





# **The Coffee Cup Philosopher**

More Poems  
By a housewife who knows

**Erica Abbott**



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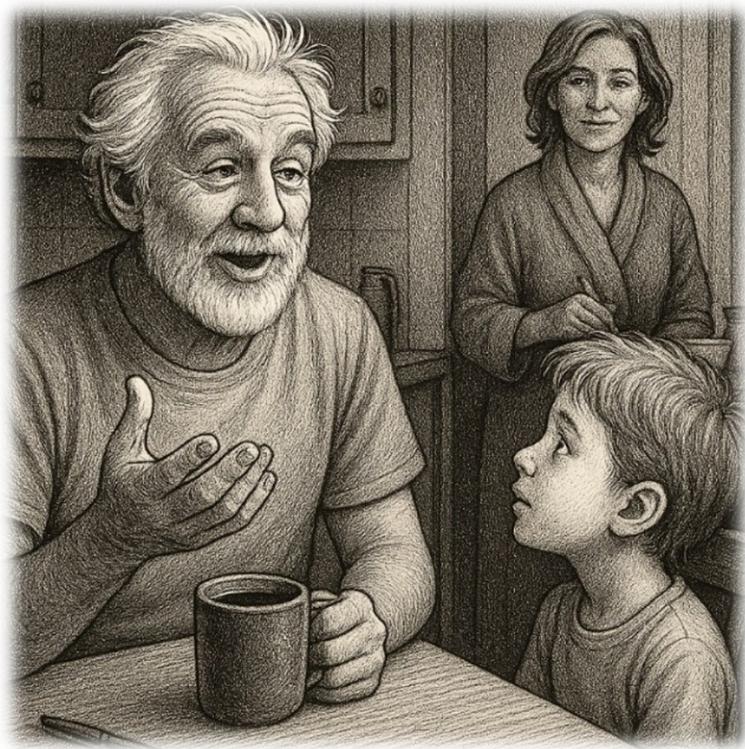
To a special cousin, Sandy Chesler, who proofread my poems.

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# The coffee cup philosopher

The wife is making coffee just as she has done for many years.  
The old man sits at the table with his grandson at his side.

Steam rises from the pot and the wife carries it to the table, and as she fills his cup she says, "Be careful dear, it's very hot."

The old man grips the cup with slightly shaking hands; he takes a sip, nods, and winks at her to show he approves the morning brew.

An aspiring philosopher, he turns to his grandson and says these wonderful words of home-grown wisdom:

"Each day is like a journey and there is no need to worry. One should stir their coffee like this, see? No need to rush. I do enjoy my first cup of coffee as it's usually the best one of the day. Start your day with coffee, like successful men have always done. Life was never meant to be easy, but coffee helps us along the way. Experience is a hard teacher because she always gives the test first. The lesson comes afterwards. Don't seek happiness, just create it. You don't need life to go your way to be happy."

The grandson cocks his head as he tries to make sense of what his grandfather just said.

The old man nods to the child by his side, then holding his cup up high, makes a toast, "Here is to the delightful innocence of youth."

His wife, washing dishes, is listening to the philosopher carry-on.  
She smiles, shakes her head and whispers to herself,

"He's such a silly old fool!"

~~~

Note:

Quote about "Experience..." by Vernon Sanders Law

Quote about "Happiness..." attributed to Victor Frankl or Albert Camus

Quote about "Life not meant to be easy..." by George Bernard Shaw



## A visit from an elegant cat

I was staying with friends and late one night I was alone in my room, when in walked an elegant black and white cat. I could not even hear her soft pads on the wooden floor.

She carefully explored the room, checking every corner; not talking or stalking nor expecting anything more.

Then, after a moment or two she gave a little meow, as if to say, "The inspection is over now."

She turned and politely walked away. A dutiful cat who had no further reason to stay.

I felt honored to be made welcome and was greatly relieved to know that my presence in the house had been officially approved.

~~~



## A two man play

My husband and I have been making breakfast together for so many years that it is now like a well-rehearsed two man play. Without saying a word we both know exactly what to do.

He makes coffee and butters the toast.

While he is doing that, I'm making our lovely fried eggs. I smother them in butter, then flip them for a few seconds and add just the right amount of pink salt and pepper.

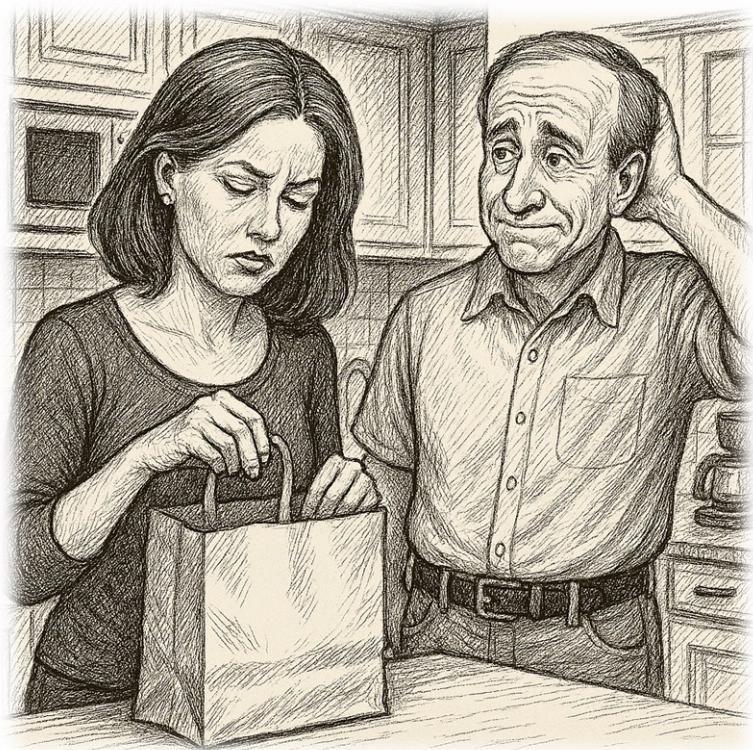
In a flash, everything is ready, like the timing of a Swiss watch! Delicious eggs, amazing fresh coffee, buttered sourdough toast, all turned out perfect, as usual.

I love to soak my toast in the yellow egg yolks. "We thoroughly enjoy these morning meals together.

But I must remind Sandy that he forgot the honey, again. He jumps up, grabs it off the counter and hands it to me. I apply it liberally to my last piece of toast, exquisitely yummy!

After all these years it is more than love. We are equal co-stars in our two-man play. However, I can always offer him a bribe, and he will quickly wash up all the dishes.

~~~



## Where are the eggs?

Betty and George were coming over for dinner and I thought they would enjoy my French soufflé, but I needed twelve eggs.

I made a shopping list which I gave to my husband, and pointed out that I needed a dozen large, pasture-raised eggs. When he got back home this is what he said,

"I stood in the aisle, list in hand and read your words which I did not fully understand. You had 'quinoa' written twice. Is that something that goes with rice, or a spice, or some kind of terrible vice? Then I thought it might be something in that song Engelbert used to sing: 'Quando, quando, quando, quando' I had no idea. But I found the milk, the bread, and the jam. I even got the special, which was a dozen cans of almost out of date clams! Then I lost your list in the spice aisle and gave up looking for it after a while. The frozen peas which I think were on your list, for some reason were under lock and key! So, I grabbed the beans, maybe five cans too many. It was such a bargain dear, all this for about a penny!"

Then he handed me the grocery bag. I looked in the bag and raised a brow and quietly asked, "Did you forget the eggs?"

He looked at me and sheepishly said, "Oh, yeah, sorry about that, but I got pickles, jam and four loaves of slightly stale bread on special instead."

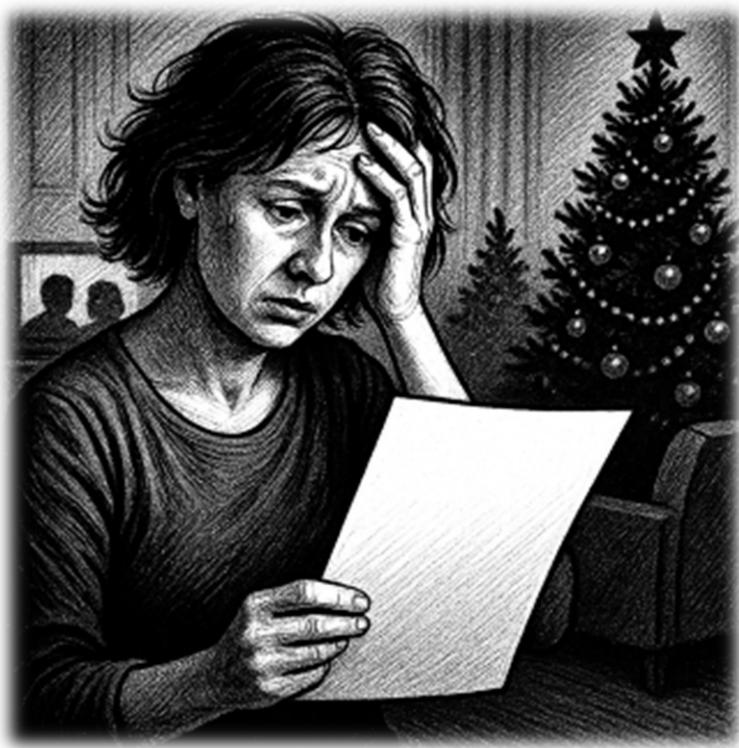
What could I say? At least he tried. I sighed and said, "I won't make a soufflé, but we'll make reservations for us four at La Bella Café." Our favorite eating place that Betty and George will think is just great!"

I have learned an important lesson; next time I send my husband out shopping I will write the list on his wrist!

~~~

### Definition:

A soufflé is a baked egg-based dish that originated in France, known for its light, puffed-up texture.



