

SPECIAL DELIVERY  
Lia Fairchild

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Anticipating the arrival of my monthly flower delivery, I filled a beautiful crystal vase and set it on the counter. Dave, from our local florist, usually delivered them around six on the first day of every month. Having flowers in my home meant a great deal and the thought of not receiving them any longer saddened me. This order would be my last monthly delivery.

I had won a contest to receive a free bouquet every month for a year. I was thrilled of course; especially since flowers have always been a huge part of my life. I used to work in the garden with my grandmother growing up and we always had fresh-picked flowers for the dinner table. My late husband brought me flowers on many occasions as well, spending a small fortune at that floral shop. That's probably the reason I won, because I didn't recall entering any contest.

It was blessing in disguise, really. It was only a few months after Mike died that the first delivery came and I found out that I had won. Seeing the bouquet for the first time brought back fond memories of Mike surprising me with flowers. The last time was on our fourth wedding anniversary. He died six months later at the age of thirty-nine.

Last month, Dave delivered two dozen long stemmed roses. I couldn't believe it. And, they were my favorite color; lavender.

"How am I getting such an expensive bouquet this time?" I asked Dave.

"There was a mistake in ordering," he responded sweetly. "We had so many extra roses and I thought you might like them."

He was right. I appreciated Dave's thoughtfulness and our little talks when he came up to my apartment. Often times he would stay and chat for a few minutes, give me tips for making the flowers last longer and even help me with other things. *What great customer service*, I thought.

Once he caught me as I was carrying some boxes out to my car. I had finally gone through Mike's things and decided to donate most of it. I had six huge and heavy boxes. Dave carried them all to my car. It was brutally hot that day so I made him some sweet tea when he was done. It was nice having a man around again to help out, even for an independent woman like me.

We had a nice long conversation on that day, talking about everything from our favorite movies to our dreams for the future. We laughed so hard I almost cried. I teased him about liking chick flicks since his masculine appearance would seem otherwise.

"Don't you have to get back to work?" I asked him.

"This was my last delivery of the day."

That happened often and I sometimes wondered if he planned it that way. But Dave was a simple laid back kind of guy. He was in his early forties and had short brown hair and a thick mustache. He sort of reminded me of Tom Selleck. He said he had been married once before, at a very young age. It didn't work out. He loves the beach and spends his free time with his large family; four brothers, two sisters. I, too, came from a big family and confided in Dave that I wished Mike and I hadn't put off having kids for our careers. Dave was a good listener and actually helped me get through some of my tougher days. We had exchanged cell numbers early on—in case of any floral emergencies of course—and we ended up texting about once a week. I found myself texting him whenever I felt down, and sometimes for no reason at all.

It suddenly dawned on me that it wasn't just the flowers that I'd be missing. I would miss seeing Dave's face. I would miss his sweet smile and especially our talks. *And, what about our texting?* I wondered aloud. *Would he still be interested in seeing me and texting with me?* I started to wonder if Dave thought anything more of me than just a nice customer. *Could this be why I haven't gone on a single date since Mike died?* I thought to myself. *I'm only thirty-nine.*

My friends and family kept telling me that I “still got it” and needed to get back out there. But what was stopping me? *Am I that pathetic that I am pretending to date my delivery man?*

I pushed the thoughts out of my head and began to straighten up my apartment for Dave’s arrival. *I really will miss those flowers*, I couldn’t help thinking. *Maybe I’ll just call the shop and see how much it would be to continue on with the service. Maybe they’ll give me a discount.*

I picked up my phone and dialed the number. A strange uneasiness came over me. *What did I have to be nervous about?*

“Hello, this is Amy Johnson,” I said when the girl answered the phone.

She asked how she could help me and I started by explaining I was the contest winner.

“I’m sorry ma’am, I’m not familiar with any contest,” she answered politely.

Confused, I paused for a moment. Then I asked for the owner. The girl explained that the owner was out and the manager was in the back completing an order, but that she would go ask her about it. On hold, I checked the time. Dave would be arriving soon. I felt a twinge of excitement and checked my hair in the mirror.

