

bad relationship stories



This is a carthasiser, a vessel for explosive, cathartic writing.

Sb

Sb

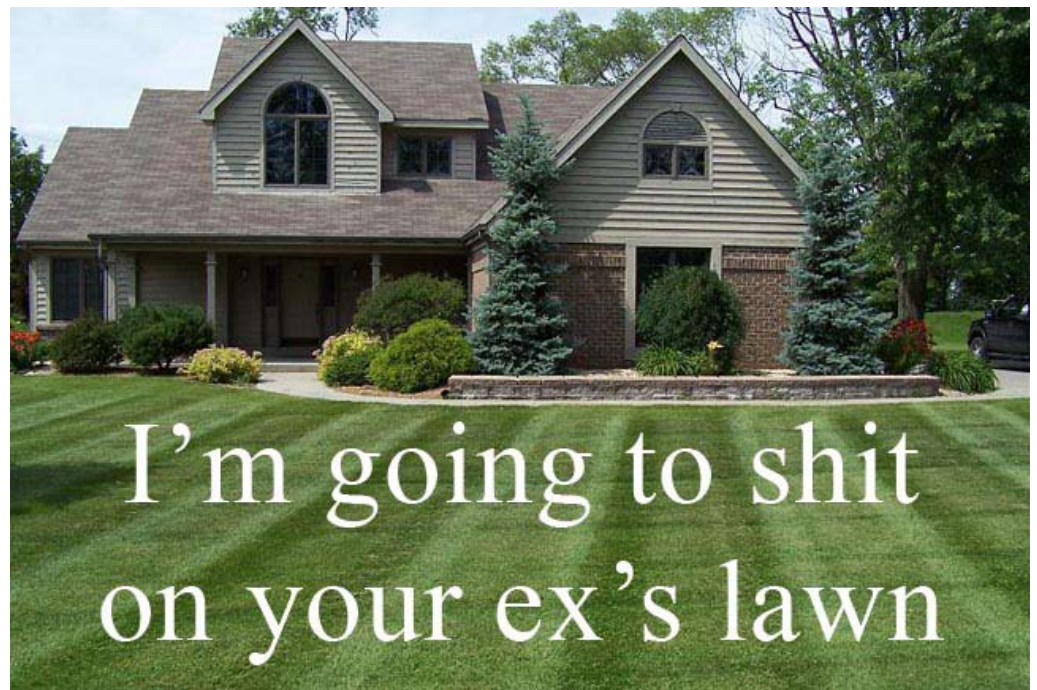
Everyone has an ex they can see themselves going back to, and one that reminds them how far they've come. These stories concern the latter.

Thank you to all the true lovers for their true stories. This is an on-going project, if you'd like to contribute a story, even the other side to any of these, please do. Whether you send them in or not, may I recommend writing about love-rats & ratesses, shit-bags & fush-sticks as a way of learning from your bad experiences and forgetting them.

All names have been changed to protect the anonymity of the characters in these stories.

Drus
Sb
drusdrus@gmail.com
sensitiveboyfriend.com

ps all story contributors will be entitled to a complimentary Sb break-up care package. This can be sent to you, or anyone else going through a break up. The care package contains lots of things, they're always bespoke to their recipient, this charming comiseration card is one of them . . .



contents

One Bright Red Eye

Jake

massive, weird, huge lies

no kiss list

AWKWARD & lame

She was supposed to be my friend

Scooter

oops

Dear Charity

second chance

One Bright Red Eye

We were living at The Rectory, when Ruapehu erupted. I think it was 1994.

It was the start of the term and the mornings were still cold. It was officially spring though, so all the girls were shivering in their rolled up skirts and sandals.

Gemma Taylor and I were the first up and the first to shower, which was the punishment for being the youngest.

Outside was the closest thing I had ever seen to snow in Gisborne. A thin layer of grey powder over everything, all the leaves of the stunted institutional shrubbery, each cobble stone, every cook's car and The Matron's van. No one had even walked through it yet and we had no idea what it was so we looked out over the chilly morning courtyard for minutes in wonder before someone told us that the volcano had erupted up on the ski field and the ash had floated all the way out to us on the East Coast.

At breakfast in the toasty dining room we all talked about it. There was even an announcement from the Masters Table, apparently the ash was corrosive and we shouldn't touch it.

We were fourteen and this is the story of Danny Williams, Gemma Taylor and Me and how Danny Williams got Gemma Taylor and I suspended from the boarding house.

I don't remember how it started. Gemma Taylor and I were best friends. Danny Williams and Matthew Savage were friends and it was arranged that we would pair up.

Danny Williams and me were Going-Out, and he was on my Table so he went from putting salt in my milk at Breakfast to Footsing me under the Table at Dinner, which was an improvement I suppose. He was a year older than me, tall and kind of pale, a bit sarcastic and maybe not my first choice for boyfriend but I was perfectly happy with the arrangement.

In those days nothing was vague, time was divided into named blocks like Lunch, English, Prep, Lights-Out, PE and even when you were off the grid it had a name, Bunking. The parts of our lives that hadn't been specifically organized by the Masters or School we organized and named ourselves. Going-Out with Danny Williams meant that we first told everyone we were Going-Out then wrote each others names on our stuff, watched each others weekend sports matches and or after school practices, passed notes in Prep, sat as close as was allowed in the common room and finally, possibly, ventured Down-The-Tree-Line.

There were finer points but we don't need to go into them here. Any more and you were a Slut any less and you were Dry. Both titles were excruciatingly shameful.

