



Source: Edward Wong, 'Doubts emerge on effectiveness of Iraqi leader', *New York Times* in *International Herald Tribune* online, 21/09/06.
Tags: corporeality, death, politics
Writer/s: [mr.snow](#)

© 2008 Barbara Campbell and the writer/s

I once was a wise and powerful man. My word was respected. Other important men listened to me over cognac and cigars. I've done terrible things that nobody can fault me for. I've fucked important men in double breasted suits in fine establishments and public places with smiles on their faces and bile in their hearts, their lovers and lawyers sitting with them, none the wiser. I've lethalled multinationals over tea and scones before midday. Governments quietly toppled about me. Social orders decayed.

Once, in a hospital I was closing, in a poor neighbourhood in a flailing, deathbed country, I met a young man with blind and creamy eyes. I made it my business not to see these people. Mostly I didn't even know they existed. My numbers book no longer rated them; they fell below my bottom line. But he could see me. He, a man, thin and filthy. Me, a god so far above, so far far above. He saw me, with blind eyes. 'Please, sir', he said. Just that.

He died.

Then and there in my mind, he died, perhaps weeks or years later in fact, but he did die. It is not so much that I felt it, or knew it, more like that I heard it—it is not like I was told, I can't really describe it, but it was as if there was a quietness in the world. Like a candle blowing out, an exhalation, a tapering off as the smoky wick spews forth a silent cloud and dies. Nobody knew, nobody saw, the hospital was closed, I don't know where he went. I heard him go.

Nothing changed, though; I continued doing what I had done forever, a death-angel in merger-acquisitions, a robber-baron. Lives continued to peel apart around me.

Though I could hear this nothing. A space. A non-space hole. It grew. Inside my head it grew, grew so loud, that it began to ooze out of my mouth. Like black blood, falling over my chin and splashing down my shirt, leaving bloody footprints in my wake. No one saw it. I couldn't see it, but I heard it. A quietness. Slowly I stopped listening to the world, hearing only nothing. Stumbling along, caving in structures around me, making bad moves, false starts, making worse deals. I turned off the power of a country. Deleting lives. People began to see the havoc that I had wrought. The glamour had faded. They began to see through me. I began to see through me.

Then Politics had her wicked way with me. She lifted me up to her harsh glare, and she took me apart, at once visible, at once naked. Under a moon-day sun, under a howling sky, vomiting viscera, pale and raked. Falling from so high.

No longer am I the man I was. Not important, not wise—no one listens anymore, no one sees my formerous gloriness. Only my bad teeth and my bad bad breath. My breath hangs loosely on my bones. My feet don't touch the ground. I am worn thin.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by mr.snow.