

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:21,480

Who can tell us the truth about life after death?

2

00:00:21,480 --> 00:00:26,500

This American minister who claims he was swallowed up by the fires of hell?

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00:00:26,500 --> 00:00:31,700

This girl who says she saw her grandmother in the gardens of heaven?

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00:00:31,700 --> 00:00:41,220

Or this Air Force doctor whose revolutionary experiments point to a more down to earth solution?

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00:00:41,220 --> 00:00:47,260

Mysteries from the fires of Arthur C. Clarke, author of 2001 and inventor of the communications

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00:00:47,260 --> 00:00:48,260

satellite.

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00:00:48,260 --> 00:00:53,740

Now in retreat in Sri Lanka he ponders the riddles of this and other worlds.

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00:01:18,260 --> 00:01:28,660

All religions face the greatest of mysteries, what happens when we die?

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00:01:28,660 --> 00:01:32,780

The Buddhists believe we may be reincarnated in this world.

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00:01:32,780 --> 00:01:37,900

Other faiths believe the soul discards the body and enters a spiritual realm.

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00:01:37,900 --> 00:01:43,780

However, a growing number of people claim they have already glimpsed an afterlife.

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00:01:43,780 --> 00:01:48,620

When they were revived after having been pronounced dead by doctors, they speak of

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00:01:48,620 --> 00:01:54,180

floating peacefully down a dark tunnel towards a shining light.

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00:01:54,180 --> 00:01:57,780

Sometimes they meet dead friends and members of their family.

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00:01:57,780 --> 00:02:03,460

Dr. Melvin Morse was inspired to investigate when child patients told him extraordinary

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00:02:03,460 --> 00:02:07,140

stories of their near-death experiences.

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00:02:07,140 --> 00:02:11,420

Many of them were too young to describe what they had seen, so Morse encouraged them to

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00:02:11,420 --> 00:02:13,340

explain in pictures.

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00:02:13,340 --> 00:02:17,220

The innocent artists produced graphic glimpses of childhood heaven.

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00:02:17,220 --> 00:02:24,460

Here are some drawings that children have drawn for me of their near-death experiences.

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00:02:24,460 --> 00:02:30,740

This is a six-year-old boy who nearly died during a routine tonsillectomy, had three

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00:02:30,740 --> 00:02:37,900

cardiac arrests, and here we see a long tunnel then leading to a rainbow bridge.

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00:02:37,900 --> 00:02:59,220

This is a five-year-old girl who nearly died of bacterial meningitis here at Valley General

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00:02:59,220 --> 00:03:00,220

Hospital.

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00:03:00,220 --> 00:03:05,100

A great wealth of detail here that she was not able to articulate.

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00:03:05,100 --> 00:03:09,220

Then we see her floating out of her body.

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00:03:09,220 --> 00:03:14,220

Here is Jesus wearing a little red hat, who she said was very nice.

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00:03:14,220 --> 00:03:16,860

There's three angels.

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00:03:16,860 --> 00:03:23,940

This rainbow, she said, is a light who told her who she was and where she was to go.

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00:03:23,940 --> 00:03:27,740

She also said this was a door where the dead people were.

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00:03:27,740 --> 00:03:32,700

This door here, she said, was where grandpas and grandmas and babies who were waiting to

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00:03:32,700 --> 00:03:34,980

be born.

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00:03:34,980 --> 00:03:41,340

Now this is another patient of mine, Jesse Lott, and she nearly died of fulminant liver

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00:03:41,340 --> 00:03:44,420

failure from mononucleosis.

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00:03:44,420 --> 00:03:49,340

She had to have a needle stuck into her heart to resuscitate her, so that's near-death by

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00:03:49,340 --> 00:03:52,700

anyone's criteria.

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00:03:52,700 --> 00:03:57,700

Jesse bounce back to health, but vividly remembers her brush with death.

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00:03:57,700 --> 00:03:59,700

Well, I was just sick.

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00:04:00,140 --> 00:04:05,220

Then all of a sudden, there was white lights or white cloud-type thingies around me, and

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00:04:05,220 --> 00:04:09,420

I saw my grandmother, and she was just sitting there in this wooden chair, and she was smiling,

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00:04:09,420 --> 00:04:12,780

and she didn't say anything, but she looked happy.

