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## MARY IN LEE-LEE-LAND

Mary is on the beach and walking in the sand. It is the middle of summer and she is wearing short shorts, a tee shirt and flip flops.

Mary sees an interesting rock formation. It is a cave. She walks into the cave and inside is a little stream. It looks curious and it is making a gurgling sound. Mary then follows the stream. The stream leads out of the cave.

She then looks around.

“Where am I?” Mary says aloud.

“You are in Lee-Lee-Land,” says a voice behind her.

“What!” says Mary in amazement after turning around.

“You are in Lee-Lee-Land,” says a giant frog.

“Oh!” says Mary still amazed.

“My name is Victor,” says the frog.

“My name is Mary,” says Mary.

Victor takes Mary’s hand.”

“Do you want to go for a hamburger?” he says.

“OK,” says Mary. “I’m beginning to feel hungry.”

They walk to the end of the block and stop at a sign that says “Beach Motel.”

“Oh!” says Mary.

“They have a really nice Coffee Shop here,” says Victor. And they walk inside and sit down at a small table with a view of the beach and the ocean.

“This is lovely,” says Mary. “But everyone here is a giant green frog. I’m the only vanilla.”

“That’s OK,” says Victor as the green frog waiter approaches.

“What would you like?” says the waiter.

“I’d like a hamburger, well done, and a lemonade,” says Mary.

“I’d like the same,” says Victor. “Mary, would you also like French fries?”

“No, thank you, Victor.”

“OK,” says the waiter taking the order, then leaving.

Mary looks around. Everyone in the Coffee Shop is a green frog and glancing at Mary.

“Are people, or frogs, looking at me because I’m so different?” says Mary.

“I’m looking at you,” says Victor. “I’m looking at your beautiful blue eyes and your beautiful blond wavy hair.”

“Oh Victor, you are so nice.”

Soon the waiter comes back with their orders. They then sit there eating, watching the beach and the ocean.

“That was really good,” says Mary as they finish. “But I feel so tired.”

“Come to my room and rest,” says Victor.

“Where is your room?” asks Mary.

“Put the meal on my bill,” says Victor to the waiter as they get up.

Mary and Victor leave the Coffee Shop and walk down a corridor. Victor stops at a door, unlocks it and they enter a motel room.

“Oh!” says Mary.

“You know, I think I’ll wash up,” she says walking into the bathroom.

When Mary gets out of the bathroom, the cover is pulled down on the bed.

“Just rest, Mary, if you are tired. I’ll put on some soft music.” And so he does as Mary lies down.

Soon Victor joins her. After making love they sleep in each other’s arms to the soft music.

The next morning Mary wakes up. She turns around and sees the sun shining through the window.

“What a dream!” she says to herself.

Then she opens her eyes wide and looks around.

“Hey, this is no dream! But where am I?”

Then Victor walks in the room from the bathroom.

“Would you like some coffee, Mary?”

“Coffee!!! What the hell is going on?!”

“Calm down, Sweetheart. Don’t you remember? We fell in love.”

“Oh, Victor. Now I remember. I remember holding you. And the soft music.”

“I’ll pour you a cup of coffee, Mary. Do you want anything in it?”

“No thank you.”

Victor hands the cup of coffee to Mary.

“Here you are, Darling.”

“Thank you. But this situation is surreal and confusing.”

“No, Mary. We fell in love and we have a whole life ahead of us together. It is surreal but not confusing. I love you and you love me and that is all that matters now. When you finish your coffee, you can get washed and dressed and we will go to the Coffee Shop for breakfast. We do have a lot to talk about over breakfast.”

“Yes, Victor, we do.”

After Mary is washed and dressed they walk down the corridor to the Coffee Shop and sit down at the same table as last time.

“This is our table now,” says Victor. “What would you like for breakfast? Maybe French toast with maple syrup and a sliced orange?”

“I’d love that,” says Mary.

The waiter approaches

“Two orders of sliced orange and French toast with maple syrup,” says Victor.

“Coming right up,” says the waiter.

“Victor,” says Mary. “I’m on vacation now from school. I just finished my first year of college and I’m travelling with my roommate, Carol. She must be worried. She has no idea where I am. And to tell you the truth—I have no idea where I am either.”

“You are in Lee-Lee-Land,” says Victor.

“And where is Lee-Lee-Land on the map?” asks Mary.

“You won’t find it on the map,” says Victor.

“And how do I get back to New York, where I came from?”

“Mary,” says Victor, “you can’t go back.

“Why not?!” exclaims Mary.

“Well, you might be able to get permission from the Town Hall to go back, but you wouldn’t be able to come here anymore.”

“Would they believe me in New York if I tell them about Lee-Lee-Land? I could end up in a psychiatric hospital!”

“That’s possible, Mary. But the alternative is, we could have a beautiful life together right here.”

“But, Victor, everyone will be so worried about me in New York.”

“I’m sorry, Mary,” says Victor. “But there is nothing you can do about that.”

“Oh.”

“Here we are,” says the waiter with their orders and he puts the food on the table.

“Oh, all this looks scrumptious,” says Mary.

“And it is,” says Victor.

Although Mary is preoccupied, they enjoy their breakfast together overlooking the beach and the ocean.

“Victor,” says Mary as they are finishing breakfast. “Everyone is looking at me. I look different—I know. I’m not green, I’m not a frog, and I’m dressed differently. All the other women are wearing long skirts or long dresses.”

“Don’t worry, Mary,” says Victor. “After breakfast we’ll go shopping and get you some nice clothes.”

“OK,” says Mary hesitantly. “But,” she goes on, “I don’t have much money on me.”

“Don’t worry about that either,” says Victor.

“Oh,” says Mary and they finish up breakfast.

“OK,” says Victor, let’s go shopping. There’s a whole row of stores on the next block.”

They leave the coffee shop and stroll to the next block and then look in the store windows.

“What beautiful clothes!” says Mary. “I like the long skirts with the casual tops.”

“This is a nice shop,” says Victor. “They might have almost everything you need. Let’s go inside.”

“OK, Victor,” says Mary as they enter the store.

“Oh look at these lovely clothes,” says Mary. “And I love these long skirts with the casual blouses.”

