

I invited a friend of mine to see a movie while studying abroad in Paris this past fall.

TL;DR: One story of my continuing journey of seeking love and failing to connect, failing to understand why I'm never the person someone wants everything with.

“Do you want to go see Mullholland Drive with me tonight? It’s playing at the Filmotheque?”

I’d asked him because I knew he liked David Lynch movies. His eyes brightened and I lifted my chin under his gaze.

“Is anyone else going?” He asked.

“No, I just invited you.”

Flynn’s lips spread in a small smile and agreed to go with me. It was a forty-five minute metro to the Latin Quarter and we spent the ride sitting beside one another. I distracted him with a conversation about how my shoelaces needed replacing since they had worn out and the history of the decline in Doc Martens quality. I knew he liked fashion and business and I hoped that the demonstration of my knowledge would make him like me.

We got in the already long line under the yellow evening lights of the narrow jagged street. He said he’d go check if we needed to buy tickets before we got in and when he had returned he handed me a small ticket stub. The face of Marilyn Monroe was on it, black and white, grainy yet still she was beautiful and perfect, a radiant smile staring back at me. I offered to pay him back, but he declined, brushing off the small request just as I had hoped he would.

“It’s five euros, it’s whatever.”

In my head, I was going back and forth wondering if that meant this was a date. I looked around at the people around us, chatting animatedly in French, and tried to picture me and him from their perspective. We must’ve looked like a couple, we could’ve, at least. He was taller than me and when I stared up at him, my eyes would be glossy from the streetlamp reflection. He stood close to me where I could feel his warmth even if I pretended not to notice it. He teased me and I smiled begrudgingly. I teased him and he would throw his head back, his shoulder-length hair shaking as he laughed.

Inside the red-velvet theater, filled with just too small chairs, we sat in the darkness with no one on either side of us. It was like it was just the two of us in the Marilyn Room if I really wanted. Chatter subsided when the lights went down and I tried to focus on the movie. I would say things to him throughout it because I couldn’t help myself. I have to talk through movies and I hoped he understood, maybe even found it endearing. He would respond but only shortly, eyes rarely leaving the screen.

The two women on screen made love and I schooled my face to look unmoved in any way, as if my face was stone and I wasn’t worried that the person beside me might want to do similar things to me. When my eyes flickered to him, I didn’t see any trace of emotion leaning one way or another.

Afterwards, he asked me what I thought the movie meant and I laughed as we were interrupted by another American saying what a strange and unmeaningful movie it had been.

"I think it was about Hollywood and how the dream of 'making it' isn't quite real," I supposed.

"Well, yeah, obviously," Flynn responded.

I didn't supply another answer, but felt a sting on my cheek from the biting cold of the night and his flippant response. We walked back to the metro station that would take us home and something shifted. We had to stand and I felt myself not moving to be closer to him. He made no move either and I told myself I knew.

We walked the rest of the way home silently, the streets quiet around us as well. I felt safe walking next to a tall man, knowing if it came down to it he would still protect me. But I decided, despite what his smile and the ticket could've meant, the reality was harsher. I could spin the story however I wanted in my head. He could've been madly in love with me and trying not to look any particular way while watching the movie just as I had been. He could've meant paying for the ticket as a form of thanks for inviting him out. I could do this, but it would be untrue to the reality of the situation.

He didn't move to be closer with me and didn't tell me I was beautiful. He didn't kiss me outside of the metro like another guy I had gone out with. And he didn't ask to take me out to dinner like the Quebecois chef I went out with did. He made no effort to show me that he wanted me how I wanted him. And even if there were feelings that he was keeping to himself, I best not waste my time waiting and hoping he'd open up and tell me the truth. Tell me that it wasn't whatever.