# Getting into gear for the new year

We have a lovely view of the lake from here on the fourth floor. After a lazy, quiet break over New Year, life suddenly woke up and is now quickly moving into high gear.

Above me, loud sounds of high heels and skates can be heard on the bare wooden floor, intermittently drowned by the roar of blasting sirens, fire trucks, ambulances, car horns, a noisy jet overhead and even more!

The wind is blowing through the trees, shaking all the leaves, and bringing dreadful dust, in powerful gusts, way up to my window here!

As I look over my list of new year's resolutions, I am filled with optimism and wonderful anticipation.

However, there is a slight concern that sometime next June, I will find this list of resolutions in my junk drawer, and that once again I will be dismayed that nothing really changed.

Let me ask: Do you too, perhaps, have the same wonderful delusion that something after the start of every new year might actually change?

~~~



## My admiration

My good friend Val had parents who were both deaf and dumb. Despite this, from incredibly young, Val refused to be a victim of their handicap.

By the age of five she somehow learned the skill of sign language so she could communicate with her parents, using only her teeny hands.

She told me it was such a fun game talking that way. As she grew older, Val adapted really well to both her noisy and silent worlds.

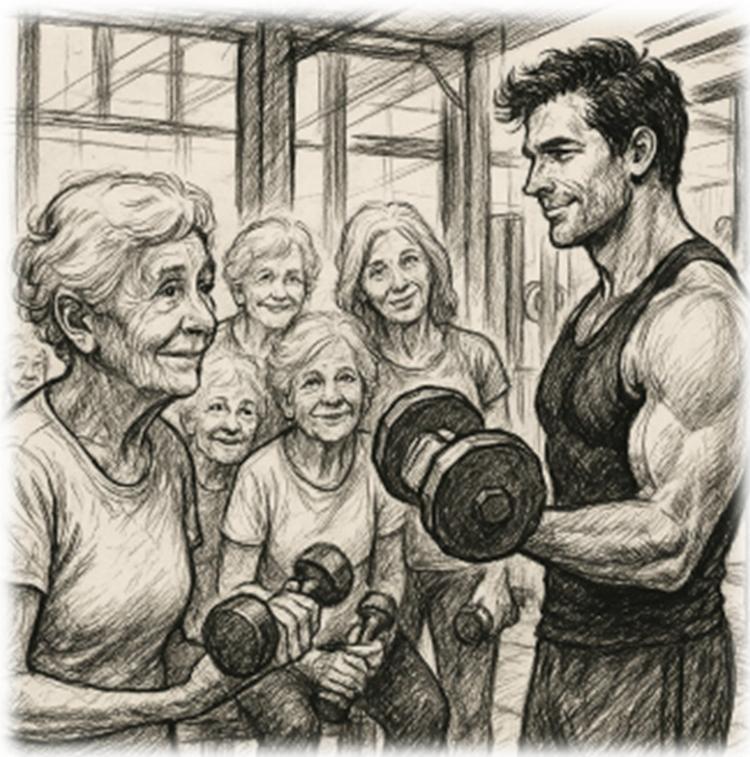
She would listen to the roaring traffic and rumbling lawn mower nearby; also, the birds singing, ducks quacking and the clickety clack of wheels on the track as the trains went flying by.

Val also appreciated the silent world of her parents at home, the games they played and the good times they shared. I really admired her ability to deal with both these worlds.

Years later, I was amazed again when Val became an excellent actor and drama teacher. Her parents were blessed to have such a clever daughter.

I am honored to have had her as a dear friend for all these years.

~~~



## The teeny white lie

Old is relative. To someone incredibly young, "old" could be twenty-one! But to someone over sixty-five, "old" probably means more than eighty-five.

You know you are heading that way, when you have too many gray hairs and people offer you help when you are trying to get up or down the stairs.

When someone tells you a funny joke and you pee in your pants.

Or when you blow your nose and your hearing just suddenly goes!

You know you getting old when your neighbor pops by for a cup of tea and you suddenly go blank on her name, which you have known for many years is Mary-Jane!

Or you can no longer bend to shake out the mat and have to wait until next week when your grandchild comes for a visit and can help you with that!

It is funny, I have noticed at our gym it's sometimes hard to tell who is a spring chicken and who is over the hill. It is usually the face that gives it away. But nowadays, plastic surgery can extend anyone's heyday so that they look thirty-nine and forever stay that way! This teeny white lie can help a poor widow suddenly look young, so that she can attract a handsome, rich guy, feel secure and continue to have some fun.

I have never tried this teeny white lie. But, as the years go by, I am thinking more and more about giving it a try. Because then I will be well prepared for the day when I need to meet another handsome, rich guy.

~~~



## Fashion plans for planet Mars

Fashion has always been my passion.

In the 1800s, women wore tight corsets to pinch in their waists, and they revealed plenty bosom which was considered good taste!

Then in 1929 Coco Chanel arrived on the scene and became known as this era's Fashion Queen. She introduced a new era of casual sportswear; pants, blazers, tweed jackets that worked out great with the short bob for women's hair!

My recall in the early 50's was making paper clothes for cardboard cutout dolls, coloring them with trendy colors and clipping them on and off for hours and hours.

In 1957 at age thirteen I insisted my hair had to be long, as ponytails were the rage. Shortly thereafter, we all had a beehive that soon followed on!

In the fabulous, swinging 60's a teenage model, Twiggy, came onto the London scene. With her stylish, short pixie hair she inspired every teen to crop theirs, dress more boldly and lose a lot of weight. Fashion

magazines captured wonderful images of her, and she soon became the world's top fashion model, winning the hearts of my entire generation.

The fashion scene in the 1970's and 80's was not very inspiring. The only change was the hem, which moved from the knee to the calf, then the ankle, and then back up again.

The scene in the 1990's was mostly casual, with jeans and sneakers worn everywhere by kids, adults and teens; perhaps, in private, even by the Queen!

In 2000 things became weird. Kids all tore holes in their jeans, got satanic tattoos and even gold rings attached to private places, which I cannot elaborate here. But, thank heavens, that fad quickly went away before we all got turned into clay.

Over the next few years bikinis got smaller and smaller and almost disappeared with the arrival of the G-string! Then came yoga pants that you may well recall; all so tight fitting that everyone suspected they were designed in hell.

During that time men forgot to shave. They thought they looked "cool" or else ran out of blades. However, I suspect they did not know much then about us girls.

I read somewhere a "theory" that skirt lengths get shorter in good economic times and longer in bad. Is this true? I am thinking it is just mad.

Fashion has come a long way. In the next few years, I am quite sure my grandchildren will only buy a space suit that is in fashion on the moon!

Now that I think of it, I'll have a chat with Elon who is busy making cars. about any fashion plans he has in mind for planet Mars.

~~~



## Time to leave.

Gun shots ring out and whizz past his ear. The girl is hiding in the closet nearby, petrified, sobbing quietly from horrendous fear.

Her older brother kneels at the window reloading his gun. He is prepared with a knife in his back pocket, ready and waiting.

He whispers to her, "Shhh, be quiet. Stay there in the closet."

Then a long, empty silence, for what seems forever.

The girl keeps drifting and waking. The air in the closet is stale and she wonders if it is safe to come out for air; yet she is too scared. She was dreaming when he shook her awake, "Quick, it's time to leave, we must run now, before it's too late!"

Dear God,

War was never your intention, no doubt. We need to raise humanity to a level where they do not choose war. Billions of us, too many to count, are praying for peace. Most people on earth all agree that we need to create your vision of a world without war."

~ ~ ~



# All you need is love

They came from Liverpool with guitars in their hands,  
spoke the truth to my generation, helping us understand.

Their songs stirred so many things, deep and new;  
forever changing the world's music and us baby boomers too.

Four lads with guitars, hopes and dreams that soared.

They rewrote music; spinning stories and chords into songs that roared.

Their concerts were packed with thousands of teens,  
and they were even knighted by the Queen.

We grew our hair long like theirs as we had found our place.

Their words and music gave special meaning to a war-torn human race.

*Help!* and *Yesterday* removed our deepest fears. In the haze of the '60s their messages ran deep, uniting Earth's cultures everywhere. Their catchy tunes, engaging lyrics, long hair and curious outfits influenced my entire generation. They were the new-age prophets calling for love and peace.

Sadly, through the decades their names just faded away and the life-changing music of the Beatles has been lost in the noise of today's digital space.

Young people that scroll on a screen do not even know the sound of the band that once turned the entire world around. What a shame!

To me, the Beatle's voices still ring clear even after all these years.

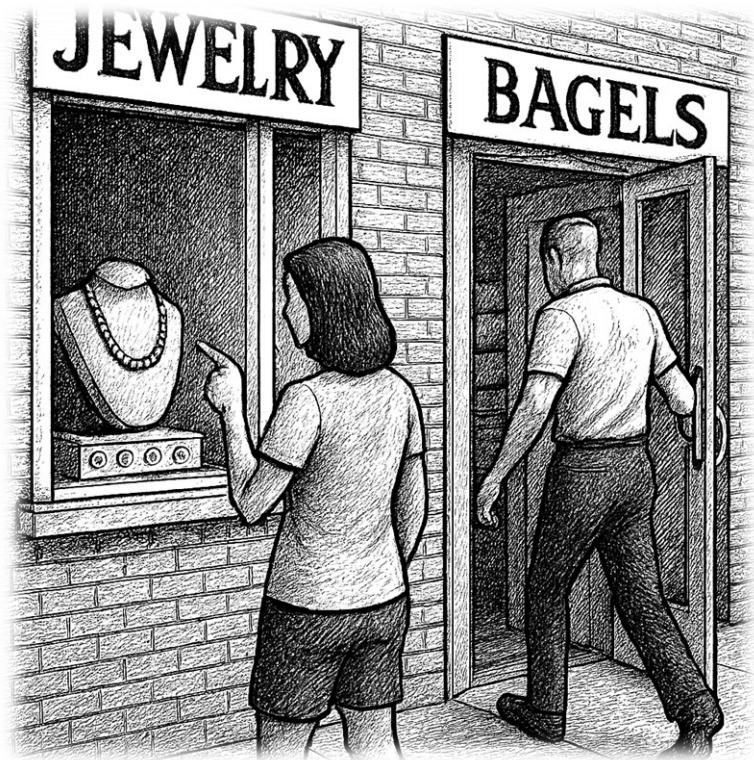
Decades may have faded their names; but to my generation their claim to fame will forever be the same.

