

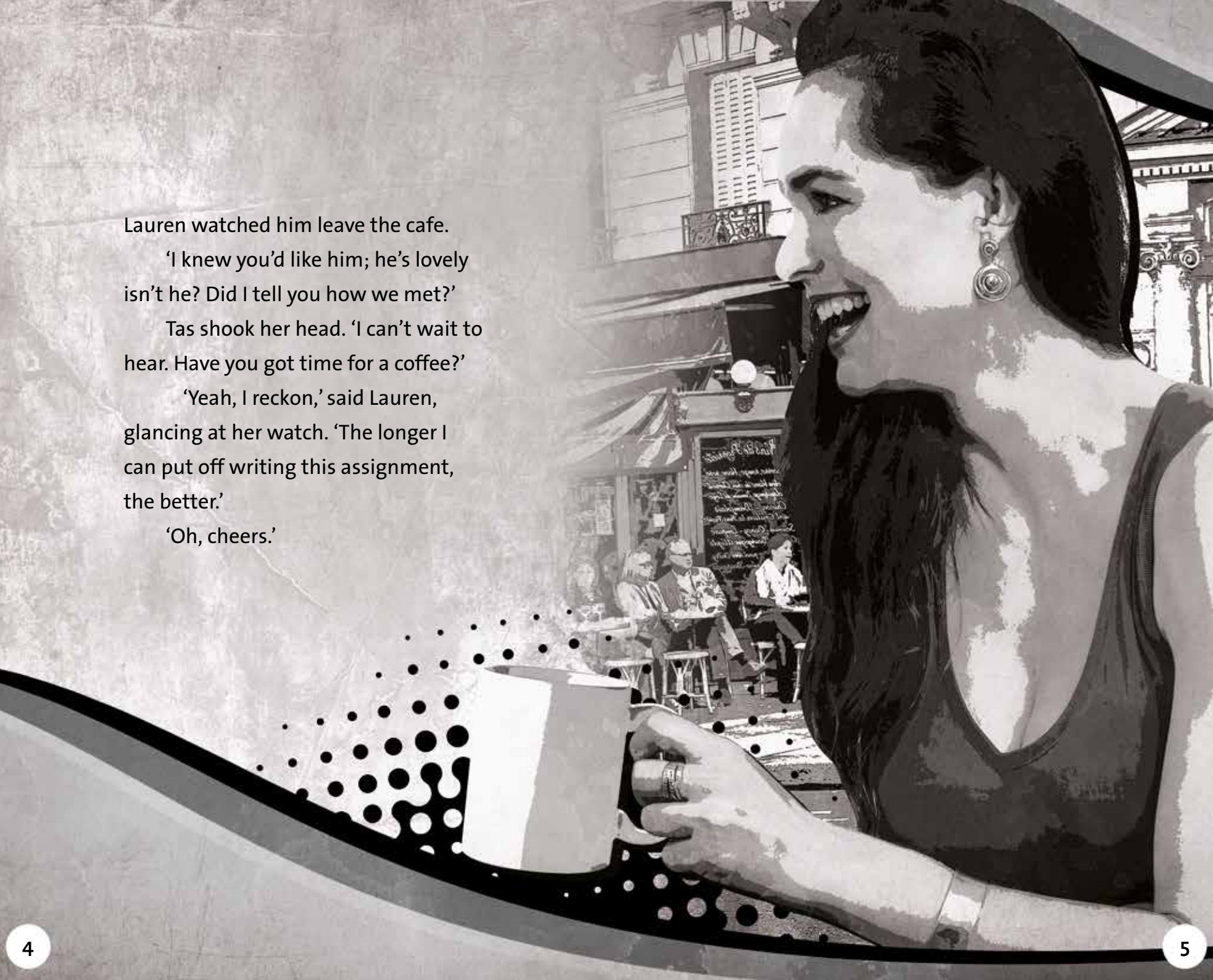
Lauren watched him leave the cafe.

