



Source: Scott Wilson, 'In West Bank, Israel sees room to grow', *Washington Post online*, 28/08/05.

Tags: [countryside](#), [intimacy](#), [water](#)

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We walk together. Side by side in motion, as we are at rest. We are passing through Country. The land smells sweet, rock formations perspire, the atmosphere is aglow from fine red dirt suspended in air. The sway and sigh of pandanus palm barkskin curling back is a crocodile's smile.

So we walk our path, which has been forged by those who passed this way before us. The small pale red stones press into the tender points of your feet, and occasionally your pace is broken by a flinching. I'm wearing thongs, so the worn layer of rubber means I ride smoother. You get to know the terrain better though, and you get more of the fine red dirt smuggling itself into the little trenches where toenail becomes toe.

There is shade thrown down by the branches and the toothy fronds. It cools us, covering us in relief. We walk through the softness of air.

A body of water approaches us. A billabong. Pelicans move together as one being, led by one mind which decides when to swoop the surface, when to break back to light and air and sound. We stop together on the track, cool ourselves near the water and the birds. Flies alight at the corners of our eyes, drawn by the moisture to be found there. You find a stick, a pebble and a feather while we sit and place them together inside a circle you have drawn in the ground between your feet. They are harmonious. It's just like you to do that, without noticing yourself, your mind drifts with the pelicans as they swoop and curve up, fishing.

I look at you in a particular way and you nod, we rise up and head on, the sound of feet and rubber soles padding the path.

We pass by more trees, these ones, gums with solid wood torsos and arms strong and lean; pink and red blossoms on tall and wiry bushes. The trail moves us on to the rock walls. There is the god of lightning with his wife. Their cricket children bring down the rain. He is gleeful and unafraid, striking at the cliffs with his axe of flint. Women with breasts dripping milk make their way to a ceremony. Further on the punished one, who broke incest law dances forever, there in the cave. Above him on the precipice his sister is a boulder, clinging with the strength in her toes to the edge of the drop, hanging in there for all known time. There is a quietness, a still in these places which passes through us both. We move on. The path carries us up into the sky, we snake up, this way then the other, your feet squeeze the rock as we climb, your right little toe is grazed and bleeds for a moment. We breathe our trail up, past the sisters, smiling at their crocodile games, their sharp teeth glistening on the river's edge below us.

We arrive there and around us is nothing: an expanse of air, the coloured sky, the moon carving through it all. Our breath loses gravity, we lower ourselves, side by side, and your skin brushes the edges of mine.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Ninna Millikin.*