

# *Survivor*

**Andrew Ravensdale**

**Ravensdale and Co**

Ravensdale and Co is a single author imprint. It is the trading name of Andrew Ravensdale.

The website for Ravensdale and Co is <http://www.ravensdaleandco.org>

You can email Andrew Ravensdale directly by clicking [notfamous48@gmail.com](mailto:notfamous48@gmail.com)

*Survivor*

Copyright © Andrew Ravensdale 2016

All rights reserved

MOBI edition for Kindle ISBN 978-0-9935686-2-6

Epub edition for Smashwords ISBN 978-0-9935686-8-8

Print on demand paperback edition ISBN 978-0-9935686-5-7

## *Survivor*

Survivor is misunderstood.

Survivor is not an elevated moral status.

Survivor is not a version of middle-class competitive success.

We are survivors.

We survive.

They call us survivors because other people don't.

# I

# 1

The table is by the window. The curtains are drawn back. The upper half of the window is lowered. The sash cords are visible in the frame.

It is night. A man sits at the table. The man's jeans are faded. The heels of the man's trainers are worn down. The man needs a haircut.

It is night. It is dark outside. There are streetlights. The traffic is audible on the road below. The local population are going about their social lives.

The man who sits at the table has not closed the curtains. The man stares. The man looks out of the window.

The man looks into the distance. It is not clear that the man is looking at anything.

In front of the man on the table is a ruled A4 pad. The cover of the A4 pad is folded back. The cover of the pad has been tucked underneath.

To the left of the pad there is a pile of A4 paper. The side of the top page that is facing up is blank.

The man is abstracted. The man caresses his elbow. The man does not seem to know what he is doing. Then the man caresses his other elbow.

The man has been writing a lot. The man has been writing for a long time.

The man has an image in his mind.

The image is of a large old-fashioned wireless. The case of the wireless is made of wood. The curves of the case have been shaped by steam.

There is a knurled bakelite knob on the side. The bakelite knob is the volume

control. The bakelite knob is of its time.

The flex is equally old-fashioned. The flex is covered with fabric. The fabric of the flex is green. The fabric is cross-hatched with red. The fabric is fraying.

In the wall opposite the place where the wireless stands is the door to the kitchen. In the wall to the side is a sash window. The sash window looks over a small yard. The window has coloured panes.

A small hand clasps the flex. The hand is the hand of a child under five.

The man sitting at the table hears his mother's voice. The man's mother is speaking at the tea table, as she often did. The man's mother is reciting a story, as she often did. The man's mother is using exactly the same words as she always did. The man's mother never changed the words. No-one in the family thought it was odd. The family had no standard of comparison.

The woman uses the name of her eldest son. We do not use her eldest son's name here.

There is something knowing in the woman's manner. The woman's voice has an oddly upward intonation at the end of her sentences. It is as if the woman thinks she is reciting her story to an innocent child.

'He was playing with the radio,' the woman says. 'He took hold of the flex. He got a shock,' the woman says in wonder.

The woman pauses for a moment.

'We had to take him to the clinic.' The woman's tone is innocent.

*Survivor*

As an adult the man hears things in memory that he missed in real life as a child.

The man is uncomfortable. The man couldn't say what he was uncomfortable about.

The image dissolves. The surface of the image shimmers. The image is a pool.

Below the surface the depths of the image are disturbed.

The radio disappears. The child's hand fades.

The man forgets his A4 pad. The man forgets the street lamps and the traffic outside.

The man forgets the empty doorway that leads to the sleeping alcove. The man forgets where he is.

The man's mind goes away.

## 2

The man sees a building. The man sees light. The light that the man sees is fire.

The man sees the fire in the space where the windows should be. The man does not see the windows. The windows have long gone.

The spaces for the windows are rectangular. The spaces for the windows are symmetrical. The spaces for the windows are aligned.

The light is yellow. The light does not flicker. The fire must be well alight. The light fills the space from which the windows have gone.

The walls of the building are thick. The windows are deep.

The walls are stone. The stone is hard. The stone is dark. The stone is grey.

The building is tall. The building stands against the night. The building stands on the moor in the darkness.

The building has no roof. The building is an eyeless skeleton.

Behind the building is the brow of the hill. The brow of the hill is not far. The outline of the building rises above the brow of the hill.

The brow of the hill is the horizon.

There is a path. The path is not made up. The path has been made by people walking. The path is like a goat track. The path leads to the building.

The building is abandoned. The building is supposed to be empty. No-one works in the building any more.

The man knows that something is happening. The man doesn't know what.

*Survivor*

The man thinks he has been to the building before. The man doesn't like that idea.

The image fades. The man is still there. The man doesn't know what to do.

The man is disturbed.

### 3

Two little boys are lying on the floor. The little boys are lying on their bellies. The little boys' heads are a little way apart. The little boys' feet are stretched out.

The boys are playing. The boys are both under five. One boy is about a year older than the other.

The boys have dark hair. In the fashion of the times, the boys' hair is cut short. Their hair is parted on the left. The boys are both freckled.

We assume that the boys are brothers.

A woman stands. We assume that the woman is their mother.

The woman is tall. The woman is overweight. The woman's face is bony. The woman's hair is loose and lank.

The woman stands with her back to a window. The window has panels of coloured glass. At a guess we would date the house to the early part of the twentieth century.

Through the window we see the opposite wall. It is not far. Clearly the window gives on to a yard. We are entitled to assume this house is in a terrace.

In the yard there is sunlight. It is day.

There are two doors.

One door leads to the kitchen. From there it leads to the back yard.

The other door leads to a corridor. There is a door off the corridor to the front room. We cannot see the front room from here.

The woman is ironing.

The woman's face is dark. The woman sighs. The woman sighs dramatically.

The elder boy hears his mother sigh. The elder boy's head jerks up.

The elder boy looks at his mother. The elder boy has fear in his eyes.

The younger boy looks at his brother. The younger boy stares at his brother.

The younger boy has noticed something. The younger boy does not understand.

The woman bangs the iron on the board. The woman glances up.

The woman stares at the boys. The woman mutters.

The woman stares at the wall beyond the boys. Low down near the skirting board there is an electrical socket.

The socket draws the woman's eye. The woman is fascinated by it.

The boys are oblivious of the socket. We think that it is really rather unlikely at their age that they understand exactly what an electrical socket is.

The smaller boy ignores his mother. The smaller boy makes wordless noises. The pitch of the noises changes constantly. The noises are not quite singing. The noises are not quite humming.

The little boy does not mind what other people think. The little boy is making the noises for himself.

In his fist the little boy has a toy soldier. The soldier is lead. The little boy holds the soldier up. The little boy waves the soldier around.

In the little boy's mind the not quite singing and the waving of the soldier are

connected. The little boy is imagining a world of his own.

The little boy's brother grins.

We think that here is something that is not quite right about the older boy's expression. We think there is something furtive about it. Something sly.

There is clearly something wrong if a boy under five has facial expressions like that. Adults would normally be concerned. Most of the adults would do nothing.

The adults would not know what to do. The adults would not want to be involved.

The adults might fear that they would make a mistake. The adults would not want to be criticised.

The older boy picks up a soldier. The older boy holds the soldier up. The older boy is still grinning.

The older boy advances his hand towards his younger brother's hand. The younger boy sees.

The younger boy's face lights up. The younger boy moves his soldier towards the soldier in his older brother's hand.

The younger boy moves the soldier around in the air. The not quite singing intensifies.

The older boy stops grinning. The older boy's face goes quite hard.

The older boy strikes out. The older boy strikes towards the little boy's hand.

The little boy gasps. The little boy drops his soldier.

The little boy kneels up. The little boy turns towards his mother.

The older boy does not move. The older boy stares. It is like an experiment.

'Mummy! Mummy!' the little boy cries. 'He hit me! He hurt my hand!'

The older boy's eyes swivel. The older boy's gaze fixes on his mother. No other part of the older boy's body moves. The older boy is frozen.

The woman slams the iron down. The woman's head goes up. The woman comes storming round the end of the ironing board. The woman's hair flies. The woman is a fury.

The woman stalks across the floor.

The little boy stares open-mouthed. The little boy did not expect this.

The little boy's fist lies on his thigh. The soldier is forgotten.

The older boy clings to the floor. The older boy wants to sink into the floor. The older boy wants to disappear.

The older boy does not cry out. The older boy does not try to escape. The older boy does not attempt to protect himself.

There is something the older boy knows. It is something the older boy shouldn't know at his age.

'I told you not to play near electricity!' the woman yells. 'It bites!'

The younger boy stares. It is not clear that the younger boy understands what his mother is saying. If the younger boy does understand, it is quite clear he has never heard his mother say anything of the kind.

The woman reaches out. The older boy tries to roll away.

'No, mummy, no!' the older boy cries. 'Mummy, don't!'

The woman grabs the boy's wrist. The woman doesn't break her stride. The woman is a tornado.

The woman drags the boy across the carpet. The boy struggles. The woman doesn't seem to care.

The woman is hell-bent on something. The woman knows exactly what she is doing.

The woman heads towards the electrical socket on the wall. The woman drags the boy by his wrist.

The boy struggles. The boy wriggles. The boy squirms.

The boy is a fish. The fish is out of the water.

The boy cannot escape. The boy cannot free his wrist from his mother's grasp. The boy cannot run.

The woman kneels. She is a big woman. The movement is surprisingly fluid. The movement is almost graceful.

The woman keeps hold of the boy's wrist.

The woman reaches out with her other hand. The woman grabs the boy's hand between her fingers and her thumb.

The woman takes her lower lip between her teeth. The woman bites down.

The woman is concentrating ferociously.

The woman's thumb is near the knuckles of the boy's hand. The woman presses down. The woman presses hard.

The boy's fingers separate. The boy's fingers are outstretched.

The boy's face is white. The boy's eyes are round. The boy's jaw is locked open.

The boy is terrified. If the boy was any more terrified, his hair would be standing on end. This is not a metaphor. It would be literally standing on end.

The big woman jabs the little boy's fingers into the holes in the electric socket. The big woman holds the little boy's fingers there.

For a moment time is suspended. The younger boy stares. Then the room explodes.

The little boy's body spasms. The big woman's body spasms too.

The big woman's body goes into spasm without any perceptible delay. There is no time lag. The current passes through the woman and the boy instantaneously.

The little boy's body shakes. The shaking is uncontrollable. The woman's body shakes.

The big woman shakes from the hips. The big woman shakes to and fro.

The little boy shakes on the floor. The little boy is an eel. The little boy is trapped.

The little boy and the big woman shake. The little boy and the big woman are shaken by the same power.

The little boy screams. The little boy wails.

The little boy is an animal. The little boy's wail is a siren. The little boy's scream is

not words. The little boy's scream is pure sound.

The woman screams. The woman howls. The woman gasps. The woman breathes.  
The woman howls again. The woman's scream is nearly words.

The younger boy retreats. The younger boy backs away. The younger boy dances  
up and down.

Alternately the younger boy's knees lift up and down. Alternately the younger  
boy's feet in their little sand shoes hit the floor.

The younger boy hyperventilates. The younger boy sobs.

The boy's mother turns her face towards the younger boy. The boy's mother  
cannot stop shaking. The boy's mother cannot let go of the boy's elder brother's hand.  
The force that the woman has released pins the woman's hand to the child.

The woman's face is black. The woman's hair is wild. Blue sparks fly. The  
woman's head has an electrical corona.

The woman's eyes are wild. The woman's wild eyes stare. The woman's wild eyes  
fix the younger boy.

The younger boy retreats further. The younger boy backs further away.

The woman's mouth is open. The younger boy can see her teeth.

The woman's tongue works. The woman's tongue flaps between her teeth.

The woman is howling. The woman's howling is still not words.

The boy stares. The boy tries to understand.

The woman is talking to the boy. The woman wants the boy to do something.

The younger boy tries to understand. The younger boy thinks he does. The boy runs forward. The boy reaches out his hand.

The boy's mother's screaming redoubles. The boy runs back.

The little boy runs back to the door.

