

ONE

Martin Callahan sipped his coffee in silence as he stared out his back window and surveyed his wife's dead garden. It seemed appropriate to him the garden had died. After all, his wife, daughter, and his three-year-old grandson were all dead too.

It had only been nine months since that rainy night when the rest of the family had gone out to eat because he had to work late, only to never come home again. When the fire department arrived, the car was already fully engulfed in flames. And by the time the fire was extinguished, there wasn't enough left to even cremate. No graves. No park bench memorial. No drawer in some depressing mausoleum. There wasn't even enough left for some shitty, depressing vase that sat on the fireplace.

The weeds had invaded the garden almost immediately, and Martin – who had always gone by Marty – was in no condition mentally to tend to them. Truth be told, Marty never much cared for gardening. That was Celeste's true passion. She was always planting and tending, picking and pruning. Their nightly walk often stretched out for an extra half hour as she was always snipping clippings of the interesting looking flora along their path. He often joked about how if he left a coffee cup unattended for more than 90 seconds he would come back and find a seedling planted in it.

It was annoying, really. It was one of the many ridiculous things about Celeste that used to annoy him constantly. And now, as he rattled about in the home they had shared for the last 30 years, he couldn't help but feel ashamed. He would have given anything to have been annoyed just one more time.

As the sun started to peek through the blinds, Marty squinted and pulled on the chord to shut the drapes. He preferred the dark. The light was so jarring. So assaultive. As the blinds slowly descended, Marty's eyes were drawn to a corner of the garden where Celeste's gardening gloves still sat. He couldn't bear to move them. Doing so would have been an admission that she was really gone.