

# RICHARD PRYOR'S TRAGIC LAST DAYS

**MS-ravaged  
funnyman  
is slowly  
slipping  
away**

**'He gets worse  
by the hour...'**

**R**ICHARD PRYOR is bravely battling the multiple sclerosis that's devastating his body. But sometimes his burden is so grueling that he's begging his nurses to let him die.

"Richard gets deeply depressed and often doesn't want to go on with his life," says his ex-wife Jennifer. "He'll turn stubborn and refuse to do his exercises or drink water. And without water, an MS patient can't breathe.

"Don't mess with me," he'll mutter when his nurses Corina and Sandra or I come to his aid. His vocal cords are so weak that his voice at times is barely audible."

And another insider confides, "On one really bad morning recently, he screwed up his face and muttered, 'Just let me die. Why don't you. I just wanna go. I ain't no good here.'"

The 59-year-old comic genius' ravaged face and shaking body startled friends and fans at a party in Los Angeles last month to launch a new CD collection of his work. He was too weak to speak or get up from his chair.

Pryor used to keep guns around his suburban L.A. home, but Jennifer, the fourth

of his five wives, changed that. "I threw all them in a trash bin so he can't use them to harm himself," she confides. "Richard's black moods are too dangerous to let fester. If he loses hope, he can't battle his disease."

Jennifer, whose brief marriage to Pryor in the early '80s ended amid allegations of physical abuse, lives just five minutes away and she devotedly oversees his caretakers, medical care and finances.

"Richard can stand, but he can't walk," she points out. "He stays mostly at home, but we try to get him out to a movie or parties given in his honor."

The legendary funnyman is also plagued by secondary illnesses that accompany multiple sclerosis. He was recently hospitalized for a

week of IV antibiotics to stem a bout with pneumonia. His vigilant daughter Rain, closest of his six children, was by his bedside every moment. "He's my daddy," says Rain, 31, "and I love him so much."

Otherwise, Pryor's final days are unremarkable. "Corina and Sandra wake him for exercise in bed, bending his legs and arms, and massaging his joints to aid circulation," Jennifer reveals. "Then they gently pull him into a sitting position. He has a small breakfast of cereal and fruit, fed to him by his caretakers as though he were a baby, because he's no longer able to lift

a fork. With the help of nurses, he takes a shower. They have to help him up and wash his face. After that, they dress him and ease him into his wheelchair."

Pryor reads the paper and watches TV while eating a lunch of soft foods like pureed vegetables. Twice a week, he receives visits from a speech therapist and a physical therapist, who exercises him to keep his muscles active.

After a light dinner, Pryor listens to CDs of his close friend Quincy Jones brings him, watches his favorite comic Clay Aiken on TV or listens to rap artists like Tupac Shakur and Ice Cube.

Before bed, caretakers brush his teeth, lift him from his wheelchair, undress him and ease him between the sheets.

"Mr. Richard is so funny and sweet," says Corina. "But some days he can be difficult and not want to cooperate."

Pryor still shows a flicker of his former self during these tragic last days.

"One time, he was sitting there staring at caretakers preparing his food, looking as helpless as can be," Jennifer recalls. "But when I asked him what he was thinking, he replied, 'How much I'm paying you m\*\*\*\*\*!'"

"And one day, when Richard was particularly down, Corina told him he's too important to let himself go. He replied weakly, but with determination, 'And don't you forget it!'" - ROBIN MIZRAH



Fading Richard is cared for by ex-wife Jennifer and daughter Rain (left)