

Walking To Gibraltar,

Chapter 11: In Which An Accusation Is Debated

by Frank Indiana

He gave her cancer. *He* gave her cancer.

Not what she said. She said her *relationship* gave her cancer. Her relationship with *him*. Gave her cancer.

It was a slit of an accusation. A razor slice that just kept bleeding. A worm burrowing up from the base of his skull. A nasty, horrible thing to say. Especially to your husband. Especially when you needed his help. Even if it were true.

Which it wasn't. Jesus. Relationships didn't cause cancer. Not even malignant relationships. The science didn't support it.

Which wasn't the point. What sort of monster had the power to infect another person with cancer? It wasn't possible. It couldn't be. Couldn't be him.

And yet. The hard little truth behind his heart had formed a tumor of resentment. His disappointment metastasized. His lymph nodes collected pools of bitterness. His liver secreted loneliness. Why couldn't the rogue cells mutating in her breast be his fault?

And why her breast? Why not her brain or her cervix? Why not a basal cell carcinoma on her forearm, just to scare her? He didn't want kill to her, did he?

Did he?

He'd fantasized about her death. Sometimes he thought if she would just die, everything would turn out fine. He could raise Max. He already did most of the cooking and cleaning. He'd be a widower. An object of sympathy. *Poor Frank. Look how he carries on. Terrible, wasn't it? Her car accident/plane crash/thyroid cancer. Accidental poisoning.*

But now that Astrid had cancer, he knew he didn't want her to die. Didn't want her to suffer. He didn't hate her. Especially now. He had been three fucking weeks from moving out of the house. *She didn't have to die for him to be happy. She just had to not have cancer.*

She had cancer. And he didn't believe for a second that she was going to die. Not for one second. That would be too easy. Astrid was going to live to be 95 with the cancer he gave her, and every twelve years she would relapse, just to spite him.

It was his fault. No other explanation made any sense. He was that sort of monster. The karma wheel crushed his soul. Perhaps in a previous life he'd tortured babies.

