



Source: Steven Erlanger, 'Gaza fighting pauses for funerals', *New York Times* in *International Herald Tribune* online, 08/07/06.

Tags: [animals](#), [nostalgia](#), [food](#), [storytelling](#), [sport](#)

Writer/s: [Annemaree Dalziel](#)

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The story, he said, has a beginning, a middle and a climax. Then it ends.

But you have to mention Cuba.

Havana she said, when the tides are high. Waves break across the road, everyone carries on as before. Little kids wait for a wave. They sit in crenellated gaps in the sea wall, defending the harbour. A wave hits the wall and spray shoots the gap. Shriek across the road, arrows from battlements; then back to the bow. Over and over.

Cab drivers go through, windscreen wipers squeak—if they work at all.

If there is a windscreen.

Relics, clapped-out taxis work the city. Is it Australia, all those old Holdens?

A moment long gone from the days of her youth? No Chevies here, but lots of old Holdens...

We should go there, she said, while it's still dilapidated.

That's going back in time they say.

That's right, she says, that's what I want, years back from here.

We should go.

All of us, you with your beers and your lemons and shiny pink cheeks.

Let's go to Cuba.

The story, he said. Let us go around the table.

It's the buzz in the night, she said, talk about that.

And they waited. And wondered and chewed on her words.

But the night has gone silent. Yet they waited to hear.

Breathless, no stirring, no whisper of air. No currents no murmur no rustling trees.

Cold windless nights, and the chill of the desert where frosts split great boulders and ice crackling grass.

Stars snap, but soundlessly, stars can't break through.

They are so far away they are icy and mute.

The silence is chill but the days are too warm.

We sit by the fire, there's good cheese, there's beer.

And laughter and teasing and stories and people. And

now we know:

global warming has brought silent nights.

Around the table they talk about formals, the fifths and the thirds. The Principal's team, football and beautiful faces. They talk about rivalry, shopping and pimp suits.

They talk about lemons and bottle shops and lips. Rolling with the ignition off to pick up more beer. They talk about friendship and kindergarten stories. That's where they met.

But T was in Queensland. I don't remember anything, he said, about Queensland. Except going down a water slide and finding a cricket. I found a cricket in my bed she said.

It flew in through the window. It must have been summer, a noisier time. Just like you people. Are you two joined at the hip because of crickets?

Our eternal present, she thought, with memories of crickets.

The story, he said, has a beginning, a middle and a climax. Then it ends.

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Our eternal present, she thought, with memories of crickets.

She thought of that place where the men played with bats, where the summer cicadas and shimmering heat lifted views of the mountain and oil from the trees. Ants in the Swiss roll, acrid and squirming. Men on the pitch, bats belting leather and balls beating bats.

A plane overhead and a fly in her ear, invading her mind.

The fly had to go, it had come in too close.

A frantic invader with escape on full bore.

The fly had to go but was trapped in an airway. An ear

way a sound way the fly was psychotic.

A crazy reminder of maddening people, the fly had to go.

She blew and she shook and she hopped and she jumped.

But still it vibrated, a drill in her head.

What did they know as they chattered their gossip?

What could they know of a fly in her ear?

What did they care of planes strafing people in their banter and drinking, beer and sweet wine?

They were busy in memory: when best friend kissed boyfriend.

So gossip and comment and laughter prevailed.

Beer from Vietnam, wine from Australia and flies from the bush and the windcreens of cars.

And the fly was a gossip a fast-fading visit that left in a porridge of pulverized wings.

The silence that followed was blissful, transcendent, the marks of its feet a small beat in time.

But if time simply passes, then why do I mark it?

Why link these stories, so random so weightless?

They sound like the fly insistent and present drumming and strumming but waiting to make a momentary impact, a route to the next.

When I was little and begging my father to tell me a story he always said this:

Shall I tell you a story? About John Dory?

Shall I begin it?

That's all that's in it!

Shall I tell you another? About his brother?

Shall I begin it?

That's all that's in it.

A circular story that I couldn't shut out. I always knew the answer but never dropped the bait. I wanted something special, the story of John Dory. And if that was a fizzer I did care about his brother. I would protest and demand a real story but just like the fly the teasing went on. And then it would stop.

Sleep would come, the oblivion of night with its promise of morning.

The silent night.

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The silent night.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Annemaree Dalziel.*