

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Nurture

by Sue Hitchcock

“What shall we get Freddy for his birthday?”

“He’s only one. He only likes cuddly animals and nothing would be better than the teddy he already has.”

“I know what’s better than a toy bear.”

“Yes?”

“A puppy.”

“We’ll have to ask Mummy and Daddy first.”

On the telly the News was showing riots in Sri Lanka, a Palestinian reporter shot dead and exiled Ukrainian women carrying pet dogs along with their children.

“I’m frightened. Of us.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well us, you and me, and everyone else too. All of the Human Race.”

“That’s ridiculous. Your not afraid of me. Surely you aren’t frightened of our kids or baby Freddy?”

“I’m not frightened for myself. It’s the rest of life on Earth.”

“Come on, you love animals and you can’t say you haven’t got a green thumb. Just look how beautiful you’ve made the garden.”

“Yes, but it all depends on killing. They say you mustn’t kill slugs and snails now. And you mustn’t mow the lawn. What kind of wilderness would it be?”

“We might get hedgehogs instead.”

“Then the cat would catch fleas off them.”

“What if we were to live in a real wilderness, with wolves and in America, they have bears as well.”

“Of course then I would be frightened, but only for myself and my family of course. I wouldn’t feel responsible for causing the extinction of the rest. It would be a relief, in a way.”

“What about Freddy?”

“He’d be better at looking after himself than me or you. We’d probably be asking his advice.”

“And what do you think he would tell us?”

“I suppose he would tell us to love and take care of everything, not have favourites, like pet animals or plants with double flowers which have no nectar, no pollen.”

“Why don’t we do it?”

“We always have an excuse for doing what we want, however harmful like travelling to the other side of the earth in an aeroplane, because our relatives moved away. We do things because we can.”

“We need the power taken away.”

“Don’t give it to a dictator, though. You know power corrupts.”

“I seem to remember a verse in the Bible, let me look it up...Oh, here it is, ‘All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth.’”

“Who said that?”

“St. Paul.”

“Oh, him. Right, but another must mean other than Man, if we’re going to make it work.”

“In the end it is for our survival, along with the others.”

“Well, just as long as I don’t have to be kind to that Russian bear, Putin.”