Blue
Patricia Leavy

Blue follows three roommates as they navigate life and love in their post-college years. Tash Daniels, the former party girl, falls for deejay Aidan. Always attracted to the wrong guy, what happens when the right one comes along? Jason Woo, a lighthearted model on the rise, uses the club scene as his personal playground. While he’s adept at helping Tash with her personal life, how does he deal with his own when he meets a man that defies his expectations? Penelope, a reserved and earnest graduate student slips under the radar, but she has a secret no one suspects. As the characters’ stories unfold, each is forced to confront their life choices or complacency and choose which version of themselves they want to be. Blue is a novel about identity, friendship, figuring out who we are during the “in-between” phases of life, and the search for people who “get us.” The characters in Blue show how our interactions with people often bump up against backstage struggles we know nothing of. Visual art, television and film, appear as signposts throughout the narrative, providing a context for how we each come to build our sense of self in the world. With a tribute to 1980s pop culture, set against the backdrop of contemporary New York, Blue both celebrates and questions the ever-changing cultural landscape against which we live our stories, frame by frame. Although fictional, Blue is grounded in interview research, teaching and personal observations. It can be read entirely for pleasure or used as supplemental reading in a variety of courses in women’s/gender studies, sociology, psychology, communication, popular culture, media studies, qualitative inquiry, narrative inquiry or arts-based research. The protagonist, Tash Daniels, originally appeared in the best-selling novel Low-Fat Love (Blue is set several years later). Blue can be read as a stand-alone novel.

“Blue is a joyful, inspiring and painfully beautiful novel written by gifted scholar and writer, Patricia Leavy.” Norman Denzin, Ph.D., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

“I love it. Tash is so familiar and yet unique. I get her discontents and I am rooting for her. I find the novel to be cool, hip, and awesome! It would be fantastic in any number of college courses. Young adults should read this. BRAVO, Patricia Leavy!” Laurel Richardson, Ph.D., The Ohio State University

“An engaging piece of public scholarship, Blue provides rich food for thought about the pop culture landscape and how its shapes our own stories. This will be a useful and fun teaching tool.” Sut Jhally, Ph.D., University of Massachusetts at Amherst; Founder & Executive Director, Media Education Foundation

Patricia Leavy, Ph.D., is an award-winning independent sociologist and best-selling author.
Blue
The Social Fictions series emerges out of the arts-based research movement. The series includes full-length fiction books that are informed by social research but written in a literary/artistic form (novels, plays, and short story collections). Believing there is much to learn through fiction, the series only includes works written entirely in the literary medium adapted. Each book includes an academic introduction that explains the research and teaching that informs the book as well as how the book can be used in college courses. The books are underscored with social science or other scholarly perspectives and intended to be relevant to the lives of college students—to tap into important issues in the unique ways that artistic or literary forms can.

Please email queries to pleavy7@aol.com

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Blue

Patricia Leavy
A C.I.P. record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN 978-94-6300-353-7 (paperback)

Published by: Sense Publishers,
P.O. Box 21858,
3001 AW Rotterdam,
The Netherlands
https://www.sensepublishers.com/

*Printed on acid-free paper*

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PRAISE FOR BLUE

“I love it. I just love it. I wasn’t planning on reading it this morning, but once I started, I couldn’t stop. Tash is so familiar and yet unique. I get her discontents and I am rooting for her as soon as she says her first words. She’s in New York City and I know she’s going to make it. I want her to. And I want her friends, including the homeless man, to make it, too. In the accolades of the 1980s, I find the novel to be cool, hip, and awesome! It would be fantastic in any number of college courses. Young adults should read this. BRAVO, Patricia Leavy!” Laurel Richardson, Ph.D., The Ohio State University

“An engaging piece of public scholarship, Blue provides rich food for thought about the pop culture landscape and how its shapes our own stories. With a subtext about privilege, opportunity, sexual assault and gender, this would be a useful and fun teaching tool.” Sut Jhally, Ph.D., University of Massachusetts at Amherst; Founder & Executive Director, Media Education Foundation

“Blue is a joyful, inspiring and painfully beautiful novel written by gifted scholar and writer, Patricia Leavy. Blue shows all of us how to move forward through times of pain, crisis or complacency with hope and love.” Norman Denzin, Ph.D., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

