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Quirkily Swayed by Whim

Don Diespecker

Earthrise, Thora,
New South Wales, Australia

"Principal rivers—there *are* none. Principal mountains—I'm on the only one, but I don't think it's got any name. Principal towns—why, what *are* those creatures, making honey down there? They can't be bees—nobody ever saw bees a mile off, you know—" and for some time she stood silent, watching one of them that was bustling about among the flowers, poking its proboscis into them, "just as if it was a regular bee," thought Alice.

—Lewis Carroll¹

HAPPY SUMMER days² ought to be just that & while these ones had been they now were wet wet wet & the gloried Bellinger too high for canoeing just yet & in a fine sunbreak I preludially potted on my furtherout wall beyond the old fine one ramparting it too & wearing a ratbag white lab coat you know the sort of thing refound scrunched in the back of the wardrobe when youre out of clean clothes anyway there I was on the sopping banks the flash new river dancing by hugely in full rollick & glistening in bright sunlight after a nearflood & Id hung an old stethoscope around my neck for its a good swatter of monstrous robber flies huge mossies maddening gnats overfed midges & other fiendish critters dipterous doing the job nicely without breaking limbs nor unduly drawing blood mine when I heard a curious murmur from somewhere behind & glancing round craftily all prescient saw itinerant stickybeak tourists riverbankpoised dimly perceiving agog & aghast & I thought why as well not & so casually interconnecting I devilishly began to auscultate the bestview laidback wall while also winning twinkled sparkles of sidewayspeered peripheral awarenesses to note with rumbustious good humour stifled a trifle to prevent a wall shakedown that showtime had elevated to nonplussing for the troubled riparian wretches over the water as chortled merriment turned to gasps of the angustia kind while I whizzed about in full busyness as if attending a group of bonzer stones in the mode therapeutic & with respectful soothing that also admired their fine multiformity for if ever there were a gravity wall coherently clustered perched collectively & neatly dressed dinkly this surely was it when all at once I heard a sort of whiffled chorus in which I curiously could distinguish individual parts Now look here sir dammit and Do you mind sir & so forth & then good grief after a stuttering start or two I cheerily heard the reintegrate welling of Glazunovs Autumn & dumbfounded listened much further until I tell you Starwars borrowed this and ET has too oh there were so many musics so many voices one of them rising from a perched ant stylite & also this thinsounding yet bigchorused group reading what Id read minutes before riverbankeasy the 8th part of Looking Glass this little old sentinel Im sure he was old said Ill swear he did always Giddyay cobber owyergowin awright fear not pray Im the moderator all of today & I tell you what added this ant give us

