

THE FIRST DAY WITH ANTHONY

-Everything he needs is in his suitcase. And here are the instructions.

"Instructions?"-once again I did not say that out loud. I took the paper with the instructions and put it in one of my jeans' pockets, the jean I put on just to open the door." Do I need instructions to look after a child? "This too was kept to myself.

-Anthony be a good boy.

-I AM -a good boy.

-Penny is good. Penny loves you.

-Well Anthony loves me too, isn't that so Anthony? We'll have a great time together, we'll do so many things, we'll...

Lazaros shut my mouth with the palm of his hand and stopped me jabbering. I wanted to say more to Anthony but that's O.K.I thought we'd have our chance to talk when we're alone.

-Anthony, let's hug, I love you.

-Me too Dad.

Lazarus turned around and gave me a hug too. He thanked me again and said he'd never forget this great favour of mine.

-Think nothing of it Lazaros, you see I'll have some company. Go on now ,on your way.

-Bye bye, and don't forget the instructions!

What's wrong with him! He's just a child ,not my new dryer that I have to study to learn all the functions!

The door was shut and Anthony was left staring at me.

-Well Anthony, what you think of my place?

-Where is my room?

I showed Anthony his room and he-thanking me- shut the door on my face. Literally!

Fortunately, he opened it immediately.

-Phew, you weren't leaving me out were you?

Anthony took his suitcase and shut the door once more the exact same instant that the end of my nose and the edge of my right foot toe were just entering the room.

-Anthonyyyyyy, naturally I screamed.

Anthony opened the door and told me he didn't see me entering the room. He didn't notice a giant nose and a 10 inch shoe ready to move in? I couldn't believe it!

-Maybe you'd like to be alone? I asked him.

-Yes ,he answered.

Truth is I never thought that he might wanted to be alone to cry. That's what I would do if I was a child. I'd liked to be alone and cry. It isn't a small thing your dad leaving without you.

Although I wouldn't worry if I knew that the person he's leaving me with is a fine person.

How was I supposed to show this to Anthony?

At this point I must lay down a few things about me.

A few things about me

(that may be a lot in the end)

You already know that my name is Penny and that I'm a poet. The poem collection "the orphan whale" is my latest work. Not finished yet. Some other time I'll read you extracts from

this work. I've written till now four poetry collections and an unfinished poem. My collections are; the Elephant's tooth, the Elephant's foot, the Elephant's eye, The Elephant's nail.

As you can understand I've worked a lot with the Elephant in poetry. I don't know if I'll work the whales the same way. For the time being I'm writing, as I told you, about the orphan whale.

The endless poem is what the word defines; End-less. I've started writing it five years ago. I've written up to now 432 verses. It is the most difficult thing I've done in my life-or so I thought, till Anthony came along to reverse this.

My regular job is party-organizer. I like this job. On weekends I'm rushing from birthdays to celebrations and from celebrations to birthdays. Not enough time to breath! On week days on the other hand I do take a breath but I'm hitting my head on my desk to come up with ideas. Writing, erasing, drawing lines without knowing where they lead, shredding papers, and then again back to the beginning till I manage to perfectly arrange my parties.

I'm proud of this. Everybody talks about the parties I organize. Mums, dads and children are left overwhelmed. I love children very much and I think that is why I put my best efforts to come up with the best party they can have.

Seeing that it's not appropriate to talk about me, besides the title is not "Penny" or something else like "A little more of Penny and a bit of Anthony", I must stop here and go back to the days I've spend with Anthony.

He's been shut inside the room for two hours now and no sign of him coming out.

I pricked my ears outside the shut door. Thankfully I didn't hear crying. He must have stopped crying. Instead I heard talking. He must have been playing some game.

-Anthony. Anthony. Anthony, are you hungry?

I opened the door. Anthony paid no attention to me. Wasn't he bored two hours on his own, I wondered.

-Anthony.

Now I'm standing right in front of him and finally the youngster takes notice.

