

George Johnston

[Excerpt from *After The Flood*]

We made our own fireworks by scraping the phosphorus off numerous sparklers and packing it into PVC tubing. I had done most of the boring preparation and did not want to ignite the first one. My dumb idea was to hold it high like an Olympic torch. I shouldn't have complained about only having a single welding gauntlet to protect my hand from the heat. It was an opportunity for Trent to tell me to grow a pair. Enraged I stabbed it towards him, burning his back.

There is a photo of Trent sitting in a hospital burns unit. 'Look at what you have done and remember it could have been worse.' Those were mum's word at the time. In the pic I can see Trent calculating all the ways he could make things worse for me.

I turned the page to see the few images we took on our weekend at Hillview before everything went wrong again. I don't have a proper recollection of that weekend, but in my mind, my near drowning was all Trent's doing. In his mind I got special attention that he did not receive a few weeks earlier when he was burned. I never bought into that idea. The adults were more interested in locating the visors we had lost than resolving our petty squabbles.

I turn to another page and instead of a photo there is a copy of Dad's obituary written by Mum with help from his close friend, Mathew. Dad had died just a few weeks after that last weekend at Hillview. The last page has some loose photos. They fall out onto the floor when I turn the page. I am too tired to bother scooping them up. My phone rings. Trent greets me in his usual manner.

'Morning Shitface.'