

## Lilacs in The Snow

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\*Inspired by a True Story\*

Time is a cruel mistress. In a gown of black and white, she gracefully glides above all. Without warning, her frigid hand will eventually grasp your bare shoulder. Try as you might to shake her off, or pretend she doesn't exist, she never goes away. One day, no matter the weather or season, she will whisper a reminder of your mortality.

For Mori, it happened as she stared at the gravestone. She was alone in the sea of grey and green. Each marker was spread evenly in a line with Mori stuck in between one of the many rows. As she stood there, the greenest grass beneath her feet brushed against her ankle as the wind directed it. The sensation, tingle or possibly happenstance reminded her she was the one standing.

"Hey mom... hope you are doing well" Mori solemnly said. "I-I was able to move into your ol- your house with no issues." She hesitated a moment before finding her words, "It looks the same as you left it... your newspaper next to your chair, the temperature set to where you like it, and-and-and" Mori collapsed to the ground, her words nothing more than jumbled sobs.

"Your shoes... near the door... for when you... you... ready to... go out."

Uncontrollable tears poured from the red and irritated eyes as her knees dug deeper into the disturbed dirt beneath. "Please say something," Mori begged and trembled, "say anything... anything at all."

Her request was selfish, Mori knew that. However, just like the old and weathering stones around her, Mori was stubborn. She remained at the cemetery for a long time before the moon signaled her to go home.

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Mori couldn't sleep again. All she could do is stare at the dated popcorn ceiling of her room. Her *mom's* room. Mori had left it exactly how she did. The purple slippers Mori had gotten her for her birthday resting at the bedside, the half-finished book covered in dust on the nightstand, and the empty record player that had not spun in months; all of them remained frozen in time. Mori did not have the heart to disturb anything that belonged to her mother.

Mori always made sure to sleep on the left side of the bed. In her heart, she hoped she would feel a motherly embrace during the night. The warmth she once knew from childhood sick days or middle school breakups would wake her up from this never-ending nightmare. However, despite her wishes, the right side remained cold and flat, making insomnia Mori's only companion in the suffocating darkness.

With no better options, Mori got out of bed. The old boards groaned with contempt as she groped around for the bedside lamp. Suddenly, Mori tripped over something on the floor. She attempts to catch herself, but gravity already had other plans. Within moments, Mori was sprawled out on the floor.

"What the hell did I trip on?" Mori said aloud as she rubbed her bruised head. Mori turned around and squinted to see the outline of slippers. While one was still neatly in place, the other had been kicked and flipped over.

“Oh god... mom will be furious with me.” Mori’s lips trembled as she picked up the disturbed slipper. “I’m sorry... so sorry.” Mori sneezed from the newly freed dust in the air. Her arms were shaking as she tried to line the slippers back to where they were originally. “It won’t happen again.” In her frenzy, she slightly shifted the other slipper. “They’ll be right here when you need them.” Mori grasped both slippers tightly as she tried to remember their original spot. “It won’t happen again. It won’t happen again. It won’t happen again.”

Mori kept repeating the phrase in hopes she would be forgiven. The guilt that she had carried for so long continued tunneling through her brain like a moebius strip.

*Move on.*

*Let go.*

*She wouldn’t want this for you.*

People had been telling her that for over a year now. No matter how hard she tried, she could not accept that her mother was gone. If time had been gripping onto her one shoulder, guilt had taken a bite out the other.

As Mori continued moving the slippers around, a small amount of light cast her hunched shadow on the wall. Mori had not turned on any lights in the pitch-black room, so where was it coming from? Her curiosity caused her to stop shuffling the slippers as she stood up to investigate. To her surprise, a door had materialized in the center of the room.

The door was shaped like an upside-down L; thin but wide. Flames clung to the wooden frame with imaginary hands as Mori stared in disbelief. Where did it come from? How did it get in her

room? Mori had no idea what was happening. Regardless, Mori felt a weird sort of familiarity emanating from the mysterious door. In fact, it felt as though the door itself was *calling* to her.

Despite her own mind telling her to stay away, Mori began taking small steps towards it.

*GROAN*. The floor cried out with each step. *GROAN*. The flames grew larger. *GROAN*. Mori reached out for the shiny gold doorknob. But before she could hold it, the door burst open on its own.

Mori was thrown backwards into the bed as the brightest light flooded the drab bedroom. Mori held her hand to shield her eyes, but, to her surprise, she felt no pain. She continued to stare intently into the pure light when she noticed what was on the other side of the door.

It was a beautiful meadow of lilacs that went far into the horizon. The smell wafted into the bedroom, filling Mori with peace. Mori rubbed her eyes. This had to be a dream, right? As Mori opened her eyes, her heart skipped a beat when she saw her.

In the center of the white and purple lilacs stood her mother. She looked like what Mori remembered from her childhood. Her long brown hair flowed with the wind as she bent down to grab a purple flower. Holding the lilac to her chest, she smiled as she made eye contact with Mori.

Mori started to walk towards her, but her mother shook her head. Mori wanted to hug her again. Talk about life again. Be with her again. But to her dismay, she was still out of reach.

Suddenly, her mother let go of the lilac. The wind held it gracefully as it carried it to Mori's outstretched hand. As the lilac landed into her hand, Mori felt the love she had desperately

missed for over a year. The tears began to flow once more as she collapsed to her knees.

“Thank you... mom.”

When Mori looked back at her mother, she was no longer a young woman. Instead, she was once again wrinkly and with short grey hair. The once green meadow was now covered in white. However, her smile remained the same. The purple lilacs still were peeking through the snow around her. Her mother waved goodbye as the door slowly began to creak shut.

Mori, with tears of happiness, waved back until the door vanished from existence.