

Ethereal

by Rebecca Snow

Jem was a man of 23, he had short, wavy, brown hair that was usually in front of his bright blue eyes, he towered over practically everyone, and he generally had an awkward grin spread across his face.

He cut through the forest path as he usually did on his way home from work. He took in the all the smells, as a refreshing Autumn breeze blew over him.

Something glinted on the ground and it caught his attention. Jem bent down, and, upon further inspection, concluded that it was a gold ring. He reached down and picked it up.

"Hey! Don't you take that ring!" yelled an angry voice from behind him. Jem turned around in a panic, and found a man in his early twenties uncomfortably close to him. The man had wild, short, blond hair, and grey eyes that looked almost blue. He stood tall with his chest puffed out, although he was almost a foot shorter than Jem. He looked incredibly annoyed, and his fists were clenched.

"I'm sorry, I didn't realize -"

"Give it!" The man went to snatch the ring from Jem's hand, but his hand went right through Jem. Jem suddenly felt very cold, like his whole body had been plunged into ice water.

"What on -" Jem felt faint.

"What? Never seen a ghost before?"

"A ...g host?" Jem was sure he must be hallucinating.

"Yeah! And who are you anyways?" Jem opened his mouth to answer, but the ghost cut him off.

"Oh. I bet you're the moron who did me in! Coming back to steal my ring huh? Well I've got news for you *buddy*, you take that ring and I'll haunt the heck out of you!"

Jem dropped the ring.

"But - but I -"

"Because, I can't seem to leave it. Guess it's the only thing keeping me to this plain."

"I'm uh ... pretty sure I didn't kill you ... or anyone for that matter ..." Jem whispered. The ghost looked him up and down.

"Hmm, I guess not. You don't really look the type."

"... Who *are* you? And why are you here?" Jem asked, not entirely sure he wanted to know the answer. "Here on this plain I mean," he added.

"The name's Daniel, and I'm pretty sure that I'm here out of sheer will power, man." Daniel looked down at the ground.

"I ... I just want to say goodbye ... to my fiancée. Only, there's one teensy problem. I can't go 20 steps from my ring - and believe me, I have counted - without being pulled back. So I've been stuck here, freaking people out. If I could just move that ring ..." He trailed off, slowly turning his head towards Jem.

"Pick up that ring!"

"What? But you just told me to -"

"Pick. Up. That. Ring," he said through gritted teeth. "And bring me to my fiancée." He finished with an encouraging smile. Jem shakily picked up the ring again.

"Now, take me to 637 Westing Street."

After they left the forest they found themselves on an empty street. A car was parked on the curb next to them.

"You know Westing Street is a little far to walk from here." Jem brought out his gps on his phone.

"See?" Daniel glared, shoving it at Jem, but his arms merely passed through him.

"Whoa! What are you -". Jem stumbled backwards and tripped over the edge of the sidewalk, slamming into the car parked there. His phone tumbled out of his hands, and fell through the car's window.

"Who leaves their car windows open?" Daniel snickered. Jem looked around nervously, reached in the window and lifted up the door lock. His phone had fallen underneath the brake pedal, so he'd have to get into the car. He checked to see if anyone had seen him break into the car, then, satisfied there was no one around, sat down in the driver's seat. He reached down, and retrieved his phone, but when he looked back out the open door, Daniel was gone.

"Daniel?" Jem asked in a hoarse whisper.

"Yeah?" Came a whisper right in his ear. Jem swiveled around and saw Daniel had made himself quite comfortable in shotgun.

"Oh. Look, they've forgotten their keys too." Daniel grinned mischievously at Jem. Jem raised an eyebrow at Daniel, then looked down, to find that the keys were still in the ignition.

"You do know how to drive right?" Daniel asked patronizingly.

"What? I'm not going to steal someone's car!"

"Oh really? Well, what if I told you that if you don't start driving me to Katherine's house in the next 10 seconds, I. Will. Murder. You."

"You'll what?!"

"Haven't you heard that ghosts go a little psycho when someone gets in their way?" Jem didn't really have a reply to that.

Shakily Jem closed his door, started up the car, and set off.

"So... this Katherine lady, she's your fiancée?"

"She *was* my fiancée," he answered solemnly.

"I'm so sorry."

"It's not your fault." Daniel smiled reassuringly.

"So... What is she like?"

"Kathy, she has long blonde hair that's in cute curls, peachy lips, an adorable little button nose, she's got the warmest eyes you've ever seen. And her laugh, I'd do anything to hear it." Daniel looked wistfully out the window.

"She's the sort of person that makes you happy, just by being around her. She's kind, selfless, funny, and a bit of a worry wart. She ... Well, she's perfect."

"She sounds wonderful, Daniel."

"She is." Jem fell silent. He felt terrible for Daniel.

Finally, after ten minutes of silence, Jem spoke up.

"Well..." He stopped the car. "We're here."

"You know," Daniel said, floating out of the car, "I wasn't actually going to kill you if you hadn't taken me here." Jem laughed.

"I suppose that's your way of saying thanks?" Daniel grinned.

"I'm still going to need your help though."

"Why?"

"Because! If someone else answers the door, I won't be able to have a private conversation with her. So just do what I say, when I say it okay? I've got a master plan!"

Jem followed Daniel to the door.

"I'm going to hide here, out of sight by the door. Now, put the ring there on the doorstep okay?" Jem put the ring on the doorstep like Daniel said, although he had no idea what for.

"Okay, now knock, and when someone answers the door, casually kick it in, so I can have a range of the house. Then stall them for me okay?" Jem slowly knocked on the door.

Daniel gave him a thumbs up just before the door opened. Jem faked a trip, and the ring shot into the house. An old man with salt and pepper hair looked at Jem with a scowl on his face.

"You alright there?" he asked, raising a single bushy eyebrow.

"Oh, yeah. Fine!" Jem laughed awkwardly

"Just uh..." Jem looked down at a faded flowery welcome mat. "Tripped on your lovely mat here."

"You know, you could have rung the doorbell," the man said looking more and more annoyed the longer Jem stood there. Daniel snickered behind the corner of the house. Jem glanced over and saw Daniel salute him while he passed through the wall.

"What do you want?" the man asked. Then Jem remembered he had to stall.

"Uh ... Well I was here ... to uh ... See Katherine?" He wished he hadn't said that, but nothing else had come to mind.

"There's no Katherine here." Jem stared unbelievably at the man.

"What?"

"I just moved in here. You must be looking for the old owner." He replied.

Daniel stood in the hall, having heard everything, he flew in and out of rooms in a desperate frenzy. Every room was a blur, but he was sure she had to be there. When he finally stopped he found himself in a small room. Overflowing bookcases covered the walls, and a small sofa sat in the middle of it. He noticed a figure in the corner of the room, but he didn't care if anyone saw him now. He attempted to sit down at the couch, but ended up hovering a couple inches above it. He buried his face in his hands.

"Daniel, is that you?" A sweet voice whispered in front of him. Daniel looked up to see a pale young woman with long curly blonde hair, bright hazel eyes, and looking very closely, he could see right through her.

"Katherine?"

Outside Jem fretted over how he was going to get the ring back, when two bright lights emanated from the house. They were like sunshine on a summer's day, only they shone all different colours. But, just as quickly as they had come, they were gone.

Jem was happy for Daniel, but he was sad that he was gone.

Then he started to wonder, had Daniel really been there at all?