

God Travels

Her hands wrapped around her pillow, Veronica was fast asleep in rem state peacefully dreaming. The ends of her long dark hair strewn out around her head bustled in the gentle breeze of her breath. In her dream she stood at her elderly uncle's bedside. Like a clip out of movie, she watched herself stand there holding her uncle's hand. He seemed to be pleasantly aware of her presence, but she could not see him very well from where she stood. She heard someone say, "Jack passed away."

Veronica woke up with a start and tumbled from her bed to her knees to pray. "God please put your aura of protection around me," Veronica begins, "and guide me on the path of your will. I pray for blessings on my family and friends. Please take special care with Uncle Jack. I had a dream last night in which he passed. For some reason I was there. Was this a message God? I do not have the resources to fly up there, so please guide him and protect him. If it be your will, amen."

Veronica pulled herself up off the ground and began preparations for the day. After a quick shower and morning routine, she pulled out a multigrain bagel and a tub of vegan butter. Veronica decided to become vegan several years back after she realized that all she ever ate was chicken. Her life was now filled with different tastes and textures, she did not regret the decision. Wrapping one foot under her tush, Veronica sat down to enjoy her bagel in her lovely breakfast nook. In-between bites, Veronica wrote down everything she could remember about her dream in her journal.

Looking at the clock, Veronica decided it was an appropriate hour of the day to make a phone call. Uncle Jack's nurse answered. The nurse was not a particularly perky personality. No problems to speak of, but Uncle Jack was apparently too tired to talk on the phone.

Veronica clasped her cell phone in her hands and thanked God for her Uncle Jack's health and the assistance of a competent, if not colorful, nurse.

Veronica was no stranger to prayer. Despite parental disinterest in the subject and a lack of any formal training, Veronica found herself on a spiritual path early in her twenties. While faith without works may be dead, Veronica found that faith with works worked. She could testify to the power of the Holy Spirit in her own life and had witnessed the power of prayer in many of her fellow parishioners' lives as well.

Veronica was still holding her cell phone in prayer position when it began to vibrate and buzz...

Veronica: Hello!

Nicole: Hi Veronica!

Veronica: Oh Nicole! Good to hear from you.

Nicole: I'm on lunch break so I don't have long. Want to go to Jungle World tomorrow? I have an extra ticket.

Veronica: That sounds great!

Nicole: Awesome! I'll pick you up at 9.

Hanging up and placing her cellphone on the kitchen counter, Veronica moved towards her couch in the living room. Before sitting down on the couch, she froze. After standing there for a minute for no real reason, contemplating what she should do but unable to make herself sit or move, Veronica got down on her knees facing her coffee table. "God please put your aura of protection around me and guide me on the path of your will. I pray for blessings on my family and friends. I'm still thinking about Uncle Jack and my dream last night. The nurse said there are no problems, but I still feel out of sorts. Please grant me the serenity to accept what I cannot change and the patience to let go of this feeling that there is something I should be doing. Again, please guide him and protect him. If it be your will, amen."

Veronica then sat on her couch, turned on her television, and enjoyed the rest of her day with relatively few interruptions from work.

Veronica arrived at Jungle World early the next day. Even from outside the gate she could see a few of the towering rides. The air was crisp with the excitement of small children and the determination of their parents to have a day of family fun. After parking, Veronica made her way to the tram. Nicole was seated on a bench there waiting for her. Rising to embrace her friend, Nicole cooed, "I'm so glad you could make it! I've meaning to come use these passes for months!"

A jam packed but uneventful tram ride later, the ladies entered the theme park. Veronica and Nicole had sat next to each other in church every Sunday for the last two years. But she noticed her friend was wearing khaki shorts and she realized she rarely saw her friend when she was not wearing her Sunday best. Her own shorts were striped and she felt quite confident now in the appropriateness of her outfit.

The park was a buzz with patrons heading this way and that. The ladies charted their course toward the flume and water rides. On their way, Veronica and Nicole stopped to look at a tiger exhibit. Gasping at God's magnitude, Veronica couldn't help but stare in amazement at the giant orange cats. The tigers seemed peaceful if not completely bored. One tiger moved his head and the audience squealed with delight.

Veronica: Oh my goodness! They are beautiful!

Nicole: God's creatures!

Veronica: No doubt!

They continued on their journey. Veronica passed a bush filled with lovely red salvia flowers. She took a second in her head to thank God for the beauty of the bush. A little ditty began to form in her head, "thank you God for the flowers I could stare at them for hours.... thank you God for the flowers I could stare at them for hours..... thank you God for the flowers I could stare at them for hours...flowers, hours, thank you god yeah!" Veronica had the urge to sing it aloud but remembered she was there with company.

Approaching the line for the flume, Veronica and Nicole noticed the wait time was well under 30 mins. Luckily they made it there early in the day. Lines for water rides always get longer midday.

Veronica: So how are things?

Nicole: Great! I absolutely love my new job. It's everything I wanted. Great benefits, great hours, good pay. Thank you God!

