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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 Carroll

HAPPY SUMMER days 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 refund scrunched in the back of the wardrobe when you’re 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 sparks 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 redintegrate 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 Gidday 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 goshakes 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 railaway river shiliding down swiftly 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 I'd 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 urgently 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 & eartenned away gone
swirling past over turtles perch eels mullet polliwog frogs a drove of tear away
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 th
thorry lisped this master I have a lithp and I urgently cried oh pleath dont be thorry my hearings thatithfactory and this larrikin spluttered Quip me no quirkth thir I beg you clothe your eyeth do jutht relacht 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 beacuthe 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 wholly & 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 & pulled 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 & or 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?

Notes

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