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creative writing
workshops

Sugar Mummy

by Holly Raber

So once more we are waiting. We are good at waiting. We sit side by side on inhospitable chairs, half way between the dog-eared copies of *Woman and Home* and the helpful leaflets. We calculate the wait. Beyond a long glass panel icy rain drips like syrup from bare branches, a lone seagull patrols the small courtyard.

The space is ergonomic, all curves and brightly lit, an oversize mobile spinning slowly in the updraft of overheated anxious air. Layers are shed like discarded skins, damp and steaming from the morning mist trapped in matted fibres. Gradually the chairs begin to fill, their inhabitants cough and shuffle and shed, we shrink from the inevitable press of flesh.

Insulin acts like a key, helping move glucose into our cells. In type 1 diabetes there is no key. Most people, 85% who have type 1, have no familial history. If your father has it the risk is about 6-9%. I married a man with type 1. The odds should have been better.

In another brightly lit room, we search for the key. Hebe is to 'transition', today I must relinquish her care, place her wellbeing in her own hands. Her hands are small and soft, their knuckles still indented. I am redundant I can only watch from the sidelines, resist the urge to interrupt, to pick her up when she stumbles. Penny the nurse has kind eyes and a nervous twitch.

I focus on the inspirational quote above her neat head.

Hebe's Diabetic footprint: 686 days living with type 1, 391 hours of sleep lost, 4116 finger pricks, 4802 insulin injections. Possible complications of type 1, include, stroke, heart attacks, kidney failure, blindness and amputations. There is no cure.

Penny's hands, long freckled fingers dance across the keyboard transcribing my daughter as data. As always we are optimistic we nod, we agree, we know the drill. As we stand up to leave a poster catches my eye, 'Diabetes and Sex'. Women with type 1, may struggle to orgasm, I want to weep at the unfairness.

Retracing our steps, we exit the ergonomic maze, emerging an hour older and a little bit wiser. Hebe still firmly in denial laughs and peels the paper off a Mars bar I don't have the heart to protest. A careless kiss and she is gone, ponytail swinging in the breeze all rules forgotten till the next appointment.

The reality of managing a lifelong condition hits everyone. There are so many extra decisions you need to make every day. That's exhausting- practically, physically and emotionally.