

Tweet, tweet, tweet. Good morning world, how are you today? The sweet birdsong knows no snooze function. Another day, another dollar, yet another trial. Bleary eyed, weary heart, the daylight is calling you once again. Like a wrecking ball. Like a wrecking ball hammering through your brain.

Eight hours of sleep? It's a myth, a rumour; an old wives' tale designed to frustrate, annoy, or even, to anger. There's more chance of plaiting fog than drifting through the night in blissful slumber. There is, however, a never-ending cycle of an hour here, an hour there, punctuated by varying degrees of exasperating insomnia. From brief minutes that seem to only exist in order to prevent prolonged sleep, to hours of quite staggering awareness. The frustration only prolongs the agony. The mind plays tricks, thoughts and fears whirl around like leaves in a tornado.

That myth slips ever further from the grasp with every passing night. Eight hours sleep? Ha, if only. You can barely remember the last time. An irony if ever there was one.

And then, the weary eyes open with a finality that brings to end another night of constant battling against the forces of consciousness. The startlingly fatigued brain attempts to clear a route for the days tasks that lay ahead of you. It is no easy task. Those pathways have become overwhelmingly cluttered with simple undertakings such as, well... functioning. Awakening becomes an issue, a chore. The leaves from that tornado are now scattered far and wide.

Task one. It must never be forgotten. Ever. Let it slip from the mind at your peril.

Medication. It sits on the bedside table like a tribute to all that has gone before. A tiny bottle, containing even more diminutive objects. And yet, it is a monolith, a monument to the day that changed everything. The tablets soon find their way into the blood stream and set about their dependable work. The tiny capsules are your best friends, your comfort blanket, your crutch through life. Without them, the nefarious headaches and the sporadic visits to the land of epilepsy would interject into the day with gay abandon. They must be stopped at all costs.

Well, at least you can try.

Epilepsy is a most confusing world to be a part of. So often the landscape is unchanged, the world keeps turning, and people continue with their day to day business. Everything is just as it should be. The intricacies of existence continue unabated.

However...

From nowhere the horizon fades and the sky starts to turn. Then it spins, slowly at first, becoming ever faster as the oncoming seizure takes a hold. People talk but can't be heard, wind blows but can't be felt, the sun shines but the light can't be seen. Life becomes a kaleidoscope, a whirling maelstrom of insane confusion in your mind. Nothing makes sense, absolutely *nothing*. And then, just as the mind can't take any more punishment, the body just might join in the 'fun'. A twitch here, a jolt there. Another twitch here. Another jolt there. Soon the brain has ceased to be able to control the body in any way shape or form. The twitches become excruciating shudders, the shudders increase in their ferocity. Intense pain battles to dominate the mind. The painful trembling is only masking one simple truth. You can feel and hear your own heart attempting to beat with such ferocity that it may just leap out of your body. It's a war twist agony, confusion and visceral fear. Just as the shaking takes over the body completely...

Darkness. Terror is finally overcome by a shroud of unconscious oblivion. It won't last long.

Into the void...

Light. Fierce, extreme, blinding light. It careers into the eyes and crashes into the mind like a runaway train. Post seizure is a violent world. Any diversion from darkness is a voyage into a world of intense pain. And what of sound? Sound is the worst nightmare, the devil with a loud haler. Pain; agony you will beg to be free from. You are acutely conscious that there was a reason for the blackout just at the point where every muscle in your body could take no more punishment. It was to allow Beelzebub the chance to steal your misfiring brain. To pilfer and replace it with something that feels akin to a red hot brick. Any movement of the skull, any movement at all causes the brain to shake and vibrate like a rattlesnake on a sugar rush. You can feel all too clearly the brick crashing against your skull. You beg for it to stop, silently. Sound was once your pal, a series of waves enlightening the brain to the noises occurring in the world around. However, post seizure, sound waves are shards of glass, missiles of burning coal that hurtle into the brain. They cause pain so severe that you are easily convinced it will never cease. Ever.

Pain, confusion, the seconds tick by. Those seconds become minutes and reality dawns. Confusion is replaced by the truth. You've suffered yet another seizure. But then, darkness again. Only this time, there is a difference. It's not due to an impromptu bout of blacking out. This time; only sleep exists. Every thought in your mind, every shred of your life centres solely on the desperate yearn for recuperation. And this time there WILL be eight hours of uninterrupted slumber. Eight hours and in all probability, beyond. The body simply must rest. The exertions have taken their toll in the most extreme sense.

Goodbye world, wake me when it's over. Please.

Into the void. Again.

You've been unconscious for what feels like days, time is suddenly irrelevant. Sleep kidnapped your awareness and swept away all before it. There was never to be any escape, it simply wasn't possible. You couldn't have fought it, even if you'd had even the tiniest inclination to. Now though, the seizure has been and gone and only the scars remain. Fortunately, that monument beside you remains in place, unmoved. The sweet nectar of medication soon enters the blood stream once more. With a little luck, the pills will extinguish the pain that remains. Vague memories blur your reality. Hazy recollections of what went before soon bring about stark reality. Only bits and pieces remain, a confusing jigsaw of truth, almost impossible to fit together.

