



monologues

“Type A” Person “TYPE A” PERSON

I was in my friend’s car once, and she was driving through the streets of Chicago, and she was letting people in who were getting in the right lane at an intersection when that right lane really should only be used for turning right but they go straight and try to cut off the long line of traffic waiting at the light. Well, as I said, she’s letting these people get in front of her, and she’s stopping at four-way stop intersections and waving other cars to go in front of her, and when she is going she’s going under the speed limit, and I’m thinking, my god, she’s under thirty years old and she’s driving like she’s twice her age and I want to tell her to get going because damnit, I don’t want to die in this car, I’ve got a lot of living to do, I’ve never jumped out of an airplane or made a million dollars or been in a lustful affair with a high-ranking political candidate, and if I am going to go out I surely don’t want to die of boredom while someone else is staying in the most congested lane of traffic when they could just as easily get into the next lane and cut everyone off in front of them when they eventually have to merge, like I would most certainly do.

And then it occurred to me, and of course it filled me with a complete and utter sense of elation, because I just love being pigeon-holed into stereotypical psychological categories: I really am a Type A person.

There’s an intersection near my house where from one direction you can either go straight or turn right, and there are two streets that merge into this one, both turning right, so the middle street has a “no turn on red” sign. And usually when I’m on this road I’m on the street that’s going straight, the left-most street, and these two streets are on my right, merging into my street. And I always catch the red light on this street, it’s like the traffic gods are displeased with my constant efforts to circumvent their wrath, so I’m always catching the red light at this street, so I’ve learned a new trick: I turn right, onto the first street on my right, but instead of doing a U-turn I turn left at the next block so I can get on that second street, all so I can turn right onto the street I was on

originally before both of the other streets get to go so I can beat every one of those slow bastards to the next intersection.

I mean, yes, I'm the one that's yelling and banging the steering wheel of my car when people on the road are idiots. Yes, I'm that person who has to race so that I can slam on my brakes at that next intersection, only 100 feet away, and yes, I am only driving a Saturn SL1, a sedan with about as much power as a 1982 Ford Mustang, but damnit, I won't go down without a fight, I will be out there cutting everyone off, weaving in and out of traffic; I will be the one getting there before you, trust me, I will.

And even when I'm tuning the radio while driving, because, you see, I do that and put on my make-up and take notes for work and check over my schedule and if I was the Hindu god Vishnu and had ten arms I'd get a cell phone and send out faxes and eat dinner and write a novel while I was at it, but, as I said, even when I'm tuning the radio while I'm driving I only let the first second-and-a-half of the song play before I'm disgusted and change the dial to the next pre-programmed station, just to instantaneously become disgusted another six times and have to find a tape to play because all those stupid corporate pieces of shit think they should play crap over and over again in order to keep the mindless tuned in.

Well, not me, thank you very much, I don't have the patience for that.

So, needless to say, I've discovered that this is a problem of mine, I wish there was some sort of therapy group for this so I could go to my weekly "Type A Anonymous" meetings, but we'd probably all be pushing each other out of the doorway thirty seconds before the meeting is supposed to start, saying, "Get out of my way ass-hole, you should have thought about being late before you tried to cut me off," and the meetings themselves would probably be filled with people yelling, "Hey, jerk, I think I was talking, what, do you think you're god or something, show some respect."

God, and I know this is a problem of mine, I know this "Type A-ness" transcends into every realm of my life. When I get on the elevator in the morning to get to my office on the eighteenth floor, I try to make the doors close as quickly as possible so no one can get on the elevator with me, because you know, I really do hate all people and surely don't want to be in a cramped confined space with a bunch of strangers. But when people do get on the same elevator as me, they invariably press the buttons for floors fifteen, sixteen and seventeen, and I start pursing my lips, stopping myself from saying, "Oh, you people couldn't stand to walk a flight of stairs, you just had to press all of these buttons and stop me from getting to my god-damned floor in a reasonable amount of time."

