

It's My Life

He woke up, his face wet with tears. This was how his mornings had begun for the past month. His hand found only a cold sheet when he reached out. She was not there, curled up in her usual embryo position. He missed the comforting morning cuddle when he moulded his body to her familiar warm curves. His bed was empty and his life was a desolate place without her.

He wiped his eyes and rebelled at the bleak prospect of another unwanted day. Mary had always said she'd be the first to go but he never believed her. She was more robust than him. She was never ill until an aggressive form of heart cancer caused her to plummet from rude health to a barely recognisable skeletal shell.

She joked when the specialist confirmed the diagnosis, "See, I told you I didn't have any old cancer. I always had to be different." Neither of them had ever heard of this deadly variant but in a matter of weeks it had done its lethal work and Mary died in his arms as dawn broke on a chill autumnal day.

During the first month he numbly dealt with the plethora of administrative tasks relating to the funeral and to extricating Mary from their joint financial arrangements. This felt like he was erasing her from their life together and when, as the last thing on his list, he cancelled her car insurance he felt her loss so acutely that he didn't move from his armchair the whole day.

Now at the end of the second month his grief was still so raw that he was barely functioning. The previous day he had been sorting out her clothes to take to the Hospice shop. Her nighties and blouses still carried the muted scent of her favourite Hugo Boss perfume. Often he buried his face in the clothes and lost himself in a kaleidoscope of memories of their fifty years together.

In the end, he could not bear to part with a single item of clothing or jewellery.

Of course his kids were supportive. Their concern for him was very touching but he really wanted to scream at them to leave him alone to grieve. For days now he had been grappling with a stark choice. Should he soldier on in a world totally blighted by her absence or end his misery by taking his own life.

As he levered himself out of bed this dark December morning he decided to end it all, using the remaining supply of the heavy-duty painkillers Mary had been prescribed. He swallowed a full bottle of the most potent analgesics.

He woke up and saw the tearful face of his daughter,

“Dad, when you didn’t answer your phone all morning, I decided to pop over to see if you were OK. I was just in time the medics tell me.”

Frank was not at all pleased. It was not what he wanted.

“I’ll have to find another way...”