

Story for performance #966
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Source: Martin Fletcher, 'Busy streets in Baghdad bring ray of hope', *The Times in The Australian online*, 11/02/08.

Tags: [evidence](#), [sound](#)

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You could say she just snapped, but there's no 'just' about it. She's been snapping for days, for years. Quietly, privately. She is snapping.

You can hear if you pay attention. Standing near you might just notice. That's the sound of twigs underfoot, you might think. The sound of dried flowers as they're tossed away. The scratch of a mouse. A lone cricket in the evening in the summer like a faulty hard drive. Or, perhaps, the sound of little bones breaking one by one, for no apparent reason, a fraction of a fraction at a time. She has snapped and is snapping, in 101 minor ways. With an osteoporosis of spirit, she's become brittle in the structure of her tolerance for life.

Here is one of the 1001 ways it happens: A stranger brushes past her on the street and she notices a mole on his cheek, but can't quite tell if it's a mole or a birthmark or a spot of soot before the stranger has passed her by. Crack. Snap. She's well aware that her attention's just been thwarted, run down and spat out, disallowed. The bypasser—well...he simply passed by! She won't have the chance to run her eyes across his imperfection, to touch it, to take it in. Her grief is colossally minor, her loss infinitesimally minute, but she has cracked a fraction of a fraction of a fraction of a rib.

Here's how it happens: A wrong word, or phrase, placed too carelessly in a magazine article: little snap. The phrase 'War on terror,' for instance, used in an essay on kitchen pests. She snaps a little as she pauses to reflect: The kitchen pest essay, she thinks, is itself pestilential, published as a thin disguise to sell products for the massacre of little lives, tiny lives, lives that might be cowering in her cupboards, procreating their little legs off, breeding and infesting but LIVING—and WHO IS SHE TO KILL THEM? Snap.

Little snap. Little snap.

Here's how it happens: the fallout of words as they attach themselves to things like Energizer...batteries, Gillette...razors, Wrigley's...chewing...gum—snap, snap, and snap. The fallout of words attaching themselves to things, then riding those things into her brain like 1,000,001 rickshaws—words riding things, crowding her brain like ash, cluttering her capabilities for paying attention.

Here's how it happens: she and her lover have coffee and read the newspaper. The day seems to be beginning and all is apparently well until, snap, she recalls that he is dead to her now and lives with another woman and this man here is her current lover and not the other man, the man with the mole who passed her by on the street...

Here's how it happens: the whistle breaks on the teapot.

Here's how it happens: apparently, they tell you, people are not being tortured after all.

Here's how it happens: you forget the third line of your favourite song.

Here's how it happens: snow begins to fall at night.

This snapping is no good, she thinks. It won't do. It just won't do. Attention must be paid. Attention, attention and more attention. There can never be too much attention to the details, the minor, minute, and miniscule details that bit by bit give meaning, must give meaning, must accumulate into something accurate, something reliable, something resembling sense! This snapping and crumbling of her control has to end, she thinks. She must regain herself, she thinks. She must wake up, cut it out, get a grip! After all WHO IS SHE TO SNAP? Her life is easy! She is in no position to panic, to be concerned, to complain about constant insignificant infractions in sensibility. After all, she can shop for ham or bacon, visit a hair dresser, eat a meal and lead what anyone would call a normal life without risking kidnap and murder. She lives in comfort. She is secure. She is salaried and satiate. A roof over her head! The newspaper everyday! The television plugged in! The computer! The Police Force! The Government! Democracy! She has no right to snap, snap, little snap snap snap.

She speaks to herself sternly. She gathers her wits about her and decides to pay even more, to pay even more attention, to witness everything and let nothing pass her by. The effort is exhausting, but she will PAY attention like she pays for food, like she pays for clothing, for education, for health care, for movies, for gym memberships, for therapy, for summer homes, for toilet paper, for garden tools, for cleaning products, for heat, for cool, for sewage access, for bed linens, for ink pens, for furniture, for sporting goods, for carrots, for financial advice, for child care, for lighting fixtures, for manicures, for ceiling wax, for toothpaste, for CDs, for deodorant, cab fare, pet food, silverware, ski equipment, daily news, dentistry, cell phone, batteries, razors, chewing gum...internet access...

Snap. Snap.

Get yourself together! Make a cup of tea. Sit down for awhile and read an article in the newspaper, or online. Find out what's going on in the world. Call a friend. Tell a story. It might calm you down...keep your structure intact. Did you hear the one about Mary? Mary Mary Mary Mary? Mary had a little lamb, a little beef, a little ham. HAH HAH HAH. Share a laugh with friends. HAH HAH HAH HAH. A little ham! A little ham! It's fleece was white as snow!

Feel better? That's good. Settle in. Pay attention to what is happening around you. Forget about bones. Bones are just bones. Breathe deeply. That's right. Notice flesh. Notice the fine stretch of flesh over jawbone, for instance. The lips. The mouth. That's right. Pay attention. The mouth...as it moves. The mouth as it moves over words. Around words. Witness a stranger, like a moment passing.

Snap, snap. Little snap. Little snap.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Rebecca Schneider.