

# Palimpsest

2023 — 30 years old

Sofía F.

**June, 2023**

**Monday, June 19th, 2023**

I keep doing it again.

I keep leaving the phone unattended, making myself busy with the tasks of everyday life and pretending the hope that whenever I go back to it there will be a new message is not there.

I keep going back to the memories of last week, revisiting the images and sensations, trying to juice out every last bit of them while I can.

I keep reaching out to strangers to fill out something that is missing.

Today is Monday, but I don't want to write about today. This is the first day of the break from my French classes. I have been going for a year to french courses. Last week was the last week. I remember when I was a kid and my mom was friends with Miguel's English teacher, how I shared with them my frustrations of how, even after studying English for years, I did not know how to speak it.

Until last week I felt the same with French. I can't understand the francophone strangers that pass me by. I struggle to get what the Québécois on the internet talk about if there are no captions. I still needed to double-check in the translator when I replied to the e-mail from my new landlord about giving him the cheques next month that I'll move in.

Two weeks ago I started talking with Alexia. She texted me first. She was a French girl visiting Montréal for two weeks. Today, when I went back to her profile, her finally updated distance marked the 5,721 kilometers between here and Toulouse. Her first texts were in English. Shortly after she asked if I knew French. She was a beginner and worried that she would make mistakes. I switched.

She proposed going to the botanical garden the following week after she returned to Montréal from her trip to Toronto. We settled on Tuesday, after I would be finished with the evaluation from French. Monday, though, I was not able to pass and do the oral production portion of the evaluation, and thus I would not be able to miss class the next day. She had said that she was also available Wednesday, so I asked her to postpone. Another option, I proposed, was to meet either before or after my class, if 9pm was not too late for her. She agreed to both.

That same Monday, exactly a week ago, Sophia changed the plans of our date and proposed meeting today for a drink and walk through the mountain. We had joked about having a first date with another Sof/phia.

The morning of the following Tuesday I went to the lab. I felt nervous about my French test, but not the one from class. What if I were not able to understand her? What if I failed to make myself be understood? How awful would it feel for her to change the plans of the second portion of our date after my failure? We agreed to meet at 3 pm, and thus I left the office half an hour earlier.

I walked towards downtown as slowly as I could. I felt sick to my stomach. I considered cancelling even though I knew it was not really an option. Was I or was she the first one to arrive? She texted me that she was waiting in front of the Italian café. Only once before had I been inside the “Caffettiera”. That time Amanda was also the first to arrive. That time Amanda’s date was also a two-partner. Three-parts.

I was nervous. If she was, too, I did not notice. We kept talking about nothing in particular, as first dates usually go. It was awkward in a charming way.

“*Ça va bien?*” She kept asking whenever I stayed silent, either because I was thinking about what to say next or trying to formulate the French in my head.

My head is hurting right now. I feel the effect of my pills and want to finish, so I can go back to bed.

The alarm I put to signal the moment that I should leave for French made my wrist vibrate. I apologized and told her that I would just go to the toilets and then we could leave. I confirmed if she was still down to meeting after. She said yes. Even after her confirmation I was almost sure that I would not hear from her. Her match would disappear. She would text me saying how despite having a great time maybe it was better to leave it like that. Perhaps I would text her that I was ready to meet, and my messages would go unrepplied.

That particular French class was the longest one ever. Before the pause, some students asked the professor if it was possible to skip it and go out earlier instead. He said that sure, we would leave just 15 minutes before, at 8:45pm. They decided to have the pause instead. Even though we did not take his offer, he let us leave 20 minutes before 9pm. I started texting Alexia to meet me at the metro station Montmorency from the orange line. Grace and the professor were in the station.

“*Sofia, est-ce que tu as changé d'appartement ? Tu n'es jamais venue à prendre le métro.*”

Alexia did reply. I realized that Montmorency was the direction of the trip and not the destination. I corrected myself and warned her that it would take me 40 minutes to arrive while Grace was talking to me. This time I waited for her at the station Mont-Royal.

...I can't do this. I will finish tomorrow.

## Tuesday, June 20th, 2023

I was sitting on a bench by the entrance of the metro station. I noticed her arrival by the shape of her hair and the color of her denim jacket. Did she smile when she saw me? Did I?

