

12-1-2023

as mother's flowers rot

Eliaz Torres
SUNY Geneseo

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Recommended Citation

Torres, Eliaz (2023) "as mother's flowers rot," *Gandy Dancer Archives*: Vol. 12: Iss. 1, Article 13.
Available at: <https://knightscholar.geneseo.edu/gandy-dancer/vol12/iss1/13>

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as mother's flowers rot

Mother was born from a garden of greens. Just as the woman who came before her.

Her mother's delicate fingers danced over every flower petal, breathing life into them with each despairing sigh.

Day in and day out she'd watch her watch them.

Wondering why she was the only one that ever held them.

Your father is allergic. She lied.

He simply hated the smell of them.

She took it upon herself to continue the garden.

She learned how to tend to them,

day in and day out she went with her mother.

She learned to dance her fingertips along their edges delicately.

When she was done, she learned to wash the dirt from her knees.

She learned to be careful—to keep their scent off her
like the scent of a forbidden lover.

She watched the way his hatred for the garden grew.

Watched the way he beat her sister when she was reckless

when she forgot to wash off the dirt

when she let their scent intoxicate her,

blindly strengthen her.

He reminded them who was strongest
with scars that matched his
day in and day out.
Until they all stopped tending,
until one turned to two,
two to three
years in the same
flowerless
weed ridden home.

After he died they put flowers over his casket.
Mom didn't touch them, she didn't even look.
When the condolences hit her doorstep,
wedged between dozens of flowery buds
she let every petal fall.
Let them wither in their own solitude.
The way she learned to,
the way he taught her to.
Just as the woman before her did
day in and day out.
My sister didn't understand,

Just like grandpa.

Mother's allergic too. I lied.