
THE MAGIC WEAPON IN THIS WORLD

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"I am sure that if all the mothers of various nations met, there would be no more wars."

Not just a sentimental observation. EM Forster has hinted at a real truth.

My Dad used to say of my Mum, with laughing tenderness:

"She is like a lioness protecting her cubs."

And years, decades on . . . my mother is still protecting her overgrown offspring. Some with 'cubs' of their own now.

"You see", she explains, when she asks me every day – Have you got your mask? –

"You never stop being a mother."

Last year in Gippsland during spring, I remember being struck by that instinctive mothering quality in the fields. A newly born calf, wet from its mother's womb – tenderly washed, suckled and even softly urged to get up on its ungainly legs.

Mother and child. A motif that has woven its seamless thread throughout history.

Selflessness and strength growing side by side.

I suppose a mother learns 'at the moment she becomes a mother' to put herself last. That little bundle placed in her arms for the first time is entirely dependent. On Mum . . .

Sadly, I am not a mother.

The closest I came to being a mother was when my ex-husband and I adopted a six-week old kitten.

I remember the day like it was yesterday. It was raining 'cats and dogs' (excuse the pun) as we drove to RSPCA Burwood. I felt like an 'expectant' mother. We walked up and down those sad cages as little 'miaows' cried out.

“Will you be my mother?” I walked into a pen of kittens and suddenly a tiger-marked tabby with Cleopatra-marked green eyes leapt into my lap and climbed up onto my shoulder. That was it. In that poignant moment, I became a mother. And from that point on, I learned the joys and challenges of that important role.

I look back with great tenderness on those early ‘kitten’ years.

Milly was never out of my sight.

“Trot, Trot, Trot’, she would follow me.

Padding with her soft pink paws into the kitchen, leaping up onto my shoulder – and watching wide-eyed as I baked or chopped up ingredients for dinner.

‘Trot, Trot, Trot’, as soon as I sat down at my lap top Milly was up on my lap, watching as I wrote a press release, following my fingers as they tapped the computer keys.

But oh my goodness, how I worried over her. The night she did not appear after dinner, I would have called out every emergency vehicle in the neighborhood if it could have brought her back to me more quickly.

But that is the role of a mother, isn’t it? It is about pure mother love.

I remember with embarrassment those awful school performances that Mum had to endure. The ‘Can Can’ was a ‘please let the stage floor open and swallow me” moment. I was the only ‘dancer’ (a very loose term) that was out of step. And yet, Mum met me afterwards, clutching the program, like a pop star groupie:

“Well done, darling. At least you gave it a go.”

And all those hours and hours and hours she spent sitting on the edge of my bed listening, advising, consoling and just being there.

As I sit writing in the study, my mother is taking a little nap in the next room. Things have changed a bit now.

I think back to my favorite photograph of Mum before she became a mum. A young girl with skinny legs, dressed in a fairy costume, wielding a 'magic' wand. Her all-encompassing smile catching the camera's eye.

Yes, I am sure that EM Forster is right. Mothers are a force to be reckoned with. With their magic 'mother' wand, they can collectively change the world.