

## Limerence

I was taught the essence of St Kilda by the Frenchman who taught me to fuck. In the morning we would be woken by rambling trams along The Esplanade and rosellas darted amongst the powerlines and palms as our breakfast view. Evening brought Sinatra and sushi on the balcony, with les lumières along Beach Road our candlelight. With him, I considered that in St Kilda a homeless man is not homeless when he sleeps beneath his clock, and discovered that the grass at Alfred Square smells sweet on a Sunday and whispers under your yoga mat as you salute the sun.

In Claypots I felt his hand up my skirt as we sat at a table shrouded in warships; hot fingers seeking while I burned with embarrassment and *want*. He was my first love, if love is what it can be called. Limerence, at least, and to the highest degree. With him I felt myself fall away as I never had before. He lifted me up to great heights and took delight in watching me fall.

### ***Letter to Louis***

I wanted so much to get under your skin, the way that you had grafted yourself to mine. During brunch with you on Acland Street, I feigned smug and loved up, but underneath I felt chipped away. Eye candy, arm candy, you chewed me up but stopped short of spitting me out. With you I felt childlike and unworthy. Full of revering, unhealthy, love. During that dinner in Claypots the ring you gave me fell into the toilet. No joke! My finger, slippery from crustacean consumption, would not keep it. I fished it out but should've known then. I tried to believe in the illusion though found it difficult when you gifted me roses that were half dead.

My love affair with St Kilda begins with you. When we fucked, vulgar and hard, in a cubicle at Barney Allen's I had no idea where it would lead. In fact, after a dozen cosmopolitans (single on Valentine's Day) I really had no idea about anything at all. I was someone else that night, confused between Valentine's Day and Halloween.

I had never cum before and you taught me to keep tissues by the bed. The rumble of the trams along The Esplanade a feverish harmony in my head. In the lift, after goodbye, we came together with violence. Bodies forging, desperate, bitter, longing embrace. I thought you were meant to be my One.

Urban Attitude is the shop where we sought eight dollar gifts for your friends. ‘Spend ten to fifteen dollars’, the invitation said.

From Peach you bought me stockings, feigning them a gift for *me*. I wore them with suspenders but they fell down around my knees.

Once, the longer I was apart from you, the more there was to miss. But now that the longing for you has past, I am left with a sense of escape. I discovered the essence of St Kilda as I discovered the essence of me. You fancied me a cut-paper-person, eager to snip and glue. I was equally arrogant, hoping love would change you.

In moments of disappointment, and self-righteousness, memories are not always sweet. Yet much sweetness remains. I opened my eyelids to see such tenderness in your face.

St Kilda is filled with memories of you. The Seabaths on a Sunday, Claypots brunch until noon. The scent of cigarette smoke and dope. Over sweetened ice cream on a sticky afternoon. Bums and buskers in the park and young drunks until 5am. You were reading *Un Petite Homme* that summer and had a deep graze on your leg. Sundays were siesta and brownies from Il Fornaio in bed. All the while the trams...

It is the ballast around you that keeps a good man cocooned. It is a thick, blistered skin, the hardening of your eyes. Knowing your capacity for goodness makes it hard to walk away. There is a pearl within your oyster, another woman’s jewel someday.

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Hold tight  
to the things within  
That leak out  
with so much ease.  
Escaping, like pearls from their shell,  
Our essence longs to be seen

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At what point do we trust ourselves with another, secure in our steadfastness of self? But sometimes we must crumble to discover our worth.

I learned the essence of St Kilda as I learned the essence of me. That salty wind can cut deep. Trams rumble down the street.