

*Saturday 1/6/02*

*11.11AM*

Winter! Rain and now sun is spilling over the treetops onto the garden. It's beautiful. It is cold. There is very little warmth in the sun, but it's warming to see. The garden is gloriously wet. I found four orchid spikes amongst the jungle in the bottom orchid house. I love orchids.

Waiting, waiting, waiting! There are things to do but I don't want to do them. I had a disturbed night. Tears were falling out the side of my eyes onto a tissue strategically positioned to catch them, not noisy tears, just leaks.

The day was tough. There was a CT<sup>14</sup> scan in the morning followed by an interview and a blood pressure check with a nurse. In the afternoon there was another interview and a check up with the resident assisting Andrew Cavallo, followed by blood tests and an ECG<sup>15</sup>. Tuesday is a PET<sup>16</sup> scan.

The operation is a very big one, a right groin dissection. The whole lymphatic system in the groin will be excised and dismantled leaving nowhere for the fluid to drain. Rex will need to keep his leg elevated and wear a tight surgical stocking for a year to prevent fluid build up. The resident said Andrew is meticulous. He certainly has been with the initial tests and information. Nothing has been left to chance.

I'm a little less upbeat today. It's out of my hands now. We will know the extent of the problem on Wednesday, and what the future will hold. The lump has been found very quickly,

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<sup>14</sup>CT (computed tomography) scans use many x-ray images that are combined by a computer to give a detailed, cross-sectional view of the body. The injection of a kind of 'dye' helps better outline structures in the body.

<sup>15</sup>Electrocardiogram is a graphic produced by an electrocardiograph, which records the electrical activity of the heart.

<sup>16</sup>PET (positron emission tomography) scans are a type of nuclear medicine imaging. In this test, a special kind of radioactive sugar is injected into the vein. The sugar collects in areas that have cancer and a scanner can spot these areas.

hopefully before too much damage. Has it spread anywhere else? We don't know. Insidious disease!

Flat. Flatter. Flattened. I need to do something but I'm feeling a bit down. I can't be too down as it worries Rex and the others around me. I have to be strong, look strong, act strong and get through it. I will. We will.

What is on the other side we don't know? The great unknown, but that's life. Rex is aware, as am I; the stakes are much higher this time. My man, my husband, my lover, my friend, he's the best of everything. Love, loved, loving.

*Sunday 2/6/02*

*1.30pm*

The day is mild and sunny after a foggy start. The family is resting. Rex is watching footy. The dogs are sleeping. It's the last day before Rex goes into hospital.

I felt Rex's lump. It's small, about the size of a pea, but hard, definitely there. It's hard to believe something so small is so deadly, and the cause of so much trouble. I don't feel like writing or talking to anyone now. We're waiting for the next instalment.

*Monday 3/6/02*

*7.23am*

The nights are tough. Rex is unsettled, worried. It's the waiting, the bloody waiting. It was black outside when I lifted the blind. Not now. Sunrise has been and gone. The silvery blue light is cold, no warmth. Like in here.

The path has been set. We follow wherever it leads as best we can, together. There's no use crying or railing against the

world on the unfairness, the injustice of it all. It isn't. This is Rex's lot for the time being.

I'm coping in my own way. I'm getting through day by day because days become weeks, weeks months, and months years. And, before you know it, the crisis is over, until next time. I no longer think of Rex as invincible. He's just a man – vulnerable, fragile, and human, like me. It's my turn to look after him. Hopefully he will be there for me when I need to be looked after once more.

I'm philosophical. What will be will be. Cancer is not my *bete noir*. I will learn to deal with it better because I have to. Cancer can be conquered or calmed, for periods of time at least, giving us time together. Our life, our future, I wonder what it holds? It will be here. We're not going anywhere else.