Gemma Taylor and I would lie in bed at night after the Matron had been around at 9:30 Lights-Out and compare notes. Had she gone Down-The-Tree-Line with MS yet? Had I with DW? No.

The way I remember feeling about it is like the way I would feel now if someone asked me if I wanted to inject heroin, like it could be the most incredible thing ever or just so, so unbelievably bad and horrifying.

We never did go down there. Sure, we kissed but only in the safety of daylight hours and in the company of others.

After what seemed like a long love affair but which was maybe three weeks at the most, we arrived home from Rowing one evening to find something quite uncanny. One bright red eye.

The whole white part of Danny Williams' right eye was creepily red and what's more he didn't know who I was or that we were even Going-Out. That ended the whole thing. The next day after Dinner I was dumped.

Ten years later Gemma Taylor and I decided that the amnesia part of the story probably wasn't true. If you get a concussion and your eye fills up with blood at Rugby practice it's unlikely that you would be totally functional yet not know your girlfriend. I fell for the whole trick, so why did he get us suspended? It's still a mystery.

After that Gemma Taylor and I stopped hanging around with those kinds of boys, they were our parents' friends' kids anyway. We sat across from Denis Stacey and Russell Hill in Prep and almost died laughing and got thrown out every single night. Denis Stacey drew a picture of Gemma Taylor doing it doggie-style with one of the Prefects which was so good and had so much work put into it she couldn't even get offended. They called me Trophy Head, because my ears stuck out like the handles on prize cup. Even at the time, in my fragile teen state I thought that was pretty funny.

We went Down-The-Tree-Line with them but not to Get-Together just to try and smoke Holidays from a Ten-pack someone had bought from the dairy.

One night after Prep, Gemma Taylor and I were standing outside the Boys Dorm talking to Denis Stacey and Russell Hill. We had spent the entire two hours of Prep working on our epic poem/rap featuring characters from The Rec mocked in verse, which had reached almost forty stanzas and been in progress over the past week. We were finally getting to laugh out loud about it after so much whispering and spluttering when Danny Williams came up behind us and pushed us right into the Boys Dorm then held the door shut while his side kick Matthew Savage went and got the Matron.

We had to go to the Bursars office and there were no excuses, we both had to phone our parents right there and then and tell them what we had done and that they would have to come and pick us up after school the next day and keep us home for a week. We were outraged. Those boys were such smarmy little suck-ups. We spent our whole last night together just loathing them both. How could we have touched such gross losers?

We never really found out why he did it but after that Danny Williams was my archenemy. Matthew Savage apologized when we got back but Danny Williams said it served us both right.

Gemma Taylor and I are still best friends every time we see each other, which isn't very often now.

Dennis Stacey and Russell Hill went from being the funniest coolest guys we knew to being totally un-funny wasters and the reason I never took up smoking weed.

Danny Williams became the archetype for guys that I wouldn't have anything to do with from then on, white Farm Boys with clean sensible hair cuts who played rugby and wore Airtex shirts. I hear he is a Merchant Banker now. What a Dick.

His family went skiing up Ruapehu the next winter. Gemma Taylor and I hoped he would be buried under a pile of ash and snow.

Jake

Sara and Jake had the kind of sex other people only read about and never actually believed existed. It was the stuff of movies. Jake took Sara whenever, wherever. Every surface: floor, door, wall, bench, stovetop, desktop, table. Against cars, trees, in parks, car parks, car ports, footpaths, against fences, driveways and doorways. But they didn't date, they rarely hung out, only sometimes emailed and they barely talked. They were friends with benefits. Minus the friendship.

That night, Sara lay awake in the dark, her back to Jake. He'd called her. Eventually. When he had an itch to scratch, seeds to sow, away from prying eyes.

Their bottoms pressed lightly together, a fine film of sticky sweat separating them. Two hours this time. Two hours. They'd finally made it to the bedroom sometime during the second hour. She hoped her neighbour Mel didn't think she was doing late-night DIY again.

Sara rolled over. Jake slumbered in towards her and sleepily wrapped his arms around her waist pulling her into him. Sara rested her head on his chest. It rose and fell as he breathed.

'You're not as pretty as a lot of girls,' Jake said in a husky burst of rare post-coital talk sometime around three or four a.m.

Oh?

'But you have a thing,' he said into the darkness. If she'd looked, Sara would have caught Jake's smile in the shard of yellow light streaming through the gap in the curtains.

'A thing?'

'Yeah. A kind of sexual charisma, like you want it all the time.' Jake traced a finger up and down Sara's arm.

The same light that cut across Jake's face fell on Sara's shoulder, pinning it to the bed. She eased her hip into Jake, placing her legs over his. 'Well, I do, most of the time. I told you, I'm a gay man trapped in a woman's body. Minus the tidiness. And the dance music. Oh, and I totally can't cook.'

'Yeah, well, that's the thing, that's your sexual charisma. That's what makes you attractive, sometimes even beautiful. I see you across the room and all I can think about is fucking you, right then and there.' Jake dropped his arm around Sara's body and he squeezed her tightly. His mouth slackened into a small smile.

'Oh. Thanks. I think.'

'Do you want to be my girlfriend?' Jake was lying on the couch face down perusing the Sunday papers, which were spread out on the floor in front of him. Sara was lying on top of him reading over his shoulder. She watched his arm muscles tense and flex with each turn of the page.

