



# A Piece of my Mind

Editorial Comment

We've been in lockdown for a few years already. That's what it feels like when you can't go out. It's been difficult, it's been scary. It certainly feels like the end of the world as we know it. It's all doom and gloom and things are going to get worse.

And yet, there are amazing things happening. My heart bursts with pride when I think of you – my wonderful colleague. I know that you must be physically and emotionally exhausted because you bear a huge burden, but you are doing so well. You work without complaining. You entered the profession to make a difference in people's lives, and that's exactly because what you are doing right now. Thank you. I'm sorry I can't pop out and come and help you, but I think of you often.

## **"It'll be better before you're a boy!"**

That was what my grandmother would tell me and my sisters when we fell and hurt ourselves. And she was right – it was always better after a while. I guess our world is busy healing right now and it'll be interesting to see how it changes and how we change with it.

## **Taking stock**

The lockdown has forced us to take stock of ourselves and our lives. What is important to us? What can we live without? Again, we are privileged – we have a roof over our heads and food in a fridge. We have a profession that enables us to earn a living, while so many others are unable to provide for themselves and their families.

## **Meetings, bloody meetings**

If you're old enough, you may remember a John Cleese training video called "Meetings, bloody meetings" in which he discussed the mistakes people make in meetings. Having spent most of my life in meetings, it's always been one of my favourite videos. Strangely enough, I think that one of the most positive results of the pandemic has been the way we've been forced to change the way in which meetings are conducted. Do we really need face to face meetings if we can use Microsoft Teams or Zoom or even good old WhatsApp video meetings? (Of course when your laptop decides that during a meeting is the perfect time for it to crash – permanently – it doesn't always end well.)

## **Travelling days are over?**

I guess for now, and the foreseeable future, they are. I fully understand the withdrawal symptoms that are afflicting Obey Madzingo right now – read about them in the section on lockdown news. Many of us

have been privileged in the past, and we've experienced the thrill of exploring different parts of our world. Now, walking to the local shop has become an adventure, and driving across town to the computer repairman was exhilarating! How about another adventure soon – a trip to Johannesburg could be fun! (I never thought I'd ever say that! I must be going stir-crazy!)

## **Reading days are here again!**

With my laptop out of the picture, I've taken to reading real books again. Actually, it's out of necessity. Not to amuse myself, but the time has come for me to cull my books. Somehow they appear to breed surreptitiously – there are always more of them than I remember.

When I was young, I frequented the local library. I'd borrow a book to read, and, if I enjoyed it, I'd go and buy the book. I wouldn't buy a book unless I'd actually read it and appreciated it. As I got older, books seemed to follow me around. But I really seriously don't need all the books I have. So, with time on my hands, I decided that I would donate some of them to hospice.

That's when the problem arose. Two problems, actually. The first is that I now cannot give a book away unless I've re-read it. The second is that physically going to hospice and getting out of the car to take the books inside creates a very stressful situation – they sell books. There are dozens in the hospice shop. I cannot walk past them without picking them up, and then I can't put them down again. So I go home with more books than I took to the shop.

I'm sitting in my lounge working on a borrowed laptop right now. From where I am sitting, I can see a bookcase with five shelves. Each shelf can hold a row of about 28 to 40 books, depending on the thickness of the book. And each shelf actually holds two rows, one behind the other, so double the number of books. In the actual study, there are three more bookcases, stuffed to the gills with books. And I know that there are boxes and boxes full of books in the garage. In the ten years that I have been living here, I haven't quite got around to unpacking them.

I guess "that day" has arrived. You know the one – the "one day when I have time" day. It's here and I have a lot of reading to do so that I can actually give some books away, so please excuse me. We'll chat again in the next issue.

**Lorraine Osman**