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PRISM *international*

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Michael Kenyon

Train

Angela, an only child, is en-route by train to *X* where her father is in hospital having suffered a number of strokes, the last of which has rendered him bedridden. At this moment she is passing through a sparsely wooded valley just east of *Y*. On the north ridge of the valley, visible from the north-facing train windows, is a bluff which looks south toward the clattering train. The bluff is intersected by a barbed wire fence running west to east on which hang Private Property signs. This is the exact location where, some months before Angela's birth, her parents say goodbye for the last time.

They meet, as arranged, beside the penguin pit at the zoo, on the outskirts of *Y*. From here, they walk to a bluff overlooking the valley and the town. The bluff is intersected by a barbed wire fence.

The two figures break from an embrace and I lose my balance. I fall backwards against the barbed wire. The early sun catches the right side of your face; your eyes are lowered.

You walked down through the trees and followed the tracks to the station in the village of *Y*. It is rumoured that he followed her to the station and that they said their last farewell on the steps, or even on the platform itself. It is also rumoured that they took their final parting some months later at the large central station in the city of *Z*—he had learned she was to leave that night for a distant part of the country. That, amid porters and tired children, he tried one last time to convince her of the importance of their staying together, especially now with the baby coming.

Coming out of a dream or moving into a tunnel, he hears a voice. Seconds pass before he recognizes the soft say-so of the Haida Indian who pushes his wheelchair through the dead leaves. He's in North America and it's autumn or early winter. The Haida is saying, *You have a*

good family, three, four members? As he wheels me through the damp woods, the train begins to wail by. Just before the culminating blast, three faces pose in the window of the sixteenth car, pale young girls. I try to say something. It's not hard: my tongue moves, my lips frame the words, the roar of the train does not drown them.

The three nurses were watching me from the hospital window, two pretty, and one thin and plain. The former had their arms akimbo, the other pressed her palms against the plate glass which bulged and shone in the sunlight. The Indian gardener was burning a pile of leaves; the right side of his face was flame red. Your eyes watch me struggle with the barbed wire; a birthmark covers the right hemisphere of your face, the eyes are bloodshot; it appears you have been crying. I remember we had been laughing. The thin nurse had pushed me back into my wheelchair and we were poised for a moment, laughing together. As the barbs dug deeper, a train whistle is heard and the girl with the birthmark tells me we must go back inside, it's lunchtime. It so happens that we have said goodbye. She walks down through the trees, into the valley, past the hospital where a gardener is burning leaves. I watch until you pass out of sight and are in my arms again on Platform A. I watch until it gets cold and the nurse again comes to fetch me in. I watch until the smoke hides the sun, the trestle and the train; hides your face, framed by hands against the window of the twenty-third car. Yours is the only face for the whole length of the train: pale and thin, motionless. The late sun catches the left side of your face. She was watching me close my eyes.

With closed eyes beside the rushing train, he finds time to notice details: the station dissolves into the wooded valley. (I'm standing on the platform.) He's sitting on a high, sparsely-treed ridge; far below, the trestle and embankment quake. With wrists behind his back, he is propped against a barbed wire fence. Two barbs wound his neck and shoulder. The other barbs in contact with the back of his corduroy shirt are at too obtuse an angle to penetrate. He has no wheelchair: his own hands grip the outer silver wheels which would drive the rubber wheels crackling over dry leaves on the hard path beside the fence. He can't move. At every effort, the barbs dig deeper into his neck and shoulder, tearing the skin a little. Sleep has long been denied him, his eyes are closed, he cannot waken. He has a cycle of nightmares, a child's dream of a black train coming out of a tunnel.

They won't give me my teeth; I am waiting for someone I love. I've not opened my eyes for some time. The nurse says I'm obstinate. Periodically, I'm fed slops and soft fruit by spoon, even the coffee by spoon. Not

an appealing sight, I'm sure. I can imagine my folded wheelchair leaning against the wall, under the window, across from the bed. Other, electric chairs, hum by. The bed rises and falls. A paper is pressed into my hand; I'm told it is a letter, but in my hand it's paper. And yet I cry out, or perhaps just sigh, it's difficult to tell anymore. I suck my gums and feel large drops of water running down my cheeks. Each day I am shaved and washed. It's how I recognise a new day.

You've been gone so long that I've slept into this room with its large imitation windows; grown used to the various events of the day, subtle changes of light, I propel myself, or am propelled, from the door to the windows, from the windows to the door. Sometimes I collide with the bed. Yesterday I was raped, it came as no surprise, like the rain; it always rains; it was raining when I first closed my eyes, or first tried to open them, I forget which. The nurses and doctors chat together. I hear much talk of flooding. But yesterday is nonsense; I was not raped and it never rains. All the banter is of somewhere else.

Meanwhile, I'm feeding the unreal penguins on the unreal beach, dreaming myself as an object far away. You carry part of me, but it's none of your business. Until you come back I'm lost, but it's nothing to do with you. I found this room long ago, with its view of buses, railway ties, moss on trees, flooded fields.

I remember asking you to hurt me. I said, I must be the one to suffer, since I do it so well. That's a laugh. I said, I will forget about myself and wait for you and not know how long to wait. I must tell you, the suffering didn't last long. When I first met Angela, I'd been married for years; my wife had been dead for years; I even have a grandson. Angela's much too old to call me Dad. You've got years left, Dad, she tells me. Makes me smile. Well, perhaps I can live for awhile, even without my teeth.

It had begun to rain the night before. We ran through puddles with your luggage up the steps of the central station. In the vast inside, between the trains and the street, we kissed goodbye. I could've waited with you for another hour, but you'd made up your mind to leave; prolonging the goodbye, you said, would be miserable. I felt you had already left. At the exit, I turned and waved. I should have run back and at least embraced you again. I thought afterwards that I should've stayed the hour. But now my eyes open and I can't see the edge, any edge, so it's easy to think such things. My fingers on the bed railings are weak; not the fingers that traced light circles around each of your breasts in the cold hotel room

that morning while the rain poured outside. We ate honeydew in the bathtub and turned all the burners up on the gas stove to warm the room. I went back to bed and sat smoking while you walked around the room wearing nothing.

I dream about penguins. Only consciously can I constitute your face, starting with the eyes, lowered. Each added detail brings a memory. I say to the nurse, *A long time ago I stopped trying to forget her, now it's a struggle to remember her.* I say to Angela, *You're just like your mother. I remember your eyes.*

We are young and I'm waiting for you at the zoo and it's stopped raining. We are to meet by the penguins. I'm early and only a few people walk around the cages. A little boy asks if I've had a good sleep. My eyes close again against the red sun. When you arrive, we sit together on the bench beside the cement pit. I say I'm thinking of what it would be like to live with you; a penguin raises his wings, tilts back his head, squawks. I'd get used to your body. A father reads the sign to his daughter—she's just emptied her popcorn into the pool—Do Not Feed The Penguins. I'd dream of our child. Penguins have a special diet, he explains, leading her away.

She comes to visit me from time to time. She feeds me with a spoon and pushes me around the gardens, trying to make me open my eyes. She dries my cheeks with the edge of her blouse or a handkerchief, before she leaves me on the bench just inside the zoo. Sometimes I remain there all night. In the morning, the keeper finds me and bathes and shaves my face, raises and lowers the bed, dresses me then lifts me to my wheelchair. Ah, a new day. I sit in the corridor, composing your face and singing Ich bin die fesche Lola.

I awake prone, my arms and legs spread wide, a rhythmic pain at the anus. A grunting body thrust furiously on top of me. Opening my eyes, just a fraction, not struggling, I see moss on a tree outside the window. A train motionless in the station. On Platform A beside a pile of decaying ties, the Station Master looks at his watch. Three nurses hum by and a boy in Scout uniform asks if I have slept well. I throw the thawed herring into the penguin pit and look up. I recognize you even at this distance. Stuffing your letter back into my pocket, I run to meet you. The paper blows along the platform and falls over the edge; it lands between two ties just this side of the rails. Standing beside your luggage, we embrace; your eyes are lowered; over your shoulder, I see a man with a brown case, hurrying toward us. You turn as the penguins, one by one, dive into the water. Outside the hotel room it's raining and your

body seems slick in the light through the streaming glass: he's caressing the inside of your thighs with his lips, now with his heavy body. As I close my eyes, I'm supine and his weight is the weight of the bed at my back, the bed is raised and a spoon nudges at my lips.

I do not believe in trains black and rushing beside the ditch into town, far below the fence against which I have fallen.

The path through the trees where the crows yell gleams in the dawn light. A mist rises where the train rushes. A breeze chills the skin through the rent in my corduroy shirt.

Further along, the ditch and the fence stop, and shops and the first sidewalks appear through the fog. The first pedestrians ignore the train whistle. In *Y* each shop window is lit. A bell rings as I go into the station; as I go into the station, a boy scout passes me. He closes his mouth after saying something I do not quite catch.

I near the station, carry a brown suitcase. Later, my body lies cold on the wood ties, bound with thin cord between the rails. Later still, I pretend to insert myself where I already am: watching you walking the tracks, wearing a white tulle dress.

I'm blind. The view from the hospital bed is neither the view from the bluff, nor the view from the moving train. The girl on the train has been warned of her father's condition.

The train shakes the texture of white linen, the scuffle of dry leaves, the clink of a spoon on the cup's rim. The old man is raised up in bed; he hears water splash in the basin, presently feels warm fingers along his chin. The young man watches the Haida gardener perform his tasks in the larger gardens attached to the rich peoples' houses on the outskirts of *Y*. The zoo keeper stands on the beach looking for his cages. You are not tied to the tracks, but I am lashed between the rails. You wear a white tulle dress with the top buttons undone, I do not wear the corduroy shirt with a rip in the collar and a larger rip at the shoulder, which I tore when I fell against the barbed wire fences. Because I'm waiting for the train, because the train is always present, I didn't feel the cold; your breasts were exposed and yet still not cold.

The three nurses watched the train pass. They told me they noticed, though not all at the same moment, the pale face of a young woman in the fourteenth car. The face pressed to the glass seemed to be silent or

sighing. You do not feel the cold of the rails because you are between them. *It's not at all cold, dad. It's quite warm, really. Beautiful outside: the sun's shining.* I feel the grass touch my back where the shirt's torn open; the wood ties are damp, but I only notice the cold at last, the final addendum. On the bluff the young man falls against the. Fade.

The barbs dig deeper. Jump.

Angela watches as I open my eyes. Fade.

Beside the bed she grasps her father's hand. A nurse with a birthmark covering the entire right side of her face enters pushing a silver trolley which she places close to the bed. The girl and the nurse exchange the usual remarks concerning the train journey, the old man, the condition of his skin, his refusal to see, his recurring dream which seems to involve three nurses, a young and an old man, a young woman, a Haida Indian gardener, a zoo keeper. *His other family never visit*, confides the nurse. I try to tell Angela: The nurse says that I've been singing Marlene Dietrich songs in the corridor, but that may still be part of the dream. The nurse kneels at the foot of the bed and adjusts the controls: the silver handle on her right, four revolutions counterclockwise; the silver handle on her left, seven revolutions clockwise, then half a turn back.

As the barbs dig deeper, a train whistles and the girl walks down the slope of the hill to where a gardener is raking leaves just inside a low garden hedge. He now has a pile four feet high. She stops at his side. He says he plans to ignite the leaves shortly. They chat about the usual things: the slow postman, the infrequent buses: not remarkable in a rural place like *Y*. The gardener says: *You have a good family? Three members, four members?* They are silent as the train begins to wail by.

Angela learned that her father was dying and of his apparent blindness when a piece of paper unfolded on the kitchen table beside the yellow handled breadknife with which she slits the envelope neatly open, takes out the sheet of typewritten paper, smooths it out and, as before, appears to read the symbols on the page: the hospital crest, the address in the town of *X*, the date. Her fingers allow the paper to slip back onto the table, to rest lightly on the wood surface.

Through the window can be seen a hedge of green leaves, a child's red tricycle lying on its side.

At the station, she buys a ticket and prepares to board the train; on the platform, she's harassed by a man carrying a brown suitcase who insists

that he knows she'll leave, but he's prepared to stand the torture her departure engenders. Tears stream down his face.

He explains the dimensions of his love and how he will wait for her. She quickly boards the train. How he has dreamed of the child they will have. You boarded the train and took a seat beside a window overlooking the platform at the precise point about to be crossed by the man who explains the dimensions of his love. The platform empties in preparation; you wave goodbye to the single figure; you note the sign *Z Central* as the train gathers speed; you pass another station sign, *Y*. The man is leaning back against the barbed wire fence.

Angela's face, framed by her hands pressed to the window of the fourteenth car, is very white.

I'm not on the platform, not in the ward, with closed eyes, not feeling the spoon nudge at my lips.

Derk Wynand

FIVE TATTOOS AND ONE SUGGESTED

the new dancer nudge nudge is she part gypsy is she half
japanese confines her routine to the stage how your mind

begins to wander she cannot she will not pick coins from
your table or dollar bills or cigarettes or rough drafts

of poems on serviettes without bringing hands or fingers
into play which does not mean her routine falls short of

your expectations but the imagination keeps tricking you
you don't feel tricked and if she's heard of stunts with

your glasses with johnson's baby oil what's left of your
beer she ignores it likely being wet behind the ears not

having travelled abroad at the end of the war not having
seen what others have seen widows dancing for less maybe

cigarettes or small potatoes not underfed she won't bend
over backward is she japanese certainly not for you when

your wife seems to whisper at your side which is another
fiction entirely the dancer has a kind of decorum is she

japanese she has a boyfriend of sorts tormented by guilt
who's older who cups his hand over his mouth and reveals

his humiliating weakness to the bartender who hands over
the girlfriend's pay not that she is his slave a hundred

dollars your wife says wide-eyed two red fifties she has
a great eye for such details though she could only guess

like you if she were guessing what it would take to make
the dancer vary her strict routine once you'd never have

dragged your wife into a beer parlour like this nor into
your poems she's nobody's slave though her eye can prove

helpful you had a certain decorum because of your german
background maybe because of her own but she has a better

vision she has her own devices and life was simpler once
your poems not running on and on less complex less wordy

have it as you will a dancer out of nowhere slipping off
her blouse it's hot beneath the red stage lights turning

the skin nearly flawless only marked for now by a spider
clinging to her breast stunned by the light maybe calmed

by the involuntary not unwilled agitations not biting or
having bitten already the cadence livelier more frenzied

if better now more tarantella than bump and grind though
the woman does not appear alarmed she is inscrutable she

is a gypsy no doubt she's never studied archaic european
nervous disorders but the audience feels short of breath

a collective heart rate increasing is this spider a mark
of slaves a secret number or name disguised made all too

ornate still making you break into a sweat you have seen
what you've seen girls dancing for less don't lapse into

a coma your wife says not overly impressed by the marked
flesh looking glumly at the few bills that remain on the

table you have bought nothing but beer she's hungry life
was simpler once you could take in a performance without

pinpointing spiders on a half-japanese stripper's breast
to incorporate into your poem as justification expiation

or listening for some voice to say ye shall not make any
cuttings in your flesh let my people go your mouth could

go dry for its own reasons a guilt-ridden paramour would
never have played any part not demanding that she follow

him to the tattoo parlour the designs already cut in his
mind her shorts dropping to the floor into the red light

it is too hot you could roll up your sleeves and a cobra
flares its hood along her spine sways back and forth and

back and forth about to strike striking your wife admits
and that is what it is *tattow tatau tattaw* a knocking or

striking and then she is totally exposed the dancer that
is but for these blue cuttings these marks that make you

so nervous is it your somber mid-european background the
cobra has no tail at all coiling down her spine slipping

deeper into her flesh its hood flaring across her lumbar
region very striking with its counterfeit eyes its fangs

truly venemous attractive and repulsive at the same time
wonderful confusion you imagine the double needle fixing

the outline the multiple needle shading it in is it your
background that makes the breath so laboured her passive

skin tortured at the parlour don't lapse into a coma the
tattooist must have said we can finish it later you make

the connections your heart rate increasing the boyfriend
the spider the cobra electric needle buzzing your german

background all make you nervous how much easier to think
of the japanese art of *irezumi* and the lovely skins that

hang in the museum of tokyo university paid for when the
human exhibits were walking and bathing were resplendent

maybe dancing less naked and you have bought nothing but
rounds of tuborg beer the dancer inscrutable now bending

over backward the boyfriend's been paid nudge nudge more
gypsy now than german your wife points out to you a tiny

red flower growing on her thigh too small to define with
any precision an amaryllis you assume yes the belladonna

dilating your eye it could be the standard rose from the
tattooist's wall its thorn if not poisonous yet adequate

connection careful your wife says the boyfriend's at the
bar eyeing the bartender each has one small blue swallow

marked on his wrist to what secret order can they belong
they are sweating staring at the two of you reading your

thoughts have you found them out have they found you out
why did she bring your wife into the place can she dance

be careful she says the girl's protected by her venemous
creatures drink up the beer at least is already paid for

it's hot you might roll up your sleeves you have nothing
to hide how well she understands you the spider's asleep

on the dancer's breast she's naked as can be the cobra's
fixed on her back the belladonna is gathering its poison

Eric McCormack

No Country for Old Men

It is a Christmas party. An old man conjures up for us the bitterness of an old war, his mind penetrates the years. He remembers the wisps of trees in the dawn haze of a dale of passion. He remembers dark, rain-filled craters, seducing the war-weary to death by drowning. He remembers the trenches joining together with intricate stitchery fabrics of opposing weft. He remembers the scattering of corpses in the half-light of no-man's land, arms still protecting their dead faces. He remembers the emerging shapes of hillocks of shells, innocent-seeming as heaps of canned dog-food. He remembers, his eyes hollow, the echoing snap of the fixing of bayonets at dawn: our soldiers, uniformed in gray mud, suck on a last cheap cigarette, smell the heavy smell of tobacco wafting across from the other trenches, where German soldiers puff securely on huge carved pipes, weighty as Mausers.

