

Becket, Space 1999, The Scarlet Letter, The Cutting Edge, Clochemerie, Amadeus, Oliver, Othello, Suez,

Peer Gynt, Pountila, Richard III, The Tempest, As you like it, Becket, Best of friends, Twelfth Night, Beauty 7 The Beast, Mother Adam, Winston Churchill,



Roy Dotrice OBE



Great Expectations, Day fever, Com Browns School Days, Kingdom, The Hollow Crown, Pericles, Romeo & Juliet, Ondine, The Hero, One of a Kind, Brief Lives,



Timeless

by Ulrike



With Respect, to Roy Dotrice
Happy Birthday, Father



King Lear, Curtmantle, The Devils, Edward IV, Aife, Murder in Mind, The Genius, Enemy of the People,

Hamlet, Julius Caesar, Dickens of London Lincoln, Comes Suez,

Timeless

by Ulrike

Ralph went into Bob's office and took a seat in the arm chair on the opposite site of his desk. They bid each other welcome and after some opening gambits, they started to discuss some upcoming matters. They made a perfect team, Ralph in his function as publisher and Bob, the right hand-man, as chief editor. They were old hands and knew all the dodges because they had studied together decades before.

As the two men finished, both stood up, looking through the big inner window, which gave a view across to the editorial department.

"Is he doing well?" Ralph asked with a pointed gesture of his head.

"Well...", Bob gazed where Ralph indicated. The editorial department was full of deskman, but a young man was crossing it on his way to his work desk.

"Well, he is, by a long way, the best graduate, we've ever had," Bob answered with a significant smile.

"Fine, that isn't really news to me. So, let me guess what you're saying, between the lines, so to speak," Ralph grinned back. "He is ambitious."

Bob nodded affirmation.

"And he's proud," Ralph added, looking at Bob, who nodded again.

"So, consequently, he doesn't see it as necessary for him to earn his spurs. He wants to keep his hands clean," Ralph finished his analysis. "I see."

Bob nodded affirmation a third time.

"So from what have you say, when is he expecting his Pulitzer Price?" Ralph asked.

"He won't be impolite...", Bob explained arching his eyebrows, one after the other.

"Two years, I see. The guy is thinking he's the cat's whiskers," Ralph noted. As Bob nodded again, both men started to grin.

"I think, we should take him to task, in a gentle way," Ralph suggested.

"That's self-evident," Bob answered, still grinning.

"Uh, we'll give him a broad hint," Ralph said, reflecting on some ideas. "We'll challenge him. So, tell me, what big anniversaries are coming up in May?"

"Uh, let me check my calendar," Bob browsed through his diaries.

"The fourth centenary of Shakespeare's death, but it's over now, as well as the 90th anniversary of the Queen," he murmured.

"In May, on the 8th, we have:

The 128th anniversary of the Gregorian calendar, 71th anniversary of the end of World War II.

Jacky Charlton's 81th anniversary, former football (soccer) icon, 41th anniversary of Enrique

Iglesias, Spanish dance-pop-singer and actor....

"There's a lot more," Bob remarked.

"Or what about Eadweard Muybridge, year of death 1904, British photographer and pioneer of photo technique, Otto Ubbelohde, year of death 1922, illustrator of Grimm's Fairytales." Bob looked up to Ralph.

"No, no. No history, no death-day. How can you interview a dead person?" Ralph shook his head. "Next suggestion."

"The 90th anniversary of Sir David Attenborough, Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE), wildlife filmmaker and student of nature, name giver for a new research vessel, brother of Sir Richard Attenborough, British actor and film director, multiple awardee of Oscar's and Golden Globes.....," Bob continued.

"So no "Boaty McBoatface!" Ralph laughed.

"No, but they will take the name for the research submarine," Bob explained.

