

 <div style="text-align: justify;">◆◆◆◆ <p>◆◆◆◆ The train ride hasn't been as soporific as usual. It's probably to do with my two companions in the compartment. Teacher-Mommy and Little Johnny have become people, with intriguing glimpses of differing experiences and viewpoints, and the maybe less than prim and proper Mrs. Schoolteacher also drawing my gaze for non-academic reasons.</p> <p>◆</p> <p>◆◆◆◆ While I am still considering the mysteries of attraction, Little Johnny preempts my next sally:</p> <p>◆◆◆◆ "Look Mommy, there's another billboard. It says 'LOVE'. I wonder what they are trying to sell now?"</p> <p>◆</p> <p>◆◆◆◆ "Johnny, that is the name of a train station." And as the train slows and comes to a smooth halt, she adds uncertainly: "We don't have to get out here, do we?" </p> <p>◆</p> <p>◆◆◆◆ The conductor is shouting: "Everybody out for @paradise#! ◆Municipal bye-laws require your participation in a love-test. But do not worry, hardly anybody has ever flunked it! You first, Lady."◆ </p> <p>◆</p> <p>◆◆◆◆ With some coaxing, Mrs. Schoolteacher enters a little cubicle set up in the middle of the platform, and shortly emerges with a happy smile. In no time Little Johnny follows her example.</p> <p>◆</p> <p>◆◆◆◆ Now it is my turn. I have to sit down in a chair, facing a rather large TV-camera-like thing. The thing speaks in a tinny, superbly neutral robot's voice: "Please think of something you really love".</p> <p>◆</p> <p>◆◆◆◆ That's easy. I picture my favourite meal of Penne Pasta with Basil Pesto sauce. A large circular dial on my right registers 6 out of 10, well short of the red field starting at 8.</p> <p>◆</p> <p>◆◆◆◆ The superbly neutral voice says: "Try something you love more".</p> <p>◆</p> <p>◆◆◆◆ I am in trouble. I can only hope that there are extra marks for something animate. There are no obvious human candidates, so I reflect on my loveable, if rather dumb, golden brown Cocker Spaniel Oopsie.</p> <p>◆</p> <p>◆◆◆ The machine registers 7. The tinny voice says: "Don't give up, try harder".</p> <p>◆</p> <p>◆◆◆◆ This is quite irritating. It reminds me of my recently deceased father, who never seemed able to take in my little achievements nor talk about them, but always gave the impression of expecting more, and always ended up talking about his own unremarkable feats.</p> <p>◆</p> <p>◆◆◆◆ The machine says: "Nine out of ten.◆ Suitability to enter @paradise# confirmed. Next please."</p> <p>◆</p> <p>◆◆◆◆ I am stunned. When Little Johnny perceptively asks whether I'm OK, I find myself replying:◆◆ "I'm fine. Better now. But I wish I had taken this test a long time ago".</p> <p>◆</p> <p>◆◆◆◆ Out of babes' mouths..... Little Johnny has the last

word on the subject. "I know whoI love, do you?"</p>
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