The woman's hand flaps. The woman screams again. The woman wants the boy to come forward again. The boy won't do it. The boy doesn't respond.

The boy takes hold of the door frame with both hands. The boy kicks the frame. He kicks it repeatedly and violently.

In later years the boy's mother will tease him about this. She would imitate his lisp.

'All right, then,' she will say. 'I kick door.'

It will not apparently occur to the woman that there was anything wrong when a three year old boy behaved like this.

The boy's mother makes an effort. The boy's mother wrenches her hand. The boy's mother is suddenly still.

On the floor the boy's brother wriggles alone. The boy's brother is still wailing. The boy's brother wails without words. The boy's brother wails by himself.

The woman bites her lip. The woman rubs her hand. The woman does not look at either boy.

The woman reaches over. The woman flips the switch.

The older boy collapses. The wailing stops.

The woman turns to the younger boy.

The younger boy lets go of the door. The younger boy stops kicking.

The younger boy looks at his mother. His stomach churns.

The woman's eyes narrow. The woman's lip curls.

'You stupid little boy,' the woman says.

The contempt in the woman's voice is palpable.

The older boy rolls over. His eyes roll up.

The older boy vomits. Thin grey bile spills from his mouth. The bile makes a pool on the floor.

The older boy collapses. The woman ignores him. The woman continues to stare at the younger boy. The woman hasn't finished talking to him.

The skin of the little boy's face tightens up. The skin of his face is a mask. His stomach boils. Under his ribs just above his belly is a sharp point of pain.

'I wanted you to go round!'

The woman's tone is condemnatory.

The boy thinks. The boy is slow to understand. A cloud sinks over the boy's mind.

'I'm going to tell my daddy,' the boy says.

It is not a threat. The boy says what he says in despair.

The woman gasps. The woman's head jerks up.

The woman thinks.

'You're going to tell your daddy?' the woman sneers.

'Mm-hmm,' the boy goes. The boy is obviously miserable.

'What are you going to tell your daddy?'

The woman is trying not to let her anxiety show. The boy doesn't notice. The woman's expression is too subtle for him.

'What you did,' the boy says.

'What I did?' the woman exclaims. 'What did I do?'

The boy's face is tight. The boy doesn't look his mother in the eye.

The boy lifts his chin. His chin points towards the electric socket. The boy doesn't have the words.

The boy's older brother lies inert on the carpet. The boy's older brother's head is still.

The woman bites her lip. The woman raises one knee. The woman puts one hand to the floor. The woman stands.

The woman has some difficulty standing. The woman is not comfortable with the weight she is carrying.

The woman walks towards the boy. The boy backs off. The boy's eyes are round. The boy's mouth is tight.

The woman extends her hand.

'Come here,' the woman says.

The boy looks at her.

'Come here,' the woman says again.

The boy doesn't move.

The woman flaps her fingers.

'I won't hurt you,' the woman says.

The boy takes a step forward. The boy moves slowly.

The woman reaches out. The woman tries to take his wrist.

The boy gasps. The boy starts. The boy whips back his arm.

'I won't hurt you,' the woman says.

The woman is making an effort. The woman sounds quite calm.

The boy stares. Slowly the boy lifts his arm.

The boy lifts the back of his hand towards his mother. The boy keeps his eyes on her the whole time.

The woman reaches out. The woman moves quite slowly. The woman is trying not to startle the boy.

The boy looks down. The boy keeps his hand up. The boy's mother takes his wrist.

The boy's mouth opens. The boy exhales. A tear rolls down his face.

The boy's wrist disappears in the woman's large fingers.

'Look at me,' the woman says.

The boy doesn't move.

'Look at me,' the woman says again.

The boy rolls up his eyes. The boy stares from under his eyebrows.

'He was playing near the radio,' the woman announces.

The woman sounds like an old-fashioned schoolteacher.

The woman uses the name of her eldest son. We don't use her eldest son's name here.

The boy stares. His brother was doing no such thing.

'He was playing with the radio,' the woman repeats. The woman is starting to sound irritated.

The boy still doesn't react.

'Say it,' the woman says. The woman is imperious.

The boy does nothing.

'Say it!' the woman demands. The woman is angry now.

'Playing with the radio,' the child mumbles. The boy is sullen.

The woman sighs. Briefly the woman lifts her head.

The woman looks at the boy again.

'He took hold of the flex,' the woman tells him. The woman speaks with a marked rhythm. It is almost a sing-song.

The boy stares. The word *flex* is not in his vocabulary.

'He took hold of the wire!' the woman says. The woman is exasperated.

'Took hold of the wire,' the boy mumbles. The boy can't get the words out fast enough.

'He got an electric shock,' the woman says. The boy says nothing.

'He got an electric shock!' the woman shrieks.

The woman's free hand clenches. The woman's free hand is a fist.

The woman licks her lip. The woman is dangerous.

'Electric shock,' the boy mutters. The boy doesn't look at his mother.

The woman sighs. The woman looks at the boy.

The boy looks miserable.

The woman lets go of the boy's wrist. The woman turns her back. The woman walks away.

The boy looks round the room. The boy looks as if he almost believes what he has just said.

The boy's eyes brim. The tears spill over. The tears stream down the boy's cheeks.

**4**

The older boy half-sits, half-lies in the chair in the hall. The boy is wearing his little coat.

The boy's face is grey.

The boy's mother stands over him. The boy's mother is wearing her hat and coat.

The woman lowers her head towards the boy.

'Are you all right?' the woman asks.

Slowly the boy rolls his head upwards. The boy looks at the woman. The boy says nothing.

'Are you all right?' the woman asks again.

The boy nods.

The boy is clearly afraid. The boy doesn't trust his mother.

The younger boy stands in the doorway. Behind him is the room where his mother was ironing.

The younger boy stands with his feet apart. The younger boy thrusts his fists deep in his pocket.

The younger boy's head is down. Beneath his eyebrows the younger boy watches his mother.

The younger boy is very suspicious. The younger boy is more suspicious than any child his age should have reason to be.

## 5

The sun is warm and bright through the curtains.

Should the curtains be pulled at this time of day?

There are two single beds. The beds stand on either side of the window. The beds stand with their heads against the wall.

We can safely assume that the room is the little boys' bedroom.

The little boy and his mother are playing.

We feel this is not quite right. What are the little boy and his mother doing playing in the middle of the afternoon with the curtains drawn? We feel this is not altogether healthy.

The woman is sitting on the floor with her knees to one side. The woman is leaning on one hand. The woman is supporting her weight. The woman's weight is considerable.

The little boy stands. The little boy stamps his foot. The little boy sweeps his fists down through the air.

'I don't *want* to be Sasha!' the little boy protests. 'Sasha's a *girl*! I want to be Binkie!'

The little boy pronounces the word 'girl' with the contempt that some people reserve for sub-human species such as Jews or blacks. The little boy after all is only five. Being a boy is almost the whole of his identity.

'All right then,' says his mother. 'We won't play.'

We are concerned. We could almost say we are disturbed. The woman is interacting with her own child - a child who, we must insist, is very young - in a most age-inappropriate manner.

The little boy freezes. The little boy's feet are still on the carpet. The little boy's arms hang by his sides. The little boy's mouth turns down.

The little boy looks at his mother. Perhaps the little boy thinks his mother will relent. Perhaps the little boy just hopes she will.

The little boy's mother looks back at him. The little boy's mother's face is cold.

'All right,' the little boy says.

The little boy is speaking quietly. The little boy sounds sulky.

The little boy's mother lifts her head a little. The little boy's mother lowers her head again. If the gesture was more decisive we might call it a nod. The little boy seems to understand the gesture perfectly well.

The little boy takes a step or two away. The little boy turns. The little boy is now standing at an angle of about ninety degrees to his mother.

The little boy's mother waits.

The little boy stands up on his toes. The little boy freezes his face into a completely artificial smile. The little boy holds out his hands. The little boy takes the hem of an invisible frock between his fingers and his thumbs.

The performance is clearly very well rehearsed. The little boy has done this many times before.

The little boy has been coached.

The little boy recites. The voice the little boy uses is high-pitched. It is almost shrill. It is perhaps the kind of voice that the little boy imagines girls use - or the kind of voice someone has told him that little girls use.

The little boy recites.

The little boy speaks with an accent that is quite close to standard English. The accent is as close to standard English as the little boy can manage.

'The witches,' the little boy proclaims, 'knocked my granddad off the ladder.'

We consider the little boy very carefully. We conclude that these words have some meaning for the little boy, though we would hesitate to say what that meaning was.

We think it is probable that these words are a script, and that the putative author of the words is the little boy's mother.

We are however unaware of the little boy's mother's personal history. We have no knowledge of her relationship with her grandfather, and we do not know that her grandfather was a speculative builder who died in a fall at work.

We are therefore unable to proceed any further with our analysis.

The little boy's heels sink quietly to the floor. The little boy's fingers and thumbs drop the hem of the invisible frock. The invisible frock disappears.

The little boy looks at his mother. The little boy may be waiting for her approval. If so the little boy is disappointed.

The little boy's mother looks at the floor. The little boy's mother's shoulders sags. The little boy's mother's spine curves. The little boy's mother's posture is classically depressive.

The little boy's mother recites in her turn. The little boy's mother uses a very broad version of the dialect. Under the influence of national radio and even more of TV, dialect like this is not heard any more.

We will not attempt to reproduce the vagaries of the dialect phonetically. We will confine ourselves to observing that the word used for 'girl' is in fact '*chiel*', an archaic form of 'child'. This is a dialect of almost Chaucerian antiquity.

'One of the little girls had a little baby,' the boy's mother intones.

We are shocked. The boy's mother manages a remarkable imitation of the voice and manner of speech of an eight year old boy - a rather depressed eight year old boy, we might add.

The boy's mother is clearly not without some form of untutored histrionic talent. One wonders why she has not made more use of it.

'The little girl's daddy was the baby's daddy too,' the boy's mother continues. The boy's mother injects a note of anguish into her recital.

'They made the little baby go away,' the boy's mother announces mournfully. The boy's mother pauses. The boy's mother's tongue flickers over her lips. The boy's mother's mouth must be dry.

This is Binkie.

We do not know that Binkie was the pet name that the boy's mother's father used for her until her much younger brother was born. Then her father took the name away and gave it to her brother.

We are therefore not in a position to surmise who Binkie was, or to speculate about why a child of that age should have been so depressed.

The little boy stares at his mother. The little boy seems to be wondering.

We find that strange. The little boy must have been exposed to this recital many times. Could it be that his mother does it so well that each time the little boy hears it the little boy is once again convinced?

'And they made the little girl go away too,' the little boy's mother concludes. She gives her voice a haunting upward intonation at the end of the phrase.

The room falls silent. The sun continues to shine through the closed curtains. The room nevertheless feels cold.

The little boy's mother still stares at the floor. The little boy's mother does not move. The little boy's mother's face has no expression.

The little boy has turned his eyes away from his mother. The little boy is listening.

The little boy is listening to something inside.

## 6

The little boy and his mother are upstairs. The little boy and his mother are in the boys' bedroom.

We do not think that this feels right.

The curtains are drawn again. The sun is not so bright. The room is darker.

The woman is lying across the bed. The woman's legs are hanging off. The woman's feet are on the floor.

The woman is abandoned.

The little boy is excited. The little boy's face is flushed. The little boy's eyes are wide and shining. The little boy's mouth is open. The little boy's hair is mussed.

The little boy runs across to the chair. The little boy's mother gives him no instructions. It would appear that the little boy knows what to do. He has done this before.

The little boy takes off his shorts. The little boy puts his shorts on the chair. The little boy runs back to his mother.

Something is very wrong here. We do not know quite what it is.

We are forming very strong suspicions. We do not like this at all. We are feeling very uncomfortable.

We notice now that the little boy is naked that he has an erection. The little boy's erection is pencil slim.

The woman lifts her head off the bed. Lifting her head takes an effort. The woman

stares at the little boy. The woman does not seem to recognise the little boy. If we were not already disturbed, we would find this also disturbing.

The woman reaches out a hand. The woman seems to grope.