“I’m very sorry,” the woman came back on the line. “The manager said we never run contests. Maybe you have the wrong store.”

“Oh...” I couldn’t think of anything else to say but, “Thank-you.”

After I hung up, I just stared out my kitchen window. What? I don’t get it. Could I possibly have had looked up the wrong number? Or maybe, I had been thinking of a different florist this entire time. *Someone has obviously made a mistake.*

Certain that Dave would clear it up when he arrived, I brushed the thought from my mind and applied some fresh lipstick. I was wearing my cutest jeans and a red V-neck t-shirt that showed off my toned arms. I had worked hard for those and enjoyed showing them off. About twenty minutes later, the doorbell rang and I raced to the door to greet Dave.

The sight of my gorgeous arrangement took my breath away. My final order was the most beautiful one yet. And, this one came in its own vase which worked well because I didn’t think the one I selected would have been big enough.

“Hi Amy,” Dave said barely peeking over the top of the flowers. I could see his eyes gleaming so I knew he was smiling.

“Come in.” I opened the door wider and watched that he didn’t bang into anything.

Dave walked right over to the dining table where he knew I always put my display. He looked great; wearing loose-fitting jeans and a tan button down shirt. I thought it was nice that the shop didn’t make him wear a uniform all the time.

“Wow, I can’t believe this one. It’s so beautiful. Thank-you.”

“Sure, it’s our pleasure.”

“Can I get you something to drink or do you have to get back?”

“Nope, last delivery of the day.” He shrugged and smiled.

We sat on the couch talking and laughing while he showed me pictures of his new nephew that had been born the weekend before. Everything seemed so natural, so comfortable. “Wow, he’s a big boy,” I said looking over his shoulder. This was the closest we’d ever sat to each other. He smelled fantastic and I was starting to get that little feeling inside my stomach. It wasn’t the first time I had felt it, but before I always felt guilty. I thought it was too soon and that I’d be betraying Mike. I realized he’d want me to be happy though. Then I started to wonder if Dave ever got that little feeling when he was around me.

“Yep,” he replied turning to look at me. “Maybe he’ll be a linebacker.” Dave stared at me with glazed eyes as if he suddenly realized how close I was sitting. At that moment, I couldn’t

tell if he was happy with that or feeling uncomfortable. I decided to give him some space and backed away a bit.

“Uh, I wanted to ask you something,” I said trying to fill the awkward silence. “I’ve really enjoyed having these flowers so much and I decided to call the shop and see if I could continue getting them...maybe with a discount?” I raised my eyebrows in question. I still held out hope that this would all work out.

Dave looked unnerved with where this was going and I wondered if he was worried about me asking for a discount. He stood and walked across the room. “Oh, I—”

“But the strange thing is, when I called they didn’t know anything about the contest. Is there another *Canyon Flowers*?”

“Umm, nope we’re the only ones.”

Dave was starting to worry me as he ran his fingers through his hair and then jammed his hands into his pockets.

“I don’t understand. Why didn’t the girl know about the contest?”

“Amy, there’s something I have to tell you.” He came over and sat down in the chair next to me.

“What is it?” *Now I’m getting a little worried. What could he possibly have to say?*

“There’s no contest,” he said looking down at his hands. “There never was.”

“What? I don’t understand. How could there be no contest?” My heart rate suddenly sped up.

Dave looked up, into my eyes and grabbed ahold of my hands. “Amy, I hope you will be able to understand this, but I made the whole thing up.”

Defensively I pulled my hands from his and stood up. I walked over to my gorgeous flowers and stared at them. Thoughts raced through my mind, but nothing made any sense. “What are you saying, Dave? Why would you do something like that?” I was beginning to wonder if he was some kind of psycho that was just using the flowers to get into my home, maybe even my bed. I couldn’t look at him. I was afraid of what he might say, so I tried to focus on each flower in the vase, tracing its detail with my eyes.

