

A Pastiche

The distraught, tear-streaked face of a young woman. She wails out an impassioned monologue, detailing the betrayal of an unknown lover. Upon her final words, she drops to the floor, after a moment of silence she composes herself and stands, letting out a self-deprecating laugh. This is Sam; 27, her narrow face is engulfed in a mop of dishevelled chestnut curls. In front of her two men and a woman straighten in their chairs. Sam listens eagerly as they thank her and indicate that they will be in touch. Sam makes for the door but is interrupted by one of the judges who questions why she's auditioning for the part of Samuel; a 50-year-old ex-marine. Sam justifies herself, explaining that despite their differences, she believes she is able to capture his essence. The judge doesn't bother to push further, instead calling in the next auditionee. Sam hurries out of the auditorium and into the night, passing a lumbering middle-aged man who takes her place.

It's night-time as Sam stands at the entrance to a dingy alleyway, rain pelts against her anorak. She checks the map's address open on her phone before squinting towards a soft glow emanating from a shopfront further down. She approaches the door and eyes it sceptically, classical music can be heard inside. She musters all of her willpower before jerking the door open.

Inside is all sleek surfaces, white marble, and LED overheads. Giant paintings adorn the walls. Guests, wearing garishly alternate outfits, stand clustered in tight groups. Sam, visibly out of place, cranes her head around, she makes eye contact with a young woman, Denise, who is engaged in an enthusiastic conversation with an elderly couple. She gives her an encouraging thumbs up which is returned with a "not now" look. Knowing no one else, Sam alternates between gazing at the abstract paintings and attempting, unsuccessfully, to integrate herself into the small groups. Sam pauses in front of a painting of three lines. A man with a bicycle moustache settles next to her. He gives her his unsolicited explanation of the work. She replies with her own interpretation, which is rapidly shot down.

Sam hides from the party in the bathrooms. She fires off a text before appraising herself in the mirror. She gathers up the wet hair plastered to her forehead and shapes it into something resembling a mohawk before tying her anorak around her shoulders. A message appears: "Here".

Sam, back in the party, searches the faces of the crowd. She is startled by a faux deep voice behind her. She turns to see a lanky man, early 30s, with thick-rimmed glasses. He tells her that her outfit does not comply and that she will need to leave. This is Henri. Henri laughs at his own joke before slapping Sam on the shoulder and making questionable comments about the gallery's other attendees. Sam distractedly looks toward Denise who is embroiled in yet another conversation. Henri continues his pompous chatter, the subject of which alternates between himself and his interpretations of the artworks. One of these artworks includes a collection of pens on a blank sheet of paper. Sam jokes that it must be interactive, her ironic tone flying over Henri's head. Bored, Sam lets her champaign flute slip from her hand, she feigns shock as it smashes onto the polished concrete. Heads turn towards them including Denise's who excuses herself and approaches. Denise chastises Sam before being cut off by Henri who pulls Denise into a sloppy kiss. He praises her profusely. Sam adds in her own praise. A photographer takes a picture of the glass shattered at their feet. Denise thanks Sam and Henri for coming and babbles about how nervous she's been. Henri is delegated to a third wheel as Sam divulges the details of her audition. They are interrupted as shouting breaks out

next to them. They turn to see Henri being accosted by a furious woman who yanks him away from the pen and paper display. The woman lets out a wail as she spots Henri's scribbles on the page. Henri stands gormlessly as it becomes abundantly clear that the sculpture was not interactive.

Sam, Denise, and Henri walk in silence along the cobblestones. A disgraced Henri hangs off Denise. Sam attempts to comfort a less-than-impressed Denise by revealing that she has a surprise back at their flat. Sam unlocks her parked car and looks back expectantly. Denise remains with Henri and explains that they are going for dinner, but Sam is welcome to join. Sam and Henri eye each other tensely. Sam rolls her eyes.

A burnt ready-made meal sits on the stovetop. Sam, oven mitts on, stands over the container and appraises the meal. She drops it in the bin. She shuffles towards the lounge, passing by the dining room table, on it sits a cake with decorative icing that poorly depicts an easel and reads, "Congratulations Denise". Sam pauses at the lounge and turns back to eye the cake.

Sam slumps on the couch, face illuminated by the glow of the TV. Denise's cake sits half-eaten next to her. A fat tabby cat licks at the icing. Sam drags him away and proceeds to explain the final scene of *North by Northwest* to him. A latch clicks and Denise appears in the doorway, she kicks off her boots and wobbles into the living room to join Sam on the couch. Sam makes to pull the half-eaten cake out of the way but is too slow, Denise lands half on top of it, but she doesn't seem to notice; she's drunk. Sam greets her. Denise's conversation skills are markedly impaired which Sam finds amusing; she entertains Denise's joyous, drunken chatter as she recounts her night. Sam, sensing Denise's weakened state, takes advantage and broaches the subject of getting Fat Tabby a friend. Denise hesitates; Sam attempts to justify her idea but is cut short by Denise who reveals that Henri asked her to move to Spain with him. Sam, disbelieving, clarifies with Denise who nods excitedly. Denise, ignorant of Sam's shock, begins to gush about Her and Henri's plans. Sam nods along numbly as the world around her grows muffled and the colours distort.

Sam lets out an oomph as a medicine ball smacks into her chest. She clutches it to herself and lies back before sitting up again and throwing it at Denise who sits opposite her and repeats the action. They are in a bright studio room lined with rubber matting; ten other people surround them and are completing a similar action. A muscular trainer shouts semi-aggressive encouragements at the group. Whispering between laboured breaths, Denise quizzes Sam on whether she's attending brunch that weekend. Sam replies that she's unsure, explaining that it will depend on whether she hears back from her audition. Denise suggests she should speak to Jimmy. Sam, struggling to recover from her latest sit-up, indicates that she has, and he will be the first to let her know. Denise cuts off Sam's final words to tell her they're safe. Sam looks behind her at the muscular trainer who is distracted and facing away from them. Sam and Denise stop throwing the ball and catch their breaths. Denise expresses her contempt that Sam dragged her along to a gym class, noting that she'd much rather be bouldering with Henri. Sam replies that Denise should be grateful to be spending time with her considering that she will be leaving for Spain in a week. Denise is quiet before swearing under her breath, realisation dawning on her face as she tells Sam that she forgot to drop her paintings off at the warehouse. Sam waits for her to continue. Denise gives her an imploring look. Sam, realising Denise's inference, vehemently refuses her. Denise pleads, explaining that she won't get the chance as she's working. Denise sticks her bottom lip out. Sam glances over her shoulder, muscle man is still busy. With a huff Denise changes tacts and grows serious. She tells Sam that she desperately wants her work to go to the retreat so that it gets

added to their alumni gallery wall. Sam suggests that would be a tad fraudulent but is cut off by a shout from Muscle Man as he realises Sam and Denise have stopped. Sam jolts and grabs the medicine chucking it to Denise. Denise not at all ready, receives the ball with her forehead. Denise yelps. Sam lunges over apologising profusely. Denise brings her hands away from her bloodied nose and lets Sam know that she will be delivering it.

Outside a warehouse in the industrial quarter. Sam stands at the boot of her car assessing how to go about moving Denise's paintings. A shrill voice sounds out in greeting. A tall woman, in her mid-50s with a shock of white hair and far too many layered beaded necklaces, appears next to Sam. She introduces herself as Belinda, the retreat leader. Sam makes to reply but only gets so far as to say she is dropping off paintings for Denise before she is cut off by the woman who gushes her relief that she; Denise, can make it after all. Sensing the misunderstanding, Sam starts to correct Belinda but can't get a word in as Belinda dotes on her and explains how the camp will run. A man who has a marked resemblance to Sant Clause begins unpacking the paintings from the boot and carries them into the warehouse. Belinda sweeps Sam along after him as she alternates between directing the man and divulging how arrival will work the following morning. Sam attempts to interrupt several more times but Belinda is incessant. Finally, Belinda stops talking and presents Sam with an information booklet and a box of chocolates; Sam lets out an overwhelmed puff of breath, she doesn't say anything for a moment, instead, examining the booklet incredulously. This retreat is far nicer than she had imagined, she says so, before once again attempting to clarify the misunderstanding. She is cut off by her ringtone sounding from the car. Sam well and truly over this interaction gives up on the clarification, hurriedly thanking Belinda before excusing herself and jogging back to the car.