"Uh, your last suggestion is much better, but it's not challenging enough. Too easy. Give the story to John, I would like to suggest. No milestone birthday, or a birthday around such a date? No decadal birthday, Shakespeare, acting, Order Of The British Empire, anniversary, merits, life experience.... Bob help me here. Your old friend, uh...he is marking his birthday, as well, if I remember correctly," Ralph thought aloud.

"Roy Dotrice," Bob mentioned the name of his old friend, grinning again.

"How's he doing?" Ralph asked.

"I haven't been in touch with him recently. The last time we spoke, he was fine," Bob replied.

"So, please contact him," Ralph suggested.

"Fine, of course, but can you give me some details about what you have in mind? I want to let him know, so he can make a free decision. I don't want to use him for our purpose," Bob declared firmly.

"Me neither. No way. Do you remember our interview with Sir Peter Ustinow? Same situation... only decades ago," Ralph reminded him.

"How could I forget that thrilling meeting!" Bob commented, eyes shining.

"You remember every moment of it and it was so exciting, so deeply touching, that we both not only keep the memory, we stored it in our heart. We didn't meet only a greybeard, being greenhorns ourselves, it was much more. We got the chance to win an advisor, a real friend, a mentor, an extraordinary man. So why should our greenhorn of today not get the same chance? I truly believe that Roy has the makings of such a character," Ralph explained.

Bob nodded. "Sure, it's as if it happened yesterday! Okay, the day before yesterday."

"Give Roy free reign and maybe he will be in the mood to talk about Shakespeare. We are marking the four centenary of Shakespeare's death. Roy is, amongst other things, a highly esteemed Shakespearean actor. So ask him about '...Or What You Will'. That would fit perfectly," Ralph stated.

"I will suggest "As You Like It," Bob replied with a broad grin.

"So, along these lines of "All's Well That Ends Well", Ralph completed, sharing the grin.

They said goodbye and Ralph left Bob's office.

As soon as possible, Bob activated the switch on his intercom.

"Donna, please no disruptions and hold my calls," he advised his secretary.

"No problem," Donna answered.

Bob whipped his smartphone out and looked for Roy's private phone number.

"I used to know that by heart," he thought, as he was initiated the call.

The call sign sounded a few times as the call was answered.

"Who are you?" asked a childish voice. "Reveal your identity," was the next instruction from the same voice.

For a moment Bob was perplexed. He had expected that Roy himself would answer the call, and he started stammering. Finally, he collected his thoughts and asked, "Whom am I speaking to?"

He heard a giggling and a slight cough, then a deepened, disguised voice answered.

"This is Sherlock Homes, speaking. What can I do for you? Will you please reveal your identity - or I'll have to take steps."

"Oh, Holmes, good to hear you. Don't you recognize me? I'm deeply disappointed. It's me, your old friend, Watson." Bob got the picture.

Again a giggling was audible.

"Frank, oh my god, what are you doing? How often have I told you, not to answer my phone?" Bob heard someone say nearby.

"It's not me, don't worry aunt Agnes. Sherlock Homes has answered the call," the boy reassured her.

She overtook the receiver.

"Hello, who's there?" she asked.

"Hello, I'm Bob Watson, uh pardon, I mean Bob Andrews calling. I'm a friend of Roy Dotrice. May I speak with him?" Bob asked.

"Oh hello, my name is Agnes Richardson. I'm a neighbour of Mr. Dotrice. I'm preparing some tea for him. I have to apologize for Frank. He's about five years old and my nephew," Agnes explained.

"Don't worry, master detectives can't even start early enough, so please give him my greetings," Bob laughed.

"Thank you for your understanding. Let me carry the tea in, so I can have a see if Mr. Dotrice is prepared. Then I'll patch you through to him immediately. Give me a second." She put the receiver aside.

Bob heard the sound of receding steps, a snick of porcelain and some murmur.

A short time later, Agnes came back and patched the call through, as she had promised.

Bob listened to a crackle in the phone line and finally the call was answered again.

"Hello, Roy Dotrice here. With whom do I have the pleasure of speaking?" he asked.

