



Associated Manitoba Arts Festivals

SPEECH ARTS MANUAL

PART 2: ADDENDUM



SPEECH ARTS MANUAL PART 2: PROSE READING

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THE TEDDY BEARS' PICNIC

If you go down in the woods today
You're sure of a big surprise.

If you go down in the woods today
You'd better go in disguise;

For ev'ry Bear that ever there was
Will gather there for certain, because
Today's the day the Teddy bears have their picnic.

Ev'ry Teddy Bear who's been good
Is sure of a treat today.

There's lots of marvelous things to eat,
And wonderful games to play.

Beneath the trees where nobody sees
They'll hide and seek as long as they please,
'Cause that's the way the Teddy Bears have their picnic.

If you go down in the woods today
You'd better not go alone.

It's lovely down in the woods today
But safer to stay at home.

For ev'ry bear that ever there was
Will gather there for certain, because
Today's the day the Teddy Bears have their picnic.

Picnic time for Teddy Bears,
The little Teddy Bears are having a lovely time today.
Watch them, catch them unawares
And see them picnic on their holiday.

See them gaily gad about,
They love to play and shout;
They never have any care;

At six o'clock their Mummies and Daddies
Will take them home to bed,
Because they're tired little Teddy Bears.

Jimmy Kennedy ([The Teddy Bears' Picnic](#), Vanwell Publishing Ltd.)

EXCERPT FROM GRAMPA'S CAT

We love our Grampa.
He's big and he's fat.
But most of all,
We love Grampa's cat.

We love Grampa's cat.
She's furry and nice.
There is only one problem,
She doesn't do mice.

She'll eat cheese and chocolate and sometimes even rice.
But never! No never
Will she ever eat mice.

Barbara loves her and hugs her and squeeze-squishes her tight
Because Barbara agrees that Grampa's cat's right.

Olivia's more quiet,
Grampa's cat is her friend.
She really loves her, and she will to the end.

Sam likes to pet her.
She purrs very nice.
But Sam really wishes
She'd catch him some mice.

Little Aidan's nose tickles
When near the cat's fur
And her whole body wriggles when Grampa's cat purrs.

Yes! We love Grampa's cat,
She really is nice
Even though, as you know
She doesn't do mice.

No! Not mice.

John Ferguson (Grampa's Cat, Compascor)

EXCERPT FROM: CLIPTAIL

There, in the bottom of a hollow tree, was a cosy little cave well-sheltered from rain and wind. Inside, dead leaves stuck together to make a warm carpet. There were four kittens, one of them the very image of Cliptail, except that he had a long tail like the one his mother used to have, a fine black tail with a white tuft at the tip. He was the one that Berthe liked best, and she patted him more than the others. Cliptail was saddened, for if there was anything that upset her, it was seeing one of her children favoured over the rest, and hearing someone say to her face: "That one, now, he's the prettiest! That's the one I like best!"

It wasn't true! They were all beautiful, even the smallest, who looked one-eyed because his left eye was in black fur and his right eye in white.

That night when Aimé showed up with his big sack that could make kittens disappear, there wasn't a cat in the house, as the saying goes!

Then the snow came. Snow, snow, snow! The sky sprinkled snow on the earth as if it had enough for all the years to come. And the North Wind came, too, shaking the snow-covered branches. When he tugged furiously at the junipers, snow fell in great chunks on the little family huddled underneath. It wasn't a very good shelter compared with the cave in the hollow tree, but they couldn't risk going back there. Cliptail had seen Aimé come by with his sack on his shoulder. And in any case, the kittens were getting too big and lively for Cliptail to carry around by the scruff of their necks. It had been hard enough for her to get them out of that cave with its sunken entrance.

Now Cliptail pushed her kittens down as far as she could beneath the juniper branches. She stretched out to make a long wall of warmth against the icy night air. And to make her children **think** that nothing was as bad as it seemed she tried a little purr. The North Wind went by just then, and caught her purr in passing and lifted it high in the air in the tumult and fury of the night.

Gabrielle Roy (Cliptail, Fonds Gabrielle Roy)

EXCERPT FROM: GOLDEN GOOSE

As Rupert and his troop rounded the corner into town, Elvira Nettle leaped out from behind a bush.

“Out of my tulips, you hooligans!” She reached to tweak the schoolmistress’s ear and before she knew **it** she was tottering down King Street behind the others.

“Help!” she squeaked as they came alongside Farmer Plotz. He reached for the old woman’s arm, and away he went too, stuck tight.

The barber saw his next customer disappearing and gave chase. Soon he was joined to the end of the rag-tag parade as it made its way toward the edge of Leroy King’s estate.

That morning, Leroy was as gloomy as his daughter. He had offered half his wealth to anyone who could make her happy. Alas, when Gwendolyn stepped out of the front door and saw the crowd of fortune-seekers, her frown only deepened.

“Father!” She stamped her foot. “My mood is not to be bargained with. Call off this contest at once!”

“Sorry boys,” a defeated Leroy announced.

At that moment Goldie, Rupert, Therese, Marie, the coachman, the schoolmistress, Elvira Nettle, Farmer Plotz and the barber came staggering into the courtyard like a crazy train.

Three things happened at once: Gwendolyn broke into an irresistible peal of merry laughter. The spell was broken, freeing the prisoners. And Rupert’s heart was captured.

Barbara Reid (Golden Goose, North Winds)

EXCERPT FROM: HOW BLUEBELL CAME TO BE

When her brothers, Strong Deer and Tall Birch, would return to camp with the day's hunt, Akusi would run to them. They took turns tossing her in the air and telling her stories of what they did and saw.

Lately Akusi did not feel like being a part of that. Today she had gone for a walk. She traced her steps in the direction of the sun's course. This way if she wandered too far, she could find her way back by following the sun.

As Akusi walked, she mumbled to herself, "Who wants a baby? All they do is make a mess and if they cry everyone runs to them."

All morning Akusi had been asked to help. Her sister would say, "Akusi, would you please take the birch pail and bring water to boil for our supper."

Her mother would say, "Akusi, would you please gather the branches of the poplar trees for more firewood."

Then, after she had done all that, she had to scrape the animal skin her mother had pegged to the ground to dry. This task had always belonged to her mother.

Akusi was angry. Dew Drop seemed to be talking an awful lot about the baby who was not even there.

Tall Birch and Strong Deer always seemed to be asking her what she would play with the baby who was not even there.

Akusi was so lost in her thoughts she did not realize Dew Drop had come to look for her.

"There you are Akusi," said Dew Drop. "I called and called and you did not answer. Come over here and sit for a moment."

Leo Sawicki ([Pieces](#), Peguis Publishers)

EXCERPT FROM: THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

"If you please," said Milo, "my name is Milo and this is Tock. Thank you very much for inviting us to your banquet, and I think your palace is beautiful."

"Exquisite," corrected the duke.

"Lovely," counseled the minister.

"Handsome," recommended the count.

"Pretty," hinted the Earl.

"Charming," submitted the undersecretary.

"SILENCE," suggested the king. "Now, young man, what can you do to entertain us? Sing songs? Tell stories? Compose sonnets? Juggle plates? Do tumbling tricks? Which is it?"

"I can't do any of those things," admitted Milo.

"What an ordinary little boy," commented the king. "Why, my cabinet members can do all sorts of things. The duke here can make mountains out of molehills. The minister splits hairs. The count makes hay while the sun shines. The earl leaves no stone unturned. And the undersecretary," he finished ominously, "hangs by a thread. Can't you do anything at all?"

"I can count to a thousand," offered Milo.

"A-A-R-G-H, numbers! Never mention numbers **here**. Only use them when we absolutely have to," growled Azaz disgustedly. "Now, why don't you and Tock come up here and sit next to me, and we'll have some dinner?"

"Are you ready with the menu?" reminded the Humbug.

"Well," said Milo, remembering that his mother had always told him to eat lightly when he was a guest, "why don't we have a light meal?"

"A light meal it shall be," roared the bug, waving his arms.

The waiters rushed in carrying large serving platters and set them on the table in front of the king. When he lifted the covers, shafts of brilliant-colored light leaped from the plates and bounced around the ceiling, the walls, across the floor, and out the windows.

"Not a very substantial meal," said the Humbug, rubbing his eyes, "but quite an attractive one. Perhaps you can suggest something a little more filling."

The king clapped his hands, the platters were removed, and, without thinking, Milo quickly suggested, "Well, in that case, I think we ought to have a square meal of—"

"A square meal it is," shouted the Humbug again. The king clapped his hands once more and waiters reappeared carrying plates heaped high with steaming squares of all sizes and colors.

"Ugh," said the Spelling Bee, tasting one, "these are awful." No one else seemed to like them very much either, and the Humbug got one caught in his throat and almost choked.

"Time for speeches," announced the king as the plates were again removed and everyone looked glum. "You first," he commanded, pointing to Milo.

"Your Majesty, ladies and gentlemen," started Milo timidly, "I would like to take this opportunity to say that in all the—"

"That's quite enough," snapped the king. "Mustn't talk all day."

