AN ARGUMENT

The massive bulk of our ancient Red Gum cast its shade on the neighbours’ fence. Born in the bush, she’d lived on farms: Soonor or later a branch will fall. It’s a widow-maker, for sure, she said, The day was cold with a dirty fog. I said, the tree’s as good as gold! and threw a few loud oaths across. Marching away, I slammed my door.

We lopped some errant branches off to pacify the pair in there but the tree itself then let us down, began to wilt and rot inside. The flaky heart just crumbled out. An expert came along to check and more old limbs were cut away till just the trunk and arms remained raised up, stark, against the sky.

The day tree surgeons finished the job it rained and rained; that tree was tough and fought three men till the light had gone. They left the chopped-up limbs behind so we heaped them up and lit a fire that burned for hours like a funeral pyre, ashes still lie thick on the ground. The workmen broke a hole in the fence, now next-doors’ son climbs through to play.