What does it take to wake up an entire generation?

“All you need is love”

~~~

*Help!* and *Yesterday* were popular songs by the Beatles



# One hundred and four

As senior citizens, Sandy and I want to keep our youthful energy. So, we have set a goal to stay active until the ripe old age of one hundred and four.

We believe it is not dependent on being rich or poor, rather just every morning getting up early and out the door.

When we were young, we both enjoyed our sport. Living in Hawaii, he swam every day. In South Africa, I was playing tennis with my high school and college teams.

These days we walk around a nearby lake and even jog a bit to keep in shape. We enjoy our daily outings around the lake watching the ducks, greeting our friends, and breathing the fresh morning air.

Instead of watching TV all day, we both stay active so that we can keep on trucking and live past the ripe old age of one hundred and four, and maybe even more!

But just between you and me, I really need some help to keep Sandy from sneaking lox and bagels when I look the other way, or he may not make it with me to the ripe old age of one hundred and four.

~ ~ ~

keep on trucking; encouragement, to stay focused on a particular job.



## The house across the way

I see part of an old house across the way from my kitchen window, day after day. It is hidden, beautifully framed by tall, giant trees on either side.

Occasionally, I spot an old man hanging around. Is he trying to hide or else waiting for someone? I do not know.

There is no sign of a dog or cat about. No loud music or even a TV sound. I have not ever seen a child about or heard anyone play or shout. I look again and again at the house across the way, hoping to see someone in the garden one day. Perhaps sweeping or picking up fallen leaves.

Some weeks ago, I was in the kitchen making myself a cup of tea. Looking out, I noticed the old man once again. He was not alone. He had a pretty lady, young as a bride at his side, whose elbow he gripped, very tight.

Mesmerized, I watched them hug and kiss long on the lips. Was she his wife, mistress, secretary or maybe someone he hired and had paid well? I could not tell. Recently, she has appeared once a week and her visits always seem to end with a long enthusiastic kiss.

I was dying of curiosity, but the words that my mom used to say just would not go away,

"Mind your own business Erica, there are some things you will never, ever know."

Turns out she was right again; as usual!  
Two weeks later, he turned up dead.

~ ~ ~



# **It is time to get packed.**

These wintery mornings I`m sleeping later and later.

Sandy is snoring peacefully as I pull my warm hands and nose and toasted feet out from under our cozy, flannel sheets. My bare feet run like scared cats across the ice-cold floor to the spare cupboard to find my warmest boots.

Soon my poor frozen feet are starting to thaw out in my wonderful warm Ugg boots. Minutes later, I am holding my steaming coffee mug close, with both hands pleasantly warming while sipping the hot tasty brew.

I am trying to see the normally pretty view from our living room window, which is now all frosted up. Nothing seems to move out there. It is like a graveyard on a dismal rainy day where everything is very still and depressingly grey.

I am concerned about getting older because it takes me much longer to warm up on these very cold mornings.

This makes me think about the ducks. I appreciate their wisdom. Not so long ago they all migrated south for the warmer weather.

So, I have just decided to take a tip from the ducks. We are going to fly south and stay with my friend Wendy who lives in Miami. We will go to the warm, sunny beach every day for the rest of this miserable winter!

I act quickly! I walk into the bedroom, shake Sandy, and give him the good news, “Wake up! You have to get packed; we have a plane to catch!”

On the way to the airport Sandy asked me if it was okay with Wendy if we come, and I replied, “I am sure it’s okay, I will ask her when we get there!”

~~~

Ugg boots: Australian boots lined with sheepskin that keep your feet nice and warm. Very popular in Australia.



## I could not wait to get out of there.

I asked dear Brian, my hairdresser, if he could make a stylish bob cut for the summer but I got a shocking surprise instead. With a flick of his wrist, he said, "Trust me, I will give you the fabulous style I would wear myself, if only I could."

He combed and trimmed and combed. Then he sprayed and sprayed more and more. However, to me, it seemed very strange that there was hardly any cutting at all.

I could not see what he was constructing and started wondering exactly what was going on up there on the top of my head. I had started off hoping and then my fears turned into panic.

After an hour or so he finally spun me around to have a look in the mirror. Unfortunately, as I suspected, it did not look at all like a bob!

He announced loudly, "It's a beehive and they're back in fashion!"  
"You look great!"

Looking in the mirror, I remembered my mom's lofty beehive from the 60's, so long ago. She tried very hard to look just like Bridget Bardot.

I could not wait to get out of there; the lady next to me was just staring at me in disbelief and two ladies across the room were trying to hide laughs behind their hands.

I sat frozen in shock, afraid to ponder my husband's comment which I was sure would mock! I just wanted to run away.

I tried to think of something nice to say but all I could think of was, "It defies gravity."

When I got to my car, I had trouble getting in. I had to open the sunroof very wide so I could fit every inch of my beehive inside.

Then on the freeway the wind was very fast so I made a wish that my beehive would not last.

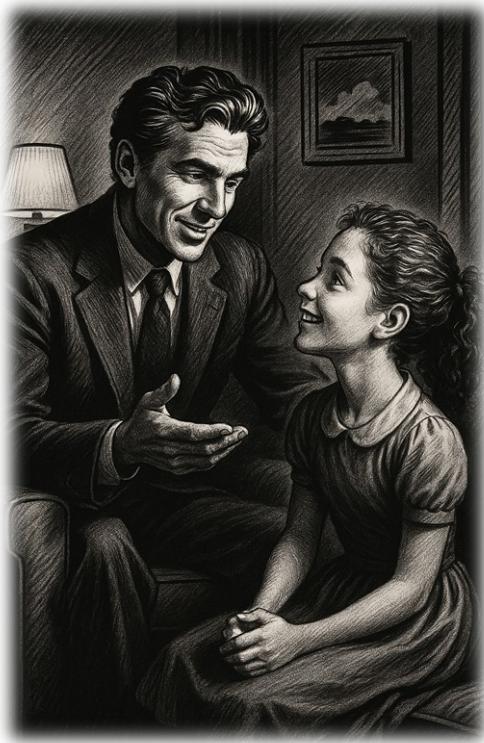
When I got home my husband did not recognize me. When he realized it was me, he snickered, "Are we going out trick-or-treating?"

I ran to the shower where it took more than an hour to wash that ridiculous beehive right out.

I have decided I will not be going back to dear Brian anytime soon, because as you might know "I'm unfortunately never going to look anything like Bridget Bardot!"

~~~

Note: Bridget Bardot, a former beautiful French actress was born in 1934 in Paris who made an impact on fashion, film and pop culture



## Is there any profit in it?

My wise old dad, Solly, God bless his soul, used to say:

"Life is too short to make any mistakes,  
so before you decide to act, always ask yourself,  
"Is there any profit in it?"

Let me give you some examples of how I use this important question:

I have a friend who is in a different political party and when we meet for lunch, I have an urge to debate the current scene. But, before I open my mouth, I ask myself dad's special question,

"Is there any profit in this?"

I then decided it would be far better to just talk about the weather.

Another friend of mine likes to smoke and eat French fries, both of which I believe are not very wise. When we go out to lunch I have the urge to preach to her and try to get her to change her ways. But instead, I just ask myself the question:

"Is there any profit in this?"

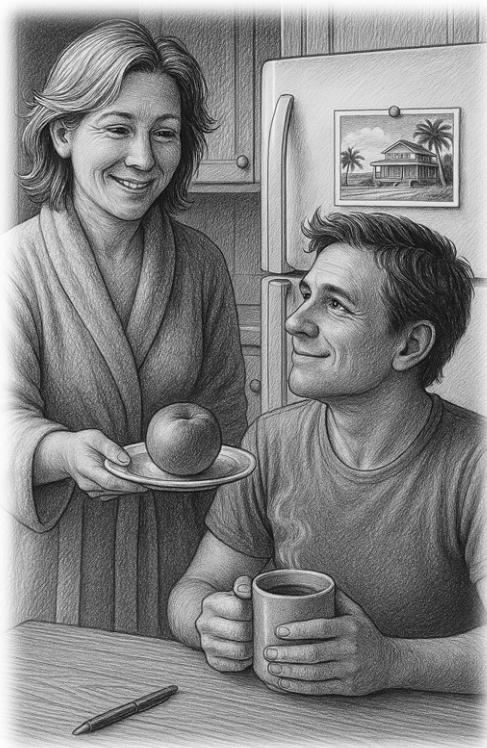
And I decide to just let her enjoy her French fries.

I am sure you can now see the wisdom of my clever dad. Profit is not only about money and wealth; it is a consideration of the possible outcomes for everyone concerned.

As I look back on my life, I can recall how asking this question at a crucial time kept me out of several potential disasters.

I am sure my dad would be happy I'm passing his wisdom on to you. I hope you can use it, because I believe there will be much profit in it, for you too.

~~~



## I give him a peach

I knew a couple, Kyle and Kelly, who purchased their ideal beach house just outside Cape Town in less than two years, in the following way:

- First, they decided how big and exactly how close to the sea it should be.
- When both agreed, they wrote it down and posted it at eye-level with a photograph on their fridge.

After working hard together for just two years they bought their dream home on the beach. They lived there with their son and their daughter and took swims daily in the refreshing ocean water.

Their kids soon swam like fish and with new surf boards soon learned to catch many waves. Every day they would pop home for lunch, as swimming, which everybody knows “gives you the munchies.”

