

Inkblots Everywhere

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I guess something about yourself that you don't just tell people is that you see flowers everywhere.

I have those middle school tiles with barely anything holding them up for a ceiling in my home, a home I've spent 15 years growing up in. They have this sort of hole-y texture to them that would probably make it miserable for people with tryphobia to be at ease. But I suppose one upside to them is that, as a kid, I could let my imagination loose to create different pictures out of the abstract, randomly distributed holes.

It's just that I'd always see screaming people. Maybe it was sort of like Rorschach Inkblot Tests; what you made of the image presented reflected something about your psyche. But regardless of the psychoanalyses that can come from that, I'd rather remark on my experience with this as I got older.

All I see now are flowers. I think that's more worthy of exploration than anything.

My father loves gardening. He is excited by life around him. It keeps him moving. Whether he is 2,600 miles from our home or guiding me in spirit, he's curating life everywhere he goes.

It was not just something he fell passionate for, but something that was also ingrained in him. Swami Purnanandaji Maharaj, Hindu monk and visionary founder of the Cove and John Ashram (1955) on the East Coast of Demerara, Guyana, taught youths in a politically turbulent environment what it meant to demonstrate respect for oneself and others, excellence, and unwavering discipline. My father was one among few to be within his presence and purpose. Part of his experience was service to building and maintaining the establishment, essentially nurturing the environment around him.

While having been considered the "disruptive" child of the family, he found himself in the discipline he learned before he became fully aware of his deficient attention and hyperactive behaviors.

Initially sent to Cove and John to attain what others believed he lacked, he came out of that period with the most persistent attitude I've ever come across. He was not encouraged or guided to embracing what made him full, and instead was neglected and rejected for what he didn't know how to harness.

He survived through flowers.

Any time my mother sees fresh flowers, I can tell she thinks of the altar.

It is considered an offering to a deity. Purity and beauty is encompassed in different kinds, a reminder of impermanence yet promise. It is a symbol of devotion and a faith in benevolence.

Mom is devout to Mother Durga, consort of Lord Shiva, symbol of power, protection, and good-over-evil. "Durga" translates to "The Impassable," her being created by the Trimurti for the

defeat of a demon. She is the divine feminine, considered the supreme embodiment of Shakti, believed to be the source of all creation and energy in the universe.

I can feel that each time she picks up a flower to place on the altar, she thinks of Mother.

Mom strays from herself sometimes. She is, too, “touched by fire,” the torch passed down to us through her lineage. She’ll forget who she is, she’ll not know where she’s going, or she may even not want to go anymore. But she never forgets where she came from. Mom always makes her way back to the young woman who went to the Pooja Mandir at the end of her street every day to sing, pray, heal, and offer her flowers to Mother, the deity under which she was born.

She prayed through flowers.

My older sister used to eat garden mulch as a little one when my father would take her outside to garden and turned his back to her. Mom would get utterly pissed while she watched from the kitchen window and holler at my dad to watch her. And if you sensed any negative connotation from that, don’t. It’s a memory full of light, now. Reflected on like it’s a fever dream, a light-hearted memory but heavy enough to make your heart hurt with yearning.

Angelina can be an uneasy book to read when it comes to what truly fulfills her. It is less of a feat to understand her somberness.

If there’s one thing I can certify about her, it’s that she can’t live without flowers. From the cradle to the grave, there were always flowers inside and outside our home when she lived with us. Whether they had just begun to germinate, or they were rotting in a vase with no water because they sucked it all up, they were always present, expelling into the air... a one-of-a-kind scent.

Like immigrant parents who solemnly come into your room offering peaceful fruit after the most shivering exchange of words in your entire life, she would quietly deliver flowers to my room, placing it on my desk while I was purposefully as far away as I could be. Particularly after my attempt, she spent nights without sleeping, working to paint my room a beautiful baby blue that I didn’t appreciate enough until years later, cleaning up the obstacles of hoarded misery on my floor, washing the piles of rotting laundry, and organizing all of my tossed belongings before placing the most vibrant, full-of-life vase of flowers on top of my dresser.

Ang cares in ways profound, but we learned to “show, don’t tell” much differently.

She made peace through flowers.

I grew up in a swarm of flower portraits and synthetic flowers Mom ceaselessly decorated our homes with. I share a way of feeling with Terri Cheney, author of *Manic: A Memoir* who felt blessed by the presence of flowers, so much so that she would never go without any present in her everyday. I draw flowers now, instead of faces, on whatever I can manage to get my hands on when I am trying to calm down.

I see flowers everywhere. Even when I’m not under my home’s ceilings, even when they aren’t inside or outside my house anymore, and even when I close my eyes.

This is my life-long Rorschach Inkblot Test. It will be forever ongoing.

Even when I come to lay under soil, my last wish will be that a flower grows above it.