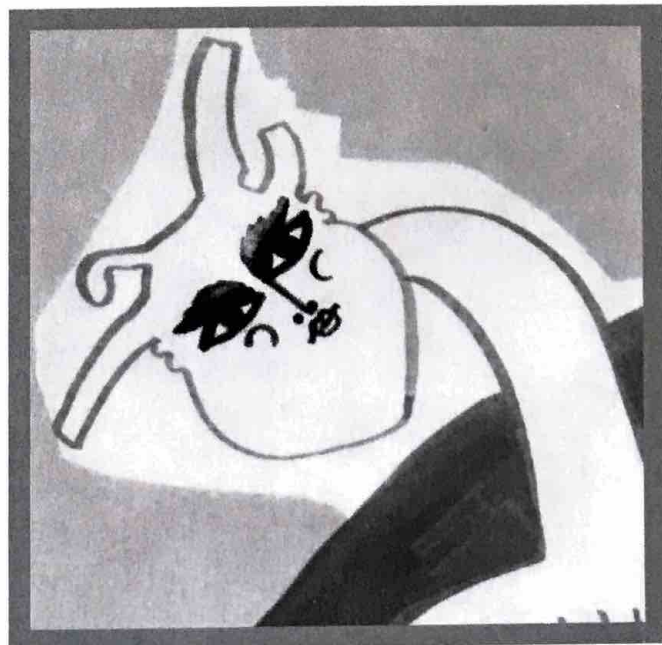
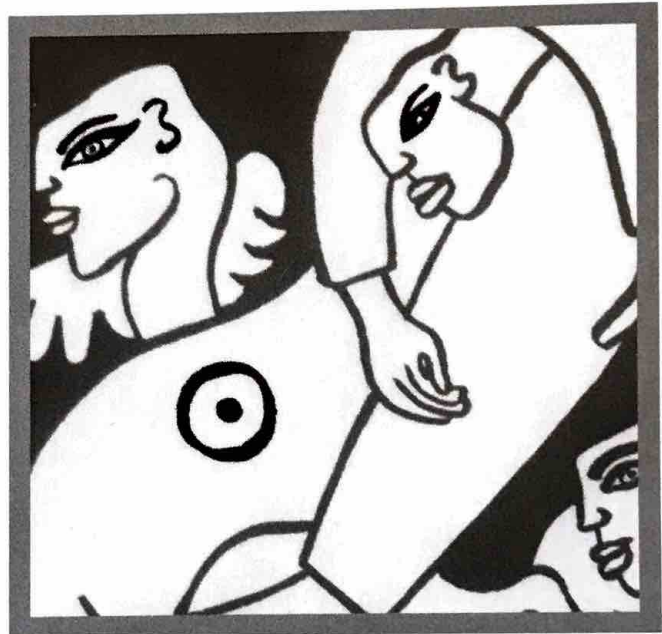
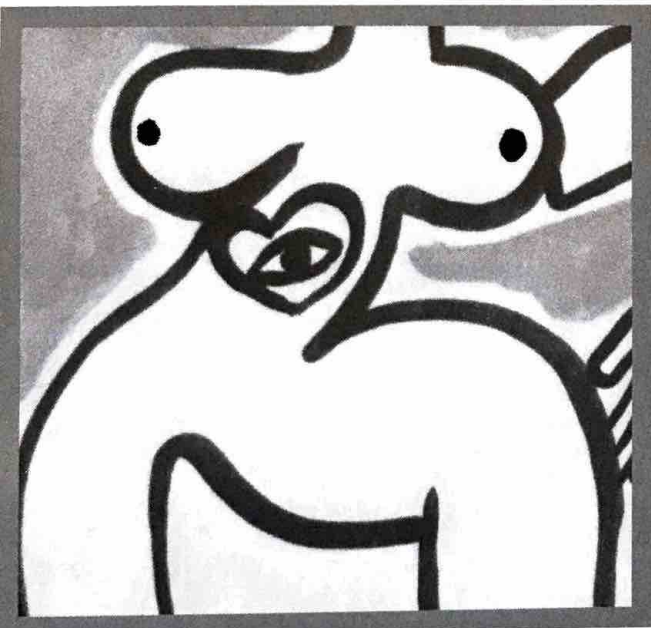


Kalliope

a journal of women's art



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Front Cover: Thomasina Sawyer, details from "Two Figures and Blue Heart," "Pyramid," "Hens in Love," and "Beside a Black Mountain."

