

## WAITING TO DIE

The rain poured through a gaping wound in the back porch, drenching the limp pot plant. She sat watching the downpour from the sanctity of her kitchen, the black thunderclouds mirrored the blackness of her soul. She shook off the gloom and poured herself another cup of tea. The tea was lukewarm, just like the doctor's smile that morning as she sat in his surgery.

"I'm dying. I have these chest pains and it hurts to breathe."

"Hmm..." He tapped her chest with his stethoscope. "Cough for me."

Elly managed a weak cough for the doctor; he tapped the end of the instrument and her heart leapt.

"Again please."

She coughed again.

"Open your mouth."

She complied and he smiled.

"Elly my dear, I'm afraid to tell you that you have a case of bronchitis."

He moved to the desk and wrote out a script.

"There's a repeat script, which you may need, apart from that," he looked up and smiled weakly. "You're not dying, for Christ's sake, Elly, you're only thirty nine; you have years before you can start worrying about cancer."

He hadn't listened, she thought moodily. They never listened to her complaints. She stared at a picture of her late husband, God rest his soul. He was fit and healthy until a heavy cold developed into pneumonia, he had died shortly afterwards.

The death had devastated her, she had been the sickly one who ran to doctors while he marched bravely through life without a care. Her rock had been washed away with his death and now there was only the bitter isolation.

She wandered tearfully through the darkened rooms of her soul. So many memories, so many disappointments, so many times she thought her heart would break. And yet, here she was, still living, still breathing, and still waiting for the end. She could feel it in her bones, the doctor's office, and his grimace as he casually informed her.

"You have six months to live."

It would be over, she would put her affairs in order, see to her only son; he would be devastated by her death. She would say goodbye to her friends, perhaps go home to her mother for a while, maybe even a short holiday abroad, providing she was well enough to travel. Then there would be the inevitable trips to the hospital as the doctors tried to stave off the ravenous monster eating her will to live; they would think she had beaten it, but then she would receive the final call.

"Elly, it's Doctor Freeburg here, I'm afraid we have to take you into hospital for further tests."

She would call her brother and pack her clothes, choosing them carefully; can't take too much, just the basics. A simple white dress, a little make up, a book to read and a diary... mustn't forget the diary. Frank would drive to the hospital and wait until she was signed in and put to bed before going home to tell the rest of the family.

The end would come quickly, a few weeks maybe, and then the angels would start flying around the room as the hallucinations intensified. She would see her husband waiting patiently for her return and with a whimper, she would shake off this mortal coil and leave a grieving world behind.

Elly swallowed as the memories faded. In the background she heard the sounds of a rock band. Her son had come home. A moment later she heard his approach.

“You all right, mum?”

“I’m fine,” she sighed.

“What did the doc say?”

“Bronchitis.”

“There you go,” he smiled, “nothing to worry about.”

Elly opened her mouth to reply but the words never found voice. Simon made a cup of coffee and returned to his room. Elly stared miserably after him, he was beautiful, so much like his father the resemblance was uncanny.

He was young, full of life and promise and she was—waiting to die.

Written by Alastair Rosie 2000 ©

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