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Tags: [workplace](#), [dance](#), [storytelling](#)

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I don't have time to write. Tonight I'm going out dancing.

I've just worked a sixty hour week. The last thing I want to do on my night off is sit down and write. YOU write something, if you're really worried about me. You know the kind of thing I'd do. They'll never know the difference anyway.

I'm going out, and there's going to be dancing and coat checks and chewing gum and cigarettes, and cigarettes and beer and hand-holding, and drag queens and maybe random kissing.

Oh, I don't know. Distract them with something foolish. Tell them how my freezer's full of meat scraps, how I've put them into deep freeze because I couldn't bring myself to throw them out. I have nothing else to say, nothing to cry about, no sympathy to share. I'm cold today, I'm heartless today. I'm going out dancing and I'm going to have a good time.

Tell them about how we met. Okay, here it is. Start from this: I'm hovering on the front lawn with my pad and pencil, pretending to be a reporter for that crappy German newspaper which pays me almost nothing and makes me ignorant and young and sends me out to cover 'the cultural events'. Remember? I see you, you're directing the proceedings and making sure nobody gets hurt. They're worried a lot about the public liability, and they want to be certain no one complains. You look in control of things and I like that, and I imagine how you might take control of things with me and I wish you would, although I've never met you before, so how could I wish such things? But I do, wish that I mean, because I imagine you might have a few good ideas about what I should do next. And I'm right, I've been right ever since, which is why I think you'll have no problem with this story of mine.

What? No, you tell it. Well, tell it from your side then. Oh, I don't know.

How about this: you're there, directing the proceedings and making sure nobody gets hurt and you're tolerating changes to the plan because you can't see that it will really make much of a difference as long as nobody gets hurt, but all the same you're paying close attention because if anyone has any complaints you'd rather they complain to you than to the boss.

But of course you're never just doing one thing at once, your eye is always scanning the crowd for interesting looking people and especially attractive ones, although you're not really conscious that you're doing this at the time, it's only now that you think about it that you realise that's what you were doing. And anyway you spot me, but not because I'm attractive, although of course I am, I'm an attractive young woman, why wouldn't you notice me? But it's not because of that, it's because I'm wearing all

brown. I stand out from the crowd in my all brown, and you make a mental note to talk to me later because there might be something there, some possibility for something interesting in talking to an attractive young woman in all brown.

That's the kind of beginning you could work from. I don't know, why don't you develop it a bit after that? Tell about the awkward dancing we do when we go out together after. Actually, it's just you dancing, remember? And me I just sit at the bar eking out my on-special watery Tequila Sunrise and pondering whether this is all actually going to work out as neatly as I had imagined after all. That's funny, because it's a story about dancing and tonight I'm going out dancing, in a minute, without you, and you're staying home and writing the story about you dancing awkwardly without me that time. Although tonight it won't be awkward for me, it will be lovely, and I'll be out late so don't worry about staying up for me after you finish writing your story.

You write it. I bet you'll do a really good job without me in the way, me butting in with all the details and corrections and additions and sidelines that go nowhere and have nothing to do with the gist of it all. It'll be really your story, told in the way you want it told, with the well-timed pauses and the spaces you need to get across your point, and none of the filling in of gaps with words that aren't necessary. And the simple language that communicates deeply, in economical phrases, so that the listener is struck by the connection between what you're saying, just a simple story of this happening and then this and then this after that, the connection all that has, to something big and important and universal. You're good at that kind of clarity.

You'll see, it's actually a blessing in disguise this me going out. You could write about the time Paul threw me out, and I called you up, I was in tears, and you didn't even ask what had happened, you just asked where I was, and you borrowed the car and came straight away to pick me up with my suitcase and boxes of stuff. Of course, in reality, I could have just taken a taxi, but your story won't tell that. It won't go into the reasons why Paul threw me out, that would be another story, the kind of story I would write maybe. Your story would be simple and it would just state the facts of what happened and it would leave it to the listener to feel something deeper between us, something unspoken and for that reason profound, and it'd make the listener think that perhaps the best way to be is to not talk too much, to just sit and let the silence speak for itself.

Good luck with it. I'm off dancing now. See you in the morning.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Lucas Ihlein.*