

Bourne
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creative writing
workshops

Click

by Victoria Cooper

It was only after the birth of her third child that the flashbacks began. They always came on in the same way; with a click.

She could be gazing out to the garden, while swaying the dance of mothers; trying to remember how many fluid ounces had been drunk when it would happen.

Click.

Or maybe it was a snap, or a jolt. It might even be a buzzing sound; whatever it was she would be back there in that room with the sun shining through the drawn curtains.

Her eight-year old self stared up hypnotised by the greasy oscillations of a ceiling fan, simultaneously ignoring his cold hand on her knee.

Snap.

It was like diving down into cold water, the world above extinguished as you break the surface and everything moves in slow motion below.

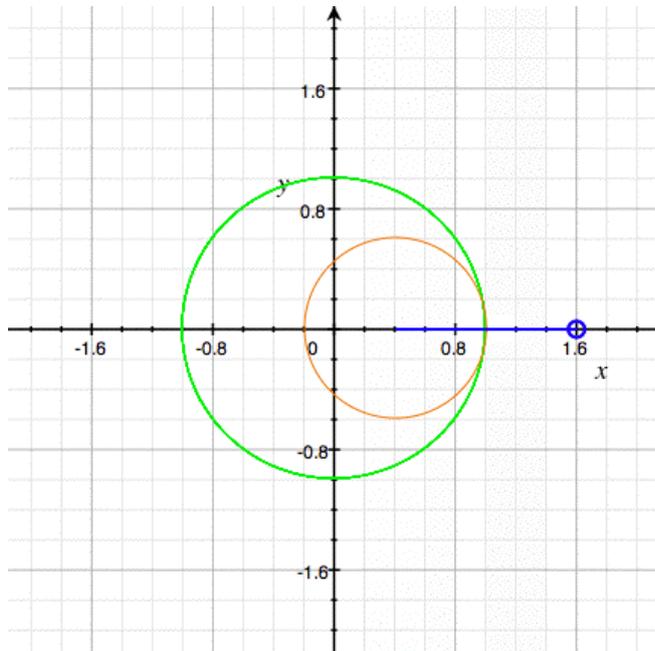
It was like lift doors shutting and yours ears popping as you reach the top floor.

It was like the vacuum squelch of the fridge door; shut inside with the lights out and only uneaten lettuce leaves and tiny child sized yogurt pots as company.

It was like all of those things, but none of them too, because each time it happened, she could not get back from his searching fingers.

Click.

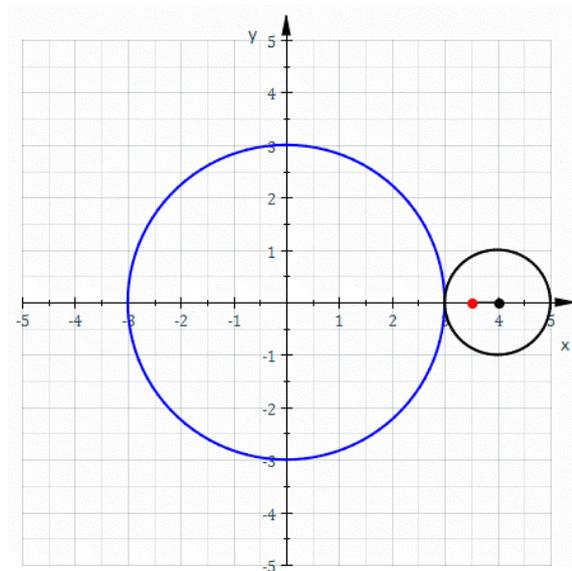
The flashback always started with a hypotrochoid.



She sat next to him as he watched her create the spirals over and over. Her caran d'ache pencils lined up in rainbow order, poised to start the rolling around the inside of each fixed circle as his fingers followed the same pattern. Sometimes on her leg, sometimes on her arm.

She felt like she was controlling his fingers with her pencil and she would change to an epitrochoid to see if they did the same.

Nothing changed, but his breath laboured as she moved.



Her mother had bought her the spirograph when her sister was born.

