

Side Quest: Forget-Me-Not

Quest Type: Side Quest

Location: Forest Village

Quest Giver: Elara, the Old Lady

Characters: Tina, Elara, and Rowan

Main Theme: Love, memory, grief, and letting go

Recommended Level: Early–Mid Game

Choices: 2

Endings: 4

Quest Overview

While exploring a small settlement in the Corrupted Forest, Tina meets **Elara**, an elderly woman standing anxiously outside her home. She asks Tina to find her husband, **Rowan**, who left home to gather something for her and never returned. Elara cannot remember exactly when he left. She only knows that every day, she wakes up expecting him to come home. She is worried, but there is something strange about the way she talks about him.

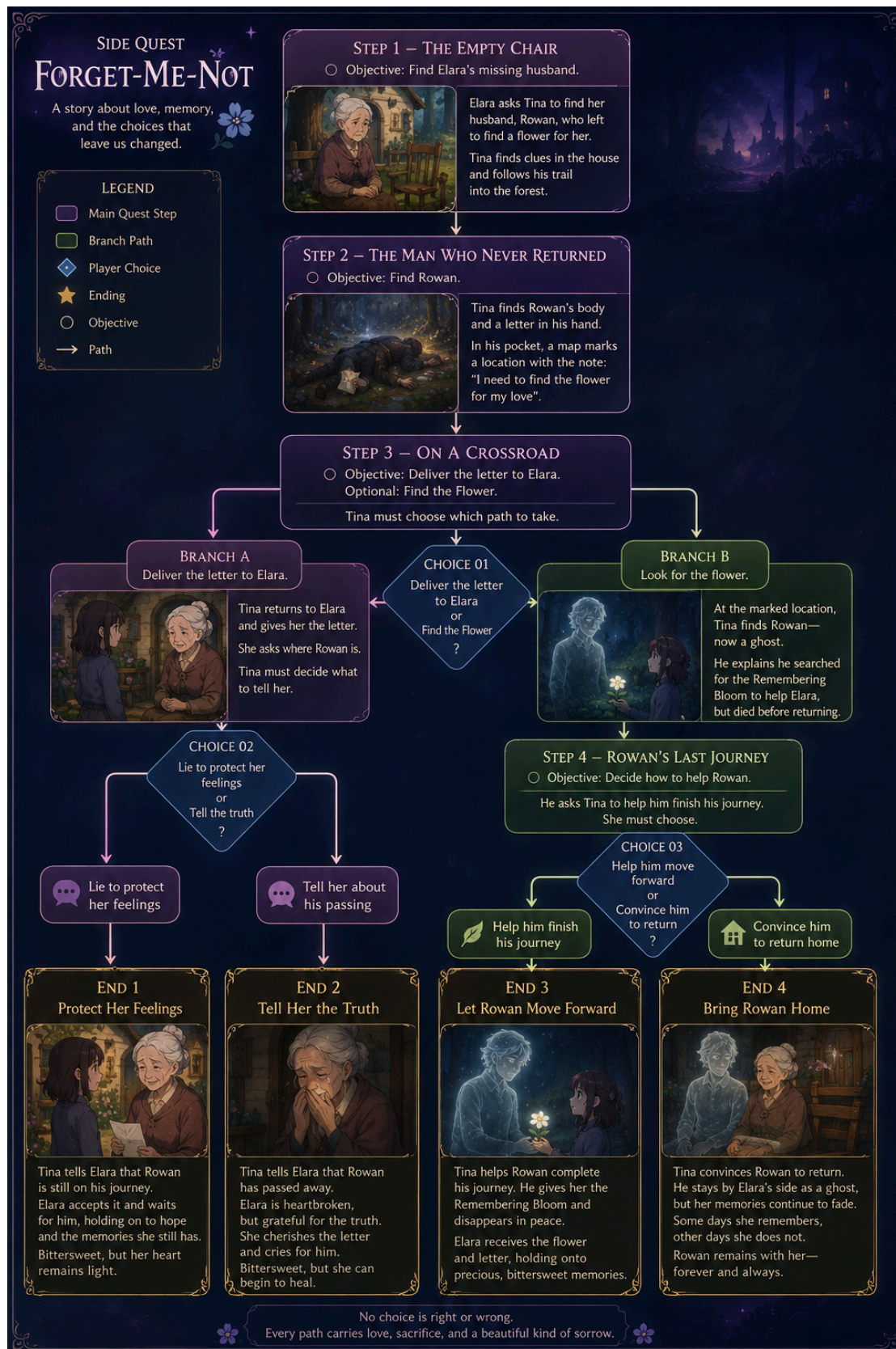
When Tina finally finds Rowan, she discovers that he has been dead for some time. He is now a ghost. Rowan reveals that Elara's memories have been slowly disappearing. He left home to find a rare flower believed to strengthen fading memories. He found the flower. But he died before he could return to her. Now, unable to let go of his wife, his spirit remains trapped in the forest.