Sitting in her driver's seat, Sam inspects her phone. The display shows one missed call from Jimmy. Pulling out onto the road she takes a shaky breath before dialling him back on hands-free. The phone rings out. She curses and tears open the box of chocolates shoving one in her mouth. The phone rings again; Sam answers it immediately, dropping the chocolate from her mouth into her hand and dumping it unceremoniously in the cup holder. Jimmy's voice comes through the speaker, he hesitates before explaining the role has been filled. Sam stays silent. He asks if Sam is still there. Sam replies coldly that she thought they were still at preliminary rounds. Jimmy says he thought so too, but they released the casting via socials that morning. Sam abruptly swerves the car into the emergency lane where she slams on the brakes and comes to a stop. Sam, voice wobbly, curtly thanks Jimmy, he attempts to console her – It only takes one Sa-. Sam ends the call cutting him off. She brings up the company's Instagram page on her phone and clicks on a post that shows 4 headshots under a casting announcement banner. She throws the phone aside before shrieking and flailing her body around in frustration. Gritting her teeth, Sam looks out the window where she makes eye contact with three girls hanging outside a shopfront. They appear to be in their mid-teens and are looking at Sam like she's insane. Sam doubles down and scowls at them.

Sam, engulfed in a fluffy robe, stands in the kitchenette of her flat. She wears a face mask, and her hair is tied up in a towel. Billy Joel's *Vienna* plays from her speaker. She chops up a pre-cooked chicken directing small pieces to Fat Tabby who stands at her feet. The front door sounds and Denise makes her way down the hall. Sam spins and begins to perform an obnoxious greeting which quickly peters out when she notices that Denise has company. Sam scrambles to turn off her music as Denise introduces her guest as Dominique; a work friend that Denise has impromptly invited over for a drink. Dominique is in her early 30s and sports a sleek black bob and an incredibly well-fitting suit. She is intimidating. Sam greets her

awkwardly. Denise sees Fat Tabby licking his lips and reprimands Sam for feeding him. Denise and Dominique's conversation quickly falls into that of the art world, unable to contribute much, Sam stands awkwardly to the side where she continues to make her dinner. Denise breaks her flow of conversation to ask Sam to get out some glasses. Sam mutters a resentment under her breath. Denise is quick to call her out. Sam jokes, with venom, that she feels like Denise's assistant. Denise laughs uneasily before resuming to her discussion with Dominique who asks about Denise's paintings. Sam jumps at the opportunity to contribute, describing Denise's would-be retreat to Dominique. Sam says she thinks it's crazy Denise isn't going. Denise echoes that it would have been good, but her priorities lie elsewhere. Sam scoffs at the insinuation that elsewhere is Henri and says as much to Dominique. Denise tells Dominique that she believes in balance and that sometimes means sacrifice. Dominique doesn't say a word as Sam and Denise continue their quarrel, Sam criticising Denise for throwing away her life, and Denise claiming that there's more to life than "making it". Dominique's discomfort grows. The argument comes to a head when Denise suggests that Sam's life is falling apart because she hasn't found any meaning or purpose, an issue that has come to a head now that Denise is leaving. Sam stands speechless at the comment before huffing out a hurt laugh. Denise looks sheepish but before she can say anything Sam grabs her dinner sandwich and leaves. She makes to take Fat Tabby with her, but Denise picks him up first. A hurt Sam hurries down the hallway as Denise is heard apologising to a very uncomfortable Dominique.

Sam tosses and turns in bed, her form partially illuminated by the dull moonlight shining through her makeshift blind. She reaches over to her phone, it reads 5:55 am. Sam collapses back and stares at the ceiling. After a moment she turns back to her bedside table; under her phone lies the information booklet for the retreat. She picks it up and considers it. Sam throws her covers back and swings her legs over the side of the bed.

Sam, a duffle bag over her shoulder, creeps along her darkened hallway towards the front door. She leans down and says goodbye to Fat Tabby, leaving him a big chunk of chicken breast before slipping out the door.

It is mid-morning. Twisted Eucalypts and dense shrubbery whip by the window. Sam consults her GPS and then slows, leaning forward in search of a turn-off. She spots it at the last minute and makes a sharp turn onto a dirt track. She grimaces as gravel pelts up into the duco. After a few moments, the sun cuts through an opening in the dense canopy and Sam's jaw drops. In front of her lies a rolling green lawn that sprawls up to meet a grand two-story homestead. Sam's car crawls along, rounding the homestead's circular driveway, she stares out her side window at a tiered cherub fountain. A loud thump shatters the tranquillity. Sam shrieks and slams on the brakes, bringing the car to a stop. A muscular man, early 30s with buzzed, white-blonde hair, leans against the front of Sam's bumper. Sam horrified, unbuckles her seatbelt, and makes to get out. The man slams his hands on her bonnet and curses her out. Sam, having gotten her door partially open, closes it again as the man rounds the car toward her. She apologises profusely; yelling through the glass as she asks if he's okay. The man, appearing to be physically fine, throws his arms up and then picks up his duffle bag. He sends a few more rude gestures at Sam before storming off into the surrounding bushland. A bewildered Sam sits frozen in her seat. She reaches over and turns off the upbeat pop song still playing through the radio.

Two large duffle bags drop on the stoop of a quaint wooden cabin. Sam, visibly out of breath, unlocks the cabin's door and heaves them through into the dark interior. She approaches the

far wall and pulls back a large curtain. Light floods in through the now-exposed floor-to-ceiling windows, illuminating a basic, but tasteful, Nordic interior. Sam, visibly impressed, opens the window's built-in sliding door and exits out onto the cabin's back deck overlooking a small lake. She observes two other cabins that sit to the left of hers along the shorefront. Sam lets out a long breath as she soaks in the peaceful atmosphere. With a shake of her head, she voices her disbelief that Denise would waste this.

Sam explores the Cabin: She fiddles with the old-style gas burner; she investigates the contents of the cupboards; she looks up the chimney; she inspects the eclectic book collection; she sits on the deck and closes her eyes, trying to relax; she moves inside to the lounge where she picks up a book and begins to read; she swaps books; she turns a page, squinting in concentration before snapping it closed; she lets out a huff. This is boring.

The sun is low in the sky as Sam wanders along the shorefront, she dips her hand in the water before retracting it with a gasp and warming it with her breath. She meanders up a track that cuts between the trees and heads in the direction of the cabin over. She stops for a moment to watch a small mob of kangaroos as they chew leisurely. A cracking of branches pierces the silence. Both the kangaroos and Sam whip their heads towards the noise and freeze. The cracking sounds like footsteps and they're getting closer. A figure comes into view, strolling down the path from the opposite direction. Sam instantly recognises the face of the man she hit on her way in. Sam curses, shrinking as his form gets closer. The mob of Kangaroos bounce away and Sam takes the opportunity to crouch run behind a tree. She stands, ramrod straight, and holds her breath as the man passes. After a moment Sam lets out a sigh of relief. Before she can release the full breath a voice sounds from behind her. Sam shrieks and stumbles back, landing on her behind. Sam looks up to discover a woman standing casually above her, wearing a perplexed expression. She looks to be in her late 20s to early 30s and wears dark, paint-splattered, overalls; her unruly dark curls sit piled haphazardly in a bun on top of her head. Sam utters an embarrassed apology and introduces herself, only just remembering to use Denise's name. The woman says her name is Georgina but to call her George. There is an awkward lull. George asks Sam if she's also on her way to the orientation, before starting up the path. Sam follows along after her. George asks what she was hiding from; Sam gives a vague non-answer that doesn't implicate her in hitting a man. George teases that she'll just have to trust her; that she hasn't picked up a serial killer in the woods. Sam laughs uneasily. Eager to change topics, Sam reveals that she's a painter. George pushes for more detail which Sam lies her way through. George tells Sam that she also paints and proceeds to describe her works with a sincerity that impresses Sam.

