



DORRIT WILLUMSEN is a central figure among Scandinavian writers with a writing career starting in 1965 and a great number of prizes to her name, notably The Danish Academy's Grand Prize (1981). In her own words, she is a 'war child', born in 1940 in Copenhagen, and much of her fiction and memoirs concern themselves with the war years and the decades leading up to the postwar economic boom in Denmark. However, she is also a master of historical fiction, including the popular novels *Marie* about Madame Tussaud and *Klædt i purpur* (Dressed in Purple) portraying the Byzantine Empress Theodora. *Bang*, Willumsen's exceptional biographical novel about the Danish canonical writer Herman Bang, earned her The Nordic Council Literature Prize in 1997.

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Bang

A Novel about the Danish Writer

by

Dorrit Willumsen

Translated from the Danish by
Marina Allemano



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DANISH ARTS FOUNDATION

1.

The night between the 22nd and 23rd of January, 1912, he checked in at Hotel Astor near Times Square, two days late because of the storm but otherwise entirely according to plan. And New York was appalling.

Cars roamed through the streets, howling like wolves. Powdered, cliff-like buildings were bathed in a strange pink light. They sparkled in the glow of the street lamps and the advertisements' vulgar phoniness. The city was just the place for seizures and fainting spells.

When he finally got to his room and tried turning on the light, a propeller on the ceiling began to spin. An ice-cold wind scattered the notes for his travel article, and while he was crawling on his hands and knees, trying to gather them up, the telephone rang. And he, who practically never spoke on the phone, was forced to lift the receiver to make the ringing stop and then listen to a voice he didn't understand. It was of no use hanging up, for the dreadful ringing and the same unpleasant voice came back until he finally discovered that by following the cable he could unplug it from the wall.

Then he managed to open the curtains, and the strange light seeped into the room. He put the papers under the pillow and placed himself on top of it. He had to gather himself before finally locating the switch on a wall lamp so he could make his way to the door and turn off that hideous contraption in the ceiling. But by now the room was already so cold that his attempts at warming up his hands under the scalding hot water tap were in vain. In New York he could have given up on the tour.

Sleeping was not possible. The sounds of the city percolated through him. Footsteps, doors, bells. Switches that went on and off. On and off. Distant ringing like thousands of insects stepping amongst fine wires on tiny metal feet. And he forced himself to think about his reading tomorrow. And he forced himself not to think about his reading tomorrow. But would they leave the money in cash by his mirror, or would they say that the money would be forwarded in a month's time?

When the light turned bluish, he got up and looked out on the city and took a double dose of sleeping draught. But it didn't help. It wasn't until late in the afternoon that he became so exhausted that the descending strokes in his travel piece grew increasingly longer and thicker until the pen dropped out of his hand.

And then, suddenly, they were in his room ready to collect him. A delightful young man and a pretty young lady.

He insisted on seeing a barber before the reading. And it was awful. Not even the barber understood him.

'Make me beautiful,' he said. 'And hide my little bald patch. Colour it black. Teindre en noir,' he said. The barber himself was a lovely shade of black. But the fool just kept on cutting and cutting.

And he didn't colour the patch black. No, he can positively feel that it is white. A grinning moon white as a corpse.

But the actual reading was a success. They wept over his novel *Tine* and wrung their tears from their sodden handkerchiefs.

Naturally, he didn't receive any money. But the hotel room filled up with flowers which he had to leave behind. He only took a single daisy and stuck it in his buttonhole.

In New York he could have given up on the tour. From New York he could have returned on the steamer.

Admittedly, he didn't have enough cash to pay for a ticket. But if he could have found a pawnbroker. The diamond ring and the golden cigarette case with his monogram set in small blue sapphires. Gifts from actors and friends on his fiftieth birthday. It would have been especially painful to part with those things that had given him much pleasure every day for four, nearly five years. And he would never be able to admit that he had sold them. He would have to say that he had been robbed. Well, the situation never arose. How do

you find a pawnbroker if you cannot even make yourself understood to a barber?

*

The train moves fast. Much too fast. And suddenly: a meadow white with flowers. Camomile, daisies or dandelion globes. He puts on his glasses, and everything disappears in a fog. He feels dizzy and must close his eyes.

