

from

Ransacked

by Anne Stone

Dear Art,
I'm sorry—but your
—G.

Dear Art,
About the bird
d...

It's rainy.

Arthur will be wearing a woollen sweater for the rain, and his bird is dead. He has gone and his bird is dead. Dead dead dead.

It is very important to G that she gets this just right, and so, she begins again:

Art:
The bird is dead.
Dead dead deadD.

The bird, dead. Clever and dead. The sweater, woollen. Woollen and itchy. The weather, cold. Cold and wet. Cold and wet, clever and dead, woollen and itchy.

Dear Arthur, Your bird is dead and I met someone. Last night, I went out for a drink — the bird was the furthest thing from my mind. Last night I went out for a drink. The bar was dead, but it picked up — I wanted you to know that. That the bar did pick up, I mean it's important to me that you know that.

clever bird is dead.

Dear Arthur,

Dear Arthur,

the bird

your

Bird

It

is dead.

You are in a hotel room in the West, and here, there is a man named Marlin, *comme le poisson*. I met him by the wet of the sea.

But the letter makes G think there never was a clever bird. Perhaps she made it up, except for the insistent lump under the crumpled dish rag.

Yes, the bird is dead. And what's more, it's staying that way.

The thing is, G feels

That walk we took when we were children, Arthur, more real to me than the woollen scratch of the sweater you wear because of the cold and the wet for Arthur, or she did. And then she didn't. Not at all. She didn't feel anything for Arthur or his sweater or the cold or the rain or the woollen itch.

No, I guess I don't love you, Arthur.

I don't love you because you steered me off of the sidewalk and the busted sole of my shoe grazed at suburban lawns like a sheep. So I didn't have to touch you or be touched by you.

Or your deadly clever bird.

Yes, I could tell that you would grow into the kind of man who would think he could own a clever bird, even then. Maybe that's why I kept to the lawns, so I wouldn't have to mourn it.

It is very complicated and difficult to explain. I know you are alone in a very large hotel room and that the windows are open. There is a draft from the west. You are sitting alone in the room. I picture the small auburn hairs on your arms, gently teased. Or they would be gently teased, if not for the blunt statement of your woollen sweater. Thickly greased as a pompadour. The smell of your hair oil is delicate and cloying at once. The delicate hairs on your arm are pressed flat under that pubic mass. Did anyone ever tell you that you have perfect teeth? Arthur, I do not like perfect teeth. Did I ever tell you they glinted that time we walked up through the old port? Some shiny thing glinted as we passed the hip-sliding silver boots of the whores on Ste-Catherine. I thought there might be a quarter on your tongue, tucked away for an emergency. But no, it was those Upper Canada teeth.

G walked like that, over lumps, sometimes losing her footing, all the way back. And so, something about the way that he didn't notice, or didn't care, that he'd forced G off the sidewalk trying to close a distance that remained constant keeps her from mourning his clever bird.

G went into the kitchen and got herself a glass of milk. She drank it very slowly. They were ten years old. Now, they are thirty and the clever bird is dead.

Your clever bird has a very small and very precise beak. A stylized triangle that curves toward

Dear Art,

I am sorry that your clever bird is dead. I realize it must seem insensitive of me, but I have given it quite a bit of thought and after I bury your clever bird in the garden, I am leaving forever. It's the best thing, really. We bring out the worst in one another. I bring out your dead woollen birds, and you, you bring this-me out. Arthur, I don't like this-me. It's not so much that I've found your continued company as delicate and cloying as that oily scent that so tenaciously clings to the pubic mound of your woollen bird, as it is that I think somewhere there might be someone else who will bring out a me I could live with. Good-bye, Arthur, I am truly sorry about your loss.

So you know, I will bury your clever bird under the lilac tree we transplanted from your mother's garden. I'll put the ceramic frog on top, the one with the spare key inside, so you'll know exactly where to look. There's some hamburger meat in the freezer, and the tomatoes are almost ripe. You should keep an eye on the lettuce, though, because I think it has aphids. The empties out back are for the slugs.

