

KEN'S CHOICE #11. – 13TH May, 2006

TOMORROW IS MOTHER'S DAY



"MY MUMMY"

My Mummy

Could read tea leaves

My Mummy

**Didn't go right through high school
But my Mummy was smart,
She was nobody's fool
She could interpret those incredibly complex patterns
That were seen
In Good Housekeeping and Crochet Magazines
You know - pearl one knit two drop three -
Even more baffling to me
Than GIF and JPEG
HTML and RAM MEMORY in my PC**

My Mummy would

**knit baby booties for friends and families
and crochet whole table clothes and table mats
and cream color hats with red roses on top
to fit over the roll of toilet paper**

**Toilet paper with sweater
And it's 92 degrees all year round.**

My Mummy

**Was born in Tobago
That off-shore island colony of
The ex island colony of Trinidad
Some people call the Robinson**

Crusoe Island

**My Mummy's Mummy and Daddy were
Scottish**

**But they were living in
A little remote fishing village
Named Charlotteville
Which is there still
A small strip of sand
At the foot of a mountain
On the far side of the island.
and I always wondered what they
were doing there around 1903
You think they may have been
smuggling
Or even making
Scotch Whiskey?**



And I can't remember my Mummy ever talking about them
That's strange isn't it?
No names no photographs
But the same thing can be said of My Daddy's Daddy
Who came all the way from China to Trinidad in the 19th century.
No photograph, no name
Unless of course it was something like Chung Lee!?
And was Trinidadianized into Corsbie?
But that is a next story
One of these days I will write it
And call it MY DADDY.

MY MUMMY

Wasn't really Scottish you know
She was a true true Tobagonian
and MY DADDY was half Chinese and
African, Welch and Amerindian.
And was a full blooded Trinidadian
But between you me and the doorpost,
I always thought that he looked like a
Malaysian.
So you see,
With all that genealogy of mine
I beat Tiger Woods to it long time;
He tell them he is not no African-American
He say
'My Daddy is part Red Indian"
No, he would have been politically correct
So he say "Native American"
And then you see my mother there?
Watch her good.
I'm an Afro-Asian-Native-American."
So you see, no amount of cultural, national, religious or political
correctness
Can dilute my satisfaction
Of being
A true true full blooded stereotypical West Indian.
A while ago
I had to fill out an American Government census form
With one of those five boxes you tick off
To say who and what you are,
Me?
Asian - TICK
Native American - TICK
Hispanic TICK
White - TICK
Black TOCK
I'm like the mouse running up the clock,
And to top up the pot
Just like Emerel the popular T.V chef,
My Grandchildren
Kicked it up a notch



By pelting in –
Bam - Portuguese
Bam Swedish
Bam - East Indian.
And Bam – Brazilian
And finally
Bam – Bajan.

MY MUMMY

married my Daddy
and they must have had
a lot of opposition in those days,
on both sides, yes sireee.
They were two handsome young people
He was short, dapper and brown skin
She was white, pretty and slim.
You should see their wedding photo circa about 1925
She with the short bobbed black hair of the 20's,
Looking real sharp in her knee length white dress
White stockings, shiny black pointed shoes
The type of shoe
that curl women's toes over each other,
and still do.
He with tapered trousers he called "Gunboat"
and short skimpy jacket
the kind that, thirtyfive years later we called Batty Breezers
The same Batty Breezers that Johnny Mattis wore
When he came to sing in Guyana
With his infinitely long breathless choir boy voice and phrasing.
And if you think it easy,
Try this..
Sing this four line verse in one breath
Slowly, with feeling.
I have tried it several times and only succeeded two or three times.
I'm going to have to draw on
All those things I was taught in my three years
in an English Drama School we called
"The Rosie Bruford School of Terpsichorean fart"
Open throat, rib swing, deep diaphragmatic breathing
But I probably won't make it anyhow.
- all in one breath.....

*"Moonlight becomes you it goes with your hair
And you certainly know
The right things to wear
Moonlight becomes you so"*

MY MUMMY

Like all Mummies everywhere and at all times
Sang to us when we were little those beautiful
Innocent bedtime childrens' ditties..

*"Rock a bye baby on the tree top..
and when the bough breaks the baby will fall"*

and "*Humpty Dumpty sat on wall
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall
And nobody could put him together at all at all*"

And My Mummy was tone deaf
She actually sung, in about 3 different keys
Sharp, flat and in between....

*"Three blind Mice
three blind mice
see how they run..
They cut off their tails.- What fun!"*

and that is why up to now I'm tone deaf
and can't sing five notes in tune.
That is my excuse anyhow.
Of course, if that happened today in America
I could sue My Mummy for Child abuse and for
"withholding the cultural development of a minor!"
But I never had teen aged angst
That I hear all American kids supposed to have.
Never knew what that was
I thought angst was those teenage pimples
You got rid of with Alcosulf Lotion.
And I never had no trauma counselling as such
No Prozac thank you very much.
And I never picked up a shotgun
and killed anybody in my high school,
just for fun!

