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ONE SATURDAY LAST SUMMER

The weather has been cold and wet and blustery lately (I don't think it's figured out that it's almost time for spring), and the wind and rain have got me thinking about summer.

I know you might think that it's a bit early in the year to be thinking about summer, but please do bear with me, dear readers, for all the inclement weather has reminded me of an anecdote that I simply must relate to you, notwithstanding the season. So I would like to invite you to suspend your thoughts of where we stand in the calendar year and journey back with me to one Saturday last summer.

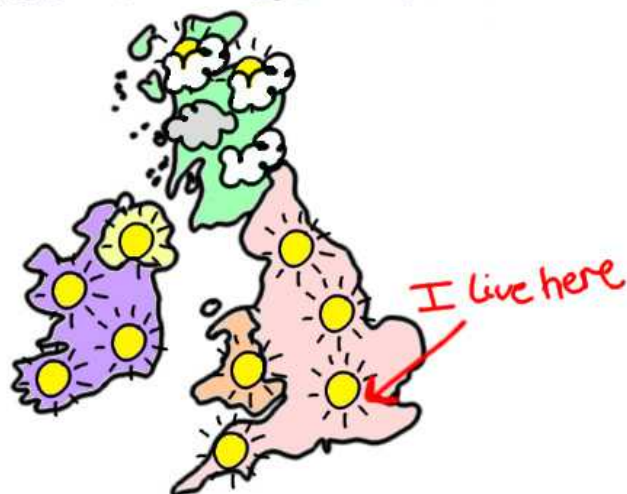
It had been one of those hard weeks, full of work to do and errands to run. Every day that week had been sunny, but I had been too busy to enjoy the sunshine. I had not had even one spare minute to just sit outside and feel the sun on my face. By the time Saturday came around, I was keen - determined, in fact - to spend the day relaxing outside in the sun doing, well, absolutely nothing. And as you know, dear readers, I am a very determined hamster: when I decide to do something, I get it done. Doing nothing, though, as I learned the hard way that Saturday, is something of a different proposition.

The Saturday in question started off looking as if it would be a beautiful day. I was actually awakened that morning by the sunlight streaming through my window. There was not a cloud in the sky. It seemed like a perfect day for doing nothing much at all.



Even the weatherman's map was covered in little suns. (There might have been one or two clouds, but they were over Scotland. I live in London, and London is far away from Scotland, so I did not pay any attention to those clouds, determined as I was to stick to my plan for the day.)

TODAY'S WEATHER



I decided to take the lid off my box to fill my home with fresh air. Then, after I tidied up my box and ate some cereal for breakfast, I dragged my deckchair out of the hall cupboard and set it up on the grass. I was ready to start doing nothing in the sunshine.

I sat down on my deckchair for a moment, enjoying the feel of the sun on my face.



Do you know what it's like when you've just started to relax and you suddenly remember that there's something you've forgotten to do? Well then, you know exactly how I felt when I remembered that I had forgotten to do my laundry! Well, laundry isn't exactly a big job, but doing laundry would mean doing a bit more than nothing. I decided that I could allow myself to break away from my plan to do nothing, just to do that little something.

I rushed back into my box, pulled my dirty clothes out of the hamper and stuffed them into the washing machine. Quickly, I added detergent and switched on the machine.



Then I rushed back outside to my deckchair. I had done only a *little* something, so I didn't feel too bad about it.

It was still gloriously sunny. I sat back down and closed my eyes. Ah, the joys of doing nothing! I must have fallen asleep in the sun, because the next thing I knew, I jolted awake.

Bleep, bleep, bleep! Bleep, bleep, bleep!



It was the washing machine letting me know that my laundry was ready to hang. I really didn't feel like getting up, but the bleeping was starting to annoy me, and it was not as if I would be able to get any sleep, anyway, with all that bleeping going on. I climbed off my deckchair and went back inside.