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00:04:12,780 --> 00:04:15,660

And here's her grandmother sitting on a brown chair.

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00:04:15,660 --> 00:04:20,860

Her grandmother had already died, and then we see her grandmother surrounded by this

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00:04:20,860 --> 00:04:21,860

white light.

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00:04:21,860 --> 00:04:25,940

When I think about it, it just gives me that warm feeling inside, and it just touches me,

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00:04:25,940 --> 00:04:30,460

and just to think about it, to know that if I was near-death, my grandma was there.

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00:04:30,460 --> 00:04:32,660

She was there to be there with me.

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00:04:32,660 --> 00:04:38,500

Now this is a patient of mine named Crystal Merzlach, and she was seven years old when

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00:04:38,500 --> 00:04:41,740

she nearly drowned in a community swimming pool.

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00:04:41,740 --> 00:04:48,180

And she said that she floated out of her body and went down a long tunnel, and here we see

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00:04:48,180 --> 00:04:53,900

the ground, which interestingly enough, she draws blue as the sky, and then she said a

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00:04:53,900 --> 00:04:58,540

hole opened up in heaven, and she could see down to her brother.

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00:04:58,540 --> 00:05:02,540

She loves him very much, so she indicates that with a red heart.

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00:05:02,540 --> 00:05:07,580

And as this hole opened up in heaven, in which she could see her brother, it was a big factor

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00:05:07,580 --> 00:05:14,380

in her deciding to return to her body.

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00:05:14,380 --> 00:05:16,300

Crystal is now grown up.

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00:05:16,300 --> 00:05:20,300

She was the first of Dr. Morse's patients to describe an afterlife.

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00:05:21,100 --> 00:05:26,140

He asked me what it was like to be in a coma, and I said, oh, it was fun.

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00:05:26,140 --> 00:05:28,460

Heaven was fun.

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00:05:28,460 --> 00:05:35,100

I was asked by Elizabeth, my guardian angel, whether I wanted to stay or come back, and

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00:05:35,100 --> 00:05:38,380

I said, no, why would I ever want to leave this place?

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00:05:38,380 --> 00:05:39,380

It's so beautiful.

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00:05:39,380 --> 00:05:41,580

There's so much love here.

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00:05:41,580 --> 00:05:43,540

And she said, OK.

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00:05:43,540 --> 00:05:48,660

And I thought about it for a second, and I thought, no, I want to go back.

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00:05:48,660 --> 00:05:55,780

I thought, I wouldn't ever be able to hug my mom again or anybody I really loved.

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00:05:55,780 --> 00:06:00,980

And for that sole reason, I decided to come back.

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00:06:00,980 --> 00:06:05,660

Within the covers of a family photograph album, Leia forgotten picture which dramatically

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00:06:05,660 --> 00:06:08,660

backed up Crystal's story.

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00:06:08,660 --> 00:06:15,620

We came to a page, and I came to realize that my great-grandma Dora was the grandma that

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00:06:15,620 --> 00:06:16,620

I saw up in heaven.

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00:06:16,620 --> 00:06:18,780

And I pointed to her and said, that's her.

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00:06:18,780 --> 00:06:22,220

That's who I saw up in heaven, and that's my grandma Dora.

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00:06:22,220 --> 00:06:27,020

And they were very surprised because she died before I had been born.

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00:06:27,020 --> 00:06:30,740

Near-death experiences tell us everything about death.

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00:06:30,740 --> 00:06:36,780

The fact that when we die, our body just doesn't stop.

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00:06:36,780 --> 00:06:40,380

As I used to think before I started near-death experiences, we just sort of check out into

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00:06:40,380 --> 00:06:41,780

the darkness.

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00:06:41,780 --> 00:06:43,540

That clearly is not the case.

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00:06:43,540 --> 00:06:46,380

We will all have a near-death experience when we die.

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00:06:46,380 --> 00:06:49,860

In fact, they're the dying experience.

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00:06:49,860 --> 00:06:54,780

The impact of standing on the brink of death has left its mark on the members of this Seattle

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00:06:54,780 --> 00:06:56,460

support group.

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00:06:56,460 --> 00:07:01,780

The annual near-death picnic provides a chance to compare notes.

