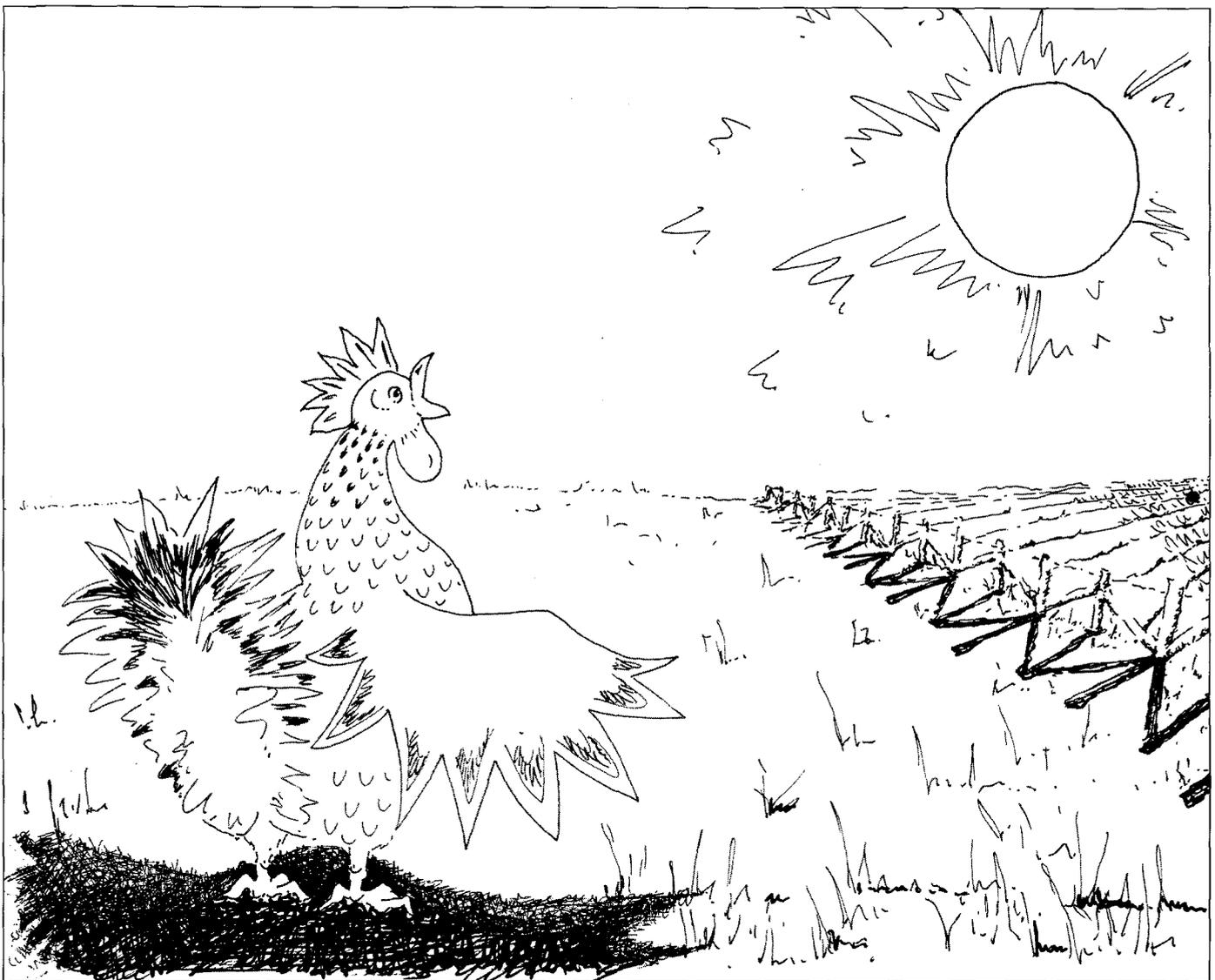


FUTURE TALK: OR THE VISIONS OF CHICKEN LITTLE



A Story by Donna E. Smyth

Chicken Little always lived
between the shattered sky
and the double-bladed ax

when she tried to tell them
they would not listen
don't bother me, they said
I have to: raise my children
do my job
if I thought about the chopping block
I'd never get anything done

Chicken Little said: I see a severed head
a body flaps aimlessly, spurts blood,
and a ghostly dialogue begins
when the sky falls
it will be in chunks
no henhouse will save us

Adidas stood in the middle of the
shopping mall and proclaimed his love to
Nike:

- Let me buy you . . . , he said.
- Fantastic plastic, she murmured shyly,
- Burger King?
- MacDonalds.
- Wendys?
- MacDonalds.
- Harveys?

