

BAD NEWS

Justin Wheatley

Paul and Patty sit down to a table in a nice restaurant. Patty is warm, happy. Paul's energy is shifty and uncomfortable. He's troubled.

A waitress appears.

WAITRESS

Can I get you anything besides water?

PATTY

I'm fine with water now, thank you.

WAITRESS

And for you sir?

PAUL

(forward)

Can I get some alcohol?

WAITRESS

Yes, okay, what would you like?

PAUL

Just--

Paul thinks hard, rubbing two fingers against his temple.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Just your best alcohol, please.

WAITRESS

Well, we have--

PAUL

Just, I don't know, beer. Beer, please. Your best year.

The waitress nods, confused, and exits.

PATTY

Is everything alright?

PAUL

You're probably wondering why I asked you here tonight.

PATTY

What do you mean? It's our fifth anniversary.

PAUL
 Maybe so. But this wasn't a coincidence that we met here, at this restaurant, tonight.

PATTY
 Well we made these reservations months ago. What's wrong?

PAUL
 Would you let me finish?

PATTY
 Sorry.

PAUL
 I have something important that I have to tell you.

PATTY
 Is it bad news?

PAUL
 I'm not going to sugarcoat it.

Patty waits for Paul to go on. Long beat.

PATTY
 Well, okay.

PAUL
 I have cancer.

The words hang in the air between them. Patty's eyes well up, and her face twists into a deep, painful sob. She squeezes Paul's hand.

PATTY
Oh Jesus oh Jesus Paul oh Jesus oh my God baby I am just so sorry oh Jesus...

Paul watches Patty cry, expressionless.

PATTY (CONT'D)
 What... what kind?

PAUL
 It's... well it's just real bad. All over.

Patty sobs even harder.

PAUL (CONT'D)
You're making a scene.

Paul looks around at the other tables, nodding his apologies.
He is embarrassed.

PATTY
I just can't believe it. Oh, Paul--

Paul rubs his brow.

PAUL
Look, I don't have cancer.

Patty freezes.

PATTY
What?

PAUL
You are making such a scene.

PATTY
You... *what?*

PAUL
I don't have cancer. I just wanted
to prepare you for bad news by
giving you awful news.

PATTY
This is so like you. What is your
problem?

PAUL
My problem? Oh, I'm sorry, I guess
there's a problem now with taking
my wife out for her birthday.

PATTY
Anniversary.

PAUL
Whatever. You know, the Jehovah's
Witnesses don't even celebrate
birthdays.

PATTY
The one night we get time for
ourselves--no stresses, no worries.
Just perfect. Thanks, Paul. You
know, you've been like this for
weeks. I can't stand it.

PAUL

Oh, like what? *Like what?* That's so offensive you don't even know. You know, I have a real problem.

PATTY

The problem of being a jackass? You are unbelievable. Can we go home, please?

PAUL

Unbelievable? I'm unbelievable. Alright, Billy Graham, believe this: I am a *sex addict*.

Confused silence.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Yes, you heard me. *S-e-x...*

He pauses to spell it in his head.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Addict.

PATTY

I don't understand what you're saying. You're addicted to sex?

PAUL

Sex. Addicted. Yep, you heard right. I'm a sex addict. A huge one.

PATTY

I guess I don't really know what to say.

PAUL

What more is there to say?

PATTY

Well, for starters, you could explain what the hell you're talking about.

PAUL

Keep your voice down, would you? Do you want the whole restaurant to know?

PATTY

Paul. What do you *mean* you're a sex addict? Are you...

Patty utters a brief gasp.

PATTY (CONT'D)
Are you cheating on me?

PAUL
What? Are you crazy? No, I'm not
cheating on you.

PATTY
Well how exactly are you a sex
addict? We don't--
(lowers voice)
We don't necessarily make love very
often.

PAUL
You want me to get into the dirty
details? Right here?

PATTY
I just want more of an explanation.

PAUL
Well how much more is there to it?
Look, I just love sex. Making sex,
doing sex, being in lots of sexy
mindsets. For instance, what do you
see here?

Paul picks up the saltshaker.

PATTY
I see salt.

PAUL
Yeah, but look at it--

Paul taps his temple.

PAUL (CONT'D)
With the mind of a sex addict.

