

## Of Quilts and Correspondence by Svava Carmel Narasiah

*Perinne (Finnish): Tradition*

*Breyta (Icelandic): Change*

\*\*\*

My dearest Breyta,

Encased in this letter you will find three things: a square of white fabric, a dead leaf, and a photograph of myself. The first two items are, as you hopefully remember, mementos of our first meeting. The third is a reminder of what my face looks like, seeing as it's been years since you last saw it. Not much has changed, though. It's still me, except I cut my hair like you suggested. Mother says it looks fetching, but I miss how it used to look.

Do you remember the tree? Heavens, I loved that tree. It was so wonderful and huge and had the most gorgeous green leaves in the summer--like emeralds, almost, and after we met they reminded me of your eyes. I loved sewing beneath its branches, but I loved it even more after you came along. You showed me what color was, Breyta. You showed me how to draw pansies and posies, how to drip cherry blood along the cotton of my sewing projects and paint them red. You showed me how to embroider words and shapes and pictures, and even though I missed the plainness of white sometimes, I couldn't have loved your artistry more. So I've mailed you a blank square, in hopes that you will decorate it and send it back to me. I'll gladly attach it to the quilt we worked on, all those years ago.

I hope the leaf hasn't been destroyed in the delivery process. If it hasn't, I want you to do what you did the day we met: it was autumn, and the leaves were falling, brown and lifeless. You picked one up and twirled it in your fingers, and a couple hours later it was green again. Maybe I'm just crazy, and you'd just found a different leaf and switched them out, but I don't think so. I know you're magic. You always were, and I know you still are, so I want you to mail this leaf back to me, green and alive. I know it'll be the same one; I've memorized its exact shape and size and texture, so don't you dare try finding another one.

I know we haven't spoken in a while, but recently I've felt an alarmingly strong urge to correspond with you. You see, I've not done anything exciting in quite a while. My life is back to being routinely mundane, the skies are gloomy and the air horribly icy, and I have grown restless and fidgety. I'm lonely, and I miss you. So if you're able to find the time, please visit. I'll spoil you with treats--my sister owns a bakery now--and we can work on the quilt together, just like we used to.

Forever yours,

Perinne

\*\*\*

Dear Perinne,

In this envelope you will find, as requested, a rejuvenated leaf and freshly decorated fabric. But do understand that the leaf might have lost its life again during its journey back to you. Rest assured, though, I did bring it back to life. I promise.

The fabric, too, might have faded. I used berry juice and nectar to color it, just like we did that day in the forest. I hope it suffices. As for the photograph, I must admit--you are entirely different. That ethereal glow you used to emit, like the cinnamon-orange flame of the hearth in my childhood home--it isn't there. Where is that radiance you once possessed? Why are there dark circles beneath your eyes? Have you been sleeping? Are you sick? Please respond quickly.

I was on a boat yesterday, and I've just arrived at the shore of a small island in the Bahamas. It's absolutely fantastic here, lovely and hot--so entirely opposite from England, where it's cold and wet and smells of sewage. My offer still stands, you know; if you ever wish to join me on my adventures, please do so. I would adore a companion. Mostly it's just me and Robert, but he's quite deaf and doesn't like when I talk to him. I want someone who does more than carry my bags.

I'll try to visit as soon as I can, but I was there not too recently and I don't want to go back yet. But for you, I'll try. I always do, remember? Always.

I'm sorry this letter is so short. I have a ferry I can't be late for.

Best,

Breyta

\*\*\*

Dear Perinne,

It has been months. Are you alright? Please write back.

Best,

Breyta

\*\*\*

Perinne--

I am en route to England. Please expect my arrival. I must ensure that you are safe.

See you soon,

Breyta

\*\*\*

My dearest, most wonderful Perinne,

I shall place this letter on your headstone, in hopes that your spirit might catch wind of its words.

They all say different things, you know. I asked your mother; she said you faded away, until there wasn't enough of you left to keep going. I tracked down your friends; they said they hadn't seen you in years, that sometimes you were there in the corners of their eyes, lingering, almost forgotten. Every single person I asked said that you had been gone for far longer than you were dead, and it breaks my heart that you didn't tell me.

Why? Why didn't you say anything? Why didn't you tell me that you needed me, that without me you were disappearing? Oh, Perinne, I'm sorry. I should never have met you, should never have taught you to lust for the unknown, should never have let you taste what it meant to be truly hungry for change. You should have kept your white blankets and your dead leaves, kept those little traditions that you loved so much, because now you're gone and it's my fault because I changed them. I changed them, and I changed you, and I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

I love you, wholly and completely. Never forget that--not even in death.

Best,

Breyta