

# Psychopomp

"Psychopomp, noun, a guide of souls to the place of the dead."

It was a day like any other, the sun was shining, birds were singing, people were outside and having fun without a care in the world. 67-year-old Jim Blouchet was on a jog this day through his local park when suddenly time began to slow for him as a deep pain began to arise from his chest and suddenly he was down on the ground. But suddenly, he got back up no longer feeling any pain in his chest. He brushed himself off and continued jogging, it was not long before he noticed something was wrong. He could not hear anything, scent had vanished, and he could detect no movement in his periphery. He began to get nervous before spotting a woman stretching, relieved he approached her but his fear is only heightened when he sees she is not moving, like a statue frozen in time. He is panicking now and is finally observing his surroundings to see that everything is frozen, even the birds while in flight, everything was stuck in place at that moment. Everything except for him. Jim frantically runs away in the direction opposite of where he was originally heading until he stops right in front of where he fell. Beneath him he saw himself, lying lifelessly on the dirt path. He started to quiver in absolute terror and fell to his knees, he then began to cry and that was when I chose to extend my hand and lay it on his shoulder. He then froze in shock from my touch but was still crying.

"Do you wanna talk about it?" I asked genuinely all too familiar with his pain and fear.

He cautiously turned around to see me and the second his eyes met mine, he began booking it in the opposite direction. I honestly hate people who run away but it is my job to go after him. But despite my dislike for runners, I could not help but empathize with him; after all, I ran when it was my turn.

He continued to run away and when he was a reasonable distance from where he was he turned around and there was nothing there; however, time was still frozen. He then faced forward once more to see me now walking towards him. I could see the terror in his eyes as well as the confusion as to how I got in front of him. He then ran away again as if thinking that if he avoided me, everything would return to normal.

I sighed and we repeated this process once more, I got in front of him scaring him and I think he realized the futility in running away at this point and just dropped to his knees and blocked his face with his hands while still crying. I know he did this because he did not want to witness what would happen next.

“Please don’t hurt me!” He pleaded through sobs and sniffles.

I approached him and told him, “There is no need to be scared, I will not hurt you.”

I think my words finally got to him and that he realized that I was not lying, he released his grip on his eyes. His face now red from tears stared back at me once more, still with fear but more with a look of defeat

“Do you wanna talk about it?” I once again asked him.

“What are you?” He asked with a tremble, his pale blue eyes gazing directly into the luminous purple of mine.

“I’m a Psychopomp, but you probably know me better as a reaper.” I explained in a calm but also straightforward tone. He looked even more afraid once I told him, I knew what he was thinking, how I just confirmed his fears.

“No...No No NO!! Y..you...you can’t be the Grim Reaper! I...I can’t be dead I just can’t!” He said frantically

“What you are experiencing is normal.” I tell him in an attempt to comfort him.

“No no, I must be dreaming. Yeah, that’s it, this is all just a dream, I just need to wake up.” He spoke deliriously before tightening his eyes closed and slapping himself across the face.

“I’m afraid not.” I said in a sullen tone, “I hate to be the one to tell you this but you are dead Jim.” I explained as carefully as I could in an attempt to talk him down from his frantic emotions going wild.

“Please, I beg of you, spare me, I have a family, I can’t die now. Please, Ms. Grim Reaper.” He pleaded through more tears.

“Believe me when I say I wish I could, but death is not negotiable. When it’s someone’s time, they can’t avoid it.” I said with tears almost welling up in my own eyes, feeling the sting of that truth.

“I’ll do anything! My family...my family.” He said, pain coating his every word.

“I don’t have that power, Psychopomps can do many things but we cannot interfere and we can not give second chances no matter how deserving an individual might be. Death is inevitable no matter how hard it may be to accept.” I tell him, just as I told countless others and he seems to understand my words despite it being hard to do so.

“Why?” He asked defeated.

“It was your time.” I replied. There was a long pause before he spoke up again.

“So what now?” He asked with a sniffle, “Do I just leave my family like this?” He continued obviously in pain. He was more sad that he could not say goodbye to his family than he was of actually dying.