"Hello Roy, it's me... Bob... Bob Andrews," Bob stated.

"Bob? Oh... Bob, sure," Roy was delighted.

"How are you?" Bob asked.

"I'm fine. All of my minor ailments are reminding me that I'm still alive. How are you?" Roy responded.

"Uh, yes. I can tell you a thing or two about it, too. My back hurts, my eyes are ageing, there are always flying some floaters around - and I'm getting grey hairs," Bob laughed.

"Welcome to the club. So you would have me believe, that you are ageing too. But you are the lucky one if your hair is only redyeing. I'm loosing mine, more and more. That's a challenge. When there's a draught you get cold and when the sun is shining, you are at risk of sunburn. Pretty awful. Just recently I've been running around with a gym sack on my head, a suggestion of my grandson. You know ... one of these headpieces, the young people are always carrying, which seems to be barely adequate." Roy explained.

"Uh, yes I know. You mean a kind of Beanie," Bob grinned. "Let's change the topic. If someone overheard us, they'd presume we're oldies,"

Roy bristled. "No way!"

"Okay. I've noticed that you are in the company of one of the best British detectives," Bob remarked.

"Oh, yes, Sherlock Holmes. The boy told me he couldn't be James Bond because "007" would never use such an old-fashioned unit. He asked me if my telephone had been produced during the Stone Age. Nevertheless, it has a fascinating appeal to him. Unbelievable, but he's a bright boy and a whirlwind. It feels good to be surrounded by young people, so I'm staying in the loop," Roy confessed.

"So, you can keep pace with the life. Good to know. By the way, talking about bright boys ...," Bob let Roy in on their plan.

"What would you suggest? Shall I tell him, I'm preparing myself for the casting in a new production of 'Romeo and Juliet', playing Romeo?" Roy asked after listening carefully to Bob's remarks.

Bob gasped and laughed.

"Why not?"

"Why not? Have I to remind you of the quintessence of this drama?" Roy questioned.

"Uh..., let me consider..... The eternal value: The largest part is love and all. Just because this love ends before the every day world of togetherness starts. It remains a night between two beautiful young people who are not allowed to come together," Bob explained.

"You said it! A night between two beautiful *young* people....", Roy exclaimed.

"But love is timeless...", Bob argued, "... and ageless - if I'm allowed to add this."

"You have a fertile imagination," Roy smiled to himself, wagging his head.

"I'm taking this as a compliment. As Einstein once said: Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited," Bob riposted with a growing grin.

"Then, you great visionary, tell me. How will you climb up to the balcony, and what about the knife fight between Mercutio, Tybald and Paris? Will you use a stair lift instead, and rollator (walker) as substitute weapon?" Roy was in the right mood to giggle.

"By the way, do you know my Aunt Imogen? She now lives in a retirement home. So, when the ladies there gather, waiting for the elevator, braced on their rollators ... I can't tell you which simile would fit best ... like the queen bees and their court, divas from high school days, or like the dispute of the queens between Kriemhild and Brunhild from the Lay of the

Nibelungsⁱⁱ.

“Of course these old ladies are experienced, because they get practice pushing their shopping carts around supermarkets. If you aren't quick enough queuing at the checkout counter in the supermarket ... watch out! Do you know, what I mean? So, don't tell me, that a rollator couldn't be used as weapon, even in every day life,” Bob stated and laughed.

Roy took a sip of tea and had difficulty not exploding with laughter.

“It's not for nothing, that they call you a chameleon,” Bob explained.

“Okay, send him along. I will have, and enjoy, my schadenfreude when you will perish playing the next game of golf with Ron. I promise. I don't think you've improved your handicap,” Roy remarked.

“No, of course not. When would I have done it? You do know this, don't you? That will spell doom for me,” Bob answered, laughing.

After they cleared the details with one another, they compared notes, presented news and information, and finally swapped happy memories accompanied by a lot of laughter.

