

FAMILY AND MORE

Enemies or Friends?

By Helena Harper

(Eloquent Books, 2008)

Contents

The Baby

The Mother

The Father

The Grandmother

The Grandfather

The Foreign Uncle

The English Uncle

The Adopted Aunt (paperback only)

The Elder Sister

The Brother-in-Law

The Niece

The Nephew

The Colleague

The Boss

The Physiotherapist

The Massage Therapist

The Tennis Director

You will find extracts from these poems below.

The Mother

A child of East Prussian woods and forests,
a German outpost
dwarfed by the Russian giant nearby.
Skiing to school
in winters of iceberg temperatures
minus thirty and below,
swimming in pristine lakes
on steaming summer days,
walking through the cooling shade
of fresh-smelling pines,
the small hand engulfed
so safely,
so securely,
in the father's,
feeling so proud,
so happy,
so warm,
so loved.

A big sister to three,
a younger to two others,
one of a handful of girls
in a grammar school¹ of boys,
diligence driving her again and again
to fall asleep over books,
to gain the reward of good grades
and the praise of teachers inspiring.
Sport, biology, English
no problem at all,
but math and physics
a different story;
sixth form² classes
with pupils few,
for the oldest boys,
her brother, too,
have gone to fight and die
in honor, they say,
on the Eastern front.
But war or no war,
nothing deflects
from her goal of study.
A levels³ she passes with
countless distinctions,
and so to university
to realize her dream
to become a doctor,
a doctor for children,
to help and heal

1 Selective high school

2 Last two years at high school

3 High school leaving exams

to care and share.

Two terms at university,
then books and lectures
she abruptly leaves —
a letter from the father adored,
soldiering in Leningrad,
foretelling the disaster to come.

The family must flee
from the Russian advance,
shedding tears for a father
they'll see no more.

Hour upon hour
in horse and cart
on the long journey West,
Hamburg their goal,
along tracks barely passable,
thick with refugees,
leaving the happy land of childhood
for the future of uncertainty and fear.

The brother lying wounded
in a hospital southeast of Prague,
so farewell to family
when they reach Berlin.
The long trek shared with
the brother's young wife,
anxious and afraid,
squeezed like sardines
in the back of an ammunition truck,
no longer stuffed with bullets and shells
but with Russian prisoners' coats,
destined for German soldiers at the front,
then by train to Prague...

But a city in turmoil
and frenzied revolt they meet —
Czechs rebelling against
wartime oppressors —
so German barracks they seek,
a refuge from fires and shooting,
till a ceasefire agreed,
leaving at midnight
without brother, without hope,
back on foot from whence they came,
in sweltering, stifling heat,
jeered on by locals
offering poisoned water
to the sun-parched German throats,
whilst the brother's shiny, new officers' boots,
two sizes too big and
for the bulging rucksacks too large,
rub, rub, rub, rub, rub,

the suffering, silent feet.

The town of Pilsen in sight,
forty-odd miles
from German borders.
Soldiers there,
odd-looking helmets,
the Americans,
how come?
“The war’s over,” she hears.
Relief overwhelmed by
fatigue and pain,
and a doctor called to treat
the young girl for exhaustion
and brutally blistered feet.
Then by hook and by crook
to Hamburg they must,
no trains, no buses, no planes,
but from south to north they must go.
A journey of months it will be,
lorries and feet sharing the load
and pages of an English dictionary,
discarded by a German soldier,
helping to while away
long, tedious hours on the road.
Sleeping fitfully
in airless air-raid towers
and suffocating barns,
rivers and streams,
pumps and wells
washing off the dirt and heat
of miles and miles and miles.
Hamburg they finally reach,
delight at the sight of family reunited,
even the brother thought hopelessly lost
in that hospital near Prague,
their ears made sharp and sensationally keen
by his tale of escape on the last train out,
bodies shuddering with fear,
realizing what a close shave it had been.

Through bombed ruins
she makes her way each day
to British Army HQ,
showing German clerks
how to impress with
expert, efficient administration,
teaching them mind-blowing,
bewildering, English ordnance jargon.
A slice of bread her breakfast and supper,
a soup of water for lunch,
hunger pangs her constant companion.

Then one day no food left —
digging under cover of darkness
for vegetables to feed
starving brothers and sisters,
face wet with streaming tears.
But starvation knows no shame,
no dishonor,
no deceit,
swallowing all
in the aftershock of war.

