

dolly



and other poems by
johnmichael simon

Poems copyright © 2011 by
Johnmichael Simon

All rights reserved
Printed by Cyclamens and Swords Publishing
P.O. Box 21, Metulla, ISRAEL

www.cyclamensandswords.com

ISBN No. 978-965-7503-058

No part of this publication may be reproduced
in whole or in part, or stored in a retrieval
system, or transmitted in any form
or by any means, electronic, mechanical,
photocopying, recording or otherwise
without written permission of the author.

Cover illustration: Helen Bar-Lev

Johnmichael Simon was born in England, grew up in South Africa and has lived in Israel since 1963. His poetry collections include *Sonatina*, *Bordwinot*, *Silly Wishes*, as well as two collaborations with Helen Bar-Lev; *Cyclamens and Swords* and *The Muse in the Suitcase*. His poetry has been awarded numerous prizes and is published widely in print and website collections. Johnmichael is chief editor of *Cyclamens and Swords Publishing* and editor of the *Voices Israel Poetry Anthology*.

CONTENTS

Dolly.....	1
Abrasha's woman.....	3
Enrico's mother.....	4
The divorcees daughter.....	5
Luverly day.....	6
Clavier.....	7
Cold turkey.....	8
Chance meeting.....	9
The telepathy of well worn garments.....	10
Five am. Everywhere.....	11
Linoleum cutout soldiers.....	12
Missing.....	13
Short Steps.....	14
Roadside poetess.....	15
The nurse.....	17
Robbie.....	19
Tough cookie.....	20
Hurrah longevity!.....	21
Oh my cheesis.....	22
Akila and I.....	23
Postprandial revenge.....	25
I dream of mother.....	26
Lilach.....	27
Sorry.....	29
In an Irish cemetery.....	30
She.....	31
Words with lost meanings.....	33

DOLLY

*Got myself a crying, talking, sleeping, walking, living doll –
Cliff Richard, 1960*

As soon as you see her you'll recognize she's one of them
by the bruises on her padded thigh, burns on her cotton rag arms
undone stitches on her forehead, hair full of knots. Lacquer
peeling and when you turn her upside down she leaks

secrets, confessions, life stories, all come pouring out,
the cheating, the nights she threw all those bottles and needles
into the garbage, sure-bet horses that ran last, lotto numbers
that never came up, unanswered phone calls in the dark,

cops, lawyers and social workers with ears tuned to other
stations, how they screwed her, how she never had a chance
to tell her real story until now. And you wonder, can she be
repaired? Silicone, plastic pellets, injection of recycled innocence

surgery to bypass the heart-place where weariness and
disappointment clog her fibers, hardened fabric and sponge
that once were soft and pliant. Maybe you could regress her
to some pastel organza and taffeta-skirted place in childhood?

It's hopeless they say, she's too far gone. Don't waste your
time. You might spend months, years, fixing her up, carefully
scraping off old paint, grime, replacing stuffing, stitching places
where she's coming apart. For what? After you've comforted her

dressed her in shiny new clothes, paid for the best psychiatrists, then what? You'll wake up one day to find she's drunk, overdosed, slit her wrists without a word of explanation. But compassion overtakes you, you're drawn to this role of rescuer

remember a sick cat you took in off the streets, how he became fat and sleek, would curl up on your bed and purr. And there's this emptiness inside you, deep and dark, going down so far that you could spend the rest of your life just trying to fill it

with any whimper or tear that comes by, any broken doll's heart that just might be repaired and made whole again to delve down into that place where the two of you can rest, snug and warm listening to that sleeping cat purring away at the foot of the bed.

ABRASHA'S WOMAN

The mother of his son was deaf in one ear
and with the other she refused to listen to him.
She had five telephones, each a different color
and all were connected to her brother in Minsk.

She would talk to her brother behind closed doors
but when her man called, she yelled in front of
the child. She divorced him at four in the morning
on a crabby strip of toilet paper torn from her pain.
I don't love you any more, what will become of the child,
you have tried so hard to be a father to him.

She made love to her psychiatrist, they sat in facing
rocking chairs masturbating at each other in Russian.
Her tears painted footpaths down her face powder,
their son wiped them away. Every Monday and Wednesday
she would practice yoga at Madame Rubinstein's,
lying back on the Afghan rug she brushed shoulders,
knees with other unhappy women. She liked the feeling
of sharing and Madame's herb tea which had not changed
for ninety years.

