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The letter, bells, creeping boys

Abstract

He sits in the square surrounded by bells. The sound of bells. Not real bells. There is a girl sitting on a bench. A green bench, chipped, with the initials of other lovers carved into it. Four small boys. The girl is writing a letter. The girl glances up from writing the letter. She is smiling. He thinks: she is writing a love letter. The boys creep past on the girl's side of the wall. She sees them creeping past.

MICHAEL MORRISSEY

The Letter, Bells, Creeping Boys

He sits in the square surrounded by bells.
The sound of bells. Not real bells.
There is a girl sitting on a bench.
A green bench, chipped, with the initials of other lovers carved into it.
Four small boys.
The girl is writing a letter.
The girl glances up from writing the letter.
She is smiling.
He thinks: she is writing a love letter.
The boys creep past on the girl's side of the wall.
She sees them creeping past.
They are following a policeman on the other side of the wall.
She does not reach the conclusion they are following a policeman — she has not looked up from her letter which has caused her to smile. She has no awareness that the policeman exists. Yet she has seen the creeping boys. The creeping boys.
The policeman keeps walking.
He has not noticed the girl writing her letter — again she looks up and smiles — nor has he noticed the creeping boys. The creeping boys.
The policeman keeps walking. He too is surrounded by bells.
Even the creeping boys are surrounded by bells.
And the girl — she too is surrounded by bells.
By the bells.

He is watching the girl, impatiently now.

He wants to speak.

He wants to wrench the letter from her, involve her in some way, some witty remark which will prove irresistible — he wants — to pick her up — he wants her to be the ideal woman, for whom he has been looking.

If only the bells would stop.

It's hard to talk above the bells.

To exchange witty banter, one has to shout above the creeping bells — who said the bells are creeping? — the boys, yes, the boys creep but the bells do *not* creep.

The creeping bells.

He wants to creep over the top of or under the bells.

Ah that's why the bells started creeping — he was thinking of creeping under or through the bells — that's why the bells started creeping, along with the boys.

He wants to get through the — bells — the sound of the bells — get through to her —

'You must have written a novel by now.'

If she looks blank he can say, 'The bells are loud aren't they?'

She will understand that even if she doesn't understand about the novel.

'Dear X, she will write, this man came up to me in the middle of the bells and started talking about novels I thought he was mad.

'Mad am I, can't you understand anything, you never stopped writing your letter and you were smiling I knew you must be entering into intercourse with someone, your brain wasn't totally belled, a sort of neologism here, if you will excuse, the din, the sin, of making a few meanings of my own, after all that is what we are here for, isn't it, to resist the given, the religious musak those damn bells are giving us — I don't know what those boys are up to by now — probably finished with their damn creeping, the policeman doesn't look like a transcendental meditator that's for sure/real if you like — he looks like an adonis who's had a lobotomy I don't mean to be smart lady snatching your letter away but I am the GREAT LETTER SNATCHER from way back, 'never could resist interfering with a message in mid-bells — now who pulled yours? — No not yours officer! That man, is obviously out to spoil everyone's including yours and mine dear, the fun we're going to have when I snatch your damn panty hose down and pull them over your head — I say we seem to have got mixed up there hardly surprising with those damn bells — God they've stopped.

I say, they've stopped.

They're lovely aren't they?
Yes, lovely. Are you writing a letter?
No I'm trimming a dinosaur's toenail.
Ha ha. Is it difficult — writing a letter? .
No, dead easy — (don't get uptight about the word dead we all have to face up to it sooner or later) — it's the dinosaur's toenail that's difficult.
Writing to your family?
I don't believe you've heard a word I've said.
It was the bells — damn they've started again.
And back comes the policeman!
Back come the creeping boys!
The whole damn thing is starting all over!
She's smiling into her letter again.
The boys are creeping again.
The policeman is — no, he's coming down on the boys' side of the wall!
That will stop their damn creeping!
(It won't stop the bells though)
Is that a love letter you're writing?
Love letter?
To the one — that you love.
We have to face up to that word sooner or later. Better sooner.
In the case of love.
In the case of death — excuse me officer are you on this case?
What case?
(OFF) The death case. The creeping boys case.
The case of the creeping bells
Bells do not creep!
Creeping boys — are we dealing with an imbecile, some kind of diabetic or something?
If I'm going to deal with an imbecile at least make sure that he has enough sugar in his bloodstream!
Policemen look younger than they used, they creep round like bells — boys! — they creep like boys — they don't have eyes in the back of their heads anymore — they're McLuhan's men — and they have all that sugar in their bloodstream — how many creeping diabetic bell-happy policemen have you seen during your letter you smug little —
I have to warn you that any bell — any bell you ring will be clattered in evidence against you. Yes you, the great letter-snatcher from way back.
Haven't you finished your letter yet?
A Russian novel. Yes one page, two pages — but this is an epic.

Did you know that postage has gone up and it's going up again?
That's why the bells are creeping — ringing! Requiem for your Russian
novel. Requiem for love letters to diabetic imbeciles on the other side of
the goddamn globe.

A totally soundless letter you're writing.

Nothing in it but words.

And don't you realize you diabetic imbecilic bitch that anything that
doesn't *move* today is a failure?

All communication must have a kinetic quality.

Otherwise it does not move.

This page is a failure. Your letter is a failure.

By this definition.

As your letter is a definition of where *you* are,

But you don't seem to *know* where you are!

You're hemmed in by bells!

Can't you hear them?

Can't you hear them?