Surely it is not so dark she cannot see?

The woman takes the little boy's arm. The woman's hand looks very big. The little boy's arm looks thin and small.

The woman pulls the little boy towards her. The little boy resists. The little boy's face falls. The little boy is not altogether comfortable with this. We surmise that the little boy has done this before.

The little boy's resistance is not firm. The woman pulls the little boy towards her.

She is a big woman. He is a little boy.

The little boy stands between the woman's legs. The little boy is dwarfed by the woman.

The woman lifts her skirt. The woman keeps hold of the little boy. The little boy's bottom jiggles. We are horrified.

The little boy tries to back away. The woman throws her skirt over her head.

'Oh, grandfather!' the woman cries. 'Don't! Don't!'

The little boy really doesn't like it. The little boy tries to pull away.

The woman grabs him with both hands. The woman pushes and pulls him. The woman gets the little boy into place.

The unspeakable happens.

*Survivor*

The shock galvanises the little boy's body. The shock is like electricity.

The little boy jumps back.

The woman frees her face from the folds of her skirt. The woman lifts her face.

The woman stares at the little boy.

'Dirty little boy,' the woman says.

'Nasty little boy.'

The little boy cowers.

7

The little boy is out of bed. The little boy is in his little sleeping suit. The little boy's little sleeping suit has a flap at the back. The little boy's sleeping suit is so cute.

The little boy is crying. The little boy is crying loudly.

The little boy is out of bed. The little boy is sitting on the floor.

The little boy has his knees drawn up. The little boy is clasping his shins.

The little boy's mother bursts in. The little boy's mother's hair is flying. The little boy's mother is wearing a dressing gown over her night-dress. The little boy's mother is wearing slippers.

'Get back to bed!' the little boy's mother shrieks. The little boy's mother flings the door wide open.

The little boy gulps. The little boy stops crying. The little boy turns his head. The little boy's mother doesn't meet his eye. The little boy's mother turns her back.

'You're a bad boy!' the little boy's mother yells.

The little boy's mother storms out. The little boy's mother slams the door.

The little boy is silent. The little boy waits. The little boy listens.

The little boy hears his mother's feet on the carpet in the corridor. The woman has a heavy tread. The floorboards in the corridor vibrate.

The house is silent. The little boy draws up his knees. The little boy hunches his shoulders.

The little boy breathes in. The little boy's chest swells. The little boy presses his

lips together. The little boy presses his lips firmly.

The little boy nods. The little boy keeps nodding. The nodding is rhythmic.

The little boy starts to rock his shoulders. The little boy rocks his shoulders backwards and forwards. The little boy keeps his mouth firmly closed.

The little boy screws up his eyes. The little boy breathes in through his nose. The little boy's chest swells even more. It is costing the little boy an effort not to breathe.

The little boy rocks from the hips. The little boy clasps his ankles even tighter. The little boy's chest presses down on his knees. The little boy's knees sway too.

The little boy rocks faster. The little boy closes his eyes. The little boy must be getting dizzy.

How can the little boy do this?

The rocking stops. The little boy's body topples. The little boy's body topples sideways.

The little boy's body floats to the floor. The little boy's eyes are closed. The little boy lies on his side with his knees drawn up. The little boy doesn't move.

We cannot hear the little boy breathing. We cannot believe the little boy is still holding his breath. We have to believe it. All the available evidence suggests that is exactly what the little boy is doing.

The little boy steps out of his body. The little boy turns towards the window. The little boy starts to walk. The little boy walks on air.

The little boy's pink rabbit jumps off the bed. The little boy's pink rabbit hurries to

join him. The pink rabbit steps over the empty body of the little boy lying on the floor.

The little boy's pink rabbit is so cute. The little boy's grandmother made it for him.

The little boy takes the pink rabbit's hand. The pink rabbit is so proud. The pink rabbit's ears come up to the little boy's shoulder.

The little boy and the pink rabbit walk up through the air. The little boy and the pink rabbit walk towards the window.

The sash is down. The curtains are open.

The little boy and the pink rabbit walk over the top of the window.

The little boy and the pink rabbit walk out into the night.

## 8

The little boy and the pink rabbit are above the street where the little boy's mother's house stands. The little boy and the pink rabbit walk in the air. The little boy and the pink rabbit walk upwards.

Below the little boy and the pink rabbit is the street and the town. The night is a dark blue river. At the bottom of the river there are pairs of bright lights moving. The river is too dark for the boy and the pink rabbit to see the cars.

The night is clear. The moon is full. The moon is silver. The moon shines.

Above the little boy and the pink rabbit are the stars. The little boy and the pink rabbit walk up towards the stars. The stars seem a long way.

The little boy is very brave. The little boy whistles. The little boy cannot whistle usually. Tonight the little boy can whistle.

The pink rabbit looks up at the little boy. The pink rabbit tries to whistle too.

The pink rabbit really likes the little boy. The pink rabbit wants to be like him.

The pink rabbit and the little boy walk up the road. You cannot see the road in the night but you know it is there. The pink rabbit and the little boy reach the dancing floor.

You can see the dancing floor in the sky at night. The dancing floor is round. The dancing floor looks like sand. The dancing floor is smooth.

Beyond the edges of the dancing floor is the night. The night is cold.

The little boy walks to the middle of the dancing floor. The little boy wraps his arms round himself. The little boy stamps his feet. The little boy wants to keep warm.

The pink rabbit stays close to the little boy.

The pink rabbit wraps his arms round himself. The pink rabbit stamps his feet.

The pink rabbit doesn't need to wrap his arms around himself and stamp his feet to keep warm. The pink rabbit is covered with fur.

The pink rabbit does it because the pink rabbit wants to be like the little boy.

The little boy hears the singing. The little boy didn't expect to hear the singing.

When the little boy hears the singing the little boy knows what the singing is.

There are many voices singing. The voices are the same. The voices are all singing at the same time. The voices are all singing the same thing.

The little boy does not think of this as a choir. The little boy does not go to church or chapel. The little boy's parents do not take him. There is a sectarian dispute between the little boy's parents.

The little boy's parents possibly expect him to absorb the truths of Christian teaching directly through contact with themselves. If so the little boy's parents are very optimistic.

The little boy does not know the words of the singing. The little boy knows the language.

It is the same language that the trees speak. It is the language you can hear in the night in the woods in the wind.

The lights come. The lights flicker. There are very many little lights.

At first the boy thinks the lights are the stars.

The lights move. The lights are all around the dancing floor. The lights move close together.

The lights are dancing. This is where the lights come when it is time to dance.

The lights move from one side to the other. The lights move back again. The lights are graceful.

The little boy thinks the lights are stars.

The little boy sees a beard. The little boy sees eyes. The little boy sees faces.

The little boy understands. The little boy remembers.

The lights are the Star Men.

The Star Men are singing to the little boy. The Star Men are looking at the little boy.

The singing is louder now. The singing is harder.

The Star Men are not looking at the pink rabbit. The pink rabbit hangs his head. The tips of the pink rabbit's ears turn over.

The pink rabbit does not like being left out. The pink rabbit does not think it is fair.

The Star Men are angry. The Star Men say the boy should not have come.

The Star Men say the boy should have waited. The Star Men say they will invite the boy when they want him to come.

The little boy says he is sorry. The little boy doesn't have to say 'sorry' out loud. The little boy just thinks about saying sorry. The Star Men know what he is thinking.

*Survivor*

The Star Men say the little boy has to go back down.

No! thinks the little boy. I want to stay here! I like it here! I'm happy! I don't want to go back down!

You must go down, say the Star Men. You must go back. There are things you have to do. You have to do them by yourself.

No! thinks the little boy. I don't want to!

The Star Men fade. The singing fades. There is nothing. The Star Men are gone. The little boy and the pink rabbit are alone in the middle of the dancing floor. Beyond the edge of the dancing floor is the dark blue river of the night. In the dark blue river of the night are the stars.

The little boy flaps his arms. The pink rabbit flaps his arms.

The little boy looks at the pink rabbit. The pink rabbit nods.

The little boy and the pink rabbit go back down. The little boy whistles. The pink rabbit tries to whistle too.

At the bottom of the dark blue river of the night there are pairs of moving lights. The night is too dark to see the cars.

9

The little boy is sitting on the examination couch. Someone must have lifted the little boy up.

The little boy looks sulky. The little boy's left arm is turned at an awkward angle.

The older boy is standing nearby. The older boy looks anxious.

The boys' father is standing above the boys. The boys' father looks proprietorial.

The boys' father looks as if what is going on has nothing to do with him. The boys' father is just there. He is there in his official capacity as their father.

The doctor comes in. The doctor has his stethoscope round his neck. The stethoscope is the doctor's badge of office.

The doctor has a sheaf of papers. The papers are stapled. The top sheets are turned back.

The doctor joins the group. The doctor doesn't say anything. The doctor doesn't make eye contact.

The boys' father looks annoyed.

The doctor studies the top sheet. Then the doctor speaks.

'There was another incident,' the doctor says. The doctor doesn't look up.

The boys' father's face clouds over. The doctor waits.

The boys' father slowly turns his head. The boys' father opens his mouth.

'Electric shock,' the doctor says.

The boys' father's eyebrows go up. His jaw drops.

'Oh yes,' the boy's father says. 'His brother was playing with the radio. He got hold of the flex.'

The older boy starts. The older boy manages not to gasp. The older boy rolls his eyes up. The older boy looks at his father from under his eyebrows.

The doctor waits. The boy's father says nothing more.

'Hmmm,' goes the doctor. The doctor still doesn't make eye contact.

The doctor turns. The doctor leaves.

The younger boy looks at his brother. The younger boy looks concerned.

The younger boy looks at his father. The younger boy looks anxious.

The boys' father looks round the room. The boys' father's face looks dark.

## 10

The man parks up the rental car. The car park isn't full. It isn't yet the season.

The man walks towards the wall. The man looks sideways. The man looks at the granite wall of the workshop that has been turned into a museum.

A full length window has been let into the wall. The man sees the tables and the counter of the museum cafe. The man sees the rotating stands of cards and books and the shelves of souvenirs.

The man thinks the souvenirs are kitsch. The man is very certain of that even though the man can't see the souvenirs clearly from where he is in the car park. The man is a snob in some ways.

The man stands at the wall. The man looks down at the clay pit.

The clay pit is full of standing water. Most of the clay pits are full of water. The man wonders how deep it is.

The man looks to the left. The clay pit is close to the road. There is no rising bank. The man expects one.

The man looks to the right. The flanks of the spoil heap have been deeply channelled by the rain. The flanks of the spoil heap are grey. They are bare.

The man thinks, The spoil heap is too close to the water. And the spoil heap is too low. It should be higher.

*<i>This isn't the place,</i>* the man thinks.

The intuition is very strong. It is very clear.

*Survivor*

The man turns towards the museum. The man is going to the cafe.

If this isn't the place, the man thinks, the place is somewhere. It exists.

# II

# 11

The man wakes. The man's head is on one side. One of the man's knees is drawn up. One of the man's arms is raised. The man pillows his head on his arm.

All around the man is the greyness of the first light before dawn. Even in his sleeping bag the man feels the cold.

The man raises his head. It is difficult. The man's head aches.

The man stares at the sand below him. The man sees the empty broken husks of capsules.

The man can't count the capsules. The man can't remember how many he took.

The man thinks of the detritus of scavenging birds.

There is a roaring. A pounding. The man thinks it is his head. Then the man realises. The pounding is the sea on the beach. The roaring is the tide.

The man tries to turn. It is hard. The man's movements are restricted by the sleeping bag. The man's belly is sore. The lining of the man's throat feels raw.

The man sees the bottle lying on the sand. The bottle of cheap whisky. The bottle is half-empty. The whisky disgusts the man.

The man looks down the beach. The man sees.

The man sees the sea.

The sea rolls up the beach. The sea roars. The sea rolls back down the sand. The sea hisses.

Slowly the sea advances.

## *Survivor*

In the afternoon the man sat at the top of the cliff. The man watched the sea. The man calculated high tide. The man worked out when he had to take the pills.

