

## Chapter sixteen

I was spending a lot of time down at the caravan with my Mum and Dad. Sometimes I would go on my own to get away for a break. Mine and Jeff's relationship is strong, but to be constantly in one another's pockets twenty-four hours a day, there was a few major cracks beginning to appear. We would get very bitchy with one another, him blaming me, then me blaming him for the most stupid things that you normally would ignore. The kids were beginning to feel the effects of all this arguing they had obviously gone through an awful lot it must be hard to see your mum go from a big strapping woman to a little scrawny bald headed one. I was inundated with letters from the school complaining about the children's behaviour and lack of homework. I am not a great believer in homework so I rarely get on at them to do it. I have been called in on a number of occasions to discuss these problems. Is it just me or does every one, revert back to feeling like a little school kid who has been sent up in front of the head mistress for misbehaviour. They always seem to talk down to you, I go in thinking I am not having this I'll set them straight on this one, but by the time I come out I am saying "yes Miss, sorry Miss". I get home the kids are there "waiting well did you have a go?" "Not really, you little gits got me a right telling off". Bradley had by now gone through five jobs, every one was rubbish according to him, and he managed to found some legitimate reason for leaving it. He was currently doing furniture deliveries but it was not a permanent position. He was a bit of a worry for us; he just couldn't get in to anything that kept his interest for very long, one day the jobs the best thing since sliced bread the next its crap. He was the same with his girlfriends too. My mum said, "Leave him to get on with it, I believe we all have a

niche in life he's just taking a while to find his, these things have a way of sorting themselves out", I hope she's right for his sake.

I would often stand in front of the mirror and study this person looking back at me, which was hardly recognisable as the person that stood in front of this very mirror a few years back. I remember thinking god I wouldn't recognise myself, no wonder other people don't recognise me. The hair loss was still the worst bit of the treatment for me to contend with. My hair was just about growing through now. They had said to me that although it would all fall out, it would most definitely grow back; and nine times out of ten it would grow back thicker and stronger. It was about half an inch long now and very patchy I couldn't see that it was ever going to be better than it was before the treatment. I thought I remind myself of something but what is it, I was just standing there staring and then it came to me an ostrich that's it, a fucking ostrich, little beaky face and nose, tufts of sticky up hair on top of my head, and then there was the body, where I had lost so much wait my boobs and arse were sagging too. This is awful I thought looking down, I've got the tits of a baboon the arse of a rhinoceros the head of an ostrich I am a walking fucking zoo. No wonder lots of people would just walk pass me they were probably afraid I might charge them admission. "Oi that's nice, not going to talk to me then" "Kerry god, I am sorry, I just didn't recognise you, your hair and the weight you've lost, I have heard all what's been going on from other people but it can't be true can it, I figured it must be the old Chinese whispers routine and every bodies exaggerating, adding their own little bits on." "I don't know what you've heard but it's probably true, it could even be worse than what you've heard. Still I am not going to go in to all that now how's things with you?" Its funny the different reactions you get from people, some want to know all the gory details and really show an interest. Others no soon as you say something they

immediately want to tell you their most gruesome details of someone they knew who died an agonising death from Cancer and how this process only took weeks. Thanks I think I could have coped not knowing that one.

Jeff was trying to kill the boredom by still working on the house. As you can imagine the place was looking absolutely lovely. Jeff can do everything in the building trade, plumbing, decorating, building, landscaping, the only thing he wont touch is plastering, I am the envy of all my friends, most of their husbands are useless at D.I.Y or should I say claim to be. On the whole though, I am proud of the way Jeff has coped, considering he has already been through this terrible experience once before in his life, with his Mum. Ted and Elsie were on the phone most days to Jeff, making sure everything was okay, and offering their help, as was Sharon and Jim, Jeff's sister and brother in law. I am not only proud of Jeff, but of my kids and how well they have coped with this situation too, very proud indeed of all of them. I think it is a true tribute to my little family that we are still together, many families, I feel sure would have buckled and gone there separate ways by now. Especially as there is still heaps more shit to come, but lets forget the shit for a while and have a party.

## Chapter seventeen

My fortieth Birthday was looming up on me fast. "This is going to be a real biggy Kel, what with all our family, all our friends and neighbours plus I am getting in touch with all the old crew from the Bell and Gate, this should be a brilliant night and I think that we deserve it, just for one night lets try and enjoy ourselves, What do you say?" "Okay lets go for it". All the invitations are sent out, we invited parents of

friends, as well, who we had known for quite some time too. One of these was Carols, mum Sarah unfortunately she is going through the same as me so we had recently been chatting to one another and we are both of the opinion we aren't going nowhere yet. Carol is another friend that I have known for years but only see now and again. I met her when I was working at the Pharmaceutical Company after I finished with my dad. . Once again I was inundated with offers of help to organise and prepare the buffet. We had just as much fun getting set up, for the occasion, as we did at the party. Most of the old crew from the Bell and Gate showed up. Its sad how things go we all used to be so close, but as you get older you settle down and loose contact with some really special people. We had been on Holiday a few times with the lads from this group. They are mainly younger than Jeff and me, so they didn't have girlfriends to start with. I was the only girl amongst the seven single lads, all in two caravans, the surrounding caravans curtains were constantly twitching, I bet they all thought I was a right old trollop. I didn't care we always had a great time, I was one of the lads and I loved it. Both my sisters managed to get down to attend, and my Aunt June and Uncle Bill, Lisa, Mick, Janine and all their kids Lauren, Kelsey, Charlie and Sam came too. I think because everyone new the situation they had all made a big effort for me and I got spoilt rotten. I got lots of presents from everyone, some really lovely things, that I will always treasure. Most of my old work colleagues managed to get time off from the home to attend. I think everyone had an absolute great time I know I certainly did. The last thing I remember clearly was stripping Sharon's brother Dave; he was the only one brave enough to do the Full Monty for me, for my birthday. I had quite a few volunteers until the music started and they all legged it. So Dave, who was in a line up of five suddenly finds he is all on his own. I am not sure that he intended to go any further than his socks and pants, but I was having none of that, the next thing I have

thrown my self at him and his gone down, so I set about getting the socks.

Unfortunately where he had been sweating his socks seemed to have moulded to his feet, I was not going to let that defeat me these bastards were coming off even if I had to cut them off. I was dragging him around the conservatory by his socks, which were by now about three feet long but were still not budging. Exhausted I gave up on the socks; I set my sights on the pants. I think Dave thought Fuck it let her have the pants and save the skin from the carpet burns. He just stood up and raised his arms the pants were removed; satisfied I set off to find my next project. Now Dave having been to other parties that I had attended, had some idea of what I get like in drink, so I don't think he would have taken much notice of me, but my next victim was a friend of Jeff's who I had never met before in my life, his name was also Jeff and his wife's named Irene, Jeff new him through work. When they were first invited they had declined because they had already made arrangements to go out with their own friends "That doesn't matter" says Jeff "Bring them along too, our parties always go on till late, so come on after you've been out". So by the time they arrive as I say I am away with the fairies having drunk about a third of my bottle of Vodka. They are standing there having a quite chat with my Jeff when, who knows for what reason I suddenly run at this poor man, jumped and wrapped my arms and legs around him. Fortunately he must have seen me coming cos he managed to keep his balance, "Hi yer fancy a dance?" "Well in a minute I am having a chat at the minute" "Okay you ain't got much any way" off I go leaving this poor man shell shocked. "What was that" "Well that was Kerry my wife" said Jeff "Well I must say I have never had an introduction like that before" "Don't worry when I tell her what's she's just done in the morning, she will be absolutely mortified" He was right I was gutted "He must think I am awful, oh shit what did his wife say" "Actually she just laughed" "Jeff I

feel sick that poor man, I'll never be able to face him again" "You probably wouldn't know who he was if I was to put him in front of you now, that's how drunk you were" "I know do you think I would get away with blaming the combination of the drink and medication" "You could try but I don't think anyone is going to hold it against you anyway, I think most people were glad to see you enjoying yourself". "Jeff I think I need a few days at the caravan to recover from this one" "I'll drive you down tomorrow" "thank you" Thank god your only Forty once.

