



Source: Helena Smith, 'Gul sworn in as Turkey's president', *Guardian Unlimited*, 29/08/07.

Tags: [language](#)

Writer/s: [Theron Schmidt](#)

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Advice for the traveller:

When in Rome, look a gift horse in the eye of the beholder. Put your money where your big mouth is. Read my lips: tongues will wag; heads will roll; eyes will have it out for you. I'd like to think I know a dead horse when I beat one, and these boots are made for hawking in the market for as much as I can get. Put your phone on vibrate. Put your hands on your head. Put anything metal in the tray. Howdy, stranger, did you pack your saddlebag yourself? Are you going to eat that? Would you like some help getting down from there? Assume the position. Assume responsibility. Assume nothing. It takes all kinds to make up this world: the affable anglophile, the laughable yank. Pardon me, is this country occupied? No, don't pull that one. I'm sorry—you can't smoke me out in here. You'll need to bring your own prayer mat. In fact, you'll need to bring your own religion. You should practice what you reach for. You should listen out for my signal failure. Could I get some help in here? Could you clean up after your message got erased? Watch out for children; they've got a head start on you. They've got their ear close to the ground. Retrace your step-parents. Redress your faultline. Reset your watch; there's been a change in the seasons. Find your true north-south divide. Keep your nose to the jody grind. Keep your arms inside the car at all timezones. Make sure you always reach out and touch someone. Check the forecast for hindsight. Objects in the mirror are close but no cigar. Stop me if you've heard this one before night falls. Stop waiting for someone else to do it. Keep watching the clockwork. Keep the car running for your life. Keep one eye on the weatherman. Watch out for your turn. Watch out for thieves operating in this hospital. They might steal your heart. Watch out for falling rock stars. Watch me now! Don't drink the water unless you can turn it into wine. Don't believe everything you read out loud. Look for hidden messages. Look before you jump to conclusions. Look out for your neighbour, the one who keeps getting up to go to the toilet. Have you seen him someplace before all this went wrong? What's the last thing you remember? What year is it? How old are you? Do you know where you are? Shouldn't things be different by now? This must be your lucky number. Or if not yours, I'm sure there's a culture somewhere where this one is lucky. The sun has almost set now—why don't you step out to get some more airtime? Just wave if you need something that's not on the menu. Sorry, it's just not in the credit cards for you today. Can you hold on a minute? Could you make it five? Do you have change for a tenner? Hold that thought; I've got a call coming through. Yes, hello.

[silence for the time it takes to read these words]

Yes, I'm online right now.

[silence for the time it takes to count down from five]

I don't know—everywhere I guess.

[silence for the time it takes to count these words]

Okay. Well. In your house definitely. Otherwise how would we be talking?

[silence for breathing]

I do.

[breathe]

Yes, I do know what you're thinking.

[pause for thought]

Because the words are coming up on the screen in front of me.

[silence for the time it takes you to leave something out]

Yes, this is some kind of joke.

[silence while you wait for the punchline]

No, I don't see anyone else laughing.

[silence is golden]

Yes, well, it's a living.

[silence for the time it takes you to leave something out]

I was going to say, it's a living room drama.

[silence for the time it takes you to remember something]

Can I tell you something?

[silence while you listen]

Can I tell you something now?

[silence while you wait]

I miss you.

[just a moment of silence]

I know. I miss you.

[an expectant silence]

I know. But I have to keep going.

[an awkward silence]

I'll be coming home soon.

[a hopeful silence]

Just as soon as I can.

[a generous silence]

I know what you're thinking, and...

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...it's okay if you're not thinking anything.

[a silent smile]

Just don't hang up.

[a silent approval]

Don't forget about me.

[a silent bond]

No, don't turn on the light...

[a silent wish]

...I won't be much longer.

[silence means approval]

So, goodbye.

[silence means acceptance]

I'll talk to you tomorrow.

[silence means goodbye]

Bye.

[silence for the time it takes to re-read these words]

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Theron Schmidt.