—All dead now. All losers in the long run.

He says this without a smile. We listen intently.

—My own life is a miracle. Feel here. Feel the shrapnel? It floats around in my flesh like bits of broken shell in the white of an egg. Notice how I stoop to draw breath? Mustard gas, inhaled sixty years ago.

The old man speaks of one regret. We are all ears.

—Of those I killed, I remember clearly only one German soldier, a boy as young as myself. I was on sentry duty on Christmas day. I woke from a doze and found him leaning over me in his alien helmet. His hand was reaching into his kitbag. I stabbed upwards, as I had been taught, thrusting till I saw the blood appear at his lips. I pulled down. The blood drained along the bayonet's gutter neatly, as it should. As he fell, his kitbag spilled out a bottle of wine and a loaf of white bread. Too late, my comrades came running to tell me there was a Christmas truce amongst us, no war for the day. We hid the murdered soldier so that they would not stop bringing the wine and the bread.

That is the old man's regret. Now he means to tell us of a dream. We listen urgently.

—For the last seven nights I have dreamt of that murder. I see myself back in the trenches, the German soldier leaning over me. I know what I

must do. I jab the bayonet up into his stomach, holding it till I see the blood at his lips. I pull down, noticing how neatly the blood drains along the bayonet's gutter.

Then I step back from the body, and I am in my study. I walk to my desk and open the right-hand drawer. I carefully place the bloody bayonet on top of a sheaf of note-paper, close the drawer, and go back to bed.

I have dreamt this for seven nights. On six of the mornings when I awoke, I went to the desk drawer to check, just in case. Only the blank paper confronted me.

But this morning, Christmas morning, something was not the same. Even after I awoke, I could still feel the chill of the trenches in my bones, I could remember the weight of the bayonet in my hand. I arose, aware of the beat of my heart. The light of the first snowfall reflected into my study. I walked towards the desk: this time I had no doubt I would find in it the bayonet, on a sheet of blood-stained paper. I gripped the handle of the drawer firmly and wrenched it open.

I found nothing. Just a sheaf of clean white paper as before. No miracle had happened. I was the same as other men. I could not cheat a nightmare, steal a part of it, smuggle it into the waking world. Was I not foolish to think that I would find in my desk the bayonet from my dream?

He appeals to us, his face tired, his eyes pleading. We are ready to forgive anything. Then a grave young man I do not know stands from amongst the group of listeners. He speaks quietly, his voice compelling. We make a circle round him.

—Last night I dreamt about a Christmas party. In the dream, one of the guests, an old man whose face I cannot remember, tells a group of people (I am one of them) how he murdered a German soldier on a Christmas day long ago. He says he is haunted by a nightmare in which he commits the murder over again, and that he has tried to end it by bringing the weapon out of the nightmare, without success. He begs for pity.

The party finishes, and in my dream I follow him to his home. It is snowing. He enters his house. I watch over his shoulder as he bends over the desk in his study. He slides open the right-hand drawer. There, on a sheaf of stained paper, lies a black-handled bayonet.

The old man reaches into the drawer and slowly raises the blade, still red with the blood of the victim, to his own red lips.

After that I awoke.

Now his eyes are burning as he stares at the old man. The old man lowers his head before us all. He stands still, makes no appeal, for he knows there is no forgiveness in us.

Philip Hughes

Schadenfreude

"Look," Plato commanded the attention of another in chains, also facing the back wall of the cave: "only shadows, all that we observe flit by so engagingly. This moment of lucid perception I have arrived at by the a priori method of induction. Consider: behind us, The Light; before us, Illusion. Since direct apprehension of this truth is not granted us, we must perforce exercise our unfettered capacity to reflect and figure—which, personally speaking, offers consolation even to the point of pride."

"Dark areas you spelunk," mused the man, while casually turning a hand to shadow mime. "'Rabbit Ears.'. . . I see. Still, substance appears lacking. Most noticeable before us always loom our own blurred adumbrations—'Bird in Flight'—without which: no contrasting notion of The Light. . . . 'Crash Landing'"; he gave his wrists a flip. "Only vague foreshadowings. 'Penumbras of the expressible.'"

"Great gods, you're right!" cried the elder philosopher, on reflection. Then he sighed. "With one gesture you have snuffed my delight in transcendental inference. Assure me: what pleasure can be said to remain for us in this our grotty existence?"

". . . . Look: 'Duck Quacking'. . ."

Lawrence Russell

The Edge of Wherever

CHARACTERS:

MAN:	who is trying to photograph a monster
WOMAN:	his wife
ROBED FIGURE:	who claims to have been great looking
LOCALE:	in the trees, above an inlet

*(*MAN *stands comtemplating the water.* WOMAN *sits nearby.)*

WOMAN: *(peeling an orange)* Did you bring the corkscrew? *(no reply)* I've got some of those crackers you like. . . the Irish ones. There's cream cheese too. *(pause)* Hope it doesn't rain. . . feels like rain, doesn't it. . . I mean, look at that light. . . *stormlight*, that's what. *(pause)* Not quite what you wanted, is it? Still, it's beautiful. Gives the landscape a neurotic feeling. . . pleasantly neurotic. Beats a sunny day, for instance. I don't much care for sunny days. *(pause.* MAN *is fixated by something)* What're you looking at, darling?

MAN: *(turning. . . eventually)* I don't know why you said that. *(*WOMAN *is puzzled)* You like sunny days. You like going to the beach and removing your clothes. You like going out on the patio and lying down. I've even known you to go up on the roof. . . I'd say you were a Sun Goddess, if anything.

WOMAN: *(looks at him. . . but decides not to challenge his sarcasm)* Do you have the corkscrew? *(*MAN *looks at her & then takes the corkscrew from his camera bag & tosses it to her. She starts to open the bottle but. . .)*

WOMAN: You know, you'd be much better at this than me. You know I always break the cork.

*(*MAN *comes & takes the bottle & opens it, then drinks from the neck)*

MAN: *(suddenly)* I've been here before. *(*WOMAN *regards him quizzically)* It's just a feeling.

WOMAN: Déjà vu.

*(*MAN *shrugs, sets up a tripod & mounts a camera with a large telephoto lens.* WOMAN *starts to laugh)*

WOMAN: I should've known . . . it was so obvious. I mean, *obviously* you've been here before. I mean, you didn't lead me here by accident. The spot is too perfect. You pretended you didn't recognize the path . . . but *really* . . . .

*(*MAN *is panning with the camera. Eventually he beckons)*

MAN: Come—take a look. *(*WOMAN *is indifferent. She lies back)*

WOMAN: Don't be a slug—come and lie with me.

MAN: *(pause)* Don't you want to look?

WOMAN: Well, I'm comfortable where I am. Also, I want to eat. Aren't you hungry?

MAN: An orange is not my idea of food.

WOMAN: I told you there're crackers. *(pause)*What's to see anyway?

MAN: You've a fear of water, don't you?

WOMAN: *(sitting up)* Don't be stupid. You know how well I swim.

MAN: It's been one hellova long time since I've seen you in the water.

WOMAN: *(exasperated)* Don't be such an uptight asshole! God you're tense today. *(pause)* Just because you want to try and get a picture of a non-existent monster.

MAN: *(amazingly calm)* There's been many sightings on this inlet over the past decade . . . even the Indians acknowledge the existence of Ogo . . . the legend has persisted for centuries . . . ah God, why do we have to go through this again?

WOMAN: We don't. *(pause)* Why don't you come and lie with me. You can watch the water just as well from here as there. *(lies back and stares upwards.* MAN *pans the water with the telephoto)* The trees are *very* tall . . . must be hundreds of years old . . . look at the moss . . . I feel as if I'm lying at the bottom of a deep pool . . . 's beautiful. *(she dreams for awhile.* MAN *now stands staring over the water.* WOMAN *sits up quickly)*

WOMAN: O Jesus . . . the lousy bugs are crawling over the food! *(swats at them, then makes a discovery)*

WOMAN: Hey—look what I found! *(she holds up a ring.* MAN *comes over)* It was right here, beneath the crackers . . . looks like it's been here for some time. *(*MAN *sits down beside her. She rubs the ring against her sleeve)* How curious . . . masculine, wouldn't you say? (MAN *looks at the ring but makes no comment)* I mean, the motif of the entwined snake . . . I wonder if it's gold.

MAN: Just a cheap bauble.

WOMAN: Oh really? Then I won't give it to you. I *was* thinking of giving it to you but since you're such . . . such as asshole, well . . . .

MAN: I think you should shut up. I mean, all you do is fucking babble at times. *(Buries his face in his hands)* Christ, what's the matter with me? I'm a mess. I haven't slept a wink these last few nights . . . months, actually.

WOMAN: *(softly)* I've noticed.

MAN: I'm being tormented by something. *(pause)* I've never talked about it because I don't know if it's real or not. . . if it's a dream or a memory or what. . . but it's there, it's such a strong *feeling.*
(Pause)

WOMAN: I think you take things too seriously.

MAN: *(a bitter laugh)* I'm not talking about Ogo. *(Pause)* I think I've killed someone. *(*MAN *lies back, stares upwards)* I think you're right about a storm. The clouds have a sulphurous look about them. . . and it's muggy.

WOMAN: *(placing her hand on his brow)* You've got a temperature. You haven't been getting enough Vitamin C. *(Pause)* Did you hit someone with the car?

MAN: *(Sits up, shakes his head)* I could feel I was being watched. Every time I passed the same spot, I knew he was there. . . it was incredibly annoying, you know, and I could never truly concentrate on getting the photograph I wanted. His behaviour was totally insulting. . . he carried on as if I was a senile old goat who didn't know he was being parodied.

WOMAN: Who? Who is *he*?

MAN: His name? *(Shakes his head)* He was young. . . not more than a youth. Quite androgynous—you could've easily taken him for a coarse young woman. . . perhaps he painted his face, I don't know. I only got a good look at him once. . . just as he went over the edge. *(Pause. Gets up & acts out the ritual with the camera)* I would stop and look into the eyepiece. He would slide out from the trees and pantomine behind me. . . you know, like he was showing off to some hidden associates. I would turn. . . and he would turn with me, cleverly, *very* cleverly, so that I just had a glimpse. . . .

WOMAN: Why'd he do this?

MAN: *(Shaking his head)* Don't really know. I guess he was just a jerk. *(thinks, then—)* I couldn't shake him, so I began to spin. . . *(He demonstrates)* round. . . and round. . . and round. . . until I felt a heavy blow. *(Stops)* I guess I struck him. I just had time to see his piercing green eyes and his horrible red mouth as he staggered back and dropped over the edge. *(Turns toward* WOMAN*)* I couldn't look. I couldn't go to the dropoff and look down. Yet I felt a tremendous relief, like I'd expelled a demon. But later *(He grips his brow)* I felt remorse. . . and fear.

WOMAN: *(Perplexed)* You've made this up.

MAN: *(Angrily)* Have you ever known me to lie?

WOMAN: *(Pause)* If you were a *successful* liar, I wouldn't know, would I? *(Then, when she realizes* MAN *might strike her)* Darling, I think you've confused a dream with a reality. Now, if you were to take some Vitamin B, you'd feel much better. It's all a matter of stress. . . misplaced

obsession. You need to eat more. Here—*(she offers him the crackers, which he accepts & devours hungrily, along with long pulls from the wine bottle)*

WOMAN: And even if this *did* happen, you don't really know if this man died...just because he disappeared over the edge of wherever... maybe he was just crippled...who knows? *(Pause)* The way you've described it, he got what he deserved...I wouldn't lose any sleep over it. *(She has slipped the ring on her finger & is studying the effect)* I'd say this must've belonged to a *weak* man...someone who wore it to give himself a sense of power.

MAN: It fits *your* finger. *(A light laugh from* WOMAN*)* It's just a cheap bauble.

WOMAN: You know anything about serpent worship?

MAN: Orthamaphelia? *(Pause)* No.

WOMAN: No? I'm surprised...with your detailed knowledge of monsters...*(*MAN *sighs & lies back)*

MAN: *(Slowly)* If I were to get a photograph of Ogo...can you imagine how much money I'd make off it?

WOMAN: Don't tell me you're in this for the money. *(Long pause)* I think you brought me here for another reason. *(No response from* MAN*)* You know, it was in a place like this that I lost my virginity...in the trees, near the water. *(No response.* MAN *is staring upwards)* I remember the sound of the water...and the way the trees moved...they were like huge people whispering. *(Pause)* I don't know what excited me the most...the act or the fear that we were being watched.

(Pause)

MAN: I think you're confusing dream with reality.

WOMAN: You're jealous.

(Pause)

MAN: I presume you killed the predator afterwards?

WOMAN: It's true that I hated him. We went for a swim...I was much better than him and led him way out of his depth and I remember thinking, I should just let the bastard drown. But he got the hold of a log. When I got back to the beach I took his shoes and dumped them in a litter bin. *(Gets up)* Boring, isn't it? *(Goes to the tripod, looks through the camera)* Say—what does a killer whale look like? I mean, does it have a hump? *(*MAN *regards* WOMAN *warily.* WOMAN*, still looking)* There's a patch of sunlight over there...wow, look at the water glistening on its back!

*(*MAN *rises & comes over & has a look. He swears under his breath & starts popping off shots)*

WOMAN: Well? What is it?

MAN: *(Still photographing)* It's out of season for whales...they migrated a couple of months ago. *(Turns, lifting the equipment)* I have to get closer. *(Disappears over the edge)*

WOMAN: *(Shouting)* That thing is *not* a monster! 's just a dead-head for Christ's sake! I was only kidding!

(She watches in disgust for a few moments & then turns to find a robed figure nearby)

ROBED FIGURE: You have something belonging to me.

WOMAN: *(Recovering)* That's not possible. I don't believe we've ever met.

ROBED FIGURE: That's so. *(Pause)* I've been watching you.

WOMAN: How rude!

ROBED FIGURE: Well, you see, I've come to think of this spot as mine. I used to come here often . . . usually with your husband. That's right, we had a romance.

WOMAN: *(A shrill laugh)* How mad you are! You're an old woman!

ROBED FIGURE: I'm younger than you. *(Pause)* He made me old. *(She pulls back the cloth covering her face & throat for a second)* You see? He tried to strangle me. *(*WOMAN *is reeling between disbelief and hatred)*

WOMAN: You had an affair?

ROBED FIGURE: It ended about three years ago.

