

 HOME

MAGAZINE

ABOUT

SUBMISSIONS



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Limerence | Jessica Sadler

Three months. Fourteen days. One hour. Nineteen minutes. That's how long it's been since you broke up with me. I remember precisely because you'd looked at your Apple Watch—it was 12:45 p.m. on a Saturday—and you said, “I have to go soon.” You had a bachata lesson to get to across town near Towson University. I wasn't invited to your bachata lessons. You already had a dance partner. Someone I didn't know.

We barely had time to drink our drinks before you had to leave. You, an Americano with caramel; me, a hot herbal tea. You never understood why I had quit caffeine. I did it so I would have less anxiety, so I would be a better person, so I could have a better relationship with you.

That morning, you texted, “Let's meet at your favorite coffee shop.”

I texted back, “When?” I also wanted to text “Why?” Why the sudden interest in places I like?

“Noon.”

You arrived late. Lateness would be your tragic Shakespearean flaw, you said, if Shakespeare wrote a play about you.

I was excited to see you. I thought, maybe, you wanted to discuss plans for my birthday weekend. I brainstormed some possibilities in anticipation: dinner and a movie; roller skating—we'd never been to the local roller rink, although we passed it all the time; getting drunk at a dive bar, the only type of bar I like; or bowling. I wouldn't have minded staying home with you either. Maybe get a cake and play games and binge-watch something good on TV.

From a little before noon to a little after twelve-thirty, I waited at a two-top near the window by myself. The café music was too loud. There was too much chatter and clanging. An entire little league soccer team was in line—a pit stop before their game.

I saw you park several rows away near a desolate tree. You didn't like parking near other cars; that's how you get scratches on your doors, you said. You checked your phone a few times before coming inside. You had on a nice smelling cologne. You were dressed like James Dean from *East of Eden*. You were everything to me.

I had already gotten our drinks.

“It's not hot,” you said, after sitting down.

“I ordered it a while ago.”

You didn't complain after that.

"How was your morning?" I asked.

"Busy. I'm working on a lot of projects."

"Yeah."

"Hey, look..." You got up to grab a sugar packet and a stirrer before sitting back down. "I think it'd be better if we were friends."

"Why? What happened?"

"You want to know?"

"Of course."

"We haven't been getting along. And I'm so busy with work and my side hustles and... You want the truth?"

The truth was all I had ever wanted.

"You're overly emotional and reactive," you said. "I don't like someone who's so reactive. It puts me on edge." You looked at your watch. "I have to go soon. Bachata starts in fifteen. Is there anything you want to say?"

There was a lot I wanted to say. I wanted to say I was reactive because you always placed your phone face-down and couldn't leave it in the same room as me; because the one time you forgot to take it with you a Tinder notification popped up; because your stories never added up and constantly changed; because the details were like a bowl of spaghetti I had to unravel; because you sometimes forgot whom you said you were on the phone with or going to see; because, when I told you my fears, you told me I was being paranoid and not to project my past relationships onto you; because a strange car was parked outside of your house; because you said the car belonged to your aunt (well, she wasn't your aunt, she was *like* your aunt, and there was never anything between you two except that one time when you were both drunk); because making love to you felt like fucking; because when we fucked it didn't seem to matter who I was. I could have been anyone. You could have been fucking anyone.

I didn't want to seem too emotional, so I said, "No. I understand."

Jessica Sadler is a Maryland-based fiction writer and charcoal artist. She lived abroad for several years in Amsterdam, Bangkok, and the greater-Tokyo area as a Fulbright Grantee and Global Teaching Fellow. Her stories have appeared in *Drunk Monkeys*, *Bartleby*, *Enizagam*, and *Atlas and Alice*, and she has received several grants from the Maryland State Arts Council.