

## 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 8<sup>th</sup> August 2018)