

My try at revising a story my late friend GREEN wrote a few years ago. Please let me know what you think. jd.as.green@gmail.com

Brian Black Sings a Sad Song

Rewritten by J as Green
Chapter One: I am Brian Black!

Sometimes you have to pull something from inside of yourself that isn't pretty. Something that's so far deep inside that you barely notice how much of an impact it has in your every day life. I am about to do just that. Many of those kids out there have a story but they need a voice. I'll never be comfortable with the label but I am a role model and I would give them that voice. It has been six years since everything I knew was taken away. I am being interviewed by my friend Brady for a documentary about street kids. I am nervous this would be the first time I would talk about what happened to me with anyone other than him. Even though he would be there to guide me I knew it was never going to be easy.

I take a deep breath and look around the studio. The studio is almost completely dark. It takes a few moments for my eyes to adjust to the dark. In one corner I can make out Arthur my agent, He's on his cellphone. "Brian do your best I know this is personal for you," Arthur says from the corner before he returns to his cellphone conversation. He's working out a movie deal with one of his other clients. Arthur thought that it would be a good opportunity for me to tell my story. I wondered if Brady had coerced him into mentioning it.

A production assistant approaches me. "Would you like to sit?" she asks and guides me to a director's chair. She turns on a bright light that is placed above me. I squint letting my eyes get used to the light. "Can I place this microphone on you?" she asks me. I nod and she awkwardly places the microphone under my shirt. "I'm sorry it's I'm nervous, I swear I'm never like this."

"It's alright," I reassure and she smiles as she finishes placing the microphone.

"There you go. Can I get you anything?" she asks me.

"Maybe a cup of water." she nods and walks over to a table as my friend Brady walks into the studio with his camera man. He approaches me and sits in the chair before me. As the camera man readies his shot. The assistant hands me a cup of water.

"This won't be easy I am not going to lie to you," Brady says. "We have a lot to talk about, but I want to thank you for helping me. A rock star like you would lend a lot of credibility to my doc." A rock star like me? I don't like when people call me that.

"Brady you know I'd do anything for you." I tell him and the camera man turns the camera towards me. "This is important for you and I am glad to be a part of it. Oh and Brady never call me a rock star again."

"Fair enough but isn't that why your agent is here?" Brady asks. "You know how I feel about agents."

"I heard that and I'm your agent too asshole," Arthur yells from the across the room. I smile as Brady shakes his head.

"Are you ready? lets start at the beginning," Brady says to me as the camera man turns the camera on.

He counts down from five as the tape rolls. Then he points to me.

I look directly into the camera and I speak....

BB

It was cold out and the wind was cutting through me. I rubbed my hands together hoping for a little heat. Why hadn't I brought a sweater? I had waited the better part of the afternoon for my father to pick me up. The mall had closed an hour before and I had spent all of my money at the arcade. No one answered the collect call I had placed.

“Son you need to move on now,” one of the malls guards said to me. “The mall is closed and I have to patrol the lot.”

“Do you have a cell phone I could use,” I asked the guard.

The guard shook his head and motioned to the pay phones outside. I started to walk there was no use staying here. I was angry and I cursed my father. If it was one of my other siblings my father would have remembered. This was a regular occurrence with my family. They forgot me at school. They forgot me at my friends house. They even managed to forget my birthday which was a week earlier. I was always the afterthought. They always forgot about me it's the burden of being the middle child. I always wondered what it would be like to an only child.

One of my friends lived a few blocks from the mall. I decided to walk over there. When I was almost out of the parking lot. I folded my arms around me and looked down the street as cars passed me bye. Moments later a white Buick slowed next to me. A man looked out the window and smiled.

“Hey kid you need a ride?” he said from the darkness of the car. I looked to see if I could see his face but he had on a pair of dark sunglasses.

“No I can walk. I'm headed to my friend's house it's down the street,” I said. I knew enough not to accept rides from strange men.

“Now kid I've been watching you if you lived down the street then why didn't you walk home sooner. Looks to me like someone forgot to come pick you up.”

“I'm alright mister.” I walked faster but the man just followed. When I got to the edge of the parking lot I started to run but the man hit me with his car. I fell to the ground. “what did you do that for?” The man stepped out of his car and grabbed me.

