

A patient's diary:

episode 8 — from the diary of Mrs Hilda Gland

25 JULY

Yes because he never did a thing like that before as ask to get his breakfast in bed just a slice of toast with his no cholesterol spread and a cup of Earl Gray Ive been so worried about him lately ever since they told him at the New Hospital that his liver tests were normal hes not been himself really low and depressed he didn't even want to go to the doctors any more so I could tell there must be something wrong well I had to go down myself anyway because of the hot spells and I wanted him to look at that vein again my tablets were getting low as low as well so I made an appointment with Dr Teacher because I like a man really except when its down below of course not like some I could mention but wont go into now Norman goes to Dr Brenda when he can I think hes a bit soft on her not that hed try anything well they cant with a doctor and hes always been faithful to me Ill say that for him so I says to Ivy Flagg she's their senior receptionist been there for ages before they had that Helena the manager and all those pretty young girls with their nose rings and I don't know what but me and Ivy go back years we used to be like that at one time and her sister Dolly too that passed away ever so sad but Ivy is a good little soul whatever they say about doctors dragons and if shes got an appointment shell give it you those doctors lead her a merry dance I shouldn't wonder always buzzing on the phone and wanting it done yesterday anyway I said to her Ivy would you get Norman's card out because I want a word you know about him with the doctor I said because hes not been at all well not at all and she says they don't have cards now its all on computer and she herself thought he was looking a

Hilda Gland has been very worried about Norman. We publish an exclusive extract from her diary (with apologies to James Joyce).

bit peaky the other day and perhaps he needs a tonic well I smiled inwardly to myself at that because they wont give you anything like that these days O we don't believe in that sort of thing any more Mrs Gland only coloured water it went out with the horse and buggy except Dr Grimes will occasionally if hes in a good mood which is not very often these days I said to him once I bet you've seen some changes in this practice Mrs Gland he said I could a tale unfold had I a mind to that would freeze your blood and make your hair stand on end like a porcupine wonderful way with words he has but he can be a bit sarcastic too especially since she passed on makes them bitter having to get their own dinners and no one to wash their pants or iron their shirts and all those other things they take you for granted so I usually go to Dr Teacher quite busy he was and the waiting room full the magazines are so different these days I said to Mrs Talbot who was there I can remember when it was Punch and Womens' Weekly but now its all Hello and Heat the youngsters read them I suppose this time its the real thing says superstar Tina meet her new squeeze inside it makes me laugh it sounds like toothpaste still their only young once let them enjoy it I said to Mrs Talbot and if you cant be good be careful I could have bitten my tongue off because their Susan got into trouble with a boy but I think she married him in the end there was a girl waiting with a baby in a pushchair only a teenager and another on the way by the look of her and one old fellow in the corner with a terrible cough he looked as though he hadn't got long to go a bit like my Dad when he ...

I wonder if anyone ever just dies there while their waiting and what they would do they might not notice at first give him a prod hello can you hear me but then the buzzer went and they said go on love its you so I went in and theres Doctor Teacher all very charming new pictures of his family

on the wall next to his diploma Id like a word in confidence Dr Teacher I said about my husband Norman Gland have you got his records and are you familiar with the case I said because seeing so many it must be in one and out the other staring at that screen hardly look at you some of them but Dr Teachers not like that were old friends Norman and I whats on your mind so I told him Dr Teacher I said ever since the hospital told him his liver doesn't need treatment hes been a broken man hed set his heart on that Dr Portal and he had such faith in him and now its dashed to pieces I said what I want to know is what is really wrong with him can it really all be his nerves put it this way Mrs Gland he said hes a very sensitive man and I believe hes had a lot of pressure on him lately which is true and it can give you just the same pain as youd get with a liver complaint but what am I going to do with him I said and I felt the tears coming all hot don't you worry Mrs Gland he said and hands me a tissue get him to come and see me I'll have a little chat with him sort it all out and he squeezed my hand very gently don't you worry Mrs Gland I can hear him saying it still and I went out in a sort of daze but hes very kind reminds me of a boy I went out with a few times he was a medical student so I might have been married to a doctor myself but it was not to be Norman came along and I never looked back because he had a way with him in those days when he was young even my mother said so before the liver trouble and the other health problems started he was so strong I remember when he carried me across those pebbles at Colwyn Bay so I wouldn't hurt my feet and then he kissed me and I asked him with my eyes to ask me again yes and then he asked me and I put my arms round him and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes.

We are grateful to John Salinsky for these extracts from Norman Gland's diary.