“Yes,” says Victor. “Pick out a few things that you like. And there are dressing rooms where you can try things on.”

“Thanks Victor,” says Mary.

Mary tries on a few skirts and tops, and some nightgowns, a robe, a bathing suit and underwear. She decides to get them all and Victor pays for it.

“Thank you Victor,” says Mary still a little bewildered by everything.

“Now we will go next door to the shoe store,” says Victor. “You need some shoes besides your flip-flops.” And they go next door.

“Thank you Victor,” says Mary after buying two pairs of sandals and a pair of slippers.

“OK Mary,” says Victor. “One more store—the drug store. You need soap, toothpaste, toothbrush, etc. And then we are finished unless you can think of something else.”

“No, that should do it,” says Mary. “Thank you.”

So they shop in the drug store and then go back to the motel room.

“Let’s put everything away,” says Mary.

“Aren’t you hungry?” says Victor. “Don’t you want to go for lunch first?”

“You know, I am hungry,” says Mary. “But let me change my clothes first. I want to look good.”

“You look beautiful,” says Victor. “But change first if you want to.”

“I love this skirt and blouse,” says Mary. “I’ll put it on now.”

“OK,” says Victor.

Mary dresses, they both get washed up for lunch, and off they go to the Coffee Shop. They sit down at their same table and look at the menu.

“I’ll get a tuna fish salad wrap on whole wheat wrap,” says Victor.

“Me too,” says Mary. “And a lemonade.”

“I’ll get a lemonade too,” says Victor.

The waiter comes over.

“You look very nice,” says the waiter to Mary.

“Thank you,” says Mary smiling.

“We’ll have two tuna fish salad whole wheat wraps and two lemonades please,” says Victor also smiling.

“Coming right up,” says the waiter.

“Are you feeling more comfortable now?” says Victor to Mary.

“Yes, I am,” says Mary.

The waiter soon brings their lunch. They eat while enjoying the ocean view.

After they finish lunch Victor says to Mary, “You know, here it is customary to take a siesta after lunch. Let’s put away the clothes on the bed, take a shower and then a nap.”

“OK Victor. I can use a shower and a rest.”

So they walk back to their room, put away the clothes and take showers.

Then Victor says to Mary, “I’ll put on some soft music.”

They then get into bed and make love. They fall asleep in each other’s arms. They sleep and wake up holding each other.

“Victor,” says Mary. “Tell me about yourself. I don’t know too much about you.”

“I was brought up in the next town,” says Victor. “My sister still lives there in the same house.

And my mother lives nearby.”

“And where is your father?” asks Mary.

Victor pauses for a few seconds. “My father is deceased,” he says.

“I’m sorry,” says Mary. And after a short pause she continues. “I’d like to meet your mother and sister.”

“OK,” says Victor. “And I’m sure they will like you very much.”

“And I’m sure I will like them,” says Mary.

“Would you like to meet them this afternoon? They are only 15 minutes away. My mother is at my sister’s house today.”

“I’d love to meet them,” says Mary. “Should I wear the same outfit I wore to lunch?”

“Yes, it looks great on you,” says Victor”

So they dress and leave the motel.

“It’s just a short walk to the bus stop,” says Victor.

Two minutes later they arrive at the bus stop.

“And here comes the bus,” says Victor.

They board the bus and Victor pays the fare. They sit down on seats with a view of the ocean.

“What a beautiful view,” says Mary.

“And my sister’s house is also near the beach with an ocean view,” says Victor.

“The sky is such a dazzling blue,” says Mary. “And I love the way it meets the water. And the waves of the ocean are so light and foamy.”

“Mary,” says Victor, “I think you are falling in love with Lee-Lee-Land.”

“I think I am, Victor,” says Mary.

Mary continues to watch the ocean and sky while deep in thought.

“What about Ronny?” Mary starts thinking to herself. “Things were really nice with Ronny too. And then we had this big fight and broke up. I wonder if he misses me. I wonder if he’s going out with someone else now. And what about my going back to Punter College? I was studying nursing. I just did one year and I want to finish. I wonder if I could do that here in Lee-Lee-Land. And Ronny—Ronny—I miss Ronny.”

Victor then puts his hand on Mary’s knee.

“Oh Victor,” sighs Mary.

“We are half way there,” says Victor. “My mother and sister will love you.”

“Thank you Victor,” says Mary.

Mary looks back at the ocean and looks back at her life with Ronny.

“Ronny,” Mary thinks to herself. “My parents didn’t like you because you would argue with my father. You two didn’t see eye to eye on politics and religion. My parents were afraid I would marry you and not have anything more to do with the family. Well, now I am going with a green frog and I’m out of my parents’ life forever.”

“You look unhappy Mary,” says Victor. “What are you thinking?”

“I’m worried Victor.”

“About what Mary?”

“Will frogs accept me here in Lee-Lee-Land?” asks Mary. “I’m not green and I’m not a frog.”

“My mother and sister will accept you,” says Victor. “And here we are. We get off the next stop.”

They get off the bus and take a short walk to the house. There in front of the house is a sign, NANCY’S STUDIO.

“What’s that sign, NANCY’S STUDIO?” asks Mary.

“That’s for my sister, Nancy,” says Victor. “She’s an artist. Let’s go inside.”

“Hi Mom. Hi Nancy,” says Victor as they enter. “Meet my girlfriend Mary.”

“Hi Mom and Nancy,” says Mary.

“Hi Mary,” says Mom and Nancy.

“We were just going to have a cup of coffee or tea,” says Mom. “What would you like Mary?”

“I’ll take coffee,” says Mary.

“Me too,” says Victor.

“Look at all these interesting paintings,” says Mary looking at the pictures on the wall.

“I did them all,” says Nancy.

“Well you are a fine artist,” says Mary.

“Coffee time,” says Mom putting out the coffee, cake and fruit.

They all sit down at the table and begin eating. Mary is perplexed about something but is afraid to ask. In many of Nancy’s paintings is a vanilla man.

“Where does he come from?” wonders Mary to herself. “I’m the only vanilla person I’ve seen in Lee-Lee-Land so far.”

“Nancy is a fine artist and she sells many of her paintings,” says Victor. “She also gives art lessons once a week in her studio, which is right here in this house.”

“Would you like to take art lessons, Mary?” asks Nancy.

