

London 26 April, 2019

To Jennifer,

Take a look to the left. Take a look to the right. Take this moment to look around you at the congregation of this church, the people of your community and think to yourself, how many beautiful friendships can you see here that exist because of our wonderful Jennifer ware.

It was early one morning. I was somewhat anxious as I was late for work. The telephone rang. It was a rather imperious woman from Earls court Square thanking me for helping to organize a free outdoor stage for the local school fate. I said I had not got time to talk as I was meant to be at the Royal Albert Hall to tune the piano for the royal Philharmonic Orchestra and I was already behind schedule. Fifteen long minutes later I was still on the phone doing my very best to fend off an invitation to a community arts meeting in a local church somewhere in courtfield Gardens. I put down the phone having had a promise firmly extracted out of me that I would attend the community arts meeting that evening.

Arriving home that evening after a day's work, the very last thing I wanted to do was go to a dusty church for a community arts meeting but somehow the promise I had made to the Imperious Lady from Earl's Court Square was on my conscience. By the time we had arrived at item eighteen on the community arts meeting agenda, I had a feeling that I was slipping into a coma. Looking round the dusty, dreary church vestry at the many community faces, I made a deep and profound vow never to come to another of these punishingly dull committee meetings. As I was leaving, I got collared by the Imperious woman from Earl's court Square who insisted I take tea with her the following week at her hoe 19A Earl's court Square bottom flat.

With more than a little reluctance and more than a little trepidation I did go to take tea with this lady. We sat in her front parlour drinking tea and eating cake. This rather formal lady set off on a long diatribe about how incredibly wonderful Earl's Court was and that in her opinion Earl's Court was one of the finest places in the world to live. She explained that Earl's court was packed with the most interesting of characters and had a rich and glorious history. She explained that she had lived in Earl's Court all her life except for a brief period when her and her fighter pilot husband had been stationed in Rhodesia with the British Air force. She explained with great pride that I ought to be grateful that I lived in such a place as Earl's court. I said I was grateful indeed to be in such salubrious company as the residents of Earl's court. Seeing that I was not yet fully seduced and enveloped, the Imperious Lady set off on a further lengthy speech on the importance of building community. She explained in detail how Earl's court could be easily misunderstood by many. She explained that there were a great deal of lonely people in Earl's court, that many were desperately poor, many were unwell, many indeed were lonely and even worse, many were isolated. She explained that because we did not have any buildings where the community could naturally congregate and socialize that we needed to build our village community through establishing an Earl's court arts charity and an Earl's Court civil society. She then said that I was ideal for the role of charity trustee and that she was counting on me to play a founding role in building the infrastructure of the Earl's court festival and year round arts programme. I said that I had no experience of community arts development that I was a piano tuner

and had not got the faintest idea on setting up charities. She replied, nonsense, you have worked in all of the most prestigious London venues and would make a fine job of being a founder member of the new Earl's Court Arts charity.

We did set up our charity: Malcolm Connell and I working together with Dianne Parnell, several of the local clergy, community activists and local business owners. Jennifer was our central lynch pin acting as conductor and Princess. I took up a mantle to put on Literary events for Earl's Court Festival suggesting first to Jennifer that we put on an event with Tony Ben, an Elder Statesman of British Left wing Politics. I explained to Jennifer that this man was writing a book dedicating letters to his grandchildren and how interesting I thought his topic would be to the Earl's Court community. Jennifer said, 'Oh Tony, great idea, would you like me to give him a call?'

I ventured further saying, I have come across a biography by Liberal Democrat Leader Lord Paddy Ashdown and how great it would be to hear his life long story of service. Jennifer said, 'Oh Paddy, I have known him for years, he owes me a favour or two, let's give him a call.'

I went on, saying in the pursuit of political balance, we would need a Conservative speaker for our literary talks. I suggested that Sir Malcolm Rifkind could give us a talk on his time in Cabinet. Jennifer replied, 'Oh Malcolm, he will be no trouble. I shall call him.' Jennifer then went on saying, 'Shouldn't you be thinking big. Is there anything you can do on Nelson Mandela?'

We did do something on Nelson Mandela, inviting John Carlin, author of *Playing the Game*, who flew over from Spain to deliver his intimate thoughts on his time together with Mr Mandela. Jennifer was very proud.

We became a team, Jennifer at the heart of a hard working Earl's court group, Suzie Lupton, Sharon Robison, and the many numbers of volunteers. Things became surprisingly rock n roll in ways I was not expecting. We put on events I would have never thought of, a strip show at an old people's lunch, a burlesque evening in an underground night club where more than enough clothes were taken off. In time, we did hundreds of events from children's teddy bear picnics to classical music, from jazz in the square to outdoor films in the rain and the sunshine. When money faltered for our festival events, we set up a year round calendar of events to ensure that our Earl's Court community kept up the pace to create events where everyone was welcome and that everyone could afford.

Something happened that I had not predicted, Jennifer became our Earl's court Mom, the natural Mother of Earl's court who like all Mom's drove you mad with her requests at times but like all loving Mom's, in return by those around her, Jennifer was deeply loved and deeply respected, in equal measure. Years rolled on and somehow without us really knowing how it had happened, we had become a family.

Recently, I returned to the parlour at 19A Earl's Court Square. This time, we took sherry, shamelessly holding hands, no longer afraid to show our open affection for each other. Jennifer's illness sat there in the room with us, knowing its place. Jennifer was solid, cheerful her stiff upper lip as crisp and proper as she wished it to be. She explained how lucky she had been in her life, how she had loved her husband so much and had been so loved by him. She spoke of her daughters and the incredible love she had between them as Father, Mother and growing family. She spoke on of her good fortune how she had met so many interesting people and how much her time in this world had

brought her friends she could have only dreamed of. She spoke of Earl's Court and the community we had built.

I asked her, 'How do you feel?' Jennifer new what I was asking her. She replied, quick as you like, 'I am not afraid of dying. I have been a good person. I have had a wonderful life.'

At times, we wonder why we are alive. It is difficult to articulate in words what the purpose of life is but the purpose of life can be felt, in the music of a Scottish song, in the love and great pleasure that comes from the birth of a new child, in the touch of one hand holding another whilst taking sherry in a parlour.

I went home that evening, thanking my lucky stars and all the stars for Jennifer. At home, in my thoughts, it came to me, how if it had not been for the Imperious lady from Earl's Court Square, these years gone by, I would be someone who just lived in Earl's court, rather than what I am, a loved part of our community, our beautiful village community of Earls court. Bless you Jennifer for being you. I love you.

Keith Mortimer Clancy

Earl's Court Community Trust

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Clancy', written in a cursive style.