

What to Make of This?

Today, my best friend encouraged me to make a move on the boy I've been admiring for weeks. Fine, I said to her on FaceTime, I'll do it. So I courted him by the bold and brave gesture of requesting to follow him on Instagram, narrating my friend through the whole ordeal. Thank God I won't see him in person for a week so I can recover, until next Monday when I sit down one row and to his left, catch glances at him, and never find a chance to actually talk to him.

Itching to release the nervous energy built from confronting these feelings and completing this terrifying dare, I went for a run, turning on relatively familiar streets as usual until I stumbled upon a tiny bookstore I'd never been to before. The address printed on its humble sign made me realize we were on the same street where I went to a previous boy's house with friends and stayed until 3 a.m. talking existentialism, throwing darts, and vibing to his guitar. When I had finally left that night, I realized as soon as I got home that I had taken his sweatshirts home by accident. Hoping something would come of it, I returned a week later to his house on the street with the sweatshirts and an index card explaining the situation and leaving my phone number. Never heard back, for it was an event too mystical and intimate to be extended.

I couldn't resist browsing books on this street, so I put the run on hold and walked inside. Curiosity and joy swirled around my head as I found old loves like Chekhov, Shakespeare, and Dickinson. Soon Hugo caught my eye, and I picked up a collection of his poems. I unlocked that world and found his poetry printed in his native language. I immediately thought it would have made a perfect gift for my first boy so long gone. We fell in love—a naïve, misguided love—through the course of Hugo's adapted *Les Misérables* musical rehearsals in high school. Also, he is, or at least was, a total French student snob. I even jotted down the first draft of this story in a notebook he *made* me

for some occasion or another as an ode to my love for writing. Not sure where that thoughtfulness went when he eventually couldn't be bothered to text me back.

Boy, boy, boy. How strange that associations with the latest ones collide in a single moment. It's one of those things that makes me think there must be something I'm supposed to get out of this: a funny example of life's coincidences, a reminder that I will always be reminded of the past even or especially in my pursuit of the future, a culmination of my inability to take romantic interests beyond the hypothetical, or maybe just a story to tell.