White flowers and a slight, young woman dressed in white. Under her dark chignon her neck is so delicate and slender. She bends down and picks one of the white seed heads. She blows, and all the downy tufts burst into the air. And a young boy runs in front of her, catching the dancing fluffy seeds. He falls and picks his own dandelions and blows and blows until his face turns red from the effort and tears well in his eyes.

The young woman bends down towards him. 'Now, tomorrow will be a fine day,' she says and lifts him up.

*

She stands at the top of the stairs, dressed in white, and her hair, almost black, gathered in a soft bun. The sitting room behind her is white. The door is open, and you can see all her green plants. The entire house is white, the stairs too.

Facing the sun, she laughs while the children slide down the banisters.

They are much too wild and badly behaved, those children.

'One of these days, one of you will break your neck,' she says. Her voice is still clear and bright.

'If you break your neck, will you then fly around like a dead chicken?' Herman asks.

*

She is the loveliest of mothers, and the children cling too much to her skirts. When she walks through the grove, they flock around her

like a brood of chicks. When she reads out loud to them, they follow her and all her movements. She is both hero and heroine. She can make her voice sound very frail as if it might break at any moment. But then she suddenly gets up and flings the dark red tablecloth with all the golden fringes around her like a knight's cape. And she stands fearless and furious right under the lamp.

'Aren't the children ever going to bed?' asks the father, sounding like he is tired of both the children and the woman wrapped in the tablecloth.

When father is away, all the dolls come out and are put on the table. They are models that she has cut out of fashion journals. They are so thin that they sometimes break in two. They have small heads with almond-shaped eyes and long, long legs. Some of them tuck their hands into fur muffs. Others hold a fan under their chin.

Mother guides them across the table and lets them speak in different voices. 'Dearest,' they say. And one of them is weeping: 'My heart is nearly bursting with love.' 'But dear me, you unhappy soul.' 'And then I said: "Let's have a nice hot cup of tea."'

All the servant girls come into the sitting room and look at the dolls. And especially at mother, the pastor's wife.

'The pastor!' Hanne suddenly cries out.

'The pastor! The pastor!' The girls scurry out in all directions. With a single movement mother sweeps all the dolls into the drawer.

Father looks at mother who is sitting tall and straight. And at the children, standing wide-eyed. It is as if he can see the shadows of all the dolls on the table.

*

They are happy as only a few can claim to be, the pastor and his wife. That a husband can be so much in love with his own wife. That is quite unheard of.

They stroll arm in arm along the tree-lined driveway. 'Thora, my love, you make me so happy!' Father repeats it over and over again. No one can come between them. He kisses her hands.

When do children become happy?

Children should be seen and not heard. And only when you

are able to eat with your elbows tucked in close to your body and without spilling your food are you allowed to sit at the table when there is company.

Mother eats more elegantly than anyone else, she has the most beautiful hands in the world. They are pure white, and the nails are like small, pale pink cockle shells. She buffs them on a small leather pillow. If one of those nails were to break, the world would collapse.

Just before the dessert, father takes her hand and places it on a perfectly clean plate and parades her around the table so everyone can see that her hand is as white as porcelain.

She lowers her head a little as if she is embarrassed. But laughs nevertheless. You can see the blue veins just under the delicate skin on the back of her hand. And everyone is sitting there, smiling, with their forks and knives, saying that it is fantastic. That a married woman can have such a hand.

No, she is definitely not made for menial work.

And all the knives and forks cut against the white porcelain. And what if one of the guests were suddenly to turn around and nick that hand. Just like snipping off the head of a white flower.

Those hands, they are so delicious you could eat them.

Herman drinks some water. He has to cool down to stop himself from laughing or crying.

*

It is so ugly, so ugly to cry. And especially not a thing for a mother to do.

Mother is all in black. She swallows up all the shadows. She bends her head so her face becomes a shadow too.

Mother is too delicate and beautiful to be crying out loud. Her face must never turn red and look distorted. Her nose mustn't be running. Her mouth mustn't open up and spit out ugly sounds.

Her tears are internal. Grief makes her cold and fragile. And her movements are slow and small. She can't even get up from her chair.

The children come to her. They lie down on the floor by her feet and stroke the deep black folds on her skirt. She pushes their hands away as if their warm, gentle caresses cause her pain.

They have never seen her like this.

‘The missus’ father has died,’ says Hanne. ‘You should leave your mother alone.’