Yet still she takes pride
in smartness and fashion,
hours spent conjuring up clothes
from this rag and that,
hands weaving magic
with needle and thread.
Catching the eye
of an English colonel
with a well-informed mind
and attractive appearance and manner.
An unhurried courtship
leading to announcement of marriage
and good-byes said to family and friends;
then off to the land
her husband calls home,
to a life of new hope and success.

All so strange this new country,
adapting to customs unknown,
spellings so odd and funny,
shorthand and typing, too,
a secretary valued by bosses
for reliability and punctuality,
efficiency extreme,
but what of the pediatrician,
her longed-for, childhood dream?
Gone up in the smoke
of the burning bombs,
other things to focus on now,
no time for regrets
with two screaming infants in tow.
Decorating an old, worn-out house,
busy from morn till night,
then translations to do till three,
useful money it brings
for a family's needs, you see.
But translations aren't enough,
when school fees have to be paid,
so off to work she goes,
to London each day by train,

rising at four for weeks on end
when railways strike,
though the stress would drive
many others around the bend.
Yet even she succumbs at last,
two weeks she's off,
made ill by the strain,
work has to get by
without her for once,
till she's fit again.

Application intense
and energy immense,
no problem for this woman
of German descent.
Hard work her friend,
her family and house her rewards
in this life she has made across the sea.
A British citizen of many years,
yet still the voice betrays
an accent ever so slightly,
indefinably different,
and her desire for tidiness precise,
for everything in its place
and cleanliness supreme,
for work to be done just so
and attention to details minute,
still give clues to the land of her birth.

But to return is not her wish,
here she will most certainly stay,
walking, reading,
badminton, gardening
giving clear purpose to her day.
A wild, overgrown bush —
what to do?
Pull it out, of course,
no other choice,
spade, push,
root, pull,
push and pull,
pull and push,
pull and push...
“Ow! Not that leg,
my bad hip.
Forgot again...
Got to shift.”
Toiling with the energy
of someone barely forty,
though her years number now
(would you believe?)
a massive one and eighty.

Planting and cutting,
digging and weeding
regardless of time,
ignoring the cuts, the bruises,
the aches and the pains,
because to do nothing and lie back
would be infinitely worse,
in short —
a villainous crime.

A remarkable woman
who laughs at the conduct expected
of old fogies aged eighty and more;
the pursuit of her passions
infusing energy into her days
and cementing the resolve
to vanquish all problems,
events that serve merely
to engage mind and body,
extracting solutions
of admirable resource and
great ingenuity.
How many of us follow
our passion in life?
How many of us grow old
in grayness and lethargy
because we never
listen to the heart's joy,
destined to fill our soul with
rainbow-like vitality?

The daughter gives thanks
for this woman of resolute will
who refuses to wallow
in past tragedies, disappointments,
upheavals and strife,
living in the here and now
of the autumn of her life
and living it in a blaze of vibrant color.
May each day in the seasons
of our lives glow likewise
with iridescent rainbows
of passion and joy,
so we can live life to the full
and help and heal
and care and share
like this woman,
exceptional and extraordinary,
whom in another time, another place,
one unthinkingly called an "enemy."

The Father

1910 the year,
the second eldest in a family of nine,
a quick, sharp brain
fascinated by all things mechanical,
math and science a breeze,
English and history, too,
a military career for him, of course,
following the tradition of years.
An officer he becomes,
listening to long tales of hunting
and shooting in the mess,
but these things do nothing
but bore him completely to death.
Eager to share his mechanical passion
the words pour forth in youthful naivety
about Aston Martins, Rovers,
engines, pistons,
motor bike racing, the lot...
But "Don't you know, my dear chap,
that's just not the done thing, what?"

A square peg in a round hole,
a nonconformist
rubbing superiors up the wrong way,
an army career dissolving,
a first marriage ending,
but then war — a reprieve,
distinguished service,
mentioned in dispatches,
family honor retrieved.
Part of the British occupation
on the shattered German soil,
encounter with a native woman
who's fled her homeland in the East,
fifteen years the difference,
yet what of that?
Elegance and intelligence intriguing,
to joyful marriage vows finally leading...

A few months later a soldier no more,
a career in technical writing beckoning,
but money is tight
and work has to be found
be it north, south, east or west,
so lonely weeks spent away
from family and home
are the price he has to pay.
Yet delight he finds
with two daughters,
helping with homework,
encouraging, comforting,

supporting, teaching,
answers never failing
to satisfy the countless questions,
revealing nothing of financial worries
robbing his nights of sleep.

