

A man with short dark hair, wearing a white button-down shirt, is shown in profile from the chest up, looking out towards the ocean. The background is a bright, slightly hazy sky over the water.

2006  
*boys'*  
*summer*  
*collection*

[www.gay-ebooks.com.au](http://www.gay-ebooks.com.au)

Featuring new work from:

Alistair Sutton

Ian MacNeill

Brendan Lindsay

Geoffrey Greene

John Roberts

Gary Dunne

Tim Miles

Rob McDonald

**CONTENT WARNING**

'A gay lifestyle with no sex would be like being grounded at Luna Park with no tokens.'

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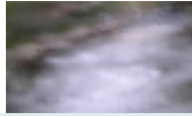


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# 2006 boys' summer collection

Welcome to gay-ebooks 2006 Boys' Summer Collection, a taste of the diversity of new Australian gay fiction. This is the first of what we hope will grow into a series of invited collections. Like its earlier BlackWattle hardcopy predecessors, it features a mix of known and new writers from across Australia, as well as a diversity of styles and themes.

2006 Boys' Summer Collection is perhaps raunchier in content than our earlier anthologies, though not by design. We simply selected the best of what was on offer. Perhaps it's a comment on the times that we are now more comfortable exploring our roots in print.

The parent for this title is <[www.gay-ebooks.com.au](http://www.gay-ebooks.com.au)>. Our aim is to foster gay writing in Australia, and if you haven't yet visited the site we urge you to do so. There you'll find more examples of new writing and some archival materials, including a couple of BlackWattle chapbooks in full. There are also free downloads from Robert Tait, Ian MacNeill, Michael West, Gary Dunne, plus the 2006 Perverse Verse Poetry Collection. Our next release will be a new title from Ian MacNeill, due online in December.

If you're in Sydney on 3 February 2007, please join us at the NSW Writers Centre for **Perverse**, a packed day out for readers and writers. **Perverse**, a Mardi Gras event, will feature readings from this collection, plus the popular Perverse Verse poetry performances, and more. Check our website for more information. New Mardi Gras is running their Short Story competition again next year; details from <[www.mardigras.org.au](http://www.mardigras.org.au)> or our website.

Our thanks to the maestro of the semicolon, Brian Watson, for his dedicated proofing; and to Alistair Sutton for his ongoing enthusiasm for what we're doing. Our sincere thanks also to the writers for generously allowing us to include their work in the 2006 Boys' Summer Collection. We're hoping this will lead to further opportunities to see their work in print and on screen. If you'd like to contact an author, please email us and we'll pass the message on. We're also interested in feedback about this collection as well as suggestions, and indeed submissions, for our next publication, a winter fiction collection. Suggestions for a snappier title are even more welcome.

Gary Dunne and Laurin McKinnon  
enquiries@gay-ebooks.com.au

Nov 2006



**Alistair Sutton**

**Mixing it with the big ones**

The beach. Hot sand. The quick chill of water as your body breaks the surf. Brown nubile bodies, skin slick with suntan oil. The promise of sex. The beach is all that and more to me. From a background of high achievers, I'd long been considered the family fuck up. Unlike my older brother Dan, I never wore a suit, didn't even own one. Unlike my father I didn't drive a Beamer.

Unlike my Mum.... I don't feel like talking much about her.

When all you're wearing is a pair of swimmers, the beach strips you back to basics, levelling rank, role and class. Little wonder I felt instantly at home here on Bribie Island, a contentment I'd rarely experienced with my uptight family down in Brisbane. Now almost three years later, I'm still here. Mum thinks I'm wasting my life. I tell her it's mine to waste if I want. I was a bright enough kid, but always seemed eclipsed by Dan who became an architect like Dad, and was good at sports. Dan's a dickhead.

As I trek across the hot white sand, the only reference points to a wider life are my towel, my sunnies, a book. I wear board shorts, 'boardies.' Only old guys wear those brief swimmers these days. Don't get me wrong, I like older guys. A lot of the men I get off with at the beach are in their forties and that's cool. You can tell the married ones, even without checking for the tell tale band of white on their ring finger. And that's cool too. I like the ones into kissing. It's funny how two strangers can get so intense, then just walk away. Some don't kiss. They're the ones who think a quick anonymous blowjob with another guy doesn't mean they're queer, as long as they don't kiss you. I guess rimming doesn't count. It doesn't worry me either way. It adds variety and it's not as if I want to see any of them again.

Brandon my best friend likes older guys too, but even older than what I go for. He deliberately seeks out the oldest guys on the beach, claiming that minus their false teeth they give the best blow jobs. He may be right, but our tastes differ enough that the ones he finds attractive, I don't. So it's hard to compare. A young guy might amble along and I'd immediately be keen to lure him off to the bushes. Brandon just sniffs and tells me I'm 'ageist'. I know I'll be old one day, but that's a long way off and in the meantime I don't want to worry too much about the future. It's summer, the water's warm and the boys are warmer.

Today I'm alone and grateful for it. The deserted beach, familiar enough, allows me time to chill out. Away from the demands of others, it's the perfect distraction. Cutting through the breakers as I body surf, the water clears my head of last night's dope and beer. The breeze quickly dries the salt on my skin as I find a protected stretch of sand to lie down. I have a few choice spots which afford an uninterrupted view of the beach and any potential flesh approaching.

I moved to Bribie after meeting Lance, at the beach. I was twenty-one. We'd had sex immediately. As you do. Not even bothering to find shade, out in the midday sun, our hot sweaty bodies colliding in a tangle of suntan lotion, sweat and cum. The memory exhilarates still. Our bond deep and

quickly cemented. I threw in my job, headed north and moved in with him. Mum reacted as if I had been abducted by a paedophile.

"I'm over eighteen Mum!" I shouted at her.

"You're a child, Philip! What will you do for a living? Don't think your father and I will support you. Max, say something!"

"Leave me out of it, Deirdre," Dad grouched at her, already tired of the argument.

But earning my keep was already taken care of. Lance, besides being hung like a horse, owns an Italian restaurant at Bribie. Not only did I have a place to go, but a lover and a job lined up as well. Way too convenient.

Time brings changes. Lance really does like them young, I admit ruefully. I'm three years older and I realise his desire for me faded imperceptibly as our friendship grew. I take it in my stride. I've developed a love of cooking and progressed from kitchen hand to chef, practically running that side of things at the restaurant. Life's good.

I go to the beach most days, as the restaurant only opens nights. Lance could have done a lot with the place, but work gets in the way of his hobbies. Fucking and getting high. I like my routine of waking late, hitting the beach in my old clapped out car, having a nap, a joint and a wank in the afternoon before heading into the restaurant. It's a routine which hardly changed from when Lance and I were seriously going out to when we stopped fucking and I

moved into the sleepout.

This suited me as it gave me my own space in Lance's untidy bungalow. Appropriating the other spare room for my clothes and sound system, I rigged the speakers up behind shelves and plants. I never dreamt of going back to Brisbane. If I wanted a break I headed up to Coolum and stayed in a caravan. The beat next to the surf club used to work a treat, but don't waste your time there now.

Lance discouraged my little trips away only because it meant he had to go back and work in the kitchen at the restaurant. But he knew he was onto a good thing with me. We both were. Bribie has one other advantage. Mum hates it and never visits. As I said, life was good.

\* \* \* \*

I don't own a surfboard, but I love surfies. Brandon reckons surfies, straight or gay, are just 'fuck machines'. If they're horny and you're around, just enjoy the ride! I always make sure I carry condoms as some of these surfie dudes would stick it into anything. I love being fucked, but I don't want to die from it.

I saw one guy regularly, after Lance and I called it quits. I forget his real name, but I'll never forget the moment I locked eyes on him. A blond vision stumbling down the path, surfboard under his arm, eyes hidden by reflector sunnies. I trailed his

footsteps to the shoreline, experiencing the familiar adrenalin rush from the chase. I had to have him.

Starting a conversation was easy once we'd been dumped by the same wave. Racing him off to the sand hills was even easier. Accidental meetings leading to repeat performances were never a problem, once I'd sussed out his work schedule. He was too uptight to pre-arrange a session, yet he always managed to let me know when he'd be back. His surprise when I'd materialize from behind a sand dune always seemed genuine, despite the frequency of these encounters. I allowed him this fantasy, never revealing the hours I'd spend waiting to see his bleached hair and lean brown body appear in the distance as he trekked up the beach.

He liked being fucked which is okay. I gave him something his girlfriend couldn't. I'd eat out his perfect hairless crack then feed in my shaft, centimetre by centimetre.

"Yeah, keep going, mate," he'd encourage. When I'd finally got it all the way in I'd pump him in long easy strokes, reaching round to fondle his big engorged tool. He'd cum in shuddering grunts as I'd run my fingers through his fine blond hair. I learnt on the grapevine that his nickname at the surf club was Grunt. I wondered if the boys knew how apt the tag was. I bet a few did. He'd spin out on a guilt trip after sex, not even stopping to smoke a joint of which Lance had an endless supply.

"Stay a while," I'd say, just wanting to chill out.

"Nah, mate. I've got to mix it with the big ones," he'd answer, gazing out at the ocean. I always wondered if he was thinking of the waves or the other surfies.

Try as I could to empathise, I could never comprehend the depths of his angst. Why choose to live like that?

"Conditioning," Brandon would explain over a rum and coke. I guess he's right.

There was this other guy Tim, who I met one weekday on the deserted surf beach. I was tired from work, trying to snooze and, for once, not trawling the bushes for action. He was an eyeful, his pale flawless skin ill suited to the harsh Queensland sun. He kissed like an angel. His probing tongue warm, soft and wet. His pink lips, cracked by sunburn, were full and sensuous. We went out for a while but it was very one sided. He was too paranoid to give me his number and he didn't have email. So he'd ring out of the blue, often on nights when I was working. Other nights when I'd be home, nothing. He'd only call on nights he'd want to come over. Hot with desire. But he wasn't a prick, just really shy I think. I was reading that book 'Tender is the Night', its brooding imagery somehow evocative of Tim.

One Monday night when the restaurant was closed, I borrowed the key and cooked him dinner. Sitting in the empty room, the candle spluttering in its bottle (Lance has a very generic sense of decorating), we

held hands and ate my risotto with forks.

"You do everything so nice." Tim smiled, the light pooling in his eyes. With him it was more than just sex and I think that frightened both of us. He moved from Caboolture to Caloundra, but it hardly made any difference to our infrequent encounters. At one stage he bought a bright red station wagon which he took childish delight in. He rang a few times when I was busy and I couldn't see him. Then one night Tim rang and I was sick. I think he thought I wasn't interested anymore.

"Just give me some warning," I pleaded.

But he stopped ringing and it really cut me up. I never saw him again. Lance did his best to cheer me up. We even started fucking again for a bit. It wasn't the same as before though and I learnt one great rule in life. Never go back. I realised in those ensuing months that it had been Tim, not Lance, who'd taught me the meaning of love.

Spring turns to summer. I've started growing my hair long at the back which Lance dislikes. The beach beckons, even in my dreams. I like how it constantly changes, the sands shifting with the tides, the embankments building and receding. Seemingly permanent, but ephemeral in reality. It's not its physical allure that captures my imagination, rather something deeper. I can't explain it. Countless summer days? The hot glare reflecting off the sand? Sweat beading my brow? Hours spent in a sleepy torpor punctuated by intense encounters of

anonymous sex... Only recently have I sensed a latent restlessness in myself. I've been unable to identify its source, nor have I been able to extinguish it.

I don't want to know what's around the corner, that would be way too scary. I check my watch. Almost time to head back to the car. I haven't gotten off, but that's okay. Absently I consider having a wank, but my shift at the restaurant starts soon. There's always tomorrow and the empty week stretching ahead. I trudge reluctantly back towards the car park. The beach a thin strip, high tide. If I hurry I should have time to check out the shower block up the road.

I tell myself I'm not lonely.

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A blurred photograph of a stream with water flowing over rocks and green moss. The water is in motion, creating a sense of flow and movement. The rocks are dark and textured, and the moss is a vibrant green. The overall scene is natural and serene.

**Ian MacNeill**

**Diary of Percival Geraint**

The following transcript of selected items from Percival Geraint's diary utilises modern spellings and punctuation in an attempt to render the document as accessible as possible. The transcript was undertaken to bring to light an aspect of Australia's colonial past about which there is little evidence. Further, what evidence exists has often been deliberately occluded. It was felt that Geraint intended to leave a record of experiences which were important to him and which he felt might be of importance to others. It is in this spirit that the following transcription was undertaken.

