

## FEATURE

# On a journey...

Having made my decision to go to the Cotswolds next, via London for an afternoon, I inform my cousin Jo in Scotland about my decision not to come up to stay with her this side of the funeral. I get the feeling she's a bit relieved, as she keeps mentioning how worried she is about her sister Annie, who lives next door to her and suffers from emphysema. Jo's taking care of her, bringing her food and generally checking she has what she needs in the house, but if Annie catches Covid, as Jo puts it, "She'd be gone in days," and anyone coming in from outside is a potential threat.

Sarah gives me the heads up that her father, who's my brother John and his partner Sharon are going to ask me to do a Covid test, not just that, but will actually give me the package with a self-administrating one to do in it. Even though John is considering himself at high-risk of catching Covid and therefore me, a danger, I'm immediately upset by this on a number of counts and want to understand where this kind of angst brewing in me is really coming from. As we are also mirrors to others' thoughts and feelings, what we experience is not random and even if it is also tainted by our own habitual traits, the resultant feeling is often added to by the energy of the intention from whence it came. Now that I've talked to quite a lot of people about Covid in the UK, I'm seeing how much stricter John and Sharon are being about it than most. Christopher had also told me that he was upset by their obstinacy to see him, as he'd tried to meet John on a number of occasions during last year, but was always refused. Like a brush with fate, they'd finally met in John's garden the week before Christopher died, but I think how sad it is now that they didn't spend more time together during the year, because Christopher never actually caught Covid and now he is dead and John can never meet him again. My kids and I often use the modern phrase, "Let's YOLO it!" when considering whether or not to do something a bit off the beaten track or daring, 'YOLO' (You Only Live Once) telling you to be present and to live in the moment, rather than over thinking things through to the point of discarding them because of all the risks involved!

I am not going to pretend any differently to how I'm really feeling, as I feel the energy of 'paranoia' rather



*Susan in the shopping mall, Hatfield, UK*

than prudence, blazing like wildfire around this request. Considering that I've taken the necessary precautions to spend 14 days in quarantine to prevent me from being a risk to anyone, by which time I should have already had it if I'd caught it on my journey over, I find this is simply 'pandering neuroticism', which I will not be a party to. But more than I myself can reason with, it's bugging me to such an extent that I am somehow feeling blue about everything. I need to be given space to live my own truth here, to make decisions for myself and plus, compliancy without good reason has never been my game play, especially because the last thing I'm out to do



*Susan trying on different jackets and boots in the shopping mall, Hatfield, UK*

here is to put anyone at risk of catching Covid! That fact itself punctures respect for my intelligence and modus operandi, on many levels. I am enough in tune with my body and mind to be aware of sensitive changes to my overall well being, in other words, I can figure out myself whether I need to do a Covid test or not! Confronting John on this, however, will be a delicate task, as he and his partner have already convinced themselves that the danger of catching Covid is at every turn. This feels to me more like the disease of 'fear', which over the long term may be way more dangerous! While I'm still at Wendy's, another very shocking message arrives from Francesca, telling me that the fellow who's the 'inner' curator of the exhibition we've been preparing for the museum in London and is therefore integral to the entire exhibition plan I've been working on with Ian, has died. This is really unexpected and notwithstanding the fact that he's a nice bloke, I'm also wondering whether the exhibition will now be compromised, as he's the one actually employed by the museum itself and therefore a crucial link in the chain. Ironically, I notice that coming up just a few weeks ahead in my diary I've written across a number of pages that this fellow and Ian should be arriving at our place in the Indian Himalayas to spend some time with us to flesh out the exhibition plan, after which time I've jotted down names of several cities in India we were going to travel to on certain dates after that, 'Dehra Dun' in Uttarakhand and 'Kalimpong' in West Bengal, to meet with some key people who could become involved in the exhibition too. What we are trying to do here is definitely not going to happen so easily now, but there's no way forward except to keep on moving forward! I send a mail off to Ian, who's the 'outer' curator of the exhibition. He says that he too has just heard the news and will have to rethink the whole thing now. On my last day at Wendy's, I'm dying to get out and about so I cross the fields behind her house, on the old footpath, 'The Alban Way' that follows a disused railway line with some of the original signs in place, to get to a shopping mall on the edge of Hatfield. It's a Monday morning and the place is nearly empty. I realize that in my angst and hurry to leave home in India,

I didn't pack cleverly for the coming months when it's definitely going to get cooler, and people are not likely to have their central heating on in their houses just yet. I need some vests and warm socks, a woolly jacket I can wear indoors and some new trainers or short boots for trekking around cities that double up as being smart enough for meetings. For someone, who absolutely dreads having to choose a couple of specific items out of the huge range they have in these large stores, I have to admit that I've never enjoyed shopping like this before! Plus, having been confined for weeks, months even if you consider how Jamyang and I have been living so isolated in India, I appreciate the human contact with each and every salesperson. I casually stop at a Costa situated in the centre of the place for a coffee, but cannot sit down at the tables there unless I download a 'track and trace' app onto my phone that apparently, since last Monday, has become a new rule throughout the UK. The guy tells me more about it and I decide there and then that I am not going to be monitored like this, to be told later down the line that someone in the café I was



*The little horse in the stables at Wendy's, St Alban's, UK*

by and to visit one of the local charity shops to find a 'new' handbag, as the one I've brought with me from India is simply trashed and needs to be binned. Ironically I'd bought it from the same charity shop where today I find a decent sized, peach coloured one, which will suit my purposes for this trip. Arabella is there when I return and we spend an hour catching up news over a



*The fields behind Wendy's house and her black horse, St Alban's UK*

sitting in that day has now caught Covid, which means I too will have to self-isolate myself for 2 weeks. No way! I buy my coffee and take it to an empty space of the mall where they've removed all the benches and chairs due to Covid, giggling at it all while trying to fit my bottom onto the curbside of the railing with just enough space to sit without technically speaking being on the floor. The next morning I catch a train into London and then the tube over to Kensington High Street. There are only a few people traveling, perhaps because it's mid-morning, or is this just the new Covid situation here, I wonder to myself? As I have stayed so often at Arabella's place or at her parents' house here during the last couple of years, Kensington High Street is such a familiar area to me now. I park up my luggage at Arabella's so my hands are free to run some errands at the bank near-

coffee and a pastry, after which I go up to her attic to find the little case I keep there where I've left my long, smart winter boots and then into her garage to find my winter coat, which is hanging there on one of the rails along with some of her things.

After leaving Arabella's, I meet Samuel. We'd been planning to go somewhere for a nice lunch, but find that the 'track and trace' app must be active on your phone in every café, restaurant and eatery in the vicinity, notwithstanding that so many of them are also simply closed. In the end, we buy some sandwiches and take them to the beautiful Brompton Cemetery at the back of Earl's Court Road.

To be continued...

For all previous editions of Susan's story, 'On a Journey...', please go to: [www.pyramidkey.com/readsusansarticleshere/](http://www.pyramidkey.com/readsusansarticleshere/)