Mom would usually serve them iced tea and sandwiches; and occasionally a treat of lox and bagels with some extra cream cheese, which certainly did please.

Beach towels, umbrellas, balls, bats, and a selection of different hats were available for all. Often, they ran home, grabbed what they needed and before mom could say, “Wear your hats please!”

They were heading back to the beach, each munching a peach.

Kyle and Kelly worked hard and bought their beach house, which pleased everyone, for sure!

Now my hubby and I have also picked out a house which is not far from the beach. So, to be like Kyle and Kelly, every morning at breakfast we stare at the picture on the fridge and munch on a peach!

~~~



## Crest Lake

Waking up early this morning my husband and I discovered a beautiful Spring Day. So, instead of lying in bed we got up, put on our walking shoes and eagerly headed for nearby Crest Lake.

The glint of the early morning sun made the water sparkle. Not too many folk were around at the park and we were happy to see a lovely duck family. A mom and dad with all their seven children swimming together on the water. The hungry ducks waddled close, anticipating scraps of bread or a handful of raw oats.

Feeling fresh and invigorated we decided to move along as the sun was starting to get a little hot. We greeted everyone we passed and said hello to their cute little pups; then made sure to say “Thanks” to the guy who always picks the rubbish up.

We walked past a good-looking young lady and a whiff of her industrial-strength perfume wafted into both our faces and penetrated deep down into our unsuspecting lungs. Shocked by the power of this French perfume, we quickly glanced at one another and ran away as fast as we could!

Fortunately, we recovered. Then feeling awake and very ready for breakfast, we headed straight for home.

With Spring here in Florida, the best time to walk is before it gets too hot! We will not, therefore, lay around and miss this pleasant time of day with its early morning air. Instead, we will be up early, skip the coffee and the breakfast, then step out for a brisk twenty-minute walk around the lake.

This is our policy and is not one bit fake; to enjoy and benefit daily from the nearby, splendid Crest Lake!

A note to the reader:

I must make a confession. Now that it's the end of May and summer has started, it's already too hot for even an early morning walk. So, we have dropped out of the walks around the lake, but we never miss the toast, honey and the coffee.

~ ~ ~



## Staying Younger

Nowadays, stiff joints and rounder shoulders remind me constantly that I'm a senior citizen, not getting any younger. I refuse to retire to a rocker with a tea tray balanced on my knee just watching TV.

I always choose to walk, not to ride, whenever possible.

I do a daily stretch for my back on a mat, with both legs up against the wall or a door. Then, with the supple feeling I had as a young ballerina, I'm up and face my day with energy galore.

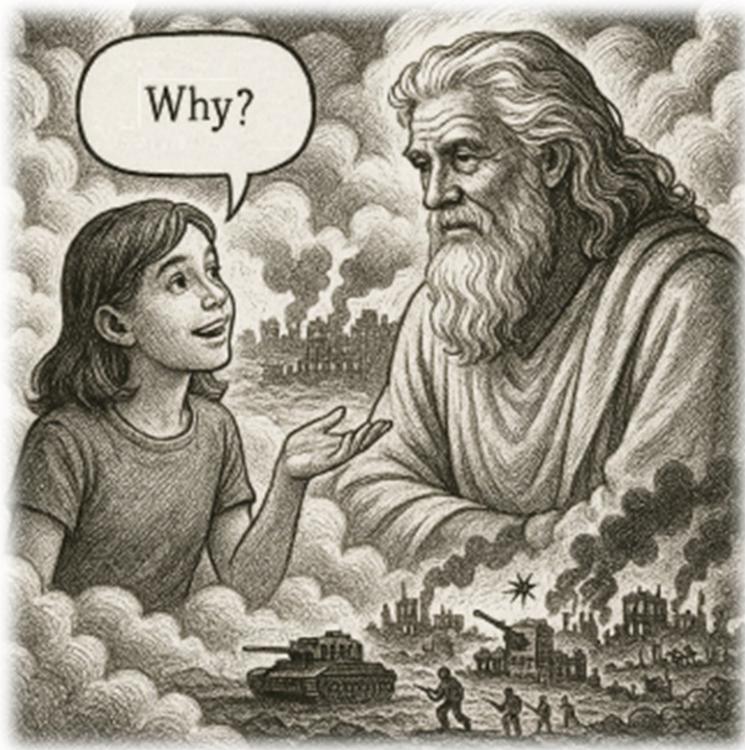
My generation was inspired by Jane Fonda's workout routine which helped keep us fit and young. Three times a week my teenage daughters and I did Jane's workout at home. Soon we were committed to staying fit. Thanks to Jane!

And even to this day, I keep this routine up every week. This has worked well for me, and I am always happy to workout at the gym.

These days my younger husband cannot even catch me, unless I let him.

~~~

Note: Jane Fonda was a popular actress who stayed in great shape always. She created a well-known video workout program that millions of people purchased and used at home.



## I'm wondering.

In early history when man took a wife and made a home, he built a fence around it so that his dog, horse and sheep could not roam. He kept chickens, pigs and cows which they reared and lived off. He then made a wagon to take some stock to market, where he bartered for bread, honey and cloth and eventually, money.

Then, with more and more gold discovered in isolated places, populations moved into these spaces and soon there was a big demand for more vehicles from everywhere.

As a result, horses, wagons, and steam-trains evolved into oil-based engines. Then the demand for more oil exploded so everyone could move faster and further and further ahead!

We learned from history that this demand for increased oil has led to many more inventions which helped mankind.

As man continues to get smarter his inventions have made life better for every one of us. For example, kites, parachutes, airplanes, rockets, spaceships and now even aircraft carriers with nuclear bombs!

Looking down on all us humans on planet Earth, I`m wondering what God is thinking about us these days?

As humans continue to get “smarter” and increase the power of their guns, will it lead to even more war, and more nuclear bombs which could end it all, forevermore, forevermore?

I must ask:

“Dear God, is all this destruction and war your intention? Or was Woody Allen right in suggesting that you were an underachiever?

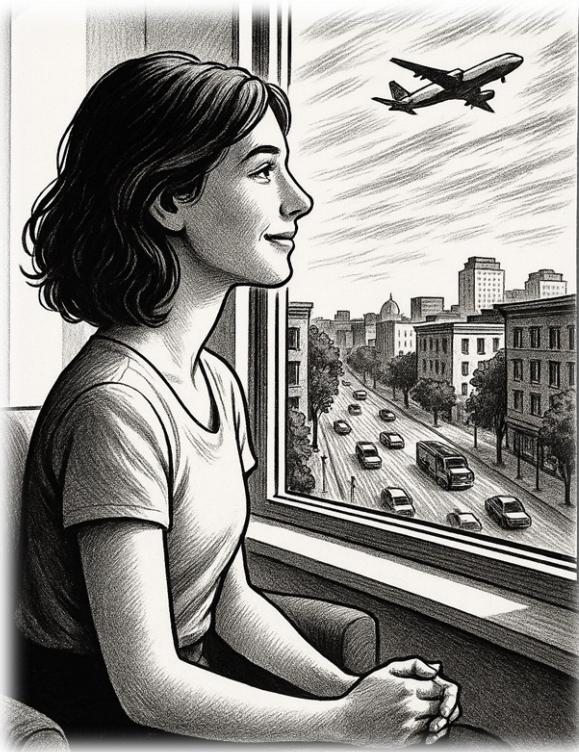
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Note:

This is the quote from Love and Death, by Woody Allen:

“The important thing, I think, is not to be bitter... if it turns out that there is a God, I don't think that he is evil. I think that the worst thing you could say is that he is, basically, an underachiever. If God exists, I hope he has a good excuse.”

~ Woody Allen



# Today and Tomorrow

After a quiet, lazy few weeks over New Year, life has suddenly woken up around here and like a roaring express train has flown into top gear!

Just above us on level five, sharp sounds of clicking heels are moving across a wooden floor. However, these shoe sounds are drowned out by blasting police sirens, noisy cars and truck horns blaring at each other on the busy road below. Then to top all that, four screaming navy jets like bats out of hell, are flying overhead!

There is a howling wind shaking all the trees, scattering the abundant leaves, just like a giant turbo engine blowing everything around.

I am enjoying this wind and also the lovely chaos it is causing.

I have wonderful plans and aspirations for the rest of this year.

My hopes and dreams right now are filling me with a sweet and uplifting sensation and I'm looking forward to another fast-paced, fun-filled year.

This is my New Years to do list.

## TO DO LIST:

- 1) Find a quieter place to live.

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# Foreign coins and forgotten keys

Something there is that loves a junk drawer.

The force of nature that Robert Frost refers to in his poem *Mending Wall* must surely be the same force that causes my junk drawer to accumulate more and more stuff.

Let me describe the treasures you will find in my junk drawer:

Some pens that long ago ran out of ink and an old piece of beef jerky that's starting to stink! AA batteries, dead of course, and a wedding cake bride and groom, whose marriage, unfortunately, ended in divorce.

Rubber bands in every size and color that are all kaput; they lie amongst one old sock with a few holes, a rusty spoon, a tube of dried-up glue, and a charging cable that no one remembers exactly what it could do. Foreign coins lie amongst forgotten keys of every size and shape, and, what is that at the back? Yuck! It is half a pack of smelly blue cheese!

I thought it was the jerky that was starting to stink. Now I know where that pong was coming from. This drawer needs a proper cleaning, but not right now. I will get around to it someday soon, I am thinking, maybe next June.

Do you also have a drawer that needs a good clean?

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See note about *Mending Wall* poem at end of this book.



## Space vs Stuff

In Miriam's house you will find teapots stacked high, knickknacks and trinkets wherever you look. Porcelain cats, gilded frames, old clocks galore; Victorian chaos scattered through every room and blocking the door, stacked high with ten times more. Her world is a maze of so many things, porcelain, lace and brass with wings. All of which came from too many thrift-shop adventures and endless garage sales.

