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Jesus in the Land of Ghosts III (I Can Die) [John 8]

Peter Hiett @ The Sanctuary Downtown September 19, 2010

Last week, we preached on this verse in John 8 (verse 32): "You shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall set you free."

"Free."

But Sunday night, I wasn't feeling free.

I had just preached at three services, interviewed a youth pastor candidate, and had a slew of divergent conversations.

I think I was afraid that everything might work. And then I was afraid that everything might fail... 'cause I might fail.

When I get like that, I usually take a super-hot bath, and I did.

I try to spin out all the scenarios as I soak, naked in darkness and heat:

"This will happen,

then this will happen,

then we'll lose the house, then we'll move in with relatives,

then they'll get sick of us, then we'll be outdoors.

then winter will come..."

Now, we're a **long** way from that ... but some of you have been there.

I pray and tell myself, "God is my provider."

And then I think,

"God, you provided St. Peter with martyrdom.

God, You provided St. Paul with hunger and thirst and prison cells and beatings.

God, You provided Jesus with flogging, nails, and a cross."

People think He died so we wouldn't have to die. But then why did He say, "To follow, you must pick up a cross"?

And Jesus suggested that I pick one up.

Then I realize: "I could die."

And please understand it's not just physical death. Actually, that's the easiest part.

It's the thought of losing all honor and respect and being publically slandered and left alone, wondering where I went wrong.

I so earnestly want to be right... and then I see my need to be right is so very wrong. It's arrogance and pride.

And then I feel forsaken by people, forsaken by myself, and even forsaken by God. I pray, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" I realize: "I could die."

And not just my body my soul – my "nephesh" ... my "psyche" ... myself.

And then I think, "Peter, you're just thinking of yourself." So I pray for people I love, and I get even more stressed. I think, "They could die, and if they died, I think I'd die."

So I see that my stress for them is stress that I can't save them, for I don't have faith that God will save them. I get to the root of my fear – it's lack of faith. But I can't just manufacture faith, and faith is life. And so I realize ... I could die.

I could die.

I could die.

And then, in that moment – in the hot bath around 4:00 AM – I think a new thought ... not just in my head, but in my soul:

"I could die.

I could die.

Well gosh, I **can** die. I can do that. I can die."

And all at once, I'm free. I get out; cool down, towel off, and then fall asleep. I die, and then live.

I the morning, I get up and the world starts telling me:

"You can't die.

You must succeed.

You must judge, save, and create yourself."

Now, I only tell you my story to remind you of your story ... and Christ's story.

Last week, we preached that a ghost is a person trapped in a lie.

And this is the lie: "I am my own judge, savior, and creator."

See? If you think you are your own creator, you will create yourself, but that self will be a lie... an apparition ... a ghost.

And if you think you are your own savior... well then, everything depends on you. And you (that lie) cannot die. But what happens if you do die? 'Cause the odds are that you will. Well, if you do die, perhaps you'll lie about the lie ... stuck in the lie.

You see, ghosts can't die, because they won't admit they're dead. To die is to come to an end ... actually, **The** End. And that's why suicide won't work – it's hiding the self from the End. To try to kill yourself **with** yourself is just more self... a ghost, like the one I told you about last week... hiding from God's judgment, trapped in her own bad judgment: "Where's my baby? Where's my baby?"

You can only die by surrendering your judgment to God's judgment. You see? A ghost can't die, and ghosts won't admit that they're dead.

This is one of my favorite movies of all time. I'm not saying it's entirely accurate Biblically, and Scripture is clear that we must not consult with ghosts. Yet, I think this movie is far more Biblical than most. It's M. Night Shyamalan's *The Sixth Sense*

[Video clip #1 - The Sixth Sense]

"They only see what they want to see."

They avoid the light of Truth.

"They don't know they're dead."

The boy talking is named Cole. The man listening is Dr. Malcolm. He's a child psychologist. His job is to judge, save, and create children.

Well, this is our 4th sermon on John chapter 8. I told you it was about ghosts, and a Ghost Buster. The last two weeks, we talked about ghosts. I even showed you a video of a flying, spooky, dark shadow that I suspect was a demon named "Secrets." And I told you how we cast out "Secrets" in Jesus' name, and then encountered a ghost named Elise.

I know ... that's weird.

