

## OpenLearn Narrative

*Beyond belief: talking to the dead*

**Hamid, Joy, Darren, Phoebe, Sarah, Tony, Alex:**

HAMID: With Darren's current condition, there are a few options.

JOY: Yeah, there has to be something.

HAMID: I've seen changes in diet and lifestyle help, but—

DARREN: I'm not interested in hearing anything that comes after "but."

JOY: Can we at least hear him out? You mentioned something about a new trial?

DARREN: Oh please. No more talk of trials.

JOY: Something is better than nothing.

DARREN: Who said I have nothing?

JOY: Something real, Darren.

DARREN: What? Like a miracle cure?

JOY: Cures happen. Science works.

DARREN: Not always.

JOY: Can you please talk to him?

HAMID: There are very few absolute certainties with any of the currently available interventions.

DARREN: I know, doc. If there was, we wouldn't be where we are.

HAMID: I'm sorry, Darren.

DARREN: It's the cancer that should apologize, not you. But thank you. And thank you-- for everything.

HAMID: Phoebe, you've been a great support to Darren. They'll still need you.

JOY: What do you like?

DARREN: Dinner at Romanelli's?

JOY: You can't just bribe me with Italian food every time you annoy me, Darren.

DARREN: Tomato bruschetta with extra olive oil for starters?

JOY: OK. I'll go and call us a taxi then, shall I? Don't forget to ask.

PHOEBE: You OK?

DARREN: Yeah.

PHOEBE: You sure?

DARREN: Don't I look it?

PHOEBE: You seem calm, given what was said.

DARREN: What-- would you prefer tears?

PHOEBE: No. But I understand. I've seen a lot of different reactions in my time.

DARREN: I've had some additional support recently.

PHOEBE: Additional supporting, eh? That's good they've been working.

DARREN: Try telling Joy that. She's not so keen on her husband seeing an angel healer.

PHOEBE: Angel healer? Well, what's that?

DARREN: Someone who channels energy from angels. You should come to a session.

PHOEBE: I didn't know that was part of the Christian faith.

DARREN: It's not, really. Joy has been bugging me to ask if the hospital chaplain is available for a chat.

PHOEBE: Father Walker's pretty broad minded. He deals with all faiths, more often than not now, and I could put you in touch.

DARREN: Yeah, it'd probably make Joy feel better.

JOY: What would make Joy feel better?

DARREN: Speak of the devil and he's sure to appear.

JOY: That's not my favourite pet name, Darren.

DARREN: Shall we?

JOY: Yeah. So, tell me-- what would make Joy feel better?

DARREN: I was talking about you, not to you.

JOY: Oi, let's look at that attitude, otherwise dinner is on you tonight.

SARAH: Finally seeking salvation, are we?

PHOEBE: Something like that. I came to find Father Walker for Darren.

SARAH: Stage 4 cancer Darren?

PHOEBE: Yeah. I think he can help.

SARAH: I think he's gone up to Preston again, but there are other priests.

PHOEBE: No. None that quite fit the bill. Father Walker is open minded, which I think will help in this case.

SARAH: What aren't you saying?

PHOEBE: As I understand it, Darren has been seeing someone who channels the energy of angels for healing.

SARAH: Right. But angels don't exist, so how can they heal?

PHOEBE: If it's what he believes, then who am I to object?

SARAH: You're a health professional.

PHOEBE: You know Darren is terminal. This is helping. Not everything is black and white.

SARAH: Look-- it's great you're so caring, but we should be promoting evidence-based health care. This spiritual stuff can be a really slippery slope.

PHOEBE: To what?

SARAH: What might appear supportive could have a detrimental effect eventually. It's important to acknowledge reality.

PHOEBE: And who defines what reality is?

SARAH: Yeah, OK, Socrates. Chill out. I just came to tell you the vacancy has been posted and see if you need any help with the application.

PHOEBE: You're not applying?

SARAH: No thanks. I've already got enough on my plate.

PHOEBE: OK, fine. I'll take the help.

TONY: The angels can't heal if you're anxious, Darren.

DARREN: Sorry, Tony. I've just got a lot on my mind.

TONY: I know. Right-- let's see which of the angels want to work with us today. Phoebe, just so you know, we're about to enter a period of silence where the energy from the angels shroud us. Essentially, it's like meditation, so we need you to observe quietly. So no tinkering on your phone, please.

PHOEBE: Of course.

[AMBIENT MUSIC]

PHOEBE: Yeah, I don't know what I was expecting. But it was really—

TONY: Here are your lovely cups of tea.

PHOEBE: Thank you.

TONY: Yours with sugar?

