

Carnagy's death

We present to you Carnagy. Male, European, aged fifty-one. Carnagy lies before you in the debris of a building, collapsed from unknown reason. Concrete landings crushed his legs and chest, his arms. Drawing last breaths, Carnagy observes his body, terribly mutilated, spattering blood all over his shaking chin. Seconds later, he is dead, gone; he is no more. Simultaneously, he somehow still is. His consciousness still is Carnagy, somewhere. But where?

"God, that fucking hurts," he says to himself. Waves of agony pouring over his body. Body? But Carnagy no longer has a body. Nevertheless, he feels the sweat painstakingly erupting over his spine and groins, in his armpits. He can sense the glutinous numbness of his hands and feet. However, he gradually loses a notion of what are or ever were his hands and legs, his armpits or groins. These become just hollow, indefinable things. Carnagy is having serious doubts that the sweat - form and purpose of which he likewise can no longer correctly define - that this sweat is erupting anywhere at all. Where? There is nothing out there! Carnagy, although still realising being Carnagy, concurrently begins to sense the utter emptiness surrounding him. "Where am I?" he speaks to himself and then also "Christ that really fucking hurts." There is quiet all around, nobody speaks, no words are said, at least nothing that could explain what's happening.

Carnagy again to himself, "Fuck sake, why does it have to hurt so much?" He remembers his crushed body. "Oh, that's why." Gradually, he starts to realise what exactly is going on. "I'm dead," he exclaims. "I died in that fucking building, under the heap of debris for fuck sake!" And that is true. He is dead.

Carnagy meets the Creator.

That complete nothingness surrounding Carnagy suddenly begins to change its form. Carnagy sees a cone of light in an unclear distance in front of him. Melodic voice, humming syllables indistinctly lures him towards the sun-like cone; and so he goes, sails or flies, it is somehow challenging to describe his movements adequately. "Oh my god, here it comes!" he thinks. As he approaches the luminous circle, its volume begins to increase to the extent that it devours the whole of him and covers his body in all-encompassing whiteness. It is not the stinging white of snow; it is more of a soft whiteness of dairy ice cream, which has a pale colour, therefore pleasant to the eyes. With the arrival of the light, Carnagy realises he no longer feels the horrid pain with which he had contended until now, tortured in that empty nothing, for God knows how long.

In his visual field - as if after an eyeblink - a man appears. An older man in his fifties with some youth energy in his face. He is shaved clean, and his grey-streaked, close-cropped hair is receding from his forehead. He is neither slim nor large; tall or short. He gives the blandest impression a bit like a bank clerk. It stroke to Carnagy that this man resembles himself and perhaps for that reason, he liked him from the first moment. The man observes him, smiling and with a patronising expression on his face - simultaneously, sitting most quirkily, somehow in an open space seated and leaning on completely nothing looking a bit like some teenager loitering on a metal fence by a bus stop. Some time passes before he talks.

The Creator: Welcome, my son.

Carnagy: Thank you and good day.

The Creator: Tell me, do you know, who I am?

Carnagy: Hmm, I think so. You must be God, that right?

The Creator: I am the Creator, but in fact, you're right. Perhaps the capital letter - I should say - that was your idea.

Carnagy: I don't quite follow.

The Creator: That does not matter much.

Carnagy: You know Lord, the thing is, I've always pictured you way differently. Sort of - more menacing! If you know what I mean? Definitely not like that - as an average man. Damn it! You almost look like me!

The Creator: The thing is, my son, each of you sees me differently because I approach everyone in a different, individual form. Therefore I am - or at least I'm trying to be - what you'd like me to. I want to look pleasant to you, so you feel comfortable in my company.

Carnagy: You're doing splendidly.

The Creator: Thank you. It's not that hard, you know.

Carnagy: I'm afraid I can hardly imagine.

The Creator: Trust me on that one. For example, let's suppose you would be a doctor of philosophy. Then, we would be having a completely different kind of conversation, and I would look utterly different.

Carnagy: I'm afraid I've lost you there again.

The Creator: Let's forget it, but the point is, I am the image of your own, you follow?

Carnagy: Image of my own. (It is clear he is already thinking about something else) Lord? I'm sorry, I mean Creator, forgive me, but I have to ask. What the hell is happening right now?