We also talked about a good will and a bad will. **[Slide #1]**Good will is a will that seeks the glory of God and others.
A bad will is a will that seeks its own glory, and thus uses others.
A bad will is a will stuck on itself.
A bad will is bad judgment – a will stuck on itself ... a ghost. **[Slide #2]**

A good will is God's judgment. In a word, Jesus. [Slide #3] If you're a Christian, good will has been created in you. [Slide #4]

You cannot create a good will with a bad will. You must be begotten from above, like a seed implanted in a ghost. The seed is eternal, and the ghost must die. We must give up the ghost to love in freedom ... to live.

Well, in John 8:1-11, Jesus creates good will in a woman who's been caught in the act of adultery. She's thrown at His feet, stripped of all her vain glory – her "nephesh," her "psyche," her "soul" – and now they're picking up stones to strip her of her body. Jesus says, "Neither do I condemn you. From the now, go and sin no more."

Jesus's lack of condemnation is condemnation on the Pharisee's condemnation. His lack of judgment is judgment on the Pharisee's judgment.

They drop their stones and leave the Light.

They drop their stones.

But in case you think Grace is cheap, allow me to jump ahead and read the last verse of John 8 (verse 59): "So they picked up stones to throw at Him (Jesus)."

God's judgment is Grace, but Grace is not cheap. Hopefully you know the story: "Everybody must get stoned." We all must die. But Jesus chose to die in our place. That's the Revelation of Love – sacrificial love.

So why don't we love? Why don't forgive as Jesus forgave? Why don't we each go home and give our life savings to feed the poor? Why don't we sacrifice like Christ?

Well, isn't it because we're afraid to die?

Isn't it because we're afraid to give up the ghost?

Aren't we afraid that, in glorifying God and others, we might lose some glory for ourselves? And let's be honest: you love like Jesus – in a world of hunger, scarcity, sin, terrorism, and war – you'll get yourself crucified.

Jesus did. And on the cross, He surrendered His spirit to God, and gave up the ghost.

But now, you ought to say, "Hey, wait a minute! Jesus didn't have a ghost. A ghost is an apparition; a lie ... a ghost is sin." Did Jesus have a ghost?

2 Corinthians 5:21 – "He who knew no sin became sin, that we might become the righteousness of God." On the cross, Jesus entered my hell and bore my sin – my ghost, my prison, my hell – to destruction.

And not just mine.

I John 2:2 – "The sins of the whole world." So the ghost of the Last Adam is the fallen children of the first Adam. The ghost of Jesus is us – the old us, the sinful us ... a lie about Him.

Yet, this is the glory of God – that He chose to bear my sin and bear it to destruction. This is the glory of God, the judgment of God – sacrificial love ... Grace. Whenever it hurts to love, and yet we do love, we sacrifice our bad will to God's good will growing within us. We learn Grace.

In John 8, Jesus exhibits Grace, and the Pharisees hate that judgment. They hate the Light

and leave. Yet some return and believe. It's like an eternal seed has been implanted in a ghost – a bit like us. So how do we recognize the seed and recognize the ghost, so we can give Him up?

[John 8:31]

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham (literally: the "sperma" – the seed of Abraham... well, Scripture tells us that Jesus is the seed of Abraham), and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"

Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are offspring (literally: "seed") of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you."

I guess it has no place to grow. They're full of themselves.

"I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father."

They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children (not just "sperm," but children), you would be doing what Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did."

What did Abraham do? In a minute, Jesus will say, "Abraham saw my day, and leapt for joy." Jesus is talking like He was there. What did Abraham do?

"This is not what Abraham did," said Jesus. "You are doing what your father did."

They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father – even God." Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

These are "The Jews who had believed." The seed of Abraham, and yet children of the devil, who is the father of lies. So, these are "the lies"... ghosts ... the work of the devil.

In I John 3, "Jesus appeared to destroy the works of the devil." I think these may be the most terrifying verses in all of Scripture. "You are of your father, the devil," said Jesus. Notice that Jesus did not say this to the adulterous woman, or to prostitutes and tax collectors. He doesn't say this to pagans, punk rockers, or Rosemary's Baby... He says it to religious Jews – the "Sons of the Kingdom."

Professor Dale Bruner writes:

"It is important to underline the fact that all of Jesus' warnings about hell occur in messages to people who believed **themselves** heirs of the kingdom. Jesus did not preach hell to pagans; he preached it to those who thought themselves believers. Hell is not a doctrine used to frighten unbelievers, it is a doctrine used to warn those who think themselves [already] believers."

There's a rumor about me that's been going around for some time. I heard it again last week, and I want to squash it.

This is the rumor: "Peter doesn't believe in Hell."

