

## Narrative Essay Example

### *Natural Disaster*

After midday the notorious winds would rise, whipping up the snow that still remained at the very top even in the height of summer, blinding unwary travelers, disorientating them, causing them to lose their way. A night spent lost on the Rhotang meant exposure and inevitable death.

Outside a blizzard was raging, as it had been for seven days and seven nights. I was well used to storms but this one was particularly strong. The snow piled higher and higher, gradually rising above my window, above my door. On it went without abating, getting thicker and thicker, heavier and heavier. Suddenly the awful truth dawned on me. I was buried alive.

The memory is indelibly etched on her mind:

I was plunged into total blackness and cold. I couldn't light my fire because the snow had broken the pipe of my wood stove, which jutted out of the cave, so there was no way of keeping warm or cooking. I didn't dare light candles either because I thought they would use up oxygen. When I looked out of the window it was nothing but a sheet of ice. When I opened the door it was just blackness. It was completely dark.

As the days wore on with no rescue in sight and no relief in the weather, I entombed in her cold, dark cave, faced the very real possibility that I was going to die. With my stove pipe broken, her window and door completely sealed with snow, I was convinced I was going to be asphyxiated.

I really thought I was going to die. I had a lot of time to think about it. It was interesting. I wasn't worried. I figured OK, if I'm going to die, I'm going to die. I was not afraid. I thought it would be fascinating to see what would happen.

I did not get the chance to see what death would be like. As I sat in the cave meditating, preparing to make the transition, I heard her voice once more. It said one word:

'Dig!' I opened the door to the cave, which opened inwards, and using one of the lids from tins began to dig my way out. I dug up and up, piling the snow back into her cave which made the place even colder and wetter. I dug for an hour or more, not knowing which way I was going, for I was in total darkness and was disorientated, crawling along on my stomach, tunneling my way through the cold blackness to where I hoped the outside and oxygen lay. Suddenly I came out into the open air and was free. The relief was enormous. To see light and breathe fresh air again was wonderful. However, the blizzard was still raging so I had to crawl back inside the cave again! Once I was there I realized that the air inside was not stale but fresh. I knew then that caves could 'breathe', that snow 'breathes' and I was not going to die. However, the tunnel that I had made quickly filled up with snow again. All in all I had to dig myself out three times. When the blizzard finally abated, I stood outside almost blinded by the light and looked around. An extraordinary sight met my eyes. Everything, including the trees, was totally buried in snow. It was a featureless white landscape. A helicopter flew overhead, bringing supplies to the devastated area, and someone inside waved.

A letter written to an English friend who had visited the area reveals the full extent of the disaster that almost over-took me:

The cause of all the trouble was an avalanche which swept down at just before midday in early March. It started at about 19,000 feet and came down carrying everything in its wake. Many houses in Gunrang were also destroyed. The avalanche was estimated to have been almost 2 km in width. In all Lahoul about 200 people died especially in the Udaipur area. That stream we have to cross to get to Keylong is at present a glacier several metres thick.



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