She is glad the alimony comes in on time every month
needing to devote herself full time to the child who she feels
sure that as he only has one parent, needs his
mother's full attention.

ENRICO'S MOTHER

Hands flowered in suds she washes each plate
carefully, different plates, different kitchens,
the hands always the same, efficient impersonal,
the few square feet of floor scrubbed repeatedly
until the tiles shine with age, love's duty never forgotten.

This is what she knows, these plates, these pots,
these clothes to be folded, laundered, folded again,
each child a man now, yet held on to by this
arthritic bond of duty.

So close, they disdain her attentions, turn their heads
away as she retrieves their discarded garments,
empties the pockets, eyes unfolding scraps of paper
for anything missed, a clue to their misdemeanors
perhaps, an overdrawn bank account.

Urging them to fly the nest she calls them home,
just one more time she thinks cleaning again,
folding again, cooking again, just one more time.

And then she thinks of her own mother crippled
with pain and resentment alone in her tiny room
bare of old furniture licking the cracked spittle
of her years bereft of all save those drying patches of scorn.

This time she thinks, I'll build my own life, do the things
I've dreamed. Soon, she thinks, washing the last plate,
folding the last garment, switching off the last light. Soon.

THE DIVORCEE'S DAUGHTER

She's five minutes to fifteen
a vagabond, an angel
locked into pop-idol, rubber-legged
philosophies, a railroad of steel strings
reverberating between her piercing
and her not so pretty graffiti tattoo

She's long outstripped her mother
who trails behind picking up her flimsies
like a taxi driver on way to a laundromat

But she's cool. Has her own rules. Cuddles
animals, doesn't smoke or drink
and then she smiles her understanding
into yours at some shared thought or melody
like a sliver moon coming up and
in a single night swelling to fullness

Etched on its glowing face a recollection
of your own adolescence you imagined
you had abandoned

L U V E R L Y D A Y

g'mornin evry buddy,
 luverly day init
 grubsup, new it dincha
 ears yaws chinchy stop cryin willya
 ears yaws fistuk not much teeth left havwy
 ow kay piefays ears yaws awl sloppy
 likya likit

oo wunts yogert?
 caws yudu
 flix cmun that's away liddlun
 ear yewar kluky nut to
 kwik now, doan eetit awl atwans
 or yewl vomitit upagin

wers guli, guli, guli wer aryu
 probly gonto slip unda dabed
 guli, guli, grubsup
 o ear yuwar guli atsa gudboy
 chipi stop fitin wid klucky

kids sed day wer cumin yesday
 din day, but day din cum did day
 dats kids for yer
 kun giva shit reely

ears flix, ello flix, ears yaws
 shitme baks act inup agin
 tink arl gobak to bedda bit
 den arl kleenup dowsa bit
 maybe kiddsel cumter day
 luverly day init

CLAVIER

Skipping, he plays white then black
 black then white, now he caresses,
 now deep inside
 my heart, pumping its metronome
 slave to his every whim
 trills, frills, arpeggios,
 not a single missed beat
 his fingers so assured

 the way he touches me – meticulous!
 as all the while his quill scrapes on
 recording
 my every gasp, each sensation
 blending, fanning out, blending

Ardent, careful lover
 so sure he can light my inner flame
 and he does, again and again
 do you know, this morning
 I had so many climaxes, I lost
 count, each time I thought it was
 over, then he touched me once more
 sure, confident.

 yesterday, I overheard him
 espousing my virtues to a friend—
 someone called Goldberg

I can't even hint to you
 what happened then

C O L D T U R K E Y

maybe i was your friend
once
now i'm a small longing
orbiting you
slowly in white and gray
as you sit on the porch steps
smoking
stub out your cigarette
in a saucer
the wire mesh door bangs
shut on its spring
as you return to your boredom
dishes, floor
the pile of days, chores
performed over

you're thinking of me
i know
i can feel it, c'mon
give me a wink, a lift
of your hand
dammit
i'm bored, up here
all day
hidden behind books
old newspapers
c'mon
let me out of this glass
prison, just once

i hate you

CHANCE MEETING

*You can be in a room with a hundred people
the professor of psychology had said
yet your eye automatically picks one out from the crowd.*

*Luring your attention from everything else
this is how it happens, a magnet, you will not miss its pull
it's a phenomenon well observed and documented
but unfortunately not validated scientifically.*

She was wearing a kind of hippie dress, you remember
there was nothing special about her, but
you noticed her immediately as she came in.

