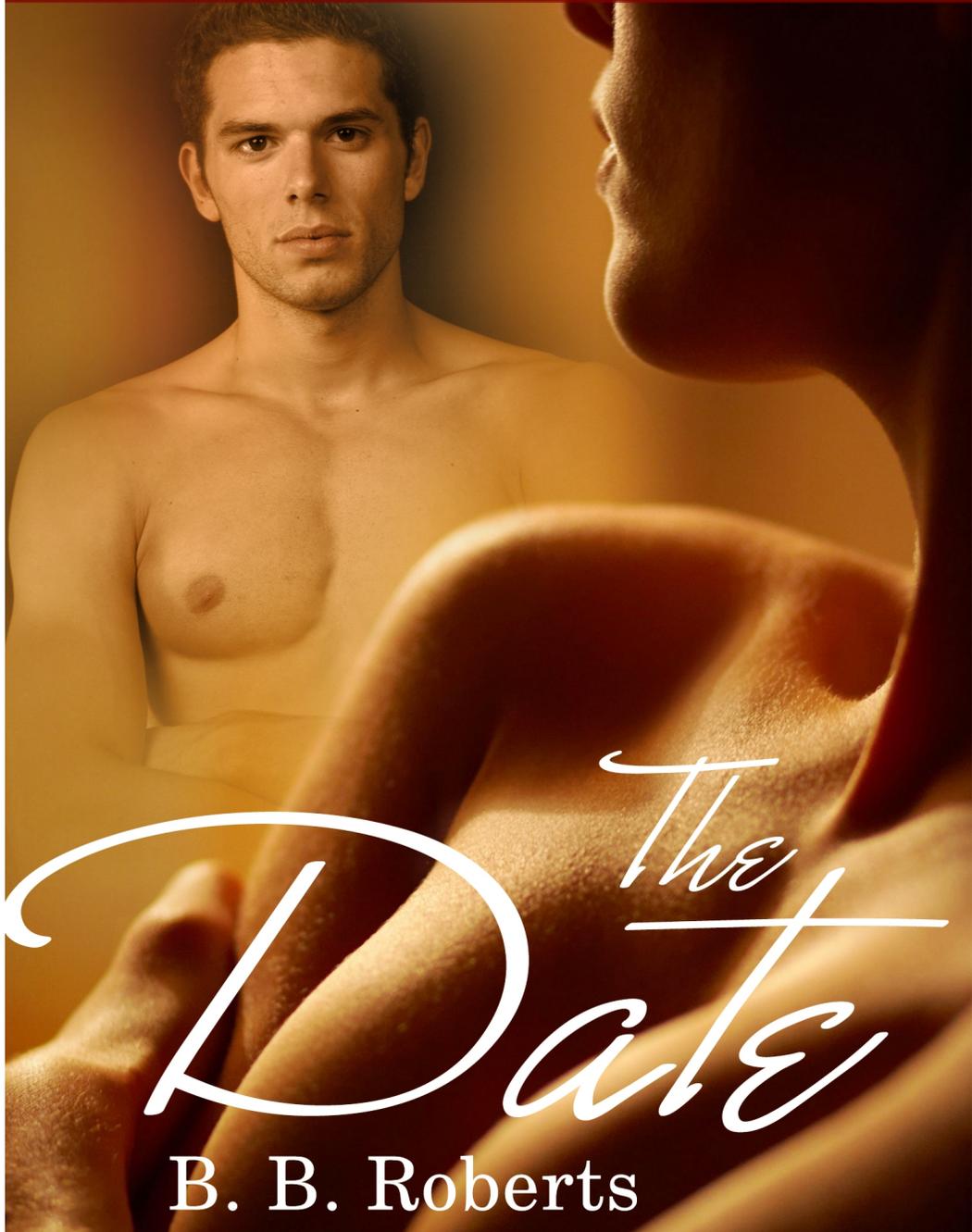


*A Noble Romance Publishing
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*The
Date*

B. B. Roberts

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The Date

ISBN 978-1-60592-033-7

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Cover Art by Fiona Jayde

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Book Blurb

Helen Wordmann is homeless and desperate, ready to throw herself in front of a truck. Don Benton, a guy she hasn't seen since their high school prom, offers her a room for the night. His room. With him in it. She'll do anything he wants for another chance at life and takes his offer. But what does he want? Not what she expects.