'Is that just a random question or are you actually asking me to be your girlfriend?'
'Dunno. A question I think. Would you want to be my girlfriend,' Jake mumbled at the paper, '-if I was asking. Are you looking for a boyfriend?'
'I don't even know if we get on or not. We don't exactly talk, or hang out, or whatever.'
'Yeah, right.' Jake licked a finger and turned the page. 'Is that a no then?'
'I'm not sure you actually asked me anything?'

Sara's phone beeped again. 'Now what?' asked Mel, dutiful neighbour and friend.
'He's saying he's in Ponsonby,' Sara replied.
'So he's saying he wants a shag then.'
Sara nodded. 'Yep, for a change,' she deadpanned.
'Communication's just not his M.O., is it?' Mel slurred in reply.
'You're not wrong there. He used to come right out and say "Wanna fuck?" or "I want to fuck you right now", these days he's just random. It's really quite bizarre.'
'Yeah, the guy seriously can't communicate. I mean, he's "in Ponsonby"? What's that s'posed to mean? You should text him back saying that you are too; that's how much bloody use it is.'
'Yeah... nah. What should I reply, really? Oh shit, incoming.' Sara's phone beeped and vibrated in her hand. 'God, he's miles away, he's at the Gypo. He's in Grey Lynn for fuck's sake.'
'Grey Lynn? He's in another borough! He's not gonna walk here is he? Seriously?'
'Nah, he's not into that. He's drunk, but he hasn't lost his mind. Once I was going to his place and was taking a while to get there, yunno, dolling myself up in that I-don't-give-a-shit-and-totally-didn't-make-an-effort way - which takes time, babe, time - and he asked if I was being a gypsy and walking there. He calls hippies gypsies; hates them.'

Later, after Mel had stumbled her way home, clambering down the stairs and over Sara's threshold taking the one step home, Sara opened the door to Jake. He stood on the stoop clutching his iPhone and charger. His white shirt was crinkled and he wore a five o'clock shadow. He smelt of cigarettes, booze and man-sweat.

'Can I plug this in?' Jake asked, holding his charger up to Sara. His voice was gravelly. 'I've been smoking again, it's not good.' He shook his head and walked in.

'Hi Jake, sure,' replied Sara, stepping aside.
Jake kicked his shoes off and planted an efficient kiss on Sara's lips. 'Oh yeah, hi. And I can't stay,' he continued, 'sorry, early start.'
'Sure, yeah, whatever.' Sara reeled from Jake's masculine stench. From him.
'Oh, and I need money for the taxi. 'S'that OK?' he slurred. 'I sent you a text.'
Sara saw impatient car lights flickering in the driveway behind him 'You sent me hundreds of texts,' she replied.
'Yeah, right. That OK, though?'
'Yeah, whatever. You're lucky I've got cash,' Sara said running up the stairs to get her wallet.
'How much?' she yelled down.
'Twenty will cover it.'
'Kay...'
'And thanks.'

Sara plugged in Jake's phone charger beside the hall table. Jake bent down behind her and wrapped his arms tightly around her small waist, nuzzling into her neck. He pulled her up into him. Into his crotch.

'Mmm,' he breathed into her. 'I thought you said you were naked.'
'I was, but I chucked on a dress; I wasn't going to open the door to you getting out of a taxi wear-

ing nothing at all, was I?’

‘Oooh, I’d have liked that,’ Jake purred a little creepily.

‘So would’ve the taxi driver.’

Jake held Sara in the silence swaying gently as he kissed her neck. Sara felt electric.

Jake breathed into her. ‘Mmm, you smell nice.’ His stubble prickled and tickled Sara’s cheek. ‘You always smell nice. D’you have beer?’ he slurred.

‘Nah, I’ve run out.’

‘Ah, well. I probably don’t need anymore anyway.’

Jake jerked Sara’s dress up over her head and hoisted her up against the glass front door. He pulled back her hair in one rough movement and fell into her neck, his lips sinking into her warm flesh.

Upstairs, Sara and Jake lay on the couch, legs entwined, their hot bodies glistening with sticky sweat. Sara’s head rested on Jake’s shoulder, his left arm flung across her, his right arm propped up behind his head. Their naked bodies were dappled by the pinkish-orange hue of the streetlights censored as they were by nearby trees. Sara’s knees hurt where she had spent too long on the rug-less rimu floor. The room smelled of sex. A cat squealed outside; a scuffle ensued.

‘Jakey...?’ Sara broke the silence. She slowly coiled a lock of hair around her finger, round and round and round. She became aware of her breath.

‘...Yeah?’

Sara stared at the ever-changing kaleidoscope reflected on the ceiling as trees shuddered outside. ‘Why do you hardly ever stay?’ she asked.

‘Oh, yunno, work.’ Jake patted Sara’s shoulder with a limp hand.

‘Sure...’ she paused. ‘But you could get ready here. I do have a shower, yunno.’

‘I know, I know. Course I know that.’ Jake scratched his nose. ‘But I get picked up from my house, by a runner. Yunno?’

‘You could get picked up from here, it’s not exactly off the beaten track.’

‘Yeah, yeah, I could. Sure I could. But there’s easier. It’s all sorted, yunno?’

‘Yeah...’

But she didn’t. Sara didn’t know.

Sara’s home phone ruptured the air with its shrill rhythmic repetition. It rang on and on. Finally, Sara picked it up. ‘Hello?’ What time was it?

It kept ringing.

Sara fell back in panic. Her heart whumped. The stars in her bedroom stung the back of her eyes and the blue trees moaned. ‘Hello? Hello? Who’s there?’ Her voice was throttled and her legs couldn’t move.

