Gypsy Healing

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

“Before I answer your question, I must tell you that I am not a religious person, and I do not believe in miracles,” said Dr Solander. “But spontaneous remission is a fact. It does happen. It happens rarely, but it does happen. Even without treatment, cancers can disappear.”

“But that is exactly what I am asking,” said Emmet. “How can it happen? Can there be some external influence? I am like you – not at all religious. I am looking for a rational explanation.”

“Cancer is not a foreign body,” the oncologist continued. “It has your DNA, but mutated. It came from your body and it is possible for the body to reabsorb it. What has happened to you does have a clinical explanation, even if we do not fully under the how and why.”

“This is for sure?” Emmet asked.

“Two biopsies, each checked three times. Absolutely. You are cancer free.”

“I am not a religious man either,” said Emmet getting up from his consulting room chair. “But I have a feeling that I have just done a deal with the devil.”

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He was pointed the way and was pleasantly surprised to see that Inigo’s trailer was quite modern and substantial, even appearing luxurious. The others that surrounded it were a mixture of big and small, old and modern, but this unit was clearly a cut above. It was a true trailer, attached to a dark blue pickup, and with extended sides when at rest.

Inigo answered the door. Tall, strong and dark, he looked much younger than his 48 years. He could be the same age as Emmet - a tired 35.

“Surprised to see me?” said Emmet, with a forced smile.

“No,” was the simple reply.

“Well I am really surprised to be here,” said Emmet. “I’m not even sure why I am.”

“You had to come,” said Inigo. “We had a deal, remember. You live a life, but in return you are mine for 3 years.” He stood aside to let Emmet enter. He climbed the steps and went inside.

The trailer was very well appointed inside with a kitchen and living area, and a bedroom on the right up a few steps.

“I have received medical advice that you cannot have been the cause of my remission,” said Emmet. He was trying to justify leaving, immediately. He dropped his small bag on the floor.

“But you are here anyway. You are here because you know what I did. You could feel it the moment I laid my hands on you.” Inigo was staring at him. He pointed at the bag and said: “You won’t be needing that.”

“Just a few things. Some underwear, toiletries, shaving kit …”

“You won’t be needing any of that,” said Inigo. “I told you that you would need to live as my gypsy wife for 3 years to earn the cure.”

“Well, I said yes, I was desperate after all, but I am not sure that I know exactly what that means,” said Emmet. Whatever it entailed, his survival must be worth it.

“You will learn,” said Inigo. “In the meantime, look around, or sit down if you like. This will be your home for a while.”

Home. Emmet had a home not that long ago. He had separated from his wife Lena only a year before his diagnosis, abandoning the family home to her and their son and daughter. Lena had visited him when his cancer diagnosis had been confirmed, but she soon realized that she had all that he owned, and that the prospect of him earning as he had done in their marriage, was slim. Lena did not come back to him. She was not a person who coped with illness anyway. He was alone.

He could not work so he decided to take the severance package that was available for serious illness, which allowed him to meet the costs of treatment. Nothing seemed to work. He was advised that the suffering that he was going through in search of a cure was doing nothing more than staving off a fate that was certain. Death was weeks away when he learned of Inigo Scarfe.

It was the temp at his office who gave him the card the day he left. He did not throw it out. It was as he was tidying his papers into some order for his executor that the card fell to the desk. It simply said “Inigo Scarfe, Healer” and beneath it the cell phone number. He thought: “What do I have to lose”. He called the number and arranged to meet this “Healer”.

Inigo had told him that he did not claim to cure everybody, but that he knew from the moment he took his hand that he could cure Emmet. He said that there would be no payment without a cure, but that the price of survival would therefore be high. Emmet figured there was nothing to lose. He had little to give, and to live he would give all he had.

So, he sat down in the comfortable fitted sofa of Inigo’s trailer ready to pay the price. Ready to be his “gypsy wife”.

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There was a knock on the door and Inigo ushered in two women. Like him they were dark, both around 30, attractive with curled hair, makeup and painted nails.

“Is this her?” One of them said.

“This is Esmerelda,” said Inigo. “But we will call her Essie.”

Emmet thought: ‘He was looking at the women but is he talking to me? Which one of these woman is Essie?”

Both of the women looked at Emmet and said: “Hello Essie.”

The Mabul sisters, Rada and Kara, were Inigo’s third cousins. They were both hairdressers and beauticians. Their trailer was emblazoned “Famabulous” and offered beauty treatments, hair styling and makeovers in whatever town they were in or about. Their skills were legendary.

Rada looked at the top of Emmet’s head. She said: “There is hair here. With treatment, it will grow well. But it will be darker than this mousy colour.”