G.

the tip. A series of very small and very precise puncture wounds run down the left breast of your very clever bird. Any one of them could have been fatal. I don't think the lung was punctured because the bird struggled to breath for a while, and something like a soft and fleshy balloon pushed its way out of a little hole and began to inflate on the outside of its chest. I tried to make it go back in. I pressed there, Arthur, and a tiny whoosh of breath was forced out of the little bird's beak. I thought of you and held it to my mouth, trying to take something of its breath into me, for you. It bit me, Arthur, and then it died. I carried it to the kitchen that way, clamped on my lower lip. It was difficult to remove. I could only use my left hand to pry the beak loose, because my right hand was cupping the rest of the dead bird. I had to cup it, so it didn't drag from my lip. It was much heavier than it looked. Somehow, I managed. Before wrapping it in the dish towel, I examined the body. A stray cat was sleeping peacefully on our kitchen floor. I must have left the door open. Its forepaws were drawn up to its chest and its mouth was open, a little. It was sleeping so quietly it was disturbing. Someone must have tranquillized it. I thought that if I placed your clever bird in the mouth of that very stupid, very swollen cat, a pattern might emerge. I didn't think of Christmas with your mother, and God, how she always hated me — or worse, how she came to like me, later, much later. Smiling when I came to the door, and calling me a breath of fresh air — implying you were a sick-room in need of just such an airing out.

Arthur, your mother has always been right . . .

G knows the letter

isn't about the bird at all. No, not at all. It's really about the yellow cravat, but she can't think about the cravat just now. When Art was dead, the second time, she would see him on the street sometimes when she bought a newspaper, and once she'd seen him on the news. Yes, one time Fiona Downey asked Arthur what he thought about the flowers the City of Montreal had planted, the billions of flowers. Art liked flowers, he said, the cravat at his neck as yellow as a daffodil. Arthur with his crooked tooth and his yellow cravat. Somehow it was easier this way. Much much easier, to take that yellow cravat from his neck, and gently closing his mouth with her hand, place a single finger over his lips as she stared at the naked place she had made, just over his throat, and let all the stories come from there.

This isn't like the other times, the times when G really forgets, I mean really forgets, where she lives and who she is. This is completely different. G remembers everything just now, she just chooses to remember it differently. No, it's not about the yellow bird at all, no, everything hinges on that god-damned cravat.

G could ransack her memories or his drawers to find some trace of it, but doesn't. There is too much at stake. She could even ask him. She could write,

Dear Arthur,
Do you
have a yellow
cravat?

Or, even more casually,

I was putting together some clothes for pick-up by the Sally-Ann and thought of that yellow cravat you used to have. Do you know where it's gotten to?

By the by, your bird is dead.

But then he would know. He would know that everything depended on this, and that she'd seen him talking to Fiona Downey on the news, or how she'd seen him that time at the corner of Laurier and Jeanne-Mance, when she stopped to buy a newspaper. He would know she had seen him and said nothing, and what's more, he would know that she didn't know if she'd seen him in spite of having seen him herself. Unless he didn't have a yellow cravat. And G is afraid of what Arthur not having a yellow cravat might mean.

If there is no yellow cravat, no Borque-flowers, no Fiona Downey, no stopping for a paper at the coin-du-Jeanne-Mance, maybe everything that has happened since is already so very wrong. Maybe one of them never got out of the car. Yes, one of them might have stayed behind, lingering in just the wrong way. And who exactly was she living with? Who would this Arthur without the yellow cravat be?

Yes, G is sure, the bird is not the problem.

The first thing

Arthur knows is that the house is too big and empty. He finds the note and thinks about G's arm. The place where her arm and shoulder meet. Arthur doesn't think of the name for that place, he just pictures the way time is slowly collecting there. He thinks of that place when they were young, and seamless, the skin was soft and tight and hairless. He thinks of that place when they are a little older, and she scuffed the flesh pink, little red spots erupting on skin unused to the rough scrape of a razor blade. In a long-ago playground, children are singing: "Art and G, sitting in a tree, k-i-s-s-i-n-g..." The way the flesh begins to fold, a little. Puckering up, just there. The way her age only showed on her face when she was tired, very very tired, but how it always showed there. How he would kiss that place, as their bodies loved. The slow see-saw motion as he entered her.

