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JAY WALKING

Cynics unite, it's Valentine's Day!

By Jacqui Zurcher

Posted Thu, 13 Feb 2003

Which sick bastard had the evil genius to capitalise on a third century priest's chaste martyrdom to flog kitsch lurve paraphernalia to the masses? Stand up and face the music, funny man! May garish silk roses and overpriced miniature teddy bears be your enduring legacy.



Given that my most recent romance has just fizzled, I confess that on the topic of Valentine's Day, I might be slightly jaded.

My personal bias aside, it does seem that Valentine's Day elicits groans of disgust or despair from many of my otherwise cheerful and well-balanced friends. A recent sundowners at Clifton on an idyllic evening turned cloudy when the topic of Valentine's Day came up.

"Another day waiting at the post box for the card that never arrives", said a girlfriendless, but normally self-respecting Chris.

"That's better than getting the morale boosting, Helen Steiner-Rice Valentine's card from your mother!" piped up Cath.

The recently heart-broken stared at the sea stoically and the couples either avoided eye contact or smiled accommodatingly.

In fact, being paired is not necessarily an exemption from Valentine's Day unease. Floundering relationships faced with the perils of Valentine's romantic overkill can face serious strain. Manufacturing tenderness and inciting passion in the face of relationship stress can be as demoralising as watching Allen Donald come in to bat at a crucial time in a match. That apache sunscreen is not going to deliver the goods.

Even solid couples can come a bit adrift over how to spend this most romantic of romantic days. Does he surprise her with a grandiose gesture, take her out for an evening of extravagant indulgence, or does she organise a romantic picnic on a deserted beach (what are the chances in Cape Town at this time of year)?

JACQUI ZURCHER isn't a vegetarian, but occasionally enjoys Soya mince and lentils. She has an honours degree in Computer Science and a Postgraduate Diploma in African Studies, majoring in Postcolonial English Literature from UCT. She likes olives, abhors cigarettes and admires pregnant woman. She lives in Cape Town and is really chuffed about that.

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from the editor



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Leigh Robertson,
Highlife Editor

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Do they both democratically and sensitively elect not to spend too much money after the festive spending spree and stay in with a video and pizza? If they choose the latter, she will probably imagine this as a ploy on his part to offset the surprise of his REAL Valentine's intentions involving a sunset cruise of the peninsula, raw seafood and champagne. He'll be baffled when she sighs heavily as the pizza arrives, he cracks open a beer and puts the video on.

But before we make as romantic samurais and messily commit hari kiri over carefully erected displays of lewd silken boxer shorts and chocolate body paint, let us ask whether there is anything redeemable about Valentine's Day?

One bonus is it's the only time of year you can find suspenders in Woolworths. I have noticed this for a few years in a row. For someone who would rather wear a woolly mammoth jumpsuit under tight jeans than a g-string, my admiration for suspenders may seem odd. Not so. My predisposition to sensible underwear is in fact why I hold suspenders in such high esteem. That and the fact that I hate pantihose. I have long legs and pantihose tend to twist around, creep slowly down my legs and suddenly I am duckwalking with the gusset cradled between my knees!

Suspender availability aside, Valentine's Day just seems cynically cruel and commercialised unless you are starry-eyed and partial to silk flowers.

I'll be dusting off my stash of 'Terminator' videos and watching Arnie shooting shape-shifting bad guys into oblivion, while possibly sipping champagne daintily (in case a knight in shining armour peeps in the window) and nibbling on a heart-shaped chocolate or ten.

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