

Lyn Scott-Cumming

JANE AND I

Jane and me, we slept on the verandah.
When the full moon flooded the plain, dead trees
became the ghosts of betrayed bushrangers roaming
in search of their Judas friends.

The tomcat's eyes, sneering at our childish
fears, invited disobedience, tempted us out to
play and dance with the Min Min in the stony desert.

Jane and me, we slept on the verandah. The
wire gauze kept out the huge moth and the equally
unwelcome king brown who announced his loathsome
presence with the sinister slither of his rough,
scaly body through the dust.

In the corner, its thick, furry body
blurring with the shadows and lending terror to
our dreams, perched the eight-legged wolf.
Father, whose sarcasm was to him a great joy,
laughed at our pleas and told gruesome tales of
children crying wolf.

Last night Jane cried. She had not liked
the many-legged yellow and red crawling thing
that had run across her hand after she'd lifted
a stone to throw at the black crow that
sat eating the eyes of our pet lamb.

Me, I was strong and told her not to be a
sissy, but then when whimpering slightly in
dream, she'd at last slept, I lay awake.
Listening to the whimpering reminded me of the
young puppy, whose head my dad's favourite
horse had kicked in.

The puppy too had lain whimpering softly
in its anguish until death claimed it.

In the house mum cried at night. Dad
always beat her. He said a beating everyday
did a woman no end of good.

Jane and me, we slept on the verandah.