

Mornings

Mairi Neil

The 5.24am rumbles past and on cue, Aurora begins nudging my back. ‘Too early,’ I croak and snuggle under the doona for a couple of more hours sleep to a waking just as rude. ‘Yuk, your breath stinks. These early morning kisses have to stop.’

In what seems moments, a glimmer of daylight dances on the wall, then a steady rhythm from the click and tap of footsteps hurrying to the railway station, after slamming car doors. It is useless to try and sleep. Aurora, also exhausted from her alarm clock routine, lifts her head and large brown eyes plead with me.

‘Okay, okay, I’m getting up. Now please move off my slippers and give me some space.’ The twelve-year-old scrambles to her feet as fast as her arthritic bones allow and my aged body does the same. ‘Happy now?’ I grumble.

The flushing of the toilet Aurora’s signal, to almost trip me up in her eagerness to be first at the backdoor, where Smackos sleep in a drawer waiting to be gobbled by this ever-hungry dog. She snatches the treat from my hand and dribbles. The chicken flavoured snack crumbles before disappearing into her expanding tummy. ‘

That’s it,’ I say, ‘Vet Jane’s orders!’

We shuffle back to the kitchen together to start another day. I put the kettle on to sing and dangle a teabag into a favourite mug souvenir from sunny California and check out the kitchen window. The Jasmine trembles along the fence and I wonder if the sea breeze promises a sunny day in Mordialloc.

Aurora coughs and totters into the lounge room to claim her favourite armchair and waits for me to bring my steaming cup of tea to join her. We watch ABC24 together and discover the good and bad news before Aurora demands a play with the ball or walk along the street - most days, like a spoilt toddler she’ll get both.

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