

The Hairspray

I got a flight from London to Copenhagen leaving my two boys behind to visit my mother in the hospital. She had been diagnosed with stage 4 ovarian cancer and I walked into the room which was filled with a beautiful scent of flowers. The window out to the garden was open and I could hear the birds singing sitting in the willow tree. It took me back to having a tea party with my teddies under the willow tree. I would have liked my mother to have been there with me sharing the cakes I had made out of candy my grandmother gave me.

The wardrobe against the hospice wall was open a little so I could see all her beautiful dresses she hoped to wear again soon. All her makeup and of course her hairspray was on a little glass shelf above her big mirror. It took me back again to the moments of admiring her beauty and the smell of the hairspray falling over her hair so slowly looking like little stars sparkling in her hair.

I put the flowers in a vase and put them on her little glass table next to her bed, which was filled with bottles of painkillers. 'I bought you single flower pale pink tulips as I know you love them so much Mum.' She turned her face towards me, and I could see the reflection of her bald head in the big mirror on the wall at the end of her bed. She looked very fragile and frightened in her eyes. She said, 'Thank you for those beautiful flowers,' and she managed to sit up a little. I held her around her shoulders while she bent to smell the sweet scent of the tulips. She felt so small in my arms as I laid her down in the bed which seemed to be too big for her now.

The nurse came in and gave her some medication to feel better, and she lightened up and wanted me to help her put on one of her designer dresses.

I helped her get the dress over her bald head and she suddenly looked at me and said, 'I'm so sorry for all the years we have missed seeing each other and not understanding how unhappy you were in your marriage. I'm worried for you

going through a divorce right now, and what is going to happen to you and the boys?’

‘It’s okay Mother, we are here now talking of love for one another and that is all that matters.’

She said: ‘I would like to see Phil and talk to him. I promise I will try to call him and hope he will come and see you.’

She looked beautiful in her dress, and we put her little flat ballerina shoes on her feet. I gave her a little hand mirror so she could put on makeup and a little eye shadow on her eyelids. I put a pale pink rouge on her cheek bones, and we walked out to the garden.

We sat on a bench in front of a waterfall which had flowers around it, and the sound of the water felt so soothing to me as I wrapped us both into a cashmere throw I had given my mother many moons ago.

The Honey Story

My mother stroked my hair with her very fragile-looking hands, looking into my eyes saying, ‘Do you remember when I spread honey on your sandwiches for you to take to school?’

‘Yes, I do Mother.’

‘I’m sorry that I did that as I knew you didn’t like honey.’

I stroked her bald head and said, ‘Mother, did you ever find out that I threw the honey sandwiches in the bushes just before I cycled home?’

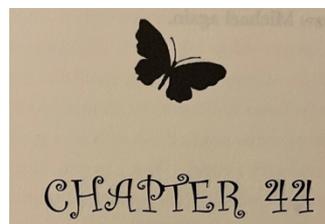
‘No, I didn’t,’ and we both laughed and held each other even more tightly. She looked at me with tears running down her cheeks as she whispered in my ear with her very weak voice, ‘I love you Jette.’

I wiped the tears away and left them on my dress so I could smell her tears later and re-live the sensation of being close to her. That evening, after hugging my mother and kissing her on her forehead and saying, ‘Goodnight, see you tomorrow,’ she held my hand tight and I kissed her hand and walked out of the room. I went back to the hotel I was staying at and laid myself on the bed, crying with deep emotion.

I picked up the phone to call Phil who was on a tour in America with his mistress. He never answered the phone and he never called my mother or went to

see her before she died. I cried myself to sleep that night feeling lonely and thinking of me and my mother at the hospital wrapped up together in the throw, feeling her heartbeat against mine and thinking, ‘Why did she never show me her love when I needed it the most?’

Was I relieved she would die? Was I sad? I knew in that moment that I wished for her to be in no more pain, and I felt some kind of relief myself and hugged my pillow as I would have hugged my mother many times in my life if she had loved me for who I am and been proud of a beautiful little girl she had created. At that moment, hugging my pillow, I thought of my boys, missing them, wondering if they were doing okay without me kissing them goodnight.



Buckingham Palace

On the 3rd of June in 2002, I was in a limousine driving to Buckingham Palace, the largest private garden in London. The driver asked me, ‘Are you an artist performing on the stage tonight?’ I said no, I was the wife of the guitarist playing in the house band.

I had been invited to ‘The Party at the Palace’. It was a celebration of the Queen’s Golden Jubilee. I looked at myself in the driver’s rear-view mirror thinking that I looked a million dollars in my original Biba black lace over beige satin full maxi dress, along with my old brown suede boots and the old felt hat with feathers around the brim. I was looking at my vintage Biba feather handbag which was lying on the seat next to me. It had the invitation card from the Queen inside the bag. It had gold-edges around it and I was holding on tight to the bag with my very dark red polished nails looking shiny on my hands, and my long hair hanging over my shoulders.

The driver was keen to chat as I could see he kept looking at me in the rear-view mirror. ‘Have you got children?’ he asked. I said, ‘Yes, I have two boys. Have you got children?’

‘Yes’, he replied, ‘my two boys are working here tonight at the security entrance.’ I said, ‘Perhaps I will meet them at the entrance. What are their names?’

