

## Amsterdam, Monday - 7 July 2002

You know the instant you've done something you shouldn't have. A tennis player feels it as soon as the ball leaves her hand. The serve will be a fault. She is powerless to prevent it. It's that moment when your centre of balance shifts and you are committed to the dive into a cold pool of water. It's 1:30am. Me on my couch, stubbing out the dregs of an up-late joint, watching the movie 'Independence Day' out of one eye, working on my laptop. There's me, utterly engrossed in the ins and outs of XML parsing, wondering if Geoff Goldblum is ad-libbing and taking the piss, or if his lines are actually part of the script. I am the chosen one. My doorbell rings.

I walk into the hall to answer the door. The shadow behind the glass trips the lizard-brain warning buzzer in my head. I think about it as I pull the latch anyway. The door bursts in on me. I scope the small handgun in the left hand of a Moroccan looking perp. I push back against the door but they are two, they have guns, they have the element of surprise. They push fast and hard, shouting at me in Dutch. I am in deep shit.

Two guys, smooth black faces, brown eyes, narrow nose, clean-shaven with short-cropped hair, both with handguns, force the door open. One gun trained on me, they force me to the ground. "Who else is here," they both ask at once.

"What?" Feign confusion. "No-one."

"Did you see my face?" Jamaican accented perp1 is pointing the gun at my head. I crouch down on my heels, shielding behind my hand, behind the door.

"My landlord is upstairs," I lie. There's no silencer on the pistol. They'd not want to make much noise if they think someone was upstairs. 'Upstairs' is ambiguous. My flat has an upstairs and so does the flat above mine. Perp2's English carries a Dutch accent and he holds a small square barrelled 9mm handgun in his right hand. He runs up the stairs two or three at a time.

"Who is upstairs?" asks perp1. "I'll shoot you now if you don't tell me."

"No-one is upstairs, my landlord is in the flat upstairs."

"I'll shoot you now, who is upstairs,"

"Don't shoot me please, I don't want to get shot."

“You won’t get shot, you do as we say and you won’t get hurt.” What the hell am I supposed to do? Perp1 thunders down the stairs and I scoped mid20’s black thin but not wastoid, cropped short hair and black clothes. Same handgun. Looked like a bit like, but not, a Walther PPK: James Bond’s gun.

“Did you look at me? Did you see our faces?”

“Yeah I saw two black guys, shit I didn’t see much but the floor and the wall.”

“You’d better not have seen us, or we’ll have to kill you.”

“You don’t have to shoot me, just take the DVD and go yeah.” My powerbook is open but almost flat. I wish I’d shut it and stashed it somewhere. I have OpenFirmware running so they can’t wipe my drive or in fact even access it without my passwords, and the screensaver will activate asap and from there, or if it goes to sleep, or whatever it is password secured. If they do take it, fuck ‘em, it is no use to them because it can’t be reformatted or rebooted past the login screen. I don’t want to lose it though. I was working on it, and it has over five hundred photos taken last month that are not backed up anywhere. I picture my balls between pliers and hope these guys aren’t tech-savvy enough to ask for my password. I ponder the various intensities of loss. I’ve lost digital photos before, and am resigned to losing them again. Flashback. I am taking my camera out of my coat pocket where it is usually nestled and placing it on the table. I never do that, why did I do it tonight? My insurance just expired. Loss. The whole situation is unreal.

“What the fuck is going on here?” I’m pissed off that this is happening. I didn’t want this to happen, I didn’t call dial-a-crackhead?

“Shut up.”

Perp1 grabs me by the collar. It rips as he hauls me to my feet. Perp2 says “Where is the girl.”

“What girl?” I ask. Thank goodness Caroline is in Australia. Have they been watching us for a while?

“Who is upstairs?” asked perp1. Both are pointing guns at me, my hand shielding them from my view. I zoom on the wall and take 3 even breathes.

“My landlord lives in the flat upstairs, and no-one is on the floor upstairs. You can’t get to the landlord’s house from in here, obviously, and I don’t have a key to his house.” I do have a key to his house and it’s sitting on the dining table next to my iPod, my hard drive and a bunch of other shit. Anything could happen right now so I stop thinking about the future and focus on now.

“Who is your landlord?” from perp2, “Is he white? Is he aggressive? Is he a big guy?” from perp1. “He’s white, he’s a big guy and he’s my landlord. That’s about all I know.”

“He is married? He has a girlfriend there?”

