

When that Happens.

I'm taking my wet, from sweating, t-shirt off, but it's tight, and my sweaty body acts like it's sucking the t-shirt to me. The bathroom is small, and it's hard for me to turn around. The t-shirt is finally over my head but gets even more stuck to my body, and I can't pull it off. My arms are stuck and now trapped. I can't grab any part of the t-shirt to get it back on or off.

I'm a man in a straight jacket suffocating.

The bathroom walls closed in and caused me to panic. Claustrophobia and panic cause my hysteria, and I'm sweating more now. I'm angry. I'm exhausted, and I need to calm down. It's hard to breathe because my face is trapped in a thick layer of wet t-shirt. I stop all movement. My mind doesn't know what to do. I suddenly feel I will die unless I can get this shirt off.

My ordeal is now down to whether I can escape because if not, death is certain. I flex my muscles, but the wet, too-taut t-shirt pulled over my shoulders, neck, and head doesn't move. It doesn't stretch at all, nor does it rip. The neck is tighter and affects my ability to breathe.

My imagination conjures up an image that I'm in my tomb, so now I am. My elbows get stuck now, too, so I can only bend my arms inwards, which doesn't help me escape. I wiggle and wriggle and struggle to get free.

One elbow slips free. My finger finds and hooks the smallest piece of the bottom of my shirt. I pull, and the t-shirt gives up just a little bit of itself. My thumb and index finger can now get a hold of more shirt, and I pull with all my strength. The shirt gets stuck on my ear, but my panic doesn't care, and I holler, "FUCK". As I holler, I pull harder, and my ear lets go of the wet fabric rather than getting torn off my head. I stand there panicked, breathing heavily, exhausted. The t-shirt now sticks only to my still sweaty arms.

I wake up. The sheet is wrapped around me so tightly that I can't reach the lamp to turn it on. I'm like a living mummy. My panic has yet to subside. I figure out how to unwind the sheet, and I escape. I turn the lamp on and feel my still panicked heart thumping in my chest.

The clock reads 4:54. I shake my head at the horror of being trapped by a wet t-shirt. My fear slowly subsides. I stand and walk to the bathroom. Coming back, I see my bed is a disaster, so I strip the bedclothes and completely remake it. The calmness of my freshly made bed calms me.

Escaping the feeling of being trapped is difficult because I felt helpless for much of that time.

Minutes pass, and I can finally smile. The impending doom that had me in its grip is minutes behind me now and moving further away.

My breathing has returned to normal, and I hear myself say, "I hate when that happens."

Written by Peter Skeels © 9-6-2024