



THE MERCURY

THE STUDENT ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE OF GETTYSBURG COLLEGE

Year 2013

Article 3

1-1-2013

The Rose Peddler

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Class of 2015

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Reynolds, Victoria J. (2013) "The Rose Peddler," *The Mercury*: Year 2013, Article 3.

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The Rose Peddler

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The Rose Peddler

Victoria Reynolds

Each week, all seven days, he walked along the aisle of concrete. Whether it was winter or summer or the first hint of spring, he paced up and down the paradise in between the departing and oncoming traffic. The cars that passed must have wondered what he did—who he was, why he simply sold roses to the cars when the red light gave him enough time to stare at the drivers with his honey-rust eyes. If he was lucky, those eyes would earn him a sale.

On this particular afternoon, it seemed as if the air inside his lungs condensed and turned to steam at the same time. He was softly shuffling, staring down each passing car with the saddest grimace. If the heat was getting to him, he did not let on to his ever-changing audience. And what an audience he had—mothers in minivans, toting small children. Businessmen who were heading to and from the city in their sleek cars. Even teenagers asked for his roses as they traveled much too fast around the sharp intersection turn. It was a mundane existence. The same collection of red roses, the same bright tinfoil surrounding them, the same general surroundings—whether coated in snow, draped with a rainbow of leaves, or filled with a canopy of green—it looked the same.

Two worlds collided on this balmy afternoon (and every other after that)—one melancholy gentleman selling roses and a young anonymous stranger on top of the world. One glance was exchanged, and the sad man scampered to the vintage convertible, three bouquets in hand. The driver held out a ten and no words were exchanged. One ten for one bouquet. As simple as that. The rose seller continued on, shuffling as he did every day, seven days a week, three hundred and sixty-five days a year, while the young man filled with promise drove off with his bouquet of roses.

It does not matter that the man who sold roses stole them off graves at night, and repackaged them in order to make a living. It does not matter that the young man purchased one bouquet every day in order to decorate his mother's grave. It does not even matter that the young man's mother resided in the graveyard that the elderly man ravaged. What matters is that the world we live in can survive a cataclysmic collision of opposites every day, and continue to turn as if nothing is occurring on it. Nothing at all.