

Part 1 – Space

I'm walking around in space. There's stepping stones of rock, floating. Just floating. Waiting for me to take each leap. Leaps that seem so big, but really, in the grand scheme of things, aren't even steps. Just shuffles.

So, I'm shuffling along in space. Everything is color. It isn't like my dreams. It's even better. So vivid. Colors the imagination doesn't dare to find. There is no red or blue or green. There are no words. It's the color beautiful over there and then, on that rock beside me, I see majestic. I see the color of shine on each star.

Finally, I see something reflective. At first, there is no reflection of me. Only everything around me. I see the colors in the mirror, I see the rocks and stars, and I see something in black and white. It's me. There I am. I blend in with the blackness of space. The colors overpower me. I am nothing. I am a speck and these are my friends.

I don't know where these shuffling space stones are leading me. But, does it matter?

Part 2 – Heaven

I think human beings are just people who broke the law on high. In consequence, they are sent somewhere that haunts their bodies. The only way to get home is to live life and be a good human.

When I found my way to those stones in space, my weight felt normal. It felt like I had been weighed down my entire life. I could run so fast and I was so happy. I could fly. Fly! Without wings and it was amazing.

People think there are aliens up here, but they are wrong. You can't fit all of us on one planet. They are the same and we are one and God looks after all of his children.

How can there be no God? When I was on Earth, did I not breathe air? Was the state of being of all life not perfectly engineered? Somehow, science supported religion and the reverse is true as well.

I looked at trees and saw they felt things, too. They spoke and they whispered and they knew the difference.

I looked at the seas. The ocean did not move. It was moved. We are all moved. I watched it sway and I fell asleep as it held me in its arms.

I looked at the sky and I just knew. Because in the sky, all things are free. There is blue and pink, purple and green, and it is the ultimate motion.

I knew there was a God, but a Heaven? Could it be? And, would he separate it with a Hell? Now, I only know one of these answers. I have seen it myself.

It was not separate from our dimension, but there is no map. All of the beauty of Earth and the stars still shined, only from below. I had new eyes where once I had been blind.

I saw a different kind of beauty. Where the colors of space were speechless, the shapeless wonder of Happiness was boundless.

I walked on clouds and I sang to a windless storm.

It didn't feel like you would think. It felt normal. Like I belonged

Part 3 – The Old Man

I walked right up to Him. I didn't know it when I saw Him. I don't think anyone does. We just know we are supposed to say "Hello." I did.

He greeted me with a wave and said, "We've been expecting you." I wasn't aware of who He was referring to as "we". For, at that moment, it was just me and it was just Him. We stared at each other. Two of the same. We walked together and we talked and he helped me understand.

He helped me understand that I will never stop asking questions. I will never know everything there is to know. He also helped me understand that, that's OK. I don't need to know everything. What is the point of existence if there is nothing to learn or to cultivate or to improve?

There was so much of Him to know; as a father and as a friend and as a lover and as a puppy. As a teacher, a grandparent, a cashier around the corner. As everyone and everything. He filled up my lungs every time I breathed and filled up my mind every time I thought. He was my air and He saved me from suffocation. I would never know all of Him, yet He knew all of me. And that was OK, too.

We talked forever and He led me to a hall. There were three doors. One of them was labeled "PAST" and it was blue. Another door, a bright fiery red, was labeled "COULD HAVE BEEN". The last was labeled "NOW" and it was white. He did not open His mouth to speak, but it was His voice. "You can visit each whenever you'd like. Just don't wander for too long."

Part 4 - Past

He left me alone before I had the chance to say a word. I didn't know if we'd ever see each other again, but I was thankful he had taken any time out for me. I am one person and there are so many.

I looked at all of the doors. "PAST" stared at me, intently, almost alive. I turned the blue knob and entered slowly. It was a theater. An old theater. Dusty, red, with a projector and one seat.

Carnival music began to play and the projector turned on. A countdown began and so did music from the good ol' days. Songs that will never leave my soul, lyrics that can never escape my heart.

I looked in as an outsider as my mother held me in her arms for the first time. I could almost feel her warm skin around my tiny little body.

Then, my first Christmas. Yes, I remembered that Tickle-Me-Elmo and that Easy Bake Oven.

A bike with a beautiful little girl on it, smiling, learning, falling, proud of each scrape.

A school bus driving away. A wooded area behind an apartment complex.

You never forget the feeling of a place. These woods were in my blood and I felt them all around me.

Pictures, dialogue, it kept going. My first band concert. A new friend. A kiss that should never have happened. A time of dishonesty. A time of failure. All of my regrets and all of my successes. Events in my life that had tested my faith.

Things kept reeling, as did my stomach. I saw an SAT score, an acceptance letter. I would graduate from college four years later.

Suddenly, the tape sputtered. There was no time, but I must have been there for a good 18 Earth hours, skipping through footage, things I didn't want to remember and things I needed to. I didn't feel tired. I could have stayed there the rest of my existence, happily entranced and enveloped by the past.

Even in heaven, all good things must come to an end. I only found comfort in knowing that I could come back at any time and continue this journey, re-experiencing and criticizing a story that can never be rewritten.

Part 5 - Could Have Been

I had always wondered what would have happened if I hadn't done that musical or didn't miss that day in school.

Then, there were other things I wondered. What if he had looked at me? What if I had said "yes"?

I could never know for sure whether or not the alternatives to my life were good or bad. I could only speculate.

Until now.

I stared at the second door. IN USE. Even if I wanted to, I couldn't view today. But, I decided I did not want to, anyway.

