

LYDIA

CLAWING OUT MY EYES

Lydia knocks on the frosted glass window set in Anita's office door. —You may enter, Anita calls.

—Hey, Lydia says, coming in. —Do you have a minute?

Anita takes the magazine she's reading by one corner, holds it up so Lydia can see it. It's an issue of *Lucky*. —Do I *have* a minute? she says. —Darling. For you, anything. She tosses the magazine onto her desk; it slides to a stop on her blotter. —What's up?

Lydia closes the door behind her and sits down. —I've made my decision, she says. —At the end of May? When my lease runs out? I'm moving.

—Oh, Anita says. —Moving in with the boy?

—Uh, Lydia says. —I don't know. We haven't— she winces, and moves her hands about in the air to indicate a kind of conceptual tangle. Austin, the boy, has been acting kind of weird lately, distant somehow, in a way that she can't put her finger on. He seems less prompt about returning her phone calls, and when she's over he seems faintly distracted, as though he's constantly reminding himself that he needs to do some minor errand, at about the order of remembering to set the VCR to tape a show he wants to watch later. —This isn't really *about* him, she says. —It's just—I just can't live in that house anymore.

—The place you're at now?

—Yeah, Lydia says. —I've just got to get out. I don't know if I can *wait* until the end of May. I just— and she drops her face into her hands.

—Did something happen? Anita asks.

—Uck, God, Lydia mutters into her hands. —I can't even *believe* it. I. Can't. Even. *Tell* you how *fucking*—I'm angry. I can't even tell you how *fucking angry* I am at—

Anita's phone rings once, then a second time. Lydia looks up to see whether she's going to answer it. —Voicemail, Anita says. —Caller, begone. She waves her hands over the phone as it rings for a third time and then it goes silent.

—So why don't you start from the beginning?

Lydia takes a deep breath. —You know I've got this roommate, Marvin?

—Sure, Anita says.

—Have I talked to you about this girl that he's been bringing around? Eighteen years old? High school dropout?

—I don't remember *that* series of unsavory details, Anita says.

—OK, well, that's basically her. He met her through this group of kids who play this like *vampire* game? Uch, I can't believe these people have like been in my *house*. So, yeah, he's been bringing this girl around, and the whole idea of there relationship kind of skeeves me even under the best of circumstances, there have been times when I've like *heard* shit coming out of their room or whatever? I'll spare you the details. OK, so that's bad enough, right? That *enough* is enough to make me want to move out and like never fucking return. But anyway. Friday night, I'm supposed to be staying over at Austin's place, but this movie is showing down at Doc Films, at U of C, Austin wants to go, so we go, whatever, it's fine. But we're like right in my neighborhood at this point, and Austin's like *I'm not feeling well, do you mind if I just drop you at home?* and I'm kind of like *that's lame* but, whatever, sure. So he drops me off and I *go in* and— OK. I open the door, and I walk in, and there's these two— these two *girls* on the floor? Like, making *out*? I mean, they're not making out any more, cause I just walked in? But they're like trying to cover themselves up with a blanket? And there's Marvin, and he's sitting on the couch, and he's like obviously trying to pull his *pants* up? And— oh, God, I'm just like *please, please, just let me go into my room so I can claw my eyes out*.

—God, Anita says. —So what did you do? Or what did he do?

Lydia laughs. —He's all like *what are you doing here?* and I'm like *I live here, you dumb shit*. I ended up locking myself in the *bathroom* and he was like knocking and knocking and being like *hey, let me explain* and I'm like running the *hairdryer* to try to drown out what he's saying and just shouting *just get them out of here*. It was a fucking mess. And eventually they went home, I guess, or something, and I came out of the bathroom and was like *don't talk to me* and then I said *I'm moving out*.

—Unbelievable, says Anita.

Lydia splays her fingers across her face. —You know the thing that gets me?
Lydia says. —You know the thing that gets me worst of all?

—What's that?

—It wasn't even his *couch*, she says. —It was *my* couch. And he didn't even like
have a blanket down or anything. I can't even *look* at the couch anymore without
thinking of like this pasty naked *ass* like *right on my couch!*

Anita begins to laugh. —I'm sorry, she says, still laughing. —It's not funny. She
covers her mouth. And Lydia realizes just how the situation looks from the outside
and she begins to laugh as well; she can't help it. She looks upwards, into the
fluorescents. —Oh, God, she says, through giggles, —why? Why must you test
me?

—Really, Lord, Anita says, joining in. —Don't you think she's suffered enough?
And then they both bust out laughing again.