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FEATURED AUTHOR

"SOUL SEARCH"

Reyna Favis, Ph.D.

Reyna Favis is more than brains and beauty. She holds a Ph.D. in biology from Wesleyan University and spent more than a dozen years as a drug development genomics scientist before turning to write fiction; her true life's ambition. She recently published, "Soul Search", a book about the paranormal. Reyna donates 50% of her author earning toward 501(c)3 charities including Search & Rescue Teams of Warren County.

Fia is the main character in "Soul Search". She's a reluctant psychic with an innate ability to assist the dead to cross over. The spirits of the dead are like drowning people. They have no intent to do harm, but once they notice people like Fia, they latch on and in their panic and desperation they drag her under.

Fia is a young woman in deep trouble, but the world thinks she owns the deluxe edition of crazy. To have any chance at a normal life, she needs a new start. Convinced that the woods are empty and safe from ghosts, she signs on as a wilderness search and rescue volunteer. Bad assumption. Big mistake.

When Fia witnesses a psychopomp leading a dead boy through a portal to the afterlife, she is frantic to learn the secret of how to free herself from the dead. Can she overcome her necrophobia and serve as a Guardian of the Dead?

WHEN A MYSTERIOUS, BEAUTIFUL AND BRILLIANT SCIENTIST WRITES A NOVEL ABOUT CROSSING OVER EVERYONE PAYS ATTENTION



Reyna Favis, Ph.D. & Author

Reyna Favis has a unique blend of all the right ingredients when it comes to understanding the mind of a psychopomp along with her direct experience with her own canine search and rescue dog, Zackie. She is a broadly trained geneticist and well respected in the scientific community. For fun she's a member of the Luxuriant Flowing Hair Club for Scientists (LHHCfs).

The fundamental motivation for her books begins with her interest in the esoteric. Her fascination with the supernatural began when she was a child. Reyna's heritage is a mix of East and West which explains her attraction to myth and mystery even in the midst of a lustrous scientific career. Reyna is brilliant and quiet; a self-proclaimed introvert with a dark side that unfolds in her novels. Her books go far beyond what science can explain.

Interview with
Reyna Favis, Ph.D. & Author
of "Soul Search"

Who Should Read "Soul Search"?

Have you ever worried about someone who has passed on? Have you ever felt close to someone you never knew, but you pass their grave in a cemetery and you feel a connection? Soul Search is for people who have had these experiences and who think differently about what comes next. This book is for anyone who wants the best for those who are no longer with us. It tells the story of a psychopomp in the modern age, compassionately guiding the dead and dying to the next life.

Which Actress and Actor Would You Choose to Play the Role of Your Main Characters?

Cam is a cross between John Cleese of Monty Python fame and Jeremy Clarkson from Top Gear. They are both tall, snarky Brits with a few miles on them. They see the tragedy and the comedy in life's trials and prefer to laugh rather than cry.

For Fia, I see a more careworn and haunted Emma Stone. Fia is the classic abused woman, but instead of growing more fearful and cowering from those who assault her, she fights back with everything she has. Fia adapts and adjusts, planning for the future even in the face of utter failure or possible death. She is the quintessential survivor.

Do Rescue Dogs Use Extrasensory Perception?

Dogs are equipped with senses that far surpass human capabilities, so to us, it may look like ESP when they are able to locate missing people. Depending on the breed, dogs can detect scents anywhere between 1,000 to 10,000,000 times better than humans. Also, because the part of the brain responsible for interpreting smell is 40 times larger in dogs relative to humans, the dog can break down



"Soul Search" by Reyna Favis

scent into component parts. If you or I smelled pizza, all we would think is mmmmm..... pizza. When a canine smells pizza, the dog can tell you that it has garlic, pepperoni, mushrooms, a doughy crust and they used that same delivery boy as the last time you ordered pizza. They also hear higher frequencies than what our ears are tuned to and because of a wealth of ear muscles, they can target the sound better than we can with our flat, little ears.

My search dog sleeps next to me every night and demands to be cuddled every morning before we get up. Because we live together and work together, we have a very tight bond, much tighter than anything I've experienced with my other pet dogs. The tight bond leads to a near perfect communication between us when we search. She doesn't have to speak to me in English to let me know where we need to go or how close we are to the subject. She tells me when she has lost scent and when she is distracted by the scent of a wild animal. She can even tell me when a subject has never been in an area. Dogs have an incredible capacity for empathy and they're a bottomless pit of compassion. They are also incredibly loyal and I have no doubt my dogs would take a bullet for me. It is not surprising that many different cultures across time have dogs as psychopomps in their sacred stories.



Reyna & Zackie, Canine Search & Rescue Dog

What is the Lesson in Your Book?

The major message is one of hope. Hope for people who are outliers and outsiders, people out of step with this world because they perceive differently. Hope at the end of life.

What is Your Direct Experience in Search & Rescue?

I am a K9 handler for a search and rescue team and I am nationally certified as a SAR Tech II. I have responded to callouts all over New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania. My training includes healthcare provider level first aid and CPR, wilderness survival, map and compass navigation, low angle rescue, crime scene preservation and incident command structure. I'm the person you want sitting next to you if the plane goes down. If we survive the crash, we will survive until rescue comes.

