

## THE JELLY BEAN MAN

“He carries jelly beans,” a neighbour told us  
when we first came here. “You’re lucky you don’t  
have any small children.”

He’s the Jelly Bean Man

5 and the first words he ever said to me  
were, “Kiss it and make it well,”  
he having observed my wife  
bump her forehead against the door  
of our car while getting into it  
10 with her arms full of groceries.  
“It’s nothing to grin about,” he said.

So I kissed her above  
and between the eyes, and he said,  
“Love her; she is the daughter of  
15 Cronos<sup>1</sup> and Rhea,<sup>2</sup> the sister and wife  
of Zeus.<sup>3</sup> Here I have a gift for her.  
She will share it with you.”

And he insisted that she take  
two cinnamon rolls  
20 which she and I later ate  
at home, very slowly,  
with dairy butter  
— each bite was like hearing  
a little ripple of simple music.

25 Later we learned it was true  
he carried jelly beans and distributed them,  
but only as an uncle might or a grandfather  
— and, oh, it’s so easy to teach  
your small daughters and sons  
30 to accept nothing  
from strangers, to keep well back always,  
to stay out of arm’s reach,  
to be prepared to run,  
so easy to tell them  
35 about evil,  
so hard to tell them  
about innocence,

so impossible to say:  
be good to the Jelly Bean Man  
40 who gives candy to children  
from no other motive than love.

*Alden Nowlan,*  
Canadian writer (1933-1983)

<sup>1</sup>Cronos — one of 12 gods in Greek mythology who ruled the universe, father of Zeus

<sup>2</sup>Rhea — the wife of Cronos and mother of Zeus

<sup>3</sup>Zeus — the presiding god in Greek mythology, ruler of the heavens and father of other gods and mortal heroes