

short cuts

We have had an overwhelming response to our "Short Cuts" competition. There is obviously so much undiscovered talent out there in Melbourne and we at the Metro News are proud to be providing writers with a forum to express themselves. Entries have included a range of styles from thrillers to children's stories and romance. One of our favorites is printed here and another cute story has been included in the Kids Mini Metro, page 15. Please keep writing and keep sending in your entries (see conditions back page). We will continue to publish as many as possible over the coming months.

Sitting Duck

J.M.Stanley

Tail gate getting too close ... something in front ... brake !brake ! too late! ...big noise ... violent shock to the body ... chest pain ... taste of blood ... can't breathe properly ... steering wheel hard on my chest ... must have hit something ... diamonds of glass glint on the dash ... silence eerie, then crickets start up ... whirring ... or is it frogs?. I hear a car speed past down the incline, churning the gravel. I can't move my head or left arm ... too painful ... I can feel my fingers sticky with something ... and my eyelids . I am fainting with pain. Lights flashing behind my eyes ... head spinning ... terrible pain in chest and arms ... drifting off.

The rumble and growl of a big road train approaching rouses me. I hear the hiss and groan as it changes gear for the hill and the loud blare of his horn. It doesn't stop. Please God let him see the wreckage and at least report it at the next town.

The night is hot but I feel very cold. More

lights pierce the dark. The glow illuminates briefly the white opacity of my fractured windscreen. The car races down the incline and away into the dark. Is that whirring crickets, or is it frogs? I try to move my left arm. The bones grate and pain sears through me. My left arm is broken. I begin to feel panic taking hold of me in my trapped state. I try to keep calm. I may not be found before daylight. Can I bear the waiting? I may die before I am found. I try to remember what time I left the reception with the day's takings.

Another car approaches at great speed. It brakes violently, the tyres snarling in protest as it swerves down the incline. Dear God let him see the wreckage and stop. It accelerates at the bottom to take the next rise and is gone.

Silence save the whirring sound ... and the zing of mosquitoes as they home in on an easy blood feed ... can't beat them off ... pain unbearable ... stickiness of eyelids has dried ... can't open them properly ... sweating ... drifting off.

I rouse to more lights. A car approaches at a slow speed ... probably a local who knows

the hill. Please God, let it stop. It does not stop. It drives on past. I start to weep, but it hurts too much. Then I hear the car brake in the gravel and the whine as it reverses back to behind my car and stop. I hear the hand brake pulled on. I hear the car radio playing. Thank you God. He has seen me. I know I can't move and I try to call out but can't muster a sound.

The driver does not get out straight away. The headlights shine on my windscreen, opaque and white. It seems an eternity before a car door opens. I do not hear it close. Maybe it is left open.

Feet crunch the gravel. I hear a zip opened and the gush of urine. It's a man. I hear the zip closed. The man walks around behind my car and peers into the open passenger window and studies the inside of the car for a long time. I feel like a specimen in a bottle. Between half my closed lids I can see he is quite a young man...I smell stale alcohol and cigarettes. He tries the passenger door handle from the outside and then through the open window, without success.

'You alright lady?' he queries. I can just manage to shake my head a little.

'Looks like you've bought it,' he mutters.

He comes round the front to the driver's side. He does not try to open the door. He reaches in through the open window. I think he is going to feel my pulse. His reach goes slowly past my right breast and trapped arm, to my lap. He grasps hold of my handbag that is wedged there by the steering wheel.

'Just to get your name and address,' he says. He yanks it violently to free it. A searing pain goes through my broken arm. I scream with pain and my head sings and swims.

I come to my senses in time to hear him whistle through his teeth and mutter, 'Jees, that's nearly eight grand.' As he fingers the notes, I see he has a tattoo of barbed wire around his wrist and blood on his hand. He drops the bag back through the window and retreats.

I hear the car door slam. The radio is still playing. The engine starts up. He accelerates away with a spray of gravel and a fast diminishing tail light.

Dutch Masters — From The Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



'The Love Letter' 1669 - 72, by Johannes Vermeer

Over the coming month the National Gallery of Victoria International will feature a remarkable exhibition of 17th Century Dutch masterpieces.

The majority of these works are from the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Rarely do these paintings leave Holland, however due to the restoration of the Rijksmuseum they have traveled to our fair city.

Melbourne residents are fortunate indeed to have the opportunity to view some of the world's finest paintings, as the exhibition will not travel to any other part of Australia. Great artists including Rembrandt, Frans Hals, Pieter de Hooch and Jan Steen are represented in this extraordinary exhibition.

The Golden Age

The Golden Age spans a period from the mid 16th century to the late 17th century. This period saw wars between Spain and Holland, the establishment of the Dutch East India Company and the rise and fall of the Dutch economy.

Domestic life in the Netherlands was a source of inspiration to local artists, who developed mastery of the still life genre. The depiction of beloved object, fruit and flowers is breathtaking in many of the exquisite paintings on show.

"The Love Letter"

A special treat is "The Love Letter" by Johannes Vermeer which was painted in 1669 – 1972. Most experts agree there are only 36 works by Vermeer in existence. "The Love Letter" is a beautiful example of his mastery of technique and depicts an engaging exchange between mistress and servant in a typical Dutch household.

Although tiny, (only 44cm x38.5cm) the painting is captivating. Vermeer shows us the

moment when a maid hands a sealed letter to her mistress.

The exchange of emotions between the two women is evident. The composition invites us into a tranquil domestic scene just as the mood is changing.

Public Programs

Dutch Masters is on at the National Gallery of Victoria, International until 2 October, 2005. There are free guided tours daily at 11am and 3pm. There are also free films at 2pm on Tuesdays and Saturdays throughout July and August.

These will be held in the Clemenger BBDO Auditorium. Films include "Rembrandt: Painter of Stories" and "Girl With a Pearl Earring".

For further information on these and other public programs contact the National Gallery of Victoria, International on 8662 1555.



The 'Overturned Bouquet' c. 1660-79
by Abraham Mignon