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Tony looks outside the glass. An hour has passed since he dreamed she called him on the phone: small anxious voice with traffic in the background. The sky has turned from black to incandescent blue. He sits: prisoner of that slice of night where concentration grows hard like granite, makes secret fears real, sharpens the blunt teeth of grief back to razor points. The mute TV plays foreign language news, dark painted lips of the newsreader press together and apart before a whirling map of East Asia. I will sit very still, he thinks, and this night will pass.

He was a dandelion, he was in a blue dress with silver thread. Hair flying, wheels of the skateboard roaring, girls in bikini tops and denim minis flashing by upside down or at 90 degrees, spinning in the aqua smoothness of the empty pool.

Under his arms tiny green shoots sprang forth making him squirm and giggle. The tiny shoots grew quickly into long green stems from which burst huge clusters of peony roses, clouding around him, extravagant blooms of soft pink petals, until he was just one gigantic ball of blossom which, light as a feather, rose gently, up, up, up into the air and drifted out across the Indian ocean, and north towards...Japan!

High above the bustle and noise of night-time Tokyo, Tony Hawk the great American skateboard rider, nested inside a huge bundle of peony rose blossom, drifted down the main street of Shibuya. As he wafted along, reflections from the neon signs that covered the buildings played across his petals in a dazzling display: Japanese calligraphy curled and uncurled, barking poodles balanced smartly on their front legs, an octopus and an eel in life jackets signalled for help, a pretty girl shook stars out of her hair and a family of dancing biscuits quickstepped past.

Tony was feeling wonderfully free just floating along like this, when he felt a gentle tug in his lower branches. He looked down and was surprised to see a lilac ribbon tied to one of his stems! His eyes followed the ribbon as it wound down and down through the Tokyo night 'til it came to rest in the pretty paw of Madame Barbara Balloons! With a start and then a cry, as he recognised his dear friend, Tony waved down to her, or rather shook his blossom at her in delight!

Madame Barbara Balloons was immaculately dressed in a dark plum coloured kimono with pink and red flowers splashed around the hem. She wore spotless white tabi socks on her feet and fawn coloured kitten ears on her head. Her lips were painted neo-punk purple and when she saw Tony Hawk waving his blossom she smiled up at him, a mysterious smile, and then turned and slipped off the main street into the shadows of one of Shibuya's tiny

lanes.

How quickly the dazzle and hubbub of the shopping strip gave way to dark and quiet. The soft glow from shuttered windows was all that lit the narrow street, and the only sound was of tiny bells sewn onto Madame B.B.'s kitten ears, jingling as she led Tony Hawk, floating on the end of her lilac ribbon, deeper and deeper into the maze of dark little lanes.

After some time following the bobbing and jingling kitten ears below, wondering where Madame BB was taking him, Tony heard his phone ring. He scrambled around amongst the branches to reach the back pocket of his jeans and fish it out. It was her. He laughed aloud, just seeing her name alight on the screen. 'Hello!' He cried, nearly weeping, longing for the smile in her voice 'Hello, hello!'

'Tony' but she was not smiling 'I can't see you. You've gone too high'.

He looked down and saw with a start the night-time city had disappeared, he was floating above the earth, like in a movie, the blue planet small below him and suddenly he is conscious, realises what's happening, grabs at the ribbon and tugs it hard. 'Don't let go!' He shouts to her down the phone. But he can hear her faraway voice saying: 'can you hear me? I can't hear you'. Frantically he winds the ribbon round and round his hand. It cuts into his skin, makes his fingers swell and purple. He shouts in frustration, but keeps on winding hard 'til he can feel from the pull of it that he has lifted her off the ground. He braces his legs in the branches of his tree and hauls on the ribbon now, wrapping it between the branches, watching them bend with the weight of her, willing them not to break, never taking his eyes from the ribbon as he hooks and winds it, gasping, swearing, not wanting to see how far she is below him, or how scared she is or if it should snap and she should fall away again.

When you sit very, very still, even if it is noisy around you, even if it is noisy inside you, things become quiet. If you give yourself the task of sitting still until dawn breaks, you will hear it: punctuated by your own eyes blinking and the morning calls of new birds, held together by the net of light that shimmers in your eyes and the silent lines of things becoming visible. And this is how Tony Hawk, the great American skateboard rider, sat through the morning of Saturday October 15th, missing, missing, missing the ringing bell laugh of his dear friend Madame Barbara Balloons.

>Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Margaret Trail.