fainting victims back to the parking area as well.

Most everyone else followed the initial group in leaving the cemetery; only a small group remained behind discussing what had just transpired.

“Do you guys think that was really him?” Snicks asked. She had been too stunned to speak while he was there and now was trying to rationalize it in her mind.

“Yeah, I do.” BedrmiiZ said.

“Me too.” RealNut agreed.

“I’d have to give it a big affirmative.” SayNo2Sanity added.

“What did he mean we’re all in danger though?” Bobbi asked.

“That’s a good question!” Maresy chimed in.

“I don’t know, but somehow I have a feeling we’re going to find out soon enough.” BedrmiiZ replied.

“I was afraid someone was thinking that also.” Texanna1 responded. “I have that feeling as well.”

“One things for certain, DeShadow wouldn’t hurt us.” Trachelle added. “So whatever danger we may be in, it certainly doesn’t involve him.”

“I think we should get out here.” Lacy spoke these words and didn’t wait for agreement. She began walking away immediately after speaking.

Before anyone else could concur with that sentiment the ground shook from what appeared to be an explosion near the cemetery entrance. The air echoed the sounds of people screaming as they ran back towards the group that had remained behind. Now visible, climbing over 20 feet into the air was a wall of flame. It began back in the direction of the parking lot and quickly encompassed the entire cemetery.

People were running in all directions, screaming in terror, even the small group that had stayed behind had now scattered to various places throughout the graveyard.

“What the hell happened?” BedrmiiZ asked. She was amongst people who had been up near the entrance when they explosion occurred.

“I don’t know. One minute we’re all walking towards our cars, next minute the ground cracks open and flames come out!” LikestoTease told her.

“Did anyone get hurt?” Bobbi was startled but doing her best to keep some rational thought.

“I don’t think so. Dave and AnnieOkrie were in front of everyone else, I know they flew back when the ground opened but don’t think they got hurt bad.” Flirt17 responded.

The scene continued to be chaotic. People still scampered around trying to find an exit. There were continued screams coming from various parts of the cemetery, most of the 39 people had found hiding places and nestled in. Just when it appeared it couldn’t get worse, it did.

PART THREE

Within the wall of flames at the entrance of the cemetery a face began forming, it was enormous and not even close to human. The face itself was shaped like a wolf, with two enormous fangs and razor-sharp teeth. Instead of ears, two horns jutted out either side of its head and its eyes were ashen amidst the brilliant yellowish-orange flame background. Seconds later, it was clearly definable and now it was extending beyond the flames.

The beast's eyes scanned the cemetery, looking at each of the trapped and terrified people. "The world you knew is gone. The world you are about to be in is one that you have only dreamed about in your darkest nightmares. Thoughts of escape are futile, you can only hope to survive for a brief time." The face withdrew back into the flames and then faded away.

Everyone was paralyzed by fear now. Some were clinging to the hope that this was a product of imagination, but all knew deep down they had indeed just seen the face of evil in fiery form.

The cold February day had now turned into an extremely warm one within the wall of flames. Everyone had moved towards the center of the cemetery except a select few that had found hiding places closer to the outside.

"Anybody have any ideas on how to get the hell out of here?" Stardust asked.

Before anyone could reply the ground opened up beneath her she fell into the earth below. Her screaming faded and then was gone as the ground closed once again.

LikestoTease, PerkyOne, PunkieGirl and LuvYaBaby quickly retreated from the area that had just swallowed Stardust. "Guess that answers any question about whether there is a safe place in here or not!" LuvYaBaby exclaimed and then ran and hid behind a tree.

The other three started to join her but stopped when they saw her being lifted off the ground, struggling and pulling at her neck. They watched helplessly as her body flopped around and she frantically tried to free herself from the invisible restriction around her neck. A minute later, her body hung limp with her head tilted forward. Aside from the three who had just been with her only minutes before, several others witnessed LuvYaBaby's demise in horror.

Paragod and Snickers started towards her with intentions of getting her down somehow. This plan was abruptly thwarted when the ground opened up beneath LuvYaBaby's body. Then, as if someone had cut the rope that bound her, she fell into the newly formed hole.

"Now I know how Custer felt." BedrmiiZ said to JustJoe, Calle_Kitten, RealNut and GiftofSunshine. All of whom were huddled down in the center of the graveyard.

"I think Custer had a better chance though." JustJoe responded.

"Gee, that was comforting." GiftofSunshine muttered.

“There has to be a way out of here.” Calle_Kitten reasoned through her terror.

“I’m certainly open to any suggestion that won’t get me killed.” RealNut added.

“Ok, let’s try and work our way around the cemetery. Maybe there’s a spot in the flames to get through that we aren’t seeing.” JustJoe suggested.

