



Finding my voice

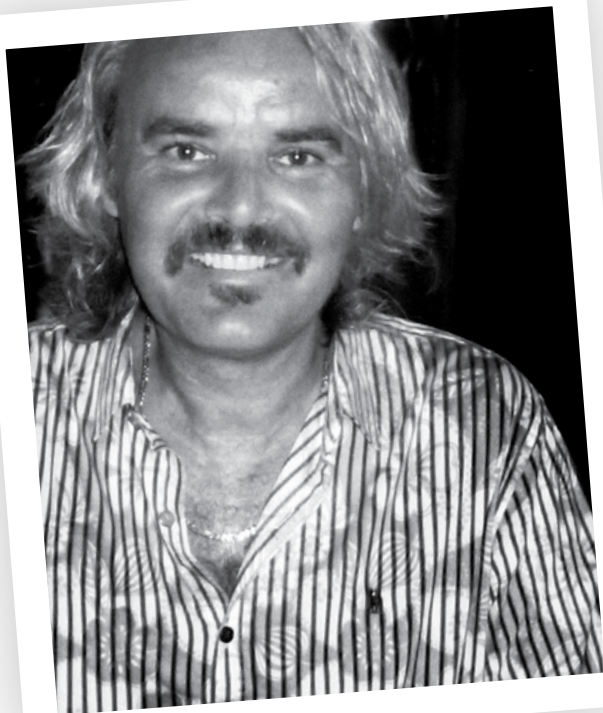
Throat cancer: a poetic battle

Jovo Ćirković

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Author's message

My brother-in law was diagnosed with throat cancer in the early part of 2012. He named the cancer 'NIGEL'

This book of poems is about my brother in law and his wife's journey during their battle with Nigel.

At time of publishing, Nigel cells had all been eliminated by the medical treatments.

Fingers crossed ... there will be no re-lapse.

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Nigel and the Stormy weather

Here's my story ... It's sad but true
But I feel the need to share
For that of my family sake
And all my friends who care

In my prime halfway through life
Enjoying life's simple things
Like time alone spent with Elaine
The pleasure and joy that brings

Our recent union was a highlight
In the journey of my life
I felt blessed ... Privileged really
To take Elaine for my wife

Just when we were getting used to
Plotting our life's course together
Along came Nigel to intrude
Brought with him stormy weather

You see Nigel is the name I've given
To the cancer in my throat
His goal to take me unexpectedly
For a trip on his deadly boat

Sit back as I start to share
This journey with you ... my friend
I'll sign off with this message for Nigel
"I'll be beat you in the end!"

I feel lost and all alone

Castaway on a deserted island
Feel the chill run through my bone
I am isolated in my thoughts
I feel lost and all alone

I guess everyone at some point
In life's journey they may find
They will stare death in the face
Trapped in battle with their mind

I am way too young to die
I have yet so much of me to give
I want to witness my children marry
Pass on advice to help them live

Elaine is far too young to widow
She depends too much on me
I feel disappointed that there is a chance
Grandchildren I'll never get to see

It's at night when I'm all alone
When dozing in my bed
My Demons drag my very soul
And trap it in my head

At those times I feel possessed
At the ending of my day
My life with Nigel feels so surreal
Like some actor in his play

Fighting for my saliva

I feel a mixture of relief and fear
From the prognosis I've been given
As I prepare for the fight of my life
To remain amongst the living

They will pump me full of chemicals
To put an end to Nigel's plans
In the process killing even living cells
Possibly those of my saliva glands

Nigel being a parasite
Many cells he has infiltrated
The Chemo is not very selective
Healthy cells will be annihilated

To prevent from possible infection
That could come from tooth decay
Four wisdom teeth I must have removed
Because they are in the way

Once removed it's time to recover
My strength ... get back I must
For I will need every ounce of it
To beat back Nigel's deadly lust

To my relief my radiation specialist
Offered hope ... removed some doubt
As Nigel started life as a virus
The surgeon can completely wipe him out

Do wisdom teeth make you wise?

I never could quite understand
How wisdom teeth got their name
If they truly make you wiser
My intelligence is down the drain

Last Friday I had all four removed
Think my dentist's was on a two-for-one
By removing another two molars
He was having too much fun

Now I wait a couple of weeks
To ensure that all's well and clear
Eliminate the chance of infection
As my Chemo treatment draws near

Next week they will make a mask
My face to protect from harm
It's designed to target only Nigel
Should work just like a charm

Elaine walks within my shoes
I stopped drinking and so has she
We're eating better and exercising
Such sacrifice she makes for me

Right now I'm feeling great
Anxious ... I clench my chin
Mentally I must prepare myself
For my real treatment to begin

Burnt sparrow droppings

Sitting in chair ... I'm connected to a tube
Filled with a cocktail entering my vein
Bringing with it ... a quick death to Nigel
I pray it won't affect my brain