“Nice talking to you. It's always been a pleasure to stay in touch with you, Roy. I'm so sorry, but I have a meeting starting soon. I have to end our call for today. Next time, when we see each other, I will bring a good bottle of hard liquor along, so we can enjoy one or two glasses of it,” Bob promised.

They bid each other goodbye, sensing a reciprocal amount of joy and pleasure.

Bob needed some seconds to collect his thoughts as he switched over to the challenge of daily business life. He stood up, left his office to fetching a new cup of coffee, then crossed the young man's path.

“Ah, good to meet you. I have a new task for you,” Bob announced.

The young man stopped dead in his tracks and looked, full of expectation, at Bob. He had assumed, and had inwardly prepared for, the chance to conduct an interview with Sir David Attenborough. He was quiet as Bob revealed the task for him.

“But I.....,” he started, then closed his mouth, aware of Bob's sharp eye. He swallowed instead of raising an objection.

“John is doing Sir David,” Bob explained, guessing his presumption. “For you I have a special order. We recently got a commitment from Roy Dotrice for an exclusive interview. I'll give you free rein. Let me give you a little advice: Be very well prepared.”

The young man tried very bravely to appear unfazed, but inwardly, he thought, “Who the hell is....?” But he nodded his agreement.

Bob struggled very hard to refrain from laughing, able of course to read the emotions written on the young man's face.

“You have to work on your poker face, my friend,” Bob thought with an inward smile.

“You all right? Are there any questions?” he asked, finally. The young man shook his head, then nodded his assent and continued on his way.

With slightly-wounded vanity, the young man went back to his work. His business-as-usual skills weren't very developed, so it was a little difficult for him to put quality attention into his preparations.

"I'm a perfect fool," he scolded himself silently. "Stop pitying yourself."

In consequence, his preparation was a bit vague, but he didn't want to turn a deaf ear to Bob's advice. An inner voice warned him to take this easy, so he tried to calm himself.

"What could happen? What could be so difficult about a birthday interview?" he persuaded himself.

On the arranged date of the meeting, the young man travelled to Roy Dotrice, who had meanwhile become a little curious about the specifics of the young man.

After his vague preparation, a second miscalculation of the young man was the time required for the journey - and it would not be his last one concerning this interview. Bob had impressed upon him the importance of being on time.

Only by a generous interpretation of "timeliness", and by the skin of his teeth, did he reach the house of Roy Dotrice. As he stepped from the car, his view wandered around a wonderful garden, where the first roses of the year had started to bloom. The young man took a deep breath.

"Here we go," he murmured.

As he approached the house, he saw a child playing in the garden, pretending to be horse-riding, supervised by an elderly man standing at the front door. As he passed the garden door, the child changed in his direction and veered in front of him.

"You are passing Sherwood Forest. Give me your codeword!" the child, whose name was Frank, requested emphatically.

Since the young man had been focused on his task, he was completely taken aback by Frank's demand. In consequence, his sense of humour got lost.

"Look child, I have more important things to do," the young man declared, trying to put Frank off, and continuing his walk.

Frank exchanged a disappointed look with Roy, who was indeed standing in the doorway. He answered with a subtle shrug.

"You are a rough young man and when ever you cross my path, I will show you what Robin Hood is able to do with you. That's a promise and I'll keep my word!" Frank thought to himself as he turned back to play.

The young man reached the door.

"I have a date for an interview with Mr. Roy Dotrice. Can I please speak with him?" he started.

"Ah, so you are my interview partner for today? Please come in. I have been expecting you," Roy made an inviting gesture.

The young man went in, not realizing that he had totally forgotten to introduce himself.

"Please go ahead. I think we will sit in the winter garden. There is still a fresh wind blowing

outside, so I think the terrace wouldn't be a good idea. The winter garden offers both a shelter from the weather, and coincidentally, a chance to enjoy nature in spring," Roy explained.

Both men took a seat at a table in the garden.

