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Message from beyond

Death is not extinguishing the light; it is putting out the
lamp because the dawn has come.

Rabindranath Tagore

Tired from a frantic year's workload, I was keen to board the plane to start my overseas vacation to paradise. I had chosen Samoa, where there would be no mobile phones, just quiet sandy beaches and gentle ocean waves—seven days of sheer bliss. There was still some time for last-minute duty-free shopping before my flight was called, and I always treat myself to a new bottle of perfume with each overseas break. It's as though the holiday destination becomes branded in a sensory experience. Then, each time I put on a particular scent, I am instantaneously transported back to the scene and the memories of times spent in different lands come flooding back.

It seemed silly at the time, but on this occasion I was drawn to a sign that said 'Teddy bear with every purchase'. Now I didn't actually need a teddy bear, especially one that I'd have to carry

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out of the country and then bring back a week later stuffed in my suitcase with my other holiday purchases. But the feeling was overwhelming—I needed to buy that perfume. Was it the name ‘Giorgio’, which was similar to my own name? Well, the fragrance smelt rather yummy, but I really wanted the teddy bear. It beckoned me from the large sign over the perfume counter. I had a feeling I had to give the bear to my son Brendan’s new girlfriend, Latoya, and to tell her it was from her sister Clair.

When the assistant was packing up my purchase, I asked where my bear was.

‘There aren’t any left—they’ve all gone,’ she said.

‘Are you sure? I really feel there’s a bear in the shop I have to have.’

She rolled her eyes. Off she trotted to the storeroom, while I waited.

‘You’re in luck, this is the last one,’ she said. It was a bear, the size of a large dinner plate—fat, happy, wearing a yellow and white striped jumper, with a large red ‘G’ embroidered in the centre. Attached to one of its paws was a large satin label that read ‘Giorgio Beverly Hills 2004 Collections Bear’—strange, as it was March 2006, but that was the bear that went with the package deal.

Surely Latoya would also think it odd to be given an outdated bear as a gift. In fact, I didn’t know too much about Latoya, as I’d only met her briefly when she and Brendan were passing through Sydney on their way to the outback for the haymaking season. Brendan had mentioned to me on the phone that his new girlfriend was from a large family, and that one of her sisters, Clair, had died in a car accident.

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Brendan's 21st birthday party was a month later so I packed the teddy bear in my bag, along with other surprises I'd bought the family while I was away, and boarded the plane for the short one-hour flight. Like all young people, they were keen to open their presents from overseas. I pulled the bear out of my suitcase and handed it to Latoya, saying: 'This is for you, from Clair. It's a gift from her to you. I feel she wants you to know she's thinking of you.'

Latoya looked at Brendan, and tears welled up in her eyes as I relayed the story of the bear and gave her a whiff of the perfume.

Georgina, this is just like the sweet-smelling perfume Clair liked to wear, and 2004 is the year she died. She was fourteen when she died. She was staying with our dad in another state. We were very close growing up; there was only three years difference in our ages. Mum and I had only spoken to her over the phone just before Christmas and were very excited to hear her say she would soon be coming home to live with the family again.

I remember Mum gave Clair a warning that day about getting into cars with drivers who were unfamiliar, reckless or who'd been drinking. I was to learn later the significance of her message—you see, Mum had a secret she hadn't shared with me or anyone else in the family. I too had a secret—it was so weird—about three days before Clair died I was watching television. It was a random thought, like I was daydreaming. I saw my uncle getting a telephone call saying

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Claira had died. I just knew it would be on the road, in a bus or car.

Christmas came and went. Late Christmas night, I was snuggled up in my bed reading, when suddenly the light flashed on my mobile phone—there was no ringing sound, just the flashing of the light. ‘Claira,’ I thought. I’ll always remember the time on my phone—11.15 p.m. The next morning was Boxing Day and the downstairs phone rang. Perhaps it was the thought of Claira the night before, plus the weird experience I had had when watching television, that made me rush as fast as I could to answer the phone. No-one ever rang me on this phone, preferring to contact me on my mobile. So the thought of wanting to answer the house phone was out of character.

As I stood at the top of the stairs, it was too late; my uncle had beaten me to it. I saw his face and he started to shake, and I just knew it was about Claira and that she had died. It was my worse fear, the unusual vision I had experienced several days before had become a living reality. I was so scared—I knew what he was going to tell me. I was dreading the news. Claira had been killed in a car accident late the night before.

Mum needed to be told. My uncle and I lived out of town near the beaches in those days, so we drove the one-hour car trip to Mum’s place. I cried non-stop the whole way—but I knew I needed to be strong for my mum. As we approached her home, I tried to pull myself together. But Mum acted as

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though she already knew. When she saw me, she said, 'Please don't tell me anything bad.' She started to run around the house like a crazy woman.

