



Source: Stephen Farrell and Ein Karem, 'Sharon sinks into Israel's past', *The Times* in *The Australian online*, 10/02/06.

Tags: [intimacy](#), [home](#), [music](#)

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He clicks his fingers. It drives me insane, but the guy is convinced he has rhythm, has some way to respond to music other than nodding his big head in time to those interminable beats. He smirks at me when he does it. I've accepted it as 'endearing' except when he does it to get my attention, like he's in a restaurant and I'm a waiter. Fuck that shit. He's been warned.

The first time I saw him I thought he was Arab. But what did I know? I'd never met an Arab before. He was thirty something, a bit paunchy, with very brown eyelids. He has a pouty lower lip, which was the most voluptuous feature of his face. His hair's matt black and absorbs all available light. I think he has good shoulders but he considers them to be shaped like a 'milk bottle'. He exhales powerfully. He can arch his back with 'feline grace'. Turns out his father is a Turk. We hooked up when we bumped into each other at the corner store and got talking. It was a conversation about the price of coconut milk and curry paste. He wore a baseball cap with a cartoon tiger on the front. We made an arrangement to meet for a cup of coffee. He told me on our first date that he enjoys dancing and bushwalks. Since then—16 months—we have not engaged in either of these activities. Being together for the most part is tolerable. We argue but it's usually about who has paid what bill etc. If we get on to religion or politics we often revert to using character voices and quoting randomly from the paper. We work in related industries. We have a similar sense of humour and physically are pretty much in sync. As time has gone by and we've got to know each other we sometimes like to relax by pulling out a few of each other's eyelashes. Then we move our heads closer and make our eyelashes touch. I didn't know these were called 'butterfly kisses' but that's what I've been told recently. He has told me that his mind 'belches images' and also that literature has had its day. He can sing along to several Kanye West songs. When he talks too much I have an uncontrollable urge to push my tongue down his throat towards his larynx, which I usually do. Once back there the tip of my tongue gets really cold. It's like there is an ice cap behind his teeth. What is that about? Bad circulation? My mother told me once that the sort of kiss I was trying to do is called 'peeling the crystal'. I enjoy it, whatever. He has no sense of timing and will discuss sex on the bus. He has put his fingers where he shouldn't when we've been at the cinema. He hangs out with some

dodgy friends from work but I have learnt to appreciate their 'antics'. According to some of these same friends we look quite good together, but in public we watch our backs. He resists the usual labels, as do I. He frowns pensively. He has the ability to crack any defence. He has asked me to call him 'the corporate raider' in bed but I refuse. We have discussed getting serious and moving east, but so far we haven't. He claims that children are the future. I'm not entirely convinced. He tends to be quite a still person. I am fidgety. We can make each other horny by winking. When we get in the mood he gets a pink glow on his neck. For fun we'll wrap our heads in the flags of various nations and chase each other naked around the house, guided only by the sounds of us crashing into furniture or making muffled animal noises. We then have a period of 'armed conflict' and eventually some kind of peace treaty. Sex occurs pretty much at any point. He pulls the flag off, goes down on me and his cold tongue goes berserk. We freak out the neighbours I guess but it's a 'tolerant community' around here. He is a charming, complicated, hidden man. He says he is not scared at the prospect of dying but that if someone came in with a knife and started waving it around then the parts of him that are not unconcerned would be 'trembling with horror and shitting on the ground'. Being something of a showman, he has agreed to attend a weekly prayer meeting to get his brother back on the straight and narrow. He reckons that if he shows some kind of moral leadership then things will improve at home. However, he is already beyond the pale for most of his family. He's not invited to some events and gets into arguments with his uncle on the phone. But then I've noticed that some things are changing. He's now considered by his younger siblings as a kind of wise old guy. They'll visit on weekends and I'll find them smoking a scoob in the garage and generally sorting issues out. He's still working his way up in the world. He's philosophical. I'm practical. We're doing okay though, considering. When he comes inside late at night and he's really exhausted, I'll park him on the sofa, turn the music up and stroke his furry sideburns. When he eventually cheers up, we talk dirty to each other in foreign accents and he clicks his fingers to the beat.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Ben Gold.*