



RISE AND SHINE: If you don't set your alarm clock in the first place, you won't need to worry about turning it off

I just don't know what to do with myself. And can't be bothered to do it anyway

ALMOST a year now since pandemic pandemonium struck and panic has morphed into sullen resignation to the status quo.

I was so disciplined at the beginning. Up at seven as usual, fit to answer the door fully dressed with a face on by 8.30am; house pristine by noon, a nutritious light lunch (no convenience foods) a leisurely perusal of the papers; then a home-cooked dinner, selective television viewing, bed at a sensible hour with a good book and uninterrupted slumber. Oh, I was a paragon of all the virtues. Or an absolute sickener. You choose.

Eleven months down the line, where did it all go wrong? Though sound in mind and limb, but suffering a serious case of hair despair, I have developed chronic CBBS – Can't Be Bothered Syndrome. My iron resolve has lapsed into lassitude and aimlessness. Individual days are long, nameless, dateless and shapeless, yet the weekends arrive with alarming rapidity. Knock away the social structures, the sense of purpose guaranteed by normality and the result is a speedy decline into a state of flabby inertia. It brings a new kind of understanding of people who slob about all day in their jinjams or sordid sportswear.

Falling at the first moral hurdle was the switching off of my alarm clock, reasoning that if there's nothing to get up for, why get up? Lie there and be driven doolally by Stephen Nolan and his endless procession of politicians and pundits digging up new bones of contention and gnawing on them ad nauseam. Shouting at the radio is an inauspicious start to the day.

Frowsty and cross with Boris-like bed hair, as sure as I step into the shower, the doorbell rings with a delivery of something useless I've impulse-ordered

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as a 'comfort buy'. By the time I'm fit for human company it's too late for breakfast, too early for lunch, so 'brunch' is a meal that starts with porridge and ends with cake.

Collecting the post, I notice the winter sunshine focussed like a laser beam on the hall cabinet, full of my mother's glass and silver, one cloudy, the other tarnished. Perhaps I'll spend an industrious couple of hours washing one and polishing the other. I've been promising to do this for 11 months. Alas – my schedule is already full – so, not today.

I've become hopelessly addicted to afternoon 'junk' television – a term I use literally. Antiques, restoration and recycling programmes – the latter, variations on the

theme of cobbling together a coffee table out of two rusty pram wheels and a wormeaten wardrobe door. One can slump comfortably on the sofa from noon till six by judicious changing of channels.

Unfortunately, cosiness leads to involuntary 'dropping off'. I wake two hours later, shivery and cramped, having completely wasted the day. If "sleep knits up the ravelled sleeve of care," I must've fabricated whole jumpers in a series of afternoon naps.

Stricken by conscience I attempt to regain the moral high ground by writing 'to do' lists. Regrettably, the kitchen noticeboard is often as far as they get, since the cold logic that listing tasks doesn't equate to doing them hasn't occurred to me.

To the kitchen to prepare dinner. Kitchen implements conspire to frustrate me. A tin-opener lodges fast in a can of tomatoes. Infinitely more serious is the corkscrew that remains immovable in the wine bottle. Post wireless dinner, with the guilty M&S containers buried deep in the recycling bin, the evening is devoted to making and taking calls. Since nobody's been anywhere or done anything, conversation is predictable. "Me and mine are alright. How are you and yours? When are the hairdressers going to open? I'm like Worzel Gummidge."

And so to bed, where, naturally, having borrowed sleep in the day I can't sleep at night. Off to the kitchen and a large mug of hot chocolate and a little sweet something to accompany it. Bless the banana bread and brownies brigade for their generosity. It's 10 past three am and I'm chirpy as a cricket. How to improve the shining hour? Thinks... I might make a start on the *Irish News* piece – if only I could come up with an idea.

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ON THIS DAY

FEBRUARY 16 1971

Cardinal Answers Critics

ALLEGATIONS that the Catholic Church had failed to take a firm stand in condemning the latest outbreaks of violence in the North were refuted by Cardinal Conway on the BBC Panorama programme. He said that over 18 months he had issued 23 statements condemning violence. The Church, he added, had made it perfectly clear that people who resorted to violence had no mandate from the people to do so and their actions were completely unjustified. Anyone who deliberately provoked violence was committing a crime which cried out to High Heaven, he said.

The interviewer asked if Protestants took the view that Catholic extremists were going unchecked because the Cardinal's leadership was not strong enough or that his authority had been eroded. Cardinal Conway replied: "Our authority has not been eroded. Some people have got a strange notion about the authority of the Catholic Church or the attitude of the Catholic people.

"They have the idea that a bishop has just to raise his little finger and the people will fall in with his point of view. This is unfair to the Catholic people." The Cardinal added that he was certain that the overwhelming majority of Catholics were at one with the bishops on the question of violence. "It has to be remembered that the violence is not only on one side."

Westminster NI debate proves a damp squib

IF the speeches in yesterday's debate on NI in the British House of Commons were singularly free from personal abuse or party rancour, they were also singularly void of constructive or positive suggestion. While stating that violence did not come from one side only and that there were extremists on both sides, the Home Secretary, Mr Reginald Maudling said that the trouble in recent weeks had been the work of the Provisional wing of the IRA and in a tough speech he warned the "men of violence" that they would not win.

Mr Gerry Fitt, who said that any attempts at repression could only exacerbate conditions.

Mr James Molyneux (Unionist) said the IRA imposed their will on the people living in "free areas". "We are now seeing for the first time in Western Europe a demonstration of urban guerrilla warfare," he said. "The suggestion of Direct Rule from Westminster would not make a scrap of difference to the gunmen."

By early 1971 the Heath government clearly saw the IRA as the greatest challenge to stability in NI. While Gerry Fitt warned of the dangers of repression in Nationalist areas, Jim Molyneux, a printer, Orangeman and future UUP leader, was the first to speak openly of the Provisional IRA's tactic of "urban guerrilla warfare".

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