

## A Shot in the Arm

Alfred hobbled out of the specialist medical clinic, leaning on his walking stick with every second step. He was wondering how he was going to survive the next two months.

He had gone to see Dr Anrajid for a final consultation before the scheduled amputation of his right foot. He had already lost most of two toes and his foot was turning blacker by the day.

He had been diagnosed with diabetes more than twenty years ago. He was forty-two when his life was changed forever: restricted diet, drugs, a need to lose weight and, over the years, increasing difficulty getting around.

It was the recent devastating bush fires which had forced the surgeon to put off the operation. Sections of the base hospital had been damaged, along with dozens of houses and the primary school. And, of course, tens of thousands of hectares of beautiful forest.

“You could go to Melbourne and have the procedure there,” Dr Anrajid had told Alfred. “One of my colleagues would look after you, but there are delays there too, because of the loss of regional operating theatres.”

Alfred had opted to have Dr Anrajid do the deed locally. He felt comfortable with him and didn't want to be away from his wife and friends.

He had been looking at replacement feet. It felt unnatural – shopping for a foot the way he might shop for a hat.

He felt despondent. Would he be able to have the operation in time, before the deteriorating circulation caused his leg to start dying? And would he be able to walk well enough with an artificial foot to indulge in his favourite recreation: wandering through the forest?

Maybe it was just as well. He had no idea how soon the bush would recover, if it ever did.

A few days later he hobbled into the pub to join two of his friends in their favourite corner.

“How're you doing, Alf? And how's Joan?” David asked.

“She's fine. I'm not.”

“The foot?”

“In a manner of speaking.” He sucked some of the froth off the top of his glass of stout, even though he knew he shouldn't be touching the stuff.

“How so?” David asked.

“The surgeon can't do my foot for a couple of months. Says I can go to Melbourne and have it done, but that would mean Joan having to find somewhere to stay, plus all the travelling.”

“What's the delay for?” Sam chipped in.

“The damage to the hospital.”

“Oh, of course.”

Sam hesitated for a moment before asking, “Why don't you have a talk with that doctor in Kalkee Road? You know, the one who gives people alternative medicines?”

“What new things could *he* tell me?”

“You know that bloke owns the hardware store? What's his name?”

“Lucas someone,” David ventured.

“Yes, that's right. Lucas Fairweather,” Sam continued. “He has diabetes and lost a toe, same as you. This doctor put him on some treatment where they drip something into your arm. And he's good as gold now – stopped the rot completely.”

“Really?” Alfred looked hopeful.

“So he says. Says it's given him a new lease on life.”

Alfred was intrigued. Maybe the fires and the delays they had caused were a blessing in disguise. The next day, Joan drove him to the clinic in Kalkee Road. He had no appointment, but hoped he could at least get some information about this supposed wonder-treatment.

He and Joan only had to wait a short while before being welcomed by Dr Harry Josephs – a scheduled patient had cancelled. What they learned in their twenty minutes with Dr Josephs changed both their lives.

The treatment, which they had known nothing about, and which the surgeon hadn't told them about, sounded too good to be true. It meant frequent and regular three-hour infusions and was a bit pricey, but it sure would beat losing a foot.

Dr Josephs said he would start the following week, after doing some tests and assuming the results were okay. He also talked to Alfred and Joan about Alfred's diet. Alfred had been told for years that, apart from staying off sugars and certain foods, diet was irrelevant to the development of his condition. He was now being told otherwise: that there were things he could add to his diet and others he should avoid, which could all help to make him less insulin dependent and improve his circulation.

Alfred could swear he was walking more easily already, as they made their way back to the car.

The first few chelation treatments with ethylene-diamine-tetra-acetic acid didn't bring any noticeable results. However, Joan enjoyed having a more active role in Alfred's wellbeing and the changes in diet and the nutritional supplements they had started taking, had both of them feeling more energetic. After the fourth chelation treatment, Alfred noticed that he was walking without the usual pain in his legs and he could walk without feeling so breathless.

Two months after his last visit to Dr Anrajid, Alfred was again in the specialist's consulting room.

"Did you forget your walking stick?"

Alfred smiled. "Don't need it any more."

Dr Anrajid looked sceptical. "Let's have a look at that foot of yours. We may have to get you to Melbourne before your leg becomes endangered."

Alfred sat down and allowed the doctor to remove his right shoe and sock. As he removed the sock, Dr Anrajid stood up and sounded amazed when he said, "What trick are you trying to pull?" He bent down again. "Give me the other foot."

He removed the shoe and sock and stood up again, looking puzzled. He said nothing as he walked to his desk and sat down. He looked through his notes. He looked up at Alfred, regarding him over the top of his glasses.

"What have you been doing, Mr Stuart?"

Alfred smiled and shrugged his shoulders. "Waiting for the op."

Dr Anrajid shook his head. "What are you not telling me?"

"I've been having chelation therapy."

"Chelation, eh? I've read a bit about it, but the article seemed to be making outrageous claims. Maybe I was wrong to dismiss it so quickly. Let's have another look at those feet."

Dr Anrajid carefully examined Alfred's feet and legs, and his hands, took his blood pressure and listened to his heart. He also did a quick blood glucose test.

"Well, Mr Stuart, not only do your feet look remarkable, your blood glucose level is down and so is your blood pressure. Have you been doing anything else out of the ordinary?"

"Change of diet and I'm taking some supplements. I feel a lot better, all up."

"We need to seriously consider cancelling that operation. It no longer looks necessary. Who have you been seeing?" This sounded a bit like a father interrogating his daughter about suitors.

"Harry Josephs."

"Isn't he that alternative chap?"

"You could call him that."

“Do you mind my writing to him and getting a copy of your file? I’d like to learn more about what he does.”

“Go for it.”

Alfred was extremely pleased. Actually he was over the moon and felt that he might be able to jump clean over it.

He continued to improve and a year later started walking in the forest again. He felt a kinship with the bush as it made its own way back to health.

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