

A close-up photograph of a man with a grey beard and glasses, looking intently at a bookshelf. The bookshelf is packed with books of various sizes and colors. A small, red Spider-Man figurine is perched on one of the shelves. The text "NO ONE ELSE SEES THE SPIDER MAN" is overlaid in large, bold, black letters at the top of the image.

NO ONE ELSE SEES THE SPIDER MAN

**A True Story
From A
Compromised
Brain
By Tom Bianchi**

NO ONE ELSE SEES THE SPIDER MAN

By Tom Bianchi

This short story is dedicated to my family.

After you read it you'll know why.

No One Else Sees The Spider Man

Chapter 1 - F.A.S.T

On Saturday March 23rd, 2019 at about 9 pm after working a show as host of The Burren Backroom Concert Series, I pulled my wife into the kitchen at the club and said, "I'm slurring, aren't I?" My wife said, "You're not talking right. You're definitely off." I had worked three shows that day, had a couple of drinks and while wrapping up the details of the day I slowly realized something was wrong with me. I had to rip up 5 checks trying to get financials right because I couldn't control the pen in my hand. Add to that a slight lean to the right while walking and I knew I was in trouble. No strength, no focus. Time to go. We jumped in the car and after a brief wrestling match with wondering if the small local hospitals were still open we went straight to Mount Auburn in Cambridge. From Mount Auburn I was picked up by ambulance and taken to Beth Israel in Boston. I sat on the table, was asked the standard questions until I realized I was sliding out. "NO NO NO NO NO...." is the last thing I remember before slipping into a massive seizure.

F - Face drooping

A - Arm weakness

S - Slurred Speech

T - Time to call 911

I was put into an induced coma and immediately intubated to keep me breathing while they figured out what went wrong and what the game plan would be. In the meantime my lungs filled up with fluid, I got pneumonia and a staph infection as well. The real tragedy here is, my wife, son and later my whole family had to watch me laying on a table for 9 days (I repeat.... 9 days....) while wired up like I was the power source for all the local street lamps. I can not begin to imagine what they we're going through. My guess is the togetherness of this family, combined with a sense of humor in the darkest moments and one of the physically/mentally toughest gene pools on the planet was just enough to get them through. If you've ever been to hear my group, Baker Thomas Band and wondered what the song, "St. Ann" was all about, my sister Ann is a breast cancer survivor. My mother made the calls that needed to be made as my father drove my sis back and forth to the hospital appointments and surgeries. My brother in law worked his tail off to keep job and home in order and my young nephew, only a child at the time stayed strong. My sister you ask? Well, she beat breast cancer. And when it came back she beat it again. 15 years clear and running. Survivors.

As it turns out I had a stroke which led to a massive seizure. I have an oddball vein in my brain and it decided to go. For anyone who knows what's what, I have a Developmental Venous Anomaly (DVA) on the left side of my brain. Some folks go their whole life without knowing. Some have issues. Apparently mine was ready to go. Add to that too much drink, dehydration, no exercise, work ethic that doesn't do me favors, a bit of air travel and sun poisoning.... I was the perfect storm.

So there I am on a table being pumped with Propofol (which killed Michael Jackson) and Fentanyl (which killed Prince,) and my family is being told, "We'll probably wake him tomorrow," for over a week, their own private hell. In the meantime my brain is broken and I'm hopped up on some major drugs and my hallucinations were running wild. While my family was going through the hell of reality, somehow my brain was back in Belize (where we were on vacation the week before)

and crazy scenes were playing out. The drugs took me to nightmare scenarios; rebels chasing my family, our plane crashing, defending our vacation resort with machine guns, being interrogated and asked to lie about government involvement with my son being held in front of me with a machete to his neck. People literally chopping up my family in front of me to punish me and/or get me to talk. No shit. The visions were violent, lucid and as realistic as one would think. At one point I remember laying dying on a floor looking up at a tile ceiling being starved of oxygen. I can only guess this was the reality of being intubated (Intubation is the process of inserting a tube, called an endotracheal tube (ET), through the mouth and then into the airway. This is done so that a patient can be placed on a ventilator to assist with breathing during anesthesia, sedation, or severe illness) while looking up at the ICU ceiling. I thought I was being slowly choked to death with a lack of oxygen. Truth was, I was breathing through a foot long tube jammed down my throat.

I've been told that every few hours the doctors would pull me back to consciousness to make sure I was still there, except when they did I was still in a state of delirium. Influenced by my dream state, my only concern was yelling at my family to run to safety thinking they were being hunted by Central American rebels, even though I was in the Beth Israel ICU unit. I was told at one point I grabbed my wife by the coat then pushed her away trying to tell her to run. I do remember trying to wave my son to run away, but when he said, "Give me a thumbs up if you love me," I did. I was told that a few times when doctors were yelling directions at me I repeatedly gave them the finger. Oddly, that's how my wife and son knew that the real me might still be in there somewhere.

Meanwhile, humor in the face of horror? I give you my father. "I just talked to someone today and they said he'd be fine." My wife asks, "Who did you talk to?" My father responds, "The janitor." The list goes on I'm sure.

