

Under a pavilion set out in a large field, a couple danced, unaware of the snow that fell all around them. They swayed to the music, moving gracefully, as if it required no thought to move so perfectly, and indeed it didn't. In a corner of the pavilion, a lone figure in a lilac dress sung softly, just loud enough for the couple to hear.

The dancing girl wore a long silk ball gown, white as the snow. A white mask covered her face just over her nose, folding up into feathers at the edges, blending with the white feathers artistically floating in her auburn hair, giving the appearance of a dove sitting posed there. The boy wore a matching white tuxedo, with a purple peony tucked into his button hole. Half his face was also covered in a mask, but it arched up sharply, sides meeting in at a sharp point a few inches above his ears. Gloves as white as both dancers' clothing covered their hands, disappearing under the cuffs of the boy's jacket, and running up to two inches from the girl's shoulder, where her dress cut off.

The snow continued to fall around them, and the song went on, everything in the scene perfectly intertwined. Slowly, the last notes of the song faded out, and the dancers parted reluctantly. The boy bowed to the girl and stepped back into the snow, blending in completely and vanishing, only the snow, the pavilion and the two girls were left, the white dancer stretching her arm out for her companion.

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Sakura looked out the window into the snow. It had been snowing for nearly a month. It reminded her of something, but she didn't know what. Tomoyo had been over earlier, measuring her for another gown. She continually complained of Sakura growing; once she could have made Sakura a dress with her eyes closed, but now her friend was always getting taller. Sakura smiled. They were both seventeen now, in their last year of high school. Which was inadvertently why Tomoyo had been measuring her. The school's winter prom was next week. It would be a masked ball, no one would be permitted to remove their masks until the end of the "ball".

The smile faded. For weeks boys had been asking her to it, but she had politely turned down each one. There was no one at the school she wanted for her date. She was waiting for someone special. She knew that someone would come to be her partner, the person who was perfect for her. Tomoyo was worried that Sakura would be disappointed when no one showed up, Sakura could see that easily. 'She shouldn't worry herself. He will come.' The snow danced as it fell to the ground, whirling around, each flake waltzing with another.

It was the night before the prom. The next day Tomoyo was coming over, to help Sakura fix her hair, and get her dress adjusted. In the past week Sakura had turned down no less than a boy a day. She had grown up, and was now one of the most popular girls in the school, though she either didn't know, or refused to acknowledge it. The past week had been trying. She had had no explainable reason to turn the boys down. Many had demanded a reason, asking who she was waiting for. She had just repeated her apology and moved away slowly. Tomoyo had watched sadly. Sakura wished her friends would stop looking at her with such sad eyes. She knew what she was doing. She had never been so sure of herself in her life.

Tomoyo watched as her best friend walked into the room, wearing the ankle length dress she had made for her. The dress suited Sakura perfectly. It was snow white, cut off at the shoulders, with long gloves. Sakura and Tomoyo talked eagerly while Tomoyo braided white feathers into Sakura's hair. Tomoyo was wearing a long lilac dress, her hair done up in a high ponytail with purple ribbon, and a purple scarf for her to cover her arms with. Her wrist length gloves lay on the bed beside her. A quick look at a watch told them both that it was time to leave. Sakura held up a white-feathered mask to her face and Tomoyo tied it on. She then picked up her own mask, she was driving and would put it on when they arrived at the school.

The drive was uneventful. Snow was still falling lightly. Sakura was again reminded of an event she could not remember completely. At the doors to the gym, where the dance was, Tomoyo met up with her partner, Eriol, who was dressed in a black tuxedo which suited him well. His mask was a dark blue, sides ending in a butterfly wing design. Sakura smiled to herself. She had seen those types of wings before. Tomoyo accepted her partner's offered arm, and they entered the gym. It was dark, most lights were turned out, only

low lights adorned the walls to prevent people from crashing into them. The dance floor was swept by large spotlights, catching couples as they swept by. On one side of the gym all those who had come without dates or whose dates had yet to show up were sitting on benches. Sakura navigated that way, recognizing Chiharu and Yamazaki as they danced by from their hair styles. Tomoyo watched Sakura anxiously, but she smiled and motioned for her to go dance with Eriol. Tomoyo nodded, and followed her date out onto the dance floor.

Sakura sat on the bench and watched as the people next to her were taken off to dance by other loners. Many offered her a dance, and she accepted, trying her best to not appear distracted. People stopped to watch as she danced by, for even with her face hidden she seemed to sparkle in the passing spotlights. Eventually an announcer came on over the microphone. Since it was supposed to be a ball they had not had any announcement, just music, but now there was one, and Sakura suspected she knew the reason. The dance had been going on for hours. It was time for it to end. A fear gripped her throat.

*What if he doesn't come after all? What if Tomoyo was right?* Sakura shook her head and listened.

"Thank you all for coming. This has been a wonderful ball, and I hope you have all enjoyed yourselves. There will be one last song, then the masks come off, and then the dance will be finished. Once again, thank you all for making this a success."

In the corner of the room Tomoyo was standing next to Eriol she watched Sakura sit alone.

"But, she needs this so much. After all she's done, she deserves a happy ending." For a moment Eriol looked up and around. Tomoyo looked at him curiously.

"What? What is it?" Eriol shook his head.

"I thought someone was here, listening to us, but I was wrong. Still..." He looked to his side, and saw, on the ground, a purple flower petal.