Veronica: That's wonderful. I'm so glad it working out for you.

Nicole: I never thought I'd be happy working. Hahaha.

Veronica: What is it you are doing now?

Nicole: Sales at a travel agency. I always looked down on sales people you know. But I really like it. Lots of positive thinking. I really think it's been good for me.

Veronica: That's great!

Nicole: And you?

Veronica: Still working for the department of children's services. It is not a positive place, pay is not acceptable, hours are awful, but they need me. I think that matters to me the most. Sounds stupid right?

Nicole: hahahaha

Veronica: Well, what you going to do? God makes sure I have everything I need, so I'm good.

Nicole: Amen.

Veronica: I had a weird dream night before last. My uncle passed away and I was there with him when it happened. He lives up north so it's rather unlikely to happen that way, and I called his nurse and she says he's fine. But do you think it means something?

Nicole: I'm sure it does. Just maybe not what you are thinking. Are you feeling guilty about not spending time with him?

Veronica: I suppose but it was so real, so lifelike. Not at all like my normal dreams.

Nicole: How old is he?

Veronica: In his 70s, but his health has never been good. He was always the funny one, you know? The cut-up. I remember when I was a kid who used to tell this stupid joke. He'd ask me where he was going to go. Then when I said I didn't know, he'd flex his arms muscles and say, "The gun show!"

Nicole: That's great! Sounds like a card. Are you thinking you should go visit?

Veronica: Maybe, but then again maybe I shouldn't.

Nicole: Come now, don't be like that. Superstition is no good.

Veronica: but what if it isn't superstition but instead a message from god.

Nicole: Were you planning a visit?

Veronica: No, he lives up in Simpsonville, South Carolina.

Nicole: Well, you are now! So says your travel agent!

Veronica did not have time to respond as they were now at the front of the line. The ladies carefully stepped into an already drenched plastic log. Veronica knew it would be a waste of time to even bother to try to dry her seat before sitting on it.

Nicole: Here we go!

Veronica: Woohoo!

They twisted and turned yelling and laughing the whole way. Veronica thought to herself that this one ride justified the entire trip to the park that day. As the water crashed against the side of the log pouring inside, Veronica's feet got soaked. The rest of her got wet as well.

Nicole: That was fun!

Veronica: My feet are soaked!

Nicole: Let's hit the river rapids before we dry off!

Waiting in line, partially damp, for the river rapids took longer than the flume. Looking for a silver lining, Veronica noted that she might not be as hot now that her clothing was drenched but she was also pretty miserable with the extra weight and stickiness.

Nicole: I'm serious about getting you up there to see your uncle. Let's work on this.

Veronica: I really can't afford it, Nicole. I'm not sure what your vacation specials are, but with a children's services salary, it isn't likely I can cover it. It is so sweet of you though. The dream has me pretty shook up and I really appreciate you listening to me talk about it.

Nicole: That's what friends are for.

Veronica: You are so sweet. You know, I noticed we were both wearing shorts earlier and thought about how funny it is that we rarely if ever see each other wearing anything less than our Sunday best.

Nicole: So true! I love your outfit by the way.

Veronica: Thank you! I love yours too!

Nicole: By the way, I think God gives us messages all the time.

Veronica: Me too.

Nicole: Good. Let's pray right now for a sign regarding your uncle and whether or not we should try to get you up there.

Veronica: out loud?

Nicole: yep, take my hand. "Dear God, my friend is in a quandary regarding a dream you sent her. Should she go up north to see him? Please let us know. Thank you. Amen."

Veronica: ...if it be thy will amen.

Veronica opened her eyes almost expecting an immediate sign, but everything was just as it was when she closed them. Veronica did not know if Nicole had been disappointed as well. They chit-chatted about the weather and how fun the flume has been.

They entered the raft with a slew of teenagers wearing pink shirts that said freshman. Several of the teenagers appeared to be homosexuals. Veronica thought to herself, "Bless them." Veronica went to a church that accepted all people no matter what race or sexual preference. She had heard many arguments for and against homosexuality but for the life of her could not figure out the hatred attached to the subject.

The teenagers were loud, rowdy, and excessively concerned about their sneakers getting wet. Nicole looked excited amidst the hub-bub. Soon they were on their way. The raft rocked back-and-forth crashing into small waves here and there in a carefully

choreographed progression specifically designed to get each and every rider wet. Veronica and Nicole giggle and laughed with the teenagers as the raft turned and headed toward the waterfall. One teenager cried out, “Cowabunga Dude!” Veronica laughed at his exclamation and it took her a second or two to register that the phrase from the TV show the Simpsons. She wondered if this was the sign they prayed for, and if it is, does it mean to go to Simpsonville or not? She looked over at her friend wondering if she heard it too. Nicole smiled and said, “Would you go if I paid for the trip?”

Veronica fought the urge to say no, and nodded appreciatively as the raft rotated and the waterfall fell directly on top of the ladies.

