

## the Gull

The gull is very fleshy and pink and has got a long black beak covering most of its face, and when it was very young, Farmer Brown found it at the bottom of the laundry hamper, where the gull was moving around in circles like a wounded chicklet, but it did not look like a chicklet at all, and a lot more like a very small newborn lamb. It became clear pretty quickly that it had moist and sensitive skin and that it wanted to learn English. Farmer Brown took the gull into his house and whispered to the gull 'I am going to let you live in my house so that you will grow big and strong, and every day I will feed you syrup where you'll be sitting in the chair by the window'. And every day the gull sat unmoving in the chair by the window where the farmer's wife used to sit before she went off on her permanent vacation into the southern countries. And the gull's body collected the black molasses with its burnt ivory mouth and didn't learn very much English other than "I am me" and "I read a book". But it breathed in and out of its body all through the day and Farmer Brown crouched behind it whispering 'that's a good boy now'. And Farmer Brown would walk around in the woods. He would walk around in the woods asking for a black net. So that at the right moment, when the gull tried to move, thick with the molasses, and the shadow beneath it lay exposed for a moment, Farmer Brown could trap the shadow with the net, and keep the special shadow, and he would take it to the border to the southern countries, where his wife had gone on a too long vacation, and he would give it onto the border patrol as switch payment. All through the day and into the early evening Farmer Brown strode through the woods with his boots on, upon crisp grey leaves, with the fingers of his right hand moving around in his old mouth, and his left hand holding the neck of a musket. He walked for miles and miles until reaching a hollow in the floor of the forest, where he saw a very small woman sitting cross-legged on the leaves: a corn sprite. Her whole body revolved around itself, in many rapid places. And because he had the old gun he felt ok walking right up to her until he, until Farmer Brown, was moving his hand around inside of her mouth, instead of his own. Farmer Brown stood at the edge of the drop, moving his right hand around in her mouth, and she sat at the bottom of the drop. He made his hand form the words: 'You have got to help me bring my wife back into the

house. A gull has appeared. And I am going to trap its shadow. Then my wife can walk home, and put her pointer finger onto my lip' And, having explained all of these things with the different positions of his right hand, Farmer Brown watched the corn sprite get up out of her empty home and they both walked to the cornfield nearby and the corn sprite's various rotating parts split off from the little beige-colored piece of blankness at the center of her body. It was Sunday afternoon, under a grey and pink sky, and the little beige piece of blankness moved forward into the corn and brushed up against all the many places in the corn.

The corn sprite gently pushed itself through these places, collecting them, stringing one gap into the next, like a thread passing through black beads, so that as Farmer Brown stood listening to the corn, an intricate net in the noise wove itself around him, and finally attached itself to him. When he walked home that day, he carried this net of noise, and very quietly opened the front door. All of the lights were off, the carpet absorbed his footsteps. And he moved into the livingroom, where, he expected, the gull would still be sitting. And there it was. Just like a defenseless sleeping child. It had a goose's moist, sensitive, irritable skin, and instead of a face, a very long, gleaming black beak. And because of how much it looked like a young lamb with a beak face, sitting back in a leather armchair, fast asleep, Farmer Brown got up close to it, with his trembling fingers, and took hold of the gull's neck, pulling it in for a very warm full-body hug. Farmer Brown reached all the way around the gull and hugged it. His fingers brushed against the pool of shadow between the gull and the chair. He felt the shadow, and the net surrounding his body felt the shadow. And the net separated the shadow from the gull, so that the gull moved its body and moved its beak also, opening the black beak with great slowness, either in pain or in exhaustion. Its little pink body trembled a little but Farmer Brown continued to hold it, hugging it. His eyes were closed. Finally, he released the gull from his grip and sat down on the floor. He kept his eyes closed. He didn't want to see. The gull's beak had opened so wide now that the two parts of it formed a single straight line. Like a spike or a very small canoe, divided at the middle by a red open throat. It stood up out of the chair and its shadow stayed on the chair without following. A flat black pool where the face of Farmer Brown's wife

looked out. And so the gull walked out through the front door of the house with its mouth wide open, and then walked along the road for miles and miles until it caught fire.