

Foiling The 'Grim Reaper'

by

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During the evening of New Year's Day in 1995, whilst suffering a mid-life crisis I experienced two heart attacks in the space of an hour.

However, I'm glad to say that I foiled the 'Grim Reaper' - and lived to continue my research into the lives of the early Celts. This culminated in a real life dream - the acceptance for publication later this year of my historical action novel 'Emissary To The Gods'.

Describing the struggle by the Celts of Western Britain to survive Roman repression, the novel links Caratacus and 'The Fox' to this early crusade that was dominated by the tribes of South Wales.

Caratacus was the greatest of Celtic war-leaders, whilst 'The Fox' was a Druid Priest who shared the same period in history. His preserved body was found in a peat bog at Lindow Moss near Manchester Airport in 1984 and now lies in Manchester Museum. He had been sacrificed in AD 62, presumably to beg the gods to stop the ethnic cleansing of Wales, the Marches and the Druid Order.

As a result of my professional training, throughout the whole series of events I analysed what was happening to me and made mental notes of the extraordinary affair. As soon as I was fit to do so, I supplemented these mental notes with written ones.

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That New Year's Day had been a particularly difficult one for me as I walked the streets of Leominster, wishing friends and relatives good health in the coming year. I started to pant as I climbed the hills and found it increasingly difficult to get my breath, whilst dull pain gradually spread throughout my whole body. On the last of my visits, which was to my older brother Reg, I felt particularly poorly and he advised me to see a doctor on the way home.

Leaving my brother's house, which was in the lower part of town, I made my way up hill to the doctor's surgery. There my doctor diagnosed a kidney infection and prescribed medication. I then walked back down hill to a chemist's shop in the town centre, collected the prescription and struggled the mile to my home on Buckfield Estate. This last part of my journey included a half mile pull up a very steep hill and phew, was I glad to get home and rest my weary body!

Later that evening the pain began to concentrate in my chest and along my arms and became more severe. Living alone this was quite worrying and I suspected the onset of a heart attack - not the kidney infection that had been diagnosed. Although I now had little faith in my doctor I decided that I must seek his help, so I rang the surgery and explained the medical problem to the receptionist. I also told her that as I was alone I would go to my bed, but would leave the front door open for the doctor to get in.

Then the strange phenomena that twice took me beyond the grave manifested themselves!

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After staggering to my bedroom I threw myself onto the bed and lay there feeling drained. By this time the pain had gone away, but a few moments later it returned with a vengeance and settled in the centre of my chest. This coming and going repeated itself two or three times and when the pain was at its highest it felt as though a train was boring through my body. Each time the train moved on it left me exhausted.

After the second or third round of excruciating pains I felt my eyes shutting and all discomfort leaving me. Then, and I couldn't believe it, I found myself in two places at once! One of 'me' was in the form of a little gnome, complete with pointed hat and felt boots, and I was sitting on top of the wardrobe with my feet hanging over the end. I wasn't just sitting there either! I was laughing and chuckling and rocking myself back and forth with great amusement as I looked down upon the other 'me'. There I was, lying on my bed completely still and all curled up into a ball.

"But if that's me lying down there, how come I'm sitting up here on the wardrobe and looking down on myself?" I queried. "It's impossible for my mind and my body to be in two places at once – unless I'm dead of course!"

"Yes, it was a heart attack. I guessed it was going to happen but it's all over now and I've died, so there's no need to worry any more," I laughed to myself. "It's a pity I had to go like that though, there's still so much I wanted to do. I could have spent less time at work and more time with my family, perhaps?"

"Hello, what's going on now?" I then asked myself as I saw a man I didn't know come into the bedroom. "And what's he up to, he's shaving the hair on my chest, but the bed's spinning around and there I am lying across it like a Druid sacrifice. Oh, I feel quite dizzy just sitting up here and watching it."

"This is quite amusing," I then chuckled as I rolled back and fore on top of the wardrobe. "That man must be a doctor and he's fixing wires to my chest and connecting them to the electricity. Wow, he did something that felt like a kick from a mule and now I'm back on the bed again!"

I certainly was back on the bed and 'me' as a gnome had disappeared off the wardrobe but oh, the pain in my chest was coming back and washing over me like waves on a sea shore. "Please doctor, can't you do something to stop this pain – I can't cope with it?" I pleaded.

The doctor then continued his expertise and, while we waited for an ambulance, gave me a morphine injection to dull the pain and spoke a lot of reassuring words to calm me down.

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In what seemed a very short time an ambulance arrived and took me the fourteen miles to the hospital in Hereford. It wasn't a good journey and I was violently sick all the way but oh, was I glad to get there?

On arriving at the hospital I was laid on a trolley and rushed along endless corridors. Fortunately the severe pain had receded and left me with a feeling of sickness and fear, but slowly that also left me and - I found myself in another time and place!

I was in a field, with long grass and the sun was shining. The field was on a hill and looking up the hill I could see the figure of a woman. She was dressed like no women of my acquaintance, but wore a voluminous black dress to the ground and a tight fitting white bonnet. Peeping out from her skirts were two little girls, similarly dressed and they were all beckoning for me to join them. I could see from the

movement of their lips that they were also shouting, but I couldn't hear what they were saying. Perhaps it was the distance that they were away from me or my exhaustion, but I didn't recognise them as anyone I knew.

I felt that I had to join them and tried to run up the hill, but the long grass kept tangling around my feet. It was no good, no matter how hard I tried I couldn't shorten the distance between us so I cried out to them. But did I cry out to them - or did I cry out in agony? At that moment the pain came back into my body and the woman and children whirled away into infinity.

Then, I was in a bed, with people in white coats around me and tubes and appendages attached to me. I felt dazed and had no idea what was happening or who the people were.

Later, however, I realised that although all the medical people who attended me that day had no wings - they were Earthly angels who by their skill and dedication had twice pulled me back from beyond the grave! I knew that I owed them a great debt of gratitude.

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When the series of events were finally over and my mind became clear again, I confirmed that my heart had stopped beating on both occasions and that technically I had died. At the same time, I discovered that in the medical world there is some thought that the brain continues to function for a while and produce images – even after a person's heart has stopped.

“Well, which possibility happened to me?” I wondered. “Did my brain routinely produce those images after my heart had stopped - or did I see beyond the grave? I believe it was the second of the two.

I also believe that I was fortunate to get a glimpse of the hereafter. It removed my fear of leaving this world on Earth and moving on - to a new life in the next world!

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