

# FLOWERS FROM OUR FATHER

By Carl L. Williams

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### CHARACTERS (2 Females)

ADRIANA 20, grieving for her father  
MARGARET Her sister, late 20's

**TIME & PLACE:** Present. In the living room.

**PROPS:** A large box and a bouquet of flowers.

**AT RISE:** *ADRIANA, dressed in dark clothes, sits glumly in her living room. MARGARET, also dressed in dark clothes, enters carrying a large box and scowls at ADRIANA.*

MARGARET: (*angrily puts down the box*) You just about *ruined* the memorial service. You know that, don't you?

ADRIANA: Oh gee, I thought maybe it was ruined by the fact our father was *dead*.

MARGARET: You're not the only one who cared about him.

ADRIANA: Loved him. The word is love. But if you think "caring" is enough, then maybe you picked the right word for how you felt.

MARGARET: No, actually I didn't.

ADRIANA: People "care" for friends and neighbors and household pets. But a father is someone you love.

MARGARET: I know you loved him. I'm fine with that. Everyone is. But you have to realize not everyone felt the same way.

ADRIANA: That was pretty plain, wasn't it? From all the... what should I call them? Tepid remarks. Lukewarm testimonials. I wonder why they came at all if they didn't feel any stronger about him than that.

MARGARET: They came to show respect for the dead.

ADRIANA: Too bad they never showed any respect for the living. Those people were never his friends. Ever.

MARGARET: Yes, they were. They just didn't have the same emotional attachment to him you did. You should be smart enough to understand the reason and wise enough to accept it.

ADRIANA: But I don't accept it. Not at all. That's why I had to get out of there.

MARGARET: You could've skipped all the acid little remarks you made on the way out.

ADRIANA: I couldn't help it. They were all so smug sitting there, so superior to the man they always made jokes about. About him being "off in his own little world." And there they were, making half-hearted efforts to say things they didn't really believe. They weren't going to miss him, and

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that's what I told them. It was just the truth. I'm going to miss him a thousand times more than they will. (*an insinuating look at MARGARET*) More than anyone.

MARGARET: Adriana...I realize it's terribly difficult for you. You've never lived without him. But I have. For many years now. And to be honest, for years before I ever moved away.

ADRIANA: That doesn't make sense to me.

MARGARET: I was already 18 when Mother died. You were half my age. When I took off for college, Dad suddenly discovered he had to pay attention to his last little girl. You were all the family he had left.

ADRIANA: If only Mother hadn't died.

MARGARET: If she hadn't, Dad would never have taken the responsibility of raising you, of tending to your needs, of actually talking to you instead of staying...yes, I'll say it...staying in his own little academic world.

ADRIANA: It wasn't little at all. It was immense, and filled with ideas.

MARGARET: Professors of philosophy are always filled with immense ideas that serve no practical purpose. It was mainly esoteric nonsense.

ADRIANA: No, it wasn't.

MARGARET: Now all those grand and useless thoughts are extinguished, as if they never existed.

ADRIANA: I guess that's how you think of Dad, too. Just dead, as if he had never lived.

MARGARET: No. No, it's a little more complicated than that.

ADRIANA: Margaret, he taught me so *much*. All those ideas that you dismiss... we live with them every day. But nobody thinks about them. I mean really *thinks*. Ideas like time. The very concept of time, of time passing. One night Dad went into this long discourse on the relativity of time and how relativity was the essence and definition of time. It was amazing.

MARGARET: What's amazing isn't what he said, but that he actually talked to you about it. Because whatever time is, it's something he didn't spend very much of with me.

ADRIANA: I'm sorry if he didn't.

MARGARET: He must've really changed after it was just the two of you here.

ADRIANA: We learned a lot about each other. But no one else ever took him seriously. No one ever listened.

MARGARET: I would've listened. But he was too distracted, too unaware of the world around him because he was so preoccupied and self-engaged, thinking his theoretical thoughts. (*snorts*) If a philosopher falls in the woods, can his daughter hear him?

ADRIANA: If she was listening. If she was close enough to hear.

MARGARET: Don't lecture me, Adriana.

ADRIANA: I didn't mean to. But you could've reached out to him more.

MARGARET: That only works when the other person reaches back. I made a life for myself and it didn't include Dad because his life never included

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me. You asked if “caring” described how I felt about him. No, it didn’t. The more accurate word was resentment, because I really would’ve liked to have had a father. Not some high-thinking professor who was always sequestered in his office, writing some obscure treatise to be published in an equally obscure journal. I wanted... just a regular Dad to do things with. Someone who took a real interest in me and the things I was involved in, no matter how simplistic and mundane they were.

ADRIANA: You should’ve been sitting with the others.

