



flor.

The Liberator Magazine 2023



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Letter from the Editors

Dear Reader,

Publishing *Flor* was similar to building a bouquet of flowers. We dwelled on the charm and color of each flower, picking apart their meanings, figuring out their places in our lives. We compiled colorful candidates to describe our deepest secrets, devouring loves, and fluorescent imagery.

We spent countless days and nights pouring over these very pages. Our sentiments became roses, chrysanthems, sunflowers, azaleas... An assortment as unique as our writers. We carefully placed words on paper, transforming pieces to flowers waiting to be read and to contrive meaning from. All of this was for you. A labor of love so we could finally give you this bouquet of flowers.

Serving as your editor in chiefs this year has certainly been a blessing. This magazine has become something so special for us. We hope you find meaning in each page. Feelings of love, loss, inspiration etc. Consume each page with the understanding that we have handpicked this bouquet especially for you.

A special *thank you* to our wonderful staff, we truly could not have done any of this without you. We also want to thank The Liberal Arts Council for giving us this platform. All of your support means the world to us.

Engulf yourself in the meanings of each **FLOR**, for they are dedicated to you.

A flower for you.

With Love,
Duaa Zulfiqar and Ariadne Danae Chavez Salinas; Editors in Chief

Special Thank You To Katherine Page for Inspiring this Year's Edition :)

Floriography

Written by Katherine Page.

Flowers. Floriography. Bouquets...

If you have ever received a bouquet of flowers—for graduation, for winning an award, for an anniversary, for love—you probably haven't stopped to realize that you might have been sent a secret message.

The classic bouquet of roses. Roses with Baby's Breath. Sunflowers and Daisies. Yellow Tulips. White Tulips. Carnations and Chrysanthemums. The standard bouquets that most people receive and know are, of course, beautiful. But what a lot of people don't know is that these flowers and bouquets have meaning depending on what flowers they are. And that florigraphy, or communication through the use of flowers, is an art that was once very popular and important.

According to Erica Weiner, author of Floriography: The Secret Language of Flowers, florigraphy originated with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, an aristocrat and poet. The story goes that she misunderstood a Turkish game called sélam, a game of gift-giving between women, as a game of exchanging flowers to send messages. When her letters regarding the subject were published, the act of sending cryptic floral messages quickly became popular, and by the late 1700s, it was a popular activity among British aristocrats (Weiner).

In the Victorian era, however, there was a surge of interest in florigraphy, which is when the activity became cemented as a serious art form. "The concept of a secret code was an appealing outlet for Victorians, who lived in a reserved society where expressing your feelings outwardly was a BIG social faux pas" (Weiner). Florigraphy was an effective way for women to express themselves creatively and in a more private manner. If this caused drama, they could just deny everything.

After all, they were just sending a simple bouquet of flowers. Unfortunately, by the end of WWI, florigraphy went out of popularity and, over time, became obscure.

Flor aims to reclaim this secret code. As staunch believers that every language should be preserved, we want to highlight not only the physical beauty of flowers but also the loveliness of symbolism. Of subtle and cryptic communication. Florigraphy was once a prevalent and important outlet, and by re-championing this secret language, we hope that you might be inspired to do the same. Or, at the very least, dig a little deeper the next time you give or receive a bouquet of flowers.

-KP

FLOWERS



Which Flower Are You?

Written by Ariadne Danae Chavez Salinas.

In Western astrology there are 12 zodiac signs: Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces. These signs are a representation of constellations in the celestial sphere that the Sun annually journeys through. Each zodiac sign corresponds to a respective date and has an individual symbol. There are four elements each sign is related to: air, fire, water, and earth. Hence, a person's sun zodiac sign can be identified by looking up what constellation the sun was in during their birth date.

People who are interested in zodiac signs know that everyone has a sun, moon, and rising sign. These are the main three placements: based on your birthday, the time at which you were born, and the place you were born. For instance, a person's chart will tell them that their sun is in Taurus, their moon is in Leo, and their rising or ascendant is in Scorpio. According to Western astrology, your sun sign determines your identity, your moon sign rules your emotions, and your rising sign represents the way you present yourself to people.

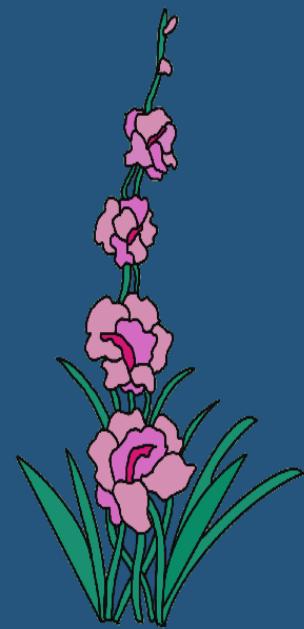
The descriptions in this piece are focused on your sun sign. This is the constellation the sun was in during your birth date, and it can be quickly found by looking up the zodiac sign of your birthday. *Your sign will correspond to a flower in our magazine!*



Aries
Lavender
Devotion



Taurus
Jasmine
Warmth; Beauty

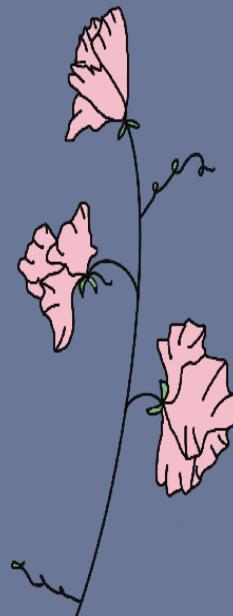
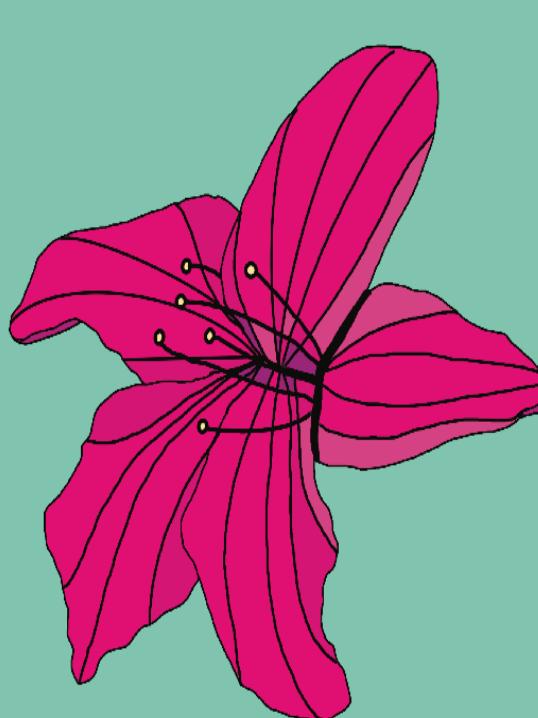


Gemini
Gladiolus
Strength of Character

Cancer
Sunflower
Loyalty, Adoration

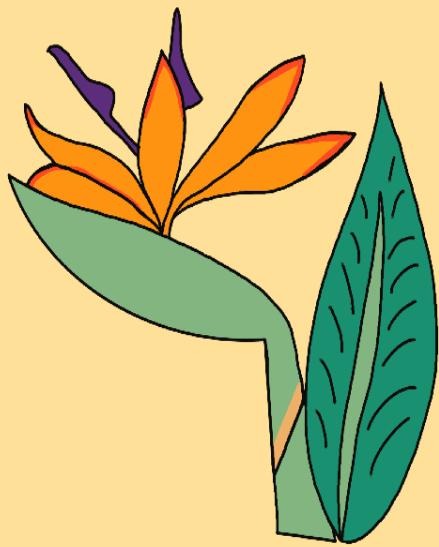
Leo
Azalea
“The Royalty of the Garden”

Virgo
Sweet Pea
Kindheartedness

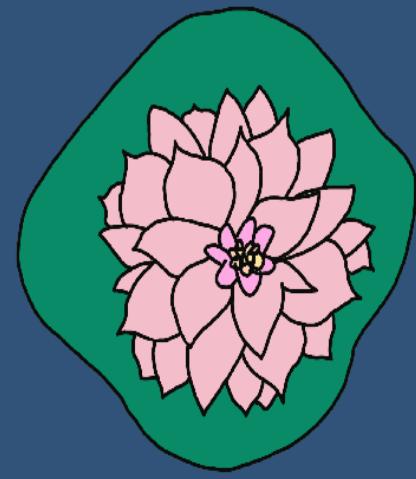




Libra
Yellow Acacia
Concealed Love

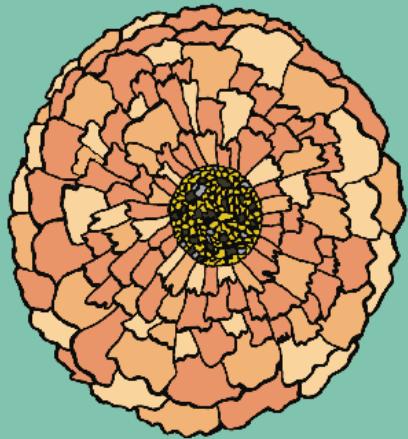


Scorpio
Strelitzia Reginae
Freedom and Immortality

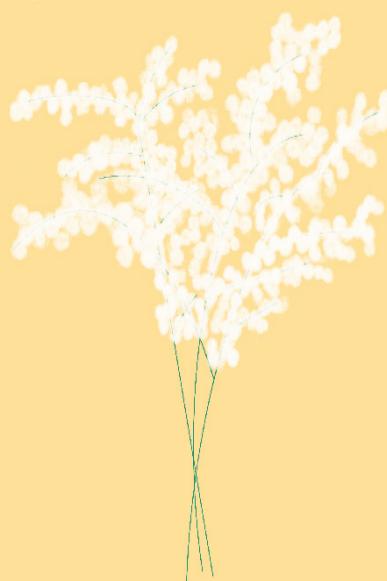


Sagittarius
Lotus
Optimism

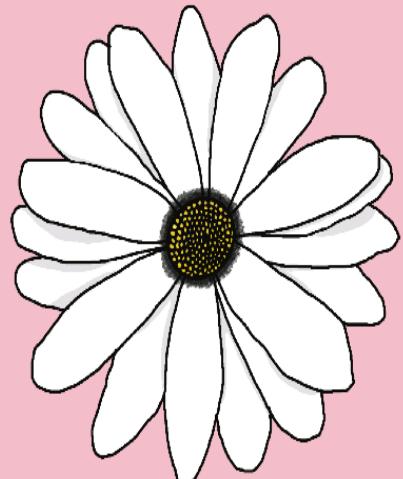
Capricorn
Marigold
Passion and Creativity



Aquarius
Baby's Breath
Festivity and Fun



Pisces
Daisy
Innocence and Rebirth



Yellow Acacia: Concealed Love

Written by Temiloluwa (Temi) Idowu.