The man knew the pills might not kill him. The man thought that if he took them at the right time he would be unconscious when the tide came in. High tide would cover him.

The man wonders if he can wait. The man wonders if he can wait till the tide rises and the sea rolls over him. Then the man will die. The man wants to die.

The man knows he can't. The man is disappointed. The man wants to wail.

The man lifts himself up on his elbows. The man tries to look up the cliff. The man can't raise his head far enough to see. The cliff is impossibly high.

The man has to get out of the bag. The man needs to pee. The man has to get himself up the cliff. The man has to do it somehow.

The man has to be away by morning. The man doesn't want anyone to find him here.

## 12

The man sees a building. The man sees light. The light that the man sees is fire.

The man sees the fire in the space where the windows should be. The man does not see the windows. The windows have long gone.

The spaces for the windows are rectangular. The spaces for the windows are symmetrical. The spaces for the windows are aligned.

The light is yellow. The light does not flicker. The fire must be well alight. The light fills the space from which the windows have gone.

The walls of the building are thick. The windows are deep.

The walls are stone. The stone is hard. The stone is dark. The stone is grey.

The building is tall. The building stands against the night. The building stands on the moor in the darkness.

The building has no roof. The building is an eyeless skeleton.

Behind the building is the brow of the hill. The brow of the hill is not far. The outline of the building rises above the brow of the hill.

The brow of the hill is the horizon.

There is a path. The path is not made up. The path has been made by people walking. The path is like a goat track. The path leads to the building.

The building is abandoned. The building is supposed to be empty. No-one works in the building any more.

The man knows that something is happening. The man doesn't know what.

*Survivor*

The man thinks he has been to the building before. The man doesn't like that idea.

The image fades. The man is still there. The man doesn't know what to do.

The man is disturbed.

## 13

The man drives round the right of the hill. The woods are up above the road on the man's left. The tidal river and the mudflats are below.

In the rear view mirror the man sees a line of cars. The cars are following the man. The drivers don't want to pass.

The road is narrow. There are bends.

Is the way the man is driving too obviously dangerous? Is that why they don't pass?

The man shouldn't be driving. The man should get off the road.

The man knows he can get off the road when he arrives. The man doesn't know if he can get off the road before.

The man is worried.

As the man drives around the bend he sees the pack-horse bridge. The bridge is not the original. The bridge has been replaced and widened to accommodate the tourist traffic in the summer. They have kept the triangular refuges in the wall that protrudes over the river. The bridge is kitsch.

The man parks up on the opposite bank. The man wants to stop driving.

The man turns left across the railway line. The man remembers his great-aunt bringing him here to see the Great Western go through.

The fireman with his black face would lean out of the cab of the engine. The fireman would hold out the horse-shoe shaped token.

The signalman would lean out of the box. The signalman would hold his arm crooked at the elbow with his fist facing forward.

The speed of the train would not relent. The pistons would surge. The wheels would grind. Steam would hiss from the valves. The whistle would shriek.

The signalman would scoop up the token. The train would disappear.

The trains don't run there anymore.

The station buildings house shops. The shops sell beach balls and sandals.

The signal box is heritage. The steam trains have gone.

The man gets out of the car. The man can barely stand.

The man walks towards the river. The man thinks there must be a bench.

The man knows there are benches on the opposite side of the river. The man remembers sitting there with his great-aunt once.

The man can't remember when. The man can't remember why.

The man has forgotten sitting on the bench with his great-aunt for over forty years. Now the man has come here he remembers.

The man thinks it is strange that he remembers now. The man does not think it is strange that he forgot.

The man finds a low concrete wall. The man sits on it. The man's knees are hunched up. The man's back curves over. The man can hardly stay upright.

The man can't fall. If the man falls people will know he is ill.

They will know what the man has been doing. They will stop the man doing it

again. The man won't have another chance.

The man looks around. The man is unsteady. Across the car park the man sees a mound of earth. The mound of earth has been left by the contractors.

The man can sit against the mound of earth. The mound of earth will support him.

The man walks over to the mound of earth. The man sits.

The man leans back. The man lets the earth take his weight.

The man is facing the sun. The sun is above the trees. The man feels the warmth. It is not yet mid-morning.

The man lets his head fall back. The man closes his eyes. The warmth comforts him. The man thought that nothing would ever comfort him again.

'Are you all right, sir?'

The man jerks. The man sits up. It is a woman's voice.

The man sees the woman. The woman is forty. The woman is perhaps a mother.

'Yes. Thank you,' the man says. 'I'm perfectly all right.'

The man stands. The woman hesitates. The woman doesn't look happy.

The woman turns. The woman walks away.

The woman has done what she felt obliged to do. The woman has done more than most.

The man walks away. The man is in the narrow High Street.

There are independent shops. There are branches of national chains.

The man remembers the street. The man doesn't remember being there.

The shops soon end. The man stands on the corner. The man hesitates.

The man thinks. The man tries to remember. The man struggles.

The name comes to the man. The man doesn't know how he retrieves it. The name comes from somewhere deep.

If you had asked the man any time in the last forty years what the name of the street where his mother's house used to stand was, the man would have laughed in your face. Why should the man remember a trivial thing like that?

The man was a very small boy at the time. Did the man even know when he was such a small boy that streets had names?

The man stops a middle-aged couple.

'Excuse me,' the man says.

The man speaks very politely.

'Can you tell me the way to Park Place?'

The middle-aged couple jump, as the people say, out of their skins.

The man looks up. The man sees the street sign on the wall. The street sign says, *'Park Place'*.

'Oh,' the man says. 'I'm sorry.'

The middle-aged couple are looking at the man. The middle-aged couple look quite disturbed.

The man is sure the middle-aged couple can tell he is ill. The middle-aged couple

probably think the man is bonkers.

The man has to get away. The man doesn't want to be looked at. The man doesn't want to get locked up.

'Excuse me,' the man says. The man hurries away.

## 14

The man crosses the street. The man's mother's house was on the left side as you walk up the hill. The man is no longer sure that his mother's house was ever there. But the man knows if his mother's house was there, it was on the left side of the street as you walk up the hill.

The man walks up the hill. The man walks on the left.

As the man walks his head is turned. The man scrutinises the houses.

The houses are a terrace. The man recognises the terrace. The man has no memory of ever having looked at these houses. But the man recognises what they are.

The vernacular architecture is not distinguished. The style belongs to the beginning of the twentieth century. It is uncommon now.

This is a bourgeois town. The relative rarity of the style gives it a certain charm.

The man comes to an end house. The man is half-way up the hill. The man does not recognise the end house. The man does not remember an end house being there.

The man stops. The man looks.

There is a footpath. The footpath is quite wide.

The man looks up the hill. There should have been a terrace. That should have been where the man's mother's house stood. That is what the man remembered.

The man was wrong. The consciousness of error is painful.

If the man is wrong he is delusional. If the man is delusional he is mad. If the man is mad the man will spend his life in bedsits.

The man will claim benefits. The man will take medication. The man will pass his days in reading rooms.

That is not what the man wants. The man would rather die.

The man turns his head again. The man does not know why.

The man looks at the path. The man does not know why it interests him.

The man walks along beside the side wall of the garden of the end house. The man walks slowly.

If the man was more relaxed we might say he was strolling. The man is not relaxed.

The man is hesitant. The man's gait is unsteady. The man is insecure.

The man comes to the end of the side wall.

The man's stomach contracts. Underneath the man's diaphragm there is a sharp pain. The skin of the man's face draws tight across his bones.

There is a lane. There is gravel. There is grass growing. It is exactly as the man remembers.

How can the man remember? If his mother's house was not there the man was not here to remember the lane.

Reality impinges slowly. This is the back lane.

The man's mother never called it that. The man's mother hated living in a terrace. The man's mother would have died if anyone had known that she lived in a terrace with a back lane.

*Survivor*

The man's mother's house was in a terrace. The terrace had a back lane.

Slowly the man understands. The man is standing on the back lane that ran behind the terrace where the man's mother lived.

The man's scalp prickles. The man's heart beats.

The man looks up the hill.

The man sees gardens. The man sees walls. The man sees fences. The man sees hedges.

The man keeps looking. The man sees houses. The houses are semi-detached.

The man sees extensions. The man sees mansards and lofts. The man sees fruit-trees.

The man even thinks he sees a swing.

The man sees roofs with different pitches. The man sees wooden window-frames. The man sees aluminium.

The man's jaw sags. The man's breathing is quite shallow. The man's heart pounds quite fiercely.

The man walks back to the road. The man looks up.

The upper half of the terrace has been demolished. These houses are post-war. These houses are sixties houses.

The man's mother's house has been demolished. That is why it is not there.

## 15

The man steps off. The man walks up the hill. The man isn't looking at the houses. The houses don't interest him anymore.

The houses end. The man starts. The man wasn't expecting this.

The man looks up. The man takes in what he sees. Over the brow of the hill is open country.

The town ends at the end of the street where his mother's house stood. The man had forgotten that.

The man looks around.

On the man's left there is a gate. The man notices. The gate takes up the man's attention.

It is a wooden gate. At one end of the gate there is an arrangement of posts and rails. The posts and rails are the two long sides of an isosceles triangle.

You can't open the gate completely. You push it as far as it goes. You enter the little space between the rails. Then you pull the gate as far as it goes the other way and you can leave.

It used to be a common enough arrangement on footpaths in the country. The man can't remember the name.

The man supposes it has a name. The man thinks it is very distinctive.

The man remembers two little boys coming to this place with their great-aunt.

The boys' great-aunt knows the way. The boys don't. The boys are excited.

*Survivor*

The man remembers a little boy slipping through. The little boy is on his own.

The man thinks about story books. The gate is like a door. The door leads to another world. The other world is magical .

The man dismisses the thought. The man is embarrassed.

If the man was well he would laugh. The man isn't well enough. The man doesn't laugh about anything.

The man goes through the gate. The man pushes the gate gently. The man slips in. The man pulls the gate back. The man does that equally gently.

The man slips through.

The man breathes deeply. The man does that a couple of times.

The man looks at the path in front of him. It is a dirt path. The path leads into the trees.

The man has a sense of wonder.

## 16

The path is narrow. There is undergrowth. Where the sunlight reaches there are wild grasses among the trees.

The path is not straight. The path was not laid out. The path was tramped. The path was beaten by the passage of many feet.

Twenty or thirty yards away the path disappears. The path twists. The path turns among the trees.

The man puts one foot in front of the other. Then the man puts the other foot in front of the first one.

The man walks away. The man walks unsteadily.

The proximity of the gate was protective. The man doesn't like to leave.

The gate is a talisman. The gate is the place between the worlds.

Underneath the canopy of the trees it is cool. Underneath the canopy of the trees it is dark. Underneath the canopy of the trees it is still.

The man hears birds. The man can't see them.

Down the hill in the town below the man the man hears traffic. The noise of the traffic is faint. The noise of the traffic is muffled by the trees. The noise of the traffic is muffled by the distance and by the buildings in between.

The man's heartbeat slows. The man's breathing becomes more regular.

The people are further away. The man has less to fear.

The man loses himself. The man sinks into the shadows among the trees. The man

is hidden from the world outside. The man is another shadow.

The man stops. There is something on the left. At first the man can't see it.

There is a bush. There is a little patch of bare earth. There is a small tree.

The man bends double. The man thinks, he shouldn't have to stoop so low.

The man shuffles forward in a crouch. The man is in the middle of a small space.

The man squats. The man squats in the middle of the patch of bare earth. The man thinks, this should be larger.

The man looks around.

The patch of bare earth is almost a circle. The patch of bare earth is magical. The patch of bare earth is protective.

The man looks at the tree. The tree is small. The tree is little more than a sapling. The man thinks, it should be bigger.

Cautiously, the man turns round. The man is still sick. The man's body hurts. The man's stomach is sore.

The man sits at the foot of the sapling. The man leans back. The stem of the sapling won't take the man's weight. The sapling is flexible. The sapling bends.

The man thinks, I have been here before.

The man thinks, I leaned against the trunk once before. The trunk took my weight.

The man is puzzled.

