Message

Dean Cropper

INT. FAMILY HOME UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR. EVENING.

SHAUN enters room hesitantly. MCKENNA has been crying and now occupied on her phone.

SHAUN
Hey, is everything okay?
(he pauses expecting a response)
I know I'm not the one you usually confide in, but if you're upset you can talk to me, y'know?
(McKenna snorts as if disagreeing)
I remember being your age and not wanting to talk to my parents about things too, but it's healthy too. I'm not going to make you talk if you don't want to but...

CERYS
(from downstairs) McKenna honey, I'm serving dinner if you want any.

MCKENNA
Okay mum, I'm coming.

As Shaun turns back to McKenna she has already gotten up and walks through him. He realises he is dead.

EXT. STREET BY HOME. EVENING.

Shaun is leaving his driveway when RAMIEL suddenly appears as if by magic before him.

SHAUN
(shocked) You? How did you?

RAMIEL
Firstly, breathe.
(he gestures for Shaun to breathe deep)
My name is Ramiel, I'm an angel, one of the angels responsible for guiding manifested spirits that...

SHAUN
So I am dead? You said angel, and spirits, so I'm dead?

RAMIEL
(adjusts tie)
Yes, there's not an easy to put it.

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SHAUN
But I'm still here, not up there... or down there...

RAMIEL
There isn't an 'up there' or 'down there' as far as we know. You manifest here and get to watch the world go on.

SHAUN
Watch? What does that mean? And for how long?

RAMIEL
Yes, watch. Interaction is very limited, and difficult, and costly. Essentially you are made of ethereal energy now. If you try to interact with the living you expend yourself into nothing. Observe, and you can last hundreds of years.

SHAUN
So, I could watch over my family but they won't ever know I'm still here?

RAMIEL
Well, they could, you could, but I wouldn't... ahem, rather than try explain all the details, what do you have in mind?

SHAUN
My daughter... McKenna... I'd want to let her know I love her, more than anything.

RAMIEL
A message? It's survivab... I mean doable. A short message, really short. Take some time, figure out what you'd want to say. Don't rush into it, you've got time, it's the afterlife after all.

MONTAGE.

SHAUN
Okay, still feels weird following you around when you don't know I'm here, talking at you as if you can hear me,

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but the angel reckons it helps to get it out. Makes a change from working all the time when I was living, mind.

I guess you could put a lot of my shortcomings as a dad on my focus on the job and not you and your mum. I was always so proud of you, I mean I still am, you're such a bright girl always getting good grades, you're so polite aside from the teen attitude around the house, always helping out more than what's expected of you.

I couldn't ask any more of you as a daughter, I just never showed you how much you made me proud, I should have. I wish I'd taken more time to show my interest in your life, what you were into, things you were doing. We could've gone to a concert, you're always into your music, what's that band you were always on about, '*Against the Current*s' or something, a bit late to be thinking of that I guess.

Seems like you're taking my passing better than I am to be honest. I've always admired how strong you are and how you always keep your cool. I was never any good at keeping my cool with you though, always letting my stress dictate my actions which wasn't on at all. Even now I'm getting stressed thinking about all these things I'd want to say to you. Edna, you know Edna, Tony next door's mum, she passed away a couple of months back, well anyway, Edna told me about this support group where deceased can talk about this kind of thing, I was thinking of going this week.

INT. SUPPORT GROUP HALL. DAY.

Six people are sat in a circle in an open hall. Shaun is one of the six, along with TWO WOMEN, TWO MEN and a YOUNG MAN. The group's mood is sombre. We join them mid-flow of the support session.

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WOMAN 1
...and Cassandra tried to get through to her husband by interfering with the TV; channel hopping to speak out a sentence, right; but it was too much for her. She just disappeared right there before my eyes, God rest her soul.

MAN 1
Such a shame, bless her. How did you feel after that?

WOMAN 1
Helpless, and upset that I lost her a second time, y'know. I really believed she could do it, so it hit hard.

WOMAN 2
You weren't to know. None of us are to know, otherwise we'd all be messaging our loved ones.

SHAUN
Has anyone we know of managed to message a loved one, and not faded away?
(Both women and Man 1 say/gesture no)

YOUNG MAN
Nah, the closest I can think of is my old man, he squeezed my mum's arm and she felt it, but he went a weird translucent after, like he was only just hanging on here.

MAN 2
Know someone who says they got two words through.

SHAUN
So the TV is a fade, but a touch or a few words and we survive. What else do we know? Just think, if we figure out the limits, we could leave a message and still be around.
(the group)

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EXT. STREET BY HALL. DAY.

SHAUN
(to self)
McKenna?

Shaun jogs over to walk beside McKenna.

SHAUN
You would not believe today, girl. It's been great. I went to that support group, well, turns out that it was just what I needed. Not that any of us truly know the cost of doing anything you could see or hear, but we talked about what others have done and I reckon that I could survive a few moments of talking to you for real. I just need to focus on what I really want to tell you, to let you know that I'm still here, I'm okay and that I...

McKenna is too occupied on her phone to notice that she walks out in front of a car.

SHAUN
McKenna!
(he grabs McKenna to pull her back)

McKenna's phone flies from her hand. Shaun fades away almost instantly.

MCKENNA
(pauses in shock)
Dad?!

END.

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