### The Document

The ms of the Geraint *Diary* was uncovered in 1979 when the floor boards of a small cottage in Darlinghurst, an inner suburb of Sydney, were taken up for renovation.

The owner of the house held the Geraint *Diary* for the next eighteen years. He offered it to several scholars for perusal. All found it lively, only one considered it contained material of great significance.

On the recommendation of the dissenting scholar, Geraint's *Diary* was purchased by a private collector upon the death of the discoverer.

The diary remains in these private hands, the following transcriptions are published with his permission.

### The Author

Thanks to the work of researcher Marilyn Leakey, Department of History, Chisholm University, a

surprising amount is known about Percival Geraint. The name suggests Welsh ancestry and indeed his record describes him as having been apprenticed to a *Mr. Hughe Jones esq.* thus substantiating the Welsh association. Hugh Jones was a *pewter founder and turner* of Claypit Field near what is now Tunbridge Wells, outside of London.

Percival Geraint was convicted in 1787 of 'nicking', that is taking flakes of valuable metal from objects sent to his master for repair and replacing them with metal of inferior value – such as patching gold with brass, or silver with tin. He was sentenced to fourteen years transportation on this charge.

Percival Geraint probably survived eighteen months in a hulk on the Thames before voyaging to Botany Bay on board the *Scarborough* in 1789 as part of the infamous Second Fleet – infamous for the cruel deprivations inflicted on the transported convicts in the cause of making a greater profit for those who

commanded the ships.

The Second Fleet was also notorious for the 'depravities' which became part of shipboard life. As we see from the first entry offered here, Geraint contributes to this notoriety which haunted Australian history until the recent past when one could at last admit to having a convict ancestor and sexuality became a matter of public discourse. Percival Geraint's skills were quickly recognised in the sprawling squalor of early Sydney and he was employed in the manufacture and repair of precision instruments, swords, medals and other ceremonial artefacts as well as the jewelry required by the Rum Corps officers, soldiers and their ladies. By the time of Governor Macquarie he was an established and respected personage with his own thriving business premises in the area just behind what is now the Customs House Museum at Circular Quay.

Ian MacNeill



# February 1793

*Coming home from church was nodded to by Corporal T. This is the first time the fellow has acknowledged me. How high am I now in the world. And I know him inside out from the sweetened nights on that stinking pail, the Scarborough. We who survived are bound forever as brothers, mute though we may be as to our stratagems. He is high now in this land, higher than a great lord at home, a duke of Sydney Town, close to the Major Governor (Grose) who has himself risen over those who made him rise. All have heard he gave his bastards on Norfolk Island a christening and think the better of him for it. There is worse than both though they say they play clean. S told me over a cup that there is talk that life at Norfolk is all pick and hoe, after sunset and lock-up it is to work amongst the fruit and flowers and many is the plot.*

## September 1793

*Was called to Parramatta to repair some clocks for Captain M. Mrs M gave me a good supper of roast mutton and potato and directed a shepherd to show me*

*my sleeping. No more than seventeen, he knew how to pasture a ram for the nights, thrashing the straw for any loose seed so we might lie comfortable.*

## December 1793

*Added my tenor to the carols sung in the new church where the ladies claim they catch cold because they have no panes in the windows. I took no cold for it was a very warm night and a friendly lad, the son of J who has his plot out Toongabbie, offered to see me safely past the Barracks with his lantern. Relief was offered as we took our way through the shrubbery on the hill there. He wanted the candle out and I was willing to oblige. Lord knows what dangers were kept at bay by his stout way with a staff thick as a hawser and knotted like one. Yet my hands felt it smooth as they ran its length. We took our way through a small gully. Young J, though a country lad, is often away from his father's farm. He knows the bye ways of this town and where to find the manners that suit him and all the nooks and crannies I can swear. The hauling of the plough it must have been*

*that gave him those shoulders and the rump of a draft horse. Even with the candle out I could look over the many parts of him for he is a rounded one and though not polite smooth as silk.*

*He said he had no place to stay for his father's friends were drunken and he could not abide them that night. Some do not know their obligations even at Christmas and it was left to me to offer shelter.*

*Young J left after breakfast, very jolly and full of praise. Even in this unGodly place one may find grace the more delightful for being unexpected.*

## *February 1795*

*It could be a very good year though a fire broke out nearby and burnt a flock of chicken and a pair of fine geese penned by a foolish individual so they could not run to shelter from it. It is not a small loss as many go hungry and the Corps keep the salt pork for themselves. There is no beef. A vessel is due from Calcutta and all look for it. I was sent to the south Head huts to repair a glass. The salt air had eroded the brass casing and the leather had loosened and was threatening to let the glass fall. I was sent in the government schooner and a hearty dash we made from the Cove, tacking across the harbour this way and that until we reached the settlement where the soldiers stay to keep watch and guard against buccaneers and who knows from the high seas. They look out for any convicts foolish enough to try to escape though those who have tried*

*have been caught miserable and lashed.*

*T an Irish man, rebel may be, took me in the skiff they keep there over to the north Head where there are some few soldiers guarding over the team there who labour to make an obelisk so that the pilot can guide the ships in. He sailed like a fiend talking and laughing in his Irish way all the time and we were soon there where he was greeted by all who knew him well. Soon we were given a pannikin and T took me off into the forest to show me where the Natives had their hovels and said Benelong was king of all the area and not to be afraid for we were very safe. It was hot so he said he would take his shirt off and he was thewed like a stallion though no thoroughbred. We did not find the Native village but T said he did not care much as he liked to dally in the forest and we were not expected back so soon, the soldiers and men having to sow their crop and we might look to do the same if we chose.*

*He stretched himself out on the ground and showed himself to have the tastes of a lady all careful and nice but he bellowed when he got to know you like so many who give themselves swaggering airs. I told him the people in Sydney Cove would think they were hearing the lost cattle and he laughed and his blue eyes twinkled in the Irish way.*

*When we returned to the work party the men asked T if he'd found the leek he was looking for and he said, all eyes sparkling with winks and nodding, 'To be sure.' I said, 'Did not you hear him singing with the pleasure of*

*it?' They wanted us to stay and help because they said their tools needed my skills but T said we must return or the Corporal would be claiming we were planning to do a bolt. And to be sure you are, said one.*

*They were a jolly lot, soldiers and men and who would have believed such high spirits alone there in their small camp on the north Head?*

*They had no vegetables to share with us for nothing would grow well so near the sea there and they were reduced to eating peas ('pease' - dried peas served as a mash) and fish, for their rice had all long gone. They gave us oysters to take back for they are very tasty on that shore.*

*T said he knew what they were good for and this was well received especially as he had brought some dahl (?'dhol') which they were so hungry for not having bread, nor flour to make it.*

*T said I must lie with him that night for who knew what dangers there were abounding on the south Head, there could be pirates creeping in from Batavia way or American whalers, a rough crew, or Natives prowling or runaways or even ghosts but he began to scare himself so stopped his Irish story making.*

*I told him he must be quieter or he would raise the spirits and this was efficacious for though he moaned somewhat it was not such that would wake anyone not listening. He showed himself various, saying I should*

*try settling quiet myself and for all that he was wild Irish he knew how to finesse any Lady of this land and had the paws and pole for it. Altogether he was well proportioned but a fine whaler he would make for the harpoon once in would not slip easily out. T says he will look for me when he returns from his time with the work gang at the south Head.*

## May 1796

*The Governor (Hunter) no less asked me to see him when I went to the (?Government) House to take some orders regarding the machinery of a mill at the Hawkesbury settlement to grind the maize that the (land) holders are now producing there. His Excellency stood me in his office privately and asked me to look carefully at the works there and to see if there are mistakes in building and to watch for any stills for he fears they might be injuring their health with bad rum and that it needs careful stilling if it is not to be near to poison.*

*I assented for what else could I? I know nothing about farming or milling and am not sure why I am to look at the mill for it cannot be much like a clock or compass. All hear the stories about the ceremonies performed along the Hawkesbury. The people have become savages and engage in unbridled licence. I do not wish to go as the winds are strong and though I am to go in the famous 'Cumberland' (the best boat in the colony) I have no relish for the open sea. His Excellency said I was to go in that vessel and not pursue a journey on land from Parramatta which is now possible.*

*As we made through the Heads I remembered my stay there with my friend T now a supervisor at Port Stephens, God watch over him in that dangerous place.*

*A young lad took up station at the stern and when I rested there told me to look beneath the waves for there was a great shark pursuing us and a man had to watch closely to see for it was monstrous cunning and hid always in the shadow of the vessel. He said if any were to slip they would be devoured and that if I felt right I would know the beast nudging the underside with its great head hoping to dislodge one.*

*He is one of many with mind upset by the terrors and deprivations of the journey out and will likely never recover his wits entirely unless he finds peace with those he was being sent to work the land for on the Hawkesbury.*

*Our entry into the river mouth from Pittwater nearly proved him right for the tide was wrong and we were buffeted by a great round wave like a pipe many miles long and high as a man.*

*We slept on board that night and he came to me and said he had learned I was an instrument man and knew the methods of repair, would I repair his instrument for some men wanted to know the workings thereof. I complied yet think not my skill would effect a lasting balance. Poor lad, I fear he needs more repair than this damned place is likely to provide.*

(Here follows a description of the farms and works Geraint observed during his stay at the Hawkesbury settlement).

*The settlers held a subscription to give those of us from the 'Cumberland' a banquet for some were returning with us and some had made themselves popular during their ten days here. Not much food was subscribed or they follow the Sydney fashion and do not consider the eating an important part of the banquet. Toasts were all of the ceremony and soon they were neglected, a mercy as they were become tedious. Some did taste of the wallaby tail soup which was enriched with the vegetables they grow well here for the soil is excellent because of the flooding which caused so much trouble here. And I ate fowl and mutton which was well roasted in the big oven. The dancing was not elegant but very lively and I noticed my young friend from the 'Cumberland' had made himself comfortable, whether with grog or agreeable manners I know not. He came and winked and asked me to dance but was spirited away by a lass who I observed pushed him at her husband while she went wild with a soldier who was to stay with the corps there. It seems there are new ways in this new world and my young friend might find himself at peace if he is not too flooded with the river and the rum and the wild times are matched with quiet (the height of the Hawkesbury flood of 1795 had taken the new settlers by surprise). For it is wondrous peaceful by the river and there is much abundance of the things of life which are salutary. I took myself away early for my every thought was for the voyage tomorrow and I did*

*not wish to be indisposed during it. I saw no still for so I shall tell His Excellency.*

Percival Geraint was awarded a conditional pardon the next year (a reward for spying on the Hawkesbury settlers?). He married Rhoda Coulthred at the same time (a condition of his pardon?). He applied himself now to the manufacture and repair of jewelry and precision instruments from a workshop.

## August 1798

*The boy is forwarding himself I hear by taking on some work of his own outside the shop. I hope he does not take on more than he can effect for though he has applied himself well and learnt much that I have to offer him, he is not entirely capable though fancies himself so. He came to me a not so pink and white as a rose for they do not grow well in this clime, more like a tiger lily with his Rocks airs (the Rocks is now a tourist area immediately to the west of Circular Quay; in Geraint's day and well into the last century it was infamous for gangs and crime). I took him on a whim, not knowing if he would rob me, or prove so unsteady as to be useless but my guess was good and he stayed orderly because he wanted to raise a skill in him and then found he indeed had a love of the trade which is difficult and not for the impatient one. His dark eye burnt under his soldered brows and his hair flicked round his neck. He must have Lascar (Indian) blood through his mother out nights in those*

*streets where the visiting sailors roam on shore. He is quiet like them, brooding so a man does not know what he thinks but as he blossomed towards manhood and grew to know his place was safe here, laughed more and whistled and sang his songs and sometimes clapped a sailors dance which was a pretty sight to see amongst the smoky things about. He plays my pleasure sometimes by rolling his walk and smiles and laughs when he sees me looking at him. I am proved a good judge by his development.*

## March 1799

*G agreed to the picnic trip to mark the Easter end and we went out past the Rushcutters bay and on past several of the other bays until we found a spot where Captain Dennett has his gardens and pasture that pleased us. The basket Rhoda had provided us with pleased us and I told G I was in the mood to be pleased by a fine lunch. He said we should find shelter for the number of skiffs on the harbour was near beyond belief for such a small place as this. We settled behind a great rock and I placed my hand on the packed fruit and felt it grow a loaf. I then did unbutton the napkin and told G he needed air after all that work and I would peel the fruit for his refreshment.*

*The brown tuber tasted best when sucked straight and I said all it needed was a little cream to be in every way perfect which sally seemed to please G well for he soon enough obliged.*

*Later he wanted some exercise and I quipped, 'We have no horse.' 'No matter,' said he, 'I'll find something else to ride.' And though he may have not spent much time in the saddle, he showed he could ride with vigour. I believed I saw his rumps bouncing and squeezing and when I breeched the poll leaned back and felt the young spuds and true they were smooth and inclined to be large though the season is just begun.*

*On the way towards home the boy wanted yet more but I said the apprentice should not overwork the man.*

Later that year Geraint was granted 25 acres at Liberty Plains (the Concord/Homebush area of today) but continued to live in Sydney. We finish his story with an account of a race ball he gave at this site where he built a villa. The land was given over to market gardens and orchards and Geraint must have employed a number of people to work it.

