

Springfield, Dusty

Dusty Springfield



Dusty Springfield, nome d'arte di Mary Isabel Catherine Bernadette O'Brien (Londra, 16 aprile 1939 – Henley-on-Thames, 2 marzo 1999), è stata una cantante britannica il cui impatto sulla storia del costume e della musica popolare britannica del novecento è paragonabile a quello che Mina ha avuto in Italia, o Dalida ebbe in Francia.

E' la secondogenita di Gerard e Catherine (Kay) O'Brien, immigrati irlandesi stabilitisi in uno dei quartieri operai della periferia nord di Londra. Cresce nel sobborgo di Ealing e già da bambina si guadagna il soprannome di Dusty per il suo atteggiamento da maschiaccio.

Eredita la passione per la musica dal nonno materno, che la incoraggia ad ascoltare autori come George Gershwin, Richard Rodgers, Cole Porter, Count Basie, Duke Ellington e Glenn Miller. Il suo modello musicale da ragazzina è Peggy Lee. Nel 1958 lascia la scuola e, rispondendo a un annuncio su un giornale, si unisce al gruppo delle Lana Sisters. Grazie a questa esperienza impara l'armonia vocale, le tecniche di microfonia e di registrazione, si esibisce in spettacoli dal

vivo, incide alcuni singoli (fra i quali anche una versione inglese di Tintarella di luna) e fa anche le prime apparizioni televisive. Nel 1960 lascia il gruppo e, insieme a Dion O'Brien (suo fratello maggiore, che prenderà il nome di Tom Springfield) e a Reshad (Tim) Feild forma il trio "the Springfields". Durante il loro soggiorno negli Stati Uniti, Dusty ha modo di conoscere e di ascoltare la musica dei nuovi gruppi vocali femminili di colore. Questo sarà determinante nella sua successiva svolta musicale.

Scelta la carriera da solista, Dusty realizza il suo primo 45 giri. "I Only Want to Be with You", viene pubblicato nel novembre 1963 ed entra immediatamente tra i dischi più venduti, rimanendo in classifica 18 settimane e risuonando in vari paesi d'Europa e oltreoceano. A questo singolo fa subito seguito "A Girl Called Dusty", un album che sorprende per la coraggiosa scelta di autori non ancora molto noti, ma che in seguito caratterizzeranno la scena pop internazionale: Burt Bacharach, Randy Newman e Carole King.

Il suo successo la porta ovunque: in autunno viene in Italia a lanciare la versione italiana di Wishin' and Hopin', brano di Burt Bacharach che verrà intitolato "Stupido, stupido". A dicembre si esibisce a Città del Capo di fronte a una platea mista di spettatori bianchi e di colore. La sua sfida alla politica di segregazione razziale del governo sudafricano le costerà l'immediata espulsione dal territorio.

Nel 1965 Dusty viene invitata a Sanremo dove gareggia al Festival con "Di fronte all'amore" e "Tu che ne sai?". Tornata in Inghilterra, decide di interpretare a suo modo "Io che non vivo (senza te)", scritta da Pino Donaggio, che diventa "You Don't Have to Say You Love Me". Insoddisfatta dal risultato della registrazione, chiede di montare il microfono nella tromba delle scale dell'edificio in cui si trova lo studio e, cantando dal fondo della cantina, ottiene finalmente l'effetto di eco che desiderava. Il brano raggiunge il numero 1 nelle classifiche di molti paesi europei e sfonda anche negli Stati

Uniti, diventando un evergreen (è stata votata tra le prime cento canzoni di ogni tempo in un referendum di Radio 2 della BBC).

Nel 1966 in Gran Bretagna i discografici privilegiano ormai i gruppi dell'ondata beat e la sua figura è leggermente in declino; negli Stati Uniti invece la sua reputazione è tale che gli autori scrivono pezzi destinati espressamente alla sua voce: tra questi, Carole King che scrive per lei "Some of Your Lovin'" e "Goin' Back", Ben Weisman che le confeziona "All I See Is You", una ballata in puro stile "sanremese", con il proposito di bissare il successo del brano di Donaggio, e Burt Bacharach che le affida "The Look of Love", brano che verrà inserito nella celebre pellicola James Bond 007 – Casino Royale e diventa nel tempo un classico della musica lounge.