"May I offer you a cup of tea? Mrs. Richardson, my neighbour, has been so kind as to prepare all these goodies for us," Roy pointed to an étagère, with sandwiches, muffins and several kinds of small cakes.

"All homemade - and please help yourself," he added proudly. "When you are well-provided for, I would suggest we start."

The young man nodded his agreement, not suspecting that the procedure was unusual.

"Mr. Dotrice, we are happy to congratulate you on your birthday, and wish you good health and happy dreams. By the way, do you still have dreams?" The young man had decided to open the interview in a perky way.

Roy couldn't believe his ears. Inwardly, he thought he had misheard. Bob was right, this was one of those young, arrogant, supercilious oafs. Wait, I'll get you! Outwardly, he clothed his face in a mildly wise smile.

"Sure, everybody has dreams. So do I," he answered modestly.

His opposite looked a bit confused.

"Ah, good, will you tell us more about them. Our audience would be very interested in learning more about them," the young man answered.

"No. Dreams are private and not something to share publicly. I can only let you know that they are timeless and ageless," Roy answered, still holding his smile.

"Uh, good. Then let's speak about your age. You can look back on a long life. Do you still have plans to continue acting? Or has the time come to step back?" the young man questioned.

"That is one of the many positive aspects the acting profession offers - that one is able to continue. The genres are mostly changing, of course, so there are always new challenges to face," Roy made a dramatic pause. "But who knows, maybe in a newly conceived direction or production," he added a second dramatic pause, "I will play a Romeo again.... Acting is always metamorphosis and transformation, like a chameleon."

The young man was becoming more and more bewildered.

"So, you've given me the cue for the next question. We all know you've played a lot of Shakespeare. Do you think that Shakespeare is, although of course classic, a bit old hat and outdated now?" the young man asked.

"No! I disagree," Roy answered sharply. "But tell me, how good is your relationship with Shakespearean works?" he asked smoothly.

"Uh, my relationship to Shakespeare? What shall I tell you? I suffered through it, usually. It was somewhat boring old hat," the young man replied, shrugging.

"You find the words boring, because you're merely reading them. You must feel them. Words are nothing but cold and lifeless things. You must use your mind and your heart to interpret them. You see, the playwright depends upon his actor to breathe life into his words, to give them life with his passionⁱⁱⁱ," Roy explained gesturing, and using the words from an episode of the TV series *Beauty and the Beast* as an object lesson.

He had an extraordinary memory. While on one hand, he could act a Shakespearean scene under many different conditions, he could also demonstrate what a good

performance was.

“What do you know of Shakespearean times?” Roy asked.

“Um Stratford-upon-Avon, Elizabeth I, London, Christopher Marlowe...,” the young man enumerated and droned out, in a lame manner.

“Let's do a little excursion, then. He was born in 1564, into a world of change, in a world, which was very different from the world of today, and yet also similar. It was, it is, a world that had been falling apart. The story of William Shakespeare is the story of a man from a small town between green hills in the middle of England, who came to London when the British Empire was built.

“Francis Drake had returned from his first circumnavigation. The earth was a globe, that certainty was the result. Country after country was discovered and subjected to reason in the form of trading. Foreign nations were founded. Merchants and adventurers brought spices, goods and people from all over the world to London. Africans paddled up the River Thames for people's amusement.

“Welcome, World, to our home, London. It was the birth year of globalization^{iv},” Roy proclaimed.

“The Age of Enlightenment started, and Shakespeare described what it meant for man to feel the breath of freedom, but in other words as well - not 'God leads us', but 'we are doing it ourselves'. Men seek freedom, but at the same time are overwhelmed by it^v,” he stated.

“Shakespeare's 16th Century was an outline of the modern world of today. He discovered and described the soul of quarrelling modern man - his struggle for good and evil, his greed and his goodness, the power of love and the dark menace of his desire, the struggle for power and the depths of revenge.