## October 1802

*The king who is now Governor (King was the name of the Governor) himself would have enjoyed the spectacle of so many brakes and fine horses and wenches and lads who came out on the drays to partake of the celebration I provided to mark the beginning of the new field which I am to put to cattle under the new man who says the milkers will do well here and the market is good as the town grows prodigiously. I told the lads and men any who felt the urge could gallop their mares in formation and we had some musicians to keep the measure.*

*Rhoda and her friend Mrs R now grown fine in the world despite beginning their time in the colony together at the ladies school in Parramatta (probably an allusion to the Women's Prison there) did well to muster help to lay out the plenty.*

*Fine games were held with running and chasing balls with the dancing after the banquet where there was everything good to be had and abundant though some there were who preferred the grog to games and gavottes. This is the way of the colony.*

*Such a sight of bonnets with coloured ribbons and white stockings in dainty boots was not to be seen often beyond the real quality and there were some there who gave themselves those airs, those mollies who would be great peeping from under their bonnets their faces powdered over though some had not much beard to shave. Some were more popular who took not the trouble and the missies stamped and pouted and threw their frocks about.*

*The afternoon was fine and some lay down to rest in the shade and some strolled the gardens and looked for any ripe apples or pears and I glimpsed blushing apricots under the trees rolling to and fro clasped by hands for their ripeness.*

*Rhoda and Mrs R had their special guests in the villa where tea and more than the sugar on the cakes was no doubt spun but I kept out of doors for the afternoon was fine and I do not like to distinguish the ranks in a*

*place where rank counts for less so a man is free to make his way.*

*And I did make mine to the creek where I heard bellowing which was no mud stuck cow but much reminded me of my Irish friend T and sure old habits die hard and who was he with? I suspect that wheelwright. I have heard talk about his big red nose. The pair of them like sporting bulls pawing the ground it must have been. And the black one playing the sweet breathed heifer.*

*Jolly S was running beneath the bank hunting some prey who arrived with the party from the Northern Boundary Farms and he made sure all who would, noticed him.*

*To talk of hunters, the Hunters Hill party was playing out, indeed it was an occasion many will remember for the re acquainting and the meeting of new friends, for ceremony had soon been forgotten and all mixed freely and some very congenially.*

*They took a care out of respect for their entertainment and refreshment with so much that was good to behave in a way that would not disgrace me. Those playing ladies in the house need not have feared to look out the window for all who had the mind took themselves to loiter in the groves or down by the creek where peaceful solitude could be enjoyed after all the heating company.*

*I found the one I thought from his looks might be*

*looking out for me and I took him to see the secret grotto I had discovered on this place. I knew him from the meetings in Jolly S's cottage where likely ones do find their merry dispositions can roam free and talk does not.*

*He weeps and says his master is cruel and no true friend has he in this damned place but his tears soon dried and his blushes traced themselves to below his collar and I said I had to see how far they went so he protested but unbuttoned his blouse to look himself and was helped further for who had seen such delicate flesh which perked up like buds about to bloom and further his hairs stayed fair. In a fit of shyness he turned away and I strayed my hands for he seemed not comfortable with his clothes so disarrayed. This he responded to and soon found his tongue which knew some language. He desired more intercourse so we found some flattened reeds and spent the hour or more in musings on our place in this settlement. I told him damask and white are my favourite hues and I cannot always find them in this place so he offered to bring them to me when he visits Sydney town or is invited to the Liberty villa. This is likely to be often.*

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## Brendan Lindsay

"What peaches and what penumbras! Whole families shopping at night! Aisles full of husbands! Wives in the avocados, babies in the tomatoes!

### and you, Garcia Lorca, what were you doing down by the watermelons?"

from Alan Ginsberg's *A Supermarket in California*

#### Mondays

He sat in his room. Tuesday tomorrow. He would get to see him again.

#### Tuesdays

He got to class early and waited outside the room. He held the burnt copy of Jeff Buckley's *Live at Sin-e'* DVD in his hands. The scanned and copied version of Jeff stared up at Thomas as his eyes darted from person to person entering the lecture hall.

Amanda and Kelly walked towards him and stopped. Kelly grabbed the DVD from Thomas and eyed it suspiciously.

"We're going to skip the lecture," Kelly said.

"Oh, okay. I just have to stay and give this to my friend," he said, grabbing the DVD off her.

"A friend. That," Kelly said, "was made with love. You're in love with whoever that is for."

Thomas blushed.

"No I'm not!"

"Who's it for then?"

"It's for Simon."

"I'd go to that much trouble for Simon," Amanda said.

"You'd colour copy the front, back and inside covers for a burnt DVD for someone?" Kelly asked.

"For Simon," she said, looking at Thomas.

#### Wednesdays

He's feeling nonchalant about the whole thing. Simon is his friend – he doesn't feel that way about him.

*Not doing anything, feel free,* he types out on his phone.

A minute later his phone vibrated.

1 message received.

*Kewl, be round in 10, maybe you can show me the river.*

The river. Behind his house, the beautiful sweeping river which the sun sparkles off, only interrupted by the random leaping of fish into the air, pushing against gravity, thrown back down to the safety of the water, where they can breathe again.



The river. Great, he thought, great. Friends.

They sit in his room staring at Jeff Buckley play his guitar and sing.

*"Don't be like the one who made me so old, don't be like the one who left behind his name, cause they're waiting for you like I waited for mine and nobody ever came."*

The DVD buzzes as it changes layer and restarts at the menu screen.

"What do you wanna do now?" Thomas asks.

"You wanna show me the river?"

"Alright."

Thomas gets up and lets Simon follow him through the house and out the back door. He realises he left the DVD player on as he passes his bedroom window and he hears the crooning of Jeff Buckley being restarted by the player's auto-start.

Thomas points across the river.

"See there," he says.

"Yeah," Simon replies.

"Takes an hour to walk there."

"Better start now then."

"You wanna go there? Now?"

"Yeah."

"Alright."

Thomas sets off with Simon following him. He takes him along to the end of the concrete path where the bush starts. He walks in slowly, Simon

follows through the trail of crushed grass Thomas leaves in his wake.

They lie on the thick grass like plant that covers the ground on this side of the river. They look up at the sky.

"It's weird," Simon says.

"What is?" Thomas asks.

"How it looks like we're in the middle of nowhere but I can hear the highway."

"Yeah, weird. This place reminds me of my childhood."

"You shouldn't reminisce so much, Tom, you're always reminiscing."

"The past just seems cosier."

"What's in the past?"

"I remember coming here about 4 years ago with my friend Janelle. She was stoned off her face and she kept going up to all the plants and proclaiming '*oh my god, Tom! This is fucking weed!*' Of course it was all just whatever."

"The water seems calmer on this side."

Silence.

"I gotta pee," Simon says standing, walking a few paces but not turning completely around, and unzipping his fly.

*Don't look, don't look, don't look,* Thomas chants in his head.

He doesn't look. Simon zips his fly back up.

Simon comes back and lies next to Thomas.

"The sun's about to set, we should start walking if we don't want to get caught in the dark," Thomas

says.

"Alright."

They stand.

"Can you remember the way?" Thomas asks.

"I think so."

"You lead then."

"Alright."

### Thursdays

"I fucking hate straight boys," Thomas slurs as he lies against Amanda on the pale red, yellow and blue chequered couch. He passes the half drained bottle of passion pop to Amanda who quietly sloshes it up and down into her mouth.

"I mean, they think they're being all high and mighty. *'Look I have a gay friend,'* whatever, just fuck off, fucken straight boys."

Amanda puts the bottle down on the floor next to the couch and sidles up against Thomas, enclosing him in her arms.

"That bad, is it?" she asks.

Thomas turns his head to look at her and then drops it against her shoulder.

"I can't stop thinking about him."

Amanda picks up the bottle and passes it to him. He takes a swig, sighs, and takes another.

### Fridays

He can't believe he just posted it. Maybe he should delete the blog entry. He doesn't. He just sits there staring at it.

*This is starting to hurt a lot* 31-05-05  
*And you, Garcia Lorca, what were you doing down by  
the watermelons? You're not a fucking watermelon.  
Now go back to the aisle with all the other dead poets.  
LEAVE US WATERMELONS ALONE.*

Thomas wonders whether he'll know it's about him.

### Saturdays

*Why did I agree to this*, Thomas thought, but he knew why. He was hiking up Mount Beerburum with Simon. Simon's idea of course. Thomas was stopping every hundred metres along the fifty degree angle track. He couldn't breathe, he couldn't breathe. He needed his puffer, he never needed his puffer.

Simon stood patiently next to him every time he stopped. Simon's breaths were steady and even.

Eventually, after six or seven stops, they were at the top. They stand on the metal platform looking over the deep shadows formed by the afternoon light hitting the other nearby Glass House Mountains.

Thomas gets his camera out and Simon poses for him. After a few snaps, he puts the camera down and picks a point along the fields just beyond the shadow of the mountain and watches as the falling sun pushes the shadow out to engulf it.

Simon takes photos of the setting sun.

They walk back down the mountain in the light that lingered after the sun had dropped beyond the edge of the world. Thomas can't tell the difference

between this light and the light they had walked up in, other than the lack of direct rays, as if the whole world were caught in the shadow of the mountain.

### Sundays

Simon had left his jacket in the room. His scent heavy in the air. Thomas stares at it for a moment and thinks about the conversation he had had with Simon the night before. They had just watched this movie on SBS, it was screened in conjunction with the Queer Film Festival. It was a love story between two boys after one of them had had his heart shattered by his best friend who was straight.

*"Like I'm bi. I'm open. I'm not closing off that possibility," Simon said.*

*Thomas was silent as his mind thrashed reply after reply towards the surface of his mind, pushing them towards his lips, but Thomas rejected each one, there was no reply for this. He was not naive however, he knew Simon didn't like him like that, and most likely never would.*

Simon had dropped him home and Thomas, who was sick, went through the contacts of his mobile phone and spilled his heart to the first person who actually answered.

Now in the morning he stares at the jacket, the scent heavy on Thomas's mind and buzzing around his loins. He feels the stirring of a fantasy, but turns over and reaches for the window, opening it, the cool morning air bringing a freshness to the room.

Tears roll down his cheeks.

### Tuesdays

Thomas sat in the lecture hall, staring at him. Him, he was Amanda's friend. They'd all sat together after class a few times and talked. Thomas always regretted what he had said afterwards. He was sure he had made a fool of himself.

Thomas cringed thinking of these times. He'd lost track of the lecturer long ago and instead of trying to ease his brain back into information gathering mood he took out his note pad and pen and began to confess.

*I think I'm in love. I would know for sure that I am if I knew he loved me too because how could anyone love someone who didn't love them back, surely they would just be mistaken. If not, then the heart is a horrid thing.*

Thomas sucked on the pen and closed his notebook. The lecture was ending. Simon stood up and saw him. Thomas smiled.

"Hey," Simon said.

"Hey."

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**Geoffrey Greene** the way the boy's dancing



Photo: © 2006 Geoffrey Greene

... fuck ... i'm breaking out in a sweat ... and i know you are too, i can smell it ... or maybe that's just the drugs talking ... talking with a fucking loud voice ... my ears are ringing and that constant scraping-crunching noise is driving me nuts ... my jaw is gunna be aching tomorrow ... fuck the drugs are talking ... speaking so loudly ... i wish they'd shut up so i could hear myself think about thinking about thoughts "Ha Ha Ha" ... shit, did i just laugh out loud? ... must be looking like a madman ...