Arthur is tired and the garbage is filled with crumpled notes. Over the next few days, he will pull them out each by each and order them. His hands will brush away coffee grounds, leaving bruise-brown smears, as he lays each note out on the empty kitchen floor trying to make sense of things. There are empties strewn across the backyard. A whole lot of empties, and no slugs in sight. The ceramic frog is hammocked in a derelict baby stroller, and the key is gone. The stroller is nowhere near the lilac bush. The frog is staring at Arthur with ancient eyes, its abdomen is cracked, the freezer is empty, and they'd never bought the tomato plants they'd spoken of so often.

Arthur doesn't recall the walk she writes of in her early drafts. He doesn't remember it at all. Arthur has a very crooked tooth, and his mother died long before he met G. He hardly remembered his mother at all. When Arthur tries to picture his mother, he sees a series of warm and suggestive brush-strokes, the oranges and reds subdued. At first, it makes Arthur think of a warm oven. It is only later, sitting in a cane chair across from their empty bed, he thinks of Hansel and Gretel.

On the third day, G walks into the house with two bags of groceries. Her natish brown hair is darker than usual. She hasn't washed it in a few days. G removes an elastic band from a clump of broccoli and binds her hair in a rope before putting the vegetables in the crisper. She doesn't mention the note or the bird. She puts half a dozen tins of cat food in the cupboard and brings a pot of water to boil, breaking open a bag of spaghetti. That night, as they are lying in bed, a bad smell leaking from the vents, G describes the photo she wants to take. In the photo, G and Art are hairless. She tells him that she will shave him from head to toe. They will lie, curled in twin fetal balls, facing one another. Their bodies contained in an aluminum pot. G says she will spray paint a cheap plastic pool silver, for the shot. Suspended in the cool broth around them, will be onions, carrots, and potatoes they've harvested from their own garden. The picture will be taken from directly above. G will jimmy a pole out their bedroom window, to which she has attached her

camera. She will put it on a timer and, hairless and naked, run down the stairs and slip into the pool. Or else, maybe Marlin will help, squeezing the small round pump in his hand when she signals him. Click. The smell persists. In the morning, they trace the smell to the laundry room hamper, to a crumpled dishrag and what is found there.

"Art," she whispers.

Together, they bury G's bird.

When G walks back into the house, her shoulders are trembling. Her back is to Arthur. She is standing at the counter facing all the little tea bags and all the pictures on all the mugs, and her shoulders are trembling. Arthur slides up behind her and kisses the place where her arm and shoulder meet.

"Who's Marlin?" he asks.

"Marlin!" she says, twirling round, "will be here in a couple of hours."

G smiles to herself and dices an onion.

The day they moved into this

house, Arthur went blind. Not forever-blind, but blind nonetheless. G walked Arthur through the house, placing his hands on all of its surfaces, calling things by their names. Chair-Art, she said, and he felt the legs with his hands. Art-wall, she murmured, running his hands over the plaster braille, illegible until she named it. Gradually, Arthur imagined he could see vague, nebulous shapes, like slices of strange fruit suspended in gelatin. He moved very slowly and his limbs retained water. Arthur felt exactly as though he were underwater, or that the house was a giant mold filled with aspic. But slowly, Art began to see things as well as the names for things. It was a very odd time for Arthur, and as a result, G did most of the unpacking herself, only pausing to touch his hands to a thing, name it, as she took it from the box. After the house was tidy, and all the boxes stacked at the end of the lawn, G took his hands and ran them over her body. Her words came in a fluid stream. She said: hand Art arm Art shoulder Art breast belly thigh and Art wasn't sure which hand she meant, hers or his, which arm, which shoulder, which breast belly thigh. Our tongue Art our mouth. Finally, G led him to a little room and sat him on the word for a chair. She teased at his fingers, slowly, pulling each a little, gently, so he felt their shapes. And then she moved his hands, so that he held them in the air directly in front of his body. She pressed slowly down on his fingertips, adjusting them slightly, time to time. Arthur heard a clacking noise when she pressed on his fingers. Art-Art, she whispered, giving him a clear picture of a typewriter. The house and everything in it unspooled from there.