Beauty hidden in seclusion, early in
bloom
You awakened something in me that I
cannot explain.
I'm terrified of this incomprehensible
wave of butterflies
And this vast and unknown terrain.
Like a budding in the wild, our love
grew.
I wish to understand this new lane.

No,
I don't need to feel.
I don't want this budding flame.
I need to conceal.
My walls can withstand anger, betrayal,
depression, anxiety, and shame.
Refusing to make way for fleeting things
like emotions protects me.

My walls give me control.
I thrive in control. Control is familiar.
Control prevents mistakes
Control is the only thing I know.
Control protects from needless
heartbreak.

Why open up if all you'll get is reproach
and ridicule?
Why open myself up to people being
cruel?
“How dare you have feelings?”
“How dare you have the audacity to feel
anything other than joy?”
“How dare you feel?”

That is why
I didn't have feelings.
Until you came
Until you turned my world upside down
and forged a new path in my life.
When you hug me my control slips
My walls start to crack
My love for you is too immense to
describe with my lips

So I build my walls up higher
To withstand a newly discovered feeling
called love.
I refuse to let my walls crumble
I refuse to lose my protection.
So I push and push in vain to keep this
nuisance at bay
Please don't hug me here, don't hold my
hand,

Don't give us away.
Nobody can know that you finally
cracked my walls.
Nobody can know that I am not so
strong after all.
Nobody can know that I love seeing you
beside me.
Nobody can know that I can *feel*.

Beauty hidden in seclusion, early in
bloom
You awakened something in me that I
cannot explain.
You help me navigate this
incomprehensible wave of butterflies
And this vast and unknown terrain.
Like a maturing floret, our love remains.
With you, I can understand this new
lane.
I never knew how freedom felt
Until you made my spirit bloom.



L'Éternel Tournesol

Written by Joseph Kudler.

Graphics by Ariadne Danae Chavez Salinas.

My roots reach deep. It's as if I've seen the history of the world over. Despite the fact it's all beginning to blur, I remember it comes in cycles. Years have gone by, new flowers come and go, but I'm still here. When I first blossomed in that fateful late august, the world was quiet. People scurried around, as fall had already begun, and I was a late bloomer.

Fall: It starts when the trees begin to morph into this vibrant autumnal rainbow, as the wind begins to rock them. Leaves float gently through the air onto the ground and the sun still shines yet I hear this steady beat. I try to ignore it and follow the sun as it arcs across the sky. Soaking up those sweet beams, but each day it grows louder, and the sky grows darker, and the beat grows louder, and winds march in gale force and the beat crescendos once again, and the frigid rain pelts me in a barrage and the beat pounds in a climax, reverberating through my body, until a hush falls over the landscape. The winds of winter whisper to me. "Death is coming." Birds flock away. Bears crawl into their caves. Bees buzz back to their hives.

Winter: The wind grows fierce, biting and howling at me, shredding my petals with its icy breath. The ground hardens like a diamond, while my seeds frost over. My appetite evaporates, yet I starve. I feel myself begin to waste away, as the sun's rays struggle to break through the labyrinth of clouds above. Hail and snow reign from the sky in a blinding blizzard of brutal proportions, bruising me, drowning me out, beating me down, forcing my head deep into the snow, snapping my spine, attempting to choke me out of existence. My mind races to find a solution, but the cold continues to rattle me to my core. I shake and tremble begging for forgiveness, to be saved, but nothing comes out. In my time of need my own voice has become a spectre. I feel sorrow build and rise, welling up inside

me, smashing into my floodgates like a tsunami. The dam breaks. And I sob silently with my seeds in the snow. My stem contorts as I wring myself of my tears. Quietly convulsing in this frozen hell.

Slowly but surely the blizzards become less brutish, the winds blow a bit softer, and the shards of sleet and hail slow.

Even as the snow still swirls around me, I muster a morsel of strength and try to pull my stem upright. My leaves feel like lead, but with great effort they sluggishly rise to wipe the snow from my frostbitten petals. The wicked winds wrangle with me once more as shards of sleet seek to slice my stem. I waver. But I refuse to topple and wilt away in this winter wasteland. Scanning the sky, I search for a sliver of sunlight.

THERE! I face the emerging gap in the clouds as les rossignols arrive singing the same song I knew.



Spring: Warmth. The solo sunbeam shining through the clouds. Relief. It washes over me. The blizzards cease, the snow and sleet stop, the winds relent. Pitter-patter. There is just rain. Soft. Cleansing. Tranquil. The snow melts, the ground softens, my parched roots are finally quenched. The bears re-emerge from their caves and the bees are back to pollinating. The cardinals, robins and swallows return and join les rossingols in their chorus. My petals perk up. My leaves relax. I regain my vibrant yellow color one step at a time. Day by day it rains less and less, while the sun shines more and more. People begin to play outside again while other flowers rise up beside me, completely unaware of the winter I've faced. Nevertheless, we stand side by side, enjoying the sun rays and the soft soothing wind.

Summer: The days are wonderfully long, as the sun slowly soars across the sky. I feel at my full strength again. My leaves were worn by frost, my petals torn by winds, my stem slightly sliced by sleet. Yet I am happy and at peace. When Van Gogh painted me those many years ago, he learned to become a sunflower and transformed his pain and passion into euphoric beauty. From the café and the night sky to flowers and wheatfields, he illustrated the joy and magnificence of our world. In a world of

cynics be a sunflower.

My many seasons of experience have taught me that when facing your winter *soyez un tournesol*. Be a sunflower. Focus on the sun. Let it energize you. Let it be a source of food and hope. The forces of Mother Nature may beat and batter you, but *n'inquietiez pas*, you mustn't worry, even the worst winters don't last forever and eventually the icy snow thaws.

And even though I begin to grow old and Mother Nature's hand beckons me through the cycle of seasons once more, I will always turn inexplicably towards the sun. And if the wild winter winds try to wound me, I will simply drop one of my seeds beside me so I may be reborn in the Spring, and he will too, *tourne au sol*.

Sweet Pea

Written by Riley Gallagher.

Graphic by Ariadne Danae Chavez Salinas.

the first thing remi notices about jade is that she smells of flowers. when she walks past her seat to class, slings her bag to the ground and slumps down, freesia and lavender floats in the air. the second thing remi notices is that her hands are stained, stained with crushed petals and poked with thorns against small, bitten-down nails. the third thing remi notices is that jade has a beautiful smile. it lights up her face, even if she blushes after laughing too loudly and flicks her hair to cover herself and avoid attention.

jade always has flowers with her, tucked in her hair or pressed in her books or in little flower pots that she brings, gifting them to the professors to brighten their rooms and make lectures less suffocating. she even has a ring on her finger, with a flower design etched in the stone that she tugs on anxiously before speaking up in class.

the two only have a few classes together, but jade is always kind to her. when they're assigned to collaborate on an anthropology project, she comes by the library with a bundle of green plumeria.

"i work at the flower shop down the road, Mayflower. we grow pretty much everything, and i always have extras to give away," she shrugs, looking down at the flowers. she places them next to remi's notebook on the table, a clear offering.

she accepts them gratefully, taking in a deep breath of its rich, slightly spiced scent. after their meeting, remi places them in a clear glass in her room, right by the window. they're beautiful, but when she goes to water them a week later the petals hang limp, one floating to the floor.

"i killed them," remi confesses to jade when they next meet up for their project at the library. "they're so pretty, but i guess i didn't water them properly."

"well, most flowers wilt eventually, if you cut their stems."

"most?"

"you can grow geraniums in the water after they've been cut. you just have to be careful, or they'll wilt too."

++

A few weeks later, jade takes remi to Mayflower and lets her cut some herself, teaching her how to grow

them in water. keep the leaves above the waterline, remi repeats, arranging and rearranging the stems. be patient, because it can take time for the roots to grow completely, she hears jade's voice chastising herself each afternoon when she swears that the plant looks exactly the same, if not worse.

remi has never excelled at being patient, but she tries. she tries patience with jade, watching as her petals slowly unfurl over time and soon, remi is invited back to the flower shop. From study sessions that feel like something more, to late-night conversations and secret smiles decorated with shy laughs.

jade goes home during the winter break, to visit her family. she leaves remi with a bundle of blue salvia and white clover, clean and fresh and cool. remi admires the perfect picture they make with her geraniums before carefully drying and pressing them between the pages of a bound notebook, one bought specially for preserving jade's offerings. she texts jade about her plants, coursework, and life, but jade is strangely quiet, so she spends her days singing and reading and trying not to think too hard about her.

jade comes back tired, her lavender scent faint and smile dimmed. she works longer at the flower shop, drinking too much coffee during class in order to stay awake, twisting her ring and staring at something in the distance.

"i'm fine," she says when remi works up the courage to ask. she sends remi off that night with citrusy marjoram, urging her to use it as a topping for one of remi's many late night cooking adventures, which remi would never admit she only started doing as an excuse to invite jade over. the stems are upside down when remi checks the bag and the leaves slightly crushed when she goes to add them to the chicken, but the taste is still wonderfully earthy and warm.

she brings leftovers to jade the next afternoon and they eat at her apartment while remi dramatically recounts her hectic morning. jade's phone starts to buzz, an older woman who looks just like jade and the contact name Mother. jade looks at it, quickly declining the call before silencing her phone and slipping it into her pocket. at remi's curious glance, jade quickly changes the subject, and doesn't pull out her phone again until remi's leaving the apartment.

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remi helps out at the flower shop when she can. jade

seems to be the only worker, essentially running the store as mr. kim's hands shake and ache when he tries to prune the flowers or gather bouquets. remi makes deliveries and sweeps the floor while jade trims and waters and plucks and teaches remi the perfect time to cut greenwood plants like gardenias to grow more flowers from the cuttings.

as remi drops jade off after work by her apartment, she enters her room with a blushing face and rose, lips warm from a parting kiss. creamy pink petals are pressed into the pages of her notebook, and she's left with a silly smile on her face the rest of the night, her nosy roommate whistling teasingly at her lovesick expression as she walks by. remi ignores them in favor of checking on her geraniums.

they're blooming, beautiful petals unfurling and stretching into the cool air.

