

# My Treat

Scarlet Rose had been passed out for several hours when the phone vibrating in her purse lying next to the bed, woke her. "Damnit" I guess it's time to go to work she mumbled as she threw back the covers, swung her legs around, and planted her feet on the floor. She dug the phone out of her bag and checked her voice mail. "Hmm.. three calls. Hope they're not from three assholes." She brushed her dyed red hair back and pushed the play button. The first message came from a guy named Mike. "Er ...ahh.. If this is Scarlet Rose I ...aah ...um would like to see you this afternoon. Um ...call me at ————. The second was from an obvious drunk. "Hi, this is Big Bill how about I show you my long hard dick, baby. Gimme a call at———. "Hell no Billy boy" she said to herself. The third call was from one of her regulars, Edward, who would see her every month or so. "Scarlet can I see you tonight? I'd like to spend some time with you."

Edward was a short, chubby nerd with a birthmark above his left eye. It looked like a map of Texas. She called him "Texas Head" although not to his face. He needed to be called Edward and would correct her if she called him Ed or Eddy. "Please. I'm Edward, Scarlet." Edward was the ideal client. Quick, quiet, and even a bit kindly.

Edward had didley squat for personality which suited her. "Get em on, get em off, get em out, and move on to the next John." She hated the studly, Mr personality types. The fools didn't understand that it was just business. "Quit wasting my time, Mr. popularity," she would say to herself

After listening to the messages, she looked at the time and began to plan her day. It was 1:30 on December 24th. "Let's see, I can call this Mike guy and schedule him for around three and then have Edward come by at five. That'll be a good 300 bucks. I'm betting I'll get another call later on tonight 450. It looks like I'll have a prosperous Christmas."

She picked up her phone and called Mike. A recorded woman's voice answered "Hello this is the Smith residence. We can't come to the phone now but please leave a message." She hung up "Sorry Mikey, no funzies for you."

She called Edward. "Hello"

"Edward, it's Scarlet, You called?"

"Yes, how about we get together this evening"

"What time?"

"Say six. You still at that Blue Bell Motor Lodge?"

"Room 124. Remember, It's 150, cash. I'm not giving you a Christmas present."

"OK See you at six"

"See you then, Bye"

Scarlet serviced a trucker from Missouri at three PM. It was a quickie and she only earned 100 bucks. Enough for two oxy 40s and lunch. She'd take one so she could remain mellow and not too high for Edward and any other Johns she'd see. "Tonight, I'll buy an Oxy 80 and smoke in the evening. Merry Christmas Scarlet Rose" she announced to herself

After the trucker had left, she drove to her supplier's trailer and picked up two oxy 40s. Next Scarlet drove to a Denny's near the mall and had lunch. A few folks were eating after they finished last-minute shopping. "Idiots, What a waste of time and money" she thought. Soon after the waitress brought some coffee, a father and his daughter came in sat at the booth across from her.

"Now only just a sandwich, no dessert we have a big dinner tonight after church."

"Daddy won't, mommy, be surprised by the present we bought her. I hope she'll like it."

Rose stared at the little girl who appeared to be about six. She had strawberry blond curls framing pink cheeks. The little girl dressed in a red sweater, jeans and cowgirl boots. They were like the ones Scarlet wore when she was the girl's age. A tear began to well up in the escort's eyes. How cute I sure hope the mom likes her gift. I wonder if the child knows how lucky she is.

After Scarlet finished her lunch and paid the bill, she got up and said to the father "You have a very cute daughter."

The dad looked up and said "Why, thank you."

Then she looked with sad eyes to the girl and almost in a whisper said. "You are so lucky to have such a good daddy."

The little girl shyly nodded. The dad said, "We are a great team. You have a merry Christmas"

Scarlet said, "same for you" and walked into the ladies' room, took a forty from her pocket and put it in her mouth, chewed it then took a handful of water to wash it down. "*That'll take the edge off*" she thought to herself.

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Brenda Harris, now Scarlet Rose, once lived in the country next to a dairy pasture. Behind her house grazed several black and white cows along with an old Clydesdale workhorse named Max. She loved petting big old Max. The high point of her day was when her daddy came home from working at the shipyard. As soon as she heard his car drive in, Brenda would rush to the kitchen and grab two sugar cubes from a small jar. Then she would go out the kitchen door put on her muddy cowgirl boots and wait for her daddy to walk around to the back. Together they'd walk to the fence. Her daddy would put two fingers in his mouth and give a sharp whistle. He would say, "Up you go my little cowgirl" and lifted her onto his broad shoulders. Max would walk over to them and stick his massive head across the fences. Brenda patted his forehead and dug out a sugar cube from her coat pocket. She would open her hand and slide the cube under Max's massive muzzle. He would gently take the cube with his lips. The old workhorse then would vigorously shake his head and neck. He'd do a little prance and give a whinney. Brenda handed a second cube and gave it to her father who fed it to Max. He would again shake and whinney. The sugar cubes were like a wonder drug the horse needed to keep his vigor. When he settled down, Brenda would pat him on his head and say "Good Boy Max". Max would turn and stride back into the pasture.

One day her dad could not whistle to Max. "I'm not feeling well today, cowgirl." Max did not come to them. Brenda tried calling but the horse kept grazing on the spring grass. Brenda cried, "I want Max to come here." Her father tried to whistle again but only a weak hiss came out.