Sometimes G

forgets the back-story, but she covers it up very well. Sometimes G forgets where she lives and with who, and sits down with her silver-beaded purse and all of the slips of papers inside of her purse, and puts it all together again. She simply figures it all out from what is found there. One day, after they move into this house, G goes to the store for a pack of cigarettes. It isn't important what she smokes. She doesn't know what she smokes, and chooses differently almost every time. Sometimes, though, she smokes a particular brand for a week. She brings the empty pack in her bag so she can ask for it a second or third time. Art worries, because if she ever gets lung cancer she won't know who to sue. Or else, she will have to sue everyone, and that, Arthur imagines, would be so much harder. On this day, G goes to the store and asks for a pack of Rothman's, to see if they stink of childhood, hair clippings found on a bathroom floor. Used clumps of mousy brown that gather their stale smell from old curtains, old carpets, old people's mouths. G lights a cigarette outside of the Greek Dep and forgets what comes next. Inhale, yes. Sit down on a bench, yes. Exhale, yes. Pet the dog that presents itself, here, tied to the pole, yes. Perhaps the dog is G's dog. She isn't sure. She looks at the dog. The dog eyes are round and liquid. When G looks into its eyes, she slips under the skin of the iris and her hair floods from her. She sees little Gs drowning in a gelatinous liquid, there, just under the vitreous skin of each eye. G goes through her purse, she finds a mover's receipt and on the bill, an address. The name of the street she lives on. The number on the street. G is sure she that if she finds the house she will recognize something. G stands over the dog, as if they belonged to one another, just to see if it is true. The greyhound wags its tail happily. The tail is long and curved. It is a delicate comma, a desperate comma. Anchored over a winking orifice, it tries to draw attention away from the pinkish hole, to itself. The manic tail greets her.

"Stupid bitch," a man says, and that's how G remembers her first and middle name.

G unties the leash from the pole and looks up. She pulls taut the trace line of the man's voice. He is sitting in the shade of a camero, on the passenger side, parked across the street from the store. "Yes," G responds coldly and the sleek little greyhound at her feet winks his hole happily. The man's voice whimpers underneath the anger. There is a hesitation before his answer. His hand comes to his head, a fist at rest. He fixes watery eyes on the dashboard as G stares into the dark surrounding him. After a long pause, he says: "You shouldn't fucking leave your dog tied up, he was fucking dying, lady. Tie your dog in the shade."

G thinks that the man sounds like he was a beaten dog. She considers telling him that this is a conversation he should be having with his father.

G thinks, yes, it's hot, but the little dog is fine. She says nothing. She waits. G doesn't know what she is waiting for, but she is eyeing this man very coldly. The man is staring at the dashboard and the flesh under his eye is twitching. G reads his expression, the doubtful fold of his fist. He refuses to look at her again. Sometimes, G is afraid at how very cold she becomes. The man doesn't frighten her at all. Her hands are not shaking. But she finds it disturbing. Something happens, and the bottom drops out and there is nothing in G but this terrible potential for something to go very very wrong.

G tells herself that she appreciates the reminder. But she hasn't moved. She finds herself looking at his soft skin and exposed neck. His body is vivisected by shadow and so, the torso is disappeared already. She sees the hand he's twisted into a knot against his hairline, as though he hasn't the slightest idea how it has shaped itself this way, or what to do with this fist now that he happens to find it in his possession.

A second man, with thick wrists, strolls out of the store and gets into the driver's seat. He tosses a pack of Players at the man in the passenger seat, whose fist winks into nothing at the precise instant it opens to catch the cigarette pack. The camero pulls away. The camero pulls away and G finds the bottom again. G finds the bottom and the way to the street with a name just like the name on the mover's bill, and a number just like the number, and tries her keys in the door to a first level flat on St-Urbain. The third key works. A man is sitting on a silver polka-dot couch, watching her carefully. The windows behind him are arched, and G can see passers-by on sidewalk, cars parked on the street. The man has a thin, long face, and prominent teeth. One of his incisors is crooked a little towards his cheek. His skin is pale and there are small, brownish spots on his gaunt hands. She likes the avian angles of his hands and, just looking at the way the skin gathers at his bony knuckles, G feels very lucky. The skin is pale, almost translucent. G traces a spider web of bluish veins from the back of his hand to his elbow, where the skin disappears into a over-large T. The T-shirt has been washed so many times that it has the consistency of gauze. There is a lump under his T-shirt that makes G think of a colostomy bag. The man looks very comfortable on the silver couch. The sofa has only one shoulder, and the man's elbow is resting there, calmly. His head is shaved, but G can trace the place where the greyish stubble gives way in patches to a fine and polished sheen. It isn't an established pattern, there is something random, clumpish, about this balding. But it seems familiar, somehow, and only disturbs her a little. She wants to run her hands over his nape and up, over the crown of his head. The man's eyes are very large and pale. Cigarette smoke blown into a dark room. His neck is narrow and ashen, a little bit stubbly, rough. The head seems overlarge for the thin neck, and G thinks of baby birds or babies peeped, their stumpyishness pulled long. The lines on his neck suggest drapes. Everything about the man is permissive, a little edgy too. An easy edginess, more unsettled than uninhabitable. The man looks from her to the greyhound and back again. "Y'know, G," he says, "we've never had a dog before."

