

Thursday

by Randal Houle

Every Thursday, around 11 am, right after the cemetery where I work receives the daily shipment of cremated remains to be interred, a frail nonagenarian steps out of the driver's seat of his Lincoln Continental and walks, unassisted, up a flight of twenty granite steps, disappears around a corner, sits at a chair - that I set up two hours earlier along with a small bouquet of flowers, and visits his wife who waits behind a one inch slab of granite. He visits for fifteen minutes, then leaves.

Thursday. The flower delivery is late. The time is 10:55. I speed up the hill. A Lincoln Continental has just pulled up. I know a back way. I set the chair and the flowers. A petal drops to the ground and I pick it up and put it in my pocket. I hear his footsteps — shoes scraping each step as he shuffles his feeble legs up twenty granite stairs. I'm forced to hide around the corner. He visits for fifteen minutes, then peaks around the corner.

“The flower delivery was late. Sorry. I was trying to stay out of the way.”

The man smiles, sighs, and resumes the journey back to his car.

Today, one week after the last Thursday, the time is 11 am. There is no Lincoln. I carry flowers and an urn containing cremated remains up twenty granite steps. The interment takes fifteen minutes, then I leave.

