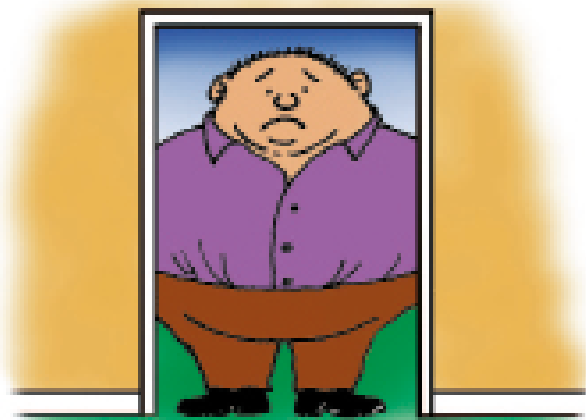


# *Epilepsy*

The background of the cover is a photograph of a dark-stained wooden door. The door has a central glass panel with a frosted or etched design showing the silhouettes of three men wearing hats, likely detectives. Below the glass panel is a small brass nameplate that reads "Debbie & Co.". To the right of the door is a dark wood bookshelf filled with numerous books, some with spines that appear to be leather-bound. The overall lighting is somewhat dim, creating a classic, perhaps slightly mysterious atmosphere.

## **The Detective's Story**

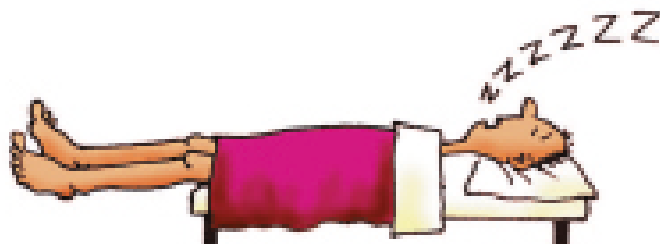
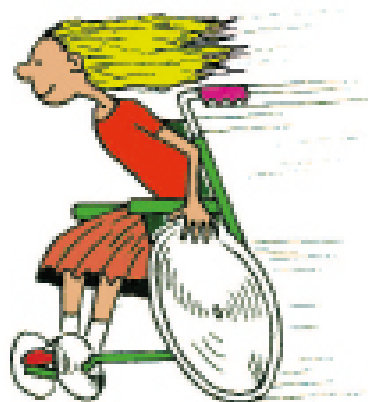
by Peter Rogan and David Hollomby



Nobody's perfect. There is something in all of us that we don't like . . . Some of us are too fat, some of us are too thin, some too tall and some too short.

Lots and lots of people have to wear glasses and many can't hear very well. Some even have to get around in a wheelchair.

Just think of all those who don't have teeth any more or older people who don't walk as fast as they used to. Yes, all of us have some type of disability at one time or another.



This is Debbie. She has a kind of disability too, but at first sight you can't see it.

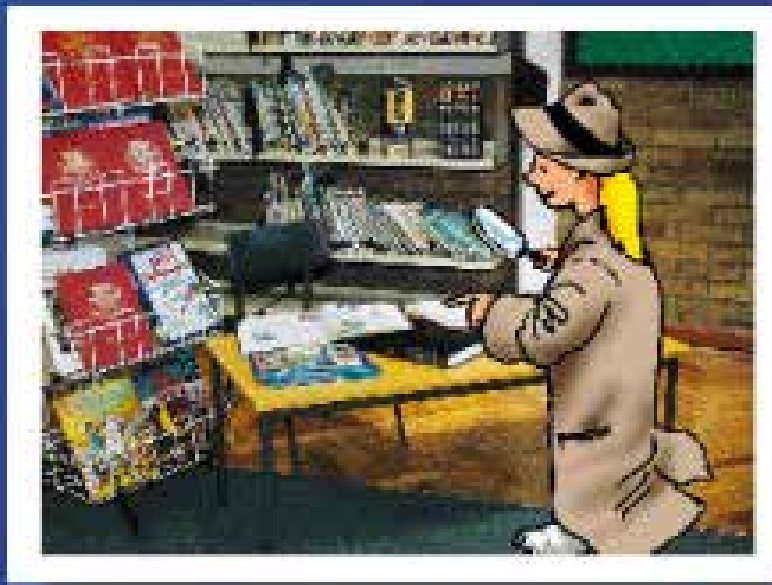
Sometimes she falls to the ground unconscious, gets stiff all over and then shakes for a few seconds. People call this a SEIZURE. That's when you can see her disability. She has something called EPILEPSY.



