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*He wanted me
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Sara: 'I know the
power of our love kept
my husband going'

Things we did for *love*

This all-powerful emotion can inspire us, help us overcome obstacles and make us stronger than ever, if we're courageous enough to let it, as these women prove...

'I cared for my husband for 13 years'

It was only two months into their relationship when Sara Challice and her partner Neal discovered he had a brain tumour. But once she'd made the decision to care for the man she loved, there was no going back...

The taxi sped along, my heart racing with it. I'd got a call at work about my partner, Neal. He'd been admitted to hospital after months of feeling unwell, and had had a scan that afternoon. I was on my way to hear the results. From the sound of his sister's voice on the phone, I knew it wasn't good news.

The diagnosis was that Neal, the strong, capable man I had fallen in love with, had a malignant tumour in his brain, the size of a satsuma. It was a devastating, shocking revelation. He was 42, 11 years older than me. We'd been dating for two months, and our relationship had only been official for around six weeks when we heard the news. We'd been filled with the prospect of a bright, joyful future together. Now, that future was threatened.

That week Neal had an operation to remove as much of the tumour as possible. Six weeks of radiotherapy followed, and six months taking a chemotherapy drug. For almost a year, he seemed to be stable and on Christmas Day, 18 months after we'd first got together, Neal proposed and I said yes without hesitation. But just a week later we were on a skiing trip together and he fell ill. Back home, an MRI scan revealed several more tumours had appeared in his brain. The oncologist suggested we move our wedding day forward. Until that day, I'd never seen Neal cry.

'You don't have to marry me,' he said, and I knew he meant it. The odds weren't good and he wanted me to live my life without burden or worry. Yet my love for Neal was too strong to desert him. I couldn't

imagine myself with anyone else. I said, 'Screw the cancer. We'll make the most of the time we have.' Our wedding was a big, joyful occasion, a celebration of our life and love. We weren't sure what the future would hold but it was one of the happiest days of my life.

With Neal facing years of chemotherapy, we knew we would have to put some of our plans on hold. As time went on, Neal's health continued to deteriorate as he lost more and more mobility. I quit my job and started working from home in order to care for him. In 2011, he had a stroke and became severely disabled. With the help of private carers, I fed him, changed him and hoisted him in and out of bed.

Every time Neal went away for a week's respite care, his condition seemed to worsen. It felt like he was giving up, but when I got him home again, he always improved. With hugs and kisses every day and constant emotional support, I know the power of our love kept him going.

He died in September last year. Even though he had been very ill for so long, it still came as a shock. I miss him terribly, but I'm relieved that he's not suffering any more. I received huge help and support from The Brain Tumour Charity throughout Neal's illness. Its research is key to improving survival rates, which are terribly low. It was a comfort to know I wasn't alone.

Spending the past 13 years as a carer has taught me a lot about life and love. I don't know what the future holds but I feel positive. I don't regret any decisions I've made. I did everything I could to support the man I loved.