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To my beautiful wife,

If legacy was tangible, I'd buy you a truck full.

As it is, I hope it moves through people's minds

And reminds them how amazing you really are.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

My name is Aria Nikjooy. I'm a Paediatric Trainee Doctor working in Manchester. I've worked as a qualified doctor since 2014. I spend my days looking after unwell children from the second they're born to when they decide not to be children anymore!

I trained in Birmingham and moved to Manchester with my pregnant wife in the summer of 2017.

In November 2018 I was diagnosed with a rare brain tumour, sitting in my Cerebellum in the back of my head. It was operated on, blasted with radiotherapy, subjected to chemotherapy and was thankfully kept at bay, up till March 2020 when the same brain tumour came back. I had more surgery, more chemotherapy and then as a reward – another tumour regrowth in July 2020.

I've been at home on/off for the past couple of years, shouting at daytime TV programmes, writing in my notepad or typing on my laptop.

Part of my personal therapy of reading, writing and speaking out loud; I decided to write a children's fiction book so I could read it to my toddler son. Plus, a cancer memoir.

I am eternally grateful to all those that have supported me, physically, mentally and emotionally; regardless of how near or far you've been.

FOREWORD

Reader caution: This book contains graphic descriptions of some extremely unpleasant experiences.

Some of these descriptions may offend those with a fragile temperament, those with no sense of humour or those that use the phrase 'Golly gosh' without being sarcastic. If you think that applies to you then I'm sure there's something like Countryfile on iPlayer to spend your time on.

Some of the references are intended as a joke, most aren't.

Enjoy!

I'm not a very good man. I haven't helped nearly enough old ladies cross the road and I laugh way too hard when fat people fall over. Can't help it, I'm not a very good man.

However, I don't think I'm a very bad man either, if the world can be viewed such in black and white. I've never stolen anything, killed, cheated, or lied to anyone (that's a small lie). I've never spoken behind someone's back (that's a massive lie) or taken the name of God in vain (so many lies!). There may be others in this list, let's just say I didn't do them.

Despite that, I find myself at the sharp end of a cancer diagnosis. Do I deserve this? Does anyone? Have I pissed someone off? My wife? Darwin? God? Is there a God? If so, why

me? Is this meant to be funny? Or a test? Is the answer to every question truly 42? Are there Copyright © issues here? How many questions do I have left?

And that's what I'm slowly learning as I travel through this process; no-one will answer those questions for you. It's not that no-one cares, it's simply that in a situation where you get an illness through bad luck, (as in I'm almost certain I didn't order this from Amazon) there often isn't anyone to blame. This memoir most likely won't have many direct or sensible answers, but at least it will acknowledge the questions. And that's all I really need, a platform to rant, rave and ask the odd question.

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PART 1

SET THE SCENE

If you're reading this then you've either pissed someone off or you've been given the worst Christmas present ever. If you've gotten over either scenario then maybe you/someone you know can take some sort of solace from my story. Or learn a little about brain tumours or cancer or whatever. Just put this down if you're looking purely for factual information, I'm not going to explain how chemotherapy works, or go into detail about what type of tumour I was allocated. You don't need to know, and I don't have the mental capacity to explain it all. This is very much an example of how not to deal very well with life in general.

By the way, in the following stream of consciousness I may refer to my diagnosis or my experiences but in reality, whatever has happened to me has affected my loving family and should really be read as our diagnosis or our experiences. Semantics maybe but without my wife and son I would most likely be dead and you would be reading something far more cheerful than this.

Whilst I'm on my soapbox I want to make one thing clear: You don't 'fight' cancer, you 'survive' it. You can't fight your own body, it just seems to be this populist view that everyone with cancer suddenly becomes Sylvester Stallone and that you

never give up until the cancer is defeated, preferably in slow-motion.

It's not a bad thing to be positive, but I'm damn sure being positive doesn't kill cancer cells. Doctors and nurses and radiographers and pharmacists and dieticians and physiotherapists and SALT therapists are the reason I survived. On top of all those amazing professionals and the treatments they provide, there's just blind luck involved, cells in your body just stop working properly or mutate and you get better or worse.

If another person tells me that a teaspoon of Turmeric a day allowed them to 'fight back' against their cancer, I'll choke them with a crystal...

THE BEGINNING

So, let's begin. I was born in Sheffield, I went to a good comprehensive school, got my Medical degree from Birmingham University, married my wife in Birmingham and then had my first child in Manchester. I then worked as a Paediatric doctor to fill in the gaps between nappy changes.

Then I got told I had brain cancer.