

I got the shock  
of my life!

verandah crashing down.

'It must have been some sort of mini-cyclone,' Jean said when it finally passed.

'I'd better go and check on Jen's place,' I worried.

Luckily, apart from some damaged guttering and a few chairs in the pool, everything looked OK and, in relief, I went to the fridge for a drink.

I touched the handle and – POW! – a searing pain shot through my body and then... everything went white.

I was floating, dream-like, towards a bright light at the end of a tunnel.

I wasn't in pain. In fact, I felt peaceful and content. I didn't have a worry in the world and when I made out the image of a man's face in front of me, I wasn't scared.

'Go back,' he said. 'It's not your time yet, Simon.'

And then he faded away – as did the bright light – and I awoke to find myself lying underneath my car in Jen's

It happened  
to me

lightning had hit Jenny's house, and travelled through a wall to her fridge. The voltage had knocked me flying into a wall, breaking my shoulder.

'We found your thongs by the fridge,' Dad said. 'The doctor reckons they absorbed some of the shock. It could have been a lot worse otherwise.'

'My thongs saved my life?' I asked incredulously, and Dad nodded.

After I'd been injured, I'd somehow managed to set off the alarm by crawling into the garage.

'I don't remember that.'

I said to Mum and Dad. 'But I do remember something else...'

I told them about the

thongs!

Ever since he was eight, Simon Leggett's ambition was to be a funeral director. But why on earth should he feel he had such a calling?

# Saved by the thongs!

A long black car slowly rounded the corner. Behind it came a procession of other black vehicles. Inside each one were people weeping.

I was eight and had never seen anything like it. 'What's happening?' I asked Mum. 'Why is everyone crying?'

'It's a funeral,' Mum explained. 'Someone's died, and everybody's upset because they're going to the cemetery for the burial.'

I let her words sink in as the car rolled by. There was a dead person in there! I felt terrified, yet strangely inspired, too.

'One day, I'm going to help people like that and make them happy again,' I said.

'That's lovely, Simon,' Mum replied.

Hers were the last encouraging words I heard on the subject.

'You want to be a *what?*' my friends would ask. 'A funeral director?'

Even those in the industry were disbelieving and after I

left school, it took several attempts before I finally found a funeral parlour which was prepared to hire me.

It didn't take long for me to confirm I had found my calling.

I took enormous satisfaction in helping to calm and comfort grieving relatives and friends. The only bit I found difficult was reassuring them about the afterlife. Despite my own Christian beliefs, I simply wasn't sure what happened to us.

In fact I was still terrified by the thought of death.

'I'm sure your loved one is at peace,' was all I could say.

Two years passed and I moved to Queensland to try my luck with a larger firm.

My friend Jenny let me stay at her house while she was away and not long after, I went to have dinner with her neighbour, Jean.

We had just sat down when the sky turned black and the wind picked up.

Within minutes a powerful gale hit, scattering the outdoor furniture and sending the

garage.

'Help!' I

cried. In the distance I could hear

Jenny's security alarm screaming loudly.

Finally, I heard a voice. It was another neighbour, Rob.

'The garage is locked, Simon!' he yelled. 'Can you crawl to the laundry and unlock the door?'

Somehow, I did. The pain was unbearable, but I made it to the door and Rob picked me up.

'What happened to you?' the doctor asked at the hospital.

'I don't know,' I mumbled.

More doctors were called and eventually, a specialist looked at my tongue, hands and feet.

'I can't believe it,' he said. 'He's been hit by lightning. You can see the burn marks.'

Incredibly, it was true. I had been electrocuted after a bolt of

tunnel and the man who sent me back.

'An out-of-body experience?' Mum exclaimed. 'That's incredible!'

Today, I'm 24 and living in Sanctuary Cove, Qld. Two months have passed since I was struck by lightning and I'm on the mend.

I'm still amazed that I survived, and I'm also amazed by my journey down that tunnel. It's made me even more certain of my calling as a funeral director.

Now I no longer offer platitudes and avoid talk of the afterlife – I am able to assure mourners that it exists and that it's beautiful.

I know, because I've been there.

True story as told to Erin Reid

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