Kara ran a long, painted nail across Emmet’s cheek, adding: “Light whiskers, easily removed. Skin needs work. Good bone structure. She could be pretty.”

Emmet needed to ask of Inigo: “What exactly is going on here?”

“These are my cousins. They will prepare you. We break from here tomorrow morning. We will travel almost 100 miles to Staines, South Carolina. Rada and Kara will prepare you for this life. This is what you promised me. Three years. In three years from today your life will be your own, for as long as you can live it, and I foresee that it will be long. But until then you will be Esmerelda. Do you understand?”

“Yes,” said Emmet. He marvelled that he was not dead, and that accordingly to the author of this ‘miracle’ he might live a life. Was three years as a gypsy to great a fee? Like it or not, this was the price that he would need to pay.

And he was alive but adrift, without home, or savings or income. He needed to get his second chance at life into order. He needed to learn how to live again. Rada and Kara were smiling at him, and so was Inigo. The trailer seemed suddenly warm and cosy.

“Yes,” said Emmet. “I understand.” Really, he did not.

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“Relax, Essie,” said Kara. “Calm down and tell us what the problem is.”

“I need to know what is going on here,” Essie complained. She pulled up her blouse and the padded bra giving shaped to it, to disclose what were definitely two budding breasts.

Rada bit her lip to avoid giggling, but Kara found it more difficult. She exclaimed: “Silly you. Every woman has breasts. Yours are just a little late in arriving.”

“Please explain how.” Essie was angry. She had taken a shower that morning. She had stuffed her growing black curls into a shower cap, checked her razor with the intention of giving her legs a once over, and then stepped in. As she reached to shave her armpits she was suddenly aware of the breasts. They felt tender and sensitive, and were totally out of place.

“Hormones,” said Rada. “Injections every month following the Feast of the Moon, when you always go to sleep too drunk to notice. Oral doses in your tea every morning. Hormones in your face cream, and your body lotion, and the scalp treatment. Sorry – no magic. Just modern pharma. Hormones.”

“So, why?” Emmet now asked.

“Inigo does not want to have a man for a wife,” said Rada. “If you are his wife you should know this. You are his wife, are you not?”

Emmet was suddenly very confused. What was he? Every morning from the day he joined this group of travellers, he woke up next to Inigo in their queen-sized bed. They seldom touched in bed - nights had been warm up until now. But in the morning, he would kiss her on the forehead and say “Good morning Esmerelda.” Every morning he did that.

Then she would make breakfast. She was so much better at cooking these days. He would go the Lead Bus for an hour while she cleaned up. He would need their trailer for consultations most days so she would go to “Famabulous” to help Rada and Kara there, or to “The School Bus” to help with the children, or to Magda’s trailer to help with the dressmaking she was learning.

Everybody in this community was busy making things to be sold in the markets in any town they went, or if there was no market in the stalls in their camp. She had learned how to use a sewing machine and could make cushions and small cloth sacks and bags. She was very busy.

She answered Rada: “I’m trying to be. I am trying to keep my promise.”

“Let your breasts grow,” said Kara. “I will get some cream to help the skin stretch. Let your body change shape and become desirable. Let your hair grow. Without your natural curl it is already down to your shoulders, and thick and dark as I promised you. Come to see us after we set up in the new town Thursday, and we will give you a makeover. I promise you, it will make you feel so good.”

It was true. His hair had grown at an incredible rate. After his cancer treatment his hair was thin and sparse, but now it had grown so much that he needed a scarf to keep it out of his face while he worked. It made him look like a real gypsy. But he felt that was how he should look.

“Come Thursday,” echoed Rada.

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Inigo and two other elders of the group had been to the Town Hall to confirm their arrival that morning, and to sort rules of conduct. I had been a difficult meeting. Travellers are not always welcome in towns such as this one. It helped that all three of them were well presented and professional. Although not requested, they had provided a list of names of all people within the group – 141 all up, including Esmerelda Scarfe, with listed date of birth, Occupation: Homemaker.

He got back to the trailer and she looked up from the kitchen bench where she was chopping vegetables. She looked beautiful. He dark hair was up, pinned somehow with a mass of curls on top. She had hoop earrings on. Her face was made up skilfully to show the green eyes under the dark lashes. Her lipstick was almost mauve. She was wearing a black dress with a floral pattern, and cut low in front. Her slight breast growth was skilfully pushed up the appear as a fulsome natural bosom. He just stood on the doorstep.

“Stop chopping,” he said. “Dressed like that, I need to take you out for dinner.”

Esmerelda smiled. It was a perfect smile. I showed happiness and the promise of more. It was not contrived. It was how she felt at that moment.