“Maybe I would,” says Nancy. “I took a course in design at college and loved it. I also took art courses in high school and received an art award at graduation.”

“So you are an artist too,” says Nancy.

“I guess I am. I never thought of myself like that, but I guess I am.”

“Would you like to paint with me in my studio, Mary? We can start tomorrow.”

“That’s not a bad idea,” says Victor. “I go back to work tomorrow. This is my last day of vacation and I won’t be spending so much time with you Mary. And you know the way here by bus.”

“OK Nancy. I think I’ll take you up on it. It sounds like fun. But I have no money and I don’t know what anything costs.”

“Don’t worry Mary,” says Victor. “I’ll take care of it.”

“Mary,” says Nancy, “come take a look at my studio. It used to be Victor’s room before he moved out.”

“OK,” says Mary as they both get up.

They walk towards the studio, down a few stairs and Nancy opens the door and turns on the light. There is a pink room with a table and three standing easels. There are pictures on the walls and a large window.

“How nice,” says Mary admiring the room.

“And there is a large closet,” says Nancy, “where we keep lots of stuff. Now let’s go back and finish our coffee.”

They then go back and sit down and relax and continue eating and drinking.

Mary keeps wondering to herself, “who is that vanilla man in Nancy’s paintings? And why am I the only vanilla I’ve seen in Lee-Lee-Land?”

Then Mary looks at Nancy and starts thinking to herself, “Nancy has a green-ish, vanilla-ish complexion. Her face isn’t as green as the other frogs. And now that I look at Victor, neither is his face.”

“You give lessons once a week?” says Mary to Nancy.

“Usually,” says Nancy, “but you can come here and paint every day. Come here about 10am”

“Thanks Nancy,” says Mary, “I think I will.”

“Well we must be on our way,” says Victor. “I have to get up early tomorrow for work. Mary, the bus stop for the bus going back is just down the street. Bye Mom. Bye Nancy.”

“Bye Mom and Nancy,” says Mary. “Thanks for everything. See you tomorrow Nancy.”

“Bye Victor and Mary,” say Mom and Nancy.

Victor and Mary walk down the street to the bus stop.

“Victor,” says Mary, “what kind of work do you do?”

“I’m a waiter at the Beach Motel Coffee Shop.”

“Oh, how come you never told me that?” asks Mary.

“I don’t know. There is a lot that you haven’t told me about yourself either. Oh, here comes our bus,” says Victor.

They board the bus, Victor pays the fare, and they sit down.

“We have to have a long talk, Victor. There is so much I don’t know about you and Lee-Lee-Land. I didn’t even know what kind of work you do until now,” exclaims Mary.

“Yes, Mary. And who is Ronny? You talk about him in your sleep,” says Victor.

“Oh dear,” says Mary.

They travel in silence for the rest of the trip.

When they leave the bus and walk home, Victor asks, “Do you think you can manage the trip alone? You can ask the driver to tell you when you get to NANCY’S STUDIO. And coming back, the Beach Motel.”

“I’ll do that Victor. And I don’t think I’ll have any problem. It all looks very easy,” says Mary. “And,” continues Mary, “here we are at the Beach Motel.”

Victor and Mary go to their room and go to bed. The next morning Mary wakes up with the sun streaming in the window. Victor isn’t there. The clock says 7:35.

“Victor must be a work,” says Mary to herself. “I’ll shower and dress and go to breakfast.”

A little later Mary goes to the Coffee Shop and sits at the usual table. Without even ordering, Victor brings her breakfast.

“French toast, orange and coffee for you, Sweetheart,” says Victor putting the food on the table.

“Thank you Victor,” says Mary. “After breakfast I’ll go to Nancy. I found the tokens you left me for the bus. Thank you.”

“You’re welcome. I finish work at four,” says Victor.

“So I’ll get back about then.”

“Great Mary. Gotta go. Love you.”

“Love you,” says Mary and she eats her breakfast.

After breakfast Mary takes the bus to Nancy.

“Hi Nancy,” she says after arriving at the house.

“Hi Mary,” says Nancy, “how are you?”

“Great,” says Mary, “how are you?”

“Great,” says Nancy.

They walk into the studio.

“Take a look in the closet,” says Nancy. “Look at all the art supplies—pads, canvasses, paints, brushes and some started and finished work.”

“Wow! This really looks good,” says Mary.

“Mary,” says Nancy, changing the subject, “why did you come to Lee-Lee-Land?”

“I got here by accident,” says Mary. “I was following a stream in a cave and here I am. I met Victor as soon as I got out of the cave. I just ended up in Lee-Lee-Land. And I’m a little worried too. Everything is happening so fast—too fast.”

“Victor tells me you have a boyfriend or had a boyfriend, Ronny.”

“Yes,” says Mary, “but I don’t think he’s in the picture anymore.”

“What do you mean, ‘don’t think?’” says Nancy.

“Just that,” says Mary, “don’t think.”

“That’s not good enough,” says Nancy.”

“I know,” says Mary. “But he’s into drugs and likes to get high. I don’t go for that.”

“What do you see in him then?” asks Nancy.

“I don’t know, Nancy. That’s a good question.”

“That’s also not good enough,” says Nancy.

“I know,” says Mary. “He is a very good person. That is when he isn’t high.”

“Well that also isn’t good enough. And that makes three strikes,” says Nancy.

“Wow!” says Mary.

“Yeah, wow!” says Nancy.

“Let’s get started painting,” says Nancy. “You said you’ve taken art classes before.”

“Yes,” says Mary. “In college and high school and junior high. I’ve done drawing and acrylic painting. And I see you use acrylic paints also. That’s great ‘cause I love acrylics. And I’ve taken pictures of scenes and painted them. In fact, I have a picture of a bird in a bush on my cell phone. I think I’ll paint it.”

“Great,” says Nancy, “I see we are going to get along very well.”

“Yes, thanks,” says Mary.

So the two of them spend the day drawing and painting, with a break for lunch. At 3:30 Mary heads for the bus stop. She then takes the bus to the stop near the Beach Motel. She gets to the motel at 4pm and there is Victor waiting for her.

“Hi Mary, how was your day?” he asks.

“Very good,” says Mary, “I’m halfway through a painting. How was your day?”

