Looking for Carroll Beckwith

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| Cover flap | Robert Snow is a retired IPD detective. He is a highly respected law enforcement officer in the Indianapolis Police Department. Commander of the homicide branch. Holds degrees in psychology and criminal justice. He is the author of four books on police procedure. |
| p. 1-2 | Read first paragraph and highlighted areas. |
| 3 | Raised in a strict Methodist family; mother made her children attend church at least once a week, and many times more. Never heard anyone speak of past lives. In America, on thought only kooks and weirdos believed in reincarnation. |
| 5 | Whether or not past lives are real or only imaginary doesn’t matter, say many mental health professionals who use past-life regression. If they seem real to a patient, thjen the past-life therapy can resolve psychological problems. |
| 7 | He attended a party given by the Marion County Family Advocacy Center (his wife was a child abuse detective.) Another child abuse detective, Cathy Graban, also a prychologist, who used hypnotic regression in her practice. He mentioned Dr. Moody’s book. He thought it was people’s imagination. Cathy challenged him to test his beliefs. Wrote name of a colleague of her who used hypnotic regression. He didn’t believe in it but agreed to take the dare. |
| 8 | Every time he ran into Cathy, she asked if he had made the appointment yet. He finally got tired of making excuses and called to make an appointment. |
| 9 | He grew nervous; not sure it was reliable, but did know that people do not lose control of themselves and are not under the domination of the hypnotist. Thought he was too strong willed to be hypnotized. |
|  | Finally drove to the office; Dr. Mariellen Griffith. “A captain of detectives is not frightened by something as silly as hypnotism. Decided to see it through and cooperate. |
| 11 | Dr. Griffith told him that in his subconscious mind there was his “higher self,” a soprt of spirit who would guide me throughout our session, allowing him to see only the parts of his past that would help him in this life. |
| 13 | At first, he didn’t feel anything except for the rather hard couch beneath his buttocks and the floor under his feet. |
| 14 | He didn’t feel relaxed, as she told him to become. He was tense from feeling like a simpleminded fool for getting himself involved in this….a captain of detectives sitting with his eyes closed, waiting to be transported back to a past life. I knew I should never have done this. |
| 18 | They went through the original exercises at least a dozen times in different variations, but nothing happened. |
|  | Okay, your higher self is telling you that this is not a place where you want to stop. He will take you somewhere else…after sitting on the couch without moving for at least a half-hour, his buttocks ached, his back was beginning to hurt, his fingers were clasped tightly together and had gone numb, and his eyelids felt sticky and glued shut. |
| 19-20 | Suddenly, my imagination began working. Without even trying, I could see in my mind the foggy picture of a large mountain. She told him to visualize a little cabin on top of the mountain…then she counted down 12 stone steps down the mountain and asked him to tell what he saw. |
| 20 | I hardly heard what Dr. Griffith said when she finished counting because something happened, something so bizarre and startling I would have screamed in surprise if I hadn’t already lost my breath. |
| 21 | I stood in a valley. I don’t mean that I just imagined or daydreamed that I stood in a valley, or that I just saw a valley in my mind. I was there…it seemed as if I had suddenly walked through a door into another world. |
| 22 | I felt an uneasiness because unlike a dream or even imagination, there were no blurry, foggy edges to what I saw. Everything around me looked sharp, clear, and extraordinarily lifelike. |
| 23-24 | Look at yourself and see what you’re wearing: pair of dirty, gnarly feet and two hairy legs. Seemed to be wearing some type of dark fur that appeared filthy and matted. Carried a piece of heavy tree limb. He lived in a cave that had a hole in the roof and water ran through it. Had no mate; lived alone. Saw his death and floated above the body. Felt the purpose of that life was to experience loneliness. |
| 32 | I felt completely clear-headed and in control. I knew that I maintained complete command of my actions and could do or not do as Dr. Griffith asked…I knew I could leave the hypnotic state simply by opening my eyes. But I didn’t want to. This had become, without the slightest doubt, the most fascinating experience of my life, a sort of makeshift virtual reality. |
