

DOCTOR GLAZER HAS A DATE

By Bob Greenspan

It was a morning in August in Washington DC, and Dr. Manfred Glazer, now retired, thought it was much too hot to go out for his usual walk. Instead, he and his one-eyed cat, reposing now on his shoulder, agreed that it would be best to drop into one of his comfortable chairs to watch whatever movie was playing at Turner Movie Classics. Taking a careful look into his TV room and relieved to find it still there, he was about to sit down when the phone rang.

He was never called anymore, except from his daughter reminding him that he was due for one of his perpetual medical checkups, or receiving friendly calls from hucksters who would suddenly hang up on him, and so it was to his delighted surprise that it was his old love and former dental patient, Louise. “Hello, Louise!” he said warmly, “It’s been a long time since we talked.”

“You’re a funny one, Manfred darling, you always were”, she chuckled. “I wanted to ask you if we could put off our lunch till one o’clock. I’m running late.”

He was astonished – and embarrassed – again. Some months ago he had been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s early stage, and he understood that these “slip ups” would occasionally happen, but that offered him little comfort when he was forever “slipping up”, or as he put it, “falling flat on his face.” He had once again fallen into that ignominious state, but when he thought how nice it would be to see Louise again, (did he see her yesterday? he hoped not), he agreed to meet her at a K Street restaurant, the Don

Carlos, at one o'clock. And he vowed that he was not going to spoil their reunion by telling her about his recent situation.

He did not have far to go. He decided he would take the subway train, the Metro, from his condo in Foggy Bottom to the next stop at Farragut West, and then walk briefly to the restaurant. To insure that he would get there, he made a note of the address and about Louise, and bound the information on his wrist with a rubber band. He knew that he took a risk that he might forget his date entirely, and think the notes on his wrist were likely bets at the Pimlico Racetrack. But he did have a heart for Louise, and he would take his chance just to see her.

Happily, it turned out very well for Manfred; he not only found his way to the Don Carlos Restaurant, but he also arrived ahead of Louise by ten minutes. True, he did not get there on his own. Certain difficulties arose which Metro personnel straightened out brilliantly in order to make his arrival possible, but that's for another story and another day. Suffice it to say, he pushed open the heavy bronze door with difficulty, and informed the head waiter that his friend, Louise, had made a reservation for two.

There was, however, a waiter, one Harry Rocco, an obese man who was given the assignment to take care of Manfred and who was not at all pleased about it. "I don't serve geezers," he told his wife just the night before. "They're just as bad as your father. They take up the table like they were sleeping on it, and at the end, they give you some of your own corn bread for a tip." But the boss the very next day collared him with the assignment, and Rocco was unhappy. He looked down with astonished scorn at the elderly little fellow in his seersucker suit. "The dude must be a hundred if he's a day," he muttered, (unfair to be sure, as Manfred was just eighty two). "And look," he thought

scornfully, “the guy’s wearing two ties”! And then he nearly wheezed with laughter when he observed that “the dude’s wearing carpet slippers, green!” Without waiting for Manfred to follow him, Rocco dumped the wine list and the menu on the geezer’s table and took off to tell his colleagues around the kitchen what he had just seen.

But Manfred was hardly aware of the churlish conduct that he had just experienced, for it was Louise who occupied his dreams. Strangely, he was free of the doubt that usually possessed him when about to meet someone. Too many times occurred when the person was wildly different then the one he expected, And some people didn’t at all relish finding Manfred there. But somehow, instinctively, he was certain that the woman he expected soon to join him would be the Louise whom he had once loved. And when he saw her waving to him as she came on, just as he remembered her, so very tall, as lean as an Olympic champion, her hair now from red to gray, surrounding her head like a helmet, he knew he was right.

“Manfred!” she said, sitting down and looking at him fondly, “you look wonderful! Just the way you did when I used to come to your office.”

“You look even better now then you did than,” he said affectionately, “you’re like a Greek goddess.”

She laughed boisterously, with that large voice she had. “Oh, please, Manfred, really. I’m a wreck.”

“Not at all!” he said softly. “Not to me.”

“Manfred darling!” It had been so many years since she had seen those warm brown eyes, the kindly affection which made her love him so much. “Why did we have to part?” she said sighing, looking coyly at him, as she used to do when Manfred would

send the dental assistant away, and then draw the coverlet tenderly around her shoulders supposedly to begin dental work, but kissing her instead.

“It was very nice,” he said gently, touching her hand.