Yes, Epilepsy is a strange and confusing place. Thankfully you won't be visiting again. For a while.

Minutes turn into hours, hours to a day, maybe two. Real life, or real life as you know it returns. You have little memory of the previous hours, little or none. However, there is only a slight difference twixt a post seizure world and normality as you know it where memory is concerned. The memory is a muscle, apparently. Frequent exercise strengthens it, helps to prolong and strengthen the ability to recall information. However, what if the muscle has been violently injured? Bruised and scarred like old fruit dropped from a great height. What then?

There are times in life, far too many to mention, they number in their thousands. You struggle to remember a detail. A name perhaps, a moment in time, an event, etc. That struggle may lead to frustration, intense irritation at the inability to recall. Now though, the horizon has changed. The

distance to the far off reaches of your memory has shrunk inward to an entirely new vanishing point. What was once a capacity to search deep into the far recesses of your mind now struggles to even open the doorway to those same alcoves.

Two minutes ago, one hundred and twenty seconds, a tiny speck in time. Barely worth noting. It's no longer true however. Now, your memory has imploded, collapsed inward alarmingly. There are no longer boundaries, no defined margins within which the memory presides. The short term often becomes unattainable. There is no forewarning of exactly when the mind will cease to attain full recollection. And there is no logic behind the timing of the anomalies; if there were, they would be almost understandable, bearable, even. Those one hundred and twenty seconds become an eternity. What occurred only brief moments beforehand may as well sit firmly in a different age in time. But it's fine, it's not a worry. You have a lifetime of recalling mundane moments in time; names, dates, events, putting the kettle on, running a bath, putting on *both* socks. It is only a matter of time until recollection thrusts its way to the fore...

Sadly, it really isn't.

Some people exercise by walking, others by jogging. It may even be their 'thing' to frequent a local gym in order to work up a sweat. Each to their own. Whatever the chosen form of exercise is, the mind and body will only benefit from the effects. It comes as a great surprise to learn that simply remembering where you were an hour ago can completely wipe you out, leave you shattered, completely spent. Flexing the memory muscle was once second nature, a part of life to which you never gave a passing thought. Now you are left scrambling for memories as your brain takes more time to connect that a dial-up broadband connection downloading a full length film. And just like that buffering, eventually the connection might not even complete the cycle, leaving you angered, annoyed and hugely frustrated. Occasionally a thought slips so far from the mind that the efforts to retrieve it can leave you in exactly the same boat as you found yourself drifting back in post seizure world. By now you are sick of the sight of it, sadly there is no other option...

Into the void.

Yet again.

Emerging from the involuntary cocoon, at least your verbal dexterity can convey your emotions. It's been some years now since you managed to grasp the skill of conversation. Even at five years of age you could make your point; albeit that you wanted food, the toilet, or sometimes both. Now, some decades later, the skill still remains. Ironically, so does the infrequent need for food, the toilet, or both. Part of your internal dictionary is the word 'glitch'. Only now you have no need for a definition. Glitches are thrown randomly into your dialogue for no apparent reason.

Say hello to aphasia.

It's a common theme after a traumatic brain injury. You can search in vain for the words hiding away somewhere in your educated mind. In an even crueller twist, at the precise moment you recover the word you were looking for, your mouth refuses to play the game.

The 'traumatic brain injury' is a bit of a trickster, it seems. Or, a tit of a brickster. The rotten sod.

Still, at least you're awake. That alone is a bonus. Fatigue curses your every waking moment. It comes as no surprise. Part of your brain has been irreversibly damaged, you know that much. What takes time to realise is that it is still performing the tasks to which it is well used to. Now though, all

is different. The remainder of your brain is also deputising for the damaged section. Less brain doing far more work every single second of each day. Tiredness, you're fighting it constantly. The overload is unremitting, the stress, enormous. Your vision may be affected, the brain compensates. Hearing not what it was? More compensation. Balance shot? More strain and more burden. The headaches that dominate your life are worsened by the ongoing fatigue. Into the void? Not yet, you can't afford to sleep forever, you're not ready for that level of blackout. Not just yet. There's a life to be lived.

For the rest of that life you are faced with the daunting prospect of relying on a smorgasbord of potions to get you through each day. It's a small price to pay. You are however safe in the knowledge that your memory is so poor you'll probably forget you need to take them anyway. And that's if you can stay awake long enough to function.

It's maybe not life as you knew it, but now, it *is* your life. Each of the obstacles you now have to face since your injury must be adapted to. They are simply hurdles you have to clear, problems you have to face. But then everybody has their problems in life don't they? You are no different in that respect.

At least you have your sense of humour and it gets you through. Smile, because if you don't, the other option doesn't seem bearable.

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