

## VENTRILOQUIST and Other Poems

### Ventriloquist

As a young girl in North Dakota, I didn't imagine  
Two kids and a husband.  
Add a boy's last name to my first name and pretend we would marry.  
Dream of a big house, a white picket fence and a fancy kitchen.

I wanted to be a ventriloquist.  
I had my own dummy in a suitcase.  
Played the piano, clarinet, tuba, xylophone and oboe.  
Dreamt of being a shining star in a tiny town.

When I grew up, I had string of personal losses and a pile of debt.  
Smoked pot and could have drunk myself to death.  
Drove too fast and could have crashed on the side of the road.

But instead of crashing and burning and dying,  
I studied Thanatology.  
Sold hand-made aprons at the Pike Place Market in Seattle.  
Sang in Swahili on TV in Uzbekistan.  
Rode a camel at dawn around the pyramids in Egypt.  
Touched, with white gloves, Michelangelo's marble in the Louvre in Paris.  
Drove international students through the South Australian outback.  
Hiked Mt. Hayachine, despite fog and pouring rain, in northern Japan.  
Walked from Gdansk to Gdynia along the Baltic Sea in Poland.  
Was awed by the Citadel and Umayyad Palace in Amman, Jordan.  
Traveled with Filipino nuns from Tel Aviv, Israel to Hebron, Palestine.  
Swam in the rain in the Black Sea.  
Swam in the Suva Harbor in Fiji.  
Floated in the Dead Sea in Israel.

My years span country roads, ancient bridges, villages and vistas.  
I didn't settle for being a wife or a ventriloquist.  
But, "Hey, what's next?" I wonder aloud, trying to keep my lips from moving.

### Who Are You?

Long, long ago I was Scheherazade.  
The thousand and one nights came and went.  
I saved no one.

Then I was Obedient One.  
Following. Footsteps. Fluttering.  
A gypsy moth.  
Captured.

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I could be a Golden Orb.  
The Australian sun.  
Intense. Unrelenting.  
Scorching the pates of old pale men.

But, I am the sound of the oboe.  
Raspy reed. Arabic melody.  
Hear me.

Listen now.  
For tomorrow I shall be the ting of a triangle.

I shall be forever and ever.  
They will call me- Christabella.

### **Where Are You From?**

I come from a white washed cottage  
that smells of lamb stew, dried rose petals,  
mugs of milky tea and wool blankets.

Poor, but rich.  
Small, but huge.  
Cold and wet.  
Smoky peat fire.

I come from late night music,  
ancient stories and early morning mist.  
I come from the dead center of a folk tale.

I come from the land of sheep and chickens,  
gulls and tiny blue wildflowers.  
The land of green landscape and blue ocean.  
White sheep dots.  
Wild surf curves.

I come from the earth.  
The hot center.

My Irish ancestors cooled me,  
molded me  
and told me the story  
that would become my life.

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### What Do You Do?

I still have to go to work.  
The garbage still needs to go out.  
The dog needs to go for a walk.  
I need a massage.  
The organic vegetables need to be picked up  
because it is Wednesday.  
The phone rings and it is AT&T.  
They ask if I want to change my long distance carrier.

Nothing has changed. Everything has changed.  
It doesn't matter. But it does.  
She's gone. But she isn't.  
I said good-bye. But I didn't.

If I listen carefully,  
the hummingbird will whisper her name.

It's my job to listen.  
It's my job to write this down.

### Not a Poet!

Why can't I be normal?  
Like a plumber.  
Or a nurse.

I memorized every word:  
*By the shores of Gitche Gumee.*  
*Of the shining Big-Sea-Water,*  
*Stood Nokomis, the old woman<sup>1</sup>*

I recited phrase by phrase:  
*'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves*  
*Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:*  
*All mimsy were the borogoves<sup>2</sup>*

Sensitive.  
Loner.  
Read Tolsoy for fun.  
Favorite composer: Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov.

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Question: Where do women go on vacation?

Answer: Hawaii. Acapulco. Provence.

Question: Where do I go on vacation?

Answer: Poland. Gaza Strip. Uzbekistan.

Question. What's wrong with this picture?

Answer: Don't let your baggage determine your travel.

I like to write poems without my brain.

Just with my fingers, eyes and heart.

Serendipity...Sympatico...Scheherazade.

Euphoric...Epiphany...Ephemeral.

<sup>1</sup> Hiawatha by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

<sup>2</sup> Jabberwocky by Lewis Carroll