For lack of a better plan the group began moving cautiously around the cemetery and examining the walls of flame. Each one hoping there would be just one simple area in which to get through. A second group, consisting of: Paragod, Dave, Snickers, Pammie, HollyKnows, AJW, Swampwitch57, Simply_Sweet, XanthousFlame, McGowan007 and RagingThunder, joined in with them.

After completely searching the entire cemetery for one small opening, the group stood near a deadfall looking towards the front gate.

“It doesn’t appear that those flames are very wide.” Dave observed.

“Not at all, actually. I can see the cars through them.” XanthousFlame agreed.

“What are you saying? That we run through the flames? I think that’s possibly the worst idea in a long sad history of bad ideas!” Snickers responded.

“Snicks is right. We need to keep our heads and not panic. Obviously whatever is in the fire that spoke isn’t in a hurry to kill us or we’d all be dead. So he is giving us time for a reason.” AJW added.

“Yeah, he’s got a reason alright. We’re mice and he’s a cat. He wants to play with us a bit before he kills us.” Dave said. “I’m not going to stand in here and die. I’m going to make a run for it and go through the fire. Worst that happens I get burnt, but I’ll only be in there a second. Is anyone going with me?”

“I tell you what, Dave. You make it and I’ll consider it.” Paragod replied.

Dave waited a minute for the others to respond. When it was apparent no one else was going, he took a deep breath. “See you on the other side.” Then he took off running towards the flames.

The group all watched together, each one hoping that he would be successful. When he was at the flames he tucked his arms in and put his head down. It appeared for a second that he had made it. The group was elated, they could see that he was still running and had raised his head now. That second passed and the next was filled with complete horror as they watched him melt.

“I thought he made for a moment there.” RagingThunder sighed lowering her head.

The rest of the group followed suit, all lowering their heads in a moment of grief and reflection on Dave’s act of bravery.

“DeShadow said there are three safe spots in this cemetery.” Simply_Sweet remembered. “We need to find one.”

“DeShadow said? DeShadow died a week ago. That was an apparition of some kind.” Holly was shaken perhaps worse than anyone. “We can’t take the word of a ghost, even if it was DeShadow how do we know which side that vision of him is on?”

“Why would he have told us that there were three safe areas? He had to be trying to help us.” Snicks agreed with Simply_Sweet.

Holly didn't respond. She just stared now. “Ok, assuming it was DeShadow and he was trying to help us, where are the three safe spots?” Swampwitch57 asked.

“That would be the question of the day.” McGowan007 chimed up. “Anyone has that answer, please share.”

“Ok, let's look, maybe there's some kind of marker.” Paragod said. “Something that's not obvious unless you are looking for it specifically. DeShadow said if we use our awareness, we'll know.”

Though half of the group didn't believe that DeShadow had honestly appeared to aide them, all eyes began scouring the cemetery.

To the left facing the rear was a slope that went down into the flames. Nearest to them it was barren, only a few tombstones were scattered around. In the middle, the tree that LuvYaBaby hung from and three other trees that were similar to it. Past it was another slope that went down into the flames. In the middle at the rear the slope continued to curve around, there was a wide path that went straight through the center all the way to the front. It was the only path in the cemetery, the rest was overgrown and what tombstones there were remaining upright were scattered mainly on either side. To the right was more of the same with the exception of the lone mausoleum in the graveyard. It stood towards the rear on the right side and faced towards the front of the cemetery.

They had all scanned the area and were dismayed at the lack of options. With the exception of the deadfall where they now stood, the only other “landmarks” were the group of trees to the left and the mausoleum to the right. What was worse yet, only one small group of people was visible throughout the cemetery.

Maresy, Bobbi, Looksie, BuyMeaRose, LikestoTease, PerkyOne and PunkieGirl now formed a small group, they had taken up shelter in the rear of the trees.

“Should we go join them?” Maresy asked pointing to the larger group by the deadfall.

“I'm not going anywhere.” PunkieGirl responded. “They can come here.”

“I couldn't join them if I wanted to, my legs are shaking so bad they'd give out if I tried to take a step.” Bobbi added.

“I know how you feel.” Looksie muttered quietly. “Besides, I saw the ground open and swallow someone up.”

“That was Stardust.” LikestoTease replied. “I say we just stay where we are.”

“Someone please look and see what is bumping the back of my head.” PerkyOne asked nervously. “I'm afraid to turn around.”

Everyone's eyes turned to Perky and what was behind her. "Oh shit." Maresy said while simultaneously running for the other group at the deadfall. Bobbi, Looksie and PunkieGirl joined her in the 50-yard-dash to the other group.

"Run." LikestoTease told Perky. She needed to hear no more, the two of them sprinted towards the other group as well. Hanging behind them in the same fashion as LuvYaBaby was BuyMeaRose. The remaining six of the smaller group managed to reach the deadfall unscathed. There were now 25 huddled at the deadfall trying desperately not to panic in the face of death.

"Where are the missing people? Did more fall into the ground or what? There's only 25 of us, we're missing 14." Calle_Kitten asked after finally gaining some sense of coherency.

