

NIKE SULWAY

strange men

i have never been raped
by a stranger

although there have been those other
men / that stranger on the train
peak hour / chatswood to
central / sitting while i stood / running
his hand up the inside of my thigh

that stranger / in the park in ashfield
i was 2 months pregnant / 16 maybe 17
years old / bent over &
vomiting into the flowerbed
when he grabbed me

& that other stranger / sweet-faced
who showed me his prick / in the line-up
for coffee / a soft
desultory thing

but it's not them you want
to hear about

it's that man who drove me home
from dinner at my parents' place
who parked in the drive & said
you have nice tits / who
forced his way into my home / into
my body / who spat in his hand

so that he could enter more
easily / & called me
a dry cunt

the worst thing was telling my mother
who said / yes / he said you were quite
drunk

or perhaps the worst thing
was his brother / a week later
saying / we like to share

it's that other man / a former lover
who came into the bathroom &
bruised my back with the taps / put his
forearm against my throat &
grunted my name / that
man whose hands
left marks I still feel / & who
as i crouched bleeding in the cubicle
of broken shower-glass / kissed
our sleeping daughter goodbye

Nike Sulway is the author of the novels *Dying in the First Person*, *Rupetta*, *The True Green of Hope*,
and *The Bone Flute*. She lives in rural Queensland.