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Jan Ball

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That Summer in Toronto

I pressed my ear against the wall to better hear the couple next door arguing in the middle of the night, then returned to you in bed lamenting like a mourner at a funeral, “I can’t stand it, I can’t stand it,” but managed to fall back asleep, anyway.

After one dinner, we soaked the black paper mache salad bowls in the kitchen sink overnight so they disintegrated like cardboard in the rain, then we unsuccessfully searched China Town for a set to replace them. With dentist dread, we called the couple we’d sublet from. Even though they were nice about it they did inform us that the bowls were a wedding present and told us that we could leave the replacement check on the left side of the mahogany entrance table.

Later in the summer, your Australian best friend, Ian, and his girlfriend came to visit from Montreal so we brought them to the department reception with your summer colleagues. When I introduced Annick as French, everyone simultaneously felt warm so they moved to the balcony except for the four of us who remained standing around the table nibbling celery and carrot sticks dipped in that onion/sour cream mixture I still like so much.

After Annick returned to Montreal on Monday, it seemed that Ian talked his whole remaining three days: about his travels in Zaire, his parents in Sydney, his engineering job, Annick, and, like a self-centered teen-ager, never asked me one question about myself, while you assiduously taught your course at the University of Toronto and I listened like a recording device (I realize now). I cooked liver with green peppers from that Time/Life Middle-Eastern cookbook with the sliced pomegranate on the cover, but, although Ian had three helpings, I never cooked liver with green peppers again.

-Jan Ball
Chicago, IL