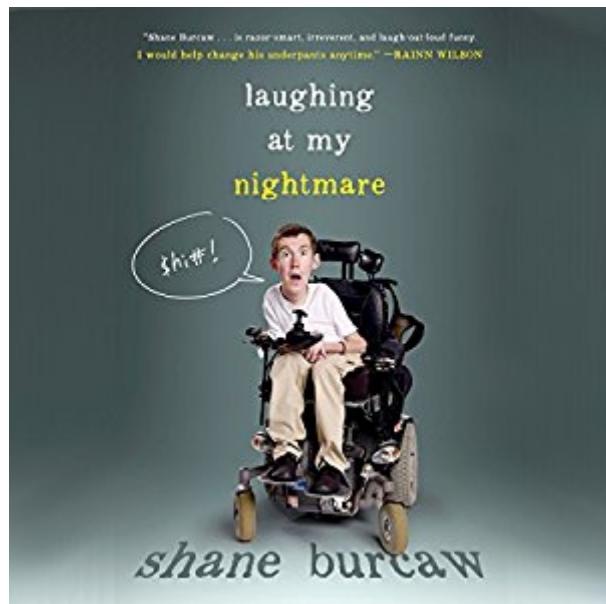


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# Laughing At My Nightmare



## **Synopsis**

With acerbic wit and a hilarious voice, Shane Burcaw's *Laughing at My Nightmare* describes the challenges he faces as a 21-year-old with spinal muscular atrophy. From awkward handshakes to having a girlfriend and everything in between, Shane handles his situation with humor and a "you-only-live-once" perspective on life. While he does talk about everyday issues that are relatable to teens, he also offers an eye-opening perspective on what it is like to have a life threatening disease.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

I have to confess I approached this book--and the blog of the same name--with some mild trepidation. I feared Burcaw was exploiting his disability, i.e., currying praise for being inspirational when all he's doing is, you know, surviving. I don't like referring to a disability as a disease, either. It's like playing the pity card, emphasizing medicalization and portraying yourself as a victim of said disease. BUT Â| as Shane himself says, he's just a normal guy. He doesn't want to be pitied and he doesn't want to be special. In fact, he's sort of making fun of all that, turning "aw" & "ow" on its head (to "wa-wo," I guess). BUT Â| Shane is definitely a talented writer. He's funny and expressive and moving. He has a distinctive "literary voice." BUT Â| this is a good, quick, and gripping read. It's unfortunate that the publishing pros have relegated it to the "teen" market because it would be good for anyone of any age. Full disclosure: I, too, grew up with spinal muscular atrophy, just like Shane. I identify with many of the experiences he describes here. Some of it cuts so close to the bone that it makes me shiver. That's not funny, I want to scream, when for example

he describes being herded to the wheelchair section at a talk Michelle Obama gave at his school, separated from his friends. That's tragic! Yet isn't it also illegal to ghettoize wheelchair folks, to deprive them of at least one "companion" seat? I do wish Shane had a stronger sense of disability rights, of his place in a broad community with a proud and deep history. Not to make the book all serious-like and angry and boring. Just so he'd have some righteous anger. His mission to fit in, to undermine the sense of "tragedy" and "nightmare" that pervades disability, to blur the distinctions of what's considered "normal," is exactly what the movement is all about. It's not just about gaining acceptance for yourself, Shane, but about making the world more respectful of and good-natured toward alla God's chilluns, no matter how they roll. Still, what's great about this book is it's not a rant. He's not on a soapbox (I guess soapboxes used to be big, or something). His candor is startling and refreshing. His humor is fresh and infectious. Yes, I did laugh out loud multiple times. But in some ways this is actually a very deep and serious book. At least to me. Maybe that's because I'm not a teen anymore. So power to Shane! Read his book! Recommend his book! Give it as a gift this holiday season! Your friends will thank you. Maybe Shane himself will thank you. He seems like that kind of guy. Even if he never did post a blurb for MY book.

I bought this book for Kindle and couldn't put it down. I laughed, I cried and have promoted it to everyone I know. My 16-year-old daughter has read it and is now crushing hard on Shane, "He's hot!" she says. Shane is funny and bravely honest about everything we humans endure, but of course, he is enduring it all in a uniquely terrifying way. The fact that he can laugh at his situation (most of the time) is definitely inspiring. My 16-year-old (in photo) also happens to have the same disease as Shane although a milder form. His experiences mirror hers in such a remarkable way that helped her to feel less isolated...she's a rebel too. Finally, as a mother of a child with SMA, I was able to gain an insight through Shane's book to my daughter's innermost fears and thoughts. Can't wait for the next book Shane!

