I moved to the city in a snowstorm. My heart had been removed from my chest with the violence of a novice turkey carver by someone who had told me it would be safe where it was. I arrived an emotional excavation site, but it was a new year. I had Jane Birkin bangs, the air was bracing and there was snow on the winding staircases when I woke up the next morning. I wasn’t looking for a relationship but, by springtime, because no one ever feels “this way about anyone before” until they meet the next person, I was more in love than I’d ever been. Sardonic, erudite—the kind of man who would pay more attention to being called sardonic and erudite than anything else in this essay—he was a native Montrealer who hated all the things I hated and loved all the things I had moved to the city to love. We spent seven months with each other, our relationship accreting through summer afternoons reading in the grass outside the Architecture Museum; with olive bread, black coffee and morning sex in my 3 ½ on Beaubien; in the alleys underneath the autoroute at Atwater and St. Antoine. He looked at me as if there had never been anyone else. Until he didn’t.

He could cook. Like, actual meals: beef flank stuffed with ham, spinach and red peppers; lemon and garlic kale salad with roasted chicken and fresh parmesan. This made the dinner parties we threw in my Plateau apartment, where we would prepare a meal together that he had shopped for that morning at marché Jean-Talon. I wore black, lacy, boy-cut underwear. We drank sparkling wine and made out on his couch. I had such high hopes. He had herpes and lingering feelings for an ex. He informed me of both as I lay spread eagle beneath him. I got up and started looking for the boy-cut underwear somewhere on the floor.

He was a bartender at a rustic market restaurant on Notre-Dame Ouest. We eye-fucked each other all night. My friend went outside for a cigarette and texted me to say she was leaving. Are you good? I showed him the message. “Am I good?” He took me home immediately. I left his place in the near-dawn hours, walking home in the still morning air past discarded cigarette butts and beer cans on the damp concrete, remnants of other people’s terrasse parties. Caught up in my post-drunk haze, it took me hours to notice that my apartment had been broken into. I’d been so focused on what I’d gained.

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