EXCERPT FROM: CAUGHT BETWEEN FIRE AND ICE

The house was built of cedar logs; in all probability it would be consumed before any help could arrive. There was a brisk breeze blowing up from the frozen lake, and the thermometer stood at eighteen degrees below zero. We were placed between the two extremes of heat and cold, and there was as much danger to be apprehended from the one as the other. In the bewilderment of the moment, the direful extent of the calamity never struck me: we wanted but this to put the finishing stroke to our misfortunes, to be **thrown naked**, houseless, and penniless, upon the world. "*What shall I save first?*" was the thought just then uppermost in my mind. Bedding and clothing appeared the most essentially necessary and without another moment's pause, I set to work with a right good will to drag all that I could from my burning home.

While little Agnes, Dunbar, and baby Donald filled the air with their cries, Katie, as if fully conscious of the importance of exertion, assisted me in carrying out sheets and blankets, and dragging trunks and boxes some way up the hill, to be out of the way of the burning brands when the roof should fall in.

How many anxious looks I gave to the head of the clearing as the fire increased, and large pieces of burning pine began to fall through the boarded ceiling, about the lower rooms where we were at work. The children I had kept under a large dresser in the kitchen, but it now appeared absolutely necessary to remove them to a place of safety. To expose the young, tender things to the direful cold was almost as bad as leaving them to the mercy of the fire. At last I hit upon a plan to keep them from freezing. I emptied all the clothes out of a large, deep chest of drawers, and dragged the empty drawers up the hill; these I lined with blankets, and placed a child in each drawer, covering it well over with the bedding, giving to little Agnes the charge of the baby to hold between her knees, and keep well covered until help should arrive. Ah, how long it seemed coming!

I found that I should not be able to take many more trips for goods. As I passed out of the parlour for the last time, Katie looked up at her father's flute, which was suspended upon two brackets, and said, "Oh dear Mama! do save papa's flute; he will be so sorry to lose it."

God bless the dear child for the thought! The flute was saved; and, as I succeeded in dragging out a heavy chest of clothes, and looked up once more despairingly to the road, I saw a man running at full speed. It was my husband. Help was at hand, and my heart uttered a deep thanksgiving as another and another figure came upon the scene.

Susanna Moodie ([The Spirit of Canada](#), Malcolm Lester)

EXCERPT FROM: THE RIVER

Pinawa, the place of the quiet waters

The Winnipeg River cuts through the edge of the Canadian Shield in southern Manitoba. It was here watching long before Canada was a country, and while Canada was being formed. Hopefully, it will be here long into Canada's future. It has seen the people of Canada come and go. They caused changes, and formed the land's history.

A Cree walked out of the forest, and squatted before the river's edge. His long black hair was tied back with a leather thong, and his chiseled features gave his appearance a rugged look. His dark eyes held a look of pride as he glanced across the land. He dipped his hands into the cool water, and brought the sweet liquid to his lips. The land would be here long after he left, and he knew it. The man stood up stiffly, and clenched his fists as if trying to stop the inevitable change. He then abruptly turned around, and walked into the trees as mysteriously as he came. The river saw this as it navigated over changes in the rocky bottom, which caused disturbances in its flow. Currents swirled and collided.

For a time, the river was used as a trade route for furs from Rupert's Land. The Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company both set up forts along this fast-flowing river.

Three canoes rounded a bend in the river. They were made of birchbark, and were filled to the brim with fur pelts. Manoeuvring the canoes were voyageurs. They wore tight leather clothing, and had colourful sashes tied around their waists. Their hair was tangled, their faces unshaven, and their eyes held a look that spoke of hardships caused by this strange land. They respected this vast, unforgiving place, because they all knew people who had died because of the land that seemed to live. One man started to sing loudly in French. **The other men immediately joined in singing. Their gruff voices rose above the silence of the land.**

Fish prosper and feed on the abundance of plant growth in the water. Bears and cougars use the river to catch fish. Deer graze on the lush grasses that grow alongside the river. All the animals use the river as a source of water to drink. Birds feed on the insects that the river spawns.

The river then saw Canada become a country, and the voyageurs soon stopped coming. The first settlers came. They built houses, and cleared land for farms. The people used water from the river to quench the thirst of their crops. Towns and cities began to grow and beckon people from their farms, and from the river. Science began to be a major part of the people's lives, bringing technology to the river. Hydroelectric dams were built across the river to harness the power. Industrial plants sprang up along the water's edge because the water was essential to their operations. The river saw and consented to these changes, because it knew humans now had the power to destroy it.

The river sees me, standing atop the falls, looking at the skeleton of the huge dam at Old Pinawa. I sit down in its current, and I'm pulled down the natural waterslide in the rock. At the bottom, the river pulls me under, and then immediately pushes me up. My face surfaces, and I smile. My eyes sparkle with happiness as I climb out of the water.

The river was here long before I came, and I hope it will be here long after I am gone...as it has been for generations.

Kendra Cann ([Who I Am Is Who We Are](#), Growing Up Canadian)

EXCERPT FROM: SUNKEN TREASURE

The Visitors Return

The next day there was a tension in the camp that hadn't been there before. Brad and Ben sat alone finishing their lunch.

"You know, Ben, maybe we should think about this. How would that guy Henry know how to sabotage the fuel? And would he really do something that dangerous?"

"I don't know, Brad. Maybe I jumped to conclusions, but what other conclusion is there. No one else knew we were up here. Or would even care. He seemed to care a lot."

"I guess I'd care too if I thought someone was going to do something that would ruin things up here. For us this is a beautiful spot to camp for a few days. To that guy, this is his home. If someone was going to wreck the place I lived in I'd be pretty mad too."

"Yeah, me too," Ben agreed "but I wouldn't kill anyone."

The boys decided to put Henry out of their minds and get on with their job, but they weren't enthusiastic. The diving didn't hold the same excitement any more. Even Ben was starting to doubt that they would find the gold concentrate. They spent their three hours beneath the lake surface but they found nothing new. They were just cold and tired. The two dads packed up the air lines and shut down the compressor. The boys stowed their diving gear for the day.

It was close to supper time when the drone of an engine broke the northern quiet.

"What do you think, Ben? Someone else on a treasure hunt?" Mr. Adamson was trying to lighten the atmosphere. Ben wasn't impressed.

"Not likely, Dad. I know you think this is a lost cause but the evidence all points to this lake. Although I admit we aren't having much success."

The engine noise grew louder until the small LM Industries aircraft was visible above the trees. The plane turned over the lake and set down, throwing up a spray of water on the slightly choppy surface.

"Company again. Boy this lake is getting to be a busy place," Mr. Adamson remarked.

"That's the same plane that visited us when we were up here before. The survey crew from LM Industries. What do they want?" wondered Brad.

This time three men instead of two clambered onto the rough dock. The big bearded man, the taciturn Jake, and a third man whom the boys knew.

"Mr. Humiski! What are you doing up here?" exclaimed Ben.

"Well, well, Ben," Mr. Humiski said heartily, "I'm glad we found you. I heard that you were having a little trouble up here. How's the search for the gold coming? Is there a sequel to my award-winning story unfolding here?"

The bearded man sneered at them. Obviously he hadn't bought the story about fur trade artifacts. Brad and Ben exchanged glances. Something was not quite right here.

"No, Mr. Humiski, we haven't found anything yet. I guess we aren't going to have any more luck than the other gold hunters." Brad was finally suspicious. He wasn't telling this man anything he didn't have to.

"Is that right?" Humiski wasn't convinced. "You must be the fathers of these two adventurers. I'd know in a minute that you're Brad's dad," he said as he pumped Mr. Johnson's hand a little too heartily. "So you must be Mr. Adamson." Another enthusiastic handshake. The fathers took their cue from Brad and were cool in their welcome.

"What can we do for you—it's Myron isn't it?" said Mr. Adamson disengaging his hand from Humiski's hot grip.

"Yes, Myron's my name. You've heard of me? No? Well, that doesn't matter. We would like to bed down here for the night. I just came up to see if there might be a story here for me and what better place to follow it up than right here?" he grinned.

No one could think of a reasonable excuse for asking Humiski to leave, so the party of four became a camp of seven.

"How did you know we were here? Brad asked.

"Oh, Jake here, keeps me posted by radio," Humiski smiled.

Jim Prentice (Sunken Treasure, Hyperion Press)

EXCERPT FROM: THE WHITE STONE IN THE CASTLE WALL

John left them and he rested
in the garden of the castle,
full of fountains and flowers and birds.

There he saw a man who whistled
as he planted young red roses,
and hummed as he pulled out
all the weeds.

John told him:

“I once grew a vegetable garden
but the only thing it gave me
was this stone.
I’m too tired to return it.
You can have it
if you’ll use it.
I just don’t want to see it
thrown away.”

The man asked John:

“Why do you care about a stone?”

John answered:

“At first, I thought it was a worthless thing
until I dug it up and pushed it up
and hauled it to the hilltop
and stood with it for hours in the mud.
Now I’m tired, wet and hungry
and this stone won’t fetch a penny
but my work has made it worth a lot to me.”

“My name,” said the man, “is Sir Henry M. Pellatt
and I’ve cared for my garden just like you.
I will buy your great white stone
and I will put it in my wall
because your work has made it worth a lot to me.”