My search team has been called out to find lost hunters and hikers, people with neurological disorders like autism and Alzheimer's disease and people with psychiatric disorders. It was a "what if?" moment during our callouts for despondents that inspired me to write the book. The story sometimes does not end happily for these people and rescues turn into recoveries. Search dogs play a huge role in finding both the living and the dead and I wondered, what if a search dog could also be a therapy dog for the dead? What if a search dog was also a psychopomp, leading tormented souls who are trapped in this world to the afterlife? The "what if?" moment wouldn't let go until I wrote the story.

With Your Science Background and PhD in Biology Do You Believe that the Paranormal is Founded or Folly?

I believe that what we see and what we experience is only a fraction of what there is in reality. We are limited by senses that evolved to their current state because they improved the probability that we would survive long enough to reproduce. Our senses are just barely good enough to accomplish this goal. We go around assuming that our perceptions – sights, sounds, textures and tastes – accurately portray the real world.

Quantum entanglement shows us that we cannot assume that the particles that make up ordinary objects have an objective, observer-independent

existence. Neuroscientists spend their time struggling to understand how there can be such a thing as a first-person reality by studying neurons independently and en masse. Meanwhile, quantum physicists have to wrestle with how there can be anything but a first-person reality. All roads lead back to the observer and our perception of reality is only a representation, sort of like icons on our desktops. If a file is represented as rectangular and yellow, that doesn't really tell us anything about the true nature of the file or how it is stored in the computer in a format consisting of 0's and 1's. It's just something, a representation of reality, that guides our behavior. Similarly, evolution has shaped our perceptions to something that influences adaptive behaviors, allowing us to survive long enough to reproduce. Since certain ways of perceiving are not adaptive and will not influence reproductive success, there are very likely all sorts of things that are hidden from us, stuff we don't need to know about in order to be evolutionarily successful. I think there's a lot going on under the hood that we are just not aware of and we're not build to be aware of it.

What's Your Viewpoint On The Paranormal?

The Lucas character in "Soul Search" is my alter ego. We both believe that there is a lot of dishonesty in recording and reporting paranormal activity. False reports are made to gain that fifteen minutes of fame due each of us. Or maybe someone wants to make a buck through book sales or cable TV shows about haunted houses. I look at pictures of ghosts on the web and automatically think they are photo-shopped. Just another attempt of someone trying for web celebrity. I think if you want to gather credible evidence to support the existence of the paranormal, apply the scientific method. Because our ability to sense is limited, we are easily fooled by perceptual illusions. To do this right, we need objective measures and positive and negative controls to rule out being fooled. "Soul Search" has a scene between Lucas and Fia where they discuss this very thing: how do you develop a testable hypothesis of the supernatural?



How Does Your Book Relate to Your Own Spiritual Path?

My spiritual path includes a lot of what Joseph Campbell advocated. Mr. Campbell was renowned for his work in comparative mythology and he delved into many aspects of the human experience. He encouraged his students to become fully human by fully participating in life. One of his famous quotes is: We must be willing to get rid of the life we've planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us.

Writing "Soul Search" was a freeing experience. In my former life, I loved the science and it was thrilling to engage with bleeding edge technologies. But the corporate world was a strange fit for me. I occasionally write about it on my blog, the Introvert Broadcasting Network, because that period of my life is such a rich source of humor. In the final analysis, the days were really long, but the years were short. I wanted to sample a new flavor in life before it was too late and my craving for novelty took the form of writing. The world opened up again for me once I switched fields. I hadn't felt this sense of possibility and potential since graduating college and it was exhilarating.

Do You Consider Quantum Physics (Double Slit Experiment) as a Possible Explanation for Paranormal Activity?

What absolutely freaks me out right now is quantum entanglements. It's also called spooky action at a distance. This stuff just blows my mind. To understand this phenomenon, think about two electrons, each with a spin that gives an angular momentum pointing either up or down. So, say electron 1 points up and electron 2 points down. Quantum mechanics says that these two electrons can become entangled, so you can no longer specify the spin of one electron without knowing the spin of the other electron. The two particles are guaranteed to have opposite spin, but you can't say which one spins which way until you do a measurement. In a way, until you measure, both particles have both spin up and spin down. If the particles become separated without disturbing the spin state, this entanglement persists, regardless of how far you separate the particles. Imagine scientist Alice on Earth has one of the tangled electrons and scientist

Bob on Saturn has the other one of the pair. If Alice performs a spin measurement on her electron on Earth, that measurement will change the spin state of its entangled twin in Bob's lab on Saturn INSTANTANEOUSLY. What is the explanation for this linkage? How deep does this phenomenon go in terms of what we experience? I'm a biologist. I know from biology that even after years of study, I only barely understand what's going on in this field. I don't pretend to understand quantum physics and I have a really hard time wrapping my mind around spooky actions at a distance. I have read stuff that indicates physicists and philosophers advocate something like a backward-causation hypothesis to account for the spooky actions. According to this hypothesis, quantum effects can flow backward in time as well as forward. Other physicists think that a variant of the many-worlds view can help to explain quantum entanglements.

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