

Story for performance #713
webcast from Madrid at 09:40PM, 03 Jun 07



Source: Edward Wong, 'Iraq's curse: a thirst for final, crushing victory', *New York Times online*, 03/06/07.

Tags: [dystopia](#), [food](#)
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The Things that No Longer Mattered were numerous and it took most people a few weeks to realise the extent of these losses. There were no more movies, no more reading, no more books. There were no more newspapers or magazines, no more neon or city lights. There was no more colour. There were no more cars or trains or planes. On the plus side, there were no more sirens greedily slicing through the air, no more shrieking of trains, and no more traffic. There was no more need to pause mid-conversation as a plane screamed overhead, coming in to land.

The first day was the noisiest. People were trying to get their bearings, trying to work out what had just happened. They wanted help. They wanted their mothers and lovers there to comfort them. They came out onto the street and wailed. They wanted bountiful bright ambulances to scoop them up and restore them, they wanted someone to hold them and lead them somewhere safe. People talked loudly into mobile phones as they walked, tediously describing where they thought they were heading as they veered into fences and fell over and got back up again.

Those people with guide dogs began leading their friends and neighbours around. They would start off as a line of two or three but, as they ran into strays and absorbed them, they became chains of people. These chains grew in length, each person holding onto the belt or shirt of the person in front of them. People were afraid to let go. When the leader passed a known landmark—a crooked footpath slab or a chain link fence—he or she would yell out where they were—'The crooked slab near Redfern Station!'—and this information would travel down the line, becoming more redundant the further down it went. Requests to speed up or slow down would be passed back up to the front of the line. In the silence that the lack of

machines left, the talk of the people in the lines sounded to those people in their houses like the shouts of rowers across a lake early in the morning.

The suburbs where the neighbours knew each other well organised themselves more quickly than the suburbs where the residents had never met. It took these people a day to come out of their houses and track each other down, and run into each other on the street, and to explain what had happened and to hear that the same thing had happened to their neighbours.

The radio band was all static except for a few stations which had automatically reverted to playlists of hits from the 70s, 80s and 90s. By the afternoon the broadcasters had found their way to their studios to go on air and tell everyone in the city what they already knew.

As the weeks went by runs developed along curbs of city streets. Lines of people would move surprisingly quickly, dressed in windcheaters turned inside out, pyjamas and mismatching socks. Homeless people moved into aeroplanes and trains, and cars became homes for cats and possums.

That first morning I sat around the table with my housemates and drank peppermint tea. They made sarcastic conversation about Labradors becoming the leaders of the new world. They seemed surprisingly calm all things considered. I held the warm cup close to my mouth. Later I made us breakfast, retrieving cans from known positions in the cupboard, slicing bread and cooking toast. I found I had a knack for cooking. Everyone complimented me on the food.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Tim Wright.