A couple of weeks after my birthday is Mandy's next doors. Jeff and her get on really well and would often have long conversations about one thing or another, leaning over the fence. Jeff's like it with all my neighbours, his more of an old woman than I am. You will often see him gossiping with one or the other, I never get to tell them anything Jeff always beats me to it. There's always a lot of playful banter going on between them all. One area that Mandy is always geeing Jeff up, is his favourite skimpy red swimming trunks, I must admit I don't like them myself but each to his own. As soon as the sun comes out so do the little red swimming trunks. These are like a red rag to a bull for Mandy she never misses an opportunity to get a dig in about them, "Glad to see your looking as sexy as ever Jeff" then making out to gag. "Your just jealous cos your arse wouldn't fit in em" "Oooo, bitchty , mind you you're the opposite from me arnt you, you ain't got a lot in the front, so I guess you don't need very big ones, unlike my John" "Yeah, yeah you wouldnt wont it on your face as a Walt," Off they go I just walk away this could go on for ages. This is what gave me the idea for her birthday present. So I acquired these red swimming trunks and wrapped them up for her in pretty paper and a Birthday bag and gave it to her. Actually I felt a bit rotten because when I gave them to her she looked genuinely chuffed that I had brought her something. "Oh thanks Kerry that's really nice of you,

you shouldn't have" "Mandy open it now" "Oh I was going to save it" "No go on open it" She stood there and unwrapped her pressie, when she finally pulled these trunks out she just creased up and so did we. She went off indoors and showed her family who had come round, you could hear them all laughing. I was expecting her to give them straight back but they didn't materialize. Jeff started to go in to mourning "I am gutted now I love them trunks," "Do you want me to ask for them back" "You cant do that" "Well I would think that all she is going to do with them, is throw them away" The next thing we heard was Mandy "ooohh ooohh Jeff, Kerry, here you are". We went out into the garden. "Thanks for the gift but I tried them on and there just a little bit tight" "Yeah right just a little bit" "Look Jeff I know how much they mean to you so you had better be nice or I might change my mind" She handed them over the fence and made a hasty exit. All of a sudden Jeff went into hysterics. "What! What has she done" "I can't tell you, you'll have a look for yourself" He handed me the trunks and I looked in at the crouch. There all over the lining was thick black short curly hairs and a creamy white dollop of some description in the middle. We couldn't stop laughing "Oi you dirty bitch I don't want soiled pants back thank you" Mandy had crept back out and had been hiding just the other side of the fence, she was killing her self laughing too. "Don't worry its one the kids stuffed Donkeys mane I attacked it with the scissors" "What's the white stuff them?" "Brylceam" "Mandy you've won this round without a doubt" we all fell about with laughter. I thought that would be the end of them but he hand washed them picked all the hair out and puts them on a happy man once again

## Chapter eighteen.

A few more visits to the Hospital had gone by, just check ups but my next one I was waiting for, was to get the results of a scan. When we walked in we were confronted with a lady Doctor who once again I had never met before. "Hi Mrs Bates, please to meet you I am afraid that your Doctor is on his annual leave so I am dealing with you, okay?" "Fine I am here for the results of the scans". "Yes I have them here once again there is a further reduction in the lungs" "There seriously cant be much left in there I mean, every time I have a scan you seem to say that there has been a reduction, it must be minute by now" "It is, but unfortunately there is now evidence that it is growing in the Liver" "In the Liver, but its never been in the liver, we established that with the Doctor last time, I don't believe this" "Look Mrs Bates let me show you your scan and maybe you will see what's going on now". She put the scan up and pointed out an area on the Liver, "Here, is what has always been in your Liver, you can see it clearly yes?" "Yes we can see that and we've been told all about that, and it isn't Cancer" "That is correct but if you look carefully you can see like a half moon shadow over the top, here see?" "Yes I can see that, can you Jeff?" "Yes just about, but how can you be sure that it is cancer, we have been told time and time again, that this is the same cancer in all areas, therefore if the treatments working in one area it will work on all the other areas, if it is reducing still in the Lungs how the hell can it be growing in the Liver, you cant have it all your own way, these are your words I am using I, ain't making it up as I am going along, not like you lot seem to, you tell us one things going to happen and then the complete opposite happens". "Jeff shhh please I am gutted", "I know so am I, so what are you suggesting next?" "Well

we've had a chat and you haven't had chemo for a little while so I suggest you go straight on to that". "No way am I going on chemo until you give me another biopsy". "But it says here that we have retested the sample that you originally had done, and we came up with the same findings, why do you want to put yourself through that again?" "Look you obviously don't know what my wife has already been through. We have no faith in what the other hospital came up with, when you originally requested that biopsy, it took them five weeks to eventually send that to you, why's that?" "I don't know what has happened to your wife, at this previous hospital I must admit, but you are dealing with us now, and I seriously recommend that you go straight for chemotherapy". "No! No way I want to wait till my Doctor gets back and speak to him to see what he has to say about all this, I am not doing a thing until then". We walked out and as we were walking back to the Train Station I just burst into tears. "Hey come on I am so proud of you, you really stuck up for yourself back there, come on babe's at least we should get a second biopsy now" "I know, that's another reason why I am crying" "But I thought that's what you wanted that was your decision back there I didn't say anything" "I know that Jeff and I am going to stick by it but I ain't looking forward to it that's for sure".

We got home and as soon as the news spread I was inundated with phone calls. Nobody could believe it; I know that's all I keep saying but there is nothing else I can say. Everyone was saying the same as Jeff, how could this possible happen when all along they had been saying that it couldn't. The next appointment couldn't get here fast enough for us; we were once again left stewing in our own little pot of misery. Eventually we find ourselves back in front of our Doctor. "I am sorry that all this happened while I was away, unfortunately no one knows the case the way I do, and because of this I will give you the biopsy to Liver we will get straight on to

this and we will make arrangements for you to be admitted as soon as possible, okay” Jeff kept remarkable quite, I thought he’s bound to say something in a minute, but he didn’t he just sat staring at the floor the whole time, his head in his hands. It was as if he looked at him, or got into any kind of conversation with him, he new he would end up saying something that could jeopardise the biopsy. We left that day without Jeff uttering a word, a first I do believe. The biopsy was carried out it was one night stay in hospital. The Doctor who did the biopsy was a nice chap he took three samples, he said that the original area in the Liver that had caused concern, one in a hundred people if scanned would have a similar disorder. It’s a shame he didn’t study the first scan, he would have known not to bother putting me through the first bungled biopsy. All I can really remember about this operation was the pain that I suffered after, which was much more severe than the last two I had done. The pain was not where the sample had been taken from, but in my shoulder, which was where they said it would be. I am no baby but when the pain got that bad I agreed to take some morphine. I know I shouldn’t say this but it was lovely, one shot of that and I was floating, “ yeah man I am floating, give us a snog Jeff” “Kell you’re a little high at the moment I’ll snog you tomorrow”. I was given a prescription for this by the Macmillan nurse the first time they came round, they said, as the cancer starts to take over I would be in terrible pain, especially in the bones, I would need this to cope. I had got the bottle at home but I had never had reason to use it. It was hidden away out of the way. I have had it before when I had my reconstruction, but I didn’t remember feeling like this on it. I had planned to take all the medication that I hadn’t used back to the chemist, guess what one won’t be going back.

I don’t think anyone was surprised when the results of the biopsy came back and they confirmed Cancer once again. He made a big thing about the fact that

he had already had the sample tested and in his words "Its not fifty percent hormone receptive, its not seventy percent hormone receptive, but one hundred percent hormone receptive. Which is excellent news for you it means that wont have to have chemo therapy we will put you on this new drug Lectrazol, this will keep it at bay, if not get rid of it". "Isn't that the same type of medication as the Arimidex, the one the papers have been saying is the new wonder drug, that is supposed to be taken over from Tamoxifen. The one that I was supposed to have been on all along, and when I pointed out to you, that I hadn't even heard of it, let alone been on it, you said it didn't matter that she hadn't actually put me on it, because it was only for pre menstrual woman". "This one in my opinion is better and the one I prefer to prescribe". I could have kicked myself for not perusing the fact that had I been taking this drug all along, like she had implied I was, and if it is as good as they say it is, would this then never have grown in my liver now. But having said that I know I can consul myself with the knowledge that he would have come out with some fandango explanation that would go straight over the top of mine and Jeff's heads, that none of what I have just said would have made any difference, it probably would have only ended in more frustration and argument best just go home

Back at home, "Okay Jeff we've been told again its Cancer, at least I haven't got to go through the chemo again I suppose that's something," "I am sorry Kerry I will never except this knowing what I know. What did you say Alexis had said to you when you spoke to her and told her they now said it was in the Liver?" "You know what she said Jeff" "Yes she said that you must be yellow then" "No not all" I had replied, "Well the weight must be falling off of you" "No actually I have put some back on" "Well I tell you what Kerry when you finally die of this, at about two hundred and fifty years of age, make sure you leave your body to science and see

what it is that you are made of that no one else is". Alexis was my manager at the nursing home, and had lots of qualifications. "Yes Jeff I know what was said" "And what about all these help lines that you have phoned, every one of them once you told them that it was secondary Muscinous Adenocarcinoma, as good as told you there's no way any one lives with that condition for very long let alone get rid of it" "Yes! Yes, I know but what do you want me to do know, you said you would except this if I had it done, and now you wont, I shouldn't have bothered". "I wont except it, no I wont, but I will respect the fact that you obviously believe it now, the ball is in your court, I will be there for you, you know I will be". " Yes I know you will physically be there, caring for me, but mentally you wont be because you still don't believe it, even now when I am in some sort of pain and worried about it, and try to tell you about it, your immediately on at me, saying, you haven't got it Kerry, so I just shut up, and bottle up what ever it was that I was going to say. I take myself up to the bathroom and lock the door and sob my heart out do you know that, no you don't because you cant deal with that cos as far as your concerned I am crying over nothing, because I haven't got it, anyway but that doesn't help me, what do you want me to do Jeff stop taking the medication and may be die how would you feel then, a you couldn't apologise to me for bullying me like this could you cos I'd be dead " "You see it as bullying I see it as not wanting to see you go through any more of this unnecessary treatment, I am sorry for caring to much" "No what your doing is putting me in an impossible situation" "look why don't you have a go like this at some of these Doctors then maybe they would start taking this more serious, like I say, I am there with you all the way, I will try to be there mentally but don't expect me to change my opinions, I cant, I am sorry, I just cant.

