

Love In Every Flicker - Mairah, Year 5, NSW

I stood at the corner of Bourke and Swanson Street. The expansive road along which I stood was pristine and inviting. Thin streaks of cloud trailed along a wide blue yonder. I wanted to reach for the azure sky but had to withhold my wish. I was meant to give light to others.

As the sun edged closer to the horizon, I took its place as the keeper of the night, alongside my fellow lamps. We served as surrogate moons and stood like steadfast sentinels, guiding weary travellers back home in the night. Night after night, I would be awakened as dusk descended, only to shut my eyes as the grey hues of morning emerged.

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Amidst the serene presence of the other lamps, I found solace in the company of a seagull who would perch upon my crown, telling tales of family and the rubbish heaps he had visited.

“A finer place to rest than on rough dykes of windmills,” sighed the seagull as it cleaned the oil slick from its silvery feathers.

A small ginger cat with twinkling eyes often came and curled up in the circle of light at my feet.

“A cozy campfire for me!” it would purr contentedly, and I couldn’t help but beam a little brighter.

There was truly little that I wanted, for I had found placidness in these simple joys.

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It was a brisk and luminous day, and when the autumn leaves blushed hearth-hues above, I noticed a young man in a vibrant crimson red jacket strolling down Bourke Street. I recognised the familiar faces who passed me every day, chatting on their phones, jogging, and walking dogs, and I had seen this man before, but this was different. This moment. The sunlight glinting off the facets of his watch and glasses captivated me; a pulsating energy was felt around him. Then he suddenly disappeared.

“He must have forgotten something at work; he should be back soon,” I wondered as I waited impatiently, yearning to catch a glimpse of him again.

Across the street, the trees were laughing, dressed in their carnival clothes, the gold and scarlet; magpies chattered and conspired in the grass. None of these interested me anymore. I longed for the evening when the office workers would make their way home, the young man among them.

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In the morning, I now lived for when 'he' would hurry down Bourke and again waited every evening for 'him' like a night owl. Instead of snapping to attention with the rest of the lamps, I waited for him to flicker on. As he drew near, I would splutter with joy. His dark, glistening velvet skin and steel wool hair sparkled in my light. Every evening, he would stop before me to check his time, and as he drew his arms towards my light, his opal quartz glittered like a tiny star.

Finally, one evening after a long day at work, he stopped beneath me. I lit up as soon as I saw him.

He placed his hand on my metal post and said, "I know you wait for me every day, don't you?"

Happiness glowed within me instantly. He understood how dearly I felt for him. And as he fondly bid adieu, I was left with brightness in my heart. From then on, whenever he passed by, he nodded at me as though to say hello, and sometimes he would smile.

Sometimes, I winked back at him.

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One evening, he was not alone. A beautiful woman with blonde, wavy hair wafting over her shoulders was with him. With light, smoky eyes, she gazed at him lovingly. Perhaps the way I would. I felt a flicker of fire within me. A devouring emptiness was felt inside me as circuits shook with uncontrollable rage.

"This light always goes on when I walk by," he said. "See?"

She tilted her head and looked at me.

"It must be in love with you," she teased.

They went on, then they left.

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Winter came and went quickly. Twice each day, I saw him turn the corner, and that was all I wanted. If he coughed on the sharpness of the air, I flung my light lovingly around his shoulders, as though to warm him. Such radiant moments went on for quite some time.

However, there came a day when the young man did not show up for work. He did not pass me in the evening, nor the next day. I waited, day after day, week after week, keeping my

sodium tubes dark well past midnight and bright well past noon. As the chances of seeing him grew bleak, I felt a sadness ocean deep.

A few weeks later, the woman came and stood next to me; her eyes looked shadowed and heavy.

“He’s gone,” she gasped. “New job, different city. I thought you might want to know.”

She touched me with her one gloved finger and was gone. I noticed a cloud of melancholy writ on her face.

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It was springtime; the new vibrant hues of the daffodils were bathed in tepid air. One day, the town’s electric company drove their van and stopped before me. I had stopped lighting up at all.

“It’s a mess,” one of the electric workers commented, examining the paper on his clipboard. “It must have turned on and off at odd times.”

Roughly and unscrupulously, they removed my panel from the base and clipped off the small box from the entangling wires. I felt a bruise deep in my heart, a heart-rending pain. However, none heard my sigh of grief.

“It’s dead!” they declared.

Saying this, they scraped, knotted, and snipped, then collected their red-handled tools and left. I felt forlorn, forsaken. As warm tears streamed down my face, I made myself understand I lived for him, the young man only.

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When darkness fell, all lights flashed like a string of stars. The seagull hovered, seeking... searching. Not finding anyone it knew, it flew away.