... are you seeing that? ... the way that boy's dancing ... manic! what a freak! ... he's hot though ... fuck i would! can you see what I'm seeing? ... or do you even really care? damn i wish i could stop talking! ... would stop talking ... breaking out in a sweat ... running hot & cold ... me, in a nut-shell ... such a nut case ... damn i wish i'd shut up ... yeah whatever, walk away, would you ... don't worry, i'm boring myself anyway ... damn look at that one over there in the blue tank ... with the smile ... a smile to melt a thousand loins and guns from hell with my name written all over them ... damn i hate this song ... it's good to dance to though ... he looked here, at me ... "i knew he would" ... did i just say that out loud? ... hold on he looked again ... was that lust or just contempt ... or amusement ... fuck i must look really out of it ... still he's hot though, such a button boy ... cute as! ... i would part oceans for him ... throw myself in front of a moving gras float if i could ... if need be i'd bleed for him ... shit his boyfriend busted me staring ... mind you he's hot too ... and he knows it ...

... damn this tune is kicking in hard ... 80's, hard times! ... a million memories flood an otherwise busy brain ... busy being busy, crowding a crowded room ... as odd as my socks ...

... fuck i need a drink ... swill some more courage ... dilute the standards ... nervous, anxious, anxiety attack ... fuck that's all i need ... pumping bass ... playing loop de loop with my ego ... i could sigh the lack of quality behind a human's nature ... sigh ... become more the quality than qualities eyes ... sigh ... quality lies ... sucking on ice ... wow how fast did i finish that scotch ... how long have i been chewing on ice ... shouldn't be doing that ... s'apparently worse for your teeth than chewing on stones ... i read that somewhere once ... wonder if it's true? who'd be fool enough to put it to the test ... well surely couldn't do any more damage than this damn grinding ...

... so do i get another drink? do i hit the dancefloor? or just go? ... i should get out of here ... ! i need to get out of here ... save at least some kind of face before my dick makes a complete dick of me ... or maybe it's a given ... an anticipated act, of life and intention ... when worlds collide, then if ... the inevitability ... the size and the lies that keep me from getting on with getting on ... seminal momentary needs ... but i would rock & roll & twist in my bed if i knew the answers to those questions ... i need to get out of here ... i need to ... ? ... yeah mate ... trust you to notice me now, just as i'm leaving ... well you missed your chance ... huh, maybe i missed mine?!

... i need to keep walking, while paris burns ... one foot ... i need to walk and remember why it was i left there ... why i was there at all, in the first place ... why i changed my mind ... or was it changed for me ... or was it changed at all ... when a fist slams up against the wall ... breaking through plaster ... walking up the stairs ... exchanging entry fee for admission to paradise ... entry fee, that's a good one, prepare to be entered ... admission for emission ... welcome to the pleasuredome ...

... that one will do ... well at least he seems interested and that's enough for me at the moment ... fuck i'm pleased it's so dark in here ... under blessing of darkness the lube flows ... cold splash of wetstuff on hot skin, and then that cock slid in really quickly ... to the hilt ... balls slamming against a freshly shaved arse ... tempted by decisions, falling into place on their own accord ...

... war is won ... work on ... walk on ... don't stop ... sirens blaring ... tempers flaring ... just walk past ... avoid all eye contact ... and i'm stumbling ... stars are spinning ... a right royal rooting ... damn i needed that ... nothing quite like a stranger's cock ... welcome to the pleasuredome ... i wish i could kick that song out of my head ... as much as i would want to ... as much as i need to ... long way from home ... and excuses will have to be made when i get there ... i am going to ache tomorrow ... but i know i'll knock on to relieve any intent of purpose ... my intention to surprise myself ... long way from home ... damn dawn chorus ... damn i'm horny still ... if i would take the time to come ... make an effort, he said, but i need to remain in control ... i need to be the one with the power ... the stars are fading ... mind games are fun but they fuck with your head ... they make your head messy ... fuck i wish i could shut this one down ...

... in Xanadu did Kublai Khan , a pleasuredome erect ...

## John Roberts

An extract from:

10 inches  
The Chronicles of Troy



9

8

### CHAPTER THREE

I buzzed so many times that in the end I left my finger on the intercom until he woke up. Except he didn't; after a minute or so my finger got sore, and there was still no voice through the intercom. Shit, I thought, he's taken a *Halcyon* and is back building castles on the beach in Yamba, or wherever the fuck it was my lovely went to when he was alone in his bed. He'd once given me a key to his apartment in case of emergency — in case of the inevitable emergency, which I guessed this was — but in typical Sandy messed-up fashion, there was no second key to the front door of his building, a dark and dingy deco block on Campbell Street not too far down from

Artwork is digital mischief

**Henry**

**TEN INCHES**

**Actual Surfer Student Out Calls**

**Body But**

**Actual Pic**

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**TROY**  
Versatile Aussie Stud

Taylor Square, full of geriatrics whom I suspected didn't go outside for days at a time, certainly not after midnight on a Friday night. There were three flats on each of the three floors, and as I was staring at the nine numbers, hoping for heavenly guidance in deciding which old lady would be the easiest to wake up, a big, dark shape appeared in the vestibule. It was a leather queen, off for a night of fisting at *Headquarters*, if the red hankie in his back pocket was anything to go by.

I quickly explained my predicament.

"Sandy, that little hooker on the first floor? She's right above me and, Christ, did she bring home some rough trade earlier in the evening. The yelling and screaming and banging, it woke me up from my disco doze. But I don't think she's there now,

because I heard her door slam an hour or so ago — I distinctly remember because I've asked her not to bang it late at night and I would have rushed out and had a word to the little brat except I was douching at the time."

"It could have been the client who left."

"No, they never slam doors. Creep out like mice."

"Still, I'd better check he's all right, so can you let me in?"

"I'm the caretaker, you know, and I must strictly adhere to body corporate regulations." Leather queens were such sticklers for rules! "But I don't suppose it'll do any harm this once. You look like a nice young man, with such lovely big hands. Come on through."

All was quiet on the first floor. I knocked softly on Sandy's door and when there was no response I put my key in the door and opened it. The overhead light was on so I could see the living-room was a mess, with the coffee-table overturned, his poster of Britney Spears half-torn from the wall, and cushions, pieces of clothing, and magazines like *DNA* and *Blue* strewn around the floor, not that that signified anything in particular as the place was usually a pigsty. One thing that did strike me as strange were the empty Toohey's cans lying in the mess of cigarette butts near the arse-up coffee table; while Sandy probably wouldn't ever say no to any drink offered free, Aussie beer definitely wasn't his style.

The door to his one bedroom was closed so again I knocked softly until there was no reply, then

quietly opened it. The light from the main room was enough to show me that there was nothing to worry about after all, as Sandy was curled up in a fetal position under a sheet, completely out to it. Even with a *Halcyon*, his big drama couldn't have been that terrible if he could sleep like a baby through my buzzing, knocking and now the light shining through the flimsy sheet covering his eyes. The relief that hit me came with both jealousy and exhaustion, because suddenly I wanted to be exactly like Sandy, asleep after my big night, preparing for a hopefully bigger-earning Saturday.

Sandy had crashed at my place numerous times, and while we had fucked a few times (usually, after long shifts, just to get it out of our systems) the nicest part wasn't sexual but the spooning and cuddling, just being close to someone in the night. Now was the time to repay that hospitality, so I returned to the living-room, spent a couple of minutes righting the table and cleaning up the mess, turned off the light, then tip-toed into the bedroom where I got out of my clothes and slipped beneath the covers.

What a day, what a fucking day! What a fucking life, I thought as I positioned myself in the bed, ready to wrap my arms around — SANDY'S HAIRY BACK!

Gradually I inched away. Sandy only had about three blonde pubic hairs, he hardly even needed to shave, so who was the gorilla lying next to me? As I lay there wondering, something else very odd struck me. I'd found from experience that it was the hairy macho guys who snored, but this one wasn't making any kind of noise, not a wheeze, a grunt — not even



**Sandy**

Barely Legal Surfer Boy

Cute Bubble Butt

Always Horny

the sound of breathing!

In the dark I felt around till I found his arm, and tested for a pulse. Hard to believe but once in my previous life I'd done a St John's first aid course. I tried his other clammy wrist, then his neck, and when what I knew I knew for sure I scrambled away as fast as I could, out of the bed, out of that room itself and around the corner into the bathroom. There I scrubbed and scrubbed, using too much soap and too hot water, until my hands were red and stinging. That was no body in Sandy's bed, it was a corpse.

But whose? Back in the living-room I pulled my clothes back on and had a glass of water, trying to get the courage to return to the bedroom. Eventually I forced myself to step forward, turn the

light on this time, cross to the bed, pull back the sheet and see.

I gasped. I knew him. Not that I'd ever met him but I knew him. Everyone in fucking Australia knew him, and seeing him lying there was an even bigger surprise than not knowing who he was except he was dead.

My thoughts were like peak-hour traffic on the M2. *If* sped one way and *but* the other. It was a police matter but if Sandy had murdered this guy then he'd go to jail, and a pretty little cutie like him wouldn't last a day inside. He'd have so many nasty dicks in him sperm would start oozing out of his ears. Besides, I wasn't sure he had killed him — one thing became increasingly clear, like a big *Linfox* truck burning down the freeway, first off I had to find Sandy and get the facts straight. Then we could get a lawyer and whatever.

And finding him wasn't going to be hard. His favourite disco was five minutes away, where he'd adjourn most nights after trade had dried up. I was sure that's where he'd be.

Except he wasn't. Security knew me well, so waved me in ahead of the queue. After doing a quick but futile circuit downstairs, I got similar special treatment upstairs, where the door-bitch didn't ask for the twenty dollar cover charge for that night's special Anthems event. You could be some top public servant who went out every night and never got a freebie, whereas scene-queen-hookers never had to pay. Maybe we were good for business, or maybe the guardians of the night just felt sorry

for us. One of Kylie's shithouse hits was booming out, and there was a sea of shaggy blonde heads on the dancefloor, but after five minutes' staring I realised his definitely wasn't one of them. Which wasn't logical at all; if he was there, he'd be dancing to that girlie crap, escaping into the bubblegum fantasy he loved, way, way removed from the grim reality back in his flat.

Those two standing at the bar would help me, I pondered, they knew what everyone was up to. Geoffrey had been a working-boy once too, although not your typical sort, since he was a major brainiac and only turning tricks to get through his uni honours philosophy course. That was until it all went wrong in a lane late one night, got beaten to a pulp by a gang of Tongans and lost his choirboy looks in a minute, then had some appropriately existentialist breakdown, dropped out of uni, put on a lot of weight, and now supported his every-night-on-the-scene lifestyle by hiring himself out for suburban trivia nights and fraudulently winning children's colouring-in competitions. An ideal indication of how far he'd fallen was who he was talking to, Krispy Kremeyourjeans, possibly the most stupid drag queen who'd ever lived. She also had weight issues, but the opposite to Geoffrey; bulimia it was rumoured, because, even though by virtue of her name she was a permanent endorsement for donuts, she was more likely to wear one around her skinny wrist than actually digest the thing.

"Yeah, yeah, he's here," she whined. "Off his fucking tits as usual."



"I can't see him," I corrected her.

"Try the toilet," said Geoffrey knowingly. "Second stall along I believe is his."

I knocked gently and whispered, "Sandy." It was becoming the recurring motif of the evening, although I was going to be really pissed off if there was another dead body sitting on the toilet. But no, he whispered back, "Troy! Come on in, the door's unlocked."

He was lighting a pipe as I entered.

"What's that?" As if I couldn't guess.

"Good stuff, want some?" He inhaled deeply and pushed it towards me.

"No, I don't." I loved the stuff but couldn't help sounding like a mother. Oh, did I mention that Troy had his fly undone and some cute Italian-looking

guy was giving him head? "We've got to talk about the guy in your bed."

"Did you see who it is? I mean was. Mr fucking bigtime — "

"Ssh." I put my hand over his mouth and indicated downwards, where the young stud had taken Sandy's cock out of his mouth to suck some of the meth.

"Don't worry, he doesn't speak English."

And even if he did, I thought, he probably wouldn't notice if the Pope entered the stall and started giving a sermon. "You've got to be careful, that's all I'm saying."

"It wasn't my fault."

"Have you thought about calling the boys in blue?"

"I'm not doing that. Did you see who it was or not?"

"I saw who it was. And I know he's definitely — gone. But I need to know the whole story before I can help you."

Sandy's phone started up, the ring tone the theme from his favourite show, *Desperate Housewives*.

"Excuse me a sec," he said, getting his mobile out of his pocket with one hand and taking back the pipe with the other. "What, now? Yeah, sure, I'll be there in, say, twenty minutes, okay?" He lit the pipe, breathed in deeply, threw back his head and exhaled.

"Sandy!" I said through gritted teeth. "You're not taking a job now? As you said yourself three hours ago, we've got to sort this *urgently*."

"I might need money to get out of town."

"One trick will get you to Albury on Jetstar, not South America."

