

FLOWERS

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It had been three weeks since she'd last seen him. She kept reaching for the phone, only to realize there was no point in calling. It was a habit, she supposed, one that would be hard to break.

She had wanted to go to him last week, but one of her third-graders had given her the flu. For almost a week she had been stuck in bed, haunted by the thought of him. Before that, she had been busy with parent-teacher conferences, and putting together costumes for the school play. The guilt screamed at her, telling her to explain the situation, but it wouldn't make a difference.

If she was being honest, there was a small part of her that didn't want to go back to him, at least not yet. She thought that maybe she needed some time to figure out what to do next. But when she pictured his kind eyes and warm smile, she knew there would never be a future without him.

She wore a white dress with blue flowers, the same dress she had worn the day she had first met him. It had been summer, exceptionally warm, when she had seen him reading a book in the park. How he loved to read. Sat in front of the fireplace in the winter, lying in their garden when the sun was out.

The air was chilly and she could feel her skin prickling as she walked down the street. She had to catch the bus, but there was still time to stop by the florist on the way. She bought nine calla lilies, one for each year they had been married.

She found him on the third row, fifth from the left. The flowers she had brought last time were wilted, brown and soggy from the rain. With light strokes she brushed leaves and petals from the granite stone. If she closed her eyes she could almost make herself feel the warmth of his skin beneath her fingers. Almost.