

STUART BARNES

DVO

A dozen red rum and cola cans
then he enfolds my head like Ted Bundy.
'I love you, I'm the only one for you.'
His five o'clock shadow grazes my jugular

then he cajoles me into bed like Ted Bundy.
Migraine medication knocks me sideways.
Five o'clock, shadows graze on my jugular.
'I said "I'm sick."' I turn on the bedside lamp,

migraine medication knocks me sideways,
like smack. 'Hell d'you think *you're* goin? 'Home.
I'm sick of this.' He upturns the bedside lamp
He's going crazy He tries to pick me up

then **SMACK!** 'No way in Hell you're goin home ...
I'll drive off a cliff into the sea,' he screams.
He tried to pick me up I'm going crazy
Pick me up I text from the hotel's locked bathroom.

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He screamed I'll drive off a cliff into the sea
—OCD's re-established its octopus grip—
I texted pick me up from the hotel's locked bathroom
I google harassment self-defence intruder

OCD's re-established its octopus grip.
Nightly, his black V8 gulps my air.
I google harassment self-defence intruder
I procure an aluminum alloy baseball bat.

Black, I gulp solitaire and V8 daily.
The order's granted eight months from our blind date.
I obscure the aluminum alloy baseball bat.
I dream, I dream about a convoy of destroyers.

Eight months since our blind date, order's not granted.
'I love you, I'm the only one for you'
I dream. I dream about a convoy of destroyers:
a dozen red rum and cola cans.

The sun shone and I ... let the beat of the paddle centre me.

—Alys Fowler, *Hidden Nature: A Voyage of Discovery*

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Hidden Nature:

A Voyage of Discovery moulded onto my clammy palms, my
bent shaft paddle, in
Courtroom 2's cockpit prior to the mention.
Dismay at the first 'adjourn', d
-ejection the fifth, the magistrate stern, imagining Nice, perhaps. Nevertheless,
forward stroke, though the
gravity of 'temporary protection order' reverberates, the gurgle
-hack of Grindr. He
is cursing outside this temple again, from his black, gleaming Holden ute,
just dying to come inside. No man's
Kassandra, I stand at the living room window, aluminum alloy baseball bat in hand.
Legalese, too, curses
me—the soft 'aggrieved', the hard 'respondent'—at long last served, his control
narrowing. I
open the window a little, admit a little fear. It admits no hidden nature, this
palindrome. Kayak
quietly, read water; paper reed choir, Eskimo
roll—purified
skull. Sculling draw draws me closer
to shore. Surely
upstream reel's a concealment, surely its eddies can't dissolve
vulnerability. Having perfected the
wet exit, having planted on every line an
x, I
yoke the Perception and myself together, neoprenes un
-zipped.

Stuart Barnes was born in Hobart and lived in Melbourne for seventeen years before moving to Rockhampton. *Glasshouses* (UQP) won the Thomas Shapcott Poetry Prize and was shortlisted/commended for two other awards. Stuart's working on his second poetry collection, *Form & Function*. @StuartABarnes