***BETTER TO CARVE, MY DEAR?...***

Anyone wanting an October all-day job could have had one at our place today. “Domestic-I” and “*Writer-I”* together had to deal with a pumpkin our sister unexpectedly sent from her Oregon farm. Previously, however, we already had prepared a bought pumpkin and made it into pies, now frozen for the upcoming Thanksgiving.

 As we will testify, preparing fresh pumpkin is a long laborious process: wash it; cut it into chunks (*a man’s job, if ever there was one, getting through that tough skin*); scrape out the innards (*yuk—seeds enmeshed within sticky stubborn fibers!*); steam chunks until soft (*needing to stick a fork in every so often to check*); transfer to a plate; separate fruit from shells (*ouch!--burned fingers*); and (*finally!*) mash and set in a sieve over a bowl to drain.

 As for that plump, beautifully-colored Oregon pumpkin, for a while it had sat outside the kitchen door. Every time we passed it “Domestic” imagined it said, “Isn’t it time ‘someone’ cared for *me?*”So today she decided to use it in an old recipe for pumpkin bars; *except,* by the time that big pumpkin was cooked, even doubling the recipe would use only half. “I know what’ we’ll do,” shethought. “We’ll quadruple the recipe!”

 *Oh, Lord; here we go, I thought, as our hands got out a big boiling pan for mixing. There was going to be a lot of batter. Next she had us assembling quadrupled ingredients in separate bowls, including certain time-consuming substitutions: added wheat germ and oat bran to white flour (not having the called-for wheat), shredding butter into milk (no buttermilk on hand); supplementing half the milk (not enough on hand) with sour cream; white sugar with brown (latter also in short supply); cut-up dates in place of raisins (ditto); and--oh yes--grinding almonds for absent walnuts. God! What a pain, mixing it all, the poor lightweight portable beater reluctantly chugging away.*

*I had to stop her and have a cigarette. Wiping greasy hands, I thought, vehemently, “This is the last time I’ll let her make me help dealing with fresh pumpkin!” But I’ve felt similar vengeance before, helplessly dragged into serving her compulsions. Nonetheless, there we were, persevering over that mass of flour, spices and leavenings, when--don’t t laugh!-- only then, all being well mixed, did she look again at the recipe—*

 OH NO!--four teaspoons of baking powder had gone in, instead of soda!

*A bit of a shock, to be sure; but not about to waste all those ingredients, she dumped in four teaspoon of baking soda. Then, while I wondered whether the concoction would explode in the oven, she added the eight eggs, followed by a lot of struggled beating again… But wasn’t there something in the recipe about oil?*

OHHH, DEAR!--

*Now greater waste threatened. Hands tried beating the oil in with a hand beater. That wouldn’t work. “Clean up as you go,” Mother always stressed; thus, the electric beaters already were washed of goop and put away. So the electric one had to be reassembled and put through intense work again, until (finally!) that questionable batter was complete.*

*One I thing that can’t be said is that Domestic (retired from 30-plus years as a cleric in The System) is lacking in organizational skills. Before beginning the entire project, hands had spent some half-hour cutting and fitting brown paper into two large broiler pans, greasing it, and shaping foil collars around the shallow pan edges. Now, into the pans went the batter and, into the oven, only one of the pans; because Domestic knows it’s best not to bake two big pans one over other, since oven heat doesn’t get around right, So, dual baking left plenty of time to prepare a honey frosting. Thirty-five minutes later the first pan came out looking gorgeous; as another 35 minutes later, the second….*

3:30 p.m., “See! [she chided]”: *two beautiful cooled slabs, each topped thickly with the honey spread. Hands cut one in diagonal bars and the other into squares, and sieved powdered sugar over all. By bedtime those frosted pumpkin bars all would be wrapped and preservedly stacked in the freezer for Christmas-giving .*

*(Ah, me…this being forced to be written, Writer-I am no farther along on the current manuscript…)*

**Two days later…**

“Refrain from making any vows,” one Yogic master advised. *Well, so much for mine! Today the local farm delivery included not just one but three pumpkins, albeit smaller ones.*

“Okay—[*I-Domestic actually joined in this thought!*]—“we’ll give these away.” *Except one friend said, “No thanks; last year’s sat outside until the bottom rotted;” and another, “Sorry, too busy!” She did manage to palm one off on a neighbor, but naturally wound up cooking the other two for yet another favorite cookie recipe and another long kitchen sentence for Me…*

*(Yet I won’t complain here. Consciousness might be divisible into two personas; but as it happens,* She *and* I *do share the most important of fundamental principles. If/ when the Spirit--that inhabits our common Body-- should ring the bell at Saint Peter’s gate and is* *asked,* “Would you have rathered being remembered a touted author, instead of a lovingly baking mother, grandmother, sister, and friend?” *The answer, dear reader, would be a resoundingly mutual “NO.”)*

**[And there’s the rub….]**