

AND THEN THERE'S LAUGHTER:

THOUGHTS FROM A DIFFERENT BED

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We aren't sleeping in the same bed tonight. I will move to the home-office, right next door and sleep on the futon. And perhaps, probably, we will not share a bed ever again.

Should I be in mourning? I can feel the sorrow... great waves of it, lapping in my inner harbor. After so many years I am not going to be sleeping beside my man, my frustrating, gentle, funny man. His restlessness and confusion during the night is driving me crazy. He hurls himself sideways, ramming his head into my back, tugging sheets, tapping, stealing my pillow. And then, sometimes, I wake up to find him leaning over me, panicked, trying to puzzle out in the dark just who it is beside him.

I whisper reassurance.

"Hey, Babe. It's me."

He either breathes a sigh of relief and lies back down or sits bolt upright, acutely distressed at finding himself in bed with another woman.

I have been away for two nights, in Vancouver, attending the Movement Disorder clinic at UBC. A friend stayed in our house with Lincoln who, in my absence, slept well.



So I ask him, "Would you like to sleep alone again tonight?"

'Yes."

Should I be in mourning because this is another loss, another heart wound, another reminder that he is slipping daily, hourly, minute by precious minute? I should be in mourning. And I am... and I am not.

I think, "It's just a bed".

In the end, it's just a bed. It doesn't mean anything. It is a practical solution for a situation that requires a quick resolution. I need to sleep. He needs to sleep. And as for sex, it fled when the brain cell destruction hit some kind of critical mass though he was, for months, obsessed with renewing his Viagra prescription. If I am ever seriously short of cash, I am going to be able to make a tidy sum of money, reselling the packs of little blue pills he has stacked up inside his overnight case.

One night he woke me up. He stood on my side of the bed and looked down at me while grinning broadly, his eyes shining in the dark and a blue pill in one hand and a glass of water in the other.

For you," he said.

"Not happening, Babe."

"Oh. Okay."

Within moments he was snoring softly beside while I lay awake for ages and wrestled with amusement and regret.

I am never more than a room away from him, 24/7. We touch often; we hold hands when we walk. We always have. I am over my anger, my fear, my raging against fate — or I am able to pretend to be. That is almost as good. There is no time for self-indulgence and no energy for anything but caring for him and looking after myself. Grief rises ... I give it space and time and then try to move it on. I miss him more than I can say. And I love him with a tenderness that astonishes me. It's just a bed.