“Tiring,” says Victor as they walk to the Coffee Shop. “Let’s go eat dinner.”

They sit at their favorite table.

“You look beautiful, Mary,” says Victor. “I’m very much in love with you.”

“I love you too,” says Mary.

“What about Ronny?” asks Victor.

“Ronny is now out of the picture. I only love you Victor.”

Mary and Victor eat dinner and go back to their room and go to bed.

The next day starts out like the day before. Mary eats breakfast at the Coffee Shop and then goes to NANCY'S STUDIO. Nancy and Mary both work on their paintings in silence. Then Nancy breaks the silence.

"You know Mary," she says, "I have had disappointments in love also."

"You talking about Ronny being a disappointment? Because only Victor is in my life now, not Ronny."

"And I'm married to my career," says Nancy.

"Why can't you have both a career and marriage," says Mary.

"Because I'm too passionate about my artwork," says Nancy. "Don't want both. The marriage will interfere with my passion for art."

"I can understand that," says Mary.

"My mother can't. She thinks if I don't get married I'll start sleeping around with different guys."

"So what!?" says Mary.

"Yeah!" says Nancy. "Try telling that to my mother!"

"Did you ever have a boyfriend?" asks Mary.

"Yeah," says Nancy. "Lots. My mother took me out of college 'cause she didn't like my boyfriend at college."

"That must have been rough," says Mary.

"It was but I was through with him. Not being able to go back to school was rough."

"But you were through with him. So why couldn't you go back to school?"

"She didn't believe me that I was through with him. And Steve, my boyfriend, wasn't through with me. He kept telling my mom we were going to get married. And she believed him! Doesn't matter anymore. I'm married to my work. Have been doing artwork all my life and I love it. And I'm beginning to get to be well known."

"You teach are too," says Mary.

"Yes, I have three students in my Thursday class. Would have more but three is enough for now. Don't have the room for too many. And now you are one of my students. And you are a very special student."

“Thank you Nancy,” says Mary.

“You’re welcome,” says Nancy. “Now let’s listen to this disc of soft music and concentrate on our work.

“OK,” says Mary.

Nancy plays the disc and they both work diligently on their artwork, giving each other suggestions from time to time about each other’s work. Then at 3:30 Mary leaves for home.

Victor was there to meet her when she arrived at her home bus stop.

“I have a surprise for you after dinner,” he says.

“Really?!” says Mary.

“Yes really,” says Victor.

So they go to the Coffee Shop for dinner and then go back to their room. Victor then hands Mary a small box wrapped in white and silver paper with a silver bow on it.

“For you Beautiful.”

“Thank you Victor.”

“Open it,” says Victor.

Mary unwraps and opens the box. And in the box is a magnificent diamond engagement ring.

“Put it on,” says Victor.

Mary does so.

“It’s beautiful,” says Mary. “And it fits perfectly. It’s so beautiful Victor. How did you know my size?”

“I borrowed the ring you always wear. You take it off at night. And I took it and brought it to the store with me when I bought the engagement ring so they would know the size.”

“So that’s why I couldn’t find that ring this morning. Oh Victor, I love this engagement ring. I’ll always cherish it. And cherish you too. I love you Victor.”

“I love you Mary.”

The next day Mary sets out for NANCY’S STUDIO.

“This is a special day,” thinks Mary to herself on the bus. “Not only am I wearing my new engagement ring but Nancy has those three art students in her class today. I’ll be meeting some new people (or frogs). Also, Nancy was telling me the first day of each month she has an art exhibit in her home. People come to look at her paintings and her students’ paintings. That now includes me. That’s really exciting. And in the nice weather she exhibits a lot on her porch. How cool!”

“And her mother works as a waitress in a diner nearby and they exhibit some of Nancy’s work in the diner.”

“All this is really exciting. But, I don’t know. Everything is happening too fast and I’m getting a funny feeling about it. Something just doesn’t seem right. Something just doesn’t seem right. Oh, here’s my stop”

Mary gets off the bus and continues thinking, “something just doesn’t seem right,” all the way to NANCY’S STUDIO.

When she arrives at the house she walks in, then walks to the studio and sees Nancy and three giant lizards! Wow!

“Hi Mary,” says Nancy, “I’d like you to meet three sisters in my class, A, B and C.”

“Hello,” says Mary quite astonished.

“Hi,” say the three lizard sisters, A, B and C, in unison.

Mary gets her artwork from out of the closet and tries to work on it. But she is bombarded with thoughts—“Lizards! Lizards! I thought everyone in Lee-Lee-Land is a frog. And who is that vanilla man Nancy keeps putting in her paintings?”

Mary then starts painting away. This time she is painting a man on the beach. When she is finishing up something hits her. “Oh my gosh! she exclaims out loud.

“What is it?” asks Nancy.

Mary is afraid to say what it is. So she says, “oh nothing. I just got a cramp but it passed.”

Then to herself she exclaims, “That man I painted on the beach—It’s Ronny! It’s Ronny!”

By then it’s almost 3:15 and Mary starts cleaning up and getting ready to leave.

“Bye everyone,” says Mary as she is leaving.

“Bye Mary,” they all say in unison.

Mary takes the bus home. When she arrives at her stop, there is Victor waiting for her.

“Hi Beautiful,” says Victor. “My, you look perplexed. What happened?”

“Victor,” says Mary, “there are three lizards in Nancy’s class. Everyone else here, except for me, is a frog. What is going on?!”

“Well,” says Victor, “lizards are not well liked in Lee-Lee-Land. They come from another place, Lizard-Land.”

“So what difference does that make?”

“Well lizards can’t jump as high as frogs,” says Victor, so they can’t see as much around them, and, therefore, they don’t know as much.”

“Oh,” says Mary, “where did Nancy meet these lizards?”

“She met them in college,” says Victor. “That’s why my mother took her out of college. Her boyfriend was a lizard.”

“What happened to him?”

“Oh,” says Victor, “he’s out of the picture now. He married another lizard.”

“You know,” says Mary, “your sister told me she doesn’t want to get married. She says she is married to her profession as an artist.”

“Yeah, I know,” says Victor. “She’s had it with all this bickering. She decided to take a different route entirely and she seems much happier now.”

