

TITLE

Reading Line (subtitle)

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OVERVIEW

On 26 July 2006, I suffered a severe car accident near my parent's house in rural Acton, Maine. I was spending the summer at home before my senior year at Brandeis University. Instead of moving into a rented house near campus with seven of my college friends, I was moved from Acton, Maine to the ICU at Maine Medical Center. In the ICU, the attending physicians gave me a ten percent chance of functional recovery.

I had broken five bones, including three ribs, a fractured left shoulder blade, a shattered right femur, a hemorrhage in my intestine—but, most devastatingly—my neuropathological diagnosis consisted of a grade II diffuse axonal brain injury with hemorrhaging in my corpus collosum. A shunt was installed in my brain to relieve excess intracranial pressure, and the ER doctors called Julie and Doug Venell into a consultation room to tell them that this is a life threatening situation.

I would spend the next year in three different hospitals. I had arrived to the ICU at Maine Medical Center in an emergency helicopter and I left five weeks later for the next hospital in an ambulance. I was admitted to Braintree Rehab in Braintree, Massachusetts, and my initial assessment [...].

This book is about my experience recovering from a traumatic brain injury, when I came back to college, and the time immediately following my graduation from Brandeis University. The book is about how, at a certain point, I was able--and required--to take over and direct my progress,

and the way I used my new reflective ability to observe and direct my own development. This is a story about personal triumph over adversity. But it's also about the triumph of the network; the web of family, friends, doctors and therapists whose support and input contributed, built, manipulated, and ultimately made my future possible; a future that was initially very uncertain from the sterile confines of the ICU.

Traumatic brain injuries affect thousands of people, from soldiers returning from the Middle East to victims of catastrophic accidents. Furthermore, recovery from TBI is very difficult, as is the adjustment to life afterwards. Getting accustomed to a new life with a brain injury is difficult for both the victim as well as for their support system: the person looks O.K., no major body parts are missing.... So, why is everything so different? This book will be helpful to people who are dealing with brain injury, either personally or as a supporter. This compelling story will provide an interesting perspective because parts of my medical team, my mother, and my friends contribute to the book: they tell the parts of the story that I can't tell, highlighting the network that makes the story possible. Like any major medical event, a brain injury happens to families, not just to individuals. For this reason, contributions from my friends and family will be an important element of this book.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

My experience prior to working on this book project has been in media and in story telling. My story telling interest took root in China, where I studied abroad in 2005 and there, I got exposure to the beginning of an environmental movement that would preoccupy me for the rest of my time at Brandeis. This preoccupation manifest after I finished school in 2008 and culminated in the documentary film, [*The Green Reason*](#), which I shot in Beijing, China. Any professional writing work I have has been in support of the production of my film. In addition to the grant proposals to support the project, I was the media contact for distribution and I also wrote a piece about production for the 11th edition of China Environment Forum's paper, the *China Environment Series*, a publication of the Wilson Center in Washington, D.C. Throughout the production process of *The Green Reason*, I kept running production notes on the project's website in order to keep our audience apprised of the status of the project.

In telling the story of the emergence of China's environmental movement, I entirely devoted myself to the story, by living with people close to the environmental movement in 2005, and then during production of the film in 2008. I told this environmental story in China because I felt as if I owned a little piece of it, and I thought by sharing my little piece, I could illustrate the whole story.

I'm telling my brain injury recovery story for a different reason, but it's perhaps a better one. I want to take the opportunity that I have, while this story is still a big piece of me, to illustrate the little pieces of other survivor's stories. This big story is mine in a way that China's environmental movement never was, but it tells the story of a struggle that many other people face on a daily

basis. My hope is that by sharing my story, I can highlight what we all share in a way that is understandable to everyone who has been touched by TBI, either personally, or through a loved one.

PROMOTION & MARKETING PLAN

While working on my book, I will write a piece for the MAB Community Services website with Dr. Katz to further make the argument for rehabilitation and reintegration and also focus the direction of our story. I will also make myself available to speak, and I will touch base with the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts again to ask if I can get involved.

