

Letter to the Editor

Frightening Near-Death Experiences

To the Editor:

In response to the articles on frightening near-death experiences (NDEs) by Kenneth Ring (1994a, 1994b), Christopher Bache (1994), and Nancy Evans Bush (1994) in the Fall 1994 issue of the Journal, please allow us to share an insight developed after reading Anthony Borgia's *Life in the World Unseen* (1993).

This narrative purports to be a description of life after death, communicated by an individual whose demise was not "unscheduled." NDErs apparently "die" before their time and pass into the next world unexpectedly. According to Borgia, when we die at our appointed time, there is always a guide awaiting us, ready to escort us into the next plane of existence, to comfort us, to calm our fears, to decrease our confusion, to answer our questions, and to aid us in this great transition. NDErs, on the other hand, seem to appear in the other life unexpectedly. Because of this, there seems to be some delay in providing an escort. Some NDErs have no recollection of meeting with any kind of escort; this alone might induce panic and terror.

Borgia made three points that might help explain frightening NDEs. First, he stated clearly that evil-doers in this life so degrade their souls that they find themselves in unpleasant circumstances in the next world, because they did nothing to provide for the care of their souls while they were on earth. Therefore, their place of "punishment" is a nightmarish region of their own creation, which they—to quote Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843)—have "forged in life, link by link and yard by yard" by ill treatment of their fellow humans. So it is certainly possible that some NDErs see a preview of what they have prepared for themselves, if they are cruel and evil-minded.

Second, Borgia wrote that these realms of self-inflicted punishment interpenetrate the earthplane. In other words, the sectors of the parallel universe we describe as "the hereafter" that lie closest to us are these darker realms. Therefore, when an NDEr glimpses things just on the other side, what he or she might see right off could be someplace most unpleasant. Some NDErs have said they remember

seeing gray figures in mists, downcast and sorrowful because they could not tear themselves away from the things of this life, whether because of remorse or malevolence, we do not know. This might be a good model to explain what we refer to as "hauntings" and "ghost phenomena." Some people believe these souls are trapped near the earthplane because they refuse to believe that they are, in fact, dead!

Third, the purportedly deceased author of *Life in the World Unseen* described in great detail the first few moments of his transition. He had an urge to sit up, did so, and was quite easily out of his body. An old friend was immediately there by his deathbed, a man named Edwin. Edwin took the newly departed individual "up" to the realm where he would rest for a brief time and dwell as he continued his spiritual progression. As they made the journey, Edwin told the dead man to close his eyes and not open them again until he was told to do so. As they journeyed through these "lower realms" it would have made sense that Edwin would not have wanted his new charge to see what goes on there; it would have been too upsetting and so he saved a tour of the dark places for later, following a period of rest.

We think these insights might possibly help explain the strange reports of negative NDEs, in particular those reported in Maurice Rawlings' (1978) fascinating and pioneering book.

References

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