The path became a river and the giant pink gorilla reached the top of the hill and pounded its chest, then the moon put its hat on and began to meow...

Sara forced open her eyes. It was still dark. The phone beside her bed was ringing. Its violence reverberated throughout the room liked a squalling a flock of bats.

Sara picked up the phone; it was cold in her hand. ‘Hello?’

‘Sara, it’s me, Mel. Sorry to phone you so late, but have you been on Facebook tonight?’

Sara shivered. ‘What? Facebook? Tonight? Mel, what time is it?’

‘I’m so sorry doll, it’s really late, but Ant’s here and we were worried about you. He told me the news.’

‘Huh? The news?’ Sara rubbed her eyes and picked up her mobile phone. She squinted to look at its tiny digital clock: 02.44 a.m. Fuck. She scratched her head. ‘What news?’

‘Sara, Jake got married.’

Sara felt the bile rise in her throat. Jake, married?

She blinked her eyes open. 'What? Jake's married? But... How...?' she stammered.

'Yeah Sara, it's true. Well, insofar as Facebook is the bearer of truth, it's true. You OK?' Mel asked. 'What am I saying? Of course you're not OK. Put some clothes on darling, we're coming over.'

'No.' Sara sat up out of bed and wrenched her fingers through her hair. 'No, no,' she croaked. 'I'll come to you. Yeah, I'll come to you. You've got booze, right?'

'Yes of course, of course darling. Only the good stuff,' Mel replied. 'Darling, you know that's all I'm good for.' She paused. 'Sara, I'm so sorry, you don't deserve this.'

Sara leaned all her weight onto the cold porcelain basin and stared up at herself in the mirror. Her shoulders were slumped and her brow furrowed. The person looking back at her was pale and small, the oversized t-shirt rendering her meek and pitiable. Her green eyes grew bigger with each small, shallow breath.

Married? Jake's married? Oh God... Sara ran to the toilet and lifted the lid just in time to vomit into the bowl.

Ant opened the door and Mel lunged forward at her friend.

'Oh darling. Darling!' she gushed and clenched Sara into a hug mopping her tears on a shoulder of her brown cashmere cardigan. 'Did you log on?'

'No... no,' Sara snuffled, hiccupping.

'Oh darling, you shouldn't, he's a rogue.' Mel tucked a piece of hair behind Sara's ear then picked up her hands. She looked at her friend.

Sara's eyes searched Mel's for an answer. 'I can't believe it, Mel.' Her tiny voice trembled. 'I just can't believe it. I feel sick.'

Mel frowned. 'We always knew he was no good, no good for our Sara. Come on darling, let's get you that drink.' She clutched Sara's hand and led her to the stairs. Ant gently rubbed Sara's back as the funereal march proceeded upwards.

Sara's eyes brimmed with tears. Ant passed her a Glenfiddich single malt. She clasped it with both hands, taking the occasional timid sip. 'Mel...?'

'I know,' Mel shook her head. 'How did we not know?'

'So, what happened? What do we know?' Sara put her whiskey down and gnawed at a thumb nail.

'Ant saw it... on Facebook.'

The girls looked across to Ant. He wiped away a tussock of thick black hair with his paddle for a hand. He was perched on the edge of the black leather chaise, his weathered face dressed with an uneasy gait. His lumbering limbs were poured into Mel's over-sized white fluffy robe, pulled tight across his body, and hairy legs gathered into white fluffy socks. He looked like a giant marshmallow.

He scratched his nose and took a sip of whiskey. 'I was on my way over in a taxi and was checking out Facebook on my iPhone,' he began. 'And Jake's relationship status had changed to married. From single to married. It didn't seem like Jake, I mean, it's Jake... so I took a gander at his profile and there's a whole lot of pictures posted of him, in Vegas, holding hands with a blonde chick dressed in white, and, well...'

Sara put her head into her hands. Her shoulders heaved and shuddered as she let out a slow quiet moan. Mel fell into her friend and rocked her slowly. 'That fucken cunt! Vegas?' wailed Sara. 'Married? Married for fuck's sake? How can Jake be married for fuck's fucken sake? And in Vegas? Oh God, it's happened. It's official: I am a cliché.'

Sara woke up haunted. Jake was married. She lay in bed and stared up at the ceiling. Tears plink-plinked their way down the side of her face onto the pillow, one after the other after the other.

The last thing Sara had expected was to hear from Jake. So when she did, at 10 p.m. one mid-week night while sitting in her lounge, she was dumbfounded.

It began as a benign text: 'This still your number?'

Soon after the first text, another followed: 'This is Sara isn't it? Phone broke overseas so using old one,' it said.

Sara paused, then thumbed her reply: 'Yes, it's Sara,' and she slowly felt herself unravel.

Less than a minute later, Jake phoned. His name blazed across the small screen. Her heart pattered. 'Hello?'

'Sara, it's Jake.'

Hearing his voice suddenly made her feel angry. 'Yeah, I know,' she deadpanned.

'I'm back.'

Sara took a sip of Bailey's. 'I guessed as much,' she paused. 'And you're married.'

There was silence on the other end. 'Yeah... Sara,' he went quiet. 'Sara, don't hate me. I need you to not hate me. Please don't hate me.'

Sara walked over to a chair and sat down.

'Sara, I had to do it,' Jake gathered his steam. 'We were together for years, we were engaged, then Marybelle never came when she was supposed to...'

'Marybelle?' Sara scoffed and took a swig of her drink.

