

Lavender

A short story by Rebecca Kerr



HAS THE TERROR OF THE FRIDAY FLORIST COME TO AN END?

It has been a couple of months since The Florist has struck, leading people to speculate if they have moved states or died.

The last known victim was 23yo Charlie Mathews who was discovered by two children on their way to school. Mathews was last seen the day before at 11:30am when they were captured on CCTV purchasing lunch at the local Happyburgers.

“We’ve seen clear signs that The Florist has ceased their killing spree,” Senior Sergeant Davies said at a press conference earlier today. “We’re still pursuing our investigations and continue to reach out to the public for any information they may have.”

Theo returned to my side. His tall, lanky body was a terrible shield from the raging wind. It was colder than forecasted. But that should have been expected on the coastline during Autumn.

“Isn’t this amazing?” he said. “I reckon all the pain in our lives helps us to appreciate moments like these. I mean, would this site be as breathtaking if everything was great all the time?”

“Are you saying that beauty justifies bad things happening?”

“Eh... no... but... yeah,” he said. “I know, I sound like a dick for saying it. But, you know that rough patch I had a while back.”

“Where your life fell into a toilet?”

“Yeah. Well, if that didn’t happen, I couldn’t look out over this and feel...” He paused to take a deep breath. “Serenity.”

“It sounds like you’re justifying sociopaths like The Florist.”

“Did it sound that way? Crap. I meant the little things.” He swallowed hard and avoided my squint.

“You’re lying. You do think it’s justified.”

He walked away. “Come on. Let’s go. We’ve still got an hour drive.”

“You know,” I said, catching up, “it sounds like you’re saying that The Florist exists so people can experience good things in a better light.”

“Well, there are good things that come from it.”

“Like what?”

“Let’s leave it, before you get me arrested by the thought police.”

“It’s just between us I swear.”

He waited until we were in the car. “Well, look at all the people who are entertained by The Florist. They watch documentaries, read news stories, talk to their friends. We’re even guilty of it.”

“That’s pretty dark. Saying that murders are great for entertainment.”
“Hey, you asked.”

Theo and I had been mates for the past three months. I met him just after his rough patch. He was alone at the river. Just staring out into nothing. We talked at a nearby coffee shop. He cried for half of it.

For the last two months, Theo and I stuck to a ritual every Friday. A road trip during the day, then my place at night. What's better than sitting on a couch, surrounded by junk food and watching a ridiculous film?

My house was chosen as the hangout site. Mainly because there was a large TV and a couch that didn't have coffee stains all over it. Theo wasn't that great at keeping his place clean. But that could be because he's stressed about looking for work. Losing his girlfriend to his sister probably didn't help either.

Tonight, we watched a film about scientists creating lizard men. Best five dollars spent on the bargain bin.

BING.

Theo reached for his jacket.

I thumped him with a cushion. "Hey, no phones."

My words meant nothing to him. Right now, the phone was more important. Clearly, it was more important than hanging out.

Thump. Thump.

He took the cushion from me. "Apparently, The Florist has struck again."

"What?"

"Yeah, they found a body that has their signature all over it."

Why did he still have The Florist set for alerts?

"But they haven't killed anyone in months," I said.

"And now it looks like they're back."

"It's not them," I growled. "Now, can we get back to the film?"

"Don't you care? They could be back."

"Turn your phone off."

"You used to love chatting about The Florist."

"No. You did. Theo, they always kill on a Friday. Then the body is found on a Saturday. Always."

"It says here that the victim was likely killed last Friday, and the body -"

"It's a copy-cat," I snapped.

He threw his back against the couch. Eyes on the TV. Another soda cracked open. The last donut taken.

“Can we just watch the movie?” I said, holding the remote.

“I thought we could do some deducing together,” he moped. “Like we used to.”

“There’s nothing to deduce.”

Theo would usually crash on the couch. But he didn’t this time. Instead, he went home the moment the film ended.

I turned everything off. The TV. The lights. I sat there. Shadows danced with the moonlight. Hypnotising. It was our first fight. It was a stupid fight. I didn’t understand. Why was he angry?

My body started itching. Deep breaths. It needed to stop. Deep breaths. Itching. Stop. My safety net was gone.

I grabbed my phone and opened my Go-To app.

HAS THE FLORIST RETURNED?

Only hours ago, the body of Jane Edwards was discovered in their driveway.

Police are speculating that this could be the return of The Florist after months of no deaths.

“Similarities between this and previous cases cannot be ignored,” Senior Sergeant Davies said. “We know at this stage that the deceased passed away about a week ago, which is outside of The Florist’s regular schedule.”

