

I want them to drop me at the airport and keep going. I want this goodbye to be over. I beg Rosie with my eyes. She gets it but airport farewells are still a big deal for Dad and he insists on coming inside and walking me to the gate. There is mayhem at security as he sets off the alarms. How a man can have so many pieces of metal about his person is a mystery to me but given that my time as a man is finite it's not a mystery I need to give much further thought to.

At the gate I tell Dad that I will come home soon to visit. And he tells me that he'll come to see me in Sydney as soon as I have settled in. Both of us know that neither of these things will happen but pretending they will seems to make the parting easier. I linger in his embrace knowing that it will be the last time I will be held by him, as a man, and then he does something that takes my breath away. He kisses me on the lips. And it almost does me in. It is so intimate. And I have never loved him more.

And I look back from the gate and he has broken. He is weeping. Rosie is holding him. She has him. I have to look away. I have to look ahead. I have to keep walking. My father's grief is a price I am prepared to pay.

The plane turns down the runway, increases its speed, lifts off the ground and as it makes its ascent I look down upon the city where I grew up, and steel myself against memories, against history and against the man I was. By the time I land in Sydney, Mark Price will just be someone I used to know.

Spring

Ben

The buds are bursting. There's music... there's light.

BOB and FRAN are dancing. Slow, lovely, close. It's then. It's now. It's always. Their children are watching... their children are remembering... then and now.

BEN. In the chaos of our home, in the kitchen when we were cleaning up after dinner, as arguments were being had about who did what to whom, and arrangements were being made about who had to be where when, basketball, netball, football, soccer, drama, piano, and who would take them, Mum or Dad or the bus and in the middle of the arguments about who would do what in the clean up, the washing, the drying, the putting away, and the wiping down the surfaces and who does more and who does nothing and who always goes to the toilet when the sweeping up needs to be done. (It was me.) In the midst of all this a song would come on the radio and Dad would stop and reach for her. And she would resist, she would push him off... 'I'm too busy', 'I don't have the time', 'My feet are too sore' but it was just part of their play, part of the game because she loved it when he took her, she loved it when they danced. And we, we kids, we groaned and stuck our fingers down our throats and pretended that we weren't interested, in their dancing, in their love, in the secrets that only they shared.

The children fall away, except BEN who holds on to the memory a little longer as BOB and FRAN are left dancing. Maybe they're at the local pub or a dinner/dance at a local Surf Life Saving Club. She wears a lovely dress. Nothing too flash because she doesn't do flash and her hair is down, which it never is, and she wears her best earrings and she is beautiful. And BOB has his good sports jacket on and he doesn't scrub up too badly either.