

An Unlikely Ride

Travis Lucas

In the day's dying sunlight an arthritic man lays in his courtyard. He looks at the unsealed and dusty pavers which he meant to hose down some thirty years ago. He thinks of what he was doing instead: floating in the bathtub sweating out the seventeen barbiturates he'd taken. *It's okay*, he thought in the water, *Yoshi will carry me there – wherever I need to go*. He willed himself into the company of the dead but his body would not abide.

Yoshi's image returns to the arthritic man now; the idea of that little green bulbous creature ferrying him to Hades, or to the top of the clouds, its little feet scurrying through thin air as it makes its melodic straining noises: *Hnnn-ning-gah*. He snorts at it. He is punch-drunk on sugary cocktail mix poured from a cask. It sits next to his frayed wicker chair and the stillness of the dusk all of a sudden makes him confused. He is hyperaware of the hollowness of his limbs and the bitterness of the congealed powder sticking to the side of his cup. The same idea comes to him again: *it's my time, Yoshi's come to take me*. He misses death in the courtyard by the same narrow margin he did in the bath.

He hears something ripple – his insides, maybe – so he doesn't catch the foundations of the house crackling. The TV is also up too loud. When he pulls his consciousness back and shuffles to the top of the matted carpet staircase and into the study nine minutes later, another solemn thought interrupts him: *out of everything in my life, I've buried too many cats*. As the thought leaves him his foot punctures the floor and the insulation underneath. He yells in pain. It's the determined, aggressive kind of pain that tells him his leg is probably broken. So he calls out and then – because the TV is too loud – nothing happens.

The double-soundproofing really makes the difference. The neighbours don't hear. He looks through the study's window-blinds, past their faded-grey colour and the heaviness that the accumulated dust gives them, and then out to the hollow salinated streetlight. The desk next to the window is just out of reach, the one useful item – a phone – is tucked well into the back

Fiction: *An Unlikely Ride* by Travis Lucas

corner behind unfinished blueprints and power tool batteries and catalogues. The clouds are eclipsing the dusk.

He looks down and watches his thigh change colour like the sunset, until the purple is indistinguishable from the darkness.

Travis Lucas is a writer, drag queen, tutor, and double cat parent who spends a great deal of time grappling with notions of the conceivable. He is a recent Masters graduate from the University of Adelaide with *Tipping Points*, a collection of Australian and politically-charged short stories.