## Chapter nineteen

My friend Brenda who I have already mentioned phoned me up one day and said out of the blue "how do you fancy a trip to Lanzarote" "a trip to Lanzarote, who with?" "Me of course" "Wow Bren that would be fantastic but I haven't got a passport and as you can well imagine I haven't got Lanzarote money" "I know that, that's why its all paid for, all you have to do is get yourself a passport and some spending money and were off" "When" "When ever you like" "What's your Jeff got to say about this?" "It was his idea, you see we have joined a holiday club and as yet haven't used it so Jeff suggested for the first trip I should take you encase it turns out to be unsuitable for the children seen as they are still so young. So there you go girl get your glad rags together and lets go". "Bren I cant believe this, this is great I haven't been abroad since I was sixteen, I need a while for this to sink in" "Well don't waist to much time, thinking about it you need your passport before I can book it, will your Jeff mind?" "No not at all, he is shit scared of flying, he has always said he would never get on a plane but he would never object to me going" "Well off you go as soon as it comes through phone me and I will get on and get it booked". When I told Jeff he was over the moon for me. "That's great news you deserve a break" "I am so excited but at the same time a bit scared, I haven't flown for so long, I am not sure I am ready for Lanzarote" "More to the point Kerry I don't think Lanzarote will be ready for you two. I sent of for my passport, which came back in no time at all so Brenda got straight on and booked the holiday, which was arranged for the beginning of October. Brenda phoned to say that when she booked the holiday she had to tell them about my condition, she said that I had to get a letter to confirm that I was fit to fly. "Really I never gave it a thought" "Well once I told them all what was supposed

to be wrong with you, they said that if you died whilst on holiday I would have to get the body home myself” She was trying very hard not to laugh. “Oh that’s nice for you” “Well I thought that if you did peg it while we are out there I would just wait for rigamortice to set in, then just prop you up in the seat next to me, they probably wouldn’t even notice” “Thanks Bren your all heart”. I couldn’t wait at last something to look forward too. Everything had been arranged, Brenda would spend the night here, as it was an early morning flight, we would have to be on the road by five, Jeff agreed to take us. Brought a few things to take but as Brenda said we probably wont need that much, we could mix and match with one another now, I was about the same size as her since loosing all my weight. I was extremely chuffed that my hair was of a length now that I didn’t need the mop any more. It was nowhere near the condition that it used to be, and I still have two bald areas where the hair has never returned, something else they got wrong. But thanks to the wonder of growing technology they have produced many different volumenising products for thinning hair like mine. I couldn’t quite get the beehive effect but it was now exceptable.

Time seemed to have slowed down but the big day finally arrived and I found my self-standing in the airport not knowing which way to go next. “Blimey its all changed since I last flew it’s a good job you know what to do Bren, I don’t think I could find my way back out of the air port, let alone get us on the right track to Lanzarote” “Actually all you have to do is keep an eye on the flight boards everything you need to know will come up on there”. Brenda took complete control I was like a lost kid just following her everywhere. I was amazed at the scene that was going on in the Airport, it made me appreciate Lee Evans account on his video of the way people get over the Trolleys. Some were nearly coming to blows over the things. I sent Brenda in to win one, she’s only little they wouldn’t hit her. The airport was

enormous but we eventually made it to the departure lounge. When our flight was eventually called I was absolutely gob smacked as to how many people got up to board our plane. "Fucking hell Bren are all these people going to Lanzarote as well" "Kerry I cannot believe you just asked that, what do you think they are going to do, throw them off as they go over other countries, its not a bus they don't drop people of on route you silly moo". "But there's just so many of us you cant imagine that the plane will carry this many people" "Well lets hope it can". "Don't say things like that I shitting myself as it is". We get seated on the plane Brenda lets me sit next to the window. I thought I coped very well considering, how long it had been since I had last flown. I must admit there were a few occasions when I grabbed the arms of the chair and Brenda had to prise my fingers up to make me let go, but all in all I enjoyed the flight very much and was actually looked forward to the flight home.

We had a short journey by coach to our apartment, which was quite a nice little apartment; we were pleased with the way things were shaping up. It was seriously like being a teenager all over again and we started bouncing on the beds and acting the goats. We didn't hang about long we went exploring our new venue. The first couple of days we spent finding where to go and where not to. I had been told by a few people to go on the Camel ride, and on the sight seeing expedition to the Volcano's, which we promptly booked. On the second day we got chatting to this chap, Gareth, who was staying in an apartment not far from ours. Rumours were beginning to circulate that; because he was on his own and wore sunglasses with a diamante motif on them, he must be gay. So Brenda and me made him our mission, we would have to find out before we left what his story was. As I say we got to find out on the second day, he was going through a divorce and finding it all a bit stressful. He just decided he needed a break, and decided to get away for a week on his own.

From then on it was the terrible threesome we went everywhere together except the two trips that we had already booked. The first was the Camel ride we were warned not to wear strong perfume as they took a fancy to it. I never realised how big they were close up and the smell was overpowering. "Ooo Bren what have we done look at them there huge" "What do you mean what have we done this is your idea your not backing out now, your getting on that bloody thing if I have to put you there myself". "Bren I feel sick," "Tough". Brenda pushed me forward as it came to our turn to get on, My one turned to look at me "Please be nice to me" I said as Brenda got into the chair on the other side of it's hump "Look it could be worse you could have got them two on your back" I think they were a couple of members of the go lightly family, they were big people, I am sure the Camels legs were bowing under the weight. The next thing I know is the camel suddenly springs in to action, it was all we could do to stay in our seats. We couldn't stop laughing; all the camels are chained together so they just all follow on. "This is fun Kerry," says Bren struggling to hold on to her chair "Remind me, not to take any notice of you ever again". " I know, I am sorry you wait till I get home, I am going to give that lot a right mouthful, they were obviously on a wind up when they said this was a must, the only thing that is going to be a must from this trip, is going to be a new spine, this chair is killing mine" "I know" "Shit what was that" I had a hot air sensation around my bum "I think the camel behind has taken a fancy to your bum" "Get away arrgghh shoo go on shoo" another big sniff "Go away" "He just winked at you Kerry, ohh look his licking his lips, you haven't been spraying perfume up your bum have you?" "No I haven't, your enjoying this arnt you?" "You could say that yes". We finally got off of them and were taken to a little village where a meal was waiting for us in this restaurant, all part of the package. It was bloody horrible too; we couldn't wait to get back to our room. Gareth was out

on his balcony on our return,"Well you look like you have enjoyed yourselves, I told you, you'd have fun" We both just glared at him "We did didn't we Bren, just make out" I whispered "yes I can see that" "Shut it otherwise we wont come out to play with you anymore" "Still on for tonight" "Sure are, aint going to let a bruised arse ruin our fun see you at seven". This was the routine set for the rest of the holiday, spend all day by the pool sunbathing, go back to our rooms get changed meet up with Gareth, go out for a meal and then go on to our favourite night club, and boogie on till about five in the morning. There was only two occasions this didn't happen one was the night we decided to stay in and see the sunset rise, the other, our day trip out to see the volcano's. I must admit on our night in, we got a few drinks in, we just sat around getting slowly drunk. After a while we decided to have a two round game of dare true love kiss promise or command. It was a game that I used to play as a kid, you would pick one of the said topics, and the others would set you a task in connection with it. Brenda and Gareth were new to this game but I knew which ones to avoid, if you picked command you had to do it, which I neglected to tell them, was a part of the rules. I picked true and love not much you can do with either of them but Brenda picked command "Right tomorrow, I command you to, emmm, let me think, yes got it, when were all lying by the pool sunbathing you ave got to suddenly get up and start clucking and acting like a chicken going round your sun bed a few times, and pecking at the make believe food on the floor, now this is a command so you've got to do it, don't forget" "I will no problem" "Your go what do you want Gareth" "Yeahh go on then I'll have command as well" "Okay then, tomorrow when Brenda is doing her chicken impersonation you've got to get up and start acting like a cockerel who fancies Brenda and start chasing her round the bed making cockerel noises" Not a problem I am up for that" says Gareth. I can't wait till tomorrow. None of us

