

(This remarkable story is related by Dr. Reggie Anderson in his book *Appointments With Heaven*. He was family physician of Stephen Curtis Chapman when the tragedy happened with their adopted daughter. “Lois” in this story was a blind elderly patient of his.)

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The next morning, I had several patients to visit during rounds. Lois’s room was at the end of the hall, so she was my last stop. As I neared her door, I could hear her raised voice.

“Keep them away from me. Please keep them away from me!”

When I opened the door and walked in, I could see her trying to push something away —but nothing was there. Lois’s daughter was at her bedside attempting to calm her down.

“What’s wrong?” I asked. “I don’t know what happened; she just went crazy all of a sudden.”

“Please! Don’t let them get any closer to me!” Lois cried out. She was clearly agitated and determined to keep the invisible away.

“Lois, it’s Dr. Anderson,” I said and grabbed her hands. I held them securely in mine, hoping it would comfort her. “What’s wrong?”

“Don’t you see them? There are so many of them. Their brilliant lights are hurting my eyes!”

She jerked her hands out of mine and began making a shoving motion. She seemed to be shooing something away, something none of us could see, which was ironic because Lois was the only one in the room who couldn’t see.

“Please get them away from me!”

Both her daughter and I tried to calm her down. We spoke to her in soothing tones and tried to engage her in conversation, but she was fixated on whatever it was that she saw. We tried gently touching her and placing our hands on her arms or legs, hoping that despite her blindness and confusion, she would understand that she wasn’t alone, that we were right there with her. But she only became more frantic. “Their colors are so bright. They’re hurting my eyes! Please, tell them to leave. It’s not my time yet. It’s not my time . . .”

Lois’s daughter looked fearful. She’d obviously never seen her mother act in such a way, and she wasn’t sure what to do.

Lois's frustration increased, and she began tearing her sheets away from her bed. "Please tell them to stay away from me. Tell them it's not my time!"

Her daughter reached over to help pull her mother's covers back, when without warning, Lois reached out and slapped her daughter on the side of the head.

The daughter jumped back and looked as if she might cry.

"She didn't mean it. She's hallucinating," I said. "This can happen when people get sick. They get a little confused. I'll order a sedative to help her relax." Lois continued pushing invisible things away and protesting the proximity of whatever she was seeing in her head. "Please make them go away!"

I could hear her as I walked down the hall.

The nurses' station was forty or fifty feet away. Lois's cries faded as I neared it. I realized she was probably suffering from sundowner syndrome. It is a common condition among the elderly; they become disoriented when placed in unfamiliar surroundings. Typically, the symptoms occur at night. Maybe because she's blind, her body can't tell the difference?

Once inside the nurses' station, I picked up Lois's chart to write my orders. Before I could even click my pen, I heard the alert, "Code ten, room two!"

Code ten meant that CPR was in progress.

Room two was the room I'd just left.

Lois is coding!

I dropped the chart on the counter and sprinted back down the hall. What had I missed? As I raced toward her room, thoughts of what caused this to happen darted through my mind. An AMI? An acute myocardial infarction, a heart attack, was possible. She'd certainly been upset when I left her. Possibly a PE? Though it seemed unlikely, a pulmonary embolism, or blood clot to the lung, could have happened that quickly. Maybe she's gone into septic shock from the kidney infection.

The door was closed, and Lois's daughter was standing outside, biting her nails while tears ran down her cheeks. I knew she had to be scared, but I didn't stop to talk to her. During an emergency, it was protocol to clear the room of everyone except medical professionals.

I pushed open the door and closed it behind me, stopping right inside the door. I tried to make sense of what was happening. The crash cart was there, and the nurses were readying the patient, but the patient requiring CPR was in bed one.

Lois was in bed two.

Lois wasn't having a heart attack—it was Sissy, her roommate!

With a code ten, time is of the essence. Since there wasn't enough time to move the patient's bed out, the nurses had asked Lois's daughter to leave and then drawn the curtain around Lois's bed while they worked on Sissy.

My instincts kicked in, and immediately I joined the nurses in running the code.

I intubated Sissy while the nurses charged the defibrillator. We shocked her. Nothing happened. "One milligram of epinephrine. Push the EPI!" We continued CPR and then shocked her again. The monitors remained flat. "An amp of sodium bicarbonate. Continue CPR."

Together, we tried to pull Sissy back from the veil before she passed through. It was noisy and chaotic while we did everything we knew to do. At one point, I thought of Lois and wondered if she was still upset. This noise and commotion must be frightening her. She was in a strange place and was already confused. I couldn't imagine how worked up she would be now that her daughter had been asked to leave the room. In addition, I knew she could hear the commotion, but she couldn't see what was happening. However, at that moment, we were so busy working on Sissy, I couldn't worry about Lois.

After nearly thirty minutes of CPR, Sissy's heart failed to beat on its own. We knew it was useless to continue much longer. Her doctor arrived and said we could stop, and he pronounced her dead. We all took a step back. Silently, I said a quick prayer for the woman's family. The nurses began clearing the equipment and cleaning up the room from the battle that had just taken place.

That's when I remembered Lois.

I slowly pulled the curtain back, expecting to see her in the same state I'd left her, but instead she appeared calm.

I took her hand in mine.

"Lois? Are you okay? It's Dr. Anderson."

"They're gone now, Doctor."

"Who's gone?"

"The angels. They're not flying over my bed anymore; they've gone with Sissy. They've taken her away."

“What did they look like?”

“Like bright lights. There were so many of them darting around. They hurt my eyes.”

God had sent a band of angels to escort Sissy home, and he'd allowed a blind woman to see them.

As I recalled all the things Lois had said when she thought the angels were coming for her, I was reminded of the night Dennis died. It was the first time I saw a glow in the hospital room after a patient passed. Something in the light that night had reminded me of Tinker Bell. I smiled as I thought about Lois pushing away a bunch of flying and brightly lit angels, only to discover they weren't there for her. They were there to escort her roommate to heaven.