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00:07:01,780 --> 00:07:09,100

Bill Vandebush was hit by shrapnel in a Vietnam airstrike.

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00:07:09,100 --> 00:07:14,380

And as I moved in the tunnel, I suddenly came into this bright white light.

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00:07:14,380 --> 00:07:20,340

And once I entered the light, it was the most beautiful thing I had ever experienced.

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00:07:20,340 --> 00:07:22,140

It was just wonderful.

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00:07:22,140 --> 00:07:28,980

I was able to have knowledge of everything, why we're here, why we exist.

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00:07:28,980 --> 00:07:33,540

It's by far the most incredible experience of my life.

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00:07:33,540 --> 00:07:36,820

Doris Jackson nearly died of dysentery in India.

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00:07:36,860 --> 00:07:40,180

Change to life.

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00:07:40,180 --> 00:07:46,860

I was walking up this path and I saw this light and I realized that there was a presence

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00:07:46,860 --> 00:07:54,900

there and this presence was warm and it was all loving, all forgiving.

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00:07:54,900 --> 00:08:02,860

And to walk into that presence is totally, it's indescribable.

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00:08:02,860 --> 00:08:11,180

Having no feelings that we have here can match that feeling.

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00:08:11,180 --> 00:08:15,300

For Paul Carr, life's priorities are clear.

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00:08:15,300 --> 00:08:22,260

The most important thing I think in life is knowing that this isn't it.

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00:08:22,260 --> 00:08:27,620

If anything, this is the illusion and that the reality is something larger.

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00:08:27,700 --> 00:08:33,940

Georgina Boyson used to suffer from depression, but now has hope.

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00:08:33,940 --> 00:08:39,300

I should probably say that before the experience, I considered myself an agnostic.

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00:08:39,300 --> 00:08:45,060

And since the experience, I would say that there's something out there.

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00:08:45,060 --> 00:08:51,980

Kind of whatever it is, but there is something out there.

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00:08:51,980 --> 00:08:56,820

Some controversial researchers claim success in the search for proof that the human soul

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00:08:56,940 --> 00:08:58,860

can survive death.

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00:08:58,860 --> 00:09:04,660

In 1907 Dr. Duncan McDougall of Boston weighed patients as they died.

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00:09:04,660 --> 00:09:09,740

When one lost an answer and a half, McDougall argued the weight loss was caused by the soul's

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00:09:09,740 --> 00:09:12,260

departure.

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00:09:12,260 --> 00:09:17,700

French psychical researcher Dr. Henri Baradouk found his guinea pigs closer to home.

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00:09:17,700 --> 00:09:24,180

As his son Andre died of consumption, Baradouk tried to photograph his departing spirit.

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00:09:24,180 --> 00:09:28,500

Six months later his wife sighed three times as she breathed her last.

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00:09:28,500 --> 00:09:34,380

Baradouk claimed he'd captured his loved one's souls on film.

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00:09:34,380 --> 00:09:39,900

The idea that we all have a soul independent of the body is reinforced by another quite

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00:09:39,900 --> 00:09:44,140

common but uncanny type of experience.

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00:09:44,140 --> 00:09:49,140

Survivors of accidents or people recovering from operations report having had a bird's

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00:09:49,140 --> 00:09:52,500

eye view of themselves during this crisis.

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00:09:52,500 --> 00:09:59,500

Some even claim to have seen things that they couldn't possibly have known about otherwise.

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00:10:06,260 --> 00:10:10,700

At Arnhem in the Netherlands an emergency admission turned into a classic case of an

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00:10:10,700 --> 00:10:15,780

out of body experience.

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00:10:15,820 --> 00:10:23,700

Nurse Ton Goessens was called to the coronary care unit to resuscitate a heart attack victim.

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00:10:23,700 --> 00:10:31,980

A short while later, just a week or so, the patient came back on our CCU unit and he

122

00:10:31,980 --> 00:10:34,780

had recovered very well.

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00:10:34,780 --> 00:10:41,580

And when he saw me for the first time entering his room, he was very astonished and he said,

124

00:10:41,580 --> 00:10:46,340

you got my teeth, you know where my false teeth are.

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00:10:46,340 --> 00:10:52,140

And I was very astonished, I didn't believe what he said because the time I had seen this

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00:10:52,140 --> 00:10:55,220

man he was unconscious.