Sir Henry showed John through
every part of his great castle.
He let John ride in his electric car.
Then he gave John Tommy Fiddich a shining silver dollar.
And he said:

“Please come and help me in my English flower garden.
You will like the work and I will pay you well.”

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EXCERPT FROM: CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS

For days they worked in fog—Harvey at the bell—till, grown familiar with the thick airs, he went out with Tom Platt, his heart rather in his mouth. But the fog would not lift, and the fish were biting, and no one can stay helplessly afraid for six hours at a time. Harvey devoted himself to his lines and the gaff or gob-stick as Tom Platt called for them; and they rowed back to the schooner guided by the bell and Tom's instinct; Manuel's conch sounding thin and faint beside them. But it was an unearthly experience, and, for the first time in a month, Harvey dreamed of the shifting, smoking floors of water round the dory, the lines that strayed away into nothing, and the air above that melted on the sea below ten feet from his straining eyes. A few days later he was out with Manuel on what should have been forty-fathom bottom, but the whole length of the roding ran out, and still the anchor found nothing, and Harvey grew mortally afraid, for that his last touch with earth was lost. 'Whale-hole,' said Manuel, hauling in. 'That is good joke on Disko. Come!' and he rowed to the schooner to find Tom Platt and the others jeering at the skipper because, for once, he had led them to the edge of the barren Whale-deep, the blank hole of the Grand Bank. They made another berth through the fog, and that time the hair of Harvey's head stood up when he went out in Manuel's dory. A whiteness moved in the whiteness of the fog with a breath like the breath of the grave, and there was a roaring, a plunging, and spouting. It was his first introduction to the dread summer berg of the Banks, and he cowered in the bottom of the boat while Manuel laughed. There were days, though, clear and soft and warm, when it seemed a sin to do anything but loaf over the hand-lines and spank the drifting 'sunscalds' with an oar; and there were days of light airs, when Harvey was taught how to steer the schooner from one berth to another.

It thrilled through him when he first felt the keel answer to his hand on the spokes and slide over the long hollows as the foresail scythed back and forth against the blue sky. That was magnificent, in spite of Disko saying that it would break a snake's back to follow his wake. But, as usual, pride ran before a fall. They were sailing on the wind with the staysail – an old one, luckily – set, and Harvey jammed her right into it to show Dan how completely he had mastered the art. The foresail went over with a bang, and the foregaff stabbed and ripped through the staysail, which was, of course, prevented from going over by the mainstay. They lowered the wreck in awful silence, and Harvey spent his leisure hours for the next few days under Tom Platt's lee, learning to use a needle and palm. Dan hooted with joy, for, as he said, he had made the very same blunder himself in his early days.

Rudyard Kipling ([Captains Courageous](#), Doubleday & Company)

EXCERPT FROM: LESIA'S DREAM

The sun inched into view. It's cheery brightness sliced sharply through the air, mocking the fear that clutched her stomach. "What's happened?" Lesia demanded again.

"It's Ivan." Tears glistened in the corners of Mama's eyes. "He's been taken into custody. In Winnipeg."

The words roared in Lesia's ears. Her knees buckled. Andrew put an arm around her shoulder and settled her on a stump. Her legs felt like potatoes that had been boiled to mush. She shut her eyes and tried to think.

Into custody. Ivan, what have you done?

The sun caressed her face. The dying fire warmed her legs. For a minute she focused on that and shut out all the ugliness. "Why?" she finally whispered.

"He tried to enlist," Wasyl explained. "He was caught lying about his nationality."

Lesia's eyes popped open.

"If he told them he was from Galicia, he knew he'd be classed as an Austrian and disqualified, so he called himself a Russian instead." Mama sank onto a stump beside her and filled in the details. "There were several young men and they were all taken off to jail."

"When?" Lesia asked.

"Two days ago," Wasyl told her. "Three of us escaped, but most are still there."

She didn't care about most. She only cared about Ivan. And Papa! "Papa is in Winnipeg. He can talk to them. He can make them understand."

Mama's shoulders began to shake. She was crying.

"Hush, Mama." Lesia pulled her close and rocked her back and forth. "Everything will be all right. Papa will get Ivan released." With each rock, Lesia's stomach rose and fell, like she was going to be sick.

"Papa..." Mama sobbed. "Papa's there too."

Lesia felt light-headed. Dizzy. Confused. "What are you talking about?"

"They brought your Papa in last night, just before I escaped." Wasyl's eyes were dark with pity. "They accused him of supporting the Austrians by sending a large sum of money home."

Lesia gasped. "But that was for Master Stryk. I sent money too." *What if they come after me?*

Beside her, Mama's frail body shook with sobs. Andrew dropped his head into his hands. "Bozhe," he whispered. "Some fine mess this is."

Lesia exploded. "If Ivan had had the common sense not to enlist—to stay out of politics for once in his life—this never would have happened." She turned accusing eyes towards Wasyl Goetz.

Wasyl stuck his chin into the air. "We've been persecuted for years! This was our chance to right wrongs, to fight with Canada. To support our new country. Who wouldn't do it?"

"I'll have to go to Winnipeg and see what I can do," Andrew said.

"He's probably not there any more." Wasyl's anger dissolved into weary resignation. He stood up and began to pace. "The jails are so full of enemy aliens, they're taking men to Brandon."

The internment camp! So what she'd heard at the Boychuk farm was true. Dear Lord! Lesia blinked back tears. What were they going to do? Surely Papa and Ivan would be back soon. But if not...? And what if they came for her?

Seizing land. Nothing they can do.

The remembered words turned her hot, then cold, then hot again. If one rumour was true, then perhaps the other one was too. She couldn't risk losing their land. She had to do everything she could to hold on to it.

Laura Langston ([Lesia's Dream](#), Harper Trophy Canada)

EXCERPT FROM: ANNE OF GREEN GABLES

Anne Says Her Prayers

When Marilla took Anne up to bed that night she said stiffly:

“Now, Anne, I noticed last night that you threw your clothes all about the floor when you took them off. That is a very untidy habit, and I can’t allow it at all. As soon as you take off any article of clothing fold it neatly and place it on the chair. I haven’t any use at all for little girls who aren’t neat.”

“I was so harrowed up in my mind last night that I didn’t think about my clothes at all,” said Anne. “I’ll fold them nicely to-night. They always made us do that at the asylum. Half the time, though, I’d forget, I’d be in such a hurry to get into bed nice and quiet and imagine things.”

“You’ll have to remember a little better if you stay here,” admonished Marilla. “There, that looks something like. Say your prayers now and get into bed.”

“I never say any prayers,” announced Anne.

Marilla looked horrified astonishment.

“Why, Anne, what do you mean? Were you never taught to say your prayers? God always wants little girls to say their prayers. Don’t you know who God is, Anne?”

“**God** is a spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and **truth**,” responded Anne promptly and glibly.

Marilla looked rather relieved.

“So you do know something then, thank goodness! You’re not quite a heathen. Where did you learn that?”

“Oh, at the asylum Sunday-school. They made us learn the whole catechism. I liked it pretty well. There’s something splendid about some of the words. ‘Infinite, eternal and unchangeable.’ Isn’t that grand? It has such a roll to it—just like a big organ playing. You couldn’t quite call it poetry, I suppose, but it sounds a lot like it, doesn’t it?”

“We’re not talking about poetry, Anne—we are talking about saying your prayers. Don’t you know it’s a terrible wicked thing not to say your prayers every night? I’m afraid you are a very bad little girl.”

“You’d find it easier to be bad than good **if** you had red hair,” said Anne reproachfully. “People who haven’t red hair don’t know what trouble is. Mrs. Thomas told me that God made my hair red *on purpose*, and I’ve never cared about Him since. And anyhow I’d always be too tired at night to bother saying prayers. People who have to look after twins can’t be expected to say their prayers. Now, do you honestly think they can?”

Marilla decided that Anne’s religious training must be begun at once. Plainly there was no time to be lost.

“You must say your prayers while you are under my roof, Anne.”

“Why, of course, if you want me to,” assented Anne cheerfully. “I’d do anything to oblige you. But you’ll have to tell me what to say for this once. After I get into bed I’ll imagine out a real nice prayer to say always. I believe that it will be quite interesting, now that I come to think of it.”

“You must kneel down,” said Marilla in embarrassment.

“Why must people kneel down to pray? If I really wanted to pray I’ll tell you what I’d do. I’d go out into a real big field all alone or into the deep, deep woods, and I’d look up into the sky—up—up—up—into that lovely blue sky that looks as if there was no end to its blueness. And then I’d just *feel* a prayer. Well, I’m ready. What am I to say?”

L.M. Montgomery (*A Century of Canadian Literature*, Ryerson Press)

EXCERPT FROM: THE DIAMOND NECKLACE

Mrs. Loisel now knew the horrible life of necessity. She did her part, however, completely, heroically. It was necessary to pay this frightful debt. She would pay it. They sent away the maid; they changed their lodgings; they rented some rooms under a mansard roof.