The Date

Don heard them as he walked up to the lobby desk—the clerk annoyed, barely civil . . . the woman, distraught and begging. She wore a dress that didn't suit her, and carried a torn and ratty duffel bag. Black tape held her shoes together and a piece of that was coming loose. Tall and very thin she looked, and her dingy brown hair might have been cut by a butcher. He noted every detail with a writer's eye.

“Please look again. I sent a money order. Helen Wordmann. You have

to have it," the woman said.

The clerk replied curtly, but the man heard nothing of his answer. The woman's name stopped him, caught him completely by surprise. Helen Wordmann? It couldn't be, not here, not now, not her.

The woman turned, her eyes full of unshed tears. She bumped into him and rushed away without a word.

"Can I help you sir?" the clerk asked, but Don was moving, hurrying after the woman.

Helen tried to stop the fear, bit her lip, but she couldn't stop the tears. No reservation, no room, what had happened to her money? Ninety-five dollars she had gathered, pennies at a time. There was nothing more to do. Nothing more to endure. She was destroyed, broken by an uncaring clerk, a clerical error, some stupid thing like that. Not only had they lost her money, but there were no more rooms available, not that she could pay for one again. She would go out on the highway. Pick a passing truck and step in front of it. This would have been her salvation, this writer's conference. She would have sold her book here. But now, the night loomed and her stash, the heavy coats and worn out shoes and ragged mismatched socks, was miles away where she had hidden it. Even if she survived the cold, no writer's agent would see her as she was, smelling like a dead fish. Numb defeat wrapped around her heart.

"Excuse me. Miss Wordmann?"

She turned toward the voice, expecting a manager to tell her to get out of the hotel. But the voice sounded kind, even polite. The man it belonged to looked to be her age and height, but he was well dressed and smiling. There was something else in his face as well. Pity? She'd seen that before in people and taken advantage of it. But this was a different look he had, something she could not identify. He broke into a smile. "Is it you?" he whispered.

She wiped the back of her hand across her mouth. "What?"

"Helen Wordmann? Is that a married name?"

"I'm not married anymore," she said, wondering at the question.

"That isn't your maiden name then? Wordmann?" he asked.

The hair on the back of her neck began to bristle. Five months of sleeping in the streets had taught her fear. What did this guy want? He had a nice look about him, and was handsome enough. But who was he?

"It is my maiden name. I took it back."

His face grew tense, but the smile remained. "You're forty-one years old?"

Growing more nervous by the minute, she shivered and did not reply.

"I'll take that as a yes," he said, "Did you grow up in New York? East Neck, Long Island?"

The shiver became wild trembling. What was it about this man? "Yes," she said.

"Went to East Neck High School?"

"Yes, damn it. Who are you? What do you want?"

"I'm attending this writer's conference. I have a room in the hotel."

"So?"

"I'd like you to share it with me."

She scowled at him and laughed. "You want me to sleep with you?" As the words came out, she cringed at her silly pride. Idiot. Who cares? You could be warm and have a shower and sell your book tomorrow. Idiot.

His smile did not change. "That would be nice, but it's not necessary. Not sexually at least, though I think I have a room with only one bed."

"I'm not a hooker."

"I didn't think you were. I went to East Neck High. I'm also forty-one. I can't believe it's you."

"You know me? Who are you?"

The Date

“You kept me at arm’s length when we danced. I’m Don. Don’t you remember me?”

