

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

A Divine Meeting

By now I'm thinking that our soul doesn't die when we do, and God is constantly giving us signs. Maybe there is only a thin invisible veil between heaven and earth.

I began to look for affirmations in nature and started paying attention to thoughts planted in my mind. I started to believe these things were here to help me through my life. This is when I felt compelled to write everything down and document my experiences. I owe it to my fellow inhabitants of this earth to tell the stories and begin an interactive conversation with anyone who will listen, to try to affirm these happenings with others who have had similar experiences. I can't be the only one who has lost a loved one and experienced a connection. I bought the web site nocoincidence.com to interact with other people who have a story to tell, too. I got serious about my quest to share my experiences for comparison with others to gain a better understanding of these occurrences and where they are coming from in my life and in theirs.

The Holy Spirit really does communicate with us if we'd only listen. The Bible surely tells us that time and time again.

I also believe the souls of our loved ones can plant thoughts in our heads to guide us in the right direction, if we open our minds to the concept. The hardships we experience as we grow older sharpen our senses and we become more in tune with nature and God.

My second divorce was amicable, and this time I was confident I could get through almost anything that came my way. I had help from above. I had been reading the Bible and I read a verse about trusting God that really made an impact on me. Worrying about anything actually shows God that we do not trust Him to get us through. I also remembered my mom's words.

“Plow forward, honey. If anyone else can do it, so can you.”

I surely missed that woman ... every single day.

I received a call from a longtime friend from high school. He had joined the Navy, and when he retired from service, decided to become a priest. We still joke about the fact that I was the only friend to warn him about the restrictions he would have to live with as a priest.

“You won’t ever be able to say any curse words again, Doug!”

He just laughed. He appreciated my concern, but was fully aware of the restrictions and was totally prepared to give his life to the Lord. All of us in the class of 1970 were proud of him and turned to him for godly advice from time to time.

Doug wanted to meet me that afternoon, but it was where he wanted to meet that threw me off. Usually he would stop by my house on his way through town, but today he was asking me to meet him at St. Ann’s Parish, the local Catholic church near my house. It was a strange place to meet, but I complied and hurried over to the church. When I arrived, I saw Doug standing out front. He hadn’t changed much, and was dressed in civilian clothes just like the guy I knew from high school. His kind brown eyes were happy to see me as he waved me closer to the front of the church. As I approached, I noticed there was a big banner above the front doors that said, “Welcome Father Doug.” This was Doug’s way of surprising me with the news that he’d been transferred to St. Ann’s in Hagerstown.

I was so excited! Doug was a special friend to me. Ever since eighth grade, we had been buddies who instinctively watched each other’s backs. It came naturally to us. It was great to know that Doug would be living and working in the same town and we could continue where we left off in high school.

I jumped out of the car and ran to congratulate him on his promotion to the Hagerstown church. We laughed when I said my standard joke about no cursing, and I asked him if he was having trouble with that. “Hell no!” Doug

said with a chuckle. He jumped into my car and I drove to the nearby pub for a glass of wine to celebrate.

“You have to come to my installation this Sunday, Cynthia. It would mean a lot to me if you would be there. I’ve got a lot of old pals from home coming; they’d love to see you again,” Doug said.

I was trying to come up with a legitimate reason not to make it. I didn’t like to go to other people’s churches and I also didn’t like to commit myself to something with the busy schedule I had in real estate.

“I’ll try to make it, Doug. My life is so hectic with this job. You never know when someone is going to call me to see a property, and then I really have to drop what I’m doing and go. That’s why they pay me the big bucks!” I said with a grin.

But a few days later, I received a written invitation in the mail with an RSVP attached. The archdiocese’s emblem made it official, so, having no honest excuse, I decided I had to attend.

It was a warm Sunday morning and I, of course, was running late. That was basically by design because I planned to slip into the back pew and then be the first to slip out. The parking lot was filled, so I had to park several blocks away. As I walked into the rear of the church, my hopes of getting a seat in the back were squelched. It was standing room only, so I stood quietly in the back of the church with some others who had arrived late.

Within moments, an usher approached me and asked, “Are you Cynthia?”

I nodded my head to the affirmative.

“Father Doug has a special place reserved for you.”

And, much to my dismay, he paraded me down the center aisle. I felt my face flush as he guided me into one of the front pews. My habit was to sit close to the back to avoid embarrassment. I always cry in church. The Holy Spirit touches me every time and folks start to wonder what is wrong with my personal life.

Some of my old friends from school were there; Joe was a really old and good friend. We were born on the same day and at the same hospital. When he spotted me, he and his wife stood up to let me into the pew. I slid in beside a gentleman they introduced to me as Paul Sullivan. I didn't think I had ever seen him before, but later, I was told he grew up in my hometown of Frostburg and we were the same age. Small town folks usually all know each other, but he went to parochial school and I went to public school.

As I sat in the pew next to Paul, I felt a warm loving feeling come over me. It was as if there was a cozy blanket over the two of us. I found myself wanting to know everything about him. I never really looked over to see him face to face, but the attraction was there, just the same. Suddenly, I wanted to know every nuance of his being. I'm embarrassed to say that I found myself wondering what he looked like naked! That wasn't like me and I hoped no one noticed I was blushing. This was an experience I had never encountered before but it felt very normal and comfortable.

The ceremony for Father Doug was surprisingly nice as we all watched our old friend installed as the rector of the church. He thanked his good friends for coming and said how much it meant to him that we were there. Well, that brought tears to my eyes. Paul noticed my tears right away and offered me his handkerchief. After I used it to wipe my tears, I handed it back to him and thanked him, apologizing for getting mascara on it.

"I'm never going to wash it," he said.

Whoa

After the service, he asked if I was going to the reception downstairs. I remember telling him I was too booked that day and was sorry to miss it. I truly dislike receptions and making small talk with people I don't know.

Looking directly into his eyes, I reluctantly changed my mind and decided to attend. Once I got there, it was great to catch up with my old friends. Paul was a friend to all my high school pals and it turned out he even went to Catholic elementary school with them. Even though we didn't share a

private conversation, I felt a connection to Paul the whole time. Incredibly, we both grew up in the same small town and didn't ever meet each other until April 2006 in a church pew in a small town many miles away.

The very next day my assistant told me I had a personal email she wasn't sure she should have read. I asked her to read it to me over the phone.

As she started to read, I realized the very personal nature of the message.

"Dear Cynthia," she read, "it was my absolute pleasure to meet you at Father Doug's installation. Wish we would have had more time together. You are a wonderfully beautiful woman with abundant spirit and humor, all very attractive to me. I could tell I was very attracted to you because I became very quiet inside and felt so blessed just sitting next to you. Anytime you need a charming date for dinner (or need a handkerchief to borrow), will you promise to let me know? Blessings, Paul."

"OK, well, thanks, Paula," I said after she finished. I felt my face turning red. But, I also realized he must have felt the exact same feeling I felt sitting next to him in church. Maybe this was meant to be.

We started dating and eventually became soul-mates. Kind, patient, and loving, Paul is a very distinguished and devout man, six feet tall with thinning silver hair. His rimless glasses were the only obstruction of my view to his soul.

At the beginning of our relationship, he had a hard time looking me in the eye. Although I saw a lot of pain there, I also saw a sweet and sensitive spirit. It seems he was afraid that I would see the evil deep in his being, that long ago a family member told him existed. But as we got to know each other, I couldn't find a trace of evil in the dark green Irish eyes of my Paul Sullivan.

It was so exciting to know that God had directed us on a new adventure together. I wondered where He was going to take us next.