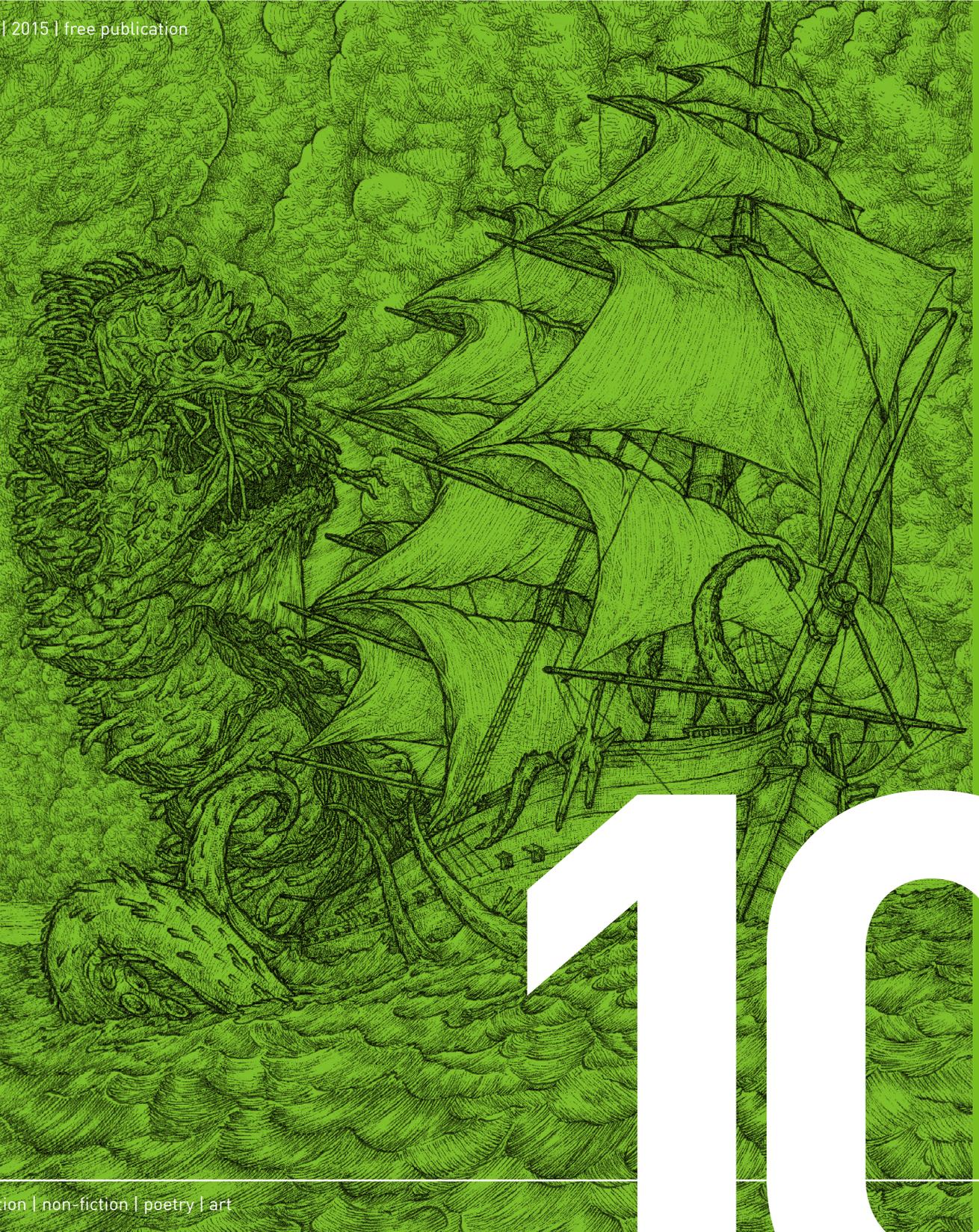


n-SCRIBE

10 | 2015 | free publication



fiction | non-fiction | poetry | art

n-SCRIBE has notched up 10 editions!

We are proud to be celebrating writers who live, work and study in the City of Darebin. With a full suite of works hailing from Northcote to Reservoir and beyond, *n*-SCRIBE also features the adult and secondary school section winners of the Mayors Writing Awards for Poetry 2015.

n-SCRIBE allows writers access to publication, and via the working group, a collaborative process that shapes each edition. The work we received took us by surprise and offered insights into what it is to be living in this place and at this time. Transformation not only in the built environment but in a more subtle intimate ways, featured in many of the chosen works, as did a preoccupation with the changing nature of people and demographics in the North.

We look forward to introducing new writers to be published and welcoming back past contributors.

My huge thanks to the *n*-SCRIBE working group for their insight, good humour and enthusiasm for the project.

Happy reading
Elizabeth Welch



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n-SCRIBE 10 is an arts and literary publication for and by writers and readers in the City of Darebin. It is a project of the Creative Culture Department at Darebin City Council. Submission guidelines, information, and past editions, can be found on our website at www.darebinarts.com.au/n-scribe/

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Some works contain language which may offend.

THE SPIDER

Ben Goldsworthy

I don't know what to make of the fact that my grandfather
Seems to be dying
In the same space in which
I was born

The doors open as if they are expecting me
At the nurses' station they are working
At the retention of proper reticence
They have backstage passes hanging around their necks

And upside-down watches pinned to their breasts
The same way ambulances reverse their names
So you know who they are
In mirrors

They offer me the name of a wing and the number of a room
Extend a finger in the general direction
And I realise that beyond this I shouldn't look to them
For any significant gesture

I search for the number as if it's an address on an unfamiliar street
Passing by slowly, peering into facades I've never seen
Finding only the consistency of an architecture designed to forget
And the vacancy of his face

He calls me by a name that is not my own
But remembers correctly that we both have webbed toes
At night, he tells me, he can see himself crawling like a spider
Along the crease of the ceiling, whilst he watches from his bed

Up high, in the corner of the room, almost too far to see
Something is on the television, with the sound down
I tell him that I have often had the same vision
That between us we account for eight limbs

And the doors will open because they are expecting us.

Winner adult section Darebin Mayors Writing Awards for Poetry

TREE

An Jiang

she is honey-haired, sad fanfare
the crunch of autumn, narcotics
sewn and threshed with sickle and scythe
the rejectamenta of marriage
banded by senseless rings around
tree-knot fingers (marking each year)
dark eyes eroding in green detergent
and she tells me she is happy

the trunk of her postpartum waist
is strangled with a compression wrap
the corners of her blood-drained lips
drooping their summer-melted flesh –
and the bruises are love marks
eddy across her thighs:
bluefish and bluebirds
trapped beneath sap and skin

if she is a tree, idyllic and idiotic
caught in the dead angles
of her long-harvested beauty
the cracked earth below cluttered
with rotten pomegranates, alone in a field
her outstretched arms barren of leaves and fruit –

if she is a tree, i must be a root
spreading from her foot like a shadow
clutching vile, blind tendrils
deeper and dirtier, claws sunken
into what she has forgotten
– you may very much be a tree
but don't forget you rose from me

WELCOME TO RESERVOIR: A SPOKEN ODE TO THE NORTH

Belinda Raposo

Welcome to Reservoir-
There is actually a *reserve-mah* here
but it belongs to Preston
and if you call it *Reserve-mah* you're a tosser who's
clearly never lived in Res-erve-or
 -Rezza- whose streets are too narrow
for two cars to pass without giving a gesture
one wave, palm out, fingers skyward for 'thanks'
one finger, out the window, for 'thanks for nothing, arse'
Streets so narrow 'cos they obviously never thought
all yous people would want to live here
 -they call it the last of the affordable here
in the united nations of Italian, Greek and Other
the cops will tailgate your mother
'cos she's driving her son's Skyline
and it's been dobbed into the hoon hotline
and someone stole my car the other night
I think I heard them do doughies
as they burned away into the night
but the cops were at the station
resisting gentrification
and arresting that guy in the white hoodie.

I'm standing on a traffic island
in the Bermuda triangle of Spring St, High St and Broadway
I wanna visit my friend in the west side but it'll take me all day
as I wait for the trains
both northbound and southbound I'm stranded
and I think I just saw my car...

Most of our neighbours grow persimmons, figs
and lemons in their front yards and
on a hot day you can smell the grapes fermenting in the air
and I wonder
if they take them out back for a big communal stomp down
feet and all

Vino di Reze-vorro

Some of our neighbours grow old couches
and kids trikes on their front lawns
and every corner has its own mattress
 take one they're *gratis* and
you don't get much for free in life anymore
In Reservoir just walk out your front door if
baby needs a bouncer 'cos Papa needs an ounce
so his car's on the Darebin Buy Swap and Sell
and if you think this is hell
get off the train in Ruthven
 - it's Zone 2 but
the rent's still the same

They say it isn't gentrified yet, some say it never will be
but the deconstructed brownies and salted caramel shakes
at Lady Bower tell me
nothing's gonna stay the same
and I know I'll have to move
I won't be able to stay
like every northern suburb pushing me back
As Westgarth begat Northcote, and
Northcote begat Thornbury, and Thornbury begat Preston
– don't forget about Croxton
and what'll happen to Ruthven?
Any further and we'll be living in no man's land
– Keon Park
Call me crazy but any suburb with a street named Dole Avenue
has got to be an ingénue
Undiscovered,
waiting to be worth her weight in gold
and when she is you can sell her streets
on a Broadway Pawn shop and gloat
that you knew Rezza before they knew Rezza
and started calling it *Reserve-mah*.

Reservoir, you can keep the car
but don't try and steal my bike again
I'm sure we can be friends
you've set my heart's compass a little further north
I can't afford to lose you
so let's open another bottle of
Vino di Reze – vorro
and call your thievery
and my snobbery even.

HE SAID NOTHING

Tim Trewartha

Ali had asked Mike because he owned a car and wasn't the type to talk behind her back. She hadn't seen him in a while. He'd filled out and had a haircut that suited him. He looked good, she thought. Really good. She'd told him so, but all he'd said was 'Thanks.' There was no chance he'd return the compliment and she wasn't expecting one. The look on his face was enough.

They drove through Collingwood, up Smith Street and left into Peel. It was a warm afternoon. They'd get to school in plenty of time. Ali lit a cigarette, her fourth since she got in the car. Mike didn't say anything but frowned and rolled his window down. She'd forgotten he'd quit.

Ali tried making small talk. She asked what he'd been up to ('Nothing much'), did he still see the old crew ('Nah') and how was Amy ('The fuck should I know?'). In the end it was too much. More so for Mike, he turned on the radio. She sat there, hands shaking, head throbbing, the old familiar itch starting up again. She'd get him to drop her around at Danny's place afterwards. It was a good place to scratch an itch.

Since then, there had been a long parade of short-term men. Men like Don. Some worse.

She'd been surprised when Mike had said yes. Their separation had been ugly. Ali still remembered the look on Mike's face when she told him she was still seeing Don. He took it badly, told her to fuck off. She did. But then Don ran away again, leaving her and their boy. Since then, there had been a long parade of short-term men. Men like Don. Some worse.

She had come prepared with offers of petrol money, booze or drugs and a sob story which, for the most part, was true.

'Just buy us coffee next time we catch up,' he'd said, adding, 'in three or five years' time, whenever suits you.'

Prick, Ali had thought. Passive aggressive, snide, fucking prick.

She'd ask him again later, to be polite.

