Story for performance #301 webcast from near Dungog at 05:30PM, 17 Apr 06



Source: Marie Colvin, 'Tehran readies suicide bombers', The Sunday Times in The Australian online, 17/04/06. Tags: corporeality, food, storytelling, travel, surveillance Writer/s: Anna Gibbs, Nola Farman, Clare Grant, Barbara Campbell, Michelle Outram, Deb McBride, Robyn McKenzie, Stephen Rodgers, Victoria Spence, Ingrid Wassenaar, Margaret Trail, John O'Brien

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Something is pulling at me. Little tugs at the edge of awareness. My ankle is twisted under. My knee wants to straighten. I feel myself pushing out and rolling over. As I turn a sudden warmth seems to coat my cheek, my ear, the side of my neck. My eyes open to light, sunlight, and I want to be free of these white sheets. I pull at them with the arm that has broken out and as my limbs realign themselves I sink back a little into the pillow's indentation and breathe in. The smell of coffee infuses my body with a kind of urgency and that's the moment it comes to me in wordless impulse that I am one, I have one. I take it all in. The room, the olive wood chair, the heavy wardrobe, the high window, and the door with the iron handle. Suddenly I am hungry.

I can see the tray. The stainless steel glints in the morning light. I sit up and pull it towards me, pillow in the small of my back to relieve the ache. What's all this then? An opening of lids: plums, a gruel—no, custard—eggs, scrambled. tea and toast.

My body jumps to attention, saliva collects in pools in my mouth, cheek reservoirs overflow and give way to swallowing. Throat sore. I have forgotten how, no not really, dry cracked earth gives way and I dip the spoon into the custard, to my nose. It's hot. Steam on nostrils. Familiar, but not identifiable by smell alone, reminding me of someone, something I know I knew, once, was close to, was fed by, loved.

My eyes focus. Vision clears. I see the room. I feel myself in the room, feel my flesh, bones, the blood rushing to and from my heart, pumping. Aaaah, eaten now, breath, breathing, moving. More tea, custard, tea, custard, toast. As if I am eating on behalf of someone else, I ask my hunger, is this enough now? If I can indeed go on and may I hope for more?

I can watch her from out here in the corridor. The slow movements and her eyes on her fingers as if she's really not quite sure whose they are. She should be just about ready now. They all go through that, I've noticed, as if they think it's never happened to anyone else.

This one is slumped over the tray with a kind of heavy droop to her neck. Her hair has gone a bit grey in parts. What is she seeing in that little grey bowl of gruel?

The tips of her fingers are trying to find something. It's as if they know before she does that they have to put something into her mouth. Yes. There's the fingers going for that piece of toast. She makes a sound. I'll go and get the release form, while she surfaces. I like watching the moment when the head lifts up and the eyes actually light on another person's face. Shouldn't be long now. She's been a good one.

I take my denim jacket from the hanger. It's been ironed. Who irons denim? The breast pockets have been fastened. The brand name printed on them is 'nobody'. Ha ha. I see someone has scrubbed in vain at the ink splotch at the bottom edge of the left pocket. I remember that, sleeping in a train from Aceh to Medan: the ink leaked through jacket, shirt, singlet to make Rorschach blots on my left breast. It didn't come off for two days. That trip was the first time I entered a mosque. Breath left me. Architecture of light and water. The first time I saw a yellow gibbon: constellation of golden pom poms hooping through trees so green they were silver. The first time I tasted ting-ting jahe—ginger sweets that lashed my head on my neck.

I'm humming the chorus from *Crazy Right Now*: oh oh, oh oh, oh oh oh oh. Oh oh, oh oh, oh oh oh oh.

I discovered a game when I was little. When you go to a place you've never been, you imagine how it will be. It's never like you imagine. Not a bit. So, I imagine where I'm going. I am dancing to get out of here, I am dancing to meet someone new.

It was time to go.

She padded out through the open door, and noticed for the first time that it did not fit the frame, but was too short, and cut on the bias. Outside, a corridor. Glass doors lay ahead of her. Brilliant sun squared them off into an aquarium of light. She headed towards them.

In an alcove to one side, behind a fingered frond of palm, stood a barrel-chested mahogany desk. There was nothing on it, but a telephone, a printer, and a young girl, with a bare midriff. She was looking at the traveller with a fixed boredom.

'We always ask our members to fill out a short questionnaire. Please use this pen.'

The traveller looked down at the printed sheet, still emerging from the printer. Towards the bottom it said, 'If you do not wish to receive further promotional material from our organization, please tick the box.'

The traveller lent down over the desk, took the black biro the girl was holding out to her, and signed her name across the bottom of the sheet.

Then she lent against the two glass doors and left.

Blue line, flexing underbelly, quiet along the beige, sisal weave carpet. Up varnished legs, across pine top—rustic construction—sanded tongue and groove. No risk of splinters here. No danger of this table biting back.

Stay focused. Just follow the line. Just keep following the line. It's found a groove, snuggling there, caressing the timber's shallow valley.

There! There! Can you see it? There! The head. At last the head; one single clear plastic fang glinting in the incandescent light. It's seen me. Or has it? Stay still. One-forty over 90. It's okay, I know what to do. I've seen this. That man, Eric Worrel, down at La Perouse with the hessian bags of writhing cable. Index finger and thumb, ready, poised.

Pounce. Finger on top of head. Thumb under jaw. Keep that jaw open. Flex flailing wildly behind. Don't think about that. Just focus on the head. Tail snaps against forearm. Stay firm. Tooth fully exposed now. This is how I want it. I've got it now. I've got hold of it. Don't stop. Into the port. Jack it in. All the way in.

Got it, first go. That little click home. That's how I know. The bite, the bits. The flow. How much is enough? Sixty-four kilobits a second up. That should do it. That sounds right. That should be enough to get this story out. I know the way, the route, the routers, the server, the links, the dish, the disk, the way out.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from stories by the participants in the Easter Writers' Camp: Barbara Campbell, Nola Farman, Anna Gibbs, Clare Grant, Deb McBride, Robyn McKenzie, John O'Brien, Michelle Outram, Stephen Rodgers, Victoria Spence, Margaret Trail and Ingrid Wassenaar.