

## In Amber

---

26 March 2020

The first feeling was of enormous lassitude. Friends and colleagues were bombing the internet with “ten ways to...” undertake home schooling, pivot your business, support the needy, learn a new skill, petition the government, and all I wanted was to lie in bed and drink Diet Coke and eat Cadbury Family Block chocolate and read my comfort books. Sleep, and half-sleep and mid-afternoon torpor that I didn't have to fight, but could just sink into. Bliss.

Raising my head after about a week, my next awareness was a lack of the corrosive envy that usually accompanied my Facebook check ins. ‘Oh, the cruise you've booked has cancelled? Shame. The holiday to Europe, the pied a terre on the Italian Lakes, the trip to Israel? All gone.’ Ok, maybe a dollop of schadenfreude as well. This is not the year to be sorry that you have lost responsibility for fundraising for a private school. My employed friends are cushioned from the fear I have of losing my house, or not being able to feed my children, but even for me they are problems for a month or two away. For today I am enjoying envisioning my ‘ladies who lunch’ coping without regular highlights, my students without china doll eyelashes and French tipped nails, and my society hostesses with racks of fashionable clothing that no one will see. The laser clinic shut its door yesterday and I can see the wrinkles forming on the brows of botoxed babes who cannot get their fix. It's delicious. The husband who was resisting sharing his shares with his soon-to-be-ex now has a portfolio worth less than my childhood swap card collection. The right wing businessman complaining about government handouts for the last ten years is now begging the Treasurer for some relief for his practice.

I don't share my first reactions with my friends. The uplifting version, which my Anne Blythe of “Anne of Green Gables” would urge me to work for, is that we might come out of this period more ready to believe in sharing and caring for all our citizens, and the stranger in our midst. That we might evolve a mighty infrastructure of health and education and housing and opportunity and then share it with our neighbours. That both men and women see the possibilities and rewards in work time that is face to face and work that can be done remotely. That teachers and parents see that a few hours of concentrated effort supplies sufficient education for a day, and more play and craft time and ‘scope for imagination’ is required. That older people and others in care don't need to be lonely, because there is time to call and chat, or send a video of the kids dancing, or drop off a gift of food or clothes or entertainment, and that we are all the better for considering the vulnerable in our midst. That our tremendous creativity comes into play, even under pressure, and wonderful ideas are generated, some for now, and some for the future.

Resonances of past struggles invade my thinking while doing the most mundane tasks. Cleaning the silver I wonder what my jewellery would fetch if I had to sell it, and remember the tales of those in our community fleeing their countries of origin with pearls sewn into their coat linings. I read my children the Exodus story in preparation for Passover in a fortnight and wonder when someone will start painting crosses on the doors of the unclean. They've already begun the blood libel.

We are flies in amber. I was too busy, and now I'm not. Too tired, and now I'm not. I'm suspended, in amber, slowly rotating to see the light through the gold. It's rather lovely.