

BACCALAUREAT
ANGLAIS LV1 - SERIE ES - SESSION 2008
Oral du second groupe

TEXT 5

Invisible girl

'It's a little girl,' panted Edward. 'I'm looking for a little girl.'

'And here she is, safe and sound,' and Mr Patel went in to stand by the counter where he kept an eye on the tall boy, who had sat himself by Victoria and was wiping her face with paper napkins that stood fanned in a holder. He seemed about to dissolve in tears himself.

5 The two girls, much too old for this boy, nevertheless were making manifestations of femininity for his sake, pushing out their breasts and pouting. He didn't notice. Victoria still wept and he was in an extreme of some emotion himself.

'I'm thirsty,' Victoria burst out, and Mr Patel handed across a glass of orange crush, with a gesture that indicated to Edward he shouldn't dream of thinking of paying for it.

10 Edward held the glass for Victoria, who was indignant - she, a big girl, being treated like a baby, but she was grateful, for she did badly want to be a baby, just then.

Edward was saying, 'I'm so sorry. I was supposed to pick you up, with my brother.'

'Didn't you see me ?' asked Victoria, accusing him.

And now Edward was scarlet, he positively writhed¹. [...] He had in fact seen a little black girl,

15 but he had been told to collect a little girl, and for some reason had not thought this black child could be his charge. He could make all kinds of excuses for himself: the confusion as the other children were running off to the gate, the noise, Thomas's bad behaviour, but the fact was, the absolute bottom line, he had not really seen her because Victoria was black. But he had seen her. All this would not have mattered to

20 a good many people who came and went in and out of those big gates, but Edward was the child of a liberal² house, and he was in fact in the throes³ of a passionate identification with all the sorrows of the Third World. At his school, much superior to the one here, though he had attended it, long ago, 'projects' of all kinds enlightened him and his fellow pupils. He collected money for the victims of AIDS and of famine, he wrote essays about these and many others of
25 the world's wrongs, his mother]essy was 'into' every kind of good cause. There was no excuse for what he had done and he was sick with shame.

'Will you come home with me now ?' he enquired, humbly, of the pathetic child, and without a word she stood and put up her hand for him to lead her.

'Poor little kid,' said one of the girls, apparently touched.

30 'Oh, I don't know, she's doing all right,' said the other.

'It's not that far,' said Edward to the child, who was half his height. He bent down to make this communication. And she was stretching herself up, so sure was she that she ought to be behaving like a big girl, while she whimpered, [...] staring up at his face which was contorted with concern for her.

35 'Goodbye, Victoria,' said Mr Patel, in a stern⁴, admonitory way, that was directed at this white boy, who was reminding him of those summer insects, all flying legs and feelers, called Daddy-Long-Legs. 'I'll see you tomorrow,' he shouted after the couple, for he was remembering he knew nothing about this boy, who should be informed that Victoria was not without friends. But the couple were already in the street, where their feet made sturdy progress through clogs of
40 wet leaves, and puddles.

Doris Lessing, 'Victoria and the Staveney's', in *The Grandmothers*, 2

1. writhe : se tortiller

2. liberal : de gauche, progressiste

3. in the throes : être au beau milieu de

4. stern : sévère