managed to see the sunrise we all woke up in a crumpled heap on the sofa, “see you later girls I am going to get some sleep” “Oi don’t forget to be over by the pool sometime today” “Oh shit I forgot about that.” “Well I haven’t” I said, “You and Brenda agreed” “I know let me have a kip first I’ll see you later”. “Bren what about you are you still up for it” “You know me Kell I am up for a laugh anytime. We went over to the pool and waited for Gareth to arrive, which he eventually did. “Listen girls I was truly going to do this but I just cant I was slightly under the influence last night, but don’t make me do it know, I’ve been worrying myself all morning” “okay but I am not welching out I am going to do it”. “Bren you really don’t have to, if we’ve let him off we can let you off too” “No a deal is a deal are you ready?” The place was packed I buried my face in my hands “She wont will she” Gareth asked as Brenda took up a chicken like stance, “I think you’ll find she will”. “Bwuuuuckkk bwuck bwuck bwuck bwuccckk” “ Oh no she is, she only bloody is” There she is strutting round, elbows thrust out to make out like wings, arse sticking out, chin sticking forward and doing a pecking motion with her head, she didn’t give a monkeys she was in full flow “bwuuuuck bwuuuk bwuuuk” she was going to give it all she had, me and Gareth how ever were bright red. The thing is, as packed as the place was nobody batted an eyelid, it was if this was the norm to see a grown woman acting like a chicken, Gareth and me enjoyed the spectacle and judging by the amount of time she circled the bed she was obviously enjoying herself too. The second excursion was a trip up to the Volcano this was getting towards the end of our holiday and we were both feeling the effects of burning the candle at both ends. We had to pick up the coach at the bus stop at the end of the road by ten in the morning.

We sat at the back of the coach barely keeping our eyes open. We had a tour guide who was telling us all about the island and the famous volcano’s, you could

tell everyone on the coach was really getting in to the day, We pulled up at one big pile of rocks and everybody had to get off and inspect the whole in the middle. It was really quite impressive we showed quite a bit of interest in this. "That's pretty amazing isn't it Bren?" Yeah I just hope it doesn't start to erupt while were all standing here looking down it" "Don't say things like that not with the luck I am getting at the moment". We were summoned back to the coach, and proceeded to the next volcano, off we all troop again, "Well I don't know about you Bren but it looks pretty much the same as the last whole we looked down" "I was thinking that myself". "Right everyone back on the coach we will take you up to the shop where you can buy some of your own volcanic rock. "Why an earth would you want to buy a piece of volcanic rock when you can just bend down and pick a piece up" "Beats me" but you could hear all the other passengers "Oh you hear that love we get some of our own volcanic rock to take home" "That's sad aint it". So we arrive at the shop everyone scurries of to get there bit of rock. "Come on Ladies you don't want to miss out do you" We both smiled sweetly both thinking you know what you can do with your bit of rock. We didn't want to offend anyone so we at least got off the coach to get some fresh air. "Come on people back on the coach we have one more volcano to show you and then we will take you to the Blue Lagoon. We pulled up in front of this huge volcano and the tour guide says "if all you people sitting on the right side of the bus would just move over and look over to the left so you can see what I am talking about" "Bren that's us we've got to get up and look out that side" She had nodded off, I was shaking her arm. "What's the panic where's everyone going" The commotion going on in the coach to get to the windows first, was unbelievable it was a stampede; the coach was nigh on tilting. "What is it an accident" "No another rock" "Your joking that's all we've seen, there all sad" "I know aren't they just". "You look if you

like, I am happy here”, “I am with you”. Eventually all the David Baileys sat down and we pressed on to the Blue Lagoon. Now this was an impressive sight I must admit it was truly a beautiful scene. Huge waves breaking on the black sand a real romantic setting. We were impressed. Back on the coach again “That should be it now surely we should be going back now”. “Lets hope so cos if they show us one more bloody rock I wont be held responsible for my actions” said Brenda. As we were on route back to the apartment the tour operator announced that we could buy a video of our day out, from the young lady who had been capturing our lovely day on tape. “You are joking aren’t you, I don’t want to relive this experience again, ohh look Bren there’s another rock” “Ohh how exciting and oohh look another one. They even put them in their gardens look, lovely little rocks all nicely arranged.” “When I get home I am gonna get a skip and rip up all the grass and flowers and have loads of rocks delivered” “Kell I think we’ve finally lost the plot, don’t ever suggest any more excursions will you” “No you can pick them out next time. The rest of the holiday was great we really had a fantastic time so much so that we have agreed to meet up with Gareth the same time next year, we had become good friends and I hope we all manage to keep this appointment.

## Chapter twenty

It wasn't long before I had my next appointment at the Hospital. Same old routine as before up to see the Doctor who would examine me, or not, depending on which Doctor I got to see. Then go and have my blood tests done, and make an appointment to have another C.T. scan, to see how well this new medication was working. Home again to start making plans for a Happy Christmas. Kim and Jack were definitely coming down, Kim is a special needs teacher, and she obviously gets the school holidays off so there was no problem for her. Karon's Job however, as a carer, means that she has to work all the unsociable hours, which unfortunately meant the Christmas period too, so she would probably only manage to get down for New Years Eve. It was more or less the same routine every year since coming back to Romford. Off course Mum Dad and Mathew would be coming round too. Becky was all excited this year as she had managed to secure herself a job at Posh Pets, through her work experience at school. They were so pleased with the way she had performed, that they have already offered her a permanent position as soon as she leaves school this term. She was over the moon it's been her ambition since she was a small child to work with animals. She had money of her own, that she had earned herself, and it was burning a hole in pocket. Bradley was now working down at the Bell and Gate as a Barman and in the kitchen; he thinks that this might be a job that he can stick at; I hope so for his sake as well as ours. Gavin and Becky still getting into, plenty of grief at school but that seemed to be the norm with this family, thankfully Becky leaves very soon now anyway. Now they will have to contend with Luke who I have registered to go there this Year, when the name Bates appeared on the list of new pupils, entering this year there must have been a few tears shed in the staff room that

day. I can just imagine them saying, "Oh no how many kids did this woman have" As I said before I normally give it the big speech about, " This one is good I promise you his not as bad as the others". This year I ain't saying nothing, I am just going to slip him in quietly and make a bolt for the door. Personally I think it's the schools fault it cant possible my children. I use to say to my Mum and Dad, "I cant believe the way parents are with children now days there just so out of control, mine will be the perfect children, I wont put up with anything less" Every time I moan about one of them they say "This cant be about one of the perfect children you were going to have, can it?" "Yep those are the ones". Any way back to Becky and her newfound wealth she decides that she wanted to buy some outdoor decorations this year, as her contribution to Christmas. She had seen some cheap three-foot figures, a Snowman, a Father Christmas and a Reindeer at a shop in Romford that she wanted to buy. Jeff agreed, "Okay Beck you get them, and Kell can get a few other things, it might cheer us up a little, put a smile on our faces as we come down the road," I don't think he was expecting us to go as mad as we did though. What started of as a few extra lights to cheer us up soon turned in to the Blackpool Illuminations. We brought the original three said items above, but then we went on to another shop and found some more bargains, "Look at all this how are we supposed to choose a few items out of this lot, we cant go mad not right on top of Christmas, I am trying to work to a bit of a budget" " I know but look at this we've got to have this" It is a parachuting Father Christmas, that went in the trolley. "Now I now Jeff was talking about getting one of those will have one of those" Into the trolley goes a green thirty foot long flashing strip light. We were like a couple of little kids, "Ooo look, look at them very pretty we have got to have those" In goes a set of twinkling snowdrop outdoor lights. "What are you laughing at Becks" "Come here kell you've got to see these" Singing father

Christmases and Snowmen, that went into a rendition of We Wish You a Merry Christmas every time you walked passed them, "Oh we have just got to get those, we can catch the postman out with them". We finally heads for the checkouts after a few more items had found there way into our trolley, an optic light activated reef for the front door, a Reindeer Head and a Father Christmas face to go on the brick work, under the front windows, not forgetting the decorations that we already had to go on the inside of the windows. "Yes that should brighten us up for Christmas" said Becky "Now we've just got to suss out, how to get this lot home". "I've got to pay for it first" The check out assistant told me the amount, "Oh dear I think we've blown the budget" When we walked in with the first three boxes Jeff wasn't to bothered, but when the boxes kept coming, and coming, his enthusiasm began to wane a little. "I thought we were just doing our house, not the whole street" "You said get enough to brighten the place up" "Yes the place meaning our home, not the whole of Romford we switch this little lot and were going to cause a power serge". I was just removing the packaging from one of the father Christmases while Jeff was jabbering away about how long this was all going to take to put up, when he stopped in mid flow, "What is that?" "That's a parachuting Father Christmas" "And exactly where is he supposed to be parachuting from" "Well I have spoken to Sharon next door and she's going out to get one as well, and we thought that we could have them parachuting down from a wire stretched between the two houses" " Oh that's what you, and Sharon thought is it, well which one of you two is climbing the ladder, and which one, is going to get the electrics to them" " Ah well That's where we thought you might come in to it, but we didn't think about getting electrics to them, did we" "No I guess you didn't" "So it cant be done then" "Yes it can be done, and I suppose I am doing Sharons as well am I?" "Emmm do you mind?" "No you know I don't mind" "Great

so we can leave it all to you, yes?" "Yes just promise me your not going to buy any more" "We promise" "Come on then Kel" says Becky "Well start putting the Tree and decorations up inside" You may have noticed that my children refer to Jeff or me by our first names and not Mum or Dad. Ever since they were babies they have done this and it really doesn't bother either Jeff or me. You would be surprised how many people think it is disrespectful, I am so use to it now, that I don't respond if they call me Mum, jokingly. It use to come in handy when I was out, if they were throwing a Tanny you know the "Kerry I want one of these" "No you've just had a bag of crisps that's enough" "I want one, I want one" Scream! Scream! "I said now" "But Kerry I want it" stamping feet and more screaming "You wait till I get you home and tell your Mum how naughty your being" looking around at the onlookers, shaking my head and tutting at the same time, you immediately get their sympathy rather than the "Cant you keep your brat under control look". Fortunately this didn't happen to often not with any of them.

