

INSPIRED BY BOOKS

A PK POETRY PROJECT



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JAMES BELL

Trial

most cabaret singers are androids

long shot

nowhere to hide

do the Rex

Pilgrim

JIM BENNETT

Homer

bleak

the lighthouse

LESLEY BURT

A Nice Knock-down Argument

A Singular Notion

BOB COOPER

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Night of Error

JAMES BELL

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Trial

Only the billowing overcoat remains. Everything else is made up.
Franz Kafka - *The Diaries*

they were waiting for him one night
said the evidence was overwhelming
advised he should come with them quietly
for they still had to decide the charges

said the evidence was overwhelming
thought the trial would soon be over
although they still had to decide the charges
and this might take a little time

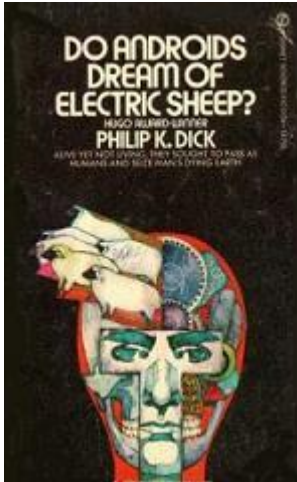
thought the trial would soon be over
but the judge had to examine the case
and this might take a little time -
they said to plead guilty was best

the judge had to examine the case
before there could be a decision
they said to plead guilty was best -
were left only with a billowing overcoat

before there could be a decision
advised he should come with them quietly
were left with a billowing overcoat
were waiting for him again another night

JAMES BELL

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most cabaret singers are androids

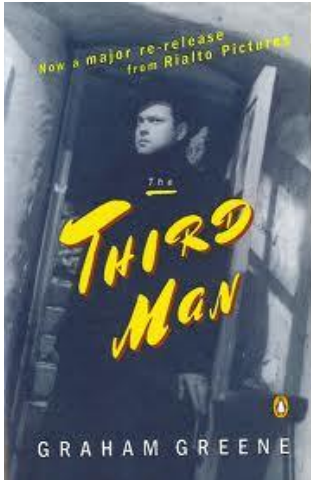
all androids are replicas of living persons
all androids will live for four years
then be replaced
are replicas and cannot claim to be human
even with beards like ZZ Top

all androids are unable to dream
all androids can have sex with a living person
but not fall in love
even with a naked cow girl
but can have an electric sheep as a pet

all androids will ultimately not pass the test
all androids are allowed to run
if they choose to run
nobody knows why there is a need for androids
one day there will be another boom
boom boom boom

JAMES BELL

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long shot

she didn't keep walking as close up
became long shot
while the zither kept playing till the end

no this never happens in the book
as the author preferred a happy end
like in one of Rollo Martin's Westerns

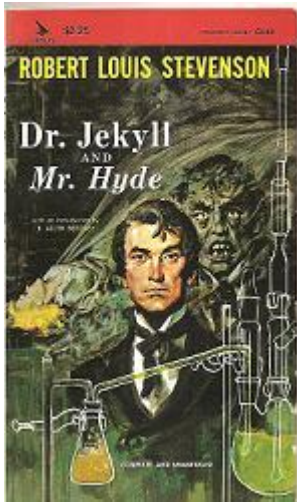
which was not his name in the movie -
and that conversation in a car
on the big wheel

nothing about cuckoo clocks being
the only thing the Swiss made
apart from watches that were any good

fiction imitates life more like the long shot
is never the same as in the book
she always keeps on walking

JAMES BELL

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nowhere to hide

remain in two minds about life -
you know life - where one exists only in a vial
though threatens to take over

there is nothing of nature here
where thoughts can be conflicted - can't they
when one wants to pound the streets

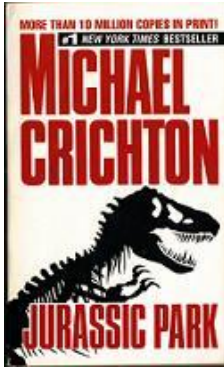
take liberties beyond morality -
yet it doesn't take a liberty to find there's
a darker side to evil

it's strength let loose at once
must burn itself out - though at a price -
even innocence is left unscathed

where one who should remain hidden
has nowhere to hide - laughs
like a jackal in the evening fog

JAMES BELL

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do the Rex

just a small island in the Caribbean
you can go there if you like
on the usual helicopter or a boat

these days let's say it's exclusive
need a taste for this party atmosphere -
it's a place that likes to dance

