

The
401



Catharine Leggett

paperbytes

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The 401

OUR HOUSE WAS in the country, beside a dirt road. But the city grew, and that changed everything. The first commercial enterprise to appear, after the paving of our road, was a White Rose gas station, which had a Coke machine. That's where we, the neighbourhood kids, hung out. We marvelled at the sound of its clunking, and gazed in wonder at how it knew when to release a bottle. We admired its brilliant red and white as if it were an oil painting, trailed our hands over its round corners, traced the waves of its letters with our fingers. We hung out at the White Rose on summer nights, sharing pops, inhaling the gasoline that splattered out on to the pavement, a smell new to us, of progress.

And then the 401 got built, a four-lane super highway that would eventually stretch like a band across the narrow part of southern Ontario, connecting Windsor to Toronto, and beyond. After church, the people who lingered in the yard with the minister, in the shade of the maples, spoke of the changes it brought. At the time, I didn't understand what the word *expropriate* meant, though I had heard it a lot lately. A few families lost so much land they had to move away, even though they'd farmed there for generations; but that was progress.

When construction began on the cloverleaf, the kids in the neighbourhood watched from a distance. Bulldozers pushed dirt up into a huge mound; I thought they were building a mountain. I watched for snow to gather on its peak. The idea that a mountain could be added to our flat landscape excited me; I embraced the changes with all my heart.

Several things happened within the next few years: the road to town was widened, its curves removed; a traffic light went up at the

intersection of our road and the road to town, to handle the cars and trucks coming in off the highway; Benny, the old hermit who lived in a shack, got killed on his horse at the new intersection, a tragedy my mother had mysteriously predicted; motels began to appear along the road to town. Off in the distance, from land that once held only the whispers of corn, wheat and rye, came the hum of cars and transport trucks. At night, in bed, I listened for the sounds of their approach, tracked them to directly behind our house, held them as long as I could before they disappeared. My dreams sped off to the cities they would pass, cities I'd never been to.

Sometimes people drifted in off the highway, beggars looking for a meal in exchange for work, or people from the States who mistook our huge yard for a park and picnicked there. One family sat in our apple orchard staring at the ducks that wandered the yard. They'd never seen ducks before, and I'd never spoken to black people.

I remember this very clearly. I was fifteen: I was with my parents,

brother and two sisters, returning from a family reunion when, very suddenly, I decided to find a job. In the fall I would begin another year of high school, and I couldn't face it with my limited wardrobe. I admired the crisp button-down collar blouses, the long V-neck sweaters, the above-the-knee kilts, the knee-high socks and penny loafer shoes of the other girls. I had two hand-me-down blouses and two woollen skirts that I had to turn up several times at the waist, and a brown mohair sweater that I had purchased myself with earnings from my vegetable stand. It had already worn thin at the elbows. If I made some money, I suddenly realized, I could look like the others.

I applied for jobs at the new motels. Joan, from The Holiday Inn, phoned the very next day to ask if I would be interested in starting there as a pantry girl, someone who worked in the kitchen, preparing side dishes for the dining-room waitresses: shrimp cocktails, roll-mops, chocolate sundaes, salads with french and thousand island dressing. I told Joan that I'd never heard of any of these things before,

except the sundaes. Not to worry; they'd train me. They needed me to start straight away, that evening, for a few hours of watching, just to get the hang of it. She sounded so friendly.

Sunday night, and I was going to my first job. I smelled the sweet scent of freshly cut hay in the fields, the air filled with a summer's soft haze. Usually, on such a night, I'd be with my family, sitting outside in the back yard, or sprawled on the living room floor watching *Ed Sullivan* and *Bonanza*, all of us lazy after a huge Sunday night meal. But here I was, walking where I'd lived all my life, feeling newly arrived and quite jittery.

I leafed through the pamphlet at the front desk while the clerk went to get Joan, the dining-room hostess. It had pictures of people lounging in spacious rooms with up-to-date furniture. Other pictures showed the dining room, all done up in red and black and gold. I thought how I would be working for that room, doing my bit in this elegant place, so far removed from my normal life that it hardly

seemed possible. I had struck it lucky. I felt intense pride as I watched Joan come across the lobby, her gold laminated slippers flickering, her platinum blonde hair turned into a French roll, smartly decorated with a black bow, the silky cape of her red dress drifting out behind her. She appeared to float.

