



Source: Alissa J. Rubin, 'Moderates try to break Iraq's sectarian logjam', *New York Times online*, 06/07/07.
Tags: [Israel](#), [child/parent](#), [home](#), [husband/wife](#)
Writer/s: [John O'Brien](#)

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She says:

I am like a ghost to him. He won't come back to earth as long as he is fighting. Instead of his life's work, his Night Novel, he is punishing his laptop with letters and demands to government people. He wants to adopt Katya. We are waiting to hear if it's possible. But when we hear 'no' we take it as a maybe and he gets back to pounding out his letters. Only when the orphan is allowed to come, will we go back to our twin farms. He makes me use my Mossad connections and tells me to make sure I have the violins playing when I do. I get the whole symphony orchestra, I'll tell you. Also there's shouting, most of them are schlemiels.

Here's what happened. After the argument and the shooting, he was all resolve. My own blood was being stopped up in a hospital, my energy dissipating. Dissipating where? Into him. My life force went into him. I no longer cared, I just wanted to lie there, I had no more ambition than that, and maybe that the hospital food improve.

He became master of the world, and his one aim was and is to build a new family, him, me, the child, and restore that family to safety. Up in the hills. Back in Australia.

He thought I was dead but I don't think he'll think I'm truly resurrected until he gets what he wants. So I'm a ghost to him. Just like the answer 'no' is a word spoken by a ghost and therefore to be ignored.

What he's tired of is what the world is tired of. The blood. You run out of patience for the idealists and you start to drown in blood. I told him this and he said, 'Yes and Katya isn't our blood but all her family's dead so we don't leave this country until they let us take her.'

Until they let me take her. They'd never let him, he hasn't the power, he isn't Israeli, he isn't a 'fit person', but my brain is intact, I'm buried in ancestors from here, I've served this place, rebelled against this place, grown up from of about in with this place and I am like him, only wanting to go to the new home, the away home, the home home, the eucalyptic home, home in Australia. Back home.

I've discovered something about the Middle East since I met my ABI with the Night Novel. It is simply another home. Its ghosts and neighbours are no more extreme, not really, than anywhere else. Its adolescents have as much pent-up energy. Its oil fields are simply another cog in the world economy, like the factories of China or the beef of Australia, or like a standard street where the Baxters are accountants, the Chans are doctors, the Joneses are unemployed, the Milevics are selling up. Its religions are no less irrational. Its tribal dreams are as ridiculous. Look at your street.

And what he says is absolutely true. Katya isn't our blood, except insofar as everyone is our blood, and everywhere is the Middle East.

...

He says:

I have this picture dream aim hope wish reality: Katya and

my love are mending the fences together, planning a new dam, putting in a DA to renovate our home. Katya has learnt English and given one of the lads at the local school a smack in the mouth for his interest.

Against the picture I have these letters, fudging, rude, faux-kind, cunty, dissembling, dismembering, incomprehensible, literal, mis-sent, arch, wack, irritating, loose, cagy, sycophantic, long, orthotic, charming, vague, hopeful, sympathetic, churlish, wry, brazen, dark, officious, myopic, resistant, contemporary, poly-referential, rhizomatic, shallow, uncertain, misrepresentational, sesquipedalian, virtual, harsh, hoaxing, Crookwellian, lacy, dysrhythmic, pure, rattle-baggy, dopy, improper, Jewish, Arabic, Semitic, Aussie, Russki, French, Kazakh, clandestine, subtextual, irrelevant, hot, courageous, sensible, reserved, toxic, parsimonious, loquacious, crafty, molly-coddling, balletic, reprehensible, open, fallacious, legalistic, emotive, hungry, gargantuan, pneumatic, parturitive, ungrammatical, holy, ectoplasmic, philosophical, unethical, ranting, prepucive, random, closed, beside-the-point, inspiring, dangerous, wrong, and incandescent as in burnable.

We are waiting to hear and it is making us alive as long as we don't hear.

But I shall hold in my head the picture, and for all my love's complaints that I am treating her like a ghost I shall never forget that the three of us, apart, separated, barred from one another, are all that matter. If they let us take the girl back home with us, I will be the luckiest man alive. I will be alive. Thank you. Don't forget to write.

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I visit them twice a week, in their old hotel. He wants to be my father, she my mother. My actual foster parents, Russians but more like Moscow people, also say they want me but I like the Australians and I think their country sounds terrible and wonderful. It sounds like Israel, in truth.

But why do they need me when she is pregnant?

The hills over the place where my Muscovites are living echo when I stand in a special spot. The first time I thought it was my sister's voice. I cried for her. I hope her voice can come to Australia with us. I know the Muscovites will cry when I go but I don't care. They will forget me.

But I'm a fool. He says we're going, in English. She says there's no chance, in Hebrew, Russian and in languages I can't understand. She must know.

She is teaching me to make lace. Her skin is pale. She walks in great pain. She screams down the phone. I wish my babushka was here, so they could make lace together. He holds her and they lie still like that for an hour. I last five minutes but I could last an hour if I wanted.

But I don't have to any more. My only job is to study and make them smile. And help them wait to hear.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by John O'Brien.