

# Three Years in Peterborough



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# Introduction

We met in first year, and were friends. One day she told me we ought to get an apartment together, and she had one picked out. I said yes, didn't even look at it.

When we got there, I realized there was only one bedroom, only one bed. I looked at her and she smiled.

## The Downtown Clock

Don't ask me about the clock  
I never found out  
It was just the clock  
and it was there  
when I was  
when she was

We would walk past it  
hand in hand  
heading for a bar  
or a meal  
sometimes a movie  
Downtown

She told me about it once  
but I didn't remember  
I was watching her talk  
watching her lips move  
watching her eyes  
and not hearing much  
~~



## Late at night

The streetlamp would shine  
into our little bedroom  
I would be home late  
drinking with the boys  
and she would be asleep under a sheet  
the air hot, humid and heavy  
The windows open  
in hope of a breeze

I would climb into bed  
as quietly as I could  
but she would always wake  
and murmur hello  
before rubbing my back  
in a vague manner  
then retreat to her side  
before we started to sweat

~~



## Six in the morning

and the sun would shine  
through a space in the curtains  
she never got them closed  
quite right  
I would wake and stare  
at the light and shadow  
across her back

I would lightly trace  
that light across her back  
trying to feel the difference  
trying to feel the shadows  
trying not to wake her up

But she would wake  
kiss me good morning  
and make the breakfast  
while I fell back asleep  
~~





## Cute Boots

We didn't have much money  
Students and all  
but when she found the sign  
at the old thrift shop  
I dug into my wallet  
and into my pockets  
I spent so much time digging  
the shopkeeper said  
"What have you got there"

A dollar seventy-five  
and it was hers  
She gave it pride of place  
and it stayed there  
for as long as we were  
When she left  
she told me  
"I'm keeping this"  
~~



## **Fisherman's Creek**

There was a creek through town  
we would go sit on the edge  
and dangle string in the water  
pretending to fish

After all  
it was Fisherman's Creek

We never caught anything  
but we talked  
leaned against each other  
and after checking both ways  
she sometimes kissed me

Then she would throw back her head  
and laugh  
as I pretended to be embarrassed  
~~



## Our Place

An uncle's couch  
a cast off chair  
A table from a charity store  
We didn't have fancy things  
but she kept them neat  
she kept them tidy  
and oh did she yell  
if I didn't take off my shoes

This is our place  
Our place  
and I love it  
like I love you  
so pick up your shit  
and leave your shoes  
at the bottom of the stair

Even when I was drunk  
I remembered

~~



## You Can Make It

"I'm sure these aren't code"  
she would say  
every time she had to help me  
get up the stairs  
a bad knee  
and a gut full of beer  
would make that turn  
a bit of a chance

Not to mention  
when I'd hit my head  
and fall back  
toward the lower steps  
barely catching myself  
on the railing  
"Come on big fella  
You can make it"  
She'd say as she pushed  
~~





## The Drop Into Hell

The drop into hell  
I'd call it  
as I slammed my forehead  
yet again  
into the roof  
"What do you expect  
from an attic apartment"  
she'd say

It was cheap  
We could walk to school  
and I wouldn't have moved  
if you'd paid me money  
She was there  
and that was enough  
to make up  
for a bruised forehead  
~~



## The Paper Roll Holder

Now, I've been to Japan  
but I didn't mind  
those tiny toilets  
I had learned  
long before that  
to take my pants off  
so I could spread my legs  
before sitting down

She would come by  
and laugh to see me  
trying to reach the paper  
Every time  
Every damned time  
I'd pull the roll holder  
off of the wall  
As I cracked my elbow  
~~



## Our Dining Room Table

Of all the bits and pieces  
of that tiny apartment  
in the attic  
I think the very best  
was the dining room

Just the two of us  
on a patio table  
by the window

We'd listen to the cars  
rolling by outside  
If you closed your eyes  
you heard waves on the shore  
of a custom-built  
ocean-side mansion

No room for visitors  
Just her gentle eyes  
looking back at me

~~



## Her Kitchen

I don't know how she did it  
the meals she cooked  
in that tiny kitchen  
So much better  
than the restaurants we could afford  
I remember the smells  
of every meal she made

And look at that vent  
for what heat there was  
coming up from the furnace  
in the wintertime  
Right in the centre of the floor  
A hot meal  
an extra sweater  
and her to snuggle with  
~~





## Some of them Matched

I couldn't give her much  
a few dishes  
a couple of mugs  
but she never complained  
"We don't have the sink  
to let them pile up"  
I washed them when I could  
but mostly she'd have them done

For all the times I was late  
all the times I was drunk  
all the times I was ugly cruel  
she stayed there with me  
in that apartment  
and I never understood  
just how lucky I was  
that she stayed so long with me

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