La continua serie di successi prosegue fino al 1970; in questo periodo il gossip sulla vita privata di Dusty Springfield, finora tenuta gelosamente nascosta, irrompe prepotentemente sulle pagine dei giornali. Il fatto che a 31 anni non fosse sposata e non avesse avuto alcuna relazione con un uomo aveva alimentato molti pettegolezzi, ma all'epoca intervistare un personaggio pubblico sulla propria vita sessuale era impensabile. Eppure Ray Connolly, giornalista dell'*Evening Standard*, riesce a farsi rilasciare una dichiarazione nella quale la cantante ammette di aver imparato ad accettare, con il tempo, la propria diversità.

Nel 1970, Springfield dichiarò all'*Evening Standard*: "A lot of people say I'm bent, and I've heard it so many times that I've almost learned to accept it...I know I'm perfectly as capable of being swayed by a girl as by a boy. More and more people feel that way and I don't see why I shouldn't. "

All'inizio degli anni '70 la sua partner Norma Tanega era

tornata in america dopo la fine della loro relazione ed anche lei passava sempre più tempo in america. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dusty_Springfield].

Nel 1973 spiegò al *Los Angeles Free Press*: “ I mean, people say that I’m gay, gay, gay, gay, gay, gay, gay, gay. I’m not anything. I’m just ... People are people... I basically want to be straight... The catchphrase is: I can’t love a man. Now, that’s my hang-up. To love, to go to bed, fantastic; but to love a man is my prime ambition... They frighten me. ”

Molte delle intervistate da Jill Gardiner, 2003. *From the Closet to the Screen. Women at the Gateways Club, 1945-85*. London: Pandora Press, pp. 303, ricordano la sua presenza al “Gateway”, il famoso locale lesbico londinese immortalato nel film *The Killing of Sister George* (1969). Vedi anche: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minorities_Research_Group

La cosa sembra non aver influito sulla sua carriera, ma sta di fatto che per tutti gli anni settanta si sentirà parlare di lei molto meno che nel decennio precedente. Dusty si trasferisce a Hollywood e, dopo l’uscita dell’album *Comeo* per la Dunhill Records, decide di ritirarsi a vita privata. Il 1978 è l’anno del suo ritorno sulle scene, con “It Begins Again”.

Anche negli anni ottanta, Dusty Springfield sarà lontana dalle scene. Lo spettacolare ritorno avrà luogo nel 1987 grazie ai Pet Shop Boys, che la vogliono come partner nel brano “What Have I Done to Deserve This?”. Nel 1995, durante le registrazioni di quello che sarà il suo ultimo album, Dusty si accorge di avere un nodulo al seno e le viene diagnosticato un carcinoma. Le lunghe sedute di chemio e radioterapia avranno la meglio sulla malattia, almeno per il momento. In stato di remissione clinica, Dusty si dedica alla promozione dell’album “A Very Fine Love”. Per l’occasione ricompare in qualche show televisivo, ma dopo circa un anno la malattia si ripresenta in forma più violenta e devastante. Dopo una battaglia durata tre

anni, Dusty Springfield si spegne proprio pochi giorni prima di ricevere l'onorificenza di Ufficiale dell'Impero Britannico (OBE). La medaglia verrà consegnata alla sua amica e manager Vicki Wickham, che racconterà di come la cantante fosse preoccupata dal fatto che si sapesse che era lesbica in Penny Valentine, 2000. *Dancing with Demons*.



Discografia e biografia allo http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dusty_Springfield

Dal libro *Anti Diva*, della cantautrice Carole Pope, 2001.

Lei e Springfield avevano una relazione e vivevano insieme a Toronto negli anni 70-80. Testo online allo <http://www.laventure.net/tourist/anti-diva.htm>



THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD EVER REACH ME

By Carol Pope

I never got enough from love from my beautiful, blonde mother. Then I met Dusty Springfield. If you are a lesbian, you know where this is going.

Back in the early days of my band, Rough Trade, I used to sit around my room on Toronto's Earl Street with my lesbo gal-pals, playing Dusty Springfield's albums and fantasizing about her. I loved R & B and thought Dusty was the only white woman

who could sing it with the necessary soulful, heart-wrenching intensity. We all knew she was gay; she was part of the collective lesbo consciousness. The boys had Rock Hudson. We had Dusty.