The dress was loose fitting, pastel shaded, knitted perhaps
Did she notice you? She was talking to a woman in a blue suit.
Yes you think, yes that's it, sun coming out behind clouds.

A perfect spring morning, birds, the rest of your life ahead.

Omigod, something to say, any damn thing, it doesn't matter,
move man, move, perhaps she'll leave. I'm sorry, excuse me
sorry, could you please let me through. At last. Hello, haven't
we met somewhere? (you unimaginative imbecile)

Yes, this is the way we'll tell the grandchildren

THE TELEPATHY OF WELL WORN GARMENTS

We're driving when I remember
someone we met last month
and you say, I was just thinking
about him, as we smile, getting used
To dovetailing each other, how shared
years have fashioned us into a comfortable
garment, two plain two purl until we
reach a loose end or a knot

Both of us going off on our own
ruminations, me about delicious fish
and chip places we've eaten at, you
probably drawing some mental sketch

Of the grandchildren, when we click-clack
against each other like two old needles
over some woolly impediment, you turning
the air conditioning higher, me switching

That idiot on the radio off, as you
complain how I always cut people off
in mid sentence and I reply that the
world is full of inconsiderate fools

Then you raise your index finger warning
and I know exactly what you're going
to say next as you lower the cooling
and I turn the weather report back on

Repeating in unison, tomorrow
it will be raining all day, with that certain
smile, each wondering, I thought of that
first - or did I?

FIVE AM. EVERYWHERE

Today cranes gaggled in clusters, wheeling then reforming into arrows heading northwards. A girl with dark hair wearing a clutch of explosives making her feel heavy or pregnant would have seen them as in a vision, wishing it would be quick, painless. Five children under blankets did not awaken as the intruder slipped between them and in a million homes not far from Tokyo, Earth Hour passed unrecognized. At a gas station near Paris a pump attendant with Michelin across his overalls handed over the cash to a man with a stocking over his head while in downtown Chicago those queuing outside a smartphone store shuffled feet in the five am. cold. Viewed from outside the yellow cherries in their shrink-wrapped pack seemed perfect, unblemished like the pale oversized moon rising over the rooftops of Nagasaki. Survivors listening to news broadcasts heard that no effort was being spared to return the situation to normal.

LINOLEUM CUTOUT SOLDIERS

newspaper soldiers, folded into triangles,
 rectangles with exhaust pipe arms, legs, marching,
 marching into valleys, across borders
 drums beating tattoos, marching, a rhythmic
 cranking of un-oiled hinges, left, right, left, right
 marching, uniforms camouflaged with disjointed
 slogans, marching, blind, stern faces

set in resolution, fear, smoke, shrapnel
 blades whirling overhead, marching,
 marching, drums beating, Sousa,
 Shostakovich, twisted twitching cavalry
 chunks of bent and burning iron, Guernica
 marching, marching

tin soldiers, a child lies on a carpet
 arranging riflemen, platoons, tanks, squadrons
 mouthing military music, bang he says, bang
 bang, soldiers fall, topple, bang, some continue
 marching across the carpet

into his head, his dreams, fatherless,
 shivering into marching dreams,
 mother arranging flowers in a jam jar

MISSING

Last night
 she made love
 to the bedclothes
 again
 immersed herself
 in dark warmth
 arms around a pillow
 toes clenched against
 Her rough mohair gown
 teeth gritted
 she imagined you
 as you were
 that last time

Last night
 last thousand
 nights
 she has slept
 alone
 not knowing
 why
 you disappeared
 without a trace

Some nights
 she searches
 places
 for a glimpse
 of you
 Anthony
 Jonathan
 Felipe
 Joshua
 Christopher
 Julian
 Robert
 Jose
 Billy
 Marco

SHORT STEPS

People who love and lose
slide away on
the breeze, faint echoes
of the Tennessee waltz, they
haunt my eyes
laugh back in the
sweep of the dance

The beat of the accordion
stirs them as they hold
each other formally
into the rhumba,
the tango, look swiftly
this way and that
to the lilt of it
like dominoes
black and silver
in sharp pointed steps

I choke back grief
on a drink with
a cherry, with an olive
with a color-blind wet glow
of tears in the pit of me

I swore I'd never be like
them but I'm dancing
alone in the empty music
can't remember my moves

ROADSIDE POETESS

*On such a night as this
 When no moon lights your way to me,
 I wake, my passion blazing,
 My breast a fire raging, exploding flame
 While within me my heart chars.*
 (Ono no Komachi circa 850AD)

It's culture free, we live in America. McArthur,
 MacDonald, macadam. Madam please move your
 vehicle we've got a road to repair here, right where
 the midnight sun burns holes in your eyes. What's those
 butterflies in your hair? Move that damn pony cart
 sister, we've got picks, steamrollers, tar molten and boiling,
 our men are laying down rows of red and white cones,
 warnings, work to do and only six hours till the dawn.