MARGARET: What do you mean?

ADRIANA: At the memorial. Even the ones who sat closest were still sitting halfway back. It’s always that way at funeral services. Only the family members sit up front. The other people hang back, not wanting to get swept up in the sadness. And the less they knew the person who died, the farther back they sit. You should’ve been on the back row.

MARGARET: That’s not fair.

ADRIANA: I don’t feel like being fair.

MARGARET: Adriana, you were still on roller skates when I was learning to drive. And you’re not even out of college yet. You have a great deal more to learn. You might’ve learned it quicker if you’d gone away to school the way I did.

ADRIANA: Unlike you, I didn’t want to go away.

MARGARET: Because you had more to give up than I did! I’ve never blamed you for staying. Why do you blame me for leaving?

ADRIANA: It’s not that I blame you. It’s just...

MARGARET: Just what?

ADRIANA: (*reluctant admission*) It wasn’t only Dad you left.

MARGARET: (*realization*) I’m sorry. I never thought of it as leaving you. I was just moving ahead with my life.

ADRIANA: Besides losing Mother and you so close together, it wasn’t easy at first with Dad... not a matter of him simply changing, the way you said. It took time. He would still disappear into his study by himself. Sometimes I’d go in and sit with him... not talking, just sitting, just being there with him. (*curious, not an accusation*) Did you ever do that?

MARGARET: No, I didn’t. But you never did, either, before Mother died.

ADRIANA: I know. But the longer we were together, just the two of us, the more he opened up and talked to me. Maybe in the beginning it was because he had to, but later it was because he wanted to.

MARGARET: Then you had an advantage I never had. And never will have, now that he’s dead.

ADRIANA: One day when I was about ten, about a year after Mother died, we were walking in the park and I knelt down to pick some flowers. Dad told me not to. He knelt beside me and said, “They’re only beautiful when they’re alive, and they’ll die if you pick them, because they’re connected to the soil.” I said, “We’re not connected to anything. What keeps us alive?” He said maybe there were connections we can’t see, and we don’t know about them until they’re broken. He looked sad when

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he said it, and I told him I didn't understand. He gave me a faint little smile and said, "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

MARGARET: From Shakespeare.

ADRIANA: I got the sense he was quoting it more to himself than to me... like admitting philosophy wasn't enough. I asked him if flowers lived on somewhere after they died. Of course he knew what I was really asking. He said it was possible that everything that dies in this world goes on to live in a world we can't see... a world of the mind and the heart and the spirit, which was why I should never let those things die, because they connect us to all that we have or ever will have. And then he stood up and we left the park together.

MARGARET: Without the flowers.

ADRIANA: But with each other.

MARGARET: I wish he had been to me what he was to you.

ADRIANA: Why is it that someone had to die before my father came alive to me? And now he's dead, too.

MARGARET: But you're not. And that's the only thing we can carry away from any death. The ones who are still living go on with their lives. Mind, heart, and spirit, like he said.

ADRIANA: And the dead live on somewhere else. Do you believe that?

MARGARET: Millions do believe.

ADRIANA: But do you?

MARGARET: I don't disbelieve.

ADRIANA: Dad talked about it toward the end, when he knew his heart was giving out. "So much speculation," he said one night, "and no conclusion. So much conjecture, but soon I'll know."

MARGARET: He had philosophy without faith. I wonder if he wouldn't have been happier having faith without philosophy. Unfortunately, I don't have much of either one.

ADRIANA: I have faith. Faith that I'll see him again. And Mother, too.

MARGARET: It's comforting to think so.

ADRIANA: You say it like it can't be true. Like you're condescending to a fiction.

MARGARET: I'm a realist, Adriana. The exact opposite of our father, who was always leaping from cloud to cloud.

ADRIANA: (*wistfully*) Maybe he still is.

MARGARET: Maybe so. (*deep breath*) The only question now is, what are you going to say to all those people you insulted at the memorial the next time you see them?

ADRIANA: I won't apologize. I might say I'm sorry, but I won't apologize.

MARGARET: There's a difference?

ADRIANA: Yes. I might be sorry I said it, but I won't apologize for the truth of it.

MARGARET: Anybody that obstinate is going to be all right. You're more like me than you might want to admit. We both live in the practical world

that our father too often avoided. In the long run, pragmatism always prevails over the foolish and the fanciful.

ADRIANA: I'm not so sure. That day I told you about? When Dad wouldn't let me pick the flowers? That night he gave me a bouquet of a dozen different kinds of flowers, all of them more beautiful than any we had seen in the park. And with a smile he said, "It's okay. These had already been picked."

MARGARET: Flowers from our father. I can't imagine.

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