a shout when next you read Carroll well come & read with you or just watch the words while we do the sounds so while I bent low to gain reassurance another new voice resistless I realised in a moment was saying There is really only one of us anyway chaps & an antheated reply smartly snappily Chaps chaps are waterdragons in humanspeak for goshsakes then the moderator seeming to sigh rolled a twinkling eye & noted serenely Sir there is really only one formicarium in the world were hugely big & languages all we know quite well just listen pray do & sample our clubs & societies too we have arts we have science & all in between you name it we know it our knowings supreme we all specialise in something you know do please attend & listen just here & a rich voice earnestly trippingly said Durrells Justine so carefully drawn would you say truly shes lost & forlorn as a panting voice faltering said take it easy dont go crazy Im todays laureate hazy pour another red ferment me dear old dasher dear old gent so I thought these little folk collectively the biggest mind that is & can read my tiny one too & the voice said yes we can enjoy us pray do so as I glanced from my mind forebodingly forbiddingly to laugh in my redwine Shiraz unrestrainedly & leap from serious quickly harebrainedly & also quite outright by my roilaway river shlding down shwiftly wooshing by wuffily oh the words sorry are there big girls in tight sweaters singing this moodily ah no just the one voice alone for twas me all the sounds smarter than I could foresee & here this is it Ill admit it at once those sounds from a blurred bunch of ants out le monde yet here as much en masse as they all were singly so perfectly formed I wonder have you noticed how words are like music if lightly you sing them oh sorry & this surely old moderator watched my slipping persona & sang on sweetly antennae turned tweakily ah this life oh & it was at this point that I newly remembered the quibelled triad on the banks of my river anguine all jaggedly different one from tother I mean all objectified heavily in unlight uptight roles tormented & seemingly suffering doloros doleful while Id been espied engrossed in antics serious ah the pain they seemed to feel entirely from what they saw which merely was my insufferable lightness of being & I say murmured an ant aspirationally Steady on old boy a voice I might add strongly fricated voiceless & plosive as the little one urgingly asked Whats your policy whats your purpose I mean we know where were going but why do you sir make plain walls lacking epopoeia when you might do as we do more slightly absurd and celebrate the world entirely joyfully & I was about to explain all indignant that I was but said I dunno & the larrikin prompted what would it be if you did know then over my shoulder I glanced once again at a fiery sun setting quite earthward to rest wavering to the still forest as transfixed I saw further more to the east where also I starkly could see lighter tops of the sundown ridges all golden in the mellow afternoon the forest all darker much lower down under the changing light dark boundary white trunks loomed up over the blackening river but closer to me in the pool there yet remained that eerie glitter of gold tops reflected & through that waving surface now cut through with fingers of skylighted blue all of it running away smooth then waved to the bends & eternalled away gone swirling past over turtles perch eels mullet polliwog frogs a drove of tearaway platypus an odd bankside snake homeward wending cormorants beating upstream king parrots crying creekwards insect billions calling it a day in riverland as inhaled exhaled in wonder inspired grokking how well little ones had a bigger knowing of us than did we of them & was immediately startled by a wholeness of chorus Sir polymaths all are we for it was quite simultaneous spontaneous you see when the old moderator smilingly said May I present an emcee of note who wants you to hurry & move to your boat and I did Im tho

