



MY JOURNEY WITH

Farrak

A STORY OF LIFE, LOVE,
AND FRIENDSHIP

Alana Stewart

My Journey with Farrah

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Alana Stewart

 HarperCollins e-books

To my beautiful friend and soul-sister Farrah, who has so deeply
affected my life and will live in my heart forever.

And to my children, Ashley, Kimberly, and Sean, who live in
my heart always.

A friend is more than an ally. As it says in the I Ching, even thieves have alliances. Alliances come and go.

A friend, however, is more than that. In a world where love has become so cheap, friendship is a love that refuses to be cheapened. It means more than just lending a hand, or sharing the easier niceties of an easy existence. A friendship that is always easy is a friendship that is not yet beautified.

A friend is willing to take a stand for you...even when sitting something out would be easier. A friend has your back...refusing to ignore it when someone else is subtly stabbing it. A friend can stay up all night and celebrate your victories, but remains awake with you unflinchingly in the hour of your agony.

A real friend will rework their schedule, fly an extra mile, spend capital, proactively support your dreams and take seriously your visions. An easy friend is often a false friend, but a *real* friend...a true, fiercely loyal friend...if ever there was a pure and precious diamond of the heart, that is it.

—MARIANNE WILLIAMS

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A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

WHEN FARRAH AND I WERE ON ONE OF OUR EARLY TRIPS TO Germany getting her cancer treatment I went to this little gift shop, the Summer Haus. I bought a book, written in German, about two friends and I gave it to her back at the clinic. We flipped through it. Neither of us could understand a word of German, but we got the gist of it: it was about two women and their journey of friendship. Farrah turned to me and said, “You know, you should do a book like this...about us.” I didn’t think much more about it at the time. But I never forgot it.

When the opportunity to do this book was actually presented to me, I had to think long and hard about it. In fact, I agonized over the decision. During the past two or more years that Farrah and I had been on this journey together, I’d protected her like a mother lioness guards her cub. Now was I doing the right thing by sharing many of our private moments? Even though Farrah had originally encouraged me to write this book? Her health took a turn for the worse, and I could no longer seek her input.

So I turned to Ryan for his advice. He was positive and supportive. “You have to do it,” he said emphatically. “There will be lots of people writing books about her. Yours will be the truth, and it will be a wonderful tribute to her. You *have* to do it!” He was extremely reassuring.

Now I feel comfortable with my decision; that it will honor Farrah in the way that Ryan and I both envisioned. I know this book would have made her proud. My dream was that, by the time this book was out, she’d be better and I could present her with the first copy of it. Sadly, that won’t happen now.

I prayed and meditated and asked God to show me the highest sense of right. What I got was that this was my gift to others, to share through my eyes the incredible courage and spirit of Farrah. I hoped I could, perhaps, give some support and encouragement not only to people fighting a disease, but also to those loved ones and friends walking the path with them. I had never experienced anything like this before, and there were many times I felt inadequate and frightened. I’m sure this must be a common feeling.

These entries are a tribute to the value of friendship; whether it’s helping a friend who’s fighting cancer or any other challenge. By putting myself aside temporarily and being there for someone I loved, I learned a wealth of spiritual and life lessons that changed me forever. One of the most important, and perhaps the most powerful, spiritual teachings in the world is selflessness; something that wasn’t at the top of my “To Do” list. Doing something kind for another person can transform you in unimaginable ways. I will always be grateful to my beautiful friend Farrah for allowing me to travel this journey with her. What started out as my gift to her became her gift to me.

A portion of the proceeds from this book will be donated to The Farrah Fawcett Foundation to support cancer research.

If you wish to make a donation to The Farrah Fawcett Foundation, you may do so at the following address:

P.O. Box 6478

Beverly Hills, CA 90212

The bond between women friends is all-powerful and not to be taken lightly. But the bond between Alana and Farrah is like nothing I've ever seen between two women. They grew together like vines.

—RYAN O'NEAL

I was always the small brunette in the middle—book-ended by two very headstrong Texas beauties, equally loyal and dependable—the stuff that bonds us through good and bad times. It would take these qualities to sustain Farrah and Alana on their journey through what I call the *cancer abyss*. Farrah's courage was matched only by Alana's commitment to stay at Farrah's side, to comfort and encourage her during her struggle to beat this damn disease. We, Farrah's friends, cannot thank Alana enough for all her sacrifice—time away from her home, her children, and her doggies. *My Journey with Farrah* fills and enriches our spirits as Farrah soars with the angels.