In the conversation with Sophia, she had mentioned Le Majestique. I thought I had been there, but the bar I had in mind was Le Darling. Both of them were on Saint-Laurent and both of them were good options. I asked her if she did not mind walking for a bit; as a third option I had picked up another bar in Saint-Denis, just a couple steps away from the station.

Rue Saint-Laurent was soulless. Even she noted how she would imagine more people wandering around. Alda would later say that it was expected given it was a Tuesday, but it still felt as if we had the street to ourselves. I asked her if she preferred a terrace or going inside, and we then entered the bar.

We both ordered a pint of beer. As I had been talking in French it felt unnatural to suddenly switch to English just to make my order.

*“Je sais que je viens de parler en français toute la soirée, mais je me sens fière de moi de commander ma bière en français.”*

She asked me a couple of times if I had gotten tired of speaking French. We could try to switch to English whenever I wanted, she reassured me. I threw back the question to her if she had gotten annoyed by trying to understand me, but she dismissed that thought. We kept talking about France and our jobs and computers.

She was finishing her drink faster than me. When I noticed I realized that I was feeling scared of ending mine and thus concluding the night. I grabbed the glass as if that would prevent the waiter to take it from me and sending us home. She asked if I were intending to order another one. I told her that I would if she did. And so we ordered them.

I kept talking in French even when I stood up from our table and asked about the location of the restrooms. I had a text from Alda asking me where I was and if she should be worried.

I shared her worries with her.

*“Ma coloc a oublié que je suis ici avec toi et elle était préoccupée de moi. Je suis sûre que je lui ai dit que je viendrais avec toi.”* I held off the urge to keep going. *“Je lui ai raconté de mon premier rendez-vous français; est-ce que tu as raconté de moi à quelqu'un ?”*

I drank my second beer even slower than the first one. I confessed how I did not want to leave when the waiter came to tell us it was the last call. We kept talking when they brought us the bill. We both looked at each other when he asked us if it was going to be together or separate. This time she took it.

We went outside, and I told her that I was cold.

*“Tu veux porter ma veste ?”*

I said no.

We kept walking through the empty street and my arm kept brushing hers, but she did not move. After some steps I dared to grab her arm and get closer to her. Still, she did not move.

We continued walking to the end of St-Laurent. I asked her to tell me whenever she was ready to leave, but we decided instead to just turn back and keep going from where we came. I did not let her go even while I was pointing to the different places that I had visited before and giving small reviews.

We passed bar Biftek, and told her how I had played pool with Aliza a couple of weeks before. She offered to play and we considered it. We thought how we might need to buy another drink at the bar, so we kept walking.

We got to a fence filled with posters for upcoming events that neither of us would ever go to. I asked her again if she wanted to leave, but we turned towards my place. By this point I was becoming aware of a possibility that I had not considered and the notion that I needed to disclose an important piece of information that I had not yet shared. Again, like earlier in the afternoon, I started feeling sick in my stomach.

We passed through Parc Jeanne-Mance.

“*Qu'est-ce que tu veux faire ?*”, I asked her a couple of times in our path.

“*Ce que tu veux*,” she kept replying.

By the time we passed the McGill Gymnasium, I pointed at the same bench were last year Alda asked me about my periods and after a deep breath said *Peut-on s'asseoir un peu ?*

As we sat she reciprocated the gesture and placed her hand on my thigh and smiled. I got closer to her and just sat there. In a minute or two, I felt the whole night passing us by in silence.

“*Ça va bien ?*” She asked again in a different tone than earlier in the afternoon.

Without thinking, I kept hiding my face in her neck. “*Oui, ça va bien. J'ai juste besoin d'un moment.*” I looked straight towards downtown. I grabbed my final breath before finally coming out. “*Je t'ai pas dit; je suis trans.*”

When I dared to look at her, she replied. “*Je savais pas.*”

I am not sure how much time passed from that moment until when I looked at her lips begging for an invitation. Almost instantly she moved her face towards me. I don't know who was the one to give the final steps closing the breach between us. We kissed one, two and three times. The fourth, I put my hand by her waist. During the fifth, she grabbed my neck. After the seventh, I felt her thigh right were her hand had laid upon my leg.

When she looked at her phone it was almost two in the morning.

“*Je peux te raccompagner chez toi, si tu veux.*”

I was too afraid to get lost in translation and accidentally cutting off the night, so I kept postponing the end.