Even walking on the sidewalk in the city, I always get stuck behind someone that's a full foot shorter than me and a full thirty pounds heavier, someone who labors to walk very, very slowly, someone who actually sways rhythmically when they walk, like a metronome, or like a person standing on the edge of a dance floor, rocking back and forth, back and forth all too afraid to actually ask someone to dance, or else afraid to go out and dance and make a fool of themselves in front of the cool people who have figured out what rhythm really is. And I'm walking behind this person, almost tripping over myself because this walking pace is just unnaturally slow, so to pass the time until

there's an opening on the left side of the sidewalk so I can pass them and walk like a human being again I start to mimic them, swaying with my walk, more for my own entertainment than anyone else's.

Yes, more than a human being I'm a human doing, and I hate having to depend on the schedules of others in order to get ahead of them all.

Yes, I am the person in line at the grocery store with three items, shifting my weight from foot to foot, frantically scanning the other lines, the person who wants to ask the person in front of them, "can't I get in front of you, I've only got three items and you have two full grocery carts full of crap like Cheetos, Pepsi, fish sticks and Haagen Daz Cookie Dough ice cream." Yes, I am the person who has four different sets of plans for any given evening because if any one event gets too boring I can pick up and say, "Oh, sorry, I'm supposed to be at a meeting by now," instead of having to tell them that they're too boring or that I just have no idea whatsoever of how to relax. Yes, I am the person who coasts toward an intersection when I know the timed pattern of the traffic lights, and know that I can manage to get to this intersection without ever having to make a complete stop so when that light does change I can accelerate faster than everyone else, pass everyone by, and have the open road to myself, wide open in front of me.

I'm already guessing that at my funeral, when the long procession of cars is creeping toward the cemetery, I'll be opening that casket up and whispering to the driver of the hearse, "hey, what do you say we floor it and blow everyone off in line? We could probably grab a beer at the corner bar and still be able to beat everyone to the grave site," because, as I said, I'm a "Type A" person, and I'm going to make damn sure I do as much living as I possibly can, I'm not going down without a fight, and wherever that god-damned goal line is, I swear, I'll beat everyone to it.

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prom '97
PROM '97...OR DOING THINGS RIGHT
... or doing things right

My mother just gave me a bunch of her cocktail and formal dresses that she wore when she was young. Floor length dresses, usually with some beadwork, all really spectacular, unique formal dresses, and I thought, wow, these are really great, I'd love to wear these dresses, and then I thought, wait, I have nowhere to wear these dresses, and then I thought, wait, no one I know of would have any place to wear these dresses, these are dresses that look like they should be worn to award ceremonies in southern California and there's nothing like that going on around here in Chicago and if there was, I'm sure I couldn't afford to go to it. So then the thought struck me, like a sequin that caught the light and glared into my eye from the shoulder of a floor-length one-shoulder satin dress with matching stole: I could have a formal party. Host it in my living room. Decorate the whole place. Well, then, since it was mid-May and I couldn't get a limo rented for a friend's birthday because they were being used by a bunch of sleazy seventeen-year-olds wasting their parents' money, it occurred to me that ten years ago this year I went to my own prom, and then the vision struck me with even more clarity. I was to have a prom party.

Prom '97, it was, I had to decorate and make it prom, except more fun, because we're older now and probably have a better idea of how to actually have fun. So, where to start, where to start. Needed streamers, hanging down from door frame to floor in every door way. Needed lighting... Got my white christmas lights out from storage in the basement and strung lights all around my living room and dining room, on the tables, on the walls. Needed balloons, so I got 75 large silver balloons, blew them all up and let them cover the floor. Bought a crystal punch bowl, made a punch that would force people to eventually have fun, got a ton of food for the buffet, sprinkled glitter and streamers and confetti all over the place, even got a disco ball.

Needed to make favors, remember at formal dances you'd get little booklets with the name of the prom and the location and the theme song and the class president?

