



Source: David Nason, 'Saddam warned US of terror attacks, secret tapes reveal', *The Australian online*, 17/02/06.

Tags: [intimacy](#), [nostalgia](#)

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Two inches, four inches. One way, the other. I am looking ahead, toward a distant blue light, while longing for the purplish haze of seven minutes ago, when I was fixing a salad in the kitchen. I am coming, I am going, my story comes and goes. A pine tree by the shore becomes a pine tree by the road when the tide recedes and the land rises to power.

I realized that days become minutes and years become moments when I reached for Frances in my bed and found a crisp sheet in my hands. Her pillow was flat, but clean and cool. She had left months ago, but in the fog of sleep her shoulder was there, for me to touch. We operated easily in closed quarters, a bed, a sitting room, and it was in open spaces that we had difficulty keeping our heads close. Distracted easily, there was too much to see, and it was when our world broke open that we lost sight of each other to peer into the chasm. One night I lay in her apartment, the lights turned off, my head under a lumpy couch cushion. She was out, I was in, nursing a migraine. It must have been the faint smell of family in the nubby fabric—I was learning her there, where she wasn't, so that when she returned, I could watch her stumble over her boots through the doorway, and not look away.

1 2/3 oz gin  
1/3 oz dry vermouth  
ice

sometimes

1 2/3 oz gin  
2/3 oz dry vermouth  
pours and pours of olive juice

Frances knew the anatomy of the martini, she had studied its sinews and joints and tissue closely, over a period of years, until she no longer remembered that the first martini she had was a vodka one. She taught me that James Bond was responsible for most of the public drinking vodka martinis. I learned the proper homage to pay the good martini, and the proper screwed-up expression to wear at the first taste of the very awful. Until I forgot that it was her drink at all, and it became mine.

She did not leave. I asked her to go. But I forgot that, also, in sleep, and when I could not find her, I cursed her softy before wiping away my sweaty hair and falling back into the futon. I had stuffed my aching head in the couch cushions to learn who Frances was, and I threw my forehead against my pillow to forget what she had taught me—stirred, not shaken. Never spill when you sip. Never down a martini in one gulp.

This story is coming, but it does not go. It comes at you, it collides, and does not continue. It sits, wreckage, behind you. You look back ten years, and you are there, ten years ago. The same with six, or just two. When you measure your past, it is all an instant. Not a passage, but a platform, with these wrecked moments, molded, hewn, standing regular distances apart. And everything between has lost form, serving only as distance. While we are moving forward, we do not see what will become this negative space.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Ella Longpre.*