

Acting your age harder the older you get

You know you're getting old when one of your peers says, "Can I borrow the glasses?" and they're not talking about beverage receptacles.

It was the clarion cry at a party we attended recently, where we got together with a group we have known since we came to Canada 22 years ago. Someone suggested a game of charades and it was quickly apparent that only our host was equipped with reading glasses.

The light was low enough to hide most of our wrinkles and to make it impossible to read the names on the little pieces of

paper we picked out of the hat. Our accumulated offspring derived much merriment from seeing their parents crouched by the table lamp and squinting helplessly at a blurry jumble of symbols, before caving into reality and requesting optical aid.

Then there was the question of the cultural gap. Despite the oldies' contention that we are the epitome of aging cool, there were some titles that passed us by completely. One example, *Drop Kick Me Jesus Through The Goal Posts of Life*, was greeted with howls of recognition by the young and complete perplexity

by the chronologically advantaged.

My moment of triumph came when I blurted out *The Maltese Falcon* as soon as my son started flapping his arms. In my excitement, I had quite forgotten that a successful guess leads to the excruciating embarrassment of an impromptu performance.

Luckily, the younger members of the audience were blessed with strong interpretive skills and it wasn't too long before my manic attempts to dance a jig brought forth the right answer, *American Gigolo*. Since this is a family newspaper, I cannot go into



Kate's Corner

Kate Gilderdale

details of my friend's efforts to translate *Earth Girls Are Easy*, save to say that it provided much hilarity and, eventually, the correct title.

As I observed the proceedings, it dawned on me that our parent/child relationships had undergone a complete reversal. Fifteen years ago, we would have sat and watched our children with smiles of tolerant affection, as they struggled to master a new skill and did not always behave with appropriate restraint in the attempt.

Now it was they who were bestowing the same kind of amused largess on their parents, as they watched us donning the communal spectacles and valiantly trying to act out *Satisfaction* and *Wuthering Heights*. The embarrassment when a mother or father did something really gauche was greeted with solid empathy from the rest of the group.

"Oh, don't worry," said one young person to another. "My mother always does the same thing. She's pretty good most of the time, but she does get carried away, especially after a glass or two of wine."

The child who once regarded you as all-knowing now views you with indulgent condescension, which indicates that even though you are pretty dense, she still loves you.

In the words of Anthony Powell, "Parents are sometimes a bit of a disappointment to their children. They don't fulfill the promise of their early years."

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