

I have a family. I don't want to forget that, but there's really nothing I can do with the information right now, besides progressing to the point where I can meet them. If I can't stand up without risking losing everything, I won't ever be able to stand up, and then I'll be worse than useless. I have to be able to stand up if I want to meet them.

My mind runs through my fall again. It feels like I'm trying to remember every detail from the last few days, instead of every detail from an event that happened just a few minutes ago. When I reach the version of myself with temporary amnesia, I realize I was still stronger than I had been when I first remember waking up here. My memories may not carry over, but my progress certainly does.

And really, I wasn't in any serious danger of losing my memory. Falling isn't like the real memory wall. It's a memory... fence. Something I can hop easily.

With that in mind...

Stand up, fall down, pass it on. I emphasize the thought as much as I can, then follow through with it. It'll be like building up a resistance to poison. Small doses of something I know I can survive will make me more resistant to the larger, more fatal doses.

I'm in a room. The loudest sounds here are the rattling gust of air in and out of my lungs and the whisper of cloth against skin as my chest expands and contracts. I'm laying on the ground. The floor is smooth, but not slippery at all. It feels like rubber. My body aches, especially my head, and my feet feel rubbed raw. I'm wearing a smooth hospital gown and nothing else. I note everywhere the gown is touching skin. The room feels nice—not too hot or cold. The gown has a tear along the left side, going from an inch or so below my armpit to around an inch above my waistline. Judging by the stillness of the air here, the room is very small and uninhabited by anyone else. I can hear that omnipresent buzz of electricity, but it's very quiet. This is nice.

I lay on the ground for a while, not feeling confident to stand up. Eventually I feel secure enough to try raising an arm. I note the feel of air passing around it and between my fingers. It's difficult to keep track of the position of my elbow, the wrist, and each finger joint, but not impossible. Harder is paying attention to the way my body shifts to stay balanced on the ground. Skin presses harder against the ground on the right side of my back, and presses softer on the left side. The gown I'm wearing stretches tight in some places. New folds and furrows are created elsewhere. The arm goes up until it's directly vertical, and suddenly I'm wondering what I was doing with that arm in the first place.

I look back, marvelling at how I seem to have near-memorized every little detail about the last few seconds. The recent memories offer no explanation, so I look farther. Quickly I hit a wall. My recent memories are like a river—there are many of them, but not an overwhelming amount. I can sort through them fairly easily. The events about forty breaths before now? Like a dam breaking. I prod at them a bit, and revise my statement. They're a big crack in a dam, or maybe a smaller dam breaking. Or just a big river. But enough of that.

With effort, I push through the memory wall, absorbing my fall and all the little details that overwhelmed me. The memories before the fall wash over me, stunning me for a few hundred breaths. *Stand up, fall down, pass it on.* The memories came back easier this time. My reasoning for wanting to continue in mind, I follow through with it again.

I'm in a room. The loudest sounds here are the rattling gust of air in and out of my lungs and the whisper of cloth against skin as my chest expands and contracts. I'm laying on the ground. The floor is smooth, but not slippery at all. It feels like rubber. I hurt. My head feels like

it's about to split in two and the entire right side of my body feels like it's been pummeled by a sandstorm. I look back, wondering how I got here and why the information has not come already. I hit a wall and push through, annoyed to have to go to this much effort only to remember what just happened. The memories of the fall stun me for a second. *Stand up, fall down, pass it on.* I can remember the reasons for thinking that, but nothing beyond the second most recent fall. I don't want to waste time, so I continue the pattern right away.

I'm in a room. The loudest sounds here are the loudly rattling gust of air in and out of my lungs and the whisper of cloth against skin as my chest expands and contracts. I'm laying on the ground. The floor is smooth, but not slippery at all. It feels like rubber. I hurt. My head feels like it's about to split in two and the entire right side of my body feels like it's been pummeled by a sandstorm. I look back, wondering how I got here and why the information has not come already. I hit a wall and push through, annoyed to have to go to this much effort only to remember what just happened. The memories of the fall stun me for a second. *Stand up, fall down, pass it on.* I can remember the reasons for thinking that, but nothing beyond the second most recent fall. I don't want to waste time, so I continue the pattern right away.

Everything hurts. My face and especially nose hurt, my hands and wrists hurt, my right knee hurts, my left ankle hurts. I'm on my hands and knees. An iron-like stench pervades my nose and mouth, complemented by a similar taste and a wet feeling all over my face, right leg, arms, and clothes. Where am I? A wave of pain shudders through me, leaving me facedown on the ground by the end. I don't even remember falling. Looking back, the hundreds of memories of individual changes in position are drowned out by the much louder memories of the parts of me that are in pain. Mentally gritting my teeth (I don't have the concentration to physically do it) I delve into the past, pushing through a red haze of insignificant details to find why I'm here. What I find is a desperate message to myself. *Stand up, fall down, pass it on.* I don't understand why I should do this, but my critical thinking skills are impaired by the pain, and from the urgency of the previous message I infer I don't have time to figure things out anyways. I repeat the message, injecting some of the pain I am feeling into it. I then struggle slowly to a standing position, the effort driving the last of my higher brain functions into the job at hand. A flurry of high-pitched noises assaults my ears. I finish standing, and relinquish my already shaky grasp on balance.