"I'll be straight back. It's one of my regulars, a married guy who phones me when his wife's out of town. All I have to do is sit on his face with his tongue up my hole while he wanks off. He usually comes in about five minutes."

"Listen to me, Sandy. You've got to get your priorities right."

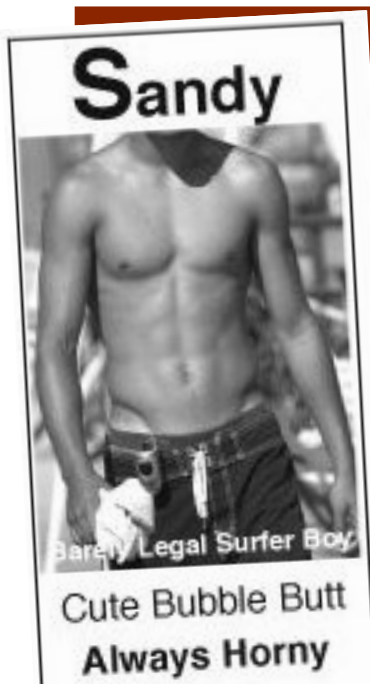
"I will," he said, "in an hour."

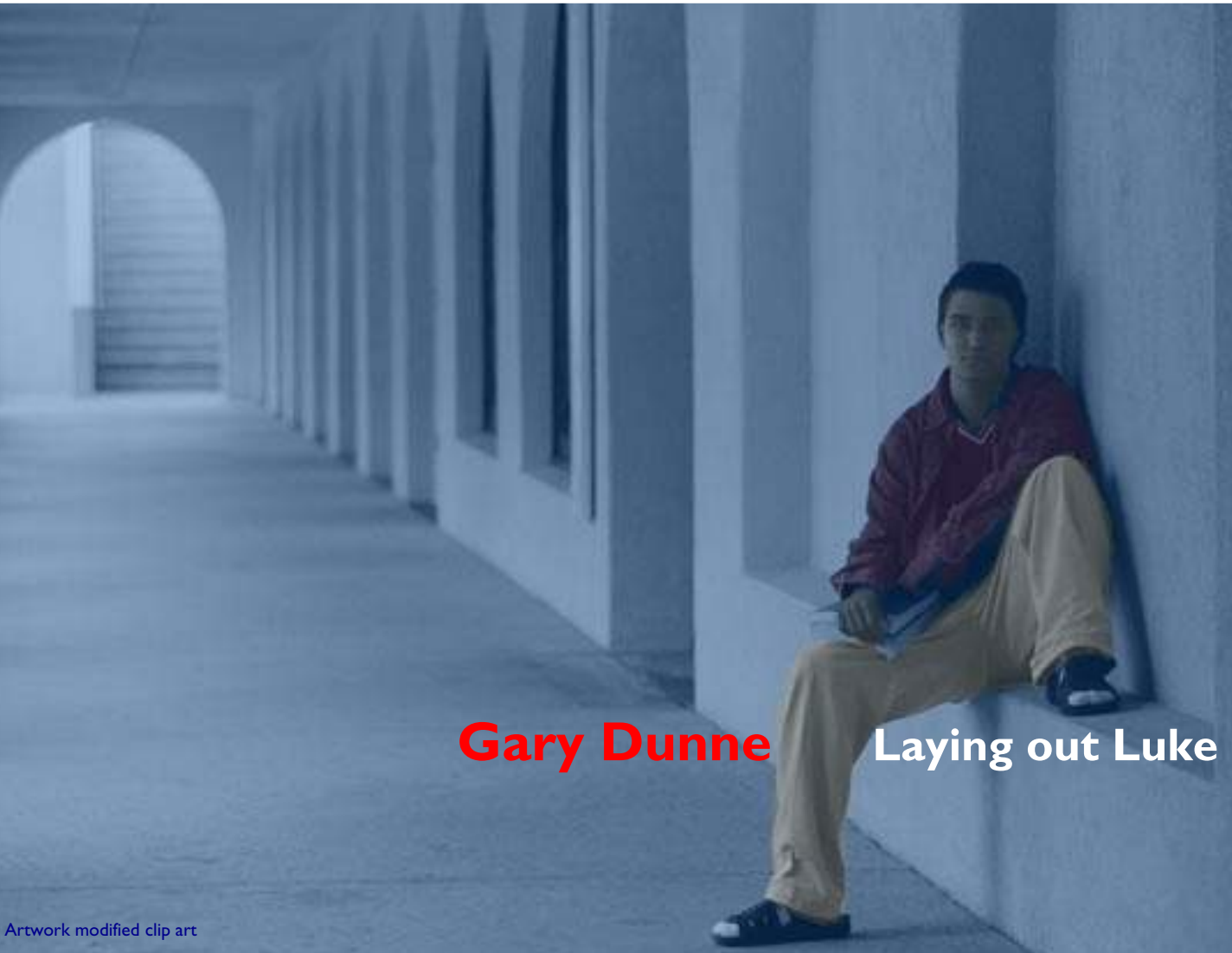
"When you're back snorting more tina?"

"It works, you know that. I'm not so freaked out now. I know it'll all turn out fine, as long as my best buddy helps me. Just promise you'll wait, Troy, yeah?"

I nodded resignedly as he pushed the guy on his knees aside, zipped up and left the stall. The Italian moved his head slightly, unzipped my jeans and immediately started sucking my dick. I sighed, leant back against the wall and let him do what he wanted — hell, it'd kill some time.

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**Gary Dunne** **Laying out Luke**

Christian is in bed next to me. I can smell his aftershave. He kisses me hard on the mouth. Then his lips brush my neck. I turn my head. I lick the skin on his shoulder. It tastes of salt. He's been at the beach all day. He wants to fuck me. I reach for the condoms. He whispers no. Then he's in and around me. I feel more alive than I've been for years. I grind like a caged dancer. And I come.



I wake crying tears of joy. The bed's a mess. I'm drenched in sweat. I turn on the light. There's blood on the pillow and in my mouth. I've bitten my lip. I wander out to the kitchen to make a cup of coffee.

Back in bed I rip off the nicotine patch. These technicolour dreams, a side-effect, are ruining my sleep. Lighting my first cigarette in three weeks, I wonder what it means when the hottest fuck I've had in years is a wet dream starring an ex-lover who died back in the late '80s.

It's 4am. Luke's funeral is at eleven. The Docs are polished and I know what I'm going to say. It's too early to vacuum the carpets, too late to go back to sleep. So I stare at the wall.

Time's a relentless bitch.

Once, back in an 80s summer, Luke and I were out on the top verandah with the rest of our gang: Christian, Pointy Head, Matt and Mike — six slick Balmain boys, sprawled over cane furniture like languid GQ models, sipping gin and tonics, and gossiping. It was one of those perfect balmy nights when the air was like milk, all warm, smooth and alive. And I realised that one day, soon, all this would be ancient history. Three of us so far had tested positive and that's how it was back then with HIV. At least three of us would be gone.

For weeks after that night I was off the air, always stopping myself thinking fatalistic thoughts. One day, soon, maybe all of my closest friends would be dead. There was no one to talk to. I could

hardly prattle on about my problem to them. And disclosure to anyone else wasn't up to me, especially considering mine was the only negative result so far.

Over time I stopped worrying about future minefields and eventually quit feeling so guilty about my unique good fortune. I don't think this made a difference to anyone else, but it certainly improved my quality of life once death became common-place a year or two later.

Luke sero-converted some time after that, then quietly shone as a long-term survivor. It was never a drama. As he said the last time I saw him at the hospice, "If all this had happened back in the '90s, there would have been a bigger fuss made."

Luke's was a familiar face. For years a regular visitor, he knew the hospice routine inside out. Ciggies on the balcony. Fish on Fridays. Visitors visit. Nurses natter. Patients pass. The day I once so feared arrived last Monday with no melodrama. We all knew the routine too well.

I set the alarm for eight and go back to sleep.

\* \* \* \*

It's a small, brief service. Once upon a time Luke would have drawn a bigger turn-out. These days no-one has as many friends. Soon it's my turn to stand next to the coffin. My hands didn't tremble like this last time I spoke at a funeral, but that was over five

years ago. I'm unsettled by how wobbly my voice sounds. I used to be much better at this.

Afterwards, outside, there's sparse socialising as we drift towards the carpark. Promises to stay in touch are vague, more statements of recognition than of intent.

Humph takes me home. It's not the first time I've been driven back from the crematorium in his geriatric Morris, but this time there's only the two of us.

"Well my dear, the front seat is finally yours. You're officially promoted. Not that one needs a navigator, not for this venue. Only last week I was out here. Coleen, a woman from work, total cow, but it would have been rude not to attend. Funny how we're finally at an age where our peers can die of respectable things like cancer. Hers was fast ..."

I nod and stop listening.

Since Luke returned to the hospice last month, it's been worrying me, this notion of being the last survivor of a crew that no longer exists. You become the sole keeper of its intimacies, its myths and legends. Your version becomes the official history. These days it's all less real. In practical terms, objective emotional truth ceases once you're the only surviving witness. It's like solo back-packing; your past becomes whatever you make it when there's no-one to correct you, no-one to have 'remember when' arguments with. And I'm a natural liar, the worst person for the job. I rewrite all the time, often

unconsciously, simply to tell a better story.

"I noticed earlier. You appear unwell," says Humph. "Perhaps we should do lunch — or something?"

"Sorry. OK. When and where?"

"Say, um, Tuesday. Three or thereabouts. That new restaurant just down from Caps. Ring on Monday and remind me but."

I nod. The restaurant isn't new. It's already had at least three different owners that I'm aware of. And Caps hasn't existed for decades. One of many things I love about Humph is his persistent ability to live in a vague continuous present where nothing really changes. It's his unique way of coping in a city where venues, dancefloors, apartment buildings and streets are loaded with memories. They're all still here. Only the faces have changed.

Humph, of course, argues that it doesn't matter. He says that his twenty years on Librium has left him with a less linear attitude to time. As he once put it, "There has always been a cute nineteen year-old in the back corner of the Midnight Shift. And there always will be."

\* \* \* \*

On George Street, right in front of the cinemas, I walk past someone who looks exactly like Christian. It's as if he had an identical twin brother. Same face, same kind of bemused half smile. And I

remember, for the first time in years, the precise sound of his voice, like there's a tape playing and he's telling me something. I often see guys who resemble people now gone, but this is different, stronger, somehow clearer. I stop, turn and look back, but I can't see him in the crowd. I step onto the street and look down towards Town Hall, hoping to spot him.

Who am I looking for and why? If it's a relative, it would have to be a younger brother. If Christian were alive today, he'd look much older. Once we knew it was true love, he took me to meet his family. They were all, as he had often enough said, uniformly bland. There were no younger look-alikes, neither then, nor at his funeral. I can't believe it's been so long.

I cross George Street and continue walking to Darlinghurst.

The days after a funeral are always weird, especially if you've been really involved with the person who died. I mean involved in the sense of doing things — visiting daily, washing pyjamas, watering plants, sorting out bills, buying gin, making funeral arrangements, and the like. Your ordinary life gets put on hold, you're busy.

Then suddenly it's over, the last of the property is distributed and you're left with an absence, an emptiness. It's not grief. You lay-by grief along the way as the abilities and qualities that make them who they are cease to exist. Their death is a small

final instalment and what remains is an emptiness, not a presence of anything. And you have absolutely nothing to do. Which is why it's so easy to go slightly loopy.

I'm right about which restaurant Humph meant. Although it's an impossibly perfect autumn afternoon, he's ignored the outside tables and is sitting alone in a back recess reading a magazine, in the same natty suit he wore to the funeral, thankfully minus the pork pie hat.

He says I still look like shit and vaguely tries to get a waiter's attention. There are two at the counter, both deep in conversation with the cash register attendant.

I tell Humph about seeing Christian on George Street.

"It's true. The dead don't age. Which can be quite a piss off sometimes." He gives his glass of water a cynical sip.

"I guess, well, I'm a bit off the air at the moment." I attempt to catch the eye of one of the waiters as he wanders out to the kitchen.

"I hadn't noticed. Then again, I never do. But you do look pale. Maybe you should try one of those spray-on suntan places. The remnants of the old A-list are all doing it this year. Especially the barristers. Golden boys are back in vogue." He points, then waves at the waiter leaning on the counter, a tanned and muscled lad with painful-looking facial metal accessories. The waiter turns his back on us and

continues his conversation.

I sip Humph's cynical water.

"May I get personal?" Humph asks, and continues without pausing. "When was the last time you had a really good root? I mean a real moaner of a good time."

"Ages ago."