'Yeah. She's American. I went to LA to see if there was anything left, if we had anything... I had to, I had to do it Sara. And we did, more-or-less, so we got married on the spur, we were in Vegas so we thought what the hell. It was her idea. I owed to her and to me to give it another shot. We'd been happy together once.'

'And was Elvis there too toasting the happy couple, I suppose?'

'Sara, don't be bitter.'

Sara nearly choked on her Bailey's. 'You're fucking kidding me, aren't you? You are seriously fucking kidding me? Don't be fucking bitter? And what the fuck would you recommend I was? Happy for the newlyweds? Doing a shout-out for the happy couple on Love-songs 'till Midnight with all my love?'

'Yeah. Right. Sorry.' Jake paused. 'She's moving here in a month.' He fell silent. 'Sara?'

Sara felt her stomach tighten at the mention of her, Marybelle – Marybelle for fuck's sake – the one who was good enough for Jake. Her Jake. Her head buzzed.

'Can I see you?' he asked.

'No.' Sara shook her head and took the phone away from her ear for a second.

'But I need to see you, Sara.'

'Jake, have you gone completely fucken mad? Are you off your rocker? What the fuck are you trying to do to me? Seriously!'

'I need to explain to you....'

'Explain what, Jake? Explain what exactly?' she interrupted. 'As far as I can see there's no explanation necessary. I wasn't the one, you told me that and now you're married. I geddit. I'm not fucken stupid, OK?'

'I know that Sara. I just need to see you.'

'No Jake, you don't.' And with that Sara hung up.

Minutes later, Jake sent Sara a text: 'Please Sara I have to see you.'

Minutes later, she replied: 'Jake, I live in hope for women everywhere that deep down inside you there's a good man trying to get out. Now piss off and leave me the fuck alone.'

Sara was washing her face when she heard the inevitable door knock. Her eyes loomed large like a possum caught in the night. She knew he'd come.

Jake stood on her doormat. The hallway light beamed out at him striking him on the forehead, causing him to squint. He'd aged, she noticed. Sara clenched her arms tight into her side as he leaned in to kiss her. His kiss hit the air as she stepped aside to let him in. This was not a conversation for neighbours' ears.

Jake stood at the door as Sara pulled the hinge shut. 'Sara... please forgive me.' Jake's voice reverberated around the tiny cavern of wooden-floored entrance.

Sara's eyes were stony and her lips thin. 'Jake, why exactly are you here?'

Jake's shoulders were slumped and he had too much hair. 'I need you to forgive me, Sara. I need you to forgive me,' his eyes pleaded.

Sara sighed. 'And why's that, Jake?'

'Cos I'm an arsehole, a cunt. And I just needed to say I'm sorry, to say how sorry I am.'

'Well say it and leave.'

'I'm sorry Sara, I'm really am. I'm sorry for what I did to you.'

'And what did you do to me, Jake? What exactly was it that you did to me?' She wanted to sit on the bottom step, to curl up, to breathe, to cry, but she stood rigid.

Jake looked over Sara's shoulder to the wall, then back to her. She was impenetrable. 'I... I couldn't commit to you, I guess,' he faltered.

Sara stiffened. 'You guess? Seriously, you guess? Nice.' She shook her head. 'And why was that, Jake?'

'Because I was still in love with someone else?'

'This isn't a quiz, Jake. You're not going to get marks out of ten. At least sound like you give a shit.'

'OK,' he snapped. 'I was – am – in love with someone else.'

Sara's face flushed hearing the words. A shiver ran across the back of her head. 'Yes...' she bit her lower lip. 'Well, that about sums it up. You were fucking me because it was convenient but all the while you were in love with someone else. And now you're married, you married her Jake.'

'Sara...'

Her poisoned eyes flickered. 'What? There's a different version? You weren't fucking me while you were in love with someone else? You weren't using me because it was easy and convenient, cos I was easy and convenient? Because I never said no to you? You weren't hedging your bets until something – or rather, someone – better came along?'

'Sara... it wasn't like that...' Jake scratched his head as he shook it slowly from side to side. 'It really wasn't. It wasn't that thought through. I just didn't think about, at all, I guess.'

'Yeah, well that's fucken obvious. So Jake, please tell me how it was cos I sure as fuck don't know.' Sara backed up towards the stairs.

Jake's iPhone beeped in his pocket and he shifted his weight from one leg to the other. 'Sara... I don't know what to say, I really don't...'

'Ha!' she snorted. 'So you came here why? Why the fuck, tell me, why the fuck did you come here, in the first fucking place? Jake you're an absolute shit of a man!' She felt her voice starting to hiccup.

'...I did like you – do like you – that part is true. But... I just had to give this a shot. I had to give it another go. I owed it to Marybelle.'

Sara snorted again. 'And does Marybelle know you were fucking me? Fucking me while you took your sweet fucken time making your piss-arse mind up? Would you like me to let her in on "our little secret",' Sara gestured the quotation marks, '–so you can start your marriage on an honest footing? Or is honesty just not your thing, Jake? All just a little bit too hard? Are you simply a lying little cunt?' Sara scowled. She no longer cared that her soul was broken open and that the bitter-

ness oozed out.

'Sara...' he whimpered. 'I had no idea you were so hurt; that you were so angry.'

Sara raise her hands beside her ears and slapped them back down to her sides. 'Oh for fuck's sake Jake, grow the fuck up!' she belted. 'You had it all. Me here waiting for you and her there waiting for you. All you had to do was to make your fucking mind up, to take your pick. And now you have, so leave me the fuck alone!' Sara lurched across him at the door and opened it wide.

