

The Death of St. Valentine

By: Kalisto Barques

She sat staring at the fluffy white snowflakes feeling miserable and depressed. Good old Mr. Groundhog had seen his shadow two weeks before and any hopes of an early spring had fluttered off into six more boring weeks of winter. Turning back to the computer screen she got back to work on the report which her boss wanted by the end of the day. Half an hour later, she sent the report to the printer and rose to get a cup of coffee. On the way back from the break room she could stop and grab the report from the printer. Frustration warred with her sense of duty as she trudged to the printer. Outwardly, she smiled to her coworkers.

At the printer one of her coworkers stood smoking and drinking a cup of coffee waiting for his print job. "Hey, Kristiana. What's new?"

"Just waiting for my report to print so I can get done for the day."

He smiled at her. "I'm almost done. They really should get another printer in here, don't you think?"

She tried to remember his name. "Yeah they should. How's your sister and her new husband doing, Doug?"

He blushed. "Peggy is well. She and Dave are in Fiji for their honeymoon." The printer paused and he collected his papers. "All done. I'll see you around, Kris. Have a great weekend."

She nodded. "You too. Be careful on the roads with all the snow."

He blushed again and hurried away. "You too."

Shaking her head, she waited for the printer to spool up and for her three pages to print. Once she had her document she went back to her desk with her coffee. It wasn't until she was seated that she saw the bouquet of flowers. They were sitting in the middle of her blotter. Setting down her coffee she ran her fingertips over the delicate petals of the roses, camellia, lily, and violets. The fern and baby's breath poking out every which way from the vase made her smile for the first time in days. "How sweet. I wonder who they're from?" Searching for a card or note, she found a small white envelope stuck to a plastic stick between the violets and camellias. Opening it, she read the carefully printed words.

My Dearest Valentine, I watch you from afar each day, and want to share my affection with you but I'm unsure of how you feel. If you are willing to give me a chance leave this card on your desk with your answer and I will find it when you get coffee again.

Frowning, she looked over the edge of her cubicle. Seeing no one, she sat back down and tapped her chin thoughtfully. *An office romance. These*

never go well, and while they are technically not against company policy, they should be. They are dangerous. Looking back at her frosted window, she sighed. "The flowers are really sweet though, and it's been a really long time since anyone has shown an interest in you. What harm could it do to give this mystery person a chance?" Picking up a pen she wrote on the back of the card. *I'll take a chance, and thank you for the flowers. They are beautiful.* Stapling her report together and putting it with the other papers she had gathered into the portfolio, she rose and straightened her suit. Taking a last sip of her coffee, she left the card on the corner of her desk and went to her boss's office.

Neil crept out of his cubicle as she disappeared from sight. Lifting the card from the corner of her desk, he brought it to his nose. The scent of her perfume still lingered. Opening the envelope he pulled the card out and smiled. Hurrying back to his cubicle he combed his hair and applied a little cologne. Making sure that he was shaved and well put together, he watched for her to come back. When she re-entered her cubicle he could tell that the meeting had gone well. Sliding across the aisle he leaned on the opening to her small office space. "Good evening, Kristiana."

Her head came up and a pair of impossibly piercing blue eyes entranced her. "Neil?"

He produced a single red rose that he'd held back from the bouquet. "For you."

She took the flower, coming out of her chair automatically. "The flowers are from you?"

He nodded. "I'm glad you like them. I wanted to make sure that you would understand the depth of my feelings before I approached you." He trailed his fingertip down her cheek. "Do you...understand?"

Her green eyes rounded and she swallowed. "I think I'm beginning to."

"Good." He stepped closer, sliding his hand down to her neck to trace her collarbone. "Would you have supper with me this evening?"

She shivered and felt the rush of liquid heat his smoky voice caused even as she heard herself answering, "I'd love to." Turning away to shut off her computer she felt bereft of his touch. Grabbing her purse, she was sure that when she turned around he would be gone. She almost sighed in relief when she found him standing right where she'd left him. "Ready."

Proffering his arm, he gave her a smile rife with promise. "I hope so." Pulling her close, he guided her from the darkened office building and into the snowy night. Seating her in a waiting car, he drove through the silent streets. Parking in front of a posh restaurant he helped her from the car and guided her inside. All through the meal he watched her.

She felt him watching her during the meal and had trouble keeping up her end of the conversation. When desert came and the waiter had poured their coffees, she set her napkin on the table and rose. "Would you excuse me for a moment, I'd like to freshen up?"

He smiled and rose. "Of course. I believe the powder room was right off the entrance." He took her hand and brushed his lips across the back in a courtly gesture. "I shall be waiting"

She flushed deep red and whispered breathlessly, "I won't be long." Once released, she hurried away. Her breathing did not return to normal until she was in the ladies room and the door was closed. Completing her business she washed her hands and stared at herself in the mirror. "Slow down girl. You need to analyze the situation and make sure of what you're doing before you make any decisions."

"That sounds like a rational course of action my dear, but speaking from experience you look like a girl in the first bloom of love."

Startled, Kristiana turned to face the little old lady who stood behind her. "I beg your pardon?"

The woman waived off her shock. "I don't mean to be rude, honey, but if you'll take a little free advice? Grab onto that man of yours with both hands and don't let him go. This kind of love doesn't come around but once in a lifetime, and you don't want to miss it. Trust me."

The slim brunette looked at the gray-haired woman and smiled. "Thank you. I've played it safe for too long. I think it is time to live a little." Freshening up her makeup, she returned to the table only to find it empty. Confused, she looked around for her date. Snagging the sleeve of a passing waiter she asked, "Did you see where the young man sitting at this table went?"

The waiter shrugged.

