



Source: Brian Whitaker and Ewen MacAskill, 'Report attacks 'myth' of foreign fighters', *The Guardian online*, 23/09/05.

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The Myth lived in a lair, of course. The Myth preferred to think of it as a multi-functional residence and operations unit, but the Myth didn't get out much, these days. The Myth had long ago stopped being mildly surprised by the dead lambs and kids and calves that would turn up at the darkly shadowed entrance to the lair, or what the Myth called the loading dock (long ago, the Myth had sent word that deliveries could come to the front entrance, which was an architectural feature, and quite sunny, though even the Myth had forgotten that by now). In fact, the Myth had hired a very accomplished Tex-Mex chef to prepare the deliveries, and there was a walk-in freezer with shelves stacked with large plastic containers marked 'goat chile,' 'lamb stew,' 'beef enchiladas,' etc. The Myth, who rarely saw the chef, would simply microwave one, and eat straight from the container, using the favourite spoon that hung all the time from a filigreed silver neck chain. The meals were large, and over the years the Myth had grown fat, bulging of neck and thigh, waddling from room to room. The state-of-the-art gymnasium installed in a basement left the Myth, who styled indolent as carefree, cold.

Occasionally, in the corner of a bulbous eye, the Myth would catch sight of a black-clad secretary scurrying away. Reports would appear on the desk. The Myth had come to think of these as cards, announcing gifts. So the Myth was as happy as a child in the middle of a mess of ripped-up birthday wrapping paper to read of the bands of adventurous young Believers who had set off in search of Mythic glory. When they didn't return, the Myth would become very sad indeed, and using a thick black pen scrawl 'Unbelievers' in heavy, crude letters on the reports, ball them up and throw them in the corner. The corner would pile high, before someone would clean it up. Then a lamb or kid or calf would arrive on the loading dock, and the Myth's dark mood would lift. Occasionally, over the years, when the pile of balled-up reports had nearly filled the room and the Myth's mood coloured blacker and blacker, a human corpse had landed on the dock, decapitated, or its heart torn out. The Myth had never quite known how to feel about this, heart swelling with breathy emotion it was hard to put a thick finger on, but always a little disturbed, too. The Myth left the chef to deal with them.

The Myth grew well used to the cycle of deliveries and cards, Believers' adventures, their failures, depression followed by cheering up. The freezer was well-stocked, the Myth ate well, and grew huge.

Eventually, though, the reports on the desk began to appear a little more often, and were becoming thicker, confusing, harder to read without glasses (needless to say, these were fashionable, in a titanium-framed design, though they were leaving a deep imprint in the flesh behind the Myth's ears these days, and the discomfort made the Myth squint). As far as the Myth could make out, Unbelievers were returning from their failed adventures, their betrayals, alive and unbowed, and had the gall to go marching about unashamed. The desk was practically submerged under paper, which was cleared away slowly, and it dawned on the Myth that the pace of deliveries had slowed, too. The Myth felt hurt, like a puppy that had been kicked. But in growing so huge, the Myth's emotional resources had apparently stretched and thinned out: the Myth wanted to rage and howl, shake some foundations—and, the Myth had to admit, see some bodies on the dock—but could only manage a whimper.

The Myth had rarely worn anything but a bathrobe for some time, but now took to bed, rarely leaving it except to shuffle to the freezer and the microwave. The Myth was eating two containers at a time, now, and gaps were beginning to appear on the freezer shelves. Two containers became three, became four, until the spoon was rarely out of the Myth's mouth, and the gaps on the shelves would've seemed ominous, if the Myth had been in any condition to notice. Finally, finding it increasingly difficult to get up from the bed, and not having checked the desk for weeks, the Myth took the unprecedented step of sending for the chef. Approaching the bed, which was by now, frankly, disgusting, and where the Myth lay bloated like a beached whale, the chef in his tall white hat was surprisingly calm, perhaps there was even a steely glint in his eye (once, the Myth might have noticed this). Yes, Myth, he said, and went to fetch a bathtub of the special meal he had prepared, and the shovel with which he would feed the Myth.

When the crowd of Believers and Unbelievers together finally made it into the bedchamber, having taken longer than they had expected to break down the front entrance that even the Myth had forgotten, they found the chef dancing triumphantly on the bones and in the blood and entrails of the Myth who had—at last, finally, inevitably—exploded.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Frazer Ward.*