

3-27-2019

## Flowers

Grace E. Spiro

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.collin.edu/forces>

---

### Recommended Citation

Spiro, Grace E. (2019) "Flowers," *Forces*: Vol. 2019 , Article 36.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.collin.edu/forces/vol2019/iss1/36>

This Short Story is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Collin. It has been accepted for inclusion in Forces by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@Collin. For more information, please contact [mtomlin@collin.edu](mailto:mtomlin@collin.edu).



## Flowers

Grace E. Spiro

### **I cannot remember a time where I did not love flowers.**

When I was a little girl, I lived in Santa Fe, New Mexico, a place teeming with colorful and eclectic flora and fauna alike. It was dubbed The Land of Enchantment in 1999 because of its bright and bold deserts, snow-capped mountains, towering forests and bounties of flowers above ground and gemstone deposits below. These were magnificent and never far from me, but my favorite things were the wildflowers.

I remember being on my mother's lap in a wide field one afternoon as she dutifully plucked different flowers from the ground and placed them in my hands and my hair, only for me to inspect for a moment before stuffing into my shallow pockets. Red snapdragons, pink desert willows, dainty white fleabanes, and tiny purple yarrows had all seen the linings of my clothes at one point or another, as days like those were many. My mother was the only family I had at first.

When I moved to Dallas at 5 years old, I only seemed to see bush roses, potted pansies or petunias, and bluebonnets in the spring. There were no longer any stretching fields of unknown blossoms to explore, but rather just decorative sections on sidewalks with unkempt bushels stuffed into the corners. I eventually grew to hate the Texas landscape and longed for my old one. My aunt, with whom we moved in upon coming to Dallas, had a large bush of Rose of Sharons in her back yard, but it wasn't enough. My mother said we couldn't go back to New Mexico when I asked her.

As I grew I continued to pick flowers. Some were just parts of weeds, some were so tiny I had to clutch them between two fingers, some were so fragile I could never pick one without ripping it. Even when I was as old as age 10 I would come home with backpack sections full of half-dead flowers I had greedily harvested from my school's field. My schoolmates would look at me as if I was mental, probably because I picked so many and took them so seriously. I hated the way they stared at me as I picked them.

In the coming years though, I realized I didn't have to pick flowers to gain the joy of collecting beautiful things or feeling "rich" in my own way... But I always kept track of my favorites.

**B**y the time I was 9, my mother had finally found love. My step-dad, a man much older than her, talked her into a Hawaiian wedding. I've never gotten to know a flower so well as the Hibiscus at that time. Hibiscus symbolized an ideal wife or a perfect love. There were many hibiscus plants and decorations around the island, but my mother wore tuberose around her neck the night she got married.

When I was 11, my favorite flower was the cherry blossom. A symbol of beauty, youth, and the fleetingness of life as one knows it. A reminder to live life to the fullest and never take anything for granted. I remember sitting on the floor of my house in North Dallas, a house that had been standing since the 1950's, and doodling little cherry blossoms onto crisp white printer paper hastily and with a tiny bit of urgency. My best friend and mentor at the time had asked me to, and despite my laziness, I filled 3 whole pages with badly-scribbled cherry blossoms.

When I gave them to her, she said she wanted a darker shade of pink. I was quick to darken them.

By the time I was 12, I had long stopped picking flowers in the literal sense. My favorite flower had become a Paulownia. Paulownias grew on trees and were planted as a custom in Southeast Asia when a baby girl in a noble family was born. In other words, it symbolized new life. At 12, I no longer had a best friend. My days were spent listening to music and drawing. My worst and only companion was myself, but the growing discomfort inside me only paved the way for more creativity. I remember writing a poem about paulownias, but it got lost later when I moved. I never looked for it even after I unpacked.

**A**t 13 my favorite flower was the red rose. Typical, but quintessential, the red rose symbolized love, passion and commitment. I would buy roses to keep in the house often, in a vase on the kitchen table. I'd occasionally pull one out and grip it in my hands to check and see if it had thorns. I remember how even when they did have thorns, I'd close my fist around the stem again and squeeze. My step-father would bring my mother roses often as well, but she began to hate it when he did. Eventually, I kept the roses I bought in my room and out of the kitchen where I had staged them before. I stayed in my room more often, anyway.

At 14, violets were my flower of choice. They symbolized devotion and purity, despite their deep, almost hedonistic purple tone. The color of a violet is so rich, and yet the flower itself stands for modesty and commitment. I was 14 when I was first in love with someone. I got my heart broken, and along with that, a tiny piece of me was lost that I wasn't even ever aware I had.



**Failed Gram Stain** Blaine Cathey

I didn't mourn losing this tiny piece, but everyone I told about it was shocked at me. They thought less of me. But I had only just begun to feel alive.

At 16, my favorite flower was the Stargazer lily. The Stargazer, as opposed to its pure white parent flower that symbolizes purity and chastity, represents boldness, youth and prosperity. At 16, I felt all grown up. The tiny vacancy inside of me that had left with my first love had grown a tiny bit bigger, but I felt on top of the world with my newfound abundance. I ate, loved and expressed myself with recklessness and lightheartedness, unaware of how much time I really had to do things like that later in my life.

At 18, my favorite flower became the poppy. A small, crimson flower with a black center that symbolizes sleep, peace and death, the poppy was also known for its sedative effects that came from the opium inside it. It was at 18 that I truly wondered if I had a problem with my habits, perhaps even addiction. The small vacancy inside me had grown, but it seemed sated again for a good two years before I realized that it never would be full.

**N**ow I am 20, and I have come to the ironic epiphany that I never stopped picking flowers.

Not for a moment. Their soft petals, delicate fragrances, vivid colors and sweet pollen were never things I could resist, let alone ignore or just exist with. No matter how hard I was reprimanded for picking flowers, I took every flower I could. Had they been wild, common, poisonous, ugly, thorny or rare, I would always give into temptation and pluck them from the grass, ending their short and simple lives. I have not, however, attempted to grow a garden or nurture a potted plant. Who needed the seeds and the soil when you could just have the lovely and sweet part? Maybe sometime soon, I will find the strength within me to do so; to cultivate a living, healthy plant that would stay alive for possible years instead of days. For now, I just can't stop picking flowers.



**Mango Cheesecake, Second Attempt** Mara Headrick

## Giverny

Mara Headrick

Monet had to grow his garden before he could paint it