



Source: Paul McGeough, 'Blindly into Baghdad...again',
Sydney Morning Herald online, 20/01/07.
Tags: [child/parent](#), [sport](#)
Writer/s: [Sophie Townsend](#)

© 2008 Barbara Campbell and the writer/s

There is a little boy and he sits on a couch. He is very quiet. The couch is big and squashy and he sinks into the cushions. The woman who's minding him asks him lots of questions but he doesn't like to answer and he mumbles and she smiles politely and he knows that she doesn't understand because his voice is so small.

The woman looking after him is a 'friend of the family' and he knows that this means that she is a good person and that he has known her since he was tiny. She tells him how much he has grown. And the friend of the family has a girl he used to play with but the girl doesn't play with him anymore. She says 'I can't hear you. I don't understand you.'

The little girl plays with his big brother in the next room and he hears them talking about things and his big brother never talks to him like that, like they are friends and equals. And he knows it's because his big brother thinks he's stupid and maybe he is because his big brother says it a lot.

He knows that the friend of the family is being kind to him, and he knows that when someone is kind, you are supposed to respond and he should say yes to her when she asks if he'd like to do some drawing but he is afraid to say yes because what if they take all the paper and all the textas out and then mummy comes to pick him up and everything has to be put away in a big rush and he doesn't get to finish his drawing?

His mummy told the woman that he would like to watch the cricket, which made him love his mum especially at that moment because usually she forgets to say things like that. He tries to watch the cricket because it's England versus Australia and it's a good match and one day he would like to play cricket for Australia and verse England. But the friend of the family tries to talk to him and she asks him questions like 'who's winning?' and it means he has to tell her that no one is winning yet because Australia hasn't batted and then she says 'sorry?' and he repeats it and she says 'sorry?' again and he looks down at the floor and then back to the cricket and he hears her sigh a little bit, but she doesn't ask any more questions.

It's quiet now. The friend of the family says 'well, I'll leave you to it!' and she smiles at him and he nods at her because he wants to be polite. She walks out of the room. He hears his brother and the girl laughing at the

computer, and he hears his brother say 'Wow, you're great at this.' His brother is showing her things on the computer and it is not fair because she is six and he is six and his brother is nine and he should be the little girl's friend, not his brother. And his brother should be his friend, not the little girl's friend.

He hears the friend of the family say to his brother and the girl that they should ask him to play on the computer with them. His big brother says, 'He doesn't understand this game, and he cries when he loses' and the girl says 'He just wants to watch cricket. That's all he wants to do.' And the friend of the family says that maybe they should all play cricket together and the boy on the couch is excited for a moment because he can play cricket so well, but his brother says 'No. He'll cry if he loses.' And the boy wants to hit his brother hard because he does not ever lose at cricket even though his brother is bigger than him. But he stays on the couch and the tears prick his eyes and he wishes he could just melt and go away, just be melted into the fabric of the couch so that no one would notice him or talk about him or say lies.

And he looks at the fabric of the couch and he likes the swirls and patterns and he likes the purple and blue and he thinks that if he'd only worn his blue shirt that it would be easier to disappear, but he wore his bright green shirt and he is so easy to see. He will never melt and the friend of the family might come down and try again. That is what friends of the family do.

And he waits and he waits, but she doesn't come and he knows that he has made it so that she can't come back. He feels glad, and sad, that he can do such a thing.

His mummy comes and says 'You just watched cricket all day?' and the friend of the family says 'I tried...' and his mummy says 'What are we going to do with you?' And they leave, and mummy says, 'what do you say?' And his brother says 'Thank you for having me.' His mummy turns to him and says 'And what do you say?'

And he wishes that he could say it and he wishes he could look at her and he wishes he had a different brother, and he wishes that he could melt away into purple and blue swirls and that would be enough.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a
story by Sophie Townsend.*