Since I've been diagnosed with a terminal illness, I lost my sense of humor gradually... I became too self absorbed in my own issues and forgot/ignored how to approach/live my life properly. This read has rekindled my desire to live, laugh and love once again! Thank you S.B. for sharing yourself with us all!

This and more reviews at [The Book Bar.col](http://TheBookBar.col) love biographies, especially humorous ones. Nothing is more eye opening than realizing that your sack of sorry is nothing compared to another's life-altering

experiences. I stumbled upon Shane Burcaw's Tumblr page when I first started this blog's Tumblr page, about a year ago. I was an immediate fan of his posts, his jokes (often gross, some intriguing - "Ladies") and his writing style. However, what I wondered most was, how in the world is this guy writing a book on his life? His "T-Rex" arms and hands are tucked to his chest and I wanted to know how was he typing his thoughts out to the universe. Then I started wondering all the other "how does he do it's", that other followers have already questioned and he, so candidly, answers. Basically my body just didn't feel like developing these proteins while I was in the womb. I was the laziest fetus you'd ever meet. Burcaw, Shane (2014-10-14). *Laughing at My Nightmare* (p. 13). Roaring Brook Press. Kindle Edition. Personally, my uncle died from ALS and I periodically observed as he progressed from standing, to needing a wheelchair, to being bedridden. I can't fathom the feeling one must experience, slowly losing control of your own body and having others to wait on you. That would be my biggest fear, having to rely on others to do the basic things that everyone takes for granted. All of a sudden it occurred to me; my jaw wasn't unhinged, but the muscles in my jaw were getting weaker. I was getting worse. Once in a blue moon I lie in bed and think why me? as I try to fall asleep. As pathetic as it sounds I usually end up tearing up and hating everything. This was definitely one of those nights. Burcaw, Shane (2014-10-14). *Laughing at My Nightmare* (pp. 144-145). Roaring Brook Press. Kindle Edition. Shane Burcaw addresses all your questions from, what exactly is his condition, to what his daily routine is like with the support of his family. Moving out and starting your own life is a huge step in a young adult's life. Shane expresses the frustration he has with his own body, but ultimately comes to the conclusion that he can only control so much (he's a bit of a control freak if you ask me; this guy is on top of everything). It is difficult to explain the loss of dignity that accompanies losing the ability to lift up your own head. I have tried to accept the fact that this is my life and [fecal matter] like this is inevitable, but when holding my head up was one of the few things I could do all by myself and it started to slip away, I became very frustrated. Burcaw, Shane (2014-10-14). *Laughing at My Nightmare* (p. 161). Roaring Brook Press. Kindle Edition. Shane also writes about falling in love, experiencing lust and finding his HEA. It's heartwarming to know that there are individuals out there are destined soul-mates. Our story is rather unusual, as most of mine are, and filled with millions of details that I could never begin to relate in a single book. This is my poor attempt to summarize our time together. Burcaw, Shane (2014-10-14). *Laughing at My Nightmare* (p. 222). Roaring Brook Press. Kindle Edition. His Shannon is a force for good and the two, along with the rest of the non-profit managers for LAMN, are going to change the world, simply because Shane is helping individuals laugh again; maybe at his expense or maybe at their own unfortunate circumstances. I

came away from this book feeling more open minded to individuals in "handicapped" stereo-types. This was a 'fast read' biography and I encourage you to check it out. And since we opened with having to [evacuate his bladder] in a jar, Shane closes up the book with how he [evacuates his bowels]. You were curious, don't deny it. That's part of being alive. The beauty begins when you connect with other people and realize that we're all in the same boat. Once we accept that life is inherently difficult, we can move on and focus on having a good time despite the tough stuff. Burcaw, Shane (2014-10-14). *Laughing at My Nightmare* (p. 246). Roaring Brook Press. Kindle Edition. Thank you Shane and the Burcaw family for sharing these very intimate moments with the world.

What a great book. It was encouraging to hear all that this young man has gone through and yet he still perseveres. This book was not just about the challenges this guy makes every day, but it was mixed with a humor that just showed how he was accepting of his condition and how he is able to use that humor to get through each day. He definitely made me think twice about complaining about petty stuff when all I really needed to do was stop, breathe and think about my own personal situation and step back and laugh at my mistakes. This was a very encouraging book and I am so glad I was able to read it. Highly recommended.

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