

KERRY LOUISE HARRISON

## Small Days

**W**e live in a new house. It is at the end of a cul-de-sac called Maxwellton Braes. Every house in the cul-de-sac comes from a different time and a different country even though they are brand new. The Simpsons have a Japanese style one, the Olivers are set up as colonials, and Mrs Marsha Ranson has a Spanish flavour to hers, with stucco stuff and vines all over it. My mother knows a lot about Marsha. She is divorced and the children live with the husband because she is a fly-by-night and an alcoholic. Her life has been sad even though she has been overseas and comes from a rich family, that taught her things. My mother says that at forty she has weathered natures corrosive effects remarkably and for all her faults she is a marvellous housekeeper and entertainer.

We have just moved from another city where me brother Delma and I have spent all our lives. It was much better there because of the big wild blue sea. The hills had gorse on them and the air stung. Boats had sunk in our harbour, and there was no fear of tidal waves. The kids at our new school don't like Delma and I. They have secret names for us. I hear them whispering and it makes me so cross, that I cry. Delma and I have decided that people in this suburb are made of a very cunning sort of plastic stuff, that looks just like skin and they have glass for eyes.

Mrs Marsha Ranson is always drunk. We know because nobody will play with us and we spend alot of time spying her from the window as she wobbles and falls about the street. Our house is from no particular country. When my mother goes to the huge purple palace with lots of different shops inside, Marsha will often knock at our door and come inside for a little chat. I think she likes us. Anyway it is one of these nights that I would like to tell you about, after this night we made up our minds to move away.

As usual she was dressed in bitsy little high heels and her dress was feathery. Delma is always laughing at her big breasts. His face goes red and he almost looks hysterical. We had been

playing dress-ups when she knocked. Delma was the witch and I was Rapunzal,

*Rapunzal, Rapunzal  
let down your  
short mousy brown hair  
Oh no, Oh no witch  
I've got no hair to spare.*

She waltzed in with her breath stinking and her glass eyes glazing. She asked Delma for a drink because hes a boy and thirteen, 'Sure' he said, 'you help yourself, mums pretty neat about that sort of thing, pour me one while your at it'. I let out a snigger at Delma trying to be big. Marsha then plummeted down onto our brown vinyl couch and kicked off her cork-heeled shoes.

'Oh God,' she said, 'Men, men are so, so lovely. All I want is to make love to some talented young man through the night. A man that writes exciting novels by day and doesn't give a damn. Ignores the mundane, because God, you are all so mundane and sexless'. Delma nearly died from looking at her and I felt hurt at being mundane, whatever that means. I decided to change the subject because she looked as if she was going to cry, 'Marsha,' I said, 'What have you been doing'.

She grasped my head and stuck it into her bosom like my mother does when she tells me home truths. She said, 'You are so innocent and sensitive, you know little of men and their torturing. Everyone here is so prosaic, backward. They have their silly little games and wives. Little wifey, wifey. I need stimulus, because you see, I am different, but sad, so sad. The man I love, and I do love, when I love, like mad, does not even like me any more. What a laugh. Part of it, is because I had an operation on my breasts to make them smaller. It may sound funny to you but they were so large and cumbersome. Toppled me over. To him it meant that a big hunk of me had gone, as if my body was three quarters of our love and not just one quarter. Here I am talking to you children as if I were a milk bottle. So stupid, so stupid'.

Her face looked as if it were cut and in pain, the mascara was smudged and her lipstick ran about her mouth. Lush and red. She had a big persons face and a little persons cry and I felt that eventually she would ooze out of her dress and fall on the floor, like a raggy doll. Everything was getting heavy which is a word that Delma uses.