

# The Dream

---

Jason Daugherty

Huttonsville Correctional Center

Huttonsville, WV

Four years into a ten-year sentence, I have had countless dreams and nightmares that have left me with feelings of melancholy and remorse. There is one dream in particular which has stuck with me. To this day, memories of this dream evoke thoughts and emotions that are nearly indescribable to somebody who has never been through the mistakes and experiences that often accompany the criminal lifestyle.

As the dream begins, I am sitting in a friend's yard, near my grandmother's house where I grew up, watching traffic drive by. With me is a girl I was close to as a teenager. Though I always had feelings for her, and was sure she felt the same way, the relationship never progressed beyond friendship. As we were talking, the ground started moving, separating us. We were powerless to stop it. We desperately grasped for each other, and even managed to hold onto each other's hands at times, but the ground was relentless in its pursuit to pull us apart. When it became apparent that we would be unable to prevent the ground from separating us, she told me that she loved me, and always had. When I told her that I had always felt the same way, her response shook me to my core. She asked, "Then why have we never been together?" She was gone before I had an opportunity to answer her. It didn't matter. I could not have given her an answer if I had been given the rest of forever.

I then turned to go home. Although I was two blocks away, I took a few steps and was back at my grandmother's house. My grandma was in her garden working, and my blue Mustang GT was in the driveway looking like it had been freshly washed and waxed. The front tire on the passenger side was flat, and I sat down and leaned against that flat tire as I began weeping uncontrollably. My grandma came over to ask me what was wrong, and all I could do was tell her "I have to get out of here. I can't be here right now." She told me to get in my car and go then, and when I told her that she didn't understand, she asked me "What Jason, what

don't I understand." I told her about the flat tire and told her again, "I have to get out of here." Her reply will haunt me for eternity. She said, "I can't help you. I'll never be able to help you again. I'm dead Jason, remember." That's when I awoke, in a cell with five other convicted felons. I have never felt so alone, and the thought of suicide has never been so prominent in my mind.

This dream stayed in the forefront of my conscience for days. It was almost two weeks later when the true meaning of this dream was revealed to me. I believe that everything in my dream symbolizes a larger aspect of my life.

The girl that I was unable to hold onto represents all of the relationships, friendships and otherwise, that were never able to develop to their full potential. The ground that so violently and relentlessly pulled us apart is a representation of my choices to live a criminal lifestyle, the true reason that these relationships were never able to fully develop. The traffic that we were watching drive by is a depiction of the days of my life, quickly vanishing as I sit in prison wishing for a freedom that may still be a long way off. The times, however briefly, that we were able to touch are vivid reminders of all the times that she, and others, tried to pull me out of a lifestyle that had to end in a box. I'm lucky to have ended up in a box of steel and concrete, because the only other place that path can lead is to a pine box, from which there is no return.

Going home to my grandma's was the only logic next step. It was to my grandma that I always ran when things went wrong. I specify that the car is a blue Mustang GT, instead of simply saying "my car," because it is representation of the type of life I was living. I allowed material possessions to define who I was. The Ford Mustang is an iconic American sports car, known the world over for its speed and power. I was living a fast life, fueled by drugs and crime,

and constantly seeking the wealth, power, and glory that Hollywood promises to all the great criminals.

The flat tire represents my incarceration. As she tells me that she can't help me, my grandmother reminds me again that, for the first time in my life, I'm in a situation that she can't save me from. The tears that I shed were not for the flat tire, nor were they for the incarceration that the tire represents. They were the tears of a man who has finally realized and accepted that he has lost everything. No friends around now, and a family that tired of his antics long ago. Then the proverbial final nail in the coffin. "I can't help you. I'll never be able to help you again. I'm dead Jason, remember." I have heard it said that truth without compassion is cruelty, and this is the cruelest truth I have ever heard. The only person who ever loved me unconditionally is forever gone. All the time spent chasing an impossible and unrealistic goal should have been spent with her. My grandmother died alone in a nursing home while I was in a jail cell worried about the sentence that I was about to receive. Although she passed away only days after I was convicted, nearly a month went by before I found out. I have often wondered what I was doing at the exact moment when she passed away. Though I will never know for sure exactly, I have no doubt that it was something selfish and trivial.

All of this was buried in my subconscious mind, but it all came rushing to the surface at once in the soliloquy that dreams really are. I have gained invaluable insight from this dream, and my desire is to be able to refrain from making similar mistakes in the future. As others read this, I hope that they will see parts of their own lives reflected in mine so that they too will be able to grow from the painful memories of my past.