

DIRECTIONS TO THE LIFE-PRESERVER

Beyond an out-of-bounds moonscape
of cloven earth, after the great dock leaves
and the childrens' playground shouts,
beside the lake you'll find the lifebelt
has been removed.

Sitting on a gnarled bench touched with sun
under a crabby pear tree, I'm face to face
with the red stand, vacant but for a label:
In case of damage to or removal
of this life-saving device please contact
Dover 872451.

Like the lifebelt, rain has been absent for a while
and leaves rub together
with the percussive friction of crickets' legs.
Behind me two young women are basking,
splendid on the dry grass.

Around my feet, among nettles
and desiccated rabbit droppings, thirsty ants
pursue the urgent business of survival
as the wind freshens
and the girls with pink hair put on more clothes
and go away.

Jo Field
(in Russell Gardens 8th August 2018)