

## **Dance I**

### **Extract from a story by Natalie MacKinnon**

As the sky darkens, I start to think about how I've got to go back tomorrow, and get maudlin. When mum finally stops faffing in the kitchen and comes to sit with me, I put my head on her knee and watch the TV sideways while she footles with my hair.

"I don't want to go back," I tell her.

"Oh, sweetheart. You'll be fine once you're there."

"I want to stay here."

"You can come back next weekend if you want."

"But it's so far."

"You can come back any time you want. It's not that big of a journey, is it?"

Eventually mum gets so tired her eyes are closing and she yawns so heavily that I almost fall from her lap. I beg her to stay up with me – just a little bit longer, please mummy – but she goes up to bed, wiping her watering eyes and telling me not to stay up too late again.

It's usually around this point, around ten or eleven at night, that I start to feel more awake than I have done at any other point in the day. I try to put it off, I even try drinking some of mum's wine, hoping that it'll make me sleepy and I can just crawl into bed, but it just makes me feel cloudy and slightly weepy and in any case I still end up online.

**... read the full story in POTB Issue 16**