Sam and George emerge from the tree line and onto the lawn of the homestead. A woman and a man are standing about. The woman; early 70's, with kind eyes and long silver hair, beckons Sam and George over. She introduces herself as Mary. The man she is standing with offers Sam and George a bow, introducing himself as Philip. Philip: mid-50s, has a severe face, softened by dark bushy eyebrows and a moustache. As Sam announces that her name is Denise, the man she hit earlier swans over to join them. Sam stands self-consciously as he assesses her. Up close he has a jittery look about him, his icy gaze bores into Sam. He repeats her name, iterating that it is nice to finally meet his assailant, he doesn't bother clarifying this label for the rest of the group, instead introducing himself as Krzysztof. George shoots Sam a suspicious look. Before Sam can respond, Belinda's shrill voice sounds from the direction of the homestead. Belinda stands with the Santa Claus-looking man, signalling them inside.

Sam, George, Mary, Philip, and Krzysztof sit on plush sofas in a grand wood-panelled room. Standing before them, Belinda acknowledges Country before delving into an explanation of what the next few days will hold. With the enthusiasm of a kindergarten teacher, she emphasises that the retreat is designed to ignite freedom and open creative flow. She indicates that they should all write their goals for the week on the paper in front of them and that she will keep them safe so they can read them back at the end. Sam is barely concentrating as she pretends to ignore Krzysztof's glare. Belinda explains they are holding a *Mayfair* dinner on the third night for everyone to mingle and present their progress. Philip, noticing Krzysztof's strange attitude, leans over to Sam to enquire what Krzysztof's deal is. Sam pretends not to hear Phillip. Belinda explains that there will be group bonding and meditation sessions, though they are not compulsory. Philip attempts to ask Sam again. Sam shrugs him off. Mary shoots them a disapproving look. Belinda corrects herself; tomorrow morning's session will be compulsory so that everyone can get to know each other. Philip leans over again but before he can say anything Sam grits out that she hit Krzysztof with her car on the way in. Phillip looks affronted and doesn't question her further as he leans back. Sam turns to the front, she notices that George, sitting within earshot of them, wears a thinly concealed smirk. Belinda is still talking when Sam's phone rings. Sam, answers the call, giving an apologetic wave as she excuses herself. Belinda reminds them they are encouraged to disconnect during their time there.

Sam raises the phone to her ear as she emerges outside. Denise's voice sounds through the other end. Sam pauses. Denise fills the silence as she demands to know where Sam is and why she hasn't been replying. Sam lies, telling Denise that she needs some time. Denise isn't satisfied with the answer. Sam highlights that Denise was out of line and hasn't even apologised. Denise's tone turns sincere as she offers an apology and asks Sam when she'll be home. Sam wavers, not knowing what to say. There is movement from inside the homestead, voices growing louder as they approach the door. Sam begins to speak but only stutters out a few words before Phillip calls out her name. Sam panics and hurriedly dismisses Denise, ending the call and cutting off her confused reply. Philip appears at the doorway, a loaded plate of food in his hands, he tells Sam that dinner's being served but he's heading off and will see her in the morning for team building. Sam thanks him but explains that she is here to relax and work on her craft and, will under no circumstances, be participating in team building.

Loud banging rings out. Sam shoots bolt upright, it is dark but slithers of early dawn light stream through her window. She sits frozen for a moment before the banging comes again. Sam scurries out of bed and yanks her front door open. A wide-awake Belinda stands in front of her with a large smile plastered to her face. Behind Belinda stand the other campers. Belinda asks if Sam has forgotten about team building and says she will give her a minute to freshen up, Sam protests but Belinda won't take no for an answer.

Belinda leads all 5 campers along a rocky track. Sam helps Mary over a particularly large stone, sympathising with her as she does so. Belinda halts the group at a fork in the road announcing that another camper who got held up yesterday will be joining them and should be meeting them there any moment. Philip begins to explain how acrylics work to a disinterested Mary. Bored, Sam surveys the group, she spots George towards the back who simultaneously looks Sam's way. Sam averts her gaze. Philip is just roping Sam into his acrylic chatter when Krzysztof lets out a low whistle. All heads turn to see a tall woman who has appeared from around the bend. Philip utters an exclamation of awe. Belinda beckons the woman over, introducing her as Camille. Camille is tall and in her early 40s, her narrow face

is engulfed by shaggy strawberry-blond hair. Everyone's greeting suggests they either know Camille or know of her. Phillip mentions that he's been a long-time admirer of Camille's work to which George rolls her eyes. Camille appraises them all and exclaims, her voice dripping with sarcasm, how much fun this will be. Belinda looks crestfallen at the comment before mustering everyone upwards and onwards.

The group treks on in silence; squeezing single file up a severe incline. The trees are thinning out and they appear to be nearing a rise. Krzysztof takes the lead, bounding ahead showily before looking back, mostly at Camille, he waits for everyone to catch up and then repeats the process. Sam, struggling to breathe, concentrates on getting one foot in front of the other. Ahead of her, Phillip voices his enjoyment of the hike, a comment which is ignored by everyone. After a moment he speaks up again, commending Camille on her latest exhibition. Camille lets him know that his interpretation of her work is incredibly rudimentary. As Phillip is stuttering to explain himself Sam looks back to see George assisting a tired Mary. Sam goes to say something to George but as she does so steps on the heels of Camille in front of her. Camille, mid-conversation with Phillip, whirls around to Sam who rambles apologetically. Camille considers her for a tense moment before smiling and indicating her unfamiliarity with Sam. Sam replies that she's a painter. Camille, believing them all painters, probes deeper. Sam can't find any words to elaborate. Camille tries again, asking her why she started painting. Sam jokes that the camps are pretty nice. Camille barks a laugh and slaps Sam on the back before agreeing that they are (usually). Camille turns her head back to the front, and Philip eyes Sam resentfully. A hollering comes from up ahead where Krzysztof has stopped under a large rocky outcrop. Two athletic-looking guys and a jeep come into view as the group huddles around. Belinda ignores Mary's observation that they could have gotten to the same spot by car and proceeds to explain how rock climbing is a metaphor for artistic creation. Sam incredulously surveys the group, but they all seem to agree, nodding in approval.

Everyone stands harnessed up, Sam makes her way towards the back of the group but before she can get far Belinda calls her to join her at the front. Sam looks around clarifying that Belinda meant her. Belinda beckons her over and explains to everyone that Sam put climbing down in the hobbies section of her application form and that it would be fitting to have her show them all how it's done. Sam looks up at the jagged, 20-foot-tall, rock face, the world around her goes wobbly. Belinda asks for a volunteer to belay Sam. Mary puts her hand up, and Sam gives Belinda a panic-stricken look. Belinda nods and vetoes this. Krzysztof raises his hand announcing that he can do it. He sends Sam a wicked smirk. Sam tries to justify why Krzysztof wouldn't be the best person either, but her argument is unconvincing.

Belinda shouts encouragement up the rock face and the other campers cheer as Sam reaches for the final marker on the ledge. Sam turns excitedly to the group before refocusing, her fingers strain as she reaches out and manages to touch it with one hand. There is more cheering from below. Arms shaky, Sam stays where she is. George shouts up at her to let go. Sam twists her head down to look at Krzysztof who raises an eyebrow in challenge. Sam squints at him, before conceding that he is unlikely to murder her in broad daylight and let's go. She is gently belayed back to the ground where Krzysztof capitulates and gives her a semi-enthusiastic high five. Sam unclips from the ropes and spins to greet the cheering campers. She bounds over to them pumping her fists. There is a sickening crack. Sam drops, revealing the group's faces as their delight morphs into shock. Belinda slaps a hand over her mouth.

No lights are on, and it's dark outside. Sam is laid out on the chaise in her cabin. Her left eye is covered by a reusable icepack strapped to her head with a makeshift bandage. Her other eye squints to make out an episode of *Love Island* playing on her phone which sits propped up on a book in her lap. She looks miserable. On the screen, a very tan, very muscular, man looks to be moments away from breaking up with a teary-eyed woman. Sam's phone buffers. She presses play and pause a few times before letting out a defeated whine.