The Creator: You don't know? You, whose name was Carnagy. You're dead, you died. Your life has ended. Then you left for your - retirement.

Carnagy: And there is something that interests me, if I may bother you, Creator..?

The Creator: Of course, my son, ask away. Momentarily, I am here for you. Therefore my time here and now is devoted to you.

Carnagy: I just wanted to know how long had I been in that retirement as you call it?

The Creator: Well, I must admit that for some time.

Carnagy: But Lord, why? I thought it would never end!

The Creator: Look, I should have been here earlier, I admit that. If only things went according to plan. Unfortunately, I got delayed, or should I say I was held up somewhere else. Listen, it's just me up here, and I've got more and more labour with all of that (In a low voice) Positively more than one would ask for. (Again in normal tone) So if you could forgive me, I mean the delay.

Carnagy: Sure, my Lord, let's drop it. Forgive me, but I don't understand, why are we having this conversation? What is it that you came here to say?

The Creator: What do you think I'm doing here? I came to guide you across. Accompany you on your journey. I am here to welcome you to your new life.

Carnagy: New life!? So this is not the end?! (Anxiously, he starts to stutter) Lord, I mean Creator, tell me, what's next, where do you take me, heaven or paradise? I hope not hell! I assume, there would be someone entirely else waiting for me here in that case, am I right?

The Creator: Dear son, there is nobody else around here. I alone welcome all of you - that's why the occasional delays. (The Creator clears his throat and in embarrassment starts rubbing his belly) I hate to break it to you, but there is no heaven or hell, or god forbid paradise, none of that, I'm sorry.

Carnagy (White as a sheet, gasping for air): But how's that possible? They all talk about it on earth.

The Creator: Let me put it this way. (He frowns) Sit down, come on. (He sweeps the air next to him with his hand) Go on, lean on it. That's it, great. Now, where was I? Oh, there. Look, long story short, there is no place for heaven or hell or any of that crap.

Carnagy (Starts panicking): But Lord, that's not possible! Everyone knows, down on earth, I mean that when one dies, one goes to...

The Creator: Bollocks. Look, there is a lot of talking down on earth, and I'm telling you, none of that comes from my head. It's unthinkable! Let's be logical about this. Every man, each soul carries an infinite amount of information. Like yourself! All that sorrow, suffering, anger and disappointment and of course, some passion and joy. Now, take this quantity of information and multiply it by billion. A billion souls, imagine that! And now tell me where you're going to put it?!

Carnagy (Vaguely shocked): Well, honestly, Creator, I don't know. Forgive my candour, but I'm not you.

The Creator: To hell with it! The point is, it is nonsense! Afterlife is not an archive, you know.

Carnagy: Okay then, but what's happening with all those people?

The Creator: That is simple. They will live again.

Carnagy: Live again? You mean they're born again?

The Creator: I don't know, is there any other way to do it?

Carnagy: So I too, will be reborn?

The Creator: Of course, what do you think I'm telling you here all the time?

Carnagy: Born what?

The Creator: What what?

Carnagy (Impatiently, hope found its way back into his voice): Well, what? Born boy or girl, born millionaire or aborigine, born as what?

The Creator: You will be born yourself.

Carnagy: Sorry, Lord, but I don't follow again.

The Creator: What's not to follow?! You will be born yourself because the life you are given will be the one you've already lived. To make it short, you will relive your life again, is that not a gift, tell me?

Carnagy: Let me get this straight, what you're saying is that I will relive my life one more time, the one that I've already lived, that means the one in which - some time ago, which I'm currently not able to measure - in which I've died. Is that correct?

The Creator: You're overdramatising it a little bit, but yeah, the concept is correct.

Carnagy (Contemplating about the information he had just obtained, his face gains a sour expression. He seems not liking it): One question Lord, will I be able to do things differently this time?

The Creator: I'm sorry my son, but if that were possible, everyone would like to live their lives differently altogether, but with that, terrible chaos would come. Therefore no, you won't be able to change a thing, you will live your life exactly as you lived it before. But think about it, you will live!

Carnagy: Live you say, but how? Forgive me, Lord, but my life sucked. I'm sorry to argue with you, but I don't see any gift in that.