I want to find those people and I want to grab those people, and shake those people – in Christian love – and say:

"READ MY LIPS. I'm not saying there is no Hell. I'm saying YOU MIGHT GO THERE... and I might go there... Unless we repent of our malicious judgment and trust God's judgment, We will go to hell – to Hades, and ultimately the Consuming Fire."

If we reject God's judgment of Grace – the Will of the Father, Jesus the Christ – we walk away from the Light, and imprison ourselves in darkness ... a ghost.

In Matthew 7:21, Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter my Kingdom, but he who does the will of my father ... May will say 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophecy in your name, cast out demons in your name, do many mighty works in your name?' And then I'll say, 'I never knew you.'

They must have been an apparition, an act, a ghost. So Jesus says, "Depart." Well... where will they go?

Matthew 8:11 – "I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham ... in the Kingdom of Heaven, while the Sons of the Kingdom (**The Sons of the Kingdom**) will be thrown into outer darkness."

Perhaps they'll throw themselves out, for they don't want to sit with Abraham. For what did Abraham do? Remember the question? What did Abraham do in front of Jesus? We preached on all of this last year.

In Genesis 12, Abraham believes a promise that through his seed all the nations (all the peoples) of the world would be blessed. In Genesis 15, Abraham watches God cut the

Eternal Covenant. In Genesis 18, three men come to Abraham's camp. One is fully God and fully man... I think we know His name – Jesus. He reminds Abraham of the Promised Seed, and ultimately He is the Promised Seed – the Seed through whom all the nations of the world will be blessed.

Then the two angels who had arrived with Jesus travel down to Sodom to destroy it. Sodom is a nation to be blessed. So Abraham stands before the God-Man (Jesus) and pleads for the salvation of Sodom. God doesn't get mad at Abraham. He makes Him the Father of Faith. Abraham wants evil destroyed, but not the righteous of Sodom. And yet, there weren't even ten righteous men in Sodom, so God destroys Sodom with fire.

Yet, Ezekiel tells us that Sodom will be restored along with Samaria... that is, the Samaritans ... along with Jerusalem ... that is, the Pharisees ... they will all be destroyed and restored.

They will be restored because God finds one righteous man in their midst. "He has numbered himself with the transgressors" (Isaiah 53) – Sodomites, Samaritans, and Jews. He cries from the cross, "Father, forgive them." He is the judgment of God. He is the Promised Seed. He is the sacrificial Lamb who takes away the sins of the world.

And oh yeah... there's one other thing that Abraham did: He prepared to sacrifice his only begotten son – his soul – to the glory of God... until the Angel stopped his hand and God supplied a substitute – His only begotten Son, Jesus. Abraham saw the Judgment of God, loved the Judgment of God, and rejoiced at the Judgment of God – Jesus Christ and Him crucified for the sins of the world.

Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You aren't doing what Abraham did, but what your father did – the devil." The devil caused Eve and Adam to doubt the judgment of God, and when they did, it killed them. "The day you eat of it, you will surely die."

"He was a murderer from the beginning." So I don't think he's simply a fallen angel. And I'm sure he can't create a real child... only a lie. The devil is the father of lies. Devil means, "Slanderer, Gossip, Accuser"... false accuser, if the Lamb of God has taken away the sin of the world. "Accuser." And that's just what the Pharisees had been doing and were doing.

You see? If your will is to glorify yourself, you will do so by taking glory from others. And the last thing you will do is sacrifice your "self" for those you've judged last and least and lost. It appears that a lack of compassion for the lost is the surest sign that you are lost – a child of hell, the very spawn of Satan, the lost, the *apololos* ("the one having been destroyed").

Well, having said that, isn't it Good News that Jesus came to seek and to save the *apololos?* The Lost? The one having been destroyed?

You see? There is a hell ... actually a few, at least. It's just that hell – as it is normally described – **cannot** be the end. WHY?

Jesus is the End. Jesus is the End. The End. The End. The End.

To finally die is to come to The End ... WHO IS:

The Consuming Fire, the Light, the Truth, the Resurrection and the Life... GRACE.

He is God's Judgment upon your bad judgment, the ghost.

[verse 18]

The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?" (Isaiah 53 – "He was numbered with the transgressors." On the cross He wore our ghosts. He was a Samaritan, Sodomite, Jerusalemite, and a Pharisee. He bore the sins of the world.) Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge. Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death."

Yet Jesus will soon tell His disciples that they will die (11:25). I think "never see death" is a poor translation. Literally translated, Jesus says, "You will not see death into the age." And these Jews understood what He meant.

"You will not descend into Hades (in Hebrew, Sheol) ... land of the dead.