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It took Jeff a couple of days to put all the decorations up, when he had finished he said "Right we'll have an official light up time of six tonight, there's no point in turning them on till we can get the full effect in the dark". When we flicked the switch and it all lit up it looked lovely. We had a few people come down to look at all, the young children loved the singing Santas and Snowmen, by the end of the first week we were all sick of We Wish You a Merry Christmas at all hours of the day, it seemed a good idea at the time. Everything was set for a lovely Christmas, but that's not how it turned out, our Christmas was about to be devastated.

## ~~Chapter twenty~~

## Chapter Twenty One

Return to the Hospital to get the results of the C.T. scan to the liver and Lungs. I told Jeff not to bother coming cos it only wound him up so Sharon came with me. I went in to get her cos Jeff was going to drop us off at the station "How are you feeling?" "To be honest with you Shal, the Doctor was so confident that this new medication would hold it at bay may be even shrink it or make it go, that I don't feel worried, wasn't he Jeff?" "What's that?" "Confident that this tablet would work" "Well that's what the man said but you know my feelings, the complete opposite has probably happened" "Jeff don't start please" "Okay I wont say another word". "Right here we are, wish me luck then" "your going to need more than that" "Oh Jeff! I'll see you later". As usual they're running behind so we sit chatting having a sandwich in the little canteen there. Eventually we are called into a room and told to wait the Doctor will be there soon. "You've not my Doctor yet have you?" "No" The door opens "Oh, well your not going to this isn't him" I was greeted by a very young Doctor who of course I had never met before. "Mrs Bates nice to meet you unfortunately your Doctor can not be here but he has given me a full run down on your case" "Okay" I said smiling "Right I know that you are hear to get the results of your scan and I can tell you that the lungs are still the same but unfortunately the area of concern in your Liver has grown" "No that cant be, he was so confident this would have shrunk if not gone, you cant be right you just cant" "Look let me put the scan up on the screen you will be able to see what I am talking about" I put my hand to my mouth the tears were beginning to sting the back of my eyes, Sharon reached out and took my hand "Come on mate you'll be okay" she squeezed my hand she looked like she could have cried with me. "See this was the original area which we now has been there all the time this here, is what had grown, and now here above you have a new

growth its more or less doubled in size". I was shaking my head I couldn't think of anything else to do, Sharon stepped in "This isn't fair the other Doctor had really got her hopes up you cant keep doing this to her". I got my self together enough to ask "So what now" "I know you were keen not to have chemo, so I will send you down for blood test and will see how they come back if there not right then I am afraid that you will have no option but to have the chemo, but is they come back clear then you may be able to get away from it for a few months to see what happens " "But now your going to say that chemo is probably what will happen in the long run" "Yes I am afraid so" "The Doctor did say something about going to Guys hospital to try the new therapy of electrodes passed into the Liver by wires or something like that, "Yes but we cant follow that route now as it is to close to a main artery where it has grown" "I am sorry I am having trouble coming to terms with this one" "Well look you can phone for the results of your blood test see what materialises there, just go home enjoy your Christmas, and let us know what you want to do afterwards". Resisting the urge to shout at him "How the fuck do you think that I am going to have a good Christmas now, I'll tell you what matey I am scribbling your name of my Christmas list" But me being me I never said a word we just got up and walked out and that's when the flood gates opened. We phoned Jeff to let him know what time to pick us up, and tell him the out come of the meeting. Sharon did her best to try to keep my chin up but I was just in a little world of me own. The car ride home didn't help Jeff went into one big time "I suppose your sitting there believing every word he had to say to you" "Jeff don't start not now" "Don't start" "Where was your Doctor then, to embarrassed to face you I bet no, thinking about it he's probably on another Holiday which would make more sense." "I don't know where he was he didn't say" "Well were in for a lovely Christmas now aren't we with this hanging over our heads, It

sickens me to think that they are all going to be sitting round there big plush dining rooms with their big fuck off Christmas dinners and the tree laden with presents and well be lucky if we can afford to serve up a sparrow” “I think your getting a little carried away” “ I suppose your going to have the chemo?” “What other choices have I got” “You know what other choice you have America”. By now we had pulled up outside the front of the house he jumped out, slammed the car door and stormed of up the pathway. “We Wish You A Merry Christmas, We Wish you a Merry Christmas, We wish You a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, sung the Santa and Snowmen “Shal have you got a knife I am going to stab those fuckers to death” She smiled at me, I just sat there for a moment not wanting to go in. “Why is he taking it out on you like that, that’s not fair is it” “I don’t know we go through this every time, but Shal what would you do?” “I dont know mate” “I just cant take the risk of refusing this, and then if they are right I die, I know it was never in the Bones and I truly believe it was never in the Brain, but I cannot believe that any one could carry on a façade like this if they know I don’t have it. I could never do this to someone just for the sake of my reputation, If I don’t need this it will probably kill me anyway I just cant believe they would do it to me, do you?” “Well I wouldn’t have thought so but Christ they are messing you around I mean if they were completely right you would be dead by now wouldn’t you?” “Oh I don’t know shal I am at the end of my tether, I say that every time don’t I” “Do you want to come in mine and have a cuppa?” “No I’ll go in he might have calmed down by now” “You gonna be alright” “Who Knows, who knows, I certainly don’t feel like I know anything any more” “See yer then” “Yeah bye, Shal, thanks for being there for me” “Not a problem if you do decide to go for the chemo I’ll come with you okay” “You sure” “Yes I am sure, see yer” “See yer” I go in.

Jeff is sat on the chair out in the conservatory with a glass of Cider in his hand, "Do you want a drink" "No not really" "What are you going to do?" "I don't know, probably have the Chemo, I suppose the best thing to do I is try to stay calm until we get the blood test results" "When have you got to phone about them" "Tomorrow, but do you think you could do that for me" "Yes, but there's a few questions I want to ask myself" "Do what you want you will anyway" "I know I will and I will keep on questioning them when it comes to you, and you know why?" "No Jeff why?" "Because I love you that's why okay?" "Okay" He pulls me into his arms and gives me a cuddle "No more arguing not to night, a? I've had a shithouse of a day I can't take anymore" "I know babe we all feel the same".

Mum and Dad came straight round not that they could do much I was really depressed obviously a trip to Walton to get me out of me miseries was not an option. Tracey phoned as she always did, and Laura who had become a regular on the phone since all this had happened. Regular as clockwork every Saturday morning "Hi Kel its Laura here just phoned to see how you are" Why she felt she needed to tell me who it was every time I don't know I knew it would be her she never lets me down. We went up to her baby Sam's christening earlier on in the year, he is gorgeous, I also met her partner Pete, they make a lovely little family. Kim phoned to see if we still wanted her to come down which of course we did, the more people around the less time to sit and ponder.