"I don't know. I know four people are dead." HollyKnows said solemnly.

"Should we check outside?" Kicknit asked quietly.

A group of 13 people had found shelter inside the mausoleum. They all sat quietly in the blackness. "Not yet." Flirt17 responded. "Whatever that fire thing was, I don't want to give it a chance to get in here, please.

"I don't know. People could be dying out there. Maybe if we open the door, they can get in here and be safe." Mickey_Mouse thought aloud.

"Yeah and maybe we open that door this thing fills with fire and we all turn to ashes." AnnieOkrie added.

"Simple fact is we have no idea what's going on out there. The whole cemetery could be on fire." Minnie432000 observed. "Why would we even want to risk our lives by opening that door?"

"Because we have friends out there that may need our help!" CandySoSweet was still in tears and frightened but at the same time very concerned for the others outside.

"Ok, let's take a vote. If you want to open the door say, yes. If not, say no." Texanna1 suggested.

Everyone agreed with this suggestion and SayNO2Sanity lit up the darkness with his lighter. "Ok, we'll start with you Venusatsunset and work down that side and back."

"Yes." Venus replied timidly. When the final voter was due, it was six to six.

"Oh great, I get to decide." Lacy chirped. "I was hoping my vote wouldn't matter. I vote, no. If they have survived this long out there then chances are they are in a safe place. I don't want to risk dying without having some idea what's on the other side of the door."

"It's settled then, we stay in here." SudiT sighed. She had felt bad about voting no, but it didn't make sense to risk their life unnecessarily.

"What exactly makes you think that you are safe in here?" A male voice sounded from the back. The mausoleum went dead silent. No lighters were on now and that voice was unfamiliar and coming from the area of the casket. One area no one had gone near.

“Who said that?” PicturePerfect asked nervously.

“I did. I must also add I do not particularly appreciate sharing my quarters with strangers.” The man responded. “But, if you are going to stay, you are going to stay indefinitely.”

The sound of a scuffle echoed through the small concrete tomb. Three people lit their lighters just in time to see an apparition strangling Venusatsunset. The man was translucent but was solid enough to completely choke the life from Venus. Everyone rushed to the door, pressing with all they had. It flew open and people tumbled out onto the ground. Once again there was disarray when the group from inside scattered in different directions once outside. The last to get to the doorway, Flirt17, was yanked back inside and the door slammed. A minute later, Flirt also lay dead inside the tomb.

Minnie432000, Kicknit, Lacy, CandySoSweet and PicturePerfect all managed to get to the deadfall where the larger group was still hiding. SayNO2Sanity had hit the tree area on a full run and climbed up to the top of one of them so quickly it would have made a monkey jealous. Texanna1 and Trachelle did not go far, they opted to scamper on top of the mausoleum.

SudiT and Mickey_Mouse were going in the direction of the deadfall but two creatures that arose from the ground cut them off. The creatures were each a foot tall, with enormous heads sitting atop small bodies. Their teeth were enormous and razor sharp, their eyes were glowing orange and their bodies were sheathed in fire.

Mickey_Mouse slipped and fell trying to turn around and was quickly attacked by the two demons. Her screams echoed through the cemetery sending chills down the spines of everyone. The two creatures bit into her viciously and, instead of dealing a fatal bite, set her on fire and ran after SudiT.

SudiT turned her head for a split second to look behind her. It turned out it was once second she couldn't afford to waste. She reached the mausoleum and Trachelle and Texanna1 were pulling her up when the demons got to her. They took one enormous bite each and engulfed her legs up to her knees. By the time Texanna1 and Trachelle were able to get her on top of the tomb, the demons had chewed away the lower half of SudiT's body. She was barely alive when what remained burst into flames. Although neither wanted to do it, the two women pushed her burning body off the mausoleum and both regurgitated at the sight.

On the ground the two small demons stared up at Texanna1 and Trachelle. “Come down and play?” One asked in a voice that sounded as if it had swallowed a tank of helium.

“We promise to make it quick.” The other said grinning.

“Go to hell!” Texanna1 screamed.

“Oh, we've been there”, said the 1st, “Now we're back for you and the rest.”

“Leave us alone.” Trachelle shrieked in horror.

“No can do.” The 2nd said still grinning. “If we had to die, so do you.”

Before their eyes the two demons faces changed resembling the countenances of Stardust and LuvYaBaby. Trachelle almost fell off the tomb when she fainted. Had it not been for quick reflexes by Texanna1 she would have. Texanna1 dragged her daughter back to safety and layback looking up at the sky. The sun had gone down and aside from a few stars the night sky was pitch black. She took a deep breath and closed her eyes, doing her best to get the nightmarish site of the two demons out of her mind.

“Guess nobody wants to play with us.” The first demon sighed.

“Guess not. Oh well, we can play later.” The seconds remarked. Just as quickly as they had rose from the ground, they now faded back to the depths below.

