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### If You Forget Me

Until someone who means a lot to you is taken away, its importance is often difficult to comprehend because it was previously taken for granted. This poem, by Pablo Neruda, is about two people who are unified through the soul. It is a connection like no other, where the man feels exactly what the woman feels. "My love feeds on your love, beloved." (Neruda, see appendix) No matter how much they love one another, however, they become afraid of losing or being separated from one another, as there is no ring that has bound them together. They can't be together like they want, which in turn creates pain, and in order to soothe that pain, one of them may feel it necessary to end the relationship and attempt to forget about it. Further confusing the situation however, this pain fails to fully motivate either one of them, and neither one can bear to let go.

Stanza two focuses a great deal on the use of natural observation. The author first looks at the crystal moon and the, "red branch of the slow autumn at my window." I feel that these things symbolize physical distance, yet closeness in memory. When we look up at the moon in the night sky, it appears as if we can reach out and touch it. In the same way, the author seems to be able to remember his love very clearly. But at the same time, when we look at the moon, we know that we are separated from it by an incredible distance in the same way that the author is from his lover. The red branch is quite similar. When the author looks at the branch, it appears to be quite solid, just like the love that he feels for his lover. But when he examines how the

autumn has set in upon it, he realizes that the branch is full of memories of the past, and of better days.

Second, the author says, “if I touch near the fire, the impalpable ash.” (7-8) Once again, he is looking at two similar things. When he comes closer to the fire, he feels warmth, but knows nothing of its cause. The fire is a substance that we cannot touch or feel in the same way that we can touch and feel most objects. In the same way, the author can feel the warmth of the love that his relationship has refined, but he cannot reach out and touch it. The ash, then, is described as make-believe, quite like the fire. When we look at the ashes of a fire, they often look solid, almost like rocks. If we poke at them with something, however, they turn to dust and fall away. Just like the first analogy, the author can’t really reach out and touch the ashes that symbolize his love. Though they look solid, they immediately turn to dust and fall away at even the slightest touch.

These symbolisms, in my interpretation, mean they have gone through a lot together, and have been lovers for quite some time. In spite of this, however, he knows that none of this will matter if she decides to let go, and he will have no choice but to loosen his grip on the rope he is tightly holding onto because she is not going to be at the other end. No matter what happens, he will always love her. In stanza five (24-35) the boy makes it clear that he is in tune with her heart, and he knows deep down that as long as she loves him, he will love her just as intensely. The minute his heart is torn out by its roots, however, it’s going to quickly fly away to another bird’s nest, a place to settle, to heal and maybe even implant itself there for a long period of time.

Since the author frequently refers to the situation hypothetically, prefacing so many statements with “if,” we know that these events haven’t occurred and that he is merely considering a worst-case scenario. It is possible that Pablo Neruda is the boy in this poem and he

is the one separated from his soul mate because he was the one to suffer the loss of a good friend, Garcia Lorca. He lost his mother when he was a very young boy; his father remarried giving his mother's place to some other women. Pablo only talks about himself and his heart and fails to mention how his soul mate feels. And although I'm sure she feels the same as he does, he is probably thinking about all of this because he feels as if everyone he has treasured in life has been taken away from him and fears that his soul mate will be taken away from him.

I see the theme here as emotional vulnerability. It is natural for one to want to reach out and to pull when it comes to true love or anything that holds a place of great significance in their life. Safeguarding that jewel and making the uncertain turn into something concrete usually means that there is a strong bonded relationship. Appreciating what is in front of us is hard because we know it is there. Once it's gone and we no longer have that safe nest to turn back to, we start analyzing and thinking of the worst possible situations.

Of course, women analyze and read into a lot more things than men do. In addition, women are typically much more emotionally involved in our relationships. Males, however, often try to mask the pain they are going through when they, say, lose a girlfriend by acting like they are over it the next day. I understand that they feel the need to keep the tough guy look, but some emotion is necessary. In lines 20-23 it shows just that. "If suddenly you forget me don't look for me, for I shall have already forgotten you."

"If You Forget Me," by Pablo Neruda is a poem that is full of symbolism and emotion. And, like many of the great poems in literary history, it combines the impulsive nature of love and emotion, with meticulous and painfully thought out symbolism. His poetic imagery contains a variety of scenes which the readers can easily imagine and to which they can relate.

## Appendix

### **If You Forget Me**

**By : Pablo Neruda**

1. I want you to know
2. one thing.
  
3. You know how this is:
4. if I look
5. at the crystal moon, at the red branch
6. of the slow autumn at my window,
7. if I touch
8. near the fire
9. the impalpable ash
10. or the wrinkled body of the log,
11. everything carries me to you,
12. as if everything that exists,
13. aromas, light, metals,
14. were little boats
15. that sail
16. toward those isles of yours that wait for me.
  
17. Well, now,
18. if little by little you stop loving me

19. I shall stop loving you little by little.

20. If suddenly

21. you forget me

22. do not look for me,

23. for I shall already have forgotten you.

24. If you think it long and mad,

25. the wind of banners

26. that passes through my life,

27. and you decide

28. to leave me at the shore

29. of the heart where I have roots,

30. remember

31. that on that day,

32. at that hour,

33. I shall lift my arms

34. and my roots will set off

35. to seek another land.

36. But

37. if each day,

38. each hour,

39. you feel that you are destined for me
40. with implacable sweetness,
41. if each day a flower
42. climbs up to your lips to seek me,
43. ah my love, ah my own,
44. in me all that fire is repeated,
45. in me nothing is extinguished or forgotten,
46. my love feeds on your love, beloved,
47. and as long as you live it will be in your arms
48. without leaving mine.

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