



Source: Robin McDowell, 'Iran will talk to nuclear agency: Indonesia', *Sydney Morning Herald online*, 14/05/06.

Tags: [discomfort](#), [evidence](#), [music](#), [sport](#), [sexuality](#)

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There is a genuine photograph of me as a child, waiting in line, in full choir, with hymns in hand, a moist ear, a dry mouth, and sandwiched between two giant Tongan sisters, Cinderella and Tracey-Yvonne. They had turned 13 the day before the photo was taken, or so I remember them telling me. And in this photograph, I am singing praise in sepia. The colour has washed me out, and left blotches on my sister's face. We are singing on a Sunday, or so I imagine, and the organist is smiling, saintly and salty. She is half-Polish and half a singer. Tim is this kid in school who spat when he spoke, had a silly haircut and a crossed eye and every time of choir practice he would sit by the organist's leg and play with her stockings. It was a genuine response to liking the synthetic fabric play funny things to the sense of his touch. Tim, by the time of his early twenties became tired by mid afternoon and had to have daily naps of two hours and twenty seconds, like religion, routine and total reason. We don't, not that I know you, but 'we' don't see Tim in the photograph. I mention him purely because Cinderella had a strange crush on Tim, and had a penchant of hitting him with clenched fist in the groin. She said she hated him, but everyone knew she had a thing for white boys. It was an 'anthropological thing' so my sister reckons. My sister reckoned that when the photograph was taken, singing *Strong and Constant* and sharing thoughts of hating how mother had forced her into singing when all along she wanted to be a drummer, like Karen Carpenter. The day before the photograph was taken, she had genuinely watched a telemovie called *The Karen Carpenter Story*, and realised then, a friend of hers had an eating disorder. You, as in you, don't see that in the photograph, you just see Josephine singing, and me looking at her.

One year and one photograph later, my mother thought it a grand idea to enrol me in a jazz ballet group called The Sunshine Generation. This motley troupe performed in shopping complexes all along the South-East Queensland coast. We were a sunshine sensation. We had the most genuine costume of a short-sleeved, lemon-yellow, collared shirt, bright orange braces attached to a pair of virgin-white slacks, white runners, a bright orange bow tie and topped with a row of beautiful teeth. My first singing solo was *Rock Around the Clock*, and performed at the Carrindale Shopping Centre to an audience of around 200 people: those were the early days. There is a genuine photograph of that. My hands are waving in the air with gay abandon in line with, "....I'm gonna rock, rock, rock till broad daylight..." I forget the movement phrase for the next line. In Grade 6, there was Troy Pennell, a bully I've written about in other stories. And in this photograph, Troy is in the audience. And I almost wet my pants with panic. You, as in, yes, you, don't see him in the photograph. You, as in you, don't see me frozen in fear; of reprisal; of shame; of a second past gay abandon; you, as in you, see a whirling dervish of camp costume and American joy; of young enthusiasm, of pop

contemplation; of sunshine generation. Snap.

She accidentally dropped her wedding ring in the bin, and then it came time to throw the rubbish out. She thought of the ring next to banana peels and empty cans of soup and beans, and thought nothing of it. Snap.

He works in an office, and is waiting for the photocopier. He waits for exactly two seconds, and then finds something else to do. Snap.

He plays the piano accordion every Tuesday by the water, tourists waiting to board their ferry, posed photographs of colonial costume, pigeons gathered round feeding hands and today he feels like something joyous. He places palm on cheek. Snap.

It is clean, artificial with vinegar and elbow grease. He picked up the kitchen cloth and wiped the same area of bench for over an hour. There is no pulse. There is only the sound of nothing, no food, bowl, spice, insect or germ. The bench is absolutely clean. Snap.

This boy is in me, and on me and is not a woman, he is not soft, he is muscle and warm like war—he is a final breath, a broken bone, a bloody nose in a burning hot shower. Snap.

The cleaver in her hand is a creeping fog. Snap.

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. Snap.

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. Snap.

Two miners trapped underground for two or so weeks. Snap.

My mother's wedding. Snap.

George W. Bush. Snap.

In Grade 4, for my first swimming carnival, at the bang of the gun, I had thrown myself into the pool as if throwing in a massive rock. For a good ten minutes my arms pierced the skin of the water making it bleed with splashes, but to no avail did I move forward. For ten minutes, I did not move forward from the initial distance made from the jump in. For ten minutes the entire school faded their war cries of solidarity into a silent awe over my complete inability of sportsmanship. After those ten minutes of uselessness, I lost all breath, and began to drown. Snap.

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