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Life after Death

Harley Meets Truck

I DIDN'T REALLY know what I expected death to be like. Probably . . . or maybe . . . perhaps . . . I don't know! Dark, I guess, you know—like “bang!” and then it's over. Something like that. And I couldn't even imagine that I would die before I turned 20! But that's true rock 'n' roll, isn't it? “Live fast, die young?” Hell yes! Been there, done that! This is my story.

It was in the end of August when it happened. Like the true rock-'n'-roller I had been for years, I was riding that beautiful motorcycle of mine, fast, fast and faster still upon the road. People just couldn't stop staring, and I would smile and show my left middle finger to everyone who'd take the chance of having a second look. I probably looked like a maniac—I had grown my hair down to my waist, and it hadn't been washed for a week; my lips were painted red; my long, black leather jacket was smashing the air behind me; and I was screaming with excitement as I burned down the road. Yep. That's me. That's my Harley. And that's the truck . . . It was one big fucking truck—coming straight toward me—on the wrong side of the road. I had no time, neither to think nor react. That was the end for my dear motorcycle and for me, as well.

When I got back to my senses, I was standing in the middle of the road, which was now crowded with people. There were policemen, ambulance-personnel, firefighters, and lots

and lots of spectators, everywhere. The road had been shut down, and the big truck was lying in the middle of it. I made my way through the crowd and stopped to stare at the sad sight of my beloved Harley Davidson, completely smashed to pieces on the ground. All of a sudden, I saw myself being lifted into the ambulance to be taken to the hospital. Something told me, though, that it was too late for that.

Not until now did I dare to look at myself. It was not a pretty sight. There was blood all over me. I was definitely dead. And there seemed to be nothing I could do about it. My apartment wasn't far away, so I started walking home, and for once, nobody was staring at me.

As I slowly made my way through the living-room, I heard a very ironic sound — “Highway to Hell” — coming from my cell phone. After a moment of hesitation, I picked it up.

“Hello? . . . ”

“Miss Jane Cooper?” said an old, creaky voice on the other end.

“Um, yeah. . . . Who is this?”

Without taking notice of my question, the voice went on: “We expect you to appear at the Last Court of Law, tonight at 6:00 p.m. sharp. There the judge and the jury will decide your future. Any questions?”

I shook my head in disbelief. Great! I was dead and insane! “Yes! Um . . . how do I get there?”

“Don't worry, miss, we've got private drivers picking you up by limo . . . ”

“By limousine!” I interrupted, convinced that this had to be some kind of joke. “Can I have a black one, with a mini-bar in it?”

“Well . . . yes, I . . . I think we can see to that, yes.” The man, at least that's what I assumed it was, sounded like he had never gotten this question before, and it seemed to confuse him a bit.

“Excellent! Then, what more should I think about?” I asked.

“That's all, miss” said the man, “Except one thing — make sure to wear something decent in court.”

I looked down on my blood-stained jeans and torn up leather jacket. “Decent” would be the last word in the world to describe my outfit.

“But . . . I’m dead. I’m dead!!” I yelled at him.

“We know, miss. . . . We know.”

“Decent? . . . ” I repeated stupidly.

“That’s right, miss.”

“Fuck you!” I said to the receiver and dismissed the call.

I laughed to myself. “The Last Court of Law” . . . Ridiculous! I stared at my watch. After wiping off some blood-stains, I could see it was 5:30. This was absolutely crazy. I had to be dreaming. I walked to the window and pulled the curtains aside. Down there, parked next to the sidewalk, was a jet black limousine.

Doom’s Day and Judgment Night

“What the hell?” I almost ripped down the curtains in pure surprise. Breathing heavily, I stepped aside from the window and leaned my back against the wall. My mind seemed to suffer from an inability to deliver longer sentences. “This is crazy. I’m just dreaming. This is crazy!” were the only thoughts running through my head.

After a minute or so, I dared to take a look down at the street again. When the cell phone rang for the second time, I nearly jumped out of my boots. I pushed the button and pressed the phone to my ear without saying a word.