Sam roams around the dark living room, she holds her phone at all sorts of angles in search of a better WIFI connection. Unsuccessful; she lets out a defeated sigh, grabs the flashlight from the bench, and opens her front door.

Sam trudges out from the tree line and heads towards the homestead. She looks around nervously and hastens her pace. She makes it halfway up the lawns before breaking into a sprint. Reaching the front door, she yanks it open and slams it shut behind her. Sam leans against it, catching her breath in the dark, before approaching the glow of dying embers in the main room's fireplace. Sam jumps out of her skin as a figure emerges from the corner of the room. Cursing, she clutches her chest and then her bandaged head. It's George. George apologises and explains that she's been up late working and was getting a snack. Sam explains that she's looking for Wi-Fi. George asks her how she is after hitting her head, Sam shrugs it off with a joke, still obviously embarrassed. This doesn't deter George who doubles down. Sam considers her for a moment before relinquishing. She admits that she's not fine; that she doesn't know what she's doing at the retreat, or anywhere for that matter, but that it will be okay because she is planning to pack up tomorrow and forget the whole thing. George doesn't react, instead asking what will become of Sam's work. Sam explains that she just came to relax, something there has been none of, and that she hasn't produced proper work in a long time. She continues, describing her exasperation at giving everything and getting nowhere. Unbeknownst to George, what Sam is really referring to is her acting. George sympathises and asks if she can show her something.

George leads Sam through to the wet room; the space has high ceilings, and features several large work benches, and multiple easels. Art supplies are scattered over every free surface. A large portrait sits on the back wall. It is in its early stages, its style emblematic of a Jane Sutherland painting. George explains that she thinks painting is a stupid medium if you want to be heard. She refers to the Jane Sutherland lookalike, describing how every brushstroke on its surface has a meaning that the spectator will never comprehend, and yet, she will spend her entire life trying to convey. She points out different details, describing each; the day she spent in the field last week, what she ate for breakfast this morning, the scar on her little toe from when she stubbed it as a child. She concludes that art should be selfish, done because one cannot resist doing it. That true success comes from the artist's truth, not the viewers. Sam listens in awe. She praises George's work and her words. George tells her not to let a little bump on the head get in the way of her truth and encourages her to stay, even if it is just to relax. Sam, reinvigorated, says she will consider it. George teases, suggesting that she only said all of this, so she doesn't have to worry about being run over by Sam as she leaves tomorrow. George turns back to her work explaining that she better get back to it and that she hopes to see Sam's work tomorrow night. At Sam's quizzical expression, she clarifies, reminding her of the *Mayfair* dinner in which everyone shares their progress.

Sam perches on a stool and stares dead ahead, sunlight streams in through the wet room's floor-to-ceiling windows. In front of her sits a blank canvas. Brush poised in her hand Sam makes a tentative stroke. She leans back to examine the line of brown paint now smeared

across the canvas. She tilts her head and looks over at George's work in the corner. She mutters – truth, truth, truth... truth... After a moment Sam gets up and inspects Denise's paintings that sit, still covered, against the opposite wall. She pulls them out and attempts to copy some of the line work. She appraises her progress; it looks...abstract at best. Sam wanders around the room, paintings in various stages of completion line every surface. Sam examines one with so much layered acrylic that it has become 3D. She touches one of the raised globs; the external layer of dried paint instantly gives in sending a dribble down the canvas. She scrambles to wipe it up before it runs further but this only disturbs more barely dried globs. The painting's various hues begin to blend into a motley brown. Voices float in from outside Sam curses, scrambling back over to her canvas and pretending to look busy. Krzysztof and Camille enter through a door built into the side of the wet room. Sam wipes her paint-covered hands on her jeans, resorting to her canvas to get the chunky bits off. Camille swears as she spots Sam, she points to Sam's forehead and tells her she looks terrible. Sam agrees. Kristoff is carrying a large circular canvas which he dumps on a trolley labelled *Mayfair*. Camille assesses Sam's work before complimenting it and reiterating her surprise at not having heard of Sam before. Camille, still referring to Sam, exclaims that at least there is some talent here, before gesturing at the 3D painting that Sam just defiled and expressing her disdain. Krzysztof joins them, agreeing and expressing pity for Mary, implying that she may be past her prime. Sam shrinks. Krzysztof makes to leave; Camille follows him before turning back and miming taking a drag. She asks Sam if she wants to join them. Sam hesitates, looking towards the mess of paints in front of her.

Sam, Camille, and Krzysztof sit outside the homestead under a single large Blue Gum that interrupts the lush lawns. Krzysztof and Camille pass a joint back and forth as Camille talks about her process which involves spending no longer than one hour on every work she's ever done. Krzysztof hangs off her every word and echoes her sentiments. Sam listens amusedly before her gaze is drawn to the steps of the homestead, she can just make out the forms of George and Phillip strolling towards them. Sam's attention is drawn back by Camille who offers her the joint, but she politely declines. Camille gives her a condescending smile before also spotting George and Phillip and uttering a snide comment about Phillip. George and Phillip reach them, and Camille gives Phillip a sickly-sweet smile. George bums the joint off Camille before sitting next to them and asking if they're all ready for tonight. George passes the joint to Sam, who this time takes it, and struggles not to cough as she inhales. This is caught by Krzysztof who raises an eyebrow. The group continue to chat, Phillip says he thinks the investors are going to be at the dinner tonight. Camille and Krzysztof tease him. Denise passes the joint back to Sam, telling her she didn't know if she'd see her again. Sam teases that someone gave her a very inspirational pep talk. George begins to reply but is distracted by Camille who is rehashing her minimal effort processes to Phillip. George cuts herself off and with a roll of her eyes, begins to challenge Camille. Sam watches this exchange, but the words of the other campers aren't aligning with their mouths. The world around her starts to wiggle.

The stern face of an austere middle-aged gentleman; he wears a bowtie, and his hairline is receding. Sam squints, confusion etched across her features. The man is harping on at her about the influence of ideology on portraiture. Sam glances around. She's sitting at a grand mahogany table in the main room of the homestead. It is set with ornate cutlery and overflowing with indulgent platters. Everybody's half-finished artworks are displayed around the room. The other campers, bar Phillip, sit around the table. Belinda, Santa Clause Man and four middle-aged gentlemen she's never met are also present. The stern man, who is one of these four, asks her what her interpretation is. Sam returns her gaze, umming, and erring.

George, who sits on the other side of the man, cuts in providing an answer that sounds very impressive. Sam excuses herself.

On the homestead's patio, Sam breathes in the night air. George appears a moment later. Sam whisper-shouts at her, demanding to know what they smoked. George shrugs but admits it was strong, adding that they're unsure where Phillip has gone. Sam watches her incredulously. George asks her if she's ok. Sam answers that she would rather not have lost the last five hours of her life but is otherwise doing great. George cuts in, clarifying that she's asking about the "Sam thing". Sam freezes and asks her what she means. George clarifies that she sounded pretty cut up when she mentioned Sam in her speech earlier. Sam, anxious, reiterates her confusion. George laughs and waves her hand in dismissal, teasing her poor drug tolerance. Sam makes to interrogate her further, but a bell rings out and Belinda's head appears in the doorway, she ushers them in for speeches.