"Well, there's your answer, darl. Let's go somewhere nice, do lunch, then you take yourself off to one of those dreadful backroom places. There's so many new ones around here, I can't keep up. Not my scene. But it's what you need. A bit of casual thrashing about now and then keeps one earthed. It's important. A gay lifestyle with no sex would be like being grounded at Luna Park with no tokens."

I agree.

"It's so much cheaper here than the newsagent," says Humph, stuffing the magazines he'd been reading into his bag. "Unless someone gets to them before me, they've usually got all the latest editions. Airmailed. And most times you don't even have to buy a coffee."

The staff ignore our departure.

We never make it to the greasy wok at Taylor Square. First we stop while I buy my own pack of cigarettes. Then we stop at Stonewall for "a quick drink".

After several gin & tonics, Humph returns to the topic of getting me laid and a decision on which of the nearby venues offers the best prospects of success.

"For starters," he says, looking me up and down, "I'd rule out the saunas. No-one over thirty looks erotic in a faded tea towel... Luke's favourite backroom was the Queens' HQ on Crown. He always reckoned he met the kindest of strangers there."

I shake my head, "No, not Headquarters." Having seen Christian on George Street, I don't fancy exploring any of Luke's regular haunts.

"How about Signal then?"

"Maybe," I pause, thinking. A seemingly impossible performance had been the highlight of my first visit to the original Signal over in East Sydney. I'd watched, spellbound. My erudite tour guide, Blaze, had said that with practice, and a gag to stop me chattering, I too could be a real doll for some handy ventriloquist. Decades ago, and definitely another country. The time seems right for a return visit. "Why not? I haven't been to Signal in centuries."

\* \* \* \*

Early in the week, early in the night, it's certainly not Rush Hour but I'm prepared to be patient. There are only four punters and they're all in the back lounge watching porn on a large TV screen. It's one of those American-Czech wankaramas, echoing the worst bucolic indulgences of David Hamilton. Two impossibly beautiful young men, unshaven and uncut, perfectly framed and posed, are casually fucking. Dust motes dance in shafts of light through

the open barn door as one pulls out and cums on his partner's stomach.

It's a cue for the four to depart, one after the other. 'Suit' is not my type, nor I his. 'Homebush Hubby' could be a possibility, our eyes catch as he exits. 'Town Hall Tubby', the oldest, looks pissed. He smirks, as falsely as his teeth, the removal of which might give him a head start in the glory hole stakes later in the night. Skinny 'Tight T-shirt', the last out, is probably nearest my type, whatever that is these days.

Once upon a time last millenium, I went for a certain type: thin blonds with butch highlights. Then I discovered that looks don't matter so much in the dark. This was the dawn of my slut period. From then until the neurotic celibacy, which appeared with my first HIV test and finally melted away in India, I comprehensively proved that in a backroom setting the quality of sex has more to do with mutual body chemistry than age or appearance.

That being the case, a session as passionless as the one currently beginning on-screen, even with someone as breath-taking as this Czech, wouldn't necessarily be great sex. On consideration, I decide that's not true either. The naturalism may be too calculated, but his physical beauty is undeniable. And sex with him is no impossible dream — not once I get back on the nicotine patches.

The key to backrooms is to stay focussed. I decide to get up and start walking before I find myself weaving Death in Venice fantasies, starring Johan Paulik as Tadzio, and me as the absent-minded

paedophile nibbling tainted strawberries.

I've never been to Venice. Varanasi on the Ganges was where I crossed the grey water. In the predawn chill and gloom I paid a boatman to ferry me out midstream. The sun broke over the horizon washing everything in soft, yellow light that turned increasingly honeyed and hazy. On the steps of the ghats morning prayers, laundry and ablutions began. It was timeless; the temples, lit gold at sunrise, seemingly perched on the edge of oblivion. At the burning ghats wrapped bodies on pyres were being circled, then kissed with fire. What remained was being returned to Mother Ganges. We were floating on frothy milk-tea water lightly carpeted in flowers and white ash.

I stumble and fall. There's a long runway down one side of the building with a small step half way along. It's well lit, but I wasn't watching. 'Tight-T' stares from a doorway at the end of the corridor. I stand up, feeling stupid, and continue walking. 'Tight-T' has disappeared. I retreat to the bathroom, wash my face and decide to give it five more minutes before going home and wanking in luxury to a decent DVD.

'Tight-T' is standing in the doorway of a small room. "That step's dangerous. I told them so last week."

"I was miles away," I reply, and pause. "I should have been looking where I was going."

"Coming in?" he asks with a nervous nod.

We haven't played slo-mo chasey in the gloom or even previously made eye contact. It's ultra-naff.

But effective. I step in. He shuts the door, and what begins as lips brushing cheeks becomes tongue kissing. His mouth tastes faintly of Chinese or Thai, overlaid with wine and menthol cigarettes. I like it. Christian always tasted of St Moritz.

I once had a repertoire of routines, appropriate for almost any backroom erotic circumstance. None began with passionate kissing. Few ended with it.

The kissing stops. "I'm Justin," he says, with another nervous nod. He's actually shaking my hand.

"Pleased to meet you," I reply, and concentrate on removing his T-shirt.

Soon we're naked on the vinyl mattress. I hold him tightly and we kiss, less forcefully, deeply. It's unfair on him, his erection pressing into my stomach, but this contact is enough. I'd forgotten the feel of skin, the pleasure and warmth of total contact with another human body.

I'm experiencing an unexpected welling up of emotion. My eyes are moist, like I'm going to cry, but I'm not feeling sad. I keep holding him tight, not wanting the moment to pass. And it suddenly dawns on me that what I'm feeling is happiness. Nothing more, nothing less. I'm happy.

My body responds. We begin slowly masturbating each other. We continue kissing. Each time one senses the other's impending orgasm, we ease off. I

notice things I like about him, particularly his bony hips and his tongue.

The intensity keeps building until eventually we come; first him, then me seconds later. For a quickie, it's taken a long time. For a wank, it's been deeply satisfying.

Justin lies next to me, his head on my shoulder. We're both dripping with sweat. My bum is stuck to the vinyl. I move to unstick it. He sits up, skittish.

"You have to go?"

"No. Just messy. We could both do with a shower, that's the disadvantage of not being at home."

"I don't take people home. I live with my sister and her fiance. They know, but I still don't. Maybe if it was like a long-term boyf or something, it would be OK. But how do you get a long-term boyf without sleeping with them for the first time?"

"Why don't you move out on your own?"

"Too expensive. We live at Maroubra, close to the water. I love the beach. And it's real easy for me to get to uni from our place. One bus."

"What are you studying?"

"Mainly history... It's not that interesting but. Not this year... Tell me about you."

I take a deep breath.

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**Tim Miles**  
**Prodigal Son**

Phyllis peered above her half-moon glasses and watched Doug thumbing through *The Land*. Their morning routine, her reading a book and her husband the paper, ended when she closed her book, took off her glasses, and collected the teacups. She asked him if he would like another

cup and he replied by commenting on the cattle sales. Now sixty-two and recently retired as manager of Gunnedah's agricultural machinery agency, Doug considered it his duty to stay in touch with the rural news.

In the kitchen Phyllis added the cups to the sink, already half filled with last night's dinner's dishes. She filled the kettle, and waited for the whistle before pouring the steaming water into the sink. She didn't need to use the kettle – it had been three years since they renovated the kitchen. Probably about the same time as David, the youngest, left to follow his elder brother and sister to Sydney. She wondered why they had waited so long to upgrade the kitchen – she really needed the automatic dishwasher when the children lived at home.

But her old domestic habits now gave her something to do. She opened the window and sniffed the fresh cow manure Doug had spread on his flower and vegetable gardens. The clear blue sky provided a playground for a couple of magpies that flicked between the telegraph poles. The only sound, other than the frisky birdsong, was the regular ticking of the grandfather clock in the lounge room.

Phyllis went into the bathroom, and stared in the mirror with the dulled grey eyes that used to shine

more brightly. Her face was now rounder and a few wrinkles had begun to appear around the eyes. At fifty-five it was too late to halt the effects of aging and the harsh Australian sun. But she pinched her cheeks, giving them a rosy smudge. Then applied lipstick, pressed her lips together and brushed her hair, giving it more body and letting a few strands fall onto her forehead. She smiled, feeling slightly younger and welcomed the familiar sound of the radio music announcing the mid-morning news. The newsreader's carefully modulated voice reminded her that there was a world outside of Gunnedah.

In the lounge room she fiddled with the red gladioli, standing erect in the twin hand-painted vases. The vases stood at both ends of the mantelpiece, like guardian angels to the wedding and family photos displayed in between. Looking down on Doug's bald head and the green cardigan she had knitted last winter, and glancing at the rose patterned lounge suite, provoked an introspective smirk. Their domestic scene would have made an ideal setting for a Dame Edna skit.

The sound of a car braking followed by an insipid horn broke the lull. She tried not to show excitement but couldn't stop herself from tapping Doug's shoulder:

He's here, Doug.

Umm! Oh, that's quick. Didn't expect him till midday.

Through the wire door, the sight of the Volkswagen filled her with comfort and relief. She had heard too many stories about Volkswagens rolling over and young people falling asleep at the wheel.

Hello, mum.

That voice. Slow and steady. Could have been mistaken for retardation but she knew better. Gentle, kind, and unsure of himself. Not like the other two – Jenny with her lawyer's precision and Robert his athletic sporting confidence.

David. Look at you!

She kissed him on the cheek, noticing the beginning of a beard. She thought he must have grown two inches. Well over six feet now. His body was still gangly, and slightly hunched. But that gave him a vulnerability she wanted to protect. His hair was starting to recede but that seemed to make his eyes more pronounced – just like his father's.

Doug ambled along the pathway, surveying the garden bed for infiltrating weeds.

Hello, son.

David recoiled from his father's firm handshake and ice blue eyes.

Hi, dad. Lawn looks good.

Yea. Not bad, but no thanks to that bloody council. Only allowed to water every second day and then with the hose only. No sprinklers allowed.

That's a shame. Ah well...

David found it hard to feign interest- usually he had little to say to his father. And had never cared about the garden, which, in his father's retirement, seemed to be a bigger enterprise than the agricultural machinery business.

Phyllis grabbed David's bag and led him into the house.

Come on, darling. It's so good to see you. Such a long time between uni holidays!

Doug lagged behind, surveying the gerbera bed. He knelt down and gently touched the petals of a wilting flower that, unlike the rest of the perfectly happy bed, refused to salute the sun.

Walking along the hallway and into the lounge room, David felt the shadows of growing up. Games and fights with his elder brother and sister. The hot summers – cooling off in the bathtub when the temperature reached 100. The cold winters when frost settled on the lawn. The droughts when kangaroos invaded the main street. And the floods – being evacuated in a rowing boat while animal carcasses passed by in the swell.

The lounge room hadn't changed. The smell of furniture polish, the lavender deodorizer and his mother's perfume. The matching vases – today filled with gladioli. Last time filled with the seasonal flowers his father allowed to be picked. And outside the bay window – the apricot tree that was now losing its leaves and starting to look withered.

David picked up the book that lay next to his mother's reading glasses on the side table.

Oh mum, you're reading *The Twyborn Affair*?

Yes, it's hard going but worth persevering with. Much wordier than those detective and crime novels, but there is something about Patrick White's writing that rings true.

He was glad she was trying to keep up with the literature he was reading as part of his Arts degree.

Looking at the bookshelf, he noticed that Leo Tolstoy was now keeping company with Agatha Christie.

And over on the other side of the room – bursting out of the window seat cupboards – his father's *National Geographics*, *Gardening Australia*, and fishing tackle.

I was bowled over by *The Twyborn Affair*. I think it's his best book. But I didn't think you'd like it.

David thought it was best not to touch on his reason for loving this book over all of White's other novels – and why he thought it wouldn't appeal to his mother.

Oh David. I didn't like it at first. But then it started to grab me. The descriptions of the country house and its people are so real. It could be any of the houses and people around here. Imagine! The main character was someone just like your father – I mean that man was strong and did lots of things a woman wouldn't. Killing animals, hunting. And then dressing as a woman, wearing makeup and having sex with another man.

He knew then that literature was giving his mother an insight into a world she hadn't experienced – or had experienced without realising it. The detective novels were all fantasy – in far away London and

New York. But Patrick White's fiction represented a world with all the foibles that were part of his mother's life in Gunnedah.

