

# If You Were Wondering

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IT WAS early August.

We met outside a restaurant on the south west end of the Queen Victoria Market. Neither one of us was feeling hungry. I had a bag full of her things. She had a vacuum cleaner for me.

We walked to Flagstaff Gardens. The same place we had our first date. The same place we eventually had our first kiss. We sat behind a fountain this time. It all sunk in with the sound of flowing water. Those fucking tears that I couldn't quite control started trickling down my cheeks. It is always better to cry in winter or spring. From a distance, people think the bleary eyes are symptomatic of a cold or hay fever.

A tourist group walked through the gardens, giving their attention to some guide who was salivating from the jaw, as he went on with his historical drivel. I studied their movement, waiting for the group to inevitably approach the fountain. I got lost in the conversation at one point and the next thing I knew we became *that couple* sitting behind the fountain. You know, *that couple* that you don't want to look at but you just can't help but ogle? We moved away from the group and sat beneath a secluded tree. I finally realised what was happening: We were fabricating a happy ending.

I took a piss at Flagstaff Station. I pissed hard and fast, worrying she would leave while I was getting everything out. I walked out and she still stood there on the other side of the ticket gate. We both ordered saganaki burgers from a place on Little Lonsdale Street. The waiter brought out our burgers together. They were great tasting burgers for what it's worth. About halfway through eating mine, I found a hair. Normally I was the one to make a complaint but this time I didn't care, I had left my emotions somewhere back in those gardens or the urinal. I slid the hair out and left it on the plate. Normally she kept quiet about those sorts of things. She rarely

wanted to make a fuss in public. This time, the last time we ate together, she called over a waitress and made a fuss about the hair.

The waitress apologised and offered to make a new one. I declined. It was fine. I really didn't care about the meal. I could have been eating two-minute noodles, it didn't matter.

The waitress insisted on making us both a free coffee after our meal. Skinny flat white with honey for her and a long black no sugar for me. The usual order we had—sweet and white, bitter and black.

We finished our meals. We finished our free coffees. We split the bill and left, together.

We walked to the State Library. I lit up a cigarette for the journey. I rarely ever smoked around her unless I was drunk. Two and a half years of secrecy and careful planning to waste. All that money spent on extra strength gum and all those little runs from the apartment to the supermarket below just to have a few drags seemed sadly comical. I figured that keeping up the appearance didn't matter anyway. The truth was just a courtesy, in the shape of my lit cigarette and its blue stream of billowing smoke.

We sat outside the State Library, the same way we had many times before. The same way I said goodbye the first time we hung out together. Her passion had outgrown this city and everything in it, including me. I clung on for as long as I could like the pigeon shit that we navigated around in order to find a clean place to sit.

Tears formed in both our eyes, my emotions had made their way back from the gardens or something. All I knew was that it had to be this way. She was leaving the country soon, on to another chapter, another city, another lifestyle and another person to find, love, fuck and cry with. We kissed for the last time. There was no real magic to it, just flesh pressed against flesh, mouth against mouth. It was as ordinary as any other kiss, only made special by its place in the sequence of our time spent together. That's what I tell myself.

The sun was lost behind a building and we walked down to Lonsdale Street where her bus pulled in. She was staying with some relatives that I had never met in all our time together. She was staying with them until she set out for New York later that week. We hugged and I knew that it was just as much for her as it was for me, and I sure fucking needed it. Our bodies distanced and she handed me a paper bag, boarded the bus and left.

I walked down toward Flinders Street, Platform 8, and boarded a train back home to Frankston. All I could hear was the peak hour whir combined with the rattle of the carriage.

I opened the paper bag and inside was a blank journal. I tucked it away with the vacuum cleaner under my seat and rested my head against the

wall of the train. I studied some asshole's etching in the back of the seat I was sitting behind that entire journey home. That's how our love ended.