



Source: AP, 'Thousands rally to celebrate 20 years of Hamas', *Sydney Morning Herald online*, 16/12/07.

Tags: [water](#), [animals](#), [war](#), [violence](#), [disease](#)
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One two, one two, testing, testing. One two, one two, testing.

One two, talking to you. Three four, talk some more. Five six, box of tricks. Seven eight, disseminate.

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Although he'd received little formal education he'd managed to learn reading and writing. But his real accomplishment was in the quality of his work with sandstone, and by the age of 20 he'd been renowned throughout Yorkshire for his craftsmanship. World War II had put him in bellbottom trousers and taken him to the Java Sea where he'd been shelled, blown overboard, machine gunned in the water and—by his account—kept afloat by a pair of dolphins until rescuers had plucked him from hours of black waves. After the war he'd returned to the same sandy lot he'd left years before and found the same blocks of stone exactly where he'd left them. But he himself was not quite the same.

Years later at the breakfast table he'd looked up from his *Daily Star* and said to his grandson 'Well I never, young man. Well I never. Since 1942 I've believed that fact is stranger than fiction and if what I've just read is true then I've surely been right about that.' His grandson couldn't remember what it was that'd made his now long dead granddad say this on that particular occasion but as he listened to the speech in praise of the man on the stage in front of him, queasiness entered his shoulders and surged upwards.

He opened his eyes. Other eyes peered down at him. Apart from the fact that he was lying on a floor and could taste salt in his mouth he recognised nothing. He sat up and looked at the faces about him. 'Are you alright?', one of them asked. He scrutinised the face. Recognition rushed to the front of his brain. 'I know you' he said. 'I've got something to tell you. As long as there've been people with the power of speech there've been people bent on silencing words with violence and threats of violence, as if stopping the words was somehow adequate consolation for their inability to stop the thoughts behind them. You are one of those people. And yet today you're being honoured by Amnesty International for your commitment to the cause of justice. Do you think that what they don't know can't hurt them, or do you think that what you did was okay because it's what you've always done?' 'Both.' He opened his eyes, his vision pocked with the noise of his retinas flushing to life. Other eyes peered down at him. Apart from the fact that he was lying on a floor and could taste salt in his mouth he recognised nothing. He sat up and looked at the faces about him. 'Are you alright?' one of them asked.

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'The shades of the shadows are blended with the sky, and also with the faces of people going by. I see friends shaking hands saying how do you do? They're really saying...What are they really saying? It's not I love you, is it doctor.'

'Those aren't the real words, are they?'

'Of course they are. I just haven't finished rewriting them yet, ya' dumb quack.'

'Dumb quack? Why do you feel the need to abuse me today?'

'Because politeness costs nothing and I'm not tight.'

'But you are a master of the witty one-liner.'

'Nope. I stole it from a man on the telly.'

The doctor stared at him fixedly. 'Why do you think you're here?'

'I'm here because my hope collapsed and took me with it.'

'So you've said on several occasions, but we need to move forward. Tell me something you haven't told me before.'

'My granddad loved all cetaceans except for Killer Whales. Their appetite for cruelty in wildlife programmes led him to dub them the Japs of the cetacean world.'

'Tell me something you haven't told me before.'

'When I was eight a traveller knocked on our door and asked if we needed any tools sharpening. My father told him that if he didn't disappear by the count of five he'd sharpen his grasp of his hatred for his thieving vagrant arse. I remember that the count of five was nowhere near enough time for him to disappear and that when his beaten face returned with two other men our neighbours surrounded them and beat them near unconscious before calling the police. I remember the cops laughed when one of the men asked that they be taken to the hospital and that they shook my father's hand when they left.'

'I see. Those are quite disturbing events for a child to witness.'

'Yes they are. But although they seem believable to you I made them up off the top of my head because if I'd told you what I wanted to tell you you'd likely not have believed me. Now I'd like to go back to my room. Can you send some orderlies to strap me down and a nurse to read me a story from the papers?'

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Daniel Gosling.