“He has lots of girlfriends.” A whopper.

They push me out of the hall and into the lounge room where I had been watching TV. White shoes dark, dark red hooded windcheater and black pants.

“Don’t look at us or see our faces or you will have to die.” “Lie on the floor face down.”

“I’m doing what you ask, please don’t shoot me.”

“Where is your money?” Perp2 scoops up my laptop from the couch and closes the lid. My situation becomes real to me.

“I’ll give you my wallet, please don’t shoot me.” I reach into my jeans pocket, pull out my wallet and pass it up behind me to perp1. My friends Dayv and Kirsten gave me that wallet; bought from Morocco somewhere. It struck a chord obviously.

“Have you been to Morocco?” Perp1 asked.

“No, my friends did.”

“Where are your friends?”

“Gone away.”

“You are lying. I will shoot you.” Perp1 was the more vocal of the two by far. Maybe a Jamaican accent and a Moroccan accent sound the same to me. What the hell would I know?

“Lie face down.”

“Okay, just don’t shoot me.”

They drag stockings over their heads. I lay prone, the left side of my face on the floor, looking up and around me. A hand grabs my collar. Material tears.

“Get up, come with us.” A gun pushes into my side. I am walked up the stairs and into my bedroom. It’s a mess of clothes on the floor, stuff strewn everywhere etc, just how I’d left it.

“Where is your money? I have to find some money or I’ll kill you. Do you understand me?” They exchange short words in French.

"I gave you my wallet, there is no money here." There was about 100 euro in the wallet, as well as an expired credit card and photo-id driver's licence. There was about 4000 euros in mixed pounds and euro in a flight slip on the bottom shelf of my bookcase and a further 850 euros in a book on the top shelf. I meant to deposit that money in the bank but hadn't gotten around to it. I could not remember if Caroline hid any money in our room or not, but I figure I won't lose all of it if I just stay quiet on the matter. They rummage around in my room a bit and the loose change on the shelf draws the attention of perp2. I figure on losing the bulk of my cash.

"Give me your watch. " He fumbled with the watch-band. "Is this an expensive watch?"

"No." Exasperated "It's just a cheap watch, a Calvin Klein watch. It's worth about 100 dollars."

Perp1 finally gets the latch off. I guess they want to deprive me of the ability to tell the time. But this is a dumb guess and I stop speculating and try to pay attention. Perp2 has run downstairs again calling back something in Dutch. He returns, they exchange words and he picks up a nasty silver tie I bought on an insane shopping whim on Rodeo Drive last year. Getting mugged at gunpoint in LA is not such a surprise if you believe the TV, but Amsterdam?

"We can't see with these things on so we are going to have to tie this around your eyes," said perp1. He ties the tie around my eyes quite tightly. In truth this is better than having to keep averting my gaze and it keeps them calmer. They march me down the hall to Mike's room and sit me down at the foot of Mike's bed. I am hoping they are just bandits and not arse bandits to boot.

"Where is your money." "What is the pin for this card?"

My visa card has just expired so they wouldn't be asking me about that one. It must be my post-bank card and I never knew the pin for that. All pins numbers need to activate a warning if entered backwards imho. "I have lost it and don't know it." The truth, and damn what a truth to have.

"I'll shoot you now!"

"It's true, I don't have the pin, anyway there is fuck all money in that account, look downstairs at the bank statement on the table. There's nothing there, maybe a few hundred euro."

"You lie and I'll shoot you. Maybe I'll shoot you in the hand, or the leg, and then you'll tell me the pin." It hadn't occurred to me that they may shoot me to wound me, rather than to kill me. Dying is not so bad but I'd resent life as a cripple.

"What do you think?" Perp1 asked perp2. "Shall we shoot him somewhere?"

But they aren't actually shooting me. Instead they speak to each other in Dutch and a bit of French and take it in turns to stand over me while the other rummages through the house. The lights are off and I hear sounds of movement and things being brought up to Mike's room.

"Do you speak Dutch?" Perp2 asks. I wish I spoke Dutch so I could lie and say no, but I don't, and lying that I do doesn't seem to present any advantages.

"No". I sit near to the end of the bed, and consider my situation. I am not convinced that they would actually shoot me, nor when I think about it carefully that the guns are even real, but I am not an expert on guns and the risk seems to be too great to try anything. I consider trying to ram through Mike's balcony doors and jump down to the street but the idea conjures visions of me, a broken ankle, trying to run from two really pissed off guys with guns. They are not in a bad temper, they seem calm, relaxed and I figure my best chance at surviving unhurt is to keep them that way as much as it is in my power.

