

Sam

This is Saturday morning. Fox Sports in the background, tomato sauce on toast. He is telling you his dream from last night. The coffee maker sits idle.

Sam is three cities away and now this is Saturday morning.

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You fell into this relationship. After Sophie, and that final phone call, you retreated. You lost yourself in the heat of an Adelaide February as the lights burned out and Saturday mornings became fish fingers at 2pm. Your friends are concerned. They invite you to dinner on Friday where they seat you next to Peter. He looks vaguely familiar. Apparently you met last year at The Cup, and then again at Lisa's wedding.

Winning Sam had been a long dance of covert flirting and hands that whispered *sex*. You had built yourselves a story, an opening act, and there had been a frantic late-night taxi ride before final declarations of feeling could be made. Your story with Pete starts with too much to drink, cadging a lift home and waking up the next morning lying on top of one of his shoes. You came up for air and he was the first thing you grabbed, though later you let him think that he grabbed you.

A month into this and he tells you he loves you, which is a week after you suggest he grow his hair, and a week before you will assign his war comics to a storage box under the bed. You break him to fix him. You paint over the gaps where he can't quote from *The Big Lebowski* or in the corner space where he's two inches too short.

'Pete mate. You're slouching again.'

He drinks instant coffee, decaf if it's after 5. In the beginning, he sees the coffee machine and offers to have a crack at it. You tell him that's alright, it takes too long to heat up and besides, if you don't clean it straight afterwards the milk cakes to the rubber.

When he fucks you, you are ashamed to find it so different. He kisses you with a clumsy energy that brings out the boy and buries the man; it leaves you feeling slightly uncomfortable, like

you've chanced across a Pete you weren't supposed to see. When you ask him to turn off the lights, he assumes you're modest. You turn your head and stare at the wall and you are not there.

When he comes, you are three cities away.

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You were more than flesh and bone with Sam. Sam pulled you out of the ordinary. He was fire and promises and he brought with him pills that dragged you screaming into life. He stood you on rooftops and showed you what it was to breathe in your own air. You see that you are so very small. He dares you to be more.

On Saturday mornings he made you coffee and breakfast (five days you eat muesli, and on that fifth day you buy bagels). He bought you the coffee maker as a house warming present, after you fled the torn linoleum of the share house. It sits next to the toaster from Woolies, across from the plates you inherited from your sister, and in its gleam is the promise that you can be more. These are your Saturday mornings, tag-teaming the paper, mostly silent until one of you reaches the magazine and then it's '*Shut up Ruth Ostrow.*' It is the only routine you have and the coffee maker presides over it all.

It's the weekend after Anzac Day and you're having lunch with Lisa. Remember the story, you ask, the one with Sam and the boat down at Port Pirie and she tells you no, that was Grace's brother with the boat story and do we want to ask the waitress for another bottle of water?

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In your life with Pete, you are tiny. There is a niece to look after when his sister-in-law does her groceries, fundraisers for his football team, and he wants to know if you've got any carpet cleaner. Pete gets a friend from work to service your car and now you are wrestling with marinades to say thank you. He discusses *All Saints* with your Mum and gardening with your Dad, even though you've spent the past 25 years running away from a driveway lined with agapanthus. You breathe in his air and some time between the last Foxtel bill and the weekend in Hobart, you forget to clean the coffee maker. One morning you wake up and realise it's been five months.

You understand that he is a good man. None of this is his fault. You like that your car no longer rattles. But now Sam is coming home, just for a week.

Sophie is staying in Sydney. The rumour is they're having problems. You make a bet with God that if this ball of paper lands in the bin, Sam will want to see you. If Tony doesn't leave his desk for the next five minutes, Sam will call. If the vending machine is still out of Snickers. If tomorrow is Wednesday.

The paper ball lands and it's Sam on the phone.

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Pete lets himself in and his eyes go to the far corner of your kitchen, as though he expects it to have sprung into life. You say nothing. He says, *'For fuck's sake, Lee,'* but later, more quietly:

'Can't you see that this is better?'

You have made yourself so very small.

You are a secondhand plate set and an 18 dollar toaster. You passed out on a man's shoe and no one else sees what is wrong with that. You fell into this relationship and on a Saturday in September Peter asks you to move in with him. It's not what you thought you wanted. But then, Sam was never in the story with the boat.

Pete's flat has a galley kitchen. You'll have to sell the coffee maker.

He's waiting for your answer.

"Yeah. Yeah, I'd like that."