*and do the Rex
do the Rex all night*

just be careful nobody bites your head off
or have a raptor rapture in the dark

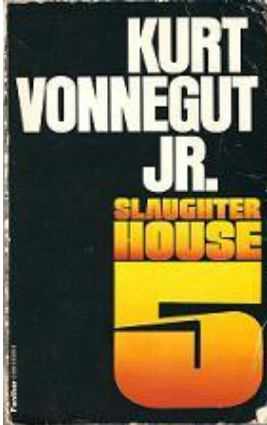
go for a Dip in the happy hour
watch the water and the jelly shake
have a Dactyl in the creative hour

*but do the Rex
do the Rex all night*

(If you are very clever you can sing this poem to the tune of 'Walk of Life' by Dire Straits.)

JAMES BELL

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Pilgrim

And so it goes. - Kurt Vonnegut

setting foot outside the slaughterhouse
was difficult next morning
for all the china in Dresden was broken

even before that Billy had time travelled
knew he must live in parallel lives -
setting foot outside the slaughterhouse

was just another form of disorientation
the world had become more Tralfamadorian
for all the china in Dresden was broken

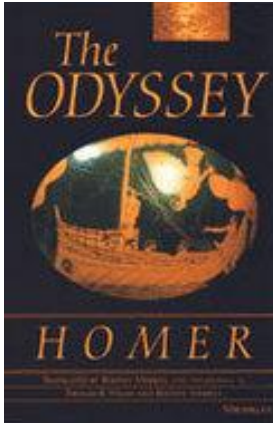
all the buildings were in ruins too
firebombing will make this kind of difference -
setting foot outside the slaughterhouse

the irony was not lost on Billy Pilgrim
that he might be inside a Kilgour Trout novel
for all the china in Dresden was broken

but he was unaware of that fact then
was in love with a princess on another world
and would not set foot outside the slaughterhouse
where all the china in Dresden was broken

JIM BENNETT

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Homer

I always wondered about Homer
the one who wrote history
about battles with Troy at least
five hundred years after the event

I suppose he had to wait
for writing to come along
couldn't write the Illiad in
Cretan Linear Script

that was like hieroglyphics
and would take too long
he was writing an epic poem
not engraving a stele or obelisk

fortunately for him a Phoenician
thought up a new technology
called an alphabet
and that came in handy

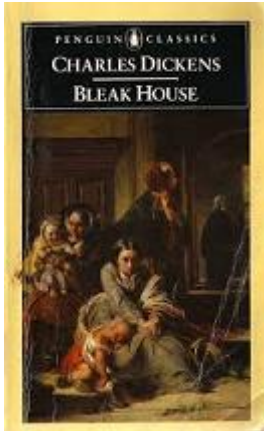
no one knows much about him
or if there was a him or her
or if he or she was a group
but most people think they do

there are lots of statues and busts
of an old guy with dodgy hair
and curled beard it doesn't matter
whoever it was could count

out lines of poetry in dactyls
with an occasional spondee
to break it up at six feet to the line
that is a hell of lot of sandals

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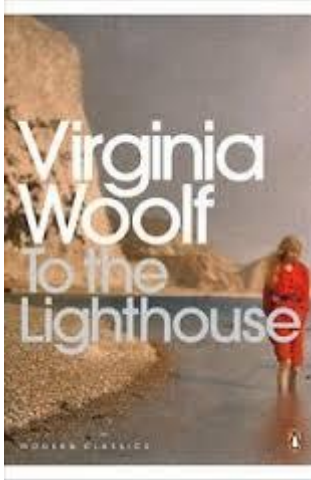


bleak

between the Court of Chancery
and Mr Krook's rooming house I met no one
he called himself Nemo didn't have
a submersible ship or a balloon like the Montgolfier's
his was a more sedate form of travel
he used opium burned it in a Chinese pipe
it did for him in the end of course but not until
an encounter and playful coincidence
brought him to the notice of the reader
enough to be remembered so that hundreds
of pages later he could emerge in a way unexpected
he stayed dead of course it was not *that* sort of book
this was a wholly different sort of book
with literary pretensions and a moral at the core
it also has a lot to say about the law and the way people
were treated in 19th Century Courts
all very worthy and wonderful things to think about
but the case of Miss Flite and her assertion
that her judgement will be on judgement day
and not one moment sooner perhaps that was the point
maybe the case of Jarndyce v Jarndyce would
drag on and on like the book into twenty instalments
all waiting for people to die off and for the fees to build