She was keen to be drawn into David's new city life. There had always been an empathy with David that she didn't have with the others. She loved them all, even Doug. But David was different. The signs were there when he was a young boy. His commenting on a flower's beauty, the shape of its petals, the softness of a newly born calf, and its deep brown eyes. She felt for him when he cried after a bag of drowned kittens was dragged from the river. And noticed how he turned away when Robert gleefully killed sparrows with a catapult; and Doug coldly shot a young kelpie because it didn't show promise as a working dog.

Judging by the place of the bookmark David knew she was at least three quarters of the way through *The Twyborn Affair*. By now Patrick White's hero would be a heroine, enjoying anonymity as a woman in the streets of London. In many ways Sydney was David's London. And he knew by now that he wanted to have sex with men. And that Sydney was the place where it could happen – plenty of bars, beats, saunas and male flesh.

Where's dad?

Oh! Still in the garden.

She felt crushed by Doug's fussing over his wretched flowers instead of his son.

Doug. Coming in now?

Doug appeared at the back door. Clutching a bunch of gerberas in one hand and a dead possum in the other.

Look at this, Phil! Whacked it over the head with a spade while it was half asleep. If I find another possum eating the apricots, I'll spray enough poison to make sure they never come near the place again.

Phyllis stared at the dead animal's soft fur, the large round startled eyes and the blood dripping onto Doug's shirt. And then glanced over to David, who avoided his father by pretending to read *The Twyborn Affair's* back cover. She noticed, not for the first time, how much he resembled Doug. The slippery dip nose, oval shaped face and large, almost feminine eyes. And the long delicate fingers that held the book, while his father's held the gerberas, as if for comfort.

All three stood – mother and son in the lounge room, father on the back doorstep – each with their

private thoughts and fears, and not saying a word. The only sounds were the ticking of the clock and the silent dripping of animal blood on the doormat.

As if awoken from a trance, Phyllis broke the silence:

I'll put the kettle on.



## Rob McDonald

### Awake!

Blame a frustrated fortnight spent with my cock or a cigarette in one hand, a remote control in the other, and my eyes glued to *Enchanted Forest*, a nature documentary featuring cute European wildlife, huge hardwoods and gushing torrents. My boyfriend had dumped me just before we were due to take a bushwalking holiday in New Zealand. I travelled from Katoomba to Sydney to Auckland then New Plymouth alone, carrying a mental travel brochure profusely illustrated with backwoods twinks, and booked a shuttle ride to the start of the Round the Mountain Track.



Artwork generated with The Gimp

There were only two travellers on the minibus, me and another solo hiker. A Bel Ami Eurotwink he wasn't, but a blip on the gaydar screen and two weeks of abstention made me turn a blind eye to his beer gut. He offered to share his tent to lower our pack weight. We left mine at the visitor centre.

There are several premises implicit in movies featuring outdoor gay sex. Then there's the reality.

*The world is populated by beautiful men, all under thirty. They're all gay, and have perfect teeth.*

He looked about fifty and had dentures. But at least he seemed gay.

*Even after a quickie guys kiss or cuddle.*

On the first night he rolled away and fell asleep. While I was unwrapping the rubber. And he snored. I lay awake all night, cursing the damp that had turned my cigarettes into nicotine porridge.

*You can have outdoor gay sex without risk of discovery. Any interloper will enthusiastically join you.*

Every December unendangered mammals called schoolkids migrate to New Zealand forests. A dozen appeared at dawn. I tossed another unwrapped condom into my daypack. After nightfall the kids and their teacher searched for glow-worms. Like a fool I'd brought fluorescent condoms. They look impressive in the glare of a dozen flashlights. I whisked another rubber into the daypack, and tried to convince the kids they'd sighted a rare Taranaki glow-worm.

*The weather's always fine.*

In the land of the long black cloud they measure rain in metres. They have snowstorms. In summer. The next night, after reassembling the flailing tent,

we felt as hot and horny as a priest watching *The Sound of Music* in a fridge. I whisked another unwrapped condom into the daypack. At least the wind drowned his snoring.

*Forests never have biting insects.*

New Zealand sandflies are as ravenous as a Eurotwink's cock. The next night, when I went for a pee, a sandfly lovingly sucked my dick. The attraction was not mutual. I squashed the sandfly and threw another rubber into the daypack.

*Even when camping, all men have clean-shaven arses and clean designer-label underwear. They never eat freeze-dried camping food. They never have diarrhoea.*

By the last night our thermal underwear reeked of repellent, sweat and shit, and I didn't even reach for a condom. I lay awake, dying for a cigarette, while his snoring and the wind competed in a down-under Eurovision song contest.

*If you get bored you can fast-forward to a hotter scene.*

When you're walking on tired, blistered, soggy feet, in boots that pinch, with a guy you can't wait to say goodbye to, there is no button for speeding you forward. It didn't help that the closer we got to the end of the circuit the more he talked about his wife and kids. They were waiting at the visitor centre, and whisked him away to Rotorua.

*Condom disposal is never a problem.*

"Take only photographs. Leave only footprints," said the signs. I tossed the unwrapped condoms into a muddied Glad bag in my daypack. There was no simple, unembarrassing way of losing them in a New Plymouth hostel full of young German

backpackers. All were confirmed heterosexuals. They kept me awake. Where were the cute gay Eurotwinks?

The only consolation was that I'd spent five nights without smoking. I decided to quit.

The wait at Auckland was a fitting end to a holiday from Hell. The Sydney flight was delayed by two hours. I craved a cigarette, a DVD-inspired wank on my comfortable leather sofa, and a quiet night's sleep in my own bed. The seats in the noisy airport were just comfortable enough for me to doze off. My sleep-starved, sex-starved brain created a compensatory erotic dream of forest life. A Eurotwink smiled into my eyes and murmured, "I've never done this before", before instinctively relaxing his muscles.

"Like a virgin, touched for the very first time." I awoke surrounded by a charmless group of Australian bimboes. Madonna's voice exploded from a humungous duty-free ghetto-blaster. The batteries were going flat, and her voice sounded as virginal as the butts of the twink in *Enchanted Forest*. An acne-ridden Australtwink guffawed, turned to me and leered, "Yeah, I'd like a virgin. Would you like a virgin, mate?"

"No, thanks," I said. "I'm trying to give them up."

Even after three weeks without sex there were limits to my capacity for lubricious fantasy. His pimpled heterosexual face looked like a burnt McCain pizza sub. I wandered away to avoid being touched again for the very first time by Madonna's allegedly virginal voice.

I ate at McDonald's, then lusted for nicotine to remove the burger's greasy aftertaste. The restaurant

was packed with package tourists from Misura, which I understand is American for Missouri. Some of their faces suggested it meant Misery. One of them, a motormouth called Audrey, introduced herself to the entire restaurant, and told anyone who cared, and everyone who didn't, that her group was doing New Zealand and Australia in eleven days. Their next stop was Sydney. Her tedious travelogue included a molecule-by-molecule description of every meal she'd had in the last four days. I soon understood the source of the others' misery. I prayed for this group to travel on a different flight.

I moved to escape Audrey, and explored the souvenir shops. Plastic Maori dolls. Abalone-encrusted paperweights. Fridge magnets with sunny pictures of snow-capped volcanoes that in reality you can't see for rain.

I bought cigarettes, and joined the addicts outside. That's when I saw him. I could see from his luggage labels that he belonged to the miserable Misura group. He wore loud, crushed, crushproof polyester trousers and a softly spoken smile. The trousers were of an atrocious colour that hovered undecidedly between green and brown. But his quiet blue eyes gripped mine like a fridge gripping a magnet.

I changed my mind about Audrey Motormouth, and hoped the group was on my flight. Mentally I joined the *Mile-High Club*, where Mr Polyester Trousers shone his stunning blue eyes into my face. Instinctively he relaxed and moaned, "I've never done this before."

He dropped two heavy suitcases, grunted, and lit

an extra-mild. "The packet should warn it's hazardous to travel with that woman."

That woman? I pressed the pause button on Mile-High Club. But the centre of my jeans remained in preparation for lift-off towards the blue. I reminded myself I'd just spent five sleepless nights with a bisexual beer gut.

"They should rip out those souvenir shops and make space for smokers," he said.

"Who buys that crap?" I asked.

"Howard!" yelled an instantly recognisable voice. Audrey wielded three carry bags, each large enough to contain a North Island volcano. Every bag overflowed with souvenirs. "Howard! You promised to quit smoking."

"When I find somewhere I can relax," he muttered. "Audrey, my sister."

"Wayne," I said, suspecting she could have forgotten my name after introducing herself to forty-two other customers in McDonald's.

Howard returned his cigarette to his lips. Drawing heavily, he extracted as much comfort as possible from his extra-light.

His sister! I reached for the play button. Then the DVD jammed. Tucked amidst Audrey's souvenirs was a copy of the *Watchtower*.

"Howard, you have to see this kiwi. He's adorable." Since I couldn't imagine this loudmouthed Jehovah's Witness lusting after any New Zealander in such an obvious way, I assumed she was talking about one of the few souvenirs she hadn't bought.

"Now you know who buys them," he muttered. "She's ninety per cent of the market." He stubbed

out his half-smoked cigarette and meekly followed. Audrey's Watchtower plummeted from one of the bags. Howard bent to gather it and through his polyester trousers revealed a perfect bubble butt. As he struggled forward the strain on his arms stressed his perfectly formed muscles, acquired from weightlifting Audrey's souvenir collection.

I smoked another cigarette, composed myself enough to walk in comfort, and headed for the plane.

At take-off time we were stuck waiting for the last passengers to fill two empty seats beside me. I nodded off, my head resting uncomfortably against the window, and my dick poking comfortably against my jeans as it remembered Howard.

Again I awoke. A large congregation of luggage appeared, and with it Audrey and Howard. She'd delayed the plane to buy a large polyester-feathered kiwi. Howard plopped exhausted into the seat beside me, and Audrey settled by the aisle.

There are several ways of getting rid of Jehovah's Witnesses, when you're on the ground. A neighbour swears by chainsaws. He invites his callers in, agrees with their interpretation of the Bible, then claims to have found some verse about smiting dwarfs. "You look a bit short yourself," he says, and calmly reaches for his chainsaw.

But I'd forgotten to pack a chainsaw. I buried my nose in the airline magazine, pretending to be mesmerised by a sheepskin ad. I'd have looked quite convincing except that the page was upside-down, bouncing on my lap, and written in Japanese.

Audrey opened her orange juice and launched into small talk. I braced myself for a segue into dire warnings of the end of life as we know it. "I love

juices," she said, and blethered on about the juice concoctions she makes at home with her extractor. "Howard and I are vegetarians," she confided.

"I never trust vegetarians," I said. "They're so picky about what they'll put in their mouths."

Howard spluttered. His orange juice went down the wrong way.

"You should be fussy about what you put in your mouth," she said, completely missing my drift. "Your body's a temple." She also missed the drift of my eyes. Howard's body was a temple indeed, and I longed to bow my head and worship.

Howard's gaze drifted too. Perhaps he was straining for a view of Rangitoto's dormant crater, but Rangitoto was below, in the Hauraki Gulf, and Howard's blue vegetarian eyes were focusing on my meat.

From healthy foods Audrey inevitably progressed to diseases physical and spiritual. Before I knew it she was talking about blood transfusions, AIDS and the abandonment of moral constraint.

"Viruses are clever," she recited. "And so is Satan, and we all know that Satan causes these nasty viruses to punish people of loose morals." According to Audrey there were three places in the Bible that forecasted the AIDS epidemic.

I blew my top. "Audrey, my father had a bad accident. He owes his life to transfusions. I'm gay. Neither of us has AIDS, while millions of poor bastards in Africa got it from heterosexual intercourse within marriage. If God or Satan or whoever is out to punish *us*, he needs some frigging target practice."

Howard blushed and concentrated on his neatly

polished shoes.

Audrey was unflappable. "It's not just the AIDS epidemic," she warned, savouring her role as persecuted believer. "Look at the recent earthquakes and volcanic activity." She told me she'd felt two earth tremors in New Zealand.

"Audrey," I said, "New Zealand earth tremors are as common as sheep."

"You probably think I'm a meddlesome fool trying to convert you," she continued, "but I'm only trying to help. Condoms won't save you from God's judgement."

I remembered my bagful of condoms. While not worried about God's judgement, I didn't relish the embarrassment of maybe having to show them at customs in Sydney.

Audrey's views on sex were amazing. In a nutshell, a sideways glance at Howard was "uncleanness". A quick touch of his dick would be "loose conduct". A blow job or a poke in the butt would be something more fascinating called "porneia". She spent the next hour exhorting me to flee from fornication, while I nodded to sleep against Howard's shoulder, which offered little resistance.

I awoke to hear Audrey lecturing me about bestiality.