Well, had to make those, and they should match the invitations, and come to think of it, there's usually a photographer with a backdrop in the corner of the dance floor so you could get your portrait taken... Hmm... I'd have to borrow the grey portrait backdrop my sister made by painting over one of those maps they have in elementary schools, that roll down over the chalkboard like a projection screen and put it in one of the bedrooms so my friends could have their portrait taken.

And my friend Brian was even coming into town for this party, because in high school nine years ago I asked him to prom and he turned me down and we've always sworn that if we could do it over again, we'd go together. So I thought I'd surprise him, and since I sing I got my four-track recorder out and taped my voice over a slow George Michael song, kissing a fool, because we were both dorks in high school and both loved George Michael, and anyway, I sang over this song and was going to have us dance to it together.

So people start showing up for my party, and I'm playing big band and swing music, Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Harry Connick Jr., The Glenn Miller Orchestra, because you see, I have taste now and wouldn't play the kind of crap you'd hear at say, your prom or a wedding, like "When a Man Loves a Woman" by Michael Bolton or "At This Moment" by Billy Vera and the Beaters or "Truly" by Lionel Richie or Mariah Carey or Whitney Houston or Natalie Cole without her dead dad's voice in the background. And people are complimenting me on my punch, that it tastes really good, but I don't dare tell them that it's Absolut vodka and Absolut citron and rum and banana liqueur and a little whiskey and some left over red wine from my last party, all with a splash of orange juice and Ne-Hi fruit punch soda. And Scott is already starting to spill his drink on the floor and bump into people and it's only like eight o'clock so I'm thinking, this is going to be a good party.

And then Helen comes in with Steve, her fiancee, and she's got a new eyebrow ring, and I say, wow, did that hurt, and she said no, it hurt more to look in the mirror and see this big metal circle piercing through the flesh above my eyebrow, but no, when I got it done it didn't hurt at all. And minutes later I hear my roommate talking to her, saying that there's a theory among psychologists and such that if someone gets into multiple piercings or piercings in unconventional places or tattoos, that's a sign that they were abused when they were a child. So my roommate is asking Helen, "So, were you abused as a child?", and I try to cut in to halt this social faux pas, and Helen responds with "No, not really." So I think, okay, I need to know what that means, so I ask, "What do you mean, not really?" and she answers, "Well, my parents were Columbian and I went to a Catholic school. It's a wonder I'm not a serial killer." And I think, okay, maybe Helen's fiancee won't try to start a fight with my roommate after all, maybe things are actually going to be okay.

And more people start showing up, Rachel strolls in wearing her old prom dress, and her and her friend made wrist corsages out of broccoli and spinach leaves. And Dave shows up, that sweet thing, with corsages that match a few of my dresses for me, and I decide to change into dress number two, I mean, there are only so many occasions where I'd have the chance to wear more than one formal dress to a function, I might as well take advantage of it, and everyone seems to be having a grand ol' time, and we start taking pictures and then I decide that Brian, the prom date that never was,

should dance with me.

So I turn off all the Christmas lights so that all that's going is the disco ball and I play this goofy George Michael song and start dancing with Brian, and he's laughing hysterically that I remembered that he liked George Michael all those years ago and that I actually sung over this song, and we're dancing together, and then he says, "Oh, wait a minute. If this is supposed to be prom, I better act like I did at prom," and then he pushed me away and acted all stiff and started doing the box step and stepping on my feet, and it just made me laugh harder and harder.

And then I decided I needed to have everyone vote for a king and queen of prom, so everyone whispered in my ear who they thought should win, and I picked two women and two men so it wouldn't be such an elitist thing, and one of the kings won only because he got nearly as many votes for queen as he did for king. So when I tallied it all up in my very drunk head, all while wearing dress number four, I picked up the Burger King crowns I picked up last week just for this occasion and crowned the winners, and told everyone we should all dance.