“Shakespeare was the writer of the Apocalypse, a former terrorism expert. His work is still amazing in the present day.

“From feudalism to the modern state, everything started to slip, the political, cultural and social order.

“In these times of the opening of the world, when enormous wealth had been suddenly amassed by a few, anything was possible - and many failed. It was the time of the brutal suppression of Catholicism by Elizabeth I. The old church rituals were forbidden. Stephen Greenblatt says: *'In times like ours, in which we don't only feel the forces of local changes, but which forces seismic shifts of political tectonics - there the Shakespearean texts are particularly powerful and strong'*^{vi}.” Roy explained passionately.

The young man was deeply touched. Never before had someone imparted knowledge to him in this way. By now the interview, as such, seemed to be forgotten. Instead, a dialog arose, conducted between two men of vastly different ages, but not as teacher and pupil, but two literature enthusiasts.

“I will give you an example. Some politicians of today, are like the extremely popular figure of Frank Underwood in the American TV-series, *“House of Cards”*. Kevin Spacey is a deeply amoral president of the White House, of nothing more than a perfect incarnation of Shakespeare's Richard III in our time^{vii},” Roy outlined.

“You know *“House of Cards”*?” the young man asked.

“Sure. You know that I had a part in *“Games of Thrones”*?” Roy asked, smiling. “Before we continue, let us brew some new tea and get some more refreshments,” he suggested.

Both men rose and Roy led the way to the kitchen. The young man supported him, being

conveniently to hand. His arrogance had given way to a great reflection. They worked in silence laying out more tea and sandwiches.

“Let's take a seat in the library. Will you be so kind as to light the fire? It's still a little bit chilly here during springtime evenings,” Roy told the young man, who nodded.

When both were seated, Roy continued.

“And while the whole globe had been explored and subjected, a theatre company along the riverside of the River Thames built one of the first theatres of the world, which accommodated an audience of 3,000. It was called '*The Globe*' - a world, and the world as a model and stage on which unfolded our man from Stratford, the inner cosmos of man.

“The brightest and the darkest areas of the human psyche, of kings and emperors as well as of beggars, attorneys, gravediggers, gardeners, merchants from around the world were featured there. Continent by continent, humans were conquering, putting flags in never previously known regions. Shakespeare presented them to the world, the audience on his planet, in '*The Globe*'.

“Today, '*The Globe*' stands as replica on the Thames. In front of the stage were the poor in the mud, thousands of people who accosted and cheered and commented. The richest sat in the boxes above the stage, and those of means sat on the seats in the galleries all around. Day by day, the actors fought in this metropolis of 200,000 to lure 3,000 spectators into their theatre. They had to create theatre for all, at any price, for both the richest and the poorest, the brightest and the most stupid, for the powerful and ordinary people. And they always needed new material: new countries, new people, new continents.

“Shakespeare was under pressure and Shakespeare supplied. Today his works are performed all over the world, because people recognize themselves in his plays^{viii}.”

“So, he was been an acute and exact observer,” the young man interposed.

“Yes. Shakespeare knew all about the power and how it transforms people, also about the impotence. He understood the nastiest monsters. Understood how the monsters came to be; sometimes it seems that he almost loved them. At least that, for they gave him so much great material. His works appear magically as timeless and global. Shakespeare was the inventor of British pop culture, just like when its world export was the first Beatle^{ix},” Roy added.

The young man grinned. The look of the 16th century seemed so totally out of keeping with the look of 1960s.

“Tom Bird, for example. For two years he toured with The Globe's *Hamlet*-production around the world.

“'*Globe to Globe*' was the project. The idea was born, because of the olympic Shakespeare-stagings from around the world that came to The Globe. The world poet came home and spoke in almost all languages. The Englishman paid a return visit to the world, to 195 countries^x,” Roy explained.

“But do they always using the English language to perform it, as originally?” the young man asked.

