



Source: Joshua Partlow, 'Mahdi army, not Al-Qaeda, is enemy no 1 in western Baghdad', *Washington Post online*, 16/07/07.

Tags: [art](#), [child/parent](#)

Writer/s: [Deborah Levy](#)

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She's a total nut case. Her hair looks uncared for under her hood. She probably has lice. I know she's too thin. The sort of thin, if she took off her dress, you'd see her ribs and nipples and want to cry. Her breath smells of sour milk. Her lips scare me. Her face is irradiated with light. I want to kiss her just under her mad right eye.

She says one day, when she was three years old, a vulture flew in through the window and landed on her bed. It turned its back on her and stroked her lips with its tail feathers. She thought the vulture might be the spirit of her father who abandoned her. When she was older she taught herself how to fly so she could search for her lost father. She wants to know his name, his rituals, the food he likes and what kind of songs he sings in the bath. She says she is not experienced in love and she likes foxes.

Her voice sounds very foreign to me.

She says she's not unhappy or happy. She says she's alright. Today is alright and yesterday was alright too. Tomorrow might be alright. She's alright.

I say Mona Lisa, where were you made? She says, what sort of question is that? I was made in Leonardo da Vinci's head: where were you made?

I'm deeply embarrassed but I started it, so I tell her, If I thought I was made in someone's head, my mother's head or my father's head, for example, it would be like all the lights I've switched on in my life going off. I would be wounded in their wars and every time I hoped for something it would be shameful and every time I listened to music it would be the wrong sort of music. When I was older I taught myself to fly so I could get away from my father. It's not a sad story or anything, it's just very important to me not to have been made in his head—or my mother's either. I have a little experience in love and I like foxes too. Today is alright. Yesterday was alright. Tomorrow might be quite good if it stops raining.

My voice sounds very foreign to her.

She smiles her nut case smile and tells me to look at the sky because she is there somewhere searching for her lost father and everybody knows that because they are too and she can feel her mother's breath, like light in her lungs under her dress.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Deborah Levy.*