“Blue is a tour de force! Leavy shines her brightest in this little gem of a book. Authentic dialogue, fun but complex characters, and brilliant use of pop culture make this book a must-read. I don’t want to give anything away, but the meaning of the title is genius. Beautiful! I love that we get to catch up with Tash from Low-Fat Love and be immersed in her sometimes endearing, sometimes frustrating, and all-too-relatable complexity again. The city is a refreshing character in this finely drawn book, transporting you to a hopeful, hip, vibrant New York. Blue inspires reflection and entertains. I highly recommend it!” Amy Leigh Mercree, author of The Spiritual Girl’s Guide to Dating
“Blue, Patricia Leavy’s latest journey into social fiction, reminds me of what it meant to live through the blue of young adulthood, a time spent working through the complexities of a life that’s constantly changing like the sky while struggling toward self-love, spiritual balance and happiness. Like Low-Fat Love I was immediately pulled in as a reader by Leavy’s refreshing use of language, her descriptions helping me see the world she’s creating, a world that feels as familiar as one I remember as if it were yesterday.” Mary E. Weems, Ph.D., author of Blackeyed: Plays and Monologues and Cleveland Arts Prize winner

“Patricia Leavy’s strength lies not just in writing relatable yet complex women, but also in the level of cultural and social research she puts into each page. Blue is more than a great read; it is the embodiment of sociological art, grounded in theory and method and mixed with all the fun pop culture has to offer. The result is stunning! I can’t wait to use it in the classroom!” Adrienne Trier-Bieniek, Ph.D., Valencia College

“In her new novel Blue, Patricia Leavy maps the contemporary landscape of love by narrating a vibrant tale where complex and compelling characters dance with the possibilities of longing and romance like light and shadow dance a tango. Full of wisdom, wit, and wonder, swirling with vibrant voices that conjure the hope and loss we all know is the heart and truth of love, always more confounding than found, always calling us forth with indefatigable desire. Blue is a novel we all need to read now!” Carl Leggo, Ph.D., University of British Columbia and Poet
Also from Patricia Leavy

Low-Fat Love: Expanded Anniversary Edition

American Circumstance

Gender & Pop Culture: A Text-Reader
Edited by Adrienne Trier-Bieniek and Patricia Leavy

For more information, visit the author’s website
www.patricialeavy.com
for beauty seekers everywhere,
and one in particular,
Celine Boyle
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword by Anne Harris  xiii  
Preface  xv  
Acknowledgements  xix  

**Part One**

Chapter 1  3  
Chapter 2  13  
Chapter 3  29  
Chapter 4  35  
Chapter 5  43  

**Part Two**

Chapter 6  61  
Chapter 7  75  
Chapter 8  95  

**Part Three**

Chapter 9  105  
Chapter 10  117  
Chapter 11  121  

Afterword: Connections between *Blue* and *Low-Fat Love*  133  
Suggested Classroom Use  137  
Excerpt from *Low-Fat Love: Expanded Anniversary Edition*  139  
About the Author  145
FOREWORD

Patricia Leavy has done it again. Shimmering under a filmic haze of vintage mid-80s Greenwich Village, her latest novel *Blue* bursts to life with the elegance and electricity of a true New Yorker. Equal parts smart and funny, this book somehow also manages to be a love letter to anyone who has fallen in love, survived the death of a love affair, the death of a loved one, or walked with others through such profound loss. It is a work of immense empathy, a work of creative practice-led research about hope and loyalty, resilience and redemption.

Tash, Jason, and Penelope are characters we have all known or been. One of the innovations of this book is Leavy’s decision to bring back Tash Daniels, the protagonist of her uber-popular book *Low-Fat Love*, the first in this Social Fictions series. *Blue* takes Social Fictions to a whole new level. Leavy’s painful personal history and her well-publicized real-life muse, Tori Amos, have informed the creation of this latest novel, and Amos’ artistry and lyricism are in evidence throughout, directly and indirectly. For this is ultimately a book about coming of age as a creative act, a book about family, and about the impossibility of living ‘safe’ lives. It shows the power of pop culture not only to reflect our experiences, but to co-create them. Leavy says, “the path through pain has always been creativity,” and in this book readers will see that creative research finds its true validity in the affective authenticity of characters like us, and in this task *Blue* succeeds beyond measure.