My Mummy and My Daddy
Had/have four children -
Percy who kept rabbits and fowls
in our bottom house
And later owned his own poultry farm,
Where his 7-week old *Corsbie Chickens* were famous.
Then there is Joyce
Who now lives in Tobago,
Where My Mummy's roots are still there
Then Me, as you see me here,
And lastly Deryck my kid brother
who married cute Joan Martins our across Hadfield street neighbour.
And they went to live in Jamaica
Where he was shot and killed by burglar;
That was their "island in the sun."
But again their stories is a next story altogether.
One day I'm going to write it
And call it "MY BROTHERS AND SISTER"

MY MUMMY

Would laugh at semi-wutless jokes
Never at full wutless jokes mind yuh

And cry when she can't get
the damn wallaba wood to light in the coalpot
to make breakfus
for us
Plantain porridge, Sago pap,
Quaker Oats with plenty dark sugar on top

And My Mummy would get hot hot hot
If anybody so much as cut dey eye on any of her children or
grandchildren
She had/has ten grands and sixteen greats at least
At the time of telling,
and who knows how many more since then.
A classic case of third world population explosion
Leading to some of America's illegal immigration.

And My Mummy
Would cool we down with Limacol when we get fever,
rub we chest down with Vicks Vaporub and call the doctor,
Wash cloth we down with cool Bayrum,
put on we nice clean pressed PJ's,
and Dr. Romiti would come.
Yes, doctors came to your home in those days.
Dr. Romiti in his starched white shirt, white pants and white jacket
In his old time motor car going COCOW COCOW
And he would put one huge Italian hand on your back and go
BONG BONG BONG
And I never knew what that was about.
Nowadays it's MRI XRAYS CATSCAN and EKG
Yes My Mummy and Dr. Romiti saw us safely
Through Mumps, Malaria, and Measles
Bumps, Bronchitis and Bruises.
Cuts, Contusions and other medical crises.

And now comes the bestest part of the story...

MY MUMMY

uses to make a different food each day of the week..
Monday to Sunday
You want to know what my Mummy uses to make?
Well if you want to know, you have to axe me.
You have to say all together
"Is what your Mummy make on Mondays?"
(and get the grammar right)
and so on through all the days of the week.
Let me hear you for Mondays.

"Is what your Mummy make on Mondays?"

MY MUMMY make

Chicken chow-mein on Mondays

"Is what your Mummy make on Tuesdays?"

Chicken pilau on Tuesdays

"Is what your Mummy make on Wednesdays?"

Curried Chicken on Wednesdays

"Is what your Mummy make on Thursdays?"

Crab and callaloo soup on Thursdays

"Is what your Mummy make on Fridays?"

Splitpeas soup on Fridays

"Is what your Mummy make on Saturdays?"

Eddoes, cassava, green plantains,

Salt fish and corn flour dumplings,

Boiled down in coconut milk

Smooth as silk

To a fine gravy

We called it - Metegee

That's what my Mummy make on Saturdays.

"Is what your Mummy make on Sundays?"

On Sundays My Mummy make

Roast Chicken, baked English potatoes

Garnished with

carrots, cucumbers, lettuce and tomatoes.

That's right!

Real white people food on Sundays..

And if you wondering how we uses to eat so much chicken in those days?

We'll remember that Percy uses to keep fowls downstairs.

Then My Mummy

Got old.

Her knee troubled her more and more

The sirsee bush she used to tie around it

Didn't help much anymore

She had high blood pressure

And Osteoporosis

Although we didn't know much

about those things in those days.

And My Mummy

grew smaller and smaller,

And shorter and shorter,

And sadder and sadder .

Three of her darling children lived abroad,

Her dear hubby had passed away ten years now,

But she still say how he still talks to her,

And Percy my older brother

the only one of us still living in Guyana

Did everything he could

To keep my Mummy comfortable.

Then my Mummy died.
And we all cried,
Partly because when your Mummy and your Daddy dead
You now have for the first time in yuh life
to face your own mortality
But I'm lucky
I still have Joyce and Percy
Ahead of me.
But now that's not true
Because Percy died in 2002.

MY MUMMY'S funeral

Was a big high class affair
Where I went up in the pulpit and read verses from the Bible
Which I had not even opened for more than 40 years
It was a high mass affair
There was communion
And although I had gone to a Catholic Primary and High School
I had never ever done communion before
And I didn't know what knee to kneel on
And my big brother Percy whispered to me
"Ken, the biscuit or wafer or whatever
Sticking to my dentures"
And I whispered back
"When the priest come with wine
tip the glass up and take a extra large mouthful
swish it around
and wash it down."
And as the four of us were walking back to the front row pew
We stopped at my Mummy's coffin
and I whispered very quietly to her
So that only we could hear
"Mummy, is only you could make us do this"
and Joyce giggled and the boys smiled and nodded,
and the whole congregation thought
"Oh that's so nice,
the children stopped to say something loving to their Mother"
and come to think of it now, they were right.

*"There is a sower in the sky
Who sows the seeds of stars
The sower's name is Death my love
He sows that we may die."*

MY MUMMY

Called me her "Brown Bomber"
after Joe Louis
because I was the darkest o' we,
Most like MY DADDY

*" If I should die before you love
The harvest that I leave
Will be the memory of my love
In everlasting sleep"*

MY MUMMY

Loved - no - loves me....

*"In everlasting sleep my love
In everlasting sleep."*

**Crick.... Crack
This story
never end.**

("The Sower" lyrics by Derek Walcott from his play JOKER OF SEVILLE, music by Galt McDermot)

MY MUMMY can be heard on the CD "Caribbean Voices #3 – THIS MANGO SWEEET!"

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