

Tse Mei Ying Gabrielle

*Remember*

*Christina Rossetti*

*Remember me when I am gone away,  
Gone far away into the silent land;  
When you can no more hold me by the hand,  
Nor I half turn to go, yet turning stay.  
Remember me when no more day by day  
You tell me of our future that you plann'd:  
Only remember me; you understand  
It will be late to counsel then or pray.*

*Yet if you should forget me for a while  
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:  
For if the darkness and corruption leave  
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,  
Better by far you should forget and smile  
Than that you should remember and be sad.*

February, a Tuesday.

Cloudy; but with faint, wandering rays of sunshine

It was dewy when I awoke this morning. All the flowers in the garden had bent their little heads, having drunk to their fill. When I gathered up to them for closer inspection, I saw them quiver slightly, their pale blue tips filled to the brims with rainwater. I suspect there was a storm last night, but I must have slept through it – the only remnants of the cruelty are the petals now strewn haplessly upon the pavilion, reduced to mere stemless hues of pink and green. Soon, they will be trampled upon by the others. How senseless! As for the sky, it had long cleared into azure, and is now a soothing, star-dotted navy. I am gazing upon the sky now, dear diary, for it gives me immeasurable peace. I feel strangely serene as I write these words, and though the birds warble incessantly outside my window, striving to be seen in their plumage, I am not at all distracted by their songs.

I can feel from within myself that I am to leave soon, but I am not horrified by the prospect. Rather, it consoles me – I suppose it was something I knew for a fact, long before anyone told me anything at all. It is merely my state of acceptance that assuages me now, not any feeble human counsel, nor trite but well-meant prayers. No words touch me any longer. They merely rustle by with their quiet wings, transient and ephemeral.

I remember seeking refuge in his words once – I warmed my cold hands with his promises; by those seaside sunsets, where he held my hand and told me passionately of his plans for our future. *Our* future, he would say, looking earnestly into my eyes, where *we* would live in our little home, warm and clean and soft. I'd half turn away to go then, sure that my cheeks were

pink (as they are now, recollecting this); and yet I always turned back and transfixed my eyes upon him, spellbound. I remember the sea blazing with so many colours, like a strange, liquid jewel: amber, crimson, errant flecks of gold... More colours than I could ever name, and they all flickered in his eyes, like fiery candlelight. That was such a long time ago, and far, far away – Does he still remember the lost look upon my face? There is no sea where I live now, no crash and clamour of the waves: all is land, and all is silent and tranquil, much like where I am destined to be.

I only hope he remembers me – that is my only wish. Now that I am no longer by his side day by day, sweet and faithful, am I still on his mind? Or have I been promptly forgotten, lost without trace, like the last of the winter snow? This plagues me constantly. No, I am sure he remembers – his letters I still keep (tied neatly with a sash) in my drawer as prized mementos, and the last is just dated a week ago. I reread them today, dear diary, and his sprawling words seemed to leap and dance under my touch, ready to take flight. He speaks to me of beautiful things alone, of Hope and Love and endless Tomorrows; and in them he plans his visits eagerly, almost hungrily. How much I wish to kiss his brow for his optimism! Yet I refrain myself, for he believes his words with a steely firmness. I will get better, he insists, and he would not hear another contrary word. I cannot tell any longer who among us is the more fragile. When I am gone far away, will he fall without the assuring hold of my hand? Or is it that when I am without him, I will cease to be? I do not ask him for anything grandiose: I only wish he would remember me, you understand. A soft, simple plea! Then I would live forever more, no longer a passing, painted figure in a trotting-horse lantern; but alive, eternal and absolute, in his stubbornly beating heart. Only remember me, my love, and I will remain staying with you, (within you), my hand entwined with yours, no matter how quickly this shell decays. That is my only command, my only desire — all else is empty and untimely.

It is night now, and I am writing wearily under scant light. My head is light, though my fingers ache like groaning pillars. I am ready to sleep, dear diary. I can smell the blossoms in my nostrils; heady and alpine, sweetly beckoning me – Oh *God*, perhaps it is best if he forgets... Perhaps he *will* forget, and carry on with a crutch; and then, one distant night, remember me all over again. My memory will invade his heart and mind, just as the fragrance of the blue flowers are assailing me now. I can imagine his hair snowy white and his eyes drooping; my poor boy, suffering for somebody that no longer is. No, do not grieve, my darling, you have done no wrong in forgetting me. You have made no mistake, you have not disrespected my memory. If I haunt you, with my darkness and corruption, with the last vestiges of my paltry thoughts and emotions... Perhaps I am selfish in trying so desperately to grasp on to mere tendrils. I would be no more than a mean shadow of myself then, and yet wisps and shadows are sometimes able to inflict such pain upon living flesh. My tender wish is cruel, diary. You must dissuade me from harbouring it any longer.

It is decided. The flowers outside are tilting their little heads so coquettishly, so reluctant to wave goodbye – forget-me-nots, I realise with a start – and the remains of the petals lay crushed upon the pavement. How pitifully vivid their colours are – my heart would ache less, had they been dull shades of grey and brown. No, my love, listen well: it is better by far you should forget and smile, than you should remember and be sad.