

THE
NAKED
TRUTH
ABOUT
BREAST
CANCER

JANE MARSHALL

PAGES 6 - 13/304

About Jane

Born in Glasgow in 1969, I'm very much a product of my generation: a Gen X woman brought up by my mum to aim high.

I spent my teens as a political activist, and at 17 I got myself onto the National Executive Committee of the National Union of Students. I spent 2 years standing on tabletops in student bars or marching at the front of demonstrations with a megaphone.

I spent the next decade working in small start-ups during the first dot com boom. I set up some of the UK's first digital companies when no-one had even heard of the internet and the web browser hadn't been invented yet. I became a Director in one of Europe's largest media companies, responsible for a bunch of world-firsts. I was a leader in my field - I featured regularly in the national media and on conference platforms.

I took a 2 year career break at 40 and travelled the world solo, going wherever the wind took me. I skied in Switzerland, visited Cambodia, lived in Mexico City for 6 months learning Spanish. I went to the Pacific and learnt to dive - going on to spend a year living on the tiny island of Palau, a long way from anywhere working on a dive boat.

In 2010 I came to Australia and spent 8 years in senior roles in a large global telco. I went on to run my own strategy and innovation business.

I had a strong spiritual practise and meditated every day. I looked after my body, ate well, slept well, didn't smoke or drink much, and was fit and strong. I took up powerlifting in my forties and am the proud holder of a handful of Australian records. I was training for world records.

I was brave, a go-anywhere do-anything kind of woman. I've had the great fortune to live an interesting life. I've been incredibly lucky in my career. There was nothing I wouldn't - or couldn't - do. And I wasn't finished. I had plans: a long list of places to visit, and things to do. I was only 50.



And then I least



Cancer DREW UP

my life

Here I Am

2 years in. Doing my best to get back to some kind of life.

But here's the truth. I feel unwell most of the time. I'm still exhausted, often dizzy, discombobulated. My body's a mess. The menopause is awful. The meds to stop the cancer coming back are unbearable. Facing death has been a huge shock. There is the worry of the cancer coming back.

I've lost friends, and several people I loved dearly. I can't go back to the kind of work I used to do. I don't know who I am any more. My old life is gone and there is no way back. I don't know what happens next.

This has been devastating. It's as if a bomb went off in my life and there is nothing left.

And yet... A lot of wonderful and extraordinary things have happened too. I know more about love and life than I ever have, and I'm almost able to say I wouldn't change any of it. It has been a most profound journey into the mystic.

It's changed everything.

I Am Here.

C-View

RCC

It's changed everything



THIS IS A BOOK
FROM MY HEART
TO YOURS



About the book

This is a book from my heart to yours. It's a labour of love.

From the moment I heard the words 'you have breast cancer' I documented everything – I took photos, kept a journal, kept all my medical notes. I published some blogs, but most of what I wrote I kept private. I write because it helps me make sense of things and what was happening to me was surreal. It wasn't just breast cancer.

It was living alone in the world's longest lockdown, coming home from chemo to an empty house, going without any form of human touch during the hardest time of my life. It was watching the pandemic overseas and noting that people with cancer were vulnerable and dying. It was watching the news of the first covid deaths in Melbourne – cancer patients in a cancer ward – and wondering if covid was going to kill me if the cancer didn't. It was extreme menopause and all that this brings.

When it came to cancer, I had absolutely no idea what I was doing. I've never seen any kind of cancer up close, and I had to work it out as I went along. It was only later I realised that what I wrote might be useful to other women who hear those same words and who have no idea what they're doing either. This is the book you need when you get your diagnosis: It's all the things that no-one ever talks about, and that your surgeon,

doctor, oncologist either can't or don't tell you. Knowing what's happening is incredibly empowering.

It's not an ordinary book. It's raw, unedited, and unfiltered. Nothing is off limits. There's nudity, swearing, and the full depths of my own misery and suffering, even though at times it's excruciating to see it on the page.

Because that is the naked truth about breast cancer.

Our cancer is seen as a 'good' cancer, which means that survival rates are high relative to others. But that only tells half the story – breast cancer is absolutely brutal, arduous, and very lonely. I want to show the reality of the thing: the emotional and spiritual rollercoaster, the devastation. For many of us, nothing is ever the same again.

Much of this goes unspoken. There are a number of reasons for this I think. In part it's because there's still so much shame around women's bodies and breasts – and by extension breast cancer. Then there's the trauma. It's as if it's too traumatic to speak of, and most others don't understand it, so we pack it away somewhere and just get on. There's the idea that we should just be grateful to be alive and not complain, no matter how scarred we are by what we've had to do to survive. And then there's death. Talking about our own mortality is one

of the last taboos in our society. We're asked to focus on survival rates, to pretend that the spectre of death isn't there, and stay positive!

It is specifically NOT a how-to-do-breast-cancer book – it's just the story of how I did it. There is no one way to do it. And there is no 'good' way to do it either. Breast cancer is hard, it's hard for all of us. However hard you're finding it, I want you to know you're not failing. Just getting up every day, putting one foot in front of the other, and doing your best is a victory.

The heart of the book is really about extreme adversity. Yes, cancer is shit and at the same time something extraordinary happens in the depths of our grief. This is not a Pollyanna book; it's not an attempt to pretend the horrors of this thing are anything other than what they are, to paper over the destruction this thing wreaks in our lives. But at the same time there is consolation for us. In the face of such great adversity everything and everyone else falls away, and it's just You and Life. We have no option then, but to face inwards – to dig deep. And when we do, often when we're at our lowest point, we find what the great mystics wrote about – the light of our own soul.

It's therefore a momentous rite of passage: one of those moments when we walk through a door and there is no going back, we're changed forever. I call this The Heroine's Journey. Instead of thinking of it as just a medical problem to be solved, we can own the experience for ourselves. We can take a stance that says I'm willing to be transformed by this thing I didn't ask for and I don't want – and in so doing we find meaning. You become the heroine of your own story.

It's deeply mystical – which is not at all the same as being spiritual or religious. It's not rational or logical, and I can't even explain what it is, but I know without a doubt that there is more to this world than the eye can see. And I know that when we feel utterly lost, when we're scared, and we feel abandoned by life, there is a divine grace that shows up for us – if we're open to it. It becomes a source of superhuman courage and extraordinary love in the darkness. Even in all of this there is great beauty – a window into our humanity and the secrets of the cosmos that we can usually only perceive when our backs are against the wall.

So yes, cancer is shit. And there is also beauty, grace, and love.

I wish I could write like the great Sufi poets, but I haven't been given those gifts. I hope that what I lack in writing skills and talent I make up for in other ways.

May it be a source of inspiration and a balm for your soul. May it put wind beneath your wings.

Take what is useful, ignore what isn't.

DISCLAIMERS

I'm not a doctor, I have no medical qualifications, and I'm not giving advice or making recommendations about breast cancer treatment. If you have questions or concerns, talk to your medical team and/or do your own research. There's swearing and breasts in the book. If you're offended by either, this isn't the book for you.

In documenting my own naked truth
my aim is to honour yours
may it be a source of inspiration
and a balm for your soul
may it put wind beneath your
wings
and light the path when it
feels as if all is lost

Be the heroine of your
own Journey

Jane

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Read More

The Naked Truth About Breast Cancer
cancer will be available from February
2022 on Amazon, and at

TNTABC.com

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