Jeff was up early the next morning he hadn't got much sleep neither had I "What time are you going to phone them" "I'll leave it till about twelve and try then, do you want to go out, I can drop you some where if you like," "No I would rather be hear" Twelve o'clock arrives and Jeff manages to get straight through to the Doctor "This is Mr Bates hear I am phoning on behalf of my wife in connection with the

results of her blood test” “Right hallo Mr Bates I have your wife’s results here and I am pleased to say that they are completely normal and the Liver is functioning well too” “That’s good so you don’t have to go ahead with the chemo now?” “Yes I am sorry that I may have mislead your wife there, I am afraid that we are still going to advice that she goes ahead with the chemo” “But why if the results are all clear” “Well you cant really rely on the blood results they don’t tell you everything” “Bullshit that is utter bullshit” “I am sorry that you feel the need to be like this Mr Bates but I am telling you the truth” “Why then when my wife was in the previous Hospital, did she have a blood test done, and they came to us and said that the blood test showed a problem in the liver, which resulted in her having an ultra sound done and that’s when they found the first nodule, they tried doing a biopsy then, and bungled that, and it turns out that it wasn’t even cancer any way. Yet, that showed up, first, in her blood, and it wasn’t even cancer. Now your telling me that you want to give her chemo for Cancer in the Liver which isn’t even affecting her blood or Liver function” Mr Bates I can not say what the other hospital” “Wow we’ve been down this road about you can not pass comment on what happened at the other Hospital, I transferred away from that because of what they were putting my wife through. I was hopping to get a proper second opinion from you but that doesn’t seem to be happening does it” “Mr Bates you can go and get as many second opinions as you like but we will still stand by ours” Yes you probably would just like the other lot” “I feel we are getting no where here, would you please ask Mrs Bates to phone back early in the New year and let me know her decision Good bye”.

“ Did you hear all that?” “Well I could hear what you were saying obviously” “Kell I am just going to have to take a back seat on this one girl its entirely up to you, I know what I would do if it were me but its not, what can I say, I am just

going to have to walk away from this cos, other wise it is just going to destroy us, the balls in your court” He walks out of the room. I sat there for a while but I could feel the tears welling up, I know he is having a hard time with this, especially as he had already had to deal with the loss of his Mum. I retreat to my bathroom lock the door, and stare into the mirror “What lovely gift are you going to get from Father Christmas this year, chemotherapy” I lent up against the wall and slid to the floor sobbing my heart out, “Merry Christmas Kerry and a Happy New Year”.

## Chapter twenty-two

Christmas was a rather subdued event not surprisingly. We all tried hard though to make an effort for the sake of the children. Kim came as originally planned With Jack and Andrew, Sebastian went to his Girlfriends for Christmas. We did the usual routine, open a few presents in the morning, got the dinner ready, had that, open rest of the presents then, some sat and watched a bit of tele, while others played games, prepare the tea, eat that then we hit the drinks. Which help to get a bit of joviality going, but I am afraid that it just wasn't the same, it had been ruined. Not even all the lights on the front of the house could brighten up this Christmas.

Karon arrived for the New Year and with a few more bodies around it did pick up a little bit. Tina and Tom and their crew came over as well as Sharon and Jim, but the other neighbours had all made other arrangements. At twelve o'clock Jeff went and let off all the fireworks that Karon had brought. He managed to set them up in some assemblance of order and we all watched from the warmth of the conservatory as he set them off. Which turned out just as well because one went completely wrong and exploded on the spot I haven't seen Jeff's arse move so quick in Years. The grass still hasn't recovered now and I am sure Jeff's developed a nervous twitch since then. Sharon and Mandy popped in after they had returned from their own Families celebrations to have a quick drink and wish us a happy New Year, both in a very merry state themselves. Andrew had just stayed for two days he left and went back home. Kim jumped a ride home with Karon and Goff so we were on our own again.

All over the Christmas period Jeff and me, had managed to avoid the subject. Obviously it had been brought up, it has been the main topic of conversation ever

since all this crap started two years ago, but it had never been just Jeff and me so it had not got too heavy. But now everyone had gone it was inevitable that we would have to speak about what I intended to do. We were sitting out in the conservatory when the subject arose. "What are you going to do then because you need to phone the hospital tomorrow and let them know" "I know that but I just don't want a argument with you right now" "I don't want to argue either you know that I hate arguing, you just take everything I say the wrong way" "Well I am having the chemo I am just not brave enough not too" "Okay Kell you do what ever you think is best for you I will try to be therefore you, but I think it would be best, if you take up Sharon's offer of going with you to get the chemo done" "Right I will go and see her and make sure she still wants to come, if not I know Mum will come with me" I went next door to speak to Sharon, she said that she would definitely come, the only problem that may occur is she had just reapplied to go back to B & Q and she wasn't to sure what would happen there. "Are you upset that Jeff won't go with you" she asked, "No not really he puts me on edge with the Doctors I keep waiting for him to go off on one, and I know he puts them on edge too" "You know it is because he cares so much for you that he finds this so hard to cope with don't you? He talks to me about it at times. He genuinely believes that they are wrong you know" "Yes Shal I know he does and as I say I now they are wrong with most of it, I am ninety nine per cent sure that they've got it wrong, but that one per cent, believe it or not out weighs the rest" "The only thing that's putting me off now is the train journey home, if I am as bad as I was last time I had this done, that's the last thing I want to be doing. What do you think of me asking to go back to the local hospital just for the treatment?" "Honestly? I think that would just about finish Jeff off" "Well were about to find out cos that's what I want to do" "Good luck" Typical off Jeff when you think he is going

to hit the roof over something, you get the complete opposite reaction. "Well I must admit I was a bit worried about the journeys why don't you speak to them and see what they think". So I did phone and everything was sorted out to do that. A couple of days of thinking about it however made me change my mind I just couldn't take the risk of bumping into the all the old Doctors again, I am not sure what my reaction would be. When I phoned up and apologised for mucking them about they said that if the problem was just the transport then they would lay it on for me and someone to accompany me, which I excepted.

I went up for my first session of chemo with Sharon as arranged on Monday the six of January 2003. It was a far better place than where I had been before they brought you cups of teas and you had sandwiches if you wanted or cold drinks or fruit there, it was really quite nice atmosphere there considering what we were all there. I was weighed; I was fifty-four kilos had blood pressure and temperature done, and then sent down to get my blood test done. I was still quite brown from going to Lanzarote so I had to laugh when one of the chaps taking my blood asked how come I was still so brown, "Well I have recently been on holiday, but I got most of my colour from Walton" "Really I have never heard of that Country" I had a little chuckle "it's a little town in England" "Oh never was any good at Geography" "No neither was I" After that you go in and speak to the doctor to tell them if you have any problems. "Hallo Mrs Bates no Mr Bates today?" "No your safe" It was the same Doctor that Jeff had the running with on the phone just before Christmas. "This is Sharon my neighbour, its alright she's friendly" he laughed, he then went on to tell me that this is a relatively new drug on the market, he gave me a pamphlet about it to read later, it tells you about all the side effects, that you may have, the name of it is Taxotre. He explained that I would be all day up there because I had to wait for my blood to be

checked, before they made up the chemo, it was one that would not tolerate being fridged up. So you had to wait to make sure your bloods okay, and weigh you, before they could make the exact amount of chemo for your body weight, I never had all this before but apparently this was really expensive to produce so they couldn't afford to waist any. Every thing is fine so we continue with the first session of six over a course of eighteen weeks. They inserted the cannular and she said "This will make your bottom feel a little strange for some reason, it's the steroid" "Yes I remember this from last time, I always think it's a shame its not a little bit more to the front I think I could quite enjoy it then" "Kerry your awful" "I know you've got to lighten this up some how haven't you" The whole procedure of the chemo being administered took about an hour and ten minutes. Then you have to wait for any one else who came in that morning with you in the cab, to finish their treatment before you can go.

For the next few days I wasn't to bad at all just a little tired, but then on the third day I started to loose my taste and thrush started to appear in my mouth, in my throat and pain in my chest it was effecting my whole inner system including down below, I was as miserable as sin. It made me very snappy with everybody. I can't say that I was ill but I felt unwell if you can make any sense of that. At least I wasn't being sick.

In the mean time we had had a very small windfall, which had enabled Jeff to finish of the loft conversion that he had started some months before but had come to a halt through lack of funds. He really got stuck in; I would sit and watch while Jeff worked on. The end result is stunning I must say but then I don't think any thing that Jeff has done here has turned out bad. We are always receiving compliments from people about our house but it truly is all down to Jeff with his for sight for things and his capability to carry them out. Bradley was still working although he was not

enjoying being at the Bell and Gate any more, he was on the look out for other pub work in the area. Becky's studying for her exams, Gavin's still doing his detentions and Luke still isn't doing his home work no changes there then.

I was still in regular contact with my sisters it was on one of these phone calls that she remembered to remind me about the Birmingham Woman's Institute. When my sister Kim had gone for a mammogram a few months ago, she had filled in a questionnaire about her family medical history so of course she had to tell them about me. She was quite stunned when she received a phone call from the Birmingham Woman's Investigations concerning me. They wanted to know if I would be willing to give a sample of my blood to them, so they could carry out investigations on it. She said that she didn't think I would mind, and gave them my Phone number, as I said this was a little while ago, as yet I hadn't heard from them. So I phoned them but had never got a response. Then out of the blue I get a phone call asking if they sent me a kit would I send them a sample of my blood. "Not a problem I said but I hope your not suggesting that I take my own blood cos you've got no chance" "No your Doctors will do that for you" "Okay then I will get it done as soon as possible" My own Doctors apparently don't do it when I asked them too. So I phoned the hospital, they agreed to do it for me at the next chemo session that I had. That seemed to come round so quick I have found that since appointments continuously rule my life, the time just seems to fly by.