She stared, recognition dawning. He was older, heavier, but she knew him then. Her date for the senior prom and three other dates after that. “Don Benton?” She gasped.

Eyes dancing, he grinned, and she started to return his smile. But her happiness died quickly as she thought of her tattered shoes and bag and the dress she wore. He was clean and neat and wore nice clothes, had obviously done well in his life. What must he think of her?

It suddenly dawned on her that he had remembered her and had recognized her name. She had thought of him on occasion, had wondered how her life would have been if he had kept calling her back then. But he had not.

“I heard you talking to the clerk,” he said.

“There was a mix-up about my room.”

“This may seem wild to you, but like I said, I have a room. You could stay with me tonight.”

Wild was putting it mildly. She stared absently, considering. Sleep with him? Have sex with him after not seeing him for twenty-four years? She didn’t believe him when he said sex wasn’t part of the equation. Not at all. “I couldn’t do that,” she said, but even as she spoke her words grew soft. What the hell. She’d been about to throw herself under a truck. What was sex in the face of that? Her husband had been a brute and she’d been raped sleeping in the streets three months ago. At least they’d do it in a bed. She groaned inside.

He heard her denial fade away. “It’s just a place to stay. I’m not asking you for anything.”

Tears formed in her eyes and the weariness she carried stole the last of her resistance. She nodded and gave him a weak smile.

“Stay right here. I haven’t checked in yet,” he said.

She watched as he spoke to the clerk and got the room key. The months in the streets had taken a toll on her. She’d learned to replace feelings with a numb acceptance of whatever came. But this was different. He seemed very sweet, almost the innocent boy she remembered from those high school days. She remembered well. He had been as thin as she was and handsome too, when he was seventeen. And he was a boy, and she had feared boys and their wanting sex, and their strength. He had been no different in that. He had tried to hold her close every chance he got. She had resisted, and been pleased that he did not force her. And then he stopped calling. He still seemed sweet, and foolish. Who asks a person to share his room when they haven’t spoken for twenty-four years? He had to know she was homeless, had no way of knowing what sort of person she’d become. Yet, he seemed thrilled to see her. Excited, too, that she’d agreed to share his room.

“We’re in 221,” he said when he returned, “Let me take your bag.”

“No,” she snapped, startled by his offer.

“Okay,” he said, and started down the hall.

“Why are you doing this?”

He turned and smiled. “Call it a wish. A hope.”

“I’m the best you can do?”

“You’re the girl I dated. It’s in your eyes. No one else can be you.”

“I’m not that kid anymore.”

“Externals don’t matter.”

His answer confused her, but he started walking again before she could ask him to explain. She tried to hang behind, to follow him, but he simply stopped when she did and waited for her to reach his side.

“You look tired,” he said.

The Date

She nodded.

“It’s three-thirty, but would you like to grab a late lunch?”

“I had lunch,” she said, speaking with the last of her pride. One donut, dry, was all she’d had.

“An early dinner then?”

How did he know she was hungry? Of course, the way she looked, like she’d been living on scraps of other people’s meals. Which she had.

“I’d like to clean up,” she said.

He opened 221, stepped inside and flicked on all the lights. He dropped his small suitcase on a chair.

The room had one bed; a queen size, she judged. Just one.

“Is that going to be a problem?” he asked, and she knew he was referring to the sleeping arrangements.

“No,” she said, numb acceptance rolling over her again.

“I don’t have pajamas, but I’ll sleep in my underwear.”

“I have nothing to sleep in. It doesn’t matter.”

He studied her face. “Are you all right?”

“It doesn’t matter. You can do me if you want,” she said defiantly.

“Whoa! What’s this?”

She sighed and sat down on the bed with her hands in her lap. He sat beside her and took her hand, then wrapped his other arm around her shoulder. Her eyes filled with tears and she fought to blink them back.

“What is it?” he asked softly.

