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The Moaning Dead

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Vance Lovell
Delta, Utah
November, 2018

“The Moaning Dead”
Personal Narrative

Informant:

Vance is my dad. He is fifty-eight years old and lives in Delta, Utah. He grew up and has lived there for the majority of his life. He is the father of five children and has six grandchildren. He is kind and fun. He loves to play sports, be outdoors, and loves adventure. Vance loves to tease people, especially his wife, Marsha. Vance loves cars. He was raised fixing cars, because his father owned his own mechanical shop. Vance is an Electrical Supervisor at the Intermountain Power Service Corporation in Utah.

Context:

We were all eating lunch in my parents’ dining room on a Sunday afternoon after church. The dining room is small, but just big enough to fit the square tall wooden table. The environment was very relaxed and we enjoyed each other’s company and conversation. While we ate we talked and I mentioned that Trevor and I live by a graveyard, and it is a little eerie at night. Vance said that graveyards weren’t scary to him, because he had had a funny experience when he was 12 years old in a graveyard that made him not fear graveyards. Since Trevor is a new addition to our family Vance shared with him his first experience in a graveyard at night.

Text:

Vance: “That one night I was up there—I was probably just 12 years old. Mark [Mark is Vance’s older brother.] and his friends were up there going rabbit hunting, and we went up there rabbit hunting into the graveyard because there was tons of rabbits, so we pulled in the graveyard and the head lights swung across and rabbits were running everywhere and those guys all took off out of the truck—took off out through the graveyard, and I could hear the 22s all goin’ off over there and I’m sittin’ there in the truck by myself in the graveyard, 12 years old, you know and I’m goin’ ‘Hum’ so I thought well—“

Marsha: [In a worried tone.] “Nobody knows which way the other people are shooting that’s [short pause] probably not good.”

V: “No, probably wasn’t good, but, so I got out of the truck and I thought, ‘I’m gonna see if I can find Mark.’ And I’m walking through the graveyard and I hear this, [Vance puts his head back and moans] [Breanna laughs] and I’m thinkin’, [Vance pulls a strange creeped out face.] ‘Yeah, that’s a little spooky.’ [Marsha and Breanna laugh] and I walk over there and I’ve got my 22—I walk over there and I hear this [Vance puts his head back and moans again] and I get up there—I have this little flashlight—and I shine it over there and there’s Mark laying on the other side of this big headstone, and he’s holding his knee going [Vance puts his head back and moans again] and I said, ‘What happened to you?’ and he says, ‘I hurdled this gravestone and I didn’t make it.’ [We all laugh.] And so—[Vance has to pause because he’s still laughing.] And I started laughin’ and from then on cemeteries never bothered me anymore after that.”

B: [Breanna is still laughing.] “After the sound of Mark’s moaning.”

V: “Of Mark going, [Vance puts his head back and moans again.] In the graveyard in the middle of the night. [Long pause] So after that it was no big deal. [Another pause.] But that was the first time I’d been in a graveyard at night.”

Texture:

Vance loves to tell his past experiences. He gets very into the story and waves his hands around. Most of the time his hand waving doesn’t have a purpose, but he will use them sometimes to show some of the actions. He spoke at a normal volume. He speaks in a very methodical way. He’s descriptive. He paid attention to details. He would pause to give detail before returning to the story. He would always throw his head back every time he moaned for a sound effect. Vance loves to laugh as he tells stories. He sometimes would be laughing while he told the story. When he laughed his eyes got all squinty and it would take him a moment to continue his story. While Vance talked he never touched his food, because he was so into telling his experience.

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Dr. Lynne S. McNeill
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