

Open

Sam Elkin

I am back and you are everywhere.

At the Clifton Hill interchange I watched you get off the bus and walk to your house. Of course you lived in that beautiful bluestone fortress. I felt as though I was stalking you, sitting there on the 250 watching you open your front door. Every morning after that I stared as I went past your house, but I never saw you.

At a party on Station Street in Carlton that I brought my housemates along to. Every single one of them embarrassed me. I smoked too much pot with Seb and stood next to you near speechless for an hour. You casually mentioned during a political debate with your comrades that you “identified as queer”. I turned to you and asked if that meant you would sleep with me. You said you would, on Tuesday.

On Tuesday, at my place on Nicholson Street across the road from Singh’s, my heart beating like crazy. In the morning I was so excited about my new life with you. But when you came back from the bathroom you said “That was nice, but I’m with a couple of guys right now so I don’t think I’ll have time to do this again.” I didn’t even understand what you were saying.

Walking home from the Pinnacle Hotel after drowning my sorrows, of course I bumped into you and one of those guys you were fucking. He said “Nice bike”.

At the band room of the Corner Hotel in Richmond. You hadn’t even invited me to the show, Amy had. I didn’t know a single thing about hip-hop but I would’ve stared at a wall for two hours if it meant standing next to you.

Walking home from the Evelyn Hotel after enduring a TZU show that I knew you were going to. Afterwards, my friends from Perth who were staying with me said “Was that her? She’s really good looking” I sighed and told them that I knew she was.

Drinking everywhere, every memory soaked in booze. Sitting upstairs with you in a bar in Fitzroy, you said “I’ve got to go now, I’m meeting Peter.” Watching you walk away, I felt like my heart was an endless strand of mozzarella cheese stretched between my chest and yours, and that no humiliation could rip it free.

Outstanding short story writing competition 2016 / Second prize winner

Back at your house after taking magic mushrooms that you'd picked at La Trobe, your friend Rebecca ran off into the night and no one followed her. I stared endlessly into the mirror in your bathroom wondering if I was still the same person that I had been before I met you. When I finally made it back upstairs, you said "I want to love you but I just can't, I like men too much." I said that I understood, but asked if I could stay over anyway.

Diligently walking down Holden Street between my house and yours at any hour of the night that you texted me. I was freezing all the time because I hadn't bought a winter coat yet.

I guess I wore you down eventually. At the end of the year you said that you were going to Italy and that I could come with you if I wanted to. From Naples to Bologna men hit on you constantly in the street, in the bars, at the ice cream parlour, everywhere. You didn't seem interested, but it was hard to tell because I couldn't speak Italian.

Later, back in Melbourne, getting out of a car on Rushall Crescent. A friend called to say that she'd heard a rumour that you'd started seeing another woman, a bartender at the Builders Arms. I laughed it off, told her you would've told me something like that. I said to you, "My friend just told me that you're seeing someone else, and that it's getting pretty serious." You looked at me and said "I didn't want you to find out like that".

But I did find out like that.