

Being Collectable

Isabella Park

It was the early morning, and Adam and I were still going in circles, arguing about something I did wrong again, or some thought Adam didn't want me to be having.

“You should know you are beautiful. If there is one thing you know about me, it's that I am a collector of beautiful things.”

Adam proclaimed this as if he had wrapped up the world in a big pink bow and given it to me. This profound realization was his cue that the argument had been concluded indefinitely.

Pressing Adam any further would have ended with raised voices and slamming doors, but I wondered what kind of collection I would be put in. What kind of “beautiful things” did he collect?

I couldn't be a collection of knickknacks. Snow globes, little bird statuettes, and crystals were off the table. Adam didn't like knickknacks, and when we moved in together, my collection of adorable useless items shrank into closeted boxes or was tossed in garbage bins.

I could see myself being placed among a collection of useful objects. Maybe I belonged with the mugs and saltshakers, or the tangled charging cables bunched in the office drawer. Adam always liked objects that were useful to him and easy to use. He got bored easily—maybe I would have been a variety of mugs that never lost their novelty or purpose.

Maybe Adam meant a collection of normal, everyday items. Perhaps I belonged with the spoons and forks. A collection of dog leashes or fleece throw blankets? Maybe a matching set of pots and pans?

What about a collection of taxidermy—a gigantic dead buffalo head or a stuffed pheasant?

I don't remember what Adam and I were arguing about; it wasn't important to him. The argument collapsed, and now I will never know what Adam meant. Back then, it felt like I was an object worth holding onto, and I didn't want to ruin it—afraid he might take the beauty he saw in me away.

Conversations always ended in the middle, like a cliffhanger.

Maybe I am a four-year collection of every unresolved conflict and every cut-off sentence. All the lost little pieces of who I was make up a collection of my abandoned self—a betrayal of myself in hopes of being loved.

Time has stretched between Adam and me since we last talked. Looking back, I question when Adam stopped seeing me as a person—the last time, the exact moment, I became an item to be collected.