Progress, that's what we call it here baby, equal opportunity,
 each man for himself. You've got nothing like that back in
 slant-eye land. Here the lone ranger can be president,
 Rambo governor of Orange County, count them lady
 fifty one hamburgers on blue and red background, swing that
 shovel, heave that pick, watch out for falling tar,
 we've got mouths to feed, kids to send to school.

Once there were rice paddies, once there were jasmine-lined pathways, ponds with goldfish, once there were picnics under the trees, water lilies, plum blossoms, chestnut nibbles, green tea bowls. Once there was a place to sail away over the blue horizon, over the rainbow, bubbling streams of rose water, goose dumplings.

We don't write love songs here lady. No time for dreams. Move that goddamn dream of yours or it'll get buried in steaming asphalt. This is America. Go home lady. Go write your poem in a safe place. Five hours to dawn and another four until the bar opens.

THE NURSE

The catheter is extracted
By means of a syringe
Inserted into the rubber tube
Which empties the liquid from the balloon
Trapping it inside the bladder
Enabling removal via the urethra

Like a skinned eel or dead fish

And how she had cried and remembered
And tried to forget before he was injured
In the war and sent back home
A relic, something to be laughed at

Or pitied, the subject of public house
Humor, lying there the whole time trying to preserve
His dignity, remembering old times
When after her day shift at the hospital

They had gone dancing

Holding each other as close as bark
Around a tree; now she was only needed
By all those old men in the ward
With their prostate and bladder problems

Requiring a change of diaper
A fresh bag, a word of reassurance
She felt cold and full of emptiness
Tried to reach out to him in the bed
Past the steady rhythm of his breathing

When he did not move
She hunched her back
Placed her palms between her thighs
Then tried to sleep
But no amount of comfort under blankets

Could warm her up

ROBBIE

He's hyperactive, sixty seven, into his third full time relationship since burying Ruthie (not counting a liberal sprinkling of one or two night stands, checking the oil level)

Everything works! He screams over the mobile she's amazing, a fireworks display in bed, totally undemanding, we're off to Cyprus, Turkey, the Dead Sea, a jazz festival, a seafood restaurant

(I remember Ruthie, God rest her soul)
My wife's giving me a hard time again
he would pant over the beeping connection -
and Sylvie, how she would drape her arms

around his neck at one of their little
birthday banquets, kiss his balding top,
empty his pocketbook on expensive silk
nightwear that later she would wear in some

New York hotel where she went with her boss
(on business of course) as he phones me frantically
I love her so much, she's a flower, a songbird
but her headaches, we haven't made it in weeks

He's getting used to living on his own. Last
weekend he didn't leave the house - but they speak
seven or eight times a day on the phone, she's mad
at me, he says, I shouldn't have told her about

that Russian bassoonist, but I'm making amends
 next week we're off to Tuscany, she's so wonderful
 but there's this divorcee I met at the fitness center
 she's coming over for dinner tonight. Truthfully
 I don't know what I want. How's everything
 with you. Got to go now, she's on the other line.

TOUGH COOKIE

No I'm not into your protocol
 don't wannabe part of your photo call
 I'm no look alike, no totem pole
 no tinkertoy, no peg in hole
 don't mix me up with those flirty girls
 don't fix me up don't twirl my curls

Cos I'm right out of your ball league mister
 make no mistake, no shikse sister
 I'm my own muffin from my own oven
 my fragrant future I alone will govern
 so go flex your muscles in the other direction
 I don't give a bagel for your erection

HURRAH LONGEVITY!