JIM BENNETT

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the lighthouse

Fort Perch Rock has vanished
into a Mersey mist the lighthouse
a ghostly image in the swirling cloud

remember another lighthouse
a promised visit from a summer home
that didn't materialise

the long stalks of grass
heavy with a seed head
weave in the breeze

giant hogweed flowers
float in the hedgerow like a sky
full of summer clouds

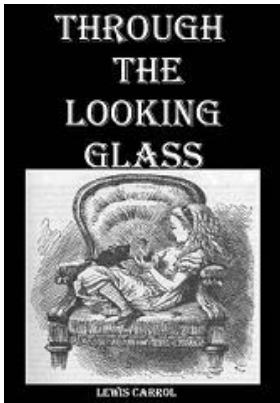
mist clears around the lighthouse
a fisherman cuts flesh from a fish
to use as bait throws rest back

it took the Ramsay's ten years
and a war but here by the Fort
the lighthouse is visible again

a camera will capture it
with a satisfying click of its shutter
before mist closes in again

LESLEY BURT

INSPIRED BY



A Nice Knock-down Argument

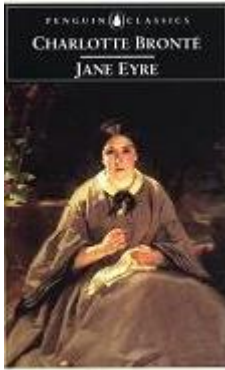
Take *hippopotamus*, he said;
how could I? asked Alice.
I'd never get a collar round its fat neck,
and I don't care for mud.

Don't be pedantic, he said,
I'm trying to show you a concept.
But *hippopotamus* is what you said,
replied Alice. We might call it *hippo*

for convenience, he said; or *rabbit*.
So long as we always use it the same way.
Take *wall*, said Alice. Take *fall*:
I'm off for a smoke with *Butterfly*.

LESLEY BURT

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A Singular Notion

Blood-red drapes, carpet, cushions,
tablecloth, bedspread; dust-muffled
air behind drawn blinds;

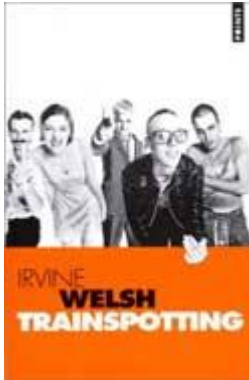
dull reflections in mahogany wardrobe:
an upended coffin to conceal
a dead man's suits; perhaps

holding his spirit from the pale child,
whose glance at a looking-glass
shows the small sprite peering back

and whose trembling ruffles the darkness.
This thought stifles her sobs:
her anguish may awaken him.

BOB COOPER

INSPIRED BY



What's Not Read In The Last Chapter

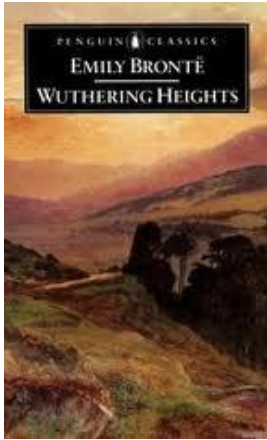
Ah, Begbie,
now I've seen and heard your Da
I'm no longer scared of you
or a glazed, dark-eyed, future.

Now I can leave all this
like I once did sat on Arthur's Seat
in the windless, shortest, warm June night,
12 o'clock awake,

reading the Beano aloud,
before dozing between sips of Irn Bru,
then stood wide-armed,
face lit in the huge sea to sky sun.

BOB COOPER

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Heathcliff Visits A Writing Course At Lumb Bank

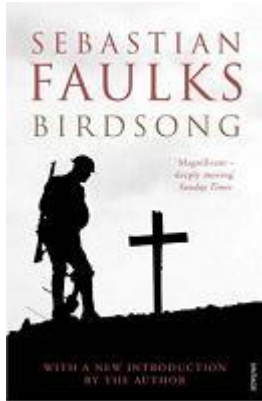
Squinting up at skylarks, down at scattering grouse
on a fine morning stroll over Wadsworth Moor's heather
to then stride across fields, along a track through cool woods,
ends when I sit on a bench, hear chatter as folk relax,
nibble slow lunches, laugh as clear as thrushes songs.

I linger into evening when their wine bottles empty
then ghost between rooms, glance at what's written,
search for my name - and Cathy's - as I stare at passions
which creep slow as valley mist or overwhelm like lowering clouds.
I read of bodies as close as quill to paper, but I am not there.