Back Cover: Lois Duffy, "Dancing Waters," 36" x 54", acrylic, 1987.

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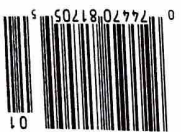
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Schrodinger's Cat

A cat is placed inside a box. Inside the box is a device which can release a gas, instantly killing the cat. A random event (the radioactive decay of an atom) determines whether the gas is released or not. There is no way of knowing, outside of looking into the box, what happens inside. The box is sealed and the experiment is activated. A moment later, the gas either has been released or has not been released. The question is, without looking, what has happened inside the box....

According to classical physics, the cat is either dead or it is not dead. All that we have to do is open the box and see which is the case. According to quantum mechanics, the situation is not so simple.

The Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics says that the cat is in a kind of limbo represented by a wave function which contains the possibility that the cat is dead and also the possibility that the cat is alive. When we look in the box, and not before, one of these possibilities actualizes and the other vanishes. This is known as the collapse of the wave function because the hump in the wave function representing the possibility that did not occur, collapses. It is necessary to look into the box before either possibility can occur....

...According to classical physics, we get to know something by observing it. According to quantum mechanics, it isn't there until we do observe it! Therefore, the fate of the cat is not determined until we look inside the box.

...What happens after we look inside the box, however, depends upon which interpretation [of quantum mechanics] we choose to follow. According to the Copenhagen Interpretation, at the instant that we look inside the box, one of the possibilities contained in the wave function representing the cat actualizes and the other possibility vanishes. The cat is either dead or alive.

According to the Many Worlds Interpretation [of Quantum Mechanics], at the instant that the atom decays (or doesn't decay), depending upon which branch of reality we are talking about, the world splits into two branches, each with a different edition of the cat. The wave function representing the cat does not collapse. The cat is both dead and alive. At the instant that we look into the box, our wave function also splits into two branches, one associated with the branch of reality in which the cat is alive. Neither consciousness is aware of the other.

Gary Zukav, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*, Bantam 1979: 85-7.

Meghan the hunter

The coney's front legs lift, nose wrinkles, ears twirl. Damn this tinkling around the neck! The coney descends for another chomp. But then jaws winding, it rises again, long ears back, nose to a breeze.

The angle's perfect, wind's right, the throat is bared. Grasses part and swoosh.

Eech-Ki!

Meghan's human

"Oh, what's the point in a bell?" Terry regards the coney corpse, laid out on the grass threshold of her hut, a gift, she presumes. Meghan is, of course, nowhere in sight. Terry imagines she hides at these times, watching from some invisible perch, having vanished herself like the Cheshire cat, leaving only a grin.

The human from another world

The town of Stromness was much as Kay remembered. And here also on the far side of the island, the landscape feels familiar, what with chapels and caved-in huts scattered thinly over low hills, and nothing alive for miles. But it goes on and on, and no one sand dune, heather-filled field, or wall, matches the memories she's preserved like amber.

Last night she asked about the dig from the middle-aged couple who ran the B and B, and then this morning from the elderly man who rented her the no-speed bike. None of them knew of it, but she set out anyway, thinking she would recognize the site all right. What she did not take into account was that the tin shack, which had served as lab and dorms, would be torn down by now, and that the grids which had marked the site square by square would be all filled in, grown over with furze, no trace, not even a scrap of the black plastic which had been used to cover the fresh diggings from daily downpours and dampness at night.