My manager, Vicki Wickham, thought that Dusty and I should meet. She said she had a feeling we'd get along. In another life, Vicki had co-written the English translation of Dusty's hit "You Don't Have to Say You Love Me" with a friend in the back of a taxi. I'd heard stories Vicki told about Dusty, and she sounded like a handful, but Vicki believed that you could have any woman you wanted if you put your mind to it. Her mantra, "Every bird is pullable," had become part of my philosophy.

So in the fall of 1980, I flew to New York to meet the Queen of the Mods and see her perform at a supper club called the Grand Finale. Vicki came with me. The place was packed with Dusty fanatics and celebs; the audience included Rock Hudson and Helen Reddy, the singer of "I Am Woman." We sat at a long table with the actress Jane Seymour, who was looking very waiflike, and sitting next to me, fuming with impatience, was the delightfully cranky Fran Leibowitz, who kept smoking cigarette after cigarette and muttering under her breath, "Is she coming on? When is she coming on?"

Dusty was hours late, but it was worth the wait. Her voice made me slide off my seat. She went someplace in herself and pulled out pure unadulterated soul.

After the show, Vicki and I left the club. She thought there would be a mob scene backstage and didn't want to deal with it. We were halfway down Broadway when I asked her if I should go back and try to meet Dusty. Vicki told me to go for it.

I went back and made my way nervously into the unflattering fluorescent light of Dusty's dressing room. Mary Isabel Catherine Bernadette O'Brien (Dusty Springfield to the rest of

us) was heavily made up, her eyes rimmed with her trademark heavy black eyeliner. Her hair was white-blond, and she was wearing some kind of sequined beaded number. Her look was over-the-top in a bad way. The elitist snob in me rebelled, but she was an icon; and so was I, albeit in a Canadian, self-effacing kind of way.

Two years earlier, I had lost my beautiful, blonde, unattainable mother to cancer just when I was starting to make a tenuous connection with her. I never got enough love from my mother. If you are a lesbian, you know where this is going.

My first words were, "Vicki suggested that we meet." Dusty looked at me shyly and smiled. We started to talk and joke around, and within moments were flirting madly with each other. I inched closer. Dusty's hand reached out to stroke my leather pants. She showed a warped sense of humour; she told me that when she was tarted up, she felt like a Puerto Rican drag queen. We broke into slang like a couple of cockney yobs.

In the middle of our dance of seduction, Helen Reddy came backstage with her husband. Dusty and I turned to each other and said, after they left, "Why is she married? She seems like a big dyke."

Then we went out for a drink and zoned in on the intriguing connection between us. Among other things, we shared a hatred of celery.

I couldn't get Dusty out of my mind. After I flew home to Toronto, I called her a couple of times. She was obviously involved with someone, but, being the egotistical and callous dyke I was then, I kept piling on the charm. We arranged to meet in Montreal three months later, where Dusty was to be honoured by a Jewish organization. Dusty's personal views regarding the PLO were to the right of then-very-vocal Vanessa Redgrave's, and the idea that she should be so honoured was ludicrous; but being the diva she was, I think she simply

liked the attention.

Arriving at the Ritz Carlton, I tentatively knocked on the door of Dusty's suite. She answered, then stepped back into a rococo decor accented with heavy black-and-gold-striped wallpaper. She seemed shy and unsure, and she was not alone. Her assistant – a girl draped in pearls who epitomized the meaning of the word preppy – was introduced as Westchester. She discreetly left the room. Dusty and I sized each other up. Yes, the air was thick with sexual tension.

She offered me a drink, and the next thing I knew we were all over each other. We tumbled onto the bed, half-naked. It was the first time I'd been with an older woman. Dusty had several years on me, and I found the idea very erotic. I fixated on her sensual mouth and her unfathomable eyes.

It was a quickie. Dusty informed me we had to drag ourselves to the home of the person who was paying for all the insanity; we'd go on to the award ceremony from his place.

At the rich guy's house, he prattled on, maybe because we were making him nervous – we pretended to listen, and at the same time, tried not to maul each other. I felt like I had tasted the appetizer and was hungry for the rest of the meal.

