BOOK REVIEW

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Talking With Angel is about a young girl confronted with a serious and life-threatening disease; her process of coping with hope, pain, decline, and despair; and ultimately the progression of her leukemia, ending with her transition into the Light. This is an amazing book, because Evelyn Elsaesser-Valarino has written this intimate story in the first person, from the “inside” of the girl, with all her thoughts and feelings. And this is why you become so intimately connected with her as she is confiding her innermost thoughts, and all her heart-rending emotions become your own emotions. While reading the book you become one with her, with her illness, with everything what happens around her and within her, including the realization that she will have no future like other boys and girls of her age.

And by identifying yourself with this girl you become a part of her process of spiritual growth, a lesson for living and dying. During the progression of her illness she is comforted by her “inner communication” with her doll Angel, a gift from her deceased grandmother. Her doll Angel explains to her that death is not the end, but only a transition into another form of being. Ultimately, towards the end of her life in the ward for terminally ill children, she hears about the

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deep and transforming near-death experience (NDE) of James, up to then a rather skeptical fellow patient, who has a miraculous cure of the malignant course of his illness following his NDE. The description of this near-death experience is very impressive and very complete, and one of the best accounts of an NDE I ever have read. Her fear of death is ultimately lifted when she reaches the moment of leaving her body, and while seeing her grandmother, going towards the Light.

As Ken Ring writes in his foreword, this girl could be anyone; and while reading you realize that it could be you, the empathetic reader of this moving book. While reading the book I was wondering if it was especially meant for adults, or also for children with life-threatening illness. The words the doll Angel uses during her communication with the girl seem to be more suited for adults than for children, as does the impressive description of James’s NDE, but the emotional impact of this book will be the same for older children and parents, and for anyone who has been confronted with death and dying or is facing a life-threatening illness. But this book is also a very special gift for caregivers working in hospitals and in hospices, because it is all about the lessons we can learn from NDEs about a new insight into life and death.

Elsaesser-Valarino has an extensive knowledge of NDEs. She has been working in this field for more than 20 years, and has written two books about this subject: On the Other Side of Life: Exploring the Phenomenon of Near-Death Experience (Elsaesser-Valarino, 1997), and Lessons From the Light: What We Can Learn From the Near-Death Experience, in collaboration with Ring (Ring and Elsaesser-Valarino, 2000). In this very good and most important and comforting book she uses a totally new and emotional approach by confronting the reader with the spiritual lessons to be learned from NDEs by becoming intimately involved in the story of a girl facing leukemia, and her transformation during the progression of her disease.

Before concluding this review I would like to share some endorsements of Talking with Angel that currently appear on the Internet website of the American distributor (http://www.steinerbooks.org/detail.html?id=0863154921):

Honestly, I was very moved by the story’s emotional power and the depth of the teachings it conveys. I found the story gripping from the very beginning, but I think what hit me the most was the account Evelyn Elsaesser-Valarino wrote, in epistolary form, of James’ near-death experience. It is simply one of the best and richest accounts (even if it is fiction) of an NDE I’ve ever come across. I don't think
it is saying too much to claim that in itself this bit of writing is a masterpiece. (Kenneth Ring)

So intimate that you feel yourself “inside” the girl, caring what she thinks and feels during crucial moments. The description of the near-death experience is among the most riveting accounts I have yet read about the phenomenon and its after-effects. The book is simply incredible! Highly recommended for older children, parents, and anyone coming to grips with life and death issues – regardless of age. (P. M. H. Atwater)

A powerful story of a young girl who becomes a woman during her intense struggle with a life-threatening illness. I recommend this book highly to everyone who values personal growth and spiritual transformation. (Bill Guggenheim)

Gripping reading .... The format is a tour de force. The simplicity of the narrative structure provides the vehicle through which spiritual wisdom is formulated and transmitted in an eminently palatable fashion. The reader feels a natural empathy for the girl's situation, which is ultimately that of every reader of this review. Once you read this book you will understand why human life is such a gift and can be passed on to those in need. (David Lorimer)

In conclusion, I am very happy that Elsaesser-Valarino has written this book, and I am obviously not the only one. I recommend it highly for everybody who is willing to be open to the spiritual wisdom that death could well be a mere passing from one state of consciousness into another.

References