“She says your mom wants her to get married,” says Mary.

“Yes,” says Victor, “but my mom has finally accepted the way things are now. Anyway, here we are at the Coffee Shop. Let’s have dinner.”

They both go into the Coffee Shop and sit down at their table.

“The ocean is so beautiful,” says Mary looking at the ocean from the window. “And soon there will be an art exhibit at Nancy’s house, with paintings on the porch, also facing the ocean. How magnificent!”

“That’s right,” says Victor. September first is coming up soon. Nancy has an art exhibit the first of every month. Will you have any paintings to exhibit?”

“Yes,” says Mary, I just finished one and I’m working on another. So I’ll have two.”

“Don’t expect the lizards to be there,” says Victor.”

“Why not?” asks Mary.

“They are not comfortable among frogs,” says Victor.

“But Nancy is a frog,” says Mary.

“Nancy is only one half frog,” says Victor. “And me too. I’m only one half frog.”

“What?!” exclaims Mary. “What’s the other half?”

“We are one half frog and one half vanilla,” says Victor.

“So that’s why you and Nancy have vanilla-ish faces. So was your dad vanilla?” asks Mary.

“That’s right,” says Victor. “He got here the same way you did, following that stream in the cave. He ended up eating in the diner where my mom works. She was his waitress. That’s how they met. Then he ended up being the chef there. He was chef somewhere else before coming to Lee-Lee-Land.”

“When did your dad die?” asks Mary.

“Oh that’s right. I did say he was deceased. That’s not quite true. It’s just that my mother wishes he were deceased.”

“Wow,” says Mary, “so is your dad still married to your mom?”

“They were never married,” says Victor. “No justice of the peace would marry them.”

“Why?” asks Mary.

“They said they wouldn’t have a stable home since they were so different. So they just lived together and had Nancy and me.”

“Oh,” says Mary, “where’s your dad now?”

“He is living with a lizard in Lizard-Land and they have two little boys.”

“Oh,” says Mary.

The next few days continue pretty much the same as before. Then comes the day of the exhibit. Mary wakes up early and goes to the coffee shop for breakfast. Victor, of course, waits on her.

“I’m so excited,” she says to him. “I have two paintings in the exhibit.”

“And I’m leaving work early today so I can see the exhibit,” says Victor. “I’ll meet you there at Nancy’s”

“Great!” says Mary.

After breakfast Mary takes the bus to Nancy’s. When she arrives she sees paintings displayed on the porch. And who is this coming out of the house to the porch with two little lizards?—A vanilla man! The same vanilla man as in Nancy’s paintings!

“Hi!” says the vanilla man. “You must be Mary. I’m Nancy’s dad. And these two little ones (pointing to the lizards) are Nancy’s brothers.”

“Hi, how are you,” says Mary to them all.

“Fine,” they all say.

It is an exciting day with some frogs coming to the exhibit and a few even buying a painting, including one of Mary’s paintings.

“How wonderful!” Mary says to Nancy.

And at one o’clock, who comes in but Victor.

“Hi everyone,” says Victor. “Hi Dad. Hi my two little brothers.”

“And where are your paintings Mary? asks Victor.

“One is here,” says Mary pointing at the picture, “and the other one has been sold. But I have photographs of my paintings on my phone. So I can show you the photograph.” And so she does.

As it gets closer to seven o’clock, Nancy and her students, her dad and Victor put the artwork back and straighten up.

“I’m getting hungry,” say the two little lizards to their dad.”

“We are going to dinner very soon,” says their dad.

And they soon leave for the Seaside Restaurant. When they get there they are seated and they see two tables with customers from NANCY’S STUDIO.

“Nancy,” says Mary, “do you ever eat out with your customers?”

“No,” says Nancy.

“I don’t know why,” says Mary, “but I can’t seem to make friends where I live. I eat at the Coffee Shop at the Beach Motel every day, but no one there wants to eat with me. I just can’t seem to make friends.”

“That’s because you are different,” says Nancy. “They consider you a misfit. And everyone at our table is a misfit. That’s why we hang out together.”

“Oh dear,” says Mary.

“And,” says Dad, “I almost went back to New York because of that. But if I leave, I can’t come back. I got as far as Town Hall to get the key to the cave. Then I chickened out. I would never be able to see my children again.”

“So what is this?” says Mary. “All the misfits hang together?”

“You got it,” the others say in unison.

“Another thing, Nancy,” says Mary, “I never see your mom anymore. What happened?”

“Oh,” says Nancy, “she just comes over once in a while and sometimes she stays for a few days. She lives in a condo with her boyfriend near where she works. But that’s fine with me. I love living alone. I can do whatever I want whenever I want.”

“I understand completely,” says Mary.

And so the whole crowd enjoys their dinner. Afterward Mary and Victor take the bus home.

“That was a terrific day,” says Mary.

“I agree,” says Victor.

Mary starts thinking to herself, “I love my life now and my career as an artist. I have a boyfriend, a career and I live in a nice place. What more could I want? I miss my mom and dad and my friends, but that’s something I can adjust to. I also miss Ronny and the relationship we had. But that is over. But that is over. But that is over. But that is over.”

“Here’s our stop coming up,” says Victor.

They get off the bus and walk back to the motel in silence and then go to bed. Victor goes to bed first and falls asleep right away.

Mary is wandering around the room thinking:

“But that is over.”

“But that is over.”

“But that is over.”

“But that is over.”

Then Mary starts thinking, “what shall I wear tomorrow?”

She starts looking through the drawers and finds a pair of shorts.

“Oh,” Mary whispers in surprise, “these are the shorts I wore here. And what’s this in the pocket? Oh, it’s a letter I got in the mail and didn’t open yet. And it’s from Ronny!”

Mary opens the letter and reads, “Dearest Mary, I love you and I want to marry you and bring up a family together with you. I will love you forever. I am going now for addiction therapy. I am sober now. Please wait for me. Love always, Ronny.”

The next morning the sun shines through the window as usual. Victor opens his eyes.

“It’s time to get up,” he says to himself

Victor looks over at Mary’s side of the bed. But Mary isn’t there.

“She must be in the bathroom,” says Victor to himself.

Victor calls out:

“Mary!”

No answer.

“Mary!”

No answer.

