

3/39

CROW-BOX6-3/35-roc1

What Next ? and Other Stories

Courtship...

Child-birth...

Dying.

True Stories
by
Ruth Crow
1998.

What Next ?

Cooking for a Special Celebration

By Ruth Crow, Stories for Ageing Project

18/ 5/ '98

A Modern Version of the Biblical Story

Martha was troubled with much serving. Mary sat at the Lord's feet.

(Luke 10, 38)

At least once a month Aunty Anna would come all the way from Diamond Creek. She always brought some freshly laid eggs and a basketful of fruit and vegetables from their farm.

I have distinct memories of one of her visits in the Autumn of 1936. On that day the sight of the eggs inspired me to make a cake which was to change the course of my life for ever.

With hindsight I think I can remember saying *Fresh eggs ! On Saturday I'll make THE cake, oh Thanks Aunt Anna !* and then adding under my breath, *I hope a lovely sponge for tea will give me enough courage to invite Maurie to meet the family after the Youth Conference.*

So, early on Saturday morning I whisked away happily crooning :-

*Pat a cake, pat a cake, Baker's Man
Bake me a cake as fast as you can !
Pat a cake, pat a cake, I hope and pray
That Maurie will come to tea today !*

When the cake had cooled I iced it and waited until the icing was set. Then I piped the words :- *What Next ? Youth Against Fascism*, featuring the question mark in imitation of lettering on leaflet about the Student Peace Conference.

I had barely time to catch the tram to the city so that I could hear the first conference speaker. At the end of the day, by good luck, or good management, Maurie did catch the same tram as I did as he lived in the same direction.

Just before my last stop I said to him, very casually :- *How about coming to my home for tea. My mother never worries if there are extras.* To my surprise (and joy) he followed me through the tram door.

*Pat a cake, pat a cake, Baker's Man
Let's get home as fast as we can !
Come on Maurie, come home with me,
To meet the family. and eat cake for tea !*

More surprises (and joys) when Maurie helped me to set the table. I was a bit shy bringing out the sponge from the pantry, but plucked up enough courage to say, as modestly as possible ;-. *We have an aunt on a farm and when she brings in fresh eggs I usually make a cake.*

And what did Maurie say ?

*The sponge shows that you have learnt from Mrs Beeton that
The way to a man's heart is through his stomach,
but
the decorations indicate that you will learn from Lenin's
words that every cook must learn how to govern the state !*

Did he really say that ?

No ! NO ! **NO** of course he didn't,!!!!

He had no need to use words !

MAURIE'S WHIMSICAL SMILE DID THE SPEAKING !

*Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, what a surprise !
Life's lesson shone from Maurie's eyes;
"Its a lovely cake but, don't sit at my feet
"Come join the demonstrators in the street.
"Stop being a drudge as fast as you can
"There is more to life than feeding a man."*

A Dance to Life

A Story About Birth and Control over Birthing

by Ruth Crow 1998.

*Life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday,
You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.
(from Persian Poet, Kahlil Gibran)*

I have spent many hours waiting for the brown bus at the stop opposite the Royal Women's Hospital.

Sometimes I read, sometimes I knit but usually I just sit and muse. Frequently I find myself silently humming ...

*There's a good time coming be it ever so far away,
That's what I say to myself, says I
Jolly good luck ! Hooray !*

When this happens I know that my eyes are turning up to the windows of the top floors of the building opposite. I will never forget visiting the birth centre just a few hours after the births of my first three great-grand-children...First, Simone then her sister Maxine and a few years later their cousin Corina.

When I arrived to welcome Corina, about three hours after her birth, Simone and Maxine were dancing to soft music on the tape recorder. They were quite un-self-conscious of the appreciative audience... the nurse and the doctor, and of course, the family members. Corina slept.

When the bus takes ages to come my musing takes me back to 1936 and I can clearly see Maurie striding along whistling with great abandon :-

*You go home and get your scanties
And I'll run and get my panties
And away we'll go.
Off we'r going to shuffle, shuffle off to Buffalo.*

*Some day the stork may pay a visit and leave a little souvenir
A little cute, "What is it ?"
But we'll discuss that later dear*

Then the repeat of the chorus, with great crescendo.

But Maurie and I were wise enough not to heed the last line. We borrowed books by Van de Velde "Ideal Marriage" and "Fertility and Sterility in Marriage". Maurie sought information from (male) friends about which chemists he could ask for the birth control aids Van De Velde recommended. I tried to get advice from the Royal Women's, out-patients' clinic; only to be severely reprimanded. *We only give birth control advice when the women's health is in danger. If you don't want children, don't get married.*

The memory of this rebuff usually stimulates thoughts about the time I asked my doctor what sort of books I should be reading

about child birth. The less you know about it the better. The delivery of your baby is my job, its your job to get to the hospital in good time. So in mid June 1940 I had A NIGHT OF FEAR, ••• I was ALONE, in the DARK, on a HIGH BED, in a STRANGE ROOM knowing that my doctor was ten miles away and that the phone exchange was not open from 8pm to 8am.

My loud moaning resulted in a hurried visit from a nurse who said We don't expect people like you to disturb us with such noise, You sounded like a Dago. And she slapped me !

*I see the brown bus is coming. At last I am on my way !
Goodbye to idle thinking
I've work to do today !*

A STORY ABOUT FEELING POWERFUL 1988.
I Just Want To Go HOME !

