

Story for performance #593  
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Source: [‘Hope gone, Palestinians turn on each other’](#),  
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Motherhood, she thought, was like being caught in a trap. It was like being fixed to the spot, every move you attempted to make being watched—but not by a hunter or a predator, just by an amorphous other. This ‘other’ creature (or in her case these two ‘other’ creatures) kept morphing and mirroring herself back to her in immature imitations. Unnerving—trapped in a hall of mirrors.

It was just a feeling not a truth. Of course, she was the other to their very real beings...but sometimes motherhood was a vice, holding you firmly in position.

They stood on the footpath on a humid Friday evening, her son, her ex-partner and her. Her son was supposed to be going to his Dad’s but he didn’t want to go...after all these years he still didn’t want to go. It was no one’s fault. Her son had tried to leave in a bad mood, not saying good-bye (which made her smile inwardly) and then he had become angry at his Dad and run back to her arms, crying. Aged twelve, but what did age matter, it was about feelings of control, or the lack thereof. And now they stood here, the two of them, talking around and around her, the screw tightening around her throat, or was it just her ankle? They circled her, debating a new arrangement that might suit everyone better...and all she felt was tired. It was not like being trapped by a hunter, no feelings of fear or death, just an interminable waiting.

And then they turned to her and her ex asked, ‘What arrangement would suit you? How do you feel?’ and she

said, ‘Oh I don’t know, I think I’m happy when you guys are happy.’ And that seemed to be the whole (patriarchal) point. My god she hated herself when she said things like that, but no matter how she looked at it there didn’t seem to be any other rational thing to say. If she began to say what would actually suit her, meet her needs, her wishes...oh she may never stop talking! But she knew it was a trick. It was not about her, it was about getting through this moment in time, this end-of-the-week-exhausted-Friday moment, and so when she said this shitty bullshit sentence and humiliated herself before them in this way, then the screw stopped tightening, the pressure eased off, and she could begin to breathe more fully.

Ten minutes later and she and her son are on the couch together watching television—she’d cancelled the plans to meet friends for drinks and found herself thinking about how beautiful his feet were as they lay stretched across her lap.

It wasn’t always his hot tears which brought things to the point of implosion. There was a different kind of episode found within the cool cool blue, like luminous pale steel, of her daughter’s eyes, so like her own father’s eyes, which froze her heart on an event horizon.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Beth Jackson.*