After the ride, the ladies decided to grab some lunch. They hopped into a boat-shaped booth in a themed restaurant outside the river raft ride. Veronica was pleasantly surprised and grateful to discover the theme park offered a vegan selection. After they ordered, Veronica tentatively brought up her friends generous offer.

Veronica: I don’t usually accept large gifts from people. I’m not even sure what made me say yes. But I do appreciate it. Please don’t feel like you have to follow through. I totally understand if you decide it’s too much.

Nicole: You actually have to let me do it. I saw the waterfall ahead of us and I thought about baptism. I thought about the only thing I really haven’t made amends for and I know I just have to pay for your trip...besides I have comps and such that I can apply to it. It’s not nearly as big of a deal as it seems.

Veronica: You are so amazing! I am so blessed to have you in my life.

Nicole: Did God give you a sign as well?

Veronica: yes...cowabunga dude! One of those kids said it on the ride. It’s from the Simpsons. My Uncle lives in Simpsonville.

Nicole: God is great!

Veronica: So true. I’d miss service that weekend.

Nicole: Its ok, God travels.

Veronica: Do you mind if I ask what you are making amends for?

Nicole: Darcy.

Veronica: Darcy?

Nicole: My ex-husbands mother. Before she got sick, she was always inserting herself in Bud and my relationship...and our financial situation. In fact when we were buying our home, it had red carpet. I told them I wanted to rip it out and replace it. She looked at me and said, “Red carpet is good enough for you.” And while we both know I belong on the red carpet, I can have carpet of any color I want. I was so mad at her. A year later I replaced that red carpet, put in a beautiful cream color. She got sick about the same time. But now I didn’t have the money for both of us to go see her. Bud made it over to see her but I did not. I’ve always felt guilty about that. Let me make this amend in my own personal way.

Veronica: I will. I appreciate it.

Their food arrived. They quietly whispered the Lord’s Prayer together and began eating. Veronica was pleased with her vegan noodle dish. She noticed that Nicole seemed satisfied with her selection as well. Veronica now felt like her and Nicole were the best of

friends. She paused a moment in her mind to thank God for Nicole being a part of her life. She had not yet conversed with God about the new developments in her travels, but she figured she'd work that out later.

Veronica found that her clothing dried quickly and by the time they left the restaurant she was basically back to normal. The rest of the day was a blast. The ladies watched several shows, took pictures of amazing rare animals, and fed birds in the parks sanctuary. The park had several roller coasters to choose from but Veronica and Nicole agreed that it just wasn't anything they were interested in.

When Veronica arrived at her home later that evening she was so glad she gone on that adventure. She now had a plan to visit her Uncle, a new best friend, and felt like maybe she was living large, as they say. She made sure to thank God in her nightly prayers and rolled up for a fantastic long nights sleep.

The following weeks flew by, Veronica needed to give three weeks' notice at work for her vacation time, so Nicole purchased a ticket a month in advance. Veronica enjoyed this feeling of anticipation and hope. She spoke to Uncle Jack's nurse several times, made an itinerary, a list of things to pack, and let herself enjoy the planning stage of the journey. She spoke to Nicole frequently and thanked God constantly. A few times, the fear that her uncle would die while she was there bit her brain with terror but she quickly reminded herself that it was really all in God's hands. She chuckled frequently over her friend's comment that God travels.

On the flight, Veronica amused herself by turning a little prayer into a song and replaying it in her mind, "God, in your perfection, please provide protection from accident and infection. Thank you for your attention."

She arrived at her Uncles house on schedule. She stood there holding her uncle's hand just as she did in the dream only this time she could see her uncle up close. In the dream she had seen herself standing next to her Uncle, as if she was in third person. She quickly looked back behind herself to see if anyone was there, but the corner of the room was empty.

Veronica was on high alert, she did not tell Uncle Jack about her dream, but she was almost waiting for the big moment. Uncle Jack appeared to be happy she had come. The wrinkles of a life of laughter shadowed his face but he managed a smile here and there. The nurse was present actively attending to him. He seemed healthy though not particularly alert. Veronica asked him if he had any good jokes for her. He told her he was too tired to be funny. She chuckled, let go of some of her angst, and they watched some television together. Veronica made sure to get a picture of the two of them to share with Nicole, quickly texting it and thanking her for the thousandth time for the voyage.

The following day, Veronica held fast to her strict itinerary visiting all of her favorite places in one full day before heading back to Uncle Jack's side for the remainder of her visit.

When Veronica returned home from her trip she had little time to luxuriate. She was back on the grind at work the very next day.

A few month later, Veronica received a phone call from Uncle Jack's nurse, she said, "Jack passed away." Standing there holding her phone, Veronica saw herself standing next to Uncle Jack a few months back. Then she realized this memory, the memory of hearing the nurse and remembering her visit was exactly like the one she had in the dream. She remembered Uncle Jack's smile. Thank you God, she thought. Thank you.