‘It’s Ben and Steve,’ he told me.

I felt I wanted to be quiet, and I was looking out of the window thinking how surreal it was to be driving up the path of the Queen’s gardens. I looked out of the window, sitting a long way away from the driver in this vast limousine, feeling kind of lonely. I saw security men standing by the trees all the way up to the back of the stage. There were security cameras hanging from the tree branches, which looked out of place in these beautiful pink blossomed English hawthorn trees. I asked the driver if we could stop the car so I could pick a flower to put in my hat. He didn’t answer as we were coming up to the back of the stage. I said goodbye to him, and we hugged, and he said, ‘Take good care of yourself.’ I wondered why he was saying that? Perhaps he could see I felt lonely and a little lost in this environment of the rock and roll world.

Phil was standing at the backstage door, and we hugged, and he took me to my seat and the show began. One of the acts was Phil’s uncle, Ray Davies, who was playing ‘Waterloo Sunset’ and I reflected on how I ended up here, being a member of the Davies and Palmer family. Thinking back to when I was sixteen living in Denmark, and my boyfriend, Vagn, buying me The Kinks album, ‘Kinks’, and I would move to London seven years later and marry the nephew of Ray Davies.

The show was filled with talented artists, and I enjoyed sitting in my seat close to the stage, drinking champagne and being entertained on a beautiful warm summer night. I met most of the artists at the after-party at the Queen’s house, which was another surreal moment. Phil and I were holding hands walking up the path leading to the Palace... it was a beautiful path, surrounded by gorgeous rose bushes smelling divine, and there was a full moon. We were walking behind Ozzie Osbourne from Black Sabbath and Brian Wilson from the Beach Boys.

Ozzie had dyed pink hair at the front of his long black hair, and he had his famous round John Lennon glasses on with a pink tint in them. He was wearing a black suit and a chunky silver chain with a big cross hanging over his chest, and he had his arm around Brian Wilson’s shoulder, who somehow looked plain in his outfit of a grey suit and white shirt and blue tie. I was mesmerised by Ozzie’s tattoos all the way up his arm, and he was clinging to Brian Wilson, and put his fingers through Brian’s grey hair. He said to Brian, ‘You are more nuts than I am!’ They both laughed at each other, and Sharon Osbourne (Ozzie’s wife) holding on to Ozzie’s arm was also laughing which amused me as her laughter was very distinctive.

We entered Buckingham Palace at the east front wing which was built in 1703 for the Duke of Buckingham and has 775 rooms. I walked up the very wide cream and gold-coloured staircase, with thick red wool carpet which somehow clung to my boots. I had to take two steps at a time to get to the top of the vast landing and we walked into a room furnished with regency-style Chinese furniture.

As we entered the room, I was looking around and saw all these familiar celebrities' faces and I felt so intrigued to be walking around talking to them all. I was suddenly faced by Tony Blair (the Prime Minister at the time) and all I could think of saying to him was, 'You used to have long hair when you were in a rock and roll band!' He laughed and said, 'Yes I did, when I was a student.'

'What was your band called?' I asked. He told me they were called 'Ugly Rumours', and his idol was Mick Jagger and his desire was to be a rock star. 'I rebelled at having my hair cut four times a term at university,' he told me, 'and so I had what I called a tick, tick, tick, tick four-days-in-a-row haircut. I was told by the headmaster that I should have a haircut, and I told him that I'd had all four already!'

We laughed and I looked around and saw Phil talking to Paul McCartney and Olivia Harrison, who had lost George the year before to cancer. She looked beautiful in her black velvet dress and her stunning brown eyes mesmerised me. We talked for a little while, and I could tell through our conversation that it hadn't been an easy ride being married to George, and I felt I could relate to her story with my own situation in a rock and roll marriage. Her voice was very soothing, and she said to me 'Take good care of yourself,' which was the second time I was told that on that night... must have meant something for me to think about, as I realised it did many years later. I said, 'You too, it was nice to meet you.'

I started to talk to Paul McCartney standing next to Olivia. I asked him did he ever miss his hometown, Liverpool, where it all started for him as a young boy? He said, 'I do miss the good times I had with my dad when me and John played songs for him in the living room. We were playing, "She loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah" for him, and my dad said, "It sounds okay, but put 'yes, yes, yes' instead of 'yeah, yeah, yeah' as it sounds too American.'" We giggled and I said 'What a lovely memory and story.' Phil would be playing with Paul McCartney numerous times over the coming years.

The room was full of familiar faces from Tom Jones, Elton John, Rod Stewart, Steve Winwood, Shirley Bassey, Bryan Adams and many more. I had a small chat with Prince Charles and Camilla who asked me what I do for a living. I told them I had a full-time job being a wife and a mother. They looked kind of bewildered and walked away. We were told that the Queen had gone to bed before the concert was over - I'm sure with her three Pembroke Welsh Corgi dogs. That was the end of a very surreal evening. As me and Phil drove home, we were both thinking, *Were we dreaming or was this evening a real event?*

I had a big surprise when I opened the front door to our house. Our dog Smokie had locked herself into a room while we were out, and she had peed in all my shoes! I spent the rest of the evening on my knees cleaning up after Smokie and scrubbing the floor.

Somehow the surreal evening among celebrities vanished into the night.

To be continued...