WOMAN: *(Thinks, then—)* I was working in the hospital then . . . *(Pause. Snarls)* I knew it! All this crap about not sleeping . . . so the ring is yours, eh? *(Pulls it off)* Well it's . . . it's just a cheap bauble. Did he buy it for you?

ROBED FIGURE: He bought me many things. Men will do anything when they're in love.

WOMAN: I don't believe he ever loved you . . . impossible.

ROBED FIGURE: Ah you say . . . but right at this moment, you're not even sure if he ever loved you. *(She is right)* I've had a lot of time to think and the problem seems to be, how can you love someone and not be a victim?

(Pause)

WOMAN: Who are you? I mean, do you always go about as if you've just come from the tomb of a dead poet?

ROBED FIGURE: I realize you must be bitter. *(Pause)* If you would just give me my ring, I'd leave.

WOMAN: *(Tightly)* Just like that.

ROBED FIGURE: Won't you give it to me? *(Pause)* You can't imagine how often I've come here and searched for it. You come here once and lo, you find it. Ironic, isn't it?

WOMAN: Yes. You might even call it destiny. *(Pause)* He tried to strangle you?

ROBED FIGURE: Most would assume it was a case of uncontrolled guilt. But he had this peculiar idea about me. He thought I was a monster . . . that my female charms were just a camouflage for an inhuman brute . . . that I was a Gorgon. *(Pause)* I thought he was joking until he tried to kill me. I'm sure he thought he'd succeeded, because he left me for dead . . . . *(She gestures towards the edge)* He cursed me for being

ugly when in fact I was beautiful. . . I aged horribly in the final stages of our relationship. Now I am disfigured and prematurely aged.

WOMAN: I know he can be an asshole but you. . . you're an emotional leper. Obviously you want more out of this than a crummy old ring! *(She glares at* ROBED FIGURE, *then shivers)*

ROBED FIGURE: I saw lightning moving along the ridge to the north. . . you wouldn't want to get caught in the storm.

WOMAN: *(Still shivering)* What's that horrible perfume you're wearing?

ROBED FIGURE: You don't have much pity for me, do you? Never mind. I'm no threat to you now. My only concern is that you might end up like me.

WOMAN: In all the years we've been together, my husband has never laid a hand on me.

ROBED FIGURE: Yes. . . he complained about your passivity often. . . I'm sure he misunderstood you, though. He definitely misunderstood me. *(Sighs)* Won't you give me back my ring?

WOMAN: I don't believe any of this. But if it's true, this ring is the only evidence I have. . . well, I hear him climbing the bank. This should prove to be an interesting confrontation.

ROBED FIGURE: An unnecessary one. *(She holds forth a vial)* Since you admire my perfume. . . .

WOMAN: My God, it's powerful—*(She falls into a lethargy.* ROBED FIGURE *suddenly moves & with surprising agility, throttles her.* WOMAN *sinks to the ground, gasping.* ROBED FIGURE *recovers the ring)*

ROBED FIGURE: *(Hisses)* Win if you can, lose if you must, but always cheat! *(Departs)*

*(*MAN *returns, agitated)*

MAN: You stupid bitch, you forgot to reload the camera after you'd finished with it!

(He is alerted by the lingering scent, then notices his wife's discomfort. He kneels beside her)

MAN: What's the matter, sweetheart. . . have you had another dizzy spell?

WOMAN: *(Choking)* I was attacked. . . .

MAN: By who?

WOMAN: *(Sits up, feels her throat)* By a Gorgon. *(Pause.* MAN *turns away)*

MAN: You've had a bad dream.

WOMAN: Is that what it was? *(*MAN *begins loading film into the camera.* WOMAN *watches him sadly)*

MAN: You know how it is when you fall asleep in the afternoon. . . especially on a hard surface. Did you finish the wine? You've never been good at drinking. *(Pause)* I don't know what the hell we saw out there

but there was no sign of it when I got to the beach. Probably just a dead-head.

(Pause).

WOMAN: Have you ever had an affair?

MAN: *(Grunts)* What a funny thing to ask. . . now, of all times.

(Pause)

WOMAN: Well—have you?

MAN: *(Irritated)* I've no time for that sort of egotism.

WOMAN: *(Pause)* You don't believe I was attacked. *(*MAN *shrugs)* Have I ever lied to you?

MAN: Well. . . if you were a successful liar, I wouldn't know, would I?

WOMAN: My throat hurts.

MAN: I'm not surprised. The weather is incredibly odd. I was sure it was going to explode a few minutes ago. It's time we were on our way. *(*WOMAN *gets up & dusts off her clothes.* MAN *picks up camera bag and tripod.* WOMAN *starts to cry softly.* MAN *comes and kisses her. She eventually calms)*

WOMAN: Is the water warm?

MAN: How should I know? *(*WOMAN *starts walking away.* MAN *is vexed)* That's not the way! *(Catches up to her)* Where're you going, for Christ's sake?

WOMAN: *(Turns)* I feel like a swim. *(Looks at him intently)* Coming?

(Fade Out)

Seán Virgo

SOLSTICE

The sea is a dark slug
inching away from the land
and its trail is ice upon stones.

The night is famished. A bird
falls briefly into a dream of death
from its frozen bough
and a young star quickens
deep in the world of its eye.

The snow goes up
to the heartland, drifting
upon the river, no river,
whose flow
is a deep black act
of faith and memory.

No one goes out. The bear
turns in upon herself
while men and beavers
crouch in their misty lodges,
breathing, believing.

And now like russian ghosts
come the sledges
the wolves
sweeping upon the river

The sledges are children's dreams
but the wolves
are real,
flattened upon the snowcrust
circling, famished:

For the ravenous, weakened moose
is down, he
breasts through the snow
his eyes detached as the bird's
his antlers decked
with a cruel diadem of stars.

For a moment, perhaps for ever,
the stark tableau of the river
is etched upon night's blind eye:

    the antlered majesty
    ringed by those tongues of frost
    rears at the sky

Then christmas falls on the steppes
like a fireball
and the river burns

The pack fulfills itself
on the ice:
the scattered flames
and black brands
of the sacrifice
smoke in the snow.
                Who knows,
as the heart of winter
yields itself,
what passes?

At dawn
the flared eye of the moose
communes with the raven's beak
and out of those tidings
the frozen host
track in to the feast:

Fox and coyote,
all of the outlaw roads
lead out on the Skeena River

And a man, a stranger
high on the ridge,
can gather
the final abstract impression
of the year

For your eye turns inwards
where the fish move
unconcerned in their darkness

and the great bull carries
the sun upon his antlers
spurning the snow
as though memory
were a dream.

W.P. Kinsella

Mother Tucker's Yellow Duck

In August of 1968 we went to a concert in Vancouver—first panhandling spare change for the ferry ride and the entrance fee by working our way along Government Street and through Bastion Square, where the air was tangy with salt and the tourists clicked over the cobblestones in bright prints. I wonder if you remember that day, Glorianna, if you ever talk about it? Probably not. You live like a cat. As long as you're warm, well-fed, well-loved, you don't remember. You discard your days like soiled shirts, to be washed clean of the past, and returned to be used again.

The house is empty, Glorianna. The last bargain-hunter has carried off the last treasure, and I am alone with my footsteps. Carla insisted that I sell most of my furniture. "It will be cheaper to buy anything we need after we get settled than to pay to ship that junk from Victoria to Toronto," is what she said, and when I think of it I realize that I have sold all *my* furniture—what was *our* furniture, Glorianna. It is Carla's belongings that are being shipped to Toronto: the contents of her apartment, the chrome and glass coffee tables, the acre of waterbed, the white-pine kitchen table the color of honey, the deep, rust-colored sofa, soft as a plush-toy. And she is right, Glorianna. What I sold *was* junk. But it made me happy to see the young couples carting it away, exchanging secret smiles, so much in love, so full of hope. But now the house is empty and my footsteps follow me as if I am walking on a drum.

Somewhere, Glorianna, are you fending off questions? Waving them away like insects too close to your face. "You must have a past," someone will say to you, as I said to you so many times. But you'll smile sweetly, mysteriously, reach across the table for a cigarette, purse your lips as you exhale, and say nothing at all.

Carla has found us an apartment in Toronto. It is not far from Bloor Street, within walking distance of the university where I will be studying. The rent astounds me—parking costs as much as we once paid to rent this little house. But then I must remember that Carla earns a very substantial salary. She is already in Toronto, "Getting things

organized," she says. When she phoned to tell me about the apartment, she mentioned, almost as an after-thought, that the management does not allow pets.

I've found a home for Hoover Shoats. The Writing Lady is going to adopt him. I guess you knew I'd look after him or you wouldn't have left him with me. He'll be happy with the Writing Lady. Carla is really not fond of cats. I used to wonder why you didn't take him with you. But I suppose I knew all along. Hoover Shoats is twelve years old, has rheumatism in one hip, and eats only *Tender Vittles*. Hoover is here with me now, alone in the cooling house. I've left the bathroom window open a few inches so he can come in and sleep in the bathroom sink the way he likes. He may be able to do it for most of the summer; the Writing Lady's husband is going to remodel before he rents the house again.

After the concert it rained, that heavy, solid, stolid Vancouver summer rain. "Like having pails of water poured over our heads," you said. And we walked the streets of Gastown, staring in rain-bleary windows, and ducked into some of the ancient bars along E. Hastings Street, bars that smell like wet dogs, ashtrays, and spilled beer. We sat in a corner until a waiter or bouncer came along and told us to either buy a drink or leave. I guess I've lost my spirit of adventure, Glorianna, for now, twelve years later, I wouldn't even think of doing what we did then: travelling off to a strange city, knowing we had no place to sleep, no money for food, depending, as they say, on the kindness of strangers. But we were young and we didn't feel the cold. We slept on one of the hard, polished benches at the Bus Depot. I remained sitting up all night while you stretched out and used my lap as a pillow. You slept, scrunching up your eyes against the bright flourescent lights, jumping once in a while as if you'd been touched by a live electric wire, saying "No," and "No, I won't," like a fretful child refusing to take medicine. We were soaked warm with love, Glorianna: you waking in the morning, your yellow hair smeared across your face, turning yourself to scratch your nose on my jeans, looking up at me with a smile so full of love.

"Did I talk?" you asked, as if in sleep you might have broken a promise or given away a secret of vital importance. What did you have to hide from me, Glorianna?

Outside in the brilliant sun, beside the dozing taxis, a man with a briefcase gave us two dollars. "I wish I had your nerve," he said, while you smiled your thanks and made the Peace Sign. Behind the taxis a bed of California poppies bloomed bright as egg yolks. You picked one and pushed its musky silk against my cheek. Glorianna, the house is so empty.

It was my aunt who got us this house, though it was much against her better judgment to recommend us. "You keep it clean and pay the rent

on time, Mac," she said to me four or five times. She was so afraid we'd embarrass her. The Writing Lady was a school friend of hers.

The Writing Lady and her husband have been next door all these years, in that huge white-frame house with the sunny study upstairs where she writes her novels. The Writing Lady always knew we weren't married, did I ever tell you that, Glorianna? "Your aunt mentioned how happily married you were so many times that I knew immediately you were probably happy but certainly not married." The Writing Lady misses you, Glorianna. She told me so. I was a bit afraid of her when we first moved here—so tall and statuesque, with her telephone-black hair and eyes—she used to come sweeping down her steps and across the lawn, her red-lined cape flapping. She reminded me of a Spanish dancer. And before I knew her well I imagined her playing the villain in a melodrama. She doesn't like Carla. Oh, she never said so, but I can tell. I guess it is because Carla doesn't like this house.

The Writing Lady was a little horrified by you, in those early days, Glorianna—by the way you used to lounge on the front steps smoking, wearing only a halter and cutoff jeans, and by the way you painted daisies and black-eyed susans on one panel of the front door. Once, when I paid the rent she told me to ask you not to do that again. I couldn't tell you though, just hoped you wouldn't and you didn't.

We were standing in the yard a few days ago, the Writing Lady and I. Hoover was sitting on the step, paws tucked under him, looking scruffy as an old boot. The flowers on the door are so faded they look as if they've been painted over with milk. "Those were happy times weren't they, Mac," the Writing Lady said as she stared at the flowers. I know she was trying to tell me something.

I've spent most of the last few months at Carla's, just stopping here after classes for a change of clothes and to feed Hoover Shoats. Carla sniffed when she first came in this house. She didn't like the blankets we had for wall-hangings, or the hubcaps turning like mobiles in the living room, or the mattress on the floor in the bedroom. Hoover was asleep in the bathroom sink and opened one canary-colored eye about halfway and then closed it again. I wanted her to stay the night with me. "It's so much cozier at my place, don't you think?' she said, and I agreed with her.

I met Carla at the Business Management course I was taking when you left, Glorianna. She's an adult Probation Officer, but has plans to be a supervisor before long. The move to Toronto was her idea. "People on the coast have no sense of urgency," she says. She also thinks the university is better in the East, that my degree will carry more prestige and land me a better job. She says she spotted me right away as someone with drive and ambition. And she liked me for it. Liked me for wanting

to improve myself. "Aren't you happy?" you used to ask whenever I suggested that I might get a full time job, that we might buy a house, a car, furniture. "Why?" you always said, your hands loving, your eyes the perfect blue of a television backdrop.

Remember how, just a few days after we moved into this house, a girl with daffodils braided into her long chestnut hair brought a box of kittens into the bar of the Churchill Hotel. I think that is the only thing you ever asked me for, and you did it in silence, with just a look. I nodded, and you picked up a kitten, a tiny bleating thing, its eyes barely open. I named him Hoover Shoats after an evangelist and false prophet in a novel by Flannery O'Connor. You never questioned where the name came from. Just held him cupped in the palm of one hand, only a thin blue workshirt between him and the warmth of your breast. Later, I went out and bought a small carton of milk, got a clean ashtray from the bar, and Hoover Shoats stood all wobbly-kneed on the green terrycloth table top, and lapped milk with his tiny raspberry tongue. He was surrounded by beer glasses, as if in a magical forest of amber and crystal trees.

"Do you have a last name?" I asked, after we had been together for several days. Courtships are usually two separate monologues. I was discovering that ours was one, mine. You were loving and cheerful and happy, but your talk was only of today.

"Why do I need a last name?" you asked, answering my question with a question, something I was beginning to notice you did frequently. We were sitting on a bench in Beacon Hill Park, trellises of roses nearby, your head on my shoulder, your fingers with their wide, pale nails exploring my arm.

"What if you wanted to open a bank account?"

"I don't need one."

"What if someone gave you a cheque? You'd have to sign it."

"People I know don't write cheques."

"The hospital," I cried triumphantly. "What if you get really sick? They won't admit someone without a name."

"I'd pretend to be unconscious," you said, slumping against me.

"Seriously."

"Seriously. Initial I., Glorianna," you said, and smiled maddeningly.

"You can't discard your past as easily as a playing card," I insisted, but you only looked at me with your languid, half-amused smile, your blue-ribbon colored eyes.

I never knew how old you were, Glorianna. That day we met on the street in front of the Cool Aid Hostel, your hair the color of lemon pie, lying in swathes across your bare shoulders, your faded jeans patched with squares of red flannel, making you look like a walking semaphore message, you might have been fourteen or eighteen, or twenty-two. You

might have run away from your parents, or from a high school where you were a cheerleader, or from your own husband and child.

"How old are you?" I asked, when we'd known each other no more than an hour. But you turned your lower lip out and down and said, "What is time anyway?" And later you made me take off my wristwatch and carry it in my pocket, though you wanted me to give it away.

"Push time as far away as you can," you said, holding your hands up in front of you as if pushing on an invisible wall.

"Who are you and where do you come from?" I insisted.

"Do you like me?" you asked, and turned your face up to be kissed. And I did kiss you, not noticing then that my questions always went unanswered.

Glorianna, I wish that I might shed my skin like a snake, leave it crinkling in the sun, and never think of it again. But my past clings to me, like crawly things drawn to me for my warmth.

"Our past is tied to us, like tin cans and old shoes to a wedding car," I said to you once. "It rattles and bumps behind us in a rag-tag tangle of uselessness.

"Not mine," you replied, with your slow-curving, innocent smile.