I put on my very best smile and followed her into the dining room. I thought everyone was looking at me. I carried my head slightly high, to give an air of complete ease, though I'd never been in such a place before in my life. The tables had candles inside glass containers, red tablecloths and white napkins. One whole side of the room faced the pool, the water a stunning turquoise. All the couples in the room were in love. None of the families having dinner squabbled the way my family would; they didn't stab at their food with their forks as if it were about to run off the plate. The room felt quiet, calm. I was inside the brochure, the place of my dreams, racing down the road that would deliver me to button-down collars and V-neck sweaters, a place

where I would fit in.

Joan pushed open a swing door, and I followed her into a kitchen; it rushed at me with the force of a cresting wave. An explosion of noise ricocheted off the white tile walls and floor: metal crashing, machines chugging, bells ringing, waitresses shouting, knives chopping, deep fryers hissing, griddles spitting, fans humming, a bewildering commotion, bouncing endlessly off tile walls and metal surfaces. Then someone shouted, “Shut up!” at the top of their lungs, and everyone froze.

A tall thin chef stood in the centre of the kitchen. He looked around at the astonished people. “That’s better. Keep your voices down. We’re in shit, and it won’t help to scream. Just shut up and get back to work.”

I squinted against the harsh white light.

“Come over here, Beth.”

Joan sounded cross as she led me to the pantry, opposite to where the waitresses picked up their food. “You can start by cleaning this up. Look at it. What a mess! Those girls can be pigs.”

Salad dressing dripped out of containers; chunks of lettuce lay strewn across the counter; a tub of vanilla ice cream was on its way to becoming soup; a cream pitcher had tipped and a white waterfall dripped down the front of the cooler, collecting in a pool on the floor. It looked like someone had tried to beat up a blueberry pie.

“I don’t know where anything goes.”

“You look like a smart girl, Beth. Just use your common sense.”

And then Joan went back to the other side of the kitchen where a waitress and a cook had started shrieking at each other.

“This has been sitting up here for twenty minutes, Janet!” The cook bounced his finger several times off a steak. “It’s stone cold! What’s the matter? First time waitressing?”

“Like hell it’s been sitting there that long!” Janet stood on tiptoes to glare at him under the heat lamps. “I just put that order in ten minutes ago. My table’s having appetizers. I can’t take it out there now. Can’t you read a goddam bill? Look.” She pointed at the slip of paper. “It says soup

and salad, doesn't it? Can't you read English for chris'sakes?"

"Move your fat ass and get this out of here!" he shouted. Then he looked at Joan. "You should train your people. Hire some professionals, maybe."

"Stop it, both of you," Joan said. "Pete, get over here and settle this. I'm sick of the way he talks to my girls."

Towards the back of the kitchen, near some swinging doors, banquet waitresses whisked away trays that Pete had been loading with plates of white cake. He scowled as he approached Joan, then looked down at his running shoes, coated in slop and splatter, as if seagulls had roosted on them. "Gus!" he boomed at the cook. "Get that order down and don't put it up until she's ready for it." Gus started to shout back. "Don't argue with me." Pete shook his finger at him, then turned to Janet. "And you try to get your shit together, will you?"

"Gus has got it in for me." Janet pushed back a wide strand of brown hair that flopped in exhaustion over her forehead. She pointed

at the sneering cook. “He’s been on my ass all night.”

“I wouldn’t get on your ass for all the money in the world.” Gus’s eyes dove to her behind, and he shook his head in disgust.

“That’s enough.” Pete’s face reddened like an aspic. “Get out of here, Janet!” he shouted. “Not another word. From either of you.”

I pretended to work very hard, pretended to be oblivious to everything, but I had my ears on high alert all that first night.

As I cleaned up spills and guessed where things went, Gus made noises, clicking his tongue, the way a person might while trying to coax a chipmunk to accept a piece of bread from his hand, and whistling like a bird. When I looked over to see what was going on, he’d jerk his head back as if he wanted me to go over. I didn’t, of course. He frightened me. All night he kept on with the sounds and repeated a word, over and over. It sounded like *poot-sa*, or something, but I couldn’t figure it out; he had a pretty heavy accent. He kept waving a sausage in the air every time my eyes made the mistake of looking his way. “*Poot-sa. Poot-sa,*”

he said.

“Just ignore that asshole,” Janet came to the pantry to pour a glass of milk. “Pardon my French, but he’s bad news.” She turned around and glared at him.

Another waitress, an older woman, came rushing into the pantry.