“Mary!”

Now answer.

“Mary!”

No answer.

“Mary!”

## WHERE IS MARY?

“Where is Mary? Where is Mary?” Mutters Victor to himself as he serves breakfast at the Coffee Shop.

“Where is Mary? Where is Mary?” He keeps saying as he finishes up.

“Maybe she is in the room,” he says to himself.

He goes back to his room, opens the door, but no Mary.

He calls his sister.

“Is Mary there?” He asks.

“No,” says Nancy. “What’s wrong? What happened?”

“Mary’s gone,” Victor starts crying. “Mary’s gone.”

“Victor,” says Nancy, “come over to my place. We’ll talk. We’ll figure something out.”

“I’m coming right over,” says Victor.

Victor then goes to the bus stop and takes the bus to Nancy. When he gets to his sister, he collapses in her arms crying.

“Mary’s gone. Mary’s gone,” he sobs.

“But Victor, how did this happen?” asks Nancy.

“I don’t understand,” sobs Victor. “When I got up this morning she wasn’t there. I don’t understand. I don’t understand. We didn’t fight. She just disappeared. She’s gone. She’s gone. What can I do? How am I going to manage without her?”

“I don’t understand either, Victor. Maybe time will tell. But you have to go on, Victor. You have to be strong and go on.”

“But I love her so much,” sobs Victor. “She is everything to me.”

“Victor,” says Nancy, “you have to be strong and go on.”

“But Nancy,” says Victor, “tomorrow I have a day off. What will I do all day without Mary? They gave me a day off. I want to spend it with Mary. Now I’ll be alone.”

“No you won’t,” says Nancy. “Come to me tomorrow. We’ll paint together.”

“I guess that would be the best thing to do. I’ll just stay here a little longer. Then I’ll go back.”

“OK Victor. Stay as long as you like.”

“I’ll leave in a few minutes,” says Victor. “It’s getting late.”

Victor soon leaves and takes the bus home. He goes to bed.

“Mary,” he sobs, “come back. Come back. I need you. I love you.”

After an hour, he somehow manages to fall asleep.

The next morning the sun shines in the window and Victor wakes up.

“What a beautiful sunny day. I’ll go for breakfast and then go to paint at Nancy’s. I have to be strong and go on. We can’t always change what happens but we can handle what happens. I’ll get up.”

And Victor does just that.

“I’ll sit at my regular table,” he says to himself, sitting down.

The waiter comes over.

“What would you like Victor?”

“Sliced orange, French toast and coffee please,” says Victor.

“Just one of you today?” asks the waiter.

“Just me,” says Victor.

And so Victor eats alone and takes the bus to NANCY’S STUDIO. On the bus Victor is thinking,

“Is it Ronny? Is it Ronny, Mary? You don’t want me anymore? You want Ronny?...Oh, here’s my stop.”

Victor gets off the bus. He walks to NANCY’S STUDIO thinking, “is it Ronny you love? You don’t want me? You want Ronny? You don’t love me? You love Ronny?”

Victor enters Nancy’s house. Then he opens the studio door. And what does he see—a lady lizard!

“Hello Victor,” says the lizard. “My name is A. Nancy had to go to the store. We’ll be painting together today. The supplies are in the closet. I can help you if you need help.”

“No thank you. I can find what I need,” says a puzzled Victor.

Victor goes into the closet and looks around.

“Where are the canvasses?” He asks.

A appears. “Here they are on this shelf,” she says. “And here is a pad of paper. The paints and brushes are on the table. And here is a can for water. I’ll help you with all this stuff.”

“Thank you,” Victor says.

Victor and A both sit down.

“Nancy has shown me some of the paintings you’ve done in the past,” says A. “You’re quite a good artist. What would you like to paint? We have pictures that you can paint from.”

“I know what I want to paint,” says Victor. “I want to paint Mary.”

Then there is silence.

A continues painting and Victor does a sketch of Mary on the pad of paper.

A looks at the sketch of Mary and says, “she is very beautiful—and such kind eyes.”

“She is very beautiful and has beautiful, beautiful blue eyes,” whispers Victor.

Just then Nancy enters the studio.

“Hi everyone,” she says. “I brought lunch—fruit and cheese. When you are ready to break for lunch, we’ll eat upstairs. My Victor,” she continues, “what a lovely sketch of Mary. Are you going to paint it on canvass?”

“Yes I am,” says Victor.

“Why don’t we have lunch first?” says Nancy.

“OK,” says Victor.

“OK,” says A.

So they all go upstairs to the dining room. Nancy sets the table with cheese and fruit.

“This is so good,” says A.

“Yes it is,” says Victor, “and A, you too have beautiful, beautiful blue eyes.”

“Thank you Victor,” says A, smiling.

They devour the fruit and cheese and go back to the studio.

“That’s a lovely flower you’re painting,” says Victor, looking at A’s painting.

“That’s called a Red Oval,” says A. “It is a lovely flower and it can only grow in Lizard-Land.”

“Why?” asks Victor.

“They say it has to do with the warm, damp weather. I have Red Ovals on my back porch facing the yard. They have a lovely sweet scent to them. And it’s so nice sitting on the porch swing looking at and smelling these flowers.”

“Could you bring some to NANCY’S STUDIO some day?” asks Victor. “Then we can all observe them. Maybe paint them.”

“I can’t,” responds A, “two minutes out of Lizard-Land and they die. But you can come to my house and see them on my porch.”

“I’d love to,” says Victor.

“Do you want to come over after class today?” asks A.

“OK,” says Victor.

And so after class, A and Victor take the bus to Lizard-Land.

“I’ve never been to Lizard-Land before,”

Victor says to A.

“You’ll like it here and here’s our stop.”

They get off the bus and walk three blocks to A’s house.

“You live alone?” asks Victor.

“Yes,” says A. “It’s a very small house. And here we are. Come on in. Come to the back porch.”

“Oh, how magnificent,” exclaims Victor entering the porch and seeing all those lovely Red Ovals and smelling their sweet scent.

“Come, let’s sit on the swing,” says A, “and enjoy these beautiful Red Ovals.”

They both sit on the swing. Victor puts his arm around A and they swing. The smell of the flowers makes Victor woozy. He pulls A close to him and falls asleep in her arms.

