

*Soul Story: There and Back Again*

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When the Brewers won the American League pennant I joined the throngs and behaved like so many others - I got stupidly drunk and howled at the moon from a war-torn Wisconsin Avenue. In the morning I awoke, half-dead, with my hands clutched about my exploding head. I wasn't thinking when I unscrewed the Extra-Strength Tylenol bottle. I took two tablets and died altogether. For ours is a society based greatly on trust, and I got burned because there are countless too many assholes about. Drat it and damn it all! Life on Earth is so insecure.

But reincarnation is for real, and that's why I'm here again. I'm the first person in the history of the world to be reincarnated only to come back as the same being in the same time - with full memory intact. Unlucky for me, perhaps, but lucky for you, because mine was the ultimate "out-of-body experience," and I'm happy to reveal it.

Here is my woeful story; pity me and give heed:

As my soul drifted from my body - still clutching that vile vial of poisoned pills - I screamed with ambivalence, for I've always been intrigued by death but have never lost my love for life, so it was necessary for death to come to me by accident. It did.

As I soared higher into obscurity among the cheers and chants still lifting from Wisconsin Avenue I began to wonder where my ultimate destiny would be. Being reared a good Christian it had always been my desire to go to heaven following my demise, but I also wanted to be among my peers of past and present whom I'd always viewed as hell-bent, so naturally I was worried. But my worries were diminished when it became clear to me that I was going to neither heaven nor hell, for in reality they don't exist in absolutes.

Instead, I drifted about the universe, my own body lying in rest but my soul scattering itself among the atoms of the atmosphere of all that ever was. Zowie! Neato! Bonkers! I saw the Devil and I saw the Lord and all that have fallen twixt the twain. It was awesome.

You see, when you die you don't separate between body and soul in an imaginary fashion, for there really is such a thing as a human soul, but it's about as absolute as heaven and hell. It's hyper intangible, but the soul exists. And man, you gotta have soul.

As my soul floated it bumped against those of history's casualties – all of them. My soul burned when it met Adolf Hitler's for that man has a bastardized soul, the very conception of which was an act ultimately won by evil. My soul wept when it met Edgar Allan Poe's, for my soft spirit has longed to touch the stained velvet of alcohol's greatest poet.

When my soul met John Lennon's it asked, as only a soul can, "Hey, I don't feel Jim Morrison. Where's he? I thought he'd be here." And then John responded, "No, he's not really dead. He's in Argentina." - all this in a smooth British accent.

My soul chortled, then guffawed when it brushed Queen Victoria's, because she was really bummed out that her once vast colonial empire has dwindled down to a few small islands. Oh, how the mighty have fallen.

My soul met that of Henry James and found it boring.

I wish I could describe the feeling of floating as a soul in the omnipresent obscurity of life after death, but it aint easy. It resembles most the feeling of a dream within a dream where the former is an awakening into the latter with the soft realization of perpetual drift. It's that neat. Yet the greatest feeling of floating as a soul cannot possibly be described in terms of physical sensuality, for that's a perspective the soul leaves in the body. The only transitional perception notable to a soul is one of constant accelerated movement outward – in all directions; like a quasar hurling itself at the expanding edges of time unfurled; like a sirocco whistling across the Sahara; like driving a land rocket steadfastly drunk with the stereo blaring jazz racing toward the converging point on the horizon of the onrushing road's sidelines – *just balling that jack toward the vertex of all parallel lines*. This, I now believe, is the definition of the word *zing*.

As I further drifted, I strongly felt the soul of a friend of mine who died as a child. I was happy to know that he lived again, and I heard him singing – which is what he always did on Earth, the little, round planet below.

I didn't feel lust when I encountered Cleopatra or Marilyn Monroe, so lust must be a carnal sin of the mortal variety. Oh well, it's good to be human again (nudge nudge, wink wink).

I smiled and said, “Isn’t this cool?” when I bumped into Ronny Thompson, who was a neighbor of mine killed in Cambodia. (He was the third man on a lighted match smoking cigarettes with two buddies doing night patrol. The sniper followed the match to Ronny’s head and blew it off.) Ronny smiled back and I thrilled in the knowledge that this folly we call war is not capable of crushing a soul. Bullets, be damned. Every battle is a Waterloo, and every general ultimately ends up as Napoleon – dead. But it is here, in this everlasting aura of mirrors and windows, that all people are judged. And believe me, worldly prejudices aside, all who court war are branded forever. Terrorist hear me: You may stand tall in your struggle on Earth, but you’re viewed as the biggest pricks in the universe in this hazy, perpetual cloud of introspection. Hah-Hah.

Moments, days, seconds, eons; time fails to impress the floating soul, and I know not how long I existed posthumously among the ghosts of Earth. They were all there about me, and they’ll all be there when I, as you, shall return. What I actually remember now is scant. My feelings of death, as I now rejoin my life, pale beside what I perceive to be the lesson of the ordeal, a lesson given to me by whom I know not and for what reason I can’t imagine, but a lesson indeed which is the root of my existence forevermore: We don’t die, none of us, and it’s trouble to think we were ever born. Our bodies die and fall away; our physical beings tear and melt down like empty cans of beer, but the soul survives.

A voice in my mind whispers to all of us, “Be awed to know that Ronny Thompson hangs in suspended animation, in and about the bastard who shattered his skull, and will continue to do so for time on end. Expect that soon you’ll leave your body for a moment and forever join the

drifting spirits of eternity. Death – true death – like heaven and hell, is a farce. You will unendingly be responsible for all you do, and evil acts on Earth stain indelibly the defenseless soul of the demented terrorist.”

So lace another Tylenol capsule, gun down another enemy, for no greater justice will be served you till your body drips its last vestige of life and you, and all that ever were or will be, look upon your soul and laugh with scorn knowing full well that you duped yourself on Earth.