“No, there are any numbers of translations and each new translation offers space for more interpretation,” Roy answered, then continued. “Shakespeare's plays are adapted in many countries. It has long since become part of other foreign cultures, according to English theatre researcher Andrew Dickson.

“There is the famous story of the Robben Island Bible. On Robben Island, the South African apartheid regime had detained the fighters of the African National Congress. One of them was Sonny Venkatrathnam.

"The detainees were allowed to take a book to their detention on the prison island. Actually, Venkatrathnam wanted "Das Kapital" by Karl Marx, but was not allowed that. Instead, he requested Shakespeare's collected works. Shortly before his release, he asked his fellow inmates to underline their most important personal passage and write their names next to it.

"On 16 December 1977, Nelson Mandela marked the following passage in '*Julius Caesar*'

"Caesar: Cowards die many times before their deaths;

The valiant never taste of death but once.

Of all the wonders that I yet have heard.

It seems to me most strange that men should fear;

Seeing that death, a necessary end,

Will come when it will come^{xi}."

"So, in a few lines, the reader travels through centuries of world history. It starts with Caesar, via the 16th Shakespearean century to the 20th century, for detainee Mandela, and it leads the reader also to everything that should be done: Liberation, president, world star of the oppressed and of perseverance against all odds.

"In these cells were living bravery, transparency and prudence, in the most beautiful and poetic description. They shine in a brighter light.

"Or in other words: Mandela's mark on this yellowed page is like a thin, strong rope, linking the past with a time just before our present. The old words haven't lost any of their force over the centuries^{xii}.

"Shakespeare is eternity," Roy finished.

"What an expressive example, I never considered this."

The young man rose, served them another cup of tea, then put more wood on the fire.

"Do you think it has been a good idea, in celebrating the 400th anniversary of the death of Shakespeare, to allow a performance by Prince Charles^{xiii}?" the young man asked.

"Yes, sure, why not? It's not disrespectful. I think it's even a good idea to show some of our British humour, taking things not deadly serious, within such a dignified challenge to an argument. To notice, that even in such a short quote, one can express so much differently, even a change the emphasis from one word to the other," Roy answered.

"How would you declaim it?" the young man questioned.

"Oh that will depend on the stage direction," Roy replied.

"Talking about the Royals. Have you ever met the Queen?" the young man asked.

"Yes, she invested me the Order of the British Empire, a very moving moment, I can tell you," Roy remarked. "You know, Queen Elizabeth II, twice a year, honours great personalities with merit. Each New Year's Day, and at her official birthday celebration in June, the awards are presented."

"What is she like? Sorry, I'm curious," the young man added, shyly.

"First of all, the Queen is the Queen. She is a model of performance of her duty and discipline, and well known for her sense of humour. It's a lifetime assignment. You can even now trace how brilliant she is, through the various festivities around her anniversary.

There is a picture, which I have seen recently in the newspaper, where she is surrounded from her younger grandchildren and her great-grandchildren, a symbol of continuity,” Roy noted.



“You're dropping a hint again. How did you celebrate your 93rd birthday?” the young man asked.

“Uh, with less performances, just within the family circle. And of course, there are a lot of greetings and greeting cards, from friends and fans. I'm enjoying them very much,” Roy answered proudly.

“I see. How has the performance of your celebration changed over the decades?” the young man questioned.

“Uh, the children and grandchildren are growing up, people are coming and going. I don't know, if you know “*Dinner for One*”. I know it has been a traditional TV-movie in Germany since the early 1960s. There, it's aired every New Year's Eve. So, you are looking at it year after year, decade after decade, and then at one absolutely surprising anniversary, it's your own 90th birthday. That's odd, somehow^{xiv},” Roy explained with a grin.

“I know it. I became acquainted with it during my outland studies in Germany. Do you face an aloneness like Miss Sophie, from “*Dinner for One*”?” the young man asked quietly.