Sakura stood up, passing by boys asking her for a dance, and walked forward onto the dance floor. It was now or never. A whisper went up from the end of the gym near the doors. Someone was making his way through the crowd. As he neared, Sakura could see that he was wearing a white tuxedo, with a purple flower pushed into the button hole, and a sharp mask. Something at the back of her mind jumped, but she ignored it. The boy was heading straight for her, navigating around shocked couples. A few girls approached him, but he moved past them politely, and stopped in front of her, looking down through his half-face mask. The music started in the background. He held his hand out in front of him.

"May I have this dance?" Sakura nodded and took his hand. As a voice came to accompany the music, Sakura realized it was Tomoyo. Looking to the side, she saw Tomoyo standing on a small platform with her eyes closed, singing into a microphone. Sakura closed her eyes and let her heart lead her, moving without thought, but knowing it was right.

*Dancing bears,  
Painted wings,  
Things I almost remember,  
And a song someone sings  
Once upon a December.*

Everything was so familiar. As if she had done it a hundred times, but couldn't remember where. Everything was so perfect. She knew this boy, someone from her past. But she couldn't think. She could only dance.

*Someone holds me safe and warm.  
Horses prance through a silver storm.  
Figures dancing gracefully*

*Across my memory...*

Someone was leaving. She was sad. They said goodbye, and he promised to come back to her, so they could be together again. She had promised him that she would wait for him, and she had. Every night she had dreamed of him, dreamed of them dancing together. And now they were.

*Far away, long ago,  
Glowing dim as an ember,  
Things my heart used to know,  
Once upon a December*

They had danced before. She had gone over to his apartment once, in the winter, while it was snowing. He had forgotten something and she had returned it. The snow had fallen through the darkness outside. He had turned on the radio, and this song had been playing. They had danced, for no reason. Just because it felt right. Like they had been doing it forever.

*Someone holds me safe and warm.  
Horses prance through a silver storm.  
Figures dancing gracefully  
Across my memory...*

He had taken her home, facing her brother's wrath just because he didn't want her to have to walk home alone through the storm. She had smiled and thanked him, and he had blushed and run off into the snow, vanishing from sight almost immediately. Like the figure in her dream.

*Far away, long ago,  
Glowing dim as an ember,  
Things my heart  
Used to know,  
Things it yearns to remember...*

Whenever the song came over the radio she would drop whatever she was doing and dance to it, as if reminding herself of that one dance years ago. But after the dance he would always leave again and she would nearly forget about it. It was something only she and he knew about, no one had ever seen her dance to it. No one but her brother had even known she had stopped by his house that night, and no one knew about their song. But now she knew that it was coming to an end. And she was afraid that, like every other dance, he would leave her, vanish into the snow, as if he had never been here and never would be. And she would have to dance alone again.

*And a song  
Someone sings  
Once upon a December*

The song was over. She opened her eyes to find that they were the only couple on the dance floor, standing in a spotlight. Everyone else stood watching, as if mesmerized by them. One by one their audience started to clap, until the gym was filled with nothing but the noise of people cheering. The masked boy took a step back, and, looking sadly at her, bowed gracefully and walked away. She watched as the crowd parted for him, and he opened the doors and walked out into the storm, vanishing instantly. Sakura grabbed her skirt and, pulling it up so that her legs were free, ran after him.

In the storm she lost herself, she could hardly see her own hand in front of her. She ran in circles, looking for some sign of him. There was none. He was gone again. She could have stopped him, but she had let him leave again. It was a never ending cycle. She would be alone forever, only happy for those few minutes when she could dance with her prince. She found herself at a tree and sat down at its base, crying softly. She couldn't wait anymore. She had waited six years for him to come back, and she just couldn't wait any longer. But she couldn't live without him. No one could take his place. The tears fell out under her mask

and fell to the ground, destroying any snow they touched. Destroying her memories.

As she watched a white gloved hand reached out and caught the next tear, and, with a wave of the hand, turned it into a white dove. Sakura looked up to find her partner leaning over next to her. He raised his arm and the dove flew off, disappearing.

"I'm like that bird."

Sakura nodded.

"But you came back. I thought you would never come back, that you would just keep leaving me, forever." He shook his head.

"I got tired of playing the lone wolf. Are you tired of playing the fragile cherry blossom yet?"

Sakura nodded again, and took off her mask. He smiled slightly, and turned around, reaching his hands up behind his head and untying the strings. He turned around again, mask in hand.

"Am I who you expected?" Sakura laughed.

"There was only ever one possibility. If this was a comedy, I suppose you would be Eriol. But life isn't a comedy. Or a drama, or a tragedy or any other theatrical term you could put to it. It's life, and in life, true love comes but once."

The boy's brown eyes sparkled.

"You've grown up since I last saw you, or at least, since I last saw you in real life. Dreams don't count, I suppose?" She shook her head again.

"No, but we won't need to dream anymore, it will be reality. Are you coming back with me?" She offered her arm to him. He smiled again.

"Of course, my lady. After all, we have yet to surprise and amaze our audience." He clapped his hands, and when he opened them they held a small silver necklace with a crystal cherry blossom as the charm. He clipped it around her neck. As they approached the school, they saw Tomoyo and Eriol standing outside the doors, in front of a large population of the rest of their grade.

"On second thoughts, maybe we should disappear." Taking his mask in his hands, the boy pulled a pen out of thin air.

"Magic is good for more than making elements, you know." He wrote something on it and, catching Eriol's eye, threw it lightly to him. The reincarnation of Clow caught it with ease and watched as together, Sakura and Syaoran bowed and stepped back into the snow, disappearing.

Eriol turned over the mask and read the writing on the inside of the sharp white mask, and, smiling slightly, handed it to Tomoyo, who read it and smiled as well.

"There are no happy endings, because nothing ends."