



Source: AFP, Reuters, 'Ties may improve after Syrians foil US embassy attack', *The Australian online*, 14/09/06.

Tags: countryside, discomfort, food, intimacy, travel  
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The weekend had started off okay. I had bought the groceries the night before, but had to make a pit stop at Woolies, to grab some socks as it was a tad cooler down South and I hadn't owned or needed a pair in years. We were living in Cairns and usually went further north to camp, but this time we were trying something different and going down to Flying Fish point.

It was in Woolies when I noticed the change; Tom seemed to freeze up as if he had to go to the bathroom, but couldn't because it had been too long between visits. I'm an easy-going kind of girl, so I gave him a big smile and kiss, but he kind of winced as if I stank or something.

We left Woolies and climbed into Dave's jeep. Dave, his mate, was working out on the reef and had left Tom his vehicle. Dave's a Hemingway type; brash, bold and blood full of poetry. Dave didn't like me at the time, couldn't look at me in the eye, but that's another story.

So off we drove, it's hot, the roads are full and the jeep is a real rattler. I try to make conversation, but Tom gives me the cold shoulder so I grab a beer, light a smoke and sit back.

We get there and there is nowhere to camp. There's miles of beach, but Tom doesn't like camping close to other people, so if there's any civilisation in sight, he will turn around and drive the other way. Tom's a bushy, so I assume he knows what he's doing when he begins to thrash through miles of cane field. It's itchy in there; the cane smacking the open windows and its dust coming in all over us. Tom's causing a cane toad massacre, his beady eyes searching for those poor toads as if they were out to get him or something. Tom has curly hair, a bit like a blonde clown, and it's now wet and plastered to his head—not a pretty sight.

After an hour we get to a dry riverbed. He's swearing, pissed that he has misjudged it for some freshwater, so we turn around and go back. It's getting dark and I'm hungry, I know he's hungry, but he doesn't say anything, so I don't say anything.

We finally stop at a deserted spot called Golden Pond where we would stay the night. He eats some of the food I had bought, complains there's no biscuits, and then says, 'I'm knackered, going to bed'.

In the morning he's up before me, swimming in Golden Hole. He would usually wake me up with a kiss and a coffee, so I realise he's still in his mood. I go in and have a dip. The water is cool and refreshing, but also really dark. If you think of Hylas and the Nymphs swimming around in one of those sacred swimming holes, that's the sight you should hold in your mind. We find out later that it's full of crocs and a couple of tourists had been taken a few months back.

Before we leave, I ask him,

'Something bothering you, because you're acting really strange?'

'No, no. I'm fine, just sick of driving.' another Emmy-winning smile, Tom was the King of no confrontation.

We finally find a site and camp at some spot with no shade that's swarming with mozzies, the water full of fish guts that some fisherman has been depositing for the whole week. Because it's so still, it just stays there all red and bloody. The fisherman looks as broody as Tom, but he was a little more intelligent leaving his woman behind at home, if there is a woman.

We leave early that weekend. When he drops me off home, I'm relieved to get out of that noisy jeep. Tom lives around the corner, and although he spends most of his spare time with me, he's the kind of guy that wouldn't live with a woman because he honours his 'space'. Ironically this 'space' didn't extend to mealtimes. Tom would come around for dinner, stay the night, eat breakfast and then take home the leftovers, leaving me to buy lunch for myself as well as taking my car for the day.

An hour after dropping me off, he's at my door, his head held low, apologising for being such an ass. I am a forgiving kind of girl, so I tell him to forget it. I then notice his eyes looking over at the stovetop and at the curry simmering away, 'but I prefer to be alone tonight' I say. I want the left overs to myself.

In Australia there's an unspoken law amongst men, it's don't be a miser, because one day you'll pay the price. I found out later that Tom was upset he had to fork out \$6 to pay for my socks at Woolies, because I had forgot my purse in the jeep. Tom and I broke up a few months later, he had saved enough money during our time together to finance a round-the-world trip. I didn't hear from him for about a year. Then a phone call woke me up in the middle of the night. It was Tom calling from his parent's house in England. While in Peru, he had been robbed of all his possessions; including clothes, camera, credit cards, cash.

After the call, I crawled back in bed and relayed the story to my new lover.

'But what did he want?' he asked.

'To see if it could work out between us again', I said.

'What did you say?'

'I told him, I'm enjoying my space right now.'

'Serves the stingy bugger right' said Dave, putting his arm around me and pulling me back to sleep.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Amélie Bird.*