The man offers to walk with her to the Dep. She accepts. The man is very thoughtful and brings a little plastic container filled with water. They tie the dog to the pole and put the water on the sidewalk. The greyhound laps at the water with a slim and pinkish tongue that is very elegant, G thinks, for all the froth. When the dog sits down again, the surface of the water is striated with thick spittle. The man and woman sit, together, on the wrought iron bench and wait. A little later, someone comes out of the store with three bags of groceries, and the dog wags its tail. And then the little dog is gone and, a little after that, G and Art are gone, too.

G and Arthur,

sitting in a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N-G. First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes then comes then comes then comes then comes something G can't think about just now. No, it's better, so much better, that G occupies herself with the beef bouillon cubes Marlin has brought as a gift.

She has a box of them in her hand, just now, and is examining each perfect foil-wrapped cube. One falls from her fingers to the counter, denting the cube's corner and mashing the foil. G slips it back into the box.

Arthur looks amused and this annoys G, a little. Marlin is telling Arthur about how, together, G and Marlin are going to make broth very slick and very sexy. It's serious stuff. G is going to be so much more than just a shampoo girl. There will be an ad campaign and of course, a vernissage for G, too. A coordinated effort. Art and advertising, a proven marriage.

"People are going to ask themselves — what's broth got to do with serial killers got to do with the missing eight year old girl. But they know. Deep down, they know. E-ver-y-thing."

Marlin writes ad-copy for the company with the beef bouillon account.

"Everyone wants meat," Marlin persists, "they're looking for it on their plates, in bars, and through the telepersonals. We're going to give them the beef they want, instant beef, add-water beef, beef that doesn't plague you with phone calls after, beef that doesn't want to meet your mother, dangerous beef. But elegant, too, picture a little cilantro floating on the surface.

Understated beef. We're going to gender beef bullion cubes — they'll reek of sex so strongly that even CK will blush, we're going to give the cube the edge. Can you smell it?"

"I'm going to make G in the proces. She's got the edge I'm looking for. Provocative, terrifying, but not too terribly original. She picks up on what's out there already, puts a new spin on it. I've had my eye on her work for a while. Her images of human remains got me started in the first place. We'll find the serial killer later, much later. I won't go to the reps with this one for awhile.

But picture it: A lobster pot with a human hand, to begin, floating in the broth. A little cilantro, too. But what's that, bobbing just under the surface? — later, my friend, we'll go there later. We'll start with sex and when broth is gendered, then, then the clincher — death. What more could you want from broth? Broth is perfect for the twenty-first century — perfectly elegant. The only thing it's lacking, danger. Broth doesn't signify — yet. I am going to single-handedly bring sex and death to the broth industry. It's a revolution, an evolution. I'm not going to dance around the slaughterhouse like Jell-O. Fuck Jell-O. Everybody knows the truth about Jell-O. The rats. The rotting hides. I'm not going to hide a fucking thing. I don't need to see Bill Cosby pandering to the latest multi-cultural poster-child, some pygmy-child from Borneo with MS. No. Keep it simple, my mother always said: The principle, people, is slaughter — and what's more, people want it. They want it so bad, they taste it. So, you kill something. So what? Everybody is killing all the time. You put on a pair of brand-name shoes and you're pimping Malaysian kids. You turn on the television, buy a magazine, glance at a billboard horizon and you're implicated. I believe people want to be sold the truth — oh yeah, they'll pay for it."

"I call it the beef-squared account," Marlin says, pausing, so Arthur can picture it. "Get it? Beef-squared. For a while, I called it 'the cube,' but that hasn't caught on." Marlin waves one of his hands, a gesture of dismissal, and Arthur sees a series of ad-copy writers in little cubicles, sees each cubicle neatly wrapped in silver foil and deposited out of sight. "No one takes it very seriously, just now. They don't see the possibilities. So, I slipped in. I've got the account mewed up. And now, I'm going to bring broth into culture in a way that will change the way people think of it forever."

