

Lady Jewells Has a Stroke

By : Lady Jewells

My vision grew cloudy and My head felt like it imploded.

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Lady Jewells suffered an Ischemic stroke Thursday, June 4, 2009 at about 7:45 am.

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Every summer, because summers in Arizona are so hot I'd reverse my schedule. I'd stay up all night and sleep during the day. That Thursday morning I'd stayed up making beaded key-chains for a client in New York. About 7ish, I was forced to stop because my vision became too cloudy to see clearly. So I went to the restroom to put some eye drops in to clear my vision.

^

(I didn't know it at the time, but the visual disturbance was due to my stroke. A small blood vessel in my left frontal lobe was already blocked. That blockage and subsequent lack of oxygen would cause a cell die-off. As cells died, the areas they controlled slowly shut down. In a matter of minutes a Walnut sized burned-out area was made inside my left frontal lobe.

Scientists have determined that a left-brain stroke manifests itself physically through loss of function on the left side of the face and the right side of the body. The left brain processes language, therefore the ability to read, write, and speak may be lost or compromised. Memory is affected although mostly its linear memory and reasoning. Linear reasoning requires an "if this, then that or cause and effect" understanding, which is used in mathematics and logic situations. Remembering one's personal information; like name, occupation and address, along with all the other data one uses to separate oneself from everyone else, are threatened by a left-brain stroke. In summary, a left-brain stroke harms linear, analytic thinking, including language centers, time concepts and one's definition of oneself, as well as leaving physical evidence behind on the right side of the body).

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In the restroom, I lost my ability to think clearly. I couldn't remember why I was in there. While I was trying to remember, the migraine from hell hit. The left side of my head felt like it imploded. I cried out in pain and steadied myself against the vanity. A wave of nausea rolled through and I gagged. I felt dizzy and fell against the wall.

^

A normal person would call for help or get to a phone to dial 911. But, I couldn't think. My head hurt really bad. I didn't want to wake my kids. It's a migraine. A really bad migraine. Opening my eyes hurt. Thinking hurt. In my mind, I had to get to the couch. I always lay on my couch when I have a migraine. The couch cushions are soft, but supportive. So, that's where I wanted to go. I kept thinking if I can just get to the couch, I can lie down and sleep. I have migraines all the time, but this one was very different. The pain in my head was blinding. I didn't want to scare my children so I didn't call out for help.

^

I couldn't figure out how to get to the door. I could see it in the mirror, but I couldn't figure out how to open the door in the mirror. Then - I'd get a moment of clarity and my reasoning spoke to me, "If the door is in the mirror, then it's behind you!" - "Duh! I knew that." I turned too fast and another wave of dizziness hit and I

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crashed into the wall..."Shhh! Ouch!" I moaned. But I found the door. My right foot felt like it was filled with lead weights.

(At this point - 10 years of memories are already gone. In 2009, my 17 year old daughter and her daughter live with me. However - in my mind, it's 1999 and I don't want to scare my kids, who would have been 7 and 8 years old!)

^

As I struggled down the hallway; the right side of my body grew sluggish and harder to manage. I'm right handed, but my right arm was numb and hung limply. I was forced to use my left side. I'm right handed, so I felt so clumsy.

^

At the end of the hallway was a baby-gate that was blocking my way to the couch and I thought who put this up? Did we get a dog? I looked around for a stray dog, but didn't see one. Thank heavens. Tripping over a dog was the last thing I wanted to do. My right hand was useless so I decided to climb over the baby gate. Normally, I'd step right over it but nothing was normal about this day. Who moved the couch and when did we get a new one? I felt like I was in a dream. Half the furniture was gone or replaced with something different.

^

In my struggle to climb over the baby-gate I made a lot of noise. The noise woke up some girl sleeping on the floor. I smiled at the girl, because she looked like an older version of my youngest daughter, Amanda. Beside the girl on the floor, was some weird glowing object that wiggled. I just knew that would not be good to step-on - squeaky toy or not. So I managed to miss the hunk of glowing stuff lying in the middle of my path to the couch. I got within about 3 feet of the couch, before I lost the rest of the use of my right side. From 3 feet away - I lunged for the couch and I made it. It took some doing, but I got a blanket over my head to block out the morning light.

^

Now I tried to go to sleep, thankfully I blacked out and started feeling very good. I think I died. I would have sworn the hand of God was holding me, because I felt so very loved. For what seemed like several moments I was totally at peace and pain-free. Oh my God - is this heaven? I wondered. I'm good. I was feeling so good, then I felt someone shaking my body. Shortly there after, I felt I was back on the couch. My body felt so heavy and numb. I winced and realized the pain was back in a HUGE way. I was in a fog and somebody was patting my body. I struggled to open my eyes. I realized that the rude somebody was that older girl. She kept talking at me and jostling me. I couldn't understand anything she said. Thankfully, she left. I closed my eyes to sleep again.

