

A Personal Experience

I awoke to the eerie sounds of the hospital at night and lay on the stiff bed, staring up at the blank ceiling, unable to slip into blissful sleep once again. The rigid smell of the hospital flooded my nostrils and brought back unwelcome memories as I strained to breathe. For a moment I wondered what I was doing here, and then the painful memories returned. I thought about what was to come and how my life would proceed considering what had happened. Would it change a great deal or would it return to normal once the procedures to repair the damage were complete?

It all began just two days ago, Dad was at the top of our long field, weeding some unruly nettles and I was leading my horse, 'Fuse', up from the bottom of the field in order to take him to the weekly lesson we have together. I had only had Fuse a few months but in that time he had shown no temperamental problems. Little did I know that that was all to change...

It was a fine summers evening, one of many we were having at the time, and I was just tidying up the field with the wheelbarrow before taking Emily and Fuse to their weekly riding lesson at the local stables

I took hold of the Fuse, as usual and began to lead him up the field, a mundane journey both he and I had travelled numerous times before. He seemed unwilling at first, but this adolescent behaviour was far from unusual so I gave a tug on the lead rope and told him firmly to 'walk on'. That seemed to do the trick as he stubbornly moved into walk. Suddenly, without any warning, he pulled back, taking the lead rope from my hands, swung his back end round and kicked me with his back leg, catching the edge of my nose. I heard a numbing crack before a bright light took over; I remember a tremendous shock - no pain. With it came a sense of utter weakness, a feeling of being shrivelled to nothing. I let out a stifled cry.

I disregarded it at first, a faint cry, no louder the moan of a small animal caught in a snare. I allowed myself to believe it was a bird or similar creature but something willed me to look up from my labour. I looked up to see the Fuse galloping down the field, legs flailing in the air, no sign of Emily.

I was thrown forward by the blow, forcing my knees to crumple from beneath me. All this happened in a space of time much less than a second. I fell flat on my face, down into the long grass not having time to put my arms out in front of me to protect my fall. I lay there for some seconds, motionless and unconscious. When I came round I felt both confused and dazed. Then the pain hit me. It was unbearable, as though someone had hit me a severe blow across my face with a big stick. I tried to sit up, but failed. I brought my hand to my face and touched my throbbing nose; it felt moist to the touch and looked to my hand to see it had been stained! I then looked down to see a pool of blood gathering. The blood covered everything coating everything it encountered, penetrating my clothes and overwhelming my every sense as I fought desperately for the strength to raise my arm in order to attract help.

My mind raced.

I instantly broke into a run. My first thought, through the curtain of shock and fear was is she alive? This ominous thought made me run even harder, until I was sprinting. I drove

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forward, senses swimming. My muscles were screaming, the breath boiling up and scouring my lungs as I scampered over the ground, bounding over tussocks of grass, I raced down the field wading through the sea of chocking grass. The wind whipped against my face as trees rushed by. The rest of the world became unfocused, a blur.

Then the panic set in. Hundreds of questions swam round in my head, would I be left here to bleed to death? What if nobody was there to hear my cries? Luckily for me there was.

When I finally reached her I ripped the shirt from my back and wrapped it around her head to slow the bleeding. I saw that she had a deep wound across her face displacing her nose and exposing the raw bone. There was no time to think, I knew I had to get her to hospital.

A feeling of utter relief swept over me when I focused and saw my father at my side. At that moment I knew I'd be alright.

I checked for the basic indications of life before holding her to her feet and supporting her up the field and into the car.

The journey to hospital seemed to take an age; I felt every stutter the car made as if it were a shattering earthquake as my face stung in agony. I held Dad's shirt against my nose to absorb the blood and prayed that we would reach the hospital soon.

I knew that I had to get her to hospital as quickly as possible. I drove like I had never driven before, ignoring red lights and breaking speed limits, nothing was going to get in my way. The thought that I was breaking the law did not concern me, I figured that if I was pulled up, the officer would take one look at Emily's face and let us through.

The A and E department was a hive of activity. I was surrounded by strange, alien faces all staring at me as I stared back at them, dumbfounded. There were grotesque injuries on display and faces twisted in expressions of agony. I heard the curdling screams of a woman in labour not far from me and the persistent crying of a small child that penetrated into my brain like a pneumatic drill. It brought back memories from television programmes I had once watched, the only difference was that now I was the casualty, living out the reality.

On arrival at casualty we were directed to a small waiting room by a busy nurse where we waited for ten minutes before Emily was taken down to the X-Ray department.

A friendly face pulled back the curtain; he was a round man in his mid forties who introduced himself as the consultant. He produced a series of X-Rays and made reference to these distorted images as he proceeded to inform me that my nose had been broken by the blow and that emergency surgery was needed. This came as a huge shock to me as the mention of 'surgery' brought to my attention the reality of the situation and emphasised the severity of my injury.

I watched as they slid a clear mask over her face and led her into surgery. I spent the next three and a half hours pacing the waiting room, praying that she would be alright. I was

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all too aware of the risks of merely being put under a general anaesthetic.

I awoke the next morning in a foreign bed. As my blurred vision grew accustomed to the light I could make out the brightly coloured images that patterned the walls, images of creatures that brought back vague memories from cartoons watched as a child. I looked across the room to see a girl; she could only have been a few years younger than me in the bed adjacent to me. She had tubes coming out of her and was connected to a beeping machine that I recognised from a hospital documentary I had once watched. I felt terrible. Every muscle in my face ached and my throat felt as dry as sandpaper; even the once simple task of breathing had become an effort. Despite this I knew that I was on the slow road to recovery.

It was a relief to see her looking well again. The majority of her face was covered by a large white mask; her left eye was swollen and red but she was still smiling

Since the accident, friends and family insisted on commenting on how lucky I was not to have suffered a more serious injury. At the time I couldn't have felt any less lucky but looking back, if Fuse had of kicked me just a few inches further towards the brain, he could have caused permanent damage... or worse!

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