Tina must decide whether to help Rowan finish his journey and move on—or help him return to Elara, knowing that she may eventually forget him completely.

Message and Themes

The quest reinforces one of Sonatina's central themes: **Sometimes loving someone means holding on. Sometimes it means letting go.** Tina cannot choose a perfect ending. She can only decide **what kind of loss she is willing to accept.**

Flowchart



Step 1 — The Empty Chair

Objective: Find Elara's missing husband

Tina finds Elara sitting outside her small cottage beside an empty chair. She looks at Tina and asks:

Elara: "Excuse me, dear... Have you seen my husband?"

She asks Tina to find him and explains that Rowan went into the forest looking for something, but she cannot remember what. But as Tina asks for more details, Elara begins contradicting herself.

Elara: "He left this morning."

A moment later:

Elara: "No... it was last week."

Then:

Elara: "I'm sorry. Did I already ask you to find him?"

Every time Tina talks to her, she doesn't seem to remember that she already asked.

Inside the house, Tina can find clues about Rowan:

- An old walking stick.
- A faded portrait of the couple.
- Notes reminding Elara about everyday things.
- Several unfinished letters addressed to Rowan.

One note reads:

"Rowan went to find the flower. He always comes home."

Tina follows his trail into the forest.

Step 2 — The Man Who Never Returned

Objective: Find Rowan.

Tina follows a trail leading away from the village, through a dangerous area of the forest.

Along the way, she finds several clues:

- An old walking stick.
- Footprints leading toward a meadow.
- A torn piece of cloth.
- Several dried flowers.
- An abandoned basket.

Eventually, she reaches a small clearing. There, the body of a man lies, already deceased, with a letter in his hand.

“Elara, my dear,

If you ever find this, know that I love you dearly, and even if your memory fades, our love will continue forever.

Yours truly,
Rowan.”

In his pocket, she also finds a map with a marked location saying, “I need to find the flower for my love”.

Step 3 — On a Crossroad

Objective: Deliver the letter to Elara

Optional: Find the Flower

After finding his body, the quest is updated. Now, the player has a choice to make: go back and deliver the letter to Elara or find the mysterious flower.

CHOICE 01: Deliver the letter to Elara or Find the Flower

Branch A — Deliver the letter to Elara

Tina comes back to Elara and gives her the letter.

“Ohh, my sweet, Rowan.”

Elara asks Tina where he is, and she can tell the truth or lie to protect the old lady’s feelings.

CHOICE 02: Lie or tell the truth

End 1 — Tell her about his passing

Tina lowers her eyes. She knows that telling Elara the truth will hurt her. But she also knows that Rowan deserves to be remembered.

Tina: "Elara... Rowan isn't coming home."

Elara remains still. Her smile slowly fades.

Elara: "What do you mean?"

Tina holds the letter tightly.

Tina: "I found his body in the forest."

For several seconds, Elara says nothing. Then she shakes her head.

Elara: "No."

She looks at Tina again.

Elara: "No, that can't be right. He went looking for a flower."

Tina gives her the letter. Elara opens it with trembling hands. She begins reading. As her eyes move across Rowan's words, something changes. The confusion in her expression disappears.

For just a brief moment, she remembers. Not everything. But enough. Tears begin rolling down her cheeks.

Elara: "He knew... He knew I was forgetting."

Elara presses the letter against her chest.

Elara: "And he still went."

She begins crying.

Tina: "I'm sorry"

Elara: "Is not your fault, my dear"

Elara: "He was always so stubborn."

A small laugh escapes between her tears.

Elara: "Oh, sweet child, thank you for helping this old lady."

The truth gave Elara one final moment of clarity. One final chance to grieve. But Tina knows the memory may not remain.

After some time, Tina can visit Elara again. Elara looks at the empty chair. Her expression becomes confused again.

Elara: "I'm sorry, dear... Were you looking for someone?"

