FOR ALL ETERNITY
By Debbie Lannen

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SYNOPSIS: A couple visits a funeral home to make future arrangements. It's good to be prepared. Eternity is a long time.

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(1 female, 1 male, 1 either)

MS. TULANE (f/m) ......................... Owner of Tulane Funeral and Crematory Services. (27 lines)
GLADYS MECHUM (f) ...................... Southern elderly woman. (26 lines)
JONATHON MECHUM (m) ............... Elderly husband of Gladys. (3 lines)

SETTING: Reception office at Tulane Funeral and Crematory Services.

PROPS

☐ Brochures
☐ Notepad
☐ Checkbook/pen
☐ Extra check
AT RISE: GLADYS and JONATHON enter and are greeted by MS. TULANE.

MS. TULANE: Welcome to Tulane Funeral and Crematory Service. My name is Ms. Tulane. How may I be of assistance?

JONATHON begins to speak but GLADYS interrupts.

GLADYS: Well, My name is Gladys. Gladys Mechum and this is my husband, Jonathon. We need to make arrangements.

MS. TULANE: Mr. and Mrs. Mechum, I am so sorry for your loss.

GLADYS: Loss? Oh no sweetie. No one's dead yet. (Laughs.)

JONATHON rolls his eyes.

MS. TULANE: I'm sorry, when you said arrangements, I thought someone in your family had passed away.

GLADYS: Nope, not yet, but the day is still young. You never know. Right Jonathon? (Pokes him in the side with elbow.) Oh, come on, relax. We got years left. Don't be so skiddish about this place. (To MS. TULANE.) He really didn't want to come here today but I told him, “Jonathon, we need to make plans. What happens if I drop dead and we don't have any plans?”

JONATHON again rolls his eyes and looks at MS. TULANE.

GLADYS: I told him, they can't just stick us in the ground if we don't have plans. You know, I knew a couple once. The husband just dropped over dead at the sink. He was havin' his midnight snack. You know, eatin' over the sink like guys do. Well, one minute he was eating leftover meatloaf and the next (Snaps fingers.) gone. Just like that. And you know the worst part. He had no plans. Nothin'. No casket, no flowers, no music, no nuthin'. Not gonna be like that for my Jonathon and me. No siree. We are gonna have everything all set. That's why we came. Right Jonathon?

JONATHON takes a deep breath and lets it out.
MS. TULANE: Well, we are certainly glad you are thinking ahead. We can help you plan everything so that when the time does come, the surviving spouse doesn't have the burden of making spur of the moment decisions. It will all be planned ahead of time and we here at Tulane Funeral Home and Crematory Services can make your final wishes a beautiful reality. Won't you please have a seat and we can go over some of your details?

ALL sit at desk. MS. TULANE puts brochures on the table.

MS. TULANE: First, let me go over some of the plans we have to offer you. We—

GLADYS: (Cuts off MS. TULANE.) —That won't be necessary sweetie. I have it all picked out. (Takes a notepad out of her purse.) My first question, do you carry those Costco caskets? I look at them every time Jonathon and I go shoppin'. I just love that taupey colored one with the roses on the side. I have this peachy colored dress that I plan to wear. I think I will look just beautiful. And I know Jonathon would look wonderful in the greyish colored one. You know, the one with the little crosses on the corners.

MS. TULANE: (Takes a brochure out.) I think this is what...

GLADYS: (Grabs brochure.) That's it! Look Jonathon. I knew they would carry them! This is the one I was telling you you would look wonderful in. I think that dark blue suit that you wore to your sister's wedding would look perfect against the silver satin. (To MS. TULANE.) Don't you think so? I keep tellin' Jonathon that he should wear that suit one of the times we go shoppin'. Then he could kind of stretch out next to the casket on display in the Costco store and we could see how he's going to look. I don't think they would mind. Do you?

MS. TULANE: I'm not sure they would appreciate you laying down next to their display.