*Anne Harris, Ph.D.*
*Monash University*
*Australian Research Fellow in Creativity and Arts in Education*
Blue follows three roommates as they navigate life and love in their post-college years. Tash Daniels, the former party girl, falls for deejay Aidan. Always attracted to the wrong guy, what happens when the right one comes along? Jason Woo, a lighthearted model on the rise, uses the club scene as his personal playground. While he’s adept at helping Tash with her personal life, how does he deal with his own when he meets a man that defies his expectations? Penelope, a reserved and earnest graduate student, slips under the radar, but she has a secret no one suspects. As the characters’ stories unfold, each is forced to confront their life choices or complacency and choose which version of themselves they want to be. Blue is a novel about identity, friendship, and figuring out who we are during the “in-between” phases of life. The book shines a spotlight on the friends and lovers who become our families in the fullest sense of the word, and the search for people who “get us.” The characters in Blue show how our interactions with people often bump up against backstage struggles we know nothing of. Visual art, television, and film appear as signposts throughout the narrative, providing a context for how we each come to build our sense of self in the world. With a tribute to 1980s pop culture, set against the backdrop of contemporary New York, Blue both celebrates and questions the ever-changing cultural landscape against which we live our stories, frame by frame.

The protagonist, Tash Daniels, originally appeared in my first novel, Low-Fat Love (Blue is set several years later). I found her a difficult character to like and enjoyed placing her story center stage, flaws and all. Blue follows Tash and a new set of characters and can be read as a stand-alone novel. For those who read Blue as a follow-up to Low-Fat Love, you will find some lingering questions are answered. Low-Fat Love explored women’s identity construction in the context of isolation, low self-esteem, and destructive male figures; by contrast, Blue tackles questions about identity in the context of positive relationships.
Together, the novels represent two ends of a continuum, both suggesting the most important relationship we have is with ourselves. You needn’t read anything else before you crack open these pages.

Although fictional, the novel is grounded in interview research, teaching, and personal observations, including my ongoing informal online communication with my students in their post-grad years. During the writing of this book, I immersed myself in 1980s pop culture and visited the locations in New York City that appear in the novel. In these ways, it can be considered arts-based research. Sociologically, the novel also highlights the disjuncture between what we see of people’s lives and what they may be struggling with behind the scenes. Blue can be read entirely for pleasure or can be used as supplemental reading in a variety of courses in education, women’s/gender studies, sociology, psychology, communication, popular culture, media studies, qualitative inquiry, narrative inquiry, or arts-based research.

I began writing Blue the day my daughter’s biological father died after a long battle with cancer. I was home alone, trying to cope, and knew that for me, the path through pain has always been creativity. So I started writing what first came to my mind, simply as a way to get through the day. I created a handwritten list of all the colors flooding my mind. They were all shades of blue. A Tori Amos song called “Garlands” was playing the background. The song is set in New York City’s Washington Square Park. Suddenly, I had a theme and location.

Although I had a different novel planned, Blue took on a life of its own, and I soon realized it was a book I was always meant to write. I pay tribute to the places in New York City I have loved the most, not because of the physical spaces themselves, but the hopefulness they inspired in me early in my life. I also give a nod to the pop culture that influenced me at critical moments in my life, to show how the pop culture we choose to consume becomes a part of who we are. Notwithstanding the grief that inspired me to start writing, or perhaps because of it, Blue is the
most uplifting, humorous, and hopeful of all my books. At its core, it celebrates possibility. When it was finished, I began to think of it as a love letter to myself. I’m delighted to be able to share that love letter with others.