Insatiable curiosity driving him
to devour books galore
on history and science,
philosophy and war,
to ask all he encounters,
whether workmen in the road
or politicians in the street,
about their work and trade
and the knowledge he gains
is oh, so precious and so sweet!
Up with the lark is his habit,
preparing breakfast before the household stirs,
enjoying the early morning quietness
and the richness of coffee freshly ground,
turning the pages of the ever-present book
or allowing the beautiful notes
of arias and symphonies divine
to transport his soul
to the realm of the spiritual.
A daughter enters
and in companionable silence,
minds perfectly attuned,
a breakfast is shared.

Can't be found?
In the study perhaps,
planning family holidays
with military precision,
or maybe the garage,
clamped under engine
hands black with oil and grime,
or glued to the workbench
cutting, shaving,
repairing, mending,
gifted fingers
weaving skillful patterns
with tools for this
and tools for that.

A call comes,
a friend in need
of his technical expertise,
or a daughter's plea,
"Can you take me into town, please?"
No problem!
Requests fulfilled

with grace and speed,
a heart full of kindness
willingly performing
deed after deed.
In the kitchen, too,
a whiz of a chef,
roasting and stewing with admirable flair
and conjuring up delicious puddings
from ingredients plain, simple and bare.
What to do for relaxation and rest?
A book, of course,
(science fiction a favorite)
or a trip to the pub,
to converse with friends
and partake of a pint or two of best.

Yet the money worries of earlier years
have taken their toll
and blocked arteries around the heart
darken tomorrow's goals.
An operation he wants,
not a body rattling with pills,
but the doctors aren't sure;
he's too old, they say, for an operation,
it's too risky, they say, at seventy-three.
But he persists,
a second opinion he wants
and at last he finds a doctor to agree.
He waits for a hospital bed,
the call arrives,
the bags are packed,
and off he goes,
this man who thinks
his life doesn't amount to much,
always dreaming of ideas
to make that fabulous fortune,
though it eludes him at every turn,
yet surely it must be there, it *must* —
if not now, then soon, very soon!
But look at the daughters he's brought up,
teaching them right from wrong,
never failing or deserting them,
filling their memories
with endless happy hours
of warmth and affection.
Look at their pleasure,
their laughing, smiling faces
when he is near,
look how they listen
with eyes so eager and keen
to the words that fall from the mobile lips —
that's a wonder to be seen!

How well he's taught and loved them!

Isn't that an accomplishment
more valuable than all the prizes
the world of men offers
and more precious than all
the gold and jewels we hide
in strongholds and coffer's?

The surgeons await
and wield their instruments
with skill and care.
The operation's a success,
but the body's too weak
and the torrent of drugs is too forceful and strong,
the heart fails,
a minor collapse,
hours later a massive one...
The race begins to open the chest,
massage the heart,
it beats,
but too many minutes have passed,
imprisoning the brain in a vacuum too long.
The body seeks refuge in coma;
organs fail as the days tick by
and hands switch off machines —
a flick here, a click there,
that's all it takes,
not much,
to enable the soul to pass
to its existence beyond,
accompanied by the love
and gratitude of hearts
enriched by its touch.

Copyright © 2008 Helena Harper

The Grandmother

A young girl, petite and slim,
figure and waist small and trim,
blond hair glowing
with natural tints of red,
surrounded by suitors,
crowding around
with youthful glee.
“Whom will she choose?” they cry.
“Him, him or me?”

Her choice made,
settling down to family life,
children coming quickly
one, two, three and four,
then a pause,
followed by two more.
Her life busy as could be,
cooking like a queen,
cleaning with passion and verve,
weeding and planting,
marvelous clothes created
with stitches intricate and small,
tireless energy managing house and family
with sureness and skill,
singing her way through daily chores
with voice clear and sweet,
composing poetry of exquisite beauty
and speaking French with practiced tongue.
A gifted, smiling soul
spreading love and happiness to all,
making the best of everything meeting her
in life's rich, unpredictable ball.
Working through peace and war,
waving to her son as he goes to fight,
and when lying injured in hospital,
baking cake after cake
for the father
on his visit to take.

Then bidding farewell to husband
as the war nears its end,
knowing when his final letter is read
she must depart with children to the West,
to escape the Russian flood
she knows is sure to come.
With determination writ clear in eyes and face,
she organizes clothes and food for
the departure inevitable,
unwanted but inescapable.
To relatives in Hamburg they must go;
the trek is hard and long,

but she certainly won't rest
till family is safe
and she's done her very best.

