

Emma - Storyteller for Scarborough Stories

Emma's story is about overcoming cancer & new beginnings.

Content Warning: Cancer

I am drawn to water: water essential to life and powerful enough to bring death :a reminder of my place on the planet

For many years that draw was satiated by my commute over the Thames.

Times changed, children grow, dissatisfaction with my once beloved job and divorce.

Move forward like the river to the big beautiful sea.

You and me you me by the beautiful sea

But where? Brighton? London by the sea: too expensive.

Somewhere closer to my collection of parents?

Sandsend perhaps? Happy memories.

1970s holidays.

Unsupervised adventures walking to Whitby on the beach arriving just as the tide is lapping the steps; midnight walks to never found villages, the Brigadoons of North Yorkshire; fishing with string and bread in the endless rain but never bringing fish home for tea.

No 34 years in South East London does not lend itself to village life.

Whitby? Nah Scarborough yes yes !

It's the place for me.

Sun, sea, sand and a house big enough for any adventurers to join me exploring its beautiful environs.

Time to live my best life

It's 2020 COVID COVID

Post lockdowns I'm ready to cycle the cinder track, walk the Cleveland way and get back into the sea. Must get back to the sea

I start vomiting

Week one: obviously bad mushrooms. I don't like to waste food

Week two: must be a bug. It'll be through me soon

Week three: my guts sound like Eeyore with a toothache. Suppose I should call the doc

Get thee to A&E. Erck surely not necessary.

Hooked up to a drip.

In and out of consciousness.

A procession of medical staff fire information at me

Your bowel has burst

Its cancer

Unless we operate you will die

Sign this

There is 80% chance you'll die during the operation

Sign this

You may wake up with a colostomy bag

sign this

Is that my signature?

The theme tune to Tales of the Unexpected starts in my head

Do you know it?

Der der der .. Nathan please

I think: if I die under anaesthetic I won't know but it will be a bit of a shock to my family who think I have a tummy bug

Then : at least I won't spend my last year's incontinent in a nursing home

A ghost face with Einstein hair looms in front of me.

I am your anaesthetist

I think : Will Emma survive this episode of Tales of the Unexpected

Then nothing

Day one: I am alive

A biomechanical thing. Stapled together.

Tubes feeding me, emptying me of waste and pumping with pain relief

Never enough pain relief

I want to see what they've taken, to face my enemy.

Gone for testing and disposal. How rude

My husband's been calling, frantic, concerned about my well being.

I'm surprised. I didn't think he'd be that bothered or am I not bothered.

Maybe the pain relief IS having an effect

Day 10: on my way home.

Mission: should I accept it? No choice

Mission: Recovery from hospital acquired pneumonia then chemo

Listen to your body they say

Don't push too hard

Not sure I trust it. I was totally unaware it was trying to kill me

My husband becomes my nurse. My rock of love. Steadfast. My White Knight.

10 rounds with the beast and I'm still standing yeah yeah yeah I'm still standing

Cancer free.

Side effects yes but proud of myself Proud I am who are thought I was

A coper, unafraid of death.

It's easy to be unafraid when you're young but it's true of me now.

I wasn't afraid and I'm still not

I never asked why me? Why not me?

I am lucky and I feel it.

If my bowel hadn't burst the cancer would have spread and become incurable.

Eventually I saw a scan of my beast, a burbling grey mass of malevolence but now only a digital memory.

Convalescing I come to understand why I'm here

I am love because I love

'The world is a better place with you in it Emma' the sentiment of friends old and new

One old friend made me my patchwork sand and sea blanket.

I wrap it around me often to connect with the love I felt and feel

So I'm gifted more life

Not everyone gets that.

Surely a second chance is an opportunity to be a better me

I can be a better friend, an appreciative person, a person who says all the things we so easily forget to say like I love you.

I told my dad for the first time.

'Well I feel the same but our family don't talk about that'

Old Yorkshire bloke. What did I expect?

My mum and step dad, with me every step of the way.

Trekking from Huddersfield with the best pork pies in Yorkshire to aid my recovery.

Now I tell my nearest and dearest that I love them often.

I will not regret things unsaid.

I compliment strangers. They often smile. It takes little effort, cheers people's day and has led to new friendships

I am still me. I survived but I intend to thrive.

I'm challenging myself to do new things

It's why I'm here fighting all my nerves to tell you my story

I've taken up roller skating to help with my chemo effected balance and numb feet

I totter around the edges not improving but warmly supported by the Scarborough rollers

It's joyful

I started exploring the Cleveland way until I fell.

Typical walking.

Now I can't get my roller boots on our walk great distances but I will I will

And then there's my tattoo habit

From none to full sleeve

In the darkness my old life in London but move to the bright bright sunlight and my adopted home is represented by Scarborough castle

And of course the sea the beautiful sea

Chemo made me sensitive to the cold but now I'm ready to jump back in

My best life's getting even better