

Mule

Amy McDonald

1.

The guy walks round the bar to me. 'My friend,' he nods to the left, 'thinks you're cute.'

I put down my glass. 'Which one's your friend?' I say and pick up my bag.

She lives in a share house. Brunswick. Her mattress is low, lumpy and damp. The moon shines through a gap in the Venetians where the blades have been bent at an odd angle.

Her hair is in my face. I push strands of it out of my mouth with the tip of my tongue. Her chin grinds into my shoulder as she flexes. We're not kissing but I can still taste her beer and cigarettes. Her fingers are insistent, tipping past the bump of my pubic bone and pouring into the cave of my cunt. She uses her thigh to dig her hand in further.

Wind rattles the Venetians. Headlights scan past, dust floating. Swampy air from the Merri snaking through a gap in the floorboards.

On our lumpy mattress island she's grunting even though she's not the one getting fucked.

Then it starts. Low but spreading, like a blood stain on white. The aching, stabbing, cramping between my cunt and my asshole. Some gaping chasm that is boundless and unfillable. I shut my eyes. Relieved at the weight of her body. The stink of her hair, the insistence of her fingers.

I'm floating off her mattress, somewhere warmer, safer. Somewhere known. Somewhere where I'm full and filled.

'Hey, where are you?' she asks, like we're having some meta-fucking-physical connection.

I flick my eyes open, stroke her cheek. 'Right here, babe,' I say. 'Right here.'

2.

We meet on the internet. Flirt. Arrange to meet before work. She lives in Fitzroy, near my office. I set the alarm early, pull on French panties. Those old ones. Remember?

Press the buzzer, open the door. She looks like her photo, more or less. I pull her clothes off. She mine.

There's something wrong with her nipples. Their length, their unwavering eagerness.

'Suck my tits,' she says and I nearly gag, taking them one at a time into my mouth. But she's big and strong. Functional. I stop suckling and she takes over.

Spreads me out on her ikea sheets. Positions me like one of those cut out dolls. I bend my arm at its stick pin elbow, pout. She flips me, smacks my arse. Digs at me and finds a soft spot. I lift my hips to meet her. She presses my head down, mashes my little doll cheek.

While she works I watch the discarded panties. Remember when wearing them made me feel good.

After, I hang my earrings in a bunch of flowers on her bedside. Like a coupon, I know it'll make for a happy customer later. I pull on her pajamas, and sit on a bar stool overlooking the town hall. Tilt my head, evaluate her bookcase. She hums from the kitchen. Grins when she sees me in her flannelette. Hands me a mug. In the sunshine, among her Persian rugs and dog hair, it could almost be normal

3.

Friends of friends can have quite disparate interests. This one loves the football. I pretend to know what she's talking about. Tipping. Teams. Abbreviations that mean nothing to me. Something low-level challenges my inner-Melbourne.

'Come and watch a game,' she says, gesturing with tongs. Plate – covered in silver foil and loaded with sausages – balanced on her other palm.

'Is it a private box?' I say, winking, and she blushes. I bend over the Esky, knowing already how easy it is to bring a flush to her throat.

On the day of the game I use nail scissors to cut the crotch out of my pantyhose. Fishnets: a cliché they go for nonetheless.

She's a door opener, coming around to my side even though there's central locking. I almost expect a corsage.

At half time I ask her where the bathrooms are. Chivalrous, she accompanies.

‘You’re an animal,’ she says when she discovers the opening in my tights, so easily pleased. Like you were when it was original. I want to vomit.

‘Take me,’ I say and lean back against the cistern.

She does.

When the hand drier clicks on I make reassuring pleasure sounds into her neck. She drops to her knees, tears the tights open. I tilt my pelvis, obliging.

When she’s had enough she takes one of those man-sized hankies from her pocket and dabs at her mouth.

Her palm is sweaty when she cups my hand and walks me back to our seats. Her team kicks a goal and she looks to me, eyes Labrador-full of simple pleasure.

In my mind, for a moment, I pretend that I love her.

4.

Sunday night, back at the bar. I sit outside with the smokers, half watching the crowd, half the passing traffic.

She has a Betty Page tattooed on one arm, a sailor on the other. She’s watching my skirt. Her beer is two mouthfuls away from finished. I wait.

She follows me down Brunswick Street, right into a leafy lane. I back up against the bluestones.

I take her hand and place it under the folds of cotton. Cool fingers on hot inner thigh and let her discover for herself that I’m not wearing underwear. I hear an intake of breath as she does.

Then she leans in to kiss me and I press a finger to her lips. ‘I don’t kiss on a first date,’ I say as her hand plunges into my cunt and I step a little wider to accommodate it.

Immediately she look hurt. Her lip curls and she says, ‘In that case,’ goes to pull her hand free, ‘I guess we’re done.’

The ballsiness of it makes me wet again. I bite her ear, suck her neck.

And the sailor becomes insistent, moving faster across her bicep. Goosebumps splashed across his navy suit.

Pinned against the bluestones I'm giving Betty Page a run for her money. I pull buttons off my blouse, skin white and sweating.

A couple of drunks stagger past and she presses in closer to me, reducing the space between our bodies, heat coming off her denim like steam.

'Is this what you want?' she hisses into my ear.

She wants the script. The patter I've learned like a mantra. Like those children taught to place chess, every move and counter move preprogrammed. No instinct, just rote.

But this time, I know I just can't do it.

'It is?' She is short of breath. 'What you want?'

'No,' I say and turn away.

She pulls free. 'What?'

'I want her.'

I mean you.

After months.

Years.

I want you, at that house by the beach with our lives mapped out. To sink my face into the oystery depths of you. For you to keep me filled.

'Are you fucking kidding me?' she says.

I claw my blouse back together, pull down my skirt. 'No.'

'So that's it?' this one, like all the others, says in the dim.

'Does it matter?' I answer, disembodied and insatiable.