

Strangers, Initially

"Yes," she said slowly. "When we met, I was but unknown to you." Her eyes turned to mine and held them tightly with their sparkle. "We were strangers, initially." A slight smile of wisdom flashed over her face. The sunlight and scudding clouds played dappling reflections on her hair, lighting her completely in a shimmering glow I could not fathom.

She continued speaking with me while holding my gaze. "Is this not the way of two lovers?" With a lilting prescience she answered her own question. "To learn through the years is the nature of life itself as we share and blend our lives." Exhaling suddenly, I realize I had been holding my breath as she explained it so beautifully. My love for her was boundless then. Truly, she was farseeing.

Do you remember that dusty farmhouse with its openness? It was there I stole a kiss. You wore your blue and white-checkered dress. So prim and proper, you were a willowy brunette. We chased the rainbows of that day. Cried together. Laughed together. Sat together. Counting dewdrops on the grass.

She was indeed philosophical. Her mind was a living entity which I happily raced to keep up with; and with her. I had written my thoughts on a yellowed scrap of

paper, a sort of day-to-day list of memories. Just the two of us. And there were many such beautiful ones to be made.

That morning I ran forever. The scent of those flowers was of freshly picked roses. Amidst the gnarled growth of the wild blackberry bushes. They were sweet and were the source for our purpley-stained clasped hands.

What pleasure I took in holding you dear to my beating heart. You need not have spoken a word. The sparkle in your eyes betrayed your enjoyment.

The morning of each spring day brought the same giddy energy. You and I held hands as we chased the raindrops. It was a never ending now. Too soon the sunset came. A hush, a promise, and we would meet again tomorrow.

The wooden house was our refuge each spring day. From the heat of the sun. And the smell of a spring rain. I discovered what made you happy. What renewal of love!

The roses are no longer fresh and vibrant. Of course, it is life itself that they give joy in just simply being. They are fragile. So too, our loving friendship has the taste of ashes in my mouth.

The flowers crumble. They tear at my very soul. What food have I consumed with such bitterness! The flowers

now have the scent of yesterday. They remind me of your love that so enveloped my very soul.

Now, they are dust. Borne on the wind. Scattered about. Strewn like so many memories that are disconnected. I play the fragment of footage again and again. What was I looking for? Whom did I become?

I cry aloud and your face is in my mind. O! if you could be here to slip your hand into mine. We would count the dewdrops together again. Just once more. That is all I ask. Run endlessly in the sloping hills to the secret fork in the river. Skipping gaily, hearts entwined. That blackberry thicket is heavily burdened with uneaten fruit. Your blue eyes are forever closed. The lips no longer meet mine.

I stand, and kneel at the site of your memorial stone. It is there behind the farmhouse. Your favorite secret spot. How quickly you entered and became a part of my happy life. Too soon, you were taken from it. There is no "now" attached to my soul. An emptiness fills the vacant corner in my heart, as the elusive spring days pass for me now.

You came, you shared, and now you are gone. Yet, you have given me many gentle memories.