

## The ballad of Sheila and David

The afterthought of David was more powerful than the presence of David. What Sheila was trying to say was that after he moved the last of his things out of the apartment --- the boxer shorts and shaving cream, the rye bread and loose change --- she kept wondering when he'd be back. But when he was there, it was as if he'd never arrived. As if they'd never snickered, that first night, at the horrible salsa band playing onstage at La Cantina. Never exchanged emails, then kisses. They had never touched. She had never cheated. He had never packed and left. Neither had thought those awful things that are so much louder than any words they had ever actually spoken to each other. Here's the thing: David was better to think about than to be with. Sheila's song was supposed to say that: The effect of David was no effect at all. Like a guitar with no strings. The beloved without the lover. A studio apartment without that guy Sheila always bumped into on her way to make tea in the morning. What was his name again?