After some time Victor wakes up to the sound of his phone ringing. Victor picks it up.

“Hello,” he says, half asleep.

“Victor,” says Nancy over the phone, “how are you and where are you?”

“Oh,” says Victor after looking around, I’m at A’s house. I must have fallen asleep.”

“Well you were sleeping very soundly,” says Nancy, “because the Coffee Shop called me up. They said you never came to work today and you never answered your phone when they called. They finally called me.”

“What!” exclaimed Victor. “Now what do I do?”

“Don’t worry,” says Nancy. “Tom is taking over for you today. He will be taking over for you the whole week if you want. He’s on vacation but he rather work. He can use the money. What do you want to do?”

“Hi Victor,” says A, coming from the house onto the porch.

“Hi A. My sister is on the phone. She wants to know if I will take the week off. Tom at the Coffee Shop wants to take over for me.”

“Oh that would be wonderful Victor,” says A. “There is so much we can do together.”

“Victor,” says Nancy who is still on the phone, “what is your decision?”

“You know, I’ll take the week off,” Victor says to Nancy. “Could you please call Tom at the Coffee Shop and tell him he can take over for me this week.”

“OK Victor. Will do,” says Nancy.

“Thanks Nancy,” says Victor and he hangs up the phone.

“What happened A?” says Victor. “I fell asleep for so long!”

“The smell of the Red Ovals is intoxicating,” says A. “You’ll get used to it. After a while you’ll just start feeling very relaxed.”

“I feel very relaxed right now,” says Victor.

“Good,” says A. Now what would you like for breakfast?”

“Let me walk around a little first. I’ve been on this porch swing so long,” says Victor as he is getting up.

“OK,” says A, “then I’ll make you breakfast and then we can go for a walk around Lizard-Land.”

“That sounds good A,” says Victor as they walk into the house.

A starts getting very close to Victor. The music is playing.

“Let’s dance,” she says to him.

And so they dance. At least that’s the way it starts. Next thing they know, they’re on the couch making love.

“I love you Victor,” says A.

“I love you A,” says Victor.

“Would you like breakfast now?” says A. “I have these wonderful smoothies. They are made with Red Ovals. You’ll love it.”

“OK,” says Victor, “anything made with Red Ovals got to be great.”

“They are great,” says A as she gets up. “I’ll get one for me too. They’re right in the refrigerator.”

A brings two smoothies over to the couch and they both drink them.

“I feel wonderful,” says Victor after finishing the smoothie. “I think I’ll give my job at the Coffee Shop to Tom since he wants to work. I don’t want to work anymore. I just want to stay here with you in Lizard-Land.”

“And you can do just that,” says A. “We have everything we need here. The government gives us an allowance and all the Red Ovals we want. You’ll always be happy.”

“I’m too tired to walk,” says Victor. “Let’s watch a movie on TV.”

“OK Victor,” says A.

So A puts on a cartoon movie and they both watch it. Then comes the commercial with a song:

“Red, Red Ovals

Have them you should

Red, Red Ovals

Make you feel very good.”

“Would you like a Red Oval Beer,” says A, “with a pizza?”

“Love it,” says Victor.

Five minutes later they are still on the couch drinking Red Oval Beer and eating pizza. They are still watching cartoons.

It starts to get dark and they both fall asleep on the couch watching TV. Victor wakes up with the sun shining in the window. A is still asleep. Victor gets up and goes to the refrigerator and gets another Red Oval Beer. There are still cartoons on TV so Victor sits in a chair to watch TV and drink his beer.

Then there is the news on TV. Victor can't believe it! It's Mary! What's this!? Mary's in the hospital! She fell in a ditch and she can't remember anything! Not even her name! And what hospital? Lee-Lee-Land Hospital in Lee-Lee-Land. “I'd better go see her,” says Victor. “I'll go see her after another beer.”

Victor drinks his second beer and falls back asleep. A then wakes up, goes to the refrigerator, gets a Red Oval Beer and sits down to watch cartoons on TV.

Then A wakes up.

“I'd like a Red Oval Smoothie,” he says to A.

“There are none left. Just the beer. But we will be getting more food soon. The Government brings us more food when we get low. They should come today.”

“How will they know we are getting low?” asks Victor.

“There's a camera in our refrigerator. It sends pictures to the Government office,” says A.

“OK,” says Victor, “so I'll have another Red Oval Beer instead of a Red Oval Smoothie. Rather have the beer anyway.”

Victor gets his beer and sits down next to A and watches cartoons.

Soon the doorbell rings.

“Come in,” shouts A.

In comes the delivery man.

“Here comes your groceries,” he says. “I'll put them in the refrigerator for you. You have

Red Oval Beer, Red Oval Smoothies and Red Oval Pizza.”

“Thanks,” says A.

“I want lunch,” says Victor.

“OK,” says A, “beer and pizza coming up.”

“Ring...Ring...Ring...Ring...”

“What’s that ringing?” says Victor.

“It must be your phone,” says A.

“I’m too lazy to get it,” says Victor. “It’s on the other side of the room.”

“Here’s your pizza and beer,” says A, handing him the food.

“Good,” says Victor.

The phone rings again.

“Ring...Ring...Ring...Ring...”

“I’ll get it,” says A. “Hello...Oh hi Nancy...No Victor won’t be coming back to work. He’s with me now...Sure Tom can take his place...Bye Nancy.”

And Victor remains with A in Lizard-Land. And Mary is in the hospital.

“Hi Mary,” says Nancy, entering Mary’s hospital room. “Do you remember me? I’m Nancy.”

“Hi Nancy,” says Mary. “I’m beginning to remember now. I miss my friends and family and I miss Ronny. I was going back to my family and friends and to Ronny. But I fell. And how can I go back to Ronny wearing Victor’s ring? And where is Victor? How come he’s not visiting me in the hospital?”

“Listen Mary,” says Nancy, “just try and rest and get better. Your life and taken another turn and you have to rest and get better.”

“Ring...Ring...Ring...Ring...”

Mary picks up the phone...

