

Clowns and Assassins

A man wanted to be a boy.
So he went into a boy's room
to surround himself with the things of a boy.
He tried on the boy's pajamas,
but they didn't fit. The boy walked in
and saw the man standing in the boy's
pajamas and asked the man,
"Why are you in the boy's clothes? Aren't you a man?"
"Yes," the man replied, "but I want to know
what it feels like to be a boy. What makes you a boy?"
"I don't know right from wrong," said the boy.
"But I've never *not* known right from wrong," the man stated.
"Maybe you've never been a boy," said the boy.

Confused, the man walked outside and saw
a giant redwood tree. He asked the tree,

As big and old as you are, do you remember
being just a small tree?

Yes.

What was it like?

I was shorter.

That's all?

Well, the wind was stronger, but I was closer to the ground.

So, do you think size is the only difference
between being a man and being a boy?

I don't know I'm just a tree.

Unsatisfied with nature's simplicity,
he walked on and came upon an assassin.

Do you like your job? the man asked the assassin.
You mean killing people?

Yes.

Well, yes, I do.

What do you like about it?

It takes hard work and lots of practice
to get to be as good as I am.

So there are good assassins and bad assassins?

I wouldn't put it that way. There are
boy assassins and man assassins.

So man is different from boy by experience?

Bulls-eye!

Self-assured and with a sigh of relief
the man walked on . . . when suddenly
a clown jumped out in front of him.

Boo! Ha ha ha ha! the clown laughed.

Why did you scare me?

Because you needed to laugh.

But how would scaring me make me laugh?

Isn't that how it works?

No, usually you're to be funny and then people laugh.

Oh, I hate being funny.

But you're a clown, that's what you're supposed to do:
be funny.

Yes, but it's too easy to be funny. Any boy can laugh
if I'm funny, but only a man can laugh when I'm scary.

But I didn't laugh.

That's because you're a boy.

And so the clown ducked back into the alleyway
leaving the man standing alone
looking like a lost boy.

Neil Diamente