

What people are saying about

## Shine On

One of the most gripping accounts of a near-death experience that I have read. And I say that having interviewed, since 1965, thousands of people who described such experiences. [His] story also evokes... a primal horror of being dragged under and run over by a train! I still remember the chill that went down my spine.

**Dr. Raymond A. Moody, Jr.**, bestselling author of *Life After Life*

Wonderful... *Shine On* is a fascinating account of an extraordinary experience and I recommend everyone read this book to understand the true importance and power of NDEs.

**Dr. Penny Sartori**, author of *The Wisdom of Near-Death Experiences*

Amazing, Amazing, beautiful book. I absolutely loved it. David's miraculous and moving story reads like a novel that brings you to tears. He used his spiritual experience to truly look within and change the trajectory of his life... beautifully weaves together the importance of the intersection of psychology and spirituality.

**Dr Amy Robbins**, Licensed Clinical Psychologist and Host of Life, Death and The Space Between Podcast

Wow! Absolutely riveting! It's so powerful and compelling! So impressed by the quality of the writing and the great story, and how real and grounded David comes across.

**Lisa Smartt, MA**, author of *Words at the Threshold: What We Say as We're Nearing Death*

*Shine On* tells the story of David's amazing experiences in an astute and very readable way. I can thoroughly recommend it.

**Dr. Melvyn J. Willin**, Paramusicologist

Part I

The Unfriendly Universe



## Chapter 1

# Falling Slowly

*You idiot. You bloody idiot.*

I knew I shouldn't have let this happen. It was the middle of the night. We were both laying on my bed, fully clothed, in the dark. I was holding Anna in my arms, her chestnut brown hair lying across the pillow, her warm brown eyes still looking up at me as the hope inside them drained away. She looked so vulnerable, and I could tell she was trying hard not to cry and that made it all so much harder.

I wanted to tell her the truth, tell her how much I liked her. In fact, more than that. I'd really fallen for her. But I couldn't. It felt safer to keep her at arm's length, because with Anna, if we got involved, I'd have to be real. She was the type that would hold me to it and I just couldn't live up to that. Maybe once I would have tried. But not now. Not after everything that had happened.

"It's okay," she said, sighing, "you don't want to have a relationship with me, I get it."

She tried to sound matter-of-fact, but I could tell she was upset as she turned over and pressed her pale face into the pillow. I rolled onto my back, put my hands behind my head and stared up at the dark ceiling.

We were friends, nothing more. I had to remind myself of that.

"It's not you. It's me," I heard myself say.

"Your trouble is, you think too much," she said, turning back to face me.

"I can't help the way I am."

"Why don't you talk to—"

"I told you. I don't want to see a therapist."

“But it might—”

“Might what? You think by talking to someone, it’s possible to be happy all the time, because I don’t see you being happy all the time.”

The words came out a little more aggressively than I’d intended.

“That’s not what I’m saying,” she argued back, but her voice had no fight in it now.

I hadn’t meant to sound so cynical. I was just angry, mainly with myself. After all, this was all my fault. As soon as she’d offered to visit, I knew that the question of where she was going to sleep would take us into dangerous territory. It was less complicated when we both lived in London; she had her flat, I had mine.

I even told myself before she arrived, keep her at arm’s length, don’t get involved in that way. But as soon as she’d texted to say she wanted to come, I knew I was looking forward to seeing her again, and almost against my own will, a wave of longing reared up inside.

Over the past few weeks since leaving London, I’d missed her even more than I thought I would and from the moment she stepped off the train, the whole day had felt so easy, spending a couple of hours in the local coffee shop, listening to her talk as she filled me in on what had happened in her life recently, then feeling comfortable with companionable silence as we walked around the town together. Finally, dinner and an evening sat talking about anything and everything, just like old times.

It was when we came to sorting out the sleeping arrangements, that was when it happened. The moment of madness. I’d offered her my bed to sleep in and said I’d sleep on the floor. She was worried I’d be uncomfortable, but I told her I was a tough guy, and when I said that, we both laughed and that defused the awkwardness of the moment. A bit. But my heart started beating faster for some reason.

"I've got a sleeping bag, I'll be okay. I just need one of the pillows," I said.

"Here you go," she replied, a flicker of nervousness unintentionally revealed in her voice as she picked one up and handed it to me.

"Thanks."

"Goodnight then."

"Goodnight."

And that was the moment. Our hands briefly touched as I took the pillow off her and that was when I made the move. That was what the strange energy in the room was about.

A thought flashed into my mind, one I didn't want to have.