Maybe it's the influx of vitamins,
 or the medical personnel salary hike,
 the compulsory retirement regulations,
 Feldenkrais, organic vegetables,
 early diagnostic techniques
 or warnings on tobacco packages
 that has caused this abundance
 of white hair in the land

so that when you walk out
 of a shopping center and find yourself
 by mistake (or by Freudian slip)
 in a senior citizens retirement community

there's no way out, back to privacy
 from this maze; activities are posted on
 the walls, starting Monday 6:30 am. aerobics,
 exercise bicycles, yoga, early
 Mesopotamian pottery and of course
 Feldenkrais, he's everywhere, urging,
 bending, reciting his favorite mantras,
 as bible scholars, basket weaving students
 rush past and you jump aside to avoid
 a clutch of wheelchair Olympic veterans

You're quickly integrated, everyone seems
 to know everyone, it's like a kibbutz,

no secrets here and despite the residences
 with larger places for couples, most of
 us are singles now—ah here's my apartment
 next to the Modigliani, you can't miss it,
 if I'm lonely I leave the door ajar
 so that people can pop in, view my collection
 of Oriental hand painted eggs

It already feels like I've been here all my life

OH MY CHEESE IS

come in bert to my rock fort
 squeeze your knees in
 this cheese is something that pleases
 the likes of yous and meses
 yalla voila you can do it
 smell's a bit high for you?
 gorgonzola man, better than gouda
 bedder dan cheddar you bet
 yeah that's good, squeeze up, cheese up
 don't do that you rat
 stop it I like it
 (haven't I met you somewhere?)
 let's play housey mousey
 I'll tickle your pickle
 c'mon just a little, a shtikel
 ok ok just taking the mickey out of you

AKILA AND I

A chiropractor tends to my back
 a priest to my dream interpretations
 two damsels tend to my appetites
 after my hairdresser leaves

They circle round like bees or egrets
 each tending to their allotted task
 I treat them at times with arrogance
 and when they cater to my wish
 for immortality – with royal benevolence

No one tends to the whole of me
 except Akila. She is dressed in white
 robe, headdress, gloves

Akila cares for the whole of me
 carefully she smoothes my wrinkles
 washes my face, combs my stringy hair
 winds linen around me until I almost
 disappear beneath her ministrations

When she is through she places beside me
 my scepter, my gold tankard, a loaf,
 a dish of corn and millet, some incense,
 a plaque bearing my name

As I prepare for my long journey
 to the museum

SPRING AGAIN

He's packing his tee shirts into his old suitcase
March crocuses pushing their way through the lawn
his autobiography's almost updated
he outlines a heart on the glass and he's gone

She passes the bakery, looks in the window
next week is his birthday, she'll order a cake
perhaps they could go for a drive in the country
a walk through the forest, a stroll by the lake

It's spring and she suddenly feels like explaining
these things she's been thinking, this weight in her chest
perhaps if she's tactful this time he'll allow her
to book them some counseling, it's for the best

She opens the door with a firm resolution
this time she'll be careful, won't say the wrong things
there's a heart in the dust on the glass of the mirror
and somewhere inside her a wistful tune stings

POSTPRANDIAL REVENGE

You are as enigmatic as coal
expressionless as the jibes you dig at me
poker-faced while sipping your pinot noir,
cutting into your chateaubriand, pinky raised
in just a hint of savoir-toute derision.

Oh that I could curl up inside a piece of hollow
pasta, hide myself inside your spaghetti bolognaise,
sail down your alimentary canal in my wet suit
Leica in hand, snapping everything, take it all
back to some editorial laboratory for analysis.

Turn of the tide. The Russian army at Berlin's gates,
flag waving crowd of gastric bacteria cheering the
demise of a dictator. And then the publication of
your secret diaries. A wiki of disclosures. That Ph.d.,
a plagiarist shame. Strings of disappointed lovers
deriding your premature ee-jay's. Your military
service - in a battle rations packing house.

There you go again between the pear helene and
cointreau, laughing at my mispronounced French,
my lowly hard-earned-yet-honest B.Ed. I'll get you
still, you rat. Impale you on a kibble stick. Feed you
to your snot nosed Pekinese. Watch him choke
on your sarcasm, eat grass, expel you on some
distant intersection. Never to be seen again.

OK. I'll drive home. You can sleep it off
in the back seat.

I DREAM OF MOTHER

In the storybooks of our lives
like in dreams
things are not always what they were
children become parents to
their fathers and mothers

My mother,
whom I father in different chapters,
appears and reappears
black tresses, serious, beautiful
winding a scarf around my head
to protect my ears from frostbite

I carry her on my back like
a sack of potatoes, laughing

She mouths words of comfort,
see you soon, don't forget
to write, rubs a soiled spot on my cheek
with spittle, then dashes off
across the road, without
looking left or right

And just when I think
I can catch her
she wisps and disappears
like a poem started
in a dream