++

often, remi brings coffee for jade on late nights and leaves with blue and pink hydrangeas, resting on her windowsill next to the geraniums in full blossom. she buys little planter boxes and pots, carefully planting the cuttings that jade gifted her. she grows the hydrangeas diligently, watering them daily and making sure they have the right amount of sunlight. as it blossoms, she plucks a few flowers, carefully drying and pressing them into her notebook. the pages are starting to fill up, florets of yellow tulips, meadowsweet, and bells of ireland from jade.

all too soon, winter arrives. jade tastes more like coffee than she does of flowers anymore, and she stops wearing them in her hair. remi's flowers sense change in the air, petals drooping low as warm music and laughter fades into quiet concentration and the furious scratch of pen on paper. finals are a struggle, and remi often finds jade hunched over her computer and notes, clothes rumpled, eyes squeezed shut, and fists clenched in fitful sleep. each and every are you sleeping well, are you eating well, is there anything i can do remain unanswered, a tired smile forming the words don't worry about me as she presses eglantine roses and golden rue into remi's left palm. all remi can do is hold jade tighter, stroke her hair and tell her how lovely she is, so she does.

after their exams, remi takes jade out stargazing, huddled in the back of the car with blankets and hot chocolate, breaths freezing and mingling as they stare up. the stars hang, glittering jewels suspended in midnight velvet, but remi still loses herself in jade's eyes. they find ursa minor and major quickly, playfully competing to see what winter constellations they can identify. they look up the fantastical myths of constellations like auriga or orion, reading them to each other as soft music floats out from the speakers.

"do you think people really could become stars after they die?" jade eventually asks, looking up at auriga.

"i'm not sure," remi admits. "it's a nice thought, though,"

"i'd like to think people become stars. that way i can still watch over and protect people after i'm gone. i'm still with them."

remi frowns, but fondly. "that's sweet, but i'm glad you're here with me now. you can't escape me until you're old and i've sucked all the plant knowledge out of you so I can properly grow miniature roses."

an affectionate smile, and a soft nudge. "Yeah,"

they depart later that night, a sugary kiss warming remi to the core as she returns to her room. when she goes to sleep, a flower falls from her hair. jade must have placed it behind her ear when she didn't notice, remi melting at the thought. it's a purple hyacinth, deep amethyst petals smelling of spring despite the cold. she breathes it in deep, then adds it to her notebook.

++

spring breaks, bright and inviting but remi finds jade hunched over in the back room of the flower shop, teary-eyed and struggling to breathe. she drops to the ground beside her, hugging her tight and counting their breaths out loud slowly before rambling about all the ways she can expand her windowsill garden.

"i want to add lavender next, but i might prefer something with a softer scent. you should pick out a flower for me, one we can both grow on our windowsills together."

jade nods shakily as her breathing steadies. after standing up, remi intertwines their fingers and leads her to the back room, to the shop's little greenhouse of flower buds. jade picks out delphiniums, gorgeous shades of blue – pale to cerulean to lapis. remi thinks they're her favorite flower, though that may be because the plant reminds her of jade: elegant and ethereal.

++

jade refuses to acknowledge or talk about the incident, but she drinks even more coffee on less sleep and seems to shrink from stress. her phone is silenced constantly now, and it seems only remi's texts come through. remi thinks she loves her, knows she loves her, but she doesn't know how to help her other than to stay with her and continue loving her as best she can.

so they grow their delphiniums together, and remi works with jade at the store each day. mr. kim has started paying remi despite her refusals, and she learns to cultivate sunflowers and carnations and daffodils. she successfully grows new honeysuckle plants from their cuttings, and earns a heart-stopping smile and kiss from jade. jade creates a bouquet from remi's plants, honeysuckle, narcissus, and white carnation bound together with a ribbon to the right, tucked into remi's hands as she reaches for her coat.

they talk in jade's apartment that night, curled up against each other and the tv playing some drama they've already seen.

"you smell like flowers now, too," jade says, face pressed in remi's hair.

She smiles. "really? which ones?"

"hmm, warm flowers. that honeysuckle you've been growing, and jasmine too. i love it." i love you.

they sit in comfortable silence, until remi asks sleepily about jade's plans after university.

"i don't know. never thought that far ahead, i guess. what about you?"

"i'm not sure either, but i want to travel. i'd love to live in new york if i could."

"new york sounds nice; you'd fit right in."

"well, maybe you could come with me. let mr. kim find someone else to manage Mayflower, and we could open our own flower shop together."

jade smiles softly, pensively, into remi's hair as she drowsily snuggles closer.

"maybe."

++

the days stretch on, flowers blossoming in and outside mr. kim's shop. jade takes remi to a cliffside overlooking a lake, where they eat chocolates and fruits, and paint their nails under the sun's gaze. jade's eyes are far away, her nails a pretty lilac, and she shivers in the warm air. she's traveling back home for the weekend.

"don't forget to bring back flowers! i know you've got some wildflower varieties hidden away at your house that you haven't been showing me."

jade smiles absently. "yeah, i will,"

remi frowns.

"are you alright?"

"definitely, just gonna miss you. i love you, y'know?"
a blush.

"i-i love you, too."

she gives remi sweet peas, fistfuls of the delicate lavender petals overflowing with their saccharine fragrance.

"oh, this is the one engraved on your ring! is it your favorite flower?"

"no, my favorite's honeysuckle because it reminds me of you," remi blushes deeper and jade rubs her ring before continuing, "but sweet peas are nice too."

"they're beautiful jade, thank you."

jade nods, pausing before hugging tightly and breathing her in. remi sinks into the embrace.

"bye, remi." jade whispers.

"bye! see you in a couple days!"

after jade drives off, remi smiles down at her sweet peas. the next morning she presses a delicate flower into her notebook before sending a picture to jade. she doesn't respond, but jade normally doesn't when with her family. remi works a slow day at the Mayflower, sweet-talking mr. kim into closing up shop early.

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++

spring breaks, bright and inviting but remi finds jade hunched over in the back room of the flower shop, teary-eyed and struggling to breathe. she drops to the ground beside her, hugging her tight and counting their breaths out loud slowly before rambling about all the ways she can expand her windowsill garden.

"i want to add lavender next, but i might prefer something with a softer scent. you should pick out a flower for me, one we can both grow on our windowsills together."

jade nods shakily as her breathing steadies. after standing up, remi intertwines their fingers and leads her to the back room, to the shop's little greenhouse of flower buds. jade picks out delphiniums, gorgeous shades of blue – pale to cerulean to lapis. remi thinks they're her favorite flower, though that may be because the plant reminds her of jade: elegant and ethereal.

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jade refuses to acknowledge or talk about the incident, but she drinks even more coffee on less sleep and seems to shrink from stress. her phone is silenced constantly now, and it seems only remi's texts come through. remi thinks she loves her, knows she loves her, but she doesn't know how to help her other than to stay with her and continue loving her as best she can.

so they grow their delphiniums together, and remi works with jade at the store each day. mr. kim has started paying remi despite her refusals, and she learns to cultivate sunflowers and carnations and daffodils. she successfully grows new honeysuckle plants from their cuttings, and earns a heart-stopping smile and kiss from jade. jade creates a bouquet from remi's plants, honeysuckle, narcissus, and white carnation bound together with a ribbon to the right, tucked into remi's hands as she reaches for her coat.

they talk in jade's apartment that night, curled up against each other and the tv playing some drama they've already seen.

"you smell like flowers now, too," jade says, face pressed in remi's hair.

She smiles. "really? which ones?"

"hmm, warm flowers. that honeysuckle you've been growing, and jasmine too. i love it." i love you.

they sit in comfortable silence, until remi asks sleepily about

jade's plans after university.

"i don't know. never thought that far ahead, i guess. what about you?"

"i'm not sure either, but i want to travel. i'd love to live in new york if i could."

"new york sounds nice; you'd fit right in."

"well, maybe you could come with me. let mr. kim find someone else to manage Mayflower, and we could open our own flower shop together."

jade smiles softly, pensively, into remi's hair as she drowsily snuggles closer.

"maybe."

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the days stretch on, flowers blossoming in and outside mr. kim's shop. jade takes remi to a cliffside overlooking a lake, where they eat chocolates and fruits, and paint their nails under the sun's gaze. jade's eyes are far away, her nails a pretty lilac, and she shivers in the warm air. she's traveling back home for the weekend.

"don't forget to bring back flowers! i know you've got some wildflower varieties hidden away at your house that you haven't been showing me."

jade smiles absently. "yeah, i will,"

remi frowns.

"are you alright?"

"definitely, just gonna miss you. i love you, y'know?"

a blush.

"i-i love you, too."

she gives remi sweet peas, fistfuls of the delicate lavender petals overflowing with their saccharine fragrance.

"oh, this is the one engraved on your ring! is it your favorite flower?"

"no, my favorite's honeysuckle because it reminds me of you," remi blushes deeper and jade rubs her ring before continuing, "but sweet peas are nice too."

"they're beautiful jade, thank you."

jade nods, pausing before hugging tightly and breathing her in. remi sinks into the embrace.

"bye, remi." jade whispers.

"bye! see you in a couple days!"

after jade drives off, remi smiles down at her sweet peas. the next morning she presses a delicate flower into her notebook before sending a picture to jade. she doesn't respond, but jade normally doesn't when with her family. remi works a slow day at the Mayflower, sweet-talking mr. kim into closing up shop early.

while watering her windowsill garden she decides to plant the rest of the sweet peas by her honeysuckle and delphiniums. remi looks for planter boxes, but after realizing she's out she uses the key jade gave her to go to her apartment and pick up a couple of her colorful pots.

next to the flower pots she finds a book she'd never noticed before. floriography. the language of flowers.

flower planting forgotten, remi eagerly sits down to examine the books. it's been used often, pages velvety and cover lovingly worn. each page documents the meanings of flowers remi has been learning how to grow. she looks up honeysuckle, smiling fondly when she sees they represent devoted affection, bonds of love. one of her earliest flowers, geraniums, were friendship, and the pink and blue hydrangeas romance and apology, respectively. confused, remi thinks back to her journal of pressed flowers as she looks up the rest. meadowsweet signified peace and protection, but the roses and rue that delighted remi when she received them actually expressed pain and sorrow.

heart stuttering, remi flips through the pages with increasing panicked urgency to find the only flower she cares about.

Sweet peas:

Gratitude. Tenderness. Farewell.

she drops the book. she stares, she remembers. comments she worried about, but ultimately ignored. all jade's missed phone calls, her exhaustion as the year stretched on. their goodbye.

she picks up her phone. she receives a call. she struggles to breathe.

