

# Enough

By Madeleine Clark

Rami studied Daniel's face as he read on their olive couch. His dark, long hair, now straggly inching towards his shoulders. His narrow, green eyes and the spotted dandelion beard she hadn't realised he'd been growing.

His Santa gut.

He'd been thin when she first met him. Like a stick; straight up and down, no curves, only hard edges. She'd liked that. She liked when he said that she made him soften. But then he'd changed. The changes had happened so slowly she couldn't tell when they had begun or if they had ended. A hot sigh dodged out of her. She froze. Had he noticed? She felt her heart drop to the pit of her stomach. He was still reading. A paper back - he'd folded the cover behind itself. Silly, it would crease the spine. He licked his finger and turned a page. She'd found comfort in this small corner lounge room; defended the yellow wallpaper as bright and cheery. But now, watching him, she felt the yellow was a sickening colour.

Like it was vomit.

Daniel pushed his glasses up his nose with his thumb, not his forefinger, and then looked at Rami: "What," he said. His tone was flat. It wasn't a question.

"Oh it's nothing" Rami tried to chuckle, tried to break the tension. "You know, just life."

He returned his eyes to the page and - in a sing-song voice- retorted, "if you say so." It was almost comedic how it came off so threatening.

Rami bounced her leg on the floor. She held her breath, waiting for the inevitable shot.

And then he said it. Still looking at the book before turning his flat gaze directly at her, "you're just like me, you know. Stop pretending you're not."

Stop pretending you're not. Stop pretending you're not. Stop pretending you're not.

The yellow vomit walls mocked her. They were closing in on her. They kept repeating the words over and over again.

Rami stood up. For a moment she just looked at Daniel, debating whether or not to say something. To try and clear the air. To do what she always did: apologise and tell him that she loved him and kiss him from the crown of his head all the way down to his belly button.

But this time, she didn't.

"I'm going for a walk." She announced, pushing her voice out so that it wouldn't snag in a shake and give her away. She waited for his response but when it didn't come she grabbed her phone and left. Let him sulk.

The door closed behind her with a satisfying click and Rami took a step out onto the street. It was a beautiful afternoon. It was still mid winter and the days before this one had been chilling. But this day the air held a warmth in it, a promise of summer. The sky was light blue and Rami smiled as she surveyed a miscellaneous cat stretched out in the sun.

She began to walk and as she did she felt the anxious knot in the pit of her stomach undo. Rami wondered how it had built up. How home, supposed to be the respite from the rest of the world, had twisted into something else. She'd been so hopeful when they first moved in, so excited to begin life with someone who truly loved her. They even bought houseplants, promised to water them. But they'd forgotten. Now they sat as pots full of dirt.

Rami reached out to the tree in front of her and pulled off a leaf. She felt so naive but at the same time so weary. Like the life she wanted was just out of grasp. She'd almost be thirty in a couple of months. That meant five years with Daniel. She'd had lots of friends in uni. From political clubs and movie clubs and going to classes. They'd go out partying almost every second night with always somewhere to go. Or if they didn't have an explicit invitation they knew someone who did or could always just rock up. Knock on the door, bring a bottle of wine. Rami had thought she'd always have those friends. That their declarations of living like this forever would be truthful, infallible.

It was disconcerting the amount of people who had fallen away. More so the couples who'd gotten married, had children. Family always asked her when Daniel was going to "pop the question". They'd been together for enough time, they were already living as a couple. There was a time when she would have laughed it off but then caught Daniel's eye and smiled. A time when that thought wasn't as disturbing. Rami clicked with a lot of friends but had rarely clicked with someone she was also attracted to. Daniel had been perfect. Besotted couldn't capture how Rami felt. But now.

Rami sat down on a park bench overlooking the oval. The sun was beginning to set. Pinks, yellows and reds exploded across the sky, covering everyone in a golden kiss. Children were kicking footballs to each other. Joggers were running in active wear. Rami heard the chatter and laughter of parents and children in the playground. Everyone seemed in motion. At once all moving and at the same time in the very place they needed to be.

Rami's meditation was disrupted by the thought of Daniel back at the house. Waiting for her. Plotting his next moves, words that would stick. Were they really the same? For so long she had believed they were, that she had met her twin flame, her ride or die, her person. But Rami couldn't see Daniel in this park on the bench beside her. She couldn't see his hand reach for hers instinctively just like the couple over there. She couldn't see him bring her hand to his lips and look her in the eye and say "I love you" so casually, affectionately. Done a thousand times. Now all the little things Daniel had done for her, that she'd treasured so religiously, that she'd carried up and set away in a box that she could open up whenever she needed reassurance, now they seemed insignificant. More than insignificant they seemed not enough.

The sun had just disappeared, leaving the afternoon for night. The joggers had left and the kids were pacing off the oval. Rami stood up and stretched, it was cold now. The warmth in the air had left and she wrapped her arms around her.

Time to go back.