She learned the heavy cares of a household, the odious work of a kitchen. She washed the dishes, using her rosy nails upon the greasy pots and the bottoms of the stewpans. She washed the soiled linen, the chemises and dishcloths, which she hung on the line to dry; she took down the refuse to the street each morning and brought up the water, stopping at each landing to breathe. And, clothed like a woman of the people, she went to the grocer's, the butcher's, and the fruiterer's with her basket on her arm, shopping, haggling, defending to the last sou her miserable money.

Every month it was necessary to renew some notes, thus obtaining time, and to pay others.

The husband worked evenings, putting the books of some merchants in order, and nights he often did copying at five sous a page.

And this life lasted for ten years.

At the end of ten years, they had restored all, all with interest of the usurer, and accumulated interest besides.

Mrs. Loisel seemed old now. She had become a strong, hard woman, the crude woman of the poor household. Her hair badly dressed, her skirts awry, her hands red, she spoke in a loud tone, and washed the floors in large pails of water. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she would seat herself before the window and think of that evening party of former times, of that ball where she was so beautiful and so flattered.

How would it have been if she had not lost that necklace? Who knows? Who knows? How singular is life, and how full of changes! How small a thing will ruin or save one!

One Sunday, as she was taking a walk in the Champs-Élysées to rid herself of the cares of the week, she suddenly perceived a woman walking with a child. It was Mrs. Forestier, still young, still pretty, still attractive. Mrs. Loisel was affected. Should she speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that she had paid, she would tell her all. Why not?

She approached her. "Good morning, Jeanne."

Her friend did not recognize her and was astonished to be so familiarly addressed by this common personage. She stammered:

"But, **Madame**—I do not know—You must be mistaken—"

"No, I am **Matilda** Loisel."

Her friend uttered a cry of astonishment: "Oh! my poor Matilda! How you have changed—"

"Yes, I have had some hard days since I saw you; and some miserable ones—and all because of you—"

"Because of me? How is that?"

"You recall the diamond necklace that you loaned me to wear to the Commissioner's ball?"

"Yes, very well."

"Well, I lost it."

"How is that, since you returned it to me?"

"I returned another to you exactly like it. And it has taken us ten years to pay for it. You can understand that it was not easy for us who have nothing. But it is finished and I am decently content."

Madame Forestier stopped short. She said:

"You say that you bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?"

"Yes. You did not perceive it then? They were just alike."

And she smiled with a proud and simple joy. Madame Forestier was touched and took both her hands as she replied:

"Oh! my poor Matilda! Mine were false. They were not worth over five hundred francs!"

Guy De Maupassant (Short Stories of De Maupassant, Book League)

EXCERPT FROM: TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES

As she drove on through Blackmoor Vale, and the landscape of her youth began to open around her, Tess aroused herself from her stupor. Her first thought was how would she be able to face her parents?

She reached a turnpike-gate which stood upon the highway to the village. It was thrown open by a stranger, not by the old man who had kept it for many years, and to whom she had been known; he had probably left on New Year's Day, the date when such changes were made. Having received no intelligence lately from her home, she asked the turnpike-keeper for news.

Oh – nothing, miss," he answered. "Marlott is Marlott still. Folks have died and that. John Durbeyfield, too, he had a daughter married this week to a gentleman-farmer; not from John's own house, you know; they was married elsewhere; the gentleman being of high standing that John's own folk was not considered well-be-doing enough to have any part in it, the bridegroom seeming not to know how't have been discovered that John is an old and ancient nobleman himself by blood, with family skillentons in their own vaults to this day, but done out of his property in the time o' the Romans. However, Sir John, as we all call 'n now, kept up the wedding-day as well as he could, and stood treat to everybody in the parish; and John's wife sung songs at The Pure Drop till past eleven o'clock."

Hearing this, Tess felt so sick at heart that she could not decide to go home publicly in the fly with her luggage and belongings. She asked the turnpike-keeper if she might deposit her things at his house for a while, and, on his offering no objection, she dismissed her carriage, and went on to the village alone by a back lane.

At sight of her father's chimney she asked herself how she could possibly enter the house? Inside that cottage her relations were calmly supposing her far away on a wedding-tour with a comparatively rich man, who was to conduct her to bouncing prosperity; while here she was, friendless, creeping up to the old door quite by herself, with no better place to go in the world.

She did not reach the house unobserved. Just by the garden-hedge she was met by a girl who knew her – one of the two or three with whom she had been intimate at school. After making a few inquiries as to how Tess came there, her friend, unheeding her tragic look, interrupted with –

"But where's thy gentleman, Tess?"

Tess hastily explained that he had been called away on business, and, leaving her interlocutor, clambered over the garden-hedge, and thus made her way to the house.

As she went up the garden-path she heard her mother singing by the back door, coming in sight of which she perceived Mrs. Durbeyfield on the doorstep in the act of wringing a sheet. Having performed this without observing Tess, she went indoors and her daughter followed her.

The washing-tub stood in the same old place on the same old quarter-hogshead, and her mother, having thrown the sheet aside, was about to plunge her arms in anew.

"Why – Tess – my chil' – I thought you was married! –married really and truly this time – we sent the cider –"

"Yes, mother; so I am."

"Going to be?"

"No – I am married."

"Married! Then where's thy husband?"

"Oh, he's gone away for a time."

"Gone away! When was you married, then? The day you said?"

"Yes, Tuesday, mother."

"And now 'tis on'y Saturday, and he gone away?"

"Yes; he's gone."

"What's the meaning o' that? 'Nation seize such husbands as you seem to get, say I!"

“Mother!” Tess went across to Joan Durbeyfield, laid her face upon the matron’s bosom, and burst into sobs. “I don’t know how to tell ‘ee, mother! You said to me, and wrote to me, that I was not to tell him. But I did tell him – I couldn’t help it – and he went away!”

“O you little fool – you little fool!” burst out Mrs. Durbeyfield, splashing Tess and herself in her agitation. “My good God! that ever I should ha’ lived to say it, but I say it again, you little fool!”

Tess was convulsed with weeping, the tension of so many days having relaxed at last.

“I know it – I know – I know!” she gasped through her sobs. “But, O my mother, I could not help it! He was so good – and I felt the wickedness of trying to blind him as to what had happened! If- if – it were to be done again – I should do the same. I could not – I dared not – so sin – against him!”

“But you sinned enough to marry him first!”

“Yes, yes; that’s where my misery do lie! But I thought he could get rid o’ me by law if he were determined not to overlook it. And O, if you knew – *if* you could only half know how I loved him – how anxious I was to have him – and how wrung I was between caring so much for him and my wish to be fair to him!”

Tess was so shaken that she could get no further, and sank a helpless thing into a chair.

“Well, well; what’s done can’t be undone! I’m sure I don’t know why children o’ my bringing forth should all be bigger simpletons than other people’s – not to know better than to blab such a thing as that, when he couldn’t ha’ found it out till too late!” Here Mrs. Durbeyfield began shedding tears on her own account as a mother to be pitied. “What your father will say I don’t know,” she continued: “for he’s been talking about the wedding up at Rolliver’s and The Pure Drop every day since, and about his family getting back to their rightful position through you – poor silly man! – and now you’ve made this mess of it! The Lord-a-Lord!”

Thomas Hardy ([Tess of the D’Urbervilles](#), Magpie Books)

EXCERPT FROM: THE STONE ANGEL

We remain in heavy silence, Mr. Troy and I. I glance at him and see he's struggling to speak and finding it impossibly difficult. He thinks me formidable. What a joke. I could feel almost sorry for him, he's perspiring so. Stonily, I wait. Why should I assist him? The drug is wearing off. My bones are sore and the soreness is spreading like fire over dry grass, quickly, licking its way along. All at once, an eruption of speech, Mr. Troy bursts out.

"Would you – care to pray?"

As though he were asking me for the next dance.

"I've held out this long," I reply. "I may as well hold out a while longer."

"You don't mean that, I'm sure. If you would try –"

He looks at me with such an eagerness that now I'm rendered helpless. It's his calling. He offers what he can. It's not his fault.

"I can't", I say. "I never could get the hang of it. But – you go ahead if you like, Mr. Troy."

His face relaxes. How relieved he is. He prays in a monotone, as though God had ears for one note only. I scarcely listen to the droning words. Then something occurs to me.

"**There's one**" - I say on impulse. "That starts out *All people that on earth do dwell* - do you know it?"

"Certainly I know it. You want to hear that? Now?" He sounds taken aback, as though it were completely unsuitable.

"Unless you'd rather not."

"Oh no, it's quite all right. It's usually sung, that's all."

"Well, sing it, then."

"What? Here?" He's stunned. I have no patience with this young man.

"Why not?"

"All right, then." He clasps and unclasps his hands. He flushes warmly, and peeks around to see if anyone might be listening, as though he'd pass out if they were. But I perceive now that there's some fibre in him. He'll do it, even if it kills him. Good for him. I can admire that.

Then he opens his mouth and sings, and I'm the one who's taken aback now. He should sing always, and never speak. He should chant his sermons. The fumbling of his speech is gone. His voice is firm and sure.