She breaks.

the first thing people notice about remi is that she always smells of flowers. when she greets customers at the door, smiling, saying, Welcome to Sweet Pea, honeysuckle and jasmine floats in the air. the second thing people notice is that her hands are stained, stained with crushed petals and poked with thorns and purple nail polish painted on carefully. the third thing people notice is that remi has a tattoo. it's a small flower with delicate lavender petals winding around her ring finger, and she rubs it absentmindedly when she laughs, sparing a fond glance at the golden and assorted zinnias ever present on the windowsill nestled next to blooming delphiniums.

Flor: An Art History

Written by Katherine Page.

SNAPDRAGON | CREATIVITY

Because they are an everyday sight, most people don't really think twice about flowers. When we receive them as gifts, we appreciate the act of someone buying them for us more than we love the flowers themselves. We get upset when they eventually die but toss them without a second thought. It's an undisputed fact that flowers are gorgeous and one of the more beautiful parts of mother nature, and throughout history, artists have tried to preserve the beauty of a flower through their art. But have flowers always been portrayed for the same reasons? What different purposes have flowers served in art throughout the millennia?

Ancient Times

In early art, floral imagery mostly served religious or cultural purposes. They were mostly found in places like temples or areas relating to some kind of deity. A very obvious example is the ancient Greek world. Each Greek deity had some kind of symbol associated with them. Dionysus was famously equated with grapes and the ivy plant; Demeter with wheat; Aphrodite with roses. Flowers and plants were usually illustrated to show the viewer which deity they were looking at, most famously on Greek pottery.

In early art in other regions, flowers were still mostly portrayed for religious reasons, but they didn't represent something or someone else. Rather, they were worshipped in of themselves or had individual significant cultural importance. There are multiple examples of this. Hindus worshipped the jasmine flower, considered to be one of the five arrows of Kamadeva, the Hindu God of Love. Ancient Egyptians worshipped the lotus flower, a symbol of the sun. Chinese culture also revered the lotus flower but viewed it as a symbol for rebirth.

The Renaissance

This pattern of religious allusions stuck during the Renaissance era. Flowers were still depicted mostly in religious contexts—specifically Christianity. Most art during the time portrayed Jesus or Mary or some biblical story, as many artists were employed by the

church. Flowers often represented purity and virginity, or a lack thereof, leading to flowers painted in relation to Mary (or Madonna) or goddesses in general. Take Primavera or The Birth of Venus by Botticelli. Or Madonna and Child with Andel in the Rose Arbor by Pseudo-Pier Francesco Fiorentino. In all of these paintings, there are flowers in the foreground, mostly interpreted as symbols for the virginity and purity of the goddesses and women in the paintings.

Dutch Still Lifes

Next emerged Dutch still-life art. This period of art history was characterized by paintings of day-to-day objects—"objects of the natural world." This style emerged as a way for Dutch masters to show off their skills. For example, lemons were featured in Dutch still-life paintings often, simply because they were notoriously hard to paint in detail. Eventually, as the style picked up, artists would play with more and more daily objects. Fruit, bowls, vases, flowers. In all types of colors and shapes. Some artists would even paint an entirely new fruit or flower, one that didn't even exist. A rose or a daffodil with swirling ombre petals. A blend of two or three different types... a marigold, a hydrangea, a carnation, all rolled into one.

As the Dutch played more with still lifes, a pattern of symbolism within the style started to emerge. They often portrayed spiritual or ethical ideas, as this was prevalent in academics at the time. Famously, Still Life with Fruit, Fish, and a Nest by Abraham Mignon (one of the most famous Dutch still lifes) was a symbolic representation of life and death. This specific motif was common at the time, with flowers most often serving as a symbol for life, beauty, purity, and faith. There were still religious aspects to these paintings, of course. People were still overwhelmingly faithful, and the Renaissance greatly inspired the Dutch masters. For instance, poppies specifically stood for the "Passion of Christ." However, we were still gifted paintings from this time that were aimed to be more unconventional and more explorative with their symbolism and ideas.

Baroque and Rococo Art

Following the pattern of one generation being inspired by the last, we move on to the Baroque period of art, which was influenced by both the Dutch still-life period and, of course, the Renaissance. Springing from the Catholic counter-reformation, the Baroque period was defined by attention to detail, rich colors, striking lighting, dramatic forms and shapes, and stark contrasts between the foreground and background. Because this period was inspired by the Renaissance and the Dutch still lifes, flowers still had somewhat of a religious context to them. However, this is where we start to see a shift away from that. Specifically, in Rococo, an art style that emerged right towards the end of the Baroque period, flowers were there simply for the sake of beauty. Artists began to realize that the form of the flower was something that could be played with. Swirling, curvy shapes, and objects were included in a lot of Baroque and Rococo art. Artists started to see the inherent physical beauty of a flower—of its bloom—and painted that simply for the sake of painting it and not for any religious or symbolic reasons. There was also an idyllic aspect to it—flowers painted together were for visual aspects only, as sometimes two flowers that never bloomed at the same time were painted together, thus creating a purely fictional and beautiful arrangement.

Impressionism and Post-Impressionism

This brings us now to Impressionism, where the sentiment of painting flowers purely for the sake of beauty carried on. Some of the most well-known painters were Impressionists or Post-Impressionists. Van Gogh, Monet, Manet, Degas, etc. Some of their most famous paintings were of flowers. Monet's water lilies are beloved. Van Gogh and his sunflowers have inspired many artists and poets. Flowers in Impressionism had the same relationship that flowers had with Dutch still-lifes. They were for practice, however, in a much different art style. Impressionism was defined by quick and loose brush strokes, landscapes, everyday scenes, and open color. This art style translated well with the beauty of flowers, and this made florals such a prevalent subject of the period. Most beloved floral paintings are from the Impressionist period, and for a good reason.

Art Nouveau

Art Nouveau also carried on this sentiment. Perhaps the art movement that is most defined by

flowers, Art Nouveau, aimed to reject rigidity and embrace movement and beauty. It emerged during the Victorian Era, around the same time that the concept of Floriography became prevalent, and the practice of florigraphy went hand in hand with the art and architecture of Art Nouveau. Defined by portraits of women (usually nude), long curved lines and arches, asymmetrical shapes, floral motifs, and color, art nouveau was also prevalent in architecture and interior decorating. Glasswork and mosaics were a big part of art nouveau too. This was the art style that truly embraced beauty for beauty's sake, and flowers could be found in almost every Art Nouveau painting. Notably, artists like Alfonse Mucha and Klimt created art that included beautiful, blooming backgrounds. For example, *The Kiss* by Klimt and *Champenois Imprimeur* by Mucha.

Modern Art

Finally, we come to the modern era. Today, we don't have any concrete motifs or purpose for flowers in art, although it is safe to say that flowers are regaining meaning. Once defined simply for their beauty, modern artists are leaning back into symbolism. Georgia O'Keeffe has famously made flowers her signature and an allegory for female sexuality—the opposite of purity that Renaissance painters gave to flowers. Salvador Dalí has works like *Flordalí*, which beautifully plays with the colors of nature. Marlene Dumas plays with grey and muted flowers, exploring the heartbreak of losing a loved one. We are in perhaps one of the most explorative periods of art history in the world, with art becoming much more accessible to the average person. Thus, we are living in a period where it is hard to pinpoint where florals stand. It differs from painter to painter, painting to painting. We are alive to see thousands of interpretations and metaphors of flowers.

However, by knowing what roles florals once played in art, we can perhaps have better insight into what we see now. We can appreciate their beauty and symbolism. We can ponder the unique perspectives of each artist who chooses to include a flower in their work. And we can be even more excited about floral art in the future.

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Azalea

Written by Namuuka Mweene.
Graphic by Quynhmai Tran.

Recently, my TikTok for you page has been inundated with girls getting boob jobs.

I watch as they sit and make several videos discussing the full procedure: the hormonal changes, the proceeding confidence boost, the unbearable pain, and the newfound male attention. And then I look at my own boobs—do they need readjusting too? What about my hair that is not so straight, or my stomach that protrudes a bit? My skin is not the clearest; I am darker than many of the immediate people surrounding me; maybe I could probably feel happier if my forehead was a bit smaller.

Perhaps dealing with these insecurities would be easier if the women that got praise and attention looked more similar to me, or even just the average woman. Instead, a girl must fit into a patriarchally constructed box to benefit from “pretty privilege”. She absolutely must have white skin (tanned, to a certain degree), she needs to be thin (but not too thin because then you look anorexic), blonde hair is preferred, and if that hair is straight, well, you’re golden! These standards are not ubiquitous, but they do serve as the expectations that all women in the western world strive for. You could perhaps compare these women to the highly-loved Azalea flower; they serve as the ideal for the rest of the population and receive some of the highest recognition, praise, and warmth.

In the past hundred years, people have worked to challenge these standards; it would be disingenuous

for me to say that I, as a black woman, have to adhere to the same stringent beauty standards as a black woman living in America a hundred years ago. Phrases like “Black is Beautiful” and the overall emphasis on uplifting minority voices and their ethnic features have taken social media by storm. And yet, for every minority woman that gains traction, a hundred white women gain more popularity than them even with minimal effort. I want to believe everyone that repeats the mantra of “black excellence”, but how can I attain that when every “beautiful” woman looks the exact opposite of me?

It could be easier to dismiss these issues as mere internal struggles an individual must work on themselves, but societal beauty expectations also hold an impact on areas outside of aesthetics: beautiful people have it easier in the economic, social, and opportunity world. The Halo Effect describes how “attractive people are perceived to be smarter, funnier, and more likable than less attractive people”. This psychological phenomenon can then explain the reasoning behind the rest of the benefits that attractive people have. For instance, they have an advantage in the hiring process as “for neutral jobs, attractive applicants were preferred over unattractive applicants” and “attractive applicants were also rated as more qualified than unattractive applicants”. This hiring process benefit is merely one of the advantages of beautiful people.

I could sit here and write about how I do not care that I live my life outside of societal beauty expectations, but still I feel the flares of intense jealousy when I think about these advantages. I also want to be perceived as kinder and smarter, but I am at an automatic disadvantage because of my skin color. And that destroys me.

