

Fong Ling Sum

I know my time is near.

Laying in this dark room, with four others by my side, the murky, pitch black shadow of death looming over our heads; under the flickering lamplight, I write these entries with a heavy heart, as I document my last journey.

My son, may this leather bound notebook live on, as I am buried under the marshy soil; as my flesh disintegrates and my bones turn to bleached white rocks.

Entry One

Nicholas died today.

He was a wise and knowledgeable fellow, with libraries in his head and the sparkle of a thousand stars in his eyes. He was once quite a famous scientist, in a life before this dank, musty room; but in the face of death, aren't we all the same?

When he was first admitted, he used to babble about how the world defied him, how they shut down his plausible theories with a simple, undiluted no. He cried out, believing that his theories was groundbreaking and it could change the world; but the world, always the unbelievers, tore down his meagre shreds of hope.

He soon fell ill afterwards.

A wheezing cough, his lungs constricting painfully for one more gasp of precious oxygen- even a fool could know that his time was near, let alone himself.

Yet he never gave up. He studied the mouldy, yellowed books by his bedside, scribbling notes on parchment, his sickness getting worse by every minute but his desperation increasing with every second.

When I asked him why, he just smiled ruefully and said,

'Have my words forked lightning yet? I shall not stop, even if death takes me away; I shall fight with my very last breath.'

Farewell, my dear friend, I am sad, but I do not grieve; for I know, you did not go gentle into the good night.

Entry Two

Terese died today.

He was kind and good, an honourable man with a heart of gold. Crow's feet lined his eyes, his wizened face inlaid with deep wrinkles.

He was almost like a saint, in this guilty, sin-ridden world; he had helped countless others, even strangers, beggars, sick men, and those on their deathbed. Albeit giving his all, he received nothing, only the judgmental looks from fools and the disgusted stares from others, including his family.

When he fell ill because of a sick patient, the voices around him was a chorus of 'I told you so's. His family, never the supportive ones, had thrown him in this hospital, leaving him to rot and die.

When I gave him a pitying look, knowing well this was a death sentence for him, he simply smiled gently and coughed up crimson on his handkerchief, and said,

'Don't worry, my friend, for the words and actions of others do not affect me; I shall get well soon and continue my deeds, even if it kills me.'

Farewell, my dear friend, I am sad, but I do not grieve; for I know, you did not go gentle into the good night.

Entry Three

Christopher died today.

He was a adventurous and wild man, eager for discovery and curiosity overflowing. Exploring was his life; he had spent all his life devoted to travelling and finding new places.

He told us stories of his life, how he sailed the Seven Seas and how he conquered the fierce waves, how he overcame the raging storms and the impassioned satisfaction he felt as he stepped on new, unexplored land.

However, that life was behind him. His previously chocolate skin had turned into a sickly, corpse-like yellow, his eyes tired and bloodshot, and frequent fevers ravaged him.

Despite his failing body, he tried his best to keep living. There were nights when I heard him silently praying for recovery, voice brimming with desperation.

When I asked him about it tentatively, he just sighed and closed his eyes, and said,

'I spent all my days chasing the sun, chasing something I could never reach; and I left everything behind me, everything that mattered.'

His eyes opened briefly, moisture in them, and his gaze flitted to the framed, yellowed photo of a woman and a child next to his bedside.

'That's why I have to recover, no matter what it takes.'

Farewell, my dear friend, I am sad, but I do not grieve; for I know, you did not go gentle into the good night.

Entry Four

Ambrose died today.

He was a quiet and grave man, silent like death. His threads of hair were powder white, eyes milky and glassy; like those of a dead fish, face creased like old parchment. He never spoke, not to us, not to anyone.

Unlike us, it was blatant he was dying. He was unresponsive, his eyes staring at the flaking ceiling, his gaze empty; he never moved, tubes attached to his frail body; his lips dry from lack of speech.

We all knew he would die swiftly, quietly, lonely.

But something surprised us.

Today, his blind gaze suddenly focused, and I swear, at that moment, his eyes were as bright as meteors, as fiery as a shooting star, and as vibrant as a blooming rose in spring.

Then his eyes abruptly shut, and the beat of his heart suddenly came to a stutter, and we all knew that was his way of fighting, of struggling, of raging against the dying light.

Farewell, my dear friend, I am sad, but I do not grieve; for I know, you did not go gentle into the good night.

It has been an honour to spend my last days with these extraordinary men.

But my child, do not worry; I am not wise, nor good, nor wild, nor grave; but for certain, I shall not go gentle into the good night.