| 33 | Next found himself on a city street; looked like late nineteenth century. Gas lamps, carriages pulled by horses. He was wearing a fancy shirt and jacket and carrying a fancy cane. Meeting a woman for a meal outside. Ordered wine. This was the first he saw his life as Carroll Beckwith. |
| 35 | Sees himself in a room with lots of paintings; many windows; I think I’m an artist. Paintings are scenes and pictures of peoples. |
| 35-40 | * Married the woman * He says his name is Jack * Getting recognized for an accomplishment * Argument over money * Should have had children * Saw some of his paintings |
| 41-48 | Another life as a young girl in Greece; teenager; brings things to the altar for work; lives with other girls who bring things to the altar in the woods; all virgins; later was in a wagon with an old man; had a daughter (recognized her as his present step-daughter); she was given or sold to the man because she had not obeyed the rules about being a virgin; she was bringing her daughter back to the altar so she could work there—wasn’t happy about it but pretended that it would be good for the girl. Felt sad and ashamed. Then saw herself old, cleaning fish; got caught in a net or something and drown. |
| 49-52 | Back in the life of the painter. Was painting a hunchedback woman and wondered why someone so unattractive would want a painting of herself.   * Didn’t like painting portraits, but needed the money. * Painting a lady in a long gown * Arguing with someone about a painting hung in poor lighting. * Walked into his house and saw wife playing the piano wearing a yellow dress. In France * Stated that “she died of a blood clot.” Felt heavy sadness. |
| 53 | Had been sitting on the couch for over an hour; he was wrong about being unable to be hypnotized. Felt he had acted like a “kook or weirdo.” Uncomfortable about his actions. Police officers don’t like losing control over situations. |
| 55 | It had all been too vivid and realistic for imagination. It had to be just dredged-up memories pieced together and reordered to make up a story that would please Dr. Griffith. That had to be it—no other explanation. |
| 56 | Had vivid memory of seeing the portrait of the hunchback and another painting that had hung over the fireplace in the mansion I’d seen myself visiting as a spirit.  He finally decided that the answer would probably come to him or he would run across pictures of the paintings somewhere and then recall where he had seen them. He was confident that they were just forgotten memories. |
| 57 | If they weren’t memories, that would mean his whole belief system would have to be rebuilt. |
| 58 | Also wondered why he didn’t have art ability: the only F he had ever gotten in school was in Art class. But he had always been interested in art, esp. 16th thru 18th century art, and always disliked impressionism and modern art. |
| 59 | Told his wife about what happened. She has an analytical mind and practical. Liked to bounce ideas off her. she knew why I went to see Dr. Griffith. She was skeptical about his experience. Thought he had experienced overactive imagination or forgotten memories. He agreed and dropped the subject. |
| 60 | For the next month, though, he thought about the experience daily. If he closed his eyes, he could still see the scenes he had experience and the two paintings vividly. It still bothered him because it had the feel of reality (not pieced together memories). |
| 61 | Knew he was becoming obsessed and if he couldn’t put it out of his mind, then he needed to prove beyond a doubt that he had made up everything from forgotten memories.   * He needed to get this matter out of his mind by finding undeniable proof that it was just patched-together memories. * Decided to look for the paintings in an art or history book. * Next few weeks, went to Central Library in Indianapolis on lunch * After weeks of searching through hundreds of art books of famous artists from the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries—found nothing. * He would have to travel a thousand miles to find one of the paintings. |
| 65 | After another 6 weeks of looking, going through every book in the library with photos of art works, he had no success. Needed a new plan. |
| 66 | He had dreams. In one he saw his older brother and himself as artists. |
| 67 | Realized that the paintings I saw were probably not famous and were obscure, monor paintings by a minor artist.   * Thought he had probably seen them somewhere and forgotten them. * Needed to widen his search in books of lesser-known artists * The months of fruitless searching hadn’t discouraged him. Still believed that he would find them. |
| 68 | Started going to all the art stores and galleries in Indianapolis.   * After two months of searching every art book in library and every art store in Indy, was stymied, but not ready to give up. * 69. Started to go to bookstores; spent several months; no success. |