Father is standing in the doorway. He looks at the woman turned to stone. Then he turns on his heel and goes back to his sermon.

*

In the pond tadpoles swim in and out between Herman’s fingers. His ship is sailing to the end of the world. But he cannot stop himself from looking at his reflection in the water. He forgets about the ship that Oluf, his older brother, has made from a cardboard box and a stick for a mast. For it is as if his face is lying at the bottom, and the tadpoles and the movements of his fingers are making it all creased. And he feels a tickle in his tummy, and maybe he is about to be transformed.

It is impossible not to look in the mirror. It is not as if he is pleased about what he sees. His hair could be longer and the collar cleaner. And the neck should never be grimy.

His eyes are large and dark brown. But the right one is looking in the wrong direction. They are not allowed to tease him about it, says mother. And it will probably correct itself.

When he covers his good eye with his hand, everything disappears. His face is just a mist on the mirror. It frightens him and he pulls his hand away and everything comes back again. His own face, too, that looks so frightened that he bursts out laughing. And he pulls his eyes to see himself as a Chinaman. He tries to look like someone who wants to kiss. Or someone who is about to cry. Or as if he had suddenly caught sight of the big dark man behind his back. Small boys are forbidden to play with mirrors. For girls it is not as bad.

Mother gazes in the mirror for long spells at a time. Especially when she combs her hair. And it is a joy to watch her putting up her hair. It is so heavy and dark and shiny that it is hard to comprehend how she can carry it all on her small head and thin, delicate neck. It is loveliest when her hair fans out as if she were an elf maiden or a princess. Unfortunately she braids it and sticks hairpins in it. The

parting in the middle is so white and smooth that you can see how delicate and dainty she is from head to toe. No one can look away when mother is putting up her hair in front of the mirror.

Nini only looks at herself in the mirror a little bit. And perhaps Tine never does. For she can twist her braid around her head in a flash while sitting on the swing with William, the spoiled child, on her lap.

William is too well-behaved and much too small to look at himself in the mirror. But he, Herman, cannot help himself. Even in a window or a polished cabinet he can suddenly catch his own reflection. And that is dangerous. For behind the pond is the grove, and behind the grove is the wood, and in the wood lives the big dark man who snatches away children who look in the mirror and ask too many questions and cry because they have to go to bed.

And he cries, and he looks in the mirror, and he protests, and he asks questions, and he never wants to go to bed. For in the darkness the man comes to grab him, especially him, the boy who is so impossible and difficult.

And it is no use crying, hitting, scratching or kicking. Not even a packet of sewing needles under the pillow would help. For he is so big, so big and strong, the black man. And he carries all the naughty children out into the big, dark wood. And then father and mother will be free. They just put a lump of sugar on the windowsill. And then the stork will bring a new child that is truly sweet and well-behaved.

*

The path leading to the parish clerk's house is getting wider and wider. Father rides that way. Mother walks down there a couple of days a week with the children. The parish clerk's family are such nice people. Their chairs are softer than any others, their blackberries are sweeter and their waffles so hot that you'll burn your fingertips. Tine carries them in without burning herself. The nicest of them all is Tine.

Many a time she has helped him get up when he fell down and has rocked him in her arms like in a small boat. Her skin smells of

sunshine, and her hair is perfectly fair from the sun. Tine is a ray of sunshine with white stockings and braids tied in bows. Besides, she is as strong as a farmhand. But luckily you cannot see it.

The servant girls tease her and say she has puppy fat. They are clearly envious. For Tine doesn't have to be in service. She can come and go as she likes and do needlework and eat rusks and play.

And she can have visitors herself.

The servant girls at the parsonage have visitors, especially at night. They live in the low yellow building with bars on the windows like in a prison where the smell of sleep and yellow everlasting flowers fills the air.

Tine says: 'My little tot. My dumpling. My squirrel.' She swings William around and then Herman. And he insists that she mustn't let go of him. Never. 'The two of us, Tine. We will always be together.'

'But, surely, I am going to get married. I want a husband and four big boys.'

'Like me. – I am strong and brave and one metre and five tall.'

She laughs and shakes her head. Perhaps not exactly like him.

She pulls a leaf off a plantain weed. Three white ribs. That means three boyfriends.

Nini holds up a buttercup to Tine's chin. The sun is shining. Three yellow spots show right above Tine's dimple. And that is surely a sign that she will have three boys.

