

Story for performance #956  
webcast from Sydney at 08:01PM, 01 Feb 08



Source: Lara Sinclair, 'War ad image sparks smoking complaint', *The Australian online*, 01/02/08.

Tags: [dreams](#), [intimacy](#), [workplace](#)

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They met in the bedding section. He led her through the bewildering array of options, teaching her all he had learnt since he was just 18. Now at the age of thirty, he was a true master of his vocation. He called her Ma'am, and kept a respectful distance as she lay on one bed after another, testing each surface.

'Ma'am, today we are going to compare each brand and all that they offer. But I don't want you to just trust my opinion and the knowledge I have gained over many years; I want you to have complete trust in the truth of your own experience.' She stepped out of her sandals and lay down, self-consciously trying to replicate the way she habitually lay on her old mattress. He sat on the edge of the other bed alongside her.

'Ma'am, I want you to completely relax into the experience. Gradually let the mattress rise up to meet you and hold you. When you are ready, I will ask you: "Do you want to be held ever-so-lightly? Or do you want to be held more firmly and confidently? Please take your own time".'

She drifted from one bed to the other under his soft, thoughtful gaze. She found herself gravitating towards the harder beds, but perhaps that was because she had been sleeping on a dreadful futon for six years and this is what she had become accustomed to. But she didn't trust the softer beds. It didn't feel like they were going to support her. And she feared sinking into their cushioned depths.

'Ma'am, if I may, I would like to show you what is happening on the harder mattress. See this curve at your waist?'—his hand traced just above the curve of her hips. 'You are over-compensating because you are not comfortable; this bed is not supporting you from deep within. Whereas on the softer bed, your spine is quite naturally straight. Please come with me.' She moved to the other bed. He traced the outline of her body and she could see that her spine was fully aligned. 'I will leave you now and you can come to your own decision.'

She felt faintly ridiculous lying down on her own in the centre of a 40-bed display. She reached for her shoes and bag and crept away while she thought he wasn't looking. Lying on her tired old futon at home she turned his business card over and over in her hand, rising to pick up her mobile then putting it back down again. She placed his card under her pillow and slept fitfully.

'I was expecting your call Ma'am' he said. 'I am able to provide for you a special service. Some people, they choose a new mattress like they choose jam for their bread. It is very simple and straightforward to them. But for you, this decision is something that you

struggle with. You want to ensure you are right, but fear that you will inevitably be wrong.

'For you, sleep is where dreams and desires show themselves to you, where new lives begin to take shape in reality. Your bed is where you come alive to yourself and your loves, where your true erotic self is revealed. Your room is your sanctuary and your haven, where you nourish and replenish yourself for life's great battles. Your bedclothes are your most intimate garments, where you are embraced and protected all night long.

'Ma'am, you must farewell your old sleeping regime to welcome the new. You already know this, but you don't know how to begin. Let me accompany you on this journey. Firstly I am going to ask you to remove all the sheets and bedding. Now I ask you to lie down naked so there is nothing between you and your old sleeping surface.

'Ma'am, if you please, tell me who you have loved on this bed. Tell me about the tears and sweat you have shed. The blood that has oozed from between your legs and the cum that your lovers have left. Feel the hollow that your body has impressed and the heat where your head rests.

'Now turn over onto all fours and search every centimetre of this old mattress. Can you see where the blue pen leaked and the greasy mark was left from eating too often in bed? Can you smell the mixture of perfumes, shampoos and sunscreen lotions; socks, underarms and crotch? Is there a tissue under the bed or a dried up contact lens or lost ring? Perhaps a memento of someone else? Look closely Ma'am, look ever-so closely.

'You tell me you have found a hair that does not belong to you. A hair of a different colour from your own, that curls softly and gently in the palm of your hand. You feel all the old feelings as you look at this hair against your skin. You see this lover smile down at you as they move into your embrace. Ma'am, this is why you can no longer sleep on this bed. This innocent hair is not so innocent. You will not let new loves into your life until the ghost of this old love is shown the door. Ma'am, it is as simple and as essential as that.

'New love is imminent. That is why, all of a sudden, you can not sleep on this old mattress one second longer. Why our paths have crossed in your search for something new. Release this hair to the four winds and bid all that it stands for farewell. Ma'am, you are now free to love and be deeply loved again.'

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Susan Charlton.*