

Darryl Short

Coming over the dunes, a bird is startled

this the heart fluttering

away in the bird
the salt

a span unexpected

in space
the moment

we breach the dunes

Narcissus

So there was this boy. He's from Wainuiomata where his father still owns a garage and his mum minds the geriatrics. And this boy he was what you might call quite the all-rounder. He was in the first XV and played fullback. And he was in musicals. Billy in *Carousel* comes to mind. So he could sing and dance. Plus academically he was quite bright. Not the dux but up there. A talker. He could sell you a bridge. He liked his sport and fixing things with the old man and he liked poetry but he didn't tell the old man about that. This boy had an open face and clear eyes that looked out on the world and when you said something to him you got the feeling he was listening. People would say things like he'll be running a company some day or he could end up playing for Wellington. Or who knows he might be a top politician or he'll be on TV you'll see. Pretty good for a boy from Wainuiomata. The right ones were those who said that about TV.

So first there was NZ Idol. Funny story about it. He had to be dragged along. He was up north for the hols. Every year he went. His aunty's the one who started things out. She's only two years older than him so not really an aunty more like a cousin. She was dead keen to have a go. She got him there. Not his thing. But he went along. Polite boy. He was going to wait outside but the producers asked him in. Must have been the look of him. Good looking lad. He didn't have a song ready so he did one off of *Carousel*. Reckoned he'd get trotted out on one of those clips they show at the beginning. But that only happened to the aunty. Big girl with dreadlocks. She looked pretty naff in that homespun.

He made the semi-finals. He didn't win but he pulled the votes because when he sang his eyes were clear and cool and he could make you believe the feeling in a song even one of those breathy type ones. Plenty of people remember him in NZ Idol.

From there he got the part of Tyson in *Shorty St.* He got pretty well known for that. Even though Tyson only lasted the one season. He went out early with the bird flu. Their mistake.

So by this time the boy had enough money for a flat in The Big Joke. He got to know heaps of people who said they admired his work. He was a personal trainer on the side. Lots of them do that.

There was a break for a while but then there was *Dancing with the Stars* – the Jenny Shipley year. Another program he came

close to winning. He got to be what you might call a household name. He was in the supermarket mags all the time. Turning out to be a bit of a lad or so they said. But he never got linked up with anyone too long. Right at the height of it along comes Big Brother NZ. That's what he's most famous for – bagging Suzanne Paul.

He was kayoed a lot in the Big Brother house. Some people asked whether it wasn't more than immaturity and maybe he did have a problem with drink. He had a pot starting but that didn't matter so much because he still had a fullback's ass. He showed it off when he got the chance which was what got him votes that time.

So when he eventually got to Treasure Island he was up against Marc and Adam. Marc's getting on but he's still a sneaky one. You knew there was going to be trouble for this boy. Those lads play the long game. It didn't look too good for him and we were all pretty sick of it by the time he finished. After what he said about Suzanne and that.

Not what you'd call a strong finish. That was it except for last season. He did the heavy lifting on one of those garden shows even though he never had what you'd call a green thumb. He had the banter all right. But he didn't so much seem himself any more. At least not like someone you'd want to know which was the surprising thing. Maybe it's just the camera that does it.

You'd recognise him from Mitre 10. That's what he does for work off and on. Openings with that weight lifter. If you wait he'll sign you a publicity photo where he's sitting by some garden pond he supposedly installed. The shape of his face is the same. You'd know him. But those clear eyes are gone. In the photo he's looking in the pond. That's what the photographer told him to do when he gets his picture taken. Look down.

Darryl Short hails from the birthplace of the world's tallest man. He now lives in Waitati where he writes poems, fiction and essays. He has studied Religion and worked as a chef, labourer, librarian and software designer. He is a parent to two dogs that aren't very precocious.