

Park

by Matt Potter

The wooden slats dug into my back. "It's just not going to work, Douglas," I said. "It's become too tense and difficult."

He slipped off his end of the park bench and knelt before me on the gravel. "Tell me what it is you want from me," he said, cupping his hands on my knees. "I want to make you happy."

I looked into his serious cow eyes crowned with those impossibly crusty eyebrows and wished, wished, wished I could love him.

"I just want to go back to the way it used to be between us," I said. I flicked my hair out of my face, and saw his eyes moisten. Or maybe I flicked my hair in his face and his eyes were simply smarting. "Before sex fucked everything up."

Sex has a habit of doing that in my life, getting in the way of things. Like catching the bus, or turning up at work on time, or meeting friends for dinner. Or going to funerals, or getting the morning newspaper or even putting my clothes on.

Douglas got up off his knees and sat beside me on the bench. "I realise we have had an unorthodox relationship," he said. He took a giant green handkerchief from his pocket and blew his nose. "But I have been the best lover I could have been. Even though I never thought you have ever loved me."

That's sweet, I thought, heart stirring a little, glad our hour-long appointments had not come to nought ... because he was right! What had I seen in him beyond stylish furniture to fuck on and discounted daily sessions? A tear almost welled in my eye. He knew me so well. Had anyone bothered to really get to know me before?

I sighed. Life was so unfair. Because he was quite expert, really, in an exacting, clinical, Freudian sort of way. His insistence on wiping the couch down immediately afterwards, steam rising from the patches of heat we'd just created on the leather was a little obsessive I thought. But then who was I to bang on about obsessive behaviour again and again and again and again and again?

“It's time we moved our relationship back into an upright position,” I said, my hands smacking my knees with resolve. “Three times a week,” I rolled. “5.30pm Monday Wednesday Friday waddaya say?”

Douglas nodded, wiping a tear from his cheek. “It is going to be difficult, though,” he sniffed.

I placed my hands beside me on the bench and stood up. I shook Douglas's hand, and he muttered something about having something important to do, scurrying off.

Snapping my head towards the Harbour in the distance, I felt a diet pill rush, a problem Douglas still had to work on. My face flushed, and I smelled the air as a breeze rustled the gum leaves.

As I headed back to my car, gravel crunching beneath my feet, I thought, Yes, I am glad that my relationship with my psychiatrist is back on one uneven keel. And looking about me, I marvelled at the beauty of the park: its soothing lawns, soaring trees and sumptuous flowerbeds had never failed me. If there was ever one spot to choose for the perfect break-up scene, this was it.

Eight times lucky, and it had never failed me.

The park gate wheezed as it opened. And as I turned the corner, I spied a man — Douglas — scratching his key into the paint of my flashy new-to-me red BMW.

