

THE-SOURCE-DOT-COM-DOT-AU

RON BURROWS

ANTON BLOWFELD KILLED three blowflies with his underpants. He had stepped out of them, ready to have a shower, when he saw the flies on the bathroom window. After he'd belted them, their bodies dropped into the empty bath, horrible indictments on the white porcelain. He grimaced, sluiced them down the drain, and stepped into the shower. Three more flew through the steam, and landed on his shoulder. Where had the bastards come from?

This was the second day. He had to find the source. And the cat . . . where was Wagner? What had the bastards done with Wagner?

The number of kills mounted fast. It was a hot day, and the air conditioner was droning, but the sun had gone off the casement windows in the lounge, so he pulled back the curtains to let in the light. A long line of ants dodged each other as they scurried along the windowsills between the mounds of dead blowies.

Wagner, black with a seething mass of them, lay on the floor. Blowfeld slumped onto the couch and looked out the window. A wattlebird trumpeted and flew out of the bottlebrush at the edge of the front verandah. He wished he were a fucking bird. A man was lucky his wife was dead. Always complained about his swearing and the skid marks in his undies. She would have panicked and added to his woes if she were there.

He shrank back into the couch and shivered as a big bastard landed on a framed photo of his wife, pictured in the pit with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. They had received a standing ovation that night for their rendition of Maurice Ravel's 'Boléro'. He looked at the crucifix on the wall as another one touched down on one of Jesus's hands where the blood dripped from the nail. Blowfeld lurched from the couch and swatted it with the previous day's rolled-up newspaper. 'Fuck off, you bastard!'

He picked up the picture and held it to him. 'Dominique,' he said, as he swatted blowies from the back of his hand with the paper. Belonging to God. She'd said that was the meaning of her name. He sighed, and fingered the crucifix hanging around his neck. Well, she belonged to God now.

He roamed the house, closed the vents on all the ducted-heating outlets and stuffed a cushion up the kitchen chimney. Back in the lounge room, the blowies were all over the framed photo. There was Dominique, playing her piccolo trumpet with an audience of fucking blowies humming 'Boléro'. He stared, mesmerised, as more flies swarmed out of his violin.

They'd been good together at first. She'd called his cock a baton. Pronounced it bat-on. 'He is so slender and elegant, but I am the conductor,' she said on their first night. He'd played along for years, letting her conduct with his bat-on, but . . . it had . . . what . . . fucked if he knew. He put the frame down and wiped his eyes.

Blowfeld checked every room for the source, fending blowies off, shuddering when they touched down on him as he ran duct tape around the windows and put rolled-up newspapers under the doors.

She had made his life unbearable. Whenever she wasn't talking, or playing her fucking trumpet, she was humming 'Boléro'. She hummed 'Boléro' when she fucked him. She conducted their union, for Christ's sake: the intensity of her thrusts, as she sat astride him, in tune with that fifteen-minute crescendo, climaxing with the music, her slim body drained, slick with perspiration. No thought of him. He was nothing more than a fucking bat-on, a replacement for her trumpet.

He cocked his head: the flies, dressed in black tuxedos, were humming ‘Boléro’ throughout the house. They danced in the dust motes, playing their tiny instruments over the kitchen sink, their conductor, Gustavo, silhouetted against the light—a flyblown choreography. Blowfeld yelled as he stormed back into the lounge. His violin was black with blowies.

It was not only ‘Boléro’ that had sent Dominique troppo: the breakfast radio-show—dot-com-dot-a-fucking-u radio, he called it—played a big part. She had taken to putting low-life milk on her Weeties as she listened to the atrocious music, and began talking in advertising slogans, adding dot-com-dot-au to the end of her sentences. She had wanted to repair the past, she said, and muttered some bullshit about rescuing the future dot-com-dot-au. He lunged for the violin, ripped it off its stand. Repair the past. Repair the fucking past! He slammed the violin down on the coffee table, and laughed. Couldn’t stop laughing. ‘Rescue the future!’ he howled. What fucking future? He hurled the splintered violin at the wall.

Blowfeld plunged a finger into his ear and gouged out two blowies. He sobbed as he squashed them . . . the second oboist used to call *him* Blowie. There was a blowie in the pit. He didn’t make jokes anymore. They hadn’t found the bastard, either.

He tore at his eyes. The volume had increased. The whole house was a-hum. There was Louie the drummer in his tux sitting on the architrave above the door: he would know the source. Blowfeld, dressed in singlet and underpants, his blowfly-encrusted crucifix swinging, moved towards him, reached out, but Louie rose to the ornate ceiling. Dominique had loved the cornices and high ceilings.

He shuddered and fingered blowies from his nostrils as his head started to pound. Dominique used to get blinding headaches and washed down handfuls of painkillers with her low-life milk to ease the agony. She’d leaned over her mother’s grave after the coffin had been lowered. When life is gone, pain takes its place dot-com-dot-au she said.

At 3 am, Blowfeld was still banging around the house, crashing against the walls, as he belted the droning, airborne contingent with yesterday’s undies. Wagner had moved. No . . . it was the maggots.

Poor, gentle Wagner. Blowfeld blubbered. He was fucked; he had to rest. He took off his shoes and socks, collapsed on the leather couch until he felt the blowies infesting his underpants, swarming around his crotch. He dug his fingernails into his palms as the flies penetrated his anus. He screamed, hurled himself from the couch and slammed into the doorjamb. When he regained consciousness, he felt them invading his ears. They were humming ‘Boléro’ as he squinted through his remaining eye. He hawked and spat out a blowie that had jammed in his windpipe. All the while he clutched at his arse with his other hand, the unbearable itch around his sphincter dot-com-dot-au.

In the hall, he heard the crunch, felt the ooze as the half-dead blowies squelched between his toes. He looked at the telephone and frowned. He crab-walked his way to the kitchen with the sound of ‘Boléro’ building in his head. The blowies inside him were eating him alive. He groaned. His fingertips and toes were tingling. They were in there, and Louie was banging at his fucking temple dot-com-dot-au.

Anton Blowfeld opened the laundry door and turned on the light. And, to the clashing of symbols, as the *Blowfly Boléro* moved towards its climax he shuffled towards the fridge—the old one that lay on its back dot-com-dot-au—and trembled. A constant column of blowies emerged from the broken seal around the door and took off like a sluggish squadron of bombers, circled the room before homing in on him. He reached out towards the fridge door and wrenched it open.