Stout Centre forum

Medicaments

Kyleigh is reading *Devils, Drugs & Doctors*. She has photographs of fetishes, shrunken heads and skulls. A golden speculum, amputation set, scarificator, canopic jars. The leg of the Marquis of Anglesey; how to open the skull 19th century style.

She builds an enamelled medicine cabinet, fills it with cures for demonic/drug possession. Breath of Young Women or Breath of Duck, read the 8th Psalm three times over. Juno Drops and Anti-Fat, how to restore hair before a full moon. Hamlin’s Wizard Oil, a recipe to ensure conception: syrup of stinking orach, piths of three ox-backs... three pints of good ale. Rub, gargle, drink, or bathe.

Let nothing disquiet you, at least be very cheerful.

Arum

She smells the bruise of purple flowers sometime after rain (iritis, violets, agapanthus, each one broken, delicately, beneath the skin); surely she traces an imprecise memory, pulling inward to the womb, holding tight a layer of skin—her death petal, a yellow tongued quality of bone.

**Alison Wong**

The Roundalay

(*... an extract from Finn’s Quest, a children’s novel*)

**EIRLYS HUNTER**

... A steep staircase led them to an attic which was crammed full of once-precious objects. There was a whirl of wings and a pigeon flew in through a hole in the roof and perched on a bed rail to watch them as they rummaged. A trunk full of brocades and silks fell to dust in Finn’s hands and Gala disturbed a colony of mice nesting in old King Bendigan’s court records. A whole orchestra of musical instruments lay in a heap, eaten away by rust and woodworm, and a stack of portraits of sad looking men rested against a pile of moth-eaten carpets.

Finn found the roundelay hidden under a canvas sail. It was a model of a town, shaped like a cone, nearly as tall as he was, narrowing to a single roof with four chimney pots at the top. The streets which wound between the houses were the slots for the marbles to race down. There was a bakery, a blacksmith’s, an inn, a church, a school, grand houses and little cottages, gardens, fountained courtyards and a fairground. It was perfect.

Gala pulled a knob on the base and a small felt-lined drawer slid open to reveal two marbles. They dropped them into two of the chimney pots. There was a clatter and the marbles popped out of two doorways and rolled round and down through the town. The bells in the church chimed twice; the ponies on the fairground roundabout bobbed up and down. Some people paraded out of one door, crossed the road and went in at another. Two men met on a street corner and bowed to each other. Water poured out of a jug and into a goblet all by itself on a table outside the inn, and a trumpeter put his trumpet to his mouth as the marbles rolled past. Near the bottom there was a field. As the marbles went by, cows and sheep raised their heads from the painted grass, as if to look at them, and three miniature red hens bent to peck.

“Hens!” shouted Finn and Gala together as the marbles dropped back into their drawer through a slot at the bottom.

“If it means taking it apart to find the crown, I can’t bear it,” said Gala fiercely. “I don’t suppose it seems so special to you, as you live in a place where stories fly into houses and people fly through the air. But I think this is magical.”