

Regurgitation

Girija Tropp

The head of the sentimental man was squared off like a seal. Nothing astonished him. Especially his children. From the kitchen he could hear them bickering over tax allocations. He wondered if he should panic. The children went past like distress signals. Everything shocked them. His wife had ideas for a party but was a creator of obstacles and the sentimental man was, by nature, a prime example. At the shopping centre where he went for fish food and balloons, mothers had picked up their children from school and they filled the air with an over-cooked petulance. A woman in a BMW yelled at him for bad parking. *My pleasure*, he said and she said, *dickhead*. When he got home, the children were still plugging away at it, the old problem: who was responsible? Now that he was approaching sixty, anyone less than forty-nine seemed far too naïve to be allowed the vote. His wife had hiccups so he filled the balloons with helium. She complained that he'd bought the wrong sort. They were shaped like hands and they bobbed pleasantly against the ceiling. He liked the baby blue but he could see that, from her perspective, the blown-up fingers might appear obscene, like teats. The visitors came and she sparkled at them as if touched by some magic wand. He splashed some champagne in his mouth and watched everyone gather around the barbecue. Tomorrow, it would start all over again.



Image Melinda Best

Girija Tropp's work has or will appear in *Agni 61*, *Boston Review*, *Fiction International*, *Quarter After Eight*, Best Australian stories 2005 and 2006, and *The Sleepers almanac* 2006. She was winner of the Josephine Ulrick Award 2006, runner-up 2005, and a finalist in the Faulkner Awards for the Novel 2006. Her blog is at www.straighttonjuice.com
