

MACMILLAN CARIBBEAN WRITERS

Walking

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Prologue

I used to wait every Saturday morning for the ice-cream boy to come up the road. When I heard the first, faint sounds of his bell in the street behind ours, I would run upstairs to my mother's room and pull out her pointy-toed, high-heeled black shoes, and slip them under my jersey, tiptoeing out of the room while looking out for Mummy or my tell-tale sister, Cleo. This done, I would hide the shoes under a chair in the living room, and go back outside to wait.

I would know from the sound of his bell exactly when he rounded the corner, and I would run inside, slide into my mother's shoes and wobble back out to the top of the driveway. Soon as I saw the bright red cap coming up the hill two houses before mine, I would put my hands on my hips and begin the jerky movements I called dance, attempting to keep time with the ping of his bell. My ankles and feet would rock in a different direction from the rest of my body, but the saucy grin I wore would give no testimony to the pain in my feet.

By the time Roger John came into view, I would be rocking and grinning, hoping each time he'd stop and talk to me. Somehow his bell always got louder and faster just before he reached my house, and I would find myself doing a sort of zigzag movement, compensating for the increased tempo by jerking my shoulders hard, since I could not move my high-heeled feet. Roger John's cart at the front of his bike would sway sharply from side to side, and I wished for it to fall so he would have to stop. He would scowl at it, as if warning it not to, and, just after he