

shiny shoes seemed. Now we know there are far finer things both to have and to be experienced in life. We have grown in wisdom and understanding. So it was that day. I began to laugh inside me but then I saw my daughters' sorrow and realised they didn't understand. When I felt how sad my daughters were, their grief called me back to be with them. I wanted to comfort them and help them to know that all was well.

The next thing I was aware of was being in a private room with a nurse sitting near the foot of my bed. Over me, as if in a dream, figures worked to heal me. Every time I woke they were there but in the morning the nurse told me no one else had been in the room with us.

Friends came to the hospital to give me spiritual healing and when the Charge Nurse declared, "There will be no healing in this ward!", some sympathetic nurses quietly found us a room to work in and supported the complementary practice.

Looking back on this time, I am grateful for the experiential inner knowledge that after this life there is much more and that we leave this world behind just as we left our toys behind when we grew up – reaching out for more wonder-filled things.

One of the wonder-filled things I have found in this life has been finding a different way of being, through this last year. I had recalled that researchers report that rats, given the task of finding their way through a maze to a reward, will eventually change and try different ways to achieve their goals. Yet we humans tend to keep acting in the same old ways while still expecting outcomes to change. For me, that realisation of the need to change came when I had breast cancer for a second time and lost my dear friend Jan, to cancer. It made me wonder if there was more for me to learn through the experience of cancer and if somehow I had missed it the first time. That is when I decided I would find a different way to experience cancer this time round.

Jan, who had died the same week as I had been diagnosed with breast cancer, had taught me the difference between being brave and being stoic. They are two quite separate things to my mind. I was stoic the first time I had breast cancer in 1991, secretive about its effects on me and I busily carried on with my life – barely touched by the whole experience. Perhaps it