Finally, my body betrayed me. “*Je voudrais rester ici avec toi, mais il faut aller aux toilettes.*” She agreed, and we stood up to start our march. Did I grab her by the arm again?

I reminded her about my main reason for moving away from the neighborhood as we were climbing the hill besides Hôpital Royal Victoria. We got closer and closer, and I pointed towards the Leonard Cohen spot. Without realizing it at the moment, I made a throwback comment to the

first story I told her about my favourite spot in Montréal. When we arrived home, I opened the door and came in without waiting for her response. She came in with me.

Every girl who has entered my room has made some sort of comment about its spaciousness. Will I end up missing my room in a couple of weeks that I'll finally leave this home?

I went first to the toilet and then started tidying up a bit while she took her turn to the restroom after being by herself in my room. She came back and shyly asked permission to stay the night. I agreed without realizing that a part of me felt fortunate.

We sat on the bed and shortly after continued where we had left off by the gymnasium. I started this journal entry as a way to write down my thoughts. I kept going to them through the day like little treasures. Time by time fading with each passing. One could argue this is the main thought, the night we spent together, the progressively faster kissing, the wandering touches, the warm sensations. These are the details I want to imprint against fading. Yet I cannot remind them, not fully and not clearly. Even through my usual walks through the memories, I fall shortly. I wander by the placement of her hand on my thigh and wander in the preamble of the first kiss. I don't get to the lip-biting nor the cold sensation of sweat in her back.

She asked me to go plus *doucement*. I found the perfect rhythm.

As I told Alda today while I was alone in the lab, I did not finish. It did not matter. As usual, I found my pleasure in her later caresses, the soft deambulation of her fingers, the bare touch of her bare skin through all my body.

“Ça te dérange?”

I absentmindedly nodded and she pulled away. Almost as fast, I stretched my arms and pulled her towards me again. Throughout the night I held her. I held her body, as I am now holding down these thoughts.

The one thing I remember from the middle of the morning was her reaching around me to grab the comforter. She covered us with it and took back her position.

Eventually we slept.

In the morning, I woke up and thought about Alda. Had she heard us? Would she see her? Would she be excited about it?

As my mind wandered, so did my finger through her arm. All night, one way or another I kept touching her. Be it the hand by the end of my arm on which her head was lying, or her arm over my chest arriving after her turning towards me.

Once or twice I would grab her, and she would raise her face and kiss me. We would kiss one, two, three times before she recoiled back down.

My alarm sounded a quarter before eight. Moments later she would ask me if I kept intending to work around noon. I laughed, dismissed the thought and went back to hiding from time under the covers with her.

Between ten and eleven we did get up. We started assigning our clothes and putting life back on ourselves. I put on my glasses.

*“Je peux te voir encore.”*

She gathered the will to start her explanations about her departure before I realized the misunderstanding and abruptly ceded. *“Non, non, avec mes lunettes.”*

I walked her down the garage. Passing through she mentioned something about her day at Le jardin botanique that I did not fully understand. *“I must go to”*, I think. *“I could go with her”*, I feared.

We kissed three times before we said our goodbyes.

I came back home to my room. I lied down again and I slept. I slept calmly—so peacefully that the full day could have passed me over and for the purpose of this entry it did.

The last time I had sex was with the Québécoise girl I met at Santropol. The same café I met the very first girl I dated and the same café I met the very last. She was looking for some girl to have her first lesbian experience with, and I was looking for someone to rub off my loneliness. After our exchange and her departure that same night, she deleted the match and with it every remnant of contact between us. With her sudden departure I felt uneasy, I felt used. All throughout the day, I kept opening Tinder to make sure that Alexia’s name was still showing.

I dared to take a screenshot as a trophy. One or two pictures with her name as way to make sure that I would not forgive her, as if it was possible, or her name, as it happened with the very girl that preceded her.

Using this idea of missed acknowledgment and closure as an excuse, I texted her.

Hey, j’espère que tu as profité le jardin et ta soirée avec tes amis (est-ce que c'est ton anniversaire ?) . Je sais pas si le plan était toujours de avoir seulement un rencontre d'une nuit. J'aimerais de te revoir mais je comprends aussi que c'est très difficile d'avoir si peu de temps à Mtl. Merci pour la belle soirée! (Et pour avoir toléré mon français) . J'ai passé un bon moment, je suis très contente de te recontrer.

