

2023

**Sunday, May 2, 1999**

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LYDIA COWAN

# Sunday, May 2, 1999

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The Sunday of the ceremony  
The rigid pew  
Against my back  
The lily-white taffeta and chiffon dress  
Mother made me wear

Pastor Aaron read: Hebrews 13:4  
About giving yourself  
To God

*I had  
Nothing left to give.*

Pastor Aaron  
Called the little girls  
To the pulpit  
Nausea gripped my stomach  
As I walked forward

Wrapped up like a pearly present  
One he would unwrap  
Like he did every Sunday

His liver spotted hands pressed silver  
Into my palm  
I slipped the purity ring onto my thumb  
The only finger that would fit  
I feel the engraving:  
"I am my beloved's"

I remember thinking:  
*I am no one's.*

*Lydia  
Cowan*