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V-Day Massacres

By Karen Cahill

For as long as I can remember I have been a pioneer against St. Valentine's Day, a lone soldier in the coup d'état of all things pink and red and chocolate. It all started in the second grade when I tried to stage a revolt against the manufacturing of paper bag mailboxes. I figured the mailbox was the root of the evil and without it valentines would not be delivered. But I was wrong. Neither snow nor sleet nor lack of homemade receptacle stopped the children from passing them out. In the fourth grade I infiltrated playground society in an attempt to find out what make this holiday tick. I stayed up all night filling out Scooby Doo cards. *You're groovy. Will you be my mystery valentine?* How the hell was I to know that Scooby Doo was out and Hello Kitty was in? I was the laughingstock of the lunchroom that year. In fifth grade I successfully picked out that year's chic valentine, My Little Pony, but tripped on an M&M while delivering one to the cutest boy in Ms. Fallon's class, sending chocolate milk all over him and landing me on the tile floor under his desk with my days-of-the-week panties exposed to all. Infiltration was foiled again.

Junior high. It was customary to attend the school dance in the gym, appropriately decorated with the cheesiest of Valentine's paraphernalia. The girls and boys would separate like oil and water until the first slow song. That is when paranoia set in. If you weren't quick you could end up creating a social faux pas that could brand you "uncool" for the rest of the year. That would be dancing—if

you can even call it that, arms stretched out, barely touching your partner's shoulder, each shuffling one step to the right and one step to the left, all the while looking and talking to your best girl friend who was doing the same right next to you—dancing with the boy who still brought his lunch in a lunchbox or, even worse, the boy who wore sweatpants every day. I did plenty of reconnaissance work while appearing to be rockin' out to Tiffany and Michael Jackson and always strategically positioned myself as close as possible to my ideal shuffling partner. My cool status remained intact throughout the three tumultuous years of junior high, but I was still unsure of what all the V-day hype was about.

In high school, I let the pioneer in me take a backseat to the hormonal teenage girl. I figured V-day was as good a day as any to be ravished by that week's obsession. The worst occasion was sophomore year when my boyfriend of three weeks took me out. He thought it would be impressive to show me how he recently took up the habit of dipping. He put about a half a tin of cherry-flavored Skoal in his mouth. When we started making out the remnants of his new favorite pastime were deposited in my mouth and I unknowingly swallowed them. I spent an hour throwing up out the window of his father's Chevy. Chalk up another one on the list of memorably horrible V-days.

During my college years, from New Years to the beginning of February my girlfriends would be pioneers with me. I

remember spending many nights with a band of femme-nazi sisters, drinking beer, smoking cigars and extolling the evils of all holidays centered around being in love, kissing in public, giving stuffed animals as presents, etc. But as the fourteenth of the second month of the year approached, without fail, the cries would become softer and the band would slowly disband. Come the fourteenth, the only place I could find support was in the binding, itchy fabric of my pantyhose. The girls would conveniently get a call a day or two before V-day and giggle like schoolgirls as they told me how they were invited to TKE's Captain Crush Dance. Junior year I giggled too as I got ready to accompany Peter Madison to the V-day social. We pre-partied in his dorm room. I took shots of Jagermeister while he consumed Keystone from a beer bong. One half hour before the social started, though, he was passed out in his bunk bed with a penis drawn on his forehead, courtesy of yours truly.

For twenty-something years (come on now, a real woman never reveals her true age) I have been on the pulpit trying to enlighten my fellow sisters as to the evils of V-day. It's also true that for all these years I have also been trying to procure a decent date for this most meaningless of holidays. But there's rhyme to my reason. Conscientiously objecting to a meaningless holiday while dating someone is extremely bold and powerful. Trying to convince yourself that you are conscientiously objecting to a meaningless holiday when you are alone is pathetic and depressing. You're much more likely to take advice on making felt centerpieces from Martha Stewart than you are from Mr. T. Just as you are more likely to take meaningless holiday advice from a charming, successful, date-friendly gal than a socially inept woman who spends her time

home alone, eating Ben & Jerry's Chunky Monkey by the pint and watching "Family Ties" reruns.

