

# The Nineteenth Death

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Eighteen. The number surprised her when she stopped long enough to think about it. That's how many times death had touched Jennie's personal world in her adult years... so far. Parents. Sisters. Grandparents. In-laws. Nephews. Close friends. Classmates who had graduated ahead of their class. Death seems to have always been part of the warp and woof of her life. Is that why she had become so inured to it, she muller? So matter of fact about news of yet another passing? When the phone call comes late at night, the question in her mind is never "Why did they have to go", only "Oh, was it his time?", sometimes followed with, "I wonder when it will be mine? Who will get that call about me?", but never with a sense of fear or dread.

When was it that she had let go of the customary fear of death? The gnashing of teeth, wailing and railing against what must be inevitable for every living thing – herself included? The stories of pearly gates beckoning the homecoming soul had rung hollow for many years. She found of much greater interest, and far more compelling, reports from those who had personally experienced death, then come back to the world of the living. The common threads running through them of an overwhelming sense of joy and peace, of a radiant light providing a sense of welcome actually instilled in her a wishful anticipation of experiencing it for herself.

Back in her thirties, Jennie had become determined to make sense of life and death beyond the "glass darkly" provided by standard religion. When she had admitted to herself that she could no longer accept the traditional beliefs on these important subjects, she set out to find what she could accept as holding potential truth. She playfully called the process "building her own current working mythology".

Her quest had her reading numerous authors on the subject of life after death which lived in the 100 series of the Dewey Decimal System in libraries somewhere between philosophy and non-fiction: Jess Stearn, Edgar Cayce, and Deepak Chopra among others opened new worlds to her. She read what science had to say, what other religions thought, what the world's great thinkers had posited in their time. Her thirst seemed insatiable, but after about ten years, she felt satisfied that she had built an understanding sufficient to satisfy that thirst for some larger truth. She had come to the conclusion that life really is eternal, that reincarnation is our current best understanding of how that plays out within

and around us, that there truly is an incredible intelligence at work at all levels and in all dimensions of the universe, both those known and those yet to be discovered. She really had no need to gain agreement or approval from others for her newly integrated views. She just set about to live with a greater sense of peace, one not built on “believing” but on understanding.

That discovery process had given her a secret sense of peace and confidence as she encountered that endless variety of deaths in her life. Her mother-in-law’s quiet passing in her sleep; the end of a long struggle with cancer for her girlfriend and confidante of 35 years; the shocking news of her young nephew’s suicide. It also helped Jennie to cope with her most closely guarded secret - a nineteenth death, the only one for which she held direct personal responsibility.

It was thirty-nine years ago. Even then she had called it date rape, although she had been with the guy for a few months. On that last night, when she had told him they were through, he went kind of nuts. Seven weeks later when the doctor gave her the news, she felt she really had no choice. In that first year of getting her feet on the ground as a divorcee and single mother, how could she possibly take care of yet another life?

The doctor who performed the procedure assured her the gas would make it fairly painless, but when halfway through Jennie had lost her ability to hear, the doctor had said she would have to either wait until another day when a different anesthetic was available, or just continue. “We’re almost done,” the woman doctor assured her, so grasping the hand of the assistant tightly Jennie said, “Go ahead.” The pain was vivid, but bearable. She took it as cathartic compensation for her sins, both real and imagined. It took several days to recover physically, but the life she had voluntarily ended somehow stayed with her, an unseen presence deep within her heart.

Jennie’s “current working mythology” reassured her the essence of that would-be girl-child – Sarah, she called her; she had always wanted a daughter, so it was easy to think of it as a girl - had gone on to find another mother. If that had happened right away in earth time, Sarah would likely be a mother herself by now. Possibly a grandmother. Sometimes Jennie’s own higher self had conversations with her in the dark hours of the night. Sarah always reassures Jennie that she long ago had forgiven her for that hard choice, and encourages Jennie, her would-have-been mother, to do the same for herself.

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