Charlie Barber's Cool Aid Hostel is still there, Glorianna, though it is a quiet place now: late at night the police drop off old winos at the front door. The hostel caters to derelicts now, or to young couples with huge back-packs, and cheque-books, wearing $200 boots. Not like when we met. Not like that sweet-smelling spring when the streets of Victoria were inch deep in cherry blossoms. Not like that wondrous, ephemeral summer when, like animals that migrate every so many years, young people poured out across the land, owning only their clothes; with a turned out thumb, and a smile and the phrase "spare change" lighting their way. They flooded forth thousands strong to the beat of soft music, surrounded by an aura of love.

That first day, as we sat in the sun and talked, you emptied your pockets of half a book of matches, and a ratty pink comb with many teeth missing.

"That's all?" I asked incredulously.

"I'm here. Why do I need to bring anything with me?" you said.

I showed you my wallet, full of photos and identification pieces, thought of the $10 stashed in my boot.

Even Charlie Barber wears a suit now, Glorianna. I suppose you disapprove of the changes in his life as much as you disapprove of the changes in mine. Cool Aid was his child and he fought for it like a mother bird defending her nest. Charlie: slim, denimed, bearded, with flint-like eyes and the ability to conjure and cajole money, food, blankets, or medical supplies, all seemingly out of empty pavement.

Remember how we used to hang around the back door of that Italian

restaurant, Glorianna? And how they saved the uneaten slices of pizza for us, put them into a green plastic bag, and we'd trip back to Cool Aid, holding hands and swinging the bag between us as parents might swing a child. Then we'd sit around and feast. And Charlie would praise us.

Charlie wears a suit and tie and sits in the legislature. He still defends the poor and still loses more than he wins, for the province is governed by car dealers who stymie the social programs Charlie and his party try to introduce.

The band we went to see in Vancouver was Mother Tucker's Yellow Duck. I remember them mainly because of their name, not their music. We sat on the cool soft grass on a sidehill 50 yards from the bandshell. And we openly smoked-up. Almost everyone did, feeling very daring and rebellious. You were barefoot, Glorianna, and you picked dandelions and put one between each of your toes. . . .

I saw one of the band members a few weeks ago, walking across Bastion Square, where the tourists still flutter through like flags. There are only tourists and business people now, but I could still see the shadows of the ragged, denimed kids of the late sixties who so genially panhandled. Our ghosts were there, Glorianna, like black and white photographs. Sometimes I wish I were with you, wherever you are, wish that I hadn't turned in my credentials, whatever they were. But I look at myself: Carla has bought me Pierre Cardin shirts and stylish corduroy slacks. "I want you to make a good impression at university," she says. "You never know who'll be able to help you with your career later on." And I let her do and say these things. . . . Are you in your sleeping bag on someone's floor this morning, Glorianna, your jeans and red-checkered shirt sprawled nearby?

The band member was swathed in a $400 business suit, his neck constricted by a silk tie; his hair was immaculately styled, an inch or two longer than the colleagues who accompanied him. His concession to the past. He was probably a lawyer, stockbroker, or accountant. But I remember him in that sun-warmed park, slamming out his music like a power-hitter belting home runs, shirtless, glistening with sweat, wild-eyed, his hair a fuzzy halo around his gaunt face.

After we settled into the house, I worked for a while for that leather shop downstairs in Bastion Suare, called *Golden Apples of the Sun*, and the mouthwatering odors of tanned leather used to cling to my clothes. Those days, Glorianna, you would sit around in Bastion Square, lounge near the old anchor which is whitewashed to the pearly color of doves, play a few notes on your guitar, lay a square silk handkerchief, patterned with a wondrous mandala, on the cobblestones, weighing down each corner with a tiny, polished rock, and watch the cache of quarters grow as the easygoing tourists emptied their pockets.

"Oh, you smell like a swatch of buckskin," you'd say to me when I came out to join you at lunch hour, and you'd rub your nose against my chest. "You must be an Indian," you'd go on. "I bet you could be an Indian. See how dark your arms are. Your profile is Indian too, your nose is straight and your brow high and noble," and you'd kiss me and press your belly up against mine, and not care who was watching, your hair smelling tangy as the crisp ocean breeze that tousled it.

Carla's house here in Victoria is sold. As soon as we get organized in Toronto, she wants to buy an acre or two in the country and build an A-frame. Carla is used to earning good money. She owned a house in Toronto, one she came away with when she divorced her husband. She sold it when she came to Victoria and put a large down payment on a newly renovated house, close to downtown but still in a residential area. She lived alone. One bedroom was a sewing room, another a study. When I first knew her I suggested she should rent those rooms to university students. "You could share the kitchen with them," I said. Carla looked at me as if I were a child. "It would help with the mortgage payments," I went on.

"Mac, if you have a good job you don't need help with your mortgage payments," she replied.

I realized then that though I was 30 years old, I'd never earned $5000 in a year.

Carla has a microwave oven. Her house, despite the sharp angles of the chrome lamp poles, was pleasant but organized: plants hung in macramé slings, the rooms were decorated with dishes Carla had made herself. At this moment, all these possessions are on their way to Toronto, cushioned like eggs in a rectangular orange semitrailer.

One evening Glorianna, on the spur of the moment, I took my only photo of you: one in which you are wearing jeans and a lemon-colored sweater and smiling mysteriously, pushing your breasts toward the camera in response to some joke I had made, and I went to Bastion Square. I walked down the long, steep flight of beery-smelling stairs to the Churchill Hotel Bar. It is now called the Bastion Inn, but the change of name has never taken place in my head. The freaks still hang out there, Glorianna, the few that are left. There were perhaps ten tables of long-haired, denimed youngsters, sprawled with their feet deliberately blocking the aisles, or sitting up straight, earnestly arguing, their faces sincere and urgent. They looked like we did when we met, Glorianna, and I felt so old. I walked from table to table showing your picture, asking if they'd seen you. I got virtually no response and I realized as I was leaving, trudging back up the gritty steps, that it was because of the way I looked. My hair was too short, too well-styled, my shirt and shoes too expensive, my jeans too new. And the watch Carla had given me sat

on my wrist glowing like a square inch of chrome. There was actually hostility in some of the faces that dismissed me. They may have even thought I was a cop, or a wristwatch hippie. . . I wonder if they still use that term. But there was something else, Glorianna, a meanness, a hardness that wasn't there in our time, and I wonder if you have been able to fit back in to that kind of life.

Until that evening I really thought of going into the dope-and-denim bars in Victoria and Vancouver and seriously searching for you, or a shadow of you. I thought of settling for someone like you, someone street-wise, but happy, easy, loving. But as I stared at those hard young faces I realized that it is almost impossible to live in more than one generation at a time. I think of Carla and vibrate with the anticipation of accomplishing something.

Glorianna, do you remember how, in the mornings, the cats used to sit in the sun on the big, east-facing doorstep of the Writing Lady's house? Do you remember the way they sat, paws tucked under them, sunning themselves like old men swathed in blankets: Nixon, the Writing Lady's cat, and our Hoover Shoats. Nixon died of old age a few months ago: that scruffy old thug of a cat with his frost-bitten ears and fight-scarred face. When he got too sick, the Writing Lady carried him off to the vet's, carried him in an apple box, and him all wrapped up like a doll. "The vet put him to sleep," the Writing Lady said.

We just rolled along, Glorianna. What we had was good enough for you, always. But there were fears that walked in my blood—I felt that one day I'd wake up, old as Nixon and Hoover Shoats, and find that I had spent my life sunning myself.

"You worry too much," you said. "We'll always get by." And we did. I showed you how I made belts and watchbands, and you said, "I can do that too," and you did. "Why go out every day when you can stay home?" you said, and I set up the workbench in that tiny basement, and we discovered that with only a few hours work a week we could earn enough to exist. Existing has always been enough for you.

"What are we going to do when we're 50?" I demanded of you once.

"Why?" was all you could say in reply. Then after a pause, "I don't think about it. Why can't you just let life happen to you?"

But I couldn't, could I, Glorianna? And I could never adequately explain why I began taking courses, or why I continued. The first one was just curiosity, to see if I could really do work at the college level. But I found it easy—I rolled over the other students like a professional halfback in a high school game. I read ten times what was required for every course I took. The other students were so lazy, so careless, so unmotivated. Desire for learning fell on me like a disease: I was ravenous for knowledge.

"Why worry about tomorrow?" you said. "What do you see in the mirror that I don't?"

"What if the Writing Lady sells this house? They're talking about retiring, you know. Where would we live?"

"We could go back on the street for a while. There's always someplace to crash," you said. But I always feel sad when I see those aging hippies, in bars or sitting on park benches, dressed and looking just as they did a decade earlier except for the lines of age on their faces and hands.

"But what about Hoover?" I said, realizing the instant I said it how ridiculous it sounded.

"We'll beg spare change to buy him cat food. I'll teach him to pick a few notes on my guitar. I'll dress him up in doll clothes, the old ladies will love it."

"I see the age in my eyes," I said.

Then, Glorianna, you smiled with your wondrous red lips, and though remaining perfectly still, moved another step away from me. I could have stopped you anytime. Why didn't I? Why did I insist on you meeting Carla, on us visiting her home. Watching you drift away was like staring at a glistening cast-iron pump handle on a frosty morning—knowing that sticking my tongue on it would bring me pain but being unable to resist.

Glorianna, I'm like a guerilla soldier who's been living in the jungle for years not knowing the war is over. I emerge, thin, ragged and uncomprehending. My comrades have won the war and are all generals and ambassadors doing all the things we fought to destroy. I learn that there is already a small, new, group of insurgents in the hills plotting another overthrow of another government. As I look around I know I would be better off to seek out the insurgents. But I don't. I turn my gun in for a briefcase, my ragged uniform for a business suit, my integrity for an indexed pension plan.

It was Carla's energy that attracted me to her. She was taking an accounting course for the sheer joy of learning. Carla is always moving, nervous, watchful, like a penned animal, pacing back and forth endlessly, never tiring.

When I came to sell the household goods I realized that they were all mine alone, or things we had acquired together, Glorianna. There was nothing of yours. You left nothing behind you. Yet you took nothing with you. You might never have existed.

Carla is real. She has parents: her father a lawyer in Ottawa, her mother a wilted flower who uses religion as a rubber crutch to get from psychiatrist to psychiatrist. She has a sister who lost a hand in a car accident, and a brother with a mysterious disease that requires him to ingest large quantities of cortisone. In her house, Carla had her high

school yearbooks, all her ex-husband's love letters, and a copy of a letter she wrote her parents on her 21st birthday, thanking and praising them for the way they had raised her.

Yet I think of the way we loved, Glorianna. "Move slowly," you said, and your tongue would move like a butterfly inside my mouth. "Pretend we're water and in a while we'll be all mixed together so warm and so wet. . . ."

I didn't know how to react when you told me you were leaving. I could see that things were going to get worse between us. But anyone else would have stayed. . . longer.

"It's what you really want," you said. "It will only be a tragedy if you make it one." And then you smiled sadly. "I think you'll change your mind in a while," you added.

"Then what?" I said.

"Then you'll have to look around for someone more like me."

"Carla and I are only friends," I protested. And it was true. But I suppose I had used her as an example, thrown her name out, like a dart, too many times.

"Then neither of us have anything to feel bad about," you said. "You're not meant to be closed in, Mac," and you pointed your enigmatic smile at me again. "Melmac, ceramic, macramé, microwave," you intoned, the smile never leaving your face.

The Writing Lady is going to adopt Hoover Shoats. He's practically been living with her these past few months and she likes it, she says. He sleeps in the sun, on a cushion on a rocking chair in that big, warm room upstairs where she writes her novels. It will be a great place for him to spend his old age.

I check the basement before I leave for good; it is hollow down here too, nothing left but the flyspecked fluorescent tubes above where the workbench used to be. I look all around to be certain I've forgotten nothing, am about to leave when a minute movement catches my eye, and I notice hanging high above the workbench, samples of our art. There are a half-dozen watchbands dangling from a plumbing pipe, various lengths of tooled leather, each strap coming to a point like a spoke, each suspended in midair by a frail thread. The bands are spaced at about six inch intervals and look like pieces of a mobile. Something, probably my displacing the air currents, causes one of them to spin lazily, catching my eye. I realize that I don't own one of my own watch straps. As a concession to you, Glorianna, I haven't worn a watch in years, until Carla gave me this one: a thin silver wafer with lights that blink, and alarms that squawk demandingly, attached to my wrist by a lustrous silver bracelet, fine as a shaving head.

I am standing directly below the row of watch bands, neck bent back, my breath has started them all moving, twisting and turning slowly as

corpses. These six little lengths of leather are all that is left of our lives together, Glorianna. You and I, Mother Tucker's Yellow Duck, Charlie Barber, Hoover Shoats, the Writing Lady, all twisting helplessly in midair.

I reach up, grab one and pull, but it is tenacious and the waxy thread cuts into my fingers. As I release it, it bucks and twirls wildly. I take out my pocket knife and one by one, like cutting flowers for a bouquet, sever the threads and lay the bands side by side on the flat of my hand, the limp strings dangling.

THE SWAMP

After the great man's reading at Harbourfront
they walked the quieted streets
where warehouses and condominiums
suddenly parcelled out the night for them.

The stars glittered in the sky.
Did they or the introspective trees they passed
hear him say: 'Leave me, I'm a man possessed.
My fury and wisdom are not for your lenient pulse'?

What purpose in reason or foreknowledge when love
bends the will as if it were wet straw?
When appetite, hardening the member, makes butter
of the mind? His being sagged in her embrace.

The incoherent words the stars made him speak
punctuated the darkness like the streetlamps
that moved towards them: prehistoric giants
holding torches high above their heads.

Folly or fate now tipped his words with flame.
His own mouth became the foundry for bolts
that rivetted him fast to inexpugnable shame.
Heavy with them he sank at last into the widening swamp.

THE GARDEN

Insects display their different shapes
on sunglasses, on table and book;
not one that isn't the slime of time
or doesn't ask from me a wise look.

the butterfly's flutter on a tall stalk
is my heart's beat in space, O gentle
and steady as my best morning thoughts.
I'd paint them or birds were I Chagall.

Give them yarmulkas to fly to
and sobbing music from the shtetl;
they would flap their crazy wings with joy
and make their certain way to Zion.

How easily, it seems, I might dissolve
into my chair or surrounding air;
become the dirt my feet walk upon,
grow bright flowerets instead of hands.

No more than a dog's bark are we all;
leaf fall or cat's momentary fright
on the retina: here, only to
disappear into the endless night.

The grass is waiting to cover me
like a warm overcoat, green with age;
the bough's luxuriant leaves are sleeves
ready to embrace or hold me down.

Nature conspires with and against
me, brief shuttle between womb and tomb;
a centimetre on which is notched
immense vistas of anguish and gloom.

Confidently I sit here and write
though dark shadows gather near the house
and the birds have left off their singing.
The fly's cry is trapped in the neat web.

One day, my head full of summer noise
or an étude by Frederic Chopin,
the wind lifting me up by the elbows
will hustle me out of the garden.

Other insects shall come, other leaves grow.
This garden will never be empty;
my wraith will be that white butterfly.
Return a thousand years from now and see.

Niagara-on-the-Lake,
July 18, 1981.

Kamo no Chōmei

A VIEW FROM MY HUT

Ceaseless flow the river moving with water
never the same and in the eddies flecks of
foam gather here or vanish there as with
people dwellings life is but once although
our capital's bejewelled where our ridgepoles
in a line contend with rich and poor vainly
arraying pert roofs but let us ask truly of
houses past how many remain a few and with
most oh it burned last year or that great
mansion's just a shack today and the folks
there fared no better out of twenty or maybe
thirty you might find one possibly two like
a puddle of water stagnant a moment dies
tomorrow and was born yesterday and has
no way to know do we where we'll go or
when nor is it clear to what loose end
we've got to pain our hearts or brighten
our eyes in this middle of nowhere with
dwellings and those who think they own
them uncertain antagonists jumbled all
together into the same unenduring hoopla
all of it as fleet as quick as dewdrops
on a petal on a morning glory petal and
let the sun shine let the drops sizzle
there's still the petal though the petal
won't see tomorrow's sun rising or say
the petal withers say the withering petal
may still sport dew do you think the
dew will greet this evening then you
may see what forty odd years of springs
of autumn colours of people of things
of it all has done to baffle this heart.

