

## Fading Memories

There's a girl in my mind. There's no telling who she is or what she wants. The only certainty about her is that she's there. Waiting.

What is she waiting for? To be acknowledged? To be understood? Maybe she's not actually waiting for anything. Maybe she's just a presence. A lost thing within an archive of dusty cabinets and misplaced books, resting in a disorganized library. A blurry image in an out of focus picture.

She's always there, within the back of my mind. I see her out of the corner of my eye. I feel her when a draft blows through, or the sun burns a little too hot on my skin. I know her most when I'm alone. When my focus is not on anything, she takes the forefront of my wandering mind.

Sometimes, if I try hard enough, if I think hard enough, she becomes clearer. I know she wears a white dress. There's a watch on her wrist. I picture her hair being dark. She holds herself as if she's on stage, as if the whole world is her audience. When I take a walk, and the smell of grass invades my senses, I hear a laugh. When a familiar song flows on the air, there's a melodic step that follows my own quiet ones. When the wind blows through the trees or a babbling brook passes by, I can almost picture her smile. Sometimes, I see it in the face of a sweet woman who will sit by my bed. She reads to me and holds tightly to my hand as she does. There are times I pretend she's that faded girl's voice.

Who is she? A sister? A friend? Did I know her a day or years? Was she someone I cared for or someone I knew in passing? Did I lose her, or did I leave her behind? I hope she was lost. Losing her means I could find her again, that she is someone who I would want to find. Leaving her could mean that I was right to want her gone, and now she's just haunting me to torment me further.

Why me?

Why does she haunt me? Why is she so important that she so stubbornly stays? Is she still out there? Is this her way of trying to get me to find her? Am I someone so important to her that she seeks me out from within my own mind? Do I haunt her too? Am I as much of a specter for her as she is for me?

There are times when she's not alone.

There are times when two others visit her. Two other girls, one who runs right past the first and another who follows close behind. Those two are not as permanent as she is, but whenever they come, they're all a little clearer.

When they visit, the laughs are louder. What were once jingles are then as loud as church bells. Their smiles are blinding! I can make out dimples and a small gap between one of the girl's front teeth. She's the one who smiles with her whole face. The other, who wears an almost matching dress to my specter, smiles as if she's a queen. Head raised high and posture perfect. She holds my specter's hand the tightest. The dances make more sense when they're there to be her partners. They circle each other in sweeping steps and dizzying twirls. The moment seems so

happy as I watch, but then I feel wet drops pour down my face so heavily I have to look up to make sure I haven't been caught in the rain. It's always when I look away that the visit ends.

"Who were they?" I always end up asking myself. "Surely, I loved them enough that their mere presence could hold such power over me. Why was my love not enough to stop them fading? Why couldn't they stay?"

But I suppose one of them does stay. She stays in my mind, demanding my attention. I get the feeling she did that a lot.

Perhaps I'll know them again. When the day comes that I no longer feel the sun on my face. When the aches are gone and when my sight is clear. When my withered hands can't take hold of that sweet woman's hand anymore, maybe then I'll be able to see them for who they were. I hope that I'll be able to join the dance.