—TINA SINATTA

INTRODUCTION

MEN COME AND GO—GOD KNOWS THEY CERTAINLY have in my life—but girlfriends are forever. I have a lot of girlfriends, but only a few very, very close ones. And in the middle of that select circle, considered Farrah Fawcett to be my soul-sister. We would have done anything for each other. But I never anticipated that our lives would become intertwined in the way that they did. I never imagined would walk this path with her.

The first time I laid eyes on Farrah was in the 1970s. We hadn't formally met yet, but I spotted her on a commercial audition and thought she was absolutely beautiful (she later told me she thought the same about me). We both arrived in L.A. around the same time. She came straight from Corpus Christi, Texas, and I had been modeling in New York and Paris. We kept bumping into each other at these casting calls, and at first our friendship was casual: a smile, a nod, a quick "How's it going?"

A few years later, we were no longer just girls hustling for work in Hollywood. By then I was separated from my first husband, George Hamilton, and had been acting in a few TV series, while Farrah was a huge star, an icon, thanks to *Charlie's Angels*. I went to Palm Springs to play in a celebrity tennis tournament with my friend Valerie Perrine, and when we arrived, there were young kids lined up outside the tennis club, screaming Farrah's name. Truth be told, Valerie and I had no business being there. We couldn't even play tennis! We'd bought the shortest tennis shorts we could find, hoping they would distract people from how bad we were. Each of us had a pro partner, and I picked the poor guy who got me. When a ball came sailing at me, I dove for the ground, narrowly missing getting smacked in the head. Farrah, on the other hand, was a powerful and graceful tennis player, a natural athlete, and, of course, she won the tournament while barely breaking a sweat. How easy it would have been to hate someone so seemingly perfect, but all you could do was love her. She was so warm, so approachable, so down-to-earth. People were just naturally drawn to her like moths to a bright flame.

We met again and really bonded in 1979, when I was pregnant with my daughter, Kimberly, and married to my second husband, Rod Stewart. Rod and I were at Countess Marina Cicogna's house for a dinner, and she sat Farrah, Ryan, Rod, and me together. Farrah and I hit it off immediately, and quickly discovered that we had a lot in common, especially our Texas roots. We also discovered another interesting connection: we were both part American Indian. I'm a one-quarter Cherokee-Choctaw mix, and Farrah was part Choctaw. Farrah's mother always said the Choctaw were the lazy Indians! I've heard that if you're from the same tribe, you have a blood tie; maybe that's why we eventually became so spiritually connected.

Ultimately, what I loved about Farrah from day one was that there was no BS. What you saw was what you got, and I found that refreshing—an actual down-home girl in Hollywood.

After that dinner, we started up a *real* friendship. She was working so much in those days that we couldn't spend a lot of time together, but when we did, we had a ball. Being around her felt like being home in Texas. We used to joke that all we needed were the big pink rollers in our hair. We'd go down to Ryan's beach house, get massages, manicures, and pedicures, and lie in the sun reading fashion magazines—just two friends forgetting about life for twenty-four hours. We hung out, we ate Tex-Mex, we baked homemade pies. Farrah was always such fun. She embraced life more than anyone I've ever known.

Over the years, there was rarely a birthday party or a New Year's that we didn't celebrate

together. As time went on, Farrah and I became even closer, even as our lives took very different paths. I got married and was busy having babies (Kimberly, Sean, and Ashley), while she had the kind of thriving acting career I had always dreamed about. In 1984 when Rod and I broke up, Farrah and Ryan were there to comfort and support me. In 1986, before her son, Redmond, was born, I threw her a baby shower. But through it all, she stayed the same Farrah. She raised her son without a nanny, helping him with his homework and cooking dinner almost every night. As we got older, and Redmond and my sons all struggled with drug and alcohol problems, she and I bonded even more in our pain and concern over our boys. In the beginning of our relationship, Farrah was private and guarded with her emotions; eventually we could talk about anything.

Farrah was the last person I ever thought would get cancer. It never remotely crossed my mind that such a thing would happen. She was always too strong, too healthy, too full of life. I always thought she was one of the most fortunate women I knew.