One of the reasons my sermons have failed miserably over years, in addition to my erring on the side of Mr. T, is chocolate. Chocolate can be found wherever a meaningless holiday chooses to rear its ugly head. Why? Women get high off of chocolate. Every woman is either an open or a closet chocolate junky. A woman would trade in her ovaries for an intravenous line of chocolate. One hit and they're sucked into a downward spiral that will inevitably end in them spending hours on a treadmill hurling profanities at the Chocolate God. In addition to being a scientifically proven aphrodisiac, a menstruating women's best friend, and the cornerstone of V-day, chocolate is the kryptonite to a woman's common sense. Women are suckers. The minute you get chocolate in them, they turn into the sappy creatures you see on February 14, easily entranced by a giant heart-shaped box or an oversized pink stuffed elephant. These days I want to get a hold of said holiday Creator and rip his sappy heart out, sauté it in a white wine sauce and serve it up. But it would undeniably taste better if I had a date to share it with.

When I started dating Rick right around Thanksgiving last year, thoughts of a Revolution formed. Granted, we were not building on a solid foundation. I got rip-roaringly drunk at my friend Bethany's birthday gala and ended up at home with Rick. But after a few weeks we realized that even without our friend Jose Cuervo in the picture, we enjoyed each other's company. And as every woman knows, you never end a relationship during the holidays, no matter how meaningless they may be. So I was secured through the New Year and I figured I could hold on tight for an extra month—finally getting

that elusive perfect V-day date and finally getting to the bottom of things.

Being the meaningless holiday hater that I am, I expect my boyfriends to keep up a continuous spree of gift-giving and affection throughout all twelve months, regardless of anything predetermined by nameless, faceless, holiday-creating lunatics. Toward the end of January, I was pleased when Rick went on a weeklong binge of showing his devotion. He repeatedly said he loved every inch of me and wanted to express it. This naturally encouraged me to gorge on every sweet he brought home for me. When the chocolate-induced high kicked in, I was more in love than ever. I proceeded to do his laundry and cook his dinners while he worked late on a big accounting project. Little did I know the chocolate-toting bastard was drugging me up while he had affair with his secretary, Suzanne. After the chocolate stopped coming and I sobered up to the true meaning of "working late," I threw his clothes out the second story window and his ass out the front door. It took super-human strength to ignore his attempts to bribe me back with everything from chocolate covered strawberries to pure chocolate fudge.

Two days before V-day I was still trying to get Rick's lingering smell out of my apartment and was reluctantly resigning to the fact that I would be alone for the upcoming meaningless holiday. It was so depressing, in fact, that after snacking on a bag of chocolate chunk cookies, I was tempted to pick up the phone and see what Rick was up to. But, turning to my kryptonite for kryptonite I was able to stifle the urge to talk to the man who recently ripped my heart out and danced a jig on it.

Nothing will sober a chocolate high like alcohol. Sounds like an award-winning advertising campaign to me: *In times of weakness, Smirnoff is there.* I curled up on the couch with my bottle and channel surfed, careful to avoid Valentine-infested stations such as Lifetime or the Romance Channel. If I saw "Untamed Heart" one more time I was going to drive to the zoo and personally punch a baboon in the face for the thought of such a beast lending its heart to Christian Slater's character.

One day before V-Day it dawned on me that the people at work, in typical office fashion, would inevitably pin me between the water cooler and the Xerox the morning after the meaningless holiday and badger me about what I had done the night before. They loved to flaunt their perfect dates in my face and feign pity when I told them about my long-standing hatred for the holiday. The memories of last year's attempt at lying were vomit-worthy. I was exposed by Sheldon, the office runt, who happened to see me in my paint-stained sweatpants, in the naughty section of Video-To-Go as he walked by the store with his runt of a date. I needed to find plans worthy of a morning-after story, fast.

While thinking that in a fair and just world I would have a boyfriend who would fly me to Fiji for the weekend, not so that I would give in to the meaningless holiday, but solely so I would have a fabulous story to tell, I was reminded of my stunning neighbor Greg who was a pilot for American Airlines. Greg was amazing. He was smart. He was funny. He was stunning—I can't stress that enough. But like all stunning men my age, he was

"When the chocolate-induced high kicked in, I was in more in love than ever."

stations such as Lifetime or the Romance Channel. If I saw "Untamed Heart" one more time I was going to drive to the zoo and personally punch a baboon in the face for the thought of such a beast lending its heart to

never home and was always having sex with someone other than me. We had your typical neighborly relationship. It was a classic across-the-stairwell affair, starting with me getting his mail by mistake and progressing into him asking to borrow milk from me—the foundation of a life-long commitment if ever I saw one. I knew the fling he was having with one of the stewardesses ended after the company strike, right before Christmas. And I knew if there were a god in Heaven, he would be in town this weekend and willing to log some frequent flyer miles with me.