They pick daisies. He loves me, he loves me not. He loves me.

'Who do you love, Tine. Who, Tine?'

She blushes and doesn't know.

It is nice to know someone who has puppy fat and whose face sometimes turns red, and who can swing and sew and bake and sing and swirl around and run without getting tired.

*

Saturday is like thin ice. Sunday morning is all ice and agony.

All Saturday you have to be quiet. Not a sound in the house. You are not allowed to disturb the pastor, for he is pacing up and down in his study, rehearsing his sermon.

When he finally opens the door, his face is all gloomy. And the

horse is saddled up, and the pastor goes for a ride to clear his head.

The pastor is a real man. He swims in the fjord even in the winter. And when it is all frozen solid, he glides across the ice on his beautiful silvery skates while holding out his coat tails to gain speed. The pastor does figures of eight and outside edges on his Copenhagen skates. You have never seen such a daft pastor, and when he gallops along on his horse who would have thought that he sometimes has to tie rags around his aching head in the house, and that the children's voices pierce his ears right through to his brain.

But Sunday mornings sting the most. Herman has seen it himself. He has seen his father cross the yard wearing his thick blue bathrobe. Father knocks on Hanne's window. It almost sounds like thunder. For it is the time between night and dawn when only the pastor is awake, and also those children who cannot sleep.

Hanne groans a bit inside and comes out, her eyes puffy from sleep. She has pulled a jersey over her nightgown and thrown a shawl around her head. She is dragging her big yellow clogs across the courtyard, and her entire body exudes sleep. She pauses by the well. She pumps and pumps a whole bucket full of icy Sunday water and hauls it into the scullery.

And there is the pastor, white and bright like Christ on the cross, apart from the pastor's loin cloth that is monogrammed with F. & T. Bang in satin stitch.

'What are we waiting for, Hanne?' The pastor is impatient.

'Yes, pastor Bang.' The cold makes her voice sound clearer than usual.

Then she steps out of her clogs and climbs on to the stool with her bucket, and with her last bit of strength and with a vacant look in her eyes, she pours the ice-cold water over the pastor, who suddenly flails about and shakes like a wet dog.

'Thank you, Hanne,' he says very politely.

But over in the church when he stands in the tall, carved pulpit and raises both his voice and his arms, then it is father, the master, the pastor who is in charge.

Afterwards, from sheer relief, he will enjoy a glass of red wine with dinner.

And mother keeps saying that he was wonderful.

‘Really?’ he asks. ‘Do you really mean that?’

She smiles and nods.

And sometimes the parish clerk and two other pastors come to play cards and drink port and punch.

It sometimes happens that they stay until dawn.

But by then father, the master, the pastor is a beaten man with an aching body and so many rags tied around his sore head that you can hardly recognize him.

*

Hanne, the maid, lifts Herman up. He notices the smell of lavender from her collar and the warm, slightly oily smell from her hair. She stands him in the tall chair, and first he sways a bit as if he is about to fall. Then he grabs the back of the chair and closes his eyes for a moment.

‘Just like the pastor,’ Hanne doubles up with laughter. ‘It is like seeing the pastor himself.’

And he spreads out his arms and raises his eyes towards the ceiling, or heaven, and begins to chant. He does exactly like father does over in the church. He chants and sings from his belly, and the sound fills up the entire room.

Mother enters and for a moment she looks serious. But then she can’t hold back her laughter either.

‘The new year is a Christ child,’ he says. And he continues to repeat it like father does while raising his arms as if he himself is carrying the blessed child, or the new year, in his hands.

He nearly falls over backwards. The servant girls are doubled up with laughter. They are all watching him. Hanne, Sofie, Ane and Marie. And mother and Oluf and Nini and Christella and William. He says it over and over again. And they laugh.

Then, suddenly, he sees their faces freeze.

A shadow approaches from behind, grabs him and pulls him down. Father shakes him until his head dangles like a loose button.

‘Are you making fun of Jesus and your father?’

And he is put in the corner, staring at the wall while tears run down his cheeks and neck, soaking his collar. For it feels much too

sad and salty to try to catch them with your tongue. And besides, you mustn't stick your tongue out. He has to think things over and repent and ask for forgiveness.

'You are spoiling that boy, all of you,' he hears his father say.

