

**Extract from The Telephone Exchange**

**Currency Press 2001**

## Section 5: The Gardens

Reality: The Exhibition Gardens

Dream: primulas, polyanthas, rhododendrums, azalias, magnolias, camelias...

Fantasy: Lord send me angels to look over me, that brush the hair from my face, who lie with me, who's wings stretch out over me and protect me while I dream

Reality: I take a deep breath and blow out and a veil of white appears

Dream: more like an angel than a bride like a messenger of good fortune. the white wedding dress, the shine on her face, the patterned shadow of the lace veil

H. Reality: I am forever reading on the train. "I'm simply delighted with my new Angel Face," says the Countess of Barronne

Reality: what would you do if you lost me?

### ***Breath***

Reality: There's a fountain, pretty garden beds of bluebells, buttercups and a border of nemesia

H. Reality: *she reads A golden elm, resplendent, graceful*

Dream: The Salvos set up on the corner of Smith and Greeves and play and play with their banner flying. You got to admit it opens your heart that music, the big bass drum pounding away makes you want to stamp along down the road to salvation. Those Salvos seem so sure of themselves, its like they're looking smack ban into the face of God himself. It's enough to make any poor sod believe, that, and he'd know there's a good square meal waiting for him if he could sit through the testimonials

Reality: *sings* "Lay your head on my shoulder daddy and turn your face to the west: It's only a year ago today since the one that we loved the best passed away".

Dream: I dreamt last night I had a horse that wouldn't go unless I gave him a thrashing

H. Reality: There is no space left in Richmond and Burnley, they ought to mow it all down and start again

Reality: *sound of loss*

Dream: Mrs. Hay lives at the end of our street and she is a Russian countess. She fell getting off a tram one day and I rushed over to help her and she insisted I go back to her house so she could thank me. She made me tea, strong and sweet in a pot she said was over 400 years old and then she played a lament from the old country on a broken down piano she retrieved from the Organ Factory. I have heard music played before around the piano at Auntie Eileen's, but this is different it is like she is writing my heart. She is telling secrets I didn't even know I've been keeping. I've gone pale and I'm trembling, Mrs. Hay takes my hand and asks if I want to play. I cant play, I could never play, we don't even have a piano where would I practice, Pats got sores again, Emmy will help Mum with the copper, the bed linen needs washing...

Fantasy: hah! shhh shhh shhh shhh

*Reality acts out "I got split up the side by a man with a knife"*

H. Reality: mow it all down I say... oh the textile factories!

Dream: ... perhaps just to listen

*Breath*

Reality: At one end there is the Exhibition building, a large dome shaped building fit for a Queen.

H. Reality: someone will be crowned Miss Coronation

Dream: The Queen and so young

Fantasy: The Yarra Boulevard. this road built by the men on the susso down on the banks breaking their backs, pick and shovel, dirt and sweat, anything so they can eat, 1933, 34, 35, 36. Back breaking work, those breaking times, father died as though the daily events ravaged his self as well as ruining his life.

H. Reality: the streets outside our house are still not made

Fantasy: Under the bridge. i can hardly remember anymore if it were dream or true. i have stolen out of the house, out of the back door, out of the back gate onto the stone steps that lead to the path along the river. I feel like a girl of sixteen but I am 29 already and out of breath. Our rendez-vous Robert! Robert who will have me! The war! your chance you said to prove yourself a man, I didn't want you to go, the world is disjointed ...

H. Reality: there's no use crying over spilt milk  
too many cooks spoil the broth  
too many dollars and not enough cents

Fantasy: you are there under the bridge, uniform straight and impressive. I want to laugh, I am too old for romance and yet I sink into your sweet breath and believe. our last goodbye. hold black night! was there a storm ...?

Dream: don't know what's worse the gambling or the drinking. its better now our Dad's left

Fantasy: Oh Michael protect me, tell the saints to pray for me and the world. Seven years have past since VP day and the trumpets of war are sounding again. Mr. Menzies foretells of war within three years and I do not know if I will have the strength to bear it. The Communists are set against us. the Devil grows strong.

H. Reality: Raze it all and build a new housing estate! "One of the best instincts in us is that which induces us to have a little piece of earth with a house and a garden which is ours, to which we can withdraw, in which we can be among friends, into which no stranger may come against our will"

Dream: such a small voice

Fantasy: The Herald boy is calling on the street. your name in the newspaper Robert.  
hah!

*Dream acts out "I got split up the side by a man with a knife"*

Fantasy: *And there was war in heaven:*

H. Reality: Speak English!

Fantasy: *Michael and his angels fought against the dragon: and the dragon fought and his angels,*

*Dream cuts herself with a knife*

*Breath*

Reality: At one end there is the Exhibition building, a large dome shaped building fit for a Queen. *breath*. There's a fountain, pretty garden beds of bluebells, buttercups and a border of nemesia *breath* Auntie Eileen liked to hum that ditty - An English Country Garden - from her shop front on the Ballarat main street. I would listen to her after she took me in. There was a picture above my aunt's mantelpiece, I'd never taken much notice of it but when my mother died I felt I was a walking river. The river in this painting of a true Australian theme. I walked on the dusty dry river bed and deathly ghost water ran over the top of me, my bones ached like the bone dry earth and the old gum tree looked over me. I felt as though we were all praying for rain and yet I seemed to be drowning. I knew I should step out but I couldn't tell which side to step out on. *breath*. The gardens are overburdened with green, the paths are shrinking mercies. the ground is sodden, heavy thick scented earth, wet with winter and melancholy. Uncle Bill dug an air raid shelter before he left for the war, Auntie Eileen left it there. you, my own, my darling, had been calling at the shop for two years making Auntie Eileen feel like she's sixteen. you make me take you down there. you make it sound like a child's game but I am sixteen now and know we are not being childish. it is damp and cold down

there an improper space like something you shouldn't remember. i wanted to cry because it was dark and I didn't want to know what I was doing. all went black, your hands, your breath, I cant breath, I dreamed last night I whipped the horse, everything is flooding. and then oh! there is no up or down and its hopeless trying to find one, the world is disjointed in my town there is only a lake but when my mother died I felt like I was a walking river. then you are the river, then you are walking with me and your feet are printed on the dryness like mine. you realise you're walking on a river bed of bones, hidden in the deep, achingly dry and uncovered. you can hear the moaning of the dead, and I can hear your soft breathing. I see you and you, me. nothing is said accept you tip your hat in my direction, you see my mother hanging by the neck. and suddenly, like a picture snap, the day is so bright there are no shadows. and oh! everything sweeps over me, and everything has disappeared, and oh! this must be swooning. your breath, *she slows* your breath. //

Dream: like a messenger of good fortune//

H. Reality: "I'm simply delighted with my new Angel Face" //

Fantasy: *Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and the dragon and his angels prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven //*

Reality: I lit a match and when I came up for air you were smiling and called me your Angel.

*pause*

Best to head straight for the lights.