

## Promises are Not Enough

She has an amazing connection with this man. Or so she thinks. They can talk for hours. They laugh together. They share kisses and joy. But something, just one thing, is not right. And she wonders if that makes everything wrong.

When they met again, after a five year hiatus, their connection survived. Frayed perhaps, but intact enough to pull heartstrings. They kissed under a clock in the station, inhaling each other, locked in time, both past and present.

Nothing had changed, even though everything had changed. They talked about where they went wrong, about how they felt, about how life had led them astray. They did not talk about the future. They walked and they talked and they held hands, her heart quietly singing a happy tune.

He looked at her with wonder, and she read tenderness in his eyes. He cut through her defenses and into her soul in swift, sharp slices. It felt inevitable and so very right, but at the same time it was terrifying. She had long been afraid of being vulnerable.

They parted with promises. He promised not to disappear again; to keep in contact; to try. She was delighted. She didn't fly home, she walked on air, a delighted smile peeking out from under her eyelids. Her feelings overwhelmed her. For the first time in a long time she had hope. She could see a different future, filled with happiness. The potential was infinite.

She waited for his mail. It was slow to come. She hid her disappointment in his reticence and made excuses for him, but inside she felt unworthy. She twined another tangled thread around the ball of hurt she kept buried deep inside and pushed it to the back of her mind.

A month passed and she pulled strings. She had to see him again. To know. To understand. She made the arrangements. He seemed to vacillate between excitement and apathy. He confused her, but she painted a happy veneer over her emotions, dusting the moment with nervous anticipation.

They met in an unfamiliar location. Her face lit up when he appeared, his smile welcoming her home as she collapsed into his arms. It felt so right, so special.

They reveled in each other's company. They walked touching, unable to let go, and he dropped tiny kisses on the top of her head. They relived past moments and made new ones. They danced to music in the street. She felt safe, and wanted. She felt new and perhaps for the first time in her life, she felt certain.

To her surprise, it was he who brought up the future. She paused and with a deep breath she was honest, recognising a kindred desire to build something together. She sighed with relief and poured out part of her heart, unable to believe that someone she wanted actually wanted her in return. Until now she had not felt that life was kind in this regard. It felt like fate.

Together they planned. She would do this, he would do that. They would both be honest. They would take this opportunity with both hands. They would not let go. They would not make the mistakes they made last time. They would try and try hard. He vowed to keep contact, to overwhelm her with email. To let her be part of his life. He said he was honoured. He understood what it meant to her. She could believe in him.

Parting again was almost unbearable. As she walked away, tears threatened to trickle down her cheeks, kept in check by the disbelief that she had found him again. That they wanted the same things. That she was worthwhile. Her heart was swollen with gratitude and life, for a brief moment, became different.

He responded promptly to her mail and she was thrilled. They had communicated and agreed, and it had worked. Here it was; the contact she desired. The affirmation that what they had was valuable and real. The validation of a possible future, despite the challenges that lay ahead.

Then he fell silent and her brave new world started crumbling.

She lost herself as she lost him. Her stomach knotted with anxiety, a

anguish lending an unhappy tilt to her face. She would never understand how she became invisible to him when she left his side. Why did he whisper words of caring into her ear, but say nothing when distance separated them? Why didn't he care enough? And did he care at all?

She still doesn't know. He has vanished again, back to his cone of silence. Perhaps she never will.