So by the end of the evening we changed the music in the stereo so we were listening to the Bee Gees and Abba and Duran Duran and old early eighties crap that we could just thrash around to, and we were singing to all the songs and jumping around, and it was two in the morning, but we didn't care, because we were all at prom and having a perfectly good time.

And I thought about Brian dancing the box step and stepping on my feet, acting stiff and scared because the high school prom was a time for awkwardness and uncomfortableness, and I thought, yeah, we really are more comfortable now. Everyone should have a prom when they're old enough to enjoy it.

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NASA Project

NASA PROJECT

I've always loved astronomy.

I've kept the telescope I had since I was a child, I remember tracking the motion of the stars to the horizon when I was six with my sister when she took a high school astronomy class, I've witnessed two comets, I've even had a star past the base of the constellation Cygnus named after me.

I've studied black holes, tried to learn more about astrophysics, the whole nine yards.

And I have noted that there are studies and possibly plans for NASA, after setting up the space station, may be planning a colony on the moon for inhabitants, as part of a test to study which would also entail the long-term-effects of a change in gravitation force on the human body.

And I heard this, that there may be plans for this within the next twenty or thirty years, and I thought,

my god, I am meant for this, I would be perfect for this.

But then I thought,

what would I do there, why would they want me there

And

I'm a journalist, I've written all my life, and I'm a designer,

and my job would be to catalog what is going on at the colony and to distribute news to the colony about what is going on on the moon and maybe also even about what is going on on earth.

And I liked this plan, it would seem fitting, give me occasional feeds through occasional transmittals of information for me to pass on to the colony, and I would catalog historically what is happening here for people on earth to learn from, this sounds like the perfect thing for me

and then I thought, wow,

I would disseminate all information to this colony of people on the moon. I would be their only link to news.

I could tell them anything.

Just think about this for a moment: I could tell them anything and they wouldn't be able to use another source to prove me wrong, I could tell them I sang the national anthem for the President,

no really, I don't have that bad of a voice,
because we were leaving to live on the moon,
and these people would believe me.

I wonder if I had to write reports to send back to earth, would I have to tell them about the hypnotic effects of the earthlight, because, you know, everyone talks about how wonderful it is to be in the moonlight.

But I don't know if it is a good idea to have a restrained audience, people who had to listen to me, and then I started thinking:

would I be able to bring my pet cat with me?

Cause all I can think is that my cat would be taking leaps and they would be fifteen feet jumps, 10 feet in the air, you know, they probably wouldn't let me bring a pet to the moon, but it's still fun to think about the gravitational pull for them. Remember at the Planetarium how they would have scales for different planets so you could see how much you would weigh there because of different gravitational pulls? All the women liked weighing themselves on the moon because of the moon having one sixth the pull of earth they could look at a scale and say,

"I weigh thirty-six pounds."

But then I suddenly started to think: I love the idea of seeing the stars from an entirely different angle, I wonder how they would accommodate for days that are twenty-eight earth days long on the moon, can you even imagine seeing the earth in the sky out there the way we look at the moon now, can you imagine it. You'd be there, unable to make any connection with people on earth at all, and would that be hard?

The one thing I realized I'd miss so much about leaving earth for years would be not the traffic, or having to go to the grocery store or to a restaurant, but missing love. For the first time you'd be separated from your family, would my husband go with me, or would I have to live without the one person that meant the entire earth to me, would I have to learn to live without love.

the effects of nine one one
THE EFFECTS OF NINE ONE ONE

It's strange, has everyone even thought about the fact that the terrorists decided to destroy greatness on nine one one?

It's strange, how close I came to losing friends and family:
my friend didn't happen to go to the Trade Center on business that week,
my brother-in-law lost a slew of contacts who died in New York,
the Pennsylvania plane landed a mile from my sister-in-law's house,
my friend in D.C. wasn't hurt but he talked about how different streets would be closed on different days and that there were so many military guards there you felt like you were in a war zone,
which in a way, you were.

