

Philip Neilsen

# Suburban dinner



---

Philip Neilsen's fifth collection of poetry, *Without an alibi*, will be published soon. His short stories are widely anthologised and he also has written award-winning fiction for young adults and children, translated into German and Korean. He is Professor of English and Creative Writing at QUT and an environmentalist. Like his early mentor Bruce Dawe, he did not flee Queensland during the 1970s and '80s.

---

Image courtesy [www.sxu.hu](http://www.sxu.hu)

You must be congratulating yourself  
on that shallow strategy,  
the way your hand brushed her arm  
as you reached for the vegetables.  
Oh yes, I saw it. And before that,  
bending down to retrieve a serviette  
deliberately dropped by her side.  
I know this from your crow-like cunning  
at the office; always the loudest call  
but first to hop out of the way.  
So—it has begun.  
Perhaps in a hotel, not too expensive,  
with prints of *The Hunt* on the wall,  
and a witty bowl of roses.  
Her donkey-headed husband  
prattles on and sees nothing.  
Though he glances once or twice  
at her expensive beauty, neither you  
nor he detects the drama here.  
I see her lips harden  
on the words 'silly mistake'  
as she describes  
a plagiarism case made a fuss of  
in her daughter's class.  
She asks me, what should be the penalty  
before the ringing of the bell,  
the coffee and chocolates.  
How does one put a stop to it.