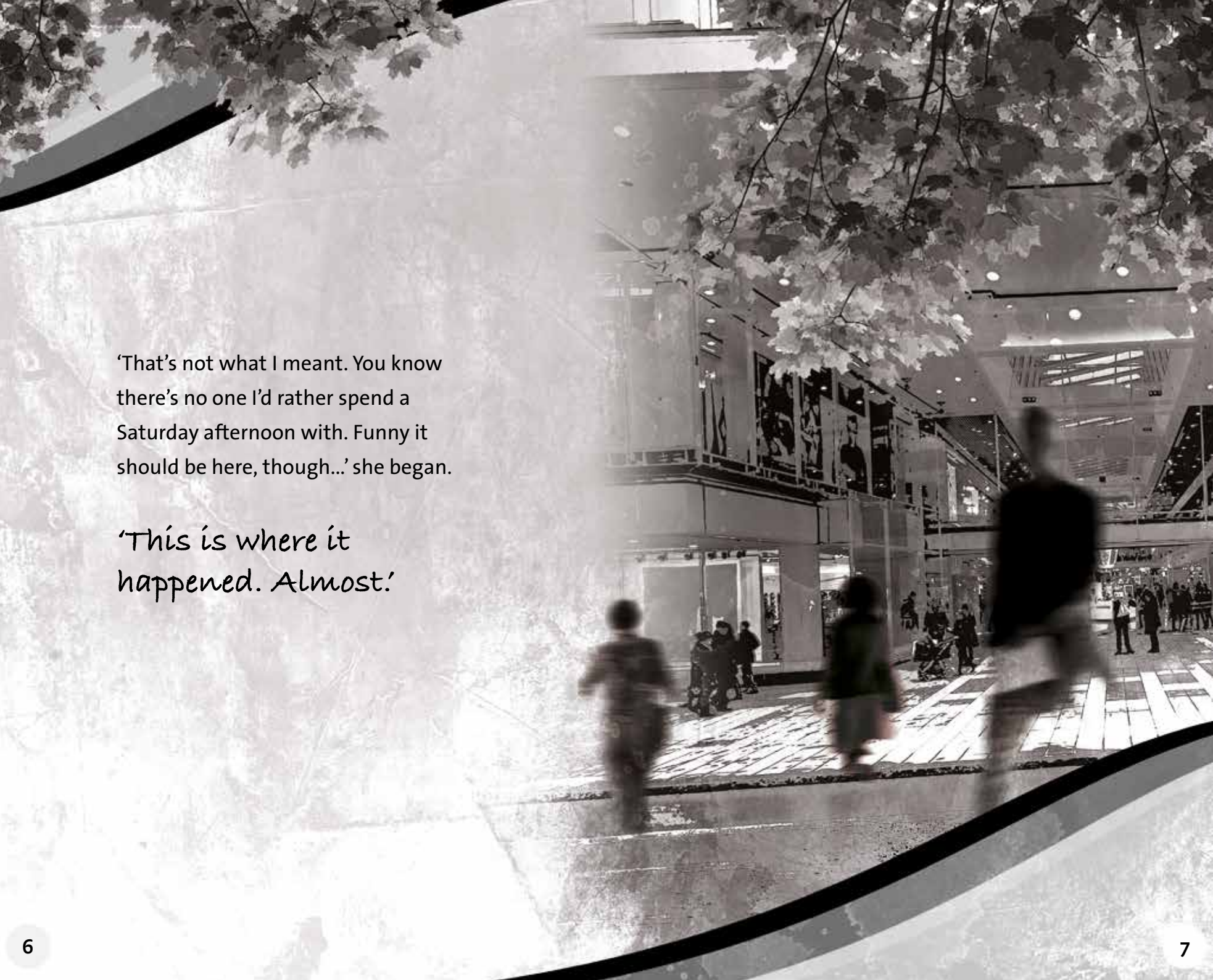
‘I knew you’d like him; he’s lovely isn’t he? Did I tell you how we met?’

Tas shook her head. ‘I can’t wait to hear. Have you got time for a coffee?’

‘Yeah, I reckon,’ said Lauren, glancing at her watch. ‘The longer I can put off writing this assignment, the better.’

‘Oh, cheers.’



A black and white photograph of a busy shopping mall. The scene is captured from a low angle, looking down a wide, brightly lit walkway. In the foreground, several people are walking, their figures slightly blurred, suggesting movement. The walkway is flanked by modern, multi-story buildings with large glass windows and storefronts. Some people are standing near the entrances, and a stroller is visible in the distance. The ceiling of the mall is high and features recessed lighting. In the upper left and right corners, the branches and leaves of trees are visible, framing the scene. The overall atmosphere is one of a bustling, contemporary retail environment.

'That's not what I meant. You know there's no one I'd rather spend a Saturday afternoon with. Funny it should be here, though...' she began.

*'This is where it happened. Almost.'*

'It was next door, actually, by the main entrance to the shopping centre. Mike was on his way here, and was passing the bus station just as I was getting off the bus on my way to my internship.'



I was running late – some idiot in a JCB had managed to dig his way through a water main in the High Street. I'd already phoned my boss from the bus to let her know about the delay, but I thought I'd better let them know I was nearly there.

I should have known better really; no sooner had I got my new phone out of my bag than some kid grabbed it right out of my hand.