-Look how I set them up! Fifty four toy cars. I used to have seventy one, but some got broken and dad threw them away. I didn't want him to do it because I had them as mementos from my last playschool year but dad said "you've grown Anthony, you can't still play with toy cars". Well I still want to play with toy cars-not all the time, sometimes, especially when I'm not at home, cause toy cars are easier to carry than my toy soldiers-and I don't mind my classmates making fun of me, cause I like them and I told aunt Agnes to buy me twenty toy cars for Christmas so I can have a lot again, more than seventy one, that is if some of the ones I have now won't get broken and again they become seventy one or less, but it won't matter, I'll have new ones, and I like having new ones cause I put them in races with the old ones and may the best car win. It doesn't matter if a car is new or old to win the race. What matters is the country of manufacture. If you turn a car upside down, you'll see written "made in" and the country. But sometimes this could be not important, it could all be down to the usage you've done. To help you understand -this one here is-or rather was-a very strong car. Now it isn't and I'm a little sad for that, cause on a day I got crossed with dad I threw it along with a dozen others from the balcony. This is the only car that survived and can still participate in races, although without much success. Before the accident it always finished first. I shouldn't get so irritated and threw it from the balcony, but I was little then and my nerves were uncontrollable, when I...

- Anthonyyy!

-What?

-When are you going to put a stop?

-What you just said is not funny. I do know when to put a stop when I'm writing. Why are you making fun of me?

Anthony started to get angry. He looked at me kind of wild-maybe a lot of wild, I can't remember, made a grrrr noise and went back to his toy cars.

I don't understand why you're angry Anthony.

-You know why. Now let me play.

I shut the door, went to the kitchen and started eating my favorite millefeuille. I got very hungry. I begun thinking what have I done to Anthony to get him so crossed. What have I said to outrage him so. Is it possible for a kid to be that furious?

These mini millefeuilles are exquisite. I bought them for my friends, but the visit was cancelled.

My mouth was smothered with caster sugar, my t-shirt had little white snowflakes and the floor needed sweeping immediately. Funniest of all was my feet; these were not my feet. They were somebody else's feet.

-What happened to your feet?

That was not my voice, it was Anthony's. The minute he saw me, he started laughing and repeating;

- Your feet ,your feet, your feet , your feet.

- That's enough now. How many times must you repeat it? We got the picture.

He felt like a parrot Anthony .As if he'd just learned the phrase "your feet" and he should practice it. He just wouldn't stop.

-Anthonyyy! My ears hurt. Does this mean you're not mad at me anymore?

Anthony gave no answer. After a while he asked me.

-I'm hungry, what's for lunch?

Seems I've being troubling myself for nothing over what had bothered him.

-I'm making rice with carrots and corn.

-I smell fish. I smell fish on the grill.

-On what?

_ I smell fish on the grill. I don't like fish grilled on coals. I don't like fish period. I'm not eating fish at all.

-Anthony, I'm not cooking fish. I told you I'm cooking rice.

-Ah! Anyway I'm smelling fish on the grill.

What a peculiar little boy. Are children like this? My my!

It's not evening yet and I feel so tired. I hope Anthony is tired too. How many hours to bedtime?

This last thought came out loud was heard by Anthony, who glanced at his watch and gave me the answer;

-Five hours and fourteen minutes. I get confused with seconds even though dad has explained them to me countless times. What I said stands ,if you want to know when I'm going to bed. On the other hand if you're asking when the color of the sky becomes darker, that won't happen before an hour and fifty two minutes. I get confused with seconds even though dad has explained them to me countless times, he repeated.

- So what do you want us to do?

-It's not snowing or raining so we're going to the mini-market on foot.

-What?

-Are you deaf?

Anthony increases the volume of his voice extremely and yells at me;

-We're going to the mini-market on foot.

I raise my voice even higher than Anthony's voice;

-Don't shout. I'm not deaf. But why go to the mini-market?

Anthony got angry. He got very angry. I think he kicked the wall. I can't remember. Anyhow we didn't get to go to the mini-market. There was no reason, was there? We had all we needed at home. I took care of that the days before. Phew! I felt I was doing something wrong with Anthony but couldn't put my finger on what it was.

Fortunately he liked the rice and didn't say a word about grilled fish.

I decided what I should do with Anthony was to know him better, and the best way to do it was, of course, to have a chat with him.