*Don't do this. Don't.*

As this thought took hold, I started to feel like an electric current was running throughout my body underneath my skin, and I couldn't stand the tension of lying next to her any longer.

"What's the matter?" she asked, as I sat bolt upright and swung my legs off the bed.

"I can't do this. I'm sorry. I'll sleep on the floor."

And that was it. I got off the bed, threw a pillow down onto the floor, pulled out a sleeping bag from the bottom of the wardrobe, lay down, put my face into the pillow and shut my eyes to block everything out.

In the dark and silent charged atmosphere of the room, I could hear her breathing softly. Then I heard her turn over and sigh deeply. Was she crying?

After a while, she began to breathe more softly again, and my heart sank because I knew we had tomorrow morning to get through before she was due to get the afternoon train back to London. If only she'd bought an earlier train ticket.

What was she thinking? What the hell was I thinking, inviting her here? Unable to sleep, I rolled over onto my back and stared into the blackness for what seemed like hours, trying to ignore the hardness of the floor. The last thing I remembered was gazing

out of the bedroom window at the starlit sky outside and hearing the sound of a fox, calling out somewhere in the distance.

Next morning, breakfast was awkward and quiet. The two of us tried to be polite with each other as we drank our coffee and she ate the food I cooked for her, but last night hung heavily in the air and it wasn't easy for either of us to feign any kind of lightness to the conversation.

But it wasn't just the uncomfortableness of last night that unsettled me. As I stood by the sink, washing up the breakfast dishes, quite suddenly, a chilly breeze seemed to run down my spine, bringing in its wake an overwhelming feeling of foreboding. I couldn't make sense of the feeling and shut the cutlery drawer a little too forcefully, as though to shake myself out of its strange cold grip.

Anna looked up from the magazine she was reading. Her eyes looked red and I could tell she'd been crying, probably when she was alone in the bathroom. Trouble was, now she was no longer Anna, my friend. After last night, she was something else, although I wasn't sure what. And I was now something else to her too.

"Sorry, a bit clumsy this morning," I said, secretly wishing it was time to leave for the station already.

Huntingdon train station was, from the outside, a typical Cambridge Victorian municipal brick building, its grand front entrance and north and southbound platforms all canopied under a new flat roof. A large poster in the ticket hall proudly listed the times of the half-hourly service to London King's Cross Station, a journey of just over an hour on weekdays and slightly longer at the weekend.

It was bitterly cold as we waited on the London-bound platform. The rail track glistened in the low, harsh winter sunlight, as though it was coated with frost. We both started stamping our feet to keep warm, sheltering from the cold wind by the footbridge of the station platform, near to where two

station CCTV cameras were mounted.

I looked around to see what the time was. The digital station clock over the platform entrance displayed the time in hours and minutes. And if you looked really closely and could make out the figures in the glare of the harsh sunlight, seconds too.

Anna rubbed her hands together to keep them warm as we waited. There were only two other people on the long station platform, a man and a woman waiting for the same train. They were kissing and holding each other, as though saying goodbye, and I felt guilty when I saw Anna glance over at them.

If I was honest with myself, part of me couldn't wait for her to go so that I didn't have to feel so guilty, but another part of me wanted to tell her I'd made a stupid mistake, tell her she should stay, come back to the house so that we could climb into bed and hold onto each other and never let go. But I still couldn't bring myself to say it and I couldn't explain why.

Finally, a metallic glint appeared in the distance, the London-bound train moving towards us. Within a few seconds, all four carriages come into view as the front engine pounded down the track towards the station.

I looked over at Anna. She looked cold, her breath was freezing into little clouds of ice.

"You'll be warm soon."

"Good, I'm freezing," she replied. Watching the approaching train, I pulled the collar of my coat around my neck, glad that I'd worn it. It was my warmest coat, three-quarter length, high quality, thick sheepskin with five brown buttons down the front and an inner fur lining that went all the way down the sleeves. I was wearing a thick jumper underneath, so the coat wasn't easy to get on and off in a hurry, but I didn't mind; it was cold waiting on the station platform, I had no intention of taking it off until I got home again.

The big, dirty diesel engine and the massive, heavy metal wheels clunking on the track grew louder and louder as the train



approached. Then, as it arrived in the station, the metal brakes screeched underneath as the train finally came to a standstill, followed by a small, violent jerk and a hiss along the entire length of the carriages as the brakes of the metal monster were applied.

"This one looks okay," I said, looking through the window of the nearest carriage, "there are empty seats in here."