In my brain the delusions continued mixed in with few visits from reality. They'd roll back the drugs, wake me up and say, "Tom, wiggle your toes." I was told I did and then they'd put me right back under. This went on for more than a week, me in my own private hell of drug induced delusion and my family asking themselves the real question of who would wake up. Is Tom still in there? Are we going to lose him?

No One Else Sees The Spider Man

Chapter 2 - Welcome Back To Reality

It's April 1st. April Fools' Day. I vaguely remember being woken up to consciousness and being held upright. I remember chaos, I remember white coats all around me. Then I remember the event that brought me right back to reality...

“ONE... TWO... THREE!!!” The foot long intubation tube was pulled from my throat. I remember thinking,
“OOOOOWWWWWWWWW..... WHAT THE F**K WAS THAT?!?!?”
But, I knew immediately I was alive. I knew I was in the ER and I quickly recalled being on the table just before I fell into seizure. “Try to relax and breathe normal,” and I did. No problem. Came right back, just like that. I'm sure “normal” was relative, but I was back. I'm not in Belize, there are no rebels, I'm not on a plane. I'm in a hospital. I haven't been suffocated. I'm alive.

I was in and out of consciousness for a bit and when I really came to I was in a hospital bed laying down, but upright. The first thing I really remember is seeing my wife on my left and my son on my right sitting down, wide eyed and looking at me oddly. In retrospect I now

understand that they were looking for a sign of the husband/father they once knew. Is he still in there?

As uncomfortable and shocked as I may have been, seeing my family at that moment was the greatest gift I've ever been given. Somewhere in my state of delusion they were killed and now they sat in front of me. Be I in heaven or on earth, I was grateful.

Slowly my wife filled me in. "You've been unconscious for 9 days." I remember thinking, wow... I hope my gigs are okay. Silly, ain't it? My first worry was my job security. What's the Dalai Lama quote? *We sacrifice health to make money, then sacrifice money to recoup health...* something like that. Humans are stupid for sure. That being said one of my next thoughts was thank goodness we made it to the ER and this happened when it did. If it were a few days before and I were actually in Belize or on a plane I'd probably be dead, or at best, a shell of the human I was.

At first I couldn't make words. The process of intubation had rendered me speechless. I remember looking at my swollen feet and my legs wrapped in mechanically pumping compression socks. I had very little strength and coordination in my right arm and all I could do is slur. The first communications were interesting, "Tap if you want a blanket. Tap twice if you want the TV on." At one point we were sitting there a while and I slurred out something. "ennnmmmurain me."

"What?" My wife and son looked at each other concerned and confused.

I repeated, "ennnmmmurain me. Im brrrrrd."

My son guessed, "Oh, he said entertain him. He's bored!" They both laughed and I imagine that may have been one of the first moments they knew I was still in there.

Bored, scared, anxious, call it what you want, but I needed distraction. While my wife and son filled me in on everything that had happened the TV stayed off. The light of it hurt. I'm guessing because of the heavy drugs that sedated me, every time I closed my eyes I would see bright, lucid, horrible visions as if my brain were projecting them at 25 times the normal speed on to the back of my eyelids. They were the strangest visions you could imagine. Most were violent, some were cartoons and everything in between. Doctors would ask, "Are you still having visions?" I'd put my hand over my eyes, let the random vision kick in for about 3 seconds, open my eyes and say, "Thousands of spiders being burnt on the dry desert floor." I'd close my eyes again, let the next vision kick in, open my eyes and describe it, "Tree branch dreadlocks hanging down over me with terrible eyes that are turning into mouths with horrible teeth." I couldn't close my eyes without seeing these things. It could be fish literally eating themselves, it could be the characters from the cartoon TV show, Phineas and Ferb on super speed (particularly scary,) but it was always something. Doctors were concerned but they also would let me know that it's not abnormal for this to happen after the heavy sedation. I took that as a positive and muscled through.

At some point I looked at the paper calendar on the wall which said, April 1st. *April Fools' Day*. Go figure.

My son left for work later that day. Apparently while I was under my wife, Danielle organized the paperwork for The Burren Backroom Series and emailed our sound engineer, Joyce all the details she needed to run the shows while my son, Sawyer and our friend, Amy worked the door. Together they kept the series going. Later that night after work Sawyer came back to the hospital with a squeezey ball to help strengthen my right hand and a panda/teddy bear. His name is Lucky. Lucky Panda. Just 12 hours after waking from a coma my slurring was turning into audible speech and I could kinda lift my right arm. The doctors were impressed with my progress. The fact that I was in the ER when this happened made me a very lucky human, hence Lucky Panda.

