

西西：像我這樣的一個女子

A Girl Like Me

By Xi Xi

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IT REALLY ISN'T right for a girl like me to have any love affairs. Which only makes it all the more surprising that such a strong attachment should have developed between Xia and me. I think it must be entirely the cruel hand of Fate that has landed me in this situation from which I cannot extricate myself. And I am powerless to fight against Fate. They say that when you really like a man, you can sit in a quiet corner just looking at him, and one little smile from him, even a very casual sort of smile, can make your spirit soar. That is exactly how I feel about Xia. So when he asks me—Do you like me?—I can tell him what I feel without holding back. You see, I am not a girl who knows how to protect herself, and the things I do and say are forever making me the laughing-stock of other people. You might think I look very happy when I am sitting with Xia in a café; but inside, my heart is heavy with silent grief. Inside I am really extremely unhappy, because of my premonition of where Fate is leading me. And I only have myself to blame. Right at the beginning, I never should have agreed to go with Xia to visit that school friend I hadn't seen for a long time; and then afterwards, I never should have accepted that first of many invitations to go to the cinema with him. Well, it's too late for regrets now. But the fact of the matter is that whether I do have regrets or not, I am no longer as worried as I was by the thought of our coming separation. Soon, everything will be over—for I have agreed to take Xia to the place where I work, and right now I am sitting in a corner of the café waiting for him.

I'd already left school long before the time when Xia and I started getting involved with each other; so when he asked me whether I had a job, I told him that I'd already been working for several years.

—So, what do you do?

He asked.

—Make-up. I make people up.

I answered.

—Oh, you do make-up.

He said.

—But your own face looks so beautifully natural.

He said.

He said he didn't like it when women wore make-up, he much preferred them to look natural. I don't think it was this conversation which drew his attention to the fact that I don't use make-up, but rather the uncommon paleness of my face. And of my hands. It was because of my work that my hands and face looked paler than those of other people.

I knew that Xia had got totally the wrong end of the stick about what sort of work I did, just like every friend I'd ever had always did. He must have imagined me at work, beautifying the faces of ordinary ladies, or embellishing brides in readiness for their wedding day; and he can only have felt even more certain that he was right when I told him that I had no regular holidays in my work, and that I was often busy on Sundays. After all, there are always so many brides on Sundays, or on holidays.

But making up brides is not what I do. What I do is to give a final embellishment to those who no longer have life; I make them up so that they will look peaceful and soft when they depart this world. In the old days I used to tell my friends exactly what I *did* do for a living; as soon as I thought they had jumped to the wrong conclusion, I would put them straight because I wanted to let them know what kind of person I was. But this honesty had cost me most of my friendships. It was me they were afraid of—as if I, sitting with

them over a cup of coffee, was the embodiment of every dreadful spectre in their minds. I don't blame them for reacting like this—because after all, we are each of us born with a primitive fear of the mysterious and of the unknown. And so I had answered Xia without offering any explanation. There were two reasons for this: firstly, I didn't want him to be frightened—I felt that I would never be able to forgive myself if I ever again upset one of my friends by disclosing the macabre details of my employment; and secondly, I'd always been bad at putting things into words, and little by little I was getting used to keeping things to myself.

—But your own face looks so beautifully natural.

He said.

When Xia said this, I was acutely aware that it boded ill for our future together. And Xia?—he was perfectly happy, happy to be with a woman who didn't make herself up. His heart was light, but mine was heavy with sadness. I'm always wondering who in this world will do my make-up for me, at my end. Aunt Yifen? But Aunt Yifen and I are the same, and we both feel very strongly that we never want to do make-up for our nearest and dearest as long as we live.

I can't think why I carried on going around with Xia so much of the time, even after that bad omen cast its shadow. Perhaps I am only human after all, unable to control myself, marching left right, left right, in the footsteps of Fate. I really cannot come up with a rational explanation for anything I've done, and then I think to myself... well, isn't that only human nature, to be irrational? Much of human behaviour *is* inexplicable, even to the person who is acting in that way.

—Can I see where you work?

Xia asked.

—I can't see why not.

I said.

—Will anyone mind?

He asked.

—No, I don't suppose anyone will.

I said.