And these terrorists, they had a masterful plan, they were stopped that day from starting at different flights, and one of them was slated, I think, to run into the Sears Tower.

I mean, think about the emotional effects of these disasters. I know different people had different reactions...

I know that for months afterward whenever we were driving toward the loop, taking the Kennedy where you could see the Chicago skyline get closer and closer, I know that every time we drove by, I would be sitting in the passenger seat and I would imagine seeing a plane fly right into the side of the Sears Tower, toward the top, to the side, exactly like how it happened to the World Trade Centers. Like how you saw it over and over again on television, when we were flooded with images of it on the news. I'd see a plane flying right into the tallest building, this landmark to Chicago.

I still see that sometimes, whenever we are driving into the city, imagining witnessing the destruction, seeing it all, and thinking, what do you do then?

This piece was used in the performance and compact disc *Six One One*, was published in *Children Churches and Daddies volume 129*, <http://www.yotko.com/jk/jk.htm>, and <http://www.deepthought.com/scars/deepthought-dot-com/kuypers-writing.htm>, and was later in the chap-book supplement to the book *The Elements*

death comes in threes
DEATH COMES IN THREES

Have you ever heard people say that death usually comes in threes? It's a strange thing to say, but when something terrible happens like that, you can almost expect over a short time that these waves of death can come a few times.

Almost to make sure you get the point.

THE MORNING OF JULY ELEVENTH

I don't remember what happened the day of my quote-unquote death, death number three. It was just a day, a normal summer day, a day like any other. I remember seeing the fireworks for the 4th of July in Chicago on the street with my roommate Eugene, and I remember that I was wearing a white shirt and it started to rain, so I had to lean my body so my shoulders were at Eugene's back so I wouldn't get drenched with my white shirt. It was Saturday, July Eleventh, and I apparently was going over to my parent's house, where my sister Sandy lived, to go swimming because it was sunny. After Getting on the Kennedy, It took I55 southwest of Chicago and exited route 45 South so I could drive the suburbs and see my family.

The rest of the accounts came from eyewitnesses.

That and what the people at the hospital told my mother.

I was at the intersection of 95th and route 45; I was at the end of a line of people waiting at a red light. The light had just turned green, but you know how long it takes for people to get moving when the light changes, we were still sitting there waiting to get moving just as the light changed.

Now at that point in the road, the intersection was at the bottom of a hill, and if you are coming south toward the intersection you'll see the light before you'll see the

street.

This apparently was the case for the driver of a sedan, he apparently saw the green light and continued speeding on the 55 mile per hour road.

As I said, I was at the end of the line of cars. I would get caught in the crossfire.

Accounts state that there was a motorcyclist in front of me, and a van in front of him.

Eyewitnesses said they saw me looking at my rear-view mirror in my car, I must have seen this speeding car coming towards me.

I couldn't move my car into the empty left lane next to me, there was no room. I could only guess that I turned the wheels of my car to the left so that I wouldn't run into the motorcyclist, who I'm sure would have died from being hit.

Originally, in part, I got away by traveling. But apparently after waiting to get away again, this time from some stranger in a car, I was struck. and all went black.

TWELVE THIRTY, JULY ELEVENTH

So what happened was that this speeding car hit the back of my car, knocking me into oncoming traffic because my wheels were turned. A van from the opposite lane of traffic then hit my front passenger-side corner and dragged my car for a bit.

Police accounts said that there were skid marks from my car tires for one hundred and eight feet.

Yeah, well, how was that second driver to know someone would appear in front of him as he was driving?

Yeah, how can you blame him.

To brake the news to my mother, they had to rummage through what things they could find of mine from the car, rummage through the pockets of my clothing, my purse was buried under the seat, so they got a phone number, and they called, and my mother answered.

"Do you know someone who drives a red sedan?" they asked.

"Yes, I do," my mother answered. "Did something happen to her?"

The hospital chaplain informed her there was an accident and they would like her to come and identify a body.

