

Till Death Don't Us Part

Writer: Karen Frances McCarthy

It seems strange that death is the catalyst that teaches so many of us how to live. It was unquestionably so in my case. I'd been a confirmed skeptic and atheist. I'd long since abandoned the Catholic Church of my childhood, and except for the oft meditation and dharma practice of the non-theistic Soto Zen, it had been decades since I'd seen the inside of a church. And I liked it that way.

People often commented on my rich and varied life. Free spirited, they'd say. Right out of college, I won a green card in a lottery. I flew from Dublin to the United States, which I saw from the convoy of a traveling circus. I worked in Hollywood, and made movies and documentaries. I worked with actors and musicians and writers. It was an exciting time.

Eventually, I grew weary of the high life and wanted something more meaningful. This brought me back the passion of my teenage years—journalism, particularly political journalism, which eventually landed me in Iraq.

It wasn't the death and destruction and witnessing the horrible things people are capable of doing to each other that shifted my value of life. That happened one fateful day when I was in Virginia interviewing people for my first book, a cultural outreach project and part of the peace effort in Northern Ireland. It was day I got the call about the sudden death of my fiancé, Johann, in New York City. It wasn't quite his death that taught me the value of life. It was his afterlife. Many children see spirits and outgrow it. At least, that's how it had been for me. As a child, I'd wake to see people standing at the end of the bed. There wasn't much of a difference to me between them and those in the flesh. I knew they weren't alive in the sense my friends understood, but I knew they weren't dead either. By the time I got into my early teens, I became more interested in teenage issues and lost interest in them. They stopped coming. I began to remember them as imaginary friends, and soon didn't remember them at all. Until that critical afternoon, which instigated a flood of



bizarre events and triggered those early memories.

Strange phenomena, which I describe in *Till Death Don't Us Part: A True Story of Awakening to Love After Life*, started to happen. Small objects started moving about. Electronics started turning on. Shadows of people appeared in front of me, and old familiar smells filled the air around me. Something was touching me—tugging on my hair or caressing my face. My first thought was that I was having some sort of breakdown. Being a person of intellectual pride, as I was back then, that was something I could not accept, so I started investigating these odd incidents. I read everything I could. I interviewed everyone I could. I was a skeptic grappling for a rational explanation to supernatural phenomena.

While I was seeking a scientific or psychological explanation, helpful people were appearing in my path: psychologists, scientists, and, ironically, the local Catholic priest and the pastor at a nearby Spiritualist church.

I probably frustrated both my fiancé—himself once a confirmed atheist—who was clearly trying to reach me as well as others in spirit form who were trying to help him. My awakening, or realization, or acceptance came about very slowly. It took a steady parade of both paranormal phenomena and wise people for me

to even begin to entertain the possibility that consciousness survived death.

I read *Love Lives On* by the wonderful Professor Lou LaGrande. In those days, before the professor's passing, we had many wonderful conversations about signs. He described them as delicate and loving and sensitive. I, on the other hand, as one friend described, was getting burning bushes.

But burning bushes, extraordinary encounters, and elaborate sequences of events were what it took for me to finally have an epiphany. My search for a rational explanation produced the most rational explanation of all. I likened it to Occam's Razor, that is, there exists two explanations for an occurrence and the one that requires the smallest number of assumptions is usually correct. In my case, the simplest explanation for these inexplicable events was that consciousness survives death, and that everything was orchestrated by my fiancé to let me know that love does indeed live on.

That was the epiphany that changed my entire perspective on life and death. Not only did it shatter my perceptions, it awakened the mediumistic faculty of childhood that I'd long since rejected.

He, in his so-called death, taught me how to live. He taught me the value of life and the real meaning of unconditional love. He died and didn't leave me. As if teaching a toddler, he taught me the language of Spirit and how to continue our relationship. It has truly been the most extraordinary relationship of my life.

Many people ask me if he's described the afterlife. But the lesson he has taught me is not about wanting to know the future or what awaits. It's about our purpose and point right now in this moment. We are here for a reason, and that reason is to be present, to awaken to the fact that we are already in eternity. We don't have to wait to die to get there, or to be unconditionally loved, or to heal. All of this happens now if we awaken to the growth and healing possibilities that face us daily as we meet the challenges of this life. Why else would we be here?

As my story unfolds in *Till Death Don't Us Part*, I manage to grow beyond "is it me or my imagination" or the technicalities of mediumship to the true gift I received from Johann. Not only did he give me the gift of his continued presence, he gave me a deep and

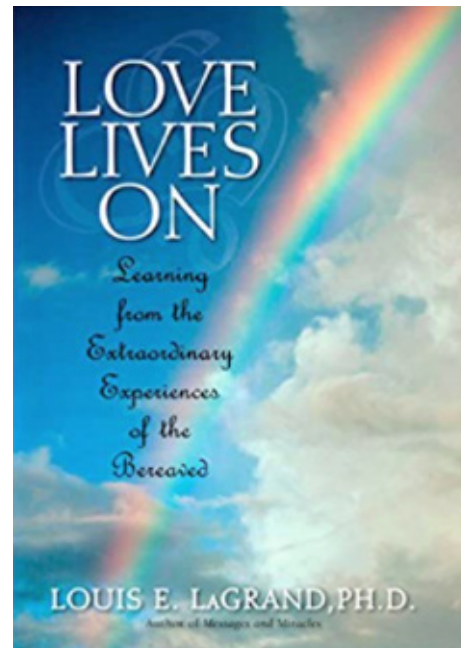
unabiding appreciation for how precious and how beautiful life is in each moment, even in our darkest moments.

His message to me is the message of all those in Spirit form for all who still walk the planet. We cannot comprehend how eternally and unconditionally we are loved. This is the gift we need to pass on to others, and what I tried to pass on by writing our story. We, Spiritualists, who have had our existential anxieties removed and who have experienced undying love, how can we not pay that forward in a deep sense of compassion for those around us.

Karen Frances McCarthy is a Spiritualist medium and bestselling author of *Till Death Don't Us Part: A True Story of Awakening to Love After Life* (White Crow Books, 2020). You can read more about her at www.karenfrancesmedium.com

Perhaps they are not the stars, but rather openings in Heaven where the love of our lost ones pours through and shines down upon us to let us know they are happy.

Unknown



Front cover of *Love Lives On* by Louis E. LaGrand, Ph.D. (Berkeley Publishing Group, an imprint of Penguin Books, 2006). Available as a paperback and Kindle edition on Amazon.com.