"Audrey," I said, "I saw six hundred and sixty-six sheep in New Zealand and I didn't fancy one!"

Howard smouldered like a volcano on a cloudy day. "Leave him alone, Audrey," he rumbled.

Coming from Howard, who had hardly said boo since take-off, this was strong stuff. We were shocked into silence. I glanced at my magazine,

then at Howard, then at the screen which told us the altitude, the distance from Auckland, the distance from Sydney, and the cruising speed. With Audrey beside him I was cruising very slowly. I wondered if the on-board shop sold duty-free chainsaws.

Finally we neared Sydney. When our immigration forms arrived I reached for my daypack to get a pen. Audrey opened her handbag for hers. While she was distracted I tipped the condoms into her carry bags, as a souvenir.

As the plane touched down, an ironic voice told us the temperature was a cool thirty-eight.

"What's that in Fahrenheit?" asked Audrey, missing the joke.

"Hot," I told her. "You won't need your coat. Hot as the flames of Hell. It's punishment for Sydney's wicked lifestyle."

She remained unflustered. "Oh, but that's a misconception. Hell's not a place of fire. It doesn't mention flames in the Bible."

"Audrey!" Howard shouted. "He's just saying you won't need your coat!"

"I'm doing it for his own good, Howard," she said. "It's not full of flames. It's just a long, long time of nothingness. You'd get rather tired of nothingness after an eternity. It's been lovely talking with you, Wayne. I hope you'll read this magazine." After depriving me of sleep for much of the flight, she gave me an issue of *Awake!*

Three hours with Audrey seemed a very long time of nothingness. As cute as Howard was, I headed as fast as I could into the terminal while they gathered her souvenirs. Along the corridor posters warned that AIDS never takes a holiday. I wished I could say the

same of Audrey.

I retrieved my backpack from the carousel in minutes, and hoped for a fast train ride home to Katoomba for a smoke, a wank and a sleep. But a zealous assembly of customs officers was giving every third or fourth passenger the full treatment.

One of them wanted to inspect everything I had. In my luggage anyway. After checking every item, down to the last putrid sock and rancid jock stuffed into my hiking boots, and finding nothing more sinister than a crushed lube tube, he pored over my boots and noticed some mud.

"I don't think Quarantine would like your boots, Sir," he said. "Have you spent any time on New Zealand farms?"

"There's no animal semen on them," I snapped. "I've repented and stopped screwing sheep."

Unamused, he sent my boots away to be sterilised. I was still waiting when Howard and Audrey reached the front of the queue. The woman selecting victims for inspection looked wryly at Audrey's profuse luggage and waved her on.

Blame Satan. Blame Audrey. Blame a holiday from Hell, which apparently didn't exist as we heathens knew it. I'd never done this before. "It may be none of my business," I whispered to the officer who returned my boots, "but that woman was acting weird on the plane. She's got unwrapped condoms in her bags. I think people use them for smuggling drugs?"

"I've no idea how it got there," Audrey screamed as the first condom emerged. Her *Watchtower* tumbled from one bag but revealed no answers. Instead it opened to reveal more rubbers. They

rained down like a cloudburst at a Sunday school picnic.

I could tell from Howard's equivocal smile that he knew exactly how the condoms had got into her bags.

"Can you confirm you packed these bags yourself, Madam?" the inspector recited.

"Of course I packed them myself," she squealed. "I wouldn't let Howard put his filthy tobacco fingers inside my bags. I hope he hasn't had those around his fingers."

"That's not what they're usually around," the inspector observed.

"I've never been so outraged in all my life," cried Audrey. At least a dozen outrageous things I'd said had failed to outrage her, so I glowed as proudly as a fluorescent condom.

The inspector raised a rubber to the light. "I'm sorry, Madam, but there appears to be some soil on it. Could I check your other bags?"

She emptied the other bags. The polyester-feathered kiwi ... A Maori doll ... An abalone-shell paperweight ... Another muddy condom.

"I'm sorry, Madam. We'll have to take your bags to Quarantine for spraying. And this other officer would like a word with you."

I discreetly winked at Howard. "We should have time for a cigarette," I hinted. He hesitated, uncertain whether to follow me or Audrey.

Audrey had no choice but to follow the other official. She glared over her shoulder, like Lot's wife looking back at Sodom. "It's the work of Satan," she screamed as the official led her away. Howard hesitated, and looked towards his sister.

Discreetly my fingertips brushed the centre of his polyester trousers. "Either you're smuggling in a metronome or you'd rather come with me. Does a body search count as uncleanness, loose conduct or porneia?"

"Frankly, my dear," he whispered, "I don't give a damn."

We didn't stop for cigarettes. We caught the train straight to Katoomba. He blushed and smiled into my eyes. Wrapping his arms tensely around my neck, he really did say, "I've never done this before."

At first he found it difficult to relax. Since then we've both become more relaxed and quit smoking.

Audrey thinks I'm a meddlesome fool, but I'm only saving Howard from a long, long time of nothingness. She often rings from Misura with news of natural disasters. She told Howard he'd been disfellowshipped. I hoped that meant we'd never hear from her again, but unfortunately family members are still permitted to talk to him. Sometimes she threatens to fly over to release him from Satan's snare. But if she does we're prepared. We've bought a new chainsaw.

Not far from Katoomba there's a quiet, leafy spot by a rock pool, where there's no risk of being disturbed. If the weather's fine when Audrey rings she often just hears the message we've left. "This is Wayne and Howard. We're sorry we can't get to the phone right now. We'll get back as soon as we've disposed of the condoms."

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# Vale **Sasha Soldatow** 1947-2006



Alexander Pavlovich Soldatow - writer, editor, subtitler, admonisher and buttinski, bohemian and sage, bon vivant and gossip, challenger and confidant - died 30 August 2006 in Sydney.

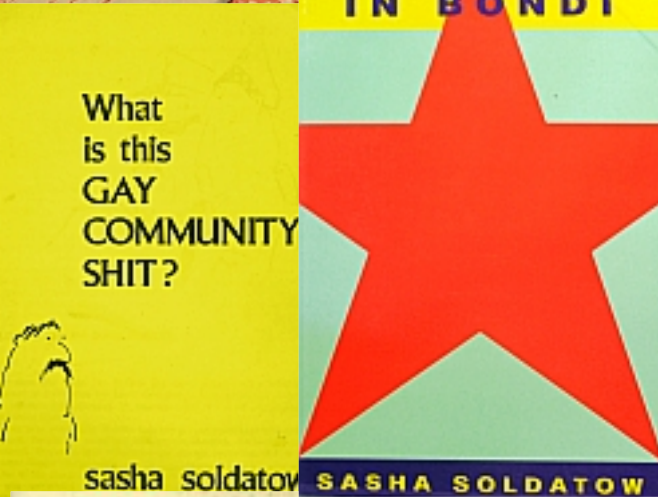
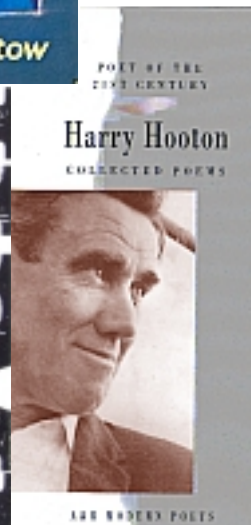
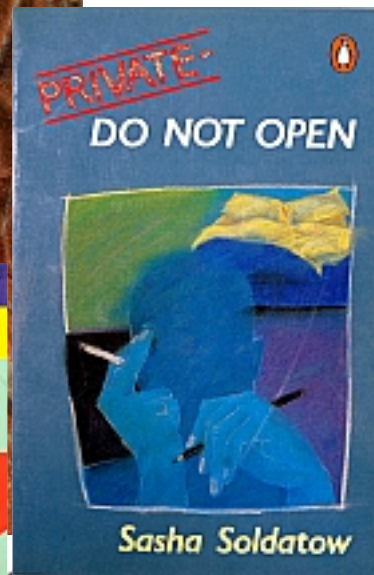
*"Sasha Soldatow is survived by countless people whose lives he changed; by great jokes and unforgettable conversations; by books published and unpublished; by the carefully catalogued memorabilia now in the Mitchell Library; by his mother and step-siblings. He asked for a literary prize to be established in his memory to honour writers who haven't had the recognition they deserve. His last publication will be the words he ordered for his tombstone: I See."* David Marr.

Full text of David Marr's moving obituary in the *Sydney Morning Herald* 9 Sept 2006. See also: Bruce Simms and George Papaelinas, *Creative soul never far from revolution*, *The Australian* 15 Sept 2006.

### Artwork notes:

The Sasha nude (aka "La Donge Enorme") is from the back cover of *Rock'n'Roll Sally* (BlackWattle 1990). We thought there'd be complaints, there weren't. *Mayakovsky in Bondi* (BlackWattle 1993) featured the opening line, 'I am trying to remember what my father's cock looked like,' which was quoted in almost every mainstream review. *Private - Do Not Open* (Penguin 1987) was Sasha's first major publication. *Harry Hooton, Collected Poems* (editor, A&R 1990) was the outcome of Sasha's

long-term desire to bring this neglected libertarian poet to a new generation of readers. *What is this Gay Community Shit?* (self published 1983) was Sasha's oft-quoted contribution to the significant debate over the politics and agenda behind Sydney's emerging gay golden mile, Oxford Street. In their role as guest editors of *cargo* (issue 8/9, BlackWattle July 1990), Sasha and Pam Brown famously stated, 'We were put here to be naughty.' Sasha contributed to virtually every men's issue of *cargo*, and to the BlackWattle anthologies: *Travelling on Love* (1991); *Fruit* (1994); and *Beyond Blood* (1995). *Travelling on Love in a Time of Uncertainty* was originally the title of Sasha's contribution our 1991 anthology. As it so perfectly encapsulated the zeitgeist of the AIDS era, he generously let it be used as the book title instead. After working with Christos Tsiolkas to see the young Melbourne writer's first novel *Loaded* finished and published, the pair then collaborated on an autobiographical book of ideas, *Jump Cuts* (Random House 1996).



# Biographies

## Alistair Sutton –

has written short fiction and articles for various gay papers around the country. He was highly commended in the Inaugural Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras writing competition. He loves writing, is a passionate advocate for Oz gay lit and is thrilled to be a small part of gay-ebooks.com.au. He lives with his partner of thirteen years, two dogs and five goldfish.

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## Ian MacNeill –

is very grateful for all the opportunities BlackWattle Press has given him over the years and feels honoured and fortunate to be now part of BlackWattle's electronic enterprise.

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## Brendan John Lindsay –

is a graduate of QUT Bachelor of Fine Arts (Creative Writing Production) course. Over the years he has found a liking of the drink and even created *Vox Barbara*, a creative writing society at QUT, just for an excuse to indulge his cliched writerly favourite habit. Check it out [www.myspace.com/voxbarbara](http://www.myspace.com/voxbarbara)

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## Geoffrey Greene –

Having spent a misspent youth in New Zealand, Geoffrey crossed the Tasman in 1985 on a familial whim. Hoping for bright shores, a previously unrecognised passion arose and to this day remains. Geoffrey writes, snaps, paints. Any remaining strength is utilised to avoid biographising. Life goes on, remains the bastard crime.

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## John Roberts –

knows Oxford Street better than anyone. For over twenty years he's worked there, lived nearby, and recorded the good times and bad times, always without judgement. Best known for *Mardi Gras The Novel*, he is now working on the sequel to *Ten Inches*, tentatively titled *Suck and Suck Again*.

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## Gary Dunne –

was a co-editor of Australia's first g&l collection, *Edge City* (1983). In the '90s he edited two BlackWattle gay anthologies. Two of his own works of fiction, *As If Overnight* (1991), and his 2006 collection, *The Queen & I* are available on gay ebooks as free downloads. < [click here hypertextthingy](#) >

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## Tim Miles –

Day job: Precedents lawyer. Writing: Finalist in Sydney Writers Festival pitching competitions (2000 and 2001). Several articles published in *SMH* Heckler column. Ambition: Finish and publish the novels I pitched 5 years ago. Inspired by: Sang (partner) FoxyLoxy (pooch) Mae West and the Bishop of Dibley. Interests: Writing short stories, playing piano, and walking FoxyLoxy in Centennial Park.

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## Rob McDonald –

lives in Alice Springs. He has lived in Sydney, Rome, Florence, London, Melbourne, the Blue Mountains, Brisbane and the Gold Coast, and existed in Wagga Wagga. His stories have appeared in *OutRage*, *CreamDrops* and two other anthologies. Another story will appear soon in *Harrington Gay Men's Literary Quarterly*.

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