127

00:10:55,220 --> 00:11:01,820

But he saw himself laying in bed out of a corner in the small room where the resuscitation

128

00:11:01,820 --> 00:11:03,740

was being done.

129

00:11:03,740 --> 00:11:11,420

And he saw himself above in that room, in that small corner, he saw everything what happened.

130

00:11:11,420 --> 00:11:19,100

He saw us doing the heart massage, he saw us giving infusions and he saw actually me

131

00:11:19,100 --> 00:11:24,900

removing his false teeth and put them on the shelf of just a crash car.

132

00:11:24,900 --> 00:11:29,740

And it was so remarkable because this man couldn't see at all, he was clinically dead

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00:11:29,740 --> 00:11:32,620

at that moment.

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00:11:32,620 --> 00:11:38,460

Such astonishing stories have persuaded mainstream doctors to take near-death experiences seriously.

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00:11:39,020 --> 00:11:43,140

Dr Van Lommel is one of Holland's top cardiologists.

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00:11:43,140 --> 00:11:49,300

He interviewed heart attack survivors and found one in ten had floated out of their body.

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00:11:49,300 --> 00:11:55,300

Van Lommel has designed an experiment to verify stories of bird's eye views from the ceiling.

138

00:11:55,300 --> 00:11:59,020

It's set in a resuscitation room.

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00:11:59,020 --> 00:12:04,740

When the people get their cardiac arrest, then the heartbeat stops, the pulse stops,

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00:12:04,740 --> 00:12:05,740

the blood pressure.

141

00:12:06,220 --> 00:12:08,860

There's no blood pressure anymore, there's no breathing.

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00:12:08,860 --> 00:12:14,300

And we start our resuscitation, that means heart massage, that means electrical shocks,

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00:12:14,300 --> 00:12:16,580

that means drugs.

144

00:12:16,580 --> 00:12:21,140

And when we look through the monitor, you see what happens to the heartbeat.

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00:12:21,140 --> 00:12:27,980

It goes on and you get a flat line on the ECG.

146

00:12:27,980 --> 00:12:31,140

And this is the moment that people get unconscious.

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00:12:31,140 --> 00:12:36,020

They are clinically dead and that's the moment they can have their out-of-the-body experience,

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00:12:36,020 --> 00:12:41,060

that they float around somewhere out of the body, above near the ceiling and they can

149

00:12:41,060 --> 00:12:49,980

see how people are doing the resuscitation on their own body and they can recognize everything.

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00:12:49,980 --> 00:12:55,980

And in our research we put a sign somewhere up on a lamp that they can see a sign during

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00:12:55,980 --> 00:12:59,660

the resuscitation, during the period of clinical death.

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00:12:59,660 --> 00:13:03,700

The message was designed and hidden by an independent researcher.

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00:13:03,700 --> 00:13:09,460

So far no patient has found it, but Van Lommel believes it's just a matter of time.

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00:13:09,460 --> 00:13:14,860

I think it will be clear that sometime we will meet somebody who saw that sign.

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00:13:19,700 --> 00:13:26,500

In 1992 a firestorm devastated homes and businesses on the hills of Oakland, California.

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00:13:26,500 --> 00:13:32,620

Twenty-five people were killed, but psychiatrist Katherine Klassen of Stanford University believes

157

00:13:32,620 --> 00:13:39,100

the disaster may have provided a clue to the root cause of out-of-body experiences.

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00:13:39,100 --> 00:13:44,420

She met shocked survivors as they left federal relief centers and asked them to fill out

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00:13:44,420 --> 00:13:46,180

questionnaires.

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00:13:46,180 --> 00:13:51,300

An astonishing number had felt the sensation.

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00:13:51,300 --> 00:13:57,980

I wasn't surprised that people had this sense of floating above their bodies because people

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00:13:57,980 --> 00:14:04,460

will do whatever they can to protect themselves and if they can't physically protect themselves

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00:14:04,460 --> 00:14:08,780

they will attempt to protect themselves psychologically or mentally.

164

00:14:08,780 --> 00:14:14,620

And so floating above the body, if you can't run away, if you can float above your body

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00:14:14,620 --> 00:14:19,540

it's a way to remove yourself from the event.