The next morning I went to therapy as excited to talk about this as I was the previous morning when Alda finally came out of her room and asked me about it. She had heard a voice different from mine and realized what had happened. As I was walking towards my session, I noticed the number one up-top the app icon. I opened the application but escaped before reading the message. I did not want to open, not yet. Again, I did not want the end to come sooner than it absolutely had to.

I exclaimed to Calli how I knew I should feel happy, yet I felt a sort of sadness.

*“Sofía, of course you feel sad!”*

Hey, oui, j’ai bien profité du jardin botanique et oui c’était mon anniversaire, c’est pour ça que j’avais de plein de trucs prevus en fin de journée. J’aurais bien aimé te revoir mais je repars demain

en France, je n'aurais pas le temps... Désolée qu'on ne puisse pas se revoir. J'ai beaucoup aimé la soirée, tu parles très bien français et j'ai passé un très bon moment avec toi.

Yesterday that I started this entry I was coming back from my date with Sophia. We walked through the mountain like that one time I met another French girl whose name have evaporated in the meantime. We talked about her starting med school and the different opportunities in the city to meet people. There was a comment during the middle of the date where she reassured me there would be many opportunities where I could meet other people. I don't know from where in her voice or words did I sense a condescension that put me off. Like a switch, I turned off and realized nothing would come out of the experience. We walked back from *Le Lac aux Castors* towards Parc Jeanne-Mance where we finally separated on our own ways to never reach out back towards each other again.

## Tuesday, June 27th, 2023

I woke up in the early morning, but decided to stay in bed. I covered my head between the pillows as I usually do after turning off the alarm and deciding that I will not go to the office. In my mind it was just the beginning of the week. No pending tasks.

Saturday I hung out with Alda. She dog-sat for her sister and her brother-in-law. We had made a bet about her not being able to follow through and commit to watching the movie *Primer*. I owed her a Poutine that we ordered to be delivered at her sister's. We smoked and watched television. What did we watch?

Rubí and Cynthia came to Montréal that same Saturday. I met them the next day. The plan was to grab a coffee at Olimpico and catch up. In my head it would be an informal meet-up of an hour or two at most. It ended up being a full weekend.

Still tired, today I got up at 11 in the morning with the false promise that I would finish the two posters that I barely touched. I brewed the last portion of grounded coffee beans and came to sit down in the living room. Ridden with guilt from procrastination, I stumbled upon a TikTok about therapy and remembered I had a session early this week. I rushed to my calendar and saw the past event of my appointment with Calli at 9 in the morning.

Sunday morning Rubí texted me about meeting. No, I texted her how we had not agreed on a time. Planning changed, and we decided to meet in The Gay Village. I found them without needing to text them. They were talking with a man, Latino, in front of the bar they went to the day before. Cynthia was with Rubí. I met Cynthia at Rubí's wedding in San Diego, 5 years ago. Cynthia would later tell me how that day she had talked to me about being sad from the rejection of a man after he realized she was pre-op. I am not sure if it was me with whom she talked that day. It could have been Melissa.

From there we walked to Old Port. We took pictures in front of *La Grande Roue*. In particular, Rubí really liked the picture I took of her in front of the Wheel. It is now her profile picture on Facebook. *Of course, she's a photographer*, she would tell her lawyer friends hours later when

we were having dinner in *Caffe Un Po' Di Più*. We rode the wheel and walked around the port. They told me about Cynthia's surgery last year. Sex Reassignment Surgery. Months ago, I read a tweet about how that name is a euphemism. Is sex being really reassigned? It is really a Genital Reconstruction Surgery. A vaginoplasty, more precisely. No. Like the doctor told Cynthia on that same day before the procedure, the surgery consists of three distinct operations, an orchietomy, an extirpation of the tissue inside the penis followed by its inversion, and, finally, a vulva construction. Three hundred dollars costed the surgery. It was covered by her insurance.

We met Alma and Amanda outside the Café. Alma asked me if we had met before since my face looked very familiar. The place would not open for another 15 minutes. Cynthia needed to pee, so we went to an Italian place nearby and sat to order a round of tequila shots. When the time was ready for the reservation we went back to the restaurant. We were the first party to be seated. We had dessert at Chat-colate, where Cynthia got herself a cone of ice cream and the rest of us shared a crêpe. When we went back to the table after ordering, Amanda was crying. The next day Alma and Rubí would talk about her. Rubí asked her if she was taking any medication. Alma asked her to not tease her about her drinking.

