

Story for performance #210
webcast from Sydney at 08:08PM, 16 Jan 06



Source: Andrew Sullivan, 'Truths behind the great Iraqi shambles', *The Sunday Times* in *The Australian online*, 16/01/06.

Tags: corporeality, intimacy, animals, seasons, water

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What happened?
I told you, I ran into a bus stop.
Right. Are you okay?
Yeah...I'm fine...my top lip is a bit swollen though.
You should put some ice on it.
We don't have any ice...I was thinking maybe you can get some on the way home?
No, it's too hot to move. I might be a while.
Okay...uh...are you coming home tonight?
I don't know.
Oh okay...I'm sorry about, y'know...
Yeah, well...listen, I gotta go now I just wanted to check if you were okay.
So...are you coming home?
I told you, I don't know!
Okay, okay...um...well...how're you?
Good. I'm tired and I'm hot. I'm gonna go!
Well...okay...I'll see you whenever?...I love you.
Yeah...
Happy New Year.
Yeah. Happy New Year. Bye.

And this was that. The phone was heavy in his hand. His fingers were tiny spiders holding it and they gave way making the phone thud dully to the carpeted floor. This day was the hottest summer's day on record. He lay naked on the couch with a wet facecloth moving lethargically of its own accord, over and under his wretched body. The air was a headache. It throbbed thick. All things were made of the sun and it burnt his eyes to look at them. The book shelf, the single black leather chair, his left thigh and big toe, the broken mug left over from the night before, the television—all cruelly sedating him with a stifling, ominous silence.

He could hear nothing outside. Outside was dead. Earlier

before, all manner of birds had crashed stupid against the sliding door of his balcony, crashing singed feathers onto the balcony floor. Some birds had flown into his bedroom to find solace under his bed, only to find heat waiting for them in a black suit. Families of crows, Indian mynas and magpies trapped under a disguise of refuge. The last crow for help was finalised after the legs of the bed melted away, collapsing the entire base on top of all their beseeching bodies. And then silence. He could hear nothing. Not by the birds under the bed, the humming of the fridge or the television turned on, not even by the pool.

His inner-city apartment block had a private pool that before this day was populated every day by screaming everybody who lived on the block. He got up to look outside from his balcony, feathers on his feet. He saw that the pool was empty of water and on the vacant floor were the shrivelled bodies of swimmers, one who he recognised from Christmas day. The swimmers' legs were still moving as if being shocked by small stout triggers of electricity. He looked around the pool area then noticed a woman walking deliriously around the perimeter: her hair smeared all over her face, and she was mumbling to herself, making faces as if wanting to cry. He saw that she was chewing her thumb. He strained his ears to hear what she was saying under her hot breath. 'Swim...I feel like a swim...swim...', she kept repeating. And then with a sudden bout of delirious energy, she jumped into the air and landed head first onto the crowded floor. Her blood instantly dried, made crystal by the sun.

I hate summer. I always have...

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Brian Fuata.