



Source: Greg Myre, 'Israel ends 38-year stay in Gaza strip', *New York Times* in *International Herald Tribune* online, 12/09/05.

Tags: [death](#), [shape-shifting](#), [animals](#)

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Shhhhhh.

Smell...

Salt? Sweat? Dead bird? Dry blood? You will know shortly. Don't try. No effort. Oh sweet. Poor little one. You are hot and sick. You have vomited up more than a small body should have inside. I know. You are all wet fur and slack jaw. I will sit here. I will not leave. Do you remember that little house on the fringe of the forest? Do you remember when we lived there?

Scent comes into you like colour. The bitterness of milk and charcoal, a draft under the door carries ferns and sweet dew. Clean humans smell gingery and salty. Dirty, they're like rotting meat in wet grass. Not a bad smell but very strong. It's the skin. Sweat licks up scent on human skin and spits it into the wind. You can smell them before they even get to the forest. They crash around stinking and shouting. Those huge eyes they have. What do they see with those eyes? Nothing at all the way they bash into things! I've never seen one be still for a breath of wind. Twitching. Even asleep. I've watched them. Even the little ones. They roll around and sweat. They are exactly like their own pigs. They should fuck—the pigs with the humans. Imagine the children. Fat but very noisy.

You forget you were ever one of them. I would go back if I could but I know I mustn't and now there are others involved. I will sit here. I will not move. I will never leave. But even a gesture, a dancestep can remind me. Sometimes a sound. Flicker of the ear. It's radiant. I have no fear at all now. Death is nothing. You chew on it or else it chews on you. Once when my friend showed me her babies, I would have chewed on them too! I did just a bit. Just to fit them in the mouth. She growled to warn me away. She was serious. It seems cruel to say it. But really it's nothing.

I will not leave. I will not even move. You are very sick, I know.

I'm very sick now. I thought it would be alright, that it would go on for longer, but my vision started to go fuzzy and I started to stagger, at first only in the dark but then in daylight too. Then I couldn't walk properly at all and I was thirsty all the time. I suppose it's bad for you. I suppose it's poison. But we couldn't stop.

It's hard to speak about the holes. But they're very important. When the change begins it comes from the rear first. The arse, the cunt. Excuse me, but that's how

you know it's working. The haunches push up into the gut and the arse and the cunt rise, become hot, stinging, like eyes. I'm sorry to say it. There's no shame. It's hard to speak about. You have never felt such feelings in the behind. Like being slapped, sitting naked in the snow, licked by a hot tongue. And fluids gush out of you, I don't know what, it doesn't smell that much, it's not shit or blood. I swear all of this happens, all at the same time. No effort at all.

It is quieter than you would think. Breezes have a hundred separate sounds. You are in quiet like water. Even running. You're very light. Sticks don't break under your weight, stones don't scatter, branches swish along your body but it's nothing like when you have skin, how they whip and cut. With fur, everything is warmer, drier, lighter. Fur holds everything, softens everything.

It is the happiest I have ever been. It's why we couldn't stop. You forget. The light amongst the leaves is marvellous. The body of another wolf indescribable. The fur is whipped sunshine, like cream, the muscles wood, but honey, the heat. The claws and teeth. They have a special meaning I can't explain very well. Everything refers to them, everything is measured by them, how crunchily it is, or how it would come apart with the claws, how it would separate, even how it will just click against them. Bones, skin, fur, feathers too because we had wild turkeys and sometimes a chicken if you could be bothered with the dogs. Dogs! I once watched one choke to death on a bone. I couldn't believe what I was seeing. Incredible. But for us, even sounds, howling is all about the teeth and claws. If you blow a ripple in a pool of blood, the soft mash off the bone. To chew. It's all very soft and fragrant when you have this jaw and these helpful paws. Everything comes into the mouth, becomes very simple and delicious.

Even if I knew how much it would hurt and how sick we would get. I would have still put on the magic belt. You're laughing. I must seem so stupid.

She got very sick and I told her it would get better. I didn't know. I thought it would. It didn't make me so sick. We had never been so happy. I miss her. She was so gentle, she would not have hurt a lamb.

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