She had it all—or so it seemed. Life is fragile; it changes in a heartbeat. One day Farrah was fine, the next she was not. Yet through it all, I never heard her question “Why me?” I never saw her act like a victim. She made the decision to fight her cancer and never wavered. It was very hard—sometimes unbearable—to watch my friend suffer, but I was in awe of her ferocious determination. Sometimes I thought it was her stubbornness and sheer willpower that got her through it. Other times I marveled at her heroism in waging war with an enemy who gave no hint as to where it might attack next—or how much it would destroy in its path. We went to Germany together to try to find a cure, a miracle, some hope in the face of hopelessness. And it was there that my friend handed me her camera and asked me to video what she was going through. I had no idea how to use a camera, and she showed me how to press the little RECORD button. So it began.

Over the next two years, there were more trips to Germany for treatments. My life took a backseat to Farrah’s battle with cancer. I would drop everything, leave my family and my dogs and my home, and hop a plane at a moment’s notice if she needed me. I felt like she was also my family, that it was something I had to do and wanted to do, and that I would worry about myself later. We tried, you tough Texas girls, to keep it together, to laugh and retain our sense of humor.

In the beginning, we truly thought there would be a happy ending; she’d find a cure, she’d be healthy again. It seemed not just plausible but probable. But life took an unforeseen turn. As her disease progressed, Farrah could have given up. Truthfully, I might have if I were in her shoes. Instead, she found a greater purpose. The video that I started filming that day in Germany turned into something bigger—a documentary that would shed light on cancer and encourage others who were suffering, as well as show the world that there were alternative forms of treatment. Farrah felt very committed to speaking up and saying that we needed more studies and more research. She wanted to bring awareness to her type of cancer, and she wanted to give people hope. Above all, she wanted to say, “Don’t give up—no matter what anyone tells you—keep on fighting.”

I also found a greater calling in this experience, and through it learned some invaluable life lessons. One of the most important is the basic foundation of all spiritual teachings: the power of giving. When you unselfishly do something for someone else, when you get beyond yourself, out of your head, and out of your own way, God solves your problems for you. Many people ask me how I could have put my life on hold for three years to be with Farrah all that time. I don’t see it as a sacrifice. I see it as simply being there for my friend, and it’s ended up being a blessing and a gift for me. Farrah had been an inspiration to so many people, not just those who have cancer but people in other challenging situations. The letters of gratitude poured in by the thousands every week. I feel privileged to have been part of all this. I am a different person, a better person, because of it. As sad and painful as the journey was, it gave me a new perspective on who I am and what is really important in life. And this perspective has turned my life around in ways I could never have envisioned.

I have kept journals since I was nine years old, and I would sometimes read Farrah what I had written in them. She loved my writing. “You’re such a good writer,” she’d say encouragingly. “You must keep doing this.” I did. I would diligently pour out my feelings, fears, and frustrations in my journal, and I soon realized how much the most recent volumes, just like my life these past three years, were about Farrah and her courageous battle with cancer. Paging through the frantically scribbled entries—some written in the wee hours of the morning when I was too stressed to sleep—I found that book which Farrah had suggested about two friends and their journey together. I suspect Farrah knew it was in there all along.

What follows is my journal of these past three years—what I saw, what I felt, what I was going through with Farrah, and how it was affecting my own life. Sometimes I wrote every day. Other times life was too hectic and the weeks flew by without my writing. But put them all together, and what you have is a celebration of our friendship as much as it is a chronicle of cancer treatment. Our relationship grew and deepened because of this experience we went through together. It was the bright spot in the midst of all the darkness. I don’t know what my life will be like without Farrah in it. I can’t imagine it. I can’t go there. But I do know I won’t have anyone to make pecan pies with me on Christmas. What I do have, and what I want to share, is the memory of a friendship of thirty years—and this, the greatest and the last adventure that we went on together.



A happier time.

This was Farrah's favorite picture of us. She kept it in a frame by her bedside, as I do. She liked the way we look in it...suntanned and rested. It was such a quiet, peaceful trip. We were able to get away from the world and lie in the sun. It was New Year's Eve and everyone else went out, but we stayed in and celebrated with each other...and the cook. I made this drink that turned out to be our favorite, a Yellowbird: it was coconut rum and pineapple juice. We had that in lieu of champagne. At midnight we toasted each other. Just looking at this photo evokes such happy memories: two best friends toasting each other, our friendship, and the promise of what a new year would bring. It's how I like to think of Farrah: happy, healthy, hopeful. It was before all of this happened to us, before her cancer, before our journey. If I close my eyes, I can see us back in the Bahamas, lying out in the warm sun, gazing at the clear turquoise waters, and walking barefoot along the pink sand beaches.

