

Yesterday and Today

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What is chronology? It was all the one time in that town. The seasons were as exciting every year, events ruptured the equanimity of the place and things changed. R. began playing only with boys and she took up reading and watching from the window.

(Before – hit, stung, by a wet cricket ball.)

Those summer nights by the pool, with several families, plates of beetroot on checked tablecloths. At night, the ducks swam in among the reeds and the children hid in the rhododendrons.

Saturday afternoon tennis for the adults, the children roaming bored on the oval. Boredom till it chokes, boredom on the oval, in the car, in the bedroom, in the street and outside the post-office. Sunday boredom in the lounge room, catching flies in the bay window.

A tall skinny kid, questionably female, standing, not so much gawky as still, and staring. Walking the straight road to school and stopping suddenly, alarmed, appalled, "haven't combed my hair, how could it possibly happen, I am slipping," like feeling unwashed.

Looking at the hedge alongside the Bank, beside it, ground cover looking like a bed. B., simple or crazy, said there were fairies in it and had one in her cupped hands. B. had strange ideas, she believed that when she thought about a boy she loved, red hearts came out of her head, at the top. Suddenly feeling so stupid, "how can I be so stupid as to even look at the hedge."

Squatting down on the footpath for hours looking at pebbles, their different sizes. Later sometime, at the beach, her mother said, "to see the world in a grain of sand and heaven in a wildflower, hold infinity in the palm of your hand and eternity in an hour."

Looking at the funnel-web spiders in the chemist shop window. A young girl had died.

Sitting on the benches in the women's dressing sheds watching them undress and dress under towels.

When standing at the lookouts staring into the valleys, the trees shimmered and it was difficult to focus.

School, adorable place, sublime pine trees to sit under like little rabbits with the teacher. The serious business of academic success and failure (mental arithmetic). A new room with venetians, no sun, a lamp and fold-down desk and every night to spend. Mr. White, red faced, joking and serious about arithmetic at the front door.

Blood on the front steps, someone had been in a fight.

Athletic success rewarded by further training with large, swift boys – seeing them tear off into the distance and feeling so tired.

Friendship in the gardening class with a gangly, round-faced boy who was knitting himself a pair of underpants at home. She defended him in a fight and he asked her to be his farmer's wife.

Coming home, stomping on the big brown leaves at the top of the hill, feeling slightly cold and sweating from jumping around. Staring at the horse with its huge, soft brown eyes (father-eyes) and feeling sorry for this sensitive creature.

Grandma across the line, she sang the old songs with a warble and played the piano, squeezing in beside the table. Grandpa sang the Internationale, standing, hand on heart.

Nights spent looking at the fires creeping up the valley – like the nights looking at the Aurora Borealis, the sputnik and the cracker-night bonfires where the housekeeper rolled in the grass with her fiancé.

Falling off the fence unexpectedly and feeling strange inside, walking home but somehow less and less able to, lying on the grass verge, (death was close but seemed so far away).

Sitting in bed sick with a green emu egg. Three minutes later it dropped and broke.

Glasses of lemonade at night whilst looking out past the tall sewer outlet in the backyard, to the dark sky. Sometimes lightning quivering right across the window.

She wore a sweater under her tunic and rubber boots. Under one of the pines in the cold, a girl said she'd seen A.'s father kissing Mrs. X. in the grocer's.

Silent nights with her mother and brother by the fire, a blue cup smashed on the kitchen wall and sobbing in the bedroom. The mother said, "I took you both in my arms one night as he left and said, 'we'll always be waiting for you'."

Walking in the sun, she thought, "doing badly at school doesn't matter understanding is the main thing."

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Walking and walking at night.

On a bike at the shops and an English gent with short trousers steps up and asks, "Would you have a few shillings for a meal?"
"no."

Walking up the lane in the dark, a gate is flung open and an English gent steps out and asks, "Would you have a few shillings for a meal?"
"no."

Walking very late, under the aqueduct is a car on fire. She looks and walks up the hill to the phone, the brandy muffles her voice. The police come and the fire engines come. She stood on the concrete bridge and watched.

Sitting at the desk under the lamp, thinking. What to do, what to do now, how to be. Things are changing, slipping off, there is a sense of madness – not sleeping, not eating.

Driving in the afternoon, already slightly drunk, she leaned on the door and went slow. The car was warm like a rocking cradle.

Walking round the block, quickly because of the cold. Working in the library. Loneliness isn't the problem, she thinks.