"Later, much later, we'll do the really wild stuff, stuff like what G and I talked about the other night. The really dangerous, scary stuff. The stuff that will have grannies pretending they don't know anything about it, as they buy the shit by the case, feed it to fat little nephews they secretly despise. Picture it. I want you to picture it. Some of it," and Marlin smiles at G in appreciation, "some of it would never get past the board, never in a million years — so that's where the tie-in comes in. I run the ad campaign, with the worst shit we can get by those fuckers — and G does the broth series in the best New York galleries. They'll eat it up, everybody will know about it. And we'll both be fucking rich. And it's the truth, I'm selling people what they want." Marlin smiles, sits at the table across from Arthur and cracks open a bottle of wine.

Marlin describes the vernissage they've planned. "The centrepiece, you follow, this is the photo that is going to get the press, whether or not we can run it as an actual part of the campaign. Picture it: A little girl, eight years old, hair natted and ropish. A little girl who hasn't bathed in a very long time, a very naughty little girl, wearing a torn undershirt. Nothing else. She is squatting, straddling one of the burners on a gas stove, legs spread over the pot. Blue flames from the jets provide the only light. It is a dim, sloppy picture, a

Polaroid perhaps. Maybe you can see a brownish smear on her ass. Details. At any rate, it is very amateurish, deliberately so. Dirt under her tiny fingernails. Maybe a couple strands of hair. Grey, wiry. A stream of piss flooding down, into the broth, a little cilantro scudding on the surface . . . At the base of the Polaroid, scrawled in a shaky hand, something terrifying in its simplicity. Just a date perhaps. A date. A first name. Maybe the place she was taken from. The name of a bus station, or maybe just a number. Details. But no face. You never see her face. In the actual ad, the Polaroid would form the centrepiece of a blank page. At the bottom of the page, in very small lettering, something about family values, something playing off of the whole Campbell soup strain and the name of the product. Simplicity. Terrifying simplicity. I am selling the people the truth. And people eat that shit up, they lap it up."

G ransacked the streets

until she remembered the Polaroid of the little girl while walking up St-Joseph and talking to strangers.

The man was a bad man. A very bad man.

G suspects the man who gives her the poster. She thinks, it is always the man who gives you the poster while looking at your tits that's guilty. There is a police car at the intersection. The man walks beside her, telling her how long he has been a friend to the family, how long he has known the little girl. G is a little afraid that the bottom will fall out. She feels a concavity shaping itself under her, a space between her feet and the sidewalk that is very difficult to account for. The bottom is falling out and this man, beside her, is pointing to the picture of the little girl, and then to G.

No, G hasn't seen her.

It's always the one with the poster who did it. The one that looks uncomfortable when he spots the police cars at the intersection, and slips into the alleyway, saying it is a shortcut. G thinks of telling the police this, but doesn't know how. How to tell the police that she knows this man, who slipped into the alley way clutching his photocopies, killed the missing eight year old girl.

How to tell the police that he grabbed his nipples while talking to her. How he grabbed at his crotch, and tried to tell her about monsters. G knows all about the monsters the man clutches in his fist.

DISPARUE / MISSING:



G

Disparue: le 7
novembre 1977

Missing: November 7, 1977
de / from: Montréal

Langue parlée: **anglais**
Âge: **8 ans**
Granduer: **4'3"**
Poids: **70 lbs**
Yeux: **pers**
Cheveux: **à la nuque,
châtains**
Peau: **blanche**
Marques distinguées: **cicatrice au
lèvre**

Language: **english**
Age: **8 years old**
Height: **4'3"**
Weight: **70 lbs**
Eyes: **blue/green**
Hair colour: **light brown**
Skin: **white**
Distinguishing
marks: **scar on lip**

Au moment de sa disparition:

Jeans bleu, Levi
T-shirt, chandail style Polo
Souliers blanc et noir, Nike

Was last seen wearing:

Levis
blue Polo T-shirt
black and white Nikes

SI VOUS AVEZ DES RENSEIGNEMENTS / IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION
Service de Police de la Communauté Urbaine de Montréal