Translated from the Chinese by William Marsh

GIRL WITH BOUND FEET

She smiles
her toes snapped
down into her

sole and strapped
Her arch
is inches off

the ground In
air the bone
bends and

becomes accustomed to
this deforming
for the eyes'

sake At night
the whole foot
shut up tight

as a fan
opens Like grass
beneath a stone

the white instep
crushes and writhes
disgorging a worm

TO MY BLIND STUDENT READING

You move
your hand over
a frost of

paper and
touch the
pimpled letters

they rise below
your fingers and
slowly mouth themselves

Their pressed out
meanings where
your eyes

can't go
are glimmered in
the fall of words

that slowly softly
in your mind
are settling

like fresh
foot prints
over the snow

Richard Simas

Joaquin Murietta Slept Here

Something always leads me back to the yellow kitchen. There are two curious objects sitting on the shelf. One is a pestle and mortar of granite, heavy and slightly grey with dust. The other is a handful of deformed purple glass tinted by sunlight passing through it for so many years. How it secretively changes colors with time, what it holds inside, fix me immobile.

My foolish aunt tells me, late at night when we are supposed to be asleep, that it is the melted glass from the burned ranchero Grandmother lived in when she was young. That after the adobe walls had fallen, and all the wooden joists and casements had finished smoldering, long after the men standing in shirtsleeves had gone home in groups of twos and threes, Maria, my grandmother, sneaked from the neighbour's home that had given them shelter, and walked through the eucalyptus grove. In the rubble she discovered the glass and brought it home with her. She has kept it ever since.

"Now don't go listening to her crazy tales," I hear later after making the mistake of retelling part of the story at the dinner table. But I see it always and want to touch it so I will understand how it all happened. No one ever says, but I can't help thinking, from what I've heard of Joaquin Murietta, that he had something to do with the burning house.

It happens unexpectedly: an afternoon when Mother picks me up from school and says, "I'm taking you to see someone." She guides the car along the odd route to Grandmother's: down an alley, past the courthouse and the baseball park. We are there, and I wait to hear his dry, accented voice from beneath the bottle-brush moustache.

His name is Fernando, rumoured to be my great-uncle, but the great part confuses me, and I see him so rarely that I can't consider him as anything more than an odd, happy man who knows card tricks, bird calls, can remove his right thumb from his hand then replace it again, and has tried on every occasion that I've seen him to hypnotize me. He's

the only man I've known outside of movies and books who wears double-breasted suits with vests that match, a fob stretched across his stomach like a golden grin. He addresses my grandmother as Maria, and her habitual sullenness seems to leave her during his visits.

He wears me out though my mother doesn't see how it's possible. His disappearing tricks, the curious noises that slip from his teeth, and finally the swinging gold pocket watch, leave me dizzy. Later Mother finds me in the next room making sounds with my lips and attempting the finger trick. When I go to say goodbye I hear, "Maria this," and "Maria that," in the kitchen. He stands next to her as though his presence will spice her soup. I can tell in her eyes that Mother admires him. I say goodbye, and we're gone. Grandmother hardly notices.

"He and Grandmother are the only ones left out of twenty-three children." My aunt's voice arrives from another one of those sleepless nights when she keeps me awake with her rambling. I lie at the foot of her bed in a sleeping bag with ducks and geese printed on the inside quilting.

"They had to witness each of them passing away. Can you imagine? All the names are in the Bible. You should read them."

I can't imagine, having never been dead nor ever even seen a corpse, but I shut my eyes tightly anyway thinking, "O.K., this is death. How is it?" But I don't feel like anything. I see a field with massacred tv Indians and cowboys, and World War II soldiers lying on a French beach as though they're asleep. All is cast in the squirrel-grey tv light. I open my eyes and hear her voice.

"She's the youngest, Fernando the next. I don't know why your mother never told you any of this. Honestly! After the fire there were legal problems because the place was originally a Spanish land grant. They had to split up, there were so many of them. It was impossible to rebuild. Some moved into town, and Mother went there with her parents. That's when she began to learn English.

Into the room my aunt whispers, "She had a name like a flower: Maria Carellaga Reinosa. Imagine! A name Joaquin Murietta would murmer as he fled at dawn on dusty roads."

The air turns around me and there she leaves me, in the eucalyptus grove that I don't even know watching Joaquin Murietta's roan horse whirl him away. Out of the dream I whisper her name, then hiss, "Auntie, yoo-hoo, wake up," but she refuses to answer. The next day she sits for hours at the dining room table with my mother and drinks tea.

Stories sift in about Joaquin Murietta, and I mull each one over carefully; I know better than to ask anyone. On a shelf over my parents' bed is a book called *Early California History*. It says that Murietta was "a ruthless marauder and threat to the growing communities in the early days of

the state. On at least one occasion he was singly responsible for the destruction of an entire town, murdering its sheriff and deputy, then terrorizing the townspeople while burning one building after another." Under the rough pen sketch of a sharp-featured man poised on a horse is written the following: "Murietta was reputed to retreat to the rocky bluffs in the Central Coast region of California after striking. There, he seemed to disappear though armed groups of vigilantes and even professional killers who were chasing the high bounty on his head always returned after coming close to capturing the bandit, vowing never to ride into the bluffs again. 'He is like a lizard,' they reported, 'a snake monster who can crawl into a stone and vanish. He lives for weeks on nothing.'"

Another time I read a report prepared by my brother. "The flamboyant Spanish-Californian villain, Joaquin Murietta, endeared himself to various ranchero families. They provided him with food, shelter, and love. They never spoke of the particulars of his visits—that seems to be a mystery—but said with pride, 'Joaquin Murietta slept here.' It is difficult to say whether they did it out of fear or genuine submission to his Robin-Hood charm. He had elegant manners and a flair for romance, leaving, whenever he felt trouble at hand, a red rose for the woman who had kept him."

Upheaval at school. The phone rings during dinner and a firm voice asks whether Murietta is seen as a villain or a hero in our home. A brief inquisition at bedtime. My brother sits on the edge of his bed in his pajamas, feet dangling. I fake sleep on my side of the room. The report on Joaquin Murietta is tossed into the fireplace on a rainy November night.

On the same night, I leave a window open wishing the outlaw would tie his horse to the water spigot outside my window and climb in. Rain falls like spangles out of a dream. I smell sage on his clothes and hear the tinkling rattle of his spurs while his horse tests the tied reins outside and settles in for the night. I offer him a pillow, food in the morning, and tell him which is the shortest way to the rocky wastelands.

I awaken to the real confusion of school-dawn. Father walking through the house cinching up his pajama bottoms and hacking into the toilet, lost socks and wax in my hair. Then I'm under a grid of flourescent lights and a nun in black and brown is pacing back and forth in front of the class. Behind her is a map of America. The pointer is broken on the tip, a reminder of how important it is to sit still after lunch and tackle whatever words fall from her mouth.

"The Country was named," she says, "after Americus Vespucci, an Italian navigator and naval astronomer who made claims of discovering our country before Columbus. It's possible that. . . ."

She pokes the country in Nebraska and sweeps from New York to California with a flick of her wrist. I imagine it's how a plane goes and am ready to blurt out all the state capitols that we had to memorize. The pointer rests on California. "Sacramento," I think, staring at the bent-finger shape the color of mauve or lilac. The pointer rests on the tint of Grandmother's glass; and the nun's puffy face, the sticky desk seat, drift away. . .

. . . standing on the narrow strip of driveway grass at Grandmother's I'm looking at the lump of melted window from outside in. My arms rest on the crossbar of the lawn-mower. She was too old years ago to mow the lawn, but if I don't come when I'm supposed to I'm not surprised to see her frail weight and crooked legs bent against the stubborn machine. In her dim-lit garage I search for oil to lubricate the mower. The garage, a hazard of make-shift shelves poking me in the dark, holds gallon after gallon of saved rainwater which she uses to wash her hair and underwear. When it rains she scatters buckets and pans through the yard to collect the water, then transfers it to glass gallon bottles, caps them, and lines them on the shelf with the date marked in grease pen. I find root-beer colored bottles with POISON written on them, a skull and cross-bones drawn in her hand; buckets of nails and screws, balls of string, old Christmas wrapping and bows, little tools either antique or toy, I'm not sure which; potting soil, a chest full of Vogue magazines from the twenties, and a corset with wooden stays that could only have belonged to a fat Uncle Alfred or Grandmother's friend, Lily. Finally I find the grease can and pour liquid over every metallic surface of the mower. It spills onto the floor and somehow I manage to get it onto the handle so that I can hardly grip it. The circling blades sound like an aviary. The guava tree whirls, and I run to keep up.

On the kitchen table I find two dollars and a glass of juice. Past procedure dictates that I can drink the juice, take the money, and leave if she's not in the front room, but something this time sends me wandering in her small house. I hear a kind of whispering behind her closed bedroom door. Sometimes she prays there, but it doesn't sound like praying. I walk into the room where she keeps the African Violets. It's always cool there, cool and dusk-like. She keeps the curtains pulled because she says the flowers need soft light. I have always known I shouldn't touch the hairy stems and leaves. She said once, "You can't touch them because they bruise, and you can't smell them because they don't smell like anything." They sit on the other side of the room like foreigners.

I examine the plants on the table. They look pale like her "off-days," though buds are just starting at the base of the stems, and I think the reason she is in the room is because Fernando, the last of her family alive, has left and she's alone again in the house. She depends on the

violets, on Fernando. I depend on her purple glass. Suddenly I want to touch the plants. Instead I dash out the back door to the garage, find the brown bottle marked FERTILIZER, mix it with water, and give it to Grandmother's violets.

I hope the flowers will grow huge, purple in January, arched leaves furry like a cat's back, and Grandmother's sombre face will look back down a dusty road as she rides off on Murietta's horse. When I leave the house I'm happy. The lawn looks like spilled forest, slick like oil. . . .

Time passes. Days and weeks. Everything becomes confused. Afternoons in class become mornings on a ranchero. I forget capitols, I paint adobe walls with father's shave cream, cut my face, and the wall bleeds roses. My grandmother collects them in gallon buckets and carries them to the bluffs on a yoke hung on her bent old shoulders. They aren't dreams but secrets spinning from the glass each time I gaze into its purple shape. Americus Vespucci is charting star maps to lead a rowdy group of townsmen after Joaquin Murietta. By following the constellations they come to a barren mesa and find only the dry sheath of a snake's skin and spherical traces in the sand. They are the only things which will tell Joaquin's story. The men kick the rocks with their boots and peer into a cloudless sky.

My aunt parts her lips in a darkened room. I wait nervously in my sleeping bag, listening. . .

"Once mother told me about the death watch and how it seemed like she and Fernando were the only ones around to take care of the funerals."

"A death watch?" I ask, thinking of a huge clock that knows when you will die and is counting off each minute.

"Yes, it's like waiting, sort of. After they emblam the body they put it in a room with flowers, and you stay up all night. It's like the last time you see them before they're buried."

"Do you really see where they're buried? The hole and everything?"

"They cover it with rugs and flowers. Pretty as the front yard. You hardly notice that part. Mother said that halfway through the night Fernando would always fall asleep, even when she had given him coffee. He would doze right off and there she'd be stuck with the dead body. I think it's what turned her hair white, poor dear. Oh, it's a horrible thing," she says. "I hope you never have to do it since you're the youngest." She lets silence enter the room.

"Alfonse, Marguerite, Andres, Jesus, and Raphael. . . .Here," she says snapping on the light. "They were all such stern looking Spaniards."

While my head reels from the sudden light, she thrusts a large, slick photo in front of me. There they are, the whole brood standing in a courtyard with a fountain in front. They pose like children in class. They

are all adults except for a beautiful girl at the far side of the photo. She wears a shapeless white gown tied at the waist with a dark sash. Her hair is gathered tightly in the back. She stares off the photo somewhere. After blinking I can look clearly at the picture and see it's Grandmother.

"This was taken before the place was burned. Look here, they had Chinese cooks and gardeners who are in the pictures. Look at the pony tails. She sighs dreamily, and snaps off the light. I feel the picture taken from my hand.

"I want to talk about something else," I say.

"Don't be silly," she answers. "If you ask me, the whole trouble arose from the fact that she wouldn't leave with him when he asked," she groans. "Of course they would have had to run away, and neither you nor I would be here today, but of all the thousands of miles he'd ridden and all the women he knew, he wanted her, imagine! You don't tell a Spanish man no, let me tell you!"

"Who, Auntie, who?" I demand, though I already know who and rock my head back and forth mouthing, "No, no, no."

I'm in the alley behind the house saying, "No, no, no." Inside, Mother is visiting Grandmother. Before I slipped out the back door I heard her tell Mother that all the African Violets are turning yellow. She can't imagine what it is.

The plank in the fence is held only by its upper nails. It swings out into the alley and sets me free. I gallop like a horse, stop, dismount, and begin climbing up the lattice of the garden house. The diamond cross-hatch is perfect for my feet, and in minutes I'm on the flat roof peering down into the alley. This is the deathwatch. I'm poised and ready to pounce, hidden from view by the wild branches of a bougainvillaea. They tickle my neck, but I can't move. I want to be a tree the way Indians can be trees, and I know the merest blink of an eye will ruin the camouflage.

It seems the watch takes hours before Murietta approaches on his great roan. As he nears I see the edge of his coat is charred. There are white flecks of ash in his river-black hair. He sobs as the horse picks its way through the rocks like a goat.

I'm Murietta's captor, the man who will put a bullet through the bandit's head and return to town with the body draped like saddle bags across my horse's flanks. I spring from the roof of the garden house, my arm cocked, and then I'm falling, falling, it seems like forever, turning so my legs are no longer the first things heading downward. Hard dirt alley hits me at once. I lie there dazed, wondering how Murietta disappeared.

"Good lord, child," my mother screams and runs toward me in the alley. Her blue jersey skirt is like a sail I'm waiting to see unfurl. Grand-

mother is peeking through a hole in the fence shaking her head. I limp to the car. Nothing is broken. Later I hear, "Now stay off that roof. Grandmother's in no mood for jokes."

Murietta's escape magnifies his proportions. I think of very little else; my rubber balls, games, and saint statues are abandoned. Trivial, they are unworthy of my attention. The death watch goes on day and night.

"You could never trust her with anything. She was always like that," Mother says into the phone. "I think she's in another world half the time. I'm ragged by the time her visits are over. He adores her though, you know. Poor thing, I really do feel sorry."

It's my aunt and her stories they are talking about, and it's true, I am confused after she leaves. "No, no, no," is my song as I roam the territory around the house and neighbor's yard. Mother keeps me away from Grandmother for some reason.

One day I set an elaborate trap in the side yard for the bandit. It consists of a noose set in the path, its end tied to a tree trunk, a pile of broken sticks arranged in a low hanging overhead branch with a string attached which dangles at eye level. The sticks are heavy enough to knock anyone out who pulls on the irresistible trap. I pour a half cup of Grandmother's poison into a chipped coffee cup and place it on the sidewalk. With chalk I write, "DRINK THIS" on the sidewalk. I crouch in the jasmine bush and wait with the stiff vine that has become my sword. The scent of the little white flowers drugs me. Only the gas man who has come to read the meter steps into the noose, and I lunge from the bush screaming, "Wait!" He jumps, letting out a gasp, and drops his pad. Half falling to avoid the noose, he kicks over the poison and turns to give me hell, but I dash past him down the street, yelling, "There, he's gone to the cliffs." Later that afternoon I return to find the noose kicked off into the bushes, the sticks in a pile on the walkway, and a brown stain where the poison spilled. I go to sleep that night convinced I'll have to play dirty with Murietta, that he is more of the devil than I took him for.

The watch's crystal swings back and forth, reflecting a light behind my head the way Grandmother's glass seems to hold a growing light inside its shape. Fernando's wrinkled fingers don't move, so it's a mystery how the whole thing swings. He murmurs phrases in which the words don't matter. This time he may really have me. The face of the watch is a white speck I follow back and forth. It happens. It is like all the movies—my eyes feel so heavy they just finally close, and I no longer have any sense of control though I hear Fernando's voice and have an image of his wild white eyebrows. Then, I can't believe what I'm seeing: the window melting out of its frame in the burning ranchero, the men leaving their buckets at the well because it's useless. At dawn I see Maria standing near a table in the courtyard of the ranchero. The warmth is drying moisture from a bottle-brush. Joaquin Murietta is seated at the table.