She thought she would at least recognize the old ruined chapel nearby, but after finding one, wandering through the graves, and recognizing none of the old stone crosses, she rode a few more miles and found another that did not match her recollections either.

So she has begun to feel not just discouraged, but depressed in a way that would not seem so inappropriate if accompanied by the mist and drizzle, fog horns and ocean smells that dogged her crossing of Pentland Firth yesterday. But now in the heat of a bright blue day, she begins to harp at herself for having harbored unfulfilled longings so long they've mouldered inside. And she peddles awhile without looking at the passing purples, greens and greys, staring straight ahead instead at the horizon where blue meets blue in a line of haze.

Then without thinking, she dismounts again, crawls over a wall — the rough hardened ash of the rocks leaving dens in the palms of her hands — and strikes out for the so-called "beach." This is a pebbly strip where the waves crash, although today the ocean is really too calm for the waves to be said to "crash," and yet her memories tell her otherwise. On a stormy evening the cross-hatching turbulence of the North Sea can set things crashing like no other.

And then to her left she sees on some rocks sticking up way out, the shiny grey of seals sunning, and the tops of heads between the waves. Without a will almost, she

turns that way and walks, and that's when she sees the grey-striped cat, sidling through the saw-edged grass, swivel its head so she spies its bell — first sign of living humans she's encountered in over an hour.

The cat halts mid-stride, back leg crooked in air, and glances over its left shoulder, eyes greener than the grass, pupils slit to vertical nothings.

Kay stops, obedient to its glance.

The subjects meet

Terry rams the black soil over the small grave with her spade and turns to see Meghan appear out of the fen which would not be so unusual (her timing perfect) if she weren't being followed by a woman — perhaps Terry's own age but dressed in khaki and white. Perhaps Norwegian.

"Excuse me, I followed your cat. At least I guess it's yours."

American, then, by the sound of her — Boston, maybe. "Meghan's her name. Whether she's mine or not, I'm not so sure on. You looking for something?"

"As a matter of fact..." Kay allows herself to eye the other woman who stands in this mud yard, made neat with some labor, between three huts, clearly the proprietor. But her accent is, though lilting, by no means the island brogue. And neither are the straight leg Levi's the sort of work pants sold at the one store in Stromness. "There used to be a dig here somewhere along the coast. I was wondering if you might know where it was."

"A dig? What kind?"

"An archeological dig..."

"Sure, but what of? There've been Pictish brochs and Celtic monasteries, Neolithic settlements, cairns, and menhirs, Beaker burial cists, Norse farms..."

Kay breaks in: "This was a Viking vessel. An archeologist from Oslo was in charge. I think she packed it off to a museum in Sweden several years ago."

Terry nods. "I know the one. It's an easy walk from here."

Josh the father

"Where did she go?" Brian asks.

"When'll she be back?" Nessa adds, her seven-year-old-face of pudges and red looking ready to crumble.

"Did you have a fight?" Tam, the eldest, is old enough to have a feel for tensions in the air.

Josh answers the questions backwards. "No, we didn't fight. She'll meet us in Edinburgh next week. She went to the Orkney Islands where she spent a summer before we were married."

"Where she dug up that Viking ship?" Brian at 10, consumed with his own interests, is apparently the least concerned with their mother's absence.

"Yes." Josh feels short of responses this morning, yet knows he needs to do better, if only for Nessa's sake.

But Brian is hooked now into his one-war track: "So why didn't Mom become an archeologist?"

Last night in bed after Kay announced she was going off, Josh worried to her about how he can not match her capacity to guide, making both ruined and mundane come alive. First at Stonehenge, then Hadrian's Wall — wherever stone walls gave way to earth, moss, or heather, or wind whistled eerily past their ears. This was just another phenomenon she knew to explain: "If you stand perpendicular to the wind, the edge of your ear cuts the air, producing sound like the lip of a flute." She got the kids and him all lined up in front of the wall, quietly listening. How can he match that?

