

“Flowers that Reek Acceptance”

BOOM! POW! For a few moments the hot and contaminated smoke was the only thing flowing in and out of Belle’s small lungs. The ringing in her ears was unbearable, as unbearable as a speaker when you put a mic near it. Not to mention the sudden headache. Where the hell did this all come from? She couldn't recall how she got there, just couldn't think straight. She'd usually look around, take it all in, but all she could see were the overwhelming lights that blinded her eyes. Her body felt horrible, feeble. With every blink she felt her body getting weaker and weaker. Each time it gets even harder to function. *Is this what death feels like?* She thought to herself as she felt her body slowly letting go.

Belle couldn't take it anymore. Blink. Blink. Her body couldn't take this sudden pain. She gathered the strength to blink once more, but after she did, it was all gone. The smoke, the unbearable ringing, the headache, the overwhelming lights, just...gone. She could see everything clearly now, she was in a...garden? Suddenly all the questions she couldn't think of before flooded her head: *Where am I? What is this place? What happened? Where's mom?* Belle felt her chest getting tighter, her hunger for air suddenly growing by the second. Her heart quickened and she could hear it. It was all she could hear. She felt every heartbeat travel through all her body like ocean waves. *Breathe.* She tried to count and slowly breathe;

Two...

One...

One...

Three...

Four...

As she took that breath, the floral aroma replaced the smoke in her lungs. Weirdly, her panic disappeared. The garden seemed to have a rather weird effect on her. She took it all in, had tried to breathe once more, and the smell of the flowers...it oddly reminded her of her mother's scent. It reminded Belle of all the fun times they would run around in the yard, and her mother would chase her. Then she would fall and scrape her knee, but it didn't matter. It didn't matter because her mom would be right there to put a band-aid on it. To cleanse and disinfect it. The scent

relaxed her, soothed her. Belle looked around, the garden looked never ending. Rows and rows of what look like infinite variations of flowers. She didn't think much of it. After all that's what she wanted to be when she grew up, a botanist. Belle reaches for the nearest flower, a camellia, and sticks her nose between the soft petals.

"Mollie!", She thought. Mollie was her friend, not just any, her *best* friend. The person she would always go to when something happened, whether it was good or bad. She was the person she'd go to when she saw a cute guy, but also the person she went to when the family dog had passed. In Belle's eyes, Mollie was the most admirable person who had ever stepped on earth. She was strong, bold—yet emotional and caring. Mollie was confident and sure of herself, the polar opposite of Belle. She was Belle's inspiration to grow and bloom like a flower into the best version of herself, though she wasn't sure she had reached that version of herself. Mollie was one of the reasons that Belle decided to actually try and live life and not rot in bed.

Belle grabbed another flower, then another one, then dozens more. The sweet smells traveled through the air, each being distinct and attached to a personal memory of hers. It stimulated her brain—activated tons of emotions that she had forgotten she had experienced. One second, she'd see the new year's fireworks that had ended one of her happiest years, but the other second she'd see whenever she'd cry in bed in her mother's arms. A few minutes ago, Belle had no idea what and where she was, but now, it didn't matter. Not even a bit. Her critical thinking was lost, and all the rational questions just disappeared.

Her body then unwinds as a spring would after a heavy object dismounts it. Slides her body on the grass and the soft green bristles brush against her body. She runs her finger through the grass, feeling it, and starts breathing softly to slowly take in all the smells, the memories. Belle makes sure to stretch her body out and get as comfortable as possible. She had no plans to leave this perfect garden. It felt like paradise, maybe it was. Yes, the flowers had very distinct smells that differ from each other, but they all shared something. What is it? Oh of course! These flowers...they...all these flowers *reek* acceptance.