



Source: Paul McGeough, 'Saddam admits ordering 148 killings', *Sydney Morning Herald online*, 03/03/06.

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I move his heavy hand across his naked chest and rest it momentarily in his pit of a breast plate. He has one of those simple chests that caves-in, in the middle, like crushed aluminium—discarded at a country fair, grey sky, cold wind, dirt ready for mud, teenage scrambling for underwear in the ferris wheel, goose-bumped skin, fairy floss between sticky shirt. But I digress—his rib cage almost piercing, his skin is pale and enemy of the sun; two rose buds for nipples that flag down torment and signal warnings for disillusioned girls; 'bitches' he calls them. I imagine him at a young age, lying in the middle of the school ground; a bully sitting on him, with heavy arse and heavy cock, and spitting in his mouth; where after a few years, he makes a kind of reservoir in his heart for the bully, he makes the bully a creator, where his stomach is lined with a decade's accumulation of bully spit and friendly fire, and his stomach becomes tough. He gives birth to saliva and salvation. He can stomach anything now. He has written, like a dork, on his school bag, 'We have met the enemy and they are ours.' A quote he got from some book about war. I imagine him at a younger age, playing war games with his toys, alone under the kitchen table, he is six and his mother is drinking; he is an idiot and I would've hated him had I know him then, but I digress—where am I now? That's right, moving his heavy hand across his naked chest.

It's been a few hours since I've seen a car drive by. The last vehicle was a Greyhound en route north and it'd been years since we had seen a coach and I didn't want to scare him, so I didn't bother with it.

I reposition his arm, so that he doesn't look so dead. I try to open his eyes. He has a bit of mud on his left cheek. He has a bit of blood gelled in a few strands of his hair. He has a bit of a hickey on his neck. I did that. I decide to stand up to reawaken my sleepy legs. Standing by the side of the road, I run on the spot. I jump up and down. I begin to laugh. 'What the hell did you do with your clothes?' No reply. His body is quiet like the road. 'I told you, but you didn't believe me did you? You went right ahead like the idiot that you are', I chuckle to myself. 'Now—now...look....God, I can't be bothered—', and I stop jumping, stop looking, and I am blank.

The night before had started off well. We had arranged to

meet with Sophie for dinner at around seven, her house. She was going to cook, something fancy, something Japanese, a three course meal of something fancy and Japanese, and it was going to be delicious. It had been a while since we had done something social, together, left the house, seen sun, under moonlight, felt grass on our elbows, and so tonight, tonight we were going to do dinner at our friend Sophie's house. We were going to venture outside, outside, yes, yes, out.

We had woken early, at around six in the morning to get ready for the dinner. Two nights before, we had laid out the clothes we planned to wear. His was a blue Prada suit, with a pink shirt made in Germany, his hair out, no socks and a pair of beautifully-crafted, Italian leather slippers. Mine was an Isogawa floral number that gathered at the waist and then sprung out like a tutu, my hair loosely bundled, no socks and a pair of beautifully-crafted Italian leather, red, slippers. This dinner was going to be our re-introduction, our welcome, and I was so excited I ate an entire carton of raw eggs. With the clothes laid out in the lounge room, we sat opposite each other giggling with anticipation.

'I wonder what her house looks like,' he asked.

'Yes, I wonder. Do you think there'll be many people on the street?'

'I think there will be, yes. There'll be lots of cars and pets, and children, and air.'

'I'm excited. I wonder if she has a cat.'

'You and your cats! You can maybe talk to Sophie about your special cat wall?'

'Oh yes. In actual fact, I'll add that to the conversation list.'

'Good idea. Maybe put it before the topic of 'bottled water'. I'm finding the idea of 'cats' a far more pressing conversation to be had.'

Hours go by and we talk and ponder; laugh and cry. It's half six in the evening; we hear the sound of the taxi idling. All dressed-up, I grab his hand, place it on the dusty door knob of our front door. One and two and three and four and, we turn it together and go outside.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Brian Fuata.