

# 1

## The Accident

I was only 12 when the catastrophe occurred. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of November, I was around a mate's house. We were messing around in his garden. There was a zip wire already set up in one of the trees and we couldn't resist but have a go. That's when it happened. I didn't realise I wasn't secured in the rope properly, lost my grip and fell about 10-15 feet. I landed on my head! Tim, one of my closest friends rushed to check if I was alright after witnessing my fall. As he got closer to my body he became aware of the extent of my injury and became scared. I uttered no sound. I was unconscious, unable to hear Tim's shouts and screams.

This was weird that I couldn't hear Tim's voice seeing as though myself and him were best friends and I went to school with Tim on a daily basis, we had spent, shared so many jokes and pranks together whether it be at school or out of school. The driveway to Tim's house was off a remote country lane, it had a row of tall trees down both sides. There was a huge garden running the length of the driveway and at the end there was a long

bungalow and this was Tim's family home. Tim lived here with his Mum, Dad, one older brother; Sam, and two younger brothers; Luke and Matt.

Tim alerted his brothers Matt and Luke to be at my side while he sprinted to the phone and dialled 999. I had only been at Tim's house an hour when disaster had struck. We had planned to go to the Horsham fair that afternoon to meet Alex, another close friend of ours. Alex lived and worked on his family's livestock farm just outside Horsham. Tim and I found we had some time to spare before we had to leave for the fair, so we decided to play on the zip wire that spanned the two largest oak trees in Tim's back garden.

It took twenty minutes for the ambulance to arrive. From the time my head had hit the ground I was drifting in and out of consciousness.

"What's this young man's name?" asked one of the paramedics.

"Chris, Christopher Manson" Tim replied.

The paramedics kept trying to ask me questions to check my level of consciousness and for possible brain damage. They persevered with questions like, "what is your name....how old are you?" They also asked if I had been on a zip wire before. I was unable to answer. The paramedics then carefully put me on a stretcher and carried me to the ambulance. They then gave up asking me questions and started talking to Tim and his

parents, who were huddled together in fear by the back of the ambulance. At one point I must of stayed conscious long enough to recognise Tim's voice in the background.

"I don't know how I am going to tell the rest of the class tomorrow that this has happened to Chris and I haven't even told his friend Alex yet!"

We set off towards the accident and emergency department at the Princess Royal Hospital in nearby Haywards Heath. Tim's Dad, Terry, came with me and Tim and my other friends stayed behind to enjoy Luke's birthday party. Terry was distraught. He was frantically rummaging around in his bag to find his mobile. He knew he had to spill the beans to my parents. He was anxious about this and extremely concerned about me. At this point I was unconscious.

In the ambulance one of the paramedics looked after me in the back, whilst the other one concentrated on driving. The paramedic driving was in contact with the hospital telling them my details, the circumstance of my accident and my current condition, so that the doctors would be ready for me when I arrived. The ambulance flashed through the lanes of Horsham with the sirens blaring all the way.

On arrival at the Princess Royal Hospital, the doors to the ambulance were immediately opened from outside, where lots of medical staff were gathered, including my Mum. I was taken straight out of the ambulance and wheeled into the intensive care room where loads of doctors started to work on me. After what seemed to be a very long time, my

Mum was allowed to see me briefly. I was then whisked off to have a CT scan on my head. There followed a lengthy discussion as to what they were going to do with me next.

From the numerous tests, the doctors concluded that I had sustained a severe head injury and would need to go to a specialist unit in London for further treatment. It could be either a unit at Kings College Hospital in South London or at the Atkinson Morley Hospital in Wimbledon, depending on which one had an ITU bed available first. The final decision could not be made until the last minute as situations are changing all the time on ITU wards. The next decision to be made was how I was going to get there. Should they use an Air Ambulance or send me in an ambulance by road? In the end they decided to send a specialist team of two doctors and a nurse down from London to accompany me in the ambulance.

I was then wheeled through the corridors from the accident and emergency department to the back of the hospital. Here I was pushed through an adjoining corridor to the specialist Hurstwood Park Neurological Unit. This is where the doctors got me ready for the team from Atkinson Morley to take me to their specialist Neurological Unit in Wimbledon. By now my right eye had swollen to the size of a tennis ball. I had all sorts of tubes going into me and a ventilator tube had been pushed down into my lungs to breathe for me. A neck collar was placed around my neck for protection and I was lying on a spinal board in case I had broken any bones in my neck or back.

It took a number of hours for the team of doctors and nurses to stabilize me for the journey up to London. Finally, I was ready and the specialist team had arrived to accompany me. My Mum unfortunately wasn't able to accompany me, as there was no remaining room in the back of the ambulance. Luckily she had been able to contact my Uncle who would drive her, as my Mum was in no fit state to travel up to London alone.

I was loaded into the back of the ambulance and once secure we set off. As my condition was critical, the ambulance driver had to drive quite carefully. The slightest jolt could have been fatal. It took about an hour and a half to get to Wimbledon, but at least I arrived safely. I was then met by a new team of doctors and nurses who had already been brought up to date with my condition. They also planned to carry out a whole load of new tests to see what could be done to help me. At that time my Mum still hadn't arrived.