“Oh hi Tom...What is it?...You’re taking over for Victor at the Coffee Shop...Oh two shifts are too much for you...Oh Victor’s not there anymore...You want to know if I would take over Victor’s shift...You know Tom as soon as I get out of this hospital and get better, I think I’d like to do just that. Is it possible for you to do both shifts ‘til I get better?...Yes...Thank you Tom. I appreciate that and I’ll try to get better real soon.”

“And you will get better real soon,” says Nancy. “That’s what the doctor has been telling me. He says you are making good progress.”

“You hear that Tom?” says Mary. “Great. Good bye.”

“That’s wonderful Mary,” says Nancy. “You have a job and a place to live. You just have to figure out where you are going in life.”

“I’d like to continue with my artwork with you Nancy. Maybe we could go into business together.”

“That sounds great Mary,” says Nancy. “That sounds great.”

*[Mary and Nancy Two Days Later]*

“Thanks for coming to the hospital to take me home,” says Mary to Nancy. “I’ll be working in the Coffee Shop, but they cut my hours. I’ll only be working a four-day week.”

“That’s great,” says Nancy. “That means you’ll have three days to come and paint with me. And maybe you’ll even sell some of your paintings and make more money.”

“Wonderful,” says Mary. “Meanwhile I have to get my stuff together.”

“OK Mary,” says Nancy. “There’s a bus that goes from here straight to the bus stop near you. Then we can have dinner at the Coffee Shop.”

“I think we’re just about ready,” says Mary. “I signed all the papers.”

“Good,” says Nancy. “Let’s go.”

They walk to the bus stop. The bus soon arrives and they board the bus.

“I think you know,” says Nancy, “that Victor’s hooked on that Red Oval.”

“Yes Nancy,” says Mary, “you told me. And Ronny’s hooked on cocaine. What can I do?”

“There’s nothing you can do,” says Nancy. “It’s up to them to do something. Meanwhile you have to get on with your life. And you are getting on with your life. You have a job and you are an artist. Good job! Here’s our stop.”

Mary and Nancy go to the Coffee Shop and sit at Mary’s usual table overlooking the beach, ocean and sky.

The manager comes over.

“Mary,” he says, “can you work Friday through Monday, the first shift?”

“No problem,” says Mary, “I definitely will.”

“Thank you, I’ll see you tomorrow,” says the manager leaving.

“That’s great Mary,” says Nancy. “And if you have to work when we have our art shows, I can still display your paintings.”

“Great!” says Mary.

The two ladies sit and talk. Finally Mary goes back to her room exhausted. She gets into bed and falls asleep.

“And here am I, a successful artist,” she says to herself. “I’m no longer working at the Coffee Shop. And no longer living at the Beach Motel. I’m living with Nancy and painting almost every day. And selling most of my paintings. I’m being written up in the newspapers and magazines. I’m...”

The sun is shining on Mary’s face and wakes her up. Mary starts thinking...

“Sometimes dreams come true.”

“Sometimes dreams come true”

“Sometimes dreams come true”

## POETRY

### HAUNTED

Haunted. Haunted  
With ghosts from the past  
Haunted. Haunted  
Be gone at last  
Haunted. Haunted  
With all that you say  
Haunted. Haunted  
Go far away  
Don't want your pain  
You drive me insane  
You do what you want  
And you don't explain  
So please hear my plea  
Go far from me  
Find someplace else  
I want to be free  
Be gone. Be gone  
Be gone. Be gone

Find someplace else  
To haunt upon  
Be gone. Be gone  
Be gone. Be gone  
Find someplace else  
To haunt upon  
Find someplace else  
To haunt upon  
Find someplace else  
To haunt upon.  
PS  
Hooray for me  
I'm finally free  
I go on with my life  
Being true to me  
I go on with my life  
Being true to me  
Being true to me  
Being true to me.

**DEAR ME**

Oh! Oh! Dear me. Dear me  
Gotta stop thinking of trash  
Gotta stop thinking of hurts gone by  
And rehash and rehash and rehash  
Now life is good. Now life is grand  
And I want to keep it that way  
I shut the bad times away in the closet  
And I laugh and I play everyday  
Yes. Yes. I'm doing just that  
I laugh and I play and I love where I'm at  
Yes. Yes. I'm doing just that  
I laugh and I play and I love where I'm at  
Love where I'm at  
Love where I'm at  
Love where I'm at  
Love where I'm at.

## DEMONS

The demons of madness  
They descend. They descend.  
The demons of madness  
Is there no end?  
What life do I have?  
What life can there be?  
Waiting for demons  
To descend upon me.

## JOY

Why did bad things happen to me?  
That's what I'd say  
But now I say look—look—  
How I've come a long way!  
I've come a long way  
That's how I feel  
I've come a long way  
And it's real, real, real  
Now I am joyful  
Instead of upset  
And there's more joy to come  
I'm willing to bet.

## **WHY SHOULD I CARE**

Why should I care  
About comments from you  
I'm doing what I love now  
Dreams do come true  
Doing things your way  
Not so bad I confess  
But it means doing  
What I love less  
There is just not time  
To do both, it's true  
And I love what I'm doing  
I do. I do  
But nothing is written in stone  
I must say  
Maybe at some point  
I'll do things your way  
And maybe I'll love  
Doing just that  
However right now  
I'll stay where I'm at

## **COUSIN**

You are my cousin  
And I like you, true  
But we are different  
I and you  
We are different  
You and I  
And I like it that way  
I say with a sigh.

## **WHY DO I CARE**

Why do I care  
What you think about me  
You're not in my life  
Nor do you wish to be  
Don't be obsessed  
With people like these  
And only enjoy  
Fond memories  
Enjoy, enjoy  
All that you do  
Life is a gift  
God's given to you.

## **WHAT TO DO**

What to do

What to pursue

Jack of trades, a few

Master of two.

## **TAKE A PILL**

Take a pill

Cure an ill

And mask a problem

That stays there still.

## **MISTAKES**

Mistakes are blessings

In disguise

To learn from them

You are wise.

### **A POCKETFUL OF VERSE**

Here I am  
With a pocketful of verse like  
All my thoughts  
It could be worse.

### **I'LL BE WHO I AM**

I'll be who I am  
Who I am, who I am  
And if you don't like it  
I don't give a damn.

### **THE SPUNKY SPINE**

The spunky spine  
We need to realign  
Then you'll be fine  
We do it all the time.

THE END