Remember To Forget **48**

Word count 1499

As the last few strokes of mascara are applied with surgeon like precision, Alice grabs her Prada handbag, drops the mascara, Raybans and Montblanc wallet inside and dashes through the door of her penthouse apartment; she pirouettes around the postman scattering today’s offering of mail on the marble floor.

“Sorry, Doug, my bad, in a hurry as always, here let me help you.” She bends to help him gather the mail strewn on the hall floor.

“Morning sweetness, no, you carry on, you have important work ........ Oh, this one’s for you too, looks important.”

He hands her an official looking envelope together with the regular annoyance of junk mail; Doug always had a thing for the beautiful mid-twenties fashion executive but never dared take it further than polite Intercourse.

“How are things with you these days?”  
“All the better for bumping into you, handsome,” She smiles enticingly.

Doug always wanted to ask Alice on a date but despite being blessed with Brad Pitt looks, he secretly believed she was out of his league. A mere postman daring to ask a fashion executive on a date, not cool.

Despite Alice’s Tigger-like character, Doug sensed a more sombre, possibly troubled side to her but felt it was not his place to impose. He was on point; in the past Alice suffered periods of memory loss, losing days at a time; several periods with no recollection of the previous days; this upsets Alice. Despite her successful career and now happy life, it plays on her mind. She needs to know. She has an itch and desperately needs to scratch it.

Mail reshuffled, Alice places a whisper of a kiss on Doug’s cheek and dashes toward the lift. “Bye, sexy man, see you tomorrow.”

Momentarily choked, Doug squeezes out a “bye”. The lift doors swallow his fantasy and she is once again a mere princess in the fairy tale of his mind.

The office lift judders to a stop on the eleventh floor. The doors release her onto the vast control deck of Starship Fashion, glass walls overlooking the city; open office style desks with the latest harvest of Apple mac technology greets each employee.

“Hi, Alice”  
“Hello, Sara, how was the presentation, yesterday?”

2

“Fantastic, we expect a huge order this week; couldn’t have gone better.” “Well done, I’m really pleased for you.”

Fellow fashionista and best friend Sara can’t help but detect a slight sullenness in Alice’s voice.

Alice’s friends encourage her to ignore her memory lapses: Often pensively lugubrious, Alice knows this makes sense, yet despite their encouragement the urge to investigate prevails. Logic dictates the folly of reawakening lost memories, to look back now could be detrimental.

As a psychiatrist, Hector is unorthodox in both his techniques and his appearance. A dapper late 20’s with dark hair and immaculate suits, Alice quite envies his fashion choices and yes, if she were honest, she did quite fancy him. Was this why she finally decided to pursue her past with his help? Or is it because he will be moving away in a few days to take up a new placement abroad and she might never see him again?

Despite Alice’s concerns, Hector appears reluctant to proceed to look into the unknown, especially via the hypnosis sessions Alice requests; besides nothing similar has happened for several years now; she is in a very happy place so maybe it is best forgotten.

Alice had to admit he does have a point, maybe it is best forgotten. But then, she thought, a few hours on a couch chatting with Hector does seem rather appealing.

Hector’s office brings Alice a mix of excitement and dread. Lying back, she feels like a school girl with a crush on her teacher, she is sure she just giggled but as Hector’s calm, masculine voice reaches 4,3,2,1 she feels a sense of security mixed with an overwhelming feeling of calmness, as if floating in space.

A feather in the updraft of a hot summer’s day, under hypnosis Alice’s mind begins to reassemble a jigsaw of history; tiny pieces of blank days reveal like numbers on a scratch card. One location repeatedly flashes a stroboscope of images, a door, some stone steps, another door, a blackened room. The location eludes but familiarity contradicts ignorance; the desire to recall escalates.

Alice descends further down the stone stairs, eventually reaching the inner doorway. Repeatedly telling herself not to look beyond the door, a compelling urge keeps her returning for more sessions of hypnotism.

