



You Can't Be That

by Brian Patten

I told them
When I grow up
I'm not going to be a scientist
Or someone who reads the news on TV
No, a million birds will fly through me.
I AM GOING TO BE A TREE!

They said,
You can't be that. No, you can't be that.

I told them
When I grow up
I'm not going to be an airline pilot,
A dancer, a lawyer or an MC.
No, huge whales will swim in me.
I AM GOING TO BE AN OCEAN!

They said,
You can't be that. No, you can't be that.

I told them:
I am not going to be a DJ,
A computer programmer, a musician or a beautician.
No, streams will flow through me, I'll be the home of the eagles;
I'll be full of nooks, crannies, valleys and fountains.
I AM GOING TO BE A RANGE OF MOUNTAINS!

They said,
You can't be that. No, you can't be that.

I asked them:
Just what do you think I am?
*Just a child, they said,
And children always become
At least one of the things
We want them to be.*

They do not understand me.
I'll be a stable if I want, smelling of fresh hay,
I'll be a lost glade in which unicorns still play.
They do not realise I can fulfil any ambition.
They do not realise that among them
walks a magician.