She looks at the letter in Elara's hands.

Tina: "Your husband."

Elara looks down. For a moment, she studies Rowan's name. Then she smiles faintly.

Elara: "Rowan."

She repeats the name quietly, as if afraid it will disappear again.

Elara: "That's a beautiful name."

In the end, Elara learns the truth and gets the chance to mourn Rowan, but her fading memory means she may be forced to lose him again and again. Still, his letter remains in her hands. A piece of proof that he existed. That he loved her. And at least for those brief moments, she remembers.

End 2 — Protect her feelings

Tina looks at the letter. Then at Elara. Elara is waiting for her answer with a hopeful smile.

Elara: "Where is he?"

Tina remembers Rowan's body lying alone in the clearing. She remembers the words he left behind. She cannot bring herself to tell Elara.

Tina forces a small smile.

Tina: "He's still looking for the flower."

Elara's face brightens.

Elara: "I knew it."

She gently laughs.

Elara: "Rowan always takes longer than he should."

Tina gives her the letter.

Tina: "He asked me to bring this to you."

Elara holds it carefully.

Elara: "From Rowan?"

Tina nods. Elara opens the letter. As she reads, her smile becomes softer. She doesn't seem to understand that the letter is goodbye. Instead, she reads it as a promise.

Elara: "He says he'll love me even if I forget."

She looks up at Tina.

Elara: "Silly man. How could I ever forget him?"

Tina says nothing. Elara folds the letter and places it inside her pocket. Then she looks toward the road.

Elara: "He'll be home soon."

Later, Tina can come back and talk to Elara again.

Elara: "Excuse me, dear! Have you seen my husband?"

Tina smiles.

Tina: "He's on his way home."

Elara smiles back.

Elara: "I knew he wouldn't forget me."

In the end, Elara never learns that Rowan died and continues waiting for him. She is spared the pain of losing him, but her fading memories trap her in an endless cycle of waiting for someone who will never return. But even if Rowan doesn't return, at least Elara will wake up tomorrow with hope. And perhaps, for now, that hope is kinder than the truth.

Branch B — Look for the flower

Tina goes to the location marked on the map. There, a rare white flower grows beside an old tree. Nearby stands a man. When she approaches him, however, she notices that he is translucent and his feet do not touch the ground. There is no room for doubt: he is a ghost.

He presents himself as Rowan and looks toward the flower.

Rowan: "I knew someone would find me eventually."

Tina tells him that Elara is waiting for him. Rowan becomes silent. Then he asks:

Rowan: "Does she still remember me?"

Tina can tell him the truth: Elara remembers Rowan, but less and less each day.

Step 4 (Branch B) — Rowan's Last Journey

Objective: Decide how to help Rowan.

Rowan explains that the flower is called the **Remembering Bloom**. According to an old dream-world legend, the flower can help someone hold onto memories that are beginning to disappear.

That is why he left home. His wife had begun forgetting things before he left. At first, she forgot small things, like where she put objects or if she had eaten. Then she began forgetting more important things: places, stories from their marriage, or even him. The flower can cure her, but he died before completing his task.

He asks Tina to help him finish his journey. She needs to collect the flower, but can only do so if she sacrifices a soul. He is willing to be sacrificed.

Now, the player has to make a choice: help him finish his journey as he wishes or convince him to return as she promised Elara.

CHOICE 03: Help him or Convince him to return

If Tina helps him finish his journey, she can finally deliver the flower to Elara. But as Rowan moves on, Elara will have to continue without him, now with the memories of his sacrifice.

Alternatively, Tina can help Rowan return to Elara as a ghost. He can stay with her and remind her of their life together. But her condition will continue to worsen. Eventually, she may forget the man sitting beside her—even while he is still there.

End 3 — Let Rowan Move Forward

Objective: Help Rowan retrieve the Remembering Bloom.

Tina helps Rowan reach the flower. When he touches it, the corruption surrounding the clearing fades. Rowan begins to glow, his spirit disappearing slowly. As his time is coming to an end, he smiles and looks at Tina.

Rowan: "Take the flower to her."

Rowan picks the flower and places it in her hands.

Rowan: "And, please, tell her how much she means to me."

Before vanishing, he looks toward the village.

Rowan: "I hope she remembers enough to know why I did this."

Rowan disappears.

Objective: Deliver the flower to Elara.