Jake shuffled backwards. 'Sara it wasn't like that...'

'You know,' Sara held Jake's gaze, '-really you've got the aura of a much smaller man... and now you can leave.' Sara stared, unflinching, holding the door. 'Leave Jake, please leave me the fuck alone.'

And it occurred to Sara, for just a moment, that seething became her.

massive, weird, huge lies

I was dating a guy in Canada for around 6 months, gosh he seemed sweet, always took me out for fancy meals and bought me stuff, and regaled me with stories of this huge fortune he had amassed in his days as an IT guru, and amazing stories of his travels in exotic countries around the world.

I often thought some things didn't quite add up, but oddly I didn't find it weird that this rich dude was slaving away with me for ten bucks an hour working for a skifield.

So, one night I happened to check my bank balance and discovered that \$500 was missing. That was a lot of money to me, I was working two crummy jobs and trying to save up.

So I called my nice boyfriend, crying and stuff, and he was so sympathetic, and worried, and all the things a good boyfriend should be.

Then, I called the bank with my terrible news. They kindly did an investigation for me, and subsequently sent me a letter with all the exact times and dates that my debit card had been used to steal my money. Well, I checked and compared, and yup, they were all times when my boyfriend was not at work, and the location was right by our houses.

So... he denied it... then came clean the next day, about EVERYTHING - all the massive, weird, huge lies he had been telling me about everything in his life!

Turns out he memorised my PIN from the supermarket or something, then took my card from my wallet, stole the money, and replaced the card.

Needless to say, I broke up with him after that.

A few weeks later, I was travelling in Mexico and receiving emails from him telling me that he was going to kill himself so that he could watch over me forever.

So what do you think? That guy was a bit of a dud.

no kiss list

I was briefly seeing a girl who I went on to work with, we stopped seeing each other when we started working together. She basically broke it off by acting distant, and I got the idea, we never really had an actual conversation about ending it or whatever. Because we started working together it was all became very professional.

We had to share a computer at work and I went on it when she went out of the room. I was looking for a file we were working on, but instead found she was working on a list of things she didn't like about me. The list included:

feet (maybe I just don't like feet)
does poo at my house
acts like girl
is not circumcised
ignorance

. . .and about 10 other things ridiculous things. The list was in English even though that wasn't her first language.

I can't really remember how I brought it up that I'd seen it. She apologised. Because I was used to suppressing emotions in a totally unhealthy ways under the guise of "professionalism", and because I seemed to pride myself on not making a big deal about stuff even if it's really out of line. I just kept working with her and tried to move on. She apologised a couple more times and even gave me a postcard about how dignified I was, presumably when I wasn't ignorantly shitting at her house like an uncircumcised girl in bare feet, when we stopped working together. We stayed friends for a couple of years until it faded out, after a couple of falling outs.

I saw a psychic about a month before this, when we were romantically entwined. She said that my spirits did not want to even talk about her. The psychic told me I should have nothing to do with her, but that I'd do whatever I wanted to do.

AWKWARD & lame

Last night I was informed about what had happened to a dear friend of mine last weekend.

After gulping down several of those mini champagnes through straws at an art opening, she had tottled off to a 21st and blah blah blah, a drunken party night ensued fueled by copious amounts of free alcohol.

THEN on Saturday night at another 21st, this time a friend of her boyfriend, she couldn't work out why the boyf was acting strange and certainly not being sensitive.

As it turns out the night before, he had dumped her.

WHATADICK ending a two year relationship while the gf is completely inebriated. She had absolutely no recollection of the whole thing and so then on the Saturday night he to re-dumped her.

The story is not that bad but really AWKWARD and lame.

She was supposed to be my friend

A couple of years ago, in spring, I was involved with a fashionable girl, Karen. Karen used to talk about how not many people knew her. She just didn't tell you stuff. Her hair was long, and dark, and shiny, and full of secrets.

I wasn't completely innocent, re. getting dumped. The last time we had slept together I said something which she either misheard, or took the wrong way. I said that I felt boring in bed. I didn't mean it as any comment on her, it was a comment on me. In retrospect I just felt so frustratingly distant from her. Sleeping with someone you feel disconnected from is boring. Anyway I felt her become more distant after saying it, and I didn't try to explain myself.

I guessed I was dumped when I took a cup of coffee around to Karen's house, a few mornings later when I was in her area and thought she'd probably be home. Her flatmate was just leaving, and looked at me with a little pity as I walked up to the house with the coffee. She said Karen wasn't in.

I went out the next night with mutual friends to a party, knowing it was going to be small, only a couple of people there. It turned out Karen and her friends were the other people, I gave her some space. After about an hour I left the front verandah to go inside. The house was an old villa and had the longest hallway, long like a catwalk. Just as I entered the hallway Karen entered from the other direction. I can't remember which words, in which order, I threw together. Not "you know I have been dumped before?"

There was a moment that night when her friend jokingly called Karen a slut. They didn't know there had been anything between us. I jokingly said back: "don't talk that way about my girl . . . z", adding the 'z' in case she overheard us and thought I was being serious. Her friend said that she was just joking, that Karen was one of her besties.

