

Dina Kirshner

Unforgettable Flowers

It was raining outside. The type of rain that starts and stops again, with an intermittent rhythm matching my heartbeat. The sky was crying, and the tears that fell from its face dropped right on to the doorsteps of the assisted living facility. I walked in with my arms feeling heavier with each step I took. The gray walls matched the dull skies, and all I could hear was the sound of the rain and ringing of the telephones. I was holding flowers. The flowers were red, and some were yellow, but most of them were white. They were very beautiful flowers.

I approached the elevator and asked my father to stay behind and wait for me. I suspected I wouldn't be too long. As I remembered to press the small silver button with the number three, a small shock went straight through my finger. My sweaty palms reflected the sky's warning of a somber day. The elevator doors opened as I stood in the doorway for a moment to collect myself, and was greeted by a woman in a wheelchair. "What is she doing here?" said one of the older women with a pink shirt and a tube resting in her nose. "I'm just visiting" I said in a low voice, trying not to startle the old man sleeping beside me.

As I began to walk through the halls of the healthcare tower, I saw a woman looking blankly at the ground. Her eyes were empty and her sudden glance up towards me set me back a couple steps. As I turned around the same woman asked who I was. I once again told her I was a visitor to which she responded, "I don't know where I am!" "I don't know what I'm doing here!" An eerie feeling came over me and my mood began to match the tone through the windows.

I picked up my pace and walked over to room 323. Marcene's room had a sign on the door reading "do not disturb" and I felt the flowers slowly droop in my hands. A nurse walked over to me and told me to wear a mask and put on a light pair of yellow scrubs. Marcene was on

her last round of antibiotics and as a precaution, anyone that entered must be protected. I slipped on the sun-flower colored scrubs that tickled my arms leaving a slight itch, and slowly placed the mask over my nose and mouth.

As I walked in the room, I immediately smiled. Marcene always made me smile. I walked over, flowers raised, and said hello in my warmest voice. As soon as we made eye contact, a rush flew through my body. She smiled back at me but something was missing. The small glimmer of light from her eyes disappeared, and I could only see the reflection of my scrubs in her glasses. I told her I wasn't able to stay for long, but that I was thinking about her a lot. She couldn't understand me.

The mask muffled my voice and was competing with the history channel show that was playing when I stepped in. I reached my hand over my face and removed the mask so I could announce my words. She answered my question with her eyes veering from side to side, occasionally stopping at the window where the rain had seized, but the gray skies prevailed. As I extended the flowers toward her, Marcene's face began to widen and I remember her saying clearly "well aren't those beautiful".

I have never been so grateful for flowers until that very moment. We started to talk about flowers, and that soon became the only topic we could talk about. I tried to talk about her life and what had been going on with me. But it seemed all too unimportant when I had to repeat myself for the third time. So we talked about the flowers - how they were fresh and smelled delicious. How the colors were vibrant and beautiful, and we sure hoped they would be in water soon. Just as I was about to say my goodbyes, she leaned towards me, and asked what my name was. My immediate reaction was to smile but I felt a tear form in my eyes. Wiping it off, I said simply "it's me Dina remember? But she didn't remember.

Her eyes left mine and her mouth moved just enough to say the words “thank you” underneath her fleeting breath. I said goodbye and promised to visit back soon. But as soon as I took off the yellow itchy scrubs that very same chill returned to my body. I thought seeing her would make me happy, and more importantly, make her happy. But I left feeling incomplete.

As I walked slowly to the elevator, that same eerie feeling settled into my skin. As the doors began to close, I thought about Marcene and the times we shared and the memories we made that although seemed so distant, were not forgotten. In the end, all we have is our memories, but memories are fleeting and maybe memories aren’t enough.

A memory is like a flower: from the moment it comes into this world, something is born. That moment something sprouts that will transform into something beautiful. A memory is something we treasure, admire and keep in our hearts. But even the most beautiful things in life fade and begin to wither, and the most beautiful things are left only to the memory of what they once were. Marcene is my flower. Every memory is a petal, in the bouquet of our lives. It is up to us to remember the beauty of flowers, even after they die. Marcene is beautiful and will always be beautiful. I will never forget the memories we made together, she will always be my flower.