

ABOVE

Try looking down from above, the way God would, if you believed in God.

Farms, green-black spears of spruce, shingles in need of repair. A river, a miniature car going over the iron bridge. The sound—road, bridge, road.

A dollhouse-sized school. In each classroom, a teacher with a pointer, explaining the geography of Canada. A vastness of pink, bordered on three sides by water. When the teachers are finished with the maps, they roll them up—snap. Canada sleeps there, rolled up.

Past the school, a dirt lane winds away from the village towards the sea. You could snatch a cow, move it wherever you want. You could pinch the small carpenters at work on a new house (down the slope from the old one).

But why would you want to do that?

Rust red leather of the Fundy. The tide has slipped, filmy blue, and exposed it. You can count the tiny mergansers, and, in the marsh near the river, a hawk—hovering, diving, hovering—stitching grass to air.

The pretty faraway.

But if you looked closely, with a magnifying glass, you'd see the hawk catching the vole, breaking its neck.

A high wall of earth covered with furred grass keeps salt water from seeping into farmland along the shore. Trace the dyke's length to the end, where the river churns into froth as it flows through the channel. Milk in a cup.

And beyond: ocean, ocean, ocean.

Glance back across embroidered marshland, needle finger of the steeple.

Look! A blazing house up the road from the church: toy fire trucks with sirens warbling.

A commotion of chatter, smoke. People move towards the house, away from it. A comical peepshow, except the garage is flaming. Next, the shed.

This is the problem with distance.

And time, another problem.

Imagine this village in the early twentieth century. Pluck the cenotaph out of the grassy knoll above the post office. Replace the cars with wagons and horses.

You can open the roof of a small white house at the road's elbow and look down on a child colouring at a kitchen table. The child's grandmother rocks by the Marvel stove, singing a hymn. Sings a hymn, sips the tea.

You can't hear the words, but you can see the child's picture: a man on a winding path, teardrop buttons on his clothes. Paused, always, beside the house she's drawing.

Put back the roof gently; don't disturb them.

After all, think of your own house with the afternoon light gliding through, turning the dust motes into sparkles. Or your garden, with daffodils and tulips and a fat stone frog.

And you, relaxing on the porch swing, about to turn the page—you could look up right now, trembling, into an inquisitive eye. Keep still,

keep still.