But also he is worried about something more. "She didn't become an archeologist because.... For one thing, it wasn't long after that dig that she had Tam. And then there was you. Then Nessa."

"So?" Brian has a way of making his whole body look puzzled.

"Idiot! Dad had to work. And Mom looked after us." Tam speaks with a newly acquired know-it-all cynicism. Maybe it was being in seventh grade that did it.

Josh admits now, what Kay accused last night, that he has not gotten to know them as she has. But who says he could or should get to know them exactly the same way she has? Anyway, this is to be his big chance.

"It doesn't have to be like that, Tam. Lots of moms these days have careers, and sometimes fathers stay home to take care of the kids. We did things as we did after lots of discussion. We decided since I had a chance at a well-paid job I enjoy and she wanted to work on her crafts at home..."

"Crafts?" Nessa wrinkles her small brow, perhaps thinking of art class at school; finger-painting and paper mache piggy banks, surely not something an adult would stay home for.

"You know the wheel and the loom in the garage. Mommy used to weave and make pottery before you were born. But maybe if you think you're grown up enough now to look after yourselves a lot more, we should all sit down and convince her to go back to school."

"And become an archeologist?" Brian's enthusiasm finally makes Josh smile. He recalls the young guide who led them around the Roman baths, Brian at her heels, a look in his eyes that reminded Josh of a feeling he'd first had at nine for his fourth grade teacher, Miss Myrtle — red-haired, tall, with velvety blue veins showing through at her temples. Not unlike Kay, he now connects for the very first time.

"If that's what interests her. But something to give her a sense of..." His heart squeezes, turns over. He recalls her face at the train station this morning, an unlearned longing there that he hasn't seen in years. It appeared when she turned her eyes towards where the tracks disappeared into hilly green. He reached out, and she slid back behind the tight-tipped mask he'd almost forgotten was not the only one she owned.

Meghan the scientist

From the roof of her hut, Meghan observes these two humans. They look somehow alike, although they smell quite different. Her human-like flowers, the other like meat. Though they may have come from the very same litter, the newcomer must have been taken away young and made to live inside.

The subjects talk

Terry has made tea and brought it out to the table between the huts. "I stayed here for a man; now I stay here for myself. I used to dream about going back someday, but now I realize I'm one of those who stumble into a place that feels more like home than the place where they were born. I wouldn't know what to do if I went back. And the way I live here I've made with my heart and my hands. There's Meghan, the chickens, the goat, and some sheep. There's the garden, these huts, and the field for peat. There's the language and the land, the wind, and the sea. I'd lose my voice, I'm afraid, if I left."

"So you live alone?" Kay inquires, ready to admire.

Terry tilts her chair back on two legs. "Well, not completely. The man's still around, though he's away as much as he's here. The first time he went I thought that was it. But he returned, he said, for the air and for me. He was gone again a few months later. But by now I know it's just as well. The aloneness I prize, the travel he needs, when we come back together there's stuff to share. You, so married, it's doubtful you know what I mean."

Kay leans forward, her elbows on her knees. "It is very different, but my husband travels too; it's part of his job. The weeks when he's away from home I feel very light. I fantasize about how things might have been. Then when he returns we fight. So I put my fantasies away, and we go back to getting along just fine."

"Sounds claustrophobic. Is it your fantasies you fight about?"