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00:14:19,540 --> 00:14:28,740

What our study has to say is that it is possible that people in experiencing the ultimate trauma,

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00:14:28,740 --> 00:14:36,220

which is dying, are using the out-of-body experience as a way to protect themselves.

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00:14:36,220 --> 00:14:41,380

So it's a defensive response to this possible event.

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00:14:41,380 --> 00:14:48,700

For the person concerned, out-of-body experiences seem real, but in one case the idea that the

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00:14:48,700 --> 00:14:52,580

sole source free of the body hit the ground with a bump.

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00:14:52,580 --> 00:14:56,820

Graham Tarr was racing a friend through the streets of Newcastle.

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00:14:56,820 --> 00:15:01,780

I was about 17 at the time and I was coming up Osborne Road here on my motorcycle, far

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00:15:01,780 --> 00:15:02,780

too quickly.

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00:15:02,780 --> 00:15:06,900

And as I came up to this corner I overshot the white line and crossed on the wrong side

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00:15:06,900 --> 00:15:07,900

of the road.

176

00:15:07,900 --> 00:15:12,180

As I came round I realized I was coming straight into the path of an oncoming car.

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00:15:12,180 --> 00:15:17,340

The next thing I knew really was that I was being thrown into the air over the car and

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00:15:17,340 --> 00:15:19,220

I was flying up above it.

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00:15:19,220 --> 00:15:25,100

As I was flying above the car, after watching my helmet slowly fly away from me and land

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00:15:25,100 --> 00:15:29,740

in the garden, I turned back round and realized that I was inevitably heading over the car

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00:15:29,740 --> 00:15:35,100

and towards the ground and decided that wasn't a good idea and that I'd much rather stay

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00:15:35,100 --> 00:15:36,860

precisely where I was.

183

00:15:36,860 --> 00:15:39,340

So in effect that's what I did.

184

00:15:39,340 --> 00:15:44,100

Floating comfortably above the scene, Graham heard the hallelulia chorus.

185

00:15:44,100 --> 00:15:49,620

He saw his body on the road, his bike to one side and his panic-stricken friend.

186

00:15:49,620 --> 00:15:51,820

Gradually he regained consciousness.

187

00:15:51,820 --> 00:15:56,580

The first thing I noticed obviously was the burning pain was coming from the fact that

188

00:15:56,580 --> 00:16:01,820

my motorcycle, rather than being as I'd seen it crumpled up at the front of the car, had

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00:16:01,820 --> 00:16:06,260

in fact followed me through the air and it landed on top of me with my leg through the

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00:16:06,260 --> 00:16:07,260

frame of it.

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00:16:07,260 --> 00:16:10,180

I was burning the back of my leg on the exhaust.

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00:16:10,180 --> 00:16:13,140

I looked around and said I could see my friend anywhere because I'd seen him stop and come

193

00:16:13,140 --> 00:16:16,860

back and be over me but I couldn't see him anywhere.

194

00:16:16,860 --> 00:16:21,580

The two of them all did, I'd seen all the pavements, looking at them with all the terribly

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00:16:21,580 --> 00:16:25,820

concerns, working there and I just realized that the whole thing had been a fantasy, a

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00:16:25,820 --> 00:16:33,140

dream of hallucination.

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00:16:33,140 --> 00:16:38,100

The leader of this devout congregation is loved and respected by his flock.

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00:16:38,100 --> 00:16:43,500

About ten years ago, the Reverend Howard Storm was a university art professor and not the

199

00:16:43,500 --> 00:16:48,380

man he is today.

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00:16:48,380 --> 00:16:56,100

Personal philosophy was to be the biggest, baddest bear in the woods and I tried to promote

201

00:16:56,100 --> 00:16:58,940

an image of being harsh and mean.

202

00:16:58,940 --> 00:17:02,460

I know a lot of people didn't like me and were afraid of me.

203

00:17:02,460 --> 00:17:06,900

On summer Howard and his wife Beverly went on holiday to France.

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00:17:06,900 --> 00:17:10,780

Howard became critically ill with a hole in his stomach.

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00:17:10,780 --> 00:17:15,620

Because he was far from home, he was left untreated for 11 hours.

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00:17:15,620 --> 00:17:19,620

Doctors say it's a miracle that he survived at all.