I saw her the next night as well, at a big party. I sent her a txt after we had fist-bumped goodbye. We didn't fist-bump, this was pre-fist bumping, but I don't know the word for the 'bro handshake' thing we did. She was wearing woollen mittens, fingerless. The txt said: "thank you for making the air taste sweeter", 49%-joking, I just wanted to commemorate the end. Closure. They were just the words that came to me when I thought of her, driving home around the waterfront. In the moonlight. The next morning I sent her txt saying, "haha, please delete that txt!" She wrote back saying she'd already done it the night before, instinctively, because she was drunk and couldn't understand what it meant.

The feeling I get when I think of this time in my life is mild car sickness. Everything about it was

a little vom in the mouth. You couldn't do anything about it except maybe swallow. I kept running into Karen in ridiculous ways, like at 1AM with her new boyfriend on a bridge. Always dramatic locations. It was weird to have to pretend that I'd never been with her. Like I was a secret. Like I didn't exist.

Writing about all this, I realise how long ago it was, it must be like three weeks ago by now. I wonder at the strange set of circumstances that conspired to bring us together. I think she'd been heart-broken by her beau before me. He had betrayed her with a kiss. I like to think I understood her, by what she showed me but could not tell, I understood that she probably just needed a rebound who wasn't a bounder. Same.

Still it's nice to be told where you stand with someone. No one likes being dumped, whether it's two (breathless) afternoons, a couple of decades, January-February. I wonder how she would have done it? Softly probably, if a little patronising, but kind. I can hear her drawing out the vowel in my name. She would have been good at it, if she'd tried. Karen's chic, she's smart, she's funny. I know we weren't made for each other but I'd just have appreciated it if she had put as much thought into me as she did into getting dressed the morning.

Her hair's shorter now. I hope she's happy, wherever she is.

Anyway, it's times like these that I'm glad I can read minds.

Scooter

Beth had agreed to have lunch with Scooter at Dizengoff in Ponsonby. Scooter was a friend of Beth's brothers, Kit and Bobby. She'd known him since he was a kid, since the days of bull-rush, Tangy Fruits and Soda Stream. He was all grown up now, same as her bros, having reached the grand old age of 26. Beth had always thought Scooter was a bit of a twat. And he was yet to prove otherwise.

As she hugged him hello, Beth didn't know why after all these years she still felt the need to meet up with him. Yet she did, and here she was.

Looking up at him all Beth could think about was taking giant clippers to his nose hairs, or reaching up and plaiting them and climbing on up to take a gander of the view up there. She always reckoned he fancied one of her brothers but Scooter insisted he wasn't gay. Insisted.

'Hi Scooter, great to see you,' she lied.

Scooter kissed Beth, missing her lips and instead planting a smacker on her nose. 'Likewise. Oop, sorry about that.'

Beth winced. 'Fine, sweet, don't worry about it...'

Scooter went up to order their food and Beth picked out a table by the window. Beth watched him as he lumbered back. He had the look of a rugby prop which had caused the passing drool of many a rugby team selector. He was a six foot five inch beefcake of a bloke with legs like milled logs. But Scooter was a pussy. Strictly exercising à la gym: bench presses, crunches and exercise of that ilk. And that was it; nothing that would get him grubby. Or hurt.

'You good?' Scooter asked after he sat down.

Beth propped her head up with elbows on the table. 'Yeah, yeah, you?'

Beth sat slumped at the café table as Scooter recounted his most recent relationship. She was sorry she'd asked.

'We were together two years,' Scooter droned on. 'Then she finally had an affair a woman – with a woman! Can you believe it? – so I could finally get out of it. It meant finding a new flat but I was sick of all the crying. Crying, crying, constant crying. Two years of constant crying.' He sniffed and wiped his nose with a finger. 'And screaming and throwing stuff. She threw stuff.' He exhaled and looked Beth in the eye. 'She had issues.'

Scooter's love life was like a series of rope swings, lurching from one bad relationship to another. He picked up his cupcake and inspected it before taking a cautious bite. Coloured sprinkles showered from the pink icing as his mincing bite came away. 'Now I realise the root of her unhappiness was that she was gay,' he monotoned. 'I should have known.' He shook his head and licked his index finger, using it to pick up the pixelated sprinkles from his plate.

'Uh-huh,' Beth murmured, thankful she had not yet passed into a coma.

'It was just years of crying,' Scooter drawled. 'But when I finally got away it was still sad, yunno? But it was just such a load off, yunno?'

'Yup.' Beth glanced down at her phone hoping to catch a glimpse of the time. Its tiny digital time-keeper however was beyond her 20/20 vision.

Scooter took another bite of cupcake. 'Did you know,' he chewed, '-when she was 25, Mona - that was her name - Mona spent about \$30,000 on plastic surgery? Thirty grand! On a nose job, face lift, some of that collagen shit and she was a regular at that Botox business. Thirty grand! At 25!' he snorted. 'I mean, what the hell was that all about? Used up all her inheritance too. What a waste.'

'That's crazy,' Beth agreed. It was.

'Yeah, stupid is what that was. Sure was.' Scooter shovelled in the last wedge of cupcake and smacked his lips. 'Yum, you really ought to get one of those.'

Beth's stomach groaned. 'Yeah, they look good...'

'She was a mess; Mona was a mess. How was I supposed to keep propping that up?'

Beth stifled a yawn behind her hand. 'Yeah, it's a toughy alright...'

'She's still with that woman, yunno? As far as I know anyway. So it must be working for her, right?'

Beth rotated her shoulders one after the other. 'Yeah, right.'

Scooter sat back in his chair and peered at Beth. 'So... I guess that means I'm single again.' He grinned and arched an eyebrow.

Beth nodded. 'Uh-huh,' she replied.