"What is this," perp1 pushes a remote control into my hands.

"It's the DVD remote I think." I figure if they are going to steal my shit they can get the remotes all mixed up. They get me to misidentify all the remotes and I can hear them packing stuff away.

Perp2 stands up close to me, over me. I can smell him and feel his body heat. In the dark, with the tie around my eyes, it is enough to tell me exactly where he was standing. A trained man at this point would have known how to punch him hard in the balls. I cannot be sure of anything and although I am a big guy, I doubt my ability to capitalise on the element of surprise. Gun or no gun these guys could hurt the hell out of me.

"We know you are a rich man, you have this nice house and nice stuff. Where is your money? How come you forgot your PIN number? If you lie to me I'll shoot you in the hand."

Carefully. "Look I never had the pin number for that card, that's not how I use it. I pay bills from the bank account using the payment forms in my room. Give me your account details and I'll transfer some money to you, but I can't get cash out of the wall." They laughed at me and spoke in Dutch.

"I'm not a bad man," says perp1, his hand on my shoulder. "But this society fucked me, I went to gaol for something I did not do, and now I have to do this." It makes no sense, and I sense a kind of junkie rambling to it. I am happy to hear him talking about things that didn't involve him shooting me however. "Shall I tell you about my life?" He says.

"Shit no. You'll tell me all this stuff and then you'll have to shoot me because I know all about you." He isn't listening to me.

“This happened to me before, you know,” he continues. “When I was a boy some guys came to my house and killed my father and my mother.”

I have no reason to doubt him, but why should it be my problem? It’s stupid and I consider putting my fingers in my ears and going “lalalalalalala”. A variation on ‘talk to the hand ‘cos the face ain’t listening.”

“For no reason.” He continues. “All my life I have suffered society’s injustices.”

What a speech. Does he get his lines from Geoff Goldblum? It’s a load of shit.

“You are not the only one to have a tough life mate,” I say. “I came home this year and discovered I was broke because some cunt in Germany had been fucked over and so he fucked us over. I’ve hardly worked all year and have no money at all – as you can probably see, all of my equipment is over a year old and it’s basically all I have to make any more money in the future. I don’t give a shit about anything else, but I need my laptop to earn money and I can’t afford to buy another one.”

“You have insurance my man, and you will get it all back.” I wish that were true. I really don’t want to lose my laptop.

“How about you don’t take my laptop “I need it to make any money at all. I mean take everything else, but leave me that. I won’t hassle you or even call the cops.

“Of course you’ll call the cops, you always call the cops.” “So long as I’m not injured, I’m not insured and don’t have a residence permit here, so why would I call the cops.”

“You are illegal here? Why are you here?” Good question.

Perp1 comes in to the room and said something in Dutch. They both sound excited and I am guessing they found my cash. That sucks.

“You told us a lie my man, a big lie,” says perp2.

“How come you don’t have the PIN for your card? I think you are lying to us.”

“I’m not lying. Look for yourself in the paperwork downstairs and you’ll see.” I am assuming they’ll ignore the paperwork. Perhaps they’ll wound me and set fire to the house?

“Whose is the Playstation?” Asks perp1.

“Mike’s”

“Who is Mike?”

“My housemate, this is his room.”

“Are these your trendy clothes?” I have no idea what he means but am guessing he is talking about something he’s found in Mike’s cupboard.

“They are probably Mike’s clothes.” Mike does tend to dress like a fag a lot of the time. I can imagine these guys don’t get into his fancy ski-wear either.

Time drags on. I wonder how long these guys are going to be.

“Where are you from?” asks perp2. “America?”

“Do I sound like a seppo?” I ask in return. “I am an Aussie.”

“An Aussie?”

“Yep.” Does it make a difference? Damn sure it does. No-one likes Americans, not even themselves, but most people seem to like the Australians. We’ve managed to keep our role as US stooges well concealed from the global population at large. Mike is American and damn lucky not to be here.

“Are you a block?” perp2 asks. What’s he mean a block – ah he means a bloke.

“A bloke?”

“A bloke. You are a bloke hey mate?”

“Yeah I am a bloke. Sure.”

I can hear Perp1 come up the stairs again. Perp2 calls to him “Hey, our man is a bloke.”

