

1981

## The Man with The Red Hat

Lisa Lawrence  
*Denison University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/exile>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Lawrence, Lisa (1981) "The Man with The Red Hat," *Exile*: Vol. 27 : No. 1 , Article 20.  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/exile/vol27/iss1/20>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the English at Denison Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Exile by an authorized editor of Denison Digital Commons.

# The Man With The Red Hat

By Lisa Lawrence

Jeremiah wears a red hat. He always wears this hat. He thinks it elegant. Jeremiah will do anything at the drop of that hat. He walks through the gates and stands near the monument of Prince Albert. The stone angels with erect nipples look down at him. He walks on.

It is Sunday and families are lying about on the grass. Most of the dogs are running after each other. Some are chasing sticks instead. The park is large and there is a pond. A small boy sits crying on the edge of the pond because his miniature sailboat has sailed into the middle, out of reach. An old man sits trying to make the little boy laugh, but his face grows more purple and screwed up with each word.

Four nannies are pushing four prams. They talk to each other as the four babies become heavy-lidded. One nanny is wall-eyed and Jeremiah notices that she and her pram are on the end of the line. When she speaks, the three nannies either ignore her or laugh. Her pram catches on a rock and the baby cries.

Jeremiah comes to a fence. According to the map in the park, this is where Hyde Park begins. He has to scale the fence and cross over to the roundabout. On the other side of the roundabout, Jeremiah can see Hyde Park. Jeremiah stands at the fence a moment and is trying to decide whether to climb it. He is heavy and the doctor has told him to be careful of over-exertion. Jeremiah also wants to be careful not to rip his new rabbit fur coat.

Finally he lifts one plump thigh and rests it on the top of the fence. It is warm out and Jeremiah rests in the position of a wishbone. Finally Jeremiah hoists his other leg up and grabs the fence with both large, wet hands. The cars that go around the roundabout honk at him. Jeremiah falls over onto the side grass unhurt and relieved. His pants have a small tear in the seat, but his coat and hat are intact. He wheezes.

He remembers wheezing when he was young and he and his father had gone bicycling. They would bicycle to the grocery store in summer to get ice cream bars. The very first time they had gone, Jeremiah's father gave him his ice cream and said that he had to learn to do two things at a time. They both were to each ice cream as they cycled home. Every time Jeremiah went to put the ice cream bar near his mouth, his bicycle would wobble. As the two pedalled further, Jeremiah's ice cream began to melt. He could feel the tears coming up to his eyes. He couldn't see where he was going. As the ice cream melted down the handlebars tears blurred his vision and his father cycled onward neatly eating his ice cream. Jeremiah fell and his father disappeared. Jeremiah looked and saw the ice cream still in his hand. He sighed and sat on the side of the road to eat his ice cream.

Jeremiah takes out a cigarette and darts across the road. Huffing and sweating he lights a Camel and stands a moment until his hands stop shaking. He sees a path that has a sign with an arrow that says, "Speakers' Corner." He walks. His sneakers have holes in them through which soil keeps entering. Jeremiah can feel the soil grinding under his toes with each step.

As he follows the path, he notices some people glancing at him. One foot follows the other as Jeremiah pushes himself to get to Speakers' Corner. A crowd of people appears as Jeremiah turns a bend. The dirt in his sneakers is damp with sweat. He grinds his feet faster and faster as he half walks, half runs toward the crowd. His cigarette is still burning in his left hand, but he doesn't smoke.

When he is within a hundred feet of the crowd, a few people hear his running and turn around. He stops short and looks back at the people.

He watches the crowd from a distance. The man with the red hat draws deeply on the non-filter cigarette and lets out a lump of smoke through his mouth with a belch. The crowd cheers. He puts his cigarette out with a sneakered foot.

The crowd quiets down and looks on expectantly.

"He was in that new wave film, wasn't he?" titters a fat lady in a navy blue jumper. "Ooh look, his lips curl down on either side at the same time," sighs one sallow-faced girl. Slowly, slowly he draws up his arm. His hand outstretched at shoulder height, he pushes his arm higher.

The crowd hears the rip as the fur gives way.

Their roar. Pens, keys, hats, sweaters, books, anything they can find are in the air.