



Source: Marie Colvin, 'Talk of ousting PM threatens Iraq democracy', *The Sunday Times* in *The Australian online*, 16/10/06.

Tags: [intimacy](#), [war](#), [sex](#)

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She felt chills up and down her spine even though the room was stifling. She turned quickly, too late to identify the shadow that appeared briefly on the opposite wall. The door closed and the room sank back into the semi-darkness of secrecy, of conspiracy and eager tension. She had known all along, of course, that she was here for the wrong reasons. She had no tragedy in her history, no dead relatives to avenge, no deep faith or love of country. She eased herself back against the wall and waited for the adjustment in vision. Eventually she could distinguish little groups of bodies from the soft murmuring voices that occasionally changed pitch and emphasis. She recognized those she had seen before, detected a few new faces. It was easier to rest back here by the wall tonight, to remain unnoticed, while she watched and listened. A month ago, even a week ago, that would have been impossible.

The door opened again and this time she was prepared. Immediately she recognized the way his hair curled at the nape of his neck, exaggerated into a large wave by the angle of the light, breaking the smooth line of the shadow against the wall. He was taller than most of the others, more handsome, a natural leader, of course: they had said it was inevitable. The door closed quickly again and he was inside, surrounded by friends, colleagues, comrades in arms, hovering, touching, questioning. She stayed where she was. He glanced around, she thought perhaps in her direction but guessed he couldn't see her over here. She continued to press the soles of her feet against the floor and her back into the wall. When she felt a soft touch on her arm she looked over to see a pair of bright eyes beaming at her in the darkness, the eyes of her so-called friend.

'Did you see?'

'As if I could help it. Are you gloating?' she scoffed, and turned her head away.

She kept her eye on the movement and felt the currents running through the space. The groups were breaking up,

dispersing, circulating closer to him as he talked and gestured. Now he was laughing, and she could hear the deep, rich tones as he regaled the group with his stories. She shuddered briefly, the slicing pain turning to anger as he gestured to a young woman standing nearby and delicately encircled her with his arm. His hand rested on her waist momentarily, then fell to the side. She saw them now as they had passed her last night, without any gesture of acknowledgement, silently sneaking away from the group, eyes for each other, hands and mouths groping, and she had imagined the scene as the door shut, the door to the room in the back that had been the setting for her own recent encounters, night after night of explosive passion, the dream come true after months of anticipation. She saw the rapid disrobing and the move to the mattress on the floor. She felt the probing hands and tongue on her skin. She hadn't believed her friend who was herself discarded, the one who warned 'he'll do it to you, too,' when she had waltzed off.

The cruel irony of her current situation struck her with a fresh intensity at this moment, and she was tempted to follow them to their destination, put her ear perversely to the door until, at the moment of climax, she could burst in and confront them. Or in another fantasy scenario, pepper them with bullets from the gun she had always intended for a different enemy. She did neither, but berated herself for her foolishness, naiveté, and refusal to acknowledge the simple truth. She shifted her weight. Her foot had fallen asleep and her butt was sore. She pushed herself up by pressing against the wall, and made her way slowly out of the corner. The heat from their hundred eyes seared her flesh as she made her way slowly to the center of the room, and she thought she could feel them mocking her, satisfied.

'I'm ready,' she murmured softly as she grabbed a rifle from the pile and went to stand on the line of the chosen.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Myrel Chernick.*