Later, Tina returns to Elara's house and gives her the flower and letter. Elara struggles to remember who Rowan was. But as she reads the letter, something briefly returns to her. Whether it is thanks to the power of the flower or her love for him is hard to say.

Elara: "Rowan... He did all of this... For me?"

She closes her eyes and tears roll down her cheeks.

Elara: "How am I supposed to continue without you, my love?"

Then, she opens her eyes and a soft smile covers her lips as she looks at Tina.

Elara: "Thank you for everything"

In the end, Rowan finds peace, but Elara is left alone with bittersweet memories.

End 4 — Bring Rowan Home

Objective: Help Rowan return to Elara.

Instead of taking the flower, Tina convinces Rowan to come back and helps him return home, accompanying him on the path leading back to the village.

When Rowan arrives home, Elara smiles.

Elara: "You took so long."

For a brief moment, they are together again. She doesn't realise he is a ghost, or remember how long he's been away.

Rowan thanks Tina and says:

Rowan: "I spent so long trying to find a way to make her remember."

He looks back at Elara with a smile.

Rowan: "Maybe remembering isn't the only way to love someone."

In the end, Rowan gets to be with Elara, but must slowly watch her memories of him disappear.

Tina can later return to their house. Elara begins forgetting. At first she forgets Tina, and eventually, she forgets him.

Eventually, she looks directly at him and asks:

Elara: "Excuse me... are you waiting for someone?"

Rowan says nothing. He simply takes her hand and remains by her side. Forever and always.

Process Reflection

The development of **Forget-Me-Not** went through several iterations as I explored how to create a side quest that was emotionally engaging while still giving the player meaningful choices.

What Didn't Work

Initially, the quest had a simpler structure in which the player found Rowan as a ghost and chose either to help him move on or bring him back to Elara. While this created an emotional dilemma, the choices felt too clearly divided into a more positive and a more negative outcome. One option allowed Rowan to find peace, while the other kept him trapped with Elara as her memory continued to deteriorate.

This made it difficult to create a sense that both choices were equally valid. The player could easily interpret helping Rowan move on as the "correct" decision.

Another issue was that the player discovered Rowan's situation too early. If Tina immediately found out that Rowan was a ghost, there was less mystery and investigation in the quest. The story moved directly from Elara's request to the final decision without enough development in between.

What Worked

The quest became stronger when Rowan's body was introduced before his ghost. Finding his body, final letter, and map created a mystery for the player to investigate. The player first discovers that something happened to Rowan and then has to decide whether to immediately return to Elara with the truth or continue following his unfinished journey.

This also created an additional layer of player choice. The first decision is not about Rowan's final fate, but about **what Tina should do with the information she has discovered.**

Adding the branch where Tina can deliver the letter immediately also allowed Elara to become more important to the quest. Instead of existing only as the quest giver, she becomes directly involved in one of the major choices. The player must decide whether she deserves the painful truth about Rowan's death or whether protecting her remaining happiness is more important.

Why the Final Structure Works

The final structure creates four different endings from three choices:

1. **Deliver the letter and tell Elara the truth.**
2. **Deliver the letter but protect Elara from the truth.**
3. **Find Rowan's ghost and help him complete his journey.**
4. **Find Rowan's ghost and convince him to return home.**

Each ending has a bittersweet outcome.

Telling Elara the truth allows her to grieve Rowan and gives her a final moment of remembering him, but her memory problems mean she may eventually forget his death and have to experience the loss again.

Lying protects Elara from the immediate pain of losing him, but leaves her waiting for someone who will never return.

Helping Rowan move forward allows him to fulfill his final wish and find peace, but Elara is left alone. The Remembering Bloom may help her hold onto him, but it cannot bring him back.

Convincing Rowan to return gives the couple more time together, but Elara's memories continue to disappear. Rowan chooses to stay even knowing that one day she may look directly at him and no longer know who he is.

Because every choice involves both something gained and something lost, there is no clear good or bad ending. This was important to the design because the main theme of the quest is **memory, love, and letting go.**

The final version also supports the overall tone of Sonatina. The Dream World is a place where emotions, memories, and nightmares can take physical form. Rowan remaining as a ghost because he cannot let go, and a magical flower being able to influence fading memories, fit naturally into this setting.

Overall, the most successful part of the process was moving away from the idea of a "best" ending. The quest became more emotionally interesting when the choices focused on different forms of love: **accepting loss, protecting someone from pain, fulfilling a final wish, or refusing to let go.**