

Dave

Dave is an African Caribbean man who attends a community cancer support group. His wife believes in dietary approaches to cure his cancer.

I've having everything. As much as I can eat. I deserve it after all this fennel tea and tasteless veg my wife's been putting down in front of me. And I need to get something good out of this trip to the hospital. I know the Doctor is going to try and twist my arm but I'm no fool. And when my old mate Biant and I stop off for my secret little treat on the way home, I will toast my fortitude with a bloody great milkshake.

'You need to think about what you want to happen over the next few months Dave; so we can put the proper plans in place'. That's what they told me he's going to say, down at the dominoes group, where they're all going through the same thing as me. And that I need to be prepared. Well I am. 'That's right Doctor; now that the chemo's not working you want me to sign on the dotted line so that I don't hang around too long. Well I'm not signing anything'.

They're a good bunch; been helpful too. If Biant had told me what it really was when he first took me, I would never have walked through that door. And now I'm glad that he did. Who would have thought it would take prostate cancer to get me playing dominoes, like my old man. It's getting harder though, to be honest. This bloody pain. But what you going to do?

Dad died of cancer, his father too. He was buried in his back yard in Portmore and I was lifted up, four years old, and passed over the coffin while they said my name so that he wouldn't come back and haunt me. It was like the whole world came to visit for days afterwards, all dressed up with food and drink and music.

My dad always said that like so many things in England, death is hidden away. Made me promise that his funeral would be a thing of joy. 'The people here son, they don't know how to die and when they do the way they are so quickly dispensed with and forgotten should be a warning of the way that they will treat us. So never forget, we have to stand up for our rights, every single day'.

And he was right. As soon as the treatment stopped working, they just washed their hands of me. And now of course, when things are properly on the downward slope, they have to appear to make an effort. But I know what's really going on. My cousin came out of hospital last month with some kind of dressing all over her hands and arms and they couldn't even find something that was the same colour as her skin.

And of course I've been thinking about it. Of what I want to happen. And Biant knows. He's the one I've told it all too. A cardboard coffin for starters. These funerals cost a fortune and I need to make sure my wife has something left after it all.

Maybe I should have asked her to come with me. She's obviously worried and wants to know why I have to see the Doctor today, but I've told her its nothing important, just some forms I've been asked to sign. And I don't want her there, getting upset and confusing everything. It's simple. I just need to stand my ground; tell him I know that things aren't good; that we all step off the boat at some point; but they're not going to get rid of me that easily.

And if she was there they would talk her into things, just like her sister does, with all this diet mumbo jumbo. I've told them both that my tastebuds are shot, that everyone who has ever eaten my wife's mutton and dumplings always ends up sneaking back round the kitchen table the first chance they get. That I need to have food in front of me that looks delicious, that reminds me of what it was like to enjoy eating. But there's no listening. 'If the doctors can't cure you with all their mighty science and technology Dave then my sister is right, and it's up to us to take charge and do what needs to be done'.

I keep quiet about it. On Biant's advice. 'If there's one person you need to keep sweet at a time like this mate, it's your missus'. So I thank my sister in law for praying so hard for me, agree that it is all in God's hands now, and nod my head to whatever my wife suggests.

She can come next time; because they'll keep trying to talk me into what they want me to do to make things easier for them. That's for certain. But not today. No chance. Today is for me and Biant to put the world to rights over some proper food; if he gets his car to start. Ah! I nearly forgot, the mints. Just so my loving wife doesn't get a sniff of what we've been up to. You see! I think of everything. Nobody gets the better of me.