

My Best Valentine

A Short Story by Jenny Dee



"I just love Valentine's Day, don't you?" said the perky, bob-haired blonde carrying a basketful of red wine, strawberries, silk heart-adorned boxers and a bunch of other uncreative tchotchkes obviously intended for her lover.

All I could do was smile politely while she rambled on about her plans for a romantic home-cooked dinner and then dessert—*wink*—obviously to make sure I knew what she meant. I controlled my urge to roll my eyes and instead giggled as I pretended to have an incoming call. Anything to avoid further contact with the garrulous woman.

Truth is, I hate this Hallmark holiday with a passion.

Even when I was partnered up, the idea of forced gushiness and obligated gestures of romance only left me disappointed. The years I wished for flowers, I got a last-minute card with a scribbled signature. Or when I wanted a night out, one of us got the flu. It never really panned out like I planned it in my head.

Forget the years that I was single—like this one—where even though I hate the idea of the day, I still wistfully wished for that magical night of love with prince charming. Which, of course, leads to wearing black and binging on pathetic chick flicks and cheap chocolates.

Bah, humbug.

Only two weeks ago, I had fallen into the commercial trap and made reservations at Perch for a quiet dinner for two, to be followed by plush overnight accommodations at the Ritz Carlton. That is, until Teddy unceremoniously dumped my ass the day after I made the reservations.


Something about how he wasn't ready for a serious relationship and wanted to date other people. Guess Christmas and New years proved to be too expensive in the gift department between me and who knows how many other girls he was probably already seeing. No wonder he had to jump ship before V-day.

Nope, not bitter at all.

In fact, Teddy just saved me a lot of money, so I'm grateful. I was even able to return the Buccio Carrara Italian leather briefcase I bought him—you know, because an expensive dinner and great sex weren't going to be an adequate enough expression of love.

As I stood there in line watching the infatuated woman get a hold of someone else's ear, I couldn't help but stare at the blatant dinner-for-one in my basket. Putting this single stupid day aside, I wondered if I would ever find the kind of love that would bring me the romance that I craved deep down.

I really didn't hate the idea of gifts, dinners and desserts. I didn't cringe at the idea of expressing love in predictable ways. In all my protest of Valentines Day, I truly wished that just one year would indulge my fantasy.



Once again, this was not to be the year.

I knew I was still too hurt from the break-up to watch my usual rom-coms or even wear black. It was more like I wanted to ignore the day instead of defy it or pity myself through it. And although I didn't want to engage with the lively lovers of the world, I didn't want to succumb to the dark side, either.

The big day was two days away and I had three choices: to mourn it, to celebrate it or to ignore it.

As I sunk into my deep blue plush sofa with my dinner-to-go and DVR full of cringeworthy nonsense to choose from, it occurred to me that I have been approaching the day all wrong.

I've idealized it, like so many others, to represent romantic love. But can't it mean so much more?

I remember as a little girl, my Daddy used to get me a beautiful red rose every year. I always loved making both him and my mom cards to show them how much I loved them. I exchanged those little corny Valentine's Day princess cards with classmates, giving my best friends some extra love sparkles on theirs.

The memory filled my heart with joy, and before I realized it, I found myself back in my car. I decided to bring back my childhood traditions, as silly as they seemed. Why should Valentine's be only for lovers?

I headed straight for the card store, where I lovingly picked out meaningful cards to send to my parents and closest friends.

A Daddy's little girl card; a thank you for being an amazing Mom card; a diverse collection of sarcastic cards and sentimental ones, depending on the type of friendship I was buying for. Maybe I can give them each a little box of chocolates, too!

I was pleased with myself for choosing the option to celebrate—my own way. I already felt so much better about the holiday since I was allowing myself to express love to those most important in my life.

While searching for the perfect valentine for my bestie, this one card caught my eye; one I had never seen before. It was a card meant for me to give to myself.

A beautifully written expression of self-love. Reminding me that I am beautiful, kind and already loved...by me. It was then that a lightbulb went off and I realized exactly how I was going to celebrate the "dreadful" event: by giving myself the very day I always expected another to give me.

Yes. That was it! A day for *me*.

I'm going to take the day off from work and pamper myself with love. First, I'll go to brunch on the water and enjoy morning mimosas. Mmmm.

Then, I'll book a spa afternoon for a hot stone massage, full facial and a mani/pedi with the works. Maybe I'll even get my hair blown out and my makeup done.

I'll look and feel so radiant that I will want to stay out and about, so perhaps a small shopping spree at the mall will do. A new purse or pair of shoes would be delightful! I have been eyeing those new snakeskin thigh high boots at Nordstrom...

And then after picking up a box of Godiva raspberry truffles, I'll order some Italian take-out and enjoy a quiet candlelight dinner for one at home...where I will be greeted by the fragrant bouquet of flowers that I send to myself: an assortment of pink tiger lilies, roses and hydrangea.

Oh, and instead of a rom-com, I'll put on my favorite pink negligee and curl up on the couch with an old romance novel. The night will end with a delicious bubble bath accompanied by a glass of white wine and my chocolates...a divinely orgasmic overture to end the perfect day.

I was so taken by the card and my brilliant idea, that I hadn't noticed a tall man come up behind me.

"Excuse me? Have you seen the cards for sisters anywhere?" Looking back at me was a kind-faced, bright blue-eyed handsome stranger with dark hair. There was something familiar about him, like I had met him before.

Flustered, I managed to point in the direction of the sister cards as he continued his explanation.

“My younger sister just got divorced and I was hoping I could cheer her up. But it’s probably a bad idea to remind her, right?” he asked, putting the card he selected back, second guessing himself.

“No, not at all,” I finally responded. “I think it’s a beautiful gesture.”

His smile made him even more handsome, with double dimples and perfectly straight pearly whites. He seemed so at ease, so natural with himself, but not in a cocky or even confident way. It was more gentle, like he knew his own awkwardness and simply accepted it.

“That’s an interesting card,” he mused, noticing the valentine for myself I still held in my hand. I blushed slightly, embarrassed that I was caught with a card professing how much I loved myself. As if he could read my insecurity, he quickly added a note of reassurance.

“I think that’s great. I appreciate a woman who can appreciate herself. I wish more women knew how to do that.” There was that smile again. Something about this stranger made me feel at ease enough to share my revelation.

“I’m a work in progress,” I smiled back. “But looking at this card made me realize that I don’t need a partner to enjoy Valentine’s Day. All I need is family, good friends and a day of self-pampering. Romance is nice, but in its absence, I guess I’ll just need to romance myself.”

“That’s actually a pretty cool idea. Maybe I’ll consider that for myself.” A quick check of his left hand indicated there was no ring (and no lingering indent from a newly removed one, either). The inner dreamer in me wondered if fate had just opened a door.

“Perhaps after your special day, you’d consider joining me for a cup of coffee and telling me all about it?”

I shyly accepted his offer and exchanged numbers. The universe surely works in mysterious ways. Perhaps by acknowledging my worthiness of love—and that I am fully capable of granting it myself—it responded in kind with a new opportunity.

I left the store smiling, knowing that I was going to enjoy Valentine’s Day for once—with the prospect of a new adventure awaiting me after.

From that moment on, I decided that whether it worked out or not with this serendipitous stranger (or anyone else who crosses my path), I would commit to myself every Valentines Day. I would be my own best valentine.

I would continue to openly welcome all gestures of love; romance included. But not without giving that same amount of love, care and appreciation to myself first.

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