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Dear The Lifted Brow, We're drawing to the close of a day when, thankfully, the water level has peaked lower than forecasts had predicted. In the most extreme emergencies, homes have been picked up and washed away. Today, one hopes, marks the end of such disasters. From the University of Queensland campus at St Lucia through to Toowong, Auchenflower and Lang Park, homes and businesses have been inundated. Like everyone, I've followed this on the ABC, but more urgently on Facebook, where my friends and colleagues have been regularly posting pictures and videos. There's a grim sequence to the status updates: losing power; the water is close; told to evacuate; staying with friends; have heard that my street is going under. Common to a great many of the accounts is the feeling that this is too surreal. I didn't entirely understand this until I went today to Rosalie Village. I go there all the time: my two young sons love the playground at Milton State School and the other parents there are easy to chat to. There are two ice cream shops close by, and after ice cream you cross the road and pick up a loaf of bread at the bakery and a hot beef panang at Sing's. It's a rather toofashionable area, yes, but in an Australian way: I've seen Darren Lockyer and Andrew Lofthouse there, picking up their lattés, but nothing more than that. We lived in Rosalie for six months after we first got back from Iceland. Finnur, my older son, had just had his first birthday. Each morning, we walked through the shops, bought a biscuit for Finnur at the bakery and a sausage roll for me, and then spent an hour in the playground before returning to our apartment, as the sun normally becomes too strong by nine or ten. And here is what we found this afternoon: A pond formed in among the shops, fitting perfectly and turning the village into props, water features. Unheimlich, I thought, is what people mean when they say it feels surreal. Or at least that is the feeling I experienced this afternoon: the uncanny sense of seeing a familiar world turned into something different, with all the qualities of its former incarnation still present. This discomfort was very present in the small groups of sightseers I saw gathered at the police parameters. It was carnival, certainly—if without the sense of celebration or abandonment, Letters to the editor then with all the bemusement and upsidedownness. And it was this spirit of quiet bemusement that suddenly, for me, made true the ceaseless media claims that tell us that the flood will make us stronger, draw the community together, help us to reassess what really matters in our lives. The flood seems to have brought out the ever-present quiet irony and good will of Brisbane people. What is the deeper meaning of a flood? My impulse over the last three days has been to answer that there is none. A flood is a body of water that disrupts our lives, while a body of water that doesn't disrupt our lives is a river, a lake, or an ocean. But this evening my feeling is different. The erasure is incomplete, and the familiar remains alongside the foreign. It's uncomfortable and disquieting, but it also brings a sense of recognition.