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Chapter 3 - Enter The Super Heroes

Tuesday April 2nd. My Mother, Father and Sister had been in town all week and my Father came in at 6 am Tuesday. Sawyer, I'm sure overwhelmed and crashing from stress was sick to his stomach Monday night (Tuesday AM really,) and I begged Danielle to take him home and let him sleep. My Dad came in just a few hours later to make sure I wasn't alone. Perfect timing. I desperately needed the distraction/company. There was no sleep to be had. I was hopped up on drugs for days and every sedative they gave me backfired. Ativan? Fail. Ramelteon? Fail. Melatonin? Fail. This-a-pan? That-a-pan? Nope. Every sedative made me twitchy, nervous, anxious and paranoid. Add to that the horrible light bulb visions every time I closed my eyes and it all equaled zero sleep. Some hours later entered my mother and sister to the rescue. At this point I knew they'd been there all week and although my speech was slurred and my right side was as flimsy as a rubber band, I could tell they were relieved. My mind was there. My sister literally saved the day with a very simple yet very valiant task. I still had mechanical compression socks on and my feet were itchy as hell. No relief. I was going nuts. She put on hospital gloves and since she's been through the ringer herself she knew exactly where to rub, squeeze and itch. Over the course of the day

she got blood flowing back into my feet. Considering that when we were little she HATED feet to the point of phobia, this was a hero's task. For me it was a desperately needed relief and distraction from all that was going on. My family is funny as all hell. My father's dry sense of humor, my mother's stubbornness and insistence to ask every possible question and my sister's humor based on the reality of being on her death bed many times herself, it was exactly what I needed. It's all the more reason I am the luckiest man alive.

All day Tuesday my speech slowly came back, not to normal, but at least I could be understood. I exercised my right hand with my new squeezey ball and got a, "WOW! Very good," from every doctor who asked me to clench their hand, follow their finger, lift my arm/leg/shoulder. They were impressed by my progress. Tuesday night I was transferred from the 1st level of ICU to the 2nd. Now, please keep in mind that I am well aware that the ER and ICU at Beth Israel and the team of doctors who diagnosed me and came up with a game plan absolutely saved my ass. The doctors, ESPECIALLY the nurses, nurse's assistants and staff are doing the work of saints for sure. That being said, the next couple of days were potentially the greatest challenge of this entire story. Sleep would elude me at every turn for an entire week.

The 2nd level of ICU was absolute chaos. Understaffed overworked nurses with barely enough time to get their jobs done mixed in with bells, beeps and the loudest ice machine ever made right outside my door mixed in with 2 straight days of zero sleep. A terrible environment to be in for sure but again, I was feeling lucky to be alive. They offered me more sleep aids and I said no to every one. At least 3 or 4 already terribly backfired and I couldn't see any of them actually working. Hell, most people smoke pot and chill. I end up doing the laundry, dishes and cleaning the corners of the house. Sedatives make me anxious, always have. The real silver lining here was, the hospital had volunteers who did Reiki and they asked me if I wanted that. Why not? So I did. Late Tuesday evening a practitioner came in and worked on my right side and head for about 45 minutes. Soon after in the

midnight hour I was able to shut my eyes and kind of nod in and out. By 4 am or so the light bulb visions were gone. I could finally close my eyes without seeing visions behind my eyelids. Forever will I sing of the benefits of Reiki after this experience.

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Chapter 4 - Enter The Villain

Wednesday April 3rd. Danielle stayed the night and my father came in to relieve her around 7 am. I told my Dad that the light blub visions were gone and I got maybe an hour or two of sleep thanks to the Reiki. This immediately launched him into the funniest two minutes of behavior I've ever witnessed. Please keep in mind that my Dad is old school. Maybe not technically the "Greatest Generation," but from a stock that worked hard, served his time in the military, took care of his family, ate meat and potatoes and by no means would he ever get around to using the hippie gift card to the massage clinic you got him for Christmas. That being said he launched into his monologue, "Oh yeah, those Yogis, they live forever. Who knows what they do?" And he started to do poses with his lips and chin out and his body perched like he was auditioning for the Walk Like An Egyptian video in 1987. With very little control over my body yet I probably and literally shit my pants.

"What the hell are you doing?" Laughing my ass off.

"Ya know, the Yogi guys. They do those poses, live forever. They had the right idea," and he continued his yogi dance until he saw that I was

laughing to the point of setting the nurses alarms off. Funniest man ever. My folks showed up later and all was grand. Bottom line is, I started my day in the best place I'd been since I came to.

All that was about to change.

Different doctors on my team would visit daily. Enter one of them Wednesday around 3 pm. He honestly wasn't that bad but he wasn't listening either and his answer to every question was drugs.

Enter Med Man. "Have you slept?"

"A tiny bit I think. Someone came in and did Reiki last night. The visions are gone and I can close my eyes. All things considered I feel like a million dollars. I can relax"

"I'd like to try a sleep aid with you."

"Well... so far the sleep aids have all backfired. I'm still scared shitless, but I haven't felt anxious and I slept a little so I think I'm all set."

"Have you heard of Temazepam?"

"No, but I'm all set."

"Well, I'll put it on your med list in case you want it."

"Can you take it off my med list please? I want zero sleep aids on my med list."

"I'll just leave it there in case."

This fairly polite conversation went on for about 10 minutes. He offered me all the drugs I had taken and new ones, Temazepam,

Prozac, Xanax and everything in between. I continued to say no until he finally left.