The reason why Xia wanted to come with me to work was because I had to go there every Sunday morning, when *he* had nothing in particular to do. First he said he'd just like to accompany me there; but then he thought that since he

would have gone all the way there anyway, why not go in and have a look around. He said he wanted to feel the excitement of the brides and bridesmaids, and he wanted to see how I made them as beautiful as roses, or how their natural beauty was spoilt by the make-up... whichever! I agreed without a moment's thought. I knew that Fate had brought me this far, to the starting-line, and that it was something I had to go through with. So, right now I am sitting in a small café, waiting for Xia to come; and then we shall go to the place where I work.

And when we get there, everything will become clear to him. Xia will realize that the fragrance he has taken all along to be a perfume that I wear especially for him, is actually nothing more than the smell of antiseptic which clings to my skin; he will also realize that the reason I always wear white clothes is not because I am deliberately trying to cultivate an air of innocence, but because these clothes afford me a measure of convenience in entering and leaving my place of work. The smell of that strange lotion not only clings to my skin, but must also have worked its way through to my bones by now—I tried everything I could think of to wash away that smell, but I never managed to get rid of it, and finally I gave up trying. I don't even notice it any more. Of course, Xia doesn't know anything about all this. He once said to me: What an unusual perfume you are wearing! Soon everything will be out in the open.

You know, I'm something of a hairdresser and I can do a stylish cut; and I am also an expert hand at doing up a tie. But where does it get me? Look at my hands. Just think of all the times they have trimmed the hair and beards of silent customers, and tied up ties around stiff and solemn necks. Could Xia stand it if this same pair of hands were to cut his hair, or knot his tie for him? These hands are really warm, but they seem icy cold to others. These hands should be quite at home cradling a new-born baby; but other people look at them as though they had turned into white bones, to hold and soothe skeletons.

THERE ARE PERHAPS many reasons why Aunt Yifen decided to pass on her skill to me. And from the kind of things she says, people would see it all very clearly: of course, with a skill such as this, a person really wouldn't *ever* have to worry about

being out of a job, and the pay is pretty good too! How could a girl like me, with little formal schooling and a limited intellect, possibly hope to compete with others in this human jungle where the weak are the prey of the strong.

I think the reason why Aunt Yifen imparted the valuable secrets of her unique skill to me was purely and simply because I am her niece. She never allowed any visitors when she was working, and it was only after she took me on as her apprentice that she let me follow her around, learning from her little by little; and I didn't feel afraid, even when I was standing in front of those naked and cold corpses. And I even learned how to take the crushed or shattered bits and pieces of a human body, or the fragments of a fractured skull, and fit them together and sew them up, as though I were only a wardrobe mistress making up a costume.

I lost both my parents when I was a child, so I was brought up by Aunt Yifen. What has happened is that gradually, over the years, I have grown strangely like my aunt, and have even assimilated her reticence, her pale face and hands, and her slow way of walking. In every way I have grown more and more like her. Sometimes I can't help wondering who I really am—maybe I am a carbon copy; maybe the two of us are really one and the same person; maybe I am only an extension of my aunt.

—From now on, you won't need to worry about food or clothing.

Said Aunt Yifen.

—You also won't have to be dependent on someone else for your keep, like other women are.

She said.

Actually, I didn't know what she meant by this. I didn't see what was so special about learning her particular skill—surely there were plenty of other occupations that could provide for me just as well, where I wouldn't have to worry about food and clothes, and where I wouldn't have to depend upon someone else to support me, the way other women had to. But I was so very ignorant of the world, and definitely not equipped to compete with other women—and that's why Aunt Yifen thought to help me by passing on to me her special skill; she had only my best interests at heart. And if you think about it, what single person in this

whole city can do without our help?—it doesn't make any difference whether he is rich or poor, a beggar or a king; when Fate delivers him into our hands, we shall be his last source of comfort, and we shall make him look peaceful and calm, and soft beyond compare. Aunt Yifen and I both have wishes of our own; but quite apart from these, there is one wish that we have in common, which is that never, as long as we live, do we want to do make-up for our nearest and dearest.

That's why I felt so sad last week. I'd already heard a little about this tragic thing that had happened, and then I discovered that it was my younger brother who was involved. As far as I understood the situation, my little brother had been in love with a girl who was not only attractive and nice-natured, but also very talented—they were so happy together that I thought they must be meant for each other. Despite all of this, however, their happiness proved to be very short-lived, and it was not long before I heard that she had got married to a man she didn't love, goodness only knows why. What sense does it make when two people who love each other cannot get married, but must instead spend the rest of their lives suffering, pining for each other. My little brother is a changed person, and not so long ago I heard him say: I might as well be dead!