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00:17:19,620 --> 00:17:23,380

Back in Cincinnati, Howard confided in his doctor.

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00:17:23,380 --> 00:17:27,780

He told him his survival had been remarkable in more than just medical terms.

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00:17:27,780 --> 00:17:36,580

He described a very horrifying experience of going through a tunnel and these little

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00:17:36,580 --> 00:17:44,340

demon-like creatures were coming at him and ripping off pieces of his skin until they

211

00:17:44,340 --> 00:17:47,500

had really torn away all the skin from his body.

212

00:17:47,500 --> 00:17:51,300

I was sure that I was never going to be back in the world again, that I was lost to the

213

00:17:51,300 --> 00:17:58,780

world and I'd ended up in this horrible, awful place full of meanness and absence of

214

00:17:58,780 --> 00:18:05,020

anything good or nice or decent, just a place of cruelty and torment.

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00:18:05,020 --> 00:18:14,140

I recalled myself as a little child singing Jesus Loves Me and I grasped at that out of

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00:18:14,140 --> 00:18:20,620

desperation and called out for Jesus to save me, not knowing or believing but only hoping

217

00:18:20,620 --> 00:18:22,500

that there might be something to that.

218

00:18:22,500 --> 00:18:27,220

And with that, a person of light came to me, carried me out of there and took me into a

219

00:18:27,220 --> 00:18:30,460

world of light.

220

00:18:30,460 --> 00:18:33,180

Howard had escaped from the jaws of hell.

221

00:18:33,180 --> 00:18:34,180

He was transformed.

222

00:18:34,180 --> 00:18:44,580

He gave up his old ways, resigned from his job and joined the church.

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00:18:44,580 --> 00:18:48,580

My wife said to me several times after the experience that the man that she had married

224

00:18:48,580 --> 00:18:53,500

and had been married to for over 20 years died that day in Paris and I was a complete

225

00:18:53,500 --> 00:18:56,500

stranger to her.

226

00:18:56,500 --> 00:19:00,420

Bob and Margaret Vitz have known Howard for over 20 years.

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00:19:00,420 --> 00:19:04,340

His radical change of character still amazes them.

228

00:19:04,340 --> 00:19:08,980

If someone had told me this 10 years ago, I would have been astounded to even imagine

229

00:19:08,980 --> 00:19:11,100

that this would happen to him.

230

00:19:11,100 --> 00:19:15,780

I would have never imagined that he would give up being a professor at the university.

231

00:19:15,780 --> 00:19:21,700

He studied religion very hard and of course now as a minister, I would have never pictured

232

00:19:21,700 --> 00:19:24,900

any of this.

233

00:19:24,900 --> 00:19:30,540

Of all the people whom we knew, I think Howard would have just about been the last one we

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00:19:30,540 --> 00:19:37,180

would have thought that would go through this transformation.

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00:19:37,180 --> 00:19:41,780

As far as I'm concerned, I went to that edge and beyond it.

236

00:19:41,780 --> 00:19:45,860

I've been close enough that I've been where most people haven't.

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00:19:45,860 --> 00:19:50,460

I've been to the edge of death and back.

238

00:19:50,460 --> 00:19:53,940

Many scientific discoveries are made by accident.

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00:19:53,940 --> 00:20:01,060

A possible explanation of near-death experiences was stumbled upon by American aviation doctors

240

00:20:01,060 --> 00:20:09,140

testing pilots to find the limits of human endurance.

241

00:20:09,260 --> 00:20:14,100

The Naval Air Warfare Centre, the pilots take their turn on the world's largest and most

242

00:20:14,100 --> 00:20:19,420

powerful centrifuge.

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00:20:19,420 --> 00:20:25,180

It can spin round more than 48 times a minute and stimulate the massive gravitational pulls

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00:20:25,180 --> 00:20:28,540

the G-forces produced in a fighter jet.

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00:20:28,540 --> 00:20:34,860

These can knock the pilots unconscious and produce symptoms just like near-death experiences.

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00:20:34,860 --> 00:20:39,460

So certainly tunnel vision is one of the most frequent symptoms that we have.

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00:20:39,460 --> 00:20:44,980

Dreamlets that include seeing family, friends, loved ones, a sense of not wanting to be disturbed

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00:20:44,980 --> 00:20:47,980

because it's a pleasurable experience.

