



Source: Ed O'Loughlin, 'Militants winning favour in Palestinian poll', *Sydney Morning Herald online*, 21/01/06.

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It is the total or partial obscuring of one celestial body by another.

It is the period of time during which such a phenomenon occurs.

It is any dimming or obstruction of light.

It is a loss of importance, power, fame, especially through overshadowing by another.

It is the dreams of many, when the moon overtakes the sun, when sleep overtakes wakefulness, when stories write themselves behind closed eyes.

I am a weak girl, I am a tired girl, I am a bad girl. I am lonely, but I do not care to change. I have lived in my room for the past six years; my existence confined to a small white box consisting of my computer, my television, a bed, and a small window that I have covered up with cardboard looking out on the Tokyo streets.

I leave my room every once in a while at night to buy groceries from a 24 hour convenience store. I go when I long to prove that I do in fact exist; that I am not just a disembodied voice in my mind. Basked in the glow of neon light I feel the stare of a thousand eyes bearing down on me, even though I know there is only me and the clerk. My breathing quickens, my heart races, and my head aches. When I get back to the calm darkness of my room it is almost morning, and I fall asleep in a cool sweat.

I am afraid of my dreams, the people from my past overshadow me as gross distorted caricatures always haunting my present. When I started having these dreams, I decided that I would stay, stay here in my hole. Today my mom brought me *Notes from the Underground* and I fell asleep reading it. I dreamt that I was walking down a long boulevard. I see him, a large man dressed all in black, his white face blank coming towards me. As I am about to knock into him I wake up, it is night, and I am swathed in darkness except for a thin ray of light pushing through the gap in my window.

In a brightly lit shower room about one square meter in dimension, tiled white from floor to ceiling, I stand neither naked nor fully clothed. Suddenly near the soap dish at a corner, the wall opens up three inches wide in diameter and a tongue hairy and dark darts out. I scream.

It breaks out of the wall. The tongue is that of a monstrous creature that displaces me. Now out of the room, I push the door trying to lock in the monster. Then crying for help, I run to the other side of the building and find myself in a dimly lit library where earlier there were people. Now no one is there but I feel safe.

The snakes, the lion, the fire...The story is centred in and around my home amidst a vague acknowledgment of other human presence. A semi-wild lion is prowling around the house and sometimes in the house. It is a vicious lion and will maim or take life, maybe my life. I need to protect myself and there are also others that need protection. There is a sense of a person in trouble outside the house but I am the one who is in danger from the marauding lion. I search for a safe haven outside. I find a large structure held up by posts and beams that I then enter. I notice a person lying comatose on the floor within.

My footsteps alert a 'host' of snakes. Instead of being terrified by the sound of my footsteps, they are attracted to me. Three snakes approach at lightning speed and surround me, they are poised, ready to strike. They are coloured light brown with creamy, lined underbellies with heads that are raised from the ground, hissing. I see their fangs. Just as they are about to strike, I grab a snake with each of my hands, around their throats, three snakes—two hands. The snake in the right hand is caught, the snake in the left hand cannot be grasped quickly enough—its fangs graze me and blood trickles down my arm. I know they carry poison of a most deadly nature. I know this poison has entered my bloodstream but I am able to accept this.

Meanwhile, in the orchard, at the back of the shed, a fire rages out of control. It is a fire of great intensity, uncontrollable, raging towards the back of the shed and the fuel storage tanks. I dial in the number 02 but remember that the phone number for fire emergencies has been changed to 000. Nevertheless, help arrives and I wake.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from stories by Deb McBride, Christina Juhasz-Wood, Judy Freya Sibayan and Lyn Patone.*