Across the cemetery, AnnieOkrie struggled with four roots that had wrapped around her legs and were pulling her into the ground. SayNO2Sanity started down from his perch to try and help her. She was screaming in terror, as the roots grip on her legs grew tighter. SayNO lowered his hand to her and she reached up, but it was too late. The ground opened in the middle of the roots and they pulled her down into the earth below. SayNO cursed and them scampered back up the tree to an area 20 feet above the ground.

The next two hours were silent and uneventful. At the deadfall a few had actually dozed off. Aside from an occasional eruption within the wall of flames, no dangers had presented themselves.

“I guess we found the three safe areas.” Paragod observed. “Although, I personally wouldn’t be feeling to safe up in that tree.”

“I think that whatever is in control here is just waiting us out now. As long as that wall of flame is there, we can’t escape. We can’t stay here forever and it knows.” BedrmiiZ said.

“He’s not waiting you out.” DeShadow’s voice came from just inches away from the deadfall. “Don’t let yourself feel too secure.”

“DeShadow?” Snickers asked. She was staring in the direction of his voice but there was no sign of him. “Where are you?”

A few feet away DeShadow appeared. “I’m here.”

“Is there anyway to get out of here?” RealNut asked.

“Only one and I’m not sure of where it is.” He said sullenly. “It will require you to explore further and put yourself at great risk.”

Before anyone realized she was doing so, Snickers stepped away from the deadfall towards DeShadow. Her arms were outstretched in the hopes that she could get a hug. In an instant, DeShadow disappeared and the ghost of AnnieOkrie appeared in his place. Snickers was barely able to lower her arms before Annie lashed out and gouged out her eyes. Snicks screamed and fell backward holding her eyes, her head hit the corner of a small tombstone and she died instantly.

“Anyone else want a hug?” Annie’s ghost smiled evilly. “Plenty to go around.”

Before anyone could respond, Annie disappeared. “We have to get Snicks.” Paragod said and reached out as far as he could to grab her. BedrmiiZ and JustJoe did also and between the three they were able to drag her body back to within the deadfall.

“At least she won’t be taken down into the ground, everyone that goes down there seems to come back to haunt us.” Pammie said sadly looking at the body of Snicks.

“That’s it. We’re all gonna die.” XanthousFlame exclaimed. With no warning she ran off in the direction of the gate screaming. Her intentions were to get it over with, quickly as Dave had done. The road to hell is paved with good intentions and hers became another brick in the thoroughfare.

She fell hard onto her face ten feet away from the deadfall. Before she could get back up, ghosts appeared on all side of her. They were the ghosts of Dave, SudiT, BuyMeaRose and Mickey_Mouse. They reached down and grabbed her, then lifted her up into the sky. Everyone watched as XanthousFlame squirmed trying to get free, but to no avail. She went up into the night sky and completely out of sight.

“Ok someone explain that on to me.” SneakyStormy shrieked. “Since when is hell up there?”

No one responded, they just continued looking up into the sky. There was no longer and sign of XanthousFlame anywhere. A few continued to stare upward, the rest huddled together to try and create some idea on how to survive this nightmare.

“We’ve already searched and there is no way to go through the flames. How else can we get out?” Pammie asked first.

“There has to be a way.” Swampwitch57 said. “We just haven’t found it yet.”

“How about we go over the flames?” AJW spoke quietly, his eyes staring at the tops of the fiery wall.

“How do you propose we do that?” GiftofSunshine inquired.

“I’ve been watching the same thing that I bet SayNO2Sanity is.” AJW spoke still not taking his eyes off the fire. “He’s actually pretty close to being above that wall height wise.”

“Yeah but he’s 15 feet away.” McGowan007 observed. “There’s no way he can jump and maintain his height long enough to clear it. Besides he’s what, twenty or thirty feet up? Even if he made it, he’d break his legs or his back or maybe even his neck.”

“I didn’t say I had it all worked out.” AJW replied. “I’m just throwing the idea out there.”

“Oh my God!” Lacy yelled. “Look out!”

Everyone scattered a bit until they realized she was yelling towards the mausoleum. Texanna1 and Trachelle were also late in realizing she was yelling at them. Texanna1 had enough time to look up before Xanthousflame’s body landed on her. Texanna1 was killed instantly. Trachelle was launched 40 feet away by the force of the impact. The tomb crumbled from the blow and was nothing more than a pile of rubble.

Everyone began yelling, urging Trachelle to run for shelter. She was shaken from the fall and slow getting to her feet. Between her and the deadfall the two small demons reappeared. She turned and ran back towards the area the mausoleum once stood, the two demons “hot” on her trail. She turned to see where the demons were, when she turned back around she saw the wire, but it was too late. Flirt17 and Venusatsunset each held one end of razor wire. It pulled them forward slightly when Trachelle ran into it, but not long as it severed her head.

