

Two Wilted Flowers

Katie's asthma was bad. It had always been bad, but now it was getting worse. Which, in the general scheme of things, wasn't that bad. Her mom had said it was because she never played outside anymore. The doctor said it was because of the change of seasons. The doctor had told Katie's mom that the flowers and the trees were blossoming. Their blossoming just happened to involve shooting spores up Katie's nose. Seeing that Katie's doctor was always right, Katie and her mom drove home with a clear list of instructions. That afternoon, Katie took two puffs from her new life-saving asthma inhaler, and looked out at the backyard. Her mom hauled shovels out from the garage with renewed energy. Following the doctor's orders, Katie's mom was quarantining their backyard. Tearing the daffodils up, Katie's mom worked happily under the thought that she was creating a allergy-free environment for her daughter. Katie watched her, expressionless. Katie had failed to tell the doctor that although their pollination was quite unfortunate for her lungs, she loved those flowers. They were gone now; but in the general scheme of things, a dirt backyard wasn't really that bad.

Besides her perfectly treatable asthma, Katie's mom was also concerned with the fact that her daughter did not have friends. Frankly, Katie spent all too much time staring at the flowers and laying in the backyard. They both needed to start moving on.

Although her mom's actions had not been subtle, Katie decided that she would still spend her time outside. She had read that flowers pollinate through their seeds. Since her mom had removed the flowers so aggressively, there was bound to be a couple of seeds that had survived. When staring at dirt turned out to be boring, she switched to staring through the slits in their fence. When she closed her right eye and squinted her left, she could just make out Mr. Harris in the yard behind them. Mr. Harris may have been the scariest man in the entire world, but his flowers were something from a story. Back when she went to school, she had admitted this to Lauren Jenkins. Lauren Jenkins lived next to Mr. Harris and had told her flat out that she was crazy. Lauren said that Mr. Harris was the rudest man in the world. She also said he was weird and never talked. Which, in the general scheme of things, wasn't that bad because Lauren Jenkins had also said all those things about Katie. So Katie continued to stare at Mr. Harris, and Mr. Harris continued to stare at his garden, and the Jenkins' dog continued to stare at both of them.

Most days Katie spent her time alternating between watching the sky and watching Mr. Harris' plants. It's a lot to think about really; how the clouds she sees are the same clouds that everyone sees. She'd lay on her back and look at the sky, and then she'd roll over onto her stomach and watch Mr. Harris' flowers unravel into beautiful shapes. It was a peaceful way to spend a day, although Katie's mom wasn't happy about this development. She had witnessed enough of Katie's behavior, and stomped outside to go confront her daughter.

“There are lots of kids on this street Katherine, please go find someone to play with.”

Katie had been right in the middle on observing a perfectly red tulip when she was rudely interrupted. She rolled over onto her back and stared at her mom. They stared a little more, and then Katie sat up, and stomped down the street.

Ringling Lauren Jenkins' doorbell may have been like admitting defeat to the world, but sitting on Lauren Jenkins' porch after nobody answered was far more pathetic. Katie finally laid down, and looked up at the clouds. Then, for the second time in one day, she was rudely interrupted again.

"She's at school you know." A voice said. Katie leaned up on her elbows. It was Mr. Harris; the rudest person on the planet.

"I know." said Katie. Mr. Harris was still standing there. Katie spoke up. "Sorry about your son." she looked down at the wood she was sitting on.

Then, the rudest person on the planet looked at his shoes and whispered, "And I'm sorry about your brother." The hose that he had been watering with was still running. "You friends with the Jenkins girl?" he finally asked.

"No. She's the only one I know who lives on this street." Katie muttered.

"Well" said Mr. Harris, "I'm glad you're not friends because she's a dimwit who, in 2007, charged me for five boxes of girl scout cookies and only delivered four." Katie nodded in agreement. Mr. Harris turned his hose off and came to sit down on the steps. "The fact that you say that Lauren Jenkins the only person on this street that you're friends with is false." Katie just looked at Mr. Harris.

"What do mean?" she asked.

"I mean", he said, "that this street, whether it be 81st or 82nd continues on indefinitely. If all the streets are parallel lines, they never truly end. And if you think in terms of latitude, this street is just a horizontal line that will at some point morph into a latitude coordinate. Are you following?" Katie nodded. "And a latitude coordinate is just a street that goes around the world. If you really think that Lauren Jenkins is your only friend on this whole latitude coordinate in this whole world, you're not thinking in big enough terms."

Katie thought about what Mr. Harris was saying. "I guess." she finally said.

"I had been meaning to give you something." added Mr. Harris. He went into his shed and came back with two brown wilted flowers. "Here", he said, "start replanting."

Katie reached out and took the flowers from him. They were dead but still had their seeds. So, in the general scheme of things, it wasn't that bad.