“Are you a bloke mate?” he calls out. I am bored and angry. “No worries mate, Skippy the kangaroo.”

I visualised him making the traditional finger hopping action that often accompanies such insights into Australia. “Yeah. Want to let me go now?”

They both laugh. “We’ll let you live if you are good and we find some money. If you lie to us again we’ll shoot you.”

Well don’t take your time I think. Now I am thinking about the last scene of ‘Breaker Morant’ “Shoot straight you bastards.”

“Any idea how long you guys are going to be?” I ask.

“You tired my man? Lay down on the bed if you like.” The idea of just passing out is tempting but I’d rather not lose any more power. Perhaps I could just pretend to sleep? Sod it. “I’m fine, I’ll just sit here.”

More rummaging. At every opportunity now I ask for them to leave my laptop behind. They are listening to me, and for some reason I am hopeful.

“What’s this?” Perp2 pushed my leather camera bag into my hands. “Is this the bag for the camera?”

“Yes,” I am despondent. “The camera is buggered you know.”

“It’s broken?”

“Yep. It doesn’t shoot video any more.” I am trying to think if there is a tape in the camera. Losing a camera is one thing but losing tape is much worse. They’ll get the memory stick in my wallet, and the one in my camera.

“We’ll find that out ourselves.” Oh yes you will. The funny thing is that in the last few weeks my gadgets had started failing. The iPod froze and never recovered. My Sony DV-cam stopped recording, the CD player is jammed. Sucked in you ignorant fucks.

“Do you have a bag?” What kind of stupid thieves neglect to bring their own swag bag?

“No. I have suitcases.”

“I need a bag like this.” I guess he gestured at something.

“Like what?”

“Can you see me?” geez these guys are paranoid. It’s a dark room, I’m wearing a blindfold, I can’t see shit.

“How many fingers am I holding up?” It’s only a guess but I am sure he was holding his gun mere millimetres from my nose.

“I have no idea,” I replied honestly. “Twelve?”

“What are you going to tell the cops?”

“Two black cunts with guns came and robbed me.”

“That’s not very nice,” perp2 admonished me. “Don’t hate all black people just because we are bad guys.”

“I’ll keep it in mind.”

“Do you hate black people?”

“No. But you’ll understand my feelings towards you two though.”

“It probably doesn’t seem fair, my man, life is not fair. My life has not been fair.”

“Life wasn’t meant to be easy,” I said louder than I meant to.

“Your life doesn’t look too hard.” This annoyed me.

“What the hell do you know about my life?” I mutter, mostly to myself.

“You are just unlucky. We saw your light on.” They both laugh. “We were going for 3 doors down before we saw you.”

I try to picture 3 doors down. I have never met them but I think it’s a Dutch man my age, his wife and 2 kids.

I start to shiver. Is it cold? No. It’s nerves. My whole body is shuddering uncontrollably. Perp2 thundered back into the room. “Do you have a backpack?” These guys were still after a bag!

“Yes, there is one downstairs.” He ran back down again.

“You like Lleyton Hewitt?” asked perp1.

“He just won Wimbledon.”

“You should be proud of him.”

“I am. He’s a great tennis player.” My shuddering is still out of control.

Perp2 is back. “Hey bloke, why are you so nervous.” They conferred in Dutch. Perp2 says “Look after him, talk to him, keep him calm.”

“I am – why do think I am talking about the tennis.”

Perp1 sits down and puts his hand on my shoulder again. “It’s okay mate, you’ll be okay. Just don’t lie to us and no-one will get hurt. Just do what we say and nothing will happen.”

“Am I doing what you say?”

“Yes you are doing fine.”

“Good. So you are not going to shoot me.”

“Not unless you make me.”

“I’d rather not be shot okay. Not even in the hand or the foot.” Desperate reasoning. “Right now there is no reason for me to call the cops, but if you shoot me then I won’t have a choice.”

“Don’t call the cops mate,” says perp2. “You call the cops and we’ll come back here and blow your house up. We have your address you know, and even if you go to England we’ll find you. We have friends there too.”

They are full of shit but I am guessing they can use email as well as the next criminal.

I am still shivering. “Are you okay mate? Why are you so nervous?”

“Let’s think about that one shall we,” I can’t help being sarcastic.

“Can I have a glass of water?” I could use a drink but more than that I am keen for them to do something for me, rather than just to me. To my surprise perp1 calls out “hey Danni, get some water.”

