

Brain Arthritis

by Jim Gold

Jack's brain was getting stiff. When he spoke, words congealed in his mouth and fell out like sticks. He decided to see Dr. Hartmind, who did an immediate brain scan. "Jack," he said, "you are suffering from brain arthritis. It is curable disease, but the treatment is very painful."

"So is the pain, Doctor. I'll do anything to get rid of it."

"Good." The doctor nodded. "A positive attitude is important in this treatment. Traditionally, we give our patients only aspirin. However, a laboratory in New Jersey has developed a special drug for treatment of brain arthritis. It is now available in pill form. At your stage, the disease is so advanced, only concentrated doses can help."

The doctor reached into his drawer and pulled out a small bottle. "Take these pills. They'll make change easier and lessen the pain. Take them every day for one year. After that, you won't need them anymore. You'll be able to change all by yourself."

"Thank you so much," said Jack. "I feel better already."

"That's one of the miracles of these pills," the doctor explained. "You feel better even before you take them."

Jack went home. After lunch he took his first pill, a round white one with a sweet fragrance. Then he left his house for his afternoon stroll. Every day for twenty-three years he had walked the same street, and always turned left at Baker Avenue. That day, however, he decided to turn right!

The pills were working.

He walked past dull red-brick houses. Suddenly, he noticed sparkling window panes, polished handrails, and black-shingled roofs. Maple trees stood proud and straight, their sturdy branches vibrating and dynamic, like powerful hands reaching towards the sky.

He glanced at the street. Even the asphalt shone!

Everything looked so different, so new. The fire hydrant seemed to survey the neighborhood like a conquering general.

Then Jack began to feel uneasy. This was enough adventure for one day. He returned home, sat down in his familiar living room armchair, and opened [A History of the Black Sea](#)

Trade; Cumulative Effects on Eleventh Century Expansion During the Byzantine Empire.

The book's 543 pages had been translated from German into English; many sentences went on for two pages and more. Jack began reading, even though the author was a marvel of dullness. He read every word, comma, period, page number, and footnote up to page 34. By page 35, he was almost asleep.

Suddenly, a new daring pumped adrenalin into his stomach. He slammed the book shut and threw it across the room. It smacked against the wall, and fell into the waste basket where it belonged. Jack smiled triumphantly. He rose, approached his book shelf, and picked out Martin Eden, by Jack London. Licking his lips, he sat down to read.

In time, Jack began changing many attitudes. He learned to formulate a thought, act on it, and, if it didn't work, try a new one. As he changed and became more flexible, he took fewer pills. Eventually, he didn't even need them. Although, like all those afflicted with brain arthritis, he had occasional relapses, he nevertheless struggled to bring a new vision to each day.

Brain arthritis had loosened its grip on him.

And he had a better grip on life.

from *Carlos the Cloud*

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