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1834 Words

**LAST DRAFT**

## **Escaped**

By Ed Hernandez

**Jason Allen Burke** was a felon who was to spend the rest of his days in a mental institution and he's just escaped.

The farther he hurried away from the facility, the more restless he felt. It should be the opposite though. He should feel relieved. And, unlike his last attempt, there were no sounds of howling dogs, nor sirens, nor any other loud

disturbances coinciding with an escaped mental patient. He thought it weird.

The events before him played out in a blur— a Hollywood film, furthermore, speeded up. He couldn't remember anything transpiring within the last thirty minutes. The last detail he remembered was lying on his bed in his cell, plotting this particular escape with a piece of metal of some kind— perhaps a makeshift key. The next second, he was outside the compound running for his life. He couldn't remember anything else in between. He reasoned that his body must've pumped him with so much adrenaline, it gave him temporary amnesia. It would explain the pain in his wrist that he felt after breaking out of the institute.

*Perhaps an injury I suffered knocking out a guard,* he thought.

Similar to his last escape, the full moon was bright; however, he didn't recall the dreary and sticky bog that he was scurrying in. It could be that the last time he fled, it was on the other side of the building. If he'd known that this bog was here, he would've tried the escape on the other side. The bog slowed him down considerably, making the experience feel like a dream.

"Are you still with me, Preacher," Jason inquired.

Jason was talking to the voice that lived in his head; the unpleasant, criticizing, loud male voice he called the Preacher. The Preacher spoke a lot, maybe too much.

'You know that I am,' the Preacher replied from inside his head. It was uncanny on how real that voice sounded to Jason and how much pain it brought him. It was one of the aspects that Jason hated the most about the Preacher— the pulsating migraine that accompanied it. It was a brain cracking agony that crippled Jason many a time; keeping him curled up in a fetal position, rendering him useless, hoping that somehow the pain would subside on its own. No amount of pain reliever was ever enough. In addition, the Preacher was an incessant and clamorous talker, adding to the excruciatingly painful migraines.

How the Preacher entered his mind Jason didn't know with certainty, although, the doctors diagnosed the sickness as Dissociative Identity Disorder, or, Multiple Personality Disorder. Jason had entertained the idea that it was a curse placed on him by his old friend, Marty Jackson.

Jason and Marty met each other in a pool hall one day and became inseparable best friends, sharing their drugs, liquor, and even each other's girlfriends.

As time went on, Marty got to know Jason a little better and realized just how smart Jason really was and Marty

didn't like smart people at all. Intelligent people tormented Marty in grammar school, or so he surmised. Intellectuals were a little too bigheaded for Marty's taste and he thought there were annoying know-it-alls. Marty had a lower than average intelligence level, which consequently, caused him to drop out of the ninth grade.

*What makes him so smart? Marty would often think. We practically grew up together. We are the same. We dropped out at the same time. I hate smart people so much.*

Marty's drug tainted brain didn't help the situation whatsoever. In time, he grew even more envious. They bickered more often and their friendship became embittered and tainted, resulting in the camaraderie ending. They became bitter enemies. However, they weren't through with each other as yet. The squabbling spilled over into their home life, until the wives of each couldn't take the conflicts any longer. Almost simultaneously, the two women filed for divorce and it wasn't long before Jason and Marty began to blame each other for their unpleasant divorces. That's about the time when the more intense fights surfaced. They fought every time they saw each other: in the pool hall, in the mall, on the streets— just about everywhere. The fights were fierce and frightening; both were trying to kill each other.

One day, Marty decided that he would not put up with this kind of living anymore. Anticipating another encounter with Jason, Marty carried a baseball bat hidden underneath his clothes. Sure enough, Jason confronts Marty and without warning, Marty whipped out the bat and whacked Jason in the head, knocking him unconscious. Marty, seeing blood, ran off and laid low for a long while.

Naturally, Jason was hospitalized with severe brain trauma, which caused the deep coma that laid him out for months and months. Amazingly, he recovered; however, he was never the same again.

The dilemma originated with the ringing in his ears. Then came the migraines, which began to increase in its ferocity as time went by— seemingly exponentially.

The thought that Marty could do such a thing played in his mind repeatedly; it bothered him, festered, resulting in the Preacher.

*'I can help!'* The Preacher would shout. *'We have to exercise those demons! They're making you act this way! You are not yourself!'*

"Leave me alone," Jason would shout to himself. "Get out of my head!"