*"All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with joyful voice,
Him serve with mirth, His praise forth tell;
Come ye before him and rejoice.*

I would have wished it. This knowing comes upon me so forcefully, so shatteringly, and with such a bitterness as I have never felt before. I must always, have wanted that – simply to rejoice. How is it I never could? I know, I know. How long have I known? Or have I always known, in some far crevice of my heart, some cave too deeply buried, too concealed? Every good joy I might have held, in my man or any child of mine or even the plain light of morning, of walking the earth, all were forced to a standstill by some brake of proper appearances – oh, proper to whom? When did I ever speak the heart's truth?

Pride was my wilderness, and the demon that led me there was fear. I was alone, never anything else, and never free, for I carried my chains within me, and they spread out from me and shackled all I touched.

Margaret Laurence (The Stone Angel, McClelland Stewart)

EXCERPT FROM: FRANKENSTEIN

“My heart beat quick; this was the hour and moment of trial, which would decide my hopes or realize my fears. The servants were gone to a neighbouring fair. All was silent in and around the cottage; it was an excellent opportunity; yet, when I proceeded to execute my plan, my limbs failed me and I sank to the ground. Again I rose, and exerting all the firmness of which I was master, removed the planks which I had placed before my hovel to conceal my retreat. The fresh air revived me, and with renewed determination I approached the door of their cottage.

“I knocked. ‘Who is there?’ said the old man. ‘Come in.’

“I entered. ‘Pardon this intrusion,’ said I; ‘I am a traveller in want of a little rest; you would greatly oblige me if you would allow me to remain a few minutes before the fire.’

“‘Enter,’ said De Lacey, ‘and I will try in what manner I can to relieve your wants; but, unfortunately, my children are from home, and as I am blind, I am afraid I shall find it difficult to procure food for you.’

“‘Do not trouble yourself, my kind host; I have food; it is warmth and rest only that I need.’

“I sat down, and a silence ensued. I knew that every minute was precious to me, yet I remained irresolute in what manner to commence the interview, when the old man addressed me. ‘By your language stranger, I suppose you are my countryman; are you French?’

“‘No; but I was educated by a French family and understand that language only. I am now going to claim the protection of some friends, whom I sincerely love, and of whose favour I have some hopes.’

“‘Are they Germans?’

“‘No, they are French. But let us change the subject. I am an unfortunate and deserted creature; I look around and I have no relation or friend upon earth. These amiable people to whom I go have never seen me and know little of me. I am full of fears, for if I fail there, I am an outcast in the world forever.’

“‘Do not despair. To be friendless is indeed to be unfortunate, but the hearts of men, when unprejudiced by any obvious self-interest, are full of brotherly love and charity. Rely, therefore, on your hopes; and if these friends are good and amiable, do not despair.’

“‘They are kind – they are the most excellent creatures in the world; but, unfortunately, they are prejudiced against me. I have good dispositions; my life has been hitherto harmless and in some degree beneficial; but a fatal prejudice clouds their eyes, and where they ought to see a feeling and kind friend, they behold only a detestable monster.’

“‘That is indeed unfortunate; but if you are really blameless, cannot you undeceive them?’

“‘I am about to undertake that task; and it is on that account that I feel so many overwhelming terrors. I tenderly love these friends; I have, unknown to them, been for many months in the habits of daily kindness towards them; but they believe that I wish to injure them, and it is that prejudice which I wish to overcome.’

“‘Where do these friends reside?’

“‘Near this spot.’

“The old man paused and then continued, ‘If you will unreservedly confide to me the particulars of your tale, I perhaps may be of use in undeceiving them. I am blind and cannot judge of your countenance, but there is something in your words which persuades me that you are sincere. I am poor and an exile, but it will afford me true pleasure to be in any way serviceable to a human creature.’

“‘Excellent man! I thank you and accept your generous offer. You raise me from the dust by this kindness; and I trust that, by your aid, I shall not be driven from the society and sympathy of your fellow creatures.’

“‘Heaven forbid! Even if you were really criminal, for that can only drive you to desperation, and not instigate you to virtue. I also am unfortunate; I and my family have been condemned, although innocent; judge, therefore, if I do not feel for your misfortunes.’

“‘How can I thank you, my best and only benefactor? From your lips first have I heard the voice of kindness directed towards me; I shall be forever grateful; and your present humanity assures me of success with those friends whom I am on the point of meeting.’

“‘May I know the names and residence of those friends?’

Continued on next page...

EXCERPT FROM: DAVID COPPERFIELD

I was going out at my door on the morning after that deplorable day of headache, sickness, and repentance, with an odd confusion in my mind relative to the date of my dinner party, as if a body of Titans had taken an enormous lever and pushed the day before yesterday some months back, when I saw a ticket-porter coming upstairs, with a letter in his hand. He was taking his time about his errand then; but when he saw me on the top of the staircase, looking at him over the banisters, he swung into a trot, and came up panting as if he had run himself into a state of exhaustion.

"T. Copperfield, Esquire," said the ticket-porter, touching his hat with his little cane.

I could scarcely lay claim to the name; I was so disturbed by the conviction that the letter came from Agnes. However, I told him I was T. Copperfield, Esquire, and he believed it, and gave me the letter, which he said required an answer. I shut him out on the landing to wait for the answer, and went into my chambers again, in such a nervous state that I was fain to lay the letter down on my breakfast-table, and familiarise myself with the outside of it a little, before I could resolve to break the seal.

I found, when I did open it, that it was a very kind note, containing no reference to my condition at the theatre. All it said was, "My dear Trotwood. I am staying at the house of papa's agent, Mr. Waterbrook, in Ely Place, Holborn. Will you come and see me today, at any time you like to appoint? Ever yours affectionately, AGNES."

It took me such a long time to write an answer at all to my satisfaction that I don't know what the ticket-porter can have thought, unless he thought I was learning to write. I must have written half a dozen answers at least. I began one, "How can I ever hope, my dear Agnes, to efface from your remembrance the disgusting impression" – there I didn't like it, and then I tore it up. I began another, "Shakespeare has observed, my dear Agnes, how strange it is that a man should put an enemy into his mouth" – that reminded me of Markham, and it got no further. I even tried poetry. I began one note, in a six syllable line, 'Oh, do not remember" – but that associated itself with the fifth of November, and became an absurdity. After many attempts, I wrote, "My dear Agnes. Your letter is like you, and what could I say of it that would be higher praise than that? I will come at four o'clock. Affectionately and sorrowfully, T.C." With this missive (which I was in twenty minds at once about recalling, as soon as it was out of my hands), the ticket-porter at last departed.

If the day were half as tremendous to any other professional gentleman in Doctors' Commons as it was to me, I sincerely believe he made some expiation for his share in that rotten old ecclesiastical cheese. Although I left the office at half-past three, and was prowling about the place of appointment within a few minutes afterwards, the appointed time was exceeded by a full quarter of an hour, according to the clock of St. Andrew's Holborn, before I could muster up sufficient desperation to pull the private bell-handle let into the left-hand door-post of Mr. Waterbrook's house.

The professional business of Mr. Waterbrook's establishment was done on the ground-floor, and the genteel business (of which there was a good deal) in the upper part of the building. I was shown into a pretty but rather close drawing-room, and there sat Agnes, netting a purse.

She looked so quiet and good, and reminded me so strongly of my airy fresh school days at Canterbury, and the sodden, smoky, stupid wretch I had been the other night, that, nobody being by, I yielded to my self-reproach and shame, and – in short, made a fool of myself. I cannot deny that I shed tears. To this hour I am undecided whether it was upon the whole the wisest thing I could have done, or the most ridiculous.

"If it had been any one but you, Agnes," said I, turning away my head, "I should not have minded it half so much. But that it should have been you who saw me! I almost wish I had been dead, first."

She put her hand – its touch was like no other hand – upon my arm for a moment; and I felt so befriended and comforted that I could not help moving it to my lips, and gratefully kissing it.

"Sit down, said Agnes cheerfully. "Don't be unhappy, Trotwood. If you cannot confidently trust me, whom will you trust?"

"Ah, Agnes!" I returned. "You are my good Angel!"

She smiled rather sadly, I thought, and shook her head.

"Yes, Agnes, my good Angel! Always my good Angel!"

Charles Dickens ([David Copperfield](#), Wordsworth Editions)

EXCERPT FROM: THE GAME

Not long ago, thinking of the generations of Canadians who learned hockey on rivers and ponds, I collected my skates and with two friends drove up the Gatineau River north of Ottawa. We didn't know it at the time, but the ice conditions we found were rare, duplicated only a few times the previous decade. The combination of a sudden thaw and freezing rain in the days before had melted winter-high snow, and with temperatures dropping rapidly overnight, the river was left with miles of smooth glare ice. Growing up in the suburbs of a large city, I had played on a river only once before, and then as a goalie. On this day, I came to the Gatineau to find what a river of ice and a solitary feeling might mean to a game.

