

Welcome, Mrs. Edwards

By Richard Mohan

Mrs. Edwards was in hell.

It wasn't so bad when she first got the money.

The money allowed her to get anything she wanted. What did she want, you might ask? Why, the house she was happiest in as a child, so she bought it. She added to it, of course, and the work was done instantly.

She had made lemonade for the workers and they all thanked her and then they finished and went home, wherever that is.

Mrs. Edwards no longer lived with Mr. Edwards; this was part of her problem. Nothing she could do could reunite her with him and she thought that, perhaps, the money would make it better.

It hadn't.

So she next hired a butler.

And who answered her call, but the same gentleman that had worked for her best friend's parents. Mrs. Edwards' best friend, when she was younger, was a rich girl. Rich, indeed, her friend would say. Her name was Mary Fynch and the Fynch's had money. Mary enjoyed the services of a butler named Watson, and here he was on her doorstep answering her ad.

She wondered where Mary was but put the thoughts aside. It was much too late in life to worry about such things.

There is a time when the things of your youth are gone and you must deal with it.

Besides, she had Watson.

Mrs. Edwards played checkers once, sometimes twice a day with Watson. She had always loved checkers and some childish things were not to be put away, after all.

The nature of things had gone her way. She had everything she wanted. Watson would cook her anything she desired, cook the food that he, himself, fetched because she did not go out.

Her favorite food was Steak and she had them, Pittsburgh you know, red inside and burnt flesh outside. She either ate this or she ate Pizza, her second favorite food, every night.

Her favorite food was steak, her favorite color was beige, and her favorite dress was on. Her house was done in beige. The curtains, the rug, the furniture which was that wonderful leather she had seen in a wonderful furniture store, her favorite furniture.

She had it all and it was wonderful.

For the first hundred years.

Mrs. Edwards was granted other, stranger wishes than just having the money to buy anything she wanted. She also was her favorite age, twenty two. She had had the best times of her life at age twenty two and, here she was folks! Twenty two.

The eye problems she had at that age did not exist, she was free of the burden of glasses which she had always hated. She didn't like contacts either but didn't have to worry about it because, of course, she didn't need them.

Her hair was perfect even though she didn't sleep, there really was no need to.

But something started to happen over the years. Mrs. Edwards' favorite food had grown tiresome, she hardly noticed the taste even though it was always perfect.

Her perfect view outside without ever having a rainy day and, definitely, no thunderstorms like she had always had in Palm Beach, Florida- had become tiresome though, some days, all she did was stare out the windows.

She had played checkers with Watson for so long now, that she could read a book at the same time and still beat him.

She had read her favorite book about twenty times, seen her favorite movie a hundred, and listened to her favorite song, Dancin' Shoes by the Faith Band about every hour. She couldn't turn on the radio anymore.

She had had this all set up, herself. And she was asked if she was sure every step of the way and, yes yes! She was sure and excited to. The nice man in the white robes had said that she would not be able to change her mind later, but she didn't know what later was, then.

She didn't think about how long later would be.

She didn't understand and she was depressed, having everything she wanted was killing her.

"I am not sure what you mean, Mam..." Watson frowned trying to decipher what she *did* mean.

"I mean I change my mind, if I can have everything I want then I *want* to change my mind."

"Change your mind about what, Mam?" he asked patiently, he was always so infuriatingly patient.

"I've changed my mind, I don't want everything I had always wanted before! I want different things, and different people."

He frowned again and then smiled patiently, "I should call your friend, Donna, she could come over and..."

"NO!" Mrs. Edwards cut him off. She was friends with Donna since childhood and when Donna had died, at age twelve, it had crushed her.

Donna had been over every day for thirty years and then only once a week after that. In truth, Mrs. Edwards could do without seeing Donna again for a long, long time.

"It's Ok, Mam, try to relax. Maybe checkers..."

"I don't want checkers, I don't want Donna! I want to change things!"

"I wish I could help, Mam, but I really don't know what you mean. Perhaps you wish to reorganize in here?" He swept his arms over the room. She had "reorganized" the house about twenty times in the last hundred years.

"No, I want to talk to *him!*"

"Him?"

"Yes, him," she repeated, "You know who I mean..."

"Yes, Mam, of course. Well, I can do that for you."

Suddenly, the butler grew a little shorter, the tuxedo feathered out suddenly and changed completely white, merging into one piece.

A beard grew on the butler's clean-shaven chin and his face wrinkled a little more.

His tray with the checkers elongated and became a walking staff.

Mrs. Edwards was relieved until she talked with him.

"Mrs. Edwards," the man in the white robes said, "What ever can I do for you?"

He smiled pleasantly and she was delighted just to see a different smile.

“Oh, thank goodness,” she said in her delight.

“I asked to talk to you before, but Watson said he couldn’t help me, just like he can’t seem to help me with a lot of things. I need a change, Sir.”

“The arrangements are not to your liking?” He frowned with a look of confusion.

“They are perfect! That’s the problem.”

“Oh? I thought you liked the Faith Band...”

“I do!”

“And I thought you had missed Donna...”

“I did, but...”

“It’s Watson? Is he not providing good service?”

“He is! But...Sir!”

“He makes a delicious steak, doesn’t he?”

“Yes,” she moaned, “Yes, but I don’t want steak anymore. I don’t want pizza, I don’t want everything to be perfect. This isn’t how it’s supposed to be...”

“But I told you, Mrs. Edwards...”

“I know, but I changed my mind, I can’t deal with everything being like this, the same all the time. Perfect or not, it’s driving me insane!”

“I see,” he smiled pleasantly.

Her hopes were up, he had to change things, that’s what this place was all about.

“You do, good!” she said, smiling herself now, “I really appreciate this place, I really do. But can’t you change things?”

“I can’t.”

“Perhaps a smaller house...what?” She was shocked. She had thought he had come to change everything for her. It didn’t sink in at first but then it hit her hard.

“You can’t? What does that mean?”

“Mrs. Edwards. We just can’t change things. When we questioned you on your arrival...”

“I didn’t know! Really, please...” she was starting to sniffle and the man in the white robes looked concerned and sad for her.

“I can’t deal with it like this, I CAN’T!!”

“But, Mrs. Edwards, that’s the nature of things here. We can’t change them once they are set...”

“Then I don’t *want* to be here! I want to go...to go...”

“Mrs. Edwards you really shouldn’t...”

“I want to go to the other side!”

“The other side, Mrs. Edwards?” he looked a little baffled but smiled with amusement.

“YES! FINE! I’ll say it, I want to go to HELL!!!!!!”

She glared at the man in the white robes whom she expected to go into shock.

He smiled a moment and shook his head.

“But Mrs. Edwards,” he said quietly as his robes stained and ran from white to black, his beard suddenly sharpening, running blood-red,

“You are in hell...”