PHOEBE: Not for me, thank you.

DARREN: Go on then. I'll have two, as long as you don't tell Joy.

TONY: No promises there.

DARREN: What ever happened to client confidentiality?

TONY: So, Darren, do you want to share what you experienced?

DARREN: I felt the presence of my nan-- her warmth, her love. I always felt safe around her. She was such an important figure as I was growing up-- throughout my whole life, really. She was my rock.

TONY: That's wonderful, Darren. Your choice of crystals today were really interesting. They link strongly with the archangel Rafael, and he joined us today. His pivotal role is to support, comfort, and guide you in matters of health.

DARREN: Perhaps he knows how much comfort she's always been to me. I think she wants me to know that she's waiting for me. It's like she knows we're going to be meeting again.

TONY: It was quite unique today-- that Rafael appeared surrounded by a warm halo of white roses.

DARREN: My nan's name was Rosemary-- but obviously everyone called her Nana Rose.

[PHONE RINGS]

PHOEBE: Hi, Joy.

ALEX: Oh no. I'm so sorry.

SARAH: I've got a break at 2:00. Do you want me to help with the app?

PHOEBE: Maybe tomorrow.

SARAH: Now, what could be more important than your application?

PHOEBE: Darren's funeral. He died last Tuesday.

SARAH: I'm so sorry to hear. You OK?

PHOEBE: Yeah. I'm coping well enough, all things considered.

SARAH: You're going to the funeral?

PHOEBE: Yeah.

SARAH: Is that a good idea?

PHOEBE: He made me promise when he was alive.

SARAH: I don't mean to be insensitive, but he won't know if you don't.

PHOEBE: It sounds like you prefer I didn't go.

SARAH: Funerals were only meant for family and close friends.

PHOEBE: Not necessarily. I've supported him and Joy from the beginning.

SARAH: Yeah, I'm aware.

PHOEBE: Why should we treat patients like numbers?

SARAH: Professional boundaries exist to protect us.

PHOEBE: When they're necessary.

SARAH: They're always necessary, especially when you go to fortune-tellers.

PHOEBE: It was an angel healer.

SARAH: Same thing.

PHOEBE: When you're dying, you have the right to take comfort wherever you find it.

It was a beautiful service.

JOY: It feels kind of odd to be praised for a funeral.

PHOEBE: It's a lot to put together when you're grieving. I thought it was really moving.

JOY: Thank you. Do you think he would have approved?

PHOEBE: We could get Tony to ask him.

JOY: We met here, you know, in church. It was more than just a belief, it was like an anchor, you know? Well, for me anyway. Something you can turn to when you're struggling. I'm not sure where we would have been without it.

PHOEBE: Something smells good. Roses?

ALEX: Don't act so surprised. I'm not completely useless.

PHOEBE: Well, you left the price tag on, so—

ALEX: It's The thought that counts. It's good to see you smile. I know it's been a tough week. You OK?

PHOEBE: Why is it even though death is a certainty, every time it happens it's such a surprise?

ALEX: I saw my granddad after he died, in the crowd at a match. He was a massive Leicester City fan.

PHOEBE: You never told me that before.

ALEX: Because I know how it sounds. And I don't know what happens after. But honestly, I'm not sure if knowing would change anything.

PHOEBE: Yeah.

SARAH: Ready?

PHOEBE: Yeah, take a seat. I'm just finishing off updating my CV.

SARAH: Sure. You got your personal statement as well?

PHOEBE: Indeed and saved in a folder on my desktop. Really?

SARAH: What's up?

PHOEBE: Is that new?

SARAH: My watch? I've had it for years.

PHOEBE: I've never seen you wear it before.

SARAH: You don't normally pay this much attention to what I wear.

PHOEBE: Why roses?

SARAH: What's wrong with roses?

PHOEBE: No, nothing. Just—

SARAH: Is everything OK?

PHOEBE: Yeah, I've just come across a few roses recently.

SARAH: I should hope so, given they're the world's most popular flower.

PHOEBE: Yeah, I know. I'm being silly.

[TAPPING]

[DRIP]

PHOEBE: I know, I'm sorry. I overslept.



SARAH: From a date night?

PHOEBE: Not quite. I thought I could hear someone in the house last night.

SARAH: What?

PHOEBE: Yeah. It sounded like Darren.

SARAH: Darren, who's dead?

PHOEBE: Yeah. He used to do this drumming sound on everything.

SARAH: Should I be worried?

PHOEBE: I could hear someone tapping.

SARAH: It could have been anything. Houses creak all the time.