Mother says something in her small thin voice.

All the girls have left.

He closes his eyes, and his stomach feels queasy just like when Hanne lifted him up. It felt like an invisible ladder. White like mother's nightgown. And tall. Just as tall as the one in the circus where the beautiful lady climbed way up high while balancing a pretty coffee cup on a knife she held in her mouth.

But his ladder is even taller. It grows out of the tent and all the way to heaven, and it becomes flexible and light so you can swing on it like in a hammock. You can get up much higher than you can blow a dandelion seed.

'Have you now had a look inside yourself?' asks father. 'What did you see?'

He tells him about the ladder that reached the sky. Higher than a dandelion seed can fly.

'You can't even tell the truth. There is no ladder.'

But father has said so himself over in the church. One of the bleak Sundays where Hanne's ice-cold water made the words spring from his mouth. And father himself has done tricks, standing way up under the ceiling.

Mother says that Herman is just a little boy with a vivid imagination. But his tears are brave. Nothing can stop them. Neither cold water, darkness nor the world's thickest handkerchief.

*

'Look at me, mother, look at me!' He jumps on her bed. And he is a troll, an angel and a Chinaman.

But she looks mostly at William for he is the youngest and so good and pretty. William never asks questions, he just sits there and looks straight ahead with his big blue eyes and lets them kiss his forehead and his hair and his small, fat, dimply hands.

'Look at me, mother, look at me!' Herman can't sit still.

Sometimes she looks at him with a gentle, surprised look.

‘Yes, look at the boy,’ she says. And he shouts with joy.

Or she says: ‘Walk properly on your feet.’ And he forces his feet to turn outward like a duckling.

‘Stand straight,’ says his father. ‘A boy should stand tall and straight.’

He looks at his father’s tall slender back and thinks about water buckets and skates. He tries to stand as straight as a poker. But as soon as he sits down, he slumps. His head is large and heavy.

‘Nini – Nini!’ His voice sounds like the call of a young bird when he tries to catch up with his older sister.

She turns around – ‘Nina – won’t you ever learn it?’

‘Nini!’

‘Stop dragging your feet.’

‘Nini – Nini! – Wait for me!’

Finally she stops. Christella is waiting at the pond. The girls are washing the dolls’ hands and stockings ceremoniously.

‘Can I play too?’ He tries to pretend that he is little and sweet like William.

Nini shrugs her shoulders indulgently and stretches tall as if she weren’t already tall enough. She who, alas, grows out of all her dresses.

‘I am playing with Christella.’

‘Nini, I can be your baby, your dog, your squirrel.’

Christella sizes him up, and he does his best jumping up and down.

Christella: ‘Maybe we could use a squirrel.’

Nini: ‘If we allow you to be our squirrel, you will have to sit up in a tree and keep quiet.’

Herman: ‘I promise, Nini. I promise.’

Nini: ‘Promises are one thing, but keeping them is another. Why aren’t you playing with Oluf?’

Herman: ‘He doesn’t want to.’

Nini: ‘Then play with William.’

Herman: ‘I don’t want to.’

Nini: ‘Don’t want to is not an answer.’

Herman: ‘But it is true. I don’t want to.’

Nini: 'Come, then, impossible child – if you must be our squirrel.'

Herman: 'You have to feed me nuts and raisins, Nini. And in the mornings I'll come and tickle your toes.'

Nini: 'I'm not so sure now –'

Christella: 'Oh, let him –'

Nini: 'Get up in the tree, then, and sit still.'

Herman: 'Lift me up, Nini. I have to be lifted up.'

Nini: 'Who has ever heard of a squirrel that has to be lifted?'

*

A thick warm smell of the barn, and in the corner the swallow's nest. Lars has broken a window with his clog so the birds can fly in and out and keep the barn free of flies. A swallow is a blessing. Swallows build nests with saliva and clay and feed on mosquitoes and flies. The belly of the swallow is so unbelievably white, it is hard to comprehend.

And suddenly in the middle of the hay he notices the little grey-striped cat with her litter. Oluf has just taught him to count to ten. He counts eight. Eight kittens that she is looking after all by herself. He tells her how clever she is and strokes her forehead that is softer than anything in the world. The tiny kittens are the most beautiful he has seen. One is reddish, the first ginger cat on the farm, one is grey-striped like the kitty herself, one is all black, one white with a black mask around her eyes, one looks like the smoke from Ane's stove, one is white with paws the colour of cream, and then there are two tiny tigers. She is clever. How clever she is. The very ordinary little cat in the barn.

