

Defence Against The Dark Arts

Once a week, usually on a Monday, she would purchase flowers on her way home from work and put them in the vase that stood on her dining room table. She chose simple, colourful flowers, such as tulips, daffodils and lilies. The owners of the florist assumed that she liked flowers, or that she had a romantic streak or, more prosaically that she did this out of habit. In all these assumptions there was an element of truth, however there were many more reasons behind her actions.

If her job was becoming stressful she bought flowers. If the news of the latest health scares, air crash or terrorist attack distressed her, she bought flowers. If her single status, slow social life, or noisy neighbours became troubling she bought flowers.

It was a simple act but she had come to depend upon it to get her through, and now the majority of life's myriad indignities could be warded off with flowers in a vase. Some people took solace in a stiff drink at the end of the day or a cigarette. Everyone has a crutch to lean on, after all. In private she referred to it as the "defence against the dark arts".

On Sunday evening she would remove the tired wilting blooms and clean the vase. Then she would iron her suit ready for work the next day. She would look at the vase, waiting for its flowers and tell herself "what ever the week brings I can cope with it", and Monday evening she would say "Red tulips today please".