I was asked if every thing was okay and I told them about the Thrush which they sorted out heaps of medication for me to combat the effect this time around. My main concern was about how much longer was my hair going to last, before I had to start wearing the gross wig. When I told one of the nurses she said "We can supply you with a wig let me see if the wig Lady is still hear she will come

up and show you some” “No thanks I’ve seen the N.H.S. wigs there awful” “Yes they are but we are talking Royal Marsden wigs a totally different kettle of fish” “Oh well yes then I would love to see them.” It wasn’t long before this lady showed up, with a glossy magazine full of fantastic wigs “There you go pick one out and I will get it for you, if you don’t like it then we can sort you out another one, we have a hairstylist here who will fit it for you, even cut it to your liking if you want” “Wow, how much is this going to cost me?” “Nothing its all part of the service we give to our patients here” “God all I can say is thank goodness I changed my mind about going back to my old Hospital, a shal” “You ain t kidding, you would never have got all this there, come on lets pick you one out” We picked out a style that was much the same as I was use to style my own, when I had it of course. She handed me a sample of all the colours that it came in, I wanted the Blonde, with lighter Blond highlights. I couldn’t wait she said it would be there for my next session. They also took my blood as promised for this genes Testing in Birmingham. So while we were waiting to make sure my blood was okay to go ahead with the chemo, Sharon and me went for a walk and posted it off that day

## Chapter twenty-three

I went to stay with Kim to break the boredom, also, things were getting very stressy again between me and Jeff, so we decided that it would do us all good to be apart for a while. It just so happened that in this particular week Kim had arranged a visit from one of the nurses who was working for the Birmingham woman Institute. When she arrived she was quite pleased that I was there and we all got chatting about all what was going on. She was really interested and was quite amazed at my story. She asked if I minded filling in a questionnaire for her which I did and right at the very end I asked her if she would do something for me, "Well if I can what is it" "Completely of the record just tell me to the best of your knowledge can you get rid of secondary Mucinous Adencarcinoma Brain Tumours" "Not to my knowledge Kerry, no you cant" "Thanks" "Well does that make you feel better then dear?" Said Kim after she had left" "Not really it just makes me more frustrated that I have been through all of this, I mean there's still nothing I can do about it is there, they have agreed that there is nothing showing in the Brain, at this present time, that's not what their treating me for now, this is for the Liver so I still have to go through with it, don't I?" "Yes I know that but its just goes to show that they got it wrong in two places for sure." "Yep and it don't matter diddly squat cos they all stuck together and backed one another up, and that makes it impossible to prove them wrong, doesn't that just stink". "Lets have a drink while I make dinner" "What are we having then" I thought we would eat healthy so were having Wild Brown Rice with Low Fat Chicken Tikka Masalla, how does that grab you" "Sounds nice cant say that I have ever had Brown Wild Rice, but I will give it a go, I tell you what Kim I am freezing can you put the

heating on?" "Kerry its on full" "Oh, have you got a warmer jumper then, that I can put on" "I will get you one, shall I get you one of the boys hats as well madam" "Yes please don't be sarky it must be the chemo I am always freezing, here you feel my hands" "Blimey you are aren't you" She came back with the jumper and one of Bassis hats "Do you want this fire on as well" "Do you mind" "No" "Kim after dinner do you think I could have my feet done" "Your taking the piss now! Yes brat you can have your feet done". Off she went to finish dinner. A little while later she came in with my dinner "Here you are, Kell I am gonna have to turn this fire down all the boys are dehydrating up stairs" "Go on I have warmed up now anyway" I starts to tuck into my healthy meal. "Kim I don't mean to be rude but I don't think my rice is cooked" she started to laugh that's how its supposed to be" "Well I am not being funny I have never eaten crunchy rice before perhaps my bit stayed on the top and didn't get boiled properly" "Stop being a woosy it's the same as mine" So I sat and crunched my way through the rest of my dinner, proud of the fact that my teeth were still up to the task, I went and helped with the washing up, and then plotted up in front of the tele for a nice peaceful night.

A few hours passed and I started to get rumbling in my stomach "Ooo did you hear that?" "Hear what?" "My stomach its making terrible noises and it's a bit weird." Kim started to laugh "I know where your going with this Kerry, and your not blaming me" "No, no I didn't mean that but now you mention it" "No, no way is that my rice it wouldn't take effect that quick, come on lets do your feet that might help". The full treatment takes an hour or so "There you go do you feel any better" "Normally that really helps but I think its getting worse" "Well have you got anything in amongst your medication that will sort it" "No, oohh Kim this is agony" "Is there any thing I can do for you" "Yes keep the bathroom clear" she's finding it funny " Ohh my god

this is awful you can poke your poxy healthy dinner up your arse” “Its not my dinner, look I’ll mix up some oils and rub them in your stomach see if that helps” “Okay” She is trying her hardest to be sympathetic with me “Oh God the pain” “Oh it cant be that bad can it” “Remember labour pains, well its worse than that” “Shut up lets rub this in” “Fucking hell that stinks what are you trying to do to me” “Right that’s it your on your own I have tried everything I know” “Could you try squeezing me ed” All joking aside I was genuinely in pain. It went on for a good few hours one of which I must have spent sat on and off the loo. “Have you been love” “No this cant go on for much longer surely I have got to go” “Well I hope so its about two in the morning” “Ohh here we go again owww oh ooo hold on o I think we have some movement get out that bathroom I am coming through” When I finally emerged my stomach seemed to be concave the sweat was pouring out of me “I swear I do not remember eating that much I didn’t think I was ever going to get off of there, I thought my time was up in there Kim, its like a nuclear fallout in there, and I might add some of that looked remarkable like Wild Brown Rice” “You dirty bitch I really don’t want to know all the gory details” “I think its safe to go to bed now I couldn’t possible go any more” We went to bed arguing over the cause of all my discomfort.

When I got up the next morning my thrush had kicked in and it got progressively worse as the day went on. Kim had given me a Yakult a live bio breakfast drink she said that if I had one every morning it would help. By the time Karon arrived to pick me up I was in quite a miserable mood with it. She took me to a local herbalist shop and he made up some tablets that you sucked, which I took but it didn’t help. Karon could sympathise with me though she had recently had it herself so she knows what its like. Its one of them things, you have to have had it yourself to know how horrible it is. I kept up with the Yakult and Karon told my about some live

bio Yoghurts which I started to eat too. I must admit that the two combined together, seemed to lessen the effect by quite a bit, so I continued on them for the rest of all the treatments.

On my third chemo I got my new wig I was over the moon with it. When everyone use to say that I looked nice in my other wig, I knew they were just being polite, but with this one I felt good, and I new that it didn't look like a wig, I was quite happy to go out in this one without feeling at all self conscious about it. So once again I had to have the head shaved, which Becky decided to do but she couldn't seem to get the clippers to work so Bradley took over. I didn't get upset this time round, I knew what was coming so it wasn't such a shock to me like the first time. I was booked in for a Brain and Chest C.T. scan, to see whether the medication was working or not. I only had transport for the Chemotherapy sessions I had to go by train for normal appointments. My Mum always came with me on these occasions, you would think that the amount of times we have been there, we would find it impossible to get lost, but if we manage to find our way there, without getting lost we would get lost on the return trip. I put the blame solely on her she is supposed to be my carer, I suppose, I am lucky she hasn't lost me yet. I got told the results of the scans. Nothing showing in the Brain, and there had been a reduction in the growth in the Liver, and Lungs, which was pleasing. Sharon was with me and she asked if we could see the scans, all she had was the report on them. She didn't have them but said that she would make sure they were there for the next visit. I hadn't seen this Doctor before, nothing unusual there, I know, but she new nothing about my case what so ever all she new was what the report said that she held in her hand. I must admit that Sharon was in like a whippet when we realised this. "So don't you think she is an amazing woman then, to have gotten rid of secondary Brain Cancer" "I must admit

that I thought they had just given you this scan to your head as a precaution”, “No they said that I had it in the Brain, have you heard of this happening before” “No if this is the case, it’s a one in a million chance, you are the only one I have come across so far, and likely will be the only one I see in my career”. When we left Sharon said “I bet she could have kicked herself after she realised what she had said”. “I know she will probably get a right telling of if she tells the other doctors dealing with me what she just said to us, you wouldn’t get any of them saying that but then again if she new my history, you would never have got her to say it either”

I got the response that I was expecting off of Jeff and you can probably guess how heated It became once I told him what she had said, I ended up going out round Tracie’s to escape, his mood. The next visit Sharon was unable to go with me as she had started her job at B & Q Mum offered to go instead but it meant coming home from the caravan so I decided to go on my own, Jeff offered but I was happier to go on my own I knew he would only get stressed out. Still no scans to see, but once again I was told they would be there for my next appointment. So now were on my last session of Chemotherapy and Sharon once again comes with me. Still no scans, but I had given up all hope of ever seeing them. We have got to know quite a few of the patients up there because they are on the same kind of treatment you see the same faces at each session. In the short time that we had been going two of the faces disappeared. Nearly all the women we spoke to, who were receiving treatment, said that all their cancer had stemmed from Breast Cancer too. It never ceases to amaze me the amount of joviality that goes on in these kind of situations, nearly everyone who was there was up for a laugh, there were only a few of the really quite poorly patients, who couldn’t really join in any way. So when they all new it was my last session it was like saying good bye to old friends, “See you good luck, don’t take this personal

but I hope I never see any of you lot again” “We know what you mean, all the best bye” “Bye” “Good Luck” “Have a drink for us all” “I intend to have lots of drinks tonight for you all” and I did.

