

## **The Promise**

**By Rob Harle**

I promised my friend I would visit her. I had promised and promised and promised. She probably didn't believe I would ever really visit her.

Clang clunk, clang/clunk the train pulled out of another station. Clickty clack, clickity clack, clickity clack. Speeding along, faster, getting faster,faster,clickity clack,clickity clack,clickityclack.

This train, this terrible trembling train had tortured me too long. I decided to get off, had to get off at the next station, next station, next station. Didn't care where just had to get off, had to get off, had to get off.

I got off. Ran down the platform, across a dirt road, across a farmer's paddock, across a bridge, across a creek. Running fast, fast, running as fast as I could run.

A way in the distance I saw a forest. Had to get to the forest, had to, had to. Running fast, faster,faster. The forest was very close now, close,getting close,closer.

My heart was pounding fast, faster,faster, thump/thump, thump/thump, thump/thump, getting closer, thump/thump, thump/thump, my legs were hurting, thump/thump, thump/thump.

The green-ness was soft, very soft. I slowed to a walk, thump/thump, thump, thump, slower, getting slower.

Tall tree ferns full of green-ness, full of green softness surrounded me. Soothed me. Delicate maiden hair nestled secure against a weathered rock. A silent weathered rock. Everything was calm, everything was still, everything was soft, everything was silent. My soft s - l - o - w breathing, silent, still. Silent soft. I sank slowly onto the silent weathered rock drifting into dreaming, drowsy drifting, drifting, drifting.

When I awoke it was dark. Hiss-siss, hiss-siss, hiss-siss, the strange noise was

getting louder. HISS-SISS, HISS-SISS. I jumped up to run, HISS-SISS, HISS-SISS. Suddenly the noise stopped. Now it was silent, not a sound.

I needed to get out of this black darkness, the gentle green-ness had turned to frightening blackness. It curled around my face and rubbed against my hand. Crash, the twigs crushed under my step. Crash crash crash crash. The crashing was deafening I tried to walk softly. Quickly and softly.

I started running, running fast, faster than I'd ever run, crashing, crunching through bushes running faster. My heart was pounding thump/thump, thump/thump,thump/thump, crashing through cold grass, thump/thump, thump/thump, thump/thump.

A faint light appeared in the distance. I slowed, slowed down, slowed to a walk. My lungs hurt, bursting as I tried to grasp my breath err/herr, err/herr, err herr, err herr, err herr. My breathing and walking were slowing, the light was getting brighter and BRighter and BRIGHTER, then it became two, there were smaller orange lights following the searing white lights, it roared past, THUNDERING the ground around me.

I didn't know where I was, couldn't remember which station I'd left the train at. I didn't know. I climbed up onto the edge of the highway and started walking in the direction of the disappearing lights.

The roadside gravel pushed up at my tired feet, crunch, crunch, crunch, crunch. I was getting hungry. Crunch, crunch, crunch, crunch. My breathing was loud against the still night air, ERR/HERR, ERR/HERR, ERR/HERR.

I walked on and on. I was very hungry. Crunch, crunch, ERR/HERR, ERR/HERR, crunch, crunch. The road was becoming steeper. The walking was getting harder and slower, crunch, crunch, crunch, crunch. My breathing was getting harder and faster, ERR/HERR, ERR/HERR ERRHERR ERRHERR ERRHERR.

Suddenly my eyes were glared by hundreds of lights; street lights, coloured lights, truck lights, shop lights. I saw a late night cafe half-way down the hill. I started walking

faster, crunch, crunch,crunch,crunch,crunch my  
hunger was overtaking me.

The fragrance of frying food and fresh flowing coffee drew me to the cafe like a fly, music cascaded out the door. "She loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah. She loves you yeah, yeah, yeah."

My hamburger oozed warm wetness down my wrist, I sipped coffee, more hamburger, more coffee, more hamburger.

Try some chicken, `Flash'. Try some chicken, `Flash'. Try some chicken, `Flash'.

The harshness, the cruelty of the neon flashing seared my eyes. Three pieces of golden crumbed chicken, gently fried chicken begged me to gulp them down. Try some chicken `Flash'. Try some chicken, `Flash'. My hunger was almost eaten up as I chewed the last piece of chicken.

Pain shot through my throat. Help! Can't breathe. Help! Can't breathe.

The music faded with the lights. Spinning fading, pulsating. My ears were buzzing, bezzz, bezzz, bezzz. My head was exploding boom/boom, boom/boom, boom/boom. Spinning, spinning, falling, drifting into dreaming, drifting, drifting, drifting, drifting.

White-ness surrounded me everywhere, white-ness, white uniforms, white sheets, white walls. A trolley with red all over the white hurtled past the white door. Click/clack, patter/patter, click/clack, patter/patter, getting faster, click/clack,patter/patter, clickclack patterpatter clickclackpatterpatter.

"Paging Nurse Green!" "Paging Nurse Green!" "Emergency!" "Emergency!" Click/clack patter/patter, click/clack, patter/patter. "Paging Nurse Green!" "Paging Nurse Green!" "Emergency!" "Emergency!"

I sat up grasping my throat, I could feel the pain inside, my breath rasped, gerr/gherr, gerr/gherr, gerr/gherr, gerr/gherr. My head sank back into the soft white-ness of the pillow. Every time I set out to visit my friend something like this happens, but she never believes me.

**Bio**

Rob Harle is a writer, artist and academic reviewer. Writing work includes poetry, short fiction stories, academic essays and reviews of scholarly books and papers. His work is published in journals, anthologies, online reviews, books and he has two volumes of his own poetry published – *Scratches & Deeper Wounds* (1996) and *Mechanisms of Desire* (2012). Recent poetry has been published in *Rupkatha Journal* (Kolkata), *Nimbin Good Times* (Nimbin), *Beyond The Rainbow* (Nimbin), *Poetic Connections Anthology* (2013), *Indo-Australian Anthology of Contemporary Poetry* (2013) and *Rhyme With Reason Anthology* (2013).

His art practice currently involves digital-computer art both for the web and print. His giclée images have been exhibited widely. He is especially interested in promoting the inclusion of visual art in academic and scientific journals.

Formal studies include Comparative Religion, Philosophy, Architecture, Literature and Psychotherapy, his thesis concerned Freud's notion of the subconscious and its relationship with Surrealist poetry.

Rob's main concern is to explore and document the radical changes technology is bringing about. He has coined the term technoMetamorphosis to describe this.

He is currently an active member of the Leonardo Review Panel, Editorial reviewer for the Journal of Virtual World Research and an Advising Editor for the Journal of Trans-technology Research.

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