

A Walk with the Tenses.

Lost in lacy melodic musings, I wander down the box-cluttered hall of my one story home into my equally cluttered bedroom. Without a conscious thought, I settle myself down next to the grimy window and gaze out at a picturesque April afternoon. Robins chatter back and forth from among the blooming purple branches of a redbud tree. High up in the crystal azure sky, cumulus clouds scurry along, providing ample fuel for my dreaming soul. The very Anne of Green Gable-like beauty of it all is so alluring that I start up suddenly.

"I simply must go for a walk!" I announce to no one in particular. Strapping on my blue sandals and calling out a parting word to my mother in the kitchen, I depart on my amble through the neighborhood.

I hadn't gone but half a block when I found myself greeted by three neighbourly persons. These people were no strangers to me, I had in truth, known them all my life. Now you must be wondering, fair Reader, who exactly my walking companions are, and if you are patient with me I will reveal to you their common names. You may even come to realize that you know them yourself.

"Quite a lovely day for a leisurely stroll, is it not?" The middle of the group calls out as a good-hearted greeting. She flashes a cheery smile and sidles up to stand beside me. I had given just a short reply when another of the three demanded my attention.

"My friend! Did you happen to see that flowering crabapple tree back there? Crabapples in Spring have always been my favorite. Why, I remember, many years ago..." A most interesting tale did follow from this elderly comrade of mine, but I haven't the time to tell it. He detailed many events from his youth as we walked on, and I would have found it quite easy to focus entirely on the stories he told, forgetting to realize and appreciate the nature around me. The name of this pleasant, but rather distracting presence is Past. I have walked many a time around this quiet neighborhood with Past, as he regaled me with memories of the numerous epochs in his life, transporting me to another place in another time. Everytime I get quite lost amongst the nostalgia, and in my remembering, I forget the moments around me. This particular stroll down the street, however I kept my mind alert to my surroundings and the quiet individual still keeping in step at my side. A faithful friend this person has always been to me, though I have not always been so attentive to her. Do not, fair Reader, take my unfixed attentions as a sign that this woman held only qualities one would find tedious or dull. Quite the contrary in fact. Her stories were just as intriguing as our elder Past; but she does not offer them up as easily nor as loudly. If one wishes to know, they must also ask and pursue a conversation. A price not many choose to pay. They—and even I—find myself taking the easier and more obvious path of a chat with Past, most times unpremeditated.

Unspeaking as we pass a patch of lilac, this woman stops and bends down to examine a soft lavender bloom.

"A positively brilliant flower." she remarks.

"I would have to agree with you, Present." I say, for Present was her name. Stooping down, I join her in admiration of *Syringa Vulgaris*. After a few pleasant moments we rise and begin our journey forward once more, rounding a corner and crossing a street. Present and I discuss our favored birds, flowers, and aspects of Missouri's suburban wildlife while Past lags slightly behind. Never too far that he cannot contribute a witty anecdote or sage utterance to our

conversation.

Reader, I can imagine you may be wondering, "What of the third person?". My omission of details about the last member of the party has been entirely intentional. I suspect, however, you may have already guessed the identity of this unknown person. For where the wise Mister Past is gathered with the lovely Miss Present, then the young Future must also be. Of him I can tell you very little, as my knowledge of this elusive being is almost all but speculation. He always seems to be many steps ahead of us; out of reach for a convenient conversation, but close enough to be a brilliant subject for observation. With his hands stuffed casually in his pockets, he walks along with a merry disposition and a brisk, light step. Rounding every bend with keen interest and glancing back with a knowing grin. Many a time I have wished to rush forward, closing the seemingly wide gap between us, and acquaint myself with Future. I can never seem to catch up with him though, and by the time I turn the corner, I find he is even farther ahead, about to veer around another. In the process of chasing Future I often lose track of Past and Present, missing out on the moments I could spend in their company. So I leave Future to himself, ever out of reach. I always keep him in view, though, while staying in step and conversation with Present, and learning from Past. Thus, I have wholly detailed an everyday walk I take with the infamous Tenses, and hope that you may be able to, someday, take one as well.

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