“Hey, no fair, we wanted to kill her!” The first demon shrieked.

“Oh shut up you little roasted Smurf.” Flirt17 replied.

The two ghosts and two demons began arguing loudly, but were silenced when the ground opened up and swallowed them all, including the body of Trachelle.

Again hours passed, all that remained were 25 people at the deadfall and SayNO2Sanity, high above in a tree, snoring. All were under the quiet watchful eyes within the flames.

PART FOUR

The deadfall crowd now had unwanted visitors surrounding them. The two small fire demons that resembled Stardust and LuvYaBaby and the ghosts of everyone else who had been killed earlier now encircled them.

“C’mon out and play.” The 2nd little demon taunted. “It’s just me, LuvYaBaby. I’ll protect ya.”

“Yeah, ok. I saw how well you protected SudiT and Mickey_Mouse.”
Minnie432000 quipped.

“Aww, we were just playing. Them getting hurt was an accident, I swear.”
Demon number 2 continued. “Besides, you guys just think you are safe there, but your not.”

“Then why are you wanting us to leave?” Maresy queried.

“Because, it’s more fun to play with you out here. Anyone want to race around the cemetery? I’ll give you a three-second head start.” The first demon now spoke and laughed.

“Why don’t you two race around the cemetery?” BedrmiiZ asked. “See which one of you is faster.”

The demons started to speak then stopped and looked at one another. “I’m faster.”
Demon number 2 responded.

“No, you’re not, I am.” The first argued.

After several more seconds of arguing the two small demons took off running, in a race to see who was faster. When they reached the area in front of the gate, two arms stretched out of the flames and grabbed them. “Incompetence!” The same voice that had spoken before boomed. “I didn’t realize I was running a daycare center.” Then the arms retreated back into the flames pulling the two small demons in.

“That was a neat trick.” Texanna1’s ghost said glaring at the group.
“Unfortunately, none of us that remain are quite that gullible.”

The group was laughing for the most part. It was a nice break from the tension and fear. “Are you sure? Your sheet is a little soiled, maybe you should take it and get it washed.” Pammie smiled.

“Ah, so brave and so naïve.” Dave’s ghost spoke up. “Let’s see how brave you are in about two minutes.”

All of the ghosts began walking in a circle around the group. They moved faster and faster until they were nothing more than a blur.

“I think we pissed them off.” McGowan007 said nervously.

“We? We hell, I didn’t say nothing to them.” Paragod added. “Maybe if we give them Pammie they’ll go away.”

“Give them me?” Pammie said incredulously. “Gee thanks, my hero!”

“I’m a paramedic, not a ghostbuster.” Paragod responded. “You want a hero for this one, call Bill Murray.”

“I’d like to see you try to give me to them.” Pammie said sternly.

Before Paragod could respond, Snickers’ voice rang out. “Okay.” Quickly, the newly deceased Snickers sat up, picked Pammie up and threw her to the circling ghosts who proceeded to rip her to shreds in an instant.

The rest of the group froze. They stared at Snickers who now sat in the middle of them looking around. Where her eyes once were, there were now two small glowing red embers. They flickered just as the flames that surrounded the cemetery did. She had a sadistic smile on her face looking at the shocked assemblage.

“Gee, you guys are in deep shit now.” She beamed. “Eenie meenie miny moe, which of you is next to go?”

“Oh screw this.” RealNut spoke up. “I’ll take my chances with the ghosts.” She jumped up and ran towards the circling mob of ghosts. She closed her eyes and hoped it would be quick with as little pain as possible. After she had taken about ten steps she opened her eyes and was amazed to have survived the circling killing team. She didn’t hesitate. She ran straight for the trees and climbed up in one next to SayNO2Sanity.

“What’s going on?” He asked her. Until she rattled the branches, he was sleeping soundly.

“Snicks is a live, again.” She said stopping at an area about half the distance off the ground as he was.

“Why am I not surprised?” He muttered and looked over at the group of people.

Everyone else decided that since RealNut had successfully made it, they too were going to flee. Twenty-three people simultaneously made a break for it. Everyone made it with the exception of two. Simply_Sweet and PunkieGirl met the same fate that as Pammie. The second they reached the circling entities they were ripped to pieces.

Inside the circle, HollyKnows sat staring into the eyes of Snickers. Her mind was telling her to run, but her body wasn’t cooperating. Snicks’ eyes took on a brighter glow and Holly felt her body temperature rising. From above the ground, SayNO2Sanity and RealNut watched as Holly’s body began to smoke. Then her hair was ablaze, she didn’t scream, didn’t make a sound or any movements. She just sat there until a massive fireball exploded within her. It sent pieces of her body flying all over the cemetery. Each piece was in flames.

All over the cemetery small areas of ground began opening up. Those fleeing from the deadfall were now running a maze, between the holes in the ground and the areas now in flames from pieces of Holly’s body igniting the dried grass, it was difficult to maneuver around inside.

