

Sucking

Our mum's sitting in the park breastfeeding the baby. Tuft of dark hair, alien eyes.

*Won't they want him back?* Emily whispers.

I mouth *be quiet* to my little sister.

We sit like any family on an outing. Mum fondling the monkey's oversize ears. Whopping enormous like mine, that get whacked regularly when she's cross with me.

As the monkey gulps and swallows, breathes out puffs of air, makes "k-ah" sounds, Mum stares down at the flat face and muzzle.

*Can we keep it as a pet?* Emily asks. *Will the zoo mind?* I slap her leg, but it's too late.

Mum shoos us from the bench, crouches over the baby monkey. Growls softly, while she strokes its shadowy fur.

I start to cry, claw tears away so Emily won't see.

I walk Emily to the playground, to the swing with rusting chains. I push her higher and higher from tree to tree above hugging woods, so she won't see Mum nuzzling the monkey.

Mum used to call me her little monkey.

That was before.

Emily's mouth makes an O shape and puffs out *whee*, as she touches marshmallow clouds with her Clarks-tipped toes.

The monkey clings to Mum's belly.

I know when our Mum's milk dries, when the sucking pain of losing the baby with the tuft of blonde hair and blue eyes goes away, I'll be her little monkey again.

And we'll sit in the park, safe under the trees, like a small troop on a day out.