Yes, identify a body.

My mother got off the phone to rush to the hospital, she was sure I was dead. When my mother and my sister arrived at the hospital, my mother was thrilled when they walked into the room and saw me with tons of tubes sticking out all around me. "She's not dead!" my mother exclaimed, as they went to see me lying unconscious.

My mother even commented that I looked so nice there. She said I looked nice because I even had eye make-up on. My sister had to tell her that I wasn't wearing make-up; that I had two black eyes.

I was unconscious for eleven days, the coma lasted two weeks.

The day of the crash they wanted to be sure no one else was in the car with me, because there was metal and car parts from the passenger side of the car jutting all they way to where I was sitting as I drove. For all intents and purposes, the passenger seat was **gone**.

Which might explain the injuries on the right side of my head. They kept a monitor on my skull for the end of my unconscious spell to monitor the amount of fluid around my brain. I have a little indentation in my forehead, at my hairline, from having that attached to my head.

You know, for my own good.

I was told that I had no broken limbs, but three skull fractures, they even had to make sure they all set properly because one on my forehead, on this side here, had to set properly so my right eye wouldn't have any problems.

IN EVERY CAR ACCIDENT, THERE ARE ACTUALLY THREE CRASHES.

In every car accident, there are actually three crashes.

The first is when one car hits another one. The second is when the outside of the human body hits the interior of the car. The third is when, within the human body, organs crash into each other, and crash into your own bones.

ELVIRA DOE

Shortly after I regained consciousness, my family told me they were slightly concerned, for two reasons.

One was that since they couldn't find identification on me when I was first brought in, instead of calling me **Jane Doe** they nick-named me **Elvira Doe**. The second thing they noticed was that the people in the hospital handed back all my dirty, disheveled, ripped up, torn cloths, and the only thing that was missing was a bra.

FENCES AND STRAIGHT JACKETS

I was in pain all the time, painkillers didn't help, my back was sore, my head ALWAYS hurt, my sinuses were terrible. I wanted the Hell out of the hospital but I couldn't take the first steps to do it.

So as I start to regain consciousness, I'm stuck in there at Christ Hospital, and I want to get out. I remember one of the first chances I had to leave, I was lying in bed, they expected me to sleep there, I was probably barely conscious, I doubt could even stand, but I tried to get out of bed and I fell out of bed and the nurses had to come get me, and they had to call my parents, I was fine, but it was their policy to call. But because they were afraid of me falling again, they put a metal bar around the side of my bed, I don't know, it was like a guard rail to keep pedestrians away from something dangerous, or a zoo fence so people could feel safe while they watched the trapped animal they have on display for you. So they had this metal rail around my bed, but that wasn't the worst part,

they also put a harness on me at night, a straight jacket, so to speak, probably so that I wouldn't be able to use my arms to help me leave.

They kept a wrist band with my stats on it on my wrist, so that if I wandered off they'd know where I belonged, to keep me in place. I hated that damn wrist band, I'd rip it off probably almost daily, and they had to make a new one and strap it on me.

You know, to know where I belong.

WRAPPING UP THE HARNESS

I don't know why they had to keep a straight jacket... i mean, a harness on me, were they trying to keep me in place? Once I regained enough of my consciousness back all I could wonder was, is this how they were trying to stop me? I just wanted to be able to sleep the night through without being restricted, without my arms being bound. I finally managed to contort myself out of it one night, not so I would escape, but just so I could feel more sane in this place. The next morning the nurses didn't know why the harness was wrapped up on my night stand. My mother saw it wrapped up there and knew that I had to have done that, and she had to think that if I as that cunning enough, I must be getting better.

HALLUCINATIONS

So yeah, I was just **loving** being in that hospital, trapped in that room, I imagined I was actually at my apartment and not in a hospital bed. I even **talked** about this, and my sister, not wanting me to hallucinate, told me,

“Okay, you say the bathroom is just past the door (*which was my hospital room door*), why don't you show it to me.”