Initially, it drove him mad. He was terribly

frightened and tried everything to rid of the voice; however, it wouldn't go away, no matter what he tried. Jason hid, cried, drank, and tried to ignore the voice. There was a brief moment where he contemplated suicide; however, the maddening prods of the Preacher made any attempts at suicide almost impossible. Ultimately, Jason was convinced that Marty put a curse on him.

The townsfolk witnessed this sudden downturn of Jason's psychological health and stayed far away from him, christening him 'Crazy Jay'.

Several weeks had passed since the appearance of the Preacher when Jason fell upon a radical solution to his mental quagmire— a last hope. He figured that if he kills Marty— the cause of the so-called curse— he would eliminate the source, diminishing its power, ending the torture.

Many days later, Jason kills Marty with a pick-ax, dumping his body in the river. After the murder, Jason felt some relief. The Preacher was gone. He was free at last. However, after a short time, the voice came back. The Preacher was merely in hiatus. The voice returned and it was more violent than ever before. The Preacher judged all of Jason's impure actions and required that Jason repent or lose his life to an eternal existence in hell. The preacher suggested Jason should give himself to the authorities and confess everything he's done.

'Jurors look kindly to people who admit their mistake and surrender,' the Preacher would reason.

Jason succumbed. He did as the Preacher suggested; however, the jury did not take his actions lightly as the Preacher foresaw. After the trial, Jason was found guilty of murder by 'reason of insanity' and the judge sentenced him to life in a mental institution. That was fifteen years ago.

*'There's no running,'* sneered the Preacher. *'How far do you think you can run from me?'*

*Far enough!* Jason responded in his mind, as he raced through the bog. His heart was beating loudly as he struggled to breathe. He peered up at the moon that apparently ran with him, keeping with every step.

*'This is no good, boy,'* the Preacher responded. *'Go back! Go back! You have to pay for the sins you've committed!'*

Jason lightly pounds his left temple, repeatedly, with his fist. "No, no," he'd say. His headaches were giving him blurred vision; however, he continued running, undaunted.

It was then that Jason knew where he was running. He remembered then that he planned this particular escape for a long time while festering in solitary confinement.

Periodically, Jason schemed until he hit upon an epiphany. He knew how and what he had to do.

In the distant, beyond the borders of the bog, on a long abandoned farm, there sat a blue barn that appeared from nowhere. Jason immediately recognized it. It was a place right out of his childhood— a place where one would be able to hide and successfully destroy nightmares and any monsters that resided within them. Jason ran to it, arms extended, like seeing an old friend.

"There it is," he cried out.

'*What is that,*' The Preacher asked.

"It's my sanctuary," Jason replied. Jason felt an inward shutter that seemed detached.

"Preacher?" Jason called. There was brief silence.

'*Why are we here?*' The Preacher's voice sounded afraid.

"To hide," Jason said aloud. He pushed the old barn doors open, practically knocking them off the wooden hinges. Bitter hay filled every crevice of the unkempt barn, from the dirt floor to the high loft. Abandoned spider webs dangled unstably. The moonlight sneaked in through the cracked openings of the roof; rain would obviously have its way in here.

"It's just as I remember it," Jason proclaimed, "a long time ago, when I was a kid."

'*You hid here as a kid,*' the Preacher inquired.

"I know where I am now and what I must do. My monsters were afraid of this place."

'What?' The Preacher sounded unsure.

"They couldn't fight me in here. I guess it's all psychological, huh?"

Jason sat in a corner, the way he did as a child and kneeled, facing the corner with closed eyes.

'*What are you doing,*' the Preacher demanded.

"Whenever I had nightmares," Jason continued, "inside those nightmare, I'd made a conscious decision to run into this barn, kneel in the corner, close my eyes and chant 'I wish you go away! I wish you go away! I wish you go away!' It always worked. The monsters would run away, afraid of my newfound faith."

'*You can't get rid of me,*' the Preacher exclaimed. '*I am part of you!*'

"Yes. You are part of me, Preacher." Jason opened his eyes. "You are someone who wants to do the right thing, someone who wants to be righteous. And it's something that I cannot

become. It's the opposite of who I am. What did the doctor call it? Multiple personalities?"

*'You will fail, as always!'*

"Preacher, this will be my last dream. It is the only way to get rid of you. I remember what I did now. I slit my wrist back at the cell with a metal part I stole from a printer in the library. I will be dead in a few moments and so will you, Preacher."

*'No!'*

The barn was fading into a beautiful light. The frightened voice of the Preacher echoed, *'No!'*

"Good-bye."

Jason and the Preacher faded into darkness.

The news of Jason's death traveled quickly within the walls of the institute. In his cell, Jason's body was discovered in a pool of his own blood, his wrist slit.

He's escaped.

THE END