GLADYS: Well, how are you goin' to know if he is gonna look right. I mean, when you buy a car, you get inside it. You try it out. I mean, it's not like we are askin' to lay down inside of the display. It's too small anyway. I just want to make sure his dark blue suit is the right one to choose. I mean, it is for all eternity, isn't it? Right Jonathon. Wouldn't you just feel awful if you were wearin' the
wrong suit for all eternity? And I know I would never forgive myself. I would have that image of you, layin' there in the wrong suit. Why I would just die!

**MS. TULANE:** I don't think you have to go try out the casket. I am sure you have impeccable taste and will select the perfect suit for your husband to wear.

**GLADYS:** Well, aren't you nice. *(To JONATHON.)* Isn't she nice, Jonathon. *(To MS. TULANE.)* You are so nice. Then it's settled. Those are the two we want.

**MS. TULANE:** Perfect. One Blissful Serenity for the lady.

**GLADYS:** *(With closed eyes.)* Blissful Serenity.

**MS. TULANE:** And Peaceful Mist for the gentle...

**GLADYS:** Peaceful what?

**MS. TULANE:** Peaceful Mist.

**GLADYS:** Oh no, that won't do.

**MS. TULANE:** I don't understand. Peaceful Mist is the one in this brochure. It's the same one you saw...

**GLADYS:** You are not puttin' my Jonathon in somethin' that sounds like he's gonna have a soggy bottom for all eternity. No, no, no.

**MS. TULANE:** Mrs. Mechum, that is just the name. This is the exact one you see every week when you go shopping.

**GLADYS:** Nope, not havin' my Jonathon layin' there and all I'll be thinkin' about as I gaze at his peaceful face is, “I wonder if it's soakin' through to his underwear. Can you imagine. layin' there feelin' like you was layin' on a damp mattress. Nope, we gotta find a different one. Right Jonathon?

_JONATHON starts to say something but, as usual, is cut off._

**GLADYS:** Never mind that now. I'll take these brochures and find something else. But you will match the price from Costco, right? You do price match, don't you? I mean, all the stores are doin' it. Wal-Mart, Kmart, why even Food Emporium although I never shop there. They are too pricy for my pocketbook.

**MS. TULANE:** We will work with you Mrs. Mechum. I am sure we will find something that will satisfy your needs.

**GLADYS:** And go with Jonathon's blue suit. Don’t forget that. It has to go with Jonathon's blue suit.
MS. TULANE: Yes. Definitely. Now, what about the vault. *(She reaches down to get another brochure from her desk.)* We have...

GLADYS: Oh, sweetie, we won't need no vault. No, no, no. Jonathon and I are going to be cremated. Isn't that right Jonathon?

Again, JONATHON can't get a word in.

MS. TULANE: Oh, I'm sorry. I just assumed since you wanted special caskets that you would want a special vault and plot for your final resting places.

GLADYS: So I can lay in the ground and have dogs, cats, wild animals crap all over me? Nooo thank you sweetie. I have had enough of that during my lifetime. I don't need it for all eternity.

At this point, JONATHON begins to sink in his chair.

MS. TULANE: Well, what do you have in mind?

GLADYS: Well first you will put us in that fancy room at the front of your funeral home. Not that tiny little one in the back. I was in that one a few months ago when my dear friend Agnes passed. You remember her, don't you Jonathon? *(Turns and runs her fingers through his hair.)* She just adored you. I'm sure she was jealous when I snagged you and she didn't. *(Turns back to MS. TULANE.)* We were in high school. Jonathon asked me to senior prom. She was so jealous. I thought she was goin' to poke my eyes out. *(Turns back to JONATHON.)* Remember that dear? Remember our senior prom. You looked so handsome in your blue suit. *(Turns back to MS. TULANE.)* Oh not the blue suit he will wear for this occasion. He's put on a few pounds since high school *(Laughs.)* Well haven't we all.

MS. TULANE: All right. I will make sure you are in the Angel Room in the front.

GLADYS: Perfect. Isn't that perfect Jonathon? The Angel Room. Sounds so heavenly. *(Sighs.)* Anyway, just lay me out, or Jonathon, whoever goes first, in the Angel Room for one day only. Not two, not three. If'n my friends and family can't get here on time, then screw 'em. They will miss the best roast chicken...
luncheon they will have ever had. Oh, I got that all arranged too. You won't have to worry about none of that.

