

The Anniversary

by Beate Sigriddaughter

Dear Kevin,

You walked by the rose on the table. I watched you. I saw you pause. "Did I give that to her?" You might have praised it then, its strong red swirl in the center, contained in vivid blue glass. I watched you decide that, no, you hadn't given it to me.

You were correct.

It was a dazzling day, with unexpected sun. I walked before dark. I met squirrels and dogs. I hoped for an eagle and celebrated shining crows instead.

I haven't seen anyone in love for a very long time. I used to notice these youngsters all the time, sliding arms around each other, heads moving in the direction of a kiss. Is it me, or is it just winter?

Today we are married ten years. I thought my world would change. It did.

You remember the names of countless senators and foreign dignitaries and football stars. You remember the layers of rock in the Grand Canyon. You remember greetings in at least twelve languages. You remember James Joyce's birthday. For whom do you remember these things? Who will admire you when you recite your hard facts?

Ten years ago I blazed with promise. I would always love you. I have kept this promise, as I always will. Today I will not speak of it to you, though it feels lonely to recite my knowledge to the brook below the bridge behind the recreation center.

If I told you, you might rush around and jump through hoops. But I don't want you like a tiger doing homework in the circus, leaping through flames, or roaring on demand. Indifference is deadly, yes. Still, I don't want it traded for apologetic drill.

I admire everything about you. Blue eyes. Strong shoulders. Exquisite mind. How you complete the New York Times crossword puzzle without cheating. How your hair gleams in sunlight. Your skin

against the marble motion of the sky. Your voice against a background of water. The way you touch the back of my neck.

Today I am exhausted from the endless effort of hope.

I wonder what threatens you to keep you aloof, adorned with the rote memory of rock formations. Limestone. Coconino sandstone. And still you are, as always, the bright angel on my trail.

Today I will not show you memories or celebrations. You don't care, or not enough, and I can't care for you.

Thank you for starting the fire. I treasure the glow, the coarse solidity of silence.

Love,
Robin