One of the Fancy Gentlemen stands at the head of the table addressing everyone, he commends them all and speaks to the retreat's ethos, emphasising how proud they should all be to have been selected. Sam raises a dubious eyebrow at the fuss, she appears to have underestimated the prestige of the retreat. The man drawls on. A hushed murmuring comes from behind her; Camille and Krzysztof are debating Philip's whereabouts. Camille is worried something happened to Phillip and it will come back on her. Krzysztof is unhelpful, pointing out that she would probably only get manslaughter, not murder. One of the Fancy Gentlemen glances over nervously. Belinda is welcomed up on stage where she commends everyone's works; suggesting that they will look brilliant when added to the alumni wall. Belinda then explains that every year the *Mayfair* dinner is designed to celebrate the artistic community and entails the presentation of a small endowment to the artist who shows the most tenacity. Camille lets out a surreptitious snort. Belinda announces that this year it will go to Sam; Sam whips her head up. George, who is sitting next to her, cheers enthusiastically. Belinda beckons Sam to the front where the Santa Clause man stands on his tiptoes to present Sam with a medallion. He shakes her hand without a word. Sam elatedly goes to make a speech but is steered off by Belinda. Belinda takes the microphone and announces that they plan to award the upcoming *Michaelson fellowship* to one of the artists, based on their final presentation at the end of the week. Sam stands to the side, a silly smile glued to her face and her eyes twinkling joyfully. The muffled voice of Belinda is just audible as she divulges the exceptional privileges that come with the fellowship. Sam's smile grows.

Krzysztof screams as his body hits the dark water, he swears at the cold. Camille strands on the bank scolding him. He makes to get out, holding out a hand for Camille's assistance, as she grabs it, he yanks her in after him. She shrieks.

Sam and George sit on the rear balcony of one of the cabins watching Camille and Krzysztof. Sam considers George. George feels herself being watched and turns to Sam, asking about "Sam" again. Sam deflects telling her she can't even remember what she said. George reveals that Sam spoke at length about someone called "Sam" who she can't stand cleaning up after anymore. Sam winces turning back to the water. She tells George that "Sam" is her friend whose life is spiralling out of control. She vents all of "Sam's" issues that are in fact her own. Sam pauses before telling George that she thinks "Sam" is beginning to get it together again. George sympathises with "Sam", sharing her own trouble with finding her feet; she details her heartbreak at never achieving her dream of being admitted to the Royal Academy of Arts. After a moment George makes a comment that lightens the mood and the two go back to watching Krzysztof and Camille who are now swimming further out. Sam's hand rests a few

inches from George's; her pinkie twitches hesitantly, as she makes to close the gap there is a blood-curdling scream.

A mass floats in the water, Camille stands stock still as Krzysztof wades towards it. As he gets closer the mass takes shape, revealing the floating form of Phillip. Sam and George watch from the bank. Phillips is pale and his eyes appear fixed towards the sky. Krzysztof cautiously reaches out, prodding his arm. There is no movement, Krzysztof turns back to the bank and throws his hands up. There is a sudden splashing causing Krzysztof to jolt violently as Phillip comes to life behind him and starts blabbing about the stars. Camille covers her face in relief and relays that Phillip is alive to Sam and George. Phillip remains floating on his back gazing at the starry night.

It is morning. Music is playing as Sam bops around her kitchen, she has a piece of toast in one hand and a paintbrush in the other, she alternates between making marks on her canvas and dancing poorly. Her phone rings, interrupting the music, it is Denise. She declines it. She goes back to painting but a moment later it rings again. This occurs several more times before Sam, fed up, blocks Denise's number. There is a knock at her door, Sam eyes it suspiciously before swinging it open to reveal George who stands with a yoga mat under one arm. George asks if Sam wants to join her at morning meditation. Sam glances back at her work before agreeing. George stands in the entryway. Sam tells her to wait for a minute while she grabs her shoes, Sam disappears but continues yapping about how excited she is to get her final piece going for the showcase. As George listens, she notices a piece of paper lying on the ground by the door. She bends to pick it up. She turns it over revealing a message scrawled on the back: "I know all about you". She calls out to Sam who emerges back into the entry. George offers her the paper with a frown. Sam's smile fades. She takes a moment before looking back to George, re-applying her smile, and explaining that it's just a creative exercise she does with herself. George doesn't say anything for a tense moment then shrugs and expresses her respect for that sort of thing. George heads out the door telling Sam to hurry up. Sam stares at the note before stuffing it in her pocket and following her.

Santa Clause man stands perched on one leg under the large Blue Gum; he raises his hands and performs a sun salutation. Sam, George, Mary, Phillip, and Belinda are assembled in a circle, their mats laid out on the dewy grass, before him. Sam attempts to mimic the pose but does so terribly as she prioritises eyeing each member of the group. Sam moves into the downward dog pose; turning her head to the right she sees that Mary is already looking at her. Mary scowls. They hold each other's gaze. Perturbed, Sam breaks first, looking away. Santa Clause man spins around and closing his eyes sits cross-legged. The group follows suit. Sam opens one eye and surveys everyone. Phillip slides the palm of his hand along his runny nose. Belinda has her eyes open but is looking at Santa Clause man. Her gaze settles back on Mary, Sam narrows her eyes in suspicion.

The group roll up their yoga mats and hand them to the front. Sam watches as Mary makes her way back toward the homestead. George tells Sam she's going on a hike that evening and invites her along. Sam hesitates; explaining that she needs to knuckle down on her work but will play it by ear. George looks disappointed but wishes her the best and starts toward the tree line. Sam looks back to where Mary was, she is gone.

Sam creeps around the back of the wet room and peers in the window. Mary sits at a bench sketching in her notebook. Sam squints at the page and utters under her breath – gotcha. She makes to open the door but is distracted by Belinda who materialises next to her. Belinda

congratulates Sam on her medallion, saying she and Richard are very impressed and have high hopes for her fellowship chance. Sam repeats Richard's name with uncertainty. Belinda, bemused, clarifies that Richard is her husband and gestures over at Santa Clause man who is hauling the box of yoga mats up the slope. Sam attempts to hide her surprise before thanking Belinda. Belinda reminds her that there's morning tea in the kitchens, before heading around the side of the building towards the front entrance. Sam turns back to the wet room window, Mary is gone.

Sam stands in the homestead kitchen, shoving a piece of cake in her mouth as she examines the note. She heads over to the industrial-size fridge and extracts another piece of cake. She closes the fridge door revealing a stern Mary. Sam jumps back as Mary comes at her; wagging a finger, and announcing that she knows all about her, and how dare she. Sam backs up against the opposite counter pleading with Mary. She tells Mary she needs this opportunity and begs her not to tell anyone. Mary scoffs and details her disgust. Sam says she will do whatever it takes. Mary agrees that she certainly will. Mary proceeds to blackmail her; asking Sam to include her in the group hangouts. Sam returns a confused reply to which Mary clarifies that she has been left out since day one, citing the rock climbing and the post-*Mayfair* swim. Sam, taken aback, softens her tone and agrees. Mary confirms that as long as Sam keeps her word, Mary will keep her secret. They shake on it. Sam gives a relieved laugh and runs her hands over her face. She looks back to the door and awkwardly dismisses herself.

Sam sits at her easel which is now propped up on her cabin's balcony. Her tongue is poked out in concentration as she works methodically on what could be a tree. George shouts a greeting from below causing Sam's brush to jolt in the wrong direction, she bites out a grunt of frustration. George approaches the balcony; announcing that she's heading off on her hike and that Sam is welcome to join her. Sam hesitates, explaining that she wants to concentrate on her work. George coaxes her to join, claiming it will be beneficial creatively.

George and Sam stroll along a track running by the water. They chat animatedly, Sam telling a story about Fat Tabby. They pass Mary's cabin; she is settled on a bench outside. Mary shoots an expectant look at Sam, who responds with a pleading one. Mary is unyielding. Sam glances reluctantly at George before interrupting their conversation and calling Mary over to join them. George looks put out, Sam attempts to justify herself by claiming she feels sorry for Mary.

The sun sits low in the sky as Sam, George, and Mary hike along the river trail. Mary asks them questions about themselves and chats away contentedly. Sam is mostly quiet until the topic of the fellowship comes up to which she expresses her enthusiasm. The group reaches a small rise of clustered boulders. Sam proposes they should head back, George agrees but suggests they climb up the boulders first to try and catch the beginnings of the sunset. Mary, unable to scale the large outcrop says she will wait. George heads off, and Sam begins to climb after her, but Mary holds her back, asking that Sam keep her company. Mary gives Sam a knowing look. Sam scowls at her before protesting. George says it's fine, suggesting that Sam can go up when she gets back. Sam mutters a snide comment at Mary which receives a judgmental look from George before she continues off over the boulders.