I don't know what to think. Surely it's not possible that I shall have to make up my little brother?

—I might as well be dead!

My little brother said.

I simply don't understand why things have turned out like this, and neither does my little brother. Supposing she had said: I don't love you any more. Well, there wouldn't have been much my little brother could have done about it. But they do love each other, and it was not because anyone owed anyone a favour or needed the money that she married this other man. Surely in this day and age, there are not still young ladies who are being forced by their parents to marry against their will? Why should she have surrendered her whole life to Fate in this way? Ah, let us hope that we never have to do make-up for our nearest and dearest, as long as we live.

But who can look into the future? When Aunt Yifen informed me of her decision to teach me her highly unusual skill, she said to me: You must

promise me one thing before I take you on as my apprentice. I couldn't think why Aunt Yifen was being so serious, but she carried on in a solemn voice: When my time comes, you must make me up all by yourself; don't let anyone else touch me. I didn't think it would be a difficult promise to keep, I only wondered why Aunt Yifen was being so insistent. I myself feel quite differently about it—for I can't see what difference it makes *what* happens to my body after I am gone. Still, it was the one hope that Aunt Yifen cherished above all others, and I felt that provided I was still alive when that day came, I must do whatever I could to ensure that her hope was realized. Aunt Yifen and I are the same as we make our long journey through life in that we don't have 'great expectations'—Aunt Yifen's hope is that I shall be the person who does her make-up for her at her end; and mine is that I shall be able to put my skill towards creating a 'sleeping beauty', a corpse more peaceful and calm and soft than all the others, just to make it seem as though death is really no more than the deepest and best of sleeps after all. Whether I ever actually manage to do this or not, it is only a game I play when I am feeling bored with life and I'm trying to kill time. And anyway, any effort I make is bound to be in vain . . . for isn't everything in the world devoid of meaning?

Supposing I ever *do* create my 'sleeping beauty', can I hope to be rewarded?—the dead themselves know nothing, and none of their relatives ever realize just how much mental and physical energy I expend on my work; and I shall never be able to hold an exhibition and let the general public appreciate the quality and the innovative skill of my work as a make-up artist; and it is even less likely that anyone will ever write a review or a comparative study, or do research, or hold a seminar, in order to discuss the making up of the dead; and even if there *were* people who did this sort of thing, so what? Theirs would only be the buzzing of bees and the busy-ness of ants.

My work is nothing more than a game of solitaire I play in a small room.

Why then do I have my ambition if not to provide the incentive for carrying on with my work—because my work is, after all, solitary, and I am alone; and in the game I play there is no opponent and no audience, let alone the sound of applause. While I am working, I can hear only the

sound of my own soft breathing; and even though the room is full of men and women, I am the only one breathing, softly. I can even hear my heart sighing and lamenting; and the sound of my own heart seems all the louder because the hearts of the dead are no longer uttering their sad cries.

Yesterday, I thought that I would make up a young couple who had committed suicide, who had died for love in fact. I stared at the face of the sleeping boy, and suddenly I felt that *here* was the raw material out of which I would fashion my 'sleeping beauty'. His eyes were shut, his lips were lightly closed; there was the trace of a scar on his left temple; he looked as though he was asleep, sleeping peacefully. Over the years I had made up faces by the thousands—many of these faces looked anxious, though by far the majority looked fierce. They were my standard repertoire, and I did the appropriate mending, sewing and patching, so that they would come to look infinitely soft. But the boy I saw yesterday, his face had an indescribable air of calm—had it been a real source of pleasure to him, killing himself? Anyhow, I knew that I for one wasn't taken in by his outward appearance, and I regarded what he had done as an act of extreme cowardice; and as far as I was concerned, a man who lacked the courage to fight against Fate was not even worth a second glance. Not only did I abandon the idea of turning this young man into my 'sleeping beauty', but I refused to do any make-up on him altogether; I thought him and the girl so stupid for just dumbly accepting whatever it was Fate had in store for them, and so I passed the two of them on to Aunt Yifen, leaving her with the job of beautification, of carefully covering over the burns on their cheeks that had been caused by drinking a particularly lethal poison.

