

Moet to life than we think

By Ruth Ostrow

THE bottle of Moet stares at us from the refrigerator door, beckoning, seducing. It is only a half-bottle but already we know the price is going to be ridiculous.

I am on a speaking assignment, being put up in a luxury hotel, far far above the world and the simple life I lead, in a two-room suite with panoramic views of the city. The water sparkles below. And the Moet sparkles in the fridge.

"Why not?" I say to my husband, who is surveying the view and making satisfied murmuring noises.

"Because they aren't paying room expenses. You know how much Moet costs. Just phone down and get them to bring up a couple of glasses of wine," he says, not taking his eye off the view.

It has always been this way with us -- we are two different money personalities. Neither is right or wrong, just different. He is the child of Holocaust survivors who lived through terrible suffering and hardship.

Post-war immigrants, they were careful with money, and kept the cupboards stocked with cans in case the Nazis should come to Australia and they were forced to barricade themselves in again.

I'm also from immigrant stock but my parents adopted the opposite approach to the suffering they endured.

"Life is short," was the catch-cry.

"Live fast, die young and leave a good-looking corpse," said my father who lived fast, died young, and spent money indulging himself along the way.

"I feel it's important to open the Moet, as a gesture of appreciation for all our good fortune," I say to my husband. "It's a symbol of savouring the moment, of saying thankyou to the pleasure gods," I argue to no avail.

Upstairs, people are having a party. The music is thudding through the ceiling and walls. I pick up the phone and ring the room above. Nice people, they apologise for making so much noise.

We chat about celebration, music, and Moet. They say they have just opened their bottle. I turn to my husband while they're still on the phone: "They just opened theirs."

He ignores me. There is no debate. Spending that much money is clearly u-n-n-e-c-e-s-s-a-r-y.

I like the taste of Moet. I'm not just spoilt. I appreciate good wine, good champagne. Before I got married, I went out with a wine importer and connoisseur for a while and grew particularly fond of the occasional splurge on fine food and beverage.

"We have so much to celebrate. We're so lucky," I implore.

"Okay Ruth. One of the reasons I love you is because you teach me to enjoy life.

"Let's do it but first I think we should get the price-list and see how much the champagne and wines in the fridge cost."

I ring room service to order silver-service sandwiches and I ask that the missing mini-bar price list be sent up.

Ten minutes go by as I unpack, 20 minutes. Half-an-hour goes by and I ring again. I'm told it's all on the way. An hour goes by, and I open the fridge.

I take the bottle and two glasses out.

"I'm taking a risk. If this were my last minute on earth I would have been glad I did it. No use saving for a rainy day that may never come," I say.

Before he objects I'm already pulling the cork out of the champagne. It's one of my favourite things -- that moment the cork is edging out, threatening to hit something, the froth threatening to explode. Danger looms and then pop, as the relief and bubbles spill over.

"The pleasure gods appreciate these gestures in their honour," I say, raising my glass. "Spending money always makes more money. The more I give, the more I receive. Truly. For every cent I give away to charity, for every gift I give or every cent I spend in appreciation of life, something unbelievable comes back. People who are sensible around money don't understand that."

He barely has a chance to respond when there's a knock at the door. It's the food and beverages manager come personally to deliver our sandwiches and price list. "Sorry about the delay," he says humbly.

"We opened the Moet anyway, and just prayed," I laugh, sobering up when I see the price.

"Oh dear, for a half bottle?"

"Look, because the delay is our fault, the hotel will give you the Moet with our compliments," he says, as my husband's jaw drops.

I have just finished thanking the manager when the people upstairs ring. Their party's still going on, audibly.

"We're sorry about all the noise. We're sending you down a bottle of Moet with our compliments!" So there it is. One cork removed, two Moets for free within moments.

I graciously decline the offer from above, but accept the hotel's gesture, savouring the sweet symbolism of it all.

My husband sits back sipping his champagne and grinning at what I laughingly refer to as the miracle of the Moet and the wondrous cycle of giving and receiving. And somewhere, up above, the pleasure gods are smiling.

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