“I need a butterscotch sundae,” she said to me. “What’s your name, anyway?”

“Beth. I don’t know how to make one.”

“Oh, come on. Surely you know how to do that. Just throw some ice cream into a dish, put some sauce and whipping cream on it. Why,” she asked me, her thinly pencilled eyebrows arched high, “would they hire someone to work in a kitchen who doesn’t know how to make an ice-cream sundae?” She slapped open the cooler, and with dramatic emphasis began scooping ice cream, throwing the slippery balls into a high glass dish. “Do we have to do everything around here?”

“I don’t know,” I said stupidly.

Janet leaned close and whispered to me, “Roberta’s a bitch on wheels.”

“Well you’d better learn how to do it, and damn fast.”

Roberta had most of her head inside the cooler.

Janet stuck her tongue out at her, and I couldn’t help smiling.

MY PARENTS MET ME that night. I saw them out of the corner of my eye, sitting in the coffee shop as I passed through the lobby on my way out the door. My Dad wore his old khaki shorts and t-shirt, my Mom her raggedy green sweater. They asked me if I wanted something to eat, some french fries or ice cream, but I said no. I was in a hurry to get them out of there.

As we walked out into the lobby, a young man at the front desk motioned for me to come over.

“Kitchen and housekeeping staff are not allowed to walk through the lobby,” he said, encased in a cloud of Old Spice aftershave, his soft

hands running efficiently over some forms. His fingernails looked as if they'd been manicured. I tucked my hands behind my back; my skin burned hot.

“Why have you come?” I asked my parents, as we walked across the parking lot. I felt a twinge of meanness.

“It’s a beautiful night for a walk, Punkin,” my Dad said.

I looked around to make sure no one had heard him use my nickname. He wasn’t telling the truth. I wasn’t old enough to walk home by myself; that’s what he really meant. My older brother Ronnie stayed out by himself at my age; I’d never have the same privileges he had. It’s different for boys, my parents always argued. What did I expect? They were country bumpkins until the highway came and brought life our way.

“I hate these trucks,” my mother said as one roared past, leaving a hot, oily breeze that blew our hair and sucked us along after it.

MY JOB AND MY LIFE became the same thing. I worked hard; my hours got extended because I caught on fast and didn't complain. I played little games with myself to see how much I could do. I tried hard to please everyone and to get along. The waitresses squabbled all the time, got nasty with each other, and often I found myself at the centre of their fights. It took me a little while to figure out that if I gave them quick service, the service to their customers improved and so did their tips. It was all about money.

Whenever Roberta snarled at me, Janet would be at my side, defending me. Later, she'd say, "Just remember, good old Janet stuck up for you right from the start. So be a honey and do my orders first."

The waitresses started tipping me. It was Roberta's idea; she gave me the most money as a way of buying the best service. "All Janet does is wag her lips. She's as cheap as they come," she told me. "I at least know enough not to take advantage of a kid."

I'd take my tips home and dump them in the centre of my bed,

arranging all the coin together into similar piles. The bills came from Roberta, the pennies from Janet, who explained about how her kids cost her so much, and how she was a single parent and when I got to be poor old Janet's age I'd understand.

I didn't have the time to take the bus downtown to spend my money. I dreamt of the blouses I would buy, the above-the-knee skirts. I imagined these things without me in them, just garments suspended in mid-air, owning no body. I thought about spending money on my room, redoing it in gold and red and black.

Ronnie overheard me telling my mother. She smiled and nodded, didn't really say anything. Ronnie said he thought it sounded like a whorehouse. I didn't know what that meant.

At night after work, I'd collapse on my bed, my skin stinking of thousand island dressing, shrimp, my arms sticky with ice cream and pie. I hated waking up in the middle of the night, the greasy smell of sausages and a voice – "*Poot-sa, poot-sa*" – upsetting my night's sleep.

Sometimes I fell asleep with my money, and when I woke up I'd find that I'd rolled over on top of it, had coins sticking to my arms, legs and face.

I was always tired. I thought that people in the workforce must feel like that all the time, half-dead or half-alive. Sometimes I wondered if I was too young to feel so old, if I might be missing out on something. Joan kept heaping overtime on me, though I only got my regular pay for the extra hours because I was part-time. I promised myself to refuse, but the coins kept piling up in the centre of my bed at the end of every day; I couldn't bring myself to say no.