Feeling better than I thought I would
On my drive back to my home
Apart from the stomach cramps
Or my need to find a throne

Now you may think me spare
But everything I attempt to eat
Tastes like burnt sparrow poo
Chicken, oats or something sweet

My body's ability to repair itself
Has become a casualty of war
Low my white blood cell count is
Chemo gives Nigel his 'What for'

Each day I feel lethargic
Ripper headache tunes my focus in
That this battle has just begun
Pick myself up if I hope to win

The constant support of my friends
Gives me the strength I need
For next week round two begins
On my cells Nigel will cease to feed

Pimply Faced nude nut

Like baking a cake in an oven
My oncologist did to me intimate
Ingredients we must decide upon
If Nigel we hope to exterminate

Then a recipe we must decide upon
Oven temperature is then set
We bung it all in the oven
And wait to see what we will get

Two lots of Chemo treatment down
My Doc more drugs did introduce
Cetuximab unlike Chemo attacks
Nigel's deadly cells ability to reproduce

The biggest side effect is acne
Great that's just what I need
Selling houses with a pimply face
Should help my sales succeed

To add insult to misery
My hair falling in clumps from my head
Imagine a nude nut with acne
Should help my love life in my bed

The clippers will take care of hair
One day the treatment it will pass
The acne is my battle scar reminder
That I'm nailing Nigel's ass

Too soon to count my chickens

Is it too soon to be optimistic?
Am I setting myself up for defeat?
I feel better than I thought I would
Which I have to say is neat

The treatment is going along to plan
If my doctors are to be believed
Having Elaine explain my treatment
Have to say makes me relieved

So far nothing unexpected
Has been thrown my way
It's like reading your horoscope
Watching it materialize every day

As they say ... touching wood
Count your chickens before they hatch
Is a sure way to attract bad news
End up with eggs from a bad batch

Oh well ... let's dance I say
Nigel bring on your best game
I feel strong enough to defeat you
All those around me feel the same

One thing that I know for sure
This journey has made a change
I will be a different person as a result
As my priorities re-arrange

Chewing shards of glass

Last week due to an infection
Off to emergency I went
My temperature had skyrocketed
My immune system was but spent

Three days plugged into tubes
Antibiotics my body in dire need
Whilst the remains of Chemo linger
To ensure Nigel's hunger doesn't feed

My mouth is full of ulcers
Never experienced such pain
Felt I'd chewed on shards of glass
As it shot right through my brain

Next comes Radiotherapy
With mask on it should be sweet
Must have hose connected to my gut
Just in case ... I cannot eat

Conciliation of my treatment
Is my beer gut has gone away
Although if I had I choice I would
Have got rid of it in my own way

My dear friends you give me strength
You help the bad times not to linger
With your support I'll beat Nigel
Even if I am never again a singer

I looked upon the face of death

Today I looked upon the face of death
It was not a pleasant sight
Photographs taken of me with no hair
Really gave me quite a fright

The face was mine ... but the head
Was one I'd seen at times before
On cancer patients who'd lost their hair
Made me afraid of what's in store

Inside I feel like I'm in control
It's just hard when I see that look
As it hides my true strength from me
From the cover you judge the book

My only option is not to look
At such photos until my hair
Grows back to how it was before
Then I'll look without a care

For the strength I need to beat Nigel
My inside must match my outer form
If I am to feel whole and strong
Help bring my body back to norm

I now realise how easily
A weak mind could be swayed to succumb
To bitterness and misery ... allowing
Nigel their strength to overcome

Eating through a tube

Soon I may just find out
What a baby in the womb may feel
Umbilical cord in my gut
To help me eat ... how unreal

It's just a precaution for now
In case the effects of radiation
My ability to swallow food
Due to swelling and dehydration

For now the Chemo is finished
I'm glad it's all behind
It seems I take more drugs
To help side effects un-wind

Can't wait for the taste of pineapple
To be different from burnt zucchini
Or a sip from a glass of water
Stop tasting like milk to me

875 minutes of blasting
Radiation to kill Nigel in my neck
Over the next 7 weeks
I hope we've stacked my deck

This is the last stage
Of my treatment and I must say
I'm looking forward to the end of it
Getting back to normal soon ... one day

Where I'm at thus far

Today I asked myself a question
What have I learnt so far?
Since Nigel came into my life
Like a flaming shooting star

To say I see things different
Would understate the facts to me
My life perspective has shifted
In a way it's set me free

No more "Someday Isle" for me
That somewhat illusive destination
Where I dream of going but never do
Used to add to my frustration

I now truly appreciate my life
Just how precious it can be
I know how good it is before it's gone
No more fear or regret for me

I'll take that holiday to Thailand
Volunteer ... help someone poor
Tick of items from my bucket list
Even add a few things more

