



Source: Thomas Grove, 'Turkey threatens incursions against Kurds', *The Australian online*, 28/10/07.

Tags: [chance](#), [streets](#), [food](#), [world events](#)  
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This, too intently. About this, too intently. You don't want to think about this too intently. But, I keep the world from falling apart. In a very large number of tiny ways, in every segment of time that is the smallest fraction that can be sliced and diced, I keep the world together. Messy, blood-soaked, cruel, unfair, laughing itself almost to pieces—but still a whole.

Yesterday, I started baking a cake. Unfortunately, I accidentally put the baking powder into the bowl before the flour. The whole lot had to go into the bin. DON'T WASTE GOOD FOOD. THERE ARE CHILDREN STARVING RIGHT NOW IN ETHIOPIA WHO WOULD GULP THAT DOWN INTO THEIR LITTLE SWOLLEN BELLIES, AND THANK YOU FOR IT. That is what I can hear my mother's voice saying in my mind's ear. But I have to throw the baking powder and the flour away and start again. Enough terrible things happen in the world as it is, without risking the consequences of continuing to bake the cake in the wrong order.

Today there is a man lying on the footpath as I walk to the bus stop. He is old and not moving. Beside his head is a dark stain, spreading thickly into the grimy concrete. I reach him just as the bus pulls into the curb. The driver propels himself out of his seat and we both lean down to the man, almost at the same time. Someone has a mobile phone. Someone is a nurse from the hospital on the other side of the railway line. I stand under a tree and think about all the tiny pieces of action that led to the man falling and hitting his head. One of them was the button on my shirt that I missed this morning. I got completely undressed and started again from the beginning, but it was obviously not enough.

Not yet tomorrow. 11:58 pm it says on the clock. The separator between the digits flashes regularly, dividing up the time. I am refolding my t-shirts, until they are even. The world is in a very sensitive state, but people don't seem to see it. Of course there are always talking heads on the television warning us about the future, about the threat of terrorism, about how much the sea level is going

to rise and how much oil is left and who we will have to fight with to get it. But that is not the worst of it. Bird flu, nuclear bombs in suitcases and mercury in fish are just distractions. The threads that keep the world together are very loosely woven. I can feel what will happen if I don't keep track, if I allow things to slip. There is significance in even the smallest of actions.

Tomorrow now. Anything could happen. It depends on how I step through the door on my way out. The future is like a bear trap, waiting for me to overlook something. On the first attempt I land too heavily on my right foot. On the second attempt I take too big a step. On the third attempt the door swings forward and lightly strikes my left heel. On the fourth attempt...

Still tomorrow. Anything could happen, if I don't concentrate on taking the right number of breaths. I wonder what would have happened in all those possible worlds in which I did NOT take the right number of breaths. Those worlds are out there, too numerous to count, and all of them, I am certain, are worse than this one.

And the day after, and the day after. I do as much as I can, even when I don't want to. Even when I think that maybe my responsibility doesn't extend this far, doesn't reach to every minute detail of my actions, I can't refuse. I have to do everything possible to hold the world together, to hold back the tide of possibility that seems like it could crash through at any moment and crack the world open like a melon.

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*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Gavin Sladen.*