

# **Lessons From Beyond The Grave**

**By Erin Goodman ©**

Melody's hand was aching, *she* was aching. Melody had had a very bad night on her mattress she shared with two other girls. Mrs Hogginathy had made each girl share one mattress with two others and it was horribly grubby and full of bed bugs, but that didn't stop the girls sleeping, except Melody. She tossed and turned all night. "I said, keep writing!" Mrs Hogginathy bellowed. The Victorian Orphanage had strict rules that when you were writing you never stopped. The girls were writing now, and kept writing, but something inside Melody made her want to stop and shout out to Mrs Hogginathy that it wasn't fair, them writing whilst she walked around screeching at the girls doing nothing. "Miss – Mrs Hogginathy - it's not fair!" Melody suddenly called out. All the girls gasped and stared at Melody who had been rescued from the streets when she was aged 11, and she was still 11, the youngest of everyone in the orphanage. Still, no one ever shouted out at Mrs Hogginathy, it was number 29 of 30 rules in the rule book at the orphanage; "NO SHOUTING OUT". Mrs Hogginathy approached Melody slowly, sharp intakes of breath, her expensive perfume itching the noses of those whom she walked passed. "I beg your pardon? Miss Melody Iceglass, you have not been asked to speak so don't speak, you certainly do NOT call out in my class – in my orphanage. Is that clear?" Mrs Hogginathy's tone of voice was icy, threatening even. "Yes Mrs Hogginathy, I'm sorry Mrs Hogginathy" Melody whispered sweetly, knowing she could get around anyone with her voice, but even so she was shaking. "Sorry is not enough Melody, though I understand..." Mrs Hogginathy had an edge to her voice, "Go to your dormitory and think about what you've done whilst I get the Child-Stretching machine ready." Mrs Hogginathy bellowed. All the girls gasped, that was the worst punishment, stretched until you screamed, and by the end you were 2 inches taller. "Wait, no!!!" Melody was panicking now, trying to find an excuse, "Mrs Hogginathy, I feel like I'm going to-" Suddenly Melody fainted, and Mrs Hogginathy was startled, but try as she might, Melody wouldn't wake up.

But before the next part, let me tell you a secret, Melody had faked it, she *hated* the punishments at Victorian Orphanage for Girls so she faked fainting. Mrs Hogginathy was looking quite worried, and opened the front door and was just about to carry Melody out when she jumped up and ran through the open door, slamming it in Mrs Hogginathy's face.

Melody ran and ran and suddenly she found herself in the spooky, church graveyard, it was a bitterly cold day, mist swirling all around. It was bone-chilling. Melody realised something was behind her, she could hear whimpering, - Melody *hated* animals in distress so she turned round and saw a beautiful, golden labrador. Melody slowly walked towards the dog and as the dog whined, it nuzzled something, "Ok, you want me

to open it?” Melody whispered, noticing the latch to open the...*what actually was it?* thought Melody. And she realized that it was a miniature chest. With a padlock. And a key. Melody picked up the key in one hand and the chest in the other and inserted the key into the padlock, she twisted it and as a rusty, grinding noise started suddenly, the chest popped open and the noise stopped abruptly. Inside was a death certificate, neatly rolled up. Melody carefully unrolled it and gasped. The burnt-at-the-edges death certificate said

*Mrs Hogginathy, Born 1809, Died 1869, aged 60  
Remembered for the worst punishment in the orphanage for girls*

Melody nearly fainted for real this time, Mrs Hogginathy was dead!? But she was still alive? Melody looked down at the death certificate again, and felt peculiarly queasy, a type of queasiness she hadn't felt before, a mixture of sickness and light-headedness. Melody turned round to face the dog and said “Come on, let's go back to the orphanage, I need to figure this out.” Melody carefully picked up the lead that was attached to the dogs bright blue collar and noticed a silver keychain on the lead,



Ivy Ice, the dog's name!! It was just like hers!! But, why? Melody ignored that thought as they ran up the cobbled road to the looming , towering orphanage. As Melody stepped inside the great, panelled oak doors of the orphanage, it was eerily quiet, unnaturally cold, and she could only hear Ivy's paws scratching along the creaky parquet flooring but strangely not her own footsteps. None of the girls, or even malevolent Mrs Hogginathy didn't acknowledge her entrance. As she looked very closely, she was overcome by the overwhelming feeling of dread, all the girls were translucent!! And so was Mrs Hogginathy, Melody stood, in the middle of the hallway trying to figure it out, and her head was hurting. Then, all became clear. Melody was astonished, they were all ghosts, “Of course! They're ghosts, because they're translucent *and* the year is 1887!” Melody muttered to herself, and she looked down at the death certificate and was again startled, as she noticed a slight change to her body and hand, *she* was translucent. Ivy had started whimpering, just like in the grave yard so Melody gave her a hug, but Ivy started pining to go somewhere, and pulled on the lead and trotted out of the orphanage

in the direction of the church so Melody followed and let Ivy lead her to...

The Graveyard.

This time Ivy walked passed the chest, weaving independently in and out of the ivy-covered graves, all the way to a grave right on the edge, which was quite new. And this time as she read it Melody fainted for real.

**Melody Iceglass, Born 1856, Died 1867 aged 11  
Is remembered because she died on the Child Stretcher,  
the worst punishment in the orphanage**