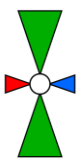


100 CA3

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bncdoc.author	Robertson, Angela
bncdoc.title	[Creative writing: prose]
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<100/c>	notes would be our reference point for what we did over the next few weeks. Emily
 <p>Key: Footprint ConEn1 Footprint ConEn2 Footprint ConEn3</p>	<p>took pains to make sure that details of operations were accurate. Whatever she took in the way of rough spontaneous notes during a discussion would later be typed up in immaculate form. It mattered to her how something looked as much as what it contained. Usually, however, she was keen to contribute ideas to our discussions. This morning she was unusually quiet. She listened to me and she took copious notes, but it was as if her understanding was glazed over. 'You know, Mr. Kopek,' she said at last, 'I don't know whether it's this new technology or just the way I'm feeling this morning, but I just don't seem to be able to take this in.' 'Don't worry. Nor did I when Geoff Tulloch started. I just said to myself 'Don't let the bastard wear you down.' I'll arrange some training sessions for you in the data processing section. It's a question of familiarity.' She laid her notebook down in her lap. 'I hate to say this, Mr. Kopek, but I think I may be too old to start all over again on something as new as this. I'm used to my ways, Mr. Kopek. This makes me feel at a disadvantage.' 'You'll soon get used to it.' Her response was firm. 'I don't think so. I may as well tell you. I've arranged an appointment with Elsie Taylor tomorrow to look into the possibility of early retirement.' 'You don't want to rush into something like that. I know the events of last week have been difficult for you, but you shouldn't allow them to panic you into a hasty decision.' 'Oh, I won't. It's been creeping up on me for a while. It wasn't just George. I've run out of steam.' I looked at my watch. 'Let's go to lunch,' I said. 'Where would you suggest?' 'There's a basement Wine Bar in Wymark Street where George and I used to go. It's usually fairly quiet at lunchtime. Most people prefer to drink in the evening. Not old George. He would start before breakfast and would carry on all day.' It was a new experience for me, a city basement wine bar at lunchtime. I wasn't sure what to expect. My lunch hours were generally spent with sandwiches and coffee at my desk or with</p>
a plate of fish and chips	
	<p>or roast pork and two veg in the organisation canteen. Occasionally I treated myself to a half hour browse in a bookshop. It was the degree of darkness which took me by surprise. Candles flickered on tabletops that bore some resemblance to wine barrels sawn in half. They may have been exactly that, but it was difficult to see. Several profiles were spotlit in the candle flames. My problem was to make my way from the entrance to a vacant table. I kept stumbling over objects, like bar stools, or bumping into people who turned out to be barmen or waitresses. 'Here, let me go ahead,' said Emily, catching hold of my hand. I left it to her. 'Why so dark?' I asked, when we were safely disposed at what seemed to be a vacant table. 'Ambience,' said Emily. 'But you can't see anything. Do the barmen have x-ray eyes or what?' Emily giggled. 'In a few minutes you start adjusting.' 'What will you have?' Emily considered. 'Would you like to give me a nice treat?' 'But of course. Whatever you like.' She mentioned a concoction which I had never encountered before. It was a modern cocktail, apricot-coloured and served in tall narrow glasses with ice, a glacé cherry and a slice of lemon. Not knowing what I was letting myself</p>

	<p>in for, but feeling in the mood for experiment, I said I would have one too. I couldn't see Emily's expression as I did so. Together we peered over the contents of a large glossy menu of unusual composition. Emily recommended a savoury pancake with prawns and mushrooms and much else. I went along with that too. 'It was the drink that did for George in the end,' said Emily. 'No question. He was lucky to be spared a long fuddled decline into the garbage heap. Without exaggeration, left to himself, that's where he would have ended. At least he could still enjoy himself. Went out enjoying himself too.' She paused. 'I should know. I was there at the time.' A movement like a camera shutter whipped across my mind, blacking out an injudicious image of two rather large seals on a pebbly beach. I found myself wondering anxiously whether anyone we knew could overhear us. At last I blessed the enfolding dark. Emily went on, oblivious. 'You can imagine the state I was in, between shock, embarrassment and unconsummated frustration. I tried the Kiss of Life. Hah!</p>
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