“I did it for you.” Dave got up from the chair and came up behind me. “That first day...the day of the first delivery. I was actually supposed to go to another apartment and came here by mistake.”

Stunned I listened to his story and continued working my way around each flower. I gently touched the petals of a lily as he carried on with his story.

“When you opened the door, I recognized you. I remembered delivering to you once before. I think it was your anniversary.”

*Oh my god. Please tell me it’s not what I think it is. He must have felt bad for me, that my husband died.* “So what, you felt sorry for me and left the flowers anyway?”

“No, that’s not it. Amy, listen I—”

“No!” I turned abruptly and rushed past him to the door. “I really can’t hear any more of this.” I opened the door and looked away. “Could you please just go? I can’t talk about this right now.” *How could he have done this? Just when I was starting to feel good about moving on.* I was so confused I couldn’t think straight. “Please,” I begged when he was still standing there.

Dave walked to the door and brushed his hand down my arm as he past me. “I’m sorry, Amy.” He left without another word. I didn’t even look at him when I closed the door.

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For the rest of the night I just sat on the couch staring at my final bouquet on the table, running over each and every time Dave was in my apartment. I cried thinking of Mike and how Dave had brought up our anniversary. *I'm sorry Mike. What an idiot I must be.* I felt I had disappointed him by letting Dave come into my life and deceive me. I finally fell asleep hours later on the tear soaked pillow of my couch.

When I woke up, the first thing I saw was the bright sunlight beaming through the window, shining on the flowers. My first thought was of Dave. *What am I going to do now?* I said aloud to myself. *Am I just being too proud and stubborn? Should I have given him a chance to explain himself? None of this makes any sense.* I realized that the flood of emotions that came back to me about Mike's death were so powerful that I just couldn't stand to talk about it. I had cut Dave off and now I wondered what else he would have told me. I was so mad at him for ruining something that what was turning out to be so nice.

I decided to give myself some time to think it all over. I went for a run in the park to clear my head. When I was too tired to run any longer, I just walked. I walked for almost an hour and then sat down on a bench at the park. Exhausting myself felt good, refreshing. A sense of calm fell over me as I watched the children and people interact in the park. I envied the carefree nature of the kids playing with each other and their parents. Then suddenly I felt confused. Something didn't make sense to me. If Dave wanted to hurt me in any way, why hadn't he done anything by now? He'd been in my apartment a dozen times in the last year and he was nothing but sweet and caring.

The other thing that was gnawing at me was the flowers themselves. Those were some pretty pricey bouquets he was bringing. I wondered for a moment if he could have stolen them. *There's no way Dave would do that.* I was relieved that I could truly say that. I did feel I knew him; or at least I thought I did. He couldn't be making that much money as a delivery person so I wondered how he could afford paying for them.

My feelings of confusion were overriding my frustration and I wanted some answers. I picked up my cell and sent a text to Dave asking him to meet me at my apartment.

When I arrived, Dave was waiting in the courtyard by the pool. He gave me a modest closed-mouth smile and I returned just the same. It was an awkward moment, but I was glad to see him. We sat at a table with an umbrella to protect us from the heat of the day.

"Thanks for seeing me," Dave said first.

"I'm just so confused by this whole thing. Can you please just tell me from the beginning what happened?" I braced myself for whatever was coming.

"Like I said, I had delivered to you once before. I actually talked with Mike a few times in the store too." Dave paused for a moment when he saw my look of surprise. I held back any words and let him continue. "Hearing him talk about you...he would just light up." Dave touched my hand on the table. "Now I know why." I looked at him holding my hand but didn't move it. "And when I saw you that first time, on your anniversary, you were just beaming to get those flowers. I thought you were the most beautiful woman I'd ever seen."

That made my heart skip a beat and instinctively pulled my hand back. I stood from the table. "Maybe we should walk and talk."

Dave followed and continued talking, "Anyway, when I came to your apartment by mistake and you answered the door, I just sort of froze. I don't know, maybe I ended up there subconsciously. But there you were. Only you weren't beaming. I had heard about Mike. You looked so unhappy and I just wanted to see you smile. I thought maybe somehow the flowers would help you."