They pulled into the car park opposite the school. Ali checked her phone – 3:20. Ten more minutes. She scratched at her jumper. There hadn't been any need for her to wear it. She had told Mike on the phone that she'd quit. It was an easy lie to tell. Lies were never too far from the tip of her tongue. She was waiting for Mike to say something about the jumper. *Take it off, it's hot.* He didn't. He said nothing.

Other Mums and some Dads stood at the gates. Some chatted amiably in small groups, others sat quietly in cars. Mike turned down the radio and checked something on his phone. Ali put her phone back in her bag.

'He's been here a month,' she said. 'I had no idea. Rang up his old school. They told me.'

But it wasn't just a new school. There was a new family. She'd been in touch with the Department. She didn't have any names and the woman on the phone didn't tell her why. It was only days later it hit her. She should have asked. Why didn't she ask? It may have been nothing.

Please let it be nothing.

The DJ on the radio was talking shit. She'd popped two valium before leaving home. They weren't helping. She should have bought a spare. Ali looked again at her phone. 3:23.

'Hurry up,' she said quietly.

'Have another smoke,' said Mike. 'That should kill some time. Then have another.'

'Why don't we just talk,' she said. 'You know, about the footy, or those arseholes in Canberra. Or what about the weather? Will summer never end?'

'OK,' Mike nodded slowly. 'How about those Pies? Great win on the weekend. Hope we get some rain soon, the farmers need it. And those arseholes in Canberra are fucking everything up, that's for sure.'

She looked at him. He didn't look at her. Ali lit another smoke and thought about getting out of the car. She undid her seat-belt and opened the door.

She walked around to the front and leant on the bonnet. She could feel its warmth pressing through her jeans into her thighs. It felt good to be outside, beneath the afternoon sun.

The sound of the bell, a droning, mournful ache, resonated from the school. Ali straightened herself. There he was, still too thin and way too small. There'd be no chance of him being asked to join any school football team. Did he even like footy anymore? Probably not, you discover new hobbies once primary school ends. His hair was longer, blonde and messy. He looked like Kurt Cobain. She wondered where he got his looks from. He didn't look like her, or Don. He stood out amongst the other, bigger boys, with their short, heavily styled haircuts and tight jeans. This was not a good thing. That day outside the court, the last time, she had cut his hair. How long ago was that, two years? Three? Had Don be there? No. Don was never there. Sometimes remembering stuff like that was hard. He shuffled slowly forward, head down and shoulders slumped.

The crowd parted and let him pass. He didn't look right – his clothes were too new, too big. It was if he had no identity, he was more a shape than a person. Ali looked down at her shoes and scuffed the gravel of the car park. She felt Mike's gaze burning into her back. Her face flushed. She did not turn around.

He didn't look right; his clothes were too new, too big. It was if he had no identity, he was more a shape than a person.

He was crossing the road. She watched him smile shyly at a girl stepping into a car. The girl didn't smile back. She was pretty; tall, long black hair, round eyes. As the car door slammed shut, the boy stood silently, watching the girl as intently as she ignored him.

Go to him, let him know it's all right, plenty of other less stuck-up fish in the sea, Ali said to herself. Why? How hard can it be say 'Hi?' It's just one little word.

She kicked at loose pebbles scattered on the footpath. She thought about Danny. She thought about money. She thought about hitting Mike up, saying it was for milk or bread, another fucking lie. She thought about everything and anything she would do once she got away from here.

Finally she turned around. Out of the corner of her mind's eye she caught a glimpse of a long gone summer. There they were in Mike's backyard, kicking the football, her son laughing at one end, trying hard to take a mark. Mike down at the other end of the yard, patient and quietly encouraging. Being everything the boy's father wasn't. She wondered what Mike thought of the boy now, how ridiculous he looked. She wondered if he had laughed. She felt her face flush again. He was closer now, clumsily rummaging through his bag. He pulled out a wilting salad sandwich and took a bite. She stepped away from the car and stood in front of him, arms open.

'James,' she said quietly.

He stopped and looked at her. His hands fell to his sides.

'James, it's me,' she said.

The boy tensed, his eyes meeting hers, unblinking, frightened. Ali took a step towards him. For a moment there was no bad haircut, no ill-fitting hand me downs. Just sunshine, a small child laughing, a ball high above in the air.

'I just want to...'

James flinched. He took a step back, then another. She reached out again. He whimpered and turned away. Ali lunged forward and grabbed hold of his ridiculous T-shirt. The boy moaned loudly before pulling free. She heard the sound of fabric ripping. Ali shook, her entire body trembled as she watched him run from her through dappled sunlight. Desire shattered, splintering into fine, crystalline pieces. Ali felt bile settle at the back of her throat. She gagged, she could taste every unspoken word, every imagined moment, every cheated memory.

He whimpered and turned away.
Ali lunged forward and grabbed
hold of his ridiculous T-Shirt.

He's gone.

The crowd parted again. Parents and children lined up to watch him disappear inside the school. Near a school crossing a lady spoke to a well-dressed man; the school Principal. Fingers were pointed, voices were raised. Between the two, conclusions were drawn and a decision made. The woman followed James. The man strode towards Ali.

She wasn't going to wait, no way. The school bell tolled as she ran back to the car. The Principal called for her to stop. But the bell was loud, it was hard for Ali to hear anything. She opened the car door and got inside. The radio was off, all was still. The Principal ran towards her, still shouting. Some parents followed behind. And there sat Mike, quietly waiting, his hands tight around the steering wheel. From the side of Mike's mouth came a sound not unlike that of a slowly deflating tyre. Mike closed his eyes and smiled. Ali stabbed at the radio, turning the volume up to maximum. All she could hear was the bell, screeching over and over again.

REMEMBER THIS FOREVER

Tania Chandler

Remember this forever, I tell myself as I take a photograph in my mind, because you'd be embarrassed if I whipped out my phone. You're standing just inside the high school gate – dipping your toe in, not ready to dive all the way yet. I can't believe you're taller than me. Your arms are crossed – the same as mine – fingers splayed, fidgeting with the sleeve of your Northcote High School shirt. Your translucent blue-green eyes flicker around, uncertain. You ask me to wait a bit. I should leave, let you go, get on with it – no other parents are hanging around – but I can't, not until you tell me it's OK. A friend you know from primary school approaches and your shoulders relax a little. You give me a quick, self-conscious hug; it's OK now. I cry behind my sunglasses all the way home on the tram.

Remember this forever, I told myself as I left you playing with marbles on your first day of primary school. Your teacher was gentle; the skin around her eyes crinkled when she smiled and I believed her promise that it would be OK. I cried as I waddled home, a third baby kicking in my belly.

Remember this forever, I told myself on your first day of kindergarten. You squeezed my hand tightly and tried to hide behind my legs. Your little sister was asleep in the baby sling strapped to my chest. Her fluffy orange sweater irritated my nose. We left you kicking a ball around the big elm tree. I sat in the car for a long time, crying, before I drove home.

When I saw you for the first time – a skinny thing, covered in blood – you looked more like a rabbit in a butcher's shop than a baby. Then the doctors whisked you away. Monitors, tubes, temperature instability, infections, blood tests, antibiotics; drips so hard to insert into tiny veins. The hands on the clock in the neo-natal intensive care unit didn't quite reach the numbers, so it was hard to tell what the time really was. The doctors said I could touch you through the portholes of your plastic crib, but you were too fragile to hold in my arms. I imagined you falling to pieces like a broken doll. They'd put a blue-and-white beanie on your head to keep you warm. I didn't cry when they told me to prepare for the worst, for letting go. I was looking at you and thinking that if they just let me hold you, I would never let you go.

Remember this forever, remember this forever, remember this forever.

CEMETERY

Lara Zembekis

Hades watched Proserpina rush by
In a blur of black.
'She's Roman,' said Hermes
'If you look at her twice you'll have to marry her.'
Hades eyes gleamed
'I have this whole realm to give to her,'
and he waved his arm towards the gate with the bicycle chain ornament
as though it was the entrance to the Crystal Palace.

Hades was the god of dead things.
It's thought things don't die
and yet
when Proserpina surveyed his realm
she counted one dead car
two dead bathtubs
three dead hot water services and four dead washing machines
hundreds of dead bike wheels, like art school mobiles
and millions of dead nails hidden in jars –
so many dead phones.
Those were some of the things she could name.
Others only materials:
sheaves of iron, entrails of wiring, a chimney of tiles
stands of wood propped like awkward guests at a party
innocent but rough around the edges
and glass, green-edged and shining.
Hades especially loved dead glass
his arms wide and full of hope
a gleaming pane carefully placed only to crack in the breeze;
a broken heart and a small shattered sea.

Everyone said his realm was dark but the sun still shone
if you looked up.
Everyone said his realm was dark but he grew
sunflowers as big as himself.
Proserpina knew Hade's secret –
he wanted to bring every dead thing back to life.
Every stick of wood was a fence
every brick was a wall
every sheet of iron was a roof
and every pane of glass
was a window for the sky.

Ceres wrung her hands
‘Why did you have to marry that Greek?
With a Roman you would have had a shiny kitchen –
now you’ve barely got a tap.’
‘Don’t cry mum things could be worse,’
said Proserpina as she thought of the liars, cheats, gamblers and thieves
the spendthrifts and porn-addled grifters
dark inside their white shirts
‘He’s shiny on the inside.’
Ceres wiped her eyes, ‘Yes but can’t he be shiny on the outside too?’

Proserpina looked in the mirror
and saw herself in black.
Darker than her mother
darker than Hades’ realm
like the queen in the famous poem
all glittering surfaces
her pomegranate full
of the rarest of rubies
seeds dead beyond burial
with a fire that fooled everyone
into forgetting they came from the bowels
of the earth cut open.
This kind of death dwarfed
Hades’ little cemetery
and she lived in his realm like it was
a city of light.

CIUDAD FANTASMAL, PARAMILLOS

Edward Caruso

Salt, at over 3000 metres,
between pre-cordillera and cordillera.
To reach the mines,
ores, veins of lead and silver,
fools gold and memories of slaves
naked in shafts of 10-degree heat;
after 20-hour days, once the body broke down,
expulsion, on foot for Chile,
without food and with little clothing,
in these valleys whose gales
descend from a Via Crucis,
wooden crosses and desert bushes.

Beyond life,
Tupungato, crest ever-blanketed,
a sky turned to glass,
its spent hearth hovering as breath,
for as long as light turns on itself.

These hours of following snow,
from slavery to death,
a blind Prometheus, his only consolation
the silence of dissolving nakedness,
desolation and innocence.
This final journey,
Tupungato allures.

RISHAKESH

Lorelei Hapman

The ink drained from my tattooed arms as I fell on the floor beside the bed, by way of avoiding your arms which sought to claim more than my gasps, soaked in rapture.

The sheets on the bed, twisted up like the stories you told me. My skin recoiled from your touch, as I shot holes in your tales of disregard and gallantry.

I became lost in the sound of you, in the sight of you, in the feel of your palms caressing my face. And soon there was nothing that I could do to recoil from your sharp tongue, cutting into my veins so that I bled again, crimson red gravy tinted by the ink from my tattoos which were drained in those days.

When I think of you, that room in Rishikesh is what I see. That musty old bed, which had held the backs of many a weary fool searching for oneness, praying for peace. That bed where we made love and smoked cigarettes for days, as the rain poured down outside. The floor where we threw our worn out clothes that stayed damp, despite our efforts to dry them. The windowless box where we listened to Bob Dylan and laughed of your stories of the years between. You didn't ask me how my years had been spent. Nor did you ask me for my soul to be laid down, the way you once had.

When I met you, you were without scruples. When I met you, you could not write. But you loved me still, with thoughtless caresses, and fingertips that lied to the wind.

When I met you, you were without control. When I met you, you could not read. But you held me still, in your fields of self-pity and callousness that threw itself down upon my mercy.

When I met you I was foolish. And foolish I was again, as we lay in that windowless room in Rishakesh, the wind whistling like a sailor through the night. Asking questions, bending memories, allowing me to forget once again.

Sometimes I don't think I'll ever know if you were my life's greatest love, or my life's greatest mistake.

SAINT AMELIE MAURESMO

Belinda Raposo

It was 1995 and Pearl Jam was poetry
& on the border of Carlton, Brunswick and Hell
girls shuffled uneasily in their chastity belts
watching SBS films on a Saturday night
smuggling desire like contraband
they're showing Betty Blue & that belt's starting to itch
& boys marched off to the red light specials
with crisp new unopened packets of condoms
from uncles with pockets lined with green
gifted from nonna to make their boy a man

& I was looking for Alibrandi or someone like her
Who wasn't hung up on the Aussie boys &
using Mum roll-ons as pretend boyfriends
in her parents baroque Franco Cozzo bed
while they're out at midnight messa confessing alike to
both having *fatto le corna* with La Spagnola next door
& while they're all crossing & genuflecting
you're dreaming of tennis lessons with a coach who's built like Amelie Mauresmo
& when you take her home to eat at Nonna's
it's all good because she thinks you've brought home
'a nice boy'

FOR MY FATHER

Eugene Donnini

Relieved to see
the cine-sound news
of Mussolini
swinging from a pole,

you redeemed yourself,
married an Anglo,
became king of a run down
Brunswick brick veneer.

Where middle Australia
grew lawn, you grew tomatoes,
and around the periphery
drove in stakes for a vine,

crushing your grapes
through thirty seasons
of home-made wine.

Like the crucifix
around your neck,
you wore your clothes for comfort,
not to conceal or impress,
sometimes getting a little pissed off
with the poses and accents
your children stressed:

'look papa – look how we've grown!
how youth, knowledge and fashion,
weave about our lives and dress'
to which 'non capisci niente!' you'd replied,

looking away through onyx eyes
to tougher days and climes, soldered
by the vigor of a simple faith.

Working ten hour shifts
down the road at Hoffman's bricks,
feeding furnaces, cutting back rock.

I can still see you now
in that old blue singlet,
winding down each day
with a bottle of red,

your face peppered
with brick dust
over a gossamer
of sweat, your black

Tuscan hair, splintered
with silver wisps,
a temple bar burning down
between your lips.

LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR

Jayne Caruso

Flames of fire
ravage my body
head pounds

Howling wind
ruthlessly beats
the windowpane

Distant thunder
echoes nearer
down the driveway

I lift my head
striving
to snatch a glimpse

The thunder morphs
into rattling wheels
of my rubbish bin

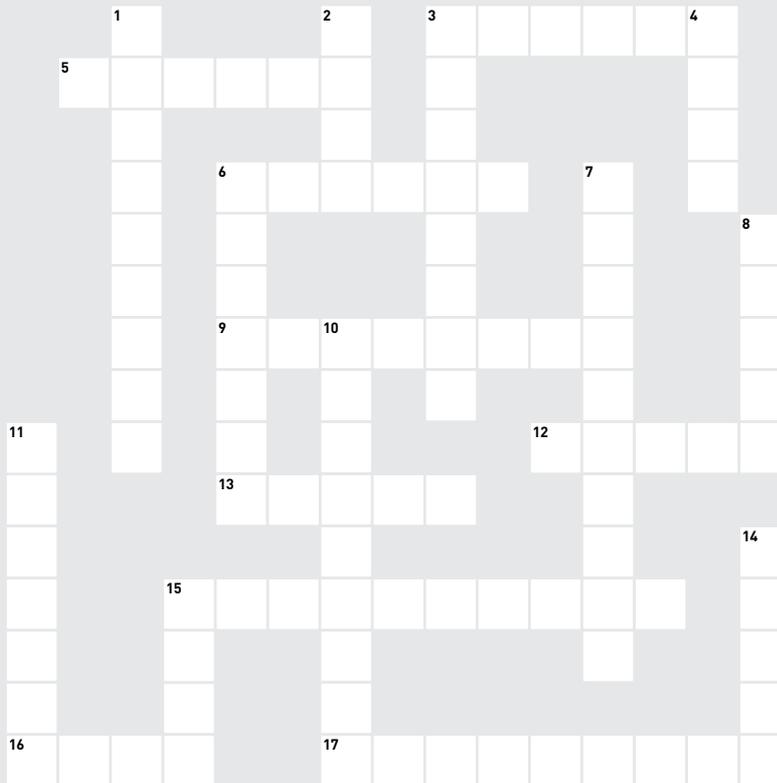
My neighbour
braving the elements
delivers kindness

He wraps his jacket
closer to his body
and staggers away

I sink back into bed
my heart
fills with gratitude

LOST IN NORTHCOTE: A CRYPTIC TALE OF STREETS, LANES AND BYWAYS

Carl Walsh



ACROSS

- Raw elk shuffled on foot (6)
- Church of England bookends mischievous bird, writes a space odyssey (6)
- Manservant starts bullish uppity talk like English royal (6)
- Queen in state (8)
- C&Y sweet American (5)
- Gulliver travels fast (5)
- Loveable Peak district village regroups on rat thing (10)
- Rambler auto sounds like grinding teeth (4)
- Belongs to cross English dragonslayer (2-7)

DOWN

- British Liberal PM pleased with rocks (9)
- Curved beginning but end not true (4)
- H2O joins toilet to win battle for Eurovision 1974 (8)
- 'Read' I said dire and confused (4)
- Be averse among dam rodents (7)
- Rap into sea, confused divide between you and me (10)
- Sir Redmond at the bar, rye whiskey inside (5)
- Mast end to fore, after Chris or Noel (9)
- Local council risk rubbish container (7)
- Sounds like Moby Dick and co. found west of England (5)
- Hello, not low (4)

ALEX IS IN LOVE WITH DAVID

Anna Forsyth

For Alex, Tuesday night became a long, winding tunnel through the jungle by train. The podcast, 'David Attenborough in Paradise', had her thinking. David turned in their double bed, still cloaked with the sour smell of sweat. *Now I'm leaving that dark world of the forest.* Alex was still in the dark forest, with all its tropical pungency. She was on a train that was travelling through one in slow motion, listing in a slow, steady rhythm.

She had time to capture still frames in her mind. *What first drew me to the bear? One bear in particular really caught my interest. I met her when she was just a cub 13 years ago. It's great to see her after all this time, but does she remember me? I certainly remember her.* And so on. Alex was tossing and turning, in between yawns. She stretched her body out as long as she could under the feather duvet, awash with pleasure. David's voice: *A raffishly handsome insect with long elegant legs and a glossy black and scarlet body.* The sound of rain. Sleep evaded her.

By morning, Alex was exhausted. Exhausted. *David is from another planet. Does he even sleep? Does he hug orangutans in his dreams, in Borneo... or was it... Indonesia?* The dining room in their one-bedroom apartment is like a stage set. Just a nondescript chair and a table. A poster of an orangutan on the wall. *Save the bloody orangutans.*

Alex was enjoying her marmite toast when she heard David's key in the door. A script she has read many times. David: (addresses the audience): *In all my years of exploration these are the creatures I find most curious.* His heavy shoes are clotted with the forensics of his daily pre-dawn garden visits. Alex eyes the streak on the rug by the door. 'Inchworm, inchworm, measuring the marigolds...'. He is sifting the coffee in the bottom of the plunger. He has to be meticulous; scientific.

In all my years of exploration these are the creatures I find most curious

Does he even sleep? Does he hug orangutans in his dreams, in Borneo... or was it... Indonesia?

And off she goes so sweetly – gently but flamboyantly launching the oversized walnut down the frozen river. Alex exits stage right, stomping. Pontificating. That’s the word for it. I’m a city girl. He should know that. I would tree plant in gumboots to impress him, but he’d be off... The river gently frisking in the foreground. Watch as the alpha female displays her dominance over the herd by tapping the end of the frisking broom to check for rogue insects. Sigh. Sigh.

Alex drifts in and out on the tide of sleep again the next night. A brain scan would later show unusual electrical activity. *I’ve collected electric catfish. They grow very big indeed. And if you were silly enough to put both hands on one, you’d be thrown flat on your back. It’s a risk I’ve only ever taken once. I’ve learned my lesson.*

Ants arrive. Enjoy the feeding frenzy at that time.

Marrow fat doesn’t sound tremendously appetizing, but it is hugely nutritious.

Interviewer: *When you see this sort of stuff, do you ever get a sense of God’s pattern?*

When you go into your own backyard are you thinking, ‘Oh, there’s something!’

It took me three days to get to Sierra Leone, which is that bulge on the left-hand side of Africa. Dinner conversation. Sigh, sigh. Mistaking the guests for seasoned travellers. People that care. There’s a sweet drink in South America, you know, which is made by old ladies chewing cassava and spitting it into a large pot and letting it ferment for three or four days, after which it tastes exactly like something not sweet, but not sour... smells exactly like vomit.

‘Oh for God’s sake David!’ Alex wakes in a cold sweat; David oblivious to his whiskey-induced sickness.

It had been droll at the dinner up until that point. Louisa with yet another bespectacled face. They all look the same. David: *‘I’ve always found lesbianism fascinating... tell me...’* Alex twitched as she served the cannelloni. Whiskey bottle diminishing; David more detailed; more outlandish. *Fascinating. Fascinating. The honey note... the smoky one I had in the Scottish Highlands... etcetera.*

Louisa had taken Alex aside to lecture her about spectrums. *These days...* Alex laughs her off, as old friends do. *Curiosity. That’s all it is.*

Wednesday night was an experiment in delayed gratification. *The next episode wouldn’t happen until Thursday.* Alex detested schedules. She surprised David with an unexpected bear hug at the sink. Risotto fascination over. Face off over the charred results. Her fault of course. *The men of the village adhere to a strict mating protocol, but can pick up the scent of pheromones from quite a distance... a lack of cultural adaptation may result in...*

And Thursday was on. Both the David’s she knew. Running commentary of course. A meticulous surveillance of the lay of the land. No detail missed, no stone unturned so to speak. *A glorious spectacle of a woman.*

I KNIT

Laura Brinson

Knit one purl one knit one
The rib slowly grows
my mothers needles bend
her grip so tight
She taught me patience
And how to knit

Click click click and slide
pick up stitches turn the heel
looking at my hands I see an image
of anothers
my mothers
intertwining yarn
connected loops

Knit one, slip one, pass slip stitch over
wrapping the family in cables
and diamonds
loose skin over knuckles but still
working the family
into the fold

All done now
her hands are still
only my needles still tap
the long refrain
bright stripes beautiful socks
the colours of the garden
blossoming on my toes

THE BACK OF AN OLD MAN'S NECK

Jaz Stutley

He showed me shadows –
Holding up knives and forks to the wall
In the pre-dawn kitchen.
I sat on his knee. Scores of years ago,
canterbury bells and the garden
were threshed for a car-yard.

In a later house, his teacups
filled with butts. His only vice.
They drank Pimms and lemonade
on their anniversary.
When she died in the crash
so did he, but struggled to look alive.

His new wife and I disagreed.
I left them for aunts and flats,
marriages and partings.
He adapted; saw San Francisco,
cultivated orchids, collected coins.
And always, bowls and 'the shop'.

Thirty-three years ago, the shadows returned –
his will to die larger than life.
And still I am deceived for an instant
by silver hair, a certain trick of the light;
or, glimpsed in a passing car,
the back of an old man's neck.

OUT THE BACK

Andrew Brion

The shame
Chafes like a cyclist's raw behind.
Who thought the sly nuzzling up
Of sneaky years
Would wear away the body so?

I want to lie horizontal, stretched out
Like a beach flat under the sun,
A salt bath near at hand.
Sunburn might camouflage the blush, of shame, of shame,
The rough ravage of time.

Bending is not so easy now
My rigid wall resists the need to yield before life's gusty winds
Which blow things to the ground,
Seeds of weeds to my beds.
In time even the stony cliff is undermined by air.

The pain confines
Restricts the luscious rolling curves of life,
Like a corset, to straight lines.
It minimises: a diet
Sucking out delicious calories from days.

And still there is the ruddy shame:
The flames of nimble youth have burned
Down, down - and now just smoulder, embers red.
Pain makes a fist, threatens to spread,
A grassfire out the back.

A GREAT NIGHT-TIME SECRET: FOXES AT DAREBIN PARKLANDS

An interview with Peter Wiltshire | Cynthia Troup

Peter Wiltshire has been a ranger at the Darebin Parklands for thirty years, and Senior Ranger since 1989. He is responsible for the development, maintenance, and administration of the parklands. Back in 2010, when interviewed for the local Leader newspaper, Peter mentioned that Victoria is home to an estimated one million foxes, with a density of ten foxes per square kilometre in Melbourne – a density higher than in rural areas, at four foxes per square kilometre. Cynthia Troup filed these facts away until 2014, when writing the theatre work Undercoat: A Parafoxical Tale. She sought Peter out at the offices of the Darebin Creek Management Committee, and recorded this interview.

CT Peter, many thanks for agreeing to speak with me, as someone who knows a great deal about foxes in the inner urban landscape.

CT What was the third method that came to mind?

CT Even if fumigation had seemed to succeed, fox populations can be very mobile, can't they?

PW I happen to see a lot of foxes: European red foxes, *Vulpes vulpes*. I admire them, they're extraordinary creatures, and very pretty too. They also annoy me, they kill so many animals.

From my professional perspective, foxes are protected in the Darebin Parklands by default. In practice, we rangers are unable to control the fox population, even if we wanted to, because the means available for fox control are difficult to use in the urban environment, and because foxes are so smart, and so aware. Technically there are three control methods available to us, or rather two: baiting of foxes, and fumigation of fox dens. Both are unsatisfactory.

PW Oh shooting, because thirty years ago it was actually permissible to shoot foxes. Things have changed. These days baiting is permitted, and we've tried bait stations; that's how we know how many foxes are around. It was amazing to discover how much fox activity takes place in the parklands, especially on the Banyule side. Anyway we've learnt that bait stations aren't practical here, partly because of how many dog walkers use the parklands and refuse to put their dogs on leashes when requested. The poisoned bait could be picked up by domestic animals, and of course that would be tragic for pet-owners, their families, the community. Naturally enough members of the general public can become angry, even paranoid about baits. So we can't risk baiting.

We know of two fairly large active dens, and we've tried fumigation with carbon monoxide flares, called Denco Fumes. When using them we found that we needed to be careful to avoid wearing any strong smells, such as aftershave or deodorant; we would have to be downwind of the den. Foxes are so sensitive, if you approach a den, well, they're on to you! Every time we've used the flares, every time we think we've knocked out an active den, I've turned around – and a fox is there. It's looking straight at us, as if to say, 'good on you mate, what are you doing to my home?' Fumigation has never worked here.

PW Sure. I spoke to Ian Temby about the dens; he's an expert on wildlife in Australia (he wrote the book *Wild Neighbours: Backyard Wildlife*). Ian has said that once you remove foxes, others will just move in to occupy the same dens. And, fair enough, although we try to destroy them, the dens at Darebin Parklands make good homes – for a roast chicken dinner, there's a Red Rooster store just down the road!

In reality, foxes are a great night-time secret, and you have to be looking for them to see them. They're quite small, dainty animals, only a little bigger than feral cats. I lead night-time spotlight walks here, and sight an incredible number of foxes. Most of them are very, very nervous: they see you, and they're flighty, moving continually. They disappear into the grass, they're agile, extremely fast, well balanced.

Even so, there are areas in the park where I can almost guarantee I'll find foxes with a spotlight. Of course they're always circling the wetlands, forcing all the waterfowl out into the middle of the water.

- CT** For survival?
- PW** Yes, at night the waterfowl huddle in groups in the middle of the wetlands, while the foxes run around the water's edge. There are more foxes in the urban area than in the country, by far. These days people keep their own chooks in their urban backyards. About three years ago, in Bennet Street Alphington, every household that was keeping chooks lost all their birds in one night – just wiped out. All the residents asked me, 'what do you do about your foxes?'. Well, the foxes are probably under your house, they're everywhere, their numbers are so high around here.
- CT** Are they alone when you spotlight them?
- PW** Other than a vixen with cubs, they're always solitary. Have that image of a tiger slinking through the grass, that's what the foxes can look like. They're easy to see during the spotlight tours; when we shine light on their eyes, they reflect green, like cats' eyes. Possums' eyes reflect an orange colour, but when we catch the foxes out around the wetlands, we see green eyes reflect back.
- CT** Over your time as Senior Ranger here, have you definitely seen an increase in the fox population?
- PW** To be honest, no. I started working here when the parklands were remnants of a tip site, and there were more foxes in this immediate area back then. They were such a problem that, with a co-worker, one of the first things I did was hire a company called Melton Aviaries. A group of guys arrived to hunt out the foxes with old – school shotguns and little fox terriers. We also had rabbits here, another invasive species. There are still rabbits upstream, but we eradicated rabbits from Darebin Parklands, and this had a dramatic impact on the number of foxes.
- Still, foxes adapt very easily, and new food sources appear: the car parks and rubbish bins of fast food outlets, for instance; a lot of local residents have pets, feed them outside, and there's dog food to be had; we've built five wetlands here, and introduced waterfowl, another new food source. On balance I suspect that the level of the fox population is static at Darebin Parklands at the moment.
- Remember that foxes are opportunistic feeders. If they can't catch chooks, they're just as happy to eat insects, that's why they're such great survivors. Like bears, they can moderate their diet. We have a program to discourage Indian Myna birds in the Darebin Parklands, and if Mynas are caught in the traps, sometimes the foxes will manage to bite the birds' heads off during the day. Ringtail Possums are usually taken by the Powerful Owls, but fox damage on an animal such as a Ringtail Possum or a Brushtail Possum is easy to see: usually foxes eat out the belly section, and leave the back leg muscles and the front leg muscles. They eat Blue-tongue Lizards, skinks, and there's no doubt they're after the waterfowl all the time. Especially in spring, one day I'll see twelve ducklings on the pond, and the next day there are six. For Ivanhoe Wetlands we created two islands, purely so waterfowl can breed without the hindrance of foxes. Foxes don't seem to kill the parrots and the lorikeets – the cats do that.
- CT** Speaking hypothetically, do you think that the fox population at the Darebin Parklands could continue to increase over time?
- PW** That's a good question.

CT It's based on the idea of symbiotic dependence between humans and species such as foxes, particular kinds of birds, other highly adaptive creatures that are becoming ubiquitous in urban environments around the world. In principle, this represents an erosion of biodiversity. Yet in terms of nature flourishing with its own momentum, as species, the human being and foxes are both doing extremely well at this time of planetary environmental crisis.

CT What would be the fox's natural predator in this kind of inner urban environment?

CT The fox is said to be one of the most intelligent animals in the world –

PW In some sense you're asking about biological succession. Indian Myna birds are very aggressive, and in regard to arboreal species and native birds they're probably wiping out biodiversity more quickly than the foxes. The Indian Mynas are the new real estate agents here.

Will foxes take over the urban world? Well, as I said, we aren't doing much about the foxes at Darebin Parklands, so I think the local fox population has achieved a sustainable level. I don't think the foxes will overpopulate a single area, because a higher density would start affecting the health of the collective. My observation is that when the foxes move out, they shift into other areas and adapt. These parklands are not unique as an environment in which foxes can succeed: next door there's an industrial site; the Yarra River's not that far away, and Yarra Bend Park is the largest area of natural vegetation near the city – there are quite a few areas in which the foxes can spread out if they want to.

In terms of interaction between foxes and humans, foxes have great noses, for scent they're very highly placed as a species. This means they're always going to find edible rubbish discarded by humans. At the parklands we've had evidence of foxes opening our rubbish bins, particularly near the barbecue area. They learnt to jump onto the barbecues, lift the lids of the rubbish bins, and pull the rubbish out. In that situation we had to relocate the bins, and make sure that the lids are tricky to lift. I've also found evidence in fat bins, seeing fox footprints in cooking fat that has seeped out. At the dens I find scraps from McDonald's and Hungry Jacks; burger wrappers and chip packets from all kinds of fast food outlets. Wherever people throw their rubbish out of cars, the foxes collect it and take it to their dens.

PW I believe they're the top of the food chain in Victoria; there's nothing above them. Dogs might chase them and give them a scare, that's about it!

PW Oh yes, Indian Mynas, all the pests seem to be really smart, but foxes are super smart. They can make you feel foolish when you're trying to observe them. They sense everything, they know where you are, what your program is, so in fact you don't track foxes, foxes track you.

The Darebin Parklands is a bushland reserve of thirty-three hectares surrounding the Darebin Creek where it flows between the City of Darebin and the City of Banyule. You can find out more about the Darebin Parklands at www.dcmc.org.au.

Cindy Troup's new work Undercoat: A Parafoxical Tale will be part of La Mama Theatre's annual Explorations season in December 2015. It's a supernatural tale of encounter with the Australian wilderness, in which the wilderness 'answers back' as a provocative chorus of three red foxes.

NORTHCOTE'S HIDDEN PAST

Carl Walsh

In the late 1860s Northcote was on the edge of a small but expanding Melbourne.

Excepting the settlement in Westgarth, much of what we now know as Northcote was agricultural land: orchards, piggeries and turnip fields.

Dotted here and there were the large homes of those who had struck it rich on the goldfields, worked out ways of relieving the recently rich of their money or simply grown sufficient numbers of turnips to make their fortune.

Mr T. King, in his seminal nineteenth century work *Mud, clay, shale, bones and more mud* documented the turning point for Northcote. The moment it got its hand dirty, as it were, and became the claypit for much of boomtown Melbourne.

Like all good stories, this story started at the pub. Or more truthfully behind the pub, the 'Carter's Arms', where turnip farmer turned publican, John Roberts, discovered clay. This is of course, all well know and on the public record, so I won't bore you with stories of the Groom brothers, the Patent Brick Company or its successor the Northcote Brick Company. I will take this all as read.

No, what I would like to draw your attention to, are the little known Northcote dinosaur finds, that, were it not for King, would have been lost to our knowledge forever. There remains (as far as I can tell) but one well-thumbed copy of his masterwork, unknown to all but the keenest of bibliophiles. I must confess I stumbled upon it completely by accident – not in a library but at a second-hand book sale, where it lurked between Mills and Boons, Readers Digests and the odd Jeffery Archer.

Before talking too much about the book, I should set the scene a little. Imagine if you will, travelling from the city down High Street to Separation Street. Instead of feasting your eyes on Northcote Plaza, you see the smoking chimney of a kiln and hear the clatter of industry. The chugging and clanking of extrusion and pressing machines ring in your ears, the grinding of pugmills and the curses of hard labouring men. Your nose is filled with the smell of coal smoke and on your lips you taste the acrid tang of brick dust.

All Nations Park is a moonscape of pits where men are digging out the clay (though the concept of a moonscape is alien in that world) and you dodge cartloads of bricks as they rattle past to make their way to the many and varied building sites of Melbourne.

Mr King was almost as alien to that world as you and I. A self-educated man, of some wealth, and a lover of natural history, he became fascinated, even pre-occupied, with the brickworks. Whilst much of his book duplicates other sources, and is pedestrian at best, the later chapters bring to lights King's own experiences and finds.

It is perhaps best to begin at the beginning by quoting Mr King on the moment things changed:

I was walking through the clay-pit after the men had stopped for lunch. In between cast off shovels and upturned wheelbarrows, there protruded from the clay a large bone about six inches thick and near on three foot long. I quickly scabbled away at the base to reveal more bones, looking very like the hand or foot of a large creature.¹

Mr King ran to the site's overseer, gabbling about the need to examine the site in more depth – certain the bones could only be from a dinosaur. The entrepreneurial brickmakers were less than excited at the thought of dinosaurs in the clay and keen to do their level best to keep this suggestion away from the ears of the government palaeontologist, for fear the site would be closed down.

¹ T.King, *Mud, clay, shale, bones and more mud*, Cretaceous Press, London, New York and Ulan Bator, 1889, p. 236

King, whilst not naturally astute, was quick to realise this conflict of interest himself, for he continues:

*At that point I was shoved somewhat roughly aside by a large bellicose man who scooped up the bones I had so lately been examining and made a bee-line for the crushing plant. I can but think that there are bricks now within our city that contain the hand or foot of what I have come to understand was a rare and uncommon dinosaur – undocumented elsewhere in the world.*²

Somewhat uncharacteristically, King decided to be more surreptitious and circumspect in his examination of the claypits. He also decided to keep news of the finds to himself, though whether to ensure continued access to the site or get the jump on the leading lights of Melbourne's scientific community is unclear to this day.

All in all, this was not too hard, as public transport had yet to wend its way out to the far reaches of Northcote, and the luminaries of the science world rarely liked to venture far beyond the city centre. In the main, they were happy to observe and experiment with the coffee houses, illicit drinking establishments, opium dens and other less salubrious establishments that made up Melbourne at the time.

Mr King was himself brave venturing out to such a place. That he did so at night, with a hurricane lamp, only leaving again in the cold light of dawn is even more remarkable. In doing so, King documented and named two new dinosaur species.

The Northcote clay perfectly preserved not only dinosaur bones but also aspects of their surrounding habitat. As egg laying creatures, dinosaurs build elaborate nests, mostly on the ground but also, in the case of the smaller species, in trees. King found evidence of these nests in the Northcote clay:

*In one recently excavated pit, I found at the edge a wall of preserved branches, complete with berries, near seven foot high. Having taken a sample, to compare with drawings at the museum, I later identified these branches as *ilex arnhemensis* or native holly. Around the base of the nest were chunks of bluestone, as if to buttress the walls to take the weight of these mighty beasts. The nest was littered with the bones and carcasses of the lost fauna of a lost world.*

When King returned to the same pit the following evening he found the wall of branches gone; however, digging in the base of the pit with a mattock and spade he made another discovery. Amongst shards of eggshell were the partial remains of a smaller dinosaur. At first King thought he had found a hatchling of the larger dinosaur but as his understanding of the claypits deepened he realised this was a second and different species. He described this dinosaur in his book:

Small rodent-like dinosaurs, they scavenged amongst the nests of bigger species, eating the dung of other dinosaurs as well as their eggs and young.

He named this species the Sladenosaurus after then Victorian Premier Charles Sladen. That he chose to name this species after Sladen, suggests King may not have been a fan of the short-lived Victorian premier or the politics of the then prevailing conservative majority.³

Curiously, the eggshells found with the Sladenosaurus showed signs of charring. As King, over the months and years of his research found more eggshells, he discovered this was common. The eggs had been subjected to heat. But what on earth could have burnt the eggs of the larger dinosaur?

The earth itself finally gave up an answer, months later, when King stumbled upon an almost complete skull of the small Sladenosaurus. I say stumbled, as this seems apt:

Each time I returned to the clay-pit, my lamp casting an eerie light and bouncing shadows off the sides of the pit, it was as if entering a new world. Not only did it look different as it

² *ibid*

³ The author notes that this was King's view and does not, in any way, represent the author's view. Particularly if you are a litigious lawyer

was dug deeper into the earth but it also changed with seasons, dry and cracking in summer, slush and puddles in winter. It was in winter when wading through a puddle in the base of the pit that my foot caught on something and I fell. I dragged my hand through the frigid waters and cut it on something sharp...

King had snagged his hand on the sharp tooth of a Sladenosaurus. Digging hurriedly, as the wet and chill sank into his skin, he found the skull. He took it back, like all his finds, to his lodgings in Melbourne. Pouring over it, in the daylight, before his obsessive nocturnal return to the claypits, he realised the teeth of the Sladenosaurus also showed evidence of charring. This charring was darker than the eggshells, as if the teeth had been subjected again and again to fire and heat:

They were rock hard-tempered like forged metal. It took me some time to establish the enormity of what this meant. Tongue rasping against the roof of its mouth, like a Lucifer match, the Sladenosaurus had ignited its gaseous belching to bring forth fire.

Nineteenth century commentators suggest it was at this very point, the importance of his find weighing upon his mind, the exertions of his night-time escapades weighing upon his body, that something clicked inside King. Frantic days of examination and research in his lodgings was followed by frantic scribbling:

Near the skull, I found one last great find. In the clay, long slender fingers, with skin stretched between them like vellum or parchment, for all the world like bat's wings. Brittle as autumn leaves, they crumbled away as I lifted them up into the light.

The revelation, that the Sladenosaurus had wings and breathed fire, marked the end of King's journeys to Northcote. He painted one last picture of the scene:

Searing the night sky with flashes of light, like some mythical beast, the Sladenosaurus played and fought and loved in a tumult of colour as if a Catherine Wheel exploding. The sounds of their internal combustions ringing out like penny bangers at a fireworks display. They would dip down to the earth and steal an egg from a nest, placing it into a pool and using their flames to heat the water. I can see them, in my mind's eye, reflected in the pools, their flames flaring, steam rising from their nostrils, until the egg boiled. I have found the depressions in the clay they used for eggcups and even some evidence of poaching.

With these tantalising words King's writing falls silent. He wrote no more of the Sladenosaurus or the larger dinosaur, that he came to call the Northcotosaurus (after Stafford Henry Northcote, 1st Earl of Iddesleigh, you've rightly guessed).

Some of you will, no doubt, be unsure of the veracity of Mr T. King's findings. You will not be the first. We live in an age of evidence, of the 24-hour newscycle. Nothing is new anymore, least of all history which has been retold ad nauseum by the victors and swept under the carpet where unnecessary, uncomfortable or just the wrong kind of story.

Mr King has had his detractors. When his work was first published the prominent critic T.C. Tops wrote: 'Mr King is to palaeontology what Genghis Khan is to hoarding.'⁴ Mr King is said to have countered that Tops 'was spinning out of control' and 'a danger to himself and the broader scientific community.'⁵ It remains uncertain exactly what either of them meant.

I, for one, have been convinced by Mr King's work.

Short of forensic examination of our bricks and mortar or digging through layer

upon layer of rubbish under All Nations Park, we are, however, unlikely to ever know for sure.

⁴ T.C. Tops, 'I've a bone to pick with King', *The Argus*, 29 February 1897

⁵ R. Apton, 'Bronte never saw us: a memoir', private diary extract 17 March 1897 (unpublished).

THE SOUND OF LIFE

Tjoni Johansen

Once again I am pummelled by noisy invasion. Closer and closer it leers. Worse than recent memories that sit rigid in my body. Etching into head, heart, arms, face, it fills my throat with a peach stone of dread. An invasion on every level.

It reminds of a time in distant memory, trying to be good, trying to be ok. Being pushed, prodded, meeting harassment and judgement at every corner, every moment. Instruments of moulding taunting, teasing, aggressively pursuing my demise, with the lecherous appetite of a vulture circling spirits of the dead, or broken, or barely there. Pushing and pushing, circling and preying. There's nowhere left to hide. It doesn't matter how deep I push myself into sharp corners, how miniscule I make myself, how quiet I am, how little space I take up. Even to dissolve so I can seep into the shadows and take up no light at all. How small and invisible can one possibly become? How deep do I have to dig to get some peace? Is it deeper than a grave?

Speak not a word, utter no sound, shed not a breath, release no tear. Stay small and small and small and use all your might to hide and blend into the darkness. What is the safety there if the pursuers are darker than the black night itself? What if their darkness is so great it swells into a black hole and sucks you in whether you are visible or not? What if the blackness is so vast and malevolent it sucks the very ether out of your spirit. So, nothing can reside. Not even night, for it is so much darker than even that.

And then, I ask myself, from what is it you hide?

From myself. From the womb. From all that holds me to myself... as I was. I have no right to reside within myself. I can only live through like minds of others. And so, remain separate from myself, for hope in distance I may make some contribution.

Wretched glowing.

The price of love is that one can be seen.

Seen brightly.

When darkness falls on battered hearts it lays its depth in wander, daring and cajoling the beat beneath to continue in hiding until it mends its wounded holes.

Holes born into time. Holes bore into time. Wholeborn into time.

Tantric webs overflow with grief unless the darkness holds them in good stead. And thus from the sunken cold mass the nights collect all the rotten dreams and memories from their keepers and condense them into a mighty oil seam strewn thick and heavy through rock and soil. Ready to emerge in another time as a fossilised memory; come precious as a jewel by nought but gestation in its wake. Peace come now, gently, but firmly. Feel this rot. Feed this misery. And know the true blessings that it births are truer than the dark night in which you still dwell.

Stay true. Feel your true. Even when the world says it isn't so, know it to be so. Your true.

Even in those darkest days count each bittersweet moment as another drop in the ocean that will feed your soul. And it is now, trust that, trust this, trust me, your golden dawn is coming, and swiftly so, be ready for flight.

APRICOT CROWD

Melissa Hamlyn

Apricot
chicken dinner and
Hey Hey It's Saturday on the
TV. Summer holidays were almost
over. I went for a walk to wear in my new
shoes. A packet of Holiday 35s in menthol
for mum and a lolly bag for me. I only ate the
spearmint leaves and blackcats. A car screams
down road, the exhaust spews black smoke as
it pulls into the driveway. Five pairs of black
doc martens at the front door. I stare at the
verandah. Nothing. A man's silhouette
appears as he draws on his cigarette,
the red tip revealing his
hiding place.

SUNSET PRIEST

Melissa Hamlyn

The sun was a blinding blood orange hue so heavenly it left Picasso's Rose period for dead. An irrational autumn day mistaking itself for a February heat-wave. I saw him spitting watermelon seeds at the pigeons through my camera lens. He used to be a Priest in Kathmandu. Fixated on my tattoos and twisting my arm to read the Sanskrit inscription he asked 'Are your parents hippies?' No, they live in London.' We gazed over at the monumental chess set. The pieces reminded me of a Freudian dreamscape. Temptation and envy transcended by the mantra inked on my arm.

Isami wheeled Hiro to the veranda window. As a little boy his brother loved the sea. Today, the two blues of sea and sky stretched unbroken to the horizon. Hiro would never walk on the beach again but he still enjoyed the sight of gulls gliding over waves. Isami watched his brother's head turn towards the water. 'I'll make us something to eat.'

Hiro raised a hand in response.

With the miso heating, Isami shifted his attention from slicing the bonito to his brother. He hadn't moved, as if he was part of an Aoki watercolour.

Hiro closed his eyes and let the soft tapping of knife blade against chopping board fade away. For a moment he felt nothing, then ease. With a new breath he opened his eyes to the sea's panorama. He longed to be part of it.

A small powerboat raced across the water. Hiro chose not to hear it as it skipped over the waves; instead he joined the dots of its splashes. Movement where the waves break caught his eye. From the shallow rose what seemed a mermaid until slender legs emerged. An elegant young lady made her way up to a low dune, wringing water from her hair.

She picked up a blue towel and draped it across her shoulders then turned to watch the boat disappear. Now they were alone.

'Over there is the new world.'

She looked at Hiro. 'How do you know? Have you been there?'

'Yes. It was a while ago, but I've been there.'

'What's it like?' She turned to the horizon.

The girl sounded genuinely interested; Hiro felt heartened. 'It's very different. Very crowded. Everyone is hurrying to somewhere with never enough time to get there.'

'You're funny.'

'I'm Hiro.'

'Naoko.'

'Hello, Naoko.'

She faced him. 'Hello, Hiro.'

They laughed.

'Do you swim?' she asked.

'A little.'

'My grandparents were pearl divers. My mother used to go out with them. When she was old enough she joined them.'

'They must have found many precious pearls,' Hiro said.

'Grandmother said that my mother had the most precious pearl that could ever be found.'

'And did she?'

'According to my grandmother, yes.'

'Hungry?' Isami asked, as he placed slices of bonito into two bowls.

Hiro raised his hand.

Isami gave his brother some extra fish, then added some thinly sliced carrot and spring onion before ladling in the steaming broth. 'It's beautiful,' Isami said, gazing seaward, as he placed the bowls on the table. 'Some mornings it glows with a crown of stars. At times I wish that moment could last forever.' He turned his brother's chair and pushed it closer to the table. 'Now eat while it's hot.' Isami placed napkins and spoons next to the bowls.

Hiro took his spoon and tentatively stirred his soup.

Isami smiled. 'Wait until you've tasted it. This will go into the annals as a masterpiece. It's a pity that we'll be the only ones who know. Such is the curse of my genius.'

Carefully taking a spoonful of miso and raising it above the bowl Hiro nodded.

'Thank you, brother. High praise indeed from such a connoisseur.'

Hiro dribbled a bit of soup onto his chin. Isami pushed a napkin toward him. He took hold of it, not rushing to dab the trickle of soup, feeling the texture of the napkin on his fingertips.

Naoko opened the little paper box. 'It's beautiful,' she said taking the little paper crane out.

Hiro wasn't sure if she was joking. At least this one, he thought in consolation, is more crane-like than the others.

'You know what you have to do now to make your wish come true,' Naoko said, as she placed the bird back in the box.

'How much time do I have?'

'As long as...'

'As long as what?'

'Come with me,' Naoko said, taking him by the hand and leading him down the Ginza strip.

They stopped outside a fashion boutique's display window. Two mannequins dressed in designer dresses stared back at them.

'Do you think I would look beautiful in one of those?' Naoko asked.

'Yes. You would look even more beautiful.'

'You're sweet. But seriously, in which do you think I would look better?'

Hiro looked at the dresses.

Naoko prodded him. 'Well?'

'The blue one.'

'I knew it. Men know nothing about fashion. I'll take the gold one.'

'Are you serious?'

'Here,' Naoko handed him her mobile phone. 'When I have the dress on pretend you have a phone call and turn your head with the camera toward me. Take photos as I consider should I buy it. Then hurry me up. I'll tell them I'll be back tomorrow.'

Isami took the bowls to the kitchen and began to wash them. Through the window he could see a thrush flitting about in the garden. It pulled a worm from the ground and flew into the pine trees. 'We have a nest of birds out there.'

Hiro tapped on the table.

'You know what you have to do now to make your wish come true,' Naoko said, as she placed the bird back in the box.

'Some mornings it glows with a crown of stars. At times I wish that moment could last forever.'

Isami went over and wheeled him to the kitchen bench. 'Want to look?' He put his arm around his brother and helped him to stand. 'Now where is she?'

The thrush flew down and began its new search in the flowerbed.

'There,' Isami pointed to the bird. 'Perhaps we should put in some nesting boxes. What do you think?'

Hiro lifted his head slightly and let it drop to nod as the thrush flew into the trees.

Isami felt his brother's weight as Hiro's legs tired. He lowered him back gently into his chair.

Hiro felt Isami's hand linger on his forearm. He placed his other hand on top of his brother's.

As Naoko strode onto the mat the audience hushed. Hiro tried to understand her mindset: such confidence always seemed to escape his grasp. She appeared transformed. After a moment her opponent came onto the mat, a taller girl with cropped hair. After bowing they assumed their ready position, waiting for the referee to allow them to begin. A whistle blew. In an instant Naoko's opponent was on her and scored a quick point, throwing a punch that even Hiro didn't see. With a gasp he stood up only to be politely tapped on the shoulder by a spectator behind him. Naoko seemed unperturbed. Just as Hiro sat down the girl attacked again but this time Naoko was ready; she swept the kick aside and landed one of her own. An appreciative murmur from the aficionados rippled around the hall: they were evenly matched, one with aggression and power; the other with agility and technique.

After the match Hiro took Naoko back to the car. As they walked the lights of the street reflected off puddles, giving the pavement a layer of multicoloured stars. Naoko carried her bag stuffed with her karate uniform. Around her neck was her medal. Her left cheek had some swelling just below the eye.

'It gives you character, you know,' Hiro said.

'The medal?'

'That too.'

Naoko brought a hand up and gently touched her bruise. 'I didn't see it coming.'

'I know.' Hiro pulled the car keys out of his pocket and pressed the 'Open' button. The car gave a metallic 'poik' and blinked its amber lights.

Naoko opened the rear passenger door and put her bag in.

'How do you do it?' Hiro asked.

'Do what?'

'The karate. How do you move so fast?'

'Would you like me to show you?' Naoko replied, turning to him. 'Let's pretend that I'm getting into the car and you come up and grab me.'

'No, it's alright,' Hiro said, hesitantly.

'Come on. I'll show you. You come and grab me.' Naoko faced the car. 'Now grab me.'

Hiro reached out, gently placing a hand on her shoulder. Before he could react she moved under his arm and was pressing against him, her arms around his waist.

'You're not the grabbing type, are you?'

Embarrassed, but before he could mutter anything, he felt Naoko's lips pressing gently against his.

Isami paused from reading his newspaper to watch the setting sun repaint the sky. With the nesting birds calling he glanced at Hiro sitting in his chair, gazing seaward,

Hiro lifted his head slightly and let it drop to nod as the thrush flew into the trees.

headphones on, listening to music. Isami folded the paper and placed it on the floor beside him, went to the hallway cupboard and brought out a shogi set. While his brother's attention was elsewhere Isami set up the board then reached across and tapped Hiro on the arm. Hiro looked at him. Isami motioned to the board. Hiro raised his hand; then switched off his portable player. Isami leaned over and removed Hiro's earphones. 'So you think you're going to beat me?'

Hiro raised his hand.

'I've been practicing.' He watched his brother make circular motions with index finger. 'Yes, for a long time.'

Hiro pointed his finger to Isami.

'Very well, defend yourself.' As he made opening moves Hiro responded with classic defensive manoeuvres. 'Conservative play means you're worried.'

Hiro's finger started wagging.

Isami looked his brother in the eye. 'Overconfidence will be your undoing.'

Hiro raised his hand, the finger still wagging.

'Humility isn't your strong point.' As the game progressed Isami saw his attack forestalled, then repelled. He cupped his chin into his hands, stared at the board, sighed; then he heard the table being tapped. 'I know, I know. I'm thinking.' A few moves later with his position hopeless Isami resigned. 'Another?'

Hiro nodded.

'This time you start.' Isami smiled as Hiro copied his opening moves: a compliment for his defence. Soon Isami's chin was again in his hands, watching his game being methodically demolished. 'Yes, yes, you win again. So what is it now? 465,000 to none?'

Hiro made patting motions on the table.

'For someone who's tired you played pretty well.' Isami packed the game away. He looked out to the sea, the moonlight reflecting of its surface, 'No lights out there. The fishermen must be staying home. There'll be a storm tonight.'

Hiro raised his hand.

'The clouds are building. I wonder what time it'll roll in?'

Hiro tapped three times.

'Yes, probably early morning. A pity. I like to watch the lightning. Tomorrow we'll go to the beach and see what's been washed up.' Isami took the shogi board back to the cupboard then went to Hiro's room. He turned down the bed, checked the alarm clock and the emergency button next to it. He made his way back to his brother, took him to the bathroom and assisted him with his preparations for bed. 'If the weather's bad tomorrow I'll go and see if there are any new movies to borrow.'

Hiro raised his hand.

Isami took Hiro to his room and lifted him into bed. 'Goodnight, brother. See you in the morning.'

They exchanged smiles.

Isami made his way to his own room. He turned on the light and sat down at the vanity unit beside the window. From its large drawer he brought out a cardboard box containing numerous squares of coloured paper. With practiced hands he started to fold a piece. When he'd finished he attached some string and tape to it. He opened the window slightly to let in the night breeze then looked up at the ceiling, to find this crane's spot amongst the others that had begun to dance.

With the nesting birds calling he glanced at Hiro sitting in his chair, gazing seaward, headphones on, listening to music.

From its large drawer he brought out a cardboard box containing numerous squares of coloured paper.

JERUSALEM

Aaron Hughes

Outside, the freezing night held its own secrets.

The sole reflection across the windows of the slow-moving car was the milky light of a waning moon. Nothing murmured or stirred out in the inky darkness. At least, nothing that would allow itself to be glimpsed by human eyes. No friendly streetlamps lit the car's way; those happy days were long gone now. The power and its warm, protective light had been one of the first trappings of civilised society to go.

Sarah drove tentatively into the small township of Jerusalem with the headlights off. She leaned forward in her seat, peering out at their surroundings. Years of living in the darkness had sharpened her eyes.

Sarah's eyes reminded Benny of a cat's: wide and always searching. Her whole posture reminded him of a cat, actually – she was always ready to spring into action. And to run like hell if need be. Her reflexes had saved both of their lives on more than one occasion.

Benny let his mind wander for a moment. He'd learned how to do that early on: to be acutely aware of what was going on around you, but also to have a vivid inner life. If you didn't hold on to your memories – to *treasure* them – you went crazy. He'd seen it happen time and again to other survivors.

Thinking of his sister's cat-like qualities naturally reminded him of their family's irascible cat, Leia. They'd only had her for two years when the darkness first came. They'd originally saved her as a kitten from the Seattle Cat Protection Society, and then taken her with them on the car trip to the small town of Jericho. One day, though, in the confusion of the first few weeks after everything began to fall apart, she hadn't come when he'd called her for her dinner. He wondered if she was still alive. Maybe she'd survived out there? Probably not. She was a wily cat. But *they* were smarter.

The siblings had picked tonight because the moon would be little more than a sliver in the sky. Sarah kept the car's speed constant. They'd deliberately chosen the little cobalt Prius for this foray. The car's headlights weren't just off: Benny had deliberately smashed them in before they'd set out from Jericho. He wanted to avoid accidentally turning them on. That would be plain suicide.

It's a ridiculous car, Benny thought.

But while it was small and slow, the vehicle was whisper-quiet when running on the electric battery. When you moved around after dark you didn't want to announce your presence. You kept yourself quiet, unobtrusive. You didn't draw needless attention. No lights, and as little noise as humanly possible. He thought – *prayed* – the battery would hold its charge and get them safely in and out of town.

But it's still a ridiculous car.

Benny watched the apparently empty houses slide by them in this small, white-picket-fence town. He watched and he waited. Soon, it would be his turn on this mission. Tonight, she was the driver, and he was the hunter. They didn't speak.

You kept yourself quiet,
unobtrusive. You kept yourself
quiet, unobtrusive. You didn't draw
needless attention. No lights, and
as little noise as humanly possible.

Occasionally, they exchanged a quick glance to check how the other was doing. They were very good at communicating with a look, a tightening around the eyes. It was a silent language.

They were both okay for the moment. But they kept alert.

Benny missed the talking. No-one spoke much anymore. You never knew when a too-loud conversation would draw something out of the waiting darkness. From a sheer need to survive, people had just stopped talking. Nowadays, you only spoke at length when you were behind closed, locked, barred doors. And even then, you didn't talk loudly. *Their* hearing was razor sharp. Just like their teeth.

The darkness had come while Benny and Sarah were scratching the edge of adulthood. He had been turning seventeen; she, fifteen. They'd been forced to grow up quickly. Survival does that to you. It was Darwinism at its best: adapt or die. And most people had died.

Of course, she's younger, but she's still more mature, he conceded, grudgingly. He would never give her the satisfaction of saying it to her,

though. But he reckoned she knew it anyway. His mother always said that girls matured faster than boys.

Ah, there it was. The memory of *her*. A small, hard thing that clawed at the inside of his stomach. Just when you thought you had forgotten about it, your mind tricked you into remembering. Silently, he breathed her memory out. He made sure that he didn't look at Sarah. She would know that something was up. She could read him so easily.

Of their family, their mother had been the last to be taken. In the early days, when there had still been some light in the sky, his father had very quickly worked out what was happening. He'd gathered the family to make urgent plans for their survival. That's how they'd ended up in the little town of Jericho.

The pain of his father's memory was like an old scar now. It ached a bit from time to time, but it wasn't painful anymore. Not like his mother's memory. That wound was still raw.

Dad had done his best to save the family. He'd gathered Benny, Sarah, their siblings, their mother and both sets of their grandparents. They'd had what Grandpa Tucker called a

'council of war': they'd made plans. They were to get food and camping supplies and to head for Jericho. They also had to round up guns and ammunition. The plan had been to equip themselves and wait it out in the mountains, to see what happened.

Grandpa Tucker must have known something was coming. It wasn't a war then. But it was now. And the guns didn't help; the guns didn't help stop *them* at all.

Out in the town, it was almost *too* quiet.

Sarah knew there was quiet, and then there was *quiet*. One was the absence of sound. The other was almost like the world holding its breath, waiting for something to happen. That's how it felt now.

The cold night air hissed through the car's vents. There was no smell to the air anymore. She missed fragrances. Nowadays, the air had a flat quality to it. It was like the taste of the bore water they drank in Jericho. Both the air and the water were different nowadays.

An unpleasant thought occurred to her.

Maybe they've released something into the air?

She told herself she'd think about that later. While Sarah was very good at balancing watching the outside world, she also liked to let her thoughts skip. But she had to focus tonight. She'd think more about the water and the air later.

Her eyes flicked over to Benny. Something was up with him. Sarah could tell he was deliberately avoiding her gaze. His breathing had also quickened. She'd become very good at picking up on these little things. She didn't know why, but then again she didn't question it as a survival technique.

I wonder if he's thinking of Mother?

She was sure that was it. She wasn't sure how she knew, but she did. For a moment, she experienced the same small, hard clawing sensation in her stomach.

Mother!

Her mother's memory was like a cry within her, waiting to be let out. She didn't dare release it, though. If she did, she'd never stop crying, which would lead to yelling. And then to

screaming. And then she'd go crazy. She'd seen it happen before, again and again and again. No, you learned to hold the memory inside, learned to treasure it, but not to let it out. Not if you wanted to go on living. Don't let it out. Don't let *them* hear you.

But some days she wondered if she really wanted to go on living. And yet there was Benny to think of. It was a very basic reason to keep living: she lived for Benny, he for her. There was no-one else now. They kept living for each other. They kept each other *alive*.

Movement.

It was off to the left of the car, about twenty metres away. They both tensed, leaning forward, trying to work out what it was. Was it one of *them*? It was moving fast. But fast enough? They couldn't be sure. Sarah adeptly stopped the car, not making a sound on the road.

Benny took hold of the handles that protruded from sheaths in both of his boots. Sarah rested her hands on the grips within the harnesses attached to either thigh. They both sat, waiting. They watched, barely breathing. Their fingers twitched, ready to release the knives.

If it was one of *them*, it would attack the car. *And if it wasn't?* The same thought echoed within each of them.

Well, they would go after it, whatever it was. Because if it was moving, it was *alive*. And if it was alive, it was *hope*. And, besides their love of each other, hope was a reason to live.

A SPANNER IN THE WORKS

Loretta Smith

*'Always see the Engine has plenty of oil before setting out'
(1920s Shell Motorists' Index)*

6th August 1926

It is early evening and the ladies of the Melbourne Lyceum Club are gathered for an extraordinary supper meeting in the members' lounge. Their long, elegant frocks complement

the rose and ruby red Persian rugs and muted oriental tones of the newly refurbished clubrooms. The view of Melbourne is admirable from their position on the fifth floor directly above the English, Scottish and Australian Bank on the corner of Queen and Collins Street – especially at twilight, when the sun shimmers on the Yarra across to Port Phillip Bay. But this evening, all eyes are focussed on the little motorcar parked in the street below, and on its driver.

The tiny Baby Austin appears even more diminutive from five storeys up, but it certainly stands out from other motorcars. The car has been 'stripped to its essentials,' its side panels and doors dispensed with to accommodate the pile of luggage. Miss Alice Anderson, its equally petite driver and owner also stands out in her driving leathers from head to hip and her breeches, boots and gaiters. She pulls herself out from behind the wheel and heaves her legs over the luggage before peeling off her gloves and cap. After ruffling her short, shingled curls, she strides to the entrance and takes the stairs to the clubrooms.

At first glance Alice does not belong here. She has neither the demeanour nor the elegant dress of one suited to the exclusivity of the Lyceum. Indeed,

her inaugural entrance eight years prior sent shock waves through the Club. One senior member noted that,

She strode into the dressing room looking like a boy, in her breeches, leggings and tweed cap pulled down over her eyes. Some of the conservatives looked at her askance, but others were intrigued. Someone laughing asked the newcomer her qualifications. 'Oh, I got through as the pioneer of women in the motoring industry,' she explained, her face all wreathed in smiles...

Alice is not only the first woman in Australia to own and operate a motor garage; she is the only garage proprietor to train and employ female staff exclusively – though she is always quick to point out that men are welcome as clients! Her 'garage girls' do everything from mechanics to 'chauffeusing'. Fitted out in masculine-style chauffeur uniforms or overalls, the public often mistake them, as they do Alice, for boys or men; and rumours of transgressions of all sorts are rife. But generally this does not disturb Alice or her employees. They wear the most practical clothing for the job and, thanks to Alice's excellent training and firm guidance, are widely recognised for their professionalism.

But Alice also wears mannish clothes because it is her sartorial preference. She has only ever had a couple of frocks in her wardrobe for those special occasions when nothing less will do. Otherwise she finds dresses a nuisance.

Today the ladies of the Lyceum Club are here to farewell Alice and her companion, Miss Jessie Webb on their overland trip to central Australia – a feat of challenging proportions. Jessie Webb, Melbourne University's first woman lecturer in history – and inaugural president

of the Lyceum Club – also stands out from this evening's fashionably dressed crowd. Jessie wears a sensible warm frock and her shoes are serviceably stout. On her head sits a pith helmet draped with netting.

Jessie is used to being well prepared for a trip and is no stranger to unorthodox travel. In 1922 she ventured from the Cape to Cairo with her companion, Dr. Georgina Sweet, whose friends were so horrified at the whole trip that they refused to see her off! The two women survived the journey, thanks to the native porters who carried them in chairs over the roughest terrain – and the collapsible rubber bath Jessie insisted on bringing to keep them both 'presentable.'

Outwardly, Alice and Jessie could not be more different. Jessie is middle-aged, well-travelled, and a university lecturer. Alice is twenty-nine, with a limited academic education and, although she spent some childhood years abroad, has yet to travel independently beyond Australia's shores. But both are pioneers in their fields and both believe in the advancement of women. As spinsters with no husbands to obey and no children to hinder, they also share the freedom to take on such an adventure.

Their trip is far from being the first motorcar excursion to attempt long distance travel in Australia. Individuals from all walks of life are testing the limits of motorcars and their own endurance, departing from

cities all round the continent, driving into uncharted motoring territory over rugged tracks, through parched deserts, rocky outcrops, treacherous rivers and creeks. In 1920s Australia the European population is only around five million in a landmass of 2,966,136 square miles (7,682,300 square kilometres), which makes it the sixth largest country in the world. Most of its population still clings to the coastline, leaving large tracts of land relatively unknown to Europeans. As automobile and motor oil companies are quick to advertise, the motorcar is the best way to explore the vast continent, and they single out women motorists in particular as symbols of progress. After all, Australian women have won the vote, taken on men's roles through the Great War, and are proving resilient in taking on the back-of-beyond as well as any man, especially behind the wheel of a motorcar. As the *Perth Mirror* noted on its reportage of Alice and Jessie's trip, 'long distance motor trips are becoming common to women drivers of late. Only a week or two ago a young lady from Geelong drove her mother to Port Darwin and back home again without mishap.'

The Austin Seven is fondly known as the Baby Austin for good reason: its wheelbase is only six foot three inches (1.905m) with a narrow forty-inch track (1.016m) and it weighs in at a mere 780 pounds (360kg), just over half the weight of a Model T Ford. Melbourne's Australian Light Cars Proprietary Ltd. advertise the new Austin Seven as 'The Woman Driver's Ideal,' being 'easy to drive, easy to enter and easy to maintain' and offering 'untold joys and pleasures.' The accompanying illustration shows ladies in fancy frocks and hats delicately stepping into the car, with a pretty driver behind the wheel. A trip by women who dress practically

and load their Austin with serious supplies for a strenuous overland adventure is probably not what the company originally had in mind, but it is nevertheless eager to accept an opportunity to prove the dainty little car's reliability and endurance.

The overland journey will take Alice and Jessie through the oldest and driest continent on earth, over barely marked roads and land uninhabited except for vast cattle stations, native and feral animals, and nomadic Aborigines who have called the 'never-never' home for at least sixty thousand years. In that time, the two women will sit cramped side by side with barely enough room for a gear stick between them.

Their imminent departure from the Lyceum Club at seven pm is important enough to be noted in the social pages of the *Melbourne Herald* as well as many interstate papers, including the *Adelaide Mail*, the *Hobart Mercury* and the *Perth Mirror*. The *Adelaide News* has even interviewed Alice and reports some interesting details:

INTREPID WOMEN

Motoring to Alice Springs

Two Melbourne girls, Miss Jessie Webb and Miss Alice Anderson, intend to leave tonight in their single-seater motorcar for a trip to Central Australia, Alice Springs being their destination. Their holiday journey into the interior promises to be entertaining. Among the luggage they will carry are two guns, sleeping bags, a compass, four gallons of water, and a supply of biscuits.

'There is one main route from Adelaide to Darwin,' said Miss Anderson, 'and that is only a camel track. I believe that 11 cars have been through up to date. We are not going to stick to the beaten track. According to the map of the Northern Territory land has been taken up by settlers. We are going to

try and find them. We hope to cut through Broken Hill.'

The detours will include a visit to some interesting caves on the South Australian border said to be inhabited by huge wombats. Exploration, however, is not the main point of the trip.

'We want to make friends,' was the way Miss Anderson expressed it. 'We are going to talk to everybody we meet and tell them about our things down here.'

Their friendly advances will not be limited to their fellow whites. They are taking with them a supply of sweets and tobacco for any aborigines they happen to meet.

Miss Anderson's adventure is actuated by another motive. 'I hope to go to Britain in a couple of years,' she said, 'and I think everybody should know something about her own country first.' The motorists expect to be away about a month.

Various mascots will accompany them on the journey. One thoughtful friend has dressed two potatoes with curly red wigs. She has sensed the possibility of a food shortage!

Alice Anderson's Motor Service has served Melbourne for nine years and over that time Alice has positioned herself as a mechanic, driver, instructor and tour manager to rival the men. 'It speaks well for her business abilities and technical knowledge that she has made an unqualified success of this venture', writes the *Adelaide Mail*. Her successful chauffeur and touring service embodies the spirit of adventure and the optimism of the decade – and her trip through the outback with a lone companion says, particularly to her female customers, that the great unknown highway belongs to anyone who dares take it.

The speeches and jollity meant that the scheduled time for leaving was long past: it was around nine pm when the party finally headed downstairs into the cool evening air. Alice and Jessie took charge, double-checking their luggage was secure: the shovel

Housed above the former ES&A Bank, the clubrooms comprised the original residence of the bank's general Manager, Sir George Verdon. Today, the top floors are closed off to the public and the ground floor is now home to a branch of the ANZ Bank.

and axe strapped to the back, the sleeping bags and other camping gear stuffed in the back seat, the four gallons of water roped to the running boards and, hidden well away but easily accessible, the shotgun and rifle borrowed from friend and solicitor Mr Geoff Gair, who stood in the crowd with his wife. He lent the guns to Alice in case the women need protection or extra food to cook over the campfire.

Alice slipped back into her leather jacket and heavy overcoat, placed a foot on the running board and manoeuvred herself into the driver's seat. Jessie, wrapped in a long woollen coat, squeezed in beside her. Alice pulled on the driving cap that fitted snugly over her ears, protecting her from wind and noise, and then 'a shake of the hand all round, a cheer, a little purring sound, and off the little car sets on its journey.'

Once the car was out of view, the Lyceum ladies re-entered the club, past Jessie's photo as former club president on the wall and a neat pile of business cards on the hall table, which read in Gothic copperplate: *Miss Anderson's Motor Service 'Qui n'a risqué rien, n'a rien'* (Nothing ventured, nothing gained).

Alice and Jessie drive north along Spencer Street. Under normal conditions the Austin can travel as fast as forty-eight miles per hour but with all the extra weight twenty to twenty-five miles an hour is all they comfortably manage. They pass Spencer Street Station, whose trains link the city with Victoria's country towns, and the railway sheds and cattle yards beyond. At the end of the Spencer Street the little Austin turns left into Adderley Street and continues west on to Dynon Road, just south of the Flemington Racecourse where every year on the first Tuesday in November the city stands still for the Melbourne Cup

– the most famous horse race in the Southern Hemisphere. Then, over the Maribyrnong River, and away from the city into the inky, crisp night air.

TALL TALES

Kaye Roberts-Palmer

Saturday Hens night fizzes into Sunday hungry hangover,
forgetting limpet friends hugging mattress and sofa
illicit carb cravings pull her through unknown burbs.

Mascaraed zombie she lurches toward terrace house café,
from a hole in the wall; two beards bring forth,
bio-dynamic, ectoplasmic, rainforest fantastic, slice of cake.

Now she's at the end of the tram, in the wilds of Darebin,
rum guts sloshing, skin stretching, something funny is going on.

Lorna Jane leggings are growing, barring sliding doors,
with weary years practice the driver presses a button,
she's ejected, plastic tiara neglected, smashed under her bum.
Surprised she sways over telecom towers, as tram lines buckle
post offices crumble, she's super colossal, worse yet her iPhone is lost.

Eat me the cake had whispered, she cursed false advertising
should have stuck to the Paleo diet she had been strictly following
each lunchtime - all in her head.

The Broadway traffic gives her a thundering migraine
so she shoves Mount Macedon below creating her own tunnel
crossing.

Her mouth tastes feral searching for a thirst-quencher,
sucks up the pool water at Reservoir Leisure and
accidentally swallows the Zumba instructor.

Off to Preston markets for a small bite to savour
but finds the delis too hot and the bread shops too sweet.

High Street, power lines twang as she flosses teeth,
personal hygiene matters, she's no Godzilla
her smile is kilo wattage like a sun lit satellite dish.

One step she's in Darebin Parklands, for a nanna nap sorely needed
blocking bicycle paths, breaking local laws, starting a hundred rallies.

Her dreaming creates new geography, in this place of plenty,
she's a lucky country, which we all dwell within.

AUSTRAL IMAGERY

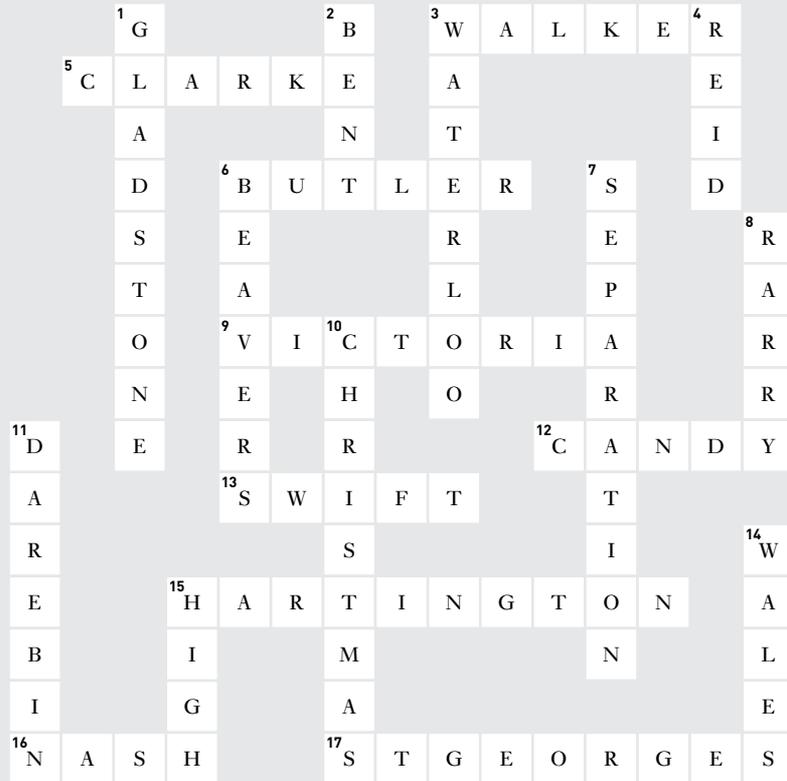
Shirl Bramich

Somewhere, out there
I can dance among the stars
Sky clad, embracing
The ALL KNOWING cosmic realm.
Weightless, transparent
I float effortlessly
Divest of earthly chains.
I feel free – yet belong
To the vast universe.
Swirls of tiny stars
Burst around me.
I revell in their touch.
Their age old secrets
Channel through my mind
My higher consciousness –
The ecstasy, fulfilment
Is miraculous.
 BUT
On returning
I vaguely remember!

First published in Northcote Writers, 1990

LOST IN NORTHCOTE: SOLUTION

Carl Walsh



CONTRIBUTORS

Ben Goldsworthy is a writer who has lived in Northcote for around 20 years. His work has been published in *Island* and *Etchings*, magazines. He recently became a father.

An Jiang is a current year 12 student. She writes sometimes and enjoys speaking about herself in third person.

Belinda Raposo has a passion for storytelling and spoken word poetry, with a love of queer history, stories of identity, migration and the urban landscape.

Tim Trewartha is a local writer who has published three books for children. One day he'd like to publish a few more.

Tania Chandler studied professional writing and editing at RMIT. Her first novel *Please Don't Leave Me Here* will be published by Scribe in August 2015.

Lara Zembekis, a local resident who enjoys writing fiction.

Edward Caruso works as a book editor. He is working on a collection of poems, *Latin leaves: something about America*.

Lorelei Hapman studies at La Trobe University, she loves coffee, poetry and yoga above all things.

Eugene Donnini a freelance writer and poet.

Jayne Caruso is a published children's author currently delving into other forms of writing.

Carl Walsh lives in Northcote and enjoys writing.

Anna Forsyth is a New Zealand writer, editor and musician based in Melbourne. She is currently completing a radio play and a short film. She moonlights as musician Grace Pageant.

Laura Brinson creates ferny landscapes in glass jars, makes wedding dresses and other costumes, lives in Melbourne, and writes prose and poetry.

Jaz Stutley has written poetry, short stories and children's books; but she is currently engaged as a vocalist with several jazz bands, locally and interstate.

Andrew Brion is a Northcote based poet.

Cynthia Troup's new work *Undercoat: A Parafoxical Tale* will be part of La Mama Theatre's annual Explorations season in December 2015. See www.cynthiatroup.com.

Melissa Hamlyn is a Fine Arts Undergraduate at RMIT. She pairs her studies with volunteering at various art festivals and galleries both locally and abroad.

Tjoni Johansen has been writing all her life, in poetry, songs and scripts. Her words weave experiences, imaginings and myths into characters and dreamscapes of contemplation.

Gino Tomisich has been a resident of Darebin for nearly 20 years with his wife, two children, and pet cockatiel.

Aaron Hughes loves chocolate, The Muppets and character T-shirts. His motto is: 'Live your life so that you don't have to hide your diary.'

Loretta Smith. This is an extract from Loretta Smith's unpublished biography, *A Spanner in the Works*, the story of Alice Anderson (1897-1926), Australia's first woman garage proprietor.

Kaye Roberts-Palmer loves writing and has written for various magazines and newspapers. She has also been featured in several creative writing group anthologies.

Shirl Bramich is a writer with a long association with Darebin writers groups. She writes poetry and short stories and has been published in anthologies including *Artemis Press*.

WORKING GROUP

Jemima Bucknell is a film critic, short fiction writer, film curator and once RMIT PWE student living in Reservoir. This is her first year with *n-SCRIBE*.

Anna Forsyth is a New Zealand writer, editor and musician based in Melbourne. She is currently completing a radio play and a short film. She moonlights as musician Grace Pageant.

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Lu Sexton is an RMIT Professional Writing and Editing graduate and has been a freelance editor (and occasional copywriter) since 2009.

Anita Smith is an RMIT PWE graduate, winner of the WRAP Synopsis Prize and is writing her first novel, one word at a time.

David Spitzkowski is a Darebin writer, RMIT PWE graduate and Varuna alumni with short stories published in several journals and anthologies.

Carl Walsh lives in Northcote and enjoys writing.

Mitchell Welch is a writer, editor and poet from Preston. His work has been featured in a range of literary journals in Australia and overseas.



Darebin
arts.