

The Flower Shop

Jim and I were visiting his parent's home, where he grew up in the village of Clive, Alberta, in March, 1975, a month before we were to be married.

“You have to have heather in your bouquet,” Jean, my future mother-in-law, said in her strong Scottish accent.

“Heather?” I said, repeating her words, trying to comprehend what she meant.

I didn't know heather was a beautiful pink flower native to moors and bogs in Scotland, where Jean was raised. A Heathland is a field where heather the perennial shrub grows. It symbolizes admiration, good luck, protection, solitude and wishes coming true.

I thought I would pick out the flowers I liked in my wedding bouquet, but my intuition told me heather was essential to Jean.

“Ok,” I said, without questioning.

Two weeks later, I drove my Studebaker from Calgary to Clive and the farm to accomplish errands and make more plans for the wedding. Then I drove to the town of Lacombe to order the bouquet. As I opened the door to the flower shop, I smelled the sweet fragrance of all kinds of flowers mingled with plants and soil.

The bell on the door tinkled to alert the clerks of my arrival. I walked inside and saw refrigerated displays of flowers lining the shop walls behind glass doors. People from all over came here to order cards, gifts and flowers for all occasions. In the middle of the room, there stood a long table used for flower arrangements.

I bought flowers here before, but this time I came to purchase my wedding bouquet for an event that will change my life. I had to make a good choice.

“Would it be possible to have heather in my wedding bouquet?” I asked.

“That shouldn’t be a problem. What else would you like?”

When I hesitated, the grey-haired woman, who was busy cutting and arranging a vase of flowers, put down her scissors and handed me an enormous book.

“We have pictures of wedding bouquets,” she said.

I didn’t know what heather looked like, and I was too proud to ask

“These look nice,” I said, pointing to a bouquet of white roses and delicate white lace flowers.

“Could you add heather and some greenery to it?” I asked.

“When do you need it?” she asked, writing the number of the arrangement from the book into her calendar.

“Two weeks from now. I will pick it up on April 18, the day before our wedding.”

“That should be fine,” she said.

As I walked out the door, I breathed a sigh.

Mom came with me to pick up my bouquet the day before the wedding. As Mother of the bride, she insisted on paying for it, just as she had insisted on paying for the wedding dress she helped me pick out.



When the lady brought the bouquet, Mom said, “Oh, that’s beautiful, the heather adds a soft contrast to the white flowers.”

“I like it too,” I said as we waited for the woman to package it in clear plastic wrap.

A few seconds later, we turned to leave the shop. It was then that the bell on the door tinkled and I found myself face-to-face with my high school boyfriend, Ray. Beside him was Darlene, the girlfriend he had for over a year.

“Hi, Nancy,” Ray said nonchalantly.

I blushed when I saw he noticed the wedding bouquet.

“When is the big day?” he asked,

His light blue eyes sparkled with interest.

“Tomorrow,” I answered.

“We are here to pick up our bouquet, too. What a coincidence,” he said.

My heart tugged. Confusion set in. I did not know what to say. I looked at Mom for help. Mom knew what I thought about Ray through conversations we had last summer. At that moment she realized how awkward it was for me to meet him in all the places in the flower shop the day before we were both to be married. Her eyes darted back and forth between Ray and me.

“Hi, Ray,” she said.

“Mrs. Archibald, this is Darlene,” Ray said.

“Nice to meet you,” Mom replied as she shook her hand.

After that, Mom knew not to prolong this interaction, and as politely as she could, ushered me out the door.

As I walked onto the street, I knew in my heart that I had to keep following the path toward marrying Jim. After all, he was the father of my baby, and with all Ray had been through over the years, we were never meant to be.

“I think Jean will like this bouquet,” Mom said.