You see, Georgina, the secret Mum hadn't shared with me was that she had a dream, a premonition, prior to speaking to Clair on the phone that day, where she'd seen a car rolling over and over and someone thrown through the front windscreen. We learnt from the police that my father's girlfriend was drunk that night, and she was behind the wheel of the car as it sped out of control, rolled and Clair was thrown out through the front windscreen. Apparently she was sitting in the back of the car, sandwiched between her boyfriend and another passenger—wearing no seatbelt.

We were told she died instantly. However, we were to learn later this was not the case. You see the policeman's wife had come out to the accident site that night and heard Clair's boyfriend calling out, 'Libby, Libby—where is Libby?' Although we called my sister Clair, in fact that was her middle name. Her first name was Elizabeth, and Libby was the name some people chose to call her. Her boyfriend's cries prompted the policeman's wife to go searching with a torch in the surrounding roadside and scrub, and thankfully this was how she discovered Clair who was badly injured.

We were so grateful she did this, otherwise Clair may never have been found. The woman stayed with Clair until she passed away. The accident and circumstances weighed heavily on her mind, and she felt we should know the true

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facts. One thing she mentioned was that just before Clairra died she was smiling. Yet the coroner's report said she had eight fatal injuries—so how could she possibly be smiling? It was one of the things about the accident that I felt puzzled about—I had no explanation as to why someone in such bad circumstances would ever consider smiling.

After the funeral and church service, we were driving to the cemetery when Mum told me of her dream and the premonition she had. I can recall that day so clearly—it was raining, and as they lowered Clairra's coffin into the ground, the rainwater was trickling down the sides of the coffin. People had scattered rose petals on top of the coffin and as I looked inside her grave, I felt so helpless. I just wanted to jump into the plot and be there with Clairra—I didn't want her to be alone. I was devastated, and I truly believed I could never ever recover from her death. So I made a promise to Clairra that when I had my first daughter she would be named Clairra, after her.

The healing begins

Just over a year later I holidayed again with Brendan and Latoya. Latoya's mother, Mary, was keen to meet up with me once more, as we had met briefly before. This time she wanted me to experience some of her traditional Island cooking. Mary is proud of her strong indigenous roots, hailing from the Torres Strait Islands, off the far north coast of Australia, scattered as far away as Papua

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New Guinea. Their food is wonderful—cooked slowly in banana leaves, with loads of coconut milk, vegetables and meat. I was to experience a true feast of the Island kind that went from evening, to breakfast then lunch—a smorgasbord of delights.

It was during our times together that I was able to discuss Clair's passing with Mary. On our previous meeting Mary was too emotional to talk about her daughter's death; however, this time she was more open. I was blessed to be able to share stories of my clients who have had Dearly Departed readings, and relate the experiences and lessons I had learnt as a psychic medium from the messages imparted to the living from those who had crossed over as they gave proof that life indeed lives on in another dimension, and how at times they have left messages and symbols to their loved ones that they are indeed thinking of them.

It was later in the week that Latoya shared with me the comfort she personally felt when listening to these stories. One particular theme that played over and over in her mind was hearing the case stories of the loved ones who, in their final hour, would speak to someone standing by their bed or close to them. They would call their name, have a conversation with someone as though it were a two-way street, listen and respond, yet family and friends standing by couldn't see anyone else present. Some did recognise the name being addressed, but these people had already crossed over, leaving those present feeling their loved one may be hallucinating.

But now Latoya understood that these were returned loved ones who manifested as the dying person's guardian angel or spirit helper, here to pave the way for the transition of the spirit to the

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other side, making the forthcoming journey of the soul easier with someone familiar, comforting and loving.

‘Georgina, now I know why Clairra was smiling before she died. I believe it was our Aunty Robyn who came to collect her. She died in 2000, and she and Clairra were always close. Clairra would always give her a big hug and smile when they visited. It makes me feel good and peaceful to know that when Clairra died she was not alone.’

Mary shared her dream with me, and we talked about the 2004 teddy bear experience at the airport. Latoya giggled and asked, ‘Had you noticed the colour of the bear, Georgina?’ Well, actually, I hadn’t taken any particular notice. I presumed it was gold. Rushing upstairs to retrieve the bear, she plonked it on the coffee table right in front of me, along with a beautiful photo of Clairra. I couldn’t help but smile—the 2004 teddy bear was not gold, as I had presumed, but a gorgeous shade of chocolate brown. I knew exactly what Latoya was thinking.

‘Can you see the family resemblance? We’re not-fair skinned at all—more like the shade of the teddy bear!’ The significance of the purchase, the message and now the colour of the teddy bear were even more significant than I had thought. Mary explained to me that in her culture and society ‘signs’ are very much entrenched in their way of life. She saw the significance of the teddy bear, date and message—even down to the letter ‘G’ (as GG is my pet nickname in the media)—as signs that Clairra had manifested to show those closest to her that even from the other side, she still honoured her cultural roots and identity.

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As I put the finishing touches on Clair's story, I have some wonderful news to share—I am to be a grandmother again later this year! Latoya and Brendan are expecting their first child, and, yes, it is to be a girl, already named Clair!