

# 100 Days

Their relationship had always been casual. They had met in the large open plan office with its stark fluorescent lighting and had begun to chat during breaks for coffee and lunch. As they began to work more closely together they saw each other outside of the office.

They went to see films together, they had dinner, on and off at the weekend they might visit an art gallery. Their conversation was light, carefully avoiding topics such as religion, politics and in particular their feelings toward each other. There was a tacit agreement by both of them that relationships with the opposite sex did not work. Then, one day, he decided to throw a spanner in the works and ask her to marry him.

Her immediate reaction was that he must be joking. She looked at him across the table, suddenly wondering if the people dining at the other tables had overheard. He sat, poker faced looking back at her. He had produced no ring, no flowers, no clue as to whether he was sincere or not. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity he decided to explain.

“I just realised I can’t get by without you” he said. Now there was a flicker of emotion on his face. It was clear to him that regardless of his depth of emotion he was not doing a good job of communicating, but, she supposed, considering the barriers they had both put in place, the no go areas of conversation that dealt with emotion and passions, perhaps that wasn’t surprising.

“I know no one wants the question to be asked like this” he continued “No ceremony no effort at romance, but it’s the best I can do. I had to tell you somehow”.

“Okay” she heard herself say, “What you have to do now is prove it”. She could hear an arch tone in her voice. The whole situation had become so strange that she had detached herself from it. Thinking about it later it was as if she had been watching a film. Unashamedly she had played up to the melodrama of the situation.

“This is what you have to do. I will put a vase on my bedroom windowsill. You have to put a rose in it every-day for the next hundred days. If you miss a day for any reason I’ll know you weren’t really serious. But, if you do it, well then, I’m yours”.

She watched as a smile spilled across his face. The next day when she came home from work there was a rose on the sill of her bedroom window. She had gone to work with a hangover and given no thought at all to the vase.

The next evening there was another rose and the evening following that another. By the end of the first week she was starting to wonder if he really was serious. In all other respects their relationship remained unchanged, they never directly spoke of that night in the restaurant. Yet there was a growing excitement in the pit of her stomach.

Twenty days, twenty roses. Thirty days, thirty roses. Forty. Fifty. Come rain, hail, sunshine or fog, the flowers arrived, occasionally storm tossed but always there. She was giddy when ever she thought about it. Sixty days, seventy days, eighty. Ninety.

The first thing she did when she got up each morning was look at her vase full of roses. As soon as she got home in the evening she would add another to the display. With five days left to go she admitted to herself that he was deadly serious. With four days she began to wonder what she would do when the last flower arrived.

On the last day she did not go to work. She took the ninety-ninth rose and placed it in the vase, then decided she would sit and wait for him to deliver the final one. When he arrives, she thought I’ll have an answer for him. She took up position at the window, looking down the length of the street, waiting for him

to arrive. She knew she had to have an answer for him when he came but in the maelstrom of emotion she still did not know what she would say. If she said yes then her whole life would change. This single existence with its freedom to do what ever she wanted whenever she wanted would cease. In its place would be a life in which she must consider the feelings of another person in everything she did. That person, it had to be said had gone to extraordinary lengths to prove his worth to her, so perhaps it was worth the effort. If she looked at her life unobjectively it could be considered not so great. She worked long hours in a harsh inconsiderate city that was grey with pollution. When she came home from work she was always tired. That freedom was always tempered by deadlines, by bills, by exhaustion. Sharing that with someone could only help to lighten the load.

For hour after hour she stood before the window, thoughts tumbling from one notion to the next. As mid-afternoon arrived she was shaking with fatigue. She imagined that she saw him at the end of the street; he walked to the house full of nonchalance, as if he was delivering a letter, scaled the drainpipe with the easy grace of a schoolboy and place a flower on her windowsill. A moment later her reverie broke, he was not there and she had to fight back tears of disappointment.

Now she was frightened that he would not come at all. What would she do if tomorrow when she arrived at work she discovered he had transferred his attentions to someone else? Or what if it had all been a joke? Even worse, what if he had had an accident. What if he had been hit by a car and lay dying in some misbegotten alley?

Down the street a figure separated from the scurrying crowds and approached the house. Her breath caught in her throat and her heart hammered madly in her chest. He was here. Finally after the terror and horror of the wait he was here, and she knew what her answer would be. He looked up and saw her at the window. He waved. She waved back then opened the window to call down to him. Finally the wait was over and she could not stop smiling.

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