

Story for performance #750
webcast from Paris at 09:54PM, 10 Jul 07



Source: Hassan M. Fattah, 'Growing talk of Jordanian role in Palestinian affairs', *New York Times online*, 10/07/07.

Tags: bombings, dreams, shape-shifting

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At 2:12am I heard the first of the sirens. I know this because I remember the shock of the noise startling me into a small jump out of bed. I hit my head hard on the beam of the ceiling and immediately fell to my pillow, my head facing the red numbers of my clock. I lay there staring at the digital time until it switched to 2:13. Seeing the numbers change always feels lucky to me; like I've witnessed some secret act of the universe in progress. But this wasn't a lucky moment—anything but. After I gained a bit of composure and realized where I was, I got out of bed, put on my blue slippers, and walked to my chair. I sat down and stared at the electric blue screen of my computer. From my desk I could see out the window and into the blood orange sky. Usually these sirens were just tests, but lately things had been escalating, so I logged on to see if there was any news.

But there was nothing. There was no mention of shots fired; no mention of bombs dropped; no mention of anything destructive. In fact, the main news item was about a children's garden project that one of the wealthiest men in the world had setup. I remember this photograph of a gapped-tooth boy dragging a bag of soil that was bigger than he was. And in the back of the photo, a man in a suit smiling. There was something creepy about that photo. I walked back over to my bed and lay down.

The red numbers said 2:48. I closed my eyes and drifted back to sleep.

Now, this next part may seem hard to believe but I'm not making any of this up. After I closed my eyes, I must have had a strange, dark dream because when I woke to the second siren I was shaking violently and huddled in a small pile under my bed. Sometimes my dreams overtake me so much that I move through the room, or do awkward night things. I once drove all the way to the house I grew up in, only to wake in my car, in my old driveway to someone banging on my car windscreen. Dreams are dangerous that way.

When the second siren woke me, I knew there was something going on. I looked at the clock and it said 2:12. Or, I thought it did. I looked again, and it said 2:48. That seemed wrong as well, so I looked again and this time it said 3:49. I gathered myself, got dressed, and went to my computer again. This time, I didn't waste time on the internet searching for clues. I picked up my headset, logged on to SKYPE and dialed the number.

As the phone rang, the third siren went off and the whole world seemed to move sideways. I don't exactly know what happened in literal terms, but it felt as if I was suddenly a vapour. It felt as if I decomposed right there on the spot and reconfigured myself as a mist. I floated out through the crack in my window and into the darkness of night.

Yes, this is hard to believe, but I can only tell you what it felt like. You can believe me or not. It doesn't really matter in the end.

I floated out there in the night, surrounded by the sounds of sirens, of explosions, whipped around by the hurtling metal of flying machines for killing. It was happening. After all these years of waiting for the siren to be followed by another it was finally happening. And I was floating up to the sky to defeat the storm clouds with my powerful thoughts. It was my moment to bring the sun into the world—to end the exhausting waiting.

At this point, I remember coughing ("Can a vapour cough", I thought) and gasping for air. And then a feeling like drowning. I felt myself becoming heavier and heavier until I seemed to land with a thud. I blinked my eyes and looked to my right. The clock's red sticks of light said 2:12. I blinked my eyes and looked around me.

There I was, here where I am now. In my room, sitting in my bed and blinking. The clock isn't moving. It stays at 2:12 and the light outside stays dark orange, and the computer stays shining back a blue electric light into the darkness and I cannot bring myself to dial the number or look at the internet headlines or to do anything much.

And that's how this started—how this moment started and how it ended too. I've been in this moment forever it seems, and I'm certain it will always be this way. I'll be sitting here, on my bed, or at the window, looking out, or staring at my computer keyboard, forever in this moment. The sirens don't blow anymore. My body doesn't return to vapour. I just sit here wondering what happened. And one day something will change. My only wish is that when the clock does change, I will be able to gather myself and face the future. I'll be able to make the call. That is my only wish.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Peter S Petralia.