Whenever I was caught up in the stress and strain and agony of watching my friend go through this horrific battle, and I started to forget, all I needed to do was look at this photo...and I was back in the Bahamas with Farrah again.

October 6, 2006

I've been here in Germany now for two weeks, at the Leonardis Clinic, which is nestled in the foothills of the beautiful Bavarian Alps. I brought my son Sean here to get treated for his ADD and learning disabilities. We were soon joined by my ex-husband George Hamilton, my daughter Kimberly, and my friend Cher.

It's a great place. The first time I was here, George sent me for my birthday in 2005 as a present. He insisted that I go—I didn't want to—but he said, "No, you have to do this for yourself." I was suffering from chronic fatigue and the accompanying depression. The clinic helped me a great deal. Leonardis is well known for cutting-edge cancer treatments, but it also specializes in other health problems. A few of my friends had seen what good results I had after coming here, and they decided they would try it as well.

Kim came into my room this morning, visibly upset. "Mom, does Farrah have cancer?"

"What? Where did you hear that?"

"I read it on the Internet."

I was furious. "Of course not, that's ridiculous. It's just that bullshit stuff they always print about her." The tabloids have been writing garbage about Farrah for as long as I've known her, but this rumor was too upsetting. I called Farrah just to make sure. I waited a rather long time for her to come to the phone, and I suddenly had a sinking feeling in my gut.

When she picked up, I said, "Honey, it's Alana. Listen, Kimberly just told me she read something about you on the Internet. It's not true, is it?"

There was a long pause as I held my breath.

"It's true," she said softly. "It happened so quickly." Then she started to cry. She was trying to be brave, but with me, she could let it all out.

I was afraid to ask, but I had to: "Honey, what do the doctors say?"

Her voice took on a stronger, more optimistic tone. "The doctors tell me they have great success with this kind of tumor, but it's very aggressive, and they have to start chemo and radiation right away." No time to breathe or even to digest this horrible news; no time to waste. Is that how it works? One day you're fine, the next day you're fighting for your life? On top of it all, she told me she has a 50/50 chance of losing her hair. But I guess hair becomes secondary with what she's going through. Still, the hair, *her* hair.

"I'm supposed to stay another week, but I'll come back right away," I said. "I'll be there."

After I hung up, I lay awake for hours with thoughts swirling around in my mind. How did this happen? Why? She's been through so much—her son Redmond's struggles with drugs the last few years, her mom dying recently, Ryan's battle with leukemia. It doesn't seem fair. I've been worried about her for a long time. She's had so much stress in her life lately and she always takes care of everyone else at the expense of herself. She spent months in Texas at her mother's bedside, neglecting her own health. Time and time again I've seen her ignore her own symptoms when someone she loves needs her.

I don't want to watch my best friend go through this. I want to cry but I can't seem to. I feel numb and scared. But this isn't about me. I have to do whatever I can to help her.

October 10, 2006

It's 6:30 A.M. and I got home from Germany the day before yesterday. I can't sleep; I keep thinking about Farrah. Tina [Sinatra] and I spoke to her on a three-way call yesterday for a long time. She has started her chemo and radiation. She sounded a little weak, but calm and strong and accepting of what she has to go through.

"The doctors told me it's not going to be easy," Farrah said. "They told me, 'You're going to come to a time halfway through this treatment when you want to quit. But you have to keep going.'" I know Farrah and her will and determination. She won't quit, no matter what. She wants to beat this.

Tina and I are going to see her tomorrow and I asked her what I could bring. "Your minestrone soup," she said. So when we hung up, I drove to Whole Foods to get the vegetables for her favorite soup.

I used to have this belief that people who were famous or bigger than life were immune from these kind of things, but I've watched too many people who I thought were invincible, who seemingly had it all, experience life's hardships and tragedies just like everyone else. No one is immune from life, not even an icon like Farrah, the golden girl of the seventies. Any one of us can get a phone call that changes our life in a flash. So many things can happen, to anyone, any time. Just writing about it makes me feel frozen with fear. I want some guarantee from God, from the universe, that Farrah will be okay, that I'll be safe, that the people I love will be safe. But there are no guarantees.

