

TOGETHER LIKE TUNING

By Linda Rogers

Father and daughter lean together like tuning forks bent into the secret language of children who've died and been born again. What is it they hear on their trips around the world: men dying, begging for water, women giving birth in trees rising out of flooded rivers, children rooting at empty breasts, the hideous gyre of windstorms sweeping the earth; or is it choirs of African orphans, Mormons, Mennonite children, Valkyries- all of them singing like the angels who circle Earth delivering babies and gathering the dead?

Do they remember invisible music, the unholy silence of dreams in tunnels surrounded by light?

These are their favourite family times, their hearts separated by a few inches of bone and skin, so close she can feel the call and response when he reads the newspaper to her or they watch the evening news on television. "This is our story," the wise child tells her anxious mother, who doesn't want her only daughter anywhere near the disturbing archives of grief.

"Tune in, turn on. What was it we said in the duck and cover generation born in the shadow of Hiroshima, "Sooner or later, someone will bring the good news."

Now her distraught mother puts herself in between her child and the screen, like the girl who stood in front of the bulldozers in Gaza. She buys her husband a pair of ear-phones, so he can plug into the dumb show.

"Remember how I learned to read lips when they shouted us out of the first garden," says the wise child who remembers every one of her lifetimes. She covers her ears with her hands, reminds her mother that there are no secrets between fathers and daughters who have been to the light fantastic and back. They are the ones who can hear with their eyes. They are the ones we are counting on now.