PATTY
That doesn't make any sense.

PAUL
It does! It does. I'm sick, I'm a
sick individual. So with my sick
brain, I don't see salt. I see--

Looks fondly at saltshaker.

PAUL (CONT'D)
I see a crotch.

PATTY
A *crotch*?

PAUL
Yeah, you know, like a male--
Gestures toward his crotch vaguely.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Thing.

PATTY
A penis?

PAUL
Yeah, that. See, told you I'm sick.
The waitress appears with Paul's beer.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Thank you.

WAITRESS
Do you two need a few more minutes?

PAUL
Yes, thank you.

The waitress walks away.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Now here's an example. I looked at her hair just now and I couldn't help but think about smelling it all over.

PATTY
The waitress' hair?

PAUL
You have no idea. I just imagine it smells so good. This is what goes on in the mind of someone like me.

PATTY
And this is normal behavior for sex addicts?

PAUL

Well ever since I've learned of my condition, I've thrown all notions of "normal" out the door. My mind just doesn't work like other minds.

Paul picks up his fork.

PAUL (CONT'D)

You don't even want to know what this looks like to me.

PATTY

I'm just... I'm so confused. I have so many questions.

PAUL

That's natural. But it's best left undiscussed.

PATTY

How long has this been going on?

PAUL

Well, it's something that's always affected me. But never as bad as now. As a child, I just wanted to hug all the girls. They were so cute, and the whole, you know, cootie thing, while a myth... well, it really got to me. I'll never forget my first girlfriend, Jo Beth Randall. She had freckles, and a firecat personality. Whenever I'd see her, I would get this feeling deep inside of me. It was like I was really hungry, but also full of a lot of air. It made me have to go to the bathroom a lot. I wasn't aware then, but now I know--that was the sex addiction.

Paul's hand slides over to Patty's. He lightly begins to rub it, then recoils.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Sorry. My disease just overtakes me sometimes.

PATTY

Who diagnosed you?

PAUL

Well, you know. The doctor.

PATTY

What doctor? Dr. Weinberg?

PAUL

No, no, just a psychologist that you've never heard of. Dr...

Paul glances down at his fork.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Spoon.

PATTY

None of this makes sense, Paul. I mean, how am I just now hearing about this? We share everything with one another. Why keep this a secret this whole time?

PAUL

Honey, there's a big difference between keeping a secret and not telling someone something.

PATTY

Well how am I supposed to live my life now? How am I supposed to live with a husband that has an addiction?

PAUL

I've done countless Google image searches on stuff like, "sex," "people who like sex," "sex is great." I've learned a lot down this road. First and foremost, you should know that you will always be my wife. I may daydream about whether or not Jerry's new secretary kisses with tongue, or if Schmidt's secretary likes me in a sex way, or why Rob now has a man secretary. But nothing will ever stand in the way of my wife. I just want to do it all day, every weekday.

Paul looks at his unopened beer.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Huh, wow, this stuff is really getting to me. Yikes.

PATTY

I just can't believe you're someone different than what I've always known.

PAUL

I'm not, baby. Just because I have a disease doesn't mean I'm not the Paul you've always known. Sex addiction may be one of the number one killers in America, but you should never seen me any differently. Now let's go home and do stuff.

Paul waggles his eyebrows. Patty doesn't know how to take the proposition.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Come on, I will rub you all over your face and shoulders and buttcheeks and...

Paul loses steam.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Alright, look, I'm not a sex addict.

PATTY

What?

PAUL

I was just preparing you for bad news by giving you really bad news.

Paul reaches into his pocket and pulls out a slip of paper.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I got a speeding ticket today.

He rolls his eyes and scoffs.

PAUL (CONT'D)

School zone.

Patty is at a loss.

PATTY

I don't even know why I married you.

She stands up.

PAUL
It's no big deal, honey. Those
crossing guards have had it in for
me ever since the incident with
that fake gun.

PATTY
See you at home.

Patty walks away.

PAUL
Wait, no! Come back! Patty, *come*
on, please don't leave.

She's gone. Paul hangs his head in his hands.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Christ almighty.

He dials a number on his cell phone.

PAUL (CONT'D)
(on phone)
Hi, is Dr. Spoon available for an
emergency appointment? I've had a
rough night.

END.