

## What Went Before

A short story by Russell Perry.

It is said, that when you are about to pass from this mortal existence, major milestones and events from your life, flash before your mind's eye. Having not yet reached that inevitable conclusion, I cannot give testament to the validity of this phenomenon. However, I can attest to a similar, more vivid experience.

I have always had a curiosity about the spiritual accoutrements religions accumulate around their belief systems. Particularly, a belief which most of them observe, in one form or another. Their faith in life after death.

My curiosity eventually led me to a psychologist, specializing in past life regression. I was interested to explore the process involved, and to evaluate the validity of any results which may ensue. In truth, I sought proof of something I hoped for. That our existence went beyond the demise of the mortal body.

On our first encounter, Doctor Mahajan Koval directed me to a couch in his office as he explained the procedure to me.

“If you could make yourself comfortable Mr. Gates, we can talk about what it is that you would like to achieve from the session, and your interest in past lives?”

I told Doctor Koval of my curiosities and hopes for the session; after which, he suggested two avenues of discovery. One, to select a point in time and explore whom I may have been then. Or we could briefly pass through the centuries, glimpsing the highlights from my “Astral Memory”, as he described it.

I chose the latter. A glimpse back through my lives under hypnosis, with the Doctor gently guiding me through the centuries. He asked me to search my memories for dates which may be significant to me, as he designated each century. We commenced with the 1100's, at the

beginning of the renaissance period, a time which had always captured my imagination, with Europe emerging from the Dark Ages.

As we moved through time, to my wonder, I experienced visions of myself as an artist, a sailor, a convict, a baker, a politician, a businessman, and on it went, a scintillating kaleidoscope of years and events passing before my mind's eye, much like a movie reel of past attractions.

As we proceeded I noticed, what seemed to be, a common thread through many of my visions. I was accompanied by a beautiful woman and in many cases, I was with her on our wedding day, I knew that it was our wedding day, because, along with the vivid visions, I felt the emotions. The feelings of deep love I held for her in all centuries. Obviously, as these were events in my past lives which were the most important to me, she was a great influence in my lives, and although her features were not the same in each incarnation, there were definite similarities in her demeanour and characteristics. The old maxim "The eyes are a mirror to the soul" I found to be correct. In all centuries, when her eyes held mine and I saw her love for me, I experienced a wave, approximating electricity, pass through my body, increasing my heartbeat, until it pounded perceptibly in my chest.

We moved steadily through the centuries, sometimes pausing more than once in each, with the events and emotions staying with me as we moved on, accumulating as they do in a normal lifetime, new memories of other men, with my soul, in other lives.

There were dire memories as well, many of them depicting the moment of my death. They ranged through a quiet passing through illness or old age to violent death in conflict and accident, however, we ploughed on, with rebirth and joy abundant in the lives to follow.

We entered what must have been my last life, before the one I now occupied. My beautiful soul mate, as I now thought of her, was with me once more. The scenes were of our wedding and our children, as we moved quickly through the highlights of that life. Until we came to the

momentous occasion of our death. We died together, shot dead, in what appeared to be the bedroom of our home, as we were in our night attire. I looked into the eyes of my love as the light went from them, and then into the eyes of a menacing figure, standing over me as the light went from mine. I would now remember that face through eternity.

As Dr. Kuval bought me out of hypnosis, I flinched, as the first thing I saw was his face looking down at me. I threw up my hands in defence, however, I soon regained my focus and recognition of the doctor soon calmed me.

Kuval was the first to speak. “How are you feeling Mr. Gates? Obviously, that passing was very traumatic,” he smiled, “you’re back in 2022 now, and all is safe.”

I adjusted my shirt and composed myself. “I’m fine now Doctor, thank you. Yes, that was a bit of a surprise. It’s the first time I’ve been murdered.”

We finished the session, and after promising to return and explore more of my lives, I said my goodbyes to Dr. Kuval, and after paying my fee at reception, walked out into the welcoming sunlight.

Naturally, the events of the last few minutes of the session were still prominent in my memories. Not only because I had been murdered, but the sadness in my wife’s eyes as she died. Her name had been Abbigail and the murder had taken place on the twelfth of December 1994. That was not that long ago. My name had been Stephen Symonds, a partner in a law firm in Brisbane. Abbigail was a partner in the same firm. This much I had established during my sojourn to 1994, however that was all the information I retained from that part of the session. I was determined to follow up on the aftermath of our death and learn more of what became of the law firm, and the killer.