I got down to his level and reached a hand out for him, “It does not have to be.” I said with reassurance before continuing, “My job is to guide you to the next realm, but I don’t need to do that immediately. Just as those which the deceased leaves behind, the recently departed

deserve time to grieve as well. As such, I am allowed to bring you to your family members so you may say goodbye.”

He looked shocked at my answer and did not seem like he could figure out how to respond before letting out a “Thank you.”

“Just grab my hand when you are ready and we will go where you need to be.” I tell him patiently.

He took some time to get on his feet and wiped away his tears. He then grabbed my hand slowly and gently before saying “Okay, I am ready.”

I smiled at him and we both vanished from the park and were outside of an apartment building in a city some distance away.

“We are at your son’s house.” I tell him and he smiles a sad but also happy smile.

“So do I just walk in and say goodbye like a ghost?” He asked.

I shook my head before saying, “It does not work that way unfortunately, all I can do is act as a transmitter for you to leave them a message.”

He looked shattered at the realization of not being able to interact with them but eventually accepted that something was better than nothing. He nodded to me and I snapped my fingers returning time back to its normal flow and the two of us walked into the apartment phasing through the door. I saw two children playing and a man in his early thirties watching over them. I pointed to the man and he nodded. I then grabbed Jim’s hand and extended my other hand to his son’s phone. Instantly, the phone began to ring and I could see Jim’s smile breaking with sadness.

I turned to him and told him that we don’t need to do this if he wasn’t ready.

“No.” He said as sadness began to overtake his voice, “I have to do this.” I nodded and continued to transmit my energy into an incoming call. Jim’s son noticed the ringing and picked up.

“Hello?” The son asked, not knowing who was on the other line, but was met with silence. Jim was in too much pain to answer immediately. He once again said hello into the phone and fearing he was about to lose his chance at saying goodbye, Jim spoke up with tears flooding down his face, “Topher.”

“Hey dad how are you?” He asked with a smile across his face. However, there was a noticeable shock and confusion plastered on his face from his dad's tone and his lack of response only added to his uneasiness.

Topher asked in a concerned voice, “Dad? Is something wrong”

Regaining what little composure he had, Jim responded, “No. No, I’m fine,” before wiping away his tears and continuing, “I love you. You have made me so proud. Never forget that.” His message was short and powerful and even I shed a tear at that.

“Dad is everything okay?” Topher asked in a concerned rushed tone.

“Everything is fine, I just wanted to let you know that. Tell Emily and George the same will you?” He asked.

“Yeah sure Dad.” Topher responded a little wary as he could obviously tell something was not right.

“I love you.” Jim said one last time.

“I love you too dad.” Topher said genuinely, and with that, Jim released his grip of me and the call dropped.

I snapped my fingers once more, now pausing time and he collapsed on the floor.

I gave him time before telling him, “When you are ready, we have one more stop.”

He nods and gets back to his feet before once again grabbing my hand and saying “No no, I’m ready.” There was hesitation in his voice but even so, I began walking and we left the apartment. We then walked for a few blocks in this world between moments in time and he soon realized something was off.

“Okay, and why are we walking when you teleported us originally?” He asked.

I stopped in my tracks and turned around to face him, “You said you were ready but we both know you’re not. You just died and said your last goodbyes to your son. You cannot just move on to your wife and expect to be okay.” I said before sitting down on some building’s steps and patting the spot next to me. He took the hint and sat down. I patted him on the back.

“We’ll leave, but only when you are ready.” I tell him gently.

He simply nodded, revealing that he knew that he was not truly ready.

We just sat there in this moment in silence. But I was never one for prolonged silence so I spoke up, “You know, most other Psychopomps would have tried to get this over with as quickly as possible, you’re lucky you got one who was once a psychologist.”

He looked confused at me and it looked like he was trying to find the right words before speaking up, “Wait, I thought you said you were a Psycho...puff?”

“Psychopomp, and yes I am, but that doesn’t mean that I was always one.” I answered with a smile while looking at the sky remembering times now long passed.

“Okay, I am confused, just what exactly are you?” He asked with extreme confusion.

“Like I said, I’m a Psychopomp.” I tell him.

“But what is a Psychopomp?” He asked, a bit impatiently.