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Everything hurts. My face and especially nose hurt, my hands and wrists hurt, my right knee hurts, my left ankle hurts. I'm on my back. An iron-like stench pervades my nose and

mouth, complemented by a similar taste and a wet feeling all over my face, right leg, arms, and clothes. The back of my throat is slowly filling with a thick liquid which I swallow instinctively. Where am I? A wave of pain shudders through me, leaving me shaking when it recedes. Mentally gritting my teeth (I don't have the concentration to physically do it) I delve into the past, pushing through a red haze of insignificant details to find why I'm here. What I find is a desperate message to myself. *Stand up, fall down, pass it on.* I don't understand why I should do this, but my critical thinking skills are impaired by the pain, and from the urgency of the previous message I infer I don't have time to figure things out anyways. I try to stand up, only for my upper arms to collide with something narrow and painful, followed shortly by my chest. Okay... before I can stand up I have to escape these wires somehow. I struggle against them, pushing, pulling, and biting until my teeth are aching and the wires have grown slippery with my blood. It's no use; I'll get out sooner if I let the wires dry, build up my strength, and try again. There are no knots to untie or anything—the wires have been welded to each other and the floor where they would otherwise end.

While I wait, and when the pain has subsided enough for me to be lucid, I look back on how I got here. It must have been an urgent need, or I wouldn't be so injured and hell bent on standing up and falling again. After looking through the iteration before the current one, I push through another burst of memories into an iteration nearly identical to the previous one.

How sure am I I had a good reason for doing this?

I look through a few dozen more iterations, all nearly identical to the last few, before realizing that either I'm being stupid now, or I was an utter moron at the start of the loop. I shuffle through another few hundred iterations as the pain starts to subside. By now I can point out nearly every one of the numerous injuries I've sustained and tell when and where it was acquired. The shallow nick on the top of my right ear? Two hundred and forty-one iterations before present I barely scraped the wall as I fell. The information is entirely useless—what I want to know is *why* I stuck myself in the loop, whether it was on purpose and I need to continue as quickly as possible, or it was on accident... and I will be furious if the pain I'm going through, have been going through for many hours, is the result of a harmless mistake with barely any thought behind it.

Hundreds flick through my mind as I absorb more and more of what brought me here. Each subsequent iteration I remember, the message to be passed on shrinks in urgency instead of growing. Finally I reach the first iteration. My own stupidity stuns me into mental silence.

...That was a bad idea. That was a really, really, grade-A spectacularly bad idea. I don't want to lose my memory, and the only way I can do that is by falling, and what do I do? I fall. I do the *one thing* that comes closest to killing me hundreds and hundreds of times, because there's a chance that if I do it enough times it'll stop being dangerous. This isn't like trying to build up a resistance to poison by taking larger and larger doses, this is like trying to build up a resistance to bullets by playing Russian Roulette until I'm shot. If the people keeping me here hadn't intervened, I probably would have killed myself. These wires saved my life.

"I...M.....B...A...C...K." I tell the room.

"What H-A-P-P-E-N-E-D?"

I'm too tired to explain. "L...E...T.....M...E.....O...U...T?"

"So you can R-E-S-U-M-E?"

"No."

"C-O-N-V-I-N-C-E me."

Ugh. "I.....A...C...C...I...D...E...N...T...A...L...L...Y....." I gasp for breath. Never using that word again.

“C...A...U...G...H...T.....M...Y...S...E...L...F.....I...N.....A.....L...O...O...P.....I...T.....W...O...N...T
.....H...A...P...P...E...N.....A...G...A...I...N.”

Hissing fills the room once again. I wake up ninety-six thousand breaths later, decidedly less exhausted. I'm still laying in the same place, but the wires are gone and the blood and I seem to have been cleaned up. I still want to get to the point where I don't risk my life every time I stand up. A few hundred thousand breaths pass, giving me time for healing and recovery, and like a fool I try to stand up again.

I may not have muscle memory anymore—nothing is automatic—but I have the next best thing. While I was falling over and over again, my mind was turning the action into a habit. Mental muscle memory. It's the difference between adding large numbers in kindergarten vs. college. Still the same motions and mostly the same thoughts, but after so much practice it's much easier to go through the motions.

The details of standing have been carved into my mind with a steak knife. I still have to pay attention to every little thing, but by now doing that is the path of least resistance, and it feels much easier than it did the first time I tried. I lean against the corner until my legs tire, slide back to the ground to rest, then stand up again. After a few hundred iterations of this exercise I think I'm ready to try moving. I inch my feet towards the corner until there's barely any weight on the wall. The feet hurriedly go back to their original positions as I start to topple.

Too little, too late. I can feel myself slipping, both mentally and physically, and then I'm sliding down the wall, the familiar overload of information slamming into me. All control over the situation is lost.

When I recover, I realize there was no temporary amnesia this time. Just a moment of disorientation as the memories come back. A few hundred repeats later, the disorientation is gone too. I'm getting stronger.

Eventually I'm sliding around the room haphazardly. Being able to stand against the wall, lean one way, and walk-fall towards another corner is incredibly satisfying; I finally have some mobility other than dragging myself like a zombie or something. Now that falling isn't a threat to my identity there's no longer the same push to learn how to stand, but with nothing better to do I may as well continue working towards it.

I get up again and push away from the wall. My feet stay rooted in place—I don't feel anywhere near confident enough to move my feet as well as my hands when I'm trying to balance. I push farther and farther from the wall until I'm hardly leaning at all. My legs and back are rigid—I couldn't concentrate on anything less simple and remain upright. Finally my hand leaves the wall. I waver for a second, then fall. Time to try again.