I was wheeled down to the very last bed in ITU. They transferred me from the trolley to the bed with the usual "On my command one, two, three..." that you hear in all the popular TV hospital dramas. Little did I know that I would be hearing those words about twenty times a day for the next eighteen months?

It wasn't long after that my Mum and Uncle Bernard had arrived. There continued to be lots of people frantically doing things around my bed. The medical staff were trying to get me to do all kinds of things like move my arms and legs, asking me whether I could hear them and testing to see if I reacted to pain by jabbing me with needles throughout

my body. These were all the things that doctors did to test for brain activity, to judge how badly hurt I was. It was then decided to sedate me so that I could have a nice sleep to give my body a chance to heal.

# 2

## Tim's Story

Tim awoke at 4 o'clock the following Monday morning, three hours before he usually woke up. It was the first day of school after the half term break and the first day back after my terrible accident. Tim, unable to go back to sleep, tiptoed past his brother's room along to the kitchen, where he poured himself a bowl of cereal. As he sat down to

eat his cereal, Tim contemplated what he was going to tell his friends later on that morning about the accident. A job he wasn't looking forward to.

Later that afternoon, Tim glanced at his watch. The fourth lesson was about to start. Tim knew that during this lesson he would have to face Danielle, my girlfriend. Danielle was a petit girl who had the most amazing smile; she had short brown hair and was in the same lessons as Chris. He had managed to avoid seeing her all day, but as they were in the same group he couldn't put it off any longer.

"Where's Chris today?" she asked.

"Do you want the bad news first or the good news?" Tim replied.

"Bad news first." she said thinking that this was one of Tim's' jokes.

"As you well know Chris is a dare devil! – it was an accident waiting to happen."

"What! You're scaring me Tim!" exclaimed Danielle.

"Here goes." Tim went.

"It was about 12 o' clock last Thursday during the holidays when Chris was dropped off at mine by his Mum. He wanted to have a go on the zip wire before we went to Horsham Fair later in the afternoon. He got on it ok but his landing wasn't what anyone could have expected. He fell off the zip wire and landed on his head. The fall has apparently affected Chris's brain."

"Where is he now?"

"At the Atkinson Morley Hospital in Wimbledon"



Tim got to his feet to walk to his next lesson, leaving Danielle in a state of shock and unable to absorb what she had just been told.

Tim's next lesson was English. Walking into the classroom he felt overwhelmed, in a state of shock himself.

"Tim, are you alright?" asked Miss Shales, the English teacher.

"Tim, what's wrong?" Becky, one of the girls from the class asked.

Tim then broke down in tears and just stood there with everybody looking at him. They all stared at him with an expression on their faces that would only be achieved by placing a chilli in their mouths. Through the tears and sobs, Tim started to speak.

"You know your friend Chris; well he had an accident in the holidays..."

"How?" everybody shouted at once.

"He fell off a zip wire in my back garden and must have landed funny."

Tim then continued to recall the story he had previously told Danielle and got a similar response. Understandably, the class only managed to get a limited amount of English work completed when the bell for break sounded. Tim walked out of English, feeling as if he alone had been given the arduous task of telling the school about me. He felt that the whole weight of the world was on his shoulders.

Tim still had all the cafeteria staff to tell and when he did they all burst into tears. The cafeteria staff were all usually filled with smiles, but not this time. After that he went to

tell the PE staff. Tim was dreading telling them even more than the other teachers because I had such a good rapport with them. Then Tim told Mr Hay, the rugby teacher, and was surprised by his reaction.

“Oh well, you win some, you lose some.” Mr Hay said unsympathetically.

Tim then went and told Mr Raydon, another PE teacher, and was greeted with a more familiar reaction to the news. Mr Raydon was also moved to tears. When Tim told Alex about how unsympathetic Mr Hay seemed and how Mr Raydon was so emotional, Alex was puzzled about this too. The whole experience was quite draining for Tim, so he was relieved when he had finally told all the staff and was glad to be going home.

When Tim got home, his little brother Matt asked about me. He was unaware of how seriously ill I was.

Matt had long Blonde hair and was the youngest of the four offspring, I had played with him on his PS1 a couple of times, but never really got to know him

“How’s Chris? When is he free again to come round?”

“I don’t know yet” replied Tim.

Matt was outside cutting the grass near to where I had fallen. Tim looked down at the grass and saw the mark where I had landed, so he took the mower off Matt and tried to get rid of the mark. It wouldn’t budge.

# 3

Alex's Story

Alex Crass lived on a farm in Mannings Heath near Horsham. He was lucky to have a large room. Alex had an afro hairstyle and was very smart, needless to say he was in most of the top level classes at school. As most school days started Alex got up and started to get dressed. He put on his shirt, next came his trousers and lastly Alex did up his tie – short, which was the fashion at the time. In one breath he greeted his mum and said goodbye to her, just as she was opening the morning paper to browse through it. Alex had to run down the lane so that he wouldn't miss the number 89 school bus which would take him to his school, Warden Park, in Cuckfield. He jumped on to the bus just in time for it to pull out of the bus stop. As he moved further down the bus, he noticed that all the boys were sat downstairs and therefore presumed that all the girls must have been upstairs. This seemed very strange to Alex that the boys and girls would choose to sit in different parts of the bus, so he decided to ask his mate Sam why.

