

Lost Love

Sam opened the door for me; He looked exhausted. He hadn't shaved in probably a month. His t-shirt was full of baby spit-up, and his once big brown eyes were so puffy that I could barely see them. He was holding his screaming five-month-old daughter. This was only the second time in ten years Sam looked helpless. He was a dad now; a dad to someone else's baby, not mine.

I grabbed baby Grace out of his hands and positioned her head in the crook of my arm and the rest of her little body across my forearm. I gently started rocking her. She let out a few more cries but gradually calmed down. "Thanks for coming," he said.

"Of course," I replied. I looked around at the huge apartment not seeing any sign of Amy. He still had brown leather couches but much nicer than the ones he had back in college. His big screen T.V and cherrywood pub table fit his lofty apartment just as much as they fit him. "Do you wanna take a shower? I got Grace," I said.

"That's sweet of you Soph, but you really don't have to," he replied.

"Seriously, I don't mind. Go shower." I continued to rock Grace until she fell asleep. She looked just like her daddy but with green eyes instead of dark brown ones and warm olive skin, just about the same color as mine. Her eyelashes were so long they didn't look real. I walked toward her room, passing by the open door of Sam and Amy's unable to resist the urge to go in. If I didn't see the closet full of shoes, I would have never known that a woman slept there. I eventually made my way to Grace's room and carefully set her down in her crib. She opened her eyes

for just a brief second and almost started to cry. I put my hand on her forehead and stroked her soft baby curls.

When I turned around to leave I was startled by Sam, standing in the doorway, just a towel on; his chest and shoulders still wet from the shower. “You’re so good with her,” he said.

“She’s such a sweet baby,” I replied.

“Do you want some wine?”

I followed him to the kitchen. He pulled a stool out and ushered me to sit down. I looked at it and then at him before pushing it back in. “I’m not really a stool type of girl,” I said.

“Oh... and why’s that?”

“Have you seen my hips lately?”

“Yeah, I’m lookin at em now. They look great,” he said.

I tried not to smile, but I couldn't help it. His compliments always felt so good. I could feel the heat settle into my cheeks. When he noticed me, it was in a sweet way. In a way that a girlfriend would. My dad used to tell me as a kid that men couldn't form deep emotional connections. They simply had too much testosterone in their bodies and were incapable of intimacy beyond their-man parts. Sam, was nothing like the men he described.

He dug through the kitchen looking for what I presume was a corkscrew, still only a towel wrapped around his waist. It seemed to be falling lower and lower, but he didn't stop to adjust it seemingly content with the exposure. I found myself staring incapable of looking away as he opened and closed drawers and cabinets. I could see his chest rise and fall and his muscles contract and release as he moved. “Damn, I don't think I have a corkscrew,” he said, waking me up from my trance. “How bout a beer?”

“Why don't you get some clothes on, and I'll look,” I said trying to hide my mortification while cursing my white mother for the unrelenting pinkness that overtook my face. He laughed, outwardly pleased by my discomfort.

“I forgot how much you look like your mother,” he said disappearing before I could respond.

The corkscrew was in the first drawer he initially opened, just under the can opener, slightly hidden, but still easy to see. I laughed as I picked it up thinking back to the hours we spent looking for this tiny notebook he had back when we were freshman in college. He was the only man I knew that walked around with an actual notebook where he scribbled his daily goals.

We had finals that day and went to dinner with a bunch of friends to celebrate. We somehow managed to get drunk even though none of us were twenty-one or even looked close to being that age. Sam never lived in the dorms but instead shared a tiny apartment with his two best friends. I spent way more time there than I should have. Way more time than a girl spends at a guys place when they aren't his girlfriend. His roommates finished finals the day before and went to their hometowns. Sam and I stumbled into his apartment around midnight. I plopped down on his couch right after taking most of my clothes off, so drunk that I almost forgot he was there. I looked up from the sofa and noticed his gaze just as he rushed toward me.

His lips touched mine, and our tongues pressed one another as I awkwardly fumbled with his belt not sure what else to do. I managed to get it unbuckled while we kissed. He stood up to take off his pants but decided he needed to empty his pockets first. I waited patiently, flushed, half

naked, legs open. He set his keys on the table beside the couch, with his phone, and his wallet. He reached around to his back pocket where he always kept that damn notebook. It wasn't there. He dug through the other pockets, and then he panicked. It wasn't the usual trepidation that I saw in him many times before. His hands started shaking, and beads of sweat formed on his forehead. I could almost hear his heart pounding. "My notebook, Sophia, where is it?" We eventually found it but not without sacrifice.

"You found the corkscrew," he said as he walked back into the kitchen. This time with gray sweatpants on and a Chicago Bulls t-shirt.

"Yeah, it was right und.. hidden under the can opener," I replied.

He grabbed two stemless wine glasses before opening the bottle. He poured the glasses way too full not leaving any room for the wine to breathe. I took a sip and let it rest in my mouth before swallowing.

"I forgot you got all fancy about wine during college," he said laughing.

"Ha ha, Sam, I'm not fancy, I just like wine."

He reached past me to grab his glass. His hand accidentally grazed my breasts. "Sorry," he said.