Although the uptick in boob jobs was the main jumpstart in my interest in discussing and navigating societal expectations, I have further expanded upon this intrigue by reading literature and books on the topic. My personal favorite is Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*; a poignant novel following a young black girl endlessly chasing beauty. The protagonist, Peccola, is the victim and witness of familial abuse and believes the only way to end her plight is by getting blue eyes and therefore achieving the paradigm of beauty. There is a lot to say about this novel (it has a place as a top three books that I have read), but I believe that Morrison comments on the themes of her book best- "Beauty was not simply something to behold; it was something one could do." The perpetual chase that Peccola undergoes throughout the novel is the same chase that we as women face in our daily lives. As my introduction says, it seems like every woman is getting their breasts done now. But it goes beyond the drastic impact of plastic surgery: there exist a hundred new ways to prevent the natural effects of aging (who would ever want to deal with wrinkles or creases or smile lines or dark circles), and there are millions of make-up tutorials on how to radically transform your face and look like Bella Hadid or Kendall Jenner, or Cara Delvigne (it really depends on which specific high-status model that you would like to try to emulate for the day) or you could buy one of the thousands of products that promise to tone your belly or grow your booty or make your lips plump.

And with all of these promises that following these new trends will grant you with your "dream face", it's no wonder that so many women give in and indulge. But, you quickly realize that no matter how much makeup you put on or how many new skin creams you buy, you are still you.

You still exist within your skin, and you will never quite reach the standard that you strive for. But you get oh-so-close each time and you convince yourself that if the first anti-aging cream did not work, then the next and more expensive one will and you will finally be beautiful and fill that void in your heart.

It truly is a pernicious cycle for a pernicious problem. And to add upon the malice of it all, this cycle disproportionately impacts different groups of women. Girls like Peccola who live at the complete bottom of the social hierarchy – very young, black, woman – feel the zeitgeist's influence and expectations the most. They will fight the hardest to climb out from the bottom just to experience even the slightest semblance of respect and recognition. Morrison's narrative choice of focusing on this specific demographic of women makes the journey of Peccola that much more real, telling, and tragic; watching Peccola descend into insanity while chasing her blue eyes invokes an unadulterated sympathy and a desire to reflect on what standards are we pushing for women.

Building upon this idea of seeking an identity and chasing perfection as a woman, the short story "Mannequin" by Jean Rhys discusses more the struggle of finding who you are in a world where we are sold so many different aesthetics and ways to improve. While *The Bluest Eye* is an examination of a girl lower on the beauty scale. "Mannequin" dives into the negative impact that the beauty standard has on those who fit into it. The main character is a newly hired model trying to figure out the modeling world. The title of the short story directly reflects the objectification that the models undergo: they have sold

their personhood to the modeling contract and entered a nonverbal agreement where their superiors can critique every detail of their appearance. I know earlier I showed some vitriol towards women who get considered “beautiful”, but I cannot sit and ignore the fact that all women suffer under the hands of the constrictive patriarchy. These women get their bodies treated as commodities, and they get stripped of everything individual in favor of shaping them into one malleable/controllable shell of a person. However, “Mannequin” challenges this notion; Rhys’ deep delve into the personalities of each of the model’s in the short story demonstrates to the reader that these women live autonomously as real people with genuine thoughts as opposed to the constructed and devoid archetype of a woman. How can we heal ourselves from the shackles of the patriarchy? I wish I could say that I had the panacea: the ultimate solution. The answer would heal all of the hurt women from their traumas after navigating beauty in such a harsh world. For me, self-care and self-awareness have helped the most. The flower Azalea, which prompted me to write this topic, tackles the duality of womanhood and looks perfectly. It holds a dual meaning: take care of yourself and your beauty. When I first read about this flower, I treated these differing meanings as contrasts of themselves: you can either partake in self-care, or you could indulge in the beauty standard. And my intention when I first began to write this was to juxtapose and emphasize this stark contrast. I thought that self-care must exist separately from beauty... But as I conclude this exploration of being considered beautiful, I realize that you cannot separate the two ideas. They are inextricable from each other. An Azalea is both a symbol of self-love and beauty; and, therefore, a woman can feel beautiful by prioritizing herself. She can take care to detach

herself from the social media that asserts that she is not enough or take care to surround herself with people who remind her that she is more than a pretty face. Maybe then, when she finds joy outside of physical factors- when she liberates herself from the unrelenting voices claiming that beauty equals happiness, then she can see the true beauty that she always had within her.





Hija Sempiterna

Written by William G Gleason II.
Graphic by Quynhmai Tran.



*“My Precious Angel,
If only we could share this
Moment forever”*

Day 1:

Mother left the windows rolled down halfway on her rusted silver '97 Toyota Camry. The stench from the diesel engine running in front of her engulfs her nostrils. But she doesn't care. She just looks aimlessly onward. Waiting. Waiting for that lively little girl to glide down the sidewalk and hop into the backseat. Waiting for that cute petite purple backpack of hers to bounce with each scampering step she takes down that same pathway she traverses each afternoon.

The air is muggy and still, it brushes the light hairs on **Mother's** left forearm stretched out along the side of the steering wheel. The sunlight gives her skin an evening glow. The whole scene causes **Mother** to undergo that same ethereal sensation she experienced just two summers ago.

Daughter is spotted frolicking her way towards the car: exactly as Mother had pictured in her head. Joyful. Without a sense of any of the dangers that dominate the outside world. She, that little speck of heaven, will forever be unscathed, forever be impeccable, in the eyes of **Mother**.

The car door opens and **Daughter** enters the right side holding onto the stem of an ornate white flower: so white it radiates under the sunlight. Its petals, as tiny and abundant as they are, are arranged in perfect radial symmetry. The brightness of the flower illuminates **Daughter's** most delicate facial features: her gentle button nose, her luscious brunette bobby-hair that curls inwards at the shoulders, her little left dimple, and the three freckles just below her right eyelid. **Mother** feels proud at the sight of her creation. Her love for **Daughter** grows deeper each second she stares into those deep pupils of hers.

“Mamí look what I got for you.”

Daughter extends her hand forward, daintily offering

the little white flower with the largest expression of joy on her face.

Mother gasps in a playful way as one does with a toddler.

“It's beautiful, mijia. Thank you.”

Mother embraces the flower in her chest. Her admiration and love grows even deeper and now **Mother** can't help but to keep looking at her beautiful **Daughter**. The emotional experience tugs at her heart so greatly that **Mother** pulls away and focuses on the road ahead of her, wiping away the tears from her eyes before they could glide down her cheek.

They advance onwards directly into the sun. **Mother** reaches in the middle compartment to pull her shades out. At first glance, it appeared as though her **Daughter** vanished into thin air after **Mother** adjusted her vision. But she was mistaken. The tint on her sunglasses blocked out that fluorescent and sparkling view of **Daughter**.

So she tosses her glasses under the passenger seat: willing to risk their lives on the road for the sake of encapsulating **Daughter's** beauty one last time.

They arrive home, sanely and safely: no scratches.

Daughter runs into the house and drops her bright purple backpack by the kitchen island table, then goes to visit **DOG**. **DOG** seems to not notice **Daughter's** presence. Completely unbothered. Stuck in that same drowsy state at the foot of the recliner like always.

Mother walks in gracefully and sets the delicate white flower down on the counter. **Daughter** turns on the TV and tunes into the same cartoon channel she always amuses herself with. **Mother** glances over at **Daughter** watching the TV so intently. **Mother** cannot feel any other emotion besides awe and love. Her little hands, little arms, little feet, little back, little

nose, little eyes are too precious in the eyes of **Mother** to ever be swept away or put in danger by the hands of God.

Mother pulls out of the cabinet an ornate and intricate white **TELA**: more than half-finished with the thread and needle dancing at the end.

At the table, **Mother** plucks out each petal from the white flower and sows it painstakingly into the elaborate **TELA**. She sits at the table for nearly two hours trying to sow the whole piece together.

Daughter approaches the table. Her eyes barely reach above the counter-top, her delicate little fingers grapple onto the edge as if she were holding onto the edge of a cliff for dear life. Her pupils widen as curiosity grows watching **Mother** slave herself away at the thread and needle. **Daughter** notices the once bright and pure white flower, plucked out of the ground earlier that day by the hand of **Daughter**, turn into a shriveled and naked flower, plucked of its ornately placed petals at the dinner table by the hand of **Mother**.

Daughter suddenly lost interest and gallops back towards her position situated in front of the TV. **Mother**, too, was tired of her painstaking operation and went to join **Daughter** in watching television. She caresses **Daughter**'s hair while they mindlessly watch the screen play out in front of them. **Daughter**'s body feels limp as it leans against **Mother**. But **Mother** keeps stroking that lifeless body, caressing that every-so sweet and precious angel.

Mother and **Daughter** fall asleep together, arm-in-arm, the light around them has burnt out other than that blue tv screen. Flashing. Flashing on ceaselessly through the night.

Day 2

Next afternoon. **Mother** stays waiting in that same spot, behind the same truck, with the windows rolled halfway down. Just like always.

And there she is. **Daughter** galloping down the sidewalk; clutching onto another little white flower. Just like yesterday, just like always.

She enters into the right backseat of the car. Her little body jumps around the back and **Mother** just keeps staring in awe, never breaking eye contact until the car behind her honks for her to advance.

As soon as she gifts in gear, **Daughter** perks up.

“Mamí look what I got for you.”

Her arm extended: the little white flower, full of life and light, is once again surrendered over to **Mother**.

Mother gasps with joy. She can't help but love this little game they play every day.

“It's beautiful, mijia. Thank you.”

Mother embraces the flower into her chest; a teardrop falls down her face. There is nothing more beautiful than the love, security, and comfort a daughter provides for her mother.

They arrive home. **Daughter** runs inside, throws her bright purple backpack under the kitchen table, and runs over to pet **DOG**. **DOG**, in that same old drowsy state, seems not to care or even notice **Daughter**'s presence.

Mother gracefully walks in, sets her bag down, and gets to work with the new flower gifted to her. Another two hours at work with the needle. Another two hours closer to finishing **TELA**.

Daughter's eyes wander over to **Mother**'s work again, just to rush over to return to viewing the television. **Mother** drops her thread and needle after she sews on the last petal and joins **Daughter** at the sofa.

Another night together embracing one another, hoping this moment never ceases. Hoping God prevents **Daughter** from ever growing up and having to face the trials and tribulations of the outside world. Hoping God can stop time in its tracks. **Mother** can only pray and spend all her days restlessly waiting for God to answer her prayers.

