

The Blooming of Janessa

Theodore K Phelps

Young Janessa wants to tell someone close to her an important secret. So, she texts her mother's sister, her Aunt June, and they meet up at a Starbucks downtown because it has a loft area where they can speak quietly.

"Hi dear," June greets Janessa. "I got your text. I am guessing it's about Buzz?"

Buzz had died last week. He was Janessa's unmarried stepdad who had lived with them for half of her life. And now, they are thankful, he is finished. He killed himself with rage. Same rage that had ruined their lives, that let him bruise their wrists when he grabbed them hard.

He had tried, let's say, to die by heart valves a year ago. Now this heart attack last week *worked*, and as everyone on the block as heard, Buzz killed himself telling some fake Easter flowers to bloom: *Bloom ya fuckin idiots! Bloom! Bloom!* with Darlene risking a slap in the head, advising him, *They're plastic, ya idiot*. Buzz, she reports, grabbed the pot with its red and yellow tulips (and insubordinate buds refusing to grow up) and chucked it at the window. It flew through the glass and fell four stories to the street. The old fellow has become the latest barroom joke, just eight days in the ground—well, in the *air*, because Darlene had him burned.

"Aunt June, do you remember how we got those tulips? 'cause you need to know."

It was from the gift shop a year ago when they were at the hospital with Buzz's first heart surgery. Janessa remembers the moment. It was love at first sight. A pot of tulips, red and yellow, some still buds. How she sniffed and stroked them. *Wow. Plastic. Real dirt? How much? Twelve bucks.*

"Aunt June, Buzz never even noticed them. Mom didn't care. She wanted to chuck them out after a week, because they were in the way *of the chair we sat in*. Why I am telling you this is because I brought them home and kept them in my room *all year* but put them on the breakfast table last month, for Easter."

"Janessa. Listen. You are *not* responsible for that asshole killing himself that way."

"It was his anger. I see that. But that's not why I called you. First, imagine me walking home last Wednesday and seeing all five of them scattered on the street. I looked up and saw the busted window. I could guess. Didn't yet know Buzz was *gone*. So, I went around and collected each of them and got a new pot with real potting soil and that's why I...I mean, I shouldn't have, but I took them to the funeral home that evening, as you saw, just in case

they could, you know, go in with the cremation. Of course, being plastic, they couldn't. He said the cemetery plot is the place. Aunt June, I thought *Who would ever give him that?*

"But then Rick, that nice funeral guy, leaned in as I held the tulips and he sniffed them and stroked the petals and said like *Sure. Sorry. I thought they were decoratives. These can go in.* Then I saw it: there was now an *orange* bloom! And a blue one cracking open. Buzz was getting his dying wish! They took the tulips and we saw them put 'em in the pine box. And now they are burned up. I miss them!" Janessa cried.

"Is that what you wanted to tell me, dear? You miss them? Those were *real* ones, honey, we all saw that."

"They were *my* babies. I really loved them. You know, like a dolly or a cat? All last year I kept them by my bed. Here's the part I want you to know. Don't tell Mom. The night before Thanksgiving last year, I had a dream that they needed water. I *never water* them! And then—we were in the park somewhere—rain came. And they were laughing in the rain. I was getting soaked. Then—because it's a dream—it changed, and the rain came for *me*. I didn't need to drink. I needed..." Janessa stopped and held her face a moment. "I needed tears. And so the clouds were crying *for* me. I started crying, and it woke me up. I went out to the park. It was snowing. The air was fresh and it sort of *became* me. The fresh air draped over everything. A few days later it was coming *out* of me or more like I was *made* of it. No fear, no anger. I forgave Buzz for that time he.... That is how it has been the past half year. Right now: you, this table, the coffee, the man over there, traffic outside."

"Dear Jesus! Those tulips! They bloomed *you*! What am I saying?! I need another latte."

"Me too. I'll get this one."

IWOW May 6, 2025 Theme "Bloom"

Note: Meaning of the Name Janessa? I decided easily to use this name, one I must have heard before, but didn't know it. All I knew was what the girl would become and had no idea about its details much less the meaning of the name. I asked Copilot for its meaning, and it said this, which later searches on my own largely, but not totally confirm (see the word transformation? It is not in other definitions, and is as if AI had read my mind before I wrote this. Haha, not yet, folks, but someday I hope not):

Janessa is a name with a unique blend of elegance and charm. It is believed to be a modern creation, derived from a combination of names like Jane and Vanessa. The name Jane has roots in Hebrew, meaning "God is gracious," while Vanessa is of Greek origin, meaning "butterfly." Together, Janessa embodies a sense of divine grace and transformation, making it a name that carries beauty, strength, and a touch of whimsy. It is a name that stands out and leaves a lasting impression, perfect for someone with an enchanting and dynamic personality.