Debbie wanted to know more about her epilepsy, so she decided to become a detective.



This story tells what she found out.



Debbie started with the word **EPILEPSY**. She looked up the word in the dictionary to see what it meant.

She found that it came from a Greek word meaning 'to be taken by surprise'. The rest of the explanation was too hard to understand.

She knew detectives asked people a lot of questions . . .

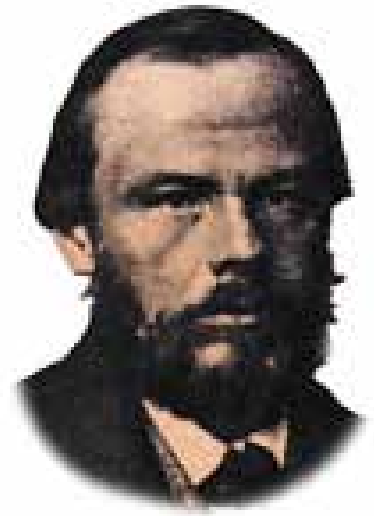


So she started with her Mum and Dad. After all, they knew just about everything! However, Mum and Dad didn't know much about epilepsy, so she asked them to come along and help her to solve the mystery,





*Caesar*



*Dostoevski*

They agreed, and the first surprising thing they learned was that lots of famous people have had epilepsy.

Debbie wondered if she would ever be as well known as the famous leaders Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great, the musician Handel or the Russian writer Dostoevski.

The three detectives also discovered that millions of people in the world have epilepsy, about one person in every hundred and fifty.



*Handel*



*Alexander the Great*



Debrae was very curious about what a seizure looked like. Of course, she couldn't see herself having one, but her friends could. So she asked them to tell her what one was like.

"Well, you fall over," they said. "You become unresponsive, then you go still. After a few seconds, you start shaking. When you stop shaking you wake up just as if you had been asleep. But sometimes you seem kind of mixed-up."



"Well, now!" said Debrae. "That's why I need a rest afterwards."

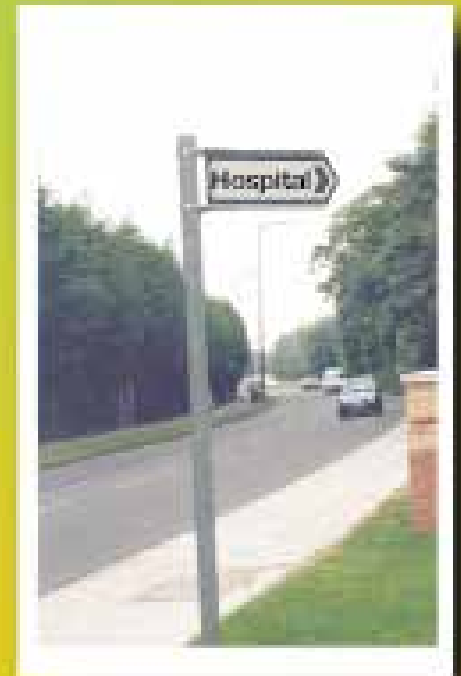


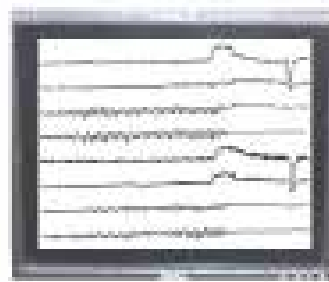
The next thing Debbie asked was: "What makes me fall over and shake?"

She discovered that seizures come from the brain. Some of them are short just like coughing. Debbie thought: "When I have a seizure maybe it's just like my brain coughing?"

Then she learned that everybody's brain makes a little bit of electricity. When there is a seizure, electrical waves suddenly get bigger for a few seconds, like the waves a boat makes when it moves through water.

Debbie was surprised to know the brain had electricity in it. "So that's why I have tests on my head when I go to the hospital", she said. Off to the hospital they went.





*Two different types of EEG pattern*



Debbie asked the lady who works the machine in the hospital "Why do you glue all those wires on people's heads?" The lady told her: "It's a way to find out how much electricity is in the brain. Once the wires are on the head, the machine makes patterns."

"The patterns are called an ELECTRO-ENCEPHALOGRAPH but we say E.E.G. for short. It means: (electro) electrical patterns (encephalo) of the brain (graph) viewed on a computer monitor screen."