Day 3

Carpool line. It's a little too hot out this evening so **Mother** kept the windows rolled up. The diesel truck is absent: maybe they are running late, maybe their child was sick today. **Mother** doesn't care to know. She just looks onward into the distance waiting. Waiting for **Daughter** to come out of those doors and frolic her way down to the backseat of her car.

Daughter jumps into the back; **Mother** is relieved. And in the same motion, **Daughter** extends her arm out in that routine manner she always does.

“Mamí look what I got for you.”

Mother extends her arm out to grab the flower, limply,

and clutches onto it in that same ritualistic manner she does.
"It's beautiful, *mija*. Thank you."

They drive in silence back home. **Daughter** runs inside and **DOG** is still unbothered.

Mother assumes her position and slaves away for the next two hours. **Mother** lifts up **TELA** at the end of her shift with both pride and agony. Her work pains and pleases her heart.

"It is done."

Daughter leaps from her place on the sofa and runs over to **Mother** to witness the finished product in its fullness and grandiosities.

TELA is large, stretching slightly above the length of the kitchen table. The dimming lights radiate off the expansive of white petals sewed onto the piece. There is a subtle opening near the top half of the piece, but large enough to fit a fist through. **Daughter** motions to touch **TELA** but **Mother** refuses and retreats backwards three paces.

"Mamí what is that for?"

"*Mija* ven conmigo, I'll show you."

They walk down the sidewalk hand-in-hand while **Mother** clutches onto **TELA** on the free hand with all her might. Soft with the hand shared with **Daughter**; harsh with the hand shared with **TELA**. **Mother** sweating profusely on her left side; **Mother** jubilant on her right side.

Daughter appears confused but unbothered by **Mother's** rather ambiguous nature. Her perpetual state of bliss could never be scathed. She will forever remain timeless for as long as her days persist.

Hand-in-hand they traverse the broken pavement of their town. As they march forward past the cracks and bruises of the road, so does the sun march downward towards its final descent.

They arrive at the door. Cedar wood. Circular door knob. Concrete slab beneath the entrance. Before approaching, **Mother** looks deeply into **Daughter's** eyes, trying to capture every square inch of her deep brown pupils one more time. **Mother's** agony grows stronger within her. It consumes her. It envelops her whole body. She's trembling violently.

"Mamí, what's going on?"

Mother could barely open her mouth. Lips quivering, she unsuccessfully attempts to spell out a single comprehensible word. Finally her mouth fully opens and she mutters out with the most fearful tone:

"I love you."

Mother violently grabs hold of the door handle and **Daughter's** hand slips away. She turns back looking for her **Daughter** but nothing is visible in her vision other than the setting sun and the poorly paved road. Gone. As if she never was by her side. Ever.

Lutona stumbles through the door; wailing. The entire atrium quakes from the magnitude of her excessive mourning. She can't fathom such a dire loss. She can't fathom losing the one person that gave her life. She howls, she shrieks, she whimpers until finally she lays on the floor of the funeral home. Silent. Surrounded by extended family and all those who held some relation to her late daughter, whether significant or not. Concerned on how to address the audibly and visibly grieving mother, they simply look down on her in a manner which further humiliates the poor woman.

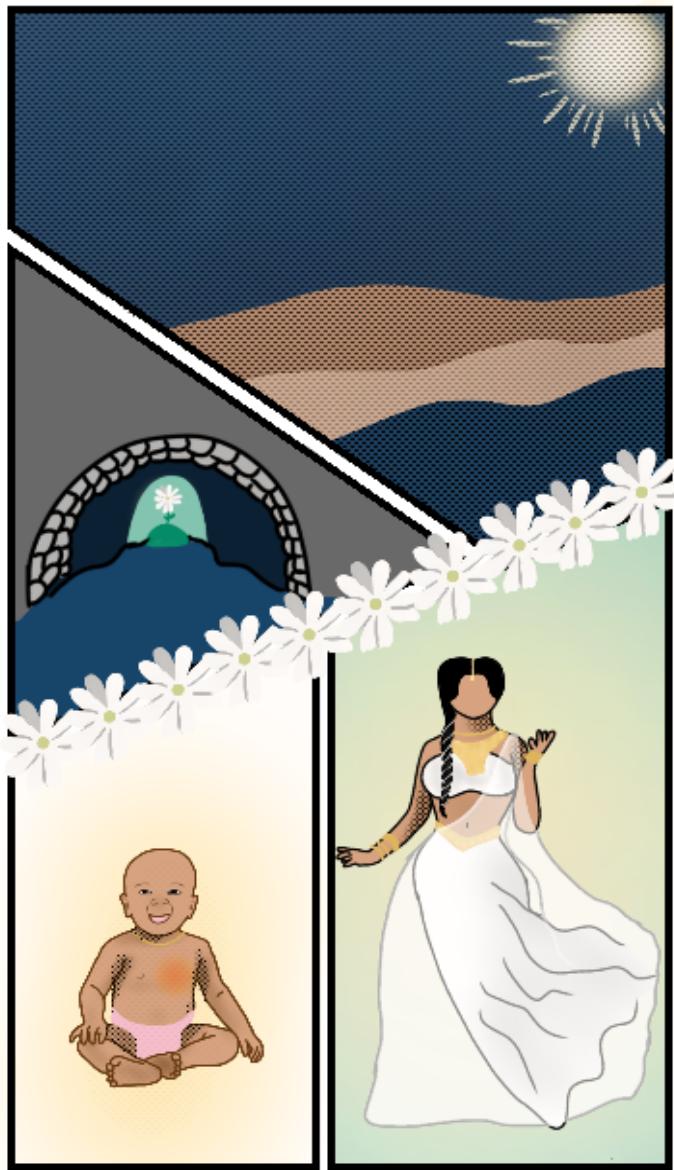
She is folded over into a fetal position and surrenders the burial shroud she spent so many tedious hours sowing together. A member of the crowd picks up the tela and the whole mass admires how elaborate the piece was made. They hand the shroud over to the mortician to properly dress the child taken by the hand of God so early.

As the procession continues, the mother lies submerged in her own sorrows until she regains strength to walk over to the casket.

The sight of her daughter's lifeless and dull face, that was once so bright and jovial, cripples *Lutona's* spirit. Her whole self is ravaged by the loss of her only child.

She lets out one final cry as she hangs off the side of the casket. Then mutters to herself one last time before she herself perishes alongside her child:

"My beautiful daughter. My little *Chrysanthemum*."



The Tale of the Night Jasmine

రయ్యమల్లి కథ

By: Lakshman Nishanth Kadiyala
Graphic by Temiloluwa (Temi) Idowu

Often regarded as the celestial flower that belonged to the Heavens, the Pārijātaṁ or the Night-Flowering Jasmine is an important flower in Hindu mythology. It has the unique feature of blooming at night, spreading an intoxicating aroma, and shedding at sunrise.

She was a gift to the gods, from the primordial Ocean of Milk.

The cave was dark and musty, and it smelled of salt. Kadalon traced his calloused hand along the wet walls, in search of what could either be a great gift, or an existential evil. The scene outside the cave was a spectacle. A massive mountain, whose top penetrated into the night sky, erected from a thick endless ocean. Two enemy demigod races, the *Dēvas* and the *Asuras*, working together. At sea level, wrapped around the mountain's base, was a massive basilisk. Thousands of beings were tugging at it at either end, gradually twisting the mammoth mountain. The mountain churned to and fro. The ocean below rippled out tsunamis. But it was not long before the demigods grew restless, as the Nectar of Immortality for which they labored refused to reveal itself.

Tensions were rising between the *Dēvas* and the *Asuras*, and Kadalon seemed to be the only one who even noticed the cave rise out of the whisking ocean.

He ventured further, taking careful steps.

“It’s too soon, is it not?” he heard a voice sputter behind him. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw a blinding light, a surging fire that shaped the figure of a man. Slowly, the fire extinguished, revealing Agni’s human form.

“It’s not the *Amrtam*” Kadalon responded. He then pointed with his eyes and tilted his head towards the blacker side of the cave, where the seeping ocean water slithered into the deep. The two searched the darkness. Their eyes adjusted on a pool of milky white, in the center of which was a pale newborn infant splashing around at the fluid.

Kadalon stared a little closer. The baby was white, sucked dry of any blood, but there was a faint blurry orange glow right where her heart should’ve been. He knew.

He scooped up the child in one arm bidding Agni farewell and stepped out into the ocean. His skin began melting into foamy liquid, mingling with the chalky open sea. His now fluid hand covered the baby’s nose and mouth. Air bubbles formed as the two sank into the dark waters. The baby was now supported only by Kadalon’s silky limbs whose molten silhouette was completely indistinguishable from the sea.

“The infant is being delivered,” Kadalon said through his tightened breath. A colossal being a hundred times his size was reclining above him comfortably on the belly of a fat serpent, the being’s skin so black that Kadalon felt if he stared too long he would be consumed by it. The god’s name was

Mayon, the black-complexioned one.

Kadalon waited for his response, hearing only the soft rhythm of the undulating milky waters surrounding them for infinity. Mayon's eyelids slept on his pupils, matching the stoic expression he wore, but his eyes were still flushed with the life of a lotus in full bloom, nourished by the sun. Suddenly, the air vibrated with a low rumble and the clouds shivered.

Mayon had tilted his head, his eyes sliding into Kadalon's gaze.

Kadalon's heart panged, but he finally managed to say, "Ganga is with the child, on her way to Bhūgōlām."

"Has the nectar come out yet?" Mayon boomed. The surrounding waters skittered away from them with unthinkable speed and each of the five heads of the cobra that hooded his dark body rang.

"Yes." Kadalon continued, "The Pālakaḍali gifted us a celestial physician whom we named Dhanvantari. He came holding a pot full of the Amṛtam."

The faintest smile played on Mayon's lips.

Kadalon hesitated before adding, "The Asuras snatched it from him before it could be distributed fairly."

And that was all Mayon needed.

The titan swung a heavy leg over the side of the serpent with a sky-shattering THWUMP. As he slid several yards down the side of the beast, he shed his burly masculine build and shrunk to reveal an archetypal feminine beauty. His eyes grew big and doe-like, his hair slithered into a braid interwoven with jasmine flowers, and his features softened as a thin white sāri materialized, draping her body. He had transformed into Mohini, his female avatāram and the most attractive celestial being in existence. Mohini swept her lotus-petal eyes across the ocean, and a sly smirk crept across her face.

She looked intensely for only a split second before shouting "Hūṁ!"

She vanished into thin air.