So I close their laptops, realising again I'm in only one book
where its pages repeat all that's told of me by Ms. Bronte.
But I want my own life. That's why I'm here. So I start to type
a story where me and those I've just met belong, and passion.
All night my fingers flicker; then, as goldfinches sing, walk home.

JAN HARRIS

INSPIRED BY



Centenary

we lay wreaths, sing hymns,
breathe the same air as those we remember
though they breathe no more

the breeze that ruffles coat hems at the cenotaph
once carried the smell of cordite and cresol
from trench to trench, flesh in stages of decay

today, it is sharp with traffic fumes and regret
the tang of pavements after rain

we hold candlelit vigils,
snuff flames out one by one
see our prayers rise with the smoke

yet still, somewhere
a soldier rests his eyes on unbroken sky
where a lark showers the troubled world with song

SALLY JAMES

INSPIRED BY



The Help

1962 in Jackson Mississippi and Minnie was hot,
so many rooms to clean, her back ached
and fingers blistered. A child cried, Minnie smiled,
she would rather nurse a toddler than brush a dusty yard.
The child called her mamma, kissed her cheek,
Minnie hoped she wouldn't do that
when her real mamma was around.

It was tea time, Minnie gave her a wooden spoon
and a pan to bang it on. The kitchen was modern,
new things buzzed, needed to be plugged in.
She cooked her own way, knew the mistress
liked the fried chicken same as her family.
Minnie had her own plate and cutlery in a cupboard,
her cup hung on a hook out of sight.

When her day was done she walked home,
her feet ached on the dusty road.
A bus blustered by scowled "Whites only".
Minnie mumbled, carried on, saw her home
mingling in the down town slum.
The door opened, children hugged her,
cried hunger, she took off her shoes
wiped her brow and put on her apron.

DAPHNE MILNE

INSPIRED BY



AFTERLIFE ON THE TOTNES LINE

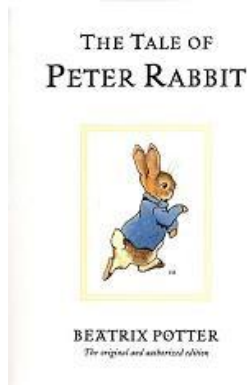
Haunting wasn't what I had in mind.
It's the chains that get me down
heavy, noisy and uncomfortable
and the nightie – I wish they would
read the book - it's all very well
for the film-makers, looks suitably ghostly
but I can tell you it's B. chilly
wafting around the afterlife with no kecks,
worse than being a Scotsman.

As for being translucent – well!

Then there's him – the hauntee
as if I hadn't had enough of him in life
miserable old so-an-so mousing around
in semi darkness, saving pennies on candles
miserable and miserly in one packet.
I'll give him mustard and gravy.
I'll have to send the gang round, otherwise
I can guarantee there'll be no change there
or my name's not Jacob Marley.

DAPHNE MILNE

INSPIRED BY



BB RUMINATES ON PR

Living with four women sounds good but
he's not the man of the family
quite the reverse three older sisters
and Mother to chase him around.

He's sent out every day with the girls
To make sure he doesn't get into trouble.
They nag. I've heard them
don't do this, do that

They're so bossy, smug as sixpences,
buttoned up in their little pink capes.
It's no wonder he's rebellious.

Of course he runs away, gets caught,
escapes leaving his coat behind him
reaches home soaking and shivering.

So he's sent to bed without supper
but with a dose of nasty medicine.
All because he wouldn't do as he was told.

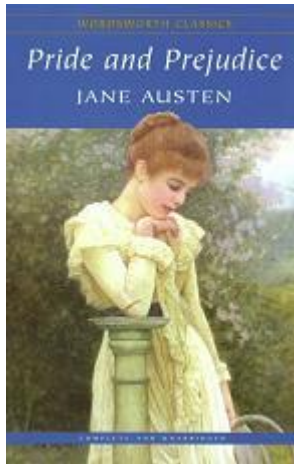
Living alone with Dad's much better
no bread, milk and blackberries for tea
a bit untidy but we manage.

I wouldn't be my cousin Peter
not for all the lettuces
in Mr. McGregor's garden.

I quite fancy my cousin Flopsy.

