

# **The Other Side**

*A monologue*

*by*  
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# The Other Side

**Plain stage with chair centre stage. A man enters. He is early middle-aged, dressed casually. He sits before addressing the audience.**

Good evening. Nice to see you all. Thank you for coming. Now, I'd like to tell you a story. One that you've almost certainly never heard before. I want to tell you what happened to me on the day that I died. That surprised you, didn't it? It certainly surprised me. Anyway, here goes.

I remember the exact moment when it happened, the moment I died. I didn't, at the time, know that I'd died, of course but I do remember, very clearly, hearing this voice saying, 'He's gone'. And I remember thinking 'Who's gone? Where've they gone?' Then there was a second voice, a sadder voice, 'Oh dear, not another one. That's the third death tonight.' 'Death?' I thought. 'Death? Who's dead? Anyone I know?' Well, it obviously wasn't me because, 'cos I could still hear them. And you can't be dead if you can still hear people talking, now can you? Stands to reason. Mind you, I couldn't see them and it did seem to be getting darker. Then, suddenly, everything went black and there was just silence. That was scary!

So, besides panic, what else do you do when you find yourself in some strange, inexplicable black place, surrounded by silence? Where was I! What was this place? Could have been a broom cupboard for all I knew. I tried to have a look around but there was nothing to see. Absolutely nothing. Just blackness. And then I realised. It probably was me they'd been talking about, and I really was dead! Like that proverbial parrot, I was no more! I was a bit shocked, I can tell you. Well, who wouldn't be? I mean, this hadn't been on my agenda for today, or any day soon, come to that! I had things to do, important things. I was going to renew the car insurance, get some petrol for the mower, fix that bloody guttering before it rained again. And all of a sudden, none of that mattered any more. They'd all become... someone else's problems.

So why was I dead? That's what I wanted to know. What had happened? Why was I here, stuck here in this... cupboard, couldn't see anything, didn't seem able to move. But then I suppose that's not surprising if you're dead. And then I really became aware of the silence. Total silence. And I mean total, utter silence. Not a sound. Nothing. No bird song. No traffic noise. No wind rustling the trees. I suppose that's where those sayings come from, is it? You know, as silent as the grave and deathly quiet. Well, I can tell you, it was both of those things.

Now, before I forget. We are all told, aren't we, that when we die, we see our whole life flash before our eyes. Well, let me tell you - that does not happen. No. One moment you're there, the next you're somewhere else. And there is absolutely nothing in between. Trust me. I know.

So there was I, in the dark and the silence and I thought, OK, so I'm dead. What happens now? Well, I waited and I listened and I watched the darkness, expecting... I don't know what, something. Anything. But there wasn't anything. Nothing at all. And do you know, of all the things to pop into my head at that moment? The lines from that old Peggy Lee song. Remember the one? Where she sings 'Is this all there is?' And I thought, well, if this is all there is, it's going to get bloody boring. Especially if it's going to be like this for Eternity. Now I have no idea how long Eternity lasts but I hope it doesn't go on forever.

And another thing. We all believe, don't we, that when we get to the other side, we'll see this long tunnel stretching ahead of us, with a warm, welcoming light at the end. And we walk unerringly, full of confidence and hope and expectation, towards the light and suddenly, everything's lovely. The proverbial light at the end of the tunnel. **(Brief pause.)** Yeah. Right. I don't know who came up with that one, but prepare to be disillusioned. There was no tunnel! There was certainly no light at the end of it! Well, having said there was no tunnel, I suppose there might have been, but without the light at the end of it, you'd never know, would you? Because you wouldn't know where to look. Because it was so dark! No. If I were you, don't expect the tunnel and you won't be disappointed. I mean, come on, it's bad enough being dead, but being dead and disappointed all on the same day, well that's over-egging it, if you ask me.

So picture the scene, if you will. There's good old dead me, squashed into some cupboard somewhere, hanging around in the blackness, waiting for something to happen. It was all terribly depressing. I was not impressed with this being dead business, you know, not one little bit. If you want my advice, best avoid dying if you can. It's not all it's cracked up to be.

Now I have to say that I had no idea how long all this... nothing-ness lasted. Could have been hours, days, months, centuries, who knows? There was just no way of telling and for someone whose whole life had been ruled by the clock, I was struggling to come to terms with that. When I was alive, time was important. Well, it seemed important, at the time... if you'll forgive the pun. Time to get up, time to go to bed. Time for this, time for that, but in truth, there never really is enough time, is there? Well, for me, there certainly wasn't. So here I was stuck who knows where, for who knows how long, in this timeless, solitary state of silence and darkness.

To stop getting too overcome by it all, I told myself to look on the brightside and find some sort of consolation in all of this. And, believe it or not, I did. And what was that? Well, I'll tell you. Thinking! Having all this time on your hands gives you plenty of opportunity to do some thinking. And as my brain seemed to be the only functioning part I had, thinking was about the only thing I was capable of doing anyway. And when all is said and done, it's always been a good way of passing the time, hasn't it? Thinking and pondering life's inponderables. It takes your mind off whatever may be troubling you. You know the sort of things, the big issues, like why am I here? Where is here? Why me? I pondered all of these things, but I didn't reach any substantial conclusions to any of them, except that I was dead. But then, I suppose that's a conclusion in itself, isn't it?

So I thought I'd best to turn my mind to other matters. Like, remembering the all the good times, the good old days, you know, the days before I was dead. The days when there was light and sound and laughter and music and people talking and dancing and making love and... Ah now, that would have been nice, wouldn't it? To make love, one last time.

**(Brief pause.)** But I suppose the last time was the last time, wasn't it? But of course, you never see it like that, do you, not at that particular time anyway. No, your mind is usually on other things, like, how did I get this lucky and I wonder when we can we do it again? Well, in my case, to answer to that one seemed to be never. And then you start to remember all the other little things you could do then but you can't do now. Or ever again, come to that. And that did get me depressed, so I stopped thinking about that sort of thing and thought about all the people I'd known instead.

And I wondered if anyone was missing me. What if no-one was? Just think of that. What if someone says Oh, haven't seen Jerry for a while, anyone know where he is and everyone just shrugs and says no and they move on to talk about something else. As if I never existed. That's awful! Can you imagine that? If no-one gives a monkey's about you? You'd begin to wonder why, wouldn't you? I mean, were you that insignificant? That boring? Didn't you make an impact on anyone's life? But there's always someone, though... isn't there? Got to be, surely. So I racked my brain to come up with someone. Now, I didn't have a wife or kids, which, I suppose, under the circumstances, was a blessing. So I had to look elsewhere.

And that's when this face came to me. This girl's face. The girl who worked in the office next door to mine, doing something with charts and tables and graphs and stuff. No idea what, but whenever I passed her door, she always looked up and smiled at me. Now, Trevor, well, you don't know Trevor, do you? No, of course not. We worked together. Well, he reckoned she fancied me. He said she'd been asking about me, you know the usual sort of stuff. Like, was I married, was I seeing anyone?