We sat at the terrace of Bar Henrietta and ordered beers. I had been to that place before. Was it one of my dates?

When we were sitting by the port, Rubí asked me again if having the operation was something I wanted. I told her that I did not know. After seeing Cynthia's brand-new vulva, I knew even less.

Back at their apartment, we talked about Cynthia's operation. She had showed me the pictures after her surgery at the Caffe. Rubí noted how the waiter was looking at us possibly disturbed. Did I worry walking around with Rubí and Cynthia about being clocked? Rubí talks about how in her program she is not read. Am I read as trans in mine?

Cynthia turned off the lights and gave us a glimpse of how her body had recuperated months after what was shown in the pictures.

When I left, Rubí ordered me an Uber home. They were almost offended by my intention of taking the bus.

The plan for next day was to climb the mountain. I sent a text to Rubí when I woke up, and we planned to meet at 11 at the monument, like Alma had suggested at the terrace. At 10:15 she texted me they were on their way. I got there before Rubí and Cynthia. I saw Alma sitting there but decided against approaching her. I met them after I saw Rubí and Cynthia arrive.

We had breakfast at a place nearby. I ordered a burger, Rubí and Cynthia got a breakfast platter and Alma just had coffee. I found the waitress particularly attractive with her brown hair and light eyes.

Later in the day we went to Alma's house. She has three kids and a husband. Today I confessed to Alda how, after feeling uncomfortable with my silly crush on her, I also felt some sort of attraction towards her husband; both of them easily in their forties.

At our own terrace, after I talked to Alda about Rubí and Cynthia, she brought up the bandmate or friend of Lucas who is “trans also”. She mentioned the pre- transition drugs, spiro, like the dragon, and the name of their disc being girldick.

I texted Laurie-Eve about her moving-in date, specifically if her offer to come in later was still available. I sent her some pictures of the furniture and agreed to leave the room on the 3rd. This will be my last week living with Alda. I will probably end up moving out without ever telling her about me.

## Thursday, June 29th, 2023

I might have walked home this route for the last time. I got a text from Laurie confirming that they will not take the bed and the rest of the furniture before the fourth. Tomorrow is a holiday, so I can stay home guilt-free and spend most of the day putting my clothes and stuff in the suitcases in preparation for Saturday. I had thought about texting Didier to ask him the time I can pass by to pick up the keys and give him the cheques. I feel nervous to start writing in them and messing up. Walking by Hôpital Victoria I felt a familiar sense of anguish thinking that the cheques I ordered a month ago from a private company will not work.

Last night I considered doing the words, but felt too tired by the pills I took an hour before. I went to the lab for the first half of the day. Waking up I had regretted buying the tickets for the lesbian-queer-trans happy hour thing at Ping-Pong Club.

I came home at 5 and tried on one of the pleated skirts. It did not close around my waist. I considered wearing the other black skirt instead.

“Should I wear pants or a skirt?”, I asked Alda.

“Dress”, was her one-word reply.

Aliza asked me if there was a dress-code and I dismissed her telling her I was going to wear cargo pants. I was not convinced by Alda, yet I put out the red dress from my closet and tried it on. I wore make up and braided my hair.

While I was working yesterday, Monica asked me to look up flights to Montréal for her. I procrastinated from working on my posters by finding differently- priced ways of coming to see me: directly from Los Angeles, from San Diego with a 6-hour layover in Las Vegas, making a stop in Vancouver.

After being disappointed last year with Monica’s empty promise, I let myself get excited thinking about all the stuff that we could do in the week she would be here. Mid-planning, I postponed the initial search a week, so it would lie on the same week that I am off from French classes.

“Pero estaría en mi bday contigo, perra, yass.”

The plan was to arrive at the bar at a quarter after seven. Aliza told us that she was running a little late and thus would meet us there. When I checked the schedule for the 144 bus, the app

said that the next one would pass in 60 minutes. We walked towards station Guy-Concordia. Alda made a stop at Coco-bun and got herself a baked hot-dog and a lemonade.