DAPHNE MILNE

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THE CAVALRY WEARS PETTICOATS

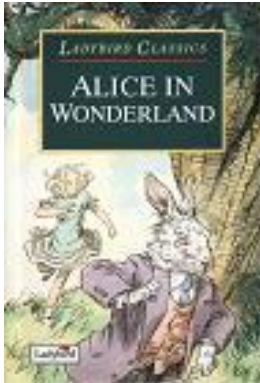
Great Aunt Jane didn't go in for wet T shirts.
Her rebellions were of a gentler kind
choreographed as precisely as a cotillion.

Such difficulties to be overcome:
reclusive Father, over eager Mum,
also the putative in-laws - snobbish,
insular, self important, off putting.

Lizzie knows her duty
however distasteful the task might be
the rich, arrogant prig needs rescuing
no alternative she must marry him.

ERIC NICHOLSON

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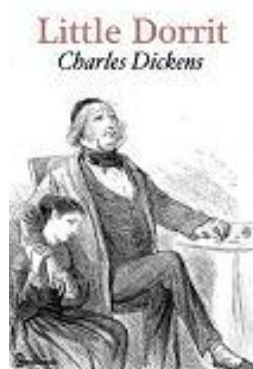


A.L.I.C.E.

up down
top bottom
strange and charm
went for a stroll
(truth and beauty were nowhere to be seen)
down disappeared
down the hole first quickly
followed by the others
strange took it
all in her stride
up got in a spin
bottom bottomed out
top went all anti-matter
charm said the rabbit
burrow experience bore
a striking resemblance
to A Large Ion Collider Experiment
and told everyone
to duck as an unidentified
sub atomic particle
hurtled towards them

STUART NUNN

INSPIRED BY



Three Dorrits

William

Who'd want to have a prison
for family? Who'd exchange

an inconspicuous freedom for fame
cadged in a cage? He would.

Frederick

Music sustains him, tucked away
in his corner of this double plot,

happy to be overlooked.
His clarinet speaks for him.

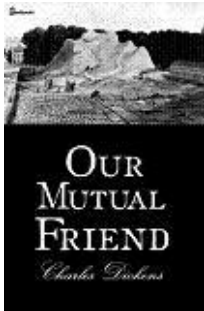
Fanny

Insupportable, the life forced on her,
two short steps from the gutter.

Her face is her fortune, and that
not reliable. In the end.

STUART NUNN

INSPIRED BY



Three Mutual Friends

Noddy Boffin

Where there's muck there's gold.
in piles too high for climbing.

Where there's gold, muck accumulates,
pollutes his generation.

Rogue Riderhood

Night and river-water
run through his veins,

his face reflected
in drowned mens' eyes.

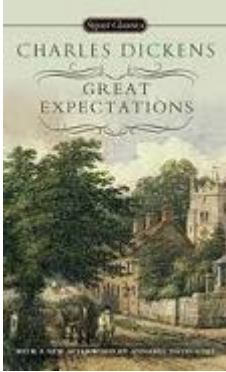
Silas Wegg

He knows how to turn a penny –
into the power to corrupt

a dustman's innocence. Till
innocence drags him into the light.

STUART NUNN

INSPIRED BY

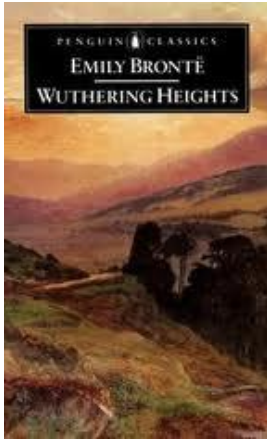


“Well, you can break his heart.”

How close, all his life, the shackle and cage;
how just out of reach the cash.
The web's prepared for him, woven of loss,
corruption of uneaten cake, a kiss bestowed,
beer stirred with a file, a servant's scarred wrists.
When his moment comes, his innocence
and sympathy for the fellow suffering
springs the trap, and then what's left
is the slow working out of the humiliation,
the lead up to this night of rain
and the stranger on the stair.

BARBARA PHILLIPS

INSPIRED BY



Diary: Catherine Speaks To Heathcliff

when the newness of the words
still grows upon the page and the cutting
leaves wounds so things can never be the same

you know it's like saying to you we're through
even if we may think we are still in love
but when you go I feel I've cut a living vein
I say oh no—why did I let my love go
but I know I can't call you back
because it will never be the same again – ever

the wound will still be there, must always
be shared and how can I do it -live with it
I know inside where I don't want to go
I can't – even if I say I can
the cut was made
it is deep, not just a scrape

I fooled myself into believing it was
just as I did when I pruned those wounded
branches that now flail in the wind
their fresh gouges open
to the light of morning accuse
me of faithlessness, lash me with questions

(cont.)

