

25th January, 1995

BABIES, HOUSES AND HOSPITALS

DEAR DIARY, I've just been discharged from hospital. It's all been go recently; I've just moved from a horrible flat into a house in a lovely area so it's new beginnings, but this hospital thing made me realise, it's not all going to be plain sailing. Welcome 1995!

Two weeks ago, I developed swollen glands and it got to the point where I knew it was serious enough for me to have to go to the surgery. The doctor took one look at my huge swelling and said you have to go to hospital! I said, no, sorry, I can't. I have a toddler and a baby to look after, I've just moved into a new house and I've got things to do, so I can't. The doctor looked at the toddler asleep in the pushchair and the baby in the baby carrier and then took an exaggerated look at me and said she's not really asking me but telling me. She said sort out who's having the children, go to the hospital and get the medical help that you need otherwise it will end in tears.

I took the children to my parents' house and called my sister and she took me to A&E. A&E delivered the bad news; "I'm afraid we have to keep you in". I said I can't, I just moved house and I've a toddler and a baby to look after. My sister said look, don't worry; I'll sort it out. I'll stay until you're given a bed and I'll come back with some clothes. Four hours later, I was on a mixed ward, in my sister's nightie, wearing itchy disposable knickers. I looked at the awfully sick, mainly old people and cried under the sheet then went to sleep and woke up the following morning miserable with puffy eyes.

I was told that my swollen glands could have been due to breast feeding or stress or both. I boo-hoo-hoo'd a bit more and lay in bed looking around me feeling very much out of my comfort zone. Despite this feeling, I was responding to the drugs and was told that I would be discharged when there was no significant swelling. I stayed in hospital for a week. My mum and sister came regularly with the children. By the end of the third day, I didn't want to go home! I was watching TV in bed, my mum was bringing me home-made dinners, I was being medicated intravenously and for once, I was the one being looked after. Seeing the children and them going home to my parents house and being able to just stay in bed was like magic. I'd spent the previous few years working flat out, being pregnant, living in a crap flat, breast feeding, sorting my life out, moving house and having mini-breakdowns. That one week stay in hospital probably saved my life mentally more than physically.

The AUGUST MAYFIELD Diaries

The day I left the hospital, I went to the hairdressers and bought myself two new items of clothes, I left the children for one more night at my parents' house – God knows what I would have done without my family. When I got home, I walked into each room and looked at my life packed in brown boxes littered around every room of the house. I then sat down in front of the window and I looked at the frosty garden and said OK then, we'll start this thing called life tomorrow.

August Mayfield