My friend Lesley says we have to stay in the present, live every moment fully and enjoy it, and surrender the future to God. But focusing on the here and now is hard to do at times. I feel like I have to wear a helmet and live in a crash position for fear of life's next blow. That's how I've been going through life, constantly anxious about what's coming next, what unforeseen struggle will make things difficult all over again. Sometimes I want to go back and live at the clinic in Germany—I felt so safe there. But then I remind myself, that's where I found out about Farrah's cancer. Even the comfort of that place has been tainted by the power of uncertainty now.

God, help me here. I'm struggling with trying to understand all this. I want my friend to be okay. I don't want to see her go through this painful experience and yet I can't stop it, just like I can't prevent my children from suffering. I don't know the answer, God. Maybe I just have to surrender it to you and trust that she will be okay, that my kids are safe and protected, that I am as well. Let me feel your loving presence, God, wherever you are, whatever you are.

*Thank you, God.
Amen*

October 12, 2006

Tina and I went to see Farrah yesterday afternoon. I made the minestrone soup and her favorite ginger cookies, and Tina brought her a giant, I mean *giant*, teddy bear. It was bigger than both of us. It barely fit into my car. Tina Sinatra is one of my oldest and very best friends and the godmother of my children. I don't remember exactly when she and Farrah met, but we all became very close, the three of us, almost instantly. She was devastated when she heard about Farrah's cancer. Her other very close friend Suzanne Pleshette was battling lung cancer, as well as our mutual friend Freddie Fields. She had already experienced firsthand the ravages of cancer. And now Farrah, too...

When we arrived at Farrah's apartment, Tina and I went into her bedroom with the bear and waited for her to come out of the bathroom. When she walked out, we couldn't believe it. She looked radiant, a vision all in pink. Her skin was glowing and her hair fell in soft waves around her face. You wouldn't have thought anything was wrong with her if it weren't for the IV coming out of her arm and the attached chemo pack, which administers the chemo twenty-four hours a day.

Farrah was so happy we came. We ended up having a lot of laughs, all piled on the bed with that gigantic bear. We took silly pictures and gobbled up the ginger cookies...and then, of course, we finally got around to the elephant in the room. She told us in great detail about her cancer treatment. I tried to smile, to put on a stoic face, to act normal, but I still couldn't quite believe that my best friend had cancer. I just wanted to make it all go away for her; the pain, the discomfort, the fear she must be feeling. She's strong, but I know she has to be scared. If it were me, I would never be this brave. I'd be out of my mind with fear. But maybe once the shock has worn off, you're too busy walking through it to be afraid?

I went to a little Kabbalah memorial for Evelyn Ostin this morning. Evelyn was the wife of Mo Ostin, who was head of Warner Bros. Records for many years—and she was one of the most beloved women in town. I studied Kabbalah in a group that met at her house every week. It was the one-year anniversary of her death, and Rabbi Eitan Yardeni, who taught our Kabbalah classes, gave a very inspiring talk about gratitude and how important it is to feel fortunate in your life instead of feeling like a victim. It felt like he was speaking directly to me; it struck a nerve. "Focus on giving back to the world instead of focusing on yourself," he said.

Eitan said that our energy attracts situations into our lives and that the biggest disease we all have is selfishness. He said that "getting" will never make us feel fortunate, no matter how much we get, but that a spirit of gratitude will shift our energy and help us "get out of ourselves" and think about others more.

This is my biggest roadblock. I'm always in my head, focused on me or my kids, my personal world. I worry about the future—my future—and that worry can begin to consume me. I know I have to expand and get outside myself and find where I can really contribute my time and energy to help others. If I could just focus my brain! It always seems to be all over the place, like a wild horse that needs to be corralled.

October 13, 2006

I went with Farrah to UCLA for her radiation and to get the line for the chemo removed. She'd been up all night, terribly sick and in pain. They had told her this would be the worst day, but she'd had no idea it would be this bad. At least she won't have any more chemo until the last week of radiation, so she has a four-week reprieve. I never realized that radiation causes so much pain; I thought it was the lesser of the two evils (chemo being the worst). I've never been this close to anyone who was going through cancer. It's such a hideous process—painful, debilitating, and unrelenting.

By the time we got back to Farrah's house, she was exhausted, but still managed to laugh and make a joke or two. Then she got serious and thanked me for taking her. "Sorry to have taken up so much of your time," she said.

