

Tribute to mum

4 minutes = 600 words – two pages double spaced

*I remember* The BOAC plane sitting on the tarmac with the door open feeling the ice-cold breeze come through the aisle of the plane. You beside me. Me beside you.

*I remember* you and I gingerly walking over banked-up dirty New York snow, up three steps into a long narrow shop that sold mittens with elastic that threaded through the back of my coat.

*I remember* Blaise and I at the formica table in the kitchen of Gloucester Road watching as you reached into the cupboard. The shadow of a mouse running down the arm and then height of your night dress. You shrieking. Our laughter. Your annoyed laughter.

Another goldfish buried in the flower beds of Kensington Gardens. You and Margot so pleased to see each other.

You with Simon Hartog. Sensing your respect for Simon.

Lying together in the garden on blankets, the smell of cigarette smoke, cut grass, freshly printed newspapers and Sunday magazines.

Your cold gloved hands cupping my face, followed by cold fur. Standing in the doorway of the house, you returning from an evening out, being gently scolded for staying up.

On the beach at Overstrand, the smell of the sand with your cigarette smoke combine with the heat of a mid 1970's summer.

Aggressive driving and the rolling suspension of the Citroen. The vinyl sunroof open on the 2CV. Your laughter and near loss of control of the car in Holt as a young Max tells the last line of a near indecent joke from the back seat.

The bleached, scrubbed kitchen worktop and badly died curtains drawn against the sun. Rice and devilled kidneys cooked on the Baby-Belling followed by semolina with whipped egg whites, sultanas and tinned pear halves. Hot tea and freshly picked lettuce.

Robert's bike dropped on the gravel in front of the house. Your laughter at absurd tales of the high seas.

Bonfire nights.

Lost together in Venice at night in an electrical storm, power blackout, no lights, hysterical with laughter, soaked through. Still laughing. Entering St. Mark's Square for the first time. At night. Being aware that you are aware that I was awestruck and your deep enjoyment of my awe.

Drying our hair in front of a red-hot coal fire on a Sunday night after boiled eggs watching wildlife documentaries.

You lying in bed again, not feeling well. My coming telling you that I could finally read.

You and Jean reading to Blaise and I at a televisionless Oak Cottage. Sharing rum and raisin chocolate. Telling me that whilst I had been at school the queen had visited, landing in the field opposite in a helicopter surrounded by tanks. My walking out to check for tank track marks.

You standing in the hall in your nightdress at 4 in the morning, holding grandpapa's sword as we, drunken-teens nervously lifted the back window up.

You and our neighbour Poppy hugging one another and laughing late on a bright, Norfolk summer evening, the sound of gravel under your feet and smell of cut straw in the air.

Your sense of peace at the dining table in Northumberland after you and Tim married at Hexham registry office. The sense of peace I felt for you. You both laughing.

Arriving back in Aylsham having picked up Tim from the airport and you embracing one another outside the house. Sensing how real that embrace was.

Your mock frustration with Mike and I giggling.

Helping you out of the car in Corpusty. You spotting my new boots and telling me they had made your day. Our laughing at the vanity of it.

Roman Vasseur

13 May