My Grandpa Hitched a Ride on an Asteroid

Asteroids have been charging toward Earth since the beginning of time and doomsdayers have persisted for centuries that thousands of asteroids before the J025 would lead to our demise. In 2020, Asteroid J025 was circling the sun but took a diversion and was headed toward Earth, awaiting the failure of my grandpa's heart, much like the Grim Reaper. According to NASA scientists, a mighty asteroid of roughly 2,000 feet would joyride past Earth on April 19 at a million miles away, swoop my grandpa up, and lead him through an infinite tour of our galaxy. (Greicius 2017).

It's something TV series always depict: patients going into sudden cardiac arrest, attendants clawing for the defibrillator in slow-motion, sending a shock through the body almost as if an exorcism is taking place. When my grandpa's heart stopped, when he walked out of his life, all I could think of was a stage set and Meredith Grey from *Grey's Anatomy* calling time of death.

Cameras and mics and scripts. It couldn't be real. My grandpa was just a superb, scripted actor whose make-up artist simply studied up on how to simulate the lifelessness of a corpse. Meanwhile, an asteroid was plummeting toward Earth, on April 19th, 2020, the very day my grandpa died. An asteroid that could have ended civilization as we knew it; one that could have saved me from living in a world without my grandpa.

My grandpa was a performer, after all. The greatest showman with the largest collection of top-hats and most mediocre voice I'd ever known. But nothing else about him was mediocre. Everything he loved eventually became something I loved. And, music was no exception. He taught me how to sing; how to perform with passion. He loved the ocean, constantly humming to the rhythm of the waves even when living in Arizona. His skin was so scorched from the sun that he appeared to be cracking yet still maintained an otherworldly glow. He'd charge into the waves at eighty-five years old (at approximately one mile an hour), with wobbly, emaciated, frail sticks of legs, unintimidated by the formidable, crashing walls of water. I'd watch, safe on the shore, as he tumbled endlessly, his stick legs poking out of the depths every once and awhile. I'd laugh until I couldn't breathe because I knew his vigor for life would conquer the waves. He'd finally surface, give me a firm thumbs up, and proudly proclaim, "A-OKAY!," with the most endearing smile.

He was a man who owned a complete wardrobe of "Life is Good" t-shirts and cherished each and every green grape. I one time made the reprehensible mistake of leaving the stem in the bowl of grapes after eating some. He was horrified by my manners and sat me down to discuss common courtesy. The way grapes were handled was paramount to him. When I first got my driver's permit, he gave me a step by step list guiding me through exactly how to avoid mutilating or killing myself or others with my vehicle.

I could talk about how my grandpa had been fighting for his life for months upon months before his heart came to a screeching halt, how I could only speak to him through his window due to a global pandemic named after a beer, how a man beloved by all who knew him, died alone. But it would be a crime, a class A felony, to leave out the story of him and his red-hot Corvette. It was a 1957 model and hung so low to the ground that it nearly scraped the tar off the roads. The

screeching of the brakes and rumbling of the engine could be heard for miles. He'd always snack on nuts while driving. Macadamia, almonds, and brazil nuts covered the leather seats. He'd store them for later within nooks and crannies. Although the nut didn't make his list of favorites, asteroid JO25 was rumored to be shaped like a giant peanut. (Lewin 2017).

Everyone in the neighborhood knew him as the humming, nut-eating, grape-loving, "Life is Good" t-shirt wearing, Corvette driving stud. But he wasn't always this perfect. He was a big-wig in New York, absent and detached, under the impression that the world revolved around him, similar to how an asteroid revolves around the sun. When my mom was sixteen, he'd delicately step over her writhing in pain on the floor from appendicitis in order to get to a board meeting on time. Eventually, because of his self-righteousness, he made a bad investment and lost all his money. From that point on, he completely overhauled himself. He reworked his machinery, his wiring, and transformed into a man I emulate every day. He inarguably redeemed himself as a grandfather, to say the least, and gave me all the time he wished he had given his daughter.

According to scientists, the asteroid passed the closest to Earth than any rock formation before in our recent history: "The encounter on April 19 is the closest this asteroid has come to Earth for at least the last 400 years and will be its closest approach for at least the next 500 years" (Greicius 2017).

I wouldn't consider myself to be a person of faith. I don't actually believe that this asteroid was some God or Grim Reaper here to take my grandpa to Heaven or the Underworld. What I do believe is that my grandpa left this world at the very same time the asteroid passed and it just happened to take him along for the ride. It's more of a scientific belief than anything faithful. My grandpa simply latched onto the asteroid, adding another layer of rocky formation. The asteroid would allow for him to travel freely. To marvel at the size and grandeur of the planets, eat his nuts, and eternally proclaim, "LIFE IS GOOD!" My grandpa and the asteroid just happened to cross paths at the same point in time.