“Um, in this context, in this theme, you are asking about the circle of life, growth and decay, becoming and passing away. In my opinion, becoming older is like the moving hand of a clock. First, I don't think, that she is really alone. There is James and the former good friends are still part of the tradition. It always hurts to leave someone behind, but you are winning other friends to replace them. You have still your memories. Friends are always something cross-generational and every one of them is able to give you something. Like something to share, to enjoy, to learn. Learning is a lifelong procedure and it's a mercy to do so. I'm blessed,” Roy remarked.

Even spoken quietly, his words were resonating through the room. Both men indulged in their thoughts. For a moment only the crackling of the fire was audible. They had now graduated to wine, and it was a very good one. Both of them enjoyed it and any agitation had given way to a deep rapport.

Finally the young man cleared his throat.

“It's been a long day, and I shouldn't have taken so much of your time. I'm sorry,” the young man declared quietly as he rose.

“Yes, it's been a long day, but our conversation, our dialog, has been very stimulating for

me as well,” Roy remarked and rose. “I’ll see you to the door.”

At the door, they were bidding goodbye. The young man turned, ready to leave, but hesitated suddenly and seized Roy’s hand.

“Mr. Dotrice, thank you so much for receiving me as a guest. I really enjoyed it. You have given me a lot to think about and I will learn a lot from it. And really, please stay sane and healthy. These are my heartfelt wishes,” the young man added.

He couldn’t explain it now, but something had touched him deeply. This should be one of those heart-stopping moments, the substance of good and long-lasting memories, which are stored in the heart.

“Thank you. Stay the way you are, without play-acting. You cut on your own path,” Roy reassured him. “May I ask your name again? My age, you know.”

The young man blushed.

“No way, it’s not your age. I have forgotten my manners. Sorry again. My name is Jim Williams,”

“So, Jim Williams, thank you for coming to me to be acquainted. I would enjoy, if possible, continuing our discussion at another time. Get home safely,” Roy remarked.

At the garden gate Jim turned, waving his hand.

“For now,” Jim said.

“For now,” Roy answered, waving back.

Both were aware, that this meeting was the beginning of a new friendship.

END

References

i <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/may/06/boaty-mcboatface-ship-to-be-called-rrs-sir-davidattenborough>

ii Extract from a report of Volker Weidemann. Title: Das Weltphantom, published in the German weekly journal, “Der Spiegel” Nr.17 from 23.04.2016

iii <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nibelungenlied>

the argument of the queens

....Years later, Brünhild, still feeling as if she had been lied to, goads Gunther into inviting Siegfried and Kriemhild to their kingdom. Brünhild does this because she is still under the impression that Gunther married off his sister to a low-ranking *vassal* (while Gunther and Siegfried are in reality of equal rank) yet the normal procedures are not being followed between the two ranks combined with her lingering feelings of suspicion. Both Siegfried and Kriemhild come to Worms and all is friendly between the two until, before entering *Worms Cathedral*, Kriemhild and Brünhild argue over who should have precedence according to their husbands' perceived ranks.

Having been earlier deceived about the relationship between Siegfried and Gunther, Brünhild thinks it is obvious that she should go first, through custom of her perceived social rank. Kriemhild, unaware of the deception involved in Brünhild's wooing, insists that they are of equal rank and the dispute escalates. Severely angered, Kriemhild shows Brünhild first the ring and then the belt that Siegfried took from Brünhild on her wedding night, and then calls her Siegfried's *kebse* (mistress or concubine). Brünhild feels greatly distressed and humiliated, and bursts into tears.

iv Extract from “Beauty and the Beast” episode “Everything is Everything”

v Like “ii”

vi Like “ii”

vii Like “ii”

viii Like "ii"

ix Like "ii"

x Like "ii"

xi Like "ii"

xii Extract from: William Shakespeare. „Julius Caesar.“ iBooks. <https://itun.es/de/AN7KA.1>

xiii Like ii

xiv <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-36122933>

xv https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVd_VLO9xcc&pxtry=1

don't worry, only the introduction is in German: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dinner_for_One