“My husband ruined it,” she said indignantly. “He changed our insurance...As if anyone could be my preferred provider but you!” And so they went on to share their poignant memories, going over the details of their love, the events that followed their breaking up, her unwilling move to Florida, until Louise felt herself growing more and more emotionally excited. She needed a drink badly, a martini, and it was then that she realized that no waiter had ever appeared to their table.

“I think the waiter is ignoring us,” she complained.

“Oh, I’m sorry. That’s my fault,” said Manfred hurriedly, “I’ll take care of it.”

“A martini!” she called after him.

She watched him fondly as he went up the three shallow steps to the sequestered bar and began talking with the bartender. He was wearing those carpet slippers, a flagrant green - why? Probably because he had foot trouble. “We all have it,” she groaned. Corns perhaps. But those two neckties; now, there she was baffled... Abruptly, she lost her train of thought when she suddenly noticed that Manfred was not returning to her. Instead, he had taken a seat at a nearby table, and had begun talking with expansive enjoyment to a group of what seemed to be four astonished people. She was greatly perplexed, and after waiting for some time, and since everyone at the table seemed delighted with Manfred’s remarks, Louise decided to join the festivities.

“Hello,” she said cordially, standing behind him with her hands on his shoulders.

“I’m Louise, Manfred’s friend.”

“Oh!” replied an elderly man in a blue suit, plainly the oldest of the group. “He’s been urging us to get out of Vietnam.” A well dressed woman, also late in years, added gaily, “we told Manfred that we all agree with him. Absolutely.” She paused, and then said, “I suppose, though, you want to go back with Louise, isn’t that so Manfred?”

“Oh yes, indeed,” he replied, “now that we’ve talked that out.” He rose, and after returning many slaps on the back and promises to meet again, he went back to his table, crestfallen.

“I’ve fallen on my face again,” he said to Louise, flushing beet red. He now fully understood what had happened, and that it was now incumbent upon him to tell her candidly about his Alzheimer’s.

“Oh, so that’s where the two ties come in, and the green slippers!” declared Louise, after Manfred had confessed. Sweetly, she took his hands in hers. “I think they’re cute. I’d love to stay here to keep you out of trouble, but Howard wants to go back to Florida, the fiend.”

Just then, because the two old people hadn’t yet ordered anything, and because the boss wouldn’t like it if the table didn’t yield even ten cents, the horrible waiter finally came around and hurriedly took their orders: two martinis, a trout for Louise and an “Italian Stallion,” a mass of Italian meat and cheese for him. Once the martinis came, the couple had a wonderful time. Neither the clock nor the bill were given any credence, until, as the dinner crowd first appeared, they acknowledged Rocco’s frantic hints that they had to leave. It was then that disaster loomed.

They had no money. Manfred, because he thought only of his Metro card and so left his wallet behind, and Louise left hers, simply because she thought only of her

fashionable outfit. They looked at each other with horror. They knew the utmost shame was coming. Seen as broken old people, incompetent and derelict, they would be held there like guilty children under Rocco's power until some reluctant authority would come to take possession of them.

"No!" whispered Louise intensely. "No one will take us! Listen! Remember I told you that in college I played Medea, that insane Greek woman who killed everybody because she was jealous? Well, I still remember it. I'm going to get up and scream that you've cheated on me with lots of women. Then I'll run out and you'll follow me! All right?"

Manfred was appalled; he began to mutter objections, playing with his ties, when Louise, disregarding him, rose up like a goddess of vengeance.

"You vile loathsome wretch!!" she boomed, thrusting a long arm at his frightened face. "I'm not good enough for you? Must you have more women???? Is there no satisfying your lust?"

She pressed her hands against her eyes, moaning: "I wish that lightning from heaven would split my head open! Oh, what use would I now have for life?" she asked the diners of the Don Carlos. Now enraged, she yelled in decibels that shook the room. "I will find my release in death! And have hateful existence behind me!" Everyone in the restaurant was now watching this tortured woman, some in tears. "Kill him!" yelled someone from the back. "Without you, Manfred, I go to die!" she screamed, dragging at his collar. "C'mon, let's go", she whispered. Like a spear thrown by a superb hand, she leaped for the door, as Manfred, trembling and gasping, stumbled behind her.

“This way!” she called to him, turning the nearest corner and waiting impatiently for him to catch up to her. It seemed forever before he arrived, but luckily no one seemed to be following them. She quickly found a taxi to take them swiftly to Manfred’s Foggy Bottom condo. There, after the key was obtained from the superintendent and the cabbie paid, they threw themselves down on Manfred’s comfortable sofa, and did no more than to just smile at each other.

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