



Source: Steven Erlanger and Jad Mouawad, 'Diplomats seek foreign patrols for Mideast', *New York Times* in *International Herald Tribune* online, 18/07/06.

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In Bargelt's considered opinion the sandstorms were getting worse. Starting earlier, blowing harder, lasting longer. He'd been trudging west for days through hilly, rocky desert dotted with mesquite, taking shelter as necessary in small caves and depressions. Coated in fine sand, he rustled as he moved; his skin felt papery. He wondered, if he ever gave up, should he just walk out into a storm one day, let the sand file him away altogether. Then he saw a cow. Or something moved, yards away, that Bargelt glimpsed through the mesquite, which he thought was a cow. Bargelt, dropped flat, could barely remember mammals of any size. He wasn't sure if he was scared because something was there, or because he might be going mad. Crouching, he made his way toward where he thought it was. Dropped to the ground again. Because it was. Scrawny, all spine and ribs. A cow. A rough rope looped around its neck, the cow was tethered to the base of one of the larger mesquite bushes. Bargelt took a wide berth around it, back in the direction he'd come from, paused to make sure no one was around, then ran for it up a ridge where he thought he'd have a view. Running from a cow, he thought. What next.

Bargelt found a small crevice on the side of the rise, two good-sized boulders embedded in a thicket. Hunkered down, he watched. Hours passed, nothing happened. Bargelt repressed the urge to laugh. He'd run from the cow, now he was watching it take a smelly shit. But that wasn't the end of the story. A woman appeared from over the rise, further along where it was steeper, to his right as he looked down. Skinny of course, cut-off jeans, boots, t-shirt, dark hair hacked off above the shoulder, held back by a bandana. Come on, Moo, she said, looping the cow's rope and leading it away. Bargelt followed at a distance. The woman led the cow over the ridge. Bargelt held back for a few minutes before approaching the top. The land dropped further and much more steeply into a wide U-shaped formation on the other side. Bargelt was on the eastern arm of the U, which opened to the north. A couple of hundred yards below and in front of him were three openings, maybe four or five feet high, which might be caves. The woman led the cow down into the U, and retied it to a stake in the ground. Two goats were roaming about. Bargelt saw another woman, raking sand, and a man sitting on a rock doing something with strips of fabric or leather.

Out along the western arm was what transfixed Bargelt. Machine, he said. He hadn't seen a machine that worked since longer than he'd seen a cow. The sand ruined everything. A windmill. Unlike any windmill, anyone had ever seen, he thought. Bargelt thought it must be built of mesquite, maybe taproots, tough, gnarly and twisted. It was about twelve feet high, a rough, four-sided,

lattice-work pyramid tower, but the shapes of the wood it was built of gave it the look of some unfinished or abandoned sculpture. A kind of pole ran down the center, constructed of bits and pieces of wood lashed or pinned together. The whole thing was topped by a round fan of metal blades, idle in the still heat, with a rusty tail section behind. Salvage, Bargelt surmised. They have a well, he gasped. What Bargelt couldn't understand was how the thing stood up, for one thing, and how it worked, for another. The storms could come from any direction, but there was very little wind, otherwise. He'd find out, though, as he began to sense the stirring that signaled the sand was coming.

Bargelt had been so taken by the windmill, he hadn't noticed the people, leading the goats and cow into a cave. He thought they had taken shelter, risked a quick run down the ridge to a cut under an overhang, not quite a cave, where he thought he'd be okay. Squeezed in, as the wind came up, Bargelt watched the blades begin to spin. The storm built slowly. As the wind gathered intensity, the blades spun faster, turning the rickety pole in turn, and the windmill began to move, blades spinning ever faster, pole looping and threatening to fly apart, frame struts bulging, the whole crazy thing jiggling and dancing. Just when Bargelt tasted sand, the three he'd seen and another man and woman sprinted from cave to windmill. One woman scampered up the structure like a monkey, heaved on something Bargelt couldn't see that turned the blades away from the wind, then leapt and grabbed the tail and hung there, a counterweight to stop the blades. Soon as she was in position, the other four—one at each corner of the base—began untying bindings and removing sections of wood, in turn, so the pyramid lurched from side to side, the woman above hanging on for dear life as she was swung about, the machine coming down like some giant slowly brought to his knees, the central pole folding down like his spine. They dismantled it in minutes, bringing the blade unit down and lying it on its side. One of them dragged it away, two gathered wood and bindings together in sheets and ran to the cave, while the last two bent over the hole that Bargelt could see, now, and hauled up some kind of water-screw, which they carried awkwardly to shelter as well. Bargelt was breathless, watching. A minute after they'd demolished the windmill, the sand hit. As usual, he pulled his coat over his head and tried to sleep through the roar.

Bargelt woke with the earliest glimmer of dawn. Already, the sand around the well was raked. One of the women lay parts out, blade unit at the top, while the other two began tying pieces of wood together.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Frazer Ward.*