

Jane Ireland

[Excerpt from 'FIELD OF VIEW']

As my finger lingers over the return-to-home button, active track kicks in on its own volition, and my drone follows their journey up the steep slope of the remote hill. I gasp in disbelief and push the button to abort, but the tracking continues. Focus on the flora surrounding them: the wallum heaths, asparagus fern, the occasional cotton tree breaking the similitude, breaking the similitude... Pulling my eyes from the screen I scan the empty sky. Broken, I've broken the first rule by flying my drone out of my sight. Yet I can see where it hovers through the video footage—my eye in the sky.

I poke a shaky finger repeatedly against the wayward button to disable the mode. It fails. *Shit!*

Halting abruptly, Ellie and my brother sit down, side-by-side with their backs toward me, on rocky ground near some bushes. My craft stops too.

From this angle, Reuben's tiger tattoo—the one he likes to think pounces formidably across his shoulders—is a dark blot on his tanned skin, a black hole consuming him. He angles his torso towards Ellie, taking her shoulders in a powerful grasp before pushing her down to lie flat on her back on the ground.

Abruptly, Reuben sits up to straddle Ellie's hips. His hands extend towards her head, where they jiggle about like he's flexing their muscles—or, unthinkably, putting pressure on her neck.

Reuben raises both arms and fists both hands, his knuckles bony white—even from way up here, I can see them, at least I think I can. A memory: Reuben devouring all the meat and marrow from a lamb shank, my brother's delight at tossing me the bare bone sucked dry, his lips glistening in fat. Here, now, he partakes of a different feast.