

REFLECTING ON LIFE

A PLAY BY STEVE LONG

Arnold is in his seventies and retired. He is sitting in his garden on a nice summer's day.

I am sitting here looking out over the garden. I have just finished mowing the lawn. There are a few weeds in the lawn, so I must get down to the garden centre and get some of that weed and feed. It's a strange time, this lock down. I don't think that my late wife, Hilary, could have coped with it. Stuck at home all the time. She would have been devastated with all her beloved soaps not being on, or less episodes to watch a week. She watched all of them, well as far as I knew, because I wasn't interested. I'd wander into the lounge and she'd be watching something on the television and the characters were shouting at each other, and I knew that she was watching a soap. But she was happy, so I was happy. I just kept out of the lounge when they were on. I spent most of my time in the garden, in the greenhouse,

tending to the plants, depending on what time of year it was. Or in the shed. I remember a sitcom on television, was it in the 70's or was it the 80's, where the husband and his neighbour, I remember that he was called Trevor. I can't remember what the husband was called. Anyway they used to disappear into the shed. Their man cave. To drink sherry. It was usually poor quality sherry, so they were always pulling faces when they drank it. Those were the days of innocent sitcoms, no bad language, no nudity. I keep meaning to clear out the shed, but I never get round to it.

There doesn't seem to be much point. Someone will do it after I have gone.

I cook for myself. Nothing too complicated. I gave a lot of cook books to the charity shop. I gave up watching those cooks on television, you know, people like Delia Smith, Brian Turner, and others. I think that I had enough recipes to keep me happy.

I go for walks, not just at the moment, but generally every day. There seems to be more people out walking. And people

are friendly, they say hello, or whatever the time of day it is. That is enough exercise for me, and as for Joe Wickes. Forget it!

Because of the lockdown there are less cars on the road. It's a lot quieter. And I think that the birds know, because you can hear so much more bird song.

Oh hullo, a robin has just landed on the table in front of me. And there is a pair of blackbirds coming into the garden nearly every day. Hilary and I were convinced that it was the same pair of blackbirds that came back year after year. We thought of them as our blackbirds. Of course there are magpies and pigeons, but they frighten away all the small birds which I would rather have in our, oh sorry, that should be, my garden.

My family have all grown up and flown the nest, but I still see them, not in person at the moment, but via Skype or Zoom. We have had a few group chats and even played a quiz, but I wonder what things are going to be like when it is all over. When, that is the question. Will we be still willing to shake

hands, kiss, hug, just be close to people.

There is an older lady who lives nearby. She is always asking me if there is anything that I need, is there anything that I want. I keep wondering if she is trying to chat me up. She is alone, like me, but I don't think that I am looking for any sort of romantic liaison at the moment. I don't know if I am up for it. Benny Hill, in one of his songs, said, "there's snow upon the roof, but there's a fire in the cellar". I think that my embers will need a lot of fanning if I am likely to be able to fulfil any of her desires, but we shall see.

I just wonder when and how this will all end. They talk about "the new normal", but what's that? The "normal" as we knew it before it all went pear-shaped. Cinemas, pubs, cafes, restaurants, could cope with things in the next few months. But theatres, it will probably next year. We will have to see. In the meantime I will carry on. While the weather is good spend time in the garden. And like everyone else, we will have to be patient.

THE END