She was reaching for her coat when his smoky voice stopped her. "I hope you're not leaving?"

Turning with a gasp, she revealed eyes that glittered. "Where were you? I thought..."

"You thought I had gone?" He smiled gently. "No... well yes... he looked at the table and brought his hand from behind him. "I had hoped to be back before you returned." In his hand he held a single red rose. "I wanted to get this for you."

A single teardrop slid down her cheek as she reached for the rose he held. "I'm sorry."

He pulled her into his arms. "You have nothing to be sorry for, darling, I am entirely to blame. I made you worry." Brushing the rose over her lips, he felt her tremble. "Shall we finish our desert and coffee?"

She nodded absently, unable to look away from him.

Lowering his lips to her, he brushed his mouth against hers in a delicate kiss. "I would like to do that better later, but for now let us finish desert."

"Okay." She let him settle her back in the chair and they resumed their meal. When their deserts were gone, she couldn't remember what she'd eaten, her eyes had been glued to his.

He smiled and helped her into her coat. "Would you like to walk in the park with me before I take you home?" He hesitated. "I'm not ready for the evening to be over yet."

She curled her arm around his and pressed close to his side, brushing the rose across her lips. "I think that would be lovely." When he led her into the snowy night, she laughed as the snow covered his blonde hair. "Oh, you forgot your hat."

"It's okay. I will go back for it another time." Taking her hand, he guided her across the street. "Come on." Walking into the deserted park, he kept up a stream of chatter.

She stopped suddenly. "Shh!"

"What is it?"

"I thought I heard something. I don't think we're alone." She pressed closer to his side as adrenaline pumped into her system.

His ears tried to pick up any sounds. Turning his head he caught a glimpse of their shadow. "I think you're right, my dear. Come on, let's get out of here."

She nodded. "Okay."

Turning them back towards the front of the park, he slid his arm around her waist. "This has been such a perfect evening, I don't want it to end."

Glancing up at him as fear replaced the joy of the evening, she sighed. "Yes, it has been a beautiful evening. It doesn't have to end. You could come back to my place for a night cap?"

He smiled and pulled her in front of him suddenly. "I should like that. Make me a promise?"

She frowned. "It depends."

He took her lips in a tender kiss. "Promise me something, please?"

Breathless, she looked at him in surprise. "Anything."

"Promise me, that no matter what you see in the next few minutes, you will not close yourself off to the possibilities of what could be between us, okay? Promise?"

Confused, she didn't immediately respond. Seeing the plea in his eyes however, she acquiesced. "I promise."

He smiled and took her lips in a restrained kiss. "Thank you." When he raised his head, his eyes were darker and his smile was feral. "Stay over by that tree, my angel. I do not wish harm to befall you." He gave her a gentle shove.

Kristiana stumbled towards the tree at the edge of the path as a small group of rough looking men stepped into view carrying chains and boards and other paraphernalia of a junkyard crew. She watched in horror as Neil dropped his overcoat on the ground at his feet and stood waiting for the group to encircle him.

"Cold night to be out, gentlemen."

His voice sounded different. It chilled her and made her skin crawl.

"You and your little tart are gonna play with us tonight fella? Look at those fancy clothes boys. He must be loaded."

"You must be the leader of this band of misfits." Neil singled out the one who had spoken. "Come here and find out just how loaded I am, my boy. Then, if you are still standing, your boys can have a crack at me. Deal?"

"You're gonna regret your cockiness chum. Deal. Mano y mano, fellas. You stay on the sidelines until I'm done with this bozo, then we'll talk to his tart."

Kristiana heard Neil's voice float over the crisp air to her. "Don't worry, my beauty. They won't lay a finger on you." What she saw next, she would swear she did not see for weeks to come.

One minute the leader of the pack was standing toe to toe with the well-dressed man, the next he was running back the way he'd come screaming. In turn each of his five buddies joined him.

When they were gone, she stepped away from the tree and crossed to him. She reached down to lift his coat from the snow at the same time as he did and found herself staring into the fathomless depth of the darkness he had shown her when the group of ruffians had shown up. "What h...ha...?"

"Happened?" He put his overcoat around her shaking shoulders and wrapped his arm around her. "Come on. I'll tell you in the car. You need to be out of this cold." Once he had her settled in the sleek car, he turned to face her; his eyes quite normal again. "Do you trust me, Kristiana?"

Searching his face, she sighed. "I honestly don't know why I should, but I do. I mean, I only know a very little about you from work, and yet, it seems like I've known you for so much longer. Weird, huh? Why?"

"Because," he started the car moving, "What I am about to tell you is shocking and difficult to believe, but it is the absolute truth."

She shook her head and leaned back into the seat. "I suppose you are going to tell me that you aren't human. That you are some sort of immortal monster." Caught up in her own reaction to the situation, she didn't catch his frown. "Let me guess, you're a werewolf, or a vampire, or something equally as," she made air quotes, "horrifying." Turning to face him, she shook her head. "I am not frightened, if that is what you were hoping for. I am intrigued. I want to know more... the truth, but more. I will admit that you frighten me a little in how much of a reaction I have to you, but I'm not in fear of my life."

He felt the irritation that had begun at the outset of her recitation melting away. "You have nothing to fear with me, Kris. I will not harm you, nor will I let you come to harm." Pulling into the underground parking structure for his penthouse apartment, he parked the car and got out. Assisting her from the car, he guided her to an elevator and slid his keycard into the slot. "I will tell you everything and let you decide what you want." Taking the both overcoats he hung them in the hall closet and took her elbow. "Would you care for a glass of sherry?"

"Brandy if you have it."

He smiled. "I do. Make yourself comfortable." Going to the built in bar, he poured them both a snifter of brandy and settled on the sofa near her.

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

