

# The shrewsbury cemetery



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

There could not have been a gloomier day than the one in which we buried Granny. She had finally succumbed to the cruelty of Father Time and although her death was expected, it still managed to stir up emotions of disbelief and misery throughout our family. I couldn't help thinking that she'd always be there through the years, but the heartbreaking reality began to set in as we'd gathered on that bitter, murky, damp afternoon. The Shrewsbury Cemetery was a vast, rambling, long neglected, concluding resting place for the dead residents of this town, dating back a hundred years or so.

Its irregular terrain was speckled with clusters of small hills and great scary trees whose enormous branches whistle an eerie song as the tough winter winds blew all the way through them. Headstones that were centuries old bore the barely legible, climate beaten inscriptions of the names of those dead, while floppy flowers ornamented the graves of those souls fortunate enough to have been remembered in recently by friends and family. Its ancient, corroded, rusty iron gates had given in to the cruel elements, and on gusty days swung back and forth, to a recognizable, rusty melody.

The cemetery had been closed many years back, to the horror of our town's elderly, who had hoped to be left there surrounded by old friends and relatives, when their rendezvous with fate would come. But it was politics as usual at the town hall in the city centre, and the board of which I was a member, had come to the decision that any allocated money for upkeep of Shrewsbury cemetery would be better spent elsewhere. So the cemetery was closed, and the years went by and the weeds grew taller, and not a single penny was spent.

Being a board member, I was able to pull enough strings to get unique consent to honour Granny's final desire. She had requested to be buried next to her husband, our grandfather, who had been killed in a freak road accident forty years ago. Granddad, the tall, handsome man who I only knew from fading photographs, was laid to rest on a picturesque hillside, once considered Shrewsbury's most awe-inspiring spot. After much arguing there I was, standing in the fresh rainfall, the once splendid area was now covered with years of neglect.

I couldn't help noticing the stares I got from everyone as we stood in the downpour. Did they think that I could have done more to preserve it? Sure they did. Could I have stopped the allocated finances from going elsewhere and continued the upkeep of this place? Of course I could have. But it was never vital to me until this unpleasantly cold moment, and I managed to hold my head down, beneath the umbrellas of the huddled assembly of mourners all dressed in black. Nature was calling loudly out to me and I left the group and headed for an area behind a wall to relieve myself.

As I stood, the rain seemed to slowly dissolve and the clouds disappear and a very deep chill came over me. I picked my head up and began to turn around, responding to the eerie mood that something was very wrong. I turned towards the funeral march and I was worried to see that the entire group had vanished! They had all left, left me all alone. Not a single person had stayed behind, and all that was left was Granny's open grave, her coffin already seated at its floor, a colossal stack of soil lying beside it. How completely strange this was, I thought as a mist began to work its way throughout the area.

How could they have all gone and all this have happened in such a short time? There were no cars left to take me out of this dismal situation and it was a long way out to walk. I turned and as I began to take my first slow steps I could sense the frosty, icy grip of a hand on my leg as it pulled me back! I yelled as I fell face down into the muddy mountain of earth. I fought and kicked and I was too petrified to look behind me! I grabbed the thick, long weeds and was able to pull myself up from inside the grave as I shook the lethal grip from my leg.

I was on the surface again and I rapidly sprung to my feet and I ran and under no circumstances would look back at whatever wickedness was behind me. Frightened beyond my wildest nightmare, I continued to run until I was out of breath and I tripped on the damp weeds, face down. I was hysterical and as I tried to breathe, I told myself that this could not be happening. I tried in vain to convince myself as I picked my head up from the rain-drenched earth, only to be even more shocked at what I was about to see.

They came gradually out of every place of the cemetery as they enclosed me. They were the undead, the residents of this eternal neighbourhood. Men, women, and children decaying, skeleton like corpses, dressed in their tattered burial clothes. Their lifeless, murky, cold eyes, set in their decomposing faces, seemed to stare irritably at me as I managed to get to my feet. Wobbly and frightened beyond belief, I looked for the way out, but they little by little moved in closer. I backed away as they advanced, and I fell down over some untamed grass.

Hitting my head on a colossal tree root, I shouted out in pain, but my screams were silent. Looking up, I could see them slowly moving forward, surrounding me. Sensing that this was my very last chance to escape this awful horror. As I tried to stand I could noticed that my once supple legs had turned to lead and every one of my actions were carried out in a sluggish motion. They came closer and although they did not speak, their message was deafening. They screamed of their sorrow with me, and my judgment to discard the place they would call home for an eternity.