Discussing recollections, close friends eventually persuade her to stop the hypnosis sessions, dismissing images as vivid imagination; fearing they are right Alice agrees to continue life as before forgetting silly notions of a bad past.

Nightimes are lonely. Waking in a sweat, recurring dreams compel Alice to look into the room beyond the door. Eventually details materialise offering clues to possible locations of the elusive door.

The office phone rings.

“Thank you, Hector, no, I’m fine, I’m glad we did it but I think it’s time to move on now. You were right, the past is not important, it’s now that counts........yes........yes.......no...... I’ll be fine.... yes I will, thank you, bye.”

“Alice, I’m so glad you’ve finished with that nonsense let’s go for a drink later and put it all behind us.”

“Me too, Sara. I did remember one pub I used to visit, maybe we could go there, it would be a fitting end to my memory search and a good place to start again.”

“If you’re sure: It can’t hurt I suppose, I’ll drive if you like, you can celebrate.” “Thanks, Sara, I‘d really like that.”

Driving deep into the countryside the girls stumble upon a stone wall encircling an ancient country estate. There’s an old crumbling gateway to a derelict former gatehouse. Alice remembers the gatehouse.

“Stop! Stop the car, I know this place.”  
The girls approach on foot.  
“There, a door exactly like the one in my dreams.”  
The door resists before creaking open. Ancient stone steps descend into the darkness.

Sara, terrified, mumbles “Please, Alice, let’s just forget about it and go home.”

Alice is compelled to continue down into the darkness. She fumbles in her pocket for a small keyring torch. It’s just enough to illuminate the old steel door at the foot of the stone steps.

Sara trembles, “Please, let’s go.”

Alice wrenches the rusty handle. The door swings inwards, its weight dragging her into the blackness beyond. Both stumble into the darkness. A sudden coldness befalls them.

In his office, sudden anxiety hits as Hector recalls a long past newspaper article. Young twin girls; a family moving away after one twin went missing aged 12. Frantically searching the internet he finds a single reference, a story of the missing twin and her family. They moved, with daughter, Alice, to another town. Google reveals the teenager allegedly suffered multiple personality syndrome, going missing for days at a time, returning with no recollection of where she had been.

Another click of the mouse; stories of girls reported missing over a number of years; panic sets in. Sudden realisation cascades like a waterfall. He grabs his mobile, dials 999, puts his phone on speaker and rushes to his car.

Alice drags her friend into the room, slamming the heavy steel door shut behind them as the darkness swallows them both.

Eyes adjusting to the light, a single candle flickers at the far end of the room. Alice moves towards the dim light.

Sara squinting stumbles over the uneven yet strangely soft floor. She falls, her face-plant saved by something squishy. An unbearable stench overwhelms. She staggers to her feet, eyes hazy, as the dim flicker of a light reveals the source of the stench, decomposing bodies pinned to the walls by huge steel spikes.

Sara screams collapsing to her knees, “Alice, what....”  
The dull thud of heavy steel against bone cuts Sara’s screams short: She drops like a stone. Loud banging on the steel door deafens, the door bursts open, Hector tumbles inside.

“Thank God I got to you girls in time....” His flashlight cuts the darkness like a light sabre. Bodies hang from the walls like rabbits in a butcher’s window. He glimpses Sara freshly hung from a spike on the wall, blood seeping from a massive head wound.

He just makes out the shape of a sobbing female huddled in the corner. “Alice, Alice, are you all right?”

The following morning Alice wakes, happy as usual. She finishes her makeup, flits out of her apartment and locks the door behind her.

“Morning, sweetness” calls Doug. “Anything special on today?”

“Morning Doug, you look so handsome today.”

He blushes.

“No, nothing unusual, just the same old routine; sometimes the days are so similar I forget which day it is.”

“How are you getting on with that lost memory thing, any progress?”

“Oh, that, I decided to take everyone’s advice and move on, sometimes it’s best to not look back, don’t you think?”