Paragod, JustJoe, Looksie, Maresy, Bobbi, Minnie432000 and CandySoSweet had managed to make it to the trees and scampered up in them at various levels off the ground.

“Hey easy down there!” SayNO2Sanity yelled after nearly falling out from the tree shaking.

“Easy my ass.” JustJoe said. “You try being down here.”

“No thanks, I like it up here. Think I’m gonna put a mailbox down below and move here.”

“If it’s safe here, then we’re going to be neighbors.” Looksie quipped.

Back on the ground it looked like a war movie. Everyone was trying to avoid the “landmines” that were becoming more and more frequent. From the tree the newly formed group watched in horror as RagingThunder, Kicknit and Swampwitch57 were swallowed up by openings in the ground. Lacy was even less fortunate, she strayed too close to the wall of flames and the same flaming arms that had snatched up the two demons now took her into the fire.

PicturePerfect, McGowan007 and LikestoTease were trapped, completely surrounded by enormous holes in the ground. Smoke rose from the holes, making it very difficult for the people in the trees to see them. Everyone felt helpless listening to the three women screaming for help.

PerkyOne had gotten herself trapped by the return of the two fire demons and was beating one of them over the head with a large stick.

“Ouch, damn it! Quit that, let me kill you!” The miniature Stardust demon complained as she took blow after blow from the stick.

The other small demon tried to sneak around but was caught by a swing of the stick knocking it through the air and ten feet backwards. Before the now lumpy-headed demon could move away, Perky resumed beating on it.

“LOOK OUT! BEHIND YOU PERKY!” CandySoSweet yelled from the tree.

Perky wheeled around. A dark figure with deep black eyes stood there staring at her. Perky recognized instantly that it was once Holly. She swung the stick, but it passed right through its intended target. The ghost, that was formerly Holly, grabbed Perky’s arm. It was ice cold and instantly, Perky’s arm was frozen from the hand to her shoulder. The chill continued through her body until she was frozen solid. The ghost disappeared and left the Perky Popsicle where it stood.

“Little shithead, beat me over the head will ya!” The small demon moved up next to the statue of Perky and she began to melt away. The second demon joined in and a minute later there was nothing left but a pile of liquid. The two demons joined hands and did a little dance in the puddle before moving on to try and find another victim.

BedrmiiZ, Calle_Kitten and AJW were now also trapped. They had made it to the area where the mausoleum once stood before the ground opened up, encircling them. BedrmiiZ backed up as far as she could and tried to run and jump over the opening. It appeared that she had it cleared easily, but when she was landing it opened wider and she fell down into the pit below.

Calle_Kitten and AJW watched as the pit grew wider and nearer to them. The mausoleum remains fell into the ground, the small patch of solid earth they stood on grew smaller and smaller until there was barely enough room for them. Then it stopped moving, they were trapped on the smallest island the world had ever seen. Around them was a 15-foot-wide gap that reeked with the smell of death.

GiftofSunshine and SneakyStormy stood in a remote area near the back corner of the cemetery. It was down an embankment enough that they could not see what was happening throughout the graveyard. They could see the people in the trees, but there was no direct path to get to them, so they stayed where they were.

LikestoTease, McGowan007 and PicturePerfect were relieved to see BedrmiiZ shoving a large piece of tree across the wide gap that surrounded them. They had no way of knowing that Beddy was now deceased, with the smoke that rose up along one side of the gap, the people in the trees could not see what was happening to warn them.

“Come on, hurry.” BedrmiiZ said smiling once the gap had been bridged.

LikestoTease successfully crossed the bridge first followed closely by PicturePerfect. The ground began to shake when McGowan was halfway across. A moan came from beneath her inside the gap. She tried to hurry but lost her footing in doing so. Her scream echoed throughout the war zone that once was a cemetery. LikestoTease and PicturePerfect turned away quickly, they couldn't watch as McGowan fell into oblivion.

“We have to get out of here.” LikestoTease said loudly and began to run away from the pit. PicturePerfect started to follow behind her but she was grabbed around the neck by BedrmiiZ's ghost and dragged backwards towards the outer wall of flame. LikestoTease turned and looked behind her, when she saw what was happening she stopped and started back towards the two women. “What are you doing?” She yelled.

“I think you need to worry about yourself.” BedrmiiZ growled back.

Before LikestoTease could get any closer or say anything else, BedrmiiZ began smashing PicturePerfect's head into a tombstone. She continued to slam her head down into it until the tombstone crumbled and there was nothing left of PicturePerfect's head but a crop of bloody hair and a caved in skull. LikestoTease stood stunned at what she had witnessed, it wasn't until Beddy looked up at her and said, “your turn”, that LikestoTease regained composure and turned to run.