What was the point? What could *be* from looking what could have been? You could never have it, could never rewind. Besides, no matter what could have been, the outcome is the same. We end, we begin again, and we stare. We stare at a door that alters reality. Some of us choose to "wander too far" to the point that fantasy is our only reality. I choose to move on and focus on "Now."

And, just like that, I created another path that begged the question, what could have been?

Part 6 - Now

Is it wrong that fear is the only thing I can feel when I think about "now"? I always wonder if the same fear doesn't hide in each of us, waiting to pounce at the most crucial of moments. We swallow it down and say "I go with the flow" so that those around us believe we are just that laidback, flowing with time meshing with life like old pals.

But, really, time and life are enemies. Unfortunately, you can't have one without the other. We never have enough time, but sometimes we have enough of life and waste our time feeling sorry for ourselves, never taking action, waiting for whatever comes next.

Why is it that we can't fathom the word "next"? What happens *next*? Where are we going next? What if I am *next*? I've found that "next" and "now" are synonymous. There is no "before" in "now". A second goes by and never exists again.

We spend forever denying any attachment to our "now". "I can't wait to graduate!" "I can't wait to drive." "I can't wait for this to be over!" When it is, we can't believe we let all of our "now" pass by. We realize how much we had and how much we lost and how much there is to gain. We realize that there is only now.

So, now is just where I am. The door was slightly ajar. I snuck in, politely, afraid of rejection. It never came. I was accepted with open arms to a world, not unlike the one I had come from. But, it was just me. No laughter. No people. Just rows upon rows of empty houses. I didn't understand. Wasn't this supposed to be a happy, different place?

Just when I thought about turning back, living in the past, a paper fluttered by my face and I knew it was meant for me.

Part 7 - Life is What You Make It

For those who do not believe in life after death, this is for you. There absolutely is life after death. And, depending on how you lived your life, sometimes the next one is even better.

I picked the piece of paper off of the ground at my feet. The paper had doves in the upper right corner, felt sort of like a parchment, and was titled "Instructions". It read;

"Welcome, newly deceased citizen. We are pleased to see you made it here. You can find a nice place to stay and build a new life for yourself here. By now, it is our hope that you have come to terms with the fact that you are no longer flesh and blood and that you will not have all of the temptations of the flesh nor the curdling of the blood. Although you will find you miss the taste of food and the pleasures of the human life, you will no longer feel any pain, you will never grow weary, life will be a brand new adventure which you will be able to take hold of and make your very own. This is what you waited and worked for. You are on your way to complete purification. Once you settle in, the process will be complete. You are already growing whiter and brighter every day. The yellow is fading and the black is completely disappeared. You may have noticed the emptiness, but I promise you will fill the nothing quite quickly. Just use the energy in your spiritual mind to complete the steps below.

Step 1: *Pick any house. Once you choose the house, you cannot change your decision. That plot will belong to you, though you may change and remodel anything you choose on that plot of land. At first, it may be your instinct to create a car or garage, but you will not need those things. Remember, you can apparate throughout this community or through each dimension, if you wish.*

Step 2: *Invite your deceased loved ones and friends to stay in houses around you. Not all have dreamed of a community such as this, to continue on in life, and many travel about this dimension in homeless bouts of confusion. They were not all as prepared as you were and even the prepared ones did not think to choose to continue on as if nothing had happened. They chose to move on and create new beginnings.*

Step 3: *You still have a choice to make. There are other options. But, we cannot show them to you nor can we make the decision for you. It is in your hands now. Your energy is all you need. Stay positive and your energy will as well. Think a thought, think of an object, and watch what happens. Then, you will understand.*

-The Man Upstairs"

I was thoroughly puzzled and in wonder, I reread the note a few more times. It was mostly simple, though I found a hint of criticizing in step 2, but it was step 3 that caused the most pacing about. What were the other options? Should I populate this community and live how I wish with nothing altogether unexpected ever happening upon me or should I have myself an adventure and become a sort of ranger of Heaven, one with the wilds of this dimension?

I read it over again. The part about thinking and watching what happens. I thought of the first thing that popped into my boggled mind. I thought of feeling the wind again. Almost as if the wind expected my thoughts, it began to blow the hair from my face. But, I wasn't able to breathe it in. All I wanted was to take a gulp of fresh, beautiful air, to taste Earth on my tongue. But, I could no longer taste and I was no longer in Kansas. I couldn't taste, I couldn't smell, I couldn't feel, and I couldn't engage in sinning. But, it was then that I caught the lie of the afterlife. I may never be able to die again or feel the slice of a blade, but I could definitely hurt. It hurt that I was all alone in this empty housing development and that I couldn't breathe in the air. It hurt that, even in Heaven, you can die inside.

Wallowing in self-pity and reading over again the lie in my hands, I realized what the point was. Everyone else moved on. They had accepted this life, a good life, lucky to have any life at all. They found themselves new purposes and went to find a new world, sailing off like Columbus, into the unknown. The community is not what I needed. I needed purpose.

You go through human life thinking that when you die you will finally know all of life's secrets. But, that's what is so great. You will never know everything. As long as we hold on to the mysterious, purpose will hold on to us. With the new, purified, powerful versions of our former selves, it is our duty to actually make life happen. Where we are, life literally is what you make it. Whether you think of drop ceilings and marble countertops and beautiful hardwoods and they appear before your eyes in the community you always wanted to belong to or you think of a pet that passed years ago to accompany you to the ends of the dimensions and back, you are making life happen and that's the best anyone can do.