One day at work, the assistant Innkeeper, a man who usually only nodded at me as he passed through the kitchen on his way to see Pete, stopped to talk. He had a heavy accent, German, Swiss or Austrian. I could only guess. What did I know of such places? He complimented me on my good work. I blushed. Then he asked me if I'd like to try waitressing in the coffee shop, working behind the

counter until I felt comfortable enough to take tables, too. Stunned, I said of course I would. I'd get out of the kitchen. I could walk through the lobby. I'd make more money. He told me to go to housekeeping to get fitted for a uniform; I'd start as soon as the head waitress for the coffee shop got in.

He left, and Pete, who had been watching, crossed the kitchen to congratulate me.

"We're going to miss you in here, kid."

With a great flurry of emotion, he took off his chef's jacket, threw it down on the cutting board, grabbed a huge cleaver and hacked it up into little pieces, pretending to shed buckets of tears.

"*O mamma mia!*" he cried.

Everyone – the dishwashers, the busboys, the waitresses, the cook's helper, the banquet girls – everyone in the whole place, except Gus, laughed. I had my first taste of success, my first experience of glory.

Joan came into the pantry carrying a pile of menus.

“You disgust me,” she snarled and threw the whole stack at me. “Now put them away.” She pointed down at the floor. “After all I’ve done for you, all the training I’ve given you, and you’re leaving and going to the coffee shop. Don’t expect any favours from me.”

Tears formed in my eyes. I had no idea that I’d done anything wrong.

“Hey, hot stuff!” Gus shouted at me, laughing as I bent to pick up all the menus. “Think you’re something now, don’t you? Boss likes your ass, that’s all.” Then he waved a sausage around in the air. “*Poot-sa. Poot-sa.*”

“You’re a jerk,” I said.

“I’ll show you, hot stuff.”

“Go fry an egg.”

I glared at him. The promotion made me feel different somehow.

EVERY NIGHT AFTER waitressing I had nightmares. Hamburgers, club sandwiches, french fries, fish and chips, hot turkey sandwiches, orders

I'd forgotten I'd made, came non-stop like a lava flow through the kitchen pass-through. I wandered around the coffee shop, my arms loaded with plates, trying to match food to people without recognizing anybody. And then Phyllis would come up to me and say, "Beth, I need you to pick up another table." In the background people shouted, "Waitress, waitress!" and Gus hammered away on the bell: "Pick it up, hot stuff. Move your ass."

In real life, Gus bothered me, kept calling me a bitch. I was a good waitress and didn't often mix up orders, but it didn't stop him from smashing the bell every time I had an order come up.

As part of my restocking duties, I had to go down to the basement to pick up things we needed in the dry room, the walk-in cooler, or the freezer. One day, in the cooler, I had my back to the door as I took a gallon of cream off the shelf. When I turned around, Gus was there, the door closed behind him. "Hi," I said and smiled awkwardly, slipping into an act of pretending that his name-calling and meanness had never

happened. Maybe he came down here to get something out of the freezer. Maybe this had nothing to do with me. He started across the small space, the fan over his head belching out arctic air. He muttered something under his breath. I didn't know what to do, whether or not I should protect myself. What if he had no intention of doing anything to me and I started screaming and kicking? He'd think I'd gone crazy. Or he'd think I was having some kind of thoughts about him, sexual thoughts. Maybe I was the loose one for thinking this.

I turned the lid on the jug of cream.

"Here, catch," I said, tossing it to him.

He caught it, but the lid flew off. Cream dribbled down his front and all over the floor. I pushed with all my might against the door and ran out, another gallon of cream tucked under my arm. "Thanks for the help," I said sassily, enjoying what I thought was a victory.

After that, he wouldn't speak to me at all, he'd just glare or swear or mumble threats under his breath.

Every night someone from my family would come to meet me, though I didn't want them to. I argued that, because we didn't live far away, I should be trusted to walk home by myself, but I might as well have made my argument to a slice of pie. No, no, no, my parents said. Not after dark. You never know who is coming off the 401. I could be scooped up, taken to God knows where, without anyone ever knowing what had become of me. One good thing, at least, when Ronnie came to meet me, he walked ahead, pretended we weren't together. Fine with me. We would cut through the field and drop in at the White Rose, where a number of our friends gathered at the Coke machine.

ALL THAT SUMMER I paid no attention to anything happening at home. I'd graduated somehow, moved on from the events of everyday that had been the content of my life only weeks before. I rarely ate at home; I didn't notice the garden or what my mother froze and preserved. I was only dimly aware of my sisters and their vegetable stand.

