



Source: Jackie Spinner, 'Prisoner shows off bomb belt that failed', *Washington Post* in *Sydney Morning Herald* online, 15/11/05.

Tags: [music](#), [retribution](#)

Writer/s: [Mira Cuturilo](#)

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Everybody told Sarah that Dr Bill Wastely was a good boss. The girls that shared her office and worked for the Gynaecologist said that Sarah was lucky because Dr Wastely let her make personal calls and gave her every Thursday afternoon off. Her mother thought she was especially lucky because Dr Wastely paid Sarah seventeen dollars more than the award wage. Many of Dr. Wastely's patients themselves would have traded their right hand for Sarah's, the Doctor's drug cabinet was the best stocked drug cabinet in the whole of Cairns and any narcotic from Mareeba to Milla Milla knew it. That is also why he was called *Dr. Wasteaway*, 'A Doctor a day and you'll Wasteaway.'

Sarah didn't feel all that lucky working for Wasteaway. The only reason she ended up being a Secretary was because she had fallen in love with Stew Macintosh. She had been an A-grade student before Stew Macintosh. She had won awards before Stew Macintosh. She was set for a music scholarship before Stew Macintosh. Before Stew, Sarah also had no interest in boys. When her friend Christine Borg pulled her into the dunnies and told her she could be pregnant, Sarah thought that perhaps too much saliva had interchanged between pashes. Before Stew, Sarah played the violin. After Stew, Sarah played THE ELECTRIC GUITAR!

When Sarah played the electric guitar, she also quickly learnt what Christine Borg was talking about, yet soon lost interest in almost everything else. About twelve months to the day that Sarah had began to play the electric guitar, her amp blew up and then her guitar caught on smoke. As she sat there in disbelief, staring at the small fire that had started in her bedroom, Sarah seemed to suddenly wake up to herself. Her school results had arrived the week before, she had not only failed to make it into Music school, she had failed to make the grade at all. To make matters worse, Stew Macintosh had made the grade, made it so well he made it down to Brisbane without her.

Sarah was distraught and depressed. Sarah had always set high ambitions for herself, yet here she was with no Stew, no scholarship, no guitar and working for Wasteaway. The other reason she didn't consider herself lucky working for Wasteaway was because he was a control freak, a big, fat control freak. Wasteaway was so fat he could steer the steering wheel with his belly. Wasteaway was so fat people always looked twice at him to make sure that they were seeing right. Being fat wasn't what bothered Sarah; what bothered Sarah was that she was required to come in at 8:15 every morning, five minutes before Wasteaway arrived and make his cappuccino. Dr Wasteaway had spent half a day teaching Sarah how to make the perfect cappuccino. If it weren't right, Sarah would have to make it all over again. This meant: one cap minus one teaspoon of coffee and definitely and most importantly, no skim milk, Wasteaway only drank full cream milk.

Sarah could make errors in typing, muddle up the patient's appointments and Wasteaway wouldn't say a word, but if Sarah got the coffee wrong, he would

threaten to fire her.

Sarah did not want to get fired. Although Wasteaway irritated her, she was saving up her wages. After her guitar blew up, Sarah replaced it with an instrument more complimentary to the violin and began to play the Irish fiddle. She had joined forces with another two girls and had formed a folk band. One day they would have enough money to go on tour, strike it lucky, pull some fans, and have their own CD. But for now, Sarah was confined to listening to Wasteaway yell at her, 'Sarah Starr, how many times must I tell you that I do not drink skim milk. If you do this once more I am going to have to fire you.'

Sarah didn't look at Wasteaway while he yelled at her; she knew that if she did, she would burst out laughing. The other two girls, Vanessa and Giaconda were sitting at their desks, trying to suppress their laughter. Instead, Sarah focused on her hands, noticing that all her fingers but the pinkie sported cuts from the fiddle strings. Fiddle strings—that reminded her, she had to get a new C string for tomorrow afternoon's audition. Johnno's Blues Bar was hosting their annual talent quest and Sarah and her band were auditioning.

"...you will stay behind tomorrow and finish typing the medical reports as reprimand."

Wasteaway's voice came back through the haze. She finally looked up at his bloated and blood-red, sweating face.

'What did you say?' asked Sarah.

'I said you have lost your afternoon off tomorrow. Now I suggest you take this coffee back and make me a new one.'

Wasteaway turned and waddled off to his office. Vanessa and Giaconda weren't laughing anymore, they knew how important having the next afternoon off was for Sarah, the girls swallowed hard, Sarah bit back her tears.

When people ask artists where their genius comes from, they often claim a divine source spoke through them. Divine source or not, as Sarah watched Wasteaway walk away she knew exactly what to do. Twenty-four hours later, she served Dr. Wastely coffee. At 10:00 he came out of his room and thanked her for making a very good coffee. At 10:30 he came out again and went to the toilets. He did this again at 11:10, 11:20 and 11:30. By mid-day, he told Sarah that he was going home to bed and that she might as well take the afternoon off.

At 1:30 Sarah and her band were signed up for their first gig at Johnno's Blues Bar.

One year later, the sleeve on their first CD read: *This CD is dedicated to Wasteaway laxatives, we wouldn't have made it without them.*

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Mira Cuturilo.*