On a cold, rainy day
under the trees
small crowd dispersing

LILACH

Perfectly dressed - a fashion magazine cover
 her blonde hair cheerful, Lilach sits at her counter
 set slightly below floor level so that waiting
 patients can view a beauty spot on her left breast

but it is her one-inch crimson lacquered
 fingernails that command center stage
 lightly caressing her keyboard they type in
 today's registrations, doctor's appointments
 referrals - all a busy hospital clinic's traffic
 handled with efficient traffic control aplomb

Two phones are attached to her ears, one
 plugged neatly over her tear-drop pendant
 earring, the other tucked between her right
 shoulder and cheek. Each call receives her
 courteous ten second allegro attention

Under Lilach's fingers pass mammographies
 chemo routines, common colds and colonoscopies
 they seem to leave no mark on her composure
 her gloss lipstick, face powder, mascara

At five o'clock exactly Lilach turns off the computer
 clicks on four-inch heels to catch the ten past
 five bus. At home she kisses the mezuzah on
 the door frame, showers, changes into jeans, starts to
 prepare supper for the twins aged eight

crippled when an enraged Palestinian drove a
stolen bus into a crowd of waiting passengers,
a photo of their father who was killed in that
attack, hangs protectively in the kitchen

Lilach bathes the twins, tucks them into bed
reads them a few pages from *The Little Prince*,
she changes into her oyster shell kimono-like
dressing gown, sits by her varnished dresser

carefully starts to repair tiny flaws on her nails

S O R R Y

they never said it
 not even once
 down the years
 of empty promises
 stale bread, cigarette butts
 lotto tickets
 cursing at 3 am
 rancid butter
 unwashed dishes

the most that emerged
 from their whiskey fumed throats
 once, on a five hour trip
 sleet blowing through broken windows
 no toilet stop, squeezing my legs
 old car rattling, spluttering
 no promised beach resort
 no summer holiday
 hail stinging
 eventually the car gave up
 out of gas

the most that emerged—
 perhaps we could have done it
 differently

it isn't even true, I just made it up
 the real things are buried in my desk
 third drawer down
 goodbye

IN AN IRISH CEMETERY

Breathing rain clouds into mud
grave stones in St. Mary's stand awash,
six thousand drenching days have cleansed
the dust and blood stains from his engraved
name and still she comes each Monday
when traffic sweeps its way towards
the town, shopkeepers unveil merchandise
and elevators rise packed with a new day's
busyness, cheer and hopes

Forget, forgive the days, they seem to say
as orders and accounts rush through the
corridors and streets. Schoolgirls long-skirted
tumble laughing from a yellow bus towards
the new day, hand-in-hand oblivious
of the enmity that yesterday lurked here

But she cannot. Head bowed, creased mother,
each Monday she brings her bunch of flowers
arranges the little lamp, the candles, the photograph
in its blurred Perspex frame. Returning home
she sits beside the empty hearth, pens a poem.
Hundreds of poems scratched with this bitter nib
engrave the letters of his loss
no drenching peace can wash away

S H E

She of slim figure, dark tresses
resides in my eye's camera
my quiet unanswered collection.

Usually I recognize her
by a certain quickness of breath,
a tightness of longing, as she
sips her espresso in Via Veneto,
washes some clothes in the Ganges,
a waitress, a stewardess
she assumes many identities
dressed in white, a model, a bride.

I saw her in khaki
hair gathered under a beret
holding a microphone to the lips
of a holocaust survivor. It was
independence day, I gasped at
the jumble of emotions.

Once in Palma, I followed her for hours
I was sure it was her, the way she hurried,
slope of her hips, straightness of neck,
through alleyways, up steps, clicking
across cobbled plazas.

She must have been aware of me
at some stage (you know how women
sense men's gaze on them), she turned
and faced me. I pretended to be window
shopping but to no avail. We looked at
each other. It was her!

It was not her. She was quite different,
beautiful, but quite different.

So I browse through these old photographs
until this one, enclosed in its cover of
buff card. Once again I regard it, the familiar
quickness and tightness besets me as if
it had never left, as if she had never died.

She is about twenty, standing on a hill
somewhere in the south of France
looking out at the ocean.

I am six years old again.
She is my mother.

WORDS WITH LOST MEANINGS

telegram
perambulator
gentle men
penny farthing
love is all you need
permanence
whites only
god save the king
all you need is love



Cyclamens and Swords Publishing
www.cyclamensandswords.com
© Registered trade mark

Printed by
Cyclamens and Swords Publishing
P.O. Box 21, Metulla, ISRAEL

ISBN 978-965-7503-05-8



9 789657 503058