

OLLIE (AGE LATE TWENTIES-MID-THIRTIES)

My Dad was ill.

He was very ill indeed.

He was hot. Very hot. Then he was coughing. Coughing like he was trying to turn himself inside out, that's what my Mum said.

Then he went into hospital and we weren't allowed to see him at all.

My Mum was allowed to speak to him on the phone, and once I spoke to him on the phone and he said 'I love you son. I love you very much.'

He'd never done that before.

Then not long after that he died.

Our flats where we live are 21 storeys high, that's a lot of people. But everyone knows me, I'm Ollie from the 15th floor. I chat with people in the lifts, I like to cheer them up. I'm a bit different cos I've got autism, but we're all human aren't we? That's what my Mum says.

In hospital they asked my Dad if he wanted to be in a clinical trial and he told them to eff off. I ain't gonna be your effing Guinea Pig he said.

I didn't understand why he said that because I love Guinea Pigs! I looked after a Guinea Pig for my school once when I was a kid. I called him Batman after my favourite superhero.

My Mum said my Dad was just being a grumpy old git. He was 56, so he wasn't actually old, but he *was* quite grumpy sometimes. He had diabetes and his blood pressure was too high. They wanted to try out some sort of medicine on him, something that might help people get better from Coronavirus. Daft sod, My Mum called him. How are we gonna get out of this whole virus pandemic thing if people don't take part in trials?

I was watching *Batman Begins* when the hospital phoned with the news.

My Mum started crying on the phone just as Batman was flying through Gotham City, saving people.

But no-one could save my Dad and we weren't there with him when he passed.

It was horrible.

We both got unwell after that, and I said to my Mum should we do a trial if they ask us?

I'm hoping it won't come to that, she said. She meant I hope we won't end up in hospital.

But if you was asked, I said, would you?

And she said yes, definitely, she would, because they need to do research on people like us too, not just on young posh people like them ones we saw doing trials for the coronavirus vaccine on TV.

I said what do you mean, people like us? I thought she was talking about, you know, me being a bit different. But she said no, sometimes people think we're not important because we live in the flats and we don't have posh jobs or cars or big houses. They don't include us in things.

And she said she was angry with my Dad, she said he could have been given a treatment, he could have got better. He always was too suspicious, she said, reading stupid conspiracy theories on the internet, that mobile phone masts give you coronavirus and vaccines kill you.

Daft sod, she said, and she started crying again. If I *do* end up in hospital, I will say yes to a trial, definitely, she said.

And I said I'd make sure I would let them know that.

I started getting better but my Mum didn't.

She was hot and she stayed hot. She was coughing and the coughing got worse, like she was trying to turn herself inside out.

By the time the ambulance people arrived, her breathing was so bad she couldn't really talk. So I said it to them, I said my Mum wants to take part in a

trial. But I don't think they really took it in because they were busy dealing with my Mum.

The hospital phoned later to tell me how she was doing, and I said it again then. They said she was on oxygen, and I said can she talk, and they said no, so I said she's an important person, and they said they knew that, and I said she wants to take part in clinical trials. It was a research nurse, and she was very pleased to hear what I said, and she said they would ask my Mum about it.

They did. They asked her if she wanted to take part, and she nodded and put her thumbs up and so that meant yes. And the nurse said it was because of me that they knew. And I said I was pleased because now my Mum might get better, once she had taken the medicine, and the nurse said that it was a controlled trial, so my Mum might not get the extra medicine. She said some people get it and some people don't, so that they can tell when the medicine works. And I got upset then. I started crying. And I said I have already lost my Dad and I do not want to lose my Mum and I don't want to be alone

And she was really lovely to me and she said that my Mum would be a hero for taking part in the trials, whether she got the medicine or not. And I said, a hero, like Batman, and she said yes, exactly. She didn't know Batman was a Guinea Pig as well.

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My Mum started to get better after that. She took part in the Recovery Trial, they gave her an anti-viral drug.

I've started calling her 'my little Guinea Pig' because I'm very proud of her for taking part in those trials. Guinea Pigs can be superheroes and people like my Mum are important.