“OK then, your Neurologist is coming in next. You’ll like him, he’s a musician.”

Fairly stressed out by Med Man and with zero time to process it, I walk the Neurologist/Musician. A brilliant genius of a man I’m sure but with zero aptitude for what a human needs mentally or emotionally in the moment. He wasn’t on my original team of doctors, he was just filling in. I suppose he simply read my chart and came in with his assumptions ready to burn.

“I hear you are a musician?” He says with a thick German accent.

“Indeed.”

“What do you play?”

Jokingly I replied, “It depends on who’s paying.”

“Oh, I have to pay you to play?” No sense of humor here.

I laughed “It’s just a standard response, I was kidding. I play all kinds of music. I’ve been a career bassist.”

“Oh, you play the big bass?”

“I can, yes.”

“Too big to bring in here I guess.”

“Yes indeed.”

Polite conversation, although with the English to German language barrier I think I did offend him when I mentioned I actually have gotten

paid to play over the years. Turns out the connection of music and neurology is a side study of his. He probably plays his piano/organ in his spare time. God forbid someone realizes that a musician also can make a living playing music.

“So, what’s your plan?” He asks.

A social worker had came in the night before and asked me the same question. Without really thinking about it I spoke my plan and she was impressed with the direction. So I spoke it again, “Well, I need a complete lifestyle change. I’ve been working too hard and drinking too much and I’ve been paying for a gym membership I haven’t used in years. My business is 3 years old and it can finally run with less of my presence. I can book during the day, go to the gym, hire staff instead of working every show, show up and host, do my financials and leave the bar. I was drinking too much and obviously alcohol is off the table for maybe the better part of a year and maybe even forever. I have to lose weight, I have to take care of myself. I want to stay alive for myself and my family.”

Enter the villain.

“Ya, but what’s your plan?” Again, with his thick German accent.

Where the social worker was ecstatic about my direction, this guy didn’t hear a fucking thing. My mom and dad sat by and although I didn’t realize it in the moment they got more and more upset.

“Well, I pretty much told you what my plan is.”

“Ya, but you’ll still be in a bar and doing shift work. Won’t you quit drinking?”

At this point I’m getting frustrated. I also could see my Father constantly looking up at the readings of my blood pressure, most likely getting higher and higher.

“Like I said, it will be a very long time before I’ll be drinking at all. I’ll be on blood thinners for months maybe forever. I’m not even thinking about drinking.”

“But why not quit?”

“Well, I just might.”

“But why not commit?” The entire time he looked down his nose at me like I were a dog who shit on the rug and he was holding a newspaper to hit me with... just in case I didn’t look guilty enough during his inquisition.

“Is that what you want me to say? Because although I’m ready for a lifestyle overhaul I’m not going to lie to you and just say what you want to hear. My goal is to get in shape, lose the weight I need to lose, keep the business going strong but pay attention to my body more. Honestly, overeating, alcohol, over work, they are all off the table for now hence part of the lifestyle change.”

“Ya, ya, but what’s your plan?”

Have you ever been pulled over and the cop just keeps asking you the same question over and over to see if you get pissed off? It is a technique, ask any cop. I realized I was being interrogated. Mind you, 9 days intubated, 2 1/2 days awake without sleep and my system being pounded by 5 IV bags, I was being interrogated.

“I think I’ve been clear about my plan.”

“What about doing Karaoke in a coffee shop?” He asks.

“The day I do that sir, is the day I’d rather just work in a coffee shop instead of playing and/or presenting music.”

“Well you know shift work is the worst thing for your brain.”

WHAT? Imagine!?!?! This guy works in an environment where nurses put in 12 hour shifts sometimes for weeks in a row and he has the gall to make that statement?

“Well, being kinder to myself and my work schedule is one of my goals.” I reply, literally trying to keep my temper knowing that there’s a blood vessel in my brain that blew up just two weeks ago.

“You said you have a son?”

“Yes.” Where is he going with this one?

“And his mother is here?” Apparently this guy is more interested in my family history than checking to see if my right arm moves. Again, he’s not a social worker or psychiatrist, he’s a NEUROLOGIST. Still I answered his questions.

“My wife is his step-mother. He’s 17 and he moved in with us when he was about 14. Things have been great. He’s into social work, politics and he’s also a musician/artist.”

Take a deep breath folks before you read this next line of horse shit that came out of his mouth. Unfortunately I had to absorb this impact in real time, “Oh, your son moved in to live with you and he can drink around you instead of living with his real mother?”

At this point my mother got so upset she had to walk out. The man was attacking the father that I’ve been. You may not know me too well but here’s the deal with my son. He doesn’t drink, he doesn’t fuck around with drugs and he’s proud of that. He works hard and offers to pay his own way daily. He loves the gym and fitness. He knows to check his location with us when he’s out and he’s always responsible around the house with chores. He was a pillar of strength in the ICU

with my wife and family and I couldn't be more proud of him, and this doctor just attacked my parenting as well as my son.