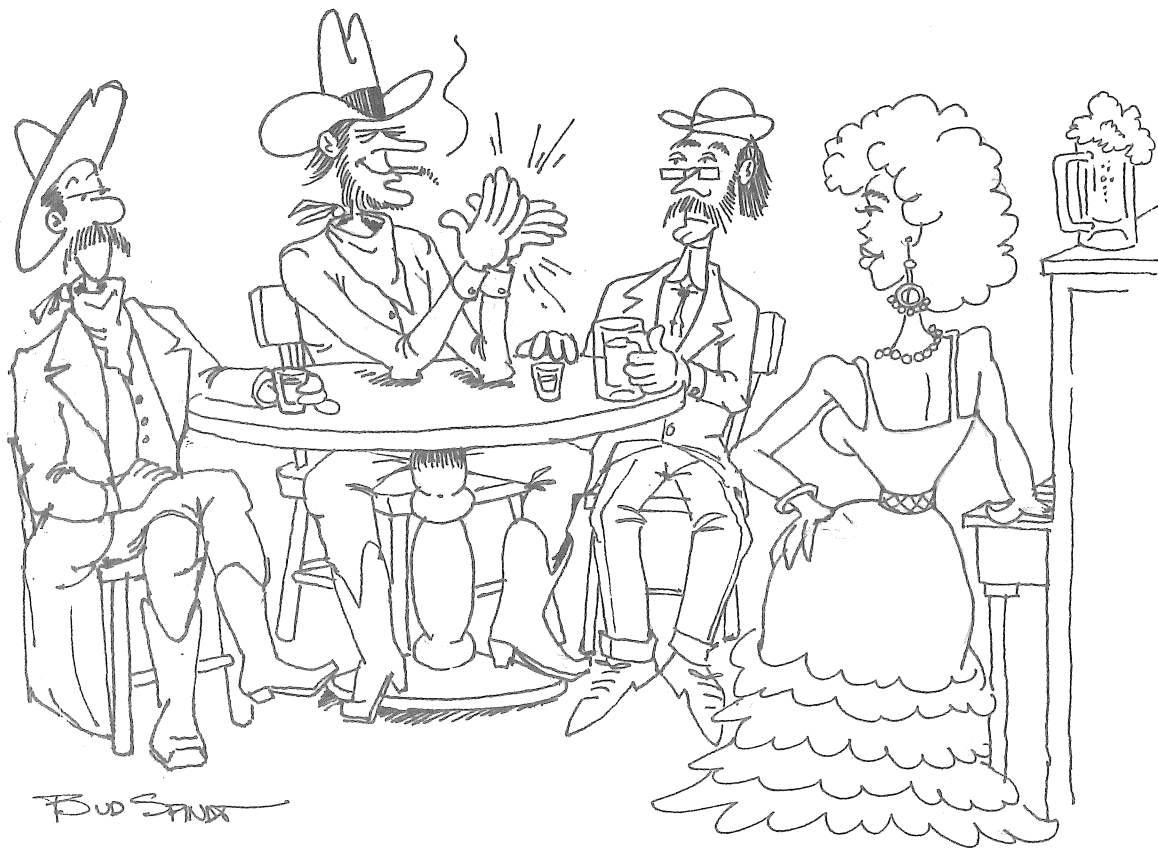
thorry lisped this master I have a lithp and I urgently cried oh pleath dont be
 thorrey my hearings thatithfactory and this larrikin spluttered Quip me no
 quirkt thir I beg you clothe your eyeth do jutht relacth while I chath on to you
 I prithee do tell if that wath twuly you that nearwy fell on the moonlight thward
 a glath of wine upon your head while danthing to muthic of long ago it was I
 said it was how did you know oh becauthe there ith only one of you that would
 & while there were otherth elthewhair ith twue onwy you juth then hummed
 nithely in tune There may be twouble ahead but while thereth moonwight &
 muthic & wove & womanthe leth fathe the muthic & danth well what could I
 say so nodded instead thinking its the way that it is right now thats the way
 that it is oh when we see what we once saw so long ago in ways it was currently
 easily so as closer to my canoe I tottered & stumbled paused right beside it
 muttered & mumbled while another said shrewdly you have a place a spot from
 where the world looks best Ill bet I do I reacted I have a housefavorite spot the
 spots one window pane by the glass sliding door in the light side of the riverfaced
 walls of my lookingglassed house & you must go up a step to the kitchen &
 move around a bit & sort of line yourself up on that level & find just the right
 place to see so when youre there youll certainly know for in that bright focus
 you may peek onto sometimes into the greygreen sparkling broad stream swirl
 away down in early sunlight a little picture at that distance framed by pane
 note the world all of it shining the live world that is oh ripper goodoh trilled he
 chirpily I did enjoy that & can even se the future here a bit large brown ants in
 bright blue singlets chorusing readings of these lines in odd places we can see it
 all you know the whiteblue planet over even your view too & to settle you sir
 said he boldly such parts that we are are all the more wholely & such much are
 we you can actually see a range so extraordinary it reaches infinity we use your
 electricity to compute of necessity & process it always in a mind that is free now
 sir see where you be & eyeswide saw uplifted gyred & all swaying millions of
 ants & whirligig beetles whod timbered & pullied a roped drum whim used all
 my bits to rig it up well & pulled the boat swaying so awfully high in green trees
 waving all of them hauling me into the sky Youre in the whimswing of things
 were busier than bees & all laughed squeakily shrilling to me grinnings to all
 grinnings from me & all at once piped an ant in my ear We suppose you might
 have another unusual spot up here now here in midair & er we knew it would
 be quite this that youd see sir the worlds spottedness markedly so pretend youre
 now launched happy & free surging downriver off to the sea in the new scene
 unframed all through the trees musical images what can this be & those uplift
 voices welled up anew la de dah falderal isnt it true & Im sure it was together
 we read in a white knighted evening forever it seemed:

Ever drifting down the stream—
 Lingering in the golden gleam—
 Life what is it but a dream?³

Notes

1. Lewis Carroll. (1871). *Through the looking glass and what Alice found there* (Chapter III, "Looking-glass insects"). London: Macmillan.
2. The first words of this piece, "Happy summer days," are the last three words of Lewis Carroll's (1865) *Alice's adventures in Wonderland*, London: Macmillan.
3. From the terminal poem to Lewis Carroll's (1871) *Through the looking glass and what Alice found there*. London: Macmillan.





THE SOUND OF ONE HIRED HAND CLAPPING