Psalm 89:48 – "What man can live and never see death? Who can deliver his soul from the power of Sheol?"

How about Jesus?

Remember, John is the one who received the Revelation.

Listen to Revelation 20:13:

Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.

The earth has been flooded and filled with Glory, Light, and Holy Fire.

(verse 4) ... and God will wipe away every tear from their yes, and death shall be no more.

It's the death of death.

John saw that there is a first death, and a second death.

The first death is the death of your body, and the second death must be the death of your soul. "Nephesh" in Hebrew, "psyche" in Greek … Your soul, your life, your mind, your heart, your ego, your self…

Jesus said I you lose your self (your psyche) for my sake and the Gospel's, you will find it. So, to come to Christ and believe is to lose your life – which is actually death. It is the death of death.

Jesus already told us (John 5:24) – "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life (life of the age). He doesn't come into judgment, but has passed from death to life."

Has passed from death.

Revelation 20:6 – "Blessed and holy is he who shares in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power."

Over such, the "lake of fire and *theion* – fire and divinity", has no power. You don't need to fear the ire if you've already been baptized in fire. You don't need to run from God's Judgment if you've surrendered to God's judgment. You can get your dying over with right now.

A Christian must be a person who dies the second death before they die the first death ... or at least sees that Jesus dies it for them. So physical death is no longer a trap ... it's a door. For we die with Jesus ad rise with Jesus. But if you don't give up the ghost before your body dies, you're trapped in death after the body is gone, like a ghost in hell.

Hades is not endless. It will be cast into the Lake of Fire... the burning-hot, all-consuming Love that is God. What exactly that means for anyone let in Hades at that time, I'm not exactly sure.

So Hades is not endless, but why would you want to exist in Hades at all? Why be spawn of Satan? Why be tormented by fear, shame, and demons at all? Why be a ghost at all?

You can die to death right now.

You!

You: that self-centered, pain in the ass, reason for all your heartaches ... you.

You: sweating in the bathtub at 3:00 AM, wondering how you're gonna pull it off.

You: terrified you'll fail and wondering what everyone will think.

You: already failed and hiding your shame and putting on an act.

You: driven and tormented to make yourself good, in the image of God.

You: trying to love, but trapped in envy ad hate.

You can die to death now.

Why die in your sin ... an apparition ... an act? Perhaps you like your act, because you haven't seen the Truth.

You know, the Pharisees were a pretty good act ... better than most of us. To quote Professor J.C. McCann, "Their intent was to interpret the law so that it could be obeyed by ordinary persons..."

That is, instead of letting it kill us or reveal that we're already dead, they made the law practical, so ordinary persons could do it: judge themselves, save themselves, create themselves... that is, they wrote religious self-help books... Mishnah, [??]. They were the pastors, counselors, and child psychologists of their day.

In *The Sixth Sense*, Dr. Malcolm tries to save Cole, and Cole saves him. Malcolm's marriage is in shambles, and he can't save it, or himself. One day, Cole suggests that Malcolm talk to his wife while she's sleeping. When he does, he sees what he didn't want to see: "The truth."

[Movie Clip - The Sixth Sense #2]

"The truth" is that he's dead.

That would explain the poor communication in his marriage.

Well, Truth hurts... yet when he sees it, he faces his death and he dies his death... and then he's free. Free to go and sin no more.

"The day you eat of it you will surely die."

Perhaps we're dead, but when we go back to the ancient tree – back to the cross – we face our death and we see that Jesus bears our sin and dies our death. He delivers our ghost to destruction and we're free.

You can die. Jesus is the death of death.

[verse 52]

The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.' ("Not taste death into the age.") Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?"

Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.' But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that

I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad."

So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

He was preparing to die for the sins of the world, not just one adulterous woman... but ALL... His bride. His bride, who trusted her judgment and took the fruit to save herself and create herself. When we go to the cross, we surrender that ghost, God reveals His love and sets us free. We die and rise with Christ.

Every time we confess our sins to a brother or sister in Jesus' name, we die and then live. Every time we confess our sins in prayer – every time we lie naked before Him at 3:00 in the morning, confessing our secret anxieties ad fears – we expose the ghost. We die, and then live.

Praise God for sufferings. They help us die. And the greatest gift a person can receive is to die before they die. That is, to die with Jesus and live. Because of Jesus, we can die. We get to die and live. Every time we come to the communion table in faith, we come to judgment, give up the ghost, and begin to live in freedom.

For the last 2 weeks, I told you about "Elise," the ghost Susan and I encountered, buried under "Secrets" in this old building... and how I told her to go to Jesus, and how Susan heard Jesus say, "Welcome home, Elise."

