

Another Time

by Sheila Luecht

There are so many Christmases of memory. They vary and run the gamete of ages and experiences. Recently I had the chance to think of one that brought me kind of full circle.

I was in New York. I was visiting a boyfriend, a first love. He was about six years older and already working, having finished undergrad and graduate school. I was just starting college with a semester under my belt. I knew him from a part time summer job in Chicago where both of us were originally from. I get the dates and years mixed up now, but it was definitely a Christmas. He had two other room mates that were colleagues from graduate school. The apartment over looked the east river and had a fancy address. I brought way too many clothes but I didn't have a clue as to what we would be doing or what I would need to wear. I was very young and naive, and my mother had helped me shop and pack.

My boyfriend had to work but had gotten a turkey for free and thought I could make it for everyone for Christmas Eve dinner. I had never made a turkey before, and not much of anything else. Now if my sister had been there, it might have been a meal of culinary delights, but no, they were stuck with me, the sometimes jello maker, who even failed at that.

I decided I would try, given not much of a choice, but it seemed a matter of putting it in the oven. I called my sister and she told me what to do, how long it would take and to baste it. I didn't stuff it, I put it in a roasting pan and basted it with a bottle of wine.

It turned out okay as I recall. I wore a black velvet mid calf skirt with a complimentary top that you needed a camisole for. It had a peter pan color and short sleeves. It was black, sparkly and see through. One of the guests could not keep his tongue in his mouth.

He was embarrassing me with his flirting and attention. I didn't have a clue how to handle it. My boyfriend was embarrassed and tried to reign him in. My boyfriend and I were more conservative and had different standards of behavior, but I digress.

It was after all a bit flattering.

So this year my daughter who is in graduate school had us come down to see her and she and her boyfriend made the turkey. It was just for family and in some ways though it was like watching an old movie of my life. Her boyfriend was polite and reserved a bit, he brined the turkey and carved it and she helped him do everything at his house. He is a bit older, working and it was his first turkey and hers too.

I looked at her and thought how much smarter she was than I was, she is a bit older than I was. I thought of how many life experiences we both had and how our parents treated us like adults and gave us opportunities and how our siblings often supported and encouraged us in our adventures. I decided that I raised a smart girl and she had found a good young man to compliment her interests. Someone who was intelligent, caring and obviously in love with her. Time will tell, I am sure.

In the end, I had a few different loves and ended up with a true and lasting one with my husband of 30 years. That boyfriend in New York went on to become very wealthy and eventually also married and had a son. I was not mature enough at the time for that relationship, and college helped to give me more depth and understanding.

It is all a grand adventure, life and all the memories in it. To be able to remember, to look back and see things differently and to see how life unfolds, is a blessing many times over.

I wish all of you a happy holiday and if this is your first time making a turkey, enjoy! In the days before cooking bags and convection ovens, that bottle of wine really worked out.

