

Why me?

It first started when Alan was at high school. He was 14 and sitting in his Tuesday afternoon Biology class. His teacher was monotonously describing the human respiratory system. As he sat there, Alan felt an overwhelming urge to run out of the classroom and get his bike and start biking. Alan stared at the whiteboard and forced the feeling to recede a little. His face started to flush and he felt his stomach begin to churn and he dry retched. He tried again to force the feeling down, acutely aware of embarrassing himself in front of the class.

A cold white feeling started in his finger tips and started to move through his hands and up his arms. He somehow knew that when the feeling reached his torso, he would vomit the content of his stomach onto his desk. He tried desperately to stop the cold creeping up his arms. It continued relentlessly like miniature ravenous glaciers. When the cold reached his shoulders, he decided to take the least embarrassing option. He stood up quickly and ran for the door.

Now fully surrendered to the urge, he ran for the bike sheds, found his bike and jumped on. He raced down the school drive and without looking biked out into the traffic.

On her way to the dentist, the fat woman in the blue Toyota saw something dart in front of her. She braked instinctively and came to an abrupt halt. The 63 year old woman behind her in the white Lexus braked later and hit the Toyota, crushing both bumpers and most of the Toyota's rear lights. The traffic backed up behind them, including a three tonne flat-deck truck.

Alan heard the squeal of tyres and the crunch of the impact, but he kept riding without looking back. He biked as fast as he could until he was around the corner and over the railway line. He slowed down and realised that the urge had left him. He looked down at himself, surprised that he felt so normal. After thinking through his options he biked home, hoping in vain that his odd behaviour could somehow be covered up or explained away to his teacher, and if they found out, his parents.

As it happened, no one phoned the school and no one phoned Alan's parents. His biology teacher asked him what happened and Alan explained that he thought he was going to be sick. She was happy with the explanation and nothing more was said.

Of course Alan's school friends hassled him and a couple of them re-enacted his running from class. Sadly it was one of the last times his school friends thought of him as normal.

Two weeks later Alan sat with his friends in an especially boring morning assembly. The headmaster was talking about the upcoming school inspection. Alan was trying to work out how he could get his English homework finished before the third period, when it hit him again. This time it

hit him so hard he jumped. His friend Steve elbowed him in the ribs and laughed quietly.

Alan tensed all of his muscles and clenched his fists. He fought desperately against the urge that gripped his mind. He started to get red in the face. Steve edged away and at the time said "You all right Alan?"

Alan fought it as if he was wrestling a giant, but the urge got stronger and stronger. Finally his stomach got the better of him and he dry-retched with a loud and sickly sound. The urge to run strengthened again and Alan, with the fight gone out of him, stood up and ran through the line of seated boys, knocking Ritchie, the boy on the end, onto the floor.

In the middle of adjusting his notes the headmaster looked up to see Alan sprint for the nearest exit and crash through the doors and out into the sunlight. The headmaster pointed to a nearby prefect and indicated him to follow. The prefect jogged out the door and arrived at the quadrangle in time to see Alan speeding away on his bike as if he was being chased by a velocorapter in Jurassic Park.

Alan biked as fast as he could, tears streaming from his eyes, sobbing and gasping for breath. He slowed down at the school gate and immediately his urge commanded him to turn right. Alan complied, no longer interested in fighting it. The urge subsided somewhat and became more of a directive. Alan simply knew which turn to make each time he came to an intersection. He biked at an even pace for eleven kilometres until he came to a roundabout. He somehow knew that he had to bike around the roundabout six times, right in the middle of the road. He almost didn't care now whether he was knocked off his bike. Taking a deep breath and steeling himself for more embarrassment, he biked onto the roundabout, in the middle of the road and started circling.

It began quietly, but it soon escalated. The patient woman in the silver Nissan just stared at Alan. The young man with tattoos in the black Holden honked his horn. The big guy in the blue van shook his fist. The traffic started to back-up and a couple of people got out of their cars.

'Get out of it" yelled a grumpy old guy from the window of his old green Morrie. Alan kept going, four, five and finally six. He biked off slowly down the street past a line of cars. A local busy-body in a white Honda recognised his school uniform, and that afternoon phoned the school.

Any semblance of feeling normal was squeezed from Alan in the ensuing days. He had concerned discussions with his parents, his form teacher, the headmaster, the school counsellor and an educational psychologist. Alan told them the truth. There was no lie he could tell them, no cover-story he could think of. He felt embarrassed and awkward and abnormal.

Regular counselling was recommended and Alan's teachers were advised to monitor his behaviour. In fact Alan's behaviour was perfectly normal for nearly two months.