“Where are we going?” she asked, playfully.

“The best restaurant in town,” he said. “But we will have to find that first.”

“You unhitch the truck and I’ll grab my handbag.”

It did not take long to find it – the best restaurant in that town. It was modest but it was intimate and the food was good. She had ordered in her best feminine voice, a voice she used 24 / 7 these days. It is just easier not to be mistaken for a man in women’s clothing. She just looked like a gypsy girl and now she sounded like one too.

He said: “We should work our way back down to Florida in a week or so. You can see your family if you like. Then after Christmas we will be heading West. By the time we get to Texas you will have been with me for a year.”

Was it really that long? I did not seem that long ago, but then again it seemed that she had been wearing dresses her whole life.

“I’m not sure that I could see my ex-wife and my kids,” she said. “Of course, I send emails and I post on social sites, but I can hardly even telephone these days. I sound different to them. I don’t seem to be able to pretend to be me.”

“You are you,” he said. He was looking at her with such a soft an inviting expression, it unsettled Esmerelda a little. “You are what I hoped for.”

The words rapped her like a warm coat. She could only stammer: “Really.”

“Let’s get you home, Mrs Scarfe,” he said. She loved those words too.

“While you pay I will just use the restroom,” she said.

When she got into the stall she pulled down her tights and struggled with her panty. It was a tight high waisted body shaping garment over a concealing strap. Her penis flopped free. Her only thought was what a disgusting piece of anatomy this was. If only things were different down there. She directed it downwards as she remained seated.

There was a coolness in the air as they walked to the truck, and when they go to the trailer it was cold without them spending the evening in it.

She kept a panty on so that she could sleep in his arms that night. He was warm. He played with her breasts and kissed her on the lips. She felt like a gypsy wife.

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It was cold that night. She drew closer to Inigo for warmth, but without touching him. But he wrapped his arms around her and made her warm. She could feel his breath on her neck. She was close to somebody, for the first time in so, so long.

She pushed her bottom a little closer to him, so that she could feel his penis even through his boxers and her nightgown. It seemed to move – contact bring it to life even as he slept. She felt happy.

She dreamt. She was walking naked through a field of long grass, warmed by a summer sun. Her large breasts jiggled as she walked. Her groin was free of any male organs. There was nothing but a tidy bush above perfectly formed female genitalia. She walked freely.

In the distance she could see a man in the distance. It was Inigo. He was naked. His body was hard and muscular, with dark hair on his chest and arms. He reached out to her. She walked faster, quickening her pace almost to a run. Her breasts jumped and bounced. They would soon embrace.

She woke. She was lying with her head on his chest, cushion upon his mat of chest hair. Her left arm was above her, bent and fingering with the hair on his head. She felt comfortable and peaceful. Her right hand was holding his penis. His penis! She pulled it away.

“Put it back,” he said. “Please.” He stroked her hair. “Please”.

She reached out again and took it, feeling it swell in her hand. She said: “I’m not sure why I am doing this.”

“Perhaps you like me?” he suggested. “Or perhaps that is what a wife does for her husband in the morning? The morning after a romantic dinner date?”

“I’m not sure that I can do anything else,” said Emmet. Without letting go of him she propped herself up to look at him. He was smiling. For some reason, she kissed him on the lips. She had a man’s penis in her right hand and she was kissing him. Their lips parted slowly.

“I’m in no hurry,” said Inigo. “Your choice is real. I am just your gypsy husband.”

She decided to do it. It made no sense and was contrary to everything she ever understood about herself, or rather everything thought about himself. But he knew what he would want, in similar circumstances. He threw back the covers, pulled down Inigo’s boxers and put his lips around his erect cock.

Emmet had the advantage of knowing what a good blowjob is. It is gentle but vigorous. There needs to be lots of saliva involved, and preferably some slurping noises. She delivered as he thought she should. And as the sperm shot into her mouth, she swallowed as she should, and understood the satisfaction to be had from giving such pleasure.

Strangely she did not feel that she had become gay, although if she had reflected there is no other conclusion. Somehow, she just felt that he needed to be pleasured and she was here to give him that. He had given much for her lately, and what could she do for him?

“I’ll make you breakfast,” she said.

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A week later she was Essie. She became her from the first time that she was penetrated by her gypsy husband.

When she knew that she was ready she spoke with Rada and Kara, and they introduced her to herbal enemas and stretching the point of entry.

“Anal sex is about pleasuring him,” said Kara. “But if you prepare you can get joy from it too.”