The award ceremony was predictably boring. We all know the drill: inedible food, long speeches. Dusty was presented with a gold plaque that bore a map of Israel. Afterward, we went out with two gay journalists. I discovered that when it came to partying, I was a lightweight next to Dusty.

We spent the rest of the weekend in a sexual stupor. I vaguely remember flying back to Toronto.

The third time Dusty and I met, we were on a plane to Amsterdam. She was shooting a television show in Holland, and had scammed an extra plane ticket for me.

My first impression of Amsterdam was that it was so clean. Dusty said that when the Dutch spoke, they sounded like they were talking with hot potatoes in their mouths. I recall seeing the city only at night. Dusty had trouble sleeping; we toured the red-light district, wandering arm in arm through streets in which whores posed in windows. We went to a sex store that catered to every sick fantasy you could imagine. We picked up a few items. The night wound down at a gay bar where Dusty was worshipped and fawned over by sweet little Dutch boys.

A diva lives in her own delusional little world, attended by effeminate men and sycophants. Dusty was impossible. The dynamics of our affair changed daily. There were so many red flags, it was like a ski run.

We stopped in London on the way back, where Dusty just waved in the direction of the concierge at the Four Seasons and we were whisked up to a suite. Dusty had about twenty suitcases jammed to bursting, rivalling Liz Taylor in the luggage department.

Once we were ensconced in the suite, there was a lot of drinking. Room service brought up magnums of Taittinger champagne and Dusty's fave, Grand Marnier.

We went sightseeing. We ran through Westminster Abbey like children. When we saw the tomb of Mary, Queen of Scots, we fell into the famous Monty Python routine, in Scottish accents yelling, "Are you Mary, Queen of Scots?" We also drank and debauched in tony restaurants. But after three days, I had to fly back to Toronto, and Dusty returned to her home in L.A.

When Rough Trade had a break in touring, I went to visit Dusty in L.A. She lived in a small house up in the hills in Nichols Canyon. Her neighbour was an ill-fated NBC newscaster, Jessica Savage, who would die tragically before her pretentious dream house could be lived in.

Dusty took me on a tour of the city, actually a sprawling suburb connected by mini-malls. In Beverly Hills, we cruised by endless monuments to bad taste, sinfully expensive Hollywood glitter palaces that stars called home. Dusty made a special point of driving by Dionne Warwick's house – she and Dionne were rivals, since they had both recorded Burt Bacharach's songs, classics like "The Look of Love" and "Anyone Who Had a Heart." If you wanted to live, you had better prefer the Dusty versions.

We visited Forest Lawn Cemetery, where there were too many movie-star stiffs in graves marked with monuments. We careened by the Tate/Polansky house where the Manson family had committed its ritualistic murders. We continued past introvert/producer Phil Spector's compound, which was surrounded by guard dogs. Dusty was a huge fan of Phil Spector. His innovative "wall of sound" had changed the face of pop music in the sixties; he was the genius behind girl groups like the Crystals and the Ronettes. Dusty told me that, these days, Spector usually sat in his living room clutching a rifle and nursing his paranoia.

Part of my fascination with Dusty was the life she led. She, the whitest of white women, had sung with the likes of Stevie Wonder, Martha Reeves, and Marvin Gaye. She'd had a knock-down battle in the hallway of a hotel with Gene Pitney, who recorded "Town Without Pity": Dusty pelted him with chocolate and meringue. He was wearing a new suit, and was not happy. Another time, she lobbed a sardine down the décolletage of one of the Shangri-Las.

Dusty once fought with drummer Buddy Rich when they were sharing the same bill and she'd got top billing. He insulted her; she attempted to punch him, and was restrained by bystanders. When she went to play some dates in South Africa, she had the musician's union put a stipulation in her contract that she would not perform before segregated audiences. It turned out that the clause was illegal, and she was escorted

out of the country. Dusty later said that it had not been a political act per se; she just thought anyone should be able to buy a ticket to one of her shows.

