**Mother’s Day**

**I read this to a receptive audience at the June 2016 NOTL Strawberry Festival**

The kids were coming home for the weekend and bringing their ‘significant others’ for the first time. Everyone wanted it to be special. Maggie wanted to make a good impression, as she was sure her two grown sons had probably regaled their partners with childhood trauma stories where she would come across as someone between Mother Goose and a prison guard.

She scoured and polished the kitchen until it gleamed. The bedrooms were scrubbed. Favourite old teddies were gently washed and snuggled between the designer pillows she piled on the bed. Finally, as a special touch, she organized cute baby photos of her sons and tucked them into every spare inch of the rooms.

“How sweet! How cute!” Maggie crooned as she kissed a little picture of her Big Boy, now a bearded 35 year old. His little ice cream smeared face grinned up at her from a high chair at his 1st birthday party.

“Just adorable! I wish I could pinch those little cheeks again,” she said to a photo of her 32-year-old grey haired Baby Boy in his Poppa Smurf hat and little blue jammies. His rosy puckered lips blew a raspberry at the camera.

The house was perfect – ready for the little darlings to come home to momma. Then Maggie remembered – the little darlings were grown up and bringing other people with them. Other people that she would have to entertain and feed for a weekend.

Back in the day when the boys lived at home, breakfast was a simple ‘make your own’ event. Maggie would put out boxes of cereal on the kitchen counter, and line up the juice and milk. A loaf of bread bread, some butter and jam and a working toaster and they were in business. Simple, fast and nutritious. No big deal.

Both of the boys had grown up, left home and found work in businesses where food preparation and presentation was important. Lately, on the rare occasion when they came home, they insisted on doing all the cooking…and meals were over the top, in Maggie’s estimation. The lengthy list of ingredients they required meant every inch of counter space would be covered in sticky pans and utensils. The fridge door would slam constantly, rattling the antique china cupboards. Flames would leap like a pyromaniac’s inferno from the gas stove. The meals would be outstanding, but the cleanup would take hours. And she was always the one left alone to do it.

Maggie checked to ensure the fire extinguisher was handy if they tried anything this time.

She decided she would do something simple, fast and nutritious but with a contemporary twist to prove that she hadn’t been completely left behind modern food trends. And she would maintain kitchen control to eliminate the cooking chaos of her master chef adult children.

After a long consult with Google, Maggie decided they would make strawberry smoothies. She found a simple and easy recipe: 3 cups frozen strawberries, 1 ½ cups milk, and 1/3 cup strawberry jam. Pour into the blender and puree – eh voila! Beautiful strawberry smoothies guaranteed to impress the important guests.

The gang arrived late in evening and headed to their quarters. Next morning, before the highly anticipated big breakfast event, the boys took their mother aside. Maggie was told that the baby photos and teddy bears were over the top and that they had been hidden in the bottom dresser drawers.

And, she was informed… they would make breakfast.

Maggie was crushed. Her efforts to recreate the warm and happy (in her opinion anyway) memories and experiences of childhood were being ridiculed.

“ Ok,” she said, a bit annoyed. “ You can make breakfast, but just humour me and make the strawberry smoothies. I already have everything ready.”

The boys exchanged glances. “Smoothies! Oh boy, we thought you were going to serve us Sugar Pops and White Bread toast like in the old days. Smoothies will be great! We’ll take over from here.”

While the young people gathered around the kitchen counter she stood back and watched as they shoved the ingredients into the oversize blender.

“But…wait, guys…I think you forgot something!” she said.

“Nah, Ma – back off… we got this! You just stay outta our way.”

Now something about being call ‘Ma’ really bugged Maggie! She’d asked them over and over not to call her by her first name…or to call her ‘Ma’. She loved the sound of the beautiful word, ‘Mom’. Maggie gritted her teeth and took a couple of steps back.

“Okay,” she said. “ You folks are on your own. I can see that you don’t need me or my advice.”

The boys shook their heads with frustration at their old fashioned mother. They pushed the red button marked ‘puree’. The processor roared to life and vibrated wildly. The top of the machine hadn’t been pressed down tightly. It blew off like a rocket ship blasting into space. Milk, strawberries and jam splattered out like a volcanic eruption and streamed down the sides, pouring over the countertop and into the open drawers. The pink goo splashed onto the floor and puddled onto the bright rug below.

“Mom!” they screamed. “Help!”

Maggie reached through the bedlam and pushed the black button that said ‘off’.

Big boy lifted his head in shock. Strawberry smoothie slop covered his face and ran down his beard onto his designer t-shirt. Baby boy sputtered and splurted as a strawberry popped out of his mouth and plopped on his leather loafers.

The guests burst into laughter and cheered as the confused men rubbed the slop into their hair and clothing.

“Sweet!” They yelled. “ Cute! Adorable!”

“Quick – get the camera!”

It took a long time to clean up the kitchen, but this time, the family worked together. Even the guests joined in. They scraped up the smoothie splashes, washed the floor and counter and put the soiled linen in the laundry. The once scorned cereal and loaf of sourdough bread were pulled out of the freshly washed cupboards.

Everyone laughed. And everyone relaxed a bit.

“I had forgotten how good cereal tastes,” said Big Boy. “And this new stuff you bought with the cranberries and almonds is delicious.”

“Yum,” said Baby Boy. “ This buttered toast and ginger mango marmalade is outstanding! I gotta buy this brand when I get home.”

“Your mom’s cool,” Maggie heard one guest say as they left. “She didn’t even cry when you exploded breakfast. We should come back again some time.”

Maggie didn’t cry until they drove away to their busy lives in other towns, and she cleaned the bedrooms. Before they’d left the boys had rearranged the rooms. The childhood pictures were back in their places and the teddies guarded the middle of the empty beds.

“Come back soon - please,” she said, as she stood alone in the tidy, quiet space.