

Mother-in-Law

by Harry Dunn

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So she's coming down to stay with us,
My dear old Ma-in-law,
And am I pleased to hear this news?
Well, of course, I say with feeling,
If it's only for a day or two, no more,
And we'll have the normal, frank, exchange of views
While she's laying down the law
And barking at the ceiling.

But she's coming for a month, you say,
Holy bloody hell!
Of course she's more than welcome, dear
But a month is quite a spell,
And I'm not sure that I can cope
With the stress she always brings;
I mean, she's been known to bury bones
And sundry other things.

Now please don't get me wrong, my dear,
You know I'm fond of Mother
And I never said she's *canine*, female gender,
Porcine, arachnid, serpentine or other;
She's a dear old soul who sometimes gets things wrong;
Do you remember when she put the cat
In our brand-new Bamix blender.

And I meant no harm when I just said
That I'd fumigate the kennel;
It was a harmless little joke
Of the type that married men'll
Make, when they hear that Mother's on her way,
And you know that I am not the sort of bloke
Who'd want to spoil her stay
With a tasteless, sexist joke.

Now, have I heard you right?
That was a *month* you said,
A full four weeks, that's nearly thirty days,
Or seven-twenty hours, morning, noon and night
Of Mother's little ways.
You'll take her for long walks, you say,
So I can have a break,
Down the concrete path, along the sandy beach;
Well, please make sure, my love,
She's always on the leash,
And take a little bag with you, a shovel and a rake,
So you can leave the beach pristine,
For other walker's sake.

Now please don't get abusive, dear,
You know I mean no harm;
I'd never say a word against your mum,
But always check before you leave,
That she's had her Clomicalm.
I mean, it's great to see her sitting up to beg
But we don't want to have her biting
Passing strangers, on the leg.

Well, now you're arcing up again-
And I just don't know what for;
You *know* how much I love to sit and chew the fat
With my dear old ma-in-law,
But sadly, I have other actions planned;
Urgent things - like lengthy daily roll-ups
And volunteering, on demand,
Requiring many hours, each and every time,
Followed by a cool-down at the bar,
Drinking Miller's Chillers, lager-lime.

And if she becomes unwell,
And her nose looks kind of dry,

Be sure that Mother gets
The very best attention, while she's here in Inverloch
Although it's sad but true to tell
We don't have a local doc
But we *do* have several vets.

Of course I only joked, when recently I said
That I'd fumigate the kennel,
The dog-kennel in the shed,
Because I planned to sleep out there myself.
So your mum could have my bed.
And when you take her out on walks,
I'll be reading Mills and Boon,
Cleaning up the shed,
And visiting the sick,
But if I hear her barking, or howling at the moon,
You'll understand my urgent, pressing need
To play a game of bowls, or call on Uncle Mick,
And not returning over-soon.

So, all in all, your mother's visit,
Although perhaps a bit extended,
And one I wouldn't actively solicit,
Will be for us a time of pain and pleasure,
With both of us transcended;
That's you - from Darling Wife
To Daughter Dutiful, never leaving Mother unattended,
And poor old me - from retir-ee,
To nasty Son-in-Law, far too easily offended,
With reason, rhyme and sanity
More or less suspended.

Author's note: The Mother in Law depicted in this bit of fiction is the apocryphal MIL of the febrile male invention, not a real person, and certainly not my own dear old Nana, who gave me no grief at all in our 40 years of peaceful co-existence.