

## Patricia Wellingham-Jones

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### Lost Boy

Once upon a time  
the young girl wanted to be a boy  
because, face it, boys had more fun.  
She wished her parents had gotten it right.  
She begged her fairy godmother  
but the wand stuck on a major glitch.  
So she decided she'd have to do it herself.

She thought "boy" in all things,  
wore only jeans, sneakers and tees,  
resisted ruffles and pink to the point  
of violence and scared her mother.

As the years passed she scrambled over rocks,  
swung through trees, dove from cliffs.  
She cropped her hair and learned to swagger  
so even real boys were fooled.

But those passing years betrayed her,  
turned her body into an alien thing.  
Churning hormones, layered desires –  
she gazed at a stranger in her mirror.  
She sighed, released her dream,  
became the best damned woman she could be.

Now, with hair gray and skin sagging,  
she unlocks time's prison and lets the boy loose.  
He teases her into doing silly things,  
lets her laugh rattle the walls,  
and tells young girls stories they can believe  
that are filled with magic.

## Visiting Vancouver

Back then, hale and whole, you paddled  
with Dave in his hand-made canoe,  
gave us a fish-eye view of Vancouver.  
Robyn and I trailed our fingers in harbor water  
like the indolent sea maidens we wished we were.

We climbed the hill from harbor to house,  
panted at vistas we devoured with wide eyes.  
We picnicked on Stilton cheese and crusty bread and lager  
by a hidden bay Dave had discovered.

We reveled in Robyn's deft hand with fresh salmon  
from Granville Market, and the fun of finding it there.  
The bold orcas and kingfishers  
in black and red and white Native art  
lodged in our memories, followed us home.

Every day in some swifiting moment,  
though you've turned to ash  
over the sea, you visit me.

## **Calf-Marking Day**

The herd arrives, gathered from the hills,  
stomping dust into sky-devils,  
tossing heads with loud bellows,  
milling confused circles  
in field and corral.

Calves get winnowed away from mamas  
who throw piteous moans  
across corral bars.

Cowboys on horseback chase strays,  
cowboys on foot swirl ropes,  
horses saddled and tied to trailers  
rest with one leg bent, hoof raised.

The fire blazes hot,  
branding irons glow red,  
syringes and ear-notchers are close at hand.

The chute stands ready to clutch  
the dazed youngsters for that final insult,  
the big snip.

On the ranch house veranda  
the former ranch manager  
sits in his wood rocker and watches,  
too stove up with age to mix in the fray.

He revels in the smell  
of singed hair and blood,  
the dust layering  
a half century of memories.

## **Donna and Her Goats**

One day Donna the bank manager  
brought home four goats,  
a nanny and three kids,  
with the stated aim of using  
the four-legged lawn mowers  
to eat the Johnson grass  
taking over the field.

A few weeks later she confessed  
to a bad case of goat-fever  
and added four more to the flock,  
a buck and three kids.  
We neighbors know what that'll mean.

On an early walk I caught Donna  
wearing a night gown and silly smile  
feeding rose hips through the fence  
to the greedy soft lips.

Then Donna added a play set,  
crowned by whatever  
king-of-the-mountain goat  
made the latest claim  
while the others jumped and clambered  
along its sides and slides.

Meanwhile the Johnson grass flourishes.

No wonder, we neighbors laugh,  
as we spy goats racing single file  
to the bowls of food Donna  
sets out every evening.

Before long we expect to see babies  
doing their goat-jetes and tumbles  
while, true to form, Donna will name  
them all, turn them into pets.

**Patricia Wellingham-Jones** is a widely published former psychology researcher and writer/editor. She has a special interest in healing writing, with poems recently in *The Widow's Handbook* (Kent State University Press). Chapbooks include *Don't Turn Away: poems about breast cancer*, *End-Cycle: poems about caregiving*, *Apple Blossoms at Eye Level*, *Voices on the Land* and *Hormone Stew*.