

Moving On

*I miss you.*

I stare at the message, my thumb hovering over the send button. It's been three months, and I can now press send. But I can't bring myself to do it.

I wonder if you're thinking about me today. Probably not. I doubt you've thought about me much at all since you met her. I still remember you telling me.

You said, "We need to talk."

I said, "Is everything okay?"

You said, "No. I think I like someone else." And my world ended.

My perfect world. The world where I had the perfect boyfriend who was funny and charming and kind and handsome and mine.

Of course, that world never really existed outside of my head. We fought, a lot, and I cried, a lot. My entire life seemed to have become about a boy, but that was okay because that's how relationships should be, and besides, he was perfect and we were meant to be together. I think that's what I regret the most: allowing you to mean so much to me. Trying so hard to be the perfect girlfriend that when you told me about her, my response was "That's okay, we'll get through this." Spoiler alert: we didn't.

Four days after your revelation, I was stepping off my usual train.

I headed straight for our meeting place. You were there and you smiled and I melted. Your smile had always been a weakness of mine. It made your eyes look so kind and so excited and so reassuring all at the same time, like the hug of a grandparent who hasn't seen you in far too long and of whom you've always been the secret favourite. Your smile told me everything was going to be alright, and for the first time, that smile lied.

But you hugged me and everything was fine. Until we went for lunch and I stopped talking and started thinking.

I thought about how this boy, who I loved so much, could like some other girl. I pictured them together. Him and the nameless girl, who was obviously far more attractive and funny and intelligent than I was. I pictured them holding hands. I pictured them kissing. For a second I thought I was going to throw up, but instead a tear rolled down from the outside corner of my left eye.

I didn't wipe it away.

Instead I stared at my food, willing myself to stop ruining everything. It's only now that I can see the irony.

Sarah Garnett

I finally looked up and your face had crumpled. Not in a oh-my-God-I'm-so-sorry-I'm-a-terrible-person-what-have-I-done way, but in a please-stop-you're-embarrassing-both-of-us way. That really should have been my first clue.

"What's wrong?"

"What do you think?" I paused. I had sounded harsher than I had meant to. "I just don't understand. How. And why."

"It's complicated."

"Oh. Okay."

We ate in silence after that. Well, nearly in silence. Every so often you'd try to start a conversation about the weather, a film, school. But I could never pretend as well as you could.

Eventually we paid and left, and you pulled me aside.

"This isn't working," you said. My heart stopped. You started to carry on. I interrupted.

"Not here. Please." I spoke so quietly you had to crane in a little to listen. "Somewhere private. Can we go to yours? I don't want to do this here. Let's go to yours."

So we went outside and it was raining. I pulled my hood up and couldn't see much more than my own feet, so instinctively you took my hand and guided me, through streets and puddles, until we stopped.

I pushed my hood back, but instead of seeing a train station, I saw a park.

"Can we just go to yours?" I repeated.

"No. I don't think that's a good idea."

So you told me again that we weren't working. You told me it didn't feel right anymore, that it wasn't me, it was you, that you were sorry but it was for the best. That was all news to me.

I cried and fought the urge to hit you and you walked me to the train station, holding my hand to show me the way, and how ridiculous it was for you to be holding my hand after you'd broken my heart, but even more ridiculous that at that moment I would have done anything to not have to let go.

We texted and you asked if we could be friends. I asked for three months to work things out. It's been three months.

Sarah Garnett

But even as my thumb hovers above my phone, ready to press the send button, it hits delete instead. First on the message, then on your name in my contacts.

Not because I am angry. Not because I hate you, although my friends keep reminding me that I have every reason to.

But because you were a scared confused boy and I was a girl who gave everything to someone who wasn't ready.

I do not yet know who I am. But I am no longer the empty shell of a girl I was after you left. I am no longer satisfied with being sad and broken and alone. I am no longer satisfied with what you left me to become. And I know now that we were not right together, no matter what we may have thought. We fought and I cried and you did not understand how to comfort someone who was afraid and I did not understand that it wasn't normal for your boyfriend to yell at you when you got upset and you did not understand how to deal with my imperfections and I did not understand that I did not need to pretend to be perfect in order to be loved.

I need to move on with my life, and that's something I can't do with you in it. So I press delete. And you are gone. And I am relieved.