Family carers’ distress and abusive behaviour

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Viruses
Glenn Colquhoun
Viruses are my sister’s children
who have come to stay at my place
for the weekend.
They try to get into the cupboards.
They draw with thick crayons
on the back of my throat.
Their run up and down the inside of my head
with small hands covered in marmite and jam
which takes forever to get off the walls.
They bang pots and pans on the floor.
They wipe their feet on the centre of my tongue.
The cry loudly in the middle of the night.
Sometimes they swing
on that dangly thing which hangs
from the back of my mouth
until I cough.
I eat broken biscuits all week.
No wonder my nose runs.

Glenn Colquhoun was born in Auckland, New Zealand and is a doctor practising in Te Tai Tokeran, Northland. He was the winner of the 2003 Montana New Zealand book award for poetry. This poem is from Playing God, Steele Roberts. Another of Glenn’s poems was published in the February 2010 issue of the Journal.

Poem chosen by Femi Oyebode.
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Glenn Colquhoun
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