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He's Looked at Life From Both Sides Now

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ED CASSITY was coming out of a bone marrow transplant, his fever spiking over 105, his body slowly going into shock when – suddenly – he came to terms with something his doctor had told him many months ago.

Quite simply, Cassity realized that it was okay to die.

Some see a white light. Some see a tunnel. Some find the loved ones who have left them are once again at their sides.

For Cassity, the near death experience was a little bit different. He did not rise above his bed, he did not float around the room – but he felt, quite distinctly, that he was preparing to move on.

“After the severe pain, the severe fear and trauma...I felt my spirit detach from the blood and bones of my body,” he explained.

With a feeling he described as “total ecstasy” Cassity remembered the words of his doctor: it is okay to die. And in this moment of peace, he knew that it was true.

But Cassity, in fact, did not die that day. That was 1992, and the Glenwood resident survived the lymphoma, which he had once been told might end his life in a year.

As he lay recovering from the almost-fatal transplant, Cassity found a new sense of inspiration. The insurance salesman, who had been writing in his free time since high school, took to his hobby with a new passion.



His hospital bed was soon covered with legal pads where he scribbled down his ideas, slowly giving birth to his characters, and exploring his own experience in greater depths.

Cassity was beginning to sketch out a story – not about a middle-aged man, and not about cancer – but about a young couple in love.

Eleven years after his ephemeral experience, Cassity is holding in his hands something quite solid – a 634-page novel entitled *The Silver Cord*.

Born out of his moments, near death, it is a book about both love and the afterlife. In his own words, it is about “what is going to happen when we close our eyes for the last time?”

The work, written under the pen name Johnson Edwards, will be available in bookstores soon, and is

currently for sale online. Although a real marketing campaign has not yet begun, over 1200 copies have already been ordered or sold.

The novel's title is taken from the book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible, which states, "Then man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the streets. Remember him – before the silver cord is severed...and the dust returns to the ground."

These moments between death and life, when the silver cord still binds the soul to the body, figure prominently in the novel. Cassity, however, considers himself more spiritual than religious and insists that although the book may be about the afterlife, it in no way applies to a certain faith or system of belief.

"I want to tell in my story that God is love and that he wants to win you over from his love, not from fear," Cassity explained.

At its heart, the book is a mix of science, mysticism, and – when it comes to the love story – stark realism. Although the title alludes to death, the book also deals quite frankly with the passion between its two young characters who find themselves emerging into the adult world.

In the opening moments of the novel, the reader is faced with a devastating car crash. Cassity then goes back to the beginning of a young couple's love affair, leading eventually to a wife lying tragically in a coma – and a young husband, armed with knowledge of the silver cord, who isn't ready to give up hope.

In addition to the spiritual aspects, readers will find within the pages many explorations of nature. Again, this is inspired by Cassity's own experiences, as he felt particularly drawn to the natural world after his illness.

Now a healthy and active man, Cassity enjoys getting away from "the hubbub of beltway traffic" where he can sit under a big tree or lie by the ocean and think.

This is a sentiment that is also shared by his young characters. In his book, and in his own life, Cassity asks, "Why do we have all this beauty if we're just here and gone?"

It seems that Cassity is naturally compelled to contemplate the afterlife, but this interest stems from more than just his own experience. The passing away of his mother was another inspiration for *The Silver Cord*.

His mother, who was also suffering from cancer, spent her final days in a coma. Cassity and her pastor were by her side when, quite unexpectedly, she sat up and asked for a drink of water.

Cassity gave her a sip from a spoon, and after taking it, his mother reached her arms out as if to give her son a hug, lay back into her pillow, and was gone.

For Cassity, it is a beautiful memory – and one he finds great peace in. It is one more moment in his life that fueled the subject of his spiritual novel and made him wonder about the mysterious silver cord.

And although death figures prominently in the book, Cassity thinks of his work, more than anything, as "a beautiful love story."

Born and raised in Oklahoma, Cassity has been married for 34 years and has four grown children and five grandchildren. It was a particular thrill for him to share the book with his wife and kids.

As for the grandkids, Cassity said they aren't quite old enough for this story. It is, after all, a tale of two young

lovers, at a stage in life that Cassity describes as “a time of discovery.”

Cassity, it seems has also entered a new stage in life. He has worked for over 30 years as an insurance salesman, and currently has an office on Ellicott Mills Road. However, with another novel already in the works, it seems that, at age 57, Cassity has found his true passion.

After overcoming illness and penning his first novel, the author has himself begun a new chapter – the star character in his own tale of rejuvenation.

To purchase a copy of [The Silver Cord](http://www.the-silvercord.net), please visit www.the-silvercord.net.