

THEY MADE ME

I suppose the first air I ever breathed was filled with her voice. But even in the agony of childbirth, she'd not have broken form:

"I came through the Blitz as a child, darling boy. What had I to fear from the rubs and scrapes of little you?"

Fair enough. But speaking of war and all that, why don't I sound like my father Jack, the fightingest blood and guts Marine of his day?

(He'd have made colonel on battlefield promotions alone, an old ranker once told me, if it weren't for the little matter of the general's wife.)

"Make that generals' wives, dear."

For better or worse, England and America made me, and we are all Americans now. So WTF, today's American reader may ask, who is this bloke, er, dude, and why does he talk like that?

I'd say it's because Captain Jack Chesterfield was always in strange lands and strange beds, while Daphne Ffoulkes Chesterfield spoke the language and ethic that I breathed in:

“There never was a time like good King Edward's, dear. For fun, for peace, and for talk. It was Shakespeare and Elizabeth with proper drains and no bear-baiting.”

That would be 1910, if you're wondering. Not 1400, or 1066. Understand, my mother never saw any of those years, though she'll surely see 3000 in her present... state.

What a mad pair, Jack and Daphne, but they made me. And what did they give “little me” that figures in our story?

Laughter. Guts. Fidelity. Ironic, that last one, as my Leatherneck dad had such trouble, domestically, with the *Semper* part.

“‘Tis not a year or two shows us a man.’ So thank God for good bourbon.”

Laughter, guts, fidelity. What are they worth today? Quite a lot, by the timeless measure of supply/demand. And what's in heavy supply? Sad to report, it's all between these covers: adulterous rumpy-pumpy,

shameless gold-digging, cyber-fraud, steroid-juiced thuggery, rampant under-the-bus-throwing...

And I just a young gentleman schoolteacher who's having none of it.

But I've said forever, it's the women who'll save us. Read on, and meet the smashingest girl ever, name of Carrie Hahn, and the stellar dog Daisy, who sniffs out villains a mile away, and the lioness-hearted "gym-chick" Jeanine, who carried the day when I fell wounded, and who made a man of my gormless pal Larry.

And yes, the fair sex throws a wrong 'un from time to time, like the alluring fortune-huntress name of Deborah, a wily adversary who passed for a while as my wife.

But it's the mum who made me –

“Well, who else? I mean, have you got your brain on?”

-- and she gets our story's final word, from Heaven, or someplace.

Right. In the end, I couldn't have done it without her... ghost.