

One night when he was 23, Thomas was at a gathering with his friends, in one of those crappy inner city apartments that was on the verge of falling apart but 'she'll be right'. "Mate, how'd you break your arm?" His friend Jack said to him, "Oh yeah I was walking down the stairs in my apartment building and I missed a stair 'cos I was on my phone and I fell on my arm". "Did you cry?" Jack said tauntingly as a group of five girls walked over and sat on the seats next to them. Thomas caught a glimpse of one of the girls as she sat down. She was wearing a black dress that seemed oddly familiar. His mind immediately went rushing back to that one night and his disheveled sister, in a dirty, torn black dress, crying at the table. The boys looked over at them, Jack whispered to Thomas, "Look at that one in the black, would you?" trying to restable his mind, Thomas replied, "Nah mate she looks like a-" they got cut off by loud yelling coming from the kitchen, Thomas was transported back to that night again, he could hear his parents yelling in the kitchen and his sister yelling back. Thomas was reminded of where he was when a girl he didn't know rushed over in a panicked frenzy and asked if anyone had first aid training. Apparently, Marcus, someone Thomas was merely acquaintances with had cut his hand on a bottle.

"He'll be fine, just tell him to get over it," Jack said after the girl rushed back to the hallway.

"You know he's really hurt right?" the girl in the black dress said.

"He shouldn't make a fool of himself like that" Thomas said, diverting the attention from Jack.

"Mate, don't start, look at her she's proly one of those chicks that don't shave", Jack said

"I don't wanna start something so just leave it alright"

"No, I won't "leave it" you tool ``

"Look out, mate, someone's on her period" Jack said. The girl rolled her eyes, turned away and ended the brief conversation. Thomas only heard little bits of the girls' conversation over the music after that and could only describe what they were saying as "crazy feminist rambling". Thomas' phone was connected to the speaker so he was in control of the music, "Oi mate change the song" Jack yelled. He grabbed his phone out of his pocket and started pressing 'Next' until Jack approved a song. When he did, Thomas looked at his phone and it read,

"Talk Show Host by Radiohead"

"9:56"

Thomas thought back to that night: he was in his room, with his headphones on, trying to drown the crying and yelling from the kitchen. He had looked at his phone and had read the same thing,

"Talk Show Host by Radiohead"

"9:56"

Growing uncomfortable, he changed the song disregarding Jack's displeasure. For some reason he couldn't escape the reminders of that night. He didn't know why this was all he could think of, maybe it was the girls next to him, but to be fair, he had always felt guilty about that night and what he said to Evelyn. They hadn't spoken much since then, and when they did, it wasn't anything more than small talk.

Thomas caught a snippet of what the girls next to him were saying. Specifically, the girl in the black dress.

“I mean that’s just stupid, why should I have to dress like a nun because men don’t understand the concept of consent?”

Thomas chuckled, forgetting they could hear him. The girl turned her head to look at him.

“You disagree?”

“Well yeah, how do you expect to be treated when you’re dressing like a whore?”

“Seriously? Would you say that about your sister or mother?”

Thomas was about to respond when he thought back to his last actual conversation with Evelyn, “What were you wearing” he had asked.

A pit grew in his stomach that was as heavy as a rock. After a few minutes of tension filled silence he got up from his seat suddenly. “I’m gonna go mate”, he said to Jack. “What? Why?” Jack asked but Thomas had already walked away.

Leaving the apartment felt like it took five years, he had to push past crowds of people with only one arm allowing him to do so. As soon as he left the raggedy old apartment block, a sense of comfort was regained, but he couldn’t shake the lingering sense of guilt. He pulled out his phone and opened Spotify, he found that listening to music always calmed him down. He played his favourite song and checked the time.

“Polly” by Nirvana”

“10:17”,

He stood there trying to figure out what to do. His thoughts were running wild. “Should I do it?” “What if she doesn’t respond?” “Would she even want to speak to me?” After all, Thomas never knew what his parents had said to Evelyn that night. He snapped back into reality when he heard the obnoxious honk of a car that distracted him from his thoughts. He started walking along the highway, not watching where he was going, and opened the contacts app on his phone. When he found her name he pressed it and formulated a text trying to ignore his foreign incessant thoughts. His finger hovered over the send button for a minute but he accidentally touched the screen and sent the message. His eyes were glued to his phone as he walked. He still had no response when he arrived home. He put his phone in his pocket so he could open his door and avoid tripping again. His phone buzzed in his pocket as he put the keys in the door. “You’ll be right mate”, he thought to himself. He got his phone out of his pocket and read the screen.

“Boys Don’t Cry by The Cure”

“10:46”

“Text Notification from Evelyn”