



Being a *Rose*

By Jan Murray

“Wanna see my ‘Nekked Ladies’ ?”

Grandma Edsell asked one hot August day.

I must have looked startled, for she slapped her knee and cackled in delight. She pointed to a clump over by her fence. There were several pale, long-legged stems with pale pink trumpet-like flowers on top. They reminded me of a flock of flamingos at the local zoo.

“See, “Grandma said, “no leaves. They’re nekked.” She grinned as we admired her flowers.

I found out many years later that they are called Magic Lilies, and sometimes are referred to as “Naked Ladies”.

I saw another clump of them in my friend Judy’s yard after Grandma died. She had dug some up and planted them in her yard to remember Grandma. It worked. Whenever I see “Naked Ladies”, I always remember Grandma’s laugh that day. It was my first vivid memory of the visceral connection between living flowers, their fragrance, and loving memories. One aids the other.

Research studies have shown that floral fragrance enhances memory, and that smell can evoke a specific time and place in individuals in powerful ways. Scent is the strongest of the five senses we possess. Floral scents trigger the production of chemicals in our bodies that make us feel in love, or blush, or hug the person we love. Jesus seemed to understand that.

In John 12:3-8, Mary, who loved Jesus dearly and witnessed Lazarus’ resurrection, poured costly spikenard perfume on His feet. The perfume was so powerful, the fragrance filled the whole house. The disciples obviously weren’t very affected then. They complained that the perfume was too expensive to be used in such a way. Jesus replied that her act was a gift and that her loving action would be remembered always.

I imagine that long after Jesus ascended, whenever the breeze carried a whiff of that perfume, those who were in the room that day would be transported back to a time when Mary poured out her love for her Lord.

Flower lives remind us of resurrection. They seem to spring to life again each year. Scientifically we know all kinds of things about what actually happens in the ground during winter. However, each year when a crocus pops its purple head out of the snow, I do a little dance as if spring were not an eventual certainty.

Resurrection was such a puzzle in the disciples’ lives, and even today to those who don’t know Jesus. Jesus understood that. In John 11, Jesus told His disciples that Lazarus would be resurrected so they would believe. Jesus told Martha, “I am the Resurrection and the Life.” He set the stage for what He was about to do with Lazarus, and later, what would happen to Him so that the disciples would see the glory of God, and that Christ would be glorified by it. They would remember Jesus’ words, Lazarus’ return, and finally understand and change the world. Each Easter, Christians all over the world celebrate that the Resurrection of Christ is a certainty.



Being a *Rose* (continued)

The Old Testament recorded that the animal and grain sacrifices made to God were pleasant aromas to Him. Christ's sacrificial death was that pleasant aroma to God for sinners forever. Because of that atoning death, Christians are also a pleasant aroma to God

In 2 Corinthians 2:15 it says "We are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing."

Think of yourself as a rose for God. We all are full of costly perfume, meant to be enticing to the perishing and permeating all the spaces around us, so that whenever they get a whiff of rose, the memories of our acts of love in Jesus' name will come back to work powerfully in their lives.

I watched Millie in our church garden one spring day. Several of us were planting flowers, and her young grandson Jordan was helping us. She had a number of petunias and one bright red Gerber daisy.

As she planted it, she began to tell her grandson how Grandma Wendy loved Jesus, loved being in our church, and loved Gerber daisies when she was alive.

Jordan asked, "Is that flower for Grandma Wendy?" Millie nodded.

As my memory of Grandma Edsell comes alive with each "Nekked Lady", Jordan will remember again his Grandma Wendy when he sees the daisy.

Another loving memory was planted and blooming in Jordan's little mind.