



Source: Paul Sheehan, 'Fighting for minds in a war of fear', *Sydney Morning Herald online*, 04/11/06.
Tags: [corporeality](#), [violence](#), [sound](#), [war](#)
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Make no mistake: the intent is to injure not disarm.
Out-injure the enemy and you will survive. Survival is victory.

Sweating cold, the whole inside comes apart-from, drops down and heaves, my slimy brow, skin milky, stomach seized by heat, arse cramped. Torso lurches in a spasm, no longer my body, vomit exploding from the mouth, shit spraying from the arse. It feels like drowning, but hot, struggling in heavy wet clothes, head sucking in air, I am snapped in half again. Foul, choked, glued-solid with stench and pain. My head: a tiny cold point, trying to stay calm, my shaking hands, a wrecked force. My body, wild.

The mallet-blow connects like a falling anvil. Collapse, head bouncing rubber on the concrete. The throat is stepped on, stomach kicked, spine whipped and twisted. Legs held down and genitals attacked, stabbed. The blade glances once off bone, ribboning the skin, and then with the next thrust drives straight through it. All that's hard splinters and gives way, soft flesh is shredded, pulped, comes off in lumps. Strings of what was solid now unplugged. Flaps, ragged, oozing, liquid pouring. The knife sticks and has to be wrenched around and out. Everybody yelling and barking. Pain so absolute that everything that ever was, is over.

There is a huge gash down the boy's side, thick furls of red tuna meat and pale fat overflow to the ground, blood covers his peeled back, the earth, and pools inside the wound. Stench, dirt, his curly body-hair thick over everything. Even the dogs are horrified: they cower, will not come near.

My head is pushed back into a wooden brace and his thumb is lined up against the bridge of my nose, its tip pinching my eyelid aside. Stiffening, he jabs his thumb into the eyesocket. There is a hideous tear as the eyeball comes away. I am shrieking, am all noise, feel it squashed into a jelly oval, blood and slime pours into nose and

mouth. I choke and bellow, spitting as he jabs his fingers, socket-busting, elbow digging into my shoulder, his body dense, hot, shaking. He braces, tears the eyeball from its hole, drops back and away. Shocking breeze where his body had been.

I collect it in the chest, my eyeball hurled like a stone.

I think perhaps the only sound left is breath struggling with water. Everything is wet here, more snot piss blood juice shit than skin. And everything smells. It is almost comforting: fine stinking blades pierce each skull without crushing.

Then I find, in fact, that I cannot recognise any sound at all.

Click: Key in lock? Rifle butt? First raindrop?

Step: Man? Rat? Woman? Dog?

Sigh: Of wind? Sleeping child? Cloth falling from the frame?

Tap: Nest building bird? New neighbour or another wall?

Hiss: Hot meat or lizard chat?

Word: Unheard. Your name? A curse?

Story? Tori? Toy?

t -oy t-oy t-oy

...I cannot hear, I cannot hear it.

s-orry

s-tory

s-orry

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Margaret Trail.