"What good is that?", asked Debbie. The lady explained: "Sometimes people with epilepsy show different tracings from people without epilepsy. These tracings help the doctor to find out what kind of epilepsy the person has."

Now Debbie knew why she had to have an E.E.G. test.



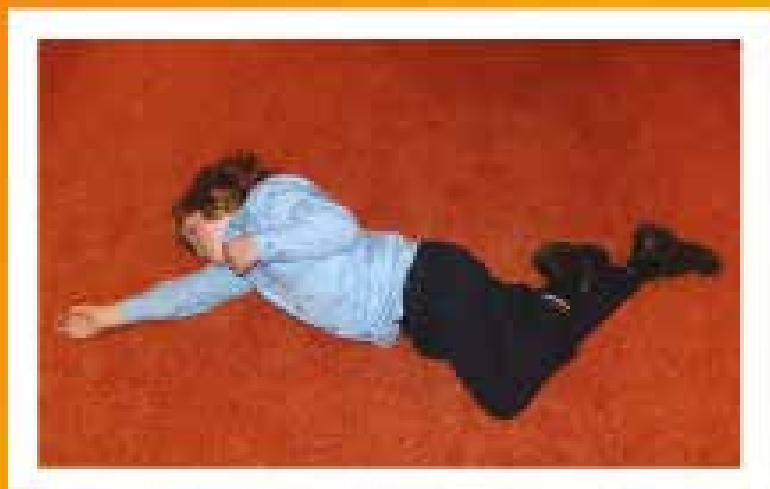




The Doctor was the next to be questioned. Debbie remembered about the E.E.G. and asked her: "Does everybody with epilepsy have the same type of epilepsy?"

"Oh no", she said, "In children and grown ups there are many different types of epilepsy, I'll tell you about the more common ones."

"When a person falls over unconscious, stiffens and then shakes, it used to be called Grand Mal Epilepsy but doctors call it a Tonic Clonic Seizure. This lasts only a few minutes. The person feels no pain and soon gets over it, but can't remember what happened."



"There are also seizures called 'Absences' which happen mostly to children. For some seconds they look as though they are daydreaming. In fact, they stare into space and have a completely blank look."



"During Tonic Clonic Seizures and Absences, which are sometimes called Petit Mal Seizures, the E.E.G. pattern comes from the whole brain so we call them **GENERALIZED SEIZURES.**"



"Can just one part of the brain cause the seizures?", asked Debbie.

"Yes, two types of partial seizures can happen: simple partial seizures, where a person may get tingling sensations or movements which cannot be controlled, or complex partial seizures when electrical waves spread to affect a large area of the brain and the person is not fully aware of what is happening. During partial seizures people may become confused and have strange feelings."

"What kind of strange feelings may they have during these seizures?" Debbie asked. "Are they particular for each person?"

"Yes. According to the person's seizure type, they may hear or smell things that aren't really there, get funny sensations in their tummies, repeatedly swallow, smack lips or fumble with clothes, or even feel that they are in a strange place as if they had been there before."

"In children, partial epilepsies are often mild and temporary," added the Doctor.



"Can someone with epilepsy have more than one type of seizure?", asked Debbie's Dad. "Yes, it may happen."

**“Do people with epilepsy have to take their medicine all the time?”, asked Mum. “Oh yes! They must never miss. Maybe they’ll only have to take it for several years if they follow the Doctor’s instructions well.”**

**Dad asked if Debbie could play all games. “Of course she can! Children with epilepsy can play any games they want to. While they are still having seizures they should not ride bicycles on busy streets, or go climbing trees.”**

**“What about swimming?”, Debbie asked. The Doctor said: “It’s OK if a grown-up looks after you, but swimming alone is dangerous, as well as taking a bath when there is no one around.”**



Debbie wanted to know more about First Aid for a Tonic Clonic Seizure. She asked an epilepsy specialist nurse for information.



The nurse told her that there are only a few simple rules and wrote them down for Debbie to show to others.

1. Keep calm.
2. Move the person away from danger.
3. Protect and turn the head and body to one side if possible.
4. Do not try to stop the seizure.
5. DO NOT FORCE ANYTHING INTO THE MOUTH.
6. Do not call an ambulance unless the seizure lasts a long time.
7. Let the person have a rest after the seizure is over.

After that the three detectives went home. They had learned a lot about epilepsy, but they knew that all the mysteries would take many years to solve.



Debbie was happier and felt a lot better because she knew more about her epilepsy. The case was closed for the time being. The family could go on living in a normal way, having lots of fun.