

Drowning

Owen Everitt

Yes, you say, uncoiling. I'm sure.

We had watched a pair of galahs canoodling and preening on a hollow tree close to camp. After, we swim to wash off the grit and burrs that had screwed into our backs and hair. We feel each other, cold but inwardly alight, and take turns diving to touch the bottom.

Yes, you say. I'm sure. If you are.

The cramps and bleeding are more than we expected. The knot we'd tied is less – a wound-red clot disintegrating in the toilet water. You swaddle yourself in the grey woollen blanket and dig in for the night.

When I shoot galahs on the farm for bait, the survivors return later to wait for their partners. We don't return to the river camp and its hollow tree. We spend the next year waiting for each other to come back from the dead.

Owen Everitt continues his third year of creative writing PhD candidature with a focus on the Murray River and a maintained thematic interest in Australian landscapes, Australian ferality, and Australian masculinity. An excerpt from his thesis was published in print in the 2020 cli-fi anthology *Scorchers*. In 2018 he received the JM Coetzee Prize.