

[UNTITLED]

Oscar Horne

62, 63, 10, 64, 65, 11. "It's a beautiful day isn't it?" I glanced up and took in the weather. "Yeah, seems to be." I told my friend.

To be honest I hadn't really noticed it, nor did I get the sentiment; I was trying to figure out the ratio between two colours of bricks along the left side of the street. Annoyingly they weren't in anything I could make out as a pattern, so I just had to count it. And then sometimes there was a small break from the layout of bricks as some concrete extended out onto the pavement. It put me in a bit of a predicament. Did I consider the left-most brick to be the one that happened the left-most in each row, or the one that was aligned with the normal left-most column, and simply not counting anything where there was concrete instead. What about the half bricks where the concrete forced some bricks to be shortened?

"What do you want to do? Does a cafe suit?" My friend asked

"I'm fine with whatever you want to do."

"I guess we can eat here then, I like their food."

A mistake on my part. I should have mentioned that I wasn't enthusiastic about this place before giving free reign of the decision to my friend. I'm not entirely sure why, if I am going to be honest. I had enjoyed the food here before, and I didn't have any new reason to dislike it. I just... didn't want to. But I'd said I was fine with whatever my friend wanted to do, so I couldn't just correct myself. That would mean my friend would know that I had been mistaken, or a liar, or an idiot... it would be wrong to say something now.

When our order arrived at our table I was handed my hot chocolate complete with two marshmallows. First I needed to use the spoon to have all the foam from the top. Next the marshmallows were unceremoniously dropped in and held down with my spoon under the liquid. It kind of reminded me of waterboarding, an image that never failed to come up when I had a hot chocolate. I continued this marshmallow torture until they softened, becoming delicious goopy sugar sludge. I wasn't entirely sure how much of that was the heat and how much was the liquid seeping in. While I did this we chatted, with a few miniscule lulls in conversation as I prevented the marshmallows from popping back up to the surface. My friend

sat across from me and ate a muffin, offering me some since I hadn't ordered myself something to eat. I declined, citing not feeling hungry and the marshmallows being enough. It was a lie; I was quite hungry but nothing on the menu seemed quite right at the moment. The chat died down over time, and eventually phones came out on both sides of the table. At that point the conversation was over and soon we made to leave.

I didn't see my acquaintance again for a few months. Well that's not entirely true; I saw them, even spoke to them on occasion, but we never made time for each other. I knew this was a mistake, I could have easily asked to meet earlier, regularly, or even just chat more often when we naturally bumped into each other. I didn't do that and it burned. It wasn't even that I later reevaluated and recognised the mistake, I knew it at the moment, and I just couldn't... say something. It made me want to cry, break down, die, how deeply I wanted something so easy to grasp, and how I couldn't even reach my hand out. But that was behind me! I had asked to meet, and we did. We walked and we chatted, and I counted the bricks on the left of the pavement. This time we were walking the other direction and the bricks now furthest left were a lot less varied than those on the other side. There wasn't even variety of colour, size or direction. At least on this side there were all the traffic poles, which at least gave me a convenient delimiter. It let me count, maybe...10% faster. I couldn't be sure but I had to start walking faster to keep up.

"What've you been doing recently? I don't think I have asked what's been happening in your life for a while." My acquaintance asked

"Not much, reading, writing, schoolwork. You?"

"Same here. I went on a short roadie over the long weekend with some friends but not much to be honest."

It's unfortunate, I think I would have liked to have been on that trip. Those are the kinds of social events that I convince myself I dislike and thoroughly enjoy when I'm involved. Oh well. I got to work on my personal projects and had some fun by myself. Maybe next time something like this came up I could go. It should be nice. We chatted a bit more, and when the time passed four and the conversation died down we performed the awkward departure ritual we always did, saying goodbye and then standing in an empty silence, saying goodbye and finally splitting off to our respective bus stops.

I saw the stranger again a few times, but we never quite got around to meeting up again; it's hard to justify meeting up with someone you don't know. It was unfortunate; I think I would enjoy

conversing with them. Interestingly the bricks were roughly in a 6:1 ratio, but roadworks dug up bricks and ruined my count repeatedly. It frustrated me to no end.