“Get into the car boy!” I tried to fight him off but he pulled out a gun. “Now I only ask nicely once.”

Two years later.

SOMETIMES LIFE THROWS YOU A CURVEBALL, thats what the wall we waited on said. Somebody had stenciled those words onto it a long time ago. For some reason I always felt safe standing there under that sign. It was a constant reminder for us while we lived on the streets. We made the best of what life had given us. If that meant stealing cars, then we stole cars. If that meant selling drugs, then we sold drugs. If that meant turning tricks, then we did just that. We did all of those things to make sure we didn't go hungry and we had a place to stay on cold nights.

I was standing by the wall when Brady My boyfriend turned the corner. Brady was everything for me on the streets. I met him a year before during a cold night. He showed me where to stay when we had to stay on the street, and he always made sure I wasn't hungry. No one cared for me like Brady did and I was never an after thought.

"Where have you been?" I asked and he threw a burger at me as he approached.

"I was making sure my boyfriend doesn't starve," he mocked as a car approached us.

"You boys clean?" the man in the car yelled at us.

"Depends on what you consider clean," Brady said with a smirk on his face. We usually worked together. It's safer that way. We could make more working solo but the uncertainty is almost heartbreaking.

"You a cop?" I asked.

"No, what's your price," said the man.

"We work together," Brady said.

"Then come on boys I don't have all night," he said and opened the passenger door.

An hour later the man dropped us off under a bridge. Rain had started falling and it was getting colder out. "It's too cold to stay here do we have enough to stay at the motel?" I asked.

"Yes if we skip dinner." Brady frowned and looked around. "Want to go to the store? Maybe we can score ourselves a five finger discount."

We've done this before when we hadn't made enough. It's always risky to steal because most store clerks carry a weapon. Besides if we are caught stealing the police officers tend to treat us like were shit.

"I'll distract the clerk and you grab what you can," Brady said before we walked into the store. I surveyed the scene. There was a customer at the back of the store but he didn't seem like a problem. We needed the door to be unobstructed. At the moment it was so I gave Brady the nod and he walked right over to the clerk as I grabbed as much junk food as I could carry.

"Run," I yelled and Brady made it out of the door. I dodged the Clerk as he came at me with a bat.

"Stop right there," the customer in the back yelled as he grabbed my shoulder. "Brian Black?" I turned to look at the man. "is your name Brian Black?"

I looked to the window nervously. Brady watched me from the outside he was afraid and he mirrored what I was feeling. This man knew who I was and I didn't know why. Part of me wanted to think the worst.

"Are you going to call for back up?" the clerk asked.

"Dave let me deal with this," the man said and I took the opportunity to run again. I threw a pack of cookies at him and headed for the door. I made it out and ran as fast as I could with the rest of the junk

food I had. Brady was down the street waiting for me. I ran as fast as my body would let me but I could hear the foot steps behind me. The man was chasing me and he was closing in fast.

“Drop the Junk food,” Brady yelled at me from the other end of the block. “Come on.”

I looked back and lost my footing. I tripped and landed on the junk food. “Shit,” I cursed and tried to stand but the man had reached me and he helled me down. I looked at Brady with dread. What did this man want from me?

“Brian we've been looking for you,” he said as he caught his breath. “I'm so glad I found you.”

“Fuck you let me go I don't owe anyone anything,” I protested and tried to get free but the man had a death grip over me.

Brady looked like he wanted to hit him with something. “What do you want me to do?” he asked.

“Get out of here,” I yelled back as the man threw me face down on the ground. “Shit!”

“I'm Detective Grant,” he said as he searched my pockets. “I'm gonna take you back home.”

“Go I'll be alright.” I yelled at Brady who still hadn't moved. He hesitated before he reluctantly walked away, looking back every few moments. The man cuffed me and helped me up.

“Once I know you won't run I'll take these off,” he said, as he took his phone out and searched through it's phone book. A moment later he was talking to someone. “Hi Mr. Black I think I may have found your son.”

BB

Detective Grant had kept me locked in a hotel room the night before. He gave me new clothes and fed me. He thought it would be best if I looked presentable when I went back home. He wasn't anything like the cops I knew. It was strange for me. The cops I knew treated us like scum. Yet Detective Grant treated me like I was his son.