Patricia Leavy
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, thank you Peter de Liefde, publisher extraordinaire, for your faith in me and your willingness to support creativity. I am forever grateful to you and the entire team at Sense Publishers, particularly Paul Chambers for your tireless marketing efforts, Jolanda Karada for your outstanding production assistance, and Edwin Bakker and Robert van Gameren for your assistance getting copies out. Thank you to the editorial advisory board members of the Social Fictions series for your generosity, and to the early reviewers for your generous endorsements. Heartfelt thanks to Shalen Lowell, the world’s best assistant and spiritual bodyguard. Thank you to Clear Voice Editing for the phenomenal copyediting services. Tori Amos, thank you for “Garlands” and “Oysters,” which enabled me to crawl into a writing hole and come out the other side. To my Facebook community, I can only say thank you. I can’t overstate how much your support has meant to me.

My deep gratitude to my friends and family, especially Ally Field, Monique Robitaille, Melissa Anyiwo, Pamela DeSantis, Mallory Sophronia, Anne Harris, Adrienne Trier-Bieniek, Mr. Barry Mark Shuman, Vanessa Alsid, and Carolyn and Charles Robins. Madeline Leavy-Rosen, love to you always. If you ever want to know who I am, aside from being your mom, read this. Mark Robins, you’re the best spouse in the world. I couldn’t do any of it without you. Dad, thanks for renting the movies I loved over and over again. You’ll recognize them in these pages and hopefully see it wasn’t a waste. Mom, thank you for the magical trips to New York when I was little and for giving me such incredible exposure to the art world. This book is a love letter to those places and what they inspired in me. Celine Boyle, you were the only person reading this as I was writing. Thank you for your invaluable feedback on every line and for “getting” me and my
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

vision. You’ve made this book and my life so much better. Finally, for beauty seekers everywhere, and all those who are in love with love, books, and movies.
We are possibilities.
PART ONE
CHAPTER 1

That can’t be right, Tash thought, squinting again to look at the time. “Shit,” she said as she reached for the alarm clock. “Damn thing never works,” she mumbled while placing it back on her nightstand. I’m gonna be late again. I should hurry. She rolled over before slowly stretching her arms and lazily dragging herself out of bed. Stumbling to her dresser and opening the top drawer, she rifled around for underwear before heading to the bathroom.

Twenty minutes later, wrapped in a towel after showering, she used her palm to wipe the steam from the mirror. I look like crap. God, I hope I can cover those bags under my eyes, she thought as she started to apply her signature black liquid eyeliner. I’ll use gray eyeshadow and make them smoky. Realizing it must be getting late, she dried and straightened her long, dirty-blonde hair but skipped curling the ends to save time. Returning to her bedroom, she scoured her closet wondering what to wear before deciding on an off-the-shoulder, loose white tunic, a pair of skinny black jeans, and high-heeled black leather booties. Staring at herself in the mirror, she tried on four pairs of earrings, posing left and then right to fully view each option, before deciding on gold hoops. To match, she threw on her favorite gold, turquoise, and red evil-eye bracelet. Coffee. I need coffee.

En route to the galley kitchen, Tash stomped past her roommates’ closed bedroom doors, clomping her heels without concern as to whether they were asleep. She got a bag of coffee and the nearly empty carton of milk out of the refrigerator, placed them on the counter, and opened the cupboard to get a coffee filter and her to-go tumbler, neither of which were there. She found her tumbler in the sink, dirty from the day before. Fuck. Turning back to focus on the coffee pot, she spotted a note sitting beside it. There’s nothing I dread first thing in the freaking morning more than these notes.
CHAPTER 1

Morning, Tash. Hope you didn’t forget to turn the volume up on your alarm again and oversleep. I didn’t want to wake you in case you had the day off. We’re out of coffee filters and it’s your turn to go to the store. I left my list on the back of this note. I can’t cover for you this time so please go. Thanks. Have a nice day. Penelope

Tash flipped over the note and rolled her eyes. She started to leave the kitchen when she turned back, remembering to put the milk away. Don’t want the Gestapo after me for that again, she thought. She headed into the common room, sans coffee, and looked around. Where did I leave my bag? The small loveseat was overflowing with random clothing, topped with her black blazer. Hmm. Two pairs of men’s shoes under the coffee table. Jason must have met someone. Good for him, but where’s my stupid bag? Ah, there you are, spotting her black bag hiding in the corner, with her keys and sunglasses conveniently lying on top of it. She scooped them up, put her dark glasses on, and headed out, double locking the door behind her.

