



Source: John Kifner, 'Hariri killing traced', *New York Times* in *International Herald Tribune* online, 24/10/05.
Tags: [intimacy](#)
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Yet again, not surprisingly though, no one is claiming responsibility for the broken glass on the floor. Actually, it looks as if everyone has formed a circle around the drop zone where the shards now rest. It is a deathly stare they all have. Maybe as if they concentrated all their energies together they could form a slow motion replay of the incident, watching the glass rematerialise as one, rested, in the hand of its rightful owner. Then we would know.

I don't hear the music anymore. I can't in fact listen to it as it just forms a belligerent buzz in my head, but I do hear their conversations. I mistakenly place the gin bottle where the whiskey normally goes before collecting the dust pan and broom. In the short amount of time it has taken me to get around the other side of the counter, the circle has closed and the patrons show a blatant disregard for the glass that they now stand on. I have to shoulder my way to the mark.

As I bend over I feel a drop of sweat run past my sternum before being caught by the fibres of my tee-shirt. It is like a war zone down there. I have to dodge and weave the burning cigarette bombs that threaten to tear this downtown apart. My fingers are on the stampede line of crushing high heels and snub nosed slides. The back of my head is hit by a falling drop of beer that has jumped to safety from a pint above. And the buzz gets louder.

I work quickly, anticlockwise and from outside in, creating a pile with the broom before I place the pan to the floor. As I hit 10 o'clock, I am challenged by a calf that belongs to a young lady in a ra-ra skirt. Her milky skin is marked with a trickle of viscous red liquid making a beeline for her ankle.

I interrupt her group, ensconced by the banter of a token drunkard who is mid-way through an egocentric rant about his past like a paperback thriller. As I lean into her ear a powder scent fills me, then the buzz becomes quieter while I explain what seems to have happened. I curl my hand into the crook of her elbow and lead towards the kitchen door, sheltering her from the masses along the way.

The kitchen is long closed but the warmth of the oven and grill can still be felt in the thick air. The frenetic pace of rush hour has past, and all the utensils have been placed back to their rightful positions. A wet dish towel hangs over the sink tap, drying. Only the gentle hums of the refrigerator fans remain.

I help her up onto the bench top, holding her narrow hips for balance as she pushes backwards before coming to rest, seated. The stainless steel must be cold on her thighs

because she shivers on initial impact. I find myself floating towards the first aid cabinet in the far corner of the room. For some reason my senses have become acute and I can hear her breathe clearly. I am overawed by her smell yet again. It is a delicate blend of bergamot and mandarin flower, the top notes of which seem to meet for the first time on the surface of her skin, waiting for a gentle breeze to carry them away.

I fossick through slings and saline solution to get to the antiseptic wipes. I take two, along with a plaster, iodine and a small bandage in case the wound is deeper than expected. The blood has already started to congeal. It takes several attempts to clean away the desiccated tributaries. Not until the swab becomes a muddied brown do we start to see where the glass had entered her perfect leg. It is a relatively small incision, but deep enough to cause a gentle stream of precious life to leave her body. She winces and takes a sudden deep breathe as I get close to the entry with iodine, but she does not pull away. Instead, she is watching me carefully cleaning away the final streaky marks. I can feel her eyes moving over my face, down my neck to my arms and watch, where she checks for the time. As I place the plaster over the cut I press firmly on the sides, being careful not to hit the sore spot.

With a wry smile she slowly swings her legs around so that both are hanging towards the floor, ready for landing. I offer my hands as assistance to help her down. My heart stops for a moment as she grabs my wrists and pulls me into her. Intoxicated by her yielding touch, I stand between her legs which have now coiled mine. Each second seems to extend lazily into the next, until she stretches her neck, upwards, and kisses my bottom lip. Her very touch is mesmerising. The buzz has become but a distant whir, and her silence has owned me.

My arm is pushed aside, and she flits out the door and back to the group where the drunkard is now resting against a wall, eyes closed with arms dangling down in front of him. He jolts forward with a sickening burp, knocking his half empty glass on the floor between his legs. I wait there, motionless, shell shocked by what has happened, before moving back behind the counter.

My head feels as if it on the brink of bursting and I try to shake it clear. I catch her name being called while pouring a customer a lime topper. It is one of her friends, squawking. 'I'll get you another drink Alice. Maybe try not to throw this one away like the last, hey'.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by David Hagger.