

### A Trip to the Hospital

Alan and Tony are sitting in their usual corner of the local cafe, when they begin to have a lively debate on one of the topic of the day.

"No, you see you don't understand", says Tony firmly.

"Don't understand what?"

"It's all very well, all this welcoming immigrants here, but we can't cope with them. I mean look at the NHS. A great British institution that is. And now groaning at the number of immigrants who are using its services."

Just then Tony's mobile phone goes and before Alan can give his reply, Tony announces:

"Oh, that was my dad's care home. He's had another fall. He's in the General Hospital. I had better go in and see him now. I hope he hasn't broken his hip..."

"Yeah, I hope everything's O.K.", replied Alan. "See you soon."

Tony made his way to the hospital and after begrudgingly paying to park in the hospital car park (he couldn't see why you should be punished because a relative was ill), ....made his way to the Reception.

"My dad has had a fall. He's been brought in here. Where do you think he will be?"

"Try the Rapid Response Unit, he's probably there", the Receptionist replied in a voice which sounded to Tony as if it was from an automaton. She did manage a slight smile.

"Thank you", replied Tony quietly. He was about to walk off when he added, "er, where is the Rapid Response Unit?"

"It's on your left up there", the Receptionist said, whilst checking a computer screen, pointing to her right.

"Thank you".

Tony walked slowly up the corridor and as he did so an imaginary vice began to grip his stomach. What would he find at the RRU?

The Rapid Response Unit was a whirl of business, with people talking, checking charts, writing information down and tending to patients. ....wasn't sure where to go at first, as nobody seemed to be at the desk. Eventually he decided that the best course of action would be to just wait patiently at the desk and after a short wait, this wise action paid off.

"Yes, sir can I help you?", a tall nurse briskly asked.

"I've come about my dad. He's been brought into the hospital after having a fall."

"What's his name?"

"John Thornton".

The nurse consulted a chart.

"He's not here now. He's been transferred to Ward 3"

“Oh, O.K. Where’s that?”

“It’s along the corridor to your left. If you follow the signs, you can’t miss it.”

“Thank you.”

As Tony made his way dutifully along the corridor the same vice-like grip came over his stomach. Ward 3. What did that mean?

Tony soon found his way to Ward 3 and walked gingerly in. He found the desk, where an Oriental-looking nurse was sitting concentrating hard on a screen in front of her.

“Er, hello”, Tony said. “I’ve, er come to see my dad, John Thornton”.

The nurse looked up and smiled.

“John Thornton? Oh, yes, he came in here this afternoon”, the nurse replied. Tony noticed that her voice sounded East Asian. He had been to Thailand and then to China on a holiday a few years before and thought that the accent was probably Chinese.

The nurse looked up at a big board.

“He is down for bed 3. In that bay there”, she continued, pointing to a room just off to the left.

“Thank you”, Tony replied before walking off to see his dad.

Tony walked off through the bay to where he thought bed 3 was, but was confronted with an empty space where a bed should be. Panic began to course through Tony like a tsunami of fear. An empty space bed, where his dad’s bed should be. What did it mean?

Tony returned to the desk. The nurse was still there.

“The space for bed 3 is empty”, Tony said, trying not to betray his concerns.

“Yes. I’ve just been told that your dad is off for another x-ray. He had one earlier, soon after coming in, but it wasn’t conclusive. Sorry about that,” the nurse replied smiling. “Do have a seat. He shouldn’t be long”.

Tony sat down and waited. A few minutes later, he saw a bed being pushed down the corridor into the ward. With much relief, he saw his dad in it. He seemed O.K.

Tony smiled at the orderly pushing the bed and said he was glad to see his dad. He wasn’t sure that the orderly had fully understood what he had said. He was slightly darker-skinned and Tony thought that he was perhaps from somewhere like the Phillipines. The orderly smiled back.

Behind the bed was another nurse., a small blonde woman Tony asked her what was happening.

“It’s O.K. Your dad has been in for a second x-ray to see if anything was broken in the fall. The doctor should be along soon with the results.”

The bed in which Tony’s dad was lying was pushed back into its space by the orderly. Tony couldn’t help but notice how tired he looked. He simply smiled at Tony and left him to carry out further duties.

Tony sat on a seat near his dad’s bed and spoke to him.

“How are you”, he asked and immediately kicked himself metaphorically for asking such a seemingly stupid question. But what else do you say in these situations?

“Well, I was alright until this morning. I had just got up when my legs gave way. They just buckled under me“, Tony’s dad replied.

“Are you in any pain?”

“Well, yes a little. Down my right hand side. Just below my waist”.

“Near your hip?”, asked Tony hesitantly.

“Yes”, his father replied in a tired voice.

“Oh”, replied Tony quietly.

Tony wasn’t sure what to say. He just sat and looked at his dad, trying not to let him see how worried he was. After what seemed an eternity, a large black man arrived, with a stethoscope around his neck. He walked up to Tony and held out his hand. Tony instinctively stood up and shook hands.

“Hello. I am Dr Chebaye”, the doctor said in an African accent. “You must be Mr Thornton’s son.”

“Yes..... that’s right. I’m Tony. Pleased to meet you”.

“Well, as you probably know we’ve taken your dad in for two x-ray examinations. The second one is much clearer....”

Tony waited for the news.

“We thought at first that there might be a break in his hip, because he was in pain around there, but the second x-ray shows that although he has a lot of bruising around his right hip where he hit the floor when he fell, there is no break. He won’t need an operation.”

A wave of relief surged through Tony and crashed upon him, like a breaker on the beach at Tynemouth.

“Oh, that’s good”.

“Yes. But he will need to stay here a while. We need to get your dad get walking again and build up his confidence.”

“Of course”. There was a pause. “Well, thank you for the news” Tony continued. Dr Chebaye smiled and walked off to attend to other business.

“What did the doctor say?”, asked Tony’s dad.

“It’s O.K. The pain you are feeling is just bruising...”, replied Tony, again wishing that he had been a bit more tactful. “Er, not that the bruising is O.K. But your hip is not broken. You won’t need an operation.

“Good”, replied Tony’s dad, before closing his eyes.

After leaving the hospital, Tony gave Alan a ring on his mobile.

“How’s your dad?”

“Not too bad. I thought his hip might be broken, but it’s just bruised. He will be in for a while, but he’s going to be O.K.”

“That’s good”.

“It is, but it’s all been a little stressful. Do you fancy a couple of pints later?”

“Yeah. O.K. See you down the Crown later? About nine?”

“Yes, that will be fine”.

Alan was sitting there in the Crown as Tony walked in. Alan had bought him a pint.

“Oh, thanks Alan”, said Tony.

“A lot seems to have happened since we last spoke this afternoon”, commented Alan. “You were just saying how the NHS was on the brink of collapse due to immigration...”

“Yes, well, er.....I wouldn’t take those comments too seriously”, Tony replied somewhat sheepishly.

Peter Sagar