

The Man with the voice has been visiting mother for years. He is a useful ally in the War on Motherism as his listening skills momentarily unburden me from the obligation. Mother is ensconced by his visits and is keen to share with him her knowledge of two-for-the-price-of-one offers at the Co-op. The man with the voice must find comfort from her Victorian sentiments as he makes all the right noises in all the right places and is rewarded with a cup of tea.

He only ever visits in the mornings which suggest to me he has a full schedule ahead of him. I sometimes wonder if he is a Samaritan who specialises in divorced females- who end up filling his day, as well as his ears. If this is the case then he should be rewarded with a community service award. Although it is not just mother who benefits from his visits as he makes me feel good as well, perhaps it's because I am a divorced male. If I am not with my son then nothing can wake me in the morning. Not even the alternate channel-flicking between *Kilroy* and *Trisha* as Mother immerses herself in topical debates; yet the man with the voice can. I feel his voice filter upstairs and climb inside my bed and lie gently with me on the pillow, lingering and vibrating like a Theremin until it fills my head. When I hear him I get all Christmassy excited and follow his words down the stairs like a willing rat seduced by my very own Pied Piper.

Over the years I have heard his voice in many places; whether sitting on the toilet, making breakfast, dreaming or calling in sick to work- his voice always filters through. It never fails to make me smile. I suppose if I had any brains I would record his voice and take it with me everywhere. I could listen to it when the traffic jams and chattering public are starting to get me down. It is a seductive distraction like perfume, the type that fades before you can locate its source. Not the type whose odour is so potent that once inhaled it infests until you begin to choke.

The man with the voice can't help himself; like most with a specific talent, his is a natural gift rather than something trained or worked hard on to perfect. It boils down to simple mathematics he has no control over. His mouth is simply too big. There is no mechanism for refinement or control and so noises just slip out. His clumsy loud voice is devoid of temperance and pitch so it engulfs your senses with the same relentless force. He is honest and excited and this is exaggerated by the way he rasps. His words are too quick for his thoughts and leave his lips a quivering mess. The few teeth he has are all over the shop and create the impression of badly placed wicket stumps. His voice whistles through them and you can't help but worry that one over pronounced word could bowl them out.

When I greet him he is perched over on a seat; his arms folded upon his lap like a neatly arranged bouquet, which his legs symmetrically reflect. He taps his feet against each other so they resemble pecking birds squabbling over worms in a nest. On his head is a Tartan flat cap that perches so eloquently that it could easily be mistaken as part of his head. His face is hyperbolic. His jowls hang from his cheeks like drooping breasts. His ears are bulbous and rise out of his hair like Yorkshire puddings that have spilt out the tray. It is his exact grotesqueness that makes his an interesting face.

The good thing about the man with the voice is he continues talking when you enter the room, politely making eye contact so you don't feel as if you are about to intrude. Sometimes I join mother on the sofa and am amazed at the perfectly equal distribution of looks we get, so that neither of us feels left out. If the man with the voice was in charge of communism I am sure it would work out. I imagine him some times as a contestant on *The Generation Game*, where prizes are replaced by people as he talks as they pass him on a conveyor belt.

Mother has never told me who the man with the voice is and I suspect she no longer knows herself, but he has become as integral to our family as the television, fridge-freezer and those pictures of relatives that live on every flat surface throughout the house. Over the years we have learnt every single thing about him, yet not once has he repeated himself. It is probably why he visits so early so he can get out and acquire some more life. I don't know how he does it, how he is able to remember who he said what to and when without becoming confused. Although mother would never admit it, I think his oratory skills are a source of inspiration and a standard she would like to set.

The man with the voice is married with three daughters all of whom have left home. They have all married me who treat them well and bring a bottle of wine or a home baked cake when they visit monthly for a Sunday roast. Each has three offspring of their own and each, going by the pictures he so proudly removes from his wallet, is blessed with his large mouth. I can only imagine what the mellifluous acoustics must sound like when spoken in unison. Each time he visits he talks about one of the daughters and now it is what one of the grand-children have done. The potential for conversation is endless and only falters when he is presented with tea, which he always has to have in the cup and

