

Buried

by
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Jason always had a fear of being buried alive. As a child he would often wake up screaming, clutching his throat as he gasped for air, his mind making his body believe he was suffocating in a coffin. Even as an adult in his early thirties, he still held this fear, and still had those suffocating dreams. He constantly had a look of exhaustion on his face from interrupted sleep. It was getting to the point that he could barely manage daily life anymore. It was at that time in his life that Brian, a childhood friend, attempted to come to his rescue.

"You know," Brian said while they walked home from a game of one-on-one basketball in the park, "I had a big fear of swimming when I was a kid, and I got over it by being thrown into the pool. I learned how to swim and never feared the water again."

Jason sighed. He always heard from people who claimed to know how to help him get over his fear. "Learning how to swim is a whole lot different than getting over a fear of being buried alive. It's not like I can just bury myself and suddenly get over it."

"Well it can be that easy, Jason. When I was thrown into the pool, my dad did it. He was right there in case anything happened, and that made me feel better."

Jason suddenly had an ominous feeling. He didn't like what his friend was getting at.

"You know, I read somewhere that the best way to get over your fear is to face it. People who are scared of dogs

pet dogs. People who are scared of heights climb ladders. It's all done under close scrutiny by a friend, and it's safe"

"Are you saying that I get buried alive? Is that how I should face my fear? That's crazy. I'm not doing it." Jason could already feel his throat begin to close with the prospect of being buried, even if it was supervised.

"Alright, let me know if you change your mind." Brian said sympathetically.

Over the next nights Jason had the same frightening dream where he was buried alive in a coffin. He had the same feeling of impending death, the same throat crushing feeling of asphyxiation. After waking up from one such nightmare, the conversation he had with Brian crept into his mind again. *Could I really be cured of this fear by facing it head on?*, he asked himself. After a long week of nightmares and mostly sleepless nights, he finally thought that he should face his fears.

"Were you serious about that idea of helping me face my fears?" Jason asked Brian over lunch one day.

"I really want to help you man," Brian said setting his BLT down on the plate. He took a sip of his iced tea and continued, "I gave it some thought. I know of a place where we can do this, and I'll be right there. Nothing will happen."

"I have to do something Brian, I can't sleep, and I'm losing weight," Jason said indicating the loose fitting shirt he was wearing, "If I don't fix this, I'm gonna go crazy." He paused for a moment, and sighed, "Okay, let's do it" He could already feel the cold sweat and acrid taste in his mouth at the thought of being underground. He only wished this idea of Brian's would help.

A few weeks later Jason met Brian after work at a clearing behind the old cigar factory. There was already a hole dug when Jason arrived. It was five feet deep, four feet wide, and 6 feet long. *Looks like a grave*, Jason thought to himself. In the bottom of the hole was a large wooden crate, like those used to transport machinery, but in this instance it looked ominously like a coffin.

The plan was simple. Jason would get into the box. Brian would place the lid on it and would fill in the hole. Jason would only be there for a maximum of thirty-minutes. If he needed to get out before that, he had a CO2 powered boat horn that he would blow to indicate his desire to be retrieved.

Jason laid down in the padded, coffin like interior of the box. It smelled musty, like damp clothing. The ground around him was cool and moist. He tried to imagine he was simply in his own bed.

Brian nailed the top onto the crate and threw several shovels full of dirt on top. *So far, so good*, Jason thought, *I'm gonna get through this.*

Brian looked down at the box and suddenly felt foolish. He really didn't have to bury his friend; he just had to make Jason believe he was buried. That would be enough. He threw several more shovels full of dirt over the box, and for good measure, and to cover any light, he threw an old burlap cover over that. With not being totally buried, Jason could still get air, but he would think he was buried. *Besides, it's all in his mind*, Brian thought. *This would be enough for him to face his fears.*

In the darkness of the makeshift coffin, Jason closed his eyes. He breathed deep through his nostrils and allowed the cool air to fill his lungs. He imagined he was in his on bed, safe and free from any danger. *This is going to work*, he thought.

Off in the distance there was a rumble of thunder. The wind began to blow loudly and there was electricity in the air from the approaching storm. Brian went and sat in the truck. *I don't want to get stuck out in an electrical storm*, he thought.

In the box time slowly ticked by. *You are all right, you're gonna make it*, Jason said to himself. The only thing he could hear was his own breath and his rapid heartbeat beating in his ears. More time ticked by. He slowly began to realize where he was and he decided he wanted out. *Let me out of here!* Jason blew the horn. Minutes that seemed like hours went by but Brian did not retrieve him. Jason began to panic. The horn in Jason's hand grew cold as the gas in the can was expelled in one long desperate screech.

More horrible minutes went by, and nothing happened. *Where the fuck is he?*

Brian sat behind the wheel of his truck. He had come in out of the rain that seemed likely to fall. But despite the loud howls of wind, and ominous sky, the rain didn't come. All the wind did was hide the sound of the piercing horn that indicated Jason wanted to be removed.

Below in the coffin, Jason screamed. His throat was dry. He was imagining the oxygen level growing low. He was having trouble breathing. His lungs screamed for air. *Oh my god, I'm buried alive!!* he thought. And in the black depths of his shallow grave, inches from the surface, and as his friend waited for a signal horn he couldn't hear, Jason clawed at his throat as eternal darkness set in.

Tom's Bio

Tom attended Penn State University where he majored in American Studies. During his studies he read many different stories and personal accounts of average Americans living their lives out. Real people have stories to tell, and his desire in writing is to show that even an "average Joe" has something interesting to say, and he enjoys portraying them in enlightening situations. He currently lives in Central Pennsylvania where he and his wife grow Christmas Trees.