Hamburg reached,
the devastation horrendous,
but relatives are safe,
the house still stands,
the eldest son arrives,
a miracle from that turmoil in Prague,
then the son's wife with daughter in tow,
happiness and relief
lighting her face with a wondrous glow.

But what to eat?

A constant struggle to survive,
digging up potatoes in secret,
a last resort — it just can't be helped,
the little ones simply must be fed.

And what to wear?

Sheets dyed yellow and blue
into wonderfully fashionable dresses transform,
ingenious ideas born out of need now the norm.

The starvation years survived,
a life of greater comfort awaits,
enjoying and still sharing
her children's smiles and tears,
and though some to foreign lands depart,
her love shines forth
from every line of letters regularly sent
in perfectly formed, close-knit,
old-fashioned, handwritten script.

A first meeting with a granddaughter,
aged eleven from England:
a woman with thick blond hair appears
with face younger, softer than her years,
readily able to smile and laugh,
talking very fluently and fast
in that foreign tongue
then incomprehensible to the young girl,
born in a land unknown.

But several years later,
the language now her friend,
the girl comes to know a woman unique,
ably reciting poems of epic length by heart,
a woman full of life and vigorous talk,
though now she needs the help of a stick to walk.

Was it fate that this granddaughter visited then?
Because barely a month later, she's dead —
operation complications, they said.

But why weep?

Let's rejoice for a lifetime of giving,
for a woman who showed
that anything is possible
with determination and resolve,
that love and joy are stronger
than despair and tears
and every second of life
can be filled with the positive,
if one adopts the right attitude
and rejects one's fears.

Let us give thanks for this woman
rejoined at last with that beloved husband,
lost so many years before
in that battle far to the East,
both of them now at last at peace.

Copyright © 2008 Helena Harper

The Grandfather

The girl looks at the photo,
at the grandfather never known
other than from the lips
of the mother adoring —
a tall, handsome man
with dark hair, mustache
and forehead broad and strong,
kindliness in the face
and intelligence in the eyes,
father of six and
husband tender and caring.

Lumber his trade,
a sawmill his business,
skilled hands creating
sailing boats of wood
and a summer house for garden fun,
children's delights pouring forth
and overflowing.

Member of clubs numerous,
sailing, swimming,
bowling, singing
just a few,
giving freely of his talents
to anyone who asks.

His deep, melodious voice
ringing richly through arches and pews,
enchancing wedding guests and
causing the eyes to weep,
whilst violin performances
worthy of a virtuoso,
accompanied by his wife
ably striking the piano,
make the heart and soul leap.

Rising at five on hot summer days
to water garden and plants
in the early morning cool;
teaching his children what he's learnt,
encouraging them to swim and dive and build,
what more could they possibly want?

Then the call to the front,
years of happy fathering cut short,
though for active service he's too old
and a weak stomach won't stand the rigors of war.

Yet to disobey the summons
of a man desperate and mad
would never do,
it's his duty, you see,
and duty must be done by all,
not just the few.

Off he goes
to make a futile last stand
at the city of Leningrad,
writing a letter he knows
will be his last
to the dear ones
who are now but a memory
of his life past,
for the Russians will attack on the morrow
and defeat will be certain and quick.

And so he leaves this life
on an obscure Russian field
for a cause lost in the realms of time,
his coffin the mud,
his grave the blown-up earth,
a victim like so many before
of a man obsessed with power
and blind to reality.

How many more victims must there be
before the slaughter and senseless fighting stop?
Before families lose the fear
of being wrenched apart
and children can enjoy every day
because innocent lives are no longer lost?
Was it all for naught? the brain screams.
Surely not.

The girl looks again
at the photo of the man never seen,
a man they'd have told her to hate
years before
but a man she'd have called
simply Grandpa,
wonderful person
and friend.

Copyright © 2008 Helena Harper

The Foreign Uncle

Harry, his name,
second oldest in the family of six,
boisterous and brave,
mischievous imp
as all boys must be,
a raconteur supreme
of adventures imaginary
in lands of heat and sun,
enthraling younger siblings
with tales of wonder and fear,
running a coffee plantation in Africa,
his fervent, passionate dream.

A bike glistening silver and new
in the shop window large,
enticing with stainless steel
and wheels of sumptuous shine,
but oh, the price — it's a crime!

What to do?

