

# FORUM

## Innocence revisited – 23

**Dr Robyn Pogmore tells the mysterious tale of the merry widow, the violin maker and regular supplies of chocolate cake and schnapps**

### The merry widow

I gave up medical practice for some years in order to be a loving mother to my children and devoted housewife to my GP husband in Germany. During our time there it often happened that people would visit me bearing small gifts and expressing great admiration for my husband, myself and my beautiful children. Over time I came to understand that these were often people my husband was helping out with difficulties. Sometimes it was a pension, sometimes the transfer of a relative over from the Eastern Sector (on medical grounds, of course), and sometimes I had the feeling that they had a small habit which needed frequent prescriptions. Whatever the reason, we were never short of cake or schnapps.

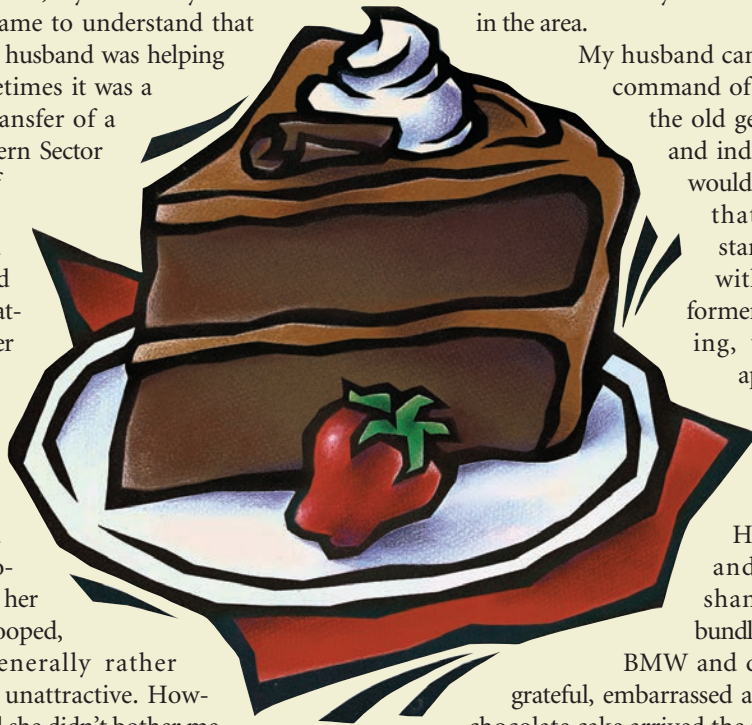
### 'Herr Doktor' to the rescue

During this time a dowdy, middle-aged woman started regularly bringing me chocolate cakes. I had often seen her walking down the street, stooped, muttering to herself, generally rather unkempt and really rather unattractive. However, her cakes were nice and she didn't bother me with conversation. My husband assured me that her husband was even more odd, but he didn't elaborate – I was used to being kept in the dark. I just happily ate the cake.

One cold, windy night there was a small commotion at our back gate, and on investigation I found an elderly man banging on the gate with his walking stick, shouting to see 'Herr Doktor'. His wife, the strange dowdy woman, was close behind, just out of range of his walking stick, and very worried and anxious. He came into the courtyard shouting that his wife was planning to poison him because she was having a love

affair with the male district nurse who came in every day to wash and shave him. They were going to live together in his house and on his money as soon as she had poisoned him.

The situation was embarrassing and frankly unbelievable. She was so dowdy and downtrodden and the district nurse was a comely fellow in his forties, well known in the area.



My husband came strolling out and took command of the situation. He ushered the old gentleman into our house, and indicated to his wife that we would bring him home later and that she should leave. He started a lively conversation with the old man about his former occupation, violin making, while I performed my appointed task – I prepared a tall glass of hot tea, with lots of sugar and a generous measure of rum.

The rum did its trick. He stopped the accusations and started singing sea shanties, at which point we bundled him into my husband's BMW and delivered him home to a grateful, embarrassed and worried wife. Another chocolate cake arrived the next day.

### Mysterious demented death

Two weeks later, the old man died. He had quickly become demented, my husband told me, in reply to my questions.

Two weeks after this, I overheard a conversation at the Kindergarten Mothers' Club, discussing how the district nurse had already moved into the old man's house, and that the woman, so newly a widow, had been observed to be wearing lipstick. To the outside world they appeared to be an item.

I took this news home quickly to my husband, and was chided for listening to idle gossip.

'But shouldn't we contact the police?' I persisted.

He was furious. 'It has happened,' he hissed. 'Don't go stirring things up.'

The woman never spoke to me from then on – I guess she didn't need to any more.

I am just passing this story on for your entertainment. If there is any moral in it, I don't see it, and it is certainly not meant to be a tale of morality.

MT

---

Dr Robyn Pogmore is a general practitioner working in Wagga Wagga, NSW. This series is being extended by popular demand. Please send your favourite anecdotes to the Editor, Dr John Ellard, for consideration.