The hill slopes down behind the man. The man cannot sit. It takes the man too

much effort. The man cannot stay upright.

The man lies down. The man lies on his side. The man lies with his knees drawn up.

The man cannot get comfortable. The man extends one leg. The man puts out one elbow. The man rests on his elbow.

The man wants to vomit. The man retches. The retching is painful. The man lifts his head. On the bare earth there are the transparent husks of a few of the capsules that the man swallowed the night before.

The man thinks, I am going to die. The man still believes that.

# 17

The man lies on the bare earth. The man feels ill. The man loses track of time.

The man hears voices. The man stiffens. The man holds his breath.

The voices are on the path. They are the voices of adults. The adults are talking quietly. The adults are having a conversation.

The man can hear the voices. The man cannot make out the words

The man thinks there are two people. The man does not think there are more. The man thinks there is one man and one woman. A couple.

Feet pass. Through the leaves the man sees legs. The couple are walking quietly.

The couple do not see the man.

The man thinks, I am invisible. No-one knows I am here. No-one knows who I am.

The man listens. The voices fade. The man thinks the couple have reached the turn of the path. The man thinks they are going uphill.

The man sits up. The man crosses his legs. The man's joints are sore. The man's muscles are tight.

The man wonders how many other people will come. The man does not think he is safe.

The man hears a voice. The voice is just outside his head. The voice says, When the voices come.

There is a twinge of fear in the man's belly. The man thinks he has heard that

voice before. The man cannot remember when.

The man tries to think what it means. He does not understand.

The man hears the voice again. This time the voice says, When I've been bad.

The man's chest is tight. His breathing is shallow. What the voice says is what a child might say.

The man has a picture in his mind of a small boy running to the woods. Is that what the voice is trying to tell him? Why a young boy runs?

The man hears a voice again. This voice comes from the other side of his head. This voice comes from lower down. This voice says, When I'm a man I will stay out in the woods all night and then I will die.

The man feels cold. The chill floods the man's body. The man's jaw locks.

The man cannot believe that when he was a small boy he wanted to die. But it seems that he did.

The man is dazed. The man has a picture in his mind of the place where he is. The man imagines as much as he sees.

The branches move. A face erupts. The face is a man's. The face is unshaven.

Hello little boy, the face says.

The little boy jumps up. The little boy runs.

The little boy runs directly down the hill. The little boy turns his ankle. The little boy falls. The little boy cries out in pain.

Come back, little boy! the face calls. I won't hurt you!

The little boy picks himself up. The little boy's face is twisted in pain. The little boy hobbles off.

The face fades. The boy disappears.

The man is sitting on the bare earth. The man is sitting on the bare earth. The man is partially concealed by the leaves.

This is my den, the man thinks. The man had forgotten that he had a den. This is the place in the woods that I used to come when I was lonely and afraid.

The skin across the man's face is tight. The skin across the man's face is a mask. The man is trying to think why a boy that age should have been so afraid.

## 18

The man picks himself up. It is not easy. The man is still weak. The man is still ill.

The man stands. The man's legs tremble. The man looks around. The man cannot see far through the trees.

The man still thinks he is invisible. The man still feels protected.

The man stoops. The man pushes his way through the bushes. The man is standing on the path.

The man looks anxiously behind him. There is no-one coming.

The man looks up. The man can see nothing through the trees.

Somehow the man knows that the path doubles back on itself. The man does not remember how he knows that.

The man starts to walk. The man's legs are shaky.

The path crosses the slope of the hill. The path climbs slowly. You do not have to be fit to do this walk.

There is a bend. Above the bend there is a shelter. Inside the shelter there is a seat.

There are cigarette butts strewn around. There are empty cans of beer. It is a haunt of alcoholics.

The man stands. The man stares. The man knows this place.

The man remembers. The man doesn't know what it is he in fact remembers.

The man walks into the shelter. The man turns round. The man sits.

The man thinks, I have been here before.

An image comes into the man's mind. The man is a small boy. The man and his brother are with their great-aunt. Their great-aunt is taking the man and his brother somewhere.

The man's brother is dead. The man's brother shot himself. The man's brother shot himself several years ago. The man does not really know why.

You can't ask people why they kill themselves. You can't talk to people when they are dead.

The man sits. The man looks out. The man knows that beyond the trees, below the hill, is the town.

The man's chest becomes tight. There is a pain in the man's belly. The skin of the man's face is stretched over the bones.

The image of the man's brother and their great-aunt fades. The man gets up. His knees shake.

The man turns. The man walks on up the path.

## 19

The trees come to an end. The man is startled.

The trees end in a line along the brow of the hill. In front of the man there is a lawn. The grass is trimmed. The lawn is cared for.

The man stares. This is a municipal park. This is not a wild wood.

On the other side of the lawn there is a belt of trees. The man walks out.

The man hurries. The man doesn't want to be noticed.

The man heads for the trees.

When the man reaches the trees he flops down. The man leans on his elbows. The man looks out.

The man can survey the open space. The man can see who comes.

The man would like to sleep. The man is exhausted. The man knows he can't sleep. The man is too tired.

People come.

People stroll. People walk dogs.

The people don't look at the man. The man thinks he is invisible.

The sun goes down. There are fewer people.

It is not dark yet. The man is still not sure that no-one will come.

It is the end of another day. The man is still not dead.

The man is thirsty. The man's throat is dry. The man's mouth is dry.

The man wants to feel cold water in his belly.

The man waits. The man waits till dark.

## 20

The man waits.

There are no more strollers. There are no more dog walkers.

The man feels more safe.

The man walks across the lawn. At the other side of the lawn there are benches.

The benches face out. They face over the town.

The man chooses a bench. The man knows which bench he wants to sit on. The man doesn't know why.

The man sits. The man looks at the night.

The man sees the roofs of the town. The man sees the houses.

The moon is rising. There is enough light.

The man can pick out the houses.

The man thinks, I have been here before.

There is an image.

The man is a little boy. The little boy sits with his great-aunt and his brother. They are sitting on the bench that the man is sitting on now.

The boys' great-aunt takes them out. The boys' mother doesn't. The boys don't know why.

The man knows what this place is called. It is called Coronation Park.

The man is startled that he remembers. The man didn't know he had forgotten.

The man didn't remember this place. The man didn't know it had a name.

The Park was named for the new queen. The boy was small then. The man feels old.

The man is thirsty.

The man thinks, there must be water. This is the country. This is not the town. In the country there is always water.

The man gets up. The man's legs tremble. The man waits.

The man is steady on his feet. The man walks away.

Back across the lawn and further up there is a dark shape. The man heads towards it. The man doesn't know why he is going there. The man just goes.

There is a building. There is a wire fence. The wire is too close to get through. The wire is too tall to get over. The fence is too high to climb.

The building is concrete. There are no windows. It is a single storey.

The man can hear water. The man can hear water running.

The man understands. This is a pumping station. The pumping station supplies the town.

The man thinks, I have been here before.

There is water there. The man can't get it. The water might as well be underground.

The man has an image of a little boy. The boy is in the same place. The boy is doing the same thing.

The man looks around. The man sees a house. There is a hedge. The house has a

garden.

There is a light in one window. There is a radio playing quietly. The man approaches.

In the garden there is a standpipe. There is a tap. The man can get water.

The man glances at the house. The man hesitates.

The man walks away.

The man isn't scared of the night. The man is scared of people.

I have done that before, the man thinks.

I have been here. I saw the house. I thought about the people. I was afraid. I walked away.

The man sees a fence. The man sees a field.

The fence is wire. The fence is high enough and strong enough to keep the cattle in. The fence is not high enough to keep the man out.

The man holds onto the fence post. The man climbs over.

The man sees what he is looking for. The man sees a horse trough.

How did I know that was there? the man thinks.

The man sees a rubber hose. The hose hangs over the edge of trough. The man thinks, they use the hose to fill the trough. The water will be fresh.

The man walks up to the horse trough. The man looks down.

The surface of the water is covered with green slime.

The man is disgusted. The man is disappointed

The man turns away.

I have done this before, the man thinks.

I saw the slime. I felt disgusted. I was disappointed. I turned away.

The man looks back the way he came.

The man looks towards the trees.

## 21

The man walks through the woods. He follows the path.

The woods are dark. They are not so dark the man cannot see the way.

The man likes the darkness. The man likes the woods.

The man is surrounded. The man feels protected. The man has nothing to fear.

The woods go on. The man cannot believe how far the path continues. The man cannot believe how big the wood is.

The man feels cold. The man has only his sweatshirt. The man left his jacket in the car.

It is early September. The nights already are cold.

The woods end. The man is standing on the brow of a hill. The woods slope down.

There is a road. Alongside the road there is a hedge. Beyond the hedge there is a stream.

The man knows this place. The man doesn't remember. The man doesn't understand how he recognises it.

The man walks down to the road. There is no traffic. The man looks up and down. There is an isolated house. There are lights.

The man crosses the road. The man finds a gap in the hedge. The man knows where to go.

The man kneels down. From close the man can hear the water running.

The man puts his hand in the stream. The man scoops up a mouthful. The man drinks.

That is all the man wants. The man is surprised he doesn't want more.

The man's mouth is not dry. There is something in the man's stomach.

That is all he wanted.

The man hears a voice. The voice says, 'I drank a cup of water in my hand.'

The man is shocked. It is the voice of a four year old.

The man thinks, I have been here before.

I did the same thing. That is how old I was. That is what I said.

The man walks along the stream. The man knows where he is going.

The man has been here before. The man can't remember.

The going is fairly level. Sometimes the man has to be careful about his footing.

The man reaches the bend in the stream. There is more space between the river and the hedge.

The man squats. The man peers through the hedge.

The man thinks he will have to be careful. The hedge gives some cover. The hedge doesn't give complete cover from view.

The people in the house might see him.

The man lies down. The man is cold. The man feels it more when he stops moving.

The man is ashamed of himself. The man thinks he should be tougher than that.

The man looks around.

There are broken branches lying among the bushes. The branches are bleached white. The man thinks they have been washed up in a flood.

There are tufts of grass.

The man gathers up the detritus of the vegetation. The man tries to cover himself. There isn't enough.

The man hears a voice. The voice says, 'Feathers.'

The man is shocked. He doesn't know what that means.

The man has an image. A small boy is standing in the front garden of his grandmother's house. The small boy points at the bracken.

'Those are the feathers,' the small boy says.

The small boy's grandmother laughs at him.

The man looks up at the moon. The sky is clear. There are not many clouds.

The man hears a voice. 'Is that where you go when you're dead?'

The man is shocked.

The man is suicidal now. The man contemplates the possibility of a suicidal four year old boy.

The man finds that possibility quite difficult.

## 22

The man hears voices. The man turns his head. There are lights.

People are leaving the house the other side of the hedge. The man stays very still.

A car door slams. The engine starts. The people go.

It is cold. The man has only his sweatshirt. The man cannot get warm.

The man thinks. The man reaches a conclusion. The man knows that he has to go.

The man gets up. The man's knees shake. The man steadies himself.

The man is about to walk along the hedge by the stream. The man looks around.

The man sees a gap in the hedge nearby. The gap will do perfectly well.

The man turns. As he turns he has an image of a little boy. The little boy is trotting back along the river bank.

The man slips through the hedge. The man stands for a moment. Then the man walks off along the road.

The man knows where to go. The man knows the town is back there. The man doesn't know how he knows. The man just knows.

The man wants to get back to his car. The man wants to put his jacket on. The man wants to leave. The man has been in this town too long.

The man thinks the corner shops will open soon. The man wants to buy something. The man wants something to eat and drink.

As the man walks he sees a little boy. The little boy is walking along the same road that the man is walking along now.

There is a man walking with the little boy. The man is the little boy's father. This is a shock.

The little boy is holding his father's hand. That is also a shock, or perhaps a surprise. The man has no conscious memories of his father - or his mother, for that matter - ever holding his hand when he was a little boy.

The little boy is worried. The little boy looks up at his father. The little boy's father doesn't take any notice.

'This is the wrong way,' the little boy says.

His father ignores him.

