Domestic

1. TV

The TV screen explodes
like an ice-cube camera-flash.

The house falls to the night,
the adults suddenly dead beneath

a threadbare purple coverlet.
They leave the dregs of the morning
to the children:
the glass on the carpet
so much grit and crumble.

The interior of the TV looks bereft:

a cardboard set grey-sprayed
with Lost in Space technology for effect.

Perhaps the two girls,
still in their pyjamas,

would have watched Scooby Doo.
Instead, they unsnib the glass door

and enter the hangover of summer.
On the tepid trampoline mat

in a backyard stacked with timber,
khaki-coloured tubes and dull steel,

they ignore the black-and-white collie,
old and obese, with dags

under its still-hopeful tail.
The dog stands in the dirt

under the shade of the eaves,
watching them.

2. Dressing table
The wheels of the trolley are dark as ash
and uneasy on the shiny floor.

The girls in acrylic dressing gowns
watch their mother, contorted
under a fluorescent sheet,
disappear through a yawning gate,
their father urgent as the electric light
of the hospital corridor.

They wake to an empty house,
curtained, on a school day.

On a dressing table,
there is a gold tube of lipstick,
a bottle of mascara and a compact
with three colours of eye-shadows--
green, blue-green and blue.
There are high heels
in the wardrobe
with the broken doors.

In sunlight enough to blanch the eyes,
they pass the line of spiked succulents
that seep milk when
their leaves are snapped.

A squat woman in a smock rushes
out from a screen door.

She catches them by their wrists;
draws them back into the shadows.

3. Pot plant

In the backseat of a red Toyota,
the girl rattles dull coins
onto a synthetic blanket,
yellow and cigarette-marked.

Her mother and sister watch.
The silver buys $10 of fuel

at the service station, luminous
as a city, and then they settle

for a dark place among eucalypts
further down the road.

When the dawn breaks, they enter
the hard light of the police station,

hardly dressed for it.
Two officers follow their car home.

There are fittings torn from ceilings,
books ripped from spines,
and a pot plant inside the TV,
terracotta shards, soil and roots littering
the room as if Triffids had escaped.
And there is a man on a
velour-covered chair, his face broken
as the plaster walls around him.

At the refuge, they find three beds
to a room, a formica table
around which women smoke,
and bars on every window.

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