"Welcome home." I think Jesus says that a lot.

One night, six years ago in worship, my friend had a vision:

The front of the Sanctuary turned into fire.

Giant hands pushed me toward the fire, and then the same hands pushed the congregation toward the fire.

My friend wrote:

"Each person would walk to the edge of the fire, take some bread, dip it in the wine, eat it and then kneel, and an angel would cut off their head. Their body would fall into the fire and the same hands would catch them in the midst of the fire. Jesus would then breathe on the broken body, make them whole again, look straight into their eyes and say, "Welcome home." At that moment, each person would realize that their pain, their heartache, their tears were all gone. Jesus was wearing them all."

They were free.

And so, say this with me out loud: "In the name of Jesus ... I can die."

For on the night He was delivered up to crucifixion on the tree, He took bread and broke it, saying, "Take and eat. This is my body broken for you."

And He took the cup, saying, "Take and drink. This is the New Covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sin."

Pray this with me: "Lord Jesus, to You I surrender my life... and I thank you for yours. You are the Judge, You are the Savior, You are my Creator. Make me in Your image."

[Benediction]

"You're making me new... You're making us new."

Close your eyes, right where you are. Just close your eyes.
You came to the table, you ingested an Eternal Seed. He's making you new.
What are you so afraid of?
Why are you so anxious?
Why are you so driven?
Perhaps you're haunted by a ghost.

And so this is what I want you to do:

I want you to go to Walgreens, and I want you to buy some Epsom salts.

They're good for cramps.

And then late tonight, when you're all stressed out and you can't sleep...

Late at night, in the dark – this is good for effect – turn on that bath, dump some of the Epsom salts in there ... sit there in the bath, in the dark, sweating bullets ... and chase your fears. Chase your fears, chase your anxieties, follow your driven-ness to figure out what it is that's haunting you.

Because you see, you are being haunted by a ghost, and the ghost is yourself ... what Paul called, "The old man ... the imposter ... the illusion."

You're being haunted by a ghost, and the ghost is your self and the ghost was created with a lie and the lie is this: "You cannot die... because you are the judge and you are the savior and you are the creator."

Well, you find that ghost, and you expose that ghost to the Light – the Light of Jesus the Christ. And in the bathtub, sweating bullets at 3:00 in the morning, you just say it:

"In the name of Jesus, I can die! I can die."

For Jesus is the death of death.

Scripture says that Satan has kept us in lifelong bondage through the fear of death. You see, he's lied to you. He's lied to me. He's told us that he is the End. But he's not the End.

He's told you that he is the Reaper.

But check this out: Revelation 14 ... before you take your hot bath tonight, you must read it... and you find out that the Reaper comes down from heaven ... He is one like a Son of Man, and what He reaps is a harvest of wheat and grapes... He reaps bread and wine... He reaps His body and His bride... the Reaper is Jesus.

And He's not grim! He's your Bridegroom. And so he will swing His sickle and say, "Welcome home."

And so in the name of Jesus, let's destroy that old lie, that the Reaper is the evil one... 'cause he's not... the Reaper is Jesus. And with this postlude, the band's going to destroy that lie. We're gonna take that lie, and we're gonna turn it into Gospel, alright?

And that is, we must not fear the Reaper, for the Reaper is our Bridegroom. In Jesus' name, believe the Gospel, and live free.

Don't Fear the Reaper - Blue Oyster Cult

All our times have come
Here but now they're gone
Seasons don't fear the reaper
Nor do the wind, the sun or the rain...we can be like they are
Come on baby...don't fear the reaper
Baby take my hand...don't fear the reaper
We'll be able to fly...don't fear the reaper
Baby I'm your man...

Valentine is done
Here but now they're gone
Romeo and Juliet
Are together in eternity...Romeo and Juliet
40,000 men and women everyday...Like Romeo and Juliet
40,000 men and women everyday...Redefine happiness
Another 40,000 coming everyday...We can be like they are
Come on baby...don't fear the reaper
Baby take my hand...don't fear the reaper
We'll be able to fly...don't fear the reaper
Baby I'm your man...

Love of two is one Here but now they're gone Came the last night of sadness And it was clear she couldn't go on Then the door was open and the wind appeared The candles blew then disappeared
The curtains flew then he appeared...saying don't be afraid
Come on baby...and she had no fear
And she ran to him...then they started to fly
They looked backward and said goodbye...she had become like they are
She had taken his hand...she had become like they are
Come on baby...don't fear the reaper