“This was it, this conference. I was going to sell my book here and have a life again. And they lost my money, lost my room. I have no nightclothes, no underwear. I’m homeless.”

“It’s okay. Everything will be all right.”

“It’s not. I can’t do this anymore. This was my last chance. I have three dollars and twenty-two cents in my pocket.”

“You’ll sell your book. We’ll get you an advance.” He lied, knowing that to be a dream, one in a million.

“No one will buy it. Who am I to write a book?”

He released her shoulder, took both her hands in his and raised her to her feet. He held her right hand in his left, wrapped his other arm around her waist and pulled her body tight to him. She did not resist as he began a slow rocking from side to side.

“You never let me get close when we danced,” he said softly.

She said nothing, just looked at his face with sad, defeated eyes.

“We were seventeen. You were afraid of sex,” he said.

She sighed then gave him a tiny smile. “I was afraid of you. You wanted it.”

“Not that way, I didn’t.”

“You were a boy, full of hormones.”

“I wanted this. To feel your body touching mine. To bury your head on my shoulder. To smell the scent of you.”

“You let me stop you,” she cried.

“I would never force you.”

“You should have! You should!”

“No. It would be by mutual consent, or it would be no good at all.”

She pulled away from him, her body shaking, her heart pounding. He didn’t know, didn’t understand what he had done to her by giving up back then. The numbness had left her and she trembled with the earthquake ripping through her insides. They might have made a life together if he had tried harder. “Stop this. You’ll kill me. I have to leave, have to get away.”

He grabbed her. “Why? What have I done?”

“Never mind. I have to leave.”

“No. You’re staying. You won’t survive out there tonight.”

“Then I’ll be your hooker. You can do me. For the price of the room

and breakfast tomorrow. And dinner tonight. And a hundred dollars cash," she snapped.

"That's ridiculous. Why are you doing this?"

How could she tell him? She didn't know herself. Years of hurt and fear and sadness churned up her insides when she looked at him. "I want a shower too." Shaking, she undid her dress and dropped it to the floor, then stared at him, defiant. "Sorry if they disappoint you. I never did have big boobs."

She started for the bathroom and he followed on her heels, frantically unbuttoning his shirt. She tried to close the bathroom door, but he forced his way in.

"What are you doing?" she cried.

"You're acting crazy. I'm not letting you out of my sight."

"Why are you taking your clothes off?"

"I'm taking a shower with you."

"Like hell you are."

"You'll do whatever I want for your money. That's what hookers do. Get into the damn shower."

"Don't talk to me that way," she said as she stepped through the plastic curtain.

He squeezed in behind her and their bodies touched despite her best efforts to avoid him.

"Why are you doing this? You could watch me if you want and take your shower later," she said.

"Yeah, and you'd beat it out of here while I did. I like this better anyway." Her back caught his attention then. She had two blisters where she couldn't reach them and he realized a real shower was probably a rare treat for her. He reached out and grabbed the soap, then holding it in his palm, used his hand as a washcloth and gently began scrubbing where he could

without hurting her.

“What are you doing?” she asked.

“You have some sores. I’m washing them. Let me know if I hurt you,” he said.

She tried to turn, but he would not let her. She was silent, letting his hand slide up and down her back. Finished, he turned her shoulders to get her back under the showerhead. Tears streamed down her cheeks.

“What is it?” he asked.

“You hurt me,” she said, but that was a lie. His hand felt so good on her back. He’d been so gentle, so careful, and his touch was so electric, but she could not admit that. Not without completely breaking down.

“I’m sorry. You should see a doctor about those.”

“There’s a clinic I can go to,” she said, lying again.

He still held the soap, and began to wash her hip.

“Is this part of my hooker work?” she asked with a smirk.