Some say that this change may be due to The Florist’s return. The clock is ticking.

A sparkling field of dew rested on blades of grass. Bare feet left footprints as the jewels were buried into the earth. The chill in the air begged me to put on a jacket or, at the very least, some shoes. But I only wore a thin cloth shirt that draped to my knees. A pile of clothes waited on a rock nearby.

Croaking frogs competed with the crickets. The occasional splash would come from the fish-eating bugs that skipped on the surface. At the edge of the river bank, I dipped my toes. Deep breath.

“You must be Sam,” said a gruff voice.

He was a lot taller than me. Taller than he said he was. Hmm. That’s never happened before.

“Calvin?”

“Yeah.” He stepped closer.

“I don’t see the rope I asked for.”

“It’s in my car.”

Rolling my eyes, my attention returned to the water. I stepped in. Why do some of them always try to get me to their car? Is it a safety net for them?

“Fine,” he growled and stormed off.

The bottom of my shirt gently swam against the current. It was about ten minutes before he returned. Which meant he parked further away than I’d hoped.

“I’ve got your rope.” He threw it on the river bank.

“You did agree to be here right? I told you I liked rope.”

“Just... Don’t tie it too tight.”

I reached out and grabbed it. The feel of the hard plastic made my stomach turn. Even though I’d ask for natural twine, most of them always brought the artificial kind.

He released a hard breath before stripping down and joining me. I pressed his back against the bark of a tree and bound his hands together.

“You better be a good fuck,” he groaned.

I locked eyes with him. “Who said we were having sex?”

He curled his brows. “What?”

“I said I would liberate you.”

It was just bright enough to see him turn pale.

“This isn’t funny.” He struggled against the rope.

“I don’t know who you killed in that moment of passion last week. A friend? A family member? A lover? And really, I don’t care. What I do care about is that you used my name to cover up your crime.”

The whites of his eyes grew as he sucked in air. “Wait. This is a joke right? You’re role playing? I didn’t agree to this.”

While he struggled, I drew my athame from the clay bank. He struggled. The water washed mud from the blade. He struggled.

“I find if you just accept it, it’s more peaceful.”

“What the fuck? Get the fuck away from me,” he screamed.

The cold metal pressed just above his navel. His lip trembled. The blade slid over flesh. Trapped blood now flowed, dripping into the river. Shock stole his screams. With more pressure, splashes threw bloodied water over my shirt. His whole body shook as his insides now fed the tadpoles.

“It’s okay,” I said. “It’ll be over shortly.”

It wouldn’t take long for him to stop breathing. As the blood left his veins, a cold blanket would envelop him. A cold that I was more than used to feeling. It followed me everywhere. But now, I was accustomed to it.

He gurgled and choked.

I held my ear to his mouth. “Is there something after? I don’t know. I don’t think so.”

As the light in his eyes faded, Theo flashed in front of me. I could only imagine what he was thinking right now. Was he at home sound asleep, without a care? Was he scrolling through news feeds looking at this asshole’s work? Thinking it was me?

I dug my toes into the muddy earth. I stepped closer. The athame now an extension of my rage. I struck the blade into his heart. Twisted. Blade across his throat.

“You fucking made me and my best-friend fight you asshole,” I screamed, inches from his face.

Blood drooled. Blank stare. Gurgled reflex. His light was gone. He'd been liberated.

From here, I would begin my ritual. Remove my shirt. Drape it over their face. Disembowel the body. Leave the organs for the fish. Wash the blood from myself and the body. Rinse the shirt and hang it over a branch. Drag the body to a cloth sheet. Salted straw and lavender to fill the cavities. The sheet tightly wound around the body.

Normally, I'd carry them all the way to their car. But sometimes I'd need to bring it closer. Like this time. I've been told I'm stronger than I looked. But I wasn't strong enough to carry an adult for five minutes. Two minutes? Yeah.

I drove his car to his house. It wasn't hard to get their address. Phones were easy to hack. And once in, you have access to everything. But I only ever needed their address.

The body would be easy to find. Laying across the back seat of the car in the driveway. Wrapped in a cloth. Free from blood stains. A note stuck on the window with the Latin name of a purple flower.

Tonight: *lavandula angustifolia*.

The notes never had a meaning. It was just a random purple flower to mess with the police. But this time, it was for Theo. It was a comment he made once. How his mum had beds of English Lavender outside the front door. The house always smelt of lavender. When his mum died, he took one of the plants, and to this day, he keeps it in his kitchen. Next to it, news clipping printouts of the only two murders I left a note with *lavandula angustifolia* written on it.

