

# Good Old Days

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That night, when Nostalgia knocked on my door just before dawn, I had just enough time to catch her coat as she slipped it off and staggered into my apartment. I held the plush, furry thing at arm's length, hesitating to hang it up and let its cheap, floral perfume seep into my closet. Before I could make up my mind, she had knocked over my pot of geraniums on her way to the couch.

They were dead anyway, the petals crisped and browned for lack of light.

"My lecture notes are under your —," I said, trailing off as she nestled deeper into the cushions.

"Coffee, dear. Extra milk, extra sugar," she said.

I only drink my coffee black, I said, and didn't have any of her extras on hand. But she was snoring heavily and I figured she wouldn't mind if I draped the coat on my shoulders and aired the thing out. I was beginning to suffocate.

When I returned, holding one of those blue and white paper cups that I thought had all but disappeared from street cart circulation, she met me at the door, her long and lacquered nails digging through the thick fabric.

"You haven't been mugged? Pickpocketed?"

I told her I hadn't, but she rummaged through the deep pockets, pulling out takeout menus, yellowed ticker tape, and colorful handfuls of museum badges.

"I almost paid for the coffee with one of those," I said as she tossed aside a transit token.

"You're probably too young to know what they are," she said.

I was about to disagree, and insist that the pink rubber ball that was now bouncing across my floor was a favorite at my childhood block parties, but she was silently counting dried blades of grass.

"There's junk, and then there's -"

"Remnants of the original High Line," she said.

As I watched her sort through bagel crumbs and Broadway ticket stubs, tucking them back into pockets that seemed to contain multitudes, a garbage truck started to screech and puff outside.

“Remember the good old days, when mornings pulsated to the rhythms of George Gershwin and the world moved in black and white?”

She looked at me with contempt.

“Now you're talking about a city that never existed.”

After she left, I watched her cross the street, cocooned in faded furs, and poured the cold coffee on my geraniums, hoping the milky fluid would revive them.

