

Businessman

Text by Dr Tan Su-Ming

I saw him out of the corner of my eye as I circled the cavernous carpark looking for a parking lot.

Full to the brim! Everyone was eating out with a vengeance after the restrictions on dining in had been lifted.

I finally found what must have been the last parking lot in this six-storey building and skilfully zipped into the narrow space, grateful that I drove a very compact vehicle.

"Madam!" he called out as I walked towards the lift.

"Wash and wax?" he asked, pushing his trolley that held two buckets, a

bottle of car polish, a few towels and some sponges.

He looked like a foreign worker who was probably trying to eke out some extra income by doing this after work.

"Okay, how much?" I asked. My car was really dirty, plastered with pigeon poo (*shudder*). I had planned for weeks to "finally" wash my car over the weekend but had procrastinated for forever.

"\$8", he replied. I rummaged through my wallet and finally gave him a ten dollar note and said, "I give you ten *lah*," He beamed, or at least I think his eyes beamed. I couldn't see the rest of his masked face, and he thanked me.

A split second later, a well-dressed woman got out of her parked Mercedes, walked up and asked, "How much for a car wash?"

"Ten dollars, madam", he replied.

I looked at him and raised my eyebrows.

He met my gaze and whispered, "Her car is bigger." ◆



Living Eulogy

Text by Dr Tan Su-Ming

It was most unexpected.

I had an intern shadowing me that week and as with every patient who entered my consultation room, I would ask the patient's permission for my intern to sit in.

Most of my patients were lovely; not only do they say "sure" or "no problem", they would even say "good luck with school" to my intern when the consultation had come to an end.

When "Jill" came in that day, I expected her to tell me that she preferred not to have the intern around, as I knew that she was going through a particularly trying patch in her life, and maybe did not feel comfortable talking about these things with a stranger around.

She hesitated for a moment, and then said, "It's okay. Your intern can stay." When her session with me ended, she turned to my intern and spoke, without looking at me, as if I wasn't there.

It felt slightly surreal, like I was listening to my eulogy as Jill, in her unselfconscious and heartfelt manner, told my intern all the things she appreciated about me, as a person and as a friend.

I could feel my cheeks getting flushed and sheepishly I muttered, "太夸张吧!" (Chinese for "that's too much of an exaggeration!")

Most times the dead don't get to hear their eulogies at their funeral.

I was so lucky to hear mine. ◆

Dr Tan graduated from the National University of Singapore in 1990. She is married with a daughter and runs her own general practice.