Later, when Sawyer heard that this was what Hans Gruber said (...yes, his name is now Hans Gruber, the bad guy in Die Hard,) he replied, "Seriously? Dad is way more strict than I ever would have imagined. That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard!"

At this point I was lost. I felt my swollen head throb in frustration and anger and I knew I had to calm down, breathe or literally die, "What do you want me to say?"

"I want to hear your plan."

"Well, I gave you my plan."

"I don't hear it."

"I don't know what else I can say."

"Well maybe you shouldn't drink with your son."

At this point I went on the offensive, "Well, I have to lose weight too. You look pretty over weight yourself. What's your plan?"

"I'm here for you, Tom."

"Well," glaring down at his potbelly stomach, "I'm just wondering if you have a plan."

"Well Tom, I'd like to hear your plan and I think you need a plan, but I'll just do a strength test and leave you be."

He checked my strength and every time a doctor checked my strength it was better than the last time. "OK Tom, think about that plan," and he left.

Now it's about 4 or 5 pm, I had just been drug-pimped by Med Man and accosted by Hans Gruber and my blood pressure was through the roof (easy to tell as I was constantly monitored.) Soon I found out my mother was so upset she left and my father was a moment away from kicking him out. The only reason they didn't give him the boot I guess is because I seemed to handle myself just fine. Unfortunately all progress made from my Reiki was gone, my anxiety was through the roof and any chance of sleeping I had was shot out the window for the next 3 days. I was mentally and physically exhausted. I tried not to dwell on it... sure. But you try not to dwell on something after 9 days intubated on psych meds and 3 days without sleep while being tied to 5 IV lines. Hans Gruber fucked me up. I mean, even if he thought he was right, did he really think now was the time? "Hi, I'm Hans Gruber. You had a stroke, you were drowned in Propofol, and Fentanyl for 9 days, you've been having hallucinations when you close your eyes due to these drugs, you haven't slept for days and more... but I think it's a good time to interrogate you until you break down."

I shook all night, I cried, I was angry, hurt, exhausted and completely compromised. Hans Gruber may be a brilliant scientist and thank goodness for that, but his social graces could have easily caused me another stroke. Imagine, he accused me of being a bad father while I was bedridden. Again, maybe he's a brilliant doctor, but as far as social tact? Fuck him. Fuck him in his fat, overweight, swollen nose, 1/2 toothless face. If I made assumptions like he did my guess would be that he's a miserable bloated insufferable drunk finding pride or delusional comfort in telling someone not to drink. In fact, I'd put money on it. I barely made it through the rest of Wednesday. I've never had suicidal thoughts in my life. That night I thought about self destruction. I thought about what would happen if I tore this IV out of my chest that was literally burrowed into a vein that went directly into my heart. Would I bleed out? Could I just leave here? What the hell will tomorrow bring?

No One Else Sees The Spider Man

Chapter 5 - The Super Heroes Return

Thursday April 4th

After a night of no sleep and turmoil Hans Gruber came in to visit one more time in the morning. I was resting well enough so my sister intercepted Hans and took him outside. I could only hear the din of the conversation but later I was filled in. My sister set Hans straight, "You may be a brilliant Neurologist, but do you really think you have social tact? Even if your message was right do you really think badgering a patient on zero sleep 3 days after being woken from a coma is a good idea? I heard you questioned his fatherhood. Seriously? You may be the best doctor in the hospital, but if you were a school teacher you would have been fired on the spot. This patient needs support and rest and all you did was piss him off and jack his blood pressure through the roof. You should be ashamed of yourself. Keep to the Neurology, leave the social work to the social worker. With all due respect, you were not on his original team of doctors (which he wasn't) you're filling in for somebody, so if you have to go in later and do strength tests, do it. But if I hear you talked with him about anything else I guarantee I'll have your job." My sister. The badass.

4 days awake, feeling a little better and IV bags slowly being replaced by real food and real pills I was finally about to get up and move around a bit. I wasn't allowed out of bed without assistance but an amazing Physical Therapist came to help me out and get me moving. I literally could not find my center of gravity to stand at first but with the guidance of my rock star PT woman I was able to not only stand, but shuffle down the hall and back as well. My left hand was strong and my right arm was slowly coming back. *Oh the feeling to be out of bed.*

My family filled all the dull moments of the day with the laughter of life. My Mom and Dad would bicker a little bit like any couple married more than 50 years and as always it was entertaining. Add to that Mom closing the room door on Dad's head and Dad adding an extra vaudeville smack to make it sound like he was pummeled and we'll have stories about this for years. Perhaps the best moments for me were hearing my Mom Dad and Sis talk about how amazing my son was through all of this. I couldn't be more proud of him. And of course my wife the rock, doing anything and everything that needed to be done. Again, I am the luckiest man alive. I still couldn't sleep but I could shut my eyes and rest and I was starting to get grumpy which could only mean I was almost ready to go. Almost.

Friday April 5th.