EVERYONE KNOWS ABOUT what happened to Aunt Yifen, for there were people around at the time who saw for themselves. Aunt Yifen was still young in those days, and she liked to sing as she worked, and would talk to the dead lying before her as if they were her friends. Her reticence, you see, came later. Aunt Yifen used to pour out her heart to her sleeping friends—she never wrote a diary but she 'talked' it instead; and those who were sleeping in front of her were the most wonderful listeners in the world because they

could listen endlessly to every detail of her tireless talk. They were first-rate at keeping secrets too. Aunt Yifen would talk to them about the man she had got to know, and she would say how they were as happy together as lovers could be, but how from time to time they also had their cloudy days, which now seemed so far away. In those days, Aunt Yifen went to a school for beauticians once a week to learn the art of make-up. She went there regularly over the years, rain or shine, and mastered virtually every technique that the teachers there had to offer—even when the school told her that she had nothing more to learn, she still insisted that they try to think if there was not *some* new technique they could teach her. Her passion for make-up was so intense it was almost as if she had been born with it, and her friends thought that she was bound to open up some large beauty parlour. But she did not, and instead she dedicated the fruit of her studies to the sleeping bodies in front of her. Her young lover was ignorant of all this—he had always assumed it was part of their nature for girls to be preoccupied with their appearance, and he thought it was just that she liked make-up . . . that was all.

Until one day, when she took him to the place where she worked. And pointing to the dead bodies around them, she told him that hers was very lonely and dreary work, but that here there were at least no worldly cares, all conflicts over jealousy, hatred, fame or money ceasing to exist; and she told him that when people sank into the darkness, they would become peaceful and calm, and soft. He was so shocked, never having thought that a girl like her could be doing work like hers—he had loved her, he would have done anything for her, he had solemnly sworn that he would never leave her no matter what happened, and that they would remain devoted to each other for the rest of their lives, and that their love would always be true. Yet, before a silent gathering of dead bodies which could neither speak nor breathe, he completely lost the courage of his former convictions, and letting out a loud cry he turned round and dashed out, pushing all the doors open as he went. All along the way, people saw him running in blind panic.

Aunt Yifen didn't see him any more after that, but she was heard talking alone in the small room to her silent friends: Didn't he say he loved me?

Didn't he say he would never leave me? Why was he suddenly so frightened? Gradually, Aunt Yifen became more and more reticent. Perhaps she had said all she had to say, or perhaps her silent friends had heard it all before and there was no need for her to say anything more—you know, there are some things which don't really need any elaborating. Aunt Yifen told me a lot about herself when she first started teaching me her remarkable skill. Of course, it was not the only reason why she chose me instead of my little brother, but it was the main reason . . . because I was not a coward.

—Are you afraid?

She asked.

—No, I'm not afraid.

I answered.

—Have you got a strong stomach?

She asked.

—Yes, I've got a strong stomach.

I answered.

It was because I was not afraid that Aunt Yifen chose me to follow in her footsteps. She had a premonition that my fate might mirror hers, though exactly why we have been becoming more and more like each other is something that neither of us could explain—perhaps to start with it was because we were neither of us afraid. We were completely fearless! When she told me her story, Aunt Yifen said: But I always maintain that in this world there must be people like us, who fear nothing. Aunt Yifen had not yet become totally withdrawn in those days, and she would let me stand beside her so that I could see how she put red on an unbending mouth and how she gently stroked an eye that had been wide open for so long, inviting it to rest. In those days, she still talked incessantly to her gathering of sleeping friends: And you, why are you frightened? How is it that a person who is in love can have no trust in that love but is a coward in love? Among her sleeping friends there were more than a few who were fearful and cowardly, and they were more reserved than the others. Aunt Yifen knew quite a bit about her friends and would sometimes tell me about them, like once when she was putting powder on a girl with a fringe she said: Gracious, how pathetic this girl is!—to have abandoned her sweetheart simply in order to play the fine-sounding role of the 'dutiful daughter'. Aunt Yifen knew that the girl over here had died in settlement

of some obligation or other, and that the girl over there had died in mute acceptance of her fate—they had both surrendered themselves helplessly into the hands of Fate, as though they were not human beings made of flesh and blood, with human thoughts and feelings, but only pieces of merchandise.