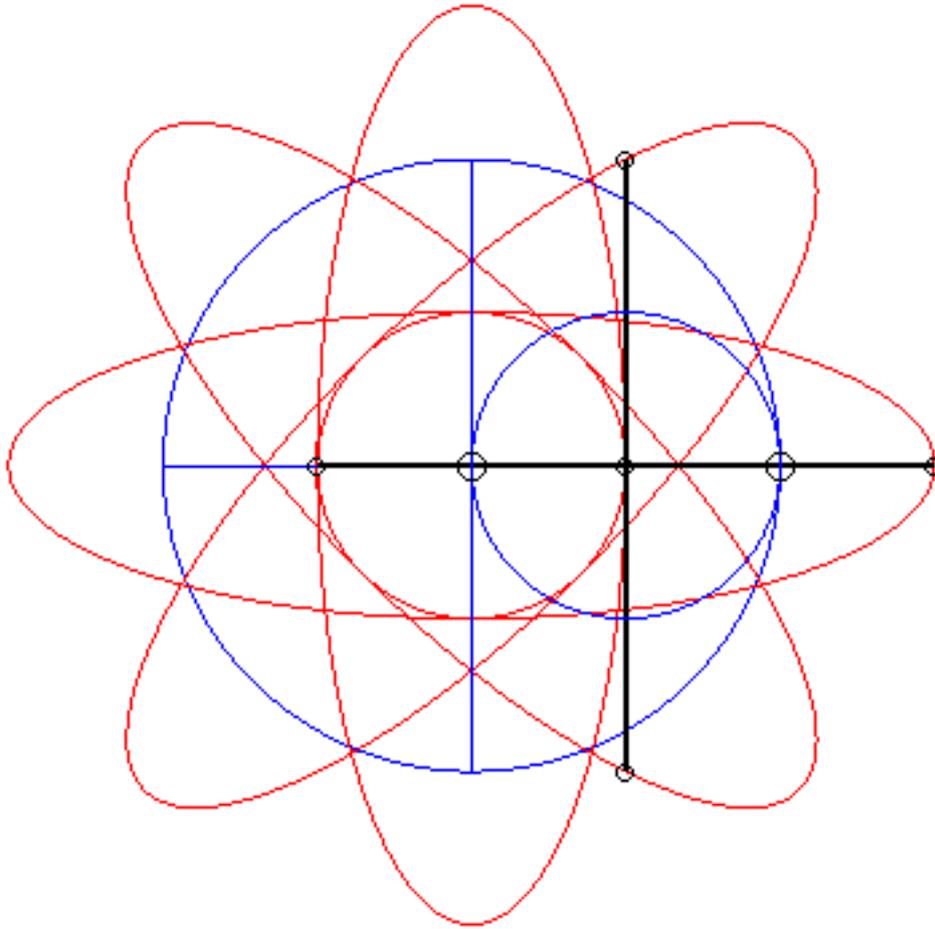
The small angry face surrounded in strawberry pink knitting looked up at her and she wondered how something so small could look so outraged.

A spirograph was no compensation for that.

Then she was back. Unaware of how she got there, but walking around the room, rocking, soothing and patting her son. Singing softly in his ear, rubbing his tightly drawn in legs, cajoling him back to sleep.

Large segments of time lost; unaccounted for.

Night and day fused together, and if she managed to brush her teeth, her hair and cook the children porridge she felt she had achieved.



She marvelled at the scurrying legs outside her window, racing for buses, late for meetings and cycling to school assemblies. She felt dizzy by other people's momentum as she sat back on the juice-stained sofa and stared at the television over his cradle-capped skull.

Sleep deprivation causes diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure along with weight

gain, weakened immunity, mood changes and memory issues.

But flashbacks?

She told the Health Visitor who tilted her inverted bob to one side and checked her depression score. Baby blues and fluctuating hormone levels, but nothing about clicks.

She had put away those spirals years ago, and they, like her Jackie magazines and national costume doll collection lay dusty in her mother's attic over a hundred miles away.

You can't get away from yourself by moving from one place to another. And time doesn't help much too.

She stared down at his perfect cupid's bow and stroked the rounded cheek, maybe now, maybe just now, she could get a little sleep, some peace, and she too closed her eyes.

Click.