She immediately tripped and fell and before she could get back up there was an enormous weight on her back. She felt the weight getting heavier and her body was jarred continually. She could not look behind her, her head was forced down into the ground, and she was completely helpless, as the weight grew heavier. Around her Kicknit, RagingThunder, McGowan007, Swampwitch57, Pammie and Trachelle's entities were dropping slabs of rock onto her back while BedrmiiZ held her head down. After several minutes and hundreds of pounds of rock, LikestoTease's body gave in. The

bones crushed with a loud cracking sound followed by a gush of blood and gore that shot out from all around the bottom of the rocks.

No one from the trees witnessed this murder. They were focused on the spectacle that was taking place near the back of the cemetery. PerkyOne's ghost was chasing the two little fire demons, beating them over the head with two clubs.

"Melt me?" She screamed at them. "I'll pound you back into the ground where you belong." She landed a solid blow to the top of LuvYaBaby's head and the little demon's body folded like an accordion with its head bouncing up and down. She stopped running and allowed the other demon to escape temporarily while she focused on the one she had clobbered.

Blow after blow she landed on the little demon while it screamed obscenities at her. "That's it, keep cussing me, I have eternity to pound on you." She screamed, while pulverizing the demon. Mercifully, the demon disappeared into thin air and Perky landed two blows into the ground. "Where'd you go? I'll find you!" She ran off in search of the demons, but came across GiftofSunshine and SneakyStormy instead.

She smiled at them viciously and ran towards them with the clubs held high above her. Gift and Tequila achieved only a step before she was on them and lowered the clubs on their heads. Simultaneously the two women fell to the ground, their heads caved in under the force of the blow.

From the trees nine people watched with horror and remorse, there was nothing they could do to save their friends. Eyes had now shifted towards Calle_Kitten and AJW still trapped on a tiny piece of ground, but their circumstances were getting worse as the ground they stood on lowered slowly into the abyss below.

"Just stay on the ground." AJW told Calle. "Maybe we have a chance as long as we don't fall."

"Okay." She agreed, clinging to the futile hope that he was right. After it had lowered down about ten feet however, that hope diminished as the ground around and above them began to close in.

It came nearer and nearer until it was just a few feet away all around, both decided it would be best to fall rather than be squashed by the earth closing in on them. First AJW, then Calle_Kitten, stepped off the small patch of ground and fell to the unknown depths below. Above them DeShadow's ghost appeared shaking his head, he knew they had found one of the safe areas but could not tell them that what they were experiencing was a bluff.

He watched as over twenty ghosts gathered at the base of the trees where all of the survivors now clung to hope. He shook his head sadly, knowing that they were doomed, the remaining safe areas were near the front of the cemetery, one being the deadfall, but they had made the grave error of bringing a dead person amongst them.

There were three trees that contained people, three in each. The one closest to the center of the graveyard was encircled first and Snicks' stood at the base while the other

ghosts stood back and watched. From her eyes flames shot forward and set the tree on fire. Looksie was the first to jump. She tried to get onto a branch at the tree next to her. JustJoe reached out his hands and tried to catch her, but she missed and fell to the ground below. Several ghosts quickly tore and clawed at her until very little remained.

The fire went quickly up into the tree. The flames trapped Maresy and CandySoSweet fifteen feet in the air. CandySoSweet was the first of the two to attempt jumping to safety. She jumped in the direction of Snickers and was ignited by more flames coming from Snickers' eyes. She hit the ground and began to roll around trying to put the fire out, but it was to no avail. Within minutes she laid dead, her skin had melted off and her skeleton was charred black.

Maresy watched in horror, the fire had spread upward and she was now at the very top of the tree with nowhere to go. "Here goes nothing." She yelled and jumped towards the next tree over, her hands grabbed hold of a branch and for a few seconds, it appeared that she had made it. Then the branch broke and she too fell amongst the vicious ghosts below and was destroyed.

In the next tree, JustJoe, RealNut and Minnie432000 watched helplessly as the three people died next to them. They turned their attention to the ground and the ghosts that now surrounded them. The leap to the remaining tree was impossible, only small branches protruded from it in their direction and wouldn't hold their weight if they did make it.

"If you have any ideas over there, now would be a good time to share them." Minnie432000 yelled to SayNO2Sanity, Paragod and Bobbi over in the last tree.

They all just shook their heads in response. "I think we're up shit creek without a paddle." Bobbi responded morbidly.

RealNut looked down at Trachelle standing just below her holding her severed head in her hands. "Look on the bright side, no one is using your head as a basketball." She told Trachelle.

Trachelle turned her head up in RealNut's direction. "Yeah, that makes this so much better, thanks for the encouragement." She responded.

The ghosts began slowly ascending the tree. The three stranded people climbed as high as they could and watched as BedrmiiZ, Dave, SneakyStormy, Calle_Kitten and McGowan007's ghosts drew nearer. On the ground below there were now four fire demons instead of just two, the two additional ones had the faces of Lacy and CandySoSweet. All danced around happily, hoping for a victim to fall to their death. Quickly the fire demon resembling Lacy turned her head and said, "DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT!" To PerkyOne's ghost who had snuck up behind her.