By this time, MS. TULANE is beginning to wonder about GLADYS and especially JONATHON.

MS. TULANE: Fine, I'm glad to hear that. Now, since you are to be cremated (Reaches for another brochure.) We have lovely urns. Why don't you take a look and see if you see anything that you like.

GLADYS thumbs quickly through brochure.

GLADYS: Oh no. these won't due. They are all too small.
MS. TULANE: Too small. Mrs. Mechum, I assure you, these urns are the perfectly sized for a person’s cremains. Then we have them specially sealed for you. You can keep your loved one with you. Close by you for the rest of your days.
GLADYS: Sealed? Why, no, it can't be sealed. You need to be able to get it open.

JONATHON sinks lower into his chair

MS. TULANE: Open? Why would you want to be able to get it open?
GLADYS: Why? Why to get the other one in, of course.
MS. TULANE: Other one?
GLADYS: Yes the other one. Jonathon and I are goin’ to spend our eternity together. Put us both in that one urn, shake us up a bit and we are good to go together to our Heavenly reward. (Sits a moment staring heavenward.) So, we need a large urn with a screw top. Do you have any of those?

MS. TULANE looks to JONATHON who now seems to be pleading with her with his eyes.

MS. TULANE: I am sure I can find something like that. I will need to research it a bit, but I am sure I can find something.
GLADYS: Alrighty then. See Jonathon. I told you, Tulane's was the place to come to. I just knew they would understand. Understand my wantin' to be with you for all eternity. So, (Takes checkbook out and writes check while she rambles on.) I am prepared to leave you a deposit of $50. That way you can lock in our prices. Wouldn't want things to be goin' up. I mean, we aren't going to be needing this place for ages, but better to lock in our savings now. Right Jonathon? Here you go. (Hands MS. TULANE the check.) Oh, do you have a restroom I could use? That coffee I had at breakfast is just runnin' through me like a racehorse at the Kentucky Derby.

MS. TULANE: Yes, down that door and to the left.

GLADYS: I'll be right back Jonathon. Don't worry. I ain't leavin' you for a long time.

GLADYS exits. MS. TULANE and JONATHON sit looking at each other. He takes a check from his pocket and hands it to MS. TULANE.

MS. TULANE: (Before looking at check.) No, Mr. Mechum. I only need one check for the deposit. (Opens check.) Mr. Mechum, this is a check made out to cash for $5,000.

JONATHON: (Speaks for the first time, pleading as if for his life.) Pleeesease! Pleeesease! Take it.

MS. TULANE: Mr. Mechum, I don't understand.

JONATHON: I have spent the last 42 years with that woman. (Mimicking.) 'Isn't that right Jonathon. Don't touch that Jonathon. Do you want to wear your white shirt or your blue shirt today, Jonathon? Let's go for a drive, Jonathon. Open the window, Jonathon. It's too cold. Close the window, Jonathon. I cannot take it anymore. Please, I am asking you, no I am begging you. Don't put me with her for all eternity. I have lived my Hell on Earth. (Beginning to whimper a bit.) Please let me go to my reward without her.

MS. TULANE: I understand but I can’t accept...

JONATHON: (Looking a bit crazy.) Yes you can! Yes you can! No one needs to know. Please I am begging you. Just use some litter from a cat box. She will never know the difference. I'll even drop a bag off so you have it ready when the time comes. Take the
money and know you are sending me to my rest knowing I will really be getting some rest. Please!

GLADYS enters the room; MS. TULANE hides the check.

GLADYS: That is the nicest bathroom. So clean. And those breath mints on the sink are a nice touch. I don't need people leanin' over me with last night's onions still waftin' out of their mouth. Well, I think we are all set. Jonathon, lets' go. I feel so much better knowin' we have made our arrangements. Mingled together for all eternity. Thank you so much, Ms. Tulane. Hopefully we won't be seein' you for a very long time, right Jonathon? (She takes JONATHON'S arm and guides him to the door.)

As they exit, he glances back at MS. TULANE who is standing behind her desk holding the check. He hesitates, MS. TULANE smiles and holds the check up and nods. JONATHON smiles for first time as he exits.

THE END