

Candidate 3 evidence

A Guide to Being Remembered

The woman woke up and found herself in a vast library. Surrounding her were shelves of books stretching farther than the eye could see, and an eerie silence blanketed the air. It was as though her presence here was but a mere speck amongst the seemingly endless rows of library books. Realising she was alone filled her with fear and uncertainty and the woman began looking for any sign of life in this place. She picked a book off a shelf at random, and with great difficulty attempted to prise it open. The book was stuck fast, and feeling defeated, she placed it back on the shelf in exasperation. Continuing on, the confused woman rounded a few more corners before stumbling upon what she could only describe as a ghost. Suddenly she wasn't alone here but couldn't quite decide if discovering this ghostly figure was a relief, or the opposite. *Where am I?* She thought to herself. From the distance she'd frozen at, the ghost looked like they were sitting at a small round table, with a teapot and teacups set out. The woman also noticed a book laid out in front of them, with pens poised next to it, which led her to assume this ghostly figure was planning to write in the book. One final thing she noticed was that this book was open: a change from the previous one which she'd fought hard with to even budge the covers apart.

As the woman guided her feet towards the ghost, they suddenly turned towards her with a gentle and welcoming smile. Before she could register that the ghostly figure had seen her, they began speaking.

"Hello there Anne. I'm glad to see you're well, can I invite you to take a seat?"

The woman froze once again, she was reluctant to go any further having been startled by learning this figure could speak - and see her. Although when the woman tried to focus on the ghost in any great detail, it was as though they became more distant and translucent. Her brain couldn't quite tell how much of what she was seeing was real and their voice was a startling interruption to the quiet of the corridors of books.

Anne. Is what this figure had called me. She recognised the name to be hers, something she hadn't done in a while. Anne tried to piece together who they were, and how they knew her name before she fully comprehended it herself. Still, she approached the figure sitting at the desk, hoping to find some clarity. The figure smiled at Anne warmly and invited her to take a seat opposite them. As she sat, she noted that this ghostly figure seemed almost too calm and serene, and she was skeptical of how they already knew her name.

"Where am I?" Anne asked hesitantly.

"It's natural to be confused when you arrive here." The figure answered, completely avoiding answering the question.

"How did I get here?" She tried again.

"There's no need to worry about that now. Help yourself to the tea if you'd like." They responded again, trying to steer the conversation elsewhere. Anne did not take up this offer and fired yet another question at the ghost.

"How did you know my name?"

"That'll become clear as we speak more."

Anne signed in disappointment having not learned anything helpful at all, she glanced up to the figure who was looking expectantly at her. A thought rushed to her mind in the moment. *My husband, where is he? I can't remember the last time I saw him.*

"You're looking for Peter, -"

"How do you know that?" Anne shot back, beginning to regret coming closer.

"Just a little party trick." They joked, hoping to break the ice. "Oh just ignore me, it's because I collect memories, and sometimes that's easier to do when you can actually see inside the other person's mind, to relive their memories with them."

Anne could do nothing but give a slight nod that she'd heard the figure, not quite understanding yet. Her mind was spinning from everything that had happened since getting here, and to add to that, the suggestion she was dizzying the person opposite her with just her thoughts. *I just need to find Peter and then we'll go home.* Although something inside Anne told her this wouldn't be resolved that easily. She shrugged the feeling off and instead poured herself some tea to distract herself from spiralling any further.

"I remember when Peter visited me. He told me all about your life together. You've had a very interesting and full life from what I've heard" The figure said, picking up the conversation again.

"You mean to say he's here?" Anne asked eagerly.

The ghostly figure gave Anne a regretful look, "not exactly" they responded with.

This seemed to cross Anne's line of sanity. "Hold on, why am I even speaking to you? I have no idea who you are but you seem to know a lot about me *and* my husband." Panic set in and she started to get up out of her seat, desperately confused and trying to think straight. The ghostly figure feebly attempted to keep her attention to stop any further madness.

"Anne, it's okay. You haven't realised yet but I feel I must tell you, any people in your life that I've met, are people that have died." The figure took a pause here allowing Anne to process their words. "They came to me in this library like you have and I let them tell me their story, almost like documenting their memories. This is what you can do too."