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00:20:47,980 --> 00:20:54,140

Those dreamlets and experiences being extremely vivid, our loss of conscious episodes, are

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00:20:54,140 --> 00:21:00,660

remembered 20, 25 years after their occurrence in crystal-clear detail.

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00:21:05,860 --> 00:21:10,860

Winnery should know he's had more rides in the centrifuge than any of his pilots.

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00:21:10,860 --> 00:21:16,860

He knows at first hand what it feels like.

253

00:21:16,860 --> 00:21:21,860

The research team's logo portrays the Grim Reaper because fighter pilots flirt with

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00:21:21,860 --> 00:21:24,860

death as the G-forces increase.

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00:21:24,860 --> 00:21:30,860

The tunnel and shining light design reflects the frequency of apparent near-death experiences.

256

00:21:31,860 --> 00:21:37,860

I can relate to you a series of loss of consciousness episodes that I had in which I think I had

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00:21:37,860 --> 00:21:44,860

six or seven loss of conscious episodes over about a 15 minute period, successively worse

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00:21:44,860 --> 00:21:50,860

insults to the nervous system on each run.

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00:22:01,860 --> 00:22:10,860

A video camera in the centrifuge cockpit recorded the moment when Winnery lost consciousness on each run.

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00:22:15,860 --> 00:22:22,860

As soon as the pilot blacks out, the centrifuge slows, the G-forces reduce and the pilot comes back.

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00:22:22,860 --> 00:22:26,860

He has to press a button to shut off the alarm.

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00:22:27,860 --> 00:22:30,860

I think that was enough.

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00:22:33,860 --> 00:22:41,860

Just after I had left the centrifuge and gotten out and was walking down the hall, all of a sudden I found that I was

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00:22:41,860 --> 00:22:48,860

no longer, if you will, inside myself. I was up behind myself, looking down on myself at the same time.

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00:22:48,860 --> 00:22:53,860

And that lasted about, oh, a minute to a minute and a half.

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00:22:53,860 --> 00:22:58,860

We've seen that on rare occasion in some of our other subjects and our reports that we have.

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00:22:58,860 --> 00:23:06,860

They're not frequently reported. We would probably anticipate that it might be much more frequent if the insults were greater.

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00:23:06,860 --> 00:23:11,860

Rob McConnell's abiding memory is of the tunnel and the light.

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00:23:11,860 --> 00:23:25,860

It was a loss of all peripheral vision. Just, if you could imagine, losing everything except for a small area directly in front of you.

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00:23:25,860 --> 00:23:37,860

And it would just be totally dark on the outside and coming into a bright, real light gray, maybe a white area in the center of the vision.

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00:23:41,860 --> 00:23:52,860

Rob had been trained to fight to stay conscious, but the G-forces won. His ordeal looks distressing, but it seemed quite different from where he was sitting.

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00:23:54,860 --> 00:24:04,860

My feelings were just warm and pleasant, almost euphoric feeling of just that everything was okay. There was no problem at all.

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00:24:04,860 --> 00:24:25,860

Our research indicates that many of the experiences that someone with a near-death experience has would be similar to the loss of consciousness episodes we see because they share in common lack of blood flow to the nervous system.

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00:24:25,860 --> 00:24:37,860

For our pilots, the lack of blood flow, of course, is caused by being exposed to high G-forces. And someone who's having a cardiac arrest is just because the heart's not pumping at all.

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00:24:37,860 --> 00:24:46,860

One thing that the research has done is, certainly makes me less fearful of death, you can't die without losing consciousness.

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00:24:46,860 --> 00:24:54,860

The last thing that I'll enter is the unconscious state prior to dying. That's certainly not unpleasant whatsoever.

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00:24:54,860 --> 00:25:07,860

So there's certain reassurance that the dying process is certainly not an unpleasant one in terms of the unconsciousness portion of it. So that's reassuring to a great extent.

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00:25:07,860 --> 00:25:16,860

So, near-death experiences may turn out to have a perfectly straightforward physical cause. Yet, this need not disappoint us.

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00:25:16,860 --> 00:25:26,860

Even if they tell us nothing about an afterlife, they give us hope that death may be far more peaceful and gentle than we sometimes fear.