He smiled and brought his hand to her breast, sliding it in tingling circles. Her nipples hardened. Jolts of fire reached to her toes as his fingers stroked her. Heart pounding, she shivered, and he smiled and leaned forward to kiss her. This was new; this was not the way her husband did her. Michael had sneered at her flat chest and never deigned to touch her nipples. Oh God, she thought, what am I going to do? She had expected pain, not this magical pleasure. Expected he would mount her and shove his shaft inside, like Michael always did. Like the rapist did. What else would he do? How would she go back to the streets after this?

He stopped suddenly, and began to wash his own body. “You’re upset. I’m sorry.”

She waited in silence, watching him scrub his chest and arms and then his member. It didn’t matter that he wasn’t touching her. Warmth rose in her belly.

The Date

He finished washing and rinsed off, then stepped from the shower and quickly jammed his razor under the bathroom door to keep it open.

“What’s that for?” she demanded.

“To keep you safe. You’re desperate enough to do anything. I’m getting room service. A sandwich? Salad? Soup for you?”

“Whatever,” she said softly.

He picked up the phone, still naked, and ordered two sandwiches, ham and cheese, a Cobb salad and two bowls of clam chowder. And a bottle of wine. Offered a forty dollar tip if it was delivered in fifteen minutes.

She began drying herself, but he picked up another towel and stepped behind her. Without a word, he began to pat dry her back.

“Thank you,” she said.

“Get under the covers when the waiter comes.”

“Can’t I get dressed?”

“No. You’re a hooker now, remember?”

“Why are you doing this? Why are you so mad?”

He smiled and shook his head.

“Why? Please tell me.”

He kissed her then, gently, like a brother. “Because you’re trying to push me away again. You’re afraid you won’t be strong enough on the streets later.”

“That’s ridiculous,” she said, but of course, it was exactly what she feared.

“Right, so get under the covers when he comes. We’re going to do it after we eat.”

“What about you?”

“I’m putting pants on, but only until he leaves. I like to be naked. I didn’t tell you that, did I?”

“I could scream rape.”

He stared at her. "How would that help? You'd be out on the street again in a minute. Or arrested for soliciting if I claimed you were an unhappy hooker."

"Damn you."

He slipped his pants on and snubbed the belt just as a knock reverberated on the door. "Twelve minutes. Money works wonders," he said as she scrambled into the bed. He paid the waiter at the door, assured the man no help was needed and sent him happily on his way.

She pushed the covers back and sat up, watching him.

"Would you like me to keep my pants on?" he asked.

She shrugged, assuming the question was a tease. He'd do what he wanted anyway. She was sure of that. But he left the pants on and began to serve the food. He placed a bowl of chowder on the writing desk, set a chair before it, and gestured. "For you."

She didn't argue. Suddenly overcome with hunger, she picked up a spoon and began to eat.

"Where's your book?"

"In my bag."

He handed her the bag and waited while she withdrew a small stack of papers. "That's all I could afford to print," she said.

He nodded and began to read. And she waited, unable to eat until she heard his verdict.

When he looked up, he was smiling. "You need an editor, but I like it. You're a good story teller."

"How do you know?" she asked, not quite able to rejoice yet.

"I'm an author. I know good writing."

She stared at him for a second then went back to eating. Both bowls of chowder and one sandwich quickly disappeared. He stopped her then, offered a small glass of wine instead. "You're not used to a lot of food. Too

much and you'll be sick."

"I don't care. I'm hungry."

"I do. A sick hooker is not in my plans."

"Damn you." She took the wine from him and downed it in one gulp.

He shook his head. "Terrible waste that is."

"Will you stop with the smart remarks?"

"Sure, as soon as you stop playing games."

"I'm not."

He stared at her then and sighed. He stood and took his pants off.

"Get into bed. It's time."

She stretched out on the bed and smirked at him. "I knew you'd want sex."

"Not sex. Love."

"Oh sure. I changed my mind. I don't want to be your hooker."

He smiled. "Sorry. You're not pushing me away this time."