We spread ourselves rinks apart, breaking into river-wide openings for passes that sometimes connected, and other times sent us hundreds of feet after what we had missed. Against the wind or with it, the sun glaring in our eyes or at our backs, we skated for more than three hours, periodically tired, continuously renewed. The next day I went back again, this time alone. Before I got bored with myself an hour or two later, with no one watching and nothing to distract me, loose and daring, joyously free, I tried things I had never tried before, my hands and feet discovering new patterns and directions, and came away feeling as if something was finally clear.

The Canadian game of hockey was weaned on long northern winters uncluttered by things to do. It grew up on ponds and rivers in big open spaces, unorganized, often solitary, only occasionally moved into arenas for practices or games. In recent generations that has changed. Canadians have moved from farms and towns to cities and suburbs; they've discovered skis, snowmobiles, and southern vacations; they've civilized winter and moved it indoors.

A game we once played on rivers and ponds, later on streets and driveways and in backyards, we now play in arenas, in full team uniform, with coaches and referees, or to an ever-increasing extent we don't play at all. For, once a game is organized, unorganized games seem a wasteful use of time; and once a game moves indoors, it won't move outdoors again. Hockey has become suburbanized, and as part of our suburban middle-class culture, it has changed.

Put in uniform at six or seven, by the time a boy reaches the NHL, he is a veteran of close to 1,000 games—30 minute games, later 32-, then 45-, finally 60-minute games, played more than twice a week, more than seventy times a year between late September and late March. It is more games from a younger age, over a longer season than ever before. But it is less hockey than ever before. For, every time a twelve-year-old boy plays a 30-minute game, sharing the ice with teammates, he plays only about ten minutes. And ten minutes a game, anticipated and prepared for all day, traveled to and from, dressed and undressed for, means ten minutes of hockey a day, more than two days a week, more than seventy days a hockey season. And every day that a twelve-year-old plays only ten minutes, he doesn't play two hours on a backyard rink, or longer on school or playground rinks during weekends and holidays.

It all has to do with the way we look at free time. Constantly preoccupied with time and keeping ourselves busy (we have come to answer the ritual question "How are you?" with what we apparently equate with good health, "Busy"), we treat non-school, non-sleeping or non-eating time, unbudgeted free time, with suspicion and no little fear. For, while it may offer opportunity to learn and do new things, we worry that the time we once spent reading, kicking a ball, or mindlessly coddling a puck might be used destructively, in front of TV, or "getting into trouble" in endless ways. So we organize free time, scheduling it into lessons—ballet, piano, French—into organizations, teams, and clubs, fragmenting it into impossible-to-be-boring segments, creating in ourselves a mental metabolism geared to moving on, making free time distinctly unfree.

Ken Dryden ([Canadian Content](#), Holt, Rinehart and Winston)

EXCERPT FROM: THE WARS

Dear Jesus – he was going to drown. He went in all the way to his waist.

He fell back onto his shoulders. All he had to hold with was his elbows. These he ground into the clay like brakes. The slide took him forward so his legs were as much in front of him as below. *Don't*, he kept thinking; *don't*.

His hands were useless to him. If he was going to use them he would have to relax his elbows and he would only slip further in. He lay with his head back. The mud pressed down on his thighs. His neck was raw against his collar. He choked.

Many people die without a sound – because their brains are shouting and it seems they've called for help and they haven't. Robert kept thinking – why doesn't someone come? But no one did. He'd told them not to. The only sound he made was the *o* in *don't* and this got locked in his throat.

He pushed. He tried to force his pelvis forward and up. The muscles in his stomach made a knot. If he could only lift the weight. The mud spread wider over his thighs. It began to make a sucking noise at the back of his legs. The fog came down like a muffler over his face. One way or another – he would suffocate and drown. He began to push again and to lift – thrusting his pelvis upward harder and harder – faster and faster against the mud. His hat fell off. The wind and the fog were dabbling in his hair. The back of his head went all the way down and into the slush. In and out in and out in and out. With his buttocks clenched and his knees...He began to realize his knees were spreading wider and wider and his groin began to shudder. Warm. He was going to be saved. He was going to save himself. He sat up. His boots were still being held. But his thighs were free. He could see his knees. He began to pull at his legs with his hands. Nothing happened. Absolutely nothing. He leaned forward. He tried to pull at his breeches. His gloves were filled with mud and nothing would hold to them. He tore them off and locked his hands behind his right knee. Then he began to rock. His fingernails gauged his palms. He rocked from side to side and back to front. His leg began to move. Then he locked his hands beneath his left knee and rocked from back to front again. Both legs slid further out till only the ankles were held and his knees touched his chin. He fell back all the way and lay on his side. He reached above his head and shoved his hands down hard through the mud until he could curl his fingers deep in the earth. He pulled himself forward with his legs like twisted ropes and then he gave a violent, sudden spasm and flopped face down in the slush. He was free. In a foot of water.

He could hear himself breathing. Whimpering. He closed his eyes. *I don't want to drown*, he thought. *Please don't drown.* He pushed himself up with his head hanging down.

His breathing died away.

He knelt with both hands fisted on his knees. He listened. Something was near him. **He** could feel it.

Timothy Findley ([The Wars](#), Penguin)

EXCERPT FROM: FEBRUARY FROM SMALL CEREMONIES

But there was no mail for him that week or the next. The month was slipping by, and I still had not confronted Furlong. I weighed it in my mind, rehearsed it; I fortified myself, gathered my strength, prepared my grievances. Soon.

But there are other things to think of. Meredith will be seventeen on February twenty-seventh, and Martin suggests we all go to Antonio's for dinner. I fret briefly about the cost, but listening to my own voice and hearing the terse economical echoes of my mother, I stop short.

"A good idea," I say.

The day before her birthday I take the downtown bus and shop for a birthday present. This is a far different quest than shopping for my mother or for Lala; for them we can never think of anything to buy. But for Meredith, for a girl of seventeen, the shops are groaning with wonderful things. Things. It is the age for things, each of which would, I know, bring tears of delight rushing into her eyes. There are Greek bags woven in a shade of blue so subtle it defies description; chunks of stone, looking as though they were plucked from a strange planet, fastened into chains of palest silver; there are sweaters of unfathomable softness, belts in every colour and width, jeans by the hundreds, by the thousands, by the millions. Things are everywhere. All I have to do is choose.

But I can't. Instead I buy too much. I spend far more money than I'd intended; it is irresistible; it is so easy to bring her happiness—it won't always be this easy—so easy to produce the charge plate, to tuck yet another little bag away. But finally the parcels weight me down; my arms are filled, and I think it must be time for me to catch my bus. But first a cup of coffee.

In the corner of Christy's Coffee Shop I sink into a chair. The tables here are small, and the tile floor is awash with tracked-in snow; there is hardly room for me to stow my parcels under the table. At all the other little tables are shoppers, and like me they are weary. The February sales are on, and many of these women are guarding treasures they have spent the day pursuing. Waitresses bring them solace: cups of coffee, green pots of tea, doughnuts or toasted Danish buns, bran muffins with pats of butter. Outside it's already dark. Only four-thirty and the day is ending for these exhausted, sore-footed women. All of them are women, I notice.

Or almost all. There *is* one man at a table in the back of the room. Only one. Oddly enough, he looks familiar; the bulk of his body reminds me of someone I know. I do know him. I recognize the tweed overcoat. Of course. It's Furlong Eberhardt. With a cup of tea raised to his lips.

And who's that with him? Two women. Students? Probably. I peer over the sea of teased hairdos and crushed wool hats. Who is it?

One of them looks like Ruthie. What would Ruthie be doing here with Furlong? Impossible. But it is Ruthie. She is pouring herself a cup of tea, tipping the pot almost upside-down to get the last drop. She is lifting a sliver of lemon and squeezing it in. The small dark face, Latin-looking. It *is* Ruthie.

And who is that other girl? I can't believe it. But the navy blue coat thrown over the back of the chair is familiar. Its plaid lining is conclusive. The slender neck, the lift of dark brown hair. I am certain now. It is—yes—it's *Meredith!*

Carol Shields ([Small Ceremonies](#), Vintage Canada)

EXCERPT FROM: A VISIT FROM MR. LUCIFER “WARTIME CONDITIONS”

Back at the car, I sat in the back seat, just for a change. It felt funny sitting there, with no one else in the car. Then, as I was looking through the window listening to the noise from across the street, a big truck turned the corner and parked beside me. It was Aunt Margaret’s truck, but Mother was driving it.

“You poor little thing,” she said, hugging me to her. “And I don’t suppose you’ve had a thing to eat, have you?”

“Uncle Max gave me a dime,” I said. “I had an ice-cream cone and a Coca-Cola.”

“Well, that was certainly nice of him. I think I’ll just go over to the hotel and thank him personally,” she said.

She didn’t tell me to stay where I was, so I tailed her across the street, although I could hardly keep up with her because she was walking so fast.

When she got there, she flung the hotel door open so hard that it almost went off its hinges and into the street. Then she marched straight into the dingy corridor where I had myself been earlier that day. Only she didn’t quietly try the doorknob. She grabbed it and shook it within an inch of its life.

“Sorry ma’am,” the big man behind the desk said, transferring his dead cigar to the other side of his mouth. “No ladies allowed in there. Them’s the rules. Besides, it’s legally closed for the night. After midnight, you see.”

