

The Ghost Who Comforted Me

By Michele Zirkle Marcum | February 29, 2016

The inevitability of dying haunted me during my teen years. My bedtime prayers didn't alleviate or even lessen the phobia. Saying, "Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul take," served to increase my apprehension about the subject.

As soon as I'd nod off at bedtime, I'd jerk awake. I'd worry about leaving my body no matter what the circumstances. Even the idea of crossing over via a peaceful sleep made me shudder. I didn't want to exist in oblivion and was petrified to think I may not possess my own identity once I passed away.

I wanted to stay coherent and self-aware. I wanted to believe that I'd always be aware of my thoughts and in control of my body, regardless of what my celestial form would look like. In my late teens, my Grandpa Happy died from a heart attack and a few nights later, there he was, in spirit form, sitting on my bed telling me hello. As his hazel eyes locked onto mine, he said he would watch over me. He hugged me and vanished. It wasn't a dream. His hug was as real as the dark chocolate I'm eating as I write this column.

Grandpa showing himself to me as a rational and conscious person, although in a more transparent form than I'd ever seen him or anyone else, comforted me. The experience gave me a bonafide reason to think that, I too, would still be "Me" when I died.

Grandpa had a desire to protect me, and he possessed the faculties to express that desire. He was dead, yet he knew who he was. He was my grandpa, and he was able to manifest himself so that I could recognize him.

Several years later, Grandpa appeared to me in a dream looking about forty years old. He was standing by the ocean, tropical shirt blowing in the breeze in what looked like Hawaii. He just looked at me and smiled—no words needed. He wanted me to know he was still around somewhere in the cosmos and happy. I woke knowing I had really seen him.

I love Grandpa as much today as I did when he was physically here, living and breathing and driving me to a Barbara Mandrell concert or through McClure's drive-thru for a milkshake. My love for Grandpa transcends time just like I believe the essence of my soul will when I die, and thanks to a ghostly visit from him, I stopped dreading bedtime.

Now, I slumber knowing that even if my heart stops beating, the love inside of me will leap through my consciousness, connecting me to not only my loved ones who've passed into higher realms, but to the ones I've left behind.

I hope my holographic appearance to my descendant's will be as reassuring as Grandpa's was to me, but in the meantime, while I'm still three dimensional, I'll be whispering a more positive prayer in my grandbabies' ears.

"Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. Watch me safely through the night. Wake me with the morning light—even if it's in a new dimension."