

The Last Innocence

# The Last Innocence

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When do we lose our innocence?



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It was crazy, how far she was willing to go, how much her soul was worth. What did it cost her really? The sun was warm, pressing gently down against her face as she crossed the road near her house. It was a gentle last caress, tender, almost as if the sun knew what was about to happen and was trying in its own way to stop her. It was innocent. Once, before the simple note sheâd found on her bench, sheâd thought sheâd lost her innocence years ago, although she hadnât really known how. When do we lose our innocence?

Is it that first second we slip into the world and find that itâs not as warm, as safe as weâd been led to believe? That moment of utter gasping shock before we break into outraged screams, urged on " in the rare occurrence we do find some form of comfort " by a gentle slap.

Is it the first time our head is turned by the sound of someone elseâs cry. The raised voices of a jarring anger, seeping into our cot and chilling us to the bone. Freezing us until we too raise our voice into whimpering cries. Perhaps before even that; when we are grasped to our mothers shaking body, her tears streaming down from above us and soaking our head. Our whimpers shushed desperately as hers grow louder and more tremulous above us, her body convulsing with the need to protect us from what she canât seem to keep inside.

Is it the first time we hear a swear word. When our sense of the English language seems somehow tainted, marred by a force we canât understand. When, for the first time, the words we were encouraged to learn, to mimic back, are suddenly enough to have us yet again the focus of meaningless anger. An anger that requires us to avoid our own actions just to keep it at bay. An anger we donât understand.

Or perhaps thatâs it, the first time we are in the wrong. The first time we are aware that what we do is wrong and yet we proceed regardless, quite sure that no matter what they say when they see what weâd done theyâll know it was worth it. Was it that first time we were yelled at strongly enough for it to leave a lasting impression? The instant when we can understand that not everything we do is good.

Is it something as little as learning that things like Santa and unicorns donât exist and that somehow, the people weâve always looked up to were stupid enough to think that we would still want to be lied to? Perhaps not. Perhaps we lost our innocence when we first saw something die. When we walked into the lounge room and found out that sometimes the stories on the TV are real. The first time we saw the news and learnt about murder, rape and wars. That not everyoneâs world was a perfect as our own.

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Was it as something as simple as realising that the stories about the prince and princesses aren't true? When we have our first broken heart, be it over that one person we thought we loved, or that one friend we thought would never leave. Or was it more complicated? Vanishing when we became murderers; pouring water down anthills, pulling the wings of flies and learning to play games with people's minds until they went crazy.

Is it the first time we find out what sex is? The first time in our lives when we cross the divide between children and young adults. When we catch a glimpse of what lies behind the iron curtain the adults deem so necessary. When we pass beyond the schoolyard gossip and fully and actually understand what it is that's been hidden from us.

Our first lie, first kiss, first time. Maybe we had a thousand shades of innocence that we lost as we grew up. Perhaps that was just human nature; to have it gradually fade away. There was one innocence left though, one she knew most people kept intact until the day they died. Even if they thought they'd lost it, it still hid deep within them.

Stepping forward, she raised a trembling hand up to the door handle and twisted it with sobbing breaths. All the people in the world, all the other lucky people; they would go to their graves still believing in humanity. That inside every one of us was a spark of kindness, of mercy. They'd die believing that everyone could change, grow and regret.

The inside of the house looked as ordinary as ever, but she only had to feel the note scrunched up inside her tightly closed fist to know that when she passed through this doorway, she'd be losing the last of her innocence forever.

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