He is a handsome man whose rogue nattiness only makes him more attractive. He takes bread and cheese and chews it slowly, moving it over and over in his mouth as though he'll never swallow. From the silence of the courtyard it seems that no one else is awake yet, but from a window looking down into the yard Fernando watches his sister and the bandit. The night before, Murietta handed Fernando's father two bags of money and said to take care of anyone around who needed help. He said he wouldn't see them again.

Now he drops the crust of bread and reaches for Maria's head. She has already said she must not leave with him and wishes she had not wakened to say goodbye. Murietta lets his forehead fall on his hip. She pulls away and stands with her back to him, her plaited black hair like a vine down her back. He shoves the chair from the table and is gone. Then Fernando is holding Maria in the courtyard, saying, "No, no, no," and the day has already broken, the others are stirring.

"No, no, no," Grandmother cries in the middle of the night. I have given up my bed, my room, my closet. She has come to stay with us because her brother, Fernando is dead. They buried him last week in another town. After all his tricks, dying just seems like another sleight of hand. It doesn't touch me. However, Grandmother says she can't stay in her house, so she has come to be with us, and I am sleeping on the couch. Though she takes sleeping pills, she can't sleep, and I keep getting wakened in the middle of the night by her grieving. It starts with low moans like cats in heat, then like babies, and finally she's saying things. I can hear the bed squeak and her fumbling in the dark. A bathroom light goes on, and Mother is there to comfort her. I can't sleep a wink on the cold couch. I have become a troll. My clothes are strewn around the house, my homework is a mess. I'd swear there were bags under my eyes. I no longer sleep near the window listening for Murietta. I hear instead *all* of Mother and Father's late night conversations which I would just as soon skip. It makes me a holy terror. Even my brother, a born aggravator, stays clear of me. I know it won't end until the Murietta business is settled.

Sleeplessness dulls me. Grandmother is still here, though I'm told she's going home soon. The word is that "she'll adjust." I feel as though I've been riding after Murietta for years. Father somehow manages to stay removed from it all. He listens to Mother, smiles when he can, and says very little. He plays cribbage with Grandmother. I hear their counting in the other room. He takes afternoon naps in their room when everyone is out, and it is into his sleep that I wander one day when I just haven't the heart for bounty hunting. Besides, something I've seen the day before disturbs me. I crawl into the bed with him.

"Dad," I say, waking him up. "How did the animal prints in the sidewalk get there?"

He gives me a confused look, wakes up, thinks for a minute, then answers. "There used to be wild animals roaming around here, and one of them must have stepped into the cement before it dried."

"Oh," I say. My eyes are huge. "Animals? Honest?"

"Wolves, bobcats, panthers," he says calmly.

"Joaquin Murietta?" I ask.

He looks at me suspiciously, laughs. "Joaquin Murietta never slept here."

"Where Grandmother lived when she was young, how did it burn?"

"Oh, who knows," he says. "Probably someone smoking in bed."

He gives me a pat and rolls over to sleep, yanking me up on the pillow with him.

"Why does Mother always get her way?"

"You never say no to a Spanish woman, son," he says.

On an ash-colored day in February I enter the cool room where Grandmother keeps the violets. I have just finished with her lawns. The wheels of the mower left furrows in the grass because the ground is soft after three days of rain. She has won gallons of rainwater from the storm. Now she stands at the table framed by the window that opens to the side yard. She is holding up each pot of withered violets then dumping the soil and dead flowers into a box. I think the room looks much nicer with the drapes open, though as I enter I'm sorry about the violets. I don't mention them, and stand patiently nearby until she notices me.

We talk about crocus and jonquil bulbs, about the old mower she said a neighbour left for the trashman when he moved and how it sat on the sidewalk for days before she wheeled it home very late one night because she didn't want anyone to see. She says she's kept African Violets all her life and never had one die on her. A kind of wry laugh slips from the corner of her old mouth. I ask her to say something in Spanish, and she says she speaks only English now.

"Did Joaquin Murietta speak English?"

"Who?"

"Joaquin Murietta, the bandit."

"He was a Spaniard," she says. I look in her eyes for some kind of light. "I was very young then," she adds.

"How did your house burn, Grandmother?" The question falls from my mouth like her half-smile.

She thinks for a minute, turning from the window to me, then grabbing another violet, says, "I think it burned because someone left a fire all night. There were so many of us."

"I'm sorry about Fernando," I say looking into her black eyes.

A fire burns in the center of Grandmother's purple glass, an oracle's voice that calls me each time I'm in that room. I know now that no storm will extinguish it.

Nuns file before me, point to chalkboards and define the laws of mathematics. Days and years whirl like the guava tree in the center of her backyard. I listen to discussions at the dinner table; late nights at the foot of my aunt's bed yield different stories. . . as if she knows too. I call off the hunt for Murietta's head, let his old tale lie, and I leave the window near my bed open, waiting to hear the clatter of his roan horse returning to spirit me away to the bluffs.

ORPHAN

reared from the rift valley
anaesthetized and ether-eyed
spinning on a sun dial
my god she says the lake
is a mother of men

we hold hands in the metropolis
squeeze hands beneath foliage
measure and meticulously slice
child eyes into serpents
between the stars and our
worn shoes
slumber
in acquiescence.
questions are whispered
made palatable for sleep
while never do we hammer
the earth's grin of cliffs

we are sea anemone
in blind cassiopeia
no one watches she says

she says our eyes
face the wild like changelings
dependent on the indifferent but
cushioning air
and the light of day
provides vision.

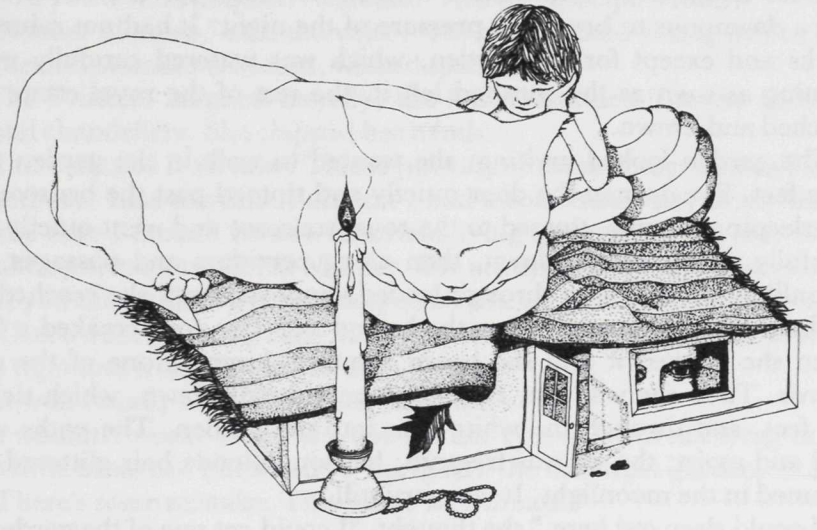
IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE LEWIS CARROLL

We are hard pressed to remember
A wide-eyed logician in bed,
Nestled with quilted children in patchwork caprice,
Lying on pillowy syllogisms,
Tweedledummed and Tweedledeed
In reason's clockwork escapement
Mind-out-of-time without a navy of drowning mice
Or a white rabbit running into white mindholes.

It's hard to imagine
Charles Dodgson greeting Lewis on
A fine July morning,
Sailing together, light-drunk
In the word-shedding sun
Both nodding off to sleep with
"K-K-Kittens c-c-curled at our feet,
W-W-Whisk-k-kers c-c-cool in the p-p-pool of years."

It's difficult to recall
A young Charles penning his
"Who-dreamed-it" dream,
A bloomsprung boy in the hopeless arms of spring
Awaking to the Liddell eyes of the checkered sky
And the unquiet dreams which passed before his sight.
Still, it's easy to feel
The haunt of a wonderland
In the swift stammer of middling life,
Ill-remembered time, eternally returning time,
O curious, illogical time. . .
Forced to imagine.

A Selection of Writing for Children



Audrey Thomas

The Princess and the Zucchini
(A Grim Fairy Tale)

This is the way it happened:

There had been a long, hot summer and the Royal Garden was full to overflowing. The gardeners were hot and grumpy and said they could not keep up with all the picking. Everybody was hot and grumpy, even the King, even the Queen and especially Princess Zona who stood now, in her long white nightdress, gazing down at the garden below her, glowing silver in the moonlight. She hadn't been able to sleep at all, because of the heat, and wished with all her heart for a thunderstorm and a downpour to break the pressure of the night. It had not rained in weeks and except for the garden, which was watered carefully every evening as soon as the sun had left it, the rest of the royal estate was parched and brown.

The garden looked inviting; she wanted to walk in the garden with bare feet. She opened the door quietly and tiptoed past the bedroom of her sleeping parents, tiptoed to the royal staircase and went quietly and carefully down, down, down, then along corridors and passages, the moonlight streaming in through leaded windows, until she reached the kitchen, then the pantry, then the back door. The door creaked a little when she opened it and she heard a mouse jump in one of the cupboards. Then she was out, running across the dry lawn, which tickled her feet, and through the white gate into the garden. The paths were cool and moist; the air was fragrant; her long blonde hair glittered and gleamed in the moonlight. It was very still.

"I could sleep out here," she thought. "I could get one of the gardeners to sling me up a hammock. I wish I'd thought of it sooner." She didn't want to go back up to her hot stuffy little room, pretty as it was. She wished, at least, that she had brought something to sit on.

And then, because she wasn't really paying attention, she tripped and stubbed her toe on a large zucchini.

"Thank God," a deep voice said. The Princess froze in fear.

"Who's there?" she whispered, trembling. "What do you want?"

"Here," the voice said. It came from beside her and below.

"Where?" She thought of all the old stories of dwarves and elves and gnomes. There must be a dwarf hiding in the vines. Her curiosity got the better of her fear.

"Come out where I can see you," she said. "It's all so overgrown in here I can't really see you at all."

"You're looking right at me," the deep voice said.

"I'm sorry. I may be 'looking right at' you but I still can't see you. Are you invisible or something?"

There was a deep, green, groan.

"Would that it were that simple," the voice sighed. "I'm the zucchini you just stubbed your toe against."

"Don't be ridiculous."

"It's true."

"I'm not in the mood for jokes," she said, and drawing herself up to her full height of four feet eleven inches and mustering all the dignity she could muster, standing there in her summer nightie, she demanded:

"Come out of there right now!"

"I wish I could," said the voice. "If you would kiss me, *then* I could."

"How can I kiss you when I don't know where you are?"

"I told you, I'm the zucchini."

"Are you a ventriloquist?" she said. "Are you a shape-shifter?"

"Neither of those," said the voice. "I'm a handsome young prince who has been cast under a wicked, wicked spell."

The Princess laughed merrily; the laugh sounded like the tinkle of crystal chandeliers. She clapped her hands.

"I understand it all now. This is just one of those crazy dreams I have sometimes. Like the time I dreamt I had a conversation with my horse. Or the time I dreamt I was a mermaid living underneath the sea. When I wake up tomorrow I'll tell Mother. She always asks about my dreams."

"If you think this is a dream why don't you try and wake yourself up?"

"That's true. I usually can, when I realize I'm dreaming." She shut her eyes tight and willed herself awake.

"It won't work, will it?" said the zucchini.

It wouldn't work. When she opened her eyes she was not lying in her own little brass bed but standing upright in the midnight garden.

"There's some mistake. This has to be a dream."

"A nightmare for me, maybe," said the voice, "but not a dream for you."

"Whoever heard of a prince being turned into a zucchini! A bear, yes; a swan, certainly; even a frog, although personally I find that one a little hard to swallow. But a vegetable! That's utterly ridiculous. Somebody's pulling my leg."

"Nobody's pulling your leg. I was standing in this garden one night, very late, gazing up at the light in your little window, trying to get up

enough nerve to sing you a song I'd composed about your beauty when all of a sudden I felt very strange, as though I'd faint if I didn't lie down, so I did that and the next thing I knew I was a tiny zucchini."

The Princess laughed and laughed.

"You're not tiny now!"

"No. I grow bigger and bigger every day. It's all this watering and sunlight. I'm afraid I may burst."

"What makes you so sure that if I kiss you you'll turn back into a prince?"

"Isn't your name Zona?"

"Yes it is. But I didn't choose it. It's a family name. All the women in our family have always been called Zona, God knows why. I don't like it. As soon as I'm of age I'm going to change it to Suzanne."

"I think it's a lovely name," the zucchini said. "I come from a land far away across the sea and I heard your name, fell in love with your name, long before I ever saw your portrait. I travelled for a year and a day to get here, saying your name softly to myself as I went, weary and wind-lashed, 'Zona, Zona, Zona,' to keep my courage up."

"But why does that convince you that I can save you? Love doesn't *really* conquer all and even if it did I'm not in love with *you*, it's the other way around."

"Don't you see? I've been changed into something beginning with the letter Z. Your name begins with Z. It must be a sign. I'm sure that only someone whose name begins with Z can save me."

"And if it's me and if my kiss can save you, what then?"

"What then! You know what then. 'Happily ever after.'"

"I don't think I could stand the idea of kissing a zucchini—it's so bizarre. What if somebody saw me!"

"Think about it for a while, but hurry."

"I'm thinking about it; the idea repulses me." Then she added, "I have to go in now, I'm getting sleepy."

"Oh please Zona," the zucchini cried. "Just one little kiss."

"I'll think about it. Anyway I'll come see you tomorrow night."

"I may have burst by then," he said sadly.

"Oh, I don't think so. And if you do, it will prove you're not really a prince, won't it."

"How cruel you are!" he murmured.

"Just practical," she replied, and ran back the way she had come.

The next morning it all seemed like a very silly dream. Nevertheless she went out right after breakfast and stuck a little hand-lettered sign in front of the zucchini. "PLEASE DON'T PICK THIS ZUCCHINI" it said. "BY ORDER OF H.R.H. PRINCESS ZONA." She had lessons to do so she didn't stop to chat, just stuck a broken bean pole through the

sign and pushed it into the moist earth near the vine. "I'll come back tonight," she whispered, hoping none of the gardeners would overhear her.

It wasn't a dream. The zucchini really *had* talked to her, really had told her his sad tale of woe. Every evening, close to midnight, the young princess walked up and down between the bean rows, the ripe tomatoes, the broccoli and cucumbers until she reached the back of the garden where the zucchinis grew. There she sat on a cushion and listened to stories of life in the distant land from which the prince—if he were a prince—had come. He had a deep, thrilling, voice and she came to look forward eagerly to his accounts of his adventures.

But she would not kiss him; she absolutely refused.

"Have you no pity," he cried. "Have you no heart?"

"I don't quite understand it myself," she admitted. "Something keeps holding me back. At the risk of sounding offensive I think it really does have something to do with the fact that you are a zucchini. What kind of a spell is that? There's something not quite noble about it somehow."

He laughed bitterly. "Do you think the Frog Prince found it 'noble' to be a frog?"

"I suppose he didn't. But that's another story and another princess; it's nothing to do with me." She sighed. "Since you had to go through all this—and I still don't understand who could have done it to you—why couldn't you have been changed into an eagle, or a swan, or a chestnut stallion!"

"Well I *wasn't*. I was standing in a vegetable garden and I was changed into a garden vegetable. That's just the way it was."

"Well it's too bad you weren't standing by the peacocks or at the stable door."

"Ha ha." He paused. "Sometimes you're not very nice to me, you know. I suffer horribly."

"How can I be nice to you when 'you' is only a voice. I must admit, however, that the voice is very beautiful."

"Doesn't it make you want to see the rest?"

"Yes, no, oh—I don't know! Don't rush me."

"I can't get much bigger, Zona. I feel that if you don't release me then I'll die."

"Tell me again about the 'Happily ever after.'"

The rains had still not come and everyone seemed to exist in a kind of terrible tension. The King snapped at the Queen, the Queen snapped at Zona, Zona snapped at everybody. One night she sat at her dressing table brushing her long golden hair and thinking. She tried to imagine

the young prince before he had been changed into a zucchini. She tried to imagine the two of them riding off together on a white horse. She tried to imagine happily ever after.

