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So hot. The oxygen is sucked out of your lungs. The snot bakes dry in your nostrils and the only thing I'm up for is lying prone on the tiled floor in close proximity to a large jug of chilled water with lemon. It's not that I feel any better but at least I might live through this disgusting day. I'm hoping that when night falls, the temperature will drop; maybe even a breeze. Oh man that would be so great. It seems impossible that anywhere on this big ball of a planet is cool. What if the oceans begin to boil? It feels like the end of the world but it's too hot to care.

The television flickers soundlessly. If I roll my head to the side I can see a politician mouthing silently from the screen; around him, a phalanx—his blank-faced entourage—minders, spin-doctors, security and personal assistants. Check out the guys in black wrap-arounds and dark suits. Not a woman in sight. This is serious men's business. 'Our' security is at stake.

No need to turn the sound up. I bet they wish they could turn him off. That familiar expression of concern, the furrowed brow, the small moue of anxiety...don't overdo it; the natives might get restless. I amuse myself with the facial choreography. I'm trying it out myself: reassurance, leadership, concern and guidance. Wrinkle the brow, cast eyes down acknowledging yes, a modicum of concern; then the direct look to camera—we will fight them in the deserts—a tempered frown—we have a job to do—followed by a brave but steely smile—I am the man for the job. I'm struggling to get up to speed; make it natural. I guess he got coaching. The entourage is a blank chorus. You can't see their eyes. They don't speak and they don't move. They exude immovable objectness.

I don't need to hear what he's saying. War, war and more war followed by disaster on top of catastrophe. The entourage remains stoic. I wonder what they're thinking. They must think something or maybe it's some kind of zen preparation for immediate action if called upon; terminators in waiting. I'm thinking fundamentalism, thousands of blank-faced men in suits heading off on another crusade. I reach for the remote and change channels. Hundreds of young men in a military camp

somewhere. They march, turn, yell and brandish weapons. Never mind the smell of napalm in the morning; hot testosterone jams the satellite. Switch again and the news is petrol prices going up and up; the punters voted on interest rates but got done on petrol instead. There's a litany of tornadoes and cyclones, earthquakes and tsunamis, famine and massacres. The weather will continue hot and dry. I'm thinking, anything for a change in the weather. I disconnect.

Where is the goddamn remote? Scrabbling around I find the several remotes now needed to turn off the TV, the digital box and the sound system. I head out the door and the heat hits like a wall. The streets are empty and unmoving. The neighbourhood cats have disappeared from baking footpaths and hot brick fences. The emptiness and strangeness almost reconciles me. I'm moving silently through my own movie.

I head to the park. Its leafy greenness promises relief. It's not really any cooler but it is mercifully free of TV, politicians and global suffering and there is a pond, admittedly brown and muddy, but water of sorts. I kick through the grass. It's green. Clearly the sprinklers are still doing their thing despite the water restrictions. Families are collapsed in exhausted heaps. No barbeques. Even the children are too hot to play or bicker. Further along the path, an old man mutters to himself as he shuffles along. I marvel at his full-length coat. A rotund sausage dog lies on his back panting—four squat little legs stick up. He looks almost jaunty.

The sky flames red as I settle at the base of a huge fig-tree. The tree does what trees do and I start feeling better. As the sun finally disappears, two not very stately black swans emerge from the brackish island at the centre of the lake and cruise along its muddy edges. In attendance, they have their very own entourage of six disreputable ducks, eight noisy waterfowl and three cackling geese. The rapsallion convoy glides into darkness honking.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Sarah Miller.*