

Voice from the past

It was the kind of voice that you never forget. Deep. Warm. Melodic. Soothing, yet with a hint of laughter hidden in those depths. The kind of voice that sends a pulse racing.

And that's exactly the effect it had when I heard it again, after five years. But then, it always had.

My first serious love. But dreams don't last, do they?

It was early evening when the phone rang. I was sitting outside, breathing in the scent of roses and lavender¹⁾. A fragrant mixture that always calmed me at the end of a long day.

“Katy?” His voice. Just as it used to be. For a moment, I couldn't reply, and when I did it was only a whisper. “Ben?” I could imagine his smile. That wide mouth tilting²⁾. The corners of his eyes crinkling. The deep cleft in his cheek he refused to call a dimple. “You remember me, then?” I laughed softly. “Oh yes, Ben. I remember you.” And love you, I wanted to add. “Despite. . .” He paused. “Where are you?” I asked him, trying to recognise the background noise. “Gatwick. Just landed. Can we meet up, Katy?” He was here in England. So close. But to meet? No. Not now. Not ever. “Please, Katy.” The sheer desperation in his words throbbed right through me twisting my heart. My teeth bit into my lips, trying to steady them enough to reply. “No, Ben.” Silence hung between us. I remembered the pain in his eyes the last time we'd met. The way they had changed from blue to slate³⁾. Lifeless and dead. All laughter gone. Were they like that now?

“Ben?” There was a rustle of sound. The cuff⁴⁾ of his jacket maybe, brushing the receiver. “I'm still here.” His voice was flat, toneless. The way I'd heard it once before.

“And I'm determined to see you, whatever you may say, this time. I need you, Katy.” Oh, Ben, if you only knew. I wanted desperately to be with you again. To touch your face, your hair. Feel your warm kiss. Memories ached through me. “I love you, Katy. I always have. Always will.” And I love you. The words beat in my brain, but I couldn't let them loose. If I did. . . “I'll be there in an hour.” “No, Ben. You mustn't.” The phone had already clicked down, leaving a faint buzz. I sat, the receiver pressed against my ear, listening to the noise. Willing Ben's voice to continue. It was over. It had to be. I'd made that decision five years before.

Five years. Was that all it was? It seemed so long ago now. Until then, everything had been good. Too good. We'd met at a TV comedy show. You know the sort--where there's a live audience. The girl I shared an office with had tickets, but at the last minute her boyfriend went down with a tummy⁵⁾ bug, so she asked me instead. Ben was in the seat next to mine. The show was so hilarious⁶⁾ that I lost one of my contact lenses with all the laughing. Panic. Then Ben produced one of those mini torches⁷⁾ and found it on my sleeve.

After the show, we went to a coffee bar. A year later, we were still together— and then everything went wrong. Promotion in his job meant that Ben had to work abroad. At first, it was just for a week or two at a time. I dreaded him being away. I found it really scary in the flat without him. I started getting tense headaches. Wearing my contact lenses seemed to make them worse. I decided to have them checked. They were like a good-luck charm to me. Without them, I'd never have met Ben. Then—the bombshell. A new

contract in Finland meant that Ben was to work there until it was completed. “It could take several years, Katy. We’ll get married straight away so you can come with me.” “No.” “But it’s the only way. . .” “I’m not coming with you, Ben. I’ve been trying to tell you for a while now. . . It’s over between us. And this is an ideal opportunity to end it.” I hated the expression on his face. Stunned. All colour draining away. It was as though I’d sliced into him with a knife. Nothing he said could change my mind. It had to be this way.

And now he was back here in England again, coming to see me. I couldn’t let that happen. All I had to do was not open the door. The bell almost shattered my jangled nerves. Then the rattle on the knocker. I sat, fingers taut round the arms of the wooden seat, trying to breathe in the balm of roses and lavender. I heard the click of the garden gate, then his voice close beside me. Deep. Melodious⁸. Soothing. Gentle.

“Katy, why didn’t you tell me? All this time. If I’d only known, I would never have gone away.” His kiss was warm as his lips brushed against my cheek. Slowly, I reached up, tracing the outline of his face. Touching the softness of his hair. Remembering. Wishing desperately that I could see him again. “Oh, Katy, Katy. This was the reason? You knew?” “It wouldn’t have been fair. I loved you too much. . .” His lips halted my words. “And doubted that I could love you enough if you were blind? Oh, Katy.”

All I would ever know now was his voice. A voice that revealed so much — his love, his understanding, his strength.

I didn’t need to see his expression. All I had to do was listen.

