

I'm Afraid It's Bad News
an original screenplay by

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INT. DOCTORS' SURGERY. WAITING ROOM - DAY

SUSAN CLARKE (43, in a colourful bandanna) watches the President's announcement along with other concerned PATIENTS. As she contemplates the repercussions -

NURSE (O.S.)
(over the PA system)
Susan Clarke to consultation room
four.

It takes a moment for Susan to respond to her name.

INT. DOCTOR'S ROOM - DAY

DR. STEWART (28, male, with the youthful exuberance of someone just starting their career) welcomes Susan in.

DR. STEWART
Please take a seat Susan. How are
you doing?

Susan doesn't respond. Still digesting what she's just seen. Dr. Stewart mistakes it for nerves. He sympathises.

DR. STEWART (CONT'D)
I know you must be nervous so I'll
cut to the chase. I'm afraid it's
bad news. The cancer has not
responded as we would've liked.
The tumour is now too close to the
brain so there is nothing more we
can do. I'm afraid we may be
talking weeks, rather than months.

Susan chuckles to herself. She can't resist laughing at the absurdity of it all. It is a reaction Dr. Stewart has not prepared for.

DR. STEWART (CONT'D)
(unsettled)
I want you to know that even if we
had caught it earlier there's no
guarantee any of our solutions
would have worked. I'm so sorry.
(sliding a leaflet
across the desk)
This leaflet may be able to help
with any concerns you may have.

Susan stops chuckling. Reads Dr. Stewart's confused face.

SUSAN
Oh God you don't know.
(off his blank
expression)
Oh God...

Susan is unfamiliar being this side of the 'bad news' conversation. She looks around the room for help.

INSERT - The leaflet. 'Preparing for the end of life.'

SUSAN (CONT'D)
I'm afraid it's bad news.
(re his computer)
May I?

Of course. She finds the meteor online. He reads.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
(hesitant)
There's a meteor heading towards us. NASA have said this meteor is too close to the earth so there is nothing more we can do. We're talking hours, rather than days. Even if they'd caught it sooner there's no guarantee that any of our solutions would have worked. I'm so sorry.

DR. STEWART
(after a long pause)
This has to be some sort of joke.

SUSAN
It was announced by the President. Of the United States.

DR. STEWART
Or a publicity stunt.

SUSAN
I don't think the President would...

DR. STEWART
It has to be something dammit!

He slams his fist into the desk. Susan flinches.

DR. STEWART (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, I didn't mean to, I just...I don't...

Dr. Stewart stares blankly at his desk. Realisation hitting him hard. Susan empathises. She goes to his side, collecting the leaflet as she does so.

SUSAN
How about we read this together?

She puts a comforting arm around his shoulder as they begin to read.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOCTOR'S SURGERY - DAY

Susan and Dr. Stewart walk out together. They stop. An awkward moment hangs between them. He offers her a handshake. She looks at the hand. Hugs him instead. He looks close to tears. She is calmer. They break the hug and go their separate ways.

THE END.