The ebony new-moon sky comforted Malli. As if the emptiness of it were hugging her while she stood warm in the field. Her name itself, Rēyimalli, meant "Jasmine flower of the night," because of how she blossomed during. She was about nineteen when she fell in love with the Sun. It was nearing dawn, and he stretched out an orange arm across the ink-blue sky and touched her. Streaks of purple caressed the red, and the twinkle of light on the horizon winked at Malli. She blushed. She had always been more fascinated by the quiet whisper

of the night. But she couldn't help being enticed by the new passion of dawn, who bathed her skin and enveloped her body in his rays.

Her joy quickly subsided. She would never be able to even meet the Sun because he resided in Swargam, the heavens, where she was not allowed to roam.

Just then, an idea struck her.

Malli ran back to her cottage, quickly rummaging through her drawers and belongings for her pen, bottle of ink, and scraps of paper. She began writing fervently, afraid of losing the spark that had just been ignited in her. Her pen was a hummingbird darting back and forth between her ink bottle and paper.

When she was done, she knelt by the banks of the River Ganga. The goddess rose from the water. Ganga had served as Malli's mother figure since she was very young. She is the one who fed her, bathed her, and told her stories of Swargam at night, putting her to sleep under the stars.

Malli was particularly fond of the Pālakaḍali story. She loved hearing how the Dēvas and the Asuras set aside their differences to work for a common goal. How when the Asuras stole the Amṛtam from Dhanvantari's grasp, Mohini was there to seduce it out of their hands. How Mohini only distributed it to the Dēvas because of the Asuras' greed. How it led to another great war, in which the Dēvas swiftly defeated the Asuras for good.

But most of all, Malli loved hearing how she herself sprung forth from that ocean, just moments before it all unfolded.

Ganga flowed from the heavens onto the Himalayan Mountains, through the foothills, and past the plains where Malli's cottage stood, finally meeting Kadalon, the sea. Those two gods who served as Malli's guardians were two of the only gods who could travel physically between the heavens and earth—the others had to incarnate as humans.

And it was because Ganga had this ability, Malli asked her, "Can you deliver this letter to Swargam, please? To Surian?"

Ganga gave Malli a knowing look before sinking back into the waters with the letter and surging upstream. Malli hoped and prayed for a quick response—at least within a week—from her newfound love. But much to her surprise, Ganga returned that evening with a smile cracked clean across her face.

"He wants to meet you."

A FEW MONTHS PASS...

On the winter solstice, Malli married the Sun.

Surian had been captivated by Malli's letter, and he came to earth to visit her several times, delighted by her presence. The two courted for a few months before getting engaged. After the wedding, they spent the cold months cozied up in Malli's cottage. Together, they celebrated Ugādi, the arrival of spring, and the new year.

Summer hit them all too quickly.

Surian informed Malli that he must leave for Swargam for the summer months and that she could not follow because he would be too hot for her to bear. But Malli insisted, unable to bear the idea of being away from him for so long.

"But promise me to keep your distance, I don't want to burn you," Surian said. Malli promised and she followed Surian, with Ganga at her side. She was jittering with excitement to see Swargam, her birthplace, for the first time ever.

The scene when they arrived was horrific.

Bodies littered the field outside the palace walls. Asuras. Malli could tell from their tattoos. They lay beaten, cut, and bleeding, the stench of death hanging heavy in the air. Ganga, who flowed into the palace recoiled in disgust as one Asura who was barely alive plopped into her waters, reddening the bank. The alive ones barely moved, eyeing the three of them as they approached the entrance. Surian walked swiftly up to the gate, with Ganga following quickly behind. It was Malli who strayed, her heart aching for the wounded.

She had to help them.

The nearest one was just up ahead writhing and clawing at a poison-tipped arrow nestled deep in his chest. He looked young, around her own age. She would just pluck the arrow out to prevent any more of the poison from bringing him pain. She approached him and knelt beside his body. Surian glanced over his shoulder at her.

"NO!"

Something clean and sharp pierced her skin and slid into her heart. Horror registered on Surian's face. She felt the blood slowly seeping down her to her stomach, but when she looked down, she saw a golden liquid instead.

Then she understood. Her blood was the nectar.

All went black.

Surian lept to embrace Malli's now limp body. Before a drop of the Amṛtam —her blood—could fall onto the coarse

tongue that lay lazily out of the Asura's mouth, she turned to ash, from Surian's intense heat.

The ash fell to the ground, and Surian and Ganga wept where it lay. Their tears mixed the ash into the soil and the ground. Unable to bear having to explain the ordeal to the other gods in the palace, Surian and Ganga returned to earth, grieving in Malli's cottage. Later that night, in the very spot where her ashes fell, a sapling sprouted. Quickly, it grew, and by midnight it had grown into the size of an adult tree, with flowers in full bloom. The flowers spread an intoxicating scent that pervaded the entire heavens and even leaked down to earth. Surian, unable to sleep, recognized it and followed the scent back to the tree. The flowers had an orange center, the drop of Amṛtam in Malli's heart. That night, and every night from then on, Surian spent adoring and tending to the tree. And when Surian had to leave to brighten the morning, the flowers shed themselves from the tree, Malli honoring her promise to keep her distance from the Sun.

Yonder

Written by Dillon Luong.
Graphic by Ariadne Chavez.

oh
 hey

It's me again
I am
 writing this because

I'm sad
A
looking down at the floor for
 too long

 kinda sad

Spilled soft-serve silence on the sidewalk
 kinda sad

I'm talkin'
 reaching out, hands flustered for fluttering Watermelon Pink butterflies of time
 while ornaments of tropical milkweed bloom by my feet,
toxic absent pockets of where I am

kinda sad

It's this
 —um

pillow willow emptiness on my chest, not in it
a cozy cotton shirt, Hollister men's large in flagrant, shallow Pine Green
 the tag told me to put it on cold wash, I followed the paper trail

And it's like I am falling into life for the first time ever
 taking my first breath
gasping, swimming,
 piddle-paddling to something off-white, distinct Meridian Blue
 Crossing meridians, crossing oceans of time
 Meridians acupunctured criss-cross by bursting dandelion weeds

It's like I am remembering everything
 for the first time

Why can't I be this whirlwind of emotion
When I am just the leaf
swaying in
the aftermath, splitting
 cords of air current
 plush on cold cement

I am unhappy
I have so much to look for, to do, to talk to
 to keep going and to keep doing what I've always done

but
 what is it even like
 to be happy

To want—to not feel like mindless fog blowing through shifting, sifting pollens of life
 free-floating, unopened melancholy mason jars

Time ticks, and I'm sitting here, stooped
 on my silly little stool—belladonna
nightshade growing over my remains
carnations sprouting from my fingertips like ovations

I am breathing earth
The garden grows along my body
scented cyclamens blossoming in my throat
where I walk with herbs, teas, and incense

where moonlight cross-section cuts through me, coalescing shadows
and still

I stare
silently
softly

and no one notices

-

life
is the

3 am road trip
prints and bags under starry eyes
hum and churn as the wheels turn on their own
blankly gazing out, watching what will come pop into the headlights
yawning and nothing

Until you come to the school parking lot

abandoned but lit up

and your feet, your shoes step on the gravel; the grass, the lines in between the pavement, in between
paint strip lots; until you get to the bump of curb, the square-holed wire link fence with the imposing
solid metal poles, and you climb it; greasy black, leather suede scented Converse Shoes in between empty
connections, laces flopping out to kiss the metal; and you look out to the field, and for the first time ever, you
see

nothing

and it isn't until hours of this

endless peering, fond
pondering some sonder

yonder
that you realize
you are still on the other side



Yonder

Dillon Luong

I wrote this poem to invoke a particular feeling of sadness. The kind that is numbing, and ever-present on you like clothes. It's not quite... undulating spasms of fashion taste? More like something that you constantly carry around on you. This is an emptiness that doesn't erupt and explode; instead, it feels like the fallout afterward; something you survive.

Moreover, the real reason I wrote this piece was that I wanted to express (and this may seem obvious) my emotions. A healthy display kind of way that lets me capture who I am, was, or want to be in a cute little time capsule I can reopen every time I reread my own work; you're an insider on your own tour de force so only you can fully realize the extent of what you were trying to create, and I think that is beautiful. However, I don't think many people, particularly men, want to accept this idea of being firsthand with their emotions. I didn't either.

In my home country, Vietnam, my true name is Hoa Anh, which translates to something along the lines of "Mr. Flower"; it also skirts into meaning blooming or blossoming. It is a name that celebrates growth and revealing one's true colors when the right time comes around, and I hated it growing up. As someone who grew up in a deeply masculine household, I was always told to be strong enough to do everything by myself; better to focus on logic and rationality over emotions and inconstancy. This was a poison that paralyzed my thoughts, feelings, and actions, and as I grew up I slowly became more tolerant of its side effects. I compromised friends and family and was told it was the best choice of action. I left my ambitions to rot and mold, and even now I still struggle with understanding other people and their emotions. All of these factors grew a thorny hatred for my floral birthright; what with it being associated with femininity and more importantly, a soft spot. It was always strange to me why I had

been named in such a way.

It was only recently that I really started to embrace this side of me. The freedom of university, the influence of ambitious individuals, and my continued dabbling in writing have led me down a path of myriad confusion. No one told me finding yourself was like walking through a hall of mirrors—I see myself every which way but I don't know which one is the actual me. It made me think, why are emotions associated with femininity in the first place? Why isn't this a mainstay in childhood development (at least formally)? Why is it even an option when it's such an important part of you and me? I know a lot of guys, and I know that most of them have not realized this yet. I know how they suffer, trapped in a cage of numbers and bare-fisted logic, and still I find myself walking in patterns and wondering why I keep looping back to the start again. I wish it was common knowledge that irrationality wasn't weakness. It's a matter of perspective; doing things with no say or way, whimsical and spontaneous is what breaks the mold, it is what makes this thing and that thing over there interesting and complex. It's like when you pop an Altoid, minty freshness filling the air and eliciting flavor you could not otherwise find elsewhere—kinda like Remy the Rat from Ratatouille when he ate the grape and cheese together, fireworks going off in your head and all; I think more people should take on his example. (Plus, if food can do that to me, I'd be okay with dealing with rat traps. I don't know about you.)

