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The Earth Mother

by Miriam Silver

Many years ago the in a small village there lived Felicity, the original 'earth-mother'. This terrifying lady managed to combine bread, cake and winemaking with growing prize winning vegetables and working for the Food Bank, together with being the perfect mother of five.

This was revealed to me on my arrival in the school playground with my wimpy small son clinging to my hand.

"Go on, here's your favourite lunch, they're all keen to play, I'll look after teddy, yes I'll bring him to meet you, soon."

Failed again, he clung on even harder.

"Are you sure my crisps are there?" he whispered waving his little lunchbox.

Dabbing his tears unobtrusively, I noticed her across and the playground and waved as she pushed her little Joshua towards us.

"I'm Felicity, met you the other day, he'll take him in, go on dear, remember what I told you about being a mentor, some children find their first day a bit difficult, yes I know you didn't," she said rather too loudly, as little Joshua came towards my cowering Charles.

I urged Charles on towards the teacher, breathing a sigh of relief as he took hold of the proffered hand, grateful to leave the rest to her.

Naturally she walked out with me, immediately launching into how she overcame her childrens' fears, what she gave them for lunch, how they walk to school and how nice it was to meet again. Smiling my thanks I managed a mumbled,

“Must rush, deadline, you know...” and moved quickly towards my car feeling a total wreck.

Arriving breathlessly at 3pm there she was, her lecture on petroleum fumes coming to a halt as her son skipped over with Charles in tow claiming they were best friends.

All unavoidable really, becoming friends. I did mention, in between hearing about the forthcoming fete's needs that I didn't have much time for coffee mornings or charities, mumbling something about work.

Unfazed she told me that in spite of her Cambridge degree she'd given herself over to all things domestic and rural, constantly expounding on Save the Planet, cutting out plastic, fat, gluten, and sugar leaving me asking her about protein, only to get a lecture on tofu and green gas and their effect on the melting ice.

I'll always be grateful for Felicity's help, so reliable, being there when my car broke down, taking my son into her home and giving him healthy teas, worrying about his small appetite. I did appreciate her help even though it made me feel inadequate, I couldn't even find a way of repaying her, especially when she said,

“Don't even think of it, what are friends for eh?”

I never told her how much Joshua enjoyed our teas of fish fingers, peas, chips and chocolate ice cream. One was seldom able to do her a good turn without thoughts of strangulation, but I never let on.

