
THE TURTLE

The turtle shell
Curiously ridged and sectioned
Covered her back.

George polished it affectionately
Every morning before he
Went out to start the car.

One day, plodding by the music store,
She lifted her head,
Looked longingly at a tuba.

“Turtles don’t play tubas,”
Laughed George.
He bought her a stereo with a turtilinear switch,
Positioned it lovingly in the centre of her back,
Gave her a record of Tubby
And other tuba melodies,
Hooked his thumbs in his belt,
Rocked back on his heels,
And waited, expectant.
“Thank-you, dear,” she said.

Next week at the art store
She ordered brushes and canvas
And forty-two assorted tubes of oils
Vermilion, crimson, ochre, cerise, and black.
George stared at her flippers, and then at her face,
and shook his head,
Then thoughtfully returned the whole array
And bought her two companion pieces—
Dawn—and Sunset—both at the seaside,
Piled them atop the stereo,
With a mirror so she could admire.

He bought her a car
So she wouldn’t have to walk,
A dishwasher so her flippers
Wouldn’t get wrinkled and old,
An aquarium in case she longed for the ocean,
All curiously balanced on her
Impermeable, halting back;
Golden chains to keep it all intact
And a feather duster for
Pristinity.
When she spoke of seeing the world
And he brought her a periscope
She shuddered and wiggled
Her defenseless, naked body out from
Underneath the shell.

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