



"I have to believe she's gonna get well," says Ozzy (with Sharon in one of the 10 bathrooms in their Beverly Hills home).

Stepping into the living room of her four-bedroom Beverly Hills mansion, Sharon Osbourne appears far more delicate than she did in the first season of MTV's *The Osbournes*. Four months of chemotherapy have taken a toll: Her weight has dwindled by 22 lbs. Her 5'2" frame is swallowed up in her white robe. "I don't know what that stuff is they put inside you," she says as she settles down on a velvet sofa with a Pomeranian named Minnie and her husband, heavy-metal legend Ozzy Osbourne, "but it shrinks you as well."

"Bag of bones," says Ozzy.

It stomps Jack, beet-red angry from his latest skirmish with sister Kelly. "Mom," he barks, "Kelly's acting up. She punched me in the b----. I'm not gonna put up with it if she keeps doing this."

Ozzy, as is his way, takes in the scene with a look of distracted bewilderment, like someone trying to follow the flight of an invisible hummingbird. But Sharon gets up to settle the matter. "Can you give me five minutes?" she asks a visitor before leaving with Jack.

Nice to know that, even coming to grips with a potentially fatal illness, TV's most eccentric family remains true to its coarse, disorderly, crazy self. It's been eight months since *The Osbournes* debuted, scoring MTV's best ratings ever and transforming an aging heavy-metal star and his family into a sort of real-life distillation of the Addamses, the Simpsons and the Beverly Hillbillies. Season 2 premiered Nov. 26, and not much seems different. Ozzy, 53, still can't figure out how to work the remote. Sharon, 50, is again butting heads with neighbors. Last season she flung a ham over a fence when the folks next door drove her crazy with their "Kumbaya" sing-alongs. The new trouble zone, she says, is the tennis courts of another set of neighbors. "It's like living next to McEnroe all day, all night," Sharon says.

Meanwhile Jack, 17, and Kelly, 18, continue their tooth-and-nail battles ("Kelly is a ticking time bomb of fury," says Jack), the yapping dogs (now numbering nine) remain indifferently housebroken, and oldest daughter Aimee, 19, an aspiring singer, continues to be AWOL, at least on-camera. She moved to a nearby apartment last fall to avoid the Osbourne family circus. "My sister has this thing," says Kelly. "She wants everyone to think she's *perfect*."

But there have been some enormous changes at Casa Osbourne. The family, paid an astronomical \$20 million by MTV for this new season, is now perhaps more famous than its patriarch, rock and roll's Prince of Darkness. Kelly has just released her first album, the delicately titled *Shut Up*. Jack, an Epic Records talent scout, is now a genuine A-lister. "Brad Pitt came up to me at the Emmys and said he was a huge fan," he says, amazed. "Brad Pitt—a huge fan of mine!" Sharon and Ozzy have met both the Queen and the President. When Sharon curtsied to George W. Bush at the White House Correspondents Association dinner May 4, she laughs, "he looked at me like I was a bit of a nutter."



"We do normal stuff," says Sharon (at home with Ozzy). "We wash the kitchen floor, he picks up the dog poop."





Success "plays with your mind," says Jack (frolicking in Maui with two local fans). "I'm milking this show for everything it's worth."

Since last summer there has been a new witness to the madness: Robert Marcato, 18 and a longtime friend of Kelly's (they met at private school six years ago). Shortly before his mother, Reagan, a restaurant manager, died of colon cancer at age 36 on July 29, Sharon promised to provide a home for her son (who has virtually no contact with his father) and pay for his education. She and Ozzy have even decided to adopt him. And so he finds himself with his own room in a small house behind the garden. The family has showered him with kindnesses, including a Cadillac Escalade truck. Ozzy throws so much spending money at him—anything from \$20 to \$200 at a time—"I get embarrassed," he says. It's not clear whether soft-spoken Marcato will hold his own on-camera with the brash Kelly and Jack. He simply calls this turn in his life "awesome."

Ozzy offers his own unadorned assessment of recent history. "This has been a pretty incredible year for the Osbournes," he says, "both highs and lows."

The nadir, however, might not be Sharon's disease per se, but its fallout on the family. The Osbournes could be facing their worst crisis. Ozzy, especially, has been torn apart emotionally. Even at the best of times, he's a fragile man who relies on an arsenal of medications to control everything from his anxiety to the palsy left by years of substance abuse. But Sharon's illness has so increased Ozzy's anxiety that, according to the Osbournes' publicist, his shaking has worsened (it was noticeable when he, Sharon and Kelly visited *Tonight* Nov. 20). After a period of relative sobriety, he even turned to booze again.

Ozzy refers to Sharon's cancer only as "the word," even now that the worst is possibly behind them: Sharon's colon cancer, diagnosed last summer, is no longer detectable in blood tests. "It's getting easier not to allow dark thoughts

When they met at school, "Kelly was one of the few totally open people," says new housemate Robert Marcato. "She's real."



"Whatever she wants to do, she'll do 10 times better than I can ever do," Kelly says of elusive sister Aimee (with Sharon in L.A. in April).

to enter my mind," says Ozzy. The chemo, which was scheduled to last until April, now will end in February. Although oncologists generally agree that a patient can't be considered clear of the disease for at least five years postop, Sharon recently celebrated with an early Thanksgiving dinner of turkey and potatoes. Not long before that—Oct. 9—she turned 50. Ozzy threw her a party at home. "I've lived 50 lives in 50 years, but this one was the most enlightening," she says. "I'm doing great. I went through about five minutes of 'poor me.'"

