

Do You See the Angels?

Alzheimer's patients have some strange intuitions. If you think they are not paying any attention to what is going on around them, you'd better think again. Many times I have felt a comforting arm around me when a patient has just died. One of our Alzheimer patients knows not only what has happened, but also understands and is compassionate. The unit gets quiet and still when a fellow patient is in the process of dying. How do they know? Do they see the angels?

While their brains may no longer make the necessary connections for everyday life, they are still human and recognize sadness and suffering.

Many Alzheimer's patients are said to have delusions and hallucinations. I have found most delusions to be deeply rooted in the past, like the woman who spoke of dead babies all the time. When her daughter was questioned on this, it turns out she lost two children in a fire when they were babies. If it is true, it ceases to be a delusion.

Here is the story of my favorite "hallucination..."

I was sitting in the dining room of the Alzheimer's unit with "Grandma Kitty" late one night. We had to sit there so she would take a rest from her wandering.

Grandma Kitty never made much sense when she talked. Vague references to things that happened when she was younger and nonsense words were all you could get out of her. Most often Grandma would repeat the phrases, "Where's the dog?" or "I'm going to the store" over and over again till you were driven to distraction. My standard answers to these were, "He piddled on the floor so I put him outside" and "Would you pick me up a dozen eggs?" These answers satisfied something in her and she would cease asking for a while and give you some rest.

This was how the conversation was going that night, when suddenly, very clearly, Grandma Kitty pointed towards the opposite side of the room and asked me, "Do you see the angels?"

"What angels, Grandma?"

"Those two angels," she replied.

I tried as hard as I could to see the angels, but I must have missed them. Grandma continued talking in her disjointed way as if nothing had happened and soon fell asleep on the sofa.

The Alzheimer's unit is a locked ward; we had virtually no contact with the rest of the facility for most of the shift. As I went on my coffee break, I passed the main nurses station. The charge nurse called me over and told me that two residents had just died that evening. I asked when this had happened; she told me "About two hours ago, they went within minutes of each other."

I stood there with what I am sure was a stunned look on my face. The charge nurse asked me if I was all right. I told her the story of Grandma Kitty and the angels.

Hallucination? Coincidence? No, I'd rather think there were angels in the building!

Do you see the angels?

Grandma Kitty sure does see the angels.

**This story do you see the angels
was sent in by Elizabeth.**