



Source: Daniel McGrory, 'Baghdad anger at Bush's undiplomatic palace', *The Times in The Australian online*, 04/05/06.

Tags: [evidence](#), [violence](#), [workplace](#)

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They didn't even knock on the door, they just crashed it down. He was collecting his papers when they came, he was reading a letter regarding a case of a woman whose apartment had been taken from her, supposedly legally by a distant cousin who was on very good terms with the overweight school friend of the minister for agriculture. The woman had been forced to live in a nearby village with friends, and she had made it into the city to see him, but it was a delicate case and he didn't know how to approach it. So he was there, standing by his desk, he had just gotten up to look out the window, it was late afternoon and there was a yellow-grey haze hovering over the rooftops, which were a deeper grey, slanting towards the even greyer streets below. There were a few pigeons sitting on the edges of the rooftops, the distant sounds of children, of people getting home, the squeaking of trams. He wasn't going to go home, home was too difficult. He was planning to have dinner in a nearby eatery, to set up on the divan in his office and to sleep there the night, to sleep on this difficult case, hoping that a solution would come to him.

And that is how he was caught, mid movement, the edge of the letter still in his hand, mid step towards the window, the image of the rooftops with their faint glow of colour from the falling light.

The door crashed open, the formidable sound of wood splintering as the lock was dislodged from its place. The letter fell from his hand. A small gust of air rustled the other papers on his desk.

He turned around, disoriented, caught off-guard, mid step, not in balance. Head turning to the side. Nothing to protect him.

The pale evening beauty of the light outside disappeared. The normal faded from view. A film fell over his eyes.

Three men in dark raincoats walked in, their belts were done up tight. He almost smiled to himself as he recognised the cliché. They really do wear those, he thought to himself. He didn't have time for other thoughts.

Suddenly there was one man behind him, holding his hands, his wrists, hard, one throwing his papers onto the

floor, sweeping movements, crashing down everything in one moment. Here it is. Here is your life's work. Here is what you are: nothing. All that you are, all that you have made. All that you have written, all that you think you are, can be swept away. You think therefore you are not. At that moment a punch was delivered to his stomach. He didn't even see who did it, he would have liked to remember his face, to know the face which went with the brutal action. He struggled for breath and a strange grunting sound came out of his mouth.

In the moment of recoiling a blindfold was wrapped tight around his eyes, tighter than could be necessary for any reason. He heard paper tearing. Throwing them wasn't enough, he thought. He felt something tear inside his chest. A shiver went through him, his nerves began to tremble with cold.

This is it, a thought went through him, this undignified, messy, swirling moment, this is the ending of my life. There was no time to react, to reflect, to think a goodbye, to remember his daughter's face. His body was trying to regain its breath, he was being shunted down the corridor to the door, he heard the door pulled shut, but not quite (the lock broken, a warning being left to others.)

He was half pushed, half lifted down the stairs, tripping, struggling. One made a joke—'come on, the taxi is waiting, we'll take you to your girlfriend's.'

For a split second an image fluttered through him, of the Seine, in Paris, the light reflected from the yellow stones, the water rushing.

He felt himself pulled through the front door of the apartment building, felt the pavement under his feet and the outside air brush his cheek. A car door opened, he was pushed in quickly.

He knew it was a black car. It went with the raincoats. The engine started, the car lurched into the street.

It was exactly two minutes and thirty-three seconds since the feel of paper between his fingers, and the yellow evening light over the rooftops.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Bagryana Popov.*