"Are you kidding?" I said. "I wanted to do it."

I realized she's so much like me. I always worry that I'm putting friends out if they go out of their way for me. Farrah's always there for everyone else—whether it's her family, her friends, or people she's working with. Now she needs to let people be there for her.

October 16, 2006

Farrah called from the hospital. They had to admit her because she had two blood clots from the IV line they had put into her arm. God, I can't believe my friend has to go through all this. It's ridiculous that the treatment itself is causing more problems for her. It makes me so angry.

November 2, 2006

Farrah has about three more weeks of radiation left. The doctors warned her that she might want to quit because it gets so difficult, but *quit* is not a word in Farrah's vocabulary. She always seems to think people are exaggerating—that things can't ever be as bad as they'd have you believe. She's much more of an optimist than I am.

But she wasn't prepared for this; neither of us was. The radiation is brutal and torturous. They keep increasing the dose until she's up to about twenty-five minutes. That's shocking to me. Our friend, who had lung cancer, was getting six minutes at the peak of his treatment. The side effects are painful and debilitating. Sometimes all she can do is sob because it's so excruciating. And there's no end in sight. Three more weeks of this.

Every day I call to check on her and see if I can do anything for her, but after she gets her treatment (which she does every day), she just wants to sleep. I always offer to take her, but Ryan or her assistant, Mike, usually goes with her. Ever since her cancer was announced, the paparazzi have been stalking her. The doctor's office organized a way to get her into the building where she has her radiation. They go through the underground parking garage to a special door where they're met by Sheldon, from Dr. Gitnick's office, who escorts them to the radiation room. This usually gives those vultures the slip.

But one day, after she'd finished the radiation, she came out the door, and there sat an SUV with four paparazzi inside, videoing her and taking photos. Poor Sheldon watched frozen in surprise and disbelief as she walked right up and confronted them. She was exhausted and in pain, but her outrage gave her the strength to fight back.

"What is wrong with you people? Don't you have any respect for someone going through cancer treatment?" she asked angrily.

But the cameras kept clicking away; she was giving them quite a show. Then she tried to grab the guy's camera away from him and they struggled. "I couldn't get him to let go, so I swear, I punched him right in the arm as hard as I could!" she told me later. She took great pleasure in telling me the story. I know that if she'd had a knife on her, she would have slit his tires.

That's my feisty Texas friend!

"You go, girl!" I cheered as she told me the story. "The only thing I'm worried about is that the guy will slap you with an assault charge!"

"I don't care!" she said defiantly. "Let him. That'll look great. Harassing a woman when she's coming out of radiation. I'd love to see that one go to court!"

We laughed. Nothing—not paparazzi, not pain, not the promise of a long road ahead—was going to knock Farrah down.

November 7, 2006

When I picked up the phone this morning, it was Farrah. For a minute I didn't recognize her

voice: she was crying and her voice sounded tiny and weak.

“What’s the matter, honey?” I asked, my heart jumping into my throat.

“I just feel so weak and so sick, and I’m in so much pain. I don’t know how I can make it to radiation.”

“I’m coming over right now,” I said. I’d never heard her sound quite like this before—and it scared me. I was used to Farrah being strong. I knew that at this moment I had to be strong for her. I needed to be there for her just as I knew she would be there for me if the tables were turned.

“No, it’s okay,” she sobbed. “You don’t have to. Mike can take me.” Just like Farrah: she never wants to cause anyone any inconvenience.

“I’ll be right there,” I insisted. Fortunately, I can be stubborn, too. I threw on my clothes and drove as fast as I could to her apartment. I went upstairs and into her bedroom, where she was trying to pull on her Uggs. She was in so much pain from where the damned radiation had burned her that she could hardly walk. Her assistant, Mike, helped me get her down to her car. I got into the backseat with her, and he drove to the secret underground entrance, which was obviously no longer secret.

Sheldon, from the doctor’s office, was waiting with a wheelchair. I looked around, making sure there were no paparazzi lurking about. The coast was clear. We went straight to the radiation room, where she lay down on the table for the treatment. It took about twenty minutes. Afterward we took her in the wheelchair back to the car and home, where I helped her back into bed. She winced with every step, but at least it was over. She’d made it for today.

