

Brace yourselves, Dear Reader, for I'm about to share a cautionary tale with you. One of woe, misery, and regret. One that's completely avoidable if you heed my caution. Are you prepared?

This story begins, like many stories, once upon a time. Although not so long ago, if I'm honest. In fact, it began just a few weeks ago at the time I'm hunched over my writing desk typing like a madman. You see, a week or two ago the young adults and I were crowded around the living room, enjoying the final few minutes of the sun, just [prior to the time change](#).

I was listening to each one rant about their opinions on the upcoming impingement on time itself. I'd heard each argument before, and had to refrain from chuckling when one of the young adults stomped his foot, reminiscent of his former three year old self, and said, "I refuse to participate. You can participate if *you* want, but *I* won't. I shall remain on old time."

I had to yank myself from the what if's and why's I'd been running through my head about plot problems my current manuscript was giving me. It was such a severe yank back to reality I'm afraid I must have stared at him like I'd forgotten who he was because he glared and growled a guttural, "What?"

Now, something you must know about the unnamed innocent young adult here is that he has a genuine growl. It used to be an elephant trumpet. When he was still in single digits he'd get frustrated and let out this insane elephant trumpeting sound. The first time it happened my husband and I exchanged a look and burst into hysterics. It didn't help the situation, because it went from sounding like a rather happy elephant to a rabid wolf. Thus, when I heard the growl I knew he thought I wasn't taking him seriously.

"It's just that if you function on old time you'll still be functioning on new time."

The glare continued.

"I mean, you have an appointment, right? So they say, 'See you Saturday at 2pm.' When will you show up? Will you actually remember that means 1pm for you, and if you do, aren't you

still just dealing with new time anyway, so setting the clocks forward would be a lot easier than showing up late.”

He scoffed.

Not that I blame him, after all I’m the one who changes the clocks. Yes, yes I know that’s not *why* he was scoffing.

There sat the Scoffer, still scoffing. The other young adult busy googling, because in a crisis that’s what he does. He googles things. You think I jest? He spent two hours googling the price of bananas yesterday because in a French class he had to translate that 7 euro was awfully expensive for a banana. Recently when I mentioned I should clean the oven, he googled all the information he could about the cleaning function of a self-cleaning oven. He’s totally your man if you’re playing trivia- or if you need a handy helper for research.

And I sat there, wondering if Scoffer was really going to play by old time rules. For just as surely as his brother will google and research in a crisis, this one will revolt. The surest way to be know something won’t get done is to inform him it must be done, and in a very specific way. He has the resolve and stubbornness of his... well, I must confess, his mother.

“Good news, it looks like you don’t have to play by old time rules,” Googler says. “You just need to move. There’s a [couple of US states that do not participate](#) in the time change.”

Scoffer sits up straighter, nods his head and says, “Lay them on me, but I swear if any of them are places that will make me sweat more than I do here, I’m not moving.”

I shook my head, and decided to [read my book](#). I have no idea what else unfolded around me, as I became lost in what I was reading. That is, until an almighty ear piercing screech ripped through the house.

I’m incredibly sensitive to noise. The kind of sensitivity that makes me jump when a car decides to rev its engine, the kind of sensitivity that despises crowded places because the noise is so overwhelming. I jumped, and not just a little bit either, I jumped a whole lot. I

cleared the chair, dropped the book, and landed on the floor, and made two young adults, who were covering their ears, chuckle.

The noise, having come from upstairs, made me demand to know what was going on up there. And since only one person was up there, I texted him. Yes, I texted because I was still sprawled on the floor. My husband informed me that he heard it, and he thought it was the fire alarm in need of a new battery.

And this my friends, is where one should heed extreme caution. Why? Because not only did we not change that battery right away, since we had no spares, we did not go out and get new batteries. Nor did any of us bother to put *Battery* on the [grocery list](#) that hangs on the side of the fridge.

I've seen an odd assortment of items on that list that range from life size cannon to Vegemite. The grocery list is normally the sanity saver in our house. With a wide range of food allergies it means I never know when the eggs are gone, or the milk. I carry on in my blissful way of not knowing until someone groans and says they need to run to the store. Thus, there's a grocery list, one of the very first items purchased and put up when we moved across the globe. The rule is, if you're out, or almost out, put it on the list and I'll get it. So why did we not think of adding battery to the list?

A week went by without further incident, and the more that time marched on the more we felt secure in our blissful ignorance of what was lurking in the shadows until it finally caught up with us. That dreadful fire alarm went off at one o'clock in the morning on a cold and dark Monday.

Now, I've told you before that I can sleep through storms and alarms and sirens. It's all true, but something about the pitch and tone of that fire alarm made me sit bolt upright in bed. There's a fire alarm in our bedroom, and I glared at the little green dot on the ceiling. But, hearing nothing further, I laid back down wondering if the noise was just in a dream I had. Please tell me that happens to you, too?