Later that night when she got home from work Beth had a screaming headache. Three coffees, nil water and a big ol' sack of frustration will do that to a girl.

Scooter had copped the café bill so Beth thought she owed him a thank you text. 'Thanks for coffee today,' she wrote. 'Great to catch up. Enjoy being a man about town again.:o)'

Scooter's reply was immediate and startled Beth from her quiet evening reverie.

'Yep. Great to hang out. You looked hot. Seriously! Just back from gym. Lots of curls for the girls. Let's do it again soon. Or better still, we can both get ripped on a glass of...'

Umm... 'What?' Beth thumbed into the keypad.

'...wine and wake up next to each other naked and feeling uncomfortable ;o)

Where the hell did that come from?

'Now that WOULD be uncomfortable,' she replied.

Oops

I knew an American girl in France who was the queen of oops.

She would come onto guys by shoulder barging them and then saying “oops.” A guy had used the ‘oops’ pick up line on her once:

“I was just telling my friend how I REALLY like you . . . oops.”

I was dating her in the NZ sense, but she was in the American. I accidentally saw a txt from a French guy and she was sorta seeing him too. I’m ‘very monogamous’ and had just come out of a horrible non-committed relationship, I called it off. It was ok, we were still friends, which was good because we lived across the hall from each other in this creepy engineering school and not being able to laugh about living there with her would have made it depressing and creepy. Also awkward, as she was the queen of awkwardness too, which was weird because she is one of the funniest people I’ve ever met.

That reminds me of the time my brother, who is not the sensitive one in the family, met her in Paris. We went out to dinner and he just started asking blunt question after blunt question, until he eventually asked her if it was weird having an adopted sibling. It turns out having an adopted sister was a real issue for her, but she was so shocked by his line of questioning that she just answered him. After meeting him she said that she thought she understood me more... haha.

Around this time I was sending book ideas to publishers, one idea was to do with all the dog poo on the street in France. There are heaps of dogs and no one poop-scoops, so you’re constantly standing in dog poo, it’s gross. Anyway this was the idea I pitched to the editor:

to wait by dog poos and photograph people as they stood in them... besides every photo would be a description of one of the dumb French things that happened to me that day. the example I gave for the publisher, i guess from the day I saw her txt:

“I just broke up with a girl who lives across the hallway from me.”

Anyway the publisher wrote back a couple of days later saying he liked it, and I fwd’d his reply to her, totally forgetting that I’d used our situation as the dumb French thing example. Our friendship was still fragile, she wasn’t thrilled by the comparison, and we were never really friends again. She once unsuccessfully tried to hide behind a tree when she saw me approaching and said that the idea of someone as bad as me being in America (where I went after France) disgusted her, ridiculous. I still lived across the hall for another month or so, until I moved in with the Others, over the river at the creepy teachers college. There was blood on the sheets there, a cloak of dust on everything and a child’s skeleton hanging in the window of the biology lab. At least I hope it was the biology lab.

Dear Charity:

I was going to write to you about how Wellington's a heartbreak town. But it's so not. Even though you think you know every one, it's just because every one is either a bit drunk some of the time or quite friendly the rest. Someone dashing & new could appear at any moment, hair tousled by the wind, like a hair salad. I remember meeting Katherine, Sanna, and err unrequitable Michael, none of them worked out, but they were all wonderful in their own ways.

Katherine, oh that was rather a funny story. I'd been at a party with her and her friend, got in a cab to go to Good Luck. We'd left a drunk guy behind and I was all like 'oh no, drunk dudes are terrible', and then I tipped the balance from tipsy to drunk on the first drink at Good Luck. I went in for a kiss with Katherine's friend, Caroline, on the dance floor. I had had a crush on her for years, I didn't know she had a boyfriend. I was having that explained by Katherine at the bar, and one thing led to another. Katherine came home but nothing really happened. It was nice, though. Polite but intimate. And then she snuck out at 5am. She was living with her parents at the time and I guess that and the circumstances were all quite embarrassing, not really a story for our grandchildren. I think she was quite a respectable girl, she's a diplomat now. Not that I'm not a respectable boy. I've never been left like that before or since, so it was a strange feeling. My flatmate brought the phone in because my mum was called mum-style later that Sunday morning. My flatmate commented on the alcoholic cloud (around 12%) in my room. The thing was, I was trapped in a vile open, secret relationship as this was happening, at least I thought I was trapped. I could have stolen away silently too. I wish Katherine had taken me with her.

Anyway here is that long, thin French cigarette you asked for.

Sensitively,

Sb

second chance

My brother's friend was out canoeing one day, he's very athletic. This particular time he just woke up next to his car (and his canoe I guess), with the door open. He couldn't remember anything. He guessed out something must be wrong so he got the map out of his car, figured out where he was and drove to the nearest hospital. I think he had some cigarette burns on him, as well?

At the time his girlfriend and him were about to break up, after being high school sweethearts. He must have been about 27 at this point. But of course Brad couldn't remember any of the badness, he couldn't remember anything. He kept telling his girlfriend, Susan, that she was an incredibly attentive, not to mention beautiful, nurse to stay with him round the clock in the hospital.

Long story short, they fell back in love all over again. Brad slowly got his memory back, a decade at a time. When my dad visited him in hospital he said he looked older, about 10 years older. Now Brad and Susan are married with lots of children.

To conclude:

How happy is the blameless Vestal's lot!
The world forgetting, by the world forgot.
Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind!
Each pray'r accepted, and each wish resign'd.



© 2010.

Slb