Dusty, who wanted her albums to have a black vibe, her own version of Motown, battled with bass players to get them to use a Fender bass. She recorded vocals in the bathroom at Phillips Studio in order to get enough reverb on her voice. She said the cleaning staff had looked at her like she was crazy. Dusty told me about how frustrated she was, when recording in England with the London Symphony Orchestra – “just one blonde bird battling a bunch of blokes.” She was still upset, when she told me, about how they couldn’t get a groove going.

She once offended Princess Margaret at a royal command performance by remarking that there were many queens in the audience, and they weren’t all in the royal box. One can only imagine Yvonne (which is the gay English nickname for Princess Margaret) in a gin-induced frenzy having a royal hissy fit. Dusty had a framed letter in her L.A. bathroom from one of Margaret’s ladies-in-waiting, expressing HRH’s displeasure.

One night, we went to see a new band, U2. Their singer with the strange name, Bono, had charisma. We ran into Elliott Roberts, Joni Mitchell’s manager at that time, and all ended up at a party in the Hollywood Hills. The owners of the house were a lovely couple into some kind of kinky Nazi love play. The pièce de résistance in their living room was a clear Plexiglas grand piano.

We drank and ate, quickly depleting the supplies. Dusty and I made polite conversation with our host, who was obsessing about his wife, Barbara – he kept repeating her name in a German accent.

The U2 boys were doing a post-mortem on their gig, which always makes me scream with boredom. You played that chord

wrong. You ended the song too early. How did I know they would be megastars one day?

Elliott hovered around me, pointedly ignoring Dusty. Maybe that explained why I discovered her on the couch making out with U2's bass player. My face dropped as if it had been dragged down by centrifugal force. It was too surreal.

"Dusty," I said, "I'm leaving, I'm not gonna watch this," and stormed out.

I had no car, and couldn't drive one anyway. Dusty eventually came after me and apologized. She offered to leave with me, but was too wasted to drive. We ended up getting a ride with a guy who seemed to think he was running laps in the Indy 500. We veered all over the road, dangerously close to the edge of a cliff, nothing between us and the sheer drop miles below. "Oh, get me to a twelve-step program," I thought.

When we got back to Dusty's place, I was a wreck, and yet somehow allowed her to placate me.

There's a joke: what do lesbians do on their second date? Bring a U-Haul.

Well, it's painfully true. In the spring of 1981, Dusty, her two cats, and I moved into a house in Toronto's Cabbagetown. Even as Dusty's faithful Westchester was hauling in the furniture, an inner voice was screaming Nooooooooooooo! Two divas under one roof: bad.

Where do I begin? We had stalkers, Dusty's and mine seeming to band together to launch an all-out assault. One time around eleven o'clock at night four of them were at the door. "We just happened to be in the neighbourhood," they said, thinking we'd be thrilled. If only Dusty's pampered cats could have been trained as guard dogs.

Dusty was so insecure about her looks, it took her hours to

get ready to go out. I'd watch as she checked herself in the mirror for what seemed like the thousandth time. I'd tell her, "You look fabulous in that Kenzo; that colour is amazing on you." Dusty would say, "My hair is wrong! I can't get it to work." I'd say, "Honey, we have to go. We're going to be late." It just didn't register.

Dusty could be so brilliant and entertaining. When we made love, she would sometimes ask me, half-jokingly, to "pound her through the mattress." Afterward, we were always ravenous, but neither of us wanted to cook. Dusty would ask, "Where's our Filipino houseboy?" and then we'd drag ourselves out to dinner. Sometimes my bandmate Kevan, his wife Marilyn, and Roy Krost, whose brother was Dusty's L.A. manager, would join us. Dusty held court with an endless supply of funny stories about her recording sessions and life on the road.

But she wasn't working, and she turned down almost every offer that came her way. She drank, and sometimes I joined her, although inevitably I fell into a drunken heap hours before she did. When I didn't want to play that game, she'd go out until all hours. I'd lie awake imagining all kinds of scenarios.

In the afternoon, when she woke up, she'd apologize sweetly and act contrite. But Dusty was hellbent on destruction, and we both knew it.

The real horror started the day I had to take her on the first of what would be several trips to the emergency room. Dusty had taken some pills, coke, and God knows what else. Another time, I walked in on her in the kitchen, where she'd methodically started to slice the outside of her arms with a knife. I grabbed her, and wrestled the knife out of her hand. Blood had spattered everywhere in our sterile white kitchen.