Although the young woman who came by to give me a little Physical Therapy said she wouldn't be back she actually did come back the next day... and she brought a friend. Another PT person, I forget her name... pretty much because I erased it from my mind after she left, but she knew me for sure and was oddly excited to see me. Soon enough I realized she had an agenda. Let's just call her the Med Maiden.

Med Maiden, "Hey Tom! I was here since they brought you in. I've been following your case since you've been here. I'm a big advocate of a new drug called, (some sleep aid.) I heard about your visions and

I think you would be perfect for it. We have seminars yearly and if you like this drug I think you would be perfect to talk about it.”

My reply, “Uhhh... I’ve been resting okay, I haven’t had any visions behind my eyes in days and so far every sleep aid I’ve been given has back fired.”

Some of these folks just don’t listen, “Yeah, but this one is great, very non-invasive. I really believe in it.”

“What is it?”

Her response was basically, “You-took-this-already-and-it-fucked-you-up-althol.” I thought I recognized it. Later I confirmed it. Been there, took that, fucked me up.

“I really am all set with sleep aids.”

“Well Tom, sleeping is part of the healing process and you need to sleep.”

“Listen, I think they’re shipping me out in a day to a rehab clinic. I won’t be next to the ice machine that’s next to the sink that’s next to the nurses station that’s next to the squeaking elevator... I’ll sleep when I get out of here.”

Now, to get the real fun part of the story you have to rewind a couple of days. I was laying in bed kind of in and out of sleep when my father and sister started to engage in conversation.

“What’s that?” My sister says looking out the window.

“It’s a guy.”

“What’s he doing?”

“Holy Jesus... He’s climbing the ledge. Whoa, that’s crazy.”

“He’s like Spiderman.”

“Spiderman on his day off. I think he’s cleaning the ducts or something.”

“Look at him slide into that vent? That’s nuts.”

I couldn’t see from my angle out the window, but the conversation was entertaining and distracting enough from my situation.

Okay... now, rewind back to my situation with Med Maiden, my Physical Therapist and I.

I’m facing the window holding on to a walker getting ready for a little PT stroll when I look out the window. There’s the dude, climbing up the wall and wiggling his way into the side of the building just like my Father and Sis had described. Med Maiden is telling me all about the benefits of “ya-tried-it-aul-athol” and I interrupt like an idiot with, “Oh hey, it’s Spiderman.” No sooner than I say, that the dude wiggles into the air vent and... Poof! He’s disappeared!

The two women turn around and the guy is gone.

With 100% certainty that I am seeing visions, Med Maiden clasps my arm with both her hands, looks me in the eye and says, “Tom, this is what I’m talking about, ***No One Else Sees The Spider Man***”

“You just missed him. He just went in the side of that duct. His keys are hanging off that square door,” which they were.

Med Maiden is insistent, “Tom, there is no spider man.”

The woman who did PT with me the day before was staying neutral, but Med Maiden wouldn't let up.

The next problem was in retrospect hilarious. In my no-sleep exhausted brain I didn't remember that my Father and Sister were the ones in the conversation. I thought it was my son.

"Hey Sawyer!"

"Yeah Dad?"

"It was you talking about the spider man dude on the roof the other day, right?"

My son, being the good son may have had no clue what I was talking about but he wasn't about to sell his Dad out. "Uhhh.... Yeah. Spiderman. Sure. No, yeah... I saw him." Poor kid was covering for his Dad and had no clue what I was talking about.

Med Maiden asked me, "Do you see him now?"

"No! I said, he went in the vent."

"Is he wearing his spider suit?"

Now I'm pissed. "NO! He's a dude working on an A/C unit or a duct or something, we just dubbed him Spiderman the other day."

Med Maiden, "Well, I have to go, but I really want you to think about taking, "I-didn't-read-your-chart-a-thol-and-this-med-fucked-you-up-already-pan."

She left. My original PT rock star stayed neutral and we went for a walk. I met my family outside my room in a small solarium down the hall that overlooked Brookline, I started to talk about my Spider Man

sitting and Med Maiden when my Sister said, “That wasn’t Sawyer, that was me and Dad who saw the Spider Man.”

Sawyer, “Oooooohhh.... Snap, cuz I was like, what the hell? But I was totally ready to cover for you.”

My Dad, “Why didn’t you just stay with it? Hey look, there’s Batman too. They’re all hanging out. You don’t see them?”

Again, I was laughing to the point of being worried about my IVs falling out or my brain exploding. We were all laughing. My family. Rock stars. I knew I wasn’t crazy and even though I was still attached to multiple IV bags and strapped into a chair with a band that said, “Fall Risk” on my wrist I really enjoyed the next 1/2 hour of sitting there with my crew.

Eventually it was time to go. My awesome PT nurse took me back to the room and as we looked out the window there he was!!! Spiderman the air duct guy!!! The dude totally wiggled his boots out the duct horizontally, climbed out backward, stood upright on the ledge and locked the small square duct door behind him.

“THERE HE IS!!!”

My PT nurse, “OH MY GOD! Dude, I’m so glad I saw that.”

“See??!?! I’m not nuts!”