We have the impression that the little boy's father often ignores the little boy. We also have the impression that the little boy doesn't like it. And we think the little boy doesn't know what to do.

'We need to go back,' the little boy says. The little boy sounds really worried.

'We need to go back through the woods.'

The little boy's father's face works. The little boy's father's expression is clouded. The little boy's father still doesn't look at the little boy.

'You went the wrong way,' the boy's father pronounces. The boy's father is like a judge passing sentence. The boy's father is a very pompous man.

'You went the long way round.'

To the boy's father this is a fact. The boy's father finds the evidence he has just given conclusive.

*Survivor*

The boy stares. The boy hangs his head. The boy doesn't let go of his father's hand.

The boy is crushed.

## 23

The man reaches the town. The town is dark. There is no-one around.

The man thinks. The man looks around. The man understands where he is. If the man walks a couple of hundred yards he will find the back lane to his mother's house.

The man has an image.

A little boy is running down the back lane. The little boy looks upset.

It is already dark. The little boy shouldn't have stayed out so long.

The little boy turns into the back yard of his mother's house. The little boy's mother hates it when people call it the back yard. Only plebs have houses with back yards.

The little boy runs up to the door. The little boy grabs the handle. The little boy twists. The little boy pulls.

Nothing happens. The little boy pulls again. The door is locked.

The little boy doesn't let go of the handle. The little boy starts to kick.

Above the little boy's head a window flies up. The little boy's mother leans out.

The little boy's mother's hair is wild.

'Stop kicking the door!' the little boy's mother yells.

The little boy is shocked. The little boy does just that.

'You can sleep in the coal shed.'

The little boy's mother slams the window down.

The little boy stares. The little boy trudges over to a shed with a wooden door.

*Survivor*

The little boy opens the door. The little boy looks inside.

The little boy sees a heap of coal.

The little boy stares at the heap of coal. Then the little boy closes the door.

The little boy walks away. The little boy walks out of the back gate of the yard.

The little boy turns. The little boy walks up the back lane.

The little boy walks back to the woods.

## 24

The little boy hears his parents' voices. His parents are quarrelling.

The little boy walks in the back door of the kitchen. The little boy doesn't know he has a leaf in his hair. There are bits of dried grass stuck to the little boy's jumper.

The little boy's parents see him. The little boy's parents stop shouting. The little boy's parents look at him.

The little boy's father's jaw falls. The little boy's father's mouth makes a round O. The little boy's mother covers her mouth with her hand.

'Where have you been?' the little boy's father cries.

The little boy knows that tone. The little boy is in trouble.

'In the woods,' the little boy says shortly. The little boy sounds sulky.

'In the woods?' his father cries. 'What were you doing in the woods?'

The little boy looks sideways at this mother.

'She locked me out,' the little boy says. The little boy is still being short. The little boy still sounds grumpy.

The little boy's mother drops her hand. The little boy's mother turns to her husband. The little boy's mother appeals to him.

'I didn't!' the little boy's shrieks. 'I didn't! Tell him I didn't!'

The little boy's mother is like a little girl. The little boy's mother thinks she is in trouble too.

The little boy's father doesn't respond. We begin to suspect that this man is good

at not responding.

'I want my tea,' the little boy says.

The woman folds her arms on the table. The woman looks at the little boy.

The woman has an opportunity to assert maternal authority. The woman feels more comfortable. The woman is on familiar ground.

'I want my tea!' the little boy insists. The little boy is getting very upset.

The little boy's father intervenes.

'What do you want for your tea?' the little boy's father asks.

'Boiled egg and soldiers,' the little boy says.

One tear falls. The tear runs down the little boy's cheek.

The woman's mouth opens. The woman turns to her husband. The woman is about to speak.

The woman's husband stares at her. The woman freezes.

The woman remains silent. The woman looks at the boy.

While we cannot identify specific evidence for our view, we are convinced her expression is malevolent.

## 25

'Where did you sleep?'

'I slept in the woods.'

'You didn't sleep in the woods!'

'I did! I did! I slept by the river.'

'There isn't a river in the woods!'

'There is! There is! I'll show you!'

The man hesitates. The little boy takes his hand. The little boy leads his father out.

The little boy pushes open the gate to the woods. The little boy is confident.

The man's face clouds over. The man's mouth works.

The man looks at the gate. The man looks at the little boy.

The man isn't happy. The little boy knows his way around.

The man doesn't ask. If the man asked, he might get an answer. If the man got an answer, he might have to do something. The man wouldn't like that.

The boy marches on through the woods. The boy leads his father by the hand.

Oddly the boy looks happy.

'You didn't come all this way!' the boy's father says.

'I did! I did!' the boy counters. 'I'll show you!'

The little boy and his father come to the brow of the hill. The little boy and his father are at the top of the slope. The road is below them.

On the other side of the road is the hedge. Beyond the hedge is the stream.

'Look!' says the little boy in triumph. 'There it is!'

The little boy turns proudly to his father.

The little boy's father doesn't look at the little boy. The little boy's father's mouth works. The little boy's father's face clouds over.

'Oh no,' the little boy's father says. 'That stream isn't in the woods. It's on the wrong side of the road.'

The little boy's father can't bear to be wrong.

The little boy is crushed.

## 26

The man drives. There is no-one else on the road. The man is not well. The man should not be driving.

The man feels good that the roads are empty. The man does not feel good about driving in the dark.

The mist comes down. This is moorland country. It is very near the sea.

The mist wafts across the road. The man slows down.

The mist gets thicker. The man can barely see the verge. The man does not know if there is other traffic.

The mist swirls. Beside the road there is barren moor. The man pulls off. Underneath the car there is a bump.

The man brakes. The man stops beside the road.

The man switches off the engine. The man waits.

The mist gets thinner. There is thin light.

The man has managed to park at a crossroads. There is a sign.

The man stares. The man reads the sign. The man recognises the names of the towns.

The man has been driving the wrong way.

The man has been heading towards the china clay country. The man doesn't know why.

## 27

The man parks up the rental car. The car park isn't full. It is not the season.

The man walks towards the wall. The man looks sideways. The man looks at the granite wall of the workshop that has been turned into a museum.

A full length window has been let into the wall. The man sees the tables and the counter of the museum cafe. The man sees the rotating stands of cards and books and the shelves of souvenirs.

The man thinks the souvenirs are kitsch. The man is very certain of that even though the man can't see the souvenirs clearly from where he is in the car park. The man is a snob in some ways.

The man stands at the wall. The man looks down at the clay pit.

The clay pit is full of standing water. Most of the clay pits are full of water. The man wonders how deep it is.

The man looks to the left. The clay pit is close to the road. There is no rising bank. The man expects one.

The man looks to the right. The flanks of the spoil heap have been deeply channelled by the rain. The flanks of the spoil heap are grey. They are bare.

The man thinks, The spoil heap is too close to the water. And it is too low. It should be higher.

*This isn't the place,* the man thinks. The intuition is very strong. It is very clear.

*Survivor*

The man turns towards the museum. The man is going to the cafe.

If this isn't the place, the man thinks, the place is somewhere. It exists.

# III

## 28

The man is unshaven. The man is in a leather jacket and jeans. All the other customers are in suits. The other customers haven't loosened their ties.

The other customers talk loud. Then the other customers talk louder to be heard over each other.

The manager sees him. The manager moves to stop him. The manager doesn't want people like that coming in.

The man's boss says something. The manager isn't happy. The man's boss insists. The manager indicates a table at the side.

The man and his boss sit. The man's boss orders beer.

'Are your parents local?' the man's boss asks.

'It's my mother that's dead,' the man replies.

The man sees the shock on his boss's face. The man gets up.

The man runs.

## 29

The man sees a building. The man sees light. The light that the man sees is fire.

The man sees the fire in the space where the windows should be. The man does not see the windows. The windows have long gone.

The spaces for the windows are rectangular. The spaces for the windows are symmetrical. The spaces for the windows are aligned.

The light is yellow. The light does not flicker. The fire must be well alight. The light fills the space from which the windows have gone.

The walls of the building are thick. The windows are deep.

The walls are stone. The stone is hard. The stone is dark. The stone is grey.

The building is tall. The building stands against the night. The building stands on the moor in the darkness.

The building has no roof. The building is an eyeless skeleton.

Behind the building is the brow of the hill. The brow of the hill is not far. The outline of the building rises above the brow of the hill.

The brow of the hill is the horizon.

There is a path. The path is not made up. The path has been made by people walking. The path is like a goat track. The path leads to the building.

The building is abandoned. The building is supposed to be empty. No-one works in the building any more.

The man knows that something is happening. The man doesn't know what.

*Survivor*

The man thinks he has been to the building before. The man doesn't like that idea.

The image fades. The man is still there. The man doesn't know what to do.

The man is disturbed.

## 30

The office is small. There are two desks. The desks are at right angles. There is just room to slip between them. The carpet is worn. The paint is faded.

At the other desk sits a youth with bad acne. The youth with bad acne is working on an Apple IIe.

The youth turns his head. The youth looks directly at the man. The youth opens his mouth.

The man sees the tip of the youth's tongue move. The man sees the youth's lips opening and shutting.

The man cannot understand what the youth is saying. The noise in the man's head is too loud.

The youth waits. The youth turns back to the screen of his IIe.

Slowly the man pushes back his chair. The man does it very carefully. The man doesn't want anything to go wrong.

Slowly the man gets up. The man is unsteady. The man doesn't want to fall.

The man's legs tremble. There is a ringing in his ears.

Carefully the man moves out from behind the desk. The man watches the corner. The man could collide with the corner. The man could hurt himself.

The man walks out. The youth looks up.

The man stares. The youth's mouth moves. The man nods.

When he closes the door behind himself it is all the man can do not to run down

the stairs.

## 31

The man stalks through the City. The man could not walk any faster.

The man cannot wait for a bus. Waiting takes too long. It is quicker to walk.

The man is heedless of the crowds. The man is careless of his leather jacket and his stubble and his faded jeans. The man doesn't care what the crowds think.

The man walks down a narrow street. The narrow street runs down beside the Mansion House.

The man feels something from the left. The man feels evil. The man turns his head.

The evil is emanating from a basement. The evil is powerful. The man feels its power.

The man puts out his hand. The index and little fingers of his hand are extended. The man is making the sign of the Horns. The sign is apotropaic. The Horns ward off evil.

The man thinks, it could be a Roman temple. Maybe they made sacrifices.

The man stalks on.

Across the road there is a church. The facade is a sort of neo-Classical. This is the City, after all.

The man crosses the road. The man tries the door. The door is open. The man goes in.

There are voices. The voices are in the gallery.

The voices are two men. The men are having a conversation. The men speak educated English.

The man finds a pew. The man kneels down. The man tries to pray.

The man has to force open his throat. The man's throat is sore.

'Hail Mary,' the man says. 'Blessed art thou among women.'

The man can't remember the rest.

The voices stop. The silence is listening.

This is an Anglican church, the man thinks.

The man flees.

The man leaves the City. The man is in the working-class quarter where he lives.

The man's origins are not working-class, but this working-class quarter is the district where he lives.

There is poverty. There is dirt. The buildings are run down.

There is an auto-mechanic's building with the shutter up. There is a second-hand furniture shop. There is a salt beef bar.

There are Peabody buildings. There are 60s tower blocks.

By the roundabout there is a church. It is the man's parish church.

The man thinks about the church. The man supposes, I would have known it was my parish church if I had thought about it. The man didn't think.

The man tries the door. The door is locked. This is a high crime area.

The man stands outside the locked door. The man stands with his back to the

church.

A black cloud falls over the man. The black cloud enters the man's body. The black cloud fills the man's body. The black cloud reaches everywhere.

The man's knees are shaking. The man has to go somewhere. The man can't stay here. What if the people from the church find him standing outside? What will he say?

The man's head turns. The man's head turns slightly. The man's head turns from side to side.

The man is seeking. The man is scenting. The man is a hunting dog.

The man scents home. The man goes.

## 32

The man sits with his back to the wall. The man sits between the end of the single bed and the door. It is a small place. It is a small room.

