

Silveridge Blooms - Sissi, Year 10, NSW

'Maybe something upsetting happened to the sky, someone should bring it flowers,' Dion mused as he looked out to the pane of glass where droplets collided against it, angrily streaking down.

He's not superstitious, or religious, but he can't help but notice that ever since the winter solstice, rain had thrashed onto Silveridge in seemingly unending onslaught. It didn't make sense, how the clouds hung as dark and heavy as the precipitation that fell from them for weeks on end, almost two months now, yet when Dion checked the weather app each night his screen reflected a smiling sun back at him. It always lied, as he's already getting used to the weight of an umbrella in his bag and the dripping of his raincoat wrapped around his figure. It wasn't like he could control the weather.

Ramming the key into the lock and hurriedly twisting it open, he flings open the door to Silveridge Blooms. The blossoms never sold well during deep winter and each year he struggled keeping the store afloat after the dreadful cold, with leaves withering and delicate blooms unable to survive, yet under the guidance of the sparse sunlight, careful fertilisation and UV lamps, he managed to bring out a little cheer, brightening up his street with florals.

However, this year it was increasingly hard to do so, with no sunlight at all, not even a single ray to be found in the expanse of Silveridge. While flowers adored water, the rain made it harder, flooding the exterior gardens with an unceasing parade of rain, roots soaking it all until they rotted, weak stems crumpling under tumultuous gales.

Positioning himself at the counter, in the line of sight of the glassy door and window framed by rows of carnations and roses, he turns his attention to the vase of snapdragons before him, positioning each stem so the flowers fanned out before him.

The doorbell chimes for the first time that day, and there's a silhouette, who Dion can't discern the gender, but deems that information irrelevant, as anyone is a good potential customer. They storm into the store intently, with a sort of simmering anger that fizzled in the air, absolutely soaking with no umbrella to be seen.

"Welcome to Silveridge Blooms, how may I help you today?" He smiles cheerily, met with only the softening of the rain outside, tapping with less anger against the glass.

The person glides around the store, their feet making gentle pitter-patters across linoleum tiling, inspecting each flower. They work their way up the counter, curiously looking at the snapdragon arrangement, before looking into Dion's eyes with serious intent, and finally speaking.

"Excuse me, you happen to have lilies?"

Dion hums, processing the request in his head, until he realised he had none in store.

“Well, uh you see,” Dion started, “I unfortunately have none in stock currently, and getting them in is hard due to the weather.” He explained sheepishly, and watched as disappointment passed over their face, the rain outside tumbling louder.

“Would you mind telling me what occasion it’s for?” Dion asked, hopeful to fix the situation.

“My mother died two months ago. I’m visiting her today,” the other stated solemnly, and he blinked. Oh. Awful weather to be visiting, but he supposed it set the tone in some twisted sense of pathetic fallacy, wrung by the universe’s hands.

“Well, I’m sorry for your loss,” he condoles, “for loved ones, I would recommend white carnations and roses as an alternative,” he continued, pointing to the display at the window, “and especially if you dearly remember them, you could also include in forget-me-nots,” Dion offered, gesturing to pinprick blossoms behind them.

After a moment of consideration, they agree, “I’ll take those then.”

Dion nods, and plucks a few stalks of forget-me-nots, snatches the pre-arranged bouquet of white carnations and roses. Unraveling it so he can arrange it properly for the other, he begins weaving the small blue blooms in with the white.

“What was your mother’s favourite color?” he asks conversationally, as if he was asking about the weather.

“Purple,” is the response he gets, so Dion wraps it all up in creamy purple tissue paper, and black cardstock, tied neatly with a violet ribbon. He hands the bouquet over to them, and they cradle it in their arms, looking at it forlornly. They pay in rumpled bills and loose coins that seem to perfectly match up to the cost.

“Can I get a name for the receipt?” Dion fingers run over the registered keys.

“Alex.”

Hissing, the receipt printer churns out a freshly inked receipt, Alex pulls it off, before uttering a quiet, “Thank you.” which Dion beams at.

“Well have a nice day Alex!” he calls out when the other departs. “Hope to see you soon!”

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Despite what the meteorology complex had to say, it was still raining the next day. Instead of the angry thrashing that was yesterday's work, the sky might have been sobbing. The clouds

seemed to mourn when he opened up the store, precipitation spilling pitifully in fragmented shreds.

They're back again. The person from yesterday, Alex, and they ask for poppies today, so Dion delivers them.

Over the course of the next few weeks, Dion now had a new regular in the form of Alex, who would come buy an assortment of flowers, always paying in crumpled dirt stained bills and rusty coins. The persistent rain had gradually lightened, especially on days when Alex would come in, and Dion thinks that he might not need to take out a loan for his rent this month.

One particular afternoon, Alex seemed to bounce into the store, gleefully happy and dry, trailing behind a waddling dog. It was the first glimpse of sun Silveridge had seen in months, and they asked for a packet of sunflower seeds.

Dion finally catches what's happening when Alex walks in on a bright clear and cloudless day, and buys some hydrangeas. After they leave, through the window Dion watched as someone pushed Alex out of the pathway, causing them to trip, and for the hydrangeas to fall out of their grasp, onto the road, where a car sped past, leaving a carcass of crumpled and bruised stems and petals.

Dion rushes out to assist Alex, and on command the sky darkens, and rain starts pouring down on the both of them.

"You," Dion realised, eyes wide and unblinking, hair soaking in the downpour. "You're changing it aren't you?" he murmured, unsure of whether to be accusatory or in awe.

It all lined up, the events, how Alex seemed to always be recklessly angry on days when there was a tempest out, and the melancholy rain seemed to lighten along with their mood. The winter solstice also aligned with their mother's passing.

Alex nods. "S-sorry about the rain," they apologise, stuttering though tears.

"No, don't ever apologise for how you feel," Dion admonished, shaking his head. "It's also really cool that you can do this," he adds, and Alex bashfully smiles. He lugs them back into the shop, and dries the both of them off with towels.

"I'll get you a new batch of hydrangeas next week ok?" he consoles, and the pouring outside abates, along with Alex's tears.

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When Dion closes up Silveridge Blooms on one spring afternoon after surviving the winter without drawing out a single loan from the bank, Alex suggests going on a hike.

“I wanna show you something.”

Hoping for a breath of fresh air, Dion follows them and they lead him, after what seems like an hour of climbing, out to the peak of the ridge Silveridge was named upon. There, across rows upon rows of flora blossomed sunflowers, irises, peonies, carnations, all Dion could name and recognise. He gasped, they were all from his shop. Alex grinned, as the sun shone brighter and the day clearer, a cool spring breeze washing over the both of them.

“Woah,” he gasps, and Alex shakes their head.

“There’s gonna be more.”

The phenomena of weather was so capricious, much like the sea, and similar to the large body of water, humans have tried and failed to tame it, to predict the unpredictable. But seeing Alex there on the edge of the horizon, embraced by the flowers with the clouds dancing alongside them, Dion realised that while one may not be able to control how they feel, there were definitely little things that could influence a person’s mood.

Now each day, Dion notes the state of the weather. In particular with rain racing their course down the pane of glass, he wonders what could it be.

Closing up again, he picks up some daffodils and daisies, thinking, *‘I’ll bring over some flowers today, Alex must not be feeling great.’*