

The Broken Lily

by Hugh Barlow

The school orchestra was done with rehearsal for the day, and Keiko was beginning to put her Cello away when Bob fought his way from the back of the room near the kettle drums through the crowd to simply stand before her and hand her a single long stemmed white lily. The flower was beautifully presented with the florist's paper and a spray of baby's breath, but it was quite obvious that the stem of the lily had been broken at some point in the past and had been repaired by binding a wire to the stem with some sort of thread or floss. Bob presented the flower with a short bow, and said, "This is for you, that you may heal." He watched expectantly as Keiko took the flower with a look of puzzlement upon her face and then asked, "Don't you and I share a physical instruction class together?" "Yes," Keiko simply responded. "Do you have a tee partner?" asked Bob. "No," again a simple response. "Would you mind if I scheduled you to join me at 7:45 tomorrow?" Bob queried. "That would be fine, thank you." Keiko quietly stated. Keiko was new to the school, and she had only one friend, Julie, who sat next to her in the orchestra.

"What was that about?" Keiko asked as she gingerly separated the lily from the wrapping and the baby's breath and examined the flower. Keiko unbound the lily and noticed that the stem seemed strong. The flower no longer needed the support of the wire, and the damage to the stem itself was barely noticeable. The flower had been bound while the bud was still young, long before it was to be presented for sale. The support could have easily been removed, and the flower sold or given away with no-one the wiser of its injury. "Why would he give me a damaged flower?" Keiko asked. Julie smiled. "That is probably one of the few answers I actually know around here." she said with a twinkle in her eye. "I used to work for Bob's mother at the flower shop's green house, and her people have an old custom. Often buds get broken while the mature flowers are being harvested. The shop binds the stem to attempt to heal the

flower using the wire and floss like a splint. Usually the wire and floss is removed before the flower is sold to the public, but on occasion a bound flower is presented to someone with the hope that the verdure will pass along the act of healing to someone who needs healing themselves. The splint is removed before presentation if they wish the act to go unnoticed, but it is left on if they wish to declare their intent in wishing the recipient well. I think he likes you." Julie said. "He seems to have waited a while to give you this. The lily is his favorite flower. It took some time for this to heal, and I think he had you in mind when he repaired it." She continued.

Keiko had lost a loved one some time in the recent past, but had not made her loss known, being a private sort of person. "How did he know?" she asked Julie. "I think it is in your music." Julie replied. "You play the cello in a very melancholy way. It is a moody instrument to begin with, but you play it with sadness." Keiko watched as Bob walked out the doors of the music room with a bounce in his step. Had there been room, he might have skipped. Keiko gathered her instrument and began to lug it down the aisle. For the first time in a long time, she began to look forward to physical instruction.