You won't likely see many of those moments on the show, which deals with her crisis head-on while keeping up the humor. (Sharon campily flirts with a doctor.) But away from the cameras that trail the family, "it's been a nightmare," says Ozzy. The cancer was discovered after the normally tireless Sharon had complained of fatigue. The doctor delivered the bad news by phone July 1. "Mum and Kelly and I were in New York City," says Jack. "Mum got off the phone. She was in tears. She said, 'Jack, I have colon cancer.' And I was like, 'Well, that's a pain in the ass.'"

Not quite what the Beaver would have said to Mrs. Cleaver, but the kid had a point: Only two weeks before, the family had signed their new deal with MTV. Kelly, relocating to New York City for a few months, was recording her album. Ozzy was set for his annual Ozzfest tour. And although the Osbournes had weathered many problems—a drug-addled Ozzy tried to strangle Sharon in '89—cancer was something that happened to other people. They were already prepared to welcome Robert Marcato into their arms and home. "There's not a day that goes by that I don't think about my mom," Marcato says. But he soon was calling Sharon "Mom," too. "It was weird at first, but I know my mom would want me to call Sharon that."

The possibility of the Osbournes losing their own mum threw them into a tailspin. "I couldn't live without her," says Kelly, who has suffered anxiety attacks since the illness. Interviewed recently by Barbara Walters, Aimee said her father, who was binging on alcohol and drugs when Sharon started to manage not only his career but his life in 1979, wouldn't last a year without her. "Eighteen months," he shouts now, sending Sharon into giggles. But Jack will have none of it: "Mum didn't raise us to be weak. The last thing she'd want would be for us *not* to survive."

On July 3 Sharon underwent emergency surgery to remove malignant polyps at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, with chemotherapy prescribed as follow-up. Although the side effects are abating, the treatment triggered debilitating nausea and diarrhea. "When I'm throwing up, Kelly's always there rubbing my back—or Aimee," she says. Even now Kelly worries about her mother's lowered immune system. When a photographer suggests Sharon playfully bite Jack's hand, Kelly snaps, "Mommy can't have germs," later explaining: "My brother's a dirty m-----." Sharon's hair hasn't thinned much, but the family is willing to shave their

heads in solidarity if it comes to that. "We'll be known as the Osbalds," laughs Sharon.

Ozzy—as expected—was the one who really fell apart. Sharon's illness "demolished me," he says. He was useless as a nurse (he fainted on her first trip to chemo), so Sharon told him he'd do best by just going out on his own as planned. He obeyed, but he also took matters into his own hands, sedating his nerves by getting stoned on beer. "I don't think I'll ever be 100 percent sober," he says, adding, "I can't stand AA." Yet he says he's not drinking "right now." On this day he jogged four miles and fixed himself a protein shake. Sharon,



Kelly, with her 18th-birthday present (a 1957 Chevy Bel Air), has dropped from 145 to 129 lbs. "I haven't changed, just grown up."



Ozzy (with Kelly, Sharon and Jay Leno on *Tonight*) "is fragile, like most artists," says his wife. "He doesn't do well with bad news."

who has ushered him in and out of 14 rehabs, reluctantly accepts that her husband may backslide. "Ozzy can't deal with a lot of things in the real world." But Kelly gets fed up coping with her child-man father. "I'm sick of saying, 'Don't do that! Don't take that,'" she says. "Instead, I'll say, 'You a-----,' and walk out of the room."

Sharon herself seemed unglued during the Barbara Walters interview, complaining that *The Osbournes* had made such a wreck of their lives that she wasn't sure the family would see their MTV commitment all the way through.

Now, she says diplomatically, "I was really tired that day." Although MTV put no pressure on the family to resume, she says, they're sticking with the show, even if that means that "in an average day there's probably 60 to 70 people that come through this house." Besides, Sharon is happiest when taming chaos. Although Ozzy asked her staff to reduce her workload, she's back to at least 90 percent of her old schedule, says assistant Tony Dennis, mapping out strategy for her syndicated talk show, which is expected to debut in the fall. She takes meetings with her staff while the chemo drips intravenously. "It makes the time fly."

Meanwhile, a second Oz-bird is ready to leave the nest. Kelly—who, like Jack, dropped out of high school with her mother's blessing—plans to move out on her own. She already loves to spend time with her boyfriend, singer Bert McCracken, 20, whose band, the Used, toured with Ozzfest. "When I'm with him, my life revolves around him," she says. (Sharon is already feeling nostalgic. "I'll miss our girly talks," she says.) Kelly also says no way to any MTV beyond the current 20 episodes. "The show is retarded," she says. "If they offered me \$100 million, I wouldn't do it. If I'm in a bad mood

in one episode, I'm considered a bitch the rest of my life."

Jack is happy with both the show and home. "I don't really give a f--- what everyone thinks about me," he says. "And I like hanging out with my parents." Marcato will be around too, working at the family's management company and planning to study theater at a local college. He savors those odd warm-fuzzy moments when Ozzy gives him a hug. Once, in a moment of techno-acuity, Oz even microwaved custard for him. "He did it just to make me happy," says Marcato. Of course, he's still getting used to the fact that the Osbournes conduct ordinary conversation at rock-star-decibel levels. "I treat him no differently than my kids," Sharon says. "So I swear at him."

The language might be softer on New Year's Eve, but who knows? Sharon and Ozzy have invited 600 guests to a delayed celebration of their 20th anniversary (they wed July 4, 1982) in Beverly Hills. "We'll write our own vows and have our marriage blessed again," says Sharon. "It will be one New Year's we'll never forget." Especially if Kelly and Jack are groomsman and bridesmaid.

- Tom Gliatto
- Alexis Chiu in Los Angeles



"One thing I'm really glad about the show is our grandchildren will have this moment frozen in time," says Sharon (with Oz and pets).