She wavered. All of Eatons was re-
flected in his tinted glasses: perfumes,
scarves and hats and the new Fall line.
This was irresistible.

We saw the elections on TV,
We saw the Pope as well,
Did we elect divinity?
It's very hard to tell . . .

Does God wear a blue suit with a smile
or descend in skirts from a helicopter?
Is voting/praying worth the while
when the power's all in the media
chopper?

Crouched in the engineered, electronic,
high-tech, nuclear-tinted shadows, the
beasts think they are masters of the death-
machines.

They wear white coats and sunglasses
and carry security passes. They wear mili-
tary fatigues and carry weapons. They
wear Ronald Reagan faces. They wear the
faces of the old men of the Kremlin. They
flicker on TV as if they are real.

The women watching soap operas turn
off the news. They press their lips and
iron their clothes. They will not say what it
is they know.

Chicken Little's heart
beat as slowly as a drum
she said: the time has come
not when: now
not where: here
from each act
each image
the future grows

Adidas and Nike got married. It was a
simple ceremony witnessed by thousands
on TV in the shopping mall. All the stores
put up signs saying: Business as usual.
The music store let them rent the portable
organ and threw in the portable organ
man for free. The only songs he knew
were La Cuchuracha and O Canada.

Adidas and Nike didn't care. Nike was
lovely in her bride's jogging suit of pure
white cotton. Adidas wore a manly com-
bination and chewed gum to hide his ner-
vousness. Eatons sent their store manager
to tie the knot. He wore a security-guard
coloured burgundy jacket and carried a
walkie-talkie. He had his hair cut like
Brian Mulroney.

Not to be outdone, Simpsons sent their
manager too. He had a John Turner
haircut.

- Too bad you lost the election, said
Adidas.
- Keep your hands off my ass, cried
Nike.
- We didn't lose, we only suffered a tem-
porary setback, said the John Turner
haircut.
- I voted for Brian Mulroney, said
Adidas.
- I did too, said Nike.

They made their solemn vows outside
the Royal Bank of Canada.

- They're financing our honeymoon, ex-
plained Adidas.
- They've lent us money for a down-
payment, added Nike.

Then they smiled for the video recorder
had begun to record and the portable
organ man had switched to automatic and
someone said that Adidas and Nike
looked like Prince Charles and Princess
Diana before they had babies.

- Dearly Beloved, said Eatons store
manager, we are gathered here in this
place to witness . . .
It was like a dream come true.

It's hard to think of the future
When we're going backwards at the time,
The style of the '80s is the '50s,
Even poets are reverting to rhyme.

Backstreet butchers sharpen knives,
The "moral majority" scolds and shrills,
We watch it nightly on TV:
The not-news and sportsreports of cold-
war thrills.

What was that Confucius said?
"If we don't learn the lessons of history,
we're dead."

Chicken Little sat
as still as feathered stone
she said: each moment opens
uncurls petal by petal
divine rose-time
we would see miracles
if we lost fear

There's nothing like a Tory majority
(unless it's the same old Liberal faces)

To remind us of national priorities
And keep us all in our places.
We'll have a Forces fashion parade
To boost military morale,
New uniforms will be handmade,
So any fool can tell
We still have: soldiers
sailors
airmen

They want their old colours backs,
They want more ships, weapons, men,
They'll take up the unemployment slack,
And hike up our taxes again.

Adidas and Nike spent their honey-
moon in the Holiday Inn. Adidas ordered
all the porn videos in sight, a bottle of rye,
plenty of ice and a case of ginger ale. He
settled down with a sigh:

- Soon it will be hockey season. Where
are you going?
- To swim in the pool, said Nike. You
don't think we've paid all this money
just to sit and watch TV?

So she swam in the pool, she sweated in
the sauna, she relaxed in the whirlpool
ripple bath and she wished there was
something she could buy.