| 69 | Becoming obsessed with finding and identifying the paintings:   * Decided to go back to Dr. Griffith, hypnotized again, but only got information from supposed lives much too far back in history. Nothing about his supposed life as an artist. |
| 71 | Began researching hypnotic regression therapy, reading several dozen books and professional journals on the subject.   * Visited a New Age store in Indy. (embarrassed at being there) * Purchased a dozen books about past lives and reincarnation and a tape claiming to teach him how to perform self-hypnosis and self-regression. * Surprised to read that many people reported similar things when hypnotized. * After death many people saw themselves rising above their bodies, as he did. |
| 72 | Instead of worrying about loved one left behind, he wanted to take one last look at his paintings before he left earth.   * Wondered how he knew these things at the moment of death? * He really wanted to find these paintings to prove that past-life regression didn’t exist. |
| 72 | Tried self-hypnosis/regression tape; could never come up with anything.   * Tried using a script dozens of times; two times he did go into the same hypnotic state for only a few seconds. * Each time started by strong impression of a number—1017. “Each time, the number came almost as an explosion that abruptly ended the hypnotic state.” |
| 73 | Finally, decided to just file this investigation away. I was out of leads and ideas.   * Didn’t realize the new evidence he needed sat only two months and a thousand miles away. |
| 75 | Still thought and dreamed about it; told himself for peace of mind, he ought to just forget about the whole experience and get on with his life. This did not work.   * He and Melanie talked about taking a trip for their anniversary—somewhere they had never been. * Melanie called and said, “What do you think about going to New Orleans for our anniversary?” |
| 77 | In New Orleans, visited historical sites. On final day, decided to visit small shops in the French Quarter. |
| 78-79  READ ON PAGE 79 | Stopped in a small art gallery. Admiring collection of paintings.   * At the end of the wall, an easel stood in the corner holding a portrait. I gave it a glance and started on past, but then stopped abruptly, as if running into a glass wall. Whirling around, I stared open-mouthed at the portrait, reliving an experience I’d had one when I grabbed onto a live wire without knowing it, the current freezing me in my tracks as huge voltage surged up and down my arms and legs. |
| 81  READ ON PAGE 81 | 9 a.m. on Oct. 13, 1978, walked into apartment and found his wife dead. Memory has always been painfully vivid.  “that was the only time in my life that I ever experience more of a shock than I did when I walked into the obscure little art gallery in New Orleans and found, resting on an easel sitting unpretentiously in a corner, the portrait of the hunchbacked woman.” |
| 82 | This was too much of a coincidence...This was the portrait I had seen while under hypnosis…I could see myself in the studio painting it, and I could once again see the hunch-backed woman…I was never more sure of anything in my life. |
| 85 | Asked who the artist was: J. Carroll Beckwith. Did J stand for Jack. Dates of his birth and death: 1852-1917. Stomach filled with cold acid that seemed to bubble and froth when heard name and saw the date of death as 1917—same as in self-hypnosis. |
| 89 | Clerk said the portrait’s been in a private collection for years….there hadn’t been an exhibition of Beckwith’s work in the last seventy-five years. He wasn’t that famous.  His whole belief system was falling. |
| 90 | Decided to do a thorough search on Beckwith. Wanted to solve this mystery and get it off his mind. |
| 94 | Indianapolis Art Museum: no books on Beckwith himself; small mentions in a few books about artists in general and one in a book about John Singer Sargent (had been a good friend and had shared an apartment and studio in Paris for several years. Also a mention in a book on painter William M. Chase, also a friend. |
| 96 | Had had an exhibition in Indianapolis in 1911. IMA had two paintings of Beckwith’s.  Portrait of William M. Chase was ondisplay in another gallery, portrait of John Singer Sargent was in storage. He saw a portrait of James Whitcomb Riley done by John Singer Sargent. (Snow knew as soon as he saw the Sargent painting that it was done by Beckwith. Felt electricity and vertigo.) |
| 100 | In the book on John Singer Sargent, he learned that Beckwith had kept a diary for most of his life: stored in archives of the National Academy of Design in New York City. |
