

## TRUST

On television. There's shit going on in America. People are getting sent back. The reporter leans in from the left of the frame towards the Bolivian woman, who is much shorter than he. He holds the bulb of the microphone under her chin, his fingers are wrapped around its shaft. His hand is still tanned from the early summer holiday he took in Crete; a colleague of his has a fantastic place they go to every year, and this year the reporter had been invited along with his girlfriend. They'd had a fantastic time and he feels so much more sure about his girlfriend now. The holiday had kind of been a make-or-break thing for him, for their relationship, though he hadn't told her that. She'd turned 30 on holiday—he's 38—and she'd been freaking out about it, but Crete had been so wonderful, it'd really taken the sting out of it and they'd had great sex most nights, mornings and afternoons too sometimes. That's what happens in paradise. His colleague was a lucky fuck owning that place. The hairs on his hand are white-blond against the tan that he got on holiday in Crete. The woman is talking into the microphone that he's holding just below her chin, as though it were a buttercup, to see if she likes butter. He nods as she talks about feeling like maybe the place she thought of as home doesn't want her, he nods, nods in agreement, it's terrible, he nods, as she stops speaking and nervously smiles up at him. He nods. She gives him a funny look because she's not quite sure what he's nodding at in that moment. It's so great to hear from you, he says, as he turns his back to her, taking up the whole frame, his shoulders broad in a pale-blue shirt unbuttoned at the collar. He smoothly hands back to the studio.

He's still not really sure though. About his girlfriend. After Crete she'd gone back home for a couple of weeks and he'd gotten so much done, instead of loafing on the sofa watching Netflix every evening, the routine they usually get into when he's not away reporting. He'd had this idea, about a cup he wanted to make, and he'd actually, finally, had time on his own to think hard about the cup. He'd come up with the idea for the cup watching his grandfather, who had the shakes—not Parkinsons—just the shakes that come with old age, trying to deal with regular cups. This cup would be a radical new design for the less-able. He was going to name the cup after his grandfather. The Ken Cup. He was thinking about using silicone and porcelain for the manufacture. He'd told his girlfriend about it on the phone and all she'd said was that it reminded her of Ken and Barbie, as in the dolls. She said the Ken Cup sounded like something Ken would use. Why would Ken use a special cup, he'd asked, feeling irritated. I don't know, she'd said, picturing a Ken doll holding a cup, but it's just the first thing that came into my head. Well I can't change my grandad's name, said the reporter. His name is Ken, and the cup's made in his honour, and it alliterates, the Ken Cup, it's a good name. Will it only be aimed at old people, she'd asked. No, the functionality was only one aspect of the Ken Cup and actually it was going to be a really cool design object too. He hoped to get it stocked in museum and gallery gift shops.

His colleague who owned the place in Crete was in the Press and Marketing dept of the TV station. One night they went out for drinks with some people that the colleague knew who also worked in marketing in the creative industries. At 4am in a narrow road in Clerkenwell, as their gang lurched towards a greasy spoon that catered to the early-morning meat-traders at Smithfield market, one of the guys who did marketing in the creative industries told the reporter that he was going to get the Ken Cup into every fucking shop in Britain. He said the Ken Cup would be a home-grown British classic owned by every fucking Ken and Barbie throughout the whole fucking land. And their dad. And their dad's dad.

The next morning the reporter looked at the bacon-fat stain on his pale-blue shirt. It was his favourite on-screen shirt and even though he had others very similar, this was his lucky shirt, and now it was possibly ruined. He called his girlfriend and said that he'd had a mad night out with some marketing guys but that he thought the Ken Cup might really stand a chance,

and when he'd casually mentioned the stain, hoping she'd offer a tip about how to get it out and she didn't, he felt peeved and ended the phone-call rather abruptly.

The next evening his girlfriend was coming home, but he would have already left for Sweden to cover some stuff before the elections. He was feeling really excited about a possible meeting with a spokesperson from the anti-immigration party who were set to take 20% of the vote, because somehow, he always got palmed off with the people on the other side, the victims. His boss said it was because he had a sympathetic aura, which complemented the plight of the victimised. His boss always said 'the victimised' rather than 'the victims'. He suspected that this particularity with words was why she was the boss.

He left his lucky shirt in the laundry basket and went to Sweden, where he was sent to report on election activities in the small town of Falkenberg, considered a typical small town and known for its salmon fishing, salt production, and for the industry created by the presence of a large Danish brewery. A riot broke out whilst the anti-immigration party held a meeting in a function room at a large Blues and Country music venue, and a group of Somalians passed by unawares and had a scarf pulled from the head of one of the women. The riot escalated as hundreds of far-right hooligans flocked to the town after the word spread on social media. The violence was unprecedented in Sweden, let alone Falkenberg, and whilst gripping his microphone and trying to explain to camera what was going on as he stood on the bridge that crossed the river that ran through the town, a masked rioter charged up behind him and cracked a baseball bat into the reporter's head. The microphone fell, his knees buckled, and being rather tall, the low wall on the bridge could not prevent his body crashing into the shallow river below. The blood from his broken head unfurled like red ribbons, carried away by the stream, and he died. Three Somali men and a Swedish-Polish man were also dead by the end of it. At the TV station, a traineeship was set up in the reporter's honour, a gesture he would've been proud of, knowing that his own career had been very much the product of a good education and good connections. He'd never pretended otherwise, but had always believed in the worth of opening up opportunities to the less fortunate, albeit in the rather limited way he considered himself to be left of centre.

When clearing out the reporter's flat, his girlfriend found the pale-blue shirt scrunched up in the laundry basket, and seeing the deep greasy stain, decided that it was no good to add to the bags for the refugee charity, and that she herself should not be morbid about keeping such a memento, even though she knew it had been the reporter's favourite shirt. She had her memories. Nothing came of the Ken Cup. The reporter's grandfather was eventually diagnosed with Parkinsons, but lived for another ten years or so. Meanwhile the Bolivian woman had a daughter who became a radical socialist politician, and was subjected to death threats for the rest of her life, which ended at 46, incidentally the number she'd reached whilst repeatedly counting to sixty in order to quell her fear of flying—a secret fear that nobody but her mother and her girlfriend knew about—as the plane had crash-landed and burst into flames. A trust was set up in her honour.