

# Snets

by Alex MacDonald

## The Romantic

She leans back with a heavy sigh  
on the loveseat in our living room  
legs stretched out on the floor  
and the fabric of her blue dress  
moulds to the swelling globe beneath  
nine months gone and counting days  
until there shall be water,  
light and a magnificent cry  
as a new universe is born  
her eyes though tired with strain  
are laughing at the enormity  
of what she is about to do and,  
meaning admiration and good cheer,  
I say—you sure are nice and round my dear.

## A Phenomenon Explained

Somewhere in the dark recesses  
behind the tangle of grey pipes  
must be this strange machine,  
an engine of primordial design  
the dials of which emit  
a greenish glow and which is operated  
by fanatical gremlins  
whose hard muscled little bodies  
strain at the taps and levers  
as the steam builds and then,  
at precisely the critical moment,  
throw everything into reverse  
so that my traitorous foot lifts up  
and firmly thrusts itself into my mouth.

### **Mattins**

Eyes open, something, a presence,  
 from the bath shines through  
 the gloom of the room  
 light which illuminates a naked  
 slim-waisted and round-hipped  
 goddess standing one foot pointed  
 with her back to the bed  
 choosing some little garment  
 from the open drawer. I stop  
 breathing and keep absolute  
 silence lest I startle her  
 while greedily I drink the nectar  
 a vision of the day's new life—  
 this intimate stranger and my wife.

### **Choice**

Dreaming deep when radio  
 early intrudes pizzicato,  
 morning's here and music  
 flashes red six-three-oh  
 across chasm on bookshelf,  
 black night window but  
 creeps dawn reluctantly I know.  
 Bravely do I get now up  
 end dream with linoleum shock  
 find slippers slip in feet  
 go to bathroom turn on light  
 and tap, shiver, wait till  
 billows steam from shower or clobber  
 clock crash back sleep pillow?

### **Summer's Day**

Fine August morning  
 bursting with promise,  
 from the front hall  
 I hear footsteps departing.  
 Working the garden  
 my hands in the earth,  
 far up in the sky  
 her jet is soon gone.  
 In the still afternoon  
 dark leaves hang from the elm,  
 ripe grain is golden  
 and gleams like her hair.  
 Though this parting's a sorrow  
 she'll be home tomorrow.

### **Actio**

To read my poem aloud  
 before this knowledgeable crowd  
 is to bring an offering  
 of carefully chosen words  
 and trust that friends  
 will "keep the grain  
 and blow the chaff away."  
 Or else it is to grasp the lapels  
 (sweating with fear of acceptance  
 heart beating with delicious panic)  
 throw the trench coat open  
 and expose the naked parts—  
 a devious celebration of ego  
 in the innocent guise of art.

### **Enchanted**

In the midst of the city  
 stands there a building  
 calls to those passing  
 that they should go in;  
 the hall is in silence  
 exact in the middle  
 of the black marble  
 is a deep well of water;  
 they stand at the railing  
 watch themselves fondly  
 their brilliant reflections  
 then they leap gladly,  
 and as they are drowning  
 they smile with conviction.

### **Love**

She said: what you need are eyes of love  
 to look at the poor wretches who come  
 daily for their bread and bowl of stew.  
 But they don't care, I said, what's in your eyes  
 as long as you give them what they want  
 They'll take it all and more and laugh at you.  
 And if they do, she said me back  
 it does not mean they need it less  
 indeed it means they need love more.  
 What is this love, it's all so vague  
 And goody goody, next you'll be dragging  
 Jesus in to clobber me with guilt,  
 explain this love, I wish I knew.  
 She smiled: it's how you give them bread and stew.

## Standup

...the one about the clone  
 who walks into a church and sees  
 a sign "No Clones Allowed" but  
 goes in anyway and during the sermon  
 the minister stops and says, "Hey,  
 didn't you see the sign? There'll be  
 no salvation for the likes of you"  
 and as the ushers are beating the clone  
 and dragging him out the door  
 he yells back to the minister  
 "How could you tell?" The minister shouts  
 "Never mind that, you're just lucky  
 we don't call the copies." Jeez  
 I've got a million like that...

## Us

Thank you for bringing me to  
 your high-school reunion,  
 epiphany of what you were  
 and are—I see it clearly now;  
 after such profound sharing  
 there can be no parting,  
 not even the metaphorical parting  
 of stiff twin compasses, and let us have  
 no oxymoronic highly caloric sorrow;  
 rather we shall link sweaty fingers  
 ignore erupting pimples  
 whisper our love and dance  
 through the dark gymnasium of life  
 holding tight, you and me babe, forever.

### **The Teacher**

When Nelson Mandela came to Canada  
 he visited children at a school,  
 wondering what he could say to them  
 he decided to tell them a story.  
 “Once there was a man, a great teacher,  
 out in a boat with some men and women  
 called disciples, which means friends;  
 the teacher grew tired of being in the boat  
 so he stood up and stepped over the side  
 and began walking toward the shore  
 on the water. His friends were amazed  
 and they called—how do you do that?  
 It's easy, he called back, the water holds me up.”  
 As the children clapped Nelson Mandela chuckled.