"No. It's hard to explain, but we have what I call reality clashes. The least little thing will start one off. Whether or not he said something to someone. He claims he said it; I say he did not. He says as proof the person perceived.... I say that response was to something I'd said. We argue about time and perception and remembering events. I say it's possible he misunderstood what I'd said. He says no, I'd missaid what he heard. I allow it's possible, then I balk: it's more likely someone mishears than missays. He counters, it's the other way round, and besides he's more accurate than most about both. He's a translator, you see." Kay fingers the lip of the cup, its saucer resting in the palm of her hand. "But that's when I go cold. I think of walking out and have gotten as far as a hotel room one night. But I don't know what I would do. This is the first time in fourteen years I've gone away on my own for more than a day. You can't imagine, I'm sure, how I feel." Terry shifted to the front of her seat. "Don't idealize my independence here. The first time he left, I almost broke. We had a fight a lot like what you've described. We argued about the way we'd met, about

who'd approached whom and who desired it more. I said I'd made the first move; he said he had. I said he'd only leapt as he was already stalking; only by happenstance was it me who wandered through to put my paw in his jaw at the time. I accused him of Scotsman machismo that he could not accept he was not the one in control. At which he bridled, said I was as bad as any man myself for wanting to hold the reins. Then, sudden as the North Sea switches currents, he accepted my version, said I was right. I'd forced his hand, maybe he'd never really cared for me after all. He threw a plate of goat cheese and cabbage at me. Terry stares past Kay's knee to a point on the flagstones three feet away. "I left it there for days, until it was nothing but the crockery shards. That was the first time I almost went back to the States. Instead I began to write poems. One was published by the time he returned."

Josh settles into his role

Tarn is fascinated by the locks: the cranks, gears, and sluice gates. And this is something Josh can explain. So they stop at a pub overlooking the works.

Nessa keeps asking about the monster she's named for. And Josh discovers he knows more Loch Ness stories than he'd ever imagined.

Brian wants to keep moving, wants to get to the castle on a promontory half-way up the lake. Half-way through the afternoon they go.

The subjects walk

Terry stops by the shore, now suddenly steep. Kittiwakes dive bomb from the cliffs, letting out screeches to scare off the invaders. But the women don't budge. "This is the spot where I met Erin. His family owns most of the land from here to that next spit and a mile back into the hills. He's the second son and won't inherit, so he comes and goes, works oil rigs down south about half the year, helps out around here the rest of the time."

"So how did you meet?" Kay provides the appropriate query.

"It was summer fourteen years ago. I was bumming around Europe with my boyfriend and we'd gotten this far when we ran out of money. Erin's father hired us for the haying and milking. Then one day Erin showed up. I used to come out here to sketch. Even as late as midnight, the sky is still bright in late June, but you know about that. So Erin came out that evening to walk the beach as he always does when he gets back. We got to talking. I think it was about the seals I asked him."

"And your boyfriend?"

Terry shrugs. "He went home."

"Have you always known what you wanted and how to get it?" Kay does not attempt to hide her envy.

"No, don't think it was like that all at once. At the time I felt I'd been bewitched. You see, Erin has a way with dreams. And right from the start he wanted me to spend the night. He said things happen to people if their bodies sleep beside each other. I said, okay, but no sex. He said fine. Terry wags her head as if still bemused, as if still

trying to refuse. "I never dream about someone I've just met. But there he appeared in my dream, setting up this elaborate line of traps and organizing a bunch of people for the hunt, synchronizing watches, looking at maps. In all the disarray, one of the hounds got caught in one of the traps. It was up to me to get her out. No one else seemed at all concerned. I was prying at the metal jaws with both feet and hands when I woke. So that's when I turned over and touched him first. Of course, that's not how he tells the story."

Kay has been listening, almost mesmerized. But now she follows the cat with her eyes as it climbs up on a flat lying stone, and sits, tail curled around its haunches. Kay approaches, squats down, and spreads both hands out to feel the grey granite warmth. "It was a place like this, maybe here, where I met a man, too." She looks back at Terry, who has followed and is listening.

"This is where we had our first talk. We'd decided to take a picnic, for no good reason I can remember. I hadn't thought I was attracted to him. He came from Norway and looked more like me than anyone I'd ever seen, and at first I didn't care for that. My husband is dark, and that's the kind I usually lean towards. But this man, I made no attempt to like; it was like talking to a brother I never had. I picked up his accent so fast, the others made fun. But that's the way I've always been — a chameleon when it comes to tongues. It's something that as a translator, Josh can't stand; he says it's dishonest, he feels he can't trust me. But I think it's because of what happened here that makes him feel he'll never trust me again."