“Hi, Mr. Collier,” she said, passing her neighbor on the stairs.

“Good morning, Miss,” he replied.

Despite the morning rush, she was able to hail a cab quickly. As the cab passed Washington Square Park, she stared at the chess players, already at it for the day. Soon she drifted into thoughts of the drama the day before. Ray was a jerk, Jason was so right. He didn’t deserve me. I’m glad I ended it. As they pulled up to Alice & Olivia, Tash rummaged through her bag for cash before giving up and surrendering her credit card to the driver.

She flew into the store, quickly heading to the backroom before Catherine could open her mouth. Tash threw her arm up and hollered, “I know, and I’m sorry. My alarm didn’t go off and blah, blah, blah.”
“You’re half an hour late, again,” Catherine called after her.

“I know, I know, and I’m sorry,” Tash said, rolling her eyes. As she hung her bag and blazer on a coat hook, Catherine continued to reprimand her.

“You need to get a new alarm clock then, because I…”

“I’ll close for you tonight, okay? You can leave early; it’s fine.”

“You know if you left on time you could walk here and save yourself the cab fare. You probably lose at least an hour’s wages by creating a situation in which you need to take a cab. And is it even faster with the morning traffic?”

As Catherine continued, Tash muttered under her breath, “Get off my ass, you bitch,” if only to make herself feel better. She took a deep breath and headed to the Keurig machine to make some much-needed coffee. She plugged it in and flipped the switch, but Catherine exclaimed, “Don’t bother. It broke yesterday.” Tash squeezed her eyes shut, shook her head, and took another deep breath before forcing a smile onto her face. “Great, that’s just great.”

*

“I’m going to head out now, since you’re closing tonight.”

“Uh huh, fine Catherine. Have a good night,” Tash said while leaning on the store counter and checking her phone. She was exchanging texts with Jason, reminding him to get them on the club list that weekend.

“Make sure you change the shoes and handbags in the window display. Last season’s accessories go on sale tomorrow, so the newer items should be featured in the window.”

“Uh huh,” Tash said, without looking up from her phone.

“Okay, well, goodnight.”

“Night, Catherine.”

An hour later, after ringing up the final customers, Tash retrieved the new handbags and shoes from the backroom. She
liked working on window displays because it was a chance to be 
creative and put things together in unexpected ways that were sure 
to perplex Catherine. Tash imagined the windows as still images 
from film, designed to convey a feeling as much as to display 
clothes. While there was a limit to what she could get away with, 
she pushed the bounds as much as possible. She didn’t mind her 
job and loved working in SoHo, but window displays and the 
employee discount were the only aspects from which she derived 
genuine pleasure.

Once Tash was done putting accessories from the window 
onto the sale table, she gathered her things and locked up. With 
only a blazer on, she felt a chill. These early spring days were 
unusually warm but the evenings were still cold. I should really 
walk home. I can’t blow more money on a cab. Desperate for a 
scarf, she stood on Greene Street rummaging through her slouchy 
leather hobo bag, which she carried everywhere despite its 
tendency to become a black hole in which she couldn’t find 
anything. “Ah, there we go,” she whispered as she pulled out a 
periwinkle scarf, which she double wrapped around her neck.

As the sky darkened, the SoHo lights seemed to shine at 
their brightest. Store windows screamed with flashing light bulbs, 
a frenetic attempt to command notice. Tash looked in the windows 
as she passed by, tempted by sale signs even though she was 
accustomed to them. These days, even New York City itself was 
on sale. Street vendors yearning to end their days well tried to 
entice her with sunglasses and other trinkets. When she smiled 
and shook her head, one guy screamed, “You look like Lindsay Lohan. 
You’re dope.”

“I get that a lot,” she said with a mischievous smile.

As she crossed over into the Village, the restaurants and 
corner cafés were already bustling with people clamoring to sit 
outside. After a brutal winter, New Yorkers were ready to enjoy 
outdoor dining again. Waiters turned on heat lamps and uncorked 
wine bottles amid casual conversation and bubbling laughter.