Sam and Mary stand in silence, Sam gives her a sardonic grin. After a moment Sam asks how Mary knew about her. Mary turns; explaining to Sam, like she's stupid, that Sam's canvas last night was covered in the paint from her painting. Sam hesitates and lets out a confused

laugh; she queries if the blackmail and the note, were because she ruined Mary's painting. Mary provides an indignant confirmation. Sam shakes her head in relief. Mary frowns at Sam before adding thoughtfully that she's not familiar with any note. Sam whips her head back to Mary before fishing around in her pocket and pulling out the crumpled note. In the distance, George stands on top of a large boulders and shouts down to them waving. Both Sam and Mary ignore her. Sam gestures to the note, explaining that it's the same paper from the notebook Mary always sketches in. Mary, exasperated and confused, cries back that the notebook is one of many identical notebooks available to everyone in the wet room: that it isn't just her notebook. Sam stares at her stupidly, she curses, beginning to panic. Mary enquires about the note but is interrupted as George scrambles back to join them. George babbles about how beautiful the view is and offers to wait whilst Sam goes up. Sam declines, providing a half-hearted excuse about wanting to get back to her work. Sam charges ahead down the track. George looks bewilderedly at Mary who offers her a sympathetic smile.

Sam trudges through the dark up to her cabin door. She opens it, stepping inside before turning back and saying goodbye to George and Mary. George gives her a meaningful glance as Sam closes the door. Inside Sam switches on the lights revealing another note that lies by her feet. She glares at it before groaning and reaching down to examine it. The same messy handwriting as the first note threatens to expose her if she doesn't withdraw from the camp before tomorrow night. Sam screws it up and lets out a pained whine before throwing herself across the lounge, her head lolls over the side, offering an upside-down view out of the floor-to-ceiling windows. Visible in the distance is the cabin across the water, its lights are on, illuminating the blurry form of Camille. Sam watches for a moment before turning herself the right way up and considering Camille more closely.

Camille sits out on the patio in front of the wet room under the midday sun. She is putting the finishing touches on an abstract work that resembles a waterfowl. A nearby scuffling breaks the serenity. She turns to see Sam who is dragging her easel from inside. She positions it next to Camille's and sends her a warm smile before starting to paint. Camille, bemused, returns the smile, and focuses back on her own work. After a moment Sam's voice sounds out expressing her pleasure at getting to know Camille; Phillip, who is sitting in the wet room sketching, smiles politely echoing the sentiment. There is an awkward lull before Sam tells Phillip that she knows; Camille apologises explaining that she doesn't understand; In the hall of the homestead Sam doubles down, with reassurances that it's all ok; she just wants to chat. Belinda, befuddled, tells Sam that she can come by her office after lunch if she wants to discuss anything; Santa Clause man stacks the dishes in the kitchen. Sam explains to him that they can work this out between them. Santa Clause man packs the final dish before turning and making a go-ahead gesture; Camille's smile drops; she begs Sam to keep it to herself, explaining that her normal dealer is usually far more reliable; Sam squints at a confused Phillip before heading towards Krzysztof who is painting in the corner. Krzysztof, without taking his eyes off his work, holds a hand up in a not now, go away gesture; Sam frowns as Camille continues to blubber that she didn't realise it was laced with anything and admits she didn't even offer the joint to Phillip, he just took it. Camille finishes blubbing, Sam rolls her eyes and tells her not to worry.

Outside the window the sun sits low in the sky. George is seated under a lamp in the homestead's study reading a book. Sam approaches and slumps defeatedly next to her. George glances over before going back to her books and asking Sam what's gotten into her. Sam, despondent, gives a non-answer – It's always so close and then.... Sam clicks her fingers once as she trails off. George closes her book and assesses her. George attempts to

comfort Sam despite being unable to coax her into an explanation for her foul mood. There's a lull. Sam apologises, attempting to suppress her misery she suggests that they should have a picnic on the cabin deck that evening as it is the last night. With a self-deprecating laugh, George confesses that she put picnic down on her goal list on the first day. Sam jolts upright, grabbing George excitedly by the shoulders. She explains that she needs to run but will see her tonight. Sam dashes out the door leaving a befuddled George on the lounge.

Sam crouch-runs along the homestead's main hallway. She reaches a wooden door with a small glass window. She peers through. Inside sits a large mahogany desk covered in papers. Sam surveys her surroundings before stealthily turning the handle and slipping inside. She rounds the desk and begins sifting through the papers and various folders. She moves on to the draws. She freezes, hand hovering over a folder labelled "Camper Goals!". She grabs it and pulls out the sheets of paper they all wrote on on the first day. She pulls the crumpled blackmail note from her pocket and begins comparing handwriting. She stops as she notices a perfect match. She moves the other papers to the side revealing the name at the top of the sheet: Krzysztof. Sam lets out a triumphant shout before muttering that of course it is. Voices float through from the hall. Sam shoves the papers back in the drawer and creeps back to the door, she peers around. Outside Belinda and Santa Clause man are approaching. Belinda becomes distracted by something, and Sam takes the opportunity to slip back into the hall. Sam, attempting to appear casual, strolls in the direction of Belinda and Santa Clause man. She notices Krzysztof as he approaches the hall from the wet room on the left. He makes eye contact with Sam and smirks; Belinda continues towards them down the hall. Sam's gaze rapidly flicks between Krzysztof and Belinda before she sprints forward, barrelling into the wet room, and slamming the door behind her.

In the hall Belinda and the Santa Clause man exchange perplexed looks and then continue out the front door.

Krzysztof yelps, jumping back as Sam barrels towards him. She confronts him, accusing him of blackmail. Krzysztof fires back accusing her of using a stolen identity. Sam tells him he can't tell anyone; he laughs in her face. Sam demands to know how he knew about her. Krzysztof reveals that he's known the whole time; he didn't care at first, but since she won the *Mayfair* Grant, and was looking likely for the fellowship, he decided to intervene. Krzysztof explains that he won't let Sam take what's his. Sam suggests that's a bit presumptuous. Krzysztof, fed up, attempts to move past her towards the door, but she blocks his way. Sam's phone is buzzing but she ignores it. Krzysztof tries again, this time moving around to Sam's left. As he pushes past her, he passes half inside one of the large art supply cupboards. Sam seizes her chance and shoves her weight into Krzysztof. Krzysztof stumbles further into the cupboard and Sam instantly slides the door closed. Krzysztof shrieks, Sam fastens the metal latch before he has the chance to right himself and stop her. Krzysztof bangs on the door and spurts all sorts of threats at Sam who stands frozen, gawking at the cupboard. Sam's phone buzzes again, she pulls it from her pocket to reveal an unknown number; she cancels the call. Sam tries to reason with an enraged Krzysztof, but he doesn't listen. The buzzing continues; frantic Sam answers the phone. The angry voice of Denise comes down the line. She is demanding to know what's going on. Sam acts dumb. Krzysztof peaks out the small slit in the cupboard and shouts that he's been kidnapped; Sam aggressively signals him to be quiet. Denise asks Sam why she's at the retreat. Sam begins to lie, but Denise cuts her off, revealing that she's pulling there now. Sam stands stock still. After a moment she tells Krzysztof to wait, he roars after her as she scurries out of the room yelling back apologies.

Sam bursts out the front door of the homestead and onto the circular gravel driveway. Denise's rover skids to a stop in front of her. Denise jumps out yelling at Sam, demanding an explanation. Sam attempts to placate her, as Denise divulges her shock at finding 2000 dollars transferred into her account two days ago. Denise explains that she thought it was a mistake until the camp emailed her back explaining it was her Mayfair grant. Sam attempts to de-escalate the matter, telling Denise that 2000 dollars isn't exactly a bad thing and that she didn't need to drive all the way out the day before she's meant to fly out. Denise storms up the steps, Sam in tow, as she explains that she in fact did because Sam seemingly blocked her and the whole thing is insane. They argue as they enter the foyer. Denise continues down the hall in search of management as Sam begins to plead with her. Denise's eye catches the open door of the wet room. She stops arguing and lets out a shocked exclamation. Sam follows her eyeline. The cupboard that was holding Krzysztof is wide open, and one of the tables is upturned. It is now dusk outside. Barely visible through the windows on the opposite wall is Krzysztof's shrinking form as he pelts across the grass towards the tree line. Sam tells Denise to wait for a minute.

