

*In 2003, Anneke 61, was packing up her towel after a swim on Sydney Harbour. She swam every day and enjoyed the beauty of her surroundings and the good life she had. As she dried her hair she noticed a tall man near by, picking up his small child. As he put the child onto his shoulders, the child screamed with delight. Laughing, they ran into the water. Annie was overcome. She didn't know why. She sat down and then the tears slipped from her eyes onto the sand.*

*And then she knew. It was all about Father.*

*"It's a pretty tragic story. It's quite an optimistic story too."*

Nell says she wrote it for her mother, who is still alive. There were many things that Anneke had to confront as she went back to the Netherlands, to help Nell find coherence in the details of her mother's very fractured beginning to life.

Though it is her mother's story, I come away with the sense that it adds coherence to Nell's life as well.

The Ubud Writer's and Reader's Festival was conceived as a healing project in response to the first Bali bombing, with the first event held in 2004.

JULY 18, 2011