Montreal Urban Community Police
(514) 280-3492

LE RÉSEAU ENFANTS RETOUR CANADA / THE MISSING CHILDREN'S NETWORK
CANADA

(514) 843-4333 / 1-888-692-4673

G is walking up St-Joseph and a man,

a very bad man, falls into step with her. He is carrying posters of a little girl, eight years old. She has been missing for a very long time. Twenty years, almost. G and the man fall into step. The man is telling G about the little girl, he is telling her in French and G is having a little difficulty following. He has known the little girl for a very long time, that much is clear. The police have stopped looking, but not the man. The man will look and look and look for this little girl. He will always be looking for this little girl. The police are not looking for the little girl in fields now, not even under the grass. This makes the man sad. Very sad. The man clutches at his nipples, his crotch. "Le chien," he says, making his hand into a gun, pointing the gun at his temple and pulling the trigger.

A very bad man slips into the alleyway, clutching something to his breast. It flutters, the thing he clutches flutters against his chest as he runs.

G ransacks the city for a man,

a very bad man. She walks up rue St-Joseph with other people's dogs. Sometimes, when she surfaces, she remembers to tie the dogs back up where she found them. At other times, she forgets, and ties them somewhere that seems obvious or at least likely, to her.

There are stories in the newspapers. G reads the stories out loud to Arthur, never guessing that she could be the cause of all that fuss. After all, she doesn't actually steal the dogs, and she always has a

What G doesn't tell Arthur: G doesn't tell Arthur that the dogs are never on the leash, it is G that is on the leash. The leash is only attached to the dogs' necks so they don't forget about G. G holds onto the leash for dear life. The leash may appear to be made from polysynthetic fibres, or even leather, but really, the leash is an umbilical cord through which G breathes when she finds herself underwater. She doesn't tell Arthur that she doesn't actually take the dogs, the dogs take

her. They take G to places that they love once upon a time. Sometimes, a dog will take her to a house, and inside of the house, there will be a family that doesn't recognize the dog at all. And that's how G knows that the dog lived there once, a long time ago, and loves the place still, and dogs enjoy her company, and she only wants to visit, a little. Sometimes the dog will lay on the grass, outside. Sometimes the dog will pull her right up onto the stoop, and if someone comes out, G will simply say, "This dog lived here once, and he's just missing home." People smile at G and sometimes let her in, giving her a glass of lemonade, and the dog lies down at her feet on a very familiar floor. If they offer her for the dog, G says, "No, that's okay, I brought some," pulling out a bowl and an Evian bottle refilled with tap water.

Sometimes a stranger smiles at her thoughtfulness and G feels a little like a fraud. But that's okay, too. It's not about the dog, after all. She holds onto the leash, even in these strangers' kitchens, because of the way her hair floods from her, wafts and waves on a horizontal plane. Before she leaves, G takes a Polaroid of the dog in the place it loves and slips it into her purse.

What G doesn't tell Arthur: G doesn't tell Arthur that all of the dogs, the bullish mastiffs and the monkey-eyed affenpinschers, the junkie-lean afghans and squarish cocker spaniels, the soft-eyed foxhounds and ulcerated basenjis, the Holstein-spattered Dalmatians, smug terriers, puckish bloodhounds and the border collies that herd G in the streets, the chow chows with flat huckleberry tongues, the carnivalesque poodles and slender, hot-tongued whippets, the foreshortened dachshunds and the bedlingtons G counts like lambs before falling into sleep, every last one of them, without exception, have the very same name.

No, G doesn't tell Arthur that name. G slips the name into conversations, sometimes, but Art doesn't seem to notice.

It's not a problem, really. Besides, the dogs ever takes the ones that are glad to see her. Most of them are. G doesn't worry herself over the dogs. It was the time with the baby stroller that bothered her. But that only happened the once, and luckily, it had been empty. She'd found it parked at the edge of a lawn, when a family was having a rummage sale. It was still out back, in Arthur and G's yard. Arthur hadn't said anything at the time, but when G came back from her walks, after that, Arthur was always at the window, waiting.

plastic bottle filled with water and a plastic bowl in her knapsack. After the second or third time, she remembers to bring plastic bags as well.

No, G doesn't tell Arthur that name. G slips the name into conversations, sometimes, but Art doesn't seem to notice.