They shouted of their annoyance and their inability to rest in peace until their dignity was restored. I managed to get to my knees, holding my hands over my ears, and I screamed out for pity and I cried. I had finally come to understand the fault of my self-centred ways. I tried to express this to them, but their rage continued at its deafening pace, and I finally rose to my feet. Running as fast as I could, I proceeded to dart right through the crowd of them. I could see the tarnished aged gates and my way out of this nightmare in the distance.

I could feel my heart throbbing almost out of my chest as I reached the gates, only to find myself on the drenched, grassy ground again. Pushing myself up with all the strength I had left, I crawled to the gates, looking behind as they still followed me. Grabbing the huge, iron gate, I tried to push it open, but the years of neglect had frozen it shut. They are coming for me and I am stuck in a situation brought on by my own selfishness! powerless and scared, I slid down the dripping, rusted iron onto the ground where they would meet up with me.

I screamed out as loud as I could as they grabbed at me with their frozen, cold, claws I was woken up by the loud, disturbing sound of the alarm clock and the tugging of my wife in an attempt to awaken me from a terrible dream. " Come on Honey, time to get up! " had never sounded sweeter and more welcomed than on this day. I sprang up and swiftly realized that I had returned to reality. Covered in a profuse, cold sweat, I looked around the room, appreciating every tiny item in it.

My heart was still pounding as Patricia, my wife told me of the screams that emitted from me during my expedition into that nightmarish sleep, and the fact that we were going to attend Granny's funeral that afternoon.

Reassured, I gradually crawled out of the bed. I was back home, but I could not fail to remember an instant of the startling journey I had just embarked on, or its significance. I sat on the edge of the bed, perplexed at the sight of the dried mud on the soles of my feet! I rapidly put on a pair of slippers before Patricia could notice.

An imperative message was delivered to me and I would take note of of it. Granny's memorial service came and went without an occurrence. Amidst all the stares and muted remarks, I stood there in the cold rain, mourning this great woman and observing the promise I had made to her and the other late residents of Shrewsbury the night before. Things were about to change at the town hall. When I return there, I was enjoyably astonished by the effortlessness at which I was able to influence the other board members to support an individual budget for the upkeep and maintenance of Shrewsbury cemetery.

A plan to expand the cemetery was even in the works before long. I had kept my promise to Granny and the others and I was entirely content. A couple of months after that alarming, paranormal encounter of mine, Shrewsbury Cemetery had undergone a radical transformation for the better. The new budget was being very well spent on full landscaping, upkeep and maintenance. A revitalization was slowly but surely taking place, and this once stunning piece of paradise was being restored to its original splendour.

Then one day on a fine, summer morning as I happened to drive by Shrewsbury cemetery, I felt a bizarre urge to park my car alongside it. As I strode over to its waist high, cobblestone wall, I looked out into this gorgeous, calm, emerald paradise. The tidily trimmed grass formed a neat, green layer around newly polished headstones, with fresh colourful flowers. The once terrifying trees now sang a comforting song as the light summer breezes blew tenderly through their thick foliage, and the remote echo of lawn mowers reminded me of my serious pledge.

As I gazed, the hum of the lawnmowers slowly vanished and I was astonished to hear the lovely sound of a charming piece of music, coming softly from behind the large oaks. Then to my amazement, came the breathtaking vision of a beautiful, young woman dressed in a dazzling, pale dress. She was with another spirit, a handsome, young man in a dark suit. Together they danced superbly as the music played. I squinted and rubbed my eyes excitedly, the more I watched them dance, the more familiar they had become. It wasn't long before I would I realized who this charming couple was.

Grandma danced with Grandpa, the true love of her life. They had appeared in pristine form, so youthful and full of life. As they danced, the music was drowned out by the sound of soft applause, which seemed to grow louder as I turned in its direction. There was a crowd of gleaming, calm souls closed in on the lovely couple as they finished their dance. They were the deceased residents of Shrewsbury, the once sour ghosts were happy. They clapped and cheered as the couple took their bows. I hung my head down as the tears ran down my face.

They were content now and this was their way of saying so. By the time I had picked my head back up, the applause grew even louder, and I opened my teary eyes to a sight that I will never forget. The whole crowd of happy peaceful souls, including Grandma and Grandpa, had turned in my direction and was applauding me! They cheered and they clapped, they were truly happy and at peace, and so was I. I rose up from my bow as the applause grew softer and they were gone, returning to their still, endless rest. The soft symphony was gone now too, replaced by the sounds of the lawn mowers.