



Source: Greg Sheridan, 'Israeli right-winger redraws the battle lines', *The Australian online*, 17/12/07.

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

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The sight of blood makes me go all...

Sorry. Here I go again! It's the way he's lying in the dust like that...

I'll go over there and sit on that wall, out of your way. It looks quite comfortable, covered with moss. All we need is a mossy armchair and a mossy coffee table to make it feel quite homely out here! Hey presto! A sitting-room.

Pardon? This wall is where he...?

Oh, I see. Sorry. No, really. I'm fine just here.

Cup of tea? Could you put some sugar in? Four, please. Yes, four.

I hope they come soon. Will they come soon?

Have you noticed there's still quite a glow in the sky even though it must be gone nine thirty? At home it's always dark by now. When I say *dark*, that doesn't include the street lights. A blackbird sings all night in our garden. He sits on top of the dividing wall. You can't shut him up. We've resorted to ear-plugs to keep out the noise.

This really is a beautiful part of the country, isn't it? You're ever so lucky to live out here in the open. Are you from next-door? We're neighbours! You're not local, though, by the sound of you. Where are you from?

Look at him lying in the dust. He's so tall. You can see his feet sticking out.

It's just bad luck. You'd never think an ordinary wall could possibly cause something like this. It's not even three feet high. I expect you think in metres and centimetres rather than feet, don't you, where you come from? Maybe in your country, you've got some local way of measuring height like they have in India?

Twenty minutes ago, that's when it happened. The other boy knocked on our door. We could hardly see him. Over here, that's what we call *gloaming*. It's when you get this type of light. Gloaming is an old English word. It means that everything becomes the same colour. No boundaries. People just disappear into it. And I suppose that wall simply wouldn't have shown up.

Oh dear, listen to that rasping noise...

There I go again. Sorry.

I hope they come soon.

Can somebody go and talk to the other one? He's running around like a headless chicken over there. Listen to him! What a mouth! They're like chalk and cheese, these two, with that one running around shouting those terrible things, and this one lying here, stock-still under the blanket like he's tucked up in bed.

What? Well you call it shock if you like, but I call a mouth like that *bad parenting*.

That's lovely, thanks, nice and hot. Nice and sweet.

Is that them? I can see the blue lights flashing on the road. Thank goodness, here they come.

\*

The gravel is very abrasive to my feet. When I rushed out earlier on, I grazed my little toe on a stone.

I know this is an emergency, but I can't understand what's happened. The boy who knocked on our door keeps screaming at the top of his voice. He stinks of alcohol. The other boy is lying on the ground with his head at a funny angle. It looks like he's inhaling the earth, and his breathing sounds prickly and sore. A trickle of blood comes out of his mouth, leaking into the gravel.

Rachel ran ahead of me, but she's no use because the smallest drop of blood is enough to send her off for good.

I try to call an ambulance, but can't get a signal out here.

I run to the cottage next door, and knock loudly. The guy who answers hardly speaks a word of English, but when he comes outside and sees the boy, he gives me his phone, and I dial 999 and tell them where to come.

Now we're waiting for the ambulance. I can't stop looking at the boy's hand. It's large and pale, like an upturned crab. But it's not dry like the crabs you find lining the shore.

\*

I very bad for small man.

I very bad for small man mother and small man friend.

\*

He'll be fine! Don't you worry about a thing. The ambulance will be along in a jiffy. What's your name?

Irish, are you?

No need for that kind of language young man. I'm only trying to talk to you.

He'll be fine!

No, he's not going to die. You can hear him breathing, can't you? Yes, I know anyone can hear him breathing, but you should see that as a good sign. They'll give him oxygen in the ambulance. He'll be right as rain by next week.

\*

While I'm in the air, the wind pummels and pushes my body. It hurts my ears. I laugh uncontrollably when I'm flying like this. For a split second I feel totally weightless.

The other day, I jumped out of the front bedroom window of Declan's house and landed on the patio. But squeezing through the window frame onto the ledge meant we couldn't leap down as fast as I wanted. And we had to aim quite carefully to miss the spiky metal fence.

All the colours of the rainbow flashed in the corners of my eyes for that split second before I landed, melting together, and I felt like there was just one colour in the world. The sky was piercing blue and in the distance, the lighthouse pointed up like a finger.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Stephanie Newell.*