Each night they dined on the elegant
cuisine of the friendly Holiday Inn. Nike
ordered everything *flambé*. Adidas
ordered Sparkling Duck. On the third
night, while the *maitre d'* was flaming
Nike's pepper steak with three pepper-
corn sauce, sherry added, Nike's hair
caught fire and they had to rush her to the
hospital. She emerged looking like a clip-
ped poodle.

- Don't look at me! she cried.
- Don't worry, I won't, snapped Adidas.

They decided that the honeymoon was
over.

Chicken Little groaned
like a dreamer caught
she said: we are told
perfect love casts out fear
but we are riddled by doubt
when we awake
and almost remember

shaken to the core
we fumble meanings
and blame ourselves
when we cannot remember

Adidas went back to work and Nike too. They had a lot of consumer spending to do. When they had their Johnson & Johnsons baby baby, it seemed like the world was their barbecued steak.

- We want to give him a name, said Adidas, that he'll live up to.
- How about Petro Canada? said Nike, I want him to be patriotic.
- No way, said Adidas, today it's Petro Canada but, if the Tories hae their way, tomorrow it could be Petro USA. We don't want him to have an identity crisis.
- We could call him Colonel Sanders, suggested Nike.
- Do you want him stuck in the fast food sector forever? argued Adidas.
- I like to be traditional, pouted Nike.
- We'll have to think of his future, said Adidas firmly, we'll call him Toshiba.

They had Toshiba christened in the same shopping mall they were married in. By this time the portable organ man had passed on to a funeral home but Sam the Record Man played a Michael Jackson tape and Eatons store manager gave Toshiba his first credit card.

That night, as they were tucking little Toshiba into bed, Adidas said:

- He'll have to learn to drive a truck if he wants to become P.M. of this great, big country. We'll start the lessons tomorrow.

Nike slipped her arm through his.

- Aren't we lucky it's not Russia? At least here he has a future.

* * * * *

Every day, military planes fly overhead. They are testing, testing. The sky is busy, the sky is full of planes and helicopters.

The caribou in Labrador try to run away. The wild geese in Alberta are afraid to fly.

Every day, military ships sail in and out of the harbour. They are testing, testing. The sea is busy, the sea is full of ships and submarines.

The fish are dying of strange diseases. The whales are composing an oratorio to be sung by the last living whale when the End of the World comes.

Chicken Little shuddered
when the shadow flew overhead
she said: when I open my eyes under-
water

I can understand the fish

* * * * *

The Struggle for Choice is the working title for a 55 min. videotape currently in production about the abortion rights movement in Canada. At this time extensive research has been completed in British Columbia, Alberta, the Maritimes, Toronto and Montreal. The tape will explore the history of the abortion rights movement since the adoption of the current legislation in 1969, as well as present a national perspective on abortion availability and treatment today.

The videotape will feature interviews with women and men across the country; abortion rights activists, doctors and clinic personnel, and women who have had abortions and those considering one.

Abortion in Canada is an issue of critical importance. The limited abortion rights that exist today are under attack from both a growing pro-life movement that aims to eliminate any access to abortion, and the erosion of health care in general through economic cuts and threats to the universality of health care insurance.

Doctors who perform abortions in hospitals are lobbied and harassed by anti-choice groups. The efforts of Dr. Henry Morgentaler and his colleagues to open free-standing clinics outside Quebec have met with arrests and criminal charges. Despite Morgentaler's recent acquittal, there is no guarantee that the law itself will be changed.

Many women now find it increasingly difficult to obtain abortions. The cost is often a barrier for low-income women, with the situation made worse by doctors opting out of provincial health schemes. In many hospitals in large urban areas, there are informal quotas on the number of abortions performed, while women living outside these areas may have no local access to abortion at all.

Because of the crucial importance of this issue, we are inviting you to contribute to the production of this videotape. Partial funding for the project has been received from the Ontario Arts Council. Additional funds from individuals and groups will ensure that *The Struggle For Choice* has the necessary level of financial support. Donations will be tax deductible.

For research purposes, we would be happy to hear from women who would agree to be interviewed for the videotape.

This video is being directed by Nancy Nicol, an independent video producer and activist for the past six years in Toronto. Her recent productions include: *Mini Skools Pays Mini Wages*, and *Our Choice, A Tape About Teenage Mothers* produced with the Women's Media Alliance.

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