The carriage had sets of double sliding doors at either end. We walked up to the nearest one. The button on the outside of the right-hand carriage door turned a bright flashing green color and I pushed it. The two doors slid open and Anna got onto the train. A few seconds later, I heard a beeping noise, a door closing warning alert.

I stepped back from the open doorway. Anna was stood inside the carriage, but I knew we still had a few seconds left before the doors automatically closed. Enough time for a few last words. But what was I going to say?

"Will you keep in touch? Let me know how things are going," I asked before I could stop myself.

"Of course I will," she replied, in an overly bright tone. But I knew she wouldn't. Not after last night.

My hand rested on the outside of the door as I leaned over the threshold to say one last goodbye, to look at her face one last time, because I already knew, I'd really miss her.

An urgent beeping noise indicated that the doors were about to close, so I took my hand away and shouted my last goodbye through the rapidly closing gap. Then both doors slammed together with a dull and heavy mechanical thud. At the same moment, I went to step back and realized something wasn't quite right. For some reason, I couldn't step back. And I couldn't figure it out. Something seemed to be stopping me.

I looked down.

The edge of my sheepskin coat was clamped between the two sliding doors that had just slammed together. Just the edge of it.

That was all.

For a second, I thought everything would be okay, so I told myself not to panic, otherwise I'd look stupid in front of Anna. I told myself it would be okay, because train doors automatically opened when something was trapped in them. I'd seen it happen many times on the London Underground. Any second now, the doors would slide open again.

Definitely.

They would.

Then I heard a noise that made the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end. The train engine was revving up. My heart started pounding as the station clock reached the timetabled departure time.

15.57:55... 56... 57.

After another second, the engine sound increased in pitch. Adrenaline took over. I grabbed a fistful of the coat fabric and started tugging at the trapped corner stuck between the clamped doors, but it was no good. I couldn't pull the coat fabric free.

*Look for the door button. The door release button. It says 'press to open' above the button. Hit it. Open the doors that way. Hit it again. Do it!*

15.58:03... 04... 05.

No matter how hard I hit the button, the doors stayed shut. The control button didn't work anymore. I had no idea that the door locks were controlled by the driver and that he'd disabled the control buttons on the outside of the carriages, now that he thought the train was clear and ready to depart. I just kept pounding the button in the hope that it would open the doors and couldn't understand why it didn't.

The next moment, I heard a new noise. The engine sound changed. It became even higher, more intense. That was the moment I knew the train was about to move and it felt like the air had suddenly frozen in my lungs.

Then, with a small jolt, the train wheels started inching

forward. One inch. Then a few inches. Then a few more. Then a foot. Then even more as the dirty metal wheels rolled over and over on the oily track. I could see the huge wheels through the tiny gap between the train and the platform, in the black and oily pit below. It was like looking down into hell.

Without even thinking, I began walking quickly because I had no choice; because if I didn't, I knew I'd be dragged under the train.

15.58:14... 15... 16.

*Come on. Think. Just keep moving. That's it. Keep up. You'll be okay. Someone will do something.*

15.58:30... 31... 33.

Then increasing acceleration underfoot, forcing me to start running.

*Have to go faster now – don't trip up – you can do this – people – there – inside the carriage – maybe they can help.*

Running faster now, I heard myself shout, "HHHHEEEEEELLLLLPPPP."

I could feel the impact on my fist as I banged on the glass window of the carriage doors and I could see Anna standing there on the other side of the glass, and for a moment, we looked directly into each other's eyes, a look of absolute horror on her face.

15.58:37... 38... 39.

*Pace picking up – have to – run now – harder to catch – breath – maybe someone – will see me – stop the train.*

Then I remembered, the platform was empty except for the other man who'd been kissing the girl. He would be the last person to see me alive and I didn't even know his name. As I passed him, he began frantically shouting, "Take your jacket off, take it off. TAAAKKKKKEEEE IT OFFFFFFFFF."

But it was no good and I knew I didn't have enough time to turn myself into a position where I could slip my arms out from the tight fur-lined sleeves in the last few seconds I had left before

I got dragged under. And I knew I was really in trouble now. I really was.

Through the glass, I could see Anna's mouth was open and she looked like she was screaming although I couldn't hear her as the engine noise was so loud. Some of the other passengers appeared at the doorway and I could see through the glass that they were trying to help, but there seemed to be lots of confusion and panic inside the carriage.

I couldn't tell who was doing what, but it looked like several people were trying to find the emergency stop button, and I could see it all and it all looked very confusing because everyone was panicking. Even though half a dozen people were frantically trying to help me, I could see that no one knew what to do.

And that was when I knew I was about to be pulled under the train.

*This is it. I'm going to die.*