

54 Simple Truths with Brutal Advice

Extract from an article by Bel Mooney in the Saturday Mail on 1 March 2008

And Finally

Enough books land on my doormat to test even an addicted reader.

This year I'm one of the judges of the prestigious Orange Prize of Fiction, which means scores of wonderful novels by women are piling up all over my house, waiting to be read and appreciated.

No wonder I often sigh to receive yet another unsolicited book dealing with subjects covered on these pages. It feels like yet another demand – the straw on the camel's back.

So, here's a paperback called 54 Simple Truths with Brutal Advice, subtitled How to Face the Challenges of Life.

It looks self-published, by one Mike Wash, who's written me an upbeat letter, saying he hopes I'll read his book. 'Do I have time for this' I sigh.

Then I turn to the Orange Prize contenders, many of them full (as the best novels can be) of profound as well as simple truths, and with their own degree of emotional brutality about life's challenges.

Mr Wash's book lies unopened on my mountain – until the day when I feel even more weighed down than usual, stressed and suffering with a cold that makes my head feel it will explode.

Randomly, I open 54 Simple Truths at maxim 13. This jumps out: 'You forget you're supposed to be working to live, not living to work'.

Now that's not rocket science, but it was surrounded by much wisdom I needed to hear. Sneezing, I flipped to 15. The title was 'You will become ill' and it spelled out my main problem, which is ignoring warning signs and driving myself on until something gives. An eye, for example.

'Use illness as an opportunity to review your lifestyle and ask yourself what's really important and what do you have to change in order to get it' writes Mike Wash.

There is a Latin tag, '*Quis custodiet custodiet?* Which translates, 'Who guards the guards?' You might substitute, who nurses the nurse? Or – who gives advice to the advice columnist?

This one is very grateful for the common sense which says: 'Stop!'

PS

Last week I mentioned a book called 54 Simple Truths With Brutal Advice and made a mistake.

This useful little volume is by Mike Wash and the website is www.mwauk.com. The man is right; you should never be too busy to double-check.