He lay down beside her, wrapped an arm over her belly and kissed her ear. His fingers found her cheek and caressed it, and then lightly rubbed the tip of her nose. He kissed her then, gently, on the lips, his tongue seeking hers, but blocked by her determined grimace. He switched to her belly and began making slow swirls, his fingers dancing lightly, making her skin electric.

"Just do me, will you," she said.

He moved to her nipple and began to play with it.

She groaned. "Don't do that. Just do me."

He caught the nipple with his mouth and licked it. Nibbled at it gently. Slid his hand down toward her curly hair, let his fingers touch and move away again.

She began to tremble and wetness formed between her legs, just a little. "Please," she said.

“I won’t cause you pain.”

“I’m asking you to get it over with.”

“I don’t “do”, not that way. You’ll be all right.”

“Then stop, please.”

“What are you afraid of?” He pulled back to watch her face, but his fingers continued dancing on her body.

“Never mind.”

“You’ve never done it with love, have you?”

“You don’t love me. You barely know me.” Why was he doing this? Playing at fairy tales. She’d seen movies, read books, but believed none of that mushy stuff. Fiction it was, not the real world. Any minute he would slam it into her. Like Michael always did. She knew he would.

“I know you’re afraid. You don’t need to be.” She didn’t answer and he continued. “You took a risk with me once. Do it again.”

“What risk? I dated you.”

“Not then. Remember? You called me later? Asked me out.”

“And you said you were engaged.”

“I was. But you took the chance to call me.”

“Are you married now?”

“Yes, but she’s living with her boyfriend.”

She said nothing, simply stared at him, wondering. What risk was he taking? Could she go back once she let him do her? He obviously hated that word. Doing it with love? That’s what he said. She sighed and took a deep breath. “Do what you want.”

He placed his lips on hers, slid his tongue along her mouth until she let him in. His fingers found her nipple and he caressed it, then bent and kissed her there. And then she understood. Despite the fear, something was happening to her body, and in her head as well. He cared whether she liked what he was doing! It wasn’t just his pleasure he wanted. Not like Michael

and the rapist. He wasn't taking. He was giving to her.

Her body shook as his fingers slipped along her hip and belly once again. Her heart jumped and her breathing came in gasps. His lips found her belly and sucked her in and she felt her body arch. Fingers on her leg, barely touching, caressing, moving, rising toward her core. His lips on her other breast, sucking hard, licking.

Trembling so hard she feared she'd break, she began to thrust her hips. His fingers sought her bud, but teased around it, not quite getting there. She felt the wetness, felt herself opening and still he teased. Her body wanted him, wanted him and still he played. He slid down, his mouth found her clitoris, and he licked her. Was that her moaning? He rolled up on her and eased his member in, and began thrusting, slowly at first, and easy.

"Now. Come on," she cried as he plunged deeper. There was nothing but his shaft inside and her body going wild. Nothing of her normal world. She was in a thundercloud, rising, surging, racing toward the heavens, wanting, waiting for the lightning. And he was driving, thrusting and the lightning came and she was hurled into the sky. And floated down to a warm and cozy pool of peace such as she had never known.

Breath slowly returned and she tried to hold his warmth inside of her. He kissed her eyes, her nose, her lips, and brushed his hand across her hair. He began to slip away and she could not hold him in. "Damn," she said.

He rolled to one side. "What's wrong?"

"I wanted to keep you there."

He chuckled. "Never works."

She kissed him. "Thank you."

"Better than just getting stuck?"

"Much better." Suddenly she wanted him to feel the pleasure he had given her. She moved her hand and found his member and felt his body

shudder. Playing him with her fingers, she felt him arch upward and he kissed her, hard and wet and long. A slow ache built between her thighs and she wanted him inside of her again.

His fingers found her slick heat and he began a gentle caress inside her folds. Inside, beside, everywhere they could reach. She moaned, wanting him now, right way. His mouth found her tongue and he nibbled at it. She tried to speak, but couldn't find her voice. He slipped inside and she gripped him with her pussy as he thrust gently, and then harder, faster, harder still, until she lost all thought, felt only physical excitement building, growing, threatening to erupt.

