

# HANNAH

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From Coffin to the Pearly Gates  
*(A Sweet Romantic Comedy)*

BETH REED

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*This book is dedicated to my mother,  
Frances Reed,  
who had a great sense of humor and, thankfully,  
passed it on to me.*

**Beth Reed**

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# Chapter I

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## *My Funeral*

“Imagine! Four husbands! And she buried them all. I wonder if she'll see them now.”

Good Heavens! They're talking about me! thought Hannah. They must think I'm dead!

She jumped out of the casket and ran from one person to another trying to tell them that she was alive. No one paid the least bit of attention to her. When the son of a distant cousin walked right through her, she decided something was wrong.

The sickish-sweet smell of flowers, the flickering candlelight, and the hushed voices spoke eloquently of a funeral.

She heard someone say, "By gosh! I thought Hannah would live to be a hundred!"

She walked over to the casket and looked down to see herself lying there. Her white hair was waved gently back from a serene, unwrinkled brow. Her long lashes lay softly on smooth pink cheeks, and her lips had the slightest tinge of lipstick. Her hands were folded loosely over a small white prayer book, which blended tastefully with the soft gray of her dress. The lower half of the casket was covered with a blanket of orchids.

Hannah nodded with satisfaction. They'd done quite well with her, she thought. She looked quite distinguished. She was glad they hadn't put a lily on her chest.

With a sigh, she turned away. She must be dead. She didn't feel dead. She felt wonderful! As a matter of fact, she felt young again!

She did a gay little dance step. No more worrying about her old heart. No more pain! She could do handsprings if she liked. Death was wonderful! And to think she had been afraid of it--.

She stood back to survey the roomful of people who had come to bid her a last farewell. They were nearly all distant relatives she had seldom seen. Few of her old friends were present. Most of them had gone before her. The only friend of her girlhood still alive, Agatha Minton, was sitting over in the corner talking to old Mr. Grey, Hannah's legal adviser.

Hannah strolled over to listen to them. Mr. Grey was talking earnestly. "But you must stay for the reading of the will, Miss Minton. I assure you it will be of interest to you."

"Nonsense," replied Agatha. Hannah wouldn't leave me anything. She always hated me. I guess she had a guilty conscience because she stole Basil from me. She married him right from under my nose and made a first-class heel out of him."

"I did not," said Hannah. "He was a heel before either one of us ever saw him. But he was a charming heel."

"But that was sixty-five years ago." Mr. Grey shook his head. "She must have had a change of heart because she did mention you in her will."

"I suppose she left me some useless thing she couldn't palm off on anyone else."

Hannah chuckled. "Wait and see, Aggie, old girl. You're in for a shock, and I doubt if you'll survive it. I'll be seeing you real soon."

She walked over to a couple standing before the casket. They were Ed and Jane Reading, cousins who had visited her occasionally in the past years.

"Well, the old girl finally popped off," said Ed. "I wonder who she left her money to. Hope she left some to us."

Jane took Ed's arm and pulled him away. "Hush! Someone will hear you."

Ed shrugged. "What if they do? They're all thinking the same thing I am. Why do you think they are here? Not because they're sorry she's gone. You can be sure of that. They came to hear the will read, just as we did."

Hannah snorted. "Much good it will do you, or them either."

She strolled among the mourners. On every side she heard speculation about her will. No one seemed in the least sorry she had died. On the contrary, everyone was happily making plans that entailed the spending of her money. Even old Mr. Benton, who had been her spiritual advisor, was hoping for money for the improvement of his church and the saving of souls in Africa. "At least he doesn't want it for himself," said Hannah as she walked out of the room.

She'd go check on the servants. Maybe some of them would be missing her. Some of them had been with her for over twenty-five years.

In the kitchen the cook, the two maids and the butler were having a cup of tea. Hannah was pleased to see that their expressions were grave. Her heart swelled with gratitude. They were sorry she was gone. They were good and faithful servants. She wished she had done more for them.

The butler put his cup down with a bang. "Well, the old battle-axe is gone! I wonder what will happen to us now. We'll certainly never have it so good again. I think I'll retire. I have enough put by to take care of me pretty well."

The cook smiled. "You should have. You got a cut on everything that came into this house for the last twenty years."

"We all shared and shared alike, so who are you to talk about my nest egg? You all must have a pretty tidy one too. The lawyers never questioned the household accounts, and what she didn't know didn't hurt her. Anyway, she had plenty."

Hannah was very angry. "You crooks! How dare you steal from me? You're fired! Every last one of you! You'll get no references from me! Get out! Do you hear me? Get out!"

She watched in despair as they sat calmly drinking their tea. If she were alive again for just ten minutes, she'd fix them!