

## **THE SLAP**

**Michelle Elvy**

The slap echoes across the park, so loud she can't understand why no one else has heard it. The other noises mask it, she supposes. The other noises are jubilant and summery: the crack of a bat, the swoop of barn swallows, the glug of a 7-11 Slurpee, grape, sliding down Jenny Carroll's skinny neck. Feet running round the dusty bases, cheers going up in the scattered crowd. Her brother and Jim Whitman toking behind Mrs Henderson's Buick station wagon.

When she hears it, she jerks her head up and starts her eyes skimming. When she finally settles on the place the noise has come from, she sees a young couple she does not know, a man and a woman standing close to each other, facing one another, the afternoon September sun backlighting them, speckled shadows dancing on their shoulders. They are there, beyond the ballpark, beyond the chain-link fence, under a maple tree, its colours already turning, at the edge of the parking-lot pavement.

The woman holds her palm to her cheek, looks up at the man, who places his hand over hers.

From where the girl stands, they look perfect.

## THE RING

Calum Kerr

Gretchen hadn't even exited the plane when she saw it.

As soon as they had stopped moving she had pressed the switch to turn her phone back on. The connection was quick and the device gave off multiple pings and vibrated in her hand even as she stood up to reach for the overhead locker.

There were half a dozen texts, two from friends and four from her mother.

She shuffled into the aisle and swiped the messages away. She knew what they would say. They could keep.

With the messages gone, other notifications appeared on the screen.

The queue moved forward slightly as she dismissed the Twitter notifications. There wouldn't be anything urgent there.

Her thumb hovered over the Facebook icon for a moment, wondering if she should check up on what had been going on while she was away.

At the front, the doors opened and Gretchen processed with the others, one baby-step at a time. She glanced up, then down again to her phone as she scrolled through her feed.

It was the usual mix of nothing important.

And then she saw it.

She had seen similar posts many times before, but they had never been for her. This was different.

It was a photograph of a ring. Specifically, it was Aiden's ring.

More specifically, it was Aiden's wedding ring, the one she had thrown into the waters just off the coast of Zante.

The ring had barely had a chance to get wet. She had only thrown it yesterday, after her week there, revisiting their favourite spots from their

honeymoon.

Some well-meaning diver had found it, and now it was on Facebook with an attempt to find the owner.

Gretchen stared at the image. She could raise a virtual hand and claim her booty. But what was the point? She had thrown it away, and it was no longer hers to govern. Let the diver keep it. Let it be passed down in his family. Let it live.

She sighed and turned off her phone, then smiled at the flight attendant and left the plane. It was time to go.