

April 2006

Dear Daddy

I sat at a bockety piano in a large room in Belgium when this music and these words came to me. Yes, I had the musical knowledge and the readings on life behind me to write such a song but that merely meant I had been made into a good receptor to which it could be sent because the whole is so much more than the parts. There is only inspiration and resistance to inspiration...of this I am now certain.

There was a moment on that flight when you knew the crash was inevitable. Did you have seconds or was it minutes to ponder that your earthly life was over? Whichever, I know what you did. You prayed. You prayed that all you believed of an after life was true and you prayed for us. "Lord", you cried, "take care of my loving wife Clare and our twelve children; Clare, Dessy, Kevin, Patricia, Peter, Brid, Eileen, Christine, Paddy, Siobhan, Colette and baby John. You must have realized that your death would be like a mental hand grenade in each of our psyches.

Nothing in my life was ever so unexpected or so devastating. You prayed that just once more you could sit with your children "about thy feet as once in Galilee". Now I know why I cried every time Granny played those words from your magnificent hymn. If you had been granted those five minutes what would you have told us? I believe I know. I believe you have told me in a large room at a bockety piano in Belgium. "Dance" you said, "to the rhythm of life".

The day you died, I closed down many feelings. In doing this, I blocked channels of inspiration and left myself with only one internal guide, my intellect. I was smart. I could handle this cruel and challenging world. Well, I couldn't. I was in constant conflict with "those who knew better" and I was firmly blocking whatever internal messages were trying to break through. I ploughed down a middle road.

One day the internal message screamed at me so intensely I had to listen. I was having lunch in a bar in Kilkenny, taking a break in the day from some compromised sales job. As I sat alone, the music above me on the speaker played the introduction to Simon and Garfunkel's recording of Mrs. Robinson. A great song no doubt as Paul Simon's are, but the effect it had on me was way more profound than anything in the world or music.

"Du, du, du, du, du, du" went the introduction and suddenly I wanted to go home. Not to a particular house or family but to some far distant planet or to some alternative dimension. I, Dessy Walls the salesman, was an alien. There was a message in the "du, du, du" calling me home. Only those who've experienced such a calling can know how deep into your being it reaches, touching a part you thought you had buried under solid rock.

I did not get up that moment and change my life. The process was gradual and painful. This pain being a result of resistance. Eventually however, I did reach a point where music and entertainment was my way of life. Yet I continued to search for one last missing piece.

One thing I knew was that this song which had come to me on a bockety piano in a large room in Belgium needed a good producer to bring out the best in it. Yet when it came to finding talented people like that, I was out of the loop. I asked around but no one had any bright ideas. Then one day I asked you.

I parked the car by the old house in Glounthaune. Ma had said she couldn't stay there because the memories were too strong so we had moved the year after you died. I have lived in thirty seven homes since. I use the word home lightly. I have lived at thirty seven permanent addresses. I've had other homes but his home in Glounthaune is deep in my soul. I look at the shed where you were building the trimaran boat, the swimming pool, tennis court, and tomato glass houses you built with your hands. The shed is ragged. The rest are gone. But the trees are there. They stretch up forty feet as you said they would. They were little twigs when you planted them. We pretended to believe you when you said they'd be as tall as the ones in Mahony's field. It was a lot to take in but you were right. You always had that habit of annoying people by being

right. You believed in the power of nature and that true nature was way beyond our comprehension. You are still right.

I asked you, "Daddy help me find the right producer for that song".

Padraig Parker is the guy in Midleton who prints my CDs. He does them in small lots of one hundred which suits me. You remember Midleton. Twenty miles to Midleton, Midleton, Midleton, twenty miles to Midleton, Midleton, Midleton far away. We'd sing it down, twenty then nineteen miles then eighteen 'til we got to Midleton. It was magic. It still is. As I was leaving Padraig, thinking of something else, a thought flashed into my head, "ask him". "Padraig", I said, "do you know a producer who could give full expression to my song 'Dance to the Rhythm of Life'?" "Hang on", he said, "I'll write down some details for you".

Two days later I met Dave Keary. Dave looked at me as if I was a long lost brother and repeated the name Dessy Walls three times. But Daddy, it was you Dessy Walls not me Dessy Walls he was referring to. In Galway in the forties, he told me, Dessy Walls met Liam Keary at UCG and they became great friends for life. Liam was Dave's father. Uncle Liam, the funniest adult in my childhood, was Dave's father. "Yes, he died ten years ago", Dave told me. There was a moment's silence during which I could feel that you and Liam were somewhere watching all this with great amusement. "Dave", I said, "will you produce my song? I've been sent to you."

When Dave told me what dates he could work on the song, it included April 6th which he was not to know would have been your 83rd birthday. That, I felt was your way of confirming in case I had any doubts, that you were involved in this project.

I was thinking about all this on the 24th March, the anniversary of your death. Another of your five sons whose path has been as varied as mine has recently joined me on a great musical project. Well, you know all this. Anyway I was thinking, as you had used your birthday to communicate, you might also say something on your anniversary. As I was sitting in a coffee bar writing words to a song for the show Peter and I will do together, I wrote down the title of that song not as a title but as a question "Who am I?" Who am I? Just then the speakers above me played "du, du, du, du, du, du, du, du", Simon and Garfunkel's Mrs. Robinson. There was no feeling of alienation this time, but of completeness and homecoming. Full circle.

It was 12:14 March 24th 2006.

Later that day I sat in Peter's house. He walked in singing "du, du, du, du, du, du, du, du". "No", he said "that's not coincidence it was playing on my CD player in the car. I put that CD there when you told me of your moment of calling in Kilkenny."

"What time did Daddy's plane go down?" I asked him.

"12:14 thirty eight years ago today".

As I write this, the words you sent me play....

*Don't be afraid of the cold or the heartache
Don't be afraid of the trouble or pain
Breathe in the life, the love all around you
And if you fall down, stand up again
And dance to the rhythm of life*

Thank you

Love Dessy