Walter's home is a temple of orderly space and beautiful light. Clean lines, no clutter, no dust in sight, an orderly home with an architectural touch. It is a designer's dream, modern and aesthetic with soft, subtle shades of grays and cream.

For her cozy means cluttered and tight; but he needs airy spaces with beautiful light.

One fateful day they met, it was love at first sight!  
Opposites sometimes do attract; but in this case,  
Cupid really blew it.

Miriam and Walter fell in love and thought it was fate.  
However, their stuff was a warning of incompatible mates.

It was obvious to everyone else; this was not a match made in heaven, rather a couple who were heading for the ditch.

One stormy day they got married and moved in together.

Her precious treasures encroached, his patience wore thin,  
their romance gave way to endless arguments neither side could win.

Miriam said, "Too much is not enough."  
Walter sighs, "Too much is too much"

For her cozy means cluttered and tight;  
while he craves airy spaces and beautiful light.

When lovers first meet sparks start to fly.  
But when conflict persists, "love says "bye-bye"

"Why so crowded? It's only collecting dust!"  
"Why so bare? It feels so cold!"

Walter hides her trinkets; Miriam fills all the shelves.  
Two lovers in conflict over: "How much stuff?"

This is a conflict that will never be resolved.

Like oil and water, they soon drift apart;  
a love undone by the nature of their art.

So beware, dear reader, if you are a lover of Zen.  
Never ever marry someone who goes to garage sales again and again.  
Oil and water will never, ever blend.

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## A special order on Amazon

If only I had a magic carpet to fly around, I could have several adventures over ocean and land. Not alone of course, rather together with my man.

He would love to take me to Hawaii to meet all his family. Show me some of his favorite places like his special body surfing beach.

Then, he would take me in a sailboat to the islands in the heavenly waters of Lanikai where he says the water is turquoise blue, clear as crystal and so refreshing to jump in. It would be his dream come true.

I can't wait to fly with him to the top of Table Mountain in South Africa. From the Cape Town lookout, I would show him all the special landmarks of my favorite city, especially the two vast oceans extending east and west with their white sandy beaches that seem to stretch out forever. I would then take him on a picturesque ride, via hills and valleys to visit the best vineyard in Stellenbosch, where we would wine and dine and have a most memorable time.

Next, we would jump on our carpet and fly to Miami to visit my very best friends for a week or two; we would reminisce, have some good laughs and probably even cry a bit!

When the hurricane season comes to Miami, we will quickly get away and visit my kids in Melbourne for a long overdue visit. After that we will fly north to Byron Bay beach which my husband says is the very best.

For the last leg of this fabulous vacation, we will fly off on the carpet to the magnificent Catskill Mountains, in the southeast corner of New York state. I plan to spend a long weekend at the luxurious Chatwal Lodge, the best resort money can buy, where we will be spoilt in the spa, have the finest champagne from their bar, and then dance together until dawn and be treated, like the royalty we know we are.

After all these wonderful experiences we will fly back home to sunny Florida to recover and plan our next magic carpet adventure. This will be a tall order, as it will have to be longer and even better!

All I need for this dream to come true is a magic carpet. So, first thing tomorrow morning, I will log on to Amazon to see if they are on-sale this week and maybe order one.

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Stellenbosch: A small town near Cape Town, surrounded by vineyards, is famous for its world-class food, wines and beautiful scenic landscapes.



## We have a neighbor

We have a neighbor whose name is Fred. My husband tells me he was a vet who fought in Vietnam. We are separated by a thin, common wall that is not soundproof at all. I've glimpsed him, briefly, outside his front door. He's old, bent with a scraggly beard, lots of gray hair and he struggles with a cane to get up one stair.

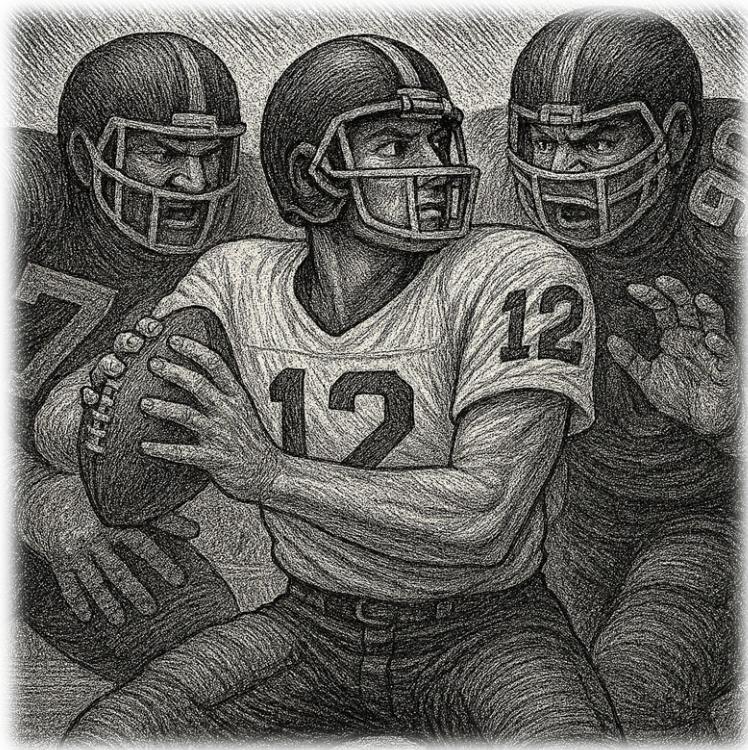
I've not seen a cat or a dog or heard him talk on his phone and can only assume he lives all alone! At times, I hear some loud thuds against our common wall. I think he may be banging the mud off his boots. I assume he's a bit deaf as he plays his TV very loud, all through the night.

I recently saw police cars parked near his front door. I feared he'd had a fall and waited to hear more. Then he came around the next day and said his difficult son had come home and caused an upset. The police had come by to sort the situation out. I pray he always moves about with his phone, just in case he trips or falls and needs some help.

In the past, everyone seemed to be friends. But nowadays it feels different with so many strangers in the neighborhood. Perhaps it is the fault of too much TV or texting on smart phones, so we remain all alone.

I was thinking the other day that he must have an amazing life story to tell, and even though he's our next-door neighbor, we don't know him very well. I asked my husband if on Sunday we could invite old Fred over for a cup of tea, which I thought would be most neighborly. He nodded his head and replied, "I agree, it seems rather sad to live so close to someone we hardly even know."

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## **Rolling with the punches**

“I've wrestled with alligators, I've tussled with a whale, I done handcuffed lightning and thrown thunder in jail.” ~ Mohammed Ali

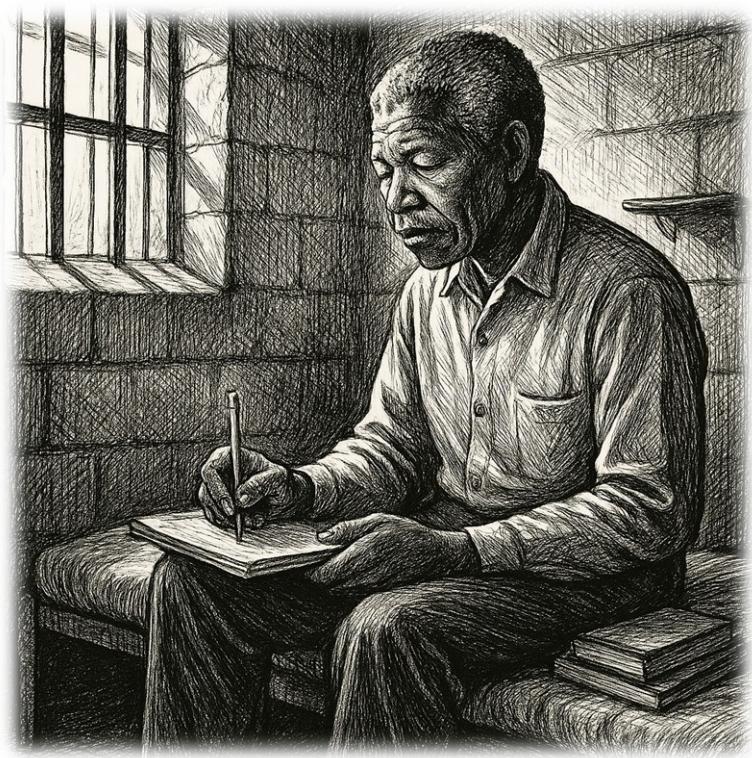
There is a saying, "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen." which I can relate to well. Living is often a balancing act, one minute we feel happy, the next we say "drat."

The young often react poorly to punches yet toughen up later when challenged by bullies at school lunches.

Facing adversity, difficulties or criticism, the resilient ones in history have made the best of their situation by rolling with the punches and then somehow arriving at their destination.

Tom Brady and Caitlin Clark come to mind with their sport challenges inviting tackles and punches from opposing players, as we have all seen on the TV screen. Many of us have seen other heroes battle on against all odds, appearing to be in a hopeless situation but persisting on and on and always seem to make the best of a bad situation. They won by, "Rolling with the punches!"

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# Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela was born in 1918 in a small village and went to a tiny school nearby. He was a member of a local South African tribe.

A bright student, he looked around and started asking "Why?"

Then at university, he spoke out, opposing apartheid's cruel divide.

He advocated for the termination of all separate facilities for the black and white communities. For this he was arrested and sentenced to prison for life.

During his time in prison on the desolate Robben Island, he clarified his intentions. Then in 1990, twenty-seven years later, Nelson Mandela walked free, his vision achieved!

In 1994, the whole world stood tall as Mandela answered freedom's call. His presidency of South Africa was a beacon light, that guides us still towards what is right.

In 2013 he passed away. If he came back to South Africa today, I hate to think what he would have to say.