The cruiser drove through the city. I watched from the back seat. The cruisers radio buzzed on and someone spoke something unrecognizable through it. Officer grant picked the radio up and put it to his mouth. “This is Detective Grant I am on the way into Maybury. I'm headed to the Blacks house,” the Sargent said into the radio. “Your father will be waiting for you,” He said turning to me. Someone buzzed something through the radio once again. I looked out the window as the city turned to suburbs and the buildings melted into houses.

“If you leave me here I won't tell no one,” I suggested. Detective Grant laughed as he pulled into a gated community. “Come on it's not like they want me here.”

“Look Brian, I wouldn't take it too hard on them Alright. You are their son and they do want you home with them. Your family has been looking for you for a long time now and they're happy that you are safe.” He punched in some numbers on a keypad and the gate opened. We passed several houses that seemed to get bigger as we progressed. A few minutes later the Detective turned into a driveway. At the end of the driveway was a huge white house that sat next to a lake.

I watched through the police cruisers window as the Detective talked to the man I once knew as my

father. "It's been too long, I can't go back." I whispered to myself. Two years since I had seen him last. He still looked the same. The same gray hair fell unruly over his ears. The crease in his brow and his piercing deep dark eyes looked straight at me. I let my hair fall across my face and looked away. The last time I saw him I was fourteen.

The Detective opened the door. "Son your father wants to take you home now," he said. "Now remember what I told you. Whenever you need me."

"Seriously I wouldn't tell anyone," I said. The Sargent smiled and motioned for me to get out.

"And I wont book you for robbery," he said ending the conversation.

Nervously I tried to get out of the car but my father hugged me before I had both legs out. "I'm so sorry son, I'm so sorry," he whispered as his arms tightened around me. He broke the hug shook the Detectives hand. "Thank you Robert," he said before he drove away. I wished with all I had that I was in the car with him.

The house that loomed in front of me was monstrous and it cast a shadow over us as we walked towards the front door. My father put his arm on my back and guided me through the front door. The last thing I wanted to do was talk yet my mouth betrayed me and I asked, "Where is everyone?"

"Your mother doesn't know you're home." he said. "She's out with the family at the moment. They should be here shortly. Now come lets get you settled."

I had never seen a house like this. Everything in it looked expensive. My father must have gotten the promotion he was coveting years ago. I looked at the family pictures some had me in them when I was younger. Most of the others were new. I stopped in front of one. My brother Tim look so much older and he was starting to look like my father. My older sister Lisa also looked different she had outgrown her tomboy phase. My two little twin sisters now looked like little ladies, identical in every way. The perfect family that I wasn't a part of not anymore.

"We waited to get a family one," said my father. "We wanted the family to be complete."

I was no longer the fourteen year old boy that they forgot about. I was someone different. My hair was died black because on the street a blond teenage boy is not a good Idea. My family was the other street kids that fell through the cracks like I did. With them I stole, sold drugs and I hustled anything to survive. I had done every type of drug out there. I had been been beaten up countless times. I slept in dingy motels, alleys and condemned buildings. Even with everything I went through on the streets I would have gone back in an instant. The people I knew there were my family. These people they weren't.

"Are you hungry?" my father asked me. "Theres nothing prepared but I can take you out if you'd like."

"No," I said.

"I guess you are tired. I can only imagine how," my father said, stopping himself before he said anymore. "let me show you your room. Your mother and I bought this house last year. We wanted you to feel welcome when we found you so we decided that you should have your own room." I guess they were really trying. I was never someone to wine about what I didn't but part of me felt like I missed out on a lot.

We walked up the stairs. I looked at the other rooms as we passed them. I saw my twin sisters room. It was decorated in pink with what seemed like hundreds of stuffed animals. My brother Tim's room was blue and there were endless amounts of football memorabilia and his varsity jersey was laying on the bed. My parents bed room was on the opposite side of the house and I wasn't able to see it. "Yours is up here," my father said as we reached another flight of stairs. "Your room is the one on the right. It has a great view of the lake. I'm going to go call your mother. If you need anything call me. Your grandparents are coming for dinner."

