

## LOVE - LOST AND FOUND

Love, the emotion, the passion, the practicality and companionship, has been written about endlessly over the years, but perhaps never less than today. Today sex is written about, but love is so much more than sex alone. This is why I thought it was right to set the record straight!

This is a little story about love - over the years, indeed over sixty years.

It all began some sixty years ago when I first saw Tom. And he quite literally knocked me off my trolley. Yes, he was very good looking, tall and straight. And yes, he did have that mischievous twinkle in his eye. But there was more to it than that. The tingle of physical attraction is a very strong emotional pull, but love is so much more. Instinctively I felt this was the man for me. Instinctively I knew about the kindness, the gentleness, the generosity of spirit which Tom had to offer. And I knew, the moment he folded me in his arms, that my little ship had come home - with him was my home, and without him I was simply all at sea!

But life is never easy. It was clear from the beginning of our blossoming relationship that both our families were unhappy at the idea of any serious relationship between us. And in those days children (even adult children) took a lot of notice of what their families said - or, as in this case, ordered! Their reasons were simple - we were from different backgrounds, different races, with different faiths and different ways of life. The horrid word "ethnic" was almost unknown at the time.

And so we parted. I shall always remember the pain of the parting. It stayed with me for years, even long after I had married a "suitable" man and Tom had married another, more suitable, woman.

I tried hard to be a good wife and mother and I am sure Tom was a perfect husband and father. We were not in touch - for more than a quarter of a century we were not in touch - but we never forgot, and there was always a special place in each of our hearts for the other. Naturally we didn't speak of this to anyone, to our parents, our friends and certainly not to our children. Life went by, peacefully enough for both of us. We had married good people, people we respected and were fond of. We had lovely children, whom we loved dearly and were proud of. We knew that we had plenty we needed to be grateful for. And we settled for that.

But life has a habit of surprising you when you least expect it! All those years later, more than 25 years later, when our spouses had both died, and long after we had mourned for them, we both picked up the threads of our lives and started living again. And then the world exploded! Across a crowded room - at an exhibition - I saw Tom. I knew instantly it was him. Our eyes met and it seemed as if a shower of lights came on. Tom hurried to my side. We didn't need to speak - our eyes said it all.

Later, when we shared a cup of tea, we caught up with our news. The wedded lives, the deaths of our partners, the birth and growing pains of the children and we knew everything had changed, and yet we knew nothing was changed. The old magic was still there, the electric current which passed between us as our eyes met, the realisation that without the other each of us was incomplete. The recognition that, from that day on, we needed to be together, every day and every night.

And so we planned for our marriage, brooking no interference from the elderly parents who still lived, but had now learned tolerance. It was so good to have all the children, and indeed all the family, so happy for us. The wedding was just about the most perfect day of my life. It was small, informal and full of love - ours for each other and the love of the children, the family and our friends warmly surrounding us.

And that was more than 25 years ago as I calculate today. And I am wiser for it. I have learnt that love grows - by the day, the week and the year. Love is the big things, yes, but it is also the little things - all those little things which alone may seem irrelevant and unimportant but which together spell out the huge impact of true love. It is when you think of the other and not of yourself; when you anticipate what the lover feels, wants, needs; when - quite simply - you recognise that true happiness means bringing happiness to someone else.

In this fast moving world, with all its freedoms - to use and abuse what life has to offer - love is often forgotten, or downgraded to a night of passionate sex. So much is lost by the young people as a result.

I mourn for the fact that young people don't understand the full and overreaching and overawing nature of what love has to offer. As Tom and I near the closing years of our lives I know that we both are so grateful for what we have been able to share - love that was lost and is found again that has overwhelmingly enriched our lives and brings a fresh, new sparkle to each and every day we are lucky enough to share.