I tried to ignore the faded scars on her arms from other episodes. What kind of self-loathing drove her to it? Did she

even give a shit about what she was doing? Dusty alluded to the fact that she was the child of an alcoholic mother, and I knew that she and her brother, Tom, were estranged, but otherwise she was mainly silent about her past and the origin of her demons.

I never knew what drama I'd wake up to. Sometimes it was great. On July 29, 1981, we set the clock for 5 a.m. to watch the wedding of Charles and Diana. I made a big disgusting English breakfast. You just fry everything in sight. Then we sat in bed propped up by pillows and cats, and Dusty filled me in on all things royal. She knew the names of the regiments in the wedding procession and the duties of the Queen's guard, the Royal Hussars, who had the sexiest army-drag going. Dusty was positively psychic when it came to the Windsors: "Baby," she said, "the Queen Mother will be wearing a yellow dress. Beryl's [that's Queen Elizabeth] frock will be blue. Yvonne's already had two gin and tonics; her dress will be tangerine." Dusty was right. That really blew me away.

While Dusty was living with me, Kevan and I were recording our second album, *For Those Who Think Young*. It was the follow-up to *Avoid Freud*, which had gone platinum (in the U.S. that would automatically make you a millionaire, but in Canada, a thousandaire, if you were lucky). Still, we felt some pressure to come up with the goods again.

We asked Dusty to sing background vocals on a song we'd written called "The Sacred and the Profane." Under the influence of Dusty – my twisted Catholic girl – my brain was inundated with images of Fellini films and Catholic morality. I think the Catholics have the kinkiest religion going. Don't get me started on the Archangel Michael or Satan.

I think Dusty was in shock over how quickly and efficiently we recorded. My brother Howard, who was also singing, and really into being Dusty's brother-in-law, put her at ease. After their session was finished, we sat in the control room

devouring sushi and listening to the finished product. Some of our fantasies were realized on that record. The song was phat, that's the only way I can describe it.

About six months into our catastrophe, Dusty left for Los Angeles to work on a new album. She took her cats, making sure to erect a tent in our backyard as shelter for any stray that might show up. She couldn't deal with the thought of a cat freezing to death in the winter. I phoned her and told her when a cat did move into the tent. She asked me what he looked like. I said he was white, ginger, and black, and beat-up looking. Dusty said his name had to be Sir Edmund Hillary. I brought him in from the cold and he slept at the foot of our bed.

I started going to Al-Anon meetings so that I could cope with living with an alcoholic. I found it very hard to open up because of my celebrity status, but was somewhat relieved to be in a room full of people as obsessed as I was.

Dusty was starting to work on a new album, *White Heat*. A diverse group of songwriters was attached to it, including Elvis Costello, who was a big fan of hers. Kevan and I contributed two songs. One of them, "Soft Core," was about loving an alcoholic. It was ironic that Dusty ended up recording it.

I went to visit her. Things were tense between us, since Dusty seemed to want to see how far she could go before I'd stop loving her. We went to AA and Al-Anon meetings. People poured out litanies of pain, which was somehow reassuring. Dusty was very mischievous. After the meetings she kept blowing the covers of celebrities that were drinking and using. My mouth would drop open as she rhymed off an A-list of stars wired on blow and booze.

Dusty was sneaking drinks herself, usually vodka because she thought I couldn't smell it on her breath. I'd ask her if

she'd been drinking. She'd look at me with a mixture of guilt and anger on her face. "No, I haven't," she'd reply, in a tone that would make me not want to push it. She hid liquor around the house, but in such obvious places I would always find it. I think she wanted me to confront her. I felt like a cop.

I visited the studio where Dusty recorded, the first time I'd been to a studio in L.A. Even before I walked into the control room, I could hear the sound of chopping, a razor blade against metal. One of the producers Dusty was working with was meticulously pulverizing rock cocaine on a metal tape reel. It was ludicrous; I had to laugh.

I watched her go through the painful process of recording. She was such a perfectionist. She worried over every infinitesimal nuance of her performance, sometimes recording a vocal word by word. She had her own agenda when it came to what was good enough for her. If anyone in the control room ventured to say a take was good, Dusty would just glare at them.