I climbed the stairs and entered the room my parents had designated for me. I opened the door. Inside all of my old stuff was placed all around the room along with a ton of new stuff. On the far end there was a desk with a new laptop on it. The window faced the lake and the sun was setting. I looked at the bed and I went to it. I laid down on it minutes later I was asleep.

BB

Ricky Streets thought about the man's offer. "Make sure you bring a pall," said the man.

"Sure man, you know the price," said Ricky. "Give me a few minutes."

The man was a little to intense for Ricky. Ricky knew that he should probably avoid the man and run as far as he could but the man offered far more than he was used to and he promised to pay upfront as soon as he found a second. Ricky scanned the street and he saw some familiar faces. Joey was already talking to someone. Jack never worked with anyone in fact he rarely turned tricks. Ricky saw Brady and he walked in his direction. Ricky knew his boyfriend was bagged the night before and he also knew that he wouldn't work alone.

Brady walked down the alley. He was nervous and his hands were sweating. Brian was never gone for more than a day. Brady feared that Brian had been sent to the juvenile hall or far worst the county jail. At the end of the alley he saw Ricky Streets he was talking to a man. "Probably one of those old perverts," he thought as Ricky approached him. "Hey Ricky have you seen Brian?" Brady asked.

Ricky smiled, lit a cigarette and put it into his mouth. "Word is your boy was arrested last night," he said in between drags. "Larry saw them do it last night."

Brady put his hands in his pocket and started to walk away. "I was there I saw it."

"Yo wait up," Ricky said. "Look I need a second tonight. Have this cat that wants a threesome and Larry's out to see his girl downtown. You wanna join?"

Brady stopped he could use the money. He had blown what he and Brady had made the night before on the motel. He knew that he wouldn't see Brian for a while. "Alright but you know what I wont do." Down the street a white Buick lights turned on.

BB

Someone was laying next to me when I woke up. An arm was draped around me and I felt the persons breath on my neck. I turned to see my mother. She pulled me closer. Her mascara was running and her tears had stained the pillow case. "You're here now baby." she whispered. "Here safe"

I got off the bed and walked away. I needed to leave. The place wasn't mine, it was their place. Who were they kidding they weren't my family. They never cared before so why where they trying so hard. I

left the room and headed down the stairs. I passed Tim's room. "Hey," he called out to me as I passed but I wasn't about to stop. I had to run as far away from that house as I could. I raced passed the twins room and down the second flight.

The front door was a few feet away when my mother asked, "Brian where are you going to go?" I walked closer to the door. My hand was almost at the door knob but something stopped me from turning it. My eyes were glued on the door but for the longest time I couldn't leave. My father put his arm on my shoulder.

"Come on son," he said and guided me to the kitchen. For the next twenty minutes I was hit with a million questions. My grandmother asked where I was. My mother asked what I wanted for dinner. My two adorable twin sisters kept messing with my hair. I was overwhelmed and my father sensed it.

"Come on guys let him breathe," he said as he sat next to me.

"Did you see your room? You and I share the third floor," Lisa said. I nodded but I didn't know what to say. I was dying inside. This wasn't the family I knew. The family that I knew wouldn't pay so much attention to me. In fact they wouldn't have acknowledge my presence.

"We need to take you shopping tomorrow," my mother said as she placed food before me. "You're going to need new clothes." I nodded as the doorbell rang. "That must be your grandfather. Tim go open the door."

My grandfather I remembered as one of those insanely proper assholes that expected everyone to live up to his standards. He hated my father because my father was Italian and not a Republican. My brother had to play football. I had to dress neatly and prepare for the ivy league and my sisters were expected to marry someone just like him. If he thought that I was going to live up to his bullshit he had another thing coming.

My grandfather Marched into the room half expecting everyone to bow to his greatness. He put his hand on my shoulder and turned me to face him. "Do you know what you put your family through?" His hand squeezed my shoulder really hard. "How dare you put your family through that?"

"Let me go!" I smacked his hand off my shoulder.

"Listen you little prick, I've heard all of the stories. I know what boys like you do out there on the street. No grandson of mine is going to be a junkie faggot," he yelled.