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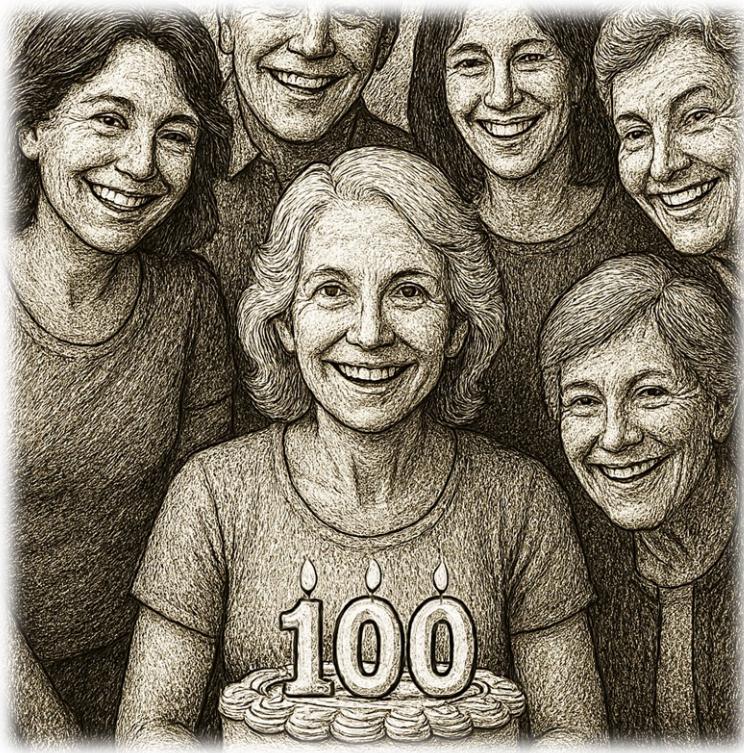
Notes:

Robben Island - a very small island in Table Bay, north of Cape Town, South Africa, where a high security prison exists.

Apartheid: separation of white and black people because of discrimination

Nelson Mandela's definition of racism:

"The belief that one race is inherently superior or inferior to another, and that this belief can lead to discrimination, prejudice and injustice against people who belong to the "inferior race."



## A special invitation

As I'm getting older, I find that my hands and feet just seem to stay cold. My back is more bent, and my breath is getting shorter. My limbs seem stiffer, my skin has more wrinkles, and my boobs are just not quite the same. I used to be a blonde but now my hair is turning gray. When I'm in the shower, some of it falls away, much to my dismay.

I think you got the idea, so I won't tell you about all my other parts.

As the years go by, my bedtime gets earlier and earlier, just like the sun sets earlier each day in the Fall.

As I get older, important details often slip my mind. I find it hard to recall where I put my keys, did I wrap the cheese, and can never find my Kleenex when I suddenly need to sneeze!

However, it's weird, I can still recall every family and friend in my neighborhood from when I was ten years old. Their names, their faces, and even some of their phones.

There is a bit of good news. As I grow older, I understand more than I did before. My curiosity and wisdom are still increasing. At this rate, I can't imagine how much wisdom I will have when I reach the wise old age of ninety-eight!

When I reach the golden age of one hundred, I intend to invite you to my birthday party. Be sure you stay alive so you will be around and not miss my big celebration. When the time comes, check your mailbox for my special invitation. You don't want to miss my wild 100th birthday party as you will have to hang around for a hundred more years until I have another one!

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## **The taco sauce had been taken away**

Last April Fool's Day I awoke with a grin, plotting a prank I could secretly sneak in. I swapped his sugar for salt and waited for breakfast, then quietly stood by. He added a few spoons of sugar to his coffee and then took a big sip. He started hacking and coughing. His eyes bulged wide. He spat it all out on every side!

I laughed and said, "April Fools dear, I just couldn't resist!"

He sighed, wiped his chin, but I won't tell you everything that he said!

His taste buds were shocked, and his morning was wrecked, but he couldn't be mad at me as last year on this same day, he had me trying to cash his bad check!

We then laughed throughout the day, but I suspected he was planning to get even with me in some horrible way.

That evening, when I was cooking dinner, I noticed with great dismay, that his extra-hot taco sauce had been taken away.

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Note: taco sauce is a very hot sauce to use usually on Mexican food.



## Angela

It seems only the other day that I was carefree and young,  
without worries and having so much fun.

I would often play with my good friend Paul,  
hitting a tennis ball against the wall.

Playing hopscotch with Sandra who was shy and lived close by.  
We'd have great fun; taking turns to throw the flat stone,  
then jump, hop and do turnabouts with loud, piercing shouts!

When mom came home from work,  
she would happily sing and play on her piano.

I would pirouette around with both feet hardly touching the ground.  
I imagined I was the prima ballerina in the Royal Ballet and  
I would always curtsey to the queen at the end of every song.

But not all days were such pure delight!  
Some moments cast dark shadows, in the light.

I recall an ugly moment of anger at age six.  
I had a special doll, Angela, who I loved the most.  
We played together every day almost.

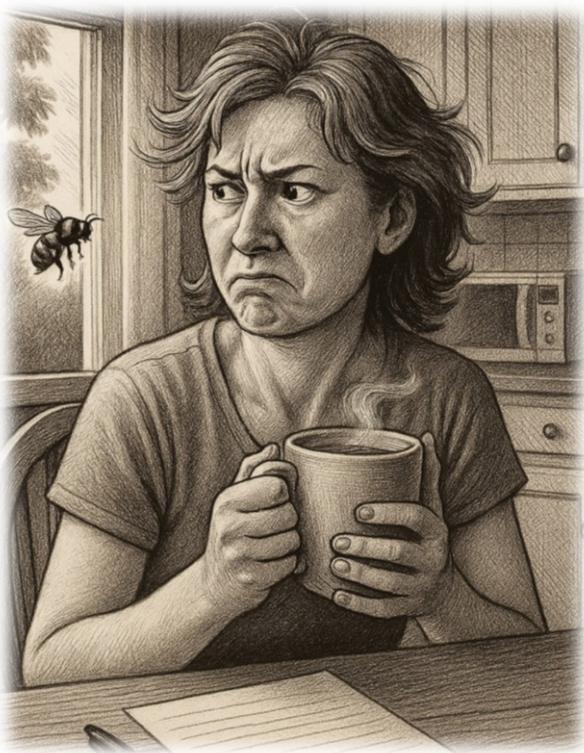
One dark day, I was in a very bad mood and ripped out both of her big beautiful blue eyes, because they kept staring at me.  
Then of course, the next day I felt unbearable remorse.

I guess, I was preparing for my life ahead.  
Life contains some good, some bad and occasionally the ugly.

Dear reader,  
I feel relieved after disclosing my little indiscretion. Also, I would like to apologize to my sweet, beautiful Angela for ripping out her beautiful blue eyes all those many years ago.

A note to Angela,  
I don't know where you are now, but I do want to say I am so sorry about that day. I hope you will forgive me. I still remember how much we loved each other. I still to this day, don't know why I did it.

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## Before you buzz off

With a cup of tea, my feet up in the recliner, pens and paper stacked close by, I am now ready to begin but need some inspiration for a new poem this morning.

I stare out the window at a cloudless blue sky.

The house is quiet. My very smart cat, whose name is Einstein, moves around silently, keeping the mice away.

Suddenly, much to my dismay, a brazen bee flies into my room. Who does he think he is? The Cat in the Hat? How very rude!

I glare at him, open the window and hiss, "You must fly away, you cannot stay. You were never invited here today. Thank you for the visit but now it's time for you to go back to your hive."

He pays no attention and just keeps flying around the room.

And then a thought occurs to me, "Perhaps he thinks I need his help to write my poem." So, I quickly continue, "But, before you buzz off Mister Bee, Einstein and I would like to thank you kindly for inspiring us with an idea for our poem today."

Einstein looks up at the bee and backs me up with a very loud, "Meow!"

And in the blink of an eye, Mr. Bee buzzes out the window and flies away.

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## **Winter has finally gone away**

Looking out of my window I watch as cars drive slowly through puddles after the heavy rainstorm.

In the garden my precious rosebuds are starting to flower. The brown grass is already turning green and of course the weeds have reappeared. The trees nearby boast many new green leaves, and their brown branches no longer can be seen.

These are all signs that Summer is finally here.

The grandfather clock, as regular as a rooster, chimes the hour. Goodness, is it already midday? Further thoughts of sitting inside and reading my book suddenly disappear. I'm expecting my good friends Ruth and Fay. We have a date to go for our first walk on the beach today.

I'm so glad summer is finally here to stay.

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## Plans for the new year

It's mid-December and I'm planning my new year. Several plans have already been made with many more to be laid. I'm busy filling in my calendar with appointments for an exciting new year. Starting with the New Year's Eve firework display!

I'm planning to visit dear Aunty Jane and will call her next month; she can be quite nice, but everyone thinks she is actually a pain.

I've planned to join a gym and do a Zumba class three times a week. Then, on the other days I will jog around the lake, feed the ducks and enjoy the breeze, then head home through the tall green trees.

Every new year I think of a bunch of "new leaves" to turn over. Now that I am putting them all on my list, I feel much better, as it makes next year seem so much more exciting.

On the first weekend in January, I am planning a party. I will be inviting all my friends to come around to have a cold beer and help me celebrate the new year.

One of my new year's resolutions is to eat more healthily and help my husband lose weight. Sandy's birthday is coming soon so I'm already planning his party.

I know he may not like this, but to help him lose weight I'm not going to bake him his favorite chocolate cake. Instead, I have googled a recipe for gluten free, sugar free cauliflower bread which I will call a cake and put a few candles on to light up instead. It's for his own good. I am sure he will understand and appreciate my good intentions.

To keep all the guests happy, I will still bake my famous chocolate cake. My challenge will be to make sure Sandy does not also eat the guest's chocolate cake.

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## You are such a blond!

I can't find my glasses again.

I search the kitchen, I search the bed,  
I look in the closet, and I shake my head.