My mother turned violently in the direction of his voice and her red hair flew around after her. She walked up the counter and looked down at him and I could tell she was angry, because her eyes were flashing like neon lights.

“You listen to me,” she said in a low voice. “If you don’t open that damned door in about one second, I’m going straight over to Constable Kruger’s house and I’ll drag him back to that door in his pyjamas. And I promise you, you’ll never sell another bottle of your rotten beer as long as you live.”

I had never seen my mother quite like this. She was so angry that she actually frightened me. And I was on her side. What the big man thought, I don’t know, but he wasn’t behind the counter anymore. He was trying to insert the skeleton key into the door.

A second later, Mother flung the door aside and stood in the doorway with her hands on her hips. The roar from the beer parlor, now revealed to me at last, was so horrific and the sudden onslaught of the smell so foul that the combined effect nearly knocked me over. But Mother didn’t even flinch. She just stood there like a rock, glaring at the beer parlor. Gradually the noise began to abate as the men at the tables saw **her** standing there. Soon, a complete silence descended, except for one last clink from a solitary glass.

I saw Uncle Max. He was sitting up on the bar with his legs crossed, and his war wounds didn’t seem to be bothering him very much. There was a bottle of beer in his hand and a look of surprise on his face.

“Max Kalisnichuk,” she said. “Didn’t you forget one little thing?”

She then reached for me and pushed me in front of her, so that Uncle Max could see me. When he did, he came down off the bar and started towards us with his hands out in a gesture of regret, but Mother instantly turned her back on him and walked quickly out of the hotel, pulling me along with her.

We drove in silence for some time. She did not speak and I did not, at first, care to know her thoughts or intrude on them. But, finally, I got up enough courage to ask her something:

“Are you mad at Uncle Max?” I asked.

“Yes I am!” she said, making me flinch.

But later, after we’d driven farther into the rolling country, transcendently beautiful in the moonlight, she looked over at me and smiled.

“No, I’m not mad at your Uncle Max,” she said in her softer voice. “Not really....All those people are his friends and this was his first trip into town since he got back. And so he got a little carried away. He didn’t mean to forget about you.”

We drove on in silence, then she began to speak to me again:

“Your Uncle Max is really a kind, thoughtful man and he’s very considerate of others. Normally. He’s generous and everybody likes him. He’s smart and a hard worker. A wonderful man, really.”

“Is Father like him?” I asked.

“God forbid!” Mother said with a shudder.

Don Lemma ([A Visit from Mr. Lucifer](#), Western Producer Prairie Books)

EXCERPT FROM: BREAKAWAY

From behind the bleachers, huge triangular flags of green, yellow and pink unfurled. Flung out like the sails of an ocean schooner, they bore the names of Chinatown clubs. The hubbub on the field grew wilder and louder. Grown men chanted together like drunken teenagers, women threw their heads back, giggling giddily, and children ran everywhere. No one cared how deep their feet sank into the soft mud.

“We won!” Kwok shouted. “We did it!”

A young woman smiled enormously and screamed, “Congratulations!”

He opened his arms and she hugged him tight. Then the piercing blare of a trumpet jolted them. They looked away, and there on the street a marching band in braided uniforms and tassled caps waved shiny brass horns and rattled their drums. A cacophony of automobile horns called out and the crowd swept off the field in one big tide.

At the sidewalk, T.C. and the team manager posed for newspaper photographs. Between them, they held up the Northwest Trophy, a gleaming silver cup three feet high and a foot around. Behind them, the team pushed and mugged their way into camera range.

A reporter was firing questions at T.C. when the two war canvassers, still wearing their cardboard signs, suddenly pushed in and ripped open their boxes. With a dramatic flourish, they poured a stream of coins into the gigantic trophy cup. The crowd cheered.

“For war relief!” Shouted T.C. He shook the cup and the cash jingled.

Then people all around started pulling out purses and wallets and throwing money into the trophy. Pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters and even bills flew forward. The camera flashed again. T.C. thrust the cup at the reporter, who was forced to drop some coins in before the crowd applauded him.

T.C. and Kee clambered onto the back of a waiting truck. They waved for Kwok. “Come on!” A tangle of eager hands reached out and pulled Kwok safely aboard. T.C. threw an arm around him and waved happily at the crowd milling below them.

“Isn’t this great?” He shouted.

A thundering drumroll launched the parade. The five huge flags went first, flapping gloriously in the wind. Then came the marching band. Next were the three trucks full of beaming soccer players. Their fans filled the road, halting the oncoming traffic. Angry drivers honked impatiently, adding to the noise traveling to Chinatown. On the sidewalks, watching with eyes both bemused and resentful, were the other citizens of Vancouver. “We’re making a traffic jam,” Kwok shouted at Eddie.

“Who cares?” Eddie hollered back. “Chinatown hasn’t ever been this happy!”

The parade sailed through a red light, stopping more traffic. People ran alongside the trucks to shake hands with the team. Dickson Lee ran up and thrust bottles of soda pop into their hands.

“Well done, Kwok-ken!” he shouted, pumping Kwok’s hands vigorously. Kwok found himself smiling at everyone.

“You’re number one!”

“We played their game and showed them who’s the best!”

As the parade rolled into Chinatown, long strings of firecrackers, hanging from every balcony, exploded and shook the air like gunfire. The trucks stopped at the Peking Restaurant and the crowds pressed in.

“Come on.” Eddie pulled at Kwok as people jostled at the restaurant door. “There’s free food for everyone!”

“Everyone?”

“Yep! All Chinatown’s been invited!”

If only this day could last forever, Kwok exulted. He couldn’t believe how perfectly it had turned out.

Then he **felt** someone else tug hard at his arm. When he turned, he saw Ying, her face wet and dark. Mud covered her overalls and rubber galoshes, and her hands hung red and raw.

“Kwok, the river broke through the dykes,” she cried out. “The asparagus field was flooded away. We’ve lost it.”

Paul Yee ([Breakaway](#), Greenwood)

EXCERPT FROM: SOMETHING WORTHY

Jim opened his address, and I could tell he was nervous. He said none of us gathered there that night would ever forget the memorable occasion. For the students, Jim said, it was both an ending and a beginning. He talked about the student year and the Tuck Shop and there was laughter, and that seemed to relax him.

With a sort of easy confidence now, he talked; and it didn't seem possible that once he had pitched hay and hauled firewood with Dad through the deep drifts of winter in the bush country.

Then after more bursts of laughter and words that were just words to me, Jim paused. The smile left his face; and I think everybody suddenly realized that the next part of Jim's speech was going to be different.

"Ladies and gentlemen," Jim said, "when we—your sons and daughters—receive our diplomas tonight, we are supposed to be worthy of them." You could have heard the silence then, thick and fixed and pregnant. "It means," said Jim, "that into our hands you have passed a great trust. When people come to our doctors, they will come, believing that we have not only the skill and knowledge—but the sacred regard for their bodies, to make them well. When you pass your children to our teachers, you will be conferring on us a tremendous—almost a terrible trust." Jim touched a strand of his hair that had fallen across his face. "I once heard a Divinity student say that the greatest prayer was: 'Lord, that I may be worthy.' Now, I know I at least understand."

Somewhere in the student gallery, somebody snickered. But for the rest of that hall, it was as if even breathing had stopped.

"So," Jim went on, "if we are to be worthy, it must mean that we set forth now with a realization of what others have done for us. There should be no room left for false pride. There should be only gratitude for the sacrifices, hidden and open, of all those who have made our education possible...who have given us, as it were, to the service of humanity."

Said Jim: "From the bottom of my heart, I want to say to all tonight that whatever I am, I owe to others. To my professors, who have preserved and handed into my keeping the best knowledge of all the generations. To my classmates, who have shown me and shared with me a beautiful friendship. But most of all..."

And here Jim paused.

"...most of all," he said, "I want to thank my mother, who is down there in the audience with you. With her permission, ladies and gentlemen—and yours—I'd like to tell you what she has given over the years, for my sake and, I hope, for mankind."

All of a sudden, listening to Jim's voice, I couldn't see. For Jim was up there, not pretending any longer, telling those people who knew the value of education, what it meant to be so poor in worldly goods **that** she'd never owned a washing machine or a toaster or one really lovely dress. She was so unlettered herself she was afraid to speak before strangers...He went on and on, telling them about the lambs and the mosquitoes, till everywhere I looked, I could see women daubing at their eyes and men staring so straight ahead that you knew what it was like with them, too.

When Jim was done, the silence followed him off the stage. Then the applause began. It swept in waves through the auditorium, till at last the distinguished-looking man stepped back and lifted his hands for silence.

John Patrick Gillese ([A Century of Canadian Literature](#), Ryerson Press)

EXCERPT FROM: WHERE SHADOWS BURN

Kelly Quirk held the black telephone receiver away from her body and stared at it, as if it were a poisonous snake. She shook **her** head to clear her thoughts. Then, gingerly, she raised the phone to her ear again.

“Hello?”

No answer. Only the sound of distance—traffic, perhaps, or ocean waves. White noise. She listened for a while, too long, before she replaced the receiver in its cradle.

