



Source: Reuters, 'Sharon likely off respirator by week's end', *The Age online*, 22/01/06.

Tags: [disease](#), [disenchantment](#), [husband/wife](#)
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Grace and Brian sit opposite each other in the specialist's waiting foyer. Yet again Brian had been called in after more tests. His thoughts flow on in a bitter stream that seems to have no end.

'Always worried about his health, all these visits to the doctor must be costing heaps, it is so inconvenient to have him off work and around the house,' he imagines Grace is thinking.

'I hope it's not more bad news about my liver. I am so sick of feeling sick. I know it annoys Grace. She's so short with me and never any nice words or sympathy. She's always been impatient with my illnesses. I tried to show her what I wanted by being extra kind and helpful when she was sick but she never really got the hint,' were some of Brian's thoughts squeezed in between his own dreadful feeling that the tests showed he had cancer.

Grace played with the gold bangle she had bought with the money she earned at the local supermarket where she worked on the checkout. 'Brian never bought me jewellery did he? Never had a good enough job, did he? Always complaining I spent too much money on clothes and holidays, didn't he? Well now I have my own money and can buy what I like, can't I?' were the thoughts Brian imagined for Grace.

'Mr. Jones!!' called the nurse who then ushered them into Dr Smyth's consulting room.

'I don't feel comfortable here, so much fuss and bother, I don't need all of this, what's wrong with Dr Brown's clinic?' thinks Brian, quivering.

'The tests show that you have a walnut-sized tumour in your liver Mr Jones' stated Dr Smyth. 'We need to do more tests but it doesn't look too good old fellow.' 'Now, I've booked you into the public hospital next week for the tests, and will talk to you again after that.' 'Chin up till then!' And with a 'bye-bye to you Mrs Jones', he was gone, out the door and into the next consulting room 'to pass sentence on some other poor beggar' thinks Brian.

'He's quite nice isn't he?' says Grace in her reassuring tone. 'He's very thorough and kind to you. How are you feeling pet?'

'Oh okay, I guess.'

'God, I'm sweating, I feel really awful, I think I mightn't be able to get up, I think I might lie on the floor until I feel better' thinks Brian, as he slumps towards the floor.

The nurse comes and there are a lot of sighs and quips before Brian, outwardly aware of his own feelings of humiliation, is wheeled out of the surgery in one of those funny looking invalid chairs.

'Oh God I feel awful, nobody knows how much I suffer, I wish it would all go away, Grace will be so pissed off, she was planning to go to the tennis open tomorrow, it's been planned for weeks, and paid for, God I hope she goes, anything would be better than having her grumping

around the house doing the vacuuming and complaining about people staying in bed all day,' Brian thinks.

'And now she's probably thinking, "Oh Dear, I suppose I will have to miss the tennis tomorrow, bugger, never had any sense of timing, always gets sick or hurts himself at the most inconvenient times, I remember when he had that car accident just before Jane and I were to go to Hong Kong shopping, that cost us dearly."'

The trip back to the country is quiet as usual. Grace is driving so he can rest. She's finished asking all the unanswerable questions to which Brian has made up all the answers to appease her.

'She knows I don't have a clue but can't be bothered to go any deeper into the obvious fears she knows I have. I bet she goes to the tennis anyway, she doesn't care about me. I don't want to tell Joanne and Sam, they have their own concerns, Joanne will be busy with planning the autumn festival and Sam will be taking Clare to the beach for the weekend, perhaps I'll just sleep from now until I go into hospital, that way I should be no bother to anyone and I can read and watch the telly in peace' thinks Brian.

'I should have left her years ago after Sam went to college, I always planned to, I just wasn't sure how I could afford it, what with all my pay going into the one account that we both have a flexi-card for and all hers going into her private account for buying the special things; her jewels and the kids' Reeboks; the holidays and extra presents for birthdays and those visits to swank restaurants that I could never afford. Who would have me now, all sick and broken? I've never lived on my own: wouldn't know how. I want to die now, I hate feeling sick all the time with no words of comfort, no hugs or kisses. Maybe it'll be better next time around, if the Hindus are right'.

'I think I'll go to the tennis tomorrow, it's not as if you're going to die on me, the doctor must think it's okay otherwise you'd be in hospital already. Anyway, it'll give you a bit of peace and quiet, what are you going to tell Jo and Sam?' Grace asked Brian, casually.

'Couldn't you tell them?' whined Brian, 'You know I'm no good at that sort of thing'.

'Oh! I suppose so,' she snapped. 'I think they would prefer to hear it from you though.'

Silence fills the car.

'I think I'll wear that new top to the tennis tomorrow,' she says.

'That'll be nice' says he, turning to wind down the window.

'So like her to be moving on to her own stuff already' thinks Brian, sinking further into the passenger seat.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Stephen Rodgers.