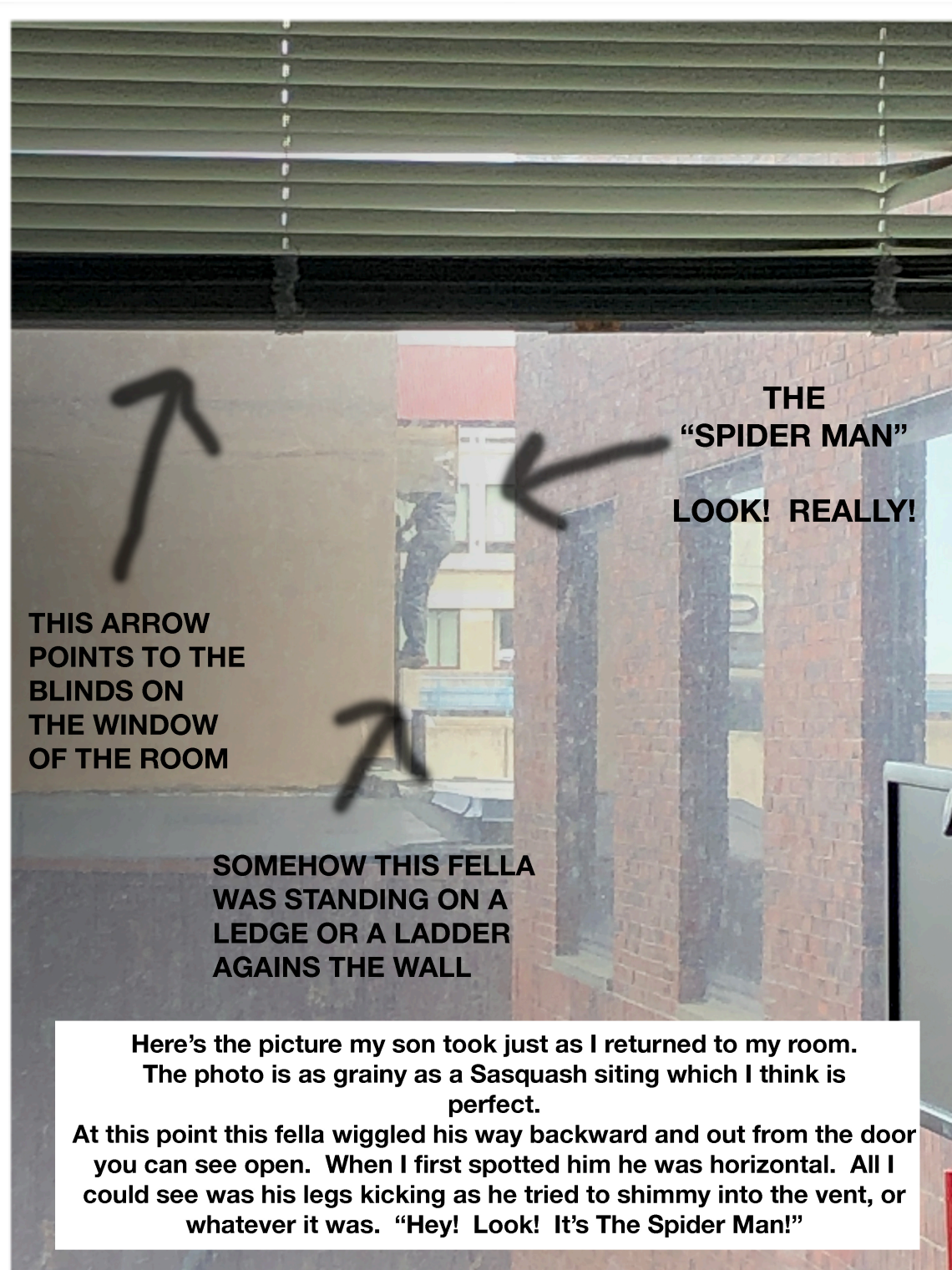
She did defend her partner by saying a very common delusional vision is spotting people on rooftops who aren’t there, but now I had proof that this wasn’t the case.

“SAWYER, TAKE A PICTURE!!!”

Sawyer took a picture, and although it does kinda look like a lousy big foot sitting, it does exist.

My PT nurse then said, “Dude, your blood pressure just dropped like 20 points after we both saw that guy!”

Along with ease my stress, lose weight and stop your drinking, I learned a very important lesson from Med Man, Hans Gruber and Med Maiden this week, try not to suffer fools.



Here's the picture my son took just as I returned to my room.
The photo is as grainy as a Sasquash sitting which I think is perfect.

At this point this fella wiggled his way backward and out from the door you can see open. When I first spotted him he was horizontal. All I could see was his legs kicking as he tried to shimmy into the vent, or whatever it was. “Hey! Look! It’s The Spider Man!”

No One Else Sees The Spider Man

EPILOGUE

Step One In Getting Back To Real Life

Saturday April 6th.

After a week of alarm bells, loud ice machines, squeaky doors and the sounds of a constantly strained Intensive Care Unit I got the amazing news that it was time to leave Beth Israel. I was released and sent by ambulance to a rehab clinic in Woburn.

