

## TT 13 Day 24

I have been severely discombobulated this week because my cousin Loopy has been in the middle of her 'estrus' cycle. The received wisdom on how to cope in these circumstances is as follows: 'Generally, neutered males (like me) are fine, but it can be stressful for any males to live in the same house as a female in heat so we usually recommend totally separating them. If possible, send one of the dogs to stay with a relative or friend for a month or so.' Clearly this isn't possible in the midst of a universal lock-down, so we have to do the best we can and it's not easy for me.

Loopy has been separated from me at night during this time and while she is sleeping in the utility room, the 'estrus' cycle has nothing to do with our new washing machine. I looked quizzically at the Guvnor inviting him to explain all this, especially as we have a young teenager self-isolating with us, and he looked away.

I thought this might be a chance for a grandfather to 'put his money where his mouth is' and show that he really was receptive to the awkward questions he had invited over the years from his grandchildren 'when they felt they couldn't ask their parents or their teachers'. And then, when there is just such a poser, he ducked it just like Noel Coward did when he was asked by his nephew what two dogs were doing; "Well, you see, the poor one in front is blind and his friend is kindly pushing her all the way to St Dunstans."

The Guvnor thought he could get away with simply repeating the sweet story of the small boy whose homework one evening was to explain all about where he had come from. His mother, busy

preparing supper, was taken aback and resorted to the stork story. Shaking his head, the boy went into the sitting room where his grandmother was doing the crossword. Having overheard the exchange in the kitchen, Granny embellished the story but kept loyally to the same theme. The boy went upstairs and began his essay, "As far as I can discover, there hasn't been a natural birth in my family for two generations."

The Guvnor kept telling me my behaviour was unethical and unbecoming, and he's not wrong from a human's point of view but I insisted on turning the criticism back to him by mocking his inability to grasp the nettle and conduct a biology lesson using Loopy and me as examples. After all, he used to teach once upon a time, but I guess it is more difficult with your own kith and kin (and please save us from the dreadful pun of 'kith and tell'. He wasn't even ashamed of himself. He just quoted Groucho Marx who once famously said, "Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend. Inside of a dog it's too dark to read."

Of course, children don't have many schoolbooks anymore, as I understand a lot of teaching material is online. In that respect, the Easter holidays are almost over, and it is back to 'virtual' school shortly. One of the Guvnor's favourite columnists in his newspaper says it is odd that his 6 year-old son is sitting at the kitchen table dressed in a shirt and tie, clean shorts and polished shoes, while his parents are slopping about at the other end of the room 'working from home' and in their dressing gowns, tracksuit bottoms and flip-flops. How things have changed, and not necessarily for the better.