I decided to hang the laundry outside. At least that way I could keep one part of my promise to myself: I would be outside in the sun. Of course, I would be hanging the laundry whilst I was there, but it wouldn't take long, and then I could get back to doing nothing.



My laundry drying, I sat back down on my deckchair. I thought I deserved another nap, my earlier nap having ended so abruptly, but no matter what I did, I just couldn't fall asleep. I wiggled around in my deckchair trying to get comfortable, but that only seemed to make my problem worse.



The more I twisted and turned, the more uncomfortable I felt.



Just wiggling about in my deckchair trying to get to sleep was getting me nowhere with doing nothing: I certainly wasn't feeling at all relaxed. Sheepishly, I grabbed the morning newspaper from where it lay on my doorstep. A bit of reading would not amount to doing very much, I decided, and I could choose to read only the most uninteresting pieces of news. Surely those stories would send me to sleep in no time at all - and I would succeed in doing nothing!

As I sat in the sunshine reading the newspaper, I began to relax again. As it turned out, nothing particularly interesting had happened in the world, and my eyelids started to grow heavy with sleep. The newspaper slipped from my hands on to the grass. I was finally back on track with my plan.



There was just one problem: I was just a little bit thirsty. Now, I wasn't completely and utterly parched, but I always find that if I fall asleep feeling even the slightest bit thirsty, I wake up with a headache. That was why I got up to fetch a glass of water. I had no choice, dear readers. I had no choice at all.

As I sipped my water and settled back down in my deckchair, I could not help but notice that the sun seemed to have slipped behind a cloud.



I ignored the cloud, deciding that it was probably on its way to Scotland. After all, I had to get on with doing nothing in the sun, and I was not going to let one little cloud get in my way, especially a cloud that was not even supposed to be there, according to the weather forecast. I closed my eyes and willed the sun to come back out.

I was dozing when I felt it: a little droplet of water on my nose.



I wiped it away with my hand, still half asleep, and snuggled back in my deckchair. Why did I not think that it might be a raindrop? Why did I not think that perhaps I should go indoors? Why did I not think about my home, with its roof removed? Why did I not think about the laundry I had carefully hung outside? Perhaps I was too busy doing nothing to think of anything.

By the time I heard the thunder and startled awake, it was too late for thinking.



The sky was covered with big black storm clouds, and it was pouring with rain - not little raindrops coming down in a gentle shower, but the kind of rain that seems to come down in sheets. I was soaking wet. I glanced over at my laundry. It was even wetter than it had been when I'd hung it out to dry. This was no time for doing nothing, and there was not one glimmer of sunshine in which to do nothing, anyway. In that moment, I abandoned my goal for the day. Quickly I grabbed my laundry from the line and ran towards my box.



And that's when I remembered that I'd taken the lid off my box. Well, perhaps 'remembered' is the wrong word; 'was reminded' might be a more accurate way of putting it. Oh, I don't suppose it really matters. What I mean to say is that when I opened the door to my box, water came rushing out, which jogged my memory.



I was soaking wet and, by now, freezing cold. My home was flooded, and everything I owned was soaking wet. I resolved, there and then, that if this was what happened when I did nothing, I'd never do nothing again. When would I do nothing, anyway? I could see that in the near future I'd have to spend all my time repairing my home.

Luckily for me, I have great friends. When I told Leo what had happened to me, he immediately invited me to stay with him until I could repair my home. What's more, the very next day, both he and Kimster came with me to survey the damage.



They insisted on working alongside me every day until, finally, my home looked just as it had before that fateful Saturday.

After we finished the works, Kimster said, "It's a lovely day, Harrison. Why don't we just sit out in the sunshine and do nothing for a while?"

I just looked at her.

"Hmm," she said sheepishly, "that's how this all started in the first place, isn't it?"

The moral of this blog post is pretty obvious, I think, dear readers: whatever you do in life, don't do nothing. Oh yes, and don't rely on the weather forecast. They sometimes get it wrong.

Bye for now!

Harrison Hamster I
21st February 2014