

1946, What I wanted..

by Meg Tuite

I wanted to sit in that class in Iowa next to Flannery as she recited that first story that stopped the world with an accent so dense with dogwood we had to strain to collect every word.

I wanted to sit inside a silence of forever with the other students and Mr. Engles, the instructor, who couldn't speak. That twang of deepest Georgia still resonating in the air that mesmerized us into nothingness.

I wanted to clap with the teacher and students because no words could fit under that prosaic door of timelessness that had been shut on prose that afternoon.

I wanted to run with the laughing girls from class to the local cemetery to gather up all the bouquets of flowers we could steal.

I wanted to sneak back into Flannery's room with the rest of them, loaded down with carnations, roses and lilacs and scatter them over her bed, her rug, her essence.

I wanted to flood Flannery with a gratitude that stopped an entire class full of pens and paper and criticism from charging forward for a day.

I wanted to see Flannery open her door to her tiny room bursting with flowers and love that speech had no room to edge into.

I wanted to go back to my room alone and flood my empty page with tears at the sunrise Flannery had bestowed on my world on that first day she read in 1946 as she had blasted me with a landscape deeper than the grandest canyon on the first day I read her when I was fourteen.

