



Source: Paul McGeough, 'Witness won't let Saddam intimidate him', *Sydney Morning Herald online*, 07/12/05.

Tags: corporeality, film  
Writer/s: Ross Gibson

© 2008 Barbara Campbell and the writer/s

When he came to, all his senses had shut down.

Except for one quarter of one sense.

Out of his left eye he could discern partial images. Shifty patterns deprived of details. No shadow-tone, no depth of field.

But he felt something like a *paradox*. Strange word...hmmnn.

The paradox was this: within his blur of vision, some things were intensified too—field-edges and primary colours were more emphatic; the slightest movement gave him an electrical sizzle. And the fact that he could hear nothing, smell nothing, taste nothing, the fact that he could detect no grade or grain with his skin—all this somehow *amped* the slender signal of vision that was getting through. It all meant that this salvaged gleam of shifting light—the little bit that was getting in—this little bit had to comprise a full quarter of one sense.

Plus, he had some recall too. That word 'paradox'. He *remembered* this word. And he quarter-remembered some dopey axiom...'in the land of the blind...something, something, something...is king'.

He got little flashes. Most of them, he accepted as memories. Personal-TV pictures making it through a storm-front. But it was feasible, he realised, that some of these visions were *actually* happening. He made a list as they came to him:

Brown smears on a ceiling;

A golden hue shimmering off a pool of piss on an easterly patio;

A tyre print that looks like the foot marks left by a crow;

Two unwelcome men boarding a fishing-boat;

A sky like in Egypt;

A nun—her white, starchy headpiece;

Four dogs on a footpath, each one lying on its left side;

Blood on a settee. And a chocolate-brown toupee;

Water darkening round the entrance to a crab-pot.

Thunder muttering in the sunseting west.

Did he *hear* that last one? 'Thunder muttering in the sunseting west'. Or is the rumbling sound just something he put there for himself, because he was seeing the storm clouds, remembering what goes with them? Or might it be possible? Might his senses be coming back?

So, there was nothing to do but wait for his body's occasional news reports. What did his flesh have for him? Was his nervous system maybe booting back up?

He spent the rest of the night asking himself:

'Is this happening in front of me, right now, or am I remembering it? Or maybe I'm wanting it? Or fearing it? Maybe I'm so full of static that I'm just conjuring *everything*, all outlined and scarlet-coloured? I can't smell it or taste it yet. Or can I? Is something coming back? I can't reach out for it yet, can't feel the mass of the world yet? Or can I? Maybe right now, maybe I'm getting something else coming back?'

MAYBE! This little word 'maybe' flared for him from time to time, like a rescue-worker striking safety matches way off across the harbour.

Then, other times, an enemy-thought would come sit with him, whispering: 'Maybe total darkness would be better?'

So he sat down and he waited. The Past, the Present, all his Wishes, all his Fears—everything was face-to-face inside his head. These abstractions, these phantasms, each of them skulking together. Inside his head.

Along comes another memory: the last scene of *Reservoir Dogs*. **All of them face-to-face inside his head!** But this time the film's been re-cast and re-mixed. This time he's got a special, iridescent print that's playing just for him. His bung eye's a projector, re-jigged. All that bright light is bouncing off a mirror, beaming these scenes just for him. Private. 180 degrees inverted. Inside his head.

It's a memory. *Reservoir Dogs!*...*Au Revoir les Enfants!*...*À la recherche du temps perdu*.

Yes, there's a chance most of it will come back.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Ross Gibson.*