It was as though that alarm was waiting until I had settled back into the pillows, covers pulled

up snugly and then it let out a second ear piercing screech of doom. I wasn't the only one to be woken this time. My husband jumped out of bed and left the room to figure out which alarm was the troublemaker.

I laid in bed not really wanting to pull myself out of the warm covers yet again, but the incessant beeping wasn't letting up. A bedroom door opened, and a mumbling voice asked what was going on.

"Just the fire alarm, go back to sleep," my husband said.

Dear Reader, it's true, I actually snorted! I mean the calmness of his voice, the concern in Researcher's voice, and the image I conjured of him going back to bed and researching the whole problem just overwhelmed me in my sleep deprived state of mind.

Throwing back the covers, I decided to join the small party, only to find my husband balanced on a chair in the laundry room messing with the ceiling. I confess here and now that I must not have been as awake as I presumed because I recall saying, "What on earth are you doing?"

"Checking the fire alarm. I think it's this one."

We've lived in this house for two years now. I have never seen a fire alarm in the laundry room. The very room I do laundry in once a week. The room I frequent in order to grab a rag, spare trash bag, or check the depth of snow or size of hail on the roof. The same room I walk through every morning to reach the one beyond it and workout. Yet, not once have I ever noticed the fire alarm on the ceiling.

"Huh," I said, leaning on the dryer. "That's so weird, I never noticed that before."

The fire alarm seemed to punctuate my sentence with another screech. My husband had pulled it off the wall only to find it was one of those nifty new fangled ones that's wired into the house. It took another five minutes for him to get it back on the wall and finally find the battery compartment to open.

With great relish he yanked that battery out, and we both sighed with relief. Not to be outdone the alarm beeped. One, tiny little beep. And then, as we glared at it, it beeped more. We left the room, pulling the door closed. It did little to block the every twenty minute screech the alarm continued to omit, it floated out from under the door, down the hallway and seeped through every crack it could find to torment us further.

Back in bed, the blanket muffling one ear I grumbled, “Do you think the trucker stop will have batteries?” We live near an interstate, and thus we have a few places that specifically cater to truckers, but I have no idea if they are open 24/7. My husband shrugged.

As I tried to get to sleep amongst the annoying noise, I began to wonder if I could call the fire department. I mean I could, but would they have pity on me and offer me a spare battery? Or would they point out that [I should have changed it with the time change like they’ve been telling people for years](#). And then lecture me about how I have the fancy shopping list on the fridge and I should have put battery on it.

I counter that I wouldn’t call the emergency number, so I wouldn’t wake the whole station. I could even offer to run over and pick up said battery. My mind turned to the lady who called 911 for milk when her baby was hungry and she couldn’t go out and get some. I decided that I don’t want to go viral for anything, much less a battery, and attempted to shove a corner of the blanket in my ear.

Which led me to wondering if shoving a blanket in your ear will get you as big of a lecture from the Dr as using a q-tip does. And then I find myself trying to work my way out of a scene problem in my current manuscript, until the house falls silent.

“Is it over?”

“Just go to sleep.”

Sleep I did, until the alarm started up again at three in the morning. And continued, on and off until the local stores opened. I held no qualms about going out in my pajamas. My husband, on the other hand, demanded a hat to wear, one that was not pink. Fair enough.

By seven thirty the alarm had a fresh battery in it, and had fallen silent. We had 2 more packs of batteries for back-ups and to change the other alarms, because no one wants to go through that chaos again!

A handwritten-style graphic that says "Author's Note:". The text is in a cursive, grey font. Above the word "Note:" is a small, simple illustration of a pen nib pointing downwards.

Dearest Reader,

Do not be like my family and wait until one am to realize you failed to change your fire alarm batteries. Just change them at a normal hour of the day, like right now if you haven't tended to them in a while.

And if you're wondering, [Scoffer](#) is functioning on "normal" time, whatever that means. But, when asked for the hour he will say something like, "Two thirty-four new time, but one thirty-four old time." Let's hope he's not late for his upcoming appointment, shall we?

[Researcher](#) admitted that he went back to bed and looked up fire alarms. Exactly what topic I have no idea, I didn't ask. I'm sure in time he'll tell us all about it though. And if you're wondering, the cheapest price on bananas, as of the time of writing this article, was [.45 a kilo {two pounds two ounces}](#) in Pakistan.

As for the plot problem, I've still got them, but they are on completely different aspects of the story now. The characters threw a curve ball at me, and ripped the story wide open. And now I have a whole new mess to mop up. It's better known as the murky middle, a terrifying and beautiful place to be where all the little strands start coming together.

The Husband has still yet to catch up on sleep, and has a spare battery beside the bed. You know because either he's too tired to put it away, or he's keeping it safe for the next fire alarm emergency.

All joking aside, we're grateful that the lesson learned came at the lack of sleep and not an

actual fire, because we all know how important our fire alarms are, and that there is no good alternative.

The Reluctant Author:

