



Source: AP, 'Tehran bid to test Holocaust evidence', *The Australian online*, 17/01/06.

Tags: [child/parent](#), [intimacy](#), [water](#), [forbidden love](#)
Writer/s: [Lucy Broome](#)

© 2008 Barbara Campbell and the writer/s

Navy squatted at the edge of the rockpool and reached out to feel the water with long fingertips. Her father remained squarely on his legs standing beside her as if he needed to see out to the ocean, to spot an approaching vessel. He looked down at the back of her quiet neck.

'You squat like a little Indian.'

The only time her father ever squatted had been in India 27 years ago. He recalls making it out of a crowded bus just in time to abandon his grace to the rising currents of yesterday's spice. That was also the year she was conceived.

Father rocked back and forth now from balls of his feet to his heels, balls to heels, heels to balls. Navy fixed hers like roots into the ground and sank deeper. His feet were old hard cheese, hers a supple clay.

Navy knows the crush of seaweed beneath feet, the sharpness of a periwinkle just as a bird knows what direction south is. She had known these things since childhood. She examined her bare toes and the spaces between them, made wider and whiter as she pressed out for more contact.

Her father watched her fingers and toes and remembered a time when they were tiny. Delicate, velvet soft, vulnerable skin.

'Do you remember this rockpool? This used to be your pool. Navy's pool.'

She was not planned for. The phonecall from her mother surprised him like a light in the middle of the night, just when he had been sleeping so well. But there was no going back to sleep. Two days a week, he wanted to be awake with her. Two days a week, forever. Or for as long as he could keep her, until she grew stronger fingers and could spread her toes wide enough to not need him any more.

'No. I don't remember this pool.'

Navy stood up and moved on across the soft weed. The sun was low and made her knees gold and the water pink. It was the perfect light for a photograph. The flat water would reflect the sky. Pink pools of light.

'That would make a nice picture, you there, don't you think?' he said, reading her thoughts.

'Nup. Maybe. I don't know. Some things aren't meant to be captured.'

But she would once have agreed. Once, they would have discussed everything.

When her father had found her crying beside the telephone, Navy talked for the first time about her relationship. Her hands were shaking as she poured tea and lips quivered over words that cut him to the quick because he could do nothing to help her. She spoke without breath, without thought, without any sense but pain. She spoke words that had nowhere else to go. She told her father that she loved a man but she couldn't trust him, that he was married, this man who had lied to her. Father stayed quiet. A white quietness sank into his jaw and settled into his stomach. He had never considered himself a spiritual man and his knees cracked as he knelt down beside his own bed that night with a tight throat. If he had known what to pray for it would have been easier.

Weeks and months after that night they were having

breakfast and the man's name bounced in and out of their conversation like a persistent fly that father wanted to swat.

'So you're back together?' he asked, staring into his newspaper.

'It's a long story. But we'll always be together. We've been through so much...' Navy smiled at him as if there had never been anything to cry about. Father shook out his newspaper and turned his full attention on the black and white text.

'You've never once expressed any interest in him. I love him. Why won't you at least meet him?'

'I'll meet with him. Just the two of us. I want to ask him a couple of questions.'

They set a time and date to meet in a café.

'I don't think you're right for each other,' her father began. And he might as well have finished there. They sat opposite one another for 15 minutes but they only needed a second to know that it was time wasted. Her father demanded to know how this man was going to put a roof over his daughter's head. When the man had tried to pay for their coffees, father refused.

'You can't afford it.'

Navy was disgusted.

'I thought you were going to talk about more important things.'

'That is everything. We discussed everything.'

Navy walked ahead of him now, into the sun so that her body was a silhouette. She was taller in this light, father thought as he stepped up beside her.

'Dad. We've decided to get married.'

She walked on and he dropped back. When she stopped and turned around he asked her,

'Is he divorced yet?'

'No. But he will...'

And then he turned too and they walked back home again like strangers.

In this familiar place now everything seemed to be moving away from her, moving beyond her, the pools of light in a moment would be dull again, the weed chilled as the night air rode up the beach on the back of the dark tide. The beach was her home and not her home at all, for it changed daily, hourly, with every wave the weed shifted, periwinkles snapped off rocks and dropped into the ocean. All of it moved by water.

Navy looked down at her hands, searching for ways to speak without saying anything. And he looked at her hands too, wanting to believe that she was still as vulnerable as she was when her fingers were tiny creatures discovering ears, toes and eyes for the first time. Perhaps she was even more vulnerable now. At 26 her tears might come from a far deeper place, further away than ever before. A single tear might crack skin, might shatter bones. A single tear might break him more than her.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Lucy Broome.