The results were well worth it. Her voice had never sounded better. Dusty never came back to Toronto. We broke up in L.A. I told her I was being torn apart by her behaviour. She was lost and I cared deeply about her, but she was fucking up my life. Dusty was very sweet, and resigned to the outcome.

I had been vain and naive enough to think that my loving her would make everything all right. Twelve-step programs I had suffered through finally made sense: let go and let God.

We kept in contact by phone. I sent her flowers. I wanted her to get better. When *White Heat* was released, there was a dedication: "Because of and in spite of Carole Pope." The record was a flop.

A few years later Dusty moved back to London. I heard "Nothing Has Been Proved" and "What Have I Done to Deserve This," two songs she collaborated on with the Pet Shop Boys, in 1987. They were hip and brilliant. Dusty's voice sounded ethereal.

Her career resurgence introduced her to a whole new audience; the fags loved her. I must have played those songs a hundred times.

Then I heard through Vicki that Dusty had breast cancer. Dusty was very reclusive at this point, but I got hold of one of her many phone numbers and called her.

We talked about her cancer; she said she was in remission. Then we lapsed into silliness. It was good to hear her fabulous laugh again.

Then, a few months before she died, Dusty phoned me and made amends for the way our relationship had been. She said, "I'm sorry for the way I behaved when we were together. You know I loved you." I told her I loved her and that I'd forgiven her long ago.

Several months later, Vicki called me to say that Dusty had bone cancer. It's March, 1999. While recording in a studio in Niagara Falls, I receive a message from Vicki: "Call me whenever you get this." When I do, Vicki says, "I wanted you to hear this from me. I didn't want you to have to read it in the papers. Dusty died in her sleep last night."

The next day, I'm on a flight home to L.A., thinking about Dusty and the funeral and whether I should go. I decide I absolutely have to go.

It is surreal. It's like watching a film. Driving in slow motion in a limo through the wooded hills of the English countryside, I'm dressed like I'm going to see my ex-lover. I want to look good for her. It's been a long time.

Then it hits. I feel her pain leave an imprint on my body.

We pull into a parking lot next to the church. The street is cordoned off, and thick with mourners. When we enter the church I hear her music coming from speakers, the ethereal

sensuality of her voice floating through the air. There is the thick scent of flowers. Priests move toward the altar, followed by a choir.

During the service, Elvis Costello speaks about his admiration for Dusty. He says she was the greatest white soul singer who ever lived. Elvis also reads a letter from Burt Bacharach, who is devastated. He had wanted to record an album with Dusty, but she was too ill. Lulu (famous for her song "To Sir with Love") says she and Dusty were friends for thirty years. She talks about Dusty's gestures during her performances, how Dusty used to write lyrics on her hands and rotate her wrists in a circular motion so she could read them. Neil Tennant speaks about recording with Dusty, how in awe the Pet Shop Boys were of her, what an incredible perfectionist she was. The choir sings the hymn "Jerusalem," its bittersweet lyrics written by the poet William Blake: And did those feet in ancient time, walk upon England's mountains green?

My heart is a dead weight.

I always thought I would see her again, that we would reminisce about our insane time together, but Dusty had to shut herself off to die.

She was a treasure. Too late, she was made an obe (Officer of the Order of the British Empire), and twelve days after she died, she was to be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. I look at the floral tributes to her, and read cards from Paul McCartney and the kids, and the Rolling Stones.

After the funeral, there is a reception in some beautiful hotel, where beautiful polite waiters pass around glasses of champagne. The room is full of old queens with bad comb-overs. Vicki and I hold each other. Her eyes are hidden behind sunglasses, and she looks exhausted.

I talk to another friend, reminiscing about falling up the stairs with Dusty at a hotel in Paris. I meet the Pet Shop

Boys, who are incredibly sweet. They know all about Dusty and me. If only she knew how much she was loved. The phrase reverberates in the room like a mantra.

Like many people in the room, I had let her voice caress me for years before I met her. I had fallen under its spell.

The most erotic thing we ever did in bed was this: I would beg Dusty to sing to me. She would put her mouth up to my ear. Then the sound of her voice, so intimate and so close, would wash over me in waves of pure pleasure.

