

The SKY'S the LIMIT

After going to hell and back, Elana looked up for inspiration...

Me on the dive



Slipping into my heels, I gave myself a spritz of perfume and tried to get in the Friday night party spirit.

I'd recently qualified as a mental health nurse and had just got home from another long shift.

Now, after a quick outfit change, I was due at a staff do. 'No rest for the wicked,' Mum joked, as I headed out.

I had a great time, drinking, chatting and having a boogie.

Only, I woke up feeling worse for wear.

My legs were sore too.

Must have been dancing in those shoes, I thought, regretting my choice of footwear.

I did my best to fight off the hangover from hell with naps and beige food.

Only, the following day, I still felt awful.

When Mum and I nipped to the shops, I struggled to open the car door.

My hands were too weak.

'You OK, love?' Mum asked.

'I still feel a bit off from my night out,' I said.

'Have an early night,' she advised.

But the next morning, I couldn't get out of bed. It was as if my legs wouldn't support me.

Petrified, I rolled on to the floor and called out, 'Dad! I can't move!'

Quickly racing into my room, he helped me up.

'Let's see if the feeling comes

back,' he said. 'It could be pins and needles.'

But after a couple of hours, it was clear something was very wrong.

Dad lifted me into the car and drove me to A&E. He had to carry me into the hospital too.

There, a doctor performed a lumbar puncture, a medical procedure where a hollow needle was inserted into my lower spine to collect cerebrospinal fluid.

While they waited for results, I had to stay on the stroke ward.

In the blink of an eye, my life had changed beyond all recognition.

Unable to change, bathe or go to the loo myself, I needed round the clock care.

How can this be happening? I thought.

I was 23, and my life had only just begun.

After a few days in hospital, my doctor finally had news.

'You have Guillain-Barré syndrome,' he said.

He explained it was a rare autoimmune condition where the body's immune system mistakenly attacked its nerves.

Doctors think it was brought on by a recent bout of flu I'd had.

'It can cause muscle weakness, numbness and, in severe cases, paralysis,' he added.

My parents and I looked at

each other, helpless.

While the condition was usually temporary and manageable, there was no cure. I was discharged from hospital two weeks later, but I was still paralysed and confined to a wheelchair.

At my weakest, I couldn't even hold up a spoon.

Over the following weeks,

I underwent physiotherapy to help me learn how to walk again.

In time, my legs and arms slowly regained feeling.

I went from needing a wheelchair to using crutches.

Mum would take me out on walks, to help me regain my strength.

After a few weeks, I was back on my feet.

It felt nothing short of a miracle.

A year after my diagnosis, I was almost back to normal.

I was able to walk, drive and even ride my horse Murphy once again. I went back to work too.

To celebrate, I wanted to do something daring while raising money for Fife Health Charity, who had looked after me during my recovery.

Looking up, I thought, *What about a skydive?*

After fearing I'd never

'I still feel a bit off from my night out'

walk again, I realised nothing could really scare me any more – even heights.

And before I knew it, I was booked in!

When the big day finally came around, I'd raised £1000.

Taking to the skies with my instructor, he asked, 'Are you ready?'

'As I'll ever be,' I grinned, as he threw us out of the plane at 15,000 ft.

As we fell through the sky, I'd never felt so alive.

When we landed, I couldn't believe it.

Doing something like that a year earlier would have been unthinkable.

But now, the sky's the limit!

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By Danielle Lett. Pictures Sky Diving St Andrews



Me with Murphy before my diagnosis