

On the Other Side

by Melissa S. Anderson

Jack: Hey, Bella.

Bella: Hi, Jack! I'm so happy to see you again!

Jack: So, what are you up to today?

Bella: I have a message to deliver to Lucinda on the other side.
Want to come with me? I can show you around.

Jack: Sure! Who's Lucinda?

Bella: She's a dear soul. She worked so hard in life
that she scarcely had a moment to herself.
Now she just rocks in her chair on the porch
and waves to the other souls passing by.

Jack: Sounds like ... Whoa! Oh, wow! Where are we?

Bella: On the other side.

Jack: It's gorgeous! The colors!
Looks like a big party.

Bella: Those are the recent arrivals,
reconnecting with their families and friends.

Jack: And is that a baseball game over there?

Bella: Yup. Bottom of the 42,509,617th inning, bases loaded, two strikes.

Jack: So baseball games are interminable over here too.

Bella: Those souls never get tired of it. It's their idea of heaven.
Let's go over to that mountain stream.

Jack: I think I see someone fishing.

Bella: There are a lot of souls who are happiest
when they have a mountain and a trout stream all to themselves.

Jack: So each one of them gets a whole mountain?

How does that work?

Bella: Well, the mountains don't take up all that much room in infinite space.

Jack: What is that mass of lights over there, swooping and dipping in the sky? And do I hear a hum?

Bella: Probably.
Those are souls who are really into merging with oneness.

Jack: They look like a million birds flying in close formation. What are those buildings, the ones without any doors or windows?

Bella: Each building is occupied by souls who were very attached to a particular religion or ideology. They assumed they would be the only ones here, so we protect them until they are ready to see more.

Jack: What's up with these people who are hauling heavy baggage?

Bella: Well, they were told that they had to bring all their stuff – everything they ever did or said or thought – to be sorted and weighed. See, they are emptying their bags onto a scale.

Jack: Now they are handed slips of paper, but they seem confused.

Bella: They were hoping for a receipt that would show that the good outweighed the bad, but instead they get a card that says, "Congratulations on all that you learned in life!"

Jack: Uh, geez, what's that dark place over there?

Bella: (*Shuddering*) The souls in there are absolutely convinced that they need to be punished. They didn't necessarily do terrible things, but, whatever they did, they are filled with guilt.

Jack: What happens to them?

Bella: We fly through there all the time, hoping their beliefs have changed enough

that they can grasp our outstretched hands
and break out of there. They all do, eventually.

Jack: Now this is odd.
Why are these souls staring at a blank wall?

Bella: They thought that when their lives ended,
there would be nothing more – just nothingness.
So here they are, seeing nothing.

Jack: How boring.

Bella: Exactly! Boredom is such a blessing here, as on earth.
They finally get tired of nothing and start looking around
for something more interesting.
You should see the looks on their faces when that happens.

Jack: So, what's the deal, Bella?
It seems that everyone's heaven is what they want it to be.

Bella: Not exactly, Jack.
Everyone's heaven is what they believe it will be.

Jack: Ah, okay, I get it.
Well, I should get back to the office.
By the way, what's the message you're delivering to Lucinda?

Bella: That her grandson finally believes he's worthy of love.

Jack: Sweet!

Bella: I know!

Jack: Well, gotta go. Always a pleasure, Bella.

Bella: Likewise, Jack.

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