

Keep your hands where I can see them

We leave their noisy grown-up world
of market hubbub, bang and barter,
tumble through in twos and fives.
A nodding doorbell bounds
the magic, shades where spells are cast
and every breath becomes a fairy tale.

The air is thick, infused by sugar
boiling in the outhouse, sticky-sweet
and warm against our nostrils.
We lift eager eyes to Mrs Wakefield,
stern and aproned, forearms resting
on the red wood counter, framed
by chocolate, aniseed and pear drops,
love hearts, sherbet dabs and wine gums.

We want bags of four-a-penny shrimps,
or gob stoppers that change their colour
as we suck and lick, and check and look.
She likes our pennies, but she'd rather
sell in shillings. Truffles, toffee, gilded boxes.
Mrs Wakefield prides herself on Quality.

Kathy Gee