



## Marriage Kate Morris

My husband takes my arm and I lean on him heavily. I shuffle forwards inch by inch but soon have to stop and rest because walking is painful. I imagine this is what it will be like in 40 years or so — clinging to each other, one of us with a stick, the other hard of hearing, chatting about the high price of ham, our hernias and how hot the summers have become.

On Christmas Eve I had a tobogganing accident. It was cold and icy and we improvised a sledge: a huge piece of plastic with string attached. The snowy hill looked as beautiful and seductive as a scene from *Narnia* and we wanted to be on it. The children tobogganed like experts, going neither

too fast nor too slow, but when it was my turn the toboggan roared down the hill at a terrifying, out-of-control pace and crashed into a tree, just short of an icy lake.

I was whisked to A&E in an ambulance, high on morphine, chatting animatedly but wincing with pain. The male nurses sashayed about their duties with tinsel coiled around their necks and toy antlers on their heads, saucy and smirking. I was X-rayed by a quirky technician who reminded me of the actor John Simm, and he told me that in his opinion nothing was broken but a doctor would give the final verdict. Two weeks later my husband is still

bringing me hot water bottles and frozen ice packs to quell the pain and the swelling while I sit and read the exquisite, bittersweet stories in *Perfect Lives* by Polly Samson.

Relying on my husband for sustenance and peace of mind reminds me of when we first met in Yemen, while covering travel stories for separate magazines. On Day Five I was struck down with “acute gastroenteritis”. It wasn’t exactly romantic, but somewhere in my subconscious I decided that this rugged man who held my head every time I was sick would make a good husband — reliable and caring, with a good sense of humour. Few men

would have been resourceful enough to find a holidaying Egyptian doctor on the edge of the desert who happened to have a saline drip in his bag, which restored me to health. The rugged photographer was, and he stood by, mopping my brow and giving me sips of Coca-Cola.

When I recovered we drove miles across the hot, dusty desert — the Empty Quarter — guarded by a truculent man nursing a Kalashnikov while the driver chewed the narcotic plant qat. The trip was arduous and at times scary but it glued us together for ever.

Dear reader, three years later I married him.