"Oops, sorry thought you were someone else." Perky lowered the clubs in her hands briefly then eyes her two targets and smiled.

"ARGH!" Stardust demon yelled and took off running.

"Shit, not again." LuvYaBaby's exclaimed and also took off.

While PerkyOne chased them and began banging on their heads she informed them that The Master had told her she could pound on them for eternity.

Back at the trees, BedrmiiZ's ghost had reached JustJoe. "Time to die, dear." She said smiling.

"Not by you." He responded and jumped. He stopped in mid-air and was hanging. Something had a hold of his ankle.

"You aren't getting away that easy." BedrmiiZ told him and began swinging him back and forth until he started banging head first into the tree. Then she slung him up into the air and when he came down, she split him in half length-wise with her hand. Immediately after his body passed her in two separate pieces, she disappeared.

Dave and Calle_Kitten had RealNut trapped. She had nowhere to go upward and knew very well what awaited her on the ground below. With all of her strength she leaped out towards the front of the cemetery. She managed to hit her target, a hole in the ground that dropped off into darkness and seemed to go on forever.

Minnie432000 watched RealNut's leap and decided of the choices of how to die, she too preferred that one. She steadied herself and leaped. To her dismay, she wasn't quick enough. SneakyStormy and McGowan007 foresaw what she was going to attempt and closed in on her quickly grabbing her feet just as she jumped.

They lifted out of the tree holding her, one on each of her feet. Up into the dark air they carried her and stopped after about 50 feet. "Make a wish!" They both yelled and flew in separate directions, ripping Minnie432000 in half as they did do. The second that Minnie was dead, both ghosts vanished into the night air.

Inside the tree, Dave and Calle_Kitten vanished also. The remaining ghosts now stood at the base of the final tree looking upward at SayNO2Sanity, Paragod and Bobbi, all of whom were at the very top of the 35-foot-high tree. A couple of them were about to go up after the remaining survivors, but DeShadow appeared with a better idea.

"Let's knock the tree over." He said.

"Awesome idea!" AJW's ghost agreed.

The eleven ghosts were all in agreement and began shoving back and forth on the tree. The roots began to come out of the ground and the tree was swaying back and forth. High above all three of the trapped people clung on to their branch for dear life. The tree was almost over when DeShadow gave it one last shove the other direction.

"NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO" The voice within the flames yelled out as the tree fell towards the fiery wall. DeShadow stood smiling while he watched the top of the tree clear the flames and catapulted the three people to safety beyond the cemetery boundaries.

"We're gonna pay for that." Mickey_Mouse's ghost said as the tree completed falling.

"No, I am." DeShadow said.

Crashing hard to the ground rendered SayNO2Sanity and Paragod unconscious on impact. Bobbi was farther from the branches that struck the ground and was thrown into a mound of dirt a few feet away from where the tree landed. She lay on her back and watched as the wall of flame went down into the ground. Each ghost faded and was gone. The last to go was PerkyOne and the two fire demons that she was mercilessly beating over the head. The only visible reminder of what had just happened remaining was the ghost of DeShadow. He was looking over at her and waving with a smile on his face. She waved back and watched as his ghost was surrounded in bright light and them lifted off the ground. She watched for as long as she could see before he faded into the sky.

She tried to move and grimaced, her leg was broken and she was fairly certain that her arm was also. From the tree she heard someone moaning and recognized it as Paragod.

“Paragod, you ok?” She asked.

“I’ve been better.” He moaned his reply. “Are we dead too?”

“No, the tree fell beyond the flames, we’re alive.”

“That would depend of your version of alive.” SayNO2Sanity muttered. His voice was also filled with agony. “What the hell are we going to tell the police? I swear officers, the devil surrounded us with fire and killed some of our friends and then their ghosts came back and killed more. We’ll be locked away in a padded room for life.”

“At this point, a padded room sounds pretty inviting to me.” Paragod sighed.

“As long as they don’t have a fireplace.” Bobbi added.

“Amen to that.” Paragod and SayNO2Sanity both agreed. In the distance they could hear the sounds of sirens getting closer, someone must have finally reported the fire.

THE END

From the author: I hope you enjoyed a Valentine’s Funeral as much as I enjoyed writing it. Well, ok, I hope you enjoy it MORE than I enjoyed writing it. ☺ If you’d like to see more of my work, my novel, Soul Destination is now available in softbound format. This is neither paperback nor hardback, it’s a 6” x 9” “paperback” that is more durable than the smaller ones. You can obtain a copy of Soul Destination at <http://www.bglocke.net/purchase.html> or by presenting this ISBN # 0-595-30930-5 at your local bookstore. Thanks to you all for reading my Iplay stories, see ya Halloween. ☺

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