

The Art Behind a Blossoming Garden

All my nan does is water her plants.

All day everyday; water, fertilise, admire, repeat, water fertilise, admire.

I never understood her wild obsession with plants. I would say her care for plants is very much excessive, I'd even go to the lengths of saying that her unit has begun to resemble the humid trenches of the Amazon rainforest.

Yai, my nan, lives in a unit house at the intersection of the main street of one of the sketchier parts of this rural town. It's a brick house in fine shape with a few steps leading to her front door. Outlining the house are a diverse community of flowers, from water lilies floating upon still waters to the classic beauty of roses and that's not all. When you first enter the house you're met with a small alcove to the right composed of minty glazed leaves stemming out of tubular branches and subdued hanging vines on the shared wall between neighboring units.

However, this seemingly decadent sanctuary isn't as calming as one can imagine.

To put it simply, Yai is someone with a short-temper. She claims I walk wrong, like I walk too bouncy or I dress wrong because I dress too man-like.

"Look at your sister, she's dressed beautifully. Why do you dress like a boy, are you a tom girl?"

"Walk like a normal person! Why do you lift your heel up before moving?"

"What is wrong with you?"

This is my normal, the complaints are constant, neverending. You get used to it after a while though, at some point her outbursts become predictable and her words futile despite their fomentful nature.

I'm laying in my favourite spot of the house, on the corner of her black L-shaped couch adjacent to the forested alcove wrapped snugly in the fluffiest navy blanket like a burrito on the verge of sleep when Yai walks back into the house after carefully placing the manure into each one of flower pots outside.

"Your mom complains about me, doesn't she?" she mutters, not gazing in my direction while walking towards the kitchen.

I don't respond, pretending not to hear her.

"You know I do a lot for your mom, I cook for her and I don't ask for her money! She should be happy to have me alive still" she yells out from the kitchen.

I say nothing, again.

She's chopping vegetables, I assume probably making one of my favourite dinners, Chicken Cashew Nut.

She walks out, softly murmuring 'I know she thinks that of me'.

She stops. She walks towards the window, admiring the glossy succulents that lay upon the windowsill.

"You know sometimes I might get angry but that's because I'm stressed. Sometime I know that she and even you think I'm too rude to your grandpa but that's because he can be a rebel sometimes"

I'm slightly frazzled, unsure of what prompted this confession.

"You're not rude," I say simply. I fidget with the hair tie on my wrist, I've grown into a habit of scratching it occasionally.

She stops talking, and gives me a look. I don't understand it.

"I know I tell your grandpa off a lot, I know I get angry at him a lot but that's because I care. Because if anything happens to him, if he falls or has a stroke again I would be broken! That's why I always tell you I want to die before him because my heart," she takes a deep breath shaking her head roughly, "my heart would die with him".

I shudder. I look at her. Why does she look different? Is it the lighting?

"Like Padei, I didn't take care of her or see her often at all because I was busy in Austria working as a nurse, not through childhood or teenagerhood and she passed away! She was my daughter, why did I let my parents take care of her! I should have been there! I could have stopped her from getting into that car!" she yells.

"And I know you think I'm a crazy woman spending too much money on my plants. But if I don't have the garden, I will go crazy! My thoughts will consume me if I have nothing to do. I can't sit mindlessly because I think of everything wrong in the world. I'm so scared so I need it. I need to take care of it!"

Then her eyes start welling up, a sudden deepening redness in the rims of her eyes as a choking sound makes its way to her voice giving her anchored voice a raspy twinge, a sound I recognise all too well.

I finally understand, in my reverie. It hits me.

She's just trying to cope with... everything.

So now I watch in admiration as she waters her blossoming flowers, and in each drop, I see the love she finds so hard to put into words.