

## Never fall in love with a man who likes Bukowski

He wanders around her living room, leafs through her books and selects a record. You can tell a lot about a woman from what she reads, he says. Never shag someone who doesn't read. That will teach them, she mutters. He recoils like a dog who is used to being kicked and she wants to stroke his silk skin, kiss his invisible wounds better. He nods his approval at Bukowski; an unread present from another man. I don't like high maintenance girls, he says, their constant need for reassurance and their jealousy. He pours the wine into two glasses, hands her one and holds his delicately in his long fingers. She wonders what he did to them. He cradles her foot in his hand. You have the smallest feet of anyone I have ever dated, the best style, the least fucked up. A drop of blood wine glistens on his lips and she reaches forward to trail it back into his mouth. He holds her gaze. You smell amazing, he murmurs. I like the way you kiss, the way you move. She feels experience in every touch, hears comparison in every word.

The night they'd met, they'd stood outside the bar laughing in the pouring rain He'd held his umbrella over her and told her who she was. They had stood so close to each other that they could feel the heat of the others' body. But they did not touch. He'd walked her home and kissed her on the cheek and she'd thought. 'Ah. It's you.'

He places the record on the player and pulls her into dance that moves into the bedroom. Dylan sings of love gone wrong, of memories and regrets of coming back and leaving again. Their naked bodies dance in the dark. In the morning she lies with her head on his chest and he gently strokes her hip as they share stories of their past.

She kisses him before getting up to go to the toilet but when she returns with coffee he is fully dressed, smoking out of the window, his back to her. He takes the cup from her and mutters a thanks but doesn't meet her eyes. She pulls on her dressing gown to see him to the door and stands on her tiptoes to kiss him goodbye, she in her bare feet, him in his long boots. She watches him walk down the street, his body bent to protect himself and his steps slow. She opens the window, feels the rain soft on her face, says 'wait', so quietly he doesn't hear. She waters her plants. Picks up a book. Loses herself in others' stories.