

Death Source B

‘My world was now black’ - One man’s account of what it was like to die and come back to life

I died on August 19, 2011, in the carpark of Queen’s hospital. I was swallowed by an inky blackness: there was nothing else. I was not in my body, I was not with my body, I was not part of my body. My body was there, I was aware of it, I just wasn’t attached to it anymore. My world was now black, black and pleasant and nothing. I was dead; and that was it.

Earlier in the day I’d felt unwell as I’d been eating my breakfast. Initially, I blamed the milk in my cornflakes. I seemed to have incredible heartburn, but with it blinding headaches and a spinning dizziness that caused the chequered flooring of my kitchen to swim up in front of my eyes as if I was standing in a sea of black and white tiles that whirled and swooshed all around me. I went to bed. I have a distinct recollection of my home phone ringing, and not being able to get out of bed to answer it. I was shivering, but also sweating. Eventually, my girlfriend came home off her nightshift (she was a nurse) and found me soiled and breathing in shallow panting breaths.

Not wanting to wait for an ambulance, she carried me over her shoulder, like a pint sized fireman, and heaved me into the backseat of her car. I remember the journey in snippets: laughing at the upside down trees I could see out the window; smacking my head on the door handle as she took a corner too fast; vomiting bright green sick all over the floor and my arm. When we arrived at the emergency room, adrenaline was the only thing keeping me conscious.

Paramedics came out with a stretcher, and that was when I died. The connection between my soul and my body was severed, and even when the blackness cleared, and I could see my body and the people working on it, and I felt this massive push to either go up further- or return to my body, and I floated back down and felt the electricity charge every fibre of my being...even then- that severed tie wasn’t fully healed.

And even now, years later, my life has been irrevocably altered. When I wake early and walk my dogs on the beach, and watch the sun come up over the water, that light isn’t as light as it was before. And when I walk past the playground on a Saturday afternoon, the laughter of children feels quieter than before. And when I’m sipping on a bottle of beer on my porch, and just shooting the breeze with my neighbours, that happiness in my soul is now something dustier, duller, darker.