“Just look at this,” she said with a sigh, showing me the skin on the inside of her legs and her buttocks where they had radiated. I was shocked. It was bright red and blistered to the point that it was peeling off. It looked like a second-degree burn, and it was so excruciatingly painful, she could barely lie down. She’d been given salve and medication, but it wasn’t even making a dent in the pain. It seems barbaric that this supposed cure is so ravaging.

I hope the doctors are right, that this will cure her cancer. After all this, they’d better be.

December 6, 2006

The tabloids are out of control. They print anything they want, even if there’s not a shred of truth to it. The *National Enquirer* has not let up on Farrah since she was diagnosed with cancer.

“You won’t believe this headline,” Farrah called to inform me today. She was furious. They had gone too far this time. It read, “Farrah Says: ‘I Want to Die!’”

I know it’s upsetting to her on many levels. First of all, her family and her friends read this garbage, and although most of us know it’s not true, it still scares a lot of people who perhaps don’t know how the tabloids lie and exaggerate.

“Can you ever hear me saying those words?” she fumed. “I get all these letters from people who are also battling cancer, and they’re upset because they think I’m giving up. That’s not encouraging them to keep fighting when they hear something like that. Don’t these tabloids realize it’s not just me they’re hurting?”

Farrah can never figure out where they get these stories, since sometimes there are some accurate details involved. Someone has to be leaking information. But this headline goes way beyond an issue of privacy. It’s becoming very clear to Farrah—and to me—that her cancer battle is not just about her anymore. People have always looked up to her—she’s the golden girl, an American icon, the picture of beauty and vitality. But now they’re looking to her for another reason: hope. And she’ll be damned if she’s going to let anyone—especially some vicious, lying tabloid—steal that hope away.

Farrah finally finished her last week of radiation and chemo right after Thanksgiving. The holidays and several delays had made it run longer than planned. She was too sick to celebrate Thanksgiving, but we were hoping by Christmas she would feel more like herself. We have this tradition of making pies and cornbread stuffing on Christmas Eve.

But the radiation and chemo have taken a terrible toll on her. I had my usual Christmas dinner with my kids and a few close friends, but in the end she wasn't up to it. I promised her I'd make extra food and send some over, which I did. I always make the same down-home Texas Christmas dinner that my grandmother cooked when I was growing up—the food that Farrah and I both love. Farrah and I were very specific about our Texas food and how it had to be cooked: turkey with cornbread stuffing, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes with marshmallows on top, creamed peas, brussels sprouts, giblet gravy, and, of course, our favorite pecan pie and coconut meringue pie.

The new year is approaching, and I always feel like it brings new hope—like you can wash away the past and start fresh. Farrah has high hopes for a full recovery, as the doctors have promised. I have high hopes that all of this will seem like a bad dream one day soon and our lives will be back to normal.

“Don't worry, honey,” I told her. “Next year we'll be back in the kitchen, cooking up a storm together.”

February 2, 2007

I feel like the dark clouds have finally lifted. Farrah called me today: the doctors have declared her cancer free. Apparently the radiation and all that pain were worth it. We screamed our heads off on the phone—such joy! Such relief! The nightmare is finally behind her. Life can get back to normal.

There are so many things she's missed the last few months. We planned to have lunch and go shopping as soon as she was a little stronger—a girls' day out and a celebration of life.

May 14, 2007

The last few months have been a relief—until today. Farrah's life was finally back to normal. She was getting back into her art (she's an amazing painter and sculptor), she was spending time with her loved ones, and she was making plans for the future.

And then today she went back to UCLA for her checkup. Everyone, including the doctors, was in shock: the cancer is back. It's the word she most dreaded hearing: *recurrence*. Ryan was supposed to take her in to meet with her doctors to hear what they felt the next step should be, but his car wouldn't start. So she grabbed her little handheld camera to help her remember all the information they were certain to throw at her, and took off to face it all by herself.

Her doctors want her to do this radical surgery that is horribly invasive and would mean part of her intestines would be removed and she'd have to wear a colostomy bag for the rest of her life. Understandably, she is not liking that prospect one bit. I arranged a conference call with her, me, and Dr. Ursula Jacob at the Leonardis Clinic in Germany. Farrah started to cry, and Dr. Jacob was sweet and reassuring.

“Don't cry, Farrah. You don't have to do this radical surgery. There is a great surgeon here who has a different way of removing the tumor that won't be as invasive and won't result in a colostomy.”

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