Her feet sore, she slowed her pace as she passed 
Washington Square Park. As day turned to night, the park was the
center of the world around her. People from all walks of life appeared. The parade of artists, writers, students, homeless people, drug dealers, professors, tourists, and countless others made it the perfect microcosm of the city itself, the dream and its shadow side. She overheard a group of preppy college students talking about social justice as they passed Harold, actively trying not to notice as he set up his sleeping bag on a bench. *Jerks*, she thought. *They’re such posers."

A year earlier, Tash had twisted her ankle racing to work one morning. A barrage of f-bombs flew out of her mouth. Harold, a witness to the accident, helped her to a bench and told her not to curse.

“Are you for real?” she asked.

“It’s undignified,” he replied. “Do you think you can walk?”

“Oh, yeah, but not in these shoes.”

They spoke for a few more minutes before she decided to stumble back to her apartment to ice her ankle and change shoes. Since that day, she’d say hi to Harold when she saw him and stopped to talk with him at least once every couple of weeks, usually bringing him a cup of coffee and sometimes a donut. Powdered sugar was his favorite.

He once started to tell his life story and she interrupted saying, “It’s cool, Harold. We don’t have to do this. I don’t need you to explain.” He seemed relieved. Since then, their conversations were usually about how they were each doing that particular day. Although routinely chased away by the police, he always returned. On this night, she just waved as she passed him.

Only half a block from her apartment, she had the horrible realization that she was supposed to get groceries. Not willing to endure a lecture from Penelope, she passed her apartment building and headed to the corner grocer. After grabbing a hand basket and making a beeline to the freezer for some ice cream, she started searching for Penelope’s grocery list. As she fumbled for the list, mumbling, “Ah, where is that stupid thing?” she heard a voice say,
“Maybe you’d have better luck if you shut your eyes and put your hand in.”

“Huh?” she queried, looking up at the six-foot-tall guy standing before her, dressed from head to toe in black. He had bleached blonde spiky hair, high cheekbones, a strong jawline, and a piercing through his right eyebrow that she thought was simultaneously cool and disgusting.

“You know, sometimes if you’re looking too hard, you can’t find anything.”

“Uh, yeah,” she said, staring into his evergreen eyes. *Oh my God, he’s seriously hot.*

“Here, tell me what you’re looking for and I’ll shut my eyes and stick my hand in for you.”

Raising her eyebrows, she said, “How stupid do you think I am? Maybe I should just go outside and scream, ‘ Somebody rob me!’”

He laughed. “Fair enough, but you try it.”

Tash smirked and stuck her hand into her bag without looking. “Uh huh, here it is!” she exclaimed as she pulled out the small, crumpled paper. “That’s uncanny.”

“Sometimes you just have to concentrate less, you know?” he said. “What’s so important, anyway?”

“Oh, it’s just my roommate’s grocery list. She’s pretty uptight so I can’t screw it up. You wouldn’t believe the things she writes, like ‘ two organic red apples and flax seed powder,’ whatever the hell that is. Anyway, I should probably get back to shopping.”

He smiled and waved his arm, to indicate she could pass by. With only a few aisles in the small store, Tash bumped into him again in the produce section.

“Should I even ask what that’s about?” she said while giggling, looking at the twenty or more coconuts in his basket.

“Oh, these are for a party I’m deejaying for a couple of friends over at NYU.”

“They’re serving whole coconuts?” she asked, mystified.
He laughed. “People try to get them open. It’s like a drinking game kind of thing. It’s pretty funny.”
“Gotcha. Do you go to NYU?”
“No, I went to school in Chicago and moved to New York after I graduated. I’m a professional deejay. I’m just doing this party as a favor.”
“So, what kinds of clubs do you spin at?” she asked.
“Uh, well, tomorrow I’ll be spinning at the Forever 21 store in Times Square.”
She smiled. “Well, do you get a discount at least?”
He laughed. “Didn’t think to ask for that. So, what’s your name?”
“Natashya, but my friends call me Tash.”
“I’m Aidan. Do you live around here?”
“Just a block away. I share a place with two roommates.”
“Pretty awesome area to live in, good for you.”
“Yeah, well we’re in like the only non-restored building in the neighborhood. Don’t get me wrong, I love living here and it’s pretty close to my work, but we’re not in one of the swanky buildings with a marble entrance. It’s more like splinter wood floors and a scary old-fashioned elevator that makes me want to take the stairs.”
He smiled. “What’s your work?”
“I work at a couple of stores in SoHo.”
“For the discount, right?” he said with a smirk.
Tash laughed. “Well, nice to meet you but I’ve gotta finish up and get going.”
“Sure, me too. Maybe I’ll see you around. If you’re not busy, stop by Forever 21 tomorrow.”
“I have to work.”
“Well, can I maybe get your number?” he asked.
“Why don’t you give me yours instead?”
“Sure, that’s cool.” He put his coconut-filled basket on the ground and held out his hand. “Give me your phone and I’ll put it in.”
“You don’t want me to have to search my bag again. Here,” she said, handing him the note with Penelope’s grocery list. “Do you have a pen?”