On a Saturday night, after work, my mother sat with me in the living room. She had been doing something in the kitchen with tomatoes, putting up some kind of sauce. “They’re working you too hard at that place, Beth,” she said. “It’s not fair for a girl your age. Believe me, you’ll have plenty of opportunity in your life to work.” I felt kind of relieved to hear her say that, though I put on a little angry act. I told her I could handle things. When I saw a hurt look on her face, I added that summer was just about over anyway, and soon I’d be going back to school.

LATE IN AUGUST, at the end of a lunch rush, Phyllis asked me to sit down at a table with her. “I want to talk to you about something.” She crunched her cigarette stub into an ashtray. I thought for sure she’d had complaints about my service. Instead, she told me I’d caught on fast and that some day I’d be a very good waitress. I felt flattered, but frightened, too. Could I imagine myself doing this for the rest of my life? She asked me if I’d consider working a few week nights and weekends

during the school year. I was pleased, but something else was heaping up inside me, a blend of sadness and guilt and pride. It would be great to make all that money. Clothes would never be a problem again. But there would be no time for fun. No time for anything. “Think about it,” Phyllis said, lighting another cigarette. “Let me know in a few days.” And then, almost as an afterthought, “I just about forgot. Hard work’s over, kid. So are the big tips. Time to start cutting back on hours. From now on, when your section is finished and you’ve done all the restocking, you can go home. Starting tonight.”

I finished around nine o’clock, two hours ahead of usual. It was still light enough that I could walk home alone. What a relief, the first time since I’d started working that summer that I had a couple of evening hours free. I walked across the lobby, waved at the front desk clerk who gave me an irritated look and a forced goodbye. He thought himself a cut above everyone. I couldn’t believe that once I cared about how he thought about me, and that I was actually embarrassed getting caught

in the lobby while still a kitchen worker. The beginning of the summer seemed so long ago. I was so naive then.

I crossed the parking lot and headed along the road to town. A chill seemed to slice through the thinner warm air of late summer. The crickets chirped hysterically, as if they knew that a killing frost would soon be here, responding to a signal deep inside that their time was almost up. The ditches were overgrown with goldenrod, the grasses tall and brown. It felt good to be outside again.

In the distance, under the lights of the White Rose gas station, I could see several people, probably some of my friends from the neighbourhood. I'd go and join them, have a pop, buy everyone a round with my huge pocketful of coin. Not like before, when I'd hang around the Coke machine, waiting for someone to spring for a bottle for me. I started across the field, past the billboard announcing that this would be the future site of a Red Barn restaurant.

I tried to imagine the number of times I'd gone this way. Every day

to and from public school. Hundreds, I guessed, maybe thousands of times. Once the Red Barn came, the school kids wouldn't be able to cut through here any more. Funny, I thought, there had been a real barn here once, with cows, before the road to town got straightened and the 401 came. We played here in the summer, tunnelled through the waist-tall weeds, making fox holes and trails. You had to walk differently over the uneven ground, raise your feet high to clear weeds and irregularities and bring them down carefully. Easy to twist an ankle here. All these things I took for granted as a kid. I felt the brush of dry weeds against my skin, the snag of burrs on my nylons. They'd be ruined. I didn't care. I was off work early. I plucked a stem of wheat and chewed its sweet tip and thought how different this summer had been. I felt happy just then, picking up some of the threads from my old life.

As I approached the billboard, I looked up at the lights that shone-down on a picture of the Red Barn restaurant. I passed behind.

That's when it happened.

A hand rose up out of the weeds, hooked around my ankle, snagged me, pulled me to the ground. I tried to scream. It clamped over my mouth, shoved my face into the dirt. Brittle weeds jabbed my skin. I couldn't breathe. The grip over my face so tight the fingers pressed into my jaw bone. My neck hurt from being yanked. My thigh being ripped at, my nylons clawed through. The zip of my nylons running up and down my legs. My body crushed by the weight of another. Absurdly, I thought of my uniform getting dirty and torn, wanted to pull my skirt down to my knees.

He grunted and gasped. I tried to heave my shoulders and my chest.

I couldn't move. I felt paralysed. I tried biting. He squeezed my face harder.

I heard a voice. Strangely calm and clear. *Fight for your life. Don't give up.*

I willed myself into a fit of violent heaves, wriggled back and forth over the ground like a worm. His free hand burned paths over my skin.