### **Channel 1**

have you thought about it?  
 everything you see  
 on the old TV  
 is nothing but bleep;  
 scandalous revelations  
 told breathlessly on the news  
 which rock the nations  
 are so much shite;  
 a media conspiracy  
 by Doctor Spin  
 to bring us down—and why?  
 only so they can tell the truth  
 and make us all feel better,  
 by and by.

### **Dad They'll Laugh**

Now listen son, haven't I told you about  
 the penis elves? They come in different  
 colours, wear two kinds of hats and on  
 average are about six inches tall; they live  
 mostly around sports facilities especially  
 locker rooms and what they do (did I say  
 they're usually invisible?)  
 what they do is pick some poor guy  
 and whisper in his ear your dick's  
 too short, it's way too small,  
 compared to all these studs your thing  
 is wee: don't you listen, sport,  
 it's all b.s. that monster of yours'll  
 do fine for making love and going pee.

### **Avondale Barn**

old swayback  
 grey boards and grey shingles  
 door hanging by a hinge  
 a roost for pigeons  
 in the long grass  
 behind somebody 's farm;  
 I back up to get  
 all this coffee-table picturesque  
 in the view finder but stop  
 for a memory I seem to have stumbled on:  
 a hot day long ago  
 when young Jack, sitting on a bale,  
 decides to leave the Island and move West  
 to be my grandfather

**AC 122**

I stand up too fast in seat 18A  
 bashing my head on the plastic compartments,  
 tug at the jeans, squirm into the backpack  
 follow the people along the long aisle,  
 pass the blonde woman with wings on her tunic  
 who smiles with her eyes and says have a nice day,  
 then into the tunnel which slants sharply upward  
 and grow as I walk unaccountably tired,  
 how very peculiar I think to myself  
 and search for a men's room to wash off my face,  
 look up from the sink and see standing there  
 a middle-aged man with no hair in a suit,  
 he doesn't look puzzled at all but he smiles  
 unbuttons the collar and loosens the tie.

**Executive**

He opened the door of his big corner office  
 and saw that the big potted plant on the floor  
 had gone mad again as it did every night  
 had sent its green vines to the top of the desk  
 where they smothered the phone, then curled across  
 the wide blotter to strangle the in-tray  
 heaped as it was with letters and journals,  
 from there to the side table over the keyboard  
 and over the monitor and printer too.  
 He picked up his scissors and started to prune  
 computer to in-tray to phone and he threw  
 the twisted green vines in the grey metal can  
 where they writhed evilly like a basket of snakes \_\_\_\_\_  
 and when the phone rang it was a wrong number.

### **There Is At Times**

There is at times a fever of the brain  
 when beauties beat their wings against the gates  
 in high panic, desperate to be free  
 to mount the sky and wheel great arcs  
 in blue heaven or beneath the clouds,  
 then fall deep, down in a steep dive  
 touch earth with the tip of a wing  
 and up again, but which of them  
 shall fly? At such times there often is  
 a slant of mind which contemplates  
 the struggling things until the breathing slows  
 and they grow calm, quiet and still,  
 settle amongst each other fold their wings  
 but one who flies for all and joyous sings.

### **Hurricane**

Set in order on the shelf above his desk  
 the treasured notebooks, fruit of many years  
 of thinking and writing in black ink,  
 elevated thoughts sometimes sublime,  
 trenchant observations, witty jibes  
 at well-deserving targets and the poems,  
 those carefully crafted sonnets much revised  
 on subjects philosophical and the time  
 for publishing these master works draws near.  
 This windy night the poet sits engrossed  
 and does not hear the rain and does not hear  
 half the mountain side above the town  
 break loose and in a rolling torrent of mud  
 hasten his and his books' eternity.

### **The Audit**

We have examined the books of the universe according to recognized accounting principles and we regret to report glaring examples of waste, mismanagement and inefficiency.

In addition we note with grave concern your CEO throws goodness around like a drunken sailor, as if there's no tomorrow. Rather than a clear division of good and bad there are double entries everywhere everyone is bad, everyone is good.

We feel it is incumbent upon us as auditors to warn the Directors and the Shareholders that unless this serious situation is rectified you can kiss the Last Judgement goodbye — it just won't fly.

### **Fall**

the old knight rides in a weird landscape,  
stands six-footed at the edge of an indigo  
lake where deep down  
in the coldness, stillness, a gleam  
reflection of the one star, slowly  
rises through the anticline  
inches from the surface where it changes  
as he watches to become the notion  
of a swan growing more definite  
with orange webbed feet and long neck  
which stretches forward as the great  
wings begin to beat, but silently explodes  
in a spray of white feathers like falling  
tears...

**Caller I. D.**

I am your telephone:  
you pick me up  
press my buttons  
and talk through me.  
To whom I wonder  
are you talking?  
Is it the dear  
departed loved ones,  
or the man you wish was here  
instead of me?  
It's no surprise  
the bill is astronomical—  
even the local calls  
are long distance.