Ah ha! Into the woods,
that's the place,
special mushrooms
growing thick and fast,
pick, pick, pick,
a suitcase full,
off to the hotels nearby
eager for these delicacies so delightful and rare
and suddenly he's got a fistful of coins in his care.
Stones for builder's merchants
he then collects and soon,
with every penny of pocket money saved,
the bike he buys and proudly shows
to friends and family alike,
discipline and perseverance
a winning combination.

The outdoor life,
to him a joy,
camping, canoeing,
swimming, diving,
sailing, too,
though he's nearly lost in turbulent seas,
on a trip across the Baltic
with friends from school,
thrown into the sea,
all possessions gone,
but Swedish rescuers arrive in time,
fishing him from bitterly cold water,
finally appearing on land
to parents' delight and siblings' laughter
in borrowed clothes two sizes too small.

The Colonial School his goal
when sixth form's over,
but war intervenes
and to the army he's called,
returning on leave to congratulate the sister
on splendid A level success,
pinning a medal to her chest,
a tradition of the time,
she feeling so tall and proud on his arm:
a wonderful thing to have a brother
dressed in uniform so fine!
Then off to Russia,
surviving winter's deadly cold
by washing each morning the body
in snows of freezing, glacial white.
"Crazy Harry," the others say,
but it saves him from ghastly frostbite
and the dreadful fate of losing a limb —
amongst his comrades a common sight.

At Stalingrad he fights,
injured near fatally in thigh and leg,
but his devoted batman
like a madman drives,
across ditches and fields,
through bushes and trees
with his officer in sidecar,
delirious with pain.
The field hospital reached,
into the O.P. tent he dives,
ignoring the wounded littered all around.
"Save my lieutenant,
save my lieutenant!"
he madly, desperately cries,
and the operation's done,
sparing the life of this uncle near dead.

The war he survives,
but then what to do?
A restaurant he starts,
first here, then there,
long, hard hours the price
but success the reward
for the work invested.
Kidney disease takes his wife
and scars his two sons.
He marries again,
though this aunt much younger
is one of difficult moods,
possessive, jealous
and open to the abuse of drink,
yet Harry sticks with her

through thick and thin.
“Foolish,” some might say,
but caring and loyal
is what many another would think.

His love of warmth and heat
leads him to exotic holidays
and a life in Spain,
and though he returns
to his birth land of wet and cold,
his decision is made
to retire to the sun;
so to the Canaries he goes,
running a bar for the German tourists
who come to the islands in droves.
The weather he adores
and the relaxing lifestyle suits
and here it is that a niece from England
gets to know him once more,
much better than before,
for she’s older and wiser
and more fluent now
in the language of his birth.

A convivial companion
this estimable Uncle Harry,
interesting, well-informed,
keen to widen his knowledge,
kind and generous,
warm and friendly,
a man with great love of family,
of infinite resource,
determination and bravery.
Battles and strife were his lot,
but undaunted by the obstacles
washed towards him by the stream of life
weary capitulation was never his choice,
somehow finding a way
around or over or through,
pushing open doors that others didn’t see
because their minds were closed
to the range of endless possibilities...
Good coming out of bad,
warmth radiating from cold,
sunshine pouring out of snow.
Resistance makes us all grow stronger
and fly ever higher on the wind of life,
so the difficulties we meet are what we need
if we want to be the highest flying kite.

The English Uncle

A younger brother of the father,
tall and slim,
good-looking to boot,
charming, sophisticated,
intelligent, too,
witticisms rolling from the tongue
that cuts like ice when the mood strikes,
a man not tolerant of fools,
but with the ladies a favorite,
make no doubt,
see — they all come running
when he shouts!

A military career he has,
like the elder brother before,
but him it fits like a glove,
for conservative he is in attitude and taste
and to conform is not a hard task.
His interests are “right” and proper
for a gentleman officer —
rugby and sport of all kinds,
that’s what he enjoys and likes,
not engines and cars and
racing dirty motorbikes!
So superiors smile
and enable the young man
to get on well and quick,
and the elder brother looks on,
eyes spiced with an envious gleam:
“That’s typical Joe for you,
everything falls right into his lap,
absolutely bang on cue.”

He marries at last,
the pick of the bunch most certainly his,
but in the end to family pressure he bows,
wedding a girl known for years
from just across the street,
a marriage of convenience in fact,
no great passionate affair,
but they rub along as friends,
for to Joe it would be unheard of
to break the marriage bonds.