"98—99—100," she said, and put down her hairbrush. She stared at herself in the mirror. The zucchini had told her she was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen. Her mother and father told her she was beautiful. Her mirror said the same thing.

"But who is the 'I' who is so beautiful," she thought. "Who is she??"

"I will be fifteen next month," she thought. "That's a lot of ever after."

She sat in her nightdress, with her hands in her lap, long after her candle had sputtered and gone out. She sat like that, in the darkness, far into the night.

It had finally rained and the King and Queen and Princess were smiling as they dined *en famille* and listened to the blessed sound of the rain on the castle roof. It was the cook's day off and Zona had begged her mother to let her prepare the evening meal.

"Absolutely *delicious*," said the King, wiping his bowl with a piece of bread. "What did you say it was again?"

"Ratatouille," Zona said. "I found the recipe in *The Joy of Cooking*."

"It really is very very good, dear," said the Queen. "We'll have to have it again."

The King and Queen smiled at one another tenderly.

"Our little girl is growing up," said the King.

"It won't be long," said the Queen, "before she'll be having boyfriends."

Zona smiled at them both and offered the dish around a second time.

John Kelly

Just An Old Boot

In the tall grass on the edge of the school yard just down the road from our house there is an old boot. It seems to smile through its wrinkles and I believe it smiles because of the secret it kept for many years. Until now, I was the only person who knew the secret.

It started on an early morning when darkness was leaving and a new day was about to be born. Birds were tidying up their nests before going in search of food, and rivers and lakes were waiting for the sun to sparkle their waves. I was sitting outside when I heard a step coming down the road.

"Hi step," I said.

"Hi John," said the step.

"And tell me," I said, "How come you're stepping down the road all alone at this early hour of the morning without a foot on you?"

"Oh," said the step, "It's a long sad story. Anytime you see a step without a foot on the early morning roadway, it has to be a sad story. I don't think you'd want to hear it."

"But you're quite wrong there," I said. "I'd love to hear your story."

"Oh, all right then," said the step, making itself comfortable at my feet.

"As you know," it said, "there are many kinds of steps—laddersteps, stonesteps, rubbersteps and ropesteps. I am a footstep, and I started life on the foot of a woodsman. He was a good man and always wore big strong boots that never squeezed me. Every morning we stepped out into the forest to cut and split wood. It was a good life until one day we had an accident. His great axe glanced off a piece of hardwood and cut me off his foot. The woodsman limped home and I was left alone in the woods. I waited there for two long weeks but he never returned, so I decided to move along.

I stepped for two hours through the tall trees and then I reached a highway. There I found some children waiting for the school bus, so I slipped amongst their feet and got on the bus when it came by. I chatted with the steps on the children's feet as we went. They were all young

steps, of course. The bus took us to the city and I got off there. It was terribly warm and the air was heavy with the smell of gasoline. The pavement was hot and very hard, and already I was homesick for the great silent trees, the gentle shafts of sunlight coming through, and the soft dark green to walk on. I sat in the shade of a garbage can and cried, and cried. I stayed there until the garbage man took the can away.

I felt better after my rest and stepped slowly along the pavements. I talked to steps on the feet of shoppers and business people and told them my story, but none of them knew of a foot looking for a step. I knew that people could go to an agency to seek work, but they said there was no such agency for steps.

Several hot days went by and still I tried to get work. Then one day I was under a table in a restaurant at lunchtime. While talking to the steps of diners there I noticed the lady serving them was quite lame on one foot, so I spoke to that step and learned that it was just tired out and needed a good rest. I told the step I would be glad to take over for it. It was delighted. It said it had never been to the park and wanted to spend a week or two there. Apparently the lady it worked for never went further than the local store, the restaurant and the little room she lived in. So off went the step to the park and I had my first job in the city.

I worked there for two weeks. The other waitresses kept telling the lady how well she looked, and how fast she was now serving the customers, but I found it a boring job and was glad to see the other step come back at the end of two weeks. It, by now, was well rested, very lively, and anxious to take up its job again.

I stayed around the restaurant for several days as I had now become friends with the steps of the steady customers. One evening two soldiers came in for coffee and I heard them discussing Private Partridge, one of their comrades up at the parade square. It seemed that Private Partridge was having trouble marching along with the others. One of the soldiers said he thought Private Partridge must have two left feet, and they both laughed. When they left I followed them back to the barracks where all the soldiers lived, and I slept there that night. In the morning a great bugle sound awakened me and already I could hear the steps of the soldiers rushing down stairs and along corridors and out to the great concrete parade square. They had a man there called the sergeant who shouted orders in a tremendous voice, and all morning he had the men march up and down, around, and across that great square. And all morning he was having trouble with Private Partridge, who could not seem to do anything right. I knew it was the step on his left foot that was giving him trouble, so at recess when they all took off their boots to cool their feet, I had a chat with his left step and offered to take over. The step was only too happy to get away. It was a very young step anyway; much too young for the army.

It felt good to be in a big boot again after my two weeks in the restaurant where the waitress wore only very light slippers. Every day we marched and drilled. The sergeant could not believe how Private Partridge had improved! Private Partridge himself could not believe it! He could do nothing wrong.

I made a lot of good friends amongst the army steps, but after Private Partridge had worn out four pairs of those great big boots, I quit the army and once again stepped out on my own.

After many enquiries I found the park where the restaurant step had its vacation and I rested there for a few days. It was good to see green grass again, and there was a small pool to cool off in. After three days I stepped back to town, again looking for work. Things seemed to be picking up a bit, for my enquiries got me several part-time jobs. I did a couple of weeks with a sawmill worker—afternoon shift—and did some night work with a policeman, and I found I could get odd jobs outside the hospital helping patients in from the ambulance. I worked one Saturday afternoon with a soccer player—and I never want to do that again. Then one very warm day my luck changed, and indeed my whole life changed.

On this very warm day I was downtown on a busy street amongst all the feet and trying not to get stepped on myself. The sidewalk was so hot I was looking for a shady place to rest a while, when I found the cool, dark entrance to a theatre and stepped in. There was a great stage inside with bright lights all round it and an orchestra was playing the beautiful music of the ballet. On stage were several dancers in rehearsal. Here were steps like I had never imagined. I was immediately in love with dancing and stayed all afternoon. I came back the next day and every day for a week. Eager young steps were being introduced to the dance every day, but at last it came my turn. I was chosen to dance with a beautiful young ballerina. It was hard work at first but I did my very best. The ballerina seemed very pleased and the director was very happy with her. He said she would be the greatest ballerina of all.

At last the weeks of rehearsal were over and on opening night the theatre was filled with people. It was the greatest night of my life. The audience enjoyed every moment of it and when I danced with my ballerina they all stood up and clapped. I had never stepped so lightly in all my years.

We danced every night for a week in that city and then went on to another great city. And on we went. We danced before kings and queens, lords, ladies, and presidents. Dancing was now my only love and as the years went by I saw all the great countries of the world and our dancing brought joy and happiness to young and old. But at last. . . .

At last it was time for the ballerina to retire. One night she hung up her ballet slippers and never danced again. Since then I have been stepping around alone."

Well, that is the story the step told me, so I asked if it would like to go back in the woods again, or perhaps with some soldier or policeman, and the step replied sadly:

"No, I could not do it. Dancing was my life and my love. All I wanted was to dance but I am too old to start again with another ballerina."

"Well, you did have a good life, didn't you?" I asked.

"O yes, I did," said the step. "I had a wonderful life, much more exciting than most steps have, but often in far-off crowded cities I would think back to the pleasant days of my youth in the woodsman's boot."

By this time the sun was up and the step became drowsy. It was almost asleep when the sound of children's voices filled the air. The children were singing and dancing along the roadway going to school. Suddenly the step came awake and was filled with joy and excitement. It joined their steps and away they went.

Now, if you ever come by our school, please stop and see how the children sing and dance. And if you go to the edge of the schoolyard you will find amongst the tall grasses a wrinkled old boot that seems to smile. It is a boot such as men wore in the great forests many years ago. I know, because I got it from a very old woodsman who had only one footstep, and who placed the boot there.

And it's not just any old boot. It's the boot in which the step now lives when it's not out helping the children with their dancing.

From: Kestrel and Leonardo

Leonardo lives in the sky.
He has a good view from up there.
Sometimes he takes tea and sandwiches
to the cemetery.
His wings are big and bright, also.

There are plenty of clouds in the sky
and small stars that make
the simple shapes of animals.

Oh, the smiling fields!
Oh, the faces of angels!

*

Kestrel flies over the jungle.
She flutters above the phantom elephants,
the haunted tigers.

She flies over a construction site
where men with bulldozers are ravaging a
field of goldenrod.

She flies into the windflowers
dreaming of sleep.

She rises out of a dead city
into the enormous heart of the universe.

She will line her nest with bones
and her own crushed feathers.

Leonardo is feeding the jungle.
The jungle is rumble-hungry, full of
lost children.

They eat anything.
They eat fish-gloat and penguin-glut.
They eat toad-frogs and greasy-pig,
oily-snake and beetle-grunt.
They eat one another.

They eat wolf-sly and chicken-slaughter.
They eat everyone.
They eat tourist-fingers and camera-icing,
money-gizzard and aeroplane-lick.

Lost children with teeth for tearing meat.
Little children who gobble their own mothers.
Lost little children chewing loud and hard and fast.
Greedy little creatures!
The horribles!

Leonardo sleeps
in the Great Bear's belly.
It is warm and hairy in there
and smells like a big
department store.

Leonardo dreams of toys,
of chocolate bars and comics.
He dreams of chewing gum and
licorice sticks,
of racing cars and tobacco.

The Great Bear smacks his
bear-chops
dreaming of Leonardo.
Leonardo between two slices
of thin dry toast.
Leonardo served simply
with salad.

*

Kestrel sleeps wrapped up in a polar bear.
Leonardo sleeps wrapped in his best newspaper.

Kestrel chews pieces of driftwood.
Leonardo eats shirt pockets and old buttonholes.

Kestrel dives like a fighter bomber,
Leonardo sings lullabies.

Kestrel lays golden eggs under the stars.
Leonardo embroiders them with tiny silver moons.

George Bowering

The Clam Digger & The Turtle

Needless to say, Woodruff was surprised to be spoken to so suddenly on the empty early morning beach, especially by a turtle. Or was it a tortoise? He could never remember which was which. In any case, this was the kind that lives in the ocean & on the shore beside the ocean. Anyway, he preferred to call it a turtle, at least in his mind, because turtle is easier to say than tortoise.

"Pardon me, what did you say?" he asked, feeling a little foolish. He was awfully glad there was nobody else on the beach.

"I said what are you doing out on the beach so early in the morning," repeated the turtle, looking at Woodruff unblinkingly.

"I'm looking for clams. I'm a clam digger by trade. In the summer, anyway."

"Do you make much money—digging clams?" asked the turtle, not seeming to realize that that kind of question can embarrass a man.

"Well, uh, no," said Woodruff, digging in the cool sand with his bare big toe. "But it's all I know how to do. And, uh, I've got a monopoly here, on account of nobody else wants to dig them. There arent an awful lot of clams along this part of the coast."

"Well," said the turtle, beginning to scuff his toe in the sand too. "Well, there are a lot of things a man can do, but most of them dont make him much money. Do you have dreams?"

"You mean at night?" said Woodruff. "Sure, I dream about falling a lot, & sometimes about clams, hundreds & thousands of clams half sunk in the sand, & me coming along with a truck & piling it full of clams. Things like that."

"I mean dreams like daydreams, impossible aspirations. Owning empires or living in style in a fancy Paris hotel. That kind of dream," said the turtle.

"Oh, yeah, sure," said Woodruff, unaccountably embarrassed.

"Everyone has dreams like that. Impossible dreams. I always wanted to be the king of some little island in the East Indies. Impossible, though."

"Not impossible," said the turtle, & then yawned, as only a turtle can yawn, as only a turtle with a head proportioned to a shell six feet from tip to tail can yawn.

"Impossible," said Woodruff, getting a little bored, his eyes scanning the length of sand for likely places where clams could be buried.

"Not impossible, not impossible," said the turtle. "There are men who *are* kings of tropical islands, & others who run gambling casinos on the coasts of the Mediterranean. Men so rich, with houses so luxurious they would blind you with their gold & ivory."

"Impossible for clam diggers, then," Woodruff persisted.

"Once more, not impossible," said the turtle, with a new note of caution in his vaguely serpentine voice.

"Aw, come on."

"I can make you a prince in the strongest & richest & most beautiful kingdom imaginable," said the turtle.

"Where?"

"Under the ocean. In the so-called dark deeps. Right out there below the Pacific's placid surface."

"Oh yeah, & I can dig clams with golden shells," said Woodruff, sarcastically, now that the novelty of a talking turtle was done with.

"That is an impossible dream," said the turtle. "But what I can offer, what I *do* offer, is to make you a happy prince at the ocean floor."

"Well, I've got news for you, turtle. I cant breathe underwater, even if I could go to your little kingdom."

"It's hardly a *little* kingdom. It covers two-thirds of the world. Furthermore, I dont think you should be so gosh-all-fired sure what's possible & what's impossible, anyway. Do you think an English-speaking turtle is possible, for example?"

"Technically, no," said Woodruff, losing some of his gosh-all-fired certainty.

"Then if a talking turtle tells you you can breathe under the ocean, you'd be just as well off to believe him. That's only logical, for Pete's sake," said the turtle, turning slowly around to face the water.

"Okay, just to keep things going, I believe you."

"Right. Okay, are you coming? Hop on."

"Wait a minute. What about everything here? What about my business? What about my friends?"

"Can you become a prince in your business?"

"Not likely."

"How many friends do you have?"

"Well, lots. Quite a few. Well, not so much friends so much as people

I like to see every day, & say hello to. Some of them, anyway. Not so many, really, just a few. Though they arent really friends or acquaintances. I'm not the town's most honored citizen, by any rate. Just that you get used to seeing the same buildings & trees & so on. You could do that anywhere, I suppose, but—well, when you come right down to it, I guess I havent got any what you would call friends. Nor enemies, either, mind you. Just people you see, even if you never do find out their names."

"Right. No friends," said the turtle, his short pointy tail switching back & forth, making a fan shape in the sand.

"Well, you dont have to put it just that way."

"Okay, no *special* friends. So what's keeping you here?"

"I guess you're right," said Woodruff, & looked uncertainly out to sea.

"So hop on," said the turtle.

"Okay," said Woodruff, & climbed up on the high shell.

"Grip tight with your knees. We really get going once I get into the water," said the turtle over his sloping shoulder.

Then, just as they started the slow turtle-paced trip to the edge of the sea, a cracked voice cried out, "Wait!"

They stopped, turning to see an unbelievably old man hobbling toward them, with a shiny black cane in his hand. The old man finally reached them, but it appeared that he couldnt have gone much farther. Sitting on the turtle, Woodruff was keenly aware that any conversation the feeble old man had in mind would be very awkward. He waited.

"Dont go," the old man croaked, his watery eyes looking up at Woodruff.

"Oh, for Pete's sake!" said the turtle. "If we dont get started we'll never go anywhere." He recommenced his slow wriggle to the sea.

"What a strange old man. Wonder what was on his mind," said Woodruff.

"Who can tell with these nutty old codgers?" replied the turtle. "Okay, hang on tight, here we go."

Down, down, down, they went in the water, & after holding his breath for as long as he could, Woodruff was surprised, despite what the turtle had said, to find that his lungs didnt burst. It wasnt that he could breathe underwater, it was just that he didnt have to. He was also surprised to find out that after half an hour he didnt feel wet anymore. The water felt as natural to him as the air had felt all his life. Down they went, & all the time they descended the colours around them changed like the changling blues & oranges & greens of an old-fashioned jukebox.

All the time the turtle swam at an amazing speed, his sharp nose pointed down at a forty-five degree angle, his strong flippers plying the water. Woodruff was so fascinated that he lost all sense of time—they could have been in the water for ten hours or ten minutes. Then, as they

were rounding an underwater volcano, the turtle said over his shoulder, "See that shaft of purple light? We follow that for a minute & we'll be there. Home."