爱之声

那是一个让人难以忘怀的声音：深沉而富有热情，优美且让人宽慰，深沉中还隐含着笑意。那是种让人怦然心动的声音。

当我再次听到这个声音我正是这种感觉。尽管已事隔5年，当它再次在我耳边响起时，它仍和以往一样让我动情。

那是我第一次真正恋爱。但是好梦总是不长久，不是吗？

一天黄昏时分，电话响了。当时我正在屋外呼吸玫瑰和熏衣草的芳香。漫长的一天过后这两种花草的混合香气总让我心旷神怡。“凯蒂？”是他的声音。没有一丝一毫的改变。一时间我无言以对。而后我只低语道：“本？”我可以想像出他的笑容。宽宽的嘴巴向上翘着。眼角皱起。脸颊上露出他拒绝称作酒窝的深纹。“那么你还记得我？”我轻声笑了。“哦，是的，本，我记得你。”我爱你，我想补上一句。“尽管……”他欲言又止。“你在哪儿？”我问他，并竭力辨别背景噪音。“盖特委克。刚下飞机。我们能见见面吗，凯蒂？”他回来了，在英国。离我这么近。可是要见面？不，现在不行，永远也不行。“求求你，凯蒂。”他话语中深深的绝望震撼着我，撕裂着我的心。我紧咬着嘴唇，努力保持镇静以做出答复，“不，本。”我们陷入沉默。我想起我们最后一次见面时他眼中的痛苦。我还记得他的眼睛是如何从湛蓝变成灰蓝，然后是死一般地毫无生气。所有的笑容都荡然无存。此刻又是如此吗？

“本？”传来一阵习习簌簌声。也许是他的上衣袖口摩擦话筒的声音。“我在听着呢。”他的语气很平淡，听不出任何感情色彩。这种语气我以前也听过一次。“这一次我一定要见你，不管你说什么。我需要你，凯蒂。”哦，本，你可知道，我多么想再和你在一起：抚摩你的脸、你的头发，感受你热烈的亲吻。往事一幕幕，让我痛苦不已。“我爱你，凯蒂，我一直爱着你，我将永远爱你。”我也爱你。这句话在我脑海里反复轰鸣，可我得控制自己不让它

溜出口。如果我说出来的话……“我一小时后到你那儿。”“不行，本，你不能来。”电话已经挂了，只有微弱的嗡嗡声。我愣坐着，话筒仍按在耳旁，听着话筒里的嗡嗡声，多希望能再听听本的声音。可已经结束了，只能这样。5年前我就做出了这样的决定。

5年前？才短短的5年吗？在我却有恍如隔世的感觉。在那时，一切都那么美好，太美好了。我们是在一个电视喜剧节目的演播室里相识的。你知道那种节目都需要一些现场观众。和我同办公室的女孩有两张票，可最后她的男朋友因为肚子疼没法去，所以她请我去。本就坐在我的邻座。节目太好笑了，在开怀大笑时，我的隐形眼镜掉了一只。我吓坏了。本拿出一把微型电筒，帮我找到了掉在我袖子上的眼镜片。

看完节目后，我们去了一家咖啡馆。一年后我们仍在一起。可突然一切都变得不顺心了。他晋升后必须去国外工作。开始，一次只去一两个星期。我很怕他走。我感到屋子里没有他就显得很可怕。我还开始患上剧烈的头痛。戴隐形眼镜似乎更加剧头痛。我决定去检查一下眼镜。它们对我来说就像是好运护身符。要不是因为它们，我可能根本不会遇见本。之后是一声晴天霹雳。芬兰的一份新合同要求本一直呆在那儿，直到工作完成。“这可能要花上好几年时间，凯蒂。我们得马上结婚，这样你就可以随我一块儿走。”“不。”“可只有这样……”“我不想跟你去，本。我早就想告诉你……我们之间已经结束了。这是结束我们之间关系的最佳时机。”我不忍看他脸上的表情。目瞪口呆，面如死灰，好像我向他捅了一刀似的。他说什么都无法让我回心转意，没有别的选择。

现在他又回到了英国，要来看我。我不能让他来——只要我不开门就行了。我本已心乱如麻，门铃声几乎要将我击倒。之后是连续的叩门声。我坐着一动不动，手指紧抠着木椅的扶手，竭力让自己呼吸玫瑰和熏衣草的芳香。我听到花园门开的吱哑声，随后他的声音在我耳边响起，那么深沉、优美，给人慰藉又充满柔情。

“凯蒂，你为什么不早告诉我？这么长时间。如果我知道，我绝不会离开你。”他的亲吻还是那么热烈，他的双唇碰触我的脸颊时，我慢慢伸出双手，一边抚摩他脸的轮廓、他柔软的头发，一边回忆着往事。多希望我能再看看他。“噢，凯蒂，就是因为这个吗？你当时就知道了？”“这对你太不公平了。我是那么爱你……”他用嘴唇阻断了我要说的话。“你怀疑你失明后我会不会全心全意爱你？噢，凯蒂。”

现在我所知道的只有他的声音。一个极富表现力的声音——他的爱、他的理解、他的力量。

我无需看他的表情。我只需聆听他的声音。

NOTE 注释：

1. lavender [ˈlævɪndə] n. [植]熏衣草花
2. tilt [tɪlt] v. (使)倾斜, (使)翘起
3. slate [sleɪt] adj. 暗蓝灰色的
4. cuff [ˈkʌf] n. 袖口
5. tummy [ˈtʌmi] n. 胃, 肚子
6. hilarious [hiˈlɛəriəs] adj. 欢闹的
7. torch [tɔ:tʃ] n. 手电筒
8. melodious [miˈləʊdjəs] adj. 音调优美的