It's been said you only live once
It's true and now I see
If you live well ... live in the NOW
Once is plenty enough for me

Surrounded by Nannas and grand pops

Week three of radio therapy
All is going as the plan should be
Even the ulcers in my mouth
Were expected by doctors and by me

Nigel has shrunk down in size
He is almost gone away
Just a small lump to remind me
Why this treatment game I play

My taste buds have been blown to bits
Dry and empty are my saliva wells
Eventually my taste buds will return
For now I'll enjoy the smells

Pretty freaky radio therapy
Being strapped down hard and tight
Listening to songs whilst radio waves
Zap Nigel with all their might

The staff and I are on first name basis
The accommodation provided is the tops
Although I feel like a teenager there
Surrounded by Nannas and grand pops

At least the Chemo has now stopped
Have to say I did stay strong
Just the thought of the chemical in me
Inside my body ... it just felt wrong

Mr Piggy faces fire & brimstone

The great thing about living in denial
Is you get to enjoy the scene
Not realising that the sufferers there
Come from where you've been

I watched others walk out of treatment
With their head buried way down
I just said ... that is not me
Walked away without a frown

For 6 weeks like a pig on spit
I lay there whilst radiation rays
Burned Nigel to a crispy critter
Wish it leaves no hope he stays

My taste buds are but a memory
Ability to swallow ... oh but a wish
Having to eat food through tube in belly
You can imagine how "Delish"

My golf game is relegated
Like everything else to the past
It seems this piggy's time on the spit
Is not over but will last

The radiation crew ... the rotten sods
Perform their evil act with a smile
Sometimes I just wish I could
Put them in the rack for a while

I am off the slippery slope

Finally the dark tunnel
In which I've fought my fight
There seems to be an end coming
I can almost see the light

The last month has been
The toughest of my life
Don't know if I could have made it
Without the support of my wife

Radiation kills everything
Good and bad cells which are inside
Hopefully leaving Nigel
Nowhere he can hide

I have lost so much weight
A bonus I guess of sorts
At least now I fit back into
Some of my favourite shorts

To all my friends and family
Your strength has helped me cope
Without you I don't think I would
Have held on to the slippery slope

One more month of waiting
For the doctors initial all clear
Then a final PET scan to clear me
In January of next year

Inside I feel that I gave Nigel
The biggest fight of his career
My fingers and my toes are crossed
I can celebrate with a beer

Sorry for being cliché

I couldn't let the past 6 months
Go without my say
I truly have ... to take off
My hat to my darling Ray

A pillar of strength he has been
Never complain or question why?
It is one reason I love him
He's such a special guy

Nigel was not on our bucket list
He just showed up one day
To test our strength and our will
We gave him nowhere to stay

Ray has been amazing
The garden looks Devine
Even his golf handicap
Has never been so fine

This episode in our lives
Has brought us all together
We value life so much more
As people we are so much better

Thanks for your good wishes
Your prayers have all been heard
If Ray and I have any say
Of Nigel ... this is the last word



*This is a poem for my little friends
at the Chiang Mai Orphanage.*

*These children are so happy ... They are well
fed well clothed, but what they miss most of all is the
hugs and kisses that our children were brought up with.
If you enjoyed "Finding my voice" all I ask in return
is that you visit my foundation called
"Happy Hands Foundation" and make
a donation to help my little friends.*

www.happyhandsfoundation.com

What I'd give for a bedside story read to me by Mum or dad

When I wake up in the morning
I look around and something just not there
No mommy ... No daddy to wake me up
It really isn't fair

I have 60 friends to share my time
And there are my carers too
Sometimes we get volunteers
For excursions at the zoo

My clothes are all packed away
In my slide-out draw
My shoes are stacked in a row
With 59 others ... at the door

I have food in my belly
Bath twice a day ... it's really not so bad
But what I'd give for a bedside story
Read to me by Mum or dad

At least I am healthy
Unlike some children ... Who have HIV
Sometimes they cry out late at night
I'm glad it's them not me

What did I do that is so wrong?
What have I done so bad?
That I should have to live my life
Without both mum and dad

I have lived here since I was one
That was five years ago
Sometimes life just flashes by
But some days it goes real slow

I wake up often in my sleep
I'm afraid of to lose my toys
When I turn seven ... Is time to move
To live with 175 older boys

No more girls to play with
I won't be the big boy any more
I've heard from other boys who've moved
And I'm afraid of what's in store

For 10 more years I need to wait
Until the day that I'm set free
When I can finally leave this orphanage
And rely just on me

I promise that when I have children
I will be there ... To take care
To tuck them in to bed at night
And let them know I'm there

If you can share some of your wealth
For a better future is my goal
Knowing your money is helping orphans
Will be like feeding your own soul

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