

## Krushan

**Krushan, a middle aged British Asian Hindu, is largely bedbound and cared for at home by his wife Dhanashree. He is awaiting a visit from his older brother Abhijeet.**

Abhijeet is coming so the house is spotless; my pillows have been plumped and our snacks are plentiful. You would think he was the one we should all be worried about.

He's not been here since our son's wedding. Where the numbers of guests were less than he expected. 'And the invitations, brother, if you don't mind me saying, perhaps a little shabby'. Not since the changes have been made to the house which have helped me move around more easily. It's impressive, how much help is available if you know how to get it. I just wish I'd known earlier, that there was someone who had told me all of this. Everything has somehow seemed like a challenge, where life can only be made easier if you put the work in first.

I think my brother will be surprised when he sees me. I should have been more honest about how things are. Maybe Dhanashree has told Padma the truth, our wives have always got on well together, but it's not easy to admit what's happening to me. The pain comes in waves, I want everything to end, and then it washes away and I think all will be well. Even though the endless stream of visitors, all very sympathetic, is a sign that nobody thinks I will last too long.

I know that Dhanashree has asked that nobody come today, including my carers. I heard her whispering to them as they left last night. It's not easy for her. She gets upset about some of the things that are said by the neighbours and at the temple. About my children not doing all that should be done by the children of sick fathers. About all of the help that we're getting. When the ramp was put in half the street seemed to come out to watch. And I know my dear wife doesn't want her brother in law to see carers here in our house.

I tell her that there are always those looking to pass judgement, from whatever community you're from. That after spending months getting flustered trying to keep track of all the different appointments and the endless telephone conversations, always looking for a pen to write down this appointment and that appointment, and this doctor and that doctor, she deserves some assistance now that I'm settled at home. And she does look less tired. Even with all the guests.

But still she insists that we shouldn't tell Abhijeet. That he will say – as he will – that this is something that the family must take care of. 'Don't you understand brother that if your energies and forces are out of balance then you need to address this rather than lying down and accepting their death warrant. How can these people do what is required so that you can attend the temple with peace of mind? Do they understand Ayurvedic medicine? Are they providing you with it?' He

will remind us how it reflects on the family. That it will soon be time to find our daughter Garima a husband. That people talk.

It angers me that Dhanashree is worried about his judgement. Maybe it's because he is older. Maybe it's because he is the successful one and somehow that means we must listen to him, like I have always had to listen to him. Of course now that he's in Mumbai making piles of money, he will pass his judgements about the way things should be with even greater certainty. Even though it is my daughter who is the Kathak dancer and my son who plays the sarangi alongside her; whilst his kids are as westernised as they come.

And why should I spend my last months watching my son and my daughter giving up their lives for me? I want to see them thrive. I want to imagine them doing well when I have gone.

With Garima there are moments, when I can see her trying to ask what she should do, what I want to happen if ... when ... I am reaching the end of the road. But she's young, and it's not right that she should have to confront such things, even though Dhanashree will never ask such questions. So it's down to me to get these things all straight; although I'm not quite sure how.

Perhaps Abhijeet will surprise me. Maybe he won't tell me about a friend in Mumbai who only had a week to live but is now playing in the slips for his local cricket team through sheer force of will. Maybe if my carers did come, he would embrace them and thank them for the work they were doing, the care they are giving.

Maybe he will come to the hospice with me when I go there next week for the first time. I think that is what I really want right now. For him to come with me. For my brother to be there with me.