

Chapter 1. Rehab.

“Just another 5 minutes Mr. Backwith”, the physiotherapist confirmed, looking up from her stopwatch. “You’re doing fine. How’s the knee?” “Not bad”, I muttered breathlessly, quietly cursing myself for not changing out of my business shirt, as a trickle of sweat ran down my back. “Much pain?” she asked. “It feels weak, not much different from last time”. “It’s going to take months”, she responded, which did nothing to appease my need for instant gratification, nor did it reinforce that by “throwing money at a problem” there should be a way to achieve anything, even cheat nature! But then, that was the sort of person I’d become.

I was snatching two lunchtimes each week for rehab. at a private London hospital following a procedure to replace the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) and to re-attach the medial cruciate ligament (MCL) in my right knee, following a predictable skiing accident that took place on a so-called business trip to California months earlier. I was unfit, overweight and a hopeless skier and should not have been anywhere near the slopes of Lake Tahoe with a bunch of young, fit American jock colleagues.

“Next Thursday then and easy does it. Stay a few minutes and rest before getting dressed. There’s some water over there”. I sat and stared out of the panoramic smoked-glass window of the private hospital across into Regents Park. A Big Issue seller caught my eye near the tube station. I had avoided him on the way here and as I would now be jumping into a black cab to go to a client meeting in the West End, I could ignore him a second time.

I allowed my mind to wander and I found my eyes following the bicycles in the park. All sorts of people from couriers, workmen, City types and actually a lot more than I had really noticed before. I smiled inwardly at the thought that I was a cyclist now too, even though I didn’t go anywhere and the bike was an instrument of torture in a physio. room.

I climbed off the machine and gingerly put weight on my right leg but favouring the working leg, I limped towards my suit jacket, tie and briefcase on a chair. Oh and the leg-brace, with its hinges, metal supports and velcro straps. Reassembled, briefcase slung across my shoulders on a bit of string, I swung out of the room on clicking crutches, into the lift and out to a waiting cab. “Mr. Backwith?” the cabbie enquired. “Do you need a hand Sir?” I largely ignored the offer, shook my head imperceptibly and got in, cursing as my knee twinged. “Broken leg is it? Skiing eh?” I cut off the cabbie by grunting a few replies before sliding the glass partition closed between him and me and calling my secretary in our Old Bond St. office to pick up phone messages. “What a bummer.”