

Story for performance #338  
webcast from Sydney at 04:57PM, 24 May 06



Source: Ed O'Loughlin, 'Young Iranians struggle with conservatism', *The Age online*, 24/05/06.

Tags: [child/parent](#), [disenchantment](#), [workplace](#), [countryside](#), [travel](#)

Writer/s: [Myrel Chernick](#)

© 2008 Barbara Campbell and the writer/s

I can run. I'm quite a good runner, actually. I have a new pair of running shoes. They're sleek, and red, with pink stripes on the sides. My daughter would never have liked that combination of colors. But I mustn't be the only one who does because, after all, someone manufactured them. After I put on the shoes I attach the little wings to my ankles. They're quite small, with silky white feathers. They're invisible, of course, no one really knows what makes me go so fast and so smoothly, barely moving my legs, as I hover near the ground. I cover a lot of distance this way. Let's see, if I leave around midnight I could be west of Pennsylvania by dawn. I won't stay there though. I'll go even farther. I wouldn't want them to track me down. What if they don't even try? That sends a shudder through my body. Of course I'll set myself up once I get there. I'll stop in a little town in Nebraska, the one I drove through that time where the hills were bright green and the sky clear and shadows sharp. The clouds are endless there, and very white and cottony, and the little town is not so ugly. The main street is actually quite charming. I'll show up one day, just like that, I'll walk into the luncheonette, the one with the red and white striped awning, or is that really the barbershop? Do they still have barbershops in towns like this? Well in my town they do. And anyway, I'll walk in with my suitcase. Did I mention before that I would take a small suitcase? I've always intended to bring the small, straw suitcase that belonged to my grandfather. It's small, and firm, with a latch that snaps shut, and still in good shape despite its one hundred years of existence. I haven't brought much, a few changes of underwear, a nightgown, my toothbrush and the notebooks. But this is the US after all, I can always go to Wal-Mart. I'm sure there's one on the other side of the hill on the highway. So I walk into the luncheonette and ask about the *apartment for rent* sign on the window upstairs. They guide me to a man who's sitting at the counter. He's the perfect image of the grizzled old farmer, who just happens to conveniently own the building. I sit down next to him at the counter. Coffee, please, I say, milk and sugar, lots of sugar. He likes

that, for some reason. He laughs, a low throaty guffaw. I'll move in that same day. The place needs painting but there's no paint store in the town. I take a few days to scrub it down. It doesn't look too bad when I'm finished. I get a job in the luncheonette. Of course they need to hire me. It's all part of my plan. I fall somewhat easily into my new life. No one knows who I am, or where I am from. And they don't ask. I'm not such a good waitress, at first. But as the luncheonette is never crowded, I have time to practise, and before long I can balance two or three plates at a time. It's quite an accomplishment, if I do say so myself.

Time passes. How much time is it really? It's hard to say, it could be a few months, or a few years. Looking back, it seems forever. I don't seem so much older. I'm surrounded by the silence I have created. It is what I wanted. How does it end? Could it be possible that someone who knows me walks into the luncheonette? Is it a phone call? Have they tracked me down? Or is it my own longing? Does this really happen? Does a woman really leave this way, can she escape? Because when she leaves them behind, are they not still, always, with her? I bend down and put on my running shoes. They're blue this time, much simpler than my old ones. They have no stripe. The soles are thick. I tie on the wings. Although they have not been used since I came here, they are intact. They know what to do. I feel the wind whistling in my ears as I move swiftly along. I mean to go west but somehow I am coming back to where I started. I am higher than I was before and I can see more of the landscape. As a matter of fact, I can see great vistas stretching out before me. The east coast is really beautiful from this angle. I'm actually looking forward to coming back. What kind of welcome awaits me? What if they slam the door in my face? Well of course I can run. I'm a good runner, actually, although I've never run the marathon. It just feels that way.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Myrel Chernick.*