

When the Flowers Bloom
a short play by Joshua Prouser

Characters:

Alan – In his 30s

Emily – In her 30s

Setting:

A cozy living room, in the Green Mountains of Vermont. It is late winter, in the evening. It is the present time.

Opening:

Lights up on a cozy living room. A couch is at center stage. A coffee table is in front of the couch. An end table with a picture frame on it is stage right of the couch. Downstage center is a wrought iron fireplace tool set. It is equipped with a brush, poker, and shovel. It is for an unseen fireplace (located offstage, downstage center). The room is dimly lit, except where the couch is, which is bright.

Emily is asleep on the couch. She is dressed in comfortable clothes, and covered in a blanket.

Beat.

Alan enters, carrying a tray with two teacups. He is dressed in business attire, including a collared shirt and a tie. He places the tray on the table. He sits on the opposite end of the couch and gently touches Emily. She wakes up.

Alan- Hey, sleepy head.

Emily- *(Sleepily)* Hi. I'm glad you made it home safely in the snowstorm.

Alan- The roads were bad, and it was hard to see. But I'm here now. *(Beat)*. I started a fire for us. It was freezing in here.

Emily- Aww, thank you Alan. *(she picks up a teacup and drinks)* And, you made my favorite tea!

Alan- Irish Breakfast with just a little milk.

Emily- Ahh, yes. Oh, and thank you for the blanket.

Alan- Of course. I wanted to make sure you weren't cold while waiting for the fire to start.

Emily- You're so good to me *(they kiss)*. How was work today?

Alan- Ah, it was fine, just another eight hour headache. But, it is what it is.

Emily- Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. What happened?

Alan- *(He stands and attends the fire)*. My boss just isn't the most understanding person sometimes. He doesn't see things the way I do. I understand that the insurance industry can be a little impersonal. But my boss only sees our customers as numbers, as just another claim or policy. I want to be there for them and try to understand them in their difficult situations. I truly care about the customers, while my boss just cares about *having* customers.

Emily- And that's what makes you such a great person.

Alan- Too bad my boss doesn't see things that way.

Emily- Yes, but I do.

They smile at each other. Alan grabs her hand.

Alan- You always know just what to say.

Emily- Well, I am always here for you.

Beat.

Alan- You know, I think there is someone at work who agrees with my approach with the customers.

Emily- Oh? Who?

Alan- Delilah. She's only been in our office for a few months, but she seems to share my attitude that we need to try to understand our customers. We've discussed how we feel that a personal connection with them is important.

Emily- That's great. I'm sure it's helpful for there to be someone who shares that belief.

Alan- I agree. *(Beat)*. But, enough about my day, how was yours? I hope it wasn't too boring, just being here at the house.

Emily- Not at all, it was fine. I slept in pretty late.

Alan- Oh good, I was trying to not wake you this morning when I was leaving for work.

Emily- And I appreciate that. I stayed in bed until late morning, so I didn't do much early in the day. Then, I had a nice lunch as I watched the snow fall.

Alan- That is a nice way to spend lunch.

Emily- It was peaceful. After that, I pattered around the house, trying to organize some things.

Alan- Yes, picking things up and putting them away, I would imagine.

Emily- That's right. After a while, I laid down on the couch and fell asleep, waiting for you to come home.

Alan- I'm sorry, I hope you weren't waiting for too long. Like I said, the roads were brutal *(beat)*. I also left a little late because as I was leaving the office, I helped Delilah clean her car off. Her snow brush broke as she was trying to push through the heavy, wet snow. So, I figured I would give her a hand.

Emily- That is so like you; so thoughtful. I am sure she appreciated that.

Alan- Yeah, I think so. *(Beat)*. I gave her my phone number; in case she needs help cleaning her car off tomorrow. And she gave me hers too, in case I need it.

Emily- That's great. Working with people who care like that is nice.

Alan- Yeah, I agree. *(Beat)*. So, you said you had a nice lunch, what was it?

Emily- Hmm?

Alan- What did you have for lunch?

Emily- Tomato soup. It's my favorite on a cold, snowy day.

Alan- Right, yes, it is. I remember. I just wanted to make sure.

Beat. Alan stands and attends the fire again. Emily goes to Alan's left side. She looks out a window, drinking her tea.

Emily- The snow is really coming down out there.

Alan- It is. How much do you think is out there?

Emily- It's tough to tell really. 10, maybe 11 inches?

Alan- Wow. I thought we had seen the last of the snow. It's March so I was hoping spring would come soon.

Emily- Yes, it would be nice to see some green soon.

Alan- It sure would. Spring is such a beautiful time of year.

Emily- It is. There is so much to look forward to in spring. When new life comes alive; when everything wakes up. When the flowers bloom again.

Alan- *(Beat)*. You know what I'm looking forward to? Spring days with walks in the woods and crossing through fields of tall grass.

Emily- *(she goes to him)* Oh yes! Going down by the river, skipping rocks and watching the fish swim. At night we can lie out under the stars and see if we can find a constellation or two. Or during the day we can fall asleep under a large oak tree. Oh, and the flowers! Lilies, roses, tulips, violets, lilacs, lavender!

Alan leads Emily back to the couch.

Alan- They will all be beautiful! The ones in the fields and the ones in your garden.

Emily- You mean, our garden. It wouldn't exist without you.

Alan- You're right. *(Beat)*. The lilies are your favorite, right?

Emily- My favorite flower?

Alan- Yeah.

Emily- Yes. Always have been.

Alan- Good, just didn't want to forget.

Beat.

Alan- But, until then, we still have all this snow!

Emily- I know, and it's supposed to stay cold for a while, so this snow isn't going anywhere any time soon.

