

# It Stops

by Claire King

Your temper was part of the fabric of our house, a stain between the coving and the flock. At night your foul, beer soaked threats and my pleas for mercy were ghosts floating through walls into the kids' dreams. In the morning we'd breakfast on silence and bruises. I felt sorry for that child inside you still fighting some painful injustice — a beating handed down along with patched up clothes, a rationing of wartime love. Until years later, when the kids told me how you'd take your belt to their bare backsides behind closed doors. Bastard.

We made our escape on grimy streets under skies filled with crows, flapping like litter in the wind.

For years you drifted angrily alone. Then the grandchildren were born.

"A new start", you thought, packing your narcissistic bags and dumping them on her kitchen floor. You were soon boiling over again, but her husband stepped in.

"Not in our house."

How you raged then, the world proven to be as cruel as you'd painted it. Everyone against you, you angry little man.

She says she feels it too sometimes: the chemical rush of fury in flesh, telling her to grab their arms, shake and bellow and slap. When it comes she falls prostrate, pressing her face to the floor, waiting urgently for it to pass. "Here," she says, "it stops."

