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Purple Flowers

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Purple Flowers

Author Bio

Julie is a published author and creative storyteller, captivating her readers with incredible imagery while covering realistic topics. She aspires to be on the New York Times Best Sellers list.

PURPLE FLOWERS JULIE SAINT-FLEUR

"There are 5 stages of grief and I believe you've just reached stage two." I looked up from my seat and glared across the room at Nancy. "Exactly, look at how you're looking at me!"

"All of a sudden you're a psychologist? Cool." I rolled my eyes and looked back down at my phone at the influx of condolences and prayers I was receiving. Notification after notification, and yet the events that were unfolding still did not feel real to me.

It had officially been approximately 27 hours and 56 minutes since we received the news that our grandma had passed away. Of course, I was angry! I'd just been given the worse news of my life and there was absolutely nothing I could do about it. I wasn't one to sit around and do nothing and at this moment watching everyone else idly sit around was infuriating me. Surely there was one of us powerful enough to bargain with God. Someone who could get this Deity to reverse their decision to have my grandma ascend so abruptly.

"I look like someone to play with?" The question was stern and rhetorical, but it came from what looked to be a frail petite frame weighing no more than 110 pounds and standing at a mere five foot two inches. Even at the age of 96, she was a force to be reckoned with. No one dared questioned her authority. For sure if anyone could go against God's decisions it would be her. The epitome of fierceness and strength, she was exactly who I wanted to be when I grow up. Her death left me puzzled. She never rolled over for anyone and had absolutely no back-down. I couldn't get past the idea of how her encounter with God must have been in those final moments. Surely, God entered the room silent and unannounced, catching her off guard as she slept - coward.

At 341 hours and 22 minutes I was set to take the stage and give her eulogy. I walked up to the podium and straightened the pamphlet that lied there waiting for me to read it. As my eyes made out her name etched to the paper in a bold italic purple print under the words 'Life Reflections', my throat began to close up. Had I not learned anything from watching her? Was she looking down at me now shaking her head in disgust? Perched on the edge of a cloud watching this fiasco. Right in that moment, as if she leaned forward and blew wind in my direction, I ran off of the stage. It was here that I scaled to stage 4 of grief: depression. The scene of me dashing off of the stage lived rent free in my head and would forever torment me. I was not the person my grandma thought I was.

39,168 hours prior to her death, the women in the family gathered around simply enjoying one another's company. "I truly admire your strength." my grandma turned her head to me and took my hand. This

was random and had not been the conversation currently at play. Everyone in the room looked at each other in confusion and then back towards her waiting for an explanation. "I don't know anyone who would have been able to handle your accident the way you did baby." I humbly said thank you but, on the inside, I had been screaming in rejoice and disbelief. I couldn't fathom how someone as resilient as her could even say that to me. Ditto, I thought as I smiled.

That scene that had been a source of my strength all of these years had now placed itself at the forefront of my memory. Surely, I was the one who had been passed the torch and was expected to bargain with God for her life. I approached the bargaining stage of grief hopeful. The only issue was I had absolutely nothing God wanted but I would present my case anyways. 2 hours after she closed her eyes for the last time, as the family waited for the coroners to arrive, I sat there in silence, and presented a mental PowerPoint to the man upstairs. Images of all the seconds I spent with her that would forever be core memories for me. Like the time we sat outside in the backyard, a breeze flew by as we crouched over a bowl of snap peas. She had just spent nearly an hour picking them from the garden adjacent to where we were seated. Although this was something she had done her entire life, she sat there with her gaze fixated on the task. Her eyes never leaving her hands as we sat, snapped, and laughed. "Send her another breath, open her eyes, wake her up. I'll go to church, I'll give more to my community more, I'll change absolutely anything you want me to." But there was no change. From either of us. Her body remained still.

From my earliest memories: every holiday, every birthday, and every occasion that required a gift – you could anticipate seeing purple flowers. Those were my grandma's favorite thing in the entire world. So, it only made sense that 342 hours and 5 minutes after she left us, all the pallbearers would all be wearing a single purple rose on their lapels. 342 hours and 8 minutes after she left, her loved ones would be placing purple flowers on her casket. The sendoff was beautiful, but it did not take the grief with it.

Hours turned into days – days into months and I was still grieving. The first four stages took turns at this point taking up space in my life. But I could never seem to navigate stage 5: acceptance. Lavender, hydrangea, lilac, aster, and bellflower are just some of the many purple flowers found around the world. The purple flower at the center of my world was named Vesta. The emptiness left in the places she once took up will now be filled with purple flowers. A vase of wilting hydrangeas sat on my kitchen table. As I planned my next trip to the flower shop, I wondered if acceptance would be in the cart as well.

Author Statement

"'Purple Flowers' is a story about navigating one's grief. Inspired by the author's personal battle with the loss of a loved one. ."