



## Cardiac Arrest

### Chapter One

#### Heartbreaker

As he opened the apartment door Memphis Bell saw the look exchanged between the two young ambulancewomen standing outside. Their shocked countenances spoke volumes. Unfortunately for Memphis, the volume in question was 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead.'

Earlier that morning Memphis had stirred to the sounds of someone dressing in a hurry. Kiki Buglehole, his current fuck buddy, had awakened before 05:00 and was intent on returning home, getting her teenage daughter ready for school, showering and changing before immersing herself in fighting the cause of Britain's inland waterways. Memphis arose to bid her adieu feigning normalcy despite the cacophony of alarm bells ringing throughout his body. His brain seemed to have disappeared overnight and been replaced by swarms of mosquitos buzzing incessantly around his cranium. His vision had fragmented, and he viewed the world through a child's kaleidoscope. His digestive tract felt as though it hosted a mad scientist testing a thermonuclear device. Every sinew of his body cried out in pain as if he'd just completed the world's most arduous assault course, rather than having awakened after a night's rest. Despite the clues that all was not well he meekly staggered to the apartment's door and, rather than plead with Kiki to stay as he didn't feel all that peachy, he meekly kissed her and bid her farewell.

He returned to bed as though hoping repose would provide a panacea. He was disappointed. Soon, his lungs began to wheeze and his attempts at rest were disrupted by loud, convulsive coughing fits that produced copious volumes of mucus, enough to exhaust his supply of bedside tissues. His skin became clammy as though the cold, dead hand of the Reaper was anointing his epidermis with a sheen of sweat. His head was dripping feverishly while the remainder of his body shivered with involuntary spasms. At this point, the mad scientist gleefully accomplished his detonation and Memphis was rapidly obliged to transport his growing galaxy of symptoms to the bathroom.

It was here that he executed a feat that he had previously believed to be anatomically impossible. He managed to vomit and sustain an explosive diarrhoea attack simultaneously. Not once, but repeatedly. Literally, he had no idea where to turn. He vainly attempted to direct his puke fountain into the washbasin but as that neared capacity he turned his trajectory toward the bathtub. The latter excreta he attempted to confine to the toilet bowl but to no avail, as convulsions repeatedly made him tumble onto a floor whose multi-hued patterns increasingly suggested that Jackson Pollock had turned his hand to interior design. To enhance the artwork Memphis occasionally introduced a stream of vividly-coloured urine to the abstract impressionist masterpiece taking shape around him.

It slowly dawned on his mosquito-infested mind that he could either die in this impromptu scatological art gallery or, rather belatedly, he should seek help. With a Herculean effort, he managed to crawl, slip and slide into the hallway. The lounge with its lifeline of a telephone seemed to be hundreds of miles distant. Summoning what remained of his fortitude he inched forward like a particularly odious worm. His laboured breathing would have made a telephone pervert envious. Finally, after what felt like a journey of many hours he arrived at the desk, located the trailing phone connection and pulled the handset to the floor. 'The way my luck's going I probably just broke the bastard' he mumbled to himself but on grasping the device he heard a ringtone and dialled 999. "Emergency. Which service do you require?" It was the most welcome voice he'd ever heard.

Having described his ever-growing list of symptoms to the ambulance dispatcher he could virtually hear her thoughts: 'Why do I get all the doozies? Just once couldn't I have a little boy with his head caught in a railing?' Instead, he heard her ask "Please confirm the address where you are at present. An ambulance is on its way and I want you to stay on the line talking with me until it arrives." Having provided the apartment's address, the dispatcher communicated it to the ambulance before reporting back: "I'm afraid they're lost. They're on the housing development but they can't locate the correct apartment block. Memphis asked for his call to be patched into the ambulance so that he could direct them but was informed that was not technically possible. This revelation initiated a bizarre and potentially lethal game of 'Battleships' with three players. The dispatcher asked the ambulance crew to describe what they could see, Memphis attempted to visualise their location and provide directions. They moved accordingly, and the next round commenced. Finally, they located their goal while the patient was still talking, perhaps things were looking up?

The patient eventually managed to distinguish between the buzz of the entry intercom from the buzzing inside his head. Then he retraced his mammoth crawl to the entry system by the

main door and reached up to press the button to unlock the main entrance. As he was by the front door he opened it and placed it on the latch. Exhausted by his efforts he collapsed on the bed, moments later he heard two female voices outside the apartment door, followed by loud knocking. "Come in, the door is open" Memphis answered in a feeble, weary voice. No one entered. Again, someone knocked loudly on the door. "Come in. I'm in here. The door's unlocked" he again bid his rescuers enter. The door remained stubbornly closed. With another supreme effort, the dying patient leveraged his dysfunctional body off the bed and stumbled toward the door.

On pulling the troublesome door open his fractured vision finally reduced the throng of people outside to two young blonde women wearing green uniforms. The medics regarded the ashen-faced, soiled, stinking and clammy cadaver clutching the doorframe as a drowning man clings to a lifebelt before exchanging 'that look.'

The look clearly conveyed their immediate impression. Deadman, barely walking.

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