The Creator: Each life is a precious thing, good or bad.

Carnagy: My life? A precious thing? You would make me laugh.

The Creator: Wouldn't you like to see your parents again?

Carnagy: Parents, you say? Well, take that drunken brute that called himself my father? Of those rare moments, my only memory of him is constant trashing, which was a cornerstone of his nurture. Or my mother, for instance, who would stand idly by, though she did not beat me, she wouldn't trouble herself speaking with me either. Is that something I should miss?

The Creator: We don't get to choose our parents, do we son? They can often be a source of disappointment for us.

Carnagy: Disappointment, I've got plenty of that. Two times in the cooler as an example, that's what I call a disappointment!

The Creator: Are you trying to say it wasn't your fault? Was there someone else to blame?

Carnagy: Well, take the first time - I was just a kid! Yes, I know, we were robbing tobacconists, but that's boyish mischief! You don't get sent to prison for that!

The Creator: At least, you got something to take an example from.

Carnagy: Sure, if only, after I was released, I wasn't double-crossed by that crony of mine, with whom we were supposed to start an illegal distillery. That scoundrel, first, he sent that pensioner to the hospital, the one that allegedly rented us the property, and then he vanishes with the whole of our poor takings the day before the police come to pick us up!

The Creator: Now, where did it take you, tell me?

Carnagy: It's easy for you to say that, but I've got a weak character. Second time in jail, of course, I escaped with a needle in my arm. In prison, everyone is escaping in their own way, I suppose.

The Creator: You still had your whole life ahead of you. Those few years behind bars, that doesn't mean much in the full concept of life, does it not?

Carnagy: You know, Lord, everyone's got the impression that it all ends outside the prison walls. As an ex-con, you begin to realise that your sentence carries on. Now comes the social disqualification.

To find friends, job or decent accommodation - that's out of the question. Quite a few - yours truly included- end up back on the streets.

The Creator: Are you of the opinion that all those poor devils that spend their lives living on the streets, that those lives are entirely unsatisfactory?

Carnagy: Not unless you get beat up as I got back then. I ended up for six months at the hospital. "You shall never walk normally again" they just said between breakfast and tea.

The Creator: Even on the bottom, one might find a friend.

Carnagy: And I did! There was this hospital frier mincing around the ward. That holly lamb used to bring solace for the ill, urging them to heal themselves through the faith. Don't get me wrong; I was hardly impressed by all that religious bullshit, I couldn't be bothered. But he was recovered alcoholic. That's what pulled me out of it!

The Creator: You put yourself back on your feet. Started to live again.

Carnagy: Well, yeah. After my release, I did pretty much anything. I was saving money. I ate well, behaved. For god sakes, I even started to like people again. I found a job, rented a flat. All that until that fucking building fell on my head.

The Creator: I'm sorry it ended up in such a way, my son.

Carnagy (mockingly): Ended up, he says. As if what preceded that was god knows what.

The Creator: You could have lived worse, don't you realise that? Or are you of the opinion that you lived the worst life of all creatures on the planet?

Carnagy: I did not say that, but what kind of life was that? Be so kind and tell me.

The Creator: That's life, and it is the way it is. Trust me; many would do anything to change their lives for yours.

Carnagy: I don't know.

The Creator: So you don't want your life back?

Carnagy: That's not what I'm saying.

The Creator: So, what are you saying?

Carnagy: Any other options that might be on the store?

The Creator: What did you have on mind?

Carnagy: What about reincarnation?

The Creator (Scoffs): Nonsense.

Carnagy: What do you mean by that?

The Creator: This obsession with reincarnation. Look, I admit, I tried that earlier. (He shrugs and wrinkles his forehead) An experiment to find out whether it might work.

Carnagy: And? Did it?

The Creator: Let me tell you a story in return. There was once a man, bishop actually, called Francis of Luba. Although being a deeply devoted spiritual man, he was also a terrible idler. He did not bat an eyelid for most of his life. Since he came from a rich and noble house - not a lot of things had been demanded of him. Surely, he wouldn't ever hurt a fly; however, there wasn't much good he had done either. He died of immobility, aged forty-seven years.