And so I'd walk out the hospital door and look down the hall. I was stunned, this wasn't right, I thought, and I stood there for a split second and I said well, it was here.

IMAGINING FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES

Day in and day out I would stay in that hospital room, and I was really going nuts ... I imagined my friend Brian, who now lives in San Francisco, becoming my roommate, dressing up as an old lady so no one would recognize him and no one would think that he was my friend visiting me, so that I would have someone there to talk to when I was sitting there all alone, all by myself, day in and day out.

No, my friend Brian never visited me, and I **did** have an old lady for a roommate, and no, I never talked to her, but I kept thinking to myself that this was how I could keep myself sane,

by imagining that a stranger was a friend,
just so I could get through my days.

IMAGINING DAVE

And I was never able to get over Dave's death, where he died three months before my death ... and I wasn't able to get across the country for his funeral, so I could never see his face to say goodbye to him. So, I would fantasize, I think, oh him appearing at my room, coming in through a side entrance so no one would see him, and he would come up to visit me, and I would say,

"How did you get here, you're supposed to be dead, did everyone see you"

and he said, "no, no, no, I managed to hid so no one would spot me because no one knows I'm alive. But I wanted to know how you were doing, because I didn't want anything to happen to you, and I wanted you to be okay, and I wanted you to not die."

I felt so alone in the hospital all those weeks, maybe it was my Brian's way of trying to fill in all the unexplained gaps in my life.

THEY WOULDN'T TRUST ME WITH A RAZOR

After being in the hospital so long, my hair was growing long, I never even got to shave my legs even, I was completely unkempt. I wanted to at least be able to shave my legs in the shower, but they wouldn't trust me with a razor.

I had to have a family member watch me, just so I could take a shower and try to get myself in order.

LEARNING TO EAT AGAIN

I had to fight every step of the way in that hospital. Three different doctors viewing my records even knick named me "miracle girl", but learning to walk was no miracle to me,

I just had to work harder to prove everyone wrong and try to get my life back.

After walking, I had to learn how to eat, because they kept a tube in me while I was unconscious. And after a while it became time for me to eat again, and I thought, I don't need to eat - I haven't been eating this entire time in here (Eating is really over-rated, what do I need it for). So when they told me I could eat, I didn't. They offered breakfast and I told them no. They offered lunch and I told them no. And by the time dinner came along my stomach was making more noise than I was (I think it started a language of its own). So being a vegetarian I got an egg sandwich, and then I was faced with this task I didn't know how to undertake. I had to rationalize it to myself. You've eaten before, I told myself, you can do it again. I know it seems foreign to you, but you can do it. Put some food on the fork, put it in your mouth, remove the fork, start chewing, and then just swallow it. You can do this. I had to talk myself through every step, the first bite was the strangest thing to me, I ate only half of the food, But I did it.

I know that once I got used to eating I ate ravenously, but the next morning they offered food and I ate an egg sandwich again and I had to tell myself, You did this yes-

terday, Janet. I had to goad myself into eating again.

NO ONE GAVE ME FLOWERS

One day, in what seemed like an endless stream of weeks, I got flowers, and I was stunned, I was thrilled, no one had sent me flowers before while I was here in the hospital, I didn't know who they were from.

When we looked at the card, they were flowers for a **Janet Spinoto**, a woman who apparently was somewhere **else** in the hospital, and I thought, that's what I get for thinking that someone would buy me flowers.

ISN'T THAT WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT

My curse is that after this accident I have the brains to know what happened to me, how bad it was, but that I survived it and now have to suffer with it, and to pick up the pieces and function on my own.

I think that people think that when you get out of the hospital you must be FINE. Clean bill of health. They are so wrong.

Now I feel like a soldier and I don't know what I'm protecting any more. I want to give the enemy what he has been looking for. It's a battle I am so often not willing to fight. Here. Take my weapons. You've stripped me of most of them now, so let me hand you the rest, freely. Let me have this, let me do this. Let me give this compilation of everything and nothing. Isn't that what it's all about?