Into the light they went, & in one minute they swam out into the most beautiful place Woodruff had ever seen. Tall wriggly white castles like the ones in goldfish bowls, but a thousand times as big, stood in uneven rows as far as the eye could see. Fernlike trees stood & wavered slightly all over the place, & under them, between them, on top of them, people stood or sat in groups. Not people, exactly, but not fish either, & certainly not mermaids or mermen. But they were all beautiful, dressed in flowing cloth arranged loosely about their bodies, playing soft music on instruments that looked like soft pulpy guitars, talking & laughing musically, holding hands, or something like hands, & looking at one another, collecting brilliantly colored flowers from the wispy trees.

Woodruff was so struck by the sight that he wanted to get off the turtle right away & go & sit with the people & listen to the music & singing, & eat some of the delicious looking food they were giving one another. But the turtle kept swimming, more luxuriously now, toward the largest castle, the only pink castle in sight. They didnt even stop at the castle door. They kept right on, the turtle swimming in thru the door & along a great corridor made entirely of coral & gold. At the end of the corridor they swam into the largest room Woodruff had ever seen. The room was hung with drapes that stretched upward out of sight, hung with starfish, pearls, gold nuggets, old anchors, all glittering in the light that shone in varying colors, red, yellow, mauve, like an old-fashioned jukebox. At one end of the room was a giant gold throne with a person sitting on it & a dozen pretty girls sitting around, playing music & reading from filmy white books. In front of the throne was a long table piled high with food—buttered clams, oysters, shrimp, lobster, salmon—all the things Woodruff liked best. He suddenly noticed that he was tremendously hungry.

But they passed the table & came to a stop in front of the white-bearded old man on the throne. The turtle floated out from under Woodruff.

"Dont try to walk. Just float," said the turtle, & floated beside him, facing the old man.

"Is this him?" asked the old man in a bubbly voice.

"This is him," said the turtle.

"What's your name, young fellow?" asked the old man.

"Woodruff."

"Well, you're Prince Woodruff now. Did he tell you about that?" the old man asked, gesturing vaguely toward the turtle.

"Yes, sort of. But I'm not clear on what I'm prince of."

"You're the prince of the whole works, the whole shebang," replied the

old man, floating off the throne. "So climb up here, & we'll get you fed & then fix you up with all the accessories & necessities—wardrobe, wife, cooks, tailor, butler, etcetera."

Woodruff was in a daze thru the meal. He had never tasted such delicious seafood, & after a while he lost track of how much he had eaten. He just consumed course after course, the best food in the world—or under the sea. He was in such an ecstacy that he wondered if the food had been drugged.

Then after the meal, which must have taken three hours, or whatever was used to measure time under the ocean, Woodruff mounted the throne, put on the coral & pearl crown the old man had given him, & watched as the clothes & jewels, tapestries & ornaments were paraded in front of him & along the endless walls.

For a week he sat on the throne & chose hundreds of the brightly colored flowing garments, dozens of servants, his squadron of turtles for transportation, millions of dollars worth of things, though no one here ever mentioned dollars, or any other kind of money. No one ever told him he should limit his selections. Prince Woodruff could have whatever he wanted, as much as he wanted. Once in a while, as he signed for another six turtles or five servants, he had feelings of guilt. He wasnt used to getting anything without working long hours for it. Sometimes he had dug clams for two days to buy a dozen apples.

"What are my duties here?" he once asked the old man.

"Duties? You have no duties here. You're the prince," said the old man, as if Woodruff had asked a stupid question.

At the end of the week it was time to choose a wife to be his princess. The plan was that he would sit on the throne, & the most eligible ladies of the kingdom would be presented to him, one by one. The whole thing made him nervous, & he bit his fingernails as he waited on the throne, first sitting up straight & princely, then slouching casually against one side of the throne, then sitting up again. As a clam digger back on the Pacific Coast he had had no time for meeting girls, & he would have been afraid to talk to one anyway, being just a poor clam digger. He was very shy.

"Miss Oona," announced the old man, floating up to the throne with the first young woman.

She wore a flowing white garment that trailed off behind her in the water & became indistinguishable from the shifting light that came thru a window high in the castle wall. Her hair was a light color, something between red & blonde, the color of fresh carrots pulled out of the ground a little early. Her face was too lovely to describe.

"The food," said the old man, & a servant brought a covered dish to Woodruff. The servant took the cover off & floated the dish in front of him.

"Squab," remarked mistaken Woodruff, & tasted it. "It's the best thing I've ever eaten," he said as the servant took away the empty dish.

Oona dropped her eyes, though a happy smile turned the corners of her coral pink lips.

"The music," said the old man, & the servant handed Oona one of the stringed instruments all girls played outside the castle walls. She played on the strings, her head bowed over them.

"That's the nicest thing I've ever heard," said Woodruff, when she had finished.

"Good," said the old man. "Now we will bring you the second applicant." He floated away with Oona, whose light hair waved behind her.

"No," said Woodruff, & stood up.

"But we have a hundred applicants to show you this afternoon."

"No. I want to marry Miss Oona," said Woodruff. His cheeks went red. He was shocked at his own impulsiveness. "I mean, if she will have me," he added.

"Of course she will have you," said the old man. He was right. Woodruff could tell that from the way she was looking at him.

So they were married.

So they lived happily ever after.

Or at least for quite a while. In fact time was so uncertain there that it was impossible to tell how long they had been married. The only guide to measurement was the children, four of them, all as beautiful as their mother, all of them able to make their father deliriously happy. Except once in a while after the fourth child had grown to the height of a hand held down to pat her soft-haired head.

It wasnt that Prince Woodruff was unhappy with his kingdom & his princess & his four children. But he had ever-fading memories of his life before he had become a prince, of an airy place above water, where he had been the clam digger, Woodruff. At first he never told Oona or anyone else about his thoughts, but when they became more frequent he had to tell someone. He told Oona first, & she cried, which made it worse, so he didnt mention it for a long time. But the hankering would not go away, & once more, after quite a long time, he mentioned it again.

"But you will never come back here if you go above," she cried.

"Yes, I will, I just want to have one last look. Then I'll come right back. After all, I have a kingdom & a family to look after," he answered.

But Oona made no reply. So a few days later he mentioned it to the old man, who looked the same as he had the first day Woodruff had come to the kingdom.

"Hmmm. I was wondering when you were going to get around to that," said the old man. "Well, we cant stop you, you know. You're the prince. If you want to take a visit to your former place, all you have to do is summon your turtle. It's completely your own decision."

Knowing that, Woodruff began to think about his trip to the upper world more & more. Until one day he told his wife he was going to be away for a few days.

"You are going up to the old place you lived in before you came to us," she said accusingly, sadly.

"Yes, I want to have one last look," he said softly, trying not to frighten her.

"You will never come back," she said.

"Yes I will," he said. "There is nothing for me there. All my life is down here, with you. This is the only place where I can be happy."

So he tried for a long time to comfort her, but she lapsed into a strange silence, & even the children sensed that there was something the matter, & they looked at him with strange eyes. But he knew he would be back, so he did not feel badly. He would make them all happy again when he returned. He had to take one final look at his old Pacific Coast.

He summoned his long-distance turtle & was almost ready to mount, when he saw the old man floating toward him, carrying a small metal case in his hand.

"You're ready to go, are you, my prince?" asked the old man.

"Yes. I'll be back in a couple days."

"Well, I have something for you to take with you."

"What is it?" asked Woodruff, taking the metal case in his hand.

"It's a watch-case," said the old man. "It's from a sunken Canadian ship. You have to take it with you when you go above. But you must not open it. Time means nothing to us here, & you have no use for a watch. Remember, you have to bring it back to me when you return, & you must not open it when you are out of your kingdom."

"Seems kind of funny to me, but I guess you know what you're talking about," said Woodruff, holding the watch-case in the palm of his closed hand.

"It's well. Have a good trip," said the old man.

"Thank you, I will, & I'll see you in a few days," said Woodruff, mounting his turtle.

Out of the castle they floated & out thru the shaft of light, up thru layers of changing colors like the lights on old-fashioned jukeboxes. It was only half-familiar to Woodruff, this reverse of his adventurous descent of how long ago. It got lighter the higher they went, & soon Woodruff was struck by a fierce blow of bright sunlight. They were at the surface of the ocean, & moving quickly to an old familiar landmass. For a moment Woodruff had a fear that he wouldnt be able to breathe in the free air, but he found himself breathing easily, as if he were letting out the deep breath he had taken when he had first dipped under water.

"Here we are," said the turtle, clumsily pulling himself out of the water & onto the wet sand of the beach.

Woodruff stood up on the sand, a little unsteady on his feet at first, & looked around. It was the same beach on which he had first met the talking turtle.

"I'm going to take a walk into town & have a look around," he said to his turtle. "I'll be back in one hour."

"You will, eh?" said the turtle, quite disrespectfully. Woodruff began walking along a path he had used many times before. How long had it been? Six years? Seven? How would he be able to explain things to the people he would meet in the town?

Then he was walking down the main street with its white stores. It was noon, & a lot of people were out on the sidewalks. Woodruff scanned the faces of people as he passed among them, but he didnt seem to know anyone. It must be that a man's mind begins to forget things when he has been away six years, he thought. After all, he had never been away from the town before in his life. But he walked up & down the street for half an hour, & he didnt recognize anyone. Sometimes there was a face that was vaguely familiar, but no one he could remember certainly.

Finally he decided to make a test. He went into old man Webster's barber shop. There were two barbers cutting hair, & two customers waiting. The two barbers were middle-aged men, unknown to Woodruff. He went up to the nearest chair & asked, "Is Mister Webster around?"

"Sure, he's around," said the man, without stopping his scissors. "He's buried back of the church, along with the rest of the Webster family, where he's been for the last fifty or sixty years."

Woodruff went back out onto the sidewalk & watched the people going by for a while. He grew more & more nervous as more & more strangers went by. The last fifty or sixty years, he thought. Nervously his fingers played with the object in his hand. It was the metal watch-case, & his fingers had partly opened it, just cracked the lid open a slice.

He wanted to look inside.

But he wasnt supposed to open it.

But he was nervous, & curious, & wanted to look inside a lot.

He opened it.

A puff of green smoke broke out of the watch-case & made a little cloud in the air in front of his eyes. Then it seemed to rise slowly. His body was suddenly cramped in pain. He turned around & looked at his reflection in the glass window of the barber shop.

He was an old old man, an unbelievably old bent-up man with long dirty white beard & thousands of wrinkles in his gray face. He took a step, & pains went thru his brittle bones.

"I have to get back to the beach," he thought. He started moving, each step sending greater pain over his whole body. With agony he made his way back to the beach, not as quickly as he wanted to, just as slowly as

his body allowed. He knew that if he could get back into the water, on the turtle's back, he would be safe. Oona had said he would not return. Even the turtle had hinted that he would not.

He made it to the beach, but he felt as if his old bones had splintered into dry shards. He walked, hobbled, along the sand as fast as he could.

As he reached the top of a dune, he looked down & saw the turtle talking to a young man in poor clothes. Immediately he began stumbling down the slope toward them, yelling in his cracked voice.

"Dont go! Dont go!" he bellowed, & watched as the turtle & the young man turned their heads toward him. They watched as he hobbled up to them. When he got there the young man was on the turtle's back.

"Dont go," he said, looking up with watery eyes at the young man.

"Come on, let's go," he heard the turtle say.

He lay on the sand, watching them inch toward the water's edge. After they had disappeared under the water he lay there. Just before the sun went down behind the ocean he saw a clam half out of the sand.

MRS MURPHY AND MRS MURPHY'S KIDS

Mrs Murphy,
    If you please,
Kept her kids
    In a can of peas.

The kids got bigger
    And the can filled up,
So she moved them into
    A measuring cup.

But the kids got bigger
    And the cup got crammed,
So she poured them into
    A frying pan.

But the kids grew bigger
    And the pan began to stink,
So she pitched them all
    In the kitchen sink.

But the kids kept growing
    And the sink went *kaplooey*,
So she dumped them on their ears
    In a crate of chop suey.

But the kids kept growing
    And the crate got stuck,
So she carted them away
    In a ten-ton truck.

And she said, "Thank goodness
    I remembered that truck,
Or my poor little children
    Would be out of luck!"

But the darn kids grew
Till the truck wouldn't fit,
And she had to haul them off
To a gravel pit.

But the kids kept growing
Till the pit was too small,
So she bedded them down
In a shopping mall.

But the kids grew enormous
And the mall wouldn't do,
So she herded them together
In an empty zoo.

But the kids grew gigantic
And the fence went *pop!*
So she towed them away
To a mountain top.

But the kids just grew
And the mountain broke apart,
And she said, "Darned kids,
They were pesky from the start!"

So she waited for a year,
And she waited for another,
And the kids grew up
And had babies like their mother.

And Mrs Murphy's kids—
You can think what you please—
Kept all *their* kids
In a can of peas.

THE DOUGHNUT HOLE

A doughnut hole was shining,
Shining,
Shining,
A doughnut hole was shining
Above a boat of gravy.

And three white mice came riding,
Riding,
Riding,
Three white mice came riding
Towards the boat of gravy.

They parked their cars by the goal-post,
Goal-post,
Goal-post,
They parked their cars by the goal-post
Beside the boat of gravy.

They pulled out sub-machine-guns,
Machine-guns,
Machine-guns,
They pulled out sub-machine-guns
Beside the boat of gravy.

They shot the hole from the doughnut,
The doughnut,
The doughnut,
They shot the hole from the doughnut
All over the boat of gravy.

But the doughnut hole kept shining,
Shining,
Shining,
The doughnut hole kept shining
Above the boat of gravy.

SILVERLY

Silverly,
  Silverly,
Over the
  Trees
The moon drifts
  By on a
Runaway
  Breeze.

Dozily,
  Dozily,
Deep in her
  Bed,
A little girl
  Dreams with the
Moon in her
  Head.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

MARTIN ANDERSON lives in Hong Kong.

GEORGE BOWERING's novel, *Burning Water,* will soon be published in French by Les Quinze, Montréal.

DERRICK CARTER is a Vancouver-based Art Director/Graphic Designer. The cover for this issue is the last of three which he has prepared for *PRISM* during the past year.

KAMO NO CHŌMEI (1155-1216) lived through the chaotic era in which the Genji family slowly lost its grip on Japan's imperial house.

PHILIP HUGHES is a sometime professor, salesman, and janitor who lives in Brookline, Massachusetts.

JOHN KELLY is a playwright and construction worker who emigrated from Ireland to Canada in 1954. He lives with his family on a small farm in Westbridge, B.C.

MICHAEL KENYON lives in Victoria, B.C.

W.P. KINSELLA recently won a Houghton Mifflin Literary Fellowship Award for his novel, *Shoeless Joe.*

IRVING LAYTON was born in Rumania in 1912 and has lived in Canada, mainly Montréal since he was one year old. A volume of his selected poems entitled *A Wild Peculiar Joy* (McClelland & Stewart) will appear in September, 1982.

DENNIS LEE's books for children include *Alligator Pie* (Macmillan, 1974) and *Garbage Delight* (Macmillan, 1977,).

ERIC MCCORMACK lives and teaches in Waterloo, Ontario.

SUSAN MUSGRAVE's latest book is *Tarts and Muggers* (McClelland & Stewart, 1982), a collection of new and selected poems.

WILLIAM MARSH is a translator, poet, and fiction writer who lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

JOHN O'NEILL is a twenty-three year old student at the University of Toronto.

LAWRENCE RUSSELL has published two volumes of plays and is currently working on a novel.

RICHARD SIMAS lives in Montréal where he makes a living as a clown/mime.

AUDREY THOMAS's most recent book is *Two in the Bush and Other Stories* (New Canadian Library, 1982).

SEÁN VIRGO was born in Malta in 1940 and emigrated to Canada in 1966. He now lives on Saltspring Island in B.C. and teaches at the University of Victoria.

DERK WYNAND is author of the book *One Cook, Once Dreaming.*

The Canada Council has announced that Ray Ellenwood is recipient of the Council's 1981 Translation Prize for *Entrails* (Coach House Press), Ellenwood's translation into English of 26 dramatic pieces by Québec writer Claude Gauvreau. Two of these pieces, "Petrouchka", and "The Shadow on the Hoop" appeared in *PRISM 20:3.*

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