I accuse my husband, then check the car,  
and even considered calling last night's bar.

"They must be somewhere as I haven't gone out today!"

I check everywhere.

The pantry, the fridge, the microwave, the laundry room,  
the garage, the couch, the tv room and even the cupboard with the  
mops and broom!

Nowhere to be found.

It's just before midnight and I am getting ready for bed.

While brushing my teeth I notice them in the mirror;  
there they are, sitting right on top of my head!

How long have they been there?

The penny drops; since breakfast when I was reading the morning  
paper, I'm so embarrassed to say.

Please don't tell my husband, because I know he'll respond, in the usual  
way, "You are such a blond!"

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## A most special time

It was a late summer afternoon in 1982, and the golden rays of the sun were flooding through the living room window, filling it with a lovely light.

I was sitting on the floor playing cards with my children; we were having so much fun. When it was my turn, I shuffled the deck. Most rules were forgotten, but it didn't seem to matter.

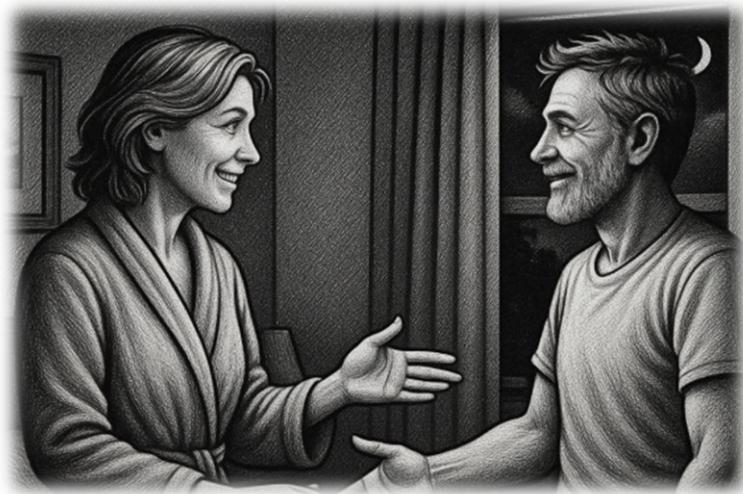
For a few hours the busy world seemed very far away.

No deadline, nowhere to go. Only the family and lots of laughter; it was a most special time.

I cannot remember the scores or the hands we played, but I will remember those happy hours we spent together that mid-summer day.

This memory is so clear, it lingers on and will never disappear.

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## Do's and don'ts

I will never forget what a wise man told me long ago:

"Reading newspapers, glossy magazines and watching TV news will eventually get to you, depress you and give you the mainstream blues. Instead, you could listen to an interesting debate, a podcast, good jazz, great classical music or not to be missed, watch a good ventriloquist!"

He saw I was all ears, so continued with a few more words of wisdom.

"Always remember to lock your front and back doors at night, or you may find a snoring drunk curled up on your bed when you turn on the light! Also, cut out the sugar in all food and drinks, I promise you'll get used to it, no fibs, I did!"

Then I asked a question and this was his reply:

"Don't go to sleep at night without first patching up a quarrel with your partner! It can be quite rewarding. You'll both get to sleep quickly, then easily sleep the whole night through. Try it one day, you'll see what I mean."

Now many years later I would like to acknowledge that very wise man. The last thing he said proved to be very beneficial.

If you don't believe me, you can ask my husband, he will probably explain it by giving you a wink or two.

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## A peaceful moment

The sun is just coming up and I'm enjoying this time to myself, sipping this delicious cup of coffee on the porch while taking in the fresh morning air and listening to some birds chirping in the nearby trees.

It's not that often that I have this luxury. I'm really enjoying the morning sun on my face. The rest of the house is still asleep. Even the cat's lying spread out on my husband's chair.

The bright, orange hydrangeas are starting to open, getting ready to greet my neighbor and his dog, who will soon be walking by.

I muse about my three grown-up children who all live very far away.

After breakfast, I'll take a walk to the lake with my hubby, who's still fast asleep. I will wake him up by making a fresh pot of coffee and taking it back to bed. That will be a delightful way for us to start our day.

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# I found my purpose in life

I must thank my husband, Sandy, for helping me discover my true purpose in life. It all started this morning.

I got annoyed with the endless itching I felt on my ankles as I itched, and I scratched. Just as I feared, it was fleas, biting and sucking my blood, feeding on me, their favorite food!

Exasperated, I asked myself, "Where the hell are all these fleas coming from?" I could not blame the neighbor's dog or cat, as neither of them had one.

In desperation, I asked my husband, "I'm wondering why these guys were even put on the earth?" He thought about it for a moment, then replied, "Let's do a search and see what Google has to say."

So, I Googled "fleas" to find out if God had a purpose for these dreadful pests. Much to my surprise Google said, "They have an important function as food for animals, such as frogs and small snakes."

I shared this information with Sandy, and after thinking about it for a minute, he said, "Evidently Erica, your true purpose in life is to be food for the fleas!" He turned around and I could hear him laughing as he walked away.

I'm feeling so at peace now that I've discovered my true purpose in life, thanks to a bit of help from Google and Sandy!

PS. If you need help sorting out your true purpose in life, Sandy says he is happy to help you anytime.

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## **Change is blowing in the wind**

As I sit on my deck there's a pleasant breeze whispering to me that everything is okay. Whenever I feel a breeze, I am reminded that life is in constant flux. Is it trying to tell me something?

After a period of some disasters, we started off the year with some positive changes.

I have observed over the years that change is a vital part of becoming wise. So, my heart, and most likely yours too, is hopeful that good changes are underway and will soon come true.

It was Alexander Pope who said,  
"Hope springs eternal in the human breast."  
I understand exactly what he is saying. I'm sure you do, too.

~ ~ ~



## A little dog in danger

On our early morning walk today we had to cross over a very busy road. The air felt fresh. The leaves on the tall trees moved gently in the breeze. It was morning rush hour, so cars, trucks and buses were all rushing past in both directions. The traffic was so loud I could not hear my husband who was trying to speak to me.

Suddenly, a little black dog appeared and started barking at us. My husband approached him and attempted to pat him, but he ran down the sidewalk, past a few houses and then he stepped onto the busy street.

My heart nearly stopped when I saw several cars come to a screeching halt. But I couldn't see what had happened to the dog.

Everything froze; cars, drivers, time stood still. All attention was on the fate of the little black dog. It was like a scene in a scary movie, the tension gripping everyone who was watching.

I told my husband I would run ahead and find out what happened to the dog. He said he would knock on some doors and try to find the owner.

I ran along the sidewalk to where I last saw the dog. Several cars on the road were still stopped. I was in a panic as I feared the worst.

When I got to where the cars were stopped the dog was nowhere to be seen.

But my anxiety suddenly disappeared when I looked around and saw the black dog being picked up by a lady standing outside her front door.

Thank heavens, the dog was safe! In that moment everything changed, going from anxiety to relief. The motorists were smiling and tooting their horns as they continued on their way.

It made me wonder why a community would be so concerned about a little black dog, and yet, it seems so normal for mankind to have been at war with itself for thousands of years?

It would be nice if we were all as concerned for each other as we are about a little black dog.

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# **The land of toast and honey**

The kettle whistles softly as I butter the toast. He grinds the coffee beans. I place the honey jar on the table then lick my sticky finger, yummy!

We are sitting at the table near a window and suddenly the sun breaks through the neighbor's trees. "Good day for a walk" he says. My mouth is full of toast, so I eagerly nod in agreement.

Some honey drips on my plate and he tries to steal it with his finger, but I quickly whack him on the back of his hand.

Another morning has arrived in our lovely land of toast and honey.

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## Ducks of the lake

We stroll down to the lake where the willow trees make shade. Duck families are swimming happily about in their morning parade.

Like some kind of gang with their quacks and webbed feet, they're forever on the lookout for something to eat. The brown ducks swim with the browns, the whites with the whites, two charming parades in formations so tight.

With heads held up high and a pompous duck air, they are hanging around waiting for any bread we can spare. When they see I've brought some they start to quarrel and get into a fray. We're amazed how ducks get into such a frenzy and behave this way!

One flutters sideways with some bread in its beak, others follow, and try to snatch it away, like a thief. They remind us of seagulls, squabbling over a pack of French fries, and this makes us think they not actually that wise.

Waddling like jesters, yet arrogant and proud, they are really quite funny and forever pleasing a crowd.

I think us humans are smarter than ducks, but I often wonder "By exactly, how much?"

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## It's alive!

There's a jar in the back of the fridge that has been there forever.

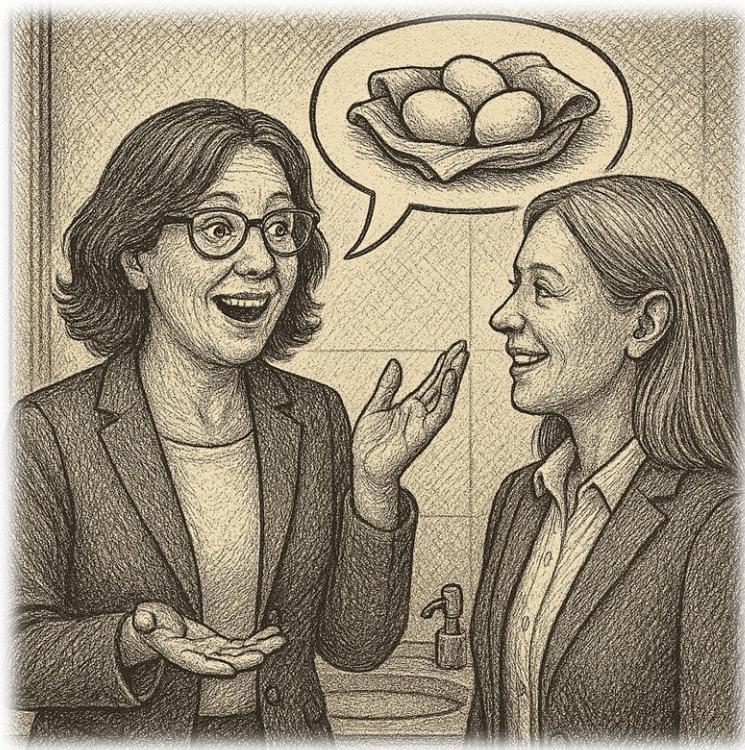
Filled with green lumps in a mystery sauce, I'm pretty sure it once was jam. I don't dare open it because it has evolved and is probably starting to think the thought, "I am!"

