

LYDIA

THE WEEKEND

Lydia has come to dread the weekend. She doesn't mind the days so much—it's nice to have the time to get things done. She drops off her laundry at the cleaners, she mops the kitchen. Sometimes she goes and browses the bins at the record store. She keeps working on *getting organized*. Saturday she went down to Target, bought a wire mail rack and a magnetic dry-erase board for the refrigerator. When she hung up the mail rack and got to put her mail in it she felt a sense of satisfaction. She'd made one corner of the world orderly.

But it's the evenings that hang heavy over her. She begins to worry about them as early as Monday. During the week they aren't so bad. By the time she gets home from work it's already close to six. By the time dinner's out of the way it's seven, and she's usually in bed by eleven—it's easy to fill four hours. She can read a magazine, or call Maria in Detroit, or take a bath, or pop in a DVD and sit in front of the tube in her slippers, eating frozen yogurt out of the carton.

These are things she likes doing. But when she does these things on the weekend she feels like a loser. If it's Friday night and she finds herself at home she can't help but think that she should be out in the world. Where things are happening. She should go out to a dance club or something. She used to love going dancing.

Or shows—that's part of why she came here to Chicago, to go to shows. She picks up the *Reader* on Thursdays—there's almost always something in the listings that sounds interesting. But she hasn't been to a show since she and Austin split up. She's doesn't want to run into him. She doesn't want him to see her alone. Looking *pathetic*. It would be OK, maybe, if she were with somebody new. Someone better-looking. (That would show him.) It would even be OK if she went with a female friend—that way, if she saw him, she could make herself feel better by pointing and saying *ew, yuk, I went out with that guy*. But her best female friend in town nowadays is Anita, and she can't imagine even *asking* Anita to come out to some dirty bar to see experimental music.

Austin's not the only ex she could run into. There's also Thomas. She doesn't want to run into him, either; she thinks about seeing him moping around the periphery of some show and it makes her actually feel *angry* in some ill-defined way. There have been shows that she's stayed away from explicitly because she thought that he might be there. Which sucks. *Next guy I go out with has to be someone who's not into the music scene*, she thinks.

So she doesn't go to shows. And she doesn't go to the movies—she has never been able to go to movies by herself; the very *idea* fills her with shame. Sometimes she'll end up grabbing a cab, going out for a couple of drinks. She'll turn around on her stool and rest her elbows on the bar and survey the men, looking for someone to whom she might have something to say. Sometimes a man will come and sit next to her, ask her what she's drinking, what she does, where she's from, what she does for fun, he'll buy her a drink, she'll smile and laugh when it's expected of her, but she can not envision spending her life with these men, not the ones she's met so far. Insurance actuaries. Men who sell advertising time on local television. Not that what she does is all that exciting. She hears herself talking about what she does for a living and she begins to understand how boring it really is.

—Have you seen the new barista in the Starbucks down in the lobby? Anita asks, on Monday.

—What? Lydia says. —No.

—Let me just say this—I wouldn't kick him out of bed.

She should give Paul a buzz. Get him to take her to a gay bar. She can see a group of gay men adopting her. There is something comforting about the idea.