Aidan smiled and pulled a red crayon out of his pocket. “Don’t ask,” he said as he wrote his number on the little paper. “Here,” he said handing it to her. “See ya.”

“See ya,” she said.

When she casually glanced around the store a few minutes later, he was gone. She brought her basket to the checkout. The cashier asked, “Did you find everything you needed?”

“Yeah, yeah I did.”

* 

Her feet aching and her arms overloaded, Tash felt like she was going to drop by the time she made it home. She dumped her handbag and keys on the entryway floor and swung the shopping bags onto the kitchen counter. She opened her new box of popcorn and stuck a packet in the microwave before putting the rest of the groceries away. She giggled to herself, thinking about the coconuts filling Aidan’s basket. I wonder if Jason is home.

Tash met Jason Woo at a club a few years earlier. She was having trouble getting past the bouncers when Jason came to her rescue. His modeling career was just starting to take off thanks to landing a gig as Calvin Klein’s first Asian male model. Both sarcastic and carefree, they bonded immediately and moved in together as soon as Tash graduated from college. Though they had a hard time looking out for themselves, they did a remarkable job of looking out for each other.

Tash was so lost in thought about Aidan’s coconuts that she didn’t hear Jason approaching.

“Hey,” Jason said from the doorway.

“Oh, hey.” She tossed him a bag of coffee. “Stick that in the fridge.” As he put the coffee away, Tash said, “This too,” and flung the loaf of bread.
“I can’t believe you actually went shopping. Did Pen leave you one of her famous notes?”

“Yup,” she said just when the microwave beeped. “Is she in her room studying?”

“She’s not here. I think she had dinner plans with her study group or something.”

“Seriously? She’s unbelievable, making me do all this when she’s not even here,” she said as she opened the popcorn bag. Steam burned her hand and caused her to drop the bag on the counter. “Fuck,” she mumbled.

“How is it you never learn not to open it that way?” Jason asked facetiously. “Here, I got it,” he said. He grabbed a bowl from the cupboard and emptied the bag for her.

“You know if you leave it in the bag it’s one less dish to wash. That’s why I do that.”

“Since when do you ever wash the dishes anyway?” he rebuffed, as he ate a handful of her popcorn.

“I don’t know why she made me go to the store if she wasn’t even gonna be home,” Tash said as she threw the two empty grocery bags in the garbage.

“I know you can’t relate, but some people actually plan ahead. She probably wanted breakfast.”

“Oh, right, like you plan ahead,” Tash jabbed, tossing a jar of maraschino cherries.

“You’re lucky I caught that. What is it with you and these things?” he asked, sticking them in the door of the refrigerator.

“You know I love them. I can’t help it,” she said. “But listen, I kind of met a guy. I met him at the store while I was getting Pen’s crap, so maybe it was meant to be.”

“You met a guy? Ah, do tell,” he prodded.

“Well from the looks of things this morning, I’m guessing you also met a guy, so you tell first.” She opened the refrigerator and grabbed two cans of Diet Coke.

“Some lighting guy from the shoot. I kicked him out this morning.”
“You’re such a slut. Must be hard to be so irresistible,” Tash bemused.

Jason smiled. “You would know. Come on, let’s go curl up on my bed and you can tell me all about the guy you met. I hope he’s better than Ray. I’m eating half this popcorn, by the way,” he said, taking a fistful and heading to his room.

“Hey, that’s my dinner!”