I got off the train and started to run to my apartment. It's difficult to describe the amount of skill involved with running in a skirt and heels. Not only do you have to judge the rugged terrain of pothole-filled streets and cracked sidewalks, as well as dodge mobs of fellow travelers, but you have to do it with the ease of an ice dancer. I'm a business woman, I can't be seen sweating like a fat man in a sauna. I have to remain cool and collected at all times, even if I am bursting at the seams to get home and stalk my neighbor.

I approached the building with an intense feeling of anxiety. It pained me to think that if this Greg thing fell through I would be forced to call my failsafe, but ambiguously gay, friend Chad. There are plenty of things an ambiguously gay friend can cover as a date for—funerals, lame office parties, Bar Mitzvahs—but V-Day, I feared, would be stretching the limits of our relationship. Looking up to the second floor I noticed that my apartment was in dire need of new curtains, but more importantly I saw that Greg's lights were on. Hooray! Surely my neighbor wouldn't think it was out of the ordinary if I asked him out for Valentine's Day. What are neighbors for? Being the overt meaningless holiday hater that I am, I have

become adept at pretending as if such holidays don't exist in my world. *Oh tomorrow's Valentine's Day? You don't say... I had completely forgotten. I didn't even realize people were still into that. I was just thinking you'd like a nice home-cooked meal as a change to that awful airline food you're used to.*

Bounding up the stairs, perhaps a little too anxiously, I heard Greg's door open -- no better time than the present to secure my V-Day date.

"Greg!" I shouted, more loudly than I had hoped in trying to make up for being out of breath from all the bounding.

"Sorry to disappoint," a male voice responded.

"Oh, you're not Greg," I stumbled and immediately wanted to take back.

"You're right. I'm Greg's brother Nathaniel. And you are?"

"Jack. Uh... Jaclyn. I live in 207."

"Oh right, Jaclyn. The beautiful and charming neighbor from across the hall. Greg has told me wonderful things about you."

Ahhhh. Am I delirious? Did he just say what I thought he...

"Nice to meet you Jaclyn. I'm staying here for a few days while Greg's out of town."

Clearly I was delirious. As I wondered whether or not I had accidentally snorted some chocolate on the way up, I shook hands with the even-more-stunning-than-Greg Nathaniel. The grip he had on my hand screamed "I want to be the father of your children" but, sadly, he had other things to do with his time.

"Well, I'll see ya around," he said as my hand fell limp against my skirt.

The disappointment of not having a gorgeous stranger make out with me on first meeting and losing my date to the Friendly Skies left me slumped against the banister for a few minutes. I trudged into

my apartment.

T-minus 24 hours. I picked the phone and called Chad on his cell phone. Chad like everyone in America who wasn't me, had his cell on him twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

I was guaranteed to have life-changing conversations as he peed in public bathrooms, picked up his dry cleaning or was stuck in a traffic jam on I-95.

Chad was particularly fond of the vibrate feature of his phone.

"Hello Gorgeous."

"Hey Chadwick.

How's life?"

"Life is stupendous.

Life is grand. Life is the best it's been in quite some time."

"Why's that?"

"I got a raise today and my stock has gone up seven points since last week."

"Well, well big spender. Where are you taking me tomorrow night to celebrate?"

"Tomorrow. Hmm... Tomorrow's no good, I've got plans with my mother."

Curses. If there's one area of a potentially gay man's life that you couldn't mess with, it was his relationship with his mother. Surely I couldn't say *Chad will you please stand your mother up so that I can have a date for V-day so that I can not feel like an idiot at work on Friday.*

"Big Valentine's Day plans with your mom eh?"

"Well I wouldn't say big. But we do go out every year. Don't you have a date?"

"Well. No. I don't."

"Oh, you're more than welcome to come along. I can pick you up at ..."

"No, no, it's ok. I'll figure something

out." Spending V-Day with my 30-year-old best friend and his mother was about as tempting as licking cement.

At work I was a zombie. My only remaining hope was to meet and kidnap

"Thoughts of using a candy bar as a concealed weapon in my pocket and forcing someone to take me out to dinner ran through my head."

someone on the train ride home. Thoughts of using a candy bar as a concealed weapon in my pocket and forcing someone to take me out to dinner ran through my head. Sadly, I sat next to a bum on the trip home. Rock bottom came when I thought about what he may look like with a shower, close

shave and a haircut. I decided I wouldn't even need to kidnap him, I could get away with telling him it was some sort of Bum Outreach program.

Slowly working my way up the apartment steps, I ran into Nathaniel who was smoking in the stairwell.

"Hi there. I hope you don't mind I'm smoking in here, but it's cold as all hell outside."