On the opposite wall there are iron brackets slotted into a rail. The rail is screwed to the wall. On the brackets there are unvarnished planks. On the planks there are books.

The man is a reader.

On the end of one of the planks there is a small yellow statue of a seated Buddha. The statue is an ornament from a petty-bourgeois living room. The statue is kitsch.

This is where the man sits when he wants to meditate. The man is not meditating now. The man is struggling to breathe.

The man sees. The man does not see what he is looking at. The man sees an image in his mind.

The man sees a room. The room has high ceiling. There are pipes. The ceiling is painted yellow. The walls are painted green. The room is ugly.

There are iron cots. There are children in pyjamas.

One boy is out of bed. The boy is sitting on a wooden engine. The engine has a funnel and a cab. The boy pushes the engine along with his feet. The boy is laughing. The boy is having fun.

A little boy lies back on the pillow in his cot. The little boy is in the cot next to the door.

The little boy in the cot cannot sit up. The little boy in the cot is too weak.

*Survivor*

The little boy smiles. The little boy likes watching the boy playing on the engine.

The little boy cannot laugh. The little boy's throat hurts too much.

A pretty young woman marches in. The pretty young woman is wearing blue and white. The young woman has a watch pinned to her dress.

The pretty young woman shouts at the boy playing on the engine. The young woman wants him to go back to bed.

The little boy lying in the cot is upset. The little boy doesn't like the young woman shouting.

The young woman is a nurse. The room is a hospital ward. The little boy has been left here.

## 33

The little boy in the cot next to the door wakes. The boy in the next cot does not wake.

The boy in the next cot does not move.

There are grown-ups. The grown-ups stand around the next cot. The grown-ups are the parents of the boy. The parents of the boy in the next cot are worried.

The little boy in the cot next to the door thinks his friend is dead.

The little boy in the cot next to the door knows they take the children away in the night. The little boy doesn't know what they do to the children.

The little boy is frightened.

## 34

It is night. The lights in the ward are dim. There are lights in the corridor. The door to the ward is open. The staff come and go as they please.

Outside the ward in the hospital there are sounds. In the corridor there are voices.

The little boy in the cot near the door is sleeping fitfully. The little boy is not well.

A woman comes into the ward. The woman is dressed in blue and white.

The woman is tall. The woman is not young. The woman is not pretty.

The woman stands by the little boy's cot. The woman smiles.

The little boy tries to smile back. Smiling is difficult. The little boy is in too much pain.

The tall woman rests one hand on the side of the little boy's cot. In her other hand the tall woman is holding a teaspoon.

'I've got some jam for you,' the tall woman says.

'No, thank you,' the little boy replies. 'I don't like jam.'

The little boy is being very polite.

The tall woman's smile disappears. The tall woman hits her hand on the side of the cot. The tall woman's wedding ring rattles on the metal frame.

'Eat the jam!' the tall woman shouts.

The little boy is hurt. The little boy opens his mouth. The tall woman inserts the spoon. The little boy closes his mouth. The little boy does his best to swallow. It is painful.

*Survivor*

The tall woman turns her back. The little boy lies back on his pillow. The tall woman walks out.

The little boy feels the jam going down his throat. The jam feels slimy. The jam tastes bitter.

The little boy is afraid.

## 35

The little boy wakes. It is night.

The boy is not in the cot in the hospital ward. The boy is not in his bed at home.

There is a wall. The wall is chocolate brown. The brown goes half-way up. Then the wall is cream. These are ugly colours.

The boy would not say that the colours are ugly. Conceptually and linguistically that is too sophisticated for him.

The boy might be able to say he doesn't like the colours. The little boy might say that if you prompted him.

The boy is lying on something. It is firm. It is narrow. It is high.

Something covers the boy. The boy thinks it is a sheet.

There is a man standing near. The man is not looking at the boy. The man is talking. The boy thinks that the man does not know the boy is there.

The boy cannot move. The boy knows he cannot speak. The boy does not even try.

The man is talking. The man is talking to another man.

The boy thinks they are arguing. The boy can hear their voices. The boy can't understand the words.

The men stop. The men take hold of the thing the boy is lying on. The men move. The thing moves. The boy moves with them.

The thing moves slowly and silently. The thing has rubber wheels.

## 36

The little boy is lying on his back. The little boy is lying on something hard.

There are lights. There are people.

The little boy is not in the corridor any more. The little boy is in a big room.

The little boy wants to know where he is. The little boy tries to turn his head. The little boy's head won't move.

The little boy tries to sit up. The little boy can't sit up either. The little boy starts to panic.

The little boy can move his eyes. The little boy can see.

The little boy rolls his eyes around. The little boy sees a man.

The man is standing at the end of the hard thing the little boy is lying on. The hard thing is white. The hard thing is not covered.

The standing man is wearing a white coat. There is a white cloth under the standing man's chin. The white cloth is hanging.

There are other people. The other people are not interested in the little boy. The other people are talking to each other.

The little boy tries to open his mouth. The little boy wants to speak. The little boy wants to say something.

The little boy can't say anything.

The little boy moves one foot.

It is the only thing the little boy can do. It is the only way the little boy can attract

attention.

The little boy is awake. The little boy wants to tell them. The little boy wants them to notice.

The standing man sees. The standing man smiles. The standing man clearly has a soft spot for cute children.

We surmise that perhaps this member of the team has children of his own.

The standing man takes hold of the little boy's ankles. The standing man holds the little boy's ankles still. The standing man holds the little boy's ankles gently.

The little boy goes away. The little boy passes out.

**37**

The little boy wakes. At the foot of the hard thing the little boy is lying on there are lights.

There are many lights. The lights are all pointing in the same direction.

The lights are all pointing at the little boy. The lights are very bright. The lights are shining in the little boy's eyes.

Beyond the lights there is darkness. The darkness is black.

Out of the darkness comes a hand. The hand is holding a scissors. On the ends of the scissors there are hooks. The hooks on the end of the scissors face each other.

The little boy sees a face. The face is wearing a white mask. The little boy can only see the eyes.

The little boy tries to open his mouth. The little boy wants to scream.

The little boy can't scream.

The scissors go into the little boy's mouth. The scissors close.

The scissors close on the living flesh. The scissors tighten. The scissors cut.

There is only pain. The pain overwhelms the boy.

The little boy goes away. The little boy passes out.

Before the little boy passes out he knows what they have done. They have cut out his tongue.

They don't want him to talk. They don't want him to tell anyone what happened on the moor.

## 38

The little boy wakes.

The people are standing at the end of the hard thing. The little boy can see the people. The people are not looking at the little boy.

There is another man in a white coat. The man in the white coat is holding something. The man in the white coat is holding it between his fingers and his thumbs. The man in the white coat is holding it up.

The others are standing around. The others wear white coats. The others have unbuttoned their white coats. Their white coats are hanging loose.

The man in the white coat talks. The man in the white coat points to what he is holding in his hand.

The others listen to the man in the white coat. The others look at what he is holding in his hand.

We surmise that this is a teaching hospital and that students have been present during the operation. We suppose that the consultant surgeon is now lecturing on some aspect, perhaps the morbidity, of the tissues that have just been surgically removed.

The little boy watches. The little boy tries to see what the man in the white coat is holding in his hand. The little boy wants to understand why the man is talking about it.

The little boy is angry.

The little boy swings himself up from the hips. We don't know how he does this. We don't know how he finds the strength.

The little boy reaches out.

The man in the white coat turns round. His jaw drops. His mouth is a round O.

The little boy grabs the man's arm.

'Give it back!' shouts the little boy. 'Give it back! It's mine!'

The little boy lowers his head. The little boy takes the man's hand between his teeth.

The little boy bites.

Hands take the little boy's shoulders. Hands take the little boy from behind.

Hands hold the little boy back.

The face of the man in the white coat is stretched wide in horror. He holds up his hand.

**39**

Someone is screaming. Someone keeps screaming. Someone doesn't stop.

The little boy is rolling his head from side to side. The little boy wants to bang his head on the hard thing he is lying on.

The screaming fills the whole of the room. The ceiling is high. The room is large.

Young men and women stand with their backs to the window. The young men and women's white coats hang open. The young men and women's eyes are round. The young men and women's faces are white.

The man in the white coat holds his hand up. The man in the white coat's mouth is drawn back in pain.

Someone fusses around the man in the white coat.

Two hands hold the boy's head. Two hands hold the boy's head firmly. They hold the boy's head gently.

The hands lower the boy's head. They lower the boy's head towards the hard thing the little boy is lying on.

The little boy goes away. The little boy passes out.

The last thing the little boy knows about before he passes out are the screams that fill the room.

The last thing the little boy understands is that the voice that is screaming is his own.

## 40

The little boy wakes. The little boy is in his cot.

The little boy is lying on his front. One of the little boy's knees is drawn up. The little boy's arm on the other side is flung up on the pillow above his head.

The little boy has managed to push his arm through the neck of his hospital gown. The little boy was not wearing a hospital gown when the nurse gave him the jam.

The little boy is not sufficiently mature or well-informed to recognise that he is in the recovery position. The little boy is therefore not capable of deducing that the nursing staff put him in this position when they brought him back from the theatre.

The little boy opens his eyes. There are two women standing by the side of the cot. The two women wear blue and white.

'Like a little animal,' one of the women says.

The little boy misses the warmth. The little boy also fails to grasp the difference between similarity and identity. The little boy is upset.

The little boy lifts his head.

'Not a little animal!' he croaks.

The women flee. We notice that the women are young.

The little boy's head falls back down on the pillow.

The little boy goes away again.

## 41

The little boy is sitting on the edge of the cot. The little boy's father is sitting opposite him.

'Where's mummy?' the little boy says.

'Mummy has to look after the baby,' the little boy's father says. The little boy's father doesn't look the little boy in the eye.

The little boy's father is holding a blanket. The little boy's father holds the blanket up. The little boy's father wants to put the blanket around the little boy's shoulders.

'Don't want a blanket,' the little boy grumbles. The little boy is clearly unhappy.

The little boy pushes his father's arm.

The little boy's father sighs. The little boy's father's face looks angry. The little boy's father lifts his arm over the little boy's head. The little boy's father puts the blanket round the little boy.

The little boy just sulks.

## 42

The boy's father stands outside the lift. The little boy's father is holding the little boy in his arms. The little boy is wrapped in a blanket.

The little boy hears the whirring of the lift motor. The little boy hears the humming of the cables.

The little boy understands where he is.

'Don't want to go in the lift!' the little boy protests.

'You always go in the lift!' the little boy's father tells him. The little boy's father is quite shocked.

'Don't want to,' the little boy grumbles. The little boy is thoroughly miserable.

## 43

The little boy and his father are walking down the stairs. The little boy can feel his father's feet as he steps from stair to stair.

The stairs keep turning. The stairs go on. Every time the little boy thinks the stairs are over the stairs start again.

The little boy's father peers over the little boy. The little boy's father peers at his feet. The little boy's father watches where he puts his feet. The little boy's father is not very steady.

The little boy's father sighs. The little boy hears. The little boy understands.

The little boy is heavy. The little boy's father does not want to carry him.

The little boy's father is angry. The little boy has done something bad.

A black cloud comes down. A black cloud covers the boy. The black cloud enters his body.

The little boy disappears into the blackness.

The little boy goes away.

## 44

The man parks up the rental car. The car park isn't full. It isn't yet the season.

The man walks towards the wall. The man looks sideways. The man looks at the granite wall of the workshop that has been turned into a museum.

A full length window has been let into the wall. The man sees the tables and the counter of the museum cafe. The man sees the rotating stands of cards and books and the shelves of souvenirs.

The man thinks the souvenirs are kitsch. The man is very certain of that even though the man can't see the souvenirs clearly from where he is in the car park. The man is a snob in some ways.

The man stands at the wall. The man looks down at the clay pit.

The clay pit is full of standing water. Most of the clay pits are full of water. The man wonders how deep it is.

The man looks to the left. The clay pit is close to the road. There is no rising bank. The man expects one.

The man looks to the right. The flanks of the spoil heap have been deeply channelled by the rain. The flanks of the spoil heap are grey. They are bare.

