



Source: 'Explosives found in EU Mideast aid bags', *The Australian online*, 30/12/07.

Tags: [animals](#), [crime](#), [violence](#)

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**(The math of things.)**

8: the time you used to set your old, round metal alarm clock to go off. You hated being late for work.  
16: cats buried in your back yard. Ruffles. Dandelion. Munchkin. Buttercup. Banana. Leon. Mink. Lucky. Breezy. Olga. Georgia. Mozart. Peanut. Humphrey. Duckie. Sam. Each one marked with a rubber rat. You gave up on cats a long time ago.  
1: times you bleached your hair.  
92: for the number of your house. There was no number 93 or 91.  
17: miles from your house to the block on Palm Drive where the Winn Dixie faces the Publix. You once said you thought they looked like they were in a grocery store face off. You loved wild-west metaphors. The Winn Dixie was dirty and had a pervasive stench of rotting meat. The Publix was a bit better, but the lighting scared you.  
2: cups of sugar you borrowed from the strange European man who lived next door, which you used to make cookies, and which you never returned. The cookies were too sweet, so you gave them to Mrs Dickerson who lived across the street and had a major sweet tooth. She also had diabetes and really should not have had any sugar. You were her supplier, slipping neatly past relatives and caregivers when they weren't looking.  
6: people who were killed.  
1 who tried to push the panic button to alert the police.  
1 who tried to run out the door.  
1 who had a heart attack when you pointed the gun at her head.  
2 who you shot to scare the others.  
1 who reminded you of somebody you wanted to forget.  
30: dollars for a full tank of gas. The gremlin's gas tank was on the passenger side and when you pulled into the gas station to fill up, you pulled to a pump on the wrong side. You stretched the gas gun over your hood, twisted it around, and filled it. A lady with cropped red hair gave you a dirty look.  
88: degrees Fahrenheit when you stopped your car in the middle of the street.  
38: seconds to get out of the car, open the trunk, unzip your duffle bag, pull out two rifles, and fire the first shot.  
14: people who worked in your office with you. None of them remember very much about you, other than your beautiful blue eyes and your incredible calm under pressure.  
6: women who loved you. Martha. Denise. Sandra. Veronica. Rebecca. Barbara. They all had red hair and cooked your breakfast of pancakes and bacon. They were waitresses. They smoked.  
85: minutes before you let the first round of people out.  
3: years until no one remembered your name.  
17: boxes of pornography they found in your basement, none of it particularly exciting.  
12: minutes that you made the store manager sit inside

the walk-in cooler.  
2: bright yellow school buses that drove behind the other stores in the strip mall to collect stranded, frightened people who had been trapped for hours in aisles of birthday cards, dollar items, and shampoo.  
10: minutes you spent taking a shower.  
4: red lights you ran.  
38: minutes before you ran across the street from the Winn Dixie to the Publix to finish the job.  
2: seconds that you stared into my eyes. (It was just like they say in the movies: time stopped, I could hear my heart in my ears and I couldn't breathe.) You smiled and looked away before running inside, sparing me for some unspoken reason.  
18: hours that you held the city in fear, gripped them to their TVs, kept them vigilant. You were a ratings gift to local television during an otherwise bleak period of reruns and syndicated chat shows.  
33: days until people began forgetting your name.  
2: weeks before you had your first trial. You shaved your beard and wore a suit. You looked like a sweet old man who had somehow wandered into the wrong room. Even on the stand you seemed gentle, sweet.  
6: people who visited you in prison. They all had red hair.  
9: items in your refrigerator, all of them condiments.  
17: hours before the last deli-counter worker was released. You knew things were coming to an end by then, but even still you grabbed a few scratch off lottery tickets. You took a penny from your pocket and scratched at the dancing bunnies that were printed across the ticket. \$0. \$6. Ticket. \$10. \$10. \$10. \$5. \$500. \$2000. You won \$10.  
68: years on earth.  
3: children who lived in Mexico, Kansas, and Hong Kong.  
1: pressed white shirt, buttoned up except for at the collar, tucked into khaki pants. You always believed in the importance of appearance.  
1: piece of hard, plastic-wrapped, mint candy that you took out of your pocket when you finished your coffee. The wrapping was clear, so you could see the red-stripped candy inside. You dropped the candy wrapper in the garbage bin, left your house, and locked the door.  
6: deep breaths. You thought they would be your last.  
2: Hail Mary's you said as you put your hand on the door and pushed it open.  
25: police officers who surrounded you, threw you to the ground (dislocating your shoulder), carried you out into the early morning light.  
60: flashing bulbs all at once. Their light was blinding, but also somehow gratifying.  
134: cars left in the parking lot.  
50: years to life.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Peter S Petralia.*