This is to say, I think more men should embrace their femininity. It's fun, I've tried it and it's a blast. There's nothing hotter than emotions and doing silly little things for no reason at all. The biggest reason is you get to be more you. Everyone is a normal person and a kooky person in their own way, but being you is whatever middle ground there is between two extremes—a tug of war between two fronts. There is beauty in the struggle: you are not a robot who is

indecisive, you are a DaVinci clockwork machination powered by strange things like air and water. The biggest difference between the two is one was printed, reproduced, and moves without a mind of its own. And the you, the crazy woodwork flying machine, is an assembly of parts that naturally come together, one part pushing on another and another until it dominoes into “I love you,” “I’m sad,” and “what’s up?”

I admit it is difficult to overcome a toxic masculine household. It is something you can’t just cure, your body cannot just filter out, that a self-help guru can just knock into you in a simple \$30 book. For me, working in construction with my uncles, it was kind of a necessity to be as straight-laced as possible. That’s why only in college, away from all of that, did I finally find the time to explore myself and all of the cool people that walk by me. This struggle is beautiful in the way that it will take time. Articulate it in your own way because, after all, pain is absence and lethargy and make-believe and so many things more than buzz words and bullet points you find on self-help websites. Be gentle. Small pushes instead of shoves, hopscotch skips instead of Olympic long leaps, towel tug football instead of tackle touches, you get the point. Having the room and time to understand, in your own way, creates real value and joy in knowing the kind of person you are. It’s difficult to know your quirks and hobbies, so finding—no, discovering—them is real power and fun.

You know, you’re one-hundred percent all-natural, so don’t poison the crop. This isn’t to say that logic and straightforwardness haven’t done great things for us, but we can do even better if we open up than optimize; there’s no need to oust the other half of ourselves. Here’s an example: mathematics and physics deal with how the world works, but they’re only true because they’re held up by a million little caveats (looking at you deductive theorems and quantum mechanics). Maybe, just maybe, in the same sense, you are not

part of one place but just a million different little spots that you fill in; you are so many different interpretations that there is no singular universal truth to yourself. Why not open up to that? Live every single part of yourself (and if you do it well enough you could be like Evelyn from *Everything, Everywhere, All at Once*, or even better, my boy Waymond). And so, take a step back and look at your garden. See that empty space? I bet it would be a great place to plant something new; come back and water, watch, and wonder as your fields, your garden, your verdant frontier smell absolutely lovely. Who doesn’t want to frolic in those Danish tulip fields? Walk the hollow-sounding bridge of Monet’s botanical garden? Jump along the stepping stones of the San Jacinto river path and realize that nothing powers anything that’s happening there, it’s all just happening on its own and you get to witness it!

Masculinity can be strong, but taking on femininity is freedom. Come, blossom with me. Pick up a trowel and trousers; we’re getting dirty, we’re pulling weeds, and we’re putting down roots. My name only tells me what I should already do (aside from getting a neat flower tattoo and thanking my sweet Aunt for passing her name onto me), and I want to spread Spring seed.

Let’s bloom.



Lilies are for Funerals: Familial Flowers

Written by Justice Elise Morris.
Graphic by Quynhmai Tran.

Dedicated to the ones I love, those lost too soon;
I love you, and I am you.

My Uncle, Jon Micheal Morris

July 14, 1979 – April 30, 2019

The roses were the first bouquet I had received, and I could not mask the joy they gave me as I blushed shyly as I whispered, “thank you.” His pride for me, as his niece and goddaughter, outshone the rays of the sun. I have kept these flowers in the safety of my heart, for they are the last remnant of his presence on this earth. Their home is an antique translucent green vase, which supports their dried stems. The aged petals lay peacefully on the bud of the faded roses. Their once bright pigmentation has faded, the yellowish gold of treasured jewels and the pink of pinched cheeks, are now muted. His love, nonetheless, remains in the delicate muted petals which I look to in my time of need.

My Grandmother, Melody Elizabeth Morris

September 21, 1955 – June 10, 2018

She invented death; it did not come swiftly, nor did it pass without the extinguishing of her fluorescent soul. I once heard “lilies are for funerals,” and they did not fail to make an appearance; I fixated my eyes on their beauty. The gentle snow-white petals tore into my soul; they mocked my senses as I cried puddles into my lap. Their beauty evoked hers, and while they thrived, she had perished; her body lay to rest in an urn, brutally cold and vile in its solitude. The verdant greens of its stem and leaves hinted at the prospect of growth, of a future. Yet, her age would not pass with that of the earth and its revolutions.

The funeral dragged on for hours, I felt my dress seep into my skin; it was covered in the pollen of the lilies, which circulated the air around me, and burrowed into the tear-stained fabric of my funeral attire. My eyes were wilted petals falling to the floor, precious petals once admired

now turned my stomach, for I could not bear to think of her as ashes in the urn. If lilies are to represent pure love, then why would they torture me so? I have not seen those damned lilies the same since. And yet, the white lilies are meant to restore innocence in the soul after a person dies. She was fortunate to have not needed this service, but it nonetheless gives me hope. She is gone. The elaborate arrangements of white lilies are gone. I remain. Flowers die, and we die, but love is immortal. Our love for each other lives in the seedlings of lilies. It transcends the confines of our mortal world. I feel her love each spring with the arrival of new blooms.

*My Great Grandfather, Joe Manuel Morris
May 2, 1935 – September 17, 2021*

Forget-me-not; I repeat the last wish he passed onto me. I spent my childhood listening to his stories, as they played repeatedly; the record of his life, rather the stories he remembered, as he shared with me. I carry these stories and memories with me lovingly.

I carry him in my arms as I embrace his widow; she wails into my sinking shoulders. The echoes oscillate in the precious stained-glass portrait of Christ. I carry this weight, and I will carry this weight for a long time. A series of photographs play on the slideshow documenting his life and its triumphs, these photographs once graced my hands, now they grace my line of sight. The golden trumpet that filled numerous rooms with its music in his days as a traveling musician, a gentle smile you wore on your wedding day, and those with the smiling faces of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The preacher recites an all too familiar sermon. My ears are tightly shut so as to cease the pins and needles which pierce them with every verse. My eyes have grown twice

in size, and in their excruciating puffiness, tears are not spared.

As I go to close my eyes, in defeat, I catch a glimpse of a baby blue. I fixate on one of many arrangements near the casket and find an unlikely surprise. Forget-me-nots! For a man who lived for decades with Alzheimer's, then proceeded to die due to complications from Alzheimer's, one might consider it a joke made in poor taste, and perhaps it could be to others; however, the moment I laid my eyes upon them, I burst into laughter. The laughter filled my lungs; it grounded me as you gifted me with one last joke. The petite petals of the forget-me-nots are reminiscent of the stories he told me. I hold onto them with a lust for life, for I want these petals to lie with me when I am in my grave. Year after year will pass, and I will get older and older. I wish not to have these petals and their memories fade; I will not let them fall into the cracks of time or let them escape the tender embrace of my fingers.



Daisy

Written by Nidhi Chanchlani.

Graphic by Ariadne Danae Chavez Salinas.

As I sit here on this sunny day, with the warmth of the sun on my face and the scent of freshly cut grass in my nose, I can't help but think about daisies. I think about how they've been in my life for as long as I can remember. And perhaps that shouldn't surprise me since my name is Daisy, but it's funny how one simple flower carries so much weight in its paper-thin petals. I think about how it would be impossible to untangle my life from daisies and how difficult it would be to describe me without a daisy. They remind me of my daughter, my mother, my childhood. Of simpler times.

I think if I could, I would go back to the moment my mother taught me how to make a daisy chain, the same way her mother taught her. We would sit in the grass on long afternoons and carefully thread the stems together, creating a beautiful and delicate chain. Sometimes I'd wear them as necklaces or as a wreath in my hair. I could watch my mother weave flowers for hours, content to just sit there in wonder as she took something so simple and so abundant, transforming it into something both practical and pretty. It was such a simple thing, but there was nothing I'd rather do.

It feels like I had all the hope in the world because I had daisies. I was the princess of the field, a blanket of flowers my loyal subjects. I felt like that was all I needed. I had it all. I loved those daisies and they loved me. But I guess it was never supposed to be that easy.

because all of a sudden being named after a flower felt like a competition. People expected me to be beautiful and delicate, just like the stars with yellow rays. They praised me for my looks but didn't seem to care about anything else. Was I as delicate and beautiful as the flower I was named after? Could I ever be as admired as a daisy or would I always just fall short in comparison?

It became easier to just accept it, be the pretty face everyone expected me to be and keep my mouth shut. If I didn't know things, then I couldn't have opinions on them and then I wouldn't blurt them out where they weren't welcome. I've learnt that the best thing a girl can be in this world is a beautiful little fool. I hope Pammy will be a fool, so she never sits and longs to be a flower. Life isn't about being delicate and beautiful like a flower, but rather being an extension of the men around you, even if that means feeling foolish at times. There isn't much this world has in store for women, even the men that want us don't know who we are. The man that loved me only saw what I stood for and what I would bring to his name. I don't think he ever really knew me, even when he was staring at the green light at the end of my dock.

So I started hating my name. Hating what it stood for and what it represented. And yet, there was something about the daisy that I couldn't help but admire. The way it stood tall and proud, despite its delicate petals. The way it could brighten up a room with just a simple bouquet. I like to think that we're all a little envious of flowers. Envious of the way they come in so many shapes and sizes, colors and scents, yet every single one of them is

called beautiful. Sometimes I think humans just want to be loved like that, handled with every care in the world, and given as gifts to those we love. Praised for their delicacy and admired for their beauty but cheered on for their thorns. Sometimes I think we all just want to be flowers.

I wish I could say I want more for my daughter but I'm afraid that asking for more would be condemning her to a life of disappointment. I want her to be strong, to break the cycle of constantly comparing herself to others, and to embrace her own unique beauty. I want her to know that she can be strong and proud, if I only because I never could, but I'm afraid there isn't enough room in the world for a woman like that.

So I sit here, making daisy chains with my own daughter, knowing that she's nearing that age where she'll start plucking the petals off of a daisy, playing the game of "he loves me, he loves me not." Knowing that soon the uncomplicated concept of existing will be a distant memory, and a slight resentment of life will begin creeping in. And so the cycle begins again. But maybe this time she won't have to be a beautiful little fool.

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Co-Editor-in-Chiefs

Duaa Zulfiqar
Ariadne Danae Chavez Salinas

Associate Editors of Content

Katherine Page
Lakshman Nishanth Kadiyala

Associate Editor of Media

Quynhmai Tran

Staff Writers

Temiloluwa (Temi) Idowu
Namuuka Mweene
William Gleason II
Justice Elise Morris

Freelance Writers

Joseph Kudler
Riley Galligher
Dillon Luong
Nidhi Chanchlani

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