



Source: Abraham Rabinovich, 'Ex-bouncer wallops Likud', *The Australian online*, 30/03/06.
Tags: [dreams](#), [husband/wife](#), [intimacy](#), [literature](#), [death](#), [sex](#)
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Nape

Grey-collar families reminded Alex of Edo Period sexuality.

The 19th century nape, grimy in industrializing England; furtive in Japan, the last bit of flesh to be revealed by a woman disrobing ritually, through interminable layers of astonishing cloth, moving inexorably toward the moment to un-conceal the spot where the upper vertebrae meet the skull. Dirty male nape and unblemished female nape, Alex thought, how terrible! The world's vile arrangements focused on cloth, hidden skin, and the sordid accumulation of dirt and desire.

She's been reviewing class struggle lit. for her Filipina helper Glenjoy, who has in turns been a high school history teacher, then a bit of an activist, and then a Japayuki before illegally gaining employment in her Dubai household. Alex herself was briefly a prostitute, so there's that bond, subtle and historically acute, between mistress and maid. They liked each other. The Dubai of Alex's husband's gold jewellery concern was harsh on the two women, who could never stop thinking of themselves as teachers. Just the day before, in fact, Alex got into trouble for regaling some customers at the hubby's shop with some bedroom a, b, c's. Glenjoy's rescue was quick though. Instructing the gaggle of English-speaking Dubai women that Alex has, imagine that, taken up writing, writing fiction! for a degree, Glenjoy added admiringly. Alex has this holy talent, she can make up stories about anything, try her, maybe start with the color grey you like? Nipping gossip, hmmm, in the bud.

But it was Glenjoy who was the long-budding academic, the more aggressive of the improbable pair, the more committed and flamboyant gossip. But another degree! To teach where, whatever for? The first teacher's certificate was useless enough. Alex was of course slightly provoked by this new commitment, though she knew

Glenjoy was so very Filipina in this, wanting badly to add to the framed graduation certificates that decorate that hut near the seashore village where people, according to the Glenjoy at her tall-tale best, did nothing but nibble on their lovers' napes. Nothing else, Glenjoy emphasizes, that's why she kept going away, she reasons. At least the Japayukis were paid for sex, she finishes.

This last point made sense to Alex, of course. When the correspondence Master's course packets and emails came, it was Alex who did the research. The Industrial Revolution stuff about Europe was in any case a breeze. The grey-collar families were as alien as Indians in the Amazon with soot on their faces, so that helps. If you watched an *Oliver Twist* DVD on the side, it was fine (and rich Alex affects a library of Broadway musicals, to feed her philosophical bent). If you watched *Madama Butterfly*, though, the story has too many loose ends. The 'East' is tough, but here, Glenjoy displayed the strangest learning skills. She always grasped the plot and got the lesson. The butterfly shouldn't have gotten pregnant, says the Filipina. That was that, and Alex, cheered by such self-assurance, would get her history quick from a special teacher.

It was thus that when the special teacher found herself pregnant, having expressed no desire whatsoever for Alex's husband, not even for his 20-k gold chains, nor for his protestations that it is not rape if there's some nibbling at the nape; having no recourse to history, nor to any sense of being violated grey collar worker, scattered grey matter; having nothing to transform into gossip; losing, not just the incomprehensible next diploma, but all possibility of learning anything at all, Glenjoy could only kill herself.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Marian Pastor Roces.