—What an awful job.

One of my friends said.

—To put make-up on dead people! Ugh!

One of my friends said.

I was not afraid, but my friends were. They didn't like my eyes because my eyes were often fixed on the eyes of the dead; they didn't like my hands because my hands often touched the hands of the dead. At first it was just that they didn't *like* my eyes and hands, but gradually they came to fear them; and at first it was only my eyes and hands that they feared, but later it was my whole body. I have watched them leaving me one after another, like animals in the face of a raging fire, or farmers in the path of a plague of locusts. I asked them: Why are you so scared? *Someone's* got to do this kind of work—I'm good at my work, aren't I? And I'm qualified to do it, aren't I?

But gradually I became content with things the way they were; and I got used to my loneliness. There are always so many people looking for nice cushy jobs, and wanting everything to be all roses and stardust. But how can anyone test his strength and show his confidence when cushioned by star clouds and rose petals. I have few friends now, for they felt in my hands the coldness of that other fathomless world, and they saw in my eyes a myriad of drifting and silent spirits, and they were afraid; and even though my hands had warmth and my heart had fire, and my eyes could shed tears, my friends were blind to this. I began to resemble my aunt, having only the sleeping dead before me as my friends.

I wonder what made me tell them, when all around was a deathly hush: You know, tomorrow morning I'll be bringing a man called Xia to see you. Xia asked me whether you'd mind. I told him that you don't mind. Now, are you sure you don't mind? Xia will be coming here tomorrow, and I think I know how things will turn out in the end because my fate and Aunt Yifen's fate have already merged into one. I expect I shall see Xia

struck with panic when he sets foot inside this place—gracious, we'll both scare each other out of our wits in our different ways! But I won't really be frightened by what happens—you see, there have been so many signs, I already know how it will all end. Xia once said: Your own face looks so beautifully natural. Yes, it is; beautiful to Xia. But even its natural beauty is powerless to dispel a man's fear.

I HAVE THOUGHT of changing jobs; surely I am capable of doing the kind of work that other girls do? There's no way that I could be something like a teacher now, or a nurse, or a secretary, or an office-clerk; but couldn't I work in a shop, maybe sell bread in a bakery . . . or what about some kind of domestic work? A girl like me only needs three meals a day and a roof over her head—isn't there some way that I can fit in? Looking at it realistically, what I ought to be doing, with my particular skill, is making up brides—but I can't bear to even think about it. Imagine how I'd feel if I was putting lipstick onto a customer's lips, and suddenly they parted in a smile!—no, too many memories stand in the way of my ever doing the very work which suits me best. Suppose I *did* change jobs: would my hands and face ever lose their pallor? and that antiseptic which must have worked its way through to my bones by now, would its tell-tale smell ever completely disappear? and would I still keep it secret from Xia, my previous job, the kind of work I am doing now? It is disloyal to conceal the past from the one we love; and even though there are countless girls in the world all desperately trying to gloss over their lost virginity and their slipped-away years, I despise them for it.

I'm sure I *would* tell Xia that all this time I've been doing make-up for the sleeping dead. And he must know and come to accept that I *am* this kind of girl. So, it is not the smell of an unusual perfume that clings to me, but the odour of antiseptic lotion; and it is not because I am striving to cultivate an air of innocence that I am often dressed in white, but because I have to think of my own convenience, in entering and leaving my place of work.

But these are only insignificant details, like drops of water in the ocean.

When he knows that my hands often touch

those sleeping dead bodies, will he still take hold of them—say, if we were jumping over a rushing stream? Will he still let me cut his hair, or do up his tie? Will he be able to tolerate my eyes gazing on his face? Will he lie down before me without any fear? I think he will be scared, very scared; and then after the initial shock, like those other friends of mine he will start to dislike me; and finally he will turn his face away altogether—all because of his fear. Aunt Yifen said: If it is love, what is there to be afraid of? But this thing, this so-called ‘love’—though it may seem on the surface to be both strong and indestructible, I know that it is actually very frail and easily broken. A mask of courage is only a sugarcoating. Aunt Yifen said: Maybe Xia *isn't* a coward. It is the feeling that she could be right which partly accounts for why I haven't told him anything more about my job, the other reason being of course that I'm not one of those people who is good at putting things into words. Maybe it wouldn't come out right, maybe I would choose the wrong time and place altogether, or maybe the weather would be unfavourable—any of these factors might distort my meaning. To fail to enlighten Xia that my work did *not* consist of beautifying brides was in fact a test for him because I wanted the chance to observe his reaction when he finally sees the objects of my work—if he is scared, he is scared. If he immediately takes to his heels, then let me say to those sleeping friends of mine: It's as though nothing had happened.