I had my last C.T. scan a week after the last chemo session, and an appointment was made to get the final results, to see just how well this had all worked a week later. Jeff promised to keep his cool so I agreed to let him come with me. I was on tender hooks for the next week.

I thought I would be seeing my main consultant, but instead I got to see a Doctor who I had seen once before. He is a really lovely chap, I said to Jeff “I think you will get on with this one he is lovely” “That might be the case but I will only find him lovely if he tells me its all been a big cock up” “Don’t start Jeff” “Funny how we haven’t seen the other chap since he made that sweeping statement about, this Treatment will hold it at bay, maybe get rid of it completely” “Do you think you would be better off waiting out here?” “No, I wont go on, I’ll let you do all the talking” “Yeah right, I knew the only way that would happen, was if I sat with me hands round his throat the whole time, Tempting as it was I resisted, and let him come in with me, its better to have some one with you, because you cant remember everything they say so its better to have two people taking it on board than one. It didn’t take long for him to get in gear, lets be generous and say he managed to contain himself for about five minutes. “Hallo Mrs Bates how are you feeling” “I feel great thank you, I have even managed to put weight on” “Good that’s great you look good any way” “Yes she does doesn’t she” “Ahh you must be Mr Bates” Obviously they had spoke about him, I can imagine them all in their little meetings “Who wants to deal with Mrs Bates today?” “Is Mr Bates going to be with her, do you know” “I do believe he is with her now, in the waiting room” “Will someone get the straw’s”. He

must have copped the short one today. "Okay I am pleased to tell you that everything has stayed the same" I was disappointed I had set my heart on it shrinking maybe even gone. "I can see that hasn't pleased you but it is good". "Why hasn't it shrunk any more then?" asked Jeff." It could mean that the Cancer has become immune to the chemo and no longer has an effect on it" "So what happens now then?" "I will speak to your Doctor and we will discuss the different medications that we can now use, the one that I would like you to go on, if it does start to grow, will all depend on whether your periods return now you are not taking any medication, how old are you?" "Forty" So you may still have periods" "Yes no one in my Family has stopped at this age" "Well we will have to wait and see". "And then what" "Well you can book an appointment for three months time and I will have you back for Blood tests, and see what is happening then" "Woe! All the time Kerry has had this supposed Cancer in her Liver she has had normal blood tests and Liver Functions, when we questioned the other Doctor about that he said you cant take that as red that there is no problems going on, and now your saying that it is okay to rely solely on a blood test, in three months time with no medication at all for, this is a bloody nightmare" " Mr Bates I know what I am doing" "Look Doctor it is no secret that I think this to be a totally wrong diagnosis, we have been lied to so many times" "I am not lying to you Mr Bates, Why would I lie" "I am sorry Doctor maybe you are not but that doesn't mean that nobody else has because we have proof , and once you have been lied to you have to question everything, and I will, if you were a professional plumber doing work on my house, or a qualified mechanic working on my car, and I had a problem I would question him, what makes you think that your profession is above questioning?" "I understand what your saying but I know what I am saying is fact" "Could I at least see my scans I was promised that they would be here." "Abh I haven't got them, I do

have the report on them, which I will give you a copy off” “Yes I will have a copy but I am not to happy that the scans are not here again” “Would you like me to see if someone has the time to find them for you” “No don’t worry we have taken up enough of your time” I said. “See this is the sort of things we are coming up against, they should be here for us to see” “Jeff lets just leave it?” “There is just one last thing that I would like you to answer, we have been told on many occasion that this is the same cancer in all the areas, so why has it had a different effect in all of them?” “Well they are all the same Cancers by name but they can have slightly different make ups which causes some to become immune and others die off” “So I am going off now with no medication at all to help keep it under control, so surely it has to start growing back if as you say it has, already become immune to the treatment” “Not necessarily chemo can send the Cancer in to a kind of coma so it just stays, emm , asleep if you like, it could stay that way for quite some time” “So I just have to make an appointment for three months time and come back just for blood tests, Yes?” “Yes” “Okay come on Jeff lets ”. “And that’s it no scans just a blood test that never shows up anything any way” He was up and away out the door, he was not a happy chappie. “Good bye Mrs Bates” I just smiled “Goodbye”

We didn’t really chat much I knew it wouldn’t be worth trying to talk about it. We ended up having another fallout over it. It’s just an impossible situation that seems there is no way out of. I feel like a puppet that has two sets of strings one being pulled by the Royal Marsden and one being pulled by Jeff both in different directions, and the stitching is near to bursting. I had an early night to get away from the atmosphere.

The phone was ringing the next morning as I was about to go out when Jeff called me back to say that it was the Doctor from the Royal Marsden, “Hallo Mrs

Bates, I have spoken to your Doctor and he thinks that you should have a C.T. scan as well as blood tests in three months, so I will arrange that for you, and when it comes through arrange to see the consultant for a week after, Okay?" "Sure I must admit that will make me feel better, thank you" "Not a problem, Goodbye" "Yes goodbye" "What was all that about" "I am not talking to you yet" "Come on, come here we shouldn't let it ruin what we have if we loose one an other, then my life wouldn't be worth anything, you and the kids are my world please lets not argue any more we are just going to have o agree to differ on this one" He reached out to pull me to him and grabbed my hand" "Ouch" "What have you done to it its up like a balloon" "Its your fault you got me so wound up I punched the floor in frustration, although I didn't do it hard, I cant think why its gone like that" He found it quite amusing "I wish I had punched you now instead" "I bet you do, would you like to hit me now, with your one good hand" We laughed and cuddled one an other "What am I going to do with you?"

Final thought.

Well there you have it the story right smack bang up to date. This is my life so far; I compare it to a roller coaster. I was dragged onto it and I went up the slow haul to the top of the ride, and was on an even track for ten years, then you get that gutt wrenching feeling as you see the massive drop that you cant avoid looming in front of you, and your falling and your completely at its mercy, then if your lucky you reach the bottom you get a short ride while you get your breath back, and then you see a steeper climb but you cant get off even though you know there's going to be another drop just around the corner, and I' am all churned up waiting for it, wondering, if this will be the final fall, or could someone put the brakes on, and let me off.

## NOT QUITE AN ANGEL – by Kerry Bowden

### Final Chapter written by Marilyn Bowden

They say that a phone call can change your life, for me that was most certainly so.

It was a Sunday at 7.pm , I know this because I had just looked at my watch and thought that I had better go and make some tea. The call was from Brad my grandson, saying that his mum, (my daughter Kerry) had been taken into hospital. We got straight into the car and went over to their house. We got there just in time to see the ambulance going down the road. We went into the house to make sure her children were all right, then on to the hospital. That's when the nightmare started for all of us.

The next years were just full of hospitals, good news, bad news, up and down like a roller coaster. All through this I never heard Kel complain, never say "why me". The bad news was always treated the same way by Kel, she would shake her shoulders and say "give me a few days mum" then she would be back to her bright and breezy self – though how she did that I do not know.

She was a very special person. I think all people who suffer like her are. She had the dirtiest laugh ever and you just enjoyed being in her company. She was very loyal to her friends and loved animals with a passion. Kel was never going to have children. She would say when she was young "just dogs". So the four dogs was not a surprise that she ended up with but the four children were – but they were much loved and wanted.

Kerry loved her vodka and orange and much again to my surprise when she was in the hospice they had a drinks trolley. Then thinking about it why not! She loved a party and when she had had enough we knew because that's when we would all have to do the rowboat song. Or as I call it "oops up side your head".

Kerry wrote her book when on chemo. I have a copy but at the moment cannot bring my self to read it, even writing this is very difficult. She loved writing it and it took her mind off other things.

Kerry died on 15 November 2005. In the last 9 months of her life she had been in 5 hospitals and the hospice. She, I think, felt safe when she was in hospital, and the hospice she loved, although apart from one hospital and the hospice the let her down badly. I cannot write it all down yet, it is too painful to go through again.

I am very proud and privileged to have been Kerry's mum and thank God for the years we did have with her. The days are hard to get through at times for all of us. Kerry called her book "Not Quite An Angel". Well I know for a fact that now she has got her wings because if ever anyone deserved to be an angel it was her.