I have also spoken at universities: for example, I spoke about my brain injury recovery in the Speech and Language Pathology Class at Emerson College in December 2009. I had three separate speaking engagements in the Spring of 2010 at Boston University, at the College of Health and Rehabilitation Science and at the Medical School. I presented in a physical therapy lab at the Sargent School at BU and also in a Medical School classroom with Dr. Katz. I also was asked to give a keynote speech in April of 2010 at the Ivy Street School gala event in honor Dr. Katz.

I have edited the video clips that were shot of my therapy when I was at Braintree Hospital, and that clip reel is available here: [Braintree Clip Reel](#) [not yet uploaded] to use as we're pitching the story. I have 1.5 hours of footage from the period 2 to 5 months after my accident, during the time that I was an inpatient at Braintree Rehabilitation Center, and I'm confident that I can make a short youtube video to support a book project from these clips in the style of NOVA's COMA film. I have photographs from the time I was at Portsmouth Regional Hospital that can also be used to support this project.

The Hoot newspaper at Brandeis University ran a story about my accident and recovery on 29 September 2009, available here: [Forgotten, but Hardly Lost](#). Additionally, Evan Sweeney has

published an article in *Brandeis Magazine*, available here: [A Small Miracle](#).

Traumatic brain injuries affect victims in a way unique from other injuries. Patients are forced to relearn even basic movements and functions and never fully recover from brain injury, and although many--like me--are able to regain functionality, the injury is ever-present. During my recovery and research for this book, I met and interacted with many people who have faced the same adversity that I have faced. It is through them that I have realized how important my story is, and it is also through them that I believe this book will have tremendous marketing potential among those recovering from a TBI and their families.

TARGET AUDIENCE

In 2008, I was contacted by a mother in South Africa because her son got hurt in a car accident very similar to mine, and was recovering with a brain injury. Charlotte was reaching out to whomever she can find to help and give her support. This is one slice of the audience that I want to reach: mothers who are left feeling alone at the hospital, with few concrete answers and nowhere to turn to for help.

Because brain injury was treated without much medical hope for so long, many cases were assumed to be closed, and patients were potentially lost. I can understand in a very intimate way that it was my mother's adamant support for me--and my dad's early morning visits to the hospital--that enabled my successful recovery. I want this story told as part of a growing support network for the mothers and fathers who are waiting in the ER..

Additionally, readers will identify with me in this heart-warming, gut-wrenching story as I get dealt a really bad set of cards. I think the story has implications beyond brain injury recovery: I got dealt this bad hand, but I [utilized the cards that I have to work in my own new means.]

Through parts of my recovery, I was able to watch myself progress. I remember being reminded by my therapists about my progress: I couldn't notice the changes at first because my memory was all tangled. Even today, five years later, I am able to appreciate the fine tuning changes that are still taking place. I remember being told by Dr. Katz that I should expect to see changes up to

five years post-trauma, and I was frustrated, thinking: "In five years, I want to be through this."

But looking at the five years from this angle, I can appreciate that these years have given me unique insight that will frame the rest of my time. I show how the lessons I learned in these years form the framework through which I tell this story.

THE COMPETITION

These books take away some of the negative stigma attached to brain injury and help to re-frame the public outlook on brain injury. In the last few years, I have learned a lot about how much attitude affects outcome in brain injury cases. By presenting my positive brain injury recovery case, I can join the growing movement to help change the way people approach this type of injury.

-In An Instant, by Lee and Bob Woodward, *Random House: 2008* [need descriptions, and more books in this list]

-As I Live and Breathe, by Jaime Weisman, MD, *North Point Press: June 2003*

-I'll Carry the Fork, by Kara Swanson, *Rising Star: 1999*

TIME FRAME FOR COMPLETION

CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER OUTLINE

SAMPLE CHAPTERS