We reached the stairs to my apartment and stopped. “I guess I can understand that. It was a nice gesture, but why the contest? Why drag this thing out for a whole year?”

Dave took my shoulders in his hands and looked deep into my eyes. There was that feeling again. I prayed whatever he was going to say wouldn’t make me angry or scare me away.

“Amy, don’t you get it. I just wanted to be near you, to talk to you, and see your beautiful smile. I thought Dave was the luckiest guy around and when I was standing in your doorway I thought fate had brought me there. I just wanted to have a chance to help you be happy again and hopefully get to know you in the process.”

I was shocked, but a part of me was relieved. I believed him. I believed every word he was saying, but somehow I couldn’t utter a single word.

“I’m sorry, Amy,” Dave continued when I didn’t respond. “But I really thought we were getting close. I thought you felt it too.” Dave’s expression was desperate as he wondered what I was thinking. “You know that feeling you get in the pit of your stomach?”

A tiny smile threatened to peak from my lips as I heard that last part, then suddenly I found myself reaching around Dave’s waist. His hands slipped from my shoulders to around my back as he drew me in closer. Finally our lips met for the first time and I knew that everything was going to be all right.

“Promise me something,” I said when we finally pulled away from each other.

“Anything,” Dave answered still holding me close.

“No more secrets. We need to get to know each other for real this time. Everything out in the open.”

With that Dave flinched a bit and shrugged his shoulders.

“What?” I said in a demanding tone. I took a step back and put my hand on my hip.

“Well, there’s just one more thing I haven’t told you.”

“What’s that?”

“I’m not a delivery driver for *Canyon Flowers*.”

“What? Are you serious?” *Now this is getting ridiculous.*

“I’m actually the owner. Sometimes I take orders out on my way home. That’s what happened on that first day.”

“Oh my gosh. This is crazy, Dave.” I grabbed his hand and led him up the stairs. “This is it! No more surprises, right? Promise me.” I put the key in the door and turned.

“OK, but how bout after today?”

When I opened the door, I was speechless. The room looked like it was painted flowers; arrangements were everywhere. Beautiful vases of flowers adorned every table, in the kitchen, in the windows. I was so overwhelmed by it all, the only thing I could do was wrap my arms around Dave as tight as I could.

“Scratch that last part; surprises are just fine!”

## Dear Reader:

Thanks so much for reading *Special Delivery*. I hope you enjoyed it and will consider getting *In Search of Lucy*, a romantic drama.

Thirty-year-old Lucy Lang is lost. She spent most of her life sacrificing her own needs to care for her sister and deal with their alcoholic mother. Now alone and bitter, Lucy struggles to find her own purpose in life. Unfortunately, Lucy becomes depressed, cynical and self-destructive. At times she'd even contemplated suicide as a way out.

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### Some editorial reviews:

"I knew from the very first page of *In Search of Lucy* that I would enjoy reading this book immensely and I was right." Tanya --**All Things Books**

"I really enjoyed this novel. I loved following Lucy on her journey. I thought Ms. Fairchild did an excellent job adding realism to this novel. Lucy was the perfect balance of hope and despair." --**Alice, Girls Just Read**

"In her debut novel, Lia Fairchild shares a compelling tale with carefully drawn well-defined characters." --Lynnette, **Avid Book Reviews**

Trailer <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wvp7vItINng>

## About the Author

I am a native Californian who loves reading, writing, movies, and anything else related to the arts. Writing is something I've thought about all my life, so the completion of my first novel, *In Search of Lucy*, is truly satisfying. I hold a B.A. degree in Journalism and a Multiple Subject Teaching Credential. My most enjoyable moments are spent with my family, traveling, spending time outdoors, or simply laughing and being together. Look for updates on my next book at <http://www.liairchild.com> or follow me on Twitter at <https://www.twitter.com/#!/liairchild>