I think I've divulged enough of my "adventure" for a lack of a better word and will leave it right here. To sum it all up, I'm still a bit slow and wobbly and I've lost plenty of coordination in my right side. Singing is no problem, playing bass is a bit wonky and strumming is really fucked up. Imagine my horror when I realized my ability to whip a scrambled egg was totally gone. Typing is coming back and even simply hitting the right button on the iPhone is still a bit of a struggle, but it's all coming back.

The rehab clinic in Woburn was wonderful and the first day I got there I slept like a baby and continued to all week. As I suspected, the ICU at Beth Israel was such chaos I couldn't sleep through it. The only negative thing I have to say about Woburn is, every morning at sunrise, the Psychiatrist would wake me out of a deep sleep, ask maybe 3 basic question and then ask me if I wanted sleep aids or anti-psych meds. Let me repeat myself and type in capital letters for dramatic effect, EVERY MORNING AT DAWN HE'D WAKE ME UP OUT OF A DEAD SLEEP AND ASK ME IF I WANTED SLEEP AIDS.

On day four of the rehab visit he came in and said, "Oh look, a guitar. Ya know... Prozac has been documented in helping patients get hand/eye coordination back." I kid you not. It was easy to find the following words, "Sir, unless you or I are legally obligated to see each other, do not come back. If you do I will report you." Again, don't suffer fools.

I started to piece this story together in the Physical Therapy hospital after leaving the ICU at Beth Israel and today as I put it all together it is Tuesday April 16th. I've been home since Saturday. To say it's nice to be home with my family sleeping in my own bed is an understatement. I've got plenty of work ahead of me, but I'm excited to do it.

If this happened in Belize I may be dead. If this happened outside of the ER I may have lost at least 50% more of the function in my right side not to mention some chunk of my mind. I got lucky, very lucky. I mentioned earlier that my son bought me a big stuffed Panda bear. I named him Lucky. Considering what happened, the help I had from the doctors, especially the nurses and my family, today I am the luckiest man alive.

See ya out there friends. It's good to be alive and still standing.

ToM

I did not know this acronym when I had a stroke but I knew something was wrong. I immediately made it to the Emergency Room and that most likely saved my life.

If you or a loved one have these symptoms call 911 immediately. I almost, “shook it off” and almost, “went home to sleep it off.” If I had, I’d be dead.

F - Face drooping

A - Arm weakness

S - Slurred Speech

T - Time to call 911



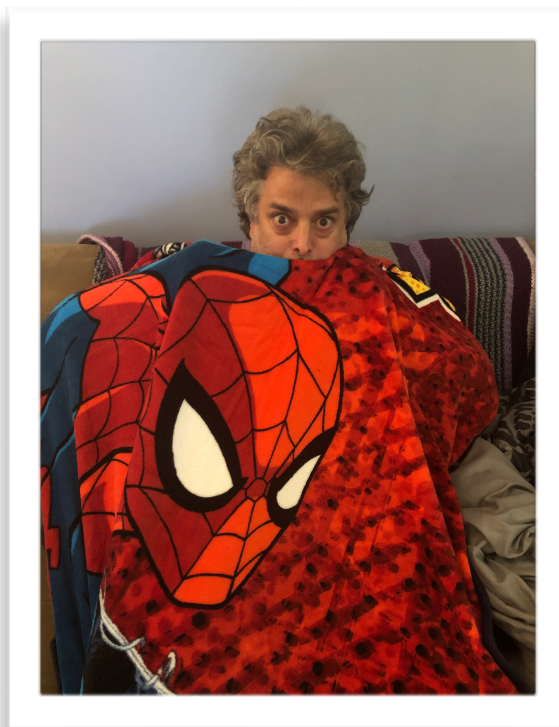
Tom Bianchi
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Singer/Songwriter... and now Author :-)
Bassist/Bandleader
Producer/Engineer/Talent Buyer
...all around nice guy

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My Name is Tom Bianchi. I'm not famous but I've lived a very public life. It's kind of amazing how hard I've worked for the last 30 years in order to not have a "real job." At this point I probably have at least a dozen hats to wear on my resume, Singer, Songwriter, Bassist, Audio Engineer, EmCee/Host, Talent Buyer, Producer, Arranger, Busker, Session Musician, Social Worker, Community Organizer, Consultant and more. Whatever I needed to do to pay the rent I've done.

This year, 2019 my best friend and I will turn 50 together in November. We've been planning a Comedy Roast of ourselves for about a year now. I will be the Roastee and he will be the host of the show. Our plans almost came to a screeching halt this past spring. This is that story.



"You have to tell this story. It's your responsibility. Not only is it good writing, it could save lives." - Don White, Singer/Songwriter/Author

"Every doctor should have to read your story in med school to have an idea of the patient's perspective." - Tom TC Carpenter, Singer/Songwriter

"You should put this out there Tom. There are many people who have gone through or may go through similar experiences, not to mention that knowing F.A.S.T. may save their lives." - Most all my friends.

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