

They never tell you when the last time really comes...

It was spring of 2014. I was studying abroad in Paris, the City of Lights. Who knew it would be the warm glow of love that would shine in my heart. We met at the Nuance Cafe almost every morning. Her a student at Sorbonne, me a botanist at the Menagerie du Jardin. After seeing her a few times I offered to buy her coffee. She was happy to chat with me, even if my french was, well let's say not that great. After she opened up, she showed me the most fantastic paintings. They were so small, but packed full of detail.

Our first date was of course the Garden. Well, I call it a date, she called it "inspiration". I had to stay late to tend to an overgrown sapling, and she asked if she could join me. Ended up staying another hour after I was done just for her to finish up. I still remember the faint smell of paint, her perfume, and the espresso she almost always had with her. Those aromas, even one of them, bring back those memories. The museums we saw together, the long train rides to get to the country, the hours and hours spent together in silence, if I could do it all again I would in a heartbeat. The most vivid memory though, the one I can never forget, plays in my mind every time I close my eyes to fall asleep without her next to me.

It was the end of summer 2016. My studies had finished and I spent the last of my savings to stay in Paris with her. I was due back to the States to finish up my education, something about a few classes they had to do specifically at my college. We finished up another one of her great paintings, one of the Queen's Hamlet. As we were walking back, I had to say goodbye to her. I booked a hostel by the airport so I wouldn't miss my flight. Had I known what I did now, I would've stayed with her for one more night of passion.

I asked her if she'd meet me at the airport.

"Oui bien sur" she said softly, "mamour"

We embraced for what was only seconds, but for me was an eternity. After we separated, she started walking down the street. I said "Wait!" in English to her. She turned around and gave me that smile. That damn smile. I can't get it out of my fucking head. I wanted to say it, the words every pretty woman wants to hear from their lovers. Those four words. I only said three.

I never saw her face again.

I've been to Paris once a year, only stopping over this damned pandemic. Whenever I can get off work, I book the flight and go back to the Nuance. I've been so much the owner even recognizes me. He says she sees her come in once a year as well, always looking for me.

I will see her again, one of these days, and when I do, I will have that ring upon me. I will say the words I was too afraid to say when I was young.

 J'attendrai