**In Motion**

standing on the sidelines  
under the trees  
I see a leaf  
falling lazily back  
and forth riding air  
currents and  
landing softly on  
the earth,  
at which moment  
a shout from the crowd  
as the quarterback  
releases a hard spiral pass  
which flies straight and true until  
at the last moment it is tipped away.

**Poplar**

Everyone remarked upon the shape:  
 full at the bottom and curving to the point  
 like a great green teardrop  
 twice taller than the house.  
 And I who watched it every day  
 was struck by its vitality,  
 leaves remaining long into October,  
 so that when the heavy ice came  
 during the night of Thanksgiving  
 they were like upturned hands  
 ready to catch it. In the morning thick limbs  
 lay upon the earth  
 and what was left a scarecrow of a tree  
 forlorn beneath the low grey sky.

**But Seriously...**

I raised my eyes while reading to take a look  
 and found we were not on the same page, hell  
 we were not even in the same book  
 so I said, hey guys, talk to me, do tell  
 what you think we can do to make this right  
 because I'm depressed and for two cents I'd sell  
 all these plaguey books in the hope we might  
 look each other in the eye and start again  
 just talk about the big and deep things on our minds  
 the ones that give us joy and the ones that cause us pain  
 the record's poor yet I believe it's not too late to find  
 genuine common cause for there's a world to gain \_\_\_\_\_  
 for a long moment there was silence in the room  
 until a woman in the back row began to laugh.



### **The Science of Love**

Take that precise moment  
 when their hands touched,  
 carefully set it in the truck  
 and drive to the lab  
 where you'll attach the cables  
 from the voltmeter, switch it on  
 to discover what I predict:  
 that there is electricity  
 between them, you will see  
 the needle jump on the dial  
 though in many other cases  
 it stands still. I can't say why  
 though if you ask me how I know \_\_\_\_\_  
 because I saw the sparkle in their eyes.

### **On City Water**

Whether 'tis nobler in the journal  
 to keep a dignified silence  
 and respect that there are times  
 the springs of invention run dry  
 and the little stream which often  
 bubbles happily o'er the rocks  
 is now a muddy bottom  
 of drab colour and no interesting  
 features—or to take up the Bic  
 medium point and scribble  
 any old depressing doggerel  
 with gratuitous alliteration  
 and a ridiculous image at the end  
 of running the garden hose to fill the creek.

**On First Looking Into Groening's *Simpsons***

much have I surfed the virtual lands  
 from melrose places to the outer limits  
 thumbed the talk shows and the news  
 and found in the town of Springfield  
 him of the bald head and pot belly  
 who dozes on his dangerous job,  
 eats too many donuts,  
 is good at shabby rationalization  
 for taking the easy way out or in  
 it doesn't matter much he says,  
 and yet there is one thing I note  
 which leads me Homer Simpson to admire  
 for his simple soul and heart size large—  
 it's how he really loves the kids and Marge.

**Lunar Convention**

Whereas a thousand poets  
 for a thousand years  
 have writ a thousand poems  
 about the moon, and  
 whereas said moon  
 is seriously depleted  
 and cannot abide the striking  
 of one more shining image,  
 therefore be it resolved  
 that for a hundred years  
 no moon poems be permitted  
 until the stock of images  
 has replenished itself  
 like silver fishes in the sea.

**Gravity**

Think of that moment  
when big engines thrust  
nose angles up  
and rolling wheels lift off,  
just that moment only  
committed to the air  
in which there are  
no boundaries, and above  
in the cabin ten across  
all the faces with  
all the expressions  
all the stories,  
and in that moment  
we could go anywhere.

**Car Poem**

When I turn the key  
electrons will surge  
from battery to starter  
engaging the engine  
exploding the fuel  
so that pistons push crankshaft  
as foot pushes pedal  
and off we will go. BUT  
when up pick I pen  
to start poem I'll cock ear  
for strange unaccountable  
noises I cannot explain  
and write them down fast  
as I reckless careen.

**Noel**

This church beside the school:  
 fifties brick and wood ceiling  
 enclose a space  
 of which is visible  
 every square foot.  
 No vaulted dome  
 no hidden transept  
 where might be glimpsed  
 around a shadowed corner  
 beating wings  
 something—  
 yet on the altar steps  
 a small host of kids in sheets  
 singing and waving tinfoil stars.

**First Snow: Nature Explains**

incorrigible rascals they are, building  
 a thousand separate houses with walls,  
 fencing backyards from backyards  
 perversely planting solid hedges  
 to keep things out, mark the lines  
 between them, and those roads  
 of theirs, cruel unbreathing bands  
 of asphalt and cement on living earth,  
 rolling them in rubber-tired  
 isolation from place to lonely place  
 including their churches, flat-roofs,  
 domes, onions and steeples—  
 there's little I can do, I know,  
 and yet, perhaps, if I send snow...

**Ice Dance**

When I said we could do that  
I didn't exactly mean the loops  
or the axles or the backward  
flips but something clean  
as steel blades on new ice,  
intense as defying gravity  
for long seconds at a time,  
daring as letting go—  
supported by the other  
at what would otherwise be  
frightening speed and feeling  
in our hair the wind  
as we move lovingly  
apart and together.