

## VALENTINE'S DAY

By

Luke Johnson

Her voice sounded sweet at the other end of the telephone. "Perhaps we can meet tomorrow.

Adam felt his face flush. "What time?" he asked.

"Ten o'clock."

"That's a little late isn't it?"

"Ten in the morning, silly."

"I don't know. I've got a lot to catch up with."

"I'm sure George won't mind if he knows you're seeing me. You're entitled to at least one day off. Call in sick."

"You know in my job it's not that easy."

"You do know it's a special day tomorrow?"

"How come?"

"February fourteen, Valentine's day. It's the most romantic day in the year and I want to spend all day with you."

His face was becoming hotter despite the fact that it was a cold day and the office heating was none too good.

Her voice continued in a huskier tone. "I've picked out something special to wear. Something I know you will like."

His mouth was dry. "Okay where shall we meet?"

She gave him the address and then hung up.

His mind was filled with thoughts of her throughout the rest of the day. He found it almost impossible to concentrate on the accounts that he knew were urgently needed. In the end he gave up. He could not afford a mistake so he decided the best course of action was to call in sick. He could not face his boss face to face so he picked up the phone. Much to his relief the boss did not seem to mind as he had a meeting on the fourteenth and Adam's presence was not required. There was little point in staying there any longer. He packed away his books and papers then left for home.

On the way he bought the largest box of chocolates they had in the store. He stopped by a florist, ordered six red roses, one for each day that he had known her and told the woman at the counter he would pick them up next morning as he wanted to make sure they were fresh for the following day.

That evening such was his excitement, it was impossible to sleep. He got up and paced the floor of his small apartment to tire himself out. He thought about going out but did not like to walk the dark streets in the February night which was turning colder. In the end he threw himself in an armchair. Visions of Amy filled his head, her short blond

hair, curled tight to her head, her sparkling blue eyes, the lips that glistened with glossy red lipstick and the young shapely body.

In the end pale day light slowly filtered into the room, confirming that he had not slept at all. The clock on the mantelpiece showed eight o'clock. Relieved that day had come, he hurried to the bathroom where he washed and shaved carefully. He brushed his shoes until he could see his face in the leather, dressed himself in his smartest white shirt and put on his best suit. Then clutching the box of chocolates he stepped outside in his shiny polished shoes, his feet so light he scarcely felt the ground.

The florist remembered him and wished him a happy day as she handed over the red roses. Luck was with him as a cab responded to his first curb-side wave. During the drive, his anticipation grew, his head was light and his heart was beating so fast it was almost singing.

The cab drew to a stop at the address she had given him. He paid the driver then pushed open one of two double doors in front of him. It was pitch dark. Before, he could gain his bearings he heard it close behind him. "No peeking and no speaking," It was Amy's husky voice and his heart raced once more in anticipation. She spoke again. "Now walk forward as far as you can go. Remember no peeking and speaking or you'll spoil the moment." He heard the door open a several times and her repeating her earlier words. He thought he could hear the panting of a dog but did not want to say anything to break the spell.

On the morning of Thursday, February 14, 1929, St. Valentine's Day, the bookkeeper and business manager for George "Bugs" Moran, Adam Heyer, and six other men were found lined up against the rear inside wall of a garage in Chicago's North Side. They had been shot possibly by members of gangster Al Capone's gang. All seven with the exception of one, John May, were dressed in their best clothes. The reason for the gathering in the garage may never be known. The only survivors were John May's German shepherd, Highball, and Frank Gusenberg who was barely alive, but would die three hours later. When asked who shot him he replied, "Nobody shot me", despite having fourteen bullet wounds. No flowers or chocolates were found.

End.

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