

This is the story of Casuarina, but it is a story with several speakers.

This is my voice, not Casuarina's.

This is a story of separation, but also a tale of threading lost needles.

Breaking to be, bleeding as healer.

This is a story of forests and flight-paths, songlines and
shellfire, cross-pollination of time-warps and mind trails.

This is a story which speaks for itself through mummified skins,
secrets as peeling.

Cathy, what is the thought you were dreaming?

A man leaving a room with a blood red door

When Casuarina was a child she grew the most beautiful wings. They were white with purple spots. And the spots were ringed round with gold. But her father cut them off, so she could never fly. But later she decided she could move just as well on foot. So she went on her travels where she met a man who promised her eternal life. Casuarina was fairly discerning so she said, if you give me eternal life what do you want in return? And the man said, I will extract my price, but you must agree in advance without knowing the terms. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose. *Look* at what I am offering you. This chance will never come again.

Casuarina did not hesitate. She said, I certainly will not agree to *that*. I never pay for anything up-front.

Cass loves the simple things in life, coffee and cakes, skimming the newspaper without taking anything in. This morning she reads about the Siberian ice-maiden, undisturbed for 2,500 years, they think she may have been a shaman. The dead in Sarajevo and the slaying in Rwanda. The Hindmarsh affair. She's pleased they are legalising euthanasia. She likes TV and trash too, there's a woman on Donahue who thinks she's reincarnated. She walks in the woods and finds a shady spot to lie down. It's great to be alive! Most of all she loves secrets. To be able to think anything and nobody will ever know. All those forbidden thoughts, those veiled acts, those hidden faces.

Yet things trouble her, they knock but she never quite knows who they are. Rooms sealed with red wax. Planes dropping bombs. Wounds like tattoos. She thinks of the ice-maiden in her wooden coffin roused from eternal sleep. Faces come back to her, like the links from a spreadout, recalcitrant sequence.

Casuarina's broadminded and reads both Freud and Jung without feeling there is any competition between the two. She likes to imagine herself lying in a grove with all her clothes off. Faces appear from above and stare down at her but she doesn't mind. She likes the way they look at her, she likes the way they stare at *it*.

Casuarina what's needling you?

I just realised when I'm enjoying myself,
it's always at someone else's expense.

the silent slit from which voices erupt
the threading of a needle with nerves
a word-web spun from the wildest text

THE PAINTINGS ON DOORS AT YUENDUMU
GHOSTS INTERLACED WITH GRAFFITI

a book which stirs out of crinkled skins
a story made by a woman from stones
a sign composed of ambiguous dots

THE PAINTINGS ON DOORS AT YUENDUMU
GHOSTS INTERLACED WITH GRAFFITI

the hollow cry of the hidden costs
a journey towards a land beyond loss
the purple light on the reddest rocks

THE PAINTINGS ON DOORS AT YUENDUMU
GHOSTS INTERLACED WITH GRAFFITI

a place which is every and no place you know
a wish that is never the want that you will
a meaning that moves as memory unpicks

Cass, which wastes do your thoughts inscribe?

which songs does your silence kill?

which secret sites are buried in blood?

We have travelled a long way but the
worst
is yet
to come

We stood in line at the edge of the pit. They started to shoot. My daughter kept saying “mummy they are shooting people, let’s run away”. They shot my mother and father, in front of my eyes. My sister was a beautiful woman, with dark eyes and hair. She begged to be saved. She met the guard’s gaze and said “let me live”. But he took no heed. My daughter kept imploring me “let’s run away”. She was five years old. He told me to give her up, but she would not go. A shot was fired, I did not see, I could not look. Then he fired at me. I fell into the pit.

I knew nothing.

When I awoke I thought that this was the land of the dead. Then I knew I was still in the world and maybe I had a chance to live. The pit was corpse-full. There were limbs on top of me, over my face. There were other bodies helping me push. But I had not the strength and if I had risen I would have been shot again. It was still light. I waited till night, I waited for hours, I could not breathe. Then when it was dark, I climbed out, crawled away. Now I know the guilt that survives.

These are the stories of Casuarina, but these fables leap from several seedlings. These are my words, not Casuarina’s.

This is a story of places and people but also the intertwining of spindles.

Blinding to see, wounding as weaving.

This is a story of pine-groves and pistols, bright sun and dark shade, links between lines and rites beyond living.

This is a story which pleads for itself through dread and delight, secrets which listen.

Cathy, whose is the death you are grieving?