“We are the ones in charge of escorting the recently departed to the next realm. Every psychopomp was once human but we chose this new life upon our deaths to help people like you be at peace and get them ready for their afterlife. That is what a Psychopomp is.” I explain to him to the best of my ability since strangely, no one has asked me that question before.

“You were once human?” He asked.

“Yes. Not so long ago actually, trust me when I say I know what you’re going through.”

“What’s your name?” He asked me curiously.

“Rhea, Rhea Thomas.” I replied.

He extended out his hand and said, “Nice to meet you Rhea.”

I returned the gesture by reaching out my own hand and shaking his responding with a “Likewise.”

“So, I’m guessing you want to know what happens next for you right?” I asked him.

“A little, it would be a little less scary and a little more comforting to know what I will be facing next.” He said.

“Well there are three main realms, Paradise, Purgatory, and Perdition.” I said to which he nodded due to it being basically what many perceive the afterlife as making up. I then continued, “Most souls end up in Purgatory as it is where neutral souls go.”

“Neutral souls?” Jim asked.

“Souls who were not purely good or bad. They are sent to Purgatory, or as we like to call it, the blackness. It is a void where the souls must face off against their worst self. By this I mean the individual faces a corrupted version of themselves which embody vices, negative emotions, trauma, etc, basically things that were holding the individual back in their lifetime. If they overcome themselves, they are given passage into Paradise, if they lose, they are to retry again

and again until they do succeed. It's basically a trial by combat and the point of constantly facing off against oneself is that defeating the worst aspects of a persons' self purifies the souls." I explained.

"Good to know." He said slowly and wide eyed, obviously concerned that he may end up there and face his demons.

"Would you like me to move on to paradise?" I asked.

"I think I know already." He responded.

I chuckled, "It's actually quite different, yet also somewhat similar to what people believe. You see there are four subsections of Paradise: there is Dream, Memory, Reincarnation, and Heaven." I explained, "Dream is where one is given the power of a God and is able to create, and even interact with their own world/worlds; it received this title as it is very similar to the seemingly unending power one possesses in a dream. Basically in Dream, you are given full control and can create whatever you wish for a reality and even interact with it. Memory is where one is given full access to their memory and are allowed to relive moments from their past first hand. Reincarnation is very similar to what people perceive it as; however, in addition to beginning a new life, one is also able to choose the kind of world they wish to live in."

"World to live in?" He interrupts with much confusion.

"I would say that you can look at it in two ways, you could either return to this planet and begin a new life, or you can enter the world of your favorite book or TV show." I explained. I looked at him and he seemed amazed, "That sounds incredible!" He said happily, obviously hoping that he reaches paradise to get these opportunities.



“Finally there is Heaven which is eternal peace with one’s loved ones. The best thing about Heaven is that no matter which subsection you decide on, part of your soul is brought to Heaven so that it may be with loved ones since passed.” I concluded.

“But wait, then how did you become a Psychopomp?” He asked quizzically.

I just smiled for a bit, reminiscing on how things turned out for me before answering. “Very few people actually qualify to become a Psychopomp and very few people even agree to become one. But essentially, when an individual who displays true compassion throughout their life enters the gates of Paradise, they are given the opportunity to become a Psychopomp. A decision that is completely up to them. I was one of the people who decided to take my passion of helping others into my next life and the rest is history.” I explained nostalgically.

“So wait, did you forgo Paradise for the job?” He asked.

“Not exactly, you remember how I said if you make it to Paradise your soul gets split apart from the rest and part of it enters Heaven?”

“Yes.” He responds.

“Well a Psychopomp has their souls split into three essentially making two copies of the original, all completely identical to each other in personality, memory, etc. One copy goes to Heaven, the other chooses between the other three, and the original transforms into a Psychopomp.” I say matter of factly.

“That’s incredible, so...I guess there is one last place to talk about.” He says nervously chuckling before turning into a somber worry.

Everyone, no matter who they are will always have a lingering fear that they have not done enough or were not good enough in their lives to be worthy of Paradise. With this being

said, I took a deep breath, stood up, and told Jim the facts, “There is no need. Trust me when I say you have done enough and are well deserving of your reward.”