"Don't worry because I'm not your grandson anymore." I broke myself loose and took off. This time I had no intention of looking back. No one was going to talk to me like that. I opened the door and headed out.

"Brian!" my mother yelled.

I was almost out of the driveway when Lisa pulled up next to me. "Look let me at least give you a ride," She said. I walked on. "Come on Brian get in." I stopped and contemplated. A walk back to the city would take hours. I got into the car with her.

"Before I take you to where you want to go can I take you somewhere with me?" Lisa asked as Tim got into the back seat.

“Where are we going?” Tim asked.

“You'll see,” Lisa said as she took off.

“Don't worry about Grandpa. Mom and dad don't really listen to him now a days. Grandma left him last year so he's been an even bigger prick,” Tim said. “So Brian how's life out there on the street?”

“Tim how can you ask that?” Lisa shouted. “Can you be more insensitive.”

“What? I was just trying to make conversation,” Tim responded. “Look Brian things have changed here. I know mom and dad weren't the most attentive parents when it came to you but I know they feel really bad about that.”

“It's true,” Lisa added. “ Mom's cried every day since you disappeared.”

“Yeah and dad well dad had the whole state looking out for you,” said Tim as we pulled up to a parking lot. “He used to stay out late to search the city.”

When I was younger I was so envious of my older siblings. Lisa was always talented. She would paint the most amazing paintings. I would watch her for hours getting lost in the colors as her brush stroked the canvas. She even painted me once. She had me pose by a window. When It came to Tim I always wanted to be like him. I wanted to be the popular like he was. He was always a great football player. More so I wanted to be visible to my parents like they were.

“If you still want to go back where you came from after this I'll take you,” Lisa said. Something told me that she wanted to bait me into staying.

“Oh you're going to love this place,” Tim added when he saw where we were. Lisa had parked in front of Jimmies it looked like an ice cream parlor. It must have been a teen age hangout. Everyone seemed to know each other. Lisa and Tim introduced me to countless other kids until we took a booth inside. There was a band Playing on a small stage in the back. They were really good and their lead singer was belting out a song I hadn't heard before. Some kids were dancing by the edge of the stage. The waiters were all dressed in white shirts with ice creams on them.

People wouldn't stop staring at me. I stood out. My clothes didn't look like theirs my hair didn't look like theirs. These kids looked like they walked out of a catalog when I looked like an uncomfortable idiot wearing clothes that were too big.

A waitress came by and asked us what we wanted. Lisa and Tim both ordered milkshakes. The waitress asked what I wanted. I didn't order anything but Lisa ordered me a sundae. “You have to have something,” She said. The waitress smiled and left.

After a while the other kids slowly stopped staring except for one across the restaurant. He was looking at me like I had stolen something from him. “Who is that guy looking at me?” I asked Lisa

Lisa and Tim both looked over.”Oh that's Connor,” she said as she motioned him over. She introduced me when Connor came over to our table. He seemed apprehensive. He barely said hi to Tim and nodded at me. I looked at Tim and I noticed that there was something wrong. They seemed uncomfortable with each other and it was making me uncomfortable. I was glad when our orders came.

“So Brian if you're their brother where have you been?” Connor asked me.

“Oh you know turning tricks downtown and selling drugs,” I said. He wanted to ask me questions then I would be truthful. He didn't like me and I sure didn't like him. “You know it pays the bills.”

Lisa laughed and Tim rolled his eyes. Connor did not take my answer kindly and excused himself.

“Brian do you still sing?” Lisa asked me.

“No I don't sing anymore,” I lied. I sang for my boyfriend Brady almost every night. Some of the other kids would crowd around us when I sang. I even sang for money sometimes. It was better than the other stuff we did for money yet it never paid nearly as much.

“Well you should sing tonight Brian,” Tim said. “looks like you're the topic of conversation again.” Most of the kids at Connors table were staring at me again.

“I don't know what their problem is,” I said and sank into my seat. A girl at Connors table was pointing at me now. “Who is that?”

“That is Mary Beth Stevenson. You might want to stay away from her,” Lisa said before sipping from her Milkshake. “You could probably catch herpes by looking at her.” I laughed at that.