Sam tears across the lawn after Krzysztof as he disappears into the tree line. She bursts into the dense shrubbery, slowing her pace as she attempts to distinguish him from the dark foliage. Krzysztof is nowhere to be seen. She stops to catch her breath and survey her surroundings. There is a rustling to her right, she whips around to see a darker shape moving among the trees. She stays quiet following with her eyes before lurching towards it. It's Krzysztof, he scampers away, Sam hot on his heels. There is a yelp and Krzysztof tumbles forward, Sam skids to a stop to avoid running into him. He lies prone on the ground, upon seeing Sam he shuffles backwards. Before Sam can say anything, Krzysztof vanishes with a squawk. Sam stares at the blank space where he just sat. She edges closer and notices that the ground falls away. Through ragged breaths, she calls out nervously to Krzysztof. Her voice is shaky. It is silent. There is rustling behind her as Denise appears. Sam looks over to her, horror etched across her face. Denise appraises the scene, raising her in surrender and beginning to back away. Sam, panicked, shakes her head looking between Denise and the drop. She starts towards Denise and begins to splutter out an explanation. A figure looms up behind Sam. There is a smack; everything goes black.

Muffled squabbling grows louder, Sam opens her eyes. Above her Denise and Krzysztof are arguing. Sam attempts to sit up but Denise, who is crouched over her, encourages her to stay down. Krzysztof is babbling about attempted murder. Denise tells him to shut up, emphasising that it was a 2-foot drop. Sam groans, Denise adds that he shouldn't have hit her. Sam locks eyes with Denise who looks down at her pityingly. Denise tells her that it's all over. Sam opens her mouth to say something, but Denise quickly shuts her down. Denise bullies Krzysztof into helping her get Sam to her feet. Denise swings Sam's arm over her shoulder to steady her. Sam, defeated, concedes declaring that she'll go. Denise cuts in explaining that she can't leave without explaining everything to management, otherwise, it will seem like Denise is the crazy one. Denise announces that she will stay with Sam for the night, and they will clear things up in the morning. Krzysztof, mumbles something about pressing charges but Denise points out that he's not innocent either. Krzysztof has one last jab at Sam before sarcastically telling Denise it was nice to see her again. He turns and stomps off into the dark. Sam shoots Denise an inquisitive look. Denise implies that they got together at a similar camp years ago. Sam stares, dumbfounded.

Sam and Denise arrive at Sam's Cabin. Denise is assisting Sam down onto the bench outside when she notices George waiting on the stoop. George is holding two disposable plates

loaded with food from the kitchen, she looks between Denise and a groggy Sam. Denise introduces herself. George, confused, clarifies Denise's name. Denise gestures to Sam who is swaying unsteadily on the bench and introduces her as Sam. George looks to Sam who glances up momentarily and mumbles out a slurred, nonsensical, apology. George asks Denise what is going on. Denise apologises, making it clear that George will know more tomorrow and suggesting she head off. George looks to Sam for answers, but Sam's head stays down. George hands Denise one of the plates before looking back to Sam one last time and leaving. Denise fiddles with opening the door as she calls back – you're a real piece of work, Sam. Sam, suddenly far more coherent, now that George has gone, watches George shrink down the path.

Soft classical music and the gabble of chatting voices emanate from the homestead. colourful bunting flags hang over the building's front entryway; Sam, covered in scratches and with multiple bruises blooming over her forehead, paces beneath them. Denise leans against the entryway, arms crossed. Sam groans, pressing the heels of her hands to her eyes. She tells Denise she can't do it. Denise explains coldly that it's either Sam or her, and if Sam has any integrity left, it will be Sam. Sam huffs and stops in front of the door.

The main room of the homestead is adorned with the campers' artworks. The campers, Belinda, Santa Clause man, and the Fancy Men from the *Mayfair* dinner all mingle within, chatting and drinking champagne. Sam pokes her head into the room, she glances around before spotting Belinda, standing along the wall to her right. Sam tries to catch Belinda's eye, one of the Fancy Gentlemen gives her a puzzled look, she glares at him, before returning to covertly gesturing to Belinda. Belinda moves, closer to Sam as she makes her way towards the drinks table. Sam hisses at her as she passes. Belinda startles and turns around, her eyes fall on Sam, and she shrieks. Sam gestures for her to be quiet but it's too late. All eyes in the room settle on her and Belinda. Belinda worries at the bruises on her face; Sam makes up an excuse for them before trying to draw Belinda to somewhere more private. Belinda doesn't give her the chance as she continues to fuss over her; telling her that they were worried and about to send someone to find her. Sam attempts to cut in, glancing nervously at everyone in the room, she spots George and returns her gaze to Belinda. Belinda is explaining that everyone has done their presentations but it's not too late to squeeze her in. Belinda begins to corral Sam up onto the small makeshift stage at the front of the room. Sam frantically tries to clarify that that isn't what she's here for. Belinda hushes her before adjusting the microphone and stepping back. Sam falls silent as she stares out at the perplexed faces of the crows. It is silent, Sam wets her lips and opens and closes her mouth uselessly. Krzysztof smirks. Sam, voice shaky, greets them all and explains that she needs to come clean. She pauses, glancing at Denise who stands against the wall. Sam stumbles through a poorly detailed confession that she has been operating under a false identity. The room is silent, Sam's eyes dart around pleading for some sort of response. There is a sudden booming as one of the Fancy Gentlemen begins to clap. He shouts – *Brava* and expresses his relief that they finally have an interesting showcase. The other Fancy Men join in; mumbling approval between themselves. Belinda's horrified expression morphs into joy as she lets out a laugh tinged with hysteria. Sam stays frozen, she glances disbelievingly between the Fancy Gentlemen and the other campers. Krzysztof looks capable of murder; he glances at Camille as she lets out a bemused laugh and raises her hands to clap for Sam; Krzysztof's scowl lessens slightly. Belinda storms the stage and hugs Sam before pulling her into the crowd where she is bombarded by questions from the Fancy Gentlemen. Sam glances to where Denise is standing but she is gone. Sam turns her attention back to the Fancy Gentlemen. They shower her with compliments and Sam regains some of her composure as she preens under their attention.

Phillip berates himself for not realising, pointing out the clever things Sam did over the past week. George stands to the side, her expression unreadable. Sam, bemused, agrees with Phillip, and begins to build on everyone's incorrect deductions; claiming to have planned her character "Denise" for months prior. At this George turns to leave, passing by a visibly agitated Krzysztof who surges forward and spits at Sam's feet before storming out. The room falls quiet. Sam wavers, before attempting to ease the tension with a condemnatory chuckle and iterating that not everyone's going to get it.

Rain pelts down as Sam hurries along the gravel driveway towards her car. She reaches it and heaves her duffel bags into the boot. She scurries around to the driver's door, lugging herself inside, and blindly jamming her keys into the ignition. Through the rain-obscured glass of her window, Sam makes out the blurry form of George as she packs her own car. Sam rolls her window down and calls out to her. George doesn't respond. Sam tries again; George glances over but continues packing. Getting nowhere, Sam yanks her door open and approaches; explaining that she just wants to say goodbye. George snaps: offering her a mawkish congratulations before asking Sam if that's what she was looking for. Sam, startled by her acrid tone, bites back, with the suggestion that if their places were swapped George would have done the same thing. George denies this, telling Sam she's a terrible person. Sam, jaw clenched, stays silent as George gets in her car. At the last moment, Sam lunges forward and grabs George's door before she can shut it. Sam tells George that maybe that's the reason she won't ever get anywhere, citing George's failed Royal Academy of the Arts admission attempts. George looks on the verge of tears, she yanks her door closed and screeches forward, narrowly missing Sam. Drenched, Sam watches George's car fade into the downpour.