“What?” from downstairs. “Danny” I think. Or was it Janni? Who knows but I store this snippet away.

I hear Danny come up the stairs and the clatter of toothbrushes being tipped into the bathroom sink. A glass of water is put into my hands and I drink. I am still shivering but the process of getting the water has calmed me. Sipping at my water I am overcome with a wave of sadness. I don’t usually have much time for self-pity but figure if there is an appropriate time for some, then now is it. I mutter obscenities under my breath.

I am alone in Mike’s room now. I can hear them in my room and downstairs but for now I am alone. I have calmed down a bit, my heart rate is back down to normal and I have stopped shivering. They come in and out with stuff. I can hear the hard drive from my laptop whirring.

“Oh please don’t take my laptop,” I try again. They discuss my request in Dutch and I hear someone take my laptop out of a bag.

“Okay mate, we’ll leave you your laptop.” I can’t believe it.

“Oh cool.” This has many implications. Firstly it means they are unlikely to kill me, second I get my laptop back, and third whatever happens I couldn’t give a shit as long as I get my laptop back.

“Can you give it to me now?” I just want to make sure it’s okay.

“No. You might use it to send a message or something. We’ll put it over here.” I can hear it.

“Fine, fantastic. Thanks.”

Time passes but I don’t really care now. Perp1 stands next to me and sprays himself with some deodorant from the bathroom.

I feel a plastic blade against my throat. “Is this a dagger?” Perp2 asks.

“It’s plastic.” I answer.

“Yes.”

This is just stupid. They could be here all damn night. I am happy as hell that I am the only one here. I can imagine if Caroline were here the situation would be much worse. I am consumed with scenarios of rape and leverage. I count my lucky stars. I count Caroline’s. I add them. How many lucky stars to the gold star? I’m being good. I hope I get a gold star.

“Can we sleep here tonight?” perp1 asks me?

“What?” This is ridiculous. The thought of these guys having a sleep while I remain somehow captive is beyond me.

“Of course not. I have people coming here first thing in the morning.”

“What time?”

“9 am,” I am almost telling the truth and they accept this.

I am getting concerned that is may still end up badly for me. They could so easily just shoot me and no-one would find me for weeks. But the fact they gave me water and the fact they offered to leave me my laptop, are good clues they won’t do anything too mean to me and I take solace in that.

Oven an hour has passed, perhaps two. They can’t find the backpack and are frustrated by the lack of bags here. I am unsympathetic. Eventually perp1 starts up. “We will speak in English so you understand what’s happening.”

“Okay”

"I want you to lie face down on the bed and we are going to tie you up." This sounds bad. "Then we will leave and take your phone. In 30 mts we'll phone your landlord and tell him to come and untie you. How does that sound?"

"Terrible. He's not home and my phone is out of credit."

"You said he was home."

"I said I thought he was, but now I think about it, I am sure he isn't home."

"Do you have a key to his place?"

"No, of course not. Why would I?"

"Is there anyone we can call to release you?"

"Not that I can think of."

"Who will you call when you are free?"

"I don't know." I hadn't given it much thought but it seems obvious I'll run down the road to John's place as soon as I can so I make that my plan. "My friends I guess."

"What friends? Where are they?" I get sudden, terrible visions of them forcing me to buzz into John and Sarah's place. This all happening again. I should stay as vague as possible.

"I'm tired." I say.

They lay me down face first on Mike's bed and at their instruction I put my hands behind my back. They have some sort of nylon cord and perp1 attempts to tie my wrists together. The cord slips and he can't get it to tie properly.

"Shall I help?" I ask. "How about I just sit here and count to 1000 or something? How much time do you need to get away?"

"About half an hour," perp2 replies.

"Well I could just sit up here for half an hour while you guys get away." I really want to avoid being knocked unconscious, or wounded to prevent my escape.

"I don't think so my man. Do you have any rope or tape?"

"No, sorry." Think damn it, how to incapacitate myself convincingly without causing myself any harm.

“Look is all this going to take much longer?” I am exhausted and the frustration I am feeling has overtaken any fear of what they may do. I am convinced now they don’t mean to hurt me.

“You in a hurry? We’ll take as much time as we need. Don’t tell us what to do.” It figures, but I felt good knowing that I could get a bit stropky with them and not suffer for it.

“Get up. “ I get up. Firm hands guide me across the room into the corner. What’s this? Have they decided just to shoot me anyway?