Anne's heart was racing in her chest, it was certainly a heavy topic to digest this quickly. What she wanted most at this moment was Peter by her side.

"I'm a memory collector, or librarian if you'd like, and this library holds the story of everyone who ever lived." They spread their arms wide, gesturing to the infinite selection of stories. "When humans die, they take their memories, and everything that made them unique and human to the grave. And isn't that so sad? So, I made this place to ensure nobody's story is lost."

What a sentimental thought. The only thing Anne could string together.

She sank back into her chair, taking it all in.

"But... Peter isn't dead, so how have you seen him?" She feared the worst, but wanted to hear it properly to believe it properly.

"Peter died a few years ago. I'm sorry." The librarian announced somberly. "You may not remember that happening, I'm afraid you were also suffering from dementia at that time and you were quite ill yourself. Earlier you asked how you had gotten here, you died is the answer, and part of you came here."

"I refuse to believe this, you're scaring me." Anne said slowly, fear taking over.

“Just try, try to remember what you did yesterday.” They gave a moment to allow Anne to realise. *I’m sure I remember yesterday, I was at the shops for groceries.* The figure interrupted her thoughts again “no, you haven’t bought groceries for a very long time.” Slowly, slowly the pieces fell into place and Anne realised she had no recent memories, they were foggy at best.

Completely lost for words, Anne sipped at her tea and contemplated this reality. *So this is what’s after life then.*

“Your library is broken.” She blurted out, a drastic move away from pondering her death “the books don’t open, I tried earlier but was bested by the book.” The librarian chuckled to themselves. “That’s because they won’t open for just anyone. I mean how happy would you be if someone plucked *your* life off a shelf at random? Once the time is right, the books will open for you.” Anne once again reluctantly nodded and went along with whatever was to come next. Before they said another word to her, she noticed the blank book facing the ghostly librarian was no longer blank. Instead words filled the pages except she hadn’t seen anyone writing in it this whole time. They must’ve seen her thoughts again, as they then went on to explain that just the act of sitting here, and having a conversation was enough for their story to emerge into a book. Her memories were bleeding out of her, onto the pages. Securing her place in history, just like all those people who’d sat with the librarian before her.

Hours passed with the librarian as Anne told the story of her life, reminiscing and reliving her memories. She accepted she could now look back on her life with happiness of how she lived it.

Anne sipped away at even more tea, steam swirled in front of her face, which reminded her of a time in her life ruled by tea.

“You know, I used to make my own tea.”

“Really? How interesting.” She could tell just how much joy the librarian had listening to her stories and ramblings.

“Well, it was just a pastime I had when I lived in France, although it seemed to grow wings and soon I had my own little business running there.” Her words were overflowing with nostalgia, thinking back on times in her younger years when everything felt like the greatest adventure. “I was never any good at it though, still I enjoyed finding new things to potter around with.” She paused for a moment to remember how it’d felt to live through those years, which felt long at the time but now she could see how little time it actually was.

“It reminded me of when I’d make potions out of my mother’s flower bed in the garden as a child, from any nearby plant I could pluck.” Anne reminisced once more, and laughed to herself at the thought of this warm memory. “It used to drive her mad, but she never told me to stop making potions, so I continued nonetheless.”

Anne saw as the ghostly librarian smiled to themselves at Anne’s memories, and suddenly she realised how many lives they must listen to and see through these conversations, but never get to experience for themselves, and Anne gave a pitiful smile back.

“I guess another interesting thing I’ve done was when Peter and I went hiking through the Alps one Summer. He was never one for the outdoors, when we did these exciting things,

I'd always have to convince him it was worth it, for the experiences and photos you'd have by the end of it." Anne continued.

"Yes! I remember Peter told me he appreciated how persuasive you are, because he admitted himself he'd never have gotten to make as many memories in his life if it wasn't for you." The librarian added in excitement.

More hours slipped by as Anne shared her memories, and her book neared completion. She'd exhausted every memory she could think of from her life, but it was as if the librarian knew and filled in the blanks where she'd forgotten herself. Until eventually she finished the story.