A successful career at an end,
retiring to a spacious house
by the sea
with Peggy, his wife,
and Jasper, the dog,
a wonderful, lovable Labrador,

to lead a life of leisure,
worry-free,
for there are no children to concern,
and money abounds
from an army pension generous
and the wife's family
successful in the brewing business.

In this retired retreat his nieces visit,
children of that rebel, elder brother,
and see an uncle tall and fit,
sailing and golfing away the hours,
a witty, interesting, likable man,
though a paragon he certainly is not.
Had he fought against
that foreign uncle on some distant shore
during those warring days?
And being on victory's side
is deserving of a niece's love
whilst the other must be despised?
If this is nonsense then war is, too,
for the niece sees but family:
two men,
human and fallible both,
yet each worthy in equal measure
of friendship and true affection.

Aunt Peggy appears,
short and rotund,
a contrast so huge and immense
to the husband of elegance,
but a cheerful, gentle-hearted soul she is,
full of generosity and kindness.
But it isn't long
before health and heart fail,
leaving a husband saddened
and dog with downcast tail.

After a while a new female companion,
but a second marriage
is not this uncle's cup of tea.
And then the news is heard —
he's dying of cancer,
it's gone too far,
it seems that this time
the good fortune of earlier years
has walked out the door
and left it ajar.
But there's still time
for the two brothers to spend together,
revisiting the haunts of their youth,
and part not just as brothers but as friends,

petty jealousies and discord forgotten
in the warmth of brotherly companionship
and common memories of play and laughter,
enjoying mutual stimulation
from engaged and active minds.

We none of us know
when the ultimate sunset will come —
surely then we should strive
to put old scores to rest
at the first chance we get,
so we can leave this world with
the heart securely set
on harmony, love and peace,
having caused hostility, alienation,
hatred and anger to cease.

The news comes
of the uncle's death,
but the brother hears it not,
for already he lies unconscious
in that hospital in London,
taking his own slow leave of life.
Yet there are numerous ways to communicate
and it seems perhaps the brother has "heard",
for a week later he too says
his last, final farewell.
The conformist and rebel
once more together
in true brotherly accord?
Who amongst us can tell?

Copyright © 2008 Helena Harper

The Boss

Friendly and approachable the new Head seems,
a welcome change, many say,
to the cool aloofness of the former.
Center stage she likes to be,
public relations her strength,
long-winded speeches her delight,
sophisticated words rolling from the tongue
with humor, diction and poise —
oh yes, she knows what to do
to impress those parents demanding
and does it just dandy and right.

Acting perhaps
would have suited her more,
for sincerity is not a trait
that brands this soul;
her friendliness a facade
that quickly dissolves
under stress and complaints,
turning the seeming friend of yesterday
into a devil in disguise,
ready to stab you in the back
giving credence to parents' lies,
causing lamentable morale
amongst the staff who slave,
but her heart of granite remains unmoved
by the distress that's caused,
and the smiling mirage is once more seen
as though nothing toward had ever been.

Organized and efficient?
Don't make me laugh!
Racked by insecurities
and unable to delegate
an ounce of the power
so laboriously achieved,
she works in her office
till three in the morn,
phoning staff at all hours
of the day and night,
leaving piles of paper
strategically placed
on tables, floor and chairs
with warning notices
clearly displayed:
"Do not disturb!"

Crisis management her creed,
muddled chaos and
chronic unpunctuality
marking her days,

causing untold stress and
suffering to the teachers below.
Those who can escape this bullying boss,
but for those who steadfastly remain
it's just one long, continuous strain.

Ten endless years
suddenly finish
with retirement
and hopes are put
in a replacement
who'll know what it means
to be a boss;
someone who remembers
what it's like to be human,
who can manage resources and people
with realistic sympathy
and organized efficiency,
someone who creates real, genuine respect —
but who am I kidding?
That's the stuff of fiction, isn't it,
not fact?

Is she my hated foe, my enemy,
this woman, this boss
with whom I share no commonality?
How can she be?
She's a citizen of the same country!
But her actions, thoughts and beliefs
are anathema to me —
they make the soul cringe
and leave it icy cold,
making it retreat
into a dark black hole.
If she isn't my enemy, is she my friend?
What? Hardly!
What is she then?
Perhaps a valuable lesson in life,
from which I can learn and grow.
On second thoughts,
maybe she is more my friend
than I now suspect or know.

Copyright © 2008 Helena Harper

Ebook available from
<http://www.eloquentbooks.com/Familyandmore.html>