

Inky and Vague

by DJ Young

Do you know what it means? Looking out your window, all the suits and skirts and heels and perms and jeans and midriffs and scarves spilling over the sidewalks, the crosswalks, off to lunch, the coffee shop, the pharmacy, the salon, someone's birthday, you forgot to buy stamps, you need to mail a letter, someone is waiting for you and you are so late.

I used to play this game when I was in college. On Saturdays the rehearsal room was usually empty and I'd go there to use the piano. More often than not I'd stare out the window, onto the main quad and watch the other students. It was a good vantage point in case this girl I had a crush on came by. I knew nothing about her class schedule or if she even had a Saturday class, but it was the idea, what if she did walk by? I don't think she ever did, but it was the possibility that made me happy and made me sit in this large, quiet room all afternoon, just in case. We all have our special ways of wasting time.

She was the blonde one and the dark-haired one and the one with curly hair and the one with straight hair, the one in the long scarf and even the boy with the camera. She sat on the bench with her lunch and lay on the grass with her book and rode by on her bicycle and teased her friends and carried a tuba and seemed to multiply the higher the sun went and listened to her headphones and yelled at her boyfriend and threw her keys at a cat.

This was never a serious diversion, just the kind that leaves you feeling a little embarrassed and stupid whenever you do see her, sitting across from you in art history when she asks if she can borrow your pen (your favorite pen! The one you paid a stupid amount of money for. It was just a pen.) and she forgets to give it back and you think: well, that might be to my advantage, good

excuse to go up to one day and be brave and ask, Say, remember me? I think I loaned you my pen once...and this would lead to an exciting conversation about how you both love pens and how she has one just like it and feels so silly for taking yours and where did you get it anyway and you find out you both shop at the same stationery store and hey, Would you like to go after class, we can check out the calligraphy kits.

But no - you never have the guts. She gets your pen and you find that you really don't care. A part of you is with her and maybe, just maybe, she knows it. Perhaps that is why she asked you and not her best friend. She wanted your pen. She asked for it deliberately so she could pretend to forget to return it. So she could always have something of yours. You're happy thinking what a pair of cowards you both are. Out of all the cringe-inducing memories your life will be filled with, this is the one you can come back to and smile about.

Wouldn't it be funny to find her again, or one of her, or someone like her, and pretend you met once and she remembers you instantly - the girl whose pen she stole.

Or something like that.