“See I knew we'd get a laugh out of you sooner or later,” Tim said in between gulps of his soda.

“Grandpa laid into you today huh?” Lisa asked.

“Yeah,” I said. “Guess he'll never change.”

“He's been on me all season because I told him that I wouldn't play in college,” Tim said. He seemed really upset over it. “Can we change the subject?”

Several people came by the table a few of Lisa's friends joined us. They all seemed to know me. One was even bold enough to ask me what I did for money on the street. Lisa took that as a cue for us to leave much to my relief. Lisa placed money on the table and we said goodbye to her friends. I never touched the sundae.

Connor waved us goodbye as we left. “Why did you bring me here I asked?”

“Well I was hoping to spend some time with you before you went back,” she said. “I was also hoping you would change your mind.”

“Come on Brian you can't blame us we had nothing to do with it,” said Tim nudging me. I smiled but I wasn't convinced yet. Brady was out there worrying about me and he was closer to me than my family but I did miss my sisters and my parents.

BB

“I'm not doing that,” Brady yelled. Ricky frowned and rolled his eyes.

“If you want your money you'll do it,” said the man. “look the faster we do this the faster you can get out of my face.”

Brady shook his head and walked out of the dirty room. The whole world was turning and he couldn't find his balance. He wondered if the drink the man had given him was laced with something. "Where are you gonna go if you can't walk?" said the man from behind, laughing as he loomed over Brady.

"What did you give me?" Brady barely let out before his world faded away.

A few hours later the man dropped Brady's bruised body in an empty lot. Ricky was never seen alive again.

BB

If I stayed I had a family to regain but I also had Brady and those that I considered my family to lose. I was torn. It was all too good to be true but I couldn't leave the people that kept me alive behind. "I would really like to go back to the city could you take me," I told my sister Lisa as we got into her car.

"I hoped you would change your mind. What's his name?" she asked me. I blushed and looked to Tim who seemed a little too eager to know the answer.

"His name is Brady," I answered.

"I'll take you back if that's what you want me to do Brian but we do miss you and we want you to stay," she said as she grabbed my hand. I gave her directions and we drove in silence until we reached downtown.

"I want you to meet Brady," I said, breaking the silence.

"and we want to meet him as well," Lisa said.. "right Tim."

"Yeah of course," Tim responded breaking his own silence. "Brian this is where you lived as we pulled up next to the wall."

"Yeah when we couldn't afford a hotel," I said. Lisa looked at me like she wanted to hear more of the details but she knew better than to ask. Tim changed the subject all together.

"Where is your boyfriend?" Tim asked and I looked around. Brady wasn't there. It was strange for him not to be.

"I'll be back," I said and I walked over to Jack one of the street kids. If one of us was in trouble chances were that Jack would know. We were like a family on the streets and Jack was like our street father.

"Hey Brian you're out," Jack asked me.

"Have you seen Brady?" He noticed I was worried.

"Nah man haven't seen him since earlier today. He was all broken up about you getting caught and shit." Jack looked over across the street to another one of the street kids. He yelled at one of the ones I didn't know. "Joey have you see Brady?"

Joey walked over to us and he did not look like he had good news. "Word is that he went out with Ricky," he said and looked down to the street. "Neither one came back today. Mark said he saw them leave in an old white Buick."

Suddenly I felt like the world had been taken out from me. The old white Buick I knew that car well. It was the car that taken me away from my family. Its driver was the man that had taken everything else.

Jack looked at me concerned. "Do you think it's the same Buick? It's been months since he's been around here," Jack said.

"I don't know," I said and I took out the card Detective Grant had given me.

BB

"I need an ambulance to the empty lot at twentieth and main," Steve said to the dispatcher from his cellphone. "I found a kid, hes been beaten. Yes he seams awake. Yeah I will be here thank you." Steve had seen it before. He wondered what it was this time a drug deal gone bad or worst a trick slapped the boy around. Steve ended the call and dialed another number.

"Hey Jeannie can you make sure the guest bed is made?" He said to his daughter. "Yeah I found another one . Sure he might like that."

"Who are you," Brady asked the man.

"They call me Steve, I'm gonna help you son," Steve said and extended his hand. "What's your name?"