She must be proud, he says. And he lifts up the kittens. They scratch only a little bit through his shirt. He drops three of them. They roll around in the hay, and it's no use to tell the cat that she shouldn't pick them up with her mouth.

He carries an armful of kittens, and in the kitchen he finds the milk pitcher and a small bowl. He pours, and the milkdrops hang like small pearls in the kittens' fur. They sneeze a bit, and he praises them when they begin to lap it up. He tells them that he will fetch their sisters and brothers and their mother.

Then Ane is suddenly there, standing in front of him as big as a mountain. A screaming mountain of flesh. For what is this filth he has brought into the kitchen? And the cream top that was meant for the sauce!

‘Lars!’ She shouts. ‘Lars!’ And he bites her leg as hard as he can when she pushes the little kittens away with the mop.

But it is no use trying to bite Lars. Herman can only scream for his mother.

When she finally comes, Ane has lifted him up on the kitchen table and filled his mouth with sugar candy and prunes and raisins and almonds. Everything she can think of to make him stop screaming. But he just spits it all out. In truth, he is as naughty as a child can possibly be.

But the missus shouldn’t worry about this, Ane says. And especially not in her condition. It was just some kittens that the boy had dragged in. And Lars will drown them. After all, there are enough cats around here. And one cat has nine lives.

The life of a cat is no blessing. Cats are neither brought by the stork nor by God. Cats come from cats and are drowned in ice-cold water.

He cries and cries, and he sneaks out of his bed and into the kitchen to see if there might still be one hiding.

Hanne and Ane don’t hear him. They have enough to do, pouring the piping hot coffee into saucers and lapping it up.

Hanne: ‘And now the missus is expecting again.’

Ane: ‘You can’t even see it. – You can barely see that she is getting bigger.’

Hanne: ‘She laces herself up. – She laces herself up very tightly. It is like a cage around the child. I reckon that the little one can barely breathe.’

Ane: ‘She still looks like a young girl. So pretty and vain she is.’

Hanne: ‘I am afraid that things will turn out like they did with Herman.’

Ane: ‘How?’

Hanne: ‘But didn’t you know that the labour lasted a full twenty-four hours? And the kid was so weak that they thought he was dead. They dipped him in ice water to make him cry. That kind of thing

marks you for the rest of your life.’

Ane: ‘Yes, there has always been something wrong with that boy. But the missus is fond of him anyway.’

Hanne: ‘Yes – . But it is really little William who is the apple of her eye. And I agree, he is surely as pretty as an angel. And he never makes a fuss at bedtime.’

Ane: ‘No, not like Herman. He bawls for no reason. And he is a mischievous one, as well.’

Hanne: ‘And then he gets funny ideas in his head. – But hopefully he will grow more handsome with age. And be less wimpy.’

Ane: ‘But the pastor, he is quite a character too.’

Hanne: ‘But wimpy he isn’t.’

Ane: ‘No, you would know about that. You with your bucket. – And then he has a way with words.’

Hanne: ‘Do you mean that?’

Ane: ‘Yes, I always fall asleep when I’m listening to him. Not everyone’s head can hold that many words.’

Hanne: ‘No – . But if it weren’t for the pastor’s father – ’

Ane: ‘Yes, it’s anyone’s guess what would become of the pastor and the missus in that case. I have certainly noticed how the finances improve when the Royal Physician comes to visit.’

Hanne: ‘Yes, that’s what I’ve been thinking too. And one’s thoughts are one’s own.’

Ane: ‘Without him we wouldn’t have a penny to our name.’

Hanne: ‘Without him the two of us wouldn’t be sitting here drinking coffee. – But for all that, the pastor is a kind man.’

Ane: ‘And to those God gives a vocation, he also gives brains.’¹

Hanne: ‘Do you really think so? Oh, no, Herman has slipped out here again. Watch out, little pitchers have big ears.’

Still, they don’t really believe that he, being so small, understands all this grown-up talk.

*

Father’s father is a Royal Physician and very very posh. He has been at the bedside of princes and princesses and has trimmed their corns and ingrown toenails. He has listened to their hearts and the