



QUOTH THE MAVEN

BY BEVERLY KING POLLOCK

Why is this Night?

My kids love Seder time. Mostly because our home is located midway between out-of-town relatives and we usually win out when it comes to where to have the festivities.

According to tradition, most Jews hold a Seder for one, maybe two nights. But I'd like to petition somebody (or mebbe even conduct a march) in favor of "Seder; four nights in a row." How else can you use up all that food?

Since our Seder is a real family affair, everybody "brings." Usually a well-known specialty. Every year we meet Tante Leah at the bus station with her bag of borscht. All flavors. Homemade. Enough to last 18 months.

If Tante Leah would just stick to borscht, we'd be in good shape. But every year she and Cousin Sarah (who makes the sponge cake 12 inches high) make a tsimmes over who will make the tsimmes. And while they're arguing over my stove (in a kitchen built for one) the tsimmes gets burned. (It's happened five years already. But no matter now. My kids think tsimmes is supposed to taste that way).

Cousin Yetta always makes the matzoh balls. With lots of schmaltz. They sorta lay there even before they hit your stomach.

Every year there is chicken and potatoes and lots of kids, at least a dozen. We board them dormitory style. No matter where you go you step over a body. But the kids prefer it to a motel. They exchange infinitesimal bubbeh meices from the past year. And giggle late into the night.

And their parents sigh how everybody's grown. A Seder could not take place without, "Doesn't time fly?" And "I guess we're all getting older." Also "Did I tell you about my son? H..."

It usually takes months to find where we hid all the matzoh. We have to plant enough for each kid to find the aphikomom and collect a big reward.

The closest we came to trouble was the haroses, which Tante Mortel insists on putting too much Israeli wine in. As a result we couldn't tell whether baby cousin Mark Stewart was wobbling merely from his tender age.

My job is chicken and general coordinator of the day. Chopped liver (not my assignment) I had to make quick because Cousin Ceil left hers on the kitchen table.

It's hard to believe one family could spawn both conservatives and wild-eyed liberals. So we try to keep away from politics. But every Seder, regardless of who is in power, Uncle Louie blames the fate of the country on "You **** Democrats!"

Each year we can see changes that extend far beyond the relocation of wine spots on the tablecloths. Besides growing, the kids no longer protest their force-fed Hebrew now that they can participate in the services. And most important of all, the family gets closer each year.

If you'd like some left over matzoh balls, please let me know. I'll send 'em to you parcel post if they don't weigh too much.

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