My husband tells me to throw it away, but I've become attached to it in a strange, moldy sort of way. Occasionally, I check on it, along with its veteran team of expired yogurt and what I think long ago may have been sour cream.

I should probably toss them all away, but not today. Maybe someday I will think of something clever to do with them. First, I will google and see if they might work in my French soufflé; or perhaps, be safe to eat as a sauce on my green curry from Bombay!

Once I get it worked out, I promise, I will invite you over to try it out.

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## Nip it in the butt

My neighbor, Jean, is a darling soul, always charming and in control, until she tries to speak her mind and then quickly goes into a steep decline.

Here are a few examples:

She told me to forget my old boyfriend by  
“alliterating him from my mind!”

Once she got annoyed with her boss and said,  
“I am not at your bacon call.”

Here are a few more interesting things she has said:

“Texas has a lot of electrical votes, you know.”

“Don’t put all your eggs in one blanket.”

“He’s a wolf in cheap clothing.”

“Their research is at the cutting-throat of technology!”

“The library is a vast suppository of information.”

“I hear George is suffering from a nervous shakedown.”

“We’re going to nip shoplifting in the butt.”

“He has a photogenic memory!”

“He is a wonderful masseur of the arts”.

“Is the neighbor’s child “scholastic to peanuts?”

“The lawyer brought up a mute point in court.”

“I asked the farmer for some organic, pasteurized eggs.”

When she was having some trouble in the bathroom, she asked her doctor “for a prescription for contraception.”

She was fussy about manners and told her young kids,

“Don’t chew with your mouth full of food!”

I always giggle but let it slide.

Jean is sweet, sincere, and full of pride.

Her words may wander, twist, and bend,

yet, she’s a treasure and a special sort of friend.

Do you perhaps know a malaprop queen?

Someone who kind of talks like my good friend Jean?

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malaprop: the mistaken use of a word in place of a similar-sounding one, often with unintentionally amusing effect, as in, for example, “dance a flamingo” (instead of flamenco).



## The banana bread incident

This morning, I decided to bake some banana bread, just to show Sandy how much I love him. Ripe bananas, half a cup of brown sugar, three large eggs, some buttermilk, baking powder, a few cups of flour and me in the kitchen this early hour. My inner Julia Child had been released!

I mixed and stirred with loving care and picked out the egg that got stuck in my hair. The oven was preheated; the bread pan was greased, and we were so looking forward to our early morning feast.

Something odd, my batter was too runny! Was that three eggs or six too many? I shrugged and thought, "It'll bake just fine." So, I poured it in the bread pan, stuck it in the oven and said a little prayer. Then just to pass some time I downed the end of the bottle of last night's white wine.

Fifteen minutes later a smell began to grow; not lovely banana bread but acrid black smoke, you know? I peeked through the glass and saw the batter had overflowed. The oven was on fire and it shouted at me, "Lady, stand back! I'm about to explode!"

Then the fire alarm screamed and a moment later my husband rushed into the kitchen like the emergency rescue team. He was dragging the garden hose and covering his nose with a dirty sock. He gasped with a life-threatening cough, "Is this the dessert, or something cooked up by Comrade Molotov?"

He put the fire out and aired out the house while I scraped up the mess. Then he gave me a hug to help calm my distress and quietly said. "It's okay dear, you did your best."

I sheepishly said, "No banana bread, but we still have toast and your favorite jam instead. I am really sorry honey. But I will bake another banana bread right after lunch."

After we had our toast he rushed off in his pickup truck to go into town. On his return he explained that he bought additional fire insurance after I promised him that I was going to make it again.

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## The Answer

From a very early age I was learning about my world, asking questions like how does the wind blow and why does it snow? I was curious about the moon and the stars and wondered what was happening way out there beyond Mars.

Then when I got older, I was asking my mom questions about the birds and the bees, but unfortunately, she was not very helpful.

When I turned thirteen, I discovered poetry with its rhythm, romance and images that I found fascinating. Later on, the catchy lyrics and songs of the Beatles always got me off my chair and onto the dance floor. I also loved the lyrics and rhythm of the Eagles.

As a teenager I read anything I could lay my hands on. When mom was at work, I read her Mills and Boon romances, which now I realize I did not fully understand.

In high school I can recall my delight when I first discovered some of Shakespeare's beautiful sonnets which my English teacher introduced me to. The school librarian was also helpful. I spent many happy hours reading the wonderful adventures by Dickens and CS Lewis and I was introduced to the wisdom and charm of Wordsworth, Ogden Nash and Bob Dylan.

At university there was much more to learn. But it felt like my quest to know all was becoming an impossible dream.

My next phase was religion and philosophy and all of the arts. My quest became a passion to discover "The Answer" to the ultimate question of, "Who am I?"

Based on the many prophets I have read, this quest is not an impossible dream. It has been my lifelong desire to find out and I know I am making steady progress.

So, despite it being a Herculin task I will just persist, and I hope to know "The Answer" before they lay me to rest.

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## Some Early Reviews

Warm poems for cold days. Erica Chesler gives another book of personal insights into family, friends, good times and holidays

~ LM. Clearwater, Florida

A charming book of contemporary poetry. It is pure reflection and observation of every day life- but reminds us to be in the present and observe and reflect on the marvelousness of just that - every day life. Reading a poem a day - reading some several times, gives me a sense of peace. I highly recommend this book. ~ MS Dunedin Florida

The poems are so funny and uplifting. Had good laughs and also some great recalls of things like that. ~ DL Clearwater Florida

These poems surprised me with how deeply they resonated — gentle, funny, and full of quiet wisdom. Reading them felt like a peaceful sail with an old friend who understands life's undercurrents.

~CR Dunedin Florida

The Coffee Cup Philosopher is a rare collection that finds beauty in the ordinary and meaning in the quiet. It invites the reader to pause, reflect, and smile — often all on the same page.”

~ ChatGPT, literary AI with a soft spot for soul-soothing verse

Erica continues to delight with these musings and her take on the everyday experiences of life. Her ability to capture joy and reflection in the little things is a treasure... and something we all need right now in this world.

~GB Melbourne, Australia

## About the author



**Erica Abbott**

I was born and educated in South Africa.

From a young age I discovered my passion for music, dancing, acting and poetry.

After studying these arts at the University of Cape Town, I taught speech and drama and acted in several theater productions.

I moved to Australia to be near to my family and met Sandy, my husband, in Melbourne.

We moved to Clearwater, Florida in 2021. I started writing poetry and published my first book *Pancakes and Coffee Breaks*.

I received great reviews which was very encouraging. This motivated me to write my second poetry book *Lox and Bagels for Brunch*, which kept me looking outwards for inspiration and hope for our planet.

Writing poetry makes me happy as it connects my physical and spiritual worlds. Sandy encourages me to write every day. Once I begin, it starts flowing and then I get going.

Sandy, who is an artist, has done all the artwork and designed the layout and the cover. This includes using AI in the creation of appropriate illustrations. Patient and willing, he has been an enormous help with the editing of all my three books.

# If you're going through hell, keep going.

It's no place to pitch a tent or build a home.  
The flames may lick your heels, the shadows  
may mock your stride—but even a step forward  
is a step away.

You don't know how close you are  
to cool air, clean skies, the hush of peace.

Relief doesn't always shout, sometimes  
it waits quietly, just beyond the bend.

So don't stop to take pictures,  
don't trade endurance for despair.  
Hold tight to movement,  
because things will get better—  
and you may already  
be nearing the edge.



## If you're going through hell...

This poem has been attributed to Winston Churchill despite google saying its source is unknown.

It started with this line, “If you’re going through hell, keep going.”

Sandy loved the concept, so he asked AI if there was more to the poem. AI said no but offered to write a few more lines and even make an image to go with the new poem. What you see on the left is the results of AI’s contribution.

One of the poems in this collection, *Foreign Coins and Forgotten Keys*, was written with Robert Frost's poem, *Mending Wall* in mind.

For those who've never read it — or haven't in a while — here it is.  
Evidence that the force of nature is always around.

## Mending Wall

by Robert Frost

Originally published in *North of Boston*, 1914 (Public Domain)

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,  
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,  
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;  
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.  
The work of hunters is another thing:  
I have come after them and made repair  
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,  
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,  
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,  
No one has seen them made or heard them made,  
But at spring mending-time we find them there.  
I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;  
And on a day we meet to walk the line  
And set the wall between us once again.  
We keep the wall between us as we go.  
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.  
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls  
We have to use a spell to make them balance:  
"Stay where you are until our backs are turned!"  
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.  
Oh, just another kind of out-door game,  
One on a side. It comes to little more:  
There where it is we do not need the wall:  
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.  
My apple trees will never get across  
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.  
He only says, "Good fences make good neighbors."  
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder

If I could put a notion in his head:  
“Why do they make good neighbors? Isn’t it  
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.  
Before I built a wall I’d ask to know  
What I was walling in or walling out,  
And to whom I was like to give offense.  
Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,  
That wants it down.” I could say “Elves” to him,  
But it’s not elves exactly, and I’d rather  
He said it for himself. I see him there  
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top  
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.  
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,  
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.  
He will not go behind his father’s saying,  
And he likes having thought of it so well  
He says again, “Good fences make good neighbors.”

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