At station Berri-UQAM, Aliza asked us where we were after I had told her Alda had made a stop for food. Maybe we could meet at station Rosemont. Aliza herself was one station behind us. We mounted the same train she was in. We walked through the wagons until we met with her at the very front.

Just two days before, Aliza had returned from her trip to Mexico. Today, in the couch, Alda mentioned how she does not think that her relationship with Ali will last long. I do not know how long they have been together. Do I agree with her?

From the metro station we talked the same bridge Alda, her friend Abby and I had walked years ago going to Notre-dame-des-quilles. Just like that experience, Ping-Pong Club was a disappointment. We got in and sat in a booth. Most people were there in groups and, like us, stayed with their companions. I kept glancing at the two or three girls I noticed had arrived alone and were sitting by themselves distracting themselves with their own glasses. By the time we left, all of them were talking to people. I did not know if their friends caught up with them, or they were approached by strangers. I felt happy for them.

I told both Alda and Aliza, at different moments, that my ex would possibly come to Montréal in a couple of months.

We decided to grab dinner before heading home. Alda found a place for dumplings that was close to our home. We considered ordering an Uber, but decided to ride the metro instead. We got there and asked the man at the entrance if he had any tables available for us. He looked around for some reason before telling Alda that it would not be possible. "Just take-out".

We ended up instead getting Pho from the place we were going to order from when I was with Rubí and Cynthia a couple nights before. The three of us ordered large bowls. I ordered the classic all-dressed pho. Aliza got herself one with just well-done meat. Alda went for the spicy beef and pork soup. I was the only one who finished hers.

When we were in line to pay, Aliza showed me her phone with a tweet from Sof Poiré. I asked her if she knew her. Before she could answer, I continued:

"Have I told you the story about my three-way kiss?", I asked her.

"No..."

"Or the story about the time I kissed another Sofía. Well, she's that Sofía."

I told her pieces of the story of how I kissed her and her ex before they were even together. I told her I would tell her that story later. She asked if she could share it with Ali. Later she would tell me how she started following Sof because of me. Because of Sof she saw the tweet that was offering the job she took out of the master's.

I finished the posters and sent them to the coauthors for their comments. Without anything else to do, I started to work again on the two papers that I keep avoiding. I did not have much

to talk about with Louis for our meeting, so I brought up a subject that, like my papers, I kept postponing. I asked him when should I start working about setting the ground for my post-doc. I had just asked him to confirm that he had done his in France. He was at Rennes. Monica lived in Rennes. I told him I personally did not want to move and would rather stay in Canada. Do I see myself living in France, though? I remember fondly the days I spent in Spain. At least the first half of them.

He told me he could start introducing me to people at the conferences. I have my work to speak for me, and we could see about doing some collaborations. I feel like those lonely girls milking their drinks surrounded by cliques of lesbians and queers in laughter. I do not know how to start the conversations. Were not for the Swedish undergrad who approached me in that mixer in Glasgow, I would have spent the rest of that conference by myself.

Will I get to meet again some of the people I made acquaintances of in Glasgow or San Diego? Would they remember me? Would I?

Two nights ago, when I finished my words, I saw the news for a new feature which allows for the reparation of a missed streak by doing double the words. I was just about to finish for the night 500 words before this but decided to continue. There has not been any notification or proposal giving me the option for that. Will I continue for another 250 just for the possibility of it? What else do I have to say?

Am I feeling better? For months, I have not written anything. I feel empty inside; both my body and my mind.

One day, walking towards the station Guy-Concordia I shared with Alda my idea of stopping my medications. It is neither the first time that I have considered it nor that I told someone else. Am I asking for their permission? Do I want them to convince me otherwise?

I was almost going to complete a double-day without making any mention of dating. Last night I told Aliza how I have been growing as a person and thus stopped giving nicknames to the women I see. I set a date to meet Noémie next week. Cheekily I told her I could pick the time, and she could pick the spot. A day before I can ask her to confirm.

I had been talking to Marion, too. She picked up the conversation asking me about my weekend. I confessed to her that I had only a vague idea of how she looked. She was in the same situation and could not refresh her memory since she had deleted her Tinder. She asked for the name I had on Facebook, so she could remind herself how do I look. After looking at it, she told me I was just as she remembered me. I told her how when we meet, it would be her responsibility to approach me since I would not recognize her in the crowd. We joked about it and the conversation got to its natural end again.

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