



Source: Naomi Klein, 'Iraq's oil boom isn't delayed, it's relocated to Canada', *Guardian Unlimited*, 01/06/07.

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Tony Hawk, the great American skateboard rider, was studying in the domed reading room of the Melbourne State Library. He was over it. It seemed all he did these days was sit around on his fattening ass reading. Briefly he wondered how he had come to be back in Australia, enmeshed in another of these peculiar stories. However, aware that he had no say in the matter, he sighed crossly and tried to focus on the article lying on the desk in front of him.

It was no use. With a moan he dropped his head down onto the desk. He wanted to be ollying in some skate park. Grinding some rim. Scraping some rail. Someplace vert. Someplace mad. With his hair flying, and surf punk blasting. He wanted to be at 90 degrees to some wall. He wanted someone fun to be watching him.

He was lulled by the voice of a girl at the desk beside him whispering to herself as she read from a comic book, her eyes followed strange calligraphy across its pages. It looked like trees. Tony Hawk's long black lashes fluttered over his eyes drawing him into the soft dark. 'How cool', he thought, 'to be able to read those little trees'.

He lifted his head to find himself inside a marvellous room. The walls appeared to be made from thick white paper and glowed with a soft light. The high ceiling was made of glass, and sparkling stars shone through it, as though they had been painted there. In one corner, three skinny pine trees grew up through the wooden floor. The air was fragrant with Christmassy sweetness: pine needles, and something else...nutmeg, thought Tony, or cloves. A large potted plant laden with fat, waxy fruit stood across from the pine trees. Are those persimmons? He wondered. Then, with a happy gasp Tony noticed, just to one side of the fruit tree, perched on a dark wooden bench, the familiar form of his dear friend Madame Barbara Balloons! Their eyes met and she smiled her warm, bewitching smile. She was wearing a buttercup gold dress of shining textured silk, with a wide grass-green sash, embroidered with tiny flowers, and atop her head, a marvellous headpiece that jingled with gold and silver coins and was fringed on four sides by strings of glass beads in emerald green and cats-eye yellow.

Beside her on the bench was a tea pot and two cups, and a small plate of pretty cakes.

With a happy whoop, Tony hurried over to her and sat down on a second bench, facing her own. He beamed at her, as she poured him a cup of tea, clearly delighted to see him also. 'Dear Tony Hawk', she said.

Tony laughed his loud, startled Californian laugh. 'Oh Madame BB,' he cried 'the only good thing about appearing in these stories is that I get to see you! But that is the best thing in the world'.

Madame Barbara Balloons paused, and then she put the teapot down. She leaned forward and placed her hand gently on Tony's tanned and tattooed forearm, and this is what Madame Barbara Balloons whispered to Tony Hawk, the great American skateboard rider, from behind the jingling fringes of her marvellous coin headdress, in the middle of the scented indoor garden, overhung with crystal stars.

'Allahu Akbar. God is good'.

Tony spluttered in surprise. 'Have you converted to

Islam?' he demanded. Madame BB smiled. She pointed behind him, and Tony spun around gasping once more, as he saw that words had started to appear, curling across the paper walls of the room! No hand was visible painting them, yet they unfurled in elegant fat curves of dark red ink.

'Allahu Akbar', wrote the words, 'God is good'.

Then a pause, and then a painted question mark.

'Wow,' breathed Tony.

'I am finished', wrote the words, 'with prayer'. Then, on a new line: 'I have taken up my sword'.

'Gee', murmured Tony. Then, there came a red dash that obliterated the word sword. And, the invisible hand wrote: board.

'I am finished with prayer and I have taken up my board?' Tony read aloud.

Madame BB's eyebrows rose, then fell back into a frown of concentration, as the words continued to appear.

'jet black goo', wrote the invisible hand, then, on the next line:

'Let every arc, become a bow.'

and then:

'and every landing, home. Sit with me, beloved. This is not nothing. Come. This is good.'

Then another stroke appeared to cross out one of the o's in good, so that it read god.

'This is not nothing,' murmured Tony Hawk 'Come. This is good. god.'

Then, finally, near the bottom of the wall, the words:

'love, God.'

'Wow,' said Tony again, screwing up his face and reading back over the words which seemed to soak more deeply into the paper, becoming blurrier and blurrier, gradually smudging together into a great soft blot that soon covered the entire wall.

The charcoal ribbons of his lashes fluttered across his eyes, and Tony found himself with his cheek wetly pressed against the waxy green surface of the state library desk. 'Oh no!' he moaned, and closed his eyes tightly, willing himself back to the beautiful garden where the words of God had so recently appeared. But it was no use. The library chair dug uncomfortably into his leg and his feet had become cold inside his Adio Filters.

Beside the potted persimmon, Madame Barbara Balloons' head was bowed and jingled as she scribbled down the last words from the glowing paper walls. Dusting cake crumbs from the page, she read back over them, first quietly and then aloud, trying out a few different pitches and tones of voice, before she snapped closed her book, and stood up, in a satisfied clatter of coins and beads. Beside her, like a whisper, steam curled from the teapot, up up up to meet the nighttime crystal sky.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Margaret Trail.