"So what happened?"

"What happened? I don't know. It just did — him talking, me listening, then the other way round. Kind of like you and I are doing." Kay pauses, rises, glances at Terry, who nods. So Kay goes on. "You know, it's so rare to meet men who can do it like this. Josh, for instance, listens well enough, but never talks back about himself, least not the same way. This man though exchanged story for story, my life for his. Weirdly his was a lot like my own. Or so it seemed."

"Our parents divorced, step-families to deal with, moves from here to there as if our parents were whimsy children with no direction to hold them clear. And here we both were at 22, digging holes in Orkney, seeking some deeper familial feeling. We spent two weeks together after the dig, visiting distant relatives of his and tracking down my ancestral home. We went to libraries, researched heraldries, and finally found a crumbling castle, no historic registration, no bronze markers attached, just sheep nibbling in its keep. We slept there, stars overhead, and for a single night I imagined I belonged."

Meghan the participant-observer

Meghan rubs between her human's legs. The other's face looks like she's caught a coney. But then they all begin to walk again.

Josh the husband

Josh, on the ramparts of Edinburgh castle, the kids exploring the outer walls below, thinks of the afternoon in late summer fourteen years ago when Kay picked him up at Heathrow. He saw her uncertain smile. Wrapping her in his arms, he felt that shell-like stiffness for the very first time. They found a B and B that afternoon. He recalls the embarrassment before the matron of the house because he signed them in as if already married, using his name. Then they went straight to bed and the walls were very thin.

The first time they made love, Kay was not there. So he asked what was wrong, and she gave him her story. He got inside her again, then he cried. He'd make her love him again, he said. She said it wasn't that she'd quit. But it was never again as it had been before.

More and more as the years go by, he meets new women while away and imagines how things might have been. But none of these women gives him that feeling he once felt or believes he did for Kay, and so never is he tempted to leave her for them. Nor does he ever mention them to her. He assumes she knows and doesn't want to learn more.

Now, with a bank of clouds moving in over Edinburgh Castle, it occurs to him for the very first time that maybe something died for her in this place back then.

The subjects nearly merge

"This is the place," Terry waves her hand towards a stretch of land like all the rest around.

Kay feels empty inside. But what was she expecting, some memorial, a Viking helmet carved in stone, the names of those who dug here emblazoned on it? Perhaps she was hoping Terry might cast some kind of spell that would make it all appear again as it had been then, Erik one square over, trowel in hand.

"I was only here six weeks and due to meet Josh in London two weeks later. We'd known each other a year by then, and we'd planned a six month tour of Europe, our parents' graduation present. But we came home after only three, worn out and confused. The man from Norway was under my skin. I have yet to rid myself of him." She rubs both freckled arms with either hand as if he might yet be brought to the surface and sloughed off.

"Sometimes it gets so bad I imagine Erik and I are really both dead. We were hitchhiking not far from London, the day before I met Josh, and a crazy rich kid picked us up. I remember thinking it would be my just deserts if he crashed his father's fancy car into some tree and wrapped us all up over its limbs. And sometimes I think that actually happened, and that everything since has been a post-death dream: husband, kids, an attempt at a life. I felt it particularly a few days back, when driving out of London, on the wrong side of the road again, as it always feels when you first come over. Josh was driving, and I felt pure panic that now at last was our reckoning

(Your parents started work on the same day and retired on the same day, after working for the same company for 35 years. Their desks sat on either side of a beige partition, the distance between them being the same when they lie in their great bed at night between sheets larger than the walls of a nomad's tent. Your mother complained once about your father's thumbtacks, stuck into his side of the false wall and distinguishing one of Raphael's madonnas, a likeness was on a postcard your sister sent from Rome and your mother hung on her side.