The Day We Marched to Peter's Tune...Dah, Dah A Dumpty Dee.

Ruth Crow 19/5/97

"If you go home, Mr Crow, you'll be dead within six weeks"

"I just want to go home !".

"Mr Crow, if you go home you won't have access to our life saving machines. You will be dead within six weeks.

"I just want to go home !!

"If you go home, Mr Crow, it may not be possible for you to be readmitted to hospital. You will be dead within six weeks."

Were my heart beats breaking the silence ? What would happen if I burst into tears ? What if Maurie caved in ? He hung his head even lower.

"I just want to go home !!!"

.....
Over night the news of Maurie's decision must have reached some of his friends who were employed at the hospital. So,

IMAGINE THE PROCESSION

First, came MAURIE in a wheel chair,
then a couple of social workers,
after them a wardsman, walking beside a nursing aide.,
next came a doctor in his white coat

An occupational therapist joined in and soon after
a physio-student,

And I was trailing the rear,

HUMMING

A dah, dah a dumpty dee, a dumpty, dunpty dumpty dee, A dah
dumpty dah, dumpty dee.....

Dah dah a dumpty dee, Maurie's coming home with me !
For one whole month we will be free... a dah dumpty dah dumpty
dee...

But what if he had said "I don't want to die, let me stay in hospital", What then ?

**DAH, DAH, A DUMPTY DEE !! MAURIE'S COMING HOME WITH ME !! A DAH.
DUMPTY DAH.**

Explanations :-

1. No doctor ever sat down during this or any other interview.
2. In actual practice there were many more people in the farewell procession.; Poetic licence and respect for Prokofieve's meter limited my numbers
3. The word "free" had strong, sentimental signifigance to Maurie and me.
4. The doctors correctly predicted the length of time Maurie would live, but can you compare six weeks at home to a few months coupled to a machine in an intensive care ward ?
5. Maurie had participated in and helped to organise numerous processions, but he did not directly organise this one, perhaps he did spiritually..

When In Solitude I Sup

by Ruth Crow, May 25, 1998.

Stories of Ageing: Thoughts About When Eating Alone.

Thanks to John Milton's "On His Blindness"

And to Harry Lauder's "Roaming in the Gloaming".

When I consider how my days are spent
In this small flat, where alone I now reside,
My cooking skills which were my joy and pride,
Lodged with me useless, though my heart more bent
To serve a good breakfast, dinner and tea
At a table set for the whole family.
Oh ! I miss the clatter, chatter and fun
When I sit at a table just for one !
The loss for me is not only the dining
Without a partner there's no more wining,
No biscuits and cheese, no sharing of cares
No exchange of ideas in the old green chairs.
So, farewell Hebe and your brimming cup !
I live alone and in solitude I sup !
Its no good sighing, so I'll smile instead,
Letting Maurie's song whistle through my head

"Maurie's Song " sung to "Roaming in the "Gloaming"

Sitting in the green chairs at the ending of the day.
Sitting in the green chairs drinking all our cares
away.

Its the hour before night's rest
That's the time that we like best.

Oh its lovely sitting in the green chairs !

"Come on Ruthie, Come on ! What are you 'Just going to do ?'

Its green chair time !"

.....

Quentin's daughter
Julie has a partner
a grandchild
one grand-child.
a grandchild needs 12 months

To
Kylie and Quentin
and
The Spring Baby

An Explanation

I won't be surprised if you do look aghast
At dressing your baby in clothes from the past
But this does not prevent me from knitting for you
These old-fashioned modesties in white and in blue..
When I look back on our parenting years
I remember the peeing as well as the tears
And how pleasant it was for baby and me
To have woollen modesties that soaked up the wee.
So defy modern fashions and let baby wear
These hand-knitted modesties each day of the year.

I won't be surprised if you both smile and sigh
At the size of the panties, so I'll tell you why.
You won't need to use them while baby is small,
They are made for a baby that's learning to crawl.
Just put them away for six months or so
Each day that goes by your baby will grow
Until one fine day you will suddenly find
That the modesties fit snugly on baby's behind.

from

Ruthie

September, 1997



When I Look in My Mirror I Don't Only See Me.

By Ruth Crow, May 1997.

(My mirror reflects an uninterrupted view west from my fifth floor flat)

When I look in my mirror I don't want to see
Two watery eyes peering at me,
False teeth reminding of the seering pain
That I suffered from toothache again and again,
Sunspots which seem to get bigger each night,
Lank hair turning white, like a witch in a fright.

When I look in the mirror, I do want to see
Out to the World that is all around me,
So, I have hung my mirror in a special place
Where I see a view instead of my face.
Wheat silos standing straight and tall
And in their shadows wool sheds sprawl.
On the horizon, towering into the sky
The high rise flats dwarf the church nearby
And sometimes, glittering in the sun
A train snakes by on its suburban run.
There are houses too with roofs, green red
and white
And thousands of lights doubling stars at night.

I look to the east for the western sky
Left changes to right and I know that I
Am PART OF THE WORLD AND
THE WORLD'S PART OF ME
When I look in the mirror that's what I like to see!

*(But before I finish this I must confess
I do use my mirror to check on my dress.
When I look in my mirror I like to see
That the clothes that I am wearing are OK for me.)*