The man thinks, The spoil heap is too close to the water. And it is too low. It should be higher.

*<i>This isn't the place,</i>* the man thinks. The intuition is very strong. It is very clear.

*Survivor*

The man turns towards the museum. The man is going to the cafe.

If this isn't the place, the man thinks, the place is somewhere. It exists.

# IV

## 45

The man has packets of painkillers. The man has a sharp knife. The man has a black plastic bag.

The man has a plastic bowl by the mattress. The man has the plastic bowl in case he vomits.

The man is quite concerned about making a mess. The man does not think that other people should clear up his mess.

The man knows that if he just takes the pills he won't die. The man has tried that before.

The man takes the pills. The man gags. The man forces himself. Before he has taken all the pills the man is losing consciousness.

The man picks up the knife. The man places the blade to his vein. The man presses. The man gasps. The man bites his lip.

There is no blood. The man puts the knife down.

The man picks up the plastic bag. The man feels the heat of the summer night. It will be stifling under the bag. The man doesn't know how long it will take for death to come.

The man puts down the bag. The man lies down. The man rolls onto his side.

The man sleeps.

## 46

The man sees a building. The man sees light. The light that the man sees is fire.

The man sees the fire in the space where the windows should be. The man does not see the windows. The windows have long gone.

The spaces for the windows are rectangular. The spaces for the windows are symmetrical. The spaces for the windows are aligned.

The light is yellow. The light does not flicker. The fire must be well alight. The light fills the space from which the windows have gone.

The walls of the building are thick. The windows are deep.

The walls are stone. The stone is hard. The stone is dark. The stone is grey.

The building is tall. The building stands against the night. The building stands on the moor in the darkness.

The building has no roof. The building is an eyeless skeleton.

Behind the building is the brow of the hill. The brow of the hill is not far. The outline of the building rises above the brow of the hill.

The brow of the hill is the horizon.

There is a path. The path is not made up. The path has been made by people walking. The path is like a goat track. The path leads to the building.

The building is abandoned. The building is supposed to be empty. No-one works in the building any more.

The man knows that something is happening. The man doesn't know what.

*Survivor*

The man thinks he has been to the building before. The man doesn't like that idea.

The image fades. The man is still there. The man doesn't know what to do.

The man is disturbed.

**47**

There is a forearm. The forearm is small. The forearm is that of a child under five. The child is male. The fact that the child is male would not however be obvious from an objective examination of the disembodied limb.

The forearm moves. The forearm moves backwards and forwards in space.

The forearm is rubbing. The forearm is rubbing against the forearm of another child. The child in this case is female.

We infer, as much as realise, that the children are sitting side by side. The children are turned in the same direction. They can't look away.

The rubbing is compulsive. The rubbing doesn't stop. The rubbing doesn't look as if it can stop.

We wonder about the rubbing. What purpose does it serve? A sense of contact? Reassurance? It really is not clear.

There is an arm. The arm is curved. The arm is around the shoulders of a male child. This child is smaller.

The embrace is protective.

We cannot see what the children see. They cannot process what they are looking at.

We look. We look more closely.

The children are sitting on a floor. There are other children. They sit in a sort of ragged circle. All the children look towards the same central spot. Some of the children

cry. One of the children hammers his feet against the dirt floor.

We notice something that in most contexts would be abnormal, or at least unusual. All the children are naked. They do not have any clothes.

## 48

There are grown-ups. In the shadows and the smoke the grown-ups sit with their backs against the granite blocks of the wall. The faces of the grown-ups are not clearly visible. The grown-ups would be difficult to identify.

The light flickers. The wood smoke billows. It hangs low.

Some of the grown-ups cough.

The boy is standing. The boy's mother puts out her hand. The boy's mother smooths his hair.

The boy is angry. The boy puts up his arm. The boy knocks his mother's hand away.

The woman looks at the boy. The woman's lip curls. There is no warmth in the woman's face.

The woman turns. The woman puts her hand down beside her. The woman fishes for something.

The woman turns back to the boy. In her hand the woman holds a powder compact.

We notice that the presence of a powder compact helps very roughly to date this episode.

The woman opens the powder compact. Inside the lid of the compact there is a mirror.

The woman puts the mirror in front of the boy's face. The boy ignores the woman.

'Look at it,' the woman says. The boy looks at the woman. The boy is puzzled.

'Look in the mirror,' the woman says. The woman's tone is encouraging.

The boy looks.

In the mirror the boy's eyes are sunken. The boy's eyes are in black pits.

In the mirror the boy's hair stands straight up. The boy's hair stands on end.

The boy stares. The boy has never seen anything like it.

The woman smiles. There is still no warmth. The boy does not notice that the woman is smiling.

**49**

In the office of a literary quarterly a young man sits at a table. The young man is leafing through a magazine. The young man is bored.

On a page of the magazine there is a small black and white photograph. The photograph is no wider than one column.

The photograph shows a Chinese man. The Chinese man is tied to a post. The Chinese man's eyes are sunken. The Chinese man's hair is standing right up.

The caption explains that the Chinese man is being subjected to the Death of a Thousand Cuts. The Chinese man has been dosed with opium to prolong his agony.

The caption describes the phenomenon of the man's hair standing up on end as 'horripilation'. It is an unforgettable term.

The young man stares. The young man thinks he has never seen anything like it. The young man does not know why the picture fascinates him.

The young man is not sadistic. The young man is not drawn to depictions of cruelty.

## 50

The little boy sits near the wall. The man stands with his back to him.

The children sit in a ring. The grown-ups sit behind them. The boy ignores the grown-ups.

The man stands in the middle of the floor. The fire is dying. The wood smoke smells. The building is darker now.

The man is holding an axe. The man holds the axe horizontally. The man holds the axe in front of his body. The man holds the axe in both hands.

The head of the axe is visible on one side of the man's body. The end of the shaft of the axe protrudes beyond his body on the other.

If the boy was a little older and a little more sophisticated he would notice from the way the man is holding the axe that the man is right-handed. The boy is too young. The boy is not sophisticated enough to make distinctions as to handedness.

The boy jumps up. The boy is naked. The boy runs across the floor. The women gasp.

The man begins to turn. The man does not turn fast enough. The man is preoccupied.

The little boy reaches up. The little boy reaches up with both hands.

The little boy grabs the man's forearm. The little boy opens his mouth. The little boy sets his teeth around the man's hand.

The little boy bites. The little boy bites hard.

The women shriek. The man turns. The man turns fast. The boy clings.

The boy's feet leave the ground. The handle of the axe connects with the boy's head. The handle hits the boy's head hard.

The women wail. The boy hits the ground. The boy lands on his back. The boy is stunned. The impact expels the air from the boy's lungs.

The boy doesn't breathe. The boy has lots of practice at not breathing. The boy thinks it is safer not to breathe.

The man flings down the axe. The axe clatters.

The man lifts his hand. The man sucks his hand.

The women worry. The women argue. The women point at the boy. The women shout at each other. The women look at the men.

None of the women get up. None of the women do anything.

The man lowers his hand. The man walks across to the boy.

The women stop. It is the women's turn to hold their breath now.

The man stoops down. The man puts the heels of his hands on the boy's chest. The man pushes down. The man pushes hard. The man is big. The man is strong.

The women shriek. They don't hear the boy cry out.

The pain is overwhelming. The boy holds his breath. The boy thinks if he holds his breath the pain will go away.

The man pushes two or three times more. Then the man straightens up.

The man walks back to the middle of the floor. The man walks slowly.

*Survivor*

The man turns round. The man faces the women.

The man looks at the women. The man throws out a hand.

'You see?' the man says. 'He's not breathing. He's dead.'

## 51

The people are walking along a narrow path. The path leads across the slope of the moor. The path winds a little upwards. On the right the moon glistens on the surface of the flooded china clay pit. On the left the slope rises above the path.

The little boy wakes.

Someone is carrying the little boy. It is a man.

The little boy can feel the man's arms. The man's arms are round him.

The little boy can feel the man's footsteps. The little boy can feel the footsteps through the man's body.

The little boy is quiet. The little boy is still. The little boy doesn't want anyone to know he is awake.

The little boy is careful. The little boy doesn't breathe.

The people walk in a ragged file. The people know where they are going. The people have been there before.

The little boy doesn't know.

The little boy slips away. The little boy slips into unconsciousness.

## 52

The little boy wakes. The little boy hears his grandmother's voice. The little boy's grandmother's voice is worried. The little boy can't understand what his grandmother says.

The little boy hears his mother's voice.

'We'll say he's been kidnapped,' his mother says airily. The little boy's mother isn't worried at all.

A shovelful of earth hits the little boy in the face. The little boy hears the gravel rattle on the sides of the grave.

The little boy's mouth is open. The little boy gets earth in his mouth. The little boy thinks he will choke.

The little boy bursts out crying. The women shriek.

The little boy spits. The little boy coughs. The little boy tries to get the earth out of his mouth.

The little boy turns his head. The little boy's ribs hurt. The little boy cries again.

The shovel vibrates as the man throws it away. The man stoops down.

The man lifts one of the little boy's shoulders with one hand. The man slips his other arm under the boy's shoulders.

The people crowd round. The people are excited.

The man stops. The man lifts his head.

The people back away. The people don't stop watching.

*Survivor*

The man slips his arm under the boy's knees. The man picks the little boy up.

The man straightens up. The man turns.

The man carries the little boy. The man carries the little boy away from the grave.

The man carries the little boy back down the hill.

The people follow.

The people are quiet. The people are tense.

The little boy slips back into unconsciousness.

**53**

The little boy hangs onto the banisters. The little boy moves one foot onto the next stair.

The little boy drags his other foot behind him.

The little boy comes down the stairs very slowly. The little boy gasps out loud with the effort.

The little boy reaches the bottom of the stairs. The little boy keeps hold of the banister. The little boy leans across. The little boy puts his hand on the frame of the door.

The little boy stands in the doorway. The little boy's mother sits on the floor. The little boy's mother's feet are turned to the side. The little boy's brother sits beside his mother.

'Oh, look at the little cripple boy!' the boy's mother says. 'We'll have to push him down the street in a cart.'

The little boy doesn't understand.

The little boy's eyes are moist. The little boy's face is tight.

The little boy doesn't want to cry.

## 54

The man parks up the rental car. The car park isn't full. The car park is nowhere near full. It isn't yet the season.

The man walks towards the wall. The man looks sideways. The man looks at the granite wall of the workshop that has been turned into a museum.

A full length window has been let into the wall. The man sees the tables and the counter of the museum cafe. The man sees the rotating stands of cards and books and the shelves of souvenirs.

The man thinks the souvenirs are kitsch. The man is very certain of that even though the man can't see the souvenirs clearly from where he is in the car park. The man is a snob in some ways.

The man stands at the wall. The man looks down at the clay pit.

The clay pit is full of standing water. Most of the clay pits are full of water. The man wonders how deep it is.

The man looks to the left. The clay pit is close to the road. There is no rising bank. The man expects one.

The man looks to the right. The flanks of the spoil heap have been deeply channelled by the rain. The flanks of the spoil heap are grey. They are bare.

The man thinks, The spoil heap is too close to the water. And it is too low. It should be higher.

*This isn't the place,* the man thinks. The intuition is very strong. It is very

clear.

The man turns towards the museum. The man is going to the cafe.

If this isn't the place, the man thinks, the place is somewhere. It exists.

'What helps?'

'Books.'

'Escape?'

'It takes me out of myself.'

'Will you write?'

'I don't like writing.'

'What don't you like?'

'Writing is narcissistic.'

'Does it have to be?'

'I don't know.'

'You write for other people.'

'I write for myself.'

**Other books by Andrew Ravensdale**

<i>In the Night the Men Come</i>

<i>The City that Walked Away</i>

*Survivor*

For more information about the writer of this book and other publications please go to  
[www:/http.ravensdaleandco.org](http://www.ravensdaleandco.org)

You can contact Andrew Ravensdale directly on [notfamous48@gmail.com](mailto:notfamous48@gmail.com)