

All about the Bradmans
Or
Losing Patients
A One act play By Camille Atebe

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Characters: Dr George Bradman
Mrs Violet Bradman

Setting: The sitting room of the Bradman's house in Kent.

Scene 1

Mrs Bradman sits in a wing chair, eating biscuits and drinking a tall pink drink. She is dressed for an evening at home. After a moment, she puts down her book with a confused frown and moves to a bookshelf, where an enormous dictionary sits on a lectern. She licks the crumbs from her fingers and begins to flip.

Mrs B: Recursant... recursant... recrudescence....recruit... Rectal chemise! Oh my... really? Hmm. Oh! What was that word again?...

She returns to her chair and locates the word in her book again.

Recursant. Of course. Recursant.

She goes back to the dictionary.

Recursant...rectilinear... rectipetality... rectrix... oh, fancy that. It means the wife of a rector *and* the large tail feathers of a bird.... Recubation... recurrency... recusancy... Oh! What was that word?

Back to her book.

Recursant. Recursant.

Back to the dictionary.

Recusative... have I gone too far? Oh, gracious, what was that word?

Back to the book.

Recursant. I should write this down. I'll be at it all night.

She picks up a biscuit and goes in search of a pen and paper. She chews happily, shedding crumbs and bits of chocolate, as she digs through a desk. Finally she locates a pen, and picks up a piece of paper. However, unfolding it, she finds it to be a letter. She reads it, at first with little interest, mumbling through bits, then with increasing alarm.

Dear Dr Bradman.... While we are deeply indebted for your continued support... surgical abilities are previously unquestioned.... Complete lack of information... patronizing tone... I am entertaining the suggestions of my friends that I ought to take legal action... My son has completely lost the use of his lower extremities and I hold you entirely responsible for this abominable situation. Please consider my request for compensation, as we would like, as must you, to keep the entire situation out of the courts and away from the prying eyes of the press. Yours Sincerely, Mrs Oliver Frontwell.
My God!

A door is heard opening and closing off. Mrs B refolds the letter and shoves it back in the drawer. She looks at the pen in her hand blankly, trying to remember why she's there in the first place. She remembers just as Dr Bradman enters.

Dr B: Hello Violet, sorry I'm late. Got caught talking to that Arcati woman down in the village. She was trying to untangle her bicycle from a privet hedge and I made the mistake of helping her. She proceeded to tell me the most outrageous story about poor Charles... Violet, are you alright?

Mrs B: Yes! Yes, George, of course I am. I was just looking for a bit of paper to write a word down.

Dr B: To write a word down?

Mrs B: (*Putting down the pen and leaving the desk*) I was reading this fascinating history. By Madame Arcati, as it happens. There was a word I'd never heard, and I went to look it up, but then I couldn't remember it when I got to the dictionary, so I thought I ought to write it down so that I would have it right there at the dictionary. It doesn't matter now. How was Mrs. Plummer? Was she full of more imaginary complaints?

Dr B: Yes, She thought she had pneumonia, because she heard a rattling when she breathed. Not a brain in her head, that woman, but at least my bills are always paid in good time. Violet, why didn't you just take the book with you over to the dictionary?

Mrs B: Take the book with me? Oh, George, how silly of me! Of course!

Dr B: I expect I'd have found you walking in circles, mumbling to yourself, descending into madness, if I'd been any later. Honestly, Violet, you must make some effort to organize yourself better.

Mrs B: Really, George, don't be supercilious. I've known you to be absentminded yourself before. I'm always kind about it.

Dr B: There's absentminded and there's empty headed, darling.

Mrs B: gives him a strong look, and he changes the subject.

Dr B: Don't you want to know what the rattling was?

Mrs B: What rattling, dear?

Dr B: The rattling in Mrs Plummer's chest.

Mrs B: So it wasn't pneumonia?

Dr B: Goodness, no! She had a beaded necklace on which gave off a rattle every time she heaved a breath! Imagine. Calling a doctor to tell you that your necklace was rattling.

Mrs B: How very clever of you, dear.

Dr B: Clever? I only wish I had some call to be clever. It seems I spend most of my time fiddling about with influenza and hypochondria. I wish I had something to actually tax my brain, instead of my patience.

Mrs B: But you're a doctor, dear! What else is there for you to do? You don't mean to say that you're thinking of taking up research?

Dr B: What on earth are you talking about, Violet?

Mrs B: Well, what else is there to tax your brain but your patients? They're at the centre of your profession.

Dr B: Violet, my dear, I meant that my patients tax my patience. I wish that they would present me with something to stimulate the grey cells instead. A good case of Dengue fever would cheer me up considerably.

Mrs B: Oh, I see! But whomever had the Dengue fever would not be nearly so cheerful, George. Remember that.

Dr B: Yes, dear. Of course. What's that you're drinking?

Mrs B: It's called a Singapore sling. Do you want me to make one for you?

Dr B: God, no. It looks like some sort of intestinal failure in a glass. I'll mix myself a dry martini.

Mrs B: There's no need to be vulgar, George. It's terribly pink, I know, but it doesn't taste too bad. Sweet, of course, but tasty. Mrs. Juniper Williams introduced me to it at our last Ladies for the Advancement of Scientific Ideas meeting.

Dr B: Advancing the science of drink mixing now, are you? What was it last month? Ah yes, I remember. You spent an hour and a half "debating" the merits of canning quince and I was called in to tend to Mrs Pewtershmidt's black eye.

Mrs B: I grant you, we do enter into passionate debates from time to time, but the society as a whole is very dedicated to our cause, and as a doctor I would think that you would be all for it, George.

Dr B: I am all for the advancement of scientific ideals, Violet, by ladies, men, children and barnyard animals, should they be so inclined. But if the meetings are going to produce nothing but black eyes and disgusting beverages, I feel that I am well within my rights to point out that the aims of the society are not being achieved.

Mrs B: You're a horrible snob, George. And a hypocrite to boot. Why, I remember the last time you came back from a medical association meeting, you stank of gin and had rude pictures in your waistcoat pocket.

Dr B: They were not rude, Violet, they were detailed anatomical drawings. That's falls entirely within the bailiwick of the medical association.

Mrs B: They were certainly detailed. But I don't remember your school textbooks having such uncouth captions, nor did they exaggerate the anatomy quite so profoundly.

Dr B: Be that as it may, Violet, you oughtn't to have been going through my waistcoat pockets.

Mrs B: You oughtn't to have spilled sauce down the front of it, necessitating the pockets to be cleaned out before laundering.

Pause

Dr B: Would you like another one of those pretty little drinks, my dear?