“Are you going to shoot me now?” I have to ask.

“No,” laughing. “We are going to think of something.”

“What about you lock me in a closet?” This is a flash of brilliance. The cupboard doors look solid but are pretty flimsy and I figure I could get out easily. They confer in Dutch and then guide me roughly into the cupboard. It’s small. It’s much too small for me but I squeeze in and they shut the door. It won’t close however. They try a few more times before dragging me out again and guiding me across the room. I hear the shelves being pulled from Mike’s other closet and then I am shoved in. This time the door closes and they lock it. I am squeezed but can breathe.

“If you make a sound we’ll come back and shoot you.” I keep quiet and remove my blindfold. The cupboard is cramped, dark and I have lost my orientation. I can hear them both going downstairs and I try some pressure on the door. It flexes. It will be an easy matter to break it down. I hear footsteps again and the cupboard door opens. A coat is thrust in at me.

“What is this? A man’s coat?” It feels like the coat I bought Caroline a few years ago.

“No, a woman’s. It’s a cheap old coat.” I lie. It’s an expensive old coat.

“What happened to your tie?”

“I didn’t think I’d need it now I am in here.” He closed the door and locked it.

“I am going to shoot you through the door if you try anything stupid.”

Visions of bleeding to death in Mike’s cupboard. Not how I was meant to go.

He’s gone again and the house seems quiet. I strain to hear them but can’t tell what’s happening. Perhaps they have gone. I didn’t hear the front door slam. I push against the wooden door. A hard push elicits a loud crack. Immediately I hear someone bounding up the stairs.

“What was what? What are you doing?”

“Sorry,” I say, “I thought you guys had gone.”

“No we are here. We are going to smoke your grass.” The fuckers.

“Oh come on!”

“You have a problem with that? How about I shoot you and then smoke your grass.”

“Don’t shoot me. Go on then smoke my grass, but just leave me some okay.”

“You are lucky if we leave you alive. Now shut up and we’ll be gone soon.”

I shut up and wait. He’s gone back down. I listen and listen and after about 10 minutes that seems like hours I hear the front door slam and the deep growl of a large car pulling away. It takes me a few seconds to push the door out through the frame and I am standing in mike’s room. There is pre dawn light drifting through the curtains. There are piles of clothes all over the place. I run into my room and check for my money. It’s gone. I look for my laptop but it is gone. The lying fuckers. I go downstairs and have a quick look a round. Cameras, airport base station, all the remote controls are gone. The place is a mess but not as bad as I half expected. It’s not been trashed. The phone is gone, but they left the Nintendo64. I grab my keys from the coffee table and leave the house. I lock the door and run down to John’s. It takes me a few minutes to wake John and Sarah. They make me some coffee and I begin the long and dull process of calling the police.

The police were polite, firm and efficient, but I do not hold out much hope that they will discover anything. The guys who robbed me were, if not professional, clearly experienced home invaders.

Over and over again, behind the fragile security of my eyelids, I can see the faces of those guys coming through my door. I re-experience that horrible sinking feeling that I have just fucked up big-time and have lost any control of the situation. That car-crash feeling. That slipping-off-a-roof feeling. I have had three falling dreams in the week since Monday morning.

Why didn’t I use the door camera? No-one does in this city. Why did I let them in? Who was to know? What was I doing up late? It’s my house. How could I be so stupid? I am just a normal guy, luckily still alive and unhurt. I could blame myself but I know am not the bad guy. The bad guys carried the guns.

And fuck ‘em. I am okay, have some cash left, some credit. I have been loaned a laptop and a phone. I have places to stay with people I trust and in time the anxiety will fade. I am sitting on the self same couch, in the self same spot, a laptop on my lap, and I feel fine knowing a couple of skanky assholes stole a bunch of tech that is for the most part either broken or locked down. Of course I

regret the incident and of course I wish it had turned out differently. If only I had pushed the door shut harder when I first answered it. Maybe he would have dropped his gun, I could have picked it up and fired through the door at point blank range. It's an obvious revenge fantasy. If only I hadn't answered it at all. For every 'if only' there are an equal number of 'but what ifs'. If they'd gone into my neighbour's house perhaps it would have been much worse for them. Perhaps by opening my door to them, I was jumping on to a grenade to absorb the blast and save the crowd. Life is irreducibly random.

Dave Sag.

Amsterdam.