I worked for Sachet, Sachet and Werner, a prominent law firm in the city, as a criminal lawyer and junior partner. It should not be difficult to track the law firm down by referencing Stephen Symonds.

As I walked to my car, I thought of Abbigail and her past incarnation, for that was surely what they were. I was convinced that my love in previous lives was my true soul mate, and that somehow, we had continued to connect through eternity. I had not met her in this life; however, I was yet only twenty-seven years of age, with much life in front of me.

On returning to my place of work, I asked Sachet's assistant, Donna, to track down an attorney from the 1990s named Stephen Symonds, as well as which law firm he may have worked for.

To my surprise, she replied immediately.

"He worked for this firm Mr. Gates; He was managing partner when the firm was known as Symonds, Symonds and Sachet. Mr. Sachet's partners were tragically murdered in 1994. I had just started working for the firm at the time as a junior assistant. We were all devastated. There was talk that the practice may go under, and may well have, if it wasn't for the large partners insurance policy they had at the time. It allowed Mr. Sachet to restructure and keep us afloat. He was devastated, but thanks to his management, we are still here."

I was stunned into silence for a few moments, then, gathered my wits as Donna spoke again, "Is there some reason you wanted to know about Mr. Symonds? I can find more information if you want,"

I shook my head. "No Donna, thanks. I was looking over an old case for a friend and saw his name on the documents. But he's not much use to me if he's dead."

Donna added as an afterthought, "Because of the large insurance policy on Mr. and Mrs. Symonds, and the fact that he made his son a name partner soon after he became managing partner, suspicion was thrown on Mr. Sachet Senior. However, no evidence was ever found to incriminate him. I don't believe he could have done it anyway."

I went to my desk and Googled the murder. Naturally, there was quite a lot of press coverage of the event. It had been described as a "robbery gone wrong". There were images of the victims

and further down the page was an image of an apparently grief stricken James Sachet Senior. He had retired from the firm some years ago in favour of his son, consequently I had never met him, however I recognised him as soon as I saw the image. His was the face I had seen in my regression, staring down at me as I died.

I rushed back to Donna's desk.

"Donna, where does Mr. Sachet Senior live, I must speak with him today."

She immediately gave me a suspicious look and turned defensive.

"Why would you want to speak with him, Is it about Mr. and Mrs. Symonds deaths?"

"Yes, it is. I'd like to find out more."

She shook her head as she replied, "No I won't give you his address. It's got nothing to do with you."

Her attitude took me by surprise, as we had always maintained a friendly, working relationship. It was as if she knew or suspected that there was some truth to the suspicions of Sachet's involvement.

I went back to my desk and found his address in the company files. He was still on the payroll as a name partner and all partners had access to the firm cashflow files.

Sachet lived at Hamilton, only a short hop from the city. I was at his gate in fifteen minutes. I didn't know what I would say to him, I had no proof of his involvement apart from my sojourn back through time.

I had cooled down somewhat from when I had first received the information from Donna, and now I was feeling quite foolish after ringing the doorbell. I turned to walk back to the car, but too late, the door opened.

I was transfixed. There could be no mistake, when I looked into the eyes of the beauty at the door, I immediately recognised her as the love from my memories over centuries passed, and

the eyes of the wife I had died alongside in 1994. I could see a spark of recognition in her eyes as well, as I stumbled over the explanation for my visit.

“Hello, I’m Zane Gates, I’m a junior partner in Mr. Sachet’s law firm. I was wondering if I could have a word about an old case. Is he at home?”

She smiled apologetically.

“Hello, I’m Lucy, his daughter. I’m afraid he and Mum are out of the country for a few months. Is there something I can help with?”

It was her. We both felt the instinctive attraction. All my anger dissipated as the familiar electricity passed through my body and my heart thumped. There would be time for justice later. I smiled and shook my head.

“It’s nothing important, it can wait until his return. I was going to have a bite of lunch down in the village, as an apology for my intrusion, would you like to join me? I am curious about the great man and the history of the firm, perhaps I could pick your brain.”

She hesitated only for a second. It was as if we had known each other for centuries and were eager for each other’s company.

“Thank you, yes I would like that.” She looked at me for a moment, as if trying to remember, then turned back into the house. “I’ll just lock up.”

Across the centuries, providence had brought me to her once again, and for now, her father’s involvement in my previous death seemed another life away.

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