Essie did get that joy. Even the first time, after the discomfort of the initial stretching was over. But she put that down to Inigo, and the way that he made love to her. He had her bottom propped up so that he could make love to her face to face. He looked at her with desire, and stroked her smooth face, and whispered words. She just did nothing that first time. She just let herself be his plaything. It was joyous.

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“That’s them at the down now,” Freddie called out to her mother. “That will be Dad and his friend.”

“I’ll go,” Lena shouted back in reply. She slipped off her apron and opened the door.

The attractive dark couple stood on the porch, the tall man and the exotic looking woman beside him.

“Hello, and Merry Christmas,” said Lena, but she was on her toes looking behind them for her ex-husband. He had not told her there would be three for Christmas dinner. Where was he? “I’m Lena,” she said extending a hand to the woman standing forward.

“It’s me, Lena,” came the reply, from the mouth of the woman.

Lena felt strange but it still did not register what was going on. The woman took her hand but not to shake it. She held it in both of her own hands, soft and warm and with brightly painted nails. And she said again: “It’s me.”

“No. It can’t be. Is it you? How can it be?” Lena stumbled through the words.

“Cured, but changed,” the woman said, smiling. “This is Inigo, my husband.”

“Your husband?” The man was shaking Lena’s hand. The shock and confusion still had not lifted.

He was smiling to. He said: “Compliments of the season to you, Lena.” He said her name as if it was an indecent suggestion. There was something about him that exuded sexual power.

She looked back at her ex-husband. He was unbelievably attractive as a woman. She could still see his nose and the line of his jaw, but the eyes seemed to different. They seemed to have a vitality about them, even a fire. Something she had never seen in the man she once knew. He was not here.

“What are we going to tell the kids?” Lena asked, suddenly starting to panic. “They won’t be ready for this. Good God, I’m not ready for this.”

“Relax Lena,” the woman assured her. “This is the reality. I have told them I have changed. They need to know sometime, and I have always thought that it should face to face.”

“I think they understood that you had become a gypsy,” Lena said. “They are OK with that. But a gypsy woman? With a husband?”

“Well, we’re not really married, except according to gypsy custom,” said Essie. “But we are together.” She put her arm in the arm of her man and squeezed it tight. “May we come in?”

Lena hesitated for a moment. She was thinking that this was way too much to take on board. And she had the kids, and her widowed father, and her sister and her husband, and their two children. Christmas lunch for 10. It was arranged. “Yes, yes. Come in,” she said.

The children were still upstairs but all the adults were in the living room.

“Well I have a real surprise for everyone here,” said Lena. Then she turned to her ex and asked: “What do I call you?”

“Esmerelda. Esmerelda and Inigo.”

“Well everybody, you will remember my ex-husband Emmet, but not like this I think,” said Lena, doing her very best to make light of it. “She now goes by Esmerelda. And this is her husband, Inigo. Have I got that right?”

“Perfectly,” said Inigo. “Merry Christmas to you all. And we have brought gifts.” He put a velvet sack (that Essie had sewn) beneath the tree and shook everybody’s hand.

Lena’s sister embraced Essie, and her husband kissed her on the cheek. Lena’s father just looked confused. Inigo looked thoroughly pleased.

The stairs rumbled and the children appeared, led by Emmet and Lena’s son Freddie, and daughter Hannah. Essie just stood there and there with tears of joy in her eyes.

“Dad?” Lena wondered how her daughter could recognise her father dressed as he was. She rushed to the woman who was her father and embraced him.

Inexplicably, Freddie was smiling. He said: “Wow. Cool. My dad is a babe.”

“Come here,” demanded Essie, wiping aside tears and showing a spare arm to envelope her son.

“I think it’s time for drink,” said Lena. She was trying to restore order.

After a while Lena realised that she had not asked Essie about the cancer. “How is your health at the moment,” she asked her ex.

“The cancer is all gone,” said Essie with a smile. They have run tests and can find no trace of anything, even after all this time since they told me I was dead man walking.” Then she added: “Inigo would say it was up to him, the Gypsy Healer, but I am not sure that I believe in magic.”

“If you did not believe it, my darling, why did you agree to be my wife?” asked Inigo playfully.

Essie thought for a minute before she said: “Because I wanted my second life to be different, and that is what you offered. Because everything behind me seemed lost, and you seemed to be so clear in your purpose. And then after that, despite it being contrary to nature, and probably good sense, I fell in love with you.”

“And I you,” said Inigo.

Lena looked at her ex-husband, and the look in those eyes, staring a Inigo in that moment of silence. She wondered why she had never received the kind of love she saw in that moment. She wondered who this person was – this healthy, shapely, raven haired beauty. If it was not magic, it was very close to it.

The End

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A person sitting on a bed

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