



Source: AP, 'Allawi flees Shia mob as Frenchman abducted', *The Australian online*, 06/12/05.

Tags: [chance](#), [dreams](#), [death](#), [intimacy](#), [politics](#)
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He has a wicked headache. She can tell. It's written all over his face. Heavy. She pinpoints it, exactly. She knows that face, the set of the jaw, the way the brow furrows as thoughts form. It's the first five vertebrae; where the spine meets the base of the skull—locked, fused, safely shut against insurgence. Years of falling forward, posture, shaped by haste.

Could she send her cells out to his? Pull it all back? Rewind time? Be somewhere else? Maybe? But, he is a long way away now...

Where? Where is he? Where have they taken him? Why? Why him?

She needs a doctor. The pain. A note, she needs a note, permission, to not be here. She moves her body, tired, stoned, soulless through it all. She wants to go with him, to him, wherever he is. She wants to be there. She puts on her shoes, gets ready...

Him in front of the house.

Him in the car.

Him going to work.

Absent minded shots. A lark. A time frame memento. My day. Your night. Good morning.

What was he doing there anyway?

The image is grainy. She's stared at it so often she can't see it anymore. She loved that, before. Not now. It's fading. And she wants definition. Sharp and clear.

Is this it then?

Is that all there is?

She gets up, looks out the window. 'The fucking noise is driving me crazy'. She gets last night's rice and salad from the fridge. Can't eat. Doubled over. Gutted.

She's here. Not there. Where? Where's here? He is not here. Or there...

She lines up all the shoes—his, hers, anyone's; stands at the back window and hurls them at passing joggers. Grabs handfuls of pebbles from the newly landscaped patio and flings them at the mob of concerned citizens who have gathered along the fence. She yells, 'Fucking do something you idiots. Anything'.

Mary from next door has made a nice cup of tea. 'I'm so sorry dear, terrible, isn't it?'

'Yes, terrible'. She stares at the golfers on the course opposite, the shoes littering the freshly mown yard. The dog, unbelieving—'What, all for me?'

'Got to water the scribbly gum,' she says, 'just planted it, on Friday, before the storm, all day, so heavy. Called it Van Nguyen'.

Mary nods, 'Oh yes, terrible isn't it, wouldn't want to be in his shoes'.

'He's dead', she says.

'Oh no', says Mary, 'you musn't think like that. Not yet'.

'No, not him, him—I saw it, on the news, in the papers, it's done, I don't think he has much call for shoes now, do you?'

She looked at me strangely, with pity. People are allowed latitude in times like this, but how much, for how long? She used to think it was happening to other people. She's always cared, been active, given generously to four charities, each month, direct debit, reels them off with pride: 'Amnesty International, Medecins Sans Frontieres, Greenpeace, Refugee Action Collective'. She even knows a family in Auburn, came out on the boats, from somewhere. She gave them her old tele, helped them set up home.

She didn't want him to go. He said 'It's a good opportunity to help. To do something concrete'. He knew about water and making things. She said 'We're in drought. Build a dam here. Why go there?' He said 'That's simplistic and naïve'. She said, 'Well, go and train someone and come back home, quickly, there's plenty to do here'. He said, 'I'm French. This isn't my home'.

'No', she said, 'but I am'.

She's dreaming of the mob, of stones, smooth river stones skimming along the surface, skipping, thrown just right. She's barefoot, crossing the river, it's filthy, stormwater drains deposit everyone's detritus, right here, in her backyard. They're running, at her, at him, yelling—'Get out, just get out, get out of the way, your in the way, go away, just fuck off, go on, get out, just get out, get out of the way'. Then there's gunshots, women wailing, dogs barking. She wakes.

'What the fuck is going on? Where am I? What's happening? I don't understand. I've read it three times, I can't make head nor tail of it? Were they attacking or defending? Was it random?'

'Him, just there? Wrong place? Wrong time? Is he dead yet? How will I know? Will I get a note? Will it be on the tele?'

She has a wicked headache. He can tell. He knows that face—the cloudy eyes, head slightly cocked to the side, nervous twitch of the mouth. Exhausted. Frontal lobe, right side, throbbing.

He knew it would come to this—the moment. Unsuspecting, when his turn would come. If he could he would. Pull it all back. Rewind time.

'I'm all right', he says. 'I send my cells out to yours. I'm with you, wherever you are. Right here.'

She gets up. Puts on her shoes. Ready...

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Victoria Spence.