



Source: Gert Van Langendonck, 'Acclaimed photo that does not tell full story', *Sydney Morning Herald online*, 10/03/07.

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When they started to carry the bodies out of the basement Michael wanted to get a good look but his brother Joe was like, 'What's the big deal? That shit is just shit you seen before on YouTube', he said. 'We seen that shit before.' Joe didn't care to get up from the table whereat he was cutting the drugs and dividing them by bags like his mum showed him, so he stayed there while his bro was staring down out of the window and sometimes Joe would be laughing to himself.

For Michael though it was just that old thing with ontology again—yeah he might have seen it all before one time on the internets or seen it five times already on Raw-Kuss Behaviour with 'Smoke' Newton or he might have seen it ten freakin' times on Best Home Torture Tapes III, but he had never seen it in real. That still made a difference to him and he said so. 'I never sawed it in real. That makes all a differents to me'.

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He counted ten bodies in the morning, though he maybe missed one when their dumb-ass neighbour came round talking mindless BS and Michael was mad that he gave up his spot at the window where he looked down ten storeys to the street and the kind of home-made improvised gurney things that they were bringing the bodies out on and taking them up the path by the dead trees in the rain and into the trucks.

In the afternoon he counted five more and then it was a pause like maybe the guys down there sent someone out to get Starbucks or maybe they called hookers from the corner and had them come into the excavations to give them all blow jobs—that was a stupid suggestion of Joe, and Michael fired back at him that he didn't know what a blow job WAS which started up the whole YouTube thing again cos Joe went online and found that movie of Jade Spectra sucking the cock of Kurt Frapton or Frinton or whatever and Frapton/Frinton is moaning so hard you think he might die. And Michael just said, 'Yeah okay Joe—but you NEVER saw that shit in real—you don't KNOW it—that's just pixels and shit'.

Anyway. Concerning the pause in the number of bodies coming out you couldn't really tell why. 'We don't know', said Michael, though Joe wasn't listening. 'It is a mystery all what goes on down there, just like the whole city. We don't know because we cannot see what they are doing and no one would tell us a truthful answer anyway: all we can do is SPECULATE.' And because Michael acted like he was in charge of Joe's education and because this was A New Word for the Day he wrote it big in the condensation where his breath had steamed the whole window.

'SPECULATE'.

If you looked at the walls of the room in many different places you could see other words that he wrote there for Joe, over three previous years since they stopped really

leaving the apartment anymore on account of how mum and the news said it was not safe to do so. 'VERTEBRATE' it said in one place. And 'INVERTEBRATE'. 'EXODUS'. 'CO-ALLITION'. 'FULCRUM'. 'WORSHIP'.

Late afternoon the pause ended and more bodies were carried out and there were so many then—another 12—that Michael wondered if the pause was more that the guys maybe hit a difficult part of the searching and now they had gotten past this obstacle and were bringing out all the bodies they'd found. It wasn't clear. The more he watched he wasn't even sure anymore if they were cops (pigs), members of an insurgency or even Red Cross/Disney Corp down there anyhow. They had uniforms but like mum always said any fool could get a uniform: it was even easier than getting a gun.

Joe had finished with the drugs at that point and was on the verge of calling Rental or Renal or whatever stupid name he went by to come over and collect it all when suddenly there was another knock on the door.

It was not the knock that mum had taught Renal, and it was not her regular knock and not her Secret Knock that was like a signal to flush the drugs quick. It wasn't like the freaky knock of the neighbour that was there already once that morning either. It was, frankly, unexpected and they exchanged a look that contained a lot of information all compressed into the gap of a small space of time.

'COMPRESSED' it said on one wall already, in M's handwriting and in another place near the emergency generator you could see where he had also written 'COMPRESSION'.

Joe was looking like don't answer the door and Michael was looking back at him. And then the door opened anyway, kicked inwards, with a lot of force. And it was not mum, and it was not Renal, Rectal or Rental or whatever. It was some other guy, some guy moving with TERRIBLE INTENT.

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Later Michael was kind of shaky, like anyone would be after killing a stranger but he tried to be calm and he sat by the body to make sure it was dead and told Joe that their mum would be coming back soon and Joe was curled up in the corner, shivering and whimpering and they had hid all the drugs already and they had wiped the gun clean and tossed it out in the garbage disposal.

While they waited for mum to return Joe was still whimpering and Michael went looking in the internets to search for a story that he could tell him to help smooth out and pass the time. At uncensored Google he typed in the words 'wanted to get a good look' and then he pressed enter and he waited for all the results.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Tim Etchells.*