

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Flower Power

As a child, Mary had wonderful memories of her grandmother. They did so many exciting things together: swimming in the ocean, flying kites, making snowmen in the front yard. But when her grandmother's health began to deteriorate in the fall of 1994, Mary knew that their time together was limited. Every few days, Mary would make the drive from Washington, DC to Winchester, VA to visit her grandmother, who was staying in the hospital there.



Mary hated highway driving, finding it ugly and monotonous. She preferred to take meandering back roads to the hospital. When she drove through the rocky town of Harpers Ferry, the beauty of the rough waters churning at the intersection of the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers always captivated her.

Toward the end of her journey, Mary had to get on highway 81. It was here that she discovered a surprising bit of beauty during one of her trips. Along the median of the highway, there was a long stretch of wildflowers. They were thin and delicate and purple. They swayed in the wind as if whispering secrets to one another.

The first time she saw the flowers, Mary was seized by an uncontrollable urge to pull over on the highway and yank a bunch from the soil. She carried them into her grandmother's room when she arrived at the hospital and placed them in a water pitcher by her bed.

For a moment her grandmother seemed more lucid than usual. She thanked Mary for the flowers, commented on their beauty, and asked where she had gotten them. Mary was overjoyed by the ability of the flowers to wake up something inside her ailing grandmother.

Afterwards, Mary began carrying clippers in the car during her trips to visit her grandmother. She would quickly glide onto the shoulder, jump out of the car, and cut a bunch of flowers. Each time Mary placed the flowers in the pitcher, her grandmother's eyes would light up and they would have a splendid conversation.

It was a chilly morning in late October when Mary got the call. The man at the hospital calmly informed her that her grandmother had taken a turn for the worse. Mary got in her car and headed to the hospital. She sped past the place where she usually stopped to pick the flowers. After continuing ahead for about a mile, she put on her emergency lights and pulled onto the median.

She reentered the highway going the opposite way. When Mary arrived back at the flowers, she was surprised to see how many of them had withered and turned brown, probably as a result of the cold.

Nonetheless, she spotted a patch that bravely retained that vibrant purple glow. She cut a few of them and hopped back into her car and headed for the hospital.

When Mary arrived at the hospital, she found her grandmother very weak and unresponsive. She placed the flowers in the pitcher and sat down to hold her grandmother's hand. She felt a light squeeze on one of her fingers. It would be the last conversation they ever had.