PHOEBE: Yeah, I know. But then Alex brings me roses, which he never buys me. Suddenly you've got a watch full of roses.

SARAH: And?

PHOEBE: Rose was his grandmother's name.

SARAH: So, you think Darren is trying to communicate with you through my watch?

PHOEBE: No, I just—

SARAH: Well, what then?

PHOEBE: I don't know. I'm just saying, we don't know everything do we?

SARAH: Look-- I've got a one to one with Hamid now. I'll catch you later.

WALKER: [GRUNTS] I've been stuck on level 23 for the past year-- Angry Birds. So apparently, you've been looking for me.

PHOEBE: I had a patient die.

WALKER: I'm sorry. Go on, sit with me.

PHOEBE: I think I'm having an existential crisis.

WALKER: Oh, grand-- a perfect time for me to sell you religion.

PHOEBE: Maybe. What's your take on spirits in the afterlife?

WALKER: It makes perfect sense to me, given who I am, my life experiences. But I'm not you. Oh, I could give you lots of words and tell you many things, but I don't think it would be any use or give you any answers, unless it actually resonates with your actual experiences.

PHOEBE: You've been absolutely no help, have you, Father?

WALKER: Well, look-- if you find yourself being dragged in a particular direction, go with it. See where it takes you. Let your experiences inform your decisions.

What's right for you isn't necessarily right for me, and what's right for me might be utter nonsense to you. It's of paramount importance that you let your experiences inform your decisions. And if that path leads you back to me, then hopefully I'll have some answers for you.

[PHONE NOTIFICATION]

PHOEBE: Hey, I just got a message from Hamid asking to speak with me. He didn't mention anything to you, did he?

SARAH: We just discussed some of your concerns.

PHOEBE: What concerns?

SARAH: Well, you think spirits are talking to you.

PHOEBE: I never said that.

SARAH: Look-- I'm just worried about you.

PHOEBE: What else did you tell him?

SARAH: Nothing you didn't tell me.

PHOEBE: Why would you say anything at all? I told you that stuff in confidence.

SARAH: Hamid asked how you were getting on. Look, you might end up becoming my line manager.

PHOEBE: All right, OK. So, this is about the job.

SARAH: You're seeing ghosts. You're clearly not coping. Is this job really the right thing for you now? It's more work, more stress, more pressure. Mistakes can kill people in our profession.

HAMID: You worked intensively with Darren. He found your support invaluable. How are you managing?

PHOEBE: OK, I guess. I've had others die on me before.

HAMID: As close as Darren?

PHOEBE: No.

HAMID: Since the funeral, you've had some unusual experiences.

PHOEBE: I hear Sarah has been talking to you.

HAMID: She's worried about you.

PHOEBE: Or likes to gossip.

HAMID: The two aren't mutually exclusive.

PHOEBE: Perhaps I've been experiencing some unusual thoughts, which I might not have had before spending time with Darren, learning about his beliefs.

HAMID: I was raised a follower of Shirdi Sai Baba.

PHOEBE: I've not heard of that religion.

HAMID: It's not exactly a religion, but devotees aren't encouraged to show affection for worldly objects.

PHOEBE: Interesting.

HAMID: Well, not if you're a child and all you want is a games console. What I'm trying to say is that there are many different people with different faiths or beliefs, or none at all.

PHOEBE: Honestly, I don't know what to believe anymore.

HAMID: And that's absolutely fine. That doesn't matter to me as long as you continue to do what you do well.

PHOEBE: Maybe Sarah does have a point.

HAMID: Look-- a few years ago, there was a study in the Netherlands which showed more than half of clinical psychologists reported their patients having some sort of paranormal experience. Does that mean that they're all suffering from psychosis? As clinicians, we need to work with this, not against it.

PHOEBE: It wouldn't have hurt to have covered this during our training.

HAMID: There is still a stigma. Why risk being labelled as mad? So, it's under-reported and not covered in textbooks. Did you mention anything about angel healing in Darren's notes?

PHOEBE: Can you imagine Sarah's reaction to that?

HAMID: Exactly. But the good news for Darren is that research shows that patients who have end of life experiences have a more peaceful death than those who don't. It can even help families who are going through the grieving process.

PHOEBE: It's a shame Joy doesn't share the same comfort he gained from it, you know? I appreciate you taking the time to speak with me. It's nice to feel supported by at least one person you work with.

HAMID: As you know, Sarah's older sister was admitted into care a couple of years ago.

PHOEBE: Yeah, she doesn't talk about it much.

HAMID: It's not my place to say, but I think this is a sensitive issue for her. You should talk to her.

[SENTIMENTAL MUSIC]