A balding man in a stiff white suit, sits at a white conference desk, in a whiteboard room. A tiny colourful painting hangs behind his head. He knocks his pen against his teeth in contemplation. He states that he thinks that funds should be directed into the museum's Renaissance wing. A man with bright features and a long white beard interjects; explaining why he thinks this is a bad idea. This sentiment is backed up by the woman seated beside him. The bearded man suggests that they should ask someone who will likely see the ramifications of the decision within their lifetime; he makes a go-ahead gesture. Sam sits slumped at the other end of the conference table fiddling with the desk's cut-out cord hole. Belinda, who is seated next to her, sends an elbow into Sam's side. Sam straightens and focuses her attention on the bearded man. She lets out a thoughtful noise before giving a lengthy reply that sounds intelligent but ultimately says nothing. The balding man considers her for a moment before nodding slowly and agreeing that perhaps the Renaissance wing isn't best after all. Sam raises a dubious eyebrow.

Belinda and Sam hurry along the city's bustling footpath. Belinda is in the middle of apologising for the boring nature of the meeting; explaining that it is a less exciting, but still extremely valuable, opportunity provided by the fellowship. Sam dismisses Belinda's fussing. Belinda indicates that her tram is approaching. She hugs Sam goodbye telling her it was good to finally see her again. Belinda makes it ten meters before turning back and shouting that she will send through the details for Sam's shoot tomorrow. Sam says she will see her soon, Belinda gives an excited shimmy and reminds her to be there a little early tonight. Belinda turns and bounds towards her tram, Sam flinches as Belinda narrowly misses getting clipped by a mob of cyclists.

The hallway of Sam's flat; light shines through a small glass pane in the front door illuminating a row of empty coat hooks on the wall. The door clicks and Sam enters. She moves through to the kitchen and drops her keys on the bench before slumping down on the lounge. The flat is missing key pieces of furniture, notably a TV. Sam stares at the wall, the only sound is the buzzing of the fridge. After a few moments, Sam pulls out her phone and turns on a boppy pop song. She takes a deep breath.

In her bathroom mirror, Sam applies foundation; she straightens her hair, burning a finger in the process; she plucks a stray eyebrow hair; she dances obnoxiously; she applies mascara; she messes up her mascara; she sings out of key as she reapplies mascara; she smizes at herself.

A man in his mid-20s stands at a podium, he wears a tuxedo, and his luscious dark hair is gelled firmly to one side. He addresses a room of equally well-dressed guests who are seated around two dozen circular tables. The room they occupy is cavernous, its stone walls leading up to opulently painted ceilings. The man is discussing the value of the arts. Sam is seated next to Belinda at one of the circular tables. She stares unwaveringly at the man on the podium in an attempt to avoid the view of Krzysztof and Camille fawning over each other opposite her. Phillip sits miserably next to Krzysztof, Mary who is positioned across from him, slides a flute of champagne towards Phillip. Sam picks at the half-eaten bowl of salad on the table. There is movement out of the corner of Sam's eye. She turns her head in the direction of a woman who is making her way towards the mezzanine. Sam watches her; she looks different, but it is unmistakably George. Sam consults Mary who agrees with her and concludes that George must have come after all. Sam gets up and weaves her way through the tables and chairs to the back of the room. She darts up the stairs and onto the landing of the landing of the mezzanine. George is nowhere to be seen. Sam glances around, she notices a sign for the restrooms, she approaches and hesitates by the door for a moment before barging in. Of the five stalls, one is occupied. Sam lets George know that it's her and begins to explain that she feels terribly for how they left things, she pauses when there is no reply. Sam wavers glancing around self-consciously, she adds that she didn't mean to corner her and will wait outside.

Sam leans over the baloney of the mezzanine listening to the woman on the podium who has taken the place of the handsome man, she is talking about up-and-coming artists. The noise of the bathroom door pulls Sam from her trance, she spins around. A woman, with a striking resemblance to George, emerges and slips past Sam awkwardly, sending her an apologetic smile. Sam returns it before turning back around and grimacing. The Woman on the podium announces that she will be presenting the final award of the night, *The Michaelson Fellowship* for exceptional dedication to artistic pluralism. Sam narrows her eyes in confusion at the description.

Sam, trophy in hand, approaches the table where her fellow campers sit, they welcome her back over and congratulate her. Krzysztof, with heavy persuasion from Camille, rolls his eyes and joins in. After finishing his applause Krzysztof abruptly slams his hands down on the table. He expresses his gratitude that they are done with the boring proceeding and declares that he is ready for the actual party. This sentiment is echoed by the table as well as several members of the adjacent ones. Sam grabs her drink and throws it back. Belinda, observing this, reminds Sam of her shoot tomorrow. Camille teases Belinda gently until she relents and declares that a little dancing couldn't hurt.

A heaving sea of bodies is intermittently illuminated by flashing red strobes. Sam and Camille shout at each other but resort to miming; their voices inaudible over the hammering base of a generic house track. Camille makes a motion that suggests she is asking the whereabouts of their drinks. Phillip, head down, is going hell for leather in a small circle that has made space for him. He transitions from a light Irish-style jig into the worm. Camille shrieks as she points Sam's attention to the sticky floor that Phillip is now lying on. Krzysztof appears, offloading a raft of drinks before dragging a reluctant Belinda from her position on the crowd's outer edge. The crowd shifts and the campers are sandwiched together, Sam considers them all for a moment, lost in thought. Sam yelps as Krzysztof grabs her by the shoulders and thrusts her into the circle. Emboldened, Sam makes to copy Phillip's worm.

It is early morning. Sam, still in her dress and nursing her heels in one hand, wanders along the main street. Men and women in business attire pass her by. She stops at a window display appraising a dress that hangs on a mannequin. Sam turns to move on before whipping her head back around. Visible through the shop window is Denise, she is trying on an oversized hat. Sam watches as Denise checks the price tag and replaces the hat before moving out of sight. Sam stays at the window, now only staring at her own dishevelled reflection in the glass. Denise's voice sounds from behind her; she tells Sam that she looks terrible. Sam turns but doesn't say anything. Denise waits before muttering an acceptance and turning to leave. Sam calls after her; enquiring as to why she's not in Spain. Denise turns back and explains that they are visiting Henri's sick grandmother. Sam mutters her condolences which Sam rejects. After a moment Sam fills the silence with a half-hearted joke about being hurt that Denise didn't let her know she was in town. Denise scoffs and announces that she needs to get going or she will be late for family brunch. Sam nods but Denise stays where she is. After another awkward lull, Denise explains that she and Henri are on a late flight out that evening, but she has a couple of hours that afternoon if Sam wants to catch up. Sam jumps on the opportunity but cuts her agreement short as she remembers she has her shoot that afternoon. She explains this regrettably to Denise. Denise, agitated, bites back that she is trying to make an effort. Sam makes to reply but Denise cuts her off; telling Sam that she will meet her at their normal spot at four and that it will be the last chance Denise gives her. Denise expresses her hope of seeing Sam that afternoon as she turns to leave.

Sam stands under the spray of the shower she turns the water off and steps out wrapping herself in a towel she examines her reflection in the mirror, frowning at herself. Her phone dings in its place on the vanity. She picks it up revealing an antsy message from Belinda confirming that she is sober, alive, and will be there on time. She shuts the phone off and looks back at herself.

Sam sits alone on one side of a classic 1950s-style diner booth. She inspects the menu before placing it down and looking out the window. Sam taps her phone, it reads 4:05. She turns it over and picks at her nails. Sam sits for another 30 seconds, completing variations of this routine before a voice calls over to her. A woman with a makeup belt strapped to her hip apologises for the delay and sweeps a strand of hair away from Sam's face. A man positions a backlight opposite Sam and directs her to look ahead towards a camera lens. Sam turns to face a woman who is crouched among a small crew assembled outside of the set. She asks Sam to adjust her position and give her a smile. Sam does.

Appendix

<https://www.mediafactory.org.au/olivia-jones/2024/05/31/assignment-4-part-2-reflection-2/>