By the summer her father was no longer coming home from work to walk with her to the pasture. He never went to work but stayed in bed much of the day. Brenda watched him becoming thinner, grayer, and weaker. She never forgot that horrible day when her mother explained that her daddy had cancer. They would have to sell the house and move to the city. "We have to be near daddy's doctors, Brenda"

On the day the family moved, Brenda took all the remaining sugar cubes out to the Pasture. Max was grazing near the fence. Brenda knelt and reached her little fist under the wire, opened her hand to show a sugar cube to Max. He took it, pranced, and whinnied. Brenda stood up, held her hand out, and one by one fed the horse the cubes. Max seemed to be getting younger and happier with each cube. She patted his forehead and began to cry. "Bye Bye Max, Bye Bye. I'll miss you". Max shook his great head and snorted Brenda was sure the horse was telling her he would miss her too.

They moved into a small apartment. When the green oxygen bottle appeared. Brenda first feared that the bottle was sucking the life out of her father. Her mother explained that her father needs oxygen to breathe and then slowly said , "Daddy's dying. He won't be with us much longer."

Two years after her daddy died, her mother remarried to a guy named Tom. He was an appliance salesman, a glad-hander, and in Brenda's eyes a total phony. He would come home from work, greet her saying, "How's my pretty little gal" and proceed to ignore her for the rest of the evening. Soon a baby boy, Tommy Junior, arrived. Her mommy doted on Tommy Junior. Cancer had taken her daddy and Tommy junior had taken her mommy. The small apartment became home to a new family with a live-in babysitter named Brenda Harris.

Brenda decided that she would grow up and fight cancer so no other little girl would have to watch her daddy die. Although she could not know at the time, She would become a highly respected registered nurse on a cancer ward. She gave her patients excellent care. But no matter how hard she tried, she had to watch too many patients decline and pass away She met several little Brendas in tears, as they said goodbye to their daddies. Brenda succumbed to the sorrow and stress.

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Edward came to room 124 exactly at six. Scarlet Rose let him in. They undressed and soon she was faking an orgasm. When Edward finished he laid on her chest. "Edward you are a little too heavy, get off of me." Edward rolled onto the mattress.

She started to get up and dress when Edward asked "Can I take you out to dinner tonight?"

Scarlet put on her clothes and thought about it "Yes, but my time is valuable. It'll cost you."

"How much?"

"A hundred."

Edward pulled his wallet from his trousers. He had four twenties. I only got eighty in cash will you take a credit card."

"Hell no. I only do cash." Then she thought and said. "OK I'll take the eighty and you can pay me the twenty next time. Where can we go?"

"There's a Denny's nearby"

"I'm not going to Denny's again. Besides they're probably closed. Got another Idea."

Edward stammered as he tried to think of a place.

Scarlet interrupted his stammering "I know a Thai Place I'm sure they're open. Food's decent."

OK. It's Thai food for Christmas. Is it any good?

"It's pretty good, Edward,' she added "I don't ride in clients' cars. I'm driving."

They drove through the cold rain that was turning to snow to a strip mall with the "Taste of Siam" restaurant near the end. The place was a narrow space that had housed many different eateries over fifty years. Most had failed after a couple of years. It had a row of eight well-worn booths, upholstered in hard, durable plastic and Formica tables with chipped edges. One the wall hung travel posters of Thailand, unframed, and held up with yellowing scotch tape. Near the entrance, a bored Asian woman was sitting behind a counter with a cash register and a small ceramic Christmas tree. It had twinkling red and white lights. The only other customers were an elderly couple who were finishing dinner. A pair of young boys played with toy cars in the last booth. *"The owners' children,"* he thought *"I wonder when was the last time the health department had checked this place out."*

They took a seat in a middle booth. The woman behind the cash register sauntered over, handed them menus, and left to get ice water. Edward puzzled by the names of the entrees, asked Scarlet "What should I order?"

"You like peanut butter?"

"Yeah, sorta"

"OK I'll order something I think you will like, You like spicy food?"

"No"

When the waitress came over, Scarlet ordered swimming angels for Edward and Green Curry for herself. "No stars for the swimming angels and two stars for the curry."

After the quiet meal, Edward pulled a package from his jacket pocket and with a shaking hand, gave it to Rose. "Merry Christmas. I got you something."

Scarlet opened the poorly wrapped package and saw a red scarf with a white snowflake pattern. Also in the package, were a pair of matching red mittens and a stocking hat. Scarlet looked at them briefly and dropped them on the seat next to her. She hated when clients gave her gifts. *"Don't the morons know that this is only about sex and money, shit!"*

"Crap! Edward can't you understand we have strictly a business relationship. I am not your girlfriend." As she spoke she saw his eyes tearing up *"Oh shit! My God he's going to cry. I gotta stop him."* Brenda jump up, walked around the booth, and sat down next to Edward. She wrapped her arms around him. Edward nestled his teary face in her bosom. Suddenly Scarlet

Rose's life unreeled. Before the time the state took her license, before Vicodin, Percocet and Oxy became family. Before she used her patients' meds to deal with the stress and sadness of the cancer ward. Before she lived in the city.

She was going out with her daddy to give that big old horse his sugar cube. Little Brenda was sitting on her father's shoulders giggling while unwrapping her hands below his chin. She held tight onto Edward as she once did with her Daddy. Poor kindly Edward with his marred face. She gripped him as she once did long ago. She was not Scarlet Rose the Escort, but a happy little Brenda in cowgirl boots. She hugged Edward, struggling with all her might to remain that little happy girl.

The spell broke when the owners said it was time to leave. Edward went up to the counter and paid the bill with his credit card. Brenda put on the red hat, mittens, and scarf. She took his hand and they walked together into the cold snowy night.

When they returned to the motor lodge, She walked over, threw her arms around Edward, and whispered "In seven days it will be New Year's Eve. Let's have dinner together, my treat"