—Can I see where you work?

He asked.

—I can't see why not.

I said.

So now I am sitting in a corner of the café, waiting for Xia. I've just caught myself wondering whether it isn't perhaps unfair of me to inflict this on Xia—after all, what's so wrong with it if he *is* frightened by the kind of work I do? Why should he be superhumanly brave? Why should there be any connection between a man's fear of the dead and his fear when it comes to love?—they might be two totally separate things.

My parents died when I was very small and I was brought up by my aunt—my little brother and I are orphans, we have no mother and father. I knew very little about my parents or what sort of

lives they had led, and everything I *do* know was told me by Aunt Yifen later on. I remember her telling me about my father, how he too did make-up for the dead in the days before he got married. And that after he had decided he wanted to marry my mother, he once asked her: Are you afraid? And my mother answered: No, I am not afraid. I think it's because I take after my mother, and because her blood is flowing through my body, that I too am not afraid. Aunt Yifen said that my mother would live forever in her memory because of something she once said: It is love that makes me completely fearless. Perhaps this is why my mother will also live forever in the inmost recesses of *my* memory, even though I cannot remember the sound of her voice, or even what she looked like. But if my mother said that love made her fearless, I think that was only the way my mother felt, and it doesn't give me the right to expect everybody in the world to feel the same as her. I probably have only myself to blame, for having submitted to this fate, for having committed myself to such an unacceptable occupation. Who in this world *doesn't* go for girls who are soft and warm, and sweet as sugar? . . . and girls like that ought to be doing some pleasing form of work that is both graceful and ladylike. Not like *my* work, which is sombre and bleak, and cold as ice; and I think it has overshadowed my whole being with its dark cloud for such a long time.

So what makes a man as radiant as the sun strike up an acquaintance with such a gloomy sort of woman? If he were to lie beside her, wouldn't he find himself thinking of how her everyday companions were corpses?—and if her hands were to touch his skin, wouldn't the thought cross his mind, how often these same hands had caressed the flesh of the dead? Oh, it really isn't right for a girl like me to have love affairs with anyone at all. It all seems like a huge mistake, and I'm responsible—so why not leave this place and go back to work? I've never in my life known a man by the name of Xia; and, by and by, he will forget that he once knew a girl who did make-up for brides. But it's too late for all this, for through the window I can see Xia coming along the other side of the street. What is it that he's carrying in his hands? Why, what an enormous bunch of flowers! What big day is it today?—somebody's birthday? I watch Xia as he catches sight of me sitting in this

dark, quiet corner, and walks over from the door of the café. There is bright sunshine outside; he has brought the sunlight in with him, for his white shirt is reflecting that brightness. He lives up to the meaning of his name—Xia, never-ending 'summer'.

—Hello. Happy Sunday!

He said.

—These flowers are for you.

He said.

He is obviously feeling happy, and he sits down to have a cup of coffee. We have had such happy times. But what is happiness after all—happiness is always quickly over. My heart is weighed down by so much sorrow. Only a short walk, no more than three hundred yards from here, and we'll be at my work-place. And then, just like what happened many years ago, a panic-stricken man will go dashing out through those large doors, and curious eyes will follow him until he completely

disappears from sight. Aunt Yifen said that maybe there are still some courageous people left in this world who fear nothing. But I knew at the time that what she said was only conjecture, and I thought exactly the same thing again when I saw Xia walking along the other side of the street with an enormous bunch of flowers in his hands... because this was a bad omen. Oh, it really isn't right for a girl like me to have love affairs with anyone at all. Perhaps I should say to those sleeping friends of mine: Don't you think we're the same, you and I? Decades can flash past with the blink of an eye. It is totally unnecessary for anybody to be scared to death by anybody else, for no matter *what* reason. The enormous bunch of flowers Xia has brought into the café, they are so very beautiful; he is happy, whereas I am full of grief. He doesn't realize that in our line of business, flowers are a last goodbye.

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