Unsettled

In Brian’s twenties, he moved into a new apartment every year. Nothing wrong, he just enjoyed upgrading. There were many changes, some major, but Brian felt settled. Now eighty, Brian felt in his heart he was still in his twenties though his body was clearly aging. He woke with some energy, which lasted until he got out of bed. Then a large mug of coffee as he read the news online, usually depressing, checked his email, usually depressing, checked his social media, often depressing…took his pills.

After an hour, he stood, usually to go to the washroom and get more coffee.

Anything that broke that routine left him tired. Going out could be fun but tiring, plus there were necessary rest stops. He was fine sitting, it was when he moved around that he became tired, out of breath. More Vitamin B12 and D helped, but there was only so much energy to be pumped into his aging body. One Summer, Brian decided he needed to install batteries. So much else in his life drew energy from batteries, why not him?

He consulted with doctors and had a large rechargeable battery installed near his gall bladder. To prevent being tired, all Brian had to do was plug himself in each morning, then plug himself in again at night, recharging as he slept. Any convenient wall outlet did the job. It was an innovative idea, and as with many such ideas, at first it worked great.

However, the unique battery took a lot of recharging. Brian saw his power bill, already quite high with recent increases, skyrocket. Soon he was carefully about using the clothing washer, hung out clothes around his living room to dry, and sweltered on hot days because he could not afford air conditioning any longer. Brian had energy but sat soaked in sweat—during heat waves, going outside was a bad idea for folks his age.

He wondered whether he was paying too high a price for feeling energetic. He could no longer afford another operation to replace the battery. He tried recharging only partially—did not feel right, he tired too quickly. In the end, he was evicted for not paying his rent, and social services, given his situation, placed him in an institution where Brian could be plugged in as needed, for the rest of his life. The institution was dreary but he had plenty of energy, met new friends and enjoyed working in the library.

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