A more recent conversation went like this:

Your Mother: That's not the tomato I bought. Did you buy that tomato?

Your Father: What are you talking about? We went to the store together. Of course that's the tomato you bought.

Your Mother: No it's not. I've never seen that tomato before.

As you open your mouth to lie and say you bought the tomato, your father demonstrates the sublimeness of the right answer: "Now I remember. The tomato you

picked out had a rotten spot on it, remember? The checker noticed, and he sent the

bagboy to bring a new one for you."

There are a million reasons for you to move out of the little apartment attached to

the rear of your parents' house. Recently, you received a promotion and a raise at your

job of assigning code numbers to educational films. When you tell your parents that

you found an apartment situated closer to work, they place an ad in the newspaper for

a tenant.)

From the sofa in the little apartment, you are watching TV when your parents enter.

Your posture changes — you splay yourself over the sofa to hide it, mindful of the

comment your mother has repeated ever since you returned from a yard sale with this

particular piece of furniture: "She must have felt sorry for it. Like the runt of the

litter." The sofa is yellow, woven with black dots and flecks of gold, and pebbly in

texture.

Before you sit up and laugh at your mother, she winks so you will keep quiet. As

though she were dressing a miniature man that morning, she has wrapped herself in a

light blue, double-breasted blazer. You imagine the network of basting and tacking she

created to make a man's jacket fit her skinny hips so neatly. The trousers match the

coat. Against a dark blue shirt, she wears a tie of your father's that you have not given

a thought to in years, with its tiny red Mustangs driving across broad black stripes.

The shoes she wears are her own: she shined her old loafers and put them on over a

pair of black socks. To complete her disguise, your mother parted her hair on the left

moment; he was going to kill us both and the children, too. Of course, it was insane. He's solid as a rock — the kind who'll never crash, I know. It's me who's out of control. But that's when I realized it was time to come back, to retrace my steps. I don't know what I expected: that I might discover the crossroads still intact, and the choice I did not make still waiting to be made?"

"And what of all this does your husband know?"

"I told him the bare outline right off. But all the rest I've kept feeling since, I would not want to say to him. We were so much more honest before."

"Terry scuffs her toe through the low ground cover. "Honest? It's a slippery word. Ern and I have finally agreed, it's best to see what comes out of our mouths and treat that as honesty — at least it's the truth as it stands between us.... Of course, that's not how I saw it at first. I was kind of partial to THE TRUTH myself. As the daughter of

an Episcopalian minister..."

Kay interrupts: "Mine was Methodist."

Terry nods. "Right, it's all the same. You know what I mean: you grow up believing there's one truth only, and that if two people speak they best address the same matter or else evil and misunderstanding will result. At least that's the side of you that

believes in the Bible. But early on I developed a part of myself which knew better, knew that each Sunday the minister spoke at pulpit, a different truth would out. Even when the minister was my father, his words were only interpretations. But especially if

some other minister came through, I noticed the Word was not the same. And then depending on who was listening. Humans have no choice but to misconstrue to some

extent.

"So Erin just brought that lesson home to me in deed. He's got plenty of Pictish blood in him, you see, and ask anyone round here, that makes a man sly. There's no

getting a single truth from him, so there's no use trying. He'll change it completely the next time round, and not for any particular reason, but according to his private

aesthetic, it just sounds better this way now. Some would say it was pragmatism drove time we talk that actually matters."

Kay feels something loosen inside. The truth, she thinks, noticing now the sandy soil between the heather. Events as they happen, events as they're told, events as

they're buried to unfold. A few small red berries show among the green. Finally, she looks straight into Terry's eyes, this woman who leads the life Kay lives in

her dreams.

Meghan the clairvoyant

Curted on a hummock, Meghan regards the two furless faces, their pupils large as they stare at one another. They seem to sense how they've grown too close too

quickly. So just in time, and as with a single mind, they shake hands and part ways.