“I think it is because they are all sad about Chris's accident.” Sam replied. “Girls and boys tend to talk differently amongst themselves about these things.”

Alex and Sam had a music lesson with Mr Powello first thing. Alex was on the keyboard, but he couldn't play any song apart from the one Chris had previously taught him. He tried but he couldn't bring himself to play anything else. The rest of that lesson was filled up with Mr Powello asking him what the matter was.

“You're not your usual self today, what's troubling you?”

Alex couldn't answer. Alex was relieved when the bell sounded for break because he could get away from Mr Powello and his insistent questioning.

The break was for ten minutes so Alex just had time to go to the canteen and buy a Swiss roll something he always looked forward to. No sooner had he put the first bite in his mouth, he lost interest in it and decided he wasn't hungry after all. He went to the language block and up the stairs for his next lesson, Spanish. Then he had information technology to look forward to after Spanish with Miss Finkel! The previous night, Alex hadn't had time to cope with homework on top of doing farm work. The class boffin, Kathryn, walked in smiling to the teacher knowing that Alex hadn't done any work on his assignment. She had done it for him to say thanks for helping her litter pick, which was part of a detention she had been given falsely. Kathryn had previously been dobbed on for something she hadn't done. Alex knew that Miss Finkel wasn't one for accepting any excuses and he couldn't face her fierce tongue, it felt a relief to have Kathryn's help.

Alex had information technology next which was as much fun as watching paint dry! He walked in to the Learning Resource Centre, put his bag down, greeted Miss Charkle and sat down on his usual chair. Harry came through the big double doors and put his bag down next to Alex's. Sam followed closely behind, then Holly-Anne, Robin, James, Mattie and Olli. Then the inseparable threesome Adam, Andy and Omeed, looking as though they had something to hide. Miss C came out of her office with the Sunday Mirror newspaper in her hand; she put it down and looked around the room indicating that everyone should now get on with some work. Alex turned the computer on, he only needed to print off stuff for his biology coursework for the Tuesday coming. Miss C walked around the class, checking that everyone was actually doing some work. She was

only about three people away from Alex so he quickly clicked on “Word” and opened the document “Darrell Blunder”. It didn’t matter which file he opened just as long as he looked as if he was working.

After I.T Alex was due to go home and the only thing that mattered was that he caught the bus in time so that he could get back to Horsham and relax. As he lay on his bed that evening he found his mind drifting onto Chris and wondered how ill he really was.

4

Wolfson

After several months of being in a coma whilst at the Atkinson Morley Hospital, Tim finally came to visit me when I had regained consciousness.

“Hi Chris, Chris hi it’s me Tim”

This was what I heard coming from the edge of my bed with flashes of Tim coming into view. At first I wasn’t sure if it was a dream or not. When I realised it wasn’t a dream I sat bolt upright.

“Chris are you hungry, can you hear me, are you alright?”

It was like he was asking twenty questions all at once. I tried to talk but nothing came out. Tim called a nurse over.

“What am I doing wrong? He doesn’t answer me? I don’t know how to communicate with Chris, what do I do?” Tim said sounding very stressed.

The nurse seemed to ignore Tim’s pleas for help, coming over to me and addressing me rather than Tim.

“Gosh Chris you had a sore ride, how are you? Can you tell me how you are?”

All I could do was make an involuntary noise, which she responded to.

“Don’t worry Chris you’re in safe hands, can you nod your head for yes and shake your head from side to side for no?”

I tried with all my strength but I had lost my ability to move my head and neck.

“Ok Chris let’s try something else, what about blinking twice for yes and once for no?” she asked.



I blinked twice.

“Oh good, well done Chris, you are back with us.”

The nurse went away for about 10 minutes to continue discussing my case with the doctor, leaving Tim to talk to me about football. He hoped that by doing so he would get a response.

“Which out of these football teams is your favourite?” said Tim, showing me a football annual.

“Liverpool?”

I didn't respond.

“What about Chelsea?”

Again I didn't respond. I wish I could have said to Tim that I didn't like football much. Instead, thinking he was being kind he brought me a load of football videos for me to watch. Watching them kept me busy up to till 9pm that night; I have little interest in it anyway.

The next day I woke up to the noise of someone using a food blender, presumably to churn someone's breakfast up. To me it sounded more like someone trying to kick-start a Harley Davison it was so loud. I heard the kettle in the ward kitchen click on and off five times before I even got to see a nurse on the ward again!. Later that day Angie and Val from a rehab unit in Chailey, close to where I lived came up to see me to discuss the possibilities of me going there once I was well enough. Angie piped up.

“I wonder how long Pat will be in the lane.”

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