Cancer Recurrence During COVID-19 and Jim McGee's "Due for A Fall"

COVID-19 has put all of us where cancer patients live: in fear, in isolation, with no security for the future.

May 11, 2020 By Robin McGee

I certainly picked a bad time to get cancer again.

On Tuesday my PET CT came back suggestive of recurrence in the right pelvic sidewall. Because a biopsy at the time of my cancer surgery two years ago told us there were cancer cells there, we knew this day would come. Those cells were sleeping during my remission but appear to have woken up. Getting cancer just as the world goes under with COVID-19 is such unimaginable bad luck I can barely comprehend it.

Before I can start chemotherapy, I need to have a GI stricture dilated and I need my dysfunctional portacath replaced. But COVID-19 has resulted in a province-wide shut down of all-day procedures.

I have emailed and left messages with my cancer doctors trying to get answers. Surgeon's offices are all closed. There is no answer at the Cancer Centre. I have no path forward.

The surgery for my escalating cataracts has likewise been canceled indefinitely. Without it, I will eventually lose my vision and I cannot have it if I am on chemotherapy. But as one little candle of human kindness, my phenomenal optometrist has stepped up, saying he will monitor my prescription and help me get glasses.

COVID-19 has put all of us where cancer patients live: in fear, in isolation, with no security for the future. All of us are living in surreal times. My book The Cancer Olympics illustrated how we as a community came together to foster my survival and that of others through our advocacy. The whole world needs such support today. All of us.

Today's song "Due for a Fall" was written by my brother Jim McGee, after our mother died of cancer. I choose it today for its resonant imagery of unknown waters, of an uneasy future, and a dreamlike yearning for safety.

I get the gist of it, the core and the grist of it

Don’t need no sordid detail
You found that damned scoundrel, the forger, the vandal
I hope you succeed where I failed

Somehow I have drifted beyond the horizon
The spires of my hometown sink slowly behind me
Ahead the abyss where the sky meets the ocean
It’s clear to me now I am due for a fall

They say the world ends where the sky meets the ocean
No credible witness has ever returned
I fear for the mariners long out to sea
Their children sleep restless until they make harbour

Somehow I have drifted beyond the horizon
The spires of my hometown sink slowly behind me
Ahead the abyss where the sky meets the ocean
It’s clear to me now I am due for a fall

I can’t get a grip on it, a handle, a fist on it
My friend denial keeps watch while I’m sleeping
I dreamed that I lived in the time of the healers
The past and the future not mine for the keeping

Somehow I have drifted beyond the horizon
The spires of my hometown sink slowly behind me
Ahead the abyss where the sky meets the ocean
It’s clear to me now I am due for a fall

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