INDOCTRINATION WITH RELIGION

But the thing is, when I'd try to do anything in that room, all I saw was this reminder that I was at **Christ hospital**, I would be reminded by seeing *something* religious everywhere I turned. I'd turn on the television, Christian programming. I'd take paper they had so I could write journal entries, the paper would have religious phrases on it, references to God, and I thought I was going nuts, what are they trying to do, indoctrinate me?

I know it was Christ hospital, but all I thought was, did God hurt me and trap me here ... and how is God going to save me?

KEEPING A JOURNAL

My sister started a journal while I was in the hospital for people to write in. My father, who never writes, wrote down while I was still unconscious,

I squeeze your hand but you don't squeeze back, but I still love you.

And my roommate, a man I dated and loved, was the first to write in the journal, and he wrote that he remembered me telling him just before the accident that I had written about a car accident, that he was a fantastic car crash,

And he wrote, But it was supposed to be ME.

SEIZURES, REACTIONS AND DRUGS

Months after I got out of the hospital, I had a Grand Mal seizure. You don't remember going through it, it's like you black out, but your eyes are wide open, gritting teeth, shaking violently. Apparently the doctors told my family (*but they didn't bother informing me, the patient*) that I may expect this after the injury I had, so there I go, back to the hospital, they load me up with Dilantin, inject an overdose of it into my bloodstream and it's making my arm itch from all of this medication, I was gripping the sides of this bed in pain.

I wanted the pain to end, but it couldn't, of course not, we couldn't have that, because I had an allergic rash reaction 10 days after I paid for a ton of medication I was supposed to be on for years, so they then switched me over to Tegretol, and yes, eleven days later, allergic reaction, so on to the expensive drug, Depakote. I had to eventually go to a fourth drug for this charade, and each time it was a different set of rules:

take 3 times a day, take twice daily, no alcohol, extended release is available on *this* one, but not on *this* one. It was dizzying.

WHAT THE THIRD DEATH IS LIKE

When do you know it's over, you're recovered and everything's better? I mean, the medications and the doctors visits and the blood samples finally stopped, and I can drive and use a knife in the kitchen without fearing my own safety, and walk down the stairs without someone a handrail or someone else's help, but...but that feeling is always there, the feeling

like you went through Hell and no one knows what it's like and you can't tell them because they just don't have the time to listen

You know when you hear that someone dies (*a grandparent, a cousin, an old friend*), you feel terrible, you bawl your eyes out... You go to the funeral you rehash the good times to try to make you feel better

And maybe, you know, maybe two weeks later...you're no longer crying.

Because people move on

people forget what the victim went through

people don't know

people never knew

and you can never know how to tell them

That's what that third death can be like, i think

A GUN TO MY HEAD

I'm at a grocery store, I don't know what I'm getting but I've got a basket for food, I'm there alone, there are others in the store, but no one is paying attention to me.

Suddenly there's a gun to my head.

I know that sounds strange, but suddenly there is someone next to me, I have no idea who it is, but they've got a gun to my head, and no one else is noticing or paying attention.

The gun is at my temple, my right temple. I can feel the metal against my shin there, it's cold, and I can't move my head or this guy will blow my head off. I don't know what he wants from me, but that doesn't matter right now, I've got this gun to my head, I have to try to keep my cool, hold everything together & not mess anything up.

My life depends on it.

I RECOVER AND EVERYONE MOVES ON

I don't know how many times i've envisioned a gun to my head.

(If I tried to tell you, I'd sound redundant)

But usually in the car I envision an accident again. But I always end up in better condition than I was after that one accident

I'm usually barely conscious,

You know, to imply that something is wrong with me, but I'm conscious enough to know in my stories that I'm going to be okay,

I'm barely conscious, but i'm okay

because that is what i do

I recover, and everyone then moves on