Alan- Yeah. That wasn't so bad when we were younger and had nowhere to go and nothing to do. But now, having to go to work, and running errands; it's all just a pain.

Emily- Yeah, it is. *(Beat)*. Hey, speaking of younger, do you remember our first snowstorm together?

Alan- How could I forget? Sure, it was over 10 years ago, but I remember it like it was yesterday.

Emily- I can close my eyes and still see myself in my dorm room with you.

Alan- That weekend in Kensington Hall with you is one of my favorite memories.

Emily- Ah, we were just a couple of silly college seniors. Stuck in an old dorm room all weekend with nothing to do.

Alan- Nothing to do but drink cheap wine, sing songs, and cry from laughing way too much.

Emily- As we watched the snow pile up around us.

Alan- And we held each other close, to stay warm. It was such a simple time.

Emily- But it was a lovely time. And it is so nice to just think back on memories like that and smile.

Alan- I could get lost in them for hours.

Emily- I could too. *(Beat)*. I was so young and beautiful back then.

Alan- You will always be young and beautiful to me.

Emily- And I will always love you for that.

They kiss.

Beat.

Alan- Do you remember our last snow storm together?

Beat.

Emily- *(she hesitates)* Yes, I do. It was last March. About a year ago actually.

Alan- That's right. And we were right here on the couch.

Emily- Yes, we were. Holding each other and sleeping by the fire.

Alan- Life was a little less simple by then.

Emily- You're right. I had just gotten laid off from my job.

Alan- Yes, and Ma had just passed. Life was tough at that moment.

Emily- But it would sure be nice to go back to that time.

Alan- I would do anything to go back to that time.

Emily- I know, Alan.

Alan- Things got a lot tougher after that.

Emily- I know, sweetheart. I know.

(Long Beat. Alan starts crying.)

Alan- Two months later, you were just gone in an instant.

Emily- May 24. It was a beautiful day from what I remember.

Alan- We were so happy, getting ready to have friends over.

Emily- It was going to be a nice Memorial Day party.

Alan- You were just walking through the gardens in the backyard. I went out to join you, and you were just, gone.

Emily- It was a heart attack, Alan. No one could have done anything. I had felt fine.

Alan- It happened so fast.

Emily- I know, but it happened so fast that I didn't feel pain.

Alan- I'm glad you didn't. But I've felt the pain from that moment every day for almost a year; I didn't even get to say goodbye.

Emily- I know. *(Beat)*. And that's why I'm still here.

Alan- What?

Emily- The pain you are in, the pain you've been in. You haven't been able to rid yourself of it, because you never had the chance to.

Alan- What are you talking about?

Emily- *(she starts to cry)* I feel like a ghost to you Alan, you won't let me leave you alone.

Alan- Emily, it's because I love you. I can't let you leave my heart. I can't forget you.

Emily- But there's a difference between remembering me, and letting my memory consume you. *(Beat)*. I feel like you're feeling this way because you didn't say goodbye.

Alan- That's not true. Even if I could have said goodbye, I would still miss you every day.

Emily- While I am sure that's true, I still don't believe I would be here.

Alan takes the picture from the end table and looks at it. Emily stands up and stands next to him. The rest of this conversation occurs with Emily looking at Alan, and Alan looking at the picture.

Emily- I love you Alan. But I don't want to see you hurting over me anymore. At least not in this crippling way. You are a wonderful, thoughtful, and kind man. A man I loved and have always loved, and will always love. But I don't want to see you this way anymore.

Alan- What do I do?

Emily- Continue on. Continue with your life the way you would have. You can still hold me in your heart. But you shouldn't see me here anymore.

Alan- That's not what I do.

Emily- It's not? Isn't that why you made two cups of tea tonight? Isn't that why you laid a blanket out on the couch for me? Isn't that why you look back on all these memories still, every day? How are you supposed to carry on with your life, if all you do is look back on what has already happened?

Alan- It's not that simple. You don't understand. You're not living what I'm living.

Emily- You're right. But I know, if I was in your shoes, you would not want me weeping over you like this. You would want me out there, living.

Alan- Of course, I just... *(he has trouble finding the words)*. I don't know how.

Emily- Please, Alan. As one final thing you can do for me. Let me go. Or, not so much let me go, but don't let the memory of me hold you back. You're still young, you have so much life still to live.

Alan- How do I start?

Emily- *(Beat)*. Well, maybe it would be good to start talking to people again who are not just a memory. There are people out there who care about you, will let you in, and that you should let in. Be like the flowers: you will bloom again.

Emily stares for a moment, then slowly exits. Alan continues to sit, holding the picture and crying. After a few moments he stops and looks up. He looks longingly at the picture, and then places it back on the end table. He thinks for a moment, then reaches into his pocket and pulls out his cell phone. He dials a number. He drinks from his cup of tea, and after a moment...

Alan- Hi, Delilah? *(Beat)*. Hi, this is Alan, from work. *(Beat)*. Yes, I'm okay. I just thought it would be nice to talk someone while we're getting snowed in. Did you make it home from work safely? *(Beat)*. Oh good, me too. *(Beat)*. Yeah, I'm tired of winter too; I'm looking forward to spring. *(Beat)*. Oh, it's one of my favorite seasons too. There's so much happiness when the world wakes back up, when the flowers bloom again. *(Beat, the lights slowly start to fade)*. What? *(Beat)*. Oh my favorite is lavender, but I do have a soft spot for lilies. You? *(Beat)*. Ah, sunflowers are lovely too. I actually have a garden in my yard that will be full of flowers in the spring. Maybe as the weather gets nicer, I can show them to you sometime? *(Black out)*