| 109 | Snow ordered the diary on microfilm. He then made a list of everything he said during his regression. (wanted to disprove them with the info in the diaries.) They also sent a biography he had written but never published.   * Found 28 items—27 from Dr. Griffith, 1 from self-hypnosis, that could be proved or disproved. * Read list on p. 109-111 |
| 115 | Beckwith had kept a daily diary from age 19 to age 65 when he died.   * Snow was able to piece together the main events of Beckwith’s life. * He found more confirmations of the 28 items and absolutely nothing that disproved anything he had seen while under hypnosis. |
| 129-130 | Decided he needed to read the entire collection of diaries.  “the number of confirmations had grown much too large. Instead, feeling like a man who had lived his entire life in darkness and was suddenly seeing his first sunrise, I realized I had apparently stumbled onto some type of universal truth.” |
| 133 | He told his wife about his research and what he had found so far.  “Are you nuts? Have you lost your mind?” said Melanie.  “Come on, Bob, you don’t really mean this. Tell me you’re not serious.”  Snow convinced her to listen to the tape of his regression. She did her own research for two weeks, hoping to find something he didn’t. she didn’t find anymore than he had, and she refused to talk about it anymore. |
| 137 | ‘Bob, you’re a police captain, not some New Age nut. Let’s not go talking to people about this. All right?...people are going to think you’ve lost your marbles. |
| 138-141 | Snow began to hear about other policemen who had had paranormal experiences and didn’t seem embarrassed to talk about them:   * Floating above during a gun fight * Left body and floated above parking lot when a robber held a gun on him inside a store. * Objects in a house moved by themselves. |
| 142 | Began to think about a book---and knew without a doubt that meant reading every page of Beckwith’s diary from beginning to end. Decided to order paper copies of the diaries, and when they arrived there were 15,000 pages. Beckwith used a light pencil for some years and somewhat scribbled. Some were difficult to read. Bought a magnifying glass. |
| 145 | He had already gathered proof for 15 of the 28 items, he wanted to verify a few and findout about the rest. |
| 146 | Went back to New Orleans to see the portrait again and maybe purchase it, but it had been moved and then sold, and when he finally tracked down the gallery owner who sold it, the owner would not give Snow the name and address. |
| 148 | Snow said he knew that no one in history had likely ever had an opportunity such as this. He had the opportunity to read a daily account of a life he had lived in another time. |
| 159 | After reading the diaries, “I realized I had now proven beyond even the smallest doubt that I carried memories of Carroll Beckwith in my mind. There was no there explanation. With the level of proof I had, if this had been a criminal case, I would have been absolutely certain of a conviction.”  Grew nervous about telling his story, and Melanie advised that he ought to just keep his discoveries to himself. |
| 161 | He had read a lot about past-life regression. Learned about the Association for Past-Life Research and Therapies. (mental health professionals who used past-life regression therapy in their practices. |
| 163 | Attend a conference of APRT. The large majority of the people seemed to be rational individuals with no obvious signs of severe psychological problems.  165: They were sincere, compassionate individuals who were more concerned about the welfare of their patients than flouting convention. |
| 165 | While reading the diaries, he learned that there were scrapbooks at the New York Historical Society. Had to go to New York because the scrapbooks were too fragile to ship. He would also be close to Beckwith’s grave. |
|  | After viewing the scrapbooks, he hadn’t found any evidence that could disprove any of the 28 items. |
| 180 | On his last day in New York, he set out to visit Beckwith’s grave. He experienced an anxiety attack. (like he did early in his career in certain very dangerous situations) heart beating very hard, rapid and painful breathing, his left knee shaking uncontrollably, hands tingling from the cold electricity of adrenaline. Forced himself to visit the grave, had a gardener take a picture of him at the grave, and left as soon as he could. |
| 186 | “As a cop, and not a philosopher or theologian, the only real conclusion I can come to from my investigation is that I very obviously carry in my subconscious mine Carroll Beckwith’s memories. And as a corollary of my proving this, I have to believe I also carry memories of an altar girl in ancient Greece and a prehistoric cave-dwelling man. What this all means, however, in the bigger picture of the other billions of inhabitants of Earth, I will leave to the philosophers and theologians.” |