



Source: Elaine Sciolino, 'Iran tries to placate West on nuclear ambitions', *New York Times*, Reuters, AFP in *Sydney Morning Herald online*, 19/01/06.

Tags: [child/parent](#), [crime](#), [home](#), [husband/wife](#)

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It was around 10am on a Friday morning. A mild mid-Summer morning. I was sitting at the yacht club café feeding Stella, when two carloads of police turned up at the block of townhouses down the road. I overheard some yachties at the next table say it was a drowning, but a waiter said he heard it was a domestic problem. The police were door knocking up and down the street, asking questions. I remember one of the policeman, a middle aged Chinese guy, stopping in front of the rope railing that separated the café from the street and stood there looking at me.

Stella let out a satisfied gurgle, lifted her head up, smiled and then continued on drinking. The policeman also smiled and then he too continued on his way.

I hadn't been living in town for very long, until I noticed them. It was hard not to. They were loud, brash and seemed to be everywhere. They were also filthy rich, but the money wasn't self-made. Some said it was drugs, others said she had married an old guy and he'd left her the lot, either way it was noticeable they weren't used to it. Money can't buy style and neither can it buy edict. I would see them at Chez Nous, a popular French bistro where they would get filthy drunk, complain about the food and then proceed to badmouth the staff. When she became pregnant, she still drank. Once she ran into a friend in the restaurant who commented on her drinking, and she yelled,

'It's my kid, and I'll do what I want to it, won't I Bill?'

'You do whatever ya want Debbie darling.'

Bill was her partner. He was a creepy American who bathed himself in aftershave and wore a hairpiece. He also had the habit of undressing you with his gaze.

I was working in the neighbouring townhouse to Bill and Debbie at about the time their child was only a few months old. My client, Ellen was a retired painter who had a weak shoulder and a fondness for shiatsu. As I massaged her, the now regular sounds of a baby crying could be heard through the walls.

'That child never stops,' said Ellen sadly.

The child's cries were soon taken over by the hysterical sound of Debbie's screaming.

'Shut up, God damn it, shut up, won't you ever shut up?'

My stomach twisted itself into knots and Ellen shook her head,

'I've had to go in and look after the poor thing after it wakes up hungry and crying. They go downstairs to their friends place to drink and leave the child all by itself.'

As I was putting my things together to leave, Ellen told me she was looking at real estate prices—she didn't like the energy in the place. The child cried again, and we both stopped to listen, 'There're too many sad children in the world.' I said. Ellen said nothing.

I can understand how a new mother can feel overwhelmed by the endless demands of a new born. But that's not why I did it. It was him. One day, as I was walking into town, I saw him dropping off little Amy Flint around the corner from the primary school. When I asked Amy what she was doing in Bill Crabb's car, she ran off crying.

When the Police were inside the townhouse, I got up and left with Stella. I put her in the new baby car seat I had bought the day before and drove off. I drove for a few hours and then stopped in a town to both feed and change her. In a small restaurant, the news came on the television; Bill and Debbie's faces flashed across the screen,

'They took my baby, someone took my beautiful baby girl.' wailed Debbie.

The news then interviewed a few locals. During occasions like these, people usually have a lot of nice words to say about the poor people who have suffered the evil, yet in this case, nobody really said much.

That night I made an anonymous phone call to Bill Crabb. I told him he had two things to forget from that day onwards; his daughter and little girls like Amy Flint.

Some months later, I received a lawyer's letter. My old client, Ellen had passed and had left me some money as well as a hand written letter. It read,

'There's now one less sad child in the world.'

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Mira Cuturilo.*