I ignored the apology, annoyed with the sudden formality. "I can't believe you're a dad," I said.

“I know. I can’t really believe it either,” he said with a smile. “It’s so crazy to look at her and to see some of myself. I took part in creating that little human.”

“She’s adorable. You and Amy made a cute kid.” I said trying to hide the jealousy that I didn’t even know existed until bringing *her* up. I took a gulp of my wine. “So where is Amy?” I asked.

Sam looked down as he told me about a two-week girls trip that she planned, telling him only a day before she left. “Why didn’t you tell her not to go?”

“Why would I?”

“What do you mean why wouldn’t you? You have an infant together, Sam.”

“I know that, but I don’t want to be one of those guys that force the woman into feeling guilty for needing to have time to herself. You know I don’t believe in those bullshit role’s society tries to push us into.”

“That’s not what I mean,” I said trying to hide my frustration. I didn’t get how he could defend her. I understood personal time and maintaining an identity outside of motherhood but two weeks. Two weeks without seeing your five-month-old baby. I didn’t want to go two weeks without seeing her, and I’m not even her mother.

“You and her are so different,” he said.

“What? Why does that even matter? Is there a reason to compare?” I asked, now thoroughly irritated.

“No, I mean... she just isn’t like you.”

“I still don’t get what you are trying to say, Sam.” I never disliked Amy, but I have never really liked her either. She was incredibly smart, dedicated, and nice enough. She worked harder than she should have had to for the position that came with the same title as Sam’s. She was as-

sertive, even when it was hard to be. I admired her for that, but I still didn't like her. Even if I met her just in the context of Amy and not Amy, Sam's girlfriend or Amy, the mother of Sam's child - I wouldn't like her. Though she was truly nice enough, she looked down on women like me.

I remember the first time Sam introduced us. We met for dinner at the Beehive. One of my favorite places to eat in Boston. I brought Oliver, thinking he would help me keep my mind from wandering to places I liked to keep locked up tight. Oliver and I started dating a few months before Sam met Amy but Sam never seemed effected by it. Our near sex incident happened years prior, and neither one of us tried to revisit it. We shut that door with the anxiety attack that Sam refused to talk about even after I assured him that I often felt the same way.

There were a few times when I thought maybe, just maybe he was thinking about me in a way that men think about women they want. I almost accepted my dad's ideology of men lacking the ability to form deep emotional connections and attributed our friendship and emotional bond to the fact that Sam simply just didn't want to fuck me. I only let the ignorance of my dad's insight linger for a short moment. Then resigned the idea of Sam and I being together or being anything beyond what we were - just friends.

Amy and Sam were already seated when we arrived. Just as Oliver and I sat down, the waiter walked over with a bottle of my favorite *Eric Kent, "Small Town," collection label, California, Pinot Noir*. "I guess we are going all out tonight?" I said.

“Oh yes we are baby doll,” Sam replied. Oliver didn't flinch. He did the first time Sam called me *baby doll* but got over it quickly and never really questioned my relationship with him. Amy, on the other hand, looked like she was about to shit her pants. I knew my days of being Sam's, *baby doll* were over before she even said a word.

“Should we get the *Carmelized Onion Dip & Chips*?” I asked, trying to break the awkwardness.

“That sounds good to me,” Sam said. Oliver shook his head in agreement.

“I don't eat cheese,” Amy said without remorse.

“Babe, we can get more than one appetizer,” Sam said.

“Why don't we all just get a *Spring Salad*?” she said. I laughed out loud not realizing that she was serious. Sam looked at me in a way I wasn't used to.

“I'm sorry,” I said. Knowing she didn't want or need the apology but offering it anyway for Sam's sake. Dinner ended with superficial hugs and empty promises to hang out again. I thought they were empty for group gatherings; I didn't realize until later that Sam and I wouldn't be hanging out again either.

“I'm glad you called,” I said to him, finishing my glass of wine and pouring another.

“Thanks for Coming. I've missed you, Sophia,” he said. He put his hand on top of mine and squeezed it gently.

"I've been missing you too," I said pulling my hand away. I could feel the tears but knew this wasn't the time or the place for them. I set my glass on the counter beside me before jumping on to the cold granite.

"You okay?" he asked.

"Yeah, I'm okay," I replied finishing off my second glass. He grabbed it from me and set it in the sink. He walked back over to me and had the same look on his face that he did all those years ago. This time he moved slowly. He placed his hand partly on my cheek and then let his fingers get lost in my thick curly hair. He spread my legs open so that he could stand in between them, and then he kissed me.

It felt so familiar, even though I hadn't felt his lips in years. His kisses were soft and slow and just what I had been craving. I wrapped my legs around him, pulling him closer to me. He kissed me harder and longer. I wanted him so bad. I had wanted him for the last ten years or at least for most of it, but I didn't think he wanted me. At least not in that way. *What the fuck is this?* I let him pull my shirt off and unclasp my bra exposing my breasts. He watched them rise and fall with my breath before taking one into his mouth.

I moaned and let myself have a moment. Just a small one. One I could hold on to and savor... because I knew this wouldn't last.

"I love you," he said.