Hereafter

by

Sam Aurelius Milam III
℅ 4984 Peach Mountain Drive
Gainesville, Georgia 30507

This story first appeared on page 3 of the August 2019 *Frontiersman*. It was first presented here on Sunday, August 11, 2019.

This document is approximately 820 words long.

Additional stories are available on my personal website.

This story is LiteraShare.

That means that it isn't for sale and that it isn't protected by a formal establishment copyright. As the author, I ask you to extend to me the courtesy that is reasonably due. If you copy the story, then copy all of it including my name and address as shown on each page, and this LiteraShare Statement. I invite you to provide such copies for other readers. If you quote from the story, then do so accurately and give me credit. If you care to make a voluntary contribution to me, then I prefer cash. For checks, money orders, or PayPal payments, please inquire.

This page was intentionally left blank.

Nobody knew. Nobody could have known. There wasn't any way for anybody to know. There still isn't.

All of those stories. Near death experiences. Somebody looking down at his body from above. Guiding angels, and a light at the end of a tunnel. All wrong. All wishful fantasies. Nobody knew. People who learned the truth, billions of them, never had any way to send it back.

For me, it started with me laying on my back, looking at the ceiling. Edna was frantic and calling somebody on the telephone. Next thing, there were firemen hovering in my vision, looking grim. Edna was crying. One of the firemen reached down and pulled my eyes closed. Why the hell did he do that? Why the hell couldn't I open them again?

I couldn't see anymore, but I could still hear. They were talking about me like I wasn't there. I started to get scared. They were making arrangements to take me somewhere. Hospital? I couldn't be sure.

I couldn't see who it was, but some people lifted me onto something and it felt like I was being wheeled away somewhere. I was lifted again, heard a thud, and began rocking back and forth. Hell, I was in some kind of a vehicle. I didn't hear a siren. If they were taking me to a hospital, then there should have been a siren.

I got moved again, placed on a cold table, not a bed. Why? Then motion, smooth and horizontal, and a thud. Then, it got cold. There weren't any sounds. I stayed that way for what seemed like a long time.

Eventually, there was motion again, smooth and horizontal, like before. Then I was lifted onto another cold surface. Terror! Horrible pain! It felt like I was being cut into little pieces. Through my terror, I could hear a calm voice talking about what he was doing. Looking back, it was an autopsy. I felt every cut of the blade. He cut me into little pieces, and then sewed me closed again. Through it all, I couldn't move, couldn't scream, nothing. I was moved again, back into that cold, quiet place. By then, I'd figured out that I was dead.

I was moved again. People touched me in various ways, cleaning me I suppose. I felt fabric. I decided that I was being dressed. After that, I went into some kind of an enclosure. I could guess that by the change in the quality of the sound. More motion, like a car, maybe. Then normal sound again, soft music and people talking quietly. I recognized it. I was at a memorial service, a funeral parlor. Damn! Well, at least somebody showed up.

After that, my box was moved around for a while, then a downward motion. Then the sound of dirt falling on the top of it. After that, it got really, really quiet.

I don't know how long it's been. There isn't any way to judge the passage of time. I can't see. It's utterly quiet. The temperature never changes. I can't feel around because I can't move. You think an autopsy is painful? Try being buried forever. I've become insane many times, and regained my sanity out of sheer boredom. Many times. Countless times. My life didn't flash before my eyes when I died but I've remembered it millions of times, from beginning to end, since then. Lately, that's getting harder to do. The memories are getting harder to find. Maybe I'm fading. Eventually, even with metal coffins and embalming fluid, eventually, my body has to decay. I'm hoping that eternal life was another fantasy, hoping that I'll fade

away with my body. There isn't any other way out. Might have been easier in the old days, with no preservatives and just wood boxes. Well, probably not easier, but at least it wouldn't have lasted so long.

Damn, I wish that I'd specified cremation.