Thus, Francis, after his departure, based on the process of reincarnation, which I had introduced at about the same century, was reincarnated into - you wouldn't believe it - a snake! Big slimy, scaly ugly beast. I won't bother you with the extended version of the story. Francis - this time in a snake's skin - spent what little of his time he was given in a zoo. Captured by English natural scientists, somewhere in a jungle, and transported to London, where, lying, motionless, he let the naturalists, caretakers, parents with children and generally anyone to do with him whatever they so desired. He died not long after that, tragically, consumed by a specimen of a European sewer rat gone wild.

Well, that's the end of the story and what was meant to be its point? (He scratches behind his ear than join the fingers of both hands forming a small roof and smiles benignly) The reincarnation process is meaningless when we bring our characters along the way. Just imagine, when a regular human being is confronted with his demise, he expresses his desire for being a better human in the next life. He begs for another life. Naturally, he is terrified to be leaving this world for good. And so he prays and makes promises. And then puff! Dying tyrant becomes a solitary lion conquering the bushland with his cruelty and ruthlessness. This way, of course, leads nowhere.

Carnagy (Disappointed): So that's off the table?

The Creator: I called it off, once and for all. I couldn't stand it anymore, the constant begging before the journey to the light. (He starts to make faces and imitates voices) "Oh, here it comes, hurrah, and hurry into my new body, and I promise I will be a better creature and this time I want to be a butterfly... (He starts again in his voice) That makes you want to throw up.

Carnagy (Desperate, it seems he hasn't been paying much attention to the Creator's talk) So what? Have you been even listening when I was telling you about my life earlier?

The Creator (Is a bit upset): Of course I was listening, even if I wasn't, I have seen it all anyway, your life I mean.

Carnagy: So you see! Is that a life to go back to? Honestly, tell me.

The Creator: Every life is better than no life at all.

Carnagy: And how do you think I should live when I already know the end?

The Creator: Don't you worry. You will not remember that you have already lived. All will seem new to you as if it was for the first time. In fact, for you, it will be precisely that.

Carnagy: How is it possible, not to remember?

The Creator: It can be arranged. After all, I am the Creator.

Carnagy: So, I won't have any idea that I'm doing this again? Considering, every day, every single thing, it happened before!

The Creator: I won't lie to you. Sometimes, it may feel as if you were reliving, reexperiencing something, some particular moment. As if when someone's telling you about his memory, and you realise it's .actually yours. And don't think that's in any way my doing. You know, the human mind is a very complicated thing. Sometimes, it works on its regard in a way I would never have believed it might without my help.

Carnagy: Alright, just let me sum it up. What you're offering is, to live my life again in exactly the same way as it once went through, without a possibility to change a thing. However, I will not remember any of that because, for me, it will be like the first time.

The Creator: Precisely.

Carnagy: I'm sorry, and I don't want to be rude here, but this does not seem to me like a win situation, Lord.

The Creator (Impatiently): And I am very sorry to hear that, my son.

Carnagy: And what if I say no? Let's say I don't want to live like that. So what's next?

The Creator: Next? There is no next. If you say no, there is only nothing.

Carnagy: Nothing? You mean the complete emptiness, that bottomless limbo where I suffered all that time, is that what you mean?

The Creator: That is what I mean, my son. It is simpler now, isn't it? Either life - again, or nothing - forever.

Carnagy: Well, it does seem like a natural choice, I admit that; one should always choose life, but what life is that? Thinking about it, I'm not quite sure which one of your options is the worse one.

The Creator: Come on now, you already know your choice.

Carnagy: How could you possibly know that?

The Creator: I know, because, this conversation, we've already had. Back then, you talked the same. But that's nothing you can remember.

Carnagy: I don't know Lord, you claim you've known all this time what choice will I make. Then why all this? Why bother with that when it has been clear from the start precisely how will I choose? Why the smile and sense of friendship?

The Creator (The Creator suddenly looks very sad and old): Why? Why! Because I want you to make the final choice. I want all of you to do that! Even though I am the Creator and being able to do as I'm pleased, I wish as well to be a friend.

Carnagy: I'm sorry, Lord, but in such cases, you can kiss my ass with friendship.

The Creator: Well, the thing is son, and I don't want to be pushy, that my presence has been for some time already requested in other places. Then tell me, what choice have you made. Life or Nothing?

Carnagy: What's all this for...

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