^

The big girl left for a moment, but soon came back with an older woman. When my vision cleared, I recognized the woman and I smiled. I felt comforted by the presence of my friend Colette. But Colette was talking and I couldn't understand her either. I waved them away - so I could sleep, but she wouldn't let me sleep either. I kept trying to gesture with my left hand that I needed to go to sleep, but no one would let me sleep. I couldn't talk so I just groaned in anguish and irritation.

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(The blockage caused cell die-off. The left side of my face drooped. Hanging-on by a thread was my ability to reason and think. ^ ^ Gone was my ability to talk and walk. 10 years of memories had ceased to exist, as far as I was concerned it was June 4, 1999. I was married to my second husband, a biker named Specs and we lived with my children, Amber (8) and Amanda (7). However, to the rest of the world ^ it was June 4, 2009. I was divorced and I lived with an old boyfriend Robert True (aka Bear), my longtime friend Colette, my 17 year old daughter, Amanda and Amanda ^ s 1 year old daughter, Maria. The older girl, who looked like my 7 year daughter, was my grown daughter Amanda. The glowing wiggling object was her daughter, Maria. Amanda had panicked when ^ she approached the coach and saw my droopy face and noticed ^ I wasn't breathing. She started shaking me and crying and yelling for ^ me to wake-up ^ Whatever - she did, worked and I started breathing. She ran and called 911).

^

Then an old boyfriend, Robert (aka Bear) - whom I dated prior to marrying Specs, walked in. He tried to talk to me, but I couldn't understand anything he said. I kept staring at Bear. I wondered when he'd arrived. I didn't remember anything about a visit. I just hoped Specs knew Bear had come to visit or I was going to be in a lot of trouble. I guessed that Specs was at work, ^ because he didn't come-in and check on me.

^

Even though Bear told Amanda not to call, that he was confident I just had a migraine, Amanda ^ told him, "Fuck you, my Momma can't talk to me and continued talking to the 911 operator. Tempe Fire Department (TFD) responded in 7 minutes. You can't imagine my surprise when the big girl told the paramedics I was her Mom!

^

Amanda insisted they just take me and assess in route, but I resisted moving (*I was in my nightgown and hadn't even had a bath. I wasn't going anywhere. Not to mention ^ trying to walk with this ^ splitting headache - who was she kidding?*). While other paramedics took my vitals, the lady paramedic asked me to smile for her. I guess the smile I made with my droopy face looked mean ^ because Amanda told the lady paramedic ^ You better back up ^ my Mom bites! ^ (You bet cha - I smiled a droopy smile.) ^ The paramedics talked among themselves - discussing my vitals.

^

I knew something was wrong with me, besides the migraine. I couldn't talk or walk. My vision was cloudy. My right side was totally numb. I couldn't think clearly. I just wanted to sleep. I really wanted to go back to heaven, I was so very ^ tired. Every time, I'd drift off, Amanda or ^ a paramedic would step over and wake me up. I was already irritated and now I was getting really mad.

^

A male paramedic stepped towards me and I leaned into the corner as far as I could go. He waited for me to focus on him. Then he told me he'd ask 4 questions (he held up 4 fingers) ^ ^ if I got ALL the questions ^ right - I didn't have to go with them to the hospital, but I needed to go. *I nodded. In my mind ^ I'd go after my nap.* Question (1): What city do you live in? ^ *I thought for a moment and looked around. Then it came to me - I hoped it was ^ right. ^ I slurred ^ Temp-ee.* Question (2): What's your name? ^ *I couldn't remember my birth name and I shrugged my shoulders. I looked all*

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around, slowly I remembered my pen name. So I quickly slurred - Laaadddy Jewel-lsz. The guy looked at Colette. And Colette confirmed and explained that "Lady Jewells" was my Pen Name and my nickname. Question (3): What's today's date? I smiled my droopy smile, I was so happy, I knew that one and I slurred, "Junnnne 4thhh, 1999." Everyone just looked at me and shook their heads. The guy told the others Load her up as I wept.

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^

TFD loaded me up, in my nightgown with a towel wrapped around my head to block out the sunlight, into their customized vehicle and headed to the hospital. (I thought we were going to Tempe St. Luke's which is 3.5 blocks from my door. When we didn't stop after a couple of minutes - I thought I was being driven by the Laurel and Hardy Ambulance Svc), but they actually took me to Scottsdale Osborn ER, about 7 miles away. Scottsdale Osborn Trauma Center is among the best in Arizona [Stroke Central].

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Thank heavens Amanda and Colette didn't let me go to sleep that morning. I believe their actions saved my life and reduced much of the potential damage. Somewhere during the time I spent on the couch and during the paramedics assessments, the blockage cleared. But some damage had been done. I lost 10 years worth of memories from my life, all I have are glimpses - It's as if someone took a 10-year photo album and dumped the pictures out and then put only part of the pictures back, minus any kind of order. Instead of full paralysis on my right side, I suffered a general weakness. However, my speech was slurred, I had a blind spot in my vision field, I tire out way too easily, I couldn't think clearly, and I am surrounded by familiar looking strangers.

PART TWO: ^ What do you mean you don't know why I had the stroke?

PART THREE: ^ My Recovery is the Grandest Adventure yet...and a very humbling experience.

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