

The Protagonist: Who Am I

I used to know who I am. Today, well, I'm not so sure anymore. There are times my mind is clear and other times when I am completely and utterly confused. How did this happen? Why did it happen? The answer remains elusive...

I loved my life until three years ago. Once a poor boy growing up in Yonkers, New York, I became an established, well known vascular surgeon on Long Island, New York. A devoted husband, father and grandfather. Married to my loving wife for over fifty-four years, had my dream house on the water, and was able to indulge my hobbies of wood-working, gardening, and fishing.

While my career flourished, so did my family. Proud of my three kids who all excelled academically, and I enjoyed watching them participate in sports, extra-curricular activities, and helping each other as well as their friends. All three of them are as beautiful inside as they are outside. Not that they didn't help turn my hair gray or worry me—they did—it brought normalcy to my life too.

Before I knew it, life had changed. I'd grown older, reaching the time when I could retire. It was both a happy and sad time. How had it come upon me so fast. My wife and I decided to buy a place in Florida, dividing our time there and on Long Island. Until three years ago it was ideal. We loved the back and forth until I decided I'd had enough. No longer able to navigate stairs, the Florida house on one level was the logical place to be, embarking on a new chapter in our lives.

About three years ago my wife and I noticed my memory was not quite as sharp. I began forgetting things, as well as an increased body weakness. Over time, it got worse. A neurologist diagnosed me with mild cognitive impairment, a form of early dementia. Its progress is erratic, one day is good; the next is not. I wish I could predict what will happen, but I can't. I don't know myself. My mind gets foggy. I want to clear it, but, at times cannot. What will the future bring? I do not know, maybe I will never know.

The Antagonist: I Know Who You Are

What a life I lead. Choosing my victims is easy for me, hard for them. There is no rhyme nor reason to my methods. I come and go as I please, insidiously selecting whom I please when I please, invading their minds, sometimes mildly, other times fiercely. There are those who'd like to hide from me, but they cannot. They think if their minds are active, all will be well. I will tell you it is not so; it is purely the luck of the draw. The scientific world is still attempting to find an answer to my whys and wherefores. If one day it does, and many hope it will be so, I will be finished, totally done. In the meantime...

Approximately three years ago, I remember it so clearly, I decided to start my journey into his brain. He and his wife were on their way to dinner, listening to opera. It happened to be their favorite aria from La Boheme, which always reduced her to tears. At the end of the aria, he turned and asked, "What opera was that from?" She was stunned. I was not. It was the beginning...

Over the next year or so, little things would happen that he didn't understand. He'd constantly ask her, "Where are my keys? Did you see my glasses? Do you know where my book is?" It was an unending din, which at first was thought to be a natural part of aging. I took care of that!

Soon, forgetting things combined with a decline in physical strength was more the norm than not. It became apparent he was on the decline. A neurologist tested him, informing the family mild cognitive impairment or early dementia was assaulting his brain, and would remain there. Yes, that's my doing, my work being recognized. Good!

Traumatic? Definitely. Insidious? Yes. What will the future bring? Only I know for sure.