Tears once again well up inside Jim’s eyes and he lunges forward and hugs me. “Thank you!” He cries.

I am at first shocked at this reaction but quickly adapt and pat him on the back.

We sat back down and after a while, Jim wiped away his tears and said, “I’m ready now.”

I nodded my head to Jim and once again stood up. He held my hand and within an instant, we were at his home. We entered through the wall and stood in front of his frozen wife, on the couch reading a book. He stood over her and tried to run his hand through her hair; however, when it went right through her causing him to break down. This made his death even more sad for Jim as he could not even properly interact with his love. He dropped to his knees sobbing once more. He was hurting more now than ever. This was the love of his life, the person he grew old with, and now he has to say goodbye; this would be hard on anyone.

“Take as much time as you need and when you are ready for your goodbye simply ask.”

“It’s not fair. Why? WHY?” He asked painfully, a question I too ask sometimes.

I exhale, “I agree, it’s not fair. But it must be this way.” My words were cold but held truth to them.

“Why?” He pleaded, but it was not truly directed toward me, more like he was pleading with a higher power for an answer. Unfortunately, that answer never came.

After maybe five minutes in that position, I believe he made his peace as he told me he was ready now. But he asked me, “Does it have to be the phone?”

I shook my head no, realizing that he needed to talk to her directly rather than over the phone. He smiled through his tear-stained face.

“Sorry.” I said solemnly.

“For what?” He asked, confused.

“For this.” I said before clasping my hand onto Jim’s neck and squeezing for a good second and then releasing.

“What the hell was that for?” He coughed out, angrily.

“I just gave your voice a physical presence. She will be able to hear you without me as the transmitter. Unfortunately, the only way I could do so was by transmitting some of my energy into your vocal cords.” I explained.

I doubt he fully understood what I said, but he got the gist. Once again, he dropped to the ground but this time thanking me like I was some deity.

I then left the room, but not before telling him to come outside when he is done. Once out of the room to give him privacy, I restarted time to its normal flow.

While outside, I gazed upon the beauties of life, beauties which were now foreign to me as I could only view them and not truly experience them. It makes me sad but at the end of the day, viewing life was better than isolating myself from it like some other Psychopomps do. I guess life is too painful for some Psychopomps because they never truly accepted their own deaths. Me on the other hand, as well as most others of my kind embrace the pain of the world we once lived in because it returns some feelings of life back into our souls.

Perhaps thirty minutes after leaving, Jim phased through the door. I was a bit taken aback that he did not spend longer with his wife, but the dried tears and his bloodshot eyes made it obvious. He said what he had to say despite the pain and made sure to say a short, but proper goodbye.

“Does it get any easier?” He asked with a hoarse voice.

“With time, but the pain will always be there.” I responded in a sullen voice, after all, it is still difficult for me.

“Good.” He said before asking “Are you happy?”

This surprised me as no one had ever asked me this question.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“Being a Psychopomp, are you happy with your decision?” He asked.

I never actually gave this thought because I never really thought about whether I was happy with my position or not.

“Well, I mean this job is fulfilling and I get to help people through the darkest point in their lives similar to my time as a psychologist while I was mortal. I get my fair share of thanks from my clients, but I also receive an abundance of hatred and blame for being the one to explain their current situation. But...yes, yes I would say that I am happy with my decision. It is a hard job though.” I tell him with absolute honesty.

“Does it get lonely?” He asked me.

“Not really, there are other Psychopomps I can interact with, and on occasion I get to see my loved ones.” I explained to him.

He appeared to be happy with my answer and smiled before saying, “I think it’s time.” I knew he would like nothing more than to stay; however, that would just bring more pain, and that he had made his peace.

I nodded to him, got up, and extended my hand for him to shake. He in return extended his own hand and shook mine.

“It was a pleasure Jim. Have a great afterlife.” I say happily.

“Thank you Rhea.” He retorts with a smile.

With that I snapped my fingers causing the world to slow down and slowly dissolve like paint melting off a canvas. We were soon in a white room and in front of us was a set of massive gates.

“Good luck Jim,” I said before we separated, he walked through the gates and I began walking back into the white nothingness.