

Passing Notes in Parallel

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This was written in an English class, then changed around for a competition.

My hands tremble as I hit "Send". My eyes dart to the Subject line: "Entry - Short Story Contest". My unease lingers long after the message sends.

Write about something important to you, my teacher suggested. And so, my thoughts turned to one person: friend, advisor, idol...

The one I love.

She is a golden fruit; any flaw she had was simply a small bruise that made her even sweeter. Whenever she played the piano for me, I listened with not only my ears but also my heart. She is Brahms' Clara Wieck, Chopin's George Sand, Liszt's Marie d'Agoult: the target of a hopeless admirer looking upon a treasure one branch too far away.

Those calm twilight hours full of music and joy will stay in my heart forever. Shared cries, joined laughter, and high hopes filled the room when sunlight could not. If only we could never be farther apart than two musicians performing a duet!

When she told me she was moving away, I was crushed. She had visions of seeing new places and escaping this plain, fameless city; I had a simple hope of going to our local university. Conflicting ambitions threatened the existence of our friendship—and of my ardent affection. I feared the day when we would each fade from the other's memories.

I take my teacher's suggestion and weep the entire night as I write my entry for the short story contest. I rewrite and rewrite, but the final line stays the same: "And with tears flowing, I took in her words: 'I am leaving soon.'"

Alone in the dark room, I slump against the piano. Her sprint out the door re-plays in my head over and over. My fist clenches around the bouquet of roses. The rejected flowers seem to cry with me.

I never see her again. Never get to say goodbye.

A few days after submission, I find out I won the contest—conditionally. "Rewrite the ending," the editor commented. "Make it resonate like the rest of the story!" When I finally rewrite the only sentence I desperately want to fix, my eyes well up as I re-read: "And with tears flowing, I took in her words: 'I will stay with you forever. No matter what happens, just remember that I love you.'"

Word count: 380