

I was aware of an intense darkness. Thin drizzle cascaded through my hair. My skin sticky with sweat, my soul heavy with guilt. I began to acknowledge a pressing a thick dirt under my stale, yellowing nails. I bit and chewed them to free the offending muck. This seemed the most important action to perform.

My nostrils detected a sweet, fresh fragrance which was horribly familiar to me. Certain, joyous memories flirted with my emotions. What a strain! What a burden I had now placed upon myself! The horrific turmoil that as sure as Juliet's suicide would plague me until I lay surrounded by God's heavenly Earth. Never again would I be able to explore life in peace. Constantly dogged by fiends so terrible I shall weep at night for mercy. O Lord! What have I done? Can you ever forgive this son of yours? Forgive me, I beg with all the strength left in this retched, unclean body.

She lay there. An angel. Innocent. Cold. Her clothes barely covering her beauty. Her beauty shining, reaching out and penetrating the dark regions of my heart, which, as each second passed, was turning to granite. My choice, not hers. Hers was life and the rediscovery of happiness. A happiness we could never find together, or so she thought. She was wrong and did not try hard enough. She paid dearly. Eternal remorse.

A beetle crawled delicately across her freckled face, desecrating her tranquillity; desecrating our peace. The contrast too obvious. God had created both creatures and the hard ugliness sought out a deep rage within. I tore the beetle from her paling flesh and flung the creature far into the painful night. Destiny fought with all her might to prevail and the deed had been committed.

I knelt beside her. Smelt her. My hands cradled her chin. My mouth edged nearer to hers. I stared into her restful eyes. I saw nothing. I ventured a kiss. A final kiss. The coldness was far too apparent. This was punishment twice over. Gently, my forefinger began to caress her face. Stroking every inch of porcelaineous skin. A tear slipped from my eye. Fool! My finger found its way onto her left eyelid and softly pulled it down. I repeated the same action on the right eyelid, with a flood of love shuddering my wrecked bones with a painful pleasure. Completeness.

Suddenly, I heard voices. Distant but travelling nearer. I scanned side to side for a hiding place. A gap presented itself, wooing me. Gently, ever so gently, I slipped my arms under hers and began lifting. The warmth had almost gone. I could only manage to drag her, for her weight was surprisingly increased for her slim frame. The voices were laughing, enjoying a shared joke. Male and female in happy conversation. The dirt under her body was wet and a powerful earthy smell was apparent. I could not judge the distance the voices were away from us. I would just have to throw my destiny to fate. I kept still. The voices seemed unbearably close. Damn! They've stopped. Have they seen me? Impossible! Or is it? Could they now see something in the bushes.? Eyes? My coat? A foot? That is it! Time had prevented me from penetrating the bush any further and I had left her right foot in full view for the world to witness! Unexpectedly, I heard the passionate sound of lovers kissing. The thought turned my stomach. I could only think of our time together. She was stunning. An angel.

I heard nothing further. Peering from the bush, I witnessed an empty pathway. Thank the Lord, for he had been kind. On looking back at my love, a glimmering caught my eye. Reaching across, I picked up what seemed to be a small leather bound book. A gold lock presented a challenge. I observed the gold initials on the thick spine and took it upon myself to locate the key. She kept it in a locket around her neck.

So, my lover had kept a diary? Kept precious secrets? These were the very feelings and thoughts of her mind and heart. What joy it would be to read them in the moonlight, on this chilled night.

*'April 28, 1894*

*It has been three years to very day that I first saw my present love! Three wondrous years! I don't know if he will remember this occasion, but I will endeavour to remind him. Of late, his jealousy of my renewed friendship with James has caused problems. This is too bad! It has been four years since my previous courtship was interrupted by*

*James' call to service. Although he never found favour with James, I suspect he would take the opportunity to reassess the acquaintance, if such a possibility presented itself. James has matured for the better over the years. Indeed, as have we all. Oh! How time plays upon us, especially in my present circumstances. I'm waiting for the most promising moment to tell my love, for his reaction is surely beyond deduce. I wished we lived in a less judgemental age.*

*By way of illustration, it was only yesterday that I revealed my desire to spend more time by myself. I was most distressed when he took offence. What am I to do? I love him dearly but I require the freedom to be with my own thoughts. I'm sure he will respect my wishes, as he has declared his love for me, but it pains me to think that one day his patience will give. If his declaration of love holds true, then so should his desire. On contemplation, it appears that I suffer from a selfish inclination, but I must remain true to myself. I prey circumstance will work out how God has intended.*

*Thy light, thy life, thy love.'*

What was this awful news that had driven her away from me? I could hardly bring myself to read further but I shall; if only to find the root of her misery.

*'April 29, 1894*

*I spoke to James again yesterday, although most of our conversation was conducted in a rage, for he desires my heart once more. Oh! Sweet, dear James. How our moment has passed. I do love him but only with the delicate affection of a sister. No longer do we share the same passion and wild voracity that encircled our youthful desires. I wonder if, in the end, I shall love my present love as a brother or will he remain eternally secured to my heart? It is hard to imagine, I suspect this will never change. If only things had retained their consistency! I toyed with the idea of speaking the truth, but found it too demanding. Foul circumstance, for my family are not endeared to my love's background. If only they knew of our secret romances! I can think of no one to turn to, not even my three younger sisters! I feel so alone! If I*

*were to tell him, then I fear he would only turn against me and our mutual love would be dashed. That I could not bare! I have reached a decision: I am to visit the Doctor tomorrow and confide in him!*

*Thy light, thy life, thy love.'*

The moonlight was fading but her words seemed strong., the handwriting steady against the white, crisp paper, and her mood sombre. I glanced down at her face. So delicate, so peaceful now. When life ran through those veins she was headstrong and self-willed. These qualities I loved so much, I doubt I shall find another like her. I'm not sure that I want to, for the pain of memories would break me.

Slowly my mind began to fill in the missing piece to the jigsaw! There could only be one explanation! How mysterious womankind can be. Why all these games, why not tell fact?

I read further.

*'April 30 1894*

*Today has been trying to say the least! All my suspicions have been confirmed. What am I to do! I shall muster all the courage I can and confront my love with the derobed truth. How will he react? A scenario resulting in my banishment from his life and daily affairs, would splinter my heart. The more pleasant, would see us wed, with the blessings of each family, but I fear that may prove impossible.*

*Yes, I have made up my mind. Now is the time to confront my love and offer the truth before it unwillingly bursts from my body.*

*Thy light, thy life, thy love.'*

I furiously read the page for any clues as to her predicament. Now at last she had written the mystery down for all to see. I turned the page to read the news that would surely shape our futures; be it entwined or apart!

My eyes fell upon the words that chilled my soul to its very core. In despair I tore the pages from the strong binding and crumpled them helplessly next to my love. I screamed her name repeatedly until my throat bled. Only one course of action would suffice and relieve myself from my suffering; for I am not worthy to be of this race!

I loosened my pistol from its leathery embrace and presented its muzzle to my pulsating temple. With a perverse pleasure born of relief, my dirty fingers found rest upon the cold, metallic trigger. Every fibre of my body tensed as the mechanism discharged itself upon my desire.

A sharp pain prevailed as I reached out and clasped my love's hand. Her mouth contorted in mockery of a smile. We will be together for an eternity.