"Uh, no, it's not a problem. Just don't let the super catch you," I said, without lifting my gaze from the dirty steps.

"Hey, do you know any good restaurants around here? My friend is supposed to be coming down tonight."

Friend. Did he think I didn't know? It was V-day, of course his girlfriend was coming down. Of course he was going to wine and dine her. I should have directed him to the nearest candy shop so he could stock up on chocolate, but instead I did stammered,

"Blue Moon. It's down on the corner of Fifth and Main. It's really good. It'll



| *Emily Wilson*

same way I did, but it seems like they've got chocolate running through their veins and Hallmark has brainwashed them."

I was in the process of a mental multiple orgasm when we reached the restaurant.

"You know what?" I said before entering. "This place is going to be full of the very meaningless holidays worshippers we loathe. Why don't we go back and I'll make you a fabulous dinner."

With that, Nathaniel took my hand as we headed back toward the apartment. We fell deep into conversation about the ridiculousness of V-day.

"You know I feel sorry for couples on days like today."

"Why's that?" I asked, again knowing the answer but still wanting more of

behind-the-scenes Nathaniel.

"You realize tonight will be the ultimate reason for half of the breakups that occur in the next few months. Either he was too eager and scared the shit out of her. Or she was too expectant and disappointed when he didn't live up."

"St. Valentine must have been a sadist..." Finally someone to listen to and respect my V-day diatribe!

We went back and forth hypothesizing the origins of the holiday, laughing at stories of past V-days turned ugly and imagining who at our respective offices would corner us first. We talked ourselves right into the morning of February 15th.

The Revolution had begun.

be perfect.”

I walked through my door and headed straight for the freezer. Before I changed into my ratty sweatpants, I dove face first into a half-eaten cart on of ice cream. I started watching sappy love movies on ABC. An hour and a half into my chocolate-induced coma, there was a knock on my door.

Someone must be lost, I thought.

“Hi there, I hope I’m not interrupting anything.”

Nathaniel.

“It’s just I heard your TV was on and I figured you were home.”

“Um, yeah I was just watching a movie.” A most witty response as I wiped the ice cream from my face.

“Well, my friend bailed on me. Said something about his girlfriend wanting to go out for Valentine’s Day. So I’ve got these reservations and I don’t want to waste them. Are you up for it?”

Clearly I was delirious again.

Gorgeous man I hardly know asking me out on V-day just when I thought all hope was lost? I tried to remain calm.

“Well I need to get changed, but if you can wait a few minutes I’d love to.” Hah! I pulled off a decent-sounding reply. It was a miracle. The miracle of V-day.

“Sure, just come over whenever you’re ready.”

I accidentally slammed the door in Nathaniel’s face as I raced to get ready. I ransacked my closet for the perfect ensemble. Sure, it was freezing cold outside, but I wasn’t about to bundle up like an Inuit for a first date, so I went for the timeless little black dress. I furiously applied makeup to get that I’m not wearing any makeup, I’m naturally beautiful look. I was surprisingly ready to go in ten minutes, but didn’t want to appear over-anxious or insane, so I sat around and waited an extra ten.

I knocked delicately on the door and was pleased with the gentleman who greeted me. Nathaniel had obviously taken the twenty minutes to spruce himself up, gelling his hair, changing his shirt and putting on enough cologne to leave a sweet scented trail behind him as he walked.

“You look great,” he said as he closed the door behind him.

“Thank you, you don’t look so bad yourself.”

As we walked toward the restaurant Greg asked, “What’s a beautiful girl like you doing home on Valentine’s Day?”

Before I could dream up a fancy lie involving the recent death of a fiancé, my conscience did something it rarely does and spoke up for itself.

“Well I’ve never had much luck with Valentine’s Day dates. So I decided not to tempt fate after my boyfriend and I broke up last month. What’s a charming boy like you doing all alone?” I flashed a vixen-like smile when saying the word boy, since it was clear we were both old enough to have boys of our own.

“To be quite honest, I hate Valentine’s Day. I hate all the build up, the stupid cards, the stuffed animals. All the hype is totally unnecessary.”

“Unnecessary?” I said, playing dumb in an effort to see what made Nathaniel tick.

“Totally unnecessary. Why do I need Hallmark to tell me when to say ‘I love you’ to my girlfriend or wife. Why do I have to feed her chocolate until she vomits on some random day in February, instead of loving her every day?”

Is it possible to fall in love with someone so quickly? I thought.

“Sorry to get so worked up over a simple question. But, ahh, I just hate stupid, meaningless holidays like this. I would love to find a woman who felt the