I'd left my message for him. He'd see it on the news in the morning. He had to accept my apology. Otherwise, there would be a future where I returned to my rituals. Every Friday, a liberation. A uni student. A banker. A mother. A brother. It didn't matter to me.

What did matter was my friendship with Theo.

There was no sleeping for the remainder of the night. No food. No drink. Only falling into darkness.

THE FLORIST IS BACK AFTER COPY-CAT KILLER'S BODY IS FOUND.

The investigation into the killing of Jane Edwards has taken a sudden turn. News is coming in that the body of Peter Edwards, Jane's brother, was found in his driveway. Investigators were looking into Mr Edwards' possible involvement when a call came in at dawn that his body had been found.

Police say they had Mr Edwards under surveillance last night, however during a shift change, police lost track of him.

It appears that Peter Edwards' possible involvement in Jane Edward's death had come to the attention of The Florist. There are calls for an internal investigation to see how this leak of information may have occurred.

I went to Theo that morning. When the door opened, his expression remained unaffected. His hair ruffled. Clothes ragged. It was like the first day we met. Him, a mess. Me, taking pity.

“I’m sorry,” I said, surprisingly in earnest.

“What for?” his tone was dry.

“Uh. Our fight?”

“What specifically about our fight?” His words appeared a challenge. “Tell me, what do you think I’m mad about.”

“I snapped at you?”

BING.

He stared at me.

BING.

BING.

BING.

“You might want to get that,” I said.

“It can wait.”

BING.

BING.

BING.

“You might want to get that,” I repeated.

He released a hard breath, rolled his eyes, and left me at the door. When he returned. Eyes on the screen. A smirk and a scoff.

“*Lavandula angustifolia*.” He put the phone in his pocket and invited me in. “Finally.”

The house was clean. It was eerily clean. I guess this is what he was like before his life went to shit. Maybe he was finally climbing out of that hole.

He grabbed a couple of mugs and put the kettle on. “You know I waited for you.”

“What?”

“I know who you are. I saw you at the lake a few weeks before

we met. I watched you after that.”

While a normal person would typically shout out in defence or run away. I watched him. Assessing him.

“Why didn’t you choose me that day? Why wasn’t I one of your victims?”

“I was there to liberate the other man there.”

“Why him and not me?”

“They tell me who dies.”

“Who’s they?”

“I don’t know. They just give me a target and I follow through.”

He ran hands through his hair. “So, you’re an assassin?”

“I guess.”

“You guess? You either are or aren’t.”

“It’s not like I get paid. I don’t even know who tells me.”

“What? How could you... Why would you... What?” He took a breath. “So, why’d you stop?”

“I didn’t hear from them.”

“So, you stopped hearing from them when we started hanging out?”

“Yeah.”

He shook his head. “Are you sure it’s not your own thoughts? Are you schizophrenic or something?”

“I don’t think so. I’ve thought about it. Maybe I could be. But what if I’m not, and they can never be liberated because I stopped believing. That’s why I sit at the lake all day until they tell me who.”

“Bullshit,” he growled. “I watched you, remember? People go there because they’re expecting something from you. What do you tell them? You’ll give them sex? Drugs? Money?”

“I never offer anything but liberation. How they interpret that is up to them.”

“How do you get them there?”

I opened my Go-To app. He was quiet for a while. Scrolling.

“So, what? We have one fight and you’re back at it?”

“Well, the way I see it, it’s like you’re my tin foil hat.”

“So, you’re saying if I stop hanging out with you on Fridays, you go back to kil... Liberating people?”

“I guess.”

“How about we move our hangout sessions to Saturdays?”

“What?”

“I started hanging out with you on Fridays because I wanted you to take me along some time. But if it’s a solo thing, I get it. But it would be cool if we could check out the news reports together and talk about their theories and stuff.”

TELEVISION SERIES BASED ON THE FLORIST COMING IN 2021

The long-awaited television series based on the real life serial killer, The Florist, is set to be released in Winter of 2021.

Award winning, Frank Walters, will be playing Senior Sergeant Thomas Davies, the man in charge of the unit responsible for hunting down the criminal.

No details have been released about who will be playing The Florist, which has led to an explosion of speculations on social media.

The creators of the show have been tight lipped about the casting choice; however they've said that people will get excited when they're revealed.

The Florist is still at large, and police encourage anyone with any information to contact their dedicated phone services: 1800-555-4321