“I believe our limousine is waiting for you already, Miss Cooper” said the same creaky voice as before. “You better go down there, or you will be late for court.”

I couldn’t say I was scared for my life, since I seemed to be short of said product. Neither could I claim to have my heart beating up my throat, because, honestly, I felt no pulse at all! But at least some sort of nervousness had followed me into the afterlife—or whatever this was called—because I had a strange feeling in my gut, as I turned around and walked out my front door.

In a minute, I was standing outside my apartment in the bright sunlight. The driver was already out of the limousine, holding up a door for me.

I walked up to the car and took a closer look at him. He wore an outfit you'd expect from any limousine driver. He looked to be in his thirties, with kind brown eyes and a pointed beard. But the oh-so-normal impression I first got of him, abruptly ended, when I realized that his feet were the feet of a goat, and that a short, furry tail stuck out from the back of his pants.

"Go' day, ma'am," he said with a merry Texas-dialect. "Miss Cooper, Jane, ain't it?" He gave me a critical look. "Ye look like a mess. What happened to ye?"

"They killed both me and my Harley," I said. "Don't wanna talk 'bout it." I took a step closer to the limo and took a peek through the open door. "There's a bar, right?"

"Course, ma'am," the driver answered. "All the booze ye can drink!"

"Perfect," I said and stepped inside. "I really need something damn strong." As the driver started the engine and the car rolled out on the street, I began my examination of the promised mini-bar. After finding numerous strange bottles of liquor I had neither seen nor heard of before, I started tapping on the window behind the driver.

"Hey, buddy," I yelled at him, "don't you have anything stronger here? Like Jack Daniels?" Through the dark glass I could see the driver snap his fingers, and voilà! A big bottle full of the amber-colored drink appeared in my left hand. I shouted, "Thanks, mate!" and opened it. I let the whiskey flow down my throat, and—oh man!—it felt just like it did when I was alive! When the driver through a microphone suggested some music, and as the drums began to beat, we entered the highway.

After some time, I looked at the watch again. It was 5:45. I was just wondering where this "Last Court of Law" was, and how we would get there in time, when the driver politely asked all passengers to fasten our seatbelts and remain calm. I realized that there were no seatbelts, but it was too late. The same second as "Kickstart My Heart" be-

gan to roar throughout the car, the driver kickstarted the limousine. I found myself lying on the floor, wondering how it was possible for a vehicle of this size to travel at a speed like this on a highway like this. Crawling on all fours to the nearest window for a look, I got the answer. We weren't even on the road anymore. The car was racing in an unfathomable number of miles per hour, at least thirty feet above the ground! Slowly, it started to tilt upwards, and all I could do was to hang on tight.

We raced on for a few minutes, but soon the limousine lowered its speed, and everything got very dark outside, and I was just going to ask what was going on when the car finally stopped. The driver got out and opened my door, and I stepped out into what looked like a huge garage.

"We gotta hurry now, ma'am" said the driver. "Just follow me." We reached an elevator not far from the limo, and as we got in, the driver pushed the button for the tenth floor. The elevator jumped and started to rise at a speed that would have pressed me down to the floor if I hadn't held on. I felt a big relief when I could finally step out of it, but I was walking like a drunkard, and almost fell when I turned around toward the driver.

"Sorry, Cooper" he laughed, "but ye gotta go in there by yerself. 'Tis just down the corridor, behind the big doors o'er there." He pointed down a dark hallway. "They're waiting."

I sighed and turned in the direction he had pointed out. The hallway seemed to be a mile long, but after some time I reached the doors. "This is it, girl" I told myself. "Go for it!"

I pushed the huge doors open and entered the courtroom. It was a big old-fashioned hall full of people, and everyone was staring straight at me. Showing off my greatest smile, I walked past the listeners sitting on each side of the gangway, toward an empty chair in the middle of the room, which I assumed was meant for me.

I sat down, put one leg over the other, and looked around. The audience was sitting behind and on either side of me. In front of me was a large table, where I figured the judge would be sitting, but also four smaller chairs for an unknown reason.