(cont.)

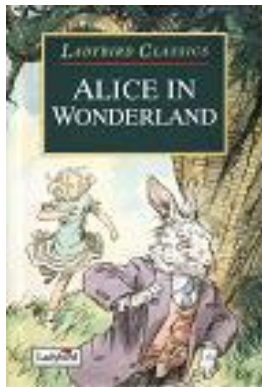
why can't you wait to see
what love can do when you believe
don't you know you can't presume
to see necessity for endings when
beginnings always cause pain that comes
in growing towards togetherness

when trust is rain across limbs
joined with ease of roots and earth
when you exhale as if each breath
is one you have not felt before
when the one you love shines
before you like a dream

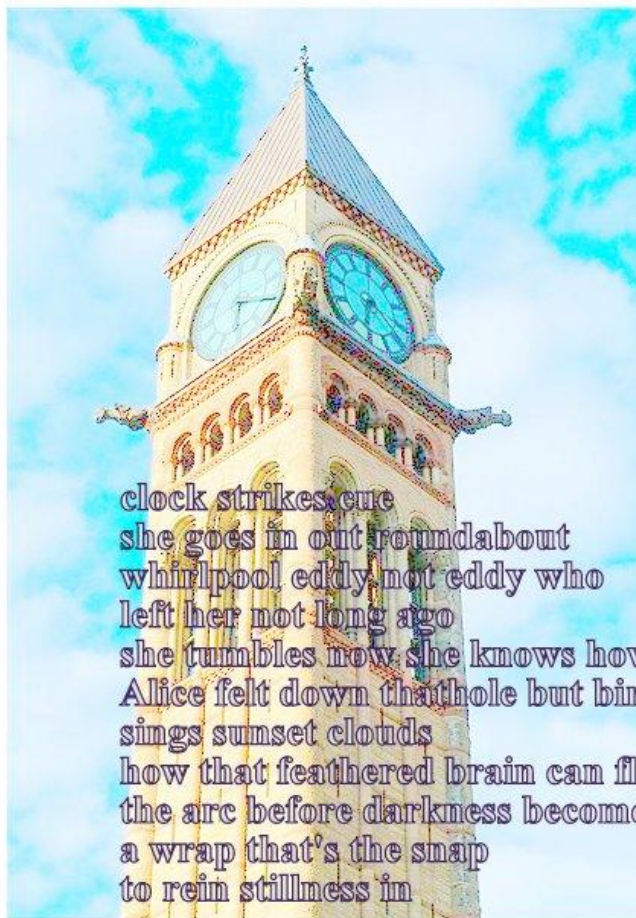
you didn't dream you'd ever
see and we are new again in a way
we didn't know we could ever be

BARBARA PHILLIPS

INSPIRED BY



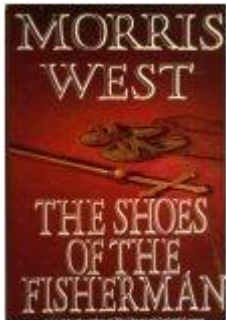
ALICE



clock strikes cue
she goes in out roundabout
whirlpool eddy not eddy who
left her not long ago
she tumbles now she knows how
Alice felt down that hole but bird
sings sunset clouds
how that feathered brain can fly
the arc before darkness becomes
a wrap that's the snap
to rein stillness in

GRANT VAN WINGERDEN

INSPIRED BY

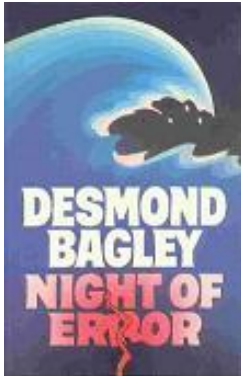


The Shoes of the Fisherman

Soaked and slightly rotten but robust in a salt crusted way
The careless knot and trailing lace across some speckled grime
No time for the flap of the flip flop or slap of the slipper
The hell with heels every time eyes on the line
A lifetime of leaning over
The canvas to fit
Practical comfortable
Weighted waterproof
and for getting up on the roof

GRANT VAN WINGERDEN

INSPIRED BY



Night of Error

Through the mist of Mister's mistakes
The fog and fug of those who lie awake
and those who lie in wait

The evening out of imperfection
Dares tumble in the wrong direction

The black streak bleak poised at peak
Shadows shift at shaft of light
Reaches for the switch to incandescence