

## Excerpt

Is this the Treasure  
Sought forever,  
By all who came before me,  
Known by many names,  
Shrouded in fame,  
Mysterious, glorious,  
Meant for all of us,  
Ours  
Simply for the asking?

“Napkin Notes, On Returning from the Other Side”  
An Unpublished Journal of Poems, Thoughts, and Wisdom  
Offered from My Friends During My Recovery  
By John Shimer

### Chapter 1 - In Search of Lost Treasure

**August 22, 2011**

On July 26, 2010, I left this Earth for a period of time and went somewhere I had heard others talk about but never really believed in. While mountain biking that morning, I became dehydrated, passed out, and crashed, hitting the earth at thirty miles per hour—headfirst. A jogger found me unconscious. When the paramedics arrived, they began the drama of saving my life. But the drama of losing my life had just ended for me.

While away from “here,” I experienced something truly indescribable. That’s why it’s so hard to write about it. Others who have gone “there” will tell you they felt completely surrounded by unconditional love. It’s true. I felt it, too. I also experienced an inner peace and harmony that was beyond anything I had even imagined up to this point in my life. While the paramedics fought to bring me back to consciousness, I fought to remain where I was.

Where was I? Where had I just been? Here’s what I can tell you with certainty. I was not unconscious. I was very much aware of myself. I could see a bright light off in the distance, and I was traveling toward it. There was no fear and no panic. Just peace and a type of happiness I have never known on this Earth. I was also aware that my body was down there somewhere, and I was speeding away from it. I didn’t even want to look back at it. And then, with a tremendous shock, I was pulled back by the voice of someone asking me if I had a cell phone. That’s when I became unconscious and was yanked back into my badly damaged earthly body.

Weeks of ambivalence followed. I did not want to be here. I wanted to go back “there.” At times, I would actually experience my spirit leave my body. The medical team working with me said I had a severe brain injury. I was pretty sure I would never persuade them that what I had experienced was real. So I buried my thoughts and feelings about dying and what came afterwards to avoid repeated putdowns. It was frustrating enough to remember the experience of being “there.” Out-of-body episodes plagued me for weeks, and they were driving me crazy all by themselves. I didn’t need my medical team and family members piling on by reminding me I was brain-injured. So I avoided the topic after a few tries and seeing their skeptical reactions. Only my wife proved someone I could talk to without judgment.