My muscles convulsed. His grip loosened from my mouth. I gulped for air, started to make a noise. He yanked my hair, pulled my head back. His hand braced my mouth again. I bit as hard as I could. He cursed. My leg came free of his crushing weight. I raised it up high and with all my strength smashed my heel down hard into him. He grunted. I wriggled and kicked, my foot now a long, pointed knife, stabbing over and over again, straight into his heart.

The swish of his clothes sliding off my nylon uniform. His weight lifted. I rolled away. Ridges of old furrows jutted up against my back, cradling me, then feeling as high as a mountain I had to cross to escape. I struggled to my feet. I ran. Sounds came out of me, the cries of a hurt animal. My nylons hung like cobwebs around my legs. Burrs grabbed at my clothes, quickly gave up their grip against the slippery fabric. The cumbersome weight of money in my pockets banged against my thighs.

He swooped down on me like a bat. My jaw hit the ground with a crack. Pain shot through my elbow. I scrambled to get up. His hand

grabbed my uniform in the middle of my back. I gave a quick heave forward. He clutched at the hem of my skirt. I flailed my arms and legs hysterically, swung out against anything. I squirmed, kicked, my breath coming in short piggish gasps. My foot connected with something, connected hard. I thought maybe his face. His hands lost their hold, fell away like chains. I rolled towards the billboard, scrambled to my feet. My chest felt tight and pinched. I started running, tripped but didn't fall. Off to the side, his body hunched over, motionless, his face buried in his hands.

I heard him coming up behind me. I raised my knees high to clear the uneven ground, just as I did when I was a kid, racing to home, during a game of hide-and-seek. I ran faster than I ever had before.

He didn't get far. He tripped. The dull thud of his body hitting the ground.

“Shit.”

I didn't look back. I kept my eyes fixed on the White Rose sign.

The hands that had covered my face smelled like sausages.

I DIDN'T REALLY TELL anyone. I tried to. I asked Phyllis what a person should do if they thought someone at work tried to hurt them, you know, like in a sexual way. She said she'd knee them in the nuts. Would you report it? I asked her. Only if you know for sure who it was, she said. If you couldn't prove it, and whoever it was heard what you said, they could come after you twice as hard next time.

I asked my mother what she would do if she thought someone she knew had tried to hurt her, maybe even rape her. "Oh," she said. "You have to be very careful about those kinds of accusations. Those are very serious charges. I'd want to be sure before I said anything."

I asked my Dad what he'd do if I told him – "And this didn't happen, Dad," I reassured him – that someone at work had tried to make a pass at me. Well maybe more than a pass. He said that if someone tried to force sex on me he'd kill them.

When I worked with Gus, I watched him, but only at times when he was too busy to notice me. I examined him for scrapes and bruises on his arms and face. I didn't see any. I would never know.

After the incident in the field, the Holiday Inn lost its glamour. As I entered through the lobby, my stomach would knot with tension. The smells made me feel ill. I couldn't be quite so friendly to the customers. I wanted to tell them, especially the chatty ones and the ones with children, to run for their lives, that danger lurked here. But I couldn't prove anything. Even the gold, black and red dining room sickened me, came to represent evil. I gave my notice, and told Phyllis I couldn't work part-time over the school year, that I needed the time to study.

"You made the right decision, Beth," my mother said. This summer has been wonderful experience for you, but you need time to grow. You've certainly proved yourself to be a hard worker."

"Nice to see you home more, Punkin," my Dad said.

AT NIGHT, AS I lay in bed listening to the sounds of the traffic on the 401, I thought of the people passing by, strangers to me, some of them maybe even on the run. Passing by so close to us, their lives almost touching ours. Then I forced myself to listen to the sounds that I'd grown up with, the sounds of our house, water rushing through pipes, feet squeeking over floorboards, voices talking softly, the back screen door opening and closing, the crickets trilling outside. The sounds of my past carried me off to sleep.

About the Author



CATHARINE LEGGETT's short stories have appeared several times in *Event*, as well as in *The New Quarterly* and *The Antigonish Review*. Her story "Snowstorm" was broadcast on CBC radio. "Ruthie and the Big Blue Sky" won the Okanagan Award for short fiction and appeared in *Canadian Author Magazine*. At present, she is completing two novels and a collection of short stories. She lives in London, Ontario, with her husband and their two children.

