

FROM SUMMER SHORTS BOOK  
by Peter HOLLAND  
1993

are driving home  
their new Tin Lizzie  
rattles over the flats  
the moths dance  
in the dazzle of headlights  
the bats are flying  
like bits of dirty rag  
Rose Tranter scrawny and toothless  
in a man's felt hat  
prances naked under the moon  
Charl Charl she whimpers  
Come soon come soon.

and the highwayman came riding riding  
over the bloodstained moor.



" INTRODUCED " ↑  
SPECIES '93

GAIL JONES

## QUEENIE THE WORDLESS

(for Sophia Bromfield)



ER preposterous name was less burdensome, finally, than her inexplicable condition. No syllable sang on Queenie's tongue. No dental, fricative or plosive exploded. No breath-filled whole-word, meaningful, pragmatic, billowing to full sentences (self-punctuating and organic) flew invisibly and communicatively to another's ear. She moved her small mouth, flicked her neat tongue, but inconsequentially. Goldfish in bowls, her father pronounced, were more eloquent than she.

Obsessively monarchical, Phyllis bestowed upon her daughter that regal nomination, 'Queenie', she would reply, as faces leaned into the baby carriage with their oohs and their aahs issuing processionally like floating coronets from *Red Royale* lips. 'Queenie'. Thus crowned. Baby waved majestically her tiny hands as though offering knighthoods.

After three strapping sons, Frederick, Ernest and Theodore, Phyllis and Percy were granted their Queenie. Both doted extremely. The boys, too, were so charmed by her sovereign singularity that they moved trinitarian, like pages, above her cradle, rapt and enwrapped by her power to command. In those days, still soundfull, she blew noises towards them. A's and e's and iou's hung loosely in the air like festive regalia. Later da-da and mu-mu embossed the wind. Fed, Nernie and Dory, in their decorative truncations, came later still. And above the cradle stared as-yet-unpronounceable Elizabeth R, Queen even of Australia, sombre, poker-faced and tiara-bedecked.

By the time she was four or five years old Queenie impressed everyone with her precocious articulacy. With un-childlike skill she chattered at length and polysyllabic. Her high-pitched voice could be heard circulating in all corners of the house,