

LYDIA & PAUL

MOVING ON

The next morning she goes into the bathroom and looks at her swollen face and thinks *no way am I going in to work today*. She knows that if she goes in to work looking like she's been up all night crying she'll end up the topic of today's office gossip, and *that's* one thing she doesn't need, not on top of everything else, but there's nothing in her basket of makeup that will make her look otherwise.

So she's not going. She skips taking a shower and just walks out into the living room in her bathrobe. She sits down on the couch (trying not to think about whether she's sitting on the spot where Marvin's naked ass might have been) and picks up the cordless phone and calls in. She doesn't even have to lie. —I'm sorry, she says. —I'm just not feeling very well today. Then she hangs up and sits there with the phone in her lap, and starts to cry again.

She hates this. She hates being so *weak*. She hates Austin for *making her weak*. She wants to be a strong woman, wants to be the kind of woman who can go through this kind of thing without blinking, who can respond to this kind of thing by just *moving on*. That's what she needs to do. She just needs to *move on*. *There are plenty of other guys out there, she thinks. Surely you can find a guy who won't fucking sleep with you for a whole year—over a year—and never tell you that he loves you and meanwhile he's e-mailing his ex five times a day telling her how bad he wants to see her.* But she doesn't want some other guy. She wants Austin. She just wants an Austin who hasn't done the things that this one has done. So basically she wants an entirely different world. Good fucking luck.

She blots her eyes with the cuffs of her bathrobe. She should probably go get the box of tissues from the kitchen but the act of getting up and walking from here to there while feeling like this just seems insurmountable.

She wants to eat an entire box of ice cream. *That's great, she thinks, just great. You're going to end up even fatter than you are now. Then no guy will want you.*

No guy wants you now.

Crying again. Time passes in this fashion. Eventually Paul comes in, shirtless, scratching his hairy belly. He turns and sees her and blurts out a shriek.

—Oh, God, Lydia, he says. —You scared the bejesus out of me. How come you're not at work?

—Called out, she says.

He gets a better look at her and sees that something's wrong. —Are you OK? he says. She shakes her head *no*. When she opens her mouth to try to explain she feels her throat close up.

—Let me go put on a shirt, he says. —I'll be right back. Then you can tell me all about it.

And he comes back (with the box of tissues, no less) and she gives him a rundown of the whole situation. She rests her head in his lap and he strokes her hair.

—I just don't want to have to start all *over again*, she says. —Austin wasn't perfect but, you know, most of the time he was at least *decent*. He was nice; he wasn't *too* neurotic; he wasn't *totally* self-obsessed; he was pretty good in bed—it's hard to find a guy who's got even *that much* going for him.

—Tell me about it, says Paul.

—And, God, just the idea of having to *start over*, God, how *exhausting*.

—You'll find somebody, says Paul. —Any guy who can't see what a catch you are has got to be a damn fool.

—Oh, Paul, Lydia sighs. —I'm going to miss you.

—You're still planning to move out, then?

Lydia thinks on this. —Yeah, she says. —I think I have to. I just can't stand living with Marvin anymore. Things haven't been good between us for a long time.

—Yeah, Paul says. —I know.

—I'm sorry to do it, cause I know it screws you, I mean, I know it means that you guys need to move, too.

—That's not a big deal, says Paul. —I'm sick of this place anyway.

—I just don't know what I'm going to do without you, she says. —Are you sure you don't want to come with me? You and I would be great roommates.

—Oh, honey, Paul says. —I can see it? And it would be great? But I need to stick with Marvin. I'm trying to teach him how not to be a complete asshole.

—You've got a long way to go, she says.

—Yeah, Paul says. —I know.