She came then suddenly, much too quickly, and the fever died away, but he didn't stop, didn't pause and back the fever came, stronger, fiercer than before. There was only her, and only him filling her inside and the amazing heat and she felt like she would burst. *I love you*, she cried or did she only think it? She had no breath to speak, no desire to think.

And then he came inside her and she joined him, erupting like an earthquake this time.

He thrust once more then stopped and they lay there still, their breathing a loud and ragged rhythm between them. He was heavy on top of her but he seemed to lack the strength to move. He was warm and still inside of her and that was fine. And she wondered if she loved him. In this, at this moment she did, but this was just one part of love. She laid a hand against his chest, touched a finger to her lips and brought it to his cheek.

He squeezed her tight and kissed her forehead. "We were one," he whispered.

"One? Oh you mean, oh yes."

He rolled off her when he finally slid out and softly caressed her belly. Gently. Lovingly. Suddenly she had to choke back a sob. If only life could be like this. Her life. Sucking up her courage, she forced her thoughts to what

must come when he left her the next day.

“Well?” she asked.

“What?”

“What now?”

“What time is it?”

“Almost five.”

“We better get dressed.”

“Why?”

“We’re going shopping. Have to see if there’s a beauty shop still open too,” he said, grinning.

“You’re going to buy things for me?”

“Of course. You’ll need clothes for your new job. Not to mention tomorrow’s meeting.”

“What new job?”

“I don’t know about hookers. I need a housekeeper.”

“A maid?”

“I cook and clean. I need a keeper of my heart, to be exact.”

“A what?”

He smiled and kissed her. “A true love.”

“Oh,” she said, speechless for the moment.

“Yeah, I have an offer for you. Move in with me.”

“I’ll be your kept woman?”

“We’ll share expenses when you can.”

“When I get a job.”

He grinned. “Hell no. We’ll write together. Wonderful love stories.”

* * * * *

Red lights went on in front of him and he slammed on the brakes. He

sighed. Dangerous to daydream when you're driving. The daydream ended, as they always did when something broke his reverie. At least this one had almost reached its end. Of course, she began to live with him. And of course, they wrote wonderful love stories. Maybe he'd repeat the dream again, later, but it wouldn't be the same. They never were.

He sighed again and pulled into the hotel parking lot. He was a writer and was going to a conference. Daydreams always started with a touch of reality. Everyone knew that. They often made good stories afterward as well. This was one he'd write.

Carrying his overnight bag, he headed for the lobby. Helen was real too. They had dated, and she had kept him at a distance. He sometimes wondered what had become of her. And often wished he had kept after her.

Don heard them as he walked up to the lobby desk—the clerk annoyed, barely civil . . . the woman, distraught and begging. She wore a dress that didn't suit her, and carried a torn and ratty duffel bag. Black tape held her shoes together and a piece of that was coming loose. Tall and very thin she looked, and her dingy brown hair might have been cut by a butcher. He noted every detail and shivered at the similarity.

“Please look again. I sent a money order. Helen Wordmann. You have to have it,” the woman said.

The clerk replied curtly, but Don heard nothing of his answer. The woman's name stopped him, caught him completely by surprise. Helen Wordmann? It couldn't be, not here, not now, not her.

The woman turned, her eyes full of unshed tears. She bumped into him, and rushed away without a word.

“Can I help you sir?” the clerk asked, but Don was moving, hurrying after her.

~The End~

About the Author

Mr. Roberts is making his first venture into Erotica. He is currently completing a Romantic Suspense novel and often writes short stories to take a break from the demands of long manuscripts. He is a member of CTRWA and lives in Connecticut with his wife Karen.

He began life as an engineer, but spent some years as a psychotherapist. Writing is his best-loved and fourth career.

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