

“This takes courage”.

I had the very great honour of spending a lot of tender and intimate time with Felicity throughout this illness. In fact, we opened a pop-up Chemo Hairdresser in Bowler Street, and she was my only client. I know that for many of you, the news that Felicity had died was the first you knew of the seriousness of her illness and for others, it has been terribly painful not to be able to be with her, offer her your care and share in this journey. I wanted to explain some things about that time that may help you understand how Felicity chose to deal with this last stage of her life.

Felicity was diagnosed with ovarian cancer mid last year and responded so amazingly well to the treatment that we dared hope there would time ahead to enjoy, although she was aware that her life expectancy had been shortened.

Earlier this year, chirpy emails popped over to Nepal, where I was working, describing her re-appearing fuzz, the joy of settling into in Richard and her new home, as well a cheeky “have a beer and a banana for me!!” . She was optimistic and happy. But she foreshadowed the road ahead in the one email “Bring me home a miracle”, and I returned knowing that soon we would be walking along different paths. She chose to walk along hers with few to accompany her.

She went into hospital for the last time in early March. Cards, flowers – beautiful greetings of love, support, and acknowledgement of her very great spirit and talents flowed in from family and her community. And so did the constant stream of doctors, nurses, cleaners, menu-takers, of poking, prodding and questions. She mouthed to me “see what I mean” as pulled her characteristic suite of faces.

She craved a space of peace and quiet. Hospitals are very lively places; great if you have a broken leg, she said, but noisy and unrestful when you have cancer. She had nothing left in reserve.

Tired, and in some discomfort, Felicity gradually accepted that her treatment options had run out. She gave instructions for her funeral – the butterflies, the Prayers of St Clare, the songs ... There was a special moment together with Richard singing You Got a Friend. I hope we all can sing her out with that song later. “I want to be with the people”, she said. Strange

though it may sound – it was uplifting for both of us. The conversation touched the things that were so important to her, and, we had been able to say the unsayable.

It was so very hard to say goodbye. “This takes courage”. In that comment she revealed the depth of her emotional, as well as physical, vulnerability.

I painted verbal pictures for her, of calm and rest. One was the flight into Kathmandu - - the clouds below, the bluest sky above and the wondrous Himalayas traversing that space between earth and heaven – that liminal space she now inhabited - so she might imagine death in beauty and not in fear.

I know she was very moved by the heartfelt sentiments in card and letters, and messages of love. We read many together. It was very painful for many that she had chosen to deal with her illness and death privately. I often said that people wanted to see her, to be with her, “because they love you so very, very much”.

“I know”, she said. “I know”.

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