She could not believe what she had heard. It was a mistake. Yet the voice had been clear enough. First, the mechanical recorded message: “Will you accept a collect call from...” and then the name.

The name.

She had distinctly heard those syllables in that deep, familiar voice. “*James Grayton.*”

She sank down onto the couch and for a few moments surveyed her living room blankly. With its plush upholstery, reams of curtains, rugs and pillows, this room was a kind of refuge for her. Soft earth colors, no sharp edges. On the surface, it looked as warm and comforting as always, but everything had changed. She let her eyes travel through the room, across the many paintings and carvings that James had made with his own hands.

James Grayton. Beloved James. If she closed her eyes she could see his youthful face, his dark-green eyes flecked with gold.

Her husband.

Her late husband. Dead this past year and a half. These sixteen months and ten days.

Darl Grayton was stuffing his six-year-old son into an oversized tiger suit, impatiently pushing the boy’s arm through a striped sleeve.

“Dad, you’re hurting me!”

“Sorry, Alex. Sorry. But we have to go, okay? We have to get you to Angel’s by five if you want to go trick-or-treating, and Dad’s got a lot of things to do first.”

“What things?”

“Things.” Darl stood up and smiled at his son. “Hey. You look pretty cute.”

Alex frowned. “Auntie Kelly said I’d look fer—I’d look scary.”

“Ferocious,” said Darl. “She said you’d look ferocious. Come on, let’s move.” Grabbing Alex’s overnight bag, he hurried his son out of the house. Once in the truck, he paused only to help Alex secure his seat belt and lock the door.

They spent the afternoon driving all over Winnipeg, running errands. It was getting late by the time Darl navigated the maze of potholes on Angel’s run-down street. He parked the truck carefully and pulled two large bags of groceries from the back.

“Do I have to go to Angel’s?” Alex asked. He dragged his heavy knapsack along the gravel path as he trailed behind his father up to the front steps.

“Yes.”

“Couldn’t I go to Kelly’s house?”

“Kelly’s coming with me tonight. Come on, Alex. You had fun here last time, remember?”

“No,” said Alex. But Darl didn’t hear. He was knocking on the peeling paint of the front door.

Kelly knew she should get up. She should tidy the house and finish her sewing and get ready for the party.

Yes, she really should restore order to this room, she thought. It was impossible to find anything lately. Her usually immaculate house showed signs of the hectic pace of the past week, the carpet full of tiny threads and probably pins as well, the coffee table strewn with teacups and half-read books and the toppled pieces of a chess game she and Darl had abandoned days ago. A light dust coated the chess pieces, including the empty spool they’d used to replace a missing white knight. The loose ends of the costume she’d been working on lay scattered across the couch.

She picked up the mask she planned to wear tonight. The sad face of a beautiful young woman stared back at her, two bright teardrops suspended on her cheek. The mask needed only one last touch—some sparkles at the eyelids. Kelly knew she had a tube of glitter in her sewing box.

But she didn’t move.

EXCERPT FROM: A TIME TO GATHER STONES

On the way back to town Daniel saw the moon rise in the twilight. "Why don't we drive by the farm?" Daniel suggested on impulse. "It'd be good to see it, for Marni too, don't you think?"

"Why not?"

Daniel turned down the next section road. Marni was asleep in her grandfather's arms.

Daniel wanted to open up to him, to say, after all the years, how sorry he was for the rift between them. But his father seemed to anticipate him. "I'm glad you came home, son." He waited for a reply and when none came he said quietly, "I always regretted the way you left. I'm sorry for my part in it."

"It's okay, dad." He didn't know what else to say.

"I was half out of my mind about your mom and I wanted to be a farmer. The farm meant a lot to me."

"I know. I guess I wasn't meant to be a farmer."

"And I had to let it go. I got a good price for it. Now with the grain prices, I'd get nothing. So it all worked out. Things work out, Dan."

As they entered the yard, Daniel saw that some of the buildings had been moved away and the old equipment shed had been converted into a granary. The house stood unused and neglected.

"They're trying to rent it. I see an ad for it in the paper every once in a while."

Marni continued to sleep as Daniel switched off the ignition. "Let's lay her on the seat for a while," he said. "She's had a big day."

The two men walked towards the house. "I'd like to see inside one more time," Daniel said. Without a word his father walked towards the equipment shed. Daniel tried to see in a window past the drawn blinds.

"Here's a key, son. I used to leave a key over the window frame on the shed. I'm sure they haven't changed the locks."

Inside the house looked as it had the day the older man moved out, complete to the debris on the floor where the fridge had stood. Mouse droppings peppered the counter and the linoleum in the kitchen. When Daniel raised the window blind over the sink, a huge orange ball of a moon surprised him with its beauty.

Then he heard Marni. "Grampa." She was sobbing. "Grampa."

Daniel walked quickly outside. "Come here, honey."

"No, I want Grampa." Daniel scooped her up, but she kicked and fussed, on the verge of a tantrum. "I want Grampa."

"I'll take her, Dan." Daniel set her down and she took her grandfather's hand. "Here, I want to show you something." He led her out into the back field, followed by the new owner, until the girl and the one-armed old man stood silhouetted against the moon. Daniel followed erratically, within earshot, unsure.

In the twilight he saw the old man kneel and scoop a handful of earth and hold it up to his nose. "Come here, Marni. Smell this." He held his cupped hand up to Marni's nose. "That's the sweetest smell there is. That's the smell of the earth."

"That's a sweet smell, Grampa," Daniel could hear Marni say through the encroaching darkness. "That's dirt smell. I can smell it, Grampa." Daniel saw her fragile figure turn toward him. "Daddy, come here quick and smell."

Daniel plodded towards **them**.

"Daddy, hurry up and smell."

Daniel seemed to remember tagging behind his father who had turned and offered him the same gift when he was a little boy. A trick of the mind perhaps. But here, now, was an invitation to life that might not fall on his ears again. He quickened his pace towards his father and his daughter. Then he broke into a run, joyful, even graceful.

EXCERPT FROM: THE BRIDGE

Winter succeeded summer and spring came again. Eve now had fifteen years to her credit and spent more and more time in the woods alone. There she dreamt of lords and ladies and wove romantic stories of chivalrous deeds and lost causes, miraculously won.

Gielgud's impatience grew like an ache.

Three years passed and Eve still used the bridge daily. She took to lingering at its apex in defiance of her old fears. She stared into the water below and dreamed about the boy with the strange eyes. He was new in school. He lived near her. "I wonder why he never comes home this way?" she asked aloud. "I've waited and waited but I never see him leave." The boy's tall broad figure and changing eyes had somehow entranced her. No one real had ever before disturbed the surface of her dreams.

The troll wove his spells with frantic haste. "She's grown now," he muttered. "won't come this way forever, curse her." New footsteps had come to trouble his thoughts. They were those of a young man, who passed by daily in the wake of, but never before or with the girl, who, in the mellow afternoons, had begun to pause on the bridge a little longer each day. She stared for long minutes into the cool, multi-colored water and saw daydreams there which seemed not always of her own making. Her hair now swung like a swathe of midnight to her fingertips.

One day she was very late returning and for once the boy had preceded her across the bridge and gone. Gielgud flexed his gnarled fingers and squinted his hot purple eyes to slits as he put all of his power into the final spell against her.

Eve stopped dead at the highest point of the bridge as if struck by some enlightenment. Deep golden afternoon was just paling to silver and blue twilight. She turned to lean over the edge and stare into the eddying waters.

The wind was cool, but a strange longing to lower herself into the swishing stream came upon her. "I'll just take off my shoes," she said with no sense of the oddness of it. Then she perched with bare legs dangling over the edge of the bridge for a moment. A flash of purple below startled her and she leaned back.

That moment of hesitation, caused by Gielgud's impatience was all that saved her when an incredibly strong, clawed hand grabbed her leg. Instead of toppling immediately into the water, she was able to grip the stone bridge rail with all her might and scream.

It was an unequal struggle. Eve had only the strength of her terror, but Gielgud had his huge, hoary sinews and massive hate.

Then the balance tipped. Without warning there was a young warrior beside him in the thigh-deep water—a tall boy with red-gold hair and strange kaleidoscope eyes which shone with battle lust. "Remember us, Gielgud?" he asked. "Remember the taste of our steel?"

Gielgud was surprised and let go of Eve with a cry of wrath and anguish. The boy's sword soon ran purple with troll blood. It was a hideous fight, which the girl watched with horrified eyes—afraid to drop into the water and too weak to raise herself up. The troll managed to wrap his strong scalding legs about the young warrior's waist and come at him with claws and teeth of steel. The boy held the horrid head away and tried to ignore the searing pain in his middle. The sword was useless at such a close angle and he reached desperately for his dagger. Finally he freed it and, at the end of his strength drove it home to the hilt to Gielgud's black heart. The troll's body went lax and dropped from him. It floated downstream and a purple mist rose there.

The sword, the dagger and the accoutrements of the warrior faded away and he was just the boy. He looked a question to Eve with his magical kaleidoscope eyes and she slipped without hesitation into his arms. The cool water flowed around them and washed clean their wounds.