Suddenly the doors behind the table opened, and everyone stood up. I had never been in court, but I supposed that I should rise as well. On the other hand, this seemed to be like no other court on earth. I stared in awe at a tiny man, probably only three feet tall, dragging a very large hammer behind him as he entered the room, and he used the chair to climb up on top of the table. The man straightened his gray wig, adjusted his thick round glasses, and poked the microphone with his hammer to see if it was on. Then he spoke in a deep voice, "Welcome to the Last Court of Law, tonight judging Miss Jane Christina Cooper."

"Hi," I said, waving the fingers on right hand in a gesture of greeting.

The judge stared at me, then on his hammer, back at me, and then on the audience. "You may sit down" he said. "Not you!" he added sharply as I started to do the same.

"But, sir, this chair is mine, isn't it?" I asked as politely as I could. "I mean, if it's not here for me to sit on, then what purpose does it serve?"

The audience started to look around and whisper to each other. The judge stared at me. "Are you trying to be funny, Miss Cooper?" he asked strictly.

"Not at all, your honor" I answered in a serious voice, but the more I thought of it, the more I smiled. "But I was just thinking . . ."

"That is enough!" the judge yelled, and jammed the hammer down on the table with surprising strength and speed. "Bring in the jury, please!" he called.

The same door as the one the judge had entered through opened up again. In walked four strange, and very different characters. First came a very tall man dressed in black jeans and white shirt; his long brown hair flowing free over his shoulders. After him came a woman all dressed in white, with bright red hair in locks that reached all the way down to her waist. Behind them walked two very handsome men who seemed to be in their early twenties, just a few years older than me. The first had long jet-black hair, and carried a sword in his belt, visible when his long dark coat swept aside. The other one was blond, topless, and beside

the black leather pants, he bore nothing more than a quiver of arrows and a bow across his back.

I just stared at them as they walked up to the chairs and sat down, facing me and the audience. The judge let me know that these four people would act as both jury and prosecutors for this trial. I said nothing. “Just focus on breathing,” I thought to myself. “Be quiet, be calm. Damn it, am I not getting an attorney?” With a forced smile, I looked at the judge. His face didn’t reveal a thing. Then the questioning began.

“So . . .” said the tall guy, “what has your main belief in life been? I mean, have you believed in any religion of sorts?”

“You mean like the religion of Heavy Metal, with the three commandments: sex, drugs and rock-’n’-roll?” I countered with a grin.

He smiled and closed his eyes, “Yeah . . . something like that . . .”

“Do you consider yourself as a good person or an evil person?” the woman asked me.

“Well, that depends. I guess I can be a pretty nice girl, if I’m in the mood for it and nobody pisses me off. But wake me up before 10 a.m. on a Sunday morning, and I’ll kill somebody,” I smirked at the memory of a friend of mine once getting punched in the nose for trying said act.

“While still alive,” said the young man with the sword, “did you have any special plans for yourself? Any idea of what the meaning of your life could be?”

“Let’s see,” I didn’t have to think too hard on this one. “I was going to be a great rock star,” I told him. After all, that was in fact the one thing I struggled so hard to fulfill.

“Did you have a boyfriend?” the blond guy asked with a teasing smile, and the black-haired one beside him closed his eyes and sighed.

“Yes! I was engaged to that motorcycle!” I exclaimed. “We had even set a date for the wedding!” He raised his eyebrows. “Alright, I confess. I really loved that guitar. It was my intention to marry that one, too. I mean, who doesn’t love an Ironbird?”

“Come on, lady!” the blond boy laughed. “Did you or didn’t you?”

“No,” I said with a sigh, “no, I didn’t.”

The four gathered around the judge’s table and started to speak to each other in low voices. I could barely hear anything, save a few lines here and there. “I think I’ll have to take her, honey,” the man with the brown hair said to the woman. “No, please, let her go with us!” the man with the sword begged. After arguing a few minutes, they all signed a paper which they then handed to the judge. He straightened his glasses once more and cleared his throat before he finally spoke.

“Miss Jane Christina Cooper! Tonight in this Last Court of Law, your destiny has been settled.” I watched the hammer falling in slow motion. “You are going . . . to Hell.”