

## THE CASE OF THE LOST VALENTINE

by Sandra Seamans

The door banged open, smacking the wall and nearly breaking the ancient frosted glass window with my name painted on it. I looked up and shook my head. Dames. They always have to make an entrance.

She stomped into my office, a Marilyn Monroe hairdo framing a face wrinkled by a lifetime of living, ready to pour out her sob story. Just once, I'd like to get through a Valentine's Day without an old broad on a crying jag.

"Can I help you, lady?"

"Are you Mr. Cupid? Horatio T. Cupid? Private eye?"

"That's what the name on my door says."

"And are you the Cupid who was working out of this office back in 1944?"

"That'd be me. Why?"

"You don't remember me, do you?"

"Lady, we're talking sixty plus years here. Between the turnover in this office and my age, I'm lucky to remember who I am. And I gotta trust that you didn't look like an AARP Marilyn Monroe back then. You were probably still in rompers and a bib."

"I was sixteen and in love with a soldier named Billy Sikes. He was stationed in France and I hired you to deliver my valentine to him. I just found out that he never got that valentine. He never knew how much I loved him, so he married some little French hussy."

"Look, Lady. There was a war going on and I was trying not to get my butt shot off. Between dodging grenades and gunfire, a few valentines were bound to get lost in the cracks. What do you want, a refund?"

"A refund? You destroyed my life and you think I've come here for a refund? Billy Sikes became one of the richest men in the world while I was sitting at home on my Daddy's porch waiting for him to come sweep me off my feet. You ruined my life."

"Jeez, Lady. I can't guarantee every romance is gonna work out. I ain't no miracle worker you know."

"That's not what you told me back in 1944. You promised me that Billy

would love me forever, you swore on your mother's grave. Now, he's dead and I've wasted my entire life waiting for a man who forgot all about me."

"Well, that's the breaks, Lady."

"That's all you've got to say?"

"Yep, that'd be it."

I eased back in my chair and waited for the dame to break into the routine crying jag. Instead, she stands up, pulls a cupid's bow from her purse and shoots me through the heart with an arrow. The lady and me will be getting married this afternoon. She says she'll be damned if she's going to her grave an old maid.

From the case files of Horatio T. Cupid, private eye. Soon to be retired and living in sunny Florida with his new bride.

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